

# BLACKS<sup>1</sup> IN THE EX-BOER REPUBLICS OF THE TRANSVAAL AND ORANGE FREE STATE IN THE AFTERMATH OF THE SOUTH AFRICAN WAR OF 1899-1902

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**The black races in these Colonies feel today that their last state  
is worse than the first.**

(F Wilson and D Perrot (eds), *Outlook on a Century*, p. 270.)

## INTRODUCTION

This article attempts to assess the short and long-term effects of the South African War of 1899-1902 on the Blacks in the Boer republics of the Transvaal and Orange Free State in particular and on the southern African Blacks in general. While the conditions of black South Africans in the ex-Boer republics in the post-war era is the central theme of this paper, it has, at times, been difficult to avoid commenting on the political influence of the Colonial South, the Cape Colony in particular, on the actions of Blacks in the Orange River Colony and Transvaal, especially in the period immediately following the unification of the four provinces, Transvaal, Orange Free State, Natal, and Cape Colony. It is for that reason that this article has not confined itself to the effects of the war on the black people in the Boer republics only. It was impossible to isolate the Blacks of the two British Colonies from those of the newly acquired British territories in this discussion.

In this essay we will sketch the aftermath of the war and assess its effects on the Blacks. This aftermath began already during the war, once areas had been occupied by British forces. This we discuss first. But these effects were by nature of the situation rather localised. After 31 May 1902 however a post bellum ensued which lasted in effect until the establishment of the Union in 1910. The full consequences of the war for all the Blacks of the territories involved then gradually

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<sup>1</sup> This term and others are explained at the end of the article.

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unfolded. These we discuss under two successive headings: First we examine the questions of land and labour which determined the economic conditions of the Blacks and constituted their renewed exploitation. Then we return to the other facet, the question of discrimination and exclusion of suffrage. Thus we show that despite black efforts and sacrifices, mostly on behalf of the British, in a conflict which little concerned them they were the real losers. Indeed, the South African War was a white man's war in this sense. When they made peace, the subjection of the black men was greater than it had been hitherto.

## BLACK LOSSES AND GAINS DURING THE WAR

The effects of this war were equally felt by the Blacks and Whites of southern Africa, despite the fact that it was a "white man's war". The Bechuanaland Protectorate, for example, was mainly defended by the Bakgatla<sup>3</sup> who "beat off the first movements of the Boers, upsetting very seriously their plans and calculations, and temporarily paralysing their efforts";<sup>4</sup> thus dispelling the myth that the South African War was exclusively a "white man's war" in which Africans played no significant role. In the Protectorate the effects of this war were greatly felt by the Bakgatla, the Bakwena, and the Bangwaketse, i.e. Batswana clans who occupied those regions which the Boers wished to conquer in order to cut off the British lines of communication between the north and south - Rhodesia and the Cape Colony.<sup>5</sup>

In the Kgatla Reserve of Mochudi Boer raids into that territory resulted in great material loss by Lentswe's people. Besides destroying African crops in the field the Boers also looted many of Lentswe's cattle and sheep,<sup>6</sup> and set fire to several Bakgatla villages on the banks of the Marico.<sup>7</sup>

However, some Tswana clans did make very significant gains from this war. A notable example is that of the Bangwato of Chief Khama. Of all the Batswana in the Protectorate, Khama's people suffered the least, but also made the greatest economic gains of all. Neil Parsons noted that "while the war destroyed Afrikaner agricultural competition in the Transvaal, where some Boers were eventually reduced to buying shirts off Africans' backs",<sup>8</sup> in Khama's country "cattle sold at

<sup>3</sup> SM Molema, *The Bantu past and present*, p. 280.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 279.

<sup>5</sup> J Ellenberger, "The Bechuanaland Protectorate and the Boer War, 1899-1902" in *Rhodesiana*, No. 11, p. 4 and AS Hickman, *Rhodesia served the Queen* (Salisbury, 1970), p. 234.

<sup>6</sup> Ellenberger, p. 5.

<sup>7</sup> National Archives of Botswana, RC 4/14, cited by N Parsons, "The economic history of Khama's country in Botswana, 1844-1930," in R Palmer and N Parsons (eds), *The roots of rural poverty in central and southern Africa* (London, 1985), p. 127.

