

## CHAPTER 2

### ADMINISTERING NATAL AFRIKANERS IN THE PERIOD LEADING UP TO THE ANGLO-BOER WAR

The reaction of Natal Afrikaners at grassroots level to the ongoing diplomatic conflict taking place between Great Britain and the Transvaal-Orange Free State alliance, needs to be considered against the socio-political and economic backdrop sketched in the previous chapter. It is important to trace how, during the period immediately preceding the Anglo-Boer War, this ethnic minority related to their government, and the policies of the true blue Imperialist, Prime Minister AH Hime, and his cabinet. In this chapter the focus falls on the role, or lack thereof, of the Natal Afrikaner in defending the Colony, and on how the approximately 5 000<sup>1</sup> men, women and children reacted to the threats Imperialism and their own government posed to the Republics with which they shared a common history, language and culture.

#### **2.1 The restrictions of arms and ammunition and its implications for Natal Afrikaners**

When signs of the impending war became more evident midway through 1899, the Natal Government, as a preventative measure, deemed it necessary to exercise tighter control over the selling of firearms and ammunition. This was considered necessary so as to deal with the perceived enemy from within, namely Natal Afrikaners.

The first step in implementing these measures was taken when the commandant of volunteers, Colonel W Royston, forwarded a circular to all magistrates, stating: "Owing to a delay in the receipt of the usual supply of ammunition it is advisable to issue to purchasers no more than absolutely necessary. Therefore until further instructions not more than 200 rounds of ammunition of any description is to be issued to any person within 12 months."<sup>2</sup> This did not apply to registered members of rifle associations and, in fact, had nothing to do with a shortage of ammunition, but rather with the upswing in the amount of ammunition purchased by non-rifle association members. Statistics show that for the comparative periods 1 April to 21 June 1898 and 1 April to 21 June 1899, purchases by non-members from gunpowder depots rose from 8 230 to 13 090 rounds, while that of members declined from 48 660 to 32 650.<sup>3</sup>

Although the above measure prevented Natal Afrikaners, who generally did not belong to rifle associations, from purchasing ammunition from government depots, they were still free to purchase

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1. It proved extremely difficult to determine the exact number of Natal Afrikaners. In 1896 it was estimated at 5 000 in total with 862 men on the voters role. PAR, CSO 2575: Request by agent-general for Natal, W Peace, on behalf of the War Office (hereafter WO) for the approximate number of Natal Afrikaners. Harry Escombe claimed in 1897 that 2 000 adult Afrikaner males resided in Natal. See, FR Carroll, p.174.

2. PAR, CSO 2580: Circular on the issuing of arms and ammunition, commandant volunteers, Col W Royston to magistrate, 10.7.1899.

3. PAR, Minister of Justice and Public Works (hereafter MJPW) 68: Summary of ammunition issued from gunpowder depots, 1.4.1898-21.6.1898 and 1.4.1899-21.6.1899.

ammunition and rifles from traders such as JF King in Durban. Applications for the purchase of firearms were nevertheless subjected to the discretion of the resident magistrate who, in an attempt to avoid confrontation, seldom declined the requests for permits. In a single month at Dundee, the magistrate, P Hugo, issued permits for 29 firearms of which 25 were purchased by Afrikaners. Of the 3 240 cartridges sold, only 500 were not bought by Afrikaners, with JS Vermaak being allowed to buy 700 rounds.<sup>4</sup> It was no different in other districts. The magistrate of Umsinga reported that Afrikaners had bought 2 200 rounds and the English only 1 800. Afrikaners who purchased the ammunition also bought bandoliers. In addition to this Hugo also received applications from Afrikaners for certificates to purchase arms in other divisions, and to buy and sell weapons amongst themselves. None of these requests could be refused since they complied with the law, but the magistrate was convinced that the purchases were not merely for the destruction of vultures and dogs, or out of fear of an African uprising.<sup>5</sup> In Estcourt, Magistrate Addison, issued 1 300 cartridges, mostly for Martini Henry's, to Afrikaners in the first 25 days of September 1899, taking care not to exceed the prescribed limit of 200. He could, however, not prevent the Van der Merwe family from collectively purchasing 1 000 rounds, and other Afrikaners from buying rifles and bandoliers.<sup>6</sup>

In a further attempt to control the sale of arms and ammunition, Prime Minister AH Hime, who also held the portfolio of minister of justice and public works (hereafter MJPW), called for an investigation of the records of all rifles sold in Natal since 1 January 1896. This opened up a hornets' nest. Over 500 rifles had been sold, of which JF King in Durban had sold 312. Of these, only two were licensed by the Durban magistrate, despite his having registered 206 rifles. The explanation by the controller of firearms was that rifles were registered immediately after passing customs and, consequently, the return of sales by dealers, who had had rifles in stock for long periods, did not correlate with the magisterial lists. To Hime this was incomprehensible. The extensive list of rifles bought by Natalians, many of whom were Afrikaners, did not aid him in his quest to control arms and ammunition in the face of the impending war. All he knew was that all the Mausers registered in Natal belonged to Afrikaners: 35 in 1897, 21 in 1898 and 13 in 1899.<sup>7</sup>

As if this was not enough of a security problem, rumours started to circulate that Natal Afrikaners were receiving arms and ammunition from the OFS and the Transvaal. The first rumour suggested that in July 1899, a person presenting himself as a roving photographer, travelled in the Normandien area near Newcastle with a wagon and eight horses calling only upon Natal Afrikaners. During these visits he was said to distribute Mauser ammunition. The allegation was immediately investigated by Inspector Dorehill of the Natal Police, who reported to the Natal Government and the Klip River

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4. PAR, MJPW 69: Controller of firearms forwards return of ball ammunition sold at Dundee from 1.6.1899-1.7.1899, 12.7.1899.

5. PAR, Attorney-General's Office (hereafter AGO) I/7/39: Report Magistrate GE Adamson, Umsinga, 20.9.1899.

6. PAR, CSO 2580: Report Magistrate RH Addison, Estcourt, 25.9.1899.

7. PAR, MJPW 116: Report controller of firearms on arms and ammunition imported and sold in Natal, 22.8.1899.

(Ladysmith) district magistrate. Although the incident happened before his appointment Magistrate Bennett did not consider it serious, since trekboers who came into Natal could bring in as much ammunition as they wished. Hence, there was no need to distribute ammunition secretly and risk punishment.<sup>8</sup>

Bennett was correct. To acquire arms and ammunition, Natal Afrikaners did not require any clandestine operations such as those implied by the rumours. Section 17 of Law 11 of 1862 allowed residents from neighbouring countries visiting Natal to carry arms and ammunition needed for personal use. The visitors included the great number of trekboers who resided in Natal during winter and in the Republics during summer.<sup>9</sup> The nature of the law therefore made it possible for arms and ammunition to be brought into Natal and to be left behind on departure. Frequent concerns relating to this practice were expressed by the Natal Police between 1896 and 1899. Yet, the Natal Government did not deem it favourable to repeal the grant that had been in effect for so many years.<sup>10</sup> With the rising tension between the Transvaal and Britain, Royston pointed out that the law in question conflicted with newly imposed regulations calling for the registration of all firearms brought into Natal.<sup>11</sup>

A second rumour elicited more urgent action. A coal prospector, Cummings, reported that it was believed that every Natal Afrikaner between Dundee and the Buffalo River had a Mauser and it was not known if the guns were registered. These rifles were apparently secretly issued by Field-Cornet John Kruger of Ward Four, Utrecht, in the Transvaal. It was alleged that, as part of their mobilisation plans for the Republican cause, the Natal Afrikaners would practice with the Mausers against whitewashed stone targets, and that they had orders to rendezvous at Talana Hill should war break out. Prime Minister Hime, on being informed of this rumour, immediately tasked Chief Commissioner of Police Col JG Dartnell, to look into the matter. Dartnell in turn, instructed Sub-Inspector WE Lyttle to investigate the registration of firearms in the area. He was not too optimistic about the results of his strategy as he was of the opinion that if the Natal Afrikaners had Mausers, they would conceal them, and he believed that to issue search warrants would not be a good idea.<sup>12</sup> The rumour had a rippling effect and news of it was carried all the way to London. The colonial secretary, Joseph Chamberlain, contacted Governor Hely-Hutchinson, regarding the distribution of arms in the area around Landmansdrift, asking for an enquiry to be launched, and requesting that

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8. PAR, CSO 2579: Letter PUS C Bird to Magistrate TR Bennett, Klip River district, 23.8.1899; Letter Magistrate TR Bennett, Klip River district, to PUS C Bird, 26.8.1899.

9. PRO, CO 179/206: Minute paper regarding distribution of firearms in Natal by Boers, 19.9.1899.

10. PAR, MJPW 69: Report by Natal Police that OFS Boers brought arms and ammunition into Natal, 1898-1899.

11. PAR, MJPW 69: Report Col W Royston on firearms brought into Natal by trekboers from the OFS and Transvaal, 5.6.1899 and 28.8.1899

12. PAR, CSO 2580: Letter Col W Royston to Prime Minister AH Hime, 24.8.1899; Letter Prime Minister AH Hime to Chief Commissioner of Police JG Dartnell, 25.8.1899; Letter Chief Commissioner of Police JG Dartnell to Prime Minister AH Hime, 25.8.1899; *Natal Witness*, 4.9.1899.

should rumour be verified, the serious implications of the situation be “brought home to the SAR government”. Via the governor, the prime minister and the commissioner of police, the orders were again passed down to Sub-Inspector Lyttle, who was commissioned to conduct an investigation and to submit a report. Lyttle consequently relayed that he had inspected all the arms in the area in question and found four Mausers, all registered to Natal Afrikaners. Despite his findings, Lyttle firmly believed that every single Natal Afrikaner in the district had a Mauser hidden away. In support of his suspicion, Lyttle was informed by his spies that the customs post at De Jagersdrift had received a consignment of Mausers, apparently destined for Natal Afrikaners. The spies could, however, not report where the consignment was kept or whether it had already been distributed.<sup>13</sup> As a result, the Natal authorities proceeded to keep a watch on the Landmansdrift and De Jagersdrift areas.<sup>14</sup> Proof that the rumours suggesting Natal Afrikaners were armed by the ZAR were unfounded, is confirmed by the refusal of Commandant-General PJ (Piet) Joubert in May 1899 to sell Mausers to Natal Afrikaners who called on the Vryheid landrost for this purpose.<sup>15</sup>

In spite of inadequate legislation, the house to house search for rifles was extended to include the following counties in which Afrikaners resided in great numbers: Weenen, Umvoti, Klip River, and the Province of Zululand, while counties dominated by Europeans of British origin who suffered this inconvenience were Pietermaritzburg, Alfred and Durban.<sup>16</sup> The inspection soon started to flush out the odd unlicensed firearm, while rumours persisted that Afrikaners had unlicensed Mausers, and in this case, the accusation was specifically aimed at the inhabitants of Noodsberg in the New Hanover district.<sup>17</sup>

Only one case seem not to have been based on hearsay. Police were informed that RJ van Rooyen of Rustenburg, Umvoti, had used an unlicensed Mauser at the Upper Umvoti Rifle Association practice. Sergeant Barbezat of Riet Vlei was despatched to investigate the matter. On being questioned, Van Rooyen did not deny possessing an unlicensed Mauser and 120 of the original 600 cartridges purchased and when he offered to take the rifle to the resident magistrate himself, Barbezat refused permission and confiscated the Mauser.<sup>18</sup> A day or so later Van Rooyen proceeded to the office of the magistrate and submitted a declaration regarding his acquisition of the rifle: on returning from the Transvaal he had taken two Mausers purchased to the temporary magistrate, E Fannin for registration. Tax and duties were paid on one rifle. Fannin, however, refused to register

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13. PAR, CSO 2580: Letter Colonial Secretary J Chamberlain to Governor W Hely-Hutchinson, 16.9.1899; Letter Chief Commissioner of Police JG Dartnell to Sub-Inspector WE Lyttle, 18.9.1899; Letter Sub-Inspector WE Lyttle to Chief Commissioner of Police JG Dartnell, 20.9.1899.

14. PRO, CO 179/206: Minute paper regarding distribution of firearms in Natal by Boers, 19.9.1899.

15. NAR, KG 818: Telegram Landrost Vryheid to General PJ Joubert, 5.5.1899.

16. PAR, MJPW 68: Question by TJ Nel to Prime Minister AH Hime regarding investigations into unregistered rifles, 9.5.1900.

