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SUBIMPERIALISM, PRIMITIVE ACCUMULATION, AND STATE FORMATION: THE MAKING OF A BOER REPUBLIC

Timothy Keegan

In 1854, after more than six years of attempted rule over the diverse peoples of the large territory between the Orange and Vaal rivers, the British authorities withdrew their sovereignty and handed over power to the provisional government of the newly created Orange Free State Republic. To the liberal scholars who from the 1920s sought to challenge 'colonial' perspectives on South Africa's past, this was an event of central significance. They saw 1854 as a great turning point; for it was the point at which the British abandoned their obligations to the African peoples of southern Africa. British withdrawal implied a catastrophic retreat of the forces of enlightenment, a capitulation to the forces of the frontier. The British had an opportunity to stamp their authority on the future of South Africa; but they failed the test.(1)

To de Kiewiet, for example, the fundamental thrust behind Britain's attempts in the 1830s and 1840s to control and dominate Boers wherever they trekked (including the annexation of Transorangia in 1848) was philanthropic. The issue was a simple one: was the British government 'to follow up the trekkers for the sake of the natives, or was it to let the trekkers be for the sake of economy?'. The former tendency predominated up to the early 1850s. But then, the 'rise to power of free trade ideas with their intolerance of unremunerative expenditure... caused the eclipse of humanitarian policy'. By recognising Boer independence and renouncing responsibility for Boer actions in the interior, the British 'formally resolved to have no more to do in any form with natives and native problems' beyond the colonial frontiers. 'Not the Boers but the natives were the enemy now.... Native interests were frankly thrown to the winds.' 'The Great Trek had conquered. South Africa was a land divided' concluded de Kiewiet. And imperial withdrawal condemned South Africa to a future in which the republican north would be 'the foundation on which all South Africa would build its political future'.(2)

In Eric Walker's opinion, the years of British rule in Transorangia were 'among the most fateful in the history of South Africa'. The momentous question at issue for South Africa as a whole was whether relations with African peoples 'were to accord with the liberal rules already fairly established in the original colony, or with the ideas which the Trekkers had departed from the colony to preserve'. Walker regarded the abandonment as 'perhaps the most momentous step in South Africa's history' -

splitting South Africa into an illiberal north and liberal south, 'as sharply divided from one another as were the North and the South of the United States'; and, unlike the United States, it was the illiberal section that eventually dictated the terms of reunification. To Walker, abandonment was the final consummation of the 'tragedy of the Great Trek'.(3)

More recently, the historian Arthur Keppel-Jones, asking whether the apartheid order could have been avoided, concluded that the original 'wrong turning' had, again, been the failure to maintain British rule north of the Orange in 1854. If that had been accomplished, 'the Cape and its institutions and traditions would have become and remained dominant in a united South Africa'. The 'Cape system... would have prevailed so widely, and been so deeply entrenched, that the rival system on the outer fringes of the Union might well, by today, have collapsed before it'.(4)

These interpretations characterised enlightened historical writing right up to the 1960s. They imply some fundamental assumptions about the dynamic forces behind the processes of racial stratification and subjugation. Racial supremacy was seen as a function of Boer ethnic experience on distant frontiers, of Boer classlessness, of an uncommercialised economy largely given over to subsistence, undifferentiated and unstratified. The imagery of the unenterprising Boer pastoralist, innocent of any dynamic economic impulses or influences, isolated from metropolitan culture and metropolitan capitalism, is still to be found in serious academic work.(5)

This paper focuses on colonial economy and society in the crucial but recently neglected middle years of the nineteenth century, on the assumption that only by understanding the dynamic processes of accumulation and dispossession in pre-industrial South Africa can the complex origins of the contemporary racial order be fully understood. Its specific concern is the Transorangian interior in a particularly revealing period of social, economic and political transition. In attempting to explain the origins and significance of the Boer republic founded in 1854, the paper explores the relationship between imperial expansionism and colonial capitalism; and it examines the emergence of ruling elites, the forms of accumulation they employed and the nascent state structures they relied on to support and legitimate their activities. A skeletal narrative section will follow, and then the issues that are raised there will be discussed and analysed in a concluding section (pp. 18 <u>seq.</u>).

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From the 1820s <u>trekboers</u> were settling for shorter or longer periods north and south of the lower Caledon River, land to which Moshoeshoe laid claim, even though it was largely uninhabited by Basotho. Moshoeshoe did not object to their settling there (although he disputed their claims to own the land and responded

with annoyance when he heard that farms were being bought and sold). The Boers were quite happy to recognise Moshoeshoe's political patronage and his authority over the land by applying to him for rights to settle individual places.(6)

These trekboers, far removed from the hub of British speculative, commercial and productive enterprise, were mainly loyalists, whose gradual movement northwards did not imply a conscious break with British authority or the colonial economy.(7) These trekboers should be distinguished from the Voortrekkers, whose participation in the complex movement of emigration that became known as the 'Great Trek' from 1836 constituted a planned act of rebellion against the colonial authorities.(8) The Voortrekkers came typically from the eastern Cape and Midland districts, where the capitalist economy was more developed, and where Boer commercial networks and productive systems were being undermined by the penetration of British capital and British humanitarianism. The Voortrekkers initially moved well beyond the furthest reaches of white settlement, establishing their own minimalist political systems known as the Maatschappy (literally 'company').

Many of the trekboers do not seem to have been in any way inclined toward a policy of territorial segregation between white and black areas of settlement and between spheres of colonial and chiefly authority. Just as they had no objection to recognising Moshoeshoe's authority over the land, they were also quite happy to continue living in an area over which Moshoeshoe's political authority was still recognised as reigning supreme (although in customary fashion he did not interfere with the lives or domestic affairs of the Boers). While they had not consciously thrown off British authority (unlike the Voortrekkers), they were not particularly concerned to elicit British intervention in 'closing' the frontier and placing geographical limits on Moshoeshoe's authority and on Basotho settlement.(9)

This partial submission on the part of the local Boers to Moshoeshoe's patronage in the lower Caledon valley was undoubtedly related to the extent of trading relationships between the Boers of the district and the Basotho chiefs. For very few was trading more than a periodic, small-scale activity, both for consumption and resale, locally and in the trading towns south of the Orange. The Boers generally found it easier and more suited to their own extensive pastoral economy to buy their grain rather than to grow it. But there were those who enjoyed more regular and profitable intercourse with Thaba Bosiu (Moshoeshoe's capital), and nobody more so than the Hoffmans. J.P. Hoffman, later to become the first president of the Orange Free State Republic, was a confidant and adviser to Moshoeshoe, whom he visited often, and supplied the chief with regular and large supplies of ammunition in exchange for grain and cattle. Many others followed the Hoffmans' example. It was little wonder that Moshoeshoe's store of ammunition was regarded as the most impressive of any chief in southern Africa. Guns and gunpowder seem to have been liberally available to the Boers from the

merchants of the eastern Cape and the storekeepers of the frontier towns.(10) The bonds of interdependence between Boer and Basotho, based in large degree on trading relationships, were growing stronger in the 1840s, and were to crystallise out eventually into a strong and self-conscious pro-Moshoeshoe faction by the early 1850s, once British imperialism had begun to threaten the networks of interdependence between white and black.

Confronted with the unsettled situation north of the colonial boundaries, Governor Napier in the early 1840s was very receptive to the idea that a treaty should be entered into with Moshoeshoe, the major established indigenous authority north of the Orange and thus a useful collaborator in the maintenance of stability in Transorangia. It seemed to them that the best way to inhibit conflict in the relative power vacuum of the interior was to secure alliances with the more important indigenous rulers, and to warn the Boers that any show of aggression toward the chiefdoms would not be tolerated. Napier drew up a treaty with Moshoeshoe in 1843 in close consultation with John Philip, leader of the missionary lobby in the Colony, who was one of the few men in Cape Town with first-hand knowledge of the situation north of the Orange, and who enjoyed considerable standing in ruling circles. All Moshoeshoe's territorial claims were recognised - including much land occupied by Boers.(11) To the British philanthropists (such as Philip) white settlers, British as well as Boer, were regarded as being disruptive of civilising and Christianising enterprise.(12) Moshoeshoe's state was clearly the major expanding power in the Transorangian interior, and the missionary lobby looked to him as a powerful counterweight to settler interests.

Given the fluidity of group dynamics and political allegiance north of the Orange, imperial involvement, once begun, could only increase. In 1845 a British Resident was permanently stationed to represent British interests north of the Orange. Major Henry Warden was appointed to this post, and set up his headquarters on the centrally situated farm Bloemfontein. The new arrangements for the time being underwrote Moshoeshoe's position as the paramount power and as Britain's collaborator-in-chief in the far interior.(13)

But once the British settler interests had recaptured a position of pre-eminence within the oligarchy that ruled the Cape Colony (as they did under Governor Smith's regime after 1847), political fortunes north of the Orange changed as well. Moshoeshoe and his people quickly came to be seen by the British administration as predatory villains. They were to learn that the reality of imperial power was less rosy than its promise, as represented by the missionary lobby. Once Transorangia had fallen under direct British rule, Moshoeshoe was to discover that he had a lot more in common with the Boers than he had ever supposed.

Moshoeshoe was increasingly to be seen by the British settler elite, spreading out from their base in the eastern Cape,

as a force that had to be reckoned with. For to them it seemed that no prosperity or progress was possible unless black power were destroyed, blacks were incorporated under white rule, and settler interests prevailed. These settlers of 1820 had developed a corporate ideology of material progress and improvement that incorporated a strong aversion to black political and economic independence and a strong commitment to imperial expansionism. Making South Africa safe for British settlement and capital investment was the major priority. Empire and enterprise were two sides of the same coin in their eyes. The essence of the imperial mission was the promotion of profit and economic development. Accumulation from production, commerce and speculation to the benefit of the empire was the historical role of colonial settlers. Thus public good and private gain were conflated. The extension of colonial authority over virgin territory, the opening up of land to private ownership and productive investment, the subjugation of indigenous rulers to the imperial will - all these were in the view of the British settler elite beneficial and inevitable developments in the empire of settlement. Extension of territorial commitments and the exercise of imperial power in the interests of settler accumulation and prosperity was to them self-evidently the business of empire.(14)

This settler elite found itself in an especially favoured position to pursue its interests during the brief, dramatic period of imperial expansionism initiated by High Commissioner Sir Harry Smith who arrived at the Cape late in 1847. Smith had been closely associated with formulating and implementing the short-lived policy of conquest and overrule against the Xhosa chiefdoms under D'Urban's governorship in 1835-6,(15) He now seized the opportunity to vindicate the discredited frontier policies with which he had been associated. Annexation of territory, military rule, and the dismantling of chiefly authority were Smith's prescriptions. Expenditure on unnecessary military responsibilities was unacceptable to the politicians and officials in London; so Smith fell back on the dubious and ultimately foolhardy assumption that the required resources could be generated indigenously. If needed in the future, the Boers should be called out to provide the colonial authorities with the necessary military force. Thus were the chiefdoms to be permanently pacified, at minimal long-term expense to the exchequer.(16)

Smith believed that he could bend black chiefdoms and white colonists alike to his will through the shere force of his personality, and even use the colonists to enforce British hegemony in the region in the absence of an adequate imperial military force. Smith ascribed all that had gone wrong in southern Africa since the mid-1830s to the policy of drift and concession that he associated with the system of treaties with the chiefdoms initiated in 1836. British power and authority had to be brutally asserted once and for all if peace and security were to prevail and the disaffected Boers were to regain their confidence in British rule.(17) Never was so much to be

accomplished with so few resources. In the event Smith promised far more than he could deliver, and succeeded in plunging the colonial government to its lowest ebb in public esteem and legitimacy. Far from stabilising southern Africa, he was to militarise it.

