

**AN ASSESSMENT OF THE ROLES OF FRERE AND CETSHWAYO IN BRITISH  
HEGEMONISTIC AMBITIONS IN SOUTHERN AFRICA WHICH LED TO THE  
DESTRUCTION AND FRAGMENTATION OF THE ZULU STATE BY THE ANGLO-  
ZULU WAR OF 1879**

By

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## DECLARATION

I declare that

***An assessment of the roles of Frere and Cetshwayo in British hegemonistic ambitions in southern Africa which led to the destruction and fragmentation of the Zulu state by the Anglo- Zulu war of 1879***

is my own work and that all the sources that I have used or quoted have been indicated and acknowledged by means of complete references.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'A. M. Law', written over a horizontal line.

01 February 2002

## UCAPHUNO

Lombhalo (ithisisi) uchaza ngokungcwele ngezehlakalo ezaholela empini yama'Ngisi kanye no Zulu ngo 1879, kanti futhi ihlose ukuchaza, phakathi kokunye, ukuthi kungani lempi yabakhona . Nyako – ke uyongo yalolucwaningo ibhekiswe eqhazeni labathile okukhona ikakhulukazi u Lord Carnarvon, Theophilus Shepstone (unobhalaka Ndabazabantu wase Natal), u Sir Bartle Frere (uNkomisheni omkhulu) kanye no Cetshwayo ka Mpande (inkosi yakwaZulu).

Lempi yango 1879 yaqubuka ikakhulukazi ngexa yezifiso zamaNgisi zokuziqoqela amazwe. U Frere wagunyazwa ngu Carnarvon ukusebenzisa umgomo woqoqano e Afrika engase Ningizimu. Yena ke wase egaya impi ngokwenza sengathi uMbuso ka Zulu ubu luhlupo ezweni elithethiwe (colony) lase Natal ebekufanele upheliswe phambi kokuthi loluqogano lwenzeke. Ngako - ke u Frere wasebenzisa izehlakalo zemingcele, wase ehlobalaza isithunzi kanye nokubusa kuka Cetshwayo okunguyena omkhethe wamethula ngokuthi ungumphathi ophatha ngonya kanye nomcinelezeni.

Ngokuphikisana nemiyalo esuka ku Sir Michael Hicks Beach enkantolo yabaphathi kanti futhi ewuhulumeni wamaNgisi, u Frere wathumela uganazithathe ku Cetshwayo obe ungekhe wamukeleke kuZulu uma ubheka indlela yokuphathwa kwakhe-ubezolahlekelwa, okuyiyona ndlela yakhe yokuphila.

Iningi lalezigameko zingazwakala kangconyana futhi kuhlaziyiwe ngokubheka esikathini sika khwini kanye nabagqugquzeli bokuphathwa kwamanye amazwe ngumbuso wama Ngisi okuyikona kuvelele esikhatini sikakhwini wokuthi amaNgisi ayevame ukuhumusha ngokungekona ezinye zezizinja eziyisisekelo sokucabanga nokwenza komu Afrika ikakhulukazi uZulu. Abakhakhwini abanjengo Frere,ngokusebenzisa awabo amagugu ukubukeza,basebenzise izindlela lapha eNingizimu ye Afrika ezingahumushwa kuphela ngokuthi wuchuku, ngamanga futhi akungeni ndawo. U Frere ubenenhloso yokupheta futhi ethatela abantu pansu kanti ekhombisa ukuzidla kubaphathi bakhe kanye no Zulu.

Uzulu ubenowakhe umbono ocacile nyezinkinga zakhe kanye nalokho okungamagugu, amasiko, izinkolelo, ezepolitiki kanye nemigomo ngokomphakathi kanye nomnotho.

U Frere ubezimisele ukuqhuba ngokuthi ezakhe izinjongo eNingizimu ye Afrika futhi ezibona kunguyena ushampeni wobumbano lwamazwe. Phezu kwalokho uye wazikhohlisa ngokuthi abuke u Cetshwayo njengenkosi yezwe elisekelwe phezu kwemigomo yempi kanye wokusetshenziswa ngempopo okuwukuphikisana nenkululeko ngempela. Kuyacaca ukuthi ubudlelwane phakathi kuka Cetshwayo wesizwe sakha kwakungeyona into elula bekuyinto ehlume ukusekela esikhatini sika Shaka futhi bamukelwe yiningi lesizwe ngaphandle kokungabaza.

Noma u Zulu ebebonakala eyimpi kodwa isizwe sona besingahleleli ukungena empini. Kungenxa yezimo ezadalwa ngu Frere ezabangela ukuthi uZulu agane esehlukana. Uma ufunda lombhalo (ithisisi) futhi ubheka amaphuzu ahluka hlukile kufanele njalo sikhumbule lemibuzo: Ingabe u Frere ubengumuntu oqotho yini ngezemo zakhe noma ubehlose ukuzigqamisa yena ngokwakhe, kanti futhi uCetshwayo ubengumcindezeli ongumashiqela.

## ABSTRACT

This thesis provides a detailed account of events leading up to the Anglo-Zulu War of 1879, and undertakes to explain inter-alia, why the war came about. The focus of the study is thus on the roles of personalities including especially, Lord Camarvon, Secretary of State for the Colonies), Theophilus Shepstone, (Natal's Secretary for Native Affairs), Sir Bartle Frere (the High Commissioner) and Cetshwayo kaMpande (King of Zululand).

The war of 1879 arose out of predominantly British hegemonistic ambitions. Frere was entrusted by Camarvon to implement a confederation policy in southern Africa. The latter consequently engineered a war on the pretext that the Zulu Kingdom was a menace to the Colony of Natal that had to be eliminated before confederation could be possible. Frere therefore exploited certain border incidents and maligned the character and rule of Cetshwayo whom he chose to label a tyrannical oppressor. Contrary to instructions from Sir Michael Hicks Beach at the Colonial Office and indeed the British Cabinet, Frere then sent an ultimatum to Cetshwayo that could not possibly have been accepted by the Zulus, given the nature of their polity - it would have lost its very way of life.

Most of the issues can best be understood and analysed by looking at the Victorian Age and the promoters of British Imperialism. A salient feature of the Victorian Age was that Britons were by and large always likely to misinterpret some of the assumptions upon which African and indeed Zulu thought and actions were based. Victorians, such as Frere, by using their own set of values as the criteria for judgement, adopted postures in southern

Africa which can only be interpreted as mischievous, false and irrelevant. Frere was 'colonial' and patronizing and displayed an arrogance towards his superiors and the Zulus. Zulus had their own vivid perception of their problems, as well as their own sets of values, customs, beliefs, political and socio-economic structures. Frere was determined to manipulate events in southern Africa for his own ends and regarded himself as the champion of imperialism. He deluded himself further into regarding Cetshwayo as a monarch whose state was based on the institutions of militarism and forced labour- the very negation of liberty. It is evident that the relationship between Cetshwayo and his subjects was not a simple one but it was one which developed from Shakan times and which was clearly accepted by most subjects.

As militaristic as it appeared to be, the Zulu state was not planning to embark on a war. It was forced by circumstances created by Frere into one which culminated in its dismemberment. In reading the thesis and considering the various factors we should constantly bear in mind the questions: Was Frere sincere in his actions or was he out for personal aggrandisement and to what extent was Cetshwayo an oppressive autocrat?

## OPSOMMING

Hierdie proefskrif verskaf 'n uitvoerige ontleding van aspekte wat aanleiding gegee het tot die Anglo-Zoeloe oorlog van 1879 en onderneem om te verduidelik, onder andere, hoekom die oorlog tot stand gekom het. Die fokus van die studie is dus gerig op die rolle van persoonlikhede, veral Lord Carnarvon (Sekretaris van Staat vir Kolonies), Tehophilus Shpestone (Natale Sekretaris vir Naturelle Sake), Sir Bartle Frere (Hoë Kommissaris) en Cetshwayo, seun van Koning Mpande van die Zoeloes.

Die oorlog van 1879 het hoofsaaklik uit Britse hegemonistiese ambisies ontstaan. Frere is deur Carnarvon gestuur om 'n konfederasie-beleid in die Suidelike Afrika te implementeer. Laasgenoemde het bygevolg 'n oorlog aangestig op die voorwendsel dat die Zoeloe Koninkryk 'n bedreiger was vir die Kolonie van Natal wat ge-ëlimineer sou moes word alvorens konfederasie montlik kon wees. Frere het dus sekere grensgevalle uitgebuit en die karakter en regering van Koning Cetshwayo belaster wat hy verkies het om as 'n tiraniese onderdrukker te bestempel.

Teenstrydig met opdragte van Sir Michael Hicks Beach en die Britse Kabinet, het Frere 'n ultimatum aan Cetshwayo en die Zoeloe Staat gestuur wat onmoontlik was om te aanvaar vanweë die aard van hulle regeeringsvorm – dit sou juis die hele Zoeloe monargie vernietig het.

Die onderliggende faktore kan die beste verstaan en ge-analiseer word deur te let op die Victoriaanse tyd en die bevorderaars van Britse Imperialisme. 'n Hoof trek van die Victoriaanse tyd was die Britse wanopvattinge en vooroordele jeens Zoeloe denke en optredes. Victoriane, soos Frere, het hulle eie kulturele waardes eensydig op die andersoortige Zoeloe tradisies toegepas en dit as geslepe, vals en irrelevant veroordeel. Frere se optrede teenoor die Zoeloes as paternalisties; dit is as arrogant vertolk deur spesifiek die Zoeloe-leiers, maar ook die Zoeloe bevolking in die algemeen. Die Zoeloes het hulle eie duidelike persepsie van probleme gehad, sowel as hulle eie waardes, gewoontes, gelowe, politieke en sosio-ekonomiese strukture.



Frere was gedetermineer om gebeurtenisse in Suidelike Afrika vir sy eie doeleindes te manipuleer en het homself beskou as die kampioen van imperialisme. Hye het Koning Cetshwayo beskou as 'n koning wie se staat gebaseer was op die instelling van militarisme en gedwonge arbeid wat vryheid ontken het. Dit is duidelik dat die verwantskap tussen Cetshwayo en sy mense nie 'n gewone verhouding was nie, maar dat dit 'n verwantskap was wat sedert Shaka se tyd ontwikkel het en wat duidelik deur die meeste van die Zoeloe bevolking aanvaar is.

Militaristies soos dit skyn te wees, het die Zoeloe regeerders nie beplan om in 'n oorlog met Brittanje betrokke te raak nie. Die oorlog is begin deur omstandighede wat deur Frere meegebring is en het in die verbrokkeling van die Zoeloe Staat gekulmineer.

Met inagneming van die relevante verskeidenheid faktore, moet daar voortdurend die volgende twee vrae in gedagte gehou word : Was Frere in sy optrede opreg of was dit net 'n poging om sy persoonlike aansien te bevorder? Die tweede vraag is : In welke mate was Cetshwayo 'n onderdrukkende outokdraat in die Zoeloe-gemeenskap?

**Key words which describe the topic of the thesis :**

**Frere , Carnarvon , Cetshwayo , Chemsford , Confederation Scheme , Zulu Kingdom , Zululand, Anglo-Zulu War 1879, Zulu War , Imperialism , Colonialism , Victorian Age , Romanticism , Nationalism , surplus labour , ultimatum , post-Shakan kingdom , hegemony , southern African history , historiography, militarism , amabutho system , isikhulu , umuzi , amakhanda , induna , ibandla .**

## PREFACE

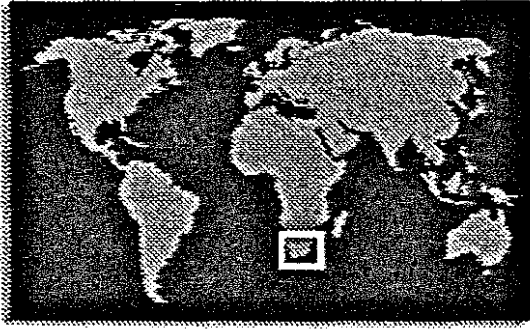
In the course of this work over a prolonged period of time I have become indebted to a great many people. I am extremely grateful to the numerous archivists and librarians in both Britain and South Africa who gave me indispensable assistance in locating sources especially the staff of the Natal Archives in Pietermaritzburg; the Transvaal Archives in Pretoria ; The Cape Archives in Cape Town ;The Killie Campbell Africana Library, Durban; the Wartenweiller and William Cullen libraries at the Witwatersrand University ; the Library at UNISA in Pretoria ; Rand Afrikaans University Library ; The British Museum ; the Public Records Office in London ; the Brenthurst Library and especially Mr. H. F. Oppenheimer ; and The South African National Museum of Military History.

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Last but not least , my thanks to my supervisor Professor J de Villiers who has been a pillar of knowledge, professionalism and strength to me, and who has painstakingly guided me through unchartered waters.

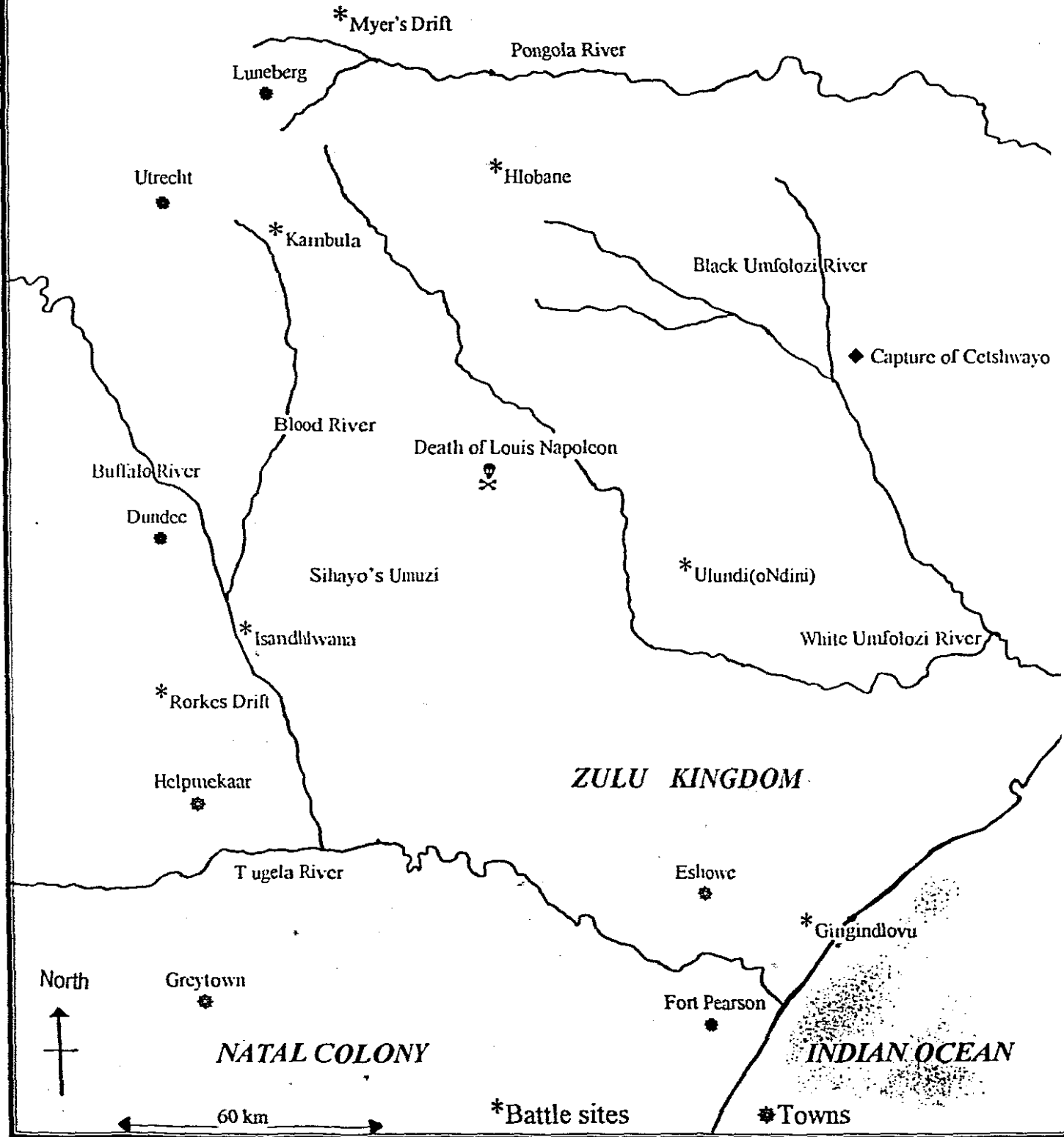
Map 1.

# Southern Africa 1879



Map 2.

# The Anglo-Zulu War 1879



Map 3.

# The Zulu Kingdom during Cetshwayo's reign

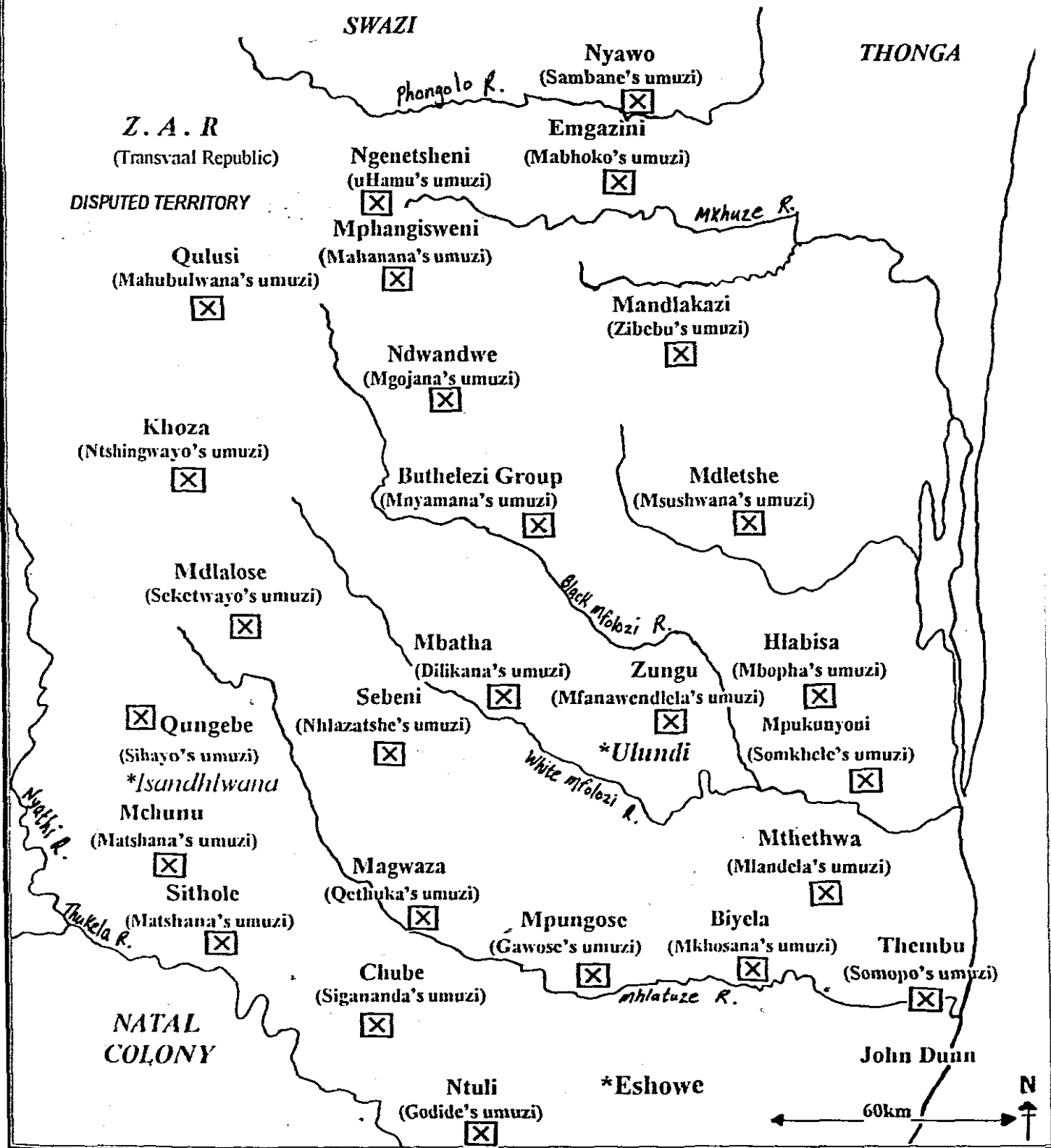


Photo 1.

**British forces visit battle site of Isandhlwana , March 1879.**

(Reproduced kind permission of MUSEUM AFRICA, Johannesburg)

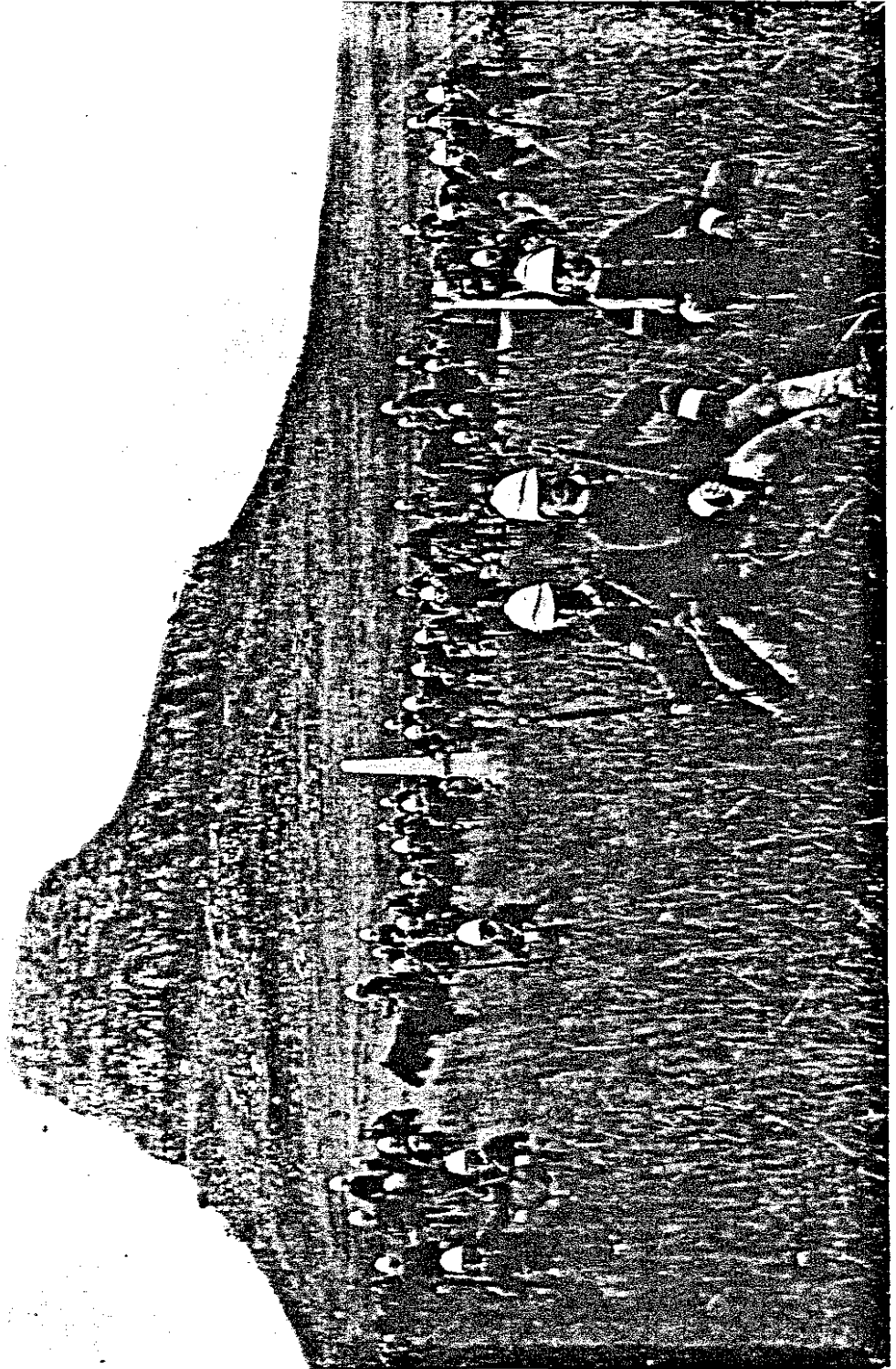


Photo 2.



Cetshwavo kaMpande , King of Zululand 1873-1879  
(Kind permission of London Museum)



## GLOSSARY

- abanumzana*.....married heads of homesteads
- ibandla*.....Council of State
- iButho/amabutho*.....age regiments
- iDlozi /amaDlozi*.....spirit of deceased person
- iKhanda/amaKhanda*.....regimental army barracks
- iLobolo*.....cattle or goods handed over as marriage dowry
- inkosi/amakhosi*.....lord / kings
- impi*.....army
- inDuna/izinDuna*.....chief /state official
- iNyanga*.....diviner / herbalist / medicine man / witchdoctor
- isikhulu/zikhulu*.....great chiefs of patrilineal lineage
- umuZi/imiZi*.....homesteads
- umnyama*.....supernatural mystical force
- umkhoka*.....death by violent means
- usuthu*.....adherents of / party supporting Cetshwayo

## ABBREVIATIONS USED IN THE FOOTNOTES

- BL ..... British Library, London
- BPP..... British Parliamentary Papers
- GH..... Government House records, Cape Archives, Cape Town
- GH..... Government House records, Natal Archives , Pietermaritzburg
- CO..... Colonial Office records, Public Record Office , London
- CSO..... Colonial Secretary's Office records , Natal Archives, Pietermaritzburg
- GRO..... Gloucestershire Records Office ,(St.Aldwyn papers), Gloucestershire
- GS..... Government Secretary , Transvaal (Gauteng)
- KC..... Killie Campbell Africana Library, Durban
- NAM..... National Army Museum, London (Chelmsford Papers)
- PRO..... Public Record Office , London
- SNA..... Secretary for Native Affairs records, Natal Archives, Pietermaritzburg
- SP..... Theophilus Shepstone Papers , Natal Archives, Pietermaritzburg
- SPG..... Society for the Propagation of the Gospel records, London
- SS..... State Secretary records, Transvaal Archives , Pretoria
- ZAR..... South African Republic (Transvaal)

**A man should always have these two rules in readiness: the one to do only whatever the reason of the ruling and legislative faculty may suggest for the use of men; the other to change thy opinion but this change of opinion must proceed only from a certain persuasion, as of what is just or of common advantage, not because it brings reputation.**

*(Meditations of Marcus Aurelius, Roman Emperor- Julius, Kansas , 1948 p. 17)*

## INTRODUCTION

The reign of Queen Victoria was marked by a concern for security for the British Empire as well as by economic imperatives. Her reign 1837-1901 was characterised by constant warfare in various parts of the Empire. The British Army was involved in a number of primitive expeditions and military campaigns and all of these, with the exception of the Crimean War of 1853-1856, were "native" wars fought against enemies that were ill-equipped militarily when compared to the British Army.

The nineteenth century was a period when not only Britain, but other European countries sought colonial possessions. A desire to obtain greater trade, scarce resources, new markets and raw materials for burgeoning industry prompted imperialistic drives but there were also other motives for imperialism. A zeal to convert 'heathen' races and the prestige of acquiring territory were also major factors in imperialism. Britain's involvement in southern Africa was motivated by all of the factors above to a greater or lesser extent but the single most important motivation was the issue of security linked to imperialism. Britain needed to safeguard a strategic sphere of influence in southern Africa.

The more Victoria's reign continued, the greater the expanse of the Empire became, although it was not so much due to a deliberate policy of expansion by successive British governments, but rather due to a natural, spontaneous growth. An example of this trend was apparent in India. By 1860, the three original trading posts in India (Calcutta, Bombay and Madras) had extended into the Indian hinterland as Britain sought more security against the French who were their rivals in the area. After the Indian Mutiny of 1857 Britain became obsessed with the protection and security of India against foreign attack. The Indian Mutiny of 1857 was a significant rebellion against British rule and was termed the First War of Independence by Indians. It shook Britain and prompted her to make India part of the British Empire. Queen Victoria took the title Empress of India and the Raj or British Government of India was founded.

The properties of the East India Company were transferred to the Crown in 1858 and the Governor-General became the Viceroy. To the British, the psychological consequences of the Mutiny were considerable, and they became more determined to preserve the Empire.<sup>1</sup> Britain did not hesitate to conduct terrible reprisals against the Indian mutineers. Men were crucified, burnt to death, tortured without any evidence against them and hanged. By the late 1870's Britain perceived the expansion of Russian influence in Central Asia to be the biggest threat to the security of the Empire. Russia desired to open up a reliable and profitable trade route to the Indian Ocean and Britain was determined to control India. To forestall Russian advances, Britain needed a friendly and relatively stable Afghanistan which would be able to check Russian imperialistic ambitions. Britain despatched three columns of British and Indian troops to central Afghanistan so as to deter Russia from further action which might threaten the security of India and British links with the entire Indian sub-continent. Landlocked Russia was obsessed with the idea of acquiring an ice free port, but Britain's forays into Afghanistan and Persia were sufficient to check Russian imperial ambitions.

The Victorian Age was accompanied by the ideals of imperialism, colonialism, nationalism and romanticism which all greatly flavoured British thoughts and actions. Britain therefore fought to repulse any invasion into what she believed was her territory and crushed insurrections as soon as they began. Imperial prestige had to be asserted at all costs and trade agreements needed to be enforced or Britain would lose status. In Africa, Britain also felt a need to preserve her territory and extend it if need be.

The Anglo-Zulu War came about for a number of reasons. Imperialism was the main reason. Empire building was the accepted policy of Britain and France in particular, irrespective of the socio-economic status of public opinion in both those countries.<sup>2</sup>

1. Wood, A. : Nineteenth Century Britain 1815-1914 , p. 223  
2. Craig, G.A. : Europe 1815-1914, p. 400

By the late 1870's Britain was master of the seas and consequently held the lion's share of the world's trade. To safeguard the vital route to India, territories were annexed in the Far East, the Pacific, the eastern Mediterranean and Africa. Britain was the only great power with global objectives and for most of the nineteenth century the role of the rest of Europe, in the British diplomatic mind, was to allow Britain a free hand to get on with its imperialistic ambitions. This was the core of the global Pax Britannica which Britain's navy procured for her by virtue of its unchallenged might at sea.

A number of Victorians were opposed to Imperialism. A notable anti-imperialism critic was John William Colenso, the first Anglican Bishop of Natal, 1853. He supported the Zulu cause and believed that Britain had deliberately and unjustifiably provoked the Anglo-Zulu War. He regarded it as a war which ravaged the entire country and in which much innocent blood was shed in pursuit of unrealistic imperialistic ambitions. He came into conflict with the British military authorities and was of the opinion that the pre-emptive British strike into Zululand would make the name of Britain synonymous in Zulu minds with unprovoked aggression and treachery. Britain would never be trusted by the Zulu again.<sup>3</sup>

Britain did not share Colenso's opinion and regarded the war as one launched in self-defence based on the principle of attack as the best form of defence.

Nationalism was also a major reason for the outbreak of the Anglo-Zulu War. Britain regarded herself as the saviour of the African races she subjugated. Military and organisational skills developed by British imperialists enabled settlers to penetrate the interiors of conquered territories and deal with African authorities on superior terms. Once Africans were subjugated Britain could spread Anglophile traditions and pass these on as a gift to them. Britain assumed a position of 'natural superiority' that gave her a right to rule – a right that she did not hesitate to exercise.<sup>4</sup>

3. Vijn, C. : Cetshwayo's Dutchman, p. xii

4. Howard, M. : The Lessons of History, p.25

She sent out not only traders and troops but also officials who took with them certain social assumptions and ethical norms and above all, British culture and religion. Britons had a civilizing mission and felt obligated to pass on British ways, which they were proud of and give all subjugated peoples the benefit of their rule. British dominance in southern Africa would of course also boost the national prestige of Britain as a colonial power. John Ruskin (1819-1900), in his Inaugural Lecture as Professor at Oxford in 1870, stated that Englishmen...

*still indenerate in race; a race mingled of the best northern blood must found colonies as fast and as far as she is able, formed of her most energetic and worthiest men; - seizing every piece of fruitful waste-ground she can set her foot on, and there teaching these her colonists that their chief virtue is to be fidelity to their country, and that their first aim is to be to advance the power of England by land and sea.<sup>5</sup>*

The historian Thomas Carlyle (1798-1881), spread the same message in his writings: Britain as a master race should extend her principles on a global scale, extend her authority and acquire greater power and prestige for the Empire.

British Governments during Victoria's lengthy reign were very often eager to expand the Empire but not in favour of carrying the burden of the cost of expansion. The financial responsibilities were often too cumbersome. Administration and defence were issues which carried a severe economic load and needed as far as possible to be curtailed. Despite this, Britain's destiny was believed to lie beyond merely naval power and she was on a path of limitless natural growth. Increased national prestige inevitably had huge economic consequences, which affected the diversity of classes in society. Although the Victorian Age was one of extraordinary wealth, the growth of the British Empire brought enormous and expensive problems in especially military matters. British public opinion nonetheless was not too keen to spend vast sums of money on foreign adventures.

5. Ruskin, J. : Lectures in Art delivered before the University of Oxford in Hilary Term 1870, p. 3

By the early 1870's it was clear that territorial sovereignty over vast and distant lands was a privilege the British taxpayer could ill afford. The colonies seemed merely a burden and in any case, the new industrial economy in its earlier stages discounted the value of possessing a huge empire that had been acquired to serve the outmoded mercantile system. There was no longer real need on the part of free traders to use colonies to further their economic ambitions. In many respects, Empire was a liability, but could not be given up as status and prestige for the mother country remained a dominant factor to consider. The emergence of the German Empire, proclaimed at Versailles in 1871, had as an inevitable consequence led to huge naval and military spending increases by all the great European Powers. A period of armed peace was ushered in and Britain was eager to maintain dominance of the seas. The Franco-Prussian War of 1870-1871 led to a change in British public opinion. Germany was mistrusted since her acquisition of Alsace and Lorraine. The emergence of new powers in Europe therefore, which seemed to rival the imperial and economic supremacy of Britain, challenged her strategic global interests. After the Franco-Prussian War of 1870-1871, the vanquished French tried to regain a measure of their prestige while the Germans succeeded Austria-Hungary as the major power in Continental Europe. The undeveloped parts of the globe became the main areas for inter-power rivalry. Britain developed an unjustified sense of insecurity which made her even more determined to hold on to her Empire and especially India, at all costs. Britain consequently increased her official control in this area. Ironically internal instability often resulted from British presence in an area in the first place. The colonial markets and sources of raw materials made it inevitable in a sense, that Britain would adopt protectionist policies.

Gladstonian liberalism was anti-colonialism whereas Disraeli promoted the idea of imperialism as he believed other European powers wanted raw materials and ready markets. He also saw it as a means of uniting the classes in Britain under a common cause which would boost national pride. However, contrary to promoting imperialistic notions, there was no planned policy of expansionism by Britain. It was only men-on-the-spot such as Sir Henry Bartle Frere who as will be demonstrated, as a matter of personal desire, pursued aggressive foreign policies as was the case in Zululand in 1879.



It was vital for British economic interests to secure raw materials and markets by provocation if necessary in especially times of economic downswing but also when internal chaos threatened a sphere of British influence. Even though Britain did not want to acquire more territory, many British officials changed their attitude particularly after mineral discoveries were made in southern Africa – they believed if there was enough capital and labour, the region could develop into a good market for British goods.

Once Benjamin Disraeli became Prime Minister in 1874 as head of the first Conservative Government to have a majority in the Commons since 1846, he formed a Cabinet, which favoured imperialism. Lord Carnarvon took over the Colonial Office and the fifteenth Earl of Derby became Foreign Secretary. The addition of these two strong elements in Parliamentary debate partly explains why the government was absorbed in foreign and colonial affairs to a larger extent than domestic affairs. Disraeli was the first Prime Minister to officially speak of the idea of Imperialism as a positive romantic theme whereas all previous Governments had made no positive pronouncements on colonial policy. All prior territorial advances of the Empire were regarded as either fortuitous or the result of foreign policy or trade. Disraeli was against Gladstone's "Little Englanderism" as he termed it.

Disraeli inherited a minor colonial war from the Liberal Government of Lord Gladstone. This was in the Gold Coast where the Ashanti were keen to prevent further foreign domination of the coastal trade. Britain invaded Ashanti territory and defeated the Ashanti army and destroyed their capital at Kumasi. Britain was reluctant to assume formal colonial administration and withdrew her forces from Ashanti. She however declared slavery to be abolished on the Gold Coast. The costs of control could be greatly reduced in the Empire if confederation was pursued as a policy by Britain. White colonies could be established as almost self-governing states that would be responsible for their own defence costs and domestic policies. Colonies needed a self-consciousness in order to realise their full potential.<sup>6</sup>

6. Howard, M. : The Lessons of History, p. 65

Carnarvon was the primary exponent of the idea of confederation and it was the belief of the Cabinet that the Cape Peninsula was to be held at all costs in order to protect the sea route to India. It was not enough though, to gain new colonies. Economic gain was a necessity and this could only be achieved if Britain dominated the southern African coastline in its entirety. Carnarvon was also of the opinion that without some form of confederation in place, British interests would suffer irreparable harm.

Romanticism must not be underestimated as another major reason for the Anglo-Zulu War. A sense of anticipation and adventure fired the imaginations of the many British citizens and many young soldiers were only too eager to fight the Zulus when the time arose and if need be to die so doing. To die for one's country was seen as an honourable and glorious way to end one's life. British troops were ready to die for a cause, fighting what they perceived to be uncivilised 'savages'. Some of the British regiments had served in the wars in the Cape Colony while others came from Ceylon and garrisons in Britain. King Cetshwayo had to be defeated before a confederation could be put in place that would be to the advantage of the Empire. The painting by R.T. Moynan depicting the final stages of the battle at Isandhlwana clearly displays the romantic idea of fighting to the death as an honourable end to life. The defiant, resolute, last stand of a British soldier in the painting speaks volumes on the romantic notion of militarism and the honour of dying in battle.

The soldier depicted by R.T. Moynan is a lone soldier of the 24<sup>th</sup> Regiment 'C' Company, who retreated to the opening of a cave on the slopes of Isandhlwana when his comrades charged downhill to their inevitable deaths. The soldier then sniped at the Zulus below until several warriors armed with firearms fired at him together, killing him.

Another painting, by C.E. Fripp, of the last stand of the 24<sup>th</sup> Regiment, is probably the most famous and masterful portrayal of the battle of Isandhlwana. It shows a group of British soldiers huddled together in a final stand and holding aloft their Regimental Colours in a pose that would have delighted romanticists following the course of the war.

Victorian balladeers were often only too keen to write to commemorate battle in Zululand. The poet Bertram Mitford in the closing versus of his poem 'The Defence of Rorke's Drift', praises the victory over the Zulus in true Victorian style :

*Yes, for old England's honour  
And for her periled might,  
We strove with vast and 'whelming odds,  
From eve till morning light;  
And thus with front unflinching,  
One hundred strong we stood,  
And held the post against a maddened host,  
Drunken with British blood.<sup>7</sup>*

Victorians had an immense curiosity and respect borne out of fear of the Zulus who were regarded by them as the most ferocious of all Britain's nineteenth century enemies. The perception in Britain was that her young men were going to Africa to fight for a just and noble cause – the defence of the Empire. The Romantic spirit cherished both experience and tradition and both the individual and the group. Man was perceived as both helpless and great and could be either destined for glory or utter humiliation. British troops of the Victorian Age were therefore engaged in a struggle before they knew there was one and believed they were destined for glory.

So great was the spirit of romanticism that even non-Britons would be prepared to venture into Africa to seek glory. One such person was the son of Napoleon III, Louis Napoleon the Prince Imperial of France. After the Franco-Prussian War, the French royal family settled in England as Napoleon III had abdicated the throne. Louis Napoleon attended the Royal Military Academy at Woolwich and was enthused by tales of military glory and battles. He was a typical Victorian gentleman as one sees them depicted in romantic art and had been raised to believe in the virtues of warfare. Louis was well aware of the great burden he carried as a member of the French royal family but also realised that his prospects of ever returning to his father's throne were dwindling.

7. Emery, F. : The Red Soldier – The Zulu War 1879, p. 146

He believed he could prove himself to the people of France by becoming involved in the Anglo-Zulu War and achieving honour in the field. Spurred on by the bravery of the defenders at Rorke's Drift, Louis pleaded in 1879 to be allowed to become actively involved in the Anglo-Zulu War. Disraeli would not accede to Louis request, as there could be serious political repercussions should anything happen to him. However after a delegation pleaded his case to Disraeli on behalf of Queen Victoria, Disraeli yielded and Louis was on his way to southern Africa – conditionally. He was to be a 'spectator' and would serve in his private capacity only. His royal status would not gain him any special privileges. He would have a small escort to protect him at all times as a diplomatic necessity.

In early June while out scouting, Louis Napoleon and a small escort were ambushed and he was butchered by his Zulu assailants. His death is mentioned in most of the interpretations of the Anglo-Zulu War. He died a romantic figure and was a tragic hero as his last moments attest to :

*From the state of the ground, it was clear that he had fought desperately. His body bore seventeen assegai wounds, five of which were severe enough to have been fatal, including one in his right eye that probably reached the brain, and another to his heart.<sup>8</sup>*

Many historians of the Anglo-Zulu War such as Coupland, Clammer and Morris, have examined such events. Certain historians are sympathetic to the British campaigns and downplay imperialistic motives for British actions. They see nationalism as the main reason for British actions and incorporate many aspects of romanticism into their interpretations.

Historians, who are critical of Britain's actions in southern Africa, see them as nothing less than imperialists and frown upon the nationalistic tendencies of the British politicians of the time.

8. Clammer, D. : The Zulu War, p. 200

British militarism also came under the spotlight once again during the Anglo-Zulu War. The army was an extremely conservative organ and most of the officer corps were either the sons of previous officers in the service or sons of the landed gentry. Loyalty to the regiment was of paramount importance but sadly, most officers were narrow-minded. It was vital to be an officer and a gentleman even if one did not have much professional training. The best-trained British troops were either engineers or were in the artillery and were usually cadets at the Royal Military Academy at Woolwich, which as mentioned earlier, was attended by Louis Napoleon. Queen Victoria was opposed to political interference in the British military. The commander-in-chief of the army was subject to the authority of the secretary of state for war and this arrangement was somewhat unsatisfactory as the secretary of state for war position changed too often to allow for efficient control and continuity. The British Liberal party was most unhappy with the inefficiency and in 1868 made proposals to reform the army. Lord Cardwell was appointed Liberal secretary of state for war and a war department was created under him in 1870 after Parliament approved the reforms he suggested.<sup>9</sup> His reforms were conservative and limited and greatly reduced Britain's military presence overseas by withdrawing troops from settlement colonies, except for India.

Cardwell's reforms were especially, to have a shorter period of six years of service for soldiers in the regular army with battalions linked to each other. Many officers opposed these ideas but a group of younger officers under the leadership of Sir Garnet Wolseley favoured reforms. Queen Victoria disapproved of reformers such as Wolseley and was loyal to the more stereotyped and conservative officers such as Chelmsford. Cardwell's ideas were not innovative enough though, as was proved during the Anglo-Zulu War. The administrative system in place was sadly lacking in its manufacture and supply departments and there appears to have been a limited knowledge of military needs on the part of the Surveyor-General. Transport and supply were major problems during the Anglo-Zulu War as was packaging of ammunition. Numerous writers have suggested that the British lost the battle of Isandhlwana as the troops could not open the ammunition boxes quickly enough due to a supposed short-sightedness in design. A myth was perpetuated in this regard.

9. Biddulph, R. : Lord Cardwell at the War Office, p. 251

It was said that the British soldiers could not open ammunition boxes because the lids of these boxes were secured by up to nine screws and no screwdrivers could be found.

In reality, the ammunition boxes were relatively easy to open as only one brass screw was used to secure each box. The British military needed to appease public opinion which was enraged by the defeat and to cover up for complacency in the British camp at Isandhlwana – hence the myth. The wooden ammunition box issue aside – there were in any event not enough carts to transport ammunition to troops in the field and no runners had been planned to transport ammunition to the troops rapidly enough. To make matters worse, there was a very strict inventory of ammunition which a Quartermaster monitored before issuing further rounds of ammunition. All this indicates poor planning – emanating from the newly created War Department.

Weaponry appears to have been more than adequate however. The British infantryman was issued with the Martini-Henry rifle, which weighed about four kilograms and was 125cm long. It was a superior weapon and could fire one round every five seconds at an effective range of four hundred metres. In addition to these rifles that could also be fitted with a bayonet, were 7-pounder and 9-pounder guns and 24-pounder rockets fired from tubes or troughs. In the latter stages of the war, gattling guns were used to great effect against the Zulus and decimated them.

Uniforms were a problem in that the traditional red tunics were not suitable for the humid conditions in Natal Colony and the blue trousers were also of a heavy material, but these were minor aspects compared to the power struggle that was occurring within the British Army. After Isandhlwana, there were growing doubts about the validity of the imperial solutions to the problems that faced Metropolitan Britain. The public, previously enthusiastic about the Campaign in Zululand, now became highly skeptical and critical. Disraeli would not be able to extricate himself from Zululand until a total British victory was achieved. The 1880 election left the Conservatives little hope of victory and the Liberals won a 135-seat majority as Gladstone's second administration began. Disraeli had however left a legacy of imperialism that Gladstone could never shake off.

The British invasion of Zululand had all the hallmarks of a classic Victorian military invasion but many lessons were to be learnt by Britain.

Much can be gleaned about Victorian militarism and warfare from letters written by the soldiers during the Anglo-Zulu War. From camps, bivouacs and garrisons throughout Zululand and Natal Colony, the common soldiers and ranking officers wrote many letters to their loved ones in Britain. The letters extolled the virtues of war, the conditions in which they found themselves, their hopes, fears and impressions. Many previously unrecorded incidents come to light in surprisingly skilled letter-writing which indicates that there were marked improvements in the levels of education of the average soldier in the late 1870's.<sup>10</sup>

Initially, the British campaign into Zululand looked likely to be a relatively quick affair but once the war had begun it proved to be a different reality. Attitudes changed even more hastily once a part of the main British column under Lord Chelmsford's command was massacred at Isandhlwana. The entire British nation was shocked at the news of the total and utter humiliation, which had wrecked Chelmsford's invasion plans. Close to a thousand British casualties were recorded and ironically, 52 officers were killed at Isandhlwana, far more than had died at the battle of Waterloo in 1815.<sup>11</sup> Rather than a British disaster, Isandhlwana should be seen for what it really was, a marvellous Zulu victory. Just as grand as the Zulu victory, was a British victory on the same day at Rorke's Drift where 3 000 Zulus were repulsed by the 84 men of B Company, 2/24<sup>th</sup> Regiment and 53 others including wounded men. Although eleven Victoria Crosses were awarded to the defenders at Rorke's Drift which was and remains an all-time record for a single battle, the crushing defeat at Isandhlwana dominated the British newspapers. It is possible that the number of Victoria Crosses awarded to Rorke's drift defenders was an astute political manoeuvre intended to divert the British public's attention away from the real issue of the most infamous of all British reverses to date.

10. Curtis, S.J. : History of Education in Great Britain, p. 11

11. Gordon, L.I. : British Battles and Medals, p. 50

The British soon realised they were in for a tough fight in the war as this letter by an unidentified British officer to his family in Bristol describes :

*It is very plain that the Zulu warrior has all along been under-rated; in my humble opinion he is equal in nearly every respect to the Maori.*

The officer who wrote the above lines served with the Natal Native Pioneers, consisting of mainly Zulu men on the side of Britain. He goes on to describe them in a sympathetic tone :

*My men are as a rule a fine lot of fellows, good tempered, obedient and very respectable; but withal, exceedingly repulsive – some of them would make splendid models, so perfect is their symmetry...*

He then goes on to write somewhat racist remarks by today's standards and displays an air of typical Victorian arrogance:

*They are not brilliant shots... They would eat up a whole bullock or two in one day.... Are very fond of Natal rum, which they cannot obtain without my signature... They dispute vehemently at times... They are clearly in their persons, but of course the Bouquet-noir is at all times more or less apparent.<sup>12</sup>*

To many officers such as the writer of the above, war in the far-flung reaches of the Empire was more of a game rather than a serious instrument of imperial policy whereas the average soldier, drawn from the poorer classes was lured by the prospect of an honourable romantic career. The latter usually wished they were somewhere else once the reality of warfare had sunk in. Private Henry Moses of the 2/24<sup>th</sup> wrote the letter below to his family in Pontypool, Montmouthshire :

12. Emery, F. : The Red Soldier – The Zulu War 1879, p.53



*I take the pleasure of writing these few lines to you, hoping to find you well, as I am, so far. I know what soldiering is now. We have marched 200 miles and haven't had a night's sleep this month. We are in fear every night, and have had to fight the Zulus, who came on us and killed 800 of our men. I wish I was back in England again, for I should never leave. It is sad times here, and we are on the watch every night with our belts buckled on and our rifles by our side. It is nothing but mountains here; all biscuits to eat. Dear father, and sisters, and brothers, goodbye. We may never meet again. I repent the day that I took the shilling. I have not seen a bed since I left England. We have only one blanket, and are out every night in the rain – no shelter. Would send you a letter before but have had no time; and now, you that are at home stay at home. Goodbye, if we never meet again, and may God be with you. Give my kind love to all friends;<sup>13</sup>*

This letter encapsulates how many soldiers felt-greatly disheartened.

Interestingly, Zulu victories were usually termed 'massacres', while the British won 'victories', as is evident in a great many letters written by British soldiers to friends and family back home. Mowing down thousands of Zulus with concentrated volley fire or blowing them to shreds with artillery certainly invokes images of a 'massacre', but then the romantic aspect of battle would suffer a grievous blow.

Clearly, colonialism reflected and, in many ways, determined British assumptions on race, gender and class. Fiction writing and other representations of the British Empire – such as newspaper accounts and letters such as those written by British troops, as well as Government policy documents generally tended to reflect a British air of superiority. The nineteenth century is also known as the Imperial Century of Britain and was a time when "the sun never set on the British Empire", when economic exploitation and political oppression were the order of the day.

13. Ibid., pp. 95-96

The late 1870's were a period in British Colonialism where a racially based system of political, economic, and cultural domination was forcibly imposed by the technologically superior British minority on the indigenous majority of Zulus in Natal Colony. This system relied on scientific assumptions about white superiority and it assumed that the nation state and an industrial economy were the most advanced forms of human organisation. The system further assumed that King Cetshwayo and his people were innately morally inferior, as were all Africans.

It was however with reluctance, that British statesmen of whatever party took decisions to assume total formal control of territories beyond Europe's geographical limits. The Victorians believed they were able and destined to solve all problems due to their technological and moral superiority. They wished to spread the virtues of their civilization to the African continent in particular, due to its strategic position *vis-à-vis*, India. They were even prepared to use force if necessary to achieve this objective. Their army therefore, had to be in a state of readiness, moving along with the times. When Victoria ascended the throne in 1837, her Army was undergoing gradual changes in terms of weaponry, equipment and in tactical approaches. The nature of the British Empire meant that British troops fought in vastly different terrains against vastly different enemies who were generally less well armed. Most of the actions in which British armies were involved from about 1859-1879 were small scale and were won by superior firepower and close-order tactics were neglected. The period 1868 to 1879 was one in which British troops fought in Canada, Ashanti, Malaya and India, before the Anglo-Zulu War of 1879. British troops had to contend with mass enemy assaults in the latter war and did not expect the Zulus to fight as they did. The Cape Frontier War was a relatively easy war for the British to win as the enemy was generally badly armed and could only skirmish against superior British firepower. The British expected the Zulus to fight in a similar way to their adversaries in the Eastern Cape but were rudely awakened.

Lieutenant General Lord Chelmsford in June 1878, had successfully ended the Ninth Frontier War in the Eastern Cape. His forces had been involved against the Ngqika and the Gcaleka tribes in a somewhat tedious campaign. Chelmsford's forces comprised of regular British troops, aided by colonial and African forces. The war was a protracted one in which the Ngqika and Gcaleka fought a guerrilla-type war which the British eventually won. In Natal Colony his enemies would still be warriors, but well regimented and disciplined Zulus who, on the advice of numerous Boer frontiersmen, should not be underestimated.

Chelmsford's main concern was that the Zulus would not fight pitched battles, but also resort to guerrilla tactics in the event of which Britain might lose. He much preferred the idea of swift pitched battles, as he believed his troops would easily win these. Perhaps this would have been the case at Isandhlwana had his troops applied the correct tactics but as things turned out the battle was a 'calamitous misjudgement'.<sup>14</sup>

Chelmsford's army, and indeed the entire British army, was in a state of transition due to the mentioned Cardwell reforms. In 1871 short service of six years was introduced in the ranks followed by six years reserve duty. Rank purchase for officers was also abolished. Battalions had been linked as stated previously and new equipment and weapons had been introduced but tactics had not, by early 1879, been carefully thought out. Chelmsford undoubtedly made poor strategic decisions due to his conservative military career and his army was inadequate to handle the Zulus initially. Britain suffered the humiliating defeat at Isandhlwana as the new tactics used did not make allowance for handling a mass-type charge. At Isandhlwana, an extended formation was used as it was the conventional way to fight, and it proved disastrous. Consequently, Chelmsford was obliged to rethink British tactics and he adopted the 'square' formation at Ulundi, which proved highly successful in repulsing a mass assault by an enemy. It was very similar to the old anti-cavalry square that the Duke of Wellington had adopted at Waterloo sixty-four years earlier. New tactical requirements meant adopting older tactics once again.<sup>15</sup>

14. Lock, R. : Blood on the Painted Mountain, p. 18  
15. Barthorp, M. : The Zulu War, pp. 162-163

These older tactics won the Anglo-Zulu for Britain but only after eight months from when Chelmsford first invaded Zululand on 11 January 1879 to the final breaking of Zulu resistance at Ulundi.

Chelmsford also only made provision for an intelligence officer after the disaster at Isandhlwana. It was the lack of such an intelligence officer that was partly responsible for the disaster in the first place.

It is notable that from 1815 to 1914 the British army fought all but one of its battles against enemies beyond the borders of Europe. Only France waged more foreign campaigns than Britain.<sup>16</sup> This fact necessitated a great adaptability on the part of Britain in terms of tactics and strategy. The main British force comprised of regulars but their numbers were limited and its capabilities were somewhat overstretched by foreign campaigns. As stated earlier, the main task of Queen Victoria's army was the defence of British Empire. However, as colonial commitments increased, more imperfectly trained troops found themselves serving abroad and this had a direct bearing on the efficiency of regiments. Ironically, 82 battalions served abroad by 1879 and only 59 were left on the domestic scene. Physical standards that were normally rigid and Spartan, were lowered due to the need to recruit more British troops to meet colonial commitments.<sup>17</sup>

Chelmsford found that many of his troops on service in Natal Colony and Zululand were unsatisfactory due to their inexperience and he therefore was obliged to augment his force using African levies from the Natal Native Contingent. These troops were considered to be inferior to the inexperienced British troops but would be used anyway as the need arose. Mounted Colonial horsemen who were also looked on in an inferior light, were usually better soldiers than the British regulars, especially in reconnaissance operations. Chelmsford was obliged to use these colonial horsemen to provide vital information about Zulu military movements and the terrain in which they were likely to come into contact with them.<sup>18</sup>

16. Addington, L.H. : The Patterns of War since the Eighteenth Century, p. 110

17. Wilkinson-Latham, C. : Uniforms and Weapons of the Zulu War, p. 16

18. Spiers, E.M. : The Late Victorian Army 1868-1902, pp. 285-286

The more complex the Zululand Campaign became, the more evident it was that Chelmsford's staff structure was inadequate and he requested new staff officers to be sent out from England. They arrived but were too late to make an impact on the southern African proceedings. Although Chelmsford's troops were issued with written information on the Zulu war machine, and instructed on how to approach this enemy, it is clear that the enemy was greatly underrated. Chelmsford ultimately laid down his command to General Sir Garnet Wolseley in July 1879. The financial cost of the Anglo-Zulu War was placed at over five million pounds which was far more than the British Government was originally prepared to spend. The economic impact of the war on Britain was great. The Chancellor of the Exchequer made the suggestion that large increases in the duties on tea be imposed so as to recover a measure of money spent on the war. The war also played a great role in the loss of the next elections for the Conservative Party.<sup>19</sup> The British press and public opinion were uncomplimentary to say the least, but after Ulundi, Chelmsford was able to resign his command with a partially restored reputation. He was nonetheless a product of the conservative military establishment and a product of his time. He was still seen as an outcast in some quarters and even Lord Beaconsfield, the Prime Minister refused to meet Chelmsford as he believed the latter had discredited his ministry. Queen Victoria came to Chelmsford's support and he finally became a full general in 1888.

