

[Book: Boerestaat, by Robert van Tonder](#)
First English Edition [1977]

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Chapter 4

The Republic of Natalia

In 1837 Retief and his followers migrated to Natal and negotiated with the paramount chief of the Zulus to purchase land from him. Dingane allotted the area between the Tugela and the Umzimvubu rivers to them on the condition that they recover several thousand head of stolen cattle from another black chief by the name of Sekonyela. Retief succeeded in the undertaking and the land [...] [was granted to them](#) .

Dingane under incitement by the reverend Robert Owen, stationed at Umgungundlhovu, and political threats by Captain Gardiner, the British Commissioner of Port Natal, violated the agreement by murdering Retief and his party of 65 men and 5 boys during a “celebration in their honour”. This he followed up by sending his Army to murder the Boere wherever they found them. The Boere regrouped under Andries Pretorius and routed the Zulus during the great [battle of Blood river on December 16th 1838](#)

Thereafter, we Boere, although we could have taken all of Dingane's land through the recognised right of conquest, settled only the land had been acquired through the agreement between Retief and Dingane. By 1840 we had founded the Republic of Natalia with Pieter Maritzburg as capital. Exposed coal seams were soon discovered and mined. George Napier, the British Governor of the Cape Colony, got wind of it and in January of 1842 Sir George Napier issued a proclamation in respect of the annexation of Natal. In his reply on behalf of the Faulk's Council J.N. Boshoff, who later become President of the [Republic of the Orange Free State](#) , summed up the grievances leading up to the emigration as follows:

“To quote a few examples: who was it that imposed the increasingly evil results of slavery on

us? Who was it that assured us of our property rights in that respect? Was it not the same Government that later stripped us of the same and in such a way that we had not the slightest say as to what would have been the best and most suitable procedure? Who was it that promised us full compensation for our slaves? Was it not the same Government that cheated us out of two thirds of the actual value and then exposed us to the avariciousness of profit-hungry dealers that enriched themselves at our cost? Who was it that employed us, at no payment and at our own cost, to protect the borders of the Colony against the hostile, bellicose and rapacious Kafirs? Was it not the same Government that later on denied us any right to compensation by wrongfully asserting that we had brought the Kafirs' vengeance upon ourselves by robbing them? Who deprived us of the best Governor we ever had simply because he, as a man with a conscience, defended the wronged Cape Colonists and, by punishing their destructive enemies, sought their essential safety and protection? Who saddled us with political speculators bound over to impose on us border arrangements that continually exposed us to being robbed and threatened by the Kafirs with impunity, accompanied by excessively high cost to be recouped from the purse of the already ruined farmer? Was it not the Government that opened the country to roving vagabonds leading an unemployed, savage way of life garnering their livelihood from the livestock and other properties of the already over-stressed farmer? Through which course the farmer, stuck without labour, or if he had labour, denuded of all authority, of which the colonists are still complaining, was robbed of all hope, so that he, all his remonstrations and petitions remaining unanswered and ignored, was left with the darkest possible future view.

“All these evils we ascribe to this one cause, namely the lack of representative government that was refused us by the executive authority of the same faulk who consider this privilege one of their holiest civil rights and for which every true Briton would lay down his life.”

By 1845 we Boere gave up hope of reaching a reasonable agreement with the British and so the migration over the Berg [10] into Potgieter's territory – the [Transvaal and the \[Orange. Ed.\] Free State](#) – took place.

10. The Drakensberg

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