

American Renaissance

There is not a truth existing which I fear or would wish unknown to the whole world.

— Thomas Jefferson

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When the River Ran Red

A great Boer victory that was later undone.

by Arthur Kemp

The year is 1838. Dodging a flurry of spears, the Boer commander, Andries Pretorius, rides forward to seize a Zulu warrior. In the midst of an epic battle between more than 15,000 warriors and just 468 Boers, Pretorius has decided to take a Zulu alive. He wants to send the captive back to his king, Dingaan, to convey surrender terms to the Zulu nation.

The warrior has no intention of being taken alive, and jabs viciously at Pretorius with his assegai. This is a Zulu spear, normally a long-shafted throwing weapon, but the warrior broke its shank earlier for close-quarter stabbing. Pretorius gives up on capturing the Zulu, and tries to shoot him.

With a single-shot, muzzle-loading musket, he has only one chance of a hit. There is no time to reload in close combat. To his horror, Pretorius sees the smoke-trailing ball whiz past the Zulu's ear. At the same time, the Zulu lunges forward, causing Pretorius's horse to stumble backwards, throwing the white commander to the ground.

Leaping to his feet, he meets the attacking Zulu, who knows he is now on equal terms with the white man, who can no longer use his magic shooting stick and carries no weapon comparable to the assegai. Pretorius is now fighting for his life. He just manages to sidestep the spear point, striking it away with the

butt of his gun.

Spinning round, the Zulu raises his spear high above his head and thrusts

itself at an angle that makes it impossible for the Zulu to pull it out. Pretorius seizes the Zulu by the throat with his free right hand and throws him to the ground in an attempt to strangle him.

The Zulu struggles, and with the help of two good hands is about to break free, when one of Pretorius's men comes upon the scene. He pulls the assegai out of the commander's hand, and plunges it into the Zulu's side, ending the struggle.

Pretorius remounts and heads back to the Boer camp for treatment. He is not worried, as he knows by now that this greatest of all battles between Boers and Zulus has already been won. The main Zulu army has been broken in two, and the river that runs along one side of the Boer camp is stained red with Zulu blood. The place and the tributary known previously as the Ncome will be renamed Blood River. Pretorius knows that the Zulu defeat, which will include some 3,000 killed on the battlefield, is a fit revenge for the deception and murder committed by the Zulus 10 months earlier.

Prelude to War

The great clash between the Boer and Zulu nations was not, as leftist historians like to claim, the result of ruthless white colonialism suppressing an indigenous people. It came about because the Zulus rejected an extremely reasonable attempt at negotiation by the Boers.

The Boers, pioneers of Dutch, French,
Continued on page 3



Statue of Piet Retief at the Vortrekker Monument in Pretoria.

down, as he has been trained to do in the Zulus' disciplined army. It is a blow that will be fatal if it strikes home, but

The Zulu king leaped to his feet and shouted, "Kill the white wizards!"

Pretorius sees it coming. He grabs the spear point with his left hand to ward it away from his chest. The sharp point cuts deeply into his palm, embedding



Letters from Readers

Sir — Mr. Stix has written a thorough, well-written article (see “Wikipedia on Race,” July issue), but I’m not sure things are quite as bad as he suggests. I have spent a lot of time on Wikipedia, and although the biases he documents are pervasive, I think Wikipedia is generally not quite as bad as most of the corporate print media. Thanks to active editors such as Mr. Stix, at least the censors have the facts called to their attention, and some are just too big to cover up. What is more, every Wikipedia article has a “discussion” page, where you can find the arguments race-realists and others have made, even if their changes have been edited out. It takes some time to go through those pages, but whenever I use Wikipedia for anything even faintly controversial—and let’s face it: Wikipedia is handy—I always check the “discussion” page to see what’s been censored. And in the process, it’s easy to reinstate a well-documented point.

Ellen Westerman, Florence, Ala.

Sir — I would ask Nicholas Stix, “Why bother with Wikipedia at all?” I think it is a waste of time to try to work within “the system” of Wikipedia to correct its inaccuracies and lies. Mr. Stix’s observations and work are obviously honorable, but I think his desire to “fix” Wikipedia is futile. Censorship, for want of a better term, *should be expected*. The only way to beat those who run the mainstream media is to create our own. *American Renaissance* is an example of this.