What prompted Britain's army to invade Zululand? If Britain was keen on confederation in order to save money or to facilitate a greater degree of capitalist production or even to safeguard her strategic position in her sphere of influence, the Zulu Kingdom would have to be eliminated from the equation at all costs. The most immediate cause of the war was the determination of Sir Henry Bartle Edward Frere, the High Commissioner of Native Affairs and Governor of the Cape who resolved that a war was needed to crush the Zulu military machine. Only by this action would it be possible to achieve confederation. Frere possibly believed the war was a necessary means of self-defence against a supposedly belligerent and aggressive Zulu nation.

19. Lovell, R.I. : The Struggle for South Africa 1875-1899 : A Study in Economic Imperialism, p. 25

As will be shown his actions concealed deeper motives of greed for economic exploitation. What certainly stands out clearly is the fact that Britain believed her prestige was a necessary factor that would enable her to maintain her position of superiority in her southern African sphere of interest. Anti-Zulu propaganda expressing the view that King Cetshwayo was a bloodthirsty oppressor and tyrant was readily propagated by missionaries. This propaganda was easily accepted as the majority of whites held the view that the Zulus were a nation in need of deliverance from the tyrannical King Cetshwayo. This distorted view of King Cetshwayo was however without adequate foundation.

Clearly, the policy of confederation was to extend British territory while excluding foreign power intervention in the region. The annexation of Zululand was necessary, as Zululand was perceived to be an essential aspect of confederation. Britain also wished to advance capitalist production and to facilitate it by using the African population as the new working class. As capitalist production and security were dependent on each other, the Zulu menace to progress and prosperity had to be eliminated.<sup>20</sup> Progress and prosperity in southern Africa would help Britain consolidate her empire and especially India which was essential to continued British commercial interests. The routes to India via the Suez Canal and around the Cape were vital to Britain for strategic as well as commercial reasons.

The Victorians were imbued with the ideology of civilizing the 'heathen masses' and even those who opposed Frere's, aggressive, Machiavellian approach in southern Africa concerning the Zulus, wanted changes to be made in Zululand that were totally incompatible with the Zulu way of life. War was an unfortunate inevitability, as the Zulus would not transform their lifestyles and culture to suit British political and economic objectives. This is not to say that the Zulus were actually hostile at all or needed to change their way of life. British militarism would however subdue the Zulus and destroy their Kingdom so that the British Empire could increase its power and influence.

20. Allardyce, M: 'The Zulu War', (Africanwoods's Edinburgh Magazine, Vol. 125, Edinburgh, 1879, p. 377)

The British Empire was 'the visible expression of the power of England in the affairs of the world'.<sup>21</sup> The first half of the nineteenth century brought an influx of white settlers to both the Cape and Natal. This was predominantly a by-product of the waves of emigration from Europe to the New World. By the 1860's white settlement dispersed well beyond the boundaries of the Cape Colony and Natal Colony and this stimulated the development of both commerce and agriculture for the whites. The economic growth had virtually no impact on the growth of the exchange activities of the indigenous people. In the hinterland Boer Republics, economic stasis was the norm.

In Natal Colony, the white settler community, especially, established new traditions like the gentleman-farmer identify, ironically, from lower class immigrants – to promote respect and self-esteem. These settlers established an 'elite' caste system where even Boers were at a lower echelon of the hierarchy. In the settler communities, politics was organised to perpetuate the political and economic supremacy of the British Empire. Vast tracts of land in Natal were expropriated by the settlers to be used as white farms. Natal, in a sense, was an extension of the metropolitan state and British strategic interests there would have to be safeguarded at all costs if Britain was to maintain her supremacy in southern Africa.

Victorian literature, science and pseudosciences such as phrenology, (which supposedly demonstrated the position of various races in the evolutionary scale by examining skull structure), regarded Africans as childlike, irrational and unreasonable, excessively sexual and superstitious with no regard for private property. The latter aspect, in Victorian thinking, implied that people without fixed property were of a lower human order and highly uncivilized and would live a roving life. These beliefs were attributed to mostly peoples with no religion. The Zulus were placed in this stereotypical mould and denigrated. In this way, Victorians pointed to their own 'advanced' state and protected themselves against their inner-fears of inferiority. By transferring their fears on a convenient indigenous Zulu nation, they gave themselves a false sense of superiority and civilization. The debacle at Isandhlwana shattered this myth and placed doubt on Victorian attitudes of superiority.

21. Eldridge, C.C. : Victorian Imperialism, pp. 104-105

Disraeli told Queen Victoria :

*This terrible news from South Africa... will change everything : reduce our continental influence and embarrass our finances...*<sup>22</sup>

Yet, the evidence suggests, that Britain had been and was determined to use force to achieve her political objectives.

In relation to empire, the early Victorians were primarily concerned with the spread of English civilization, rather than with extending political control or the empire. Colonial Reformers of the 1830s and 1840s believed in a systematic colonisation which meant creating new societies abroad resembling, as far as possible, English characteristics. The Victorians had also inherited a strong sense of obligation towards peoples who were perceived to be backward. Missionary endeavours and the anti-slavery struggle produced in Britain a conviction that it was the duty of Britons to convey the numerous benefits of civilization to those who did not possess them.

It was the missionary David Livingstone who in 1857, encouraged his hearers to spread Christianity and commerce. This did not of course mean that more territory should be acquired or colonial Governments established. It would be far better to avoid such steps unless they became unavoidable.

Anthony Trollope (1815-1882), the Victorian novelist who was a strong supporter of ethics in politics, wrote the following in a novel, "The Way We Live Now" (1875) :

*We are called upon to rule them (the colonies) – as far as we do rule them, not for our glory, but for their happiness. If we keep them, we should keep them – not because they add prestige to the name of Great Britain, not because they are gems in our diadem, not in order that we may boast that the sun never sets on our dependencies, but because by keeping them we may assist them in developing their own resources.*

22. Swartz, M. : The Politics of British Foreign Policy in the Era of Disraeli and Gladstone, p. 106



*And when we part with them, as part with them we shall,  
let us do so with neither smothered jealousy nor open  
hostility, but with a proud feeling that we are sending a  
son out into the world able to take his place among  
men.*<sup>23</sup>

By 1875, British industrial supremacy was being challenged by increasing foreign competition and economic rivalry stimulated a search for new sources of raw materials and new markets. Profitable outlets for investment became necessary to continued British growth. The diamond-diggers of Griqualand West, Natal, the ZAR with its mineral wealth – were all areas Britain could do with economically. The economic motives were plain enough, though it would be expedient to simultaneously present imperialism and the defence of the empire in a form that would appeal to the moral, religious, romantic and nationalistic consciences of Victorians. As other countries such as Portugal, France and Germany began to turn their gazes to colonial expansion, political rivalry increased and this further complicated the economic drive towards empire by Britain. If obstacles threatened to impede British Empire-building, they would be removed by force if need be.

The die was cast on 24 June 1872 when Disraeli, in a speech, adopted imperialism as the main idea of the Conservative policy. He became Prime Minister two years later and the Imperial Crown of India, Cyprus, the annexation of the ZAR and the Anglo Zulu War, redeemed his pledge. The lower middle classes in Britain found imperialism gave them emotional satisfaction in having psycho-social dominance over 'lesser-breeds', while the wealthier classes saw greater wealth as their primary motivation in supporting imperialism.

John Keegan in *A History of Warfare* states that "War is the continuation of policy by other means". He says war is irrational and "a legal" means of advancing global policy. British military expeditions were therefore regarded as acceptable. Keegan further states that war is culturally determined.<sup>24</sup> The Victorian Age in that sense promoted war with its romanticism.

23. Trollope, A. : The Way We Live Now, p. 12

24. Keegan, J. : A History of Warfare, pp. 22-25

## CHAPTER 1

### The Confederation Scheme of Lord Carnarvon

The Anglo-Zulu War was the result of Carnarvon's confederation scheme and as such, the scheme is vital to our understanding of the causes of the war. Natal became a British Crown Colony separately controlled to the Cape Colony in 1844. The Zulus lived in peace with Natal Colony and British immigrants were only too happy to be given large tracts of land on which to settle and farm especially sugarcane. The larger the farms became, the greater the need for labour.

On most of the farms the majority of workers were indentured Indians as the Zulus tended to regard working in cane fields as a feminine vocation. The labour supply was relatively constant until 1870. Large quantities of diamonds were discovered in 1867 in Griqualand West in the region of modern Kimberley, ushering in a mineral revolution. The diamond-fields lay to the north of the Cape Colony, which was a British possession and their ownership was disputed by the Boer republics of the Transvaal or Zuid Afrikaansche Republiek (1852) and the Orange Free State Republic (1854) as well as the Tswana, Koranna and Griqua tribes. Thousands of people, mainly speculators and miners, flocked to the region, some from as far as Australia and America. By 1874 some 50 000 miners alone, were working on the diamond fields of Griqualand West.<sup>1</sup>

Britain was determined to add this promised source of enormous wealth to her Empire and established a court of enquiry into the ownership of the diamond fields. The Griqua chief Nicolaas Waterboer was adjudged to be the lawful claimant to the diamond fields having based his claim on the fact that the area was occupied by Grikwas long before other claimants came on the scene. Even though various chiefs including Cornelis and Adam Kok, had sold parts of the land to White farmers, Waterboer had not been informed of this fact and as head of all the Grikwas, his approval should have been granted first. As it was not, the land sales were invalidated. The Transvaal's claim and that of the Orange Free State, were summarily dismissed as Britain became involved in the diamond field dispute.

1. Denoon, D. : Southern Africa Since 1800, pp. 7-9

It transpired that President Brand of the Orange Free State and Nicolaas Waterboer were willing to lay their dispute at the door of the Cape Governor, Sir Philip Wodehouse. Brand was able to show that Cornelis and Adam Kok were not obliged to inform Nicolaas Waterboer of land sales to the Boers. In 1870, Waterboer and his attorney David Amot then appealed to Acting Governor of the Cape Colony, Hay, to request British Government intervention in settling the dispute. (Wodehouse had returned to England before he could become involved).

The Cape Colonial Secretary, Richard Southey, was of the opinion that if the Boer Republics annexed the diamond fields, British expansion into the interior would be thwarted. He therefore persuaded Nicolaas Waterboer to request British protection from the Boer Republics.<sup>2</sup> Britain now had her justification and promptly annexed the territory. This marked the beginning of a new British policy of imperialism in southern Africa which would eventually lead to war with the Zulu Kingdom (1879) and later on, the Boer Republics (1881 and 1899-1902).

By annexing the diamond fields Britain regained her supremacy in the southern African region which she had lost earlier after the Sand River Convention (1852) and Bloemfontein Convention (1854). These Conventions had granted the Boers republican status. Britain named the diamond fields the British Colony of Griqualand West. From the outset the diamond fields were exploited by whites who had the capital and technological edge over the Africans. Foreign capital flooded into the area accompanied by many skilled immigrants, traders, fortune-seekers, speculators and indentured labourers. The new settlements which sprang up became the nuclei of the future urban centres. There was a large-scale recruitment of African labourers away from their traditional tribal subsistence style lives and absorption into the developing cash economy. This process created the migrant labour system which became the foundation of the much debated South African way of life.

2. CO., 48/468, Cape 3836, Barkly-Kimberley, 4 March 1874

The sugar plantations in Natal Colony struggled to find labourers and many relocated to the diamond fields. Soon there was an urgent need to access more labour in Natal Colony. Durban, the only port in south-eastern Africa, was regarded by the British Government as a conduit through which vast wealth could flow to England in a grand imperial vision. This vision provoked Henry Molyneux Herbert, the Fourth Earl of Carnarvon – the British Secretary of State for Colonies in Disraeli's Government, to write that 'Britain should declare its own Munro Doctrine over this land of treasure'.<sup>3</sup> (He spelt Munro, but meant 'Monroe', as in the exclusivity of American control over the Americas, in terms of the Monroe Doctrine).

From the very outset, the distribution of the ownership of the economic assets – whether real, such as land and financial capital, mining rights, education skills and especially political influence, was extremely unequal. Access to the abovementioned assets were exclusively the preserve of English and European immigrants. Few Boers possessed any of these assets and Africans possessed virtually none of them. Africans at the diamond fields were confined to manual labour tasks and very few Africans were 'diggers'. Each white digger staked out a small claim which he worked on with hired African labourers. By 1877, the main diamond mines had become enormous open pits that needed expensive machinery to haul soil to the surface and pump out floodwater. Companies with British political backing, such as Cecil Rhodes De Beers, soon dominated smaller operations and achieved complete monopoly of the diamond mining industry. The development of migrant labour was a major impact of the diamond fields. Cattle sickness and drought obliged many Africans to seek better job prospects on the diamond fields. Higher wages than could be earned elsewhere in southern Africa encouraged many Zulus from Natal Colony and Xhosas from the Cape Colony to make the arduous journey to Kimberley. Once they had worked hard they would return home with weapons with which to defend their tribal lands from white encroachment.

3. Etherington, N.A., "Anglo-Zulu Relations, 1856-78" in A. Durniny and C.C. Ballard (eds.) : The Anglo-Zulu War : New Perspectives, p. 22

In a nutshell, essentially traditional and feudal African societies underwent a fast transformation as they were sucked into the developing modern industrial society in which there were huge inequalities in the distribution of costs and benefits of economic development. Largely as a corollary of the mineral discoveries, British Colonial rule began to extend over much of southern Africa.

Numerous employers of British origin in Griqualand West were keen to see the Boer Republics under British rule once again. It was alleged by these employers, that the Boer Republics were preventing labourers from working on the diamond fields as they needed labour on Boer Farms. By 1875 the Lieutenant-Governor of the Cape Colony, Richard Southey, protested that the enforced Pass system for migrant labourers moving through the Boer republics to Griqualand West, was causing harassment to the labourers involved and was particularly disruptive to the mines. The main source of labour supply was the Pedi of the eastern Transvaal who encouraged their men to work on the diamond fields as guns would be brought back to the chiefdom. The ZAR Volksraad (legislature) felt it vital to enforce the Pass system so as to maintain law and order in the republic. Many Basotho tribesmen needed to cross the Orange Free State to reach Kimberley and were also prevented from going to the diamond fields by Boers. The labour supply was therefore obstructed. Clearly, more territory annexed by Britain would mean more land and greater labour possibilities. Political fragmentation was clearly not in the interests of British industrialisation and commercial expansion.

Carnarvon was keen to develop southern Africa into a modern capitalist state.<sup>4</sup> He therefore disapproved of the independent Boer republics and African states such as the Zulu, Xhosa, Pedi and Gcaleka, as their continued independent status would retard the needs of capitalist production and its attendant infrastructural necessities.

4. House of Lords, Debates of Parliament, Vol. CCZIII, Col. 693, 12 April 1875

Camraron assured Disraeli that 'confederation' was the answer.<sup>5</sup> A single authority would replace the various political structures. The efficient legal and financial systems in place in the Cape Colony and Natal Colony could be used to great advantage in the Boer republics as well as the African Chiefdoms. Huge economic growth could result – spurred on by the discovery of diamonds, but what was needed first and foremost, was 'civilized' British Government.

In the 1850s, Disraeli stated that colonies were millstones about the nation's (England's) neck. However, by 1874 he altered his position and became a keen imperialist for purposes of power and prestige. "He was more interested in the empire as a source of power and prestige. It was the part the possession of empire could play in assisting Great Britain's role in world affairs that concerned him most.... he was solely concerned with utilising the British possessions to increase British power and influence".<sup>6</sup>

Robinson and Gallagher write : "Foreign policy was a matter for an elite, and they conducted it according to their own view of national interest and world policy... In the eyes of the real makers of policy, there was obviously a scramble in Africa; but it was hardly for Africa or for empire for empire's sake".<sup>7</sup> Britain's primary motive was to secure India as it was the jewel of the Empire. Britain "moved into Africa, not to build a new African empire, but to protect the old empire in India. What decided when and where they would go forward was their traditional conception of world strategy".<sup>8</sup> The Cape Peninsula was to be held no matter the costs involved in order to secure the sea route to India and control of the entire extent of the coast of southern Africa was desirable.

Although the initial discoveries of both diamonds and gold occurred in areas beyond British jurisdiction – namely Griqualand West and the eastern Transvaal – they spurred on the extension of British jurisdiction over much of southern Africa by the turn of the century.

5. Goodfellow, C.F. : Great Britain and South African Confederation, 1870-1881, pp. 23-29
6. Eldrige, C.C. : Victorian Imperialism, pp. 104-105
7. Robinson, R. and Gallagher, J. : Africa and the Victorians : the official mind of imperialism, p. 378
8. Ibid., p. 393

Britain had a growing need for new markets in the 1870s as other European powers were industrializing at a rapid pace. This was a great cause of concern in Whitehall. Up until 1850, Britain had secured the lion's share of the world's export trade in manufactured goods in virtually unrestricted markets.

The Government saw no need to intervene in trade and traders saw no need for government intervention. Administering colonies was not on the Government's agenda. From 1860 to 1871 however, the emergence of the United States of America, the German Empire and a united Italy, all threatened to upset British dominance of world markets. Competition soon ensued on the world's markets but Britain still enjoyed a monopoly of trade until economic crises in Europe and the United States of America decreased the demand for British goods. Higher tariffs in most European countries made Britain fear exclusion from possible new markets. It therefore became vital to maintain and enhance Britain's presence in southern Africa. There were strong movements towards self-determination for colonial possessions as colonial rule was expensive and unpopular in many people's eyes. However there were also many Britons who feared that Britain's rivals would obtain strategic positions in southern Africa that would threaten valuable resources such as the diamond fields.

Disraeli believed the dilemma could be resolved by confederation. Problems of defence, administration and native policy could thus be solved. Confederation was working well in Australia, New Zealand and Canada by 1870. Carnarvon who had successfully introduced confederation<sup>9</sup> in Canada was appointed to the Colonial Office specifically to implement a confederation scheme for southern Africa. The Conservatives spoke of 'imperial consolidation' and believed that by uniting the colonies and states of southern Africa under British control, problems in the region could be solved. Two other major dimensions to the process of the extension of British jurisdiction were the need to dispense with the problem of the Boer Republics in the ZAR and the Orange Free State and the bringing of the remaining hinterland territories under British control.

9. Guy, J. : The destruction of the Zulu Kingdom, pp. 44-45

The latter dimension in particular had a defensive, as well as an overtly imperialistic character to it, in that the two Boer Republics as well as Germany and Portugal, were all to a greater or lesser degree actively seeking to extend their own areas of sovereignty in southern Africa.

The problems relating to Griqualand West, including the danger that the ZAR would expand westwards and restrict British expansion to the north, the territorial dispute with the Orange Free State and the obstructed labour supply to the diamond fields, could all be resolved by confederation. Carnarvon believed that it would not matter who claimed what if all were under the British flag.

Confederation would also immediately resolve all border disputes, as all borders would be done away with in theory. In practice however, confederation would establish the white colonies as virtually self-governing nation-states with the implication that they would be almost entirely responsible for their own domestic policies. They would therefore also have to bear the cost of their self-defence in return for a measure of self-determination. Carnarvon did not wish Britain to incur any expenses for the administration of the states to be federated-neither did the majority of British public opinion favour greater expenses being incurred in southern Africa.

Carnarvon's confederation policy was partly intended to relieve Britain of the expenses and great responsibility of the troubled affairs in southern Africa. The historian Norman Etherington has emphasised that Natal Colony, was highly dependent on migrant labourers and this fact encouraged Sir Theophilus Shepstone, the Secretary for Native Affairs in Natal, to try to gain as much British control of the interior as possible. Etherington asserts that Carnarvon was influenced by Shepstone to pursue a confederation policy and states : "the perceptions of Shepstone and the expansive interests of Natal became, for a brief period, British imperial policy".<sup>10</sup>

10. Etherington, N.A. , Labour Supply and the Genesis of South African Confederation in the 1870s, *(Journal of African History, 20 ,1979, p. 239).*



Atmore and Marks, put forward the argument that confederation was the policy of Camarvon for purely economic reasons. They stress that the pressures exerted on Britain's dominant role in the world both politically and economically, promoted the usefulness of a confederation system which would allow economic gain without annexation or further colonial proclamations. The huge demand for greater labour following the diamond discoveries further bolstered the need for control without expense by Britain.<sup>11</sup>

As economic decline began to set in, in Natal Colony, due to the migration of the larger part of the labour force, increasing despair developed amongst the settlers in particular. Economic dislocation therefore had to be countered but at limited cost to the mother country. Camarvon's policy of confederation was aimed at building prosperity in southern Africa from within the region itself for the benefit of Britain.

The above argument fits in well with the traditional definition of imperialism as not only the gaining of colonial possessions but also the pursuit of a foreign policy whose objective is economic gain.

Colin Webb sees the Anglo-Zulu War as the direct result of the attempt to implement Camarvon's confederation policy, however the motive for the policy was, in his opinion, the desire to maintain strategic control of the south-eastern African seaboard and to reduce the financial burden on the British exchequer.<sup>12</sup> Webb does not give capitalism its rightful place in his assessment, however, and over-emphasises the political motives of Camarvon for federation. Confederation was clearly a means of creating an abundant labour supply by moving workers out of their pre-capitalist societies into economically vital areas as far as the furtherance of British economic interests was concerned. It was therefore in a sense, inevitable, that African societies incompatible with capitalist economy and which did not create a ready market for manufactured goods would prove to be a thorn in the side of British expansionist ideas.

11. Atmore, A., and Marks, S., *The Imperial Factor in South Africa in the Nineteenth century: Towards a Reassessment*, (The Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History, 3 1974, pp. 7-9).

12. Webb, C. de B., 'The Origins of the War: Problems of Interpretation', in Duminy, A., and C., Relating to the History of the Zulu and Neighbouring Peoples, Vols. 1-4, pp. 18-19

The British did after all, see their economy and culture as 'a bright light that could scatter the darkness surrounding southern Africa'.<sup>13</sup> Theophilus Shepstone believed that the opening up of migratory labour routes in a confederated southern Africa would solve the labour troubles in Griqualand West and Natal, and he greatly influenced Carnarvon and later, Sir Henry Bartle Frere, to take courses of action that they did.

Carnarvon relied on the active support of Shepstone as a first step to confederation. Shepstone had many years of public office experience and had worked for the peaceful co-existence of the Zulu Kingdom and Natal Colony and was to an extent influential over King Cetshwayo as long as the latter believed Shepstone had Zulu interests at heart.

Carnarvon sent James Anthony Froude, a historian, to southern Africa in 1874. Froude had written numerous articles in England, which supported the idea of a united Empire. Carnarvon asked him to report on the viability of confederation in southern Africa. Froude was critical of the annexation of the diamond fields and he regarded their annexation as a blunder, which served the purpose of alienating, to some extent anyway, the Cape Boers who sympathised with the Boer republics.<sup>14</sup> Froude was of the opinion that if the Boer republics were allowed to handle African issues in their own way, they could probably be expected to join the Cape and Natal colonies in a greater self-governing dominion. Froude did however propose that the Cape Peninsula remained under direct British rule, as its strategic value was immeasurable.

Froude reported regularly to Lord Carnarvon and eventually informed the latter that Britain had acted arbitrarily and incorrectly in annexing Griqualand West. In 1875 Froude paid a second visit to South Africa to again help forward the Confederation scheme. Froude gives a good idea of his observations while visiting the ZAR (Transvaal Republic).

13. Cope, R.L. and C.W. De Kiewiet, the Imperial Factor, and South African "Native Policy", (Journal of Southern African Studies, 15, 3 April 1989, pp. 487-488).

14. Goodfellow, C.F. : Great Britain and South African Confederation, pp. 71-75

He expressed the opinion that Lord Kimberley's annexation of the diamond fields was a huge error of judgement. Froude, in fact, regarded it as the the hugest error ever made by a Colonial Minister. Froude could not but believe that the Boers felt betrayed by the fact that Britain had annexed the diamond fields after promising not to interfere in the domestic affairs of the two independent Boer Republics. Furthermore, the Boer Governments were accused by Britain of 'foul dealings' concerning the Boer treatment of Africans. Froude insisted that if Britain had left the diamond fields alone, the mere natural increase in British population numbers would have made it likely that the Boers would eventually be outnumbered. This would pave the way for ultimate British control.

As Britain had decided to annex the diamond fields, she had only exasperated the Boers thereby making the far less likely to be willing to accept some sort of southern African confederation.

Britain should have, according to Froude, confined her activities to the Cape Peninsula only, as this was the most strategic geo-political position in southern Africa.<sup>15</sup>

One of the groups that sent men to work in Griqualand West were the Amahlubi of Chief Langalibalele in Natal Colony. Following the example of other labourers, the Amahlubi used their earnings from the diamond fields to purchase guns and ploughs and also to pay tax, predominantly the standard hut tax to the Natal Colony.

Those Amahlubi living on white owned farms were obliged to work in lieu of paying rent but after diamonds were discovered many flocked to the diamond fields. This latter fact however, impeded the sales of produce by northern and midland Natal Colony farmers as the lack of labour meant less production. The farmers could therefore not capitalize as they would have liked to.

15. Froude, J.A., 'Leaves from a South African Journal', Short Studies on Great Subjects, Vol. III, p. 524

The fact that many Amahlubi returned with ploughs from the diamond fields also posed a threat to white farmers as the use of ploughs made the farmers produce far more than they would have using the traditional hoe. Langalibalele and his Amahlubi tribe, along with the Ngwe clan had been ousted from their original tribal homes by Mpande, the Zulu King before Cetshwayo. The Natal Government under the direction of Shepstone resettled the Amahlubi and Ngwe in the foothills of the Drakensberg. By placing them in this area, in the vicinity of Giant's Castle, Shepstone used them to keep warding Basuthos at bay for some twenty-five or so years. During this period the Amahlubi and Ngwe had acquired a limited amount of guns which they used to repel Basutho incursions into the territory.

By 1873 the Amahlubi owned a herd of 1500 or more cattle and were reaping huge harvests. Chief Langalibalele's status soon increased and his subjects appeared to be far more arrogant towards whites. The Gun Law in Natal Colony stated that Africans needed to obtain written permission to obtain guns but this law was not enforced as it should have been. The number of unregistered guns increased rapidly and caused concern amongst the whites in Natal. The resident magistrate of Estcourt, John Macfarlane, prompted by anxious settlers, decided that the time was opportune to enforce the Gun Law. He consequently demanded that Chief Langalibalele submit all unregistered guns for registration. Langalibalele did not comply with Macfarlane's request as he claimed he did not know which of his people owned unlicensed guns, furthermore, those with guns feared that their weapons would be confiscated.

In 1873 Langalibalele was summoned to Pietermaritzburg by Shepstone so as to explain why he did not enforce the Gun Law as requested by Macfarlane. Langalibalele's actions were seen as treasonable. His insurrection was not to go unpunished as if it did, other tribes would be encouraged to revolt as well. Langalibalele was not eager to have trouble with either his own tribesmen or the Natal administration and pleaded ill-health in defence of not going to Pietermaritzburg and when approached by messengers of the administration, simply ignored them. He resolved to trek with his tribe across the Drakensberg into Basutholand and thereby avoided going to Pietermaritzburg.

Consequently, a massive armed force was despatched by Sir Benjamin Pine the Lieutenant-Governor of Natal and Theophilus Shepstone with instructions to arrest Langalibalele. The force under the command of Lieutenant-Colonel Milles and Major Anthony Durnford consisted of 200 Gordon Highlanders, 300 Natal Carbineers, 8 000 Natal Native Levies and the Richmond Mounted Rifles. The Amahlubi had a total of only 111 guns with which to defend themselves. Durnford and a five man forward party of the force moved to block the Bushman's River Pass, but Langalibalele had already crossed into Basutholand.

Confronted by the remnant of the fleeing Amahlubi, Durnford, three white troopers and two African levies became involved in a skirmish after a shot was fired – by whom exactly, and why, remains sketchy. The three whites and two levies were killed and Durnford escaped to his main force after sustaining two assegai wounds. He was ordered to fortify Pietermartizburg against a possible increase in hostilities. The colonists in their highly emotional states, sought a scapegoat and placed full responsibility for the 'escape' of Langalibalele on Durnford who was severely castigated in the press. His military reputation, however, emerged untainted from the Langalibalele Affair and he was promoted to the rank of Lieutenant-Colonel in December 1873. The incident infuriated the colonists who sought revenge and supported by the Natal Government conducted violent reprisals against the Amahlubi who were left in Natal,<sup>16</sup> acting both unjustly and incorrectly. The reprisals resulted in the deaths of some 200 tribesmen. All the Amahlubi cattle were confiscated – even the Ngwe, the neighbours of the Amahlubi had their cattle confiscated on the slim pretext that they were collaborators of the Amahlubi. The raid conducted against the Ngwe was extremely cruel. Their huts were burnt down, crops destroyed, driven from their homes and many were sealed up in caves in which they sought refuge. Amahlubi prisoners were forced to enter into labour contracts with white farmers who hurriedly scrambled to occupy Amahlubi land. Langalibalele surrendered in Basutholand and was returned to Natal Colony where he was accorded a travesty of a trial by an illegally constituted court that found him guilty of treason and banished him to Robben Island for life<sup>17</sup> (later repealed after which he returned to Natal in 1887 and died in 1889).

16. BL Add Mss 60906, Camarvon Diary 1874, 31 October 1874

17. Guest, W.R. : Langalibalele : the Crisis in Natal, 1873-1875, p. 88

Durnford was distressed at the unjust treatment meted out to the Ngwe and Amahlubi prisoners by the Volunteer units and their Native levies. Pine, however, absolved the settlers in Natal Colony from all atrocities that they had committed against the Amahlubi and the Ngwe by passing a formal act of indemnity.

The Anglican bishop of Natal, John William Colenso, was shocked at the way Langalibalele, the Amahlubi and the Ngwe had been treated. Consequently, Lieutenant-Governor Pine sent Sir Theophilus Shepstone to England to explain the Langalibalele affair to the Secretary of State for the Colonies. Colenso, now bitterly opposed to Shepstone due to the latter's handling of the Langalibalele affair, also went to England, to protest against the way Langalibalele and his people had been treated.<sup>18</sup> Colenso's anti-colonist stance made him very unpopular amongst the colonists, although when he explained his experience of the Langalibalele affair in England, it caused somewhat of a public outcry. The Natal Criminals Act which had been passed by the Cape Parliament, and which made provision for Langalibalele to be sent to Robben Island as a prisoner, was disallowed and his sentence was repealed. Lord Carnarvon made it abundantly clear to Sir Benjamin Pine that he did not agree that the Ngwe had been collaborating with the Amahlubi in the rebellion of the latter against the Natal administration. He found no reasonable justification for the maltreatment of the Ngwe and ordered that reparations be made. The Natal Government reluctantly granted limited compensation to the Ngwe and over a period of eight months released all Ngwe prisoners. By July 1874, all Ngwe tribesmen could return to their former locations after Sir Benjamin Pine granted them a full pardon. Durnford went out of his way to find employment for the Ngwe and returning Amahlubi who were gradually returning to Natal Colony.

Colenso and Shepstone had been close friends but the Langalibalele affair convinced Colenso that Shepstone had acted arbitrarily by supporting settler interests and their friendship ended.

18. Guy, J.J. : The Heretic: a Study of the Life of John William Colenso, 1814-1883, pp. 240-242

Shepstone survived the Langalibalele affair but the Zulu over whom he had a fair measure of influence, now lost the total faith they had in him. Lord Carnarvon, at first appeared reluctant to meet with Shepstone on the latter's arrival in England.<sup>19</sup>

However, on meeting with him, Carnarvon soon decided that Shepstone was truthful, able and straightforward and after their second meeting was so impressed with him that he intimated that Shepstone should receive an increase in salary. Once Shepstone left the shores of England, Carnarvon, who had been greatly impressed by him, hinted at a possible knighthood for Shepstone. Since the 1850s, Theophilus Shepstone had been given a free hand by the Colonial Office in controlling African policy. His authority had also been upheld when Lieutenant-Governors tried to intervene. The control of the Zulu chiefdoms became his preserve as his knowledge of African societies was great. He was able to manage the internal and external relations of the chiefdoms and thereby maintained British hegemony in the Colony.

Shepstone was not keen to allow Magistrates to exercise their authority over Africans in their districts of jurisdiction as this would lessen his control. He did however exploit any rivalries between chiefdoms to his advantage and recognised the authority of existing chiefs. His exaggeration of violence in Zulu society served to strengthen his position as he was seen as a great civilizer of the Zulus by many colonists. He allowed chiefs that supported him to exploit colonial presence so as to increase their authority and took no notice of their hostility towards chiefs who were less supportive of him. When British authority was ignored by certain chiefs however, he used African levies to crush them and confiscated their property. This action did serve to promote violence as a means of obtaining political objectives and was not a good idea as it had repercussions in later colonial rule in Natal Colony that were disruptive. Carnarvon began to rely more and more on Shepstone's advice and knowledge of southern Africa. However, after meeting with Colenso, Carnarvon was convinced that the Natal Government had acted unfairly in the way Langalibalele had been treated.

19. PRO., CO., 179/115, Original Confidential Correspondence : Pine to Carnarvon, 20 July 1874

He consequently restored some of the Amahlubi and the Ngwe to their lands and Langalibalele was moved from Robben Island to the Cape Government farm of Uitvlugt for several years and then returned to Natal in 1887. The granting of self-government to Natal Colony suffered a huge setback. In 1875, Sir Benjamin Pine was recalled to England as a result of his poor handling of the Langalibalele rebellion and Langalibalele's trial. He was also retired from Colonial service after his protests that he had acted on the advice of Shepstone fell on deaf ears.<sup>20</sup>

Despite Carnarvon's seemingly sympathetic actions of restoring some Amahlubi and Ngwe lands, and moving Langalibalele from Robben Island, Carnarvon had no intention of making life easier for Africans in general. Froude, on writing to Carnarvon concerning matters in Natal Colony, expressed the opinion that the Natal Government was weak rather than tyrannically opposed to the Africans.

*I cannot but regard the state of feeling here as exceedingly serious. The Colonists find themselves a small minority surrounded by multitudes of daring natives who will not work for them or work very irregularly and who swarm over the frontier in increasing numbers owing to the ease and license which they enjoy under British rule.<sup>21</sup>*

Froude suggested that Britain had erred in maintaining tribal structures in Natal Colony and the authority of the *indunas*. He believed that as the tribes grew wealthier and more powerful, they would become more insubordinate and less likely to remain under British control. Froude pointed out that as the colonists feared a revolt, they were more likely to create or exaggerate evidence of African unhappiness in Natal Colony and would therefore also over-react to any situation which seemed likely to create instability in the colony. Froude favoured direct British control over the Africans in Natal Colony and the end of tribal authority. 'Shepstone System' was at the root of the problem and changes were needed urgently.

20. Rees, W. (ed.) : Colenso Letters from Natal, p. 315

21. Cope, R. : Ploughshares of War. The Origins of the Anglo-Zulu War of 1879, pp. 46-47



Carnarvon's views were surprisingly not dissimilar to Froude's. He favoured the enforcement of the obligations of citizenship on the Africans and believed that the tribal system and the maintenance of the hereditary chiefs as authorities merely perpetuated barbarism.

White magistrates and common law in Natal Colony should replace Chiefs (*Indunas*) and native law. Individuals should also own land and communal land tenure should be abolished. This older 'Shepstone System' was at the root of the problem and changes were needed urgently, as is evident in a despatch from Lord Carnarvon to Sir Henry Barkly on 4 May 1875 .

Carnarvon regarded the Native Question to be the most pressing. He consequently urged that a conference be held under the presidency of Britain, as she had the greatest interest in the region and should not lose the initiative in matters relating to southern Africa.

The delegates that would be invited to attend would be from Natal Colony, Griqualand West Province, the Orange Free State Republic, the ZAR and the Eastern and Western Cape Provinces. Froude would represent Britain as he was deemed to be highly qualified by Carnarvon in terms of his knowledge and interest in colonial matters.

Froude was willing to be a part of the proceedings of the conference, while John Molteno the Prime Minister of the Western Cape would represent that colony. Theophilus Shepstone would represent Natal Colony while Richard Southey would represent Griqualand West.

Although Carnarvon regarded the Native Question as the most vital to be discussed, he would welcome discussions centering on a possible union of southern African states in the form of a confederation.

Carnarvon would place no pressure on the conference delegates concerning confederation but hoped that they would of their own accord discuss such a possibility.<sup>22</sup>

22. BPP. ,C. 1224, General Correspondence : Carnarvon - Barkly, 4 May 1875, p.1

It was time to integrate the Africans into British colonial society and Natal's economy. Shepstone supported Carnarvon's society and Natal's economy. Shepstone supported Carnarvon's proposals and had believed in a united body politic for Natal supported Carnarvon's proposals and had believed in a united body politic for Natal Colony for 30 years. However, the idea of amalgamation of all the races in Natal Colony would have been a costly exercise for Britain. He therefore came to see the role of tribal structures and chiefs as vital to controlling the Africans.

The reform of African policy as desired by the Colonial Office for Natal Colony was therefore no more than Shepstone doing what he believed was best for British and settler interests in each circumstance that arose. The weakness of British forces in Natal Colony and Shepstone's influence over the Africans made it inevitable that he should be entrusted with any reforms in African policy.<sup>23</sup> But the time for changes had arrived!

Magistrates had not replaced *Indunas* and clans had not been disbanded yet, therefore the Africans had not in Carnarvon's opinion become more 'civilized'. Carnarvon also objected to the fact that Africans were not required to contribute to the progress of Natal Colony by working and that labour needed to be imported. Shepstone was not at all keen to dismantle his system which had taken many years to put into place, with very little economic support from Britain. Carnarvon consequently appointed Major-General Sir Garnet Wolseley, as Commander in Chief and Special Commissioner for Natal and instructed him to gain control of African policy. He took up residence in Pietermaritzburg on 2 April 1875, once Pine had left for England.

23. PRO,CO 179/122, Original Correspondence : Chesson - Carnarvon, 25 February 1876, p.3

Wolseley needed to make certain that the legislative council of Natal Colony was pliable by amending the constitution and boosting the ranks of the legislature with supporters of the idea of confederation. If force was needed to obtain necessary results, reinforcements would be despatched from the Cape Colony and Mauritius. Wolseley believed that if Natal Colony was to be retained as a British colony, direct control over the Africans was absolutely imperative.<sup>24</sup> Carnarvon agreed entirely with Wolseley that the Zulu army of roughly 30000 warriors was a threat to the entire Colonial Empire. To try to implement reforms without considerably increased British military forces in Natal Colony would be a grave error. Wolseley therefore made military preparations for the contingency of war with the Zulus, although he believed the likelihood of war was improbable despite Shepstone's constant advice that the Zulus were a menace to Natal Colony.

Wolseley and his staff set out to sow the seeds of confederation by lavishly entertaining the more influential colonists and propagating the ideas of confederation. He persuaded the Natal Legislative Council to increase its number of nominated members from 5 to 13, as against the 15 elected members. Nominated members would of course be those who agreed with the policies of Carnarvon and pandered to the whims of Shepstone.

With Wolseley in Natal Colony, Carnarvon carefully plotted the next stage of his confederation plan which included much more than the existing colonies and republics. It appears that he wanted confederation to encompass all the territories south of the Zambezi and Kunene Rivers, including modern day Zimbabwe, Namibia, Botswana and the southern parts of Mocambique, Lesotho, Swaziland and the whole of South Africa. Carnarvon sent a despatch to the Cape Government, stating that, due to the recent Langalibalele affair, it would be desirable that all the indigenous population of southern Africa should be treated under a common policy. He called for a conference of delegates representing the Colony of Natal, the Western and Eastern Cape Provinces, Griqualand West Province and the ZAR and Orange Free State Boer Republics.

24. PRO.,CO 879/8, Correspondence : Wolseley - Carnarvon, 14 June 1875, pp. 1-6

The conference would discuss the Native Policy and if the issue of confederation should arise, Britain would render any assistance it could. Froude would represent Carnarvon at the proposed conference.

John Molteno, Prime Minister of the Cape Colony rejected Carnarvon's proposal and refused to be associated in any conference in which confederation as an issue suggested by Britain was to be discussed. In a Minute on a despatch from Carnarvon, Molteno responded :

*(Minute on a despatch from the Right Honourable the Secretary of State for the Colonies, of 4 May 1875 – 7 June 1875.)*

*Without entering upon a discussion as to the extent to which the many important questions touched upon in this despatch may affect this Colony, Ministers are of opinion that its interests would not be promoted by pressing forward at the present time such a Conference as the Secretary of State proposes...*

*Ministers have the honour to state further that, in their opinion, the proportionate number of Delegates who should represent the Cape Colony at any such Conference and the selection of Representatives to whom the discharge of such important functions would be entrusted, are questions, more especially the latter, which it would seem very desirable to leave to the free action and judgement of this Colony.*

*Under these circumstances, and as Ministers feel assured that nothing will be gained, in so far as this Colony is concerned by any action which may now be taken in reference to this despatch, they do not feel themselves in a position to advise in the matter beyond agreeing to the suggestion that copies of this despatch be presented to both Houses of Parliament, together with copies of this Minute.*

*(Signed) J.C. Molteno<sup>25</sup>*

25. BPP., C. 1399, Despatch from J.C. Molteno, 4 May 1875, p.5

As the Cape had responsible government, it was from her that any proposal of confederation should emanate ; not Britain. The Cape Colony feared that she would have to take full responsibility for dealing with any threats that her independent African neighbours might make upon her and was not willing to become involved in any sort of confederation unless African tribes along her borders were subdued by Britain. Froude set out on a tour of the country and tried to muster support for the confederation idea of Carnarvon.

Carnarvon's ideas for change in Natal Colony resulted in Shepstone looking for a strip of land adjacent to the Colony to which 'unhappy' Africans could go. Shepstone stated that :

*with such an outlet all reasonable legislation would be safe, without it every measure must be specially considered with reference to its popularity or otherwise among our natives.*<sup>26</sup>

Shepstone went to Britain to discuss with Carnarvon not only the Langalibalele affair but also, according to Pine,

*more fully than could be done in written communications, the grounds which render it necessary that an outlet should be afforded to the overwhelming kafir population of this Colony by the acquisition of some territory intervening between the occupied country of Cetshwayo, the King of the Zulus and the Transvaal Republic.*<sup>27</sup>

26. SNA 1/6/3, private memo by Shepstone relating to Cetshwayo, 28 February 1874

27. NA, GH 1218; Confidential Papers : Pine - Carnarvon, 20 July 1874, p.489

Carnarvon was growing increasingly concerned about the ZAR as its president, Thomas Burgers, was scouting about the Netherlands and Belgium in an effort to raise capital for the construction of a railway line to Delagoa Bay (Maputo). If the ZAR succeeded in constructing such a rail link to the coast, British commercial interests would suffer immense and irreparable harm as the route from the Cape to Central Africa would be blocked, also wrecking Carnarvon's plans. Matters were exacerbated by the evidence that Burgers was also attempting to place the ZAR under the protection of Germany, and this action would greatly undermine British hegemony in southern Africa and could never be allowed to come to fruition.

In 1876 the ZAR signed a commercial treaty with Portugal in which reference was made to the ZAR's ships, although she had no coastline. In Britain, there was much appreciation for Carnarvon's confederation plan. Resolution of the Legislative Council (16 June 1875) :

*That this Council appreciates the deep interest taken by Her Majesty's Secretary of State for the Colonies in the welfare and progress of the South African Colonies and States, shown in his despatch laid upon the table of this House, on the proposed Confederation of all these settlements into a South African Dominion under the British Crown.<sup>28</sup>*

The Pedi lived in the Eastern Transvaal to the east of the Olifants river. From 1846 a series of wars with the Boers began and in 1876, President Burgers went to war with the Pedi once again. Carnarvon suspected that the real motive of the war was to extend ZAR territory as far as the Indian Ocean. If the ZAR had its own port it could become economically independent and would never agree to joining a confederation with the British colonies. A diversion of trade from Durban to Delagoa Bay would be an economic cataclysm for Natal Colony. The war with the Pedi was already having an unsavoury impact on trade between the ZAR and Natal Colony.

28. BPP.,C. 1399, Resolution of the British Legislative Council, 16 June 1875 , p.9

While Shepstone was in Britain at Carnarvon's Conference, along with President Brand of the Orange Free State and Froude representing Griqualand West, he argued that the ZAR should be induced to abandon any claims to its east and south-east, and any ZAR citizens with claims to farms in the territory should be compensated. Once the territory was acquired it would be ruled through the Natal Department of Native Affairs and not the Natal colonists. Shepstone was of the opinion that the Africans would be more amenable to moving to a territory under a familiar government. He also put forward the idea that a strip of Zulu territory some 35 kilometres wide along the Natal border to the sea from the disputed territory which was between the Mzinyathi and Pongolo rivers and which the ZAR and Natal Colony laid claim to be purchased. He believed that this strip of land held no value for King Cetshwayo and would go a long way in promoting Carnarvon's confederation plan. Carnarvon was only too eager to obviate any threat to the European population of southern Africa on the part of the various tribes. An extract from a speech of Carnarvon's to the Conference concerning South African Affairs on 3 August 1876, gives us a clear indication of his reasoning :

*Extracts from Speech of the Earl of Carnarvon to the Conference concerning South African Affairs (3 August 1876) :*

*... On this point, (Confederation) it is right that I should say a few words... It is important... that I should explain that I have never considered it necessary that each separate member of the confederated body should have one and the same identical constitution. I think that, on the contrary, each member of it might well retain its own laws, customs, traditions, and mode of procedure, reserving only a certain limited number of subjects for discussion and administration by the central Legislature and Government.*

*This limitation, usual in any form of Confederation would be particularly convenient in South Africa, where the several native tribes are very different in their wants, their civilisation, and their character; and where, on the other hand, those tribes, separately and collectively, may easily constitute a serious and common danger to the whole European population. It seems to me now, as it has seemed to me in time past, that it is very desirable, by a certain unity of action on the part of the European communities, to reduce, as far as possible, that common danger, by securing at least a principle of well-considered co-operation on their part. The bundle of sticks may be tied together very loosely or very tightly, but provided that there is common action, the object is secured. This, I apprehend, is the meaning of Confederation...*<sup>29</sup>

Shepstone believed that an amount of £15 000 would be sufficient to buy out Boer claims to the strip of land and the repayments for the £15 000 would be collected from revenues collected there. He also believed that the land would ultimately be occupied by White colonists in what would become a Natal Native Affairs Department 'mini-empire' extending north towards Delagoa Bay.<sup>30</sup>

If the Zulus could be pacified under British control, many of them residing in Natal Colony, and who provided no useful labour to the British Colonists, could be repatriated to their original lands of habitation in Zululand. The Boers would also have to be pacified and as they were unlikely to pander to Carnarvon's confederation whim, they would have to be forced into a confederation so that the entire southern African region could become the springboard for future British political and economic expansion into the African interior. British paramountcy was an essential ingredient therefore, to the success of Carnarvon's plan.

29. Newton, A.P. : Select documents relating to the Unification of South Africa, Vol. 1, pp. 39-40

30. N A, GH 64, Confidential Papers : Shepstone - Herbert, 30 November 1874, encl. in no. 60, Carnarvon to Wolseley, 30 April 1875 , p.7



The ZAR had absolutely no intention of relinquishing its claims to the disputed strip of land as it provided invaluable grazing for Boer herds during the winter months. The Transvaal Boers claimed that the land had been ceded to them by Mpande, which was denied by King Cetshwayo. One of Wolseley's officers, Colonel George Pomeroy Colley, visited the ZAR in June 1875 in order to investigate the possibility of Natal Colony having the disputed land ceded to it. Wolseley and Colley were hoping that the ZAR would look favourably on the disputed land being ceded to Natal. They believed this would create a buffer zone of British territory between the ZAR and Zululand. Colley however soon discovered that the disputed territory as well as an extra portion of Zululand had only recently been proclaimed ZAR land.<sup>31</sup> The ZAR frontier farmers were of the opinion that war between the ZAR and Zululand was inevitable. Colley was of the view that the Boers would have launched an attack on Zululand had they not feared a violent British retaliation and intervention. In his report to Wolseley, Colley stated that the ZAR would be happy to see a British annexation of Zululand provided that the ZAR would be allowed free access to Delagoa Bay and therefore freedom from British control. Once Wolseley heard the news of the ZAR's proclamation incorporating the disputed territory within its borders, he was horrified that Natal had lost a great opportunity to acquire land on which the 'super-abundant Kafir population, of Natal could be settled.'<sup>32</sup>

It became abundantly clear to Camarvon, Wolseley and Shepstone that both the ZAR and Zululand would have to be subdued if confederation would ever take place in southern Africa.

Wolseley and Shepstone now decided to bring the entire area of Zululand under British control as this would solve the Natal 'Native Problem' as surplus Africans in Natal Colony could be relocated there. Zulu independence would have to be terminated. Natal newspapers such as the *The Natal Mercury* soon began carrying editorials such as the one below :

31. N A, GH 1300; Confidential Papers : Wolseley - Camarvon, 14 June 1875, p. 41

32. N A, GH 1219, Confidential Papers : Wolseley - Camarvon, 14 August 1875, p. 146

*The Zulu question is the keystone of the arch of South African politics...there is a strong feeling both in Natal and the Transvaal, that it would be well were the Zulus shown by strong measures, that the British government is supreme in South Africa, and means to remain so. It is believed that an effective demonstration of British will be required before the Zulu power shall cease to be a disquieting and disturbing element in South-East Africa.<sup>33</sup>*

Zulu power was therefore seen as a great threat because it had potential influence over other African tribes. As for the ZAR, it looked to non-British waters as a source of real independence from British control, according to Shepstone. He saw British hegemony as a possibility only if Britain controlled the entire East Coast of Natal Colony as far as the Zambezi river. Wolseley echoed Shepstone's sentiments and saw the annexation of Zululand as vital in preventing the ZAR from gaining access to the sea. Only the annexation of Zululand could allow Camarvon to achieve confederation. Wolseley depicted King Cetshwayo as a tyrannical savage whose deposition would free the Zulu people - the annexation of Zululand by Britain would in this case be seen as a humanitarian blessing for the Zulu nation in general.

Shepstone argued that as King Cetshwayo was a despot, it would be a formality for British troops to cross the Thukela River and annex Zululand – as the entire Zulu nation would rise up to depose their king. The Zulus would, in his opinion, rather be ruled by the British from Natal Colony.

Wolseley was clearly influenced into thinking as Shepstone did, as the latter was perceived to be an astute diplomat. Shepstone however, readily accepted any misinformation as gospel, provided that it fitted in with his plans, objectives and expectations.

33. Guest, W.R., *The War, Natal and Confederation*, in Duminy, A.H., and Ballard, C.C., (eds) : The Anglo-Zulu War: New Perspectives, p. 61

King Cetshwayo was denigrated as a tyrannical despot by a systematic campaign which accused him of committing atrocities against his own people. Shepstone and Wolseley used these accusations in their attempts to persuade Britain to invade and annex Zululand. It is possible that stories of atrocities were circulated by Shepstone and Wolseley so as to whip-up an anti-Zulu frenzy in Natal Colony which would lead to the annexation of Zululand. The Natal Mercury and other local newspapers were used as vehicles of the anti-Zulu campaign-although most of the newspapers were sceptical as to the validity of the stories. As the role of Christian missionaries diminished in Zululand, they became frustrated and hoped for British control. It is likely that they, therefore, spread false anti-Zulu stories to make a British takeover more likely.<sup>34</sup>

In May 1875, the Zulu army prepared to attack the Swazi but rumours spread like wildfire in the press that they were planning to attack Natal Colony. As Natal Colony was attempting to construct a railway and needed huge outside investment, investors would according to the press not be encouraged by a military build-up in Zululand and the railway plan would fail.

The editor of The Natal Mercury wrote :

'If the British Government desire to exercise in their African dominions the beneficent function to which it aspires as an imperial dispenser of peace, civilization and security, it is surely called upon to remove from its borders a condition of things so fraught with disquietude and menace.'<sup>35</sup>

Shepstone's main contact amongst missionaries in Zululand was the Anglican, Robert Robertson, from whom many reports of Zulu atrocities emanated. Robertson was well aware of Shepstone's plans to obtain Zululand or at least a part of it. Evidence of this is to be seen in letters written by Robertson to Shepstone in which he urged Shepstone to annex all the land up to Delagoa Bay. This would put an end to the 'bloodshed' in Zululand and depose King Cetshwayo who was in his opinion, not well liked by most Zulus.<sup>36</sup>

34. Etherington, N.A. : Preachers, Peasants and Politics in Southern Africa, 1835-1180, pp. 74-77

35. The Natal Mercury, 2 March 1875, editorial, p.8

36. PRO., CO 30/6/38, Original Correspondence, Robertson - Shepstone, nos 32 and 33, 18 and 25 June 1875

Carnarvon favoured the idea of annexing Zululand but its power necessitated a delay in British actions. It would be more expedient to annex a weaker state first, such as the ZAR. But Shepstone was to annex the ZAR and administer it provisionally himself on the condition that the annexation had to be bloodless.

The ZAR's unsuccessful struggle against Sekhukhune and the Pedi between May 1876 and February 1877 hastened British intervention in the region. The Pedi tribe lived in a flat-bottomed valley between the confluence of the Olifants and Steelpoort rivers in the north-eastern Transvaal. Their ruling Maroteng dynasty dated back to 1500 BCE. However in 1845, the Voortrekkers under Hendrik Potgieter established a settlement at Andries Ohrigstad in terms of a treaty with the Pedi. The Pedi however, constantly raided Boer farms and stole their cattle. This situation was exacerbated by problems developing over labour and grazing rights. The situation worsened annually and in 1876, the ZAR was forced by the circumstances to wage war against the Pedi under Chief Sekhukhune. The Boers tried to starve the Pedi into submission by laying siege to their capital in rugged mountainous terrain.

A quick peace was not possible as the Pedi refused to pay 2 000 head of cattle to the Boers as reparation. The indecisive situation lasted until the British annexation of the ZAR in 1877. Shepstone, who was in London as Natal's representative at Carnarvon's conference, warned him that King Cetshwayo might go to the aid of Sekhukhune and this would result in a major war between the Zulu and Pedi on the one hand, and the ZAR Boers on the other. Shepstone also believed that African tribes might be involved in a conspiracy to unite against British controlled areas in southern Africa and this would be devastating to the idea of Confederation as Carnarvon envisaged it. Carnarvon was consequently convinced that the time was ripe for Britain to intervene in the ZAR.

If Shepstone was to annex the ZAR to the British Crown, Britain's route to the interior would remain open. Britain could put forward 'valid' reasons for annexation of the ZAR i.e. the fact that ZAR state coffers were depleted due to the ZAR – Pedi struggle, friction between the ZAR and King Cetshwayo over the disputed territory and the defeat of a ZAR commando led by Burgers by the Pedi. Furthermore there existed a perception in British circles that majority of ZAR Boers supported the idea of British intervention. The recalcitrant Sekhukhune was a thorn in the side of British Imperial ambitions in southern Africa and had to be removed.

Carnarvon remained resolute in his confederation stance and pushed the Permissive Federation Act through the British Parliament and decided that Shepstone should travel to southern Africa and attempt to obtain support from the inhabitants of the ZAR and the Volksraad. In the course of the second reading debate of the Permissive Bill in the House of Lords, Carnarvon once again expressed the idea that confederation in southern Africa was desirable .

The framework of a future confederation was presented to the House of Lords. The finer details would be discussed between the Imperial Government and each of the local Governments to be involved.

The Bill would be 'permissive' in that no pressure would be placed on the various colonies to force a decision on confederation. A united Government in the form of a confederation would be able to make uniform and better arrangements concerning the Africans in each area involved and would greatly reduce the threat of possible insurrection. This would have the effect of reducing panic on the part of the colonists.

