The South African War: The Negotiations

The Outlook has already given a history of the events which, beginning with the exodus of the Boers from Cape Colony in 1835 and the founding of the Transvaal Republic, have preceded and prefaced the present war in South Africa. To these articles we refer the reader who wishes to understand the course of events which has culminated in the negotiations finally broken off by the ultimatum of the Transvaal Republic. Without further comment on the mutual suspicion and the ineradicable incongruity between the stolid and apathetic Boers and the ambitious and aggressive British which pervaded and embittered this diplomatic intercourse, we here briefly summarize it, that the reader may comprehend its culmination:

May. Twenty-one thousand Uitlanders present to the British Government a petition praying for redress of grievances indorsed by Sir Alfred Milner, Governor of Cape Colony and High Commissioner for South Africa. For statement of these grievances see pages 447–448.

May 31. Sir Alfred Milner and President Kruger have a conference in which Sir Alfred demands that five years shall be sufficient to secure the franchise, with a naturalization oath similar to that in the Orange Free State. President Kruger consents to halve the present residence of fourteen years, but insists on Great Britain’s abandonment of her claim to suzerainty.

July. The Volksraad grants retrospective franchise after seven years’ residence, despite British protest that it will not be satisfactory. The British Government proposes a joint conference.

August. President Kruger, as an alternative, proposes to accept five years’ residence, provided Great Britain abandons her claim to suzerainty and pledges herself never again to interfere in Transvaal affairs. Great Britain refuses to make such pledge, but proposes conference on all points at issue.

September. President Kruger withdraws proposal for five years’ residence for franchise, but consents to a conference, on the condition that the Transvaal shall be recognized in the conference as a sovereign State, involving an abandonment of the suzerainty of Great Britain and its right to interfere. Great Britain refuses to accept these conditions, and promises to formulate afresh its demands. Three weeks pass by. During that time the British Government is evidently making preparations for possible war. Meanwhile Mr. Chamberlain officially gives the assurance of the Government that there was “no desire to interfere in any way with the independence of the South African Republic,” and offers “to give a complete guarantee against any attack upon that independence either from within any part of the British dominions or from the territory of a foreign State.”

October 10. The Transvaal Republic sends its ultimatum to London, demanding (1) that all points of mutual difference shall be regulated by diplomacy or arbitration; (2) that all British troops on the borders of the Transvaal Republic shall be instantly withdrawn; (3) that all reinforcements of troops that have arrived in South Africa since June 1 shall be removed, and (4) that troops now on the seas shall not be landed in any part of South Africa. Finally, if these four demands are not acceded to before five o’clock of the next day, the Transvaal Government will regard the failure “as a formal declaration of war.”

Effect of the Ultimatum. By those who felt that Great Britain would fight, whether or no, this peremptory ultimatum was regarded as an obvious military precaution. It must be admitted that there was something in the British attitude to confirm Boer suspicion. Not only was there no receding from the London Government’s insistence on its demands; there had even been enlargement of those demands—for instance, the proposed introduction of the English language into the Volksraad. Again, both by word of official newspapers and by the deed of War and Admiralty Office preparations, Great Britain was expressing in no uncertain language her intention to enforce her demands by arms. In addition, the Boers charged Mr. Chamberlain with irritating them beyond the bounds of
of mounted infantry produced by modern war. In consequence of the report that some burghers had misbehaved themselves on their journey, General Joubert issued a public letter declaring that any plundering raids will be severely punished. He adds that "when we are unwillingly compelled to cross the boundary line of our country, let it not be thought that we are a band of robbers; with that in view, remain as far as possible from private dwellings and from places where no enemy is stationed. When food or forage for the cattle is needed, let certain officers acquire such goods from the owner, and let a receipt be given with promise of recompense by the Government." While General Joubert commands the Boers advancing into Natal, those advancing into Bechuanaland are commanded by General Cronje, who made his reputation in the war of independence, and also in his prompt checking of the Jameson raid.

The events of the war so far show rapid movements on the part of the mounted Boers to prevent British concentration. The Transvaal forces advancing across their southern border into Natal have now occupied Charleston and Newcastle. Fighting is reported near Dannhuaser, Glencoe, and Dundee. The Transvaal forces are now being joined by the Orange Boers, who marched from Harrismith through the Drakensberg by way of the Van Reenen Pass to Ladysmith in Natal. It is interesting to note that these two towns were once in the same country. They are named for Sir Harry Smith and his wife. In 1848 Sir Harry was Governor of Cape Colony. The Boer forces advancing across the western border have destroyed two armored trains and captured the ammunition, together with a number of prisoners. The British railway from Cape Town to Bulawayo runs for more than five hundred miles parallel with and only from five to twenty miles from the Dutch border. In many places the roadbed and bridges have been already destroyed. The Boers have laid siege to Mafeking, where Colonel Baden-Powell is encamped with an insufficient force. It is now reported that the Boers have also laid siege to Kimberley, where Mr. Cecil Rhodes, aided by three thousand troops, is guarding his diamond-mines.