Many of Smith's perceptions had been formed in association with the settler gentry centred on Graham's Town, with whom he had been so intimate during his period in the eastern Cape making war on the Xhosa chiefdoms in the 1830s, and whose ignominy at the hands of the philanthropists in 1835 he had shared. Like Smith, the British settlers had never forgotten or forgiven those who had painted them and their policies toward the Xhosa in the blackest light. Not surprisingly, news of Smith's appointment was greeted with unbridled enthusiasm by the British settlers.(18) Particularly significant was the appointment of Richard Southey, a leading settler with whom Smith had continued to correspond since his departure from the Cape in the 1830s, as the Secretary to the new High Commissioner.(19)

However, for the settler elite, Smith's arrival at the Cape was more than a vindication of their cause; it was also an opportunity. The settler diaspora from their original base in the Albany district had by the end of 1847 already penetrated beyond the Orange and Caledon rivers. For example the Halse brothers had already put down roots in the lower Caledon valley, had started speculating in land, and were heavily involved in money-lending and commercial enterprise. They had also not hesitated to exploit the networks of influence to make known to the authorities in Cape Town the desirability of extending colonial boundaries to incorporate them and validate their claims to land.(20)

Smith had probably already determined on annexing Transorangia before he set out on his grand tour of the interior shortly after his arrival at the Cape. At the beginning of February he was in Natal, and on the banks of the Tugela River he issued his proclamation annexing Transorangia.(21) Smith assured Grey in London that the new Sovereignty would be self-financing and self-policing.(22) The inspecting of land claims and the issuing of land certificates were essential to the establishment of a rudimentary state system as the administration looked to quitrents, land sales and transfer dues as the foundation of the new state's revenue. Revenue was also to be generated from commerce. A licence of £50 was to be payable by every trader and storekeeper. Further, land title was to be conditional on the rendering of military service when called upon by the British Resident in Bloemfontein. Farms were to be forfeited should these conditions not be met.(23) Smith had a very optimistic view of his ability to carry the mass of the Boers with him (to the point of relying on burgher commandos to compensate for the shortage of regular troops); but he also probably envisioned that an influx of settlers and capital would rapidly create the base for a more sophisticated state structure. This certainly was the sanguine expectation of many of the prominent British

settlers in the Cape, ready to take advantage of any speculative opportunity presented by the extension of British government northwards.

The administration of the new territory was to be extremely rudimentary - three magistrates cum civil commissioners (stationed at the Voortrekker settlement of Winburg, at Bloemfontein, and at the new town of Smithfield in the lower Caledon River region), each with a clerk and two constables. A small Cape Corps force was stationed with the Resident, Henry Warden (who was also magistrate in Bloemfontein district). Those appointed to the magisterial posts were men, predictably, with very close ties to the British settler elite of the eastern Cape. Their first duty was to inspect land claims, issue certificates and impose quitrents. Part-time, elected commandants and field cornets from the burgher community, loyalists all, made up the bulk of the official presence in the new Sovereignty.(24)

Contrary to Smith's assumptions, the great mass of the Emigrant Boers north of the Modder River, now augmented by A.W.J. Pretorius and his angry and impoverished followers leaving Natal to escape British rule there, were not inclined to submit to further British intervention in their lives, and were quite prepared to obey the call to arms or to retreat further northward should they be obliged to do so in order to preserve their independence from British rule.(25) Smith's very basic arrangements were barely being implemented when all his optimistic expectations of Boer compliance in the Sovereignty were challenged by an uprising of Boers under Pretorius's leadership. Smith marched northwards with a military force, the Boers under Pretorius were swept aside at Boomplaats in August 1848, and British sovereignty was reproclaimed. But the High Commissioner was undoubtedly embarrassed at this turn of events. The peace that prevailed on the eastern Cape frontier was very uneasy, and Smith's limited military resources were dangerously overextended.(26) In reality, British power north of the Orange was just as fragile and vulnerable after the Boer rebellion of 1848 as before it. Many of the more irreconcilable Boers moved north of the Vaal River away from British rule; but those remaining, whose political affiliations were weak and unsustained, soon grew used to the unintrusive British administration, and quitrents began to be paid regularly.(27)

Meanwhile, the British settler presence, particularly in the southern part around the lower Caledon region, was becoming more entrenched. Led by the Halse brothers, they continued to assure the High Commisioner of their imperial resolve and loyalty, and to agitate for a greater commitment of military power to the Sovereignty. Their interests were crucially served by the inflation of land prices that Smith's policies of imperial expansionism tended to promote. Those in the know of what was in the offing were able to buy up land from Boers prior to the extension of British dominion, and immediately after Smith's proclamation of February 1848 farms that had cost £100-200 were fetching £1000 as the demand for land by speculators soared -

particularly in the south of the new Sovereignty. Those who were in the best position to profit by this inflation in prices were those closest to the High Commissioner - the civil and military officials.(28) Prices then sagged as Boer rebelliousness threatened the collapse of British rule. Many of the Boers who moved northward across the Vaal River after the insurrection had collapsed disposed of their land claims. Large numbers of these farms in the northern half of the territory were bought up by British officials and speculators for very low prices, £18 to £30 being typical. A few years later these farms fetched perhaps £600 or £1300.(29)

Sales of unclaimed land were an important source of revenue, although it was a general assumption amongst proponents of British immigration that the development of landed resources depended on allowing settlers access to waste land on the easiest terms possible.(30) While little land in Bloemfontein or Caledon River districts was unclaimed by white owners (and that waterless, inferior land), the vast stretches of land in the northeast above the Natal escarpment had remained largely unsettled by the Boers, and by the late 1840s only small isolated villages remained of the dense Sotho population that had lived there prior to the difaqane. The Vaal River district as this region came to be called was quickly perceived to be a speculator's paradise, where large numbers of unoccupied farms could be had at small price. The administration began in 1850 to dispose of farms by the dozen here at the upset price of £20 each. It was envisaged that the land would be settled and productively utilised by the new owners. But this injunction was brazenly and inevitably ignored.(31)

Prominent among those who grabbed farms in the district were members of the Cape settler elite, for example Robert Godlonton, editor of the Graham's Town Journal and leading spokesman for the Graham's Town gentry.(32) Henry Southey, brother of the Secretary to the High Commissioner, even set himself up in the district as a land agent for his friends.(33) Furthermore, free grants of land were a form of patronage reserved for those specially favoured at Smith's court, and one which was very partially allocated - to men like the Halses and A.H. Bain, a scion of another prominent 1820-settler family, who was granted a 16 000-acre farm for his services as a transport contractor in the Boer rebellion of 1848.(34) High-placed individuals who owned six or twelve farms were not uncommon. Indeed, it was in the nature of government by patronage in this pre-democratic age that there was a close relationship between office and profit.(35)

But the visions of rapid development of the landed resources of the Sovereignty proved illusory for the most part, and there was no flood of new British settlers into the interior of southern Africa such as the imperialists had hoped would promote British power and profit. Nevertheless, farming in the Caledon River district, where some improved farms were fetching perhaps £3000 by 1851, was becoming more capitalised than elsewhere. The

first agricultural show north of the Orange was held in the district town of Smithfield in April 1853.(36) A prime example of productive capitalism in the district was provided again by the Halses.(37)

The interests of the British settler elite were well represented in The Friend of the Orange River Sovereignty, a newspaper established in mid-1850 in Bloemfontein by Robert Godlonton. The Friend, under the editorship of Godlonton's nephew Robert White, echoed its older relative The Graham's Town Journal in pushing for a more militant, aggressive, aggrandising commitment of imperial power on the frontiers of settlement. In true Godlontonian fashion, the newspaper flayed those pusillanimous spirits who put the dictates of economy before the greater glory of British arms and settler profit. The Friend pursued an often exaggerated campaign to promote the benefits of the Sovereignty as a field for settlement and investment, reminiscent of the tone of the settler propaganda of the day in the eastern Cape.(38) But in general these remained unfulfilled expectations in the short term. Lack of confidence in the intentions of politicians and officials in London, who were very unenthusiastic for territorial expansionism in general and for this new encumbrance in particular, was a severe obstacle to investment in productive resources other than the land itself as a speculation.

Despite the growth of mercantile enterprise in the towns of the Sovereignty (based on wool, cattle, hides, ostrich feathers, Basotho grain, and ivory from the further interior), small-scale, intermittent trading opportunities for Boers with wagons were growing all the time, particularly with the Basotho, whose grain was a crucial trade item, sustaining the Sovereignty population as well as that of the eastern and northeastern parts of the Cape Colony. The licence to trade was quickly dropped from £50 to £10 because of the widespread evasion by itinerants.(39) During the Sovereignty period Bloemfontein became a centre for the Basotho grain trade, and Lesotho was regarded as the 'principal granary' of the Sovereignty. The high road eastward from Bloemfontein to the rich arable lands controlled by the Basotho was well-travelled by the wagons of Boer, Bastaard and Barolong middlemen.(40) The Basotho chiefs and their missionaries were keen on keeping the trade routes open;(41) and these trading networks formed the basis of a strong pro-Moshoeshoe sentiment amongst many of the burghers, that ran directly counter to the imperialist spirit that motivated the administration and its settler supporters. The trading ties between Moshoeshoe and many of the Boers of the Caledon River district particularly (on whom the Basotho relied for their illicit supply of arms and powder) were to become politically significant as the policies of the British administration toward the Basotho became more militant and bellicose.

Moshoeshoe's regional power was increasingly seen as an obstacle to the achievement of the greater settler-dominated dominion that the settler imperialists were seeking, and to the

further development of settler capitalism in its primitive phase. The inexorable expansion of Basotho settlement as their numbers and security and wealth increased, at the expense of the smaller, weaker black communities on the western side of the Caledon,(42) was a threat to settler accumulation and prosperity in the longer term. The truth was that a strong, independent Lesotho had ceased to be a useful instrument of British policy in the South African interior. The breaking of Basotho power and the expropriation of Basotho resources, most obviously the fertile arable lands of the Caledon valley, were now increasingly the dynamic motive forces shaping imperial policy as it was experienced by Moshoeshoe and his people.(43)

A very restrictive boundary was imposed that decisively separated the Boers in the lower Caledon from Moshoeshoe's patronage, and annexed a very large extent of Basotho territory (as recognised by previous British governors) and many Basotho villages to British rule.(44) Many of the Boers who were thus decisively brought under British dominion discovered, when confronted by the realities of imperial expansionism, that Moshoeshoe's patronage was more attractive than that of the British.(45) This disillusionment amongst many Boers grew as imperial power on the frontiers of settlement became more and more intrusive and aggressive toward the Basotho, especially as the beneficiaries tended to be British settlers and their Boer notable allies.(46) Those more radical Maatschappy men further north who had already learned this lesson, and who had departed from the eastern districts of the Cape from 1835 onward with the intention of moving well beyond the reach of colonial authority, were also to demonstrate that when it came to conflict between an aggressive imperialism and an indigenous black chiefdom, they preferred to ally with the latter rather than the former.

