

= Anglo @-@ Zanzibar War =

The Anglo @-@ Zanzibar War was a military conflict fought between the United Kingdom and the Zanzibar Sultanate on 27 August 1896 . The conflict lasted around 38 minutes , marking it as the shortest war in history . The immediate cause of the war was the death of the pro @-@ British Sultan Hamad bin Thuwaini on 25 August 1896 and the subsequent succession of Sultan Khalid bin Barghash . The British authorities preferred Hamud bin Muhammed , who was more favourable to British interests , as sultan . In accordance with a treaty signed in 1886 , a condition for accession to the sultanate was that the candidate obtain the permission of the British consul , and Khalid had not fulfilled this requirement . The British considered this a casus belli and sent an ultimatum to Khalid demanding that he order his forces to stand down and leave the palace . In response , Khalid called up his palace guard and barricaded himself inside the palace .

The ultimatum expired at 09 : 00 East Africa Time (EAT) on 27 August , by which time the British had gathered three cruisers , two gunboats , 150 marines and sailors , and 900 Zanzibaris in the harbour area . The Royal Navy contingent were under the command of Rear @-@ Admiral Harry Rawson while their Zanzibaris were commanded by Brigadier @-@ General Lloyd Mathews of the Zanzibar army (who was also the First Minister of Zanzibar) . Around 2 @, @ 800 Zanzibaris defended the palace ; most were recruited from the civilian population , but they also included the sultan 's palace guard and several hundred of his servants and slaves . The defenders had several artillery pieces and machine guns , which were set in front of the palace sighted at the British ships . A bombardment opened at 09 : 02 set the palace on fire and disabled the defending artillery . A small naval action took place with the British sinking the Zanzibari royal yacht HHS Glasgow and two smaller vessels , and some shots were fired ineffectually at the pro @-@ British Zanzibari troops as they approached the palace . The flag at the palace was shot down and fire ceased at 09 : 40 .

The sultan 's forces sustained roughly 500 casualties , while only one British sailor was injured . Sultan Khalid received asylum in the German consulate before escaping to German East Africa (in the mainland part of present Tanzania) . The British quickly placed Sultan Hamud in power at the head of a puppet government . The war marked the end of the Zanzibar Sultanate as a sovereign state and the start of a period of heavy British influence .

= = Background = =

Zanzibar was an island country in the Indian Ocean , off the coast of Tanganyika ; today it forms part of Tanzania . The main island , Unguja (or Zanzibar Island) , had been under the nominal control of the Sultans of Oman since 1698 when they expelled the Portuguese settlers who had claimed it in 1499 . Sultan Majid bin Said declared the island independent of Oman in 1858 , which was recognised by Great Britain , and split the sultanate from that of Oman . The subsequent sultans established their capital and seat of government at Zanzibar Town where a palace complex was built on the sea front . By 1896 , this consisted of the palace itself ; the Beit al @-@ Hukm , an attached harem ; and the Beit al @-@ Ajaib or " House of Wonders " ? a ceremonial palace said to be the first building in East Africa to be provided with electricity . The complex was mostly constructed of local timber and was not designed as a defensive structure . All three main buildings were adjacent to one another in a line , and linked by wooden covered bridges above street height .

Britain had recognised Zanzibar 's sovereignty and its sultanate in 1886 , after a long period of friendly interaction , and generally maintained good relations with the country and its sultans . However , Germany was also interested in East Africa and the two powers vied for control of trade rights and territory in the area throughout the late 19th century . Sultan Khalifah had granted rights to the land of Kenya to Britain and that of Tanganyika to Germany , a process resulting in the prohibition of slavery in those lands . Many of the Arab ruling classes were upset by this interruption of a valuable trade , which resulted in some unrest . In addition , the German authorities in Tanganyika refused to fly the flag of the Zanzibar Sultanate , which led to armed clashes between German troops and the local population . One such conflict in Tanga claimed the lives of 20 Arabs .

Sultan Khalifah sent Zanzibari troops led by Brigadier @-@ General Lloyd Mathews , a former Lieutenant of the Royal Navy , to restore order in Tanganyika . The operation was largely successful , but anti @-@ German feeling among the Zanzibari people remained strong . Further conflicts erupted at Bagamoyo where 150 natives were killed by German military forces and at Ketwa where German officials and their servants were murdered . Khalifah then granted extensive trade rights to the Imperial British East Africa Company (IBEAC) who , with German assistance , ran a naval blockade to halt the continuing domestic slave trade . Upon Khalifah 's death in 1890 Ali bin Said ascended to the sultanate . Sultan Ali banned the domestic slave trade (but not slave ownership) , declared Zanzibar a British protectorate and appointed Lloyd Mathews as First Minister to lead his cabinet . The British were also guaranteed a veto over the future appointment of sultans .

