One day in 1942 I was informed by the local Post Office that I would be wanted on the phone at a certain time for a trunk (long distance) call from Cape Town. Cape Town is about a thousand miles from Alice and people do not make trunk calls between points so widely separated except on important business. I wondered what this important matter was for which I was wanted so urgently.

When the call came through, it turned out to be from my friend Senator (the Hon.) Alexander Maclean. The senator asked whether I was at home on a particular day. He had a very important matter to discuss with me for which he was going to travel all the way from Cape Town to Alice and back. This was during the Parliament's summer recess and he would have to return to Cape Town almost immediately. He was not prepared to discuss the matter over the phone.

This only served to deepen the mystery. Between the day when he was phoned and when he actually turned up, we tried to guess what this business might be, but as usually happens in such matters, all our guesses were wide of the mark.

Senator Maclean’s story was as follows. He had recently come from a visit in Cape Town to the Minister of Justice to make representations on behalf of Africans in connection with some matter or other. While there he had discussed that it was proposed by the Department of which Mr. H. S. Lawrence was then head to take steps to intern certain people on the grounds of their subversive activities in connection with South Africa’s war effort. It will be recalled that the United
Party was then in power and they had had a lot of
trouble from certain sections of the population, principally
from the Africans. A section of the population who were
not in favour of South Africa's participation in the war and
were responsible for various acts of sabotage of the country's war
effort. A number of them had had to be interned. A
number of enemy aliens, especially Germans, who had
recently entered the country from Nazi Germany, had
also been interned. But what surprised Senator Millemans
was to find my name included in the list of those
against whom it was proposed to take action. Not only
because he was a formal point but from his capacity
as African representative in the Senate, Senator Millemans
immediately took up the cudgels on my behalf and wanted to know
on what grounds I was being placed in this category.
It transpired that the Government was worried about
the fact that the response to their recruiting campaign
among Africans was very poor, more particularly so
in the Eastern Cape. Inquiries had been made from
Native Commissioner in the so-called Native areas
as to the possible causes of this lack of enthusiasm
in the war effort among Africans. Some Native Commissioners
in the Transkei had come forward with the bright
idea that this was due to the work of agitators
especially among the ranks of educated Africans
and had mentioned my name in that connection.
Senator Millemans wanted to know from me what
I had done to cause this sinning about me to
spread in remote areas such as the Transkei.
I could not think of any definite action on my part which could have given rise to this attitude on the part of the Government. I had attended recruiting meetings held in our area held by men like Col. Smith, who was Director of the New Zealand Army Services. He had had a meeting in the Local Natives Commissioner’s office in Wairoa at which he was closely questioned by various people about such matters as the negro army pay offered to Africans joining the Native Military Corps.

I had joined in the strongly derisive laughter of the audience when in response to a question about the Government’s refusal to provide Africans joining the army with proper firearms instead of the assagos which they were given, Col. Smith had replied that he would prefer to face the Germans with a body of Africans carrying assagos rather than firearms, but I had not spoken at any of these meetings or asked any questions but had just been an interested spectator. I did recall, however, that I had written an article for a journal called “Common Sense” on the subject of “Africans and the War”. “Common Sense” was the official journal of an organization then existing called the “Society of Jews and Christians”, one of whose Object was to fight against anti-Semitism and to promote better relations between Jews and Christians. The Editor of this journal asked me to write an article dealing with the attitude of Africans towards the war then in progress and I readily agreed to do so. The text of the article was as follows:
I did not consider that there was anything subservient in the statement in which I endeavoured to sum up the position as I saw it on the question of African attitudes towards World War II. My friend Senator Melancon told the Minister to warn me that during a time of war public authorities generally need to act more than appears on the face because of their sensitiveness about the security of the country. He had had much experience with perfectly harmless German citizens who had been interned and on whose behalf he had had to make representations to the government. He consequently advised me not to go much into statements as if we were living in a country which was at peace.

