

THE SCAPEGOAT OF THE BOER WAR

OR

Gen. Piet Cronje

by

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PRELUDE:

CHAPTER 1.

✓
 "Some are born great, some achieve greatness, and some
 have greatness thrust upon them".

One part of this statement, and the reverse of another part of it are true of Pieter Arnoldus Cronje.

By his reckless bravery, his absolute fearlessness, his distinguished generalship, and his dramatic victories, he achieved greatness, and became one of the most talked-of men in the adolescent South African Republic, of which he was one of the chief architects.

The name of Cronje was upon every one's tongue after the excited meeting at Paardekraal on the 13th of December 1880, and during the fateful days of the siege of Potchefstroom, and throughout the period of the Transvaal or First Boer War of Independence, December 1880 to March ¹⁸⁸¹ 1881. Militarily it even overshadowed the great name of Piet Joubert, the Commandant-General of the South African Republic, and young Afrikaners saw in Piet Cronje a warrior after their own heart, and the one man that could quickly bring about a favourable military decision in their struggle for independence, and they chafed at the somewhat deliberate, and to them, over-cautious tactics of Joubert, which they contrasted unfavourably with the quick decisions, the bustling heroism, the grim resolution, and clever, if somewhat unscrupulous methods of Piet Cronje, methods which earned for him the sobriquet of "Slim Piet".

The physical courage and military ability which were first observed during the various commandos and wars against African Tribes were definitely recognised and became a reputation at Paardekraal and Potchefstroom. They were enhanced by Cronje's victory over, and his capture of the hateful enemy of the Transvaal - Dr. L. Starr Jameson, and his band of free booters at Doornkop in January 1896. Cronje's reputation reached its apogee, its zenith, its highest brilliance at Magersfontein in December 1899, when he completely defeated one of the greatest British generals, Lord Paul Methuen by

a clever ^{ruse} ~~counterfiet~~, and destroyed, in a few minutes, the flower of the British army, and the best infantry brigade in the world.

This dramatic victory, the greatest and the most famous of Cronje's was also his last.

Having ascended by phenomenal gradations to the highest military fame of his ~~career~~ ^{kilt} and country, he was to fall, almost immediately after, to the lowest depths of military disgrace. He had, as it were, ascended up the top of a high peak, only to fall down a precipice on the other side, and so scuttle down to abysmal depths.

He who had been courted and caressed, a darling of his nation, suddenly became shunned and suspected by every one - an accursed thing, - and the loathsome word "traitor" was breathed in connection with the once magic name of the Boer patriot - Piet Cronje.

CHAPTER 11.ANTECEDENTS:

It is a matter of history that from about the middle of the 16th Century France was torn asunder by civil strife between two politico-religious ~~ap~~ parties, the Roman Catholics and the Protestants, and during the ascendancy of the former, the latter were subjected to cruel persecution and massacres. This brought about the emigration of about half a million French Protestants to other European countries, and this stream of emigration continued until 1598 when the Edict of Nantes was promulgated by King Henry IV of Navarre securing some religious toleration and political equality to the Protestants.

The most famous of the Protestants' refugees was Jean Calvin (born 1509) who ultimately settled at Geneva, and as a reformer of the type of Martin Luther (born 1483) in Germany, and John Knox (born 1505) in Scotland, founded the Calvinist branch of the Protestant Church.

The revocation of the Edict of Nantes in 1685 by Louis XIV gave a new licence to intolerance and persecution, and led to renewed emigration of some 50,000 to 60,000 families from France to foreign countries, notably Holland, England, and Germany, but also to Denmark and America.

Of the large numbers that came to Holland, the Directors of the East India Company offered to take some to the Cape, and from 1688 to 1700 some 200 Huguenots, as the French Protestants were called, were landed at the Cape; and heads, of families were placed at Stellenbosch, Paarl, the Drakenstein and Franschhoek. They were dispersed among the 600 Dutch farmers who then constituted the entire population of the Cape, and soon they lost their language and national identity.

It is well to remember that the Huguenots' families arrived at the Cape less than a half century after Jan van Riebeck, that it is to say, during the rearing of the second generation of the new Dutch-Afrikaner nation, when the Dutch element was only 600 strong, or only three times as many as the new Huguenot arrivals.

The Cronje's, as the name indicates, were of Huguenot or French Protestant origin. The first of their line in South Africa was their ancestor Pierre Crosnier, originally from Normandy, ^{who} and was one of the Huguenots who left Holland on May 25th 1698 by the Driebergen, and arrived with two younger brothers at the Cape on the 3rd of September 1698 near the end of the governorship of the energetic Simon van der Stel. The names Pierre Crosnier were later corrupted, Pierre into Pieter, and the Crosnier first into Cronier, and later into Cronje. (Manfred N. The Huguenots of South Africa pp.43, 138).

Pierre Crosnier, born in 1671 was only 27 years old when he landed with his two brothers in South Africa. They were allocated farms at Versailles in the Waggeⁿmakers Vallei near the present site of Wellington in the Paarl district and at Champagna and Olijvehout. Pierre married a Huguenot woman - Susana Taillefer, and had with her issue in six children. His two brothers died soon after their arrival in South Africa and their farms developed on him.

Pierre called his eldest son after himself. This son was born 1713 and in due time married Susana Roy, daughter of Jean Roy, a Huguenot originally from Provence in France. From this union eight children were born - seven sons and one daughter. The third eldest son was Stephanus, born in January 1747. At 26 years of age he married Susana Jacoba Harhoff, and ten children resulted from the union.

P Pierre's fourth child, named Francois Johannes and born in September 1780 married Hermina Elizabetha de Jager and had also a large family. Their fifth child was Andries Petrus who married Johanna Christina Geldenhuys and is the father of Pieter Arnoldus Cronje our hero, whose pedigree in a direct line is as follows

~~-----Andries Petrus~~

~~X-----Pieter Arnoldus Cronje.~~

~~Johanna Christina Geldenhuys~~

By the natural process of expansion, and the characteristic desire of farming communities to move constantly into unbroken lands, the Cronjes in the succeeding two generations moved from Waggenmakersⁿ Vallei, Campagna^h and Olijvehout over the mountain barriers of the Drakenstein and Langebergen, and established themselves at Caledon, and after another two or three decades some of them were settled in Swellendam, in a country swarming with all manner of large game and beasts of prey.

From the earliest days, Boers as they came to be generally called from their chief occupation were, above everything else hunters and cattle farmers. They preferred the excitement and dangers of the chase to the steady toil, peace and dull monotony of agriculture, and Governor Simon van der Stel, whose heart was in viticulture was wont to make many animadversions^d and strictures against the Dutch Boers' hunting propensities, which he regarded as a deplorable waste of time and playing the sluggard. Love of the chase was thus almost inborn in the descendantsⁿ of the early settlers at the Cape.

At a still later date, some of the Cronjes were burghers of Graaff-Reinet^t, the succeeding generations having moved more inland and eastwards.

Andries Petrus Cronje, the father of Pieter Arnoldus Cronje was removed five generations or about 160 years from his ancestor Pierre Crosnier, who had arrived at the Cape in 1698. During that time the family had moved right across the Cape Colony from Stellenbosch, Paarl, Caledon and Swellendam, then across the Br^ede river, the Gou^litz river, over the Outeniqua Mountains and the Great Karroo to Gra^aff Reinet^t, then finally over the Sneeuwbergen to the foothills of the Stormbergen, and Andries Petrus Cronje had acquired a farm Rietkuil in the Colesberg district.

He had frequently taken part in border wars against the Ama-Xhosa, and had been wounded more than once, as a result of which he was slightly lame in one leg (Mrs.C.M.Robinson).

CHAPTER III.
BIRTH AND EARLY YEARS.

From the union of Andries Petrus Cronje and Johanna Christina Geldenhuys, herself a descendant of one of the first arrivals with Jan van Riebeck from Holland, twelve children were born, five sons and seven daughters, and of these Pieter Arnoldus our hero was the second child.

