

GARVEYISM IN AFRICA: DR WELLINGTON AND THE  
 "AMERICAN MOVEMENT" IN THE TRANSKEI, 1925-40

by

Bob Edgar

During the period surrounding World War I, a wave of millennial fervour swept through the Ciskei and Transkei of South Africa. A series of millennial movements emerged, one of the most intriguing being led by a Natal-born Zulu, Wellington Butelezi, who began his preaching around 1925. Claiming that he was an American, Butelezi drew direct inspiration from Marcus Garvey, but he infused Garvey's message with millennial inspiration as he proclaimed a day of salvation was at hand in which American armies were coming to liberate Africans from European bondage. Over the years, Butelezi's personality has been much maligned and his movement has been considered an ephemeral episode in South African history, but the fact remains that his movement achieved more success than any other Transkeian movement of that period in articulating the grievances and aspirations of Africans. In this paper, I will present a reconstruction of the development of the Butelezi movement and attempt to analyse briefly some of the motivating factors behind it.

The details of the early life of "Dr Wellington" are still obscure. Baptised Elias Wellington Butelezi, he was born about 1895 at Emtongjanene near Melmoth, Natal. He received his early education at Mpumulo, a Lutheran mission school, but after 1918 his parents lost track of him. As his father, Daniel, testified at one of Wellington's numerous trials, "... after he returned [from Mpumulo] he wandered about the country ... I did not actually know where he was when he was wandering about the country, and cannot say whether he left this country or not ... I saw him last during the flu epidemic. He came from Portuguese East Africa to my kraal". (1) However, we know that, in 1921, Butelezi enrolled as a Standard VII student at Lovedale Institution in the Eastern Cape. His performance at Lovedale was less than inspiring, and he left after one term, but not before being tagged with the name "Bootlaces". His former classmates still remember him as a "poser" who enjoyed assuming different identities, and he was noted for his fancy dress - he was fond of wearing riding breeches. (2) Both these traits Butelezi carried with him throughout his career.

Where Butelezi assumed his talents as a Medical Doctor is not clear, but, in August 1923, he was arrested and fined for practising medicine without a licence at New Hanover, Natal. (3) Apparently Butelezi had been granted a licence to practice as a herbalist in Natal, but he had redefined his occupation to include the responsibilities of a general medical practitioner. (4) By 1925, Butelezi had shifted his base of operation to Qachas Nek, Basutoland, where he concocted the bottles of medicine which he peddled on his circuit throughout the north-eastern Transkei. Armed with a stethoscope and a dry cell battery (which he used to run a current through his patients), he diagnosed everything from tuberculosis to water on the womb, but his medicines (generally sold at 5s per bottle) only achieved mixed results. Nevertheless, he collected a widespread clientele who found him less expensive than many herbalists and more accessible than the few European doctors in the area.

Besides his transformation into a medical doctor, Butelezi's residency at Qachas Nek also saw other developments: he changed his name to Dr Butler Hansford Wellington and became a minister of the AME Church and a representative of Marcus Garvey's Universal Negro Improvement Association and African Communities League. (5) Later, "Dr Wellington" was to embellish many other aspects of his personal background, but the statement he made at one of his trials provides a basic outline of his purported story:

"I am an American Negro male adult age 32 years. I was born in Chicago, North America, where my father, Daniel Wellington, is still residing. I left New York per S.S. Harlem at the late part of 1921 for Portuguese East Africa and landed at Delagoa Bay. In 1922, I got a Portuguese passport ... for the purpose of visiting the Union. I entered the Transvaal through Kommatiepoort where my passport was stamped by the Emigration [sic] offices. From the Transvaal I visited Natal and also went to Cape Town and from Cape Town I came to East Griqualand and at present I reside in Qachas Nek West Basutoland.... The passport with which I entered the Union from Portuguese East Africa is at present amongst my belongings in Basutoland. When coming into the Union I only came on a visit not intending to reside in the Union. I have been in the Union all the time since 1922 up to February 1925 when I went into Basutoland.... When coming into the Union I passed as a Portuguese East African Native. I am a medical practitioner by occupation. I passed my medical degree, Bachelor of Medicine, at Rush Medical University, North America." (6)

Wellington later changed his birthplace from Chicago to Liberia and claimed he had had further training at Oxford and Cambridge.

