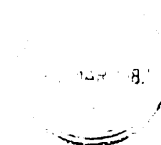


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Robert Thorne Coryndon
*Proconsular Imperialism in Southern
and Eastern Africa, 1897-1925*



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LNC	Local Native Council
NAR	National Archives of Rhodesia
NAZ	National Archives of Zambia
NRC	Southern Rhodesia Native Reserves Commission of 1914-15
OAG	Officer Administering the Government
O-in-C	Order in Council
PBNC	<i>Proceedings of the Basutoland National Council</i>
PMS	Paris Missionary Society
Sec. of St.	Secretary of State for the Colonies
secre.	secret
tel.	telegram

Introduction

In the annals of colonial history in the African subcontinent, Robert Thorne Coryndon is a ubiquitous figure. Of all the British mainland colonies south of the equator only two—Tanganyika (which for much of Coryndon's period was under German rule) and Nyasaland—escaped his influence, although his stints as a Bechuanaland police officer and resident commissioner of Basutoland were brief. Born in South Africa in 1870, Coryndon went on to serve both Cecil Rhodes' British South Africa Company and the British government as a top-rank administrator in southern, central, and eastern Africa. His colonial career, from his position as resident in Barotseland (today part of the Western Province of Zambia) in 1897 to his turbulent governorship of Kenya (1922-25), spanned twenty-eight years. No other British colonial governor served that amount of time as supreme executive authority of the African dependencies.

This is the first full-scale study of Coryndon's career. That is should have taken so long in coming is, perhaps, not surprising. In reaction to the imperial school—whose focus on Europeans in Africa tended to ignore or downplay all that was going on around them—African historians have tended to deny the validity of even studying Europeans in Africa. The Nigerian historian, Adiele Atigbo, goes so far as to say that European governors in Africa are hardly worthy of "an entire paragraph in a serious book of history." He adds: "Indeed, one continues to have the nagging feeling that the man who held gubernatorial office in Africa, and the regimes they set up and ran constitute a theme more amenable to psychoanalysis than to conventional historical investigation."¹ Others are not as explicit, but the general synopsis is the same. For instance, snippets of Coryndon's career appear in the various histories of the territories he governed. He is depicted as a

¹ "Men of Two Continents," in Lewis Gann and Peter Dugman (eds.), *African Personals* (New York, 1978), pp. 330, 334.

racist, a white supremacist, a direct ruler, and a reactionary.² Having latched onto Coryndon's South African background, his friendship with Cecil Rhodes, and his crucial role in stifling Indian demands for political equality in Kenya, these authors then take the ideological pointers and fit them into a proverbial Procrustean bed of colonial oppression.

Taking the opposite tack, Peter Duignan has produced a eulogistic mini-biographical portrait which places Coryndon in "the Pantheon of colonial heroes,"³ a man who was "a great governor, one of the greatest in African history,"⁴ and someone who was well liked by all—Africans, Asians, and Europeans alike. The division is clear. The role of one colonial governor has been firmly placed in the wider ideological debate; Coryndon is the whipping-boy of the anti-colonialists and the favoured son of the imperial school (although given the paucity of numbers in the latter, the debate is weighted heavily on the side of the former). Both prescriptions offer a poor starting point for analysis; they are approaches which tell us little about the place of the governor in British colonial rule.

This study does not, therefore, fit into the same genre as the gubernatorial biography. Biography is not the stuff of history, and in the case of colonial governors it is afflicted with the "great man" syndrome. Governors were necessarily marginal actors in the histories of colonial territories; as Guggisberg's biographer states:

However creative they may have been they built on what had gone before, and whether they received praise or blame from their contemporaries, or from the critics of later years, the credit or opprobrium ought justly to be shared by others. A colonial governorship was an incident in an unfolding story, and none survived long enough to be able to say "Alone I did it!"⁵

The brevity of gubernatorial tenure (customarily four or five years) and the fact that governors were moved indiscriminately from post to post, regardless of whether their experience was in black, white, or cosmopolitan Africa, tempered the achievements of individual proconsuls.

Yet, by the same token, British governors were the linch-pins of the bilateral relationship between mother-country and dependency; their metropolitan overseers in the Colonial Office, who regarded themselves as controllers not rulers of empire, gladly delegated wide

² See, for example, Gerald Caplan, *The Elites of Bantustan 1878-1969* (London, 1970); R. G. Gregory, *Sidney Webb and East Africa* (Berkeley and Los Angeles, 1962); D. A. Low and R. C. Pratt, *Uganda and British Overseas* (London, 1960); and Robin Palmer, *Land and Racial Domination in Rhodesia* (London, 1977).

³ African Proconsuls, p. 314.

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 348.

⁵ R. Wraith, *Guggisberg* (London, 1967), p. 73.

discretionary powers to them. Governors were expected, through a combination of good sense and good character, to exercise rule over dependent peoples in an honest and impartial manner (an amalgam of liberal values and autocratic methods which lent a certain ambiguity to British imperial rule in Africa and elsewhere). These were the unwritten guidelines. There were hardly any written ones, save the Letters Patent and Royal Instructions which accompanied and sealed a governor's appointment, but these, along with colonial regulations and the occasional administrator's manual, dealt only with the general aspects of policy (i.e., promotion of religion and education, and protection of private property) and some technical ones, and not with the specific policy he was to implement. In terms of broader goals governors were expected to encourage economic growth (because this increased empire production and revenues to make the colony independent of Treasury control) and to maintain political stability (so that the former could be accomplished). Within these parameters the governors were allowed much leeway.

