

https://dspace.org/

The Swaziland question and a road to the sea 1887-1895

Garson, N. G. (Noel George)

2015-01-27
http://hdl.handle.net/10539/16791

Downloaded from a DSpace repository. https://dspace.org/

as full subjects (algeheele onderdanen) or allowed to remain "bondgenooten" - subordinate and protected allies whose relations with other tribes were controlled by the Republic. The expedition, consisting of a commando of 350 men and 70 waggons under G.M.Rudolph, formally a native administrative official in Natal, but at this time a landdrost in the service of the Republic, and C.J.Joubert, a member of the Executive Council, arrived in Swaziland in June. It had been instructed to deal with the question of Ludonga's successor and, finding Umbandine already ensconced, performed a "crowning" ceremony which confirmed his installation.

In July a treaty was concluded with Umbandine and his councillors. While guaranteeing to the Swazi the management of their own affairs within the boundaries of Swaziland, the treaty made them "subjects" of the Republic, which was given the right to appoint a "supervising official" in the country. The Republic undertook to protect them from any "unlawful violence", but the Swazi were not to make war without the consent of the Republic and were to assist the latter against its enemies if required to do so. A final clause of significance was the one requiring the Swazi to permit the building of railways.[26]

---

(26) For the treaty see W.J. Leyds , The Transvaal Surrounded, pp.507-8; Symington, op.cit., pp.56-7; Walker, op.cit., p.366; van Rooyen, op.cit., p.81; Hailey (2), op.cit., pp.44-5; Boyce, The Swaziland Concessions and Their Political Consequences, p.5.

For details of the expedition: Symington, op.cit., pp.53-5; Mouton , op.cit., pp.45-6; C.J.Uys, In the Era of Shepstone, where it is erroneously stated that P.J.Joubert accompanied the commando; W.F.Butler, Life of Sir George Pomeroy Colley, pp.125-6, 129, 131-3. Colley was an eye-witness of the expedition.

(2) British policy and Swaziland 1875-1881

The authorisation of the Republic's expedition in May 1875 had followed a threat from Cetewayo to raid the Swazi.[1] Through Sir Theophilus Shepstone, the Secretary of Native Affairs in Natal, who exerted considerable influence over Cetewayo, British colonial policy now became concerned with the status of the Swazi. It is not the intention here to analyse the imbroglio in which Swaziland became involved in relation to the British attempt under the Secretary of State for the Colonies, Carnarvon, to coerce the Transvaal into a proposed South-African confederation. The Sekukuni Wars (1876 and 1879), the annexation of the Transvaal (1877) and the Zulu War (1879) were events directly bearing on this aspect of British policy.

Ten months after the conclusion of the Boer-Swazi treaty of July 1875, the Swazi denied knowledge of an agreement with the Republic through messengers to Shepstone in Natal.[2] The messengers made the untenable allegation that Umbandine had been under the impression that he was treating with the Natal government, as he had thought Rudolph was still a Natal official.[3] A possible explanation of the Swazi disclaimer of the treaty is that Umbandine had come

---

(1) Uys, op.cit., p.120.

(2) C 1748, pp.53-4; Uys, op.cit., p.121, suggests that the message was "possibly inspired by Natal" - that is, Shepstone.

(3) Despite - almost because of - the interested credulity which was attached to this Swazi plea by Shepstone and officials in the Colonial Office, the claim is quite unacceptable. It was strenuously denied by Rudolph. (Uys, op.cit., p.125) In his minute on the Swazi written in June 1876, Shepstone absolved Rudolph from the charge of having committed a fraud on the Swazi, but stuck to his guns in alleging that the Swazi must have been under a misunderstanding. (Uys, op.cit., pp.122-3; C 1748, pp.54-6). However, if there was no fraud a misunderstanding was inconceivable in the circumstances. Rudolph had been accompanied by what was unmistakably a Boer commando; and as Sir Evelyn Wood, hardly an observer sympathetic to the Republic's position in Swaziland, stated in September 1881, the expedition had been "intended to demonstrate the sovereignty of the Boers". (Boyce, op.cit., p.5.) Cf. Colley's view, note (26) above.
For Rudolph much of the sting therefore remained, especially as he had become a British official once more after the annexation of the Transvaal. In September 1878 he was still pressing Shepstone to clear him at the Colonial Office. Nevertheless, in Cetewayo and his White Neighbours (1888), Rider Haggard, who had been Shepstone's secretary at the time, implicitly repeated the allegation against Rudolph. (pp.115/6).
In view of the Swazi interest in disclaiming the treaty, and the context of Shepstone's uncritical and sympathetic reaction to their message, the likelihood of there having been either fraud or misunderstanding seems remote.

