

‘Reform from within’: Schalk Pienaar, the Afrikaans press and apartheid

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During the apartheid era, the Afrikaans press was perceived of as a willing lapdog to the National Party (NP) and the Afrikaner establishment. The reality was, however, far more complex and ambiguous. From the 1960’s onwards the relationship between the press and the party became strained as editors increasingly practised what N.P. van Wyk Louw defined as loyal resistance.¹ Schalk Pienaar as the editor of *Die Beeld* and later *Beeld* played a crucial role in the evolution of a more independent and critical Afrikaans press, whilst remaining loyal to the party. In the process he also encouraged soul-searching amongst Afrikaners about the party’s treatment of the black majority and urged Afrikaners to adapt to a modern and changing world if they wanted to survive in Africa. In the process Pienaar underwent a personal pilgrimage from a participator in a race riot to the conscience of Afrikanerdom.

Schalk Willem Pienaar was born on 28 July 1916 in the Karoo hamlet of Merweville, the youngest child of Sarie Roos and Schalk Willem Pienaar, a clergyman in the Dutch Reformed Church (DRC). After Dominee Pienaar’s death on 4 November 1918 his widow eventually settled in Stellenbosch. Under the guidance of his mother and uncle Paul Roos, a former captain of the Springbok rugby side and principal of the Stellenbosch Boys’ School, Pienaar developed into a young man with a strong sense of righteousness and justice, as well as with a streak of individualism and rebelliousness. His childhood also moulded his political views as he grew up in a fiercely nationalistic home that supported the NP.

The Pienaars’ immediate neighbours in Stellenbosch were the Cilliés who’s son Piet, the future editor of *Die Burger*, was the same age as Pienaar. They became

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 - 1. N.P.VAN WYK LOUW, *Lojale verset: Kritiese gedagtes oor ons Afrikaanse kultuurstrewes en ons literere beweging* (Nasionale Boekhandel, Cape Town, 1939), pp.11-21 and 166-170.

close life-long friends.²

In 1933 Pienaar entered the University of Stellenbosch majoring in modern languages. He and Cillié, who studied sciences, became rebels as they regarded the university as too slow and stultified, and their fellow students as too conservative, conformist and respectful of authority.³

On obtaining his degree Pienaar went to Worcester College, Oxford in October 1936 as a Rhodes scholar. By then he wanted to become a journalist and had no desire to continue his studies. By April 1937 he had enough of Oxford and decided to return to South Africa.

On his arrival in Cape Town he immediately joined Cillié as a journalist at *Die Burger*, South Africa's leading Afrikaans newspaper. The paper was started in 1915 by Nasionale Pers as a mouthpiece for the newly formed NP. Its first editor was Dr. D.F. Malan who was also the leader of the party in the Cape Province. There was always a close relationship between Nasionale Pers and the NP as the political party that represented the interests of the Afrikaner.⁴ *Die Burger* over the years developed a tradition of professional journalism which was upheld by Cillié and Pienaar. They were however more than journalists as they were dedicated to the Afrikaner cause and the furtherance of its culture and ideals.

Pienaar was a natural journalist. His first article for *Die Burger* on 21 May 1937 was not just splashed on the front page, but also on its advertising posters.⁵ The cornerstone of Pienaar's success was his ability to write about the most complex issues in an easy style which made sense to all.⁶ Pienaar's natural talent as a journalist was also honed at *Die Burger* by his mentor Phil Weber, a father figure to him and Cillié, who became editor in 1945. He directed their careers and turned them into superb newspapermen.⁷

Die Burger quickly realised that it had something special in Pienaar and he was assigned to cover the 1938 symbolic oxwagon trek from Cape Town to Pretoria as part of the centenary celebration of the Great Trek. Pienaar's highly readable

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2. S. PIENAAR, *Getuie van groot tye* (Tafelberg Publishers, Cape Town, 1979) p. 33; Personal communication with Prof. P.J. Cillié.
 3. Interview with Prof. P.J. Cillié, 26 March 1999.
 4. For the history of *Die Burger* see C.F.J. MULLER, *Sonop in die suide. Geboorte en groei van die Nasionale Pers 1915-1948* (Nasionale Boekhandel, Cape Town, 1990).
 5. *Die Republikein*, 16 October 1978.
 6. *Rapport*, 15 October 1978; *Die Huisgenoot*, 5 July 1946.
 7. S. PIENAAR, *Getuie van groot tye*, pp. 31-32.

and entertaining reports captured the spirit of the event, especially the humour and the emotional and irrational actions of many Afrikaners.⁸ This assignment established him as one of the leading Afrikaans journalists in South Africa.

Pienaar's involvement in the Trek awakened his interest in the history of his country and people. He therefore returned to the University of Stellenbosch in 1940 to do a three-year history course in one year. It was at Stellenbosch, as a nationalist opposing South Africa's involvement in the war against Nazi Germany, that he became involved in the Ossewa-Brandwag (OB) which developed out of the centenary Trek to keep the spirit of 1938 alive.

Pienaar later described many of the OB's activities in Stellenbosch as nothing but student nonsense, but admitted that some of the organisation's violent activities elsewhere brought shame on the Afrikaner. He was involved in one such incident on 27 July 1940 when he was an organizer of a protest against a two minute silence in Cape Town to pray for an Allied victory. This led to a massive streetfight involving students, soldiers, sailors and the police. On that same evening Pienaar and his friends started a race riot in Stellenbosch. This led to widespread fighting between coloureds and students in which extensive damage was caused to coloured property.⁹ In his memoirs Pienaar admitted that he could not excuse his actions, but stated that he was awfully angry at the time.¹⁰ These events left a lasting impression on Pienaar and made him more understanding of those who rioted against apartheid.

Pienaar's involvement with the OB was shortlived. He was not a dogmatic person and rejected the fascist nature of the organisation after the election of the pro-Nazi Hans van Rensburg as the Commandant-General in December 1940.¹¹

Back at *Die Burger* Pienaar built up a circle of friends amongst the organisers of the Cape NP. It was a tradition for the journalists of *Die Burger* and NP organisers to meet daily at a popular pub, affectionally known as "Oom Charlie", at the Oriental Hotel. At these gatherings they discussed and argued politics over drinks for hours. One such party organiser was a skinny, balding young man with a short fuse, the pugnacious P.W. Botha. For Pienaar the "Oom Charlie" association with P.W. Botha would stand him in good stead during the turbulent infighting in the NP in the 1960's and 1970's.¹²

In September 1946 Pienaar became the editor of *Die Oosterlig* in Port Elizabeth. He was recalled to *Die Burger* after seven months to be with Cillié one of

8. See for example *Die Burger*, 11 August 1938.

9. *Die Burger*, 29 July 1940; *Cape Times*, 29 July 1940.

10. S. PIENAAR, *Getuie van groot tye*, pp. 24-29.

11. Interview with Langdavid de Villiers, 8 April 1999.

12. Interviews with Hein Basson, 4 April 1999 and Piet "Weskus" Marais, 26 April 1999.

Weber's assistant editors. In 1954 Weber vacated the editorship to move into management. Cillié was appointed as his successor with Pienaar as his assistant.

Pienaar and Cillié supported the implementation of the NP's policies enthusiastically defending them in *Die Burger* against any criticism. Yet soon after 1948 they developed doubts about aspects of apartheid. In 1949 as part of three months of long leave Pienaar visited central and east Africa where he witnessed the stirrings of emerging African nationalism.¹³ The visit was a turning point for him as he became more critical of the NP and its policy of white "baasskap" (to be the boss, to dominate). Although he rejected any political integration with the black majority as the death of the white minority, he and Cillié became increasingly uneasy about the numerous negative and oppressive aspects of apartheid. They felt that crude white domination negated the Afrikaners own struggle for freedom. How could Afrikaners who had fought a long and bloody struggle against British imperialism deny the black man his own dignity and freedom.¹⁴ With his strong sense of justice Pienaar was upset to witness the impact of the group areas act on the coloured community. The forced removal of the coloureds at Franskraal, where he had a small beach cottage, horrified him as a gruesome act of discrimination.¹⁵ As a journalist he also became aware of the pain caused by article 16 of the Immorality Act, which prohibited sex across the colour line. He had a traumatic experience when as acting editor of *Die Burger* an emotional woman, in an attempt to protect her children, begged and then attempted to bribe him to keep her husband's conviction out of the paper. Pienaar had no choice but to publish the story, but did his best to tone it down. That night he could not sleep.¹⁶

Pienaar and Cillié were also disturbed by the NP's circumvention of the constitutionally prescribed two thirds parliamentary majority to remove the coloured voters from the common voters roll and to place them on a separate roll with the right to elect four white representatives. They did not object to the removal as such as they were of the opinion that coloured involvement in white elections only led to racial tension, but to the way it was done.¹⁷

13. S. PIENAAR, *Getuie van groot tye*, p. 35.

14. P.J. CILLIÉ, *Baanbrekers vir vryheid. Gedagtes oor Afrikaners se rol in Suid-Afrika* (Tafelberg Publishers, Cape Town, 1990), p. 71; Interview with Prof. P.J. Cillié, 26 March 1999.

