



CHARLES RIVER EDITORS

# THE COLONIES OF BRITISH SOUTH AFRICA

The History and Legacy of British Imperialism  
in Modern South Africa and Zimbabwe

**The Colonies of British South Africa: The History and Legacy  
of British Imperialism in Modern South Africa and Zimbabwe**

**By Charles River Editors**



**Zimbabwe's flag**



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## Introduction



***The Rhodes Colossus Striding from Cape Town to Cairo, a cartoon that appeared in *Punch* on December 10, 1892***

“The Boers were hostile toward indigenous African peoples, with whom they fought frequent range wars, and toward the government of the Cape, which was attempting to control Boer movements and commerce. They overtly compared their way of life to that of the Israel patriarchs of the Bible, developing independent patriarchal communities based upon a mobile pastoralist economy. Staunch Calvinists, they saw themselves as the children of God in the wilderness, a Christian elect divinely ordained to rule the land and the backward natives therein. By the end of the 18th century the cultural links between the Boers and their urban counterparts were diminishing, although both groups continued to speak a type of Flemish.” – Encyclopaedia Britannica

"Africa must revert to what it was before the imperialists divided it. These are artificial divisions which we, in our pan-African concept, will seek to remove." – Robert Mugabe

The Napoleonic Wars radically altered the old, established European power dynamics, and in 1795, the British, now emerging as the globe's naval superpower, assumed control of the Cape as part of the spoils of war. In doing so, they recognized the enormous strategic value of the Cape as global shipping routes were developing and expanding. Possession passed back and forth once or twice, but more or less from that point onwards, the British established their presence at the Cape, which they held until the unification of South Africa in 1910. However, it would only come after several rounds of conflicts.

In 1884, Prince Otto von Bismarck, the German chancellor, brought the plenipotentiaries of all major powers of Europe together, to deal with Africa's colonization in such a manner as to avoid provocation of war. This event—known as the Berlin Conference of 1884-1885—galvanized a phenomenon that came to be known as the Scramble for Africa. The conference established two fundamental rules for European seizure of Africa. The first of these was that no recognition of annexation would be granted without evidence of a practical occupation, and the second, that a practical occupation would be deemed unlawful without a formal appeal for protection made on behalf of a territory by its leader, a plea that must be committed to paper in the form of a legal treaty.

This began a rush, spearheaded mainly by European commercial interests in the form of Chartered Companies, to penetrate the African interior and woo its leadership with guns, trinkets and alcohol, and having thus obtained their marks or seals upon spurious treaties, begin establishing boundaries of future European African colonies. The ease with which this was achieved was due to the fact that, at that point, traditional African leadership was disunited, and the people had just staggered back from centuries of concussion inflicted by the slave trade. Thus, to usurp authority, to intimidate an already broken society, and to play one leader against the other was a diplomatic task so childishly simple, the matter was wrapped up, for the most part, in less than a decade.

There were some exceptions to this, however, the most notable of which was perhaps the Zulu Nation, a centralized monarchy of enormous military prowess that required a British colonial war, the storied Anglo-Zulu War of 1879, to affect pacification. Another was the amaNdebele, an offshoot of the Zulu, established as early as the 1830s in the southeastern quarter of what would become Rhodesia, and later still Zimbabwe, in the future. Both were powerful, centralized monarchies, fortified by an organized and aggressive professional army, subdivided into regiments, and owing fanatical loyalty to the crown. The Zulu were not dealt with by treaty, and their history is perhaps the subject of another episode of this series, but the amaNdebele were, and early European treaty and concession gatherers were required to tread with great caution as they entered their lands. It would be a long time before the inevitable course of history forced the amaNdebele to submit to European domination. Although treaties and British gunboat diplomacy played a role, it was ultimately war, conquest, and defeat in battle that brought the amaNdebele to heel.

Despite this, the amaNdebele, notwithstanding their eventual military defeat, commanded enormous respect from the British. This was also true with the Zulu. The British were a martial nation themselves, and they saw the concept of the "Noble Savage" as the romance of a bygone age, offering up the esteem due to a ruling aristocracy, according to the rules of chivalry. With the defeat of the amaNdebele in 1893 in a war that has come to be known as the Matabele War, agents of the British South Africa Company, as they assumed full administrative control of the territory, also established a rule of lionizing the amaNdebele. It became fashionable to mythologize the amaNdebele's noble origins, their courage and virtuosity in battle, and their incorruptible adherence to the Spartan code of war.

As various European interests tried to reach economic-based deals with the tribe's King Lobengula in Matabeleland, others considered how to actually physically seize it. Lobengula and his army may not be capable of deflecting the might of the British Empire, but they certainly retained the potential to fight. Rumors of gold in the land helped lead to Cecil John Rhodes obtaining a royal charter in October 1889 for a private company to exploit the resources. After tricking the amaNdebele with a dubious agreement, members of Rhodes' company began to establish a fledgling

colony, and after the British defeated the amaNdebele and began driving them away from the land during the First Matabele War, the seeds were sown for two colonies to take root. But little did the British know just how politically turbulent those efforts would be, and how much more fighting would have to take place to consolidate their position.

The Boer War was the defining conflict of South African history and one of the most important conflicts in the history of the British Empire. Naturally, complicated geopolitics underscored it, going back centuries. In fact, the European history of South Africa began with the 1652 arrival of a small Dutch flotilla in Table Bay, at the southern extremity of the African continent, which made landfall with a view to establishing a victualing station to service passing Dutch East India Company (Vereenigde Oost-Indische Compagnie) ships. The Dutch at that point largely dominated the East Indian Trade, and it was their establishment of the settlement of Kaapstad, or Cape Town, that set in motion the lengthy and often turbulent history of South Africa.

For over a century, the Cape remained a Dutch East India Company settlement, and in the interests of limiting expenses, strict parameters were established to avoid the development of a colony. As religious intolerance in Europe drove a steady trickle of outward emigration, however, Dutch settlers began to informally expand beyond the Cape, settling the sparsely inhabited hinterland to the north and east of Cape Town. In doing so, they fell increasingly outside the administrative scope of the Company, and they developed an individualistic worldview, characterized by self-dependence and self-reliance. They were also bonded as a society by a rigorous and literal interpretation of the Old Testament. In their wake, towards the end of the 17th century, followed a wave of French Huguenot immigrants, fleeing a renewal of anti-Protestantism in Europe. They were integrated over the succeeding generations, creating a hybridized language and culture that emerged in due course as the Cape Dutch, The Afrikaner or the Boer.

On June 1, 1948, Daniel Malan arrived in Pretoria by train to take office, and there he was met by a huge crowd of cheering whites. He told the audience, "In the past, we felt like strangers in our own country, but today, South Africa belongs to us once more. For the first time since Union, South

Africa is our own. May God grant that it always remain our own.” Back in Johannesburg, the leadership of the ANC, including the young attorney Nelson Mandela, listened to these celebratory prognostications in a grim mood. As strangers in their own country, they all understood that the South African liberation struggle would not be won overnight. In fact, the era of apartheid was only just about to formally start.

Although apartheid is typically dated from the late 1940s until its dismantling decades later, segregationist policies had been the norm in South Africa from nearly the moment European explorers sailed to the region and began settling there. Whether it was displacing and fighting indigenous groups like the Khoi and San, or fighting other whites like the Boer, separation between ethnicities was the norm in South Africa for centuries before the election of Malan signaled the true rise of the Afrikaner far right.

The man most associated with dismantling apartheid, of course, is Nelson Mandela. With the official policy of apartheid instituted in 1948 by an all-white government, Mandela was tried for treason between the years of 1956-61 before being acquitted. He participated in the Defiance Campaign of 1952, and oversaw the 1955 Congress of the People, but when the African National Congress was banned in 1960, he proposed a military wing, despite his initial reluctance toward violent resistance, a reluctance which had its roots in original nonviolent protests through the South African Communist Party. The ANC did not openly discourage such an idea, and the Umkhonto we Sizwe was established. Mandela was again arrested in 1962 and tried for attempts to overthrow the government by violence. The sentence was five years of hard labor, but this was increased to a life sentence in 1964, a sentence handed down to seven of his closest colleagues as well.

Mandela would eventually serve 27 years, but his statements made in court received enormous international coverage and acclaim, and his reputation grew during his time in Robben Island Prison of Capetown, the Pollsmoor and Victor Verster Prisons. He was ultimately released in February 1990, in large part as a result of the international campaign generated by his words and the current South African story. Shortly after



that, he was elected as the first man of African descent to the presidency of South Africa, which he held from 1994–1999. Most significant was that Mandela was elected from the first multi-factional, multi-racial election ever held in the country, a result of extensive negotiations with then President F.W. Klerk.

*The Colonies of British South Africa: The History and Legacy of British Imperialism in Modern South Africa and Zimbabwe* chronicles the conflicts that marked Britain's efforts to establish colonies in the southern part of the continent, what politics and social life were like there, and the dramatic independence movements that spurred decolonization and brought about the modern nations of Zimbabwe and South Africa. Along with pictures depicting important people, places, and events, you will learn about modern Zimbabwe like never before.

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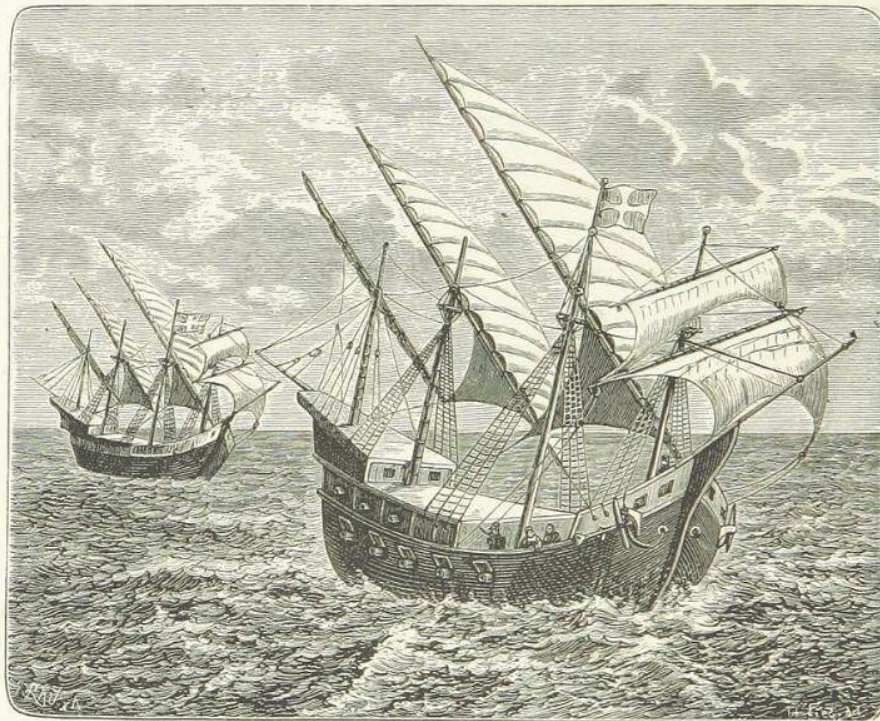
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## The Portuguese

“One’s destination is never a place, but a new way of seeing things.” – Henry Miller

Sometime in January 1488, a violent storm blew up off the southern cape of Africa, one of many in a region that would become known for storms. In fact, the storm inspired the cape’s first European visitor, the Portuguese mariner Bartolomeu Dias, to name it *Cabo das Tormentas*, or the Cape of Storms. This particular storm, however, caught Dias at a difficult moment, for he was in command of a small flotilla of two caravels, the *São Cristóvão* and the *São Pantaleão*, under commission from King John II of Portugal to round the southern tip of Africa in order to finalize a sea route to the East Indies. With very rudimentary tools of navigation and no charts to work from, where precisely the southern tip of the continent lay remained a matter of educated guesswork.



BARTHOLOMEW DIAZ ON HIS VOYAGE TO THE CAPE.

**An illustration of the two ships**

Portuguese maritime explorers had been gradually probing southwards along the west coast of Africa since the early part of the 15<sup>th</sup> century, seeding spores of the Portuguese language, religion, and trade interests at numerous points along the way. These journeys were both enterprises in their own right, insofar as trade off the African coast was an end unto itself, as well as an effort to establish Portuguese primacy in the spice trade with India through the discovery of a viable sea route to the east. There was also something of a quasi-religious objective to the undertaking: locating the mythical Kingdom of Prester John, a fabled Christian empire thought to exist somewhere in Africa.

By the time Bartolomeu Dias departed the Portuguese mainland in August 1487, a considerable portion of the route to the Cape had been established, and in practical terms, he was simply joining up the last dots. Speculation on tides and currents tended to suggest that the southern extremity of the African continent was close, but no Europeans knew precisely where it was yet.

In theory, the navigational demands of the voyage were relatively straightforward. It was simply a matter of following the Atlantic coast of Africa until south became east, and then north. The furthest established settlement was the Portuguese fortress of São Jorge da Mina, located on the Gold Coast of what is today Ghana, and perhaps the point furthest known was the desert coast of what is today known as Namibia. There, the two ships could expect to encounter a cold, north-flowing current, the Benguela Current, south of which no expedition had yet passed.

Dias and his crew arrived safely off the coast of what would today be Angola towards the middle of December 1487, reaching the modern Namibian port of Walvis Bay a few weeks later. This was named *Golfo da Conceição*, and a small cross was erected before the two ships struck out once again for open water.

The next point of landfall was the Namibian port of Lüderitz, named by Dias *Angra dos Ilheus*. Nowhere inland, however, along this parched and arid coast, could the resupply of water or food be obtained, and by then there were serious tensions on board. The two ships were entering latitudes never before challenged, and the cold current coming up from the Antarctic



provoked jitters among men, some of whom still believed the world was flat.

Then, abruptly, the storm hit, and the fleet was pushed far out into the Atlantic, and all that Dias could know for certain was that the ships lay somewhere west and south of their last known position. How far south was impossible to know, as navigational technology was crude and the ships were by then well beyond sight of land. An easterly course would end up carrying them in the direction of the mainland, but if by chance they had drifted to a latitude below the southern tip of Africa, they would have no idea when they sailed past it.

This was a very fundamental conundrum, and it was completely bewildering to sailors of that era. Falling back on instinct, Dias set a course due east and hoped for the best. A day passed, and then another one, but still all that could be seen from the crow's nest of the *São Cristóvão* was open ocean. Two options were now open to him – either hold firm and continue east, at the risk of missing their objective altogether (and sailing blindly into the Indian Ocean), or turn north at the risk of returning back in the direction from which they had come.

Dias' instincts told him to hold steady on an easterly course, but under pressure from his crew he reluctantly agreed to turn northeast, and this quickly proved to be a fateful decision. The expedition had indeed overshot the southern cape, and when, after sailing for 30 days without sight of land, land was eventually sighted, it turned out to be modern-day Mossel Bay in South Africa, some 150 miles east of the Cape. They named this region *Aguada de São Brás*. The date was February 4, 1488, and although Bartolomeu Dias would proceed only a short distance further east along the coast than this, it was more or less on that date that he realized the way now lay open to India.

Somewhat inadvertently, Dias and his crew had accomplished one of the most crucial feats of navigation, and in many respects it was the crowning achievement of a process begun at the dawn of the 15<sup>th</sup> century under the patronage of one of the great geniuses and innovators of the age. The name “Henry the Navigator” has become intimately associated with the mythology and history of the Age of Exploration, and at the very least it

was he who set in motion the great age of Portuguese exploration. Known in his day as Prince Henry, or *Infante Henrique*, he was the son of King John I of Portugal, known best for his preservation of Portuguese sovereignty and the founding of the Aviz Dynasty, of which Henry was a member.



**Henry the Navigator**



**King John I of Portugal**

The reign of John I coincided more or less with the expulsion of the Moors from Portugal, but pockets of Muslim resistance remained in Spain and bitter fighting continued for a long time. When Henry was about 16, John decided to launch a campaign against the North African mainland, seizing the crucial port of Ceuta, a Muslim stronghold located immediately across the Straits of Gibraltar. This was a great and comprehensive military victory, attributable in many respects to the young Henry's planning. That campaign established him at an early age in the minds of his people as a great military and naval commander.



### **A depiction of Prince Henry the Navigator at Ceuta**

Henry was born in 1394, on the cusp of monumental changes in Europe and the world, and as a child he certainly dreamed of great military conquests and fame as a military leader. In the aftermath of Ceuta, however, and as riches from the African continent began arriving in Lisbon, his mind began to turn to a more daring conquest of Africa by means of exploration and trade. It was this fascination that set in motion the series of voyages that would culminate in Bartolomeu Dias' discovery of the Cape of Storms.

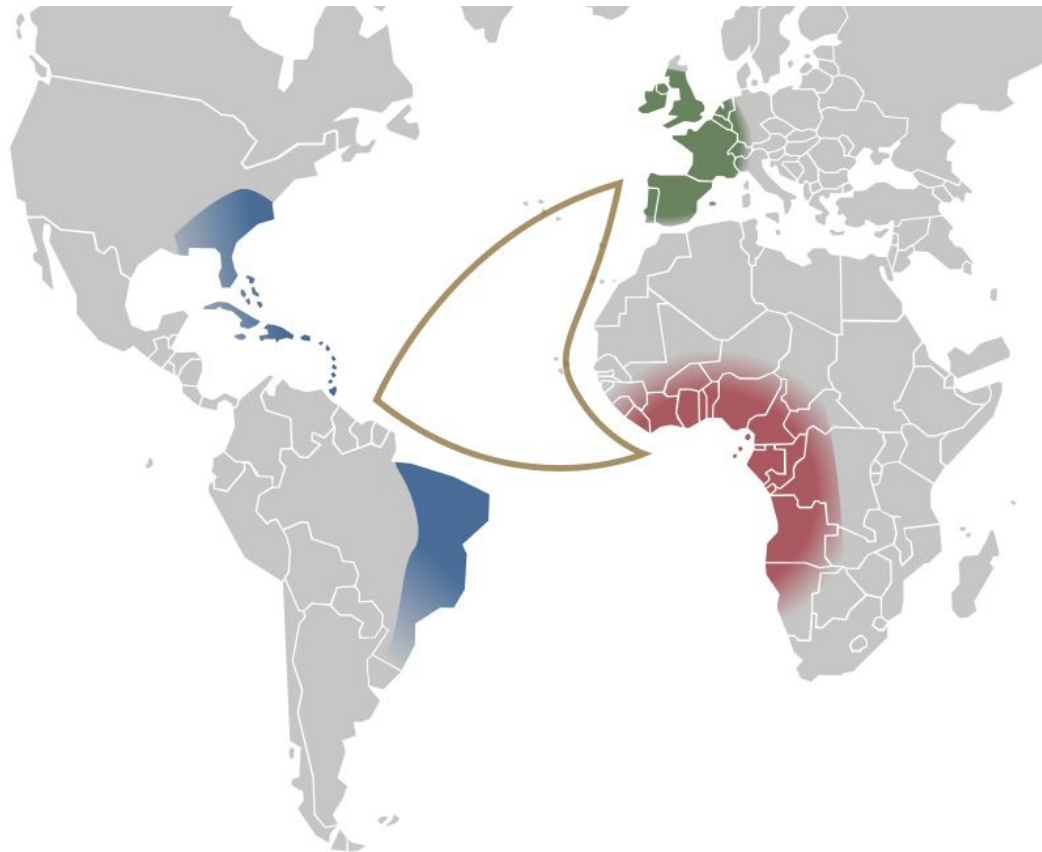
Henry was one of three brothers, and he was not originally in line for the throne. He thus remained a prince, and until the age of 26 he was actively involved in the wars and campaigns of his father, winning his spurs in numerous campaigns and battles. A major change came in 1420 when he was placed in charge as administrator general of the Holy Order of Christ, the successor of the Knights Templar in Portugal. From then on, at least according to popular history, his twin preoccupations became religion and exploration.

Although Henry never set sail on a single expedition himself, it was his funding and patronage (not to mention the development of appropriate ships and navigational techniques) that drove Portugal's momentum. By then, the



Portuguese had ventured as far south along the African coast as the Canary Islands, but Henry, having personally seen the goods carried north by caravan across the Sahara Desert, was aware that slaves and gold were to be found in large quantities somewhere further to the south, and he was anxious to circumvent the Muslim trade networks of North Africa by locating the source. How far south beyond the desert the continent of Africa extended was anyone's guess, but he intended to find out.

One of the most important discoveries was the phenomenon known as the *Volta do mar*, or the “turn of the sea,” which in practical terms is a rotating system of winds and currents in the mid-Atlantic that allowed an outward journey via the Canary Islands and a return journey via the Azores. It This facilitated the triangulated three-point traffic of the Atlantic slave trade, allowing for a journey along the coast to African slave ports, the trans-Atlantic “Middle Passage,” and a journey directly home from the Caribbean.



**A map of the Middle Passage**

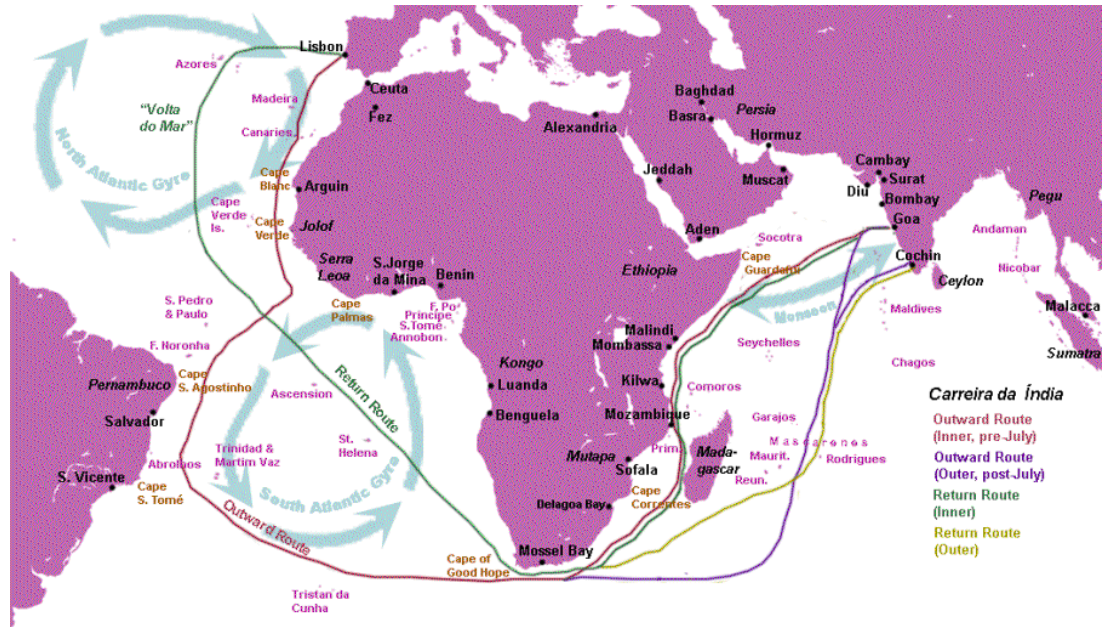
The Azores, Madeira and the Canaries marked the main points of the first journeys out, with Cape Bojador in modern Western Sahara the most southerly known point on the West African coast. In 1434, Cape Bojador was passed by Gil Eanes, one of Henry's commanders, and compatriots Nuno Tristão and Antão Gonçalves reached Cape Blanco off the coast of modern Mauritania in 1441. In 1443, a fort was constructed on the Bay of Arguin, also in Mauritania, which set the stage for the first probing movement south of the Sahara Desert. Soon the mouth of the Senegal River was reached, at which point Henry could claim to have successfully circumnavigated the Muslim trade networks of North Africa. Before long, gold and slaves began to arrive in Portugal, at which point most of Henry's critics were silenced.

Bartolomeu Dias did not press on much further into the Indian Ocean than the site of his landing. Naturally, he returned in haste to Lisbon, arriving in December 1488 after an absence of 16 months and 17 days. The way to India had been established, and the next to appear in the waters of the southern Indian Ocean was the more famous Portuguese mariner Vasco da Gama. It was da Gama who would round what was now renamed *Cabo da Boa Esperança*, or the Cape of Good Hope, in 1497, and he would reach India in May 1498.





## A depiction of da Gama reaching India



## A map of da Gama's routes

Vasco da Gama's route from the Cape to India was quite straightforward. Annually alternating trade winds carried him up the East African coast, and in some respects, he was back in known waters. The ancient trade route between India and Europe followed the coast of Arabia into the Red Sea, and by land across the Isthmus of Suez. This linked the shipping fleets of the Mediterranean with those of the Red Sea, and it established subsequent links and connections along the coast of the Arabian Peninsula and the Persian Gulf to ports in Gujarat and as far south as the coast of Goa. By knowing that he was indeed on the coast of East Africa, it was easy for da Gama to simply sail north along the coast, pausing at various points until crossing the Gulf of Aden. There he contacted Arab and Indian merchants who directed him east to the coast of India.

As was true of all the European trading powers that would eventually follow in the footsteps of these early Portuguese explorers, it was not Portuguese imperial policy to try to seize or control territory on the mainland for its own sake. Instead, depots and forts were established for the sole purpose of conducting trade with the existing powers of the coast and

the interior. These facilities inevitably grew into settlements as missionaries arrived and colonists assimilated, married locals, and established roots. The same was true for the Danes, the French, the Dutch and British, who all founded similar settlements as they joined the slave trade and lay the groundwork for future spheres of influence. Conditions in the interior were simply too hostile to contemplate colonization, and it would be several more centuries before wider exploration and exploitation of Africa's interior was even attempted.

Further south, as Portuguese exploration continued, their parties encountered an increasingly arid coastline and a cold, northward moving current. Apart from one or two landings and a few monuments erected, no attempt was made to establish any kind of permanent settlement here. In fact, despite regularly visiting the peninsula, the green and splendid Cape of Good Hope was also left unsettled by the Portuguese. This was mainly because the elusive natives were too wild and few in numbers to justify the hunt, and there was no one on shore willing or able to trade anything that was of interest to the Portuguese. The future would demonstrate that this was a blunder, because in 1652 the Dutch would assume control of the region, representing a lost opportunity for the Portuguese. The modern provincial structure of South Africa includes the province of Natal, marked by the Portuguese on the developing map of Africa, and named after the Christmas Day when it was first sighted. Once again, however, it was never permanently settled.

The Dutch were more than a century behind the Portuguese in making landfall in southern Africa, which gave the Portuguese centuries of unrestricted access before other European colonizing powers began to appear on the scene. The coast of West Africa, thanks to powerful kings and rampant malaria, did not invite deeper exploration, but East Africa certainly did. The Arabs had already established widespread and comprehensive trade networks throughout the region, and all that was required now was for the Portuguese to force the Arabs out and take over all of that themselves. Before long, the Portuguese had effectively taken over all the key Swahili ports and settlements along the coast as far north as Mogadishu, and in 1507 they entered the port of Muscat on the Arabian Peninsula, the capital of the Omani Sultanate, which they held for 143 years.

The Portuguese tended thereafter to confine themselves to the coast and the lower reaches of the Zambezi, conducting trade expeditions into the interior until, by the late 17<sup>th</sup> century, the tribes of the Central Plateau had ceased to exist as a dynasty. Gold reserves were depleted, and shortly after that the Portuguese lost interest in the region, focusing their efforts instead on the trade arteries of the Zambezi and the Limpopo, and as well as the rapidly growing East African slave trade.

## **The Arrival of the Dutch**

To understand what led to the Dutch's sudden prominence, one must travel back to 1568. Before the mid-1500s, the territories known as Belgium and Holland today were composed of 17 lowland provinces belonging to Burgundy. These lands came under the control of Charles V, King of Spain and Holy Roman Emperor, in 1506. In 1568, his son, Philip II, intervened in said territories once more to quell the movement of the Protestant Reformation, but disgruntled dwellers in the 5 northern provinces did not take kindly to this and revolted against the king. 11 years later, 7 of the provinces officially declared their independence with the Union of Utrecht. From then on, they dubbed themselves the United Provinces. Just 6 years later, the Siege of Antwerp of 1585 drew a dashed line between Northern and Southern Netherlands, formally dividing the regions.



**Charles V**





**Philip II**

Before the siege, the city of Antwerp was the leading center of commerce in all of Europe. Antwerp welcomed Catholic and Protestant merchants alike, and it was this unbiased attitude that propelled them to the top of the ladder. Merchants from Germany, England, and the new United Provinces all flocked to Antwerp to trade an assortment of goods, including grains, Baltic timber, and exquisite Dutch textiles. One of the commodities Dutch merchants readily accepted was Iberian salt, which was used in preserving herring and other Dutch delicacies.

The decision made by Alexander Farnese, the Duke of Parma, to invade Antwerp came with lasting consequences. Going against the tradition of ruling Catholic powers of the time, Farnese allowed Protestants to evacuate the city peacefully. At the same time, Philip II, Farnese's uncle, imposed a ban on trade against the United Provinces and confiscated all trading ships from the ports of Spain and Portugal. The king had unwittingly created a population of roaming Antwerp Protestants, the majority of which were skilled craftsmen, seamen, and wealthy merchants. Backed by years and experience of international trade, they would soon take the industry by storm.





### **Farnese**

Most Protestant refugees made their new homes in the city of Amsterdam. The population in the capital of Holland, then an obscure trading port, ballooned from 30,000 residents to 105,000. The multicultural community of Amsterdam had quickly become one of the most highly populated cities in all of Europe.

From then on marked a glowing period of religious, scientific, technological, and artistic advancements in Holland. The world was introduced to the creative genius of Rembrandt and Pieter Hooft, as well as the likes of Christiaan Huygens, who invented the pendulum clock. In the late 16<sup>th</sup> century, Holland decided that they, too, wanted in on the spice trade.

In 1591, the Portuguese established a syndicate between German, Italian and Spanish firms, utilizing Hamburg as its central port. This syndicate essentially excluded the Dutch from nautical trade. Infuriated Dutch merchants vowed to find a way into the industry themselves, beginning with their observations as the Portuguese trading system fell apart. To start off, the syndicate could not match the increasing demands of certain commodities, especially pepper, and each time the syndicate failed to meet the supply quota for pepper, the spice saw a dramatic increase in prices. The Dutch finally found their way in when a couple of traveling merchants, Cornelius de Houtman and Jan Huyghen van Linschoten, allegedly gained access to confidential Portuguese trade routes and learned their business practices.



**A portrait of van Linschoten**

In 1594, Reiner Pauw, Jean Corel, and Dirk van Os, along with a small group of merchants hailing from Antwerp and Amsterdam, established a syndicate of their own. They called their new company the “Compagnie van Verre” – the Company of Far Lands. The next year, the CFL sent 249

sailors, spread over 4 ships, to India on a quest for spices and other blue-chip items.

After 3 years of rough seas and the mini-battles that ensued abroad, only 89 Dutch crewmen made their way back to Holland. On top of their obvious lack of planning and shoddy organizational skills, the ships returned with only a single cargo of pepper, and little to no other spices or valuable goods. Nevertheless, even with the seemingly unimpressive haul, merchants were still able to make a tidy profit.

The phenomenon excited other wealthy Dutch merchants, who found a fresh opportunity and pounced on it. That same year, in 1597, Vincent van Bronckhorst, Cornelius van Campen, and another band of Dutch merchants formed a company of their own. They called it the “Nieuwe Compagnie te Amsterdam (New Company of Amsterdam).” By 1599, 6 new companies from Rotterdam, Delft, and Zeeland, all motivated by the same agenda, had come to fruition.

Among these companies was one founded by a reputable merchant, Isaac Le Maire. Le Maire joined forces with merchants from different Dutch cities, including Louis de la Beeque and Jacques de Velaer, and founded the Nieuwe Brabantse Compagnie. Later that year, Amsterdam's burgomasters (mayor-like officials) gifted the NBC a charter for trade with China. The following year, NBC was permitted to partner up with Expert Compagnie, forming the newly united Verinigde Compagnie te Amsterdam (the United Amsterdam Company). 8 massive ships fit to fight the most passionate of waters were added to the merged company's assets, which were to be commanded by Captain Jacob van Neck.



**Le Maire**



### **Van Neck**

In late 1600, van Neck's ships produced results that put a sparkling grin on the faces of Dutch merchants everywhere. His successful voyage became the first to touch bases with the “Spice Islands” of Maluku. This eliminated the need for Javanese middlemen, and in turn, Dutch merchants raked in a 400% profit. It was then that the Dutch knew they were truly in business.

At that point, it was high time for retaliation. In the spirit of the Portuguese syndicate, the Dutch companies realized that unity would be the key to driving the Portuguese out of the spice industry. In the last weeks of 1600, the Dutch collaborated with Muslim merchants on the Ambon Island of Indonesia. Their agreement entailed that the Dutch be granted exclusive rights to the purchasing of all spices on the island.

Traditionally, European maritime companies operated under one similar and increasingly dated system. Unlike modern corporations today, an entire company would be established for the purpose of a single round trip voyage to the East Indies. Once what was left of the ships returned, the company disintegrated. The defunct company then distributed profits between shareholders, and proceeded to either sell or auction off their inventory and equipment. Conversely, the new Dutch establishments set out to change the antiquated system, breathing “semi-permanent life” into their companies. While most companies were formed to take on just one voyage, the Dutch were granted a single charter that allowed them to oversee a series of them. This meant that rather than having a constant rotation of control, the same set of directors and board members were kept on staff throughout the voyages. Finally, when the voyages were deemed complete, the same directors would take the profit and capital from the now buried companies to start a brand new one.

In 1601, the Dutch were on a mission to quench their spice cravings. 6 of these companies released 65 ships on 14 voyages to the Cape of Good Hope, the rocky border in the Cape Peninsula of South Africa. The scramble for spices took a definitive toll on the nation's trade. While bidding prices in Indonesia soared, merchants in Amsterdam were forced to lower their prices as local competition began to heat up.

Profits were at an all-time low. The Dutch government, which felt its power dwindling, knew the problem had to be remedied, and fast. If the Dutch did not act now, the swelling unified powers of Portugal and Spain would push them out of the industry altogether, rendering all their accomplishments thus far completely useless. Meanwhile, a more ominous threat loomed over the Dutch market, as the English were already one step ahead of them. Just a year before, English seafaring companies combined their powers in one of the world's earliest monopoly enterprises: the British East India Company.

On March 20, 1602, the Dutch followed by example, marking another page in history. The 6 rival companies – the United Amsterdam Company, the Veerse Compagnie, the Verenigde Zeeuwse Compagnie, the Magellaanse Rotterdamse Compagnie, the Moucheron van der Hagen &

Compagnie, the Een andere Rotterdamse Compagnie, and the Delftse Vennootschappe Compagnie – combined their powers into a single entity. The new “mega-merger” of a corporation became known as Vereenigde Oostindische Compagnie – formally referred to as the United Dutch Chartered East India Company. Traders from the nearby cities of Enkhuizen and Hoorn were also invited to the trade of the newly-formed cartel, now known today as the Dutch East India Company.

With blessings from the Dutch government and a starting capital of approximately 6,440,200 guilders (roughly \$644 million in USD today), the VOC could now reign as a monopoly over all Asian trade. The charter bestowed upon the company the right to build and maintain armies, erect forts overseas, and the power to handle treaties with Asian rulers however they saw fit. This charter, which would be valid for 21 years, also suggested that board members perform a routine audit every 10 years.

It was under the purview of the Dutch East India Company that a small flotilla of trading vessels arrived on the southern peninsula of the African continent in 1652. The expedition was led by Company factor Jan van Riebeeck, and its objective was to establish a victualling station for passing ships of the Company. A settlement was founded and before long, the city of Cape Town, in the shadow of the famous Table Mountain, began to take root.





**Jan van Riebeeck**

## Indigenous Peoples

One of the first things that Riebeeck did was establish a boundary separating the Company compound from the surrounding native communities. He did this by planting a bitter almond hedge around the settlement, beyond which no employee of the Company was authorized to settle. In part, the hedge was intended to establish and limit the responsibility of the Company, but also to prevent any undue interference with native communities and limit the interactions of an almost exclusively male Dutch community with local native women. It would, however, also establish a fundamental doctrine of separation in the new colony, defining and symbolizing South Africa as a nation built on a foundation of segregation.

Beyond the almond hedge and in the extensive hinterland of the *Kaap de Goede Hoop*, or the Cape of Good Hope, there did indeed reside an indigenous society. These were known by the Dutch as “Hottentot,” an onomatopoeic term referencing the phonetic click that characterized their language. The word “Hottentot” is still occasionally used today, but it has become rather discredited. Instead, the same society is more accurately known as “Khoisan,” and in southern Africa, then as now, it defines two distinct races: the San, or Bushmen, and the Khoi, or Khoikhoi.

The Khoisan are an ancient people representing the earliest human inhabitants of the region, with an archaeological record dating back at least 100,000 years before the first arrival of the Europeans. Beyond that, the archaeological record is illuminated by only a few pinpricks of discovery here and there that place some of the earliest human ancestors in South Africa. These are classified as *australopithecines*, literally “southern apes.” The first major discovery of australopithecine remains in South Africa was made in 1924 by Witwatersrand University Professor Raymond Dart in a cave system known as Taung, located in what is today the North-West province of South Africa. Similar remains have also been discovered in a series of limestone caves at Sterkfontein, Swartkrans, and Kromdraai, all now collectively classified as a UNESCO World Heritage Site. This particular region of South Africa, located to the northwest of Pretoria, is now rather aptly known as the “Cradle of Humankind.”

It was the Khoisan who were living around Table Bay when van Riebeeck and his party landed on the beach, and it was in that vicinity that the two groups first encountered one another. The indigenous people maintained a nomadic hunter-gatherers society, and the enormous social and political ramifications that followed van Riebeeck's arrival on the shores of the Cape eventually displaced them or caused them to be eradicated. Most now survive only in the arid west of the subcontinent, where they remain relatively primitive and nomadic, for the most part eschewing contact with modern societies. Their social and political organization extended no further than small family groups, and they spoke what must have seemed a bizarre and incomprehensible language. Occupying a wide range of the southern continent, their numbers were small and their impact on the land was minimal.

Perhaps the most interesting aspect of San culture was the artistic legacy they left in the form of parietal art in cave sites all over southern Africa. Most of these are minor, but in many places, large, multi-generational compositions survive, presenting an opus of beautifully rendered compositions of animals and human hunters. In what is now Zimbabwe, horses and riders are portrayed, documenting the arrival of whites.

The Khoikhoi resembled the San – small in stature, almond-eyed, and with signature peppercorn hair – but they were pastoral in habit, and although also nomadic, their lifestyles tended to be more material. In the same vein, their social and political order seemed more established. They nonetheless existed as a nomadic people, thinly dispersed and limited to family or clan groups. The San did not represent a particular presence in the Cape in the 17<sup>th</sup> century, but the Khoikhoi had long been established on the well-watered pasture lands of the Cape, and it was they who confronted the first European arrivals. The first record of contact with the natives was documented by early Portuguese mariners, who stopped over briefly at the Cape as they explored the southern reaches of the continent. They did not settle the Cape, however, instead starting settlements in the future Mozambique and elsewhere up the coast as they charted the first successful sea passage from Europe to India.

Initially, the Dutch established virtually no contact with the Khoisan, relying instead on imported slaves from elsewhere in Africa and from various parts to the east for labor. They found the natives simply too primitive to exploit and too few in number to represent either a threat or a resource. The story is often told of Cape Colony Governor Simon van der Stel adopting a Khoisan child, educating him, and sending him overseas. Upon his return, the boy, now an adult, promptly abandoned his European clothes and returned to his own people, provoking a philosophical debate on the wisdom and viability of assimilation.



**Simon van der Stel**

In general, the only impact that the Dutch arrival had on the Khoi and San was to introduce non-native diseases to which both groups proved extremely vulnerable, ensuring that their numbers, already small, were reduced even further. At the same time, the San, as a hunter-gatherer society and with an elemental sense of nature and property, found European herds

difficult to resist, and stock theft was endemic. This eventually resulted in their systematic eradication by way of bounties.

Initially, very little land was taken, and the Khoikhoi families in occupation of the peninsula simply moved away. As the settlement of the Cape developed, the lack of white women tended to see an inevitable incidence of sexual exploitation of the Khoisan women, with the result that a sub-culture referred to in South Africa as “colored” began to develop. Today, that community is broadly divided by rural and urban origins. Rural members of the group derive typically from the interaction of European and “Hottentot,” while urban members had a much more diverse genetic lineage with the influence of white and Khoisan as well as Indian, Arab, and the many different ethnicities of slaves that were present in the Cape at that time. The urban community is today distinct and established from whites, and it has rich and vibrant social traditions that developed over centuries. The rural community, on the other hand, occupied a niche as agricultural laborers, and in many places they continue to do those jobs. Their genetic proximity to the Khoisan is evident in their appearance, so much so that they represent the only surviving manifestation of the original Khoikhoi population today.

The Dutch character of the European population was both diluted and enriched somewhat toward the end of the 17<sup>th</sup> century. After about 40 years of settlement, a wave of French Huguenots fleeing religious persecution in Europe sought refuge among an isolated society of Dutch Calvinists celebrating a Protestant tradition. These two highly accomplished European cultures mingled in that isolation, and although they remained substantively European, they absorbed the cultural and genetic influences of their Asian and Micronesian slaves, establishing the bedrock of the unique “Cape Dutch” culture and society of the modern Cape.

As the Cape developed into a permanent, diverse, Dutch and French-speaking settlement, the original Company decree that no person shall settle beyond the bitter almond hedge became increasingly moot. It was inevitable after a while that Europeans would begin to extend outward from Cape Town, pressing north, west, and especially east along the fertile and well-watered coastal hinterland. As a result, there evolved a rugged breed of

frontier pastoralists who assumed the name of *Boere*, or farmer, and sometimes *Trekboere*, or migrating farmer.

As generations of Boer steadily expanded their settlements eastward, separating from their metropolitan cousins in Cape Town, they began to hybridize. Adopting a strict, Calvinist religious credo, they relied on a literal interpretation of the Old Testament, by which they began to regard themselves as a chosen people. They also considered land upon which they migrated a promised land and viewed the native tribes as Canaanites, who were to be persecuted and banished.

This process of Boer expansion continued until the 1770s, at which point some of them reached the west bank of the Great Fish River in what is today the Eastern Cape. There, for the first time, they encountered the Bantu, and the peaceful migration of both groups was abruptly interrupted.

The word *Bantu*, in anthropological terms, broadly defines the indigenous races of Africa making up the bulk of its modern population. The word is a variant of the Nguni term *abaNtu*, meaning “people” or “the people” as an expression of humanness, humanity, or simply being human. It was first used in this context by German linguist Wilhelm Bleek in his 1862 study *A Comparative Grammar of South African Languages*, from where it has since entered the language of African anthropological study.

The Bantu were the subject of a vast migration over many centuries that saw the Congoid establish its dominance over the virtual entirety of sub-Saharan Africa. The “Bantu Migration,” or the “Bantu Expansion,” exists today as a contested hypothesis rather than an established historical fact. The currently accepted theory places the origins of the Bantu race in the broad region of the Niger Delta. Their outward migration was driven primarily by the development of agriculture and ironwork, and the enhanced opportunities that the advances presented. South and eastward migration brought about the gradual displacement of older Neolithic populations such as the San who were well established south of the equator. Sometime around the beginning of the 2<sup>nd</sup> millennium CE, the Bantu Expansion reached and then crossed the Limpopo River, entering the region.

The Bantu Migration, when it reached South Africa, was split by the central highlands of the Drakensberg mountain range. One part migrated east onto the coastal littoral of Natal, and the other veered west, occupying the South African Highveld.<sup>[1]</sup> The former became the Nguni and the latter the Basutho, or Basutho-Tswana, who occupied the Highveld and the north and northwestern provinces of modern South Africa. The commencement of Bantu settlement in South Africa is tentatively dated at about 500 CE.

In the meanwhile, the Nguni streamed down onto the coastal plain, evolving eventually into the major South African language groups of the Zulu and Xhosa. Over the course of successive decades, they continued their slow migration south, progressively settling the verdant and fertile country of Natal. By the end of the 18<sup>th</sup> century, however, the southern extent of Xhosa settlement, when it reached the Great Fish River, encountered the northern and eastern extent of Boer expansion, and both migrations were abruptly halted.

At this point, there is a debate over exactly what happened. White South African history asserts that the Bantu were absent from the Cape at the beginning of Dutch occupation, which certainly was true. The region was populated by the Khoisan, and the first contact with the Bantu took place as described above. This fact was used throughout the apartheid period as the basis of a claim of prior occupation, which, under the circumstances, is hard to dispute. As a facet of history, however, this tends to sit uncomfortably with black history, and as a historical concept, it is generally rejected.

Regardless, the encounter between the black Bantu and white Boer triggered the first of what came to be known as the “Kaffir Wars” or “Frontier Wars,” a conflict that ebbed and flared for a century or more until the pacification and subjugation of blacks in South Africa was completed around the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>[2]</sup>

In the past, historians have been fond of illustrating this clash of societies as the breaking of a wave. The Bantu Migration flowed south from its origins in West Africa, was channeled by the Great Rift Valley, and eventually brought the Bantu to the southern subcontinent. There, the movement was divided by the Drakensberg, quickening its pace down the coastal region until it broke against a seawall of white occupation. A



backwash, of course, was inevitable, and in the turbulence that followed, an age of peaceful migration transmuted into an age of militancy and war.

The Frontier Wars were, of course, part of this phenomenon, but even greater permutations took place within black society itself. For the very first time, competition for space and resources introduced the need for confederation, so tribes and clans coalesced into larger and more powerful entities to compete with and protect against others doing the same. There were other external influences to consider as well. For example, in Delagoa Bay on the east coast, the Portuguese developed a trading relationship with the tribes of the interior, introducing the medium of exchangeable wealth and bringing with it some inevitable tensions and competition. A Portuguese sailor who was shipwrecked off the Natal coast and subsequently traveled through the region to Delagoa Bay (today the southeast coast of Mozambique) wrote, “These people are herdsmen and cultivators . . . their main crop is millet which they grind between two stones in wooden mortars to make flour. From this they make cakes [and] of the same grain make beer . . . they drink with great gusto. Their cattle are numerous, fat, tasty and large, the pastures being very fertile. Their wealth consists mainly in their huge number of dehorned cows.”<sup>[3]</sup> About a century later, a Dutch sailor also shipwrecked off Natal reported, “The country is exceedingly fertile, and incredibly populous, and full of cattle, whence it is that lions and other ravenous animals are not apt to attack men as they find enough tame cattle to devour.”<sup>[4]</sup>

Thus, by the end of the 18th century, the ingredients for a great conflagration were in place, requiring only a spark to set it off. That spark proved, in the end, to be the birth in 1787 of an illegitimate child to the daughter of a noble family and the son of a minor chieftain of the Zulu clan. The mother’s name was Nandi, the father was Senzangakhona, and the child was Shaka.

The name Shaka resonates with enormous power and authority throughout modern South African history, but the boy in question began his life as a fugitive, as his mother was an outcast who was reviled for his illegitimate birth. Historians have also speculated that Shaka was perhaps

homosexual or sexually impotent, for which he compensated in the context of his times through a ruthless propensity for violence.

Toward the end of the 18th century, the region of Natal was dominated by two major groups, the Mthethwa and Ndwandwe, ruled respectively by two powerful kings, Dingiswayo and Zwide. Both comprised of numerous minor tribes and clans and were at almost perpetual war with one another. The Zulu clan belonged to the Mthethwa confederation, and in common with all initiated boys, Shaka was eventually inducted into the Mthethwa army, a life that he took to like a duck to water. Through a combination of extreme physicality, intelligence, and creativity, he quickly rose through the ranks, and no less quickly in the estimations of Dingiswayo. When his father, Senzangakhona, died in 1816, the throne of the Zulu was passed down to his son and heir Sigujana, Shaka's legitimate half-brother. Sigujana's reign, however, would prove to be short. With Dingiswayo's help, Shaka marched on the royal kraal of the Zulu, killed Sigujana, and assumed the throne himself.

Although it was perhaps an insignificant coup in the grand scheme of things, especially with various imperial powers establishing global empires, this was a pivotal moment in South African history. The Zulu had previously been an inconsequential clan with just a small army, but Shaka immediately set about fashioning his minor tribe into a formidable fighting force, implementing a relentless regime of discipline and introducing new weapons and tactics. He exchanged the traditional javelin for a short stabbing spear known as the *Iklwa*, a name that mimicked the sound of the blade as it was withdrawn from the body. He also introduced the shock tactics of hand-to-hand combat that had previously never been used. With his initial force of some 600 men, he then began subjugating smaller, regional clans and tribes, quickly building his own proto-confederacy.

Although he observed Shaka's actions closely, Dingiswayo allowed this to take place, content that Shaka would form a buffer between the Mthethwa and the Ndwandwe. At the same time, Shaka was careful to stay on the right side of Dingiswayo, dedicating his conquests and all of his booty to the Paramount.

In 1817, however, Dingiswayo was killed during a campaign against the Ndwandwe, and Shaka seized the opportunity to rally the Mthethwa army under his command. After comprehensively defeating Zwide and the Ndwandwe, he assumed the role of Paramount himself.

This began the meteoric rise of the Zulu nation. Shaka maintained the same basic terms of confederacy, ruling as a paramount chief over numerous allied and subject tribes and clans, each of which contributed men to the regimental structure of the Zulu army and enjoyed the protection of the confederation. Shaka then embarked on a program of aggressive expansion in all directions, spearheaded by a military machine the like of which had never been seen before. Within a few years, Shaka's Zulu ruled an empire covering the entire region of Natal north of Tugela River, known thereafter as Zululand.

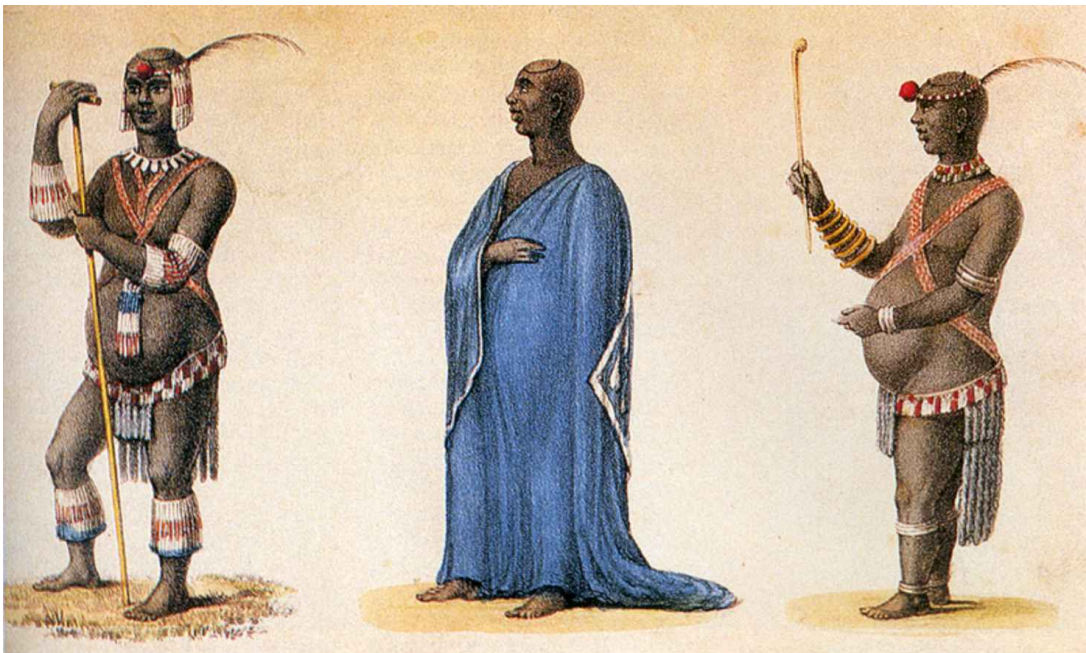


**A 19<sup>th</sup> century European depiction of Shaka holding an *assegai* and large shield**

These had a major regional effect, and today it is a phenomenon known as the *Mfecane*, or the “Scattering.” As the Zulu rapidly and violently expanded, tribes and clans were displaced, creating a knock-on effect that saw militant and aggressive groups such as the amaNdebele, under the despotic king Mzilikazi, bringing warfare and destruction in every direction they traveled. As one group was displaced, it moved on to displace another, creating a wave of destruction across the entire region. This pattern

continued until the 1840s, and those three decades of violence, depopulation, and famine brought about an astronomical loss of life.

The Mfecane outlived Shaka, who was assassinated by his half-brother Dingane in 1828. By then, Shaka had by all accounts, descended into a state of sociopathic violence and paranoia, turning on his own people in an orgy of fratricidal killing that only ended with his death. The Zulu nation never quite replicated the glorious era of Shaka, but under the leadership of Dingane and subsequent kings, it remained a formidable military nation that would collide with white settlers as they gradually advanced into the African interior.



**19<sup>th</sup> century European illustration depicting Dingane in civilian and military attire**



**19<sup>th</sup> century European illustration of a Zulu warrior**

## **The Great Trek**

As the Napoleonic Wars played out in Europe, the Dutch allied with the French, which proved to be a mistake when Napoleon met his Waterloo in 1815. William V, Prince of Orange, had sought asylum in England years earlier, and in 1795 he had ordered the Batavian governor of Cape Town to hand over the administration of the colony to the British. This was resisted, and a brief skirmish was fought to enforce it, but more or less, from that moment on, the Cape was established as a British overseas territory. In an age of European imperial expansion, the southern tip of Africa was simply too important a strategic location for the British Royal Navy not to control it.

The British had many profound effects, but perhaps the greatest was the impact that it had on the Frontier Wars and on the lives and liberty of the Boer. With regard to the former, British command and a force of arms turned the tide of the conflict very much against the Xhosa. A consequence of the latter was that the British administration curbed the independent lifestyles of the Boer, brought them under the rule of British law, and imposed abolition on what was then a slave-owning society.

The takeover of the Cape by the British was generally unpopular among the Dutch, but the urban and settler elites tended to accept it, and they generally benefited. They did not like the British, of course, but they were pragmatic about the material effects. The Boer, on the other hand, who were mostly bucolic and rural, were outraged and resisted the British bitterly. This established deep mutual antipathy between the Boers and Britain that would prove so influential on South African history deep into the 20th century.





