THE SOCIAL HISTORY OF
THE Machine Gun
John Ellis
IV Making the Map Red

"And the white man had come again with his guns that spat bullets as the heavens sometimes spit hail, and who were the naked Matabele to stand up against these guns?"

A great gulf existed between the effectiveness of military firepower and the soldiers' total lack of respect for its potential. Their contemptuous attitude persisted, even in the teeth of mounting evidence of the unparalleled efficacy of modern firearms. Nor had that evidence been manifested only in parts of the world not very familiar to European military establishments. The machine gun had also been put to use in an area of the world with which most European armies had close connections, and there its effectiveness had become shatteringly obvious. In Africa automatic weapons were used to support the seizure of millions of square miles of land and to discipline those unfortunates who wished to eschew the benefits of European civilisation. With machine guns in their armoury, mere handfuls of white men, plunderers and visionaries, civilians and soldiers, were able to scoff at the objections of the Africans themselves and impose their rule upon a whole continent.
Without examining all the reasons for imperialist expansion it is certain that the search for markets, strategical considerations and the question of national prestige were all contributory factors, though historians have argued about the exact importance of each. But of one thing there is no doubt. Whatever the general causes, or the personal motives of the individual colonisers, the whole ethos of the imperialist drive was predicated upon racialism. Attitudes to the Africans varied from patronising paternalism to contempt and outright hatred, but all assumed that the white man was inherently superior to the black.

A central strand of this racialism was the crude interpretation of Darwinian theories about 'the survival of the fittest'. Projected back into the past, such theories enabled people to put forward the relative superiority of Western civilisation as a reason for arguing that the white man was the dominant race. One could also extrapolate from them to predict that eventually this race would physically dominate the whole world. An extreme version of this prediction was given in 1881, by W.D. Hay, in a book called Three Hundred Years Hence. He described the future paradise:

The old idea of universal fraternity had worn itself out; or rather it had become modified when elevated into the practical law of life. Throughout the Century of Peace... men's minds had become opened to the truth, had become sensible of the diversity of species, had become conscious of Nature's law of development... The stern logic of facts proclaimed the Negro and Chinaman below the level of the Caucasian, and incapacitated from advance towards his intellectual standard. To the development of the White Man, the Black Man and the Yellow must ever remain inferior, and as the former raised itself higher and yet higher, so did these latter seem to sink out of humanity and appear nearer and nearer to the brutes... It was now incontrovertible that the faculty of Reason was not possessed by them in the same degree as the White Man, nor could it be developed by them beyond a very low point. This was the essential difference that proved the worthlessness of the Inferior Races as contrasted with ourselves, and that therefore placed them outside the pale of Humanity and its brotherhood.

Clearly, working from such a theory of human development, it was easy, even natural, to go on to regard superior military technology as a God-given gift for the suppression of these races. A popular history of science of 1876 offers a perfect example of such an attitude. In the chapter on firearms the author tells us:

We often hear people regretting that so much attention and ingenuity as are shown by the weapons of the present day should have been expended upon instruments of destruction... The wise and the good have in all ages looked forward to a time when sword and spear shall be everywhere finally superseded by the ploughshare and the reaping-hook... Until that happy time arrives... we may consider that the more costly and ingenious and complicated the instruments of war become, the more certain will be the extension and the permanence of civilisation. The great cost of such appliances as those we are about to describe, the ingenuity needed for their contrivance, the elaborate machinery required for their construction, and the skill implied in their use, are such that these weapons can never be the arms of other than wealthy and intelligent nations. We know that in ancient times opulent and civilised communities could hardly defend themselves against poor and barbarous races... In our day it is the poor and barbarous tribes who are everywhere at the mercy of the wealthy and cultivated nations.1

The Europeans had superior weapons because they were the superior race. With regard to the machine gun, for example, one writer assured his readers that 'the tide of invention
which has ... developed the "infernal machine" of Fieschi into the mitrailleur (sic) and Gatling Battery of our own day - this stream took its rise in the God-like quality of reason.\textsuperscript{2} Thus when the Europeans opened their bloody dialogue with the tribes of Africa it was only natural that they should make them see reason through the ineluctable logic of automatic fire.