Instead of trying to work within the guidelines of the egalitarian propagand-

dist at Wikipedia, perhaps Mr. Stix should consider writing for a pro-white online encyclopedia such as Metapedia (metapedia.org).

Mark Farell

Sir — I think Jared Taylor is wrong about Barack Obama in the August issue. First, I would bet any amount of money that even as I write these words, independent Republican strategists are working on a series of Jeremiah Wright television ads. Mr. McCain will denounce the ads, but will be privately delighted by them, and they will carry him into the White House.

A real dilemma for Mr. McCain would arise if there were no independent Republican organizations and he, himself, had to decide whether to “play the race card” against Mr. Obama. Mr. McCain has wanted to be president ever since he got into politics, and will never have another chance. Like every candidate who gets this far, he will stop at just about nothing. What agony it would be for him to turn his back on a winning strategy—and the top job—just because he was afraid of what the *New York Times* would say. Fortunately for him, someone else will make that choice, and voters will have their noses rubbed very hard in Jeremiah Wright for about two weeks before Election Day.

And that brings me to something else Mr. Taylor got wrong. It is true that white Americans have been softened up with years of fancy blacks on TV and at the State Department, but they had no choice. In November, Americans will finally have a choice and, in effect, will vote against all those fancy blacks. They will do the same thing they do whenever they have a chance to vote

on racial preferences: There will be a resounding “no.”

Carmen Storey, Hampton, Va.

Sir — Mr. Taylor should have mentioned one more reason Mr. Obama will be our next president: Many whites think blacks will finally shut up if one of their own is in the Oval Office. In that sense, a vote for Mr. Obama is a vote against blacks—just the sort of crazy, apparent contradiction race brings out in politics. Blacks will never shut up, of course, but maybe whites will know better next time.

Steven Epstein, Sunnyvale, Ca.

Sir — Janet Fielding’s and Elizabeth Garnett’s letters in the July issue [taking Roger Devlin to task for misogyny and for emphasizing the importance of women as child bearers in his June cover story] exemplify the weakness of feminist thinking. They’re basically solipsistic, focusing mainly on women without considering the complementary nature of the sexes or the common good. As their great-grandmothers better understood, it is not “unhelpful,” “retrograde thinking” or “boorish” to believe that women’s wombs are as crucial to a society’s survival as are good men to serve as husbands and fathers.



Our problem is that “liberated” women often forget how to encourage or rear good men. What is lacking in their feminist arguments is the objectivity feminism derides as “male” thinking. The “freedom, careers and incomes” Miss Garnett relishes are often available only because “men like to have women around,” and one must not ignore differences in brains, thought patterns, and behavior, or the dubious value of manly women doing men’s jobs (or as Roger Scruton puts it, *appearing* to do them). Calling men “vapid and self-absorbed” for preferring feminine, companionable women simply defies reason.

W. E. Chynoweth, Sanger, Calif.



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and German descent, were the people who opened up much of what was later to become South Africa. Their first antecedents had landed on the southernmost tip of Africa in 1652, only 45 years after the Virginia Company settled on Jamestown Island.

When they arrived in the area now known as Cape Town, whites came

der formed by the coast and firm Xhosa settlement. It was not, however, a time of peace, as Xhosa were constantly raiding the Boers who lived on the border. This caused much harm and discontent among the farmers, who blamed the Dutch-ruled colonial government back in Cape Town for the lawlessness.

It only added to the border farmers' grievances when the British took the Cape Colony from the Dutch in 1806 to prevent the colony from falling into French hands during the Napoleonic Wars. It was vital to control the merchant and naval refitting station on the way to the Far East. The new colonial masters not only started anglicizing the colony, when they abolished slavery they offered compensation that amounted to hardly a quarter of a slave's value.



A Zulu hut.

into contact only with Hottentots and Bushmen. As the number of Europeans increased, they expanded east and north, only meeting their first black tribe, the Xhosa, some 500 miles away, on South Africa's east coast. The Xhosas were migrating south, fleeing the warlike Zulu to the north, who were engaged in imperialist expansion of their own.

