

THE SIGNIFICANCE OF ARMS AND AMMUNITION ON THE CAPE'S NORTHERN FRONTIER AT THE TURN OF THE 18TH CENTURY

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In the second half of the 18th century the expansion of the white settlement at the Cape became, primarily for geographical reasons, an eastward movement; thus the shifting eastern frontier has been well scrutinized historically. Apart from P.J. van der Merwe's seminal study,¹⁾ the northern border has only recently come to the notice of historians in what may be termed a scientific fashion; the works of Robert Ross²⁾ and Martin Legassick³⁾ are pioneering efforts dealing with his frontier zone. Though this area did not experience the continuous and wide-scale contact between black and white polities that gave the eastern border its particular significance, nevertheless it offers the researcher rich rewards in the form, for example, of fresh insights into race relations and the "civilizing" rôle of the missionaries.

In 1798 the Cape governor Macartney declared the Riet River to be the colony's northern boundary.⁴⁾ The Batavian authorities shifted the line northwards to the Sak River, which was more realistic given the fact that already in 1798 a thin stream of white settlers had trekked north-west into the Hantam and beyond to the Kamiesberg.

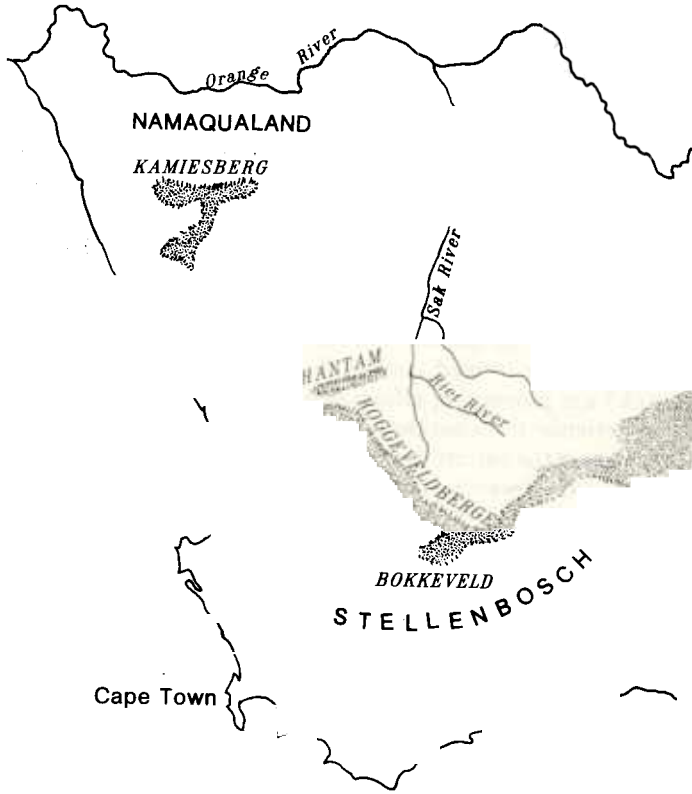
Nevertheless knowledge of the country to the colony's north and north-west was scanty and unreliable. The first officially acquired, comprehensive information concerning this area appears almost in the form of an *obiter dictum* in the report of the 1801-2 Truter-Somerville expedition, which made contact with an independent, indigenous polity, that of the Tlhaping, north of the Orange River.

For the couple of decades before and after the turn of the century the white inhabitants of this frontier zone had the most tenuous contact with the colonial authorities. Conversely the last — whether V.O.C., English or Batavian — had neither the wish nor the means to alter this state of affairs. This accounts for the fact that many of the individuals who left the colony in the late 18th century were fugitives either from the law (the Kruger brothers, Jan Bloem, and unnamed runaway slaves) or from government service, such as military deserters who had to survive by their wits in a harsh environment. Lichtenstein reflected the impressions of other travellers in this area when he wrote after his visit to the Orange in 1804:

"We were now pretty well accustomed to hearing stories of murder and plunder related as matters of little moment; to see a man's life considered as a trifle."⁵⁾

Despite the emphasis placed on the violent aspect of the northern frontier by the early travellers, its inhabitants included many who were not fugitives from justice. There were the representatives of the London Missionary Society — Kicherer, Ed-