The sons were Jan, Pieter Arnoldus, Andries Petrus, Hendrik, and Stephanus in order of age.

Pieter Arnoldus Cronje, whom we shall hence onward simply refer to as Piet Cronje was born on the farm Rietkuil in the district of Colesberg on the 4th of October 1836, that is to say during the bustle and turmoil of the Great Trek. It is of interest to note here that another and greater Dutch Afrikaner giant Paul Kruger, also first saw the light in the Colesberg district eleven years earlier.

When Piet Cronje was born, ^{Louis} Louis Trichard had trekked from Tsomo in 1835; ^{and} Hendrik Potgieter had left Tarkastad in November or December 1835 and traversed the district of Colesberg, where he was joined by a large party under Carel Celliers (Preller: Voortrekkermense p.) of Colesberg, including the Krugers with their son Paul Kruger, the future president of the South African Republic. Gerrit Maritz, a leading wagon maker of Graff Reinett, who must have been known to Andries P. Cronje (P.C's father) emigrated from Graff Reinett in September 1836, while Pieter Retief the historian and draughtsman of the Great Trek left the Winterbergen in February 1837, passed close to Colesberg on his way to the Orange River, where his large party was greatly augmented by many who had been of two minds.

Piet Retief was born at Waggenmakers Vallei on the 12th November 1780. He was of Huegenot descent, and most probably knew the Cronje family very well. He had most probably met some of them at Waggenmakers Vallei, at Swellendam, at Graff Reinett or at Colesberg. Their common ^{the} Huegenot descent would be still a strong binding factor between these people.

Andries P. Cronje, like other true Dutch-Afrikaner patriots was undoubtedly discontented with the policy of the British Colonial

government of the day, and his sympathies were fully with his trekking countrymen whose leaders he knew.

These facts are adduced to show that there was every reason, every inducement for Andries P. Cronje to be also on trek at the time of Piet Cronje's birth, and indeed, it is often averred erroneously that Piet Cronje was carried as a baby in one of the wagons of the Great Trek (Times 6th February 1911).

That Andries P. Cronje did not at this time abandon his Rietkuil farm and join his emigrating compatriots was due to his wife's serious illness (Brandwag 15/8/1913 p.167). She was so ill that she could not be moved from her bed, and Andries P. Cronje had perforce to continue on his farm for many more years, waiting, either to bury her, or to nurse her to recovery.

Piet Cronje's tender years were thus spent on the farm at Rietkuil under the usual environment of the frontier Dutch Afrikaner child of those days, namely a religious atmosphere in the house, where Bible reading, psalm singing and prayer were the invariable rule, and the hand of providence was seen in every incident, including the Great Trek itself; where the 'outrageous' events of the Black Circuit, the Slager's Nek, the Emancipation of Slaves, the Missionaries' slandering of the Boers, the ^{Fiftieth} ~~Fifteenth~~ Ordinance granting to the Hottentots equality with ^hChristians, and other such measures were discussed and denounced; where Lord Glenelg, Dr. Philip and men of similar kidney were condemned and abused. In this way Piet Cronje would early ~~xxxx~~ receive indelible impressions of the political discontent of the Dutch Afrikaner people, the grievances of land and labour, the unfairness of the English, and the antagonism and even animosity between them and his own people the Boers; the savagery of the Kafirs and the constant fear of their cruel attacks and cattle raids, leaving a trail of blood, burning homesteads, denuded cattle folds, and a gaunt prospect of poverty and ruin. He would see in his father's lame leg the result of one of such attacks.

Besides these mental impressions, ^hthere would be the usual industry in agriculture, and ^hherding of cattle and sheep, tending

to develop the body and the mind. There would also be the usual chase with its acquisition of veld lore, early familiarity with the gun, and development of self reliance.

Piet Cronje was eight years old when, his mother's health being restored, his father was ultimately able to leave the Colesberg district and join his countrymen across the Orange river.

This was in 1844. Andries Cronje crossed the Orange River with his trek somewhere to the north-east of Colesberg, probably at Alleman's Drift, and he settled down for a while at Groenvlei in the Orangia. Here the family lived for seven years.

During that time he was developing quickly, physically and intellectually. His courage and self-reliance was such that he went by himself to tend his father's flocks and herds among thickly wooded hills infested with lions and dangerous snakes. At thirteen years, he had already acquired great skill at shooting, and he says of himself - "En terwyl ik myn oog oefende langs de loop van myn trouwe roer, voelde ik mij reeds man genoeg om enig wilddier dat het wagen zou onze kudden aan te vallen tegemoet te gaan en neer te schieten." (Brandwag: 15/8/1913 p.167). (And while I looked proudly at the barrel of my gun, I felt already man enough to meet and shoot down any wild animal that ^{might} attempted to attack our flocks.)

At this early age, besides killing several large game, he brought down his first lion, single handed.

About this time (1844), there was some excitement among the Boers. Many of them had settled just on the north of the Orange River, and had leased large tracts of land from some of the 2,000 Griquas of Philippolis under Adam Kok III. They had then formed themselves into an independent community with its full complement of field cornets, landdrosts and commandants. Their attitude to their landlords became more and more refractory and contemptuous with the result that Chief Adam Kok, Lt.-Gov. Hare, Dr. John Philip and other missionaries asked the Colonial Government to protect the Griquas. With this end in view ~~Sir George Napier~~, Governor Sir George Napier entered into a Treaty of Alliance with Adam Kok and other chiefs in the Orangia (~~1843~~) (1843) whereby European lessees became subject to the jurisdiction of the chiefs, very much to the repugnance and disgust of the Dutch Afrikaners. Matters came to a head when two African servants of one Jan Krynauw are said to have quarrelled with a European and menaced him with assegais.

Jan Krynauw arrested them, and took them to Commandant Jan Kock, who had them severely flogged. Adam Kok, thereat sent an armed band to arrest Krynauw, but not finding him at home, they broke into the house, "poured a storm of abuse upon his wife," and took three guns and ammunition. Incensed at this, Afrikaner farmers assembled under arms to uphold European honour. There was some skirmishing, and much cattle lifting on both sides until at his request, Adam Kok was supported by a British corps under Lt.Col. Richardson, and defeated the Boers under Commandant Jan Kock at Zwartkoppies and Touwfontein in 1845. In this skirmish, Andries P. Cronje acted as Field Cornet, ~~whisk~~ while young Piet Cronje and his mother were among the inmates of the Boer camp at Touwfontein.

After their defeat, Commandant Jan Kock and several Boer emigrants, thoroughly disgusted with the British, abandoned their leases in the Philippolis area, and fled to Winburg. With Jan Kock went Andries P. Cronje and his family. From Winburg Jan Kock led another force of infuriated and revengeful farmers against Adam Kok, but was driven off by Major Henry Donovan, the new British Resident, at the head of British troops and men furnished by the Chiefs Moroka, Gert Taaibossh, Carolus Baatjes and Peter Davids ^{Theal: History of S.A. 1834-1854 p.409)}

In 1848, the new Governor Sir Harry Smith, to put an end to tribal and racial wars, and "with a benevolent design of preventing disorder and bloodshed", proclaimed all African and European territories between the Orange and the Vaal rivers under British rule as the Orange River Sovereignty. The majority of Dutch Afrikaner farmers agitated against this proclamation, and Commandant Andries Pretorius arrived at Winburg to weld them together and proclaim a "war of freedom", and at their head he marched against Bloemfontein. The report of this no sooner reached Sir Harry Smith at Cape Town than he collected all the available Colonial troops and sent them to Colesberg. From there he led them in person, splashed across the swollen Orange river went by Philippolis and Touwfontein and engaged Andries Pretorius' force at Boomplaats on the 29th of

August 1848. In this battle, described by Sir Harry Smith as "one/...10

FN/

"one of the most severe skirmishes" he had ever fought. Jan Kock was in command of the Boer right wing which suffered most severely, but distinguished itself by its bravery and discipline, and among ~~the~~ bravest burghers in Jan Kock's commando was Andries P. Cronje.

