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INTERNATIONAL CONTEXT OF THE CREATION OF BECHUANALAND PROTECTORATE IN 1885*

Introduction

In 1884 Cecil Rhodes declared: „Bechuanaland is the neck of the bottle and commands the route to the Zambesi. We must secure it, unless we are prepared to see the whole of the North pass out of our hands... I do not want to part with the key of the interior, leaving us settled on this small peninsula”¹.

For the same reason Rhodes called Bechuanaland the Suez Canal and in 1883 said: „I look upon this Bechuanaland territory as the Suez Canal of the trade of this country (sc. Cape Colony), the key of its road to the interior”². He also told the Cape parliament that that Suez Canal led to a land beyond the Transvaal (sc. later Rhodesia), which had great prospects. For him, Bechuanaland was the key to the interior and the little-known reaches beyond. „I solemnly warn this House – he said – that if it departs from the control of the interior, we shall fall from the position of the paramount state in south Africa, which is our right in every scheme of federal union in the future, to that of minor state”³.

* The topic of this article was already discussed by me in „Africana Bulletin”, nr 47, Warszawa 1999.

¹ R. I. Rotberg, *The Founder: Cecil Rhodes and the Pursuit of Power*, Oxford: University Press (dalej Univ. Pr.), 1988, pp. 163-4.

² *Ibidem*, p. 152.

³ Vindex (pseud. of John Vorschöyle), *Cecil Rhodes: His Political Life and Speeches, 1881 – 1900*, London: Chapman and Hall, 1900, pp. 62-69. For the general background see: D. M. Schreuder, *The Scramble for Southern Africa, 1877 – 1895: The Politics of Partition Reappraised*, Cambridge: Univ. Pr., 1980; A. Sillery, *Founding a Protectorate: History of Bechuanaland, 1885 – 1895*, London: Mouton and Co, 1965; P. Maylam, *Rhodes, the Tswana, and the British: Collaboration, and Conflict in the Bechuanaland Protectorate, 1885-1899*, London: Greenwood Pr., 1980. Among more recent publications of special value is K. Shillington, *The Colonisation of the Southern Tswana, 1870 – 1900*, Braamfontein: Rvan Pr., 1985.

Cecil Rhodes desperately sought to keep the road northward free of interference from the Transvaal and Germany. His political activities, together with other factors, made the Cape parliament favour Bechuanaland's annexation by the Cape Colony. Urging the Cape parliament to prevent the Transvaal from acquiring the whole of the interior, he repeated his words about the role of Bechuanaland as the Suez Canal and the neck of the bottle that commands the route to the Zambesi from the South⁴. In 1884 the British government, after some hesitations, have accepted the notion that Bechuanaland was very vital to British. In 1885 general Charles Warren's expedition to Bechuanaland took place and the Bechuanaland Protectorate was created.

The question arises what was the wider political context of those developments? How dangerous was the Transvaal and German expansionist policy to British position in Southern Africa? Was Cecil Rhodes only expressing the British fears or was he rather looking for justification of Britain's imperial plans in that area? Was the annexation of Bechuanaland mainly the British expansionist move or a defensive strategy against a possible Transvaal-German alliance?

In this short article I would like to examine the international background of British expansion which led to the creation of Bechuanaland Protectorate in 1885. First, I am going to discuss the role of missionaries in British imperialist policy in Southern Africa and then the clash of British, Transvaal and German interests in that part of Africa.

It is an interpretative article on a polemical issue. Its aim is not to discover new facts but rather to critically analyse and systematize the historiographical material from the point of view of the role of the Transvaal and German expansion in Southern Africa in the British decision to occupy Bechuanaland. The polemical edge of this article is mainly directed against the opinion of R. Robinson and J. Gallagher who thought that the danger of German-Transvaal alliance for Britain was only „imagined”⁵ and were minimizing that factor.

In this article also the missionary factor is more extensively examined than, for instance, in J. Butler's article of 1967⁶, which is practically the only earlier attempt to discuss more directly the German and Transvaal expansion from the point of view of British policy in Southern Africa.

⁴ There is among historians and writers a tendency to overemphasize the role of Cecil Rhodes in British policy at the end of the 19th century. One should agree with K. Shillington that „historians have generally followed the eulogies of Rhodes's numerous biographers in taking his political utterances at face value”. See K. Shillington, *op. cit.*, pp. 155.

⁵ R. Robinson and J. Gallagher, *Africa and the Victorians: The Official Mond of Imperialism*, London: Macmillan, 1961, pp. 208-48.

⁶ J. Butler, *The German Factor in Anglo-Transvaal Relations*, in *Britain and Germany in Africa: Imperial Rivalry and Colonial Rule*, ed. P. Gifford and W. R. Louis, Yale: Univ. Pr., 1967.