15. *Deurbraak*, June 1976.

16. S. PIENAAR, *Getuie van groot tye*, pp. 40-41.

17. Interview with Prof. P.J. Cillié, 26 March 1999.

In this period Pienaar and Cillié took note of N.P. van Wyk Louw's writings. His book *Liberale nasionalisme* (1958) influenced Afrikaner journalists to question the politics and conventions of the volk. Louw argued that if the struggle for Afrikaner survival was not morally waged it would crumble from within.¹⁸

Realizing that the Afrikaner had to adapt to a changing world in which the old colonial empires were collapsing, Cillié and Pienaar's desire to reform Afrikanerdom from within was strengthened by the concepts of 'loyal resistance', 'liberal nationalism' and 'open dialogue'. At *Die Burger* they started to implement Louw's philosophy that a society was judged by its questioning and exploratory attitude.¹⁹ They initiated a process of gentle persuasion to convince fellow Afrikaners that to ensure the volk's future, apartheid had to mean more than racially segregated toilets, post office counters and cheap black labour. To ensure the freedom of the Afrikaner it had to ensure freedom for blacks and this could only be found in a compromise between "baasskap" and a common society.

Afrikanerdom, extremely conservative and conformist was, however, not ready for an open dialogue about apartheid's shortcomings. *Die Burger's* new attitude led to a direct conflict with premier Hendrik Verwoerd. Although Pienaar respected Verwoerd's intellect he was no admirer of him as a person or of his dogmatic views as he found him too rigid, too logical and lacking in humanity.²⁰ Pienaar confided in Tony Heard, future editor of the *Cape Times*, that Verwoerd's mind was too tidy.²¹ He did, however, support Verwoerd's Promotion of Bantu Self-Government Act of 1959. The Act presented guidelines for the development of self-government for eight separate black ethnic groups. It further provided for the possible development of the ethnic units, the so-called homelands, into independent states.

Die Burger was fully supportive of the Act and coined the phrase 'separate freedoms'. Pienaar sincerely believed that independent homelands was the solution to South Africa's racial question. This perception he expounded in an essay, 'Safeguarding the nations of South Africa' for a booklet, *South Africa. Two views of separate development* published by the British Institute of Race Relations in 1960. Pienaar's essay was essentially an exculpatory plea based on the Afrikaner nation's right to life and that the options of a common society or a

18. J.C.Steyn, *NP van Wyk Louw, 'n Lewensverhaal II* (Tafelberg Publishers, Cape Town, 1998), p. 643.

19. P.J. Cillié, *Van Wyk Louw se rol in die vrymaking van die Afrikaner* (Publication series Randse Afrikaanse University, nr. A135), pp. 12, 14, 17-18.

20. Interviews with Louis Louw, 2 April 1999 and H.J. Grosskopf, 5 April 1999.

21. Interview with T. Heard, 1 June 1998.

racial partnership were unattainable. The solution according to him was a white South Africa and a black South Africa politically divided but peacefully and co-operatively co-existent. For him there was no doubt that separate development was a just and liberal concept in which the various black 'nations', like the Afrikaner, could develop along their own lines.

Pienaar's essay was a sophisticated defence of apartheid, but he ignored the immutability of history. South Africa did not belong to the Afrikaner to divide. They were a minority and could not justify the apportionment of only 13 per cent of the land to 75 per cent of the population. The liberal journalist, Allister Sparks, in evaluating Pienaar's essay, argues that the Afrikaner had forfeited the right to speak of rights when it had built its nation on the foundations of injustice and exploitation.²² It was Pienaar's desire to ensure a moral foundation for the principles of separate development that motivated his journalism after 1960. Although he remained blind to the inbuilt injustice of the homelands system, his quest for a moral foundation started the process of Afrikanerdom questioning apartheid.

In 1960 South Africa was rocked by extensive black resistance to apartheid. The bloody events at Sharpeville and Langa in March when police fired on protesting African crowds undermined white confidence. This provided an opportunity for Cillié and Pienaar to address what they saw as the damaging influences of negative aspects of apartheid. *Die Burger* in carefully worded editorials and in Cillié and Pienaar's column "Uit my politieke pen" (From my political pen), under the pseudonym of 'Dawie', started a campaign against petty regulations to control every aspect of black lives. For them this type of 'petty apartheid' was senseless and undermined what they saw as the separate freedoms of grand apartheid.

Die Burger also initiated a debate on the future of the coloureds as the homelands policy could not be applied to them. The paper reflected the attitude of many western Cape Afrikaners that coloureds, and not white representatives, should represent the coloured community in parliament.²³ It led to a vindictive

22 A. SPARKS, *The mind of South Africa. The story of the rise and fall of apartheid* (Heinemann, London, 1990), pp. 208-211.

23 L. LOUW (Ed.), *Dawie 1946-1964* (Tafelberg Publishers, Cape Town, 1965), pp. 182-183.

campaign against *Die Burger* by ultra-conservatives. Verwoerd was offended and made it clear that he would never allow direct coloured representation in parliament. For him it would be the thin end of the wedge that could lead only to black domination. Any departure from the system of racial separation, however trivial, would endanger the system as a whole and he went to absurd lengths to ensure separation at all levels.²⁴

Verwoerd eventually squashed the debate in January 1961 when a declaration of the Federal Council of the NP made it clear that the party, meaning Verwoerd, was the sole arbiter of policy. Pienaar was angry and mutinous and predicted that the coloured issue would come back again and again and would eventually split the NP.²⁵ He was also bitterly disappointed that no one in the NP had the courage to oppose Verwoerd.²⁶

Die Burger had no choice but to submit as Cillié was not prepared to throw his paper in front of a steamroller. He knew that Verwoerd was an icy person who would destroy any opposition with the impersonality of crushing an ant underfoot.²⁷ Pienaar supported Cillié. When Louis Louw, a junior member of the editorial staff, demanded that *Die Burger* confront the NP, Pienaar simply told him that when a tortoise sees a farmer approaching with a spade he withdraws into his shell.²⁸

After 1961 Cillié was more circumspect in his attitude to the prime minister, but a bruised Pienaar prepared himself for the next round as he regarded Verwoerd as a danger to Afrikanerdom. He believed that Verwoerd's stifling of any debate contributed to a dangerous complacency and intellectual laziness amongst Afrikaners. It created a false sense of security that exorcised any doubts about the future. For Pienaar nothing could be more dangerous for the survival of the Afrikaner in a changing and hostile world.²⁹

Pienaar also believed that Verwoerd was fundamentally dishonest. The official line of the NP was that urban blacks were temporary sojourners and with the development of the homelands, the majority of them would stream back to their traditional homelands by 1978. Pienaar knew that this was nonsense and in his "Dawie" of 8 May 1965 warned that the belief in 1978 as a turning point was dead and that the party had to face the reality that the homeland policy could not