Spurred by constant pressure from British settler interests (amongst whom the Halses were predominant), Resident Warden was forced into an increasingly militaristic posture toward the powerful Basotho chiefdom of Moshoeshoe, even though his military resources were very limited (especially after the Xhosa chiefdoms recommenced the war of resistance at the end of 1850 that had petered out shortly before Smith's arrival at the Cape). Warden had little choice by 1851 other than to seek confrontation with the Basotho. The most vociferous supporters and beneficiaries of British imperialism were clamouring for war.(47) Economic confidence, on which immigration, investment, the value of property and speculative prospects were all founded, was at a low ebb and unlikely to flourish unless British power were decisively and irrevocably asserted. The future of the Sovereignty was at stake, for no one could be in any doubt that should it fail to develop a self-sustaining economic momentum, the fragile tolerance of the politicians in London would be quickly exhausted.

One important faction opposed to the imperialists were the merchants and lawyers of Bloemfontein, who quickly developed a corporate political identity that was more and more unsympathetic

with the policies of dispossession toward the Basotho pursued by Warden's administration. They generally espoused laissez-faire policies toward the chiefdoms and supported the promotion of peaceful commerce.(48) In this the Bloemfontein bourgeoisie (some of whom after all were German Jews and not Britons) was quite unlike the war party based in Smithfield further south, who were ideologically far more attuned to the governing Cape oligarchy and the eastern Cape settler interests, and looked to an expanding imperial power to create a greater South African dominion firmly under British control. These group dynamics were to be fully activated during the legitimacy crisis of 1851, brought on by the increasing militarisation of British policy on the frontier.

Just as the Cape Colony had been plunged into crisis as a result of Smith's attempts to subvert the Xhosa chiefdoms, so the Sovereignty administration was confronted with a massive crisis of legitimacy in mid-1851. Reliant largely on burgher forces in his attempt to assert imperial domination over the Basotho and to expel them from the newly alienated lands, Resident Warden precipitated a mass campaign of resistance from the burghers, who overwhelmingly refused to obey his call to arms. His unimposing force consisting of the small garrison at Bloemfontein, and his Barolong and Griqua allies, was humiliated by the Basotho at the Battle of Vierfoet in June 1851. All threats of confiscation of property and all inducements in the form of promises of cattle booty failed to draw more than a few dozen loyalist Boers from their homesteads.(49)

The following months witnessed an astonishing rapprochement between Boer and Basotho in opposition to British authority. The Basotho chiefs spared no effort to assure the burghers of their peaceful and neighbourly intentions, sending letters to this effect (penned by Boer radicals like J. van der Colff who had attached himself to Moshoeshoe, as well as by the French missionaries) to well-disposed Boers in the districts for general distribution.(50) In the Caledon River district the British-appointed Commandant J.T. Snyman, who had been increasingly unsure where his loyalties lay, actively dissuaded Boers from joining Warden's commando, protesting the Basotho's innocence of any wrongdoing.(51) Boer delegations wended their way to Thaba Bosiu (Moshoeshoe's capital) in order to sign treaties of friendship and co-operation with him and his people - all this despite the fact that he and his people had been officially denounced as the enemies of the crown.(52)

In August the magistrate in Smithfield, T. Vowe, reported indignantly that many of the Boers in his district had expressed their conviction that Moshoeshoe was still their friend, 'and why should they not visit and trade with him, instead of being compelled to go to war with him?' When Vowe heard that the renegade Commandant Snyman was on his way to Thaba Bosiu to pay a courtesy visit to Moshoeshoe, he wrote in impotent rage to Warden demanding that 'this indiscriminate communication between British subjects and these enemies... be put a stop to without

(53)

delay'.

Indeed, wagons were still plying the road from Lesotho to Burghersdorp across the Orange River, bearing merchandise northward and bringing grain southward to feed the markets of the Cape Colony, despite the state of war that officially existed. A trader in Moshoeshoe's territory expressed his surprise to discover that 'while Moshoeshoe is proclaimed an enemy and war declared against him, a number of Boers are living in peace and security in the heart of the enemy's country'.(54) What was particularly galling to the imperialists were the considerable quantities of arms and ammunition still being ferried into Lesotho.(55) A correspondent from Burghersdorp south of the Orange River wrote in August:

> A great number of Boers from your district [the Sovereignty] have visited this place during this and the past weeks with loads of Kaffir corn, which they dispose of well, taking the chief part of their payment in powder and lead. It has been remarked that they all speak in the most friendly way of the Chief Moshesh and the Bassoutas.(56)

The authorities were unable to put a stop to this treasonable intercourse, carried on with the connivance of the Burghersdorp traders who were not in the habit of asking questions.

The leadership of the pro-Moshoeshoe faction in the district fell to J.P. Hoffman more than anyone else. A meeting of some 120 burghers on the lower Caledon that he chaired passed resolutions ascribing the 'pitiable state' of the region to British policies of aggression toward the chiefdoms. They particularly condemned the forced imposition of the boundary line in 1849 (which as we have seen constituted a massive annexation of territory that the Basotho claimed, including land on which many of these burghers lived), 'against the wishes and interests of his [Moshoeshoe's] people'. This clearly implied that these burghers were more than content to continue living under Moshoeshoe's patronage rather than under British rule.(57) Even the Resident Warden himself conceded that many Boers made no secret of the fact 'that they prefer the rule of the Chief Moshesh to that of the British Government'.(58)

Although there was not the same pro-Moshoeshoe faction further north, where most of the Boers had historically looked to the 'Maatschappy' to legitimate their claims to land, the mass of the Boers clearly saw their Basotho neighbours as less threatening than the intrusion of an aggressive imperialism. No sooner had Warden's small force retreated toward Bloemfontein after the debacle at Vierfoet than the small group of loyalist burghers of Winburg district - those, mainly British-appointed field cornets and commandants, who had joined Warden's force - began to be subjected to a systematic campaign of plunder by a joint Basotho-Boer commando, that seems to have enjoyed a degree of tacit support from substantial numbers of burghers.(59)

The discrimination with which these depradations took place

suggests a carefully plotted war of nerves aimed at the political allies of the British administration amongst the Boers of the district. Those who had not taken up arms were left untouched. 'The frontier is now in the hands of Kaffirs an· disaffected Boers' wrote magistrate T. Biddulph. 'Only those who went on commando are singled out for plunder - not one of the disaffected has lost a horse.' By October all the loyalist office holders in the district had been 'obliged to fly their homes, and are now wandering about with their families, and the remnant of their flocks'. 'The passive resistance of the majority has succeeded' wrote Biddulph; 'they hold constant traitorous discourse with the Kaffir chiefs' and 'have headed marauding bands of Kaffir thieves into the immediate neighbourhood of Winburg'.(60)

The Bloemfontein bourgeoisie, who, as we have seen, resisted the administration's policies of military dispossession and advocated laissez-faire policies toward the chiefdoms, compiled a memorial at a public meeting in which they condemned the agitations of the war party and the aggression against the Basotho. If Moshoeshoe had not been 'restrained by motives of wisdom, generosity and forebearance', he would have been provoked into inflicting 'irreparable damage' on the people of the Sovereignty, they warned.(61)

But the agitations of the war party, most obviously represented in the Caledon River district to the south, where the Halse brothers and their colleagues constituted a forward base of the British settler interests of the Cape Colony, reached a new peak of militarist fervour. The Basotho, declaimed Henry Halse at a public meeting in Smithfield in September, should be reduced to a state of cannibalism in the interests of the Empire and its loyal subjects. It was agreed that it was imperative that the war against the Basotho be carried to its limits. It was not only British settlers who supported war policies; a number of prominent Boers, some of them office holders (field cornets, justice of the peace), forming for the most part an incipient landed elite (H.J. Wessels and Henning Joubert were examples in the district), pinned their colours to the mast of British imperialism too.(62) However, in the crisis of 1851, those Boers who threw in their lot with the British against the Basotho, mostly it seems men of substance who saw in imperialism a means to advance their elite economic position, turned out to be quite a small minority.(63)

These developments virtually sealed the fate of the Orange River Sovereignty, for they finally confirmed the suspicions in London that Sir Harry Smith's expansionist policies were foolhardy and dangerous. In September 1851, upon hearing news of the debacle at Vierfoet and the humiliation of Warden's force by the Basotho, Earl Grey reminded the High Commissioner that the annexation of Transorangia had reluctantly been sanctioned in 1848 on the understanding that the white inhabitants had overwhelmingly supported the extension of British dominion, and on condition that the whole cost of administration of the new territory (including military expenses) was to be met by those

for whose benefit the annexation had been undertaken - the burghers. 'If the inhabitants will not support that authority, but on the contrary desire to be relieved from it, there is no British interest to be served by endeavouring to maintain it'. British authority was to be withdrawn as soon as this could be accomplished 'with safety and honour'.(64) Smith continued to believe that withdrawal would be disastrous and could yet be averted.(65) But his oligarchical regime, the interests it served and the ideals it cherished, had already been overtaken by events, in the Sovereignty as in the Cape Colony itself, and had been thoroughly discredited both in Britain and in South Africa.

The first step in the process of withdrawal was the recognition of the independence of the Transvaal Boers, and the formal renunciation by the British authorities of their claims to the Emigrants' allegiance as subjects. This was achieved at a meeting between the representatives of the High Commissioner and those of the Potchefstroom Raad on the Sand River in January 1852. Thus did the mass emigration of the disaffected Boers from the 1830s (the 'Great Trek' as it was later to be called) receive, for the first time, the official blessing of the British as a fait accompli. But the Sand River Convention went further; all British alliances with black chiefs were foresworn, and the Boers were crucially granted a monopoly of the supply of arms and ammunition from colonial ports. In all this, it provided a model for the terms under which independence was to be granted to the Sovereignty burghers two years later.(66)

In the first half of 1852 Smith withdrew in ignominy to Britain to be replaced by Sir George Cathcart as High Commissioner. Cathcart had no sympathy for the members of the old settler oligarchy with their base at Graham's Town, who had been the chief formulators and instruments of frontier policy under Smith.(67) He oversaw the introduction of a representative form of government (not yet fully responsible government due to the intractability of the eastern frontier where the Xhosa continued to resist subjugation) with a remarkably low non-racial franchise. Cathcart's administration represented a new departure in Cape politics; oligarchic government by patronage was something of the past.(68)

But withdrawing British sovereignty from the territory between the Orange and Vaal rivers with due regard for Grey's strictures about 'safety and honour' proved much more difficult and complicated than the initial annexation had been. It was delayed in part by changes of government in Britain. But once Smith's regime at the Cape had been replaced, abandonment was only a matter of time. However, Cathcart decided that first a brief display of force against Moshoeshoe was essential to the restoration of British prestige in the region. His military adventure in late 1852 was undertaken in the belief that continued British rule in Transorangia was counterproductive and profitless, and that a final assertion of British will and power was necessary before effect was given to this belief. The expedition by 2400 regular troops, including 1000 cavalry, was

undertaken with no great desire to wage protracted war against the chiefs, but merely to salvage some honour from the mess created by the discredited policies of imperial expansionism pursued by Smith's administration.(69)

However, the imperialists in the Sovereignty watched the approaching troops with very different expectations. Alarmed at rumours that a definite decision had been taken to abandon the territory, they believed that this was the last chance to assert British power once and for all, thereby establishing the conditions for the economic take-off that they had been anxiously predicting since 1848. But Cathcart's mission was hardly calculated to satisfy the sanguine expectations of the imperialists. Having elicited from Moshoeshoe a face-saving avowal of subservience to the paramount power, he withdrew. The Friend of Bloemfontein declared the campaign an impotent failure; the supremacy of British arms had manifestly not been asserted.(70) The imperialists in the Caledon River district in the south, where they were mostly strongly entrenched, were predictably enraged at this conclusive evidence of the failure of imperial will to establish British hegemony over the disparate political forces in the subcontinent. With the Halse brothers in the lead, they petitioned that those who had 'murdered and plundered Her Majesty's subjects' were thus 'emboldened to further aggression'. Land prices had tumbled as a result, and the morale of the British settlers had slumped dramatically.(71)

In his unrepentant response to this petition, the High Commissioner pointedly wrote that some persons were apparently 'disappointed that I did not, notwithstanding his submission, ... destroy the Chief Moshesh, in order that his rich lands might fall into other hands'. Some appeared 'to have anticipated, with no disinclination, a protracted Basuto War, requiring probably the expenditure of a large amount of British money for its maintenance' (a reference to the war-profiteering that had been the basis of so much accumulation for the settlers in the eastern Cape). Cathcart dismissed the imperialists in the Sovereignty as 'almost all land jobbers, possessed of title to numerous farms which they hold unoccupied with a view to profitable speculation', whose 'covetous and rapacious spirit' had been largely responsible for the destabilisation of the region.(72) Cathcart had an altogether more jaundiced attitude than his predecessor to the imperialist impulses on the frontiers of British settlement in South Africa.

