

**THE
TRANSVAAL
TROUBLE**

**AN ADDRESS
BY**

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I. A Brief History.

I speak as an American citizen and from an American standpoint only; I hold no brief for England. My sole desire is to correct the erroneous impressions prevailing on the South African question. I deprecate all attempts to evoke in America sympathy for the English or for the Boers by appealing to national bias. The cause of England or of the Transvaal must be judged solely upon its intrinsic merits, and from that impartial standpoint I purpose to discuss the subject.

It has been asserted, but untruly, that the Boers of the Transvaal did not wish to have its mines developed. Before 1868 the Boers, it is true, did discourage prospectors, as well as other intruders, but in that year President Pretorius had this law repealed, and premiums were offered by the Government for the discovery of payable gold mines. This stimulated considerable mining developments in certain portions of the Transvaal. At that time the Witwatersrand district had not been discovered.

When, in 1884, Mr. Krüger published the cordial invitation of the Transvaal Government to immigrants bringing capital and enterprise, gold mines were already worked in the Transvaal, and the burghers were more than willing to sell their mines to farmers. At that time the country was in a bad way financially.

Under the promises given by Mr. Krüger of just and equal treatment to foreigners investing money in the country, further immigration took place, which resulted, in December, 1885, in the discovery of the gold fields of the Witwatersrand. The Outlanders who developed these mines bought the land from the Boer owners, often at large prices; Mr. Krüger himself having sold farms for large sums. At the time of the Jameson raid in 1896, the Outlanders held options for the additional purchase of Boer farms to the amount of over five million dollars; and the fact that the prosecution of the threatened Johannesburg Reform Committee was causing the abandonment of prospecting and the surrender of these options mitigated the severe treatment of the leaders of that Committee which was proposed by the Government. In short, the Boers have always been, and still are, anxious to sell their lands for mining purposes, and to pocket the proceeds.

The reason of their disinclination to work the mines for themselves is easy to find. It has been widely said that the mines of the Rand (the most important gold district in the Transvaal) are very rich. On the contrary, they are what is known as "low-grade" mines, *i.e.*, the rock contains so little gold per ton that individual miners, without machinery, capital and scientific aid, cannot work it with profit. Only operations on a large scale, with all the aids which science and capital can furnish, can do this. And the scientific skill required was furnished, in this instance, very largely, not to say almost wholly, by American mining engineers, who had acquired on the Pacific coast the requisite knowledge and experience.

Upon this head, the report of the Boer Commission, appointed in 1897 to investigate the economic grievances of the mining industry, is conclusive. That report declared that the administration of the mines was not only honest but skillful; that most of them were directed by competent men, devoted to that business, who had introduced and perfected the latest machinery and appliances; and that, without these men, "a good many of the mines now producing gold would not have reached that stage." The same report warned the Government that, "in order to prevent the calamity of a closingdown of the mines, which constituted the financial basis, support and mainstay of the state, the industry must be encouraged by lightening its burdens."

Note. - Sixty per cent, of the shares of the Witwatersrand Companies are held in France, Germany and Belgium.

Note. - Until the past year the sums extorted for taxes by the Boer Government from the mining community have considerably exceeded the amount of money paid in dividends to the shareholders of the mines of the Transvaal. The expenditure of the Boer Government now amounts to \$20,000,000 annually for the administration of a country of 125,000 square miles in area, with a white population of about 300,000. This is equivalent to the sum of \$1,000 for each adult Boer. In fact, the salaries paid to the Boer officials are equal to the sum of \$200 annually for each adult Boer.

II. The Success of the Transvaal

In short, the truth is that but for the very large investments of European capitalists on the one hand and the technical direction of American engineers on the other, the Transvaal mining industry would not have achieved any significant success. Concerning its productive capability, when developed with these aids, I may be pardoned for recalling here the prediction, published under my name in 1895, as "well within the bounds of conservatism, that the annual output, before the end of the present century, would exceed twenty million pounds sterling worth of gold." There is some doubt, I believe, as to the precise date when the nineteenth century ends. But I am safe in either theory as to that problem, for the production of 1899, when interrupted by the present war, was going on at the rate of a larger sum per annum than that which I prophesied. As to the present production of gold, I can only say, that when the war began the well-managed mines of the Rand had been developed so as to show reserves of ore for two or three years in advance. Since that time, as I understand, some of the mines have been operated by the Boer Government, which is simply using up these reserves, without doing any work to develop and prepare new ores. In other words, it is "gutting" the mines, without regard to their permanent value. It is very easy to get temporary profit from a mine in that way; but it is reckless waste of the resources which nature has provided, and reckless disregard of the rights of posterity.