The Missionary Factor and British Imperial Interests in Southern Africa

The 19th-century Bechuanaland is a good example of the well known observation that quite often „the cross came before the flag” in European expansion in Africa at that time. Before political interests of Britain, the Transvaal and Germany clashed in that area, the missionaries had been the first to „discover” Bechuanaland for the West. They also were the first to connect religious and imperialist aims of Europeans in their African expansion.

The relationship between Christian missions, African societies and European expansion has been examined many times since the pioneer work of Roland Oliver on the missionary factor in East Africa⁷. Of similar importance are the studies of J. F. Ade Ajayi for Nigeria⁸, Robert I. Rotberg for Northern Rhodesia⁹ and many others. For Bechuanaland let me quote A. Sillery’s work on John Mackenzie¹⁰ and also a short article of Anthony J. Dachs on missionary imperialism which focuses on Bechuanaland¹¹.

There is no need here to examine the early and not very successful efforts of missionaries of the London Missionary Society who from the beginning of the 19th century (for instance James Read, John Campbell and others) were active in Bechuanaland. What is important to note is that throughout the 19th century the Tswana were showing suspicion and even hostility to radical change. In 1878 the southern Tswana even rose in arms against alien pressures on their life and customs, rejecting social and economic change which had followed missionary settlements. The Tswana were interested in developing trade with the newcomers but on condition that they would not preach the new religion and the new concept of life. They rejected any foreign attempts to change the old way of life. They easily discovered that foreign preaching was undermining the Tswana life, their social and political system and they feared that the missionaries aimed at changing their customs and beliefs. More successful than in spreading Christian religion were the missionaries in introducing better methods of irrigation and cultivation but this area is beyond our discussion here.

What should be, however, emphasized is the fact that the power to which

⁷ R. Oliver, *The Missionary Factor in East Africa*, London: Longmans, 1952.

⁸ J. F. Ade Ajayi, *Christian Missions in Nigeria, 1841 – 1891*, London: Longmans, 1965.

⁹ R. I. Rotberg, *Christian Missions and the Creation of Northern Rhodesia, 1880 – 1924*, Princeton: Univ. Pr., 1965.

¹⁰ A. Sillery, *John Mackenzie of Bechuanaland, 1835 – 1899*, Cape Town: Balkema, 1971.

¹¹ A. J. Dachs, *Missionary Imperialism – The Case of Bechuanaland*, *Journal of African Studies*: XIII, 1972, pp. 647-658.

the missionaries looked was the secular force of British imperialism¹². Already since the middle of the 19th century they called upon the British government to preserve their mission field from Boer expansion from the Transvaal. David Livingstone directed his efforts to the north to occupy the interior before the Transvaal settlers could spread their influence there. For Livingstone such a pre-occupation was the only remedy.

It was the missionary concept of the „Road to the North”¹³ that became so much connected with Rhodes’s view of Bechuanaland as the „Suez Canal” and which had such a strong appeal to the British and, first of all, Cape government. This was originally the missionary view that in terms of secular politics the road along the Bechuanaland mission stations was the key to the balance between British colonies and Boer republics¹⁴. The view that missionary settlement, imperial security and commercial interests were associated with each other had, of course a strong appeal to the British public and government. It was David Livingstone who demanded the exercise of British power to protect the „English route to the North”.

From the above remarks it is clear that British missionaries in Bechuanaland attached an imperial importance to the achievements of their missionary activities. When John Mackenzie, the celebrated humanitarian imperialist and missionary, wrote in 1876 that „the old feudal power of the native chiefs is opposed to Christianity”¹⁵, he was strengthening British imperial aims with religious argumentation. He believed that to make Bechuanaland Christian, the missionaries had to make it first British.

Of greater appeal for the British government was the discovery of gold in the Ngwato country in 1868 which made the missionaries more optimistic about the British direct involvement in Bechuanaland. John Mackenzie even called on Englishmen to fill the country and exploit its gold for imperial purposes. This celebrated missionary was thinking along economic lines when he wrote in 1868 that Bechuanaland „must and will be opened up. It contains gold”.

In his popular book „Ten Years North of the Orange River”¹⁶ Mackenzie called for the British occupation of BaTswana territory for the protection of its

¹² Ibidem, p. 649. There are some good observations about the work of missionaries in Bechuanaland in J. M. Chirenje, *A History of Northern Botswana, 1850 – 1910*, London: Associated Univ. Pr., 1977.

¹³ The old work J. A. I. Agar-Hamilton, *The Road to the North*, London: Longmans Green, 1937, is still valuable in spite of its fragmentary character.

