

# History Without the Humbug

*Countering the Re-Writing of History*

## **The Trials and Tribulations of the English South Africans**

**by Aida Parker**

The purpose of these articles is to counter the deliberate re-writing of history with those stubborn things called facts, and that wonderful thing called truth. “Woe unto them that call evil good, and good evil” (Isaiah 5:20).

This is an age when history is being re-written by Marxists, liberals and others. Very rapidly, the truth about the past is being “revised”, and unless this wicked revisionism is resisted, people will be thoroughly indoctrinated with lies and myths presented as “truth”. Already vast damage has been done, and even many who lived through more recent historical events have been so well indoctrinated, and conditioned to think along the “party” line, that they actually believe the lies and myths they have been fed. Very few people think critically anymore. They do not even know how to. They simply swallow whatever they are told by their Red, almost-Red, and religious-Red heroes and masters.

This article is excellent for its factual and historical documentation; and Christians must make use of accurate documentation to counter the lies of historical revisionists.

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### ***Foreword***

by Shaun Willcock

South Africa’s black Marxist or Marxist-sympathising leaders, with their arrogant assumption that the whole world owes them a cushy living and their hatred of the two white South African nations, the Afrikaners and the English, would do well to study some basic points about South African history: how these groups won their place in the sun. These groups understood, as the ANC and its alliance partner, the SA Communist party, do not, that moving from poverty to prosperity involves massive effort on their part. There were no government handouts for the Voortrekkers or their descendants; no free perks for the early British settlers. To survive at all, these groups – and others – had to struggle and sacrifice like supermen; and SA is immeasurably the richer for it. How many similar supermen are there in the ANC? Thus far, we have seen none; nor will we, for Marxism and black African nationalism cannot produce them.

### ***Introduction***

If Britain was seldom a good neighbour to the Afrikaners,<sup>1</sup> she was often very little kinder to her own. Few groups have been so woefully misled as were the 1820 Settlers, the first British population of any size to appear in South Africa.

In 1819 Britain was in a mess. The end of the Napoleonic Wars in 1815 was followed by the usual aftermath of poverty and unemployment. Peace has its problems, no less than war. Huge military contracts had been cancelled; some 300 000 demobilised soldiers and sailors thrown onto an already saturated unemployment market. Many of these men, including officers of quite high rank, now found themselves totally without means of livelihood, their wives and children facing starvation.

Britain's population had doubled itself in 60 years, to almost 14 million people. The country could not adapt to so many people – especially now that the Industrial Revolution, with its transition from hand industries to power-driven machinery, was playing havoc in the traditional work place. Adding vastly to the misery was a series of the worst winters and wet summers in living memory, with a succession of bad harvests.

### *Only Remedy*

Emigration was seen as the only effective remedy. Reduce the pressure! Get rid of people! Send them overseas! Now, suddenly, the thinly populated Cape Colony emerged as the new El Dorado, as a particularly attractive destination. In 1817 Benjamin Moodie, a Scots settler, had himself financed the immigration of 200 unmarried Scots artisans to the Cape from Edinburgh. It proved hugely successful, and was followed by several similar schemes with equal success.

All this suited the plans of the immensely influential Lord Charles Somerset, Governor of the Cape and second son of the Duke of Beaufort, very well indeed. In London on private business, he called on the Secretary of State to discuss Cape affairs and urged upon him that British settlers be sent out to occupy the long, troubled Eastern Frontier.

### *Human Wall*

Somerset was certainly not inspired by philanthropic considerations. His concern was that the sadly-strapped Imperial Government (rather like South Africa today) was economising with heavy cuts in military expenditure, especially in the colonies. The scattered Boer and British colonials living along the Great Fish River frontier were having an increasingly difficult time in protecting themselves, their lives, their homes and their stock from Ama-Xhosa raiding parties. Indeed, so bad had the attacks become that more and more settlers were deserting their homesteads.

The only alternative, as he saw it, to the maintenance of a strong, but expensive, garrison force was to settle a large European population there. In short, the unsuspecting British settlers were to be placed first and foremost where they would provide an effective barrier, a human wall, against the Ama-Xhosa. Urgently wanting these people, Somerset himself eulogised the Eastern Cape as producing abundantly the same kind of foodstuffs as were raised in Britain, plus the profitable cultivation of cotton and tobacco.

The brilliant prospect of comfort and affluence, visions of fertility and abundance, whipped up unthinkable enthusiasm among Britain's starving multitudes. Emigration to the Cape became an all-absorbing topic in the British press, including the *London Times*, with the most exaggerated statements concerning the fertility of the country, the happy conditions of peace and plenty awaiting all those fortunate to move there.

Basically, the British are a cynical people. By no means all were infatuated with these glowing descriptions of the Cape as the new land of golden opportunity. The great cartoonist George Cruikshank published several ferocious cartoons warning against emigration to "the Cape of Forlorn Hope." One showed settlers being eaten alive by savages, cobras and a boa constrictor!

