

SCRIPT APPEARS ON BLACK SCREEN:

One hundred years ago the British Colony of Natal in Southern Africa was surrounded by a vast and independent Zulu Kingdom.

In 1879, a battle took place that was forever to alter the course of colonial history:

ISANDHLWANA

EXT. DAWN.

Four Zulu's are seen in silhouette herding cattle up a hill.

LONG SHOT - Two Zulu's are seen in silhouette high on a precipice. Seven Zulu's are seen walking in silhouette against the sunrise. The sun fills the screen as the sound of many running feet and Zulu drums are heard.

EXT. ZULU KRAAL. DAY.

A large regiment of Zulu warriors carrying shields and assegais (stabbing spears) are seen running into the Kraal whilst the sound of tribal singing, chanting and drum beating escalates.

Inside the camp a group of Zulu's are seen grappling with a bull as they struggle to bring the animal to the ground. They are watched by a vast circle of warriors all shouting encouragement.

An elaborate tribal dance ensues. It appears to be some sort of Fertility Rite. The females stand opposite the men in rows, chanting as they move in closer.

CETSHWAYO, the great Zulu King emerges into the throng. He is tall, beautifully fat, with a big intelligent face and superb dignity. He surveys his subjects with interest as they stand unanimous, thrusting their assegais into the air whilst shouting their allegiance.

EXT. HIGH COMMISSIONER'S RESIDENCE, PIETERMARITZBURG,NATAL.  
NIGHT.

BARTLE FRERE (V.O.) Reading aloud the letter he has just written.

Cetshwayo's Zulu army to disband and the warriors permitted to return to their homes.

SWITCH TO INTERIOR. FRERE is seated at his desk whilst LORD CHELMSFORD is seen in the background standing on the veranda.

BARTLE FRERE He continues to read aloud:

Present military system to be abandoned. New regulations concerning the defence of the realm worked out.

CHELMSFORD enters the room, sits and studies two sheets of paper.

FRERE continues:

All who do not submit will be dealt with as enemies of the Crown. We will not permit the arbitrary killing and

FRERE pauses as he underlines a certain word:  
and unjust oppression which the Zulu people have suffered from their own King  
Cetshwayo

Pausing, FRERE looks up as if to meet his comrade's gaze.  
CHELMSFORD, however, continues to read, turning the page.

BARTLE FRERE

You 'll see from the letter that this ultimatum is our decision alone. Her Majesty's  
government seems to prefer a negotiated settlement

CLOSE UP of CHELMSFORD's letter:

Her Majesty's government confidentially hope that by the exercise of prudence and by  
meeting of the Zulus in a spirit of forbearance and  
reasonable compromise it will be possible to avert the very serious evil of a war with  
Cetshwayo:

Return to BARTLE FRERE. As he melts some sealing wax over a silver burner:

BARTLE FRERE (Referring to the letter he has just completed)  
Does this do what we both know to be right Frederick?

CHELMSFORD

It does Sir Henry (He folds the papers neatly in half) excellently.

The pair exchange glances as BARTLE FRERE applies the wax to his letter.

CLOSE UP of stamped seal.

EXT. CHELMSFORD'S CAMP PIETERMARITZBURG. DAY

Activity everywhere, the incessant movement of an army in the final stages of its  
formation. Huge ox-wagons are being hauled into the camp.

CHELMSFORD and CREALOCK are on horseback in full regalia as they ride into  
the centre of the Camp.

Squads of Basuto-infantry - tall, rangy bodies, naked except for a loincloth and neck  
ornaments - are being drilled by foul mouthed, bullying European NCO's.

LT. MELVILL, young, dapper, inspects the Martini Henry rifles of a company of  
REDCOATS who are lined up near the BASUTOS. A CSM (SGT. WILLIAMS) stalks  
behind MELVILL.

ONE REDCOAT, young, thin, gangling, turns his head slightly to peek at the Basutos, and the swift eye of SGT. WILLIAMS detects the disaffection. The young redcoat (PTE. WILLIAMS) turns, guilty at being caught out of the 'Attention' position. The CSM (SGT. WILLIAMS) leans forward until his face is one inch from that of his quavering prey.

SGT. WILLIAMS (Shouting)

You moved (With more restraint) You moved go and tell the NCO of that black shambles that you love 'im more than you love me (Shouting) NOW!

