



# Jan Smuts - Unafraid of Greatness

*Richard Steyn*

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## **Jan Smuts - Unafraid of Greatness** Richard Steyn

Jan Christian Smuts was soldier, statesman and intellectual, one of South Africa's greatest leaders. Yet little is said about him today even as we appear to live in a leadership vacuum. Unafraid of Greatness is a re-examination of the life and thought of Jan Smuts. It is intended to remind a contemporary readership of the remarkable achievements of this impressive soldier-statesman. The author argues that there is a need to bring Smuts back into the present, that Smuts' legacy still has much to instruct. He draws several parallels between Smuts and President Thabo Mbeki, both intellectuals much lionised abroad and yet often distrusted at home. This book is a highly readable account of Smuts' life. It also examines a number of overarching themes: his relationships with women, spiritual life, intellectual life and his role as advisor to world leaders. Politics and international affairs receive the lion's share, but Smuts' unique contributions to other fields - for example, botany - are not neglected. Unafraid of Greatness does not shy away from the contradictions of its subject. Smuts was one of the architects of the United Nations, and a great champion of human rights, yet he could not see the need to reform the condition of the African majority in his own country.

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