¹⁴ For more details see A. J. Dachs, *The Road to the North: The Origins and Force of a Slogan*, „Central Africa Historical Association”, 23, 1969.

¹⁵ A. J. Dachs, *Missionary Imperialism...*, p. 650.

¹⁶ J. Mackenzie, *Ten Years North of the Orange River, 1859-1869*, London: Frank Cass, 1971.

inhabitants threatened, as he thought, by the Tati gold rush. This British missionary was also aware of another growing threat, that of Cape colonial and Boer filibuster land-grabbing. Mackenzie became very much involved in writing and lecturing to reach a British audience and in 1884 he was appointed a deputy Commissioner for Bechuanaland. Because of his opposition to the Cape Colony government he was, however, soon dismissed by the High Commissioner in the Cape Colony, Hercules Robinson. Mackenzie was of the opinion that Bechuanaland should be in future ruled by the British not from the Cape Colony but directly from London and that not local freebooters but English farmers should develop the area. He succeeded in convincing General Charles Warren to his ideas and even accompanied him in 1885 on his expedition to establish the Bechuanaland Protectorate¹⁷.

The missionaries welcomed to Bechuanaland the British expedition of Charles Warren and it was the mission press that printed the notice calling on the Tswana to surrender. They argued that the intervention of a British administration was essential to peace, to preserve order between the races, to maintain the Road to the North from the Transvaal and to promote change. Using religious arguments they maintain that the British occupation of Bechuanaland was the precondition of its Christianization. Like in other parts of Africa, religious and political factors were closely interwoven in the missionary work also in Bechuanaland.

From the 1870s the missionaries to the Tswana had concluded that they had to do all they could to bring in the imperial government to promote as well as protect their religious work. But, at the same time, to quote A. J. Dachs, „the missionaries were as much agents of alien political expansion as traders, consuls and concession hunters. By their settlement they threatened independence; by their methods they eroded custom, integrity and authority; by their connexions they invited the imperial replacement of resistant African rule”¹⁸. Their main thrust was, of course, the spreading of Christianity and Christian education. But those other aspects and by-products of their activities should not be overlooked as sometimes was the case in older historiography.

¹⁷ See A. Sillery, *John Mackenzie of Bechuanaland...* It is still the most important work on the British missionary and his political role on the eve of the founding the Bechuanaland Protectorate in 1885. An important source for that period is J. Mackenzie, *Austral Africa: Losing It or Ruling It...*, 2 vols, New York: Negro Univ. Pr., 1969 (its first edition was published in London in 1887).

¹⁸ A. J. Dachs, *Missionary Imperialism...*, p. 658.

German-Transvaal Factor and the British Expansion in Southern Africa

Cecil Rhodes, the architect of British policy in Southern Africa, declared in 1897 before the Select Committee of the House of Commons, that he was really responsible for the conspiracy to overthrow the government of the Transvaal in 1895 because he was convinced that the Transvaal was trying to introduce the influence of another foreign power into the already complicated system of South Africa. By another foreign power he meant Germany¹⁹. The analysis of Transvaal and German policy in Southern Africa in the early 1880s allows to find the answer to the question: why Britain decided to create the Bechuanaland Protectorate and the crown colony of British Bechuanaland in 1885?

The German-Transvaal danger for British domination in Southern Africa was often exaggerated in older historiography which was taking official statements of the British government without much criticism. Ronald Robinson and John Gallagher have even argued that the German threat in Southern Africa was rather „imagined” in 1884 and that German interference had never been a serious menace to British supremacy in that region²⁰. Of more moderate opinion is R.I. Lovell²¹ and those historians who think that the German factor was important only in periods of acute conflict between Britain and Germany on Southern African issues. The last opinion seems to be much closer to the truth and the short period in 1884-5, when the future of Bechuanaland was settled by the British, belonged to such periods. It was also only at the end of the 19th century that the German interests in Southern Africa became important again and induced the British government to return to the policy of intervention in the Transvaal.

¹⁹ The old work of R. R. Bixler, *Anglo-German Imperialism in South Africa, 1880-1900*, Baltimore, 1932, is still of interest. More recent is J. Butler, *op. cit.*, See also W. R. Louis, *Great Britain and German Expansion in Africa*, in *Britain and Germany in Africa: Imperial Rivalry and Colonial Rule*, ed. P. Gifford and Wm. R. Louis, New Haven, Conn.: Yale Univ. Pr., 1967, pp. 3-46. For a more general background see H. A. Turner, *Bismarck's Imperialist Venture: Anti-British Origin?*, pp. 47-82. In German historical literature quite useful is W. Westphal, *Geschichte der deutschen Kolonien*, München: Bertelsmann Verlag, 1984, pp. 2-35, 330-333. Among more recent monographic studies of special value is D.M. Schreuder, *The Scramble for Southern Africa, 1877-1895* (quoted above). For a comparative discussion of great interest is still C. W. De Kiewiet, *The Imperial Factor in South Africa: A Study in Politics and Economics*, London: Frank Cass, 1965. For a little later period see A. J. Dachs, *Rhodes's Grasp for Bechuanaland, 1889-1896*, in *Rhodesian History*, II, 1971, pp. 1-9.