PTE. WILLIAMS blinks, swallows then runs over to the Basuto's NCO.

NCO (Addressing the Basutos)

You're not fit to be in the British army you different coloured articles. STRAIGHTEN UP! You're like a load of bloody herd boys! (He suddenly becomes aware of PTE. WILLIAMS' presence).

PTE. WILLIAMS

I'm to tell you Corporal, that I love you more than my Colour Sergeant

The Basuto's NCO walks up to PTE. WILLIAMS.

NCO

That's frightening... Get out of my bloody sight lad. And put your rifle over your head and double round this field (shouting) until you drop bloody dead. Now move, get on with it, at the double.

The Basutos, laughing, raise their shields into the air in general amusement as PRIVATE WILLIAMS runs past.

NCO

Shut up! Get back in the ranks you shower of animals.

CHELMSFORD, still on horseback, surveys the encampment. He salutes to SGT. WILLIAMS. CREALOCK, as always, is in attendance.

SGT. WILLIAMS Facing the ranks:

Company Shoulder arms.... (LT. MELVILL joins SGT. WILLIAMS) Present arms.

LT. MELVILL turns standing to attention, saluting as CHELMSFORD passes.

Two BOER ride into the camp, passing two SUTLERS wagons. We see SGT. WILLIAMS' dismissed COMPANY hurriedly crowding round one of the SUTLER'S wagons, shouting for cigars and gin.

The two BOER, one an elderly man, one a boy of sixteen, have dismounted. SGT. WILLIAMS strides over to them.  
You passing through?

ELDERLY BOER  
We 'vet come to fight the Zulu.

SGT. WILLIAMS  
We aren't at war yet Referring to the boy: Bit young 'in' he?

ELDERLY BOER  
He's my nephew... he can shoot, track and speak Zulu and fight like hell... he's got Assegai marks to prove it...

He gestures to the boy to show SGT. WILLIAMS. The YOUNG BOER pulls up his shin, showing an horrendous white scar across his stomach.

SGT. WILLIAMS stares in amazement. Coming to, commanding the attention of a BOY-PULLEN in the ranks:

You!

Sir. (Running over)

SGT. WILLIAMS to BOY-PULLEN  
Take 'em to the orderly officer. (SGT. WILLIAMS departs).

BOY-PULLEN  
(Standing to attention). Colour Sergeant Addressing the BOER:  
This way.

The BOER follow as the PTE. Leads off

A TROOP OF SIKALI HORSE under the command of COL. DURNFORD ride into the camp. He is a tall, thin-haired man with handsome sunburnt features, intelligent and sensitive eyes and an over-length moustache. He has only the use of one arm, his left arm being completely paralysed and held immobile, tucked into a special pocket he has sewn into his tunic. COL. DURNFORD and SGT. MAJOR KAMBULA (A powerful and intelligent African radiating authority.) pull up as the troop ride by.

With the SIKALI in the foreground, PTE. WILLIAMS is seen in the background, still running, his rifle above his head.

The same NCO seen previously addresses the BASUTOS:  
Company.... 'Shun!  
(The BASUTOS comply).  
Move yourselves.

SIKALI are seen cantering as if a pre-ordained manoeuvre is about to commence.

DURNFORD and S.M. KAMBULA are surveying their troops.

S.M. KAMBULA  
Shall I give the order Sir?

COL. DURNFORD  
Alright, Sergeant

S.M. KAMBULA rides offscreen.

The SIKALI gather together. S.M. KAMBULA's voice is heard above the throng:

S.M. KAMBULA  
Sikali Horse Forward!

The SIKALI ride full pelt, charging at the BASUTOS.  
The troop continues almost into the first line of the BASUTOS, which consists of their European NCO's.  
The European NCO's of the BASUTOS stare at the SIKALI troop as they wheel and once again come galloping at them.

COL. PULLEINE, LT. MELVILL & LT. COGHILL are seen outside the Officer's Mess amused at the commotion.

CLOSE UP. COL. DURNFORD laughing.

The NCO's edge away, unsure, prepared to take to their heels. The BASUTO infantry watch, admiring, clapping.

The troop skillfully turns their horses, as if on a penny, inches from the BASUTO NCO's then ride away, whooping, in high spirits.

LORD CHELMSFORD & COL. CREALOCK, having watched this exhibition, ride forward to meet COL. DURNFORD.

CHELMSFORD  
Splendid horsemanship Who are they?

