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Book Review Editor (*New Contree*)

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The *New Contree* Journal publishes reviews of significant books that are relevant to historians. Book reviews are written on invitation from the office of the review editor, but unsolicited reviews may also be considered. *New Contree* has an interdisciplinary outlook and welcomes suggestions of historically significant works written by scholars in other disciplines. The review should be submitted to the review editor within two months of receipt of the book. If this deadline cannot be met, a mutually agreeable alternative date can be negotiated. If it becomes impossible to review the book, it should be returned to the review editor. All reviews will be submitted to the members of the editorial board before acceptance for publication.

Contents and additional (or book) references

The review should summarize what is important in the book, and critique its substance. The reviewer should assess the extent to which the author achieves the stated aim of the book. It is important that the reviewer should engage the material instead of simply reporting the book's contents. For this reason, the reviewer should try to avoid summations of book chapters or the separate contributions in an edited collection. Instead, the reviewer should assess the ways in which chapters and contributions are relevant to the overall context of the book. Reviews should be written in a style that is accessible to a wide and international audience.

Any use of references or additional references from other sources must be informed on in footnote style.

Format

The review should generally be between 800 and 1 200 words, and should include as little bibliographic data as possible. When necessary, use page references for quotations in the text of the review and provide complete bib-

liographic details of the source. The review should begin with a heading that includes all the bibliographic data. The elements of the heading should be arranged in the order presented in the following example:

The early mission in South Africa/Die vroeë sending in Suid-Afrika, 1799-1819. Pretoria: Protea Book House, 2005, 272 pp., map, chronology, bibl., index. ISBN: 1-9198525-42-8. By Karel Schoeman.

Do not indent the first line of the first paragraph, but indent the first line of all successive paragraphs. Use double spacing for the entire review. Add your name and institutional affiliation at the end of the review. Accuracy of content, grammar, spelling, and citations rests with the reviewer, and we encourage you to check these before submission. Reviews may be transmitted electronically as a Word file attachment to an email to the review editor. If you have additional questions, please contact the Book Review Editors.

Hitler's spies: Secret agents and the intelligence war in South Africa

(Jeppestown, Jonathan Ball Publishers, 2021, 271pp. ISBN 978-1-77619-020-1)

Evert Kleynhans

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The Ossewabrandwag (OB), a cultural organisation that was born out of the 1938 Great Trek centenary celebrations, and spearheaded the anti-war efforts within Afrikanerdom during the Second World War, is gaining popularity within the historical and broader academic community. The last fifteen

years especially have seen a growing interest in the OB,¹ and 2021 alone sees two major titles dealing with the organisation published: Albert Blake's long-awaited biography of Johannes Frederick Janse van Rensburg, commonly known as Hans van Rensburg (the leader of the OB), is expected to be released in August; and Evert Kleynhans's *Hitler's Spies: Secret Agents and the Intelligence War in South Africa* was released in April. It seems that Jonathan Ball Publishers has certainly picked up on this growing interest in the OB as they are the publishing house for both Blake and Kleynhans's publications.

One aspect of the OB that has been neglected in the historiography is the role that the organisation played in the German intelligence networks that operated in southern Africa during the Second World War. Kleynhans himself states that he set out to write an "unrivalled account" of this aspect of South Africa's past with *Hitler's Spies*. Kleynhans excels in achieving this goal.

In *Hitler's Spies* Kleynhans investigates a number of facets of the broader intelligence war in southern Africa. Firstly, he explores how the Axis intelligence network functioned in southern Africa during the war including the contact between Germany and prominent South African figures like Daniel Francois Malan, Robey Leibbrandt and Hans van Rensburg. Secondly, Kleynhans examines some of the communication operations that formed part of the intelligence war in southern Africa (including the Rooseboom operation and the infamous Felix operation) as well as how the OB attempted and ultimately succeeded in establishing direct contact with Germany. Thirdly, he investigates the counterintelligence efforts that was launched by British and Union forces during the war. Lastly, and arguably the most intriguing facet researched in his book, is the efforts to collect evidence against various promi-

