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1984-08-20
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A F R I C A N S T U D I E S I N S T I T U T E

African Studies Seminar Paper to be presented at Seminar in RW 319 at 4,00 p.m. on Monday, 20 August 1984.

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AN ILLUSION OF UNITY: UITLANDER POLITICS BEFORE THE ANGLO-BOER WAR

Dr. Diana Cammack

> The spectacle of thousands of British subjects kept permanently in the position of helots, constantly chafing under undoubted grievances, and calling vainly to Her Majesty's Government for redress, does steadily undermine the influence and reputation of Great Britain and the respect for the British Government in its own dominions. [1]

In this, the famous 'helot telegram', Milner was careful to present the Uitlanders of the Witwatersrand as a unified, aggrieved community which eagerly pressed him to involve the British colonial government in the domestic affairs of the South African Republic. This portrait of the Uitlanders is not unique, for the vast majority of official cables originating in southern Africa, as well as the Reformers' published writings presented a picture of an oppressed British community, irrevocably joined together in its struggle to eliminate a variety of practices -- enumerated as "grievances" -- and to win the Republican franchise. Most political historians since that time have adopted this view of the Rand community, which has encouraged their acceptance of the Colonial Office's account of the grievance agitation and the local cause of the Boer War. Consequently, too many of us were taught this version as students.

But there is another view of the Uitlander community, and one which Milner and his subordinates knew to be true. Only a month before Milner sent his 'helot telegram', he received a confidential report of the situation from the British Agent in the Republic, Conyngham Greene:

> The truth is that the Uitlanders of Johannesburg are lacking now, as before, in Cohesion, and it is impossible to hope to hold them, for an indefinite interval, together. This was the case at the Raid time.... The same influence is at work today.... People here are of so many nationalities, interests, occupations and even feelings, that you cannot expect lasting cohesion from them. [2]

But in order to gain the support of the British press and government, and the sympathy of the British public, Milner had to ensure that this view of the Witwatersrand was suppressed and that the Uitlanders appeared instead as a uniformly oppressed and outraged community. Any dissenting opinion had to be hidden behind a veil of silence, if it could not be out-right eliminated.

Milner and his colleagues did this in three ways: first in his reports to England, Milner presented a one-sided picture of the situation on the Rand and biased accounts of the views of the Uitlanders. Secondly, he attempted to unify the Uitlanders on certain issues and encouraged them to form organisations led by men who Milner felt already knew what was needed. Finally, he and these men, the Reformers, tried to quash any independent Uitlander movement which either opposed British intervention in the Transvaal or was out-right pro-Boer. As history attests, Milner and his colleagues were more than a little successful.

No matter where one begins an investigation of the Uitlanders -- whether by looking at their spatial distribution and life styles, their ethnic and national differences, their religious and social affiliations or their class interests -- it is clear that theirs was not an homogeneous community. Though one generally assumes that the Uitlanders were British, there were on the Rand a large number of Continental Europeans, Australians and Americans. Their housing and leisure time activities as well as their children's access to schooling reflected class differences which originated in occupational roles. Class and nationality were the two most divisive factors within the Uitlander society in the 1890s and both took on political meaning as war approached.

One manifestation of the heterogeneity of the community was the organisations

which had regional, national or cultural identity as their focus and which maintained the vitality of national allegiance. Their social function was to bring immigrants together who enjoyed taking part in activities from home. For instance, the Cambrian Society's "Eisteddfod" or the Swiss Society's Helvetian Independence Day celebrations served to draw people together who might have had nothing else in common other than their origins. These clubs also served as benevolent societies, quasi-labour organisations, and a few had explicit ly political functions. While these ethnic-based organisations served to bridge class differences, they did keep nationalist sentiment alive.

Tracing class divisions within the Uitlander community before the war is not much more difficult than determining the occupation of the members of this society. Tracing class consciousness takes more time, which may account for the belief amongst some historians that it did not exist before the Boer War.

Certainly, though, an awareness of class interests was present amongst the Uitlander workers as the number of strikes increased after 1896 and as the depression settled upon the community. The depression, which began in 1897 and which only partially eased before the war, put strains upon the society, polarising the Uitlander community and fostering class conflict. As political tension mounted, these strains took on political meaning.

The Rand Lords argued in the press, before the 1897 Industrial Commission and to the British government that the depression was caused by Kruger's economic and political policies. The Reformers echoed this sentiment in their publications and from public platforms. The High Commissioner and his subordinates took up the cry. On the other hand, many amongst the Uitlander working class formulated their own explanation.

The pro-Republican and anti-capitalist Johannesburg newspaper, the Standard and Diggers' News, argued that the depression was caused by "artificial means." The "big houses" had, in its opinion, agreed to halt the flow of funds to Rand industries, thereby creating a "heart sickening decline from day to day" so that the "small man" would be forced to sell out and larger concerns could buy up bankrupt companies. This argument appealed to the working man as well. [3]

Class conscious Uitlander workers felt that the depression was also used by the owners as an excuse to lower white wages. One of the clearest statements of this position was made some time later:

> The director of one of the great mining groups, talking to me ... in the summer of 1897, was almost brutal in his frankness:- 'We have settled the question of native labour .... We have now the more difficult problem of white labour before us. I don't at all approve of suddenly reducing wages, and so producing a strike. This is in every way undesirable. What we have to do is to shut down some of our poorer mines, and let the men walk about the streets for two or three months until their feet are on pavement. They'll be glad enough then to take whatever we may choose to offer them.'[4]

Such suspicions gained credibility during the depression as mines were closed, as owners -- notably J.B. Robinson -- attempted to lower white wages, and as attempts were made to raise productivity with no commensurate increase in wages -- through the 'two machine' movement, for instance. Any attempts to lengthen hours, or replace white with cheaper non-white labour further reinforced this view.

