

## CHAPTER 9

## THE IMPRISONMENT OF NATAL AFRIKANERS

The Anglo-Boer War was characterised by the imprisonment of large numbers of civilians and individuals associated with the Boer forces. Natal Afrikaners did not escape this plight, and under the ultimate exertion of power over ordinary people by Martial Law, they found themselves being confined in four categories: as POWs; rebels on charges and conviction of high treason; inmates of the concentration camps; and lastly a small number were interned in Portugal. Under these experiences Natal Afrikaners suffered a fate similar to that of the inhabitants of the Republics, which reinforces the notion that they were targeted because of their ethnic origins. In this chapter the imprisonment of Natal Afrikaners will be investigated and analysed by focussing on the various facets of life in the prison establishments as well as the liberation from it.

### 9.1 Natal Afrikaners as Prisoners of War (POWs)<sup>1</sup>

Initially the military made little effort to distinguish between Natal Afrikaners and Boers and consequently several managed to pass themselves off as *bona fide* burghers after surrendering or capture.<sup>2</sup> This confusion led to the eventual deportation of an estimated 43 Natal Afrikaners. (Appendix E)<sup>3</sup> For the British to commit such an error was not difficult, as no real comprehensive name list of Natal Afrikaners existed. The phenomenon of Natal Afrikaners pretending to be Boers, so as to escape prosecution as rebels, continued throughout the war, especially when they were captured by units who did not have the ability to distinguish between Natal Afrikaners and Boers. PR, D and FA van der Craght from Dundee for example fought with the Boers for 18 months before they were captured and sent to India.<sup>4</sup> In another instance, JJ and PD Dekker of Dundee, captured by Rimington's Guides near Utrecht and sent to the Tin Town POW Camp in Ladysmith, were only identified as British subjects when they admitted to being Natalians.<sup>5</sup>

Measures designed to prevent such errors were,<sup>6</sup> because of the lack of communication between the

---

1. For a detailed description of Boer POW Camps during the Anglo-Boer War, see: SPR Oosthuizen, *Die beheer, behandeling en lewe van die krygsgevangenis gedurende die Anglo-Boereoorlog, 1899-1902*. D Phil-thesis, UOFS, 1975.

2. PAR, GH 1449: Summary of names of Natal rebels compiled by Sub-Inspector WE Earle, 12.9.1901.

3. PAR, GH 563: Minute paper on the arrest of eight Natal rebels returning from Ceylon on board the *Templemore*, 22.7.1902; GH 742: Nominal role of Natal rebels compiled by Major SHM Conran, Bellary, India, 15.11.1902; GH 563: CID report on the arrival of rebels on board the *Ionian* from India, 15.11.1902-18.11.1902; GH 563: Minute paper on the detainment of ST Potgieter as a suspected Natal rebel, 1.12.1902-11.12.1902; GH 742: Report by Lt-Col AC Vincent from Ceylon on the rebel MC van Niekerk, 11.12.1902; GH 742: Declarations of allegiance taken by SJ Eksteen and HS van der Craght, 10.7.1902; NAR, SOP 35: Letter SOP Cape Town to DAAG POW, Umbilo, 26.11.1902; PRO, WO 108/117: Letter Lord H Kitchener to the Viceroy of India, 19.3.1902; OE Prozesky private collection, Diary of JJA Prozesky: Diary entry, 27.8.1900. p.164; PAR, 1/LDS 3/1/1/16: Letter Magistrate TR Bennett to DAAG, 4.10.1900.

4. PRO, WO 108/117: Letter Lord H Kitchener to the Viceroy of India, 29.3.1902.

5. PAR, PM 22: Minute paper regarding the arrest of JJ and PD Dekker, 29.6.1901-3.7.1901. JJ Dekker eventually received one of the heaviest sentences meted out to a rebel, seven years imprisonment. PD Dekker were fined £20 or five months imprisonment.