The conflict with the Griquas, and especially the subjection of the Boer emigrants to the jurisdiction of Adam K&K, their bitter complaints of oppression and coercion and of British partiality to the Africans, all this must have made a great impression on the plastic mind of young Piet Cronje, and the disaster of Boer arms at Zwartkoppies, Touwfontein, Winburg and Boomplaats, coming in such quick succession, must have fired his warm heart, embittered his tender soul, and imbued him with grim determination to avenge, at some future date, the undeserved humiliation of his people.

CHAP IV. Adolescent Transvaal

The Orange River Sovereignty was short lived as the Imperial authorities were reluctant to assume new responsibilities. But when they were still considering the terms and means of withdrawing from this embarrassment with good grace, the agile and industrious Andries Pretorius cashed in at the opportune moment, and got the British Government to recognise the independence of the Transvaal in the famous Sand River Convention of ⁿ the 17th of January 1852. By it the British Government guaranteed in the fullest manner, to the emigrant farmers beyond the Vaal River the right to manage their own affairs, and to govern themselves according to their own laws, without any interference on the part of the British Government, and that no encroachment shall be made by the said Government on the territory beyond to the north of the Vaal River.

Her Majesty's Government also disclaimed all alliances whatever and with whomsoever of the coloured races to the North of the Vaal River.

Further it was agreed that no slavery is or shall be permitted or practised in the country to the north of the Vaal River by the emigrant farmers.

It was also agreed that no objection shall be made by any British authority against the emigrant Boers purchasing their supply of ammunition in any of the British colonies and possessions of South

Africa; it being mutually understood that all trade in ammunition with the native tribes is prohibited both by the British Government and the ~~settlers~~ emigrant farmers on both sides of the Vaal River.

Owing to the bitterness and rancour of party-feeling, Comm-General A. Hendrik Potgieter and his followers at Zoutpansberg had refused to associate themselves with Andries Pretorius in bringing about the Sand River Convention, and now, when the Convention was a fait accompli, prompted by jealousy and animosity, they accused Andries Pretorius of having acted without authority, and seeking to make himself supreme. Among the generality of the Dutch Afrikaners, however, the Sand River Convention was hailed with hosannas and acclaimed as a masterpiece of Dutch Afrikaner diplomacy.

"Groot was de blijdschap onder de burghers toen wij ten laatste - na vele jaren van vermoeiend rondtrekken door de wildernis, na aanhoudende strijd tegen wilde dieren en nog wilder mensen, na ongelooflik zwaar lijden - erkend werden als een vrij volk. Het bloed van dappere mannen en vrouwen was niet te vergeefs gestort. Onze God het onze gebeden verhoord; Hij het ons geleid door een wildernis van stryd en bewonden dat wij de vryheid waardig waren waarnaar wij so hard gestreefd, en waarvoor wij so veel geleden hadden, En wij waren dankbaar jegens Hem en gaven Hem alle lof en liefde" (Brandwag) (Great was the joy among the burghers, when at last, after years of fatiguing peregrinations through the wilderness, after constant strife against wild animals and still fiercer men, after incredibly bitter suffering, we were recognised as independent people, the blood of our heroes and heroines had not been shed in vain. Our God at last heard our prayers. He had led us through the wilderness of strife and found us worthy of the freedom for which we had striven so hard, and for which we had suffered so bitterly, and we owe Him thanks and give Him all glory and love.)

These are the words of Piet Cronje. They typify the sentiments of all the Dutch Afrikaner race from 1852 to 1950.

The Sand River Convention was their Magna Charta.

After it was ratified at Rustenburg, many freedom loving Boers left the languishing Orange River Sovereignty and went to seek new homes in the Transvaal, the new Canaan. Among these was Andries Cronje with his family. He went to the Potchefstroom District, and acquired farms on the Schoon Spruit to the north of the present town of Klerksdorp. The chief of these farms he named "Goed^dgevonden" (Discovery). Here his son Piet Cronje was destined to spend most of the remaining fifty-nine years of his life.

Piet Cronje was now about 16 years of age. He was a well developed youth, somewhat spare of body, swarthy of countenance, quiet, stubborn and short tempered, but lithe of limb, industrious, methodical and determined.

Besides ability to read and write, he had no education. There were no schools in the Transvaal at this time. His father therefore procured the services of an itinerant teacher, one William de Villiers to give his children the rudiments of education. Piet made as rapid a progress as can be expected from disjointed and irregular lessons with the clamant duties of the farm ever knocking at the door of the classroom. He is said to have taken special interest in history - first the history of his own people as becomes a properly trained child, and then the history of great military leaders, and of the world at large. (Brandwag 15/8/1913 p.168).

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After the ratification of the Sand River Convention, the Transvaal Afrikaners, elated with their newly won independence renamed their country the South African Republic, and instigated by the munificence of the Convention they set on foot a series of expeditions ^{against} the African tribes of the northern Transvaal. These expeditions are generally termed punitive. In reality, most of them were provocative, and all of them were protective. Their principal reason and objective was to disarm the tribes and thereby secure the Transvaal and its European inhabitants against the military rivalry. First there was Hendrik Potgieter's comm-
ando against the Bapedi of Sekwati in the Zoutpansberg in August 1852. In the same month and year there was Commandant Pieter

Scholtz's expedition against the Bakwena of Sechele at Kolobeng and the Barolong of Montshiwa at Lotlhakane on the Molopo River.

Shortly after this, the Republic was called upon to mourn its two chief surviving architects, the two outstanding figures and bitter rivals of that generation of Dutch Afrikaners - Andries Hendrik Potgieter who died in March 1853, and Andries Willem Jacobus Pretorius who died in July following, and the Volksraads in due time appointed their sons Piet Potgieter and Marthinus Wessels Pretorius to succeed their fathers respectively as Commandants ^{their} ~~-xPietxPotgieterxfromxthe~~ generals, and to carry on policies; and so the commandos against Africans were not long interrupted but were, if anything, resumed with greater bitterness.

In November 1854, the new Commandants, ^{General} - Piet Potgieter from the Zoutpansberg, and Marthinus W. Pretorius from Rustenburg led their respective burghers in a commando against the tribe of Chief Mokopane, who had murdered Hermanus Potgieter, brother of the old commandant, ^{General} Hendrik, and his party of thirteen men, ^{ten} women and children in a ~~xxxix~~ shockingly cruel manner. Hermanus was a rough, uncivil man of violent temper, who looked down with scorn and contempt upon black folk, and his repeated taunts and frauds upon Mokopane's people, during his unlawful hunting and trading trips provoked them to commit this heinous crime. ^{JN/} (Theal: History of S.A. 1854-1872 p.27). The people of Mokopane fully expiated their crime by being almost exterminated. The Commandants - General Potgieter and Pretorius, with Paul Kruger as their chief of staff blockaded the tribe for twenty-five ~~xxx~~ days in a large cavern 2,000 feet long by 500 feet wide [→] killed, while about two thousand had perished of thirst and hunger. The besiegers had only four men slightly wounded, but lost their leader Commandant Piet Potgieter, who was struck ^e by a ball while directing operations. Mokopane himself escaped the doom of his tribe and the ferocious vengeance of the Dutch Afrikaners, of the Transvaal. He fled to Mapela, a neighbouring chief and ~~xxxxxx~~ accomplice. 87

In the last two of these commandos, viz. the one led by

Comm.P. Scholtz against Sechele and Montshiwa, and that led by the Commandants General P. Botgieter and M.W. Pretorius against Mokopane, Andries P. Cronje took part. Piet Cronje, also, although only about seventeen years of age, had hopes of being called on commando. In this there was nothing unique, for many Afrikaner boys have served in the firing line at the tender age of sixteen with their grand-fathers of sixty years not only then, but even in the Anglo-Boer War of 1899 to 1902. If Piet Cronje took no part in these expeditions, there is no doubt that it must have been a bitter disappointment to the young patriot of 17 or 18 years of age to be compelled to stay at home when his countrymen were serving their country, and writing their names in letters of blood.