For just under a century white settlement halted at this eastern frontier bor-

der formed by the coast and firm Xhosa settlement. It was not, however, a time of peace, as Xhosa were constantly raiding the Boers who lived on the border. This caused much harm and discontent among the farmers, who blamed the Dutch-ruled colonial government back in Cape Town for the lawlessness. It only added to the border farmers' grievances when the British took the Cape Colony from the Dutch in 1806 to prevent the colony from falling into French hands during the Napoleonic Wars. It was vital to control the merchant and naval refitting station on the way to the Far East. The new colonial masters not only started anglicizing the colony, when they abolished slavery they offered compensation that amounted to hardly a quarter of a slave's value. Exasperated by incessant Xhosa attacks and British attempts to suppress their language and culture, groups of frontier farmers, filled with a sense of manifest destiny not seen again until the opening of the American West, set forth to the north and the east in a movement known as the Great Trek. The trekkers (they became known as Voortrekkers, or pioneers, only after 1880) bypassed the Xhosa in search of new, unsettled territory, in which they could establish independent Boer nations. All told, it

was only a small minority of no more than 12,000 Boers who made the trek to the future Natal, Orange Free State, and Transvaal regions. They traveled in several waves of covered, ox-drawn wagons much like the Conestogas in which Americans opened the West.

The Boer leader of the time, Piet Retief, had written the trekker "manifesto," in which he spelled out the farmers' long-held grievances against the British. By 1836, the Boer wagons had crossed the great mountain range into Natal, in an act of audacity that few thought possible. The range, the highest in southern Africa, had been named the Drakensberg—the Dragon Mountains—because they were said to be impassable.

Retief had identified a large piece of uninhabited land to the north of the Zulu kingdom, which lay open to settlement. Retief knew that if he wanted the land for his people, he could take it unopposed. However, he wanted to live in peace with his Zulu neighbors, and before taking possession, he opened negotiations with the Zulu king, Dingaan. He wanted no misunderstanding between the two peoples.

He sent a letter to the Zulu king explaining why he wanted to speak to him, and first visited Dingaan's capital—a large circle of reed and grass huts—on November 5, 1837. Retief left the main body of trekkers and went to the Zulu king's capital, Umgungundhlovo ("the place of the elephant"), to negotiate a treaty that would allow Boers peacefully to settle land adjoining the Zulu kingdom. Dingaan said he would let the Boers live in Natal if they recovered cattle stolen by a Tlokwa chieftain. Retief and his men did so, and Dingaan agreed to give the land to the Boers.

Retief returned to Umgungundhlovo on February 3, 1838, to finalize the agreement. He arrived with 60 volunteers, including his own son and three children of other men—it was common for children to accompany their fathers on expeditions of this kind. The next day, Retief and Dingaan formally signed a treaty—the Zulu king made his mark by scratching an "X" on the document—giving possession of the land to the Boers. Delighted, the Boers sent scouts back to the main encampments to report the successful outcome and made ready to leave. As Retief and his party were about to saddle up, a messenger arrived from Dingaan inviting the Boer party to

a special celebration to mark the signing. Retief was suspicious but did not want to offend Dingaan. As they had on previous visits, the Boers stacked their firearms neatly outside the reed walls and entered the royal enclosure unarmed.

As they ate and drank, a Zulu impi, or warrior unit, put on a dance for the guests. According to the account of a white missionary who was present, the dancing warriors drew ever closer to the Boers, till they were just in front of the seated whites. When the Zulu king leaped to his feet and shouted, "Kill the white wizards!" the impi fell upon the surprised Boers. Some of them drew their hunting knives and tried to fight off the attackers, but they were quickly overwhelmed.

The Zulu warriors bound the whites with reed ropes and dragged them to Hlomo Amabutho, the Hill of Execution, near the Zulu capital. There they clubbed the Boers to death, one by one, with Retief kept until last and forced to watch his son being murdered. After Retief's heart was extracted and presented to Dingaan as proof that the Boer leader was dead, the bodies were left for the vultures, in accordance with Zulu custom.

