

# Materialist Conception of History

## FOR BEGINNERS

Lesson 23: Africa (Continued)

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GR<sup>E</sup>AT interest was aroused in European countries by the entrance of Germany into South West Africa. Great Britain, being occupied in Egypt, was hardly in a position to oppose successfully other nations' enterprises.

The Alliance of Austria and Italy—1881 and 82—gave Germany courage for colonial expansion, but being the last in the field of world policy she could not acquire territory or a coaling station without alarming everybody. The great industrial expansion and overseas trade, the increased need of raw material and food stuffs from abroad, the new hunger of colonies, was a perfect natural process of capitalism with its increased facilities of communication, the steamship, the cable, and wireless installations all tending to annihilate distance.

The Germans, however, had missionaries at work in Southwest Africa as far back as 1842, and several missions were destroyed in the civil war of the natives in 1863. (Hereros and Hottentots).

In 1868 the Prussian Government petitioned the British Government for protection for these missionaries, asking that a British Protectorate be established, particularly over Walfish Bay. This the British Foreign office refused to do, but in 1877 the Governor of Cape Colony persuaded the British Government to annex Namaqualand and take possession of Walfish Bay, but would not extend a protectorate over the whole country as they had too much trouble on their hands in Bechuanaland, a rebellion in Basutoland and several other parts of Africa with the natives.

In February, 1883, Bismarck asked protection for a Bremen merchant. This merchant had bought 150 square miles from a tribal chief in the neighborhood of Angra Pequena, for 200 rifles and 100 dollars. Britain took a long time to answer Bismarck's request.

The British traders having stations on this coast and leases of islands protested to the British Government. One of Her Majesty's ships was sent to the Bay to protect the traders in case of conflict but Germany managed to get possession. The Cape government rushed a bill through parliament to annex this territory, but the home government announced it would not contest the German claims to a protectorate, and before the British authorities had time to occupy the coast north of Angra Pequena Bay where their claims were weak, the German warship took possession of the whole region, England still holding Walfish Bay and the Islands at Germany's assent. The eastern boundary was fixed in 1890 when England gave Germany Heligoland, and Britain established herself in Nyassaland and Somaliland, while Germany did likewise in East and South West Africa.

The Historian says German South West Africa was a white elephant, yet he adds "one doubts if it will ever be a paying proposition to the Mother Country but from a commercial point of view, however this protectorate is a source of considerable wealth and profit to the merchants of Germany. The sum total of imports and exports of \$2,000,000 in 1899 reached over \$18,000,000 in 1911. Britain agreed to Germany having this to buy off her opposition to her occupation of Egypt."

This Bremen merchant tried the same method to obtain territory in East Africa, but failed, owing to the alertness of the British Government.

This South West Africa incident was preceded in June 1890 by the acceptance of British Protection by the Sultan of Zanzibar, and this protection was recognized by France in return for a British recognition of a French protectorate over Madagascar. All through the nineties, France and Britain were at loggerheads over the stealing of territory in the Soudan, and Lower Niger districts. After three

years of exchanging notes they agreed (in 1898) to a general "divide up" of the different parts of Africa; this agreement was almost upset during the Fashoda incident of 1898. When the French attempted to unite their Congo possessions with their Niger Sudan territories, the claims of Germany and Britain in these territories brought forth complaints which prevented France from accomplishing anything of importance up to 1892.

In 1893 France succeeded in gaining a little more territory and in the same year the last portion of the frontier was worked out by Germany and England to Lake Chad.

England received Yola and Germany Adamana. The French objected bitterly, vigorously refusing to recognize the treaty until her claims to Baghirmi with access to Lake Chad from the South was recognized officially in the German-French treaty, March 15th 1894.

There was great rivalry in Nigeria between Britain, France and Germany in 1884 for territory and trading stations. Great Britain, at length forced, under the pressure of France and Germany's activities, formulated a definite policy of expansion in West Africa and a British Protectorate was proclaimed over the coast region. In 1906 the Native Revenue Proclamation was issued and the Chiefs appointed to collect taxes. The wild payans were assessed a small sum to accustom them to annual payments, while the more advanced payans paid according to their wealth and assessability in return for the protection and security of civilization. The discovery of gold and diamonds, which brought an influx of British and other settlers transformed the social and economic status of the outlying provinces of South Africa, gave Britain a desire to expand further in South Africa. The district of Grigualand, including the chief diamond mints, the ownership of which was in dispute between the Cape and Transvaal authorities was awarded to Britain by the decision of the Lieutenant Governor of Natal and annexed. Then we had the move to unite all South Africa which led to Majuba Hill and the Boer Independence, but Britain maintained supervision over the Boer foreign relations.