This is not to suggest that Colonial Office control over proconsular activities was lax, at least not in the post-partition phase at the beginning of the twentieth century. The threat of dismissal, although rarely used, was a potent one. It was used when a governor looked as though he was yielding power to local pressure groups and, therefore, not fulfilling his role as impartial arbiter. This was the case in the premature resignations of two early governors of Kenya, Charles Eliot (1900-1904) and Percy Girouard (1909-12).⁶ These two had supported white claims to "guaranteed" Masai land, something which cast a shadow over professed concern for African welfare, and called into question the Colonial Office's trusteeship role. Much of this went on of course, but in the glare of public exposure the Masai eviction was for the government of the day a delicate and potentially politically damaging question. The land alienation was not rescinded, but the governors were ousted from office. Such a situation contrasted with the partition era of the late nineteenth century when poor communications and the exigencies of conquest meant the proliferation of the *fait accompli*. In Coryndon's time, however, the *fait accompli* was much a thing of the past—governors were wise to defer to Downing Street.

Both the "great man" biographers and their detractors ignore the limitations on proconsular power. Governors are either benevolent autocrats whose schemes are easily translated into concrete achievements or racist despots whose ideologies are the motor-force of colonial oppression. Africans are either ungrateful recipients of the new order or hapless victims of the colonial juggernaut. The purpose of this study is to ascertain the precise manifestation of colonial power

⁶ See G. H. Mungeam, *British Rule in Kenya* (Oxford, 1966), cs. 5, 12.

through the agency of one proconsul. Coryndon's ideological precepts are not downplayed but they are placed in their proper perspective. The objective is to analyse his relationship with African rulers, white settlers, Indian traders, and metropolitan officials, to assess the impact of his rule, and to delineate the *de facto* constraints on proconsular rule.

Coryndon was by no means a typical administrator. It was rare for a man to serve his entire career in the African colonial service. Many of those selected to govern the British empire in Coryndon's period, the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, were either professional soldiers (normally Royal Engineers) or, in the latter part of this era, men with university training. Coryndon was neither. It was uncommon also for individuals born in South Africa, or even those with a South African background (service in the Boer war or with the British South Africa Company), to rise to the rank of governor, although Coryndon, with his English-born father and public school education at Cheltenham (which weaned empire's sons and comforted its grandfathers), was sufficiently anglicised to warrant favoured consideration from Whitehall.⁷ It is perhaps difficult to locate a typical administrator, but all were confronted with the same problems and pressures, all had a limited service in individual colonies or protectorates, and all were there in the name of empire. Coryndon himself would have relished the title "imperialist." What that actually meant in the age of British imperialism, rather than what it means now, is an underlying theme of this book.

Unlike some of his more famous colleagues, Coryndon left little in the way of published works, and none that constituted an intellectual rationalisation of the purpose of empire. Some private papers are extant, the best collection being the Coryndon Papers at Rhodes House, Oxford. These, supplemented by a few files of his diaries and papers in the University of Zambia library, have served to enrich this study. Some African archival material has been used but much of the following account is based on British sources, particularly Colonial Office records. As such this profile of Coryndon is a work of colonial history.

Since the actions of early governors established the precedent of imperial authority, Coryndon's administrations of Barotseland under the British South Africa Company (1897-1907), where he was the first resident and administrator, and in Swaziland (1907-16), where he was the first *de facto* resident commissioner, reveal the problems of setting up a colonial regime and the impact of early policy on subsequent developments. During the last years of his Swaziland appointment he

⁷ These general observations are based on Kenneth Robinson, *The Dilemmas of Trusteeship* (London, 1965), p. 47, and I. E. Nicolson and Colin Hughes, "A Provenance of Proconsuls: British Colonial Governors 1900-1960," *JCH* 4, no. 1 (1975), pp. 84-85.

was charged, as chairman of the 1914-15 land commission, with the final demarcation of African reserves in Southern Rhodesia. The final report involved the British government in a bitter controversy with the pro-African lobby. His Basutoland administration (1916-17) was not as contentious, although it was particularly irksome for the Sotho intelligentsia who considered Coryndon's administration an unwelcome aberration in the established pattern of British over-rule in the high commission territory. In Uganda, his first governorship (1917-22), and in Kenya (1922-25), his regimes witnessed rapid economic growth; his economic policies here have been depicted by East African historians as dogmatically pro-European, an argument which is rejected here.⁸ In Uganda he introduced legislative and executive councils, and in Kenya he established Local Native Councils as an experiment in indigenous self-administration. In the latter colony, where he died in office, he was also embroiled in the Indian crisis, the only crisis in Cosmo Parkinson's thirty-six years at the Colonial Office (1909-45) which, in his opinion, interrupted the "smooth working of colonial government."⁹ Coryndon's career as an imperial proconsul was both long and momentous.