²⁰ R. Robinson and J. Gallagher, *op. cit.*, p. 208.

²¹ R. I. Lovell, *The Struggle for South Africa, 1875-1899*, New York, 1934. See also D. W. Kruger, *The British Imperial Factor in South Africa from 1870 to 1900*, in *Colonialism in Africa, 1870-1914*, ed. L. H. Gann and P. Duignan, Cambridge: Univ. Pr., 1977.

In the light of more recent research one has to agree with D. M. Schreuder²² that the German factor has been rather underrated than exaggerated in studies on Southern Africa for the period before 1885, especially in British historiography dealing with the British expansion in Southern Africa in the 1880s and the German-Transvaal connection.

Let us start from the examination of the Transvaal factor. During the period under discussion Afrikaner nationalism was on the rise and the ideal of Young Afrikaner Party was a united South Africa. In the same direction was working the Afrikaner Bond founded in 1879. Its aim was the establishment of a Federal Afrikaner Republic and the expulsion of the „English usurper” by arms and with the aid of foreign powers (especially Germany), by boycotting English people and English trade, by protecting the interests of the Boer farmers and by the assertion of Afrikaans language²³. The idea was to make the Transvaal „the paramount Power” and to eliminate from there the power of Great Britain.

In search of new farms the Boers penetrated on their own hand the borders eastwards, and from 1882 onwards into Zululand, taking up land for farming. In due time they founded the New Republic there. On the western frontier they trekked into Bechuanaland, instigating the quarrels of rival Batlhaping and Barolong chiefs. They were rewarded with grants of land by those whom they supported. Since the 1840s Dutch-speaking traders and hunters from the Transvaal already moved through parts of Eastern Bechuanaland, settling in Molepolole. Some of them seized the Batlhaping land ruled by Mankurwane and created the independent Republic of Stellaland around Vryburg. They also took Barolong land near Mafikeng and called it the Republic of Goshen. In 1884 Paul Kruger, the ruler of Transvaal, tried to make Goshen part of the Transvaal.

All those movements made it clear to the British government that the Road to the North was in danger, that the expansion of the Transvaal threatened to cut the Cape Colony off from that connection – the only trade route to the North.

At the same time the German increasing interest in Southern Africa

²² D. M. Schreuder, *Gladstone and Kruger: Liberal Government and „Home Rule”, 1885–1895*, London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1969. In German historiography consult I. J. Demhardt, *Die Errichtung der deutschen Herrschaft über Südwestafrika und die Entstehung ihrer kolonialen Grenzlinien, in Namibia: ausgewählte Themen der Exkursionen 1988*, ed. H. Lamping, Frankfurt/M 1989.

²³ T. R. H. Devenport, *The Afrikaner Bond: The History of South African Political Party, 1880–1911*, Cape Town: Oxford Univ. Pr., 1966. For general background see S. Marks, *Southern Africa, 1867–1886*, in *The Cambridge History of Africa*, 6, ed. R. Oliver and G. N. Sanderson, Cambridge: Univ. Pr., 1985, pp. 359 ff.

gradually started to endanger the British position there. In 1880 Sir Bartle Frere, High Commissioner for South Africa, sent to the Colonial Office in London an article of Ernst von Weber, a German writer and politician in which Weber was urging the establishment of a German colony in the Transvaal²⁴. Weber suggested a German settlement in Matabeleland, where the Boers might join their German kindred in a colony free from British interference.

At the beginning of the 1800s the number of Germans in Southern Africa was still very small but already since the 1860s German entrepreneurs played an important role in the development of diamonds fields there. Of great interest is the case of F. A. E. Lüderitz²⁵, a leading German merchant from Bremen very much interested in overseas trade, who established a post at Angra Pequena in South West Africa in 1883, and a year later tried to gain concessions at St. Lucia Bay (between Durban and Delagoa Bay)²⁶.