In 1855, the township of Pretoria was founded on a farm belonging to Comm. Gen. Marthinus Pretorius, and in 1857 a representative assembly - the Volksraad - was elected by the burghers of various cornetries, a Constitution was adopted, and Comm. Gen. Marthinus Pretorius was chosen as the first President of the South African Republic, and Potchefstroom was made the seat of Government, later Pretoria. The Dutch Reformed Church was to be the state church, the Batavian flag - three horizontal stripes, red white and blue, with the addition of a green vertical stripe at the mast end was adopted as the Republican flag. Slavery was prohibited; Equality ^{cap!} between black and white people would not be tolerated.

These matters were no sooner put down upon paper at Potchefstroom than there was violent commotion in the whole Transvaal. Ecclesiastical disputes, parochial jealousies and political animosities at once flared up, Potchefstroom pulling this way and Zoutpansberg pulling that way; Lydenburg going one way and Ureicht another way, each calling itself an independent republic; each with its own volksraad, president, commandant-general and other paraphanelia of offices, and here and there resignations, ejections, ~~usurpations~~ usurpations of authority, and irregular elections of officials; President M. Pretorius going from one Republic to another, now evading the constitution and now trying against odds to effect union, and Paul Kruger attempting to put an end to anarchy now by

reason and how by cannon. To make confusion more confounded, there was unrest among African tribes, constituting an external threat to an internally divided community. In the following year, however, Zoutpansberg came into line with ~~Potgieter~~ Potchefstroom by accepting its constitution, and in 1860 Lydenburg and Utrecht also gave in their adhesion, so that the four embryo empires were welded in one single South African Republic. But now there was intestine strife between the various factions and parties for supreme power in the state. Between the men of Potchefstroom and the men of Lydenburg, especially, there seemed to be an irremediable breach, which was nothing more than the perpetuation of the age-old animosity between the adherents of the old ^{Commandants-General} ~~Comms. Genl~~ Andries Pretorius and Hendrik Potgieter. So bitter was the animosity between parties that there were soon insurrections and revolts in various wards and districts that the country was torn with anarchy and chaos, ending in a minor civil war and a state bankruptcy.

In 1859 President M. Pretorius visited Bloemfontein, and whilst there he was elected President of the Orange Free State in succession to Jacobus Boshof. There he carried on flirtations with Chief Moshoeshe and resigned the presidency of the South African Republic. But now again, more suo, in 1863 he resigned as president of the Orange Free State, and sought re-election as president of the South African Republic.

Peace was not restored till 1864, when Marthinus Pretorius was accepted by all parties and districts and universally re-elected and accredited as the President of the South African Republic, while Paul Kruger was elected as Commandant-General.

During all this turmoil, the Cronjes were on the side of a man who gradually emerged as a tower of strength. This was Paul Kruger, who was on the whole the moderating factor, and whose grasp of the situation, whose strong mind, and whose patriotism urged him to uphold the constitution, and ^{from the} ~~at~~ first ^{to} oppose the somewhat ^{shuffling and} unstable, President M. Pretorius, and therefore ^{to} support the anti-Pretorius party.

Towards the end of the year 1856, the Volksraad laid down

orders for special precautions for communities in various districts and wards. Burghers were told to hold themselves in readiness, and to form laagers under their respective field cornets and commandants. The African tribes along the Olifants River, especially those under Chiefs Moleté, Manekusa, Sekwati and Rasiti were said to be conspiring to murder any European hunters who traversed their territories, and people saw in this threat a repetition and elaboration of the gruesome Hermanus Potgieter incident, ^{of 1854} and were determined to ^{Y [Volksraad Minutes Jan-May 1846]} meet force with force. There was great apprehension of invasion by united forces of African tribes of the Northern Transvaal. The chiefs and the people were greatly annoyed at the frequent penetration of their villages and lands by European hunting parties, some who slaughtered large game at random, thus reducing the food supply of the people. But above all, the hunters were mostly representatives of the reckless, rough and rowdy and less law abiding sections of the Europeans society, untrammelled by any nice considerations of humanity, propriety or just dealing. "Men capable of the most abominable cruelty, and meanness but possessing the quality of brute courage roamed along the frontier normally as hunters and traders." (Theal: Theal History of S.A. p.376). / Early in 1856, when he was twenty years old, Piet Cronje was called up on commando against some African tribe, ^{se/} whose members had raided some Boer farms, slaughtered some of their herds and flocks and driven off others. The pursuit of the thieves ^{se/} into their mountain fastness was however abandoned, as the ^{se/} terrain was difficult.

n Soon after this, there was another expedition against yet another African chief Masuba in the Northern Transvaal. He was accused of having murdered some Boer farmers, their wives and children, who were travelling through and hunting in his district. This was quite a large commando and Paul Kruger was in charge, while Piet Cronje served as Assistant field cornet under Commandant A.C.Swarts. The Assistant ^F field ^C cornet's popularity with the burghers somewhat eclipsed the Field Cornet and excited jealousy in the superior officer, leading to some contre-temps in the commando, but Piet Cronje's bravery and address so impressed Paul

JN/ Kruger that he publicly commended him, and however envious Swarts might be, he had, at least outwardly to treat Piet Cronje with respect and consideration. ⁴(Brandwag: 15/8/1913 p.168). Piet Cronje had been steadily coming to the notice of his countrymen. He was now confirmed in his official position as an Assistant ^FField ^ecornet. This was the commencement of his public life. His duties were partly military and partly civil. A Field Cornetcy or ward consisted of from sixty to one hundred and twenty households, and every group ~~is~~ had a Commandant as its military and administrative head. The duties of the Field ^Ccornet were to administer law and keep order in the district, to supervise African villages, to help the landdrost, or magistrate of the district, 20/ ⁴(Hamilton Agar: Native Policy of the Voortrekkers pp.74,75) to arrest evil doers and law breakers, to see to the roads and bridges, to watch the relations of masters and servants and conditions of employment, to keep a register of burghers of the ward, to help in the collection of taxes and vital statistics, and to check on stock movements and stock diseases. His military duties were to assist the commandants in every way, to call up burghers on commando, and to give out ammunition. These duties entailed much travelling and contact with people in all walks of life, and the Field cornet was thus generally the best known man in the district. The salary attached to the Field cornetcy was 200 Rixdollars or about £15. per annum.

caps/ cap/ J.N CHAP V. LOVE AND WAR
 The year 1857 was among the happiest of Piet Cronje's life. He was entrenched as Assistant Field Cornet; he was called up again on an important commando, and he was engaged to be married to the sweetest girl in the Transvaal.

H/ Early in the year there was a serious quarrel between the governments of the South African Republic and the Orange Free State. President Marthinus Pretorius, over-anxious for the union of the Boer republics had committed acts in the Orange Free State which that government regarded and characterised as sedition. He went over to Bloemfontein, and ¹totally disregarding President Boshof of the Orange Free State claimed chief authority as being

van der Hoff, a leading personage and accomplished scholar, recently arrived from Holland. He was for many years the only clergyman in the South African Republic, till 1858.

Early in 1858, the unsatisfactory relations, and constant friction between Africans and Europeans once more manifested themselves in the recurrence of bloodshed. ^{Members of} The clan of Chief Mapela, living in the Zoutpansberg are said to have murdered a European hunting party and siezed their property. Comm.Gen Stephanus Schoeman of the Zoutpansberg at the head of a strong force went against them, but they retired behind their strong fortifications among inaccessible hills and mountain gorges. In April, Commandant Paul Kruger called out a strong commando to proceed

son, heir and successor of Comm-Gen. Andries Pretorius, and invited Chief Moshoeshoe to Bloemfontein for discussions. These pretensions were intolerable, and the Free State Volksraad gave M. Pretorius twenty-four hours ^{notice} to quit Bloemfontein and cross the Vaal. A few days after, M. Pretorius and P. Kruger led ^{an army} ~~a force~~ to invade the Free State to force the issue of union. In this

~~Transvaal force numbering three hundred men, and with Paul Kruger as one of the chief-officers, - one would naturally expect Piet Cronje, thirsting as he was for a baptism of fire and military distinction, to be one of the first and most enthusiastic volunteers. But Cronje had conscientious scruples which decided him against joining. He refused to take part in what he considered a fratricidal war (Herinneringen, Brandwag 15/8/1913).~~

On the opposite banks of the Rhenoster River the Transvaal and the Free State forces faced each other, but at the critical juncture, neither fired a shot. Pretorius and Kruger, doubtful whether any personal consideration could possibly justify the shedding of their kinsmen's blood, and seeing no useful purpose in fighting and less hope for their side, hoisted a flag of truce, re-crossed the Vaal, and returned to Potchefstroom.