⁸ See, for instance, Cyril Ehrlich, "The Uganda Economy 1903-1945," in Vincent Harlow and E. M. Chilver (eds.), *History of East Africa*, vol. 2 (London, 1965), pp. 395-475; R. C. Pratt, "Administration and Politics in Uganda, 1919-1945," *ibid.*, pp. 476-541; Phares Mutibwa, "White Settlers in Uganda: The Era of Hopes and Disillusionment, 1905-1923," *Transafrican Journal of History* 5, no. 2 (1976), pp. 112-22; Thomas Taylor, "The Struggle for Economic Control of Uganda: Formulation of an Economic Policy," *IJAH* 11, no. 1 (1978). For a thorough exposition of my counter-argument, see "Peasants, Planters and Cotton Capitalists: The 'Dual Economy' in Colonial Uganda," *CJAS* 12, no. 2 (1978), pp. 163-84, and "Colonial Economic Policy in Uganda after World War I: A Reassessment," *IJAH* 12, no. 2 (1979), pp. 270-76.

⁹ Cosmo Parkinson, *The Colonial Office from Wilton* (London, 1947), p. 141.

ONE

Outdoorsman, 1870-97

It was the Kimberley connection which gave young Robert Coryndon his start in the colonial service. Coryndon's father, Selby, had moved to the bustling mining town on the Cape's northeastern frontier in 1872, when Robert was two years old. Selby's decision to move his law practice from Queenstown was born of practical business sense: litigation was as much a part of Kimberley life as its diamonds. But it was the "glittering ice" which proved to be Selby's nemesis, for playing the speculative diamond market is reputed to have left him a poor man at the time of his death in September 1885. The young Coryndon, though, became "well-known and popular as his father's son,"¹ particularly among those whose impact on South Africa transcended the bounds of Kimberley—C. D. Rudd, Leander Starr Jameson, and most important of all, Cecil Rhodes.

It was Rhodes who rescued Robert Coryndon from what was proving to be a dismal existence as an articled clerk with his uncle's law firm. Coryndon was an outdoorsman, "an open-air man with a keen affection for horses, dogs and guns,"² as Hugh Marshall Hole, fellow Devonian, constant companion, and later official historian of Rhodes' British South Africa Company, once described him. Office work was too restricting for a teenager whose first love was the outdoors, one who spent most of his monthly salary either purchasing or hiring horses for riding excursions into the veldt: an attempt to escape the humdrum world of his legal apprenticeship. But the legal profession was secure, at least compared to most other occupations in Kimberley.

1 H. M. Hole to Lady Coryndon, 11 Sept. 1926, Coryndon Papers (CP) (Mss. Afr. s. 633, Rhodes House), 10.1.38.

2 Ibid.

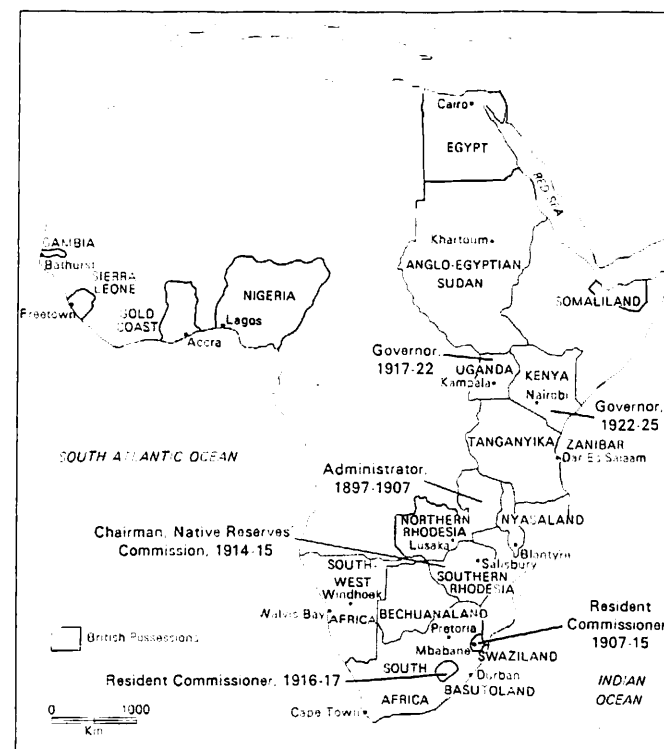
and Coryndon felt obliged to remain behind the lawyer's desk out of deference to, and in support of, his widowed mother. When she died, in July 1889, Coryndon was responsible only to himself. He moved in with Hole. It was at this time that Coryndon's appetite for adventure was whetted—a chance to move into the mysterious north, the little-known interior beyond the Boer republics. Hole recollects:

About September '89, Coryndon and I, with a view to economy, went to live at a very second-rate hotel called the "International" which was close to the de Beers compound. There we occupied two small corrugated iron rooms and paid £5 a month each for full board. Most of the other boarders were roughish Kimberley miners—good fellows nevertheless—and from them we picked up an astonishing amount of information about diamonds and the methods of the I.D.B. . . . About the same time we began to hear rumours of some tremendous scheme of development which Rhodes and his allies were contemplating in the far north. We heard people talking about mineral concessions, the Matabele, and finally of the British Charter which Rhodes had secured from the Home Government. At first it all seemed very distant and vague, but towards the end of October Coryndon informed me that Rhodes had offered to send him and a few other Kimberley friends of ours up-country in connection with his schemes, and sure enough a few weeks later an expedition was actually launched.¹

On 9 November 1889 Coryndon and eleven other young men assembled outside a warehouse in Kimberley where they were provided with horses, uniforms, and a small sum of money. The twelve, who were subsequently and variously known as Rhodes' "Apostles," "Young Men," or "Lambs," were charged with protecting the pioneer column to Mashonaland. Coryndon was to take part in the opening up of Rhodesia.

