

4 • FROM REPUDIATION TO FULFILLMENT

THE passing of Ordinance No. 50 of 1828 had given the farmers a shock from which they did not readily recover. They replied by working harder to consolidate their reserves of power for the purpose of making their initiatives an influence the government could not ignore.

The first great challenge came two years after the passing of the 1828 proclamation, when the British Government ordered that record books be kept in which particulars about punishments meted out to slaves by their masters were to be noted. These registers were to be inspected by government officials every two years. The Boers felt that this was almost the limit of provocation. They had in the past protested peacefully against persistent efforts to undermine their position, but now the time had come for direct action. Meetings were called, and in the end the farmers resolved to boycott the record book. The government withdrew it and issued a proclamation making it compulsory that the slaves work a maximum of nine hours per day. Another wave of protests followed, but the government stuck to its guns. The farmers then said that they would agree to emancipation if they were granted representative government. Fearing that this was a ruse by which to give a new lease of life to slavery, the British Government turned the request down.

By this time feeling against almost everything British was running high. That this was the case is illustrated by the incident involving the Bezuidenhout brothers in 1815. Frederick Bezuidenhout had been summoned to answer charges of ill treatment by his Hottentot servant. Since it was beneath the dignity of a Boer to go to court and allow himself to be questioned by a nonwhite person, Frederick ignored the summons. When the magistrate sent a company of Hottentot constables under a white officer to arrest him, he retreated into a cave from which he opened fire. But a shot from one of the Hottentots killed him on the spot. At the funeral, his brother publicly swore vengeance against the British and their Hottentot lackeys; shortly after the burial, he organized a band of desperadoes to drive out the British and punish the Hottentots. Some of the Boers, aware of their numerical weakness, approached the Xosas for help, but the latter openly showed their lack of enthusiasm for the idea. In the end, the British rounded up the rebels and tried them for treason. Five of them were hanged publicly at Slachter's Nek, in 1816, and Frederick's brother was shot and killed while trying to escape. The Boer community was outraged by this incident.

The blood of the rebels had barely dried when the House of Commons passed the act that abolished slavery in the British Empire, as of December 1, 1834. Provision was made for compensation to be paid, for the apprenticeship of the emancipated slaves, and for a transition period during which both sides would adapt themselves to the changed situation.

Emancipation shook the Boers' world to its foundations. They found themselves face to face with the prospect of a large mass of black people who were, in the eyes of the law, to be their equals. They made it clear that they had had enough of British rule and liberalism. Just as the "nationals" had repudiated Holland in the hour of crisis, so the Boers took refuge in repudiating the British when the humanistic tradition threatened to give to citizenship a similar meaning on both sides of the color line. This was not a decision taken on the spur of the moment; it was a dramatic climacteric in a process that had had its roots in the

hatred for the company's rule. In their journeyings into the interior, the emigrant farmers progressively realized that salvation for them lay in solidarity, group exclusiveness, and a fierce possessiveness in clinging to what was their own.

Britain had always stood for ideals that the Boers regarded as a threat to their security and survival. Under the circumstances, repudiation served the purpose of guaranteeing security for a people whose isolation from the cultured world had given them a deep sense of inadequacy. They would leave the Cape colony and trek to the north, where they would be free to make laws that would best express their genius. The Boers, of course, were not the first people in history to confuse moral and physical necessity. Their exemplars, the Biblical Jews, regarded their private enemies as God's own personal foes. The formulation of the law by Moses was not the natural achievement of the human mind in a given situation; it was proof of God's partiality for the Jews, justification for their group supremacy.

In 1834, the Boers secretly sent three parties into the interior to spy on the strength of the African states and decide what areas were most suitable for settlement. These were the Commissie Treks. One of them visited Damaraland, another went to Zoutpansberg in the north, and the third rode into Natal. Shortly after the return of the Commissie Treks, the great emigration started.

The Great Trek is the most important single event in Afrikaner history next to Jan van Riebeeck's arrival in South Africa. Opinions still differ very sharply on the real motivating urges that brought about its organization. Two authoritative witnesses may be called in to testify on the issues that stirred deepest in the Boer bosom. The first is Piet Retief, one of the most idolized and distinguished leaders of the emigration, who gave his and his people's reasons for leaving the Cape in a manifesto published in the *Grahamstown Journal* of February 2, 1837. He declared:

1. We despair of saving the Colony from these evils which threaten it on account of the turbulent and dishonest conduct of vagrants who are allowed to infest the country in every part; nor

do we see any prospect of peace or happiness for our children in a country thus distracted by internal commotion.