Sir George Clerk was despatched as Special Commissioner to effect the disannexation, arriving eventually in Bloemfontein in August 1853. His task, quite crucially, was to forge a successor state that could be relied upon to carry on the imperial task without threatening a continual drain on the imperial exchequer. He was met with a furious, sustained crescendo of propaganda from the empire loyalists, determined to obstruct this act of betrayal. Like the Ulstermen of a later date, they threatened rebellion against the British authorities in order to secure continued British rule over them. Petitions and letters to The

Friend in Bloemfontein predicted the direst consequences should British sovereignty be withdrawn: the collapse of civilisation the annihilation and enslavement of the indigenous people, the ruin of the settlers. All the British in the Sovereignty were now united in the face of this threatened abandonment - including the Bloemfontein bourgeoisie, who feared (without real cause as it turned out) the collapse of the fragile linkages of credit and debt stretching from the colonial ports to the far interior, at the centre of which they operated, and who profited greatly by supplying the British garrison.(73)

But Clerk was not to be diverted from his task, which was in his own words 'to withdraw, if possible in a friendly manner, if not, to withdraw anyhow'.(74) He, like Governor Cathcart, had a shrewd understanding of the nature of the oligarchic interests that had dominated the making of imperial policy in southern Africa in recent years, and was not impressed by the intimidations of the settler imperialists - 'stirring and trafficking men' he called them.(75) He called a meeting of delegates from each field cornetcy with a view to drawing up a constitution for the self-governing state; but the loyalists succeeded in ensuring that their views predominated when the 95 delegates (who were not directly elected but indirectly nominated by the British-appointed local officials such as the field cornets) met in Bloemfontein in September 1853.(76) Confronted with their unco-operative attitude, Clerk simply set about finding other more amenable collaborators, undeterred by the furious objections of the loyalist delegates.(77)

This did not prove to be easy. In fact there was no great rush by burghers to take advantage of the Special Commissioner's determination to hand over the reins of government to anyone who would deal with him. But gradually an independence movement coalesced around a few men of diverse origin and political persuasion, some of them (like A.H. Stander) old Maatschappy rebels, others (like J.P. Hoffman and J.T. Snyman) members of the old pro-Moshoeshoe alliance, and even some British officials like P.M. Bester who had served as magistrate in the Vaal River district. Prominent in the movement were aliens such as A. Coqui, a Belgian Jewish trader from Harrismith, J. Groenendaal, an immigrant Dutch teacher, and J. Schnehage, a German storekeeper in Winburg. Stander in particular assiduously propagated a memorial at public meetings through the country, offering to take over the government on easy terms.(78) What is clear is that the strong anti-imperial instincts of the great bulk of the burgher population, that had plunged the Sovereignty into crisis and persuaded the British to withdraw their rule from north of the Orange, did not translate readily into a self-conscious republicanism or sense of national identity. Nevertheless, at a meeting in February 1854 attended by 27 representatives of the independence movement, the Bloemfontein Convention was drawn up and signed, despite the efforts of the townsfolk to disrupt the proceedings. The Orange Free State Republic was now ready to be born, with an elaborate constitution based on that of the United States of America.(79)

Meanwhile, Henry Halse and a group of his colleagues in the Caledon River district announced to the world in January amidst much publicity in the colonial newspapers that a fabulous gold reef had been discovered not far from the town of Smithfield and that a mining company was being floated, hoping to abort the abandonment by provoking a surge of speculative fever north of the Orange River. Clerk coolly responded that 'the inhabitants of Smithfield would find it more advantageous to their interests' to accept the inevitable than 'to cling to hopes which cannot be realised'.(80) As a desperate last resort the Smithfield imperialists set up a 'Committee of Safety' in March, committed to defying the authority of the new republican regime.(81)

But men like Henry Halse were too aware of where their interests lay to resist the inevitable for ever. By April, he had been elected to the new Volksraad as member for the town of Smithfield. There he and other representatives of urban bourgeois and large landowning interests (Boer and British) played an unduly influential role from the start. At a local level, British settlers accepted magisterial posts - such as J. Orpen in Winburg.(82) Indeed, independence did not imply the overturning of the existing social and economic order. Imperial dominion was not subverted, as the British settlers had feared. The state continued to be dominated at the local level by the elite interests that arose with the intensification and spread of colonial capitalism, particularly in the years after the establishment of the Sovereignty. The difference was that the state now enjoyed a legitimacy that the imperial administration had never enjoyed; and it promoted and represented a far larger range of rising local Boer elites than the rather narrow clique of imperialists, concentrated in the south, and government employees whom the Sovereignty had primarily served.

The Maatschappy radicals such as Stander soon understood these realities. The rise of a colonial state as an extension of imperial hegemony (albeit from 1854 republican in form) was not what they had in mind. By September 1854 a flood of petitions had reached the Volksraad demanding the dismantling of the state and unification with the Transvaal Boers. Many petitions demanded that only members of the Dutch Reformed Church could be members of the Raad or hold public office, so as to subvert the continued dominating influence of British settler interests. Some even questioned the need for a state president and a professional bureaucracy. Stander himself was holding meetings north of Winburg in October campaigning for the replacement of the president by an unpaid commandant-general in the minimalist Maatschappy political tradition.(83) The Boer republic was in large degree the vehicle of an informal imperial hegemony in southern Africa, that outlasted the phase of formal imperial expansionism. And the mass of poorer Emigrant Boers of the high veld continued to resist the rise of local ruling elites and the elaboration of local state structures.

Analysis and Conclusions.

The fundamental issue that arises out of the historical narrative presented here is that of the dynamics of racial stratification, of subjugation and dispossession, at work in the interior of South Africa in the pre-industrial nineteenth century. This issue raises another: what was the nature and impact of British imperialism in the subcontinent in the crucial decades following the massive expansion of colonial settlement known today as the 'Great Trek'? What were the fundamental impulses behind imperial policy in the interior in the 1840s? The nearest thing to an answer very often is the vague assertion that British policy was concerned to 'control the Great Trek'.(84) The assumption, more or less explicit, in the writings of the earlier liberal historians was that humanitarian considerations - the desire to protect indigenous peoples from Boer rapacity - predominated in the making of policy until the early 1850s, when such considerations were abandoned with tragic consequences for the well-being of Africans.(85)

However, there was much more continuity in imperial policy than these historians imagined. The earlier historiography undoubtedly overemphasised the extent to which British policy was ever dominated by humanitarian concerns. Imperial policy-makers were always primarily concerned with maintaining the economic and strategic interests of the empire at minimum expense.(86) They were prepared to rely on military treaties with indigenous authorities like Moshoeshoe and the Griqua captains as long as they were the major foci of power and stability north of the colonial boundaries. Philip pushed in vain in the 1840s for an extension of British control north of the Orange in order to protect indigenous societies.(87) Nothing was less likely to move the British to action. In fact, imperial expansion was rarely beneficial for the independence and well-being of black chiefdoms.

Some later scholars, notably John Galbraith, questioned the extent of philanthropic influence on imperial policy-making, but essentially agreed that territorial expansionism was the inevitable culmination of accumulating commitments in pursuit of control in the relative power vacuum of the interior in the aftermath of the Great Trek.(88) There is some validity in such a view, as there is in the view that the annexation of Transorangia was a direct consequence of Harry Smith's self-delusions about the extent of his capacity to reshape the geo-political scenery by the force of his personality alone.(89) But these interpretations, preoccupied as they are with the workings of the official mind, and severely limited by the nature of the sources they rely on, do not go far enough. They do not take account of the expansionist impulses emanating from within colonial society.

In fact, imperial expansion was almost always undertaken in the interests ultimately of colonial capitalism.(90) We cannot understand imperialist impulses at this time without

understanding the expansionist dynamics of settler capitalism. By 1848, when the British settler elite was closer to the centre of power in Cape Town than ever before, and the influence of the settlers' bitterest foes, the missionary philanthropists, was seriously on the wane, imperial expansionism was at its height. The 1840s were years of speculative mania in the Cape, inspired by unattainable visions of profit from land, water schemes, mining and railway construction, as well as the rapid immigration of aspiring capitalist settlers.(91) Subjugation of black peoples by the use of imperial military force, and the shaking free of their land and labour for more 'efficient' purposes, were seen as integral to the promotion of colonial capitalism, as was the extension of imperial sway over independent peoples beyond the colonial borders. Sir Harry Smith, more perhaps than any other governor, was steeped in the colonial propaganda of the day, and allied himself closely with the imperialist settler elite based in the eastern Cape. In so doing, he based his administration on a very narrow pedestal of support.

Settler imperialism failed in its immediate objectives, not least because imperial expansionism evoked massive resistance from both Boers and black peoples. Policies of aggression and dispossession aimed at independent chiefdoms evoked not support but resistance and even sedition from the Boers on the frontiers of white settlement, and resulted in a crippling crisis of legitimacy for the colonial government.(92) In Transorangia the crisis of 1851 represented not only a breakdown of British authority but a crystallisation of group dynamics. The more militarised British policy became, the more it elicited a backlash from the Boers, most of whom saw no reason to throw in their lot with British imperialism against black chiefdoms, and many of whom, including many who lived closest to the centre of Basotho power, openly chose the patronage of Moshoeshoe rather than the patronage of the British. For their part, the Basotho learned that an imperial power at a distance and clothed in philanthropic garb was a very different animal to an imperial power encamped at the very thresholds of Lesotho. Compared with the imperial forces they were now confronted with, the mass of Boers must have seemed to him to be harmless and benign.(93)

The conventional view that the relations between Boers and independent black peoples in pre-industrial South Africa were overwhelmingly characterised by enmity and conflict is clearly inaccurate, as many have pointed out.(94) Certainly Boers deeply resented British interference in their labour relations; and the Emigrants were incensed by the fact that the British were willing to recognise black chiefly authority while seeking to deny them the same privilege. But the notion that the Boers emigrated from the Cape because of British failure to crush the black chiefdoms (or their refusal to permit the Boer commandos to do so) was a myth assiduously propagated by settler propagandists of the day and uncritically repeated by historians.(95) The assumption that it was British concession, humanitarianism, and weakness of will in relation to black chiefdoms that was behind Boer disaffection with British rule was propagated, not so much

by Boers themselves, but most vociferously by British settlers and expansionists who were determined to draw imperial power irrevocably into the interior of the subcontinent. It was not the Boers who agitated the hardest for greater imperial military commitment to the 'frontier'.(96) It was initially the British and not the Emigrant Boers who brought with them the will as well as the systematic capacity to dominate and dispossess.

