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DECLARATIONS BY STATESMEN AGAINST ANNEXATION.

SOME NOTABLE PLEDGES.

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Declarations by Statesmen Against Annexation.

SOME NOTABLE PLEDGES.

In view of the fact that the war in South Africa must very shortly pass from the defensive to the offensive stage, and that, therefore, in the judgment of many Englishmen, it is the bounden duty of our Government clearly to define the goal at which it aims, it may be interesting to recall some of the pledges to which Ministers as well as some ex-Ministers that have not vigorously condemned the war have committed themselves.

It is generally, and we think rightly, believed that the Boers took up arms in defence of their internal independence and that if their internal independence is assured to them they would not hesitate to make peace.

But if this be so, where is the need for further fighting, in view of the numerous Ministerial declarations that we have no designs upon the independence of the Boer Republics?

It is no sufficient answer to say that some of these declarations were made before war broke out. For if the declarations were made in good faith, and if the desire of our Government before the war really was, as Mr. Chamberlain said, to "strengthen and confirm" the independence of the Transvaal, on what reasonable ground can that desire be said to be removed by the occurrence of war?

Lord Salisbury.

With regard to the future I shall not dare to say anything except to deprecate some very strange assertions which I see occasionally in the Continental Press. . . . Every industry that is prosecuted successfully breeds commerce. All commerce that is produced is to the advantage of England, and all industries and all commerce flourish better under that good government which she furnishes than under any regimen in the world. But that is the limit of our interest. We seek no gold-fields. We seek no territory. What we desire is equal rights for all men of all races and security for our fellow-subjects and for the Empire. (*At the Guildhall, 9 November last.*)

Mr. Balfour.

We have been accused abroad—I do not mean the Government—I mean the country has been accused abroad of ambitious designs to seize for itself territories rightfully belonging to others. This is not the only subject on which we have reason to know that foreigners are possibly not very impartial, certainly not very perspicuous, judges of the desires and sentiments of this country. I am certain that no such wretched, pitiful ambition has animated any public man of any section in this country. (*At Dundee, 28 September last.*)

The Duke of Devonshire.

The obstacle which seems to stand in the way of a peaceful settlement of our difficulties with the South African Republic appears to be in the rooted conviction they have that in the demands which we have made we cherish some designs hostile to their independence and self-government. That any such apprehensions on their part are absolutely unfounded has been asserted as strongly as it can be asserted, both officially in our despatches and unofficially by members of the Government, and nothing which I can say can add to the force of those assertions. (*At New Mills, Derbyshire, 30 September last.*)

Sir Michael Hicks-Beach.

Those to whom this war was most terrible and most hateful must be most anxious to guard against the possibility of a recurrence. Ample security must be taken that such an evil should never recur. We must establish pure and honest government on the basis of equal rights for men of all bloods. Subject to that we should give whatever self-government might be possible, remembering that—in his belief, at any rate—there was no one in any part of South Africa where white men were competent to hold their own against native races, whether of English or Dutch blood, who would for a moment desire that that country should be permanently governed from Downing-street. (*At Bristol, 13 November last.*)

Mr. Chamberlain.

I hope that he (President Kruger) may be able to appreciate the fact that we have no design upon the independence of his country. The friendly advice which we give him would have the effect of strengthening and confirming that independence. (*At Birmingham, 26 June last.*)

What reason is there to say, that in the case of the Transvaal and the Orange Free State, whatever may be the result of the war in which we are still engaged—and in my opinion it is absolutely premature talking about the results of a war in which we are still engaged—does anybody imagine that, whatever the result of the war is, we shall fail to do to others in this matter what we have claimed for ourselves, or that we shall refuse as an ultimate settlement that equality of rights to the Dutch in the Transvaal which the Dutch in the Transvaal have denied to us? (*In the House of Commons, 25 October last.*)

The Transvaal is a country as large as France—a wild and difficult country—and it is perfectly evident to every one that if we are to hold it down by force we must permanently maintain, say, a number of troops at least equal to the number of our possible opponents. Well, we know also that the Orange Free State . . . would make common cause with their co-religionists, and therefore I say that it is perfectly certain that not fewer than from 15,000 to 20,000 English troops must be permanently stationed in the Transvaal if we are to hold that country by force and against the will of its inhabitants. (*At Birmingham, 7 June, 1881.*)

Sir M. White Ridley.

The Government still believed that if the South African Republic would be persuaded that there was no attempt whatever on their part to attack their independence—and it was perfectly plain from all the Government's dispatches, and especially the last one, that there was no such intention—there was still a chance of a conflict being avoided. (*At Blackpool, 26 September last.*)

Mr. Ritchie.

There is no desire on the part of her Majesty's Government to interfere with the internal independence of the South African Republic ; indeed, so far is that from being the case that I do not believe there is a member of the Government who would not look upon it as an unmitigated misfortune if we had to take over the government of that State. We want to see a prosperous South African Republic. That cannot be until the evils I have mentioned are disposed of. We have no desire to interfere with their independence—we have again and again said so. (*In the City, 28 September last.*)

Lord George Hamilton.

The contest could have but one issue—our success. When that success was attained, and the terms which we proposed as victors to the vanquished were known, then foreign nations would, he believed, change their feelings towards us. Then they would see that the main cause which forced us to embark on this conflict was not a desire for pecuniary profit or territorial aggrandisement. (*At Ealing, 1 November last.*)

Sir Edward Grey.

Never for a moment, however great the heat when war is going on, let us lose sight of this, that, though it be a war for freedom, the result of the war is to be not race inequality but race equality throughout South Africa. Equality between the two white races in South Africa, freedom and democratic Government, that is the object for which we shall strive, that is what will be established as the result of the war—equality between the two white races, free and democratic government. (*At Glasgow, 25 October last.*)

Mr. Asquith.

So far as we are concerned—I mean we here in Great Britain—I believe that, apart from a few noisy but insignificant shouters, there is no real or genuine body of opinion in this country which desires for a moment to destroy, or even to curtail, the internal independence of the Transvaal. We deliberately gave it back its autonomy, and we do not desire to resume the gift. (*At Leven, 2 September last.*)

I dissociate myself, however, entirely from those, if such there be, who hail this war, this deplorable, this lamentable war as a means to an ulterior end, the subordination of the Boers and the annexation of the Dutch Republic. Such an intention has been emphatically and repeatedly repudiated by her Majesty's Government ; it finds no place, as far as I know, in the programme of policy of any responsible politician in this country. (*At Dundee, 9 October last.*)

He would not say, as some people did, that the Boers from the first intended no concessions. The evidence did not appear to warrant such a charge. He thought, however, that whatever their original intentions might have been, it was clear as time went on that they began to distrust our sincerity. They credited us with ulterior motives. They suspected us of designs on the internal independence of their Republic. The apprehension, he believed, was baseless. He did not think any responsible statesman in this country had any such design. (*At Ashington, 25 November last.*)