The discovery of gold and the increase of trade saw the building of a railway in 1891, completed with outside assistance, from Dunbar to the Transvaal frontier. The Cape Railroad, a sharp competitor, pushed its line to the edge of the Transvaal, by May 22nd, with the assistance of the government and the Orange Free State. Meanwhile the Netherlands South African Company started a railroad from Lourenco Marques on Portuguese territory, which was brought into the Rand in 1894. The Transvaal government which owned a material interest in this line attempted to turn all traffic to this shorter road to the coast, and it was the interference of the British home government that succeeded and secured for the Cape and Natal railways an entrance to the Transvaal on anything like an equal commercial basis. Cecil Rhodes thought Matabeleland and Mashonaland would be a paying venture, because of the mineral and agricultural wealth of that region. He thought it out of the question to persuade the home government to undertake such an extensive policy of expansion. He decided to work out this enterprise by forming a commercial company. A British South African Company was formed; among the original directors were the Duke of Fife, Lord Gifford, Cecil Rhodes and other prominent British financiers. They asked for imperial recognition and protection. The British government issued them a charter (1889) incorporating the company and endowing it with political as well as commercial powers. Again we had native wars and rebellions, and our fellow workers going to war for these commercial interests. This is how the territory of Rhodesia up to Lake Tanganyika was acquired. The output of gold was £83,000 from 1890

to 1898, and by 1912 it was £22,250,000, one company paying a dividend of 30 per cent.

Tobacco growing and agriculture is very profitable, but the historian says it is not a poor man's country, as only settlers who have \$3,500 dollars to \$5,000 are encouraged.

There are large cattle ranches and the chief work of development has been in the hands of large corporations. Copper, lead, coal and asbestos are abundant. This is called South Rhodesia, below the Zambesi river. North Rhodesia above the Zambesi river has great mineral wealth which delivers 12,000 tons of copper annually to Europe (previous to the Great War).

The "Financial News," 9th February, 1918, had a paragraph about the land dispute, whether the unalienated lands of Southern Rhodesia belonged to the natives, the Crown, or the British South African Company. The natives were asserting their claim. A despatch from London, July 29th, 1918, told us the decision of the Privy Council that the domination of 48,000,000 acres of land in Southern Rhodesia remains in the Crown, but the British South African Company will continue to administer the land and may be reimbursed in financial matters. The "Manchester Guardian" printed a letter, 11th June, 1919, from John H. Harris, of the Aborigines dealing with the claim lodged by the South Gang. He says:

"Sixty-five years ago, the savage monarch Unisiliani and his son Lobengula met and formed a strong friendship with the famous missionary Dr. Moffat. Forty-five years later the boy Lobengula became king of the Matabele and believing all white men were as disinterested as Moffat, gave a concession which ultimately came into possession of Cecil Rhodes and the Kimberley doctor, Starr Jamieson. These two directors, with their colleagues of the Chartered Company asserted for over 20 years that the concession granted by Lobengula was a land concession, giving to their shareholders, the commercial ownership of every foot of land in Southern Rhodesia, including the kraals, gardens and grazing grounds, and even the graveyards of the people. Through the intervention of Lord Harcourt, the claim was submitted in 1914 to the Judicial Committee of the Privy Council, who after four years have given judgment that those lands belong to the British Crown as successor of the deceased Lobengula but that the Company had the right to look to the sales and leases of unalienated land to reimburse them for their necessary and proper administration deficits."

John Harris says further in opposition to compensation being paid the Chartered Company:

"One crucial question arises upon the Matabele and Mashona wars of 1893 and 1896. These wars are now known to have been unnecessary, and cannot therefore, properly become a charge upon the Imperial Exchequer. Three factors now established, show how the Imperial government was misled at the time. First Lord Ripon for the Imperial government, so late as 26th August, 1893 cabled: "I should certainly prohibit any offensive movement in the interests of the South African Company." Twelve days earlier, Jamieson had signed a secret agreement (now available) to invade Matabeleland and give to his 500 fellow invaders considerations potentially exceeding £6,000,000, including land, gold, and half the loot. Not only had he done this but a month earlier he had deliberately cabled the capital allegation that the Matabele had fired on the white man—an allegation proved later to have been without a shadow of truth. The cost of this invasion and the aftermath was about £120,000 and can hardly be regarded as a necessary and proper administrative charge."

Harris goes on to illustrate the expense of the Jamieson Raid and all trouble due to it at a cost of £2,500,000 and how the Chartered Company's police which, by article 10 of the Charter were to be retained in Rhodesia for maintenance of order, were being assembled far south of Rhodesia near the Transvaal border. How the High Commissioner enquired if it was true and Rhodes replied with the misstatement, "For the purposes of economy and to protect the railway." He also wired Jamieson to make the same statement. Two days later that invading police were at war with the Transvaal. This is the history of the compensation which the Privy Council says should be reimbursed.

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