Already in the 1870s German missionaries and merchants (especially from Hamburg and Bremen) began to take an interest in the Transvaal, encouraged by Ernst von Weber who in 1875, together with Lüderitz led a delegation to Bismarck to urge the establishment of a German colony in the Transvaal. They received, however, a discouraging reply because at the time Bismarck was not yet fully interested in German colonial expansion in Africa (gradually he changed drastically his policy in this matter)²⁷. But the idea of German colonies in Southern Africa had already an increasing number of followers in Germany. Friedrich Fabri's book *Bedarf Deutschland Kolonien?* (Does Germany Need Colonies?), published in 1879 in Berlin, caused in Germany agitation for the acquisition of colonies and brought about the intensification of the colonial spirit²⁸. In the same year German mis-

²⁴ J. Butler, *op. cit.*, p. 185.

²⁵ I. Goldblatt, *History of South West Africa from the Beginning of the Nineteenth Century*, Cape Town: Juta and Co., 1971, pp. 80ff.

²⁶ K. Mbuende, *Namibia – the Broken Shield: Anatomy of Imperialism and Revolution*, Lund: Liber, 1986, pp. 47ff.

²⁷ This topic is extensively discussed by P. M. Kennedy, *The Rise of the Anglo-German Antagonism, 1860 – 1914*, London: George Allen and Unwin, 1980, pp. 166-183. Kennedy shows that the top British ministers of that time, Gladstone and Granville, only after some time understood that Bismarck seriously intended to annex overseas territories. *Ibid.*, p. 178. See also the old work of W. O. Aydelott, *Bismarck and British Colonial Policy: The Problem of South West Africa, 1883 – 1885*, Westport, Conn., 1970. It is the reprint of the 1937 edition, pp. 19ff. Still of interest is A. J. P. Taylor, *Germany's First Bid for Colonies, 1884 – 1885*, London: Macmillan, 1938.

²⁸ Among more recent publications see K. J. Bade, *Imperial Germany and West Africa: Colonial Movement, Business Interest, and Bismarck's Colonial Policies*, in *Bismarck, Europe, and Africa: The Berlin Africa Conference 1884 – 1885 and the Onset of Partition*, ed. S. Forster, W. J. Mommsen and R. Robinson, Oxford: Univ. Pr., 1988, pp. 121ff. Still valuable is old German study by G. Königk, *Die Berliner Kongo-Konferenz 1884 – 1885: Ein Beitrag zur Kolonialpolitik Bismarcks*, Essen: Essener Verlagsanstalt, 1938. Of great importance is H. U. Wehler, *Bismarck und Imperialismus*, München, 1976, which gives the contemporary German point of view. The same is true about J. A. S. Philips,

sionaries in South Africa were trying to get Bismarck to make some annexations (the problem of Damaraland)²⁹.

In 1882 the Deutscher Kolonialverein (German Colonial Society) and in 1884 the Gesellschaft für Deutsche Kolonisation (Society for German Colonisation) were organized and began to mobilize a wave of colonial enthusiasm in Germany and enlist financial support for colonial expansion. Their main argument was that German economy would be able to overcome stagnation only by securing colonial sources for raw materials and markets for German finished goods.

German intention of creating a powerful German colony in Central and Southern Africa began to appear in Berlin colonial propaganda already in 1880. It influenced early attempts to expand the German „protectorates” along the coast toward the inland regions of the African continent. It was expected – writes a contemporary German historian Helmuth Stoecker from the University of Berlin – that those German attempts of obtaining vast colonies, uniting large stretches of African territories, would offer access to the markets of the African interior³⁰. Britain’s decision to create the Bechuanaland Protectorate in 1885 was made – writes Stoecker – „to forestall Germany”³¹.

There is no need to mention about different German moves towards the acquisition of colonies in Southern Africa in the late 1870s and early 1880s. On 24 April 1884, Bismarck had instructed the consul at Cape Town that Lüderitz and his settlement were under the protection of Germany. A German warship patrolled the Cape coast. Yet the British Foreign Secretary, Lord Granville stated in the House of Lords on 12 May 1884 that Germany had not claimed sovereignty over any part of South Africa. But already a few weeks later, the German protectorate of South West Africa was declared. The danger of German-Transvaal alliance was becoming real³².

It seems that the hesitant and not very consistent character of British foreign policy in Southern Africa in the early 1880s was the result of much broader international issues. The occupation of Egypt in 1882 and rivalry with France over colonies in Africa, conflicts with Russia in Asia, etc., „had

Deutsch-englische Komödie der Irrungen um Südwestafrika: eine Studie zu Bismarcks Kolonialpolitik und deren Folgen, Pfaffenhofen: Afrika Verlag, 1986.

²⁹ I. Goldblatt, *op. cit.*, p. 80.