A further benefit of confederation would be closer ties between the British and the Boers who would now face common problems in a united way.<sup>37</sup>

37. Newton, A.P. : Select documents relating to the Unification of South Africa, Vol. 1, pp. 45-46

Carnarvon was undoubtedly greatly influenced by the time in which he lived. In 1872, as stated earlier, Disraeli had committed the Conservative Party to a policy of imperialism. In 1876, a year before the annexation of the ZAR, he had, by the Royal Titles Act, made Queen Victoria Empress of India. The causes of the change were mainly economic. From the late 1860s onwards, Britain was faced with a series of economic depressions. It became clear to the Victorian imperial thinkers who were a small minority of men who were specially concerned with expanding the empire, men who had lived in colonies or served at the Colonial Office, that Britain's predominance was likely to be short lived. Colonies became very attractive as markets and areas in which to invest. Fresh annexations were welcomed and a prolonged attempt was made to strengthen relations with the existing self-governing colonies. Much time and energy was devoted to drawing up paper constitutions for the federation of the empire. The ZAR was considered to be unable to maintain political stability, much like New Zealand in 1840, Lagos in 1861 and Fiji in 1874 – annexation was therefore unavoidable.

If non-European people came under British rule, how should they be governed? It would not be sufficient to transfer British representative institutions or establish despotism and so it was left largely to men such as Carnarvon, Shepstone and later Frere, who had actually served as colonial administrators to work out this part of Britain's imperial creed. Theophilus Shepstone ('*Somtseu*' the 'great hunter' to the Zulus) was therefore despatched to the ZAR.

He had to be careful to bring changes in response to local demand or perceived demand, not to be seen as the whim of a British Governor or his Home Government. The people should if possible be given responsibility, and their institutions must be in accord with their own ideas. When Shepstone reached South Africa he found that the news of the ZAR's defeat had been greatly exaggerated. Sekhukhune's warriors, although more resilient than the Boers had expected, were pinned down by volunteers fighting for the ZAR once the commandos had been disbanded. The Boers refused to fight for their President as their loyalties were clearly to their families, local communities and farms.

It would be futile in their opinions, to die fighting to protect other men's farms. A contingent of volunteers from the diamond fields burnt Sekhukhune's crops and used guerrilla tactics to harass the Pedi so that Sekhukhune was obliged to sue for peace. Contrary to Colonial opinion, King Cetshwayo showed no signs whatsoever of intervening. Shepstone did however find that the ZAR was in fact bankrupt and all attempts on the part of Burger's to raise capital to build a railway to Delagoa Bay had failed. Burgers clearly intended that the ZAR should be politically independent when economically strong enough and sought friendly relations with Continental powers so as to realise the dream of a railway line between the ZAR and Delagoa Bay. He failed to raise a loan on his visit to Amsterdam and later in London but had eventually raised a loan in Amsterdam on a second visit and then, failed to represent the ZAR at Carnarvon's Confederation Conference. Carnarvon from then on regarded Burgers as hostile and untrustworthy and as the Confederation Conference had achieved nothing, Carnarvon stated that the ZAR 'must be ours',<sup>38</sup> as it was a vital part of the envisaged southern African dominion and furthermore had vast potential riches. Shepstone had to annex the ZAR with or without the consent of its Government.

The state of bankruptcy in the ZAR and the collapse of credit along with the war against the Pedi had brought mining and trade in the ZAR to a standstill. Labour supplies were also severely hampered and this state of affairs contributed to Natal Colony and other parts of South Africa experiencing a trade depression.

Britain had to intervene as far as British mining interests in the ZAR were concerned. It was also abundantly clear to Shepstone that Burgers had lost the respect of the majority of ZAR citizens and was demoralized, although the Boers who were largely self-sufficient were not as severely affected by the economic slump in the ZAR.

38. PRO., CO 30/6/4, Original Correspondence : Carnarvon - Frere, 12 December 1876, no.67

Carnarvon's new idea was to use a confederation between Griqualand-West, Natal Colony and the Transvaal as a lever to force the Orange Free State and Cape to reconsider their respective stances on confederation. In January 1877, Shepstone as Her Majesty's Special Commissioner, accompanied by a small escort of 25 mounted police, entered the ZAR and based himself in Pretoria. He spent the next few months interviewing prominent ZAR citizens on their opinions with regard to a southern African confederation. Shepstone played on the insecurity and disunity in the ZAR that had arisen from the unpopularity of Burgers and went so far as to suggest that his influence over the Zulus would enable him to avert what seemed to most ZAR Boers to be an inevitable confrontation between the ZAR and the Zulus. Shepstone also demanded far-reaching reforms in the Volksraad. On 7 March 1877 the ZAR Volksraad adopted a Resolution aimed at forestalling annexation :

Resolution of the Volksraad (7 March 1877) :

*That, as H.M.'s Special Commissioner, ...is of the opinion that the independence of the Republic cannot be saved or guaranteed through changes or reforms; And as the representative body is fully prepared to remove all grounds of grievance against the State, whether these actually exist or in appearance only, and is further prepared to take far-reaching measures – as it has already done – in order to avoid those irregularities of which complaint is being made, and for the better preservation of peace and good order;*

*And as it clearly appears from the letter of His Excellency Sir Henry Barkly ...that Her Majesty's Government are not minded to force the Republic against its wish to sacrifice its independence;*

*And as the Raad further has full faith in the justice of Her Majesty's Government, and is convinced that it would not command the burghers of the Republic to be deprived of their most sacred possession;*



*That therefore the Government be instructed to enter into communication with Her Britannic Majesty's Special Commissioner, with a view to maintaining the autonomy of the State, and further to conclude such treaties as may be necessary for preserving the good understanding between the Republic and Her Britannic Majesty's Government and for maintaining the general security, order and peace of South Africa with regard to the natives.<sup>39</sup>*

Shepstone was determined to magnify the Zulu threat to the ZAR to a large enough proportion that would terrify the Boers into readily accepting a British annexation of their territory. He initially told Burgers that his visit to the ZAR was to inquire into the war against the Pedi and to try to be useful in bringing about an end to Boer-Pedi hostilities.

He later told Burgers and the Executive Council (Volksraad) of the ZAR that he was in Pretoria to negotiate a federation of the ZAR and other colonies and states and that he would be obliged to do so forcibly if the plan did not come together as he anticipated.

On 12 April 1877, Sir Theophilus Shepstone (as he was now known, having been recently knighted on Carnarvon's recommendation), issued the proclamation below which declared the ZAR a British possession and he became its administrator. It stated that the Sand River Convention had guaranteed the Boers north of the Vaal river the right to manage their own affairs and to govern themselves according to their own laws, without British interference. The situation in the ZAR had now altered in that it had become politically weaker and was threatened by African tribes.

39. Eybers, G.W. : Select Constitutional Documents Illustrating South African History 1795-1910, p. 445

The decay of power and the ebb of authority in the ZAR had compelled numerous Boers to leave their farms and homes which were subsequently occupied by Africans. This weakness of the ZAR had made all the European communities feel insecure. Matters were exacerbated by the state of bankruptcy that existed in the ZAR. This had virtually paralysed the Government into an inability to adequately respond to the threats it faced.

Anarchy and bloodshed were likely if matters continued as was. This would endanger British subjects and colonies if left unchecked. Britain would therefore extend her authority and protection over the ZAR so as to bring about peace and prosperity. There was in any event, according to Shepstone, a fair measure of support among the ZAR inhabitants for British involvement and control. <sup>40</sup>

The Boers did not wish to come under British rule. The ZAR was in a weak and extremely vulnerable position and its citizens were deeply divided on numerous issues including the Pedi War, the perceived Zulu threat, the role Britain should play and the bankrupt state of their economy. The mining and commercial population of the ZAR which was mainly of English descent, and a few frontier farmers of Dutch descent, welcomed British rule. This was counter-balanced by the united resistance of 1880 which culminated in the Transvaal War of Independence. Shepstone undertook to preserve the separate government, legislature, laws and status of Dutch as the official language alongside English.

President Burgers protested the British annexation in a proclamation also dated 12 April 1877.

40. Ibid., pp. 448-453

Burgers was, he said, unable to defend the sovereignty of the ZAR against superior British forces, and in any case favoured a peaceful resolution to whatever problems might arise concerning his State. He did however protest against the annexation. The ZAR would send a delegation comprising the honourable S.J.P Kruger and E.P. Jorissen to Europe and America to try to muster pro ZAR support against Britains annexation.

Burgers called on all officials, burghers and other inhabitants of the ZAR to refrain from resorting to violence against British actions in the ZAR, but rather called on them to support the resolutions of the Volksraad for the preservation of order and the prevention of bloodshed.<sup>41</sup>

Burgers also ordered his burghers not to opt for a violent response against Shepstone's annexation and he appointed two members of the Volksraad to act as a deputation to the British Government. The deputation would seek to reverse the annexation.

Shepstone was unperturbed by Boer actions in the Transvaal and further promoted the propaganda that the Zulus were an aggressive threat to all whites in southern Africa, so as to psychologically influence them to accept British control of their Republic.

Burger's ideal however, was to have a united South Africa, independent of Britain.<sup>42</sup>

41. Leyds, W.J. : The First Annexation of the Transvaal, pp. 225-226

42. Appelgryn, M.S. : Thomas Francois Burgers; Staatspresident 1872-1877, p. 48

Froude, Carnarvon and Shepstone all had dealings with Burgers and all believed he was not averse to accepting a union within the British Empire and would probably also welcome British immigrants and capital into the ZAR as this would assist the ZAR to develop its resources.<sup>43</sup> There was a great deal of apprehension concerning Burgers motives in the Colonial Office, especially since it was known that he had made contact with Bismarck, Chancellor of Germany. If Germany intervened in southern African affairs and especially the ZAR, all hope of confederation would fail, and Britain would lose its political 'edge' over the region.

Barkly, the High Commissioner, distrusted Burgers completely and believed he intended to assist Germany to acquire Delagoa Bay and possibly place the ZAR under German protection. Barkly believed Burgers would pass himself off as a loyal subject to the Queen but in reality was a 'very chameleon in his moods' and would prove treacherous.<sup>44</sup>

Shepstone's assessment that no Boer resistance would be made to annexation proved correct. Two letters written by Shepstone give us his version of the events. The first written a day before the annexation and the second letter, directly after the proclamation of British annexation on 12 April 1877.

The first letter was from Shepstone to Sir Robert Herbert, Permanent Undersecretary at the Colonial Office.

Letter from Sir Theophilus Shepstone to Mr Herbert (11 April 1877) :

*...I have arranged to issue tomorrow my proclamation declaring the Transvaal British territory : it is now only a question of printing, the facilities for which here are very small and inadequate to meet an emergency*

43. BL, Add mss. 60798 : Froude - Carnarvon, 10 November 1874 , no.62

44. PRO, CO 30/6/32, Supplementary Correspondence : Barkly - Carnarvon, 10 April 1875, no.43

*...I shall, besides the proclamation, publish an address to the people in which I speak to them as a friend, and explain to them less stiffly than can be done in a proclamation, the true state of affairs...*

*There will be a protest against my act of annexation issued by the Government, but they will at the same time call upon the people to submit quietly pending its issue. You need not be disquieted by such action, because it is taken merely to save appearances and the members of the Government from the violence of a faction that seems for years to have held Pretoria in terror when any act of Government displeased it.<sup>45</sup>*

Shepstone went on to say that President Burgers had acquiesced in the need for change and that at least three-quarters of the ZAR population would welcome change. President Burgers had further explained to Shepstone that he felt obliged to issue a protest against British annexation so as to appease a conservative segment of the ZAR Boer population who were vehemently opposed to British control.

Shepstone was convinced that nothing but annexation could save the ZAR as the Government of Burgers was a sham. He was further convinced that the Boers would offer no resistance even though he had only an escort of 20-25 men.

He was adamant that he had told the Boers on numerous occasions that no other course of action was open to them except to accept British control.

Although the troops that he would need to enforce British control were at least 320 km away in Natal, awaiting news on the issuance of the proclamation to the Boers in the ZAR, if needed they would hastily be despatched to the ZAR to quell any revolt. He did however not foresee such an eventuality arising.

His manipulation of events is shown in the following letter to Bulwer:

45. Gordon, R.E. : Shepstone, pp. 261-263

Letter from Sir Theophilus Shepstone to Sir Henry Bulwer (12 April 1877) :

*The proclamations have just been publicly read in the market, or rather the church square by my secretary, Mr Osborn, accompanied by the other members of my staff. Everything went off quietly, and the reading was received with hearty cheers. The majority of the audience were Englishmen, so the cheers were natural; but there were a few Boers also, who, of course, could scarcely be expected to be cheerful.*

*Mr Burgers had his protest read, followed by a proclamation referring to the protest and desiring in the strongest terms all officers and others to abide by the issue of the protest, and to avoid by word or act any hostile demonstration that might damage the success of the mission to Europe.*

*After the proclamation, Burgers assembled his officers, and made a very feeling speech to them, urging them to accept the circumstances and support me. This moment the State Secretary has come to me by his orders, and handed over to me the key of the officers which I gave back again into the Secretary's charge.*

*Thus far everything has passed off quietly and well, and Burgers has helped me a good deal.<sup>46</sup>*

Shepstone, like Camarvon, believed that good governance, law and order and peace were essential elements if the confederation plan was to succeed. European immigration would be encouraged by having a stable southern African region and capitalists would also be encouraged to invest surplus capital in the region, which would lead to great economic development.

46. Hattersley, A.F. : Later Annals of Natal, p. 121

As Burgers was keen to develop the ZAR's resources so as to keep the state out of Britain's sphere of interest it became vital for Britain to annex the territory. In any case, Shepstone and Carnarvon were of the opinion that the ZAR had very little control over its African population who did not even pay taxes. Shepstone in another letter to Bulwer, stated that ;

*It if had not been for the good offices of the Govt. of Natal this country (ZAR) would have been overrun long ago, and for these people to talk of their independence and freedom is simply to talk of enjoyments which they don't possess.<sup>47</sup>*

Carnarvon was also totally against any annexation of territory by the ZAR towards the sea and was also afraid that if the Boers were able to defeat the Zulus, they would gain ascendancy in southern Africa and this would destroy his confederation scheme. Britain had to be the paramount power in the region and could not afford to have either a strong ZAR or Zulu Kingdom. The Orange Free State under President Brand would have no choice but to fall in line with the confederation scheme once the ZAR and Zulus were subdued.

The inaugural conference of King Leopold of Belgium's International Association also played a part in Carnarvon's despatch of Shepstone to annex the ZAR. Sir Bartle Frere, Barkly's successor as High Commissioner, attended the conference and was convinced that Belgium would not found colonies or operate south of the Zambezi river. Nonetheless, Carnarvon was considerably more cautious as to Leopold's motives in Africa and was prepared to see a sort of Munro doctrine applied to much of Africa by Britain. Rivals could clearly not be admitted in the eastern or central parts of Africa, and especially not in Egypt or the ZAR.

47. N A, SP 67, Confidential Papers : Shepstone - Bulwer, 20 February 1877, Vols. 6-12, pp.66-67

Shepstone's campaign to persuade the British populace that his annexation of the ZAR had saved the Boers from the Zulus succeeded and it soon engendered the belief that the Zulus were a real threat to whites in southern Africa. This belief paved the way for the later invasion of Zululand. Shepstone was therefore very effective in creating an over-elaborate image of the Zulus as a ferocious people who were most eager to destroy all traces of white occupation in southern Africa.

In order to promote the Confederation scheme, it was imperative to sustain this image of the Zulus at all costs. Shepstone, once the trusted 'father' of the Zulus was soon to abandon his 'children'.



## CHAPTER 2

### Antagonists-Britain, the Zulu and the Boers

Barely a month after Shepstone's proclamation of the ZAR as a British colony, former President Burgers left the ZAR and returned to his earlier occupation as a church minister in the Cape Colony. Shepstone was rather pleased at the initial lack of resistance to his annexation of the ZAR, but soon many Boers expressed their opposition to such an extent that in the Cape, the Governor, Sir Henry Bartle Frere found himself caught up in an uproar over the issue. Having taken over from Sir Henry Barkly as Cape Governor just before the annexation of the ZAR, Frere encountered a barrage of hostility emanating from the ranks of the Cape Parliamentarians and from the Boers in the Orange Free State and ZAR once annexation was carried out. The reaction to annexation varied considerably. In the Cape, a petition against the annexation was signed by over 5000 people. They expressed great unhappiness at Camarvon's departure from the policy of conciliation towards the Boers that Froude had led them to believe Camarvon would follow. The annexation of the ZAR presented a new image of Imperialism in which the tribes and Boers in southern Africa would be subordinated to the interests of the British Empire. In Natal Colony the annexation of the ZAR was greatly welcomed as an astute political move by Britain.<sup>1</sup> The supply of labour for the construction of railways that the ZAR war with the Pedi had disrupted would now be forthcoming again and the economic depression in Natal would be a thing of the past.<sup>2</sup> In Zululand however, there was apprehension concerning the annexation of the ZAR. King Cetshwayo went as far as to send two messengers to Pretoria to ascertain the nature of the annexation as the matter was unclear to the Zulus,<sup>3</sup> but it was only two months after the annexation that King Cetshwayo was given a clear picture of what it entailed. On 11 April, Shepstone informed King Cetshwayo that Henrique Shepstone, his eldest son, would visit him and explain the annexation of the ZAR and the 'true position of affairs and the altered circumstances of the country'.<sup>4</sup>

1. The Natal Mercury, 24 April 1877 (editorial)
2. The Natal Witness, 21 January 1877 (editorial)
3. T A, Administrator's Letter-book 6 : Shepstone - Camarvon, 7 August 1877, no.42
4. N A, GH 789, Confidential Papers : Shepstone - Boast, 11 April 1877, p.322

Henrique Shepstone was taken ill however and F.B. Fynney was tasked with paying King Cetshwayo the visit in June 1877. Cetshwayo seized the opportunity to make it clear to the British that 'the Zulu nation grew up alone', separate and distinct from all others, and has never been subject to any other nation'.<sup>5</sup> King Cetshwayo also believed that Britain was going to force the Zulu nation to pay taxes and that Shepstone would soon be arriving with troops.<sup>6</sup> There was a great suspicion in Zululand of Shepstone and his motives especially since, according to Cetshwayo's brother Hamu, Zulus returning to Zululand from Natal believed a British attack on the Zulu Kingdom was imminent.<sup>7</sup>

Shepstone believed his annexation of the ZAR had prevented a Zulu attack on the ZAR. Furthermore, reports of Zulu military movements in Zululand increased the belief that Zululand needed to be tamed. In 1875, after the death of Mpande, Cetshwayo had agreed to be crowned King of the Zulus by Shepstone. This action implied that Cetshwayo symbolically acknowledged British hegemony as far as the latter were concerned. Shepstone hoped that by crowning Cetshwayo king of the Zulus in the name of Queen Victoria, he would accede to some degree of indirect rule by Natal's administration. Cetshwayo's motive for allowing himself to be crowned by Shepstone was that the action suggested that Natal and Britain supported his reign as king and this strengthened his claim to the throne. This was imperative to Cetshwayo as his brother Mbuyazi and his half-brothers Hamu and Zibhebhu were challenging his right to the throne. Shepstone soon realized that Cetshwayo was an astute and diplomatic leader and would only be controlled by British force. He also believed that only a minor show of force would be necessary to topple Cetshwayo and clearly underestimated the Zulu King.

5. BPP., C1961, report on Zululand by F.B. Fynney, 4 July 1877, P.49
6. N A, GH 1052, Confidential Paper : Robertson - Bulwer, 7 August 1877
7. T A, Staatsekretaris 242, R2956 : Nunn - Shepstone, 7 July 1877

Cetshwayo was not a docile neighbour and reports of attacks by his subjects on mission stations and the senseless slaughter of innocent subjects by Cetshwayo's impis added fuel to the argument that Britain needed to intervene in Zululand on humanitarian grounds. The local British perception was that Natal Colony had to be spared from any menacing threat and Cetshwayo had to be stopped at all costs as he had :

*set at naught his engagements with her (Britain) by converting his country into a shambles and by singling out unoffending Christian converts as the particular victims of his fury.<sup>8</sup>*

Bulwer made a thorough investigation of the allegations that converts in Zululand were being murdered and discovered that the allegations were grossly over-exaggerated and that in fact only two had been killed and not necessarily for being Christian converts either.

I have heard nothing tending to confirm the opinion so hastily arrived at and so hastily expressed that the attacks actually made were part of a hostile design against the missionaries and mission stations in the Zulu country, or to induce me to alter the opinion which I originally formed upon the information before me that the attacks, however unjustifiable they might be in themselves, were directed against individual natives for personal reasons.<sup>9</sup>

Clearly, the belief that Britain was to annex Zululand encouraged the missionaries to report incidents in Zululand in such a way as to hasten the expected annexation of the territory.

Robert Robertson, an Anglican missionary from the United Society for the Propagation of the Gospel, was the main propagandist of Zulu atrocities in 1877 as evidenced by his correspondence with Bulwer.

8. The Natal Mercury, 8 May 1877 (editorial)

9. N A, GH 1220, Confidential Letter : Bulwer - Camarvon, 27 November 1877, no. 193

He wrote numerous letters to Shepstone, Bulwer and Frere in which he maligned Cetshwayo's character and reported hundreds of fallacious executions in Zululand, so as to hasten British actions in the Kingdom. His primary motivation was a desire to spread Christianity and not feel threatened in the process by possible anti-missionary activity on the part of the Zulus.

Ironically, most whites and especially missionaries were treated well by the Zulus, King Cetshwayo even had John Dunn as a white Zulu chief. It was however only after the British annexation of the ZAR in April 1877 that relations between the Zulus and the missionaries deteriorated. The Boer threat to the Zulus had been removed and replaced by a British threat. In any event, the Zulus had frequent direct communication with the Secretary for Native Affairs in Pietermaritzburg and did not need missionaries as diplomats. It became illegal for a Zulu to become a Christian and when a Zulu who wished to become a convert was killed for an altogether unrelated reason, Robertson used the opportunity to spread anti-Zulu propaganda. By July 1878, all mission work in Zululand had stopped as the missionaries all left. A nadir had been reached in missionary-Zulu relations. Zulus saw missions as havens for the immoral, criminal and good-for-nothing – whereas missionaries saw missions as a refuge from savage heathen superstition and oppression by Cetshwayo's highly centralized Government. Despite Bulwer's investigations showing that many false rumours concerning Cetshwayo were in circulation, he was also eager to malign King Cetshwayo so as to gain support for Carnarvon's confederation scheme. The commercial interests of Natalians were only too eager to obtain and maintain a regular supply of labourers for their business to flourish.<sup>10</sup> The sugar plantations in particular demanded a constant availability of workers. If southern Africa was to flourish economically it would be vital to develop a capitalistic economy in the entire region – including Zululand. The region could not remain politically or economically disparate as a continuation of that state of affairs would undermine Britain's hegemonistic ambitions in the region and put at risk Britain's route to India.

10. Etherington, N : Labour supply and the genesis of South African confederation in the 1870s, (*Journal of African History*, XX, 3, 1979, pp. 236-239).

Carnarvon was determined to appoint a statesman that would be able to bring to fruition his confederation plans. Consequently, on 31 March 1877 the eminent Indian administrator Sir Bartle Frere succeeded Barkly as Cape Governor and High Commissioner for Native Affairs in South Africa.

Carnarvon had tempted Frere into accepting his position by offering as a salary the sum of £10 000 a year which was double what Barkly had been receiving as the governor. Frere aged sixty-two had proved himself to be an able civil servant in India and had been Governor of Scinde and later Governor of Bombay. His Indian experience was however, not practicable in the southern African political context. In India he governed over a largely quiescent population whereas in the southern African context there were various antagonistic races living in a highly volatile political landscape. Frere was the confederationist who played the greatest role in the events leading to the Anglo-Zulu War as it was under his authority that Britain conducted her diplomatic relations with King Cetshwayo. It was Frere who had the power to declare war if necessary, especially since Carnarvon resigned in February 1878, to be replaced by Sir Michael Hicks Beach. Hicks Beach left Frere to his own devices as he was deeply involved in other colonial affairs. Frere knew very little about Africa but had however led a successful mission to the island of Zanzibar in 1873 in which he had persuaded the Sultan of Zanzibar to ban slavery in his territories. Frere had a great respect for Carnarvon and his success as Colonial Secretary in having united the Canadian states and promoted Carnarvon's forward policy of extending the British Empire even after Carnarvon's resignation.

Not long after arriving in South Africa, Frere faced a full-scale African uprising on the Cape eastern frontier. The Kei river formed the eastern boundary of the Cape Colony. On the land nearest this boundary on the western side lived the Mfengu (Ngquika-Xhosa and Mfengus) who were allies of the British. Beyond the Kei on the eastern side, lived the Gcaleka and Ngqika who were not formally under British jurisdiction. This latter tribe were previously owners of the land on which the Mfengu lived and they attacked the Mfengu to recover their land which the Cape administration had given to the Mfengu. As they lacked the know-how concerning the use of rifles, the Gcaleka and Ngqika under their chief Sarhili were driven back into the Transkei.

In a short period over 700 of them and at least 20 of their *indunas* died at the hands of the colonial forces. To make matters worse for them, the colonial forces also confiscated over 10 000 head of cattle.

As cattle were the main source of Gcaleka and Ngqika wealth, they repeatedly re-crossed the Kei river to attempt to recapture their cattle. Frere, based at the British barracks in King Williamstown tried to secure the area. He believed that Sarhili had to be subdued and his lands annexed. Frere did however only wish to disarm the Gcaleka and Ngqika and teach them to obey the law. Molteno, the Cape's Prime Minister, objected to Frere's ideas and wanted to have a free-hand in controlling the Gcaleka and Ngqika by violent force. Frere disagreed and dismissed the entire Cape ministry and Molteno. Sir John Gordon Sprigg member of East London, was appointed as the new Cape Prime Minister. Like Frere, Sprigg was an ardent Empire-builder but despite remaining in office until 1881 he was unable to advance confederation as Molteno who was opposition leader, sabotaged any such moves. Lt-General Frederick Thesiger assumed command of two battalions of British regulars who had been rushed to the Cape to crush the 'rebellion'. British troops were despatched in support of the Mfengu. Consequently, war broke out between the Cape and the Gcaleka and Ngqika Xhosa, termed the Ninth Frontier War. This war kept Frere occupied until mid 1878 and prevented him from pursuing the confederation plan. Although not a serious war, the Ninth Frontier War renewed fears of an African insurrection in Natal Colony. Frere was content to listen to Shepstone's advice and as a keen Christian, also listened intently to what Robert Robertson had to say concerning Cetshwayo and the Zulus.

Shepstone believed that Cetshwayo had stepped up his cruelty in Zululand as he felt frustrated due to his inability to conduct foreign military campaigns. This was as a result of Britain's presence in the region. The annexation of the ZAR had made Cetshwayo realise that he was an ineffectual king :

*The annexation of the Transvaal baulks both his purposes and condemns him to the ignominy of being a non-combatant Zulu King.*

*He will continue to chafe under this but in my belief his chafing will end in destroying himself because it will take the form of domestic bloodshedding, and that will sooner or later produce revolution.<sup>11</sup>*

F.B. Fynney, in a report on Zululand to the Natal Government, said that Cetshwayo believed his army was strong enough to resist any British incursion into Zululand and that such an incursion was imminent. Fynney also reported that Cetshwayo wished to attack the Swazi and would do so irrespective of whether or not Shepstone approved of such an action.<sup>12</sup>

Bulwer was greatly concerned that the Boers in the former ZAR had been unable to crush Sekhukhune – this weakness on the part of the Boers would create the impression in Zululand that King Cetshwayo had no need of British support against the Boers. King Cetshwayo would fight if provoked in even a small measure although, according to Bulwer, he would not be keen to fight the British or the Natal Government unnecessarily.<sup>13</sup> Much to his dismay, Frere found that most Natal colonists, although predominantly British, were extremely cautious concerning confederation as they feared absorption by the Cape Colony and desired to retain self-rule.

Sir Bartle Frere's eyes were increasingly drawn to Zululand where Shepstone had discovered that aggression was inherent in the Zulu way of life with its Spartan – like military system. It was clear that as long as an independent Zulu Kingdom existed, with its strong army serving as an inspiration for lesser tribes, confederation would not succeed. Frere marvelled at King Cetshwayo's leadership :

*To maintain a standing army of 40 000 unmarried young men, would task the resources of a country as rich as populous and industrious Belgium, and if Cetshwayo can manage it, without a constant succession of conquests, he is fit to be War Minister to any great military power in Europe.<sup>14</sup>*

11. N A, GH 1397, Confidential Paper : Fynney - Natal Government, 13 July 1877
12. N A, GH 1300, Confidential Paper : Bulwer - Camarvon, 23 July 1877, pp.3-4
13. N A, SP 25, Letters Received : Frere -Shepstone, 28 October 1877 , p. 17
14. N A, SP 67,Letter-Books, Vol.6 : Shepstone - Camarvon, 23 July 1877, p.226

Shepstone corrected some of the misconceptions held by Frere concerning the Zulu army. Not all of the 40 000 men were unmarried and once in a conflict situation, they would be fed by their families. The Zulus as will be shown in chapter five, did not have a standing army but relied rather on men who were usually farmers or livestock tenders. The Zulu *amabutho* (military system) preserved the Zulu Kingdom as men of all ages served the state when required to do so. Nonetheless, Frere was obsessed with the idea that King Cetshwayo would invade Natal as he feared Zulu militarism. Zululand had to be neutralized at all costs if confederation was to have even the remotest chance of succeeding. 'The Zulus had to be taught a lesson.'<sup>15</sup>

Frere propagated fear of the Zulus so as to promote his dream of expanding the British Empire. (see [map.1](#)) Zululand would be a vital inclusion to the territorial jewels in Queen Victoria's crown. What was needed as a matter of urgency was solid central Government in southern Africa.<sup>16</sup>

Frere tended to compare the situation as he had experienced it in India, with what he found in southern Africa. The way he perceived the Zulu army was undoubtedly based on his Indian adventures.

*There (India), as in Kaffraria and Zululand, all the best muscle, as well as money, of the country was absorbed by idle warriors who found but scanty provision in the smaller and more compact Sepoy armies of their English conquerors. More of them turned their swords into plough shares than would be possible here – though, even amongst the most indolent Africans there seem more ways of making them take to honest work, than their European critics always admit.<sup>17</sup>*

15. BPP., C.2222, memorandum by Frere, 6 December 1878, no.42

16. Fumeaux, R. : The Zulu War : Isandhlwana and Rorke's Drift, pp. 17-18

17. N A, SP 22, Letters Received : Frere - Shepstone, 17 July 1877



A year and a half before the invasion of Zululand, Frere was making known his master-plan for southern Africa. Africans were to be drawn into the capitalistic system as labourers. Bishop Colenso doubted the sincerity of Frere's 'fear' of Zulu militarism. Colenso believed that Frere was vigorously attempting to prejudice the Natal Administration and the British Government against Cetshwayo. The Zulu King was compared to Chaka and was depicted as a ruthless savage in what was clearly a politically motivated propaganda campaign. By his actions, Frere hoped to gain support for the impending invasion of Zululand.<sup>18</sup>

Frere used a wide range of arguments and every possible incident involving Zulus to convince Britain that King Cetshwayo and his people had to be tamed. Missionary work could not be carried out effectively due to Cetshwayo's supposed aggression and this hampered Britain's civilizing mission in southern Africa. Frere had to create the opinion that he was acting in response to King Cetshwayo's hostile attitude and to the general feeling pervading Natal Colony that it was in imminent danger of a Zulu invasion. Frere and Bulwer had to come across as interested in keeping peace in southern Africa. The threat posed to whites in the region as well as to other African tribes was too great to ignore. Both Frere and Bulwer expressed a desire to prevent a Zulu invasion of Natal Colony and both objected vehemently to the way King Cetshwayo was supposedly ruling his Kingdom. His apparent malevolent rule and overtly arrogant militarism would serve confederation well if acted upon swiftly and decisively. After all, prevention is better than cure. Furthermore, Frere had been passed over for the Viceroyship of India, perhaps he could salvage some pride by creating a 'new' India in southern Africa. Shepstone advised Carnarvon that Cetshwayo was keen to place Zululand under British protection but once the ZAR was annexed, Herbert informed Shepstone not to annex any more territory until further notice, probably 'for a year or so'.<sup>19</sup>

18. Vijn, C. : Cetshwayo's Dutchman, pp. ix-xi

19. PRO., CO 30/6/33, Original Correspondence : Carnarvon - Frere, 7 June 1877, no.45

There was clearly a large body of anti-imperial expansion opinion in the British Parliament, spurred on by the possible expenses and complications of an enlarged Empire. The British public would not take lightly to excessive foreign adventures. Camarvon had no doubt that Zululand would eventually be annexed as a matter of necessity. Herbert supported Shepstone's 'administration' of Zululand as in this way it remained within British demi-control and would not be preyed on by any other European power. It would before long become a British possession.<sup>20</sup>

The fact that the ZAR was annexed without any resistance led to the misconception that the Zulus would not resist annexation when the time for such action was suitable. The Victorian belief that civilization needed to be spread to the four corners of the globe and that it would be accepted as an inevitable and natural process, undoubtedly pervaded British society and politics. Shepstone had managed to annex a Boer republic with great ease. It was therefore inconceivable that the savage Zulus and their king who was after all, crowned by Shepstone, would offer any form of resistance to a British annexation when it did indeed come. Furthermore, the missionaries had made great inroads in creating the impression that Cetshwayo was a tyrannical king whose deposition would be welcomed by most of the inhabitants of Zululand. Shepstone believed no fighting would be likely once Britain annexed Zululand. He had however inherited the Zulu border dispute with the Boers of the ZAR. He was particularly concerned with the south-eastern border of the ZAR where the disputed territory was and felt a need to attempt to restrain King Cetshwayo in this regard. Shepstone spoke of Zululand as a 'dangerous, although I think manageable volcano'.<sup>21</sup> While the ZAR Boers sought an outlet to the sea, it was expedient for Shepstone to support the Zulu in their border dispute with the ZAR. But since the Transvaal was now under British control, it would be appropriate for the Zulu to be subdued so that they could serve as a source of much needed labour in Natal Colony and elsewhere in southern Africa.

20. PRO.,CO 48/483, minute by Herbert, Secret : Frere - Camarvon, 21 July 1877

21. NA, SP 67, Letters despatched : Shepstone - Herbert, 23 July 1877, pp.234-235

Furthermore, it was within the realm of possibility that the Zulu and Swazi Kingdoms would form an anti-British alliance, as reported by Robert Bell, the Native Commissioner on the Swazi border. Cetshwayo had also sent emissaries to meet with the Portuguese administrators at Delagoa Bay and this was clearly a threat to Britain's hegemonistic ambitions in southern Africa.<sup>22</sup>

Shepstone was of the opinion that King Cetshwayo was an opportunist who would instigate 'others to commit themselves to act against Britain, while he sat on the sidelines awaiting the outcome'<sup>23</sup> – consequently Shepstone thought Cetshwayo should be subdued as far as possible. Bulwer appears to have been far more in touch with the reality in the Zulu Kingdom and with Cetshwayo's fears and probable belief that Britain would soon annex Zululand. Shepstone seems to have harboured the belief that he would be able to annex Zululand rather effortlessly based on his status in the Kingdom.

Shepstone wrote :

*My relations with the Zulus are peculiar. In virtue of a law specially enacted by them in 1861, I hold supreme rank in their country and am entitled to the same salute as the King, according to that law I am the King's father! I do not think that there would be much difficulty in establishing British rule in Zululand when we are ready for it.<sup>24</sup>*

King Cetshwayo was clearly not as docile as Shepstone had anticipated him to be and while his regiments trained in Zululand it was natural for Natalians to be concerned about his intentions. When Bulwer castigated Cetshwayo for the arbitrary execution of certain of his subjects, the Zulu King responded in a hostile tone.

22. N A, SP 68, Letters despatched : Shepstone - Frere, 12 September 1877, p.262

23. N A, SP 68, Letters despatched : Shepstone - Frere, 15 August 1877, p.259

24. N A, SP 67, Letters despatched : Shepstone - Frere, 1 August 1877, p.2

In 1875 King Cetshwayo intimated that he would in future not execute any of his subjects without a trial first but now told Bulwer that 'he would kill his people if he liked, and that he did not ask the Governor of Natal not to kill his own'.<sup>25</sup>

Although Shepstone was acknowledged by Cetshwayo as having been instrumental in assisting him to attain his place as King of Zululand, the latter made it abundantly clear to Shepstone that the personal nature of their relationship implied nothing as far as the relationship between the Zulus and Britain was concerned. In a conversation with the missionary Robertson, King Cetshwayo stated :

*I am the child of Queen Victoria. But I am also a King in my own country and must be treated as such. Somseu (Shepstone) must speak gently to me.*<sup>26</sup>

Robertson was somewhat ridiculed in Zulu circles and was known amongst them as the "Fat Parson". He was a rather peculiar character who sought to ingratiate himself with Shepstone and Bulwer and consequently fabricated atrocity stories concerning the Zulus. He was known to be a rather heavy imbiber of alcoholic beverages and also possessed a large harem of Zulu women.<sup>27</sup>

The border dispute between the Transvaal and the Zulus was an issue that would cause much Zulu consternation. Once Shepstone was in control of the ZAR, the Zulus assumed he would settle the dispute in their favour. However the Zulus believed he was actually siding with the Boers and was planning to annex the whole of Zululand.

25. Norris-Newman, Charles I. : In Zululand with the British throughout the war of 1879, p. x

26. SPG, WP, Robertson - Macrorie, 23 October 1877 , no.193

27. Etherington, N.A., 'Anglo-Zulu Relations, 1856-78', In Duminy, A.H. and Ballard, C.C., (eds.) : The Anglo-Zulu War : New Perspectives, p. 43

In time of severe drought the disputed land would become a vital area for the Zulu herds. The Zulus had endured Boer occupation, seizure of their cattle by the Boers and control of the grazing lands without resorting to conflict to resolve the issue of ownership of the land. They had requested Shepstone's intervention and he had simply told them to stay placid in response. When the Boers attempted to tax the Zulus living in the disputed lands, they demonstrated after which the Boers abandoned the tax and some Boers even abandoned the land. These events, along with the failure of the Boers in the wars against Sekhukhune, highlighted that the Boers and indeed all white men were not as invincible as had been suggested in the past.

On 18 October 1877, a meeting to resolve the border dispute took place west of the Ncome River on a flat-topped hill later called Conference Hill. Shepstone and his son Henrique who had been appointed Transvaal Secretary for Native Affairs, a large Zulu deputation of about 500 men and Gert Rudolph the Landdrost of Utrecht together with approximately 50 soldiers as escorts, met to attempt to settle the border dispute which had been a burning issue. The strip of land in question was the north-western boundary of Zululand. Shepstone attempted to claim for the Transvaal the lands they had claimed were theirs during their independence. He clearly sought to win the Boers over to his side by these actions but in the process provoked the Zulus to become extremely hostile towards him. The Boers said they could prove title to the land which they claimed had been ceded to them in 1861 – Shepstone had always disputed their claim. However, since the Transvaal was now under British control, he would manipulate the situation to meet his objectives and those of Sir Bartle Frere, namely, complete hegemony for Britain in southern Africa. The end would justify the means of obtaining this hegemony.

'It is well known that Shepstone reversed his opinions on the Transvaal-Zulu border dispute as soon as he raised the British flag in Pretoria'.<sup>28</sup>

28. Ibid., p. 39

Shepstone sought to achieve four objectives by his actions. Firstly, Sekhukhune could once and for all realise he would have no chance of threatening any whites again. Secondly, the Boers could be duped into accepting the British as their protectors and thirdly, Cetshwayo could be significantly brought down to earth.<sup>29</sup> Fourthly, Shepstone wished to acquire the strip of land for Natal as a corridor to the north from which African labourers could be imported as a very cheap source of labour. Shepstone therefore 'met a Zulu delegation to discuss the territory disputed with the republic (ZAR) – and in his new guise as administrator of the Transvaal backed the Boer claims to the hilt'.<sup>30</sup>

King Cetshwayo's father, Mpande, had offered a portion of the disputed territory to the settlers in Natal Colony in return for security for the Zulu Kingdom against Boer encroachment on their lands. In a turnabout, Shepstone now warned the Zulus to accede to Boer rights. Shepstone's apparent desertion of the Zulu cause from that point on earned him Zulu distrust. Instead of discussing the dispute face-to-face with the Boers, the Zulus found themselves losing ground and Shepstone proved unsupportive to say the least. He clearly supported the Boers and no compromise or redressing of past wrongs would be possible for the Zulus who had ardently, albeit reluctantly at times, adhered to Shepstone's counsels of restraint. When the Zulus named the boundary they were claiming – the Nyati River (see Map 3) to the Drakensberg and from there on to the sources of the Vaal River – Shepstone rejected it outright. He proposed the boundary should be the Ncome River and the Lynspruit to its source and included a buffer-zone belt of territory inside Zulu territory which would be occupied only by a British agent who would arbitrate complaints from both sides. The Pongola River would be the northern limit of Zululand. The Zulu were in a very vulnerable position and did not foresee the implications of their persistence in wanting their rights restored. All Boer occupation of lands below the Drakensberg were considered by the Zulus to be an encroachment on their lands and spheres of interest and they rejected in totality Shepstone's proposed boundary.

29. Gay, J. : The Destruction of the Zulu Kingdom : the Civil War in Zululand, 179-1884, p. 46

30. Marks, S., 'Southern Africa, 1867-1886', in Oliver, R. and Sanderson, G.N., (eds.) : The Cambridge History of Africa, Vol.6, p. 391

Shepstone made a counter-proposal that the entire matter be referred to King Cetshwayo but the Zulu delegation rejected this as they were the representatives of King Cetshwayo and the entire Zulu nation and therefore acting with full authority. They regarded Shepstone as a traitor who had relinquished their claim to the disputed territory and was now placating the Boers. The Zulus would not abandon their claims and Shepstone abandoned any idea of compromise and insisted on the entire ZAR claim. The result was that the meeting ended in failure to resolve the land dispute.

In a report to Frere, Shepstone wrote :

*Cetewayo is the secret hope of every.... Independent chief hundreds of miles from him, who feels the desire that his colour shall prevail... The sooner the root of the evil.... Which I consider to be the Zulu power and military Organisation, is dealt with, the easier our task will be.*<sup>31</sup>

Shepstone also believed that it would be an easy task to subdue the Zulu and that not much time would be necessary for such action.<sup>32</sup>

Shepstone's proposed boundary was unacceptable to King Cetshwayo but he was averse to the idea of war as a means of resolving the issue. He consequently on 5 November modified the Zulu claim in favour of the ZAR and was prepared to accept the boundary as the Ncome River up to its sources, then following a watershed between the Pongola and Mkhondo rivers. This modified boundary was nonetheless unacceptable to Shepstone as it would have meant the removal of a number of ZAR Boers from their farms. The modification of the Zulu claim by King Cetshwayo greatly angered the leaders of the Zulu deputation to the original 18 October border dispute meeting at Conference Hill.

31. PRO., C0 30/6/23, General Correspondence : Shepstone - Camarvon, 11 December 1877

32. N A, TS 68, Confidential Papers : Shepstone - Camarvon, 11 December 1877

They confronted King Cetshwayo but by the 23 November, King Cetshwayo had managed to convince them to accept his viewpoint concerning the boundary dispute. In the meantime, on the 16 November, about 2000 Zulu warriors had moved up the Pongola River with orders to erect military barracks or *ikhanda* at a site where the Boers had previously destroyed an *ikhanda* which had been erected by Mpande.

Shepstone regarded King Cetshwayo's initiative as highly provocative as an *ikhanda* in close proximity to Luneberg would place the Zulus in striking range of the districts of Wakkerstroom and Utrecht and could conceivably sever links with Swaziland. He consequently sent Gert Rudolph and Captain Clarke to intercept the Zulu force and ascertain what the Zulus were intending to do while he debated with King Cetshwayo.

On 18 November, Rudolph and Clarke met up with the Zulu force at the juncture of the Ntombe and Pongola Rivers. The Zulus stated they were erecting an *ikhanda* in Zulu territory to be able to house Zulus who were living on Boer farms and would return home once the *ikhanda* was completed. Rudolph and Clarke told the Zulus that the land was disputed territory and that the Zulus agreed to erect only the basic structure of the *ikhanda* and returned home the next day. Numerous farmers abandoned their farms in the course of the Zulu actions and some deserted farmhouses were looted by the Zulus on their way back home.<sup>33</sup>

On 21 November, a few Zulu men went to Utrecht with a message from Cetshwayo to Shepstone. King Cetshwayo requested that Shepstone should inform him as to where the boundary should be in his opinion and added that if he disagreed with the boundary line he would inform Shepstone. Shepstone had in the meanwhile sent Gert Rudolph and his son Henrique Shepstone to King Cetshwayo in an attempt to set up a temporary boundary.

33. N A, GH 789, Confidential Papers : Shepstone - Bulwer, 23 November 1877



They were to claim for the ZAR all the land that had allegedly been ceded in 1861. The Old Hunting Road would however be accepted as a temporary arrangement – a provisional boundary. These actions however had a profoundly negative effect on Anglo-Zulu relations in general as well as ZAR and Zululand relations. King Cetshwayo rejected Shepstone's claim and said that if Shepstone was abandoning the Zulu cause, a man in Pietermaritzburg would write to the Queen for him. Shepstone assumed this to be Colenso, whereas Cetshwayo was referring to Bulwer. King Cetshwayo also informed H. Shepstone and Rudolph that he would continue to erect the *ikhanda* on the Pongola River bank. H. Shepstone and Rudolph returned to Utrecht. Once Theophilus Shepstone heard what King Cetshwayo had to say he regarded it as an ultimatum and immediately despatched a counter-ultimatum to King Cetshwayo in which he said he would regard the Old Hunting Road as the provisional Transvaal-Zululand boundary. He also said he would not allow the *ikhanda* to be completed. In the event, the *ikhanda* was not completed. Shepstone believed that the Zulus were keen to oust Cetshwayo and that a revolution was a real possibility in Zululand. Furthermore he was of the opinion that the anti-Cetshwayo faction as he saw them, would attempt to drag him into the resulting hostilities so as to bring about the speedy demise of the tyrannical king. He wrote to Frere :

*I have a very strong suspicion that the headmen are pressing things to their extremes to bring about confusion and relieve them from the present state of things.*<sup>34</sup>

Shepstone clearly inferred far too much from the situation and undoubtedly sought a reasonable sounding excuse for his inability to control affairs. He had clearly lost the edge he believed he had over the Zulus and indeed of the entire boundary dispute, and had not handled the Zulus correctly. The war on the Cape eastern frontier was in Shepstone's opinion also a problem for him. Reports of British military setbacks, albeit highly exaggerated; were in his opinion encouraging the Zulus to be defiant. Bishop Colenso was also believed to be encouraging the Zulus to claim more land, so much so in fact, that he was threatened with death should he visit Utrecht again.

34. N A, SP 68, Confidential Papers : Shepstone - Frere, 1 December 1877, p.296

In truth, King Cetshwayo had asked Bishop Colenso for advice concerning the boundary dispute. The latter had replied that it would be in the best interests of the Zulus to submit the matter for arbitration. The result was that on the 5 December, King Cetshwayo sent messengers to Colenso stating that the Zulus had given up part of their claim of the disputed lands. They added that King Cetshwayo was keen to maintain peace and pursue friendly relations with Britain and wanted Colenso to write to Bulwer and Queen Victoria stating King Cetshwayo's proposals. King Cetshwayo did not believe that Shepstone had ever conveyed his misgivings about Boer intentions to Queen Victoria.<sup>35</sup> The Zulus had clearly lost all faith in the Shepstone's, in both the ZAR and Natal, and saw in Colenso an opportunity to state their case clearly. Colenso suggested that his soon Frank and the attorney Walter Smith become the diplomatic agents of the Zulus. These two men informed Bulwer of their roles as agents of King Cetshwayo but the latter refused to speak to Cetshwayo through them.

Shepstone's Janus-faced approach greatly impeded any positive developments. In Natal Colony he had sided with the Zulus, but once in the ZAR he sided with the Boers. It was convenient for him to believe the Boers and dismiss the Zulus case as one characterised by lying and treachery.<sup>36</sup> He began to side with the Boers after arriving in Utrecht where he obtained 'evidence' in favour of their case. This so-called 'evidence' however, proved nothing besides the fact the Boers laid claim to the disputed lands. In the 'evidence', - President Pretorius testimony<sup>37</sup> describes his visit to Mpande and King Cetshwayo after the cession which was allegedly made in 1861 – it was however a total contradiction in terms of reports made at the time and was clearly based on untruths. Shepstone undoubtedly felt obliged to uphold the ZAR interests. This is what he had told them he would do once they were annexed to Britain. He could therefore not conceivably side with the Zulus and was increasingly attracted to Lord Carnarvon's scheme to federate the entire southern-African region under British rule.

35. N A, GH 1398, Umfunzi and Nkissimane - Attorney-General, 5 February 1878

36. N A, SP 68, Confidential Papers : Shepstone - Bulwer, 10 December 1877, p.302

37. BPP., C.2242, M.W. Pretorius statement, 22 December 1877

This would once and for all bring border disputes to an end. Shepstone believed that if Natal Colony and the Transvaal were seen to be acting in unison, King Cetshwayo would think twice before adopting a hostile stance toward either. He told the Boer farmers to ready themselves for active service in an attempt to reassure them that the border situation was under control. This however backfired as many farmers evacuated their farms fearing that war was imminent. The Zulus were however resolved not to be aggressors and no invasion took place. The Zulus took abandoned property in the lands they were claiming but did not take over any deserted farms in lands not claimed by them. In fact, the Zulus were extremely peaceful and Cetshwayo sent a message saying he had no intention of attacking the Transvaal. He added that if any property had been damaged by his force which had been sent to build the *ikhanda*, he would pay compensation as this was contrary to the orders given to the *impi*.<sup>38</sup> As for the Old Hunting Road, this was right in the middle of Zulu territory – perhaps Shepstone could suggest another place for the Zulus to move to? Shepstone sent messengers to King Cetshwayo to ascertain the Zulu response to his counter-ultimatum and to inform the Zulus that he was to garrison troops on the west bank of the Ncome river so as to reassure the Boer living in that vicinity that all was well.

King Cetshwayo informed the messengers that he would not fight any force sent by Shepstone as he could not fight his 'father', but he would also not accept Shepstone's land claims. He could see no necessity for Shepstone stationing troops on the Ncome River as this could only be interpreted as a hostile action. The messengers also met with the *isikhulu* (hereditary chiefs) whom Shepstone believed were eager to oust King Cetshwayo. They supported King Cetshwayo's stand concerning the boundary line but were adamant that they would fight to the death if necessary to resist occupation of the disputed territory by whites. Negotiations between King Cetshwayo and Shepstone were clearly at an end. Bulwer became convinced that Shepstone had not handled the situation at all wisely and he totally disagreed that Zulu *indunas* sought conflict with Britain so as to bring about revolution in Zululand.

38. N A, SP 6, Diaries, Shepstone's diary 1877, 19 December 1877

He also doubted that the Zulu had erected the *ikhanda* as an act of aggression – they were simply erecting a barracks that the Boers had destroyed years before. Bulwer believed that Shepstone was misinformed in his belief that the Zulu army was divided and would be shattered in a confrontation.<sup>39</sup>

Once Henrique Shepstone and Rudolph returned from their disastrous meeting with King Cetshwayo, Bulwer became totally convinced that Shepstone would no longer be capable of leading any further negotiations with the Zulus. Neither King Cetshwayo nor Shepstone would give way on the stand each had taken and a crisis was developing. Of particular concern to Theophilus Shepstone was the fact that his son and Rudolph had been poorly received by the Zulus. He did however acknowledge that perhaps his son and Rudolph were the wrong men to have sent to King Cetshwayo. In a letter from Bulwer to Carnarvon we read :

*They committed some great mistakes at the interview with the King, and some part of the discussion, so I have been told on good authority, was about the behaviour and bearing of the Zulus to Sir. T. Shepstone at the October interview. Shepstone's son being one of the mission, and the principal member of it, there was too much family feeling enlisted in the matter, and this part of the discussion was unprofitable and not at all calculated to help the far larger question at issue which was one of peace or war between the English and the Zulus.<sup>40</sup>*

Bulwer was uncertain as to how he could assist Shepstone but decided that he should avert war at all costs. Bulwer told Shepstone that a peaceful settlement was possible provided that the Boers of the ZAR could be kept in check. Letter from Sir Henry Bulwer to Sir T. Shepstone (9 January 1878) :

*The question should be settled without coming to blows, and so long as the question can be settled peaceably nothing will or can justify a war..*

39. N A, GH1351, Confidential Papers : Bulwer - Frere, 26 November 1877, no.6, p.18

40. NA, GH1351, Confidential Paper : Bulwer - Carnarvon, 24 December 1877, no.9, p.32.

*Why should there be war if the dispute can be settled by negotiation? I believe that it can be so settled and that if a war is begun now it will be begun without any necessity for it... There is first the intermediation and enquiry by the Natal Commissioners. If you don't like, or if the Zulu king does not like their finding, then there can be an enquiry and reconsideration of the whole case by the High Commissioner, or by the Secretary of State. If the Zulu king will accept the decision obtained in this way, surely your Government will be prepared to accept it also. I really cannot see why this question should not be settled without a single shot being fired. If the Zulus are in earnest to have it settled peaceably, we certainly might be very much in earnest with the same object. Of course, there may not be the same mind on the part of the Boer population and that is a danger you must guard against.<sup>41</sup>*

In July 1878 he also expressed this view to Sir Bartle Frere and urged him to be extremely cautious in the handling of the Zulu King.

Despatch from Sir H. Bulwer to Sir Bartle Frere (18 July 1878) :

*...3. My opinion has been that it is desirable under the present circumstances, and pending the final decision in the matter of the boundary dispute, to avoid as much as possible any military demonstration, as liable to be misunderstood and to be interpreted as showing our intention to settle the question by force.*

*The delay too that has occurred since the sitting of the Commission might be attributed by the Zulu King to our desire to make preparations, and it might be thought that we were playing false.*

41. Binns, C.T., The Last Zulu King : The Life and Death of Cetshwayo, p. 99

4. *Military demonstration, moreover, might look like coercion, and might either cause suspicion of our intentions and a rejection of the decision to be arrived at, or it might cause suspicion and a semblance of acceptance of the decision until a more convenient time came in which to dispute it.*

*Either result would be unfortunate, because there is still the hope that a settlement of this long pending dispute may yet be accomplished without war, and that the decision may be accepted by the Zulu nation as a satisfactory and permanent settlement of the question, and it would be unfortunate in this event that the acceptance were imperilled by a misunderstanding, and on the other hand, because any outward acceptance of the decision at this moment, is given in the presence of a war-like demonstration, and under coercion as it were, would be liable to the risk of subsequent disregard.*

5. *It is for these reasons that it has seemed to me advisable that the decision in respect of the question at issue should be first given, and then that our action should be guided by the manner of its reception, and by the indications of the King's intention to abide by it or not, which indications would not be long wanting.*<sup>42</sup>

On 8 December, Bulwer sent an urgent message to King Cetshwayo in which he suggested that there should be arbitration over the dispute territory. He expressed the view that he believed a peaceful settlement could be had and urged the Zulus to refrain from occupying any of the disputed territory. He also pointed out that the ZAR was British territory and therefore like Colony Natal, and if either of these areas was violated in any way, it would inevitably also involve the other. Bulwer also said he would write to the High Commissioner and ask him to send an arbitrator to resolve the issue.<sup>43</sup>

42. BPP., C.2220, General Correspondence, December 1878, p. 395

43. N A, SNA 177/13, Messages : Bulwer - Cetshwayo, 8 December 1877 , p49

Bulwer was undoubtedly supported by a few people in his assessment of the situation. Most notably Bishop Colenso and his family. They were firm supporters of King Cetshwayo and believed that the Zulus were being gradually drawn into a conflict to meet the ends of war-mongering imperialists. In her book, *History of the Zulu War and its Origin*, published in 1880, Frances Colenso depicts the British as ardent imperialists who were eager to extend British hegemony in southern Africa. She did not believe the rule of King Cetshwayo had anything to do with the outbreak of the war, it was rather part of a British strategy to subjugate the Zulus.<sup>44</sup> Undoubtedly the objectivity of Frances Colenso is questionable especially in the light of her admitting that her father's views influenced her entire family's way of thinking about Zulu-British relations. In letters to a certain Mrs Lyell, Frances Colenso wrote :

*5<sup>th</sup> June, 1878.*

*...I must not say too much about our politics, yet it is difficult to say nothing about what occupies our minds so much. I can only say that we think the Zulu King has behaved wonderfully well, that he has been shamefully maligned by missionaries and traders who actually wish for war, but we hope Cetshwayo will continue to behave well, be able to restrain his people and be content with the allotment of the Natal authorities. We hope, but faintly, that the allotment may have some flavour of justice...*

*6<sup>th</sup> September, 1878.*

*...We are still at peace, which is, I think, wonderful considering the persevering attempts that have been made to irritate the Zulu King, to malign him etc. I don't think I have given you much of our monotonous politics, yet to us these things must be of primary interest while we live amongst them.*

44.

