

JAMESON AND LOBENGULA 1889-90

R. CARY

Although there is no direct evidence of what took place at discussions between Rhodes and Jameson/^{after}the former's return from England in August 1899, and before Jameson left for Matabeleland in early October, it is possible to put together the substance of Jameson's briefing from contemporary letters and from the subsequent pattern of events. Even here, however, one must be careful: the words chosen by Rutherford Harris to beguile the directors in London into thinking that everything in Africa was proceeding on 'respectable' lines were seldom the same as those used in discussion or correspondence between the 'men on the spot'. On 21 October Harris told the London secretary of the B.S.A. Company that 'our object must be to develop [Matabeleland] quietly and steadily, without bloodshed'.¹ Early in November Harris enlarged on his peaceful intentions:

Meanwhile our policy will be to ... commence working gold in the Disputed Territory;² waiting for the future to win the confidence of the King and our way into Mashonaland, or, on the other hand, the presence of the whites so close to him, may cause the King to retire of his own accord across the Zambezi.³

As late as 13 February 1890 Lord Loch, the newly-appointed High Commissioner at the Cape, was telling Lord Knutsford that 'Mr. Rhodes himself did not suppose much, if anything, would be done for two years'. 'Rhodes professes' went on Lord Loch, 'and I believe most sincerely, to be most anxious not to hurry matters in Matabeleland.'⁴ The soothing balm of these statements cannot, however, conceal the fact that Rhodes and his lieutenants were determined to move into 'Zambezia'⁵ as soon as a practical plan could be devised. Nor, in following this policy, did they disdain the tactic of provoking war in order to hasten matters to a climax. Rhodes knew well the dangers of delay. The liberal elements in England,⁶ although temporarily bemused by the speed of events during the English summer of 1889, were by no means a spent force; the shareholders of the Chartered Company would soon be looking, if not for an early return on their investment, at least for early action; other countries, principally Portugal and the Transvaal, were showing increasing interest in the area. Gold, moreover was a universal lure - a point well taken by Harris, who believed that the gold discoveries made it 'impossible for the country to remain closed'.⁷

For some time it seemed to Rhodes, Jameson and Harris that it was the Portuguese interest in Zambezia that could most easily be turned to the advantage of the Chartered Company. Late in July Harris wired Jameson - then in Kimberley - informing him that he had heard 'on the highest authority' that 'Major Serpa Pinto and three thousand Portuguese soldiers had reached junction of Umfuli and Umnyati'.⁸ Harris was quick to see the significance of this move. If Lobengula did not at once take action Portuguese claims to Mashonaland would be clearly established, and the whole of that area would be lost to the Chartered Company. However, if Lobengula moved in quickly with a strong impi 'this news would induce him to take our guns and thus legally complete our concession. If [the] Portuguese beat him so much the better, as he will then consent to English troops coming into his country to aid him'.⁹ 'Our Charter' Harris went on, 'will be null and void, and the English sphere of influence too, unless you set Lobengula against [the Portuguese]!'

The risk of a major clash with the Portuguese, whether real or engineered, was certainly taken seriously by Lord Loch. In a letter to Lord Knutsford¹⁰ he dwelt on the dilemma in which he would be placed if Lobengula should make a call upon the Chartered Company to assist him in turning the Portuguese out of the country. If he were to sanction Company action against the Portuguese he would be authorizing an act of war against a friendly country; if, on the other hand, he withheld his sanction, he would 'place the Chartered Company in a very dangerous position'.¹¹

Despite the indications reaching Kimberley that Lobengula was set on revoking the Rudd Concession, it was clearly in Rhodes' interests to sustain the only document which gave him any rights at all. As he wrote to Maund in September, 1889:

It rests with you to help and get the Concession through with the King and do not attempt sub signatures with him. We have the whole thing recognized by the Queen and even if eventually we had any difficulty with the King the Home people would now always recognize us in the possession of the minerals. They quite understand that savage potentates frequently repudiate.¹²

Lobengula unwittingly played into Rhodes' hands by raising doubts whether the copy of the Rudd Concession held in Matabeleland was identical to the original. In his letter of 23rd April 1889 (addressed to the Queen) Lobengula wrote that the indunas 'will not recognize the paper as it contains neither my words nor the words of those who got it. After the meeting, I demanded that the original document be returned to me. It has not come yet, although it is two months since, and they promised to bring it back soon'.¹³ Invited to comment, Rochfort Maguire had seized on Lobengula's plea with sweet reasonableness:

In order to prove that the copy and original are identical, the original was sent for by us, but Lobengula assured Mr Thompson, one of the concessionaries, that if the documents are identical he will be perfectly satisfied.¹⁴

The real issue, as Rhodes well knew, was not whether the original and the copy were the same, but whether, in signing the Concession, Lobengula understood what he was giving away. However, the King's insistence on seeing the original Concession perfectly suited Rhodes' tactics, and the first objective of Jameson's trip to Bulawayo was to bring the King to the point where he would admit that the original and the copy were the same. Once this had been achieved it would not be difficult to argue that the document was therefore valid in all respects.

Maintaining the Rudd Concession was vital for another reason. A considerable number of white concession-hunters still remained at Bulawayo; most of these had been 'squared' by Rhodes, but his ability to keep them under control depended on the fact that his Company held an 'exclusive' concession from Lobengula. Remove that concession, or cast doubts on its validity, and the 'dogs' would once again swarm around the King. The Exploring Company (which had amalgamated with Rhodes to form the Chartered Company) saw the danger clearly. On 14th June the Secretary sent an urgent letter to Maund (whose own loyalty was newly-founded):

... I am to request that ... you will endeavour in every way to prevent the King signing any document whatever as it is of the utmost importance that the Rhodes-Rudd Concession should be maintained in its entirety.¹⁵

The Secretary gave an excellent reason for his insistence: if repudiation took place all those whites who had been promised subsidiary concessions by the Chartered Company would look to the King for new favours. The whites in Bulawayo, wrote the Secretary, must remain dependent on the Rhodes-Rudd Concession, 'thus ensuring their loyalty'. The situation became even more serious in the months following that letter. Indeed, in writing to the London Office in early October, Rutherford Harris gave the need to keep the concession-hunters under control as the main reason for Jameson's impending visit to Matabeleland.¹⁶

Imperialists in the late Victorian era were realists. Although they may not have invented the phrase, they fully appreciated that 'power flows from the barrel of a gun'. It was therefore with no illusions that Rhodes and Rudd had undertaken, as part of the price of their Concession, to supply Lobengula with 'one thousand Martini-Henry Breech loading Rifles' and a hundred thousand rounds of 'suitable ball cartridge'.¹⁷ They realized that this was placing dangerous

modern weapons of war in the hands of someone against whom they might one day have to wage war.¹⁸ But they knew, too, that nothing could cement a concession better than the fulfilment by one party of an obligation to deliver offensive weapons to the other.

The importance of the guns has certainly not been lost on later writers, many of whom have even gone to the lengths of alleging that the first instalment of 500 was accepted by Lobengula as early as April 1889.¹⁹ All the evidence points in the opposite direction. Cobbing clearly shows that, although the 500 guns did arrive in Matabeleland during that month, Lobengula refused to take them over, and it became necessary for a white man to be employed to guard them at Maguire's camp at Mvutjwa.

Certainly Rhodes himself was not satisfied that public opinion overseas would accept that Lobengula had taken the guns. In appointing Major Tom Maxwell to accompany Doyle (a skilled interpreter) and Jameson to Matabeleland in September 1889 Rhodes showed how clearly he saw that formal acceptance of the full quantity of 1000 guns would be needed before people in London would accept that the 'deal had been clinched'. 'Should you be successful' he wrote,²⁰ 'in having the guns taken and the concession ratified I will give you a bonus of £2,000.' Rhodes' enticement to Jameson to work towards the same end may not have been so blatant, but there is little reason to doubt Cobbing's assertion that 'one of the prime-aims of Jameson and his colleagues ... was to make the King change his mind' and take the rifles.²¹

It was an obvious part of Jameson's 'brief' that he should develop the closest and friendliest relations with Moffat. Much of the strength of the Chartered Company lay in its ability to put itself forward as the Queen's chosen instrument; the support of a respected Government servant in Bulawayo could only enhance this image. Fortunately Moffat was a well-suited man - from the Company's point of view - for the task. Although himself the son of a famous missionary he had long since abandoned any hope that the Ndebele - under Lobengula's rule - could be converted to Christianity. He believed that their only hope of salvation lay in the destruction of the military system under which they lived.²² He approved of the entry on the scene of Rhodes and his lieutenants, seeing them as 'honourable English gentlemen who sought for rights ... with the object of developing the country ...'²³ Some time after his arrival back in Matabeleland in May 1889 he summoned Fairbairn, Usher and Cohen, three of the traders who had witnessed Lobengula's letter of 23 April to Queen Victoria,²⁴ and 'dressed them down' vigorously for their action. 'Communications to Her Majesty' he said,

'... ought always to be sent through me, as the official representative of the Government ...' The three unfortunates humbled themselves. 'They seemed' went on Maffat, 'to be disposed to take the advice offered to them.'²⁵

A man such as Moffat, whose moral conscience had been disciplined by his ten years as a Colonial Civil Servant, was the ideal person to give to the Chartered Company the gloss of official respectability. It was very unlikely that Jameson, whose 'gaiety and ready tongue gave him a charm that can be felt across the years', would have any difficulty in retaining him as an ally.