24 H. KENNEY, *Architect of apartheid: HF Verwoerd, An appraisal* (Johannesburg, 1980), pp. 216-217, 263.

25 S. PIENAAR, *Getuie van groot tye*, pp. 60-62.

26 Correspondence with H.J. Grosskopf, 10 April 1997.

27 P.J. CILLIÉ, *Tydgenote* (Tafelberg Publishers, Cape Town, 1980), p. 24.

28 Interview with Louis Louw, 2 April 1999.

29 S. PIENAAR, *Getuie van groot tye*, pp. 49-50, 60: *Die Beeld*, 11 September 1966.

be applied to urban blacks. An upset Verwoerd rejected this outright and flayed Pienaar in the NP parliamentary caucus.³⁰ Pienaar had difficulty concealing his resentment of the prime minister and referred to him as the white god³¹ and on one occasion, after a couple of drinks, vowed that he would break Verwoerd.³²

When Pienaar was appointed in 1965 as the editor of Nasionale Pers's new Sunday newspaper *Die Beeld*, Verwoerd had moulded South Africa in his image. Afrikanerdom followed him blindly, whilst the white parliamentary opposition was weak and divided. Outside parliament black resistance was crushed with immense cost to civil liberties. The African National Congress (ANC) and the Pan Africanist Congress (PAC) were banned and their leadership either jailed or exiled. Pienaar was unhappy about the growing disregard of civil liberties and confided in Langdavid de Villiers, a prominent lawyer and personal friend, that he was unhappy with the use of detention without trial.³³ Pienaar was thus deeply worried by developments in South Africa and eager to break the lethal stranglehold Verwoerd had on Afrikanerdom. Amongst his editorial staff he was outspoken that Verwoerd was leading South Africa into an abyss and he referred to Verwoerd as "die verdomde Hollander".³⁴

A daunting task awaited Pienaar as Nasionale Pers had no office or printing press in Johannesburg, whilst Nasionale Pers journalists had no experience of running a Sunday newspaper. Logistical problems were, however, not the real challenge, but political resistance from the Transvaal Afrikaner establishment. Verwoerd as prime minister and especially as chairman of Afrikaanse Pers that owned the Sunday paper *Dagbreek*, *Die Beeld's* direct competitor, as well as that of Voortrekkerpers, owner of *Die Transvaler*, made no secret of his enmity and the Transvaal NP mobilized to organize a boycott of the paper.³⁵

Apart from Verwoerd there were a number of Transvaal NP MPs to the right of the prime minister who were determined to crush *Die Beeld*. Albert Hertzog and his ultra-conservative followers, to become known as the Hertzogites, ruthlessly hounded any Afrikaner or institution they suspected of liberalism or of disloyalty to the Afrikaner cause. Even Verwoerd was on occasion suspected of

30 S. PIENAAR, *Getuie van groot tye*, p. 63.

31 Interview with S.W. Pienaar jnr, 7 April 1999.

32 Correspondence with Hannes van der Merwe, 8 May 1999.

33 Interview with Langdavid de Villiers, 8 April 1999.

34 Interview with Ton Vosloo, 30 March 1999.

35 Cape Town Archive, NASIONALE PERS ARCHIVE (hereafter Naspers archive), AL21 File 4/1/13, Vosloo's report of a meeting of NP organizers, 2 October 1965.

being too left.³⁶ Modernity was also feared and Hertzog used his position as the minister for posts and telegraphs to veto the launch of television in South Africa. His view of the world was also coloured by conspiracy theories of international finance or big business determined to destroy the Afrikaner. Hertzog easily convinced himself that Pienaar and *Die Beeld* were part of a liberal masterplan to undermine the Afrikaner.³⁷

Die Beeld's brand of journalism alienated the local Afrikaner establishment even further. Pienaar's philosophy as editor was that the Afrikaner had to be informed about the difficulties and challenges facing them. As a young journalist he had witnessed the bitterness and confusion amongst Afrikaners during the years of struggle between the NP and OB because the Afrikaans newspapers had forsaken their task of keeping them properly informed. This had a lasting influence on Pienaar which he described as follows in his memoirs:

The oath that I swore was that if I should come into a position of authority on a newspaper, I would inform the people about those things they should know and so inform them that they would know what I was talking about. (*Translation*)³⁸

This came as a rude shock to the establishment which saw the press as its lackey to propagate party policy, praise party leaders and keep silent when necessary. The Afrikaans newspapers in the Transvaal, *Die Vaderland*, owned by Afrikaanse Pers, and *Die Transvaler* were both dismal and unappetizing propaganda sheets for the NP. Criticism of the NP and the Afrikaner establishment was unknown. *Dagbreek* was a more professional paper and its editor, Dirk Richard, like Pienaar, also desired internal reform to enable Afrikanerdom to adapt to changing circumstances. Richard, however, had to be more careful and muted as he was an isolated loner in a conservative newspaper group with Verwoerd as its chairman. Verwoerd demanded and got complete subservience from his editors.³⁹

Pienaar's open journalistic approach had its limits as he made it clear that he would not break with the Afrikaner establishment. He believed that those outside the establishment were powerless to influence the running of the

36 Hennie Serfontein, *Die verkrampde aanslag* (Human&Rousseau, Cape Town, 1970), p. 201.

37 UNIVERSITY OF THE FREE STATE, ARCHIVE FOR CONTEMPORARY AFFAIRS, Albert Hertzog collection, File 1/320/28/20, Undated and unsigned document listing *Die Beeld's* liberal deviations.

38 S. PIENAAR, *Getuie van groot tye*, p. 3.

39 D. RICHARD, *Tussen bid en droom. 'n Koerantman het albei nodig* (Johannesburg, 1986), pp. 8-10, 77-79; UNIVERSITY OF THE FREE STATE, ARCHIVE FOR CONTEMPORARY AFFAIRS, Verwoerd collection, File 1/39/4/2/5, Verwoerd's private secretary to Richard, 6 December 1965.

country. He felt that the correct approach of an Afrikaner newspaper to the NP and Afrikaner establishment was a policy of independence in commitment and friendship in tension.⁴⁰

In his first editorial Pienaar made it clear that *Die Beeld* was in service of the volk and the NP. This reflected his loyalty to the party, but was also a shrewd move to prevent a recurrence of the coloured debate when *Die Burger* had been isolated by Verwoerd. Pienaar especially wanted to make sure that he had the full support of the Cape NP which was resentful of the dominance of the more conservative Transvaal party. To secure this *Die Beeld* would be lavish in its praise of the ambitious P.W. Botha as the Cape leader. In private correspondence, always addressing each other as friend, Pienaar reassured Botha that his paper would support him.⁴¹ In return Botha placed the Cape NP behind *Die Beeld*.⁴²

Despite the enmity of the Transvaal establishment, Pienaar's open and critical approach was well received by a growing number of younger Afrikaners who resented the 'praise the party and church' attitude in the Afrikaans press and who were reading opposition English-speaking papers to find out what was happening in South Africa.⁴³ Afrikaners had undergone many changes since 1948. They had become more affluent and urbanised and susceptible to new ideas. This was especially true of the youth, who growing up in a culture of consumerism, admiring American films, pop stars, fashions, hair styles and drinking Coca-Cola, had become removed from traditional Afrikaner values.⁴⁴ Many of them chafed under the stifling conformity of Afrikanerdom.

From the first issue of *Die Beeld* Pienaar flayed what he regarded as sour old ideas and injustices in Afrikanerdom. He despised the attachment of so many Afrikaners to worn out and dated ideas and saw it as the task of his newspaper to yank Afrikaners out of the past and to prepare them for the future. If the Afrikaner volk wanted to survive it had to be open-minded, innovative and dynamic.

The first issue of *Die Beeld* appeared on 31 October 1965 and exposed the

40. S. PIENAAR, 'Die Afrikaner en sy koerant', *Standpunte* 108, August 1973), pp. 4-5.

41. NASPERS ARCHIVE, AL21 File 4/1/17, Pienaar to P.W. Botha, 17 September 1969.

42. UNIVERSITY OF STELLENBOSCH, J.S. GERICKE LIBRARY SPECIAL COLLECTIONS, P.J. Cillié collection, 220.K68(15a), Confidential report by Alf Ries on a parliamentary caucus meeting, 13 February 1968; B.M. SCHOEMAN, *Vorster se 1000 dae* (Human & Rousseau, Cape Town, 1974), p. 123.

43. *Die Beeld*, 1 November 1970.