The British Army had decided to purchase twelve Gatlings in October 1869 but they were not sent on active service until 1874, on the occasion of the first campaign against the Ashantis. It was decided that Wolseley's small expeditionary force should take along some Gatlings to even up the odds. The \textit{Timer} heard of this decision in late 1873 and it prompted them to express some rather bloodthirsty hopes:

The Gatling guns ... we presume are mainly intended for the defence of stockaded positions. For fighting in the bush a Gatling would be as much use as a fire engine, but if by any lucky chance Sir Garnet Wolseley manages to catch a good mob of savages in the open, and at a moderate distance, he cannot do any better than treat them to a little Gatling music ... Altogether we cannot wish the Ashantees worse luck than to get in the way of a Gatling well served ...\textsuperscript{3}

Wolseley himself had prophesied to his soldiers that the Gatlings would provoke a feeling of 'superstitious dread' in the natives. Eager to take early advantage of such moral factors, he staged a demonstration of one of the Gatlings before a group of tribesmen. Unfortunately the gun immediately jammed, leaving the natives with a rather over-optimistic assessment of British firepower. When the time came to press on into the interior, Wolseley, probably aggrieved at this embarrassing failure, decided not to take the Gatlings along, claiming that the terrain was quite unsuitable.

This was a rather inauspicious start to the history of machine guns in Africa, but it was one of very few times that they were to prove such a disappointment. Their next trial was much more promising. In 1879 two successive expeditions, under the command of Lord Chelmsford, were sent into Zululand against the \textit{impi} of the great Cetshwayo. The first met a most humiliating reverse at the Battle of Isandlwana, and was also the occasion of the unnecessary heroics of Rorkes Drift. This latter engagement had convincingly displayed the power of modern musketry when pitted against mere hide shields and assegais, but on the second expedition Chelmsford was determined to put the issue quite beyond doubt, and four Gatlings accompanied the troops. The Navy had actually supplied one Gatling crew for the first campaign, but this had been placed with Colonel Pearson's flank column on the right and it had been unable to make any contribution to the main engagements. Nevertheless, it had been well served. It was in the charge of Midshipman Lewis Cadwallader Coker whose dedication would have delighted those, like Parker or Guerin, who looked on machine gunners as an \textit{elite} corps. Coker died of disease whilst in the field. His chances of recovery had been minimised because 'to the last he had insisted on sleeping in the open beside his beloved Gatling gun.' Similar dedication was shown by Midshipman Morehead during the Battle of Ulundi, the climax of the second campaign. At one stage in the fighting he 'was hit in the thigh, pouring blood over the frame that held the chattering barrels. He waved the litter-bearers aside, and sank down beside the gun to help load the drums of ammunition.'\textsuperscript{4}
This time such singlemindedness was not in vain. As Chelmsford mildly put it: 'At Ulundi we also had two Gatlings in the centre of the front face of our square. They jammed several times when in action but proved a very valuable addition to the strength of our defence.' In choosing to fight in square formation Chelmsford had shown a typically aristocratic concern with outmoded notions of honour and fair play. Explaining his tactics to his officers, he insisted that 'we must show them that we can beat them in a fair fight.' Given the weapons at his disposal such chivalric niceties were a little irrelevant. By no stretch of the imagination could the Battle of Ulundi be deemed a fair fight. British casualties were slight, whilst, as Cetshwayo is reputed to have said after the battle, 'There are not tears enough to grieve for all our dead.' Not a little of the credit for this slaughter went to the Gatlings. As a war correspondent for the London Standard said: 'When all was over and we counted the dead, there lay, within a radius of five hundred yards, 473 Zulus. They lay in groups, in some places, of fourteen to thirty dead, mowed down by the fire of the Gatlings, which tells upon them more than the fire of the rifles.'

The last important engagement in which Gatlings took part, again with the Naval Brigade, was the assault on Tel-el-Kebir in 1882. The Army and Navy Gazette's account of this action sums up both the efficacy of the guns and the contempt for the enemy which made it so easy to use them:

The naval machine gun battery, consisting of six Gatlings...reached the position assigned to it...Having received orders to advance they came within easy reach of the Tel-el-Kebir earthworks...The order 'action-front' was given and taken up joyously by every gun's crew. Round whipped the Gatlings, r-r-r-r-r-r-rum, r-r-r-r-r-r-rum, that hellish note the soldier so much detests in action, not for what it has done, so much, as for what it could do, rattled out. The reports of the machine guns as they rattle away rings out clearly on the morning air. The parapets are swept. The embrasures are literally plugged with bullets. The flashes cease to come from them. With a cheer the blue-jackets double over the dam, and dash over the parapet, only just in time to find their enemy in full retreat. That machine gun was too much for them. Skulking under the parapet they found a few poor devils, too frightened to retire, yet willing enough to stab a Christian, if helpless and wounded.