In various sectors of the economy the use of non-white labour was advanced during the depression. For instance, engine drivers on some mines complained that "coolies" were being hired to replace whites and that the owners were trying to get "engine drivers' certificates granted to coloured persons --

Kafirs."[5] Hotel employees fought against the introduction of blacks as porters while unionised printers were opposed to the introduction of blacks in the print shop, though with little success in these years.[6]

The bakers, like other whites, argued against the introduction of non-white workers during these depression years. In mid-1898, for instance, one baker reported that though it was illegal, "Kafirs are used for mixing dough, whereas whites are working at the oven and baking bread." He explained that because the "kafirs worked cheaper," they were "liked by the bosses." His conclusion, like that of many others, was that the "natural consequence is that many white people are out of work and on the point of starvation."[7]

It is difficult to determine whether non-whites were actually being hired to replace white workers directly in an attempt to lower labour costs during the depression. But one thing is clear: white labourers thought so. Hence, the depression served to highlight the use of cheaper, non-white labour just because so many whites were unemployed. This did little to endear the employer or the non-white competitor to the unemployed or defensive white workers.

Not surprisingly, then, at the 1898 Transvaal Typographical Society banquet a guest from the Engine Drivers' Association rose to toast Kruger and remark that "there is no Government on the face of the earth more ready to give working men their due than the Transvaal Government."[8] This view summed up the feelings of a good many trade unionists and white artisans on the Rand before the war. Part of the reason they liked Kruger was because of the ease with which organised labour was able to approach the Pretoria government. Also, Kruger was seen as the friend of the white workers in their battle against bosses and non-white competitors.

For instance, in 1896 Kruger had approved of legislation which theoretically gave engine drivers protection against non-white competitors on the mines. Similarly, non-whites were not allowed to handle explosives. White miners were not ungrateful for Republican protection, as may be seen by the letter written by one miner to the South African Mining Journal:

> I must say it is a good thing for the white miner that the Transvaal Government recognised the difference between the Kaffir and his white brother, as you are pleased to call him, and for which they will have the support of all the working men on the Rand, especially the white miners. I make no doubt the miner would have been working for starvation wages long before this if the capitalists of Johannesburg had their own sweet will. I make no doubt that the Kaffir would have been tried in the place of white men long ago if it had not been for the timely action of the Government in making it impossible for them to hold responsible positions. [9]

Such sentiment had profound political implications when the agitation for the Republican franchise was at its height in the year or so before the war. Then the workers feared the changes in legislation which would follow if the bosses were to achieve political power in the Republic. Further, they were afraid of what might happen in the white workers were to receive the vote. They were concerned that if Uitlanders were enfranchised, the working class would be forced to register and vote for specified candidates.

For instance, in May 1899 one worker told the Standard and Diggers' News that not "one in a thousand" Uitlanders wanted the vote, for if they had it the "big houses" would compel their people to register and the "capitalists" would then "run the men they wish for the constituency, and put pressure upon all hands ... to support their candidate." He warned that anyone doing otherwise would be told "voetsac" by the boss. [10] Another immigrant warned that if enfranchised, workers would be "sounded individually, like we were at Broken Hill [Australia]." The end result, he feared, would be the fall

of the Republic into the "hands of the capitalist to be used for himself against us..." [11] Such views were commonly expressed by class conscious Uitlanders in the year or so before the war.

Class conflict, then, was intimately related to racialism and to political antagonism, and the study of any one of these topics cannot ignore the other. But our purpose here is to emphasize that class conflict did exist before the war, and that it, like nationalist sentiment, kept the Uitlander community from becoming that unified, aggrieved society which Milner so frequently wrote Home about.

As the depression deepened, political tension escalated. Consequently, Milner and his Reformers tried to overcome the divisions within the community and to generate grist for Milner's political mill. In order to do so, the Reformers created two organisations, the South African League and the Uitlander Council. Much has been written about these groups and about the outcome of their efforts, but little has been written about the means they pursued to generate pro-British propaganda and to suppress pro-Boer activity.

Not surprisingly, the class basis of the reform movement was bourgeois. J.P. Fitzpatrick and Samuel Evans, for instance, were powerful figures in the mining industry, while J.W. Quinn and William Hosken were important local business men. Lawyers, such as J.D. Forster and H.C. Hull, played an important role, as did the journalist-editors, Monypenny and Pakeman.

The background, training and position of men such as these led them to advocate a form of government which aided the growth of modern industry. Anomolies, such as customs barriers which inhibited the movement of goods, restrictions

which hindered the reduction of working costs, bribery and corruption which made good laws unenforceable and religious scruples which were used to justify archaic practices and which limited the full utilisation of capital, labour and equipment must have seemed frightful burdens to these men.

Similarly, lax enforcement of legislation purposefully enacted to ensure the efficient and effective administration of the city, district and industry no doubt frustrated those who had been trained to repect the law and to strive for excellence. Those who believed that British culture could bring beneficial change to the Republic must have felt disgust with what was seen as rule too personal, too corrupt, and too inefficient. Their goal was to bring what in their view was efficiency and order to the economic and political life of the Republic. In this, their views paralleled Milner's.