So far this analysis of Jameson's briefing has concentrated on matters of diplomatic finesse. There is, however, one further, fundamental question that needs to be studied. To what extent, in September 1889, was Rhodes preparing for war against Lobengula, and to what extent, therefore, was Jameson's whole mission merely a device to persuade a gullible public that peaceful methods were being given a fair chance.

Samkange has no doubt that Rhodes, forced into an awkward situation by the obduracy of Lobengula, was ready to consider, and endorse, a plan 'to murder Lobengula and stage a coup in Matabeleland'.²⁷ Gustav Preller says that 'after his [Rhodes]' return from London [in August 1889] he and Jameson came together and they appear to have agreed that something had to be done at once ... Then either Rhodes or Jameson - who afterwards developed a strong tendency towards this kind of thing, and a proficiency at it that compels admiration - conceived the diabolical plan of doing away with the obdurate Lobengula.'²⁸

It is generally accepted that, at some time during 1889, discussions did take place between Rhodes and the youthful Frank Johnson on a scheme to overthrow Lobengula. Johnson himself first gave details of the plan in an article which appeared in the Cape Times on 12th September 1930. In that article he indicated that 'it was early in 1889' that Rhodes first raised the question of the occupation of Zambezia, but it seems improbable that there was serious talk of armed intervention at that early date. A copy of a 'Memorandum of Agreement'²⁹ between Rhodes, Maurice Heany and Frank Johnson - with the names of the parties typed in - is dated 7 December 1889, but it is known from the letters of H.J. Borrow that Johnson was having discussions with Rhodes as early as September of that year, and that Rhodes was 'anxious to get Johnson, Heany and (Borrow) to work with him and "come under his flag"'.³⁰ By the beginning of November Heany was writing to Borrow: 'Come what may, it is Rhodes or nothing with us.'³¹ From these references it is reasonable to assume that at least some outline of the proposed 'Contract' had been discussed - and was known to Jameson - before the later

left Mafeking for the north in early October.³²

Before looking at even more positive evidence that Jameson was fully party to Rhodes' warlike intentions, it is relevant to study Johnson's disclosures in some detail. As part of the basic preparation for the assault Johnson

would gradually and unostentatiously bring [the] 'prospecting' parties up to a total of five hundred men ... suddenly, all these parties were to converge on a selected spot on the Shashi River, well away to the north-west of Tati ... the necessary casus belli was to be a very simple matter ... [The Disputed was occupied, for the look of the thing, I think, by a few small Bamangwato cattle posts whose herd boys frequently complained of the presence of raiding parties of Matabele. Hearing one of these raids, caution would make me assume that it was the advance guard of a big force ... I would naturally decide that the best defence was active offensive...³³

Some writers on the period - Samkange and Preller are exceptions - have assumed that Jameson (throughout his sojourn in Bulawayo from October 1889 onwards) was at all times a believer in a peaceful occupation of Zambezia, and that he acted in some way as a brake on the warlike intentions of the men in Kimberley. According to Cobbing 'Jameson ... was confident that Lobengula could be "bounced" into allowing a peaceful occupation of Mashonaland ... The hints of the forceful solution being planned at Kimberley alarmed Jameson'.³⁴ Richard Brown, while admitting that Jameson was prepared in the event of a failure to 'recommend military action', nevertheless says that he 'hoped for a peaceful outcome'.³⁵

Direct evidence, however, shows that - whatever Jameson might later say he was, for several months after his arrival in Bulawayo in October 1889, a firm adherent to the policy of war. The first indication he gave of believing in a peaceful outcome was in a letter written to Harris as late as 8 January 1890; in this he said that a journey to Kimberley might have been useful in 'helping to mitigate a little the warlike tone displayed in your letters'.³⁶ Three weeks later he expressed his new attitude more strongly:

Your letter of January 11th ... is the first we have had really appreciating the peaceable tone in the country, and holding out a prospect of the policy of peaceable occupation being attempted first, even if the war like becomes inevitable in the end. This is what I have been driving at in my letters ever since arriving here ... I see you put me down in your list of authorities that

fighting would be inevitable. I have always hoped and, as time went on, become more sanguine that we should get a peaceful settlement ...³⁷

When one compares these estimable sentiments with what Jameson was actually writing between October and December 1889, one can only conclude that, as a late convert to the new policy in Kimberley, he had no wish to be thought more belligerent than the ebullient and unstable Rutherford Harris. For his earlier letters prove that at that time he had no thoughts of peace whatever:

(1 Nov 1889) ... the missionaries are all prepared to attend an autumn meeting, somewhere beyond the Shashi;³⁸ I have spoken freely to Helm and Carnegie and they with Moffat are convinced that Rhodes is right in his decision that he will never be able to work peaceably alongside the natives, and the sooner the brush is over the better ... surely the main thing for us to do is to hurry on some kind of settlement by word of mouth ... now I hope Rhodes' preparations of increased police is going on apace, so that they may be ready to move up at short notice when the settlement is come to and the people warned to clear out...

(6 Nov 1889) ... your full force ought to be got ready as soon as possible; and Moffat authorizes me to tell you from him, so far as this place is concerned the recruiting rapidly and even publicly of your whole 1000 or better 1500, will do no harm, so long as no single man crosses the Macloutsie before he gives notice ...

(7 Dec 1889) [The arrival of the Queen's letter] a few weeks after our temporary settlement of being allowed to begin digging will be quite right and very useful - we then having a locus standi amicably obtained of being actually at work in the country, which will go a long way with the King and natives towards submitting to the inevitable, and I should think also in satisfying the public and authorities at home as to the bona fides of the obtaining of the original concession;

which might appear doubtful if the country had to be entered by force from the commencement'.³⁹

Jameson's mission may, indeed, be summarized in the following terms:

- (a) to preserve the Rudd Concession;
- (b) to work in close co-operation with the Assistant Commissioner, John Moffat;
- (c) to persuade Lobengula to accept the 1,000 rifles promised under the Concession;
- (d) to keep the concession-hunters under control, and to ensure that they neither discredited the Rudd Concession nor received further 'pieces of paper' from the King;
- (e) to frighten the King by tales of Portuguese infiltration, thereby bringing him into greater reliance on the Chartered Company as an ally against his 'real' enemies.

But all these diplomatic tactics were no more than a facade behind which the real 'clout' was being prepared in Kimberley. To organize an invasion of Matabeleland would take time - probably until the beginning of the 1890 dry season;⁴⁰ during the intervening six months it was Jameson's task to keep the Rudd Concession alive, to restrain the young Matabele warriors from any anti-white outburst, and to manoeuvre the King into a frame of mind in which resistance to the final thrust would seem pointless.

It was a mission ideally suited to the character and talents of Jameson. He was a perfect example of a man to whom 'the end justifies the means'. The immediate 'end' was a personal one: to prove to Rhodes his skill and usefulness in a field far removed from the orthodox life of a General Practitioner. In longer terms he visualized his role as a vital part of the onward drive of the British Empire. With objectives such as these, he was unlikely to be troubled by a tender conscience. If moral qualms should ever arise he would find no difficulty in quietening them. 'We are' he remarked on one occasion, 'rapidly becoming adepts in appeasing the wily savage's suspicions'⁴¹ - the implication being that deceit was necessary in order to combat deceit.

It seems, moreover, that Jameson was a man who enjoyed exercising his winning charm. 'His personality' wrote Philip Mason, 'must have cured his patients as often as his technical skill'⁴² - and in Lobengula he had a patient who was wide open to both. Whether in fact Jameson did anything for the King's gout other than to dull the pain with morphia is immaterial: the point is that Lobengula associated the relief with Jameson, and was thus more likely to be well-disposed than suspicious towards suggestions put forward by the latter in the course

of the lengthy 'indabas' that took place in October and November.

'Lengthy', indeed, they were - a factor which one must take into account when measuring Jameson's achievement during his stay in Bulawayo. When one casts an eye forward to Jameson's later career - the Matabele War, the Jameson Raid - it is hard to see much evidence of patience in his nature. Somewhere along the line his willingness to spend long hours in negotiation must have evaporated, for certainly in 1889 his patience seems inexhaustible. 'Tiresome was no name for it' he wrote after one long session, 'like a lot of silly children - repeating and repeating - a grand exercise of patience'.⁴³ By comparing Jameson's good humour under stress with the choleric reaction of Frank Johnson to a similar situation at Lobengula's kraal⁴⁴ in 1887 one can see why Cecil Rhodes chose him for such a vital diplomatic task.