The year of Ali 's ascension also saw the signing of the Heligoland @-@ Zanzibar Treaty between Britain and Germany . This treaty officially demarcated the spheres of interest in East Africa and ceded Germany 's rights in Zanzibar to the United Kingdom . This granted the British government more influence in Zanzibar , which they intended to use to eradicate slavery there , an objective they had held as early as 1804 .

Sultan Ali 's successor was Hamad bin Thuwaini , who became sultan in 1893 . Hamad maintained a close relationship with the British but there was dissent among his subjects over the increasing British control over the country , the British @-@ led army and the abolition of the valuable slave trade . In order to control this dissent , the British authorities authorised the sultan to raise a Zanzibari palace bodyguard of 1 @,@ 000 men , but these troops were soon involved in clashes with the British @-@ led police . Complaints about the bodyguards ' activities were also received from the European residents in Zanzibar Town .

= = 25 August = =

Sultan Hamad died suddenly at 11 : 40 EAT (08 : 40 UTC) on 25 August 1896 . His 29 @-@ year @-@ old nephew Khalid bin Bargash , who was suspected by some of his assassination , moved into the palace complex at Zanzibar Town without British approval , in contravention of the treaty agreed with Ali . The British government preferred an alternative candidate , Hamud bin Muhammed , who was more favourably disposed towards them . Khalid was warned by the consul and diplomatic agent to Zanzibar , Basil Cave , and General Mathews to think carefully about his actions . This course of action had proved successful three years earlier when Khalid had tried to claim the sultanate after the death of Ali and the British consul @-@ general , Rennell Rodd , had persuaded him of the dangers of such an action .

Khalid ignored Cave 's warning and his forces began mustering in the Palace Square under the command of Captain Saleh of the palace bodyguard . By the end of the day , they numbered 2 @,@ 800 men armed with rifles and muskets . The majority were civilians but the force included 700 Zanzibari Askari soldiers who had sided with Khalid . The sultan 's artillery , which consisted of several Maxim machine guns , a Gatling gun , a 17th @-@ century bronze cannon and two 12 @-@ pounder field guns , was aimed at the British ships in the harbour . The 12 @-@ pounders had been presented to the sultan by Wilhelm II , the German emperor . The sultan 's troops also took possession of the Zanzibari Navy , which consisted of one wooden sloop , the HHS Glasgow , built as a royal yacht for the sultan in 1878 based on the British frigate Glasgow .

Mathews and Cave also began to muster their forces , already commanding 900 Zanzibari askaris under Lieutenant Arthur Edward Harington Raikes of the Wiltshire Regiment who was seconded to the Zanzibar Army and held the rank of Brigadier @-@ General . 150 sailors and marines were landed from the Pearl @-@ class protected cruiser Philomel and the gunboat Thrush , which were anchored in the harbour . The naval contingent , under the command of Captain O 'Callaghan , came ashore within fifteen minutes of being requested to deal with any rioting caused by the general population . A smaller contingent of sailors under Lieutenant Watson of Thrush were put ashore to guard the British consulate , where British citizens were requested to gather for protection . HMS Sparrow , another gunboat , entered the harbour and was anchored opposite the palace next to Thrush .

Some concerns were raised among the British diplomats as to the reliability of Raikes ' askaris , but they proved to be steady and professional troops hardened by military drill and several expeditions to East Africa . They would later become the only land troops to be fired upon by the defenders . Raikes ' troops were armed with two Maxim guns and a nine pounder cannon , and were stationed at the nearby customs house . The sultan attempted to have the US consul , Richard Dorsey Mohun , recognise his accession but the messenger was told that " as his accession had not been verified by Her Majesty 's government , it is impossible to reply . "

Cave continued to send messages to Khalid requesting that he stand down his troops , leave the palace and return home but these were ignored and Khalid replied that he would proclaim himself sultan at 15 : 00 . Cave stated that this would constitute an act of rebellion and that Khalid 's sultancy would not be recognised by the British government . At 14 : 30 , Sultan Hamad was buried and exactly 30 minutes later a royal salute from the palace guns proclaimed Khalid 's succession . Cave could not open hostilities without government approval and telegraphed the following message to the Foreign Office of Lord Salisbury 's administration in London : " Are we authorised in the event of all attempts at a peaceful solution proving useless , to fire on the Palace from the men @-@ of @-@ war ? " Meanwhile , Cave informed all other foreign consuls that all flags were to remain at half mast in honour of the late Hamad . The only one that did not was a large red flag flying from Khalid 's palace . Cave also informed the consuls not to recognise Khalid as sultan , to which they agreed .