The story bears a remarkable resemblance to an incident in the 'Great War' in the Mahabharata - the great Hindu epic, when the Pandavas and the Kuaravas, facing each other for battle on the Kurukshetra field were siezed with mutual dread, and each army trembled at the sight of their opponents, and dismayed at the thought of slaying their kinsmen, desired reconciliation.

At the beginning of the year 1857 Piet Cronje had made the acquaintance of Hester Susana, daughter of ^{Johannes Hendrik} Piet Visser, ^{popularly known as} of one of the neighbouring farms. ^{Jan Boomplass because of his distinguished bravery at the Battle of Boomplass (1848)} After the philandering of the usual "op sit" and courting at the girl's home, the lovers submitted to the ceremony of "confermasie", or admission to full membership of their church, and were then formally engaged to be married.

Early marriages were the rule among ^{Tulsh-} Boer Afrikaners of the time, and so on the 24th of December 1857, Piet Cronje, then twenty-one years of age was joined in matrimony to Mej. Hester Susana Visser, aged eighteen years, in the Nederduits Hervormde Kerk at Potchefstroom, the ceremony being conducted by the Rev. Dirk

against the people of Mapela. Once more Piet Cronje was one of the first men to answer the call. He was bubbling over with patriotism and was anxious to distinguish himself, and was at the forefront in inflicting the loss of nearly a thousand casualties on the Mapela tribe and capturing large herds of their stock.

The northern Transvaal was a veritable festering sore, and it was not long before hostilities broke out again between black and white. The Africans again accused the Europeans of coercion, contemptuousness and brutality, while the Europeans accused the Africans of cattle lifting, insubordination, and unlawful possession of armaments. In October and December 1863, therefore strong commandos were sent ~~ex from Lydenburg and Pretoria~~ against the clans of Mabogo (Mapoch) and Malefo (Malewu) of the district of Lydenburg, and one of the first acts of Pres. M. Pretorius after his re-election was to send another ⁱⁿ commando/1864 against the two clans, who had not yet been subdued. Piet Cronje took part in both commandos, but on each occasion the commando returned without engaging the enemy, in the first instance (December 1863) because it was recalled owing to the revolt of Commandant Jan Viljoen of Marico, and in the second instance (June 1864) because ^{the} Swazis, who had also a bone to pick with Mabogo and Malefo ^{had fallen} fell on their tribes and nearly annihilated them, leaving something like six thousand men, women and children dead on the field of battle, before the Pretoria commando arrived on the scene.

In June 1865, war broke out between the Orange Free State and the Basotho of Moshoeshoe. Pres. Marthinus Pretorius, of the S.A. Republic was also ^{ex-president} president of the Orange Free State, and his sympathies were wholly with the Free State. In earnest terms he appealed to the burghers of the S.A. Republic to go ^{to} the help of the Free State, but a threatening cloud of Zulu invasion made such help impossible just then. Shortly after, tidings came that armed bands of vindictive Basotho under Ramanehella, ^(Ramanela) who were pillaging Free State farms and burning homesteads as an act of warfare, had fallen upon the transport wagons of one Piet Pretorius, and uncle of Pres. Pretorius and a burgher of the

South African Republic, on the Free State border near the Drakensbergen, massacred Pretorius, his four sons and his servants, and then removed his oxen his wagons and goods. President Pretorius thereupon demanded from Moshoeshoe the delivery of the murderers, and compensation commensurate with their crime. Receiving no satisfaction, he and Comm-Gen. Paul Kruger in September 1865 led a strong force of 970 men to aid the Free State against the Basotho and at the same time to avenge the blood of their countrymen. Among those Transvaal burghers was Piet Cronje who again distinguished himself by his ardour and fearlessness. The Transvaal force was suddenly attacked at Naauwpoort one early morning by a strong Basotho force under Molapo. There was panic in the laager, and disaster was only averted by the cool confidence of Comm-Gen. Paul Kruger, and the courage and discipline of men like Piet Cronje. *On* One ^{occasion} ~~day~~ during this war, Cronje and three companions were away from the laager, when they found themselves surrounded by twenty Basotho warriors. Without waiting, Cronje and his mates immediately opened fire on them, and drove them off.

Having effected junction with the Free State forces under *Comm-* Gen. *J.* Fick, the combined Transvaal and Free State commandos engaged the Basotho impis first at Leribe, and then at Cathcart's Drift on the Caledon, defeating them on both occasions and capturing much spoil in 770 horses 8,000 cattle and 4,000 sheep on 23rd October. The division of this booty led to dispute between the Orange Free State and the South African Republic armies, and on the 30th of October, Pretorius and Kruger and their burghers left Fick and his Free State men to paddle their own canoe.

CHAP VI

DIAMONDS DISTRICT DISPUTES

In 1867 Schalk van Niekerk, a farmer living near Hopetown observed a neighbour's child playing with a very brilliant pebble. The ^cChild's mother gave it to van Niekerk for the asking. Afterwards a trader, John O'Reilly saw the stone, and suspecting it to be a diamond had it sent to Dr. Atherstone of Grahamstown, and afterwards to Mr. Herite, the French Consul at Cape Town. Both pronounced ^{it} a diamond. A second stone was discovered again near Hopetown, a third on the banks of the banks of the Vaal River, and after several others a large stone was found in March 1869 in possession of an African medicine man as one of his charms. It was 83 carats in weight and was afterwards sold for £11,000. How much the ^{African} owner received is not stated.

By the end of the year, many stones had been found on the northern bank of the Vaal River near its confluence with the Harts River, and diggers were soon swarming over the area.

The territory in which diamonds were found had no less than five claimants - namely the South African Republic, the Griquas of Nicholas Waterboer, the Koranas of Massou, the Batlhaping of Mahura and the Barolong of Moroka, and later, the Orange Free State (Pres. Brand).

In 1870 diamonds were found on the south bank of Free State side of the Vaal River and more diggers came. Later in the year, more diamonds were found some distance from the river at Dut Oitspan, on the Free State side, near its border with the Griqua territory of Cornelius Kok, and again thousands of diggers rushed there. These rushing movements and excited flockings of diggers here and there ^{were} ~~was~~ like the gathering of birds of prey over carrion.

All the claimants, the Barolong the Batlhaping, the Griquas, the Koranas and the S.A. Republic claimed the whole or part of the territory along the northern bank of the Vaal River from its confluence with the Harts River upwards and eastwards to the Maquassi spruit, then along that spruit up along the Maquassi hills and above the source of the Harts River to the x source of the Molopo River. The eastern line of this disputed territory, namely

the line of the Maquassi spruit and mountains northward ~~xxx~~ cut off the town and all the district of Bloemhof, and many farms of the Potchefstroom district from the South African Republic. It came very close to the Schoon spruit, and was within twenty-five miles of Andries, and Piet Cronje's farms of Goedgevonden and Palmietfontein.

Several letters were exchanged and several interviews and meetings were held between the officials of the S.A. Republic and other claimants with a view to exploring some basis of agreement but all without avail. Finally, a representative conference of all parties was held at Buurmansdrift on the Molopo River close to Mafeking on the 15th of November 1870. Present on behalf of the S.A. Republic were Pres. Marthinus Pretorius, Comm-Gen. Paul Kruger, Messrs T.J. Steyn, M. Loubert, J. Botha, H. Greef, H. Beukes, H. Coetzee and J. Snyman. The Barolong were represented by their chiefs Phoi, Montshiwa, Moroka, Molema, Matl^aba, Makgobi and Izaak Motlhabane; the Bahurutshe by Chief Moilwa from Marico; the Bangwaketse by Chief Gaseitsiwe from Kanye and the Koranas of Captain Massou by Andries Rei. The Rev. Joseph Ludorf, chief Montshiwa's missionary did the interpreting.