But the subimperialism of the British settler elite under Smith's patronage relied rather too heavily on the willing support of the imperial authorities, and this support was not forthcoming when it was most needed. In the mid-nineteenth century the dominant sentiment in Britain was strongly opposed to imperial expenditure. It is wrong to suppose that this was an anti-imperialist age in Britain, as Gallagher and Robinson pointed out many years ago; but it was an age when formal empire was in deep disfavour, as the imperial task generally did not require formal rule over distant peoples. The international dominance of British capitalism was so complete that informal hegemony over non-European parts of the globe was generally entirely efficacious. Local crises, obstacles and upheavals, might require some more or less temporary assertion of imperial power, but on the whole this was regarded with distaste.(97) In colonies of settlement such as the Cape, in keeping with the prevailing spirit of free trade, the British were increasingly looking to self-government as a means of reducing settlers' dependence on the mother country.(98)

It was the misfortune of the settler imperialists that their influence in the making of policy at the Cape was at its height at precisely the time that the purse strings in London were being tightened and politicians were becoming determined to slough off financial and military responsibilities on to local settlers. Tolerance for empire builders and military adventurers on distant frontiers was at a low ebb. After Smith had departed the Cape, the British were no longer prepared to pay for the processes of primitive accumulation and dispossession that were enriching the rising settler elite on the frontiers of settlement. His successors at the Cape as well as the officials and politicians in London could differentiate more clearly between Britain's essential interests and her peripheral interests. Her essential interests could be maintained much more effectively through free trade and informal empire than through the militarisation of colonial society that had been the necessary consequence of policies pursued since the late 1840s; only the peripheral interests were served by Smith's policies of territorial advance and subjugation.

The less ambitious, less spectacular, but more realistic longer-term pursuit of commercial and productive development did not require the maintenance of British sovereignty. In fact, British withdrawal made little practical difference to the value of land, the profitability of the interior trading networks, and the well-being of the sheep farms and towns of the erstwhile Sovereignty - the dire predictions of chaos and ruin

notwithstanding. Far from representing an imperial retreat, the withdrawal from north of the Orange and the granting of representative government in the Colony proper were both designed to reassert the legitimacy of imperial interests and to facilitate the pursuit of profit and prosperity in the subcontinent by granting greater autonomy to the rising colonial ruling classes.

However, although in terms of its own programme Smith's governorship was an abject failure, in other respects he did leave a lasting legacy in shifting the essential supports of British power in the subcontinent. While it is true that there was no room for imperial aggrandisers in an age of free trade, informal empire and colonial self-government, it is nonetheless also true that Smith's governorship represented a watershed of lasting significance. It was not British abandonment of humanitarian responsibilities that represented the watershed, as suggested by the earlier liberal orthodoxy; the purposes of imperial policy did not change radically. Rather, the watershed lay in the means at the disposal of the British. Ironically, the annexation of Transorangia created the conditions for the securing of British interests, commercial and strategic, without an ongoing accumulation of military commitments and territorial encumbrances. In this perspective, the temporary extension of formal sovereignty was a necessary step in the creation of informal imperial hegemony (although this was not realised at the time). A new, white, collaborating class with the necessary institutional muscle and economic resources emerged out of the Boer diaspora, much more suited to carry the imperial cause in the subcontinent than had been the indigenous authorities on whom the British had previously pinned their trust.

The truth is that during the short-lived Sovereignty period, the processes of white accumulation and state formation north of the Orange were given a massive boost. The formal registration of land title, in particular, generated revenue that enabled the incipient colonial state to extend its authority gradually over the diverse and ill-defined communities, black and white, of the region. Land ownership (in practice confined to whites) also attracted speculative capital on a modest scale from which new sources of wealth and new sources of state revenue could be generated; and it also was a precondition for the eventual extension of white control over black labour, facilitating over the longer term the accumulation of capital from production. In part, the Orange River Sovereignty was conceived and run as an engine of primitive accumulation for the settler ruling class. In the longer run, these processes, set in train by British imperialism, were integral to the elaboration of a state system and the crystallisation of a class structure in the Boer republic created in 1854.

The creation of the Boer republic was manifestly not a return to the status quo before imperial intrusion, as has been commonly assumed.(99) The creation of the republican state was made possible by the colonial capitalism that was spreading most

rapidly into the further interior from the late 1840s on the back of an advancing imperialism. Under Smith's governorship more spectacularly than at any other time before the age of mining capitalism, British commerce, British investment, British settlement, and British imperial rule were advancing hand in hand. By 1854 British imperial rule was no longer necessary to sustain these forces, and could again recede. It was now British policy to recognise Boer political independence while relying on the ruling class and the political institutions emerging in the new republic to sustain the larger colonial economy. The republic was to be an essential support of imperial interests for several decades to come, the classic exemplar of the imperialism of informal hegemony, more accountable and democratic and therefore more legitimate and stable than formal imperialism itself. Thus British policy came to be firmly pinned to the mast of Afrikaner republicanism, which in crucial ways had its roots in the social and economic forces unleashed by British territorial expansionism and commercial enterprise.

The local Boer elites in the districts of the Orange Free State Republic emerged out of the same colonial capitalism as had the British settler elite of the eastern Cape, and employed a similar blend of more primitive and more explicitly capitalist forms of accumulation.(100) The local state in the republic was embodied in the economically dominant notables, who were also the local state functionaries (judicial, policing and military) with considerable discretionary power in the absence of a strong central executive. The forms of accumulation at their disposal included not only land speculation, but also not atypically the looting of livestock in military expeditions against African peoples, and the carrying off of women and children as labourers in homes and fields. These more primitive forms of accumulation went hand in hand with more market-dominated productive and commercial activities. All these forms of accumulation reinforced each other. Access to political, administrative and military office, and ownership of land, livestock and firearms meant considerable powers of patronage over both local whites and black groups.(101)

Republican policy toward the Basotho in the 1850s and 1860s was increasingly militaristic.(102) The policies of dispossession and subjugation against Moshoeshoe's people pursued by the republican state had been initiated by the British under the Sovereignty administration, and had in earlier years been much more characteristic of British settler imperialists than of the Boer Emigrants. The continuities between British and republican administrations and the interests they represented are striking. In the Caledon River district, for example, the local notables of the 1850s and 1860s (such as H. Joubert and J. Klopper), large landowners and speculators, wealthy sheep farmers, office holders and representatives, and leaders of the war party, tended to be the same men who had most strongly allied themselves with the British administration's imperialist policies in the Sovereignty period.(103)

North of the Vaal, too, a new ruling class was emerging as Boers re-established their productive and trading enterprises after the long years of trekking. The Voortrekker town of Potchefstroom hardly existed as a centre of permanent settlement in the 1840s; by the mid-1850s it was a modest commercial entrepot, firmly linked to the trading networks spreading out from the British ports, and through which much ivory from further north passed.(104) Transvaal farmers were sending fruit, tobacco and grain southwards for sale or barter (often for merino sheep), and were avidly trading with and raiding neighbouring African peoples. The rising Boer elite, many of whom had resisted imperial advance under arms a few years earlier, were ready by the early 1850s to take their place as forward representatives of colonial capitalism, eager to establish their own stable institutions of government, to regularise their relations with the imperial power and to convince the British of their friendship.(105) Trade routes to the Portuguese harbour at Delagoa Bay were now seen to be insecure due mainly to the pestilential climate of the low veld. In bilateral recognition of these realities the Sand River Convention was signed in 1852.(106) By the 1850s the Emigrant Boers of the southwestern Transvaal were being reintegrated into the colonial economy, but quite crucially now on their own terms.(107)

In the absence of a powerful communal ideology, the Emigrants had a short political memory. What mobilised them to united political action was their opposition to alien rule and economic domination; and this was essentially a negative impulse. Their sense of group identity was weakly developed. Mobilisation was related to specific, transient threats and opportunities. Once they had re-established viable economic bases beyond the reach of direct British rule and British settler infiltration, they quickly forgot their rebellious impulses. The Boers' anti-imperial rebelliousness in the mid-nineteenth century was ad hoc and unsustained, instrumental rather than ideological.

The Boer republicanism that was emerging in the 1850s was a radically different animal from the Maatschappy tradition of the earlier 'Great Trek' period.(108) The minimalist, part-time, ad-hoc, political institutions of the Maatschappy were a function of relative classlessness, of the egalitarian democracy of the mobile and the impoverished. When Emigrant communities were still unstable, unsettled and unstratified in the aftermath of the levelling experience of the emigration from the Cape, there was no need nor much inclination to submit to the rule of government. Government emerged as and when the process of accumulation from economic and military enterprise threw up a stratum of local notables, who in turn required the protection and the patronage of stable, permanent political institutions. Until then, Emigrant political life remained atomised and fissiparous. These factors explain the lethargy that confronted George Clerk when he tried to set up an independent republican government in the Sovereignty. As far as the mass of poorer Boers were concerned, political leadership served an essentially part-time military function. They had no time for rulers, and

even declined again and again to sanction the appointment of a permanent commandant-general (such as in 1848 when Pretorius was attempting to set himself up as leader of Boer resistance to imperial expansion).(109)

In part the struggle within Boer society was between different economic systems. Those who resisted the process of state formation being set in train were resisting an economy in which capital accumulation and the rise of bourgeois elites were predicated on access to state power and state legitimation. These processes of accumulation and state formation required and permitted an extension of control and domination over black peoples.(110) The more radical of the Boer Emigrants, who resisted the entrenchment of bureaucratic government, were opting for a more egalitarian, atomised and self-sufficient economic system, and one incidentally that posed far less of a threat to the independence of black peoples. But their's was also a forlorn cause. For as long as there were opportunities for individuals to profit by closer integration into the subcontinental colonial economy, the processes of state formation and the emergence of local elites were unavoidable developments in the long term. And again, these developments were given a massive boost during the short-lived phase of imperial expansionism in the subcontinent initiated by Governor Smith.

The earlier anti-statist tradition continued to be manifested in a sort of rural populism amongst the mass of poorer Boers, always well-represented in the Volksraad, but always well-insulated from the levers of power at a local level in the republican state. This populism of the propertyless was manifested in continuing illicit ties with the Basotho (including large-scale gun-running) throughout the republican period,(111) in continual resistance to the accumulating drive of the notables in the districts,(112) and in widespread resistance to military service at the behest of the state (not least in the Anglo-Boer War at the end of the century).(113)

The longer-term significance of the watershed years discussed in this paper lay in the entrenchment and elaboration of a pervasive system of racial domination. Like the imperialism of which it was in part an outgrowth, the republican state was built, not only on passive racial exclusion, but increasingly on active racial subjugation and dispossession as essential elements in the process of white capital accumulation. As we have seen, the earlier historiographical orthodoxy saw imperial withdrawal from all responsibility for the activities of the Emigrant Boers as a surrender to the forces of the frontier; the dynamic forces of capitalism and civilisation had failed to assert their liberalising and energising influences on the largely undynamic, undifferentiated, isolated, subsistent pastoralists of the far interior. It was this failure of nerve on the part of the British Empire to fulfil its historical mission, in the view of de Kiewiet, Macmillan, Walker, that condemned South Africa to the tragedy of its twentieth-century history.