6. PRO, 179/222: Correspondence regarding the trial of Natal rebels by the military, 29.11.1900-4.1.1902; PAR, AGO

Natal authorities and the military, and within the military with regard to captured suspected rebels, only partially successful. As a point in case the assistant provost marshal - Standerton-Heidelberg was forced to ask: "... please inform me what is the ruling in the cases of Natal and Cape Rebels that arrive here as Prisoners of War..."<sup>7</sup> Three weeks later the SOP based at the Umbilo POW Camp, Lt-Col Allatt, also wanted to know if Corporal Marthinus Johannes Potgieter, of Beauvale, Ladysmith, was to be exiled as a leader, or handed over to the Natal authorities to be tried as a rebel. Attorney-General GA de R Labistour had to refer Allatt to the agreement between the Natal Government and the military whereby from 1902 onwards, rebels captured outside Natal were to be tried by the military authorities outside the Colony. A note was made to the effect and Potgieter was removed from Durban to be tried at Volksrust.<sup>8</sup> No record of a trial could however be found.

The statement by Labistour did little to enlighten the military and he received a similar enquiry regarding DS Landman of Kameelboomkop, Dundee, who had surrendered on 16 February 1902, at Middleburg. Again Labistour reminded the military of the agreement whereby rebels captured in the field were to be tried by court martial.<sup>9</sup> Due to the continued uncertainty regarding the status of Natal rebels arriving as POWs, Landman managed to slip the net until his wife, MMED Landman, a resident in the Merebank Concentration Camp, requested that her husband be allowed to join her. Mrs Landman admitted that her husband was a British subject but insisted that he had repented his actions. Although her letter alerted the military and the Natal Police, Landman managed to escape punishment as the trial against him came to nothing.<sup>10</sup> In the end both he and Potgieter were better off than their rebel counterparts, for as a result of bureaucratic bumbling and oversight they came off scot free.

The end of the war meant that the tens of thousands of Boer POWs imprisoned in India, Ceylon (Sri Lanka), St Helena and Bermuda, were able to return home.<sup>11</sup> Amongst these prisoners were a small number of Natal Afrikaners whom the Natal authorities wanted to apprehend. To achieve this end, frequently updated lists of Natal Afrikaners believed to be POWs, were forwarded to all commanders of overseas POW camps with the request that the rebels, when identified, be immediately deported. The Natal Afrikaners in question were to be handed over to the ship's captain, who would in turn, on arrival in Durban, hand the suspected rebels over to the colonial officials.<sup>12</sup>

---

I/8/83: Correspondence regarding the trial of Natal rebels by the military, 29.11.1900-4.1.1902.

7. NAR, PMO 44: Letter assistant provost marshal, Standerton-Heidelberg district, to provost marshal Pretoria, 26.1.1902.

8. NAR, SOP 29: Correspondence regarding the status of MJ Potgieter, 18.2.1902-20.3.1902.

9. NAR, SOP 30: Correspondence between Lt CC Bicknell and Attorney-General GA de R Labistour, 6-7.3.1902.

10. PAR, AGO I/8/84: Correspondence with reference to the release of DSA Landman, 18.4.1902-1.5.1902; PAR, 1/DUN 3/1/12: Request by S Liebenberg that he be paid for testifying against DS Landman, 7.2.1903.

11. An unknown Natal Afrikaner, banned to Ceylon, was brought back to Ladysmith to be tried for high treason. PAR, HF Schoon collection, A 72: Diary entry, 27.9.1902. p.144.

12. PAR, GH 563: Minute paper with instructions to ship captains on how to deal with Natal rebels, 20.9.1902.

The suspected rebels would then be imprisoned in Durban before being despatched to their home districts for trial.<sup>13</sup> These elaborate procedures made it very difficult for Natal rebels when repatriated, to disembark at Durban without detection.

To ensure that none slipped the net, a premium was also placed on personal identification. This was considered essential since many Natal Afrikaners shared the same surnames and initials, while others purposefully altered their identity in an attempt to pose as burghers and in so doing escape arrest. Emphasis was specifically placed on the recognition of “the scores of the Natal bywoner class” who appeared on no voters role because they owned no property and were shielded by their former landlords. To achieve this a loyalist Afrikaner, CR (Coenraad) Cronjé, and an English Natalian, Kirby, were employed on the dockside in Durban and in the Umbilo POW Camp.<sup>14</sup>

The elaborate measures taken to identify returning rebels so impressed Prime Minister Hime that he informed Governor HE McCallum that he believed they could not be improved.<sup>15</sup> Attorney-General Labistour, however, disagreed and stated: “At this rate the question of dealing with rebels will last forever and the expenses will be considerable...”<sup>16</sup>