17. PAR, CSO 2580: Report Magistrate CLA Ritter, New Hanover, 23.9.1899.

18. PAR, AGO I/7/39: Report on discovery of an unlicensed Mauser in possession of RJ van Rooyen, 27.8.1899.

both rifles as Van Rooyen only had a permit for one. The second rifle was subsequently registered on 12 March 1898, in the name of TC van Rooyen of Pampoennek, but retained at the office. To solve the problem, Fannin undertook to write to the controller of firearms. When Van Rooyen called a week later Fannin had still not received a reply and handed the Mauser to Van Rooyen, informing him that he should produce it when called upon to do so. According to Van Rooyen, if he had contravened the law he had done so unwittingly, for he had not attempted to conceal the rifle and had relied on the correspondence of Fannin and the controller of firearms to execute the necessary administrative procedures.<sup>19</sup>

This incident incensed Prime Minister Hime who felt that the proceedings on the part of the magistrate and the controller of firearms had been highly irregular and illegal from the start. The rifles were brought in under section 17 of Law 11 of 1862 which was not applicable under the circumstances as a application had been made for a Martini Henry and a Mauser been registered. In the light of this the rifle in question should never have been registered to TC van Rooyen as he had not applied for the permit, while the second rifle should have been confiscated and the government informed. Owing to the irregularities the law could not be enforced and after paying the custom duties Van Rooyen's Mauser was handed back to him,<sup>20</sup> but this was the end of his good fortune. His later application to import 600 cartridges from Germany for self defence, shooting of vultures, and target practice, was denied by Hime because, according to the controller of firearms, Van Rooyen had declared that he would under no circumstances fight for the British. He had nonetheless stated that he would not fight against them either even though some members of his family might.<sup>21</sup>

The inspection of firearm licenses by the Natal Police also unearthed several unregistered items in the Estcourt district which the owners brought to the magistrate. GL Oosthuysen of Mount Alice applied to have two rifles, a carbine and a revolver, registered. He had brought these into Natal on returning from a hunting trip in Rhodesia (Zimbabwe). J van der Merwe, of the farm Moor, who believed that as a trekboer section 17 of Law 11 of 1862 applied to him, applied to register a Mauser which he had purchased in the OFS. JJ Meyer and JC Jordaan also possessed unregistered firearms,<sup>22</sup> as did the member of the Legislative Council for Weenen, Casper (CJ) Labuschagne, who had brought in a Martini Henry carbine.<sup>23</sup>

Problems arose with the Mausers of JA Oosthuysen and his son. The Oosthuysens were wealthy landowners with 12 000 acres in Natal and 13 000 in the OFS. In 1898 father and son bought

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19. PAR, AGO I/7/39: Deposition by RJ van Rooyen relative to his confiscated Mauser, 29.8.1899.

20. PAR, AGO I/7/39: Report on discovery of an unlicensed Mauser in possession of RJ van Rooyen, 29.8.1899

21. PAR, AGO I/7/39: Letter RJ van Rooyen to controller of firearms, 9.10.1899.

22. PAR, AGO I/7/39: Application to have firearms registered by GL Oosthuysen, 18.9.1899; Application by J van der Merwe to have firearm registered, 18.9.1899.

23. PAR, CSO 2580: Report Magistrate RH Addison, Estcourt, 12.9.1899.

Mausers from the OFS Government, but did not have them registered in Natal. In an attempt to circumnavigate the process, JA Oosthuysen (snr) wrote to FR Moor, the secretary of native affairs (hereafter SNA) who, as a politician, relied heavily on the vote of Afrikaners in Estcourt, and explained that he trekked seasonally between Natal and the OFS, and was therefore unsure about legal requirements and the process of registration. On 22 September 1899, Oosthuysen requested Moor to forward a telegram to the Estcourt magistrate explaining the situation. When this did not materialise, Oosthuysen, in a sworn affidavit before Magistrate RH Addison, acknowledged that he as a British subject, had brought in unlicensed Mausers from the OFS, pleading that he had been ignorant of breaking the law. The same day Oosthuysen visited his lawyers, Chadwick and Miller who, on behalf of father and son, applied to the controller of firearms to grant them licences on the grounds that the Mausers were not brought in willful contravention of the regulations or with the intention of using them against the British. When an immediate response was not forthcoming Chadwick and Miller were instructed to write to the colonial secretary, asking that the governor set aside the normal formalities since the Oosthuysens wanted their Mausers registered without delay. They received a standard reply from the colonial office - the matter was receiving attention.<sup>24</sup>

The reason for urgency in trying to register the rifles were evident, the Transvaal forces were already mobilized on 27 September 1899, a fact that surely did not escape the attention of Oosthuysen. In early October 1899, JA Oosthuysen left for the OFS without handing in his Mauser despite requests by the magistrate to do so. The fact that the police could not prevent him from leaving, nor confiscate the rifle, nor prevent him from causing problems with Chief Ncwadi, angered Prime Minister Hime who asked for an explanation from the Chief Commissioner of Police Dartnell. Dartnell, in turn wanted an explanation from the officer in charge of the investigation, Inspector Mardall. A week later Mardall had still not offered an explanation.<sup>25</sup>

Generally the inspection of firearms caused great dissatisfaction amongst Natal Afrikaners. In Weenen county, the Afrikaners took it for granted that the inspections were aimed at them. A Mr Grobbelaar who possessed an "old piece" without a permit, told Magistrate Matthews that the government should not take arms from the people but that they should rather provide them with weapons. A certain Heine went even further and told the police that Natal Afrikaners could get many more rifles from the Transvaal.<sup>26</sup> In the Dundee area much offence was incurred by the first search for rifle licenses in the history of Natal. The question posed was why this was being done at a time when friction between the Transvaal and Britain was rife, and while rumours of disloyalty amongst Natal Afrikaners were widespread. Although most Afrikaners found the process insulting, the half-hearted and perfunctory manner in which the inspection was done brought a smile to both English

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24. PAR, AGO I/7/39: Application by JA Oosthuysen (snr) to have firearms registered, 18.9.1899-28.9.1899

25. PAR, Secretary of Native Affairs (hereafter SNA) 1/4/6: Correspondence between Magistrate WG Wheelwright, Upper Tugela, and Prime Minister AH Hime, 25.9.1899-5.10.1899.

26. PAR, CSO 2579: Report Magistrate MRN Matthews, Weenen, 4.8.1899.

and Afrikaners alike.<sup>27</sup>

Since all measures regarding the control of arms and ammunition seemed to be failing, the only solution appeared to be to instigate stricter regulations when issuing licenses to Natal Afrikaners, especially for Mausers. Alex Jansen, the son of Adrian Jansen (JP), was refused a permit for the Mauser he had imported six months earlier from the Transvaal without being given a reason. What was puzzling to Natal Afrikaners was that in the past there had not been a problem and they felt: “It is an indignity, and the sign manual of distrust. If this gun was intended to be used for disloyal purposes, there are other and easier means of obtaining it.”<sup>28</sup> Furthermore, firearms not only formed an important part of the defense and hunting prowess of the Natal Afrikaner, but they also served as an important cultural symbol of masculinity. The emotions and ill feelings of Natal Afrikaners surrounding the arms and ammunition issue is best summarised by CJ Triegaardt in a letter to the *Times of Natal*:

...I could not get one (rifle) for love or money. Before this disturbance, I bought one in town, took it to the Resident Magistrate’s office, and had it registered. That shows plainly that we Natal Dutchmen are not trusted with a gun; frightened it might go off when we have it. Don’t blame them; guns are dangerous. The Home Guard in Pietermaritzburg can get firearms and ammunition served to them, to protect them against the supposed coming war. That is arming one party and disarming the other by not wanting to sell them firearms; but, thank God, Ladysmith is not the only place to get firearms. I suppose after this I’ll be branded as a disloyal subject, which I certainly must be as regards (*sic*) the way I was treated.<sup>29</sup>

On the whole, the inspection of firearm licenses by the Natal Police yielded only 16 unlicensed rifles, of which only two were Mausers. Of the 16, only 11 were confiscated.<sup>30</sup> Natal Afrikaners thus possessed few unregistered arms since they could be brought in legally from the Republics or regularly purchased under law. The whole exercise which proved to be highly unsuccessful merely served to antagonise Natal Afrikaners and the Reverend August Prozesky, a missionary of the Berlin Missionary Association station at Königsberg near Newcastle, expressed the fear that these inspections could easily have led to armed revolt.<sup>31</sup>

## 2.2 Natal Afrikaners and the armed forces of Natal

After dealing rather unsuccessfully with Afrikaners who owned and purchased firearms the Natal Government turned their attention to the next manner in which they could pose a threat to the

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27. *Times of Natal*, 27.9.1899.

28. *Ibid.*

29. *Times of Natal*, 13.9.1899.

30. PAR, MJPW 75: Question by TJ Nel to Prime Minister AH Hime regarding investigation into unregistered firearms, 9.5.1900.

31. OE Prozesky private collection, Diary of JJA Prozesky: Diary entry, 16.9.1899, p.17. Prozesky had by this time resided in Natal for 34 years and had great sympathy with the Boer cause and actually referred to himself as an Afrikaner. He was later convicted of high treason.

Colony, namely membership of the rudimentary armed forces of Natal. Like with the debacle surrounding firearms and ammunition the measures taken would serve to further alienated Natal Afrikaners.

The first line of defence in Natal was the various rifle associations. Being a member of a rifle association held several advantages, including the ability to purchase rifles at cost price, and acquire free ammunition. Despite these advantages Natal Afrikaners did not join rifle associations in large numbers. For those who did belong, the politics change radically during early 1899. New rules and regulations were published requiring all members to take an oath of allegiance to the crown. Members not willing to do this would be excluded from receiving a rifle and ammunition, and had to continue membership at their own expense. An outcry followed. Associations with substantial numbers of Afrikaner members such as Kranskop, refused to adopt the new rules. Journalists of the *Natal Mercury* found the action incomprehensible since, for as British subjects who enjoyed the accompanying privileges, they could also be called upon to defend the Empire. The only conclusion the journalists could arrive at was that Afrikaners wanted to be free to join the Transvaal in the case of war. In the light of their refusal to take the oath, accusations of disloyalty aimed at Natal Afrikaners appeared, in this case, to be valid.<sup>32</sup>

The reaction of Col W Royston, the commander of the volunteer forces, was to call for the abolition of all rifle associations whose members had refused to take the oath of allegiance. Attorney-General Henry Bale was more cautious. He pointed out that the new regulations were not applicable to members who joined under the rules of 6 June 1896, since these regulations did not demand an oath of allegiance except when purchasing a rifle for cash. Although the governor had the power to disband the rifle associations, Bale maintained that such a step would cause much anger amongst Afrikaners.<sup>33</sup>

Matters regarding the new regulations and the signing of the oath of allegiance came to a head when the Legislative Assembly member for Melmoth, Mr Yonge, an active campaigner of the South African League, asked the assembly to identify the rifle associations which had refused to adopt the new rules. Thirteen associations were subsequently named of which only two, Upper Umvoti headed by TJ Nel, and Venterspruit headed by AWJ Pretorius, had Afrikaners as presidents. None of these associations provided reasons for their rejection of the new regulations but the assumption was that the Afrikaners were responsible for the recalcitrance as they did not wish to sign the oath of allegiance.<sup>34</sup> How emotional the matter had become, was illustrated by the hate mail Yonge received from Umvoti. A copy of the newspaper article in which the offending rifle associations were listed

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32. *Natal Mercury*, 23.3.1899.

33. PAR, MJPW 65: Extract from the *Natal Mercury*, 23.3.1899, with comments by commandant volunteers, Col W Royston.

34. PAR, MJPW 67: Question by Yonge on which rifle associations have failed to adopt the new regulations, 30.5.1899.



was sent to Yonge covered in red ink, presumably to symbolise blood.<sup>35</sup>

The associations which complied with the new regulations lost most of their Afrikaner members. Others, dominated by Afrikaners, held out and by 12 October 1899, the day after the commencement of the Anglo-Boer War had still not adopted the new rulings. Prime Minister Hime therefore decided that the associations which had failed to comply with the regulations, and whose membership had fallen below 50, would cease to exist. They were all in Dutch Districts namely: Helpmekaar, Ingogo, Little Tugela, Upper Tugela, Upper Bushmans River and Venterspruit<sup>36</sup>. This step successfully eliminated the associations dominated by Afrikaners who were not willing to sign the oath of allegiance. All in all the measures taken proved to be counterproductive since they only served to eliminate Afrikaners, with some loyalty to the Empire, from the rifle associations.