I had the honor to be one of the American engineers engaged in the development of these mines. We were employees, and we were not strictly obliged, by the terms of our employment, to risk our lives in the defense of the interests of the absent owners whom we represented. Yet, with a feeling of loyalty to the trust reposed in us, for which I think no American would reproach us, we made common cause with our employers, in the attempt to resist the plunder of their property through unjust and unlawful extortions.

III. Kruger's Extortions

These extortions were both innumerable and intolerable, comprising exorbitant taxation, Government grants to private monopolies, corrupt administration and legislation, the denial of personal rights, such as the right of self-defense, the denial of the right of peaceable assembly for the statement of grievances, and the denial of representation, upon reasonable conditions of franchise, for interests representing more than two-thirds the population, more than one-half the land, more than nine-tenths of the assessed property, and more than nine-tenths the taxes paid in the Transvaal. Our legal remedy in the Supreme Court of the Transvaal had been defeated by a law, depriving that tribunal of its independence and making it the creature of the will of the President. The so-called Constitution of the republic was amended, from time to time, without notice or formality, by simple proceedings of the Legislature, at the dictation of the Executive, and had no greater permanence than any ordinary statute. The English language was practically excluded from the schools which our money supported, and from all official proceedings, so that even when the judge, counsel, litigants and witnesses in a lawsuit all understood English perfectly, and the Boer-Dutch patois imperfectly, the use of English was forbidden, and the use of the patois enjoined.

The patronage by the Government of favored monopolies was a crying evil. It covered innumerable articles necessary to the Outlanders and the miners, but not to the Boers. It extended from dynamite to jam; and, worst of all, the profits of these monopolies did not go to the Government, which received from the concessionaires very small returns; but, while individuals grew rich from them, the Government secured its revenue by additional taxation.¹

An instance of such Government favor to private enterprises is that of the railroad from Delagoa Bay, in which members of the Government were privately interested. The rates of freight charged by this road upon articles required in large quantity by the mines amounted to fifteen cents per ton mile. The great railroads of the United States charge, under similar conditions, about one cent per ton mile. Five cents per ton mile is recognized as a liberal maximum charge for roads expensively built and operated over steep mountain grades on the Pacific coast, and fifteen cents is enough to pay for transportation by ox teams across a desert.

In fact, in order to evade the payment of this outrageous railroad rate the Johannesburg mine owners set up again the old method and started to haul their goods by ox teams, on discovering which the Government issued an order forbidding the passage of the drifts (fords) on the route. This was done with the avowed intention of forcing the mine owners to use the line and pay the rates of the favored railroad.

The above list of grievances may be further augmented, though not completed, by the statement that, by reason of the persistent refusal of the Legislature to grant to Johannesburg any form of local self-government, that city of one hundred thousand inhabitants was unable to protect itself, by sanitary police regulations, against

unnecessary causes of disease, and consequently, though exceptionally healthy in situation and climatic conditions, was afflicted with a death rate far exceeding that of other cities less favorably located. In this respect those who demanded reform were literally fighting for their lives and the lives of their women and children.

Efforts for the redress of these grievances by constitutional means had been made for years in vain. Petition after petition had been rejected with contumely, and, on more than one occasion, the Outlanders were told that, if they wanted their rights, they would have to fight for them. At length they decided to accept this alternative, constituted what afterward became the Reform Committee² of Johannesburg, and smuggled arms into the country.

Footnotes.

1. The Boer Industrial Commission admitted that \$3,000,000 is annually lost to the government by reason of the infamous dynamite concession.
2. The Transvaal flag floated over the building occupied by the Reform Committee during the crisis.

IV. Jameson's Fatuous Raid

At the same time an offer was accepted from Dr. Jameson to come to their aid, if requested to do so; but it was explicitly declared that no enterprise would be undertaken under the English or any other foreign flag, but that the sole object of the contemplated demonstration should be the reform of the corrupt and oppressive existing administration, and the establishment of a just and honest government of the Transvaal Republic. The leaders swore allegiance to the Transvaal flag and gave solemn pledges that no attempt would be made to subvert the sovereignty of the State. In fact, the Americans who joined in this movement were, at that time, specially opposed to any identification of it with British interests; for that was the time when the Venezuelan question had produced a tension in the relations between Great Britain and the United States, and no American was willing to identify himself with the former power. At a meeting of five hundred Americans, held in Johannesburg, December 31, 1895, it was decided (with only five dissenting votes) to support the reform movement; and a "George Washington" corps was organized, from which all except Americans were carefully excluded.

