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PC/11/12/1-8

1. Born in 1826, Cetshwayo succeeded his father Mpande in 1828. Not capricious like his uncles Shaka and Dingane, nor weak like his father, he revitalised the Zulu kingdom and army. He was friendly with white Natal and invited Theophilus Shepstone to install him as King.

Cartoon: Shepstone robing Cetshwayo in a scarlet and gold mantle.

2. Cetshwayo's foreign policy was to seek Natal's support against Boer expansion. But when Shepstone annexed the Transvaal in 1877, he endorsed its boundary claims. For Shepstone, and for the High Commissioner Sir Bartle Frere, the Zulu kingdom had now become an impediment to South African federation. Frere ordered the disbandment of the Zulu army, but Cetshwayo refused. He inflicted on the British the great defeat of Isandlwana in January 1879.

Cartoon: The battle of Isandlwana

3. The British finally broke the Zulu power at Ulundi in July 1879. Cetshwayo was banished to Cape Town, allowed to visit England and the Queen, and finally restored to a position of powerlessness in Zululand. There his followers rose against the upstart Zibhebhu. They were utterly defeated, and Cetshwayo became a refugee, and died a few months later. So ended in 1879 his tragic life. Thirteen years later Natal annexed Zululand, and tore Shaka's kingdom to pieces. It was a shameful chapter in British history.