As a result of this cleansing, the various rifle associations retained only a minimal number of Afrikaners as members. Proof of this is to be found in the muster role for the various rifle associations as it stood by the end of 1899: Camperdown, 20 members, two Afrikaners; Clyderdale, 15 members, four Afrikaners; Dundee, 90 members, two Afrikaners; Elandslaagte, 18 members, two Afrikaners; Highlands, 32 members, two Afrikaners; Klip River, 18 members, one Afrikaner; Kranskop, 20 members, three Afrikaners; Rietvlei, 18 members, two Afrikaners; Seven Oaks, 19 members, three Afrikaners; Tshekana (Muden), 21 members, six Afrikaners; Umvoti, 29 members, four Afrikaners and Weenen, 52 members, 18 Afrikaners. By the end of 1899 only 14% of the members of rifle associations were Afrikaners and only the Weenen association boasted a significant number of Afrikaner affiliates.<sup>37</sup>

Within the rifle association culture of the time an ethnic division already existed. As an alternative to the official government aligned rifle associations, Natal Afrikaners created their own independent groups. Such associations did not adhere to any of the above regulations. The appeal of these clubs therefore lay in the alternative political policies they offered. The most active of these was the Biggarsberg Boer or the Dutch Rifle Association where, from 1896, regular sham fights, drills and a “wapenskou” were held under the command of PR Vermaak who even invited the magistrate of Umsinga to attend one of their meetings.<sup>38</sup> The magistrate was, however, instructed by the Natal Government “...on no account to attend any sham fight, and as far as you can you are to make it known that a sham fight, now is regarded by the Government as imprudent, apart from the question of legality.” The magistrate was instead obliged to designate a policeman to attend the fight in order

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35. *Natal Witness*, 31.8.1899.

36. PAR, MJPW 71: List of rifle associations which have not adopted the new regulations. 12.10.1899.

37. PAR, Natal Defense Records (hereafter NDR) 2/3: Muster role rifle associations, 31.12.1899.

38. PAR, AGO I/8/52: Request by PR Vermaak to magistrate Dundee to hold sham fight, no date; VTR, JC Vermaak collection, 03/2553/1: Preliminary statement by CL Pieters in the case against JC Vermaak, no date.

to report on the events.<sup>39</sup> The government attitude did not seem to affect the Afrikaners residing in the area because, on 26 August 1899, the Biggarsberg Rifle Association held their quarterly practice session with 35 members attending, of which according to the *Natal Witness*, all but three were armed with Mausers.<sup>40</sup> The Umsinga magistrate took umbrage to the report, since he knew of no Mausers in his district and only a few in the Dundee district but did have to admit that the rifle association, with CJ de Villiers acting as leader and addressed as Commandant by those involved, was not a conventional rifle association since during their meetings near Paddafontein, sham fights and drilling did occur.<sup>41</sup> Other such private Afrikaner rifle associations were less successful. Practices at the Normandien Rifle Association were only attended by ten members. The low turnout was blamed on the drought.<sup>42</sup> Private irregular corps such as these were generally frowned upon by the military who regarded their existence as illegal. The Natal Government could, however, not be moved to interfere, mostly out of fear of internal political repercussions.<sup>43</sup>

The second tier of the Natal colonial defence was the Natal Police and the various volunteer units. Apart from the Natal Police, which had three Afrikaner members,<sup>44</sup> the only volunteer unit which had a substantial number of Afrikaner members was the Greytown-based Umvoti Mounted Rifles (hereafter UMR). As the year 1899 progressed and the prospects of war increased, more and more German and Afrikaner members resigned from the UMR, mainly to avoid fighting against their kin in the Transvaal. Between 1 April and 30 June 1899, six Germans and one Englishman resigned. Thereafter, between 1 July 1899 and 30 September 1899, 19 members resigned of which 16 were Afrikaners including Troop Sergeant-Majors CJ van Rooyen and S van Niekerk, Sergeant PR Botha and Corporal JHF Nel.<sup>45</sup> Apart from being unwilling to fight against their kin, further pressure was imposed when the commanding officer, Col George Leuchars, was attributed with the dubious honour of rooting out the disloyal Dutch contingent from the UMR, thus ensuring that Afrikaners remaining in the unit were aware that they had to be loyal as they were under close surveillance.<sup>46</sup>

The bottom tier of the Natal colonial military hierarchy consisted of cadets. Every government and most private schools had cadets. From the available archival material on the cadet corps the statistics given below, provide an overview of the strength and ethnic composition of the corps.

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39. PAR, CSO 1501: Letter PUS C Bird to magistrate Umsinga, 8.12.1896.

40. *Natal Witness*, 4.9.1899.

41. PAR, CSO 2580: Report Magistrate GW Adamson, Umsinga, 11.9.1899.

42. *De Natal Afrikaner*, 24.1.1899.

43. *Natal Witness*, 4.9.1899.

44. PAR, NDR 215-216: List of Natal Police parading at head quarters, 31.3.1899.

45. PAR, MJPW 69: List of men who have resigned from UMR, circa 1899.

46. *Times of Natal*, 24.8.1899.

**Table 2.1: Muster roll for Cadet Corps in Natal as on 31.12.1899<sup>47</sup>**

SCHOOL	ROLL	COMMENTS
Dundee	?	3 Afrikaners. Two Liebenbergs and a Prozesky.
Durban High School	50	2 Afrikaners. EG (Ernst) Jansen and his brother. Ernst joined on 3.8.1896 and left on 30.11.1899 with the rank of sergeant.
Estcourt	35	4 Afrikaners. All left in September 1899.
Greytown	80	49 Afrikaners.
Ladysmith	57	8 Afrikaners. All had left by August 1899.
Maritzburg College	79	7 Afrikaners. Started leaving in June 1899 and by November 1899 all had left, including FJ Rousseau, son of the local dominee, WP Rousseau.
Newcastle	76	7 Afrikaners. By August 1899 all had left except J van Blerk. L Bosman, aged 16, the son of the local dominee, served as a corporal and was later convicted as a rebel.
Stanger	30	6 Afrikaners. They either left for Vryheid or Eshowe.
Weston College	?	1 Afrikaner. F van Reenen who left in August 1899.

Some of the Afrikaner scholars listed were sent from the Republics to complete their schooling in Natal. As war approached they were taken out of school. A point in case was the removal of 15-year-old JAE Prozesky from Dundee as a precautionary measure, in case war should break out.<sup>48</sup> Being a cadet in an English school was never easy, but in spite of this the political fervour of some Natal Afrikaner boys was not dampened. At a cadet camp in Durban, six Afrikaner boys refused to applaud the queen. When asked for an explanation one replied: "she is not our Queen." The *Natal Mercury* believed that the only solution was to expel the boys from the corps if discipline amongst cadets was to be maintained. Hinting at the measures adopted at the UMR and referring to the new rifle association regulations, the newspaper called for drastic action to be taken against any signs of disloyalty.<sup>49</sup> The behaviour of the Afrikaner cadets was raised in the Legislative Assembly by a Mr Sparks who wanted to know if any official reports had been received, to which the prime minister replied that an official enquiry had been called for.<sup>50</sup> It seems nothing much happened to the boys in question for on 14 October 1899, "Fear God-Honour the King", in a letter to the *Times of Natal*

47. PAR, NDR 2/2: Muster role for cadet corps, 31.12.1899.

48. OE Prozesky private collection, Diary of JJA Prozesky: Diary entries, 22 and 28.9.1899, p.19.

49. *Natal Mercury*, 14.8.1899.

50. *Times of Natal*, 4.8.1899.

complained that they were not adequately punished.<sup>51</sup>

Afrikaners did not feature prominently in any of the first line defences of colonial Natal as represented by the rifle associations, volunteer units, and the cadet corps. This was largely as a result of political reasons, and the mounting tension between the Transvaal and the British Empire. Furthermore, very few Natal Afrikaners were prepared to place themselves in a position where they would have to fight their kin. The aggressive rooting out of Natal Afrikaners, who were not deemed to be one hundred percent loyal to the armed forces, thus solved very few problems. Instead it served to polarise white Natal society even further.

### 2.3 Courting the allegiance of Natal Africans

One of the pre-war factors both the Natal Afrikaners and the Natal Government had to consider was the position of the numerically superior African population of the Colony. The relations between the Natal Afrikaner and the African inhabitants of Natal should be viewed in the context of historical clashes over land and livestock which commenced in the mid 1830s during the Great Trek. By 1899 the economic foundations for interaction between Natal Afrikaners and Africans had hardly changed but by now these traditional adversaries had both experienced the dominating influence of British Imperialism. The Zulu lived in constant fear that they would be attacked under the guise of war and that the few head of cattle that had survived the rinderpest, would be looted. Similar fears existed amongst Natal Afrikaners. Governor Hely-Hutchinson suspected that Africans would not understand a British diplomatic victory but only a military one, and that several tribes were ready to use the disruptions caused by war to resolve inter tribal conflict.<sup>52</sup> Since the Natal Government had an elaborate spy system in place, it was well aware of the intentions and attitudes of both the Africans and the Natal Afrikaners towards the impending war.<sup>53</sup> Additionally, under circular No. 51 of 1899, the Natal Government also expected the magistrates to keep the SNA and the colonial office informed on the views of Africans in each district.<sup>54</sup>

The first report that the Natal Afrikaners feared they would be attacked by Africans when war broke out, was issued by Major-General William Penn-Symons, who said that the Afrikaners in the upper districts of Natal were concerned that their cattle would be looted in the case of conflict. He also stated that Natal Africans were prepared to defend their property if given arms.<sup>55</sup> This was followed by a report from the magistrate of Dundee relaying the fears of several Afrikaners in the area namely

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51. *Times of Natal*, 14.10.1899.

52. PRO, CO 179/206: Letter Governor W Hely-Hutchinson to Colonial Secretary J Chamberlain, 15.9.1899.

53. For this system see: PAR, SNA I/4/6: *passim*.

54. PAR, CSO 2579: Confidential circular No. 51 of 1899 instructing magistrates to furnish reports regarding conditions of affairs in their districts, 29.8.1899.

55. PRO, CO 179/206: Memo Major-General W Penn-Symons to chief of staff - Cape Town, 31.7.1899.

that, in case of hostilities, Africans would commence looting and destroy their property.<sup>56</sup> Apprehension also existed that their wives would be murdered.<sup>57</sup> With similar concerns emanating from Weenen, Kranskop, Melmoth and Newcastle, and being echoed by the *Times of Natal*<sup>58</sup> and the *Natal Witness*,<sup>59</sup> the Natal Government decided not only to allay Afrikaner fears but also to appease the Africans who, owing to their numerical superiority and military tradition, could prove a formidable adversary or ally capable of playing a decisive role.

A response to the expressed fears and concerns came in the form of a message from Prime Minister AH Hime, via the magistrates, to the various chiefs and headmen: "That in the event of war breaking out between the English and the Dutch, the Queen wishes the Natives to remain within their own borders, as the war will be a white man's war, but they may, of course, protect themselves and their property against attack or seizure by the enemy." It was also stressed that magistrates were to limit themselves to this declaration and under no circumstances was any other information to be provided without the instructions of the Natal Government.<sup>60</sup> On their own authority, and for the sake of internal political stability based largely on the fears of Natal Afrikaners, the Natal Government therefore declared the coming war, in the name of the British monarch, a "white man's war".

The magistrates immediately informed both the traditional African leaders and the Natal Afrikaners of the content of the prime ministers' letter.<sup>61</sup> The section of the message relating to the right of the Africans to protect their property and themselves, caused much concern with the Klip River and Dundee magistrates. The former concluded that Africans would ask for arms and ammunition to defend themselves. This in turn would create dissatisfaction and unrest among the Afrikaners in his district. He therefore wanted to know what answer he was to give Africans when asked: "How are we to protect ourselves without arms?" After consultation between the prime minister, the colonial secretary and the SNA, he received the following reply: "...the necessity for protecting themselves and their property is regarded by the Government as a remote contingency."<sup>62</sup> With this evasive and unsatisfactory answer the Natal Government presumably regarded the matter as settled and assumed that the war would be fought by Europeans only.

Not all Afrikaners were convinced that the government's instructions would have the desired effect. They feared the possibility of inter tribal fighting, which could be planned to coincide with the

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56. PAR, SNA I/4/6: Report Magistrate P Hugo, Dundee, to FR Moor, 27.9.1899.

57. PAR, SNA I/4/6: Report native intelligence officer No. 3, 9.3.1899.

58. *Times of Natal*, 28.8.1899.

59. *Natal Witness*, 18.9.1899.