I cannot undertake to give here the full history of the Jameson raid and its consequences. But I must state a few established facts, which relieve the Johannesburg Reform Committee from the charge of a cowardly desertion of Dr. Jameson.

1. Notice was sent to Dr. Jameson, and received by him, warning him not to start upon his ill-advised expedition.
2. After he had thus started, in defiance of this notice, and before he had been defeated and captured, the Johannesburg Committee, in friendly conference with the Pretoria Government, offered to guarantee his peaceable retirement, if he would discontinue his expedition.
3. After his capture the Johannesburg Committee and its constituents surrendered all the arms in their possession, on the statement that this act would save the lives of Jameson and his associates, and the further assurance from the representative of Great Britain that they would themselves be protected from harm. This surrender, for this reason and upon this assurance, left them powerless against the further acts of the Pretoria Government, and cost them, in the end, between one million and two million dollars.

In view of these facts it may be fairly claimed that the Johannesburg Committee did more than its full duty to Dr. Jameson.¹

Before Jameson's defeat the Transvaal Government was quite willing to treat with Johannesburg, and sent the so-called "olive branch" deputation for that purpose. This deputation professed a great desire for peace; promised reforms, and asked for a conference in Pretoria. This conference was held, between representatives of the Executive and of the Committee. The latter stated frankly their position and demands, their relation with Jameson, etc., and gave from memory the names of their associates in

Johannesburg (which list, was subsequently used by the Government as its guide in making arrests). The conference was entirely friendly, and resulted in an agreement that Sir Hercules Robinson, then High Commissioner of Great Britain, should come from Cape Town as a mediator between the parties. Both the Government and the Committee issued public notice to this effect.

The High Commissioner came, two days after the surrender of Jameson², who had disregarded his proclamation to retire from the Transvaal. The only result of the so-called mediation was the disarmament of Johannesburg, to save the life of Jameson and his men, which was done, as Sir Hercules Robinson telegraphed to Mr. Chamberlain, "the people placing themselves and their interests unreservedly in my hands, in the fullest confidence that I will see justice done to them." In the same despatch he said that the Reform Committee had been actuated by "a paramount desire to do everything possible to insure the safety of Dr. Jameson and his men," etc.

Curiously enough, no less a person than Mr. Krüger himself was a raider, having with a force of Transvaal Boers, invaded the Orange Free State for the purpose of obtaining civic rights for his followers. Like Dr. Jameson's raid, that of Mr. Krüger also resulted in failure, Mr. Krüger's life being spared through the clemency of the Orange Free State officials. Reverting to the Jameson raid, this was an incident only in the great reform movement of the Outlanders, and as I have said, was made against their protest, the movement itself being a bona fide one for reform. Had not the plans of the leaders been frustrated by the invasion of Dr. Jameson, the success of the reform movement would have been assured. A Revolution from within solely in the interests of reform, would have been popular throughout South Africa. The Cape Boers, the Boers of the Free State and the progressive Boers of the Transvaal (including General Joubert himself), were favorably disposed to the cause of reform. In fact, shortly before the recent Bloemfontein Convention, General Joubert publicly stated that the Outlanders were deserving of the franchise.

Footnote.

1. The bravery of the Johannesburg Outlanders has been recently proved by the inestimable services rendered by those of them who are now fighting in the British Army. Thousands of Outlanders have offered their services to Great Britain. Many of them were born in South Africa; others have had many years of experience in that country. Hence they are exceptionally well fitted for war against the Boers, being as good riders, and shots as the Boers themselves, more intelligent, perfectly familiar with the local conditions, and fully as brave, with the added advantage of possessing Anglo-Saxon dash.
2. The importance of the Jameson raid has been purposely greatly exaggerated by the Boer Government in order to gain European and American sympathy. In connection with South African raids, I might state that the Transvaal Government itself has been the aggressor on several important occasions having raided into British territory, which in most instances, they were obliged to relinquish, by Great Britain sending out at considerable expense, military expeditions. Although

in the cases of the unfortunate Zulus and Swazis, the persistency of the Boers enabled them to obtain a permanent foothold in these latter territories.

V. Jailed for High Treason

The arms having been surrendered, and the "mediator" having returned to Cape Town, without once conferring personally with those whose interests he had promised to protect, the members of the Reform Committee were arrested in a body, imprisoned in Pretoria, and accused of high treason. By false representations of friendly intentions on the part of the Government, they were induced to plead guilty to a technical offense, of which the punishment, under existing statute, would be a light fine. But a judge imported for the purpose from another district invoked the ancient "Roman Dutch law" as superior to the statute, and sentenced the four leaders to death. This precious specimen of a judge, on his arrival at Pretoria, applied to one of the local judges for the loan of a black cap, to be used in pronouncing sentence.