44. W. BEINART, *Twentieth-century South Africa* (Oxford University Press, Oxford, 1994), pp. 171-180.

infighting in the NP to secure safe parliamentary seats for the coming election. In the NP, only used to praise and the turning of a blind eye to unsavoury events in the party, this type of reporting did not go down too well. But for many Afrikaners it was a fresh breeze in the dull world of Afrikaans journalism. N.P. van Wyk Louw likened *Die Beeld's* arrival to oxygen for a person trapped in a swamp.⁴⁵

Pienaar made it clear in the lead article of the second issue on 7 November that the 31 October issue was not a one-off. Under the heading “Die ope gesprek”(the open dialogue) he argued that the Afrikaner and the NP would benefit from less whispering and more open discussions to address the big and urgent problems facing South Africa.

Pienaar, however, realized that if it was to grow, *Die Beeld* could not just be a serious paper and also had to attract readers by covering sensational events. He believed that the contents of a Sunday paper should either make its reader's hair stand on end or give him an erection – if the paper succeeded in both it was on the right track.⁴⁶ Much attention was thus given to crime and sex. Young women in mini dresses and bikinis also figured regularly in the paper to the disgust of many. *Die Kerkbode*, the official journal of the DRC, went as far as to claim on 4 June 1969 that *Die Beeld* exhibited signs of an anti-Christian force that relished the undermining of Christian principles, morals and norms. Even Nasionale Pers was disturbed. Hubert Coetzee, the managing director and Pienaar's greatest supporter, confessed shock at the “kaalstert” (bare arsed) women in the paper.⁴⁷

The regular features on straying DRC clergymen also caused dismay. *Die Beeld's* spotlight on their sexual shenanigans was a consequence of Pienaar's unhappiness with the Immorality Act. He regarded the use of sexual police-traps as evil and argued that it was not the work of the police to get involved with the sexual activities of consenting adults in private, even if these were over the colour line.⁴⁸ Pienaar was sympathetic to those whose love crossed the colour line and this sympathy was reflected in *Die Beeld*. Police excesses were also given publicity.⁴⁹

What angered Pienaar was that the DRC as a defender of the Immorality Act demanded the Afrikaans press to ignore the trials of its clergymen when they

45. J.C.Steyn, *NP van Wyk Louw, II* p. 1017.

46. Interview with Langdavid de Villiers, 8 April 1999.

47. NASPERS ARCHIVE, Cape town, D. de Villiers collection, Coetzee to De Villiers, 3 May 1967.

48. *Rapport*, 1 December 1974.

49. *Die Beeld*, 27 November 1968, 5 October 1969, 15 February 1970.

contravened it. For Pienaar this smacked of hypocrisy and he decided to give such cases publicity.⁵⁰ He also focussed attention on other activities he did not regard as proper in the church. In the process he contributed more than *Die Kerkbode* in reminding the powerful DRC to live up to its professed values. As N.P. van Wyk Louw put it, *Die Beeld* wrote the fear of God back into the DRC.⁵¹

Pienaar also clashed with Verwoerd when N.P. van Wyk Louw's play *Die pluimsaad waai ver*, commissioned for the fifth anniversary of the Republic on 31 May 1966, was criticised by the premier. Verwoerd was unimpressed as Louw dared to reflect that not all the Afrikaners in the struggle against the British were heroes. He made it clear in his festival speech that writers had to praise the achievements of the Afrikaner and not to raise doubts. This gave the ultra-conservatives an open season to hound Louw. Pienaar in his signed column "Politieke Beeld" of 26 June 1966, defended the play and he encouraged Afrikaners to see it as it would make them think.⁵²

It was, however, *Die Beeld's* confrontational role in the bitter internal struggle between the ultra-conservatives and those who favoured a more tolerant outward looking Afrikanerdom that caused the most controversy. Professor Wimpie de Klerk in October 1966 referred to these protagonists as the "verkrampes"(narrow-minded ones') and the "verligtes"(enlightened ones'). Not all verkrampes were Hertzogites as the Hertzogites were a small group with their own agenda, based on conspiracy theories, to secure control of the party. Pienaar felt that the Hertzogites were a malignant group that had to be excised from the NP, while he used his journalism to convince verkrampes about the necessity to adapt to a changing world.

Full scale war between Pienaar and the Hertzogites erupted in August 1966 when he, as well as Cillié, confronted S.E.D. Brown, editor of the *SA Observer*, a small extreme right-wing monthly, unofficial mouthpiece of the Hertzogites. He demanded that the Afrikaners behind Brown had to be exposed. In the process he warned Afrikaners not just to focus on the dangers from the

50 S. PIENAAR, *Getuie van groot tye*, pp. 40-41, 74-75.

51. J.C.Steyn, *NP van Wyk Louw, II*, p. 1017.

52. J.C.Steyn, *NP van Wyk Louw, II*, pp. 1034-1053.

left, as the extreme right was just as dangerous to the survival of the Afrikaner.⁵³ The Afrikaner establishment in the Transvaal, disliking *Die Beeld's* provocative journalism, rallied to Brown's defence. According to the Hertzogite NP MP, Jaap Marais, who went to see Verwoerd after the attacks on Brown, the prime minister expressed his support as he knew that he was the real target of the attacks on Brown. He also indicated that he was only waiting for the right moment to strike back at Pienaar and Cillie.⁵⁴ Verwoerd also made it clear to Blaar Coetzee, a member of his cabinet, that he would personally dispose of Pienaar.⁵⁵

By then Verwoerd's enmity to Pienaar was so strong that he refused to be photographed, or interviewed by *Die Beeld* or to speak to Pienaar.⁵⁶ Pienaar realized that a direct conflict between Verwoerd and *Die Beeld* had become unavoidable.⁵⁷

Pienaar, however, did not back down and decided to express his opposition to the growing extremism of segregatory measures. This was in a period in which Verwoerd banned the screening of the film *Othello*. In "Politieke Beeld" of 4 September 1966 he complained that apartheid had dealt harshly with the coloured community and that it was unthinkable and a glaring injustice to segregate beaches and mountains. Using this as an example he argued that it was evil to think that with laws and regulations you could achieve perfect segregation. This approach could only undermine the ideal of separate freedoms. Instead of such legislation the government had to do more to change the attitudes of whites who trampled on the rights and dignity of other races.

Two days later Verwoerd was murdered in the House of Assembly. Jaap Marais believes that Verwoerd, who was scheduled to make a parliamentary speech, intended to strike at the politics of Pienaar and Cillie.⁵⁸ Personally Pienaar was shocked by the murder, but that evening a woman friend visiting the Pienaars asked how long South Africa could have endured Verwoerd. Knowing that she was correct yanked him out of his state of shock.⁵⁹

Verwoerd's successor, John Vorster, was more pragmatic and prepared to

53. *Die Beeld*, 7 and 14 August 1966.

54. J.A. MARAIS, *Die era van Verwoerd* (Aktuele Publikasies, Pretoria, 1992), pp. 157-158, 159.

55. S. PIENAAR, *Getuie van groot tye*, p. 50.

56. E. POTTER, *The press as opposition. The political role of South African newspapers* (Chatto&Windus, London, 1975), pp. 132, 152.

57. *Die Beeld*, 1 November 1970.

58. J.A. MARAIS, *Die era van Verwoerd*, pp. 157-158.

59. S. PIENAAR, *Getuie van groot tye*, p. 65

accept changes as long as they did not threaten the identity of whites or give blacks a share in the white man's political structure. Pienaar and Vorster were on excellent personal terms and on a first name basis as they had known each other since their student days.⁶⁰

In his first column after Vorster's election Pienaar was very supportive of the new premier.⁶¹ This was the first of a number of gushing columns and articles from Pienaar's pen. Criticism of Vorster would be unknown in *Die Beeld* and the paper would support his policies with enthusiasm.