60. PAR, CSO 2580: Letter Prime Minister AH Hime to magistrate, 9.9.1899.

61. PAR, CSO 2581: Report Magistrate P Hugo, Dundee, 28.9.1899; Report Magistrate JO Jackson, Newcastle, 16.9.1899.

62. PAR, SNA I/4/6: Letter Magistrate TR Bennett, Klip River district, 13.9.1899.

outbreak of war when the Natal Police and other forces were occupied elsewhere, and that such hostilities could spill over into white areas. In Weenen some Afrikaners even applied to the magistrate for permission to congregate in laagers on the higher lying areas to protect themselves against an onslaught by the victors of a tribal fight between Chiefs Silwane and Mamele which was assumed to start as soon as war broke out. As a result the Afrikaners who resided in nagmaalhuises in Weenen, for the sake of the schooling of their children, abandoned the town and left it undefended. Magistrate Matthews argued that there was a second motive behind this departure, namely that the Afrikaners wanted to separate themselves from the English, in order to be able to act in an unrestricted manner in case of a Boer invasion.<sup>63</sup> Evidence for the magistrate's argument was provided by the Weenen Afrikaners themselves, when they made it clear that they would support the quelling of any African uprising, but insisted that they would not fight against the Republics.<sup>64</sup>

In the Dundee area Afrikaners also prepared to form a laager at or near Fort Pine out of fear of an African uprising. The Umsinga magistrate, who described the Africans as peaceful, found these plans and the reasoning behind it difficult to understand. His rationale, like that of his Weenen counterpart, was that the Afrikaner action was based on the principle of getting their families to safety in order to make it easier for them to join the Boers once the invasion began.<sup>65</sup> The idea of laagering and arming against a possible African attack was also raised by the Afrikaners of Upper Tugela.<sup>66</sup> The governor of Natal, like the Umsinga magistrate, received news of these plans with apprehension, but he understood the move to have been born out of fear of the Africans, rather than put forward for sinister reasons.<sup>67</sup>

The Dutch District most threatened by tribal fighting under the guise of war, was Kranskop. Local traditional leaders, Gayede and Hlangabezu, were adamant that they would use the impending war to resolve their problems. The concern which such a possibility sparked amongst Afrikaners was that it could result in looting and attacks during which the raiders would not distinguish between blacks and whites or their property, especially if the British should suffer reverses. These Afrikaner fears were described by the local magistrate, HW Boast, as unfounded,<sup>68</sup> but the local Afrikaners still clamoured to purchase large quantities of ammunition in case the tribal violence spilled over into their territory.<sup>69</sup>

Unconvinced by the reassurances of Magistrate Boast, the Kranskop Afrikaners decided to hold a

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63. PAR, CSO 2582: Report Magistrate MRN Matthews, Weenen, 6.10.1899.

64. PAR, CSO 2580: Report Magistrate MRN Matthews, Weenen, 20.9.1899.

65. PAR, CSO 2581: Report Magistrate GW Adamson, Umsinga, 3.10.1899.

66. PAR, CSO 2579: Report Magistrate WG Wheelwright, Upper Tugela, 4.9.1899.

67. PRO, CO 179/206: Letter Governor W Hely-Hutchinson to Colonial Secretary J Chamberlain, 15.9.1899.

68. PAR, CSO 2580: Report Magistrate HW Boast, Kranskop, 15.9.1899.

69. PAR, CSO 2580: Report Magistrate HW Boast, Kranskop, 23.9.1899.

meeting on 29 September 1899, at the local court house to ask for government assistance in acquiring arms and ammunition to defend itself, should the expected tribal violence between Gayede and Hlangabezu spread into their domain. At the meeting the chairman, LMJ van Rooyen (snr), recommended that the government themselves should be asked to supply arms and ammunition for protection, in the event of African tribal clashes. This suggestion was not well received by AJJ Nel who disagreed vehemently stating that such a request would only evoke a “slap in the face from the government” since any request for arms and ammunition would be refused because of the unwillingness of the local Afrikaners to sign the oath of allegiance. An agitated Nel continued, saying that any Afrikaner who signed the oath of allegiance was of low class and nothing more than a dog. Owing to the commotion caused by Nel’s outburst, Magistrate HW Boast, and the clerk of the court, JM Hodgson, went to investigate the commotion. They arrived just as Nel was being asked what the local Afrikaners would do if the Transvaal were to invade Natal. He replied that only once it happened, could a decision be made. The arrival of the two local officials soon brought an end to the meeting.<sup>70</sup>

AJJ Nel’s resistance to the Natal Government provided the *Times of Natal* with an ideal opportunity to continue its crusade against Natal Afrikaners. According to the paper the chairman, LMJ van Rooyen, had been extremely hostile and denounced the Natal Government in the strongest possible terms. The article claimed that others had joined in, complaining that experience proved it was fruitless to ask the government for any assistance. The meeting, according to the newspaper, was also an indication of the racial antagonism in the area.<sup>71</sup> When Magistrate Boast and Afrikaners who had attended the gathering met in an attempt to resolve the situation, most Afrikaners expressed great indignation at what they regarded as a false reflection of the events. The chairman of the meeting, LMJ van Rooyen, denied the allegations and proclaimed: “Being an old and very loyal resident of the Colony for upwards of 40 years he seeks to obtain the protection of the government from such wild and damaging attacks.” Van Rooyen was supported by LJH Nel who stated that the trouble was caused by AJJ Nel who spoke in a very excited manner, going beyond the jurisdiction of the chairman, and disrupting the meeting in the process. To another member of the extended Nel clan resident in the area, Theunis, the only solution in dealing with such misleading journalism was for the government to prevent a reoccurrence by prosecuting false reporters in a court of law. In their condemnation of the *Times of Natal*, the Afrikaners who were present, had the support of Boast who felt “... that newspaper reports of this nature do a great deal of harm.”<sup>72</sup>

As war and the possible conflict between Gayede and Hlangabezu drew nearer, the moderate Afrikaners at Kranskop continued negotiating with Magistrate Boast, requesting that he provide for

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70. PAR, CSO 2580: Report Magistrate HW Boast, Kranskop, 5.10.1899.

71. *Times of Natal*, 1.10.1899.

72. PAR, CSO 1628: Report Magistrate HW Boast, Kranskop, regarding complaints by LMJ van Rooyen and LJH Nel on false reports made by a newspaper, 9.10.1899.

their safety and security. On 7 October 1899, several Afrikaners once again asked for government protection, while at the same time refusing to sign the oath of allegiance. According to LMJ van Rooyen and WG Havemann, the local Afrikaners were still determined not to fight against their relatives in the Transvaal. A strong force patrolling the border between the tribal area and the white farms would, according to Van Rooyen, address their security requirements. The suggestion was rejected by JC Martens of Broederbank who felt that the magistrate should rather discuss the matter with Gayede and Hlangabezulu since an armed patrol would be seen as a sign of weakness. Instead, Martens, supported by WG Havemann, suggested that arms and ammunition be sent to the magistrate, who would then keep supplies in reserve and issue them as needed. A follow-up meeting on 10 October 1899, did not achieve anything other than merely reiterating formerly expressed fears. Those present again made it clear that they would not fight against the Transvaal or take up arms against the Natal Government but that they wished to help to suppress any African uprising. The final attempt of the embattled Kranskop Afrikaners to find an amicable solution to their problems took place on 12 October 1899. In the office of Magistrate Boast, WG Havemann supported by Petrus Nel, suggested the formation of a home guard but no decision was reached, and the six Afrikaners in attendance left with the promise that they would support the suppression of an African uprising and provide information regarding the movements of Boers in the area.<sup>73</sup>

While on the one hand fearing a possible attack and looting from Africans, individual Natal Afrikaners on the other hand tried, mostly in a clumsy intimidating manner, to convince Africans to support the Republican cause. Between 1 July 1899 and 23 September 1899, 12 confirmed cases of attempts to influence Natal Africans were reported to the SNA. Of these, six were attributed to Natal Afrikaners, and the remaining six to citizens of the Republics. In the first reported case, three young Natal Afrikaners, all related to Christoffel Lombard Odendaal of Klip Kraal near Besters Station, visited the Amakolwa or Christian chief, Johannes Khumalo, to enquire on which side he would fight if war broke out. After receiving an evasive answer they left. In other cases involving the Amakolwa, who resided in Klip River county, visits were paid by leading Natal Afrikaners who informed leaders that the British had been defeated in the past and would be defeated again. These chiefs would thus do better to side with the Boers. If they did, they were promised more land, but they were warned that if they did not they would be shot down like the British. After investigating these claims, the Klip River district magistrate declared that only in the case of Khumalo did he deem the allegations to be true.<sup>74</sup> He was of the opinion that incidents such as these interfered with the good relations he had with the Africans in his district.<sup>75</sup>

The second chief to be approached was Ncwadi of Upper Tugela. He received a messenger sent by

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73. PAR, CSO 2581: Report Magistrate HW Boast, Kranskop, 12.10.1899.

74. PAR, AGO I/7/39: Letter Prime Minister AH Hime to Magistrate TR Bennett, Klip River district, 4.7.1899; Letter Magistrate TR Bennett, Klip River district, to Prime Minister AH Hime, 28.7.1899.

75. PAR, CSO 2579: Report Magistrate TR Bennett, Klip River district, 5.9.1899.



JA Oosthuysen of Bethanien in the district of Estcourt, who enquired what his intentions were in case of war. Oosthuysen followed this up with further emissaries sent to Ncwadi, and also quizzed Chiefs Nyanda and Silwane, trying to determine their position in the impending war, while at the same time attempting to convince them to side with the Boers in case of hostilities.<sup>76</sup> What made matters even worse for the chiefs involved, was that Attorney-General Bale advised against the prosecution of Oosthuysen, despite conceding that the available evidence could lead to a conviction. Although Oosthuysen was also suspected of spying for the OFS, Bale was afraid that “if a search warrant were to be issued and no incriminating papers found the moral and political effect might be serious.” Such an act would make the Natal Afrikaners suspicious as well as cautious and alienate them even further. The consequent lack of action had a negative effect in that it encouraged other Natal Afrikaners to engage in subversive activities involving Africans.<sup>77</sup>

In one such instance, Chief Nondubela declared that on his way to Pietermaritzburg he had met four Afrikaners from Sterkspruit who rode with him and questioned him on the matter, asking whose side he would take. On another occasion Chief Kula stated that a certain Maritz, who traded with him and who had outspanned at his kraal, had tried to convince him to side with the Boers. Macala-Ka-Becana of Proviso B disclosed certain threats made by LJR Kritzinger regarding the treatment Africans in Zululand could expect from the Boers in the event of war.<sup>78</sup> Reports from Melmoth revealed that some local Afrikaners used every opportunity to belittle the British Government in front of the Africans who remained unimpressed.<sup>79</sup> A point in case was the testimony of Ziweni, a police constable sent by the Melmoth magistrate to collect butter and oranges from a Mr Kritzinger. During the transaction Kritzinger (jnr) informed Ziweni that it would be better if there were no soldiers in Melmoth as their presence would only cause trouble.<sup>80</sup>

In the Kranskop area, AJJ Nel, when asked by Jacob Zuma what he would do in the case of war, replied that unlike the Zulus who turned on Cetswayo during the Anglo-Zulu War, the Natal Afrikaners would wait until the Transvalers came for them after first attacking Durban. He continued, saying that *en route* to Durban the Boers would cross at Ngubeva Drift and attack Greytown first. In addition to this Nel boasted about Majuba and the Jameson Raid and said that he had set some cattle aside which he would slaughter when the Boers came. Nel also told Zuma of a recent visit to Cape Town by him, where he saw cartoons, one in which President Kruger was stirring porridge and Afrikaners emptying meal into a pot, and a second one in which Queen Victoria was washing Kruger’s face. Angered by this Nel retorted that he would “rip open English

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76. PAR, AGO I/7/39: List of cases of tampering with Africans reported to government between 1.7.1899-23.9.1899.

77. PAR, AGO I/7/39: Report Magistrate WG Wheelwright, Upper Tugela, with regard to the depositions made by Ncwadi, Nyanda and Silulwana regarding advances made by JA Oosthuysen, 15.9.1899.

78. PAR, AGO I/7/39: List of cases of tampering with Africans reported to government between, 1.7.1899-23.9.1899.

79. PAR, CSO 2581: Report Magistrate, TR Maxwell, Melmoth, (also known at the time as Entonjaneni), 24.9.1899.

80. PAR, SNA I/4/7: Statement of African Constable Ziweni, 28.9.1899.

women and impale their children.”<sup>81</sup>

Nel was not one to mince his words, even when speaking to English Natalians. In July 1899, he greeted a certain HV Killoch with the words “Good day Rooinek”. To this Killoch replied “Good day greybelly”. Reacting in a very aggressive manner Nel stated that the Transvalers would shoot the “Rooineks until their entrails fly.” Killoch took this as a private joke, despite the animosity expressed by Nel.<sup>82</sup> Acting Magistrate Herbert Miller did not pay much attention to such boastful and slanderous talk because he considered Nel a very excitable and eccentric character and a rabid hater of the English. Moreover, he was locally known as “Mal Theuns”.<sup>83</sup> Others disagreed and felt that Nel was sane and that he should take responsibility for his repeated verbal attacks on the British.