<sup>8</sup> Parsons, p. 127.

prices not reached again for sixty years, at £25 to £30 each, and military authorities purchased no less than £25 000 worth...".<sup>9</sup> That the Bangwato emerged relatively unscathed from this war is further confirmed by the remarks made by Kebailele, the Commander-in-Chief of the Maolola age-set, who, when a sum of £1 728 was paid to him by the British for military services they had rendered to them, could not contain himself and rejoiced to Khama: "Chief, I see that God has helped us wonderfully, for this war has not hurt at all... no dead or wounded to lament, as in former wars. Instead we have made much money in this year."<sup>10</sup>

The war also created a remunerative market for agricultural produce and live-stock at inflated prices. Africans were quick to avail themselves of this opportunity to accumulate capital for agricultural improvements and replenish depleted herds. This was largely evident in the Orange Free State where share-cropping or farming-on-the-halves was generally practised. Briefly this meant that a white farm-owner supplied seed and land, the African squatter farmed the grain, and the returns were shared equally between the proprietor and the African. The sustained drought conditions of 1903-1908 however made rural recovery very difficult in the post-war era.

In contrast other Africans to suffer noticeably as a result of this war were those who greatly depended on wages obtained from migrant labour. Apart from the fact that the Rand mines had to close down at the outbreak of hostilities, there was no longer any free movement between the neighbouring states and the Transvaal gold mines, as virtually the entire southern Africa was a war zone. To compound the matter the wages on the Rand mines were also not attractive. After the resumption of gold production in 1901 the wages of black mineworkers were reduced by the Chamber of Mines from their pre-war level of 50 to 30-35 shillings per month. Equally important was that in the aftermath of the war work became available on the railways and other areas outside the gold mining sector at higher wages than those then paid by the mines.<sup>11</sup> The reason for African reluctance to

<sup>9</sup> Parsons, citing L.M.S. Archives, E Lloyd to L.M.S., 20 August 1900, (recalling c. 1902), p. 127.

<sup>10</sup> See also P Warwick, "Black industrial protest on the Witwatersrand, 1901-02" in *South African Labour Bulletin*, Vol. II, No. 8, April 1976, p. 23.

<sup>11</sup> Two chiefs, Lentswe of Mochudi and Sekgoma of Serowe, visited Mafikeng in October 1903. The two were interviewed by the *Bechuana Gazette* about their views regarding the suggestion by mine managers that since there was a shortage of labour from the indigenous Africans for the Rand mines, Chinese labourers should be imported to work on the mines. Lentswe retorted: "I am not in a position to help the Rand Mines as I am the Chief of the Bakhatla and not the Emperor of China. They want Chinamen and not my people, who, they say, are too expensive. If Mokebisa (De Beers) wants labourers I may give him some, ... but it is not within my power to satisfy the wishes of a company that wants cheap Chinamen". And Sekgoma concurred: "If any one tells you that there are not enough labourers in this country, it is a falsehood ... One hundred of my men once went to the Rand and they had to run away from there. The statements they make about the

work in the mines at this time seems obvious. Mining, particularly at deep levels, could hardly appeal to them as long as there were other employment opportunities available to them in other sectors of the economy.

Conditions on the Rand mines and in the mining compounds were notoriously bad and the mortality rate high. As a result of this it became very difficult during this period to recruit men for the mines. Some Tswana chiefs who preferred Mokebisa (De Beers Mines), where treatment of mineworkers was said to be better, said they did not like their men to go to Johannesburg because they went there to die.<sup>12</sup> The mine owners therefore had to seek labour elsewhere and they turned to China for Chinese labour. When white trade unions opposed this the Government signed a *modus vivendi* with Mozambique in December 1901 to supply conscripts. This also failed owing to African resistance to enforced recruitment.<sup>13</sup>

Even while the war was still in progress, the need for labour also led the British administration to raise the Hut Tax from 10/- to £1 in 1900. This tax was levied according to the number of wives an African had. If he had ten wives, that meant ten huts, and consequently he had to pay £10. This served to force thousands of Africans on to the labour market in order to obtain the cash.