Dingaan then gave orders for the full might of his army to attack the Boer camps. The settlers had received the message Retief had sent earlier and believed everything had gone well. They were therefore completely unprepared and badly undermanned. The 60 men in Retief's party were all dead. Many other men had gone hunting, leaving only a light guard for the women and children. The Boers were so confident there would be peace that they had not even posted sentries. Just before dawn, barking dogs aroused the outlying wagons. Then, thousands of Zulu warriors attacked the several hundred trekkers—women, children, and old men—as they lay sleeping.

The Boer historian, Gustav Preller, who interviewed survivors, left a harrowing account of the aftermath: "All around dozens and dozens of bodies . . . babies who had had their heads smashed open against the wagon wheels, women, dishonored and in some Zulu custom, their breasts cut off . . . [I]n a wagon, blood filled to a height of several inches, the life blood of an entire family ebbed out where they lay . . . Jan Bezuidenhout, one of the few young

men who had not gone ahead with the Retief party, grabbed his four-month-old baby daughter out of her crib and ran off through the undergrowth . . . [H]aving lost his pursuers a few miles away, Bezuidenhout checked for the first time on his daughter in his arms. She was dead; a single spear stroke had killed her."

The slaughter became known as the *Weenen*, the Dutch word for weeping, and a town of that name still stands near the site. Of the 600 Boers camped in the area, Zulus killed some 300, including 185 children. The rest survived because grazing requirements for their animals meant that the Boer camps had to be widely dispersed. If Dingaan's men had scouted more thoroughly, found all the encampments, and attacked them simultaneously, the slaughter would have been far greater.

Pretorius arrives

The Boers now faced their greatest challenge. Their camps were full of wounded men, orphaned children, and widows. The Zulus had stolen an estimated 25,000 head of cattle and sheep during the *Weenen* slaughter, and ammunition was running low. The Zulu armies might return at any time, and they were a formidable force, as the Boers discovered when they launched a raid to avenge the massacre. On April 6, 1838, 347 trekkers under a divided command of Piet Uys and Hendrik Potgieter rode into Zulu territory only to be defeated by some 7,000 warriors not far from Um-gungundhlovo in what became known as the Battle of Italeni.

This new disaster forced the Boers to face reality: They had to either abandon their quest for independence and return to the Cape Colony, or find some means to fight their way through. The widows and orphans argued strongly for pushing on. They knew that if they fell back to the Cape they would have to live on charity, whereas if Dingaan could be defeated they could at least recover their livestock. Many Boers were also convinced that God favored them, and that setbacks were only a test of faith.

It was at this moment of indecision that a popular lawyer named Andries Pretorius answered the trekker call for reinforcements, and rode into camp

with 60 men and a brass cannon. The Boers appointed him commander in chief on November 25, and he immediately began preparing a strike against the Zulu.

His means were few. A force of only about 468 Boers, including three Scotsmen, set out on November 27 seeking battle. For extra protection, the Boer column of 64 wagons traveled four abreast, instead of the usual single file. Each night, they formed a circular defensive formation, known as a *laager*.

Pretorius realized that even with two front-loading cannon, his force was too weak to defeat the Zulu army in an open field. He therefore decided to draw the enemy into an attack on the Boer encampment. Each day patrols and scouting parties rode ahead, sometimes led by Pretorius himself, to make sure



An assegai.

no unexpected surprises were waiting over the horizon.

On December 9, 1838, the Boer party reached the Zandspruit tributary of the Waschbank River. It was here that the Boer chaplain, Sarel Cilliers, first pledged during his nightly sermon that if God helped them defeat the Zulus, they and their descendants would celebrate that day in honor of God, and that they would build a church in commemoration. The Boers repeated this oath, known in Afrikaner folklore as "the covenant," every night until they met the enemy.

There appeared to be no movement from the Zulu side. On December 12, Pretorius decided to move camp to the Buffalo River, hoping to provoke the Zulus by moving farther into their territory. That day, he sent out two patrols, one under the command of his deputy, Commandant Hans De Lange, and another, under the Scotsman Edward Parker. This latter group saw action when they came upon a small group of

Zulus. They killed the warriors and took the women prisoner.