DURNFORD  
Sikali Horse, My Lord. Christians all. I know each one by name.

CHELMSFORD  
They come well recommended do they?

DURNFORD

My Lord, they rode for me at Bushman's Pass.

CHELMSFORD

Oh... indeed. Crealock, we should see that Colonel Durnford has an Officer for his hard riders. Perhaps a subaltern from the Twenty Fourth.

DURNFORD

I thought it might be more effective to find someone who speaks Zulu.

CHELMSFORD & CREALOCK exchange glances.

CREALOCK

Yes. I see you've issued each of them with a Martini Henry Carbine. Our quota for Native contingencies: one rifle to ten men and only five rounds per rifle.

CHELMSFORD

But will they make good use of them?

DURNFORD

They're as good marksmen as horsemen.

CHELMSFORD

There's no doubting their horsemanship Colonel Durnford.

CHELMSFORD & DURNFORD salute.

DURNFORD

Mr. Crealock.

CREALOCK nods.

DURNFORD exits offscreen.

CHELMSFORD

We must think how to make best use of Colonel Durnford's African knowledge.

Through the smoke of the field kitchens enters the Honourable WILLIAM VEREKER, aristocratically aloof on a fine stallion, his servant following on an equally fine horse. He rides purposely towards COL. DURNFORD as if he has been seeking him.

VEREKER

Colonel Durnford... William Vereker. I hear you've been seeking Officers?

DURNFORD

Good ones, yes, Mr Vereker. Gentlemen who can ride and shoot

DURNFORD waits for a reaction. VEREKER, cool, looks into DURNFORD's face and takes out his rifle. Cantering some distance away, VEREKER turns, spurs his horse vigorously and, on reaching DURNFORD, throws his rifle up into the air. He fires one-handed at the half carcass of a cow being hung up near the field kitchens without veering his galloping horse. The half carcass judders under the impact of the heavy bullet.

PTE. WILLIAMS has been jogging wretchedly on. On hearing the bullet he throws himself to the ground believing he has been shot. Two of the kitchen hands help him to his feet.

CLOSE UP of SGT. WILLIAMS.

SGT. WILLIAMS Shouting across the field:  
Private Williams. You've stopped.

PTE. WILLIAMS regains his composure and, once more lifting his rifle above his head, continues to jog. SGT. WILLIAMS looks on with smug satisfaction.

As VEREKER approaches, DURNFORD commands the attention of LT. RAW.

DURNFORD

Mr. Raw. Take Mr. Vereker to the Store and see he's issued the necessary equipment And then show him to the Mess and explain to him how an Officer is expected to behave.

RAW salutes and leads VEREKER off left, as DURNFORD watches their departure.

INT. OFFICERS' MESS TENT. DAY

CLOSE UP. A scorpion is being removed from a specimen jar with a pair of tweezers. It is lifted out of shot to be examined under a magnifying glass revealing LIEUTENANTS COGHILL & MELVILL seated at an impressive green baize table.

There are African servants, white-jacketed. SERGEANT MURPHY, a short, broad humourous, coarse-faced man, supervises the servants.

CHELMSFORD sits alone at a corner table reading his newspaper.

Other Officers are seated around the main table drinking claret and smoking the obligatory cigars. COLONEL PULLEINE is writing a letter whilst LT. HARFORD sits with his tins around him classifying his specimens.

As SGT. MURPHY refills their glasses COGHILL & MELVILL gossip covertly in half whispers so that their voices don't carry to the table of their commander.

MELVILL Lighting COGHILL's cigar:

Our good Colonel Durnford scored quite a coup with the Sikali Horse.

COGHILL

Um. There are rumours that my Lord Chelmsford intends to make Durnford Second in Command.

MELVILL

Well that's typical of Her Majesty's army. Appoint an engineer to do a soldier's work.

PULLEINE He continues writing without looking up:  
Now, now Mr. Melvill, less of your spleen.

COGHILL & MELVILL smile at one another before their attention is drawn to LT.  
RAW and VEREKER entering the Mess.

RAW Addressing the Mess:  
Stranger in the Mess. Gentlemen. (To CHELMSFORD) My Lord

The officers and Vereker survey each other.

RAW to VEREKER:  
Announce yourself

VEREKER spots CHELMSFORD in the corner.

VEREKER  
Good day Frederick.