The functions, activities, though not the goals, of the South African League and the Uitlander Council were quite different. The former was meant to generate, harness and channel popular Uitlander discontent with the Republican regime, while the latter was to advise the colonial government on elite Uitlander opinion, and, ultimately, to mastermind, in conjunction with Milner, the escalation of pressure on the Republican government. This is not to say that the League was a democratic organisation, for its very structure -- with the same men rotating posts in the executive from year to year, and with an organisation which ensured that decisions were made and orders given by the executive in Johannesburg -- precluded uncontrolled, spontaneous activity by common members. For instance, in times of crisis the executive cancelled meetings in outlying branches in order to keep the members from vocalising opinions which might be an embarrassment to Milner.

The advent of the Uitlander Council was closely related to the Jameson Raid:

the public appearance of the Council was timed to coincide with the expiration of the three year ban on political activity by the Raid conspirators. This is not to say that the Reformers had not been active before this date, for as Milner was told earlier, the "best men" were doing "a good deal sub rosa." [12] Still, the Council supposedly grew out of a public meeting of concerned Uitlanders, and Council members were supposedly chosen by the public. Yet, a careful reading of reports shows that the leadership was, in fact, self-selected and that the representatives who were supposedly 'elected' were in fact nominated by men on the platform and "agreed to" by spectators at various meetings. Because its membership was, by and large, made up of powerful industrial and mining men, and because Milner's men were in close contact with its leaders from the beginning, it was the more powerful of the two organisations. Still, both served his purposes.

Anyone familiar with the Boer War has heard of the Edgar Affair (which, mercifully, won't be discussed here) as well as the famous Uitlander petition with some 20,000 signatures for the Queen. The idea of this petition originated with Fitzpatrick, after a previous one with 40 signatures purporting to represent several thousand Uitlanders met with a rebuff from Milner's stand-in at the time, General William Butler. After the Queen's petition reached Great Britain, Milner sent word to Fitzpatrick not to let the agitation "fizzle", while other Reformers were warned by Milner's secretary, G.V. Fiddes, to "keep steadily though quietly pegging away." [13] They took their directions seriously, and a number of meetings along the reef were then organised by the South African League.

These meetings served Milner's purpose well. The Star reported them fully, though the Standard and Diggers' News had little to say about them other than that they were poorly attended and being used to stir up trouble by the League.

Naturally, it was the Star's reports which made it to England. And, the speeches made on the platforms were just the sort of propaganda Milner needed to send home. But, what was not reported in Britain was the way the speakers pandered to class antagonisms in their attempt to gain support for the reform movement.

Generally any speaker -- and none was identified as being a League member, though all followed the League's line -- began by telling the Uitlander workers who attended these meetings on the mines that they were just like "kaffirs": they lived without the "true status of manhood" and had become the "laughing stock of European powers." The speaker then told the audience that the Uitlanders' struggle was not just the bosses' battle, but one that the workers ought to take an interest in as well: had not the Rand Lords in their meetings with Kruger not remembered that the workers' interests were paramount? [14]

Some speakers argued that once the Uitlanders were enfranchised, the working class -- and not the capitalists -- would dominate the Transvaal. One argued that they had nothing to fear from the reform leaders, for it would be easier for the labouring class to "make terms with the financier than with the /Kruger/ Government." Further, with the secret ballot, the workers could vote for whomever they wanted. [15]

At a few of these meetings, men were 'elected' to join the Uitlander Council. This served the purpose of making it appear as though the Council had actually been created in public, by outraged Uitlanders, rather than in private by the Rand Lords with Milner's encouragement. These meetings, then, like the Edgar demonstrations and the Queen's petition served as propaganda for Milner to feed the British public.

Similarly, the grievance agitation was well publicised in Britain. We all have read about the so-called grievances, such as the high cost of dynamite, the concessionaire companies, the customs duties on industrial and urban consumer goods, the poor education for Uitlander children (and in the Dutch medium as well), the restricted franchise, etc. It was the League which kept these grievances before the public, and which made sure that Milner was never without information about them to send to England.

But a study of the grievances [16] has shown that in no case was much more than a small section of the Uitlander population upset by the practices of the government. In many cases, such as with the dynamite price, it took alot of effort on the part of the Reformers to make an issue appear to be one of common concern. And many of the more widespread complaints, such as about the children's education, were class based. In this case, for instance, very few working men had families in residence and/most were, therefore, apathetic about the education issue. Instead, it was men who had put down roots in the Transvaal, and who had families with them -- business men and industrial supervisors and the like -- who were most apt to be concerned.

But even with an issue which had some amount of popular support, such as the issue of education, there were those who dissented. For instance, the Clifton Methodists of Braamfontein were quite satisfied with the government's educational plan -- much to the disgust of the Reformers. So was the Welsh vice-Master of President School in Johannesburg. But neither of these was given a fair hearing in London. Their reports to the Colonial Office were accompanied by letters from Milner and the Reformers which threw doubt on their credibility. In the end the Colonial Office believed its representatives and the Reformers' education expert, J.P. Fitzpatrick.