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1. *Die Noordwaartse Beweging van die Boere voor die Groot Trek 1770-1842*, Hague, 1937.
 2. *Adam Kok's Griquas. As study in the development of stratification in South Afrika*, Cambridge University Press, 1976.
 3. *The Griqua, the Sotho-Tswana and the Missionaries 1780-1840: The Politics of a frontier zone*. Unpubl. Ph.D. thesis, U.C.L.A., 1969.
 4. Van der Merwe, *op. cit.*
 5. H. Lichtenstein, *Travels in Southern Africa*, II, Van Riebeeck Society, XI, 1930, p. 285.



wards, Anderson and Botma — whose mission to the San (Bushmen) begun in 1799 had by 1801 been extended to the Bastards (later termed Griquas). Kicherer was accompanied by Jan Kok, S.A. Society missionary who subsequently traded further north on the Kuruman River with two Bastard brothers, the Bergovers.⁶⁾ The early missionaries sometimes acted as agents of the government during the first British Occupation. When the fiscal sought to arrest Stephanus "the Pole", a convicted forger, who had fled the colony in about 1799, he enlisted the aid of Kicherer, with whom the criminal had taken refuge at the Sak River mission station.⁷⁾

Finally one finds wanderers driven from their homes by personal calamity. Into this category come the landless, workless, generally unidentified Khoi, Oorlams and Bastards one meets with in the travellers' accounts; and an anonymous white colonist "who had fallen deeply in love with a black woman"⁸⁾ and left the colony because his private life affronted the mores of society in the settled areas.

An article by Atmore *et al.* entitled "Firearms in South Central Africa"⁹⁾ taken in

J. Campbell, *Travels in South Africa*, London, 1815, p. 228.

J.J. Kicherer, *Narrative of his mission to the Hottentots and Boschemen with a general account of the South African missions*, London Missionary Society, 1804, p. 22-23; J. Barrow, *A Voyage to Cochinchina in the years 1792 and 1793*, London, 1806, p. 424 ff.; J. Burchell, *Travels in the Interior of Southern Africa*, London, 1822, I, p. 252.

8. Campbell, *op.cit.*, p. 397.

9. *Journal of African History*, Xii, 4, 1971.

conjunction with the above-mentioned studies of Ross and Legassick, together with the present writer's recent work as co-editor of William Somerville's journal of his journey to the Tlhaping in 1801-02,¹⁰ suggested that one particular aspect of frontier history at the turn of the century needed further study, namely the possession of arms and the availability of gunpowder, as the most influential factors in determining the affairs of this region. The ownership of arms meant, pre-eminently, the ability to acquire and retain livestock, and hence followers, both of which were synonymous with the possession of power. An individual could win the loyalty of black tribesmen because of the ease with which he could provide game for their maintenance. Even the Christianising work of the missionaries was furthered through the physical superiority engendered by the ownership of a gun.¹¹ Thus the sentiment expressed in Hilaire Belloc's rhyme, "We have the Gatling and they have not" was nowhere more expressly confirmed than on the Cape's northern borders.

Cornelis Kok is a good example of a political leader regarded as "well-disposed" by the Cape authorities, who survived and flourished through shrewdness reinforced by the possession of arms, which enabled him to regulate the economy of, and hence rule over a "vast property"¹² along the Orange River.¹³ In 1795 Cornelis succeeded his father Adam¹⁴ as captain of a group of mixed Khoi and white origins which had gathered around the older Kok in the Kamiesberg region of Little Namaqualand, but which moved to the Orange during the same year. The British, by bestowing a staff of office on Cornelis, granted him legal status within their political system,¹⁵ as the V.O.C. had done with his father.

The Kok group were but one among a number of organised groups of mixed racial origins which can be subsumed under the name Bastards, who had abandoned the colony during the Company's rule, primarily because of the disabilities to which they were subject.^{16a} In 1804 Lichtenstein described a Bastard "republic" beyond the Orange that had been placed under L.M.S. control during the first British Occupation. Both the Kok group and these Aakaap (Rietfontein) Bastards occupied a dual position culturally and economically. They formed an elite among the Khoi with whom they had settled; Kicherer¹⁶ noted their severe treatment of these people. Unlike the Khoi they spoke Dutch, "were clothed after the European manner ... were converts to Christianity".¹⁷ Cornelis Kok, for example, could read and write¹⁸ and had been baptized at Cape Town by a Church of England clergyman.¹⁹

Similarly they had a dual economic rôle. Like both Khoi and trekboers they "lived by breeding (horned) cattle";²¹ while Stow²² calls Cornelis "a great flock-master". In