Despite such labour and taxation policies during the war, the Africans, both rural and urban, cherished the illusion that Imperial victory would bring a substantial political improvement to them; if not independence, at least a return to autonomy in the countryside or a participation in suffrage in the cities. When Roberts<sup>14</sup> troops reached the Witwatersrand and Pretoria in 1900, Africans burned their pass books which symbolised their menial place in society and industry, in the misplaced belief that they would no longer be required under an enlightened and progressive administration. Alas! That was not the case. Under the British the pass laws were enforced more stringently, and in general labour conditions worsened rather than improved.

Nor did the Ba-Pedi Chief, Sekhikhune II, who ousted the Boers from Sekhukhuland in June 1900 and collaborated with the British against the Republican forces, get anything in return. Sekhukhune had hoped that all the Ba-Pedi of

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bad treatment of labourers and melancholy state of the sick there, is discouraging..." Archives of the Secretary of Native Affairs, Pretoria, SNA. 39, 2991/03, Native chiefs and the Native labour question, 6 November 1903. See also *Bechmana Gazette*, Wednesday, November 4, 1903 and *The Mafeking Mail*, 6 November 1903.

<sup>12</sup> TRH Davenport, *South Africa* (Johannesburg, 1986), p. 357.

<sup>13</sup> See DR Hunt, "An account of the Bapedi" in *Bantu Studies*, Vol. V, (1931), p. 316.

<sup>14</sup> Frederick Sleigh Roberts superseded General Sir Redvers Henry Buller as Commander-in-Chief in South Africa in January 1900, after the latter had suffered serious reverses at Colenso in Natal.

Geluks (a corruption of Kgolokoe) Location would be re-united under his chieftainship at the end of the hostilities. Instead the British government decided to the great disappointment of their ally, not to re-unite the chieftainship and ordered Kgolokoe II, Sekhkhune's rival, to be installed as chief of the southern half of the location.<sup>15</sup> Indeed, the ingratitude meted out to Sekhkhune by the British authorities in return for services rendered during this war, will forever be remembered by that people as a severe blow to their erstwhile belief in the British sense of justice.

The Zulu who had dealt the Vryheid commando a telling blow at Holkrantz received nothing either. After the war large parts of Zululand were alienated for white settlement, and Zulu claims for compensation for losses suffered during the war remained unfulfilled.

Other blacks, however, did make some political gains in this war. A point worth mentioning is that of Lentswe's Bakgatla. As a result of his participation in the South African War, especially in the Derdepoort incident, Lentswe, the Bakgatla chief, was able to persuade British authorities in South Africa to recognise his sovereignty over the Bakgatla in the Rustenburg District. With this recognition he was able to send his brother Ramono of Kaeye Pits fame in 1903 to Saulspoort to serve as his representative in the Transvaal.<sup>16</sup> It is important to note that this appointment of a chief's representative at Saulspoort had very important political implications for the Kgafela-Kgatla royal family. It led directly to the split of the family into two independent sections, for since then the Transvaal Kgafela-Kgatla have been ruled from Saulspoort independently of Mochudi. The "split" in the Kgatla royal family was brought about by the fact that while Lentswe enjoyed loyal allegiance from the Transvaal Bakgatla, he could not rule them directly as he was a Protectorate subject (argued Windham, Secretary for Native Affairs in the Transvaal), but his deputy in Transvaal was officially recognised by the South African Government as chief of the Transvaal Bakgatla.<sup>17</sup> Lentswe's Bakgatla were also allowed to retain their arms. In June 1900, the High Commissioner, Milner, indicated that it was about time that the Bakgatla were disarmed. To this General

<sup>15</sup> See LW Truschel, "Nation-building and the Bakgatla, The role of the Anglo-Boer War" in *Botswana notes and records*, IV (1972), p. 190.