The measures did work and several Natal Afrikaners landing in Durban and attempting to masquerade as Transvalers or Free Staters were apprehended.<sup>17</sup> One such rebel, ST Potgieter, who gave his address as Waaihoek, Utrecht, was identified as a resident from the Newcastle district. He was arrested and sent to Newcastle to be tried.<sup>18</sup> Likewise a Natal subject, MC van Niekerk, who had resided in the OFS for three years, was identified and arrested as a rebel and sent to Newcastle for trial.<sup>19</sup> In other instances it proved more difficult to distinguish between rebel and Republican. Three burghers from Vryheid for example, were initially incorrectly arrested as Natal rebels,<sup>20</sup> while HAF Lezar had to be released because he was a Transvaler.<sup>21</sup> This difficulty of distinguishing between rebels and former Republicans is best illustrated by the case of the 70-year-old HP Geldenhuys who died on 21 May 1902 in Ceylon. Geldenhuys left £8.15.3 and a securely nailed box to be mailed to Hartebeestfontein, Newcastle. Neither the Natal Police nor the local magistrate could identify the individual or the farm. Further investigation revealed that the farm was located in the Vrede district,

---

13. PAR, GH 742: Telegram secretary of state to High Commissioner A Milner, 28.6.1902.

14. PAR, GH 563: Report SOP Umbilo on the detention of ST Potgieter, 1.12.1902-11.12.1902.

15. PAR, GH 563: Minute paper regarding POWs, including suspected Natal rebels, disembarking at Lourenco Marques, 20.9.1902.

16. PAR, GH 563: Minute paper regarding the return of Natal rebels from POW camps, 28.11.1902-2.12.1902.

17. *Natal Witness*, 20.11.1902.

18. PAR, GH 563: Report SOP Umbilo on the detention of ST Potgieter, 1-11.12.1902.

19. PAR, GH 742: Report on Natal suspected Natal rebel MC van Niekerk, 17.12.1902-28.1.1903.

20. PAR, GH 563: Minute paper from SOP Umbilo on three suspected Natal rebels sent to Vryheid, 12-21.8.1902.

21. PAR, GH 563: Report SOP Umbilo on the arrival of four Natal rebels on board the *Oratava*, 28.11.1902-2.12.1902.

a short distance from the Natal border. Newcastle was merely the closest railhead.<sup>22</sup>

The close scrutiny of POW ships arriving in Durban in search of rebels meant that the latter had to consider alternative plans to escape arrest. Rumours soon surfaced, denied by British informers in Lourenco Marques, that rebels were paying their passage to the port with the intention of returning overland to Natal. The Natal Government nevertheless forwarded instructions to the commanders of POW camps instructing them to prevent Natal Afrikaners from paying for their return passage and from disembarking at Lourenco Marques.<sup>23</sup> In an attempt to block all escape routes from Lourenco Marques, the British consul-general in the city, the provost marshals at Pretoria and Newcastle, the magistrate at Wakkerstroom, and the South African Constabulary at Volksrust, were all informed of the possibility of such a scheme.<sup>24</sup>

The Natal authorities, however, neglected to block one of the most obvious disembarking points for Natal rebels, the port of Cape Town. As a result six Natal rebels landed at Cape Town and were erroneously allowed to proceed to the former OFS. (Orange River Colony after 31 May 1902). This caused a problem to the authorities since the men were outside of Natal and could, in accordance with an agreement reached between Lord Kitchener and the Boer leaders at Vereeniging, not be extradited. They would only be charged should they decide to return Natal.<sup>25</sup>

In the end all the measures put in place to arrest Natal rebels returning from POW camps came to nothing. Although some were briefly imprisoned in Durban, only William Cheney was convicted of with high treason and fined £2.<sup>26</sup> The others were treated very generously and freed, possibly because they had already served time, while it would also have been counter-productive within the post-war context to subject them to further punishment.

## **9.2 Natal Afrikaners in prison as rebels**

The second group of Natal Afrikaners imprisoned were men who were suspected or convicted of high treason.