**A Boer family in the 1880s**

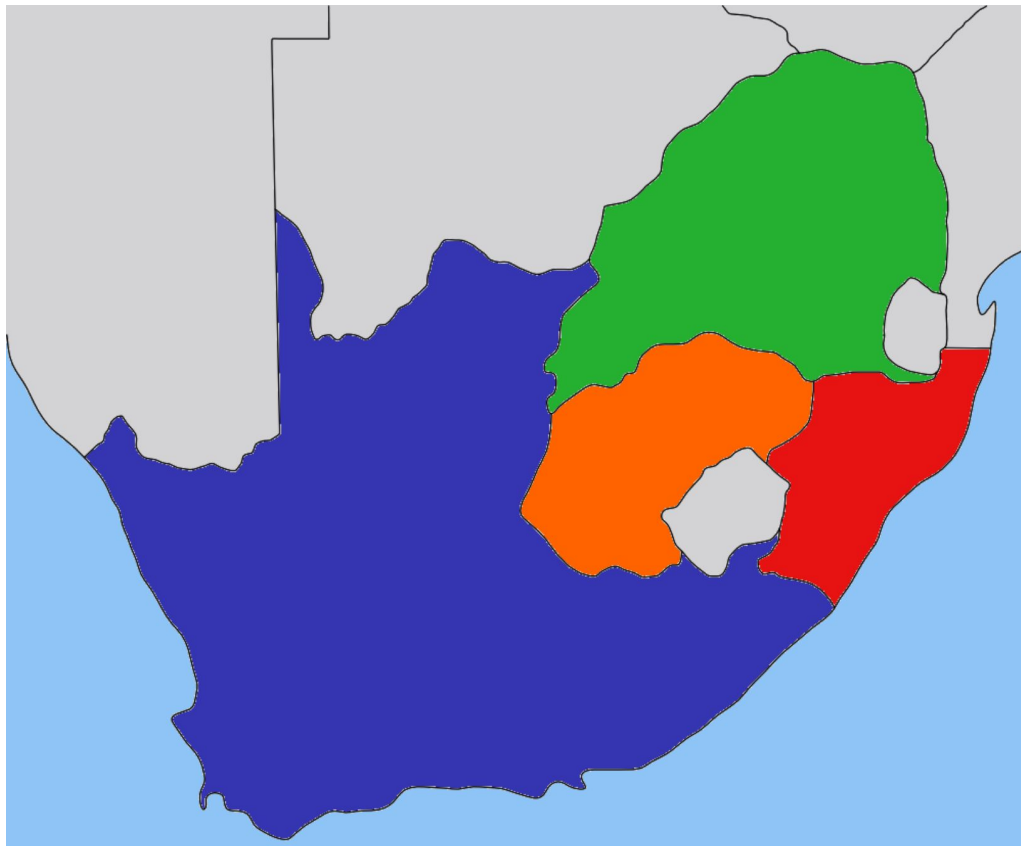
The net result of this was a decision taken in the early 1830s by a radical fringe of Boer to leave the Cape region altogether, in an organized exodus known as the Great Trek. This carried waves of migrating Boer, known as Voortrekkers, or Forward-movers, north into the unsettled interior of the subcontinent. Beyond the Vaal River, and east into the future Natal, the migrating Boer came up against two powerful, independent native kingdoms, the Zulu and the amaNdebele. Several dramatic engagements took place that saw isolated Boer parties attacked by significant legions of disciplined native infantry, but since the Boer were armed with traditional weapons and used cannonades and musketry against their opponents' mounted assaults, these tribes were ultimately defeated. Such improbable victories as these, against such phenomenal odds, established the bedrock of Boer mythology and served to confirm to a pious people that this was indeed a land promised to them by God.

Three Boer republics were thereafter founded. These were the Orange Free State (Oranje-Vrijstaat), the Transvaal, or Zuid-Afrikaansche Republiek (ZAR), and the Republic of Natalia. The first two were landlocked, of little interest to the British, but the latter, Natal, occupied the

coastal littoral east of the Drakensberg Mountains, another potentially strategic maritime location that the British could hardly allow to fall out of their control. In 1843, a naval expedition was sent to occupy Port Natal, the future Durban, and the territory was annexed and declared a British colony.

This, then, set the stage for the political evolution of the subcontinent of South Africa. The British acknowledged the existence of the Boer republics, and under certain conditions, the British even recognized their independence. Nonetheless, the British retained an unspoken option on both territories, should circumstances ever require it.

For the time being, however, the two republics had nothing much of strategic or economic interest to offer, so they were left to develop along their own preferred lines. The British, on the whole, were interested in the territory only from a naval/strategic perspective, and so long as the key ports lay in British hands, the interior could languish under Boer control indefinitely.



### **A map of the British Cape Colony (blue), Transvaal (green), the Orange Free State (orange), and the Natal (red)**

It is interesting to note that as parties of Trekboere began crossing the Orange River and heading across the open plains of what would in future be the Orange Free State, they encountered a land almost empty of population. By then, the Mfecane had swept across the land, and where once the Basotho tribes had roamed the land, only a handful of starving fugitive groups survived. This, once again, lent the impression that the land was unoccupied, which was used to justify its takeover.

Between 1835 and 1837, six individual treks left the Eastern Cape, and by 1840, roughly 6,000 Boer, about a fifth of the rural population, had abandoned the Cape. Inevitably, the vanguard of the migration encountered the two great native societies of the day, the Zulu and the amaNdebele. Beating the Zulu in combat was one thing, but dealing with the British was an altogether different proposition. The British, alarmed at the possibility of losing the strategic port of Port Natal, annexed the territory in 1843 and declared it a British colony. The independence of Transvaal, however, was ratified in 1853 via the Treaty of Sand River with the British, upon the key provisos that the rights of British subjects would be respected and slavery would not be practiced. The Orange Free State, although initially anxious to remain under British administration as the Orange River Sovereignty, was handed over by the British in 1854 under similar terms.

This was the essential character of South Africa by the second half of the 19th century. The subcontinent south of the Limpopo River was locked in an unhappy marriage of two opposing territorial concepts. There were the two British colonies of the Cape and Natal, and the two independent Boer republics of Transvaal and the Orange Free State.

## **Mineral Discoveries and the Countdown to War**

In the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century, the British were content to let the Boer have their republics. At that time, South Africa was a strategic portion of the British Empire solely in regard to naval and merchant shipping. The Cape was essential to British communications with India and Australia, and it could not be allowed to fall into unfriendly hands. Beyond that, however, South Africa appeared to have little to offer the British Empire in the way of economic interests, serving mostly as an agricultural waystation and a rather unimportant imperial backwater.

People located around the Cape continued to live under an extremely liberal constitution, and they had, under both Dutch and British administration, always been liberal. In 1872, the Cape Colony was granted responsible government, which meant in effect that the people enjoyed administrative and legislative independence under loose imperial control. This led to a revised constitution, under which the franchise was “color blind” insofar as it was open to every man over 21 regardless of race, color, or creed so long as he could meet certain educational and property qualifications. The participation of blacks in the electoral process was actively encouraged, and it is perhaps fair to say that the Cape offered, at that time, the most liberal and open political environment anywhere in the world.

Then, in 1866, a man named Erasmus Jacobs unearthed an interesting looking pebble on the banks of the Orange River. This proved to be a 22-carat diamond, and from that moment on, South Africa emerged as the principal theater of capital adventure and war across the entire scope of the British Empire. The diamond pipeline that would soon form the mining settlement of Kimberley was located in an undefined area on the borders of the Northern Cape and the Orange Free State that was more Orange Free State than Cape. However, thanks to the highly questionable decision made by a British commission of inquiry, it was declared to be part of the Cape and thus British. In short order, the subsequent bonanza attracted English-speaking immigrants and British capital from across the imperial spectrum.

One of those joining the diamond rush was an 18-year-old youth by the name of Cecil John Rhodes. Rhodes came to the diamond fields in 1871, a tubercular and asthmatic youth sent out to the colonies in the hopes of avoiding an early death. In South Africa, the weakling certainly became a man, and in Kimberley, that man became a titan. Rhodes was a passionate imperialist who believed with utter conviction in the God-given right of the English-speaking races to rule. While this might sit uncomfortably in the milieu of modern thinking, at the time it was based on a profound sense of British manifest destiny. As Rhodes put it, “I contend that we are the first race in the world and that the more of the world we inhabit the better it is for the human race.”



**Rhodes**

While this was certainly hubris, it was also based on the fundamental “civilizing” mission of the British Empire, a concept widely subscribed to and supported as a British duty, referred to in other quarters as the “White Man’s Burden.” The idea of the White Man’s Burden emerged as a philanthropic mood began to define (and justify) the British sense of imperial mission. In the aftermath of the slave trade, large areas of Africa lay in ruins, and it became a popular British idea that the role of the empire, at least in part, was to repair this state of affairs. Rhodes tended to define it as “philanthropy plus five per cent,” which was certainly the ideal.

The essence of Rhodes’ vision was to unite all the territories of Africa under the Union Jack. By then, that view was made complex if not impossible by the French, Belgians, and Germans, who had for their parts seized control of much of west and central Africa. Rhodes modified his dream down to establishing a rail and telegraph link from British South Africa to British North Africa, or his famous Cape to Cairo concept.

As a part of the same general idea, Rhodes also pictured the unification of South Africa under the Union Jack, which to his mind, and to most right-thinking imperial strategists, would be the only practical way to realize the full economic potential of the region. No matter how logical it was or not, an idea like that would likely attract the utter scorn of the Boer, and to achieve it, if it was possible to achieve at all, would require a great deal of skill, considerable diplomatic maneuver, and no small amount of money. To start the process, Rhodes entered politics, taking his seat in the Cape parliament as a junior backbencher in 1881. He was just 28, but he was already extremely wealthy, and his objective was simply to win the trust of the Cape Dutch community, those Dutch-speaking citizens of the Cape who had not fled British rule. Rhodes sensed that if he could convince them, they would ease the anxieties of the Boer and persuade them of the obvious advantages of British rule.

The next major South African milestone was the discovery of gold. In 1886, in the Witwatersrand region of the Transvaal, the world’s richest deposits of gold were unearthed, triggering a gold rush that would transform the demographic character of the Transvaal and the economic complexion of South Africa entirely. Unlike the diamond discovery,

however, South African gold lay indisputably in the Boer republic, and no amount of creative map drawing could change that. Still, British capital flooded into the Transvaal alongside waves of English-speaking fortune seekers originating from as far afield as Australia and the United States, not to mention Britain itself.

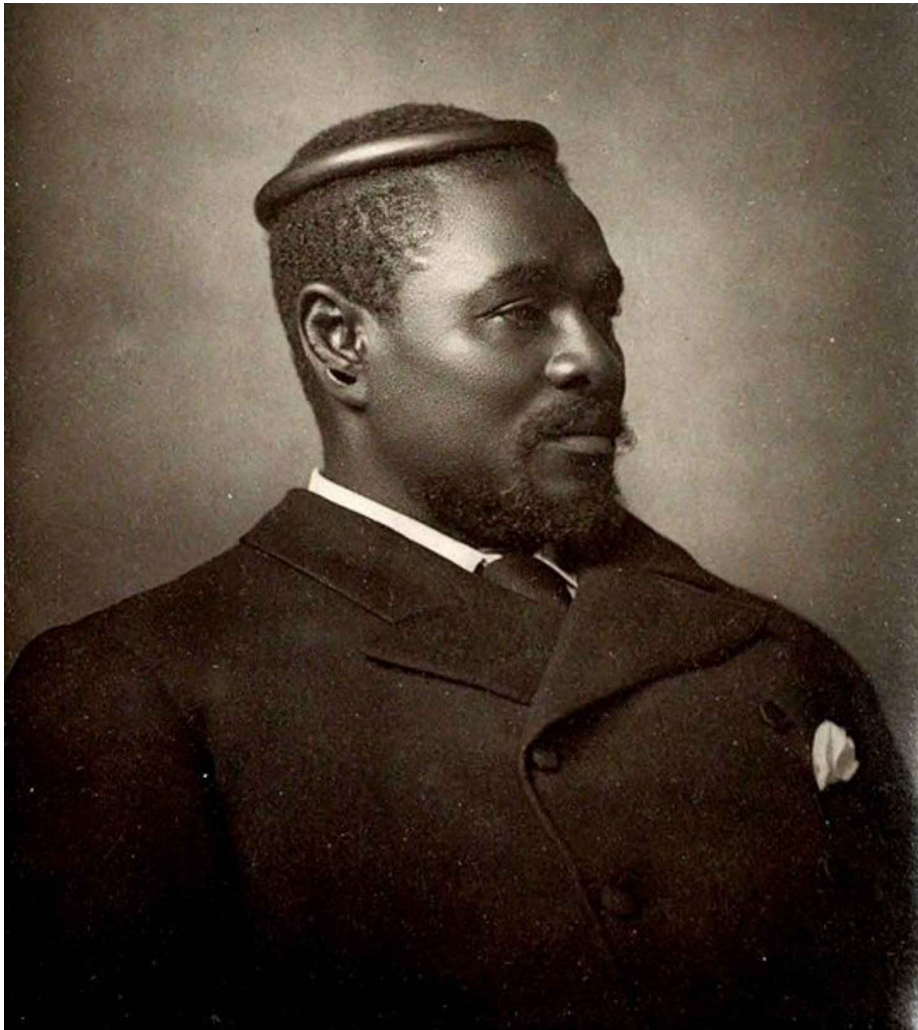
The Boer themselves did not directly engage in mining, but they heavily taxed British mining activities and held monopolies on such vital commodities as dynamite. The Boer had something of a love-hate relationship with gold, which brought in a phenomenal amount of money but also introduced a great many English-speaking immigrants whose capital influence and numbers had the potential to overwhelm the Boer population. While it remained a cherished ideal to exist beyond the reach of British interference, gold brought the British into the Transvaal and gave them a reason to intrigue for political rights and representation. This presented a major conundrum for the Transvaal leadership, for if they were to grant the foreigners access to the local franchise, any hope of perpetual Boer sovereignty would be obliterated overnight.

This, then, was the Boer's dilemma. The *Uitlanders*, as the foreigners were known, agitated for relief from taxation and access to the franchise, which the Boer, for obvious reasons, simply would not grant. As a result, war, which up to this point had been a possibility, now became an inevitability. From the point of view of the British, it became simply a matter of contriving a viable reason to fight.

As the British and Boer moved toward war, the British found themselves fighting the Zulu. In 1873, King Mpande kaSenzangakhona, king of the Zulu Nation since 1840, died and left his son Cetshwayo to assume the throne. Mpande was a half-brother of Shaka and Dingane, both of whom preceded him as kings of the Zulu Nation, thus making Cetshwayo related to Shaka by blood. Per custom, Cetshwayo erected a new capital (Ulundi, which still stands today in KwaZulu-Natal Province), expanded his army (readopting many of Shaka's methods abandoned by his father), and equipped his *impi* with European muskets, something previous kings had frowned upon in order to maintain Shaka's reforms. Cetshwayo then banished European missionaries from Zululand and was also rumored to



have incited other native African groups to rebel against the Boers in Transvaal.



**A photograph of Cetshwayo taken in London in 1884**



**Cetshwayo in 1875**

In December 1878, representatives of the British government, who may have been acting largely without authority, delivered an ultimatum to 11 Zulu chiefs under Cetshwayo telling him to disband his armies and accept British authority. This had followed three dispatches on October 17, November 21, and December 18 from Sir Michael Hicks Beach (who replaced Carnarvon as Secretary of State for the Colonies in November), stating in no uncertain terms that war with the Zulu was to be avoided and a British invasion of Zululand was prohibited. Beach had written, "The fact is that matters in Eastern Europe and India...wore so serious an aspect that we cannot have a Zulu war in addition to other greater and too possible troubles."<sup>[5]</sup> Since the ultimatum was tantamount to relinquishing his throne

and abandoning his people, Cetshwayo refused to obey and ordered his troops to prepare to defend their country “only if attacked” and not to carry the war beyond Zululand. He even directed his soldiers to avoid killing any invaders other than British soldiers.

On January 11, 1879, a British force of 5,000 soldiers under Lieutenant General Frederick Augustus Thesiger, 2<sup>nd</sup> Baron Chelmsford, invaded Zululand, reportedly without authorization from the British Government. Chelmsford had already underestimated the Zulu before fighting them, writing back in July 1878, “If I am called upon to conduct operations against them, I shall strive to be in a position to show them how hopelessly inferior they are to us in fighting power, altho' numerically stronger.”



**Chelmsford**

However, even before his men fought the Zulu, Chelmsford found out how difficult it was just to travel around the region. It took him more than a week to move his army a dozen miles, and on the night of January 20 he made camp on a hill called Isandlwana. On the morning of January 22, he sent a majority of his forces south to find the main Zulu force, but he had not properly reconnoitered the ground and had no idea that 20,000 Zulu warriors were actually to the north. About 1,700 British soldiers were surprised that morning by the Zulu warriors, who wrecked the British center, annihilated its camp, and inflicted about 1,300 casualties on them.

One British officer described the scene, "In a few seconds we distinctly saw the guns fired again, one after the other, sharp. This was done several times - a pause, and then a flash – flash! The sun was shining on the camp at the time, and then the camp looked dark, just as if a shadow was passing over it. The guns did not fire after that, and in a few minutes all the tents had disappeared." A Zulu warrior described the same dark phenomenon; it turned out there was a solar eclipse occurring at the climax of the battle.



**An illustration of the Battle of Isandlwana in the Illustrated London News and The Graphic**

The British public was outraged at the idea that the finest soldiers in the world could be beat by Africans wielding spears, but Chelmsford had a powerful patron: Queen Victoria herself. Chelmsford found other scapegoats, and he also pointed to the action at Rorke's Drift the same day as the decisive defeat, in which only about 150 British soldiers had resisted an overwhelming number of Zulu warriors for hours. Chelmsford was recalled to London several months later, and Queen Victoria recorded what he told her in an audience that September: "Ld. Chelmsford said no doubt poor Col. Durnford had disobeyed orders, in leaving the camp as he did..."



Ld. Chelmsford knew nothing, Col. Durnford never having sent any message to say he was in danger... This much is clear to me: viz. that it was not his fault, but that of others, that this surprise at Sandlwana took place... I told Ld. Chelmsford he had been blamed by many, and even by the Government, for commencing the war without sufficient cause. He replied that he believed it to have been quite inevitable; that if we had not made war when we did, we should have been attacked and possibly overpowered.”

Chelmsford had lied outright to the queen, but at that point it didn't much matter anymore. The British managed to gain the upper hand through strategic movements, including outflanking the Zulu, who were not accustomed to such military maneuvers. On July 4, 1879 at the Battle of Ulundi, 16,000 British and 7,000 native allies under Chelmsford proved insurmountable. Though Cetshwayo attempted to negotiate a peace treaty prior to this battle, Chelmsford was not open to negotiations; Cetshwayo's capital city of Ulundi was captured and partially torched.



**Charles Edwin Fripp's painting of the Battle of Isandlwana**

After the Battle of Ulundi, the Zulu Army dispersed, and most of the leading chiefs tendered their submission to the British. Cetshwayo became a

fugitive, but on August 28, 1879, he was finally captured and exiled, first to Cape Town and then to London. He would not return until 1883, but when he did return, he merely assumed a role that was little more than figurehead. Ironically, it was Chelmsford who was rewarded most as a result of the war, thanks to the queen, who made him a full general and bestowing other honors on him, including making him Lieutenant of the Tower of London.

Once Cetshwayo was captured, the British divided the Zulu Empire into 13 "kinglets." By 1882, however, differences between two Zulu factions – one supporting Cetshwayo and the other supporting rival chief UZibhebhu – erupted into a blood-feud civil war. Attempting to restore order over these tribal wars, which were coming dangerously close to white settlements, in 1883 the British reinstated Cetshwayo as king of Zululand, but that only exacerbated matters. With the aid of Boer mercenaries, Chief UZibhebhu initiated an uprising in protest of Cetshwayo's reinstatement and attacked Cetshwayo's new *kraal* in Ulundion on July 22, 1883. Wounded during the attack, Cetshwayo managed to escape to Nkandla in the KwaZulu-Natal forest. After pleas from Resident Commissioner Sir Melmoth Osborne, Cetshwayo moved to the European settlement of Eshowe, the oldest European settlement in Zululand, where he died a few months later on February 8, 1884 at the age of 57 (or 60 by some accounts). He left his 15 year old son Dinuzulu to assume the throne, and Zulu infighting would continue for years, until Zululand was fully absorbed into the British colony of Natal, subsequently ceasing to exist.

Secretary Carnarvon had hoped to achieve a confederation by diplomatic means, but it ultimately took the British until 1877 to annex the disintegrating Transvaal, and war was required to subdue the Xhosa (1877-1878), the Pedi (1877-1879), the Zulu (1879), and the Sotho (1880). Most significantly, the results of these military actions was the breaking of the economic and political backs of the two most powerful southern Africa states, the Pedi and Zulu Empires. The Pedi lost their cattle and land, while the Zulu were dispersed into 13 separate and competing units.

## **The Rise of the Diamond King**

“In order to save the forty million inhabitants of the United Kingdom from a bloody civil war, our colonial statesmen must acquire new lands for settling the surplus population of this country, to provide new markets. The Empire, as I have always said, is a bread and butter question.” – Cecil John Rhodes

On a cool autumn morning in 1870, the British mail packet SS *Eudora* dropped anchor in the roadway of Durban Harbour, located on the eastern seaboard of the South African subcontinent. A number of passengers disembarked, among them a tall and sallow youth, his hair almost white, his eyes a pale blue, and his breath escaping his lungs in a ragged whisper. His name was Cecil John Rhodes, the fifth son of an English country parson, and he had come to the colonies in the hope that a drier climate might delay what his physicians predicted would be an early death from tuberculosis. On board the ship with him were a great many men from all corners of the empire, drawn to South Africa by news of the discovery of the most precious diamond pipe in the world.

Rhodes, however, had it in mind to grow cotton in the British colony of Natal, in the main port of which he now stood. In his pocket he carried a sum of £2,000 in investment capital, a gift from his Aunt Sophia, who was alone in predicting that her ailing nephew would survive much beyond his 19<sup>th</sup> birthday. Rhodes stepped off the teak boards of Durban docks and made his way to the Metropolitan Hotel. A day or two later, he traveled inland into the Umkomaas Valley, where 200 acres of land lay waiting for him.





**Rhodes as a boy**

No one, of course, could have had any idea quite what a profound moment this was in the history of Africa, perhaps not even Rhodes himself. Nonetheless, this anonymous arrival, one among thousands that year, would shape the course of events in this turbulent corner of the British Empire for the next century.

The South Africa into which Cecil John Rhodes stepped that day remained in its formative stages. At the time, the African subcontinent south of the Limpopo River was divided between two unhappy and mutually antagonistic partners: the British and the independent Boer. The Boer, a Dutch colloquial term for farmer, were the descendants of the

original Dutch East India Company settlers who founded the Cape Colony in 1652 as a victualling station for passing Dutch mercantile ships. The colony was established strictly for this purpose, and as a consequence, free immigration was discouraged, as was any unregulated movement beyond the confines of the settlement of Cape Town. Inevitably, however, independent immigration did take place, and this was mainly in response to the effects of the Counter-Reformation and the Catholic resurgence in Europe. The persecution of Dutch and Huguenot Protestants drove waves of both groups to search for sanctuary, and this they found at the Cape, the furthest corner of the known world.

In time, Dutch and French-speaking immigration to the Cape established the bedrock of a unique and hybridized European culture that came to be known as Cape Dutch, or *Afrikaans*. The urban settlers who settled the immediate hinterland of the Cape were, in general, highly cultured, and the metropolitan aspects of Cape Town today continue to bear this out. However, a more free-ranging and nomadic branch of the same family, driven by a far more orthodox style of Calvinism, spread out into the hinterland, evolving eventually into a rugged and independent breed of frontier pastoralists. These were the Boer, highly xenophobic in outlook and passionately independent in lifestyle. Over generations, they grew accustomed to a style of life that was itinerant, uninhibited, and unregulated. Where they encountered native Africans, they fought them, developing all the while a doctrine of entitlement not dissimilar to the biblical concept of a “promised land.”

For so long as the Dutch remained a strong European trading power, the Cape remained a Dutch outpost, but the strategic position of the southern peninsula of Africa, in particular as global trade began to develop and the British established colonies throughout the New World, became of ever greater importance. The British made use of the port facilities of the Cape, of course, but thanks to the Napoleonic Wars and the alliance between France and the Batavian Republic, it became increasingly important to British foreign policy that the Cape be secured as a British possession, against any possibility that the French might seek to claim it for themselves.

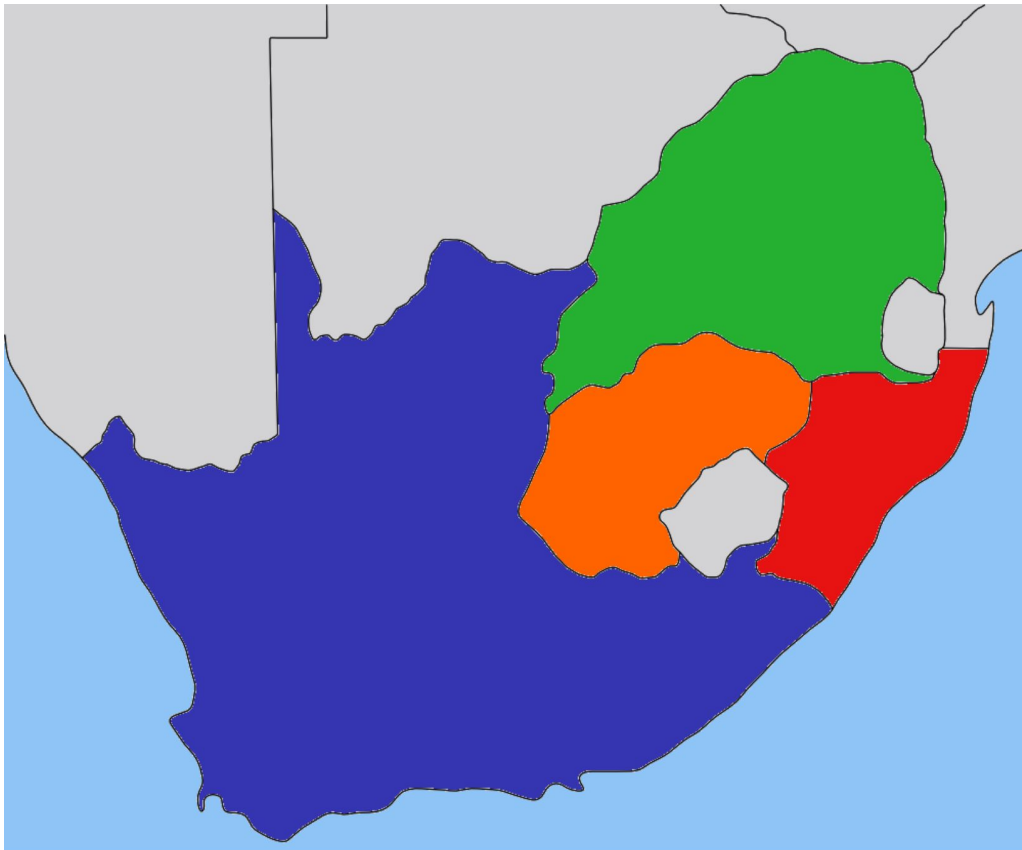
By the end of the 18<sup>th</sup> century, the Cape Colony of South Africa was a British colony, seized in 1795 from the Dutch as part of the dispensations of the fighting against the French. As a private concern, the Dutch East India Company had avoided any administrative responsibility for frontier settlements, and the Boers were left largely to their own devices. The outer boundary of white settlement remained largely undefined, and beyond that, almost nothing was known about the interior.

Under British rule, however, things changed radically. As a colony, the British authorities were interested in bringing the entire population, black and white, under an administrative remit, which did not sit well at all with the bucolic and individualistic Boer. The sudden introduction of British taxes, census, and land audits all irritated them unbearably, and in short order, a difficult and antagonistic relationship existed between British and Boer that continued for about three decades until the British imposed abolition. When the British forced the manumission of all slaves, it was the last straw. A series of Boer councils were held throughout the Eastern Cape, and as a result, a significant portion of the rural Boer population made the simple and fateful decision to leave.

From about 1836 onwards, therefore, a series of organized treks culminated in one of the greatest organized exoduses in modern history. About 5,000 disgruntled Boers left the Cape, and in one of the great epics of 19<sup>th</sup> century journeys through Africa, they penetrated the interior, founding two independent republics, the South African Republic, or the Transvaal, and the Orange Free State. An attempt was made to found a third republic, the Natalia Republic, on the east coast of Natal, but the British got there first, realizing that, like the Cape, Natal held too great a strategic value to be allowed to fall into unreliable hands.



**A Boer family in the 1880s**



## **A map of the British Cape Colony (blue), Transvaal (green), the Orange Free State (orange), and the Natal (red)**

This status quo might have held, but two key events took place. The first of these was the discovery of rich diamond deposits in a vaguely demarcated border region between the Cape and the Orange Free State, which inevitably altered the British view of things. That discovery was followed soon after by the discovery of what were then the richest gold fields in the world, located in the heartland of the Transvaal. Almost overnight, South Africa became the most important theater of British capital adventure in the world, and perhaps not surprisingly, the British suddenly took a keener interest in the area.

These were the conditions on the ground when Rhodes landed in Port Natal on that September morning in 1870. By the time Rhodes made landfall, diamonds had been discovered in the Northern Cape, in the area of the modern city of Kimberley. This was an extremely important moment because prior to that, South Africa's significance to the British Empire had tended to be purely strategic, but now it served a major economic purpose. Within the next decade, gold would be discovered in the Transvaal in quantities nowhere else encountered in the known world, projecting South Africa almost overnight to the very center of British capital adventure.

As Rhodes was settling in, the diamond rush was just beginning, attracting hopeful prospectors from across the empire. At 17, Rhodes was a serious-minded youth, and despite the rush to the diamond fields, he determined that he would stick to farming. However, when it became clear to him that growing cotton in the virgin soils of Zululand would take more effort and resources than planting parsnips in his back garden in England, he decided to defer developing his farm until he had tried his luck on the diamond fields. Thus, about a year after his arrival in South Africa, he packed up a small mule wagon with a few tools and possessions and began the 500-mile trek to Kimberley through the interior of South Africa.

Rhodes has been the subject of numerous biographies, and each one points to this moment as the beginning of a signature metamorphosis in the young man's mind. Besides a few isolated Boer homesteads, and perhaps a native village here and there, the land was empty. This was his first

practical exposure to the outer fringes of the British Empire, a phenomenon that was very much part of his worldview. In order to fully appreciate how the events of the next three decades would play out, it is important to understand the place that the English-speaking races occupied on the global stage at that time. The British Empire was by no means at its peak yet, but it nonetheless was moving quickly towards it, and the sense of manifest destiny that went along with this informed very much the English view of themselves, and of the world in general. It would perhaps not be overstating the matter to suggest that on the left hand of God sat Victoria Regina, the greatest British monarch of the modern age, who ruled the known world as a God-given right, and whose people enjoyed absolute sanction to assume overlordship over every acre of land and every native race, discovered and undiscovered.

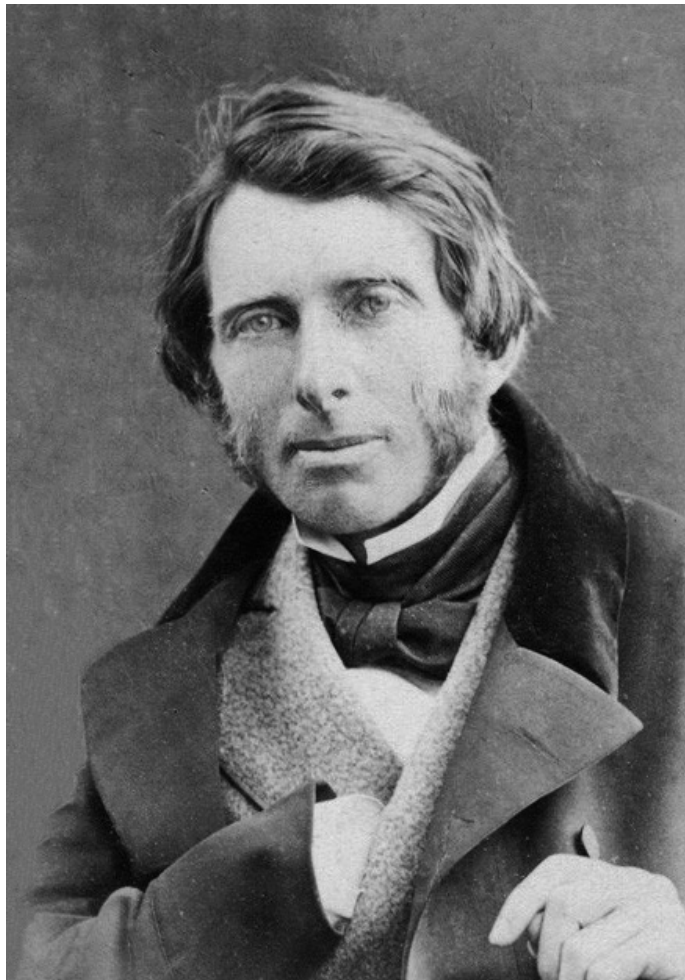
This might seem absurd in the modern context, but in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century it was believed by many, and it very much informed the young Rhodes' thinking as he passed the idle hours traveling over that vast and empty land. As he once put it himself, "Remember that you are an Englishman, and have consequently won first prize in the lottery of life."

Arriving in Kimberley in October 1871, Rhodes secured a handful of claims and set to work. The dry climate certainly did fortify his health, and before long he was writing to his mother with the news that he was averaging a haul of about £100 a week in diamonds, which in 1871 was already a significant amount of money. To go along with that, Rhodes was discovering within himself not only an ability to make money, but also the early signs of genius. He certainly made money finding diamonds, but there was only so much money that one could make doing that, and before long he was involved in capital manipulation, the acquisition and consolidation of defunct claims and the industrial exploitation of diamonds. It was at that point that he began to make real money, and by the age of 19 he was already a wealthy man.

This, however, was just the beginning. Rhodes went on to make more money, and more still, but by then his mind was fixed elsewhere. In 1873, at the age of 20, he made a seemingly curious decision. For a long time he had nurtured the ambition to earn a degree from at Oxford, but his poor

health had tended to preclude any particular investment in his education. Now, however, he had the money and could make the time, so he did.

Rhodes' entry into Oriel College Oxford was another seminal moment in history, coinciding on this occasion with the arrival at that university of John Ruskin as Slade Professor of Fine Art. Ruskin was probably best known then as an art critic and social philosopher, but he also was one of the most influential Englishmen advocating the advancement of the empire. Rhodes, who had thought idly about such things, now suddenly found himself surrounded by the cream of British youth, urged by John Ruskin to go forth and claim on behalf of the British Empire every acre of unclaimed ground.



**Ruskin**



Initially, Rhodes' response to this was to write copiously about his vision of world government, of reclaiming the United States for the British Empire, and adding to it all of Africa, Asia, Oceania, and South America. This whole would combine into a style of global government under the enlightened rule of the English-speaking race. One of Rhodes' most famous quotes asserted, "I contend that we are the finest race in the world and that the more of the world we inhabit, the better it is for the human race."

Rhodes spent just a year at Oxford before returning to South Africa, now fully embracing his monumental vision. Before long, his great idea was by necessity trimmed down to something more practical, but it was no less astronomical in scope. At 22, he pictured a United States of Africa amalgamated under the British flag, from Cape to Cairo. At that time, this still seemed totally possible since no other European power had any particular claim to the African interior. He realized, however, that for this to succeed, political authority and a great deal of money would be required at the very least. It was a huge concept for a 22-year-old to be seriously contemplating, but Rhodes was nothing if not serious.

Then, quite suddenly, Rhodes was struck down by the first of what would prove to be numerous heart attacks, and this too was an important moment, simply because it alerted him to the fact that he would probably not live for long. In other words, if just a small part of his vision was to be realized in his lifetime, he would need to cut corners and move quickly. This meant to Rhodes that the ends justified the means, and as a simple article of faith, he believed that no greater fortune could any individual hope for than to fall under British sovereignty. He knew natives might initially resist, but he was confident that once they were introduced to British people and culture, the natives would eventually accept them.

Rhodes certainly did move swiftly. He moved from the diamond fields of Kimberley to the goldfields of the Transvaal, establishing the monopolistic De Beers Consolidated Mines in Kimberley and the Goldfields Corporation of South Africa in Transvaal. In 1880, he campaigned successfully for a seat in the Cape Parliament, entering politics as a young backbencher later that year. He was 27, and all the elements were in place.

As the 1880s began, the map of Africa was undergoing a rapid evolution. Both the British and the French were beginning to occupy and claim pockets of West Africa, while the decline of the powerful Zanzibari Sultanate left a political vacuum in East Africa, which the British and the Germans were filling in a mood of mutual suspicion.

On the morning of Saturday, November 15, 1884, plenipotentiaries of all of the major powers of Europe gathered at the official residence of the German Reich Chancellor, Prince Otto von Bismarck. As each entered the yard, they were met at their carriage door by the Chancellor himself and then ushered into the library, where an informal reception took place. Then, as a body, they climbed the wide, ceremonial staircase to a second-floor reception room, where each took his allocated seat at a semi-circular table arranged before a large and detailed map of Africa pinned to the wall. Bismarck addressed the assembled delegates, outlining briefly the objectives of the meeting, after which, casting his eyes from left to right, he declared the Berlin Conference formally in session.



**Bismarck**



and certainly the most important theatre of British capital adventure of the age. South Africa at that point was divided into four separate territories - two British colonies (Natal and Cape) and two independent Boer republics (Transvaal and Orange Free State) - and between these there existed enormous suspicion and antipathy. The superior weight of British capital and imperial reach allowed the British to dominate the Transvaal gold fields, but they did so very much to the chagrin of the Boer. The Boer were not by any means impoverished because of this, but as they prospered, they were ever vigilant toward any British threat against their sovereignty.

It was onto this rather tense economic and political stage that the Germans entered in 1884, annexing the territory of Damaraland, nominally the whole of modern-day Namibia, as a German colony. This immediately pitched the British into a fit of apprehension. What were German intentions? Was it the gold, the diamonds, the strategic ports, or all of the above? The British were acutely aware that the hatred felt toward them by the Boer could easily drive them into the arms of an opposing European power, and bearing in mind the ideological compatibility of Germany and Boer at that time, the Germans were in a position, should they choose, to wreak havoc on British interests in South Africa.

The conference set the groundwork for what became known as the “Scramble for Africa.” One of the most important terms established by the conference was the requirement that a treaty of protection be signed between the colonizing power and local traditional leadership before annexation could be deemed legal. After that, an effective occupation and administration of the subject region had to be proved in order for any territorial claim to be recognized.

Much of the rationale for establishing these basic criteria was to avoid the potential for a major European war if political jostling in Africa grew too rancorous, and this would be tested almost before the ink was dry. In 1884, the German imperial flag was hoisted in Damaraland, proclaiming the colony of German South West Africa, prompting an immediate bout of the jitters in London. Suddenly, not only was the Cape, with its strategic value and the economic weight of gold and diamonds, now in German proximity, the question of the unclaimed south-central interior was also suddenly one

of urgent interest. The British questioned German intentions, and where the Germans might advance next.

This, then, was the basic situation in Africa in 1885. The British controlled two out of the four territories of South Africa, the other two were independent, and the Germans now had a colony on the western seaboard of the subcontinent. To the north lay an ill-defined region known as Bechuanaland, more or less congruent with modern-day Botswana, that remained under tribal rule and was therefore unclaimed. On the west and east coasts lay the Portuguese maritime trading territories of Portuguese East and West Africa, more or less modern-day Mozambique and Angola, while to the north was German East Africa, or modern Tanzania, and British East Africa, modern day Kenya. In all of these regions, the dispensation of the lands was essentially established, and barring some shuffling of borders, that is how it would remain.

To the immediate north of South Africa, the situation was very different. This was what was regarded as the south-central interior, which today would comprise Zimbabwe, Zambia, and Malawi, and for all intents and purposes the land remained unclaimed and largely unmapped. It was, however, precisely here that all the major regional European powers were preparing to do battle. The Germans saw the opportunity to link up their two colonies to the east and west in a vast region stretching across the girth of the subcontinent, while the Portuguese pictured an identical scenario with regards to their colonies on either coast. In each case, any hope of British movement north out of South Africa towards Rhodes' vision of a through route from Cape to Cairo would be immediately frustrated, so Rhodes now deemed it vitally important to act quickly and ensure that none of this took place.

Rhodes' first move was to engineer a British protectorate over the territory of Bechuanaland, which he did against significant resistance from the British government, which was curiously coy under the leadership of Liberal Prime Minister William Gladstone to enter the great imperial race in Africa. No colony was proposed, however, and all that this move achieved was to give the British first claim on the territory over and above any German claim. This, for the time being, stopped any northward advance of

German interests, but only for the time being. Of far greater importance was the territory of Matabeleland and its subject territory of Mashonaland, today comprising the two principal provinces of Zimbabwe. Even a cursory glance at a map of the region would put this in perspective, because any movement in any direction required, as a basic facility, control of that key territory.



### **A map with Zimbabwe highlighted**

However, if securing Bechuanaland as a British protectorate had been relatively easy, claiming Matabeleland would certainly not be. The basic requirements as defined by the Main Act of the Berlin Conference were a treaty of protection signed between a colonizing power and the local chieftainship, followed by effective occupation and administration. Throughout most of Africa, this had been relatively easy to accomplish by splitting and dividing African leadership and playing the various tribes against each other, but Matabeleland was no such place. There, a powerful and centralized monarchy, the amaNdebele, held sway, and under no circumstances was this warlike race willing to part with an acre of territory



under the terms of any treaty. Rhodes now had to carefully consider the way forward.

## **The amaNdebele**

“Did you ever see a chameleon catch a fly? The chameleon gets behind the fly and remains motionless for some time, then he advances very slowly and gently, first putting forward one leg and then another. At last, when well within reach, he darts out his tongue and the fly disappears. England is the chameleon and I am that fly!” – King Lobengula of the amaNdebele

The central plateau of southern Africa lies between the Limpopo and Zambezi Rivers to the south and north, the Kalahari Desert in the west, and the great escarpment to the east. From about 1000, the region was penetrated and occupied by the southward migrating Bantu peoples. The Bantu language group originated in what would today be the border regions of Nigeria and Cameroon, or broadly speaking the Niger Delta. Vanquished from the path of this migration was the older, Neolithic San race (the Bushmen), the remnants of which today survive only in the harsh desert regions of the Kalahari.

The Bantu were, as they remain, a far more robust, resourceful, and political race than the San, developing strong and cohesive societies wherever the conditions for settlement were suitable. The high and well-watered regions of the central plateau proved to be ideal, and gradually a tribal confederation began to form that in due course evolved into what is today known as the Kingdom of the Mwene Mutapa. The catalyst for the development of a dynastic society in the region was trade with the east coast. This trade was, for the most part, under the control of Arabs exploiting the annual trade winds between Africa, the Arabian Peninsula, and the Persian Gulf. Commodities such as gold and ivory dominated this trade, but exotic timbers, honey, and slaves also contributed to a vibrant local economy and a society of uncommon sophistication.

By the middle of the 16<sup>th</sup> century, early Portuguese traders, established on the east coast from about the end of the 15<sup>th</sup> century onwards, introduced European influence for the first time, and in general the effect was not positive. It is perhaps fair to say that by the first appearance of the Portuguese, the culture of the Mwene Mutapa was already in decline, but the introduction of Christianity and the aggressive trade practices of the

Portuguese had the effect of accelerating a general social collapse. In the aftermath of a series of disastrous Portuguese crusades in Morocco, however, the Portuguese overseas empire tended to slip into decline, and at the beginning of the 17<sup>th</sup> century, the Portuguese largely abandoned the south-central interior, confining themselves thereafter almost entirely to the coast. This allowed a curtain to fall across the region, behind which the steady decline of the indigenous tribes continued. By the dawn of the 18<sup>th</sup> century, what once had been an empire that inspired Portuguese admiration existed as little more than a dispersed and loosely affiliated society of tribes, sharing a common language and common cultural traits, but politically disunited and significantly weakened.

Major changes, however, were taking place just over the southern horizon. The Zulu were prominently located on the coastal littoral of Natal (precisely where Cecil John Rhodes landed in 1870), now under the leadership of a military commander by the name of Shaka. This began a brief era of militarism in southern Africa, and Shaka Zulu's military campaigns, now the stuff of African legend, were highly destructive, creating generations of refugees and depopulating huge regions of central South Africa. This phenomenon came to be known as the *Mfecane* or *Difaqane* ("The Scattering").

The Mfecane created numerous bands of refugees, some more aggressive than others, and three of these groups were significant in terms of Rhodes' plans. The first of these was the Ngoni, or Angoni, under the leadership of a fighting general by the name of Zwangendaba. Fleeing north from Zululand, the Ngoni passed through what would today be Mozambique, and to sustain a long migration that would eventually lead to the shores of Lake Malawi, raiding and plundering became the Ngoni hallmark. Languishing on the central plateau, after a century or more of slow but peaceful decline, were the remnant tribes of the Mwene Mutapa. Abruptly, this generally peaceful race was visited by a level of violence never before encountered, as Ngoni military prowess, borrowed from the Zulu, was used against them with utter ruthlessness.

The Ngoni continued on and soon passed over the northern horizon, visiting their destruction on other tribes in other regions. Behind them came

the Shangaan, under the leadership of another fighting general by the name of Shoshangane, who also fled Zululand in a northward direction. Around 1820, Shoshangane established a powerful kingdom in what is today the Gaza Province of Mozambique, and with no lesser military competence at their disposal, the Shangaan also developed a raiding economy. Once again, the most convenient race to subject to this was the remnant of the Mwene Mutapa. The attention of the Shangaan was more sustained and certainly more violent and brutal than the Ngoni, although they tended to be confined to the eastern quarter of what would in the future become Zimbabwe.

However, a far more magnificent and terrifying despot was formed by the last of these three groups to hive off from the Zulu, and his name was Mzilikazi of the amaNdebele people.<sup>[6]</sup> Mzilikazi was, in fact, one of Shaka's favorite generals before he separated from the Zulu in a breach of friendship around 1823. He led his Khumalo Clan first onto the South African Highveld, where they settled for a short while before coming into contact with the migrating Boer. The Boer drove them north across the Limpopo River into what is today the Matabeleland Province of Zimbabwe.

Mzilikazi, although acknowledged as one of the greatest indigenous leaders of his age, was nonetheless a ruthless dictator who utilized an astronomical level of violence to establish his nation. Colloquially, the word *amaNdebele* implies the black soldier ants common in southern Africa that migrate in hordes and devour everything in their wake. It was by precisely this phenomenon that the amaNdebele acquired their name, and it accurately described their methodology. To build the basis of his nation, Mzilikazi worked along the principle of destroying every human settlement in his wake, ruthlessly killing every living thing other than those required to carry the booty of war or to breed. Those who survived this unspeakably cruel treatment were allowed to enter the society at its lowest level, creating a hierarchy whereby the original Nguni members resided at the top and captive Basuto were very much at the bottom. The net result of what was in effect a process of selection meant that those who did survive to take up arms on behalf of the amaNdebele were only those people believed to be ruthless and effective enough to do so. The amaNdebele referred to this interrelated people as *Shona* (outsiders), meaning people not of Nguni

heritage, or *maShona*. As a result, the land of the *maShona*, lying to the north and east of Matabeleland, became *Mashonaland*, and thus it remains.

Conventional history has it that the amaNdebele established their economy based on cattle and plunder, the latter provided by the *maShona* in a sequence of annual raiding. Traditionally, it was understood that this program of raiding, as a style of military adventurism, was undertaken with the same atrocious level of violence inflicted upon the Basuto of the South African Highveld, and no doubt this was originally the case. The *maShona*, however, were not a comparable military race by any means, and their long-term subjugation by the amaNdebele did not require consistent brutality, just periodic reminders of the amaNdebele's violent capabilities.

An interesting effect of the violence was that it removed potentially powerful enemies, and without one, a traditionally military society may tend to lose its edge. Consequently, as the first whites began to appear in Matabeleland, mostly after the 1860s, to observe and comment on the amaNdebele for the first time, they encountered an impressive military culture, highly regimented with form and procedure, but anachronistic and certainly not adapted to modern conditions.

By 1868, Mzilikazi was dead, but the balance of power in the region was fully established. In the 30 years after the arrival of the amaNdebele in Matabeleland, great changes were taking place in the wider region, in particular south of the Limpopo. These, of course, were the same changes that catapulted Rhodes to the pinnacle of his career, and while Mzilikazi had no clear sense of what they represented, they frightened him. He therefore maintained a strict policy of limiting white access into his country, simply because he knew that therein lay the elements of change that neither he nor his nation understood, or wished to embrace.

Upon his death, Mzilikazi's throne was inherited by his son Lobengula, a man by no means as gifted as his father. By the time Lobengula ascended to the amaNdebele throne, the Kimberley diamond rush was in full effect, and the essential political divisions of South Africa were in place. Where Mzilikazi had successfully sealed his borders against white incursions, Lobengula now found this impossible. Hunters and prospectors began to appear in steady numbers, followed by missionaries and traders, and while

Mzilikazi would have had no hesitation in ordering them all killed, Lobengula knew that he could not.



**A sketch of Lobengula**

As the Germans established their South West Africa colony and Rhodes engineered the Bechuanaland Protectorate, things in Lobengula's neighborhood began to change most profoundly. Suddenly, he was no longer dealing with the occasional prospector or missionary, but a concentrated European effort to pin him down to a treaty of protection, or indeed any treaty that might be construed as such. The capital of *kwaBulawayo* (the Place of Slaughter) was besieged by concession seekers representing private and public interests from across the European colonial spectrum. Each was working against the interests of the others, and among them was plenty of intrigue, backstabbing, lies, and deception. All that Lobengula knew for certain was that if he succumbed to the urging of his

commanders (his *indunas*) to wipe the entire gaggle out with a single order, a foreign army would be on his borders in months, if not weeks.

It was into this situation that an old Boer hunter from the Transvaal Republic by the name of Piet Grobler, a fluent isiNdebele speaker and a cordial acquaintance of Lobengula, appeared. The exact circumstances of what happened are unknown, but somehow Grobler was able to secure Lobengula's signature on a vaguely worded treaty of amity and friendship with the Transvaal. The potential of this treaty was that it might give the Transvaal Republic the right to annex Matabeleland as an extension of the republic, with the further possibility that the Germans would piggyback on this to put their foot through the door, and thus gain an option.

As it so happened, however, on his way back to the Transvaal from Matabeleland, Grobler disappeared, along with his treaty. It has never been established precisely what became of him, and conspiracy theories have since abounded, but in all likelihood he fell victim to bandits and his treaty was somehow lost. The very existence of it, however, set the pot boiling, and when news of it reached Rhodes, it shocked him into immediate action.



## **The Rudd Concession**

“Truly they possessed two requisites of terrestrial happiness — a good appetite and no conscience.” - Frederick Courtney Selous

When news of the Grobler Treaty reached Rhodes, he realized that that time to act was now. All things considered, he was in a very strong position, but it was imperative that he gain some sort of similar treaty from Lobengula to offset any potential claim from the Transvaal, and to give himself some time and space to maneuver.

His first course of action was to approach the British High Commissioner to the Cape, Sir Hercules Robinson, in an attempt to browbeat him into arbitrarily declaring a British protectorate over Matabeleland, which he was empowered to do. At this time, however, Robinson would not do so under just his own authority. He instead echoed Rhodes' own instincts to get something on paper – anything at all – just to buy time.



**Robinson**

Rhodes then approached a 53-year-old ex-missionary by the name of John Moffat, then part of the Bechuanaland colonial administration, and requested that he travel on Rhodes' behalf to Bulawayo to negotiate a treaty

with Lobengula. Moffat was an excellent choice, because, as an ex-missionary, he knew Lobengula well. His father, the famous Scottish missionary Robert Moffat, enjoyed the rare benefit of a friendship with Mzilikazi, and their two sons grew up in association with one another. Moffat, as a liberal and a humanitarian, understood that implicit in Rhodes' advances would be the end of the amaNdebele nation, but as much as he might have respected the amaNdebele as a race (as most whites did) the nature of the regime was abhorrent to him, and Moffat believed it would in the long term be to the benefit of both the amaNdebele and the maShona to come under British protection.

Moffat, with surprising ease, was able to persuade Lobengula to attach his seal to a document. This treaty, apart from a vague promise of cooperation and friendship between the British and his independent people, bound Lobengula to enter into no "correspondence or treaty with any foreign state or power to sell, alienate or cede or permit or countenance any sale, alienation or cession of the whole or any part of the said amaNdebele country under his chieftainship, or upon any other subject without the previous knowledge and sanction of Her Majesty's High Commissioner for South Africa."

Since Her Majesty's High Commissioner for South Africa was in Rhodes' pocket, it stood to reason that Rhodes now had time to plan his advance more carefully. His first decision, in respect to the reluctance of the British government at that time to take on any extra responsibility in Africa, and also to have more personal control over events, was to proceed by way of a chartered company. The tradition of chartered companies was obviously quite established by now, most notably the East India Company and the Hudson's Bay Company, but more recently the Royal Niger Company and the British Imperial East Africa Company had both been granted charters. Each was granted a vast territorial concession and empowered by the authority of royal charter to occupy, pacify, administer, and exploit their territories almost entirely without oversight. In the case of the East India Company, that was India, and in the case of the Hudson's Bay Company, it was most of British North America. This model is what Rhodes had in mind.

The terms of the Moffat Treaty, however, were not specific enough to frame an application for a royal charter, so a second delegation was assembled on behalf of Rhodes' British South Africa Company to negotiate something more absolute. For this mission, Rhodes chose a business partner by the name of Charles Dunell Rudd, a tall and austere man in his mid-40s who was practical and severe. Accompanying him was a lawyer, Rochford Maguire, and an interpreter and "native expert" by the name of Francis Thomson. Also assisting was an Anglican missionary by the name of Charles Helm, who was fluent in isiNdebele and somewhat trusted by Lobengula.



**Rudd**

The Rudd Concession, as it came to be known, forms the bedrock of modern Zimbabwean history. For the forces of colonization, it was celebrated as a feat of frontier diplomacy, and the basis upon which the territory was occupied. From the point of view of black liberation history, however, it was a massive deception and the quintessential act of political duplicity that set the tone for the colonial era to follow.

Either way, Lobengula remained in a desperate quandary. By 1889, when Rudd and his group first appeared in Bulawayo, the frenzy of foreign petitions had reached a fever pitch. The competition was now intense, and at the hands of a few key players, Rudd among them, Lobengula found himself under unrelenting pressure. Adding to that was even greater pressure from below to order a military solution, which of course he knew that he could not do. Lobengula teetered on the brink of a nervous breakdown.

In the end, after months of prevarication, and endless sessions in consultation with different people, Lobengula came to the decision that he had no choice but to deal with the most powerful of his enemies. Bearing in mind the strength of the British in southern Africa and the apparent authority of Rhodes, who Lobengula understood to represent the British imperial establishment, he was eventually persuaded to sign the document that Rudd held in front of him. He could not have known that Rhodes did not actually represent the British imperial authorities, but merely his own interests in the form of the British South Africa Company. Rudd, naturally, did not disabuse Lobengula of this belief, so when he affixed his seal to the Rudd Concession, it was the native leader's belief that he was dealing with Queen Victoria.

The Rudd Concession as Lobengula negotiated it and understood it contained several key points. Most importantly, entry into Matabeleland would be restricted to 10 miners who would claim no land and who would remain subject to amaNdebele law. No specific territorial grants or concessions were made, and no permission for general settlement was granted. In exchange, a generous cash payment was offered, along with a quantity of guns and ammunition.

When the terms appeared in writing, however, the implications were very different, and since Lobengula was illiterate, he relied on Reverend Charles Helm primarily to interpret and sign off on the fact that everything was as it should be. Helm, however, lied to him by claiming the treaty was as it had been negotiated, when in fact it was not. The implication of the document was that the British South Africa Company was empowered to exploit as it pleased every mineral resource in Matabeleland, and by extension

Mashonaland, and to take whatever measures were necessary to achieve this, with no mention whatsoever of any fealty to amaNdebele law or government.

Believing what he was told, Lobengula affixed his seal to the document, and before the ink was dry, Rudd was on horseback hurrying back to Kimberly to hand the document over to Rhodes. With equal haste, Rhodes then boarded a ship and made his way to England to submit an application for a royal charter.

Naturally, as news began to circulate, there were plenty of other people ready to alert Lobengula to the fact that he had been duped. He had no idea at all what he had done, but he sensed that whatever it was, it was not good. Moreover, no one would give him a straight answer because they were all trying to scupper Rhodes' victory and obtain one of their own at the 11<sup>th</sup> hour.

Ultimately, due to his belief that his contract was with Queen Victoria, he decided to send an embassy to London to deal directly with her. Traveling in the company of a rival claimant, two elderly indunas set off from Bulawayo and made their way to Cape Town, pausing briefly before embarking on a steamship to London.

By the time they reached Cape Town, having traveled by rail and now witnessing ships the size of cities, they began to realize precisely what they were up against. London itself served only to reinforce this effect, and by the time they were introduced to Queen Victoria at Windsor Castle, they fully understood their own relative insignificance. Any effort to petition the queen was thwarted, and their only official contact was with the Colonial Secretary, who advised them to make the best of it. As tragic as it was to witness the death of a noble race, that race was an anachronism, and the advance of Europe could hardly be diverted around a tiny island of independent rule just for the sake of sentimentality. To drive this point home, the two indunas were given a tour of the Royal Navy shipyards in Portsmouth and treated to a display of artillery and machine gun fire on the ranges of Aldershot.