But in sharp contrast, it is the fundamental contention of this paper that, far from being a product of a classless, isolated, frontier society, racial supremacy grew out of the rise of local ruling classes and state structures as a function of growing integration into the developing colonial capitalist economy. There was a world of difference between, on the one hand, the individual master-servant relationships, brutal and harsh though they might have been, that characterised life on isolated Boer farms; and on the other hand, the systematic, institutionalised, monolithic domination increasingly exercised by the colonial (or republican) state as the colonial economy intensified and developed - more particularly of course after the mineral discoveries of the later nineteenth century. The most isolated of the Boers, those in the eastern or northern Transvaal, for all their slaving and raiding activities, continued to be a far less intrusive, disruptive presence in the social environment than were the capitalist accumulators (whether Boer or British) of the Cape Colony and the Orange Free State - as the Xhosa and the Basotho found out.

This is why Fredrickson gets it so wrong when he contrasts the British tradition of 'trusteeship' with the Boer tradition of 'baasskap', and implies that the latter - the 'slaveholding mentality' as he characterises it - was the direct lineal antecedent of modern apartheid.(114) In fact the Boers' 'baasskap' over their servants was very localised and limited in scope, and very different from the large-scale, pervasive, state-initiated and -sustained domination of the industrial age, that encompassed not only black servants on white farms, but blacks wherever they were to be found, in mines, factories, farms or reserves.(115) This all-pervasive racial domination had its pre-industrial roots in the kinds of economic, social and political developments that we have been discussing here, and decidedly not on the isolated, backward frontier where the 'slaveholding mentality' flourished.(116) To extrapolate, as Fredrickson does, from the labour relationships on the Boer farms of the nineteenth century to the philosophy and practice of segregation/apartheid requires a considerable leap of the imagination. In fact, the essence of racially exclusive accumulation - the fundamental dynamic of the pre-industrial colonial economy - was not to be found in the relationship between white master and black servant. Productive enterprise played a secondary role in the pre-industrial processes of primitive accumulation out of which the modern-day racial landscape was forged.

One central conclusion that arises out of this discussion is the futility of trying to define the fundamental motive forces behind racial supremacy in South African history in ethnic or purely ideological terms. Leonard Thompson has recently presented a picture of Afrikaner 'racial mythology' as a mainly discrete, monolithic, essentially unchanging phenomenon, dating back to the original meeting of the races in the eighteenth century and continuing in its essence right up to the apartheid regime of recent times.(117) Clearly this thoroughly ahistorical approach, which reduces Afrikaner history to a series of bland

generalities, is inadequate. Once Afrikaner historical experience is examined in all its concrete diversity, we discover that Afrikaners (some of them) participated fully in the dynamic forces of accumulation and dispossession out of which modern South Africa emerged. It is by looking, not only at racial 'attitudes', but crucially at the forms of capital accumulation and the kinds of social and political systems that were being spawned in the process, that we are ever likely to understand the origins and intensification of racial subjugation and domination in the economic life of pre-industrial South Africa. Such a task is long overdue.(118)

FOOTNOTES

1. For further discussion of this historiographical tradition see M. Legassick, 'The Frontier Tradition in South African Historiography' in S. Marks and A. Atmore (eds) Economy and Society in Pre-Industrial South Africa (London, 1980).

2. C.W. de Kiewiet, British Colonial Policy and the South African Republics 1848-1872 (London, 1929) 5, 7, 8-9, 21-2, 62-6; idem, A History of South Africa, Social and Economic (London, 1941) 66. Also see, e.g., W.M. Macmillan, Bantu, Boer and Briton: The Making of the South African Problem, 2nd ed. (Oxford, 1963) ch. 17; S. Paterson, The Last Trek (London, 1957) 23-4.

3. E. Walker, 'The Formation of New States, 1835-1854' in Cambridge History of the British Empire, vol. 8 (Cambridge, 1936) 341, 355; idem, The Great Trek, 5th ed. (London, 1965) 376-7. The contrast with contemporaneous developments in the USA was also stressed by W.M. Macmillan, The Cape Colour Question: A Historical Survey (London, 1927, repr. Cape Town, 1968) 247-8.

4. A.M. Keppel-Jones, 'When Did We Take the Wrong Turning?', Race Relations Journal (South African Institute of Race Relations, Johannesburg) 26, 1 (1959) 29. Also idem, South Africa, a Short History, 5th ed. (London, 1975) 72-3.

5. See L.M. Thompson, 'Co-operation and Conflict: The High Veld' in M. Wilson and L.M.Thompson (eds) Oxford History of South Africa, vol. 1 (Oxford, 1969) e.g. 407-08, 426; G.M. Fredrickson, White Supremacy: A Comparative Study in American and South African History (Oxford, 1981) 36-7, 49-50, 52, 167-8, 178-9.

6. See the several depositions, 11-14 September 1858, Basutoland Records, 4 vols (Cape Town, 1883, repr. 1964) (henceforth BR) vol. 2, 424-38; Moshoeshoe to Stockenstrom, 26 November 1839, BR, vol. 1, 36; Moshesh, 'Bekendmaking', 29 October 1844, BR, vol. 1, 81.

7. P.J. van der Merwe, Die Noordwaartse Beweging van die Boere voor die Groot Trek 1770-1842 (Den Haag, 1937).

8. A. du Toit and H. Giliomee, Afrikaner Political Thought: Analysis and Documents, vol. 1, 1780-1850 (Berkeley, 1983) 114-15, 170-1; van der Merwe, Noordwaartse Beweging, ch. 12; M.C.E. van Schoor, 'Die Nasionale en Politieke Bewuswording van die Afrikaner en sy Ontluiking in Transgariep tot 1854' in Archives Year Book for South African History, 1963, 2 (Cape Town, 1964) ch. 4.

9. OFS Archives, OSB 1/1, 215-18, 84 Emigrant British Subjects to Maitland, 19 August 1845.

10. OSB 1/3, 543-5, 547-50, Depositions of C.R. Eberhardt, Smithfield, 27 and 28 May, 4 June 1852; GH 10/3, 326-8, Report of Proceedings in court of RM, Caledon River, 16 December 1848; 'A Farmer' to editor, The Friend, 18 August 1851.

11. On the interior politics of the 1840s see J.H. Malan, Die Opkoms van n' Republiek, of Die Geskiedenis van die Oranje-Vrystaat tot 1863 (Bloemfontein, 1929) chs 4-6; M.C.E. van Schoor, 'Politieke Groeperinge in Transgariep' in Archives Year Book, 1950, 2 (Cape Town, 1950) chs 1, 2; J.S. Galbraith, Reluctant Empire: British Policy on the South African Frontier (Berkeley, 1963) ch. 9; C.F.J. Muller, Die Britse Owerheid en die Groot Trek, 2nd ed. (Johannesburg, 1963) passim; P. Sanders, Moshoeshoe, Chief of the Sotho (London, 1975) chs 7, 8.

12. See Macmillan, Bantu, Boer and Briton, passim.

13. See note 11 above. On Warden see B.J. Barnard, ' 'n Lewensbeskrywing van Majoor Henry Douglas Warden' in Archives Year Book, 1948,1 (Cape Town, 1948).

14. T. Kirk, 'Self-Government and Self-Defence in South Africa: The Interaction of British and Cape Politics 1846-1853', D.Phil thesis, Oxford, 1973, 290-8, 312-17 and passim; idem, 'The Cape Economy and the Expropriation of the Kat River Settlement 1846-53' in Marks and Atmore, Economy and Society; B.A. le Cordeur, The Politics of Eastern Cape Separatism 1820-1854 (Cape Town, 1981); idem, 'Robert Godlonton as Architect of Frontier Opinion 1850-1857' in Archives Year Book, 1959, 2 (Cape Town, 1959).

15. Galbraith, Reluctant Empire, chs 6-8; J. B. Peires, The House of Phalo: A History of the Xhosa People in the Days of their Independence (Johannesburg, 1981) chs 8, 10.

16. A.L. Harington, Sir Harry Smith, Bungling Hero (Cape Town, 1980) 88-92.

17. Harington, Harry Smith, ch. 6.

18. Editorial, Graham's Town Journal, 2 October 1847; Harington, Harry Smith, 95, 100.

19. A. Wilmot, The Life and Times of Sir Richard Southey (London, 1904) 11-21, 26, 29; Dictionary of South African Biography, vol. 2, 695-6.

20. OSB 1/3, 193-5, H. Halse to Warden, 11 August 1847.

21. OSH 2/1, Smith to farmers of Caledon River, January 1848; 'Sir Harry Smith's Progress', Graham's Town Journal, 19 February 1848; Harington, Harry Smith, 111-27; Galbraith,

Reluctant Empire, 227-32.

22. British Parliamentary Papers, Irish University Press ed. (henceforth BPP) vol. 22, 229-32, Smith to Grey, 3 February 1848.

23. Proclamation of 3 February 1848 in BPP, vol. 22, 233-4.

24. Proclamation of 8 March 1848 in BPP, vol. 22, 235-6. For a detailed, confused and very uncritical history of the Orange River Sovereignty see J.F. Midgley, 'The Orange River Sovereignty 1848-1854' in Archives Year Book, 1949, 2 (Cape Town, 1949); also Malan, Opkoms van 'n Republiek, chs 9-16.

25. B.J. Liebenberg, Andries Pretorius in Natal (Pretoria, 1977) 266-96.

26. Harington, Harry Smith, ch. 7; Malan Opkoms, ch. 10; van Schoor, 'Politieke Groeperinge', chs 5-8.

27. Cape Archives, GH 10/2, 461-3, Warden to Southey, 30 September 1849.

28. Editorial, Friend, 19 November 1853.

29. Edit., Friend, 24 March 1851; GH 10/2, 378, Warden to Southey, 3 June 1849; GH 10/2, 253-4, 'Vaal River District', July 1849.

30. E.g., Edit., Graham's Town Journal, 4 March 1848.

31. OSB 1/1, 141-2, Garvock to Warden, 13 June 1850; Edit., Friend, 24 March 1851; 'Postscript', Friend, 10 June 1850; 'Farms in the Vaal River District', Friend, 17 June 1850; 'Explorator' to editor, Friend, 26 January 1852; 'Veritas' to editor, Friend, 13 March 1852.

32. Le Cordeur, Eastern Cape Separatism, 217.

33. 'Extensive Sale of Landed Property', Friend, 24 December 1853.