### **9.2.1 Initial imprisonment**

The first Natal Afrikaners to be imprisoned on suspicions of high treason were PRN Vermaak, JA

---

22. PAR, GH 774: Enquiry about the location of the farm Hartebeestfontein, 29.10.1904-16.11.1904.

23. By 30 May 1902, two Natal Afrikaners, James and Izak Bester, who had crossed in Mozambique in 1900, was still resident in Lourenco Marques. PAR, CSO 2927: List of British subjects in Natal who are expected of disloyalty with handwritten notes, no date.

24. PAR, GH 563: Minute paper regarding POWs, including suspected Natal rebels, disembarking at Lourenco Marques, 20.9.1902.

25. Free State Archive Repository, CO 143: Correspondence file dealing with Natal rebels allowed to proceed to ORC by mistake, 9.2.1903-17.3.1903.

26. PAR, AGO I/7/44: Name lists of rebels arriving in Durban as POWs, 19.7.1902; PAR, AGO I/7/37: Rex vs W

van Tonder, and PC Cronjé. They were arrested outside Dundee by the UMR and arrived via Greytown in Pietermaritzburg in late October 1899. Several other Afrikaners such as the Mcduling brothers, D Snyman, G Pieterse and D Bezuidenhout from the Weenen and Estcourt districts, joined them in December 1899.<sup>27</sup> None of these men were ever tried and, all were released after a brief detention.

Large scale arrests of suspected Natal rebels began when Buller's Natal Army advanced into Northern Natal. The first group of Afrikaners to suffer such arrests were those resident in the Klip River district. By March 1900 the district surgeon for Ladysmith, HC Proctor, pointed out that the local prison was severely overcrowded and that "many of the political prisoners are complaining of slight ailments, and these, I fear, will become more serious, unless the condition is alleviated."<sup>28</sup> Proctor was convinced that overcrowding caused the decline in the health of the suspected rebels.<sup>29</sup> Although the Ladysmith Prison was only supposed to hold 50 prisoners in 18 cells, this number was exceeded when 28 suspected Afrikaners and POWs, seven convicted Europeans, 23 suspected Africans, 13 convicted African and Indian prisoners, five suspected Indians, and four British soldiers were imprisoned. These 80 prisoners had to share three toilets.<sup>30</sup>

Similar conditions were experienced in the Newcastle Prison. Like in Ladysmith, it was impossible to alleviate conditions in the overcrowded prison because the Pietermaritzburg and Durban Prisons could not receive the overflow from Newcastle. As a temporary solution, 25 African prisoners from Pietermaritzburg, were sent to Durban to make place for suspected rebels. The military also suggested that 150 suspected rebel prisoners be removed to Durban and imprisoned on board the *Catalonia*, anchored outside the harbour. As the pressure to deal with the situation intensified, Prime Minister Albert Hime stepped in. Although he did not want to imprison the suspects on board the *Catalonia* he had no choice since the Pietermaritzburg Prison could not accommodate any more prisoners.<sup>31</sup> Suspected Natal Afrikaners from Newcastle, Ladysmith and Pietermaritzburg consequently arrived in Durban on 20 May 1900, and were transferred to the *Catalonia* where they were detained alongside Boer POWs. Here the prisoners spent their time fishing, fighting seasickness, writing letters home asking for money, clothes and tobacco,<sup>32</sup> and gathering in the

---

Cheney, pp.977-979.

27. PAR, MJPW 72: Lists of suspects incarcerated in the Estcourt and Pietermaritzburg Prisons, 18.12.1899-1.3.1900.

28. The term political prisoners were from time to time used in official correspondence when referring to the Natal rebels, simply because they were regarded as criminals against the state. Even some of the rebels used the term on occasions. It, however, did not become a general term of reference, but provides an insight into how the rebels were viewed in some quarters, and how some viewed themselves. See for example: OE Prozesky private collection, Diary of JJA Prozesky: Diary entry, Introduction, p.384.

29. Eight suspected and convicted rebel prisoners died while imprisoned. For the details of these deaths see Appendix F.

30. PAR, 1/LDS 3/3/14: Documentation on the crowded nature of the Ladysmith Prison, 19.3.1900-29.3.1900.

31. PAR, MJPW 75: Correspondence regarding the transfer of suspected rebel prisoners from Newcastle Prison to the *Catalonia*, 29.5.1900-31.5.1900.