Butelezi certainly could have become acquainted with Garveyism long before his sojourn in Basutoland. Ever since Garvey had conceived his movement after the first World War, his literature and ideas had permeated southern Africa. African newspapers, such as Imvo Zabantsundu and The Worker's Herald carried full page advertisements on Garvey's organizations and his writings, while even European newspapers gave inflated accounts of Garveyite conventions and activities in the United States. Most of the Garveyite strongholds were in the industrial centres like Johannesburg, Kimberley and Cape Town, but the Universal Negro Improvement Association (UNIA) spread rapidly into the rural areas. The most direct conduit of news would have been the thousands of labour migrants who continually traversed between rural and urban areas, but pamphlets often moved in a more circuitous fashion. One newspaper item suggested that "subversive literature" was circulated by store-boys who packaged goods and took the opportunity to slip in literature in the hope that store-boys would be opening the goods at the other end. (7)

Garveyism had a profound impact on a varying audience. The Swazi king was reported to have told a friend he knew the names of only two men in the western world - Jack Johnson, the black American boxer, and Marcus Garvey. (8) By 1920, Enoch Mgiijima, the prophet of the Israelites at Bulhoek, was interpreting the changes being heralded by Garvey as evidence that the end of the world was indeed approaching. (9) Garveyism was also a topic of discussion among students at Butelezi's former school, Lovedale. Every Wednesday morning, the teachers would hold an open forum on current affairs, and the UNIA, its ideas and objectives, was a constant source of discussion. (10)

However much Butelezi may have been influenced by earlier contact with Garveyism, his most important contact was through a West Indian, Ernest Wallace, who resided at Qachas Nek and who had met Butelezi about 1925. Wallace had joined the UNIA after World War I and, with several black Americans, was organizing followers in Basutoland. (11) He found a willing convert in Butelezi, who, in typical fashion, claimed he had met Wallace almost a decade earlier in Chicago and again at Oxford and Cambridge. At one of Butelezi's trials, Wallace's own recollection of that meeting was less than definite. Butelezi had told Wallace he was the same man he had met in England. "I did not question the fact I have not met accused elsewhere in Europe.... I only saw accused pass me in London. I was not intimate with him. I

am not sure that this person was accused." (12) However vague their relationship had been before, Wallace and Wellington joined forces and began holding meetings in the districts of Mount Fletcher and Matatiele. A flowery report of a meeting held on December 15, 1925, was sent to a local newspaper.

"Stepping on to the platform Bro. Wallace's mind ran back though hundreds of miles of land and sea to the land of his birth and adoption, and the country of his fathers' afflictions.... With that inspiration seething in his breast like molten volcanic lava and finding exit from the great volcano of his mouth, the goodly brother issued out his sentiments and touching sensations. He was not sent to tell what the negroes in America do, he said, but to ask them to work out their own salvation.

His message, he said, was based on the foundation of truth and on the promotion of a general confraternity among the scattered negro race. He had come to ask Africa to trim her land and await the time when the Son of Man shall come out on His chariot of fire to redeem His people.

God the Almighty loved the negro race as much as he loved other races of the world. He made all of one blood, therefore let Africa rise on her feet and praise the Lord, for the Lord God Omnipotent reigneth. Let Africa claim for one God, one aim, one destiny.

If we strive and struggle hard the Lord who is always at the service of the needy will hear our cry and come to assist us in our efforts. The sons and daughters of Africa must coalesce, unite and build themselves up into a strong and indivisible unit believing always in the fatherhood of God and the brotherhood of man; respecting the rights of others and finding inspiration from the Man of Men.

Africa is furthermore asked to cook her own pot and the Africans, the legal shareholders in this great and beautiful country, to put their backs to the wheel and work hard for the redemption of their fatherland and utilise all energy to save Africa from the grinding pincers of poverty: 'There is much strength in Union for Union is strength', says an old dictum. Let us unite and co-operate. The U.N.I.A. and A.C.L. affords ample chance for aspiring young men and women of the negro race.

May the God of Israel stretch out His hands over the Ethiopian race and bless their struggling efforts." (13)

Wallace's florid delivery may have overshadowed a basic message which was expressed in the Negro spiritual which opened the meeting: "We are awaiting for a master who will rise and come to his people". Wallace and Butelezi soon parted ways, but it was essentially Wallace's appeal, although substantially altered, which Butelezi spread throughout the Transkei. Nevertheless, Butelezi's message did not allow for divine intervention in the not too distant future. He prophesied that American blacks were coming immediately to liberate Africans from their European oppressors.