In this conference, Montshiwa claimed for all the Barolong tribes the country bounded on the east by a line from the source of the Molopo River to the source of the Harts River thence to the source of the Schoolyspruit and along that river to the Vaal and along the Vaal River westward to ^o its confluence with the Harts River, and thence westwards to the Kgalagare (Kalahari Desert).

If Moroka's claim had been surprising to the representatives of the S.A. Republic, Montshiwa's must have been staggering. And what was to become of the Cronjes? Their farms were swallowed up

wholly within this claim of Montshiwa. *It was from this time that Piet Cronje knew of the Barolong of Montshiwa at Mafeking, and he never forgot them.*

The Keate Award:
As no agreement, ^{regarding ownership} could be reached, it was mutually agreed to refer the dispute to a court of arbitration. In February 1871, the new Governor Sir Henry Barkly caused deeds of submission to be drawn up and these were duly signed by Pres. Pretorius for the S.A. Republic, and also by the Barolong Chiefs, the Batlhaping chiefs and

the Griqua chiefs. Mr. Anthony O'Reilly on behalf of the S.A. Republic, and Mr. John Campbell on behalf of the African and Coloured chiefs were to be judges of the arbitration court, and in case of their disagreeing Lt. Gov. Robert Keate of Natal was to be umpire.

To the great excitement and expectancy of all concerned, the arbitration court was opened at Bloemhof on the 4th of April 1871. Pres. Marthinus Pretorius and his State-Attorney Frederick Klein conducted the case for the South African Republic; Mr. David Arnot, a Euro-African (or Coloured) and exceptionally clever lawyer, together with attorney D.C. Grant appeared for Chief ^{Nicholas} N. Waterboer and his Griquas, Attorney Grant and Mr. Edwards for the Batlhaping of Manjurwane, and the Rev. Joseph Ludorf for the Barolong chiefs Phoi, Montshiwa and Moroka, and also for the Batlhaping Chief Botlhasitese, while Mr. Carel Mathey appeared for the Bagwaketse Chief Gaseitsiwe, and for the Ba-Maidi chief Motlhabane,

The court listened patiently to evidence from the 5th of April until the 19th of June, but in the end, as was generally foreseen, the judges disagreed, and the final decision now ~~was~~ devolved upon the umpire - Lt. Governor R. Keate.

On the 17th of October 1871, after carefully studying the evidence, he announced his findings in the decision every since known as the Keate Award, which caused something like an earthquake in South Africa. It denied the South African Republic all the land from the source of the Molopo River past round the source of the Harts River to the source of the Maquassi spruit and down that river to the Vaal River. All the district of Bloemhof and parts of the districts of Potchefstroom and Marico were thus cut away from what was claimed to be the South African Republic.

2. The Fall of Marthinus Pretorius
The publication of the Award was greeted with a storm of indignation in the Republic. The floodgates of vituperation were widely opened upon the president and his executive so that he had no other course than resign in November. The members of the Volksraad were abusive in their criticism. They and the farmers who were hardest hit said, and called Marthinus Wessels Pretorius a meddlesome, imbecile, ^{and} precipitant president. They raked up the

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Continued

past. Had he not blundered in the same way in his over anxiety to unite the Trekker republics in 1857 by strutting ~~into~~ into Bloemfotein, making preposterous, ^{by} dictatorial claims, and illegally inviting Moshoeshoe to ~~take~~ a conference in that foreign capital? Had he not again gone behind them, slipped into Bloemfontein and begged for the presidency of the Free State in 1860 and thrown them overboard, and then again deserted the Free State to beg for the S.A. Republic presidency? Wasn't it he who without due authority issued a Proclamation on the 29th of April 1868, extending the boundaries of the S.A. Republic from Langebergen to Lake Ngami as soon as he had heard that gold had been discovered on the Tati, and thus butting into Portuguese possessions, and also ~~inviting~~ Sir Philip Wodehouse's superior snub, and had to execute an undignified climb down? Had he not again, in June 1870 too hastily granted Munich and Posno and Webb the exclusive right to search for diamonds along the Vaal River for twenty-one years, and had to withdraw his concession with ill grace? And now what was the outcome of his imbecilities? He had lost the Republic thousands of square miles of land. "Zijne regeering was geenzins eene gelukkige geweest; zijne ⁱ bannenlandsche regeering was krachteloos; zijne buitenlandsche politiek was geenzins tegen die der vijanden van die Republike opgewassen. Zonder eenige zelfstandigheid was hij de prooi van anderen geworden." (Oordt van J.F; Pual Kruger p.143). His critics sneered at him and raked all this up. They saw that he was precipitant and presumptuous. Blinded by anger they did not see that he was passionately patriotic, and by no means phlegmatic.

The Cronjes who never liked him much, and part of whose lands was lost by the president's ineptitude became bitter against him and joined in this ^h chorus of denunciation and in hounding him from his exalted office.

The Keate Award was however never translated into fact, because the British Government, besides greedily swallowing up the diamondiferous bone of contention, ^{n had} neither the time nor desire to embroil itself in South African disputes, and the S.A. Republic

continued to include regions which the Keate Award had theoretically hacked away from it.

The [↓]Burghers of the S.A. Republic were ^{now} not in search of a President. He must be a clever man of high educational qualifications. He must be versed in diplomacy, gifted with eloquence and possessed of vision. "Men moest een gestudeerd, knap man hebben, die in ståt was om met den mond, ^{en} ^e ~~et~~ met de pen en papier den vijand te bevechten; een Afrikaner, ~~xxx~~ wien het welzijn van Zuid Afrika en van de Republiek in het bijzonder aan het harte lag."

fn (Oordt J.F: Paul Kruger p.144) They disdained and skipped a strong man and a patriot, Paul Kruger at their very door step. He was hurt and offended, but never said a word to betray his feelings. They cast their eyes across the Vaal and invited President Jan Brand of the Free State who was recognised as an able and ~~xxx~~ shrewd statesman. He declined with thanks and advised them to proceed cautiously. They looked further afield, sounded the Rev. Francois T. Burghers of Hanover, Cape Colony; changed the Grond Wet or Constituin of the Republic to make him who was not an elector, eligible. He accepted nomination, ^{and} was duly elected President of the S.A. Republic.

The discovery of diamonds came just when the S.A. Republic was in the hollow of depression, after its three years of civil strife, when times were hard, money scarce and unemployment rife. Many men, especially from the Western Transvaal, went to the diggings, and if they did not make fortunes, they at least made a living as diggers, transport riders hawkers and traders. Farmers also found a ready market for their produce, and the depression gradually receded before the advancing wave of prosperity. Piet Cronje shared in this prosperity, making good money as a transport contractor, and also by selling his farm produce.

CHAP VII A LAPSE In July 1869 Assistant Field Cornet Piet Cronje thoughtlessly committed an offence which must have cost him much heart burning and many years of promotion. The offence was one of kidnappⁱng, and on the 4th of August he duly appeared before the landdrost or magistrate at Potchefstroom, being accused of abusing his

official position, going beyond his Schoonspruit ward and the district of Potchefstroom, with thirty men to Harts River, where he wrongfully and maliciously attacked an African village, removed men, women children and cattle, and had them distributed (for a consideration no doubt) among the farmers of Schoon Spruit.