CHELMSFORD  
Good day William. (Folding his newspaper, he stands to shake hands). Pleased you could join us.

The OFFICERS turn, a bit startled, to look at this newcomer who is somehow on first-name terms with the Lord General.

VEREKER  
It was either that, or join the Zulu.

CHELMSFORD (Removing his glasses).  
Join the Zulu? Oh yes, you're right in the thick of it aren't you? Talked to your father before we sailed.. he said you 'd taken to farming near Zulu land. Sent his regards. Should I meet up with you.

VEREKER (Wryly)  
That was nice of the old boy.

CHELMSFORD

I think you 'd better call out who you are.

VEREKER turns to address the Mess. CHELMSFORD sits.

VEREKER

William Vereker.

RAW

Sergeant Murphy.

MURPHY

Sir?

RAW

Bring drinks for the stranger. Allow me to introduce the Mess: Colonel Pulleine. Messers. Melvill, Coghill...

With the exception of PULLEINE & MAJOR RUSSELL the Officers stand as they are introduced.

COGHILL

Morning.

During the introductions, SOT. MURPHY selects a large, silver, chalice-like receptacle from a trophy table in another corner. He takes it to the head of the table.

RAW

Jackson, Milne, Major Russell, Stevenson.

STEVENSON

How do you do?

RAW

Halford. . and Halford's best friend

HARFORD raises a glass jar containing one of his prized specimens in acknowledgement. Meanwhile MURPHY has collected a bottle of claret from a tray brought by another black servant. He pours the contents into the trophy.

RUSSELL

Don 't leave your gin around, Vereker, or Harford will have it full of preserved butterflies. A damned waste, if you ask me.

HARFORD chuckles as he replaces the lid on his jar.

VEREKER

Oh I doubt if I'll leave much of that around. There's quite a shortage where I've been.

COGHILL Puffing on his cigar:

They fight with spears don't they? I mean it doesn't seem quite fair against the Martini Henry.

MELVILL

You didn't really have to chose between your country and the Zulu did you?

VEREKER

Um. And a damn close thing it was too.

RAW

Taking the freshly filled trophy from MURPHY. Ah, well done Murphy. (He presents it to VEREKER).

HARFORD

Stranger's Cup. (The Officers sit.) Down it in one and we where share your Mess bill for a week.

VEREKER

And if I don't?

RAW

Then a bottle of good claret to each member of the Mess is charged to your account

MELVILL

if it's too much we can have the bill forwarded to your father... in the House of Lords. Oh no offence meant, Vereker.

VEREKER

No offence taken, Melvill. (Taking the trophy from RAW). To men who aren't afraid to speak their minds.

RAW

Good luck, Sir

VEREKER begins to drink. Gradually, the officers join in with cheers of encouragement until the entire Mess is chanting "Down, down, down". They bang their fists on the table in time with the chants.

Gulping back the liquid, VEREKER stops as if he has accomplished his task.

The Officers applaud. General ad. lib. "Well done". Etc.

VEREKER (Expressionless)

Not quite.

Turning the trophy upside-down, he pours a small amount of liquid onto the floor.  
Appearing slightly intoxicated, his lips stained red with the wine, he smiles:  
The bottles of claret, are on me Gentlemen.

General calls of “Here, here”.

RAW

Standing, he raises his glass to propose a toast:  
The Regiment

OFFICERS

The Regiment

VEREKER Still smiling, he wipes the remaining wine from the corners of his  
moustache.  
The Regiment.

EXT. ZULU KRAAL. DAY

A tall, bald imposing Zulu named MANTSHONGA enters the camp. He makes his way  
through a large regiment of young Zulu braves and older INDUNAS (officers). They  
surround two young Zulu warriors who are tautly circling. Their shields are held at the  
defensive, their assegais poised for underhand thrust.

CLOSE SHOT - The two warriors fighting.

LONG SHOT - The vast crowd encircling the warriors.

The crowd cheers as CHIEF CETSHWAYO watches from his throne.

MANTSHONGA, spotting CETSHWAYO, walks purposefully towards him.

MANTSHONGA

I bring greetings from your friends, the British, and from the Great Lord Chelmsford

CETSHWAYO Still watching the fighting Zulus;  
And what do your Masters say?

MANTSHONGA

They are angry and send these demands. They say you rule in old ways that are wrong,  
that you kill your people without trial. The Great White Queen herself cannot kill her  
lowliest subject though she rules forty lands, each greater than all of Zululand.