One of the least likely grievances — considering the racialism rampant on the Rand — was the one which had the Uitlanders expressing dissatisfaction with the way the Boer government treated non-whites. In the years before the war, Pretoria had attempted to conscript Cape Coloureds for service in the commandos, had tried to keep all non-whites in urban locations, had sought to create a new location some miles from the city, and had tried to restrict Asian trading in the city. In most cases, the Boers had the full support of the Uitlanders resident on the Rand. Hence, it should be cause to wonder why the Reformers included the Boers' treatment of non-whites in their list of grievances.

Milner wanted to use the treatment of non-whites as part of his case against the Kruger regime — possibly because it would be sure to gain support in England. But, because of the Uitlanders' racialism, he had to muzzle them and this meant getting the Reformers and press in line. In fact, this is what Fiddes was sent to do in early 1899.

When on the Rand, Milner's secretary met with the leaders of the Reform movement and at dinner they spoke at length about the political situation. Fiddes later reported to Milner that

> having gotthem in good humour and shewn that I was at least sympathetic, I put the question: 'As regards Indians and Cape Boys. I know you don't love them much, and I know that there is something to be said on your side which I am sure H.M.G. would take into count if properly approuched. But the T.V. [Transvaal] don't approach us properly. I may tell you in strict confidence (I always like to tell people open secrets in strict confidence) that at any moment this question might assume serious shape. Now, if H.M.G. made their minds that it was necessary to take a firm stand on it, would Johannesburg be likely to take up a hostile or embarrassing attitude on it?'

Not surprisingly, they "bounded on their seats," and "simply chorused:

'Certainly not. Any stick is good enough to beat Paul Kruger with, and though we don't love the Indians, we wouldn't say a word, and we would use our influence for all its worth to prevent others from saying a word against you.'" On the same visit, Fiddes made sure that the editors of the Star and Transvaal Leader, Messrs. Monypenny and Parkeman, respectively, would "strike the right note." [17] Unity amongst the Reformers on this issue — for the time being, at least — was thus assured.

But Milner and the Reformers were not always so fortunate as to be on the offensive; sometimes they had to fight rear-guard actions. For instance, when Milner was in England, the Acting High Commissioner, Sir William Butler, decided he would send a report to the Colonial Office about the Reformers. In it he labelled them capitalists and noted that they had stage-managed the Edgar agitation. Upon his return, Milner had to expend some amount of energy and time trying to change this impression.

Later the credibility of the Queen's petition was called into question. The Standard and Diggers' News spearheaded a campaign to discredit it by printing letters from readers who cited cases of fraud. For instance, cases of duplicated and triplicated signatures were reported, and while the League stated that only British citizens over the age of sixteen were allowed to sign, instances of youngsters signing it were noted. Cases of women signing their husbands' names, and of people signing it without knowing what it was about were recorded in the press. In other instances, men stated that they signed it in order to "retain their billets." [18]

Soon a Republican Green Book appeared. It presented affidavits swearing to a variety of other infractions. Milner was forced to defend the League and its petition, which he did to the satisfaction of the Colonial Office. At the same time he did not fail to mention that the petition was the work of

the League and not the capitalists.

Again, in August 1899, the Reformers were placed on the defensive, but this time by the management of the Robinson Deep, owned by the Consolidated Gold Fields. The manager there tried to lengthen the work day of his ground level white workers from nine to ten hours. A strike of 150 or so men ensued, which threatened to spread along the reef. This action obviously did not demonstrate Uitlander unity or the friendship which capital supposedly had for labour. Hence, the League was forced to criticise the "high-handed action" of the directors of the Robinson Deep. While apologising for interfering in the concerns of employer-employee -- and, indeed, it was a unique action for the League, but illustrative of the importance this strike had for Uitlander political unity -- the League felt that it was in error for the company to "take advantage of the present period of [economic] distress" to introduce new hours. Undoubtedly the Standard and Diggers' News was correct in assuming that the League, now cast as the "Friend of the Working Man," was of the opinion that "a quarrel between man and master would not suit the [purpose] ... of the League just now." Indeed, the Star argued that the strike was only an "isolated action" and should not be allowed to impair the "harmony and unanimity of all classes of Uitlander people..." As the engine drivers threatened to walk out and with the fear growing that a general movement for a reduction of hours would ensue, the management capitulated. The Reformers gave a sigh of relief and the Mining Journal reported that the "danger of a growing feud between labour and capital at this most critical juncture" had been avoided. [19]

The Reformers also had to concern themselves with organisations with pronounced pro-Boer tendencies. And, there were amongst the Uitlanders in these years groups which were becoming increasingly sympathetic to the Kruger government.

In April 1899 at least two different groups of pro-Boers circulated petitions on the Rand, both addressed to Kruger and denouncing the League's principles and petition. One asked for the liberalisation of the franchise law as well as other laws, but expressed a desire for peace and good will between Uitlander and Boer. The second was more pointed, accusing the organisers of the Queen's petition of being "capitalists and not the public." It added that in the opinion of the signatories, the Republican government had no major "faults" but if it had, and any grievances were to result, they could not be resolved by the intervention of any foreign government or the "advice of the capitalists." [20]