The Naval Brigade also took part in the next expedition to Egypt, the attempts to relieve Gordon in Khartoum in 1884 and 1885. There were several Gatlings in the gunboats that accompanied the British troops, but the only one to see service on land was a single Gardner gun with a small party of sailors under the command of Charles Beresford. They were accompanying a small column of soldiers that was surprised by the Arabs at Abu Klea. The British immediately formed a square with the Gardner in the middle and managed to fight off the Dervish assaults. In fact the Gardner only managed to fire seventy rounds before jamming, but even so its effect was most heartening. As Beresford himself said: 'As I fired I saw the enemy mowed down in rows, dropping like nine-pins.' And once again the men of the Naval Brigade showed themselves capable of great heroism in defence of their machine guns. At one stage in the battle Gardner actually moved the Gardner outside the square, thus helping the Dervishes to break in temporarily. In the hand-to-hand fighting that followed eight of his subordinates, the entire complement of the naval party, were killed as they successively tried to get the gun working again. Indeed Beresford's own attachment to the gun seems to have been a little excessive. In the later attempt to relieve Metembneh the British column was accompanied by a battery of seven-pounders 'but not the Gardner, possibly because Beresford was incapacitated by a painful boil on his bottom. One has at times the impression that Beresford regarded the Gardner as his personal property.'

The climax of the wars in Egypt and the Sudan came in 1898 when the British Government decided to finish the
matter once and for all. But by this time their forces had the
Maxim gun whose reliability was beyond question, at their
disposal. The final showdown of the campaign came at the
Battle of Omdurman where the bulk of the Dervish forces
repeatedly hurled themselves against the British lines, and
were repeatedly beaten back by the deadly small-arm fire.
The Maxims were the most deadly component of this mas-
seled firepower. A German war correspondent with the British
wrote: 'The gunners did not get the range at once, but as
soon as they found it, the enemy went down in heaps, and it
was evident that the six Maxim guns were doing a large
share of the work in repelling the Dervish rush.' Another
eye-witness wrote of the effects of these weapons when he
described the battlefield at the end of the day:

It was the last day of Mahdist and the greatest.
They could never get near and they refused to hold
back... It was not a battle but an execution... The
bodies were not in heaps - bodies hardly ever are; but
they spread evenly over acres and acres. Some lay very
composedly with their slippers placed under their
heads for a last pillow; some knelt, cut short in the
middle of a last prayer. Others were torn to pieces... 

Because Winston Churchill was a participant in this battle,
contemporary mythology has retained nothing of it except
the futile charge of the 21st Lancers, in which Churchill took
part. But at this time a much more accurate assessment of
the significance of Omdurman was made by Sir Edward
Arnold. Maxim proudly quotes the following remark in his
autobiography: 'In most of our wars it has been the dash, the
skill, and the bravery of our officers and men that have won
the day, but in this case the battle was won by a quiet
scientific gentleman living in Kent.' When one looks at the

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pioneers. For men like Cecil Rhodes and Frederick Lugard, and organisations like the British South Africa Company and the Imperial East African Trading Company, the Maxim gun was an indispensable tool for the imposition of European control. Maxim himself was only too pleased that his invention should be used in such a role. In 1887 an expedition led by Stanley set off for Wadai, near Lake Albert, to rescue Emin Pasha (Eduard Schnitzer), who had established a bizarre dominion among the natives of that region. This expedition of mercy attracted the imagination of Europe and Maxim donated one of his guns to help them on their way.