When "Dr Wellington" began his advocacy for Garveyism around 1925, he was about 30 years old. He stood a stoutish 5'4", sported a large moustache and bushy mutton-chops, and had a long scar below his right ear-lobe. He wore glasses and was usually nattily dressed. It was said Wellington had six suits which he would change periodically during the day, but when he spoke at meetings he would put on a gown. For transportation, he initially relied on horses - the first he owned he called "Europe", the second "Sedition". (14) Later, a follower put up land as security so that Wellington could buy an old Dodge automobile. (15)

Word of Wellington's preaching began to spread quickly throughout the Transkei, and he was soon invited to numerous districts. He travelled as far west as Ugie and Elliotdale, but his strongest concentrations of followers were in Griqualand East, especially in the districts of Mount Fletcher, Mount Aykiff, Qumbu

and Tsolo. Whenever he was not able to appear personally, Wellington sent disciples or converts who had travelled to hear him.

Whenever a meeting was called for a district, thousands would flock to hear Wellington. Dressed in a flowing ministerial robe, Wellington addressed the crowds in English and his interpreters translated into Xhosa. He would usually begin his meetings with prayer, scripture reading and hymn singing. Normally two standard hymns were sung, "Nkosi sikelel iAfrika" and "Lizalis idinga Lako" (God fulfil your promise), but, as the movement gained momentum, numerous songs reinforcing the theme of freedom and unity were composed by the Wellingtonites. A few examples follow:

1. Africa is the land of our fathers  
The foreigners are claiming it  
They will never have it  
Because it is ours
2. Chase away our enemies  
And destroy their plans  
And leave us in this world of ours  
May unity continue forever
3. We are the family of Africa  
We are the children of Africa  
We shall die here  
Bless our country (16)

The basic thrust of Wellington's preaching was that a day of judgment was drawing nigh in which Americans were coming to liberate black Africans from their oppressors. It is not hard to imagine how Wellington could have misinterpreted Garveyite ideas. Most certainly Garvey was preaching the unity of all black races and that Afro-Americans would be returning to their ancestral homeland. Moreover, it was widely rumoured that "General" Garvey himself was to pay a visit to South Africa in the near future. But in justifying his prediction that Americans were coming to liberate South Africa, Wellington took liberties with history that might have amused even Garvey. He claimed that "during the late war King George V had given America South Africa as compensation for their services.... Then General Smuts wrote to King George that he had resigned and the Americans could come and take over. When General Hertzog heard this, he took over and is now challenging America". (17) Wellington at first was vague as to how this liberating army would arrive, but he later began to predict that they would be conveyed by ship and aeroplane. This was probably inspired by Garvey's ill-fated Black Star steamship line and his plan to form a black flying squadron. In any event, it was the aeroplane imagery which caught the imagination of Wellington's followers. (18)

When the day of judgment arrived, Wellington told his followers, the Americans would fly over in aeroplanes and cast balls of burning charcoal down on all Europeans and African non-believers. (19) Turning to scripture for further justification, he quoted: "Now when these things begin to take place, look up and raise your heads, because your redemption is drawing near." (20) In order to distinguish themselves from the unfaithful, Wellington told his people that they must paint their houses black and kill all their pigs (and destroy any vestige of items derived from pigs, such as candles). (21) Several times in 1927, Wellington predicted dates on which the Americans would arrive, but, when they did not materialize, Wellington chastized his followers that the Americans would not come because obviously not all the pigs had been killed.

As further proof of loyalty, Wellingtonites were also required to purchase a membership card for 2s 6d and wear a red, green and black button. Huge sums of money were collected. As one woman recollected: "I have never seen so much money in my life. Membership was 2s 6d then but people wouldn't stick to that amount - 5s, 10s, 2 pounds, 6 pounds - in all my life I have never seen so much money, either in coins or notes. The table was so full, high up. It took many to count that money.

Wherever he went he collected money and wherever he went people were willing to donate money. He said he had to buy wagons for the liberation, and he had to build houses for the liberated people. And he had to pay all the police to imprison the oppressors." (22) When Wellington was eventually deported from the Transkei, he left so abruptly that the belief developed that Wellington had absconded with all the money.

In similar fashion to the Cargo Cults of the South Pacific, Wellington's followers had an ambivalent attitude to western culture. The Americans were to drive out the European oppressors, but Africans would be able to share the European material wealth. Factories would spring up overnight; clothing would be distributed to everyone; there would be an end to taxes and dipping fees; Africans would control their own government. Wellington never openly preached rebellion against the government. If his followers practised unconditional loyalty to his cause, the Americans would fulfil their expectations.