Coryndon was to spend the next seventeen years in the service of Rhodes' British South Africa Company, from surveyor to Rhodes' private secretary to administrator of North-Western Rhodesia. The rise was not as meteoric as the facts suggest; it was a career punctuated by fits and starts, even though he did secure the northern Rhodesian post at the tender age of twenty-seven. Once that position was secured, however, Coryndon had established a toehold in the British imperial service. North of the Zambesi he worked for both Crown and company; from 1907 on, with his accession to resident commissioner in Swaziland, he worked for Crown alone, although the connection with the company was re-established when he chaired the Native Reserves Commission investigation in Rhodesia during World War I. Coryndon's career as a top-level administrator in Africa was, and is, in terms of consecutive service in years, unsurpassed by any other colonial governor.

¹ Ibid., 101-140.



MAP 1
British Africa in 1918, Showing Coryndon's
Administrative Positions

Robert Thorne Coryndon was one of twin brothers (the other, Henry, or Harry, died in infancy) born to Selby and Emily Coryndon on 2 April 1870. Selby had sailed to South Africa in the autumn of 1852, leaving behind his native Plymouth and his family, determined to carve out a new life in the British colony of the Cape. He was seventeen. The Devonian emigré began in Queenstown where he had left off in England, as an articled clerk in a lawyer's office. After serving his apprenticeship the up-and-coming young lawyer marked the occasion of his twenty-fifth birthday by setting himself up in partnership. Having established himself in business, Selby's thought turned to mar-

riage, although he had no particular woman in mind. He asked his sister to seek out potential brides in Plymouth, but thought, on reflection, that it would be best if he married "a colonial girl" since "it is hardly fair to bring an English delicately nurtured girl here."¹ A year later, in January 1862, Selby Coryndon married his colonial girl—Emily Caldecott, the daughter of a member of the Cape Assembly. Emily bore six children, three of whom (Henry, Mabel, and Cecile) died in infancy. Blanche Emily, the eldest (born in 1863) died in Italy in 1912; John Selby, the youngest (born in 1877), died in the campaign against the Ndebele in 1896. Robert outlived them all.

Robert inherited from his father a pride in his west country heritage and a sense of adventure, but not, to his father's dismay, a love of the law. Selby was grooming his son for a legal career and wanted a good formal education for him. This was not to be had in Kimberley which, at that time, was nothing more than a motley collection of tents and galvanized iron shacks in the barren veldt. It was not so much a town as an archeological maze with the hillocks of lime and soil surrounding the fresh diggings. Robert therefore spent brief periods at a number of cosmopolitan South African schools before going on to one of Britain's newest public schools, Cheltenham, a hatchery of empire. He spent three years there, from 1884 to 1887, before returning to the Cape and a position with the firm of Caldecott and Bell. Alfred Caldecott, Emily's brother, owed his own elevation in the law business to Robert's late father, and ensured that the youth was well provided for.

The opportunity with Rhodes soon presented itself. A little over a year after his return Coryndon was with the Bechuanaland Border Police, providing part of the escort for the pioneer column to Rhodesia. This exclusive regiment was formed in 1885 and was disbanded ten years later when the Bechuanaland Protectorate was annexed to Cape Colony. Many of those who signed up were from influential Cape families (insurance, perhaps, for British government backing should the Rhodesian venture fail), hence the epithets "Blue Blooded Police" and "Top Hat Brigade." When the twelve apostles assembled outside the Kimberley warehouse in 1889 they had little inkling of the enormity of the mission Rhodes had in store for them; their sole instruction was to proceed to Bechuanaland. It was not until they reached Mafeking, scene of the famous Relief at the outset of the Anglo-Boer war, that Coryndon and his colleagues learned of their role as guardians of the pioneer column to Mashonaland.

The column, like its escort force, was composed of sons of wealthy Cape families, some 200 of them. The reward for their participation in the quest for what they believed was the second Rand was 3,000 acres

4 Selby Coryndon to Blanche, 12 Jan. 1861 (in private possession of Peter Coryndon).

of land and fifteen gold claims in Shona territory. For Rhodes the corps was the nucleus of colonists for the sustenance of his Rhodesia. The settlers were to provide the foundation stone of company rule south of the Zambezi.