It was Frank (Matabele) Thompson, whom Jameson took back with him to Bulawayo in early October, who first sowed doubts in Jameson's mind that the Rudd Concession could be maintained in being. Thompson was adamant that the Concession was dead, and that the most that the Chartered Company would get from the King as a substitute was 'one hole to dig in'.⁴⁵ Jameson was not impressed. If, he said, the King should tear up the Concession, 'we ^{will} still get him to take the guns and say that we will ask him at a later period where we are to dig'. Jameson believed that this tactic would be underwritten by the fact of Rutherford Harris 'having a certified copy down below' - clear evidence that Jameson, like Rhodes, felt the need at this stage for the Rudd Concession as a prop for the Company's future plans.⁴⁶

But Jameson soon changed his attitude after arrival at Bulawayo. At a meeting with Lobengula on 18 October the original of the Concession was produced, and compared with the copy which had been left in Bulawayo. The King had no option but to acknowledge that the two documents were the same, but he 'denied that he understood he was giving away all the gold'. He had only intended to give the Company one hole in which to dig.⁴⁷ This was, of course, the nub of the whole question, and Jameson, with that mental agility which marked his entire career, saw at once that the Rudd Concession was a dead letter. He recalled Thompson's advice, and changed his approach, 'I was beginning,' he wrote, 'to ask for a hole to commence in when he (Lobengula) abruptly stopped the discussion.' The first meeting was over.

Despite the sudden end to the meeting Jameson was hopeful that the whole matter could be resolved on the new basis within a matter of days.

'I think,' he wrote, 'there is a fair prospect that within a few

days, while urging on the hole versus whole country question we may bounce him by saying that we will accept a hole at Ramaquabana to begin with and deliver the guns, letting the whole country question slide by, and avoiding the acceptance of any other document.'

Jameson still had much to learn of the slow-motion methods of Matabele diplomacy. Eight days later he was telling Harris that 'after two days of philandering the King got to business ... which lasted another two and left us pretty well as before'.⁴⁸

Once again the King insisted on comparing the original and the copy of the Rudd Concession, and once again he declared that some of the words therein were not his. Jameson, by now convinced that all written documents were a waste of time, 'sent Helm to tell the King that we would now trust entirely to the King's word of mouth ... and that we would fulfil our part of the contract in delivering the guns when the King gave us some place to dig, leaving it to the King when and where'.

By now Jameson realized that he was in for a long stay, and it was possibly his knowledge of the disappointment which the delays would rouse in Kimberley that led him to hold out hopes of a clash between Lobengula and the Portuguese. The King had recently sent messengers to investigate a reported Portuguese foray into Mashonaland, and Jameson drew optimistic conclusions from this mission.

'When the messengers come back' he wrote, 'it must almost certainly mean an impi being sent out - and if that is beaten, which is highly probable and much to be desired, he must feel inclined to come to terms with us.'

Jameson then revealed the extent to which all this diplomatic verbiage was but the cover for armed invasion. He wrote of the need, 'immediately the guns were accepted', to get prospectors at work on the Ramaquabana and to send Doyle and Maxwell to the same area 'with all our goodsetc. for working purposes'. He told Harris that the departure of the missionaries would be camouflaged by a statement that they were going south to attend a conference in Bechuanaland. He stressed the need 'to hurry on some kind of settlement by word of mouth'. He expressed the hope that 'the police' would be 'ready to move up at short notice'.⁴⁹

It is significant to note the similarities between Jameson's plan and the scheme which Frank Johnson revealed in 1930. There is the same build-up of 'prospectors', the same concentration on that part of the border nearest to Bulawayo, the same emphasis on haste, the same realization that a 'casus belli'

would be easy to engineer at the right moment. There are some differences in detail,⁵⁰ but these are easily explained by later lapses of memory on the part of Johnson.⁵¹ The real point is that the similarities are so great, and the timing so nearly identical, that there can be no reasonable doubt that Jameson and Johnson were discussing the same operational plan.

Jameson's relations with Moffat were by this time cordial and extremely intimate. Even as early as 1 November Jameson was telling Harris that Moffat would do anything he was asked, 'either in his official letters to the Administrator or conversations with the King'.⁵² A week later Jameson was making it clear to Harris in full detail the extent of the identity of purpose between himself and Moffat. Lobengula was concerned at news that two Portuguese officers, with 300 blacks, had arrived in the area south of Zumbo and were building forts and planting Portuguese flags.⁵³ Moffat's assessment of the situation could as easily have come from the mouth of Jameson himself. Queen Victoria could help, either by talking to the Portuguese Government or by giving material aid to Lobengula 'for which a quid pro quo would be required'.⁵⁴ Alternatively, as the Charter was about to be granted,⁵⁵ advantage could be taken of the powers granted therein 'to raise soldiers and protect ourselves against outsiders'. Neither Moffat nor Jameson was certain that Lobengula would in fact ask for help against the Portuguese. There were strong suspicions at the King's court that in some way the Portuguese and the British were acting in concert against the best interests of the Matabele. However, Moffat and Jameson were certain that, whether the King fought the Portuguese alone or in alliance with the Chartered Company, he would want the controversial 1,000 rifles 'so that settlement ought to be near!'

But the word 'settlement' was still no more than a euphemism for war. In the same letter Jameson stressed the need for Rhodes' full force 'to be got ready as soon as possible'. He added that Moffat saw no harm in this build-up being given full publicity 'so long as no single man crosses the Macloutsie before he gives notice'.

For two weeks matters hung fire in Bulawayo. The King and his indunas debated whether it was possible to concede a 'hole' without conceding the country 'in toto'. Jameson, by now accustomed to the tempo of Matabele diplomacy, used the time in consolidating the position of the Chartered Company. His first task was to confirm Moffat's position as the sole representative of the Queen in Bulawayo. Convinced that Moffat was completely to be relied upon he impressed on Lobengula the need to regard Moffat as the 'only mouthpiece' of the British Government.⁵⁶ For some time Renny-Tailyour had been maintaining that he in

fact was Queen Victoria's representative. In this bogus role he had, he admitted, stressed to the King that the Chartered Company 'had all the country' and that it had a document which enabled it to raise military forces, and to 'fight any surrounding natives, white or black'. His motive, he maintained, was to enhance the image of the Chartered Company. Jameson and Moffat, however, were not impressed. They saw what suspicions such talk would create in the King's mind, and Moffat called on Renny-Tailyour to deny in front of the King his pretence that he held an official mandate from Queen Victoria. In the face of such firmness Renny-Tailyour retreated 'in a blue funk'.

Jameson's strength of character - backed up by the knowledge that he had the support of the most powerful man in South Africa - showed itself clearly in his no-nonsense dealings with the white traders and concession-hunters in Bulawayo. For most of them his contempt was boundless:

Tainton I only threatened ...

Petersen I have refused altogether as he is harmless

Maund is conceited and frequently injudicious ...

Fairbairn ... is certainly the silliest ass that God ever made ...

being born a liar, and the tendency carefully nourished on drink,

[he] can scarcely be held responsible.⁵⁷

Only for Cohen did he have any respect. 'He is' wrote Jameson, 'too smart to be got by promises of "recommending".' Jameson finally reached an agreement with him, but feared that its terms might seem unduly generous in Rhodes' eyes. To quieten Rhodes' doubt he stressed that Cohen 'had been the essence of the opposition from the beginning'.⁵⁸

This transaction shows in microcosm the value of Jameson as a negotiator. Having clear objectives but few moral scruples, he could, where necessary, be completely flexible.

By the time he wrote to Harris on 21 November Jameson was hopeful that matters in Bulawayo would soon be settled. His object was still to deliver the guns and to get permission to 'begin working at some place, leaving the original [concession] intact in Moffat's possession'.⁵⁹ Jameson knew by this time that the Charter had been granted, and that a deputation was on its way from England, bringing with it a second letter from the Queen impressing on Lobengula the wisdom of dealing with the Chartered Company and no-one else. Jameson was doubtful of the timing of this second letter. Having turned his attention away from formal ratification of the Rudd Concession, and having pinned his immediate hopes on a verbal permission to dig in a single location, he feared that the

Queen's missive might again 'raise the question of the whole country ... and create a rumpus'.

Although the letters and instructions which Jameson received from Rhodes during his stay in Bulawayo have not survived, it is possible, by a careful study of Jameson's own letter, to assess to what extent the two men were at variance in their approaches to the problems confronting them. From the letter which the latter wrote on 23 November⁶⁰ it is apparent that Rhodes had not approved Jameson's concentration on a single place to dig. Clearly Rhodes feared that Jameson's tactics would 'compromise' the Rudd Concession, and possibly 'remove altogether the main prop on which the Charter rested. Jameson was at pains to point out that the Concession document was no more than a foundation. 'If' he wrote, 'we had swiftly produced the original, then sat upon our bottoms and asked for nothing, they would certainly have become suspicious.' Instead he had told the King that he trusted to his word and that 'when he tells us where we may begin digging we will deliver the guns'. 'It would never do' he stressed to Harris, 'to throw the guns at this head and ask for nothing in return.'

The underlining of the word 'begin' (which occurs twice in this one letter) demonstrates how strongly Rhodes must have stated his view that the 'one hole' policy would limit the Chartered Company to a single mining activity - something that fell far short of his intention to occupy a whole country. Jameson was acutely anxious that Rhodes should see that the 'one hole' policy and the Rudd Concession were not mutually contradictory lines of policy. At an indaba held a few days later Jameson made progress. It seemed that the King's advisers still feared that the Rudd Concession could be interpreted as 'giving away the country'.⁶¹ Jameson, despite the risk that the Concession would be prejudiced by his action, said that he would 'be content to trust to the word of mouth'. Obviously - although Jameson did not admit as much to Harris - this remark gave the Ndebele the impression that he was content to move away irrevocably from the Rudd Concession, for Lobengula then announced that the indaba was finished; 'he would deal with us himself as to a place to dig, as that was for the King to decide alone'.