<sup>16</sup> Lt. Gov. 114, 3289/02, W Windham, Secretary for Native Affairs, Tvl. to Chief Segale K Pilane and others of the Bakgatla People, 2 June 1903. See also I Schapera, *A short history of the Bakgatla*, p. 20. It is also important to note that under sub-section (7) of section two of the Native Administration Act, 1927 (Act NO. 38 of 1927), as amended by Act No. 9 of 1929, and later by Act No. 42 of 1957, the Governor-General as Supreme Chief of all Africans in the Union superseded all Lentswe's successors as Paramount Chief of the Bakgatla in Saulspoort. Cf. *Bantu authorities and tribal administration*, 1959, pp. 3 and 9.

<sup>17</sup> WK Hancock and J van der Poel, (eds), *Selections from the Smuts Papers*, I (Cambridge, 1966), pp. 482-3.

RSS Baden-Powell replied that "he could not approve of the disarmament of a tribe which had rendered such signal services to the British cause during the course of the war... And so Linchwe retained his arms."<sup>18</sup>

## LAND AND LABOUR AFTER THE WAR

When the Boers laid down their arms and signed the Terms of Surrender on 31 May 1902, the Blacks who had participated in the war as British allies expected that British victory would greatly improve their lot.<sup>19</sup> This hope was greatly enhanced by a belief held by many Blacks that Great Britain had gone to war with the Boer Republics primarily in their interest - to protect them from Boer aggression. Such hopes and beliefs were raised by statements made by some prominent British spokesmen during the early months of the war. In October 1899, no less a person than the Secretary of State for Colonies, Joseph Chamberlain, told the House of Commons that "the treatment of the natives of the Transvaal has been disgraceful; it has been brutal; it has been unworthy of a civilized Power".<sup>20</sup> And in South Africa, Cecil Rhodes had spoken on the eve of the war of "equal rights for every civilized man south of the Zambezi",<sup>21</sup> which the black intelligentsia thought would include them.

From such official pronouncements it was to be expected that once the war was over the new rulers would strive to better the lot of the Africans. After the war was over, however, disillusionment set in among the Africans. Many had hoped that the British Government would restore to them their old Native Reserves which the Boers had expropriated and turned into land for white settlers since the days of the Great Trek. Consequently, some had even taken possession of confiscated Boer farms that they had been allowed to cultivate while living in the Refugee Camps along the railway system. Once the war was over they were evicted and "their crops left standing in the fields; and demands were once more made upon them to supply labour for the local white farming community".<sup>22</sup> The disillusionment of the African peasantry in the late Republics was succinctly summed up in July 1906 by an anonymous black contributor to the journal *South African Outlook*: "One strong incentive reason that impelled the Natives of the New Colonies to put themselves at the disposal of His Majesty's troops in the late war was that the British Government, led by their known and proverbial sense of justice and equity,

<sup>18</sup> N Mansergh, *South Africa 1905-1961: The price of magnanimity*, p. 62.

<sup>19</sup> *Parliamentary Debates*, 4<sup>th</sup> series, LXXVII, 271, 19 October 1899.

<sup>20</sup> Mansergh, p. 62.

<sup>21</sup> P Warwick, "Black people and the war", unpublished mimeograph, University of York, 1978, p. 18.

<sup>22</sup> F Wilson and D Perrot, (eds), *Outlook on a century: South Africa 1870-1970*, p. 270.

would, in the act of general settlement, have the position of the black races upon the land fully considered, as at the conclusion of the war the whole land would refer to the British Nation, when it would be a timely moment, they thought, for the English to show an act of sympathy towards those who have been despoiled of their land and liberties. Alas! This was not the case."<sup>23</sup>

In the Bechuanaland Protectorate one of the most important long-term effects of this war was its significant contribution to rural poverty. We have pointed out elsewhere in this essay that the outbreak of the war had drastic effects on migrant labourers who depended on South African mines for supplementing their meagre earnings in the Protectorate, as free movement between the Protectorate and the South African mines almost slowed down to a halt. After the war, with increased taxation on the people it became virtually impossible for them to recover from the ravages of the war and the disasters of the rinderpest of 1897, as the migrant labour wages were now diverted from the people's pockets to the coffers of the colonial offices.<sup>24</sup> Migrant labour wages therefore, instead of contributing towards the economic recovery of the state after the war, actually benefited the colonists and resulted in rural poverty and economic dependency. Writing about this period Neil Parsons aptly said: "The period 1896-1902 saw the flower of past Ngwato development and the seeds of its future underdevelopment."<sup>25</sup>