At all events it transpired that as a result of this representation it had to be to the Minister, I believe, that arrangements were made that an intelligence officer of high rank should visit one area to make an on-the-spot investigation about subservient activities among Africans. The man concerned was, I believe, a Mr. Roberts who was responsible for keeping an eye on the schools and the subservient activities were concerned, so hence, the cognizant men would go to the centre of African education. In due course it appeared of Fort Neck, this Dr. Roberts then was advised that each one of the officers would be visiting Fort Neck on a certain date, or keep both the opportunity to invite African leaders to come to a meeting which the representatives of the Government was going to address. On the fixed date...
the Professor arrived accompanied by Senator Malemeas. The Christian Union Hall in which the meeting was held was packed to capacity with students and visitors, before he addressed the meeting, the Professor had a private interview with Dr. Kerr, in which I understood among other things he wanted to learn from Dr. Kerr whether "this man for Whittens was anti-white." Dr. Kerr is reported to have replied refuted that "pro-African" was probably a more accurate expression to use in the circumstances. The Professor did not mind anybody being called "pro-African," what he was against was any African who was "anti-white." At all events, the time arrived for the meeting and the Professor was introduced to the audience. When he got up to speak he explained that it was his job to recommend the settlement of any people black or white who were engaged in subsistence activities in the area and he would not hesitate to use his powers against anyone who did that. He had come to find out why there was so little interest in the war effort among Africans in the area and he wanted people to tell him frankly about their complaints or suggestions. He wanted to convey to Field Marshal Smuts for his attention. When the debate stormed into full swing, the speakers got up from the floor and dealt with the complaints of Africans in regard to the treatment meted out to Africans during World War II. They spoke about the poor pay, the lack of attention to the needs of the defenders of men on active service, the refusal of the government to arm Africans, etc. The Professor listened very attentively and when he
get to up. He explained his surprise to find that the Africans had so many genuine complaints about their treatment by the authorities. He did not know anything about these matters. He thought that Africans were being treated the same as "our boys" in the North. He himself would not join the military forces of his own and as many complaints as he heard about that afternoon. He had made a careful note of all that had been said and he would convey these complaints to the proper authorities. And that was that!

This was really in the nature of an anti-climax. Here was a man who had come shouting for and demanding against so-called subversive agitation but with no real knowledge of the conditions under which Africans were being called upon to join up. It was so typical of the white man's way of dealing with Africans. "Accuse first and make injures afterwards?" instead of vice versa. I did not find it necessary to speak in the meeting. What I should have liked to say was said so much better by so many other people that I decided to leave it at that.

The Professor left and we heard no more about threats of interference. The conditions of African recruits were improved but throughout the war the N.M.C. (Native Military Corps) remained the Cinderella of the South African Armed Services.
Ever since the outbreak of this War we have been warned that we are
fighting not against flesh and blood but against spiritual wickedness in
high places, that this is not only a struggle between material forces but
also a contest between different conceptions of life. For that reason it
is of much significance that the attitude of different nations, groups
and peoples, whether belligerent or not, to World War No. II. In a country
like South Africa which is actually at war it is of vital importance to
study the attitudes of the different sections of our population to the War.
The object of this article is to give a brief account of the writer's
impressions of the various attitudes adopted by Africans towards the
present world conflict.

I use the word 'attitudes' advisedly, because for the first time
in the history of their participation in wars in which Great Britain is
involved, the African people, in South Africa at any rate, are not finding
it easy to make up their minds about this war. Time was when it was
sufficient to say of any conflict that the King of England, a descendant of
Queen Victoria, was involved to evoke a ready response from them. Without
further question the King's enemies were their enemies, and when appeals
were made to them for their assistance, the enthusiasm with which they
responded was almost embarrassing.

Since the World War of 1914-18 great changes have taken place in
African opinion about both British Colonial Policy and Vlèon Native Policy,
and by 1939 it was evident that there were going to be various schools of
thought among Africans regarding their attitude to the War. We still have
with us, of course, the 'die-hards' who are prepared to out-British the
British in their unquestioning patriotism and support for any cause
espoused by His Majesty's Government, but in addition we now have sections
which claim to be more discriminating in their loyalty. There are those
who contend that this is a white man's affair in which Africans should take
no part, albeit they feel convinced that whoever wins the war, the Africans
themselves will lose the peace. There are the believers in divine inter-
vention who look upon this fell struggle between European nations as just
retribution for the misery and suffering which civilized nations have
inflicted upon so-called primitive peoples in different parts of the world.
There are those who contend that this is a struggle between rival imperial-
imperialisms to determine who should get the lion's share of the world's natural resources, among which resources are included the subject races whose capacity for cheap labour can be exploited to advantage. Finally we have a vast number who are just plainly indifferent who when told that there is a war on point out that as far as the African is concerned there never has been any peace.

But it may be argued that at the outbreak of the war all the important Native public bodies, both the official ones like the Native Representative Council and the General Council of the Transkei and the Ciskei, and the unofficial ones like the African National Congress and the All-African Convention were unanimous in affirming their loyalty to the Crown and in expressing their willingness to serve in the armed forces of the king. Normally when a Government which is at war can, without compulsion or pressure, obtain such assurances from the majority of its population it may regard its position as entirely satisfactory. Subsequent events have shown, however, that this would be a mistaken view to take of the attitude of Africans to the War. It is an open secret that considering their numbers and their repeated expressions of loyalty, the response of the Africans to recruiting for the various services open to them has, especially in certain areas, been disappointing and appeals for war funds and gifts and comforts for both black and white troops have not aroused the enthusiasm which might have been expected. Obviously their loyalty and their readiness to take up arms require further elucidation in order to be comprehended.