Before long, the two were back in Bulawayo. Squatting in a smoky council chamber under thatch and saplings, they related the wonders of what they had seen to a somber and depressed Lobengula, who now also began to realize that the worst had come to pass.

## Founding a Colony



**Rhodes as an adult**

“Go north young man, your hinterland lies there.” - Cecil John Rhodes

It was one thing to engineer a spurious legal entry into Matabeleland, but it was another thing to actually physically seize it. Lobengula and his army may not be capable of deflecting the might of the British Empire, but they certainly retained the potential to fight. Rhodes was granted his royal charter in October 1889, but the capital necessary to exploit it would have to come from him. That said, the British South Africa Company was publicly subscribed, and a number of highly influential British establishment figures, among them numerous aristocrats, were prepared to

bet on what Rhodes lavishly promised would be the new Ophir. There were certainly signs of gold, mostly in the form of previous old digs, and this was enough to get the ball rolling.

Dr. Leander Starr Jameson, a name that resonates to very dubious effect throughout Zimbabwean history, was arguably the most influential character in the dramatic events to follow. Jameson, like Rhodes, came out to the colonies because of ill health, and as a physician he established a private practice in Kimberley. He was a small, but compact man, highly gregarious in nature and extremely amusing. As charming and amiable as he was, however, he was equally ruthless and unscrupulous. He was seconded into Rhodes' organization to help guide Lobengula into accepting his fate. This he achieved by the application of morphine to ease the king's gout, and, of course, to get him addicted to the drug. Later, his role was to manage the political affairs related to the occupation of Mashonaland.





**Jameson**

Rhodes decided, after a series of consultations, to establish the occupation by way of an armed flying column. He was reasonably certain that Lobengula would not order an attack against his advancing force, which was an enormous gamble given the numbers involved. The British South Africa Company Pioneer Column comprised less than 1,000 men, facing a potential amaNdebele army – trained, disciplined and highly belligerent – of upwards of 35,000 men. All that would stand between them and utter annihilation would be discipline, and Lobengula's ability to maintain it.

Leading the British South Africa Company Pioneer Column as its guide was the famous hunter-explorer Frederick Courtney Selous. The column itself comprised a 500-man paramilitary detachment known as the British South Africa Company Police, and it included 200 "pioneers," also armed

and trained but under contractual terms of service. These were led respectively by a professional British soldier, Lieutenant-Colonel Edward Graham Pennefather, and a young imperial freebooter by the name of Frank Johnson. In overall command, with no specific rank but with a general power of attorney, was Dr. Jameson.



**Selous**

In the spring of 1890, the expedition assembled in Kimberley and then moved cautiously through southern Bechuanaland toward the border with Matabeleland. As it approached, Lobengula sent numerous messages to its leaders, warning that if they crossed into Matabeleland, he might not be able to control his regiments. This was sobering, and there certainly must have been some members of the expedition who thought twice. Nonetheless, at the end of June, the Pioneer Column did indeed cross into

Matabeleland, and by maintaining a position as far east as possible, they sought to bypass the amaNdebele heartland and move directly northwards towards Mashonaland.

The distance was about 300 miles, but the journey was fraught with danger and progress was extremely cautious. From its first entry into Matabeleland, the column was shadowed by a force of about 20,000 amaNdebele soldiers, but no hostile action was attempted. Bearing in mind the popular antipathy felt in Matabeleland against this expedition and anything to do with Rhodes, it stands as testimony to the strength of Lobengula's authority that discipline was indeed maintained. The Pioneer Column was armed with repeating rifles, a handful of machine guns, and small artillery pieces, so it would certainly have taken a large native force to overrun it, but it is very probable that it would have been overrun and destroyed if the order had been given.

Towards the end of October, a low escarpment began to rise upon the north horizon, and soon the column was safely beyond what could be regarded as Matabeleland, and in what could also be regarded as Mashonaland. It was felt that the amaNdebele would not act directly to defend Mashonaland since it was, strictly speaking, only a vassal territory. Cautiously, therefore, the police and pioneers stood down, and the remainder of the journey passed without incident. The amaNdebele military detachment melted away, and nothing more was seen of it.



### **Members of the column**

On September 12, 1890, the British South Africa Company Pioneer Column arrived in the vicinity of an elderly maShona chief by the name of Harare, and there it was decided to establish the main settlement and administrative headquarters of the new colony. The site was named Fort Salisbury, after British Prime Minister Lord Salisbury, and the Union Jack was raised on a makeshift flagpole. Once prayers were said by the Reverend Canon Balfour, a 21-gun salute was fired and a fledgling British colony was born.

## **The Inevitable War**

“What do you want, and by whose orders are you here? Where are you leading your young men to like so many sheep and do you think they will get back to their homes again? Go back at once, or I will not be answerable for the consequence. Do you not think that white blood can flow as well as black?” – Lobengula

Throughout the course of its short history, the amaNdebele nation developed just one response to any crisis: violence. This was written into the essential blueprint of the amaNdebele character, and even if its own destruction might be the inevitable result, no other course of action but war could be conceived.

As the various pioneers drifted out into the countryside to take up the land and gold claims promised as part of their terms of service, an uneasy correspondence was maintained between Dr. Jameson and Lobengula. An arbitrary border was recognized between the two, and to the best of his ability, without openly acknowledging Company sovereignty, Lobengula sought to keep his raiding forces south of that line. His military establishment continued to agitate, and occasionally a punitive raid would be launched to deal with indiscipline among the maShona. This was usually due to cattle theft, and certainly the raids were violent, but to the best of his ability Jameson tried to ignore them.

The effect of the occupation on the maShona tribes, on the other hand, was somewhat different. The term *maShona*, it must be remembered, was an amaNdebele construct, and it did not represent anything that the maShona understood themselves. As an umbrella term, it defined and continues to define a people sharing a common language and many common cultural traits, but no political cohesion or central leadership. Some acknowledgement of paramount leadership was made, and a handful of chiefs, especially those beyond the reach of the amaNdebele, were quite powerful, but the maShona possessed nothing comparable in terms of state authority to the amaNdebele.

The arrival of the white men, therefore, was greeted by the maShona with ambivalence. No effort at armed resistance was attempted, and the

occupation immediately brought the benefits of law and law enforcement. In practical terms, this meant an end to decades of amaNdebele attacks, which was certainly a good thing. Very quickly thereafter, the maShona began to reestablish a community and generally enjoyed the benefits of trade, employment, cash, and modernization. While the amaNdebele nation was deeply conservative, the maShona were infinitely more resourceful and adaptable, and they acknowledged the obvious potentialities of modern life and were quick to embrace those opportunities. It is also true that such a vast amount of unclaimed land still existed, so whites and maShona were willing to live and let live.

A problem that did exist was the tendency of some maShona chiefs and communities to now thumb their noses at the rule of the amaNdebele. Thus, some members would steal cattle and then seek refuge under white protection. Jameson was as forbearing as possible when an amaNdebele party crossed the informal boundary and sought to impose traditional justice, just so long as the violence was contained and the death toll was not too egregious. There remained, however, the potential for any one of these punitive raids to extend beyond these limits, and this would obviously require Jameson to respond.

The first three years of the existence of Mashonaland as a British colony, now informally known as Rhodesia, passed off without any such eventuality. The main preoccupation of the settlers, and indeed the Company, was to establish the colony and find the gold that both the shareholders and the settlers had been led to expect. The colony was landlocked, isolated by Portuguese occupation of the east coast, and the initial phases of the occupation were certainly not easy. It cost Rhodes and the British South Africa Company an enormous amount of money to sustain the population by road from South Africa, to maintain the police force and administration necessary, and to construct the public works projects and essential infrastructure for a viable society.

Meanwhile, Rhodes' agents were already north of the Zambezi acquiring the treaties and contracts necessary to found what would eventually be Northern Rhodesia (now the modern state of Zambia). His objective, after all, was imperial, not commercial, and to him the gold was simply the way

to raise the cash necessary to fund further imperial projects. When the shareholders began to grumble, however, that it was all cost and no profit, the price of British South Africa Company shares on the London Stock Exchange began to tilt southwards. It was then that Rhodes and Jameson began to discuss the possibility of adding Matabeleland to the territorial portfolio of the Company as an inducement to boost the value of the stock and pay dividends via captured land and cattle.

It was also a fact that the amaNdebele issue still had to be resolved one way or another, because it was quite obvious that an independent kingdom structured along the lines of the amaNdebele could not coexist indefinitely alongside a modern colony. In essence, manufacturing a war and seizing Matabeleland would conceivably kill two birds with one stone.

It was serendipitous then that in the winter raiding season of 1893, a strong amaNdebele detachment entered Mashonaland in the vicinity of the Fort Victoria settlement, known today as Masvingo, and set upon an errant maShona chieftainship with unusual ferocity and violence. The incident took place in the vicinity of white settlers, and the whites who observed it were shocked and dismayed at the brutality displayed. A senior induna arrived at the gates of the fort and demanded that all maShona seeking refuge be handed over. It was promised that they would be killed downstream of the local spring in order not to contaminate the town's water supply.

When news reached him in Salisbury, Jameson hurried to Fort Victoria, and there he issued an ultimatum: the raiding amaNdebele party was to be back across the border within an hour or an armed force would be sent out to intercept it. The commanding induna claimed that he knew of no border and thus did not remove his detachment. Soon afterwards, a mounted police squadron left Fort Victoria, and a running battle followed as the amaNdebele force was pushed southwards back into Matabeleland.

This incident might well have been glossed over in the past, because, while it was the most violent episode to date, it was hardly unprecedented. However, war was now a desirable thing, so Jameson duly declared it.

As it turned out, this introduced an immediate complication. In 1889, Sir Hercules Robinson was replaced as British High Commissioner to South Africa by Sir Henry Loch, who was not by any means as slavishly devoted to \ Rhodes as his predecessor. In fact, he disliked Rhodes and was extremely prejudiced against the very idea of a privately run colony. This was for good reason, because usually a chartered company was only really used to manage a colony where no long-term white settlement was anticipated, and where an expatriate population would typically not exceed the requirements of administration. In every other instance, such as Natal and the Cape, where large white settler communities existed, a system of direct rule was applied which usually led in due course to some level of self-government.



**SIR H. B. LOCH,**  
Chief Commissioner at the Cape.

## **Loch**

Sir Henry Loch was anxious, therefore, to ensure that Matabeleland was not added to the British South Africa Company occupation. Thus, when war with the amaNdebele became imminent, he maneuvered as quickly as he



could to position British imperial forces to attend to the conquest so that Matabeleland could be claimed as a British imperial territory, not a British South Africa Company holding. Conversely, Rhodes and Jameson had the equally urgent need to ensure that Sir Loch was frustrated and that Company forces reached Bulawayo first.

With that, a hasty mobilization began on both sides, but the only imperial force available at that time was the Bechuanaland Border Police. A detachment was hastily assembled and dispatched in the direction of Bulawayo, but before it could get underway, Jameson issued a call for volunteers, and in exchange for the promise of land and booty, the Victoria and Salisbury Columns were quickly assembled and rushed south towards Bulawayo.

The First Matabele War was fought between October 1893 and January 1894, and it was, in its first phase, a short, bloody, one-sided affair. For all of their traditional magnificence, the amaNdebele army was simply not equipped to deal with a heavily armed flying column of several hundred Britons armed with modern repeating rifles, artillery, and machine guns. Set piece formations of warriors armed with assegais and shields, thrown in waves against fortified positions, were cut down and repulsed with maximum casualties. Two significant battles were fought, the Battle of Bembezi and the Battle of Shangani, and they were decisive victories for the British. By early November, Jameson led his forces into the smoking ruins of Bulawayo, which had been torched by the amaNdebele themselves as they fled north into the vast hinterland of Matabeleland.

A day or two behind Jameson and his columns came the imperial column, too late to influence matters and too late to claim the conquest as an imperial project. The British South Africa Company was victorious, and Matabeleland was now a province of Rhodesia. It was a bitter moment for Sir Loch, but a jubilant moment for Jameson, Rhodes, and the British South Africa Company.

Before the volunteer militia could be released to claim cattle and land as booty, the question of what to do with Lobengula needed to be settled. Jameson certainly hoped that he would find the king waiting for him in Bulawayo, ready to formally surrender, but he did not. Instead, Lobengula

was adrift somewhere to the north, surrounded by a loyal clique of warriors and very much still the leader of his nation. To wrap the business up as quickly as possible, it was necessary to bring him in or kill him.

To achieve this, a smaller flying column was hastily put together, and as the annual monsoon season began to threaten, it was sent north to intercept the king. This enterprise seemed doomed from the start, and it offered proof of Jameson's amateurism. An ad hoc force of ex-regular British army members, rough riders, and volunteer irregulars pressed forward with limited supplies and no particular plan. Soon enough, the rains broke and conditions became extremely difficult. Discipline broke down, squabbles erupted, and factions formed, all while large numbers of amaNdebele warriors were reforming. It was almost inevitable that the column would at some point blunder into an ambush.

Between December 3 and 4, under poor weather conditions, the column paused on the banks of the Shanghai River while an advanced patrol set out to locate Lobengula, who was believed to be nearby. In fact, the patrol, immortalized as the Shangani Patrol, was drawn into a trap. Tempting intelligence about Lobengula's proximity had been planted, and the patrol had been intentionally coaxed deeper into enemy territory. Then, in one of the most storied engagements of the colonization period, a battle was fought that resulted in the complete annihilation of the 34-member patrol. This was the only victory recorded by the amaNdebele against the British, and it stands as one of the great military accomplishments in their history. It did not, however, alter the course of the war, and although Lobengula was never found, he was also never seen again.<sup>[2]</sup>



### **A contemporary depiction of the patrol's last stand**

The remainder of the flying column returned to Bulawayo, and for all intents and purposes the war was over. British imperial forces retreated, and reluctantly Sir Loch was forced to acknowledge that the British South Africa Company had won Matabeleland by right of conquest. Share prices bounced back, the British South Africa Company was in the black again, and Rhodes and Jameson could congratulate themselves on a job well done. It was now a question of consolidating the conquest, distributing the booty, and ensuring that the amaNdebele understood their place in the new order of things.

## **The Bitter Fruits of War**

“The northern pirates are now in possession of the great King’s Kraal, and the calf of the black cow has fled into the wilderness.” – Frederick Courtney Selous

After the war, Rhodes had several million acres of land and hundreds of thousands of cattle to distribute to friends and supporters as he chose. This marked the beginning of one of the most discreditable phases of the history of the colony, and the basis, many historians agree, for the bitter antipathy between the races that would blight the colony for the rest of its existence.

At the end of the First Matabele War, Jameson found himself in an extremely powerful position. The war had been won with very little imperial involvement, which meant that influence over the territory lay with him and Rhodes almost exclusively. That said, both men also understood that they were obliged to acknowledge and reward those who contributed money and support to the venture, albeit in whatever manner they saw fit. Rhodes had obviously relied on quite a number of important people to expedite the process to date, not just in terms of his twin occupations of Mashonaland and Matabeleland, but in the usual ways and means of capital and political cronyism. It was now incumbent upon him to show generosity, and lavish recognition by way of naming streets, squares, parks, schools and public buildings after peers and capitalists would not be enough. Hard assets like land, livestock, and mining rights were also expected.

By then, Rhodes had reached the very pinnacle of his career. At the age of 40, he was not only Prime Minister of the Cape Colony, but he controlled a vast and diverse financial empire that included owning a colony. Unlike most of the Victorian *nouveau riche*, he now enjoyed at least some fellowship and a great deal of respect from the British ruling classes. As such, he felt empowered as never before. According to Sir William Milton, one of Jameson’s later successors, before any checks and balances could be observed, Jameson distributed enormous quantities of amaNdebele land and cattle to largely speculative, absent, or unproductive recipients. The solution with regard to the natives themselves was simply to resettle them in

reserves, where few willingly went. They mostly preferred to remain as squatters on land now owned - often in absentia - by a white man.

Jameson struck at the very heart of amaNdebele society when he began the mass expropriation of cattle as booty of war. This was a rash policy, and while the amaNdebele certainly understood that resources would be plundered by the victorious side, Jameson went much further than this. It is to the credit of only a few, Sir Loch among them, that any voices were raised in protest at all, but it is to no one's credit that nothing was done about it.

The amaNdebele had inherited from their Nguni parents a love of cattle and a social economy at the core of which lay their herds. Jameson began by claiming the "royal herd" as a right of conquest, which was a clever but rather cynical move. He based this on the assumption that all things could be accounted for by individual ownership, although he knew perfectly well that the monarch held the national herd in trust as a national treasury and dispersed them to individuals only by dint of loan, favor, or convenience. In other words, claiming the "royal herd" made available nearly 200,000 head of cattle, all ostensibly owned by Lobengula. Before any effective control or limitation could be enacted (and Sir Henry Loch did what he could to act on the amaNdebele's behalf), the national herd was reduced to just 41,000 head.

To add to the confusion and difficulties, around this time a cattle disease known as rinderpest arrived in southern Africa. This disease ravaged local herds, both wild and domestic, and it was a bitter harvest for the amaNdebele to have the white man enter their reserves in order to slaughter what cattle they had not stolen.

Then came hut taxes. All over colonial Africa, blacks were being pressured off the land by the imposition of taxes. The idea was simply to force them into employment in order to pay taxes, which would have the dual effect of creating a need for money and creating the basis of a new consumer society. As far as the amaNdebele were concerned, however, labor was a woman's business. Men made war and women worked. Contemporary Britons could argue that it was a necessary bridge from old to new, and perhaps it was, but it certainly did not please the amaNdebele. It

might also be observed that the maShona adapted to labor and economics far more easily and were quicker to take up the opportunities of education offered by the missionaries.

Another ill-advised move was the establishment of a native constabulary in Matabeleland. It was generally felt that a force of police drawn from the ranks of the amaNdebele themselves would be sympathetic to the amaNdebele, but this proved not to be the case. In fact, amaNdebele society remained defined very much by caste, and by the 1890s, the original Nguni and Basotho bloodlines were so diminished that most of the rank-and-file consisted of maShona slaves or amaHoli. As it turned out, the maShona slaves and amaHoli were the ones who tended to find their way into the ranks of the Matabeleland Native Police. Native commissioners were fond of proclaiming that their black constables once fought with the mighty “Imbizo,” and no amaHoli constable ever denied it.<sup>[8]</sup> However, old orders were reversed and old grievances were revisited, and the Matabeleland Native Police very quickly became yet another source of grinding grievance.

All the while, white settlement went ahead in both Mashonaland and Matabeleland with minimal regard to the potential risks of an uprising or a return to war. Lobengula’s two most likely heirs were removed from the region by Rhodes and taken to Cape Town, where they were maintained in a style not unbecoming of European royalty. They were enrolled in school and introduced to a life from which they would unlikely be willing to return. This they owed to Rhodes, and that debt remained on the books. In fact, Njube and Nguboyenja Khumalo, who were eligible for succession thanks to their birth while Lobengula was king, would never return to Rhodesia, and both would die relatively young. Very little information is available to add any substance to their lives, but if their removal was intended to create confusion over the question of succession, that policy proved very successful. After Lobengula, no amaNdebele king ever again sat on the throne. Leadership was devolved through a loose system of committees, and various senior indunas tended to retain the loyalty of their own regimental households and family groups.

The only central and potentially unifying influence was religion. The same essential theocracy that thrived during the era of the Mwene Mutapa had retained considerable stature and authority under the protection of the two amaNdebele kings. The supreme spiritual leader was the *Mlimo*, sometimes also a name used to describe the Supreme Being. It was similar to the use of the term *Mwari*, but generally an individual identifiable as a high priest or spirit medium at the head of a cult.

Thus, in the aftermath of the First Matabele War, the amaNdebele were leaderless and confused, but while a majority of whites assumed that they were beaten and had accepted their permanent defeat, this was hardly the case. The regimental structure of the amaNdebele military remained very much in place, and lessons had been learned. Weapons were stored away, and plenty of amaNdebele already anticipated the moment their nation would rise up again.

## **Rebellions**

“Of the Threshing and the Dancing Songs, and the Chants that lead to War.” – Kingsley Fairbridge

Once Rhodes and Jameson had established the colonies, they turned their attention back to South Africa. Rhodes remained concerned about the unification of South Africa, which still uneasily consisted of two British colonies and two independent Boer republics. It was his belief that South Africa would never live up to its potential as long as it remained divided in this way, and naturally he thought the land's potential would be best served by uniting the region under the British flag.

At this time, the Transvaal Boer was led by an aging patriarch named President Paul Kruger, who resolutely resisted calls by various expatriate lobbies to provide limits on taxation. He also rejected requests that they be allowed representation commensurate with that taxation. The Boer referred to the non-Boer émigré community as Uitlanders, or Foreigners, but by the latter half of the 19th century, the Uitlander population had grown in numbers and capital influence to such a degree that a free grant of voting rights would have established an Uitlander government in the Transvaal. Gone in an instant would be the cherished Boer ideal of independence, sovereignty, and freedom from British domination. Kruger could simply not countenance this.





**Kruger**

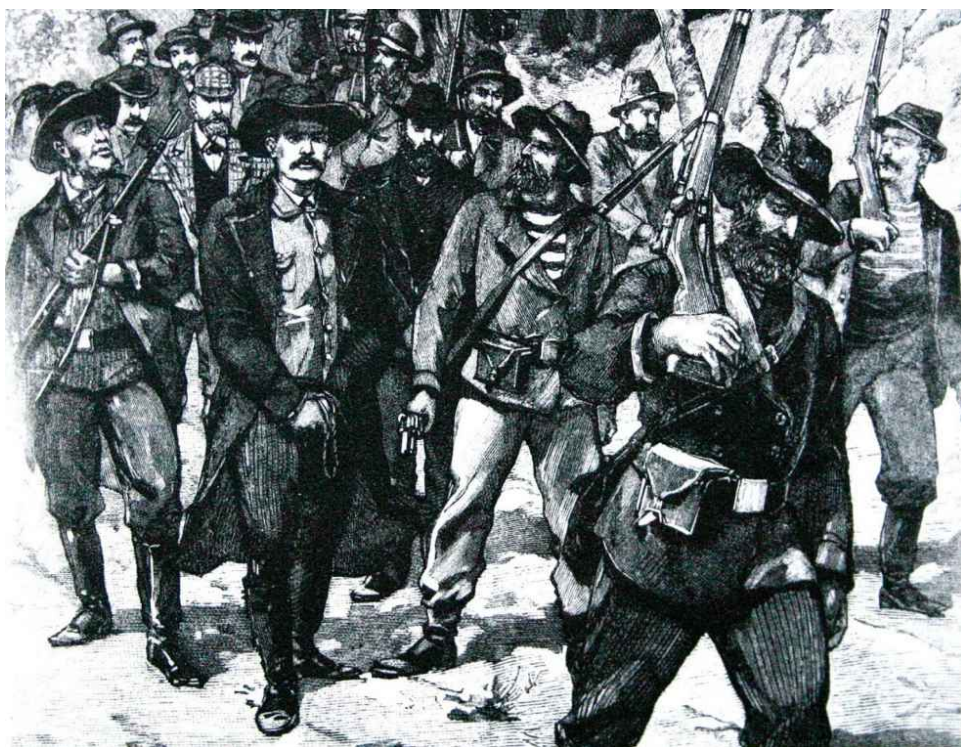
To deal with this obstacle, at some point in 1895 Rhodes formed a covert alliance with British Colonial Secretary Joseph Chamberlain, who happened to share his vision for a united South Africa, albeit for different reasons. Rhodes was a capitalist and a visionary, and there was always a strong strain of ideology that ran through his thinking. Chamberlain, on the other hand, was a political strategist, and he was concerned with the proximity of the Germans, the potential of a German alliance with the Boer, and the likely implications this would have on Britain's strategic position in Africa. Chamberlain also worried about a wider European war being inevitable.



### **Chamberlain**

While carefully camouflaging his involvement, Chamberlain tacitly supported the development of a plot in South Africa, devised by Rhodes and supported by Rhodes' local network. In essence, the plot involved leveraging the Uitlanders' discontent in the Transvaal to engineer a coup. Rhodes would provide the arms and the money, and he would orchestrate the start of the coup in the form of a mounted force of some 600 men, drawn from the colonial militia of Rhodesia. At a predetermined time, the Uitlanders in Johannesburg would rise in rebellion, and the armed force, led by none other than Jameson, would ride into the city, take control of the gold mines, and then bring about the collapse of the Transvaal government.

As it turned out, Rhodes made one major miscalculation, and it was simply that wealthy men are seldom predisposed to revolution. A great deal of hue and cry was generated, and a rather amateurish organization of the plot ensured that the Boers were fully informed of every detail. When the raid was launched in late December 1895, the Uitlanders opted not to place themselves in harm's way, and the raiders were met by a fully armed Boer reception party. Chamberlain, despite being complicit, simply distanced himself from the planning and denied all knowledge, leaving Rhodes to bear the consequences alone. Meanwhile, the raiders were extradited to Britain to face trial, including Jameson.



**An 1896 depiction of the arrest of Jameson**

All the while, white settlement went ahead in both Mashonaland and Matabeleland with minimal regard to the potential risks of an uprising or a return to war. Lobengula's two most likely heirs were removed from the region by Rhodes and taken to Cape Town, where they were maintained in a style not unbecoming of European royalty. They were enrolled in school and introduced to a life from which they would unlikely be willing to return. This they owed to Rhodes, and that debt remained on the books. In fact, Njube and Nguboyenja Khumalo, who were eligible for succession

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Eventually, Rhodes settled on the idea of stoking an uprising among expatriates living in Transvaal, and he would orchestrate the start of the coup in the form of a mounted force of some 600 men, drawn from the colonial militia of Rhodesia. That effort would fail miserably, but it also helped generate a chain of events that led to the Second Boer War in 1899.

When the coup attempt at the end of 1896 failed, the depletion of white armed forces in Matabeleland alerted the amaNdebele immediately to an opportunity, and they were quick to act. A few months after the failed coup, the killings began, and within weeks the Matabeleland province of Rhodesia was engulfed in a fully constituted native rebellion.

Given the uprising's origins, there is scant historical material to explain or describe the sequence of events that led up to the rebellion, but it commenced with the full moon in March 1896, a few months after the Jameson Raid. A day or two before, a dispute broke out between armed members of the Matabeleland Native Police and a unit of amaNdebele rebels, which resulted in the death of 12 police constables. This triggered the uprising a week or so prematurely, which significantly impacted its efficacy.

The essential strategy was for isolated outlying stations, mines and rural trading posts to be attacked and their white inhabitants killed, while at the

same time, by prearranged signal, all domestic servants would murder their employers. As it happened, these operations went ahead rather haphazardly, and while a spate of murders in the outlying districts did indeed take place, the majority of whites were able either to mount active defenses or make their way to Bulawayo.

By the end of March, Bulawayo was under siege, and the situation was critical. At that point, quick and decisive action against the city of Bulawayo would almost certainly have seen it overrun and destroyed and its inhabitants slaughtered. This did not happen, however, as the rebels appeared content simply to keep up a siege. Historians have since concluded that disunited and ineffective leadership was probably most to blame for this, and there were certainly plenty of tactical mistakes made.

Support for the rebellion at the senior leadership level was not by any means universal, and several powerful indunas opposed it, with one or two even surrendering themselves to the colonial authorities. As an indication of how the majority of those indunas in command of the rebellion hoped that it would end, the road to Mafeking and Kimberley was left open in the apparent hope that the whites would just disappear. Even among the rank-and-file, that old mastery of war that once defined the amaNdebele seemed to be missing.

Meanwhile, Rhodes appeared in the colony for the first time, visiting on his way back to Cape Town from London (where he had recently faced a parliamentary select committee investigating the events of his attempted coup). Although he was forced to resign his premiership of the Cape, he narrowly averted the annulment of his company's charter and held onto his place on its board of directors by the skin of his teeth. Given his tenuous position, the rebellion in Matabeleland was fortuitous, as it presented him with a distraction when he desperately needed just that.

Rhodes' conundrum was once again to somehow ensure that the rebellion was suppressed using the company's resources, not imperial resources or men. If Her Majesty's armed forces were seen to be influencing events, and if Her Majesty's treasury paid for it, the risk again would be that Rhodesia would be handed over to imperial control. Bearing in mind the maverick style of government utilized so far by Jameson and his cronies, there

certainly was a strong feeling the British government back in Whitehall would be in favor of that. As soon as he arrived in Salisbury, therefore, Rhodes organized a volunteer relief column, and within a few weeks he was riding south towards Bulawayo at the head of a force of some 200 men.

For Rhodes, perversely, the whole business was a tonic. It took his mind off the odious business blame and counter-blame, as well as the various commissions and committees of inquiry, allowing him to channel his thoughts instead on more elemental concerns. Never in the past could he find the time to visit Rhodesia, but now, in the saddle and riding to war, his mental and physical health rallied.

Yet again, however, he did not take into account the effects on the black residents in the territory. The maShona, however, immediately sat up and took notice, and no sooner had the relief column passed over the horizon than the maShona too broke out in rebellion.

Meanwhile, as Rhodes and his column converged on Bulawayo, a strong imperial relief force under the command of General Sir Frederick Carrington arrived in the colony from South Africa. Rhodes accepted this as *a fait accompli* and placed his column under Carrington's command, after which the latter set to work dealing with the rebellion. Rhodes' hope remained that matters could be resolved reasonably quickly so that the campaign could be paid for by him and the company without dipping into imperial resources. For now, as it kept a close eye on events, the British government was also content with this arrangement.



## Carrington

By then, the rebels had clearly lost the initiative and most realized that all hope was lost. The siege of Bulawayo was quickly broken, the amaNdebele scattered, and various members took refuge in a region of broken hill country just to the south of Bulawayo known as the Matopos. The topography of the Matopos, even from a casual glance, is clearly configured for defense, and Carrington very quickly realized that the rebels could not be dislodged by military action. What would be required instead would be to starve them out in a campaign that might easily spill over into the following year. The amaNdebele themselves occupied this defensive position with no real objective other than a determination to fight to the last man, suspecting that the alternative would be genocide.

When this was conveyed to him, Rhodes was appalled. Clearly, neither he nor his company could sustain a campaign for over a year, which would involve thousands of troops and huge logistical resources that inevitably resulted in an imperial takeover. It is important to keep in mind that the British South Africa Company, after almost seven years of administering Rhodesia, had not yet earned any profits. The anticipated mineral wealth had not so far materialized, while the business of establishing an administrative infrastructure, the maintenance of a police force and a judiciary, and the cost of the First Matabele War placed the company in a deficit running into the millions. Rhodes simply could not let the colony go without recouping at least some of these massive losses.

As a result, Rhodes embarked on a bold strategy. Without informing any of the various imperial agents in Bulawayo, and by utilizing the skills of a local native guide named John Grootboom, Rhodes reached out to the amaNdebele and suggested a negotiated peace. For several weeks, Grootboom kept vigil on the edges of the Matopos, until sometime in early November he was able to make contact with an elderly woman who claimed to be a junior wife of a leader named Mzilikazi. Through her, initial contacts were made with the senior indunas commanding the loyalty of the fighting men.





**A picture of Rhodes around this time**

What followed resides very much in the white history of Rhodesia as a seminal moment, perhaps even the most important. Historians have since tended to agree that this was something that only Rhodes could have achieved, simply for reasons of his extraordinary stature, and the instinctive response of the amaNdebele to favor strong and authoritarian leadership. Defeat in battle was deplorable only if the enemy was seen to be inferior, and there were few that the amaNdebele did not fundamentally regard as inferior. Rhodes, however, known to the amaNdebele as *Ilodzi*, was respected, and while he was almost singlehandedly responsible for the demise of the nation, his greatness, his authority, and his power were indisputable. The amaNdebele were willing to deal with him.

The essence of the negotiations, which stretched over several weeks, was in fact rather straightforward. On many occasions Jameson was explicitly named as the main grievance. The cruel and cavalier manner in which he

dealt with the immediate aftermath of the First Matabele War still sat poorly with those who lost land and cattle. The Matabeleland Native Police were also a constant source of discontent, as was the Native Department and the various rural administration officials. When it came to land and cattle, Rhodes could do little other than to invite the amaNdebele to return to their traditional lands while time remained in the season to cultivate their crops. Most of that land, however, and indeed most of the cattle, was now owned in absentia by white landowners, with whom Rhodes negotiated two years of rent-free occupation for the amaNdebele. This, of course, was rather duplicitous, for he certainly gave the impression that these lands were being returned to the amaNdebele without condition, which was not the case. However, by the time that fact became clear to them, Rhodes had left the colony and it was far too late to do anything about it. Nonetheless, the Great Indabas successfully ended the war, Carrington and his army returned to South Africa, and Rhodes once again narrowly held onto his royal charter.

The maShona's rebellion remained to be resolved, and this was achieved in the end with extreme prejudice and with none of the forbearance and dignity offered to the amaNdebele. Part of this was simply because the maShona lacked any centralized leadership with which to negotiate or deal. Unlike the Matabele Rebellion, this uprising was unplanned, spontaneous, and reactionary. It was also to the detriment of both rebellions that they were never coordinated, as a combined effort would certainly have achieved more.

In the end, Salisbury was never directly threatened, and for the most part the action took place in the countryside. The two main figures to emerge from what came to be known as the *Chimurenga*, or the Uprising, were two spirit mediums, the first an elderly woman called Nehanda and the second a man using the name Kaguvi. They led the offensive phase, which was brief and ended with their capture and subsequent execution. From that point on, the rebellion became strictly defensive. Once the local authorities and volunteer militias finished dealing with the amaNdebele, they were in a position to apply all of their resources to crushing the rebellion in a manner that the perpetrators would never forget, and to reduce them to such a condition of absolute defeat that they would never again be able or willing to rise in rebellion.

The tactics used to achieve this were simply to deal piecemeal with pockets of resistance, which usually took the form of a particular tribe or clan taking refuge in the signature hill country of Mashonaland. They were starved out and dynamited, and many of their leaders were executed. MaShona memories of the episode, therefore, differ markedly from the amaNdebele. The latter were granted the opportunity to retain their traditional leadership and return to their previous lives intact. The maShona, on the other hand, were comprehensively beaten and had their social structure shattered.

Although Rhodes survived to see the outbreak of the Second Boer War, he did not witness its conclusion and the unification of South Africa that had been his dream for so long. Sometime in mid-March 1902, he suffered an asthma attack that could not be reversed. Within a few days, he asked to be removed to a small cottage he owned in the oceanside village of Muizenberg, just outside Cape Town. There, a wall was removed to allow in the sea breeze, and he lay fighting for breath until, on March 26, 1902, he died. He was just 48.

Rhodes was buried in the Matopos Hills, the burial place of kings and the site of perhaps his most honest effort. As an indication of the regard in which he was held by the amaNdebele race, once all the dignitaries had left the site, a spontaneous amaNdebele guard of honor was mounted on the grave, and it remained in place for several years. Today, however, the location of his grave in Matobo National Park, Zimbabwe remains controversial within the country.

## **The Boer War**

Prior to the discovery of gold in the Transvaal, the republic was impoverished, and as a consequence, vulnerable to British expansionist policies. On April 12, 1877, two years before the Anglo-Zulu War, the British had actually annexed the Transvaal in a bloodless and peaceful operation led by none other than Theophilus Shepstone. From there, it was widely assumed by the British that they could bring about the submission of the Orange Free State.

As it turned out, the generally peaceful reception of British rule in the Transvaal was dangerously deceptive. A majority of the Boer remained deeply inimical to the British and any presumption of the absorption of the Transvaal into the British Empire. Popular resistance simmered for the next few years, until, on December 20, 1880, a brief war broke out. Known as the First Anglo-Boer War, it caught the British by surprise, and in the course of a few weeks, sovereignty of the Transvaal went back to the Boer.

The matter was temporarily shelved as the frenzy of the gold rush washed over the Transvaal, and its economy was radically transformed. The Transvaal was now no longer impoverished but awash with gold revenue, and it was arming itself. Nonetheless, the question of British sovereignty over all of South Africa continued to preoccupy the metropolitan political establishment, and thanks to the sudden and meteoric wealth of the region, that preoccupation steadily grew.

A large part of British anxiety over the continued independence of the Transvaal lay in the sudden proximity of the Germans. In 1885, the German Empire annexed the territory of Damaraland, which would eventually become the German colony of South West Africa and later become Namibia. By then, the leaders of the various nations believed that the different countries' global expansion would heighten tensions among the Europeans and bring about a global war. To deal with that eventuality, the security of British strategic interests in southern Africa was vital, and the weak link in that regard was the Boer.

The British and everyone else understood that the Boer's hatred would possibly lead them to ally with Britain's enemies. There was also something

of a natural ideological alliance between the Boer and the Germans, so there was every reason to suppose that a political and security alliance would soon follow. It is questionable how much better an alliance with Germany would be to an alliance with Britain, but that certainly appeared to be the direction that things were going, and if that happened, it would certainly position the Germans to take over the entirety of South Africa and its goldfields, diamond fields, and strategic ports. This was something the British could obviously not tolerate, and if the Boer could not be induced to peacefully accept British sovereignty, they would have to do so under force of arms.

It was not only British capitalists and industrialists who financed the Transvaal mining industry, but largely British-affiliated workers who ran the mines and attended to the innumerable peripheral and support industries associated with the mines. Most of this took place in the thriving and chaotic mining city of Johannesburg, and in due course, Johannesburg became an English speaking region. For its part, the central government of the Transvaal, located in the capital city of Pretoria, levied heavy taxes against the mining industry and ran several lucrative and questionable monopolies over such vital commodities as explosives.

All of this was extremely lucrative, but at the same time, the Transvaal Boer, led by an aging patriarch named President Paul Kruger, resolutely resisted calls by various expatriate lobbies (the Boer referred to the non-Boer émigré community as Uitlanders, or Foreigners) to provide limits on taxation, and representation commensurate with that taxation. The Uitlander population, by the latter half of the 19th century, had grown in numbers and capital influence to such a degree that a free grant of voting rights would have meant, in practical terms, an Uitlander government in the Transvaal. Gone in an instant would be the cherished Boer ideal of independence, sovereignty, and freedom from British domination. Kruger could simply not countenance this.



**Kruger**

By now, Rhodes occupied the office of Prime Minister of the Cape Colony, and with vast wealth at his disposal, he was in a position of enormous local power. Sometime during 1895, he formed a covert alliance with the Conservative British Colonial Secretary, Joseph Chamberlain, who happened to share his vision for a united South Africa, albeit for different reasons. Rhodes was a capitalist and a visionary, and there was always a strong strain of ideology that ran through his thinking. Chamberlain, on the other hand, was a political strategist, and he was concerned with the proximity of the Germans, the potential of a German/Boer alliance, and the likely implications this had on Britain's strategic position in Africa. Chamberlain also worried about a wider European war being inevitable.



### **Chamberlain**

While carefully camouflaging his involvement, Chamberlain tacitly supported the development of a plot in South Africa, devised by Rhodes and supported by Rhodes' local network. In essence, the plot involved leveraging Uitlander discontent in the Transvaal to create a coup d'état. Rhodes would provide the arms and the money, and he would orchestrate the start of the coup. That trigger would take the form of a mounted force of some 600 men, drawn from the colonial militia of his territory of Rhodesia. At a predetermined time, the Uitlanders in Johannesburg would rise in rebellion, and the armed force, led by a man named Leander Starr Jameson, would ride into the city, take control of the gold mines, and then engineer the collapse of the Transvaal government.



**Jameson**

As it turned out, Rhodes made one major miscalculation, and it was simply that wealthy men are seldom predisposed to revolution. A great deal of hue and cry was generated, and a rather amateurish organization of the plot ensured that the Boers were well-informed of every detail, so that when the raid was launched on New Year's Eve of 1896, the Uitlanders manifestly declined to place themselves in harm's way and the raiders were met by a fully armed Boer reception party.

As Julius Caesar once remarked, if one must break the law, then do so to seize power, but in all other cases, obey it. Rhodes failed to seize power, so he simply broke the law. Chamberlain, the complicit British Colonial Secretary naturally distanced himself from the planning and denied all knowledge, leaving Rhodes to bear the consequences alone. The raiders



were extradited to Britain to face trial, while Rhodes was eventually removed from all of his major business interests and forced to resign as Prime Minister of the Cape Colony. He never achieved the same level of power and influence again.



**An 1896 depiction of the arrest of Jameson**

Although it was an abject failure, the Jameson Raid set in motion a chain of events that would lead to war. The Uitlander crisis continued to ferment, and the British authorities in South Africa, supported by Whitehall, initiated negotiations with the government of the Transvaal over the question of Uitlander rights and liberties in the republic. These negotiations were somewhat disingenuous since the British were looking to instigate some sort of conflict, and in due course, as he was backed into a corner, President Kruger issued an ultimatum for the removal of British troops from the borders of the republic. The British press bellowed with derisive mirth at the audacity of it, as did the Victorian public, and the ultimatum was ignored.

Thus, on October 11, 1899, war was declared.

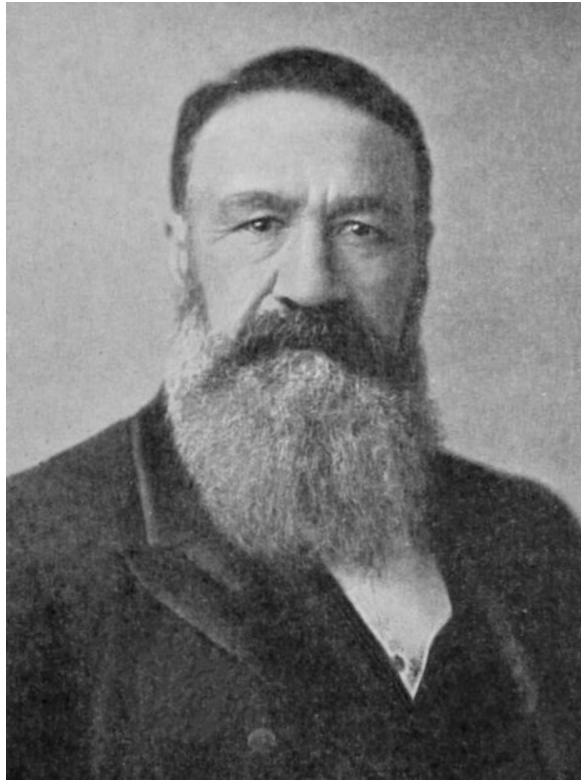
On the eve of the war, the British armed presence in South Africa was extremely limited. The Boer, on the other hand, had been covertly arming and organizing for some time. As a result, by the time the war started, it was estimated by British intelligence that some 32,000 fighting men were on call in the Transvaal alone. These were supported by a modern and well equipped artillery division, the Staats Artillerie, an extremely functional police force, the Zuid-Afrikaansche Republiek Politie (ZARP), and a widespread and effective intelligence network. As Chamberlain had suspected, the Germans were sympathetic to the Boer, and almost all of the Boer war materiel and equipment were sourced from Germany. This cooperation fell short of a formal alliance, but Boer fighters were nonetheless armed with the latest Mauser Model 93/95 rifles, and plenty of Boer artillery had been manufactured by the Germans.

The Boer military structure was based on a commando system that had evolved as a civil defense in response to generations of frontier and border wars with black South African tribes. A permanent official within the community, known as a Veldkornet, dealt with what formal organization there was, and he both commanded and summoned the commandos when they were needed. Boer commandos, therefore, comprised an informal mounted infantry, usually highly mobile, and they embraced community-based units that consisted of all able-bodied men, urban and rural, within any given area. These men were expected to serve at a moment's notice if the call came.

The weakness in this arrangement was command. As with all informal militias, volunteers could be led but never driven. Command was based not on a rigid hierarchy, as was the case with the British Army, but by the consent of the majority, so tactics and strategy were agreed to by consensus, which inevitably resulted in a weak and variable chain of command.

At the outbreak of war, command of Boer forces resided in the hands of a 68 year old patriarch by the name of Piet Joubert, whose military experience was informal and whose command style was cautious. His combat history had been mainly during the "Kaffir Wars," the wars of pacification fought against native tribes. There certainly were younger men within the command structure, and many with more progressive ideas, but it

was the elders who tended to hold sway within the military council. Consequently, the immediate strategy that evolved was cautious and conservative.



**Joubert**

Cautious ideology or not, the military situation at the onset very much favored the Boer. The British could rely on just a small garrison of a few thousand imperial troops and a collection of regionally organized colonial militias. The younger men within the Boer leadership, among them a brilliant young lawyer by the name of Jan Christiaan Smuts (then the Transvaal state attorney) and a charismatic farmer by the name of Louis Botha, both urged a rapid seizure of the key ports in order to prevent the landing of a British expeditionary force, which would inevitably occur at some point. This was undoubtedly a logical strategy, and had it been followed, it is possible that what many saw as an inevitable Boer defeat might have been avoided.



**Smuts**



**Smuts and Boer guerrillas in 1901**



### **Botha**

At the same time, there were many within the higher echelons of Boer leadership, most notably Jan Smuts, who did not see much hope of an ultimate military victory for the Boer. The integration of the Boer republics into the British network of overseas territories was in some respects inevitable, and the overwhelming power of the British Empire somewhat precluded any hope of the British truly being defeated. What Smuts and others saw as more likely was a situation where war, in the Clausewitzian sense of the word, would be deployed as an instrument of politics. It was a question of under what terms and conditions the republics would submit to British superintendentship, and what could be decided by war.

Others, of course, did not see the situation in quite so nuanced a form. Anti-British sentiment was almost a religion in the republics, and among the mid-level command, ignorance of the outside world and a general lack of strategic understanding meant that many believed it was a simple question of victory or defeat.

From the beginning, the British moved wisely. The Jameson Raid had originated from the British protectorate of Bechuanaland, the modern day Botswana, and the British gambled that a build-up of forces in the same region would play on Boer paranoia, resulting in a deployment of forces away from the main strategic ports in the Cape and in Natal. The British strategy was to draw Boer forces into the north and northeast of the Transvaal, and from there the British would defend two key settlements, the diamond mining town of Kimberley and the railway depot of Mafeking. This would draw the Boer into pointless sieges that would divert and engage a disproportional amount of Boer manpower, and so long as the sieges were maintained, that manpower would be diverted away from more potentially productive targets.

When war broke out, this is precisely what happened, and the sieges of Kimberley and Mafeking began by mid-October. However, on October 12, a day after the declaration, 21,000 Boer horsemen also surged out of the Transvaal and the Orange Free State into Natal, where they laid siege to the British garrison town of Ladysmith, which most analysts agree was the signature Boer strategic blunder of the war. Without a doubt, had that force bypassed Ladysmith and thereby isolated the garrison by simply sealing road and rail access, it could have concentrated its main effort on the port town of Durban, Natal. That would have made British landings far more difficult. At the same time, had the temptation to lay siege to Mafeking and Kimberley been resisted, and the men and artillery so preoccupied been directed to Cape Town and Port Elizabeth, the Cape might also have been secured.



### **A picture of Boer troops in a trench outside Mafeking**

The sieges of Kimberley and Mafeking were for the most part static, while Ladysmith, the more famous of the three, was much more dynamic.

The commander of British troops in South Africa was Sir Redvers Buller, a veteran of the subcontinent and many other African colonial conflicts. When the war started, Buller was dispatched from England, and he arrived in South Africa to assume his command at the end of October 1899. By then, a mixed force of some 15,000 British troops, the Natal Field Force, had been diverted to Natal from various locations and had landed under the command of Lieutenant General Sir George White. In the expectation of a Boer movement against the Natal ports, White had been advised not to deploy his troops too far inland, but upon taking command, he discovered that his immediate subordinate, General Sir Penn Symons, had already pushed advance units to two points in the Natal interior. The first of these was the garrison town of Ladysmith, located 60 miles inland of Durban, and the second was the coal mining town of Dundee, a further 25 miles northeast of Ladysmith.





**Buller and his wife**





**White**

Surrounded by hills, Dundee became the site of the first major action of the war.<sup>[9]</sup> The *Battle of Talana Hill* took place on October 20, 1899, as Boer forces occupied a prominent hill overlooking the town, and opened the action with a largely ineffectual artillery barrage aimed at the British camp. The character of the British response was direct, with a full frontal infantry advance covered by reasonably accurate artillery fire advancing directly against Boer positions. It was a punishing advance for the British, who paid dearly for their first victory, losing some 446 men in the action, including General Sir Penn Symons himself who received a fatal rifle shot in the stomach.

As advance British troops closed in on the summit of the hill, the Boer simply mounted their horses and galloped away, regrouping at a point called Elandsplaagte. This cut off the British retreat to the main force in Ladysmith, which would prove to be the pattern in many of the preliminary battles that followed.

The opening stages of the war were conventional, insofar as the Boer moved in large formations, utilizing supply columns and artillery. Even still, they were significantly more mobile than the British. British columns

were monolithic, and their tactical maneuvers were ponderous and predictable. In this regard, the Boers enjoyed an initial advantage.

Meanwhile, a second action was fought soon afterwards as the British attacked Boer positions at Elandslaagte to clear the lines. In what came to be known as the Battle of Elandslaagte, the British, commanded by Major General John French, scattered the Boer. General White, assessing the situation from his command room in Ladysmith, was convinced that a much larger concentration of Boer was massing to hit the advanced column, so he ordered a rapid retreat. Given that the British won a tactical victory at Elandslaagte, this had about it the flavor of an overly hasty retreat, and it immediately squandered any advantage gained. As the column entered the precincts of Ladysmith a few days later, the Boer simply closed in behind them, and positioning their siege guns on the surrounding high ground, they began to lay down a carpet of fire.

General White, in a rather ill-conceived response, sent out a strong foot and mounted force under orders to take the Boer artillery positions, but the attack was almost immediately broken against the entrenched Boer forces and an enfilade of witheringly accurate Boer musketry. This became known as the Battle of Ladysmith, and it ushered in a period of disastrous British reverses that would mark the beginning of the British counter-offensive. The British seemed to consistently underestimate the mobile fighting capabilities and the superb marksmanship of individual Boer combatants, and in long-range engagements over open ground, the advantage almost always went the Boer's way.



### **British soldiers at the Battle of Ladysmith**

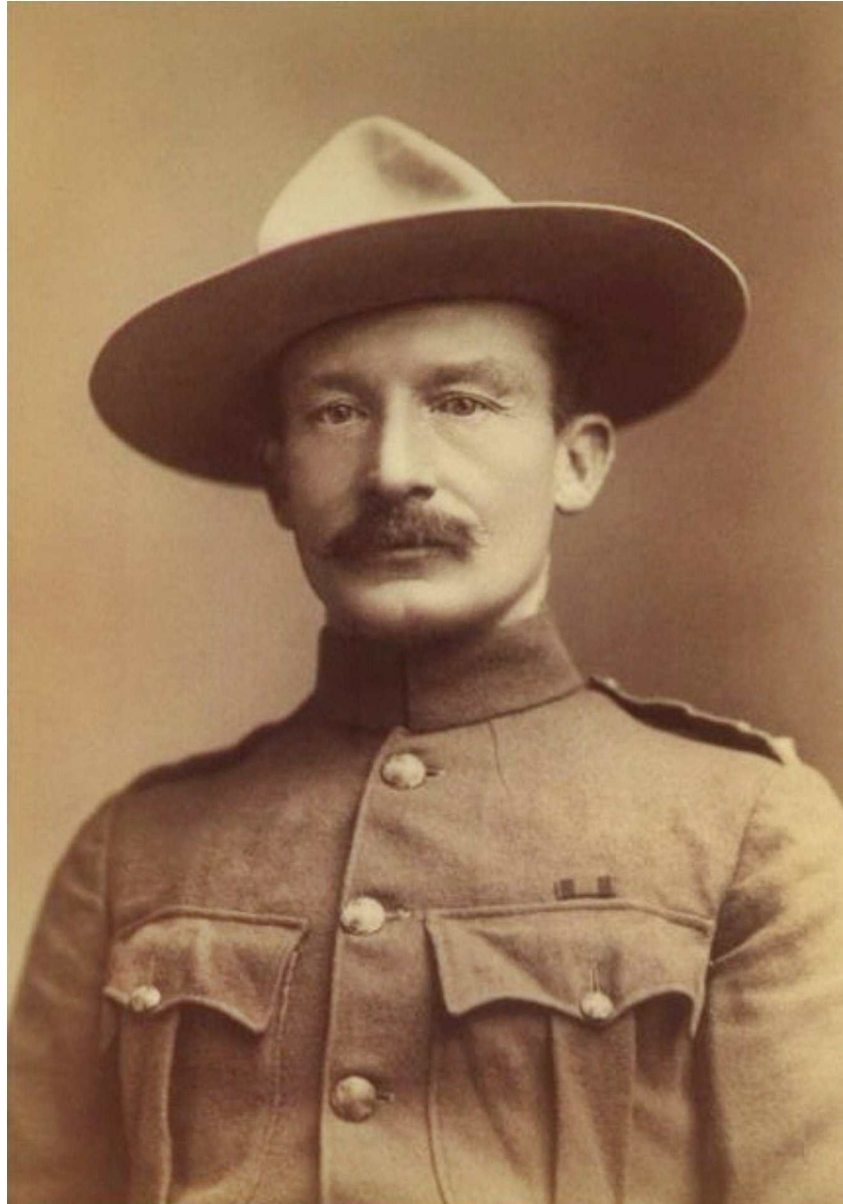
At this point in the conflict, Boer morale and cohesion were very high. They were well-armed, capably led on a detachment level, and well-mounted. British troops, on the other hand, with a command element still somewhat reliant on the tactics of the last war, deployed set-piece advances over open ground, or in the face of entrenched positions that were easily targeted and cut up by a mobile and elusive enemy. The British were armed with a state-of-the-art rifle, the .303 Lee Metford, that was capable of a high degree of accuracy and a high rate of fire, but these advantages were not properly utilized. Perhaps the only real utilitarian advance that the British Army had made since the last major war in South Africa, fought against the Zulu, was to abandon the ubiquitous redcoat, which would have been nothing less than a joy to Boer marksmen as the hapless British troopers marched in open formation across the battlefield. British troops now adopted khaki, which proved to be a far more practical uniform for the African veld, but their battlefield tactics were still slower to evolve.

It is also perhaps worth noting that the British Expeditionary Force that set sail soon afterwards, and which would eventually number upwards of 240,000 men, included numerous colonial militias and detachments from Canada, New Zealand and Australia. They joined numerous local rough-rider style commandoes, and they introduced to the tactical rulebook of the British Army an entirely new concept of warfare. As the Boer fought an

increasingly mobile campaign, utilizing marksmanship and horsemanship in combination with local knowledge, these smaller imperial units responded in kind, developing many of the ground rules of future guerrilla warfare.

In the wake of the Battle of Ladysmith, the British attack column returned to Ladysmith having suffered 140 men killed, many more wounded, and some 1,000 captured. After that, the Siege of Ladysmith began.

By the time the siege closed in on Ladysmith, the sieges of Kimberley and Mafeking had been in effect for almost a month, and the stresses of siege life had already begun to tell in both places. Regular artillery bombardments and food shortages were the main problems, and as the sieges wore on, these stresses amplified. Eventually, however, siege life settled into a predictable routine on both sides, and permeable lines allowed for some back-and-forth movement of dispatches and personnel. The Siege of Mafeking, commanded by the legendary Colonel Robert Baden-Powell, was perhaps the most isolated of all, and conditions were the most spartan, but in all instances, a high degree of creativity came into play. There was plenty of daring in the periodic breaking of the sieges, and even some gentlemanly fair play in the celebration of events and holidays.