Because of their friendship Pienaar always had more freedom of movement than any other Afrikaner journalist. Once when Vorster was confronting Afrikaner journalists about their reporting one of the journalists asked, "What about Schalk Pienaar?" Vorster resignedly answered in measured tones, "Schalk Pienaar is Schalk Pienaar".⁶² Yet this close relationship also had its drawbacks as Pienaar admitted to Hennie Serfontein of the *Sunday Times* that he did not publish anything on the torture of political prisoners as it would only alienate Vorster.⁶³

Remembering the isolation and battering of *Die Burger* in 1960 Pienaar linked *Die Beeld* as closely as possible with Vorster. His favourite tactic was to project any criticism of *Die Beeld* as an attack on Vorster's policies.⁶⁴ As Pienaar wryly admitted in his memoirs: in the the heat of the struggle between the verkramptes and verligtes you had to be clever to survive.⁶⁵ Pienaar used this situation to urge Vorster to be more reformist and to go on the offensive against the Hertzogites. Vorster was, however, just as pragmatic as he initially felt insecure and needed *Die Beeld's* support. In reality he shared the establishment's view of the paper. He confided in Alf Ries, political correspondent of *Die Burger* and a close confidant, that he disliked *Die Beeld's* sex stories, that the paper was too negative and that he resented the demands to force him to act against the Hertzogites.⁶⁶

Vorster on one occasion warned Pienaar that he was too sympathetic to Beyers Naudé, the former DRC cleric who had become an anti-apartheid activist.

60. Interview with Piet "Weskus" Marais, 26 April 1999.

61. *Die Beeld*, 18 September 1966.

62. *Rapport*, 15 October 1978.

63. Interview with Hennie Serfontein 23 July 1999.

64. See for example his column of 3 September 1967.

65. S. PIENAAR, *Getuie van groot tye*, p. 3.

66. Cillié collection, 220.K67(72), Ries to Cillié, 26 July 1967; 220.K67(98), Ries to Cillié, 14 September 1967 and 220.K69(26), Ries's summary of a conversation with Vorster, 14 March 1969.

Beyers was a former university friend⁶⁷ and Pienaar had a soft spot for him. He was also repulsed by the verkrampte hounding of Naudé and his *Christian Institute* (CI), an independent ecumenical organization founded in 1963 to promote dialogue for reconciliation.⁶⁸ Without directly defending Beyers Naudé and the CI *Die Beeld* shed some light on the unsavoury, petty and vindictive persecution of him by the DRC and this led to Vorster's warning.⁶⁹

With a new prime minister Pienaar took with gusto the battle to the Hertzogites. He used his paper to demonise the Hertzogites' narrow-mindedness and exclusive nationalism. In his column of 19 March 1967 Pienaar also confronted the Hertzogites' phobia about immigrants by arguing that the Afrikaner had developed from immigrant stock. Tongue in cheek he pointed out that his ancestors were Huguenots who loved their drink a bit too much and if there had been an immorality act back then they would have ended up behind bars. The humourless Hertzog was so shocked by this column that he raised it in the NP's parliamentary caucus.⁷⁰

Pienaar's irreverent wit became a powerful weapon to ridicule the world of the Hertzogites as silly, outdated and paranoid. When the final split did take place in the NP most Afrikaners perceived Hertzog and his followers as figures of fun.

Pienaar also actively participated in the culture war when the Hertzogites campaigned in 1967 to gain control of the Suid-Afrikaanse Akademie vir Wetenskap en Kuns, the highest intellectual forum in Afrikanerdom, and other cultural organisations.⁷¹ Pienaar used *Die Beeld* to expose and frustrate their activities and with the paper's active support the verligtes rallied to thwart an ultra-conservative take over. *Dagbreek*, seeing its competitor's sales rocketing with its coverage of the cultural war, followed *Die Beeld's* example, to the NP's dismay, of focusing on the internal wranglings in Afrikanerdom.⁷²

The Hertzogites did not take Pienaar's attacks lying down and were determined

67. Correspondence with Beyers Naudé, 7 May 1998.

68. NASPERS ARCHIVE, Cape Town, AL21, File 4/1/17, Weber to Pienaar, 25 October 1965.

69. De Villiers collection, Weber to De Villiers, 13 June 1967.

70. Cillié collection, 220.K68(15b), Confidential report by Alf Ries on a NP parliamentary caucus meeting, 20 February 1968.

71. For the verlig/verkrampt struggle for the control of the Akademie see H. SERFONTEIN, *Die verkrampte aanslag*, pp. 84-117.

72. D. RICHARD, *Moedswillig die uwe: Perspersoonlikhede in die Noorde* (Perskor, Johannesburg, 1985), pp. 113-124.

to destroy him and *Die Beeld*.⁷³ A whispering campaign besmirching Pienaar as a traitor, a pornographer, a church basher, and a drunkard was also conducted. Pienaar was not an alcoholic, but it was one of the most damaging rumours about him in circulation.⁷⁴ The organized hate campaign became so intense that Pienaar feared a physical attack and admitted that on occasion his legs shook with fear.⁷⁵

Pienaar's office carpet was worn through by offended delegations confronting him about *Die Beeld's* journalism. One such delegation was that of the Junior Rapportryers, a cultural organization for young Afrikaner men, under the chairmanship of a young Vereeniging attorney, F.W. de Klerk. *Die Beeld* had given the organization some negative publicity when it exposed Hertzogite activities within. Before the meeting Pienaar wrote to his friend Hein Basson that De Klerk was a decent person, but that he was going to confront him and demand that he rid the organization of the Hertzogites.⁷⁶ During the meeting tempers did flare and ended on that note. The Rapportryers were eventually cleansed of Hertzogites and relations between the organization and *Die Beeld* improved. De Klerk eventually apologized for his behaviour. In his memoirs Pienaar pointed out that he had high expectations for De Klerk.⁷⁷

Despite the pressure of the establishment, Pienaar did not hesitate to confront even the legal system and this led to the banning of *Die Beeld* on 15 January 1967. In Bloemfontein a group of men, some of whom were prominent members in the community, were arrested for alleged homosexual activities in a city park. The local court on request of the accused prohibited any publicity of the case. Pienaar decided to ignore this prohibition as he felt that the accused had used the friendship of people in high places to cover up the case.⁷⁸ The case received front page coverage, but within hours the accused's attorneys succeeded in securing a court interdict to prohibit publication.⁷⁹

Pienaar's provocative journalism saw *Die Beeld* in another legal wrangle in September 1969 when it ignored military restrictions and published details about the deaths of two conscripts who had died as a result of military brutality.

73. J.A. DU PISANI, *John Vorster en die verlig/verkrampstryd. 'n Studie van die politieke verdeeldheid in Afrikanergeleedere, 1966-1970* (Institute of Contemporary History, Bloemfontein, 1990), pp. 81.

74. S. PIENAAR, *Getuie van groot tye*, p. 120-122.

75. S. PIENAAR, *Getuie van groot tye*, p. 76.

76. Pienaar to Basson, 18 August 1967. (Letter in Basson's possession.)

77. S. PIENAAR, *Getuie van groot tye*, p. 111.

78. UNIVERSITY OF STELLENBOSCH, J.S. GERICKE LIBRARY SPECIAL COLLECTIONS, MER collection, 55.K.V.9(10), Rykie van Reenen to MER, 4 February 1967.

79. S. PIENAAR, *Getuie van groot tye*, pp. 86-87.

Pienaar felt that national security was not involved and that parents had the right to know what happened to their sons during their compulsory military service. As a result Pienaar had to appear before a military commission investigating the deaths as well as *Die Beeld's* report. In his typical forthright style Pienaar did not backdown and forcefully put his case to the military. The end result was that no charges were laid against *Die Beeld*, but two army instructors were prosecuted and convicted for the deaths of the conscripts.⁸⁰

Pienaar was only able to survive such confrontations as he had the full support of Nasionale Pers's board of directors which was packed with friends and supporters. Recht Malan, the chairman was a former *Die Burger* assistant-editor, Weber was the vice-chairman and Hubert Coetzee, the managing director, a close friend since their student days. On his death he was replaced by another friend from university, Langdavid de Villiers. Cillié also joined the board in 1969. Lastly P.W. Botha was also a director. Apart from friendship the directors also stood by Pienaar as they had no doubt about his loyalty to the NP and the Afrikaner cause.