In this same letter Jameson again showed how much he felt that success depended on Lobengula becoming entangled with the Portuguese. Only against the background of 'a licking from the Portuguese' did he believe that the Queen's letter would 'have much effect in persuading the King to give us all the country to dig in peaceably'. Then Jameson wrote a sentence whose interpretation is wide open:

'We will have in the end to show them that we are able to work, whether they like it or not.'

Whether Jameson intended to be cryptic, or whether his mind was tiring at the end of a long letter, the only explanation of this sentence - and it is at best only half an answer - is that force would in the end be the sole solution. It certainly does not carry the stamp of a man who believed that victory would come from negotiation alone.

By 7 December Jameson had still not been granted 'a place to begin digging'; the King was still 'thinking'.⁶² Jameson, who ten days earlier had been confident that his policy was about to be crowned with success, began to have doubts. If the Queen's letter arrived while the indunas were still worrying that their whole country had been given away in the Rudd Concession, the chances of getting a 'place to dig' would be destroyed. Jameson, therefore, wrote to Heany⁶³ putting forward fictitious reasons for the official party to be held up at Palapye.

With the danger that the Queen's letter would arrive prematurely now safely removed Jameson regained his confidence. The King's permission to dig would surely be given before long. This would give the Chartered Company 'a locus standi' amicably obtained'... which will go a long way with the King and natives towards submitting to the inevitable, and ... also in satisfying the public and authorities at home as to the bona fides of the obtaining of the original concession; which might appear doubtful if the country had to be entered by force from the commencement'.

Even if Jameson's earlier letters could be said to sustain his alleged belief in a peaceful settlement, the last sentence of this quotation destroys his claims beyond resurrection. His line of policy was clear:

Obtain a place to dig as evidence that the Concession has been honoured by Lobengula;

Mount a forcible entry (on some pretext) as soon as a sufficiently large presence had 'legitimately' been built up.

Undoubtedly the most important letter written by Jameson during his stay in Bulawayo was that dated 12 December 1889.⁶⁴ In it he was able to tell Harris that the King had agreed to a hole being dug. He was also able to give what purported to be a verbatim account of a discussion with Lobengula which was to become the basic justification of the Chartered Company's occupation of Mashonaland. When the King said that he had no idea where gold was located, Jameson asked for permission to begin 'from above Tati, and look from there upwards'. To this the King agreed, 'waving his hand generally to the south'.

What, however, (asked Jameson), would he do if no gold was found in that area. The King's alleged reply is best quoted in Jameson's original words:

Come to me, and I will tell you to dig there (waving his hand in the direction of Mashonaland).

The edifice which has been built on these written words certainly rests on a very shaky foundation. Even if it is accepted that Jameson's reporting is accurate, and that the King made a gesture with his hand - neither of which is supported by reliable corroborative evidence - one need only look at the map to see how absurd are the conclusions which interested parties have drawn therefrom. Taking Bulawayo as the centre of a circle, a line drawn from Zumbo in the north to the Shashi - Limpopo junction in the south subtends an angle of at least 145 degrees. A gesture by Lobengula in almost any direction could be construed by an interested party as being 'in the direction of Mashonaland'.⁶⁵

Although Maxwell was later to receive his £2,000 reward, Jameson gives no real evidence that the King at this time accepted the rifles. Certainly Jameson did his best to effect delivery as part of a quid pro quo for the granting of a place to dig. The best that he could achieve, however, was a vague undertaking from Lobengula that he would put some of his own men to guard the guns as soon as they became available. Since, however, no evidence exists that any of Lobengula's men took charge of the guns, either in November 1889 or later, the only fair conclusion to be drawn is that Jameson and Maxwell were less interested in the truth than in the great advantages to be gained from a statement that the guns had been accepted by Lobengula.

The letter of 12 December is, however, also important for the evidence it gives of the first real change in the direction of Jameson's own thinking. On the basis that the granting of a place to dig represented 'a ratification of the original concession' - an opinion with which apparently Moffat was in agreement⁶⁶ - Jameson began to spot the possibility of a peaceable occupation of the whole country. He talked of gradually increasing the number of miners and prospectors, of gradually 'bringing them further northwards as the natives become more accustomed to them'. 'I am sure' he wrote, 'in a month or six weeks the King would take quite kindly the suggestion of a second party to help the first and so on.' His new policy of gradualism extended in his mind even further into the future. 'At all events this will do very well for the next few months - say till May - before which time profitable prospecting is an impossibility, as the grass cannot be burnt off before that'.

Such a change in policy and mood requires analysis. To attempt to understand

it needs an imaginative conception of the psychological effects of a two-months stay at Lobengula's capital in the heat of an early summer in Matabeleland. Two months during which frustration followed frustration as the King sought the best way out of his dilemma. Two months during which the only congenial company was provided by Maund,⁶⁷ a man for whom Jameson had no more than a tolerant contempt. In such an environment it must sometimes have seemed to Jameson that he was doomed to remain indefinitely in the wilderness of Matabeleland. Jameson was a man of gay temperament - but he was also a man to whom forced inaction was intolerable. This being the case, it should cause no surprise that the first real break-through in the negotiations created in him a feeling of euphoria - a feeling that, as one door had opened without bloodshed, so might the remainder open in the same way. At this stage of his career Jameson had not yet persuaded himself that war was the only way to solve difficult and frustrating problems. If another method presented itself he was willing to give it at least an equal try. It was only later that impatience and excessive self-confidence tempted him to believe that he could quickly cut to the heart of any problem with the clean thrust of war.

According to Cobbing⁶⁸ the arrival from Bulawayo of the news that Lobengula had granted a place to dig was greeted with great joy. 'The gloom,' he writes, 'was cast aside. The Portuguese would after all be dispossessed of western Mashonaland from the south ... If Jameson's reports were true, Rhodes' and the Charter's immediate problem were over.'

Such a dramatic interpretation of the events of December 1889 accords well with the 'great man' concept of history. The picture of Rhodes and Harris flourishing Jameson's letter, and proclaiming that their problems were now at an end, would delight the heart of any biographer of Jameson. By patient and clever diplomacy the little doctor had solved all the difficulties standing in the way of a move into Zambezia. It is an attractive version of what took place but regrettably far from being an accurate one.

There can be no doubt that during October and November Rhodes was working on two possible expeditions for the occupation of Zambezia. The first plan - an invasion from the East Coast via the Zambezi - was referred to by Harris in several letters to the London Office of the Chartered Company during November.⁶⁹ It was also specifically referred to by Jameson in his letter to Harris of 7 December.⁷⁰ The scheme, however, received its death-blow when Selous, arriving in Kimberley at the very time Jameson's letter was being written, convinced Rhodes that the practical difficulties of such an expedition were immense.⁷¹

It was only at this point - according to both Cobbing⁷² and Brown⁷³ -

that Rhodes conceived the idea of a direct assault on the Ndebele kingdom from the south, and entered into negotiations with Frank Johnson. The idea that this drastic plan was hatched only at this late stage has already been shown to be unlikely;⁷⁴ a comparison of dates shows it to be impossible. Selous' famous letter to the 'Times' (which appeared in that newspaper on 4 January 1890) was date-lined 'Cape Town, 4 December 1889': on 9 December Harris was reporting to London that 'Mr Selous' return... has shown Mr. Rhodes the impossibility of the [Zambezi] scheme'.⁷⁵ Somewhere, therefore, between 4 December and 9 December Selous and Rhodes must have had a meeting in Kimberley. Yet the agreement between Rhodes and Frank Johnson for an armed attack on Lobengula is dated 7 December. It is only necessary to glance at the Agreement to realize that it represents the culmination of many and long discussions between the contracting parties - something that would have been impossible if the plan had been first thought of only after the return of Selous and the demise of the Zambezi invasion scheme.

As a workable substitute for the defunct Zambezi scheme Selous put forward to Rhodes a 'plan for the occupation of the country by a new road, passing to the south and east of the country actually ruled over by the Matabili'.⁷⁶

This plan, which was based on Selous' conviction that Lobengula would not agree to a route through Matabeleland, assumed the creation of 'a good, strong mounted force'.⁷⁷ Selous, however, was not looking for a fight. He believed that, by keeping beyond the farthest limits of the outside Ndebele kraals, the expedition stood a good chance of not being molested by Lobengula's impis. He did not envisage any jumping-off point in Lobengula's territory, and indeed the essence of his plan was that it would tacitly ignore the Ndebele issue altogether.

Selous' ideas made little initial appeal to Rhodes,⁷⁸ who was deeply committed to the concept of a military confrontation with Lobengula.⁷⁹ There is strong evidence, however, that - whether his particular plan was to be adopted or not - Selous had already agreed to join forces with Johnson and Heany. On 12 December - following a visit to Cape Town - Johnson told Harris that the Committee of the Selous Exploration Syndicate (which owned the concession obtained by Selous in the Mazoe Valley) had agreed to surrender their claims in return for a sub-concession from the Chartered Company.⁸⁰ On 22 December Selous, was able to write to his mother with the news that he had 'made more than £2,000 this year'⁸¹ - a sum which bears suspicious resemblance to the amount paid to Selous by Rhodes as a recompense for giving up his hard-won concession.⁸² In the same letter Selous said that he now considered himself to be in the

service of the Chartered Company.⁸³

This, then, was the state of affairs when the news of Lobengula's 'permission to dig' reached Kimberley on 21 December.⁸⁴ It would be difficult to detect anything of the 'gloom' to which Cobbing refers. On the contrary, there was a determination to occupy Zambezia during the forthcoming dry season,⁸⁵ and a bold, if dangerous, scheme for carrying that determination into effect.