Colenso, F.E. : History of the Zulu War and its Origin, 1880, pp. 75-76

*There is always a jar between the white and African men. Justice must ultimately be the interest of both, but there is the continual appearance of clashing between the two, and we have always come in for an immense quantity of odium because we have always been supposed to prefer the African man to white!...*<sup>45</sup>

As stated, Frances Colenso's father was pro-Zulu and was in fact regarded as 'the most fanatical friend of the African man', by numerous of his contemporaries.<sup>46</sup> He must have flavoured her thinking to a large extent. She asserts over and over that the Natal Colony authorities were desirous of a conflict so as to achieve an imperialistic objective. She speaks of the fervent wish for a southern African confederation along Camarvon's lines and a need by Britain to absorb southern Africa into the British Empire as part of a grandiose plan. She sees Sir Theophilus Shepstone and Lord Camarvon as equals in their desire to annex Zululand and crush Zulu might, thereby promoting Britain's territorial expansion.<sup>47</sup> Their primary aim was to invade and conquer Zululand. This clearly the case in a letter from Shepstone to Frere in which the former writes, 'I am fully satisfied that no permanent peace can be hoped for until the Zulu power has been broken up'.<sup>48</sup>

Shepstone was clearly in a rather embarrassing position. He had annexed the ZAR so as to defend Boer interests against the Pedi and the Zulus who were the larger menace of the two. He supposedly had sway over the Zulus but this was clearly not the case in January 1878 as more and more Boers were deserting their farms as war with the Zulus appeared imminent. The Boers were fast becoming disenchanted with Shepstone and were increasingly opposed to British rule in the old ZAR. Ironically even the British elements in the ZAR were most unhappy with Shepstone's handling of the disputed territory question and with his inaction in introducing much needed reforms in the ZAR. A correspondent of the Natal Witness wrote the following on 29 November 1877 :

45. Rees, W., (Ed.). : Colenso Letters from Natal, pp. 335-338

46. Fumeaux, R. : The Zulu War : Isandhiwana and Rorke's Drift, p.63

47. Colenso, F.E. : History of the Zulu War and it's Origin, 1880, p. 76

48. N A, SP 68, Letters : Shepstone - Frere, 8 January 1878, p.319



*While Sir Theophilus remains on the border, attending exclusively to one matter, and all others are allowed to "slide" for the present, people can scarcely be blamed for grumbling.<sup>49</sup>*

If Shepstone wished to obtain the support of all the white in the ZAR, he believed he needed to subjugate the Zulus first and foremost or it would be virtually impossible to collect any native taxes in the ZAR if the Zulus remained defiant. He also believed that Sekhukhune's defiance in failing to pay 2000 head of cattle as a fine was directly due to the fact that Cetshwayo was seen to be successfully defying British authority and setting a bad example. Most eastern Cape frontier fighting was also seen as a result of tribes following King Cetshwayo's lead by defying Britain. If King Cetshwayo were to be crushed once and for all, 'all native troubles in South Africa would for the future be but insignificant affairs'.<sup>50</sup> It was essential to crush King Cetshwayo so as to prevent further native upheavals in southern Africa. Shepstone sought a scapegoat for his mismanagement of the Zulus and tried to persuade the Secretary of State that the Zulu Kingdom needed to self-destruct so as to alleviate the frustrations of the numerous chiefs whom he believed sought to oust King Cetshwayo. A revolution in Zululand was in his opinion on-the-cards, but needed some prompting from without that would not involve great costs to the British exchequer. In Natal Colony itself, Africans were not at all well-administered.

Natal's African policy was virtually non-existent. After Theophilus Shepstone resigned as Secretary for Native Affairs in 1876, his brother John acted as Secretary for Native Affairs. No clear, official African policy was in place. The Colony's governors focused their attention on Zululand and they had very little time to be involved in domestic African affairs. The Shepstone's controlled policy as they saw fit. In 1878, Sir Bartle Frere summed up Natal's African policy in the following note to Hicks-Beach :

49. The Natal Witness, 29 November 1877 (editorial)

50. N A, SP 68, Confidential Papers : Shepstone - Frere, 18 December 1877, p.312

*The great secret of ruling our own Natives was to put off every inconvenient or troublesome question, to delay deciding whatever could be postponed... I find no one who knows much about the Natives, their wants, wishes or dispositions, than any intelligent traveller might pick up in a few weeks or months.<sup>51</sup>*

The department of Native Affairs and magistrates offices were hopelessly understaffed and did not have adequate resources to sort out Zulu land claims in Natal Colony. The British authorities were nonetheless eager to 'sort-out' Zululand. Shepstone's belief that Zululand was on the verge of a revolution was unfounded. King Cetshwayo's main rivals uHamu and Zibhebhu had given him assurances that they recognised him as the legitimate ruler of Zululand at his coronation. Prior to the coronation Cetshwayo had restricted the access to guns to the Usuthu and in so doing prevented Hamu and Zibhebhu from obtaining them. The trader-chief, John Dunn, made it possible for King Cetshwayo to acquire the monopoly on guns and distributed these exclusively to Cetshwayo's Usuthu followers. In return for his efforts, Dunn was given cattle and land. Cetshwayo's authority in Zululand grew as Dunn obtained more guns and culminated in the coronation of Cetshwayo as king of Zululand.<sup>52</sup> King Cetshwayo had also manipulated trade to increase his military stature and by obtaining guns exclusively, gained a decisive edge over his rivals. Once the rivals had acquiesced and accepted Cetshwayo as their King, the control on the gun trade was relaxed and Hamu and Zibhebhu were able to purchase guns. The disunited Zulu Kingdom that Shepstone believed was on the verge of a revolution to oust Cetshwayo was clearly a figment of his imagination. King Cetshwayo allowed all factions in Zululand to be armed with guns after 1873<sup>53</sup> - surely not the action of a king fearing an imminent revolution!

51. GRO., PCC/1/27, Sir Michael Hicks-Beach Papers, Letters from Frere : Frere - Hicks Beach, 27 October 1878
52. BPP., C.1137, Report by Shepstone on Cetshwayo's installation as King, September 1875, p.5
53. Guy, J.J : A note on Firearms in the Zulu Kingdom : with special reference to the Anglo-Zulu War, 1879, (Journal of African History, Vol. 12, 1971 p. 559).

Shepstone was critical of Dunn for his involvement in Zulu domestic politics without the approval of the Natal colonial government. The Natal Executive Council had previously found Dunn's involvement in Zululand to be injudicious and ill-advised and he was censured for his conduct.<sup>54</sup>

In the 1870s it was clear that Natal Colony under the Shepstone's was inept in its handling of Africans. The absence of an African policy threatened the speculators who, by 1877 owned huge tracks of land in Natal Colony. Many speculators of British or colonial origin owned 2-3 hundred thousand acres of land.<sup>55</sup> Between 1874 and 1878, the local situation in southern Africa and Lord Carnarvon's policies shaped the course of events that Bartle Frere was to follow. Carnarvon's confederation policy was partly intended to facilitate capitalist production in southern Africa. In this regard, the Zulus were seen as the major obstacle to the scheme and consequently had to be conquered. There was however no pre-conceived plan as such, only a dialectic of Empire that motivated men such as Carnarvon and Frere.

By 1875 the free flow of labour to Natal Colony, Griqualand West and the Cape was impeded by the Pass Laws which had been enacted in the ZAR in 1873 and 1874. If Britain was to impose a market economy in southern Africa, it would be vital to procure cheap labour and it was therefore essential in British policy to transform the African tribes into a local work force. The greatest number of workers would have to be obtained at the lowest cost. Shepstone was well aware of this :

*The Makate or Basutu race, ... are not unwilling to travel hundreds of miles on foot in large parties in search of suitable employment at the diamond fields, and in the Cape and Natal Colonies, and many of them have done so in spite of the insecure condition in which they have left their families...*

54. KC, Ms. 26515, Official Letter : Shepstone - Lt. Gov. Scott, 2 December 1856

55. BPP., C.1961, General Correspondence : Shepstone - Carnarvon, 11 August 1877, P.71

*Measures are being taken to prepare the way (to)... bringing all the native tribes in the Transvaal under the control of intelligent Government officers, and I have no doubt that although this will be costly at first, it will far more than repay any expenditure upon it... I have remarked more at length on the native question, because I believe that in it is included the most valuable resource of the country.*

*The agricultural and mineral riches of the country can best be made available by the free labour which these people are willing to give for moderate wages as soon as confidence in the stability and justice of Government is established, and the readiness with which they, so unlike the Zulus, adopt European clothing, will soon add thousands to the number of those who consume the many articles of England.<sup>56</sup>*

The wealth of the ZAR, namely its agricultural production and its mineral riches including gold, coal, copper and lead had all been 'absorbed' by the 1877 annexation.<sup>57</sup>

Local African labour was therefore vital to colonial interests and to capitalists abroad if the industrialising colonial economy was to develop. Any threat to realising the overall objective of British hegemony had to be removed. Just as the ZAR was removed as a threat by annexation, so to Cetshwayo's Zulu Kingdom would have to be removed as a threat to imperial interests, and by force if necessary. Independent African Kingdoms were an anachronism to Sir Bartle Frere. They had to be modernised and conquered if need be. Zululand was an indispensable link in the chain of territory Britain wished to control in southern Africa. The traditional strategic motive of protecting the searoute to India encourage the British pursuit of hegemony in southern Africa and this happened to coincide with the rise of new industrial power competitors and with greater demands for raw materials.

56. BPP., C.1961, General Correspondence : Shepstone - Camarvon, 11 August 1877, no.27

57. BPP., C.1399, General Correspondence : J.A. Froude - Camarvon, 10 January 1876 , no.50

Natal's internal labour shortages were exacerbated by regional competition for labour. It became necessary to introduce migrant labour into Natal as the Zulus could not be coerced into working in meaningful numbers for the white settlers.<sup>58</sup> Shepstone tried to promote European agriculture and commercial techniques but he did not receive adequate funding from the Colonial and British authorities. He relied on the Colonial Office to support him and proceeded to conduct his administration through an artificially revived tribal structure, in which fragmentary clans were grouped together and :

*appointed or 'unborn' chiefs were installed over those tribes which lacked a hereditary ruler. Under this system Natal's African population was subject to its own traditional tribal law, in so far as it was not repugnant to humanitarian considerations. This law was administered by the chiefs themselves, with the assistance of 'white Native magistrates' and with the right of appeal to the Secretary for Native Affairs, in his capacity as 'induna' to the Supreme Chief. Who was the Lieutenant Governor of the colony.*<sup>59</sup>

As early as 1856, Natal Colonists had been experiencing problems in obtaining sufficient labourers as a result of the restrictive nature of Shepstone's Reserve System. They investigated the idea of importing indentured Indian workers. By 1860, 1593 Indians entered Natal as indentured workers. These numbers swelled to 6445 by 1866.<sup>60</sup> Between 1869 and 1874 another severe labour shortage occurred. African, cheap labour had to be found for the expanding Natal Colony economy.<sup>61</sup> Shepstone wrote to John Dunn in 1863 and considered using Tsonga migrant labourers in Natal.<sup>62</sup> Tsonga migrants were allowed entry to Natal Colony on three-year labour contracts. They would have to pass through Zululand to get to Natal Colony and King Cetshwayo was not eager to allow them to pass into Natal as he feared he would lose 'manpower that procured the annual tribute'.<sup>63</sup>

58. The Natal Witness, 26 August 1870 (editorial), p.1

59. Guest, W.R. ; Langalibalele : The Crisis in Natal, 1873-1875, p. 18

60. Welsh, D. : The Roots of Segregation : Native Policy in Natal, 1845-1910, Chapters 3-5 and 10

61. Ibid., p. 180

62. N A, SNA, 1/1/13 of 1863, Dunn - Shepstone, 8 July 1863

63. Ibid

Shepstone negotiated the flow of Tsonga labourers with Cetshwayo and in August 1873 the latter invited Shepstone to his coronation and to give British recognition to his accession to the Zulu throne. On September 1<sup>st</sup>, 1873, Shepstone installed Cetshwayo as King of Zululand.

King Cetshwayo allowed Tsonga workers to travel along the Zululand coast to Natal Colony and back after Shepstone promised that all Tsonga thieves would be arrested. From 1874 to 1879, numerous Tsongas were coerced to work in Natal.<sup>64</sup> Although Tsonga migrants had alleviated the labour needs of Natal's farmers and railway builders, and helped develop the economic base of the colony, there was still a huge demand for labour that a conquered Zulu nation could meet. The Tsonga played the preponderant role in establishing sugar cultivation in Natal Colony. The Natal Mercury editor described Tsongas (amatongas), as a peacefully inclined peoples and as an industrious race. It went on that about 2500 Tsongas entered Natal per annum.<sup>65</sup>

By the end of 1870, numerous migrant workers in Natal Colony including Tsongas, Pedi and Sothos were moving away from Natal to better paid work on the diamond diggings in Griqualand West. In February 1876 the resident magistrate of Natal's Tugela district commented on the high volume of Tsongas passing through to the Griqualand West diggings.<sup>66</sup> The withdrawal of many Tsongas placed a huge financial burden on the shoulders of many Tsongas returned home for fear of conscription by the British to fight the Zulus. Some returned to serve with the Zulus against the British.

The massive influx of colonial and foreign diamond diggers created new markets for manufactured goods and this augured well for the creation of the new economy in southern Africa provided that the native races could be subjugated.

64. N A, SNA, 1/1/24, Dunn - Shepstone, 18 February

65. The Natal Mercury, 29 February 1876, p.15

66. N A, SNA, 1/3/26 R233/76, RM Upper Tugela to SNA, 25 February 1876

Carnarvon, like Shepstone, came to believe that 'a defeat of the Zulu King would act more powerfully than any other means in disheartening the native races of South Africa'.<sup>67</sup> Shepstone also feared that the Zulu military structure was frustrated by its inability to wage wars of conquest given the presence of whites in the ZAR and Natal Colony. He also expressed the belief in a despatch to Frere that the Zulus would have been economically prosperous if their warriors were labourers working for wages rather than a military menace to their neighbours.<sup>68</sup>

In replying to Bulwer's arbitration idea, King Cetshwayo vehemently denied that he had belligerent intentions, but did explain that he had told his people living in the disputed territory to remain there until the issue of ownership was resolved. He furthermore ordered the construction of the *ikhanda* as it would serve as a garrison from which his subjects in the area could be monitored but had in the interests of peace ordered them to disperse. King Cetshwayo regarded Shepstone as a warmonger and said he was prepared to accept Bulwer's suggestion of arbitration over the disputed lands providing that a preliminary investigation would be undertaken by Natal commissioners prior to the High Commissioners arbitration. Bulwer believed that if the Zulus wanted a peaceful resolution to the dispute, British interests should also strive for peace. In this regard he hoped Shepstone would tow the line.<sup>69</sup>

Shepstone did not share Bulwer's optimism concerning a peaceful resolution to the dispute and regarded any peaceful solution which might come about to be of a purely temporary nature. He did nonetheless harbour a belief that King Cetshwayo would back down rather than risk a war, and firmly believed that King Cetshwayo would have accepted the claims he had made, had it not been for Bulwer's interference. Shepstone also resented Bulwer's offer of arbitration as it had undermined his leadership role in the region and he claimed the issue was well under control until Bulwer became involved.

67. C A, GH 4/6, Confidential papers : Carnarvon - Frere, 23 January 1878

68. N A, SP 68, Shepstone - Frere, 5 January 1878, pp. 317-318

69. N A, GH 1325, Bulwer - Shepstone, 8 January 1878, no.468

*I take it that the description given by your messengers of the relief and satisfaction afforded to Cetshwayo and his Indunas by your message, shows that I was not far wrong in my estimate of the situation at that moment; naturally they would all say that your words were unlike my words; that yours were comforting while mine were disturbing; mine put pressure upon them, yours took it off, and relieved them from the necessity of further negotiating with me on a question upon which they must feel themselves in the wrong.<sup>70</sup>*

Shepstone's attempt to negotiate with the Zulus were fruitless as they would not give up their claims to the disputed lands.

He clearly deceived himself in believing, falsely, that he was in total control of the situation. If he had been, he would surely not have appealed to Bulwer for help. It was clear to Bulwer, based on despatches from Shepstone to him, after the latter's son and Rudolph had returned from King Cetshwayo, that Shepstone believed war to be inevitable. Shepstone was no doubt infuriated by Bulwer's clear understanding of the motives of the Zulus. It was after all Shepstone who was supposed to be the expert on the Zulu nation. The Secretary of State for Colonies, Michael Hicks Beach, clearly thought Bulwer to be better qualified to deal with the Zulus.<sup>71</sup> Shepstone, in an attempt to save face, sent a petition to Bulwer signed by 79 farmers from the Transvaal and Natal Colony in which they objected to arbitration with King Cetshwayo whom they regarded as a murderer. The farmers also urged Shepstone to fight the Zulus and promised their support in a war against King Cetshwayo.

Bulwer would not be duped by the petition. The farmers wanted war and were opposed to arbitration as they realised they could lose their claim to the disputed territory. The majority of Natal Colonists also believed, according to *The Natal Mercury*, that arbitration would not be in favour of King Cetshwayo and that war would therefore be unavoidable.<sup>72</sup>

70. N A, SP 68, Shepstone - Bulwer, 14 January 1878, p.321

71. BPP., C.2000, Hicks Beach - Bulwer, 14 February 1878, no. 98, p.153

72. *The Natal Mercury*, 11 March 1878, p.12



Sir Bartle Frere saw arbitration as a useful exercise as it would allow more time to prepare for the inevitable hostilities and was hardly dismayed at the violent solution which seemed imminent.

*I should rather expect, from what you have sent me on the subject, that the Zulu King like many other Military Despots, will be willing to accept an intervention which may give him what he desires without fighting for it; but that he will not accept with equal readiness any decision adverse to his own claims... Unless both Cetshwayo and his army and people have been greatly misrepresented, I do not see what reasonable hope we can entertain of their laying aside schemes of Military Conquest, and taking to the ways of peace... and if Cetshwayo were to get all that he demands, without a trial of strength, his subsequently remaining content with what he had got would be a phenomenon which the usual habits of Military despotism, civilised as well as uncivilized, hardly justified our expecting. Even if immediate hostilities be averted our position must, I fear, long continue to be one of armed observation...<sup>73</sup>*

Bulwer's Boundary Commission began its work on 17 March 1878 at Rorke's Drift, a Swedish mission station on the Natal side of the Mzinyathi River which separated Natal Colony from Zululand.

73. N A, GH 599, Frere - Bulwer, 26 January 1878, no.2

## CHAPTER 3

### Sir Bartle Frere and the Invasion of Zululand

The Border Commission comprising of the Acting Secretary for Native Affairs, J.W. Shepstone (Sir Theophilus's brother), Henrique Shepstone, Gert Rudolph the Landdrost of Utrecht, the Attorney-General, M. Gallwey, Lieutenant-Colonel A.W. Dumford, Piet Uys (a farmer), Gebula (an envoy of Cetshwayo's), Sihayo (a Zulu chief), Mundula (an ex-chief) and Cetshwayo's attendant Sintwangu began its task at Rorke's Drift on 12 March 1878. The Zulu delegation claimed the Mzinyathi River (Buffalo) to its sources and a line which extended from north of the Olifants river well into the eastern Transvaal. Land which Cetshwayo had previously abandoned as a claim, between the Ncome (Blood) river and the Mzinyathi river, was made into a formally claimed area by the Zulus. The Transvaal claimed the line of 1861 as their border and claims to land north of the Pongola river were made on the basis of a Swazi cession of 1855 and ignored a Zulu cession. The whites assumed that the Zulus could have no claim north the Pongola river. Initially the Zulus were distrustful of the Commission as they were not sure of its neutrality.<sup>1</sup> However as the Commission pressed on with its work, the Zulus were pleased that they were afforded equal treatment with the Transvaal delegates and were satisfied. Shepstone and his son Henrique were not as enthused by the equality of treatment given to Zulus.<sup>2</sup>

The Zulus clearly believed that they had got the better of the Border Commission whereas the Transvaal delegates were not too happy with the inquiry, suggesting that they were of the opinion that the Zulus had triumphed over them. King Cetshwayo sent a message to Bulwer in which he stated that he was most pleased with the way the Commission had carried out its tasks,<sup>3</sup> clearly expecting a favourable outcome for this people.

1. BPP., C2242, General Correspondence : Bulwer - Frere, 24 April 1878, pp.85-88
2. N A, SP 69, Letters : Shepstone - Frere, 12 October 1878, p.132
3. N A, SNA 1/7/13, Cetshwayo - Bulwer, 15 May 1878, p.114

By mid-April 1878 the Commission began to wind down its work and it became evident that the Transvaal had lost its claims based on the withdrawn attitudes of the Boer delegation. The Zulus on the other hand became more assertive and repudiated the existence of any boundary in the Utrecht district except for the Buffalo river. They also accused every witness giving evidence for the Boers of lying. As an insult to injury, they refused to accompany the Commissioners on an inspection of the disputed boundary as they believed their presence on such an inspection would be tantamount to admitting such a boundary indeed existed – and this they were ordered not to do.<sup>4</sup> The Transvaal case was not upheld and even before the Commission's task ended it was expected that the Boers would lose their claim.<sup>5</sup>

A new round of tension in the border area between the Transvaal and the Zulu Kingdom began in May 1878 as both Boers and Zulus made attempts to reoccupy the land after the Commission had reached its final decision in favour of the Zulus. The report completed on 20 June did not concede every Zulu claim but certainly weighed heavily in favour of the Zulus. A group of Shepstone supporters wrote a petition protesting the outcome of the Commission's findings but he replied that Bulwer was now solely responsible for all issues relating to Zulu affairs – a claim denied by the latter.<sup>6</sup> Bulwer despatched the Border Commission Report to the High Commissioner, Sir Henry Bartle Frere, who was now able to devote his time to the problems in the Transvaal and Zululand, since the Ninth Cape Eastern Frontier war had ended (1878).

Frere, the most revered imperial administrator who had made his mark as Commissioner of Sind in India, was at the pinnacle of his illustrious career. Lord Carnarvon considered him to be a philanthropist and one who had the welfare of natives at heart. He was greatly admired by civil servants who had served in India.<sup>7</sup>

4. The Natal Witness, 27 April 1878, p. 4

5. The Natal Mercury, 8 April 1878, p.2

6. N A, GH 791, minute by Bulwer, 28 June 1878

7. Woodruff, P. (pseud. Of Philip Mason, Civil Servant in India) : The Men Who Ruled India : the Guardians, p. 42

Norman Etherington, a historian of note on South Africa who is often cited as a source by many other Anglo-Zulu War historians :

*In his treatment of the Zulu-Transvaal boundary dispute Frere resembles nothing quite so much as the sinister banker of western movies who uses legal technicalities to bamboozle honest ranchers out of water holes or oil wells... No African hatted banker ever laid down more impossible conditions or set a shorter deadline for compliance.<sup>8</sup>*

Etherington sees Frere's villainy as very clear but believes it has obscured the deeper, underlying causes of the Anglo-Zulu war. I agree with Etherington's assessment of Frere as a villain with a sinister role, but see that role as vital to the realisation of Britain's hegemonistic ambitions. Frere clearly interpreted the situation he was in, in southern Africa, in the broader context of imperialistic necessity. His commendation to Queen Victoria by Carnarvon as a sympathiser with the native races and a great humanitarian may well have been true – but while in India not while he was in southern Africa. Carnarvon also regarded Frere to be a leader with a 'stronghand'.<sup>9</sup>

Lord Carnarvon's Confederation Scheme was to all intents and purposes a response to the need to have a constant supply of cheap labour,<sup>10</sup> with which to exploit the immense natural resources in southern Africa to the ultimate benefit of Britain. The southern African region was vital to British imperial interests. Obtaining the Zulu nation as a source of wage labour in order 'to facilitate the advance of capitalist production' was undoubtedly part of Frere's agenda.<sup>11</sup>

8. Etherington, N.A., 'Anglo-Zulu Relations 1856-1878' in Duminy, A., and Ballard, C., (eds) : The Anglo-Zulu War : new perspectives, Natal University Press, Pietermaritzburg, 1981 pp. 13-52
9. Carnarvon to Frere, 13 October 1876, in Martineau, J. : The Life and Correspondence of Sir Bartle Frere, p.117
10. Etherington, N.A. : 'Anglo-Zulu Relations 1856-1878', pp. 21-27
11. Guy, J.J. :The British invasion of Zululand : Some Thoughts for the Centenary Year,( Reality, 11(1), January 1979, p. 8).

Frere tended to believe that his opinion was always the correct one and he consequently believed that whatever action he took to further Camarvon's Scheme had to be correct. Camarvon supported Frere to the hilt and regarded Frere :

*as the statesman who seems to me most capable of carrying my scheme of confederation into effect, and whose long administrative experience and personal character give me the best chances of success.*<sup>12</sup>

Frere reciprocated his master's support and said he would like very few things better than 'to be associated in any way with such a great policy as yours in South Africa, entering as I do into the imperial importance of your masterly scheme...'<sup>13</sup> In analysing Britain's motives for supporting a confederation policy, James Morris explains that although there was a dialectic of Empire, there was no manifesto or dogma or even desire by Britain to facilitate, officially at any rate, the advance of capitalist production in southern Africa.<sup>14</sup> It was however explicitly supported by Camarvon as the Secretary of State for the Colonies and an independent Zulu Kingdom was a major obstacle and as such had to be removed.<sup>15</sup>

Wage labour was regarded by numerous Victorians as a civilising process and civilisation as capable of including the advance of capitalist production. Any and all resulting conflict which might arise in the pursuance of advancing capitalist production was conveniently placed under the category of 'Native Questions' whose primary issues were labour acquisition and land absorption. These issues were the seeds of the confederation policy. Both Camarvon and Frere were also greatly concerned about the possibility of foreign power interference in the southern African region given its importance in the hegemonistic ambitions of Britain and especially its strategic value *vis-à-vis* the Indian subcontinent.

12. Camarvon to Frere, 13 October 1876, in Martineau, J. : Life of Frere, p. 162

13. Ibid., p. 163

14. Morris, J. : Pax Britannica, p. 500

15. Guy, J.J. : 'The destruction and reconstruction of Zulu Society', in Marks, S., and Rathbone, R., (eds) : Industrialisation and social change in South Africa : African class formation, culture and consciousness, 1870-1830, pp. 184-193

Camraron regarded southern Africa as a region which possessed the elements of a dominion which would allow capitalists to attract labour and develop an economy. This would give Britain an even greater position amongst nations but as time passed it was becoming exceedingly difficult to keep other powers out of the region. Frere saw as a necessary first step in the preservation of the sovereignty of the British Crown in southern Africa, 'a Confederation of South African Colonies and States under the British Crown'.<sup>16</sup>

Using force to achieve peace was regarded by the British 'colonial ruling class' as ethically justifiable and subjugating independent tribes to imperial control could only bring progress and civilisation to 'primitive barbarian societies'.<sup>17</sup> Britain undoubtedly wished to maintain her supremacy in all her spheres of influence and Frere's actions in invading Zululand must be seen in this context as all imperial authority was gained by the use of force. British sovereignty had to be maintained and extended in southern Africa and the ZAR Boers and the Zulu Kingdom had to be subjected to British rule.

Frere argued that "primitive, barbaric, indigenous tribes" were bound to disintegrate as soon as they encountered missionaries and traders. Other civilising influences were brought in by European colonists and especially contact with the British. He was also of the opinion that Arab rulers such as the Sultan of Zanzibar were worthy of British support particularly after the abolition of the slave trade. The great commercial benefit of a East African Empire could not be ignored and if Britain could dominate the area from east Africa to the Cape Colony, she would gain enormous mineral riches and access to previously untapped markets.<sup>18</sup>

16. CO, 879/14, African No. 162, Confidential, Frere to Hicks Beach, 5 September 1878 p. 331

17. Maylam, P. : 'The Official Mind and the war : the view from the Colonial Office' (Unpublished paper- Anglo Zulu War Centenary Conference, Durban, February 1979 pp. 5-12).

18. Emery, F.V : South Africa's Best Friend, ( Sir Bartle Frere at the Cape, 1877-1880, Theoria, 63 Oct. 1984).

Frere and Carnarvon were adamant to assert British hegemony in the whole of southern Africa. Writing to Frere in 1876, Carnarvon explained his ideas for a British dominated sub-continent, from which all foreign rivals should be excluded :

*When I speak of geographical limits I am not expressing my real opinion. We cannot admit rivals in the East or even the central parts of Africa : and I do not see why... the Zambesi should be considered to be without the range of our colonisation. To a considerable extent, if not entirely, we must be prepared to apply a sort of Munro (sic) doctrine to much of Africa.<sup>19</sup>*

The "Native problem" as perceived by Carnarvon, had to be solved before a confederation of white-ruled states bearing the costs of its own administration, yet still British controlled, could come into operation. Frere was determined to have things go his way in southern Africa and constantly placated his critics in Britain by emphasizing the economic gains that could be derived by the implementation of his policies regarding the Natives. He hoped to bring all African tribes under British hegemony and have them form part of a broader South African confederation while at the same time keeping firm control over the erstwhile Boer republics.

In a letter to Hicks Beach in August 1878, Frere wrote :

*There is no escaping from the responsibility which has already been incurred, ever since the English flag was planted on the Castle here. All our real difficulties have arisen, and still arise, from attempting to evade or shift this responsibility. The attempt always ends in and can have no other result than that of substituting the gun-runner and the canteen-keeper for the English magistrate.<sup>21</sup>*

19. Carnarvon to Frere, 12 December 1876. Quoted in Goodfellow, C.F. : Great Britain and South African Confederation, 1870-1881, p. 117
20. BPP., C2222, Frere - Hicks Beach, 14 December 1878, no.214, p.53
21. Frere - Hicks Beach, 10 August 1878, Martineau : Life of Frere, Vol. II, p. 259

The Colonial Office viewed the annexation of Zululand as a necessary action that would have to take place in the near future as it was going to be the major obstacle to the achievement of Carnarvon's confederation scheme. Frere became obsessed with the idea of eliminating the Zulus as a threat to the plan of a grand dominion of the British informally controlled territories from the Cape to the Zambezi River. By removing the obstacle of the Zulu Kingdom, Frere believed that the 'native problem' would be comprehensively solved. By overthrowing King Cetshwayo, the Zulu Kingdom's dictatorial rule would be a thing of the past and at the same time, other African tribes would be taught that Britain was not be challenged.

The Boers would also be satisfied by the destruction of Cetshwayo's Kingdom as Britain would have fulfilled its promise to protect the ZAR from the Zulus and other native peoples. The Boers in the ZAR were increasingly opposing British rule and would probably not be a happy party to confederation unless Britain was seen to be keeping its promises of defending Boer claims. Frere was perturbed by the Boer unhappiness that seemed to increase. Shepstone reported to Hicks Beach in May 1878 that :

*The violent language of the Boers still continues, and the employment of force to gain back the country to their rule is spoken of as a settled plan fully and finally determined upon. Messrs Kruger and Joubert will, it is expected, be back in four or five months, when the agitation will in all probability be renewed with greater energy and possibly with more serious results.*<sup>22</sup>

Carnarvon had always been committed to the idea of absorbing Zululand but delayed due to his fear of public outcry in Britain against further annexations.<sup>23</sup> Frere rationale was that 'guns and brandy carry the day... unless there is a civilized magistrate of a settled Government to keep peace and enforce order'.<sup>24</sup>

22. BPP., C2144, Shepstone - Hicks Beach, 9 May 1878, pp. 128-130

23. PRO, CO 30/6/33, Carnarvon to Frere, 7 June 1877, no.45

24. Frere - Hicks Beach, 28 October 1878, quoted in Martineau : Life of Frere, Vol. II, p. 260



Frere's prime consideration was the hegemony of Britain in southern Africa and the 'exclusive command of the seaboard from the Cape Colony up to the Portuguese frontier, on both the West and East coast'.<sup>25</sup> Once this 'exclusive command' was in place it would be virtually impossible for the Zulus to import firearms from the Portuguese traders in Delagoa Bay.

The Zulus were, according to Frere, "savages" that were capable of higher values. He wrote :

Th

*They (the Zulus) belong to the same race which furnishes the good honoured volatile labourers and servants who abound in Natal, men capable of being moulded in the ways of civilization, and when not actually trained to manslaughter, not naturally blood-thirsty nor incurably barbarous.*<sup>26</sup>

He maintained that, unless the Zulu military system was disbanded and as long as Zululand was kept insecure by King Cetshwayo's rule, industry and commerce could not thrive.<sup>27</sup>

The Zulu monarchy had to be crushed. Sir Michael Hicks Beach shared Frere's views and reported to Frere that :

*Cetshwayo must be kept in order best the Unpopularity of the boundary award encourage him to war from the natural belief of a savage that we only yield from weakness.*<sup>28</sup>

There could be no threat allowed to British supremacy by the Zulus. Furthermore there were numerous economic advantages to be had by Britain if the Zulu military system and King Cetshwayo were to be done away with and replaced by indirect rule :

*Zulu would be slotted into its assigned place in the confederation rather like an Indian 'subjectally'.<sup>29</sup>*

25. N A, GH 600, Confidential papers : Frere - Hicks Beach, 5 September 1878

26. BPP., C.2260, note by Frere, 3 February 1879, no. 5, p.27

27. BPP., C.2222, Frere - Hicks Beach, 16 December 1878, no. 55, p.21

28. BPP., C.2219, Hicks Beach-Frere, 2 October 1878, no. 87A, p. 270

29. Laband, J. : Kingdom in Crisis: The Zulu Response to the British Invasion of Zululand p. 33

Progress in Natal Colony on the economic front was being stifled by the Zulu military machine which was gradually acquiring guns. In 1877, agents of the Crown informed the Colonial Secretary of Natal that they had been unable to raise capital for much needed railway construction in Natal Colony as possible investors feared losing their money due to the Zulus among themselves for possible attack against Natal Colony.<sup>30</sup> The rudimentary system of transport that existed was insufficient to handle the growing need for manufactured goods and foodstuffs in a growing economically important region. Effective railway links were sorely needed. The Zulus therefore needed to be subjugated as a matter of urgency. Uncivilized neighbours could not be allowed to thwart growth. Frere came to the conclusion that it would not be possible to improve relations with the Zulu Kingdom unless it was annexed and Zulus governed as a subject race by British officers who would enforce the rule of British law. This did not necessarily mean that the Zulus would lose their culture or traditional way of life – they would simply be raised to a higher stage of civilisation in which a European type British Government would have the upper hand. If they did not control the 'uncivilised' natives would become more barbaric and pose even greater danger to Natal and British hegemonistic ambitions.<sup>31</sup>

Frere regarded the Zulu culture as one which was inferior to the Indian and European civilisations. For this reason, the Zulus and other African peoples were always to be treated as junior partners in the confederation that was being planned for southern Africa.<sup>32</sup>

The intensifying of the idea of racial differences that was founded on the attitudes of the post-Enlightenment period undoubtedly influenced Frere into taking the view that whites were superior to other races. Crude stereo-typical thinking pervaded the 'corridors' of power where indigenous peoples were regarded as inferior to whites who had come from the metropolis.

30. NT164, T643/1877, Crown Agents to Colonial Secretary, 14 June 1877

31. BPP., C.2222, Frere-Hicks Beach, no.54, 14 December 1878, pp. 211-213

32. Martineau. : Life of Frere, p.70

The hierarchical nature of imperial society promoted the idea of the racial superiority of whites. Frere, as a colonial administrator and imperial civil servant, living in great splendour overseas sought to create a replace of British social life in southern Africa. This was precisely because of the enhanced position he enjoyed in his overseas vocation. He would most likely not have aspired to the heights he enjoyed overseas if he had remained in Britain. Frere wished to promote the British Empire as the highest stage of capitalism and could not allow the Zulus to stand in his way. The ZAR had been annexed in 1877 as the Boers were not voluntary collaborators in the confederation scheme. The Zulu Kingdom would have to be approached differently however he advocated a 'forward policy' for Zululand that included conquest and annexation but where British control was to be more informal than formal in nature.<sup>33</sup> He was totally against any of the African tribes ruling themselves in a confederation and although chiefs would have some input to make in administration of their territories :

*The principles of administration and of the law administered must be everywhere those of modern civilisation, not of Kaffirdom, embodying the ruling ideas of the English, Dutch and Roman Law-givers, not of the Kaffir Chief and his councillors.*<sup>34</sup>

As early as 1875, Camarvon wrote to Sir Henry Barkly the High Commissioner, explaining his fears that the Zulus and other tribes would capitalize on white disunity and in 'combination', dislodge Britain from strategic position in southern Africa.<sup>35</sup> His intention was clear for all to see, Zululand was to be annexed at all costs and by force if need be. Writing to Chelmsford in 1879 Frere states :

33. *Ibid.*, p. 491

34. BPP., C.2144, General Correspondence : Minute for Ministers Attention, 4 June 1878, pp.166-168

35. BPP., C.1244, General Correspondence : Camarvon - Barkly, 4 May 1875, no.1, p.86

*You will virtually annex and settle the country as you proceed, and greatly simplify proceedings when Cetewayo is disposed of. I have no idea of recommending any revival of a paramount chief or King or of any separate Zulu nationality... H.M. Troops, will keep order among the chiefs who submit and obey, and will after putting down opposition govern directly, through Headmen, the subjects of those who resist – all as subjects of Queen Victoria.*<sup>36</sup>

The Zulu Kingdom was, according to Frere, responsible for the Pedi uprising against the Transvaal as well as the war on the Cape eastern frontier. Cetshwayo was encouraging anti-white activity and was the thorn in Britain's side. As such, there could be no peace in Southern Africa in general as long as Cetshwayo and the Zulus enjoyed their position of power.<sup>37</sup>

The Victorian perceptions that the Zulu Kingdom was the "major conspirator" in an "anti-white plot" was also accepted by Chelmsford, who took it a step further and included the ZAR Boers in it. Chelmsford saw the Boers as a 'cause of anxiety and there is reason to believe that they are in communication with both Cetshwayo and Sekhukhune' in a great regional conspiracy against Britain.<sup>38</sup>

Frere subsequently based his policies towards chiefdoms on the premise that a conspiracy was afoot and he deluded himself into the acceptance of such an erroneous belief. He could not however substantiate his belief and admitted to the Colonial Office that he knew of no definite agreement between any two tribes to oust whites from the region. He did nonetheless believe that there existed 'a common purpose and a general understanding that the time was now come for the African races to shake off the domination of the white and to expel them from the country and that King Cetshwayo was the head and moving spirit of the combination'.<sup>39</sup>

36. Guy, J.J :The British Invasion of Zululand : Some Thoughts for the Centenary Year, (Reality, 11(1), January 1979, p. 12).

37. BPP., C.1776, General Correspondence : Shepstone - Camarvon, 6 March 1877, p.107

38. BPP., C.2144, General Correspondence : Thesiger - War office, 10 April 1878, no.29, p.29

39. BPP., C.2222, Letters : Frere - Hicks Beach, 10 December 1878, no.45, pp.182-186

Hicks Beach believed that the Zulu people would welcome British rule, especially if they had a measure of control in an indirect fashion. He did not agree with Frere's sentiments concerning Zulu hostility. There is very little room for doubt that Frere was aware of the real situation in southern Africa but he was determined to assert British hegemony throughout the entire region at a time when 'civilisation' was extending beyond the boundaries of formal British control. In a series of despatches to the Colonial Office, Frere explained his reasoning *vis-à-vis* the situation as he saw it in southern Africa

*You must not expect peace... till the chiefs have satisfied themselves who is master. When once they have learned that lesson it must be our fault if they forgot it; for ... they are more easily governed than most Indian nations, but they must be governed! Not neglected and left to follow their own devices.<sup>40</sup>*

The Colonial Office was against war being waged in southern Africa as an instrument of policy during Carnarvon's term of office and after his resignation and this reluctance posed a dilemma for Frere. If he stated outright that he wished to attack the Zulus in order to achieve confederation, he would most certainly have been prohibited from so doing. It therefore became essential for him to oust Britain from the region and to declare and that the Zulus were overtly hostile towards British interests. He insisted that the mighty Zulu war machine could only be dismantled by an external force which was mightier – with that thought in mind he resolved that war was unavoidable. This thought was clearly in place by December 1877 in a letter to Carnarvon :

*Our  
object is not conquest, but simply supremacy to Delagoa Bay. This will have to be asserted some day and the operation will not become easier by delay. The trial of strength will be forced on you;<sup>41</sup>*

40. Frere - Herbert, 18 March 1878, in Martineau : Life of Frere, Vol. II, p. 225

41. PRO., CO 30/6/34, Original Correspondence : Frere - Carnarvon, 19 December 1877

Hicks Beach gave Frere a great deal of independence but the latter would have to motivate a need for war against the Zulus if he was to succeed in his mission of forging the confederation plan. It became his primary objective to construct an image of the Zulus as a belligerent tribe and to show that King Cetshwayo was a bloodthirsty tyrant. At his coronation, Cetshwayo had promised not to execute his subjects without a trial and he was not adhering to his promise. His hostility was becoming more evident in a series of unpleasant incidents and the atmosphere was becoming more strained as border incidents were reported to be increasing in number and intensity. As stated earlier, missionaries returned from the Zulu Kingdom with stories of King Cetshwayo's brutality towards his own subjects. Frere believed King Cetshwayo would soon cast his eyes toward Natal Colony which must surely have been tempting, given its wealth and proximity to his Kingdom. Frere became convinced that King Cetshwayo would soon attack Natal Colony which was a more likely target than the ZAR.<sup>42</sup> Frere also convinced himself that the Zulu nation would welcome the downfall of King Cetshwayo and see the British as their liberators from tyrannical oppression. From May 1877 onwards, the number of letters from mission stations in Zululand reporting greater brutality on the part of King Cetshwayo increased in volume. King Cetshwayo was reported to have been having Zulu converts to Christianity brutalised and killed. However as stated previously, many of the reports were unreliable as many missionaries had a hidden agenda in that they too desired British annexation. Frere eagerly latched on to the reports which although without foundation, would serve to convert the feelings of the British public in favour of war against the Zulus once they reached London.

The report of the Boundary Commission was received by Frere on 15 July 1878. He immediately began to analyse the report and soon concluded that if the report favoured the Zulu claims it would be catastrophic for the Confederation scheme. He wrote to Bulwer explaining :

42. BPP., C.2234, Memo by Theisiger, 28 September 1878, p.14

*I do not see how the Zulu claims can be admitted without the Transvaal giving up portions of territory which have for years been unquestioned as belonging to the Transvaal Republic. Apart from all other objections to such a course, any such surrender would be inconsistent with the pledges given by Sir. T. Shepstone to the inhabitants of the Transvaal, that, in taking them over, the British Government would maintain the integrity of their State, and repel the unjust encroachments of native tribes...*

However, Frere would certainly not conciliate the Boers at the expense of the Zulu and be seen to be doing it. He therefore denied...

*Any possible concessions to the Zulu demands will render our Frontier more secure against further unjust aggression by the Zulu Chief and his allies.<sup>43</sup>*

Sir Henry Bulwer, as Lieutenant-Governor of Natal Colony, had appointed the Boundary Commission. He hoped to avoid war and tended to go along with the idea that Zulu claims to the disputed territory might in fact be valid. He did not believe that Zulu aggression was imminent in Natal Colony or that King Cetshwayo would not be restrained by his own subjects who were more prudent and who did not wish to provoke the British. Bulwer was also not convinced of the existence of a 'African' conspiracy against whites in southern Africa even though *Indunas* might have been communicating with one another. He regarded all disturbances as events in isolation and believed they could be dealt with as such :

*dealing with it separately and distinctly as a separate and distinct matter – and by treating in the usual manner and with the usual confidence all those which are not concerned in it.<sup>44</sup>*

43. N A, GH 599, Frere -Bulwer, 7 May 1878, p.80

44. N A, GH 1326, Bulwer - Frere, 12 June 1878 , no.96

Bulwer believed that all minor outbreaks of violence could be contained and as such a major conflagration could be avoided.

Frere communicated his viewpoint on the findings of the Boundary Commission to Bulwer. He was greatly concerned that the Boers would be most displeased and that this displeasure would push most of the Boers who had previously supported the annexation of the ZAR, into supporting the anti-annexation Boer faction. By 9 August, Frere authorised Bulwer to explain the findings of the award to the ZAR delegates and the Zulus and to accept from the Boers any claims for compensation which they might make.<sup>45</sup>

The Zulu argument had been accepted by the Commission, namely that, according to the Zulu customs, the land belonged to the nation as a whole and that King Cetshwayo had no power to cede land to anyone else without first gaining the full approval of the Zulu nation. The Commission summed up that :

*no session of territory was every made by the Zulu nation, and that even had such cession been made by either King Umpanda, or after him King Cetywayo, such would have been null and void unless confirmed by the voice of the Chiefs and people, according to the customs of the Zulus.*<sup>46</sup>

Frere feared that the Transvaal Boers would reject the arbitration and 'even if they trek away will carry discontent wherever they go, and furnish the Boer agitators with a convincing proof of their charges of bad faith against our Government'.<sup>47</sup>

45. BPP., C.2222, General Correspondence : Frere - Bulwer, 9 August 1878, no.19, pp. 29-30

46. BPP., C.2220, General Correspondence : Border Commission Report, 30 June 1878, p.380

47. BPP., C.2222, General Correspondence : Frere - Bulwer, 15 July 1878, p.25



Bulwer urged Frere to arbitrate personally, which Frere agreed to do but he also instructed Bulwer to make a copy of the Boundary Commission's report available to Shepstone for his perusal and comment.<sup>48</sup> Shepstone echoed Frere's belief that the report would alienate the ZAR Boers and serve to undermine the confederation plan in the process.<sup>49</sup> Frere hoped to use Shepstone's comments to overturn the findings of the Boundary Commission, but he did not receive them until November when they would not be of any use. The Commission was attacked by Frere for supposedly rejecting documentary evidence which would support the ZAR claims. The Commission was able to show that at least a part of the so-called ZAR documentary evidence was false.<sup>50</sup> Frere protested and said that as the Zulus and Boers were semi-migratory peoples, he could find no better 'claim which either party could advance to the lands they stood on than that of possession, and power to hold and govern', furthermore he believed that the Boers had conquered the lands by force and were therefore possessors of local title to the lands. Furthermore, the Boers, said Frere, 'a sincere belief in the divine authority for what they did, and therefore a far higher title than the Zulus could claim for all they acquired'.<sup>51</sup>

Frere recognised that the Commissioners decision concerning the award of land to the Zulus was final and would not be overturned. Another excuse for war had to be found. A Chief named Sirayo had two wives both of whom had taken lovers. While Sirayo was at Ulundi, the eldest son of the one wife discovered her illicit affair and decided to kill her. She however got wind of the murder plot and fled together with the other wife and their lovers into Natal Colony. The son and an armed group of men raided into Natal in pursuit of the two women. After two raids, both wives were dragged back into Zululand and killed. Bulwer demanded that the raiders be extradited to Natal Colony where the Natal authorities would deal with them. King Cetshwayo however argued that according to Zulu custom, the murdered wives were guilty, and in any case the killings had taken place in Zululand and not Natal Colony.

48. N A, SP32, Frere - Shepstone, 27 August 1878

49. N A, SP69, Shepstone - Frere, 12 October 1878

50. BPP., C.2222, General Correspondence : Memo by Frere and replies by Commissioners, 27 September 1878, pp.27-40

51. BPP., C.2222, General Correspondence : minute by Frere, (undated) , p.45

Bulwer saw the Zulu actions as nothing more than the actions of a barbaric kingdom, but Frere saw the violation of Natal territory by the Zulus as a sign that they condoned such action and that King Cetshwayo was anything but a submissive neighbour. Frere concluded that King Cetshwayo would soon violate Natal's territory with his entire army. Shepstone and Frere, but especially the former colluded with various missionaries in Zululand to create a crisis. The missionaries had for years been stifled in Zululand by the rule of the King whom they regarded as a tyrannical savage. A few of the missionaries including Robert Robertson, Hans Schreuder and others were only too eager to provide 'evidence' of King Cetshwayo's alleged barbarity which created panic amongst the ranks of the settlers in Natal Colony.

Orsmund Oftebro, a Norwegian missionary in Zululand, in collusion with Theophilus Shepstone, was responsible for a large exodus of missionaries from Zululand. He and Shepstone vehemently protested against the alleged persecution of proselyte Zulus by King Cetshwayo's army. As stated earlier, the vast majority of allegations against King Cetshwayo were without foundation but nonetheless had the effect of increasing anti-Cetshwayo sentiment and anti-Zulu hostility in general. King Cetshwayo was generally not in favour of attempts by missionaries to convert his people. Bulwer was not disposed to becoming involved in any activity against King Cetshwayo, since the activities of missionaries had always been beyond his jurisdiction.

When Carnarvon resigned as Secretary of State, to be replaced by Sir Michael Hicks Beach in early 1878, Frere was virtually free to act as he saw fit. Hicks Beach was happy to entrust the affairs in southern Africa to the man on the spot and Frere was left to his own discretion. On 23 September 1878, Frere arrived in Pietermaritzburg from Cape Town. He soon confirmed his views that King Cetshwayo and Zululand posed a major obstacle to British hegemony in southern Africa. He saw the incident of Sirayo's runaway wives as the ideal opportunity to further malign King Cetshwayo and re-ignite the atmosphere for a *cassus-belli* against the Zulu Kingdom.

He wrote to Hicks Beach a week after his arrival in Pietermaritzburg and suggested that King Cetshwayo should be served with an ultimatum that if he did not surrender the murderers of Sirayo's wives to the Natal authorities, then war should be declared against him. King Cetshwayo would not be swayed into handing the murderers over since they had killed on Zulu soil and disagreed totally with Bulwer who regarded incidents such as these as the consequence of having uncivilized people as neighbours. Frere's last despatch to Hicks Beach before leaving Cape Town also gives us an indication as to how he was intending to implement the Boundary Commission's report and why he was prepared to risk a war with King Cetshwayo:

*...15. On a review of the whole situation and from the best evidence I have met with, I am bound to state as my own opinion it would be impossible to imagine more precarious state of peace. It seems to me that the preservation of peace in Natal depends simply on the sufferance of the Zulu Chief, that while he professes a desire for peace every act is indicative of an intention to bring about war, and that this intention is shared, as far as it is possible to judge in such a despotism, by the majority of his people.*

*I have anxiously scanned the political horizon, as far as I can see it, without discerning any ground for hope that there is any intention on the part of the Zulu nation or its King to keep the peace longer than is necessary to put the English in the wrong by making them, if possible, strike the first blow.*

*16. I think his Excellency the Lieutenant-Governor would think this too gloomy a view of the situation, but after hearing all that his Excellency has been good enough to lay before me on the subject, I confess I am unable to take as sanguine a view as he does.*

*Apart from whatever may be the general wish of the Zulu nation, it seems to me that the seizure of the two refugee women in British territory by an armed force crossing an unmistakable and well-known boundary line, and carrying them off and murdering them with contemptuous disregard for the remonstrances of the Natal policemen, is in itself an insult and a violation of British territory which cannot be*

*passed over, and unless apologised and atoned for by compliance with the Lieutenant-Governor's demands that the leaders of the murderous gangs shall be given up to justice, it will be necessary to send the Zulu King an ultimatum which must put an end to pacific relations with our neighbours. To accept a solatium of 50L (£50), or of any amount for such an offence, while it is treated by the Zulus as a pardonable boyish freak, seems to me as incompatible with national honour as with the future safety of Her Majesty's Colony. I do not think Her Majesty's subjects can be expected to live on sufferance in such a neighbourhood.<sup>52</sup>*

In a further letter to Hicks Beach, Frere dismissed the opinions of Sir Henry Bulwer and once again attached great importance to the murder of Sirayo's wives by the raiding party. He regarded the situation as a volcano waiting to explode :

*Since we landed a week ago at Durban I have been so hard at work gathering information and putting it into condensed shape for you, that I can do little more than refer you to my despatch for the grounds of my conviction that the state of things here is far more serious than I had supposed possible. The people here seem slumbering on a volcano, and I much fear you will not be able to send out the reinforcements we have asked for, in time to prevent an explosion.*

*It is perhaps as well, for things could not go as they have done for the past few years – all who were not blind shutting their eyes to facts are before you.*

52. BPP., C.2220, Frere - Hicks Beach, 30 September 1878, no.105, p.280

*I speak with a deep sense of responsibility for what I say, when I assure you that the peace of South Africa for many years to come, seems to me to depend on your taking steps to put a final end to Zulu pretensions to dictate to H.M. Government what they may or may not do to protect H.M. Colonies in South Africa, and that unless you settle with the Zulus you will find it difficult, if not impossible, to govern the Transvaal without a considerable standing force of H.M. troops.*

*Nothing can be more hospitable than Sir Henry Bulwer, and nothing more cordial and frank than our relations both public and private. I found his opinions differed widely from mine on many points. On some I think I have succeeded, with Chelmsford's able assistance, in bringing him round to my view, on others I hope to do so, when he recognises as practically, as he does in theory, that the other colonies are not separate, or rival, 'nations', as it seems the fashion in Natal to consider them. Sir Henry is himself a thoroughly patriotic English gentleman, but he has never had much to do with military affairs, and many things which are burnt into one after a few years dealing with natives in India have to be explained to him, and he is not facile in altering opinions once formed.<sup>53</sup>*

In order to guard against a possible Boer revolt, extra troops were despatched from the Cape Colony to Natal Colony in early 1878. Frere realised that the Boers would be most unhappy with the award of territory by the Boundary Commission as a portion of land which the Boers regarded as theirs, was now declared to be Zulu territory. Britain had made an undertaking to protect Boer interests by the annexation of the ZAR and now appeared to be by reneging on the undertaking.

53. Worsford, W.B. : Sir Bartle Frere : a Footnote to the History of the British Empire, p. 92

To forestall what he believed to be an imminent Boer uprising, Frere undertook a visit to the Transvaal and Natal Colony, beginning in September 1878. He also wished to make the findings of the Boundary Commission known and attempt to force the Zulu Kingdom into his system of 'native administration'. He hoped to nullify the award by giving the Zulu King only a nominal sovereignty over the disputed lands. The Transvaal Boers would keep the 'individual rights of property which were obtained under the Transvaal Government',<sup>54</sup> and these would be enforced by a British Resident Frere would force onto the Zulus.

On 5 November 1878, Frere sent Hicks Beach a telegram asking for military reinforcements. Chelmsford (Thesiger) had concluded that there was a shortage of troops in Natal Colony which could have dire consequences for the colony. Frere consequently requested that at least two more battalions and some cavalry be despatched to Natal Colony from England. He believed the problems of Zululand and the Transvaal to be closely related and was particularly fearful of the 'native combination' mentioned previously. In the despatch Frere also emphasized that since the British had been unable to crush the Pedi, the Boers were not desirous of assisting British activities against African tribes. The British failure to effectively safeguard the sovereignty of whites in the Transvaal, made success by Britain in Zululand an urgent necessity. If the Transvaal was not effectively safeguarded against tribes, Britain would not be able to expect Boer acquiescence in her rule. Frere asked :

*Are we then forcibly to coerce the Zulus in order to secure the allegiance of the Transvaal?*

*Certainly not, if any one can show us reasonable grounds for expecting that the Zulus will be content to remain in peace within their own borders. But everything during the last twelve months has confirmed the belief that nothing of the kind can be expected from Cetshwayo.<sup>55</sup>*

54. The Natal Mercury, 20 December 1879, p.4

55. BPP., C.2222, Frere - Hicks Beach, 5 November 1878, no.6, pp.4-8

Frere argued that if he had more troops at his disposal, Chelmsford would quickly settle the 'Zulu difficulty'. The troops could be sent to India once the Zulus had been defeated. This would be a bonus to the defence of India as the troops would have already had experience of military matters making them invaluable to the maintenance of British supremacy.<sup>56</sup> Frere became convinced that the Zulu Kingdom could only be overthrown by force. Bulwer however was against Frere's plan to send more military personnel to Natal Colony for its supposed self-defence as this he believed, would endanger any peace prospects and would in any event be seen as an aggressive move by the Zulus. Frere overruled Bulwer and sent troops to Natal Colony. The latter eventually realised that the military reinforcements were not intended for self-defence but for an invasion of the Zulu Kingdom.<sup>57</sup>

Chelmsford in a despatch to the Surveyor-General of Ordnance, explained that Bulwer was not in favour of any British military movements which might be seen by King Cetshwayo to be hostile towards Zululand in intent, and recommended the postponement of any such actions.<sup>58</sup>

Frere did not believe that Chelmsford had enough troops for a war against the Zulus although the latter believed he had sufficient troops. Chelmsford was clearly envisaging a defensive war against the Zulus in which the currently available amount of troops would have been sufficient. Frere however had a different objective, namely the rapid invasion of the Zulu Kingdom by a sizeable British force – hence his suggestion to Chelmsford that troops numbers should be increased as a matter of priority.