FN
 (Landdros Potchefstroom Bundel 34,24 August 1869)(U.R.3 26 Okt. 1869 Art 13)

This was a serious crime, especially in view of the fact that the S.A.Republic was just then being reviled and seriously criticised of slave holding propensities, and of oppression and coercion of African tribes within its borders. X This reproach was a matter that injured it in the eyes of the outside world, and the Republic was at pains to clear itself of the charge, not only by statements and manifestos, but by actual deeds and reformed methods of administration. On the 29th September 1857, the President had issued a Proclamation "forbidding the sale of barter of black children", and "prohibiting transfers of apprenticeships, except when made before the landdrests, "and in 1858 Traffic and indentures of coloured children was forbidden under penalty of a fine of £100 to £500. (Theal:History of S.A. 1852-1872 p.125)

FN
 Thus besides denunciations by the Aborigenes' Protection Society in London, and many books, several pamphlets and a plethora of newspaper articles in England and South Africa all showing the Dutch Afrikaners in a very unfavourable light, there was an official Blue Book published in 1869, containing the "Correspondence relating to the alleged kidnapping and enslaving of young Africans by the people of the Transvaal Republic."

"Veldkornetten zullen stiptelijk waken voor de wet waarbij die zich schuldig maakt aan het vervoeren van kleurlingen of hunne kinderen over de grenzen der Republiek, of de gemelde jonge kleurlingen verhandelen of verkoopen; beide koopers en verkoopers zullen gestraft worden met ontmengin der kleurlingen, en eene boete van £100 tot £500 of bij onvermogen met gevangestraf." (Ref.?))

Assistant Piet Cronje was at this time Asstant Field Cornet under Field cornet B.H.Swart of the ward Schoonspruit.

Swart stated in evidence inter alia that Cronje committed the offence without his (Swart's) knowledge, permission or assistance. Cronje was found guilty of the charge and fined accordingly. He was furious; he protested his innocence, and characterised Swart's evidence as pure fabrication and defamation, and afterwards asked Swart to recant, but of course the latter would not. In high dudgeon Piet Cronje resigned his position as Assistant Field cornet (Landdrost Potchefstroom Bundel 4; Brief van P.A.Cronje Potchefstroom, 6 Aug.1869) (BB.782/69 Brief van die Staatsekretaris aan Laddros Potchefstroom inhoudende kopie van Brief van P.A.Cronje, Pretoria 17 Aug.1869). Cronje was discharged from his official position on the 26th of October (1869), being replaced as Assistant Fieldcornet by S.D.J.van der Merwe. Sullen and resentful, he retired to his farm Palmietfontein, and there, in search of peace of mind, he immersed himself in hard work.

In this incident was revealed the less attractive side of Piet Cronje's character, namely lawlessness, in that he, an assistant Field cornet, and a guardian of the law should set the frequently promulgated law of his country against human traffic at nought; coarseness of grain and lack of respect for elementary human rights in raiding African villages and trafficking in human beings; prevarication and legalistic inveracity ^{is} seeking to convert the clear proofs of his guilt and the well-founded evidence of Field cornet Swart; and finally indiscipline and obstinacy in not submitting readily to correction, nor willingly accepting his well-merited punishment, and also in attempting to intimidate a legitimate witness in a court of law.

Some of these undesirable traits were to appear again and again in Piet Cronje's career at a later date.

1. PRESIDENT THOMAS FRANCOIS BURGERS.

On the 1st of July 1872 the Rev. Thomas F. Burgers succeeded to the presidency of the South African Republic. A hard worker, a conscientious and clever man of high education, he was also a brilliant theorist and super-optimist, but quite unpractical, envisaging colossal schemes and entertaining grand ideas far beyond realisation by the poverty-stricken and untutored populace he was called upon to lead.

At first the high hopes reposed upon him seemed to be justified as he raised a loan to discharge the internal State liability of £60,000, erected the much needed Government offices, regularised State appointments, and ^{conducted} negotiations, more or less successfully with powerful African chiefs like Moshete, Montshiwa, Gasebone, ^{we} Mosewen, ^{we} Mosewen and Cetwayo, inducing most of them to cede to the S.A. Republic the territorial rights accorded them by the Keate Award, and thereby skillfully ^{side-tracking and} undermining that instrument.

Pres. Burgers envisaged a powerful and prosperous S.A. Republic of high international prestige, equipped with all the accomplishments and requisites of old ^{and well-organised} European states, ^{furnished} equipped with railways and harbours, offices, telegraphs, ambassadors, schools and colleges and a fully equipped civil service.

In 1875 he obtained the sanction of the Volksraad to proceed to Europe to negotiate a loan of £300,000 for his pet ambition, the construction of a railway to Delagoa Bay, a venture which however ended in a dismal fiasco. In Holland he also engaged ^m eminent scholars and high officials for non-existent positions in the S.A. Republic.

When in April 1876 Pres. Burgers returned from Europe, he found a sad state of affairs in the Republic. The State coffers were empty. There was simmering discontent among the burghers, and the party in opposition to him had grown in strength. To crown it all the Bapedi tribe of Sekukuni, living in the wild and mountainous district of ^{Lydenburg} Lydenburg in the North-West of the Transvaal had been in fretful mood, and was now in ~~an~~ open rebellion against the Republic. They objected to gold prospectors

They were tired of paying taxes, and of being ruled by foreigners. They were craving for independence. That is to say they set the example in 1876 which the S.A. Republic was to copy and improve upon in 1880.

P/ in their districts; they refused to give up their lands for Pres. Burgers' railway scheme. X/ The President hastily assembled a commando, but to his dismay both Paul Kruger, who had been relieved of his position as Commandant-General in 1873, and Piet Joubert the Acting President declined to take charge, and so the President himself assumed the command of the force of 1,100 burghers, ^{who had} answered the call, reinforced by 500 Swazi warriors. With Pres. Burgers were Ex-Pres. Marthinus Pretorius as honorary commandant-general, while Comm. Niklaas J. Smit, who five years later made a name for himself at Majuba went as Lt. General.

The war, which commenced on the 4th of July (1876) with an assault on Mathebi's Kop, a stronghold which Pres. Burgers in colourful language called 'Little Gibraltar' ended just after one month without having realised the purpose for which it was embarked upon, namely the subjugation of the Bapedi. ^{The} Bapedi lost however, two thousand men killed, including three sons and two brothers of the Chief Sekukuni, and the war cost the S.A. Republic about fifteen casualties and £20,000 in money. Burgers now commissioned one Coenrad V. Schlickman, an ex-officer of the Prussian army to raise a force of volunteers to crush the Bapedi, and to pay themselves by the spoils of war in cattle and farms. The result can be better imagined than described. There was a war of massacre and unrestrained brutality. Women and children were murdered and the wounded slaughtered by Von Schlickman's orders. ^(Walker E.A.: ~~Nixt~~ Cambridge History of the British Empire p.463) ^{Von Schlickman} He was killed in action, and his successors Alfred Aylward and Abel Erasmus ^{faithfully} carried on his atrocities. ^(Ibid) Among the strongest opponents to Burgers was Paul Kruger & his ^{and friends the Cronjes,} ^{Pres} ^{Piet-Cronje} ^{He} ^{was} ⁱⁿ ^{fact} ^{already} ^a ^{Paul} ^{Kruger} ^{man,} ^{and} ^{as} ^{such} ^{would} ^{not} ^{lift} ^{as} ^{much} ^{as} ^{lift} ^{his} ^{little} ^{finger} ^{to} ^{assist} ^{Pres.} ^{Burgers.}

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In fact so bitter were they against him that they could not be induced to go and protect their country in his company, and they must have taken an impish delight in the frustration of his military plans and the collapse of his 'beschaafde' ^{or high brow} schemes.

Piet Cronje, especially, would probably be among the farmers who hated the Railway scheme of Burgers, as being calculated to take the bread away from their mouths and from him who lived by transport riding. What was to become of their wagons and their trek oxen when the railway usurped their legitimate function? The thing was ungodly like its unorthodox promoter Burgers.