³⁰ H. Stoecker, *The Quest for German Central Africa*, in *German Imperialism, in Africa*, London: C. Hurst, 1986, p. 250. It is the English translation of the German edition which appeared under the title *Drang nach Afrika*, a few years earlier, Berlin 1977.

³¹ H. Stoecker, *op. cit.*, p. 250. Among studies written by German historians see also W. Windelband, *Bismarck und die europäischen Großmächte, 1879–1885*, Essen 1940, and also K. J. Bade, *Friedrich Fabri und der Imperialismus der Bismarckzeit*, Freiburg 1975.

³² I. Goldblatt, *op. cit.*, pp. 80-99.

absorbed British forces with the result that Britain was not interested in additional frictions or conflicts with Germany over comparatively unimportant matters³³. Some historians in discussing political issues of Southern Africa at the end of the 19th century quite often forget about that broader context of British imperial policy.

From the British point of view, the real danger for the British position in Southern Africa was coming with the possible German alliance with Boers trekking west, which could form a Teutonic belt across the continent, making the future British expansion there very difficult if not impossible. The Transvaal delegation which in 1883 visited Germany, negotiated for a loan in Berlin. The German flag had been hoisted over the settlement founded by Lüderitz, Germans were preparing their interference in the Zululand. Bismarck invited the Boer delegates to Berlin and they were received by the Kaiser, to whom Kruger spoke about his own German origin. He also assured the German emperor that in case of need he would be faithful to the tradition of looking to Germany for help. The visit was followed by the conclusion of a treaty of amity and commerce between Germany and the Transvaal.

The creation of the German South West Africa (Namibia) in 1884 strengthened only the seriousness of German presence in Southern Africa for British political plans and aspirations. The very presence of Germans in South West Africa gave a new dimension to the political geography of Southern Africa and seemed to undermine the balance of power there, so much favourable earlier for Britain³⁴. „By bringing South-West Africa into the German Empire – writes D.M. Schreuder – Bismarck had soon drawn all South Africa into the vagaries of international relations and politics³⁵. Such developments were making Britain more vulnerable to German and Boer challenge along the Indian Ocean rim of South Africa.

All these and other developments only convinced Cecil Rhodes and the British government more strongly about the need to counteract the German and Transvaal expansion. It led to a better understanding of the importance of Bechuanaland as the Suez Canal in that area³⁶. A little earlier a kind of a Monroe Doctrine for Africa was developed in England in the interest of the British monopoly there. Already in 1875 Lord Carnarvon, the British Colonial Secretary wrote: „I should not like anyone to come too near us on the South

³³ I. Geiss, *German Foreign Policy, 1871 – 1914*, London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1976, p. 49.

³⁴ D. M. Schreuder, *The Scramble for Southern Africa...*, pp. 155ff.

³⁵ *Ibidem*, p. 134.

³⁶ A. Sillery, *Botswana: A Political History*, London: Methuen 1974, pays very little attention to the international context of the creation of the Bechuanaland protectorate. The same is true about A. Sillery, *Founding a Protectorate: History of Bechuanaland ...*

towards the Transvaal, which must be ours; or on the North to near to Egypt... To a considerable extent if not entirely we must be prepared to apply a sort of Munro (sic – should be Monroe) doctrine for Africa”³⁷.

In Cape Colony there were in 1884 more and more voices encouraging Britain to annex the whole territory between the western Transvaal border and that of German protectorate of South West Africa³⁸. The Cape Colony pressed very hard to keep the Germans out of South West Africa and demanded the declaration of an English Monroe Doctrine for that region. Cecil Rhodes very strongly supported the idea of British expansion from the Cape towards north. He saw, as was already mentioned, in the occupation of Bechuanaland the necessary move to safeguard the Road to the North and check German and Boer expansion.

Sir Hercules Robinson, the British High Commissioner in the Cape in those years, telegraphed on 24 September 1884 to London that in view of German annexations and other moves calculated to cripple Cape Colony, decisive measures should be taken for maintenance of British authority in South Africa, though that it was necessary to annex Bechuanaland at once³⁹. Throughout the Autumn of 1884 commercial groups in England, alarmed at the prospect of a railroad from the Transvaal to German South West Africa, also urged the British government to annex Bechuanaland – the territory between them⁴⁰.

For different diplomatic reasons London showed for quite a long time its reluctance to intervene and the British government was divided on this issue. Whereas some ministers (for instance Chamberlain and Harington) supported the demand for a protectorate in Bechuanaland, the British Cabinet as a whole was against it, indicating the risk of another Boer war. At the end of 1882 Lord Derby even declared: „Bechuanaland is of no value for us... for any Imperial purposes... it is of no consequence to us whether the Boers or Native Chiefs are in possession”⁴¹. From the point of view of global imperial British policy he had a different perspective and understanding of Southern African realities than Cecil Rhodes. Future developments of the next few years had proved that it was Cecil Rhodes and not Lord Derby who was able to define more correctly British interests in Southern Africa. It was through Rhodes and Cape Colony that British interests in Southern Africa were better taken care of, especially when for different diplomatic reasons London could not act directly.