It is tragic that the very country that was defended by its inhabitants against Boer invasion was to emerge from this war as an economic hostage of its ally, Britain (the mother country).<sup>26</sup>

At the end of the war the High Commissioner, Milner, appointed a South African Native Affairs Commission (SANAC) under the chairmanship of Sir Godfrey Lagden, the Commissioner for Native Affairs in the Transvaal, which met from 1903-04. Its task was "to gather information and make recommendations to

<sup>23</sup> "The Colonial income from Ngwato hut tax grew steadily from its 1901-2 figure of £5,300. For 1903-4 it leapt 8,5 per cent over the previous year because the hut tax effectively converted into a poll tax on all adult males. For 1907-8 and 1908-9 it leapt 12,3 per cent and 14,5 per cent to accommodate in its own mysterious way the increase of the tax from 15s to £1, to yield £13,255 for 1908-9." Parsons, pp. 128-130.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 125.

<sup>25</sup> Writing on the effects of this war on Botswana Parsons said: "Evidence suggests that the rate of labour migration from Khama's Country in this period was directly related to depressions in the internal economy ... the 1902-10 economic depression in a way remained with Botswana until 1969 in that it was institutionalised into the South African Customs Union." Palmer and Parsons, p. 131.

<sup>26</sup> C Headlam, (ed.), *The Milner Papers II* (1935), p. 452.

the several Governments, 'with the object of arriving at a common understanding on questions of native policy'<sup>27</sup>

This commission recommended, inter alia, territorial segregation of black and white and the establishment of segregated "locations" for urban blacks.<sup>28</sup>

We stated that taxation was one of the pressures contrived by the government to force the Africans on the labour market. There was an additional pressure in the form of land legislation. By the time of the establishment of the Union in 1910 the position of the Blacks on the white-owned farms as well as on the reserves had been engaging the minds of white South Africans for some time. The Native Land Act, No. 27 of 1913, was obviously a result of the recommendations of the Lagden Commission. Contemporary interpretations of this Act have brought new perspectives to our understanding of this period. Thus Martin Legassick in his "Gold, agriculture, and secondary industry in South Africa, 1885-1901" argued convincingly that the main aim of the 1913 Land Act was to redistribute more evenly the labour supply on white-owned land, to eliminate share-cropping by Africans and to replace this by labour tenancy.<sup>29</sup>

These reserves therefore were to become vast pools from where migrant labour was to come to the towns. Similarly, Leonard Thompson pointed out in the *Oxford History of South Africa* that "the immediate object of the Act was to abolish the system of farming-on-the-half and to eliminate squatter locations",<sup>30</sup> and not as a corner-stone of the policy of apartheid as maintained in the older literature. And Colin Bundy in his critical analysis, "The emergence and decline of a South African peasantry", has shown that a more important function of this Act was that squatters and share-croppers were to be reduced to the level of labour tenants.<sup>31</sup>

Another age-old aspect of the farming community to be attacked by this Act was the practice called "Kaffir farming" or the leasing of "white" land to Africans. Under this system the farmer (usually an absentee landowner) placed his farm at the disposal of the African(s) to use as he/they wished without any interference

<sup>27</sup> See HJ and RE Simons, *Class and Colour in South Africa, 1850-1950*, p. 65.

<sup>28</sup> M Legassick, "Gold, agriculture, and secondary industry in South Africa, 1885-1870: From periphery to sub-metropole as a forced labour system" in Palmer en Parsons p. 180.

<sup>29</sup> M Wilson and L Thompson, (eds), *Oxford History of South Africa* (Oxford, 1971), II, p. 127.

<sup>30</sup> C Bundy, "The emergence and decline of a South African peasantry" in *Journal of the Royal African Society*, Vol. 71, No. 285 (October 1972), p. 384.