**Baden-Powell**

Trapped in Kimberley at the time of the siege was Cecil John Rhodes, whose mining interests were mainly in that city. Rhodes, in keeping with his nature, frequently attempted to usurp the authority of the military commander, Lieutenant Colonel Robert Kekewich, who periodically threatened Rhodes with arrest over his constant meddling. Kimberley was a large mining settlement, so numerous industrial workshops were available to improvise weapons and protections, including an armored train. On the

whole, the residents of Kimberley survived the experience without too great a hardship.



**Kekewich**

Ladysmith, however, was where the attention of the British Empire was mostly focused. Commanding the Boer forces was the young and charismatic field commander Louis Botha. The world would hear a great deal of Louis Botha in future years, and eventually he would emerge as the first Prime Minister of the Transvaal, and then of the Union of South Africa. He would ultimately become one of the most widely respected imperial statesmen of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. For the time being, however, he was just 37 years old, but a dynamic and gifted tactical commander.

Botha had already proved himself in the field, but the real test would come when he faced the imperious and overconfident General Buller. Buller had by then landed in Cape Town, and he was busy organizing his expeditionary force, which included an army corps of three divisions. His original intention had been to march directly northwards from Cape Town to Pretoria, taking the Orange Free State Capital of Bloemfontein en route, but the sieges complicated this, so he was forced upon arrival to modify his plan. One division was therefore sent north under the command of

Lieutenant General Lord Paul Methuen to relieve the garrisons at Kimberley and Mafeking, another smaller force was sent to contain any possible uprising of Boer in the Cape, and he personally led the largest detachment by sea to Port Natal, from where he would push overland towards Ladysmith.

This monumental deployment began what has since come to be known in British military lore as Black Week. The large, heavily supported British columns immediately began to run afoul of mobile Boer commandos, and from December 10-15, the British suffered several shocking defeats.

The first of these was the Battle of Stormberg, fought on December 10, where 135 British troops were killed and 600 were captured. Next came the Battle of Magersfontein on December 11, in which 14,000 British troops advanced on Kimberley and were thrown back at the cost of 120 killed and 690 wounded. The efforts to relieve Kimberley and Mafeking were failing miserably.

The lowest point of Black Week came on December 15, 1899, when Buller, leading a column of 21,000 men, came up against a smaller force of 8,000 Transvaal Boer commanded by General Botha. Buller landed in Durban on December 6, and with surprising efficiency, was very quickly on the move. News reached him en route of the defeats at Stormberg and Magersfontein, which simply added to his impatience to deal promptly with Ladysmith in order that he could turn his attention to the wider theatre. A major obstacle to be negotiated, however, was the Tugela River, flowing off the eastern slopes of the Drakensberg and entering the Indian Ocean some 70 miles north of Durban. This barred his way, and under any circumstances, it was a formidable obstacle and a superb defensive barrier for the Boer. Buller made a direct approach on the river in the direction of the small town of Colenso, located 20 miles or so south of Ladysmith. The landscape was open, with areas of high ground scattered here and there upon which Boer reconnaissance groups carefully plotted his advance. On the opposing bank, the Boers were dug in, ready to contest the crossing.

The Battle of Colenso was not only a confused and bloody action, replete with the desperate heroism so typical of British military lore – four Victoria Crosses were awarded – but it also demonstrated the same stultifying lack

of tactical creativity that was a trademark feature of Victorian warfare. Ultimately, Buller's division was thwarted in its effort to cross, and it was driven back with heavy casualties. British losses ran to 143 killed, 756 wounded, and 220 captured. The battlefield consisted largely of open ground, which gave the Boer a virtually unrestricted field of fire, and notwithstanding punishing artillery duels back and forth across the river, efforts to move infantry across the river simply proved too costly. A portion of the high ground – a hill known as Hlangwane – was occupied by the Boer, and it commanded the battlefield. So long as this was held, the Boer held the advantage.



**A picture of part of the battleground**

The British weren't the only ones making mistakes. The Boer did not follow-up these impressive tactical victories, allowing the British to withdraw, regroup and reorganize. Over the next few weeks, Buller received steady reinforcements, and as he waited, he modified his plan. He would now move 30 miles upstream and cross the river at two points. Once he established a bridgehead, he would move his force across in order to complete the 20 miles to Ladysmith. Crucially, he intended to attack and neutralize a heavily defended Boer position on a hill known as Spion Kop, guarding the left flank of his advance. Spion Kop, at 1,410 feet, was the



commanding feature of the local landscape, and with an artillery battery positioned on top, the British would effectively command the approaches to Ladysmith.

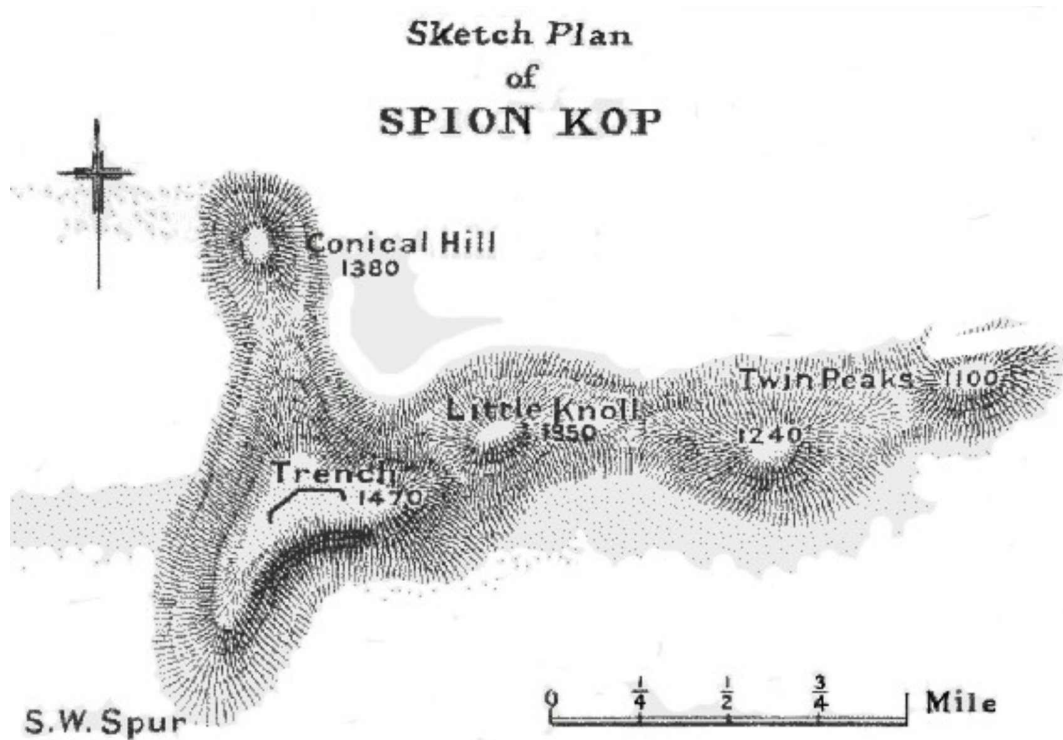
The crossing was achieved without particular difficulty, but it was during the assault on Spion Kop that things once again began to unravel. This was perhaps the most iconic battle of Buller's advance, the Battle of Spion Kop, which has been made even more famous by the fact that the Indian barrister Mohandas K. Gandhi served on the battlefield as a stretcher bearer, as a member of the Natal Indian Ambulance Corps.



**Boer forces at Spion Kop**

The topography of Spion Kop resembles an extended “L,” with the tail facing north and the highest point at the apex. Five distinct peaks or promontories mark the summit, and the Boer held the highest. On the evening of January 23, 1900, under cover of darkness and obscured by mist, the British climbed the hill and expelled a small Boer detachment from what they assumed was the summit. However, the daylight revealed that they had only occupied the lowest of the five summits, an acre-sized plateau exposed on three sides to Boer positions on higher ground. Entrenchment

was difficult because of the hard ground, and 1,000 or more British troops thus found themselves exposed on three sides to enemy fire.



**A map of the 5 peaks**

Botha ordered his men to take the position before the British could move up their heavy guns. Heavy salvos of fire poured into the shallow British trenches, and casualties quickly began to mount. The Boer directed their artillery from adjacent positions, and accurate shelling added to the misery of the beleaguered British troops. Boer reinforcements then moved up and began hitting the British from the right flank. The commanding officer, Major General Edward Woodgate, was felled by a shard of shrapnel above his right eye, and his replacement, Colonel Malby Crofton, signaled the column commander, General Sir Charles Warren, by heliograph that without immediate reinforcements, all was lost. General Warren replied with the typical valor of a rear commander that the position must be held to the last. No surrender must be contemplated.

That night, the defenders held their position, absorbing dreadful casualties while tactical command gradually collapsed in the mounting chaos. Hours later, dawn rose on a scene of abject slaughter. Tormented by heat and

thirst, low on ammunition, and still under withering fire, the surviving commander, Lieutenant Colonel Alexander Thorneycroft, continued to plead for permission to withdraw. In the end, in consultation with his fellow officers, Thorneycroft ordered a complete withdrawal on his own authority. “Better six good battalions safely down the hill than a bloody mop-up in the morning.” He is reported to have later remarked. “I’ve done all I can, and I’m not going back.”



### **A picture of dead British soldiers on the battlefield**

Ironically, the Boer forces had also largely abandoned their positions, having reached their own conclusion that further defense was pointless. The fact that British defenses had also been abandoned was only accidentally discovered by two Boer Scouts, who probed the hilltop in the early afternoon and found British trenches manned only by the dead. The Boer quickly returned and hailed their victory. The British suffered 243 fatalities during the battle, most of which were buried in the trenches where they fell. Approximately 1,250 British were either wounded or captured. The Boer, on the other hand, lost just 68 men dead and 267 wounded.

Despite the setback, the sheer weight of British numbers prevailed, and Buller was able to throw a pontoon bridge across the Tugela. After that, a mass of British infantry bore down on Ladysmith, taking the last defended points of high ground along the way. The Siege of Ladysmith was lifted on February 27, 1900, having lasted for 118 days. Withstanding the siege and lifting it cost some 7,000 British casualties.

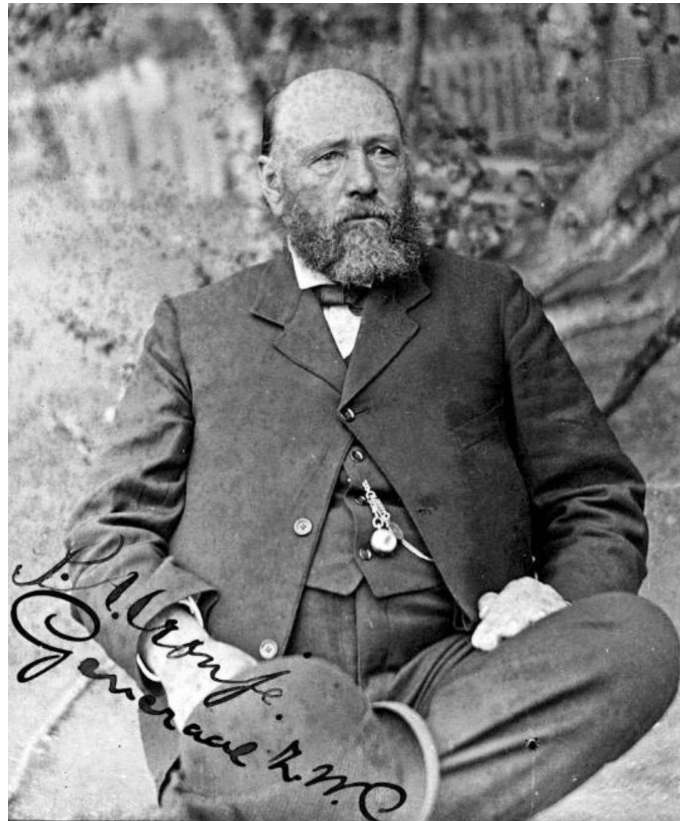


**John Henry Frederick Bacon's painting depicting the lifting of the siege at Ladysmith**

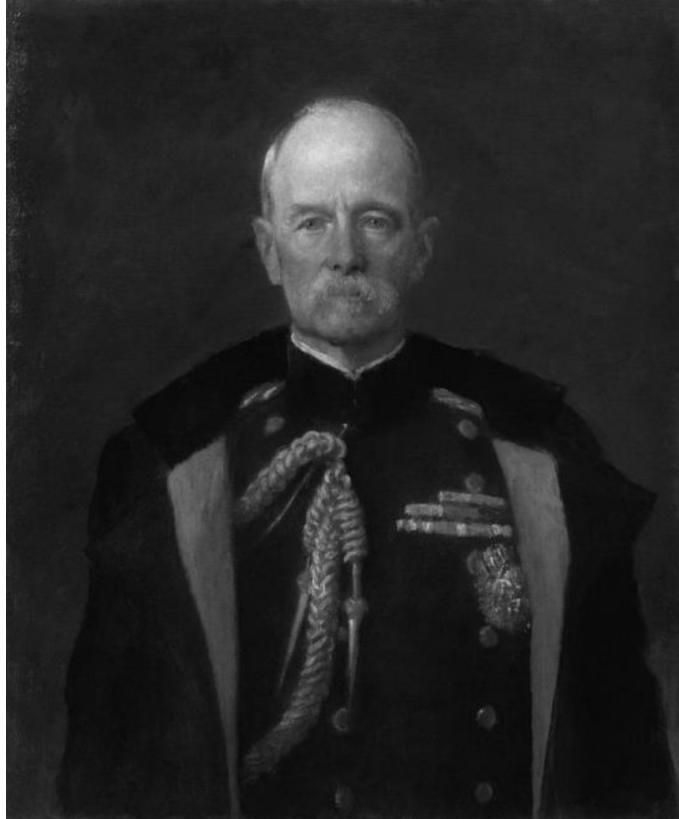
In time, the weight of British numbers prevailed over the sieges of Kimberley and Mafeking as well. The relief of Kimberley was achieved on February 15, 1900, and Mafeking was relieved on May 18.

Ironically, Buller would not be the commander who relieved Ladysmith, because his handling of the campaign came under considerable criticism, and he was relieved of overall command on December 23, 1899. He was replaced by General Sir Frederick Roberts, who arrived in Cape Town on January 10, 1900 with his second-in-command, General Lord Kitchener. They led an expeditionary force of some 50,000 men, supported by over 100 pieces of artillery.

The lifting of the sieges was a major psychological blow to the Boer, but perhaps even more so was an action that took place from February 18-27, known as the Battle of Paardeberg. The battle was fought along the banks of the Modder River about 20 miles east of Kimberley. At that battle, an army of 4,000 Boer, under the command of General Piet Cronjé, surrendered to the British, taking out of action 7% of the Boer forces.



**Cronjé**



### **Roberts**

The series of Boer defeats that had led to the lifting of the three sieges, in conjunction with the debacle at Paardeberg, served to convince many that it would now be impossible to reasonably oppose an overwhelming British force consolidating to capture and occupy the republics. Inevitably, a defeatist mood began to creep into the ranks of the Boer commandos. These prognostications tended to be confirmed as Roberts began to rapidly advance north from the Cape to the Orange Free State, scattering Boer resistance ahead of an unopposed occupation of Bloemfontein on March 13, 1900. The tide certainly seemed to have turned. The Orange Free State was formally annexed to Britain on May 28 and renamed the Orange River Colony, after which it came under British military administration. There seemed little now to hold back a lightning British advance on Pretoria.

On March 17, four days after the occupation of Bloemfontein, a meeting of the two state presidents and all of the senior commanders was held in the temporary capital of the Orange Free State, Kroonstad, located 60 miles north of Bloemfontein in the direction of Pretoria. Here it was



acknowledged that attempting to counter Roberts' steamroller tactics by conventional methods was hopeless. The struggle to retain republican independence would continue, but the strategy and tactics used to achieve this would have to change. Instead of adopting a conventional defensive position to meet the British advance across a broad front, Boer forces would now be organized into smaller units, operating in a mobile configuration and no longer dependent on conspicuous supply columns. The objective would henceforth be to interdict British lines of communication, attack from the rear, and harass the British columns at every opportunity. The broad objective was simply to extend British forces, drain British resources, and eventually provoke a backlash in Britain that would lead to favorable conditions for peace.

It was agreed, therefore, that the republican forces would split up into four main commando groups. Upon the death of Joubert in March 1900, Botha had been appointed Commandant-General of Boer forces, and he would take as his sector the Eastern Transvaal, the modern day Mpumalanga Province of South Africa. Generals Christian de Wet and James Hertzog, both Free State men, would command that sector. General Christiaan Beyers would command the territories north of Pretoria, while the ageing but highly respected General Jacobus "Koos" de la Rey would take command of the western Transvaal. Second-in-command to Koos de la Rey was the 30 year old Smuts, who had until the abandonment of Pretoria served as State Attorney and was a rising star in the Boer leadership. He was a rare creature insofar as he had been born in the Cape, making him a British subject. Indeed, he had studied law at Christ's College, Cambridge, was a member of a British Bar Association, and was fully aware of British cultural and academic tradition. He was nonetheless committed to the preservation of the republics and had been a key aid to President Kruger during the tense negotiations with the British prior to the ultimatum. At the outbreak of war, he had remained in his cabinet position, but with the collapse of the government, he was naturally absorbed into the commandos at a senior rank, even though he had no prior military experience at all.

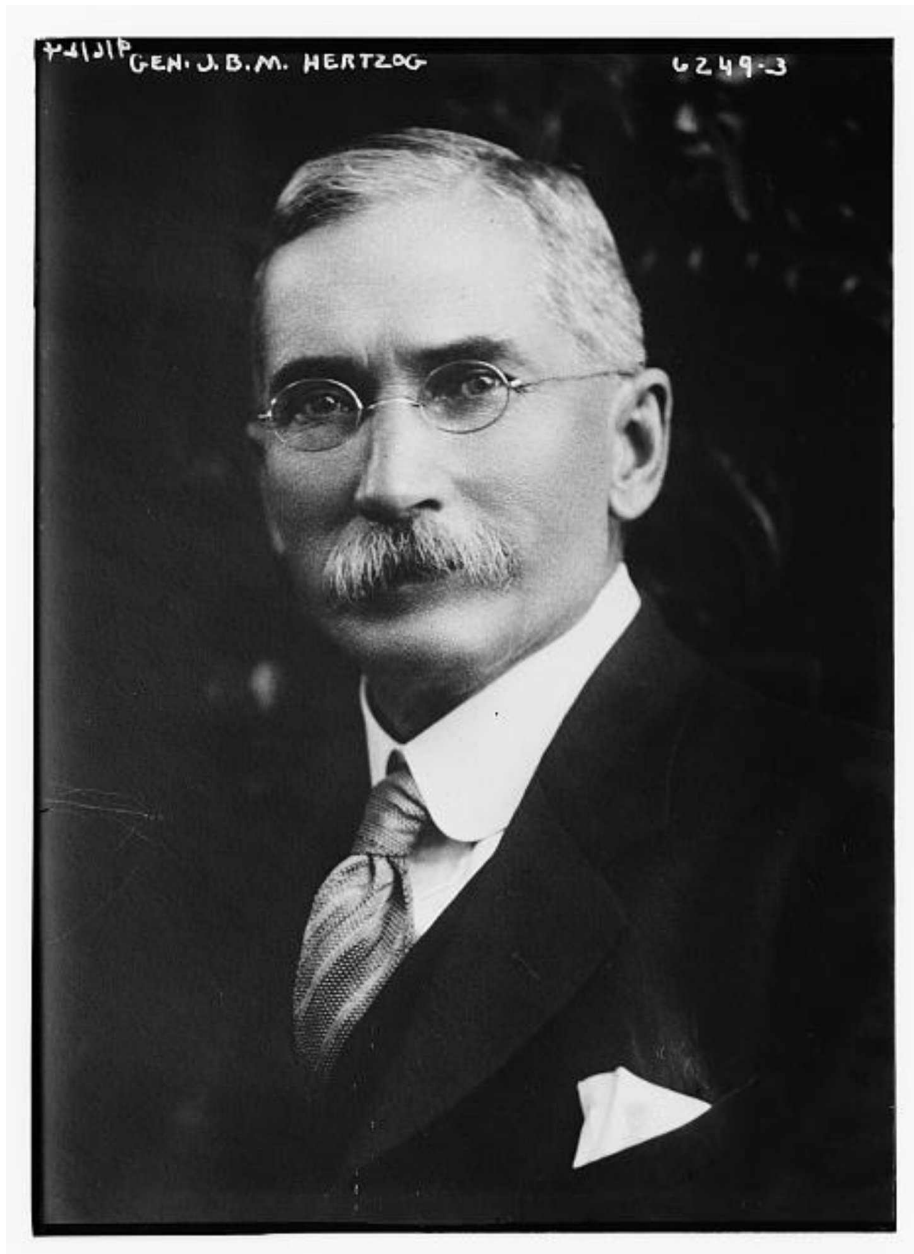
It is also important to note that the switching of tactics from conventional defensive stances to mobile offensive operations was only really possible once the older and more conservative Boer commanders had ceded

authority for one reason or another to younger, more innovative men. General Christian de Wet would emerge as probably the most celebrated Boer guerrilla leader, but Botha, de la Rey, and Smuts would also go on to forge reputations as daring and innovative commanders during this period.



**De Wet**





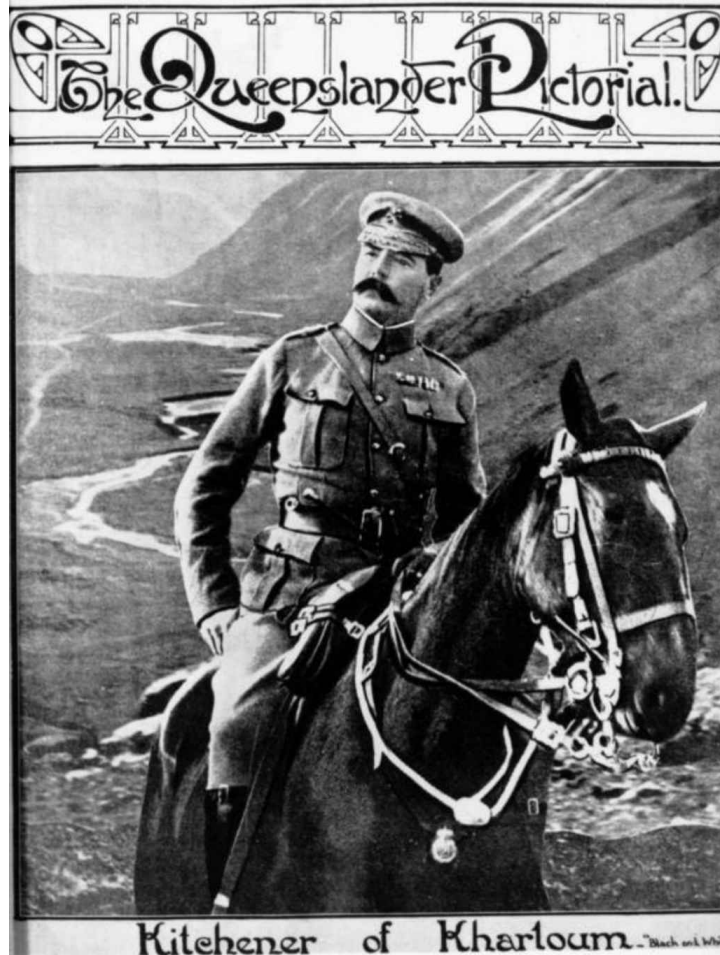
### **Hertzog**

In Pretoria, preparations began to be made to evacuate the government and prepare for an abandonment of the capital. President Kruger, 75 years old and in poor health, was put aboard a train, along with key members of his cabinet, and sent east towards Lourenço Marques, the main Portuguese East African port. Waiting for him there was the Dutch ship *Gelderland*, sent by Wilhelmina of the Netherlands to carry the Transvaal president away to safety. He would never return from his exile.

As Kruger's train steamed eastward, an enormous British expeditionary force advanced steadily on Pretoria in three parts, with two bearing up from the south commanded by General Lord Roberts himself and a third approaching from Natal under the command of Buller. By June 4, Lord Roberts had advanced to within just a few miles of the city. Johannesburg had been taken relatively easy on May 31, 1900, since it was already largely a British settled city, and after that Roberts set his sights on Pretoria. General John French, commanding the 1st Cavalry Brigade, was detached from the main force and sent west, via the small town of Krugersdorp, to circle around Pretoria and position himself to the north behind enemy lines.

This was an odd move under the circumstances. Had Roberts deployed French and his mobile force east of Pretoria instead of west, he would have been able to capture the vital Delagoa Bay railway line, upon which Kruger had recently slipped away, cutting off any further Boer retreat and blocking the obvious route of escape that the Boer defenders and leadership would take. In all likelihood, however, Roberts probably gave no consideration to the possibility that the Boer civil and military leadership would do anything other than surrender upon the occupation of Pretoria. In the British rulebook of warfare, the capture of the enemy's capital marked the end of the war, and the idea that the Boer would fall back on their time-honored principle of mobile warfare by abandoning their cities and taking to the countryside likely never occurred to him.

Behind the lines, however, de Wet had already begun mounting hit-and-run attacks against British positions, attacking from the rear, scoring several victories in quick succession, capturing quantities of arms and supplies, and inflicting significant casualties. Kitchener was promptly deployed south by Roberts to deal with this unexpected turn of events, but de Wet remained elusive. On the evening of June 12-13, Kitchener's guard unit was hit in a surprise raid, forcing Kitchener himself to flee the scene in his pajamas and take refuge in a nearby Yeomanry camp.



### **Kitchener**

As this was going on, Roberts formally annexed the Transvaal on September 1, 1900, and satisfied that the war was effectively over, he handed over command of what he believed would be no more than extensive mopping up to his second-in-command, Lord Kitchener. He returned to England in late November to take up his new role as commander-in-chief of the British Army.

Unbeknownst to British leaders, the annexation of the two republics was premature. The British controlled the administrative centers, but the Boer held sway in the countryside. Roberts was still on the high seas heading back to England when the guerrilla war in South Africa escalated dramatically. On December 13, 1900, a Boer force commanded by de la Rey, Smuts, and Beyers surprised a British force at Nooitgedacht, west of Pretoria, and overran their camp. British losses were 109 killed, 186

wounded, and at least 368 taken prisoner, while the Boers lost only 32 killed and 46 wounded. This would form the pattern for the next few months.

In mid-December, Hertzog crossed the Orange River and entered the Cape Colony with a large force, intending to take the fight directly to the British in hopes of provoking a large-scale Boer rebellion in the Cape. In fact, the Cape Dutch had not and would not actively enter the war in big numbers. Some did on an individual basis, maybe 5,000 in total, but Hertzog's invasion did at least relieve the pressure elsewhere. Guerrilla activities elsewhere continued, with the western Transvaal, under de la Rey and Smuts, becoming arguably the most active region.

While they ramped up the guerrilla tactics, the Boer launched a parallel diplomatic offensive. The British, never popular in Europe, attempted to portray the ongoing action as the mopping up of limited resistance, while the Boer sought to counter this by assuring the international community, including the Americans, that they were still very much engaged in the struggle. Boer officials were sent to various European capitals and the United States in an effort to secure arbitration and support for a continuation of the struggle. However, while there was a great deal of expressed sympathy for the Boer's position, very little support or practical aid came about as a result of these efforts.

Perhaps one of the most noteworthy actions of the guerrilla phase of the war was General Smuts' invasion of the Cape Colony, which began early in September 1901 and followed up on Hertzog's unspectacular effort. This was undertaken for the same basic reason, but it proved much more successful, cementing Smuts' reputation as a gifted military commander and setting him on the path to attain one of the highest military offices in the British Empire.

Although the greater strategic objective of this ambitious raid was never achieved – the Cape Dutch still stayed out of the war – the episode was a remarkable tactical success insofar as some 350 mounted men successfully remained at large in the colony until the war was eventually concluded with a treaty. Although hounded relentlessly by British and loyal columns, it

succeeded in remaining operational, raising its force to an eventual 4,000, and at times getting within 150 miles of Cape Town itself.

It soon became clear to Kitchener that he had been left with a job far greater than simply mopping up. A relatively small, mobile Boer force now had the British running around in circles across the vast spaces of South Africa, with no apparent intention of surrendering. What Kitchener was essentially confronting was the same kind of battle conditions that future counterinsurgency strategists would deal with in later African wars: an asymmetric military equation whereby the enemy enjoyed intimacy with the landscape and the broad sympathy of the non-combatant population. The campaign was now as much against the Boer as the almost limitless expanses of the South African Veld. The time-honored use of mass maneuver was irrelevant, and an entirely new strategy was required.

The first consideration was Boer support and supply. Now largely estranged from formal weapons procurement, the commandos were increasingly dependent on captured weapons and supplies. For this, Kitchener introduced severe penalties, including summary execution for any Boer combatants captured wearing British Army uniforms or using British equipment and weapons. That proved to have a minor impact; since they came from a largely agrarian population, almost every Boer fighter in the field was connected to a farm or rural homestead.

Since the Boer commandos were typically deployed on or near their home districts, a movement to and from the home front and the front-line was ongoing. Kitchener, therefore, conceived very quickly the advantage of cutting off this avenue of support. In fact, Roberts had previously ordered the destruction of rebel Boer farms in the Cape quite early on during his inland advance, but this was largely punitive rather than preventative, and also perhaps for the purpose of looting livestock. He regarded such targets as legitimate since Boer farms supplied the commandos with food, fodder for their horses, information with regard to British troop movements, and medical care to the wounded. Thanks to this, Kitchener was offered a precedent for a much wider implementation of the program, which is precisely what he did.

The British scorched earth policy went into effect piecemeal, but it quickly gathered intensity, and ultimately some 30,000 Boer farms and homesteads were burned or torched, with the additional destruction of associated black homesteads. This resulted in the devastation of over 100,000 homes. Alongside this, 40 towns and villages of various sizes were razed to the ground. As a consequence, large areas of the Orange Free State and the Transvaal were laid to waste.

In conjunction with this, Kitchener authorized the use of internment camps to further isolate Boer fighters from their families, which would hopefully have the added effect of undermining the will to fight on the part of those whose families were now suffering the punitive effects of the war. The term “concentration camp” has fallen into disfavor in recent years for obvious reasons, and historians tend to prefer “internment camps” when describing the British camps, but the lingering effects of this experience still reside very much in the collective consciousness of the South African Afrikaans community.



**A camp near Cape Town**

The first two camps, situated in Pretoria and Bloemfontein, started as authentic refugee camps housing those displaced by the war for one reason or another, or for the families of Boer commando members who had surrendered. But once the scorched earth policy was rolled out, the families of active commando members were also driven into these camps, at which point they acquired the name “concentration camps.”

It is also worth noting that a large number of blacks associated with Boer farms and homesteads were likewise interned under similarly restrictive conditions, but in separately located camps. Black families, whether or not they were actually associated with Boer families, were as deeply affected by the scorched earth policy as the other rural inhabitants of the Orange Free State and the Transvaal. According to some accounts, there was an ulterior motive on the part of the British in targeting black civilians in this manner, and this was to gain a source of captive or coerced labor for the various noncombatant roles necessary to support such a vast British expeditionary force. These roles not only included such necessary functions as wagon drivers, stockmen, herders and general camp labor, but also more specialized roles such as tracking and reconnaissance, for which they were often ideally suited. The British made widespread use of them, as did the Boer, albeit to a lesser degree.

After awhile, the use of camps, the scorched earth policy, and the extreme social hardships that all of this imposed upon the civilian population began to attract the attention of British liberals and humanitarians. A broadly conservative government was in power in Britain at the time, and the South African situation, now widely considered a social blight, provided the opposition Liberal party with partisan political ammunition. This was aided considerably by the work of one of the first and most influential British humanitarians and philanthropists of the age, a formidable woman by the name of Emily Hobhouse, who almost singlehandedly exposed and publicized the South African concentration camps.



### **Hobhouse**

The British authorities in South Africa pursued a multi-tier system in the camps, insofar as ration distribution and general comforts within the wires were made available to a greater degree to the families of those men who voluntarily surrendered. Resources were withheld from the families of those men who did not. The result was widespread hunger and disease within the camps, and figures later produced suggest that some 4,177 women died, 22,074 children under the age of 16 died, and 1,676 non-combatant men died. It's estimated that the population in the camps numbered 85,000-94,000.

On June 18, 1901, Hobhouse produced a report following a tour of inspection of many such camps, entitled *To the S.A. Distress Fund, Report of a visit to the camps of women and children in the Cape and Orange River Colonies*. The damning nature of this report not only provoked measured concern in Parliament but also widespread revulsion among the wider



Victorian British public, further consolidating a growing anti-war movement. There were many within the British establishment who began to ask whether the annihilation of the Boer and the absolute destruction of their lives and livelihoods could be considered a legitimate tactic of war.

Naturally, Kitchener came under increasing criticism, and his antipathy towards Emily Hobhouse caused him often to refer to her as “That Bloody Woman,” a moniker that she apparently accepted with a great deal of pride and self-satisfaction.

In the meanwhile, she continued her public campaign, publishing and lecturing widely and collecting funds to improve conditions in the camps. To Lord Kitchener, she wrote, “I hope in future you will exercise greater width of judgement in the exercise of your high office. To carry out orders such as these is a degradation both to the office and the manhood of your soldiers. I feel ashamed to own you as a fellow-countryman.”

In time, the British government was accused by both its opposition and members of its own party of pursuing a policy of extermination, and soon enough the question of human rights violations in South Africa became the opposition’s clarion call. “When is a war not a war?” asked the Liberal Opposition Leader, Henry Campbell-Bannerman, to which he also answered, “When it is carried on by methods of barbarism in South Africa.”

Against a backdrop of the explosive contents of Emily Hobhouse’s report and the steady trickle of defamatory facts, the government found itself in a position requiring a response. This response took the form of a commission of inquiry, the Fawcett Commission. The Fawcett Commission was headed by a woman, Millicent Fawcett, a leader of the woman’s suffrage movement who led an all-woman panel, making it quite unique for the time. Fawcett was a Liberal-Unionist, nominally a government insider, and the administration hoped for leniency in her report, but that was not to be the case. Fawcett submitted a report that went even further than Hobhouse in its unrestrained criticism of Kitchener’s methods. As a result, responsibility for the administration of the camps was handed over to the civilian authorities, philanthropic organizations were given access, and conditions steadily began to improve.



**Fawcett**

It was broadly concluded that Kitchener had not pursued a deliberate policy of extermination, but simply that the scale of camp administration, and the level of priority the camps occupied in the overall military equation, inevitably resulted in unacceptable neglect. Kitchener was a soldier, not a civilian administrator, and the deployment and use of a system of camps to accommodate those who were accumulated there as a byproduct of a unique war was simply too new.

Other commentators and subsequent historians have been less charitable. Kitchener, they argue, used the deplorable conditions and the suffering of the inmates as propaganda. Word of what was taking place would inevitably leak to the front lines, and naturally, it would add incentive to many Boer men sitting on the fence to surrender. When no longer able to practically do this, Kitchener changed tack, ordering that his forces in the field not bring in women and children for internment but send them across the lines to join the fighting men. Thus encumbered, the commandos would find it increasingly difficult to survive, let alone maneuver, and once more, surrenders would be encouraged.

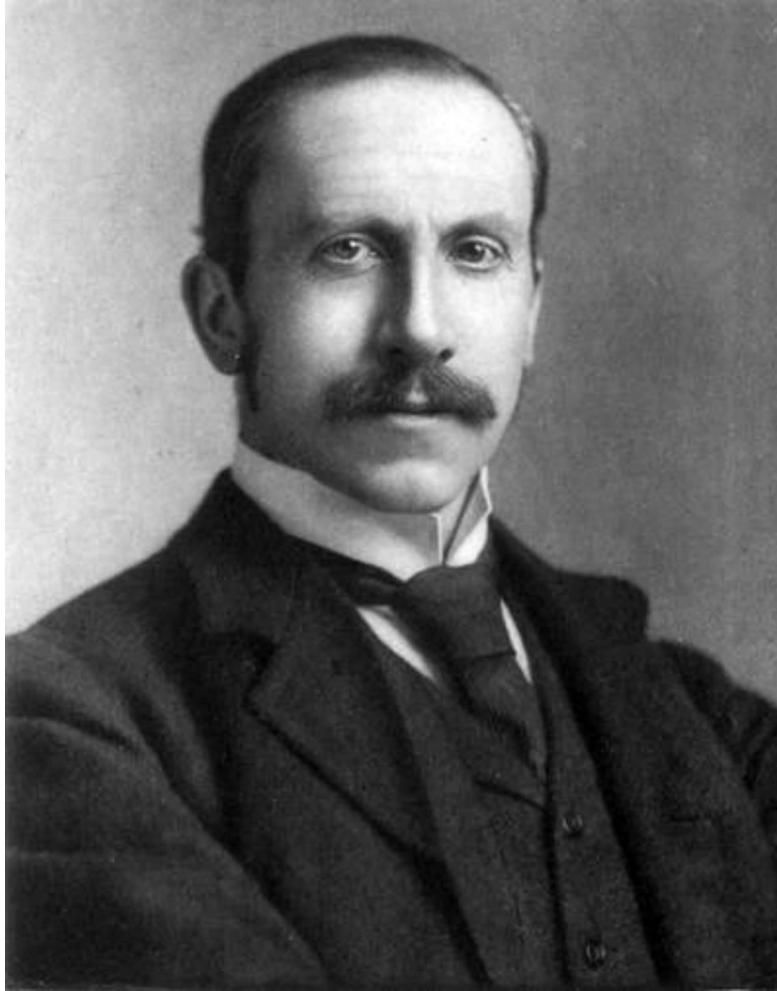
On the battlefield, Kitchener was no less diligent in applying his revised military policy. Roberts had begun a program of fortifying strategic bridges, railway junctions, and other places of importance against Boer attacks, and Kitchener began to expand on this program with the construction of blockhouses. These were in essence strong-points located in a grid system across the great expanses, linked by barbed wire. They eventually numbered 8,000 and were manned by a garrison of 60,000 soldiers and supported by 25,000 non-white auxiliaries. The blockhouse system was probably only useful in combination with the mass drives that Kitchener also implemented, but as an obstruction to free Boer movement across the landscape, they were certainly of at least some value. The drives were mass infantry movements mounted to keep the Boer mobile, and where possible to trap them against blockhouses and large garrison forces. This was feasible in the open country of the Orange Free State, and although some success was recorded, on the whole, against the mobility of the Boer commandos, it was not all that impactful. To patrol railway lines, which were always vulnerable, armored trains were deployed, but again, they were too few and too cumbersome to really have any widespread effect.

While no one policy was terribly successful on its own, all of these policies succeeded in wearing down Boer resistance, and by the beginning of 1902, a combination of dwindling numbers, hunger, diminishing supplies, and a general sense of hopelessness had begun to erode Boer morale. By April 1902, there were approximately 21,000 Boer combatants left active in the field, many without horses, rifles, or ammunition. British forces in South Africa numbered 240,000 at the peak of deployment, with huge numbers of auxiliaries. It was beginning to become clear to Boer leadership that the struggle could not continue for much longer, and at the very least, some kind of a negotiated peace would be preferable to their annihilation.

By April 1902, Kitchener was at his wit's end over the entire conflict, and he was anxious to see it end. Under safe conduct, he allowed the Boer leadership to meet in the town of Klerksdorp on the border of the Transvaal and the Orange River Colony. Attending this meeting, among others, were Transvaal President Schalk Burger, Transvaal military commander Botha, General Koos de la Rey, and Orange Free State President Martinus Steyn.

General de Wet and General Hertzog were also in attendance. The Transvaalers tended to be more open to considering peace negotiations, while the Orange Free Staters, on the whole, took a more trenchant position, arguing for a continuation of the war. A more pragmatic presence was General Smuts, who, although not ranked among the top tier of Boer leadership, was present because of his legal training and his clear understanding of British diplomatic process.

Prominent on the British side was Alfred Milner, an extremely influential character in British South Africa and one of the original architects of the war. By 1902, the geopolitical balance was moving towards a confrontation of some sort between the two major power blocs of Europe, and Milner was looking at the world in this context. The British Empire had reached the apex of its geographic scope, and the question was now less one of continued global expansion than the consolidation of the British Empire into a form that would not only accommodate the growing mood of independence among such overseas dominions as Canada, Australia, New Zealand and India, but one that would maintain such cohesion in the face of widespread war. South Africa was the only substantive British overseas territory that was home to a white European population that did not identify fundamentally as British. The smaller African territories, and such similar territories elsewhere, were British colonies and not British dominions, and their native populations did not at that point warrant consideration as independent entities. The Boer could not be classified that way.



**Milner**

These considerations compelled Milner to seek a permanent British dominance in South Africa, in order that South Africa as a future British dominion would stand alongside the other major pillars of the empire when push came to shove. In part, his strategy to achieve this was to encourage the inflow of British capital for reconstruction, the mass immigration of British labor to facilitate industry and mining, and the imposition of the English language as the language of government, the judiciary, and education. In the face of all of this, the petty anxieties of a minor race seeking to preserve their identity counted as very little.

Thus, when the Boer committee returned its position on peace, marking as its minimum negotiating position the retention of independent Boer rule

over the republics, Milner dismissed this outright. Unconditional surrender was his minimum negotiating position, and he would not be moved.

Kitchener now had to become something of a diplomat. He took aside the more moderate Boer leaders, like Botha and Smuts, and expressed his opinion that under the current conservative establishment in Britain, concessions of that magnitude would be impossible. A brutal and costly war had been fought and funded by the British for the purpose of adding South Africa to the British sphere of influence, and that, at the very least, was what was expected. However, he reminded the Boer that an election in Britain was imminent, and the likelihood would be that a Liberal government would follow. Given the Liberal position over such issues as the internment camps and other harsh realities of the war, the Boer should wait for the elections to begin sounding the British government out for a more equitable distribution of power and resource.

Smuts, of course, recognized this immediately. His history, his training, and his past engagement with the British softened his view, and naturally, he was better placed than his more bucolic comrades to recognize that the independence of a small race in a larger, imperial world was temporarily impractical. He did not like it, but he realized that it was unavoidable, at least in the short term. On his side stood Botha, now a very influential figure among the Boer, and it was with this fundamental realization that the two men guided the Boer establishment on the next step towards a negotiated peace.

On May 15, 1902, a grand council of Boer leaders gathered under an expansive marquee in the market town of Vereeniging, 40 miles southeast of Johannesburg, and here the final Boer position would be established. A series of difficult and acrimonious discussions took place, with moderates led by Smuts and Botha grappling against hardliners led by de Wet and Hertzog. There remained a strong Boer army in the field, and the war could easily be continued for a season or two, as the hardliners pointed out, but what, ultimately, would be the result of this? Terms of surrender could, under current circumstances, be negotiated that would salvage the Boer language, customs and national ideals. In the event of an unconditional surrender, all of that would be lost. Instead, the Boer would indeed be a

subject people of the British crown, but they could retain their identity as a separate people and could live to fight a different kind of war on another day.<sup>[10]</sup>

On May 17, 1902, Smuts, Botha, and Hertzog were sent to negotiate with Milner. Negotiations were rancorous and painful, but in the end, in exchange for their survival, the Boer leadership accepted the loss of their independence and an acknowledgement of British sovereignty over the republics. At the same time, extremely generous reconstruction funding was authorized, which Milner distributed quickly, dramatically easing the conditions of a great many impoverished Boer.

Moreover, the treaty, known thereafter as the Treaty of Vereeniging, left open the possibility of self-government under the terms of British dominion. This provision was vague, and its terms were unspecified, but it held promise for the future, and for the time being, that was enough.



**Amanda Calitz's picture of the table on which the treaty was signed**

## **The Union of South Africa**

The events that followed the Boer War and the treaty quickly brought about the creation of modern South Africa. The two new colonies of the Orange River and the Transvaal were incorporated into the British Empire, under military rule initially and then under formal British administration, with Milner serving as de facto governor-general of South Africa. He implemented his policy of promoting British capital and immigration vigorously, with mixed results.

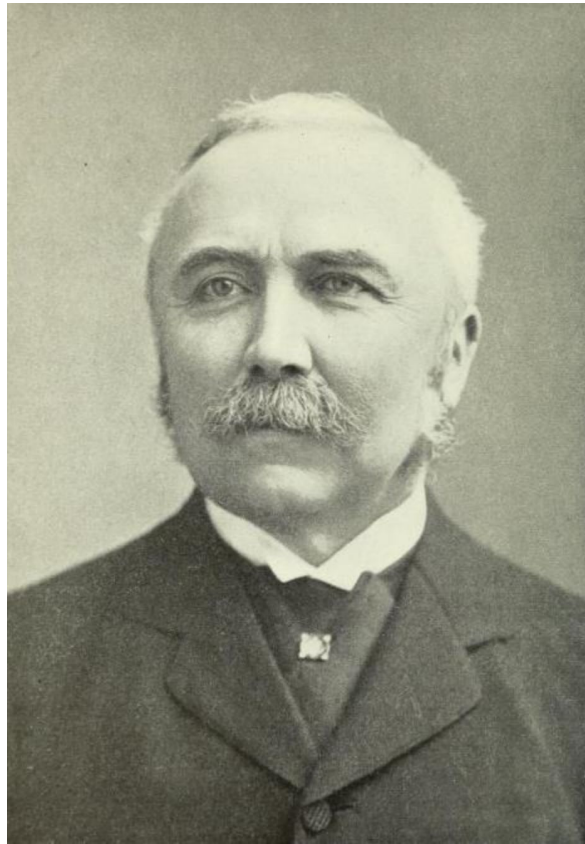
Initially, the old Boer leadership, with Botha and Smuts now somewhat leading the pack, retreated into the background and refused any kind of engagement with the colonial government on any level. Milner did try to draw prominent Boer leaders into the various new colonial administrations, but this was almost always unsuccessful. No Boer leader would formally associate with the British government, which left Milner entirely accountable for the results of his policies.

Milner was confronted by the need to restart the Transvaal mining industry in order to jumpstart the economy. British capital was available to achieve this, but British labor was slow to avail itself of the opportunity. Black labor at that point was not sufficiently developed to fill the gap, so Milner was forced to contemplate imported Chinese indentured labor. This proved so universally unpopular, both in South Africa and in Britain, that it brought down the British government and discredited Milner and his entire pro-British policy in South Africa.

This was precisely the moment that Kitchener had predicted, and a Liberal victory in the 1906 British general election offered the opportunity for General Smuts to open negotiations. A strong personal sympathy and friendship developed between Smuts, who was a man of towering intellect and great statesmanship, and the new British Prime Minister, Henry Campbell-Bannerman. Smuts' position was simply that Britain would be wise to cultivate the friendship of the Boer since it would be they who would ultimately decide the direction in which South Africa would tilt when the time came for taking sides in a global war. Campbell-Bannerman

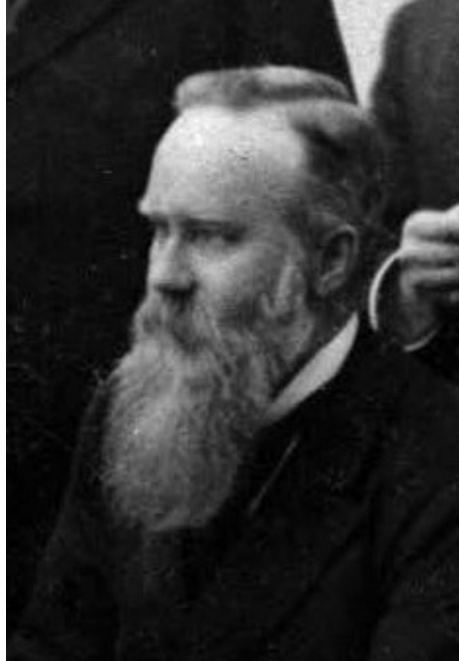


agreed, and the broad terms for the self-government of the colonies were established.



**Campbell-Bannerman**

Self-government within the British Empire implied a domestically elected legislature, prime minister, and cabinet, under the broad and very loose terms of British superintendentship. This was the status of all the substantive British overseas dominions at that time, and it was seen in South Africa as an obvious precursor to South African dominion status within the Commonwealth. An election was held in 1907, and in the Orange River Colony, Abraham Fischer became the first (and only) prime minister. In Transvaal, Botha was similarly elected, with Smuts as his deputy.



**Fischer**

The next constitutional development was the amalgamation of all four British territories in South Africa into a single unified colony. Again, it was Smuts who led the process, which was largely one of reconciling the various peculiarities and race policies of each colony into a single constitutional format. The Cape, for example, enjoyed a long tradition of free franchise and liberal race policies, while the Transvaal remained deeply conservative and antagonistic towards any non-white inclusion in government or the administration. The British, on the whole, were amicable to South African unity, but they were forced by circumstance and political reality to swallow an overall race policy that was extremely retrogressive when compared to contemporary British thinking.

Nonetheless, the Union of South Africa was formalized by Parliament on September 20, 1909, and it came into being on May 31, 1910.

In both former colonies, the question of race was deliberately kept off the agenda as the election campaigns went ahead. The British were willing to ignore the obvious anomaly of a whites-only electorate in a multi-racial colony, but only in the interests of peace and harmony in the region. The issue, therefore, was best ignored and left to be dealt with at a later date. In the matter of race relations, the Orange Free State, under the sway of a

deeply conservative and right-wing establishment, would tolerate no discussion whatsoever of black political engagement. The electorate of the Transvaal remained almost exclusively white, with only a minimum of Indian participation, with Natal retaining its constitution that barred Indian participation and limited black involvement to almost zero. The Cape, on the other hand, held on to its colorblind franchise but found itself swimming very much against the tide as its northern neighbors entrenched an attitude of formal racial exclusion.

Black political activity, however, was beginning to gather momentum. In the Cape, it existed at an advanced stage, with several black language newspapers, numerous high profile and active political figures, and several organizations falling just short of political parties. There were also numerous independent churches that functioned in an extremely political environment, and, in fact, it was in this environment that the radical black nationalist movement began to push out its first shoots.

The most politically active region of the country was the Witwatersrand, where by 1910 black laborers from all across the region met and mingled. Most of the Chinese had by then been sent home, replaced almost entirely by blacks. Migrant labor in the South African gold mines was drawn from a very wide catchment, with Congolese mingling with southern Sotho, and Nyasas sharing a common lingua franca with Mozambicans and Northern Rhodesians.<sup>[11]</sup> Revolutionary ideas easily followed these arteries of migrant labor, and as men entered and assimilated the cash economy, so they grew fluent in modern life and politics. As a consequence, the mine compounds of the Witwatersrand were hotbeds of nationalist political activity and the free exchange of ideas.

It was in this environment that radical political ideologies were developed and organizations were founded. In 1882, the Ethiopian Church had been created in Pretoria, with its rallying cry being Psalm 68:31: "Ethiopia shall soon stretch forth its hands unto God." This psalm was interpreted to mean that God and the black races would soon link hands in the common purpose of liberating the nation and all the subject people of the world. This was a powerful concept, and it produced an ecumenical movement that was more politics than religion that established the first organized black forum with a

mass following. Toward the end of the 19th century, the Ethiopian Church allied with the African Methodist Episcopal Church, or the AME, in the United States, creating a powerful movement. The AME, indeed, would emerge as the largest black church in South Africa, as it remains today. Interestingly, it was recognized in the Transvaal, but it was banned in Natal and gained no particular foothold in the Cape.

Even as the union of South Africa was coming together, its various leaders recognized the regional differences, especially when it came to interactions with black residents. Smuts spoke not only for the political establishment of the Transvaal but for the left wing of the Afrikaner movement as a whole, while Hertzog stood proxy as the spokesman for the conservative wing. Representing Natal was Prime Minister Frederick Robert Moor, and speaking on behalf of the Cape was Prime Minister John Merriman. Another vocal and passionate representative of the Cape was liberal Afrikaner parliamentarian William Schreiner, the younger brother of the feminist author Olive Schreiner.

William Schreiner was in many respects years ahead of his time. He wrote to Smuts in the days prior to the convening of the conference that brought about the union, imploring him to guide the conference in the direction of fairness and justice. He asked whether the liberal Cape tradition alone would be robust enough to stand up to the interests of three territorial partners that were hostile to it: “The freedom to which all men are born in a free land is as true as their alleged equality is false ... But,’ he argued, ‘their freedom cannot be real if they do not have full opportunity to achieve equality.”

John Merriman, the Cape Prime Minister, argued for a Cape-style franchise, the qualification for which would be high enough to attract “civilized” blacks. It was argued in reply that this would simply deny the vote to poor whites, an entire generation of which was created by the Anglo-Boer War. Merriman’s comments on this are interesting, because he did not necessarily like the Cape electoral system, but he regarded it as a useful pressure valve. Although “noisy and evil-smelling,” it was nonetheless the safest contingency to prevent further fighting.

Smuts' opinions were varied and often contradictory, all of which, as his biographers have noted, tended to reveal an unresolved view of the issue. As an academic, he was quite often apt to lapse into hazy theoretics, using the language of paleoanthropology and evolutionary divergence. At other times, he suggested that the issue be left for wiser minds of the future to resolve. In this regard, he was referring not so much to himself, but to his constituents, who remained perplexed at the very suggestion that the natives in the countryside had any conception of modern politics. An extract from a letter written by Smuts to the British economist and social scientist John A. Hobson contained this remark: "My impression is that the only sound policy at this stage is to avoid any attempt at a comprehensive solution of the various questions surrounding the political status and rights of the native. With the chaotic state in which public opinion on this subject is at present, any solution would be a poor compromise which might probably prejudice a fairer and more statesmanlike settlement later on."

There was some truth in that, but ultimately it was his view that the natives of Africa resided in the kindergarten of life, and that it fell upon the white man to guide them forth toward the light of civilization by increments until that day in the far distant future when they might be allowed some small share of their own destiny. It was not so much a question of should the black man be granted a political voice, but whether it was in his own best interests to have such a voice at all. Needless to say, 21<sup>st</sup> century readers recognize the racism and paternalism in it, but in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, Smuts' contemporaries would hardly bat an eye at such a thought.

It might be interesting to include Gandhi's view of all of this, for he was very much an interested observer of a process that involved not a single non-white member. He said, "Civilization is gradually making headway among the Negroes. Pious missionaries deliver to them the message of Christ as they have understood it, open schools for them, and teach them how to read and write, but many whom, being illiterate and therefore strangers to civilization, were so far free from many vices, have now become corrupt." The essence of this message was repeated often, and in many forms by a man fighting a race war in South Africa who was speculating whether all races were created equal. Gandhi's campaign in South Africa was categorically not waged with any view of black

advancement in mind - his interest was narrowly focused on the plight of Indians, and if Indians could not be granted full equality with whites in South Africa, then at least let them not be legislated for alongside blacks or lumped in with blacks indiscriminately as “non-white.” As he also put it, “Ours is one continual struggle against a degradation sought to be inflicted upon us by the Europeans, who desire to degrade us to the level of the raw Kaffir whose occupation is hunting, and whose sole ambition is to collect a certain number of cattle to buy a wife with, and then, pass his life in indolence and nakedness.”

The antipathy implicit in this comment between Indians and blacks was no less a fact of life than any other in the complex race equation of South Africa. The main point of contact between blacks and whites in the country was in the labor market, which, in a way, was unfortunate, because at that point the least qualified members of each side to approach and judge one another were pushed together. Most whites only knew black people who labored in their home, but Gandhi did not even have that. He employed no black servants, labored alongside no black person, and sought no contact or alliance with the black political establishment. He mingled entirely with whites and Indians and concluded in the end that that struggle he was engaged in was an Indian struggle, not an African one. As such, he ultimately determined it would best be fought in India.

In the end, the conundrum that Smuts and other white political colleagues faced was one they decided was too complex and multi-faceted to be dealt with in a convention meant to forge a consensus. Thus, it was agreed that each region would retain within a proposed union its pre-existing constitution, espousing whatever practices each preferred.

In the end, Jan Smuts would be proved wrong, for the wiser heads were not those in the future, but those in the past. The earliest European activity in the Cape was undertaken with the cooperation and involvement of all citizens in mind, and that remained the preferred vision of many older liberals. As it turned out, the younger generation took a harder line. Each time the black political elite knocked on the door, the door was bolted a little tighter, until, as the National Convention wound up, it became clear that the door would never willingly be opened.