By 1890 the organization of the pioneer march was complete. In compliance with last-minute orders from the high commissioner, Sir Henry Loch, the newly-formed British South Africa police, 500 strong, was designated as military escort.⁵ Coryndon and the other apostles were transferred to this force prior to the pioneers' departure from Mafeking, although most of the British South Africa police joined the march in May 1890 when the column had reached MacLoutsie in northern Bechuanaland. Wishing to avoid conflict with Lobengula's Ndebele, the column steered clear of the king's domain although it was only Lobengula's restraint of his restless warriors that ensured its peaceful progress. In September 1890 the pioneers ended their trek near Mount Hampden in Shona country and there honoured the British prime minister, Lord Salisbury, by erecting a fort in his name. The new settlers disbanded to seek their promised livelihood in the soil of Rhodesia.⁶

For Coryndon the story was somewhat different. Like the other apostles he had joined the pioneer corps in July 1890 and was therefore entitled to a land grant and gold claims. However, just before the column reached Salisbury, A. R. Colquhoun, the ex-Indian civil servant who was to be Rhodesia's first administrator, offered Coryndon the chance to join his personal clerical staff. Coryndon accepted the offer even though it meant relinquishing his land and gold titles.

For a short while the handful of company officials lived in the so-called Administrative Compound, a collection of mud and thatched huts at Fort Salisbury:

In the middle of the Compound lived Colquhoun in a slightly bigger hut than the rest, but Coryndon's was out and out the best of all. In some indescribable fashion he had made his quarters not only comfortable but artistic. His bedstead was made of rough logs like the others but was covered with native karosses. The floor, instead of being bare earth, was carefully smeared with cow-dung and the walls lined with native made reed mats. He had the knack of employing the rough materials which he found around him for making the immediate environment attractive.⁷

5 See the booklet, *Rhodesian Pioneers and Early Settlers Society: List of Members* (1913), p. 5. CP 10/1/unfoliated item no 2. Loch wanted a force capable of defeating the Ndebele, although his professed reason to the Colonial Office was that a large military escort was needed to forestall a Boer threat. See John S. Galbraith, *Crown and Charter* (Berkeley, 1974), pp. 118-19.

6 The name Rhodesia was officially used by the company from 1895 onwards although the British government did not recognise the title until 1897. See FO to CO, 19 July 1897, Africa South 552/38.

7 Hole to Lady Coryndon, 14 Sept. 1926, CP 10/1/43.

Coryndon was noted for the talent which Hugh Marshall Hole describes. Later on the young pioneer constructed a log hut for himself "which was for many months the show place of Salisbury."⁸ He is furthermore accredited with building the first brick house north of the Zambesi, a two-bedroom bungalow which was the government house of Barotseland. His natural aptitude was not confined to the construction of buildings. Another contemporary observed after Coryndon's death:

His gift was to model raw material into the finished article by the most efficient expedient at hand. When last in England I went to see his children at the quiet country house which was their home whilst father and mother in a remote colony were serving King and Country. On a mantelshelf were two busts of his only daughter modelled by his hands. These were the work of a man who never had a day's tuition in a sculptor's studio but some mysterious gift enabled him to produce a clay replica, almost human, of the original. He always handled raw material and framed it to conform to contemporary requirements.⁹

Coryndon's artistic ability was meticulously technical rather than free-flowing and imaginative. In fact his reverence for technical detail earned him an admonition from one teacher at Cheltenham because his almost perfect reproduction of a ten-shilling note seemed to pre-empt a vocation in forgery. Coryndon was always tidy and meticulous. His Barotseland diaries and notebooks contain a wealth of information on the topographical features of the country. When game-shooting he kept a record of the size and sex of the beast, the number of shots fired, and the number of hits. This conscientious attention to detail earned the young pioneer a job, in 1891, as cartographer and surveyor with the Surveyor-General's Department in Salisbury.

Apart from an assignment to sketch the ancient ruins of Zimbabwe Coryndon was more generally desk-bound in Salisbury, drawing up maps on the basis of material collected by explorers in the company's employ, including the famous big-game hunter Frederick Selous. The routine in Salisbury was becoming reminiscent of Kimberley days. Again much of his spare time was devoted to shooting excursions on the veldt.

Like Selous, the man he endeavoured to emulate, Coryndon acquired the skill of stalking game until the quarry could be shot at close range. By the 1890s, however, such skills were fast becoming obsolete since the hunters' frontier was closing and there was little prospect for the professional game hunter apart, perhaps, from the provision of specimens for museums.¹⁰ But Coryndon could not resist the out-

⁸ Ibid., CP 10/1/44.

⁹ Alister M. Miller to Lady Coryndon, 20 April 1926, CP 10/1/29.

¹⁰ See L. H. Gann and Peter Duignan, "Changing Patterns of a White Elite: Rhodesian

doors. In 1893, after obtaining special leave from his department, he successfully captured two white rhinoceroses, an almost extinct species. One of the animals was despatched to the Natural History Museum in Kensington, where it still adorns the entrance lobby, and the other to Lord Rothschild's museum at Tring.¹¹ Coryndon was able to pursue a career as a naturalist during the months that followed, collecting specimens of African fauna and insects in return for commissions from Rothschild. This congenial and lucrative past-time ended abruptly in August 1893. Coryndon hastened to Salisbury to join a volunteer burgher force under Major P. W. Forbes. The company and the colonists were at war with the Ndebele.