No sooner had the second of these counter-petitions been conceptualised than the Reformers took action. A copy of it was stolen from the printers and leaked to the press before it was circulated. It was then attacked by Greene who stated that it was "generally discredited" for it was no secret, he claimed, that its 9,000 signatures were obtained through the instrumentality of government officials and railway workers, and that neither group was representative of the Uitlanders. [21] The Star adopted this line and printed a letter stating that the petition had been signed by illicit liquor dealers, because the authorities were kind to them, illicit gold buyers, railway employees, "under pain of dismissal," indigent Boers and six hundred or so "continental peoples." Finally, reports were sent to Milner which testified to the duplicity of the canvassers in obtaining signatures for the counter-petition. [22]

In August another petition was circulated which stated that the signatories were not interested in taking up the franchise. The League took steps immediately and warned off potential signatories by stating that by signing it they might render themselves liable for military service. [23]

Earlier, in May 1899, a resolution was forwarded through Milner's office to

Chamberlain. It read:

> That although we hold that there are many legitimate grievances, and there is urgent need for reform in many directions, we are yet of /the/ opinion that there are no grievances here which could justify any extreme measures on the part of Her Majesty's Government.

It was signed by the vice president and the secretary of the Federated Building Trades Council, the presidents, vice presidents and secretaries of the Witwatersrand Painters and Decorators' Union, the Transvaal Engine Drivers' Association and the Iron Moulders' Union -- all Uitlander organisations -- as well as the Chief Ranger and secretary of the Irish National Foresters Benefit Society. Nonetheless, the Colonial Secretary did not receive the resolution without prejudice, for Milner and Greene made sure that the instigator was discredited as an "anti-imperialist and advanced Irish nationalist." [24]

Another example of radical working class support for the Boer government was the International Independent Labour Party (IILP). It has been argued that because of its socialist platform, the post-war successor of the IILP was not well-received by the Rand electorate. But the same cannot be stated so certainly regarding the pre-war party. First, it never contested an election, and secondly and more importantly, while its principles and leadership were broadly socialist, its immediate concerns as well as the causes it expounded were not. Further, during its short-lived career it was attacked more for its anti-British stance than for its socialist principles.

The goal of the IILP was the "equitable distribution of wealth" and the elevation of the "moral and intellectual standard" of its members. It opposed special privilege, advocated a Republican form of government and sought some sort of local self-government for the Rand. It advocated the nationalisation of property, including the mines, the abolition of monopolies and called for public ownership and control of public works. It intended to achieve its goal of promoting and protecting the welfare of the white working class through

legislation and by improving the conditions of labour: securing an eight hour work day and a trade union rate of wages, abolishing all unnecessary Sunday labour on the mines, obtaining one man-one vote with no property qualification or religious disqualification, and prohibiting the importation of contract labour. The IILP was clearly South African in its conception, for its goal was the religious, political and social equality of white people only, and it sought the maintenance of the Republic as a "white man's country." [25]

In an effort to create this workers' utopia, its tactics were quite ordinary: the collection and distribution of data relevant to labourers, communication with other labour organisations, the establishment of a library and a meeting place for party members. From Pretoria it wanted articles of incorporation as a political party, and the passage of any legislation which would ameliorate the conditions of white workers. [26]

The IILP began in 1899 with a meeting of a few working men, chaired by J.T. Bain. At this meeting, in the same month as the League's meetings along the reef, it was resolved to hold a mass meeting to form an "Association to protect the interest of workmen on the Witwatersrand." From this time until the party's drift into relative obscurity, chaos reigned. Conflicts centred upon personalities as well as the party's criticism of the Rand capitalists.

Throughout the early phase of its existence, an unruly element attended party meetings. IILP leaders suspected that this disruptive group had been sent by the Reformers who wanted the movement to fail. The men in attendence were vociferous in their opposition to any anti-capitalist or anti-British speaker and soon they focused on Bain, one of the most outspoken Boer supporters and a long-time Rand labour leader. The dissidents were successful at the

first meeting: little business was conducted due to interruptions from the floor and speakers were denied a hearing. Eventually the disorderly persons were ejected from the hall.

A moderate, Mr. Hall, was elected to the chair and he insisted that speakers temper their anti-capitalist diatribes, confine themselves to the immediate issues and not wander into what he considered side-issues. Needless to say, many labourers present did not consider capitalist exploitation of the working class and the capitalists' machinations in the Transvaal to be side-issues as he did. After further dissention, he was removed from the chair. [27]

The second meeting, in June 1899, was just as disorderly, though this time the fracas was confined to the audience, for the leadership did not make the mistake of allowing another moderate to chair the meeting. With constant interruptions from the floor, the business of presenting and adopting the party's principles took a long time. Anti- capitalist speeches were interrupted by hecklers shouting 'rats', which then led to further commotion. The audience as a whole supported the leadership and speakers, though a disruptive element (along with a few sober and moderate labourers) gave the audience little chance of hearing a coherent arguement. The introduction of contemporary politics was opposed by the most vociferous members of the audience. [28]

They also spoke out against the "socialist" speech of Mr. Grauss, a "socialist of repute" and the leader of the local Vorwaertz Society, the organisation of German Social Democrats:

> The success of the toiling masses meant the prosperity of any country. It was not the Transvaal burghers, or the Government, who were their enemies.... It was the monopolists of the mining industry who were causing all the trouble. [29]

The historian Grobler has stated [30] that the people in attendence were primarily opposed to the radical Bain and the socialist platform of the IILP. But it is not as simple as that, for the so-called socialism which found expression at the meeting was generally concerned with the local political crisis and was openly critical of the Rand Lords. In fact, most socialist theory was lost in the heated exchanges concerning the Boer-British struggle. Further, it was precisely because of its pro-Boer stance that the IILP became the focal point of criticism. It was denounced as a socialist organisation partly in the hope of discrediting it with less radical workers.