For the time being, the British observed these events from afar and did not seek to subvert the wishes of the people on the ground. Again, this was an example of political expediency overriding the moral requirements. There could be no doubt that the situation did not bode well in the long term, but in the short term, the British Empire was arming to deal with a more clear and present danger than blacks in South Africa. Smuts noted as much: “The war between the white races will run its course, and pass away and may, if followed by a statesman-like settlement, one day only be remembered as a great thunderstorm, which purified the atmosphere of the sub-continent. But the native question will never pass away. It will get more difficult as time goes on, and the day may come when the evils and horrors of this war will appear as nothing in comparison with its after-effects produced on the native mind.”

Indeed, a few years later, South Africa would be playing an important role in World War I. At the outbreak of war, Britain lacked the necessary organization and manpower to deal with the occupation of German South West Africa and German East Africa, so this task was assigned to South Africa, which would have to rely on its own resources. Almost at the moment that this understanding was reached, however, a rebellion broke out in the ranks of the Union Defense Force, and a significant number of anti-British South African troops attempted to cross into German South West Africa in order to declare for the Germans. It must be remembered that Germany had been the closest thing to a foreign alliance that the old republics had ever enjoyed, and a great many Afrikaans speaking servicemen did not see the Germans as the enemy. Furthermore, they recognized an opportunity to overthrow British rule in South Africa now that the British Empire was engaged in a European war.

Ultimately, Smuts, as Minister of Defense, crushed the rebellion, and he guided South Africa into World War I as a loyal member of the British alliance. This would also be the case in World War II, but that conflict would bring about the advent of the South African republic, and the descent of South Africa into its darkest phase of statutory racism and apartheid.

## World War I

At the outbreak of war in August 1914, the Union of South Africa was just four years old and the greatest challenge to the cohesion of the British Empire lay before it. By then, the character of the British Empire had evolved, and the principal territories were no longer as closely allied to the center as they had once been. Increasingly, the empire was being referred to as a “Commonwealth,” with each territory allied to the Crown but enjoying nominal independence. India remained under direct rule, and although a certain amount of diplomatic maneuvering was required, India’s entry into the war on the Allied side was never really in doubt.<sup>[12]</sup> A vague commitment to consider dominion status in the aftermath of the war mollified the growing Indian nationalist movement, while Australia and New Zealand were increasingly part of the Asian security equation, which involved concerns about the potential of Japanese imperial ambitions, and Canada was now much more engaged with the United States in terms of trade and security. With a significant French language demographic, there was never any certainty of Canada’s commitment to Crown in a time of war. Ultimately, the populations of these dominions quickly threw their lot in with the British after little debate, and contingents of men immediately began to flood into Europe and the Middle East from the colonies, making it a true world war.

In South Africa, however, the situation was far less certain. South Africa was a British dominion, but its collective loyalty to the British Crown was very much in doubt. A little over a decade earlier, one of the most bitter imperial wars on record had been fought between the two white races of South Africa, and the notion of reconciliation so soon afterward, to the extent that South Africa would willingly go to war for Britain, was untested to say the least. During the Boer War, the Boer had fought with Mauser rifles and Krupp artillery, and the German Empire was as close to a foreign relation as the Boer republics had. Thus, while a significant number of South African servicemen did not acknowledge either the British as an ally or the Germans as an enemy, the expectation that they fight on those terms was sure to open up wounds that had barely begun to heal. Indeed, there was a strong movement among the hardline Afrikaner faction which



nurtured a hope that, with the British fully preoccupied with war in Europe, an opportunity might be there to evict them from South Africa altogether and reestablish the republic.

Of course, the British faced difficult and more immediate dilemma in Europe. The British establishment entirely appreciated the agony of indecision that collectively afflicted the whites of South Africa, with one side fanatically loyal and the other grimly unreconciled, but the war needed to be fought and South Africa was the only British dominion in the southern African region capable of dealing with the German presence there. The Cape and the naval base at Simonstown remained of supreme importance to the Allied Powers, as did the British deep-water port of Walvis Bay, which was little more than an enclave surrounded on all sides by German South West Africa. Besides that, an important radio relay station was located in German South West Africa, and that territory clearly presented a risk to British sovereignty in South Africa. Put simply, it needed to go.

Further afield, the situation was no less complicated. The territory of German East Africa, the future Tanganyika, was home to several deep-water ports, most importantly Dar-es-Salaam, which was also able to host heavy naval shipping and submarines. That presented a significant risk to Allied naval and merchant shipping in both the Indian Ocean and Atlantic Ocean. Bearing in mind the roles of India, Australia, and New Zealand in the war effort, and the vulnerability of the Suez Canal, it was seen as vital to establish full Allied control over all the main African ports in the south and east.

While these war aims were obvious, it was also obvious that dealing with the German threat in the east and south would require a significant military undertaking, and at that early stage in the war, with neither the organization or the manpower to attend to it, the British relied on South Africans. Soon after the declaration of war, a formal request was submitted to South Africa to annex German South West Africa with its own resources. This was obviously a major request and a significant responsibility, but General Botha and General Smuts agreed without hesitation. Smuts' appreciation of the British was not without reservations, but both men recognized that if South Africa did not firmly and resolutely hitch its wagon to the British

side, then it would most certainly be left behind and would never realize its full potential as a member of the first tier of global nations.

While this reality was also acknowledged by many others, it was rejected by the vast majority of Afrikaans-speaking South Africans. By then, the difficulties of race and ideology in the Union of South Africa had already manifested themselves in a series of bitter and violent labor disputes, centered on the Witwatersrand but affecting industry throughout the Union. The causes of the various strikes and lockouts were general, but underscoring this industrial action was the steady rise of Afrikaner nationalism and a determination to protect white, Afrikaans-speaking workers against unfair competition from lower-paid blacks. Much of the anger expressed was directed at the government (Smuts and Botha in particular), and as World War I began, the stability of the government and the feasibility of a British dominion hung very much in the balance. Smuts and Botha were seen by a majority of their colleagues and compatriots as having sold out to the British, and the decision of the government to honor the British request to mount a campaign against the Germans in South West Africa was seen as clear evidence of this.

Despite internal opposition, both Botha and Smuts were determined to carry it through. In part, this was to establish the principle of South African loyalty to the British Crown, but also to prove that the Union of South Africa was viable and a regional superpower. Furthermore, while a South African campaign to annex South West Africa would, in theory, add the territory to the dominions of the Crown, in practical terms, it would add territory to South Africa.

Smuts, as Minister of Defense, had the responsibility for creating the Union Defence Force, or UDF. This proved to be a delicate, political balancing act, which required fair Boer representation at a command level, but at the same time established an armed force that would be both stable and obedient to the civilian government. To command the UDF, Smuts appointed Brigadier-General Christian Beyers, the highly respected and senior Boer War commander. Beyers' loyalty, however, was first and foremost to the Afrikaner nation, and not necessarily to the government. Although he remained loyal to both Botha and Smuts as fellow members of

the Afrikaner nation and as comrades in arms, he was not a supporter of the pro-British position of the government.

In fact, Beyers was bitterly opposed to South African participation in the war, and in this regard, he was backed up by some very powerful voices. The aging General Jacobus de la Rey was one of these. He stood firmly against South African participation in the war, and what he had to say about it was taken seriously in many quarters. On September 15, 1914, Beyers resigned his commission, writing, “It is sad that the war is being waged against the 'barbarism' of the Germans. We have forgiven but not forgotten all the barbarities committed in our own country during the South African War.”<sup>[13]</sup>

Meanwhile, stationed in the Northern Cape, along the frontier with German South West Africa, was a force of about six-hundred 600 UDF members under the command of General Salomon “Manie” Maritz. Maritz was a “bitter-ender,” which in South African parlance meant one who advocated a fight to end rather than surrender at the end of the Boer War. In mid-September 1914, in the midst of preparations to mount the South West Africa Campaign, Maritz led his commandos across the Orange River and into South West Africa and declared for the Germans. He also declared a provisional government and announced the removal of the Union of South Africa from the British Empire.



### **Maritz**

Smuts had certainly been expecting something along these lines, and he seized the opportunity when it came to stamping the authority of the government on the rebellious armed forces. Martial law was declared, and the “Maritz Rebellion” was systematically crushed. A commando unit under the command of Beyers was also attacked and destroyed. With what can only be described as extreme prejudice, Smuts acted swiftly and decisively to bring the matter to a conclusion. In the end, he was able to retain the loyalty of the armed forces, which, albeit reluctantly and with deep reservations, held firmly to the policy of war on behalf of the Allied Powers.

When the dust settled, it was quietly acknowledged that the loyalty of the UDF hung on a knife’s edge, and for a while South Africa teetered on the very brink of civil war. However, now that it was over, Smuts was at last in

a position to plan the South West Africa Campaign, and he set about doing this immediately.

South Africa conducted two major military campaigns during the war, known as the German South West Africa Campaign and the German East Africa Campaign. The former was fought between September 1914 and July 1915, and it marked the coming of age of Smuts as a military genius, which was surprising because he had no formal military training at all. He entered service during the Boer War after the collapse of the republics, at which point the guerrilla phase of the war had already started. Prior to that, he held the position of State Attorney of the Transvaal and had never fired a shot in anger. In fact, many anecdotal reports say that he never did, conducting numerous successful operations and campaigns without ever personally resorting to gunfire. His brilliance was in tactical assault and evasion, and a wider strategic appreciation of waging war. He was awarded the rank of general in the informal manner of the Boer commandos, and he retained that rank for the remainder of his life as a mark of respect.

The German South West Africa Campaign was the first chapter of mechanized desert warfare in the annals of military history, and it remains the essential template for similar wars and campaigns. Upon analysis, however, it was more of a feat of logistics and military engineering than military maneuver, which would often be the case in desert warfare. The Germans did not defend the colony with a great deal of commitment, resting on the assumption that they would achieve victory in Europe and then get back any lost colonies elsewhere across the world. Early in the war, that was a fair position to take since the odds of a German victory were good, so the strategy in Africa was simply to tie up as much Allied manpower as possible in a wild goose chase from one end of the colony to another, offering surrender only when run to ground.

The broad strategy of the South West Africa Campaign was a vast double envelopment. Two armies were deployed, one commanded by General Botha and the other by General Smuts, landing respectively at Walvis Bay and Swakopmund and attempting to trap the defending garrison in a giant pincer. The strategy was simple enough and sound, and its success can be attributed almost entirely to the vast logistical feats of fielding an army,

supplying it under punishing conditions, and providing wells and roads and railway lines upon which it could move forward. The Germans remained one step ahead until they could no longer do so, and they then surrendered in good grace. As far as World War I campaigns went, this one was remarkably bloodless, with the South Africans losing 185 killed (most in non-combatant circumstances) and the Germans just over 100. The territory was placed under a military government for the duration of the war, leaving General Smuts to turn his attention to German East Africa.

Ideally, the British wanted General Botha to command and lead the Allied forces in the German East Africa Campaign, but the war remained so deeply unpopular in South Africa, so it was decided that he would remain in South Africa and run the government. A British officer, General Sir Horace Smith-Dorrien, was instead appointed by the War Office to take command of the East Africa Campaign, but en route to South Africa, he fell ill and was unable to take up his command. After much consideration, the job was given to Smuts.

The difficulty in this regard was that Smuts was not a member of the British Army, nor any army for that matter, and he had never undergone any sort of formal military training. This time, he would be commanding a British and Commonwealth force, so it was necessary for him to hold a British Army commission. He was therefore quietly inducted into the British Army as an honorary member with the rank Lieutenant General, which, at 47, made him the youngest man to date to be awarded that rank.

East Africa was divided between the British and German empires along the broadly speaking line of the modern frontier between Kenya and Tanzania. By international treaty, it was understood that the colonial possessions of each empire would not prosecute the war, maintaining neutrality for the sake of not exciting the natives.<sup>[14]</sup> Both colonial governors were committed to honoring this convention, but the German military attaché in East Africa, Colonel Paul Emile von Lettow-Vorbeck, had other ideas. His objective, not unlike that of the German commanders in South West Africa, was to force the commitment of as much Allied manpower as possible into a largely irrelevant theater simply to ease pressure against German forces on the Western Front. By then, the certainty of a German

victory in Europe was not quite so keenly felt, and the strategy was to avoid a general defeat.

Initially, von Lettow-Vorbeck commanded the battlefield. The British territory (Kenya and Uganda) was only protected by a weak, colonial militia, a handful of imperial troops, and a few battalions of the King's African Rifles. Inevitably, with a weight of naval superiority, the British were able to blockade the coast and main ports of German East Africa, which included sinking the German warship SMS *Königsberg* in a daring operation, but they lacked the resources to dislodge the Germans from the interior in and around Mount Kilimanjaro. From that stronghold, using the local *Schutztruppe*, or native troops under German command, von-Lettow-Vorbeck conducted a campaign of attrition into British territory. He repeatedly targeted the Uganda Railway, which ran parallel to the international frontier.<sup>[15]</sup>

Smuts arrived in the theater in February 1916 at the head of a large South African force. Now energized, the British turned the tide of the campaign, after which von-Lettow-Vorbeck adopted the strategy of a fighting retreat, leading the Allied forces in a mobile operation that continued until a few weeks after the signing of the Armistice in November 1918.<sup>[16]</sup> The Allied victory, such as it was, represented another feat of logistics as von Lettow-Vorbeck, leading a largely native army, ranged across the East African interior. Troops from India, several parts of British Africa, as well as Rhodesia and South Africa were employed in the theater, along with hundreds of thousands of native carriers and porters. In the end, the East Africa Campaign degenerated into a battle more against the conditions of tropical warfare than enemy action, with several times the casualties recorded from disease than from contact with the enemy. Neither side could definitively claim victory or defeat, and in the end, von Lettow-Vorbeck and Smuts acknowledged one another's brilliance. They later became friends.

At the beginning of 1917, Smuts was recalled from East Africa to London, ostensibly to represent South Africa at the Imperial Conference of that year, but more practically to enter the British high command as an appointed member of British Prime Minister David Lloyd George's War Cabinet. By then, with the entry of the United States into the war, an Allied

victory was looking likely, and Smuts was required at general HQ. His political genius, no less highly regarded than his military, was then applied to questions as diverse as Palestine and Home Rule in Ireland, and later to help craft the terms of peace that would be imposed on the defeated Central Powers. Smuts, incidentally, was among those who regarded the terms of the Treaty of Versailles as too harsh and initially refused to sign it on behalf of South Africa, but he was eventually persuaded to do so by Botha.

Perhaps Smuts' greatest contribution during this period was as a founding architect of the League of Nations. As an Allied victory approached, one of the most challenging questions became how to replace the authority of the four empires that collapsed as a consequence of the war. With the Germans, Russians, Ottomans, and Austrians all losing their empires, the question was how to manage the many territories liberated from these empires, especially since so few of them had any past as independent states. President Woodrow Wilson was the first to moot the concept of a world government named the League of Nations, but it was Smuts more than any other who applied his mind to the practical formation of such an organization. It was he who designed and established the many institutions and organizations necessary to found and practically manage such a groundbreaking international association, which was further confirmation of his prodigious capability and his standing among international statesmen. The League of Nations would ultimately fail and disband, but as the forerunner of the United Nations, the essence of its mission was to replace global empires with global government.

Of particular interest to South Africa at this point were those territories that it had liberated from the Germans during the war. It was decided that a system of governing mandates be put in place to be divided up among the victorious powers. The Middle East, for example, was divided up between the French and the British, but it was South Africa that was given an exclusive mandate over the territory of South West Africa. This, on the surface at least, was part of the British mandate, but in truth, it was a reward to South Africa for the conquest of the territory.

Smuts regarded this as entirely just, but he was aggrieved somewhat when South Africa was not given East Africa in respect of the dominant South



African role in that campaign. There was, by then, already a degree of wariness in Whitehall over the apparent micro-imperialist ambitions of South Africa, and while handing over South West Africa, 95% percent of which was desert, was one thing, East Africa was another altogether. The Tanganyika territory thus became a British mandate, which, incidentally, finally created the reality for Cecil John Rhodes' Cape-Cairo vision. <sup>[17]</sup>

The South African mandate over South West Africa would evolve into de facto South African annexation, after which successive South African governments tended to regard the territory as a fifth province of South Africa. Under the terms of its mandate, the territory remained under the control of the League of Nations, and then the United Nations, but South Africa's refusal to relinquish control of the region when requested to do so would subsequently set the tone for later confrontations between South Africa and the international community.

## **A New Future**

“The evil that men do lives after them; the good is oft interrèd with their bones.” – William Shakespeare

Not surprisingly, Rhodes’ death complicated matters on the ground. Until that moment, both the administration and the settler community of the colony had tended to respect the integrity of Rhodes’ dream, and although at times it was irrational, the cost of it was subsidized by the company. As such, the settlers accepted the incongruity of being governed by a private company, but when Rhodes died, questions about the feasibility of the status quo immediately came up.

By 1902, the railway line from Mafeking to Bulawayo was complete, and within a few years it would be extended north to Salisbury, east to Beira, and eventually through Northern Rhodesia as far as the borders of the Congo Free State. Built both well and cheaply, this too was paid for by the British South Africa Company in the expectation of supporting a mineral and mining industry that simply did not materialize. The colony was in debt to the company to the tune of about £8 million, a vast amount of money at the time, and the debt was growing daily, but there was still no realistic income generator in the economy that could promise to eventually balance it out.

At the same time, the settler community, now numbering upwards of 10,000 and growing steadily, was increasingly agitated that the colony remained under private, commercial control. Chartered companies across the empire were falling out of vogue, and by the early 20<sup>th</sup> century they were really only relevant in a situation where the white population of a colony consisted mostly of that company’s employees or contractors. The system worked well in colonies like Nigeria or Sierra Leone that were never intended to be settled and were founded for economical or strategic reasons, but this was clearly no longer the case in Rhodesia. Nonetheless, the company could not relinquish control until some means was found to recoup its administrative deficit.

In the short term, the problem was plastered over by an ad hoc system of government that sought to respond to settler concerns by creating a local

legislature with a handful of elected seats, balanced out by a slightly higher number of appointed seats. Overall authority resided with the British High Commissioner to South Africa, who kept a finger on the pulse of events through the office of a local British resident. This, however, was largely theoretical, and the daily business of government was overseen by an administrator of the company, answerable to the Board of Directors in London.

With the Second Boer War over, South Africa existed as four separate British colonies, and the Boer republics were no more. Movements were by then already underway to create the Union of South Africa, which would become a reality in 1910, after which South Africa would exist as a single British dominion. A dominion, one step higher than a colony, was self-governing in anticipation of full independence at some point in the near future. The British dominions at that time included Australia, New Zealand, and Canada, and then South Africa in 1910.

The discussion on Rhodesia's future, therefore, centered around the possibility either of joining the proposed Union of South Africa or amalgamating the two current colonies into a single, enlarged British colony, with the potential after that for a further amalgamation with Nyasaland and British East Africa. There was some urgency to address this question, simply because the Royal Charter, issued in 1889, was of a 25-year duration and was due to expire in October 1914.

As all this was happening, on the economic front the contest between the company and the settlers grew more rancorous and more defined. In the absence of a mining industry and now with a railway system to utilize, the agricultural potential of the colony began to come under consideration. The well-watered central watershed of the country was ideal for agriculture, with the potential for tobacco cultivation particularly favorable. This presented the company with an unexpected opportunity, and it sought after that to claim that the unalienated land of the colony was its asset to dispose of as it chose. This was based on a legal interpretation of the Rudd Concession and other concessions and treaties that Rhodes purchased from rival concessionaires. It was a fair point backed up by a reasonable legal

argument, and it presented the possibility of recouping the administrative deficit rather handsomely.

Predictably, the settlers vigorously protested. Now also appreciating the potential of land distribution, the settlers understood the land was a major asset and believed it should be distributed and sold to the benefit of the colony. Cheap and abundant land was regarded as a basic right of colonial settlement, so to them the company had no business claiming ownership of it.

This was the state of things at the outbreak of World War I, an emergency that tabled the issues in the colony. A supplementary charter of 10 years was agreed to, pushing forward the date of a resolution of the issue to no later than 1924.

Throughout the Great War, manpower in these colonies were put toward the South African effort to annex German South West Africa, which was achieved by the middle of 1915. Rhodesian soldiers were then used in the German East Africa Campaign, from about February 1916 through the beginning of 1917. After that, Rhodesians tended to be engaged in the various actions on the Western Front, with a few deployments scattered among the various imperial units active in the war. A large number of indigenous soldiers were utilized in portage during the East Africa Campaign, while later in the war, the first constituted battalions of native troops began to supersede white personnel as the war progressed and as white manpower became difficult to replace. It also became clear that black troops were better suited to the combat conditions of tropical Africa, which established the basis of the first permanent military formations of the new Southern Rhodesian army. White personnel tended to serve in the irregular battalions of the Rhodesia Regiment, which prevailed until the 1960s, when the first regular white military formations were established.

Naturally, the decision to form a native battalion in the colonies was made only with great difficulty and a great deal of handwringing. The reason for this was the potential mental effect on black troops engaging and killing white men in battle. There was a concern that this would shatter the illusion of inviolability and superiority that whites felt was all that kept them in control of a black population that outnumbered them. In the end, that

concern was overruled, and the Rhodesia Native Battalion became a fact of life.

An interesting corollary of World War I was the fulfillment (albeit brief) of Cecil Rhodes' dream of a through route from the Cape to Cairo. Thanks to the German defeat in Africa, German South West Africa and German East Africa were granted to South Africa and Britain respectively as League of Nations mandated territories. Britain, therefore, controlled, in one way or another, every territory in a direct line between South Africa and Egypt, which would remain the case until 1952 when Egypt was declared a republic.

## **The Interwar Years**

“The last World War did not teach the subject peoples the spirit of independence. This was already there. People had long felt the poignant injustice of subordination and discrimination. They had no means hitherto of vocalising and dramatizing their deep-seated grievances. World War II focused these grievances more intensely and gave them an effective expression.” - Reverend George Gay

From nearly the moment World War I ended, the fight between the settlers and British South Africa Company started back up, and three potential alternatives existed. The first, as previously mentioned, was a merger with the Union of South Africa as a fifth province. The second was to amalgamate the two Rhodesian colonies as one. The third was the idea of Responsible Government, which emerged very quickly as the most popular option among the settlers.

What was implied by Responsible Government was simply a locally elected legislature and a locally appointed cabinet led by a local premier. Imperial superintendentship would take the form of an imperial governor with theoretical power of veto over any legislation deemed discriminatory to the natives. The portfolio of native affairs, in fact, would be withheld from the remit of any local cabinet, falling instead under the purview of a Native Department, which was answerable directly to the Crown via a Chief Native Commissioner and the British High Commissioner to South Africa. The reason for this had much to do with the way Jameson had gone about things, and the fact that the white settler community simply could not be trusted to deal fairly and equitably with a disempowered black majority.

The issues of land and land ownership were put to the Privy Council for consideration, and the decision that was returned was an interesting one. The Crown decided that the land belonged to it, not the Company, regardless of treaties and agreements with Lobengula. This might conceivably have been interpretable as the Crown holding the land in trust for the natives, and very possibly this was the original conception, but its alienation in the end did not materially benefit blacks either in terms of land

or money. The British South Africa Company, therefore, lost even that potential avenue of making money.

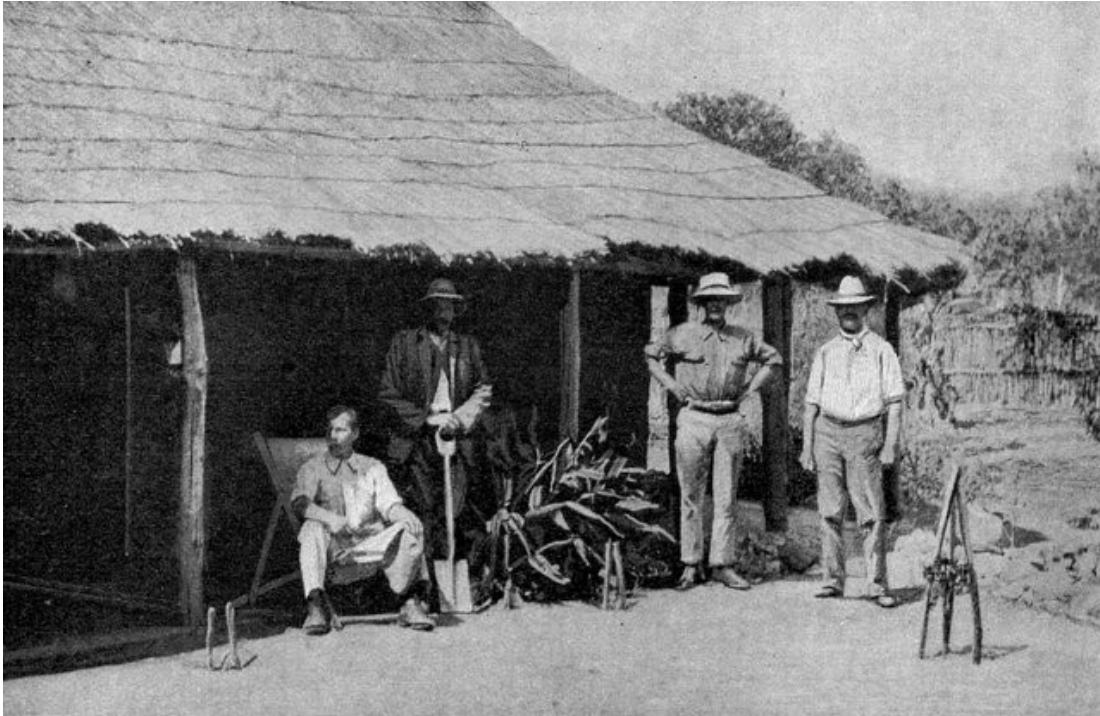
In the wake of those decisions, the company looked to the option of joining the Union of South Africa as the most attractive, which was also the preferred option of Whitehall and pro-British South African Prime Minister General Jan Christian Smuts. From Smuts' standpoint, a significant injection of fanatically pro-British voters would stand as a bulwark against the steady rise of Afrikaner nationalism in South Africa, and extremely generous terms were offered to the British South Africa Company to engineer an effective union. The amalgamation of the two Rhodesian colonies was a generally unpopular option simply because the ratio of blacks to whites in the north was weighted so heavily in favor of the blacks that whites in the south feared being overwhelmed by blacks if the two colonies were joined together.

The company fought a vigorous campaign for a union with South Africa, but when that matter was put to a referendum on November 7, 1923, the Responsible Government Party achieved a narrow victory. This officially established Southern Rhodesia and Northern Rhodesia as separate, with Southern Rhodesia becoming a self-governing British colony and Northern Rhodesia being a protectorate under the management of a private company.

For the British South Africa Company, this was a disaster. The question of land was subsequently decided ultimately in favor of the colony, and the British government back in Whitehall offered the company paltry compensation for its administrative deficit, agreeing only to waive loans taken out by the company to cover expenses related to the recent rebellions. This left the company with just the mineral rights of the colony, given over by Lobengula as a fundamental term of the Rudd Concession, and retention of private ownership of the railway system. Northern Rhodesia, however, would remain a British South Africa Company holding, and with the discovery of massive copper reserves in the north of that colony, the much storied Copperbelt, the British South Africa Company would make a profit for the first time in 35 years.

The interwar period in Southern Rhodesia was generally one of peace and plenty. The economy of the colony proliferated along the lines of

agriculture, with base and precious metal production never quite reaching the anticipated levels of the earlier generation. Gold, however, was eventually found, and over the years it became one of the main pillars of the economy, along with platinum, iron, and steel. Substantial coal deposits in the northwest complemented the boom in copper production in Northern Rhodesia, and both industries expanded massively as rearmament in Europe created an enormous demand.



**A picture of white settlers in Southern Rhodesia**

The end of World War I also brought the first substantial increase in the white settler community as hundreds of thousands of demobilized soldiers filtered out into the colonies in the aftermath of the war. A degree of exclusivity was demanded of white immigration into Southern Rhodesia in those years, which was something that Rhodes and his successors had always deemed desirable. An interest in keeping the new class of poor Afrikaners created by the Second Boer War out of the colony tended to define early immigration policy, and between the wars this rule continued. It was recognized early on that Southern Rhodesia did not require white labor since the colony had plenty of potential black labor. This encouraged



white men with the necessary intelligence and capital to utilize the land and labor available in the colony to generate enterprises and make money.

This social arrangement meant that the whites who settled in Southern Rhodesia during this period tended to be men and women of education whose attitudes toward the native majority were generally liberal and accommodating. The scarring effect of World War I on a generation of European youth had the result of creating a desire among them to found a society based on principles that were more liberal and egalitarian than in the past.

Moreover, in 1931, the British Colonial Service was established as the empire-wide civil service, and this organization attracted many young men of caliber and education with a similar vision for the administration of the empire. From the ranks of the Colonial Service were drawn the early personnel of the various native affairs departments of the African colonies, as well as the wildlife management departments in such ecologically unique regions as Kenya, Tanganyika, Northern Rhodesia, and Southern Rhodesia.

From a social standpoint, whites in both colonies took a great interest in helping the natives assimilate. Thus, they attempted to convince the native population of the benefits of “modern” lifestyles, and in equipping them with a broad-based primary education to help them embrace and exploit these options. A burgeoning civil service required large numbers of nominally educated personnel to fill the lower and intermediate ranks, while the army and the police likewise offered excellent opportunities at the levels of junior ranks.

This was a pivotal moment in the history of the region’s race relations, albeit one whose ramifications the people could not envision. It was the moment that the government and administration had the opportunity to leverage that goodwill to begin the introduction of young and gifted blacks into the administration at a grassroots level, along with selected elements of traditional leadership, to start the process of political acculturation. There certainly was a will to do this, but it was never done, and the reason simply was complacency. Few whites in the colony, with the best of intentions, imagined or could conceive the speed with which black society would mold and adapt to modern life. To them, the native population in the early 20<sup>th</sup>

century seemingly did not avail themselves of education to any great degree, but they were indeed sending their children to the mission schools cropping up all over the colony. By the outbreak of World War II, a generation of highly educated youth would emerge, and they would prove extremely fluent in modern life and politics and disdainful of any late effort on the part of the white community to foster political partnership.

The roots of black politics in Southern Rhodesia lay in the independent churches that were beginning to appear all over the colony. Christian missions, generally speaking, provided the first introduction that young blacks experienced to modern life and education. With the collapse of the traditional institutions as an inevitable aftermath of the two rebellions, natives adopted Christianity with extraordinary zeal. Very often, the tenets of Biblical teachings merged with strains of ancient animism, often creating from this a hybrid version of Christianity that lent itself well to the politics of self-determination and independence.

The mission societies were run entirely by white clergy who often provided a literary style of education only for the greater ease of conversion, and for the creation of a class of junior black catechists to further spread the gospel. They remained fundamentally paternal in outlook, however, and blacks were not encouraged in any ambition to rise much above a subordinate level.

By the 1920s and 1930s, however, a widespread independent church movement was beginning to take root, encouraged by similar movements existing on a much more advanced scale in South Africa, particularly the tribally heterogeneous mining regions of the Transvaal. This resulted in numerous independent churches espousing a style of liberation theology that had much of the flavor of early, radical politics.

Economically, by the late 1920s and 1930s blacks were beginning to reap the benefits of the mushrooming economy. The different forms of industry all over the region were doing well, while agriculture and mining were also booming. In particular, the tobacco industry benefited from the dollar shortage created in Britain by rearmament, so empire produce – tobacco in particular – experienced a spectacular boom. This fostered an entire

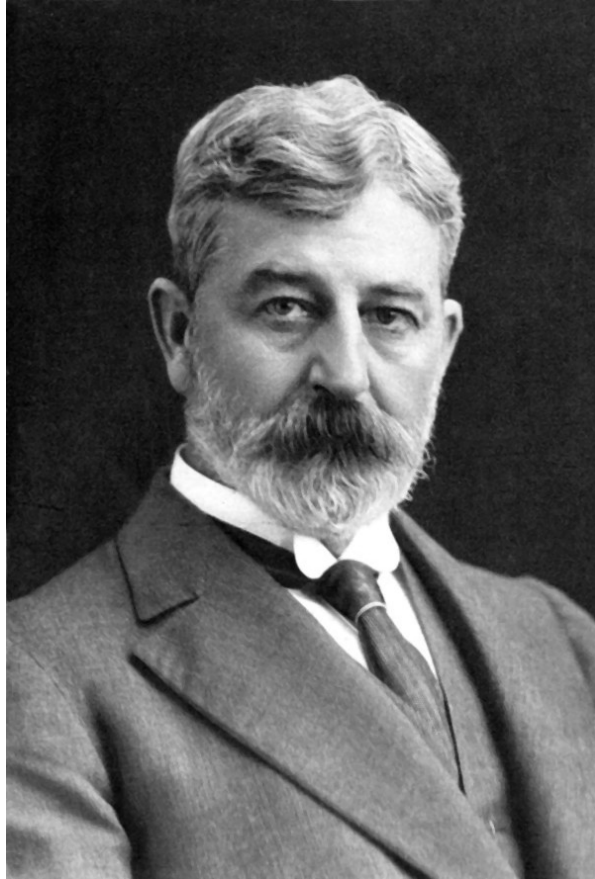
spectrum of aligned industries that, alongside mining and agriculture, employed ever greater numbers of blacks.

At the same time, land tenure legislation began to appear, and they attempted to cement the status of Jameson-era native reserves. This meant disallowing the permanent settlement of blacks in the urban areas, and clearly defining land ownership rights along the lines of race. The industrial areas, therefore, rapidly developed as overcrowded urban slums without regulations of any sort, which soon turned them into seething hotbeds of black political activity.

## **The Emergence of Black Politics in South Africa**

On January 8, 1912, the iconic South African indigenous political party, the African National Congress (ANC), was founded. This was the culmination of years of organization and political development. The National Conference, discussed above, defined the terms under which the four colonies would be federated into the Union of South Africa, but any mechanism for the inclusion of the black majority in the political process of a future dominion was conspicuously absent. The British government accepted this state of affairs, passing the South Africa Act of 1910 with almost no query in regard to this glaring exclusion. The requirements of imperial unity in the face of an inevitable European war overrode the essential principals of the British Empire, and the matter was quietly swept under the rug.

In the aftermath of the National Conference, William Schreiner organized a shadow conference in the black township of Waaihoek outside Bloemfontein. The conference was intended to be a forum within which a general black response to the National Convention would be formulated. This was styled the South African Native Convention (SANC), and much of the conference was dominated by an address given by the member for native affairs in the Orange River parliament.



**Schreiner**

The Reverend Dewdney Drew, who was noted for his pro-African sympathies, was invited to speak at the conference, and he did. While acknowledging that the Union Bill fell far short of “equal rights for all civilized men,” Drew was also inclined to adopt a cautionary tone.<sup>[18]</sup> He advised acceptance of the broad terms of the document in the belief that any agitation against it would simply stir the embers of white paranoia, inviting an even deeper assault against the rights and liberties of blacks. There was space within the proposed constitution for black participation on a local level, including qualified franchise in the Cape, so it seemed to him wiser to prove political maturity before demanding greater representation.

Although this message was discouraging, there was certainly a great deal of sense in it, and it was probably a fair assessment of the lay of the land. The Union Bill, however, required passage through the British House of Commons and royal assent, and toward the end of 1909, all the various prime ministers and interested parties set off for London to bear witness to

the adoption of the South Africa Act. A 9-man delegation of black representatives was assembled and led by William Schreiner to travel to London to approach the British Government with black South African concerns. Gandhi also traveled to London at the head of a delegation of South African Indians to present the Indian case in respect of South African union, but he rejected Schreiner's appeal that the two delegations combine forces.

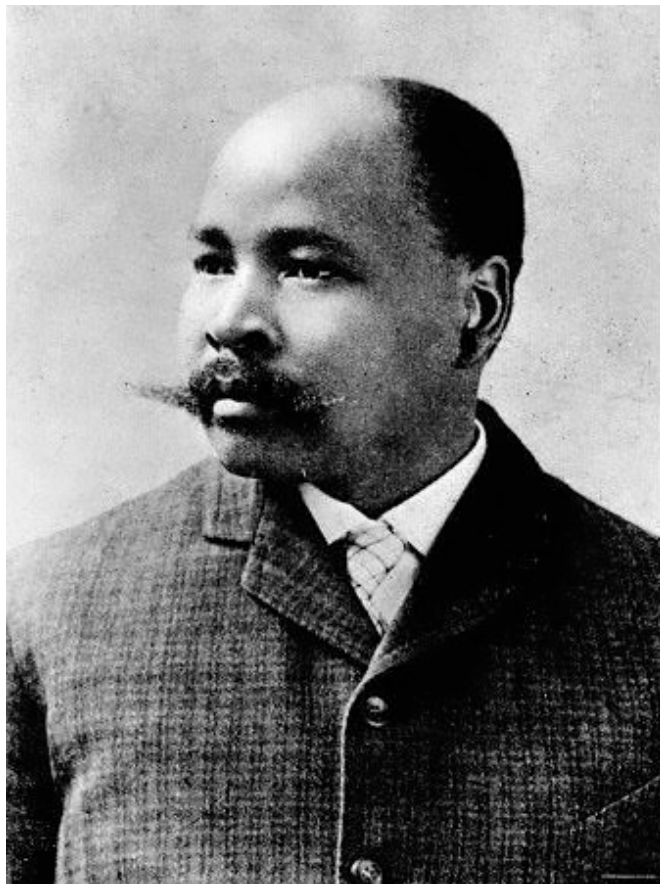
During the event, the native delegation was entertained and heard by members of the government, the opposition, and the liberal establishment, but in the end they were made to understand that no changes to the essential character of the draft bill would be entertained. John Tengo Jabavu, a leading Cape political figure, newspaper editor, and writer, addressed a farewell breakfast hosted by the Aboriginal Protection Society. During this, he remarked that just a decade earlier, he had been invited by the Afrikaner Bond, the Dutch-speaking political party in the Cape, to stand as a candidate in the Cape Parliament. Now, under the terms of the draft act, no such thing would be possible. This hardly represented progress, and from where he was standing, it was an assault by one section of the population against another. The address concluded with the rueful observation that a parting of the ways between black and white in South Africa had finally come to pass.

While this was certainly the case, it's only fair to note that John Merriman, Prime Minister of the Cape Colony, argued vehemently for the extension of the Cape qualified franchise to the rest of the Union, but ultimately he was unsuccessful. The Cape qualified franchise remained in effect and black representation in local forums was encouraged, but nothing of the sort was to be entertained in the federal parliament, which would be exclusively white.

Meanwhile, the South African Native Convention continued to exist as a political organization, acting as a voice against discriminatory legislation until it was agreed that a permanent organization was required, which led the way to establishment of the South African National Native Congress, the forerunner of the iconic African National Congress. The principal founders were Saul Msane, Josiah Gumede, John Dube, Pixley ka Isaka

Seme, and Sol Plaatje, collectively representing the acme of the South African native political movement.

Perhaps the most famous and enduring of these leaders was John Langalibalele Dube, born in 1871 at the Inanda station of the American Zulu Mission. His father was an ordained priest, and his mother was a Christian convert. As was the case with many politically active young blacks, he received his primary education at the hands of the mission and his secondary education at the nearby Adams College, also an American missionary institution. As something of a prodigy, Dube was sponsored by the mission to attend Oberlin College in Ohio, where he fell very much under the influence of the black American civil rights leader Booker T. Washington. Dube was impressed particularly with the concept of industrial education and the “learn to walk before you can run” approach to black emancipation and postbellum reconstruction.

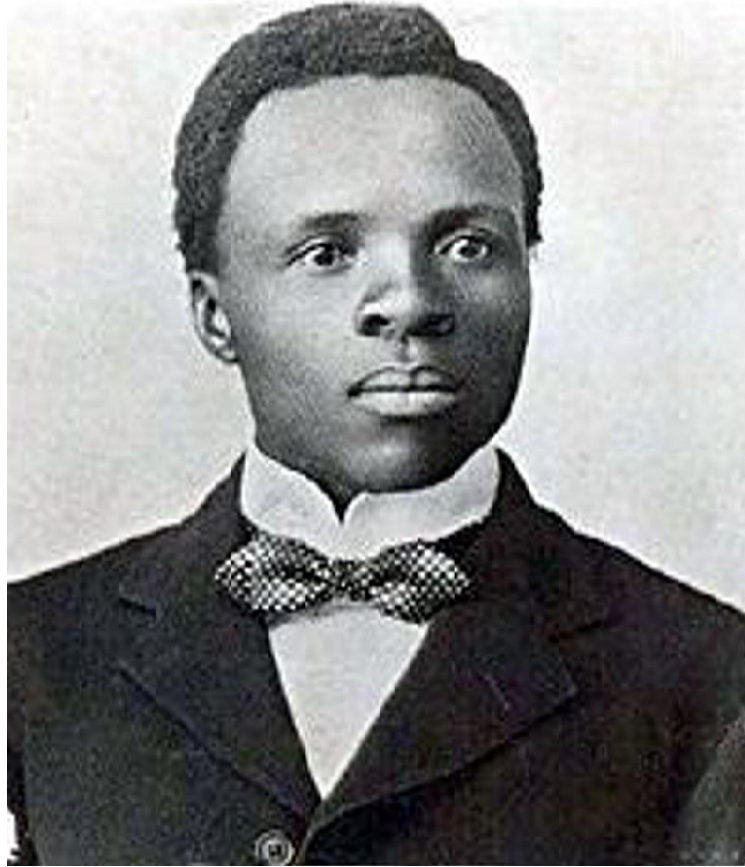


**Dube**

Returning to South Africa with this concept at the fore of his mind, Dube established the first, fully indigenous educational institute, the Zulu Christian Industrial School, also known as Ohlange High School. Incidentally, this school, was located close to Gandhi's Phoenix settlement, and although the two organizations promoted a similar agenda and overlapped in much that they did, they did not associate or cooperate.

Solomon Tshekisho Plaatje was another seminal figure of the early black political movement in South Africa. A few years younger than John Dube, Sol Plaatje is often described as the first prominent black academic in South Africa. He was a Tswana, but he relocated to the Cape just before the Boer War, and was, as a consequence, something of a product of liberal Cape tradition. Born in the Orange Free State in 1876, he too was the product of a missionary background, although in his case, German Lutheran missionaries, and his education was also missionary sponsored. He also became proficient as a pianist and violinist, a composer and writer, and fluent in numerous languages. He was perhaps most influential, however, as a journalist, novelist, and political polemicist. His criticism of the South Africa Act of 1909 was entitled "Sekgoma – the Black Dreyfus," a commanding piece of political literature that remained unpublished until relatively recently. An admirer of Marcus Garvey rather than Booker T Washington, he was part of the intellectual black elite, and, like his other hero, W.E.B. Du Bois, he urged the intellectualism of blacks as an avenue of liberation.





**Plaatje**

As South African blacks began the establishment of a mass nationalist movement, various articles and instruments of discriminatory legislation began popping up on the Union statute. The strikes of 1913 had much to do with the economics of white and black labor, and the outrage caused among whites by economically conscious mine owners employing skilled black labor at a cheaper rate than skilled white labor. In 1911, the “Mines and Works Act” reserved certain categories of labor and most skilled positions for whites. Also in 1911, the “Native Land Regulation Act” made it law for blacks injured in industrial accidents to receive less compensation than their white colleagues. It was also legislated that they could be held criminally responsible for strikes or any breach of contracts, and it prohibited blacks from military service.

In 1913, under intense pressure from their rural constituency, the government of Botha and Smuts introduced and piloted through parliament the “Land Act,” which began the campaign of limiting black access to land.

It prohibited the purchase or lease of land by blacks outside the native reserves. The “native reserves” at that point were not a formal concept but often simply comprised land, such as in Zululand, upon which the tribes were left in possession of some portion of their original land. There, in theory, their traditional lifestyles could be protected and retained.

The Land Act served several purposes, but it was primarily intended to limit and control black access to land, and also, as a corollary, to solve a growing labor problem in industry and mining. It limited the movement of blacks outside of the reserves without a legal “pass,” which was only issued upon proof that an individual was employed by a white person. It was understood, and indeed hoped, that limited space and resources in the native reserves would force blacks into the cities on labor contracts, but at the same time, rather ironically, the cities and towns remained strictly designated as white-only areas.

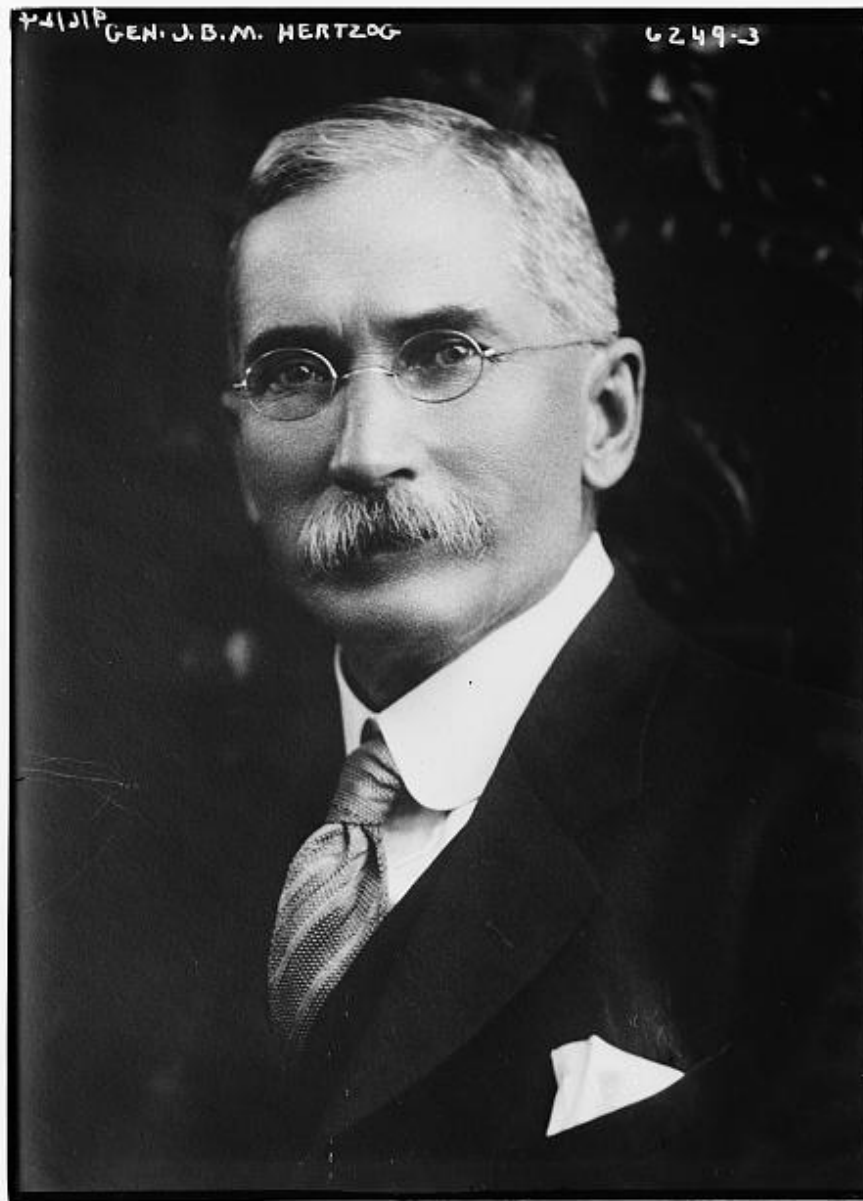
South African “pass” laws were probably the most odious and discriminatory articles of differentiating legislation in an environment of increasingly restrictive laws and conventions related to race. The first use of documentation identifiable as a “pass” was in the early 1800s, and various laws and statutes were enacted during the latter part of the century as diamonds and gold began to introduce a culture of formal labor and triggered the widespread migration and movement of blacks to the centers of mining and industry. Under these statutes, the term “black” often simply meant non-white, and the story is told of Gandhi as a young Indian barrister in Pretoria acquiring a special permit from the state attorney of the Transvaal to allow him to enter Pretoria without specific documentation proving that he was employed by a white person. He was, of course, employed by an Indian and not a European, which was a difficulty. An interesting fact is that the Transvaal Attorney general at that time was a Jewish lawyer trained in London and a member of the same bar association as Gandhi.

Gandhi’s predicament fell under the laws and statutes of the Transvaal Republic, which, although draconian, were nonetheless haphazardly applied and seldom enforced. Under British rule, the same laws became subject to British standards of enforcement and administration, and Gandhi noted that

life, commerce, and the free movement of non-whites became infinitely more difficult once Milner's Kindergarteners had assumed control of the local bureaucracy.

In 1923, the infamous "Natives (Urban Areas) Act" was debated and passed in the Union legislature, formally designating the urban area of the Union as white. Thereafter, it was required that all black South Africans, regardless of origin, carry pass and identification documents at all times. This began to establish a precedent, and the enforcement of separate urban amenities quickly began to take effect. White-only facilities, from railways to busses to beaches, became a feature of daily life in South Africa.

Much of this was driven not so much by the government as by the right-wing constituency that was steadily gathering pace and gathering influence under the leadership of James Hertzog. In the general election of 1924, Smuts, who had been Prime Minister of South Africa since September 1919, was defeated by Hertzog's National Party, and with that, the first overtly racist Afrikaner right-wing nationalist party took office.



**Hertzog**

## **The Rise of the Right**

Botha died in August 1919 of heart failure, and upon his death, his natural heir was Smuts, who was just returning from his triumphant term as a member of the British War Cabinet and his service on the various drafting committees of the Treaty of Versailles. As deputy, Smuts took office upon the death of the incumbent prime minister, and two years later in 1921, he fought a general election. His main opponent was Hertzog, standing as the National Party candidate and representing the right-wing of the Afrikaner nationalist movement. Smuts stood as the South African Party candidate, and his platform was essentially pro-British and imperialist.

Although Smuts triumphed reasonably easily, the National Party returned a respectable result. Smuts campaigned mainly on his status as the great war general and member of various lofty imperial political forums. However, as would continue to be the case throughout his life, Smuts, while deeply admired in the imperial context, was rather reviled at home. He was acknowledged in Britain and the United States as a great international statesman, an architect of European peace, and a founder of the League of Nations, but locally he remained somewhat under a cloud for precisely the same reasons. Although his achievements on the imperial stage certainly elevated the status of South Africa, they seemed to attract criticism at home, and his close engagement with the British certainly undermined crucial support from among his own Afrikaans-speaking community.

Smuts was quite aware of what a National Party victory in South Africa might mean, and while he made concessions to the right in terms of numerous articles of discriminatory legislation, he was not of the school of thought that segregation was the solution to the emerging “native problem.” He was an advocate of the “Sacred Trust,” the verbiage of which he himself inserted into the Covenant of the League of Nations.<sup>[19]</sup> The “Sacred Trust,” in the context of the British Empire as a whole, was an acknowledgment that Africa existed fundamentally as an African realm, and that it was the trust and responsibility of the governing race to guide the black man toward parity and equal representation with fairness and honesty. On the surface, there might appear to be scant difference between this position and the segregationist position of Hertzog, for both espoused separate

developments. However, the two positions differed a great deal in intent. The former was inspired by a belief in the rights and ambitions of the emerging black political movement (albeit acknowledging that the moment was not precisely now), while the latter was constructed on antipathy, racism, and a determination to never allow the black man to rise above the current status.

Facing a second general election, Smuts looked around for a solution, and his eye fell on the northern territory of Southern Rhodesia. The territory was administered by a private chartered company, the British South Africa Company, whose charter was due to expire in 1925, and the question of what system of government would replace it was very much at the center of the public debate in Southern Rhodesia. Three options existed, with the first being an amalgamation of Northern and Southern Rhodesia. The second was a responsible government of its own, and the third was an absorption into the Union of South Africa as a fifth province.

As these options were being considered, Smuts realized that if Southern Rhodesia could be persuaded to cast its lot in with South Africa, he would acquire a bloc of about 35,000 fanatically loyal British imperial voters who would certainly swing the next general election back around to the liberal, pro-imperial position. He made a generous offer of cash and political representation, and there were certainly a great many Southern Rhodesians who were tempted, but South Africa had certain problems that the pro-British Southern Rhodesians worried about as well. For example, South Africa had a large population of poor whites, and it was feared that they may well flood into Southern Rhodesia in search of cheap land. The legacy of the Boer War also concerned the whites of the northern colony.

In the end, it was the violent and bitter labor unrest of the early 1920s that turned the Southern Rhodesian electorate away. Since the end of the Boer War and the Chinese labor crisis, the mining industry in South Africa emerged as a hotbed of race and labor politics. The essence of the strikes of 1913 and 1914 was the tendency of mine owners to make use of cheap, black skilled and unskilled labor in preference to higher paid white labor. After World War I, however, the mining industry faced renewed challenges and acute financial problems. It was an age of high inflation, and the mines

were beginning to operate at much deeper levels, thus incurring significantly greater costs. One glaring anomaly in the industries balance sheet was the inflated cost for white labor when much cheaper black labor was readily available.

What followed was a series of strikes and labor actions involving white labor, and a popular slogan was “Workers of the World United, and Fight for a White South Africa.” Clearly, there was more to these series of strikes and demonstrations than simply wages and working conditions, and as luck would have it, as a delegation from Southern Rhodesia was visiting South Africa on a fact-finding mission, Smuts was forced to act. The strikers, most of whom were Afrikaans-speaking, formed commando units and gave the impression of an armed revolt. Smuts reacted swiftly and resolutely, declaring martial law and deploying troops, tanks, aircraft, and artillery to crush what did indeed quickly turn into a full-scale rebellion. The mild-mannered leader revealed his menacing side, after which the Southern Rhodesia delegation hurried home determined to petition for a responsible government of its own. The end result was that Smuts was indeed swept out of office in the general election of 1924, and the National Party, with Herzog at its helm, took power in South Africa.

Hertzog went to work immediately, entrenching white predominance, passing numerous articles of discriminatory legislation, and promoting the interests of the white Afrikaans community. He also worked to distance South Africa from the British Empire, claiming greater autonomy and proceeding apace with “differentiating” legislation that, under the rules of empire, ought to have attracted a Crown veto. A Land Bank was formed to benefit those of the agricultural community, marketing controls were established, and state-run corporations were created, most notably in the iron and steel industries.

Perhaps the most impactful legislation enfranchised white women, but not black, and while this might be seen on the surface as an advance in representation, it simply eroded the effectiveness of the Cape’s qualified franchise. In fact, this represented the first orchestrated assault against it. English was no longer the exclusive language of administration and justice,

and as a result, the civil service was opened up to Afrikaans-speakers, beginning a convention of Afrikaans domination of the civil service.

In perhaps an act of more symbolic than practical use, but nonetheless giving a clear indication of the direction in which things were heading, the Afrikaans language was differentiated from Dutch, which the South Africa Act of 1909 listed as the second language of the dominion. Afrikaans had by then developed rather separately from Dutch and was truly a unique and separate language. This acknowledgment also recognized the uniqueness of Afrikaans culture as an intrinsically and identifiable African culture. By 1925, the Bible had been translated into Afrikaans, followed by an Afrikaans dictionary and, in due course, a substantial body of Afrikaans literature.

While not necessarily an Afrikaans writer, the career of South African feminist, liberal, and author Olive Schreiner shines a light on the South African liberal movement. Olive Schreiner was the author of the seminal work *The Story of an African Farm*, which is generally regarded as the first literary work of any renown to come out of South Africa. Olive Schreiner was a fiercely liberal activist at the dawn of liberal feminism, and as a member of the Cape Dutch community, she led the extreme liberal fringe, which consisted of her brother William and another Cape liberal feminist, Elizabeth Molteno. Both women were friends and supporters of Gandhi during his period of South African activism, and both campaigned relentlessly for a free and egalitarian society. Olive Schreiner died in 1920 as these events were taking place, but the white, liberal tradition in South Africa was certainly alive and well.