to the conclusion that a necessary safeguard against Cetewayo, who had encouraged Umbilini, his rival for the Swazi kingship, and who continued to threaten a raid on Umbilini's behalf, was to ingratiate himself with the Natal government and trust to Shepstone to stay the hand of the Zulu ruler.[4] It seems reasonable to suppose that, for Umbandine, securing a safeguard against Cetewayo and getting rid of Boer "suzerainty" at the same time would have been killing two birds with one stone.

In his minute describing the visit of the Swazi messengers, Shepstone stated that the Boers were using Swazi aid against Sekukuni's Bapedi, who, although their land had been included in the Swazi cession of 1846, were now resisting the efforts of the Boers to enforce their sovereignty. He added that this would increase the danger of a raid from Cetewayo who regarded both the Swazi and the Bapedi as his subjects. Such a raid would embarrass the Republic because of its obligation to protect the Swazi.[5] Shepstone apparently restrained Cetewayo successfully, but towards the end of 1876 he began to think that a Zulu attack on the Swazi might be a "practical lesson" to the Boers. The implication was that the awkwardness of having a native war on their hands might make the Boers more amenable to confederation.[6]

The Colonial Office had been notified by the Republic of the Swazi treaty. In July 1876 Bulwer, the Lieutenant-Governor of Natal, threw additional doubt on the view that the Swazi had not known they were treating with the Boers in 1875 by reporting that 7,000 Swazi (actually 2,400) were assisting the Boers against Sekukuni.[7] Carnarvon nevertheless signified his agreement with the permanent official, Fairfield's suggestion that Shepstone should be made to understand on his return to South Africa that it must be "no part of his duty

---

(4) Uys, op.cit., p.123; Symington, op.cit., p.55, for Cetewayo's support of Umbilini.

(5) Uys, op.cit., p.123; Walker, op.cit., p.369. De Kiewiet, in The Imperial Factor in South Africa, p.100, maintains that the intended route for the Delagoa Bay railway traversed Sekukuni's country. C 1748, p.7, Bulwer's despatch, 27 Oct.1875, mentioning the embarrassment for the Boers which a Zulu raid on the Swazi would provide.

(6) Uys, op.cit., pp.186-7, 200-1.

(7) C 1748, pp.12-13; Uys, op.cit., p.124.

to discourage the Amaswazi in any tendency which they may evince to repudiating Transvaal protection and returning (!) to English Alliance".[8]

This was the background to Carnarvon's despatch to Bulwer in November 1876, which was intended also for Shepstone's perusal. The British government could not recognise "the title of the Transvaal Republic to any sort of suzerainty or protection" over the Swazi. Carnarvon was merely repeating his statement of policy of the previous January, when he informed the Governor of the Cape Colony, Barkly , that extensions of the Republic's influence or territory made without the previous consent of the British government could not be recognised. He adhered also to the view that the Swazi, "whether intentionally or not" had been misled by Rudolph in July 1875.[9]

The situation in South Africa when Carnarvon was pursuing confederation and the annexation of the Transvaal was impending was markedly different from that in the 1880's when the failure of confederation for the time being was accepted and the Transvaal was once more independent. But from the manoeuvres of British officials in the late 1870's it is possible to isolate certain fixed points in British policy toward the Transvaal.

Carnarvon found no legal justification for objecting to the Republic's territorial expansion. The Sand River Convention (1852) had prescribed no boundaries and a diligent search of the Colonial Office archives in 1876 resulted in nothing upon which the Colonial Office could "take a stand".[10] The fact that the boundaries of the Transvaal were "indefinite and elastic" proved particularly disturbing to the Permanent Under Secretary, Herbert, Despite the vicissitudes in British policy between 1875 and 1884 the deficiency was remedied: boundaries were delimited with fair precision and conditions were laid down, though in less precise terms, under which any future expansion of the Transvaal might take place.[11]

---

(8) Ibid.
(9) C 1748, pp.15-16 (despatch of 25 Jan.1876) and 168 (9 Nov.1876). See also note (3) above.
(10) Uys, op.cit., pp.128-9.
(11) The British officials who negotiated the Conventions of 1881 and 1884 also felt this need for a definition of the boundaries of the Transvaal. See Section (3) of this chapter.