2. We complain of the severe losses which we have been forced to sustain by the emancipation of our slaves, and the vexatious laws which have been enacted respecting them.
3. We complain of the continual system of plunder which we have endured from the Kafirs and other coloured classes, and particularly by the last invasion of the Colony.
4. We complain of the unjustifiable odium which has been cast upon us by interested and dishonest persons, under the cloak of religion, whose testimony is believed in England to the exclusion of all evidence in our favor; and we can foresee, as the result of this prejudice, nothing but the total ruin of the country.
5. We are resolved to uphold the just principles of liberty, and, while not tolerating slavery, will preserve proper relations between master and servant.
6. We quit this Colony under the full assurance that the British Government has nothing to require of us, and will allow us to govern ourselves without its interference in future.

Although Piet Retief had stated the motivating urges behind the Great Trek in tactful language, his niece, Anna Elizabeth Steenkamp, saw no valid reason why she should hesitate to tell the world in candid and precise terms what really burned most fiercely in the Boer bosom. This remarkable lady wrote in the *Cape Monthly Magazine* of September, 1876:

The reasons for which we abandoned our lands and homesteads, our country and kindred, were the following:

1. The continual depredations and robberies of the Kafirs, and their arrogance and overbearing conduct; and the fact that in spite of the promises made to us by our government we nevertheless received no compensation for the property for which we had been despoiled.
2. The shameful and unjust proceedings with reference to the freedom of our slaves; and yet it is not so much their freedom that drove us to such lengths, as their being placed on an equal footing with the Christians, contrary to the laws of God and the natural distinction of race and religion, so that it was intolerable

for any decent Christian to bow down beneath such a yoke; wherefore we rather withdrew in order thus to preserve our doctrines in purity.

One fact might be noted in passing. Both Retief and Steenkamp laid the greatest stress on the losses they had had to endure as a result of emancipation. The point looks somewhat over-emphasized; for although some slave owners suffered heavy losses, it must not be forgotten that as early as 1809 the British had started introducing legislation designed to cushion the farmers against the shocks of emancipation.

Retief probably meant every word of what he wrote against tolerating slavery. At the same time, it must be said that if some Trekker communities gave up slaveholding, others did not readily do so. Mrs. Angelina Dube, the wife of the late Dr. John L. Dube, who founded Ohlange College near Durban, informed the present author some time before the writing of this book that some of her grandparents had been slaves who fled from their Boer masters during the Great Trek. It is possible also that in time the Boers gave up slavery as they penetrated into the interior. But we have it on Piet Retief's own authority that the Trekkers were going to preserve "proper relations between master and servant." These relations had arisen in circumstances where slavery was a fixed and accepted institution. Master meant a white person and servant the man of color. The habits of thought, behavior patterns, outlooks, and practices that gave reality and form to these relations were to remain. In other words, although the Trekkers gave up the institution of slavery, they were, according to Piet Retief, who is a convincing witness, not going to give up the temper of the slave owner.

To insure that these relations were preserved, the Trekkers, after establishing their republics in the north, insisted on treating the man of color as an inferior. The South African Republic (Transvaal), which was the most famous and powerful of the Boer states, declared specifically in its constitution that there would be no equality between black and white either in the church or the state. Largely as a result of this attitude, the greatest African progress was registered in the British colonies, where,

as in the Cape, the African had the vote and in Natal, where he could buy land freely.

In every sphere of life, the temper of the slave owner has constituted a grave and limiting factor in the Afrikaner's approach to the man of color. Everywhere, barring a few and notable exceptions, he insisted upon seeing in the African a permanent inferior. This temper has poisoned every phase of Afrikaner life. The Dutch Reformed Church upheld it; so did the Afrikaner universities. For a long time, Afrikaner literature, again with a few exceptions, has been one unbroken song of hate and contempt for the African. The point of highest fulfillment for the Afrikaner genius in this setting has not been the vision of emancipated man making the best possible use of his life and enjoying that liberty which was the birthright of all human beings created in the image of God. It has been the frustration of the other man's march to freedom and a fuller life, the narrowing down of the area within which the other man could strive to be like God. When the Union Government forbids the admission of Africans into white universities, it is moving to ensure that the "proper relations" are preserved.

The Nationalist Party, which Dr. Verwoerd leads, was returned to power in 1948 on the slogan that *die wit man moet baas bly* (the white man must remain master). This is the ideal apartheid has set itself, the point of final fulfillment for the descendants of the Trekkers. When Dr. Verwoerd elected to leave the Commonwealth rather than modify the temper of the slave owner, he was merely taking the position assumed by Piet Retief more than a hundred years ago, in an almost similar situation. The chain of continuity has never been broken. Apartheid is the twentieth-century version of the temper the Trekkers swore to preserve.