What does the African 'men-in-the-street' mean by loyalty to the Crown in this war? Firstly he wishes it to be understood that he will not engage in subversive activities in league with the King's enemies and will not sabotage the war effort of the Government. In other words he gives an undertaking not to become a fit subject for Fifth Column activity. From time to time fears are expressed in the Press that subversive propaganda is being disseminated among the Africans by Nazi and other anti-British agents. These may be a few people who are gullible enough to believe the tales which it is alleged are told about the Nazi willienium, but the bulk of the African people regard these as tales full of sound and fury signifying nothing. Moreover their own past history in this country has taught them that to support one European group against another brings upon the enmity of the group to which they were disloyal without earning them the friendship of the group.
group to which they were loyal. As they put it, Europeans may fight one another during war-time, but when peace comes they preach that blood is thicker than water and combine against us.

Secondly, by their loyalty Africans apparently mean that they do not intend to use the war period to exercise pressure on the Government to secure rights which have thus far been withheld from them. Here again there are undoubtedly certain elements among them who look upon the present crisis as a golden opportunity for bargaining which ought to be exploited, but perhaps because of that patience of the African which a famous South African statesman once described as ooline, the bulk of the people do not believe that advantages extorted out of an unwilling Government during a period of crisis can be regarded as permanent. This does not mean, of course, that they will not continue, even during the war period, to press their claims for what they consider to be overdue, but clearly they depreciate the use of the war as a lever to support their excellent case.

But it is necessary to consider also what the African does not mean by his loyalty. In the first place it does not imply that he endorses the pre-war Native Policy of the Government, nor that he takes without a pimple of salt official propaganda about the issues involved in this war. Statements like "this war is a war between Good and Evil and we are on the good side and the Germans on the evil side" or "we are fighting for freedom and democracy and the Germans for world domination" leave his utterly cold. The African, as someone has pointed out, has experienced so little of the good that is on our side and so much less of the freedom and democracy for which we are fighting that he is tempted to ask, "In which cheek has the white man got his tongue when he makes such statements to us?". He has not forgotten that the last war which was fought to make the world safe for democracy was followed in this country by the entrenchment of the segregation principle in Union Immigrant policy, by the imposition of regressive taxation upon him, by the adoption of the "civilised" labour policy, by the financial strangulation of Native Education and by the disenfranchisement of the Native—all of which can be regarded as expressions of a democracy worth fighting for.

Moreover in the African view it does not add much force to our argument to say that "if the Germans win this war, your position will be worse," for that implies a justification of the evils to which they are at present subjected. It may well be that a German victory will lead to a worsening
worsening of the position of the African, but his contention is that he has no special claim upon the solicitude of the German Government, not being a German subject. What he wants to know is whether a South African victory will lead to the betterment of his position. In all the schemes for post-war reconstruction which are now under consideration, what sort of place will the African have in the South African, not the German, New Order? It has not escaped his attention that there is a deadly silence on this point which can hardly inspire him with confidence regarding the future.

What about his readiness to take up arms? The African looks upon South Africa as the only country in which he has a stake, and that consequently, if the country is in danger, no one is more entitled than he is to take up arms in its defence. The refusal of the Government to accept his offer of the highest form of service, in order to placate certain elements, is regarded by him not only as a plain lack of foresight in making preparations for the proper defence of the country but as a direct declaration of the permanent denial of citizenship rights to him. It is argued, of course, that taking up arms is not the only way in which a national may serve his country in time of war, but the African looks upon that as the highest symbol of citizenship, and the refusal to admit him to the armed forces confirms his belief in that connection. The rumour that he might be armed when he gets beyond the borders of the Union only makes matters worse, and the sooner that is given up as a form of propaganda the better.

One need hardly point out that the gibbering over the military pay of Africans on active service, low enough in all conscience, has been another shock to Native sentiment. The fact that there should have been a debate about a paltry sum of money which would not have made much difference to the total cost of the war has further strengthened the belief that Africans are regarded as butting in where they are not wanted.

All this does not mean that Africans look upon this war as something which they can regard with complete indifference. How could they when the war is affecting so many different aspects of their lives? Nor are they unmindful of the tremendous suffering which it is causing in Europe. Their sympathy and admiration for the courage of the British people are beyond question. They share the hope of all right-thinking persons that out of this upheaval will come a new world in which justice and fairplay will be the rule rather than the exception and in which war will be outlawed forever.