34. GH 20/2, J. Russel to G. Cl -k, 2 March 1855; OSB 1/1, 69-70, Southey to Warden, 31 January 1850.

35. G. Clerk reported after inspecting the land registers in 1853 that of 1265 farms inspected and to which title had been issued since the Sovereignty had been established, 264 were registered in the names of 139 English-speakers, of whom the bulk had never occupied their land. Of the some 11 000 000 acres that had been granted to white landowners, the British settlers and speculators owned nearly 2 000 000 (22.4 per cent), or an average of 17 750 acres per owner, while each Boer owner owned an average of about 8500 acres. Amongst the worst offendors, he reported, were the

officials. The leading government employees owned some 310 500 acres between them. BPP, vol. 36, 291-2, Clerk to Newcastle, 25 August 1853; ibid, 303, Clerk to Newcastle, 8 October 1853; ibid, 317, Table of acreages owned by several officials.

36. 'Caledon River Agricultural Society', Friend, 16 September 1852; 'Caledon Riviers Landbouwkundige Tentoonstelling', Friend, 21 April 1853.

37. Edit., Friend, 17 February 1853.

38. E.g., 'The Capabilities of the Sovereignty', Friend, 17 June 1850.

39. GH 10/2, 131-4, Warden to Smith, 22 April 1848; 'Postscript', Friend, 3 February 1853.

40. 'An English Farmer' to editor, Friend, 31 March 1851; 'Postscript', Friend, 10 March 1851; Edit., Friend, 14 October 1850 and 28 August 1851.

41. Edit., Friend, 10 July 1852.

42. Sanders, Moshoeshoe, ch. 10.

43. GH 10/3, 284-90, Biddulph to Southey, 10 November 1848; Cape Archives, Southey papers, Acc. 611, Vol. 68, J. Hoffman to parents, 12 December 1848.

44. Moshoeshoe to Warden, 17 January 1849, BR, 1, 217-18; OSH 1/3, 375-85, J. Hoffman to family, 1 January 1849; GH 10/2, 459-60, Warden to Moshoeshoe, 21 September 1849; GH 10/2, 455-6, Moshoeshoe to Warden, 1 October 1849.

45. This was graphically illustrated in the conflict over the siting of Smithfield town. It was altogether predictable that the initial site chosen was a farm, Waterfall, belonging to the Halse brothers, the leading settler imperialists in the district, and that they should be granted the privilege of organising the sale of erven to their own profit. But local Boers refused to have anything to do with Waterfall, complaining that the farm had no water supply. Instead the Boer church wardens went to Moshoeshoe to ask him to grant them the farm Rietpoort for a 'church place'. This Moshoeshoe did, exercising his patronage toward the Boers as he had always done. The Boers were outraged when the British administration insisted that the chief had no authority in the district, and proceeded to proclaim the town at Rietpoort without any reference to the church wardens. GH 10/3, 74, 138, 143-51, J. O'Reilly to Southey, 18 May, 24 June, 27 June, 29 June 1848; GH10/3, 156-7, F. Rex to Southey, 24 June 1848; GH 10/3, 429-33, Vowe to Southey, 7 May 1849; GH 10/2, 374-6, Warden to Southey, 27 May 1849; Moshoeshoe to J. Snyman, 13 September

1849, BR, 1, 278; OSH 1/3, 387-8, Snyman to Smith, 2 November 1849; OSH 1/2, 77-92, Vowe to Garvock, 12 March 1850.

46. OSB 1/3, 241-3, H. Smit to Warden, 15 December 1849.

47. OSB 1/3, 239, H. Halse to Vowe, 1 August 1849; Warden to Smith, 5 August 1849, BR, 1, 259-61; Warden to Southey, 5 August and 2 September 1849, BR, 1, 261, 276; OSH 1/3, 423-34, C. Halse to Smith, 18 July 1850; Warden to Southey, 25 August 1850, BR, 1, 319-20.

48. J. Haasbroek, Die Rol van die Engelse Gemeenskap in die Oranje-Vrystaat 1848-1859, Memoirs van die Nasionale Museum, 15 (Bloemfontein, 1980).

49. Van Schoor, 'Politieke Groeperinge', ch. 11; Malan, Opkoms van 'n Republiek, ch. 12; Midgley, 'Orange River Sovereignty', ch. 9.

50. Letsie to J. Olivier, 12 July 1851, BR, 1, 427-8; 'Postscript', Friend, 14 July 1851; OSB 1/3, 381-3, Deposition of H. Halse, 2 August 1851; OSB 1/3, 395-8, Vowe to Warden, 9 August 1851; OSB 1/3, 377-9, C. Halse to Warden.

51. OSB 1/3, 343-6, Vowe to Warden, 11 July 1851; OSB 1/3, 425-7, Deposition of J.G. Herbst, 10 August 1851; J.T. Snyman to editor, Friend, 14 July 1851.

52. OSB 1/3, 463-6, Deposition of G. Voesee, Smithfield, 16 September 1851.

53. OSB 1/3, 361-6, 391-3, 395-8, Vowe to Warden, 13 July, 9 August and 9 August 1851.

54. A.H. Brown to editor, Friend, 25 August 1851.

55. OSB 1/3, 385-6, 487, Vowe to Warden, 8 August, 3 October 1851.

56. 'A Farmer' to editor, Friend, 18 August 1851.

57. OSB 1/3, 487-94, Vowe to Warden, 3 October 1851; 'Public Meeting', Friend, 27 October 1851.

58. Warden to Garvock, 14 July 1851, BR, 1, 428.

59. Edit., Friend, 20 October 1851; OSH 1/5, 539-42, Petition from loyal inhabitants of Winburg district, 31 July 1851.

60. OSB 1/4, 157-62, 167-77, 179-86, Biddulph to Warden, 29 July, 7 and 16 August 1851.

61. Edit., Friend, 25 August 1851.

62. Report in Friend, 15 September 1851; J.P. Hoffman to editor, Friend, 29 September 1851.

63. Magistrate Vowe of Smithfield (himself a large-scale land speculator) clearly represented these imperial interests:

> if this Sovereignty is to be put into and kept in order we should have at most 2000 troops for the next 4 or 5 years, and in the mean time let the Government send out Emigrants to the Sovereignty on an Imperial scale, which would be a benefit both to the mother country and this Sovereignty, and by the time the troops were withdrawn... the European population would almost counterbalance that of the fighting black.... We must teach not only the Native but the disaffected Boer to fear and obey the British power and her authorities before we can expect to accomplish a permanent peace here.

OSB 1/3, 513-17, Vowe to Warden, 14 November 1851.

64. Grey to Smith, 15 September, 21 October 1851, BR, 1, 445-8, 463.

65. Smith wrote: 'The step will be regarded by every man of colour in South Africa as an unprecedented and unlooked for victory for his race.' OSA 2/1, Smith to Assistant Commissioners, 11 November 1851.

66. F.A.F. Wichmann, 'Die Wordingsgeskiedenis van die Zuid-Afrikaansche Republiek 1838-1860' in Archives Year Book, 1941, 2 (Pretoria, 1941) 110-17; Galbraith, Reluctant Empire, 256-60. The Convention is contained in G.W. Eybers (ed.) Select Constitutional Documents Illustrating South African History 1795-1910 (London, 1918) 358-9.

67. OSB 1/1, 349-50, Memo. by Sir G. Cathcart, 14 May 1852.

68. T.R.H. Davenport, 'The Consolidation of a New Society: The Cape Colony' in Wilson and Thompson, Oxford History of South Africa, 319-24; Kirk, 'Self-Government and Self-Defence', ch. 12.

69. BPP, vol. 36, 204-7, Cathcart to Secretary of State, 14 November 1852; Correspondence of Lieut.-General Sir George Cathcart, KCB... (London, 1856, repr. New York, 1969) 164-82.

70. Edit., Friend, 16 December 1852, 6 January 1853.

71. OSB 1/3, 551-7, 38 Loyal Subjects to Cathcart, n.d.; OSB 1/3, 559-61, Resolutions at a Public Meeting, Smithfield, 24 December 1852; 'A Farmer' to editor, Friend, 6 January 1853; 'Petition', Friend, 20 January 1853. Cathcart reported to the Secretary of State that 'false expectations appear to have arisen on the part of those whom Government

influence had hitherto favoured, that I should unscrupulously continue to exercise, to their peculiar benefit, might irrespective of right.' Correspondence of Sir George Cathcart, 20.

72. BPP, vol. 36, 228, Cathcart to Secretary of State, 13 January 1853; 'Cathcart's Reply', Friend, 13 January 1853.

73. For petitions, see BPP, vol. 36, 272-82, 285, 297.

74. De Kiewiet, British Colonial Policy, 78.

75. BPP, vol. 36, 303, Clerk to Newcastle, 8 October 1853. Clerk considered that speculative land-grabbing had been the main cause of conflict with the Basotho; the speculators' 'rapacity... could not have been expected to promote a good understanding between a tribe of natives who at that time were unoffending, and Europeans'. Significantly he reported after a meeting that Moshoeshoe was not apprehensive about the abandonment, and felt that 'no danger could now result from allowing his relations with the boers to revert to the understanding which generally prevailed between the boers and himself before the British Government interfered with them.' Nor were the Boers who resided on his borders apprehensive either, and they had no fears regarding the 'security of their just rights, when not required by authority to place themselves in a position of antagonism towards a chief possessing a considerable degree of moderation and discretion.' BPP, vol. 36, 313-14, 336-7, Clerk to Newcastle, 10 November 1853, 14 January 1854.

76. BPP, vol. 36, 298-9, Clerk to Newcastle, 10 September 1853; ibid, 307-9, Proceedings of the Assembly of Delegates, 5-8 September 1853.

77. A memorial from Smithfield signed by 109 accused Clerk of 'cajolery, flattery, private canvassing and... in some instances bribery' to secure support for his plans. Edit., Friend, 4 February 1854.

78. BPP, vol. 36, 325-8, 332-4 for memorials from those willing to take over the government. Reports in Friend, December-January 1853-4.

79. For reminiscences relating to these events, see W.W. Collins, Free Statia: or Reminiscences of a Lifetime in the Orange Free State (Bloemfontein, 1907, repr. Cape Town, 1965) chs 3, 4; J.M. Orpen, Reminiscences of Life in South Africa from 1846 to the Present Day (Durban, 1908, repr. Cape Town, 1964) chs 34-41; A Voice from Bloemfontein: The Reminiscences of Gustav Adolph Eichardt, ed. D.A. van der Bank, Memoirs van die Nasionale Museum, 19 (Bloemfontein, 1984) ch. 1. On the constitutional history of the republic see G.D. Scholtz, Die Konstitusie en Staatsinstellings van die Oranje-Vrystaat 1854-1902 (Amsterdam, 1937).

80. 'Gold', Friend, 11 February 1854; H. Halse and seven others to Clerk, 14 February 1854, in Friend, 25 February 1854.

81. 'Public Meeting at Smithfield', Friend, 11 March 1854. Dr A.J. Fraser, a large landowner, and Rev. A. Murray of Bloemfontein were sent as a deputation to London to protest against the abandonment, in vain. 'Deputation to England', Friend, 17 September 1853.

82. South African Archival Records: Orange Free State, vol.1, Notule van die Volksraad van die Oranje-Vrystaat, 1854-5 (Parow, 1952) 83 and passim.

83. 'A Political Squall', Friend, 16 September 1854; H. Struys to editor, Friend, 28 October 1854. Petitions in South African Archival Records: Orange Free State, vol. 1, passim.