Frere had previously described the position between Britain and the Zulus as an armed truce which he was eager to break down before it broke down due to the enormous tensions created by the Boundary Commissions findings.<sup>59</sup>

56. *Ibid.*, p. 8

57. BPP., C.2584, Bulwer - Hicks Beach, 10 March 1880, no.94, p.204

58. BPP., C.2234, Theisiger - Surveyor-General of Ordnance, 12 August 1878, no.1, p.1

59. BPP., C.2222, Frere - Bulwer, 9 August 1878, no.19, pp.80 -89

Chelmsford ignored an offer by Frere to apply for another regiment so Frere took the initiative and wrote to Hicks Beach requesting two more battalions which he said were necessary for peace to be maintained. The extra troop presence would also deter any possible anti-British agitation in the ZAR from escalating into an insurrection.<sup>60</sup> Frere however was intent on an invasion of Zululand as he hoped to force the Zulus to accept British overlordship and the show of force would also go a long way towards securing the allegiance of the ZAR. Then both the ZAR and Zululand would be 'Feudatory' states, 'in which the British Resident will be as supreme a potentially as he ordinarily is in the State of an Indian 'Subject ally'.<sup>61</sup> As in India, Frere was convinced of the faultlessness of all his actions and acted just as impatiently as he had on the Indian sub-continent. He saw no need for referring to Hicks Beach for orders when he believed he should be using his own initiative and discretion as the man on the spot.<sup>62</sup>

As communication between Natal Colony and London was extremely slow, due to the submarine cable ending in Madeira, (the average time for a telegram to reach London from Cape Town was two and a half weeks), Hicks Beach had to deal with situations about a month after they had occurred and with information in hand that was long outdated. This scenario was perfect for Frere who believed that his responsibility to his superiors "should always be retrospective in the shape of praise or blame for what is done, and should never involve the necessity for previous sanction".<sup>63</sup>

As he believed that his actions always to be correct, he assumed that he would have praise heaped on him rather than denunciations of failure. In India he had acted impulsively on numerous occasions and came into conflict with the desires of the British Government as well as the Viceroy of India.<sup>64</sup>

61. BPP.,C.2220, Frere - Hicks Beach, 10 September 1878, no.74A, pp. 232-233

62. The Natal Mercury, 21 December 1878

63. Martineau : Life of Frere, Vol. 1, p. 272

64. Ibid., p. 273



The quest for political unity in southern Africa was undertaken as a matter of urgency by Frere who believed it would bring stability and peace. If necessary, war was an avenue Frere would willingly follow in order to achieve his objective of British hegemony in southern Africa. Motivated by imperial drive, the desire to obtain more land to appease the Boers and by a calculated and premeditated strategy to defend British colonists, Frere became obsessed with the subjugation of the Zulu Kingdom.

In a memorandum from Sir Henry Bulwer to Sir Bartle Frere written in September 1878, Bulwer was at pains to explain that although he regarded Cetshwayo as a king for whom nothing could be said in his favour, war with the Zulus was not a good idea although he did not altogether discount an eventual resorting to arms against them. Although not totally in accord with Frere's policy towards the Zulus, Bulwer was later induced by Frere to sign the ultimatum that would be presented to King Cetshwayo. His attitude towards King Cetshwayo and the Zulu Kingdom was clear :

...1

*3. What your Excellency observes with regard to this people, their military organisation, their numbers, and their armament, is perfectly true. With respect to the character of their present King, there is little, if anything, that can be said in his favour. What little there is to be said is this, that during several past years he listened to the counsels of this government, and even under strong provocation refrained from acts which would have precipitated a crisis and led to serious and possibly general disturbance in this part of South Africa. It is true that if he listened to us it was no doubt because he felt it to be for his own interest to do so, and that he could not afford to disregard our wishes. Nevertheless for so much credit as the attention he paid to our counsels in past time is worth, to that credit he is entitled; that I do not know that I am able to say anything further in his favour. He has broken the promises which he made to us and to the Zulu nation at the time of his coronation.*

*His people have been put to death without trial, and the shedding of blood has been indiscriminate. His rule, so far as it has gone, has been a cruel and tyrannical one, and all the better interests of his country have been sacrificed to the maintenance of a large army, though this indeed, it must be remembered, is no innovation introduced by him...*

*14. The maintenance of a standing and well organised army, it should be observed, is according to the custom of the Zulu nation, which in all its traditions and instincts is war-like, and does not in itself prove that there is any set purpose of aggression in the mind of the King; though this consideration does not of course remove the cause of danger that a large standing army in a savage nation must always be to its neighbours.*

*16. That there are elements of danger in this state of things, and that the situation is and has been for some months a critical one, there is no doubt; nor can it be said that the settlement of the disputed boundary question will put an end to all the dangers of the situation. In that question consist perhaps the greatest cause of danger; but it is only one question, and other questions may arise at any moment. The King may prove unreasonable, or he may be forced into foolish action by the pressure of the young fighting men, or be led by treachery or bad advice to do something that will compromise himself with us beyond recovery; moreover, so long as the manhood of the nation is organised into a standing army, the causes of danger cannot be wanting.*

*17. But there is this to be said for the settlement of the disputed boundary question, and for the enquiry into it which has been held, quite apart from any advantage which has been gained to us by the delay, that it is a matter to which our good faith was committed. I believe that it would have been a great misfortune if we had entered into a war last December on account of this question, not only because of the circumstances at that time existing on the Cape Frontier, and of the critical state of affairs in Europe, but also because we should have gone into a war on account of a question which, so long as it was a question between the South African Republic and*

*the Zulus we had always admitted was a fair subject for enquiry, and had for years by means of our influence been holding back the Zulus from taking their own action upon. It was of the greatest importance, therefore, that we should put ourselves in the right in this matter, and that there was fair cause for any enquiry the report of the Commissioners shows, whether we accept their conclusions or not.*

*It may be that the settlement, when it is made, will not satisfy the King, or possibly other questions may arise obliging an eventual resort to arms, but we shall, at any rate, by this enquiry and by dealing with the dispute according to its merits, have put ourselves so far in the right, and in doing this it may be safely said that we shall not prejudice our position or our prestige in our future relations with the Zulu people or in the eyes of the native population at large.<sup>65</sup>*

Once the extra battalions arrived in Natal Colony, King Cetshwayo sent a message to Bulwer in which he said he was aware of troops 'coming to attack the Zulus, and to seize me', but 'the English are my fathers, I do not wish to quarrel with them, but to live as I have always done, at peace with them'.<sup>66</sup> At the end of September 1878, a member of the Colonial Engineer's Department, Smith, accompanied by his friend Deighton went to inspect a drift across the Thukela river so as to report on how the drift could be made wagon friendly. The two were threatened by a group of Zulus who demanded to know from them what they were doing on Zulu land and who then released them. Smith did not regard the matter as worthy of a report to the government but Deighton took a different view and report the incident which infuriated Bulwer.

65. *Ibid.*, p. 347

66. BPP., C.2222, Bulwer - Frere, 30 September 1878, no.19 , pp.36-37

Bulwer was annoyed that the Colonial Engineer's Department should allow men to inspect the drift at a time when there was great tension in the area and mutual Anglo-Zulu distrust and misgiving. Frere however was to blow the incident out of proportion and use it as 'evidence' demonstrating the anti-white attitude of the Zulus. This 'incident' along with others involving the Zulus were, according to Frere, 'not accidents, but acts on system to keep up the terror' (against British interests).<sup>67</sup>

In virtually every despatch to England, Frere referred to the Zulu threat, gathering all the 'evidence' he could to support his thesis concerning the Zulus, and asking for military reinforcements. In a despatch from Sir Bartle Frere to Sir Michael Hicks Beach, dated 6 October 1878, we read :

*...4. Two acts of more serious import have been reported since the date of my last Despatch, regarding which it will apparently be necessary to require an explanation from Cetshwayo.*

*Mr Smith, a surveyor in the Colonial Engineer's Department, was on duty inspecting the road down to the Tugela, near Fort Buckingham, which had been made few years ago by order of Sir Garnet Wolseley, and accompanied by Mr Deighton, a trader, resident at Ford Buckingham, went down to the ford across the Tugela. The stream was very low, and ran under the Zulu bank, but they were on this side of it, and had not crossed when they were surrounded by a body of 15 or 20 armed Zulus, made prisoners, and taken off with their horses, which were on the Natal side of the river, and roughly treated and threatened for some time; though, ultimately, at the instance of a headman who came up, they were released and allowed to depart.*

67. N A, SNA 1/7/13, message from Cetshwayo, 16 September 1878, p.130

*5. His Excellency, the Lieutenant-Governor, regards the surveyors' going down to the ford as an indiscretion, and it, no doubt, was one of those acts which, however allowable in ordinary times, may, at a period of excitement like the present, lead to serious consequences. But it is evident that it is but a precarious state of peace which is liable to be broken as a consequence of such an indiscretion.*<sup>68</sup>

When Mbelini, a Swazi pretender to the throne, living under Cetshwayo's aegis conducted massacres against two groups of Swazis in a quest for his own political motives to be realised, Frere used the information to bolster his anti-Cetshwayo stance by suggesting that the massacres were orchestrated by the Zulu King, although no evidence even remotely suggesting this existed.

Frere was renowned as an English Christian gentleman of the loftiest sort, but there is little room to doubt that he had a total disregard for the Zulus as a nation. His Machiavellian approach and almost obsessive pursuit of a war against them was hardly the attitude one would expect of a Christian gentleman. His persistent and fanatical character assassination of King Cetshwayo was extreme and he believed that most Africans in southern Africa would join any moves to oust the King :

*That the time was come for them all to join to resist the flood of new ideas and ways which threatened to sweep away the idle, sensuous elysium of Kaffirdom...*<sup>69</sup>

Frere was aggressively devoted to the political plan of confederation in southern Africa at the heart of which was the advance of capitalist production and whose main strategic objective was the maintenance of British hegemony in the sub-continent.

68. GRO, PCC/2/4, Frere - Hicks Beach, 19 January 1879

69. BPP., C.2220, Frere to Hicks Beach, 6 October 1878, no.111, p.305

The primary reason for a war to be waged against the Zulus was however control, and not the desire for mastery over them. As the tensions mounted in Natal, fears of a African conspiracy grew based on an irrational evaluation of the situation *vis-à-vis* the Zulu Kingdom's objectives concerning land acquisition. Although Britain fought to protect colonists and her interests from attacks by indigenous tribes in here Empire, there was no such real threat towards whites in southern Africa on the part of the Zulus. Frances Colenso wrote :

*England's collisions with the savage races bordering upon her colonies have in all probability usually been brought about by the exigencies of the moment, by border troubles, and acts of violence and insolence on the part of the savages, and from the absolute necessity of protecting a small and trembling white population from their assaults. No such causes as these have led up to the war of 1879.<sup>70</sup>*

She also asserted that the British Government was very uneasy about the situation in Southern Africa and was initially uneasy about sending military reinforcements as requested by Frere. By 1878, it was deemed appropriate by the British Government to use diplomacy rather than force to achieve political objectives in the colonies of the Empire. Cardwell's reforms of the British Army in the 1870's were directed at decreasing expenses and avoiding "colonial" wars. But Frere had his own agenda. This was quite evident in his request for two battalions of military reinforcements, despite the reluctance of the Home Government. Frere was undoubtedly beset with the confederation scheme of Carnarvon and resolved to use force to realise that objective if he deemed it necessary to do so. His opportunistic intentions would not be easy to counter. He, together with Chelmsford carefully planned and orchestrated their invasion of Zululand as both strongly desired a war against the Zulu Kingdom.<sup>71</sup>

70. Martineau, J. : The Life and Correspondence of the Right Hon. Sir Bartle Frere, p. 224

71. Colenso, F.E. and Durnford, E. : History of the Zulu War and its Origin, p. 187

Bishop Colenso echoed the opinion of his daughter and went so far as to assert that the colonists in Natal had never desired the war in the first instance – they never urged it on, or even dreamt of it, Bishop Colenso echoed the opinion of his daughter and went so far as to assert that the colonists in Natal had 'never desired the war in the first instance – they never urged it on, or even dreamt of it, till Sir B. Frere came up here and wheedled them into following his lead'.<sup>72</sup>

In the preface to *Cetshwayo's Dutchman*, Bishop Colenso maintained that Frere's intentions were purely imperialistic. He also maintains that Frere intentionally misrepresented King Cetshwayo's persona and character so as to justify an invasion of the Zulu Kingdom. Colenso sees Frere as the firebrand of the war and a manipulator 'par excellence' whose main interest in life was the furthering of his own ends.<sup>73</sup>

Frere became obsessed with the idea of demonising the Zulu King and latched onto every and any opportunity to further promote his cause. In a despatch to Hicks Beach on 23 October 1878 he went to great pains to try to demonstrate that King Cetshwayo had mistreated Norwegian missionaries and Zulu converts to Christianity. It appears that he was attempting to foster a greater sense of urgency in Britain for his 'reinforcements' to be sent to southern Africa. He wrote :

*Sir,*

*I have the honour to forward for your information a very interesting account furnished to me by the Rev. Mr Oftebro (of whose intelligence and moderation I have already had the honour of informing you...), of the position of the Norwegian missionaries with respect to Zululand.*

72. KC, Colenso Papers, File 27, no. KCM 50001, Colenso - Chesson, 23 November 1879

73. Vijn, C. : *Cetshwayo's Dutchman*, p. vii

2. *I have done my best with the very imperfect means within my reach here to test the accuracy of the statements contained in the Rev. Mr Oftebro's memorial, and have found n reason to doubt the brad facts,*

*(1) that the Norwegian missionaries when obliged to leave Zululand had been established there for more than a quarter of a century with the permission of the great Chief and the general assent of his people.*

*(2) that at the great Chief Panda's death the Norwegians had nine stations, the Hanoverians 10, and the English Church three or four.*

*(3) that a Cetywayo's coronation, though he manifested ill will towards the missionaries, he agreed that those in the country should remain, that if he were thereafter offended with any of them and wished t expel the offender, he should submit the case to the Government of Natal, and obtain its assent before carrying out the sentence of expulsion.*

*(4) that, after his coronation, Cetywayo commenced a system of deterring, first by threats, and then by sending 'impis' and (King's execution parties) to kill suddenly, and without warning, the Zulus converted or suspected of intention to be converted to Christianity.*

*(5) that by this system of terrorising he has obliged the missionaries to abandon the stations on which they were settled with his father's permission, and to fly from Zululand.*

*(6) that the missionaries have given no apparent cause of umbrage to the Zulu Chief.*

*(7) that even if a just cause of umbrage had existed, Cetywayo's conduct in sending 'impis' to kill converts has been clearly a breach of his solemn coronation promises, not to the missionaries only, but to his own people and the British Government, that no Zulu should be killed without open trial and opportunity of defending himself against his accusers, and that he should only be executed by order of the great Chief...*



4. *What notice should be taken of his treatment of the missionaries will be a matter for serious consideration whenever a final settlement with Cetshwayo takes place.*<sup>74</sup>

He repeated his contention that King Cetshwayo would have to be subdued in another despatch to Hicks Beach on 28 October 1878 :

*I can only repeat to Her Majesty's Government my own conviction that the continued preservation of peace, depends no longer on what the servants of the British Government here may do or abstain from doing, but simply on the caprice of an ignorant and blood-thirsty despot, with a most overweening idea of his own importance and prowess, and an organized force of at least 40 000 armed men at his absolute command, ready and eager at any moment to execute, in their ancient fashion of extermination, whatever the caprice or anger of the despot may dictate.*<sup>75</sup>

Frere needed to win support for his policy of subjugating the Zulus by force and therefore deferred the presentation of the Boundary Commission award and the ultimatum to King Cetshwayo that would abrogate it. He also hoped that the home government would take note of his request for reinforcements which he claimed would be for self-defence but which he knew full well to be vital for his invasion of Zululand.

The Colonial Office had the impression that war with the Zulus was ineluctable. This was due to Shepstone's failure to successfully negotiate with the Zulus in 1877, despite the fact that King Cetshwayo had agreed to accept arbitration.<sup>76</sup> To Frere, arbitration was expedient, as it would allow necessary military planning to be undertaken including the despatch of troops to the borders of the Zulu Kingdom.

74. BPP., C.2220, General Correspondence : Frere - Hicks Beach, 23 October 1878, no.129, p.340

75. BPP., C.2220, General Correspondence : Frere - Hicks Beach, 28 October 1878, no. 132, p.357

76. PRO,CO 291/1, General Correspondence : Shepstone - Camarvon, 1 December 1877, no.27

Sir Michael Hicks Beach was not entirely convinced that war with the Zulu Kingdom was a foregone conclusion :

*I have received your Telegraphic Despatch of the 23<sup>rd</sup> September, urging compliance with the request contained in Major-General Lord Chelmsford's telegram, of which you communicated to me the substance in your Confidential Despatch of the 14<sup>th</sup> September.*

*I have been in communication with the Secretary of State for War on the subject and arrangements will be made for the early despatch of some additional officers for special duty.*

*Her Majesty's Government are, however, not prepared to with the request for a reinforcement of troops. All the information that has hitherto reached them with respect to the position of affairs in Zululand appears to them to justify a confident hope that by the exercise of prudence, and by meeting the Zulus in a spirit of forbearance and reasonable compromise, it will be possible to avert the very serious evil of a war with Cetwayo; and they cannot but think that the forces now at your disposal in South Africa, together with the additional officers about to be sent, should suffice to meet any other emergency that may arise without a further increase to the Imperial troops.<sup>77</sup>*

77. BPP., C.2220, General Correspondence : Hicks Beach - Frere, 17 October 1878, no.92, p. 273

Frere in a dispatch to Hicks Beach on 30 September 1878, stated that a highly precarious state of peace existed and that maintaining peace would undoubtedly depend on King Cetshwayo's endurance in this regard. While King Cetshwayo avowed peace, every act of his indicated his intention to being about war.<sup>78</sup> However it was Frere who delayed the conveying of the Border Commission's report to the Zulus. He argued that he could not and would not make a final appraisal until he had accepted delivery of Shepstone's comments on the findings of the Commission. Frere clearly required advice from Shepstone apropos of the ultimatum he proposed to present to King Cetshwayo together with the award.<sup>79</sup> Support from Shepstone was vital for Frere as he realised that the Natal Colony settlers were not too concerned about the suppose Zulu onslaught they were to endure. He found the Natal Colony Government to be 'obstinate, ill-informed, short sighted and reluctant ..... an official clique at Pietermaritzberg.'<sup>80</sup>

Frere was also increasingly piqued by Bulwer who was not in accord with Frere's policy but he had to bring Bulwer round to his way of thinking and this would be time consuming.<sup>81</sup> It was only on 8 December 1878 that Frere was able to report to Hicks Beach that he had successfully, albeit exhaustingly, brought Bulwer round.<sup>82</sup> The notion of war did not appear to have occurred to anyone in Natal Colony until troops that Bulwer had requested arrived there. The Natal colonists may well have regarded Zululand as their future area for expansion but in 1878 they had no instantaneous need for either land or labour from Zululand. Their primary concern was to finalise the colonization of Natal rather than expand the land mass of the colony. Huge tracts of land in Natal Colony owned by non-attendant landowners were occupied by Africans who therefore had no need of working for

78 BPP., C.2220, Confidential Papers : Frere - Hicks Beach, 30 September 1878, no.105, p.280

79. N A, SP 33, Frere - Shepstone, 8 October 1878

80. Frere - Herbert, 10 November 1878, in Worsfold : Sir Bartle Frere, p.113

81. NAM 6805-386-6-13, Frere - Chelmsford, 18 March 1879

82. Frere - Hicks Beach, 8 December 1878, In Martineau : Life of Frere, Vol II, p.250

wages. The colonists wanted the landowners to return to their land and hire the squatting Africans as wage labourers. They did not concern themselves with possible land acquisition or expropriation beyond the Thukela river or the civilizing of the unchristian hordes that they regarded the Zulus to be. In fact it would be better for the Natal Colony colonists to support the Zulus and in so doing keep the Boers out of Zululand. If the Boers occupied Zululand it would be impossible for Natal colonists to later on expand their colony when the time was deemed suitable.

King Cetshwayo was clearly concerned at the change in Britain's attitude towards him and requested clarification:

*What have I done or said to the Great House of England, which placed my father, Panda, over the Zulu Nation, and after his death put me in power? What have I don to the Great White Chief? I hear from all parts that the soldiers are around me, and the Zulu Nation asks me this day what I have said to the white people. I hear that British troops are now in Swaziland, and that they are there for the purpose of fighting the Zulu Nation, and that these troops crossed through Zulu territory.<sup>83</sup>*

King Cetshwayo was also clearly disturbed by a drought that was gripping Zululand and appears to have believed that Britain was somehow manipulating the weather for political objectives to be realised. Shepstone (Somtseu), was singled out as a person whose injured pride may have prompted anti-Zulu sentiment while Rudolph was conveniently appended to the statement.

*I hear that there is war intended, and the reason for it is that I said I was as great as the Queen of England – that 'Somtseu' was only as great as my Chief Mnyamana, and the 'Thela' (Rudolph) only of the same rank as my Chief Bejana.*

83. BPP., C.2308, Confidential Papers : Cetshwayo - Bulwer, November 1878 , p.263

*I feel the English Chiefs have stopped the rain, and the land is being destroyed. The English Chiefs are speaking. They have always told me that a kraal of blood cannot stand, and I wish to sit quietly, according to their orders, and cultivate the land. I do not know anything about war, and want the Great Chiefs to send me the rain.*<sup>84</sup>

The Colonial Office was not convinced that a war with the Zulus was ineluctable. In September 1878, once the findings of the Border Commission were made known, Edward Fairfield of the Colonial Office wrote:

*If the views of the Commission and of Sir Henry Bulwer are adopted there is no occasion to go to war with Cetywayo. It has been generally assumed that Cetywayo was in the wrong and would have to be repressed. Now he is pronounced to have been in the right, as indeed everyone always supposed he was until after the Transvaal had been annexed and Sir T Shepstone took up a position adverse to his claims. But it appears to be a foregone conclusion in everybody's mind that here is to be war.*<sup>85</sup>

Shepstone continued to encourage Frere in his belief that dissenters in the Zulu Kingdom would surface to assist the British in bringing about the demise of King Cetshwayo whose control was by no means solid. Shepstone likened Zululand to 'a huge ball of sand with no larger base than a ball would have, and with only cohesion enough to keep its shape undisturbed.'<sup>86</sup> Frere's initial request for reinforcements was received by the Colonial Office on 5 October whereupon Hicks Beach promptly referred the request to the Cabinet which was attempting to avoid war with Afghanistan and was thus greatly preoccupied. The converging pressures of the British and Russian empires subjected Afghanistan to the imperialist ambitions of both these powers. Russia wished to exploit the country's position in order to open up a reliable and profitable trade route to the Indian Ocean while Britain was

84. *Ibid.*, p.264

85. BPP., CO 179/126, minute by Fairfield, 25 September 1878

86. Cope, R.L.: *Shepstone and Cetshwayo, 1873-1879*, p.369

determined to control Afghanistan for strategic reasons. A Russian mission in Afghanistan set alarm bells ringing in London and the British demanded via the Viceroy of India, that Afghanistan receive a British mission as well. The Afghans refused Britain's request and war with Afghanistan seemed inevitable. It was therefore undesirable to 'sabre-rattle' in southern Africa as well and deemed prudent in Colonial Office circles to avoid war against the Zulus.

War undoubtedly suited the career interests of Frere and the military elements that surrounded him. The ordered imperial society of Britain was in a sense categorized by honours bestowed on those who served in it. Imperial civil servants and colonial administrators alike had a fervent desire to replicate the social hierarchy as it existed in Britain; in the colonies. It was therefore desirable to augment their position in the colonies and if it took war to achieve this, then so be it. Frere went to great lengths to malign the character of King Cetshwayo at every opportunity and tried on numerous occasions to explain that the Zulu army was large enough to warrant concern despite the fact that two additional regiments, the 2/24<sup>th</sup> and 90<sup>th</sup> had been sent to Natal Colony. On 5 November 1878 he wrote to Sir Michael Hicks Beach:

*... 10. I find the state of things in Natal Colony not essentially altered for the better since Sir G. Wolseley reported on the state of affairs there three years ago.*

*11. It is clear that, even with the addition of the two regiments (Her Majesty's 2/24th and 90th) now in the Colony, Natal Colony is far from being as well provided with means of defence as Sir Garnet Wolseley considered it should be when he was here three years ago.*

*12. But since Sir Garnet's time external dangers have considerably increased and become more imminent.*

13. *The Zulu army has certainly not decreased in numbers nor in efficiency of organisation and armament since Sir Garnet's days. I have seen no estimate of numbers enrolled in the regular regiments which sets them down at less than 35 000 men and the number is variously estimated, by persons who claim to know all about them, at totals between that force and 60 000 men. The supply of guns to them has, till lately, not slackened. There can be no doubt that a feeling of extreme self-confidence and anxiety to try conclusions with the white man pervades the whole mass, especially the younger soldiers. Their mere force of numbers makes them most formidable, and they are, man for man, decidedly the best native troops in South Africa.*

14. *I am well aware that there is good reason for believing that a considerable portion of the Zulus do not sympathise with their cruel Sovereign, nor would his war-like followers; but under such a grinding despotism it is impossible to say what is the effective power of such a party for peace, nor whether it may be able to make its existence felt till the final victory of the war-like faction is hopeless . . .*

28. *Cetywayo is in no respect superior in character to his predecessors. Since his coronation placed him firmly on the throne he has had ample opportunity for showing that in cruelty and treachery he is no degenerate representative of Chaka and Dingaan. I have met persons who agree that there is no ground to fear an unprovoked attack from Zulus, but I have never met a man who, having had dealings with him, professed to have any trust in Cetywayo's word, or who believed that anything except fear would restrain him from acts of the most revolting cruelty and bloodshed. As long as a large force is maintained in Natal Colony it is possible that fear may continue to preponderate over cupidity, pride, or passion; but with Chaka as his avowed model, we can never have any better security for peace than an armed truce whilst he rules Zululand.<sup>87</sup>*

87. BPP.,C.2222, General : Frere - Hicks Beach,5 November 1878,no.6, pp.6-8

Hicks Beach urged Frere to avoid war at all costs as the Cabinet was greatly concerned about the situation in Afghanistan.<sup>88</sup>

Frere sent another telegram on 18 November in which he stated that the situation in southern Africa was 'as threatening as possible short of actual hostilities.'<sup>89</sup>

After Hicks Beach made an appeal to the Cabinet for more troops to be sent to southern Africa, they grudgingly agreed to dispatch additional support. Hicks Beach sent the dispatch informing Frere of this decision by the Cabinet on 21 November 1878 and explained that the troops were to be used explicitly for the protection of the Colonists and not for a protracted invasion or conquest of the Zulu Kingdom:

*.... 2. Her Majesty's Government has not failed to give their most careful consideration to the opinion formed by you, and to the facts and arguments upon which that opinion is based, and they learn with great regret that you see little prospect of a favourable change in the relations of Her Majesty's subjects with the Zulus and other neighbouring tribes and that you consider the prospect of peace very precarious.*

*3. The several circumstances which you have reported as tending to cause an open rupture do not appear, in themselves, to present any difficulties which are not capable of a peaceful solution. I concur with you in attributing no special importance to the seizure and temporary arrest of the surveyors, which was partly due to their own indiscretion, and was evidently in no way sanctioned by the Zulu authorities.*

88. Hicks Beach - Frere, 7 November 1878, in Hicks Beach : Life of Hicks Beach, Vol.1, pp.103-104

89. Ibid., p.108



*The abduction and murder of the Zulu women who had taken refuge in Natal Colony is undoubtedly a serious matter, and no sufficient reparation for it has yet been made. But I observe that Cetywayo has expressed his regret for this occurrence; and although the compensation offered by him was inadequate, there would seem to have been nothing in his conduct with regard to it which would preclude the hope of a satisfactory arrangement. And I entirely share the belief which you have yourself indicated, that if the boundary dispute on which you are about to arbitrate proves capable of adjustment at an early date there is a possibility of a great improvement in the attitude of the Zulus.*

*5. On a full review, therefore, of all the circumstances reported by you, and influenced by the strong representations made by Lord Chelmsford as to the insufficiency of his present force to ensure the safety of the European residents in Natal Colony and the Transvaal, Her Majesty's Government have felt themselves justified in directing that further reinforcements of troops, as well as the additional officers recently placed under orders for special service should be sent out to Natal Colony; and the necessary steps will at once be taken for this purpose.*

*6. But in conveying to you the decision at which, in compliance with your urgent representations, Her Majesty's Government have arrived, it is my duty to impress upon you that in supplying these reinforcements it is the desire of Her Majesty's Government not to furnish means for a campaign of invasion and conquest, but to afford such protection as may be necessary at this juncture to the lives and property of the Colonists.*

*7. Though the present aspect of affairs is menacing in a high degree, I can by no means arrive at the conclusion that war with the Zulus should be unavoidable, and I am confident that you, in concert with Sir H. Bulwer, will use every effort to overcome the existing difficulties by judgment and forbearance, and to avoid an evil so much to be deprecated as a Zulu war.<sup>90</sup>*

90. BPP.,C.2220,General Correspondence : Hicks Beach - Frere,21 November 1878, no.119, p321

In a further dispatch on the same day, Hicks-Beach re-emphasized the fact that peace was to be the objective in Natal Colony. He also made apologies for the ignorance of King Cetshwayo in assuming a plot was afoot and wanted any misunderstanding to be cleared up as speedily as possible:

*I trust that in accordance with the suggestion conveyed in your Memorandum to the Lieutenant-Governor of Natal Colony, Cetywayo may have been informed that a decision regarding the disputed boundary would speedily be communicated to him. His complaint that the Lieutenant-General of Natal Colony 'is hiding from him the answer that has come from across the sea about the land boundary question, and is only making an excuse for taking time so as to surprise him,' is not altogether an unnatural one for a native Chief situated in his circumstances, who is necessarily ignorant of much that has passed on this subject, and of many of the causes to which the delay is attributable. But it is a misunderstanding which it should be the earnest endeavour of the Government to remove, and I am confident that there is no need to impress upon you the importance of losing no time in dealing with this question or the beneficial effect which its satisfactory settlement may be expected to have upon the strained relations which you describe as now existing between the Colony of Natal Colony and the Zulu nation.<sup>91</sup>*

The despatches were only received by Frere after the ultimatum had been delivered and the reinforcements arrived on the eve of the campaign against the Zulu Kingdom. As discussed earlier, Frere and his advisers perceived the Zulus to be a threat to British hegemonistic ambitions and as a core element in a African conspiracy to overthrow white supremacy in southern Africa. Frere was convinced that only an overwhelming defeat of the Zulus would ensure the dismantling and dismembering of the Zulu state. Once this was achieved, the Zulus would no longer be a potential future threat to British ambitions of sovereignty in southern Africa. Frere desperately needed an excuse to wage war against King Cetshwayo's military machine.

91. BPP.,C.2220,General Correspondence : Hicks Beach -Frere, 21 November 1878, no. 120, p.322

The report of the Border Commission cast the Zulu actions in a new light in which they were seen to protecting their legitimate rights. If vindicated, the Zulus would have no reason to be a threat towards British interests in the region and Frere would have no reason to launch a belligerent campaign against them. Bulwer expressed his opinion on the matter in this light and even the British Cabinet harboured suspicions about Frere's intentions with regard to the Zulus.<sup>92</sup> Frere needed to act fast to invalidate the effects of the Border Commission report and to render it inconsequential through a rapid and conclusive victory over the Zulus. Frere manipulated the situation and was able to arrange the war against King Cetshwayo by maneuvering in between communications from London.<sup>93</sup> The Border Commission report was suppressed by Frere for five months and it ' remained Frere's files.'<sup>94</sup> The delay in telegraph communication suited Frere down to the ground as he was left a wide range of discretion within which to operate. Hicks-Beach, as Frere's junior in age, was also reluctant to issue orders to his administrative superior. Frere could not accept that Carnarvon's Confederation scheme was destined for failure as this would have left the former a failure in his own eyes and he would have remained simply, a Governor of the Cape. He believed he was destined for greater glory and was utterly convinced of his own incorruptibility and ultimately deceived himself in that the overthrow of King Cetshwayo was necessary for Confederation to be effected in southern Africa. Frere consequently strove to represent his intended actions as defensive in nature.

A despatch from Frere to Hicks-Beach dated 10 December 1878 emphasizes once again that military reinforcements were necessary in southern Africa and also alludes to an ultimatum, the terms of which King Cetshwayo would probably not accede to:

92. Hicks Beach - Victoria, 11 November 1878, in Buckle, G.(ed) : Letters of Queen Victoria, p.646

93. Brookes, E.H. and C de B. Webb. : A History of Natal Colony, pp.124-133

94. Webb, C. de B. : Lines of Power: The High Commissioner, the Telegraph and the War of 1879, (Natal Colony, 8, p.34).

Frere explained that he doubted that a war against King Cetshwayo could be averted and found little ground for such hope. He believed that there was a common purpose amongst Africans to shake off white domination and said that there was an 'irresistible body of evidence from every part of South Africa' supporting this belief. Furthermore he regarded King Cetshwayo as the prime instigator of anti-white agitation. There was of course no hard evidence to support Frere's allegations and assertions Frere further expressed his confidence in the Lt. Governor of Natal Colony, Sir Henry Bulwer, as an honourable and fair negotiator. Frere also claimed that with the exception of King Cetshwayo and a handful of *indunas*, Zulus in general favoured British rule. This was of course a clear attempt to hoodwink Hicks Beach. Frere placed the responsibility for the war which was looming squarely on the shoulders of King Cetshwayo. He regarded the King as a 'barbarian potentate' who could not be taken at his word. This too was an attempt to set Hicks Beach against the Zulu King. Frere expressed the opinion that the time for reasoning with King Cetshwayo had passed as the situation was precarious for Natal Colony. Frere had no grounds for such assertions either as King Cetshwayo had not showed the slightest inclination in desiring to gain land in Natal Colony. Frere stated that King Cetshwayo would have to be compelled to observe definite conditions for a future Government in Zululand.<sup>95</sup>

By the beginning of November 1878, Frere had resolved to use the report of the Border Commission to precipitate a crisis so that he could crush the Zulu Kingdom and advance further along the path to confederation and British hegemony. He proposed to yoke the Award of the Border Commission which favoured King Cetshwayo, with an ultimatum which he full well knew King Cetshwayo would not and could not accept. Frere's despatch of 16 November in which his proposals were outlined, reached London only on 19 December, some 8 days after the delivery of the ultimatum to King Cetshwayo.

*The Report of the Commissioners appointed by his Excellency the Lieutenant-Governor of Natal Colony to enquire into and report on the disputed boundary question which has so long existed between the Transvaal Government and the Zulus, together with the documents that accompanied it ...*

95. BPP., C.2222, General Correspondence :Frere -Hicks-Beach, 10 December 1878, no. 45, pp.182

*I also forward a copy of the award which I have drawn up (and which I hope will be shortly communicated to his Excellency the Administrator of the Transvaal and to Cetewayo and his Great Council), and other Despatches and papers connected with this subject.*

*Briefly what I propose is this:*

*1. That as regards territorial jurisdiction the verdict of the Boundary Commissioners be accepted unaltered; portions of the district between the Pongolo and the Buffalo Rivers, as defined by the Commissioners, being declared to belong to the Zulu nation and the Transvaal respectively.*

*2. That the limits of these respective portions be at once surveyed and demarcated by a mixed Commission.*

*3. That measures be taken at the time to enquire into, define, and secure the private rights of property which have grown up in both portions of the divided territory during the years when the right of territorial sovereignty has been in dispute.*

*4. That in as much as the existing system of Government in Zululand makes no provision for securing any rights of person or of private property, that such rights in the portion of the disputed territory assigned to Zulus be placed specially under the charge of the British Resident, who on other grounds will be appointed to represent British interests in Zululand, and to secure performance of those promises of better administration which were made by Cetwayo to the British Government and the Zulu nation at the time of his coronation and recognition as King by the British Government.*

5. *That the award in the matter of the boundary dispute be at once communicated to Cetshwayo and the Chiefs and Council of the Zulu nation, together with a statement of the demands of the British Government for reparation for the past and security for the future, including the observance of the promises made by Cetshwayo at his coronation.*<sup>96</sup>

Frere first briefly mentioned an ultimatum in a dispatch dated 30 September 1878. He stated that if the sons of Sihayo (also Sirayo) were not handed over for trial 'it will be necessary to send the Zulu King an ultimatum which must put an end to pacific relations with our neighbours.'<sup>97</sup> This dispatch reached Hicks Beach on 1 November. If Hicks Beach had acted immediately and ordered Frere not to send an ultimatum to King Cetshwayo without the prior approval of the Cabinet, such a response would have reached Natal Colony before the ultimatum could be delivered to the Zulu King. It is also possible that Hicks Beach did not notice the small detail of an 'ultimatum' as it was carefully enveloped by a multitude of communiqués.

When Hicks Beach saw a despatch from Frere to Shepstone dated 7 November in which Frere asked for Shepstone's opinions regarding the type of ultimatum that should be sent to King Cetshwayo, Hicks Beach realized that Frere had resolved to send an ultimatum that could and probably would lead to war. Frere was never as forthright in his letters to Hicks Beach as he was to his co-conspirator, Shepstone. Frere deliberately clouded his communications with London and vaguely hinted at what he intended to do. Aspersion followed him which followed imputation in a multitude of statements to Hicks Beach. 'Employing an adequate force' to take 'immediate action' were blended with statements such as: 'the time for taking action no longer rests with us.'<sup>98</sup> The voluminous piles of enclosures which included the Boundary Award and the ultimatum, were by some *contretemps* not sent with

96. BPP.,C.2222, General Correspondence : Frere - Hicks Beach, 16 November 1878, no.19, p.23

97. BPP.,C.2220,General Correspondence : Frere - Hicks Beach, 30 September 1878, no.105, p. 280

98. BPP., C.2222 , General Correspondence : Frere - Hicks Beach, 10 November 1878, no.19 , p.24

the despatch. This meant that Hicks Beach would only have all the relevant documents before him on 2 January 1879 albeit in primary draft. The final draft, as delivered to King Cetshwayo, arrived in London only on 25 January, a fortnight after hostilities had commenced and 72 hours after the catastrophe at Isandhlwana.<sup>99</sup> The monumental failure in communications between the British Government and its colonial administrators had allowed Frere to adopt a cynical, more vigorous approach to the issue of British hegemony in southern Africa on his own initiative. He never fully expressed in plain terminology his political objectives *vis-à-vis* the Zulu Kingdom. Persuaded by Shepstone as to the fragile state of the Zulu Kingdom, Frere deceived himself and duped others into believing that Cetshwayo's Kingdom was doomed to failure. Furthermore, Frere was over-confident in the strength of the British troops at his disposal. He appears to have believed that the Zulus could be crushed before the British Government had a chance to debate either the morality or effectiveness of his *modus operandi*.

Frere's motives and actions were to a large extent also influenced by economic factors, the primary of which was the need to develop a capitalist economy in southern Africa in which there would be a reliable labour supply and access to markets. His main motivation was, however, political hegemony for Britain in a geographically strategic area and to a lesser extent personal aggrandisement. His professed concerns about the Zulu military threat were, as we shall see in the next chapter, a pretence. He was willfully deceitful and obdurate and deliberately steered a course which would lead to war against the Zulus. As tensions in the region mounted based on a mood of nervousness created by Frere's assertions that King Cetshwayo was heading a conspiracy to oust whites from southern Africa, Frere accelerated the pace in his endeavour to contrive a confederation in the region. Frere's supposed 'superior,' Hicks Beach, was extremely ambivalent of events and somewhat apprehensive as he awaited news of the British campaign in Afghanistan. Although he urged Frere to use every effort to avoid a war against the Zulus he was not assertive enough and gave the latter an almost entirely free reign except for the fact that Frere would still need to justify a need for bellicose action against the Zulus.

99. BPP., C.2222, General Correspondence : Frere - Hicks Beach, 13 December 1878, no.53 , p.201

Hicks Beach displayed an incapacity with regard to controlling Frere and was parodied in the House of Commons by Sir William Harcourt who read the following imaginary summary of despatches written by Hicks Beach to Frere:

*My dear Sir Bartle Frere: I cannot think you are right. Indeed, I think you are very wrong; but then, after all, I feel you know a great deal better than I do. I hope you won't do what you are going to do; but if you do I hope it will turn out well.*<sup>100</sup>

Although dated 31 March 1879, this pretty much summarizes Hicks Beach's communication with Frere in January 1879 and demonstrates the extent to which Frere had virtual *carte blanche* in his planning for war and in his untruths and misrepresentations of King Cetshwayo and the Zulus in general. It is clear that Hicks Beach was turning a blind eye to Frere's actions and hoping for the best. Frere undoubtedly knew that the British Government did not want a war against the Zulus. In April 1878 Hicks Beach wrote concerning the movement of British troops to Natal Colony from the Cape and emphasized that both he and Frere should not relax their 'best efforts to obtain a peaceful solution' *vis-à-vis* the Zulus.<sup>101</sup> In a despatch of 17 October the view of the British Government was clear:

*All the information that has hitherto reached them, with respect to the position of affairs in Zululand, appears to them to justify a confident hope that by the exercise of prudence, and by meeting the Zulus in a spirit of forbearance and reasonable compromise, it will be possible to avert the very serious evil of war with Cetewayo.*<sup>102</sup>

100. House of Commons Debate, Vol. CCXLV, Harcourt, 31 March 1879

101. Hicks Beach - Frere, 7 March 1878, in Worsfold : Sir Bartle Frere, p.69

102. BPP., C.2220, General Correspondence : Hicks Beach - Frere, 17 October 1878 , no.92A, p. 273



Frere was determined in his resolve for war and wrote the following to Robert Herbert, the Permanent Under secretary at the Colonial Office

*It is just possible the evil day might have been put off. But there would have been simply an armed truce; no security except where the troops were, probably native risings in Natal Colony and Kaffraria, and almost certainly a Boer rebellion in the Transvaal*

And this was after Frere admitted that he had accepted delivery of 'pressing exhortations to avoid war,' before he had even left the Cape for Natal Colony.<sup>103</sup>

Frere and Shepstone were to discover that the Colonial Office and Bulwer were not the only hindrance that needed to be surmounted; they also faced stiff opposition from Bishop Colenso and anti-British elements in the ZAR.

Colenso was to condemn Frere as the instigator of an unjust and morally devoid war conducted against the Zulus in defiance of his instructions. Bishop Colenso was a polemicist for the Zulus and is described by the British historian Rupert Furneaux as 'the most fanatical friend of the African man.'<sup>104</sup> Colenso maintains in his preface to *King Cetshwayo's Dutchman*, that Frere had purely imperialistic ambitions and accuses him of masterminding a campaign to deliberately misrepresent King Cetshwayo and thereby justify his actions in invading Zululand. Colenso painstakingly analysed the Blue Books and exposed untruths which Frere was using to obscure his real motives concerning the conquest of the Zulu Kingdom. The analyses of the Blue Books were submitted to members of Parliament resulting in Frere being exposed to an assault by them which left him fearing that he would be tried.<sup>105</sup> Colenso regarded Frere as a self-righteous individual who was 'rotten to the core.'<sup>106</sup>

103. Frere - Herbert, 23 December 1878, in Martineau : Life of Frere, Vol. II, p.265

104. Furneaux, R. : The Zulu War : Isandhliwana and Rorke's Drift, p. 23

105. Frere - Clarke, 16 October 1880, in Martineau : Life of Frere, Vol II, p.434

106. K C, Colenso Papers, File 29, KCM 50310, Colenso - Chesson, 12 July 1882

Colenso was greatly disturbed by the turn of events and in a sermon preached in the Anglican Cathedral Church of St. Peter's in Pietermaritzburg on Wednesday March 12, 1879 he stated his opinion. The sermon entitled 'What doth the Lord require of us?' was reached to a packed church. He began by saying:

*This day has been appointed by him who rules in the Queen's name over us 'to be a day set apart for the purposes of prayer and humiliation'; and, as a 'minister of religion,' I have been specially 'invited' by him, with 'others. Her Majesty's loving subjects,' to 'join in observing the same accordingly.'*

*Most heartily do I respond to the call of our Governor, who has spoken, I am sure, out of the fullness of his own heart. He has done, we believe, his utmost, as a Christian man, a lover of peace, a lover of justice, to prevent by wise and friendly measures this dreadful war. And we know also that his hopes have been disappointed, and all his efforts to settle the matters in dispute amicably and righteously, keeping good faith, the faith of Englishmen, even with a savage King and People, have been made in vain. Truly, the 'great calamity which has befallen us as a Colony' has brought home these sins to us sharply, having filled many homes, both here and in England, with mourning and woe, and spread over us all a gloomy cloud of dread and anxiety*

107  
.....

His support for Bulwer and his horror and sense of having transgressed as an Englishman is apparent. He continued:

*It is true that our personal sins are doubtless the source of our public transgressions – that, if we had been more faithful and good, just and upright, God-fearing and God-remembering, more considerate for our brother's welfare as well as our own, in our private intercourse with one another, we should not have been so rash and hasty in giving our public approval from time to time - or, at all events, our silent assent and encouragement - to*

107. Colenso, J.W. : What doth the Lord require of us ? A sermon preached in the Cathedral Church of St. Peter's Maritzburg on Wednesday March 12, 1879, pp.1-2

many things which we have half suspected, or even felt in our heart of hearts, to be wrong, to be at variance with the eternal laws of truth and righteousness, with our Christian profession, and with our character and reputation as Englishmen. But we are summoned here to-day by the voice of our Governor to humble ourselves before the Most High God, and confess, not our private sins, but our national and public faults and transgressions, the sins which we, as a People, and our rulers have committed, and on account of which, he implies, as do those who asked him to appoint this day, we have been so sorely smitten ....<sup>108</sup>

The 'personal sins' is clearly a reference to Sir Bartle Frere's sending of the ultimatum to King Cetshwayo contrary to the wishes of the British Government. He blamed the disaster at Isandhlwana on the British annexation of the ZAR:

*Have we then been 'doing justly' in the past? What colonist doubts that what has led directly to this Zulu war, and thus to the late great disaster, has been the annexation of the Transvaal, by which, as the Boers complain, we came by stealth, 'as a thief in the night,' and deprived them of their rights, and took possession of their land. We all know that, while the Secretary of State on April 23, 1877, was saying in his place in the House of Lords that 'as to the supposed threat of annexing the Transvaal, the language of the Special Commissioner had been greatly exaggerated,' it had already been annexed on April 12th, under authority issued months before by himself. No doubt, he had been beguiled by the semblance of great unanimity, of the general desire for annexation, among the Transvaal people; whereas the expression of such a desire, we know, came chiefly from Englishmen, most of them recent arrivals in the land, and not from the great body of old Dutch residents. He had also been, of course, very deeply impressed by the reports which had reached him about the state of the country, the weakness of the Government, its empty exchequer, its failure in warlike measures against the natives, and the cruel outrages committed by individual Boers in some of those conflicts. But those outrages were reprobated by their own fellow-countrymen ....*

108. *Ibid.*, pp. 3-5

Colenso placed the annexation of the ZAR at the forefront of the problem as it brought with it the problem of the Zulu land claims – although he clearly states that the Zulus were justified in their claims to land:

*So we annexed the Transvaal, and that act brought with it as its Nemesis the Zulu difficulty, with respect to the territory disputed with the Boers. Have we 'done justly' here? I assume what is stated in the published Award that the three English Commissioners have reported their opinion that the land in question south of the Pongolo - almost identically what was claimed by the Zulus - belongs of strict right to them, and not to the Boers. I assume that our Commissioners conscientiously discharged their duty in the matter, heard and considered carefully all the evidence produced on both sides, and produced in the presence of the representatives of both, an essential requisite in such an enquiry, and came to the deliberate conclusion that the Transvaal claim had not been sustained, and that the Zulu claim was justified.<sup>109</sup>*

The 'plot' against the Zulus continued as the 'High Commissioner' (Frere) agitated against them and resolved to carry out 'active operations' against them:

*At last, our present Governor, with a true Englishman's sense of right and justice, took the matter in hand, and at the end of 1877 proposed, and in due time appointed, the Boundary Commission, which reported in favour of the Zulus.*

*Did we even then 'do justly?' I must speak the truth this day before God, and honestly say that in my judgment we did not. Some time before the Commissioner's Report was made, the High Commissioner had said that we must be 'ready to defend ourselves against further aggression,' that 'the delay caused' by the Commission would have compensating advantages,' that 'it appeared almost certain that serious complications must shortly arise with the Zulus, which will necessitate active operations' - when all the while the Zulus were only claiming, south of the*

109. *Ibid.*, pp. 6-7

*Pongolo, land which has now been declared to be 'of strict right' their own, and, north of it, land east of the Drakensberg, which may as justly be their own, but respecting which no inquiry has yet been made. And we know that, before the Award was given, large bodies of troops had been collected on the frontier, our volunteers called out, our native levies raised, and that Award, which might have been the herald of peace, was converted, by the demands coupled with it, into a declaration of war. Nay, the Award itself was, in my judgment, stripped of almost all its value for the Zulus by a clause of the Memorandum, reserving under British guarantee all private rights acquired under the Boer Government, which had granted out in farms, it is said, the whole land in question, though it had no right to grant any of it. The Zulu King would have had no control over it; he would not have been able to send any of his people to live on it, or any of his cattle to graze on it, or even to assign places in it to any Zulus who might have elected to move from the Transvaal to the Zulu side of the boundary.<sup>110</sup>*

King Cetshwayo was supported in the sermon and his character is portrayed as that of an honourable and sincere king deserving of appropriate treatment. Colenso ends by saying that calamity would befall the Colony and England if King Cetshwayo continued to be unfairly judged and misrepresented and if Britain did not urgently redress the wrongs that Frere had perpetrated:

*The Zulu King, it is well known, has sued at our hands for peace. It may be that he has done this, as some think, because his army has suffered much - because his counsels are divided - because he fears that some of his great chiefs will desert him - because he is laying some deep plot against us. But it may be, as I trust and believe, that he is sincere in his expressions of grief for the present war, and the slaughter at Isandhiwana. As far as I can read the obscure and evidently confused and incorrect reports of his message, which have appeared in the newspapers, he seems to say - 'This war is all a dreadful mistake - a horrible nightmare! Is it possible that I am fighting with my English Father, with whom I have lived all along in unbroken friendly*

110. *Ibid.*, pp. 7-9

*intercourse? I have no wish whatever to do so. My young men did wrong in crossing at Rorke's Drift; I ordered them not to cross, and, when I struck, I struck only in self-defence; and as before, in my own and my father's time, so ever since that bloody day, the Zulus have never invaded Natal Colony. As Englishmen, speak the word that no more blood be shed; let the war be brought to an end; and give me only such terms as I and my people can accept."*

*I say that, with the very possibility of such feelings having impelled the Zulu King to send this message - and it closely agrees in tone with the last message which he sent before the Ultimatum was delivered - if we would 'walk humbly with God,' and put our trust in Him, and not in the god of force - we are bound to meet the Zulu King on the way, when he comes with a prayer for peace - to propose to him, from our higher and stronger position, such terms as it shall be within his power to accept - to show him that we Christians trust more in our strength Divine, as a just and merciful nation, than in mere military power - and, having done this, to leave the rest with God.*

*But if, after this solemn day, we will not do this - we, our kings and princes and prophets and priests - will not do what the Lord requires of us, will not 'do justly, and love mercy, and walk humbly with our God' - if we will go on killing and plundering those who have never seriously harmed us, or threatened to harm us, until we made war upon them - treating his message of peace with, contempt and neglect, even with ridicule, ascribing it falsely to the promptings of men in our midst, judging unfairly and misrepresenting the Zulu King, both in the Colony and in words sent to England - if we will do these things then indeed there will be reason to fear that some further great calamity may yet fall on us, and perhaps overwhelm us - by the assegai, famine, or pestilence - in what way we cannot tell, but so that we shall know the hand that smites us.<sup>111</sup>*

111. *Ibid.*, pp. 10-11

Hicks Beach sent a sequence of despatches to Frere in which he explained why a war against the Zulus should be avoided. The state of affairs in Afghanistan and the political crisis in the Balkans involving Russia were far more pressing matters for the British Cabinet. In any event, the fiscus was in dire straits and could ill afford a war in Southern Africa. If a war did result, the implication for British taxpayers would have been an increased tax burden which could lead to the downfall of Disraeli's Government. War was therefore an undesirable option .

Disraeli was viewed by most historians as the great pro-active imperialist who hoped to unify the classes in Britain under the imperial banner. His rhetoric as exemplified in his Manchester and Crystal Palace speeches in 1872 , supports this idea. However the Empire did not extend nearly as greatly between 1874 –1880 as it did under Gladstone. Disraeli's approach was to rather consolidate the Empire, if necessary in an opportunistic fashion ,but always safeguarding the Empire according to the principles of the Tories.

His purchase of Suez Canal shares in 1875, while an opportunistic reaction to the troubles of the Khedive, was also significantly strategic. It prevented a French takeover of the vital sea-route to India and had the effect of reducing tolls, thereby making shipping to and from India and the Orient far cheaper. Disraeli was therefore intent on safeguarding British strategic and economic interests. This was also the case during the Second and Third Afghan Wars. Disraeli made a poor selection in having Lord Lytton as Viceroy as the latter was an aggressive imperialist much like Frere. Lytton was instructed to install a British mission in Kabul and told not to use force to expel the Russians who were believed to have cast their eyes on India. Lytton ignored Disraeli and invaded with 35000 troops that restored British control in 1880. Selecting Frere in southern Africa was an equally contentious appointment. Selecting poor officials in terms of their non-conformity meant that highly controversial policies had to be followed through. Hicks Beach was also a poor choice-he had the authority to prevent Frere's belligerence but did not persevere in attempting to persuade Frere to avoid hostility against the Zulus.

Hicks Beach wrote to Disraeli on 3 November 1878:

*I have impressed this view upon Sir B. Frere, both officially and privately, to the best of my power. But I cannot really control him without a telegraph – (I don't know that I could with one) – I feel it is as likely as not that he is at war with the Zulus at the present moment; and if his forces should prove inadequate, or the Transvaal Boers should take the opportunity to rise, he will be in great difficulty, and we shall be blamed for not supporting him.<sup>112</sup>*

Clearly, Hicks Beach had conceded defeat in his dealings and unsuccessful attempts, feeble as they were, to supervise his subordinate. He condoned Frere's actions providing there was a chance that they would be lucrative. In defence of Hicks Beach one could argue that he did not know for certain if Frere would actually precipitate a conflict. Frere was resolute in his determination however, and he believed it was imperative to keep the ZAR happy under British control. In fact confederation could only be possible if the Boers felt content and safe from possible Zulu invasion. If Britain failed to satisfactorily protect the ZAR from Zulu aggression, a Boer revolt could be in the offing and Frere's plan for British hegemony would be dashed. The ZAR Boers were increasingly discontented at British control and a deputation was sent to Britain in April 1878 to request a restoration of the ZAR's independent status. Kruger and Joubert were unconvinced that promises of telegraph and railway links would be forthcoming under British control. They also doubted that proposed reforms in the British control over the ZAR would in fact be viable. Hicks Beach warned Frere of these dangers and the possibility of a Boer revolt and preferred the idea of restoring to the ZAR a measure of self-Government under British Protectorate status. Frere would have none of this and only wanted a confederation, which was after all, his master-plan. He believed that if the Zulus were crushed militarily this would appease the ZAR,<sup>113</sup> who would then easily slot into their place in the confederation scheme.

