

THE STORY OF COMPENSATION, SILVER AND BRONZE MEDALS FOR THE ZULUS AFTER THE ANGLO-BOER WAR

S.J. Maphalala
University of Zululand

To the Zulus, the question of compensation for losses was one of the most important consequences of the struggle against the Afrikaners. Compensation was aimed at consoling the Zulus who had joined the British forces at the instruction of the military authorities. This question caused heated discussion by the Invasion Losses Enquiry Commission, which was in favour of the Zulus being compensated, and the civil authorities who were against compensation for the Zulus. In the end, the standpoint of the civil authorities prevailed. The second question however, concerned the silver and bronze medals for the Zulu scouts who had been employed by the British military authorities during the war. The question was whether those Zulus were to get medals at all or whether these medals were to be silver or bronze. The Zulu scouts themselves were in favour of getting silver medals or nothing. This was also the view of Mr Samuelson, the under Secretary for Native Affairs, the Natal Cabinet of Prime Minister Hime and the Commandant of Volunteers. However, the Governor, Henry McCallum, and the General commanding South Africa were in favour of giving the Zulu scouts only bronze medals. In the end, the latter view prevailed.

The problem of compensation was started when the Governor, Henry McCallum, gave instructions to the Invasion Losses Enquiry Commission. The chairman of the Commission was to assess and inspect all claims which might be presented to him for losses sustained.¹ The Governor was, however, aware of the difficulties to be faced by the Commission, and stated that it would be impossible to differentiate in Zululand between losses sustained early in the War and at subsequent dates as the Zulus would be unable to distinguish such classification. But he hoped that the Invasion Losses Enquiry Commission would endeavour as far as possible to arrive at approximate dates when the losses, for which compensation was claimed, were incurred. The Chief Magistrate and Civil Commissioner in Zululand, Sir Charles Saunders, was strongly against compensation for the Zulus. He sincerely hoped that claims made by people who themselves looted the Afrikaners would not be recognized.² In a strongly worded letter to acting Prime Minister Frederick Moor, Charles Saunders said: "It was the looting by our natives over the border that brought about the most serious raids by Boers of Native stock. Our natives who joined in the looting knew perfectly well that they were doing so in direct opposition to the wishes of their own government".³

Sir Charles Saunders did not tell Moor that at the time of looting, Zululand was under martial law and that the Zulus through their Chiefs and with Saunders' knowledge, were ordered to cross into the Afrikaner territory.⁴

On August 20, 1902, the Deputy Chairman of the Invasion Losses Enquiry Commission, James King, wrote to the Governor and gave facts which completely contra-

G.H.1304, Governor to Sec. of S., 25.7.1902.

Ibid., Saunders to Moor, 9.8.1902.

Ibid.

G.S. Preller Collection: A 648 (a) and (b).

dicted those given by Sir Charles Saunders. He pointed out that on arrival in Zululand, the Commission waited on Sir Charles Saunders at Eshowe, and from him obtained the information which did not disclose the full facts of the case and therefore misled the Commission. The Deputy Chairman stated that instructions were issued to Colonel Bottomley in March 1901 by General French. Those instructions authorised Bottomley to use Zulus for looting Afrikaner stock.⁵

Bottomley therefore informed the magistrates to assist him. He also enlisted the help of such men as Cooper and Caverley for looting stock. The Zulus were promised ten percent of the stock looted by them. The first expedition was led by Captain Wickham on March 31, 1901.⁶ After the raids had taken place, the Chief Magistrate and Civil Commissioner informed the Zulus on April 1, 1901, to stop raids across the border, consequently no further raids were undertaken by the Zulus.⁷

There was a telegram from the Prime Minister conveying Lord Kitchener's instructions communicated directly by him to the Natal Government, and which were wired by Sir Charles Saunders to the Nkandla district. The Deputy Chairman of the Invasion Losses Enquiry Commission therefore concluded: "The Zulus were only carrying out the orders given them by the military authorities through the magistrate, and when countermanding orders were issued they were immediately obeyed".⁸

The Deputy Chairman of the Commission, James King, ended his letter to the governor by emphasizing that the Commission was of the opinion that compensation should not be denied to those Zulus who had shown their loyalty and obedience to orders.

