

History Buff EP 1 - The 38 minute War

Considered to be one of the shortest wars in history, the Anglo-Zanzibar War lasted for an underwhelmingly grand total of 38 minutes. Now before we move on, some of you might be wondering what the heck what Zanzibar is (it's okay if your not) I'll explain anyways.

Welcome to History Buff, a show about all the random and unusual facts that your textbooks forgot; I'm your host and fellow history buff Natalie Rondeau. Today's episode is on The 38 Minute War, so dust off your thinking caps and lets begin.

Zanzibar was formed by the Zanzibar Treaty signed by Great Britain and Germany back in 1890, which defined respective areas under the control of the two countries and Zanzibar being one of them.

In the tail end of the 1800s, Zanzibar was a protectorate or a country that was protected by a much larger or stronger one. In this cast that larger and stronger country was British Empire. In 1893 the British "appointed" a Sultan , Hamad bin Thuwaini, to keep an eye on the region. It should be noted that he was a supporter of the British which probably help him gain power.

However, after ruling peacefully for three years, in 1896 on August 25; Hamad was found dead in his palace. The most common belief for how he was that his brother poisoned him in a very typical spike of greed for the throne. This idea is also reinforced by the fact that just a few hours after Hamad's dead, his brother Khalid bin Barghash moved into the palace and assumed the role of Sultan.

As such, this angered the British because Khalid did this all without their approval. The local diplomats were not happy to say the least and the chief among them, Basil Cave, declared that Khalid should stand down. Of course Khalid didn't.

I will note for those of you who may have not noticed, but all of the previously stated events and the following events all happened on August 25, 1896.

Ironically, because over the 3 years of the former sultan's the britiash had given Zanzibar many guns and cannons as diplomatic gifts, Khalid's army was well armed with over 3,000 men, several artillery guns surrounding and protecting his palace. Additionally, an armed royal yacht was stationed at a harbor nearby.

During this "war", Britain had two warships docked at the harbor, the HMS Philomel and the HMS Rush which had been quickly deploying soldiers to protect the Bristish Consulate. Additionally Cave sent a telegram to the British government because he did not have the authority to engage in conflict w/o approval from the government.

The next day on August 26, the HMS Racoon and HMS St George which carried Rear-Admiral Harry Rawson, who was the commander of the British fleet in the at the time. Early on that same day Cave received a telegraph from the British government giving them the green light to engage with Khalid.

Cave gave Khalid one final ultimatum on August 26, demanding that he leave the palace by 9 AM on the next day, August 27. 8 AM the next day Khalid effectively told the British to screw off. So the British responded in kind.

At 9 AM on August 27, British ships began bombarding the palace. After only two minutes into the conflict, much of Khalid's artillery was destroyed and the wooden palace began to collapse with over 3,000 people inside. At 9:40, the bombing stopped and the Sultans flag was pulled down.

It was reported that over 500 people had been wounded or killed mainly due to the palace collapsing on top of them with only one British officer being injured. It was also reported that two minutes after the shelling started; Khalid fled the palace through the back door and left his servants and fighters to take the punishment for his own actions.

Afterwards; the British placed another Sultan on the throne who was pro-British and ruled on behalf of the crown for the next six years. I'm not to sure what happened to him.

If you want to know what happened to Khalid, well he managed to escape with a group of followers to a local German Consulate. The German Navy smuggled him out of the country on October 2, 1896 and was then taken to what would become modern-day Tanzania.

When British forces invaded East Africa in 1916, they captured Khalid and exiled him to Saint Helena, an island off the coast of Rio de Janeiro. In 1927, he died after returning to East Africa after "serving time".

And that's the story of the 38 minute war. Thank you for listening to History Buff, I'm your host Natalie Rondeau. Tune in next time for all the facts that your textbook forgets and Wikipedia can't.

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Today's podcast History Buff was produced by Natalie Rondeau.

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