Pretorius drew up a message for Dingaan on a white cloth, explaining that he was leading a commando to punish the Zulus. If, however, Dingaan was willing to cooperate, Pretorius wrote, he was still willing to make peace—a generous offer in light of the earlier betrayal. He freed the prisoners and told them to give the message to Dingaan. He received no answer.

On December 13, the Boers spotted Zulus and what appeared to be a large number of cattle near their camp. Piet Uys had been tricked by such a ploy at the Battle of Italeni. Zulu warriors, crouching behind toughened animal-skin shields, looked like cattle from a distance, and Uys dropped his guard. He was killed in a surprise attack by the “cattle.”

Pretorius did not make the same mistake, and he sent a 120-strong mounted unit to investigate the “cattle.” They turned out to be Zulus, and in the short fight that followed the Boers killed eight warriors but suffered no casualties. Pretorius now suspected that the Zulus were preparing for battle.

On December 15 he moved the Boer camp to a position alongside the Ncome River, itself a tributary of the Buffalo River. A scouting expedition that day confirmed the presence of two huge Zulu armies a short distance away.

Pretorius prepared for battle. His men drew the wagons into a D-shaped formation, one side overlooking a large hippopotamus path facing the Ncome River, another side facing a soil erosion ditch, and the third side facing the open plain. Pretorius chose the site to limit the directions from which the Zulus could attack.

The laager was large enough to contain all the horses and oxen. The defenders tied the wagons together with leather ropes, and closed off all openings between and below the wagons with a Pretorius innovation, so-called fighting gates, which were slatted wood fixtures through which defenders could fire. They left two small openings, sealed with removable fighting gates, so cavalry could leave the laager. Finally, they attached lanterns to the ends of large ox-whips planted upright in the ground. These dangled in front of the laager and were to serve as forward lighting during the dark hours when Zulu usually attacked.



One of the cannon used during the Battle of Blood River.

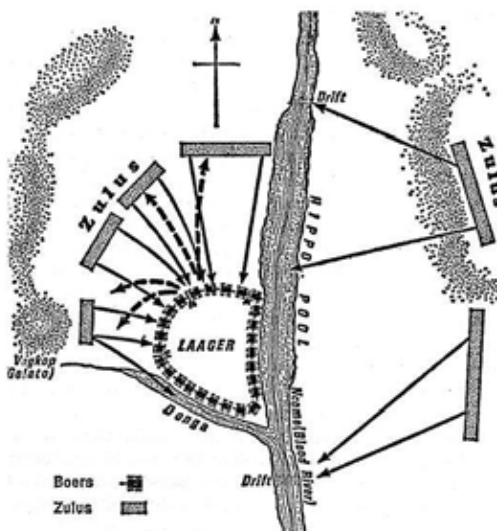
Zulus captured after the battle said they had believed the lights waving in the breeze above the Boer camp were spirits, and that fear of the spirits kept them from attacking that night.

Battle is joined

In Pretorius’s own account of the battle, he wrote that as the mist cleared on the morning of December 16, he saw that the Boer camp was completely encircled by tens of thousands of Zulu warriors, even where the terrain would have made an attack difficult. Estimates placed the number of Zulus at between 15,000 and 25,000, although no official count was possible. Whatever the figure, Pretorius wrote that it was a “terrible sight.”

The Boers had been ready and armed since two hours before day-break. The two cannon were in position, and the fighting gates closed. The defenders expected to run out of ammunition for the cannon, and had stacked up suitably sized stones at strategic points along the perimeter to fire as a last resort. The Boers would fire stones that day.

The front lines of the Zulu force were still, squatting, only about 40 paces from the wagons, waiting for the signal



Sketch showing the main Zulu attacks as well as the Boer cavalry charges.

to attack. Pretorius decided to strike first. At his signal, three bursts of fire from the Boer guns and two blasts from the cannon broke the silence. The Boers' orders were to then hold their fire. As the billows of gunpowder smoke lifted, they saw that the surviving Zulus had fled some 500 paces from their former



The Blood River vow.

front line, leaving behind dozens of dying and dead comrades.

