

## Tribute to a Tribe

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W. J. H. CULLINAN

IT IS EASY to find the Voortrekker Monument; once one is within the environs of Pretoria it is seldom out of sight. From the approach wide steps lead to the only gate in the massive laager of stone ox-wagons with which it is encircled. The first reminder of the Monument as a place of pilgrimage, and not just an unaesthetic joke, is a notice in English and (curiously) French, asking visitors to behave reverently and decently. This has a sobering effect, and lends a sombre note to all subsequent impressions. The stairs to the main door of the building curve upwards on either side of an enormous bronze statue of a woman in Voortrekker dress. The eyes of this sun-bonneted *volksmoeder* are fixed on the distant hills. Two frightened children cling to her skirts, hiding their faces.

Inside the building the central hall is cool, dim and stone-floored. A white marble frieze in bas relief runs round all four walls. Carefully carved, it depicts the story of the Voortrekkers. They are seen in the first panel leaving the Cape at the start of their trek. Soon they are engaged in frightful combat with near-naked savages. Women load muskets, and ride for help. In one scene a young girl chisels a memorial to her dead father. There are cruel massacres, but still the women encourage the men to go forward. Retief and his men are slaughtered. Finally, after a victorious battle against the tribesmen, the Church of the Vow is built in

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dedication and thanksgiving. The treacherous chief, Dingane, is murdered by the Swazis, amongst whom he has taken refuge after his defeat; and the British sign a Convention in recognition of the first Trekker Republic.

ONE IS BACK at the main door, having come full circle. But how to explain to three bewildered small children what it is all about, let alone to a mystified American student due to leave for New York in an hour's time? However, one has a disturbing idea of what it must mean to many. It is more than just a monument to the heroic endeavours—and heroic they often were—of the Voortrekkers. It is a clever and careful piece of propaganda designed to perpetuate the idea of the ever-present *swart gevaar*. One can sympathise with a young and aspiring nation wishing to extol its hardy forebears, and to accord them honour. One can even appreciate that a monument to this end could be, at the same time, a quasi-religious symbol—but *only* if the monument itself is seen purely as a tribute to the "tribe". (Perhaps in this case the only consciously integrated tribe still surviving in South Africa.) The Voortrekker Monument, however, purports to be a *national* monument, a *national* shrine. Can it ever be regarded in this light when it shows the majority of the inhabitants of South Africa as 'the enemy', and the English playing a negligible part? (The latter are shown twice; first, presenting a Bible and appropriate good wishes to the departing Trekkers, and then again in the final scene of the frieze as signatories to the Convention.)

From the main hall one looks down over a central circular parapet to the basement vault below. In its centre is the cenotaph, an oblong block of pinkish marble. A carefully angled aperture is built into the domed roof of the Monument. It has been calculated that at exactly 12 noon on 16 December, the Day of the Vow, the sun (if it is shining that day) will illuminate the inscription on the tomb. This reads ONS VIR JOU SUID-AFRIKA. The supposition is that the tomb commemorates those Trekkers who were killed on the treks. Set into the walls of the vault at one side is a modern brass hurricane lamp, kept perpetually alight. This is the 'sacred flame', which purports to be the 'light of civilisation' carried forth by the Voortrekker Movement, the focal point of the *volksideaal*.

FROM THE BASEMENT a door gives on to the garden—a narrow strip of immaculate lawn and flowerbeds, watered and weeded by convicts in striped jerseys. It is sunny and sheltered; an incongruous contrast to the grim blockhouse which it surrounds. Around it the laager is all-enclosing, incredibly solid; the huge wall of wagons standing well above head level. Let into the wall at intervals are steel shutters. What is their purpose? Our American companion thought they might be gunports. Perhaps they house fire hoses, if these could conceivably be necessary in such obsessively granitic and indestructible surroundings. But for an appreciation of the Monument's magnificent position it is necessary to climb to the parapet around the roof. This is reached

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by spiral staircases with narrow slit windows in frontier style. A second door in the garden below leads to a small museum. This is interesting enough with tableaux vivants behind glass, and an assortment of clothes, Bibles, diaries and other personal belongings of the Trekkers. One small case containing rough clay pots and a few glass beads is labelled "Bantu Objects."