When a special type of education is given the African, it is to make sure that the master-servant relationship is given a permanent form. When the Commonwealth raised its voice in protest against the inhumanity of apartheid, Dr. Verwoerd's prompt and definite reply was to repudiate this community of free nations, and, by implication, to repudiate humanity itself.

5 • THE FATE OF THE REPUBLICS

THE northern lands into which the Trekkers moved were caught in a wave of bloody turbulence. Shaka had laid waste large tracts of land along the east coast of Natal and driven whole tribes across the Drakensberg Mountains or beyond the Limpopo River. These groups, in turn, had used fire and spear to fight their way to areas where they could be safe from him. The Hlubis had climbed over the Drakensberg and were giving Moshoeshoe's Sutus no end of trouble, Mzilikazi's Ndebeles had pushed on into what was to be the Transvaal and had left chaos in their wake. The Griqua chieftains on the Orange River had their own ideas on how to treat the white man. As a result, large numbers of refugees and displaced or stateless persons roamed the countryside. Some of them attached themselves to powerful kings; others traveled up and down the country, a menace to black and white.

The Trekkers moved into this situation in three directions—toward Natal in the east, the Orange River in the northwest, and across the Vaal River in the north. Piet Retief led the Trekkers who wanted to live in Natal. The land was held by Zuluspeaking Africans who were then ruled by King Dingane. The coming of the whites was viewed with very grave suspicion, for they had crossed the Drakensberg and settled on lands that belonged to the Zulus without first obtaining permission from the king. The Zulu intelligence services reported this to Um-

gungundlovu, the seat of government, where it caused no small stir. Retief's followers were caught in an extremely unfortunate situation. Just as the British had inherited the sins of the Dutch East India Company at the Cape, so the Boers had landed themselves in the position where they had to suffer partly for the sins of the British.

About ten years before their arrival, as we noted earlier, Shaka had made serious efforts to become friends with the British. He had sent Sotobe, Mbozamboza, and others to the King of England in an endeavor to establish diplomatic relations. The story that reached Zululand was that King Shaka's envoys had never reached their destination; they had been arrested and jailed by the British authorities at the Cape on the suspicion that they were spies. One of them fell ill as a result of the bad conditions in the cells and died. Zulu opinion had been shocked and angered by this white reciprocation of Shaka's courtesy. Some time later, the Commissie Trek was said to have arrived in Natal to spy on the land and its people. The queer movements of these Boers had aroused much comment among the Zulus, who had begun to view the white people with suspicion.

So when Piet Retief at last approached Dingane with the request for land, the latter laid down the condition that he would consider the application only if the Boers recovered the cattle King Segonyela of the Pedis had stolen from Zululand. Retief and his men accepted the condition and, as legend has it, traveled northward to Segonyela's headquarters. They lured the king into a trap by telling him that they had brought special silver bangles for him. But when he tried them on, they put handcuffs on him, locked him up, and declared him their prisoner until a ransom in cattle was paid. This they took to Dingane.

The Zulu intelligence officer who had accompanied the Boers without their knowledge is said by the Zulus to have rushed home and reported what he had seen to his king. When Retief returned with the cattle, Zulu opinion was in a state of dangerous ferment; there was the fear that the Boers would attempt

the same trick upon their king, protestations of good intentions notwithstanding. What made matters worse for Retief was the fact that the sentinels guarding Umgungundlovu kraal reported strange movements by the Boers at night. They reported that they had seen them attempt to surround the capital. This confirmed the suspicion that they were the spies of a foreign white power. Finally, the Boers complicated matters by being rude and overbearing in their manners. When the Reverend Mr. Owen, who lived in the royal kraal, warned them against manners which could be misconstrued as provocation, Retief is reported to have replied that he knew how to deal with the Kafirs.

Dingane had all along been most reluctant to take drastic action against the Boers. Like his brother Shaka, he had an eye on making friends with them for the purpose of procuring guns. When, however, he was confronted with evidence that they were conspiring to overthrow the Zulu state, he did what any man in his position would have done to a spy and traitor—he ordered their destruction. But he used their own tactics against them. They were invited to a display of dancing by the soldiers; as they watched, they were fallen upon by armed Zulus and stabbed or clubbed to death. Segonyela's humiliation had been avenged. An army was sent forthwith to the settlement Retief had established. It arrived unexpectedly and razed to the ground much of the community's property, killing in all some 280 Boers and about 250 of their black servants.¹

The news of this disaster spread like wildfire in the Trekker communities on the other side of the Drakensberg. A force was hastily got together to avenge the dead. It met the Zulus at the battle of Itala, but the Africans scored a resounding victory. Piet Uys, the leader of the Boer forces, lost his life in this battle.