BAYELE

Kill the Traitor, Father!

CETSHWAYO Gesturing to his son to calm down:

I do kill, under the customs of the Zulu, and I shall not depart from that. Do I go to the country of the white man and tell him to change his laws and customs?

MANTSHONGA

The British say your armies grow larger and they demand that you disband your Impis of War

CETSHWAYO

Tell the British I will not cross the river which divides our lands. But ask Lord Chelmsford if he would disarm his warriors in the face of such threats.

CLOSE UP. The two Zulus are now in ferocious combat.

SWITCH back to alternate CLOSE shots of CETSHWAYO & MANTSHONGA

MANTSHONGA

I will ask him but his answer will be to start war against your 30,000 warriors.

CETSHWAYO

My armies will defend this land

General uproar as one of the fighting Zulus falls to the ground. Standing, CETSHWAYO gives the signal to kill. The triumphant Zulu drives his assegai into the other's heart. A group of warriors converge upon the body as MANTSHONGA turns and EXITS.

EXT. GARDEN. DIOCESAN MANSION. DAY.

A garden party is in full swing. There are tables and chairs dotted about a spacious garden. Stringed music is playing and there is an air of English civility. There are ladies with parasols, children playing and Officers present.

FANNY COLENZO - 25, her cheeks aflame, her manner excitable, is engaged in a sedate game of cricket with some children and officers. She bats the ball some distance away near COL. DURNFORD.

FANNY

Anthony (Shouting)... Anthony

COL. DURNFORD, engaged in conversation with an Officer and a lady, turns on hearing his name. He spots the ball.

COL. DURNFORD (Handing his hat to the Officer)

Hold this.

Picking up the ball, he gives it to a little girl who has run to collect it.

(Smiling at FANNY)

Well batted Well batted

FANNY curtsies in mock recognition. Her eyes flash to his and we sense their secret feeling for each other.

VEREKER & two other officers ride along the drive to the mansion. Dismounting VEREKER hands the reigns of his horse to a well-dressed black groomsman and steps forward extending his hand in greeting to the black butler.

VEREKER

Joseph, how are all the Colenso girls?

JOSEPH

They are all in the garden, Sir And they will be glad to see you, I'm sure.

VEREKER walks down the slope of the lawn, past a young girl on a swing, her maid is in attendance. Removing his hat, he spots FANNY being bowled to by LT. MILNE. Creeping up behind her, VEREKER indicates to MILNE to bowl high.

VEREKER (catching the ball MILNE has just bowled)

You tipped it! You tipped it! Out! Out!

FANNY

I did not (Turning) William. (Hugging him) You cheat, you.

VEREKER

Me cheat? Same old Fanny. (He kisses her on the cheek).

FANNY With genuine affection:

Welcome. Welcome back.

Taking his arm, FANNY & VEREKER walk across the lawn. VEREKER throws the ball back to the cricketers.

DURNFORD, still engaged in conversation, turns smiling. His smile fades as he spots FANNY with VEREKER.

DURNFORD

Excuse me, Ladies.

Leaving them, he makes towards FANNY & VEREKER.

FANNY

Did you get your farm going?

VEREKER

Yes, I did.

FANNY

Oh. How was it?

VEREKER

I've never been so happy.

Stopping, FANNY addresses him earnestly:

I'm sorry you had to leave.

DURNFORD approaches them.

DURNFORD

You 'vet met the... Honourable William Vereker, I believe.

FANNY

Yes Anthony, we were childhood friends.

DURNFORD

Your childhood friend shot a dead cow at the gallop the other day. (FANNY laughs). He wasn't impressed.

SWITCH TO MANSION VERANDA.

CHELMSFORD watches the threesome as BARTLE FRERE approaches him, puffing on a cigar.

CHELMSFORD

There is a Mrs. Durnford, is there?

BARTLE FRERE

She exists.. .but er. . .nothing's been heard of her, the eight years Durnford's been in Africa.

CREALOCK

Although much is spoken of her now, My Lord.

These three walk along the veranda.

BARTLE FRERE

I, er, recommended him to you... because he knows Africa so well.

CREALOCK

Oh indeed. His ability to recruit native contingents is proving invaluable to His Lordship.

BARTLE FRERE

How do you rate him as a soldier?