What impact did Jameson's message have on the subsequent course of events, and what degree of success can therefore be attributed to his mission to Bulawayo? Harris said later that 'this sudden change of front of Lobengula's made us pause';⁸⁵ it was not however until the beginning of January that serious thought was being given in Kimberley to alternatives to the Johnson 'murder' plan. In a letter written on 1 January 1890 Harris showed his awareness of the political value of a foothold in Matabeleland. He also drew attention to the comparative advantages of Mashonaland, 'a sparsely populated country ... inhabited by a more peaceful and amenable native race'. At this time, however, he was still wavering between Selous' plan of entry and the traditional route through Bulawayo.⁸⁷ 'We hope' he wrote, 'that early this year, we shall be enabled by one or other of the routes open, to enter (Mashonaland)'.

By the middle of January the views of Rhodes and his associates had crystallized. A further letter had been received from Jameson in which he said that 'he would have no hesitation in telling the King in a month or two that we were not satisfied with the gold where we were and that we must go into Mashonaland'. Harris concludes that, in the event, 'we should probably go in by a new road running from the Macloutsie to rather higher up on the Lundi and then due north to Mount Hampden'.⁸⁸

It is fair to say that Jameson's securing of 'a place to dig' within the boundaries of Matabeleland was an achievement of great significance - even if not quite in the way that he himself visualized. Jameson, having become a convert to a policy of peace, saw the prospecting operations on the Ramaquabane as the first towards a gradual penetration. This was certainly not the view held by Rhodes. To him a foothold in Matabeleland was a means whereby public opinion might be satisfied that Lobengula was a willing party to what was being done. But his objective remained unchanged - the early occupation of Mashonaland by a force strong enough to beat off attacks and to consolidate what it had gained. Selous' route, with its reduced risk of an armed clash with the Ndebele impis, was the best way of achieving this object - and now much to be preferred to a direct assault on Bulawayo. Towards Jameson's policy of gradualism Rhodes

had little sympathy:

... to assure the position of the Chartered Company, it is necessary to obtain effective occupation of Mashonaland in the coming winter ... (Rhodes) is very strongly of the opinion that this object could not be considered to be attained merely by sending in one or two prospecting parties, and that it is of the utmost importance to form at as early a date as possible a substantial nucleus of white population in the country.⁸⁹

The fact that Jameson's plans were adopted by Rhodes to his own ends does not, however, devalue the former's achievements in Bulawayo. The measure of his success is the improvement in the general atmosphere in Bulawayo between September and December 1889, and the definite acceptance by Lobengula of a Chartered Company presence - however limited - within his boundaries. For this success Jameson is entitled to full credit. He controlled the white concession hunters and so prevented them from undermining his position with Lobengula; he relieved the King's gout, and thereby achieved that psychological advantage which every physician has over a grateful patient; he showed an untiring willingness to tolerate the slow-motion tactics of the Ndebele court; he built up his relationship with Moffat to the point where Lobengula found difficulty in distinguishing between the words of the Queen and the wishes of Cecil Rhodes; above all he showed a flexibility in discussion that enabled him to give way on minor points in order to realize his main objectives. The fact that all these achievements rested on the foundation of a ruthless, calculating character is not material: no-one has ever argued with validity that a diplomat should be a man of warm heart and human emotions. Perhaps the greatest tribute to Jameson's work is to be found in the words of two men who were with him in Matabeleland - one writing immediately after Lotshe's death in September 1889 and the other in December:

Here there has been decided retrogression, and an evident determination to draw back from all engagements ... No-one will dare to advocate the opening of the country.⁹⁰

Two months ago, about, I thought a crisis had come and that it would be a mercy if any of us go safely out of the country. Now, as I said, things are much quieter.⁹¹

Following his successful indaba with the King, and his letter to Harris of 12 December, Jameson concentrated his efforts in two directions: to demonstrate as soon as possible the paucity of gold on the Ramaquabane, and to ensure that

the working of the Queen's letter (shortly to be delivered to Lobengula by a deputation drawn from the Royal Horse Guards) contained nothing harmful to the Chartered Company's interests.

Jameson left at once for Tati in order to put the first batch of prospectors to work.⁹² It was not long, however, before he was back in Bulawayo seeking to secure further concessions from the King. On 20 December he told Harris that he had informed the King that he could only get four working white men at Tati and that he 'wanted to send Moore (previously the most recalcitrant of the concession-seekers) to work on the east side of the road'.⁹³ This was a clever move; it not only doubled the number of prospecting parties: it also helped to convince the King that even the leaders of the rival concession-hunters were coming under the banner of the Chartered Company.

Throughout the next five weeks reports continued to reach Jameson from Maddox (the main prospector on the Ramaquabane). They all told the same story, a story of 'white reefs with nothing in them'.⁹⁴ Jameson made no secret of his elation. 'This will be the excuse for asking to go into Mashonaland' he wrote. Even in his state of euphoria, however, Jameson did not ignore the possibility that his tactics might founder on the rock of Lobengula's obstinacy. 'If he lets us go in numbers, good and well. If not, then that will be a fair "casus belli" - a going back from his agreement after allowing us to work peaceably in the country for sometime'.

While building up to a request for permission to dig in Mashonaland, Jameson did not neglect his other aim - to ensure that the Queen's letter helped, not hindered, the Company's cause. In mid-December he instructed his drivers, who were going south to bring forward the envoys from Mafeking, to take the head of the party on arrival 'direct to Moffat, so that he may (appear to) have no communication with our party till after he had delivered his mission to the King',⁹⁵ The two words in brackets were added by Jameson as an after-thought, and reveal with disarming candour his capacity for devious action.

In early January Jameson was greatly concerned lest 'Matabele' Thompson, whom he described as 'ignorant, arrogant and finally (showing) funk',⁹⁶ should be one of the party with the Queen's envoys. He sent a messenger to stop him on the road, and at the same time wrote to Harris:

Should the letter contain Thompson's name as the representative to be supported it must be omitted in Moffat's reading and Doyle's interpretation.

On 15 January a messenger arrived in Bulawayo, bringing with him an

advance copy of the Queen's letter. The following extracts show the general tone and content:

... The Queen ... understands the trouble caused to Lobengula by different parties of white men coming to his country to look for gold; but wherever gold is ... it is impossible for him to exclude white men, and, therefore, the wisest and safest course for him to adopt ... is to agree, not with one or two white men separately, but with one approved body of white men, who will consult Lobengula's wishes and arrange where white people are to dig, and who will be responsible to the Chief for any trouble caused to himself or his people ...

The Queen, therefore, approves of the concessions made by Lobengula to some white men who were represented in his country by Messrs. Rudd, Maguire and Thompson ... As some of the Queen's highest and most trusted subjects have joined themselves with those to whom Lobengula gave his concessions, the Queen now thinks Lobengula is acting wisely in carrying out his agreement with these people ...

The Queen understands that Lobengula does not like deciding disputes among white men or assuming jurisdiction over them ...

The Queen thinks Lobengula would be wise to intrust to that body of white men, of whom Mr Jam(i)eson is now the principal representative in Matabeleland, the duty of deciding disputes and keeping the peace among white persons in his country.

... The Queen has, by her Royal Charter, given to that body of men leave to undertake this duty, and will hold them responsible for their proper performances of such duty. Of course this must be as Lobengula likes, as he is King of the country, and no one can exercise jurisdiction in it without his permission ...

The Queen understands that Lobengula wishes to have some one from her residing with him. The Queen, therefore, has directed her trusted servant, Mr Moffat, to stay with the Chief as long as he wishes ...

Jameson was horrified:

It is as bad as it could be made; but Moffat being a brick and as always, willing to do anything for the advancement of the Company, it can be tided over ...

There was no mention in the letter of Rhodes' name, whereas Rudd, Maguire and

Thompson were all mentioned. Without Rhodes' name, protested Jameson, 'we should be looked upon and denounced as frauds and imposters'. Even in matters of detail the letter was unsatisfactory:

... These portions must be rendered in Kaffir into "thinking" and "reporting", instead of "understanding" and "deciding".

The commencing words of paragraph 6 of the letter - "the Queen understands that Lobengula wishes to have someone from her residing with him" - seemed particularly unfortunate. They were in direct contradiction of Lobengula's sentiments, as expressed in his letter of 10 August, a letter which, of course, had not reached London by the time the Queen's letter was drafted.