In spite of the Deputy Chairman's clearly stated facts, the question of giving compensation to the Zulus remained a thorny issue. On August 25, 1902, the Governor, in a letter to the Prime Minister, mentioned that Colonel H. Bottomley's proceedings were to his mind indefensible. He then added that if any compensation was given to those Zulus, it should come from the military and not from the Transvaal government.⁹

Acting Prime Minister F.R. Moor wrote to the Governor on August 27, 1902 stating that he was strongly against compensation for the Zulus who had fought during 1901, despite the fact that they had been acting on the orders of Colonel Bottomley and his agents. Moor feared that if the Zulus in the province of Zululand were allowed compensation, the Zulus in the district of Vryheid would expect like treatment. He requested that his view be brought to the attention of Chamberlain, the Secretary of State.¹⁰ The Governor wrote to the Secretary of State on August 30, 1902, and explained about the compensation for the Zulus: "In the district of Vryheid General Bruce Hamilton called upon Sikabobo's tribe to furnish armed scouts and to help him generally during the latter stages of the war when his columns were sweeping that district. In consequence of their complying with this request, General Louis Botha gave orders for the entire kraals to be wiped out and all their stock to be seized. This was done, the kraals were all burnt and the cattle taken possession of, ... many of the men were killed and the women and children were turned out on the veldt, ... They took refuge under the walls of Vryheid and have not returned to their district,

5. G.H.1304, Enclosures, Deputy Chairman to Governor, 30.8.1902.

6. Ibid.

7. Ibid.

8. Ibid.

9. Ibid., Enclosure 6, Governor to Prime Minister, 25.8.1902.

10. Ibid., Enclosure 7, Moor to the Governor, 27.8.1902.

the whole of which has been devastated by fire. If the natives of Zululand obtain compensation for injuries sustained through having obeyed the orders of Colonel Bottomley without reference to their Civil Magistrates, the natives of Vryheid, who belong to the same tribal families, will naturally expect to receive compensation for even greater injuries sustained through having obeyed the orders of General Bruce Hamilton".¹¹

The Governor also praised the Zulu behaviour towards the British throughout the War. He pointed out that if certain of the Zulus in Zululand had committed the technical mistake of obeying Colonel Bottomley and his subordinates without waiting for instructions from Civil Magistrates, it was only in consequence of the show of authority displayed.¹² The Governor further explained that when orders were given to the Zulus by magistrates, they were immediately obeyed. However, in order to avoid complications in the Vryheid district, he had given instructions that claims for compensation by proved raiders were not to be entertained by the Commission until instructions had been received from the Secretary of State for the colonies.¹³ The Governor felt that where Zulus had suffered, either in Zululand or Vryheid in consequence of obedience to orders by apparently properly constituted authorities, they should receive compensation, either in whole or in part.¹⁴

In spite of the heated discussion in connection with compensation, the Zulus became the losers because claims for compensation by proved raiders were not considered by the Commission. The statement of "proved raiders" was ambiguous in that the Zulus had never looted without orders given them to do so. Dinuzulu also endeavoured to obtain compensation for his people. He presented a long list of the Zulus who had been killed in action, including those who had been wounded,¹⁵ but failed to get compensation.

The Zulu scouts were also dissatisfied about the way they had been treated by the British after the War. That they were doing valuable work for the British was shown by the fact that as late as January 1902, Zulus of Chiefs Sibindi, Tshutshutshu, Hlangabeza and Gayede of the Krantzkop district in Zululand were still being registered for service as scouts and handed over to the Officer Commanding Army Service Corps in Pietermaritzburg. They were later distributed to various places where they were required.¹⁶ Among the Zulu scouts were exceptionally brave men such as Simeon E. Kambule of Driefontein, Josiah Gumede of Bergville, Zephaniah Masuku of Ncome and Stephen Mini of Edendale.¹⁷ Their participation in the War brought them into contention for medals.

Simeon Kambule had been Regimental Sergeant Major of the Native Contingent during the Anglo-Zulu War. He was recommended by General Buller for the distinction of the Victoria Cross for his gallant conduct at the reverse sustained at the hands of Mbeline on the Hlobane Mountain.¹⁸ Buller's recommendation was not carried out

11. G.H.1302: Governor to Secretary of State, 30.8.1902.

12. Ibid.

13. Ibid.

14. Ibid.

15. G.A. Mills, *A report on the causes which led to the ill-feeling between the Boers and the Zulus under Sikobobo at Holkrantz on the 6th May, 1902* (Pietermaritzburg 1902), 72; G.H.1337: Enclosures 1 & 2 in Despatch no. 252, 7.7.1902.

