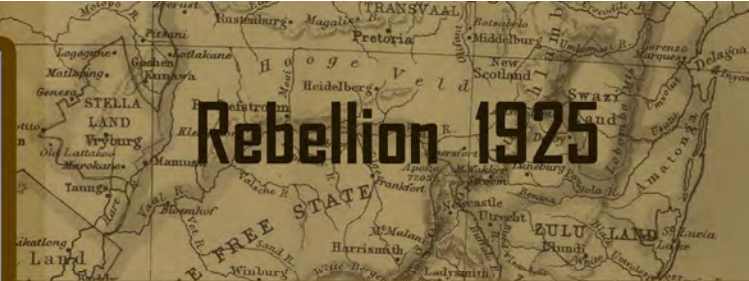
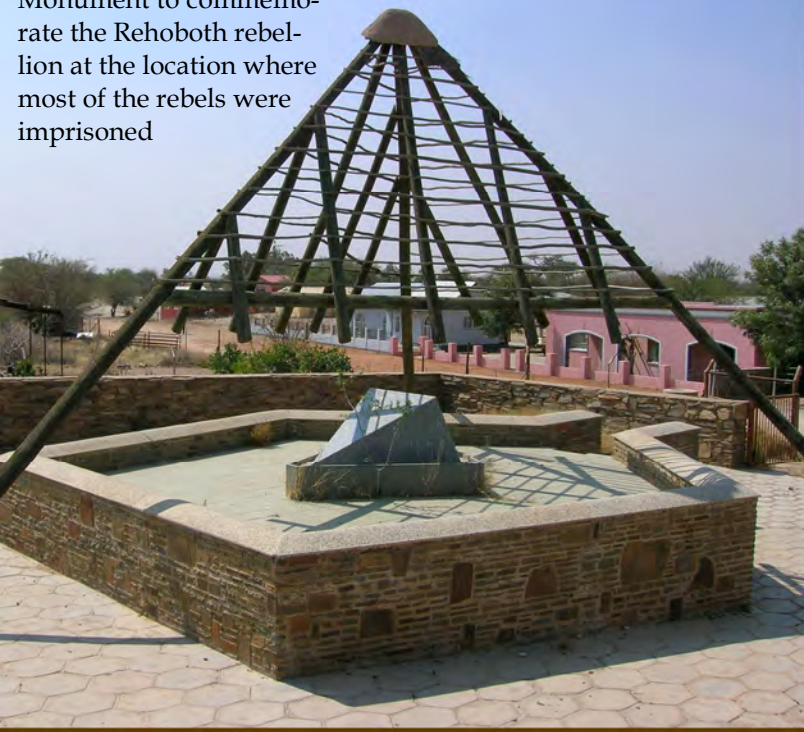


Monument to commemorate the Rehoboth rebellion at the location where most of the rebels were imprisoned



Following the liberation from German colonial occupation, the Basters concentrated their efforts on two key objectives. The First objective was to regain the territory lost to German colonialism. The second objective was to work towards a return of former independence.

The Kaptein and four members of his Council met the South African appointed magistrate for South-West Africa on 2 November 1915. They tried to establish an agreement with South Africa similar to the treaty with Germany in 1885, which would recognize the Basters as an independent nation. This was however rejected.

Following this failed meeting, the Council sent a petition to the British government in 1916 requesting Britain to grant Rehoboth its independence. However, this petition received no response. The next petition to Britain was a request to establish Rehoboth as a British protectorate. Britain replied in February 1918, stating that they can not make a decision on the matter as long as Britain is still at war.

In November 1919, the Rehoboth Basters drafted a treaty, in which the British crown was to place a representative in Rehoboth to whom all power in Rehoboth would be bestowed. This concept treaty was presented to the British, who subsequently rejected it.

South Africa officially gained control over South West Africa in 1920 to govern it as a Mandate territory of the League of Nations. From this time on, the Basters were forced to negotiate with the South African government instead of the British government.

On 9 January 1922, South Africa presented a treaty to the Rehoboth Basters that outlined the future relations between Rehoboth and the South African colonial government. The Basters disagreed with the contents of this treaty. According to this treaty, Rehoboth would be granted self-government, but the colonial laws would also apply and take precedent. Furthermore, the territory that belonged to Rehoboth before 1893 was not recognized as part of the Baster territory. In July 1922 the negotiations between the Council and South Africa began in which some concessions were done. In the adapted treaty the white farmers who settled in the Rehoboth area would be removed and the land returned to the Basters.



