

In compliance with the *Protection of Personal Information Act (POPIA)* that came into effect on 1 July 2021, I am notifying you that I will protect your privacy and information. I would love to keep sending you my Newsletter, however I also need to make you aware that you have the option to *unsubscribe* should you no longer wish to receive communications from me. No action is required from you if you are happy to stay on my mailing list. Note that you can unsubscribe at any time in the future by writing to kleinschmidt.horst@gmail.com. Should you have any queries, please feel free to get in touch by replying to this email.

Horst's Newsletter 47.

July 2021.

To see the Newsletter with all images, pdf and other text's go to www.horstkleinschmidt.co.za.
Not included here are documents and photos on subjects other than the three matters I write about below.

Hi there,

Thank you all who wrote in response to my 46th Newsletter. I've never had so many detailed responses! And my writ was translated into Afrikaans and reproduced in the online weekly, Vrye Weekblad.

"Why don't you throw it all away" was Christine's soft suggestion when we packed up in London, for me to return to South Africa after 15 years in exile and for her to immigrate to a country she knew only through the lens of anti-apartheid demo's and writings. A big ask of her from me indeed! She came with me. We chose to settle in Pretoria because it was the only city in SA where both of us were offered work; she with the then 'white' department of health and I with Lawyers for Human Rights. On a visit to SA in 1991, in an effort to make her look forward to SA, Pretoria was the only city in South Africa I had not taken her to! It was there where in 1975 I served detention, in the prison for white men.

1. Putting up an independent candidate in the all-white elections in 1974.

SA will hold municipal election on 27 October 2021. For the first time independent candidates are able to stand, either at ward level or as proportional candidates. Could the forthcoming elections serve to put forward new ideas? Might we see candidates not hell-bent on telling lies to get their job and thus their secured incomes back? After 27 years of democracy the political offer - across the board - is stale, conservative or populist. The majority of contesting parties are crowding-out the centre-right. Poor people will be lied to once again to serve a corrupt elite.

From the annals of my archive: The story of an independent candidate in 1974 - during whites-only elections! We were gatvol with apartheid and used the election platform to challenge the prevailing self-serving utterings of the National Party, the United Party and the Progressive Party; the latter being broadly the DA today. It's admirable sole MP, Helen Suzman represented the constituency where the richest people lived, the Johannesburg suburb of Houghton. The PP posed as the progressives - seeking to enfranchise only those people of colour who had 'enough education and enough money' (!)

The idea to put up an independent candidate arose in the Christian Institute (CI) of Oom Beyers Naudé. We noted that during elections the limitations on the freedom of speech were lifted if you registered a candidate. Our preferred candidate, Fr. Cosmas Desmond was disapproved by the authorities on the basis that he was serving house arrest. So we put up Peter Randall, my boss at the CI's Programme for Social Change. – I was made his election agent. We created a Social Democrat committee and we chose to contest the Von Brandis constituency – adjacent to where the CI offices were. The real advantage of the constituency was that it was here where white mine workers, many now retired, lived in high rise flats. We banked on the older amongst them having a history in the (white) mine workers strike of 1922, and that they might have belonged to the now defunct Labour Party - thus hopefully a fertile ground for discussion.

Our chances were slight, just to get 10% of this white vote – a target to claim back the deposit we had to pay in order to register. Without a budget but plenty of youthful energy we called meetings, did door-to-door calls, printed leaflets, hung up posters and attracted the interest of the press – albeit often, to deride us. We used the election to say the things the other parties ignored, nay opposed. We said to the voters:

We are "democratic: i.e. all the people must have the right to participate in decisions that affect their destinies".

We are "socialist: i.e. the redistribution of power, land and resources amongst all the people of the

land”.

We argued for a national health system, for the right to collective bargaining and for the protection of the environment.

Peter got just shy of 1000 votes and we got our deposit back.

2. 120 years later and Germans still fail to make amends.

Dr Wolfram Hartman is the voice of German speakers in Namibia I identify with. Thank you Wolfram for your courage and for saying it clearly! I herewith identify myself with your views. See his column, in English published in The Namibian on 25 June 2021. And read also the interview with Hartman in Der Spiegel. <https://www.spiegel.de/geschichte/namibia-entschaedigungen-fuer-koloniale-verbrechen-herr-steinmeier-kann-nur-um-verzeihung-bitten-a-e339b554-693e-4935-b145-3f1f61b066e9>.

