



# Isandlwana: The Bitter Zulu Victory (Wars and Battles)

*Carlos Rocca Gonzales*

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When the incredible news of the Isandlwana disaster reached the heart of the British Empire, Victorian society could not believe that a few 'savages' had annihilated a large number of professional troops, belonging to one of its most legendary infantry regiments. It was a major defeat - remaining the greatest British military defeat at the hands of native forces in history. 850 Europeans and around 450 Africans in British service died. Only 50 European troops and five Imperial officers escaped, in addition to several hundred Africans who fled the battlefield before the camp was surrounded.

While Isandlwana was a Pyrrhic victory for the Zulus because of the heavy casualties suffered, it was an immediate catastrophe for the British and with the decisive defeat of Chelmsford's central column the entire invasion of Zululand collapsed and would have to be restaged. The victories of the Zulus did not end the war and as King Cetshwayo feared, the embarrassment of the defeat forced the policy makers in London, who to this point had not supported the war, to rally to the support of the pro-war contingent in the Natal government and commit whatever resources were needed to defeat the Zulu. The Zulus were poorly supplied with firearms and were not well trained with the few they had. The Zulus also, despite local numerical superiority, had manpower resources that could not match the British in a series of battles.

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