Certain aspects of the movement, such as pig killing, were not originated by Wellington. Indeed, pig killing was not unprecedented in recent Transkeian history. In 1906, at the time of the Bambatha rebellion, a Zulu diviner appeared in the Transkei soliciting support for the Zulu uprising. Pig-killing was instigated (known in the southern Transkei as Gcaleka Nongqause) as the result of a myth which the diviner spread. "According to the Transkei version, a Zulu chief called Mjantyi (possibly Majaji) had a white winged pig which would fly from Zululand round our coast uttering cries, to which if any domestic pigs responded the inhabitants of the kraal would all fall dead; thus Mjantyi would exterminate all not in sympathy with the rebellion, while his sympathisers would save their lives by effectually silencing their pigs. Another account said that the pig was at a later stage to be accompanied by a white cock, upon the appearance of which all white cattle were to be killed." (23) Later outbursts of pig killing occurred in 1910 on the appearance of Hailey's Comet, and in 1917 when it was rumoured that pigs were to be registered for war purposes and owners would be fined 5 pounds for selling them. (24) However, none of these epidemics approached the scale and scope of Wellington's pig killing.

It is doubtful whether the pig-killing can be attributed to any symbolic importance. Pigs do not have ritual significance in Xhosa society, and this demand placed on Wellingtonites was more likely designed to add more cohesiveness to the movement. It became a symbol of unity. Unlike Nongqause, the Wellingtonites did not make the drastic demand that their cattle be sacrificed.

In piecing together his millennial message, Wellington's claim that liberation would come from overseas was not a new theme in South African history. As far back as the cattle killing episode in 1856, rumours spawned by the Crimean War alleged that Russians would invade South Africa to drive out the English. (25) During the first World War, one of the principal actors changed, and the Germans became the liberators of South Africa. In one instance, an African constable in the Orange Free State was told by a farm labourer that "the Germans had said we shall land in this country in six years time if we are not beaten by then, and it is no use your trying to assist the English, it is better for you to remain quiet at your kraals as we are doing". (26) Then, in 1920, a rumour swept the Dundee District in Natal "... to the effect that Dinizulu was not dead; he was on the seas en route for South Africa with a large German Army and was coming to 'blot out' the white man". (27)

In the years immediately after World War I, the idea which was most commonly circulated among Africans was that liberation would come from America. Most certainly Garvey's propaganda served as a catalyst for this myth. Indeed, many Africans believed that America was a nation controlled by black people and that black Americans were a pivotal force in world politics. (28) As W. D. Cingo, an early African historian, put it: "They [Africans] regard the voice of America as that of a mighty race of black people overseas, dreaded by all European nations. These people, our unfortunate friends imagine in their confusion, manufacture for their own purposes engines, locomotives, ships, motor cars, aeroplanes, and mighty

weapons of war. The mad dreams and literature of Marcus Garvey, a black American Negro, were broadcast on the winds. Hopes for political and economical emancipation were revived and today the word America (iMelika) is a household word symbolic of nothing else but Bantu National freedom and liberty." (29)

The ICU also contributed to the myth of liberation. With its emphasis on freedom for black people and higher wages and better conditions of employment for workers, the ICU had a profound impact on labourers in both rural and urban areas. One African, who had worked for many years in Port Elizabeth, remembered: "During the time of the ICU, we heard about the coming of the black Americans who were coming to liberate us. There was gossip that a ship with eight chimneys was seen in East London which was coming to free us. The ICU was preaching the idea of independence and these ideas cropped up also." (30)

Later, the myth of liberation was to have an effect on the millennial movement led by the prophetess Nonteta near King Williams Town. When several hundred of her followers were jailed in 1924 because they resisted a government order to kill locusts, a number of the men had dreams in jail that the Americans would open the doors of the jail and free them. One man noted: "We used to dream in the hope that the Americans were coming to release us. It was just a rumour, but what you hear as a rumour, you always dream about. I can't tell you who told us these rumours but there was always hope throughout that the Americans would free us. As oppressed people, we always had hope that we would be released." (31)