32. PAR, GH 559: Intercepted letters written by Natal rebels imprisoned on board the *Catalonia*, 7.6.1900-14.6.1900.

evenings for devotion.<sup>33</sup>

On 5 June 1900, 20 Natal Afrikaners were removed from the *Catalonia* to the Durban Prison. The remainder of the suspected rebels joined them on 23 June 1900. Initially they were only allowed to smoke during certain times and were locked in their cells from 16:30 till 6:30. Conditions were, however, better than on the *Catalonia* as the food and facilities were good, they regularly received letters from home, and were visited by GM Rudolph of Weenen, a former magistrate, who gave each prisoner £2.<sup>34</sup>

From early July 1900 onwards the suspected rebels were transferred from Durban to Ladysmith and Newcastle. This boosted the moral of the suspects as they were now closer to their relatives. JC Buys, for example, commented that he could see his mother from the prison window and although he was not allowed to greet her, she did send him cake and meat. He also saw his father and greeted him by lifting his hat. The terrible conditions in the Ladysmith Prison as outlined earlier persisted and were addressed by individual prisoners throwing money at the problem. Buys bought a kettle and a pot for cooking since the utensils in prison were very dirty, while Ds Schoon supplied him with a bed and chairs. As far as the inside of the cell was concerned Buys stated: "Ik heef alles betakel met vlooi poeder." He also complained that the bedding was dirty, that the prisoners had to cook their own food and buy their own coffee. The close proximity to home did outweighed the poor living conditions as visitors were eventually allowed.<sup>35</sup>

The Ladysmith Prison, however, remained seriously overcrowded. As a result Inspector Dorehill of the Natal Police received instructions to remove "upwards of twenty of the rebel prisoners now in course of examination" to the prison in Pietermaritzburg.<sup>36</sup> By 5 October 1900 the gaoler at Ladysmith could report that the prison had been relieved of surplus prisoners and that he had ample accommodation for all the men in his charge.<sup>37</sup>

By this time the first rebels were being sentenced. Often the imposition of prison sentences were followed by requests from the legal representatives and family members that the convicted rebels serve their sentences close to home. Carter and Robinson, for example, applied on behalf of their client, HB Cronjé, that he serve his sentence in the Estcourt Prison. This was denied due to overcrowded conditions in the prison.<sup>38</sup> A similar request by Chadwick and Millar on behalf of their

---

33. WM, Dagboek van Johannes Christoffel Buys: Deel 1, 27.5.1900, p.2.

34. WM, Dagboek van Johannes Christoffel Buys: Deel 1, 3-5.6.1900, pp.4-5.

35. WM, Dagboek van Johannes Christoffel Buys: Deel 1, 4-7.1900, pp.6-7.

36. PAR, 1/LDS 3/3/14: Letter Inspector Dorehill to magistrate Klip River district, 22.9.1900.

37. PAR, MJPW 78: Minute paper chief commissioner of police to minister of lands and works on conditions in the Ladysmith Prison, 5.10.1900.

38. PAR, CSO 1665: Application by Carter and Robinson for HB Cronjé to serve his prison sentence at the Estcourt Prison, 22.12.1900-29.12.1900.

client, GI van Benecke, who wanted to serve his sentence in the Upper Tugela Prison, was rejected because the authorities did not want to send convicted rebels to small outlying prisons.<sup>39</sup> The request that led to the formulation of a policy regarding such requests came from, GM Rudolph, who wanted his son-in-law and grandson, JF Robbertse senior and junior, transferred from the Pietermaritzburg to the Estcourt Prison. Initially Chief Commissioner of Police John Dartnell indicated that the Estcourt Prison was full, and that the request could not be entertained. He did, however, promise that “later on when the Estcourt Goal is less congested it may be possible to send the prisoners back to complete their sentences.” When Rudolph pursued the matter at a later stage Prime Minister Hime made it clear: “I am strongly opposed to these men being sent to Estcourt Goal to complete their sentences...if this application be granted, it will be a precedent which will be quoted in favour of granting other applications.”<sup>40</sup>