1 Some examples include C Marx, *Oxwaggon Sentinel: Radical Afrikaner nationalism and the history of the Ossewa-Brandwag* (Pretoria, UNISA Press, 2008); C Blynnaut, "Volksmoeders in die kollig: 'n Histories-teoretiese verkenning van die rol van vroue in die Ossewa-Brandwag, 1938 tot 1954" (MA, North-West University, 2012); AM Fokkens, "Afrikaner unrest within South Africa during the Second World War and the measures taken to suppress it", *Journal for Contemporary History*, 37(2), 2012, pp. 123-142; FL Monama, "The Second World War and South African society, 1939-1945", T Potgieter & I Liebenberg, *Reflections on war: Preparedness and consequences* (Stellenbosch, SUN Press, 2012); K Shear, "Tested loyalties: Police and politics in South Africa, 1939-63", *The Journal of African History*, 53(2), 2012, pp. 173-193; A Blake, *Wit terroriste: Afrikaner-saboteurs in die Ossewabrandwagjare* (Kaapstad, Tafelberg, 2018); FL Monama, "Civil defence and protective services in South Africa during World War Two, 1939-1945", *Historia*, 64(2), 2019, pp. 82-108; A La Grange, "Die impak van die Unie van Suid-Afrika se noodregulasies op die Ossewa-Brandwag teen die agtergrond van Suid-Afrika se deelname aan die Tweede Wêreldoorlog, 1939-1948" (MA, North-West University, 2020); AL Landman, "From Volksmoeder to Igqira: Towards an intellectual biography of Dr Vera Bührmann (1910-1998)" (MA, University of the Western Cape, 2020); C McRae, "'If you had been a man you would have gone a very long way...': The public and private politics of Emeline du Toit, 1898-c. 1948" (MA, Stellenbosch University, 2020).

ment OB members, but especially Van Rensburg, in order to prosecute them for high treason.

Most interestingly to anyone who follows the growing number of works on the OB will be Kleynhans's analysis of the "post-war hunt" for evidence to prosecute Van Rensburg and other OB members for high treason. Two burning questions have long been left unanswered in the history of the OB. Firstly, why was Van Rensburg never interned during the war? And secondly, why was Van Rensburg never prosecuted for high treason after the war? Although the first question still remains open for debate, Kleynhans has shed some light on the second.

Kleynhans's dedication to patiently work through various documents held in the OB Archive, the South African National Archives, the Department of Defence Archives, the Archive for Contemporary Affairs, as well as the MI5 files in the United Kingdom's National Archive, ultimately led to a publication that will have a lasting impact within the military history community. Not only is the publication properly researched by mainly using primary sources, but Kleynhans has also contributed to a very welcome and well-timed trend in military history that is moving away from the traditional "drum and trumpet" writing style. *Hitler's Spies* joins a growing body of work that is reconsidering South Africa's military history by using new perspectives.²

Kleynhans not only addresses a gap in the historiography but also identifies one by rightfully arguing that the South African home front (especially the naval activities) during the Second World War has been left understudied by both amateur and professional historians. Moreover, intelligence history is renowned to be a daunting task for any historian. How do you go about finding documents relating to events that are supposed to have no paper trail? As such, the military intelligence and counterintelligence aspects of the South African war effort (especially how they impacted the naval war in the region) have received almost no attention at all. Kleynhans successfully addresses this gap by studying the role of the OB within the broader intelligence war on the South African home front. Additionally, *Hitler's Spies* will hopefully ignite in-

2 For some examples, see FL Monama, "Wartime propaganda in the Union of South Africa, 1939-1945" (PhD, Stellenbosch University, 2014); I van der Waag, *A military history of modern South Africa* (Jeppestown, Jonathan Ball Publishers, 2015); K Horn, *In enemy hands: South Africa's POWs in World War II* (Jeppestown, Jonathan Ball Publishers, 2015); A Blake, *Wit terroriste: Afrikaner-saboteurs in die Ossewabrandwagjare* (Kapaapstad, Tafelberg, 2018); D Pretorius, "Sluit nou aan! South African Union Defence Force recruitment posters from the Second World War", *South African Historical Journal*, 71(1), 2019, pp. 41-69 and R Steyn, *Seven votes: How WWII changed South Africa forever* (Jeppestown, Jonathan Ball Publishers, 2020).

terest amongst historians to pay some much-deserved attention to the South African home front during the Second World War.

All in all, *Hitler's spies: Secret agents and the intelligence war in South Africa* is not only a captivating read for the general public but it is also an important contribution to the historiography of the OB and the South African home front during the war. Kleynhans offers an exciting glimpse into the southern African intelligence war and simultaneously addresses a mammoth gap in the historiography of the OB. The book comes highly recommended for anyone interested in reading a fresh perspective of the South African home front during the war, as well as anyone interested in the OB as an organisation. What *Hitler's spies* is especially successful in is conveying a professional, academic version of military events in an understandable and enjoyable way without utilising the outdated “drum and trumpet” approach.

Die ossewa en sy spore [“The Oxwagon and its tracks” – Book review in English]

(Pretoria, Imprimatur, 2020, 372 pp. ISBN: 978-0-620-89142-4)

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Prof. Erik Holm is known for his work with the restoration and preservation of all wood-spoke carriages. He founded the “Houtspeek Klub”, as well as published the newspaper for it. His interest in carriages rekindled interest in it, and collections of carriages began to emerge, as well as wagons pulled by a team of oxen. Thus, Holm revived the wagon culture, thus ensuring its survival for the foreseeable future.