The Boers then heard the noise of the Zulus breaking their spear shafts to make them into short, stabbing weapons. A frontal assault was coming. A few minutes later, the Zulu force stormed the wagons, screaming wildly, shields held high, and assegais in readiness. Withering gunfire ripped through the Zulu ranks, and while some managed to reach the wagons, they were gunned down before they could cut through the wagon canvasses.

Another group of Zulus tried to attack from inside the erosion ditch by standing on each others' shoulders and scrambling over the edge. Pretorius ordered Cilliers, the fighting churchman, to see off the attack. He led a group of men out of the relative safety of the wagon perimeter, and they proceeded to kill some 400 Zulus. One Boer, Philip Fourie, was wounded when an assegai struck him in the side.

The Boers then wheeled one of their cannon out of the laager, pointed it into the ditch, and fired a shot that literally blew apart the assaulting party. The survivors fled the ditch in disarray. This sparked a temporary retreat by the Zulu, and marked the end of the second unsuccessful attempt to break the Boer lines.

The wounded Boer, Fourie, returned to the wagon circle for treatment.

As the Zulus waited for new orders, Pretorius ordered another burst of cannon fire into their ranks, provoking a spontaneous charge against the wagons. Although it was the longest single assault of the nine-hour battle, it was utterly defeated, as the Boers cut down wave after wave of attackers. Gun barrels got so hot men had to hold them with wet cloths for reloading.

As the third attack fell back, the Boers launched their first surprise counterattack, as the mobile fighting gates swung open and a cavalry unit charged the Zulu lines. Shooting from the saddle, the Boers tried to turn the Zulu lines to their left. Desperate Zulu resistance, which saw hundreds more of their number killed, stopped the encircling action,

and the Boer horsemen rode back to the wagons. They regrouped and launched a second attempt, driving the Zulus further away. A third mounted charge finally broke through the Zulu lines. The Boer cavalry then turned and attacked the Zulus from the rear. Pinned between the cavalry and cannon fire from within the wagon circle, the main Zulu force facing the open plain scattered.

A reserve Zulu force tried to cross the Ncome River to attack the laager but so many warriors were gunned down that their blood stained the water red. Pretorius himself then led another cavalry charge from within the laager. Cut to pieces, with thousands dead, the Zulu army, which had courageously charged repeatedly against a better-armed enemy, finally broke ranks and fled.

Pretorius divided his cavalry into two units and sent them in pursuit. Mounted Boers killed hundreds of warriors during a three-hour chase. It was during this pursuit that Pretorius was wounded. Two other Boers, including Fourie,


suffered nonfatal assegai wounds, but these were the only Boer casualties. An estimated 3,000 Zulus died on the battlefield, and many more died later from wounds.

The Aftermath

Early the next morning, Pretorius ordered the camp broken, and marched the commando straight to the Zulu king's capital. He was confident the Zulus no longer posed any significant threat, but he hardly expected the sight that awaited him on December 20 at Umgungundhlovo. Dingaan had fled with his wives and cattle, leaving the circular camp of reed huts burning, as a symbol of the destruction of Zulu power.

On the outskirts of the capital the Boers found the skeletons of Retief and his men. "Their hands and feet were still bound fast with thongs of ox hide," wrote Cilliers, "and in nearly all the corpses a spike as thick as an arm had been forced into the anus so that the point of the spike was in the chest." Retief, who was identified by the remains of a satin vest he had worn, still had a leather bag draped over his shoulder bone. In it was the treaty, signed by Dingaan, giving the Boers the unoccupied land to the north. According to

The Vow

Here we stand before the holy God of heaven and earth, to make a vow to Him that, if He will protect us and give our enemy into our hand, we shall keep this day and date every year as a day of thanksgiving like a sabbath, and that we shall erect a house to His honour wherever it should please Him, and that we also will tell our children that they should share in that with us in memory for future generations. For the honour of His name will be glorified by giving Him the fame and honour for the victory. 

one of the Boers who saw it, the treaty was astonishingly well preserved—as if it had been "left in a closed box." Pretorius's men buried Retief and his party on Christmas Day 1838.

Dingaan fled north but was captured by a rival tribe, the Swazis. Earlier, he had persecuted the Swazis, and they murdered him in revenge. The new Zulu