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10. Van Riebeeck Society, Second series X; the official account is in G.M. Theal's *Records of the Cape Colony*, IV. (1899).
 11. Lichtenstein, II, p. 326; Burchell, *Travels*, I, p. 362.
 12. Kicherer, *op.cit.*, p. 30.
 13. G. Stow, *The Native Races of South Africa*, London, 1905, p. 323.
 14. J. Campbell, *Travels in South Africa*, London, 1822, II, p. 259.
 15. *Ibid.*, p. 262.
 - 16a. 1836, VII (538) Report from Select Committee on Aborigines, p. 608.
 16. *Op.cit.*, p. 27.
 17. Lichtenstein, II, p. 301.
 18. V.R.S. X, P.B. Borchers' letter to his father, undated.
 19. Kicherer, *op.cit.*, p. 32.
 20. Lichtenstein, II, p. 301-2.
 21. *History of South Africa*, London, 1922, IV, p. 402.
 22. *The Native Races of South Africa*, p. 324.

the latter rôle he peacefully acquired a number of San and Korana followers by giving those employed as his shepherds half the lambs born annually.²³⁾

Hunting goods, frequently bartered from the Tswana, were in turn exchanged, together with the Bastards' own cattle, for colonial goods, particularly clothing.²⁴⁾ This barter was inextricably linked with the possession of arms; for guns not only increased the products of the chase, they also protected the herds from San and other raiders. In 1790 Cornelis Kok listed the *snaphaans* (blunderbusses) in his legal possession for the protection of his cattle.²⁵⁾

The Aakaap gun trade, however, as Lichtenstein noted, was an illegal operation, in which the missionaries played an active rôle. "They obtained powder and ball, with other necessaries of civilised life, by a traffic in elephants' teeth (and ostrich feathers) with the inhabitants on the northern border of the colony. This trade for powder ... was secretly carried on by some citizens at the Cape Town through agents on the borders."²⁶⁾

The importance of the gun trade to those frontiersmen engaged in it can be gauged from the prices they paid. In 1804 "a musket of even a middling quality" fetched 5 or 6 oxen, or 100 lbs of ivory.²⁷⁾

By the time however, that Lichtenstein visited the L.M.S. stations among the Bastards to investigate this "secret traffic" on behalf of the Batavian authorities he found the whole trade in a parlous condition, primarily because of an ivory shortage.²⁸⁾ The most significant point in Lichtenstein's account in his remark that the San, realising the Bastards were no longer able to use their firearms. "had therefore become much more troublesome".

Cornelis Kok's extensive hunting trips had given him a thorough knowledge of the country north of the Kamiesberg long before the group settled along the Lower Orange. It was on one of these trips that he first encountered the most southerly of the Tswana-speakers, the Tlhaping under their chief Molehabangwe, then living on the Kuruman River.²⁹⁾ Kok arrived just after the Tlhaping had been attacked and stripped of their cattle by the Springbok clan of the Korana, under their leader Jan Bloem, a German who had come to the Cape as a soldier in the V.O.C., "clashed with the law"³⁰⁾ and fled the colony. The attack on the Tlhaping may have occurred between 1783 and 1787 when Bloem was living in the Hantam at Hartebeestenrivier, the loan place of Petrus Pienaar,³¹⁾ a stock farmer and contraband trader, "celebrated for his dexterity in hunting elephants".³²⁾ More probably however, the raid on the Tlhaping took place after 1787 when Bloem crossed the Orange,³³⁾ and acquired thereafter, according to Kok, a large number of cattle, "dewelke ... van andere heevt vernomen, niet aan hem Blom alleen, maar in maatschappij met de bergere Christiaan Bok".³⁴⁾

23. Borchers letter, *op. cit.*

24. Lichtenstein, II, p. 307.

25. Cape Archives, Stellenbosch Archives, 3/12, Kriminele Verklaringen, 1786-1793, ? Nov. 1790.

26. Lichtenstein, II, p. 302.

27. *Ibid.*, p. 325.

28. *Ibid.*, p. 326.

29. Stow, *op. cit.*, p. 325; Campbell, 1822, II, p. 261.

30. D.S.A.B., III, p. 73.

31. (Cape Archives) Stellenbosch Archives, 3/12, C. Kok's deposition, ? Nov. 1790.

32. F. le Vaillant, *New Travels into the Interior Parts of Africa*, London, 1796, I, pp. 71., 147.

33. (Cape Archives) Stellenbosch Archives, 3/12, Kok's deposition.