112. Hicks Beach, V. : Life of Sir Michael Hicks Beach (Earl of Aldwyn), p.103

113. Frere - Hicks Beach, 10 November 1878, in Worsfold : Sir Bartle Frere, p.111



Frere and his advisors were during the first months of 1878, equally perturbed about the situation in the ZAR as they were about the Zulus.<sup>114</sup> Commodore Sullivan, one of Frere's Naval Commanders had preceded him to Natal Colony in preparation for hostilities in Zululand and was making arrangements for this eventuality as early as April 1878.<sup>115</sup> Bishop Colenso, in his analysis of Frere's actions, noted 11 April 1878 as the date on which Frere had been contriving the invasion of Zululand.<sup>116</sup>

The question, to Frere, was not whether a war against the Zulus was avoidable, but rather when such a war would break out. Only by conducting a war against the Zulus and by being victorious could the ZAR be reconciled to British rule. Nothing less would do. A victory over King Cetshwayo would overawe the Boers and serve to confirm the superior status of Britain in southern Africa. In any event Frere believed he had sufficient military means to conduct a rapid campaign against the Zulus and this would serve to nullify the border award which he regarded as a catastrophe. The Boers had to be appeased at all costs. They desperately needed an assurance as to their future that could only be achieved by settling the Zulu problem militarily. If Britain did not act decisively, the Boers would, in Frere's opinion, resist the annexation. As it turned out, the debacle at Isandhlwana encouraged Boer resistance to British control and eventually led to the failure of the confederation scheme. Disraeli can to a large extent be accused of creating the germ of Boer nationalism for the sake of the impractical idea of confederation by his poor selection of personnel such as Frere, who had their own agenda.

Hicks Beach re-iterated that any reinforcements sent to Natal Colony were purely sent as a precautionary move and were not to be utilized for any campaign of invasion, but Frere brushed these instructions aside:

114. BPP., C.2144, Thesiger - War Office, 10 April 1878, nos. 20 and 29, pp.20-29

115. BPP., C.2144, Confidential Correspondence : Sullivan - Admiralty, 12 August 1878, no.42, p.33

116. Vijn, C. : King Cetshwayo's Dutchman, p.99

*an insurrection or rebellion in the Transvaal would have been almost inevitable and would certainly have been followed by a Zulu invasion of Natal Colony. It would take months to convey to the Boers the devices by which I hoped the Commissioners' disregard of private rights might possibly be mitigated and corrected. Meantime it is probable the Boer discontent would have exploded in some form of other.*<sup>117</sup>

In Frere's opinion there was no doubt that the implications and dangers of a Boer revolt were far greater than those posed by a Zulu war. It was therefore imperative that he take the initiative and bring on the impending crisis. The overthrow of the Zulu Kingdom was the way to coax the recalcitrant ZAR into confederation. There was also a measure of resistance to confederation elsewhere in South Africa:

*a considerable party in Natal Colony and the Cape Colony who have taken, and advocated in the public press, views regarding Zulu affairs strongly opposed to the use of coercion.*<sup>118</sup>

While Frere in need of an excuse to invade Zululand, requested troops on the pretext of using them for self-defence, King Cetshwayo was doing nothing at all to suggest any hostile intention whatsoever. Frere convinced himself that peace in southern Africa could only be achieved by subduing the Zulu menace and although requesting troops for self-defence knew full well that he would stake the Zulus first, but needed the Zulus to be aggressive so as to justify his action. He therefore promoted vigorously the idea that the Zulus would not be content within their own borders and demonized King Cetshwayo as a king who would revert to the centralized military organization system in order to conquer<sup>119</sup> the entire southern African region. His paranoia had no real foundation however and the last thing on King Cetshwayo's agenda

117. GRO, PCC/1/31, Frere - Hicks Beach, 8 December 1878

118. BPP.,C.2222,General Correspondence : Frere - Hicks Beach, 27 December 1878, no.58, p.225

119. BPP.,C.2222,General Correspondence : Frere - Hicks Beach, 5 November 1878, no.6, p.7

was an invasion of Natal Colony. Frere was anything but transparent and accountable in his actions. His appalling level of arrogance and indeed inhumanity, in the face of a social catastrophe in Zululand resulting from a war which was unjust leaves a lot to be desired.

Rupert Fumeaux, a respected historian in the field of the Anglo-Zulu War is extremely critical of British actions and in particular, Sir Bartle Frere. He portrays the invasion of Zululand as unrestrained and totally unjustified. He contends that the Natal Colony colonists were grossly exaggerating that a Zulu invasion was imminent and lays much of the hysteria at the door of Frere. Fumeaux is of the opinion that King Cetshwayo had no desire to occupy any of the land in Natal Colony, neither was he the tyrant that Frere and numerous missionaries made him out to be. Fumeaux asserts that the British casus belli was unjustified. He sees Frere as the predominant force behind the invasion of Zululand.<sup>120</sup> Fumeaux does however portray Frere as a man obsessed with the idea that King Cetshwayo was bent on the destruction of Natal Colony and that the majority of Zulus would welcome King Cetshwayo's demise. Frere regarded the entire region as a highly volatile one in which dangers lurked, the most pressing danger being the menacing Zulu military machine. This military force would only be dismantled by an external, superior force.<sup>121</sup> Once this objective was achieved, confederation would be within sight.

One should not lose sight however, of the fact that the Boer republics had no desire to relinquish their independence, and the annexation of the ZAR which although intended to expedite confederation, had instead polarized anti-British sentiments in both the republics. Even the administration of Molteno in the Cape was not interested in taking responsibility for unconquered tribes or antagonistic Boers. Hicks Beach warned Frere that Paul Kruger and Piet Joubert were unlikely to accept assurances of British reforms in the ZAR and feared that the Boers in the ZAR would revolt.<sup>122</sup> This intensified Frere's

120. Fumeaux, R. : The Zulu War : Isandhlwana and RorKe's Drift, pp.3-5

121. Ibid., pp.18-19

122. Hicks Beach - Frere, 11 July 1878, in Worsfold. : Sir Bartle Frere, p.75

resolve to crush the Zulus militarily as such a victory would overawe the Boers and thus emphasize British military supremacy and political hegemony. He continually depicted the Zulus as tyrannical savages who were about to butcher the helpless Natal Colonists and went so far as to describe King Cetshwayo's soldiers as 'celibate manslaying gladiators.'<sup>123</sup> Frere was convinced that once the Zulu Kingdom was crushed the Boers would be reconciled to the idea of confederation. The Boers needed an assurance as to the future but the 'difficulty' of the Zulus needed to be settled as a matter of urgency before the Boers would be brought around to the idea of British hegemony.<sup>124</sup>

Donald Morris, the American historian who wrote *The Washing of the Spears*, in 1965, is also highly critical of Sir Bartle Frere. He regarded Frere as the instigator of a preventative war against the Zulus that ultimately led to the dismantling of their Kingdom. Morris stresses that Frere wanted a confederation and used the fear of the Zulu military machine as an excuse to invade Zululand. He also points out that Sir Theophilus Shepstone greatly influenced Frere's thoughts and actions. Frere in particular, believed that a confederation would bring stability to southern Africa. A broader British policy of hegemony in southern Africa drove his actions leading to war. Morris argues that the Boers were restless in the ZAR and wanted more land on which to settle and farm. By conquering the Zulus, Britain could satisfy this land-hunger.<sup>125</sup> Problems of drought, cattle disease and boundary disputes could also be solved. Morris states that Natal Colony was extremely fearful of Zulu militarism and Frere was particularly concerned that King Cetshwayo had a large force at his disposal. Whether or not King Cetshwayo intended to attack British interests was irrelevant. What really mattered to Frere was the fact that King Cetshwayo's army had the capability to attack and this would wreck the confederation plan he envisaged.<sup>126</sup> This would threaten British hegemony in the region and Frere would not allow it.

123. Kennedy, P.A. :The Fatal Diplomacy : Sir Theophilus Shepstone and the Zulu Kings, 1839-1879, p.23

124 .Frere - Hicks Beach, 15 September 1878, in Worsfold. : Sir Bartle Frere, p.89

125. Morris, D.R. : The Washing of the Spears, pp.268-269

126. Ibid., p.267

The journalist-historian Norris-Newman an officially designated correspondent who accompanied British troops, stated that Frere was given clear instructions to avoid war but if King Cetshwayo proved stubborn in obeying Frere's requests, force could be used. King Cetshwayo had in Norris-Newman's opinion broken his coronation promises regarding arbitrary executions and ordered a raid into Natal Colony in hot-pursuit of Sihayo's women and these factors had served to heighten the tensions in the region. King Cetshwayo would not accede to British interests and ignored Frere's ultimatum which was sent on 11 December 1878. Consequently, says Norris-Newman, Frere was obliged to take military action and did not do so purely because of a desire to promote and establish British hegemony. Norris-Newman further asserts that John Dunn had as early as October 1878 reported to the Natal Colony Government that King Cetshwayo's forces were mobilizing. Norris-Newman further asserts that Frere believed it was his duty to induce King Cetshwayo to govern his land in a civilized way and in a manner which was not hostile towards either the ZAR or Natal Colony.<sup>127</sup>

Norris-Newman believed the ultimatum presented to King Cetshwayo was unreasonable but defends Frere by insisting that he had no real desire for war and hoped for a peaceful resolution. Frere believed King Cetshwayo would have accepted the ultimatum. As King Cetshwayo did not, Frere was not acting against the home Government's wishes by invading Zululand as it had given him the power to initiate an invasion and therefore sanctioned it.<sup>128</sup> Norris-Newman clearly supports Frere's actions and believes he was acting well within his authority. Norris-Newman is a rather emotional primary historian and does not mention that Hicks Beach's instructions were ignored by Frere. It therefore appears that British policy in general was to use force to subdue and destroy the Zulu Kingdom irrespective of the lip-service in dispatches between London and Natal Colony .

127. Norris-Newman, C.L. : In Zululand with the British throughout the war of 1879, p.xi

128. Ibid., xiv

Both Fumeaux and Morris regard the 11 December 1878 ultimatum as an unworkable document with totally unreasonable demands. Both agree that King Cetshwayo could not possibly accept it and Frere knew this full well. Morris says the ultimatum was not outlining reforms King Cetshwayo should make but rather outlined how Britain would administer Zululand. War was thus inevitable. Morris says that although Frere had authority to use force if necessary, the ultimatum was a serious overstepping of that authority and a declaration of war. Fumeaux echoes these sentiments.

One must not forget that Frere was acting according to British Colonial policy at the time. Imperial warfare was an accepted mode of life in Victoria's Empire. In fact from 1837 to 1901 warfare was a common price to pay for empire building. In *Queen Victoria's Little Wars*, by Byron Farwell, the Anglo-Zulu War is only one of numerous wars of the Victoria era. Farwell also agrees that the ultimatum presented to King Cetshwayo was totally humiliating and unreasonable to extreme and therefore tantamount to a declaration of war on the Zulu Kingdom.<sup>129</sup> Farwell does however greatly admire Victorians and asserts that Britons believed it their duty to spread their doctrines, customs and political institutions – Frere shared these sentiments.<sup>130</sup>

Farwell explained that Frere had no option but to invade Zululand as the region was destabilized by a large Zulu army. The region was extremely volatile and the Zulus could have invaded Natal Colony at any time. This was a good enough reason to invade Zululand. Farwell says that the fear of invasion by Zulus was the reason why Frere called for reinforcements in 1878.<sup>131</sup> The Zulus could not be allowed to threaten British control in the ZAR and Natal Colony and therefore British hegemony. The Zulus could not be allowed to threaten the lives of the whites or other African tribes. Farwell emphasizes that the main

129. Farwell, B. : Queen Victoria's little wars, pp.1-2

130. Ibid., p.3

131. Ibid., p.224

British interest in Zululand was spurred on by imperial ambition with a secondary concern the welfare of whites in Natal Colony who were severely outnumbered by Africans. The ZAR too, needed protection to assure its support of British control. Frere needed to strike the first blow and take the initiative against the Zulus. If a confederation was considered vital to peace in southern Africa it would only be a matter of time before King Cetshwayo's hordes would have to be subdued anyway. Furneaux and Norris-Newman also see the war as a preventative war that Frere was planning based on his belief that the Zulus were the greatest obstacle to the confederation plan.

Frere would be justified in invading Zululand if King Cetshwayo showed hostile intent first:

*If some of King Cetshwayo's young regiments would try their strength against one of H.M.'s, I should have no fear of the result and the way would be clear.<sup>132</sup>*

Frere was dismayed at the prospect of King Cetshwayo actually accepting the ultimatum and therefore resolved to make it as comprehensive as possible. He subsequently began to search for further evidence of Zulu hostility that he could use as an excuse against the Zulus. As virtually no further evidence could be found with which to taint King Cetshwayo, the Smith and Deighton incident which Bulwer regarded as insignificant was turned into an 'outrageous insult' by Frere.<sup>133</sup> He hinted to the Natal Colony newspapers that a crisis was looming vis-à-vis the Zulu Kingdom and they wasted no time in supporting his anti-Zulu stance:

132. N A, SP 34, Letters sent : Frere - Shepstone, 20 November 1878

133. BPP., C.2222, General Correspondence : minute by Frere, 12 December 1878, p.189

*We have been all our lifetime subject to bondage, our colonists may well say, by reason of this African shadow (the Zulus) across the Tugela ... such a nation must of necessity form a constant menace to the peaceable European community beyond their borders. Civilisation cannot co-exist with such a condition of things upon its outskirts.*<sup>134</sup>

Shepstone was very pleased to learn that Frere was totally committed to a war with King Cetshwayo and that nothing would deflect him from this course of action.<sup>135</sup> Frere however continued to present himself as a diplomat attempting to reach a settlement with the Zulus. In truth, he was frantically attempting to amass and make connections between fragmentary evidence supposedly demonstrating Zulu hostility, arguments for war and hypotheses as to what the Zulus could be expected to do.

Ultimately, however, there seems to be something disquieting concerning Frere's conscious mythologizing of King Cetshwayo's brutal nature, considering that he never actually met the Zulu King face to face. What is equally disturbing is that Shepstone was able to convince Frere that the Zulu Kingdom would disintegrate after a single strike had been made against it. Shepstone convinced Frere that Zululand's Government and militaristic way of life could only be changed by using force. Only then would Frere be able to bring peace to southern Africa.

Robert Edgerton in *Like Lions they Fought*, which was published in 1988, asserts that the war was fought because Frere and his officials could not and would not accept a powerful and hostile antagonist in their sphere of interest. A southern African confederation could only materialize once the Zulu menace was neutralized.<sup>136</sup> Edgerton claims that Frere hoped to consolidate British hegemony in southern Africa and create stability. It was therefore imperative to absorb Zululand as it could not be allowed to present an

134. Duminy, A. and Ballard, C., (eds) : The Anglo-Zulu War : New Perspectives, p.40

135. N A,SP 34, Letters Sent : Frere to Shepstone, 20 November 1878

136. Edgerton, R.B. : Like Lions They Fought, p.21



obstacle to Frere's grand design.<sup>137</sup> Interesting, Edgerton apportions blame equally on Frere and Shepstone for causing the war. He says that Frere and Shepstone both schemed and waited for and created the opportune time to do their dastardly deed against King Cetshwayo. He hastens to add that the initiator of the confederation scheme was Camarvon who set Frere on a path to try and realize this objective in Machiavellian fashion.<sup>138</sup> Frere propagated tales from unreliable missionaries that cast King Cetshwayo in the light of the arch-villain of the peace and further failed to dispel rumours that all the Africans were involved in a covert conspiracy to oust whites from southern Africa. Frere did nothing to allay this genuine concern of white settlers and in fact fuelled the fire more and more by propagating untruths about King Cetshwayo and his intentions. Edgerton states that Frere's ultimatum was unjust and not entirely supported by Natal Colony residents. There were however sizeable pockets of support for Frere's ultimatum which was intentionally unacceptable to the Zulu monarch. It was after all designed to lead to the 'calculated destruction of a sovereign state.'<sup>139</sup>

The ultimatum that was presented to King Cetshwayo included, *inter-alia*, the following:

- a. The surrender of Sihayo's brother and sons.
- b. A fine of 500 cattle to be paid within 20 days of the receipt of the ultimatum.
- c. A further fine of 100 cattle to make up for the Smith and Deighton affair, also to be paid within 20 days.
- d. The abolition of the Zulu military system.
- e. No Zulu regiments to be assembled without the prior approval of the British.
- f. Zulu men should be free to marry as they saw fit.
- g. A fair and open trial for those accused of crimes with a right of appeal to the monarch.

137. *Ibid.*, p.14

138. *Ibid.*, p.13

139. *Ibid.*, pp.21-22

- a. No executions without the monarch's consent.
- b. A British Resident would be stationed in Zululand to make certain that military changes were introduced and all the coronation laws of King Cetshwayo were observed.
- c. Any disputes involving Europeans was to be heard by King Cetshwayo in the presence of the British Resident.
- d. No European could be expelled from Zululand without the approval of the British Resident.
- e. Missionaries and their proselytes were to be allowed to return to Zululand and continue their work.
- f. King Cetshwayo had to signal an acceptance of the terms and conditions of the ultimatum within 30 days.<sup>140</sup>

Ironically, Bulwer signed the ultimatum despite his misgivings. He clearly bowed to Frere's way of thinking and was undoubtedly pressurised by Frere. In an apparent turnabout, Bulwer wrote:

*I get on very well with him (Frere). We have not always agreed upon all points, but I am able to agree with what he has now asked and consider he has asked no more than necessary.*<sup>141</sup>

Bulwer, as stated earlier, was mainly concerned about legitimacy over the disputed territory. His opposition to increased troop numbers in Natal Colony was prevailed over by Frere's wishes. The increased troop numbers in Natal Colony heightened tensions in the region to a very large extent and was directly responsible for the mobilizing of the Zulu army which in turn created fear of invasion in Natal Colony. This was precisely what Frere wanted to achieve. Britain would not disarm to ease the tension as if she did, the Boers in the ZAR as well as Britain's other subject populations would take it as a sign of weakness. The Zulu army would certainly not be disbanded by King Cetshwayo as this would be a despot and hoped that the Zulus would accept changes as

140. BPP., C.2222, General Correspondence : Shepstone - Frere, 30 November 1878, pp.203-208

141. BPP., C.2252, General Correspondence : Frere - Hicks Beach, 24 January 1879, no.18, p.51

these would benefit them. He subsequently re-wrote the ultimatum in softer terms which he hoped would mollify the Zulus. He omitted Frere's original hint that war would result if the ultimatum was not accepted and ended by saying that King Cetshwayo and his advisers had 30 days to respond in the affirmative.<sup>142</sup> During November 1878 a steady stream of British reinforcements arrived in Natal Colony. All were previously involved in the Ninth Frontier War on the Cape eastern frontier:

*During the past week [the third week of November] Durban has been enlivened by the arrival of large reinforcements of men to supplement the British military strength in this colony and the Transvaal [ZAR]. Altogether, over 900 men have landed on our shores, composed of naval, military and Volunteer contingents.<sup>143</sup>*

The reinforcements included the Kaffrarian Vanguard, the Naval Brigade, the First Twenty-Fourth Regiment, and the Volunteers of Commandant Lonsdale. A colonial military build-up was also under way as the Colonial volunteer Infantry, Durban Volunteer Artillery, Natal Colony Mounted Police, Natal Colony Mounted Volunteers and Maritzburg Rifles all prepared for the imminent hostilities. King Cetshwayo did not even under these conditions demonstrate any intention of attacking Natal Colony:

*..... Of one thing you may rest confident, the Zulu King will show no hostile move in this direction until an attack is made on him; and it is plain to see from the various movements of the troops that things are not yet ripe enough for that.*

*The 'thin red line' is spreading, and day by day the Zulu King is getting more surrounded, and it requires no great foresight to see that things at the Front cannot much longer remain as they are.<sup>144</sup>*

142. N A, GH 1326, Bulwer - Frere, 17 July 1878, no.112

143. The Natal Colony Witness, 23 November 1878, (editorial)

144. The Natal Colony Witness, 30 November 1878, p.5

The Zulus did not appear to fully comprehend the gravity of the situation and this was probably due to the fact that Bulwer had toned down the language of the ultimatum to a great extent.

Colenso surprisingly approved of the points of the ultimatum which would ultimately lead to war and this was a very important psychological victory for Frere as it fuelled his initiative. Colenso only later realized that he had been led into a 'fools paradise'<sup>145</sup> by Frere and that the border award was counterfeit as the Boers would get to keep the land. This 'the most fanatical friend of the African man,'<sup>146</sup> appears to have muzzled his doubts and went along with the hope that Frere as a Christian was on the side of justice. He also appears to have harboured the belief that King Cetshwayo would eventually accept English civilization.<sup>147</sup> Ironically, Frere complained that only half the Natal Colony colonists were in favour of 'his war.' Before the invasion of Zululand the Natal Witness characterized Frere's ultimatum as a demand for the Zulus to commit 'self-emasculation.'<sup>148</sup>

Frere was bent on his chosen course of action and believed he was enlightened to promote the advance of empire as planned by Carnarvon. His self-righteous declarations were believed by most Britons who did not understand that he had connivingly presented an ultimatum to King Cetshwayo. It was an ultimatum of intolerable proportions which would justify the premeditated destruction of the sovereign Zulu Kingdom. British hegemony could be advanced in southern Africa and Frere would be the hero of the Empire.

145. BPP., C.2220, Original Correspondence : Bulwer - Commissioners, 6 July 1878, p.368

146. Fumeaux, R. : The Zulu War : Isandhlwana and RorKes Drift, p.23

147. Guy, J. : The Heretic : a Study of the Life of John William Colenso, 1814-1883, pp.263-266

148. Guest, W.R., The War, Natal Colony and Confederation, in Duminy, A.H. and Ballard, C.C., (eds):

The Anglo-Zulu War : New Perspectives. p.65

Frere was a very persistent, persuasive and adept diplomat and an equally effective administrator. He believed that as the man on the spot, he had a far better understanding of events than the British Cabinet which was geographically distant. He undoubtedly persisted in doing things his way as he had not been censured by his superiors in the past and simply continued to do his will. Sir Michael Hicks Beach appears to have had very little understanding of Frere or the confederation policy and was somewhat constrained in his correspondence with Frere. On 7 March 1878 Hicks Beach wrote to Frere:

*I need not say that I have been doing my best to make myself acquainted with my new work, and more especially with South African affairs. But I do not write now for the purpose of expressing any opinion about them. I hardly feel yet in a position to do so.*<sup>149</sup>

Frere appears to have had his actions sanctioned by the royal family of Britain. In 1875 he served as advisor and attended the Prince of Wales on his tour to India after which Frere continued to keep on friendly terms with the royal family. This relationship probably accounts, in part, for Frere's willingness to disregard the British Government's directives and plod his own course. By his own assessment and the persuasive arguments of Shepstone, Frere resolved that the Zulu Kingdom could not remain autonomous. He sought the hands of some Natal Colonists by promising them constitutional concessions and land.

As stated earlier, Frere, Shepstone and Carnarvon were all in favour of confederation as agents of capitalism. The Zulu Kingdom needed to be destroyed so as to facilitate the organization and deployment of a large African labour force. The British Government supported this idea but took an ambivalent stance as it did not wish to spend huge sums of money to achieve this objective,<sup>150</sup> war was certainly not a desirable option.

149. BPP., C. 2220, Original Correspondence : Hicks Beach – Frere, 7 March 1878

150. Guy, J.J. : 'The British Invasion of Zululand : some thoughts for the centenary year,' (Reality, 2(1), 1979 pp.8-9).

As the decision of the boundary commission (which was expected to be against the Zulus and therefore bring matters to a head) in fact favoured the Zulus, Frere had to find another course of action. He consequently began to magnify border incidents and attacked the rule of King Cetshwayo.<sup>151</sup>

Frere arranged to deliver the boundary commission's verdict and the stringent ultimatum on 11 December 1878. If King Cetshwayo refused to accept the ultimatum within 30 days, war would be declared. The award and ultimatum were delivered on the right bank of the Thukela river.

The award defined the line as the Ncome river to its main source in the Magidela mountains and from there a direct line to a hill between the main two sources of the Pongola river. The award failed to state that land between the defined border line and the line claimed by the ZAR had been sub-divided into farms and all these claims would be regarded as valid whereas any Zulus on the ZAR side of the line could only be on white-owned land as ZAR law forbade African land ownership. Zulus on these land could be removed and not compensated. The Zulu delegation did clearly not fully understand these terms and also accepted that King Cetshwayo had no sovereignty north of the Pongola river.

The reading of the ultimatum was a cause of great trepidation amongst the Zulu delegation. They claimed that King Cetshwayo had not broken any coronation vows and did not see why the Zulu army should be disbanded as it was an old and indispensable organ of the Zulu Kingdom. They also raised an objection to the 30 day time limit and would have preferred no time limit on such important issues to be decided. Furthermore, they requested a British representative to certify the correctness of the ultimatum which they would present to King Cetshwayo. John Shepstone would not agree to send a British representative with them and gave the documents to John Dunn to present to King Cetshwayo. Dunn, as it turned out, sent messengers to

151. Barthorp, M. : The Zulu War, p.13

King Cetshwayo and did not convey the ultimatum in person. The King probably never received a clear account of the ultimatum as it appears that the Zulus believed the surrender of Sihayo's sons to be the main demand requiring compliance. Once Sihayo's sons were handed over, the other demands would be easy to ignore. King Cetshwayo's initial response to the ultimatum was penned by John Dunn. King Cetshwayo agreed to give up Sihayo's sons and pay fines in head of cattle. The remainder of the demands would be discussed by King Cetshwayo and his advisers. He requested Frere not to take action if Sihayo's sons and the cattle were not handed over in 20 days, as heavy rain had made communications very difficult.

Bulwer appealed to Frere to wait for the full 30 day period before taking action, but Frere would not accede to Bulwer's request. He believed King Cetshwayo would not submit to the terms of the ultimatum which was impossible in content and ordered troop movements to various positions on the Zululand border. Frere was set on war with the Zulus. Although the home Government was reluctant to be drawn into a conflict, Frere would do what he thought was best. He was not eager to see another 1857 Indian Mutiny and feared Zulu violence against the whites.<sup>152</sup>

On 26 November, a message was received by the Border Agent at the Lower Tugela. King Cetshwayo consented to pay the fine of cattle as ordered but requested more time. He claimed he could not gather together all the cattle in the time allocated as they were to be sought out and the land was great. When the 20 day limit had been reached, Sihayo's sons had not yet been handed over and neither had any cattle. Before the expiry of the 30 days, Frere ordered the invasion of Zululand.<sup>153</sup> On 6 January 1879, Wood's number 4 Column crossed the Ncome river into Zululand.<sup>154</sup> The Cabinet did not learn about the ultimatum until 2 January 1879. Ironically, Frere's invasion force was reinforced by additional troops that Hicks Beach had sent that were to be used for defensive purposes only.

152. Clammer, D. : The Zulu War, Pan, pp.17-20

153. BPP.,C.2234, General Correspondence :Chelmsford - War Office, 22 December 1878, no.26, p.39

154. BPP.,C.2242, General Correspondence : Frere - Hicks Beach, 13 January 1879, no.9, p.24

In G.A. Henty's *The Young Colonists : A story of the Zulu and Boer Wars* - originally published in 1885, we read:

*During the month of December General Thesiger, who commanded the British forces in South Africa, made every effort to prepare for hostilities. The regiments which were at the Cape were brought round by sea; a brigade of seamen and marines was landed from the ships of war; several corps of irregular horse were raised among the colonists; and regiments of natives were enrolled. Before the date by which the king was to send in his answer the troops were assembled along the frontier.*<sup>155</sup>

Frere clearly had no intention of allowing King Cetshwayo to retain his Kingdom intact. Lt-General Lord Chelmsford (Thesiger had inherited this title in January), launched a three-pronged attack with 7000 British troops. Hicks Beach was not aware of terms of the ultimatum until the afternoon of 2 January 1879, by which time he was well aware that he would not be able to contain Frere.

The High Commissioner believed he could crush the Zulus before Disraeli, Hicks Beach or the Cabinet could question the morality or competence of the methods he was using.

Eleven days later the main British column had been annihilated at Isandhlwana and the Zulus were firmly behind their King.

Frere had his supports; amongst others John Mackenzie, British High Commissioner for Bechuanaland who wrote in 1882 in response to a statement that Frere should have been tried and hanged for perpetrating a war.

155. Henty, G.A. : The Young Colonists : A story of the Zulu and Boer Wars, p.47



*... but for the grave blunders of others you would have canonized Sir Bartle Frere instead of speaking of him as you do. He is the ablest man you ever sent to South Africa. As to his personal character, I do not know a finer or manlier Christian*

.....  
156

Sir Evelyn Wood wrote in his biography in 1906:

*The one great figure throughout the time when men's minds were depressed was undoubtedly the High Commissioner, Sir Bartle Frere. He spent many days and nights in supporting all my demands, and in coercing unwilling and timorous civil subordinates.*<sup>157</sup>

In the British Parliament Frere was vilified and being censured after Isandhlwana but also found supporters as in this resolution by the Earl of Cradock:

*In our opinion, his Excellency, Sir Bartle Frere, is one of the best Governors, if not the best Governor, this Colony has ever had, and the disasters which have taken place since he had held office, are not due to any fault of his, but to a shameful mismanagement of public affairs before he came to the Colony, and the state of chaos and utter confusion in which he had the misfortune to find everything on this arrive; and we are therefore of the opinion that the thanks of every loyal colonists are due to his Excellency for the Herculean efforts he has since made under the most trying circumstances to South Africa ...*<sup>158</sup>

A further example of support for Frere and his actions is a resolution by Lord Kimberley:

156. Butler, J. : Native Races and the War, p.79

157. Wood, E. : From Midshipman to Field Marshal, p.44

158. C A, B PP., C .2673, p.28

*It has been a source of much pain to us that your Excellency's policy and proceedings should have been so misunderstood and misrepresented .... The time, we hope, is not far distant when the wisdom of your Excellency's native policy and action will be as fully recognized and appreciated by the whole British nation as it is by the colonists of South Africa.*<sup>159</sup>

Josephine Butler (1828-1906), a Victorian woman writer of note, wrote the following concerning Frere after the debacle at Isandhlwana:

*On reaching Cape Town, a telegraphic message was handed to him, preparing him for his recall, by the statement that Sir H I Bulwer was to replace him as High Commissioner of the Transvaal, Natal Colony and all the adjoining eastern portion of South Africa, and that he was to confine his attention for the present to the Cape Colony.*

*To deprive him of his authority as regarded Natal Colony, Zululand, the Transvaal – the Transvaal, which almost by his single hand and voice he had just saved from civil war – and expressly to direct Colonel Lanyon to cease to correspond with him, was to discredit a public servant before all the world at the crisis of his work.*

*Sir Bartle Frere's great object had been to bring about a Confederation of all the different States and portions of South Africa, an object with which the Home Government was in sympathy.*

*What was wanting to bring about confederation was confidence, founded on the permanent pacification and settlement of Zululand, the Transvaal, the Transkei, Pondoland, Basutoland, West Griqualand, and the border generally. How could there, under these circumstances, be confidence any longer? There was no doubt what he had meant to do. By many*

159. C A, BPP., C. 2454, p.57

*a weary journey he had made himself personally known throughout South Africa. His aims and intentions were never concealed, never changed.*<sup>160</sup>

It is easy to understand why Josephine Butler says the Home Government was in sympathy with Frere's actors. The economic motivation of Britons was based on a desire to defend the financial interests abroad, especially so as to have huge financial gain. The markets for British goods opened up in the various parts of Empire; coupled with the vast resources of cheap raw materials and cheap labour made it essential to defend such interests. Southern Africa was no exception and it was in fact even more strategic than other areas given its geographic location in relation to the Indian subcontinent. The industrial revolution also motivated the search for new markets, especially during the depression from 1875, when, according to Hobson, capitalists preferred to invest in new areas rather than increase the wages of workers in Britain. Colonizable areas were therefore of great economic potential and Frere clearly realized this. Indeed, the Zulu Kingdom, appeared to rival Britain's economic and imperial supremacy and therefore challenged both its financial and strategic interests. It is justifiable to construe Frere's assault on the Zulus as a manifestation of the struggle for mastery in southern Africa. Furthermore, it was felt in Britain that the emerging Great Powers including Germany, France and the United States were seeking to emulate Britain's status and power. The consequence of this feeling was that a largely unjustified sense of insecurity developed in Britain which filtered through to the colonies. This in turn imbued men such as Frere with a desire to defend and expand the British Empire even though official control and expansion was not the formal foreign policy of the Government.

Frere felt a need to maintain order in the profitable if unstable, Natal Colony-Zululand region. Any instability, however, was the result of white encroachment on Zulu lands and the strong presence of British influence amongst Natal Colony colonists.

160. Butler, J. : Native Races and the War, pp.59-60

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Like Frere, Lord Lytton in Afghanistan was a man-on-the-spot. His aggressive policies towards perceived threats to stability in the Indian subcontinent provoked greater upheaval.

Frere, ever the moral guardian and a 'perfect' English Christian gentleman, asserted that he had acted to restore civilized Christian harmony in southern Africa rather than extend British economic interests and influence in the

region. This 'reluctant' or even 'fortuitous' imperialism was typical and very ironic given the penny-pinching policy of Disraeli's Government and the contradictions of protectionary imperialism. Disraeli's vision of the Empire as a pillar of Tory Democracy that would unite the social classes in Britain under a banner of imperial pride gave justification to imperialism. Hence Frere's decision not to abide by the instructions of Hicks Beach but to go his own way. He saw it is his duty to exercise a civilizing influence on the Zulus by providing stable Government and dispensing British justice. This glorified seemingly honourable motivation usually followed the initial economically motivated imperialism followed by Frere. This deliberate aggressive policy was not part of any planned expansionism policy – there was none.

Like Cameron, Frere was anxious to keep foreign powers out of Africa. Expansionism was therefore a stratagem that Cameron and Frere personally believed in and felt it their duty to carry out. In any event, Frere did not believe that Zululand as a potential entity, was worth keeping intact. Its barbaric nature would make it self-destruct once it came into contact with civilization. It would have to be absorbed if confederation was to be achieved. As the Colonial Office was not in favour of war against the Zulu Kingdom, Frere had to convince himself that King Cetshwayo could only be removed by force and resolved to go ahead with a war, irrespective of the Colonial Office's feelings. He therefore began to misrepresent the situation as it was in southern Africa and became ambiguous in his correspondence with London.

He pushed his African-conspiracy theory and convinced himself that Natal Colony would be attacked by the Zulus at any moment. Consequently he decided to conquer Zululand rapidly and then present the Colonial Office with a *fait-accomplis*.

In a letter to Sir Robert Herbert, the Permanent Under Secretary at the Colonial Office, Frere acknowledged he was encouraged to avoid war,<sup>161</sup> yet he persisted in his mission.

161. Frere - Herbert, 23 December 1878, in Martineau : Life of Frere, Vol II, p.265

Disraeli was extremely angry because of the disaster at Isandhlwana as it would weaken his international image and reduce his bargaining ability in international issues. The extra expenditure that would be needed to save face made the Government a target for attack by the opposition Liberals. He was:

*Greatly stricken ..... Everybody was congratulating me on being the most fortunate of ministers, when there comes this horrible disaster.*<sup>162</sup>

Frere had clearly overstepped his authority.

Anthony Trollope, who dined at Frere's home in 1877 launched a virulent attack on Frere's actions in a letter on 26 April 1879 written to G.W. Rusden:

*I cannot tell you how much to blame I think we have been in attacking Cetuyayo. Frere, for whom personally I have both respect and regard, is a man who thinks it is England's duty to carry English civilization and English Christianity among all savages. Consequently, having the chance, he has waged war against these unfortunates, - who having lived side by side with us in Natal Colony for 25 years without ever having raised a hand against us! The consequence is that we have already slaughtered 10 000 of them, and rejoice in having done so. To me it seems like civilization gone mad!*<sup>163</sup>

In Frere's mind, he was a perfect Victorian gentleman. John Henry Newman, the most famous English convert to Roman Catholicism in the Nineteenth Century gives us a descriptive definition of a 'gentleman':

*It is almost a definition of a gentleman to say he is one who never inflicts pain. This description is both refined and, as far as it goes, accurate. He is mainly occupied in merely removing the obstacles which hinder the free and*

162. Buckle, G.E. : The Life of Benjamin Disraeli, Earl of Beaconsfield, p.424

163. Trollope, A. : The Letters, Vol II, p. 826.

*unembarrassed action of those about him; and he concurs with their movements rather than takes the initiative himself. His benefits may be considered as parallel to what are called comforts or conveniences in arrangements of a personal nature.*

Frere certainly was a person who did inflict pain. He does however fit the bill of one 'removing the obstacles which hinder the free and unembarrassed action' as is evident by his actions in perpetuating the Anglo-Zulu War. He was also keen to do things that suited his own 'conveniences'.

Newman continues:

*(The Victorian gentleman) – He is never mean or little in his disputes, never takes unfair advantage, never mistakes personalities or sharp sayings for arguments, or insinuates evil which he dare not say out. From a long-sighted prudence, he observes the maxim of the ancient sage, that we should ever conduct ourselves towards our enemy as if he were one day to be our friend.<sup>164</sup>*

Frere certainly does not fit into the latter mould. In terms of this idealized description of a British gentleman, Frere was then far from being one and was predominantly out for personal aggrandizement at whatever cost. His delay in making the Boundary Commission's findings public until he had consulted on a wide front and obtained a means to neutralize its probable consequences, clearly demonstrates his mercenary character.

At a banquet held in Pietermaritzburg on 5 October 1878, Frere attempted to justify his intention to subdue the Zulu Kingdom. It was Britain's duty and aim to spread Christianity and British civilization and to obliterate all barbaric practices, rituals, traditions and rules in Zululand. The fabric of Zulu life would be altered in its entirety:

164. Newman, J.H.C. : Essays, English and American, p.74

*He (the High Commissioner) said his long experience of native races led him to conclude that there was every reason to hope that they were capable of being raised from the state of barbarism in which they were at present ..... but cannot expect the kafirs to advance at a rate much greater than that [at] which we ourselves proceeded.<sup>165</sup>*

Frere was assured by his advisers, including Lieutenant-General Thesiger that a campaign against the Zulus would be over in a very short time and therefore would involve little expense. As stated previously, Shepstone had also expressed the belief that domestic opposition to King Cetshwayo would hasten the King's demise. Frere would then be free to bring about his much desired confederation. It is not surprising that Thesiger had decided on his plan to attack as early as 14 September 1878 – months before the ultimatum was issued to King Cetshwayo. Clearly, British hegemony would be asserted at all costs, irrespective of the wishes of the Home Government who were in any event ambiguous in stance. Being that as it may, Frere had not made the British Government aware that a state of war existed between Britain and the Zulu Kingdom until after the fighting had begun.

Numerous new settlers in Natal Colony, in terms of the time they were living there, supported Frere's initiatives and appear to have trusted his particular view of the Zulu 'menace'. The Humphreys who arrived in Natal Colony at the end of 1877 and were farm owners. Mr. Humphrey expressed his opinion on events in the colony of Natal to a trader, Mr. Jackson:

*They say that he has 30,000 fighting-men, and in that case he ought to be able to overrun both Natal Colony and the Transvaal, for there is no doubt that Zulus fight with great bravery. As for the Dutch, I really can't blame the Zulus. The Boers are always encroaching on their territory, and any remonstrance is answered by a rifle-shot. Had it not been for our annexation of the Transvaal, Cetewayo would have overrun it and*

165. The Natal Mercury, 7 October 1878 (editorial)



*exterminated the Dutch before now. We have a strong force in the colony just at present, and I think Sir Bartle Frere means to bring matters to a crisis. The existence of such an army of warlike savages on the frontier is a standing threat to the very existence of the colony, and the constitution of the army renders it almost a necessary that it should fight. All the men are soldiers, and as none are allowed to marry until the regiment to which they belong has distinguished itself in battle they are naturally always burning for war. The Pieter-Maritzburg paper says that it understands that Sir Bartle Frere is about to send in an ultimatum, demanding – in addition to various small matters, such as punishing of raiders across the frontier – the entire abandonment of the present system of the Zulu army, and cessation of the bloody massacres which constantly take place in that country. If a man offends the King, not only is he put to death, but the whole of the people of his village are often massacred. Altogether an abominable state of things prevails; there seems to be but one opinion throughout the colony, that it is absolutely necessary for our safety that the Zulu organization shall be broken up.*<sup>166</sup>

There is little room for doubt that this settler fully supported Frere and was a victim of a meticulously planned propaganda campaign against the Zulus. Many of the settlers that had lived in Natal Colony for longer periods did not share Frere's enthusiasm to subdue the Zulus.

The British soldiers waited anxiously for the outcome of the ultimatum to King Cetshwayo but although they hoped for the best expected the worst:

*The last two days of the term granted to Cetewayo to accede to our terms were full of excitement; it had been reported, indeed, that the King was determined upon resistance, but it was thought probable that he might yield at the last moment, and the road leading down to the drift on the other side of the river was anxiously watched.*

166. Henty, G.A. : The Young Colonists : A story of the Zulu and Boer Wars, p.45

*As the hours went on and no messenger was seen approaching, the spirits of the troops rose, for there is nothing that soldiers hate so much as, after enduring the fatigues preparatory to the opening of a campaign, the long marches, the wet nights, and other privations and hardships, for the enemy to yield without a blow. Men who had been in the campaigns of Abyssinia and Ashanti told their comrades how on both occasions the same uncertainty had prevailed as to the intentions of the enemy up to the last moment; and the fact that in both campaigns the enemy had at the last moment resolved to fight, was hailed as a sort of presage that a similar determination would be arrived at by the Zulu King.*<sup>167</sup>

As soon as the invasion of Zululand began on 11 January 1879, British troops began looting cattle.<sup>168</sup>

The British Government held Frere and Chelmsford responsible for the dilemma in which it found itself, especially after the disaster at Isandhlwana. Frere had deprived the Government of information and had declared war on the Zulu Kingdom without obtaining the proper authority. Chelmsford (Theziger) was castigated for Isandhlwana and later for not ending the war in an inexpensive and decisive fashion. If Chelmsford's forces had actually won the battle of Isandhlwana, Frere would have been in a position to meet the ZAR Boer leadership in March 1879 with a significant victory at his back. The Zulu victory instead encouraged Boer resistance to British rule and put completely out of reach the confederation scheme Frere had hoped to achieve. (see photo 1)

Disraeli also appears not to have understood that Carnarvon's confederation scheme (and therefore Frere's), was a rather radical blueprint for increasing British hegemony at all costs. Given the trade recession in Britain; a war against the Zulus was a luxury the Cabinet could ill afford. It would be 'a

167. Ibid., pp.46-47

168. Vijn, C. : King Cetshwayo's Dutchman, p.96

serious evil' that had to be avoided.<sup>169</sup> However the optimism of short, successful campaign appears to have beguiled Hicks Beach who told Disraeli that:

*There is, I hope, a good prospect, in this case, of the war being short and successful, like the Afghan campaign.*<sup>170</sup>

Disraeli's Government would pay a high price for allowing complacency to set in and for having given Frere virtual free rein. Gladstone and the Liberals would sweep back to power and face greater problems in southern Africa. The Boers of the ZAR were developing a highly aggressive attitude towards British control and this was based primarily on the picture of British fallibility as evident at Isandhlwana.

What was important to Britain was the vital issue of whether or not she could protect her interests formally or informally. Actual Empire building was not really an issue, but if the Empire did extend, as Frere was intending, cost should be minimized. The less of a military or administrative infrastructure to maintain the better. Britain's Colonial Office prided itself on its selection and appointment of what was considered to be the best imperial administrators. There were always a couple of eccentrics amongst the rank and file of British administrators. Most of them were conventional and able, and above all else, a gentleman of the type that were educated in the classic Victorian public schools. They were expected to follow a definite code of honour which necessitated truthful conduct at all times with regard to the Home Government. The idea of fair-play was deemed to be an integral and expected part of the colonial administrators dealings with his subordinates and subjects whilst obedience in following orders to the letter was essential at all times. Administrators such as Frere formed a definite caste in British society and were looked upon as exemplary persons – they were in a sense the keystones of the British system whose imperial structures was a complex network of parochialisms.

169. Blake, R. : Disraeli, p.699

170. Hicks Beach - Beaconsfield, 13 January 1879, in Buckle, G.E. : The Life of Benjamin Disraeli, Earl of Beaconsfield, p.424

It was expected therefore, that in southern Africa, Frere would be utterly efficient, incorruptible, hardworking and just, as he had been in India. After all, the Indian Civil Service was the model which the Colonial Office wanted the rest to emulate.

But Frere was keen to preserve and extend British hegemony at all costs. Robinson and Gallagher describe the difference between what they term mid-Victorian imperialism and late-Victorian imperialism which was steeped in incongruous foreign policy stances.

*The early Victorians had been players from strength. The supremacy they built in the world had been the work of confidence and faith in the future. The African empire of their successors was the produce of fear lest this great heritage should be lost in the time of troubles ahead.*<sup>171</sup>

Although the 'official mind' was against expansion into the southern African interior, 'crises' forced British policy makers like Frere into taking *ad hoc* decisions.<sup>172</sup> He did however need no prompting to strike Zululand as supremacy in southern Africa seems indispensable to him and this was undoubtedly due to the great influence that Lord Carnarvon had on him. Carnarvon was very eager to promote the idea of confederation:

*The policy of 1874-8, and therefore its consequences, . . . were essentially the products of the personal preoccupations of one man, Lord Carnarvon . . . The conclusion is inescapable: the origins of this major episode must be sought not in terms of forces and factors, pressure-groups and interests, or influences and circumstances, except in the important, but negative sense that the absence of significant pressure from such societies constituted the conditions of freedom which was the necessary condition for the formation of Carnarvon's intentions. Instead, these origins are to be*

171. Robinson, R. and Gallagher, J. : Africa and the Victorians : The Official Mind of Imperialism, p.472

172. Ibid., p.19

*found in the personality of Lord Carnarvon, and by implication, if further detail is sought, in biographical and psychological researches.*<sup>173</sup>

The circumstances of the award of the Boundary Commission and the issues of the ultimatum to King Cetshwayo clearly supports the view that Frere was intent on having war against the Zulus and on pursuing the annexation of the Zulu Kingdom as a major step towards confederation.

Colenso wrote to Frere on 14 January 1879, expressing his opinion on what the real situation was in southern Africa:

*It may be, indeed, as some think, that it has been intended from the first to annex or subjugate Zululand, with a new Confederation or to the advancement of Civilization and Christianity, that has been the policy of the British Government and the real object of these proceedings, and that the Commission has been merely a means of gaining time for warlike preparation.*<sup>174</sup>

Colenso also had a clear understanding of why he believed war against the Zulus was considered necessary by Frere:

*It is very plain that the desire to pacify the Boers so as to get them to settle down under British rule and thereby advance the scheme of 'Confederation' led to the policy of the Zulu War.*<sup>175</sup>

173. Goodfellow, C.F. : Great Britain and South African Confederation, 1870-1881, p.216

174. K C, Letters , Colenso - Frere, 14 January 1879, p.493

175. Ibid., p.497

Frere's procrastination in publishing the Boundary Commission's report which he received on 15 July 1878 and only announcing it nearly five months later, on 11 December 1878 is described as:

*little short of criminal . . . in view of the unsettled state of the country. In the Transvaal there had been the struggle against Sekhukhune in which the Boers had suffered a serious reverse, and hostilities were on the point of being resumed . . . . In the Transvaal, too, further trouble could be created from the recalcitrant Boers, who were bitterly opposed to the Annexation and were waiting a favourable opportunity to strike.*

176

Binns continues:

*Had Cetshwayo been informed of the findings of the Commission with as little delay as possible there is no doubt that once the Award had been strictly enforced, the rising tide of wrath amongst the Zulu people would have been allayed. But this did not fall in with the carefully prepared plans of Sir Bartle Frere and his military advisers, and it is impossible to avoid the suspicion that the Report was purposely withheld from Cetshwayo. It is known that Frere was bitterly disappointed with the findings of the Commissioner's, for he had fully anticipated that they would have laid all the blame upon Cetshwayo . . . . . It was a subtle scheme, and Frere played his cards cleverly, for in those intervening months certain events happened in Zululand which immensely strengthened his position.<sup>177</sup>*

176. Binns, C.T. : The Last Zulu King, The life and death of King Cetshwayo, p.100

177. Ibid., p.101

Despite Frere's attempts to show that King Cetshwayo was a savage villain, Sir Henry Bulwer and Col. C. Pearson, the Officer Commanding in Natal Colony, were unable to perceive the hazards which Frere apparently discerned in this regard. If anything, they both feared that a British military build-up would convince King Cetshwayo that Natal Colony was 'preparing for active hostilities against him.'<sup>178</sup>

As much as the British Government was in favour of federation, it was reluctant to see this happen at the expense of the British exchequer. The disaster at Isandhlwana proved that Frere had made a huge miscalculation as to the ability and resolve of the Zulu military machine. Although he was not officially charged with 'rashness', the political opponents of the Beaconsfield Government used Frere's 'harebrained' ideas against him and brought Frere and the Government into disrepute. The Opposition in Parliament supported by a very vocal section of the public was outraged at the policy of the Conservative Party overseas. It was expected that as soon as Gladstone came into power, Sir Bartle Frere, whose policy had been so strongly decried, would be immediately recalled. When the new Parliament met in May, there was much dissatisfaction that Frere had not yet been removed. On the 3 June 1879, a petition to Gladstone was drawn up by about ninety members of parliament:

*We the undersigned, members of the Liberal Party, respectfully submit that as there is strong feeling throughout the country in favour of the recall of Sir Bartle Frere, it would greatly conduce to the unity of the party and relieve many members from the charge of breaking their pledges to their constituents if that step were taken.*<sup>179</sup>

On 13 March 1879, Hicks Beach wrote a private letter to Frere in which he informed him that he was to be censured:

178. BPP., C.2220, General Correspondence : Frere - Hicks Beach, 10 September 1878, no.74A

179. BPP., C.2740, Memorial to right Hon. W.E. Gladstone, 3 June 1879

*MY DEAR SIR BARTLE,-*

*I have not written to you privately since the news of the Isandhula arrived; for I have felt it difficult to say anything definite as to the view taken by the country of the Zulu War, and could not until lately gather the opinion of my colleagues.*

*The newspapers (knowing as you do their political proclivities) which you will have seen by the time you receive this, will tell you the former.*

*I need not say that you have been bitterly assailed .....*

Hicks-Beach goes on to say that if Isandhlwana had not occurred, Frere would have not provoked the wrath of the British Government.

*Had all gone successfully, comparatively few would have blamed you - as it is, the feeling of the "Liberal" party generally is, I think, expressed in the enclosed notice of motion by Sir C. Dilke, which will probably come on Thursday week (March 27th), while I fear our side could hardly be prevailed to vote a direct negative to it, and Mr. Hanbury's motion will probably be that which we shall have to support. We shall have an awkward debate . . . .*

The disaster at Isandhlwana had far-reaching negative implications for Britain as she lost face in other parts of the globe where she was eager to portray herself as an invincible power. Hicks Beach continued:

*Now I come to my colleagues. Many of them are much biased against your policy by the influence for evil-you can hardly appreciate how great it is- which our difficulties in Zululand have had against in Egypt and at Constantinople, in both of which places matters are just now precarious. But all feel very much as I did when writing to you my private letter of Dec. 25th, to which I have just received your answer and its enclosure.*

*They do not think you ought to have taken the step of making on Cetywayo those important demands as to the*



*disbandment of his army, the resident, and the performance of his promises of better Government, without first obtaining our sanction on it; and they are by no means satisfied on this point by the minute enclosed in your letter to which I have referred.*

*Though I feel the difficulties in which you were placed, and that you had but a choice of evils before you, yet I am obliged to say that I concur in this view; and I say so now in a private letter because by the next mail I expect that the Cabinet will decide upon a dispatch taking this point more strongly than it was put in my dispatch taking this point more strongly that it was put in my dispatch on Jan. 23<sup>rd</sup>, and, while expressing confidence in you, yet impressing upon you very decidedly their wishes as to this for the future.*

*I think you ought to know - but of course what I say is for yourself alone-that but for the support of the Prime Minister, the Cabinet would have gone much further in this-and that I should have had to choose between resigning, and consenting to supersede or recall you.<sup>180</sup>*

As in the past, Hicks Beach demonstrated an apathetic and languorous attitude towards Frere but he attempted to impress on Frere that he had given him strict orders not to annex any part of Zululand:

*I attach the greatest importance to your continuance in S. Africa; and I feel bound to the best of my ability to support you or any other governor who does his best. But I tell you this, not only that you may know how strong the feeling of the Cabinet is on this subject, but also because I rely on you, when you know it, to help me, by not taking the dispatch which will come in the light of a recall, or of such a censure as would justify your resignation.*

*I have already sent you a dispatch against the annexation of any part of Zululand. I shall not publish your private minute (lately received) because some paragraphs at the end of it point to annexation*

180. Hicks Beach – Frere, 13 March 1879, Life of Frere, Vol. II, pp. 232-233

*The Cabinet are decided against anything of the kind, so far as we are concerned; and they want you – now that it must be all military work in Zululand, and the Transvaal Boers can hardly (I suppose) be dealt with until the Zulu war is over, to return as soon as possible to Cape Town and guide your Ministers towards Confederation.*<sup>181</sup>

Hicks Beach was also sanctioned for not being firm enough in making the wishes of the British Government clearer to Frere. His granting to Frere of a virtual free-rein, also then, gave Hicks Beach problems:

*I can only end with a hope that all our difficulties, mine here, and yours there, may soon pass away.  
We have sent you, I think, fully as many troops as you asked for in your more recent letters – though the cavalry are English instead of Indian. I confess, seeing the way the Zulus fight, I think you are safer with the former.*<sup>182</sup>

The Government tried to water-down the vitriolic attacks on their policy and wrote Frere a formal letter of Censure in which they stressed that confederation did not necessarily imply annexation. Frere was reminded that he had:

*no authority either to accept a cession of territory or to proclaim the Queen's sovereignty over any part of the country.*<sup>183</sup>

The Zulu victory at Isandhlwana had a devastating effect on Frere's plan to assimilate Cetshwayo's Kingdom into an envisaged political confederation. Hicks-Beach told Frere that although the British Government was in favour of exerting a civilizing influence on the Zulus, they:

181. *Ibid.*, p. 233

182. *Ibid.*, p.234

183. BPP., C.2260, General Correspondence : Hicks Beach - Frere, 6 March 1879, no.7

*Are not prepared to sanction any further interference with the internal Government of the country than may be necessary for securing the peace and safety of the adjacent Colonies.*<sup>184</sup>

Frere was censured by the British Parliament for the war and especially for not referring the terms of the ultimatum to them before handing it to King Cetshwayo:

*. . . . .which makes a definite turning in British South African policy. A policy that in straining after confederation had not hesitated to annex an independent republic; and that would certainly have annexed Zululand and other territories now turned about and began to slip down the arduous path it had steeply trodden . . . .*<sup>185</sup>

He was nonetheless allowed to remain in South Africa a little longer and he went to great pains to justify his Zululand campaign.

*You must not think that I was insensible to your difficulties in Turkey and Asia. I doubt whether you felt them more acutely than I did. But you must remember they were not present in their late aggravated form, till we had gone too far in Zulu affairs to recede with honour or even with safety. You will remember that Bulwer's very proper demand for the surrender of Sirayo's sons was made in August last; there was no drawing back with safety after that. And I had to choose whether I would risk a Zulu war, which all the authorities believed could be successfully concluded in a few months, or a hollow peace, sure to be followed by a Boer rebellion and a Zulu war afterwards.*<sup>186</sup>

He continued, that he was a loyal servant of Her Majesty's Government and had no personal motive or gain in mind:

184. BPP., C:2260, Hicks Beach - Frere, 20 March 1879, no.16

185. de Kiewiet, C.W. : The Imperial Factor in South Africa : a study in politics and economics, p.235

186. Frere - Hicks Beach, 18 April 1879, in Martineau, Life of Frere, Vol II, p.237

*But you may rely on one thing, that I will think first of the public service, and of what is due to Her Majesty's Government and the country before I give thought to what is merely personal. I need not tell you that I came to South Africa for no personal object of my own, and, had I consulted only my own ease and welfare, I should have returned in six months. But I was honoured with a charge to stand on sentry<sup>1</sup> for other purposes than my own personal benefit, and, whilst my strength lasts, I will not desert my post till Her Majesty's Government relieves or removes me.*<sup>187</sup>

Frere further stated his actions had been justified by circumstances in southern Africa. He made it appear as though he had no alternative, but to invade Zululand and thereby attempted to exonerate himself :

*In fact it seems to me a simple choice between doing what I did – risking a Zulu war at once, or incurring the risk of still worse – a Zulu war a few months later, preceded by a Boer rebellion.*<sup>188</sup>

He failed to explain his disregard for instructions from London which clearly forbade a military campaign against the Zulus. Frere's authority was confined to the Cape Colony and confederation ground to a halt. A week after his return to Cape Town, Frere heard from Hicks Beach that he was to be immediately suspended by Sir Garnet Wolseley in respect of the affairs of Zululand, Natal Colony and the ZAR and he would be checked at every turn. This demonstrated a severe lack of confidence on the part of the British Government. Frere, stubborn as ever, although censured by the British Government and suspended by Wolseley, did not resign. He continued to delude himself that his conduct in Natal Colony was correct and believed that if the British Government had the entire picture of events in southern Africa before them, he would be praised rather than demeaned by them.