Oftentimes an unsuspecting visitor from overseas would be transformed into a messianic figure. A prominent case was the Gold Coast educator, Aggrey, who toured the Union of South Africa in 1921 and gave speeches in the Eastern Cape and the Transkei, where he was given an overwhelming reception. Speaking in the vein of Booker T. Washington, Aggrey, who was also regarded as an American Negro, counselled moderation and hard work, but his listeners came expecting more. His biographer remarked: "In the Transkei - as in Palestine - people had expected an earthly deliverer who was coming to wage war, not against their wrongdoing, but against their conquerors and rulers.... It is necessary to remember that there, as elsewhere on the African continent, a number of the inhabitants was looking to America for redemption from their troubles. Aggrey was supposed by some to be the herald of an invading band of Negroes - they thought all Americans were Negroes - who would drive the Whites of South Africa into the sea. Men came to the meeting in Umtata on horseback with empty sacks for saddle-cloths. He will order the merchants to sell their goods cheaply - he may even compel them to give their goods away for nothing! So they imagine. The empty grain bags under the saddles were to carry away these easily gotten possessions. These men rode away greatly disappointed from Umtata, wondering at the impudence of the person who had summoned them hither." Even a petty chief, who was a member of the Bunga, believed Aggrey would offer more. When asked for his reaction to Aggrey's speech, he replied:

"I liked it; but he did not say what we expected."

"What is that?"

"The American Government." (32)

In explaining Wellington's phenomenal success in attracting followers, one is struck not by the originality of Wellington's message but by his ability to articulate Africans' aspirations and expectations and to channel them into organized activity. Part of his power lay in his genius to use and revitalize ideas which were in the air anyway. As Yonina Talmon has rightly observed, "in some regions millenarism is an endemic force and may seize upon any available figure". (33) Nevertheless, one should not underestimate Wellington's appeal as an inspirational leader. His meteoric rise to prominence came at a time when traditional leadership was losing its legitimacy in the eyes of the people and had been serving as instruments of government control. Wellington provided an alternative focus of identification as he promised radical change which by-passed normal lines of authority. We shall return to this theme later.

Besides pointing to an atmosphere of heightened expectation of change existing throughout the period after World War I, the emergence of Wellington's movement must also be placed in the context of additional pressures which had been brought to bear on rural Africans in the Transkei from 1925 onwards. First, Africans were reacting to increased tax burdens and various pieces of repressive legislation which had been put forward by the Hertzog regime. In 1925, a tax on cotton blankets and second-hand clothing had been instituted. In the same year, the Native Taxation and Development Act was passed. Designed to consolidate laws relating to taxation of Africans throughout the Union, the act decreased the tax burden in some provinces, but increased it in others, including the Cape Province. Moreover, in 1926, Prime Minister Hertzog introduced his Native Bills, which were designed to disenfranchise African voters in exchange for additional reserve lands. These laws were not passed for another decade, but their introduction in Parliament sparked off deep resentment from Africans of all levels.

Of all the laws affecting Africans, none was more distasteful than the dipping regulations which compelled Africans to dip their cattle. Africans were very reluctant, anyway, to pay dipping fees, but they were also suspicious of the efficacy of dipping, as they regarded it as just another European ploy to destroy their herds. In particular, the area around Mt Fletcher had been a "storm centre" of anti-dipping agitation and several dipping rebellions had broken out during World War I. Accordingly, when Wellington informed his followers that the Americans would abolish dipping when they arrived, he evoked an instantaneous response. Numerous Wellingtonites around Mt Fletcher refused to pay their dipping fees, and, as a result, dozens were jailed or fined in 1927. Nor did Wellington's exit from the Transkei diminish the anti-dipping activity; in later years, Wellingtonites continued to resist dipping regulations.

The years after 1925 were also dominated by droughts and crop failures, but the economic malaise which was gripping the Transkei had been in the making for several generations. Ever since the last outbursts of rebellion in the 1880s against European rule in the Transkei, European administrative measures had mummified rather than developed the Transkeian economy. Where small groups of peasant farmers did emerge, this activity was stifled and allowed to stagnate. The vast majority of Transkeian agriculturalists, however, had neither the opportunity nor the technology to overcome the barriers which were erected. Nor were Transkeians assisted by the numerous natural disasters which befell them. Cattle herds had been severely depleted during the Rinderpest and East Coast Fever epidemics of 1896 and 1910. Droughts and locust plagues were common occurrences; crop failures had become the rule rather than the exception. By the 1920s the Transkei had become so dependent on income from its labour migrants that almost 20 per cent of the male population was absent from the territory each year. A Cape newspaper captured this picture of chronic hopelessness and despair in the Transkei when it editorialized: "... we have poverty growing into hunger. It is a fact no thinking man can fail to see that even in the Transkei, long supposed to be a land of blissful idleness and plenty for the natives, and even now regarded by some ignorant political and official experts as a land of easy living - even in the Transkei, underfeeding, undernourishment and consequent rapid deterioration in bone and flesh and health is the rule among the young natives. It is no exaggeration to say that the majority of them live in a chronic state of hunger relieved at growingly long intervals by plenty. This plenty is too often marred by the sale of food to buy clothing and to pay off debts. These are the general conditions of life; poverty growing into hunger, debt with no hope of escape. No people under the sun who have not been tamed and weakened by centuries of low diet and despotism can fail, in such conditions, to get into a state of unrest." (34)