34. *Ibid.*

Bloem was Kok's analogue in the power game; but because he was, literally, an outlaw, his methods were more overtly violent. His followers were armed with muskets³⁵⁾ which gave them an immediate advantage over the Tlaphing, who were blissfully unaware "of the mighty power of fire-arms."³⁶⁾ Bloem's headquarters were sited at a spot called Bloem's Fountain south-west of the Tlaphing country, probably selected because of its proximity to the Blinkklip, which the surrounding Africans continually visited to obtain the shining *sibello* with which they decorated themselves. From here Bloem would send the plundered cattle to the colony to be exchanged "for powder and ball and other things of which he stood in need".³⁷⁾ Despite his ostensible right, as a white colonist, to acquire guns and ammunition,³⁸⁾ it is dubious whether as a fugitive from the law he could legally have done so. Possibly his "partner" Bok, or Pienaar, his patron, may have helped him. Campbell, however, suggests³⁹⁾ that Bloem acquired "additional muskets, ammunition and people" through the brothers Kruger, who had fled the colony beyond the Orange, while awaiting trial on a charge of forgery during the first British Occupation. The older brother Carel, "an indefatigable and fearless hunter",⁴⁰⁾ "led a wandering life amongst the tribes of savages whom he found means to attach to him by shooting for their maintenance".⁴¹⁾ "They often used to go with the natives to shoot elephants"⁴²⁾ — again for the profitable ivory. Jacob his brother, was pardoned near the start of the second British Occupation and as a member of the Cowan and Donovan expedition was killed by the Ngwaketse in 1808.⁴³⁾ Campbell believed that the Ngwaketse chief Makaba, was probably able to plunder the cattle of a neighbouring chief because of "his having Dr. Cowan's guns, powder and shot".⁴⁴⁾

Cornelis Kok, as noted, had both a legal and illegal supply of arms. Accordingly "he took Molehabangwe under his protection, remained with the Batlapin nearly two years and effectively shielded them from Jan Bloem",⁴⁵⁾ in addition "to shooting game for them".⁴⁶⁾

Bloem's counterparts on the Middle Orange were the Afrikaners, a group probably of white/Khoi origins. Jager (or Klaas Afrikaner, as he is called in the official account of the Truter-Somerville expedition) and his sons had farmed independently in the Tulbagh district where they knew Petrus Pienaar. Afrikaner's subsequently extra-colonial position, and his relationship with Pienaar, are difficult to determine exactly. In 1790 Kok described him as the "Hottentotten captain (sic) Africaander",⁴⁷⁾ implying he was an independent leader. Vedder is not strictly correct in referring to him as a member of the V.O.C. forces, permitted to organise raids against the San, using ammunition supplied by Pienaar, as Hantam veldwagmeester. In 1792 however, the

35. Stow, *op. cit.*, p. 291.

36. Lichtenstein, *op. cit.*, II, p. 342.

37. *Ibid.*, p. 342.

38. D.S.A.B. III, p. 73.

39. *Travels*, 1815, p. 540.

40. J. Burchell, *Travels in the Interior of Southern Africa*, 1822, I, p. 211

41. Bodleian Library, Somerville manuscript.

42. Lichtenstein, *op. cit.*, II, p. 267.

43. Campbell, *Travels*, 1815, p. 303.

44. *Ibid.*, p. 308.

45. Theal, *History*, IV, p. 402.

46. Campbell, *Travels*, 1822, II, p. 261.

47. (Cape Archives) Stellenbosch Archives, 3/12, ? Nov. 1790.

Council of Policy ordered the Stellenbosch landdrost to authorise Pienaar (who in that year was *not* the veldwagmeester), to supply Afrikaner "met eenig kruijt en lood", so that he might pursue a band of "Bosjesmans-Hottentotten" who had robbed him. Both Pienaar and the veldwagmeester were enjoined to ensure that the ammunition was used for no other purpose.⁴⁸⁾ Vedder's error probably stems from the fact that the landdrost was told to delegate authority ("qualificeeren") to "den zo dikwijls geciteerden capitain Africaner" with whose conduct the Council expressed its satisfaction.