= = 26 August = =

At 10 : 00 on 26 August , the Archer @-@ class protected cruiser Raccoon arrived at Zanzibar Town and was anchored in line with Thrush and Sparrow . At 14 : 00 , the Edgar @-@ class protected cruiser St George , flagship of the Cape and East Africa Station , steamed into the harbour . On board were Rear @-@ Admiral Harry Rawson and further British marines and sailors . At around the same time Lord Salisbury 's reply arrived authorising Cave and Rawson to use the resources at their disposal to remove Khalid from power . The telegraph read : " You are authorised to adopt whatever measures you may consider necessary , and will be supported in your action by Her Majesty 's Government . Do not , however , attempt to take any action which you are not certain of being able to accomplish successfully . "

Cave attempted further negotiations with Khalid but these failed and Rawson sent an ultimatum , requiring him to haul down his flag and leave the palace by 09 : 00 on 27 August or he would open fire . During the afternoon , all merchant vessels were cleared from the harbour and the British women and children removed to St. George and a British @-@ India Steam Navigation Company vessel for their safety . That night , Consul Mohun noted that : " The silence which hung over Zanzibar was appalling . Usually drums were beating or babies cried but that night there was absolutely not a sound . "

= = 27 August = =

At 08 : 00 on the morning of 27 August , after a messenger sent by Khalid requested parley from Cave , the consul replied that he would only have salvation if he agreed to the terms of the ultimatum . At 08 : 30 a further messenger from Khalid declared that " We have no intention of hauling down our flag and we do not believe you would open fire on us " ; Cave replied that " We do not want to open fire , but unless you do as you are told we shall certainly do so . " At 08 : 55 , having received no further word from the palace , aboard St George Rawson hoisted the signal " prepare for action " .

At exactly 09 : 00 , General Lloyd Mathews ordered the British ships to commence the bombardment . At 09 : 02 Her Majesty 's Ships Raccoon , Thrush and Sparrow opened fire at the palace simultaneously , Thrush 's first shot immediately dismounted an Arab 12 @-@ pounder cannon . Three thousand defenders , servants and slaves were present in the largely wooden palace and even with barricades of crates , bales and rubber , there were many casualties from the

high explosive shells . Despite initial reports that he had been captured and was to be exiled to India , Sultan Khalid escaped from the palace . A Reuters news correspondent reported that the sultan had " fled at the first shot with all the leading Arabs , who left their slaves and followers to carry on the fighting " , but other sources state that he remained in the palace for longer . The shelling ceased at around 09 : 40 , by which time the palace and attached harem had caught fire , the Sultan 's artillery had been silenced and his flag cut down .

During the bombardment a small naval engagement occurred when , at 09 : 05 , the obsolete Glasgow fired upon the St George using her armament of 7 nine @-@ pounder guns and a Gatling gun , which had been a present from Queen Victoria to the sultan . The return fire caused Glasgow to sink , though the shallow harbour meant that her masts remained out of the water . Glasgow 's crew hoisted a British flag as a token of their surrender and they were all rescued by British sailors in launches . Thrush also sank two steam launches whose Zanzibari crews shot at her with rifles . Some land fighting occurred when Khalid 's men fired on Raikes ' askaris , with little effect , as they approached the palace . The fighting ceased with the end of the shelling . The British controlled the town and the palace and by the afternoon Hamud bin Muhammed , an Arab favourable to the British , had been installed as sultan with much reduced powers . The British ships and crews had fired around 500 shells , 4 @,@ 100 machine gun rounds and 1 @,@ 000 rifle rounds during the engagement .

= = Aftermath = =

Around 500 Zanzibari men and women were killed or wounded during the bombardment , most of the dead a result of the fire that engulfed the palace . It is unknown how many of these casualties were combatants , but Khalid 's gun crews were said to have been " decimated " . British casualties amounted to one Petty Officer severely wounded aboard Thrush who later recovered . Although the majority of the Zanzibari townspeople sided with the British , the town 's Indian quarter suffered from opportunistic looting and around twenty inhabitants lost their lives in the chaos . To restore order 150 British Sikh troops were transferred from Mombasa to patrol the streets . Sailors from St George and Philomel were landed to form a fire brigade to contain the fire , which had spread from the palace to the nearby customs sheds . There was some concern about the fire at the customs sheds as they contained a sizeable store of explosives , but no explosion occurred .