### *Free Passage*

But the momentum was now in full swing. Parliament voted £50 000 for the transport of 5000 emigrants to the Eastern Cape. One hundred acres of land were offered to each settler of means, a further hundred acres for every male labourer he took with him. Title to the land, however, would only be issued after the ground had been occupied for three years. The Imperial Government would provide free passage and provisions.

Lured by the lavish promises that they would be going to the Promised Land, nearly 90 000 applications were received, but only 3487 were selected. These proved an odd bag. The Mountforts, whose ancestors fought at the Battle of Hastings, were among them; small squires; retired military officers, physicians, surgeons; peasants; artisans; farm workers; craftsmen; silversmiths; clerks; shop assistants; teachers and many more.

After lengthy delays because of the bad weather, the first of the 24 settler ships, each of about 400 tons, sailed down the icy Thames in December, 1819. Few eyes could have been dry as the ships slowly pulled away from the familiar sights and sounds of home – for many, never to be seen again. The voyage out took three months. There were a few deaths – and some births. Expectations continued to run high.

The first reality dawned when the ships called in at False Bay on a wintry day in April, 1820. The black hills and general desolation sparked wide dismay. Having taken on fresh provisions, they continued on to Algoa Bay, to be welcomed there by British soldiers and Boer farmers. Some were taken to Albany, others located between the Bushman's and Fish River.

### *Tragic Untruth*

But, no matter where they were placed, their condition was all the same, set down in a harsh, inhospitable country, encircled by wild animals and even wilder men. As to the lyrical descriptions of the fertility of the land, the next three years were to show how tragically untrue that was. Albany was a particularly sad case. Seemingly, no one had troubled to establish that this district was not wheat country. Indeed, it is curious how little real information or knowledge was possessed by those who had talked so volubly about the marvels of the Eastern Cape.

Many among the settlers came to the colony believing that on 100 acres of their own they could employ labour and live in comfort. They were rudely awakened when they found the only labour they could rely on was that of their own two hands. Somerset had stipulated that the settlers were not to be permitted to own slaves or hire Black or Hottentot labour. The greater number of the immigrants were utterly unfit for heavy agricultural labour.

The historian, Cory, relates how they made the most preposterous blunders. They built wattle-and-daub houses in such flimsy fashion that they blew away in high winds. They sowed seeds that were swept away when the rivers came down in flood. They planted fruit trees where no trees of any sort would grow.

The experienced, veld-wise Boer farmers must have gazed incredulous at what their new *rooinek* [red-necked] neighbours were trying to do. Cory relates how one settler planted his carrot seed in trenches two feet deep. Another sowed his land with mealies [maize], without first removing the pips from the cobs. Yet another transplanted his young onions with their roots in the air.

### *Depression*

The settlers had left acute depression behind them. Now they faced much greater depression. Their first wheat crop failed, attacked by mildew and completely ruined. The second harvest time came. To the utter despair of the colonists, it too was attacked by rust and nothing was saved. The third crop likewise.

By 1823 only 1800 of the original settlers remained on the land, and all were in a sorry plight. Sometimes it must have seemed to them that the very hand of God was turned against them. Early in October 1823 the Eastern districts were devastated by floods such as had never before been seen in the area.

Cottages, furniture, gardens, orchards, cornfields, animals, all were swept away. Many of the pioneers escaped only with the clothes they stood up in. Many families were now reduced to the last stages of distress. The poet, Thomas Pringle, one of the most famous of the settlers, visited Albany in 1824 and found his fellow pioneers in pitiful shape, “almost destitute of decent clothing.”

### *Emaciated*

Another visitor told of meeting “what had once been... a fine, hearty young woman, now miserably emaciated. She was leading one child, another was following, another on her arm. All were without shoes or stockings. The woman's dress, if such it could be called, consisted of the remnants of an old tent wrapped around her. The children were clad in like manner and the canvas appeared so rotten that it could scarcely hang on them.”

Periodically, too, the settlers underwent their baptism of fire. In 1834 the Fourth Kaffir War [now known as the Fourth Frontier War], without warning, brought horror, murder and devastation upon the border farmers on the Eastern Frontier over a huge area. The 1820 Settlers were included in the deluge of savagery, with hundreds of families once again reduced to destitution and despair. But the tide of adversity was already slowly turning.

By now the settlers knew what could be cultivated; and they also knew that cattle breeding was their most profitable option. Visiting the area, Somerset – who had limited the sites to 100 acres to force the settlers to be agriculturists, not herders, enlarged the plots of those remaining, allocating to them the ground abandoned by others. Moreover, starving Blacks had recently invaded the area and these were now permitted to become apprenticed to the farmers.