At first Dingane thought of making a clean sweep of the White men in his country, but after some hesitation he let the English and American missionaries get away. On the other hand he at

¹ Gibson, *The Story of the Zulus*, p. 60.

once sent his impi (forces) to fall upon the Boer laagers . . . joint action was arranged with the English. Disaster ensued. Neither of the Boer leaders would serve under the other . . . the first English expedition effected little, the second was destroyed and the Zulus, storming down to Port Natal, drove the survivors and the missionaries on shipboard.²

The Boers now prepared for a decisive attack on Dingane. Their army met the Zulus on the Ncome River, where they fought the historic battle of Blood River, in 1838. The Zulus were defeated. The Boers proceeded to set Umgungundlovu on fire, and Dingane himself retreated to the north. Since the power of the Zulu states was weakened, the Boers settled down at Pietermaritzburg, where they established the Natal republic. But dissension, personal jealousies, and rivalries had characterized Boer life for a long time, and the Boers were therefore afraid to give too much power to one man. They set up a people's council elected by white male adults; there was no governor, and power lay in public opinion. Pretorius, one of the leading personalities in the Boer community, took advantage of the brief interval of peace to try to negotiate with Dingane for the return to the Boers of some of the cattle that had been seized by the Zulus.

While all this went on, Boer diplomacy was, in the main, applying itself to the task of widening the fissions in the Zulu royal family. Mpande was being encouraged secretly to stake a claim for the leadership of the Zulus in opposition to his brother, Dingane. This led to the war between Dingane and Mpande, which the former lost at the battle of Maqongqo, in 1840. The Boers gave Mpande all possible help in return for the promise of land to the northwest of Zululand.

The growing influence of the Boers and their quarrels with the Zulus brought in the British. Commissioner Cloete was sent from the Cape to Natal with instructions to tolerate no race discrimination, no slavery, and no encroachment on the rights of the African people. Once more the Boers started trekking

² Walker, *A History of South Africa*, p. 216.

out of Natal into the Transvaal and the territory along the Orange River. After that, the Natal republic died a natural death.

The most important personality near the Orange River was the *Sutu* king Moshoeshe, who had started life very humbly. He had collected about a hundred followers and settled down at Butabute in Basutoland; when the powerful Mantantisi raiders drove him farther south to Thaba Bosigo, he halted and, in turn, attacked them from his mountain fastnesses. Moshoeshe was the most astute diplomat produced by the Africans during this unsettled period. He welcomed to his side the refugees, the displaced persons, and the stateless. These he gradually welded into the *Sutu* nation, and with their help he fought and beat off Zulu and other invaders. He welcomed Boer hunters into his domains—just as he received Paris evangelicals and British representatives with open arms. When things started to turn against him, he played rival Boer leaders one against another, Boers against British, and vice versa.

He did not rely much on war as an instrument by which to further his aims. When forced to fight, however, he proved himself a brave and clever general. The Boers gave him a lot of trouble. They wanted to control Basutoland because the cold climate was suitable for horse-breeding. By 1865, his relations with them were so tangled that war became inevitable. At first, he did very well against them, but then they called for reinforcements from Natal and the Transvaal. That turned the tide against him. As soon as he realized that Boer pressure was becoming irresistible, he appealed to the British for protection. That took victory almost out of the hands of the emigrant farmers and raised a fearful storm of protest among them. They sent a deputation to England to get Britain to allow them to punish Moshoeshe, but Britain stood firm by her promise to protect the *Sutus*. By the skillful use of diplomacy and war, Moshoeshe had welded the *Sutus* into a small, powerful, and extremely intelligent nation, which survived the turbulence amid which it had come into being.

While these events were taking place, the British had moved into the area around the Orange River where the Boers were involved in serious clashes with the Griqua chieftains. These had driven the British to the point of calling a conference of chiefs, which met at Touwfontein in 1845. At this gathering, Maitland, the British representative, proposed a formula by which to bring about peace. There was to be fair allocation of the land to the Africans, the whites, and the coloreds. Each chief was to divide his land into two parts—the inalienable portion, which could be leased to the whites, and the other, which would belong to the Africans. The chiefs were to wield sovereign authority in their areas, and the British Resident would control the whites. The Resident would judge mixed cases jointly with the chiefs, and he could call on the chiefs to furnish him with men to maintain peace. But the differences among the chiefs undermined the Maitland plan the moment it was outlined. Many of them gave lip-service support to it, then waited for the first opportunity to wreck it.