The feeling, already strong against Pres. Burgers was increased by the universal sense of failure of his campaign, and when he imposed a special tax of £2 to defray the war expenses, the hopes of his re-election to presidency in the following year dwindled to zero. *Taxes were never popular in the Transvaal just as they are unpopular in the whole world.*

Things looked black in the Republic. The country was faced with inescapable bankruptcy; trade was at a standstill, the S.A. Republic £1 note was worth only 1/-; the Bapedi were triumphant and the Zulus of Cetshwayo were threatening; the burghers were discontented and divided. On one thing only were they united, and that was to have nothing to do with the much noised scheme of the Colonial Secretary Lord Carnarvon, namely the Confederation of South African colonies and republics under the British flag, or with ought else that might affect their independence by one ^{title} title or iota. Paul Kruger was making capital out of Burger's irreligion and extravagance, and the presidential election was approaching.

2. ANNEXATION OF THE TRANSVAAL

In January 1877, the multilingual, suave and accomplished Theophilus Shepstone, late Secretary of Native Affairs in Natal, arrived at Pretoria. He had come 'as a friend'. He was mysteriously sent as a British Special Commissioner with large powers, and despite remonstrances, he issued, on the 12th of April a Proclamation annexing the ^{40 yr old} S.A. Republic under the name of Transvaal, to the British possessions, and he at once assumed supreme

authority while Thomas Burgers retired to the Cape, where he subsequently died in December 1881. / Many views favourable and unfavourable, and varying according to political sympathy, have been expressed on the Annexation. The British excuse for annexing the Transvaal was that it was threatened internally with bankruptcy. It owed £300,000 and had only 12/6d in the Treasury. Also that it was weak and ^{was} threatened externally by the Zulu impis of Cetshwayo. The Transvaal maintained that the annexation was a grave and inexcusable breach of the Sand River Convention of 1852 (Kotze J.: Memoirs and Reminiscences of 335) (Nathan M: Paul Kruger pp. 110, 121) but the British replied that the Sand River Convention ~~had~~ ^{did} not exist^{ed} as its provisions had been flagrantly infringed upon by the Boers by practising slavery. (Nixon John: The Story of the Transvaal pp. 21, 47).

Almost immediately after annexation business improved and money flowed into the Transvaal, but the burghers were aggrieved at the loss of their independence, ~~but the burghers were aggrieved~~ The immensity of this loss was not at first realised, so suddenly had it come. But as weeks and months passed, indignation and intense bitterness developed among the people of Dutch extraction in the Transvaal, the Orange Free State and the Cape Colony, and no words were strong enough to denounce Albion's ~~perfidy~~ perfidy. (Nathan M: Paul Kruger p. 121).

Deputations and Despot In May (1877) the executive of the recently ^{abrogated} ~~abrogated~~ Republic appointed Paul Kruger and Dr. E. P. Jorissen, an eminently acceptable import of the utterly unacceptable Ex-President Burgers, as a deputation to proceed to the Colonial Office and protest to Lord Carnarvon against the annexation, but their journey was in vain. Lord Carnarvon told them that the Annexation was irrevocable.

After their return from Europe they addressed large meetings all over the country during the first quarter of the following year (1878) in which the ^b Burghers clamoured more and more against Annexation. In March, Sir Theophilus Shepstone, behaving with

autocratic intolerance to the Boers as people vested with great authority are apt to do, threatened punishment to those taking part in these public meetings. Finally, however, the burghers chose Paul Kruger and Piet Joubert, with Edward Bok as their secretary, to proceed again to England to endeavour to obtain the restoration of their independence. Again, however, the deputation returned 'onverrigttersake', without having effected its purpose. Sir Michael Hicks-Beach, the new Colonial Secretary told the Deputation, on the 6th of August that "It was impossible for many reasons that the Queen's sovereignty should be withdrawn from the Transvaal.

Returning to the Transvaal in December, the members of the Deputation addressed huge crowds in excited meetings, and Independence became the burthen of every conversation, the yearning of every youth in the field, the nursery ^{rhyme} ~~whime~~ in every household, ^{and} the cry of every new-born baby, the text of every sermon from the pulpit.

The Boer leaders, having failed to influence the Colonial Office now tried to enlist the sympathy of the officials on the spot. They approached Sir Owen Layon, the new Administrator of the Transvaal, who had succeeded Sir Theophilus Shepstone. For answer he delivered to them a homily on the advantages and benefits of British Colonial administration. They next implored Sir Bartle Frere the High Commissioner, that they wanted the conditions of the Sand River Convention returned to them. He answered that they might as well ask to return to the Garden of Eden as to the Sand River Convention. Then they beseeched Sir Garnet Wolseley, who succeeded Sir Bartle Frere, and on military stilts and supercilious manner he assured them that "the sun would forget to shine in the heavens, and the Vaal River would run backwards to its sources sooner than the British flag would cease to fly over Transvaal territory." Throughout the year they tried all constitutional means to regain their independence, but in vain.

A Peoples Committee had been appointed under the chairmanship of Ex-President ^TMathinus Pretorius. It now called a meeting at Wonderfontein near Pretoria for the 10th of December 1879. The meeting was attended by some 61000 Afrikaners. The Vierkleur was hoisted. Feeling ran high. In a strong resolution the people demanded their independence. They resolved:

1. That the time for memorials to the English Government is past; in that [?] way deliverance is possible.

2. That the people of the S.A. Republic have never been and do not wish to be Her Majesty's subjects.

3. That the people desire that the Government of the S.A. Republic shall be restored and that the Volksraad shall be convened as soon as possible.

4. We will never submit to the British Government, and will continue emphatically to protest against all proclamations.

5. We solemnly declare to be prepared to sacrifice our life and shed our blood for our independence.

These palpitating deeds were letters of a ~~star~~ strange alphabet laboriously but unconsciously being assembled, shuffled and re-arranged to spell names hitherto unknown in the annals of history. One of these was a name of ten letters - PIET CRONJE. He was in that meeting of Wonderfontein. He had been in nearly all the meetings addressed by the members of the first and the second deputations to the Colonial Office after their return from England. Like every true Afrikaner his feelings had been stirred, his patriotism fired, and his resentment against the English Government roused. Independence ^{and} had become an ideal and ruling passion.

At this Wonderfontein meeting, a sub-committee of ~~thirty~~ thirty 'vorrmanne' or Liutenants was chosen, one lieutenant for each ward in each district. The choice naturally fell on the already existing fieldcornets. In the division of Schoon ^{Spruit} Spruit wherein the Cronjes lived and were highly respected, the choice fell on Piet Cronje.

The sub-committee was a liason between the burghers of the Republic and the Volk's or People's Committee. It had to keep the ideal of independence constantly before the burghers. It had to report and make suggestions to the People's Committee, and also to report and make suggestions and give advice to the ~~the~~ several wards of each district. H.P.Malan of Rustenburg was voorsitter or chairman of the sub-committee. Malan and Piet Cronje then proposed to the larger People's Committee that failing compliance by the British authorities with the burghers' demands, by the sixth of April, 1880, all dealings and relations with the English people should be broken off, and that there should be a complete boycott of all things English-language, literature, # schools, business houses, hotels; to burn and destroy all writings, books or documents in the English language; to remove all Afrikaner children from English schools; to forbid the speaking of English in Afrikaner homes; to refuse hospitality to English people, to boycott English businesses, concerns and enterprises; to forbid assistance to English people under any circumstances in any way. All this sounds something like the happenings of the year of grace 1950.

As if deliberately to add fuel to fire, Sir Garnet Wolseley caused Mathinus Pretorius and Eduard Bok, the chairman and Secretary respectively of the People's Committee, to be arrested and imprisoned for crimen laesae majestatis. Eduard Bok was # released on bail for £3,000 while for Pretorius bail was refused. This matter caused great excitement among the burghers. They collected in knots all over the country and spoke of resorting to arms, to defend themselves. The number of prefects chosen for the district of Potchefstroom was increased. Piet Bezuidenhout was appointed for Mooi River, ⁱWollem Schoeman for ^{Vaal}Vall River, Andries Oosterhuis for ^gGatsrand and Christoffel Kamfer for Makwassij. ⁴(Herinneringen Brandwag 1578/1913 & 171)

To these and other prefects, Cronje proposed that they should elect a head prefect among themselves, who should be their spokesman and representative to the People's Committee, and he

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