In 1890 the somewhat battered gun was taken up by Lugard when he left Mombasa to travel to Uganda. By the Anglo-German Treaty of that year Uganda had been recognised as falling within the British sphere of influence and Lugard lost no time in revealing the reality of that influence. Missionaries had already exacerbated tribal tensions there and relations between Protestant and Catholic Africans became increasingly bitter. In 1892 open warfare broke out, with the Catholics demanding the expulsion of the British. Lugard immediately threw his support, which included his Maxims, behind the Protestant Ingleza tribe. This support was decisive, despite Catholic over-optimism. During the preparation for the uprising, Mwangi, its leader, had drawn some faulty conclusions from the tatty appearance of Lugard's much-travelled Maxim. One of his envoys 'had circulated the most extraordinary reports, saying that we were cowards who dare not fight ... that our Maxim was merely for show, and fired single bullets like a gun.' Clearly the usual efficacy of such weapons had already been noticed abroad in Africa. But even a battered Maxim was better than no Maxim at all. At the Battle of Mango Hill Lugard and his Sudanese mercenaries threw their weight behind the Protestants, the former taking charge of the machine gun: 'Firing the Maxim hastily, Lugard scored a pair of freak hits on the legs of two Fransa chiefs ... He then traversed to cover an open potato patch that the attackers would have to cross. The Maxim was now jamming at almost every other shot ... but the few rounds Lugard got off sufficed to hold the Fransa back.'

Perhaps Mwangi's original concern with the potential of the Maxim gun had been aroused by events in Tanganyika. In 1890 certain German opportunists had established the German East African Company. They almost immediately encountered African opposition and in 1891 the Company was involved in a savage war with the Hehe tribe under their chief Mkwawa. At one stage Hehe warriors had ambushed a German column and massacred almost everyone. But it turned out to be a Pyrrhic victory at best. Towards the end of the battle, 'the German officer-surgeon, helped by askaris, dragged two machine guns, with plenty of ammunition into a muddy hut, and from there turned the tables on the Hehe. He is said to have killed about one thousand of them.'

Probably the leading practical proponent of British imperialist expansion was Cecil Rhodes. By the same token he was keenly aware of the indispensable role of the machine gun in translating his visions into reality. In 1893 he went in person to Pondoland to meet Siegau, a dissident chief. The bulk of the discussion was taken up by a very pointed demonstration which was reminiscent of Wolseley's abortive attempt to impress the Ashanti with nearly twenty years before. But this time the Africans could hardly fail to get the point.
Rhodes had brought an escort along with him and amongst their equipment was a Maxim gun. He took Skieau into a field of mealies and there the gun was set up. It was then fired for a few seconds and great swathes of mealies were mown down. Then Rhodes turned to the chief and said: 'This is what will happen to you and your tribe if you give us any further trouble.'

Skieau was suitably impressed, but in that same year, in the area of Africa to which Rhodes gave his name, and unfortunately his ethos, his men had occasion to use their Maxims on men rather than mealies. In Rhodesia a small detachment of the British South African Police, using machine guns purchased by the British South Africa Company, were confronted by the Matabele led by their chief Lobangula. As early as April 1890 the assistant commissioner in the Bechuanaland Protectorate, aware of the realities of colonial control, had been writing home to anxiously ask, 'When may I expect the Maxim gun . . . ?' By 1893 there were five of these guns available. In three battles, at Shangani on 24 October, Imbemba on 1 November, and Empandana on 2 November, they were used to ruthlessly crush Matabele resistance. In a report on the second battle, Lieut-En-Col Williamsby fully acknowledged the part played by the machine guns: 'I think it is doubtful whether the rifle fire brought to bear would have succeeded in repelling the attack; the Matabele themselves have since stated that they did not fear our rifles so much, but that they could not stand against the Maxims.'

The tragedy of the situation is revealed only too clearly in a contemporary account which appeared in the Daily News:

Most of the Matabele had probably never seen a machine gun in their lives . . . Their trust was in their spears, for . . . they had never known an enemy able to withstand them. Even when they found their mistake, they had the heroism to regard it as only a momentary error in their calculations. They retired in perfect order and re-formed for a second rush . . . Once more the Maxims swept them down in the dense masses of their concentration . . . It seems incredible that they should have mustered for still another attack, yet this actually happened . . . They came as men doomed to failure, and those who were left of them went back to a mere rabble rout.

The Matabele themselves gave a moving account of their helplessness in the face of the machine guns. In it they attributed the disaster to their own neglect and started because the

British South Africa Company had chosen to interfere in an inter-tribal dispute:

The Mashonas were Lobengula’s subjects and the white man had no business with the Mashonas, to protect them or shield them from the King’s justice. So impi had to be sent to punish these Mashonas, and they had collided with the white man. And the white man came again with his guns that spat bullets as the heavens sometimes spit hail, and who were the naked Matabele to stand up against these guns?