The turbulence on the other side of the Vaal was as bad as any in Natal, the Orange River territory, or the Cape. There the most important African personality was the *Pedi* king, Sekhukhuni, who was to have an interesting history. In 1852, in the Sand River Convention, the British had recognized the Boers in the Transvaal as an independent people, and in the same year a British Order-in-Council had given authority for the establishment of the Cape parliament and provided for a nonracial franchise. The Transvaal republic, like the one in Natal, did not recognize the African as a citizen. He could not buy land; he was not allowed to reside in white areas unless he had a pass; and on the farms he was allowed to squat on conditions that assured the farmer of a permanent source of cheap labor.

Sekhukhuni had become a vassal of the Transvaal republic. Its troubles with the British on the Orange River, the Zulus in northern Natal, and the Swazis and Shangane to the east encouraged him to follow an increasingly independent line. When the Boers tried to bring him to heel, he withdrew to his moun-

tain fastnesses in the Lulu Range. From there he hurled defiance at the South African Republic. It sent a force against him, which he readily crushed.

Down in Natal, meanwhile, a new political star was rising among the Zulus. Cetshwayo had succeeded his father as king of the Zulus, and he was keenly interested in Sekhukhuni's quarrels with the Boers. Legend has it that he continually sent emissaries to Sekhukhuni in the guise of tobacco-sellers (an enterprise in which the Zulus had specialized for centuries) to give him advice and moral encouragement. When the Boers gave both of them trouble, Cetshwayo proposed a military alliance with Sekhukhuni to drive the whites out of their African lands; his plan was to push out the weaker Boers first and then clear Natal of the British. News of Cetshwayo's intentions alarmed the British authorities. Shepstone rushed to Pretoria, where he hectored the members of the South African Republic's parliament into surrendering their sovereignty without a shot being fired.

The thought of the Zulus massing on the Republic's southern borders, of the rebellious Sekhukhuni and the Swazis posed for war, and of the indescribably chaotic state of the Republic's finances forced the president to protest feebly against the annexation and in the end to accept it. By April of 1877, the first South African Republic had come under the British Crown. In this, it had followed the fate of the Natal republic. The impression must not be gained, however, that British policy was influenced purely by the desire to protect the African peoples. Certainly, the Order-in-Council of 1852 had gone to the extreme of giving citizenship the same meaning on both sides of the color line. On the other hand, diamonds had been discovered in Kimberley and gold in Johannesburg, and these discoveries acted as strong incentives to the British to move northward.

Since the Transvaal was safely under the British Crown, Shepstone returned to Natal, where he began preparations for war with Cetshwayo. The latter's plan for uniting the Africans against the whites had to be forestalled to avoid disaster for the Westerners. By this time, Cetshwayo had established a reputa-

tion—founded or unfounded—as an archconspirator. It was said that the troubles the British were having in the Cape with Sandile and Krelie were instigated by him, and he was even said to be doing the same in the Transvaal. Reverend A. Nachtigall wrote from Lydenburg, in the Transvaal, on January 14, 1878, to say: "Sikukuni has again received a message from Cetshwayo wherein he tells him that his people, by strategy, have taken one of the laagers of the White people; that the remainder of the White people have escaped, and their cattle are at the Vaal River and Komati; Sikukuni, therefore, also had better begin at once, then he would easily get the upper hand."³

In time, the British concluded that the Zulu king was the most dangerous African that the Europeans had met in this part of the continent. Backed by a powerful, highly disciplined, and famous army, the best of all armies maintained by the African states, his word naturally carried a lot of weight and inspired confidence. Sekhukhuni's refusal to pay his taxes, his open defiance of the Boers, and the humiliating defeat he inflicted on them when they marched on his mountain fastness were all cited as proof of Cetshwayo's machinations against the whites. And in a dispatch by Sir Bartle Free, dated November 5, 1878, the following was said of Cetshwayo:

It is not this (the Cape) Colony alone, but wherever the Kafir races are to be found, from the Fish River to the Limpopo, and from the Lower Orange River to Delagoa Bay, that the influence of the Zulu King has been found at work festering and directing this warlike spirit. It is not of late years only that the danger was seen by most competent judges; and every month since has accumulated evidence of the reality of the danger.⁴

To make South Africa safe for the white man, the power of the Zulu state had to be destroyed. This would undermine the incipient unity Cetshwayo had set his mind on building. Accordingly, the British found excuses for declaring war on him, and hostilities finally broke out in 1879. The Zulu army surrounded

³ Gibson, *The Story of the Zulus*, p. 143.

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 144.

the British at Isandlwana and annihilated 800 regulars and about as many African levies. After fighting bravely against great odds—killing a French Prince Imperial in the process—the Zulus lost the war. Their kingdom was broken up into a number of principalities; Cetshwayo was captured and sent to England, from where he returned stripped of much of his power.