Just a year later, at a time of mounting tension between whites and Khoi in the Olifantsrivier, Hantam and Roggeveld districts,⁴⁹⁾ and the expression of white determination "om ons lant te behouden",⁵⁰⁾ J. Nel, the Hantam veldwagmeester, reported his attempts to capture Afrikaner, apparently linking him with the unrest, to the landdrost's manifest disbelief.⁵¹⁾

Thus in 1793 the Afrikaners still had independent status. By 1796 however, they seemed to have been working as herders for Pienaar on his Hantam loanplace. In March of that year, during a fracas caused possibly by an argument over wages,⁵²⁾ or Pienaar's seduction of the Afrikaner womenfolk while their men were on commando,⁵³⁾ Pienaar, his wife and a daughter were shot dead and two other children severely wounded.⁵⁴⁾ The Afrikaners then fled with Pienaar's cattle and weapons.⁵⁵⁾ A commando under J.P. Karstens, Bokkeveld veldwagmeester, failed to catch them, although it went beyond the Sak River, that is well beyond the colonial boundary.⁵⁶⁾

The Afrikaners settled in the Middle Orange on an island from which they could readily defend themselves, and where they collected a band of Namaqua and Korana followers,⁵⁷⁾ terrorising the "whole extent of the Gareep for 500 miles".⁵⁸⁾ Possibly during the following years they became an exemplar for Khoi disaffection within the colony which came to a head in the July 1799 clashes on the Eastern frontier. This hypothesis is tentatively offered on the basis of a report written in 1799 by the veldkornet of Onder Bokkeveld, that the Khoi were conspiring to murder the whites in his district and then "with their booty" follow Afrikaner "skulking in the Hantam".⁵⁹⁾

More demonstrable, from fairly extensive evidence, is the fact that throughout the 1790's there was a good deal of tension between the Khoi and the whites in the outlying northern areas of the colony (then still part of the Stellenbosch district), caus-

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48. (Cape Archives) V.C. 496 (C. 209), Resoluitien Politieke Raad, p. 246ff., 20.11.1792.
 49. (Cape Archives) Stellenbosch Archives, 10/162, Veldwagmeesters Reports on Bushmen marauders 1783-1793, P.J. Lubbe, Olifantsrivier Veldwagmeester, 16.9.1793; J.P. Karsten and others, Hantam, 10.12.1793: 10/164, Letters from veldwagmeesters and private persons 1776-1795, Journal kept by Gerrit Maritz on commando, August 1793.
 50. (Cape Archives) Stellenbosch Archives, 10/162, P.J. Lubbe.
 51. (Cape Archives) Stellenbosch Archives, 10/162, Landdrost, Stellenbosch to Nel, 28.10.1793.
 52. H. Vedder, *Das Alte Südwestafrika*, Berlin, 1934, pp. 187-8, quoted in J.L.M. Franken, *Duminy-Dagboeke*, V.R.S., 1938, XIX, p. 217.
 53. Campbell, 1815, p. 534.
 54. (Cape Archives), Stellenbosch Archives, 3/13, Kriminele Verklaaringen, Michiel Bok, 9.8.1796.
 55. *Ibid.*,
 56. (Cape Archives) Stellenbosch Archives, 10/165, Letters from veldwagmeesters and private persons, 1795-1798, J.P. Karsten, Bokkeveld veldwagmeester to Landdrost, 8.10.1796.
 57. Kicherer, *op.cit.*, p. 27.
 58. V.R.S. X, p. 176.
 59. (Cape Archives) B.O. 54, Letters from Stellenbosch, March-August 1799, letter from Stellenbosch landdrost, 10.8.1799.

ed on at least one occasion by a report circulated by a local official veldkornet A. Kraay, that the Khoi were to be enslaved.⁶⁰ During this unrest, Khoi possession of arms and ammunition, and the commandos' inability (because of shortage of water and pasturage)⁶¹ to pursue them beyond the colonial border to the hiding places along the Orange were the two crucial factors.

Already in 1788 Michiel Bok had been asking that "het mog belet worden dat de Hottentots met geweeers rondgaan mogten".⁶² Some years later constant reports were coming in of "samevatting" of Khoi and San armed with fairly considerable numbers of muskets, purportedly acquired by theft.⁶³ Cornelis Kok however claimed, that he had heard from the Khoi themselves that "de zwerwende Hottentotten en Bastaart Hottentotten all hunne snaphaans van de Christenen voor Vheë inreegleen".⁶⁴