**Schreiner**

In 1926, Hertzog attended his first Imperial Conference as South African prime minister, and there, in the company of his colleagues from Britain, Canada, New Zealand, and Australia, he campaigned for a complete reevaluation of the relationship between Britain and the dominions. This motion was well received among the other dominions, for if nothing else, World War I had redefined the status of the empire in relation to its dependent territories, few of which were in practical terms dependent anymore. Thereafter, the dominions regarded and defined themselves as autonomous communities of the British Empire, sharing a common allegiance to the Crown.

In regard to the other three dominions, this was stating the obvious, and Whitehall did not particularly object, but the situation in South Africa was rather different. The native races of Australia or Canada were never serious contenders for power, and their numbers were so small that the removal of their right of autonomy did not represent any particular conundrum. Africans across the diaspora, however, were more politically alert and present in significant numbers. The “Sacred Trust” demanded that Britain protect the interests of the black majority with a view to a future of majority rule, but that would be rather difficult to enforce in South Africa. Settler communities all over Africa had been placed on notice that the British regarded Africa as African, but this was enormously complicated in South Africa by the fact that the energized Afrikaner movement also presented itself as African.

In 1931, the Statute of Westminster was passed, giving legal force to a new inter-imperial relationship. By then, all the dominions had begun acting independently in international affairs, placing diplomats in foreign capitals and diminishing the powers and roles of their territorial governor. In 1934, the “Status of the Union Act” was debated and passed by the South African Parliament, underlining and reinforcing the Statute of Westminster. For instance, it provided that acts of the British Parliament would no longer be valid in South Africa unless they were also enacted by the South African Parliament, and that the governor-general should act exclusively on the advice of his South African ministers.

During this time, the Great Depression was acutely felt in South Africa, which was primarily a gold producer and exporter. Hertzog resolutely held the South African pound to the gold standard while Britain and the other dominions devalued their currency. As a result, South African exports, especially wool exports, almost ceased, and by the time the South African pound was devalued in December 1932, the economy had been seriously damaged. This drove Hertzog to the negotiating table with Smuts, from which emerged the United Party, with a breakaway Afrikaans-speaking faction led by Daniel F Malan, calling itself, rather ominously, the Purified National Party.



### **Malan**

Hertzog next turned his attention to the Cape qualified franchise, which had been the target of his ire since the National Convention. In 1936, the Native Representation Act was passed, deeply eroding and compromising native representation by removing all black voters from the ordinary voters roll. The legislation also gave black voters only the right to vote for three members to sit in the House of Assembly, the dominant forum at that time, to represent their interests. In all four provinces, blacks could similarly elect white representation, while a Native Advisory Council was established with advice-giving powers.

By now, the race struggle was beginning to coalesce in the cities and towns as desperate blacks, marginalized from state assistance during the Great Depression, flooded into the urban areas in defiance of the pass laws. In 1919, the Industrial and Commercial Workers Union was formed, and in 1921, the Communist Party of South Africa came together. In 1930, both organizations began a campaign of pass burning that attracted a mass

participation of blacks and Indians in every urban center of the country. In Durban, one protest was stormed by police and four people were killed.

Clearly, a mood of militancy was spreading in black South Africa, and this had the effect of entrenching white resistance to change, mostly in the right-wing, Afrikaans-speaking community. The English-speaking portion of the white population, although hardly liberal, was somewhat less hardline. Nonetheless, the problem was universal insofar as there were few whites who seriously contemplated offering blacks direct representation or opening administrative jobs to black civil servants. A certain amount of traditional leadership was tolerated in the reserves, but no interest to speak of existed when it came to extending matters further than that.

The Purified National Party was now the voice of the Afrikaner fringe, a movement that attracted an alarmingly wide popular response. A generation of marginalized white Afrikaners who survived the Boer War but lost everything were by the 1930s beginning to establish positions of security, wealth, and influence, and their numbers were swelling faster than the English-speaking white community. Numerous Afrikaner cultural movements emerged, celebrating Afrikaner history and such epic events as the Great Trek and the Battles of Blood River and Vegkop. Nonetheless, in the 1938 general election, the United Party won 111 seats in the National Assembly, while Malan's Purified National Party won just 27.

## **World War II and the Triumph of Afrikaner Nationalism**

At the end of the decade, an economic recovery was underway, the economy was booming, and for both black and white South Africans, wages climbed, standards of living improved, and the United Party consolidated its grip on the apparatus of government. However, just over the horizon, the first great test of South African autonomy within the British Commonwealth began to manifest. The growing militancy of Nazi Germany presaged war, which in turn reignited the debate of who would and who would not stand with Britain. The participation of Australia, New Zealand, and Canada would never be doubted, but for South Africa, it prompted another agonizing bout of soul-searching.

When Britain declared war on Germany, the United Party, now fundamentally defined by the personalities of Hertzog and Smuts, split along precisely those lines. Smuts, of course, was immediately committed to declaring South Africa for the Allies, while Hertzog was no less adamant that South Africa owed Britain no such commitment. In a passionate debate in the House of Assembly, Hertzog argued for South African neutrality, but when a vote was taken, he was roundly defeated. The governor-general refused his request to dissolve parliament and call a general election, leading to Hertzog's resignation. This paved the way for Smuts to serve a second term as Prime Minister of South Africa and to lead South Africa into the war.

The main theaters of South African involvement in World War II were in East Africa, North Africa, and Italy. Individual South African servicemen signed up with numerous imperial regiments, and South African pilots were very well represented in the Royal Air Force.

The East Africa Campaign of World War II was quite different than the fighting a generation earlier. This time, the threat came from the Italians entrenched in Ethiopia and Somalia. Mussolini nurtured an ambition to extend the Italian overseas empire by driving the British out of East Africa and rolling the Italian army as far south as possible. A combined Allied force, dominated by South Africans, launched a campaign in the summer of 1940 that broke Italian resistance almost immediately, driving them back to

Addis Ababa in just a few months. Commanding one of the attacking columns was South African Major General Dan Pienaar.

From there, the focus of the war shifted to North Africa, where South African units were scattered across the various imperial commands. As the war then moved up through the boot of Italy, South African tank crews were present. By the end of the war, some 218,000 South Africans were in uniform, and of these, 13,000 were women, 27,000 were “colored” men, and 42,000 were black. All were volunteers. Black and colored men tended to be distributed among the various white detachments and labor and transport drivers, although a handful did manage to find their way into combat units. All the while, the white backlash proved intense. While the soldiers found themselves on common ground in battle, back home, the likes of Daniel Malan fulminated against the use of “Kaffir” soldiers. Despite this, of the 5,500 South Africans killed during the war, more than a quarter were black.

During the war, Smuts was again brought into the British War Cabinet in an advisory role, this time joining a panel of similar experts and senior imperial statesmen advising British Prime Minister Winston Churchill. He was given the honorary rank of British Field Marshal, and he was again celebrated in the halls of imperial power. Upon his death in 1950, his statue was placed in Parliament Square in London alongside Churchill, Gandhi, and many other major British imperial figures. This, however, simply added to the ongoing discontent in the Afrikaner nationalist community over his apparent collaboration .

During the war, South Africa also offered the Allies the benefit of a strong arms industry, strategic ports, and a good economy. During the German blockade of the Mediterranean in 1941, the route around the Cape of Good Hope was vital for transporting troops and supplying the Allies in North Africa. South African industry provided munitions, food, clothing, and tobacco, while the products of South Africa’s Iron and Steel Corporation, or ISCOR, supported the British munitions and arms industry.

Of course, South African gold and platinum were also quite importance. Gold remained the central prop of the South African economy, employing upwards of 320,000 blacks and 43,000 whites. In 1946, the industry

produced £102 million in gold bullion. Close behind was the South African coal industry, and while it remained a major base metal and mineral producer, the South African manufacturing base also expanded and grew at a healthy pace. By the end of the war, the South African garment industry employed 70,000 people and produced goods worth £42 million.

All of this tended to further urbanize the population, to the extent that by the end of the war, about 75% of the population lived and worked in an urban area, including at least 24% of blacks. This was a significant figure, because, although a smaller percentage, it meant that urban blacks outnumbered both urban whites and Indians in pure numbers.

Moreover, the character and status of blacks in the cities was changing. In 1911, a census was conducted that put 55% of blacks present in urban areas as contract workers or migrant labor whose homes were elsewhere. By 1946, it was found that less than 21% of blacks in cities were employed by the traditional exploiters of migrant labor, with the remainder in permanent or semi-permanent residence and distributed across a broad-based employment market ranging from domestic to commercial to industrial.

In tandem with these changes, more blacks became literate, with an increasing number getting educations. A major demographic shift was underway that saw blacks abandoning the overcrowded and impoverished reserves and flocking to the cities in unregulated droves. The irony, as many observed at the time, was that successful economic policies were acting against social policies that were aimed at keeping blacks out of the cities and in the reserves. Thus, even as the policies incentivized blacks to come, no provisions were made for them when they arrived. The purchase or rent of property in an urban area was impossible for blacks, so shanty towns began to appear on the outskirts of the main industrial towns and cities, especially the industrial metropolis of Johannesburg.

With this state of affairs, a vibrant African urban culture grew, but it also fostered enormous discontent, violence, and crime. The cost of living began to creep up as young blacks found meager employment in the informal economy, women ran “shebeens” and distilled and brewed illicit alcohol, prostitution was rife, and violent crime was endemic.<sup>[20]</sup> At the same time, the government’s “civilized labor” policy remained in effect, providing

sheltered employment for whites, with unskilled white labor earning on average more than twice the wages of unskilled black labor.

If World War I rattled the imperial establishment and weakened it at the knees, it was World War II that finished it off. By the latter half of the 1940s, as India was granted independence, the nationalist political movement across Africa was energized and began to gather momentum. A combination of returning black servicemen (many of whom had served in Burma and had absorbed the airs of Indian independence) and a growing generation of educated and political youth started a powerful African liberation movement. The center of this in South Africa was the seething babel of languages, ethnicities, and backgrounds of the Witwatersrand mining compounds. The rotation of migrant labor from all over the region created a highly mobile market for ideas and ideologies in an environment that was intensely reactionary and political. Strikes became more and more frequent as black labor unions and organizations began to flex their muscles. Despite an Industrial Conciliation Act that forbade black involvement in collective bargaining and declared strikes illegal, blacks still organized, and in 1945, the Council of Non-European Trade Unions boasted a membership of 158,000 spread across some 119 separate unions.

The front-line of the emerging struggle, of course, remained the mine compounds and shanty towns of Johannesburg and the Witwatersrand. Here, the politics of black nationalism flourished and formed. Between 1939 and 1948, the Native Affairs Department received reports of over one hundred gold and coal industry industrial actions. The largest of these was a four-day strike called by the African Mineworker's Union in August 1936. Some 74,000 workers brought the industry in the Witwatersrand to a standstill over the government's refusal to implement reforms recommended by a government commission.

The government's reaction was swift and violent. Strike leaders were arrested, 12 were killed, and 1,200 injured. The government held to the position that while union organization among whites was beneficial, among blacks it encouraged mindless and reactionary behavior, proving that blacks simply lacked the maturity to organize and express grievances in a peaceful and controlled manner. The African Mineworker's Union was effectively



emasculated, and the Council of Non-European Trade Union was deeply compromised.

Smuts, as the leader of this repressive movement, did so very much against his better judgment, and often the highly fluid nature of the situation resulted in reactionary and haphazard policy. Smuts has often been lumped together with the white nationalists as being responsible for this policy, but by then he was no longer the architect of events. The principles of segregation continued to be espoused in the various articles of legislation – the Representation of Natives Act of 1936, the Native Trust and Land Act of 1936, and the Native Laws Amendment Act of 1937 – but in most respects, Smuts was pressing forward in the dark. He was hardly a liberal, but he was certainly not a visceral racist. Uncertain what the future held, he was clueless as to how to contain the situation without revealing quite how out of step with the times he was.

As all of this was taking place, Smuts was summoned one last time to contribute to the establishment of the United Nations as the successor to the League of Nations. He was instrumental in the wording of the United Nations Declaration of Human Rights, which must have been extremely difficult bearing in mind the regular and unapologetic flaunting by his own government of these very principles. By then, the forum was dominated by the likes of India and other independent states, and he suffered open criticism for South Africa's repressive race policies. Smuts was forced to acknowledge the hypocrisy of the situation, and it was a relief to him not to be asked to contribute in the same way again.

Behind the scenes, a growing corps of white academics and professionals urged the government to nip the revolution in the bud by increasing black wages, recognizing black trade unions, and abolishing the hated pass laws. The business sector also tended to echo these sentiments, urging the creation of a stable labor market. White members of parliament elected to express black concerns argued consistently for reforms, and some mainstream members of parliament began to argue in cautious terms for the removal of any color clauses from the constitution.

International disapprobation was also gathering stream. The Atlantic Charter, signed by President Roosevelt and Churchill in 1941, marked the

entry of the United States into World War II, but with certain conditions. The independence and sovereignty of all peoples was a basic criterion, which signaled the end of the British Empire and the European imperial period as a whole. The establishment of the United Nations and the independence of India marked an age of emancipation, and as the liberation struggle gathered momentum across Africa, South Africa became a more prominent target for the growing liberation and anti-imperialist movement.

In South Africa, this unleashed a wave of tepid and ineffectual commissions of inquiry into everything from urban living conditions to the long-term effect of migrant labor, and through the process, the full extent of social rot was exposed. Smuts was forced to concede that segregation as a workable social policy was moot, but he was aging and bereft of answers, and his government did not have much to offer as a solution. A report published in 1948 by Justice Henry Allan Fagan concluded that the trend toward black urbanization was irreversible, adding that the system of pass laws was unworkable. Instead, a labor bureau would be more useful in directing labor to where it was most needed.

Smuts' helplessness, and the wave of practical and useful advice that could not be utilized, all pointed to the fact that race policy in South Africa was no longer driven by practicality, if it ever had been. It was now due solely to dogma and ideology, in which case a working solution was not particularly possible. White wages remained inflated, artificial barriers of separation supported white privilege, and almost 20 times more was spent per capita on white education than black.

Despite all the barriers, black political organizations were reaching a standard of maturity and effectiveness that represented a direct and unavoidable challenge to white hegemony. In 1943, at the annual conference of the African National Congress, a challenge was issued to the government in the form of a statement entitled African Claims in South Africa. Citing the Atlantic Charter, it traced out a bill of rights calling for an end to discrimination, redistribution of land, black participation in collective bargaining, and universal adult suffrage.

Nothing struck quite so directly to the core of white anxiety than universal adult suffrage, and the more these calls were made, the more determined the

white establishment became in ensuring that it never happen. In 1944, the ANC Youth League was founded by Walter Sisulu and Oliver Tambo, two seminal figures in the movement. The founding of the Youth League introduced a new and radical generation of black politicians, and into their midst arrived a young attorney by the name of Nelson Mandela.

For its part, the Afrikaner movement was also groping toward what it sensed as a moment of national realization. The agricultural sector of the economy remained largely in Afrikaans hands, and Afrikaans-speakers were emerging in the English-speaking milieu of the cities, academia, professions, business, and industry. Numerous Afrikaans cultural and political organizations emerged. The *Broederbond*, the *Federasie van Afrikaanse Kultuurverenigings* (Federation of Afrikaner Cultural Associations), the Afrikaner churches, and the *Reddingsdaadbond* (Rescue Association) were just a few of these, and the National Party was the political party under which it all resided. On the far right, fringe organizations such as the *Ossewa Brandwag* (Oxwagon Sentinel) openly supported Nazi Germany during World War II and espoused a more radical and potentially oppressive race policy.

The *Ossewa Brandwag* did not speak for the majority, but it nonetheless signaled the rise of the Afrikaner right and an era of bold and defiant Afrikaner attitudes as the world was mostly rallying against such outdated social and political ideologies. Daniel Malan, the far-right leader of the Purified National Party, led the Afrikaner movement, and as the 1948 general election loomed, he campaigned vigorously with growing confidence. While other sectors of the political establishment fractured and subsided into irrelevance, the National Party was able to unite Afrikaans-speakers from across the spectrum. A powerful sense of nationalism emerged against a backdrop of republicanism, and the rise of a people brutally defeated half a century earlier in a war with the British. Race paranoia was also a powerful force, in particular among the working classes who sensed daily a threat to their protected status by a rising black working class and intelligentsia. The word “apartheid,” or “apartness,” became a word more frequently coined in the race debate, and while it was not yet a policy, it was surely a sign of the times.

By contrast, the United Party offered up a vague and ill-formed series of policies, espoused by Smuts who, at 78, was increasingly old and out of touch. Besides that, it forced him onto the back foot by having to deal with and rationalize the growth of urban migration, and in a situation where no practical or accepted policy could hope to satisfy a majority of the electorate, the advantage lay with the opposition. A general election was held on May 26, 1948, and the National Party, led by Daniel Malan, emerged with 70 seats (mainly rural) to the United Party's 65 (mainly urban). Smuts conceded defeated and slipped gratefully into retirement, dying two years later as South Africa separated itself from the British Empire and the policies of apartheid began to shape the direction of life and government.

On June 1, 1948, Daniel Malan arrived in Pretoria by train to take office, and there he was met by a huge crowd of cheering whites. He told the audience, "In the past, we felt like strangers in our own country, but today, South Africa belongs to us once more. For the first time since Union, South Africa is our own. May God grant that it always remain our own."

Back in Johannesburg, the leadership of the ANC, including the young attorney Nelson Mandela, listened to these celebratory prognostications in a grim mood. As strangers in their own country, they all understood that the South African liberation struggle would not be won overnight.

## **Implementing Apartheid**

The iconic 1948 General Election in South Africa that projected Daniel Malan and the right-wing Afrikaner National Party to power also marked a parting of the ways between the Union of South Africa and Britain. Notwithstanding its status as a British overseas dominion, Whitehall had not been in a position to exert meaningful influence on the political process in South Africa for years. Indeed, residual British political influence in any of the overseas dominions amounted to very little, and Canada, Australia, and New Zealand all entered the postwar period with almost absolute autonomy. South Africa stood apart from the other dominions, less as an expression of independence or self-sufficiency than simple defiance. British policy in Africa was to prepare the ground for a domestic African takeover, but that was never going to fly in South Africa. South African independence meant independence under white rule, not black, and every international forum watched in dismay as South Africa entrenched white minority rule and settled in for the long haul.

The final break came in 1961, after a decade of rancorous relations, when South Africa declared itself a republic, replacing the old imperial with standard diplomatic relations with Britain. South Africa's membership in the Commonwealth was withdrawn after a majority of members objected, at which point South Africa effectively separated from the British Empire and every residual imperial association that continued to exist.

At this stage, the Republic of South Africa was more than the sum of its parts. South Africa was emerging as a regional economic and military superpower, registering almost meteoric economic growth, and it enjoyed burgeoning wealth and a rate of development that outpaced the rest of sub-Saharan Africa to a fantastic degree. One particular American diplomat was heard to remark that by world standards, the South African communications infrastructure was excellent, but by African standards it was miraculous. While this was certainly true, and while it was aided by an incorruptible administrative bureaucracy, it was nonetheless built on a hopelessly skewed social and fiscal economy.

In the aftermath of its 1948 electoral victory, the National Party quickly moved to consolidate power. Parliamentary seats were added to represent South West Africa, on the one hand, both formalizing South African control of the territory and bolstering the right wing, which was well represented in the UN-mandated territory. It then finished the assault against the Cape-qualified franchise begun by James Hertzog. All coloreds were removed from the common voters roll, relegating their voice to the same level as blacks by empowering them only to elect white parliamentary representatives to represent their interests. Coloreds represented a large voting body who were typically loyal to the United Party, but they were now excluded from the franchise.

The United Party, after the 1948 defeat and the death of Smuts in 1950, began to wither, while the National Party grew steadily in strength and influence.<sup>[21]</sup> For the next 20 years, the “Nats” swept successive general elections, building upon a solid economic performance and rising standards of living to eventually win the loyalty of even English-speaking whites. This was only, in part, a reaction to the steady economic growth, because it was also thanks to the emergence and integration of the Afrikaans elite and the marshaling of a common white response to African liberation movements elsewhere on the continent. By 1960, the National Party enjoyed a virtual monopoly on power, but the Belgian Congo was independent, and the spectacle of a generally ordered and well-run colony descending into unrestrained bloodletting and anarchy within months convinced white South Africans across the board that the same must never happen south of the Limpopo. The Nats appeared to have a firm grip on the race issue in South Africa, and most whites were either supportive of or prepared to overlook the rise of apartheid as the price of security in a turbulent age.

As this all indicates, the National Party was in many respects also a cultural movement, promoting first and foremost the interests of the Afrikaner nation. The institutions of state and government were steadily packed with Afrikaans speakers, until the cabinet, the civil service, the judiciary, the police, army, and all state corporations were dominated by Afrikaans speakers. This would have important ramifications later when apartheid began to gather notoriety and general disapprobation, by which

time the system was so thoroughly in Afrikaner hands that even international and local condemnation could not force change. Of course, the steady support of the Afrikaner cultural movement also led to the rise to power and wealth of a great many Afrikaans speakers, who by the 1960s had reached a state of parity in regard to the economic and social influence of English speakers. There were many prominent Afrikaans academics, authors, artists, and captains of industry, and the differences of class that in the past had separated the languages no longer existed to the same degree.

In 1961, the single greatest Afrikaner cultural goal was achieved when, after a narrow referendum victory, the government declared South Africa a republic, 60 years after the signing of the Treaty of Vereeniging. After a backlash from almost every member, South Africa withdrew from the British Commonwealth with little apparent regret. The cries of anguish from the civilized world were regarded as a fair price to pay for the restoration of the scared Afrikaner republic.

Economically, South Africa defied the already established African model by registering steady growth and diversification. It has often been remarked that the South African economy was a law unto itself, growing robustly through the 1950s, 1960s, and 1970s despite a backward-looking and repressive government. Much of this had to do with South African gold, which continued to form the central pillar of the economy. South Africa, as a consequence, wielded a comparatively unassailable military strength in Africa, not to mention an economic ballast that would not easily be upset.

Whites were the principal beneficiaries of all of this, and the National Party applied no less diligence to its flagship program of assuring white supremacy in the country. Most of the early work to achieve this amounted to bolstering and supporting existing segregationist legislation and tightening up the enforcement of those laws. This began the policy that would later be formally identified as “apartheid.”

The word apartheid, meaning simply separation or segregation, entered the South African political dictionary in 1929 with the publication of a Dutch Reform Church manifesto suggesting a system of racial separation and using the term apartheid. The date of origin of segregation in South Africa has tended to be identified as 1913 with the publication of the

“Native Lands Act,” which began the regulation of black land ownership and the statutory separation of the races. In 1936, the “Native Trust and Land Act” was published, enlarging the native reserves from just over 7% of the total landmass of the country to a little over 13%. Appropriating the Persian suffix term “-stan,” meaning land, and “Bantu,” the aggregate term “Bantustan” was coined to refer to regions of the country set aside as nominally independent black homelands.

The true architect of apartheid, if there was a particular culprit, was Prime Minister Hendrik Frensch Verwoerd. Verwoerd led South Africa from 1958-1966, prior to which he managed the Department of Native Affairs, and it was he who indelibly imprinted the doctrine of apartheid on the South African legal statute. Verwoerd arrived in South Africa in 1903 as the two-year-old son of pro-Boer Dutch parents and grew up mainly in Cape Town, developing a passionate identification with the emerging Afrikaner movement. After earning a doctorate in psychology from Stellenbosch University, he remained on the academic staff as a professor of applied psychology. All the while, he was active in politics, promoting a white, Afrikaans agenda and opposing the immigration of Jewish refugees into South Africa during the Nazi occupation of Europe. He entered politics as an appointed senator under Daniel Malan and served as Prime Minister until his assassination in 1966.





### **Verwoerd**

During those crucial eight years, Verwoerd oversaw the transformation of South Africa into the most racially polarized nation on earth. By the time he was leading the country, most of the legal framework to support apartheid was already in place, and all that was required was vigorous enforcement to ensure complete separation of the races. Verwoerd made numerous speeches and public declarations in support of the policy of apartheid, and as a doctor of psychology, his view of the race landscape was informed by his academic experience. He said the following in a speech in December 1950: “My point is this that, if mixed development is to be the policy of the future of South Africa, it will lead to the most terrific clash of interests imaginable. The endeavors and desires of the Bantu and the endeavors and objectives of all Europeans will be antagonistic. Such a clash can only bring unhappiness and misery to both. Both Bantu and European must, therefore, consider in good time how this misery can be averted from themselves and from their descendants. They must find a plan to provide the two population groups with opportunities for the full development of their respective powers and ambitions without coming into conflict. The only possible way out is the second alternative, namely, that both adopt a development divorced from each other. That is all that the word ‘apartheid’ means.”

At the heart of apartheid lay four distinct concepts. These were that South Africa comprised four racial groups – black, colored, Indian, and white – and that the interests of whites, as the “civilized” race, must prevail over all others. In addition, whites were to hold a monopoly in state and government, and the white race ultimately formed a single nation. Obviously, a white monopoly of political power was the central pillar of the apartheid ideology, and there was no longer any mention of the British Empire’s “Sacred Trust,” which was supposed to steward the nation and transition it into majority black leadership. Instead, apartheid ensured that the black man must henceforth accept his second-class status as a perpetual state of affairs.

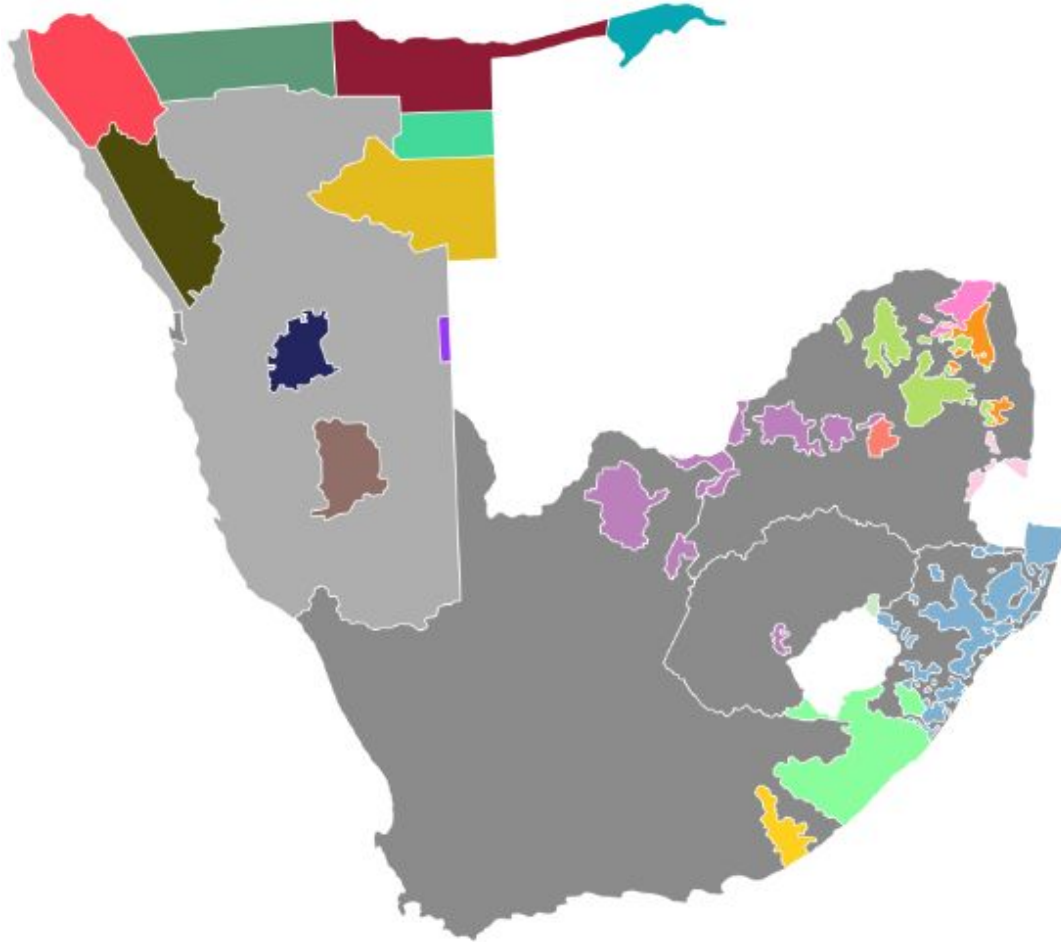
In 1950, while Verwoerd was serving as Minister of Native Affairs, the “Population Registration Act” was passed, providing the legal machinery to allocate each individual a racial category. The methods applied to determine that category could be both arbitrary and Orwellian. One notorious method was to place a pencil in a person’s hair, which, if it fell out, would determine that individual as white, but if it remained, would classify the individual as black or colored. The application of this law often split families along lines of classification, and as desperate as marginal whites were not to slide down the scale to a classification of “colored,” coloreds strove to ascend the same scale to improve their prospects by a classification of “white.”

Similar acts included the “Immorality Act” and the “Prohibition of Mixed Marriages Act” of 1949, which all tended to regulate and sometimes complicate the lives of people living at the point of overlap among the different races. Marriage and sexual relationships between the races, always frowned upon, were henceforth illegal. In 1953, the “Reservation of Separate Amenities Act” was passed, with obvious implications for segregation in the urban areas.

In 1951, the Natives Representation Council, the only officially recognized, nationwide, black administrative institution, was banned. The reserves were then grouped into ten identifiable territories, each designated a “homeland” earmarked for a separate black “nation” governed by traditional leadership under white tutelage. The legal framework to enforce

this separation was cleared in 1971 with the passage of the “Bantu Homelands Constitution Act,” which empowered the government to grant de facto independence to any homeland, or Bantustan. The Transkei, for example, was declared “self-governing” in 1963 and “independent” in 1976. Bophuthatswana followed in 1977, Venda arrived in 1979, and Ciskei came in 1981. Zululand (or KwaZulu) under the leadership of Chief Mangosuthu Buthelezi, refused to accept independence, and instead, a powerful political front (Inkatha) was established. This formed the basis of the Zulu representative party, the Inkatha Freedom Party.

Citizens of the homelands, thereafter, were stripped of the rights of South African citizenship, although under the existing pass laws, they were allowed free access to the South African labor market, albeit without right of permanent abode. The homelands were often not contiguous, but fragmented, and despite the South African economy continuing to grow, the Bantustans remained economic backwaters and labor pools for South African mining and industry. In regard to this policy, the South African government was quite candid. In a general circular, the Department of Bantu Administration and Development stated, “It is accepted Government policy that the Bantu are only temporarily resident in the European areas of the Republic for as long as they offer their labour there. As soon as they become, for one reason or another, no longer fit for work or superfluous in the labour market, they are expected to return to their country of origin or the territory of the national unit where they fit ethnically if they were not born and bred in their homeland.”<sup>[22]</sup>



**A map of South African Bantustans**

Meanwhile, pass laws were rigorously enforced, and throughout the apartheid era, they remained the most despised aspect of the system for ordinary blacks. No black person could visit a city or urban area for more than 72 hours without the requisite documents, and officials and police were authorized to arrest anyone found doing so. In the 1960s, an annual average of 100,000 people were arrested and processed in this manner, with the number peaking in the mid-1970s to about 380,000. Segregated townships were established on the outer precincts of the cities, while informal and squatter settlements proliferated and were periodically broken up and dispersed. The “Group Areas Act” of 1950, and its many amendments, formally divided the urban areas of South Africa into racial zones where only members of that race might reside. The zoning of white areas obviously held precedent, and the forced removal of incumbent populations

to make way for white urban development became a feature of the late 1950s and 1960s.

Perhaps the most memorable example was “District Six,” or the Sixth Municipal District of Cape Town. District Six was a colored neighborhood of Cape Town that could trace its history to the abolition and freeing of slaves of mixed ethnic heritage. In the 1970s, the area was designated white and subsequently leveled, with its population forcibly relocated to designated colored areas of the city. District Six became thereafter something of a cause célèbre and a symbol of the insensitive and high-handed attitude of the government at that time.

Naturally, education was also segregated and controlled. In a rare instance of white segregation, white education was separated along language lines, with Afrikaans schools dealing with Afrikaans speaking students and English schools dealing with English speakers. It was compulsory for a child to attend a school teaching in the language spoken in that child’s home. Black education was separated as a matter of policy from the Christian missions, which had long held a monopoly on providing education to blacks. Christian missions were regarded as ideologically suspect, and it was sensed that Christian schools and institutions, with their history of politicization, could not be trusted to maintain a neutral educational doctrine. Under the “Bantu Education Act” of 1953, the government assumed complete control of black education, making it almost impossible for non-government black schools to exist and extending this control to colored and Indian children in the 1960s and 1970s. According to Verwoerd, “Native education should be controlled in such a way that it should be in accord with the policy of the state. If the native in South Africa today in any kind of school in existence is being taught to expect that he will live his adult life under a policy of equal rights, he is making a big mistake. There is no place for him in the European community above the level of certain forms of labour.”<sup>[23]</sup>

In 1959, ignoring significant student and faculty opposition, South Africa’s Parliament passed the “Extension of University Education Act,” which prohibited the enrollment of black students into mainstream universities without special permission from the relevant cabinet minister.

The Native College at Fort Hare was taken over by the government, its staff was replaced, and its role was reestablished as a Xhosa university. Ultimately, Fort Hare would emerge as the gathering place of aspiring black nationalist leaders, educating, among others, Nelson Mandela, Oliver Tambo, Chief Buthelezi, and Robert Mugabe.

Thus, the rise and entrenchment of apartheid in South Africa was backed up by a ruthlessly efficient law and order establishment. This also required a ubiquitous and highly efficient police intelligence network. The National Party government inherited an apparatus of coercion already well established, and along with multiple discriminatory laws came a no less comprehensive raft of punitive laws. The “Suppression of Communism Act,” for example, was passed in 1950, offering a broad definition of communism and wide powers to contain it. This was followed by numerous similar laws, including the “Riotous Assemblies Act” of 1956, the “Unlawful Organizations Act” of 1960, the “Sabotage Act” of 1962, the “General Law Amendment Act” of 1966, the “Terrorism Act” of 1967, and the “Internal Security Act” 1976. This body of legislation delivered vast powers to the police and law and order agencies to arrest without trial. The authorities could also hold detainees indefinitely in solitary confinement, with no obligation to reveal their identities or grant them access to anyone except police and government officials. Any organization could be banned, meetings of any sort could be prohibited, and organizations could be prevented from receiving overseas funding.

## **The Federation of Rhodesia and Nyasaland**

“The healthiness of race relations in this country depends on the sum total of the thousands of contacts which occur throughout the country each day. Each one of us has something to contribute but the eventual totting up does not work out in an arithmetical way because one case of ill-management of the native does far more harm than the good done by the liberal-minded employer. I refer, of course, to common sense treatment and not to treating them like a pet. We have to face up to the fact that there are people who are longing to prove that we in this country are not capable of handling the African. They do not like our policy and they will do anything they can to wreck it. I think it is very important that we should realise our individual as well as our collective responsibilities in this matter.” – Godfrey Huggins

In the end, the great catalyst for the black political revival was World War II. Again, white Rhodesian manpower predominated at the start of the war, and Rhodesian men saw service in every theater of the war, but for the first time, black servicemen in the Rhodesia African Rifles were deployed for service overseas. This was done rather later in the war, as black Rhodesian servicemen were deployed mainly to Burma while the Japanese retreat was in full effect.

However, before their deployment to the front lines, and during periods of rest and reorganization, all of these battalions were stationed either in India or Ceylon. Both these colonies were approaching their own independence from the British Empire, so people in the region were brimming with optimism. This had a profound effect on young blacks, not only from Rhodesia but from all over Africa. Add to this the general principle of freedom from oppression that underwrote the defeat of fascism, and the result was that many young blacks repatriated back to Southern Rhodesia filled with new ideas.

Initially, they would be profoundly disappointed to realize upon their return that none of those lofty concepts of emancipation and liberty, on behalf of which they had fought and died, were ever intended to apply to them. But that would not be the end of the story. Coinciding with this return of black servicemen, the first generation of highly educated blacks also

began to filter back into the colony, bringing home Masters degrees and doctorates. These young men certainly felt that they owed the white man nothing, and that whites should pack up and leave the colony. If whites left and took with them their racist social and political institutions, the natives assumed a future independent nation would be no worse off for it.

Then came the first waves of post-war white immigrants. The aftermath of World War II saw huge numbers of ex-servicemen abandoning the gloom of Britain in favor of the sunshine of the colonies. The population of every British overseas territory ballooned at this time, and in Southern Rhodesia it crept towards its peak of 260,000 whites. Instead of coming from the British upper classes, such as aristocrats and professionals, they were artisans and from the working classes of Britain, and more concerned about class and race. The poorer classes believed their neighborhoods, their schools, their clubs, and their jobs were in greatest peril of being overrun by blacks if artificial barriers were not erected. In tandem with those fears, white Rhodesians became more conspicuously racist.

As racism not only increased but became a mobilizing political platform, ex-servicemen provided the backbone of political organizations while the young and educated elite provided the leadership. In the years immediately following the war, the ingredients for a mass movement did not yet quite exist, as the masses remained, for the most part, conservative and politically apathetic until the mass appropriation of land began. There was a great deal of competition among the various colonies for immigrants leaving Europe, and as inducement, general land grants were offered to any with an interest in agriculture. It was said that when the white man returned from the war, he was given a farm, but when the black man returned from the war, he was given a bicycle. Indeed, to accommodate the many thousands of immigrants clamoring for prime agricultural land in Southern Rhodesia, blacks were forcibly removed in significant numbers and relocated to often sterile and unproductive native reserves, or Tribal Trust Lands, on the very fringes of viable existence. It was this, as much as anything else, that generated deep antipathy and set the stage for a black revolution.

India was granted independence in 1947, a circumstance that was always implicitly understood when Indians helped defend the British Empire upon



the outbreak of World War II, and India's independence set the imperial dominoes falling. In Africa, the first to fall was Egypt, which estranged itself from Britain through a "revolution" in 1952. In 1957, the Gold Coast followed, creating the nation State of Ghana, and it was followed in quick succession by all the British West African colonies.

Things were a bit more complicated in colonies such as Kenya and Southern Rhodesia, where established white populations strongly resisted any suggestion of black majority rule. In Kenya, the Mau Mau Uprising erupted almost at the moment that World War II ended, which began the countdown to Kenyan independence. In Southern Rhodesia, however, things were rather different. Since 1933, the colony was led by Prime Minister Godfrey Huggins, who the white population greatly loved and admired. An establishment figure who remained at the helm of Rhodesian politics until 1956. Huggins was responsible for a great deal during those 23 years, not the least of which was the formation of the Central African Federation, or the Federation of Rhodesia and Nyasaland.



**Huggins**

The history of the Federation had everything to do with a determination on the part of the ruling white minority of Southern Rhodesia to retain the exclusivity of its government. White leaders on both sides of the Zambezi River sensed that the African liberation movement, which was gathering

pace all over the continent, could best be thwarted by amalgamation and safety in numbers. This, in some respects, was the modern iteration of Rhodes' vision of a United States of Africa, although in this case the concept was a union of all the British colonies of central and east Africa, or at least those that were worth preserving. Huggins summed up the goal in abjectly racist terms: "You cannot expect Europeans to form in a queue with dirty people, possibly an old mfazi with an infant on her back, mewling and puking and making a mess of everything...It is perfectly obvious to anyone that the system we have in Southern Rhodesia at the present time is the most satisfactory to both sides and it is certainly impossible to alter it until the hon. leaders of the African people have cleaned up their brother Africans a bit; and then we can perhaps consider it."



**A map of the Federation's administrative divisions**

The idea of union with South Africa, which had been the preferred option for many people in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, had fallen out of favor after World War II. The emerging race policies of South Africa were ominous, and even though Southern Rhodesian race policies were also quite harsh, they certainly bore no relation to what was taking place in South Africa. It was, therefore, regarded as morally indefensible in Whitehall to recommend

handing over the native population of Southern Rhodesia to a style of stewardship now displayed south of the Limpopo River.

In fact, the British government was in something of a quandary. By the end of the 1940s, the decline of the empire was clear. There were some people still in denial, but in general, it was understood that the end was near, so the idea that a population of British expatriates in Central Africa might remain in control of an African colony in perpetuity was absurd. At the same time, British authorities a continent away could only do so much to resolve the situation without blundering into a race war. The settlement of the African colonies had been actively encouraged during the height of the empire, and the establishment of settled colonies had been the result. Now that the British government wished nothing more than to divest itself of colonial responsibility, it felt obligated to those residual British populations that remained in the colonies.

Moreover, white Rhodesians had contributed willingly and significantly to the defense of Britain during World War II, and in gratitude, white Rhodesians were given to understand by the British authorities that independence would be granted to the colony at the moment that it became feasible. That feasibility was understood at the time to be when the dust had settled and peace in Europe had been established. Peace in Europe had been established, but decolonization now meant that while Northern Rhodesia and Southern Rhodesia might gain independence, the people who would govern it would come from entirely different backgrounds than the whites anticipated.

As part of British Prime Minister Winston Churchill's negotiations to bring the United States into the war, an agreement contained in a document known as the Atlantic Charter compelled Churchill to acknowledge and promote sovereignty and self-determination throughout the empire. The end of the war had also brought the emergence of the United States as a superpower, and the Cold War era of superpowers now effectively superseded the age of empire. The creation of the United Nations and the independence of India made it all the more impossible to grant independence to a colony such as Southern Rhodesia while maintaining the rule of a white minority.

As Huggins made clear, though, white colonists in Africa simply could not conceive handing the government of their colony over to revolutionary blacks who would obviously have little interest in preserving the status quo. By the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century, it was far too late to preach partnership and the incremental introduction of blacks into power. The African revolution was well and truly underway, and across the continent, blacks were demanding power immediately and without condition.

The British were in a pickle, and it was Huggins who revived the idea of amalgamating Northern Rhodesia and Southern Rhodesia, with the inclusion this time of the British Protectorate of Nyasaland. Southern Rhodesia, the most developed and populous of the three, was a British self-governing colony with a white population of just over 200,000 whites and about 5,000,000 blacks. Both Northern Rhodesia and Nyasaland, on the other hand, were British protectorates. The fundamental difference between the two was that, as British protectorates, Northern Rhodesia and Nyasaland were governed directly from Whitehall through the office of a governor, so no franchise or system of representation existed. In both protectorates, the white population was no more than 5,000, and a far more liberal attitude among them existed compared to the whites in Southern Rhodesia. This was particularly the case in Nyasaland, which had a long tradition of encouraging black political expression and black participation.

Huggins was enthusiastically supported in this by the leader of the elected members of the Northern Rhodesian legislature, a man by the name of Sir Roy Welensky. These two men could hardly have been more different. Huggins was an urbane, cultivated and educated member of the British middle class, a Fellow of the Royal College of Surgeons and a highly respected imperial politician. Welensky, on the other hand, was an obese ex-prizefighter, a railway worker and a unionist. Nonetheless, the two formed a partnership to press the case of amalgamation as a counterbalance to the growing chorus of black nationalists.



**Welensky**

The British government was forced to take this plea seriously, in part because of the residual sense of responsibility they felt, but also because refusal to do so held the potential to drive white Rhodesians into the arms of South Africa. However, British officials also recognized the evident incompatibility between the three territories, and they were hesitant to place the management of the two protectorates' native populations under the management of Southern Rhodesians. It was apparent that the native populations' rights and freedoms would then be unprotected.

Southern Rhodesia, by dint of the fact that it was a self-governing colony, elected its leadership through a standard system of imperial franchise. All subjects of His Majesty, regardless of race, color, or creed, enjoyed equal access to the vote, assuming that they could meet essential property and education qualifications. In principle, therefore, the Southern Rhodesian franchise was open to universal participation, although at that time few blacks met the necessary qualifications.

There may have been obstacles keeping them from voting in the numbers they deserved, but blacks were politically active throughout the colony. The political activity had begun under the umbrella of independent churches, but as the black urban workforce began to grow, that political activity began

increasingly to find expression in labor unions, pressure groups, and early political parties. The first substantial political party to be formed anywhere in the region was the African National Congress of South Africa, formed in 1912 along the lines of the Indian Congress Party. This inspired the formation of a similar organization in Nyasaland that emerged in due course as the Nyasaland African Congress (NAC), and in 1952, the Southern Rhodesia African National Congress (SRANC) was formed.

The SRANC was founded by one of the earliest Southern Rhodesian black nationalists, 35-year-old Joshua Nkomo. Nkomo, like so many of his fellow Rhodesian nationalists, received his early education at the hands of missionaries, after which he obtained higher education in South Africa. While in South Africa, he engaged with the emerging black nationalist movement in that country, which was far better organized and a great deal more sophisticated than any other similar movement in the region. Returning to Bulawayo, Nkomo found employment as a Rhodesia Railways social worker, then as a labor organizer, and later still as the founder of the SRANC.

Nkomo was a moderate, and he damaged his reputation somewhat by allowing himself to become involved in the preamble to the formation of the Central African Federation. He did not participate directly, but he was present as an occasional delegation member, purportedly representing the voice of “black Rhodesia.” Informed black political opinion in all three territories was universally opposed to the Federation based on the obvious fact that it was a device intended to delay black majority rule. It was over this issue, indeed, that the first large-scale mobilization of a black protest movement took place anywhere in central Africa.



### **Nkomo**

Black political organization, particularly in Southern Rhodesia, remained somewhat formative, and it did not in any way derail progress towards the formation of the Federation. The difficulties that were encountered tended to be technical and procedural, and in general the British government fell in line with the process, which was driven by the partnership of Godfrey Huggins and Roy Welensky. The British governments in office during this process were led respectively by Clement Attlee and Winston Churchill, and Churchill was rather elderly and infirm by then, so things tended to slip through his fingers that younger and more contemporary politicians might not have let pass.

Regardless, on August 1, 1953, the Federation of Rhodesia and Nyasaland came into existence under the leadership of Huggins, closely supported by Roy Welensky. It was an imperfect political union in many respects, not least because it was a complicated accommodation that sought to reconcile the fundamentally incompatible constitutional status of each constituent

territory. For example, the preamble to the Federal Constitution made provision for a grant of independence in the Commonwealth to each of the three territories upon the dissolution of the Federation, and within the body of the Constitution, an allowance was made for a review conference of the Constitution within 10 years.

For the time being, however, the Federation of Rhodesia and Nyasaland settled into existence, and the white populations of all three territories allowed themselves a moment of optimism and hope for the very best.



## **The Winds of Change**

“Europeans must realize that unless the legitimate demands of African nationalism are recognized, then racial conflict is inevitable.” – Robert Mugabe

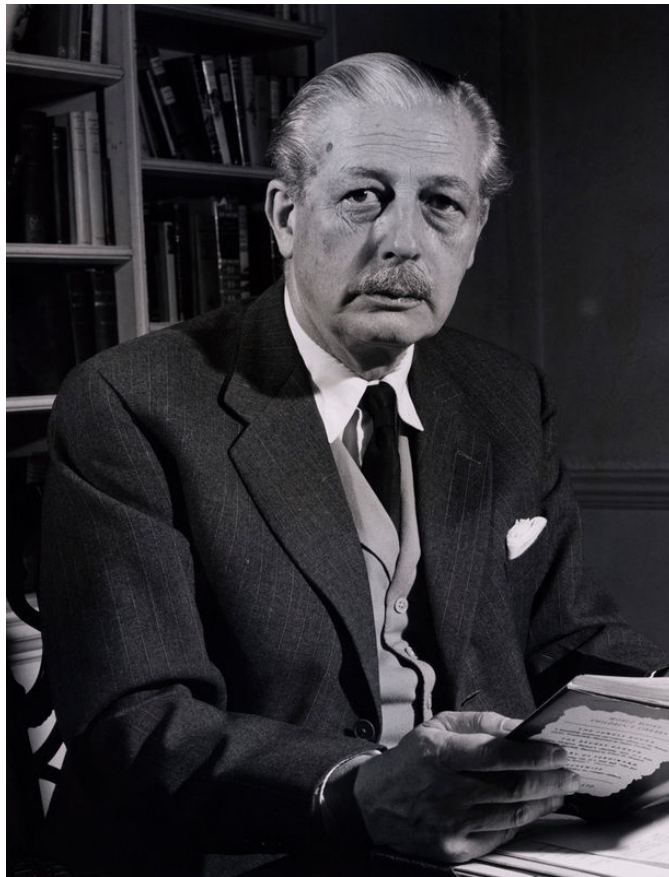
The 1950s were turbulent throughout Africa. The Mau Uprising in Kenya presaged great change, but it also gave a hint of some of the realities of black politics. The Mau Mau was one of the first guerilla organizations willing to trade blows with the colonial establishment, but more important was the manner in which it handled political enforcement, and this more than anything sent a chill down the West’s spine. The organization was in general extremely atavistic, relying of ritual oathing and blood sacrifice to bond its membership, and the acts of violence that reinforced this, even by African standards, were cruel and horrific.

As terrifying as the Mau Mau could be, events in Kenya were practically tame compared to what occurred in the Congo in 1960. The Congo Free State, Belgium’s only colony in Africa, comprised the vast region of the Congo Basin, and it contained a bewildering ethnic kaleidoscope across its many regions.<sup>[24]</sup> It was also one of the more tightly run European colonies of Africa, but in response to to the wave of African nationalist fervor gathering pace all over Africa, Congolese natives started widespread disturbances and civil unrest. Seeing the writing on the wall and fearing a colonial war on the scale of French Algeria, the Belgian government sought as quickly as possible to divest itself of the colony. An overly hasty handover, an almost immediate armed forces mutiny, and a series of secessionist wars saw the Congo collapse into utter chaos within months of the July 1960 handover. The United Nations was drawn into a hot war, and scenes of unimaginable anarchy and carnage featured on television screens and newspapers all over the world.

As panicked Belgian refugees flooded into Northern Rhodesia with tales of rape and murder, white Rhodesians determined that if this was the reality of a black takeover, then no black man would ever rule Rhodesia. Events in the Congo were an aberration, and attributable as much as anything to the

exclusivity of Belgian rule in Congo and the poorly handled divestment, but they still served to solidify a mood of defiance among whites.

As luck would have it, the much-anticipated Federal Constitutional Review Conference neared, and the white leadership of the Federation, now led by Roy Welensky, suspected that the British were beginning to buckle under pressure. British Prime Minister Harold Macmillan visited South Africa in February 1960, and while addressing the South African Parliament in Cape Town, he gave his famous “Winds of Change” speech. In it, he said, “The wind of change is blowing through this continent. Whether we like it or not, this growth of national consciousness is a political fact.”



**Macmillan**

Into the mix stepped a diminutive Nyasa doctor by the name of Hastings Banda. As the most politically progressive and liberal territory of the Federation, pressure had been building in Nyasaland in anticipation of the

Federal Constitutional Review Conference, and Banda was pulled in to lead a secessionist movement as the countdown to the conference neared.



**Banda**

Hastings Banda was already somewhat advanced in years when this call came, and he had for many years led a quiet life in North London running a family medical practice and looking forward to retirement. Indeed, he had been away from his home colony for so long that he could no longer speak his native language. Nonetheless, he was the man for the job, and he plunged into the business of dragging Nyasaland out of the Federation with passionate commitment. Perhaps better than any white politician in his field of vision, he understood that the moment had arrived - the British were ready to hand the territories of Central Africa over, and he was determined to ensure that he was in a position to receive an independent Nyasaland when that handover came.

For months, Banda led a loud and violent campaign demanding that Nyasaland be allowed to secede from the Federation, which stirred up

nationalist activity all over the region. The territorial government of Southern Rhodesia banned the SRANC and arrested its entire senior leadership, though this did not include Joshua Nkomo because he happened to be out of the country. Various states of emergency were declared, and heavy police actions were implemented in all three territories.

Banda was eventually arrested and detained in Southern Rhodesia. This, ironically, simply served to enhance his political profile and grant him the necessary revolutionary credentials to compare himself to Gandhi and Nehru, who had each suffered the same treatment in the twilight of their colonial experiences.

In the midst of all of this, a beleaguered Roy Welensky was boxing shadows. He was consoled and mollified by a British establishment that sympathized with white Rhodesians, but nonetheless offered Hastings Banda what he wanted. The Federal Constitutional Review Conference, when it came, reviewed nothing at all. Instead, it presided over the beginning of the end for the Federation of Rhodesia and Nyasaland.

On hand to observe all of this was 41-year-old Federal Chief Whip Ian Douglas Smith. Smith, along with a handful of other politically active Southern Rhodesian whites, realized that Northern Rhodesia and Nyasaland were lost, so it was now critically important to save Southern Rhodesia from the same fate. Learning from the experience of Sir Roy Welensky, Smith realized that the British could not be trusted on this issue. Smith was not at that point senior enough in the Southern Rhodesian political establishment to lead any political movements, but as the edifice of the Federation began to crumble, he quietly began to lobby for his positions.



### **Smith**

Hastings Banda continued to browbeat the British, and, with a great deal of showmanship, he guided the dwindling Protectorate of Nyasaland towards its eventual independence as the nation-state of Malawi. This process would not be completed until 1964.

Meanwhile, under the leadership of a similarly charismatic nationalist leader, Kenneth Kaunda, Northern Rhodesians also began agitating for removal from the Federation. A similar journey as the one in Nyasaland would lead to the establishment of an independent Zambia. Thus, on December 1, 1963, the Federation ceased to exist.

At that point, the territorial government of Southern Rhodesia lay under the leadership of Sir Edgar Whitehead, the last of the middle-class prime ministers born in Europe. He was only nominally interested in the concept of perpetual white rule in Africa, but more importantly, he was a myopic, bumbling individual who managed the detachment of Southern Rhodesia from the Federation with spectacular incompetence. Besieged by an army of fist-shaking nationalists and a colony on the verge of insurrection, he was manifestly overwhelmed by the circumstances of the moment.



### **Whitehead**

Energized by the collapse of the Federation and the steady march of the other two northern territories towards independence, Southern Rhodesian nationalists organized and protested as fervently as they could. Violence and civil unrest had won the day everywhere else, and there was no reason to suppose that Southern Rhodesia would not be handed over with equal alacrity the moment that the Molotov cocktails began to fly and a general state of emergency was declared. Ironically, most of the violence was inwardly directed, and most of those affected were black, but nonetheless, the colony appeared to be tipping towards anarchy.

In the midst of an orgy of violence and killing on the city streets of Southern Rhodesia, a series of constitutional conferences were held so that all three constituent territories of the Federation might determine the constitutional framework of their respective futures. Predictably, the conferences held in Lusaka and Lilongwe ended with the triumphant emergence of Hastings Banda and Kenneth Kaunda as the respective



presidents of an independent Malawi and Zambia, but the process as it began in Salisbury promised to be a little more complicated. The Southern Rhodesia Constitutional Conference of 1961 was chaired by 53-year-old Duncan Sandys, the new British Commonwealth Relations Secretary. Leading the government delegation was Whitehead, nervously seated opposite a group of cultivated and educated blacks of a type that he had never before encountered. Hardly knowing what to expect, he was pleasantly surprised to encounter men better educated than he was, as he had never spoken to a black man other than those employed on his farm or those who served him tea and biscuits in his office at mid-morning. This was true for many establishment whites at the time, for whom the term “African nationalist” conjured up nightmarish images of Congolese soldiers waving machetes and chopping people to bits, or of Kenyan Mau Mau members drinking the blood of whites.



**Sandys**



**Kaunda**

In fact, aside from Joshua Nkomo, who led the nationalist National Democratic Party (NDP) delegation, the two principal members were Ndabaningi Sithole and Herbert Chitepo.<sup>[25]</sup> Sithole was a Methodist minister and author of the groundbreaking nationalist bible *African Nationalism*, published several years earlier to considerable international acclaim. A soft-spoken and thoughtful character, Sithole was in every respect a moderate, and a highly intelligent and educated man. Seated beside him, Herbert Chitepo was a British-trained barrister, and one of the first black Rhodesians to be admitted to the local Bar Association. None of these men represented the radical wing of the NDP.