<sup>31</sup> Sol T Plaatje in his book *Native life in South Africa* (1916) is quite articulate and has given a heartrending description of the experiences of many Africans who suffered from the effects of this outrageous act.



from the landlord, he being only interested in the cash rental he received from the tenants. This practice had made some African farmers fairly self-sufficient and economically independent before the war. After the war the Land Act was to uproot all these blacks from white-owned farms and to render them homeless,<sup>32</sup> thereby hitting at the very core of the Africans' social system. In other words, the inception of the land Act of 1913 resulted in the complete loss of the two pillars of black society, land and cattle.

## DISCRIMINATION AND SUFFRAGE

Those Africans who had burned their pass books in 1900, only to see them replaced by new, even more stringent pass laws, had not given up hope. In 1903 Africans in the urban areas of Johannesburg and Krugersdorp who had hoped for political rights at least in local affairs protested against the discriminatory legislation of the new administration and submitted a petition signed by 254 Africans to Milner, which read in part: "Now in passing laws like the one just passed ... as regards Coloured people is tantamount to encouraging slavery or raising slavery from its grave."<sup>33</sup>

To the authorities, as on numerous occasions during the Crown Colony period, the petitioners' request fell on deaf ears. In 1905 the Native United Political Association of the Transvaal Colony submitted a petition signed by over 25 000 Africans to King Edward VII against various discriminatory laws which affected the Africans and requested that the Lyttelton Constitution should make provision for reserving discriminatory legislation for the consideration of the Crown,<sup>34</sup> and even these were denied.

Coloureds and Asians also became more critical of British policy towards the non-whites after the war. Under the leadership of Dr Abdullah Abdurahman, President of the African People's Organisation (APO) and Gandhi, the Indian leader, they struggled in vain to persuade the Milner government to reshape race relations in the Transvaal and the Orange River Colony.

If discriminatory laws aroused bitter feelings, the greatest disappointment of all was over the question of the franchise for Non-Whites, particularly those who resided in the defeated Boer republics. As early as February 1901, Kitchener had been informed by Botha that the Boers had insisted that the enfranchisement of

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<sup>32</sup> L. G. 105/9, Petition from Iliso Lomzi (Native Vigilance Society) to Viscount Milner, 14 July 1903.

<sup>33</sup> C.O. 291/81, 15332/05, Lawley to Lyttelton, 25 April 1905.

<sup>34</sup> Headlam, p. 210.

Kaffirs should be delayed until the ex-Boer Republics had been granted representative government.<sup>35</sup>

In the Cape Colony the franchise qualifications were colour-blind since 1854, although there were economic and literacy requirements. A few Africans enjoyed the vote, but the Whites dominated the political system.

Even though very few Africans had the vote in the Cape they were at least enfranchised on the same basis as the whites. In the former Boer Republics - the Orange Free State and Transvaal - a political colour bar was written in the constitutions of 1854 and 1858: "No kind of equality was admitted: there was no vote for native or coloured inhabitants, and this continued to be not only a matter of practice but of clearly enunciated doctrine."<sup>36</sup> Even in English-speaking Natal where the franchise was colour-blind in theory, it was virtually impossible for the Africans to enjoy the vote.

During the peace negotiations the Imperial Government informed the Republican Government that no peace terms could be considered which did not extend to the black people the same privileges - the rights of the franchise which were enjoyed by the Africans of the Cape Colony. The Colonial Secretary's cable of 6 March 1901 made the Imperial Government's stand clear: "We cannot consent to purchase peace by leaving the coloured population in the position in which they were before the war, with not even the ordinary civil rights which the Government of the Cape Colony has long conceded to them."<sup>37</sup> At first Milner had been against the enfranchisement of the non-whites but he regretted this later when he stated that he "bitterly regretted that he had yielded to the Boer over the Native Franchise regarding this as the greatest mistake he had ever made".<sup>38</sup> Three years later he confessed to Lord Selborne his ignorance of the attitude of white South Africans to the black man.

In recent years a contemporary writer discounted the argument that the British government did not do enough for African interests after the war. Ronald Hyam, in his article "African interests and the South Africa Act, 1908-1910", argued that "the racial problem in South Africa before 1910 was not as intense as it became subsequently, and it is unrealistic to expect the British government then to have

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<sup>35</sup> Mansergh, p. 65.