These verbal outbursts soon got him into disfavour with the Natal Government and Prime Minister Hime considered the possibility of charging him with treasonable language<sup>84</sup> under Act 22 of 1896, section 34. One problem did, however, exist in the addendum to the act which stated: “Mere expression of hatred or contempt of the sovereign authority may usually be allowed to pass without notice, though there may be circumstances in which language becomes dangerous to the public safety, and should be punished.” To achieve a conviction was therefore difficult because: “Guilt will depend on the precise words used and the time when, and circumstances under which they were used.”<sup>85</sup> In Nel’s case liability was difficult to prove as both the Kranskop magistrate and the clerk of the court were not prepared to testify to the slanderous nature of his statements since their Dutch was too poor.<sup>86</sup> This was nevertheless not the end of the investigation into the affairs of Nel and his trip to Cape Town was closely monitored. Once again charges were not pressed.<sup>87</sup>

Although AJJ Nel was singled out, “native intelligence officer no 2” accused all the Afrikaners of Greytown and Kranskop of interfering with Africans and he felt it his “... duty to warn the government very strongly about the Boers from Greytown and Krantzkop.” He continued: “They should be made to declare on what side they will be in the event of hostilities. If they say they will take the part of the others in the Transvaal, they should be sent across the border to their own people... they are not only trying to set Natives against the English but they try to set tribes of Natives against each other.” His recommendations were based on two items of information; an occasion near Seven Oaks, when an Afrikaner had informed him that the Boers would invade Natal

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81. PAR, AGO I/7/39: Deposition by Jacob Zuma to magistrate Umvoti on statements made by JJ Nel, 12.10.1899.

82. PAR, AGO I/7/39: Report Magistrate HW Boast, Kranskop, 5.10.1899.

83. PAR, CSO I/7/39: Deposition by Jacob Zuma regarding statements made by AJJ Nel, 12.10.1899.

84. PAR, AGO I/7/39: Minute paper on treasonable language used by AAJ Nel at Kranskop, 29.9.1899.

85. PAR, AGO I/7/39: Letter Prime Minister AH Hime to Attorney-General H Bale, 30.8.1899.

86. PAR, AGO I/7/39: Minute paper on treasonable language used by AAJ Nel at Kranskop, 29.9.1899.

87. PAR, MJPW 69: Minute paper Attorney-General H Bale to Magistrate HC Koch, Umvoti, regarding movements of AJJ Nel, 26.9.1899; PAR, AGO I/7/39: Letter Magistrate HC Koch, Umvoti, to Attorney-General H Bale, 28.9.1899.

and that they would “go right into Maritzburg and drink their tea there”, and another near Kranskop when two Afrikaners warned Chief Mbanyana that his cattle would be raided if he supported the British, to which he retorted that he would instigate revenge raids.<sup>88</sup> Not all Natal Africans were as loyal to the British as spy “no 2.” At a beer drinking party Chief Mdiya said that if the Natal Government should call out the levies he would join the Boers. He claimed that he would “pick out the English Colonel and shoot him” because he was not familiar with the English, but he was accustomed to the Boers.” As a result the authorities removed Mdiya’s chieftainship.<sup>89</sup>

Such opinions only served to prove how impossible it was to gauge the position Natal Africans would take in the event of war. Whichever side the Africans supported, they expected to gain something from it. In the case of allegiance to the British they hoped for “money or land.”<sup>90</sup> Natal Afrikaners for their part, could offer neither money nor land and so the relations between Natal Afrikaners and Africans remained low-keyed.<sup>91</sup> Some Natal Afrikaners in the Newcastle district tried to protect their labourers from Republican invasion by handing them certificates that could identify them as being in the service of Afrikaners.<sup>92</sup>

How Natal Africans would be treated by the armed forces on both sides remained uncertain. The available evidence seems to indicate that there were only a few isolated individual attempts to lure Natal Africans to the Republican side. A much more common occurrence was for Natal Afrikaners, in conversations with Africans, to either boast about Boer abilities or slander the British. The anticipated presence of the British Army did not install any confidence either, and along the Buffalo River in the Umsinga district, Africans started slaughtering their cattle, sheep, goats and fowls because they were told that the British Army was going to seize all their stock to feed the troops. A hasty telegram by the SNA was despatched to the Umsinga magistrate, denying this rumour in the strongest possible terms.<sup>93</sup>

#### **2.4 Attempting to deal with Natal Afrikaners in the run-up to the war - using espionage and close surveillance**

Apart from dealing with Afrikaners who owned and purchase firearms and ammunition, those in the armed forces, and the loyalty of the indigenous population of the Colony, the Natal Government, in compliance of its support for the aggressive position of the Imperial Government towards the Transvaal, also had to keep a close watch on its Afrikaner subjects.

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88. PAR, SNA I/4/6: Statement by an African, 13.9.1899.

89. PAR, SNA I/4/6: Report native intelligence officer No. 2, 31.8.1899.

90. PAR, SNA I/4/6: Report native intelligence officer No. 4, 30.8.1899.

91. PRO, CO 179/208: Letter SHF de Jager to C de Jager, 11.10.1899.

92. PAR, CSO 2581: Report Magistrate JO Jackson, Newcastle, 9.10.1899.

93. PAR, SNA I/4/6: Report from Helpmekaar that Africans are killing their livestock fearing it will be seized, 12.10.1899.

In line with this, the Natal Government, on 29 August 1899 instructed those who carried the administrative burden in Natal, namely the resident magistrates, to forward at least once a week, a confidential report to the authorities. The reports were to focus on the attitudes of the white and black populations in their districts and were to include any information that could assist the government in maintaining law and order. This included the investigation of rumours and newspaper reports.<sup>94</sup> In September 1899 this was followed by an instruction from the commissioner of police to each of the district officers to keep a detailed account on Natal Afrikaners suspected of disloyalty.<sup>95</sup>

On 30 September 1899, the monitoring of Natal Afrikaners was intensified, when Col JG Dartnell forwarded a memo to the police inspectors at Newcastle, Dundee, Ladysmith, Estcourt, Greytown, Nkandla and Melmoth, instructing them to "...make out lists of the Dutch residents in your district, and carefully note the names of any who leave the Colony to join the Transvaal, or who are suspected of having done so." Although the OFS was omitted, it may be assumed that any Natal Afrikaners who intended venturing in that direction with ulterior motives, were also to be reported. The anxious governor of Natal, Walter Hely-Hutchinson, also insisted that careful records be kept of such movements, and that each suspicious case had to be supported by evidence.<sup>96</sup> This was in addition to the routine reports the magistrates had to furnish.

Another dimension in the process of policing Natal Afrikaners was provided by the English Natal press. The most prominent investigative role was adopted by the *Times Of Natal* which, even before war had broken out, hinted that rebels did exist based on the assumed precedent of 1880-1881 when Natal Afrikaners were said to have fought on the side of the Transvaal. The fact that trouble makers had not been tried after the war, was now recalled. The *Times of Natal* expressed the view that the same mistake was not to be made again, and therefore encouraged its readers to act as watchdogs and "to get names and addresses of rebels and witnesses. This could then be forwarded to the newspaper or the Principal Under Secretary."<sup>97</sup>

#### **2.4.1 Reports on the Afrikaners of Proviso B**

One of the areas that did prove to be a hotbed of Republican sentiments was Proviso B, and specifically the district of Melmoth (Entonjaneni). This was understandable as it was formerly part of the New Republic which, in exchange for recognition ceded Proviso B to Natal in 1886. Its European population, who were predominantly Afrikaners and geographically isolated from the rest

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94. PAR, CSO 2579: Confidential circular No. 51 of 1899 instructing magistrates to furnish reports regarding conditions of affairs in their districts, 29.8.1899.

95. PAR, MJPW 116: Minute paper request by minister of lands and works to see the book kept on disloyal Natal Afrikaners kept by Inspector Mardall, 9.1.1900-24.1.1900.

96. PAR, MJPW 116: Record of all Natal Afrikaners who have left, or may leave, to join the Boers, 30.9.1899-3.10.1899.

of Natal, maintained strong political, cultural and economic ties with the Vryheid district and with the ZAR. It was therefore not surprising when rumours started to circulate that the Afrikaners in Proviso B were expressing pro-Republican feelings and communicating with their Transvaal counterparts via African runners under cover of night.<sup>98</sup> These rumours gained weight when Africans reported that two members of the Zuid-Afrikaanshe Republikeinse Polisie (hereafter ZARPS), RP Dafel and Potgieter, stayed overnight with some Afrikaners under the pretence that they wished to purchase cattle. At the same time Proviso B Afrikaners started stocking up on sugar and flour.<sup>99</sup>

In reality most Proviso B Afrikaners planned to remain quietly on their farms. The greatest deterrent to their joining the Transvaal forces was the fear that a treasonable offence could lead to the confiscation of their property. At the same time, fears were expressed that they could be forced to take up arms against the Republics. Only a telegram from the prime minister, stating categorically that this would not happen, put their minds at rest.<sup>100</sup>

A second matter of concern was that Proviso B could be attacked by the Transvaal in order to forcibly remove those Afrikaners who were known to want to leave. Such a step would serve to nullify the rationale that they left voluntarily, which meant that they could not be tried as rebels or have their property confiscated.<sup>101</sup> The prospect of forced removal therefore did not suit most Proviso B Afrikaners. Fears of such an invasion and a possible African uprising prompted 27 whites, including 13 Afrikaners, to convene a public meeting on 19 September 1899. As loyal subjects those present, including later rebels RJ Vermaak and MAS Kritzinger, called on the Natal Government to ask for protection of their property and families.<sup>102</sup> The protection offered by the Natal Government came in the form of 50 African policemen or Nonqai. At least two locals were deeply offended by this step. PJ Uys and F White, an Englishman married to an Afrikaner, complained that the deployment of the African policeman endangered the lives of all Europeans, because the Transvaal would view this as a menace which invited attack. Their concerns were not taken seriously by the Natal authorities.<sup>103</sup>

A significant minority of Proviso B Afrikaners had no intention of remaining neutral or loyal to the government. Several months before war broke out LJR Kritzinger of Osborne, P Klaasen, ICJ

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97. *Times of Natal*, 9.10.1899.

98. PAR, CSO 2581: Report Magistrate TR Maxwell, Melmoth, 4.10.1899.

99. PAR, CSO 2581: Report Magistrate TR Maxwell, Melmoth, 24.9.1899.

100. PAR, CSO 2580: Telegram Chief Magistrate CJR Saunders to Prime Minister AH Hime, 20.9.1899; Telegram Prime Minister AH Hime to Chief Magistrate CJR Saunders, 22.9.1899.

101. PAR, CSO 2581: Report Magistrate TR Maxwell, Melmoth, 4.10.1899.

102. PAR, CSO 2581: Report Magistrate TR Maxwell, Melmoth, 24.9.1899.

103. PAR, AGO I/7/39: Telegram Chief Magistrate CJR Saunders to Prime Minister AH Hime, 30.9.1899.

Vermaak, GC van der Merwe, AM Potgieter, J Potgieter, CJ Potgieter of Nooitgedacht and T Pretorius and DC Uys (jnr) of Waterfall, left for the Transvaal.<sup>104</sup> They were followed by one of the wealthiest Afrikaners in the area, JJ van Rooyen of Morgenzon. Van Rooyen took approximately 600 head of cattle with him and was accompanied by CJ van Rooyen.<sup>105</sup> The Van Rooyens were followed by T Strydom of Sandpoort who, likewise, took all his livestock across the border.<sup>106</sup> Another equally wealthy Afrikaner, PJ (Piet) Koekemoer of Welcome, followed soon afterwards with 1 800 sheep, 180 cattle, 30 horses and 100 goats. Koekemoer's problem was that he owned considerable property on both sides of the border. On the Transvaal side his property was seized by ZARP Dafel with the aid of two Proviso B Afrikaners, R and C Labuschagne, because he had not adhered to his call-up instructions. In order to secure his Transvaal property Koekemoer therefore left Proviso B.<sup>107</sup> In an attempt to provide labour Koekemoer tried to take some African children along, but both the children and their parents refused to accompany him into the Transvaal, and were supported by Magistrate TR Maxwell, who informed Koekemoer that the masters and servants ordinance No. 2 of 1850, Section 7, stated that Africans have the right to refuse to accompany their master out of the district. Although Koekemoer agreed not to use force in the matter, he insisted that the Africans who refused to accompany him leave his farm.<sup>108</sup> The last two Proviso B Afrikaners to leave for the Transvaal were HJ Laurens of Diepkloof and JJ Uys of Schuilkraal. In total between 17% or 22% of male Afrikaners of a fighting age departed for the Vryheid district;<sup>109</sup> by far the largest number from any Natal district. The reason for joining the Transvaal, at least in the case of T Pretorius, was provided by his father DJ Pretorius, a veteran of the Anglo-Transvaal War. According to Pretorius senior: "The old men who owns the land will sit at home and their sons will assist the Transvaal." No property could therefore be confiscated as it invariably belonged to "the old men".<sup>110</sup>

#### **2.4.2 Developments in the Afrikaner stronghold of Umvoti county**

The Natal county with the biggest and also the most politically active Afrikaner population was Umvoti. Understandably so it became the focus of attention from the jingoist forces in the Colony. An article in the *Times of Natal* of 24 August 1899 entitled "Rebels in Natal" called upon the Natal Government "...to take steps to disarm disloyal British subjects within this Colony and Zululand and to inform all such at once by Proclamation that their properties would be forfeited without hesitation, in the event of these people joining or affording assistance to the enemy." The "facts" which the newspaper obtained from a "reliable source" indicated that the centre of disloyalty was located

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104. PAR, CSO 2581: Report Magistrate TR Maxwell, Melmoth, 4.10.1899.