In private Weber and Coetzee were occasionally Pienaar's biggest critics. They wrote numerous letters, as close friends, to encourage, advise, warn and admonish Pienaar for what appeared in *Die Beeld*.⁸¹ More importantly, they played a crucial role in protecting Pienaar against criticism. When Vorster wanted dissident author André P. Brink and Dennis Worrall, perceived as a left-wing liberal by the establishment, to be dismissed as *Die Beeld* columnists Pienaar approached Hubert Coetzee for advice. His blunt response was:

Who the hell is the editor of *Die Beeld* - you or Vorster? (*Translation*).⁸²

Brink and Worrall were retained.

In 1969 Vorster proposed a code of behaviour in which *Die Beeld* and *Dagbreek* had to undertake not to sow suspicion, inflate party differences or to prescribe to the party. Afrikaanse Pers accepted it, but Recht Malan and Weber, as Nasionale Pers representatives, refused to sign. They protested that the code would be to the detriment of Afrikaans journalism and that Nasionale Pers did not prescribe to its editors.⁸³

Another example of Weber's protectiveness was in 1969 when Vorster confronted him with a pro-British postcard that Pienaar, whilst at Oxford, had

80. S. PIENAAR, *Getuie van groot tye*, pp. 90-91.

81. NASPERS ARCHIVE, Cape Town, AL21 File 4/1/17, Coetzee to Pienaar, 13 August 1966, 1 May 1967 and Weber to Pienaar, 2 October 1966.

82. S. PIENAAR, *Getuie van groot tye*, pp. 32-33, 84-85.

83. NASPERS ARCHIVE, Cape town AL21, File 4/1/13, Weber's memo on the meeting with Vorster, 24 March 1969.

sent to an aunt. She was a fierce nationalist and to tease her he had pretended to have become a supporter of the British empire. The card eventually came into the hands of General Langhendrik van den Bergh, chief of the security police and he presented it to Vorster as proof of Pienaar's suspected loyalty as a nationalist. A worried Weber investigated the matter and eventually reported to Vorster that the postcard had been sent in jest.⁸⁴ The affair was farcical, but that the prime minister, his chief of the security police and the deputy manager of Nasionale Pers became involved is indicative of the atmosphere of hate and suspicion in the NP in the late 1960's.

Whilst the battle against the Hertzogites raged furiously Pienaar never forgot the big picture, namely justice for the black majority. He used his column to encourage whites to accept the idea of freedom for the other races within apartheid.⁸⁵ Pienaar also rejected the notion of a homeland for the coloureds as unrealistic and escapism as there was no territory that could be demarcated for such a homeland. He thought of coloureds as brown Afrikaners and not a separate nation.⁸⁶ Although he did not see it as a final solution he did support the NP's policy of parallel development with a Coloured Persons' Representative Council to represent their interests.⁸⁷

Pienaar also pricked the Afrikaners' conscience with regard to racial discrimination. In his column of 17 November 1968 under the heading "Ons red die volk in 'n hysbak" (We save the volk in an elevator) he rejected elevator apartheid as silly and humiliating nonsense that could only be described as sheer comedy whilst real challenges, for example the position of the growing black urban population, were ignored. A large section of the white population vehemently disagreed and saw elevator apartheid as an important pillar of white survival in South Africa. The following Sunday *Die Beeld* reported the arrest of a white man for beating to death a black man he found using a white reserved elevator.⁸⁸

Pienaar also urged the NP to rid itself of its sour image which he believed was alienating the youth, especially the party's emotional rejection and

84. UNIVERSITY OF STELLENBOSCH, J.S. GERICKE LIBRARY SPECIAL COLLECTIONS, S.W. Pienaar collection, Weber to Vorster, 12 May 1969, De Villiers collection, Weber to De Villiers, 14 May 1969; S. PIENAAR, *Getuie van groot tye*, pp. 19-20.

85. *Die Beeld*, 25 February 1968.

86. *Die Beeld*, 10 August 1969.

87. *Die Beeld*, 3 March 1968.

88. *Die Beeld*, 1 December 1968.

condemnation of men with long hair and women with short dresses. Personally he had no problem with the rebellious fashions of the 1960's and he mocked those who saw them as signs of evil and degeneration.⁸⁹

For the verligtes and a large proportion of the Afrikaner youth Pienaar's political commentary was bread from heaven. Johan Vosloo, a student at the University of Potchefstroom and eventual teacher in this conservative town, found that Pienaar's columns articulated what he and many others thought but were too afraid to say. It gave him and his fellow verligtes courage and ammunition to confront the verkramptes.⁹⁰

In the spirit of open dialogue Pienaar also expressed his unease about security legislation. He fully supported the argument that in the interest of national security extensive powers should be given to the police, but he warned that these powers should not be abused and urged some reflection on them.⁹¹ He was especially offended and disturbed that the government used modern technology to invade the privacy of citizens. He urged that strict control had to be applied to prevent the security establishment from using technology for its own agenda.⁹²

The internal differences in the NP reached a climax at the conference of the Transvaal NP in September 1969 when Hertzog and some of his followers were expelled and formed the Herstigte Nasionale Party (HNP). The HNP was annihilated in the April 1970 election. With the purge of the Hertzogites Pienaar focused on the task of preparing the volk for more changes and encouraging Vorster to bring these about. *Die Beeld* started to give extensive publicity to cases of racism and discrimination which Pienaar regarded as indefensible. This was a break with the past as until now the Afrikaans press had practised sunshine journalism in which negative aspects of apartheid were ignored. In April 1970 the paper for example extensively covered the case of a young Chinese schoolgirl who had reached the finals of a local school tennis tournament in Aliwal North. As Chinese were *prima facie* blacks according to South African law a spectator complained to the security police who rushed over to the tournament and prevented her from playing.⁹³

Pienaar's criticism of discrimination was, however, limited to what he regarded as petty apartheid. Although unhappy with the abuse of power he did not realize that to implement separate freedoms the apartheid state had to become autocratic to enforce it on the reluctant black majority. Pienaar was thus blind to

89. *Die Beeld*, 20 April 1969.

90. Interview with Johan Vosloo, 30 March 1999.

91. *Die Beeld*, 7 May 1967.

92. *Die Beeld*, 23 April 1967.

93. *Die Beeld*, 5 April 1970.

some evils done in the name of apartheid and sensitive to liberal accusations that apartheid could not be morally justified.⁹⁴

By 1970 Pienaar's health was in a perilous state after a heart attack and an operation to remove a malignant tumour from his palate. This forced him into early retirement. He had been a brilliant editor. Starting from scratch he had turned *Die Beeld* into one of South Africa's finest newspapers.

In this period extensive political pressure was being placed on Afrikaanse Pers and Nasionale Pers to settle the press war between *Die Beeld* and *Dagbreek* as it was seen as detrimental to Afrikaner unity. This and the mounting costs of the press war led to a merger of the two papers. The new paper, *Rapport*, was to be run by a new company in which Nasionale Pers and Afrikaanse Pers each had 50 per cent shares with Willem Wepener of *Die Beeld* as the first editor. Wepener continued with vigour the Pienaar approach. Pienaar also continued with his column, now called "Politieke Rapport".

In his "Politieke Rapport" Pienaar increasingly took on the mantle of an Old Testament prophet, criticising the volk's life of luxury and indifference to injustices. In the process he became one of the most astute political commentators in South Africa and the most quoted. His comments on political events made regular news. His reputation became that of an elder statesman and his writings placed pressure on the government to hasten the process of reform.

Pienaar still believed in grand apartheid, but as an answer to the future of the urban blacks, coloureds and Asians he supported a plan that was developed by the Broederbond in the Western Cape. It was namely to reconstitute the senate to turn it into a body where urban blacks, coloured, Indians and whites could meet and consult. If the Senate could not be reformed into such a body, a third consultative parliamentary chamber had to be formed.⁹⁵ To Pienaar's sorrow the possibility of such third chamber was swept from the table without any real discussion.⁹⁶ To confidants he admitted that what he wanted was the coloureds in parliament on a common voters roll.⁹⁷ Vorster suspected this and challenged him about it in 1974. Pienaar admitted that he wanted to do so in the past, but

94. *Die Beeld*, 17 August 1969.