Canada's Contingent

At a meeting of the Canadian Cabinet last week a decision was reached to send one thousand soldiers to South Africa as Canada's contribution to the British forces now fighting the Boers. The official statement is as follows:

The Government has decided to send a larger number than any of the other colonies has sent, and larger than the British Government has suggested. The only question in the way of the Government acting more speedily in the matter was as to whether or not Parliament would have to be called together to meet the expenditure. This point was got over by the form of enlistment, the War Office having stated that units of men of 125 each should be sent, and that they would be attached to an imperial corps. The Canadian Government would have preferred to send a whole regiment with Canadian officers in command. Good marksmen will have the preference. The Government will equip the contingent and pay the cost of transportation to a point on the South African coast. Enrollment will begin at once.

Though Canada sends double the number of troops asked for by the British Government, double the number decided upon by the Canadian Cabinet might have gone but for the opposition of one member, Mr. Tarte, Minister of Public Works, who threatened to resign if such a contingent were sent. He declared that the participation of Canada in one of England's foreign entanglements was a phase of imperialism which French Canadians would not tolerate. Finally Mr. Tarte was induced to relax his opposition upon a compromise as to the number and payment of the men. The Canadian Cabinet had proposed to equip, transport, and maintain two thousand men throughout the entire South African campaign. To placate Mr. Tarte it was agreed to reduce the number and to allow the British Government to pay the men, who will be attached to the British forces. Quebec Frenchmen are much divided on the question, but it is said that the English throughout Canada are a unit.

Last week a letter was published from General de Gallifet, French Minister of War, concerning Colonel Picquart's
management of Secret Service funds. At the recent Dreyfus court martial a number of the witnesses from the army had criticised the financial conduct of the Intelligence Department during the time when Colonel Picquart was in charge. The most pronounced of these witnesses was General Roget. He declared that Colonel Picquart had squandered a part of the Secret Service funds in trying to obtain information which would facilitate the substitution of another officer for Captain Dreyfus. Colonel Picquart indignantly announced that he would demand from the Minister of War an immediate investigation of the manner in which the Intelligence Department had been conducted. Accordingly, the Minister of War called a Council of Inquiry. The Council investigated the affair and made its report to General de Gallifet, who summed up the conclusions in a letter to Colonel Picquart. As might have been expected, the results of the examination gave no ground whatever for the slightest suspicion as to the honorable character of Colonel Picquart's management. Last week the High Court of Justice dismissed the case against Judge Grosjean, of the Versailles court. Advocate-General Melcot had preferred charges against M. Grosjean in connection with the trial of M. Déroulède, Chief of the so-called "League of Patriots." M. Déroulède and his accomplices are now before the Senate, which sits as an extraordinary court of justice. The charge against them is that of a conspiracy to change the form of government. Last week also occurred the condemnation to two years' imprisonment of MM. Firman and Jardin, who wounded a commissary of police while the rioting of Sunday, August 20, was in progress. M. Sébastien Faure, editor of the Anarchistic "Journal du Peuple," who did more than any one else to provoke that riot, was sentenced to only two months' imprisonment. It will be remembered that the mob invaded two Paris churches, and during the various encounters outside and inside nearly three hundred persons were injured.

Earthquakes in Asia Minor and in Ceram

It is now believed that at least fifteen hundred persons have perished from the recent earthquake in the neighborhood of Aidin in Asia Minor, an earthquake felt as far as Smyrna. Entire villages were destroyed, and so sudden was the shock that men, women, and children were buried in the ruins of their homes before they had any realization of their danger. Five hundred persons were killed at Sarakeni alone. Throughout the Aidin district the level of the soil has subsided in consequence of the earthquake, sulphurous springs have burst out, and the country has become full of crevices, out of which rushes muddy water in great volume. A still more terrible earthquake has occurred on the island of Ceram, to the west of New Guinea. The town of Amhei was completely destroyed; four thousand people are reported as killed. Many of these probably met death by fire, the usual accompaniment of earthquakes in the villages of the Malay archipelago. A volcanic mountain chain traverses the island from east to west, and the peaks rise in some instances to a height of ten thousand feet. Ceram belongs to the Dutch government of the Molucca Islands. It is the largest and most mountainous of that group. The inhabitants are partly