<sup>36</sup> Headlam, p. 212.

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 353.

<sup>38</sup> R Hyam, "African interests and the South Africa Act, 1908-1910" in *The Historical Journal* (XIII,1), (1970), p. 86.

acted as if South Africa were already the world's greatest racial villain...".<sup>39</sup> Hyam's argument can however not be accepted without question, for did Chamberlain not declare publicly in the Commons on the eve of the war that "the treatment of the natives of the Transvaal had been brutal ... (and) unworthy of a civilized Power"? Did the Honourable Prime Minister, Lord Salisbury, not assure Parliament that following victory in South Africa the lot of the blacks would improve under British administration when he said: "There must be no doubt ... that due precaution will be taken for the kindly and improved treatment of those countless indigenous races of whose destiny I fear we have been too forgetful"?<sup>40</sup> And did the Imperial Government not reiterate this point during the war when they informed the Boers that Britain would not "purchase peace by leaving the coloured population in the position in which they were before the war"? These statements clearly show that at this time Britain was already aware of the intensity of the racial problem in South Africa.

In the Orange River Colony members of the educated black elite who had hoped that British victory would lead to the improvement of their position were disappointed by the contents of Article VIII of the Treaty of Vereeniging, which stated: "The question of granting the franchise to natives (in the Transvaal and Orange River Colony), will not be decided until after the introduction of self-government", and King Edward VII was informed that "it seemed to them deplorable that before bloodshed ceased the avowed cause of Justice, Freedom, and Equal Rights, for which the war had been undertaken, should have been so easily abandoned".<sup>41</sup> Indeed, by agreeing to these terms, Britain sacrificed the Africans on the altar of British-Boer reconciliation; "she had tacitly surrendered her moral responsibility and abandoned her self-assumed role as the protector of Africans and Coloured".<sup>42</sup>

Writing about the peace agreement in October 1902, John Tengo Jabavu, the editor of the African newspaper *Imvo Zabantsundu* (Native Opinion) said that because the British, the Boers and African peoples all had the right to live in South Africa, "each should be accorded by the others the common rights of citizenship".<sup>43</sup> White reaction to this was however negative.

<sup>39</sup> *Parliamentary Debates*, 4<sup>th</sup> series, Lords, LXXVIII, 257, 1 February 1900.

<sup>40</sup> T Karis and GM Carter, (eds), *From Protest to Challenge 1* (Stanford, 1972), p. 48.

<sup>41</sup> See HJ and RE Simons, p. 64.

<sup>42</sup> *Imvo Zabantsundu* *Blomzantsi Africa*, Wednesday, 8 October, 1902, col. 5, p. 3.

<sup>43</sup> The National Convention met from October 12, 1908-February 3, 1909/

When responsible rule was granted to the Transvaal and the Orange River Colony in 1907 and 1908 respectively, the question of "non-white" franchise was shelved only to be taken up by the National Convention.<sup>44</sup>

In 1908 the governments of the four colonies of the Transvaal, Orange River Colony, Natal, and the Cape Colony began talks on possible political union. One of the first problems which arose at this conference was that each colony had its own "Native policy" and these colonies were anxious to see a uniform system of administration for all South African Blacks.

The Convention grappled with this problem. At times it even seemed as if the ship of union would founder on this rock. There were four points of view: to extend the Cape non-white franchise to the whole of South Africa; to accept the uncompromising inequality practised in the Transvaal and the Orange River Colony (baasskap) throughout the country; to introduce a civilization test for everyone as a prerequisite for suffrage; and to retain the Cape franchise unchanged and to allow the other provinces to maintain their existing laws. The Northerners (Transvaal and Orange River Colony) said that South Africa was a white man's land and should remain so, while some of the representatives from the south (Cape Colony in particular) argued that the Union would be built on a volcano if the majority of the population was denied the franchise.<sup>45</sup>

In the end the wishes of the northern colonies prevailed and it was resolved that existing colonial franchises should be retained. But some Western-educated Africans were now beginning to take part in politics themselves. A great deal of anguish among South African Blacks was caused by the fact that it was now clear that it was not the Cape "liberal" tradition that would prevail in the Union, but rather the racial ideologies of the northern colonies and Natal. They protested vigorously against this discriminatory legislation and held a number of meetings at which they insisted that the British government had an obligation towards her allies in the late war - the Africans, and that she should safeguard African interests in the constitution of the new Union.