And read

"Namibian genocide: why Germany's bid to make amends isn't enough" by Reinhart Kössler and Henning Melber. — <https://theconversation.com/namibian-genocide-why-germanys-bid-to-make-amends-isnt-enough-161820>

3. 'Tranquill and treacherous' is the title I gave below watercolour painting. (see image below)

Having been born on the wrong side of history, into a Nazi German family in colonial and apartheid South Africa, it was with some trepidation that I bought *Hitler's Spies* by Evert Kleynhans. Published earlier in 2021, it provides details of the Nazi secret agents in the “intelligence war in South Africa”.

I no longer fear rejection or ostracism as much as I did when talking about my background, but it still pains me to consider it — and I quickly searched through the index of the book. To my relief, neither the name of my father nor any other relative appeared. So, I can at least assume that none were in leadership positions or were found to be responsible for any notorious actions. But my father and my grandfather were very much involved in Nazi machinations.

Both joined the NSDAP (Nazi Party). When these were outlawed in South Africa and South West Africa (SWA, now Namibia), my father was active in establishing undercover structures in Cape Town and maybe elsewhere. Throughout the 1930s and 1940s the ultra nationalist and neo-Nazi Afrikaner Ossewabrandwag (OB) was never far from the German fascist movements.

The story Kleynhans tells, and which I expand on below, reveals how dangerously close the Nazis came to having a client state here in South Africa. It stands as a warning to us today. Defending our Democracy now depends on people standing up – and calling for the implementation of the Bill of Rights. Just moaning when you meet friends on Saturday is tantamount to inviting the enemy to march through the gates of liberty and decency.

Unfortunately, *Hitler's Spies* is not as exhaustive as it could have been. The author relied on official records only. As a result, the former pro-Nazi Grey Shirts and later, OB, leader Louis Weichardt, for example, gets just one passing reference; the Gryshemde (Grey-Shirts) are not mentioned at all. Yet I knew, courtesy of my father, that Weichardt — he became a National Party senator for Natal — pursued his aims well into the 1960s.

When our family was living in Johannesburg in the early 1960s Weichardt was instrumental in arranging for us to look after a fugitive Austrian SS officer, Theodor Soucek. At Weichardt's request, we also hosted the former German commando officer Otto Skorzeny when his biography was launched in South Africa. Kleynhans would have found ample evidence in the pre-war annals of the German School in Hillbrow, Johannesburg. Some of my teachers in the 1950's were actors in a story yet to be told. (I hope to expand on above matters in future mailings - relying not least on materials I inherited)

Below watercolour looks idyllic but it conceals treachery. It depicts my parents courting in the early 1940s in Swakopmund (in today's Namibia). The drawing is by a friend Herbert Laschien. He's poking fun at Wilhelm and Eva, calling it the *Hotel to the Red Lantern – garden delicacies – family destination*. My parents married in 1944; I was born in October 1945. But that's not all....

Elsewhere in the world there was war and death for millions.

The hotel was built during the German colonial era – 1884–1915. In its day it probably was a house of ill repute. Its actual name was *Löwenhaus* - The Lion House. It stood on the first sandy elevation overlooking Swakopmund harbour. During the viscous European scramble for Africa, Britain in 1878 annexed Walfish Bay, eighteen kilometres to the south of Swakopmund – formally it was a very tiny sub-colony of the Cape colony. The Walfish bay is the only sheltered bay along the 1500km coastline. When the Germans came in 1884 they wanted the vast hinterland, today known as Namibia, but it had no harbour. German narrative: 'nasty Britain took it so we would fail!'. As a result Germany built a half-mile jetty perpendicular to a dry river-mouth. It served as the port to what was to become German South West Africa. Plans to double the length of the jetty came to nought in 1915 when South African militia defeated the German 'Schutztruppe' in GSWA. From then on Walfish Bay became the harbour for the whole country – today's Namibia.

After the German defeat, Swakopmund became a backwater. Like scores of others, the former hotel stood empty with endemic dense fog spells or hot desert storms alternating, taking their toll on the building the *Löwenhaus*. Until my father rented it during WWII.

What does the picture conceal?

Why is my father not in an internment camp? Most other German men were by then at facilities in Baviaanspoort or Andalucia in South Africa. Mom's father, Hermann Jatow was detained there – he was the chairperson of the NSDAP (Nazi Party) in Swakopmund when the war started. Exceptionally, dad's father was not interned. He was not remotely a suspect. He was not amongst those who supplanted a human deity with the Christ he worshipped.