Initially, there a sense on the black side of the table that compromise would achieve more under these circumstances than the fist-shaking actions of the likes of Hastings Banda. That sort of behavior had certainly intimidated a British leader eager to hand over the colony to whoever was



available to take it, but Southern Rhodesian whites would not be quite so easily intimidated. If backed into a corner, they would certainly fight.

It was with surprising ease, therefore, that Duncan Sandys was able to guide the conference towards a reasonably amicable conclusion. In fact, it would perhaps be fair to say that Sandys fought very much in the white Rhodesian corner, and his suave handling of the three black politicians took advantage of their inexperience, although he also took absolute advantage of Whitehead's catastrophic indifference to detail.

The main issue on the table was voting, and to balance out black aspirations with white apprehensions, a rather ingenious system of representation was agreed upon that seemed to give everything to everybody while giving nothing to anybody. In exchange for relinquishing almost all reserve powers, the British government was prepared to accept simple, verbal undertakings from a Rhodesian (no longer "Southern") government that discriminatory practices would cease and a Declaration of Rights would be added to the Constitution for the protection of the majority. Regarding the franchise, the common roll was split in two with an intricate set of procedures implemented to increase black representation without permitting an overall majority. This was achieved by enlarging the legislature from 30 seats to 65 seats and introducing A and B voter rolls. Qualifications for the B roll would be similar to those in the existing special vote. The two rolls would exist in a relationship of reciprocal devaluation, ensuring that B-roll votes never exceeded 25% of A-roll returns.

Nkomo and his delegation accepted this, although not without some mild histrionics. The three nationalist delegates staged a brief walkout, but they returned in due course, and the conference concluded with Nkomo stating his willingness to give the new constitution a chance, albeit with reservations. The NDP closing statement read, in part, "We could not be party to the franchise as it stands. This leaves us with the issue of franchise still as the greatest field of political operation. It is a subject for political pressure. But although we did not approve of the franchise, the attitude we adopted was not to impede or encourage the introduction of these proposals. The onus is on the UFP to prove the truth of its intentions in the implementation of these proposals."

Sandys then collected the signatures, closed the door on the conference, and fled to the airport as fast as four wheels could carry him. By the time the ink was dry on the draft constitution, he was safely en route back to London. Behind him, the various delegates returned to their parties and constituencies and submitted their various positions for review.

On the nationalist side, virtually the entire party listened in stunned disbelief as Nkomo outlined what in practical terms seemed an absolute giveaway. He had, in effect, agreed to a system of franchise that guaranteed a white electoral majority no matter how many blacks qualified for the vote, and all that stood in the way of a de facto system of apartheid were “guarantees” and a “Bill of Rights.”

The most passionate critic of this position was Robert Mugabe, a 37-year-old schoolteacher then serving as the NDP’s party secretary. Mugabe was in charge of the youth wing of the party, and although he had a slight build, he was without question the man most feared among the up and coming cadre. It was Mugabe who led the condemnation of Joshua Nkomo.



**Mugabe**

Bitterly stung by this response, Nkomo attempted to change course, but by then, of course, it was too late. Sandys was long gone, and the conference doors were closed. Statements were issued and condemnation rang out in all directions, but the only possible action remaining was a general black boycott of the referendum that would ratify the draft document. Not even that, however, could alter the direction of things. Nkomo's reputation suffered a blow from which it never recovered, and he and Robert Mugabe established a relationship of bitter and unreconcilable acrimony that would characterize the struggle from that day on.

Meanwhile, Whitehead had every reason to feel pleased with himself. With virtually no effort on his own part, he appeared to have pulled off the impossible. It was Ian Smith, however, who noted that the draft constitution made no mention of independence for Rhodesia, which had been promised by the British government in 1945 and guaranteed by the Constitution of

the Federation. It was quite clearly stated in that document that in the event of a dissolution of the Federation of Rhodesia and Nyasaland, each territory would qualify for independence within the Commonwealth. Nyasaland had been so endowed, and Northern Rhodesia gained independence as well, so Smith was left wondering why the same was not the case for Southern Rhodesia.

The answer to that, although awkward, was quite obvious, and Smith reached the conclusion that trying to reason with the British government over this issue was an utter waste of time. The British would never let Rhodesia be independent with a minority white government, so Smith became convinced that the only way forward was to pick a fight with the British and see who came out on top.

Smith may have had foresight, but he was neither old enough nor sufficiently experienced to lead an opposition front, so he accepted the position of deputy in a new political party called the Rhodesian Front, which was founded on March 1, 1962. The formation of the Rhodesian Front marked an essential sea change in white Rhodesian attitudes, and this new party was right-wing to the extent that it was almost fundamentalist. Its stated anathema was the British government, which the party distinguished from the more abstract concept of the Crown and the British Empire, to both of which it insisted it remained loyal. A certain rhetorical accommodation was made to black political engagement, but it was based on the terms of the 1961 Constitution that Sandys had hoodwinked the NDP members into signing, which offered the symbolism of inclusion without any real means to influence affairs.

After less than a year in existence, party leader Winston Field led the Rhodesia Front in a general election, and it narrowly ousted the incumbent United Federal Party, effectively removing Sir Edgar Whitehead from office. Whitehead soon afterwards quit the colony altogether and entered retirement in England.

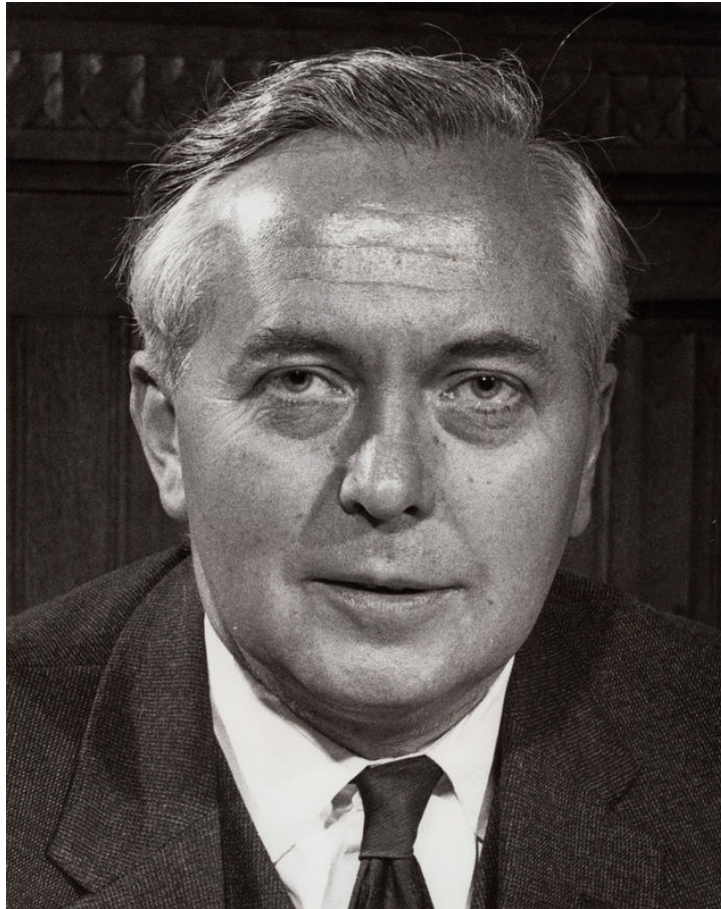


**Field**

Field was a seasoned and charismatic politician, but he was immediately overshadowed by his deputy and cabinet and was really nothing more than a figurehead. Smith was the one who called the shots, and he began calling the shots almost immediately. His essential message to the British was that the Federation's Constitution guaranteed independence to each constituent territory upon the Federation's dissolution, yet so far, only Nyasaland and Northern Rhodesia were counting down to their independence. He demanded independence for Southern Rhodesia under the terms of the agreed franchise Sandys had pulled off, which meant minority white rule.

The British remained steadfast that independence would be granted only under terms acceptable to all British subjects in the colony, not just those registered to vote. The impasse remained in place somewhat due to the fact that the British government was at that point under caretaker leadership. Prime Minister Harold Macmillan resigned in October 1963 on the grounds of poor health, yielding his office pending a general election to Foreign

Secretary Alec Douglas Home. In October 1964, a general election was held in Britain, which returned a Labour government to power, and Prime Minister Harold Wilson took office.



**Wilson**

Around the time Wilson came to power, Field was ousted as leader of the Rhodesian Front, and Smith assumed the leadership of the party and the office of Rhodesian Prime Minister. This pitted two men who held very different ideologies against each other. Smith was a right-winger and a hardliner, and a man of defined and uncompromising opinions. Harold Wilson was a left-winger, a hard-liner, but he was also uncompromising.

Beyond that, there were more subtle differences that would influence events in the coming years. Smith was a committed imperialist whose face had been scarred during World War II, much of which he spent in the cockpit of a Spitfire patrolling the skies over Italy and North Africa. His identity lay with his commitment to the British Crown and everything the

British Empire once stood for, whereas Wilson, on the other hand, was an Oxford-educated liberal committed to decolonization, the British social agenda, and the transition from empire to Commonwealth. He spent World War II in the Office of Statistics, never entering the service and never seeing action.

It was inevitable, therefore, that the two men were not going to see eye-to-eye on much, and certainly not on the fate of white Rhodesia. Smith made what were in effect impossible demands, and before long the two were at each other's throats politically. Smith let it be known that if independence was not granted to Southern Rhodesia on the basis of Britain's previous commitments, then independence would be unilaterally declared. These were fighting words, and it further polarized the two sides. Aside from the United States nearly 200 years earlier, no unilateral declaration of independence had yet been made in the divestment of colonies from the British Empire, and such a threat was not to be taken lightly.

Throughout 1965, a series of contacts between Salisbury and Whitehall achieved little other than to raise the level of acrimony to a point at which Smith determined that he had no choice. That said, there was never any doubt that Smith intended to declare independence almost from the moment that he and Wilson began their engagement with one another. His demands were manifestly impossible, and Wilson – for all the disagreeable aspects of his administration – was pushed into a corner. This sequence of events continued until November 11, 1965. At 11:00 a.m. on that day, the anniversary of the 1918 Armistice that ended World War I, Smith gathered his cabinet together and signed the Unilateral Declaration of Independence (UDI), announcing the creation of the sovereign state of Rhodesia.

Though the British might not have immediately recognized it, the colonial projects commenced by Rhodes about 75 years earlier had come to an end. For Smith and the white Rhodesians, however, they would soon have to confront the fact that there were plenty of other people in Rhodesia who had a completely different concept of what Rhodesian independence would look like.

## **Conflicting Liberation Movements**

“Our votes must go together with our guns. After all, any vote we shall have, shall have been the product of the gun. The gun which produces the vote should remain its security officer – its guarantor. The people's votes and the people's guns are always inseparable twins.” – Robert Mugabe

As Joshua Nkomo was facing a repudiation, more ardent nationalists in the NDP embraced a strategy of making the colony of Southern Rhodesia, and then the independently declared country of Rhodesia, ungovernable. There was still a residual belief that independence could be achieved on the same terms as other British colonies in Africa via the mobilization of the black population in civil unrest, and Mugabe referred to this as Positive Action. Traditionally in revolutionary politics, especially in Africa, the Youth Wing or Youth League stood as the enforcement branch of the party, and, to cow the general public into line, a great deal of black on black violence was deployed. Agents or agencies of the state were specifically targeted, and in most cases these agents were black police details, traditional leaders allied to the Department of Internal Affairs, and facilities in the rural areas such as cattle dips, which were all easily accessible.

In the cities, the mood was perhaps even more rebellious, but with a heavier and more concentrated security presence, blacks were for the most part successfully quarantined in the townships and locations. There the violence was directed at such targets as municipal beer halls, and at black townsmen perceived to be wavering or in some way loyal to the government. As 1961 progressed, and as the disputed constitution was voted upon and adopted, the violence in the townships and countryside escalated. Killings and beatings continued until, in December 1961, the territorial government of Southern Rhodesia banned the NDP and briefly detained a few members of its leadership.

Almost immediately, however, the Zimbabwe African People's Union (ZAPU) was formed in anticipation of a ban on the NDP that had for some months been expected. In this party, the essential institutions were the same, the main faces were the same, and the new party resumed the program of Positive Action without missing a step. Mugabe, although still not



numbered among the top tier of the leadership, was nonetheless the one at the head of operations, and his fundamental policy was to render the colony ungovernable. He did not necessarily hold out any hope that that colonial government would cave, but he expected that Britain would in some way intervene.

Ultimately, the British government did not do so, and within a year of its founding, the leadership of ZAPU was rounded up and members were distributed to various restricted areas and detention facilities across the country. For the time being, a measure of peace returned to the countryside and urban townships, which offered the opportunity for the key players on both sides of the field to organize themselves for a bigger fight to come.

For his part, Nkomo was a large and corpulent man, soft of body and avuncular in manner. He was comfort-loving and manifestly unwilling to face the same dreary prospect as Nelson Mandela, then in his second year of a life sentence. The minority regime in Salisbury showed absolutely no sign of backing down, and certainly power would not be handed over any time soon. The inevitable fate of any nationalist engaged in liberation political activity would be imprisonment, or worse.

During Nkomo's first phase of restriction, following the boycotted constitutional referendum, he summoned his executive and tried to persuade them to relocate to Dar-es-Salaam, where a government in exile would be established.<sup>[26]</sup> It was not a bad suggestion, but it was universally rejected. Perhaps not surprisingly, the rejection was led by Mugabe.

Meanwhile, as political tension across the board rose, it became increasingly clear that the government intended to deal decisively with the nationalist movement. In fairness, ZAPU was operating with little less than mob rule at that time, terrorizing the black townships with staggering levels of violence. Behind the violence was a political agenda, but often that seemed obscured by internal divisions and pointless criminal activities among factions of the party.

Thus, Nkomo was quite anxious to be out of the country when the final reckoning arrived, and to achieve this, he took a very serious risk. Gathering his executive, he told them that he had been instructed by

Tanzanian President Julius Nyerere to transfer his executive to Dar-es-Salaam, where an exiled organization would be established and supported. Julius Nyerere was regarded at that point as the senior African liberation statesman and the doyen of the Frontline Movement, and if he issued a directive, the Rhodesian nationalists had very little choice but to comply.<sup>[27]</sup>



**Nyerere**

In reality, Nyerere had issued no such directive at all, and Nkomo was simply hoping that the logic of his decision would be appreciated by everyone as soon as it had become a *fait accompli*. By then, the Mozambican liberation movement, the *Frente de Libertação de Moçambique*, or FRELIMO, was permanently based in Tanzania and already mounting an armed insurgency, so it certainly did seem logical that ZAPU should do the same.

Nyerere, however, did not see it that way, and as the Zimbabwean nationalists began drifting across his borders, he was outraged. Nkomo was summoned to Government House in Dar-es-Salaam and severely reprimanded. Neither material support nor asylum were offered, and

Nkomo was told in no uncertain terms to return to Rhodesia and attend to the business of the revolution there.

Needless to say, Nkomo was mortified, and his colleagues were astonished and angered. It quickly resulted in a split in the nationalist movement. Mugabe, still serving the executive in the role of party secretary, orchestrated the split, though nominally it was led by Ndabaningi Sithole, Nkomo's erstwhile deputy and the most senior nationalist present. The split was extremely acrimonious, and underlying tensions left over from the debacle of the 1961 Constitution flared up yet again. Nkomo hurried back to Rhodesia to reclaim the leadership of ZAPU, while Mugabe and Ndabaningi Sithole founded the Zimbabwe African National Union (ZANU). The two men then made their way back to Rhodesia, and inevitably, the two parties went to war with one another for the hearts and minds of black Rhodesians.

If the previous levels of violence in the townships and countryside were enough to remind white Rhodesians why they were so determined to hold onto power, they paled in comparison to the events following the split. To the bewilderment of whites watching from the sidelines, the two black parties sought to pulverize one another, each trying to outdo the other in acts of terror. If a moral opportunity was sought by the Rhodesian government to declare a state of emergency and net the entire spectrum of nationalist leaders, this was it. By the end of 1964, both parties were banned, and every substantive black leader was detained under lock and key. A decade would pass before Mugabe, Sithole, or Nkomo would walk free again.

## **Jockeying for Position**

“Zimbabwe will never be a colony again.” – Robert Mugabe

When their leaders were arrested, both parties accepted exile, and each was established under secondary leadership in Lusaka, the capital of Zambia. It was an inescapable fact that white Rhodesians were manifestly not about to wither in the face of civil unrest, and that a more robust, organized and committed response would be required. What this meant in practical terms was war, but neither of the two nationalist movements was in any way equipped to wage a war, even as both of them established a war council and began to recruit members.

Initially, an ad hoc and highly improvised insurgency was mounted across the Zambezi River and into Rhodesia, but thanks to the prowess of the Rhodesian Security Forces and intelligence establishment, these initial efforts were disastrous. Nevertheless, even as the casualty rates were hopelessly lopsided, the black liberation struggle continued.

The strategic situation in Rhodesia on the date of the UDI certainly did not favor a hostile insurgency. The two liberation movements, ZAPU and ZANU, were both based in Zambia, separated from Rhodesia by the Zambezi River, itself sunk in a deep and wide valley that was virtually uninhabited at that time. To the east lay Mozambique, firmly under Portuguese control and friendly to Rhodesian interests. In fact, it remained an important avenue of illicit Rhodesian imports and exports.<sup>[28]</sup> To the west, the nation of Botswana, traditionally unfriendly to regional liberation movements, offered limited support for the Zimbabwean nationalists, while to the south, the regional superpower of South Africa held the balance of power.

For the Zimbabwean nationalists, therefore, the prospect of mounting attacks into Rhodesia was daunting in the extreme. Along with the area's natural defenses, the white government was in a position to field a small but highly professional army comprising a regular commando battalion, a squadron allied to the British Special Air Service (SAS), and an African rifle regiment, the Rhodesian African Rifles (RAR). Supporting this was a territorial regiment of eight battalions, and ultimately six independent

national service companies. A large police reserve acted as civil defense, with numerous local hunter-killer formations made up of local men operating within their farming areas.

The glue that bound successful Rhodesian counterinsurgency operations together was an excellent intelligence network. The Rhodesians operated a Central Intelligence Organization, or CIO, which was charged with responsibility for external espionage and intelligence gathering. Operational intelligence for the Security Forces was typically provided by Special Branch. Special Branch, utilizing a standard British and Commonwealth system, was usually a desk of the civilian police force, and this was the case in Rhodesia. Special Branch typically had its finger on the pulse of an informer network managed from rural police stations.

Initially, if a group of guerrillas from either party was able to cross the Zambezi River and traverse the Zambezi Valley, it would be identified almost immediately and, through a network of local informers, reported to Special Branch. Typically, within a very short time, an army detachment would be deployed to the area and deal with the matter cleanly and quickly. The death toll among early insurgent groups was extremely high, and it was not long before nationalist military planners realized that attempting to directly confront the Rhodesian Security Forces in open warfare was a complete waste of time and manpower. As a result, units were withdrawn from the country, and both liberation movements took a step back to reevaluate their strategies.

During this time, the white Rhodesians were aware that their security depended in large part on the Portuguese holding firm in Mozambique. In the 1960s, Portugal was ruled by fascist dictator Antonio Salazar, and since it was a declining European power, Salazar placed a great deal of emphasis on retaining Portugal's African colonies, which he regarded as overseas provinces. This was a matter of national prestige, so he vowed that the war effort would be sustained no matter what. In both Mozambique and Angola, however, civil wars were gathering pace, and the young men of Portugal were returning home in body bags in increasing numbers.

In the case of Mozambique, FRELIMO, under the charismatic leadership of Samora Machel, was based in Tanzania and was making steady territorial

inroads into the northern provinces of Mozambique. Conversely, the Portuguese armed forces in Mozambique could not by any stretch of the imagination be described as effective. Disillusioned conscripts, poorly led and unmotivated, did as little fighting as possible, and the Rhodesian security establishment reached the conclusion that without direct intervention, FRELIMO would inevitably cross the Zambezi. If so, that would make it possible for Rhodesian insurgent groups to safely cross the river themselves before attempting any entry into Rhodesia. For the remainder of the 1960s, therefore, the Rhodesian SAS operated covertly alongside Portuguese forces, attempting to keep FRELIMO north of the Zambezi River and ZANU and ZAPU away from the eastern frontier of Rhodesia.



**Machel**

By the end of the 1960s, most guerrilla units were withdrawn and the most important nationalist leaders were either incarcerated or restricted.

White Rhodesians were tempted to imagine that the war was won, but when the white government declared independence from Britain in November 1965, the international response was one of outrage, and British Prime Minister Harold Wilson, the man white Rhodesians most loved to hate, had his hands full dealing with it. Demands were made by members of the Organization of African Unity, the United Nations, and within the British Commonwealth for British forces to bring the rebel colony back into the fold.

Despite the clamor, Wilson was aware that this was impossible. Even if British troops could be ordered to attack a previously allied force with a long history of cooperation, taking on armed and belligerent Rhodesians in Rhodesia held out no guarantee of success. Instead, Wilson argued for sanctions, but even these were meted out piecemeal, allowing Rhodesia to sustain itself with barely any disruption. Fuel was illegally sourced and imported through Mozambique, while military supplies and economic support came from South Africa. Apart from a few minor inconveniences, economic sanctions had almost no initial impact at all, and Rhodesia stared down the international community over the next few years, daring the British, or anyone else for that matter, to do something about the status quo on the ground.

In fact, almost at the same moment independence was declared, lines of communication were reopened with the British. While the British officially established “No Independence Before Majority Rule” (NIBMAR) as their basic negotiating position, Smith and Wilson cautiously conversed with each other. In December 1966, the two prime ministers met on board the HMS *Tiger*, anchored off the British enclave of Gibraltar, and a year later aboard the HMS *Fearless*, also anchored off Gibraltar. There was a great deal of form and protocol attached to these two conferences, and while both Smith and Wilson were able to overcome their mutual antagonism, no major changes resulted.

Most analyses of the events of this period tend to suggest that Smith came out very much on top, and in many respects he achieved the best terms possible under the circumstances, certainly better than anything he achieved again. The main point of issue was a “return to legality,” which in the

language of the conference was the return of control of the country to a British governor, something that Smith could not countenance. After all, once the colony had been returned to British control, there would be no guarantee that it could be regained if things went wrong, so during the two conferences Smith simply dug in his heels and yielded nothing. The British position was in the end negotiated down to the bare minimum of allowing appeals to the Privy Council for redress should anyone in Rhodesia harbor a political grievance. This was a giveaway, and yet Smith rejected even this on the basis that it did not represent absolute independence.

The conferences broke up without an agreement, and Smith returned to Salisbury at the head of his delegation with the sense that the British needed a settlement more than the Rhodesians did. He was probably right, because it was Prime Minister Wilson who desperately wished to deflect international demands that British forces be deployed to restore legality. He also aimed to convince skeptics in his own party that he was equal to the crisis. In Rhodesia, on the other hand, fuel and weaponry were still getting in, vital exports were getting out, and not a single shot had been fired along the line of the Zambezi for months. Rhodesia was in the driver's seat, so there was little point in giving Wilson a settlement.

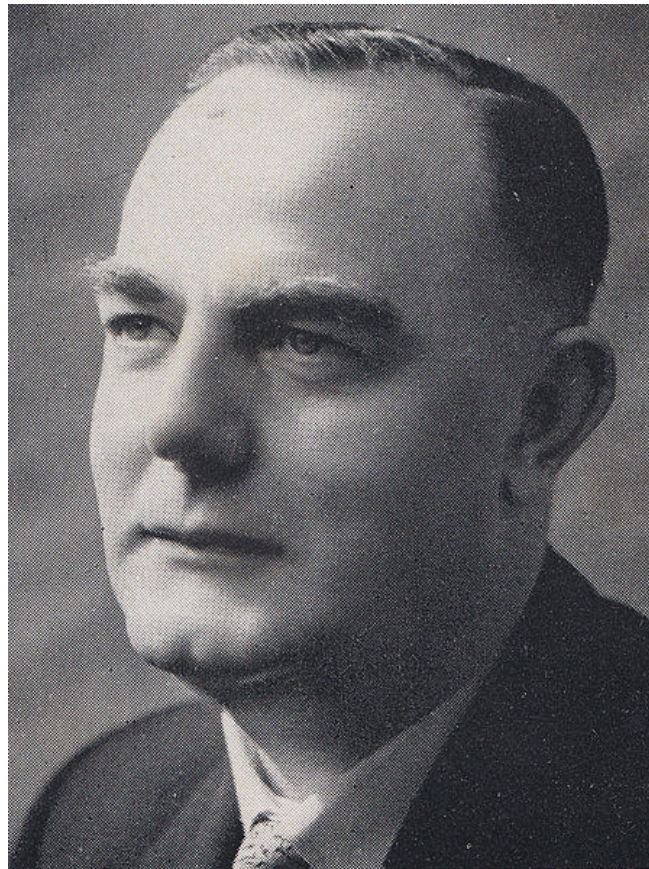
As it turned out, the optimism that came with the end of the conferences in Rhodesia proved to be the high-water mark. Rhodesia was growing more isolated by the day, and when the Rhodesian government declared the country a republic in 1970, it was a rather hollow gesture that no other nation in the world recognized. Moreover, international sanctions were being more steadily enforced and complied with, and they were hurting Rhodesia's economy. South Africa, under censure itself for its apartheid race policies, was finding Rhodesia something of a political hot potato.

The most worrying thing of all was the southward creep of the Mozambican insurgency. As Rhodesia dealt with its various problems, FRELIMO breached the all-important Zambezi line and began mounting active operations against the Portuguese in the Niassa Province, south of the Zambezi River. By 1972, there was indisputable intelligence that ZANU units, operating as the Zimbabwe National Liberation Army (ZANLA), were present in FRELIMO-held areas of northern Mozambique. The



implication of this was that ZANLA too could now access Rhodesia without the obstacle of the Zambezi River to deal with, and as FRELIMO continued to push further south, the space available to ZANLA theoretically grew. ZANLA was not at that point ready to open a new front in the east, but the potential was certainly there.

Meanwhile, a very curious policy was developing in Pretoria to meet this imminent communist threat. South Africa was confronting an insurgency of its own in South West Africa, a byproduct of the civil war in Angola, which was going no better for the Portuguese than it was in Mozambique. South African Prime Minister John Vorster was of the opinion that South Africa would be better advised to try and find accommodation with black Africa rather than attempt to resist it. It was generally accepted that the Portuguese in Mozambique and Angola were surviving on borrowed time, and that a communist takeover of both territories was inevitable. Since both were lost causes in the eyes of the South Africans, Rhodesia was also essentially a lost cause to them as well.



## **Vorster**

Thus, South African Prime Minister John Vorster reached out to a handful of black African leaders, most notably Zambian President Kenneth Kaunda, offering to act as an honest broker to bring about majority rule in Rhodesia. In other words, South Africa would hand over Rhodesia in exchange for African acceptance of white South Africa's own anomalous existence.

Needless to say, this came as a great shock for Smith and the Rhodesian government. South Africa was Rhodesia's only practical ally, the Rhodesian Security Forces fought with South African manufactured assault rifles, most of the attack helicopters still in the air were on loan from South Africa, and all munitions with very few exceptions were supplied by or through South Africa. Put simply, if the South Africans told the white Rhodesians to jump, the white Rhodesians had to ask how high.

While South Africa introduced this new development, both ZANLA and its ZAPU counterpart, the Zimbabwe People's Revolutionary Army (ZIPRA), were undergoing a complete overhaul of their respective military strategies. ZIPRA was primarily sponsored by the Soviets, while ZANLA was sponsored by the Chinese. ZIPRA, operating mainly out of Zambia, developed a conventional doctrine in line with Soviet military thinking, while ZANLA, in keeping with Chinese military doctrine, chose mass recruitment in combination with light arms and nominal training. This meant that instead of trying to take on the Rhodesian Security Forces head on, ZANLA would rely on the Rhodesians' inability to be everywhere at the same time.

For the Rhodesian Special Branch, success always relied on local intelligence resources. Armed strangers arriving in a district unannounced simply invited betrayal, as they were unknown and their objectives were uncertain. What was required, ZANLA now understood, was for a phase of politicization and reeducation of the masses to ensure that when the armed cadre appeared, they were expected, accommodated, and sheltered. This was in keeping with the Maoist concept that the guerrilla swims like a fish among the population. The struggle must in the first instance be of and for the people.

The ideological bedrock of this process was a mixture of Marxism mingled with traditional religion and culture, reinforced by extreme violence to make perfectly clear to each and everyone what would happen in the case of treachery. As the Chinese military philosopher Sun Tzu put it, “Kill one, frighten ten thousand.”

This shift in strategy changed everything. In December 1972, the first ZANU unit was infiltrated into Rhodesia through FRELIMO-held territory in Mozambique. Its target was not the local Security Force garrison, but an isolated white farm, which was hit with rifle and machine gun fire for a few minutes before the perpetrators melted into the nearby native reserve and disappeared altogether. This set the pattern that followed, as isolated farmsteads were attacked, rural roads were ambushed, and mines were laid to target civilian traffic. Traditional intelligence sources could shed no light on who was responsible, or where they were, and the vast majority of the rural population supported the insurgents or proved too scared to give them up.

The response of the Rhodesian security establishment to this was multifaceted. Borrowing a page from the British counterinsurgency manual, a program of “protected villages” was rolled out. Under the aegis of the Department of Internal Affairs, heir to the old Native Affairs Department, the population was removed and relocated to “protected villages.” They were concentrated in these villages ostensibly for their own protection, but in practical terms the goal was to isolate the guerrilla units from the support of the population. This, in practical terms, was a concentration camp policy, and it quickly earned bitter international condemnation. It also did not work, for though there might have been some inconvenience caused to guerrilla groups, their operations were not hindered.

When this form of insurgency began, the fighting was taking place in a narrow operational area focused in the northeast of Rhodesia. The Portuguese were still fundamentally in control of Mozambique, and with Rhodesian military support the war was static, though still attritional. However, in April 1974 a military coup in Portugal toppled the fascist dictatorship of President Marcello Caetano and replaced it with a left-leaning military council. The principal reasons for the coup were the useless

and bloody colonial wars in Mozambique and Angola, which were costing thousands of young Portuguese lives in a hopeless quest to hold the colonies.

The coup resulted in a rapid Portuguese capitulation in both Angola and Mozambique. In Angola, the power vacuum was very complicated, as four outside powers – the Soviets, Cubans, South Africans, and Americans – all got involved. By fueling different proxies, one form of civil war in Angola simply transitioned into a new form of it.

In Mozambique, on the other hand, there was only FRELIMO, and the handover of power was swift and relatively painless. There were no elections and few negotiations before Samora Machel was sworn in as the first black president of Mozambique in June 1975.

It is almost impossible to overstate how disastrous this was for Rhodesia. An alliance between FRELIMO and ZANLA meant that ZANLA now had available to it access routes into Rhodesia running down its entire eastern quadrant. Add to that the fact that traditional suppliers and trade routes of illicit fuel supplies went south with the Portuguese, and the gravity of the Rhodesian situation is easy to understand.

On top of that, South African Prime Minister John Vorster chose that moment to forge ahead with his policy of détente, and he demanded that the Rhodesian government free all of the detained nationalists so that they would be in a position to represent their various parties at the negotiating table. Against his every instinct, Smith did as he was told, and for the first time in nearly a decade, Nkomo, Mugabe, and hundreds of other nationalists walked out of their various prisons.

## **The Birth of the Anti-Apartheid Movement**

The international anti-apartheid movement reached its zenith in the late 1980s as the countdown to the end of white domination of South Africa began, but the movement its roots in the early liberalism of the Cape and the advocacy of early liberals such as Olive Schreiner and her brother William. Furthermore, South African churches, with the notable exception of the Dutch Reform Church, the main spiritual platform of the Afrikaner movement, formed a united front against the creeping effects of South African race policy. Soon after the 1948 election, an ecumenical statement was issued condemning apartheid, and in the years that followed, the clergy was often on the at the forefront of the anti-apartheid movement. In 1968, the South African Council of Churches declared apartheid inconsistent with the principles of Christianity.

Initially, the Dutch Reform Church remain steadfastly loyal to the principles of apartheid, but in 1962, a prominent member of the church and a central figure in the “Broederbond,” Afrikaner Christiaan Beyers Naudé, broke ranks by founding the Christian Institute. This organization allied white and black Christians, introducing for the first time a multiracial, Christian and academic opposition to official race policies. Naudé and the institute he founded were banned in 1977, but by then opposition to apartheid had begun to find a following within the Dutch Reformed Church, which struck very much at the heart of the Afrikaner nationalist movement.



**Beyers Naudé**

The various English-speaking universities, most notably the University of Cape Town and the Witwatersrand University, formed early focal points for the active anti-apartheid movement. The National Union of South African Students was founded in 1924, establishing after 1948 a posture of antagonism toward the government. In 1959, the organization staged a series of rancorous demonstrations against the closure of the established universities to black enrollment. In 1966, US Senator Robert Kennedy visited South Africa as a guest of the organization, bitterly denouncing apartheid during the course of several well-attended speaking engagements.

A more grassroots, domestic white response was founded in 1955 with the “Black Sash,” a predominantly white and middle-class women’s

association. The Black Sash was initially formed to protest the removal of coloreds from the Cape voters roll, but it soon broadened its agenda into a suffragette-style protest movement against government race policies in general. The Black Sash method of protest was to stand with heads bowed, wearing a black sash in symbolic mourning for the death of equality and the constitution, publicly shaming cabinet members and National Party politicians. The movement gained significant following among ordinary white, middle-class women, to the extent that it was formally banned in 1976. It continued to exist, however, as an advisory body, offering legal assistance to blacks caught up in apartheid enforcement and navigating an unequal and unfriendly justice system. Numerous individuals such as authors Alan Paton, Nadine Gordimer, and Athol Fugard voiced their opposition, though at this point big business and industry were too invested in the economic advantages of apartheid to side too openly with the opposition. White labor unions were perhaps the most active supporters of apartheid, simply for the protection the system offered to white labor.

Organized black resistance to apartheid tended to be slower to manifest, simply because life for the average black person under the extremes of apartheid was a consuming struggle to survive. Mass black political organization was yet to find its feet in a society where every institution of state and government was configured to frustrate it. The most that an individual could do was to adapt to and circumvent the law when possible. In the face of apartheid, a growing black middle class, climbing through the formal economy as nurses, teachers, priests, and skilled workers, were yet to be persuaded that anything was to be gained by protest and resistance. At the same time, the black nationalist movement in South Africa was constrained and frustrated by tribalism, regionalism, and class. In fact, before the National Party takeover in the 1940s, black politics tended to remain the preserve of the educated elite.

The commencement of the wider African liberation movement had the effect of stirring the movement in South Africa. Many of the early African nationalists active to the north of South Africa were men educated in South Africa, often at Fort Hare University, and they were known to the elite of the South African black political movement. As Africa began to stir, so black South Africa awoke. In the early 1950s, at a time when the legal

foundations of apartheid were under construction, a new political generation began to come of age. The 1949 annual conference of the ANC, for example, elected three new members - Nelson Mandela, Walter Sisulu, and Oliver Tambo - to the national executive of the ANC Youth League. All three men were products of the mission school system, all were from the Transkei. Mandela, after his expulsion from Fort Hare University, qualified as a lawyer in 1949 after completing a correspondence course at the University of South Africa.<sup>[29]</sup> Although not among the senior members, Nelson Mandela was nonetheless the dominant member of this group. He was a minor member of the Thembu ruling family in the Transkei and had a commanding personality. He was powerfully built, intelligent, charismatic, and passionately committed to the cause of African liberation.



**Tambo**

The 1952 ANC conference elected Albert Luthuli to the leadership of the ANC, which was a seminal appointment because Luthuli was not of the new generation of educated elites. A modestly educated Zulu traditional



leader, he was both forceful and charismatic, and he successfully bridged the divide between the older generation of moderate and somewhat collaborative nationalists and the younger and more radical cadre epitomized by Mandela.

The first major action in this new phase of the struggle was a campaign of passive resistance mounted in partnership with the South African Indian Congress, which had also shed its conservative leadership and emerged in a more radical mood. The campaign began in 1952 and continued for a year before it was called off in the face of a heavy government response, which included the rushing through of severe criminal penalties for the crime of civil disobedience. Rioting in Cape Town, Port Elizabeth, East London, and Johannesburg resulted in the arrest of at least 8,000 activists.

On June 26, 1952, on open ground outside Johannesburg, 3,000 ANC delegates, including 320 Indians and 230 coloreds, met. This gathering formed the basis of the South African Congress Alliance, consisting of the African National Congress, the South African Indian Congress, the South African Congress of Democrats, and the Colored People's Congress. Before the meeting was broken up by the police, the "Freedom Charter" was unveiled and adopted. This was an important moment, for the Freedom Charter defined the core principals of the movement and the essential policy statement of the ANC. Its opening demand was, "The People Shall Govern!" It was followed by a further nine similar demands defining the essential freedoms required by a non-subject people. The preamble read, "South Africa belongs to all who live in it, black and white, and that no government can justly claim authority unless it is based on the will of the people."

The government, of course, responded aggressively, bringing to bear the full weight of the law against anyone they could. After thousands were detained without trial, hundreds were tried on spurious charges in lengthy trials intended to both preoccupy the ANC leadership and exhaust its resources. In this way, the government made absolutely clear its intention to not yield one inch, which had the effect of seeding enormous frustration and division within the leadership of the ANC.

Elsewhere in Africa, civil disobedience and violent protests were bringing the British authorities to their knees, and independence seemed to be pending everywhere. Southern Rhodesia was drifting toward war, but for the forces of liberation, it had the potential to be a viable war. To take South Africa to war, however, was a very different prospect. The land borders of South Africa were comparatively short, making the nation easily defensible. Add to that the sheer weight of the South African conventional military machine, and the state was in almost every respect invincible. Internal resistance was the job of the domestic intelligence services to root out, and they were ruthlessly efficient at doing so.

The party was therefore divided along the line of moderates and radicals. The former, led by Albert Luthuli and Nelson Mandela, pressed for dialogue and political pressure, while the hardliners, who were in the majority, increasingly pushed for the formation of an armed wing. Dialogue required a common cause with white liberals, a practice that the radical wing of the ANC believed had damaged the integrity of the struggle. While the doves sought to blur the pure race complexion of the struggle, the hawks sought to clearly and unequivocally identify the enemy as the white man.

This resulted in a split in the ANC and the founding in 1959 of the “Pan-Africanist Congress” (PAC) which would always tend to understudy the ANC but which would still emerge as a powerful and uncompromising voice of the liberation struggle. On March 21, 1960, the PAC staged a national demonstration against the pass laws. The call was widely heeded, and the focal points for popular anger quickly became police stations, where thousands of people presented themselves without pass documents. At a small police sub-station in Sharpeville, part of the Johannesburg conurbation, police opened fire, killing 67 people in arguably the most iconic incident of the opening phase of the “Liberation Struggle.” From that moment on, a steadily more forceful and demonstrative popular pushback began to be felt. In the aftermath of Sharpeville, numerous minor, spontaneous popular protests exploded into major demonstrations. The police and security establishment responded with equal resolution, declaring a state of emergency and calling in military reserves.

All of this tended to sharpen the ANC, which, as the senior and larger organization, had always tended to espouse a commitment to passive resistance. Gandhi, upon leaving South Africa for India, had remarked that Africans had no use for passive resistance, vegetarianism, and religion as weapons of war, fully believing the African struggle would be a violent one. The young members of the ANC, Mandela among them, were forced to the same conclusion, and they came to believe that nonviolent methods were a waste of time. As Mandela himself put it during his 1964 trial, “We of the ANC had always stood for a non-racial democracy, and we shrank from any policy which might drive the races further apart than they already were. But the hard facts were that fifty years of non-violence had brought the African people nothing but more and more repressive legislation, and fewer and fewer rights. It would be unrealistic and wrong for African leaders to continue preaching non-violence at a time when the Government met our peaceful demands with force.”

In 1961, “Umkhonto we Sizwe” (“Spear of the Nation”) was founded as the armed wing of the ANC, and “Poqo” (the “Azanian People's Liberation Army”) became the fighting arm of the PAC. Another multiracial militant organization was the “African Resistance Movement,” founded in 1960. Collectively, these organizations were responsible for some 200 acts of sabotage, mainly in the form of bombing rural post offices, police stations, and power utilities.

There was an unmistakable flavor of desperate optimism about this phase of the struggle, and ultimately, the state security establishment penetrated and effectively shut down these organizations with ease. On August 5, 1962, the police and state security agents raided an isolated farmhouse near the Natal city of Howick and netted a bonanza. Nelson Mandela was picked up, along with a fellow activist, the white theater director Cecil Williams. A few months later, in December 1963, the iconic Rivonia trial began, and along with several other ANC members, Nelson Mandela was charged with four counts of sabotage and conspiracy to violently overthrow the government. <sup>[30]</sup>

Mandela made no secret of his involvement in acts of sabotage, thus ensuring a conviction, but with the spirit of a true revolutionary, he turned

his trial into a political platform. His speech from the dock has since entered the archive of seminal South African political utterances: “I admit immediately that I was one of the persons who helped to form Umkhonto we Sizwe, and that I played a prominent role in its affairs until I was arrested in August 1962.”

It was widely assumed that Mandela would be handed down a death sentence, and he was certainly prepared for that, saying, “During my lifetime I have dedicated my life to this struggle of the African people. I have fought against white domination, and I have fought against black domination. I have cherished the ideal of a democratic and free society in which all persons will live together in harmony and with equal opportunities. It is an ideal for which I hope to live for and to see realized. But, my Lord, if it needs be, it is an ideal for which I am prepared to die.”

Ultimately, however, the death sentence was commuted to life, and Mandela was briefly held on remand in Johannesburg before his incarceration in the notorious political detention facility of Robbin Island. He would serve 27 years in various South African prisons.



**The inside of Mandela's prison cell**

## **The Border War**

When the 1948 general election altered the political direction of South Africa, the United Nations began to express alarm at the tightening grip of South Africa on the UN-mandated territory of South West Africa. At the moment that provincial representation was awarded to South West Africa, it became clear that there was no political will whatsoever in Pretoria to contemplate South West African independence, and while the only pressure for South Africa to do so was political, there was no particular hope of compliance. The 1960s, however, introduced a more militant and aggressive phase of the African struggle, and as arms began to enter the picture, liberation organizations prepared their armed wings and wars began.

Two of the most bitter and long-lived civil wars of that era were in Angola and Mozambique. In both cases, civil war began with a war of independence against the Portuguese, and the Mozambique war of independence was relatively straightforward. A single unity organization, the Frente de Libertação de Moçambique (FRELIMO) challenged the Portuguese government along a single line. In Angola, however, several liberation movements vied for supremacy, including the communist-aligned MPLA, or the People's Movement for the Liberation of Angola, and the right-leaning FNLA, or the National Liberation Front of Angola.<sup>[31]</sup> The MPLA was supported by Cuba and the Soviet Union, and the FNLA by Zaire and the United States.

The war in Angola, therefore, was an imbroglio that the Portuguese could not ultimately hope to win, but which they nonetheless fought with determination. They were, arguably, the only colonial power in Africa determined to retain control of their overseas provinces. The style of warfare was Maoist, with a combination of terror and propaganda ensuring the loyalty of the surrounding population and forcing Portuguese soldiers to fight on the back foot.

It was under the cover of the civil war in Angola that South West African liberation forces began to infiltrate the northern border areas of future Namibia. The Namibian liberation movement was the South West Africa People's Organization' (SWAPO), which was founded in 1960, and as the

Portuguese gradually lost ground, SWAPO insurgents were able to proliferate throughout southern Angola, conducting a low-level counter-insurgency war with the South African Defense Force.

For so long as Portugal remained in substantive control of both Angola and Mozambique and Rhodesia survived, the “Swart Gevaar” (“Black Danger”) did not represent a direct threat to South Africa. The South African security response in northern South West Africa remained throughout the 1960s and into the 1970s as a police action, with the SADF and the South African Air Force maintaining a permanent support presence. The situation was radically altered, however, in the spring of 1974, when a left-leaning Portuguese military council overthrew the fascist dictatorship of Marcello Caetano and plunged the Portuguese security policy in southern Africa into confusion. The motivation behind the coup was primarily the bleeding and pointless wars in Angola and Mozambique, and implicit in this was a rapid abandonment of Mozambique and Angola.

In the case of the former, FRELIMO assumed power by preordainment, but in Angola, as the era of Portuguese colonial domination faded away, the various liberation movements fell upon one another, battling for the ultimate prize of power. The situation was now infinitely more complicated. In Mozambique, South Africa applied a policy of destabilization, funding and supporting a pseudo-liberation movement that plunged Mozambique into what would prove to be a 20 year civil war that would ultimately cost tens of thousands of lives and reduce Mozambique to economic ruin.

In Angola, however, the South African response was more direct and aggressive. The Portuguese departed Angola the moment that it was feasible to do so, handing over power to whoever was present to receive it, and that happened to be the MPLA. The FNLA tended to lose relevance thereafter, but they benefited from an immediate windfall of funding and arms supply from South Africa and the United States. The MPLA, on the other hand, allied to the communist bloc, attracted the immediate interest of the Soviet Union and Cuba. As Soviet arms shipments flooded into Angola, and as Cuban “advisors” began to arrive, the South Africans caught a bout of the jitters, sensing the possibility of a direct conventional threat to South West Africa.

At about the same time, US Secretary of State Henry Kissinger arrived in the region, seeking to bolster the US position in the face of aggressive Soviet and Cuban involvement in Angola.<sup>[32]</sup> Reluctant in the aftermath of Vietnam to insert American troops directly into Angola, the American government simply poured money in to support the various anti-MPLA factions, but a deal was also struck with South Africa. It was a risky move attempting a war by proxy using a force as discredited as the South African Defense Force, but nonetheless, it was a risk Kissinger was prepared to take. Thus, with covert CIA support, South Africa launched a major invasion of Angola codenamed Operation *Savannah*. At midnight on October 15, 1975, Task Force Zulu, a strong South African battlegroup, crossed from South West Africa into Angola, and within three days, it had advanced to within artillery range of Luanda.

Cuban reinforcements were rushed into Angola and the forces aided by the United States retreated, sensing the grave political risks and leaving the SADF over 1,000 miles in enemy territory. The South African forces were now essentially besieging a city with no objective. Ultimately, the SADF withdrew, but from that moment on, South Africa became a combatant force in one of the most bitterly fought and costly civil wars in African history. As South Africa continued to deal with SWAPO on the borders of Angola, it also took the fight to the enemy, and several major conventional battles were fought between South African forces and the Soviet-backed Forças Armadas Populares de Libertação de Angola (FAPLA).

## **The Liberation Struggle**

The imprisonment of Mandela and other key nationalists, along with the exile of many others, brought the armed struggle to an abrupt end. Umkonto we Sizwe would continue to exist, of course, and desultory attempts were made to sustain an armed struggle, but the simple truth was that South Africa would not be defeated militarily. Its military reach and capabilities were so massively out of proportion to almost anything countering it only an unconventional war of the most asymmetric kind was ever likely to do damage.

At the time, the South African government was coming under mounting international pressure, most notably through the three major international forums of the United Nations, the British Commonwealth, and the Organization of African Unity. A popular, international anti-apartheid movement was beginning to take shape, and the focus of nationalist activity shifted into the popular arena. Both black and white South Africans assailed the arts, theater, and literature of South Africa with the anti-apartheid message. Universities in South Africa reciprocated with overseas universities, and anti-apartheid demonstrations became a regular feature of campus life.

Despite the increasing international isolation, the South African economic miracle continued, which offered an opportunity to revive a moribund black labor movement. As a result, the early 1970s were characterized not only by rising levels of protest but also by rolling industrial action.

Then, in the early 1970s, another opposition front opened up in the realm of Bantu education. In 1968, 22-year-old student Steve Biko founded the exclusively black South African Students Organization and emerged as an influential voice among black South African youth by espousing the message of “Black Consciousness,” or black cultural autonomy and pride in ethnicity. As he put it, “Black consciousness is, in essence, the realization by the black man of the need to rally together with his brothers around the cause of their subjection-the blackness of their skin-and to operate as a group in order to rid themselves of the shackles that bind them to perpetual servitude.” Biko also spoke of the final removal of any form of dialogue



between the races. “Blacks no longer seek to reform the system, because so doing implies acceptance of the major points around which the system revolves. Blacks are out to completely transform the system and to make of it what they wish.”

There was in this a strong flavor of idealism, and anyone who reads Biko’s ideology of Black Consciousness cannot escape the sense that his physical survival could hardly be taken for granted. Such radical and uncompromising verbiage populated his writing that the security services and police would not take long to identify him as a target. Nonetheless, the concept of Black Consciousness struck an immediate and popular chord, achieving widespread international appeal. In June 1976, thousands of black South African schoolchildren demonstrated in Soweto, a large black township to the west of Johannesburg, protesting the requirement that lessons be taught in Afrikaans. The police opened fire, and 13-year-old student Hector Pieterse was shot and killed. The image of his body being carried by distraught friends emerged as one of the most iconic images of the anti-apartheid struggle.

Hector Pieterse would certainly not be the last. By 1977, according to the report of a detailed commission of inquiry entitled “Commission of Inquiry into the riots at Soweto and other places in South Africa held on 10 February 1977,” 575 people had so far died in a similar manner, 134 of whom were under the age of 18. That same year, Steve Biko was arrested for breaking the terms of his restriction, and a few days later he was dead. His cause of death was brain damage brought about by injuries to his head.

Steve Biko, the first high-profile martyr, very quickly became the poster child of the revolution and irrefutable evidence of the careless brutality of the regime. By then, the only African states still under white rule were Rhodesia (which was barely hanging on), South West Africa, and South Africa. The United Nations was now home to a majority of independent states, few of which hesitated to openly condemn Biko’s killing and call for an end to minority rule in South Africa. In 1967, the UN created a Special Committee and a Unit on Apartheid, both organizations emitting a consistent flow of anti-apartheid messages. In 1971, the International Court of Justice handed down an opinion declaring South Africa’s continued

occupation of South West Africa illegal. In 1973, apartheid was declared by the UN as a crime against humanity, and in the aftermath of the Steve Biko killing, the United Nations Security Council imposed a mandatory arms embargo on South Africa. The South African arms industry, of course, was easily able to circumvent this in the short term, but the writing was definitely on the wall.

In turn, the South African government, now under the leadership of a hardliner in the form of Pieter Willem Botha, presented a picture of South Africa standing alone against the spread of communism in Africa. This was the same essential message that white Rhodesia propagated, and it was not entirely false, for the main liberation movements certainly were ideologically and materially aligned to the Communist Bloc. In this regard, South Africa was certainly confronting a hardline, communist movement in Angola, and the government tried to extrapolate from this that the ANC was a communist organization and that the communists were behind all the civil disobedience and protest in South Africa.

In truth, while the Communist Bloc and China were the only powers willingly supportive of the African liberation movement, African liberation leaders were as communist as it was necessary to be. Some, such as Julius Nyerere and Kwame Nkrumah, described themselves as “African Socialists,” while Samora Machel of Mozambique and Agostino Neto of Angola frankly declared themselves Marxists. The South African Communist Party certainly formed a pillar of the domestic anti-apartheid movement, but the ANC never declared itself a communist organization, nor was its principal leadership avowedly communist. The ANC’s response to the government’s claim was that the black people of South Africa did not require foreign indoctrination to oppose apartheid.

One of the major difficulties in transforming passionate international opposition to apartheid into tangible economic action was the fact that South Africa was simply too important an international economic player to be shut out or shut down. South Africa was the world’s major producer of gold, diamonds, and numerous other strategic minerals. A certain amount of symbolic action was taken in the aftermath of Sharpeville and on occasions

of other egregious state action, but there was always a tendency to slip back into business as usual once the dust had cleared.

By 1978, however, things began to turn. As the end seemed in sight for white Rhodesia, the apartheid state in South Africa found itself increasingly against the ropes. International opposition was gathering form and direction, and the internal mechanisms established in the 1950s and 1960s to keep the whole edifice under control were beginning to fail. For this, there were numerous reasons, including white emigration, a black population explosion, the increasing demands of the military, the introduction of conscription, and the growing use of blacks in the security and military ranks. There was also the increasing cost of the Border War, and a growing difficulty of replacing aging weapons systems as the Soviet-supplied FAPLA began to overtake South Africa in state-of-the-art arms. The Bantustans remained unrecognized by any foreign power as independent states, and their continued existence was entirely thanks to South African financial support.

Then there was the fact that South Africa stood largely alone in Africa. In the Verwoerd era, Africa was governed almost entirely by European colonial governments, but by the end of the 1970s, only Rhodesia remained standing, and that was because of South African arms, balance of payment support, and fuel. In 1980, white Rhodesia finally collapsed, leaving South Africa as the last white holdout and an unmistakable anomaly on an otherwise black ruled continent.

## **Reforming Apartheid**

By 1980, the popular international movement against apartheid, spearheaded by the likes of the charismatic Winnie Mandela and artists such as Hugh Masekela and Miriam Makeba, was gaining sufficient momentum to begin positively affecting international government policy. White South Africans could see where things were going, and the mood of the white population of South Africa began to tilt away from the policies of the National Party, which still entrenched in power and utterly uncompromising in its worldview, but now adrift in an unfriendly world. Even the Afrikaner movement, known for its unshakable internal cohesion, began to split as a growing movement began to advocate for some sort of a compromise.

The talk, of course, was not of a complete overhaul, but selected reforms. There remained a strong base of support for the Nats, especially in the rural and agricultural areas and in the industrial labor market, where protectionism and statutory apartheid remained the only thing separating poor whites from poor blacks. Much of the problem lay with the National Party leadership and President Botha in particular, who was by then so identified with the hardline, right-wing faction of the party that any kind of meaningful reform was impossible. He was of the virulent anti-communist faction, utterly convinced by the discredited propaganda of an earlier age and unable to see much beyond the policies already in place. His attitude to foreign pressure was to claim a communist “total onslaught,” and bearing in mind the rapid descent into a police state, the security establishment was granted a disproportionate amount of influence in government. The State Security Council, created in 1972, eventually acquired more practical influence and power than the cabinet.



**Botha**

When confronted with the inevitability of reforms, the solution as Botha saw it was to somehow adapt the state to changing circumstances without yielding an iota of Afrikaans power. The changes made, therefore, were superficial at best, with only the more odious symbols of apartheid scrapped, such as signposted separate facilities. The enforcement of separation did not ease up or get eliminated anywhere, and blacks were still barred from facilities as diverse as cinemas, bars, and hotels. A commission of inquiry was authorized to consider areas of change – comprising, interestingly, of whites, Indians, and coloreds, but no blacks – and no serious consideration was given to its findings.

In 1984, a new constitution came into effect. A new Parliament was authorized, consisting of three chambers: a House of Assembly, comprising 178 white representatives elected by whites; a House of Representatives, comprising 85 coloreds voted in by coloreds; and a House of Delegates, made up of 45 Indians elected by Indians. A multiracial cabinet was drawn from all three chambers, which was responsible for what was termed “general affairs,” including internal revenue, foreign affairs, defense, state

security, law and order, commerce and industry, and “African affairs.” Uniracial Minister’s Councils assumed responsibility for their own affairs, confining their activities to areas such as education, health, and local government. The State President, replacing the prime minister, was elected by a college of 50 white, 25 colored, and 13 Indian members. The State President then appointed the members of the cabinet and the minister’s councils and retained direct responsibility for dealing with issues related to blacks. Blacks were without a voice in this arrangement.

As the 1980s progressed, further cosmetic changes were made, in particular to various pass laws and group area acts, but on the whole, these were cosmetic and were ultimately intended to streamline and modify rather than abolish discriminatory statutes.