Jameson overlooked nothing:

Colenbrander is a favourite interpreter of the King; so, in case he is called upon, Doyle is coaching him up with Moffat's authority.⁹⁷

The Queen's letter has been described by Hole as "a curiously weak one in some respects" and as 'a blend of conciliation and dictation. It talks down to Lobengula ... but at the same time practically orders him to leave disputes among white men to be 'decided' by the white men themselves - a demand quite likely to elicit another snub from the Chief, who might reply, 'Who made you the Induna in my country?', besides being rendered abortive by the succeeding sentence - 'No man can exercise jurisdiction in the country without the King's permission'". Hole goes on to say that the "recantation of the 'ox bit' is so crudely expressed as to carry nothing but confusion to the native mind".⁹⁸

Although one may share the shocked surprise felt by historians such as Sankange that Jameson should brazenly tamper with an official letter from Queen Victoria and her Ministers, one cannot but have sympathy for Jameson's dilemma. At a time when he was basing his whole strategy on persuading Lobengula that all he wanted was some place to dig with a reasonable chance of finding payable gold, a pompously-worded letter with pronouncements on weighty issues of sovereignty and legal jurisdiction must have seemed the ultimate in 'overkill'.

On 30 January Jameson was able to report that the envoys had safely arrived, and that 'the letters were read by Moffat and translated by Doyle on the lines in my last letter'.⁹⁹

It is, however, questionable whether the Queen's letter - even with Jameson's alternations - made a favourable impression on the King. Colvin maintains that the revised style of the letter was 'calculated to please a savage monarch' and that the reading it to the King produced an 'excellent effect'.¹⁰⁰

Doyle, on the other hand, writing shortly after the event,¹⁰¹ said that the letter

has done us much harm and it is no' improbable the King will send another mission (to the Queen)

The King's complaint was that 'the words in the letter were put into the mouth of the Queen by Rhodes', a suspicion which (if one substitutes Jameson for Rhodes) was more than justified.

The letters written by Doyle to Harris during the early months of 1890 show a growing disillusion with the tactics and methods of Jameson.¹⁰² It is almost as if Doyle had suddenly come to realize that Jameson was playing a double game, and feared that his duplicity would in the end force the King into a policy of retaliation and war.

Jameson, however, had no doubt of his own ability to achieve his ends. On 31 January he decided to press Lobengula for permission to prospect in Mashonaland. He reported to the King that the working party on the Ramaquabane had found nothing payable, and that he did not wish to prospect nearer to Bulawayo 'for fear of interfering with (the King's) people in their kraals'.¹⁰³ According to Jameson the King did not demur at the suggestion that the Company's men should be allowed to prospect 'to the north-east' of Bulawayo. Even if it were possible to believe that Lobengula would have indicated in so vague a manner an area which could be interpreted as including virtually the whole of modern Rhodesia,¹⁰⁴ the next words which Jameson wrote belie his own claim. Having produced a map with Selous' suggested route marked on it, Jameson told the King that the Company 'wanted to go on looking up northwards from the extreme south east corner of this country'. Jameson also asked whether Nibele labour could be hired to assist in the necessary road-building. The King's reply indicated the limited extent of his response to Jameson's bid to prospect in Mashonaland:

Yes, you can go there, go and find the place and then come to me for men to take out the stumps for the road when you know where you are going to dig.

These are not the words of a man pledging himself to allow foreigners to overrun a vast country which he holds in tribute. They show rather a willingness to allow a limited mining operation, for which some means of access for men and machinery would be needed.¹⁰⁵ That Jameson indeed presented his scheme in these terms is seen by a remark later in the same letter; Doyle is to remain in Bulawayo 'to report to the King faithfully everything which happens; and every party that comes in'. A perfect description of a succession of prospecting groups

but hardly a portrayal of a single expeditionary force comprising artillery, a searchlight, and nearly 700 armed men! In fairness to Jameson it can be argued that he still believed in his policy of peaceful and gradual penetration, but that what Rhodes required of him was a mandate from Lobengula for something far wider; with his skill in dissembling, and his realization that a hand gesture could never be pinned down, Jameson was able to propound one policy while working secretly towards another.

Lobengula was most anxious that Rhodes should visit him at Bulawayo, a request which Jameson supported, saying that 'if Rhodes could spare a month it would be well spent to complete a peaceful settlement'. Jameson promised that, if Rhodes should come, he would return with him; if not, 'I have promised to come back and report his words'. These were undertakings given for the sake of appearances. In suggesting the possibility that Rhodes might come north for a month Jameson must have known that Rhodes' other commitments would make such a visit impossible. Regarding his own promise to return, this seems to have been given casually and without thought to its impact on the King. Clearly Doyle, who was to remain in Bulawayo after Jameson's departure for the south on 15th February, doubted whether Jameson was being sincere:

'I want you' he wrote to Harris on 27 February, 'to impress on Mr. Rhodes that it is of the utmost importance that Jameson comes back ... If the King thinks faith has been broken with him nothing I can do or say will avail.'¹⁰⁶

No doubt Doyle knew his man; in early April Jameson wrote to his brother Sam of a possible further trip to Bulawayo in words which might have been used to describe a week-end fishing trip:

So very probably I may go back with (Selous) at the beginning of the week; but as I told you it will be as a favour and distinctly requested. I don't care which way it is much ...¹⁰⁷

Even after making allowance for Jameson's laconic style of correspondence, this does not read like the letter of a man who was unduly troubled at the thought of 'breaking faith' with a savage potentate.

Jameson was in Kimberley during March and the first half of April. Throughout this period the tempo of the build-up of the expeditionary force was increasing; men were being recruited all over southern Africa for the Pioneer Corps and the Company's Police; equipment was being shipped out from England; hundreds of horses were being collected on a farm outside Kimberley. On the diplomatic front the possibility of a trek by Boer freebooters into Zambezia had flared

up and died away again.¹⁰⁸ Notwithstanding the easing of this problem, Lord Knutsford - reacting to a letter written by Lord Loch when the crisis was at its height¹⁰⁹ - had sent a telegram in reply on 10th March:

You have authority to exercise discretion as to the advance of the B.S.A. Company into Mashonaland.¹¹⁰

With all this activity going on, and with the South African newspapers full of the impending expedition, it might have been thought that Jameson would be in the thick of the fray. Here was Rhodes' trusted lieutenant, a man of unbounded energy, a man moreover who had just returned from an apparently successful diplomatic mission; yet this same man seems to have been determined to exclude himself from the action. Colvin does not attempt to explain this strange phenomenon. Nor, in fact, do any of the historians of the period with the exception of Gustav Preller. He notes that there was at this time an estrangement between Jameson and Rhodes, and suggests that it was brought about by Rhodes' repudiation of the plan to murder Lobengula and by Rhodes' attempt to cast responsibility for it on to Dr Jameson.¹¹¹

It is of course possible that Rhodes behaved in this way - Johnson certainly hints that Rhodes was determined to clear himself of any involvement¹¹² - but there is nothing to prove that he tried to blame Jameson for the embarrassing plan. There is, however, clear evidence that Jameson and Rhodes did not at this time see eye to eye on the correct strategy for the occupation of Zambezia. Jameson had returned to Kimberley in late February convinced that a policy of peaceful and gradual penetration was the best way of undermining Ndebele fears at the advance of the white man. He found himself surrounded by para-military preparations on a large scale, and his pleas for a non-belligerent approach were met with scornful references to the 'dribbling in of small prospecting parties' which 'would, in themselves, invite attack'.¹¹³ In his dissatisfaction at the way things were going Jameson seems to have decided to withdraw from the fray.¹¹⁴

To the Company men left in Bulawayo - Doyle and Maxwell - the dangers foreseen by Jameson loomed even larger. They knew that, whatever Rhodes might try and read into Lobengula's vague assurances, the fact was that the King had not as yet given permission for a road to be built through to Mashonaland. It was Doyle's view that Lobengula and his indunas accepted that in due course the Chartered Company would go into Mashonaland 'up to Mount Hampden'.¹¹⁵ What they objected to was the 'unseemly haste'. Doyle saw nothing but danger in statements by Harris to the effect that 'all chance of a collision is over' and that the Company was 'going to make the Road'.

'If' he wrote in reply, 'you make the road without Lobengula's consent, then I am quite prepared to tell him so, and tell him that for this reason all the white men must leave the country, but I hope sincerely Mr. Rhodes will allow Jameson and myself to work out the policy we started on our arrival in this country ...'¹¹⁶

It was at this point that Selous came upon the scene. Much as one may admire Selous' skill in hunting wild animals or planning a route through the bush, it is impossible not to be appalled at his elephantine irruptions into the field of diplomacy. Having entered the Chartered Company's employ in December 1889 he seems to have absorbed all the latter's long-term philosophy without regard to the need for short-term caution. His task was to cut a road from Palapye to the eastern border of Khama's country. Such a job, of course, required native labour, but Selous seems to have been oblivious of the subtleties of the situation in his desire to press on quickly with the work. On 15 February he wrote to Moffat¹¹⁷ asking him to get Lobengula's consent to the building of the road, and the services of 'one hundred men under a headman to act as workmen in chopping down trees and making the road'. This was provocative enough in itself, but Selous went even further:

If (Lobengula) were defiant and made no concession, Moffat was to advise all the whites in Mashonaland to leave the country before April, for the Company had to make this road into Mashonaland that year, either with or without Lobengula's consent.