The rejection of the above-mentioned requests and the formulation of a policy did not prevent others from being lodged.<sup>41</sup> Subsequent requests, based on family and health concerns, made very little impact on the authorities who stood firm in their policy not to transfer prisoners.<sup>42</sup> This put an end to applications from legal representatives and only one further application was received for the remainder of 1901.<sup>43</sup>

As no possibility existed for convicted rebels to serve their prison sentences close to home, they were generally transferred to Pietermaritzburg. Often the accompanying guards were slack, slept most of the way, and only removed money but not knives from the prisoners. They even gave some of the convicted rebels beer during the train journey.<sup>44</sup>

The jail in Pietermaritzburg, like the up-country establishments, was soon overcrowded and only the rebels with a sentence of less than one-year were detained there. Those with lengthier sentences were transferred to the brand new prison at Eshowe in Zululand. These transfers took place on four occasions: 22 and 29 November 1900, 30 January 1901, and 14 February 1901.<sup>45</sup>

---

39. PAR, CSO 1666: Application by Chadwick and Millar for GI van Benecke to serve his prison sentence at the Upper Tugela Prison, 10.1.1901-16.1.1901.

40. PAR, CSO 1669: Application by GM Rudolph to have JF Robbertse senior and junior transferred from the Pietermaritzburg to the Estcourt Prison, 13.12.1900-13.2.1901.

41. PAR, CSO 1667: Application by Carter and Robinson for OW Krogman to serve his prison sentence at the Estcourt or Ladysmith Prison, 26.1.1901-31.1.1901; Application by Carter and Robinson for WAL Bester to serve his prison sentence at the Ladysmith Prison, 23.1.1901-25.1.1901.

42. PAR, MJPW 83: Application by Renaud and Robinson for HBLW Meyer to serve his prison sentence at either the Estcourt or Pietermaritzburg Prison, 14.3.1901-25.3.1901; PAR, CSO 1677: Application by Carter and Robinson for HW and GJB Boers to serve their prison sentences at the Estcourt or Pietermaritzburg Prison, 29.5.1901-5.6.1901.

43. PAR, MJPW 88: Application by J Anderson for CF Marais to serve his prison sentence at the Pietermaritzburg Prison, 21.10.1901-24.10.1901.

44. WM, Dagboek van Johannes Christoffel Buys: Deel 2, 23.1.1901, pp.3-4.

45. PAR, AGO I/8/78: Correspondence regarding the representations made by FDJ Havemann and other prisoners, 5.3.1901-18.4.1901; WM, Dagboek van Johannes Christoffel Buys: Deel 2, 28.1.1901 and 12.2.1901, pp.5 and 8.

### 9.2.2 Living conditions in prison - an overview

On arrival in prison the convicted rebels were stripped naked and weighed before all marks and scars on their bodies were recorded. When this rudimentary medical examination was completed they were issued with striped prison clothes marked Natal Convict Department (NCD). Shoes were selected from numerous pairs stored in a cupboard.<sup>46</sup> Their prison term had commenced. Suspected rebels still awaiting trial, soldiers who found themselves in trouble, and from time to time other criminals, were imprisoned on the same premises.<sup>47</sup>

The general living conditions in the Eshowe and Pietermaritzburg Prisons were typical of the time. Two to three prisoners shared a cell<sup>48</sup> furnished by grass filled mattresses, a wash basin, wash bucket, drinking mug, and a toilet bucket.<sup>49</sup> Lice were a problem,<sup>50</sup> while luxuries such as toothbrushes, toothpowder,<sup>51</sup> and sheets<sup>52</sup> were not readily issued by the prison authorities. Sometimes those in power did try and improve conditions by, for example, painting the cells and spraying them for lice.<sup>53</sup>

Initially no special rules existed for the management of convicted rebels. Very soon the rebels complained that they did not have sufficient time to exercise, that they were locked in their cells by 17:00 and not allowed lights after dark. In his capacity as minister of lands and works, Prime Minister Hime demanded an explanation. Governor JR Thomson of the Pietermaritzburg Prison responded that the rebels were allowed all the privileges which prisoners on remand or awaiting trial had been granted in the past. Hime subsequently asked Attorney-General Bale whether he thought any special privileges should be extended to the rebel prisoners. Bale was not prepared to commit himself and said he believed the cabinet should decide on the matter. Initially the ministers decided that no action was necessary.<sup>54</sup> By November 1900 this decision changed and the following regulations were adopted by the Natal Cabinet:

#### **Special Rules, applicable to prisoners sentenced to terms of imprisonment without hard labour**

1. They may wear their own clothing, providing that it is sufficient and fit for use, and may also procure their own bedding.