The exact number of Africans who were attracted to Wellington's banner is impossible to estimate, but, at the peak of the movement's popularity around 1927 and 1928, thousands probably had been issued membership cards and many thousands more were deeply affected by his message. In order to express their solidarity with one another, Wellington told his followers to join his organization, Amafela ndawonye (those who die together). In locations where Wellington had strongholds, tremendous pressure was exerted on non-believers to join. In some cases, social sanctions were utilized; in others, physical violence was even resorted to. When Wellington was

finally removed from the Transkei, his followers angrily turned on non-members as the cause of Wellington's departure.

The majority of Wellingtonites were drawn from Africans with little or no formal education. For them, Wellington's message stimulated hope and provided immediate answers to the problems which were confronting Transkeian societies. Moreover, the movement provided an organized base for disciplined, uncompromising action which by-passed ineffective institutions such as the Bunga, whose actions more often reflected the will of the magistrates rather than the people.

Besides Wellington, the leadership of the movement revolved around men who had Standard V educations or better. Outside of teaching, there were few positions of status within the Transkei for educated Africans. For those who lacked the qualifications to become teachers, the Wellington movement also offered an organizational home for expressing aspirations which were being held in check. Only a few qualified teachers joined the movement. Several retired teachers explained to me that Wellington, whose own education did not go beyond Standard VII, stayed away from better educated Africans because they generally saw through his facade. However, as employees of the government, teachers on the whole tended to be cautious and conservative and were less apt to join a movement built on mass enthusiasm and which threatened their interests. Nevertheless, teachers were not necessarily opposed to the idea of freedom. One former teacher told me: "Sure I wanted to be liberated, but not by Wellington."

While teachers exhibited some ambivalence towards the Wellington movement, the most vehement opposition came from missionaries, who delivered a steady stream of vitriolic denunciations against Wellington. To them, Wellington was another in a line of "unscrupulous adventurers" and "dangerous parasites" who were pandering to superstition and upsetting the delicate path of advancement to civilization of the "Bantu people". Little comment, however, came from missionary quarters as to the legitimacy of grievances which the Wellington movement was expressing.

In response to the opposition of teachers and missionaries, the Wellington movement organized their own "American" schools and churches. The schools were run by unqualified teachers in huts and kraals. The curriculum of government schools was not altered except that Garveyism was a basic component of instruction. These schools, bearing names such as Mt Justice and Willbewill College, only lasted a few years in most areas, but not before many mission and government schools had almost to be closed because attendance had dropped so markedly.

Another focal point of opposition came from the Bunga. Yet, even there, members were acutely aware of the problem accentuated by the Wellington movement: the erosion of traditional authority under European administration. One Bunga counsellor, Lehana, lamented: "The foundation of the Natives had been thrown away, so much so that the Natives now had no confidence in their Chiefs and Headmen and now they had no confidence even in their Magistrates.... When the Natives were accepted under the Government the powers of the Chiefs were taken away. Before that the Chiefs were the leaders of the people and had the respect of the people." But now that the powers of the chiefs were circumscribed by the government, a man like Wellington could enter an area and win over a headman and his people without consulting the chief. Lehana added: "That would never have happened had the Government taken the chiefs into their confidence and elevated them by giving them power to deal with matters of that kind." (35)

Thus the headmen and chiefs by no means formed a united front against Wellington. Some were hostile, others were benevolently neutral, and a surprising number were active participants in the movement. One headman, Edward Zibi of Mt Fletcher district, became a long-time leader, while a notable chief, Lutsoto Mditshwa of the Mpondomise, joined for several years.