Baster Council that signed the 1923 agreement with South Africa. From left to right – second row: G. Alcock, F. Maasdorp, T. Jarmann, P. Mouton, and K. McNap  
Front row: J. Witbooi, P. Beukes, A. Mouton and G. Cloete

REHOBOTH BASTERS



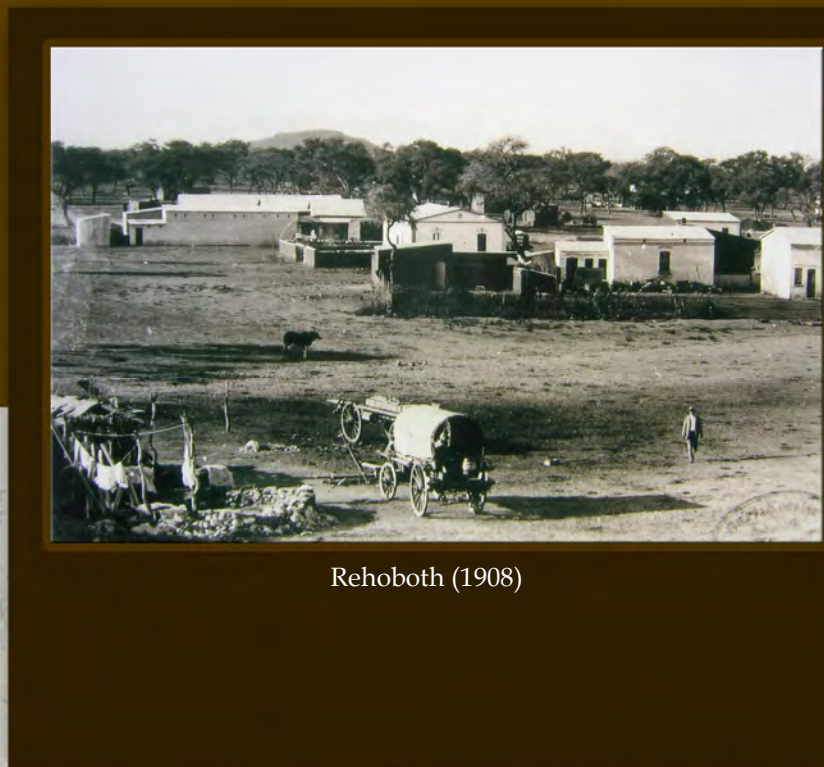
Baster church (around 1900)

On 9 August 1923 the Rehoboth Basters held a referendum on the new treaty with South Africa; 74% voted against. The Council now faced a dilemma; if they didn't sign, South Africa would implement the plan anyway and in that case the land occupied by the white farmers would not be returned to the Basters. On 17 August 1923 the Council signed the treaty against the wishes of the people. As a result the majority of the Basters did not recognize the Council as the legitimate authority of the Rehoboth Basters anymore and collectively refused to pay taxes.

The opposition held new elections on 23 April 1924, who were not organized according to the Paternal Laws. A new Kaptein was chosen (Nicolaas van Wijk), as was a Peoples Council and for the first time also a Parliamentary Council consisting of 23 members whose task would be to check the (finances of the) Peoples Council. This election was also the first in which women were allowed to vote.

Rehoboth now had two Councils. The unofficial Council represented the majority of the Basters, but was not recognized by South Africa.

On 26 April 1924 Albert Mouton was elected as Kaptein of the official Council. On 16 June 1924 a new Council was also chosen. These elections were boycotted by most Basters which resulted in the re-election of all the persons in the Council.



