

## Sir Bartle Frere's Policy.

Editorial of *The Natal Mercury* 27<sup>th</sup> November 1878  
(Unabridged)

From Alice Berry.

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'We recommend those of our readers to whom a first perusal of the ultimatum may have brought a sense of disappointment to read that document again and yet again; they will find that it improves with acquaintance. It needs careful study to be understood aright. The more closely it is examined the more clear does it become that Sir BARTLE FRERE has exercised in its conception and preparation all those qualities of calm dispassionate judgement which have won for him the high place he holds in the ranks of Imperial administrators.

Let us consider the circumstances that attend this manifesto of policy. It is addressed to a king who has throughout his reign, and long before it, recognised the paternal supremacy of the Natal Government. This relationship between the Zulus and the English began at a very early time, and was established at the instance of CHAKA himself. PANDA never forgot the compact entered into by his great brother. CETYWAYO has steadfastly recurred to it. In 1865 PANDA told messengers from Government McLean "that it is a tradition of the Zulu people to look upon the English Government as supreme head; that CHAKA had conveyed the tender of their allegiance and fidelity to the English Governor at the Cape, and that ever since that time they had looked upon themselves as belonging to the English." On the same occasion CETYWAYO, on his own account, expressed his desire "to be the son of the white house, that CHAKA had made the English house there the Zulu's great house, and they always wished to look upon it as such." Four years later, "PANDA, CETYWAYO and all the heads of the Zulu people" repeated the alliance and the invocation. In 1870, PANDA told the Boers "that the English were his friends, and had been CHAKA's, his predecessor's friends; that CHAKA had sent an embassy over the seas to the Cape, to secure his friendship;" and to PANDA also said he looked "upon the Government as protectors of the House of CHAKA, and CETYWAYO and his people are children of that house." In 1876, three years after the coronation CETYWAYO again admitted, by the mouths of his messengers, that "he looked upon himself as a child of the Natal Government, having been placed by it at the head of the Zulu nation."

Not less persistent has been the position taken up by the Zulus in regard to the boundary question. Since 1861, when CETYWAYO was publicly nominated and recognised as Panda's heir, he has appealed again and again to the Government of Natal for protection from Boer encroachments and aggressions. In 1865, after the cession of the beacons line, which was immediately repudiated by the Zulus, "both PANDA and CETYWAYO expressed their strong desire that the Zulu country should fall into the hands of the English, although PANDA said the English were so difficult to move that it seemed likely to revert to their more active neighbours the Boers." This desire was expressed again and again, in varying language, up to 1873. So, also, with the

appointment of a Resident. In 1865, "PANDA said he wished very much to see an agent of the British Government stationed on the border between them and the Boers, to see that justice was done on both sides." CETYWAYO also "spoke of a Resident belonging to the English being appointed on the border between the Zulus and the Boers, and expressed a strong desire for such an arrangement." In 1870, both father and son "sent to repeat a request formerly made, that the person appointment by the Natal Government should be placed to reside between the Zulu country and the Boers;" and in 1876, the latter sent "to say that his heart was sore, and that he was afraid he had offended the Natal Government in some way, as he had not seen a representative of the Government since his coronation." A month later, he repeated the message in almost the same language.

It is necessary to bear these facts in mind when reading and interpreting the ultimatum. So far as words are concerned there have been no overt avowals of hostility on CETYWAYO's part. On the contrary, there has been at all times an almost abject exhibition of deference and attachment. Acts, it is true, have belied those words to some extent. USTRAJO's raids and the rudeness displayed to Sir T. SHEPSTONE at the Blood River were indication of a more sinister significance. We believe, however, that the one may be looked upon as an outcome of our own impotency in the JOLWAN matter, while the change in demeanour towards the ADMINISTRATOR no doubt arose, first from the fact that he had changed sides in their eyes and, secondly, from a disbelief in the vigour of the British Government. Through thirty years the Zulus regarded the British as their protection against the Boers. Their alliance with us was a bulwark against their neighbours in the Transvaal. Since the cause of the Transvaal became the cause of England, there has been a manifest change in the temper and tone both of KING and people.

Upon this point Mr. FYNNEY's observations in May, 1877, are of high importance. That gentleman says:-"In assuring me that he still looked towards the British Government for his strength and power, I could not but feel that CETYWAYO simply spoke from expediency and not truthfully, and that any active remonstrance on the part of the British Government would most likely cause him to throw off the cloak. Again, in assuring me that he had not in any way departed from the compact entered into with HER MAJESTY's representative on the occasion of his coronation, no one knew better than himself how little that compact had been regarded.

It was necessary, therefore, that the coercive attitude now assumed by the Government should be sustained by arguments and reasons of the highest character, and be borne out by visible evidence of British integrity and good faith. This has been abundantly done. Whatever the substantial merits of the Award may be, the Zulus can find no fault with it. It gives them back the land they have claimed ever since CETYWAYO repudiated the beacons he had been induced to recognise. It gives them back the line of 1856, one mutually agreed to at that time between the Boers and themselves. The Government might not inappropriately proposed to annex this strip of country to Natal, as so often desired by the Zulus themselves, but in order to clear their hands from any appearance of selfish action they have handed it over unconditionally to that people. After such an act the voice of the Government may justly speak with irresistible authority on behalf of the Zulus themselves. Henceforward the position taken by the HIGH COMMISSIONER becomes impregnable by reason of the magnanimity that has disguised the Award. By the admissions of PANDA and CETYWAYO on so many occasions the Government has the

right to interpose its hand, and to insist upon obedience to such behests as those it now enjoins. There is not one of them that the wildest sentimentalist can find fault with. There is not one of them that is not inspired by a high and humane purpose. There is not of them that ought not to be hailed by the Zulu people as the harbinger of a new era to them of order, peace, security, and contentment. Mr. FYNNEY tells us that he was asked in Zululand "what the Government intended doing, or what was thought in Natal about the killing saying - it was not in the night that SOMTSEU spoke, but in the sunshine; the KING was not alone, but his people were with him; and the ears of all Zululand heard these words, and the hearts of all Zulus were joyful, and in gladness they lifted up their hands saying, the mouth of our white father has spoken good words, he has cautioned his child in the presence of his people, and a good sun has risen this day over Zululand. How is it now? Has the King listened? Does he hold fast those words? No, not one; the promises he made are all broken." Mr. FYNNEY quoted these words as spoken by a young Zulu, who, with others, visited his camp; but he is of opinion that they expressed the feeling of a large number in Zululand, especially the elder and thinking portion of the population.

The Imperial Government intend now not merely to "caution," but to compel CETYWAYO to fulfil his duties to the people under him; and a better sun than any they have ventured to imagine is rising, let us hope, over Zululand'.

Editor's footnote.

The above 'JOLWAN' is probably a poorly-rendered version of 'Tulwan', as in the uThulwana regiment. In which case this could refer to the clash between the uThulwana and iNgobamakhosi at the 'First Fruits' ceremony in late '77 - early 78.

There were protests to King Cetshwayo over the fact that the uThulwana had allegedly killed so many of the iNgobamakhosi - so that might qualify as 'our impotency in the Jolwan affair'. If the typesetter was working from a hand-written report then a T might have been misread as a J, and a rather closed up 'u' as an 'o'. And uThulwana has been written as 'Tulwan' or even 'Toolwan' before.