CREALOCK

It is widely held that he has great courage and he's an excellent engineer

BARTLE FRERE (Walking down the veranda steps).  
Shall we join the guests?

The DEWITT sisters, both in their whites, are seen playing a game of tennis. They are being watched by LTS. MELVILL & COGHILL (They are both seated). One of the ladies moves off court to fetch the ball that has gone out of play. She glances up at COGHILL.

COGHILL

Do you think she might be interested in someone?

MELVILL

Which one?

COGHILL

Well that one. The one who keeps looking at me.

MELVILL

It could be you flatter yourself Coghill. It's that odd eye.

LT. RAW approaches

RAW (Tongue-in-cheek)

They must have locked all the good ones up.

BARTLE FRERE, CHELMSFORD & CREALOCK have now joined a selection of the guests at some tables on the lawn for afternoon tea.

MRS. DEWITT

Ah, General. (She curtsies. CHELMSFORD acknowledges). Do you find our Border Country congenial, My Lord?

CHELMSFORD (Sitting)

The landscape, most congenial Ma'am but the Border, vulnerable.

MRS. PRETORIOUS (Also sitting)

Do you really think Cetshwayo will attack us?

DURNFORD, VEREKER & FANNY have also joined the party.

CHELMSFORD

The intention of the Zulu Impis and their King concern me deeply, Ma 'am.

FANNY

Cetshwayo has no intention of attacking Natal, Mrs. Pretorious. Unless he's given no option. He has no quarrel with us. (She sits).

BARTLE FRERE (Sitting next to FANNY)

It's very rare to meet a young lady interested in tactical matters, Miss Colenso. Is it not, Sir Henry, most rare?

MR. PRETORIOUS

You are talking of a violent and murdering barbarian who commands an army of 30,000 warriors just across the river

FANNY

My father has known and lived with the Zulus for many years.

MR. PRETORIOUS

Cetshwayo massacred 20,000 of his own people to make himself king.

COLENZO

The English Tudor Kings did no less. Much later in our nation's history, I might add, and the French much more recently.

CHELMSFORD

That may well be, Your Grace, but be that as it may, my duty is clear. The defence of all this (indicating the surroundings) Natal.

COLENZO

Yes, well, it's difficult to stand against that position. if you speak only of (Leaning forward & looking him in the eye)... defence.

MR. PRETORIOUS

And what does our good Colonel Durnford think?

DURNFORD (Walking around the tables to join VEREKER)

If the people of Natal wish to feel safe, let them persuade their husbands and sons to volunteer. We need both Officers and men.

CHELMSFORD

We do Colonel, good point.

COLENZO

I cannot be brought to believe that Cetshwayo wants a war with Britain.

BARTLE FRERE

Every Zulu is raised to be a warrior. Without a war there 'd be no Zulu nation.

MRS. DEWITT

Nobody is really safe, are they Your Excellency?

JOSEPH has appeared at BARTLE FRERE's side. He whispers something into his ear.

LADY FRERE

Mrs. Dewitt has four daughters, Henry, and I fear she feels for them all.

VEREKER has wandered away from the tables. He is watching MELVILL & COGHILL chatting to the two DEWITT girls who were previously playing tennis.

VEREKER

Your daughters may indeed be in some danger Mrs. Dewitt, but not at the moment from the Zulus, I fear

The parties' attention is drawn to the four on the lawn.

CLOSE UP of MRS. DEWITT as she laughs politely.

As the camera swings back to the four on the lawn we see MANTSHONGA in the background. The camera follows him ending in CLOSE UP as he strides forward to meet BARTLE FRERE. BARTLE FRERE looks grave as if he is already aware of the news he is about to hear.

SWITCH, LONG SHOT to where BARTLE FRERE, CHELMSFORD, CREALOCK & MANTSHONGA are now standing. BARTLE FRERE addresses the entire garden party.

BARTLE FRERE

Ladies and gentlemen, your attention, please.

LONG SHOT of lawn. The guests move forward.

The camera closes in on the four on the veranda. With one arm behind his back, a cigar in his other hand, BARTLE FRERE continues: (Slowly and deliberately)  
I think I should inform you that I am obliged to issue a state of war between Her Majesty's Government and the Zulu King, Cetshwayo

SWITCH to CLOSE UP of VEREKER & COLENSO. General background noises of dismay as BARTLE FRERE carries on.  
on his non compliance with the ultimatum made on him urging reformation...