There is evidence that the intention of the Government was to execute the four principal prisoners, and commute the sentences of the rest to fine and imprisonment as an exhibition of clemency. But this plan was defeated by an unexpectedly general protest from the Boers themselves as well as from the Governments of Great Britain and the United States. At the outset, the latter Government requested Great Britain to look after the interests of American citizens who might be involved in peril.

VI. Disgusting Back-Door Negotiations

Then followed a period of disgraceful and disgusting back-door negotiations for the payment of money as ransom for our lives and liberty. We were told that this money would be accepted only as a spontaneous subscription on our part to some public charity; and the amount suggested was two hundred thousand dollars each for the four leaders. Finally, the price came down to one hundred and twenty-five thousand dollars; but we stuck some time upon the conditions that we should sign a petition for clemency, and offer this amount as a sort of thank offering, not as a payment. This we refused point blank to do, declaring that if the Government chose to extort such a sum from us, we might consent to pay it; but we would not go through the mockery of giving it to charity, or of calling the official robbery an act of clemency. At last the pious scruples of the authorities gave out, and they took the money straight, and set us free.

Mr. Krüger's lack of good faith was abundantly shown throughout the negotiations. He endeavored to throw dust in the eyes of Europeans, and gain a sympathy which he did not deserve. For at that time he was actively pursuing the scheme of a conspiracy which should drive England from South Africa altogether, and establish Boer supremacy from the Zambesi River to the Cape. Long before the Jameson raid, he had imported guns in great quantities, erected fortifications at Pretoria and adopted plans and secured an appropriation for a fort to overawe Johannesburg. The Boers had been secretly organized; and foreign officers had been employed to drill them. Provided with unlimited resources, extorted from the Outlanders, they had secured arms enough to equip twice over every Boer in all South Africa. They were waiting their opportunity, which would have come whenever England should have become involved in war with other powers. In recent years, the Fashoda incident, had it brought on a war between France and England, would have furnished the desired opportunity for the Boer conspirators. The same would have been the case if England, by reason of the stand she took during the Spanish war against interference of Continental powers with the United States, had become involved in war with any Continental power.

VII. How the War Came

But no such favorable opening presented itself; and, in my judgment, the recent insulting ultimatum of the Boer Government, followed by its instant invasion of the British colonies of Natal, the Cape, was forced upon President Krüger by his inability to control any longer the widespread conspiracy he had carefully built up. Great bodies of ignorant, ardent and confident people do not want to wait. And the hope of a swift conquest of English territory, before England could prepare for its defense, was too great to be resisted, by those who did not rightly estimate either British valor or British resources. President Krüger, I think, knew better, but could not help himself. That hope has been disappointed. Not one place of importance has been captured by the Boers, notwithstanding the weakness of the English garrisons. They have used in vain the time of their only possible opportunity; and their complete disappointment is at hand. It matters little how long they may maintain a defensive guerrilla warfare, their plan was an offensive one, and it has utterly failed.

To-day England is fighting for the establishment of the principle that there should be no taxation without representation. She learned this lesson from us in our war of independence. In the English colonies of South Africa there is absolute equality for both Dutch and English; both obtain the franchise on the same terms. The language of both races is used in the parliaments and in the courts of justice in the British Colonies of South Africa. England is fighting among other causes for the extension of this privilege throughout South Africa generally.

VIII. The Grievances of the Outlanders

In conclusion let me briefly state the grievances of the Outlanders. Two-thirds of the Transvaal population were Outlanders. We went thither by express invitation; our capital and enterprise developed what in Boer hands was a worthless territory, into the greatest mining center of the world; the country, now rich, was bankrupt before our arrival; we owned more than half the land, having purchased it from the Boers; we paid nine-tenths of the taxes, much of which amount was admitted by the Boer Commission to be class taxation; and yet we had to submit to unlawful expenditure of the bulk of taxation, as we had no voice in the Government.