Certainly Bain's stand as a republican rather than a socialist generated more criticism at the June 1899 meeting. When the fact was made known by someone in the audience that Bain had advocated at the time of the Raid the hanging of Dr. Jameson and his "raiders", it brought cries of "traitor" from some in attendence. His speech which followed and which was meant to clarify his position in early 1896 was constantly interrupted and soon he gave up, with the meeting drawing to a close as the rowdiest element led the singing of 'God Save the Queen'. [31]

The proposed July meeting demonstrated the power of the Uitlander elite. That meeting was scheduled to be held at the Wanderers' arena, but the executive of the Wanderers' Club successfully barred the IILP's use of the facility. There were also rumours that the League had made plans to wreck the meeting if held. It had to be postponed while the IILP sent a deputation to Pretoria to ask the government to investigate the matter.[32]

The campaign against Bain had been well organised, with the press joining in after the second meeting. Finally at the end of July he was forced to resign from the party executive because the press's smear tactics were hurting the party. His resignation as well as the "futile endeavour" of the IILP to hold a

mass meeting at the Wanderers were regarded as another "triumph of the tyrant Capital." [33] Thereafter the party continued the struggle, though it lost a great deal of momentum with Bain's departure. Yet in his absence it could get down to serious work and it was only at this point that its successful struggle for legislation for the eight hour work day began.

The Reformers' press and the Rand Lords vociferously opposed the Eight Hour Movement. None the less, the principle of an eight hour work day was adopted by the Republican Raad in September 1899 and a bill was drafted. Had the war not intervened, the Bill should have become law and the IILP would have had its first victory. The Kruger regime was to the end the friend and protector of the white working class. [34]

Though the paid up membership of the IILP was quite small--130 in August 1899 [35]-- it reflected the views of the more radical element of the remainder of the white working class. It did wield some power and had influence in Pretoria and as a result, its leadership was hounded by the pro-British Uitlanders. Because it endeavoured to expound the cause of white labour and was to some extent successful, because it was allied with the Pretoria government in an attempt to achieve its goals, because it was well advertised in the local pro-Boer press, and because its very nature was to divide the Uitlander population, it was a prime opponent of those who conspired to oust the Pretoria regime. For those reasons, its activities, goals and membership -- in fact, its very existence -- were scarcely reported at Home.

In the months preceding the war, opposition to British intervention generated by nationalist sentiment became more widespread. Clubs which had ethnicity as their focus were the basis of this political activity. Many of the Irish

clubs had had an explicit political function for some time. This Irish nationalism gave r ise to support of the Boers. For instance, when in 1897 Kruger banned the Star, one Irishman noted he had no sympathy for the paper, for the treatment meted out to it was less severe than that handed out by the British in Ireland. Naturally, as the political situation worsened, a comparison between the Boer and Irish nations was inevitable, as both were being tormented by British imperialists. [36]

Anglophobia amongst continental Europeans on the Rand was transformed into Republican sympathy as well. The Germans were probably the most outspokenly sympathetic to the Republic, having been given their lead some years earlier by the 'Kruger telegram', though Kruger's boasting of his German descent probably helped as well. Business competition between British and German entrepreneurs on the Rand played a significant role while the working class Germans who belonged to the Vorwaerts Society had class-based reasons for their support. [37]

Other Europeans, particularly Hollanders, spoke out in favour of the Republic. Even the normally apolitical Scandinavians became increasingly vociferous. And though the pro-British press maintained that the American community supported the Uitlander struggle for representation, it is clear that many Americans did not. Even the American Consul was suspected by the British of being a Boer sympathizer. [38]

By September such support had become more meaningful to the Republicans; volunteer forces began seriously recruiting about this time. The reasons given by pro-Boer activists demonstrate the fact that their sympathy had grown out of both class antagonism to the Rand Lords, and nationalist ardour.

On the 16th of September, Bain called a meeting on Market Square to make an appeal for the enrollment of volunteers for the Boer forces. The meeting had to be cancelled because of the size and "turbulence" of the "mob". Bain claimed that the men had been hired by the Reformers in order to keep him from speaking, a charge never proven.[39] Even though he was refused a hearing, volunteers began to organise.

Bain himself served as a recruiter for the First Irish Brigade, formed in early September. The reasons which motivated its members to join were outlined in its "Irish Manifesto". After a discussion of the Raid — which it said had been instigated by a "member of the Queen's Privy Council"— the manifesto went on to point out that a "number of English capitalists" along with this un-named cabinet minister, had continued their scheming, now bringing the two countries to war. The depth of their hatred for the English government, their primary reason for joining the Boers, is notable. The manifesto read:

> Irishmen! The Transvaal Boers have fought and bravely won their Independence. You have seen in your own country the effects of English rule; you have seen your fathers, your mothers, and your sisters suffer in themselves and in their children, poverty, nakedness, hunger, misery and oppression of the most dreadful kinds. You know that English rule has left your country desolate, and driven her children forth, homeless and penniless, to all the ends of the earth. You know that during those sixty years of Queen Victoria's reign, one and a half millions of your countrymen and women have perished of starvation! ... You know all of this, you have seen all of this, and we ask you, in the presence of the terrible apparition of your own perishing country, whether you are going to help bring the [same] curse upon the Transvaal? Vengence! Irishmen![40]