CLOSE UP of FANNY & DURNFORD. He drops his head, averting her gaze.

CLOSE UP of BARTLE FRERE. He continues:  
and redress for violations of British Sovereignty.

The guests applaud as CHELMSFORD & BARTLE FRERE shake hands.

CLOSE UP of FANNY & DURNFORD.

FANNY

Why? Why do men think of nothing but killing? (She touches his disabled arm lovingly).

Tucking his hat under his arm, he looks into her eyes and kisses her hand. Walking away, he replaces his hat and reaching the top of the veranda steps, turns. They exchange desperate, painful glances.

CLOSE UP of COLENZO

COLENZO (To himself)

This wonderful land we are privileged to share. (Removing his glasses.) Dear God (hanging his head) there should be room for all of us.

EXT. CHELMSFORD'S CAMP. PIETERMARITZBURG. NIGHT

ASSORTED CLOSE SHOTS TO COVER THE MOVE TO RORKE'S DRIFT - WAGON WHEELS CREAKING AS THEY TAKE THE FIRST STRAIN OF MOVEMENT, OXEN HOOVES STARTING FORWARD ON RUTTED DIRT SURFACES, WAGONEERS FLICKING WHIPS, PACKS GOING ONTO BACKS OF SOLDIERS, BARE FEET OF NATIVE LEVIES, OFFICERS MOUNTING, THEN SIMILAR DETAILS TO SHOW RHYTHMIC FORWARD PROGRESS, MARCHING, ROLLING DARK SILHOUETTED FORMS. TORCHES. THREE OFFICERS stand watching:

OFFICER

There goes Number Two Company.

Q.S.M. BLOOMFIELD CUTS ACROSS SHOT he is studying a list attached to a clipboard. He is about to walk past a tent when he hears a call of "I'll see yer" coming from within. Suspecting gambling, he moves to investigate.

Pulling back the tent flap reveals a group, including BOY-PULLEN playing a game of cards.

BLOOMFIELD

Do I believe what me eyes see? The whole bleedin' Army movin' off to meet the murderin' heathen and what goes on in 'ere? A game of Brag. (Sternly) Brag?

BOY-PULLEN (Standing)

I'm sorry, Quartermaster

BLOOMFIELD

You'll be more sorrier still when the Zulu ask Lad.. "What 'ave you got to offer me not to slit your gut?" and you say (Pointing to the cards in BOY-PULLEN's hand) ah, the Knave of Hearts, Sir, the Knave of Hearts.

The rest of the group chuckle.

Offering BOY-PULLEN a coin, BLOOMFIELD gives the order "Move!"

Taking the coin BOY-PULLEN leaves the tent.

SWITCH to BANDSTAND. A band is playing "Men Of Harlech".  
CHELMSFORD & BARTLE FRERE move into CLOSE UP in foreground.

CHELMSFORD

For a savage as to a child, chastisement is sometimes a kindness.

BARTLE FRERE

Let us hope then, that this will be the final solution to the Zulu problem.

EXT. COLUMN ON THE MOVE. NIGHT

BOY-PULLEN moves against the traffic towards the back of the moving column. He passes squads of torchlighted marchers, artillery units, riders, wagons, until he comes to the SUTLER'S wagon.

THREE SOLDIERS ENTER SHOT and surreptitiously help themselves out of the back of the moving wagon. Noticing, BOY-PULLEN seizes his chance and grabbing a bottle out one of the soldier's hands, makes a dash for it.

SOLDIER

'Ere! Come back 'ere you thievin' little beggar!

MOVING SHOT. CHELMSFORD, on foot salutes an officer as  
DURNFORD  
approaches from behind on horseback.

DURNFORD (Calling)

My Lord. (CHELMSFORD turns.) I've prepared a list of ideas for you to see. (He removes a paper from his tunic).

CHELMSFORD

Excellent. Thank you. (He continues to walk away) Give them to Crealock, would you?

DURNFORD

My Lord. (CHELMSFORD turns again) This list was prepared for you. I don 't think another can understand its true value.

CHELMSFORD (Taking the list)

Thank you Colonel Durnford. (He exits as DURNFORD looks on).

CHELMSFORD joins his group of officers. He mounts his horse and then addresses them:

CHELMSFORD

Gentlemen, within ten days we shall cross the Buffalo River and British soldiers will then be in Zululand. Colonel Durnford will remain down river

CLOSE UP of DURNFORD. He looks agitated by this remark.