95. *Rapport*, 3 October 1971; B.M. Schoeman, *Die Broederbond in die Afrikaner-politiek* (Aktuele Publikasies, Pretoria, 1982), p.102.

96. *Rapport*, 3 September 1972.

97. Interview with Piet "Weskus" Marais, 26 April 1999.

that he now supported the party's policy.⁹⁸ The bottom line was that in the ruling NP in the 1970's the notion of coloureds in the House of assembly was simply not practical politics.

Convincing whites of the necessity to adapt apartheid was an extremely difficult task. South Africa entered the 1970's at the crest of the golden age of apartheid with the economy booming and white living standards rising. With black resistance crushed, white dominance seemed secure.⁹⁹ The only area in which whites experienced some discomfort was that of the spreading sport boycott. For the overwhelming majority of whites, South Africa was the country of sun, rugby and "braaivleis". Any internal changes that could possibly affect their way of living were opposed with vigour. For example, attempts by Professor Gustav Heyman in 1972 to get Pretoria's DRC congregations to move church services for blacks from garages to unused church halls was squashed.¹⁰⁰

This verkrampste reaction combined with Vorster's fear of the HNP's growth potential dampened any initiative for change. Vorster increasingly lost all drive and ideas and was content to tread water and drift with the political tide of relative calm between 1970 and 1974.¹⁰¹ Vorster also became cooler and more distant from Pienaar. Weber found during an interview with Vorster in 1973 that he did not have a good word to say for Pienaar and his columns in *Rapport*. The prime minister was of the opinion that *Rapport* undermined the NP and refused to allow the paper in his house.¹⁰²

Unknown to most whites black resistance was stirring amongst the black youth with the formation of the South African Students' Organisation (SASO) and the rise of black consciousness. This led to the emergence of the Black People's Convention in 1972. Black consciousness promoted self-confidence and raised expectations, whilst black workers became increasingly restless about exploitative working conditions.

As a perceptive journalist Pienaar could see the clouds of a gathering storm. His columns took on an urgency and regularly lashed at the NP for running away from real challenges by focusing on irrelevant issues. He was horrified that during the conference season of 1972 the provincial NP's focused on the issue

98. Pienaar collection, Pienaar to Vorster, 3 September 1974.

99. D. O'MEARA, *Forty lost years. The apartheid state and the politics of the National Party, 1948-1994* (Ravan Press, Randburg, 1996), p. 170.

100. *Rapport*, 22 October 1972.

101. D.O'MEARA, *Forty lost years*, p. 195, 205.

102. UNIVERSITY OF STELLENBOSCH, J.S. GERICKE LIBRARY SPECIAL COLLECTIONS, P.A. Weber collection, File 296.KV.38(23), Notes of Weber's meeting with Vorster, 13 June 1973.

of women in skimpy clothes and the statue of a woman with naked breasts.¹⁰³ In January 1973 when the country was shaken by massive black strikes in Durban, Pienaar could not conceal his anger with the party for playing sterile white party politics in an ultra-conservative parliamentary atmosphere. He warned that the shadow of violence and armed resistance was creeping nearer. To the standard reaction by the NP that agitators were responsible for the Durban strikes Pienaar argued that they had much to agitate against.¹⁰⁴ When Afrikaners, after violent clashes between English-speaking students and the police at the universities of Cape Town and the Witwatersrand, urged stronger action by the government, Pienaar urged caution. In his column of 11 June 1972 he made it clear that although he did not agree with the students, he did feel the police could have handled the protests with more common sense. His own involvement in a student riot made him far more tolerant and he attempted to explain their frustrations.

Pienaar saw it as the main task of his column to get whites to change their attitudes to blacks and to treat them as fellow human beings. On a regular basis he pleaded that apartheid could only succeed if it secured the support of blacks and that this could not be achieved if whites were offensive in their actions and behaviour. He bluntly warned that by treating blacks badly and damaging their pride, whites were acting as recruiting agents for armed resistance.¹⁰⁵

The collapse of the Portugese empire in 1974 and the fear that time was running out added an edge to Pienaar's warnings. He was especially worried that the party was sliding to the right and confided to P.W. Botha that there was a new Hertzog movement in the NP.¹⁰⁶ This was reflected in his "Politieke Rapport" of 12 May 1974 under the heading "Dis fiksies wat gek geword het" (Fictions gone mad). He flayed the NP for allowing whites to live in a dream world and made a list of dangerous fictions, the government propagated. These included the adherence to job reservations despite the fact that they were collapsing in practice; the delusional and foolish idea of a coloured homeland and the notion that by 1978 blacks would be returning to the homelands. The NP was upset

103. *Rapport*, 30 July 1972.

104. *Rapport*, 21 January, 4 and 11 February, 4 April 1973.

105. *Rapport*, 6 May 1973, 24 November 1974.

106. Pienaar collection, Pienaar to Botha, 3 September 1974.

about the column, but Pienaar was not deterred.

Under the heading “Moet hulle hul hiervoor laat skiet?” (Must they be shot for this?) on 2 June 1974 Pienaar asked whether it could be asked of young white conscripts to be killed on the borders in order to protect discrimination that could not be justified.

Our sons go in increasing numbers to the borders where they must shoot and be shot at. The numbers and the shooting can increase dramatically. These sons, can they really believe that everything they see about them is worth their lives? And we, dare we send them to their death in defence of so many practices that in our souls we know are not defensible. (*Translation*)

This led to controversy and a stinging letter from Louis le Grange, MP for Potchefstroom and future minister of law and order, to *Rapport* that Pienaar was undermining the Afrikaners' morale to fight for their country. He also denied that whites were responsible for the tensions in the country.¹⁰⁷ Pienaar was shocked by Le Grange's inability to see the injustices in South Africa. On 16 July 1974 Pienaar answered under the heading “Weet die L.V nie van die dinge nie?” (Does the MP not know about this) in which he painted a grim picture of the forced removals, senseless discrimination and humiliations a young coloured doctor had had to endure.

Despite his growing discontentment with the NP Pienaar remained loyal to the party. In his perceptive review of a published selection of Pienaar's columns, *Schalk Pienaar: 10 jaar politieke kommentaar*, Dreyer Kruger wondered what the inner price was that he had to pay for his loyalty when the party was so reluctant to change and reform.¹⁰⁸ The bottom line was that Pienaar believed that the NP was the only party that could bring about change in South Africa. Beyers Naudé served as an example what happened to those who left the laager of Afrikanerdom. Pienaar regarded Beyers Naude's career as a tragedy. He argued that by leaving Afrikanerdom, Naudé had become irrelevant and his criticisms meaningless pinpricks.¹⁰⁹

In Pienaar's attempts to convince the NP of the need to reform it was the conditions which could create a revolutionary climate that attracted his attention. In his “Politieke Rapport” of 22 September 1974 under the heading “Hulle is die weerloses” (They are the defenceless ones) he was indignant about an affluent South Africa in which the rich got richer and the poor poorer, with especially the blacks being the most defenceless. In biblical terms he warned his fellow Afrikaners:

107. *Rapport*, 16 July 1974.

108. *Beeld*, 28 April 1975.

109. *Beeld*, 11 October and 21 November 1974.

When you look at what shoots up in this country in the way of palaces and at the hovels that exist, then you ask yourself if the vengeance of the eternal God can be kept at bay.... (*Translation*)

At the time of its general synod of 1974 Pienaar also attacked the inability of the DRC to provide leadership to the volk in a time of growing darkness and insecurity. In this time of crisis the synod decided in principle that the Immorality Act and Mixed Marriages Act could be extended to sexual relations between black, coloured and Asian. In “Politieke Rapport” on 27 October 1974 an anguished Pienaar simply could not believe that the DRC did not hear the voices of the blacks and only saw South Africa as God’s Afrikaner reserve.