Their protests were supported by only one white Liberal, WP Schreiner, former Cape premier from October 14, 1898 - June 17, 1900. Otherwise all came to nought.

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<sup>44</sup> For a debate on the "Native franchise question", see JF Preller, *Die Konvensie-dagboek van FS Malan*, pp. 47-59, 71-3, and Sir Edgar Walton, *The Inner history of the National Convention*, pp. 117-57.

<sup>45</sup> Davenport, p. 169.

The Coloureds also protested. Their political organisation, the APO, made representations to the National Convention to safeguard existing non-white rights and to extend them to the northern colonies. The colonial parliaments flatly refused to address or redress the non-white pleas.

The Africans and Coloureds then appealed to Great Britain and a multi-racial deputation, led by WP Schreiner and consisting of DR Abdurahman, the president of the APO, Walter Rabusana, an American-educated ordained minister, and JT Jabavu, the editor of *Imvo*, was sent to London to persuade the British government to change the proposed Union constitution, but they returned home empty-handed.<sup>46</sup>

The British government was reluctant to interfere on behalf of non-whites lest their interference would wreck the projected Union. In fact, there was little or nothing Britain would do without the support of white South Africans in trying to give political rights to the South African Blacks. Indeed, "if ... anything was to be done for the natives, the backing of the Imperial Government alone was hardly enough. What was required in addition was the support of some solid body of European opinion in South Africa. It was precisely this that was lacking."<sup>47</sup> On August 19, 1909 the House of Commons accepted the South Africa Act and the Union of South Africa came into being.

That the proposed Union was built on a volcano as some Southerners had predicted at the time of the National Convention, is borne out by the strained relationships that exist between black and white South Africans to the present day, primarily because the interests of the former were deliberately ignored at the time of the Union.

The effects of this war on the non-white peoples of Southern Africa have been succinctly summed up by Raine Kruger as follows: "The Boers said the war was for liberty. The British said it was for equality. The majority of the inhabitants, who were not white at all, gained neither liberty nor equality."

Indeed, liberty was denied to them and they gained no degree of equality.

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<sup>46</sup> Mansergh, p. 70.

<sup>47</sup> Rayne Kruger, *Good-bye Dolly Gray* (London, 1960), p. 507.

## USAGE OF CERTAIN TERMS IN SOUTH AFRICAN HISTORY

- AFRICAN** : The term African refers to any person who is generally accepted as a member of any aboriginal race or "tribe" of Africa.
- BAASSKAP** : Master status, implying that the other party has servant status.
- BLACK** : The term "black" denotes all the South Africans who till very recently have been on the receiving end of **apartheid**; it includes Africans (Bantu-speaking people), "Coloureds" and Asians.
- BOER** : Literally farmer, generally applied to the Afrikaners whether farmer or not because they descend from a traditionally farming tribe. Also applied to them in a derogatory sense by Blacks in retaliation for their calling Blacks "Kaffirs".
- COLOURED** : A term used by white South African to denote people of mixed descent.
- KAFFIR** : (Sometimes rendered as Kafir/Kaffre/Caffre, is an Arabic word which means "infidel".) South African colloquialism applied to any person of African ancestry living in the Southeast African coastal region. Sometimes used pejoratively to refer to all indigenous South Africans.
- NON-WHITE** : A term used in the old-fashioned literature to denote all the South Africans who do not fall into the so-called "white" group, i.e. the African, "Coloured" and Asian peoples of South Africa.
- RAND** : Highland or ridge.

### ADDITIONAL NOTE ON USAGE

In this article I have departed from the anthropological practice of dropping prefixes before the names of people. My reason for retaining them is that this is how the people refer to themselves and would like to be referred to likewise by those writing about them. Thus we say the Bakgatla and not the Kgatla. The latter form, however, has been reserved for adjectival use, eg. Kgatla royal family, etc.