At the same time fear of Khoi violence⁶⁵ made the possession of firearms of prime importance to the farmers, whose legal supply was provided by the government and had to be strictly accounted for. The records are filled with constant requests from the veldwagmeesters for arms. In August 1793, Willem Burger, Hantam veldwagmeester, reported his intention to go on commando and asked for 200 lbs. of gunpowder, 400 lbs. of lead and 6 guns.⁶⁶ In 1796, soon after the Pienaar murder, a group of Khoi under Klaas and Piet Bastard stole over 500 cattle from various Namaqualand colonists, and, supported by the latter's Khoi servants, announced their intention of driving "the Christians back as far as the Oliphants River"; whereupon many of the farmers abandoned their homes "as far as the Green River"⁶⁷ (just south of present-day Garies). The veldwagmeester therefore requisitioned for a considerable quantity of gunpowder and shot, together with reinforcements.⁶⁸ During 1799 two Namaqualand veldkornets (i.e. veldwagmeesters) reported severe shortages of ammunitions;⁶⁹ while the Hantam veldkornet's request for "good" gunpowder and lead to be used against roving San who were making life insecure for people in his district,⁷⁰ suggests that the quality of supplies was not always satisfactory.

But violence alone was not responsible for these requests; evidence of Khoi independence produced a similar response. At the end of 1801 B. Lubbe, the Hantam veldkornet asked the landdrost for help against "Hottentotten en Bastaarde" who refused to work as labourers, and gathered "agter Hantamsberg ... met geweeers", for,

60. (Cape Archives) B.O. 53, Letters from Stellenbosch, landdrost to Dundas, 20.12.1798.

61. (Cape Archives) B.O. 54, Stellenbosch landdrost 10.6.1799.

62. (Cape Archives) Stellenbosch Archives, 10/162, veldwagmeester, Bokkeveld to Stellenbosch landdrost, 30.9.1788.

63. (Cape Archives) Stellenbosch Archives, 10/162, Petrus Pienaar to Stellenbosch landdrost, 3.6.1790; 10/151, Incoming letters from veldwagmeesters and private persons, J.P. Karstens to landdrost, 15.8.1795., J.C. van der Westhuizen, veldwagmeester Little Namaqualand to landdrost 10.12.1798, 4.1.1799; B.O. 53, landdrost to Dundas, 20.12.1798.

64. (Cape Archives) Stellenbosch Archives, 3/12, ? Nov. 1790.

65. (Cape Archives) Stellenbosch Archives, 10/165, Letters from veldwagmeesters and private persons 1795-1798, F. Lubbe to landdrost, 14.2.1797 — if order were not restored "sal het net so gaan als by Pienaar".

66. (Cape Archives) Stellenbosch Archives, 10/162, Burger to landdrost, 14.8.1793.

67. This was a few months after the Pienaar murder, but has no apparent link with it.

68. Cape Archives, B.O. 48, letters from Stellenbosch, report by J.C. van der Westhuizen, 8.7.1796.

69. (Cape Archives) Stellenbosch Archives, 10/152, letters from veldkornets (i.e. former veldwagmeesters) 1798-1799, J. Lubbe ? Jan. 1799, J. de Wet, 22.8.1799 — "Mijn contrië is seer ontbloom van kruit".

70. (Cape Archives) Stellenbosch Archives, 10/152, 18.2.1799.

he opined, no good purpose.⁷¹⁾ Sometimes the farmers over-reacted to what was conceivably a peaceful trek by people forced to move by poverty and a harsh environment. Thus in 1797 when some 800 stockless Khoi with a few San and Xhosa adherents arrived in the Roggeveld from the far side of the Orange, "60 hours distant", intending "to dwell with the Christians", the veldwagmeester feared they were intent on plundering the whites.⁷²⁾

The policy of the British authorities, as shown in the case of the attacks by Piet and Klaas Bastards, was one of delay; the commandos were called up in readiness, but at the same time the landdrost was advised to try peaceful negotiation before force was used.⁷³⁾ Similarly in the Roggeveld "invasion" mentioned above, the governor recommended "pacific and friendly measures being used to persuade these people to return to their own homes", while warning the whites "to be upon their guard and prepared if necessary to afford each other their assistance against any violence".⁷⁴⁾

Possibly this policy would account for Cornelis Kok's failure to raise help from the government after he had suffered heavy livestock losses at the hands of the Afrikaners in 1798.⁷⁵⁾ It is equally arguable however, that the authorities, like the modern researcher, could not readily accept what appears, *prima facie*, to be such a complete change in Afrikaner's behaviour since 1792. Two quite contrary explanations for this apparent change are possible. Either Afrikaner had over the years been a cattle rustler whom Pienaar had used to rob the interior tribes on his (Pienaar's) behalf;⁷⁶⁾ or the murder of Pienaar, which put the Afrikaners outside the law, *made* them into freebooters.