In the end, it was the South African government which had to curtail Wellington's activities. Policemen had been detailed to follow Wellington and attend his meetings, but the government had hoped the movement would lose momentum on its own. Wellington himself was arrested numerous times, but after paying fines he would immediately return to his crusade. That he was never jailed only enhanced his reputation among his followers, who reasoned the government had been forced to release Wellington because truth was on his side. In 1927, however, Wellington had created such a mass following and was giving encouragement to his followers to refuse payment of taxes and dipping fees that the government felt compelled to intervene. On 1 March 1927 Wellington was banished from the Transkei. Wellington made several attempts to re-enter the Transkei, but he was either turned away or arrested.

The mass enthusiasm created by Wellington did not diminish for many years. Although his absence did foster splits within the movement, his work was carried on for many years by disciples who generally worked independently of each other. No area of the Transkei was immune to the spread of Wellington's movement. Paul Fulwa led groups around Tsolo and Mt Fletcher and he continues to lead the Umanyano (Unity) church today. Joel Bulana organized followers around Idutywa, while Edward Maqolo carried the Wellington message to Nqamakwe. Invariably, individuals turned up who also claimed to be American emissaries from Garvey. One was Mbijana, who took the name of John Mackay and organized a following around Tsolo and Qumbu. In early 1929 his followers grouped together for several months in expectation of the arrival of American aeroplanes. When a number of constables were sent out to arrest Mbijana, a clash ensued in which a black policeman and several followers were killed. After a few years the cadre of loyal Wellingtonites had dwindled to no more than a few thousand. Their millennial expectations subsided over the years, but they remained conscious of Garvey's Pan-African ideals, and, in 1936, when Italy invaded Ethiopia, a group began a march up the continent to assist their African brothers. However, they were turned back by the authorities after a few hundred miles. Today, the Umanyano church still waves the red, green and black banner of Garvey at their bi-monthly services, but Garveyism itself has receded into past memories.

Wellington carried on his career outside the Transkei, but he never again aroused the mass enthusiasm he had created in the Transkei. He moved briefly to Edendale, Natal, where he organized another school, the St Booker Washington Memorial Industrial Liberty College, and he called together his assistants from the Transkei. He decided to carry on the work on the fringes of the Transkei, while his assistants would continue organizing inside. The government did attempt to silence Wellington for good at Edendale when a case was opened to deport him to America. Wellington, however, appealed to A. W. G. Champion, the Zulu trade unionist, to attest to Wellington's Zulu origins, and the case was dropped.

Wellington made excursions to Johannesburg and Bloemfontein, but he eventually carried his preaching to the Ciskei, where he continued to organize American schools and Garvey chapters in Herschel district, Aliwal North, Queenstown, and King Williams Town. He established a home in Tylden, and from there he would organize occasional meetings in the Komga district, where he could preach to Transkeians.

He also organized periodic Congresses in Queenstown, at which he claimed a membership of 25,000 in his chapters. A black governor-general, government and cabinet were appointed, which included a unique position, Minister of European Affairs. Numerous resolutions were passed calling for repeal of the Land Act of 1913 and demanding old age pensions for Africans, but one resolution must have been worded tongue in cheek. It applauded "the decision of the Government to employ 3,000 native convicts in the Transvaal for farm work. It is well known that this privilege has hitherto been given only to white convicts". (36)

I was not able to accumulate any evidence on Wellington's ultimate end. His former assistants claimed he disappeared after 1937 and was never seen again, but one of his letters, written in 1937 from Port Elizabeth, has been preserved and sheds some light on his state of mind. "... now you should know this, you should

send some delegates so that they meet me at the beginning of January before the excursion tickets are finished. Come with all your books, new members and old ones. Send also immediately the joining fees and your monthly dues before you come.... There is no more time for happiness. The country is in troubles. I'm not going to explain ... I need you because of innumerable matters which are important and thoroughly serious. The time for happiness is over ... I'm not prepared to repeat your lack of interest in your matters, but you are going to feel sorry after a time if you don't come.... Reply immediately so that I'm able to await you and also know that I know you are still working.... Send also some funde soon ..." (37)

The story of the Wellington movement has not been passed on to succeeding generations in the Transkei, but Wellington's message has left an imprint on the older generations. His promise of freedom, however, has been redefined to fit the Bantustan ideology which is dominant today. In anticipation of the Transkei's expected independence in 1976, more than one informant told me: "Wellington promised us we would be liberated and the Europeans would leave. We would have our own policemen, magistrates, shopowners, doctors, teachers and lawyers. Today that is coming true." Because he lies outside the mainstream of African nationalist politics, Wellington has remained a neglected figure, a humorous footnote in history textbooks. He has been branded a charlatan and a bald liar, perhaps with some justification, but the fact remains that for a brief period he achieved extraordinary success in organizing a mass movement in the Transkei. Just as the work and ideas of his mentor, Marcus Garvey, have been reevaluated in recent years, so Butelezi's movement is also worthy of serious reconsideration.