The veto on its expansion which Carnarvon sought to impose upon the Transvaal was not intended to be absolute. It might be withdrawn if the Republic consented to join a confederation. Carnarvon implicitly made the offer early in 1876 when he stated in a despatch that as annexations of native territory by the Transvaal might lead to wars which would spread throughout South Africa, they would only be permitted within the framework of a confederation in which native policy would be co-ordinated.[12] Sir Garnet Wolseley (later Lord Wolseley) agreed with Herbert that the territory of the Swazi might be offered to the Boers to lure them into confederation. But he recommended making the offer covertly, in case it was interpreted as a sign of weakness and in view of the sensitivity of British public opinion to the handling of native interests. Carnarvon took up Wolseley's suggestion in his despatch, as well as the alleged danger of a native war.[13]

During the course of the Swaziland question in the late 1880's and in the 1890's a similar principle governed British policy. The Republic's aspirations to expand which, after 1889, were concentrated on Swaziland and the coastal strip east of the Lebombo, might be sympathetically entertained by the British government if the Republic showed itself willing to make concessions which, for the most part, had a bearing on the South African situation as a whole. It remained an end of British policy to foster a closer union between the South African colonies and states and the Republic proved to be the lion in the path of its realisation.

Carnarvon's stand against territorial expansion on the part of the Republic was also aimed against acting-President Joubert's efforts to widen the Pongola River corridor in the vicinity of Utrecht in 1875.[14] Sir Garnet Wolseley, later to become High Commissioner for South-East Africa, in commenting on the line to be taken in this question, warned against the consequences

---

(12) C 1748, p.16, despatch, 25 Jan.1876.
(13) Wys, op.cit., pp.128, 129 for Wolseley's views.
(14) C 1749, pp.6-7, Joubert's proclamation (August 1875).

of allowing the Transvaal to occupy further territory in the area. It "would only be the first step towards further encroachments on their part, and ere many years had elapsed we should find them with a frontier on the seaboard".[15]

Here was revealed a principle which had long governed the thinking of British policy-makers. It had emerged in the years following the dispersal of the Boers into the interior after the Great Trek when it became an accepted maxim among British officials to keep the Boer Republics from acquiring footholds on the coast.[16] The consistent opposition to the Boers reaching the sea has been explained as "the heroic attempt to maintain British supremacy in the sub-continent and to exclude foreign powers".[17] While this is probably an acceptable generalisation, the tenacity with which the principle was adhered to varied with different officials and with the changing situation in South Africa. It is necessary in assessing the rôle of this tenet in British policy to use a detailed approach and examine it against the background of the circumstances ruling in a relatively narrowly prescribed period. This involves an analysis of the conditions under which the British government showed itself prepared to allow the Boers access to the sea at a particular time. Such an analysis would be revealing in its application to the ends of British policy.

Permanent officials at the Colonial Office, if the following extract by Herbert in 1875 can be taken as representative of their view, would have favoured more positive steps to keep both the Boers and foreign powers from the South African coast:

> "..... no time should be lost in declaring that we claim the whole coast of South Africa from some point far north on the western coast to the boundary of the Delagoa Bay Territory lately awarded to Portugal [this referred to the MacMahon Award] for ..... if a South African Dominion is formed [through confederation ?] it will ultimately spread far within the Tropic, inland at all events."[18]

---

(15) Uys, op.cit., p.131 (quoting Wolseley).
(16) See Krüger, op.cit., and Muller, Die Britse Owerheid en Die Groot Trek, passim, on this point.
(17) Uys, op.cit., p.160.
(18) Herbert's minute, C.O. 179/118 of 27 Aug.1875, quoted in Hall, The Colonial Office, pp.179-80. The insertions are mine.