Dad, here in Swakopmund was still with T&C who now imported British Lever Brother products. Did dad escape internment because dad's secretary was the daughter of Major Short, the South African police authority in Swakopmund? Might she have been spying on him and his kind? Or was he bribing – through her – Major Short with *Flag* cigarettes? (after the war dad could not account to the company what happened to consignments of cigarettes). Were they deceiving each other?

Look again at the picture and notice the empty bottles leading to a cellar. Mother told me that dad had an illegal radio receiver down there. Here he listened to Radio Zeesen broadcasting from Berlin. Indeed, dad spoke of listening to Lord Haw-Haw, a British defector to the Nazi cause. Did dad have aspirations to not just receive news and maybe receive coded messages or did he aspire to transmit messages to Berlin? Mom thought he spent much time in the cellar – at one point she had to rescue him from the depth of his hideout because the ladder to get out had collapsed. The easy legend is that dad would listen to German propaganda and initial military victories, and relay the information to the many war-widows, to keep up their morale for the German cause. This was treasonable in itself under martial law. But was dad a wannabe spy for Germany? – I say wannabe, because if he had been able to send (coded) radio messages to Germany, it is most likely that he would have been tried after the war. Could he have been privy to any sensitive information? German U-boats landed agents along this coast – like Robby Leibrandt. I shall never know the truth – and must not let theories get the better of me.

In the Windhoek National Archive there is a file on my father. Some years ago I read my way through it. I found were letters of German war-widows denouncing my father. He had imparted news he culled from his illegal radio installation to them. Several women were not amused. Some claimed that their husbands were not sympathetic to the Nazi cause, yet they were interned, not least because of people like my father. Others called on the authorities to detain my father whom they believed was the real villain.

Connecting other dots.

The mission grandpa worked for had gone bust after WWI when German subsidies stopped. The family struggled to make a living. By 1930 both dad and his older brother Helmut were sent home from boarding school in Swakopmund – unpaid fees – and to an uncertain future. Neither had finished their schooling. Dad tried his luck in Windhoek. He got a job as an assistant to a travelling salesman, Herr Beckurts of Taeuber, Corsen & Co. (T&C). In 1933 his boss invited dad to join the Nazi party. He joined willingly but faced an instantaneous crises: he had to put into writing evidence that he was truly Aryan. He had a problem. He invented a different ancestor to Zara – our Khoi-khoi ancestor. No doubt this substitution of the name Maria Bam had been rehearsed in the family before – in case anyone question their assumed status as being part of the white population.

In 1935 dad led a German boys delegation from SWA (Namibia) to the Hitler World Youth Festival in Germany. He held up high his delegation's flag when the Nazi race laws were adopted at the Nuremberg rally that year! The trip remained the highlight of his life: six months of youth and party gatherings – or indoctrination - and six months of training in factories. If connections to German intelligence came about it was during this period. From around 1937 he once again was working for T&C, but now in Cape Town. His extra-mural life cantered on the German youth club, a front for Nazi activities. He ascended to the position of Vice Chair. They met at the German club in Cape Town. Oddly he resigned this position, on friendly terms, just prior to the outbreak of the war.

In *Hitler's Spies*, published in Cape Town in 2021, Evert Cruywagen quotes British intelligence suspicions that the Nazi underground in SWA and South Africa had plans to stage a coup in SWA on Hitler's birthday – 20 April 1939 – to return the former colony of SWA to Germany. There is no evidence that this was attempted.

PS: When the war started in September 1939, dad happened to be in Durban. Family folklore recalled a conversation between dad and the German Consul. Dad asks for assistance to get to Germany. The Consul replies that this is not possible because of the allied blockade. Dad replied: then let me travel to Japan and via the USSR I can get to Germany to offer my services. The Consul ends the conversation with: 'Young man, by the time you get to Germany, we will have won the war'. Well

Good wishes to you all. May Covid spare you, your family and friends,

Horst

Horst Kleinschmidt
kleinschmidt.horst@gmail.com.
Highcliffe, 10 Jacobs Ladder, St. James, 7945, South Africa.
Phone and Fax +27 21 788 2174,
Cell – Mobile +27 71 361 2790
Email: kleinschmidt.horst@gmail.com.
Web: www.horstkleinschmidt.co.za.
Skype: kleinschmidt.horst