The killing on 11 May 1799, of a white farmer, Jacobus Engelbrecht, by a band of 100 armed Khoi and San under Afrikaner's leadership,⁷⁷⁾ and their theft of his three guns and over 1500 head of livestock, did however result in the swift despatch of the Hantam commando. Thanks to the weakness of the horses, but "more especially from the unwillingness of the men" the Afrikaners were able to reach the Orange; veldkornet Van Wyk therefore requested that the government supply him with ammunition, and manpower support from other areas, in order to pursue them. A Bokkeveld commando went out in August 1799.⁷⁸⁾ Floris Visser called up a commando from the adjacent Roggeveld in September, but encountered a lack of enthusiasm similar to that shown by the Hantam burghers. Obviously the farmers would fight only if their own or their immediate neighbours' interests were in jeopardy. Several members of the Roggeveld commando objected to going on the grounds that it was harvest-time; that no one knew exactly where Afrikaner's kraal was situated; that he was "wel voorzien met geweeers en ammonniets, zo dat het onmogelijk is met zo wijnige manschappen te randen"; and finally, as Afrikaner had not attacked *them*, he would "zekerlijk wraake oeffenen en deze distrikte deerlijk kwellen".⁷⁹⁾

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71. (Cape Archives) Stellenbosch Archives, 10/151, letters from veldkornets and private persons 1794-1803, 23.11.1801.
 72. (Cape Archives) Stellenbosch Archives, 10/9, incoming letters from governor and officials, Oct. 1795-June 1799, governor's sec. to landdrost, 29.5.1797.
 73. (Cape Archives) B.O. 147, Letters despatched from the Colony, Maj.-General Craig, 5.8.1796; see also Bodleian Library, Somerville manuscript.
 74. (Cape Archives) Stellenbosch Archives, 10/9, H. Ross to landdrost, 29.5.1797.
 75. (Cape Archives) Stellenbosch Archives, 10/165, veldkornet Floris Visser to landdrost, 28.9.1799.
 76. Campbell, 1815, p. 534 ff.
 77. (Cape Archives) B.O. 54, Stellenbosch landdrost to Dundas, 21.6.1799.
 78. (Cape Archives) Stellenbosch Archives, 10/152, 31.8.1799.
 79. (Cape Archives) Stellenbosch Archives, 10/165, 26.11.1799.

Burgher reluctance may have been at least partly responsible for the opening, towards the end of 1799, of tentative (but subsequently abortive) negotiations between the new governor Sir G. Yonge and the Afrikaners to pardon the latter.⁸⁰ Kok offered to apprehend Afrikaner "for which purpose he wants some gunpowder" the landdrost informed Andrew Barnard, "and as the said Kok is a well-disposed Hottentot one could provide him with a small quantity of ammunition".⁸¹

Kok's offer came to naught. When the Truter-Somerville expedition returned to Kicherer's mission at Aakaap in January 1802, the missionaries were living in "continual uneasiness" under the threat of an attack by Afrikaner⁸² whose ranks had been joined by Stephanus "the Pole". The latter's crimes had, for the missionaries, been infinitely exacerbated by the fact that he "had taken pains to explain to the natives that they ought to drive the Christians from a colony that did not belong to them but to the Hottentots, and that God Almighty had sent him to vindicate their rights and to instruct them in religion — *the making of Gunpowder, etc*".⁸³ (present writer's italics).

As the expedition moved homeward it met up at the Kheis crossing of the Orange, well south-east of Aakaap, with Danster (or Nzwane) emigré brother of the Xhosa chief Ndlambe, whose plans to unite his (Danster's) group with that of the Afrikaners had foundered some time earlier as a result of Afrikaner treachery.⁸⁴ Consequently the commissioners decided to attack an outlying camp of the Afrikaners. Their own "protective" force of Roggeveld farmers having been dismissed a month earlier for non-cooperation,⁸⁵ a mixed commando of 40 men comprising Bastards from Aakaap and Kok's Kraal, together with some of Danster's followers, was provided with ammunition for the purpose.⁸⁶ The commando failed to capture the able but merciless Afrikaner,⁸⁷ but an examination of his camp did reveal that he "had no lead, and as a further proof that these villains were short of gunpowder, their shots were very feeble".⁸⁸

A couple of months after this incident Afrikaner sent a messenger Cobus Booy to the Cape, ostensibly to ask for a pardon, but in fact to acquire ammunition. A small quantity of gunpowder was found in a bag of rice in Booy's cart; and the Stellenbosch landdrost expressed his concern as to how and from whom Booy had got the gunpowder. "It would be very dangerous if the Hottentots could procure gunpowder for their private use and more especially for the vagabond Africaander."⁸⁹

In his old age the poacher turned gamekeeper with a vengeance. Jager was converted to Christianity in 1815, and "he who was formely like a firebrand, spreading discord, enmity and war ... would now make any sacrifice to prevent anything like a collision between two contending parties".⁹⁰ His son Jonker however, moved just below the Augrabies Falls where he "proved himself a successor not inferior in

80. (Cape Archives) B.O. 55, letters from Stellenbosch, landdrost to governor's sec. 28.12.1799.