Prosperity began in 1830 when it was discovered that Albany was excellent for sheep farming. An observer wrote: “Many of the emigrants of 1820... had no other capital to commence with than health, strength and industry, yet despite every drawback... and there were many at the outset...” had now achieved success and were moving to prosperity. Slowly the settlers turned their savage, ruthless wilderness into a panorama of lovely, picturesque homesteads and bequeathed to their descendants a heritage of which any people could be proud.

## *Cultural Heritage*

Many of these settlers were to give their names to South African history: Ayliff, Bowker, Daniels, Chase, Cock, Currie, Godlonton, Southey, Scablan, Shepstone, Shaw: it was they, these British settlers, who laid the foundation for modern South Africa. On the whole a refined, religious people who insisted on a sound education for their children, they added to the cultural heritage of their new homeland in many ways. They produced poets, writers, artists and journalists; produced prosperous merchants; provided skills, crafts, administrators.

Before their arrival, education was a huge problem. In February 1812, of 3400 White children living on the vast Eastern Frontier, only 100 went to school. Then Andrew Murray, a master of arts from Aberdeen University, came to the Cape, heading the most valuable cargo ever seen in SA: six trained schoolmasters. It was these men, Murray, William Robinson, Alexander Smith, James Rose Innes, John Taylor and George Morgan, who were to found schools and stimulate everywhere the thirst for knowledge in SA. It was men from Scotland, too, who at a time of scarcity gave the Dutch Reformed Church some of its most notable ministers.

Most of the great roads of South Africa were planned and carried out by English-speakers, among them Andrew Geddes Bain, responsible for that great engineering feat, the Bain’s Kloof Pass, and Colonel J. Mitchell, responsible for the famous Mitchell’s Pass, giving access through the mountains to the district of Ceres.

Sir William Guybon Atherstone carried out the first operation in SA under anaesthetic – and identified the first diamond found at the Cape. Sir John Coode pioneered SA’s earlier harbour works. Astronomer Sir David Gill made the Cape Observatory world famous. Sir Leige Hulett opened up Zululand for sugar. Cape legislator Hercules Crosse Jarvis promoted the building of Table Bay Docks. John Paterson established the Standard Bank of SA in 1862.

## *Statesmen*

There were so many more: the great British architect, Herbert Baker, commissioned by Rhodes to rebuild and restore Groote Schuur, later to design the Union Buildings in Pretoria; John X. Merriman, possibly the most influential English-speaking statesman the country has produced; the world-famous palaeontologist, Robert Broom; the equally famous anthropologist, Raymond Dart.<sup>2</sup>

There was Alfred Milner who cut his name deep into SA, both for good and ill. In the “good” column we must list the creation of the Milner Kindergarten, the nickname given to a group of exceptionally gifted young graduates from leading British universities, mostly Oxford and Cambridge, brought to SA by Milner in 1900. These young men between them laid the foundations of the SA public service; and prepared the way for the formation of the Union of South Africa in 1910.<sup>3</sup> All were later to attain great distinction, either in SA or on the world scene. Among them were Patrick Duncan, who remained on to

become the first South African named as Governor-General; Richard Feetham, later to become one of SA's most distinguished judges; Lionel Curtis, destined to become first Town Clerk of Johannesburg; and a variety of others.

These Englishmen, and many, many more, have loved and helped build a great South Africa, helped make it the most advanced country in all Africa. The gifts they brought with them were rich indeed. Would all that they brought with them, achieved, sacrificed, fought for, be preserved in any ANC/SA Communist Party government? In this crisis period, there is nothing more important for South Africans – all South Africans – to ask themselves than that question.

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Aida Parker was a highly articulate, conservative South African journalist, whose *Aida Parker Newsletter* was read around the world before she passed away in 2002. Her excellent writings should not be forgotten. This article (original title: “Unlikely Start for British Emigrants to Cape Colony – a Human Wall”) is taken from *The Aida Parker Newsletter*, Issue No. 140, November/December 1990, published by Aida Parker Newsletter (Pty) Ltd., Auckland Park, Johannesburg, South Africa. Consent was granted for the use of this material, providing acknowledgment was made of the name of the copyright holder: Aida Parker Newsletter (Pty) Ltd. It has been slightly edited for publication here.

#### ***ENDNOTES:***

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1. See *The Long, Long Trek of the Afrikaners*, by Aida Parker. Published by Bible Based Ministries. [www.biblebasedministries.co.uk](http://www.biblebasedministries.co.uk).

2. Many scientists working in the fields of paleontology and anthropology are opposed to the truth of the Bible; but they are retained here because of their worldwide fame, and for no other reason. – *Editor*.

3. Although many of these men went on to do great things for the country, Milner was an internationalist who, like Rhodes, planned to use these men as part of their secret ambitions for world domination; and indeed the very formation of the Union of SA was a major step towards their goal. We would disagree, therefore, with the author that this was a “good” thing Milner did.

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