The “Houtspeek” newspapers were useful references regarding dimensions, detail, construction, as well as other finer details about wagons and other carriages. The “Houtspeek” currently exists as a Facebook page where enthusiasts exchange information. The corpus of work that Holm had gathered around the ox wagon, not only in writing but also in repairs, saved many carriages,

and for that, he must surely get the credit. He saved valuable cultural-historical treasures.

His research was finally recorded in 2020 with the publication of *Die ossewa en sy spore*. The book begins with a brief introduction to the types of wagons as well as the evolution from the jaw wagon to the goat wagon, accompanied by photos of different variants and scale plans. The first chapter discusses in depth the parts, differences as well as tent constructions of wagons. The traction equipment is also discussed in reasonable detail.

The next chapter discusses the wagon making industry. This chapter is an excellent technical summary of the actual construction methods of wagons. The types of wood and their uses are particularly good, as well as the list of manufacturers of iron axles. The big wagon makers such as Merryweather et al. are well treated and are followed by a helpful list of wagon makers who have worked in towns. However, this list could have been much better and more comprehensive after consulting contemporary newspapers, magistrate documents and tax registers (which are freely available in our archives). The ZAR magistrate's records, in particular, like to indicate residents' trades, and some of these names do not appear on the list. The book's list is a good starting point but can be supplemented.

One aspect that has not been discussed in-depth here is the construction of wagon canvas as well as the types of materials used and how they were made waterproof. The section on painting only touches on the available paint technology, but not on their compositions. For the restaurateur, this would have been helpful information. The photos of the painting are slightly small. Full-page templates of the types of patterns and painting would have been better. For this chapter, the research into existing painted objects would also have helped to create a complete picture of the type of folk art.

The treatment of the wagon in the formation as well as in the use of South African historical events is thorough, although some of the illustrations here are slightly small or of poor quality. The use of wagons in the South African War (1899-1902) with approximate quantities is useful and opens up a new aspect on the subject. Of utmost importance is the section on the wagons and their expenses, as well as the section on the wagon licenses. However, it is sad that the photos of the wagon licenses are so small and unclear.

The use of oxen and other animals for traction is treated well and concisely. The cultural legacy of wagons, whether linguistic or elsewhere, is a handy cultural-historical reference. The explanation of the linguistic use of the chariot in proverbs is, in my opinion, one of the most complete here. The wagon's influence on poetry, music, and other literature is well discussed through this concise study, opening new research possibilities.

The next chapter on the ox-cart as a symbol begins with the words "Canonization as an Afrikaner symbol", words that slightly simplify the ox wagon's symbolism and more profound meaning for the Afrikaner. The souvenirs of the 1938 Great Trek anniversary could also be discussed further thanks to contemporary sources and the influence it even had on architecture. The 1938 Great Trek anniversary itself and the wagons used and built for it are covered concisely. The 1949 and 1988 Great Trek anniversaries are treated very briefly, and the wagons used and made for the events and the logistics, planning and the specific political currents around them (1988, for example, had two parallel anniversaries) are not touched on at all.

The ox-wagon monuments and the wagon in the use of monuments could also have received more attention in the book. The wagon's use in heraldry, stamps, and other objects is useful. Still, it would have fitted better in an extensive chapter explaining the use of anniversaries and manufacture of souvenirs and the influence the ox-wagon had on them.

The treatment of wagons in art, whether European or indigenous, is slightly on the thin side. Here a section on WH Coetser would have been appropriate as well as on other artists' works. The chapter could have provided a detailed discussion on this.

The discussion of model wagons, toys, and children's literature is a beautiful addition to the corpus of cultural-historical information. Of course, the construction of model wagons and their history is of utmost importance. However, the children's literature section would have been better suited to the previous chapter, where the language and literary uses of the wagon are discussed.

The list of existing wagons and collections is a valuable piece of work. The catalogue of existing jawbone wagons is a wonderful resource, yet certain replica wagons are classified among the originals. This is sure to cause great headaches for future historians and researchers. The existing catalogue of goat

wagons is a wonderful reference guide. The use of GPS coordinates of the location of the wagons is a fantastic idea and will help in the future to be able to place the relocation of the documented wagons, which will also help with their preservation.

Overall, the *Die ossewa en sy spore* is an improvement over existing books on the subject. However, editing, factual errors and poor visual footage do detract from the book. The *Die ossewa en sy spore* is a good starting point for future research. If the author perhaps considered more contemporary sources, along with quality photos and footnotes, it could surely have been the standard academic work on the topic. All in all, a handy book for any cultural historian or wagon enthusiast.