The franchise law in the Transvaal is, that the applicant must renounce, in the first instance, allegiance to all other countries; he is then under probation for a period of fourteen years, during which time he is liable to be called upon by the State for military duty. After the expiration of fourteen years he may secure citizenship, provided he obtains in writing a petition signed by two-thirds of the burghers in the district in which he resides; and *provided* furthermore, that he receives the sanction of the President and Executive Council. According to our Declaration of Independence, "Governments derive their just power from the consent of the governed." In the Transvaal we have the anomaly of two-thirds of the population being disfranchised. The two-thirds of the population went to that country by express invitation. Their capital and enterprise developed what in Boer hands was a worthless territory into the greatest mining center of the world. The country, now rich, was bankrupt before their arrival. They owned more than one-half of the land, having purchased it from the Boers; they paid nine-tenths of the taxes, much of which amount was admitted by the Boer Commission appointed to investigate the industrial grievances, to be class taxation. And yet they had to submit to an unlawful expenditure of the bulk of taxation raised, as they had no voice in the government.

We objected to the subversion of the High Court of Justice, in which rested our only hope of legal address. In direct contravention of the Grondwet (the Boer Constitution), the Volksraad empowered the President and Executive Council to dismiss any judge without trial who disputed the validity of any law passed by the Volksraad, even when such law conflicted with the Grondwet. President Krüger exercised his privilege in summarily removing Chief Justice Kotze, who had for many years honestly and ably filled that office. Afterwards all the judges were simply the President's tools.

We objected to the jury system; we were debarred from proper trial, as the law makes only burghers eligible for jury duty. Court records in the Transvaal prove that a small percentage of Boers are found guilty, and a very large percentage of Outlanders are convicted. Nor was any Boer jury ever known to convict a Boer who had murdered a native.

We objected to the Alien's Expulsion act, by which an Outlander can be put over the border at the will of the President without the right of appeal to a court of justice—a court open to the offending burgher. This law was obviously opposed to the British Boer

Convention of 1884- a similar law passed in this country under John Adams' administration, wrecked the Federal party.

Footnote.

1. Judge Kotze incurred the disfavor of the Krüger clique on account of the decision rendered by him in favor of an American citizen against the Transvaal Government.

IX. "Gag Law."

We objected to the prohibition of free speech; to the power vested in the President of suppressing any publication which, in his individual opinion, was opposed to good manners or subversive of order. He did not hesitate to exercise this despotic power toward newspapers which supported British interests, while newspapers which supported the Boer Government were allowed to publish libelous articles, and even to advocate atrocious crimes without interference.

We objected to the Johannesburg police force. For the shooting and killing of a British subject a policeman was recently released on one thousand dollars bail - less than the amount demanded from Outlanders in trivial cases.

We objected to the Public Meetings act, which left discretionary power in the hands of Boer policemen to suppress assemblages of outlanders.

We objected to the high death rate prevalent in Johannesburg, owing to the insanitation which the community was powerless to prevent under Boer maladministration.

We objected to being taxed to maintain schools in which Dutch was exclusively taught. A resolution introduced in the Volksraad that no English should be allowed to be taught even in private schools was defeated by only one vote.

We objected to the Boers being exclusively allowed to carry firearms.

We objected to the maladministration of laws as to native labor, the Boers lying in wait to rob the natives of their earnings on their way from the mines to their homes.

We objected to the religious disabilities aimed especially against Roman Catholics and Jews.

We objected to the erection of forts to overawe and terrorize the Outlanders of Johannesburg into a peaceful submission to Boer tyranny.

X. The Nefarious Liquor Traffic

We objected to the maladministration of the liquor law. The main reason for the insufficient supply of labor was that the natives were not in a fit state to work, a quarter of them being constantly incapacitated through drunkenness and many of the accidents occurring in the mines were due to the same cause.

Even more deplorable results followed the misuse of liquor; frequent outrage on white women and children.

Finally, we objected to the prevalent official corruption and to the granting of concessions giving monopolies for the sale of supplies indispensable to the Outlanders. With the concessionaires, Government officials were generally associated in the great profit derived. In the grant of a recent railway concession it was proved in court that twenty-one out of the twenty-five members of the Volksraad had received bribes.

I assure you that every statement that I have made as to the question of grievances is absolutely true, and further, that there is abundant and incontrovertible evidence available on this subject. In view of these facts it is nothing less than disingenuous to affect sympathy for a republic, which, as you must admit, is one in name only; and it is little short of criminal for American statesmen, through ignorance of such an important subject, to attempt to justify the position of the Boer Government in the controversy. (Loud Applause.)

Note. - The sum of \$10,000,000 loaned to state officials has not been recovered by the government. In fact the government has, in the interests of the dishonest clique possessing it, concealed in its accounts the whereabouts of this money.

Note by Transcriber

I have done my best to ensure that the entire book is completely and accurately transcribed, but it is of course possible that errors were made.

The purpose of this transcription is to ensure that the content of a historical document is available to researchers and interested persons.

Please report any errors or omissions to:

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Pieter van der Merwe