When Selous arrived in Palapye in early March he seems to have expected to find the 100 labourers from Matabeleland.¹¹⁸ Failing to locate any trace of them he decided to ride to Bulawayo 'and find out if (Lobengula) was really prepared to co-operate with the British Company ...' It would be difficult to discover a more crass example of a bull in a china shop.

Doyle did his best to retrieve the situation. He decided to represent to the King that Selous' real reason for coming north was to impress on the King the need to make the road at once, in order to forestall the 'proposed Boer invasion'.¹¹⁹ Lobengula was suspicious. Such a road, he feared, would give the Boers easy access to Mashonaland, and enable them to join force with the Portuguese for a combined attack on Bulawayo. 'There is only one road to Mashonaland' he said, 'and that goes through my country past Bulawayo.'¹²⁰ In reply to Doyle's question: 'Does the King mean us to go with out 100 waggons through his people' his reply was 'Yes'.¹²¹ On this note, and with a plea by the King for Rhodes to come north, 'and settle my business with him very quickly',

Selous was forced to return to Kimberley. The appalling bungling of Selous served one purpose: it brought Jameson and Rhodes together again. Indeed it did more than that. It enabled Rhodes to demonstrate to Jameson that the time for subtle diplomacy was past. Preparations for the march had progressed beyond the point where they could be halted; power to order the advance now rested with the High Commissioner, a man on whom Rhodes could rely for full support. If Lobengula continued to prove tiresome the risk of a clash would have to be accepted.¹²²

Not, of course, that matters were openly expressed in that manner at the time. Rhodes was once again clearly in great need of Jameson's services, and, in order to get them, was willing to admit that the latter's policy had been the correct one all along:

Rhodes ~~was~~ very nice in every way when screwed up to the point, and I had my say out thoroughly and an acknowledgment that I had been right from the word 'Go'. I am going to try and get things back to the point where I left them ... I fell very uncomfortable at my swagger arrangements being upset ...¹²³

On arrival in Bulawayo Jameson soon found that Lobengula's mood had changed greatly since he last saw him in early February. Although Doyle was officially putting out the story that there was 'every prospect of (the Chartered Company) getting into Mashonaland with our whole force this year without a fight',¹²⁴ he had to admit that the Ndebele were talking freely of an attack by the British, and that preparations for putting the country on a war footing were already under way.

After two days of discussion Jameson finally accepted that further diplomacy would achieve nothing. In accordance with Rhodes' instructions he showed the full extent of the 'mailed fist' - the number of waggons, the size of the force, the position of the various planned police posts. He told the King that it was impossible for the Column to come in via the existing road since this would interfere with the numerous Ndebele kraals. In any case, the road was quite incapable of transporting heavy machinery.¹²⁵

Five days later Jameson had his last meeting with Lobengula. The King continued to ask that Rhodes should come to Bulawayo; he also intimated that he was considering sending another mission to Queen Victoria. Jameson realized the futility of further talk:

I said I was going at once/^{and} should I tell Rhodes that he now refused to let me make the road ... He turned round at once and said, 'No, I do not refuse, but let Rhodes come'. Then

I shook hands and departed ... If I had waited till Doomsday I should have got no further ... I have made him say in his own words that 'he does not refuse'. Surely that in a Kaffir is as good as a ratification of his former permission, and we are justified in going on with the whole expedition into Mashonaland ...¹²⁶

Yet, despite the fact that he had now fallen in entirely with Rhodes' plans, Jameson could not abandon completely his belief that his own policy had been the correct one. He blamed the failure of that policy squarely on Selous:

'... could I have got back before Selous' advent ... the road would have been found by this time, and Johnson's wagons dribbling in by fives and tens, and by the time they were all in the police coming up to the border to give Lobengula his present funk - the country being already occupied - now he has to swallow the whole scheme which, as I have already quoted from Moffat, a nigger can never do ...

FOOTNOTES

¹ L05/2/0, Harris to London Board, 21 October 1889.

² Between the Shashi and Motloutse rivers; the rights to this area had long been a source of animosity between Lobengula and Khama.

³ L05/2/0, Harris to London Board, 4 November 1889.

⁴ 'Private Papers of Lord Loch', p.67 (material prepared by Lord Loch for an autobiography, but never published).

⁵ A useful contemporary word for describing briefly the area that now comprises Rhodesia.

⁶ Symbolized best, perhaps, by the Aborigines Protection Society - a body whose name indicates the nature of its involvement - and, on the other hand, by men like Rev. John Mackenzie, who believed deeply in the Imperial mission, and who deplored the abandonment of this mission to commercial interests.

⁷ L05/2/0, Harris to London Board, 21 October 1889.

⁸ Harris to Thompson, 25 July 1889 (quoted in 'Matabele Thompson', pp.151-2).

⁹ It is easy, with what is known of Harris' ebullience and wild schemes, to play down the importance of what he was saying. To do so, however, would be to ignore the great importance which Jameson attached to Harris' proposed Portuguese policy during his stay in Bulawayo (October 1889 - February 1890). See CT1/13/6, Jameson to Harris, 1 November 1889, 6 November 1889, 14 November 1889, 21 November 1889, 7 December 1889, 8 February 1890.

- 10 Loch, p.73, 23 December 1889.
- 11 It is difficult to escape the impression that at the time he wrote this letter (23 December 1889) Loch was already under the influence of Rhodes' persuasive powers. Whatever immediate Portuguese threat existed was to be quickly dispelled by Lord Salisbury's ultimatum of 10 January 1890 (C.5904, no.282, Salisbury to Petre, 10 January 1890 - a diplomatic move which, one feels, might have suggested itself to Loch also).
- 12 MA23/1/1, Rhodes to Maund, 7 September 1889. See also P. Mason, The Birth of a Dilemma, p.128: 'It [the Charter] depended on the existence of concession as a paper economy depends on bullion somewhere.'
- 13 C.5918, Enclosure in no.101, Lobengula to Queen Victoria, 23 April 1889.
- 14 C.5918, Enclosure in no.106, Maguire to Rhodes, 21 June 1889.
- 15 MA23/1/1, Secretary, Exploring Company, to Maund, 14 June 1889.
- 16 L05/2/0, Harris to London Board, 8 October 1889.
- 17 Extract from Rudd Concession.
- 18 It is doubtful whether Rhodes shared the expressed view of Sir Sidney Shippard that 'in native wars the actual losses in mortality and bloodshed would be lessened by the use of firearms'. It is more likely that he agreed with Sir Hercules Robinson, whose argument was that Lobengula would get guns from the Transvaal if the British refused to supply them. (CO African (South), no.369/106, Robinson to Knutsford, 26 December 1889).
- 19 Cobbing, 'The Rudd Concession Rifles', Rhodesian History. Vol. 3, 1972, p.
- 20 MA1/3/1, Rhodes to Maxwell, 28 September 1889.
- 21 Cobbing, 'The Rudd Concession Rifles', p.78.
- 22 R.U. Moffat, John Smith Moffat, pp.221-3; 'As a military power it will be a blessing to the world when they are broken up'. 'The Natabele are a miserable people, and have made myriads of other people miserable, too'.
- 23 Ibid., p.247. See also M01/1/6, Moffat to Miss Unwin, 21 July 1889: 'There is absolutely no-one with whom it is any pleasure to associate except the representatives of the Rhodes Company, who are respectable men'.
- 24 C.5918, Enclosure in no.101, Lobengula to Queen Victoria, 23 April 1889.
- 25 C.5918, Enclosure in no.131, Moffat to Shippard, 28 August 1889.
- 26 Mason, p.136.
- 27 S. Samkange, The Origins of Rhodesia, p.160.
- 28 G. Preller, Lobengula, p.162.
- 29 L03/2.

30 B011/1/1, ff.596+, 30 September 1889.

31 Ibid., ff.631, 1 November 1889.

32 J.R.D. Cobbing, 'Jameson and the Occupation of Mashonaland', Rhodesian History, vol.4, 1973, p.43. Cobbing suggests that Rhodes started negotiations with Johnson for 'a direct assault on the Ndebele Kingdom' only in the first week of December. The evidence for much earlier discussions is, however, very strong. See also 'Aspects of the Scramble for Matabeleland' in E. Stokes and R. Brown (eds), The Zambesian Past, p.88.

33 J03/6. Typescript of a 'Memorandum of a Confidential Agreement made and entered this 7th day of December 1889 ...'

34 Cobbing, 'The Occupation of Mashonaland', p.44.

35 Brown, p.86. See also H.M. Hole, The Passing of the Black Kings, p.231.

36 CT1/13/6, Jameson to Harris, 8 January 1890.

37 Ibid., Jameson to Harris, 30 January 1890.

38 In other words, to be safely out of Matabeleland when the strike took place (in about April 1890).

39 CT1/13/6, Jameson to Harris, 1 November, 6 November, 7 December 1889. (The underlinings are by the author). See also CT1/13/6, Jameson to Rhodes (telegram), 24 October 1889: 'Moffat very urgent that no movement should take place from your end till matters here settled, as natives already on the qui vive'.

40 See footnote 38.

41 CT1/13/6, Jameson to Harris, 6 November 1889. See also A.G. Leonard, How we made Rhodesia, pp.244-6, for Jameson's views on morality in politics.