A Scandinavian Corps, growing out of the local club, was formed later that month. The reasons for its support of the Boers were presented by

E. Olsen-Mandalh. After reviewing the liberation struggles of the nordic people, he outlined the Scandinavians' view:

> Can we Scandinavians, with such a record, stand back ... and see the dearly-bought independence of this country taken away? Look at the ways and means used during the last years by the capitalists and their tools to ruin the country. [41]

In the month or so before the war a number of Uitlander volunteer corps were formed. There was a Russian unit, a French Corps (which guarded the mines), a Jewish commissariat committee, an Italian Scouting Corps, two Irish Brigades, an American Scouts, a Hollander Corps as well as the largest of the volunteer units, the German Corps. [42]

By the beginning of war, then, many non-British Uitlanders had displayed in a very tangible and meaningful way their sympathy for the Boer government and their dislike of the British. Their anglophobia was in a large part based upon their distrust of the Rand Lords, their fear of capitalist rule, as well as their own nationalist sympathies.

Meanwhile along the coast the British Uitlanders were beginning to become a burden to the colonial administration. [43] During the war most remained politically apathetic, but suspicious of the machinations of Milner and his Reformer advisors, vociferously "anti-capitalist" and not in the least interested in serving in the British volunteer corps. Instead, they expected the British Imperial government, which received donations from local committees at Home, to support them until such time as they could return to work on the Rand.

A few of the most radical British Uitlanders, such as E.B. Rose and J.T. Bain, remained in the Transvaal, openly and actively assisting the Republican cause. Hundreds of other British workers remained on the Rand, working in the mines and other industries, which was of great assistance to the Boers' war effort -- much to the disgust of Milner and his Reformers. [44]

In the five years before the Boer War, the Reformers sought to create an efficient industrial economy and to bring order and British culture to the Transvaal. Milner's assistance was essential to their success, for without him their grievances would have remained obscure and their cause little known. In order to initiate such fundamental change, though, it was necessary to take a hard line with Kruger. In order to justify this position, Milner needed the support — or at least the appearance of support — of the mass of Uitlanders.

Real unity, though, was difficult to achieve and almost impossible to maintain for any length of time. The Uitlanders were not homogeneous and their varied origins, class positions and interests, as well as their mobility and disillusionment with Transvaal politics made them resistant to unification. By 1897 there were concrete divisions within the Uitlander elite, based on differing political and economic interests. Also, as industrial unrest became more frequent after 1896, class conscious Uitlander workers were increasingly unlikely to follow capitalist-led political organisations.

In other words, inter-class and intra-class conflict hindered the Reformers' cause while industrial unrest and class-based organisations, such as the IILP, undermined their efforts to create the illusion of mass support for the Reformers and Milner's politics. But, since the appearance of unity was all that was needed, even a signature on a petition could be used to bolster the agitators' position and to support their contention that the overwhelming majority of Uitlanders was aggrieved by Kruger's actions.

In order to create this illusion of unity, economic conflict was not widely reported. None the less, it existed, and was fostered by the 1897-99 depression which compelled employers to reduce their working costs. Work stoppages

resulted when they cut wages, introduced piece work, or tried to replace expensive white workers with cheaper, generally black, labour.

After the war, when the capitalists had gained political power, the workers' fears were realised. For instance, employers were in a much better position to lower real wages and to replace white with non-white workers. The Uitlander working class -- despite the deportation of a number of class conscious labourers during the war -- did not accept its position passively, but sought to regain some of its power. As the Kruger government fell, organised labour lost an ally. It tried unsuccessfully to recruit another by asking Milner and Chamberlain for support. Failing this, the workers used the revitalised trade unions to organise industrial action when faced by worsening conditions. They also joined together to pursue class-based and racialist political goals.

For instance, in August 1902 the leadership of the Uitlander working class outlined several demands which reflected its roots in the Rand, its class awareness, its racialism, and its pre-war struggles. The workers wanted white male suffrage, the secret ballot, payment of members of the legislature, government administration of public services, free, secular and compulsory education, and electoral districts divided equally amongst the white population. They also championed the eight hour day for government employees, the end to "sweating" and the "subletting" system of work, a variety of health and safety measures for the mines, compulsory arbitration of labour disputes, and minimum wages for blacks and whites. They also advocated a graduated income tax on all earnings over £ 500 per year, a tax on land irrespective of improvements, prohibition of Asiatic labour importation, and they upheld the "unalienable right of the people to the unearned increment of all." [45] In other words, class divisions had not evaporated in the heat of battle.

From the time the Uitlander Council was created until the early reconstruction period the Rand capitalists managed to push their differences into the background and to unite behind Milner. Before the war they served as organisers and propagators of publicity. During the war they served as advisors and as leaders of the refugee committees along the coast. Their participation gave credence to the belief that all of the Uitlanders were well represented before the High Commissioner.

But the causes of conflict were too deep seated to suppress, and the result was that conflict, discontent and alternative organisations burst forth from the midst of Uitlander society to shatter that illusion of unity. Before the war attempts were made to crush such opposition, to discredit its leaders, and to suppress its representations. During the war, attempts were made to subvert the opposition, to co-opt its leaders and to ignore its representations. In both cases, the Reformers and Milner were mostly successful.