³⁷ C. F. Goodfellow, *Great Britain and South African Confederation, 1870 – 1871*, Oxford: Univ. Pr., 1966, where this problem is examined in detail.

³⁸ R. Robinson and J. Gallagher, *op. cit.*, pp. 206.

³⁹ *Ibidem*.

⁴⁰ J. A. I. Agar-Hamilton, *op. cit.*, pp. 283-95 and D. M. Schreuder, *The Scramble for Southern Africa...*, pp. 88ff, and 408ff.

⁴¹ R. Robinson and J. Gallagher, *op. cit.*, p. 203.

Basically, the British government did not want a clash with the Transvaal. It was mainly the Cape Colony government that was pressing in 1883 in London to check the absorption of Bechuanaland into the Transvaal using Cecil Rhodes's argument that through Bechuanaland ran the Road to the North, which was the only free access for the Cape Colony to the African interior. The British Government gradually accepted that argument and the decision of sending Warren's expedition to Bechuanaland in 1885 should be seen in this context⁴². The advent of Germany on the coast and her claims in the hinterland seemed to make the Transvaal more dangerous. Lord Derby, who some month earlier described Bechuanaland as worthless, now in 1884 agreed that it was of the great importance as the territorial edge between the German hinterland and the Transvaal republic.

From John S. Galbraith's studies on the early history of the British South Africa Company we have ample evidence that already Bismarck's intervention in South West Africa caused consternation in London⁴³. The assessment of his motives became a matter of great urgency in the British government. Sir Percy Anderson, the Foreign Office African expert, noted that Bismarck's Southern African policy was already in 1884 regarded in London as „direct act of hostility". It was understood there that Bismarck's action manifested a shift in German foreign policy which might be threatening to Britain both at home and overseas. The idea was that if Germany had ambitions to use its position in South West Africa as a base for expansion into Southern African interior to link up with the Transvaal, this required Britain to take immediately action. Sir Robert Meade, the British principal negotiator on Anglo-German issues, warned even London that „it was impossible to exaggerate the importance of preventing the German government joining hand with the Transvaal"⁴⁴.

The fact that the British government had been willing to risk war and to commit itself to an expenditure of £ 1.500.000 (costs of Warren's expedition to Bechuanaland in March 1885) was impressive evidence of imperial concern. Reports of German activity on the southeast coast (German expedition in the second half of 1884 in the southeast into Zululand and Tongaland, the acquisition from Dinzulu the rights to St. Lucia Bay and to 60.000 acres of adjacent land) added to the sense of urgency. At the beginning of March 1885 Sir Charles Dilke told Count Herbert Bismarck that while the British government might not be willing to annex new territories in the neighbourhood of

⁴² K. Shillington, *op. cit.*, pp. 168ff.

⁴³ J. S. Galbraith, *Crown and Character: The Early Years of the British South Africa Company*, Berkeley: Univ. of California Pr., 1974, pp. 9ff.

⁴⁴ Meade to Granville, December 20, 1884. *Ibidem*, pp. 11.

Cape Colony, it would strongly oppose their being appropriated by any foreign power by which he meant Germany. There is no doubt that the British fear of further German expansion in Southern Africa was the decisive factor in London's decision to dispatch a force of 5.000 men under the command of Sir Charles Warren to Bechuanaland.

Conclusions

The Warren's expedition and the creation of Bechuanaland Protectorate and British Bechuanaland in 1885 were the culmination of that complex international situation that was seriously threatening British interests in Southern Africa. In the light of the state of historical research, which we have tried to examine above, it seems correct to conclude that the German threat was not – contrary to R. Robinson and J. Gallagher – „imagined” only. British decision to intervene in Bechuanaland, strongly influenced by Cecil Rhodes and Cape Colony government, was a logical political consequence of different international pressures and developments in Southern Africa which were discussed above in this article. There is no doubt that London feared the potential German-Boer connection through Bechuanaland and was afraid that the very important Road to the North might fall into alien hands. In 1888, Cecil Rhodes expressed very clearly the British motives of the occupation of Bechuanaland, saying that „if Bechuanaland was lost to us, British development in Africa was at an end”⁴⁵.