But everywhere about this place is an aura of oppressive symbolism and misplaced emotion. One cannot but feel it; and the whole hilltop conveys the

impression of a site selected for a dramatic last stand, its doom inherent in its whole conception. Against this background of heavy Afrikanerdom the double gates through which all visitors must enter and leave are curious—a breach in the laager in more than just the literal sense. They are designed, inexplicably, as a fence of assegais surmounted by traditional warrior shields. Could this be an unconscious acknowledgement that the laager has been penetrated after all? One hopes so. ●

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## Northern Rhodesian Elections

# The Widening Breach

TITUS MUKUPO

THE GENERAL ELECTION that took place in Northern Rhodesia in October brought to light two main facts above all others. The first is that no single party can claim to have won it. The second is that the result itself had the effect of pushing races wider apart than before. Nevertheless, the constitution has left one man in a stronger position than he was before. This man is Kenneth Kaunda, leader of the United National Independence Party (UNIP).

In the elections, the struggle was mainly between Sir Roy Welensky's pro-Federation United Federal Party and Kaunda's UNIP which is uncompromisingly against Federation. While the UFP is predominantly white, UNIP is predominantly black. Hence the struggle was not only a battle between pro-Federationists and anti-Federationists but also a clash between white nationalism from the south and black nationalism sweeping through Africa from the north.

Results in the election showed that the UFP had won 15 seats, UNIP 14 and the African National Congress led by Harry Nkumbula, five. Thus no party emerged strong enough to form a government. Another attempt is to be made to fill the 11 remaining seats at the December 10 by-election. But it is thought that only the one upper roll seat (in which no election took place because of the death of a candidate) will be filled by the UFP. The ten national seats are likely to remain unfilled as no candidate is likely to win the right percentages of votes.)

The Liberal Party steering a middle course between its larger rivals was completely eliminated and has since died. Its leader, Sir John Moffat, a great grandson of explorer David Livingstone, was lucky to keep his deposit. Nearly all his 27 candidates lost their deposits. Another African nationalist party—the Barotse National Party suffered the same fate despite some support in one constituency from the UFP. None of the independents were elected either.

The constitution provided for a House of up to 53 members of whom 45 would be elected by popular vote. Of the rest, six would be top civil servants nominated to sit in the House by the Governor and the other one or two would be nominated unofficials.

While the British Government was willing to extend the franchise to more Africans than ever before through this constitution, it was unwilling to see the European voter swamped by the African. So in an effort to balance the voting strengths of the groups, this ingenious arrangement was resorted to.

Fifteen of the elected members (intended to be white) were to be elected by upper income group people, that is, those earning £700 a year and over. Fifteen others (intended to be black) were to be elected by the lower roll or lower income group people earning £120 a year and literate. To tip the scale one way or the other, 15 national seats were included. One of these was set aside as a reserved seat for Asians. The remaining 14 were paired up and for each candidate to succeed he was required to win at least one-tenth support of Europeans and one-tenth of Africans voting in his constituency. In addition he was required to win not less than one-fifth support from either of the racial groups.

IT WAS THOUGHT BY THE BRITISH GOVERNMENT that this device would encourage politics to develop on non-racial lines. It was intended that candidates would find it imperative to appeal to voters of both major races in order to be returned.

But unfortunately, the anticipated result was still-born. What in fact happened was that instead of the United Federal Party making their policies liberal enough in order to attract African support, they entered into an electoral pact with anti-Federation but much-weaker African National Congress. The two parties had nothing in common except a common determination to prevent a UNIP government. UFP wanted this because it saw in that action, its only chance to return to power. Nkumbula, whose ANC has been depleted by Kaunda's abler leadership followed the line that since he could not win he might

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