84. E. Walker, A History of South Africa, 2nd ed. (London, 1941) 242; Thompson in Oxford History of South Africa, 423, 410; de Kiewiet, British Colonial Policy, 10. Muller in Britse Owerheid en die Groot Trek manages to give no coherent answer at all, contenting himself with listing and describing various 'factors' that do not add up to any kind of integrated analysis.

85. See introductory paragraphs to this paper. Later echoes of this interpretation emerge in Fredrickson, White Supremacy, e.g. 175-81; but also see qualifications on 186-7.

86. These 'interests' are difficult to define. In global terms they were actually quite insignificant; but they were not at all unimportant to those who provided the finance, supplied the markets and bought the exports of southern Africa. But there was more at stake. Britain's industrial economy, more than any other since, was externally oriented to a remarkable degree, and hence was profoundly dependent on her international economic dominance. The very notion that those who laboured to bring civilisation and commerce to distant parts could be abandoned as too marginal to worry about, was profoundly subversive of the whole enterprise of British capitalism; for economic progress in the long term, and Britain's continued international predominance, were seen to depend on a steady integration of outlying parts of the globe into the vortex of British industry, as suppliers of raw materials and consumers of British goods, as well as recipients of British capital investment and (where feasible) of British settlers.

87. Macmillan, Bantu, Boer and Briton, ch. 13.

88. Galbraith, Reluctant Empire, 229-30 and passim.

89. The line taken e.g. by D. Denoon and B. Nyeko, Southern Africa since 1800, 2nd ed. (London, 1984) 78-9.

90. An obvious exception was the British annexation of a much truncated Lesotho in 1868; but that episode reinforces the point. The annexation did not grow out of opposition to the drive of the Free State burghers to expropriate Basotho-controlled resources; indeed the British were basically supportive of primitive accumulative enterprise. But as overseers of that process, the British had occasionally to step in to prevent it from getting out of control and thereby threatening a general conflagration. Hence, in informally 'managing' the process of primitive accumulation, Britain was concerned to ensure that black resistance did not undermine the delicate foundations of informal empire.

91. See note 14 above; also A.F. Hattersley, The British Settlement of Natal: A Study of Imperial Migration (Cambridge, 1950).

92. On the crisis of legitimacy see A.F. Hattersley, The Convict Crisis and the Growth of Unity (Pietermaritzburg, 1965); A.H. Duminy, 'The Role of Sir Andries Stockenstrom in Cape Politics 1848-1856' in Archives Year Book, 1960, 2 (Cape Town, 1961); Harington, Harry Smith, chs 8-11; S. Trapido, 'The Origins of the Cape Franchise Qualifications of 1853', Journal of African History, 5, 1 (1964).

93. Sanders, Moshoeshoe, ch. 13.

94. Perhaps none earlier than H.M. Robertson, '150 Years of Economic Contact between Black and White in South Africa: A Preliminary Survey', South African Journal of Economics, 2, 4 (1934) and 3, 1 (1935).

95. A.L. Harington, 'The Graham's Town Journal and the Great Trek 1834-1843' in Archives Year Book, 1969, 2 (Pretoria, 1970) ch. 4 on contemporary settler perceptions; Fredrickson, White Supremacy, 42-4, 47-51, for a historian who replicates this position. Significantly, Fredrickson nowhere mentions the existence of British settlers, thereby strengthening the implication that it was Boer 'semi-subsistence pastoralists' who were the major proponents of dispossession and subjugation.

96. A.W.J. Pretorius wrote in 1848 to Smith that the British 'have brought the Colonial Native Chiefs into an unavoidable state of enmity against the Emigrant Boers; whereas we formerly lived with them in a peaceable and friendly manner'. He charged that the extension of British rule north of the Orange would similarly turn black peoples with whom they had previously lived in 'peace and security' into their 'enemies and persecutors'. This view of British imperialism as a destabilising factor in race relations was not atypical of Boer Emigrant rhetoric. OSH 1/9, 329-31 and 361-5, Pretorius to Smith, 18 February 1848 and 22 April 1848.

97. J. Gallagher and R. Robinson, 'The Imperialism of Free Trade', Economic History Review, 2nd Series, 6, 1 (1953). The debate is to be found in W.R. Louis (ed.) Imperialism: The Robinson and Gallagher Controversy (New York, 1976). A recent very useful introduction to these issues is C.C. Eldridge (ed.) British Imperialism in the Nineteenth Century (London, 1984), esp. the chapter by P. Kennedy, 'Continuity and Discontinuity in British Imperialism 1815-1914'.

98. P. Burroughs, 'Colonial Self-Government' in Eldridge, British Imperialism.

99. Hence the common assertion that the Sovereignty was a 'failure': e.g. Thompson in Oxford History, 423-4. A. Atmore and S. Marks in 'The Imperial Factor in South Africa in the Nineteenth Century: Towards a Reassessment', Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History, 3, 1 (1974) 119-20, stress the efficacy of informal empire without investigating the processes of state formation that facilitated it.

100. On the way in which idealist notions of the proper (capitalist) relationship between the settler and the land carried right through the early Cape and were continually replicated by the settler elite, initially in the western Cape, see R. Ross, 'The Origins of Capitalist Agriculture in the Cape Colony: A Survey' in W. Beinart, P. Delius and S. Trapido (eds) Putting a Plough to the Ground: Accumulation and Dispossession in Rural South Africa 1850-1930 (Johannesburg, 1986).

101. Some of this is filled out in T. Keegan, 'Dispossession and Accumulation in the South African Interior: The Boers and the Batlhaping of Bethulie 1833-61', Journal of African History, 28, 2 (1987); T. Keegan, 'White Settlement and Black Subjugation on the South African Highveld ca. 1850-1914' and P. Delius, 'Abel Erasmus: Power and Profit in the Eastern Transvaal' both in Beinart et al, Putting a Plough to the Ground.

102. Sanders, Moshoeshoe, chs 16-23.

103. Keegan, 'Boers and Batlhaping of Bethulie'.

104. On Potchefstroom see 'Rough Notes of a Tourist', Friend, 18 November 1854; report in Graham's Town Journal, 6 January 1849.

105. OSB 1/6, 505-6, Pretorius to Warden, 4 October 1851.

106. Governor Cathcart envisaged a single Emigrant republic uniting those on either side of the Vaal, as a single authority could more easily be monitored and controlled -- and overthrown should things go wrong.

107. It was in 1850 that the route into the ivory-rich Lake Ngami region was pioneered; the Potchefstroom Boers sought to monopolise it, requiring that all traders and hunters pass through the town. The trader J. McCabe was prosecuted for publicising the route in a Cape newspaper. (OSB 1/1, 159-65, J. Montagu to Warden, 11 July 1850; OSH 1/9, 425-7, Pretorius to Assistant Commissioners, 22 October 1852; 'Trans-Vaal Boers', Friend, 17 June 1850.) The crucial southwestern Transvaal badly needs a closer study such as has been given to other areas of the Transvaal (by P. Bonner, P. Delius, R. Wagner).

108. The view that the republican tradition was directly an outgrowth of some inherent sense of Afrikaner national identity is to be found throughout the Afrikaner nationalist historiography: e.g. F.A. van Jaarsveld, Die Eenheidstrewe van die Republikeinse Afrikaners. Deel 1: Pioniershartstogte 1836-1864 (Johannesburg, 1951). No alternative revisionist analysis has ever really been elaborated. Hence it is possible for Fredrickson (White Supremacy, 52-3) to regurgitate the nationalist paradigm rather too uncritically.

109. GH 10/2, 96-9, Deposition of J. McCabe, 14 March 1848.

110. The self-conscious urge actively to assert racial supremacy and forge racial solidarity came strongly to the fore at times when such emergent ruling classes were forming, seeking ways in which to define themselves in relation to others whom they were dispossessing. Closely interrelated ideas of racial superiority, civilisation and Christianity had always been vaguely present in Boer self-perceptions, but only became intermittently useful as a self-legitimating ideology during moments of conflict and competition. However, race became a centrally important tool in the self-definition of 'class-in-the-making' under circumstances such as those described here, when accumulation was based fundamentally on racial subjugation and dispossession. Ideological references to total racial domination as necessary and beneficial in and of itself came to the fore at this time -- preoccupations that were not a characteristic of earlier Voortrekker writing. Similarly in the very changed circumstances of the later industrialising age, when not only were capitalists emerging but many Boers were themselves being dispossessed, 'class struggle' on the land is perhaps best seen as the struggle of 'classes' that had not yet fully crystallised (indeed were in many cases being destroyed) and that defined themselves in racial/ethnic terms, to become classes in fact as well as in perception -- to invest their essentially racial/ethnic definition of themselves with a class reality at the expense of blacks. See T. Keegan, Rural Transformations in Industrialising South Africa: The Southern Highveld to 1914 (London, New York and Johannesburg, 1986) passim on these latter issues.

111. C.C. Eloff, 'Die Verhouding tussen die Oranje-Vrystaat en Basoetoeland 1878-1984' in Archives Year Book, 1980, 2 (Pretoria, 1983) 12: 9.

112. Keegan, 'Tlokoa Heartland'.

113. A.N. Grundlingh, Die 'Hensoppers' en 'Joiners': Die Rasionaal en Verskynsel van Verraad (Pretoria, 1979).

114. Fredrickson, White Supremacy, 192-3, 175-81, 93, 237-8. In some respects I am presenting something of a caricature here that does not really do justice to the subtleties of Fredrickson's argumentation. The book is in many respects a major, masterly achievement, ambitious in its scope and assured in its execution. But the assumptions that I point to here are undoubtedly present in the book and emerge repeatedly.

115. One is reminded of Legassick's aphorism: 'White frontiersmen expected all their dependants (save their families) to be non-white: they did not expect all non-whites to be their servants.' ('Frontier Tradition', 67.) The extension of total domination grew precisely out of the processes that this paper seeks to describe. The 'reserves' policy of the industrial age, rather than being indicative of a policy of 'trusteeship', embodied a steadily tightening domination exercised by the state, bent on subjugation and control. (See K. Shillington, The Colonisation of the Southern Tswana 1870-1920 (Johannesburg, 1985) chs 7-9.) Such a total domination would have been unthinkable to the Boers of the early Transvaal. Nevertheless, Fredrickson's assumption is that the victory of white supremacy in the twentieth century was in large part a result of British capitulation to 'settler traditions' (139, 195-7), and also to the industrial economy's capacity to adapt to 'traditional patterns of white dominance and black servility' (220, 329).

116. Fredrickson sees this much more clearly in the case of early colonial north America (e.g. 51-2); but he is in search of contrasts. His flaws result partly from the thinness of the South African historiography on these issues, and partly from his apparent unfamiliarity with any of the critical revisionist approaches.

117. L.M. Thompson, The Political Mythology of Apartheid (New Haven, 1985) esp. ch. 3. Again it should be added that in many respects this is a valuable, innovative book, despite its flaws. The same doubts about seeking to invest ethnic categories with too much historical significance apply to the project by du Toit and Giliomee on Afrikaner Political Thought, of which the first volume (1780-1850) has been published.

118. We are unlikely to get very far by seeking to unscramble the egg by writing a history of black South Africans, as does Paul Maylam in his otherwise very useful A History of the African People of South Africa: From the Early Iron Age to the 1970s (Cape Town, 1986). While such an approach might seem unproblematical to one bred in an Africanist tradition, the black experience cannot be understood when removed from the context of white accumulation (whether of a more primitive or a more explicitly capitalist nature). Let that thought remain as this paper's self-justification.