Undeterred, CHELMSFORD continues:

where he will be responsible for the defence of the Natal border

Turning his horse and without looking at DURNFORD he leads his party off

BLOOMFIELD is joined by BOY-PULLEN

BOY-PULLEN

Will you hear "Last Post", Sir?

BLOOMFIELD

I listened extra careful to your "Stand To" this mornin', Boy. It was perfect. I couldn't 'vet done it better me self, not even when I was Bugler to The Duke Of Wellington.. .now tell me, where did you get that black eye?

BOY-PULLEN

From the Cook, Sir They saw me dip your shaving tin in the tea-water this morning, made their tea taste of Lifebuoy toilet soap, they say  
Handing him the bottle of gin he purloined earlier.

BLOOMFIELD

So, you got it in the line of dooty.. (Taking a swig from the bottle & handing it back to BOY-PULLEN)... point taken.

BLOOMFIELD gets up onto a wagon as BOY-PULLEN gulps from the bottle.

BOY-PULLEN

Will we be fighting the Zulus soon, Quartermaster? (Joining BLOOMFIELD, he jumps up onto the front of the wagon).

BLOOMFIELD

Could be. (He shouts for the wagon to move out) Across the river into Zululand. (They share the bottle of gin). They might just be waiting there for us to show up... .them stabbing assegais pointing right at our bellies!....

BOY-PULLEN

You afeared of the Zulus then, Quartermaster?

BLOOMFIELD

One Zulu is only one man.. ..and I'm afeared of no one man... but the Zulu, they come in the thousands.... like a black wave of death.... in the thousands.... and them assegais.... stabbing!

The BOY-PULLEN doesn't answer. He stares into the darkness, contemplating the prospect of the morning as described by BLOOMFIELD.

Back in the centre of the camp, VEREKER rides past the bandstand to meet DURNFORD.

DURNFORD

Your orders, Mr Vereker?

VEREKER

I'm to take the Sikali with the main column to the river

DURNFORD

Lord Chelmsford seems to want me to stay back with my Basutos.

VEREKER

I think Chelmsford wants a good man on the border Why he fears a flanking attack and requires a steady Commander in reserve.

DURNFORD (Angrily)

The wrong side of the river! The wrong place! (DURNFORD glares at VEREKER, who realises he has hit a raw nerve.) Does he wish me to fight the Zulu, or merely observe their natural habitat?

Sensing his cue to exit, VEREKER salutes and saying "Sir" turns his horse to join the Sikali who are leaving the camp.

85. DURNFORD walks his horse a few paces forward as he watches the troop leave.

DURNFORD (With sincerity)

God go with you, Mr Vereker (He turns his horse about as the band music swells to its conclusion).

THE CAMP AT RORKE'S DRIFT. THE BORDER WITH ZULULAND. DAY.  
TRAVELLING P.O.V.

THE THREAT OF THE BACKLIGHTED LANDSCAPE BEFORE THEM, THE SUN  
GLARE MAKING CLARITY OF VISION DIFFICULT. CAMERA PANS UP RIVER.  
THE MOUNTED INFANTRY CROSS TO THE FAR BACK, THE UNION JACK  
HELD PROUDLY ALOFT.

RIVER BANK.

Two punts, carrying redcoated soldiers are being hauled across the water by rows of  
Basutos on the opposite bank. As they unload, the soldiers immediately form into  
columns.

The first ox-wagon is driven out of the river, with much shouting and encouragement  
from the drover and watching soldiers. There is general activity everywhere.

LOW SHOT. The wheels of the wagons and the Basuto's feet are  
seen trudging  
through the slop of mud.

LONG SHOT OF CAMP. A column of Basutos is seen walking towards the camp. The  
white tents are dominant in the background.

SWITCH to CHELMSFORD, seen mounted on horseback. He surveys the proceedings  
through a pair of binoculars.

CAMERA PANS to discover VEREKER, on horseback, leading the troop of SIKALI  
HORSE across the river.

CAMERA PICKS UP a calm LT. RAW as he crosses amidst the multitude.

CLOSE UP of VEREKER. With gritted determination he spurs his horse onward up the  
bank.

SGT. WILLIAMS is seen seated upon a covered wagon about to enter the water.  
PTE. WILLIAMS is on foot trying to ins