The decisive step of annexing the Transvaal in 1877 put an end to the mild exercise of their ingenuity in which British officials had been able to indulge by considering how the Swazi and Zulu questions could be used to lever the Transvaal into a confederation which they were still trying to create. But the status of the Swazi was not settled by the annexation. For the Swazi themselves the chief consideration all along had been how best to obtain security against Cetewayo. The Republic's warnings to Cetewayo and its acceptance of the obligation to protect the Swazi were apparently not adequate.[19] The Swazi contingent of 2,400 which turned out to assist the Boers against Sekukuni in 1876 dispersed to their homes on the rumour of an impending Zulu raid.[20]

Following upon the repudiation earlier in 1876 of their treaty with the Boers, this independent behaviour of the Swazi which the Republic proved powerless to prevent marked their practical immunity from Boer control. It is easy to blame the intrusion of British policy for this, but the Republic's difficulties with Sekukuni which provided a practical measure of how effective its protection against the Zulu was likely to be, and Swazi manoeuvres to obtain further safeguards against the latter also played their part.[21]

During the British regime in the Transvaal (1877-1880) their actual experience with the Swazi rather than any scrutiny of the Republic's early relations with the tribe chiefly determined the way in which the British officials dealt with the problem of their status. Herbert in January 1880 complained of the lack of information on "many of our relations with the Swazis which we have inherited from the Government of the South African Republic".[22] Whether or not Herbert's grumble was justified, the fact remained that the British administration inherited no actual control over the Swazi from the Republic.

---

(19) For these warnings see C 1748, pp.9-10, 12.

(20) Uys, op.cit., p.209; van Rooyen, op.cit., p.81, gives the number of Swazi as 2,400, but does not mention their withdrawal from the war. Uys gives the number of Swazi as 2,000.

(21) van Rooyen, op.cit., p.81, displays some naiveté in contrasting the friendly relations between the Boers and the Swazi up to 1875 with the "antagonism" which the Swazi displayed towards the British administration in the Transvaal. Huyser, op.cit., p.251, makes a similar implication.

(22) C 2695, p.20, despatch to J.Alleyne, head of the Swaziland boundary commission. Knowledge of the Republic's early relations with the Swazi were only sought by the Colonial Office in November 1894, as material to justify the cession of Swaziland before Parliament. (L.A.500, M.White (London Consul-General) to State Secretary, 15 Nov.1894.)

In 1878 Sir Theophilus Shepstone and Rudolph wrote minutes on British relations with the Swazi for the information of the High Commissioner, Frere, whose main concern was to secure their assistance against Cetewayo in a war to break the power of the Zulu. [redacted][23] In October 1878 he informed Hicks Beach, Carnarvon's successor, that the Swazi were ready to furnish a contingent against the Zulu "as soon as they saw they could do so without entailing destruction on themselves."[24] Two British officers visited southern Swaziland in November and inspected the boundary in the Pongola River area. Their opinion was that the Swazi would repel a Zulu attack on Swaziland if they were offered some support.[25] But the Zulu victory over the British troops at Isandhlwana on January 22 1879 confirmed Swazi doubts and they kept out of the Zulu war.[26]

In the latter part of 1878 efforts were also made to persuade the Swazi to furnish an impi against Sekukuni, for the British administration had succeeded to the difficulties provided by this chief's defiance of European authority. But for as long as the fear of a Zulu attack dominated their outlook the Swazi refused to allow any warriors to leave their country.[27] Soon after the defeat of the Zulu at Ulundi in July 1879 the Swazi notified their willingness to serve in the Sekukuni campaign and Captain McLeod was sent to Swaziland to recruit a contingent. A Swazi impi of 8,000 moved to Lydenburg, assisted in Wolseley's successful campaign against Sekukuni in September 1879 and were rewarded with the cattle they captured from the Bapedi. They then returned to their "own country" and were later complimented for their good behaviour in Wolseley's despatches.[28]

The co-operation in the Sekukuni war was described by Herbert as having cemented an "alliance" between the Swazi and Great Britain, and he thought it

---

(23) C 2220, pp.291-3.
(24) Ibid., pp.308-9. Hicks Beach was by no means converted to the idea of a Zulu War and Frere's comments should be taken as intending to be persuasive and reassuring rather than accurate.
(25) Ibid., p.358; C 2222, p.21; C 2242, p.18. Frere to Hicks Beach, 12. Jan.1879.
(26) Cf. C.O.438, p.19. Graham stated that the Swazi were "ready to help us" in the Zulu War.
(27) van Rooyen, op.cit., p.328.
(28) Walker, op.cit., pp.369, 375-85 for the Sekukuni campaigns generally. See also van Rooyen, op.cit., pp.328ff.; Symington, op.cit., p.63 (giving the Swazi impi as 5,000); C 2100 pp.4-5, for the outbreak of the war in February 1878; C 2505, pp.106, 125; Maurice and Arthur, Life of Lord Wolseley, p.224; C.R.Low, General Lord Wolseley A Memoir (1883), pp.376-89 passim.