The British had no sooner crushed Cetshwayo than they turned their minds to the Transvaal, where annexation was being bitterly resented. President Burgers, who had signed the instrument surrendering the republic's sovereignty, was attacked for not having gone to war. He was later thrown out of office and hounded out of the country. But his had been an impossible task from the very beginning: The coffers of the republic had been empty; the Postmaster-General had paid himself in stamps, the Surveyor-General seized the lands of the republic in lieu of his salary, and lesser officials did without pay.⁵

The war of independence broke out in 1881, but neither side did well. The Boer state was not in a fit condition to bear the burdens of a full-scale war, and British arms had suffered a demoralizing defeat at Isandlwana. Although the British ultimately won the war, they emerged from it with the prestige of their army damaged. Feeling was strong in the country that the war among the whites was the work of Cetshwayo's conspiring brain. Whenever the opportunity presented itself, he did not hesitate to set one white group against the other. Besides, the British Government was having trouble in Ireland. It was not terribly keen on the South African war. Then there were reports that behind the fresh wave of turbulence in the Cape, the Orange River area, and Zululand itself was an attempt at regrouping by the Africans to take advantage of the quarrel among the whites. The Pretoria Convention, however, brought the war to a speedy end, and the Boers got self-government, subject to the suzerainty of the British Crown.

Paul Kruger emerged from the war as the most important personality in the Boer community. He set himself the goal of

weakening British influences in the republic. Foreigners were flocking in, attracted by the gold, and were creating a serious political problem. Since they paid taxes, they wanted the right to vote. But Kruger raised the franchise qualifications. These were white people he was dealing with; the men of color could never be citizens of the republic. In the end, the war of 1899–1902 broke out between the British and the first republic, and it ended disastrously for the latter.

In their long and painful march from the Cape to the Transvaal, the Boers had hoped for a fuller life. This had strengthened their faith, which had been reinforced by the conviction that one day they would establish their own republic. When they first settled down in the Transvaal, they had felt that their moment of fulfillment had been reached. But now they were crushed by the thought that the supreme moment for which they had sacrificed so much had been of brief duration. Whenever they turned toward the vast plains around Pretoria, they saw smoke, charred walls, and the uniform of British soldiers. That was what was left of their great dream. During the trek, they had often parted by the wayside, whenever a group broke away from the others and moved on to establish its own republic. With the exception of those in the Orange Free State and the Transvaal, not one of their attempts at statecraft had survived. Each had collapsed under pressure from the turbulence of the times, internal dissension, inexperience in government, financial chaos, personal jealousies, or British intrigue and arms. Very rarely had any collapsed under African pressure.

Thus, the Boers' moment of fulfillment had ended in failure. Since disaster was staring them in the eyes on all fronts, the Boers settled down and started the painful process of reassessment.

⁵ Walker, *A History of South Africa*, p. 369.

6 • A WHITE UNITED FRONT

THE two most significant developments to emerge from the period of reassessment were the partial abandonment of the heroic approach and a greater willingness to face realities. Repudiation and white supremacy had been two of the main pillars on which Boer life and policy had been based for a long time: The one had regulated the relations with those whites with whom the Boers could not identify themselves; the other gave form to their dealings with the man of color. Both had so widened the chasms between the Boers and the British, on the one hand, and the Boers and the Africans, on the other, that when it came to questions of survival the Boers believed the Africans to be as dangerous as the British.

After their defeat, the Boers realized that they could no longer trek out of the Transvaal. Beyond the Limpopo the British had already blocked the way. To the east were the Portuguese, and the Kalahari desert lay to the west. In order to survive in this situation, the Boers re-examined their position. The great challenge, they agreed, could no longer be avoided, for they were face to face with the reality of disaster. So they decided to abandon the pillar of repudiation and come to terms with the white-skinned British.

For their part, the British had restored the Transvaal to the Boers a few years after the war. They were keen to unify the Cape, Natal, the Orange Free State, and the Transvaal into one

state to facilitate development, cut down the costs of administration, and evolve a uniform policy toward the African people. Boer agreement to this led to the formation of the Union of South Africa in 1910. The Boers agreed largely because identification with the British offered the farmers a number of advantages. It would bring about peace and the protection of a great power. Economic prosperity would follow, and in the end fulfillment would come to the Boers because of their numbers. Besides, friendship with the British held out the possibility that one side of the historical cleft stick into which the Boers were born would be removed. There was also the possibility that if the British, who were also a minority, belonged to a state in which they accepted the Boers as equals, they could be persuaded to sever their links with Britain and do as the Huguenots had done. That would provide a remarkable accretion of strength to the insecure Boers; it would swell their numbers while it would tend to destroy liberal influences in the white community. Then the issues facing South Africa would be defined in simple terms of black and white with no complications centering around values of life.