While South African leaders tried to push against the tide, the anti-apartheid movement had become a cultural touchstone across the world. Among white South Africans, much of it remained academic, and many took a defensive position against international moral grandstanding. For the average white South African, however, matters began to crystallize with the application of UN pressure on South Africa’s international sports contacts. South Africa’s invitation to participate in the 1964 Summer Olympics was withdrawn after a refusal by the South African sports ministry to integrate its teams. In 1976, New Zealand was censured by the International Olympic Committee for its continued sporting contacts with South Africa after a tour of South Africa by the All Blacks rugby team. South Africa’s final foreign rugby tour was to New Zealand in 1981, and although some rogue British and French teams toured South Africa amid much international disapprobation, the nail in the coffin of South African rugby came with the exclusion of the Springboks for the 1987 and 1991 World Cup tournaments.

Also throughout the 1980s, domestic protests continued, featuring school boycotts, bus boycotts, worker stay-aways, and regular clashes between residents of the townships and police. Inter-black violence also became a feature of township life as political resistance overlapped into gang violence and rival groups adopted political language and opposing political associations.

In 1985, Winnie Mandela, the wife of jailed nationalist Nelson Mandela, defied a banning order that restricted her to the town of Brandfort in the Orange Free State by appearing in the Johannesburg township of Soweto. The mass movement in Johannesburg and other major South African cities tended to be organized and orchestrated by the South African Congress of Trade Unions, or COSATU, and the various liberation parties. Winnie Mandela, however, always militant and uncompromising, introduced a far more aggressive tone to the business of anti-apartheid activism. As an international figure, she attracted an enormous popular following, and she was almost single-handedly responsible for popularizing the anti-apartheid message and keeping Mandela's name at the forefront of the international debate. She was deeply stigmatized in South Africa for her support and advocacy of the excruciatingly violent methods in common use in the townships.



**Nelson and Winnie Mandela**

On April 13, 1985, dressed in combat fatigues, Winnie Mandela delivered a speech in Munsieville Johannesburg, during which she uttered the now infamous slogan, "Together, hand-in-hand with our sticks of matches, with

our necklaces, we shall liberate this country.” The reference here was to the grisly practice of “necklacing,” a style of street punishment that involved hanging a vehicle tire around the neck of a victim, filling it with gasoline, and igniting it. This apparent endorsement of the darker side of the anti-apartheid movement earned Winnie Mandela a great deal of informal censure, and the South African government was gifted with the opportunity to cite her as an example of what might be expected under African rule. The precedents elsewhere in Africa were already unimpressive, and at about that time, the term “Afro-pessimism” began to be coined in the international press as a lamentation on the apparent inability of Africa to effectively govern itself.

Winnie Mandela’s violent manifestation of anti-apartheid protest continued with the activities of the “Nelson Mandela Football Club,” the enforcement arm of the Winnie Mandela personality cult, which was responsible for numerous abductions, beatings, and killings. There were many other similar gangs and mobs active throughout South Africa, and the government was frequently guilty of fermenting this violence through covert funding and assistance.

Thus, by the end of the decade, the situation in the townships began to resemble a formal insurrection. As scenes of South African violence were splashed across television screens, the image of armored troop carriers and heavily armed convoys of police patrolling the townships became a nightly feature. Meanwhile, the demographic weight of the white population in South Africa began to steadily diminish as the black population grew at an unequal pace and as the best and brightest of whites began to flee the country in search of better prospects elsewhere. In markets where South African goods were not boycotted, they were non-competitive, and a spate of sanctions and divestments began to deeply impact the health of the economy.

Perhaps most importantly, the myth of a self-sufficient peasantry in the Bantustans was visible, as was the equally flawed myth of white separation. Blacks needed urban employment (the Bantustans were supported by remittances), and urban industry needed black labor. The very foundation of separation was untenable and held together only by the ideological



resistance and determination of an oppressive government. By the 1990s, substantial numbers of blacks were educated, and a strong and vociferous black middle class was emerging. Institutionalized, government-sponsored efforts to continue their marginalization no longer made any practical sense.

## **The Republic of Zimbabwe**

“Each time I want to fight for African rights I use only one hand – because the other is busy trying to keep away Africans who are fighting me.” – Benjamin Burombo, Zimbabwean Trade Unionist

On March 18, 1975, Herbert Chitepo, ZANU leader in exile, was killed in a car bomb explosion in the driveway of his home in Lusaka. His assassination was a Rhodesian CIO operation, but this fact was not revealed for many years, and even today many historians do not accept that version. Whatever the case, it plunged ZANU into a period of chaos and civil war that had profound ramifications.



**Chitepo**

Chitepo was one of the most important leaders on both sides of the nationalist divide, and his removal muddled things. With his release from prison, Ndabaningi Sithole remained the official leader of ZANU, but he had already been somewhat discredited, and he did not have the fortitude required to fight a war. Another consequence of the assassination was that Kenneth Kaunda notified ZANU it was no longer welcome in Zambia. The combined guerrilla forces of ZANLA and ZIPRA outnumbered the Zambian army, and with the two movements still at each other's throats, Kaunda needed little persuasion to push them across the border into Mozambique and let them cause problems there.

With Chitepo dead and Sithole rendered ineffective, there was a leadership vacuum in an organization now without a home. One of the first to take note of this situation and identify its potential was Mugabe. Having been released from prison, he went straight to work organizing a transfer of ZANU's military and political operations to Mozambique. He was fully aware that his activities were under scrutiny by Special Branch, and that he was likely to be arrested again at some point. However, he kept his head down and remained in Rhodesia, engaged in organizing until the opportune moment. When it came, he and a handful of loyal aides slipped through the heavily patrolled frontier between Rhodesia and Mozambique, announcing their presence the following day.

Samora Machel, when he heard, was not particularly pleased, nor welcoming. He did not personally like Mugabe, and he supported the position that Ndabaningi Sithole remain leader of ZANU. For a long time, he would not acknowledge Mugabe as having any legitimate authority at all. However, even though he was technically under house arrest, Mugabe moved around Mozambique freely, organizing the military and inducting large numbers of black refugees from Rhodesia into the liberation forces. He very quickly won the loyalty of the revolutionary armed forces of the party, and with that backing he was able to seamlessly maneuver himself into the leadership. Sithole did not mount much of a resistance, and once Mugabe had been recognized by Nyerere, Kaunda, and Machel, there was little that he could do anyway.

Mugabe then abandoned the nationalist's traditional reliance on the Organization of African Unity for arms and equipment and went straight to the source. He forged an alliance with the Chinese, who were competing with the Soviets for the hearts and minds of African nationalists, and thereby gained access to his own weapons and equipment. Training facilities were established in Tanzania, with more promising young soldiers finding themselves in training in places as diverse as Egypt, Libya, China, Russia, and other countries in the Soviet Bloc.

One man who had to try to respond to all of this was Nkomo, at the head of ZAPU and the de facto commander-in-chief of ZIPRA. He remained based in Zambia, under the protection of Kaunda and supported and

supplied by the Soviets. He utterly lacked Mugabe's dynamism and resolve, and his political and military efforts would always be inferior. His army was conventional in configuration, and his strategy, in general, was to let the ZANLA human wave soften up the Rhodesians. Then, when the time came for a full-scale conventional assault, his army would be poised to do it.

From the Rhodesian Security Forces point of view, all of this was understandably concerning. The only friendly border now was South Africa, and that friendship was conditional and always unreliable. Détente died a natural death as Mugabe refused to be part of it, and South African attention was diverted more and more to South West Africa and Angola, but a hostile front existed across 75% of Rhodesia's frontier, including the border regions adjoining Mozambique, Botswana, and Zambia. The Rhodesian Security Forces simply did not have the manpower to deal with all the threats, and this is precisely what Mugabe was counting on. In the first few months of 1976, he began pushing the first of his units into Rhodesia, entering through the most populated and economically important regions of the country. No longer were guerrillas ferried across the Zambezi River into the waiting arms of the Security Forces - ZANLA units were now easily infiltrated into the populated rural areas and townships of the nations, entering in numbers that could no longer be dealt with practically.

In short order, there was fighting across all of Rhodesia. No agricultural homestead was safe, nor were any outlying roads or rural highway. The death toll from landmine blasts and roadside ambushes steadily crept up, as did the daily body count of young Rhodesian soldiers engaged in more conventional fighting. The young revolutionaries were dying in far greater numbers, but they were, according to the ZANLA strategy of war, more dispensable. The annihilation of an entire revolutionary brigade did not make an iota of difference to the general direction of the war, while the losses of Rhodesian soldiers, helicopters, and aircraft were all irreplaceable. Moreover, now that the writing seemed to be on the wall, white Rhodesians were fleeing the land in droves. Security strategists within Rhodesia began to sense that the moment was not far off when the Security Forces would be wholly unable to contain the situation at all.

1976 was the turning point. Before that, a brilliant little army in Rhodesia had enjoyed a jolly good war. The South African military establishment could hardly contain its envy, and the competition in the South African army for the occasional combined operation with the Rhodesians was intense. South African manpower and hardware was always a factor in Rhodesia, though it tended to wax or wane depending on the political mood. After 1976, however, things were very different, and the situation grew desperate very quickly.

The essential Rhodesian strategy up to that point involved a combination of ground coverage and accurate and timely intelligence. When contacted, guerrilla units were quickly and easily run to ground and captured or killed. Helicopters played a key role, and usually any subsequent operations involved the rapid, heliborne deployment of hunter-killer groups directed by information gathered by ground coverage patrols or Special Branch. While operations were confined to a limited area and traditional intelligence sources remained open, this was an unbeatable strategy, and neither liberation army made much headway.

The moment traditional sources of intelligence began to dry up, however, the Security Force success rate dropped accordingly. During the 1976 offensive, traditional ground coverage simply could not cope with operational demands. Finding the guerrillas was the key, and often intelligence was more important than operational kills, but after 1976, guerrilla units were everywhere and finding them was no longer the problem. Killing them before they could inflict major damage now became the key priority.

At the elite level, the Rhodesian Security Forces was among the most effective and dangerous military formations in the world, on par with the Israel Defense Forces and comparable to the best that the British and AMericans had to offer. The problem lay in force levels and the difficulties of replacement and resupply caused by international sanctions.

Confronted with this situation, some creative thinking became necessary. During the Mau Mau insurgency in Kenya, where many white Rhodesians originated, one of the most effective strategies was the use of pseudo guerrilla gangs to infiltrate active guerrilla units and ultimately liquidate

them. Central to the success of this strategy was the ability of local Special Branch members to “turn” a captured guerrilla as quickly as possible and infiltrate them immediately back into their operational areas. A complex psychology came into play that allowed white bilingual intelligence handlers to manipulate fresh captures into switching sides. Usually the alternative was the gallows, so persuasion was not difficult, and indeed, in most cases guerrillas were only too glad to escape the forest and turn on their erstwhile comrades.

From about 1973 onwards, Rhodesian Special Branch began experimenting with a similar strategy. Recently captured guerrillas were given a stark choice between switching sides or taking a short trip to the gallows. In this way, pseudo gangs were quickly reintroduced into an area where they would still be familiar with the passwords and identification protocols that introduced incoming gangs to local contact men. After that, active guerrilla groups were identified, and with that intelligence, they were engaged and destroyed.

The pseudo operations arm of Special Branch soon came under army administration, acquiring the name Selous Scouts after the famous hunter-explorer Frederick Selous. Once honed, the pseudo strategy began to yield immediate results, and parallel to it, a system of rapid reaction was also developed. The Rhodesian Fireforce strategy involved a mobile standby force, usually involving troops of the Rhodesia Light Infantry, a regular commando battalion based at forward airfields in all the operational areas. The moment that hot intelligence came through from an active Selous Scout unit, the force was scrambled, usually in helicopters but also occasionally in an older fleet of Dakota transporters dropping in paratroops. A Fireforce deployment could be on the scene in minutes, and it was usually with brutal efficiency that a vertical envelopment was accomplished and the target gang was taken out.

Dealing with all of the more mundane aspects of ground coverage and follow-up were the territorial battalions of the Rhodesia Regiment. The Rhodesia Regiment was regional and manned by a rotating compliment of men under a call-up obligation, usually every six weeks but growing more frequent as the war intensified. In support were six independent companies

in which national servicemen usually served. National Service affected all-white school leavers over 18 who were obligated to serve, initially for one year, but this was extended to two years after 1976. There were also two battalions of the Rhodesian African Rifles, the all-black rifle regiment typically commanded by white officers, although towards the end of the war a handful of black officers were commissioned. The RAR was a highly regarded and revered regiment of the Rhodesian Army that many white Rhodesians held up as proof that they were not fighting a race war, but standing alone against a communist takeover of Africa.

Throughout the conflict, which technically ran from 1965-1980, the Rhodesian Security Forces suffered no tactical defeats. Rhodesian military operations continue to be studied by other countries' militaries, and spectacular results were routinely achieved, but the war was simply unwinnable. From a military standpoint, a point was reached when it became clear that internal operations could not prevail against the sheer numbers of enemy combatants entering the country. It was at that point that the Rhodesian strategy shifted in emphasis. The cities and towns were protected, as were key installations, but the countryside was abandoned to the guerrillas, and the Rhodesian Security Forces concentrated on striking into Mozambique and Zambia. These cross-border operations tended to define the Rhodesian Security Forces, hitting the liberation armies in their forward bases where they were concentrated and vulnerable. An additional aspect of this strategy was that it pulverized the infrastructure of Mozambique and Zambia, killing significant numbers of people and purposely demonstrating to both neighbors that they would pay a heavy price for allowing insurgents to use their territory.

The first major operation of this type was codenamed Operation *Eland*, and it took place on August 8, 1976. A convoy of heavily armed trucks containing a detachment of Selous Scouts entered Mozambique disguised in FRELIMO livery, after which they simply drove to a huge ZANLA training and holding facility and gunned down about 1,800 unarmed ZANLA members before returning by the same route. They suffered no casualties.

From a purely military perspective, this operation was astonishing in its audacity and superb in its planning and execution. ZANLA deployments

were set back by a few years, and a profound message was sent to the enemy. Militaries the world over expressed begrudging admiration, while political organizations and international forums howled in outrage. The target was presented as a refugee camp, and the dead were portrayed as innocent women and children. None of this was true, and the fact that the ZANLA personnel were unarmed was due to the fact that individual ZANLA members tended to sell their guns to local villagers, causing the Mozambique government to ban the issue of firearms and ammunition until immediately before the insurgents were deployed. The incredibly lopsided casualty statistics could be attributed to the difference in standards of training and equipment, and the fact that the operation, although it delayed the inevitable, did not alter the trajectory of the war in the slightest. Numerous similar operations followed, with the same extraordinarily one-sided results, but the steady attrition of war remained unaltered.

In July 1977, Rhodesia's top service chiefs, representing every branch of the Security Forces, met to consider the security situation, and the conclusion they reached was not a happy one. While it was acknowledged that the Security Forces continued to enjoy astonishing successes, they were not keeping up with guerrilla deployments and could make no appreciable impact against the external threat. ZANLA was accelerating attacks in key operational areas, while ZIPRA, under Cuban and Russian tutelage, was fast building a conventional capacity. It was predicted that by the end of that quarter, the number of guerrillas operating in Rhodesia would outnumber the Security Forces. Moreover, whites were fleeing the country and the internal security system was buckling, so it was becoming increasingly difficult for command headquarters to conduct the war, protect civilian life and property, and monitor vital rail and road communications. Large areas of the country, particularly along the border with Mozambique, were effectively under guerrilla control, and as Mugabe had predicted, Security Forces simply did not have the manpower to garrison the entire country.

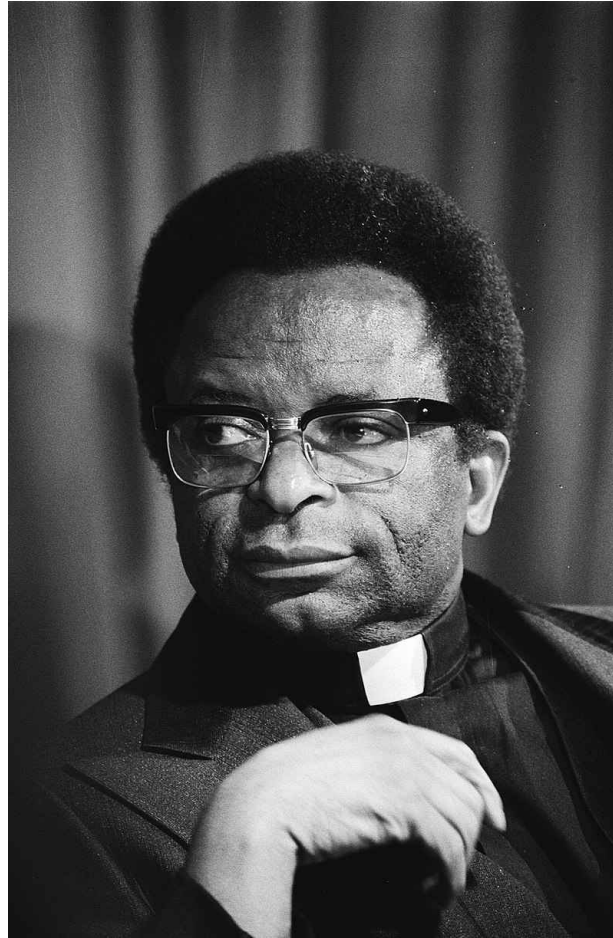
A document was produced entitled *Military and Police Implications of the Quarterly Threat, 1 July 1977 to 30 September 1977*, and it was passed on to Prime Minister Smith. In essence, it was a plea for a political solution in recognition of the fact that a military resolution was no longer available.



The solution, as unpalatable as it might have been, required Smith to accept majority rule, and either Mugabe or Nkomo would likely end up running the country.

Smith, however, had other plans. His strategy was to groom a handful of “moderate” black leaders and craft an “internal settlement” that would exclude the two substantive nationalists waging war from the outside. There was obviously some desperation behind this strategy, but if handled carefully there was a chance it could succeed. The British certainly wanted an end to the matter, and if an acceptable compromise could be offered, even if it was manifestly calculated, British recognition might be granted, after which most of the West would likely follow suit.

To achieve this, Smith approached a black Methodist Bishop by the name of Abel Muzorewa, a second-tier nationalist who had a bit of a following. To this, Smith added the discredited Ndabaningi Sithole and an ex-deputy of Joshua Nkomo’s by the name of James Chikerema. To round it off, he added a few more respected traditional leaders, and with this ensemble, he set about negotiating a constitution that would allow for majority rule.



### **Muzorewa**

The announcement of an internal settlement was made on November 24, 1977, and almost simultaneously with Smith's appearance on air addressing the nation, an air armada deploying almost every combat asset in the Rhodesian arsenal was overhead, en route to the Mozambican city of Chimoio. This was Operation *Dingo*, involving 200 Rhodesian forces in an airborne attack on a ZANLA base containing upwards of 8,000 ZANLA personnel. By then, ZANLA was alert to the potential of Rhodesian cross-border raids, and the camp was located sufficiently far to the rear and widely dispersed, so the risk of an attack was thought to be minimal. In these camps, a baboon that had at some point experienced a Rhodesian bombing raid was usually tied to the end of a long chain, because the baboon would typically become hysterical the moment it heard an approaching aircraft.

The camp was in the middle of its morning parade when the baboon indicated an approaching aircraft, prompting a rush for the trenches and anti-aircraft guns. However, the aircraft proved to be a civilian airliner sent over the camp as a ploy 10 minutes in advance of the main assault force. The parade was resumed, and when the sound of approaching aircraft was again detected, it was ignored. Thus, when the first wave of strike aircraft hit the camp, it was entirely unprepared, and a second wave hit a smaller camp at Tembue some distance to the north that was equally devastating. When the dust settled and the operation wound up, about 3,000 ZANLA fighters were reported killed and 5,000 wounded, at a loss of two Rhodesian soldiers killed and six wounded.

As the news was digested locally and abroad, the usual propaganda pleas were broadcast that the camp was a refugee facility and the dead and wounded were women and children, but this time no one took that particularly seriously. Military establishments all over the world again expressed their admiration for what could hardly be seen as anything less than another daring and brilliantly executed operation, while the shocking casualty figures dismayed the various international forums for good reason.

Once again, however, this setback for the revolution did not permanently alter the course of the war. Thus, as Smith forged ahead with the process of manufacturing an internal settlement, the war raged on, and Rhodesia's security situation continued to decline as the towns and cities became virtual fortresses and as the farming and rural areas were increasingly abandoned. Whites continued to leave the country in numbers, and the unrelenting assault against guerrilla bases and operational facilities in Mozambique and Zambia went on.

Behind the scenes, Mugabe continued to advocate total war, pressing for a military victory that he sensed was becoming more tangible with each passing day. Conversely, Kaunda and Machel both warned that their respective nations could not indefinitely sustain a war of attrition with Rhodesia. Although weakened and running out of options, the Rhodesian military establishment was still capable of great destruction.

There was some cause for optimism when, on March 3, 1978, an internal accord was signed between Smith, Bishop Muzorewa, and Sithole. The

British political establishment was pitched somewhat into disarray by the event, and for some time it was undecided on how to proceed. A Labour government was in power, led by Prime Minister James Callaghan, who had made a point of excluding the Rhodesian issue almost entirely from his agenda. A rather desultory Anglo-American process had been underway for some months, led by British Foreign Secretary David Owen and US Ambassador to the United Nations Andrew Young. The race symbolism of a white Briton and a black American taking on this issue exceeded the practical value of the effort, and apart from irritating Smith and Mugabe with pointless conferences here and there, it achieved nothing.

The British Conservative opposition pointed to the Rhodesian internal accord as the best effort so far, and that if it excluded the external nationalists, it was because they excluded themselves. The position of the external nationalists, however, was illustrated quite clearly by an immediate and tangible intensification of the war. On September 3, 1978, an Air Rhodesia Vickers Viscount passenger aircraft on a routine commercial flight was brought down by a Russian Strela SAM 7 missile. 35 of the 53 passengers aboard were killed in the crash, and 10 survivors were murdered on the ground by a ZIPRA unit deployed in the vicinity.

The Rhodesian response was a raid against ZIPRA staging facilities just outside Lusaka, which proved to be yet another surgical operation that inflicted 1,600 ZIPRA casualties with the loss of no Rhodesian troops. Again, the spectacular competence of the Rhodesian Security Forces was put on international display, but the operation did nothing to change the direction of the war other than perhaps offer proof that the internal settlement was fundamentally a failure. Shortly thereafter, bomb blast in a Salisbury department store killed 11 and injured 70, the first action to be registered within an urban area. A few days later, a rocket attack was staged against the central fuel storage depot in Salisbury that caused a huge fire, consuming months worth of precious Rhodesian fuel.

In the face of all this, Smith went ahead with the internal peace process. In the spring of 1979, campaigning kicked off, and an election was held in April that was celebrated as the first in the country's history that was conducted under terms of universal adult suffrage. The two main contenders

were Bishop Abel Muzorewa and Ndabaningi Sithole, and a total of 1,869,000 votes were cast out of a possible 2,862,000 in a generally peaceful and ordered atmosphere. Bishop Abel Muzorewa emerged victorious, and a month later he took office as the first black prime minister of the rather awkwardly named Republic of Zimbabwe-Rhodesia.

The constitution that underwrote this new dispensation was a carefully crafted document intended to present all the empty accoutrements of power to a black leader, while retaining all substantive powers, most importantly security and military command, in the hands of whites. Mugabe and Nkomo were obviously excluded from the process, so the legitimacy of the whole thing was very much open to question.

In May 1979, Britain had its own election, and the weak Labour government was swept out of office in favor of Margaret Thatcher's government. White Rhodesians breathed a deep sigh of relief when the Iron Lady entered No. 10 Downing Street. The Conservatives had always been a good friend to white Rhodesia, and the sheer force of Thatcher's personality boded very well for general recognition of the Rhodesians' recent election. As she took office, the initial language coming out of her administration rather suggested that Thatcher was indeed sympathetically disposed, and there was a general sense that recognition for the Muzorewa government was imminent.



### **Thatcher**

Thatcher, however, was almost immediately confronted with nearly universal African and Asian opposition to any suggestion of recognition. She might have been inclined to ignore this but for an action on the part of the Nigerian government that made very clear Britain's economic priorities. In May 1979, it was announced by Nigeria's Olusegun Obasanjo that Nigerian public contracts would henceforth be denied to British firms, and that this moratorium would remain in effect until majority rule was established in Rhodesia. In July, Shell-BP in Nigeria was nationalized, after which the Nigerian government dumped £500 million sterling on the international currency exchanges in order to destabilize sterling and dispel any doubts about Nigeria's determination and regional economic clout. President Jimmy Carter then announced that America would not be lifting sanctions against Rhodesia. If Thatcher had been sitting on the fence, this helped tilt her towards the inevitable.

The 1979 Commonwealth Heads of Government meeting was held in August in the Zambian capital of Lusaka, and it was at this meeting that Thatcher was expected to announce the official British position on Zimbabwe-Rhodesia. Delegates from across the Commonwealth region gathered in the expectation that Thatcher would spring a surprise, but she did not. Her message was that Britain would not be pushed around and bullied into any decision by anyone, but she also added that the constitutional terms of the Zimbabwe-Rhodesia government were less than she deemed suitable for British recognition.

As the applause died down, several heads of government, including Michael Manley of Jamaica and Malcolm Fraser of Australia, approached Thatcher and suggested that if the terms of Zimbabwe's settlement could be advanced to include Mugabe and Nkomo, the Commonwealth would almost certainly offer a majority decision to recognize it. This would be a terrible pill for Rhodesians to swallow, but things had changed somewhat. Ian Smith was technically no longer in power, so the decision officially lay with Bishop Abel Muzorewa. Muzorewa realized that an agreement to be party to a new round of constitutional negotiations would probably result in the end of his brief premiership, but at the same time, he also realized that it was the only way to end the war. Against enormous pressure from the hard right of the white establishment, Muzorewa agreed to attend a constitutional conference.

On September 10, 1979, the Lancaster House Conference opened its doors, and the business of negotiating the end of the Republic of Zimbabwe-Rhodesia began. The Lancaster House Conference was a long and convoluted affair, and the key players were Mugabe, Nkomo, and British Foreign Secretary Lord Peter Carrington, who chaired the conference. Nkomo was very much in Mugabe's shadow, and Smith and Muzorewa were essentially redundant as they represented white and moderate black interests, respectively. Carrington knew he had a job on his hands in dealing with Mugabe, who did not want to be there and only attended under pressure from Machel. Even as the conference was getting started, a massive Rhodesian Security Force operation was underway in Mozambique, pulverizing both FRELIMO and ZANLA facilities and inflicting massive damage on the local communications infrastructure.

Machel wanted an end to the war, and Mugabe was sent to London with instructions to end it.



**Carrington**

The main issues were the terms under which the rebel colony would return to legality, and the guarantees and protections that could be gained by white Rhodesians. The main issue with regards to the latter was land, as the war was fought, more than anything, over the question of land, and a large part of the nationalist message was that the land must be returned to the people. Mugabe was only mollified over this question by a verbal assurance from Carrington that Britain would underwrite the costs of a willing-buyer



willing-seller land redistribution program. Mugabe's political naiveté was revealed somewhat by his willingness to accept only verbal assurances over this vital point.

At this point, Carrington made the risky decision of sending a British governor to Rhodesia to take over its government. No agreement had yet been reached, so doing this was not exactly playing by the rules, but it happened anyway, and as Carrington steered the conference to its most difficult issues, the Union Jack once again flew over Government House in Salisbury.

The next issue was a return to legality, and which military force would oversee the transition. Mugabe naturally demanded that his ZANLA forces do so, which was of course entirely unacceptable to the other side. It was instead suggested that each side stand down and let the process be monitored by a Commonwealth force of mainly British troops. Rhodesian forces would be confined to barracks while the liberation forces would be contained in demarcated Assembly Points within Rhodesia. It did not escape any nationalist's notice that this would potentially allow the Rhodesian Security Forces to launch a series of attacks against enemy forces now conveniently concentrated and disarmed, and that such strikes would no doubt succeed where years of counterinsurgency had failed. On this point, Mugabe declared that enough was enough, and he walked out of the conference, declaring his intention of continuing the war.

Mugabe was reasonably confident that Machel would accept the Assembly Points suggestion as an outrageous provocation, but Carrington remained a step ahead. As Mugabe was en route to Heathrow Airport, Carrington put a telephone call through to Machel, informing him through an interpreter that his protégé was at that moment on his way to the United States to lobby for support for a continuation of the war. Carrington pointed out to Machel that since a British governor was now in residence in Salisbury and Rhodesia was once again a British colony, this meant in practical terms that Mozambique was at war with Britain.

Machel was understandably horrified, and the Mozambican ambassador to London was immediately dispatched to Heathrow Airport, where Mugabe was narrowly intercepted. He was then informed that his right to

boycott the conference would be respected by the government of Mozambique, but if he did so, he would be exiled, and his right to the use of Mozambican soil to fight a war with Rhodesia would be withdrawn.

Within a few hours, a tight-lipped Mugabe reappeared at Lancaster House, took his seat, and, barring a few minor adjustments, accepted the terms of a draft constitution. For Mugabe, it was a difficult moment. White land rights were guaranteed for 10 years, his armed forces were to be marginalized during the transfer, and various other concessions stuck in his throat. He knew that an absolute military victory was within his grasp, perhaps in just a matter of months, but now he was forced to accept a compromise and contest an election.

The months that followed were extremely tense. Mugabe and Nkomo, along with the bulk of the nationalist military and civilian leadership, returned to Rhodesia, and campaigning began for a general election scheduled for the early spring of 1980. The two liberation armies duly submitted for disarming and assembly, although not by any means in totality. Enough armed manpower remained at large in the countryside to press home Mugabe's message that a defeat at the polls would all but guarantee a return to war. Rhodesian Security Forces at that point were nowhere to be seen, so there was no reason for the majority of the population to think otherwise.

Mugabe survived numerous assassination attempts during this period. A secret Security Force operation, Operation *Quartz*, was proposed to deal with Mugabe and his army should he win an outright majority at the polls, which, while deemed unlikely, was possible.

The election was held in February 1980, and to the horror of the white community and the armed forces, Mugabe did indeed win an outright majority and was poised to be the first leader of an independent Zimbabwe. The order for Operation *Quartz* was never given, and in all probability there never was any intention to give it. Historians have since speculated that the operation was a ruse to convince Rhodesian Security Forces that a central plan was in place to stage a coup so that mid-level commanders did not formulate any similar plans of their own.

Even still, a final assassination attempt on Robert Mugabe was in the works. Utilizing rogue elements of the Rhodesian Security Forces and members of the South African security services, a series of bombs disguised as traffic control boxes were to be planted along the official route to the handover ceremony, which would kill Mugabe, Britain's Prince Charles, and anyone else in the motorcade. The South Africans positioned a battle group on the border with Rhodesia, and once the planned assassination took place, followed inevitably by the massacres of whites at the hands of angry blacks that would ensue, the South Africans would move into the country in the interests of regional peace and would thereafter take control of the situation.

For reasons never adequately explained, the operation was called off, and Mugabe was safely delivered to Salisbury's Rufaro Stadium. There, before a capacity crowd, the Union Jack was lowered and handed to Prince Charles as the representative of Her Majesty, and in its place was raised the new Zimbabwean flag.

For the next 10 years, Mugabe was constrained by the terms of the Lancaster House Constitution and could do nothing about land rights or any other entrenched clause protecting the white minority. That said, in the months following the election, tens of thousands of whites left the country, the Rhodesian Security forces were generally disbanded, and Rhodesia became a relic of the past.

Some whites did remain, seemingly determined to give the new government a chance, and Mugabe initially displayed a pragmatic streak. While espousing Marxism himself, Mugabe was aware that a wholesale loss of skilled white residents would be disastrous for the country. Over time, however, Mugabe had every intention of following his revolutionary peers elsewhere in Africa by establishing a one-party state. His first target, naturally, was Joshua Nkomo. ZAPU was targeted, and the amaNdebele were given a rough and violent reminder that the old amaNdebele-maShona order was reversed. The maShona were now in charge, and amaNdebele resistance to maShona rule was broken. Nkomo too was broken, and in 1987 he allowed his party to be effectively subsumed by ZANU. Accepting

a role as titular vice-president, he never again wielded any significant power.

Mugabe was never able to establish a one-party state, but as he aged, his rule became more dictatorial and irrational. As slow economic decay began to underwrite the growth of an authentic opposition, his true nature was somewhat revealed. Having done nothing about land redistribution for almost two decades, when he faced a real political threat for the first time, he played that particular card. The British had verbally agreed to pay for land reform, but this was denied based on the violence and corruption that accompanied the process. As a result, the masses were invited to take what they wished of the whites' remaining property in the country.

What followed was a violent and chaotic program of land redistribution, which was utilized by Mugabe to service his wide patronage network much the same way Jameson and Rhodes had done so a century earlier. Mugabe narrowly survived an election in 2000, but by then he was an international pariah anyway, which effectively liberated him from any restraint. With that, his maneuvers to remain in power became steadily more violent and coercive. He stayed in power until November 2017, when, at the age of 94, he was finally ousted in a military coup. Heidi Holland described his reign by comparing it to other African leaders of the late 20<sup>th</sup> century: "The story of Robert Mugabe is a microcosm of what bedevils African democracy and economic recovery at the beginning of the 21st century. It is a classic case of a genuine hero—the guerrilla idol who conquered the country's former leader and his white supremacist regime—turning into a peevish autocrat whose standard response to those suggesting he steps down is to tell them to get lost. It is also the story of activists who try to make a better society but bear the indelible scars of the old system. Mugabe's political education came from the autocrat Ian Smith, who had learnt his formative lessons from imperious British colonisers."

As for Smith, he remained in Rhodesia until just before his death in 2007. Joshua Nkomo died in 1999, and Mugabe died in September 2019 at the age of 95. The public was invited to attend his funeral at Zimbabwe's National Sports Stadium, which holds 60,000. An estimated 15,000 people showed up.

## **The End of Apartheid**

As the institution of apartheid hung in the balance, the Berlin Wall fell, and the Soviet Union began its rapid collapse. The notion that South Africa was suffering a “total onslaught” by the forces of communism was obviously undermined by the end of the Cold War. While this marked the end of several African regimes that were only being kept alive by Cold War patronage, it also set in motion events that would result in the end of apartheid rule in South Africa.

On the battlefields in northern South West Africa and Angola, things were shaken up. As the Cold War dynamic, that which had added so much fuel to so many African wars, began to fade away, Angolan oil reserves quickly replaced Soviet funding as the driving factor of war. Moreover, as South Africa’s influence inevitably waned, the war simply continued to be fought on revised terms until 2002 when National Union for the Total Independence of Angola leader Jonas Savimbi was killed.

In December 1988, Cuba and the Soviet Union agreed to link their withdrawal from Angola to South Africa’s withdrawal from South West Africa. This was a face-saving formula for the two sides to end a war that had achieved almost nothing. The opening months of 1989 saw the beginning of a massive operation to return to South Africa a military operation that had been present in Ovamboland for upward of 23 years. At the same time, the first units of the “United Nations Transition Assistance Group” (UNTAG) began to arrive in South West Africa, forming an interim authority as a prelude to full Namibian independence, which was celebrated on March 21, 1990.

As the SADF withdrew from Namibia, it did so against the backdrop of a general mood of change. It was becoming clear to all that the government could not support the institutions of apartheid indefinitely, but the liberation movement and the international community also had to acknowledge that the government of South Africa could not be forcibly overthrown. Moreover, the longer the stalemate continued, the greater the residual damage to both sides.

As early as 1985, tentative, non-governmental contacts were underway between the leadership of the ANC in exile and prominent white business leaders and liberal civic leaders and politicians. There were also somewhat less formal contacts between prominent individuals on both sides. Even the hard-right Afrikaner Resistance Movement (AWB) began to air the notion of an independent Afrikaner homeland in South Africa, which was clear a sign of impending change as any other to date.

Meanwhile, as the government of P.W. Botha continued trying to manage the situation with force, behind the scenes, covert government contacts were underway with none other than Nelson Mandela. While he had been incarcerated for over a quarter of a century, Mandela's name had never disappeared from the popular movement, and by the end of the 1980s, largely through the efforts of his wife, his was the name around which the liberation movement rallied.

Initially, the gist of these contacts was to try and sell Mandela on the idea of his own freedom in exchange for abstention from politics, which inevitably proved to be a waste of time. He was moved from Robbin Island to a more commodious accommodation at Pollsmoor Prison outside Cape Town. There, believing that a solution could be negotiated, he began a series of meetings with South African officials. By 1988, demands that he renounce the armed struggle, the alliance of the ANC, and the South African Communist Party had also proved fruitless, and as the weeks and months were ticking by, it became clear that Mandela, notwithstanding his incarceration, held all of the cards. He was moved to a house located in the grounds of the Victor Verster Prison in Paarl, where he was treated as a guest and allowed unlimited and unsupervised visits, which meant he was essentially given the freedom to organize. A 10-page memorandum was compiled under his signature and sent to the office of President PW Both, stating, "I now consider it necessary in the national interest for the African National Congress and the government to meet urgently to negotiate an effective political settlement."

Mandela added to this the point that the armed struggle was simply a reflection of the violence perpetrated against the masses by the government and that the ANC's alliance with the communist party was simply an

expedient of the Freedom Struggle. If the basis of the Struggle was removed, it would disappear, along with the communist alliance. Cautiously, the ANC leadership in exile endorsed this position, announcing, in what was known as the Harare Declaration, that a negotiated end to apartheid was possible.

In January 1989, almost on cue, President Botha suffered a stroke and resigned as National Party leader. By choice of a parliamentary caucus, the presidency passed to the 53-year-old Frederik Willem de Klerk. De Klerk was no less a product of Afrikaner nationalism than Botha, but his relative youth and pragmatism better positioned him to act on a sense of inevitability that had by then permeated throughout white society. On February 2, 1990, he made the momentous announcement that bans on the ANC, the Communist Party, and the PAC were to be lifted. Political prisoners incarcerated for nonviolent actions were released, and some 33 domestic organizations were legalized. Nine days later, Nelson Mandela was unconditionally released after 27 years behind bars.



**De Klerk**

For the first time since its banning in 1961, the ANC held its annual conference in South Africa, and in a difficult and at times rancorous process involving some 2,244 delegates, a banned and secret organization began its transition to a mass following political party with a practical, democratic political agenda. Oliver Tambo, leader of the ANC through the difficult years, did not stand for reelection, as it was obvious there could be no other candidate than Mandela. A 66 member national executive committee was also elected, and at the head of the party, Mandela began to apply his mind to the negotiation of a fresh constitution within which the hopes of the nation resided.

Shortly after Mandela's release in February 1990, he set about traveling to seek affinities in prestigious circles in Sweden and Britain, and he put in an appearance at the Nelson Mandela: American International Tribute for a



Free South Africa concert. None of this was done without purpose, and where Mandela might have once toured solely to seek help, he was now projecting the strength of international solidarity in preparation for some diplomatic muscle-flexing with the new president. Whatever steel curtain Mandela had experienced with Botha, an entirely new set of difficulties was presented by de Klerk, who wrestled with ongoing feelings of humiliation at the hands of the upstart African leader. Fully aware that Mandela had toured Africa, Scandinavia and Britain, and that he had been welcomed by Pope John Paul II, Margaret Thatcher, George H.W. Bush, Venkataraman of India, Suharto of Indonesia, Mahathir Mohammad of Malaysia and Australia's Bob Hawke, de Klerk's awareness of the international support behind Mandela in their first meetings was likely felt all the more keenly.

In 1990, Mandela led a delegation to negotiate with 11 Afrikaner men from the South African government, and this in itself demonstrated de Klerk's undermined confidence and a general realization that the old order would no longer stand. This effort led to the Grot Schuur Minute, in which the government lifted the state of emergency, though the ANC's reciprocal offer of a ceasefire was not born entirely out of humanitarian motivations but in part because of a recognized disadvantage in firepower.

Mandela was elected President of the ANC in 1991 at the National Conference, and he acquired an office in the new ANC headquarters in Johannesburg. Many on both sides were caught off-guard by Mandela's sense of moderation in his dealings with his own people and the opposition, including his own wife; Winnie, ever less patient and more prepared to strike boldly, became thoroughly disenchanted with this careful, methodical style of revolution. Her involvement in the larger picture would be, for a time, rendered moot after being convicted of kidnapping and assault and sentenced to six years in prison by the Truth and Reconciliation Commission. Despite her post-apartheid internal status as "mother of the nation," her presence during the transitional process was less welcome among moderate factions. Furthermore, after she was accused of gross mismanagement of funds, a lightly-veiled criminal indictment, she was forced from the National Executive.

Mandela and de Klerk were natural antagonists, and bad blood prevailed throughout negotiations in which de Klerk labored under a persistent belief that Mandela was attempting to belittle him at every turn. He also lived with the particular onus of being the white South African President who would let the old dream die. In addition to de Klerk foreseeing apartheid's eventual undoing, and fearing taking the blame for it, an integrated society with shared power of majority rule was the most offensive and unworkable idea to him of all. He made his disdain for the process clear in the wasted efforts of December 1991 during the Convention for a Democratic South Africa (CODESA 1). President de Klerk used his time not to build common ground but to condemn ANC violence, and an equally offended Mandela took the microphone to denounce the basis of de Klerk's legitimacy to exist as a minority ruler at all. In the 1992 session, de Klerk maintained his insistence that any post-apartheid South Africa must be federalized, and Mandela naturally objected to this, demanding that the post-apartheid period must be overseen by a unitary government of majority rule. An alarming rate of violence between black factions similarly threatened the process, and terrorist-incursions by the Inkatha faction worked against Mandela's hope to maintain a tepid emotional temperature to ensure minimal reprisals in the post-apartheid period. Thousands died in these actions, and Mandela personally faulted de Klerk for overly demonstrative retaliations, such as in what was termed the Sebokeng Massacre, where over 18,000 homes that had been erected by the government gave way to violent clashes over rent and service tariff boycotts. A peace accord was signed, but gang violence remained a regular feature of the area.

After more massacres at Boipatong and Bisho, Mandela called for international peacekeepers, and given the ongoing public opinion internationally, the subservient faction pleading for outside help played much better in the press than Inkatha murders of 40 citizens or the killing of 28 by the Ciskei Defense Force. The United Nations sent Cyrus Vance to participate in the negotiations following Mandela's call for the convening of a Security Council session; Mandela's request was perceived as a triumph of nobility over oppression in much of the outer world.

As this delicate state of affairs progressed, threats to the peace still loomed from militant organizations like the Concerned South Africans

Group, a coalition of rightist Afrikaner parties and black secessionists. Terrorist attacks continued from both fringes, with Inkatha actions from the left and white supremacists from the right, such as the Afrikaner Weerstandsbeweging, who attacked the Kempton World Trade Center in the summer of 1993. The ANC leader, Chris Hani, was murdered in that year, and the peace process grew more vulnerable with each violent news item.



**Hani**

Realizing that the situation was worsening, Mandela returned to negotiations with added fervor, demanding that all traditional Zulu weapons be banned and that Zulu hostels be fenced off, to which de Klerk, in a rare spirit of cooperation, agreed. In the end, both sides consented to a five-year coalition government underpinned by an American-inspired Bill of Rights. The ANC somewhat reluctantly agreed to protect all white civil service jobs, which was essential to Mandela's bloodless transition, because if the white-based economy was destroyed, the new South Africa, already crippled economically, would collapse and start again with nothing. The country was divided into nine provinces, each with its own civic structure, and each represented by its own localized premier.



**Mandela and de Klerk shake hands at the World Economic Forum, 1992**

In July, Mandela and de Klerk each received the Liberty Medal from President Bill Clinton, but the fact that the awards were bestowed on separate trips is more than telling. Not long after, they were jointly awarded the Nobel Peace Prize, and in his acceptance speech, Mandela called for continuing the fight against apartheid:

“Together, we join two distinguished South Africans, the late Chief Albert Lutuli and His Grace Archbishop Desmond Tutu, to whose seminal contributions to the peaceful struggle against the evil system of apartheid you paid well-deserved tribute by awarding them the Nobel Peace Prize. It will not be presumptuous of us if we also add, among our predecessors, the name of another outstanding Nobel Peace Prize winner, the late Rev Martin Luther King Jr. He, too, grappled with and died in the effort to make a contribution to the just solution of the same great issues of the day which we have had to face as South Africans. We speak here of the challenge of the dichotomies of war and peace, violence and non-violence, racism and human dignity,

oppression and repression and liberty and human rights, poverty and freedom from want.

“We stand here today as nothing more than a representative of the millions of our people who dared to rise up against a social system whose very essence is war, violence, racism, oppression, repression and the impoverishment of an entire people.

“I am also here today as a representative of the millions of people across the globe, the anti-apartheid movement, the governments and organizations that joined with us, not to fight against South Africa as a country or any of its peoples, but to oppose an inhuman system and sue for a speedy end to the apartheid crime against humanity.

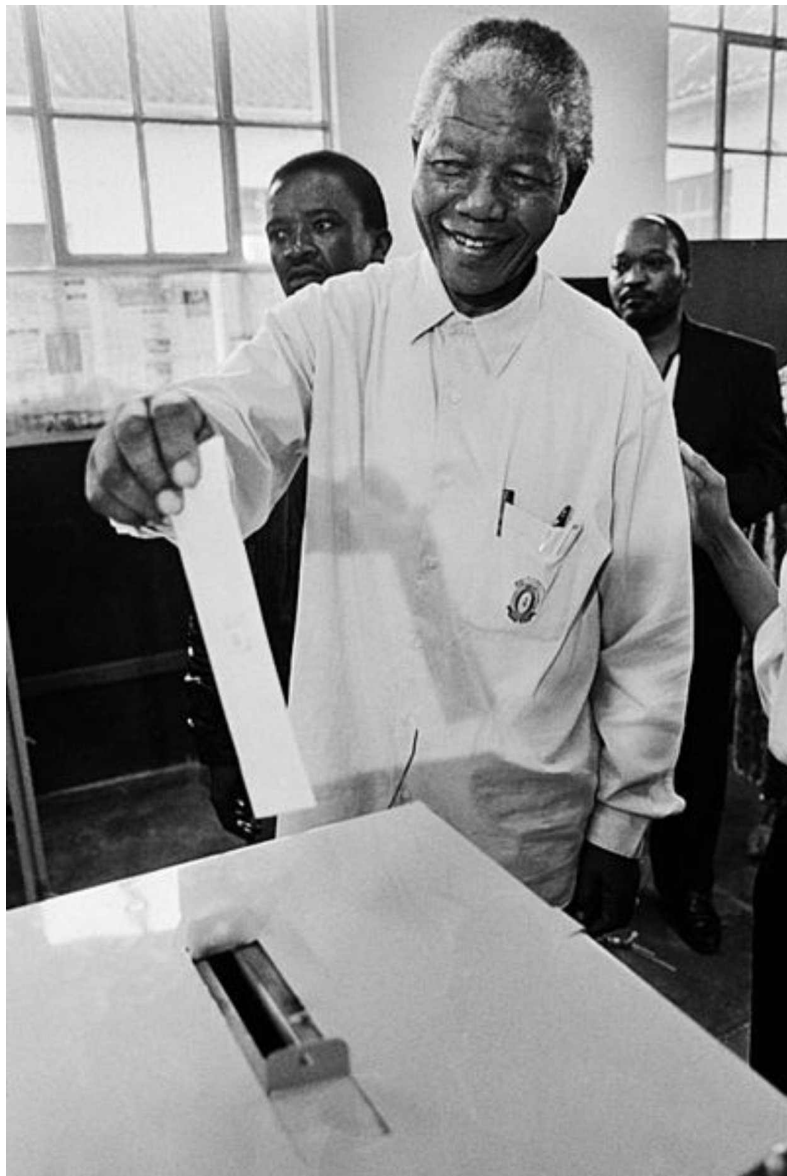
“These countless human beings, both inside and outside our country, had the nobility of spirit to stand in the path of tyranny and injustice, without seeking selfish gain. They recognized that an injury to one is an injury to all and therefore acted together in defense of justice and a common human decency.

“Because of their courage and persistence for many years, we can, today, even set the dates when all humanity will join together to celebrate one of the outstanding human victories of our century.

“When that moment comes, we shall, together, rejoice in a common victory over racism, apartheid and white minority rule.”

However, the mutual chasm would continue between the two until the end of negotiations and well into the new state. Mandela, acutely aware of South Africa's tenuous financial condition, which would grow far worse if the revolution spilled over into sectarian violence or outright civil war, began to seek out foreign investors of every political and economic persuasion, even as he experienced no small amount of trouble in moderating his sense of nationalism. At the root of it, Mandela would have preferred for the black population to create the new wealth as he did for them to create the revolution single-handedly, but neither was possible.

Despite never having been perceived as a great orator, by the time 1994's general election came around, Mandela's supporters had established a vast network of forums around the country at which Mandela would speak. Despite his verbal limitations, Mandela was intensely popular, and to many, simply seeing him and meeting him was better than hearing him speak. During the campaign, Mandela and de Klerk debated on live television, and although there was little chance of overcoming the president's rhetorical mastery, Mandela shocked the viewership by offering his hand at the onset in a gesture of cooperation, which was perceived as a victory in itself.



**Mandela casting his vote in the 1994 election**

Ultimately, the ANC and its first African candidate took 62% of the national vote in the general election of 1994, a victory to be sure but a disappointment as well, because the figure fell just short of the two-thirds majority needed to alter the constitution without challenges. The Inkatha and National parties each took one of the nine provinces, but Nelson Mandela, the first African President of the Republic of South Africa, was inaugurated on May 10, 1994, an event televised around the world. In his inauguration speech, Mandela declared:

“Democracy is based on the majority principle. This is especially true in a country such as ours where the vast majority have been systematically denied their rights. At the same time, democracy also requires that the rights of political and other minorities be safeguarded.

“In the political order we have established there will regular, open and free elections, at all levels of government — central, provincial and municipal. There shall also be a social order which respects completely the culture, language and religious rights of all sections of our society and the fundamental rights of the individual.

“The task at hand on will not be easy. But you have mandated us to change South Africa from a country in which the majority lived with little hope, to one in which they can live and work with dignity, with a sense of self-esteem and confidence in the future. The cornerstone of building a better life of opportunity, freedom and prosperity is the Reconstruction and Development Programme.

“This needs unity of purpose. It needs in action. It requires us all to work together to bring an end to division, an end to suspicion and build a nation united in our diversity.”

A daily newspaper editor in Johannesburg, remarking on Mandela’s ability to equalize the “haves” and “have nots,” rather than giving one over to the other for bloodletting, wrote, “The way the election was conducted — all its imperfections notwithstanding — is proof that this country has just

survived a negotiated revolution.” Analyzing the concept of a negotiated revolution, Nina Koshey went on to say that “to Nelson Mandela the election was liberation, and to Justice Kiegl, the chief of the independent election commission, it was an act of national reconciliation.” Mandela had successfully engineered a government of national unity that was dominated by the African National Congress, and de Klerk became the Deputy President.



### **President Clinton and President Mandela**

Led by Mandela, who was 76 when he took power in South Africa, the overthrow of apartheid had finally been realized.



## **Online Resources**

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- [1] Natal was name given to the east coast of South Africa by the Portuguese, who observed it on Christmas day, and Highveld is a term that applies to the land lying above 5,000ft in north-central South Africa.
- [2] The word 'Kaffir' his highly pejorative in modern South Africa, although it's original usage as a general term for black was quite general. It is derived form the Arabic term 'kafir', meaning infidel, or heretic, and was used in reference to black slaves who non-Muslim.
- [3] Reader, John. *Africa: A Biography of the Continent*. Page 442.
- [4] Reader, John. *Africa: A Biography of the Continent*. Page 442—443.
- [5] Colenso, Frances E. *History of the Zulu War and Its Origin*. Page 258.
- [6] Zwangendaba and Shoshangane belonged to the Nguni umbrella group which also include the Zulu, but they were not Zulu, belonging instead to the Ndwandwe nation, an arch enemy of the Zulu.
- [7] Most subsequent analysis, based largely on oral testimony, states that Lobengula probably died of stomach cancer, which his later symptoms appear to indicate.
- [8] The Imbizo Regiment was the elite amaNdebele fighting unit, comprised entirely of Nguni men, and with a pedigree dating back to the original formation of the amaNdebele.
- [9] The *Battle of Kraaipan* in the Northern Cape occurred a week earlier, which was a smaller action, and which preceded the Siege of Mafeking.
- [10] A point worth noting is that Smuts negotiated a key clause in the agreement that limited any black involvement in future government. Part of the British stated reason for entering the war was the disparity in rights available to whites, Indians and blacks in the Transvaal, and certain promises were made to grant greater inclusion to blacks and Indians upon an eventual British victory. Milner had argued that non-white voting rights would be implemented upon a grant of self-government. Smuts had altered that terminology to read that non-white voting rights would be considered upon a grant of self-government, which effectively pushed back that possibility until such time as the white minority accepted it, which in the event never occurred.
- [11] The lingua franca that developed on the mines was known as 'Fanagolo,' containing elements of English, Dutch, and numerous native languages. Being able to speak it lent young blacks the impression that they could speak English and whites that they could speak a native language. In practical terms, it was both and neither.
- [12] The Indian nationalist/independence movement was fully formed by then, and agitation of Indian dominion status was well underway.
- [13] Beyers was referring to the use of concentration camps to isolate Boer women and children from the fighting men, to starve out the latter. Thousands of Boer women and children died in these camps.
- [14] This was the Main Act of the Berlin Conference of 1884/5
- [15] The *Schutztruppe*, or colonial protection force, comprised battalions of native troops, or 'askari', commanded by metropolitan German officers. Von Lettow-Vorbeck went on a recruitment drive early in the war, and at its peak, he commanded a force of about 20,000 men at arms, with many more in auxiliary roles.
- [16] The East African Campaign of WWI is regarded as the longest running campaign of WWI. It began at the moment of the declaration and ended only after the signing of the Armistice. Von Lettow-Vorbeck offered his surrender but did not acknowledge defeat.
- [17] The relevant British territories included South Africa, Bechuanaland, Southern Rhodesia, Northern Rhodesia, Nyasaland, Tanganyika, Kenya, Sudan, and Egypt. Each was a British dependent territory or a British protectorate.
- [18] 'Equal rights for all civilized men' was one of Cecil Rhodes' many mantras.



- [19] It was the 'Sacred Trust' that underwrote the League of Nations Mandate system. Territory's were held in trust until the conditions for independence were in place.
- [20] A 'shebeen' is a back street bar selling bootleg liquor and illegally brewed beer.
- [21] The United Part was dissolved in 1977
- [22] Quoted: Thompson, Leonard. *A History of South Africa*. (Yale University Press, New York, 2000) p193
- [23] *The Living Church*, Volume 129, p10
- [24] Rwanda and Burundi were Belgian-mandated territories taken over from the German Empire after WWI.
- [25] The National Democratic Party was the successor to the Southern Rhodesian African National Congress, which Sir Edgar Whitehead banned during the disturbances attendant on the Nyasaland secession crisis.
- [26] The terms of restriction were reasonably porous, with individuals or groups confined to certain rural areas, but usually it was possible for covert movement and communication.
- [27] The 'Frontline Movement', or the 'Frontline States', was an organization of African nations confronting the Liberation Struggle. At that point the Frontline Leaders were Nyerere, Kenneth Kaunda and Hastings Banda.
- [28] Rhodesia was under mandatory United Nations sanctions, and vital fuel imports were directed into the country via Mozambique. These were sourced through various international suppliers and circumventing a periodic and porous British naval blockade.
- [29] Mandela was expelled from Fort Hare for his political activity and protests.
- [30] Mandela's first trial began in October 1963, but it was thrown out for insufficient evidence.
- [31] *The third was the National Union for the Total Independence of Angola, or UNITA, founded in 1964.*
- [32] Thanks to the same cause and effect, the war in Rhodesia escalated rapidly after the Portuguese coup, and Red China was deeply involved in the liberation movements of Zimbabwe.