In final conclusion we must agree with D.M. Schreuder that the advance of the British empire into Bechuanaland was certainly in response to German and Boer expansion in Southern Africa⁴⁶. Of a similar opinion are Botswana scholars today. T. Tlou wrote that the reason of the British decision to create the Bechuanaland Protectorate was „not so much that the Botswana interests were really paramount in British strategy for Southern Africa, but rather they (sc. The British) feared among other things the colonisation of Botswana by the Germans from Namibia”⁴⁷. In popular *History of Botswana* T. Tlou and A. Cambell express a similar view writing that Britain feared that the Germans and the Boers „would unite against her and form a colony which would join the

⁴⁵ Vindex, *op. cit.*, p. 215.

⁴⁶ D. M. Schreuder, *op. Cit.*, p. 115.

⁴⁷ T. Tlou, „Documents on Botswana History: How Rhodes Tried to Seize Ngamiland”, *Botswana Notes and Records*, 7, 1975, p. 61. See also T. Tlou, *A History of Ngamiland, 1750 – 1906: The Formation of an African State*, Macmillan, 1985, p. 114.

German colonies in Namibia and Tanganyika and Boer republics in the Transvaal⁴⁸.

At the same time, the creation of Bechuanaland Protectorate in 1885 became the „springboard” for the British empire in Zambesia and opened a new chapter in the history of the British expansion in Southern Africa.

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Translated by Author

STRESZCZENIE

Autor przedstawił w niniejszym artykule genezę imperialnej polityki brytyjskiej w Południowej Afryce i brytyjsko-niemiecką rywalizację o dominację nad tą częścią świata w ostatnim ćwierćwieczu XIX stulecia. Terytorium Botswany (Bechuanaland), początkowo niedoceniane ani przez Bismarcka, ani przez Anglików, było kluczową pozycją dla sprawowania kontroli nad południową częścią kontynentu afrykańskiego. Było tym dla południa Afryki, czym kanał Sueski dla zabezpieczenia interesów angielskich w Afryce Północnej, Wschodniej, na Bliskim Wschodzie i w Azji Południowo-Zachodniej. Twórca angielskiej strefy interesów w Afryce Południowej, Cecil Rhodes, w 1884 r. charakteryzując strategiczne znaczenie Botswany dla imperialnych interesów polityki brytyjskiej, porównał ją do korka zamykającego butelkę, bowiem Botswana zamyka drogi ku Zambezi, Transvaalowi, Kongu i Północy Afryki. „Musimy – mówił Rhodes – go strzec [terytorium Botswany] dopóki nie stwierdzimy, że wszystkie szlaki wiodące z Północy są w naszych rękach. [...] Jeśli Botswana zostałaby utracona, brytyjskie interesy w Afryce byłyby skończone”. Rhodes stojąc w obliczu zagrożenia niemieckiego z Namibii, zmierzającego do zjednania i podporządkowania imperium niemieckiemu osadników burskich, przekonywał rząd brytyjski o strategicznym i żywo-

⁴⁸ T. Tlou and A. Campbell, *History of Botswana*, Macmillan, 1989, p. 148. Of a different opinion is I. Schapera, *The Tswana*, London: International African Institute, 1968, p. 16, who writes that the Boers „tried on several occasions to extend their boundary further west. These attempts led to armed conflict with such tribes as Kwena, Rolong, and Thlaping. The outcome was that in 1884 the British ultimately responded to Native appeals, and proclaimed a Protectorate over the country south of the Molopo and west of the Republic... in 1885 the Protectorate was extended to include the tribes farther north”. The emphasis on the Boer expansion is correct but it is only a part of the story. The German factor in creation of Bechuanaland Protectorate is only very briefly mentioned by T. Pakenham, *The Scramble for Africa*, Johannesburg: Jonathan Ball Publishers, 1991, pp. 216-17, 377-79.

tnym dla interesów brytyjskich znaczeniu Botswany, czynił desperackie próby niedopuszczenia do połączenia niemieckich posiadłości w Namibii przez Botswanę z zamieszkałym przez Burów Transvaalem i zablokowania niemieckich działań, mających na celu utworzenie niemieckiego protektoratu w całej Afryce Południowej.

Autor przeanalizował religijne (misje prowadzone przez Kościół anglikański jak i protestanckie, niemieckie związki wyznaniowe), polityczne i militarne (ekspedycja płka Wrena z 1885 r.) czynniki, które złożyły się na szeroki kontekst imperialnej polityki brytyjskiej i w efekcie doprowadziły do opanowania tej części Afryki przez Brytyjczyków. Artykuł H. Zinsa pozwala lepiej zrozumieć złożoność problemów polityczno-społecznych dzisiejszej Afryki Południowej i historyczne uwarunkowania chociażby niedawnych konfliktów w Zimbabwe.