Lobengula, the Ndebele monarch, had tried desperately to avoid confrontation with the company, the latter's activities being confined to Shona country in the east. Mashonaland, however, had failed to yield the second Rand, and the prospects of mineral riches lured the colonists and company officials into Matabeleland. The pretext was a minor confrontation between the Ndebele and Shona which ended, in July 1893, with the callous and unwarranted slaughter of a party of Ndebele by the commanding officer at Fort Victoria. Lobengula still sued for peace, but Jameson, the administrator, and the vociferous settlers mobilised a volunteer burgher force. Unwilling to burden the company with the expense of war, the Rhodesian administrator sought a *pis aller* with the infamous Victoria Agreement (August 1893) by which volunteers were guaranteed loot—land, gold, and cattle—as the reward for defeating the hapless Ndebele.

The conflict was brief. The Ndebele were easily defeated, no match for the maxims of the white invaders. Coryndon described the encounter at Bambisi for the *Illustrated London News*:

It was close upon noon [on 1 November 1893] when the column halted and the wagons were drawn up into laager. The position chosen was a very favourable one, and soon the necessary work was done, the horses let go, and the grazing guards had taken up their duty; fires were started, and the men set about getting something to eat. About half an hour after this the camp was roused by a quick hum of talk, men started up, and suddenly the "alarm" rang out, followed by "horses in" and "the double", for a strong body of enemy had shown themselves on the piece of rising and open ground. The men snatched up their rifles and bandoliers. . . . At this moment the enemy charged out of the bush in great force. The whole face of the timber appeared to be alive with them; they came on at the run, though stopping occasionally to fire.

The enemy's bullets were dropping thickly into the laager, but the Maxims were chattering away and our individual fire was very heavy, continuous and well placed. It was evident that they could not stand

and Other Settlers," in Gann and Duignan (eds.), *Colonialism in Africa*, 5 vols. (Cambridge, 1969-75), vol. 2, pp. 97-98.

¹¹ *St. James' Budget*, 20 April 1894, CP 12/1/1-4.

before this, and after a very determined charge that lasted for close upon half an hour they drew off into the bush.... The whole attack was most determined, but it is not surprising that the enemy were unable to stand against the terribly heavy fire from the laager.¹²

Not long after Bembisi the triumphal white troops, Coryndon among them, reached Bulawayo.

The circumstances surrounding the war, especially the Victoria Agreement, aroused much public criticism in England, but the British government, unwilling to bear either the responsibility or expense of the territory, accepted the company's "right by conquest" to govern the Ndebele state. The haphazard alienation of land to the conquerors was a problem which would beset Coryndon twenty years later as chairman of the Southern Rhodesian Native Reserves Commission. But more immediately the metropolitan government's objective of "an empire on the cheap" was being undermined by the very agent which was meant to minimise the cost of British imperialism—the Chartered Company.

Within three years of the Ndebele war both the Ndebele and the Shona rebelled against the white authorities. While the organization of the risings of 1896-97 has occasioned some debate¹³ the consensus is that the grievances of the Africans owed much to the oppressive nature of the Chartered regime. In order to save the Charter and further expense Rhodes skillfully negotiated an Ndebele settlement in October 1896, although desultory Shona resistance continued until 1898.

Coryndon was called upon again to support the company effort. Since the first war against the Ndebele he had spent much of his time on hunting expeditions and working for the company driving a postal cart from Salisbury to Kimberley. Now, in 1896, he was in charge of a party of Beal's scouts. However, he saw action only once when thirty Africans were killed and their kraal destroyed near the Hunyani river in June of that year. Shortly afterwards he succumbed to pneumonia, and spent from September onwards confined to a hospital bed in Salisbury. It was here that he heard of the death of his youngest and only remaining brother, John Selby. Just nineteen years old, the younger Coryndon, a trooper with the Salisbury rifles, was fatally wounded at Chena's kraal on 11 October, two days before Rhodes' negotiated peace with the Ndebele.

After his discharge from hospital in November 1896 Coryndon became private secretary to Rhodes, along with Jack Grimmer, the

fellow apostle who was perhaps the closest of Rhodes' young contrabands. These two accompanied Rhodes home in late 1896 when the latter was called upon to face the British parliamentary enquiry into the Jameson conspiracy of the previous year. The select committee, anxious not to delve too deeply for fear of implicating Chamberlain and other politicians, did little more than condemn the raid and Rhodes' behaviour.¹⁴ No action was taken against Rhodes, and the Chartered Company's administration of Rhodesia was examined only summarily. Rhodes appeared before the committee on six occasions before returning to the Cape in April 1897. The charter was still intact and although the British South Africa Company was afterwards subject to closer imperial supervision in Rhodesia as a consequence of the raid, imperial authority remained more nominal than real.

Coryndon had been elevated from his rather junior and varied positions with the company to Rhodes' personal amanuensis. Despite the title, though, Coryndon was dissatisfied with what was actually a mundane, if nominally glamorous, clerical job. When Rhodes and Coryndon returned from London in 1897 the empire-builder offered Coryndon the choice: resident adviser to Lewanika in Barotseland or manager of his Inyanga estate. Coryndon chose the former and Grimmer was left with Inyanga.¹⁵

Rhodes recommended Coryndon to the Foreign Office¹⁶ which for several years had urged the appointment of an official in Barotseland in compliance with a concession granted the British South Africa Company in 1890. Rhodes himself had no immediate plans for setting up a formal administration north of the Zambesi, and the gruelling, enervating climate of the Zambesi plain made it necessary to appoint someone versed in the deprivations of the wild rather than one familiar with bureaucratic administration. Coryndon was, in this respect, an ideal candidate.

