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SOURCE EIGHT

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Extracts from the report of a meeting in 1899 between a senior British official and the Boer leader Paul Kruger (PRO ref: DO 119/556)

HIGH COMMISSIONER SIR ALFRED MILNER to MR. CHAMBERLAIN.

(Received June 30, 1899.)

(No. 379.)

8. I said that the number of open questions between the two Governments was increasing as time went on, and the tone of the controversy was becoming more acute. It was a deplorable situation. In my personal opinion the cause of many points of difference, and the most serious, was the policy pursued by the South African Republic towards the Uitlanders, among whom many thousands are British subjects. The bitter feelings thus engendered in the Republic, the tension in South Africa, and the sympathy throughout the Empire with the Uitlanders, led to an irritated state of opinion on both sides which rendered it more difficult for the two Governments to settle differences amicably. It was my strong conviction that if the South African Republic would, before things got worse, voluntarily change its policy towards the Uitlanders and take steps calculated to satisfy the reasonable section of them, who after all are the great majority, not only would the independence of the Republic be strengthened, but there would be such a better state of feeling all round that it would become far easier to settle outstanding questions between the two Governments.

9. The President, in coming to the Conference, had made a reservation as to the independence of the Republic. I could not see that it was in any way impairing that independence for Her Majesty's Government to support the cause of the Uitlanders so far as it was reasonable. A vast number were British subjects, and in similar circumstances we should in any part of the world, even in a country not under conventional obligations to Her Majesty's Government, be bound to make representations, and to point out that the intense discontent of our fellow subjects stood in the way of the friendly relations which we desired to exist between the two Governments.

How to use this source

Study this source carefully.

1 What impression does this source give of life in the British empire in terms of the following issues:

- the British giving independence to some countries in the empire?
- the relationship between the British government and the settlers?

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