105. PAR, Prime Minister's Office (hereafter PM) 91: Telegram Chief Magistrate CJR Saunders to Prime Minister AH Hime, 4.9.1899.

106. PAR, AGO I/7/39: Telegram Chief Magistrate CJR Saunders to PUS C Bird, 7.9.1899.

107. PAR, CSO 2581: Report Magistrate TR Maxwell, Melmoth, 4.10.1899.

108. PAR, AGO I/7/39: Letter Magistrate TR Maxwell, Melmoth, to Chief Magistrate CJR Saunders, 5.9.1899.

109. PAR, CSO 2581: Report Magistrate TR Maxwell, Melmoth, 4.10.1899.

110. PAR, CSO 2582: Report Magistrate JL Knight, Nkandla, 4.10.1899.

amongst the Afrikaners in Umvoti who were armed and had appointed a commandant. They were also in the process of resigning from the UMR. The Republican plan of attack, namely that the Transvaal forces would rush into Umvoti via the Tugela River to reinforce their sympathisers and use the county as a springboard for launching an attack on the rest of Natal, was apparently openly discussed. Umvoti Afrikaners were also accused of trying to influence the Africans to side with the Boers in the case of war. Expressions laced with bitter racial hatred were apparently also levelled against the English. Although the *Times of Natal* did not express the view that Natal Afrikaners were expected to fight against the Transvaal, it was felt that they should not arm and mobilise themselves, or conspire to cooperate with the enemy. Such behaviour, according to the article, smacked of open rebellion, and the newspaper maintained that the sooner the government disarmed those who had acquired firearms illegally, and took action against those who had broken the law, the better.<sup>111</sup>

The article evoked varied reactions from English Natalians. "Alert" thanked the *Times of Natal* for its scathing attack on disloyal Afrikaners and felt that: "It is high time that the undisguised threats and preparation for action be seriously dealt with by those responsible to the Imperial Government." "Alert" was clearly willing to play his part in dealing with the problem because he warned his Afrikaner neighbours: "You are known, you are watched and any overt act of rebellion on your part will be inevitably rewarded on its merits. You have no grievances like the English in the Transvaal - don't imperil your property, privileges and life in an undefendable and unreasonable cause."

George Potter on the other hand, described the plan of action outlined by the newspaper as "...silly, ignorant, childlike nonsense, emanating from a brainless, idiotic stupid ass, a Utopian scheme." To him the idea of attacking from across the Tugela River was mere "praterij" by ignorant boys, since the bio-geography made it impossible, while the historic lack of courage displayed by the Boers and the loyalty of the Natalians would serve to halt any attack. To this the *Times of Natal* responded explaining that the Transvalers would not rush in but that they would infiltrate the Colony in small groups, only to congregate later and create a diversion for the forces at the front.<sup>112</sup>

In the Biggarsberg area the article was regarded as lies. What concerned the readers in this jurisdiction was that the newspaper had not revealed everything "out of regard for people holding responsible positions." A correspondent put forward two objections: firstly, that "responsible people" or their relatives could be disloyal in which case he wanted to know why they should be protected for criminal acts that could be a threat to public safety. Secondly, he argued that even "important people" might be the newspaper's informants and if so, sentiment could not be afforded at the risk of public safety and fair play.<sup>113</sup>

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111. *Times of Natal*, 24.8.1899.

112. *Times of Natal*, 29.8.1899.

113. *Times of Natal*, 11.9.1899.

The first Afrikaner to react to the accusations against the newspaper was D Havemann of Umvoti Poort. He regarded the article as a source of amusement, and went as far as complimenting the journalist who, he remarked, probably did not even have the grace to be embarrassed. Continuing in this lampooning mode, Havemann volunteered further information: "...we are busy manufacturing cannons out of gumwood blocks, to be loaded with onion bulbs, to meet our terrified Greytown English friends, as soon as hostilities commence." On a more serious note Havemann acknowledged that Afrikaners were resigning from the UMR because they could not fight against their own flesh and blood and added that "... the foreigner cannot exactly have his own way." In view of the accusations levelled against the Umvoti Afrikaners, Havemann wondered how great the falsehoods would be when journalists reported on matters in the Transvaal. The accusation that Africans had been incited to join the Boers was rejected by Havemann with contempt.<sup>114</sup>

J Nel responded in a similar way, stating that they had elected the 84-year-old William Nel as Commandant and the 80-year-old Henry Dafel as his assistant. In a more serious vein Nel stated openly: "Our sympathy is with the Transvaal for our relatives are there - and we have not sunk so low in the scale of civilization as to forget blood is thicker than water - I am dear sir, one of the so-called rebels."<sup>115</sup> By now the election of William Nel as commandant and Henry Dafel as his assistant had become a standing joke in the Greytown area, especially since Gert van Rooyen in a letter to the press had expressed the thought that these two men would "be a match for the mighty British Empire." The *Times of Natal* did not share the humour. They labelled it as "an example of Boer logic and policy" and hoped that all Van Rooyen's friends would underestimate the "mighty British Empire" to the same extent that he had done.<sup>116</sup>

Under the outward joking veneer, the Afrikaners of Greytown were fuming about the article in the *Times of Natal* which branded them as rebels, conspirators and meddlers. As a result, a petition initiated by CJ Nel was circulated in the area, calling on the three political representatives from Umvoti, TJ (Theunis), TJ (Tol) Nel and G Leuchars, to present the offending report to the governor.

According to the petition, falsehoods and lies were spread under cover of freedom of the press and the signatories protested "most emphatically and solemnly against these vile charges and accusations hurled in our faces without the slightest cause or reason." The three parliamentarians had to demand "...an immediate and thorough investigation into the matter, with a view to having these charges either substantiated and publically proved or publically withdrawn or revoked..." The hope was that such action would secure the sympathy of all moderate English Natalians who believed in fair play.

The *Times of Natal* welcomed the expression of loyalty in the petition, but stood firm that there was

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114. *Times of Natal*, 2.9.1899.

115. *Natal Witness*, 1.9.1899.

116. *Times of Natal*, 11.9.1899.



more to the truth and that any enquiry would verify the article. As proof of its conviction, the newspaper asked why the Natal Police were guarding the bridge on the Sundays River near Ladysmith, night and day.<sup>117</sup> The newspaper did not reduce the intensity of its attacks and some time later reported that parties both loyal and disloyal to the authorities were signing the petition. It also confirmed that the general feeling was that, in event of war, the majority of Dutch in Natal would join the Transvaal forces, if they could do so without risking the loss of their farms and stock.<sup>118</sup>

When nothing came of their petition, the Umvoti Afrikaners held a meeting to remonstrate with the Natal Government for allowing the *Times of Natal* to insult them. They complained that Natal Afrikaners were distrusted by the “Natal Jingo Ministry” and if the government did not act there would be no support for their cause. The protest meeting ended without a clear plan of action.<sup>119</sup> Under circular No. 51 of 1899, Attorney-General Bale instructed the Umvoti magistrate, HC Koch, to enquire about the loyalty of Umvoti Afrikaners. Attempts by Koch to gain information were met with evasive answers. He subsequently assumed that the Umvoti Afrikaners were not disloyal, but that they shared a feeling of having been subjected to grave injustices.<sup>120</sup>

Natal Afrikaners could not expect much support from the only Dutch newspaper in Natal. In an attempt to be as neutral and evenhanded as possible, *De Natal Afrikaner* soon adopted opinions contrary to that of the majority of its readers. Natal Afrikaners were encouraged not to discuss the Transvaal crisis, and to accept that the Hime Government would readily believe anything negative about the Afrikaner.<sup>121</sup> An anonymous correspondent took umbrage to this and in an outburst complained that while Umvoti Afrikaners were the people being threatened, the English were allowed to voice their opinions but the Afrikaner not. Afrikaners were furthermore prevented from purchasing rifles, leaving them unarmed and under threat of a black revolt. Their agonised concern was, what was to become of them?<sup>122</sup> The answer was that Natal Afrikaners could not expect any sympathy or support from their government who was content to let them suffer the consequences of not signing the oath of allegiance.

Rumours of under-cover movements by Umvoti Afrikaners remained in circulation. The first such rumour stated that several young Afrikaners of Umvoti and Kranskop were in the Vryheid district, hoping to gain land in Zululand in the event of war. Investigations by the Natal Police could not

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117. *Times of Natal*, 1.9.1899; *Natal Witness*, 1.9.1899.

118. *Times of Natal*, 11.9.1899.

119. PAR, CSO 2580: Report Magistrate HC Koch, Umvoti, 19.9.1899.

120. PAR, MJPW 69: Minute paper Attorney-General H Bale to Magistrate HC Koch, Umvoti, regarding the movements of AJJ Nel, 26.9.1899; PAR, AGO I/7/39: Letter Magistrate HC Koch, Umvoti, to Attorney-General H Bale, 28.9.1899.

121. *De Natal Afrikaner*, 19.9.1899.

122. *De Natal Afrikaner*, 8.9.1899

confirm this report.<sup>123</sup> A similar rumour soon followed. According to one Robert Horsley, several young Afrikaners had left Umvoti to join the Transvaal forces. His source of information was his brother, the hotelkeeper at Helpmekaar, who was woken twice in one night by young Afrikaners, two of whom he recognised as a young Havemann and a young Van Rooyen of Upper Umvoti near Riet Vlei. Most activity took place in the night after the news of the failed Bloemfontein conference became known.<sup>124</sup> The third rumour involved six armed Afrikaners, believed to be from Umvoti, who passed Weenen during the night of 17 September 1899.<sup>125</sup> The latter incident was investigated by Casper Labuschagne (MLC) who dismissed it as mere gossip.<sup>126</sup> JG Nel, a prominent Umvoti Afrikaner, regarded all these tales of undercover activity as mere fiction. The alleged secret movements, he claimed, were merely young Republicans courting in the area.<sup>127</sup>

In the Kranskop district of Umvoti county matters seemed calmer. The prospect of war was freely discussed but according to Magistrate HW Boast, with great ignorance on the part of the Afrikaners regarding to the strength of the British nation. Although the Kranskop Afrikaners were sympathetic towards the plight of the Republics because of family ties, they planned to remain neutral and were in favour of a peaceful settlement.<sup>128</sup>

eing the Dutch District in closest geographical proximity to the political epicentre of Natal, the Umvoti Afrikaners were far more exposed to criticism than the Afrikaners in Northern Natal. Despite accusations, by specifically the *Times of Natal*, the Afrikaners of Umvoti county had developed no quasi-military organization to engage in military manoeuvres. Their sole transgression was open sympathy towards the predicament of the Transvaal, making nonsense of the view that the Umvoti Afrikaners were not “ware Afrikaners.”<sup>129</sup>

### 2.4.3 The position of the Afrikaners of Weenen county

In Weenen county, like in the neighbouring Umvoti county, the possibility of war was freely discussed amongst Afrikaners in a manner referred to by the local magistrate as “...boastful...characteristically vague, but disloyal in tendency.” One of the views expressed, by the local dominee AM Murray, from the pulpit, was that the imminent war could engulf all of South Africa. These discussions were finally tempered by the advance of British troops, although only two Afrikaners bothered to watch the passing troops. As in other districts the attitude of most Afrikaners

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123. PAR, CSO 2579: Report Chief Magistrate CJR Saunders, 16.8.1899.