"most essential that we should keep the Swazis as our firm friends".[29] From the Swazi side McLeod, styled "British Political Agent with the Swazis" in the commission for the settlement of the Swaziland boundary, reported that the co-operation in the late war had created a "good effect" among the Swazi.[30] But the "alliance" had been based upon log-rolling principles which fell away with the annexation of the Transvaal and the defeat of Cetewayo. The result was that the British authorities showed no desire to acquire any control over the Swazi. This was understandable in view of the reluctance of the British government to undertake further commitments after the experience of the Zulu war. The Swazi for their part were glad to be free of what they had regarded as the Zulu menace and not displeased at the removal of the Boer rein, which, though slack enough at first, had shown signs of being tightened in 1875.

It was later alleged that the Swazi were promised a British guarantee of their independence for their help against Sekukuni.[31] The Swazi deputation which visited England in 1894 to protest against the proposed transfer of Swaziland to the Republic declared that McLeod had made such a promise, but there is no documentary evidence that he or any other British official did so.[32] But the general solicitude for native interests, which was undoubtedly an ingredient in British colonial policy although often outweighed by other considerations, was strengthened in the case of the Swazi by the special position as friends and allies which their participation in the Sekukuni war had given them. This partly explains their treatment in the Conventions of 1881 and 1884 and the reluctance of British officials later to deviate from the policy of recognising their independence.

The British authorities tackled the problem of the Transvaal-Swazi boundary over which there had been disputes since 1866. The commission of 1879-80 demarcated the whole Transvaal-Swazi boundary using the Republican

---

(29) C 2695, p.19, 1 Jan.1880, instructions to the Boundary Commissioners.
(30) C 2705, pp.129,130. McLeod had been special Commissioner with the Swazi in the Sekukuni campaign. His appointment as Political Agent was temporary.
(31) For example, Nathan, Paul Kruger His Life and Times, pp.141-2, 230.
(32) Record of Proceedings at Interviews between the Marquis of Ripon Secretary of State for the Colonies and a Swazi Deputation, p.11.

beacons as the basis of the "final settlement" of "the boundary between the Transvaal territory, and the territory of the Swazi people".[33] The Commission included in Swaziland some land in the vicinity of the Pongola River which had been ceded to the Boers but not occupied by them and also some in the Horo district in the north-west of Swaziland. This "indulgence" was expected to give the Swazi "additional cause to be thankful".[34] But the British government laid down no conditions to govern their future relations with the Swazi who were therefore recognised as completely independent. The clauses relating to Swazi independence in the Conventions of Pretoria and London reflected the state of their previous relations with the British government. Their status was not a prominent question in the negotiations with the Boers which led up to those agreements.

(3) The Conventions of Pretoria and London

After the Anglo-Boer War of 1880-1 in which the Boers took up arms to overthrow the British regime in the Transvaal and regain their independence, a Royal Commission consisting of Sir Hercules Robinson, the High Commissioner, Sir Evelyn Wood and Sir Henry de Villiers, Chief Justice of the Cape Colony, was set up to report on the terms upon which the Transvaal Boers might regain their independence.[1] In his instructions to the Commission Kimberley, Secretary of State for Colonies in Gladstone's government, stipulated that native interests both within and outside the Transvaal were to be taken into account. Swaziland was to be independent despite the "undefined supremacy" which the Republic had claimed over the territory before the annexation of the Transvaal. At the same time the Commission was to bear in mind that the British government was on "general grounds" opposed to "the extension of British territory in South Africa".[2]

The chief question relating to the disposition of territory which

---

(33) C 2505, p.126; C 2220, pp.291-3, 358, for Frere on boundary disputes in 1878; C 2316, pp.22-3, for H.C.Shepstone's minute on the early history of the Transvaal-Swazi boundary. (H.C.Shepstone was Secretary for Native Affairs in the Transvaal during the British administration); C 2505, pp.125-6 and C 2524, p.108, for Wolseley's issue of the Boundary Commission (February 1880) and pp.28-31 for the Swazi acceptance of the boundary as demarcated.