The unity thus achieved might lead to greater things. The white group could then set out to destroy whatever traces remained of Shaka's idea of common citizenship among the Africans. Cethswayo's disciples would be wiped off the face of the Union. In the end, South Africa would be a country where the white man in general, the Afrikaner or Boer in particular, could feel safe. (By the time of Union, the Boers had gone a long way toward discarding the name of farmers. They were calling themselves the Afrikaners—the people of Africa. After Union, this became increasingly the fashion.)

The British, for their part, were thinking along entirely different lines. As pointed out earlier, they had not severed the cultural and other links with Great Britain when they came to the Cape. There was nothing the Afrikaner could offer them, by way of protection, for example, that would be more reliable than the security deriving from membership in the Anglo-

Saxon community of the world. One of the links in that community was the adherence to a common set of values, which were basically liberal. It was true that in South Africa these had been respected more in the breach than in the observance, at least in relations between black and white. At the same time, the British were emotionally involved in what was known as British fair play. This made them somewhat susceptible to pressures that produced definitely negative reactions from the Afrikaners.

The British had another quality. In addition to the military power of the empire, they possessed technological knowledge. Without it, the country's industrial potential could not be developed beyond a certain point, and the Afrikaners had learned through bitter experience that to run a viable country required more skill than that which a farmer needs to count sheep. But both sides acted as though the differences which had kept them apart would resolve themselves in time and enable them to emerge as a truly united group.

The union of the groups had peculiar features, for which racial interests were largely responsible. The whites were always in a hopeless minority wherever they went in Africa. They had pooled their resources largely to meet the African challenge from positions of greater strength. The Afrikaners had not renounced the fundamentalist dynamic, nor the British the empiricist. Each hoped that when it came to fundamentals the other would yield ground.

But with a shrewder sense of realities, the British insisted on incorporating into the Union's constitution legislation guaranteeing the franchise rights of the Cape Africans. This would prevent the Afrikaners from ganging up against the whites as a racial group. Dr. Philip's exploits had given rise to a tradition in the African community that always set the greatest store by human values. Any doctrine that threatened to undermine these could divide the African community very sharply, and the British were not blind to the prospects held out by this possibility. If the Cape Africans could be kept on the voters' roll, the day

would come when the British would reach agreement with them and still find them, because of these values, in the mood to be friends. Since they had already come to terms with the Boers, the British looked forward to the day when they would make their political peace with the Africans. After that, all three would collaborate to exploit the wealth of South Africa.

To the Afrikaners who were concerned with considerations of survival, the inscription into the constitution of liberal recognition of the political rights of the man of color was unacceptable. It was not until the Cape, which was predominantly British, made it clear that it would not give in that the Boers agreed to the retention of the Cape vote. But the white united front based on blood and race had obvious weaknesses. The Boers and the British had reserves of power that would tend to encourage them not to alter basically their fundamentalist and empiricist outlooks. Since the Afrikaner was in the majority in the white community, that made him the most important political influence as long as white domination was the order of the day. He was determined to hold to this advantage no matter what happened. The economic and cultural superiority of the British placed him in the position where he functioned merely as the business manager of a concern (the state) whose shareholders were the British.

In this setup, clashes on economic or political policy would tend to involve race interests and in the end jeopardize the unity of the whites. The Africans had already shown, particularly in Natal, the Orange River area, and the Transvaal, that whenever the opportunity presented itself they would not hesitate to widen fissions in the white community in order to advance their own interests. For the whites to gang up on the basis of race in these circumstances, when they were in the minority, was to play straight into the hands of Cetschwayo's disciples and successors. What was worse, however, was that the unity based on race gave both sides no alternative except to attach to citizenship a meaning that would be valid from either's basic perspective. This involved a lot of complicated juggling with the

conscience: The profoundly Christian Afrikaners insisted on one standard of political conduct among the whites and another between black and white; the British accepted the process as inevitable and hoped to muddle through. The result was that citizenship came to have one meaning in the Afrikaans community, another in the British, and quite a different one among the Africans, who found themselves lumped together as an unprivileged racial group.

The danger that developed from this was that it made ordinary differences on social, economic, or political questions, which are normal in a free society, fundamental on almost every plane. There was no real South African viewpoint; there was certainly the Afrikaans point of view, the African, or the British. In a situation like this, the legitimacy of government could be maintained only by force, because there was no room for compromise and consent. Rebellion, civil war, and treason remained the only means of obtaining redress. These were the basic weaknesses with which the white united front started, and it fell on the Afrikaners to be the first to rock the boat of white unity. Speaking at De Wildt in 1912, General Hertzog enunciated the policy of parallel development for the British and the Afrikaners. This was more than a hint that Afrikaner initiatives were to be developed until they became the most dominant influence in the white community itself.