124. PAR, CSO 2580: Letter Magistrate JL Knight, Nkandla, to Chief Magistrate CJR Saunders, 13.9.1899.

125. PAR, CSO 2580: Report Magistrate MRN Matthews, Weenen, 20.9.1899.

126. PAR, CSO 2582: Report Magistrate RA Addison, Estcourt, 25.9.1899.

127. PAR, CSO 2579: Report Magistrate MRN Matthews, Weenen, 4.8.1899.

128. PAR, CSO 2579: Report Magistrate HW Boast, Kranskop, 1.9.1899.

129. ES Cilliers, *Die invloed van die Anglo-Boereoorlog op die verhouding tussen Afrikaanse en Engelsprekendes in Durban*, unpublished project, Durban College of Education, 1980, as quoted by VS Harris, *The reluctant rebels...*, p.4.

was one of sympathy towards the Republics,<sup>130</sup> but it was not accompanied by any concrete promise of support.<sup>131</sup> In the light of this the 28 Afrikaner members of the Weenen Rifle Association made it clear that they would resign if called on to defend the town against the Boers.<sup>132</sup> Former magistrate GM Rudolph did, however, promise to attend a meeting to form a local defence in case of attack.<sup>133</sup> The only tangible support forthcoming for the Republican cause was in the form of contributions to a fund started in the likelihood of there being wounded Transvaal burghers. Ds Murray initially indicated that he would contribute to the Transvaal Relief Fund and accepted complimentary tickets to the “Relief Fund Concert” but, when the counter-fund for Boer casualties was created, he and several other Afrikaners, to the annoyance of the magistrate, changed their minds and withheld their contributions.<sup>134</sup>

Although no evidence of disloyalty could be attributed to the local Afrikaners, Magistrate Addison doubted their allegiance.<sup>135</sup> The general opinion of the English in the district, however, differed and it was thought that the local Afrikaners would not act aggressively in case of an invasion, with the exception of James Howell of Frere who travelled up and down the railway line to Ladysmith with a hidden agenda.<sup>136</sup> Casper Labuschagne and other long-standing residents were likewise hopeful regarding the loyalty of the Estcourt Afrikaners. They doubted whether any Afrikaner with property would risk losing it by joining the Republican forces.<sup>137</sup> Labuschagne and the English colonists were obviously not well informed, as several Afrikaners of the Estcourt district did depart for the OFS, while attempts by two young Afrikaners brothers of Thaba Hlope to proceed to the Transvaal were thwarted by their father.<sup>138</sup>

A week before war broke out, more Afrikaners left the Estcourt district for the OFS - including JT Potgieter who resided on a farm which belonged to A Fuhri near Kamberg. In his haste to make good his intentions that he wanted to fight the British, Potgieter left behind planted crops, a horse and other property and sold his livestock at a low price. PB Simmons, the president of the Weston Rifle Association who reported the act of treason, suggested the immediate confiscation of Potgieter's property, since such prompt action would keep others of vacillating temperament at home. The government's response to this suggestion via PUS Bird was: “Under the present circumstances the government has no power to confiscate property belonging to anyone whether in

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130. PAR, CSO 2579: Report Magistrate MRN Matthews, Weenen, 4.8.1899.

131. PAR, CSO 2580: Report Magistrate MRN Matthews, Weenen, 20.9.1899.

132. PAR, CSO 2582: Report Magistrate MRN Matthews, Weenen, 6.10.1899.

133. PAR, CSO 2581: Report Magistrate RH Addison, Estcourt, 2.10.1899.

134. PAR, CSO 2581: Report Magistrate MRN Matthews, Weenen, 1.10.1899.

135. PAR, CSO 2579: Report Magistrate RH Addison, Estcourt, 4.9.1899.

136. PAR, CSO 2579: Report Magistrate RH Addison, Estcourt, 9.10.1899.

137. PAR, CSO 2580: Report Magistrate RH Addison, Estcourt, 25.9.1899.

138. PAR, CSO 2580: Report Magistrate RH Addison, Estcourt, 12.9.1899.

Natal or otherwise."<sup>139</sup> This was a clear indication that the Natal Government were either not expecting rebellion by Natal Afrikaners or that they had contingency plans in place to deal with mutinous activities. Potgieter was followed by a certain Buys from Weenen, J van der Merwe, owner of the farm Moor, and JA Oosthuysen and his son of Bethanien.<sup>140</sup> The latter two families had previously run into trouble because of being in possession of unlicensed firearms.

In the Upper Tugela district of Weenen county, the local Afrikaners avoided the resident magistrate and the local police. The result of this unsatisfactory relationship was that information was withheld from the magistrate, for example, when one De Villiers of Waterloo was commandeered by his father, the commandant of Harrismith, or when a memo was circulated stating that in case of war the Natal Government would close the border with the OFS and seize all trekboer livestock. Such propaganda caused panic and many Afrikaners, although it was in the middle of the lambing season, trekked to the OFS.<sup>141</sup>

#### 2.4.4 Afrikaner sentiments in Klip River county

One magistrate who thought that Natal Afrikaners would join the invading commandos *en mass* was TR Bennett of the Klip River district. Although the Afrikaners were outwardly seen as tranquil and loyal, he sensed an underlying dogged disapproval of the attitude of the Imperial Government towards the Transvaal. Bennett was therefore of the opinion that if hostilities broke out, between 15 and 20 percent of the non-land holders would immediately leave the district and join the Transvaal forces; and in the case of an invading force, the remaining property owners would unite with the invaders, if not as combatants at least to assist in commissariat operations for the force. The exceptions would be a few affluent Afrikaners who would remain neutral.<sup>142</sup> Support for this view came from a member of the public, GL Coventry, of Acton Homes. According to him, since 1896, and specifically after the visit by ex-President Pretorius to the area, treason was viewed in a less serious light by Afrikaners such as Andreas Pretorius, Barend Labuschagne of Kopje Alleen, PM Bester of Abergeldie, PCD Bester of Vaalkop and Philip, John and William Bester of Besters Hoek. Coventry complained that when he brought this change in attitude to the attention of the authorities, he was accused of being alarmist, and his friend Mr Putterill, even received a letter accusing him of causing a disturbance.<sup>143</sup> In reaction to this criticism, Prime Minister Hime responded in person, expressing regret that Coventry's warning had been received with indifference. He explained that the government failed to act since they wished to prevent undue alarm and hoped to protect the property of those who remained loyal. Action could also not be taken because the diplomatic possibilities for

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139. PAR, CSO 1628: Letter PD Simmons to PUS C Bird, 6.10.1899; PAR, MJPW 116: Report Magistrate RH Addison, Estcourt, 5.10.1899.

140. PAR, MJPW 116: Report Magistrate RH Addison, Estcourt, 5.10.1899.

141. PAR, CSO 2579: Report Magistrate WG Wheelwright, Upper Tugela, 4.9.1899.

142. PAR, CSO 2579: Report Magistrate TR Bennett, Klip River district, 5.9.1899.

143. PAR, MJPW 116: Statement by GL Coventry on the attitude of Natal Afrikaners, 15.5.1899.

peace were still being pursued.<sup>144</sup> The tension in the Ladysmith area was, however, best reflected in the absence of numerous Afrikaners from the quarterly *nagmaal*.<sup>145</sup>

In the smallest magisterial district in Klip River county, Umsinga, strong feelings of sympathy for the Republics existed. In spite of the difficulties involved in gaining reliable information regarding the extent of pro-Republican sympathy, the resident magistrate was confident that leanings towards the Boer cause would not develop into an armed rebellion against the crown. The local Afrikaners were mostly large land owners who feared confiscation of their property.<sup>146</sup> This initial assessment changed as war approached. Afrikaners were building up supplies, some farms were abandoned, and Magistrate Adamson now thought that if the British suffered reverses, the Umsinga Afrikaners would regard mutiny as worth their while. The driving force behind these sentiments was the local commander of the irregular Boer force, CJ de Villiers, who was trying to sell his two farms in Umsinga. At the time De Villiers was at his farms in the OFS to which, he had for the first time, removed all his cattle.<sup>147</sup>

Questions regarding the loyalty of Natal Afrikaners were also being asked in the neighbouring Dundee district. As an Afrikaner himself, and because he enjoyed the support of the foremost Afrikaners in the district, Magistrate Hugo found it easier to obtain information on what was transpiring in his magistracy.<sup>148</sup> In a conversation with AL (August) Jansen (JP), whose loyalty to the crown was beyond any doubt, Hugo was informed that, as in the other districts, the Dundee Afrikaners had strong sympathies with the Transvaal. All were, however, pacifists and Jansen did not know of anyone who wanted to take up arms. The Dundee Afrikaners were also advised by Mr Uys, a member of the first Volksraad, during a visit to the district, to avoid becoming involved in possible hostilities. In another conversation Hugo was informed by LJ (Lodewyk) de Jager, whose son was married to a daughter of General Lucas Meyer, that several Transvalers had crossed into Natal to cause trouble. Jansen, promising to keep the magistrate informed, denied any knowledge of such individuals and insisted that only Uys had crossed over.<sup>149</sup> A conversation with another prominent Afrikaner, JJ Gregory, confirmed Jansen's statement. As far as Gregory, supported by AL Jansen was concerned, Natal Afrikaners would not cross into the Transvaal to assist the commandos in case of war. If, however, the Republican forces were to cross into Natal and meet with success, some Dundee Afrikaners would in all likelihood join forces with their kin.<sup>150</sup>

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144. PAR, MJPW 116: Letter Prime Minister AH Hime to GL Coventry, *circa* 1900.

145. *Times of Natal*, 9.10.1899.

146. PAR, CSO 2579: Report Magistrate GW Adamson, Umsinga, 28.9.1899.

147. PAR, CSO 2579: Report Magistrate GW Adamson, Umsinga, 3.10.1899.

148. PAR, AGO I/8/65: Letter secretary Congress of Dutch Farmers' Association FDJ Havemann to Attorney-General H Bale, 1.0.1899.

149. PAR, CSO 2580: Report Magistrate P Hugo, Dundee, 2.9.1899.

150. PAR, AGO I/7/39: Report Magistrate P Hugo, Dundee, 20.9.1899.

By and large the information supplied to Hugo rang true. Prominent farmers with property assured the magistrate that they would remain neutral but exceptions did occur amongst the landless Afrikaners. Three such young men of the district, after leaving to join the Republican forces, were reported to the magistrate by an informant, Mr Maritz. Although Maritz did not want to reveal their names, he described them as being of the lower class and said they had left without the consent of their parents. Investigations by the magistrate identified the rebels as Jordaan, Meyer and Nel.<sup>151</sup> With the magistrate in possession of the names of the potential rebels, matters developed quickly. AF Nel, in trying to cover for his son, informed Hugo that the young man had been studying for confirmation in the Vryheid district and had been commandeered by the Boers. Although Nel declared that he had done his best to get his son back, the magistrate rejected his explanation. In a further attempt to ease matters should his son return, Nel notified Hugo that Hendrik Klopper, a bywoner on the farm of Isaac van Rooyen, had left for the Transvaal, accompanied by a son of Van Rooyen. The latter returned later, without repercussions. With information on the identity of the potential rebels becoming available at a rapid pace, the original informant, Maritz, relented and revealed that the Meyer who had left was Johannes Marthinus Meyer, the son of Isaak Meyer. As far as the Dundee magistrate was concerned, the potential rebels had one point in common: "They all belong to the lower class of Dutch, and have no standing at all in the district."<sup>152</sup>

The upheaval that war would bring to the Dundee district soon became apparent. Defences created by townspeople in Dundee were viewed by Afrikaners as acts of hostility. Tension in the town was heightened by the actions of CJ Wilson who "spared no pains to belittle and insult every Boer with whom he came into contact." Until then he had been held in high esteem by Natal Afrikaners. His "considerable patriotism" now gave offence to Transvaal and local Afrikaners alike.<sup>153</sup> The foreshadow of war also impacted on economic activities. Several trekboers, on approaching the magistrate with enquiries, were advised, in the absence of government instructions, not to migrate. Others like Coenraad Pieters brought his sheep back from the Vryheid district<sup>154</sup> and JJ Gregory collected his cattle from the OFS. In the latter's case his son was commandeered for ambulance duty while in the OFS,<sup>155</sup> and three cattle were stabbed to death during the return trip.<sup>156</sup>

The only Natal Dutch District which bordered on both the Transvaal and the OFS was Newcastle. In early September 1899, Magistrate Jackson could report that all was peaceful in this district. The affluent Afrikaners were strongly opposed to war, but feared that many irresponsible young men

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151. PAR, CSO 2581: Report Magistrate P Hugo, Dundee, 5.10.1899.

152. PAR, CSO 2582: Report Magistrate P Hugo, Dundee, 7.10.1899.

153. PAR, CSO 2581: Report Magistrate GW Adamson, Umsinga, 3.10.1899.

154. PAR, CSO 2581: Report Magistrate P Hugo, Dundee, 4.10.1899.

155. PAR, CSO 2582: Report Magistrate P Hugo, Dundee, 7.10.1899.

156. PAR, CSO 2582: Report Magistrate P Hugo, Dundee, 4.10.1899.

would assist the Republics in case of hostilities.<sup>157</sup> Some Afrikaners, probably those with the intention of joining the commandos, took their stock to the Republics despite the fact that the grazing was worse in the Transvaal and OFS than in Natal, and that the lambing season was about to begin.<sup>158</sup> This premature seasonal migration did not escape the attention of the *Times of Natal* and *De Natal Afrikaner*, but both failed to regard the events as being of particular significance.<sup>159</sup>

As the political landscape changed, so did the points of view of Natal Afrikaners. In Spitzkop, an area in the Newcastle district exclusively inhabited by Afrikaners, uncertainty arose as to whether the Natal Government might force them to take up arms against their family in the Transvaal and OFS. Although the magistrate assured the concerned parties that their fears were unfounded, they asked for an assurance from the Natal Government.<sup>160</sup> Reacting very quickly, the Natal Government confirmed that it would not be expected of Natal Afrikaners to take up weapons against their kin.<sup>161</sup> With this fear allayed a new one came to the fore; the Afrikaners of Spitzkop were anxious to know whether information they had received that freebooters from the Republics would steal their livestock in case of war was true. To safeguard their stock some Afrikaners contemplated joining the Imperial Army, while the majority proposed that five to six farmers should keep their herds close together, and maintain a strict watch over them.<sup>162</sup>

As in some of the other Natal districts, rumours of suspicious movements by Afrikaners abounded in the Newcastle district. The suggestion was that armed Boers had apparently crossed the Buffalo River from the Transvaal under cover of darkness in order to obtain information from Africans on troop movements.<sup>163</sup> These rumours gained more credibility when a borough policeman spotted four armed Afrikaners crossing the Ncandu River from the Utrecht side of Newcastle one morning at 03:00. The riders later returned along the same route.<sup>164</sup> Night riders such as these forced the *Natal Witness* to pose the question: "Are they rebels?" As far as the newspaper was concerned the feeling in the Dutch Districts was that the Natal Police were not energetic enough to put a stop to such nocturnal escapades.<sup>165</sup>

According to Thomas Watt, a Newcastle solicitor and later minister of justice and education, who had many economic dealings with Natal Afrikaners, the above-mentioned claims were far from the

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157. PAR, CSO 2579: Report Magistrate JO Jackson, Newcastle, 5.9.1899.