Hutchinson has recorded a macabre footnote to this slaughter of the bewildered Matabele. The Maxims used were mounted on light artillery carriages and the man firing sat on a small saddle positioned at the end of the trail piece. Thus, 'after the Matabele War . . . there is something more than a legend which records that the Central African native fled at the mere rumour of the approach of a man who, taking up the common native posture for the relief of nature, could, in place of fluid, eject a death-dealing stream of metal.'

One of the chief participants in this campaign had been Dr. Leander Starr Jameson. He had been so impressed with the performance of the Maxims that he attributed to them almost magical powers of protection. On 1 January 1896, when he rode forth across the Transvaal to attempt to bring armed support to the Uitlanders, the prosperous but disenfranchised gold seekers of Johannesburg, he took with him eight Maxims. Before the raid started, in an address to those who doubted his chances of success, he said of the guns: You do not know the Maxim gun. I shall draw a zone of lead a mile each side of my column and no Boer will be able to live in it.' Unfortunately he neglected to take along adequate supplies of water, with which to cool the guns, and when they were brought into action they jammed almost immediately. His force was surrounded by Boer commandos under General Cronje, and Jameson was forced to surrender. Here one sees a rare example of an over-estimation of the machine gun’s capabilities. And a fatal over-estimation it was too. Not only did it doom the raid to failure, but it also wrecked the political career of Jameson’s friend, Rhodes, and brought a little nearer the prospect of war between the Boers and the English.

For the rest of the century, and into the twentieth, the use of machine guns was limited to consolidating the Europeans’ hold on the African continent, and to the suppression of any native dissent. In 1897 Sir Arthur Hardinge gave a succinct definition of the true nature of European rule. His words are:
referred to British policy in Kenya but they are applicable to all nations who had established a foothold on the ‘dark continent’. As he said: ‘These people must learn submission by bullets – it is the only school ... In Africa to have peace you must first teach obedience and the only person who teaches the lesson properly is the sword.’ The choice of weapon is a little confused but the message is clear. The only adequate response to native discontent was violence. And despite Harding’s rhetorical reference to the *arme blanche*, it was the machine gun that offered the most economical solution to the problem of keeping down the whole population of a continent with small bodies of police and soldiers.

They were used again, for example, in Rhodesia against the Matabele. In 1896, though hardly recovered from the massacres three years earlier, they rose up again. The rebellion took place in the immediate aftermath of the Jameson Raid and can be partly attributed to the fact that the whole area had been temporarily stripped of Europeans. But it seems likely that the abject fear of Jameson and his Maxim was also a contributory factor. For many of the Matabele went to war this time sustained by the belief that the guns of the Europeans could do them no harm. At the trial of some of the rebels it was stated by one Matabele witness that: ‘The accused told them that when the white men crossed the river their bullets would turn to water and the Maxim could not fire any longer as there were no bullets left.’ Such beliefs are very reminiscent of those of Mwanga’s men in Uganda, six years earlier. In each case the rumours were without much foundation, but it is interesting to note the speed with which the Africans correctly identified the central importance of the machine gun to the maintenance of European power.

Exactly the same kind of rumours were prevalent in German East Africa, what is now Tanzania, in 1905. The German Government had taken over control from the German East Africa Company in 1891 but the situation in the colony had not improved much. Eventually the natives were goaded into rebellion, on an unprecedentedly widespread scale. At least three tribes took part, the Mbunga, the Pogoro and the Ngoni, and certain scholars have discerned in this the first awakening of any kind of supra-tribal consciousness in the region. The ideological framework of the rebellion was a set of beliefs that came to be known as the Maji-Maji cult. The central belief was that no harm could come to the rebels because when they attacked, the white man’s bullets would turn into water. But once again they were cruelly deceived, though these beliefs were strong enough to carry them through to the bitter end. On August 30, for example, 8,000 of the Mbunga and Pogoro tribes, armed only with spears, tried to assault the Mehenge fort, to drag away the machine guns with their bare hands. Of the Ngoni resistance, Count von Gotzen, the Governor of German East Africa, said charitably: ‘The natives fought amazingly well, only retreating in the face of machine gun fire ...’ The rebellion failed bloodily and the Africans learned to their cost that magical talismans alone could not alter the balance of military force, however perceptively it had been assessed. The only effective response to the machine gun and the general European preponderance of firepower was the resort to guerrilla warfare, and certain tribes did adopt this mode of combat.