(34) C 2695, p.27, despatch, Wolseley to Aileyne, 15 March 1880.

(1) Walker, Lord de Villiers and His Times, p.160.

(2) C 2892, pp.1-3, C 3114, pp.6-8, Kimberley to Robinson, 31 March 1881. Kimberley added that the Swazi did not acknowledge the Boer claim to their territory.

concerned the Commission was whether the British government should retain the area of the Transvaal east of the thirty degree meridian. Wood's recommendation which had emerged in his negotiations with the Boer leaders who had reluctantly accepted it, was that in the interests of the natives inhabiting the area and to maintain peace and prevent disturbances on the Zulu and Swazi borders, retention should be insisted upon at least in the south-east. But in view of the strenuous opposition of the Boer rank and file to the proposal, Robinson and de Villiers decided against retention, relying on greater powers in native affairs for the British Resident who was to be established at Pretoria.[3]

In their statement against retention the Boer leaders referred to their friendly relations in the past with the Swazi who, they maintained, did not desire to be separated from the Transvaal.[4] Speaking before the Commission in May 1881, Kruger as a member of the Triumvirate argued along similar lines.[5] Forced to concentrate on opposing a measure contemplating the alienation of a large slice of their own territory, the Boers could hardly have been expected to press their somewhat doubtful claim to Swaziland in 1881. They won their case against retention, but the British government's decision regarding Swazi independence was not seriously challenged and was incorporated in the Pretoria Convention (August 1881).[6]

The provisions of the convention placing the conduct of relations with the tribes beyond the boundaries of the Transvaal in the hands of the British Resident need not be enlarged upon, as they were superseded in 1884. But the negotiations leading up to the London Convention of that year threw some light on certain aims of the powers which persisted after the conclusion of the agreement. In November 1883 the Transvaal Deputation in London addressed Lord Derby, Kimberley's successor in the Liberal Cabinet, on their objections

---

(3) Walker, Lord de Villiers and His Times, pp.160-1; for Wood's dissenting report, c 3114, pp.34-6, 56-66 and his autobiography, From Midshipman to Field Marshal, Vol.II, pp.128, 129-32; for the report itself C 3114, pp.15-34.
(4) C 3114, p.62.
(5) C 3219, p.19.
(6) C 3114, p.65, Kimberley's telegram, 30 May 1881.

to the Pretoria Convention, the anticipated revision of which was then about to take place.[7] The main questions raised were the suzerainty over the Republic's relations with foreign Powers and tribes beyond the borders of the Transvaal which Britain had obtained in the Pretoria Convention, and the possible future extension of the Transvaal's boundaries, especially in the west. Significant views were expressed regarding Transvaal expansion in general. The Deputation, in rather circuitous language, asked for what amounted to a withdrawal of all restrictions on the future extension of the authority of the Pretoria government and neighbouring native tribes, promising "all such guarantees [for native rights and interests] as are prescribed by divine law and human feeling", and justifying any extensions in advance as "action on behalf of humanity and peace".[8] In the draft Convention which the Deputation forwarded to Derby later in November 1883, an article was incorporated providing for the extension of existing frontiers in cases where it was "considered expedient for the peace or security of the boundary or for the common interest of South Africa", on "the principle that it should be left to the free choice of the Native Chiefs to come with their tribes within the South African Republic ....".[9]

The British government's reaction to this ill-concealed request for the facilitation of the Republic's future territorial expansion was to insist on the observance of "defined boundaries" the lack of which was considered to have been the chief defect of the Sand River Convention (1852), which the Deputation would have liked to have been accepted as the basis of the new agreement.[10] Robinson, commenting on the Deputation's proposals, pointed out that if they were accepted, the Republic would be enabled to begin a process of encroachment on native lands which would end only at the Atlantic and

---

(7) C 3841, pp.83-7. The Deputation consisted of Kruger, who was now State President, Smit and du Toit.
(8) C 3841, pp.86, 187.
(9) Ibid., pp.111-12, 140.
(10) Ibid., pp.90-1, Derby to the Deputation, Nov.20, 1883.