Sultan Khalid , Captain Saleh and around forty followers sought refuge in the German consulate following their flight from the palace , where they were guarded by ten armed German sailors and marines while Mathews stationed men outside to arrest them if they tried to leave . Despite extradition requests the German consul refused to surrender Khalid to the British as his country 's extradition treaty with Britain specifically excluded political prisoners . Instead , the German consul promised to remove Khalid to German East Africa without him " setting foot on the soil of Zanzibar " . At 10 : 00 on 2 October , SMS Seeadler of the German Navy arrived in port ; at high tide , one of Seeadler 's boats made it up to the consulate 's garden gate and Khalid stepped directly from consular grounds to a German war vessel and hence was free from arrest . He was transferred from the boat onto the Seeadler and was then taken to Dar es Salaam in German East Africa . Khalid was captured by British forces in 1916 , during the East African Campaign of World War I , and exiled to Seychelles and Saint Helena before being allowed to return to East Africa , where he died at Mombasa in 1927 . The British punished Khalid 's supporters by forcing them to pay reparations to cover the cost of shells fired against them and for damages caused by the looting , which amounted to 300 @,@ 000 rupees .

Sultan Hamud was loyal to the British and acted as a figurehead for an essentially British @-@ run government , the sultanate only being retained to avoid the costs involved with running Zanzibar directly as a crown colony . Several months after the war , Hamud , with British prompting , abolished slavery in all its forms . The emancipation of slaves required them to present themselves to a government office and proved a slow process ? within ten years only 17 @,@ 293 slaves had been freed , from an estimated population of 60 @,@ 000 in 1891 .

The badly damaged palace complex was completely changed by the war . The harem , lighthouse

and palace were demolished as the bombardment had left them unsafe . The palace site became an area of gardens while a new palace was erected on the site of the harem . The House of Wonders was almost undamaged and would later become the main secretariat for the British governing authorities . During renovation work on the House of Wonders in 1897 a clocktower was added to its frontage to replace the lighthouse lost to the shelling . The wreck of the Glasgow remained in the harbour in front of the palace where the shallow waters ensured that her masts would remain visible for several years to come ; it was eventually broken up for scrap in 1912 .

The British protagonists were highly regarded by the governments in London and Zanzibar for their actions leading up to and during the war , and many were rewarded with appointments and honours . General Raikes , leader of the askaris , was appointed a First Class (Second Grade) member of the Order of the Brilliant Star of Zanzibar on 24 September 1896 , a First Class member of the Zanzibari Order of Hamondieh on 25 August 1897 and later promoted to Commander of the Zanzibar armies . General Mathews , the Zanzibari army commander , was appointed a member of the Grand Order of Hamondieh on 25 August 1897 and became First Minister and Treasurer to the Zanzibari government . Basil Cave , the consul , was appointed a Companion of the Order of the Bath on 1 January 1897 and promoted to Consul @-@ General on 9 July 1903 . Harry Rawson was appointed a Knight Commander of the Order of the Bath for his work in Zanzibar and would later be Governor of New South Wales in Australia and receive promotion to Admiral . Rawson was also appointed a first class member of the Order of the Brilliant Star of Zanzibar on 8 February 1897 and the Order of Hamondieh on 18 June 1898 .

Perhaps due to the effectiveness shown by the Royal Navy during the bombardment , there were no further rebellions against British influence during the remaining 67 years of the protectorate .

= = Duration = =

The war , lasting less than three quarters of an hour , is considered the shortest in recorded history . Several durations are given by sources , including 38 , 40 and 45 minutes , but the 38 @-@ minute duration is the most often quoted . The variation is due to confusion over what actually constitutes the start and end of a war . Some sources take the start of the war as the order to open fire at 09 : 00 and some with the start of actual firing at 09 : 02 . The end of the war is usually put at 09 : 40 when the last shots were fired and the palace flag struck , but some sources place it at 09 : 45 . The logbooks of the British ships also suffer from this with St George indicating that cease @-@ fire was called and Khalid entered the German consulate at 09 : 35 , Thrush at 09 : 40 , Racoon at 09 : 41 , and Philomel and Sparrow at 09 : 45 .