

# 8. Piet Retief

by D. Marquard and P. W. Wheeler

In 1836 Piet Retief published in the "Grahams Town Journal" an able and logical statement as to why the Boers were trekking. The best-known sentence from it is: "We quit this colony under the full assurance that the English Government will allow us to govern ourselves without its interference."

His first visit to Ungungundhlovu was successful, Dingaan promising him a cession of territory in return for cattle stolen from him by Sikonyela. But on his second visit and in spite of warnings from missionary Owen, Retief allowed his followers to go unarmed into the royal kraal, where they were seized, dragged out to the hill of execution and massacred on February 6, 1838.

When the trekkers established their first simple form of government at Thaba Nchu in April, 1837, the Nine Articles, Retief was elected Commandant-General and "Governor." He turned towards Natal and the sea when Potgieter and Uys wanted to trek farther north away from the English.

Nearly a year later, after the Battle of Blood River had broken Dingaan's power, the satchel with the treaty was found on Retief's body.



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72  
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