---

46. VTR, JC Vermaak collection, 03/2553/1: Memoirs of JC Vermaak, 1941, pp.30; OE Prozesky private collection, Diary of JJA Prozesky: Diary entry, 3.11.1900, p.444

47. WM, Dagboek van Johannes Christoffel Buys: Deel 2, 18.8.1901, p.28.

48. VTR, JC Vermaak collection, 03/2553/1: Memoirs of JC Vermaak, 1941, p.35.

49. OE Prozesky private collection, Diary of JJA Prozesky: Diary entry, *circa* November 1900, p.441.

50. WM, Dagboek van Johannes Christoffel Buys: Deel 2, 29.1.1901, pp.5-6.

51. OE Prozesky private collection, Diary of JJA Prozesky: Diary entry, *circa* November 1900, p.449.

52. OE Prozesky private collection, Diary of JJA Prozesky: Diary entry, 28.1.1901, p.478.

53. WM, Dagboek van Johannes Christoffel Buys: Deel 2, 26.5.1901, p.19.

54. PAR, MJPW 76: Investigation into the complaints by suspected rebel prisoners awaiting trial, 10.7.1900-10.8.1900.

2. They may provide their own food and other necessaries, but only at hours as may be laid down from time to time.
3. They may be permitted to purchase at their own expense such books, newspapers or other means of occupation as are not, in the opinion of the Governor of the Goal, of an objectionable kind.
4. No prisoner should be allowed to sell, or transfer to another, any article which has been introduced into prison for his own use.
5. They may receive and send letters daily.
6. They may receive visitors twice a week, at such hours and on such days as may be appointed, such interviews shall, however, be restricted to thirty minutes, and shall take place in the presence of an official of the prison.
7. They shall be allowed to exercise for a period of at least two hours during the day, and when at exercise they will be allowed to smoke (providing their own tobacco). The latter privilege may, however, be withdrawn from any prisoner should he misconduct himself.
8. A light shall be allowed in the cells of such prisoners from sundown until 9 p.m.
9. They shall not be placed in association or exercise with other criminal prisoners.
10. The rations issued in the prison shall consist of:  
Breakfast: 1/3 oz. Coffee, 1 oz. Sugar 12 ozs. Bread.  
Dinner: 1<sup>st</sup> class European ration as per present dietary scale.  
Supper: 1/4 oz. Tea or Coffee, 1 oz. Sugar, 8 ozs. Bread.
11. Such prisoners shall not be compelled to have their hair cut or to shave, unless the Medical Officer deems it necessary on the grounds of health and cleanliness, and the hair shall not be cut closer than is necessary for that purpose.
12. They are exempted from the strict prison regulations as regards washing and bathing; but will obey such orders as are from time to time issued with a view to health and cleanliness.
13. They shall not be required to perform menial service, other than making their own beds and tidying their own cells. Such work as the removal of slops, scrubbing floors, etc., shall be performed by a convict told off for this purpose.
14. Prisoners of this class shall also be subject to the general rules for the time being in force for the government of prisoners, except where the same are inconsistent with these special rules.<sup>55</sup>

The adoption of the outlined set of rules for prisoners convicted of high treason did not find favour with the *Natal Witness*, and by using emotional phrases such as a “travesty of justice”, and expressing the opinion that their punishment was being “diminished”, the right of convicted rebels to wear their own clothes and the general relaxation of the rules surrounding visitors and correspondence, were questioned. The newspaper interpreted these steps as “nothing less than a declaration of disapproval of the sentences” passed by the Special Court. By posing the question, “Who has done it?”, the Natal Government was indirectly attacked since only the cabinet could make such a decision.<sup>56</sup> The newspaper’s opinion was supported by an anonymous letter from a member of the public who felt that rebel prisoners were treated too leniently and should be made to work on the roads.<sup>57</sup>

---

55. PAR, AGO I/8/78: Special rules applicable to prisoners sentenced to terms of imprisonment without hard labour - as revised by the attorney-general and colonial secretary in accordance with ministers’ decision, 24.1.1901; Foy Vermaak private collection: Letter JC Vermaak to CT Vermaak alias Miss C Herzog, 24.3.1901.