42 Mason, p.136.

43 CT1/13/6, Jameson to Harris, 28 November 1889.

44 F. Johnson, Great Days, p.64.

45 CT1/13/6, Jameson to Harris, 2 October 1889.

46 c.f. Cobbing, 'The Occupation of Mashonaland', p.40; 'It must be emphasised that Jameson travelled to Bulawayo upon the assumption that the written Rudd Concession was, at least as far as Lobengula was concerned, dead'.

47 CT1/13/6, Jameson to Harris, 24 October 1889.

48 Ibid., Jameson to Harris, 1 November 1889.

49 Ibid.

50 For example, Johnson speaks of the concentration of forces taking place on the Shashi river, whereas Jameson's plans relate to the Ramaquabane.

- 51 See Robert Cary, Charter Royal. Ch. 2, for many examples of Johnson's unreliable memory.
- 52 CT1/13/6, Jameson to Harris, 1 November 1889.
- 53 P.R. Harhurst, An Anglo-Portuguese Relations : South-Central Africa, p.8.
- 54 CT1/13/6, Jameson to Harris, 6 November 1889.
- 55 It had, in fact, been granted on 29 October.
- 56 CT1/13/6, Jameson to Harris, 21 November 1889.
- 57 Ibid., Jameson to Harris, 20 December 1889.
- 58 Ibid., Jameson to Harris, 12 December 1889.
- 59 Ibid., Jameson to Harris, 21 November 1889.
- 60 Ibid., Jameson to Harris, 23 November 1889.
- 61 Ibid., Jameson to Harris, 28 November 1889.
- 62 Ibid., Jameson to Harris, 7 December 1889.
- 63 Who was responsible for the arrangements for the official party.
- 64 CT1/13/5, Jameson to Harris, 12 December 1889.
- 65 Particularly as Jameson gives no evidence of the direction in which Lobengula was facing at the time. The whole incident is clearly absurd, and one must agree with Cobbing, 'The Occupation of Mashonaland', p.42, that the gesture, if indeed it was made as described, was the 'specious, last-resort expedition of an impatient man'.
- 66 CT1/13/6, Jameson to Harris, 12 December 1889: 'Moffat says he looks upon it as a ratification ... at all events as near a ratification as it is possible to get from a Kaffir'.
- 67 Ibid., Jameson to Harris, 1 November 1889: 'Maund is like a spoilt child, constantly worrying around for Kudos, but a very decent fellow and a great relief to go and see or have dinner with after hobnobbing with most of the whites up here.'
- 68 Cobbing, 'The Occupation of Mashonaland', p.44.
- 69 L05/2/0, Harris to London Board, 25 November 1889.
- 70 CT1/13/6, Jameson to Harris, 7 December 1889: 'As to the expedition to come in from the north in June, we are very glad to hear it is in preparation'
- 71 L05/2/0, Harris to London Board, 9 December 1889. Selous had led a small expedition (via the Zambesi) which had obtained a mining concession in the Mazoe Valley. See Cary, Charter Royal, pp.48-52; also F.C. Selous, Travel and Adventure in South-East Africa. Chs. XIV-XVI.

- 72 Cobbing, 'The Occupation of Mashon land', p.43.
- 73 Stokes and Brown, p.88.
- 74 See above, p.6.
- 75 L05/2/0, Harris to London Board, 9 December 1889.
- 76 Selous, Travel and Adventure, p.312. See also CO African (South), no.372/91 for a letter from Rev. John Mackenzie to the Colonial Office (8 June 1889) in which Mackenzie put forward this route as the best way of reaching the gold 'without interfering with the Matabele economy'. It is certainly possible that Selous, who was in London in May 1889, met Mackenzie and discussed potential entry routes with him.
- 77 Selous, Travel and Adventure, p.357.
- 78 Ibid., p.312.
- 79 See Loch, p.109+, for evidence that Rhodes' invasion plans were sufficiently far advanced for him to have given Khama full details of the intended military expedition.
- 80 CT1/20/1, Johnson to Harris, 12 December 1889.
- 81 SE1/1/1, Selous to his mother, 22 December 1889.
- 82 L08/3/1, Rhodes to Duke of Abercorn, 30 March 1890.
- 83 See also CT2/11/1, Harris to Johnson, 9 December 1889. This letter gives many details of the preparations for the armed assault on Matabeleland, and then uses the phrase: 'I hope Selous will stick fast. Shall I suggest a salary for him as I am sure Rhodes would give it'. The strong implication is that Selous - even after putting forward his plan for a peaceful entry - was prepared to join Rhodes, Johnson and others whether or not his own particular plan was adopted.
- 84 This date is given in CT2/11/1, Harris to Hepburn, 17 January 1890.
- 85 Selous, Travel and Adventure, p.311.
- 86 CT2/11/1, Harris to Hepburn, 17 January 1890.
- 87 L05/2/0, Harris to London Board, 1 January 1890.
- 88 Ibid., Harris to London Board, 13 January 1890.
- 89 Ibid., Harris to London Board, 24 March 1890. See also Loch, p.102, for a letter dated 18 March 1890 in which Harris, writing to the Imperial Secretary, contemptuously refers to 'the dribbling in of small prospecting parties'.
- 90 CT1/13/10, Moffat to Harris, 12 September 1889.
- 91 L06/1/5, Helm to W. Thompson, 20 December, 1889.

- ⁹² Sankonge maintains (p.165) that Jameson 'was still secretly working on the plan to murder Lobengula' and that his visit to Tati was to supervise the build-up of the invasion force. It seems more likely, however, that by this time Jameson was concerned to ensure that Johnson's continuing preparations would not upset his own new plans for peaceful penetration.
- ⁹³ CT1/13/6, Jameson to Harris, 20 December 1889.
- ⁹⁴ Ibid., Jameson to Harris, 17 January 1890.
- ⁹⁵ Ibid., Jameson to Harris, 12 December 1889.
- ⁹⁶ Ibid., Jameson to Harris, 8 January 1890.
- ⁹⁷ Ibid., Jameson to Harris, 17 January 1890.
- ⁹⁸ Hole, The Making of Rhodesia, pp.123-4. A copy of the Queen's letter is in Mathers, pp.295-6.
- ⁹⁹ CT1/13/6, Jameson to Harris, 30 January 1890.
- ¹⁰⁰ I. Colvin, Life of Jameson. vol. 1, p.120.
- ¹⁰¹ CT1/13/4-5, Doyle to Harris, 8 February 1890.
- ¹⁰² Ibid., Doyle to Harris, 15 February, 20 February, 13 March 1890.
- ¹⁰³ CT1/13/6, Jameson to Harris, 31 January 1890.
- ¹⁰⁴ The suggestion that Lobengula would have been willing at this stage to give carte blanche is rendered even more unlikely by Doyle's remarks about the King's suspicions of the Queen's letter.
- ¹⁰⁵ See Cobbing, 'The Occupation of Mashonaland', p.45, for Colenbrander's view that Lobengula only gave permission to dig at Massibis on the Crocodile river.
- ¹⁰⁶ CT1/13/4-5, Doyle to Harris, 27 February 1890.
- ¹⁰⁷ Colvin, vol.1, p.129.
- ¹⁰⁸ Loch, pp.84-90.
- ¹⁰⁹ Ibid., p.93, Loch to Knutsford, 16 February 1890.
- ¹¹⁰ Ibid., p.94, Knutsford to Loch (Telegram), 10 March 1890.
- ¹¹¹ Preller, p.171.
- ¹¹² J03/6. Typescript of proposed Chapters 1-6 of Great Days: 'I was then taken to Government House to confirm Rhodes' innocence, he having previously told me: "You must take everything on yourself"'.
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- ¹¹³ Loch, p.102, Harris to Imperial Secretary, 18 March 1890.
- ¹¹⁴ Cobbing, 'The Occupation of Mashonaland', pp.46-7, maintains that Jameson was annoyed and impatient at the British Government's withholding of permission to advance. He gives no direct evidence in support of this argument.

- 115 CT1/13/4-5, Doyle to Harris, 27 February 1890.
- 116 Ibid., Doyle to Harris, 13 March 1890.
- 117 Quoted in Samkange, pp.170-3.
- 118 Selous, Travel and Adventure, p.358. See also Samkange (p.178+) for an account of the diplomatic complications inherent in this whole issue - complications of which Selous seems to have been blissfully unaware.
- 119 CT1/13/4-5, Doyle to Harris, 20 March 1890.
- 120 Selous, Travel and Adventure, p.359.
- 121 CT1/13/4-5, Doyle to Harris, 20 March 1890.
- 122 See CT1/13/6, Jameson to Harris, 22 April 1890, for clear evidence that Jameson had by then accepted that the Pioneer Column would advance, regardless of whether Lobengula or not.
- 123 Jameson to Sam Jameson, 10 April 1890 (quoted in Colvin, vol. 1, p.129).
- 124 CT1/13/4-5, Doyle to Harris, 15 April 1890.
- 125 CT1/13/6, Jameson to Harris, 30 April 1890.
- 126 Ibid., Jameson to Harris, 5 May 1890. See also CT1/13/6, Jameson to Harris, 29 May 1890, for a clear indication that by the end of April the die was cast regardless of what attitude Lobengula took: 'Supposing the most cordial assent had been given - the same precautions now being taken would have been required, as it is impossible to tell what evil intention is lurking behind a Kaffir's mind'.