But it was not only the African who openly acknowledged the importance of automatic fire in the subjugation of the African colonies. The following letter to Cecil Rhodes from Sir Harry Johnston, an employee of the British South Africa Company, is chilling in its matter-of-fact assertion of the central role of violence in the day-to-day management of a particular region of Africa: ‘One day I am working out a survey which has to be of scrupulous accuracy, and another day I am doing what a few years ago I never thought I should...’
be called upon to do — undertaking the whole responsibility of directing military operations. I have even had myself taught to fire Maxim guns ... I who detest loud noises .... Another group who were prepared to come out into the open about the harsh realities of imperialism were certain British poets of the turn of the century. Perhaps because it was 'only poetry' people felt that their words had less real significance. Nevertheless, the message sometimes came through loud and clear. Even Rudyard Kipling, usually so piously smug about the duties of Empire and the thankless self-sacrifice involved in them, gave at least one scathing definition of Christian civilisation. In 1897 he wrote a poem called 'Pharaoh and the Sergeant', dedicated to the Sergeant-Instructors sent to Egypt to help train that country's ramshackle army. It begins thus:

Said England unto Pharaoh, 'I must make a man of you,  
That will stand upon his feet and play the game;  
That will Maxim his oppressor as a Christian ought to do.  
And she sent old Pharaoh Sergeant What'sisname.

Hilaire Belloc was equally blunt in a poem called 'The Modern Traveller'. In it a typical, somewhat languid colonial figure utters the perfect motto for the triumph of British imperialism:

I shall never forget the way  
That Blood stood upon this awful day  
Preserved us all from death.  
He stood upon a little mound  
Cast his lethargic eyes around,  
And said beneath his breath:  
'Whatever happens, we have got  
The Maxim Gun, and they have not.'

So the slaughter continued. In 1900 the Ashanti had once again to bear the brunt of British displeasure. At first the British fared rather badly. One force was besieged by the Ashanti in the fort at Kumasi, and the relief column, under Captain Aplin, which was sent from Lagos, was continually harassed by the natives. The main reason for Aplin's plight was that the inevitable Maxims accompanying the column were of an old and unreliable model, and whenever they were brought into action they never failed to overheat and jam. But Aplin's force eventually reached the fort and found that the plight of its occupants was not as desperate as had at first been feared. Yet again Maxim guns had saved the day, for at first the Ashanti had tried to attack the fort itself, but the machine guns on the bastions had proved too effective for them and they had settled down to a long and patient siege. More troops were thrown into the campaign as swiftly as possible, mainly from the Gold Coast Constabulary and the West African Frontier Force, all these units possessing large numbers of Maxims. They were used to great effect in the final battle of Abosu in which Ashanti resistance was crushed for good.

As was common practice at this time, almost all the troops used in this campaign were Africans, the only officers being British. One of the most important duties of these officers was to operate the Maxim guns. It would clearly be too dangerous to teach natives, even though they might be wearing a British uniform, the secrets of the white man's ultimate weapon. But during one of Aplin's first attempts to relieve Kumasi there occurred one of the few instances of an African ever getting to actually fire a machine gun. At the height of the engagement all the Europeans had been killed or incapacitated and a native NCO took the chance to step into the breach. He managed to get the gun working and kept firing until it finally jammed. 'The history of this particular NCO is an interesting one; having fought the British in the Sudan he had conceived a profound respect for the Maxim gun and had walked across Africa and enlisted in the African Frontier Force with the express purpose of working one.' Once again one sees the central place of the machine gun in the Africans' analysis of the reasons for their conquest and subjugation.

But few other Africans ever got the chance to emulate his example. The Europeans jealously guarded both the machine guns themselves and the secrets of their operation. When the Dervish camp at Omdurman was overrun, amongst the vast amounts of military material found there were a few Gatlings and Nordenfelt guns, doubtless captured after the destruction of Hicks Pasha's army. But the Dervishes clearly had no idea how to fire them and they had remained useless in the rear. Similarly, in 1894, when the capital of the Itsekiri, at Brohemie in Nigeria, was captured by the British they found a machine gun rusting away in the huge armoury. Also in Nigeria, in 1906, the people of the Satiri tribe captured a Maxim when they wiped out a company of the West African Frontier Force, but the water jacket had been slashed and the gun was unworkable. About the only occasion when machine guns were actually used against Europeans was in Uganda, in 1897, when Lugard's trusted Sudanese mercenaries mutinied and managed to lay