Some of Coryndon's diary entries for the late 1890s illustrate the harsh conditions of frontier life. There was a certain matter-of-factness about death, at no time better exemplified than by this short but telling entry for 19 October 1897, in which the illness of a companion is viewed as an obstacle to the journey: "Short trek in consequence of Grey's illness—he died about 1:30 p.m. Letter arrived from W[orthington] re Laer [?] which I answered, do not wish to engage Laer. Made good long trek."¹⁷ There was the problem of trekking on the Batoka plateau: "9th August 1898. Bitten by a lion. Batoka."¹⁸ And of the lack of medical

12 *Illustrated London News*, 17 Mar. 1894, CP 12/1/1.

13 See Terence Ranger, *Revolt in Southern Rhodesia* (London, 1967) and critiques: J. R. D. Cobbing, "The Absent Priesthood: Another Look at the Rhodesian Risings of 1896-1897," *JAH* 18, no. 1 (1977); D. N. Beach, "Chimurenga: The Shona Rising of 1896-7," *JAH* 20, no. 3 (1979); D. N. Beach, "Revolt in Southern Rhodesia," *JAH* 13, no. 1 (1980).

14 See Jeffrey Butler, *The Liberal Party and the Jameson Raid* (Oxford, 1968), pp. 63 et seq. 15 CP 10/1 68-70.

16 BSAC to FO, 9 Mar. 1897, FO 403/245-73.

17 N.W. Rhodesia Diaries, 1897-1906, Coryndon Papers, University of Zambia (CP [ZAM]).

18 CP 10/1/10-15.

help: "Fever—doctor long way off, either flowers grow on grave or patient rides out to meet him."¹⁹ Coryndon, however, managed to overcome all these difficulties. On many occasions he succumbed to malaria, but he defied death. He was a survivor on the frontier—"the sort that gets there with the help of a powerful frame and a strong, resolute will."²⁰

Coryndon's strength lay, paradoxically for one with such an artistic disposition, in his hands and fingers, "a marvel of muscularity" according to Cecil Rodwell who was on the high commissioner's staff in Johannesburg.²¹ He was able to tear in half a deck of cards, a feat of strength which became a hallmark of fame among contemporaries (later embellished to tearing the same deck into quarters, even eighths). Coryndon, who stood five feet nine inches and always sported a short dark moustache, became something of a twilight-and-dusk raconteur, full of anecdotes on the famous personalities with whom he had rubbed shoulders and of his encounters with the beasts of the savanna. "He talks so well," said one enthralled listener, "it is more than a pleasure to listen to him."²² It was no hollow vainglory: serious tales were delivered in serious tones but behind those determined features, "even a little grim in repose," was "a ready smile, melting into a deep chuckle of infectious laughter."²³

With frontier life went "Colonial prejudices."²⁴ Coryndon was "inclined to dogmatize . . . on the relations between whites and natives,"²⁵ and talked of the injustice of taking the "nigger's word before a white man's."²⁶ He certainly had no qualms, even as late as 1922, about the efficacy of flogging:

In dealing . . . with many Central African tribes, whose mentality and development are on a much lower plane, it is not usually advisable to adopt European standards in considering the question of punishment. . . . Serious crimes are suitably rewarded with long terms of imprisonment; several of the less serious offences are best dealt with by a judicious use of the power to inflict a whipping.²⁷

Summary dispensations of justice were normal in settler society. South African or otherwise; even the Bishop of Zanzibar was renowned for his worship of the whip.²⁸ Until Malinowski and the advent of an-

19. Notebook CP 12.1, unfoliated item no. 1.

20. V. C. Scott O'Connor, "An Odyssey of Empire," *Blue Peter*, Jan. 1924, CP 12.5/37.

21. CP 10/1/32. Rodwell was later governor of Fiji, British Guiana, and Southern Rhodesia.

22. J. R. Wallis, *The Barotseland Journal* (James Stevenson Hamilton (London, 1953), p. 95.

23. Rodwell's assessment, CP 10.1/32.

24. Hole's characterisation, CP 10.1/34.

25. *Ibid.*

26. Wallis, *Journal of Stevenson-Hamilton*, p. 93.

27. Coryndon to Seccombe, 29 April 1922, CO 576.110.

28. Extract from *Dunbar Sketch*, 21 Nov. 1924, CP(ZAM) 4.

thropology in the interwar years. Europeans knew little about indigenous society and their prejudices were reinforced by the writings of the day. Coryndon had an extensive library of Africana but it was colonial jingoism, not African history, depicting the glorious advance of Western civilizers like himself and articulated by those who shared his racial bias and cultural chauvinism.

So, while he did not have, and did not require, administrative experience, Coryndon was well equipped, from the company point of view, to handle the conditions of the "Far North." In June 1897 he set out from the Cape for Barotseland. Accompanied by a detachment of six policemen and troopers, Coryndon embarked on the arduous journey north. Many of the transport animals died en route. On 17 September the group reached the banks of the Zambesi. It was the dead of the night. To Coryndon it was like being "at the end of the world."²⁹ Frank Vigers Worthington, formerly an accountant with the company's Bulawayo office, and later Coryndon's brother-in-law, remained at Kazungula with another trooper. The other five, escorted by Litia, son of the Lozi monarch, Lewanika, proceeded to Lealui, the royal capital.