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#### Notes

- (1) Rex v. Wellington, Matatiele, case No 224/1926.
- (2) Interviews with Monica Wilson, Z. Mabandla, C. D. Zulu.
- (3) He was arrested again on the same charge at Mount Ayliff, Transkei, in September 1925, and twice more at Matatiele in 1926. Only one of the trial transcripts has been preserved.
- (4) In order to receive a licence in Natal, a herbalist had to be recommended by his chief or the chief in whose district he or she was practising. The licence was renewable annually for 3 pounds and the certificate bore the words "medical practitioner". Subsequently, a directive changed this wording to "a native medicine man or inyanga".
- (5) It has been suggested he took his name "Butler" through anglicizing Butelezi.
- (6) Sworn affidavit of B. H. Wellington, Rex v. Wellington, 224/1926.
- (7) Queenstown Daily Representative, 7 December 1920, p. 5.
- (8) David Cronin, Black Moses.
- (9) These allusions are contained in letters written between Enoch Mgiijima and his nephew, Gilbert Matshoba.
- (10) Interviews, Z. Mabandla, C. D. Zulu.
- (11) Interview, M. Nthamane.
- (12) Rex v. Wellington, 224/1926.
- (13) Matatiele Mail, 23 December 1925.
- (14) His horse, "Sedition", was reputed to have had the habit of clicking its heels whenever it would cross a stream, whereupon Wellington would cry out: "Rejoice, my luck is true!"

- (15) This composite view of Wellington is drawn from my interviews and an article in Imvo Zabantsundu, 10, 19, 29 May.
- (16) These songs were collected over a series of interviews and were translated from Xhosa by D. Ngewu.
- (17) Rev v. Albert Rulashe, Umtata, case No 663/1928. A similar version is found in Monica Hunter, Reaction to Conquest, p. 371.
- (18) The airplane imagery was also a component in other African movements, including the Mwana Lesa movement led by Tomo Nyirenda.
- (19) The theme of the burning charcoal has been woven into a play by Mmango, Law'ilahle.
- (20) Luke, 21: 28. In the Xhosa Bible, the word "nkululeko", meaning "freedom", is used for "redemption".
- (21) Even today, followers of Wellington's church, Umanyano, paint their houses black.
- (22) Interview, Mabel Mzimba.
- (23) Letter from W. E. Stanford to Dugmore, 26 November 1906. Native Affairs Department, Cape, Vol 707, file 2926.
- (24) Interview, Paul Gulwa; Transkei Gazette, 8 February 1917.
- (25) Chalmers, Tiyo Soga.
- (26) Justice Department, Union of South Africa, Vol 240, file 3/896/16.
- (27) Justice Department, Union of South Africa, Vol 386, file 3/841/24.
- (28) On one occasion, I was initially accepted by my informant as a black American.
- (29) Kokstad Advertiser, 30 September 1927.
- (30) Interview, Harry Jali.
- (31) Interviews, Tembile Lama, Jongile Peter.
- (32) Edwin W. Smith, Aggrey of Africa. A study in Black and White (New York, 1930), pp. 180-81. Although my examples are drawn from the Ciskei and Transkei, variants of "Americanism" found their way to the Witwatersrand. James Kepe told me: "There were also certain Europeans who used to attract people by saying that this is an American store and in that they told us lies so that we would think of liberty. In these stores articles were cheap. One could even get a blanket for 5s. You used to pay for goods from America in advance, but you never received the goods. This European used to inform people that he was coming from America to liberate them."
- (33) Yonina Talmon, "Pursuit of the Millennium: the relation between religious and social change", Archives européennes de sociologie, III (1962), p. 134.
- (34) East London Daily Dispatch, 8 June 1928.
- (35) Transkeian Territories General Council Proceedings, Session of 1927, p. 45. An interview of the workings of the Bunga is provided by W. D. Hammond-Tooke's article which appeared in the Journal of African History (1968).
- (36) Undated, unidentified newspaper clipping found in possession of Paul Gulwa.
- (37) Letter from B. H. Wellington found in possession of Paul Gulwa.