187. *Ibid.*, p.238

188. *Ibid.*, p.236

Frere's position was made even harder given the inability of Chelmsford to crush the Zulus militarily with the means at his disposal and Isandhlwana was clearly the proverbial last-straw which broke the camels back so to speak. Frere's close ties with Theophilus Shepstone and his reliance on the latter, led to maladministration in the ZAR which had awakened a strong sense of national consciousness amongst the Boers. His reliance on Chelmsford's military capability, intensified Boer nationalistic sentiments. Prior to General Sir Garnet Wolseley succeeding Frere as High Commissioner for South-East Africa, the former had succeeded Chelmsford as military commander. The British Government was aware that Chelmsford was demoralized and extremely dubious in his strategy. They did not believe that he could bring the war to an end quickly and were reluctant to continue incurring huge expenses in this regard. The Cabinet consequently decided to bring into existence a single command in southern Africa. Frere had to be sidelined and both Chelmsford and Bulwer would be given secondary status.<sup>189</sup> Frere's credibility amongst the Boers had weakened considerably and Britain appointed Major Lanyon as the new Administrator of the ZAR. He was however under the direct orders of Wolseley who in effect then, controlled the ZAR.

Wolseley was very similar to Frere in that he was sensitive to only issues that could advance his personal aspirations. Ironically, he supported Carnarvon's choice of Frere as High Commissioner but when it suited Wolseley, he did not share Frere's hegemonistic ideals for southern Africa. He consequently abandoned all Frere's proposals for a settlement in Zululand and the ZAR and in so doing got on the right side of the British Government.

Once Frere was confined to the Cape Colony, the idea of confederation halted. The immense financial burden of war and the loss of lives in southern Africa was too daunting for Britain to allow a continuation of Frere's policy which had begun in 1874. Although Britain ultimately won the war,

189. Laband, J.P.C. : Lord Chelmsford's Zululand Campaign 1878-1879, pg.xiii

the military disaster at Isandhlwana had brought home the point that confederation would be too expensive to pursue in southern Africa. Frere had been reckless in his behaviour and disregard for carrying out the wishes of the Cabinet in Britain. (See map 2)

On arriving at the Cape, Frere was greeted as a hero. His trip to Cape Town was 'like a triumphal progress.'<sup>190</sup> At a banquet in his honour, he used the opportunity to explain the four principles upon which his policy and subsequent actions had been derived.

*The first principle is this, that every subject of Her Majesty in every part of her dominions should be able to live in his own house in the same security as if he were within the four seas of Old England . . . that when native tribes and native society come in contact with European population and European society, there shall be a distinct understanding whether European ideas or whether native ideas are to rule and are to prevail for the Government of the people . . . It is not by exterminating, it is not by expelling the native races that anything can be done in this direction. We know that by one means or another they must be taught to live among us, and to rise to our level without expecting us to go down to their . . .*

*The third principle is the principle of self-government . . . I told the Transvaal patriots that there would be no hope whatever held out to them that the English Government would retrace its steps and throw them back into the chaos and difficulties from which they had just emerged . . . I could also assure them, as I was happy indeed to be able to point to this colony in proof of what I said, that it lay entirely with them, under the British flag, to work out for themselves, in a much shorter period than it has taken you, the same measure of independence and self-government as you possess . . . . .*

190. Ibid. , p.333

*The last principle is the principle of union. We all know that union is strength, and a union such as you will approve – a union which will give to all who unite with you the same privileges and the same franchise as you yourselves enjoy – can be nothing but strength, and the foundation of happiness to all concerned. It must not be a union merely of this or that colony; it must be a union which will mould us all into an integral part of a great Empire . . . . It is not, I ask you, something to feel proud of, to be bound up as colonies in such an Empire as this? Since our troubles began I have received from Canada, and I have received from India, letters asking me to speak the word, and assuring me you would received from the shores of the Frozen Ocean, and from the sun-dried plains of India, any assistance you wanted to secure the European race in South Africa.<sup>191</sup>*

His empire-building ideals are clearly demonstrated. He does not however explain his sinister assault on the edifice by not adhering to his instructions. He appears to be committed and intellectually honest but the facts speak louder than his words. His ruthless and implacable policies and his foolish mistakes, led to a national catastrophe – a terrible cost to the Zulu people and the other African tribes who had lost for a hundred and fifteen years a chance to share in the political decision-making process in South Africa.

Frere's plotting, planning and conniving was mere folly and fraud which profoundly altered the course of South Africa. The indubitable fact which needs to be confronted rather than evaded by historians is that Frere was a 'villain.' The cumulative impact of his desire for self-aggrandisement was disaster for the Zulu nation. The Kingdom was dismembered and a proud nation was brought to its knees. If Frere had genuine foresight to anticipate the effects of his actions and if he and Wolseley could have worked together, and not be blinded by empire-building, great changes could have been wrought for the benefit of all South Africans. Africans could have taken their legitimate place, with their rights guaranteed, alongside the whites – all

191. The Cape Argus, 8 June 1879 (editorial)

under British hegemony. Frere however, nurtured dreams of a South African empire and probably viewed southern Africa as another India. He may even have had visions of himself as a future viceroy of southern Africa and desired first and foremost to expand the borders of the British Empire as he saw fit.<sup>192</sup> To Frere, war was the means to achieve political unity in southern Africa and he would do whatever it took to have war.

His determination to assert British supremacy in southern Africa drove him to imagine, as Macbeth imagined Banquo's ghost, that there was increasing restlessness amongst the Africans in the region and a desire on their part to oust whites as part of a larger conspiracy. Frere argued not for caution but for quick and decisive action against the Zulus whom he regarded as the greatest menace. The spirit of revolt would be harder to suppress as long as the issue of British suzerainty remained unsettled.

Another historian, Major Gerald French, although an ardent supporter of Imperialism, asserted that Frere and his advisors were well aware that the ultimatum to King Cetshwayo could not be accepted as it would emasculate the Zulus. He also cites the evidence that Frere did not expect a peaceful resolution in the fact that preparations for war were well in place months before the ultimatum was even sent to King Cetshwayo.<sup>193</sup>

Regarding Frere's authority in southern Africa, David Clammer in *The Zulu War*, explains that Frere did not act in accordance with the wishes of the British Government. He took the initiative and did as he pleased. Clammer states that Disraeli wanted to avoid war against the Zulus at all cost and that Hicks-Beach echoed this sentiment while Britain faced an unstable Afghanistan and possible war against Russia in Europe. Clammer further states that although Britain was reluctant to have war against the Zulus, it was increasingly apparent that Frere had set his course in motion and that he could not be effectively controlled due to the slow means of communication between London and southern Africa.<sup>194</sup>

192. Pakenham, T. : The Scramble for Africa, pp.43-44

193. French, G. : Lord Chelmsford and the Zulu War, pp.39-40

194. Clammer, D. : The Zulu War, pp.25-27



Frere was also confident in his belief that Chelmsford was correct in assuming that the war would be a minor campaign that Britain would easily win. After the war he believed that his actions would be condoned – assuming that it did remain a minor campaign which it turned out not to be. Neither Chelmsford nor Frere imagined that a well aimed military force could be vanquished in battle by King Cetshwayo's impis at Isandhlwana. As it turned out the disaster at Isandhlwana unhinged Chelmsford's strategy and immediately placed his forces on the defensive. He based his strategy on the assumption that the Zulu forces would fight by launching a full frontal assault on the British. Ideally the Zulus would be decoyed into a locale where they could be raked with concentrated rifle and artillery fire – but Isandhlwana was not an ideal situation. It would take eight months to crush all Zulu resistance and cost more than £5 million<sup>195</sup> an amount far in excess of what the British Government was prepared to allow to be spent on what should have been a minor campaign – assuming that they were in favour of such a campaign in the first instance.

The British historian Sir Reginald Coupland in his book *Zulu Battle Piece : Isandhlwana* is clearly pro-British in stance. He is however critical of Frere but does not portray him as a villain. Coupland shows Frere to be a distinguished man who had an accomplished record of service to the Empire while in India. This made him an ideal candidate for the position of Governor of the Cape Colony and High Commissioner of South East Africa. Frere was an intellectual personality with a lofty character.<sup>196</sup> He does however state that Frere was bent on war against the Zulu Kingdom of Cetshwayo as he believed the Zulus were a threat to the confederation plan as envisaged by Carnarvon. The situation in southern Africa made war inevitable.<sup>197</sup> Coupland also contends that by 1878 Sir Garnet Wolseley and Sir Theophilus Shepstone were convinced that the Zulu military menace had to be curbed. Frere also convinced himself that it would be necessary to crush the Zulus if confederation was to be realized at all and conducted himself according to this belief.<sup>198</sup>

195. War Office : Narrative of Field Operations, p.172

196. Coupland, R. : Zulu Battle Piece : Isandhlwana, p.27

197. Ibid .., p.30

198. Ibid .., pp.32-36

Furneaux also criticizes Frere's handling of the ultimatum which he says Frere knew would not be accepted by King Cetshwayo. It was totally unrealistic to even imagine a Zululand without an army since it was the army that was the very essence and cornerstone of Zulu society. Frere knew only too well that a refusal to comply with the ultimatum on King Cetshwayo's part would lead to war – which is why he worded the ultimatum as he did,<sup>199</sup> totally disregarding instructions from Hicks-Beach. Edgerton also says Frere began a campaign against King Cetshwayo so as to justify a war against him. Propaganda was spread by Frere which maligned the person of King Cetshwayo. Frere is therefore portrayed as the main villain but Shepstone, Carnarvon and Wolseley are also assigned blame for promoting a war against the Zulus.<sup>200</sup>

Frere undoubtedly realized that he was taking a huge gamble by bringing about a war without approval or support from the British Government as is evident in a letter to Chelmsford:

*As long as all goes smoothly and successfully . . . the opposition here will only murmur. But a slight check, or small inroad of Zulus, would bring them out open-mouthed and a revolution – 'antimilitary and anti-imperialist' – with the Lt.-Gov. and Colonial service at its head, and all true colonists as followers, would be threatened, and if the present tone of home letters continues, the good people they will be only too glad of evidence to show how wise they were in sending us all to act on the defensive, whilst Bp. Colenso and the Natal Govt. tried conciliation and pure reason.<sup>201</sup>*

199. Furneaux, R. : The Zulu War : Isandhlwana and Rorke's Drift pp.26-27

200. Edgerton, R.B. : Like lions they fought p.14

201. N.A.M., 6807-386-12, Frere - Chelmsford, 22 Jan. 1879 , no.11

Despite being cautioned not to go to war against the Zulus by the Colonial Office and Hicks-Beach – although not forcefully enough – Frere totally ignored the instructions of the British Government, hoping for a glorious end for himself to a distinguished career. Instead he faced supersession and dishonour. Although most of the Cabinet favoured Frere's recall, the Queen, who was a personal friend of the Frere family discussed the matter with the Cabinet members in correspondence. She was very strongly against the idea of recalling Frere.<sup>202</sup> On 6 March 1879 Queen Victoria wrote to Lady Frere:

*... I feel so deeply for Sir Bartle Frere and yourself and daughters and have the fullest confidence in him ...*<sup>203</sup>

and again on 11 June 1879:

*The Queen has to thank Sir Bartle Frere for 2 most interesting letters of the 10 Feb. and of the 25 April and wishes to express her deep sympathy with the great anxiety which he has gone through, and her satisfaction at the more favourable news from the Transvaal and the dispersion of the Boer's camp without any breach of the peace. This is a great thing.*

*"The Queen trust Sir Bartle Frere has not suffered in health from all he has gone through and trusts that the comparative rest and comfort of Cape Town may soon repair the effects of the great bodily fatigue which he must have endured in addition to the anxiety he must have experienced."*<sup>204</sup>

Frere had his supporters but was highly criticized by Liberals as well as Conservatives. The Duke of Wellington called Frere a 'whiner' and wrote to him:

202. Cabinet Reports, Cab 41, 12/10, Disraeli - Victoria, 8 April 1879

203. Victoria - Frere, 6 March 1879, Life of Frere, Vol II p.244

204. Victoria - Frere, 11 June 1879, Life of Frere, Vol II p.244

*he says that he talks religion to make his politics go right, and you have no idea what a strong feeling there is in this direction regarding Sir Bartle among some at least of the aristocracy of England.*<sup>205</sup>

Despite anti-Frere sentiment from various quarters, one cannot escape the fact that the British Government was in favour of a confederation of southern African states as a way to reduce responsibility and the expenses associated with formal control. The region was strategically vital for the securing of the sea route between Britain and India – Frere was clearly pursuing a policy in southern Africa that would achieve this objective.<sup>206</sup> Frere had other objectives in mind as well. The anachronistic military Zulu Kingdom could not be allowed to continue as it threatened to destabilize the region as far as Frere and his supporters were concerned. If the ZAR was to be effectively maintained in the British sphere of influence and reconciled to British rule, the Zulu threat to the ZAR would have to be eliminated. This would also serve the purpose of coaxing the Cape Government of Gordon Sprigg to become abundantly more amenable to the idea of confederation in southern Africa. Sprigg was an ardent supporter of Frere's and no doubt had a clear understanding of what Frere was attempting to achieve in the region. After the reports of the Zulu War debate in the Commons reached South Africa on 24 April 1879. Sprigg wrote to Frere:

*If you were now to retire, the consequences to South Africa would be simply disastrous . . . . I hope you will not come to a decision adverse to the wishes of nearly every man in Africa without giving me an opportunity of discussing with you the whole question . . . . In my representative character as first minister of the leading Colony of South Africa, and on behalf of its inhabitants, whose opinion has been expressed through public meetings in every important town, I do urge you not to*

205. K C, SP, File 6, KCM 31408/3, Shepstone - Henrique Shepstone, n.d.

206. Goodfellow, C.F. : Great Britain and the South African Confederation, 1870-1881, pp.22-35

*think for a moment of giving way to public opinion in England on a question which no man who has never been to Africa is competent to understand.*<sup>207</sup>

J.A. Benyon accentuates Frere's desire to placate the Cape to accept confederation as the main reason for the war against the Zulu Kingdom. King Cetshwayo's military machine was an obstacle and a menace that needed to be crushed before the Cape would ever contemplate joining a confederation.<sup>208</sup>

Furthermore, Theophilus Shepstone who had a great influence on Carnarvon's and therefore Frere's policy, was determined to have British hegemony in southern Africa as a means of ensuring an adequate supply of cheap labour,<sup>209</sup> especially after the discovery of diamonds which brought with it a vastly changing economic motivation in this regard. Britain's role in the world was being challenged by the new emerging powers and Frere as an ardent empire-builder was more than keen to preserve British global status, even if it meant going against the official limits of his authority. The Zulu Kingdom would have to be curbed and dismembered so that capitalist production in the region could be expedited to the benefit of Britain.<sup>210</sup> The Zulu economic make-up was not compatible with Britain's capitalistic system. In the former there was a marked absence of development and capital aggregation – in any event Britain needed cheap labour or even better, free labour to allow her to derive the maximum benefit from a region she was keen to exploit economically, socially and politically. Britain would use the convenient civilizing-mission as a means of justifying her exploitative presence and would obtain huge support from the numerous Christian missionary organisations in this regard.

207. Sprigg - Frere, 24 April 1879, in Martineau, Life of Frere, Vol II p.322

208. Benyon, J.A. : Proconsul and Paramountcy in South Africa The High Commission, British Supremacy and the Sub-Continent 1806-1910, p.163

209. Etherington, N.A. : The "Shepstone System" in the Colony of Natal Colony and Beyond the Borders, (A. Duminy & C. Ballard (eds.) Natal Colony and Zululand from Earliest Times to 1910: a New History, Pietermaritzburg, 1989).

210. Guy, J., :The British Invasion of Zululand: Some Thoughts for the Centenary Year,( Reality: a Journal of Liberal and Radical Opinion, II, 1 Jan. 1979, p.8).

The labour shortage of the mid-1870's could be solved by crushing the Zulus and obliging them to become a cheap and abundant source of labour. The Capitalistic enterprise was greatly underdeveloped in Southern Africa and if Britain wished to maintain hegemony in the region at limited cost to her exchequer, federation would be the way to achieve this objective. Britain could have her cake and eat it for virtually nothing. The Zulus who were not allowed to work for wages, once crushed by Britain, would become wage-earners and this would bolster the manufacturing and commodities markets. This would promote and facilitate capitalism which would in turn strengthen the economic and therefore strategic position of Britain in the region and in her Empire. Frere was undoubtedly motivated to the extreme by beliefs such as these and adopted a Macchiavellian approach

Consequently, he would deceive himself to believe that the Zulus had to be destroyed as a Kingdom as they were savage and a military menace to civilized settlers:

*At this moment the Zulu power is a perpetual menace to the peace of South Africa; and the influence which it has already exercised and is now exercising is hostile and aggressive; and what other result can be looked for from a savage people, whose men are all trained from their youth to look upon working for wages and the ordinary labour necessary to advance the progress of a peaceful country to be degrading; and to consider the taking of human life As the most fitting occupation of a man<sup>211</sup>*

A successful campaign against the Zulus would greatly enhance Frere's prestige as a diplomat, politician and promoter of Victoria's Empire. The end would justify the means. After all Frere was generally regarded as a fine English Christian gentleman of the highest type – how could he conceivably do wrong?

211. BPP., C.2222, Frere - Hicks Beach, 16 November 1878, no.19

But Frere's reputation was based on delusion. His machinations led to a very serious and costly military reverse which would cause great embarrassment to the Cabinet in Britain. The vitriolic attacks of the Opposition and its desire to assuage public opinion in Britain, obliged the Cabinet to lay blame on Frere for the debacle at Isandhlwana. While King Cetshwayo did not want a war and did his utmost to avoid one, Frere persisted in pursuing his policy which could have no other outcome but war. His obsession with idea of crushing the Zulus suggest that Frere had a total disregard for the lives of people who were deemed by him to be obstructing his ambitions. He had no intention of negotiating with the Zulus at any stage and once the British Army had been humiliated at Isandhlwana, Disraeli was very bitter.

He reprimanded Frere in public but Frere had anticipated that there would be an outcry after Isandhlwana and once again tried to weave his way out of a predicament by suggesting that Colonel Dumford was to blame. But Frere and Chelmsford had to find a 'fall guy'. Dumford was a convenient choice for this honour. In a dispatch to Queen Victoria on 10 February 1879, Frere stated that orders left for Pulleine to defend the camp at Isandhlwana 'were not obeyed, owing apparently to Colonel Dunford . . . . coming up and either taking command of the camp or inducing Colonel Pulleine to divide his forces.'<sup>212</sup> On 19 August 1880, Chelmsford in a speech in the House of Lords, stated that it was Dunford's disregard for orders that had led to the destruction of the British force at Isandhlwana.<sup>213</sup> One could argue convincingly, as has been demonstrated, in the Chapter, that it was in fact Frere's disregard of orders, more than anything that had led to the disaster.

After finally accomplishing a military victory over King Cetshwayo's army, Chelmsford was not in the least in favour of becoming Wolseley's subordinate during mopping up operations in Zululand that would lead to total Zulu surrender.

212. Drooglever, R.W.F. : The Road to Isandhlwana, p.242

213. Ibid., p.243

After the battle of Ulundi on 4 July 1879, Chelmsford received a hint from the Secretary of State for War that Wolseley would be appointed in his place. Wolseley promised the Zulus that if they surrendered their weapons, they would be allowed to retain their means of production. This was in a sense more valuable to peace overtures than the crushing defeat suffered by the Zulus at Ulundi. Chelmsford took his supersession by Wolseley as a severe criticism and reprimand of his conduct. He replied that since he had crushed the Zulus he requested permission to return to Britain. The war was over for Chelmsford after Ulundi. Instead of pursuing King Cetshwayo, he marched his army away from Ulundi back to Natal Colony and sent his resignation on ahead to Wolseley:

*The general's resignation . . . . . was the final act in a sorry sequence of political and military mismanagement. By then Disraeli was referring to it as 'the unhappily precipitated Zulu War, the evil consequences of which to this country have been incalculable.'*<sup>214</sup>

Frere should have resigned when he was censured but decided to try to justify his actions by achieving federation. The Liberal Government came to power in 1880 and reduced Frere's salary due to his curtailed responsibilities. When Sprigg failed to convince the Cape Parliament to hold a conference on the issue of confederation, Gladstone's Government decided to recall Frere.<sup>215</sup> Confederation could clearly not be allowed to take place through the barrel of a gun – this option was far too costly and could show up British military inadequacy as was evident by Isandhlwana. Britain's prestige would be further diminished by another disaster. Even after Frere's recall, Colonial Office officials desired to find a way of federating the ZAR and Cape Colony and Gladstone acceded by formally committing Britain to retain control of the ZAR.<sup>216</sup> This shows that the British Government was in agreement with Frere's idea of confederation, but not the method by which he hoped to achieve it.

214. ↪ Emery, F. : The Red Soldier, p.36

215. Benyon, J.A. : Isandhlwana and the Passing of a Proconsul.( Natal Colony, 8, December 1978).

216. Pakenham, T. : The Scramble for Africa, p.98



The British Empire continued to expand in spite of the official policy because of individuals such as Frere and events on the periphery of the Empire. Frere was simply one of numerous individual colonial administrators far from central authority who as 'men on the spot' took the initiative to annex new territories to the Empire. In Frere's case, a military reverse and costly war which had been the result of doing things as he saw fit to do then, could not be sanctioned especially in light of the fact that he had been ordered not to involve Britain in a war against Cetshwayo's Kingdom. As paradoxical as it sounds, the Zulu War was waged without sufficient reason.

Sir Bartle Frere's successor was to be Sir Hercules Robinson who was in New Zealand. As it would take time to reach the Cape Colony, Sir George Strahan was appointed *ad interim* governor. Frere was ordered to leave by the earliest mail steamer. As stated earlier, he had managed to hoodwink a number of people with regards to his policy. The Malays and Indians in the Cape Colony looked upon Frere, a former Indian Statesman, as their special property and were distressed by his recall:

*We regret that our gracious Queen has seen fit to recall your Excellency. We cannot help thinking it is through a mistake. The white subjects of Her Majesty have had good friends and good rules in former Governors, but your Excellency has been the friend of white and coloured alike.*<sup>217</sup>

Numerous settlers of Dutch descent also supported and virtually idolized Frere – ironically enough, given the British control over the ZAR was not at all supported by most Boers.

Madame Koopmans de Wet, an old Dutch lady from the Cape wrote to Frere on 16 November 1880:

217. BPP., C.2740, Mohammedan subjects - Queen Victoria, 29 August 1880, pp.1-4

*It is with feelings of the deepest sorrows that I take the liberty of addressing these lines to you . . . What is to be the end of all this now? for now, particularly, do the Cape people miss **their** Governor, for now superior qualities in everything are wanted. Dear Sir Bartle, you know the material we have; it is good, but who is to guide? It is plain to every thinking mind that our position is becoming more critical every day . . . .*

*"But with deep sorrow let me say, England's, or rather Downing Street's treatment, has not tightened the bonds between the mother country and us. You know we have a large circle of acquaintances, and I cannot say how taken aback I sometimes am to hear their words. See, in all former wars there was a moral support in the thought that England, our England, was watching over us. Now there is but one cry, 'We shall no Imperial help! Why is this? We have lost confidence in a Government who could play with our welfare; and among the many injuries done us, the greatest was to remove from among us a ruler such as your Excellency was.'<sup>218</sup>*

There is no doubt that most Britons believed 'Sir Bartle's self-righteous declarations, and so did most of the British officers who fought "his" war. They did not know that Frere had knowingly lied about King Cetshwayo and had intentionally presented him with an unacceptable ultimatum to justify the calculated destruction of a sovereign state.'<sup>219</sup> Sir John Akerman, a member of the Legislative Council of Natal Colony wrote to Frere on 9 August 1880:

*Having become aware of your recall to England from the office of Governor of the Cape of Good Hope, etc., etc., I cannot allow your departure to take place without conveying to you, which I hereby do, the profound sense I have of the faithful and conscientious manner in which you have endeavoured to*

218. Koopmans de Wet - Frere, 16 November 1880, in Martineau, Life of Frere, Vol III, p. 345

219. Edgerton, R.B. : Like Lions They Fought p.21

*fulfill those engagements which, at the solicitation of Great Britain, you entered upon in 1877. The policy was not your own, but was thrust upon you. Having given in London, 1876, advice to pursue a different course in South Africa from the one then all the fashion and ultimately confided to yourself, it affords me the greatest pleasure to testify to the constituency of the efforts put forth by you to carry out the (then) plan of those who commissioned you, and availed themselves of your acknowledged skill and experience. As a public man of long standing in South Africa, I would likewise add since the days of Sir G. Grey, no Governor but yourself has grasped the **native question here at all**, and I feel confident that had your full authority been retained, and not harshly wrested from you, even at the eleventh hour initiatory steps of a reformatory nature with respect to the natives would have been taken, which it is the duty of Britain to follow while she holds her sovereignty over these parts.*<sup>220</sup>

Akerman was clearly one of those who had been hoodwinked by Frere in believing that British policy was to wage war and Frere was simply doing his imperial duty.

The Prince of Wales, Edward, was very upset about Frere's position. He held Frere in exceptionally high esteem and up to Frere's death attested to his statesmanship and political and moral integrity. The Prince, in a letter to Lady Frere on 27 March 1879, while the British Parliament was debating the Zulu War after Frere's Censure had been sent, said the following:

*. . . I cannot tell you how my thoughts have been constantly with you and good excellent Sir Bartle – during the last six months – and how I have felt for his anxiety and the sorrow he has naturally felt at the disasters which befell Durnford's gallant band.*

220. BPP., C.2740, Sir John Akerman - Frere, 9 August 1880

*I have never ceased exonerating Lord Chelmsford from the blame which many have attached to him. Alas! He who fell and led the attack was in my mind the only culprit. (Durnford) you will receive by this mail the account of the debate in the House of Lords of the 25<sup>th</sup>, and you will see that the Ministers of the Crown have defended Sir Bartle.*

*I much deplore the censure passed upon by Sir M. Hicks Beach in his dispatch-but sincerely and earnestly hope that your husband will not think of resigning. Let me implore you and him not to think of such a step - as his presence - and the great abilities which he possesses are so much needed in South Africa. A public man must lay himself occasionally open to censure but I feel convinced that not only Government but the country would deplore his resigning the trust which has been given into his hands.*

*The sincere friendship and esteem which I bear Sir Bartle and his family urge me to say this. You will I know excuse so short an answer to your long letter, when I tell you how much my time is taken up just now with multifarious business.*

*With the Princess' kindest regards to yourself - and ours to Sir Bartle and your daughters - Believe me, yours most sincerely, Albert Edward.<sup>221</sup>*

Five months later however, once the Cabinet had included supersession to Frere's censure, Edward had changed his opinion and urged Frere to resign:

*I am most grateful to you for your interesting letters of the 5<sup>th</sup> and 9<sup>th</sup> August. It is evident to me that you are not at all satisfied with the look of things in South Africa, though you believe the war in Zululand is virtually over.*

221. Edward Albert Prince of Wales - Frere, 27 March 1879, Life of Frere, Vol II pp.322 -325

*"I can well understand and share your feelings, and I am not sure whether you can well retain your present important posts with dignity to yourself."<sup>222</sup>*

By the end of June 1879, both Frere and Chelmsford were superseded in Natal Colony by Sir Garnet Wolseley.

After six months and seven major military engagements, Cetshwayo's Zulu Kingdom came to an end as it was dismembered. Frere was recalled in dishonour a year after the Zulu War was concluded and literally months before the Boers decided to take up arms against the British rule in the ZAR. Frere had hoped that a rapid, successful campaign against the Zulus would settle two problems. Firstly the Zulu military menace could be crushed. Secondly the Boers of the ZAR would be far less likely to revolt against British rule. Once these problems were resolved, confederation would be in sight. Both the Conservative and Liberal Governments were keen to gain the advantages that the implementation of confederation promised for Britain. Instead of solving the problems in southern Africa however, Frere had been instrumental in causing two serious wars within the space of two years. The only legacies of Carnarvon's and Frere's aspirations was the stirring up of violent Boer nationalism and the subjugation of the Zulus and other African nations of southern Africa.

Frere, in his defence, cited passages in his Commission which were of relevance to his actions against the Zulus. He had to take any necessary measures within the lawful scope of his authority:

*..... for preventing the recurrence of any irruption into [the Queen's] possessions of the [South African] tribes, and for maintaining [her] possessions in peace and safety, and for promoting, as far as might be possible, the good order, civilization, and moral and religious instruction of [these] tribes, and, with that view, for placing them under some settled form of Government."<sup>223</sup>*

222. Edward - Frere, 11 September 1879, Life of Frere, Vol II p.328

223. BPP., C.2454, Confidential letters : Frere despatch, 30 June 1879

Frere's actions against King Cetshwayo were seemingly justified by the above provisions – but this was not the case. He had by his own contrivance and machinations decided to extend British hegemony in southern Africa at all and any costs from without the scope of his authority. In addressing the issue of disobedience and insubordination, Frere's official response is to be found in the same dispatch of 30 June 1879:

*As fast as events occurred . . . I did refer home. But it took six weeks to get an answer to a telegraphic message; more than two months to a letter by immediate return of post . . . Nothing more than a comparison of dates of dispatches, and of the replies to them, is needed to show that in this respect at least I did my duty, and that I am no more deserving of censure than a Minister in Chile for not predicting an earthquake, in time to prevent loss of life, and for not awaiting orders before doing his best, with the means at his disposal, to meet the calamity when it occurred.<sup>224</sup>*

Hicks Beach, by his inability to control Frere, endorsed the latter's actions regarding the Zulus. The British Government was not firm enough on Frere but once the Afghan war loomed, Hicks Beach and the entire Cabinet abruptly adopted a more severe stance on southern African matters. The disaster at Isandlwana immediately necessitated a 'fall-guy'. This time it was not Durnford. Who better than the person who had engineered the war without a formal request to do so.

The time of Frere's return to England was approaching:

*As the day drew near, the Cape Town people were perplexed how to express adequately their feelings on the occasion. It was suggested that on the day he was to embark, the whole city should mourn with shops closed, flags half-mast high, and in profound silence. But more cheerful counsels prevailed.*

224. Ibid

He was to leave by the Pretoria on the afternoon of September 15<sup>th</sup>. Special trains had brought in contingents from the country. The open space in front of Government House, Plein Street, Church Square, Adderley Street, the Dock Road, the front of the railway station, the wharves, the housetops, and every available place, whence a view of the procession could be procured, was closely packed. The Governor's carriage left for Government House at half-past four, - Volunteer Cavalry furnishing the escort, and Volunteer Rifles, Engineers, and Cadets falling in behind, - and amid farewell words and ringing cheers, moved slowly along the streets gay with flags and decorations. At the dock gates the horses were taken out and men drew the carriage to the quay, where the Pretoria lay alongside. Here the General, the Ministers, and other leading people, were assembled; and the 91<sup>st</sup> Regiment, which had been drawn up, presented arms, the Band played "God Save The Queen," and the Volunteer Artillery fired a salute as the Governor for the last time stepped off African soil. There had been some delay at starting, the tide was ebbing fast, the vessel had been detained to the last safe moment, and she now moved out slowly, and with caution, past a wharf which the Malays, conspicuous in their bright-coloured clothing, had occupied, then, with a flotilla of boats rowing alongside, between a double line of yachts, steam-tugs and boats, dressed out with flags, and dipping their ensigns as she passed, and lastly, under the stern of the Boadicea man-of-war, whose yards were manned, and whose crew cheered. The guns of the castle fired the last salute from the shore, which was answered by the guns of the Boadicea; and in the still bright evening the smoke hung for a brief space like a curtain, hiding the shores of the bay from the vessel. A puff of air from the south-east cleared it away, and showed once more in the sunset light the flat mass of Table Mountain, the "Lion's Head" to its right, festooned with flags, the mountain slopes dotted over with groups thickening to a continuous broad African line of people, extending along the water's edge from the central jetty to the breakwater basin. The vessel's

*speed increased, the light faded, and the night fell on the last, the most glorious, and yet the saddest day of Sir Bartle Frere's forty-five years' service of his Queen and country.*<sup>225</sup>

It may have been the saddest day of Frere's service to Queen and country but it had been brought about by his own connivance and contrivance.

Ironically, Wolseley was also personally attracted to Frere's dream of establishing a 'Great African Empire' but he made an effort to obey all instructions to the letter and thwarted all Frere's moves to promote confederation.<sup>226</sup> Bulwer had briefed Wolseley on Frere's use of force against the Zulu Kingdom which he regarded as totally uncalled-for and was clearly against violence as an option. He disliked Frere's duplicitous dealings.

Sir Henry Evelyn Wood in his autobiography, however, lionized Frere:

*The one great figure throughout the time when men's minds were depressed was undoubtedly the high commissioner, Sir Bartle Frere. He spent many days and nights in supporting all my demands and in coercing unwilling and timorous civil subordinates. With great address and moral courage he prevented an outbreak of the Boers projected after the destruction of No. 3 Column.*<sup>227</sup>

Frere himself could have written the words in the previous quotation. He undoubtedly held himself in high esteem and would never have admitted that his *casus belli* was without foundation. He inevitably sent many Zulus and imperial troops to their deaths in order to attempt to achieve a misguided political ambition that did not have the official sanction of the British Government.

225. Butler, J.E. : Native Races and the War p.105

226. Guy, J. : The destruction of the Zulu Kingdom, p.60

227. Wood, E. : From Midshipman to Field Marshal, (4 ed.), Vol II, p.44



In 1881, Frere wrote and published a detailed defence of his policy. He was a man beloved and respected by many for apparent courage and patience under exasperating conditions. Many others view him for what he was:

*Frere was the sort of villain cinema audiences love to hate, a sanctimonious, pig-headed, officious, self-righteous, ambitious city slicker from out of town. In his treatment of the Zulu-Transvaal boundary dispute Frere resembles nothing quite so much as the sinister banker of western movies who uses legal technicalities to bamboozle honest ranchers out of water holes or oil well . . . . . No African-hatted banker ever laid down more impossible conditions or set a shorter deadline for compliance.<sup>228</sup>*

Frere vehemently denied that he acted contrary to the directions of the British Government and reiterated that King Cetshwayo had forced the war on Britain.<sup>229</sup> He believed that he would be vindicated if people 'would only read "The Further Correspondence"; they must understand.'<sup>230</sup>

Frere's ignominious position greatly pained him and he tried to his dying day in 1884 to absolve himself of any guilt, yet, in the words of Norman Etherington there was no reason to:

*. . . award him a retrospective white hat and a shave.<sup>231</sup>*

He was determined to wage war on King Cetshwayo's Kingdom and created for himself the opportunity to do so. His overriding considerations throughout were to enforce hegemony at all costs and receive the acclamation he believed he so richly deserved.

228. Etherington, N., 'Anglo-Zulu Relations 1856-1878' in Duminy, A. and Ballard, C. (eds) : The Anglo-Zulu War : new perspectives, p.13
229. BPP., C.2740, Frere - Kimberley, 30 August 1880, no.26
230. Worsfold, W.B. : Sir Bartle Frere, p.336
231. Etherington, N. : 'Anglo-Zulu Relations 1856-1878' p.14

## CHAPTER 4

### Cetshwayo, the Zulu way of life and the path to war

In 1856 a very brief civil war broke out in Zululand. It was the result of growing tensions between two of King Mpande's sons, Mbuyazi and Cetshwayo, as to who would succeed to Mpande's throne. As both Mbuyazi and Cetshwayo had mobilized support and created their own private armies, Mpande decided to separate them territorially. Cetshwayo and his followers, the uSuthu were ordered to occupy the Mthethwa kraal at eMangweni where Shaka had served as a warrior. Mbuyazi and his followers the iziGqoza were ordered to a kraal on the Mfoba hills. Tensions mounted between the brothers, however, and resulted in a major military clash on 2 December 1856 at enDondakusuka. Cetshwayo's 20 000 men easily vanquished the 7 000 men of Mbuyazi. The consequence of victory was that Cetshwayo was recognized as the successor to Mpande's throne. Cetshwayo in effect, became the ruler of the Zulu Kingdom and Mpande was left little more than titular office. As King Mpande grew more and more incapacitated, Cetshwayo assumed the position of regent until Mpande's death in 1872. The Secretary for Black Affairs in Natal, Theophilus Shepstone traveled to Cetshwayo's *umuZi* (homestead) in 1873 and placed a 'cheap tinsel crown on the new Zulu King's head' so as to persuade Cetshwayo to accept at least some degree of indirect rule by Natal Colony. In fact, Cetshwayo agreed to allow the ceremony to take place at all only because he decided that the visible support of Natal Colony with its British troops could strengthen his claim to the Zulu throne which had been endorsed as early as 1861.<sup>1</sup> Cetshwayo got what he hoped for from Shepstone – British sanction to his appointment as heir to the throne of King Mpande.<sup>2</sup>

1. Fuze, M.M. : The African People : And Whence They Came (Abantu Abamnyama), p.9

2. N A, GH 1394, T. Shepstone, SNA Natal official report on mission to Zululand, 22 June 1861

The seeds of destruction of the Zulu Kingdom in 1879 had been sown. Shepstone's approval of Cetshwayo as King of Zululand encouraged British claims to 'suzerainty' over the Zulu Kingdom. Matters were exacerbated for the Zulus by ZAR claims on Zulu territory resulting from Cetshwayo's negotiation to obtain the return of his brothers Mgidlana and Mthonga who had fled after enDondakusuka.

The huge task which faced the Boundary Commission in attempting to settle the ZAR-Zulu border dispute which has been discussed earlier in detail, was not an easy one. As the ZAR's boundaries were ill-defined<sup>3</sup> and dubious in nature, they were legally inadmissible in their entirety. Consequently, the recommendations of the commissioners were highly distasteful to Sir Bartle Frere. He believed that the findings of the Boundary Commission were a threat to the confederation plan which he desperately sought to bring to fruition in the furtherance of British hegemony in southern Africa. The Zulus were an intolerable obstacle on the path to the realization of Frere's objective and had to be removed. Frere hoped for a boundary commissioners report that would uphold and protect Boer interests but the report was contrary to this and had made Frere's task of confederation even harder to achieve.<sup>4</sup> Frere resolved to delay the announcement of the award as recommended by the Boundary Commission while he planned for war against the Zulus.

Finally, when on 11 December 1878, Frere made known to the Zulu delegation the decision concerning the boundary dispute, they were also issued with the ultimatum which demanded amongst other things, huge amounts of cattle as reparation for border infringements by the Zulus and more importantly, the dismantling of the Zulu army.<sup>5</sup> The social and political adjustments expected of the Zulus would have destroyed the very

3. Webb, C. de. B. and Wright, J.B., (eds) : A Zulu King Speaks, p xix

4. BPP., C.2220, No. 133, Frere - Hicks Beach, 4 November 1878

5. Martineau, J. : Life of Frere, Vol II p.333

Fabric of their society.<sup>6</sup> The Zulus would have no option but to fight to preserve their independence and Zulu sovereign state.

The Zulu military system was highly efficient and they were courageous fighters who would not hesitate to protect the Zulu Kingdom. Their way of life made it imperative to defend themselves – precisely as Frere had hoped. He was well aware of the impossibility of the ultimatum being accepted by King Cetshwayo and would consequently have his excuse for invading Zululand.

The Zulus were in an invidious position – accept the political control which Theophilus Shepstone's earlier missions had insinuated or fight against the most powerful empire on the globe. As stated in Chapter Three, many Natal Colony settlers were angered by the loss of Natal's African labourers to the diamond fields of Griqualand West. Shepstone's response in 1859 was to import Tsonga migrants.<sup>7</sup> This action angered Cetshwayo as the Tsonga were subjects of the Zulu Kingdom and if he allowed them to migrate to Natal Colony he would lose labourers that acquired annual tribute. It was only after the recovery of Natal's economy in 1869 that a few Tsonga labourers went to Natal Colony with the full approval of Cetshwayo albeit reluctant approval.

Shepstone worked to bring about an unrestricted flow of migrant Tsonga labourers to Natal Colony through Zulu territory. Shepstone attended Cetshwayo's coronation in August 1873 and give British support to the accession in return for King Cetshwayo's consent regarding the passage of Tsonga labourers through Zululand to Natal Colony. This would ultimately create economic problems for King Cetshwayo as his tributary revenue began to diminish considerably in scale. The number of Tsonga migrants in Natal Colony steadily increased between 1874 and 1878 when more than 5000 Tsongas per annum were recorded in Natal.<sup>8</sup> The Zulu Kingdom was under very severe economic pressure

6. Brookes, E.H. and Webb, C. de B. : A History of Natal, pp.134-135

7. Etherington, N. : The Rise of the Xhosa in South-East Africa : African Christian communities in Natal,Pondoland, Zululand, p.61

8. SNA, 1/1/13, Dunn to Shepstone, 8 July 1863

when Cetshwayo was crowned. The cattle herds in Zululand had been devastated by lung sickness, and as cattle were the principal source of wealth, the economy was devastated. The loss of Tsonga tribute also exacerbated matters. King Cetshwayo would have to create opportunities for the Zulu economy to grow and trade with Natal Colony was one way to help create a more solid economic base. War was therefore not on King Cetshwayo's agenda. Frere who brought about the war envisaged a future of wage-labour for the Zulu people – but at slave wages. White agriculturalists expected African labourers to work long hours and perform very hard manual tasks and all for a fraction of the cost of Indian indentured labour. It was after all expected by the British Government that if confederation was to be achieved at all it would have to be at minimum expense and then for the ultimate benefit of the Imperial exchequer.<sup>9</sup>

In order to exploit the Zulu labour force to the fullest, and incorporate the Zulu Kingdom into a capitalist economy for the benefit of confederation, it became necessary to conquer the Zulus. The claimed justification of bringing to an end a barbarous and savage militaristic state will be shown to have been a distortion of the facts. Clearly, what Frere needed was cheap labour that he could exploit – given that the Zulus were forbidden to work for wages he would have to destroy their political economy and make them subservient to Britain. Their anachronistic *ibutho* system which had been in existence for sixty years would have to be dismantled.

By examining relevant evidence I will attempt to show that King Cetshwayo could not have conceivably accepted Frere's ultimatum, given the nature of the Zulu political economy. Furthermore the misconceptions that King Cetshwayo was a tyrant and his people nothing more than barbaric savages will be dispelled by an analysis of the evidence at hand. Frere's derfands were nothing more than an excuse to invade the Zulu Kingdom and he would not be stopped. King Cetshwayo was truly a man trying to 'ward off a falling tree'.<sup>10</sup>

9. BPP., C.2220, No. 66, Further Correspondence Respecting the Affairs of South Africa, 1878

10. Guy, J. : The Destruction of the Zulu Kingdom, p.130

King Cetshwayo ruled over roughly 300 000 subjects in Zululand and owned the land by virtue of his accession to the throne. The Zulu monarchy was centralized and extremely cohesive when one accepts that it was also subject to divisions and political tensions and intrigues. It was however not as centralized as has been suggested by numerous historians. As will be demonstrated, the King ruled in concert with the *izikhulu* or chiefdoms and did not have *carte-blanche* in the running of the Kingdom. In fact, political power was distributed from the center of the polity by the Zulu clan. This clan, using the military system, was able to stretch its influence throughout Zululand. Zulus who gave allegiance to King Cetshwayo could occupy tracts of land and retain for their personal use a large part of their produce. Collecting tribute continued although at a diminishing rate and it was usually in the form of ivory and hides. An exception to this was King Cetshwayo's demand for cash money tributes from Tsonga migrants employed in Natal Colony, in the form of a tax on their wages.<sup>11</sup> Surplus was derived from the labour of men in the army from late adolescence until physically incapable of serving. There were therefore even men in their eighties in the ranks. The king was able to exercise a great amount of economic and social control over his people and was able to subvert possible rivals with relative ease.<sup>12</sup> There was a hierarchy of political and civil officials who were subordinate to King Cetshwayo and who operated in terms of the clan and kinship in self-sufficient productive units called *umuzi* (pl. *imizi*). These were homesteads. A second system which was socially integrated with the homestead system was that of labour through the *ibutho* or military system. It was this system that gave the Zulu Kingdom its martial orientation and impinged on King Cetshwayo and his dealings with the British.

The *ibutho* system comprised of an arrangement to recruit teenage males into age groups called *amabutho*. The *ibutho* system which was in place in Zululand during King Cetshwayo's reign was not an innovation of the Shakan era. We need to be aware of the fact that Shaka had organized his military forces on ancient principles. The age-regiment system had been retained by the Zulus and Zulu successor states.

11. Ballard, C.C. : 'Crisis , Synthesis and Adjustment in Zulu-Tsonga Tributary Relationships, 1860-1879', paper presented to the Conference on the History of Opposition in South Africa, University of the Witwatersrand, 28 January 1978 p.16
12. Laband, J.P.C. and Thompson, P.S. : Field Guide to the War in Zululand and the Defence of Natal 1879, p.4

The recruits were not permitted to marry for between fifteen to twenty years. Throughout their period of service they would be based at royal homesteads called *amakhanda*.<sup>13</sup> *Amabutho* age groups allowed the Zulu polity to control river valleys as well as the coastal lowlands and dominate pastures for grazing. Vital economic assets such as cattle and grain could be protected, thereby ensuring the survival of the Kingdom.<sup>14</sup> *Amabutho* served to 'entrench the dominance of the ruling elite' as Zulu kings could extract manpower for fifteen to twenty years.<sup>15</sup> Throughout this time the young men would be indoctrinated in Zulu values. Children below puberty were forbidden on military *amakhanda*. Not only men were recruited into the *amabutho*. Young women were also required to stay at home and not marry. Their labour was extracted for the betterment of the kingdom. They usually produced grain in fields alongside their *imizi* and used it to feed the male *amabutho* who were as a rule given only milk by the king in a Spartan like existence which had a structural continuity:

*The right of property comes from the king, but he does not exercise that power. The country has remained like it is now since the King's father and grandfather reigned.*<sup>16</sup>

The male *amabutho* were of great importance in a military sense as they could be used to crush insurrection and protect the Kingdom from invaders. They provided a coercive force that was able to keep the ruling elite relatively safe from political agitators and pretenders to the throne. Roughly fifty young men would be mustered into companies called *amaviyo* under the command of an officer called an *induna*. (The same word also means 'chief'). The *umuzi* was the physical embodiment of the patrilineal lineage system (where men and women had descended from a common ancestor through the male line) which was the keystone of Zulu social organization.

13. Wright, J.B. : 'Pre-Shakan Age-group Formation among the Northern Nguni' (*Natalia*, 8, December 1978 pp.26-30).
14. Gump, J. : 'Ecological Change, and Pre-Shakan State Formation', (*Unpublished manuscript*) p.9
15. *Ibid.* , pp.9-10
16. Webb, C. de B. and Wright, J.B., (eds) : *A Zulu King Speaks* p.91

There were literally thousands of *imizi* diffused throughout the Kingdom which varied greatly in size according to the wealth and status of the occupants. Each *umuzi* would have an *umnumzana* (head) with his wives and children. It would be adjacent to their land for grazing or planting crops. The men would work with all the livestock while the women concentrated on agricultural endeavours. It was also a characteristic of Tswana society that Tswana chiefs possessed an army of civilians in their *battlanka* (homestead) who carried out tasks such as tending cattle on royal cattle posts. Like the Zulus, these Tswana recruits were also used to repair homesteads that had fallen into a state of dilapidation.

The *amabutho* have been described as 'multifunctional, organized labour gangs,'<sup>17</sup> that were used not only for the defence of the kingdom but also for renovating and repairing *amakhanda* that had succumbed to the ravages of time. Clearly, the *amabutho* system could not be disbanded in terms of Frere's ultimatum as this would break up the entire military system and disrupt the Zulu way of life. When the *umnumzana* of an *umuzi* died, the *umuzi* would be apportioned between the sons who would establish their own respective homesteads. This would also be the case when sons came of age – they would leave their fathers *umuzi* and seek wives from other clans. Men were forbidden to marry wives from their own clan of origin. Although the *umuzi* was a self-sufficient unit, wives had to be acquired from other *imizi* to marry her husband, her father was given *iLobolo* (compensation) in the form of cattle by his future son-in-law. A man that owned cattle was regarded as powerful in Zulu society and he was held in high esteem. A man that owned no cattle or very few cattle was regarded as a failure. Cattle were regarded as the very essence of a Zulu's life. If he was deemed to be courageous, a man could be rewarded for his bravery by being given cattle by the King or his *indunas / amakhosi* (chiefs). During King Cetshwayo's reign the subjects of the Kingdom were allowed to possess land that had previously been occupied by their ancestors without the fear of being

17. Wright, J.B. : 'Pre-Shakan Age-group Formation among the Northern Nguni' p.25



dispossessed. In Shakan times it was not uncommon for the King to apportion land to his subjects as he saw fit and this often involved resettling them.<sup>18</sup> Cetshwayo's Kingdom was not as autocratic as has been suggested by various primary and secondary historians. It was however a Kingdom in which the monarch acquired his dominance by controlling the producers, both male and female, rather than the instruments of production.<sup>19</sup>

The eldest son of an *umuzi* usually inherited his father's property, the preponderance of which was livestock, usually cattle. This enabled him to procure more wives – the effect of which was to create new production units which would in turn greatly influence production in the entire Kingdom.<sup>20</sup> The *amakhosi's* status was based on the size of his herds which he could exchange for wives. This would create more lineages that could support the *umuzi* and ultimately the King, as thousands of *imizi* were banded together in a polity under the King's control. Clans were therefore part of the chiefdom which was comprised of various clans of which one had political ascendancy. The dominant clan since the days of King Shaka was the Zulu and it was they that had occupied large areas in the Kingdom and had the greatest access to cattle. The power of the Zulu state was derived from the surplus labour which was exploited from every *umuzi* in the Kingdom. On occasion it transpired that Zulus gave their daughters as gifts to King Cetshwayo in return for farming implements that would enable them to be more productive. A lineage had the ability to grow in a relatively short time frame and could control large expanses of territory.<sup>21</sup>

18. Webb, C. de B. and Wright, J.B., (eds) : A Zulu King Speaks pp.84-85

19. Terray, E. : Marxism and 'Primitive' Societies, pp.168-86

20. Guy, J.J., 'Production and Exchange in the Zulu Kingdom,' paper presented at the National University of Lesotho, July 1976 p.11

21. Wilson, M., 'Changes in social structure in southern Africa : the relevance of kinship studies to the historian,' in Thompson, L., (ed.) : African Societies in Southern Africa, pp.78-79

The salient basis of the states power could be found in the *amakhanda* (military *imizi* of the royal house). There were at least twenty-seven *amakhanda* in Zululand, thirteen of which were on the Mahlabatini plain and were the 'barracks' of the single *amabutho* for at least a year after their formation. The remaining *amakhanda* were placed at strategic points throughout the kingdom. The dress of the warriors was standardized, although they were from different districts. Although the Zulus were an armed people with a military system, they were not the military menace to Natal Colony that they were made out to be. Under the auspices of King Cetshwayo, the Zulu military system scaled new heights and the fighting forces reached previously unattained excellence. Male teenagers reported to one of numerous *amakhanda* in Zululand to begin their extended period of military service to the Kingdom. This was however after they had been drafted according to age and district into groups of about a hundred called *iNtanga*. Each *iNtanga* had an *induna* to lead them until they were deemed ready for absorption into the *amakhanda* where they remained from puberty until their mid-thirties. Whereas the conventional *umuzi* was based on a sexual division of labour – men tending cattle and women performing agricultural duties – in the *amakhanda* men would plant, reap, create gardens for the royal family and erect military kraals.<sup>22</sup> The military kraals were not as disciplined as one would imagine them to have been. Ironically, the main discussion point in military kraals was love and romance, not how to wage war.<sup>23</sup> Peace, economic growth and unity were ideals to be striven for in Cetshwayo's Kingdom and the military character of his state has been greatly exaggerated.

When new villages were formed the huts were arranged in strict accordance with the status of the members of the clan. The *amabutho* did not reside in distinct military barracks but were stationed on the *amakhanda* of the king or his family. This system greatly enhanced the prestige and status of the King

22. Supplementary Minutes of Evidence, Cape Black Laws and Customs Commission, p.519

23. Lugg, H.C. : Life Under a Zulu Shield, p.35

and also lent itself to forces developing from the apex of the Zulu Kingdom outward. Despite the control this allowed Cetshwayo to exercise, his Kingdom was not as cohesive and monolithic as it had been during the Shakan period. Notwithstanding the fact that *amabutho* were enlisted as a fixed rule and regulated as such, they became through maturation, the fundamental centers of the civil administration from which the *imizi* spread out. They were in effect, the nucleus of the Zulu Kingdom. King Cetshwayo's main royal *umuzi* was at Ulundi (Ondini) and it was basically one of a dozen royal military *imizi* that littered the Mahlabatini plain. State ceremonies took place at Ulundi and it soon became the main administrative center of Cetshwayo's Kingdom.

The continued use of the pre-Shakan age-regiment or *amabutho* system was an example of King Shaka's political acumen. It removed the problem of regional instability which could have been exploited by political opportunists and enabled security to be maintained in any area by the presence of a regiment either on a temporary or permanent basis. Furthermore, the *amabutho* imbued conquered peoples with a common Zulu identity as makes of different tribes lived together in the *amakhanda* for close on twenty years. King Cetshwayo continued the tradition. The *amakhanda* also provided King Cetshwayo with vital military and political intelligence. The young warriors could be useful in regional policing as well as state maintenance. On occasion an elderly woman of the royal family was appointed to administer the *amakhanda*. In fact *amabutho* were used by many chiefdoms as a means for holding down conquered territory and incorporating alien prisoners into their chiefdom.

The strength of an *amabutho* varied considerably in the number of males, from about 500 to as many as 5 000 in some cases. Usually the larger regiments were in closer geographical proximity to Ulundi. New *amakhanda* were sometimes joined to older regiments resulting in groups equivalent to brigades of British military strength – 6 000 men. By the 11 January 1879, Chelmsford estimated (based on reconnaissance), that there were no less

than 34 *amabutho*.<sup>24</sup> Seven of these *amabutho* dated back to Shakan times and as their ages ranged from sixty four to eighty years of age, they were of diminishing advantage to the Zulu state. The experience and age of the regiments was marked by shield colour. The younger regiments had African shields which were gradually adorned with white markings as their experience increased. Red shields were used by mixed age group regiments or married regiments – which occurred when entire regiments were given permission to marry at the same time. This was usually when warriors were 35-40 years of age. Increasing amounts of whiteness on the red shield denoted increasing experience until finally, the seasoned warrior would carry an all-white shield. Shields were oval in shape and made of stiffened cowhide which was secured to a pole by strips of cowhide. Two types of shields were in use, the war shield *isiHlangu*, was 1,5m in height and 1m wide. King Cetshwayo's warriors also had an *iHubelo* (smaller shield) which was about 1,2m high and 0,75 wide. The shield was used in conjunction with the short stabbing *iklwa* (spear) and the *iwisa* (a battle club) which was usually made of hard iron-wood. The shield was used defensively as well as offensively. It was common practice for warriors to carry a variety of spears into battle. The longer spear was usually used for throwing while the shorter *iklwa* was for combat at close quarters. Xhosa, Sotha and Tswana warriors also carried long spears which they would hastily convert into shorter spears by breaking the shafts for one-on-one combat. King Shaka insisted that his men use only the *iklwa* but Cetshwayo gave his warriors both options.

The basic dress of warriors was the *umuTsha* (string) worn around the waist from which strips of fur would hang down in front and a larger strip of cowhide at the back. Older regiments wore a kilt of fur and hide tails. Around the head, warriors would wear very elaborate arrangements of hide, feathers and fur. This would also be worn around the neck and arms and below the knees.

24. Fynney, F.B. : The Zulu Army and Zulu Headmen, p.4

The dress code enhanced the ferocious appearance of warriors and made it possible to distinguish various regiments. Married men became known as *iKhehla* and wore a fibre circlet which was woven into their hair. This circlet was called an *isiCoco*.<sup>25</sup>

The thirty-three regiments were grouped into thirteen 'corps'. In the event of war the *impi* (Zulu army) could be mobilized rather rapidly as runners were sent to the various *amakhanda* to order the regiments to gather at the royal kraal. Once at the kraal the various regiments would undergo rituals performed by an *izangoma* or diviner who was believed to be possessed by the spirit of the ancestors (*amadlozi*) and as such were a connection between this world and the spirit world. This was so as to protect each of the warriors and therefore the *impi* in general before battle.