Indian Oceans.[11] Derby therefore insisted on a "defined frontier". The result was that in the second article of the London Convention the Republic had to agree to adhere to the boundaries delimited in the first article, and to "do its utmost to prevent any of its inhabitants from making encroachments" on lands outside the boundaries. The Republic was to appoint commissioners on the eastern and western borders "to guard against irregularities and all trespassing over the boundaries", while the British government was given the right to appoint, if necessary, Commissioners in the native territories beyond the eastern and western boundaries of the Transvaal "to maintain order and prevent encroachments".[12]

The appointment of Commissioners was first suggested by the Deputation in December 1883 when it had still been trying to obtain Derby's agreement to the principle of the future extension of the authority of the Republic over the neighbouring tribes. Derby had asked whether the Transvaal government would take steps to prevent its subjects from encroaching on the territory beyond the delimited boundaries. The Deputation's suggestion was clearly intended as an assurance that no sudden or arbitrary advance need took place without the consent of the British government, but it was offered in the hope that future modifications of the boundaries in the Republic's favour would not be prohibited in advance. In developing the argument after Derby's initial hesitant reaction the Deputation explained that the Republic's Commissioners would be expected to stop Boer encroachments with the help of the landdrosts and the normal police and in accordance with the laws of the country, while the British Commissioners would be expected to prevent encroachments by the tribes. The particular case with which the Deputation was concerned was the Road to the North along the Transvaal's western boundary. They hoped that the activity of Commissioners on the spot would lead to the Republic's securing

---

(11) C 3841, p.104; Lovell, The Struggle for South Africa, p.47.
(12) For the London Convention, C 3914.

a favourable modification of the frontier. But Derby replied in January 1884 that the appointment of Commissioners could have no practical result, as any change in the boundary would mean giving the Transvaal part of the road, which the British government was not prepared to do.[13]

The manner in which the Deputation's proposal was incorporated into the Convention suggests that it was used to satisfy conflicting demands on Derby's position. Philanthropic opinion demanded measures to prevent the Republic's establishing control over the neighbouring tribes, while Liberal policy in the early 1880's was opposed to the further assumption of responsibilities in South Africa.[14] In the Convention the onus of preventing Boer expansion beyond the boundaries of the Transvaal was placed on the Republic itself, while the fact that the appointment of British commissioners was made optional meant that a right and a safeguard were obtained for the future, and the immediate or necessary assumption of obligations by Downing Street was avoided. In this way Derby appeared to solve his dilemma. But the aspirations of the Republic to expand did not disappear with its acceptance of obligations under the Convention which were completely out of step with the intentions of its representatives. In its application to the Republic's expansion in general, the London Convention had the defect of any arrangement in which the cat is asked to guard the cream-jug.

The first results of this were apparent along the western boundary of the Republic. Here the efforts of the Cape Colony to acquire the Road to the North, which became the mainspring of the action of Cecil Rhodes in the early part of his political career, forced themselves into the counsels of imperial policy.[15] The Republic was denied the Road to the North in the Convention, and the imperial government's reaction to Kruger's efforts to extend his western boundary by proclamation in the latter part of 1884 was prompt and

---

(13) Z.A.R. Officieele Bescheiden Gewisseld met de Engelsche Regeering I.Z. de Conventie von Londen, pp.43, 45-7, 49, 55-60. (Correspondence between Derby and the Deputation, December 1883-January 1884); C 3841, pp.83-7, 90-1.

(14) Walker, History of South Africa, p.401.

(15) Ibid., pp.401, 403-6. On Rhodes' interest see Chapter III (1) and Chapter VII (2) below.

Author Garson N G (Noel George)
Name of thesis The Swaziland Question And A Road To The Sea 1887-1895. 1955

PUBLISHER:
University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg
©2013

LEGAL NOTICES:

Copyright Notice: All materials on the University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg Library website are protected by South African copyright law and may not be distributed, transmitted, displayed, or otherwise published in any format, without the prior written permission of the copyright owner.

Disclaimer and Terms of Use: Provided that you maintain all copyright and other notices contained therein, you may download material (one machine readable copy and one print copy per page) for your personal and/or educational non-commercial use only.

The University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg, is not responsible for any errors or omissions and excludes any and all liability for any errors in or omissions from the information on the Library website.