81. (Cape Archives) B.O. 55, 28.12.1799.

82. *Records*, IV, p. 395.

83. V.R.S. X, p. 98; see also J.J. Kicherer, *Narrative*, p. 30.

84. *Records*, IV, p. 403; see also Cape Archives, Stellenbosch Archives, 10/165, F. Visser to landdrost 28.9.1799 for a similar attack by Afrikaner on Danster.

85. V.R.S. X, p. 167; *Records*, LV, p. 397.

86. *Records*, IV, p. 408 — "100 lbs. gunpowder, 150 lbs. lead, 15 lbs. pewter, 50 lbs. shot and 400 flints" were provided. The absence of muskets in this list indicates that the "commando" already had arms.

87. R. Moffat, *Missionary Labour and Scenes in Southern Africa*, London, 1842, p. 79.

88. *Records*, IV, p. 408.

89. (Cape Archives) B.O. 60, letters from Stellenbosch, landdrost to Dundas, 13.5.1802.

90. Moffat, *op. cit.*, p. 112-3.

villainy".⁹¹⁾ When Burchell visited the L.M.S. station at Klaarwater in 1811, his Khoi servants were terrified that the "great quantity of gunpowder which I had in my wag-gons would strongly tempt (the younger) Africaander to attack us, in the hope of being able to get possession of it; for without a supply of ammunition, his freebooting schemes could not be carried on".⁹²⁾

By this time however, those who had earlier suffered grievously as a result of their lack of European arms were taking steps to repair the omission. Cape Town remained the main source of supply.⁹³⁾ A comparison of the trade goods taken by the Truter-Somerville expedition, and those used by Burchell a decade later, illustrates the point. The former expedition carried only tinder boxes, knives, scissors, beads, tobacco, and some unimportant articles of clothing as barter goods. In 1812 Burchell found that beads were a useless exchange article. The Tlhaping chief Mothibi (son of Molehabangwe) urgently wanted to trade his oxen for guns.⁹⁴⁾ One of his subjects, Adam, offered *eight* oxen for a gun;⁹⁵⁾ Mothibi himself gave six. Despite the chief's protestations that a gun was a better hunting weapon than an assegai, Burchell believed "his only object ... (was) that of gaining ... a superiority over the neighbouring tribes".⁹⁶⁾ Similarly at Klaarwater, neither the Khoi captain nor the missionaries wanted anyone but themselves to possess firearms.

The musket's *doppelgänger*, gunpowder, was equally sought after. The Korana at the Orange River preferred it even to tobacco, while at Klaarwater "the invaluable article gunpowder was of all things the most convincing" when Burchell wanted to show his appreciation of a chief's help.⁹⁷⁾

Thus when the young Borchers noted of the Roggeveld farmers that "one of their greatest pleasures is to own a gun; he who can shoot accurately has already come far,"⁹⁸⁾ he was misjudging the significance of these two attributes; for paradoxically the instrument of death was also the protector of life. Yet one final question remains: did the possession of firearms generate a violence whose primary object was the acquisition of more firearms, those keys to power and hence also to security? Burchell's constant references to the importunings of people from the Roggeveld to the Kuruman who wanted his guns; the violence of Bloem and the Afrikaners which all the travellers attribute to their possession of weapons; even the behaviour of the missionaries, would seem to answer the question affirmatively.

91. Burchell, I, p. 191.

92. *Ibid.*, I, p. 341.

93. Burchell, I, p. 232 — "The value of gunpowder naturally increases in the proportion of the distance from Cape Town."

94. *Op.cit.*, 1824, II, pp. 268, 281, 294, 317.

95. *Ibid.*, p. 285.

96. *Ibid.*, p. 277.

97. *Ibid.*, I, p. 362.

98. Van Riebeeck Society, Second Series X, Appendix 1, p. 207.