Pienaar also warned that South Africa could not be kept safe solely by military means or security legislation. Whilst being circumspect he continued to warn against the abuses of these types of powers. He concluded that maybe state security was too serious a matter to be left in the hands of the security police.¹¹⁰ In the process he was also critical of attempts by the government to control the press. In his “Politieke Rapport” of 26 November 1974 Pienaar bluntly warned that only evil could come out of censorship of the press. Pienaar was critical of censorship in general and of the government’s involvement in it in particular as it was not its task to make moral judgements; this had to be left to the individual and the church.¹¹¹ He was deeply upset when André P. Brink’s *Kennis van die aand* was banned by the Publications Board.¹¹²

Pienaar’s quest to prepare the way for reform was given a push when Nasionale Pers started a new daily, *Beeld* in Johannesburg and appointed him as editor. *Beeld* saw the light for the first time the morning of 16 September 1974 despite attempts by the Transvaal NP, under the leadership of the verkrampte and very ambitious Connie Mulder, to prevent it.¹¹³ Although professing *Beeld*’s loyalty to the NP, Pienaar urged the removal of politicians as directors of Afrikaans newspapers in his new “Politieke Beeld” of 17 September. From day one *Beeld* encouraged reform and exposed what it regarded as unacceptable discrimination.

110. *Rapport*, 21 May 1972.

111. *Rapport*, 14 October 1973.

112. *Rapport*, 17 February 1974

113. D. RICHARD, *Moedswillig die uwe*, p. 172.

In the process the battle was taken with enthusiasm to the verkramptes, or (as Ton Vosloo tagged them) the Mampoer triangle consisting of Piet Meyer of the SABC, Connie Mulder and Marius Jooste of Perskor (Afrikaanse Pers and Voortrekkerpers had merged as Perskor). *Beeld's* unconcealed enmity to this triangle was a high risk strategy alienating many Afrikaners. This was reflected in the bitter comments by Professor Attie Pelzer, influential cultural leader and vice principal of the University of Pretoria. He maintained:

The best thing that could happen to Afrikanerdom in general and the National Party in particular is for *Beeld* to close down immediately. Its liberalism is asking us all to kiss the Devil.¹¹⁴

Vorster also did not conceal his displeasure. Shortly after the launch of *Beeld* Pienaar requested a meeting, but the prime minister was reluctant and only after a long delay grudgingly met with him. In an awkward interview he was extremely surly and accused Pienaar of causing him problems with his journalism.¹¹⁵ After this unpleasant meeting Pienaar wrote to Hein Basson that he had no desire to speak to Vorster again.¹¹⁶

By then Pienaar was exhausted. Although his cancer was in remission he was emaciated and simply did not have the energy left for the demanding task of running a daily paper. As a result he retired with immediate effect on 8 January 1975.¹¹⁷ Although this was earlier than expected it was felt that he had given *Beeld* a good start and that the paper had the right political tone to make an impact on Transvaal politics.¹¹⁸

The arrival of *Beeld* had a dramatic effect on *Die Transvaler*, its direct competitor for the Afrikaans morning market. To get a big name to counter that of Pienaar, Perskor recruited Wimpie de Klerk, a prominent verligte, as its editor. De Klerk changed *Die Transvaler* into a more verligte paper and loosened the ties with the NP.¹¹⁹

Even in retirement Pienaar retained the ability to hit the headlines. In 1976 the Progressive Party's mouthpiece *Deurbraak* (June 1976) published an interview with Pienaar in which he referred to the South African military involvement in Angola as a "ligte mistyk". He did not reject the involvement in general, but

114. A. VAN WYK, *The birth of a new Afrikaner* (Human & Rousseau, Cape Town, 1991), p. 26.

115. Correspondence with H.J. Grosskopf, 28 April 1997.

116. Pienaar to Basson, 4 November 1974. (Letter in Basson's possession.)

117. H. VAN DEVENTER, *Kroniek van 'n koerantman. 'n Persoonlike perspektief op die jare na '80* (TarlehoetBK, Cape Town), pp. 7-9; Correspondence with J.H. Grosskopf, 3 January 1998.

118. Interview with Langdavid de Villiers, 8 April 1999.

119. D. RICHARD, *Moedswillig die uwe*, pp.161-164.

believed that it was a mistake to trust the Americans. This statement made news and was seen as a condemnation of South Africa's role. Although taken out of context many South Africans felt that it was a good summary of the whole debacle. On hearing the statement all hell broke loose in the NP. P.W. Botha and the leadership of the Cape NP were furious.¹²⁰

In April 1977 Pienaar was again in the news after addressing a meeting of the Women's Agricultural Society in Gansbaai. There he argued that the Soweto riots of 1976 could not just be condemned as terrorism as the young people involved were inspired by idealism, in the same way as Afrikaner nationalists had been in the past. The *Cape Times* on 23 April praised him as "A sane voice in the cause of justice".

On 12 October 1978 Pienaar succumbed to cancer. Ten days before his death he concluded his memoirs. Shortly before his death the Cape NP awarded Pienaar the DF Malan medal for his dedication to the party.¹²¹ After years of being accused of disloyalty the medal signified vindication for Pienaar. The party must have had second thoughts when Pienaar's memoirs were published in 1979 as *Getuie van groot tye*. In the Pienaar tradition the book pulled no punches. In the introduction he made it clear that if he stepped on toes the victims must know that it was done intentionally. The toes he stepped on most were those of Verwoerd whom he described as a petty vindictive dictator. The book led to some controversy and criticism.¹²² Vorster was also disgruntled and made it clear that the book should not have been published.¹²³

By then, thanks to Pienaar, the days the NP could tell Afrikaans journalists what to publish were over. Ironically it was Pienaar's loyalty to the NP and the Broederbond and his sincere belief in apartheid, that was responsible for this. He believed that the survival of Afrikanerdom could only be ensured if Afrikaners were taught to confront conformity, to become introspective and to debate the future of apartheid. Accordingly he was prepared to expose hypocrisy and deceit in the Afrikaner establishment. As a result he played a crucial role in moving away from the attitude that the Afrikaans press was a

120. Interview with Hein Basson, 4 April 1999.

121. *Rapport*, 27 August 1978.

122. See for example M.C.E van Schoor's review for the SABC, 5 April 1979 (Pienaar collection) and Jan J. van Rooyen in *Die Burger*, 1 March 1979.

123. Interview with J.H. Grosskopf, 5 April 1999.

willing lapdog of the NP and Afrikaner establishment. In the process the press became more professional, enterprising, mature and independent. For Ken Owen, former editor of the *Sunday Times*, this made Pienaar a revolutionary editor.¹²⁴ A more independent press also forced the Afrikaner establishment to face reality and to listen to what it did not want to hear. Potter in her study *Press as opposition* argues that the Afrikaans press became the most powerfully organized opposition force within the government and the NP.¹²⁵ Ultimately Pienaar's lashing of sour and outdated ideas made Afrikaners more critical of their political, religious and cultural leaders and contributed to a more open society.

Through Pienaar's editorship of *Die Beeld* the Afrikaans press also developed a social conscience. Previously Afrikaans newspapers only looked inward, they had no interest in the suffering, indignities and poverty of blacks or brutal and insensitive behaviour by whites, especially the police. This was an important shift of emphasis which had a definite effect on the Afrikaner way of thinking as it encouraged soul-searching on apartheid and prepared the way to accept change. In doing so Pienaar, as well as other editors such as Piet Cillié, Dirk Richard and Wimpie de Klerk in the 1960's and 1970's, paved the way for the reforms of P.W. Botha and F.W. de Klerk.

Opsomming

“Hervorming van binne”: Schalk Pienaar, die Afrikaanse pers en apartheid

Schalk Pienaar, redakteur van die Sondagkoerant *Die Beeld* (1965-1970) en *Beeld* (1974) was 'n lojale, maar kritiese lid van die Nasionale Party. Hy was van mening dat die voortbestaan van die Afrikaner slegs deur die beginsel van geregtigheid vir alle Suid-Afrikaners verseker kon word. Hy het dus introspeksie oor die moraliteit van apartheid aangemoedig. Sy joernalisme het ook die hervorming van apartheid bepleit, en skynheiligheid in Afrikanerdom oopgevelek. Buiten dat hy 'n belangrike rol gespeel het om die Afrikaanse pers meer onafhanklik en krities van die Nasionale Party te maak, het hy ook die weg voorberei vir die hervormings van P.W. Botha en F.W. de Klerk.

124. Interview with Ken Owen, 12 August 1999.

125. E. POTTER, *Press as opposition*, p. 204.