16. G.H.1338, Enclosure in Despatch no. 305, 18.8.1902.

17. G.H.1343, Enclosure 2 in Despatch no. 277, 14.2.1905.

18. Ibid., Enclosure 2 in Despatch no. 232: Acting Magistrate Vryheid to Col. Secretary, 1.6.1905.

but Kambule's conduct was nevertheless so much appreciated that at the end of the Zulu War, Sir Henry Bulwer specially proceeded to Edendale to attend his wedding.¹⁹ During the Anglo-Boer War, Kambule rendered excellent service with the Driefontein Scouts under Colonel Altham. After the siege of Ladysmith, he went forward as Chief Native Scout under Colonel Henderson who was the Director of Military Intelligence in South Africa.²⁰ He returned home after the War as an invalid. He was confined to bed for months, suffering from a kidney complaint and rheumatism. This was the result of the hardships he had to suffer for the British.²¹

It is against this background that there was unanimity among British officials that Zulu scouts were to receive medals for their bravery.²² On June 8, 1903 government ministers in Natal recommended that no bronze medals should be given as stipulated under Clause 29 of the Army Order. They recommended silver medals to all leading men, including the Zulu scouts.²³ This view was also held by the Commandant of Volunteers who pointed out that all scouts are entitled to silver medals.²⁴ Mr. R.C. Samuelson, the under Secretary for Native Affairs, was also in favour of giving Zulu scouts silver medals.

Mr. Chamberlain also made a promise at Ladysmith that all Zulu scouts would get medals.²⁵ It was against this background that ministers in Natal government felt that promise was to be fulfilled. In a speech at Ladysmith on January 2, 1903, Chamberlain promised medals to the scouts. Chamberlain expressed the hope that no man who had served the British government would afterwards be forgotten.²⁶ However, the Governor, Henry McCallum, and the General Officer Commanding South Africa, suggested giving bronze medals to the Zulu scouts. They reiterated that silver medals fell under Clause 28 of the Army Order which stated: "The medal in silver, with clasps, will be granted to any native soldiers specially employed within the sphere of operations, who fulfil the necessary conditions".²⁷ McCallum maintained that the Zulu scouts were not soldiers, they were not enlisted, but they drew military pay and therefore fell under Clause 29 which provided bronze medals. When the new ministry of F.R. Moor took over the government in Natal, it consequently supported McCallum and suggested that even the bronze medals were to be limited to 100 or less.²⁸

In the midst of that confusion, R.C. Samuelson wrote a letter to the Governor on behalf of the Zulu scouts. He told the Governor that leaders of the Zulu scouts felt that the differentiation shown against them in that matter is due to their being Zulus. The Zulu scouts decline receiving the bronze medals.²⁹ The Governor declined to recognize Mr. R.C. Samuelson as the mouthpiece of the Zulu scouts in that matter. He pointed out that if representative men on behalf of the Zulu scouts wrote as Mr. Samuelson had written, there was nothing further to be done.³⁰ Consequently, the

19. Ibid.

20. Ibid.

21. Ibid.

22. C.H.1344, Enclosure 1 in Despatch no. 277: Governor to Prime Minister, 13.12.1904

23. Ibid.

24. Ibid.

25. Ibid., Sub-enclosure in Enclosure 1: "War medals for Natal natives".

26. Ibid.

27. Ibid.

28. Ibid.

29. Ibid., Sub-enclosure in Enclosure: R.C. Samuelson to H.E. McCallum, 6.10.1904.

30. Ibid., Enclosure 4: A.J. Hedgeland (Secretary) to R.C. Samuelson, 10.12.1904.

Minister for Native Affairs was to send for Jabez Molife and other headmen with a view to explaining Clauses 28 and 29 of the Army Order. He was to explain, amongst other things, that Clause 29 did not refer only to Zulus, but to non-enlisted men of whatever nationality; that it would be impossible to treat Zulu scouts in one way and the scouts of other natives in another; that decoration in bronze were among the most honourable of British distinctions; and that in that manner it was the king's gift to such persons as had served him honourably and well during the Anglo-Boer War.³²

