

9 How would you describe the mood in South Africa with respect to its history?

Right in the very beginning of this new sort of political dispensation that we have now, there were quite a number of voices that said, ja, there are certain things that we want to get rid of. In terms for instance of its monuments and, and, and, and these statues that you find all over the show. But I think given the important role that was played especially by someone like Nelson Mandela, very soon, all the people in South Africa started, you know, to realise what we need is to create a new history and not only create it but also acknowledge it. So what you find is not that people want to tear down, you know those artefacts of the, of the past history, but, but rather to, ... to add to it by building museums for, for instance, a apartheid's museum and naming streets after important black figures in the, in the black history.

10 One well-known episode in South African history is the 'Grote Trek' by the Boers, the Dutch colonists. What occasioned it?

The 'Grote Trek' was the result of a very important political struggle, in a sense. At the time the Cape Colony, as it was called then, was dominated by English – an English government and English colonists. And there was a lot of dissension ... between the Dutch or then Afrikaans-speaking farmers and the English-speaking government of the time. The then Dutch colonists were forever in this fight with the black tribes of the area and the British were much more sympathetic towards the, the black tribes.

And that caused a racially defined point of dissension if you like, so that the colonists thought, you know, that, that the British Government was not really taking their position into consideration. And at a certain point in time the farmers simply decided, well, then we leave and we ... we will start a, a trek to the North.

11 After the 'Grote Trek' there were the Boer Wars between the British and the Dutch colonists of the time. What factor, would you say, was decisive here?

If you look at governments even today, quite often what happens in, in, in, in government, decisions that are taken are quite often made by individuals and, in a sense, governed by ... the way in which a certain individual within such a government thinks and acts. Rhodes is a very, is a very clear example. He did a number of wonderful things. And in a sense, I'm quite often, I'm left with the impression, when reading the history, that there was also this, you know, sort of certain amount of jealousy, you know, that, you had this very strong British figure doing all these important developing all these opportunities and developments and becoming rich of course.

Then Paul Kruger is maybe one of the most important leaders of, of the time creating the sort of republican ideal, getting people to stick together and the start of a very definite nationalism, if you like. And a lot of it is linked to the role that Kruger played, indeed.

12 The second war between the British and the Boers has been called 'the last of the gentlemen's wars'. How about that?

It all depends on one's perspective of course. And, and quite often – as we all know when writing history – the history is in a, in a sense governed by the perspective of the writer of the history. 'Gentleman's war'? Yes, maybe, to a certain extent, but in the time when the history was written, especially from the South African perspective, of course, there, there were really very negative feelings about the, the way in which the British fought the war. There are all these stories, for instance, about the concentration camps, where, the women and children were kept under really harsh conditions, and one could hardly, you know describe that as 'gentlemanly'. I think there is a lot of mixed feeling about the characteristics of the Second Boer War.