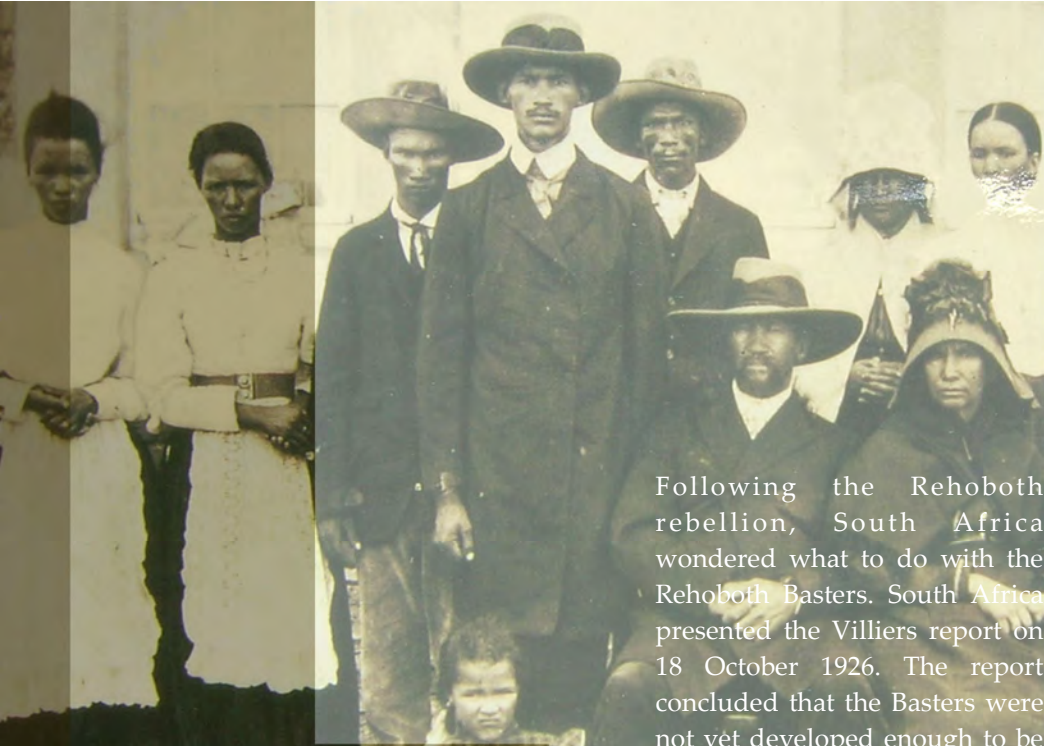
Rehoboth (1908)

The unofficial Council headed by Nicolaas van Wijk, immediately started to collect taxes, while the official Council did not have any finances or support among the people.

On 1 December 1924, Nicolaas van Wijk and the Peoples Council declared the independence of Rehoboth. South Africa reacted on 10 December 1924 by abolishing all rights and functions of the Rehoboth Basters with the presentation of the Rehoboth Affairs Ordination nr 31 to take force as of 16 December 1924. For several months a tense atmosphere was present in Rehoboth. The Rehoboth Basters prepared for an attack by South African forces, with the knowledge of what happened to the Bondelswarts Nama when they demanded their independence in 1922.

South African forces invaded Rehoboth town on 5 April 1925. South Africa quickly took control of the town and crushed the Rehoboth rebellion. The South African forces were supported by three airplanes, machineguns and a large number of personnel. 632 people were detained and transported ending the Rehoboth rebellion.

Beukes family (1920s)



Following the Rehoboth rebellion, South Africa wondered what to do with the Rehoboth Basters. South Africa presented the Villiers report on 18 October 1926. The report concluded that the Basters were not yet developed enough to be able to govern themselves.

A South African Magistrate governed Rehoboth directly from 1925 until 1928. Proclamation nr 9 of 1928 established an Advisory Council consisting of six Basters to be elected by the Basters themselves. Their function was to advise the South African appointed magistrate.



Diergaardt family



Engelbrecht family (1897)

The unofficial Council headed by Nicolaas van Wijk had in the mean time already been released and boycotted the elections for the Advisory Council. They kept sending petitions to the League of Nations to demand their independence. The lack of results that the petitions to the League of Nations had, caused the group around Nicolaas van Wijk to cooperate with the Advisory Council as of August 1932.

On 11 April 1934 the Advisory Council demanded from South Africa that the Rehoboth Basters would be granted the same rights as they had under the Treaty of Protection and Friendship of 1885. The South Africans replied in colonial fashion: '...The Basters are not developed enough to govern themselves' and '... The Basters have inherited very few of the good and all of the bad qualities of their white forefathers'.

The 1930s were also hard times in economic terms. In order to develop the Rehoboth area, the South African government made investments and gave out loans. This made the economic and political gap between the Rehoboth Basters and the white colonists even greater, because only the latter qualified for this assistance.

Rehoboth Baster house (1906)