However, it was not until a meeting between the Governor Henry McCallum and the leaders of the Zulu scouts was convened on 14 February 1905, that the problem was solved.³³ With the Governor was the Minister for Native Affairs and the under Secretary for Native Affairs who acted as interpreter. There were five leaders representing all Zulu scouts viz. Jabez Molife and Stephen Mini of Edendale, Josiah Gumede of Bergville, Simeon Kambule of Driefontein and Zephanian Masuku of Ncome.³⁴

The Governor told the leaders of the Zulu scouts that he wanted them to state their own case with regard to the silver medals as he did not recognise Mr. R.C. Samuelson as their representative. He also clearly explained Clauses 28 and 29 of the Army Order with regard to silver and bronze medals.³⁵ He explained to them that boxes of bronze medals were already in his possession ready to be given to them (the Zulu scouts). However, he wanted the leaders to give him their decision on the matter. The Zulu scouts were, however, later instructed to accept bronze medals.

It was Stephen Mini who, after thanking the Governor for convening that meeting, pointed out that giving medals to a selected few Zulu scouts was very unsatisfactory to them. He pointed out that rather than having a few scouts receiving medals, the Zulu scouts would not accept medals at all as they had been promised by many government officials that they would all receive medals.³⁶ With reference to the bronze medals to be given to the Zulu scouts, Stephen said that the scouts had made up their minds that rather than receiving such medals, they would not have any at all. The reasons for taking such a step were: those who were ready to lose their lives and sacrifice everything for the British King should be treated alike as was the case in Zululand with Zulu kings.³⁷ With the latter, even the humblest men in the country got the same mark of distinction as the greatest, because they had all shared the danger and the risks of the war. The mat carrier, for example, who went with the Zulu army when there was a battle or, if there was any difficult work to do, distinguished himself in some manner, was treated like the greatest warrior.³⁸ His position as a mat carrier did not come into consideration.

Stephen Mini stated that it seemed hard that silver medals, having been mentioned to the Zulu scouts and being distributed to many of those who did take part in the Anglo-Boer War, in the case of the Zulu scouts should be withheld from them because "in death we are all one". He ended by saying: "Death is an universal leveller. We

31. *Ibid.*, Enclosure 1: Governor to Prime Minister, 13.12.1904.

32. *Ibid.*

33. G.H.1343, Enclosure 2: Notes taken at an interview between His Excellency the Governor and the leading men of the Native scouts who served with the British forces during the Anglo-Boer War, 14.2.1905.

34. *Ibid.*

35. *Ibid.*

36. *Ibid.*

37. *Ibid.*

38. *Ibid.*

were prepared to go to death with the Army of His Majesty, and it didn't matter whether we were black or brown, or yellow, or any other colour — when we were in the War we were prepared to die for the cause of the King".³⁹

Simeon Kambule concurred with Stephen Mini and pointed out that the question of Clauses 28 and 29 was new to them. He, however, added lamentably: "When I was at the front and doing service there no distinction was made between me and the soldiers in the orders issued to us".⁴⁰ Jabez Molife pointed out that it seemed the Zulu scouts were being forced to accept bronze medals or get nothing. That was done in spite of their request for silver medals.

The Minister for Native Affairs warned the Zulu scouts' leaders. They had not been called to discuss whether they would take silver medals or not. On the contrary it had been decided definitely that silver medals would not be given to the Zulu scouts. Consequently, the question being discussed was simply whether the Zulu scouts were prepared to accept bronze medals.⁴¹ The Governor concurred with the Minister and concluded: "Then I will lay the whole matter before the King and try and get them all bronze medals".⁴² Realising that the whole question had become an instruction, the Zulu scouts accepted the bronze medals.

In conclusion, it can be mentioned that the question of compensation, bronze and silver medals did result in strained relations between the British and the Zulus. The latter eventually failed to get compensation and were to accept bronze medals instead of silver medals. The two questions were directly connected and linked with the Anglo-Boer War. Referring to the Bhambatha Rebellion of 1906, the *Ilanga Lase Natal* pointed out that if there had not been plenty of combustible material — the result of loss of respect, a mere small match like Bhambatha could not have raised too much fire.⁴³

39. Ibid.

40. Ibid.

41. Ibid.

42. Ibid.

43. *Ilanga Lase Natal*, 24.5.1906.