158. PAR, Principal Veterinary Surgeon (hereafter PVS) 3: Letter DC Uys asking to move his sheep to the OFS, 19.8.1899; PAR, CSO 2581: Report Magistrate JO Jackson, Newcastle, 9.9.1899.

159. *Times of Natal*, 28.8.1899; *De Natal Afrikaner*, 8.9.1899.

160. PAR, CSO 2580: Report Magistrate JO Jackson, Newcastle, 9.9.1899.

161. PAR, CSO 2580: Letter PUS C Bird to Magistrate TR Bennett, Klip River district, 12.9.1899.

162. PAR, CSO 2581: Report Magistrate JO Jackson, Newcastle, 30.9.1899.

163. *Ibid.*

164. PAR, AGO I/8/67: Letter Attorney-General H Bale to Prime Minister AH Hime, 22.9.1899.

165. *Natal Witness*, 5.10.1899.

truth. He maintained: "Dutch people in the district speaking generally don't want war. A few of the younger men will help the Transvaal if hostilities begin, but the majority of the farmers, although all their sympathy will be with the enemy, will be still."<sup>166</sup>

In the other counties and districts with Afrikaner inhabitants, the impending war also caused some commotion. In Lower Tugela two Afrikaners employed by the Dartnell Estate, Zietsman and Labuschagne, suddenly left for the Transvaal with their wagons.<sup>167</sup> The four Afrikaners who resided in the Impendhle district were not seen as a threat to the security of the region, although they had empathy with the Transvaal.<sup>168</sup> In these areas, as in Durban and Pietermaritzburg where there were only a small number of Afrikaner inhabitants, the threat of war did not cause nearly as much ethnic polarisation and anxiety as elsewhere.

## 2.5 The countdown to war

Against the backdrop of tens of thousands of refugees fleeing from the Transvaal into Natal in early October 1899, the final act of espionage against Natal Afrikaners commenced. Although Martial Law had not yet been proclaimed, all letters to and from Natal Afrikaners were illegally intercepted and opened so that, in the words of the governor, they were in a position to "...thwart and counteract work of spies in Natal." To Chamberlain he wrote "... these documents go to bear out the theory of the existence of a widespread and deep rooted Dutch conspiracy throughout South Africa for the subversion of British rule."<sup>169</sup> The governor clearly over-reacted, if the contents of the letters he forwarded to Chamberlain were any indication of the mood of the group. Phrases such as "if we faithfully trust in the lord...who will defeat us?", "the plan of the Boers here (Mooi River) is to join the Transvaal if they win", "may God grant that you come off best, but I do not believe that it can be that the Afrikaner must lose", "have a Transvaal flag in readiness to be hoisted when the Boers arrive" could hardly be described as a conspiracy. What the letters did give away was names of possible rebels such as Solomon M who had joined the Harrismith Commando.<sup>170</sup> Probably more accurate was the view of WCH George of the Natal Police, who headed the investigation and who noted that: "Practically the whole of the Dutch correspondence which we have gone through and numbering many thousands of letters is couched in the most sympathetic terms, calling on the almighty to lead the Afrikaner armies to victory."<sup>171</sup>

Furthermore, the number of Natal Afrikaners who crossed into the Republics do not substantiate any

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166. PAR, PM 23: Letter T Watt to Attorney-General H Bale, 31.8.1899.

167. PAR, CSO 2580: Report Magistrate FP Shuter, Lower Tugela, 11.9.1899.

168. PAR, CSO 2579: Report Magistrate C Boast, Impendhle, 4.9.1899.

169. PRO, CO 179/208: Letter Governor W Hely-Hutchinson to Colonial Secretary J Chamberlain, 6.11.1899.

170. PRO, CO 179/208: Letters JA van der Westhuyzen to CJ van der Westhuyzen, 3.10.1899; EJ Boshoff to AA Boshoff, 6.10.1899; JS Maritz to CF de Jager, 8.10.1899; SHF de Jager to C de Jager, 11.10.1899; TA Perold to JF Keytell, 11.10.1899.

171. PRO, CO 179/208: Letter WCH George to Prime Minister AH Hime, 6.11.1899.



Boer conspiracy theories. In reality 26 names of Natal Afrikaners who had left for the Republic were forwarded to the Natal Police. Seventeen of these were from Proviso B.<sup>172</sup> What is true was that the Natal Police could not keep track of all the Natal Afrikaners who had left for the Republics. A point in case was the son of Gert Aveling of Newcastle, who departed for the OFS on 13 September 1899, to join the reserve artillery.<sup>173</sup> Many others left earlier than usual on their seasonal migration, but their reasons were unclear. Most of those who left for the Republics with military intentions shared the following characteristic: they were young, poor and landless and from the “bywoner” class. Fears that rebellious activities would mean the confiscation of property therefore did not impact on these Natalians. In fact, reports which originated from Proviso B and Estcourt<sup>174</sup> claimed that the landowning fathers encouraged their sons to join the Republican forces, knowing well that while supporting the Republican struggle in this way their property remained safe.

Not all Natal Afrikaners with rebellious intentions crossed to the Republics. On 26 September 1899, when the 18<sup>th</sup> Hussars, the 13<sup>th</sup> and 69<sup>th</sup> field batteries, and the mounted Leicestershire Regiment, were moving in column from Ladysmith, their right flank was fired upon at the foot of the Biggarsberg. Scouts were deployed but could not locate the “bold shottists”<sup>175</sup> who had started firing before war was declared.

Natal Afrikaners with military intentions were at this point, however, in the extreme minority. The vast majority wanted to remain neutral, and did not want to fight against their Republican kin, while nonetheless wishing to retain the right to sympathise with the plight of their brethren across the border. Proof of this lies in the efforts of those who were later convicted as rebels, and who tried to continue life as normally as possible. AC Vermaak, the owner of Paardeplaats, and JJS Maritz, the owner of Adelaide and Dewdrop, both applied for extension of payments on their farms until the improvements were completed.<sup>176</sup> HW Boers, the postal contractor for Upper Tugela, wanted to know what steps were being taken to protect the mail in case of war. The answer was simple. Natal if attacked, would be defended with the full force of the Empire while compensation would be exacted for any injury or loss to the Colony or loyal subjects.<sup>177</sup> The Afrikaners in the worst possible position were those who owned landed property in Natal, Transvaal and the OFS. Their predicament is reflected in the words of August Prozesky: “They can only serve one government, now they must decide which one. If one could only see into the future, which party will retain the upper hand!”<sup>178</sup>

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172. PRO, CO 179/205: Letter Governor W Hely-Hutchinson to Colonial Secretary J Chamberlain, 6.10.1899.

173. OE Prozesky private collection, Diary of JJA Prozesky: Diary entry, 16.9.1899, p.17.

174. *Times of Natal*, 12.10.1899.

175. *Times of Natal*, 27.9.1899.

176. PAR, Surveyor-General's Office (hereafter SGO) III/1/138: Letter Tatham and Tandy to SGO, 5.9.1899.

177. PAR, Postmaster General's Office (hereafter PMG) 80: Enquiry by HW Boers on protection of mail in Upper Tugela in case of war, *circa* 1899.

178. OE Prozesky private collection, Diary of JJA Prozesky: Diary entry, 5.10.1899, p.22.

The role which Natal Afrikaners could play during the war was always foremost in the minds of the politicians, especially in that of the powerful and dominating governor of Natal, Hely-Hutchinson. He feared that in the case of an invasion into Northern Natal which was not well defended, the occupation of Newcastle could be magnified into an important victory with a serious effect on Natal Afrikaners who might take up arms as their sense of alliance with the Transvaal was strengthened by such events.<sup>179</sup> He was, however, convinced that most Natal Afrikaners would not take part in war except if the British were to suffer serious reverses.<sup>180</sup>

Despite this conviction, Proclamation No. 98 of 1899 of 29 September 1899, which warned all Natal inhabitants against disloyalty and treason, was issued. Prospective rebels were also cautioned that their property could be confiscated by the Natal Government.<sup>181</sup> The issuing of the proclamation, which was punitive rather than protective in intention, was probably a case of too little too late as it could not be determined how many Natal Afrikaners received it. Furthermore no other warnings, advice or moral support were forthcoming from the Natal Government who seemed uniquely unprepared for war.

It is therefore not strange that a day before war broke out “AN EXILE”, in a letter to the *Times of Natal*, complained: “...we hear nothing from the British Government as to the action they intend taking with the disloyal Dutch...more plain statement of facts by our government would be appreciated by British subjects, and I feel sure you will agree with me that the time has come for plain speaking on this and other matters of like nature.”<sup>182</sup>

The only Afrikaner to voice the opinion that his Natal compatriots were not to be trusted by the government in the period building up to war, was Casper Labuschagne (MLC).<sup>183</sup> When his reservations were relayed to the prime minister via FR Moor, the response was surprise and he was given the assurance that the Natal Government made no distinction between Afrikaners and English, and that they had always been treated alike. This would stay the policy “...as long as Dutch Colonists remain loyal to the British Crown.”<sup>184</sup> Labuschagne backed down despite some evidence to

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179. PRO, WO 32/7863: Letter Governor W Hely-Hutchinson to High Commissioner A Milner, 29.9.1899.

180. PRO, CO 179/206: Letter Governor W Hely-Hutchinson to Colonial Secretary J Chamberlain, 15.9.1899.

181. *De Natal Afrikaner*, 3.10.1899; PAR, NCP 6/1/1/52: *Natal Government Gazette*, 29.9.1899; *Natal Witness*, 30.9.1899.

182. *Times of Natal*, 12.10.1899. August Prozesky mentions in his diary, p.22, a proclamation by the governor around 5.10.1899 that any British subject who assisted the Boers would be punished by death and his property confiscated. No evidence to support this statement could be found. He is probably referring to the proclamation listed in the previous footnote.

183. PAR, CSO 2580: Report Magistrate RH Addison, Estcourt, 25.8.1899.

184. PAR, CSO 2582: Letter Prime Minister AH Hime to CJ Labuschagne, 2.10.1899.

substantiate his argument, and retracted his earlier statement.<sup>185</sup> And so the last political voice of the Natal Afrikaners on the subject of war was silenced, and Labuschagne joined the non-vocal brigade represented by *De Natal Afrikaner*, members of Parliament, and the agricultural association.

The incessant attacks and accusations by the Jingoist Natal press, the constant exposure to investigations and spying, the portrayal of Afrikaners as backward,<sup>186</sup> and the Transvaal as corrupt,<sup>187</sup> the name-calling and the total lack of support from the Natal Government, served to polarise Natal society more than ever before, with Natal Afrikaners treated as the enemy within. When the Transvaal ultimatum to Britain expired on 11 October 1899, war was declared, and Natal Afrikaners were forced to make a decision about their political alliances.<sup>188</sup>

According to the Reverend August Prozesky, all this was the result of the Jameson Raid and the desire to avenge the defeat of Majuba. The inscription in his diary on Friday 23 June 1899, probably reflected the stance of many a household: "Since the beginning of 1896 I have prayed for peace daily at our devotions, on Sundays in the church, and at the evening prayer-meetings. I sensed that we would experience a time like this at some stage; now it has come. Lord, have mercy!"<sup>189</sup>

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185. PAR, CSO 2581: Report Magistrate RH Addison, Estcourt, 2.10.1899.

186. *Natal Witness*, 3.10.1899.

187. *Natal Witness*, 7.9.1899.

188. When the invading Boers arrived in Newcastle, the shoe was on the other foot as Jenkins the town engineer explained: "The indignation at this time was great, for we had made enemies amongst the Dutch, who were constantly in and out of town when all this preparation (defence works for Newcastle) was in hand, and now openly taunted us." Fort Amiel collection, Newcastle: Portion of a letter written by Jenkins to his wife, *circa* 1899.

189. OE Prozesky private collection, Diary of JJA Prozesky: Diary entry, 23.6.1899, p.14.