Hence, the view which predominated then, and which has been passed on in history texts since, was that the Uitlanders were by and large solidly behind Milner and they were joined together as one community to seek the assistance of the Imperial government in their struggle against the tyrant Kruger.

NOTES

1 Milner to Chamberlain, 4 May 1899

2 Greene to Milner, 7 April 1899, private and confidential

3 Standard and Diggers' News, 8, 9 and 10 Dec 1897

4 H.C. Thompson, The Supreme Problem in South Africa (London, 1900), p. 12

5 Star, 8 Sept 1897 and Standard and Diggers' News, 17 Dec 1897 and 18 Jan 1899.

6 For hotel employees, see Star, 22 July 1899, Standard and Diggers' News, 18 Jan 1897, 12 March 1897 and 25 July 1899. For printers, see Elaine Katz, A Trade Union Aristocracy, (Johannesburg: 1976), pp. 25-26; A.J Downes, Printers' Saga (Johannesburg, 1952), pp. 804 and 814; and Report of the Transvaal Indigency Commission, 1906-1908, evidence by H.W. Sampson, pp. 95 and 97.

7 Standard and Diggers' News, 2 July 1898.

8 Star, 8 Aug 1898.

9 South African Mining Journal, IV, 34, 25 May 1895.

10 Standard and Diggers' News, 27 May 1899.

11 Standard and Diggers' News, 21 June 1899; also see 17 and 22 June 1899.

12 Fiddes to Milner, 7 April 1899, private.

13 Fitzpatrick to J. Wernher, 6 April 1899 and Fiddes to Milner, 7 April 1899.

14 Star, 21 to 27 April 1899. For negotiations, see Star, 22 April 1899; Thomas Pakenham, The Boer War (London, 1979), pp. 54-56; A.H. Duminy and W.R. Guest, Fitzpatrick (Johannesburg, 1976), Chapter 5 and J.P. Fitzpatrick, The Transvaal From Within, (London, 1899), pp. 345-51.

15 Star, 28 April 1899.

16 See Diana Cammack, "Class, Politics and War: A Socio-Economic Study of the Uitlanders of the Witwatersrand, 1897-1902," (University of California, Irvine, Ph. D., 1983), Chapter 2.

17 Fiddes to Milner, 7 April 1899, private.

18 Standard and Diggers' News, 28 and 30 March, 14 April, 11 May, 30 June and 7 July 1899.

19 South African Mining Journal, VIII, 409, 5 Aug 1899 and see, 409, 12 Aug 1899. Also see Standard and Diggers' News, 3 to 7 Aug 1899 and Star, 3 and 4 Aug 1899.

20 Standard and Diggers' News, 21 April 1899 and Star, 22 April 1899.

21 Greene to Milner, 6 May 1899, and see Standard and Diggers' News, 16 May 1899.

22 Star, 1 June 1899 and P.J. Meyer to J. Emrys Evans, 20 April 1899.

23 Star, 29 Aug 1899.

24 Milner to Chamberlain, 9 May 1899.

25 Katz, p. 187; Standard and Diggers' News, 10 May and 7 July 1899; "Platform of the International Independent Labour Party," attached to letter from G. Marshall, Secretary of IILP to Chairman of the Government Ruling Commission, 5 Oct 1899 in Argief Johannesburg: Regeringskommissie, Witwatersrand Gouldvelde, Afdeling Rus en Orde, 540, Permits (Transvaal Government Archives, Pretoria)

26 Standard and Diggers' News, 6 June and 7 July, 1899 and "Platform," ibid.

27 Standard and Diggers' News, 10 and 15 May 1899.

28 Standard and Diggers' News, 5 June 1899 and Star, 5 June 1899.

29 Star, 5 June 1899 and see Standard and Diggers' News, 15 May 1899.

30 F.J. Grobler, "Die Invloed op die Suid-Afrikaanse Politiek, 1886-1924", (University of Potschefstrooom, Ph. D., 1968), p. 10.

31 Star, 5 June 1899 but compare Standard and Diggers' News, 5 June 1899.

32 Star, 12 July 1899 and Standard and Diggers' News, 14, 18, and 31 July 1899.

33 Standard and Diggers' News, 18 and 31 July and 10 Aug 1899.

34 See Standard and Diggers' News and Star, Aug-Sept 1899, passim. Also see E.B. Rose, The Truth About the Transvaal (London, 1902), p. 33.

35 Standard and Diggers' News, 4 Aug 1899.

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39 Standard and Diggers' News, 18 and 19 Sept 1899.

40 Standard and Diggers' News, 28 Sept 1899. Also see Ruda, p. 204 and the Star, 5 Sept 1899.

41 Standard and Diggers' News, 29 Sept 1899.

42 Standard and Diggers' News, 2 and 30 Sept, 5 and 17 Oct and 2 Nov 1899 and 3 March 1900; Star, 24 and 25 Aug and 11 Sept 1899. Also see H.H. Auson, "Foreign Volunteer Corps, 1899-1902", pp. 4 and 5 (JPL) and Henry John May, Music of the Guns (London, 1970), pp. 103 and 115.

43 For further information about the Uitlander refugees, see Diana Cammack, "The Politics of Discontent," Journal of Southern African Studies, 8, 2, April 1982.

44 Cammack, "Class, Politics and War," Chapters 4 and 5.

45 London Times, 4 Aug 1902.

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