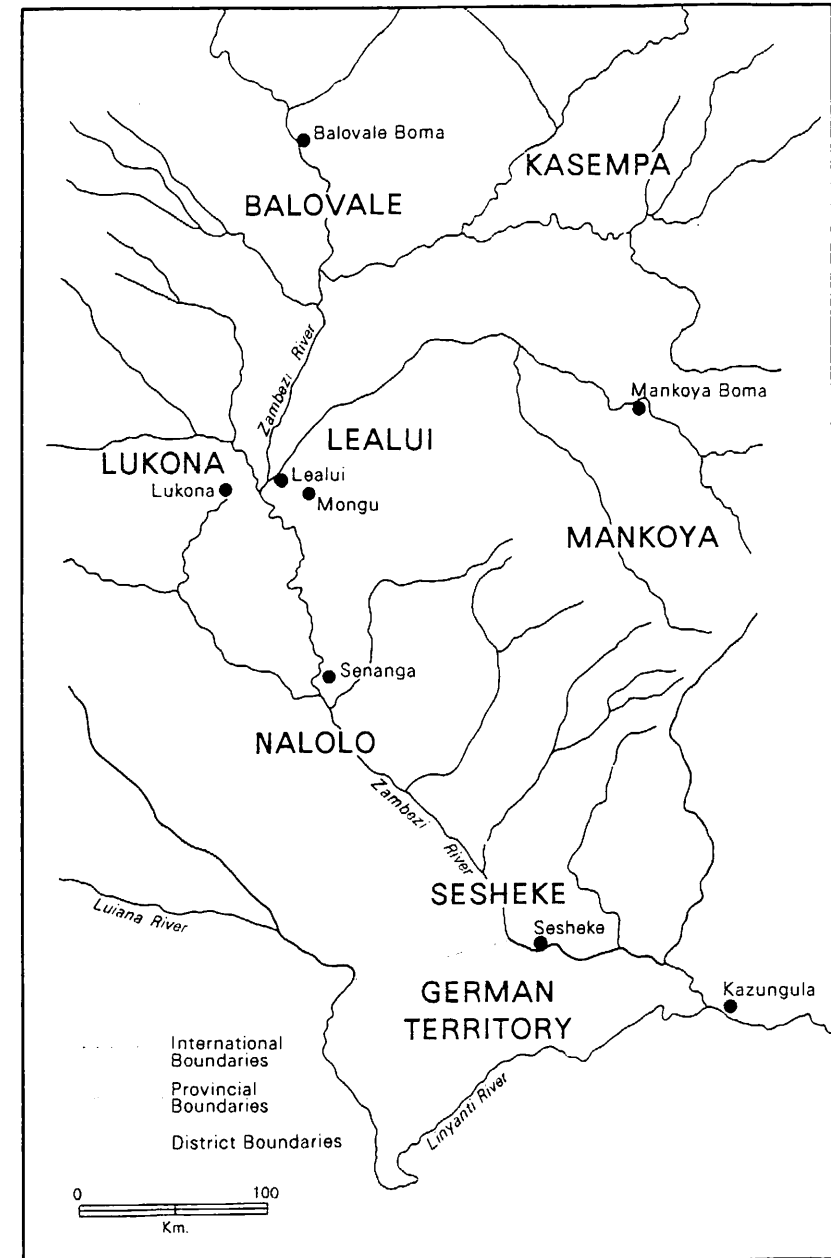
29. *Livingstone Mail*, 13 April 1897.

TWO

Barotseland, 1897-1907

By 1891 the scramble for central Africa among the European powers was over. Through agreements with Germany and Portugal, and an informal one with Leopold's Congo Free State, the future independent states of Zambia, Zimbabwe, and Malawi were placed firmly in the British sphere of influence. Yet north of the Zambesi that influence did not amount to much, especially in the largest territory, Zambia. British claims to the area were based on a treaty with the Litunga (king) of Barotseland signed in 1890, which offered the Lozi peoples British "protection" in exchange for mineral rights over much of western Zambia. The terms of that treaty were never met. Rhodes' British South Africa Company (BSAC) was uninterested in taking up its commitment north of the Zambesi; it was the company which became the reluctant imperialist in the territory it later administered as Northern Rhodesia. The self-imposed limits on colonial power gave Barotseland a substantial independence in the first few years of company rule. Such limits also affected the amount of latitude allowed its agents in the territory, particularly Coryndon.

The Lozi kingdom on the upper Zambesi flood-plain was ruled by the original luyana-speaking inhabitants. Bulozhi, or Barotse proper, was the heartland of the wider geographical area of Barotseland—the kingdom and the tributary peoples under Lozi paramountcy. Barotseland was in turn only part of the territory designated North-Western Rhodesia, and created by order-in-council in 1899, which came under the nominal control of the high commissioner for South Africa in that year. North-Western Rhodesia was then the responsibility of both Crown and company, an ambivalent position given the lack of a de-



MAP 2
Districts of Barotseland in 1916