The Zulus believed that there was an area of overlap between this world and the world of spirits. As a consequence of this belief warriors who were about to go into combat needed ritual purification against evil forces. An evil mystical force known as *umnyama* that was always described as African in colour could cause the death of a person, usually by violent means. Death which was the result of violence, or *umkhoka*, was a very strong form of *umnyama* which possessed the killer. The members of an *amabutho* would bare-handedly kill a African bull upon which all evil forces had been cast by means of rituals. Meat from the bull would be treated with medicines which would strengthen the warriors. The meat would be roasted and then bits thrown into the air by the *izangoma*. Warriors would catch bits of meat and suck them while inhaling smoke from a fire upon which other medicines had been thrown. The final stages involved in purification would be to drink medicines and then vomit into a pit – each warrior in turn followed by washing at a running stream. The warriors had now themselves assumed a state of *umnyama* and were not permitted to have anything to do with the female gender while they prepared to fight the enemy.

25. Barthorp, M. : The Zulu War, p.16

For Zulu warriors to be successful in a campaign it was necessary to have the approval of the *amadlozi* who lived below ground. These spirits had the welfare of their descendants at heart and since they had a certain status while alive they maintained it under the ground. Therefore it was far more beneficial to secure the support of the King's royal ancestors. If Zulus hoped to make their ancestors favourably inclined towards them it would be necessary to sacrifice cattle as burnt offering that the ancestors could 'lick'. As cattle were highly valued it would be the best way to satisfy and appease the *amadlozi*. Preferably, cattle from the royal herds would be selected for sacrifice. In this way the spirits of the ancestors would assist warriors by using their vast powers against enemy forces.<sup>26</sup>

The Zulu warriors were proud of their regiments and the Zulu Kingdom. Even recruits of non- Zulu prior identity became keen Ama-Zulu. They adopted the Zulu Nguni dialect and Zulu traditions.<sup>27</sup>

In 1873 King Cetshwayo summoned all the *amabutho* of young men who had been born between 1850 and 1853 to the royal *amakhanda* and created the *inGobamakhosi* regiment, average age 24, which numbered some 6 000 warriors. The second largest regiment had been created during Mpande's reign seven years earlier in 1867. This regiment was the *unQakamatye*, average age 30 and numbered some 5 000 warriors.<sup>28</sup> By 1879, the largest army King Cetshwayo could put into the field was about 25 000 men.<sup>29</sup> Jeff Guy in *The destruction of the Zulu Kingdom* puts the figure at 30 000 men.<sup>30</sup>

26. Laband, J. : Zulu War Rituals, [www.religion and nature.com](http://www.religion and nature.com)

27. Denoon, D. : Southern Africa since 1800, p.17

28. Barthorp, M. : The Zulu War, pp.175-176

29. Edgerton, R.B. : Like Lions They Fought, p.34

30. Guy, J. : The destruction of the Zulu Kingdom p.39

There may have been as many as 70 000 men in Zululand between the ages of seventeen and fifty in 1879. Why was it that approximately only fifty percent were put into the field? It appears that not all young men were based at royal *imizis* or performed more than casual service.<sup>31</sup> Men over the age of forty were also victims of a considerably higher mortality rate than those under forty years of age.<sup>32</sup>

The essential factors of control that King Cetshwayo retained, such as the extraction of labour and permission to engage in matrimony, were as important for the survival of the Zulu polity as were the rigid duties of the various *amabutho*.

King Cetshwayo was keen to reassert his authority over his subjects by breathing new life into the *amabutho* and by re-disciplining the men. While he did not use terror-tactics to enforce his will he resolved to rigorously enforce marriage provisions. These strict provisions governing marriage had a negative impact on Zulu society from a demographic growth point of view as they in essence deferred the marriage of women until they were well into their thirties.<sup>33</sup> As childbearing covers the years between fifteen and forty-nine, the effect of the *amabutho* system on women would have been huge and the lower enrolments of conscripts into the system would have also had a large impact on the size of the military force available to King Cetshwayo.

For Frere to have expected the huge Zulu army with its numerous *amakhanda* which were scattered throughout Zululand to disband, was an absurdity. The *amabutho* system had been established over decades and it could not possibly be made inoperative so as to pander to Frere's whims.

31. Bryant, A.T. : The Zulu People, as they were before the white man came, p.467

32. Willis, G.A., 'Some Basic Concepts in Demographic Analysis', paper presented to workshop on production and reproduction in the Zulu Kingdom, University of Natal, Pietermaritzburg, October 1977 p. 4

33. Guy, J.J., 'Ecological Factor in the Rise of Shaka and the Zulu Kingdom', paper presented to a conference on southern African history, National University of Lesotho, July 1976 pp.15-16

If it was discontinued, what would it be replaced by and how would the Zulu state be expected to defend itself? Frere and his apologists displayed a total lack of understanding of the Zulu psyche or knew full-well that the Zulus would have no option but to reject the ultimatum handed to them at the Lower Drift of the Thukela River on 11 December 1878. The majority of the members of the various *amabutho* were only too happy to submit themselves to hardships in the service of their monarch and kingdom – much in the same way as the Spartans of Ancient Greece. The Zulus were proud of their reputation as great warriors. Just as the Spartan poets wrote stirring military songs to their soldiers, exhorting them to battle and indoctrinating them with the glories of war, so too were young Zulu men inspired in the *amabutho* system. The Zulus could simply not conform to the demands of the ultimatum concerning their army. They were the most energetic and influential African tribe in southern Africa and were flabbergasted at the ultimatum. They would not and could not succumb to demands that were so outrageous in nature as to threaten the Kingdom's sovereignty and their very way of life.

Sir Bartle Frere and numerous others had basic misconceptions and prejudices about the Zulus. A great misconception was the Zulu warriors fought as aggressively as they did because they were sexually frustrated due to the nature of the *amabutho* system. They were not allowed to get married until they were in their mid-thirties.<sup>34</sup> Numerous British officers believed that Zulu warriors fought as brutally as they did so as to impress the king who would reward them by allowing them to get married.<sup>35</sup> This contention is however inaccurate as just under half of the regiments were made up of married men. In fact, of the twenty-seven active *amabutho*, only sixteen were made up of single men. Although the single-status requirement may well have been disliked by numerous warriors and may have in some cases caused friction in the Zulu state, it was nonetheless common practice and deemed culturally correct for young men to provide the Kingdom with their services in the *Amabutho*.

34. Guy, J. : The Destruction of the Zulu Kingdom pp.11-12

35. Gon, P. : The Road to Isandlwana, p.195



As stated, the warriors were expected to defend especially the herds of cattle in the Kingdom against theft by unscrupulous societies or individuals emanating from territory adjacent to the Zulu Kingdom. If it became necessary to raid an adjacent territory, the captured herds were given to married men who used them as *iLobolo* to be handed over to the fathers of new wives that would be acquired. Warriors were not permitted to marry for at least fifteen to twenty years so as to extract labour from them as well as

... the means by which that labour-power was reproduced, that is, over human reproduction.<sup>36</sup>

Both men and women therefore, spent most of their time working for others in Zulu society until they were virtually middle-aged. The *amabutho* needed to comprise of younger members of society that could by virtue of their younger age obey instructions easier than older people and therefore assist the king and his chiefs to exercise more centralized authority in managing the land and its resources. As warriors were members of a particular lineage, and a chief represented a hierarchy of lineages – it was essential to give them allegiance.<sup>37</sup> In the lineage based system which was in place in Zululand, the ruling elite showed its unique relationship to the royal *amadlozi* by means of ritual actions which regulated rainmaking, the first fruits festival and the production cycle. Royal ritual authority was augmented by the *amabutho* system. This resulted in an individual's assimilation into the political community depending less on his lineage association but rather on his association with the *amabutho*. The King would reward the *ibutho* that distinguished itself most by granting its members the right to marry and by providing it with cattle.

36. Wright, J. : 'Pre-Shakan Age-group Formation Among the Northern Nguni', (*Natalia*, 8, December 1978 pp.24-27).

37. Hamilton, C. and Wright, J. : 'The Making of the Lala: Ethnicity, Ideology and Class-Formation in Precolonial context', research paper, University of the Witwatersrand History Workshop, March, 1984 p.8

When older men selected for themselves the girlfriends of younger warriors in the *amabutho*, tensions naturally flared up. Marriage was however closely allied to the availability of resources and as such young men had to delay marrying until they had adequate resources and the permission to do so. This resulted in periodical inter-generational conflict as age partly determined the amount of surplus that an individual had given to the state. In 1878 the uThulwana regiment comprising of men aged forty-five on average, clashed with the *inGobamakhosi* whose average age was twenty-four, over the issue of younger women. A number of deaths resulted and tensions between the two regiments took many months to subside. But tensions such as this did not threaten to destabilize the Kingdom at any time. Warriors in the *amabutho* were not allowed to have affairs with the wives of older men, neither were girls in the female *amabutho* permitted to take lovers from the younger male *amabutho*. If women refused to marry older men they would in all probability be executed. The restrictions on marriage imposed by the *amabutho* system also regulated reproduction but did not effect to any meaningful extent the rate of reproduction. J.Y. Gibson in *The Story of the Zulus*, explains that King Cetshwayo sent Theophilus Shepstone a bag of millet and challenged him:

.... *If you can count the grains then you will also be able to count the Zulu people.*<sup>38</sup>

Sexual relations between young men in the *amakhanda* and unmarried young girls were strictly regulated. Vaginal sexual intercourse was taboo but *hlobonga* was permitted. This was intracultural intercourse that literally took place between the legs.<sup>39</sup>

The Christian missionaries in Zululand frowned upon this activity and believed in the liberating effect of 'free' labour and in the 'civilizing mission' of British Imperialism. Missionaries such as 'Fat Parson' Robertson became

38. Gibson, J.Y. : *The Story of the Zulus*, p.32

39. K C , Webb, C. de B. and Wright, J.B., (eds) : *The James Stuart Archive of Recorded Oral Evidence Relating to the History of the Zulu and Neighbouring Peoples*, Vol.1, p.312

Convinced that the Zulus could be fully assimilated into Christian culture once the shackles of King Cetshwayo's oppression had been removed. Robertson falsely reported that King Cetshwayo had ordered the execution of hundreds of young women in Zululand as they had violated his ban on being allowed to get married. As evidence later demonstrated, only three women were executed for gravely insulting the King's authority. Marriage was an issue for families to decide upon as was described by Cetshwayo's evidence to the Cape Government Commission on Black Laws and Customs in 1881 which I will touch on later. It is clear however, that missionaries clearly had their own agenda in mind when reporting 'incidents' that they alleged had taken place in Zululand.

Robert Edgerton, in *Like Lions They Fought*, gives us a very favourable impression of the Zulu warriors whom he depicts as virile but not celibate. He shows us their love of dancing, lovemaking and appreciation of physical beauty:

*Zulu men had a very active interest in their women, admiring their beauty, courting them, and talking about them almost incessantly. Huge thighs were admired; some people, particularly in the royal lineage, had such immense legs that they had to put aloe between their legs to prevent chafing when they walked. Zulus believed that breasts and buttocks should be large but "firm enough to crack a flea on," as they said. Zulu women were no less interested in sex than men.*<sup>40</sup>

King Cetshwayo who was perceived by most of his subjects as the incarnation of the Zulu state, was well acquainted with his territory and knew his people. He gave his sisters to them in marriage and he married their daughters.<sup>41</sup>

40. Edgerton, R.B. : *Like Lions they Fought* pp.26-27

41. Guy, J.J. : 'The Political Structure of the Zulu Kingdom During the Reign of Cetshwayo Kampande,' paper presented to a conference on southern African history, National University of Lesotho, July 1976 p.12

To demand that Zulus should be free to marry on attaining maturity, as stipulated in Frere's ultimatum, would be a major distabilising factor in Zulu society.

In David Clammer's *The Zulu War*, we read that the Zulu military had been formed by Shaka and that King Cetshwayo inherited the martial system. It was the backbone of the Zulu nation. Clammer states that celibacy was enforced among the *amabutho* who were stationed in *amakhanda*.<sup>42</sup> Permission to marry was not granted until a man had attained middle-age. A warrior's first duty was to his nation and therefore marriage and its attendant responsibilities would interfere with his devotion to the state. Marriage needed to come later.<sup>43</sup>

Edgerton maintains that Zulus were not celibate and asserts that some warriors in the *amakhanda* were in fact married while others could be involved in limited sexual activity that did not involve vaginal penetration. He goes on to say that the British assumed Zulu warriors were celibate because they were unmarried and that their violent disposition in warfare was due to sexual frustration. Edgerton challenges this Victorian assumption and calls it 'a charmingly innocent idea.'<sup>44</sup>

In the Zulu state, adultery was considered to be a capital offense. A woman guilty of infidelity could be executed as in the case of Sihayo who discovered that his younger wives had taken lovers. They had further inflamed the situation by giving birth to illegitimate children. It was the abduction of these women from Natal Colony by King Cetshwayo's men that gave Frere his *casus belli*.<sup>45</sup>

42. Clammer, D. : The Zulu War p.20

43. Ibid . , pp.20-21

44. Edgerton, R.B. : Like Lions They Fought pp.24-26

45. Ibid . , p.27

Marriage was not permitted until the King placed the *isiCoco* on the head of a warrior. This was assign that the King was granting the warrior, usually a veteran, the opportunity to go out and find a wife. This system remained more or less the same as it had been during the reign of King Shaka. The Zulu army as created by King Shaka did however undergo certain changes by the time Cetshwayo was monarch. A prime example of change was in the geographical location of the numerous *amaKhanda* which must have changed due to the volatile border situation *vis-à-vis* the ZAR in particular. Many Zulus responded with alacrity to the opportunities that were presented by wage labour in Natal Colony and the ZAR and traveled long distances to earn money to supplement the rural enterprises in the *imizi* economy.

Whites in southern Africa were divided between two views that prevailed by 1879, concerning the Zulus: war-like and aggressive in nature or simply peaceful pastoralists? Under Zulu customary legal norms, the powers of King Cetshwayo and his predecessors stood outside of and above the powers of ordinary Government. All individuals were the king's subjects but were also members of the political community. So while King Cetshwayo formally controlled aspects of their person, such as marriage, each was also a member of a smaller polity in which the *induna* could control their labour and access to land and cattle amongst other economic resources.

In the geographical locations far from the center of the Kingdom, Zulus would often ignored the King's instructions about deferring marriage and were married when it pleased them to do so:

*. . . . in the coast and outlying districts there were large numbers of people who retained their liberty and married as they pleased but that strict loyalty was the fashion near the court.*<sup>46</sup>

46 Colenbrander, P.J. : 'Confronting Imperialism : The People of Nquthu and the Invasion of Zululand,' in Duminy, A. and Ballard, C., (eds) : The Anglo-Zulu War : New Perspectives, p.90

It was not unusual for men to sometimes leave Zululand and return with wives at a later stage.<sup>47</sup>

During the respective reigns of King Mpande and King Cetshwayo, many men left the *amakhanda* and wandered south into the regions of Natal Colony where the monarchs had no jurisdiction over them and where they would be free to marry whom and when they pleased to do so.

Frere's description of the Zulus as 'Celibate man slaying warriors' was ridiculed by *Punch* magazine after the disaster at Isandhlwana:

*It would be better, if possible, to send out only unmarried (British) men. I find there is something to be said for a force of celibate man-slaying gladiators after all.*<sup>48</sup>

In *Cetshwayo's Dutchman*, we encounter a favourable portrayal of the Zulus as given by the Boer trader Cornelius Vijn who was in the company of Zulus during the war. Vijn had close contact with the Zulus and dispels rumours of arbitrary execution such as the one which said that King Cetshwayo had young girls executed for failing to marry older warriors in 1876. While King Cetshwayo on occasion was obliged to enforce the laws and execute subjects, there was no wholesale execution of Zulu subjects as was the belief in Natal Colony.<sup>49</sup> Trading with the Zulus was always a pleasurable for Vijn and he was always treated with respect and fairness.<sup>50</sup> Perhaps only three women had been executed for sexual indiscretion – not hundreds as suggested by Victorians. Zulu warriors were therefore not as celibate as has been assumed and were certainly not frustrated sexually. Their supposed sexual frustration had nothing to do with their military aggression and prowess in battle. They simply had an efficient military system and were fearless warriors. There was no way the Zulu army could have been disbanded without destroying the fabric of Zulu society – Frere knew this all too well!

47. Kennedy, P.A. : 'Mpande and the Zulu Kingship', (*Journal of Natal and Zulu History*, No.4 p.3).

48. *Punch* magazine, 5 April 1879, p.154

49. Vijn, C. : *Cetshwayo's Dutchman* , pp.80-81

50. *Ibid.*, p.15

Magama Fuze, in *Abantu Abamnyama (The African People)*, explains that he paid King Cetshwayo a visit in July 1878 and was much impressed by the King's concern for his subjects, 'his good government and his sense of justice. Everyone who met King Cetshwayo was impressed by him, even Somtseu . . .'<sup>51</sup> Fuze, who was the compositor for Bishop Colenso's printing press, 'gives us a real, sincere, authentic account of Zulu history . . .'<sup>52</sup> in which it is clear that the amabutho were an essential part of Zulu life. Fuze also contributed to *Cetshwayo's Dutchman* by Vijn.

Vijn like Fuze provides us with a great deal of first hand information on the Zulus. He stresses the importance of cattle in Zulu life. This emphasis on the vital need for cattle by the Zulus, provides us with a far deeper appreciation of what Frere's ultimatum of 11 December 1878 must have meant to the Zulus and the impossibility of its acceptance by the Zulus. Cattle played a vital role in Cetshwayo's Kingdom. They were the focal point of Zulu society since the days of King Shaka. Carolyn Hamilton in *Terrific Majesty : The Powers of Shaka Zulu and the Limits of Historical Invention*, shows that Shaka was a 'benign patron' who 'carefully managed' a show of despotism in Zululand as a strategy of state controlled skills. Cattle were a fundamental core of his Kingdom.<sup>53</sup> Cetshwayo's Kingdom was a continuity of the Shakan Kingdom in which cattle played an equally important function. Zulus regarded cattle as their most valued possession and consequently steadfastly devoted most of their time to caring for the royal herds and later their own. So much time was spent on animal husbandry that the Zulus had over three hundred terms to describe variations in colour among their cattle. Apart from their immense value of showing their possessors to be men of power and status in Zulu society, cattle provided meat, milk, *amasi* (milk-curds which were a Zulu staple) and hides. As stated earlier, good

51. Cope, A.T. : 'The Zulu War in Zulu Perspective', (Theoria p.46).

52. Ibid ., p.48

53. Hamilton, C. : Terrific Majesty : The Powers of Shaka Zulu and the Limits of Historical Invention, pp.11-19

fortune in a venture depended on the approval of the *amadlozi* who were propitiated through the sacrifice of cattle. Cattle were therefore also greatly valued for their ritual importance. Prior to engaging in battle it would be expected (by the royal *amadlozi*) that warriors would sacrifice cattle taken from the king's herd so as to induce them . . . to offer their vital support against the enemies of the polity.

Cattle were essential to a man's upward mobility which depended to a large extent on the acquisition of larger herds either through marriage or as a reward for exceptional service rendered to the royal *umuzi* or to a grateful *induna*. Without cattle to be used as *iLobolo*, (a marriage arrangement by a man to his future father-in-law), marriage was virtually, although not entirely impossible which meant that no children could be obtained. This would impact negatively on the population growth in the kingdom. In giving evidence to the Cape Colonial Government's Commission on Black Laws and Customs in July 1881, King Cetshwayo explained the reasoning behind parents or guardians forcing a girl to marry a man whom the parents or guardians had selected for her and the role of cattle in the marriage arrangement:

*If the girl was allowed to go to any man that she wished, she might choose a bad man, and that is why the father controls her, and sends her to the man he wishes to have her . . . . They do not think more about getting cattle than about the girl . . . . . It is a custom that has been in Zululand since the nation was a nation, and the king (Cetshwayo) does not suppose he would be able to make away with it himself . . . . . The girl is not really married for the sake of the cattle; she would be allowed to have whichever (husband) she preferred . . . . . and they can arrange about paying the cattle . . . . . The king gives leave to a certain regiment to put on the head-rings (isiCoco), and then he gives an order that the girls who are sweethearts of these soldiers are to put on the head-dresses, so as to be fit to be married to these men, and then they are married . . . . They (men) always have to give cattle for their wives, and can marry more than one ...<sup>54</sup>*

54. Blue Book G.4.-'83, part 1, Cape Town, 1883 pp.517-523



Cattle came to represent potential labour and disbursed labour in Zulu society. The larger a Zulu's herd, the greater his prestige in his district. King Cetshwayo had on numerous occasions fined people for misdemeanours to the state by extracting cattle from their herds.<sup>55</sup>

In terms of the ultimatum presented to King Cetshwayo, 600 head of cattle were to be handed over to the British authorities in Natal Colony within twenty days. Frere requested Bulwer to inform King Cetshwayo that:

*... rigid punctuality with regard to time will be insisted in and unless observed, such steps as may appear necessary will be immediately taken to ensure compliance.*<sup>56</sup>

John Shepstone, in a note to John Dunn on 26 December 1878, emphasised the seriousness of the situation concerning the handing over of the 600 head of cattle to Frere's agents:

*Unless the prisoners and cattle are given up within the time specified Her Majesty's troops will advance, but, in consideration of the disposition expressed in your letter to comply with the demands of the Government, the troops will be halted at convenient posts within the Zulu border . . . . . without in the meantime taking any hostile action, unless it is provoked by the Zulus.*<sup>57</sup>

As it turned out the British forces showed no concern for the welfare of the Zulus in any case. As soon as they crossed the border into the Zulu Kingdom they plundered and destroyed Zulu property without provocation.<sup>58</sup>

55. Guy, J.J. : 'Production and Exchange in the Zulu Kingdom' pp.10-13

56. BPP., C.2222, Frere to Bulwer, 22 December 1878

57. Dunn, J. : Cetshwayo and the Three Generals, p.92

58. Preston, A., (ed.) : Sir Garnet Wolseley's South African Journal, 1879-80, p.48

A letter dated two days earlier than John Shepstone's, on 24 December, from Dunn stated that:

*The cattle are still being collected and it will be impossible for them to be up in time.*<sup>59</sup>

To King Cetshwayo and his *amakhosi*, the cattle fines amongst other points in the ultimatum were unpalatable and unreasonable to the extreme. As it was, there were not enough cattle in Zululand to allow all the men to marry. If the Zulus wished to acquire more cattle the army would have to fight for them against other tribes. A shortage of cattle would therefore threaten King Cetshwayo's position as reproduction of the society would be affected as well as food production. There had been far less rainfall in Zululand since at least 1860. Unprecedented low levels of rainfall in 1878-9 again caused a drought which greatly reduced the number of herds in Zululand while cattle diseases such as Anthrax had also taken their toll on the herds. Great care was however taken by the Zulus to minimize the impact of losses.<sup>60</sup> White traders from Natal Colony introduced new diseases into Zululand such as bovine pleuro pneumonia (lung sickness), redwater and tuberculosis. The greatest cause of cattle loss was bovine pleuro pneumonia which struck Zululand in the late 1850s.<sup>61</sup> This disease is spread by inhalation of infected droplets expelled by animals with the disease. Because the organism can only survive a few hours outside the hosts body direct contact is needed for the infection to be transmitted. As the disease spreads faster in places where cattle are gathered such as in kraals, it has the potential to cause great economic losses if not controlled. Slaughtering vast amounts of cattle was the only way out of a major catastrophe for the Zulus but as reactors were not promptly disposed of serious losses resulted which obliged the then King Mpande, to obtain more cattle from the Boers in the ZAR.<sup>62</sup> • The losses of

59. BPP., C.2242, Frere - Hicks Beach, 1 January 1879

60. Bryant, A.T. : The Zulu People As They Were Before the White Man Came , pp.129-130

61. Ibid ., p.336

62. Leslie, D. : Among the Zulus and Amatongas , p.185

cattle due to disease were so great that in 1861 King Mpande ordered John Dunn to have at least 800 buffalo shot so that the huge meat losses could be recouped. The losses were so severe that in a single year a company of Durban traders exported a reported 90 000 hides which they had obtained from Zululand.<sup>63</sup> King Cetshwayo grew so desperate to obtain cattle that he requested Natal to accede to his wish to raid the Swazi Kingdom for them. Natal Colony did not give in to his request and he subsequently shelved the idea to raid the Swazis.

The main aim of the Zulu war was to obtain cattle and since they too possessed cattle, the Zulus strove to annihilate an enemy as quickly as possible thereby greatly minimizing the chance that their own cattle would be captured.<sup>64</sup>

Bravery in battle was usually rewarded by giving the hero a few cattle although this was by no means the only type of reward. Recipients of military honours could also be given brass armlets, bead necklaces, specially made spears or willow stick necklaces which denoted the number of enemy warriors that had been killed by them in combat.<sup>65</sup> The Zulus often killed cattle in a savage way that appalled the British.<sup>66</sup> In order to make a shield that would be induced with supernatural protective powers it was deemed necessary to skin an ox while it was still alive. The extended suffering of the animal would and its cries of pain would be regarded by the *amadlozi* as a sign of the love of the living.<sup>67</sup> The ritual importance of cattle in communicating with their ancestors was therefore great.

63. N A, Colenso Collection, No. 3, Bishop Colenso, Annexure to Letter Received: R. Robertson to Sanderson, 20 April 1887, p.5
64. Guy, J.J. : The Destruction of the Zulu Kingdom , p.45
65. Samuelson, R.C. : Long, Long Ago, p.37
66. Lugg, H.C. : Life Under a Zulu Shield, p.13
67. Gardiner, A.F. : Narrative of a Journey to the Zoolu Country in South Africa, p.130

While it was certain that King Shaka's raiding pursuits were responsible for large cattle herds during his reign, it is likely that these very large numbers of cattle led to overstocking which must have been exacerbated by repeated seasons of grass-burning in the land of mixed grazing which was ideally suited to the raising of livestock.<sup>68</sup> Another problem of having large herds was undoubtedly soil erosion. The scarcity of cattle was not only due to natural causes. Increasing trade with whites in Natal Colony in particular had major repercussions for the economic and political order in Zululand. A measure of bartering was conducted through which the Zulus obtained imported British commodities in exchange for cattle and cattle by-products – especially in the early 1850s.<sup>69</sup>

In the 1870s, the trade in guns in Zululand skyrocketed. It has been estimated that about 20 000 guns plus ammunition was introduced into Zululand as King Cetshwayo believed they would be necessary to ensure the preservation of the Kingdom, particularly at a time when the Boers of the ZAR and rival African chiefdoms were threatening the borders of Zululand to the north and north west.<sup>70</sup> The guns possessed by the Zulu and whether they were at all used to any effect is in dispute. It is likely that most of the guns were obsolete and probably obtained by some *amakhosi* as well as white traders like John Dunn and Cornelius Vijn who engaged in large-scale buying and selling in Natal Colony and to a lesser extent in the ZAR. Through Dunn in particular, King Cetshwayo was able to broaden the economic base of his Kingdom. But this white *induna* would ultimately cross over to the Natal Colony side. John Dunn was obliged to flee to Natal Colony on 31 December 1878 and abandoned King Cetshwayo to look after his own interests after the assembled council of the *ibandla* met to discuss Frere's ultimatum. There was a belief that Dunn had intentionally misled King Cetshwayo and the *ibandla* concerning the aggressive intentions of the Imperial forces of Britain. Natal Colony needed Zulu

68. Bryant, A.T. : The Zulu People As They Were Before the White Man Came , p.336

69. Mason, G.H. : Zululand : a mission tour in South Africa . p.200

70. Guy, J.J. : 'A note on firearms in the Zulu kingdom with special reference to the Anglo-Zulu war, 1879,' (Journal of African History, xii, 4, 1971 p.559).

cattle to make up for its depleted herds which had been devastated by lung sickness. The implication of 'guns for cattle' type trading between Natal Colony and Zululand further decreased the size of the Zulu herds. The Zulus became more and more reliant on Natal Colony exports for basic agricultural tools and a once proud nation became impoverished to the extent that its people were obliged by economic reality and necessity to work for wages. The upper classes in Zululand were the most prosperous Zulu traders.<sup>71</sup> These wealthy Zulu men usually demanded between 20 to 100 cattle as *iLobolo* for their daughters while the average Zulu commoner usually expected between 1 and 10 head of cattle as *iLobolo*.<sup>72</sup> Given the decimation of the herds by diseases and the necessity for cattle to be bartered for goods from Natal Colony, there was a marked tendency for the rich to become richer and to the poor to become even more impoverished. Wealthy lineages would be at a distinct advantage as women preferred to marry wealthy men but poor men become more desperate and could not afford wives. As will be shown the *izikhulu* (powerful chiefs of the kingdom also known as 'the great ones'), had a great influence over King Cetshwayo – he could make no decisions of national importance without them. They indulged in *ukusisa* (farming out cattle to poor families) which greatly increased the labour resources available to them and the Kingdom in general.<sup>73</sup> As cattle herds declined so too did the poor because as the *isikhulu* did not need as many men to tend their cattle. King Cetshwayo attempted to maintain his authority by revamping the *amabutho* and by enforcing marriage regulations. He also became more intolerant of the missionaries who were increasingly regarded as an invasive bad influence on the Zulu social and cultural arenas.<sup>74</sup> He attempted to raid the Swazis for cattle but was denied this request by the ZAR and Natal Governments and could also not expropriate cattle from the *izikhulu* without provoking them and increasing the risk of division in his Kingdom. Without

71. Guy, J.J. : The Destruction of the Zulu Kingdom , pp.35-38

72. Bryant, A.T. : The Zulu People As They Were Before the White Man Came ,p.591

73. Ibid ., p.467

74. Etherington, N.A. : Preachers, Peasants and Politics in Southeast Africa, 1835-1880, pp.185-198

embarking on raids for cattle King Cetshwayo would not be in a position to reward the amabutho and they would become increasingly unhappy and frustrated by their failure to propel themselves by acts of bravery, up the social ladder in the Kingdom. Frere's demands in the ultimatum for cattle as a payment of a fine, therefore greatly exacerbated the fragile socio-political and economic position of Zululand. The tenuous allegiance of the *izikhulu* threatened to shift away from King Cetshwayo as they with increasing impunity sought greater self-aggrandisement.

Cornelius Vijn, in *Cetshwayo's Dutchman*, gives us a greater understanding of what Frere's ultimatum demand for a fine to be extracted from the Zulus in terms of cattle meant for them. By imposing a fine of this nature Frere was being extremely harsh on the Zulus. Vijn's great emphasis on the socio-economic value of cattle also aids our understanding of the way real fears of the *indunas* that British encroachment would involve the loss of the resilient Sanga type cattle that they owned. Vijn's contribution regarding the value of cattle is invaluable to the historiography of the Anglo-Zulu War. He portrays the Zulus as basic human beings living in their *imizi* and conducting the day to day chores of 'Zulu society.'<sup>75</sup>

Reginald Coupland in *Zulu battle piece : Isandhlwana*, portrays the Zulus as extremely militaristic in orientation since King Shaka's reign. He represents the Zulus as a warlike nation under an autocratic leader. King Cetshwayo's militarism is portrayed as a real threat to British interests in southern Africa.<sup>76</sup> This misconception was held by many British officers in Natal Colony and by numerous settlers. King Cetshwayo, like King Shaka, was in their opinions an absolute and authoritarian monarch presiding over a monolithic Kingdom. Frere, no doubt had much to do with the spreading of such misconceptions concerning King Cetshwayo and his 'army'. General Sir Garnet Wolseley in *The South African Journal of Sir Garnet Wolseley, 1879-1880*, believed that war against

75. Vijn, C. : *Cetshwayo's Dutchman* , pp.6-11

76. Coupland, R. : *Zulu battle piece : Isandhlwana* , pp.9-10

Zululand was inevitable and that King Cetshwayo was a tyrant ruling 'heathens.' He did however not approve of Frere's timing given the instability of Afghanistan and possible war against Russia.<sup>77</sup> Wolseley further depicts the Zulus as bloodthirsty savages with a primordial instinct to conquer all before them and places King Cetshwayo squarely in this mould.<sup>78</sup>

While there is no doubt that the Zulus were a resilient nation with a proud militaristic tradition, I doubt that King Cetshwayo was the tyrannical despot he has been portrayed as. The evidence strongly suggests that there was in the Zulu Kingdom an establishment of a hierarchy of political as well as civil officials. While subordinate to King Cetshwayo, these officials subjected him to checks and balances. The area under King Cetshwayo's control had been greatly reduced since the days of King Shaka and while the collection of tribute remained in place, it was greatly reduced and raiding had been virtually stopped. The *izikhulu* who had become powerful and rich as a result of their positions in the segmentary patrilineal lineage system yielded power and had labourers working for them which further strengthened them and gave them an almost psycho-social dominance in many areas of the kingdom. These more powerful lineages adopted highly versatile *amabutho* which enabled them to secure better pastures and land for crop planting. The *izikhulu* were able to exercise more centralized control in the matters relating to their lands and herds and were also able to increasingly gain the consensual support of their *amabutho*.<sup>79</sup> King Cetshwayo's leadership was therefore not as rigid as has been upheld by Frere and Shepstone's and many of their contemporaries.<sup>80</sup> He ruled with the *izikhulu* who represented the pre-Shakan chiefdoms and they were a force for decentralization which Cetshwayo could not prevail over despite possessing centralizing institutions

77. Wolseley, G. : The South African journal of Sir Gamet Wolseley, 1879-1880, p.39

78. Ibid., pp.52-54

79. Gump, J. : Origins of the Zulu Kingdom, (The Historian, 8/87, p.533).

80. Cope, R.L. : Shepstone and Cetshwayo, 1873-79, (M.A. thesis, University of Natal, 1967) pp.220-221

like the *amabutho*.<sup>81</sup> The King working in conjunction with the *izikhulu* constituted the *ibandla* which was the loftiest council of state. The chiefdoms kept their political cohesion and used the *izikhulu* to exert pressure on the *ibandla*. The *izikhulu* 'were the pillars of the nation.'<sup>82</sup>

The *izikhulu* were the most dominant lineages of the chiefdoms in Zululand and they had ironically been assisted to achieve their high status and prestige by obtaining the support of the Zulu Kings. King Cetshwayo's powers were limited in the sense that he had to obtain the approval of the *izikhulu* prior to almost all decisions. Various *indunas* and *isikhulu* were tempted by self aggrandizement to strive for local autonomy. This desire was underlined by their interaction with white traders and missionaries which allowed them to increase their own status at the expense of King Cetshwayo. This was done by obtaining articles and redistributing them to their supporters as gifts or rewards for services rendered.

The power of the *izikhulu* was such that they in effect made the Zulu Kingdom a loose confederation of tribes and districts that was bound by custom, economic and political necessity and a historical allegiance to a monarch who was not equally loved by all subjects. King Cetshwayo had to balance the various factors so as to be able to remain the ruler of the polity. King Cetshwayo's half-brother Uhamu kaMpande actively sought to bring about King Cetshwayo's political downfall while Usibebu kaMapitha the leader of the Mandlakazi faction was subversive against Cetshwayo's rule. King Cetshwayo did not have it all his own way and was well aware of opposition:

81. Laband, J.P.C. : 'The Cohesion of the Zulu Polity under the Impact of the Anglo-Zulu War', in Kingdom and Colony at War, p.2

82. Cope, A.T. : 'The Zulu War in Zulu Perspective', ( Theoria p.47).



*Uhamu is the man that has for a long time during my reign tried his to dethrone me and get in my place, by sending men like Ungwegwana and Betywana to slander me and tell all sorts of lies about me.*<sup>83</sup>

Next to King Cetshwayo, his chief Minister Mnyamana kaNqengelele of the Buthelezi clan was the most powerful man in Zululand. Mnyamana was in the position of virtue of his father's status under King Shaka. When King Cetshwayo was crowned king, Mnyamana was appointed as chief minister. He was greatly respected by the Zulu nation and was also chief *induna* of the Thulwana regiment.<sup>84</sup> The Zulu army was commanded by Utshingwayo who was *isikhulu* of the Khoza clan. Cetshwayo's Kingdom governed many different peoples and not all of the highest hereditary group, the *izilomo*, were members of the highest council of state. Conversely, not all *isikhulu* emanated from the dominant patrilineal lines.

Although Usibebu kaMapitha was treasonous towards King Cetshwayo, he was still an *isikhulu* due to his independent power in the north-east of the Kingdom. The majority of *isikhulu* were older than King Cetshwayo and had served in King Mpande's reign.

Meetings of importance to the Kingdom included younger *amakhosi* (plural *isikhosi*) and these meetings were not only concerned by the *ibandla*. It was not uncommon to invite *amakhosi* and leaders of the various *amabutho*. State administration was conducted by the *izinduna* (plural for *induna*), military commanders, *amabutho* heads, messengers and a wide assortment of other personnel at lower ranks. Many *abanumzana* (married heads of *imizi*) also served as officials in King Cetshwayo's state. King Cetshwayo was asked a question by the Cape Government Commission on Black Land Customs concerning state officials in Zululand:

83. BPP., C.2950, Cetshwayo's - Cape Governor (Sir Hercules Robinson), London, 29 March 1881

84. Fynney, B.F. : The Zulu Army, and Zulu Headmen, p.49

174. *The induna are military men, you say, but being at home they are also headmen. Are there any headmen who are not military men? (Cetshwayo's response follows) – An induna is called a headman (umnumzana) when he is in his own district, and an induna when he is at the military kraal.*<sup>85</sup>

Roughly 10-15 percent of military-age Zulus lived in their own districts and gave their primary allegiance to their own *induna*. They also gave him their labour.<sup>86</sup>

The *isikhulu* often received gifts from the king in the form of women and cattle. They frequently also gained surplus in the form of fines and tribute.<sup>87</sup> Administrative authority was directly linked to the productive capacity of individuals and the extent to which the lineage of a clan had access to the 'corridors' of power. *Isikhulu* also played a great role in formulating affairs policy and could overrule King Cetshwayo as implied in his response to a question:

19. *We often change our laws if they are not good. If the people were willing and you had the power to make changes the change, would you consent to it? (Answer) Yes, the King would change it if the chiefs of the land were willing to make a change in that way.*<sup>88</sup>

Some of King Cetshwayo's warriors lived in the temperate forests of the Nkandla and Gudeni and were associated with the Shezi (Cube) people. Their autonomy was such that they opted not to fight against the British. Their ruling lineage was unbroken since the days of King Shaka. Another group who objected to fighting the British were the Qulusi. They were part of an old *amakhanda* whose authority was deemed greater than the clan as far as its

85. Cape of Good Hope Blue Book G.4 – '83, part 1, Cape Town, 1883 p.525

86. Edgerton, R.B. : Like Lions They Fought , p.33

87. Bryant, A.T. : The Zulu People As They Were Before the White Man Came , p.481

88. Cape of Good Hope Blue Book G.4 – '83, part 1, Cape Town, 1883 p.530

relations with the state were concerned. The Qulusi were not drafted into the conventional *amabutho*. They fought as a royal section and had no *induna* representing them at the *ibandla* as they represented the Zulu Royal House. This arrangement was based on the fact that King Shaka had sent Ntlaka of the Mdlose to establish the Qulusi *ikhanda* in the Hlobane region. Ntlaka did so, but the daughter of King Shaka's grandfather, MnKabayi, who was therefore of royal lineage, was placed in charge. The Qulusi therefore did as they pleased. Many other *isikhulu* had a semi-independent position within the kingdom which some lineages emulated. Other lineages of the Zulu clan had separated from the *induna* line in pre-Shakan times and had virtual *carte-blanche* in their dealings in the Kingdom. The children of Mpande, the *abantwana* (who were princes) also had special dispensations. Dabulamanzi KaMpande the brother of King Cetshwayo was the most important of the *abantwana*. There was clearly a complete network of links in Zululand between King Cetshwayo and his subjects. Many men ignored the call-up to the *amabutho* and openly defied King Cetshwayo, claiming to be diviners.<sup>89</sup>

The *indunas* who were appointed directly by King Cetshwayo to command the *amabutho* for example, were more likely to remain firmly under his grasp than those *indunas* who were in their positions by virtue of their patrilineal lineage.

Although it was a common belief amongst the majority of settlers in Natal, missionaries, traders and military personnel that all the men in Zululand served in royal *amabutho* under the authoritarian control of King Cetshwayo, the evidence has given a very different scenario in which King Cetshwayo had only token power to a large extent. Neither was his army a highly disciplined 'war-machine' as envisaged by the British.

89. K C , Webb, C. de, B. and Wright, J.B. : The James Stuart Archive, Vol III, p.3

The ultimatum presented by Frere's agents to King Cetshwayo was considered at length by the King and his *ibandla*. He did not respond on his own as a dictator surely would have. Together, King Cetshwayo and his Great Council agreed to pay fines of cattle – as painful as they are – and tried to stall for time while pondering how to respond to the other impossible-to-meet demands. Frere and his followers knew full well that there were certain indunas with aspirations far beyond their current status and resolved to use this knowledge to their advantage. Intrinsically the Zulus were a noble tribe whose 'army' was not a separate entity but rather, as discussed, an integral part of Zulu social, economic and political life.<sup>90</sup> Frere undoubtedly realized that even if King Cetshwayo wanted peace, he would not be able to disband his army as this would result in a labour surplus of tens of thousands of men. The economy, particularly with its emphasis on the possession of cattle by individuals, would simply be unable to absorb the 'retrenched' force. Many observers believed that it was a matter of time before the latent 'giant' of Zulu militarism would erupt into aggression against Natal Colony.

Henry Harford who was a Colonel in the British forces in Natal Colony wrote in his diary which was later published as *The Zulu War Journal of Colonel Henry Harford*, that the Zulus were worthy opponents and he gives King Cetshwayo and his warriors a measure of respect. He does not in the least represent the Zulus as savages or primitive tribesmen but as fierce warriors of admirable courage.<sup>91</sup> As a lieutenant in the Third Regiment of the Natal Contingent he was obviously au fait with the Zulu way of life. Harford had been raised in southern Africa and spoke impeccable Zulu. It is not surprising that he says nothing in his diary which maligns King Cetshwayo's character. He was clearly aware of nothing to say! He shows a very human side of King Cetshwayo, after the King was captured:

90. Colenbrander, P.J. : 'The Zulu political economy on the eve of the war,' in Duminy, A. and Ballard, C., (eds.) : *The Anglo-Zulu War : New Perspectives*, p.88

91. Harford, H. : *The Zulu War Journal of Colonel Henry Harford*, pp.72-73

*Cetshwayo always took the greatest interest in inspecting the band instruments and learning different sounds that were got out of them, greatly to the amusement of the men, went around asking them to blow hard. His favourite instrument was a double bass, to which he invariably placed his ear while the boy who played it blew for all he was worth.*<sup>92</sup>

Harford regarded King Cetshwayo favourably because of the intimate experiences he had with the Zulus before the war broke out. According to Donald Morris in *The Washing of the Spears*, Harford was a close childhood friend of Bishop Colenso's sons and this fact must also have coloured his view.<sup>93</sup>

General Sir Horace Smith-Dorrien was also a lieutenant in the Ninety-Fifth Regiment and a survivor of Isandhlwana. In his *Memories of Forty-Eight Years Service*, he does not in any way malign King Cetshwayo or attempt to dehumanize the Zulus. He says the Zulus had high moral fibre but put this aside when involved in battle. He discusses the Zulu disemboweling of killed enemy soldiers and acknowledges that the Zulus did not slash enemy stomachs for demented fun but rather for a very real superstition (that I have explained earlier). He fought the Zulus and witnessed scenes but remains less anti-Zulu than Sir Bartle Frere, despite what he saw on the battlefields of Zululand.<sup>94</sup>

If King Cetshwayo was indeed the 'monster' he was made out to be and a tyrant worthy of deposition, his adversaries would have rallied to the support of the British. The bottom-line is that when faced with invasion after not meeting the deadline of Frere's ultimatum, King Cetshwayo was able to muster about

92. *Ibid.*, p.83

93. Morris, D.R. : *The Washing of the Spears* , p. 214

94. Smith-Dorrien, H. : *Memories of forty-eight years' service*, p.18

30 000 men to attempt to defend his state. The invasion which Frere believed would splinter Zululand, instead united the Zulus under King Cetshwayo – surely not what one would expect as action towards a supposed tyrant in charge of supposedly celibate man slaying gladiators. Zulu resistance was based on a desire to support King Cetshwayo despite the domestic difficulties which existed in the Zulu Kingdom. The bitter dispute over territory and the ultimatum galvanized the Zulus into actions in support of their monarch. The aggressive nature of the British campaign also intensified their resolve to stand behind their monarch.

While Frere and other besmirched and slandered King Cetshwayo, Colenso supported him. Bishop Colenso set out to create an image of Britain as a power of justice and 'light' in world of 'darkness.' His belief that missionaries had it as their main duty to educate the Zulu in Christianity and other areas such as law and industry.

We are bound to teach him, as God shall give us opportunity for so doing, what we [that is, Englishmen] ourselves have learned, not only what we have enabled to acquire by our own exertions and industry, but what we have *inherited*, and received through the hands of others, from the Father of all, the Father of lights, the "giver of every good and perfect gift." Most of all are we bound to impart that highest knowledge . . . of God himself.<sup>95</sup>

Although believing that Frere was an English gentleman who would ultimately be on the side of truth and justice, Colenso supported the Zulus and as stated previously was a staunch apologist of theirs. He believed that Cetshwayo and his Kingdom had a 'claim' on Britain that necessitated their education since they had already been 'heavily taxed' and governed by Theophilus Shepstone without their consent.<sup>96</sup> The Zulus were keen to receive knowledge and accepted occidentalism as a means of gaining

95. Colenso, J.W. : 'On Missions to the Zulus in Natal and Zululand,' (Social Sciences Review, June 1864 p.16)- (Reprinted by Richardson, B.W., London. In the South African Library, document 575.e.1066 (10) of the Grey Collection)

96. Ibid ., pp.17-18

greater power. The actions of whites were ambiguous though and left great doubt in the mind of King Cetshwayo as to their motivation. The majority of Colonial farmers were virulently racist against Zulus and their feelings were echoed in the actions of British regiments that went out of their way to punish Zululand severely after the debacle at Isandhlwana. Many *imizi* were raised to the ground and grain-stores plundered. The result of this violence left a very complex scenario in which Apartheid was able to flourish decades later. The penetration by whites into southern Africa had far reaching effects – effects that Frere's machinations had brought about.

King Cetshwayo made frequent attempts to have peace negotiations conducted with the British. By the end of February there were a number of defections to the British side which caused King Cetshwayo and the *ibandla* great concern.<sup>97</sup>

In March King Cetshwayo requested all the *isikhulu* to meet at Ulundi so as to discuss the conduct of the war against the invaders.<sup>98</sup> If we are to believe Frere's propagandists that King Cetshwayo was indeed a tyrant, how do we explain the latter's actions? When the *isikhulu* were in May unnerved by British victories, King Cetshwayo agreed to negotiate with the British.<sup>99</sup> He clearly listened to the advice of the *abantwana* – thereby demonstrating respect for their wishes.

Andrew Duminy and Charles Ballard are historians who have keenly presented the Zulu perspective. In *The Anglo-Zulu War : New Perspectives*, they stress the value and importance of searching for alternative African views of Cetshwayo and his Kingdom as portrayed by the traditional sources that are studied.<sup>100</sup> Clearly what is needed is an Afrocentric version of African history rather than the Eurocentric versions which glorify imperialism and denigrate Africans.

97. CP 7, no.32, Fynney - Law, 8 March 1879

98. CSO 1926, no. 1669/1879, Fannin - Colonial Secretary, 22 March 1879

99. CP 9, no.52, Wood - Military Secretary, 10 May 1879

100. Duminy, A. and Ballard, C., (eds.) : *The Anglo-Zulu War : New Perspectives* p. xvi

Dhlomo, in *UCetshwayo*, vehemently disavows Frere's malicious and slanderous view of King Cetshwayo. He asseverates as to the good nature of the Zulu monarch and condemns the hegemonistic war conducted by Frere in pursuit of self-aggrandisement in the name of confederation.<sup>101</sup> In a chapter entitled *Imizamo kaCetshwayo* (Cetshwayo's attempts), Dhlomo describes the numerous attempts made by King Cetshwayo to open negotiations for peace. In a further chapter, *Izwelombango* (disputed territory), he painstakingly explains that in Zulu eyes, there was no 'disputed territory', it was Zulu territory – as confirmed by the Boundary Commission much to Frere's chagrin.<sup>102</sup>

Magema Fuze in *Abantu Abamnyama* (The African People), gives a succinct and clear explanation of why the war took place. His account is authentic and he does not glorify war as has been done by most occidental writers. Fuze had visited King Cetshwayo in July 1878 and was speaking on first hand experience. As a convert of Bishop Colenso's to Christianity his writing has an air of sincerity:

*The European invasion was not brought about because Mehlokazulu killed his mothers, but because it had already been decided to destroy this savage government (umbuso wobudlova) adjacent to an enlightened government (umbuso wokukhanya); because the Natal Government feared that one day it would be suddenly and unexpectedly attacked. It seems that the white people had in mind the bad deeds of Dingane, but Cetshwayo was a man of good character (umuntu olungile) who would never have committed acts like those of Dingane. He strongly criticized (sola) such acts and abhorred (zonda) such behaviour.<sup>103</sup>*

101. Dhlomo, R.R.R. : *UCetshwayo*, pp.7-15

102. *Ibid.*, pp.24-38

103. Fuze, M. : *Abantu Abamnyama* p.89



While it is clear that there are many interpretations on exactly who King Cetshwayo and his people were and that there are also differences of opinion in this regard, it cannot be disputed convincingly, that the Zulus although martial in orientation were a real menace to Natal Colony or the Transvaal. It is also indisputable that King Cetshwayo was not a tyrannical oppressor of his people as has been stated by numerous historians – the evidence speaks for itself. We can also not assume that Frere did not know what it must have meant to the Zulu nation to demand cattle from them as reparations for crimes they were not guilty of or that he believed his ultimatum was truly just.

Although there may well have been slight resistance on the part of the *isikhulu* and various *indunas* to promote and continue war against the British – especially after military and economic setbacks – this resistance must be viewed in context. Many *indunas/izikhosi* determined that they would maintain their status by coming to some sort of arrangement with the British authorities. As it turned out the *imizi* were not disrupted to any measurable degree by the British peace conditions and only the power of the king and his family were curtailed.<sup>104</sup> Ulundi was the effective end of the Anglo-Zulu War of 1879.

Once it became clear that King Cetshwayo's support base was diminishing as a result of losses in the field, and that his *impis* were reluctant to continue prosecuting a war that was without 'reason or cause' in their minds, Garnet Wolseley withdrew from the field. King Cetshwayo was 'hunted down' and captured and removed to the castle in Cape Town.<sup>105</sup> Although vanquished in battle – the Zulus had gained the respect and admiration of many people, including Britons, who regarded the conflict as an unjust war. They believed that King Cetshwayo and his nation were suffering as a result of Frere's hegemonistic ambition. These were useful allies:

104. Laband, J. and Thompson, P. : Kingdom and Colony at War , p.25

105. Emery, F. : The Red Soldier: The Zulu War 1879 , p.254

*and Cetshwayo worked more and more closely with them to keep his plight and that of the Zulu nation in the public eye. Even with these aids, however, a lesser man would not have succeeded as he did; and there can be little doubt that it was, in the last resort, the king himself who triumphed over the intentions of his captors.*<sup>106</sup>

Frere and his supporters had as their aims British hegemony, civilization of an occidental orientation, economic growth and the missionary effects of Christianity and as such were able to vindicate their assault on a kingdom which they regarded as savage and barbaric to extreme. Jean and John Comaroff in *Of Revelation and Revolution : Christianity, Colonialism and Consciousness in South Africa*, explain how the inequality in colonial encounters such as that between Britain and the Zulu Kingdom was coloured by a British society which was in a profound stage of flux. Europeans were seldom "placed under the same scrutiny" as Africans. The actions and interactions of the British in South Africa were "deeply influenced by their backgrounds, their cultures, and their ideologies". The missionaries were simply "anonymous agents" of "social change" and "colonial domination"<sup>107</sup> and were exploited by Frere who used them in his quest for total control over the Zulu Kingdom.

Frere however had, as explained, a further aim – self-aggrandisement. By examining relevant evidence I have attempted to provide a detailed account of events leading up to the Anglo-Zulu war and tried to explain that the war came about because of the machinations of Sir Bartle Frere. I have also attempted to show that King Cetshwayo was not, as supposed by many, a tyrant in the mould of Shaka, neither was his Kingdom a martial state which was assumed to be a menace to the southern African region. The war of 1879 was clearly inspired, although unofficially, by British imperial policy. Camarvon's desire to 'confederate' the southern African territories into a 'self-governing' dominion under British control was the prime reason for the war, while Frere was his instrument and King Cetshwayo his victim. I have argued that King Cetshwayo was an innocent bystander dragged into a war to satisfy Frere's imperial hunger and personal ambitions.

106. Webb, C. de B. and Wright, J.B. : *A Zulu King Speaks* , p.xxv

107. Comaroff, J. and J. : *Of Revelation and Revolution : Christianity, Colonialism and Consciousness in South Africa* , p.54

## CONCLUSION

The purpose of this study has been to examine critically the roles of the two main antagonists namely Sir Henry Bartle Frere and Cetshwayo kaMpande, in the Anglo-Zulu War of 1879. The war led to the destruction and fragmentation of the Zulu nation and the downfall of Cetshwayo. This war was an inevitable concomitant of imperialism that was founded on military force in the Victorian Age of British Imperialism. The British misconception, greatly promoted by the plots and intrigues of Sir Bartle Frere, that the Zulu King Cetshwayo was a bloodthirsty tyrant possessing absolute authority over a monolithic Zulu kingdom with hostile intentions towards Natal was the main cause of the conflict.

Nineteenth Century southern Africa was an area where international rivalry and a complex of international problems superimposed on local black problems. The Anglo-Zulu War was launched by the British Colony of Natal and Frere on the slim pretext of self-defence against the Zulu Kingdom, which they believed threatened stability in the region. The dimension to the widening of British rule had a defensive but more importantly an overtly imperialist character. The role and machinations of Sir Bartle Frere who was regarded by many as a fairly pragmatic man and a realist and by others as a villain of the peace, led to the aggressive pre-emptive strike into Zululand. The attack was devoid of moral or legal correctness and was in line with the furtherance of Lord Carnarvon's Confederation scheme for southern Africa which was the main motive of the war.

The role of King Cetshwayo during and after the conflict showed him to be a peaceable man who was far less martially inclined than Shaka had been. The fragmentation of the Zulu Kingdom was the main outcome of the Anglo-Zulu War. As Frere made many believe, the British incursion into Zululand in 1879 was not an act of self-defence on the part of the British, but rather, a pre-meditated act of aggression whose objective it was to further the aims of British hegemonistic ambitions in the southern African region. This was part of a plan, albeit unofficial, to expand the British Empire and to safeguard the strategic Indian subcontinent by means of securing for British interests the labour of the Zulus and other blacks of the region that could be exploited for the economic benefit of Britain's domestic economy and the Empire at large. Britain could not allow either the Zulu Kingdom or the Transvaal

Republic (ZAR), to threaten their hegemonistic ambitions in an already volatile part of the world and favoured British expansion as long as it did not involve great expense /for the British exchequer.

Frere and Thesiger (Lord Chelmsford) were keen to demonstrate British military supremacy for individualistic reasons as well as for reasons of prestige, strategic and economic necessity. Frere in particular, followed an independent, personally contrived plan of action in which instructions from Hicks Beach in particular were disregarded. He strove for personal aggrandisement and approached the issues in southern Africa in a rather Machiavellian manner.

Given the Zulu military system, the severe drought and cattle shortages, Cetshwayo could still have been able to restrain his army from acting aggressively outside the borders of Zululand, and as he harboured no hostile intent against the British authorities, he could not have been a menace to the security of Natal. Given the conflicting aims of all the parties in the region, i.e. Briton, Boer and Zulu, a war was inevitable but it would not be started by the Zulu Kingdom, as Frere had hoped. He therefore engineered an ultimatum to present to the Zulus which he knew full – well they could not conceivably accept. To accept it would totally destroy the fabric of Zulu society and with it the Zulu polity.

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