The difficulty for both, however, lay in the fact that the Afrikaner, finding himself at last in the position to become master of all South Africa because of his numbers, was no longer able to make concessions and compromises that would make the British believe that he was not conspiring to destroy them as a cultural entity. In the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, the Afrikaners could give up Dutch and, with the ingenious help of the Afrikaner slaves, build up Afrikaans. Although they were still very weak, they could still abandon their sense of identity with the people of Holland when Africa produced greater attractions. But at the beginning of the twentieth century, the Afrikaners were relatively too strong to be willing to

yield vital ground. Preoccupation with considerations of survival precluded the possibility of making major concessions, for history had hardened Afrikaner attitudes, fixed their preferences, and destined them to move toward their goal on their own steam if necessary. They could not abandon the ideological outlook that had ensured their survival and taken them to their moment of fulfillment. They could not relent even where the reward was to convince the British that the rejection of the connections with Britain was in their best interests. How could they yield ground when African nationalism was rearing its head in readiness for a showdown with their nationalism?

On the other hand, the British saw no valid reason why the Afrikaner should preach to them the virtue of giving up what was theirs when he clung so tenaciously to what was his. Besides, everywhere he was admonishing the Africans and the coloreds to stick to what was their own. Yet throughout his history, the Afrikaner had accustomed himself to the habit of seeing the truth only from one angle. Men and events either secured or threatened his survival. He banged his bosom passionately for all to see what a perfect example he was of what the others should be. If they did not see much virtue in it, he was offended; if they picked out blind spots, he saw treason in their behavior. He just could not understand how he could be wrong and the others right. After all, God and good luck had been on his side for such a long time.

When the British expressed doubts about the policy the Afrikaner was forcing the new Union to follow, trouble ensued. The attacks on the British press became more acrimonious, and even the Anglican bishops were publicly vilified. The Afrikaner was not going to forget Dr. Philip in a hurry. These moves were designed to cut off the lines of cultural communication between Britain and the British in South Africa, to force them into isolation and then submission. If they would not voluntarily toe the line, they would be forced to do it. In the years that were to follow, British traditions were to be systematically purged from South African public life. The Cape African vote

was abolished. When Verwoerd's Nationalist Party got to power in 1948, an exclusively Afrikaans cabinet was appointed. "God Save the Queen" was rejected as one of the country's national anthems. The Union Jack was hauled down and trampled in mud. The Union of South Africa became a republic. The crowning moment in this process of weakening the British for the purpose of forcing them to identify themselves with the Afrikaner was the severance of the Commonwealth connection.

The British had accepted this systematic clipping of their wings with virtually little more than feeble protests. There were two main reasons for this. Although a minority in the white community, they practically held the wealth of the country in their hands; but the Afrikaners' numbers and the political power derived from this made it risky for them to insist on their wishes being respected beyond a certain point. Secondly, the British, as a group, had developed as vicious a form of hatred for the man of color as some of the most negrophobic Afrikaner nationalists. Although a small band among them upheld the liberal ideal, the majority secretly cheered Verwoerd for his handling of the men of color. So strongly did many of them feel on this issue that they would sooner see South Africa out of the Commonwealth than accept a policy of real race equality.

In 1910, when the white united front had been established, the British were in a strong bargaining position. During the next fifty years, Afrikaner diplomacy isolated them so completely that they had had to accept the fundamentalist dynamic practically on the Afrikaner's unchanged terms. The front had undergone an internal change. It would exert itself in the direction of defining the issues at stake in the race crisis in simple terms of black and white. When that happened, the Afrikaner would be ready to accept the challenge posed by African nationalism.

7 • THE PATTERN OF AFRIKANER JUSTICE

IN THE manifesto he issued when he and his followers left the Cape, Piet Retief had proclaimed that the Trekkers would establish communities where they would be free to establish "just" laws. The first cardinal principle in the Boer notion of justice was that there would be no equality between black and white, either in the church or the state. There had to be one code of law for white people and another for the men of color. They saw nothing wrong with that, since God Himself, they believed, had created men with different skins and temperaments. If the laws expressed this diversity, they were perfectly in accord with the divine intention.

When the first South African Republic was established in the Transvaal, its laws discriminated very rigidly against the African. Except in very rare circumstances, the African could not buy land, he could not vote, he was not allowed to live in the white man's towns. He always got the worst possible of the amenities provided either by the state or by municipalities: He was not free to move about the white man's towns; he was presumed to be a criminal until he produced a pass to prove the contrary; and he was not allowed to be out on the streets after a certain hour of the night without a piece of paper signed by a white man showing that he was not a vagrant.