56. *Natal Witness*, 20.11.1900.

In the Pietermaritzburg Prison the rules were welcomed by the rebels who speculated wildly on why they had been enforced. One rumour which persisted was that General Redvers Buller was captured by the Boers and in the trade-off for his release a better deal was negotiated for the rebel prisoners.<sup>58</sup> In the Eshowe Prison the new rules made little difference as the prisoners were denied their right to view any regulations.<sup>59</sup>

Prisoners, however, also contested the regulations. While most rebels embraced the wearing of their own clothes as stipulated in the first article, others, especially the poor, adopted a different attitude. They preferred to wear prison clothes and reasoned: "Why should I wear out my clothes and shoes?"<sup>60</sup> These rebels received fresh clothes every Saturday.<sup>61</sup>

The single biggest problem with the implementation of prison rules were the prison officials and low ranking wardens who tended to apply the regulations as they saw fit. Warden Davis of Eshowe made it clear he thought it was their duty to make life as difficult as possible for prisoners so that they would not come back again.<sup>62</sup> This seems to have been the unofficial policy in dealing with Natal Afrikaner prisoners. Already during their pre-trial imprisonment in the Dundee Prison, suspected rebels considered one warden ill-mannered since he seldom addressed them other than with shouts and swearwords. The prisoners dealt with this behaviour by bribing him with £15 and an "oorkonde" (address) the words of which sang his praises in elaborate language. Subsequently there was a remarkable change in his attitude.<sup>63</sup>

In the Eshowe and Pietermaritzburg Prisons it was not so easy to deal with difficult wardens. In both institutions wardens were, with the odd exception, rude and "erg nukkerig",<sup>64</sup> while Governor Deane of the Eshowe Prison earned the nickname "Satan" because of his vindictive disposition. Attitude problems towards the rebel prisoners manifested themselves in various abuses. Prisoners were often locked in their cells for the duration of the day with the doors and service hatches closed and in the process denied access to the toilet.<sup>65</sup> Requests that the service hatches be opened for fresh and cool air to flow through were ignored. In contrast the cell door of a British soldier, who had murdered a fellow soldier, was opened so that a breeze could blow through.<sup>66</sup> In Pietermaritzburg prisoners were similarly tormented and during a particularly bad week were only let out of their cells to collect

---

57. *Natal Witness*, 28.8.1901.

58. OE Prozesky private collection, Diary of JJA Prozesky: Diary entry, 17 or 19.11.1901, pp.451-452.

59. OE Prozesky private collection, Diary of JJA Prozesky: Diary entry, 14.1.1901, pp.475-477.

60. OE Prozesky private collection, Diary of JJA Prozesky: Diary entry, 17 or 19.11.1901, pp.451-452; VTR, JC Vermaak collection, 03/2553/1: Memoirs of JC Vermaak, p.31, 1941.

61. OE Prozesky private collection, Diary of JJA Prozesky: Diary entry, 5.11.1901, p.446.

62. OE Prozesky private collection, Diary of JJA Prozesky: Diary entry, 11.3.1901, p.493.

63. VTR, JC Vermaak collection, 03/2553/1: Memoirs of JC Vermaak, p.27, 1941.

64. WM, *Dagboek van Johannes Christoffel Buys*: Deel 2, 20.1.1901 and 26.2.1901, pp.1 and 11.

65. OE Prozesky private collection, Diary of JJA Prozesky: Diary entry, 14.1.1901, p.476

food.<sup>67</sup> Fortunately more humane wardens in both prisons left the cell doors unlocked for the duration of the day when on duty. Inmates could then visit each other and enjoy cooler conditions.<sup>68</sup>

Harassment of rebel prisoners also took other forms. In the Eshowe Prison they were forced to exercise in the heat of mid-summer,<sup>69</sup> while in Pietermaritzburg they were, against the regulations, coerced into taking a communal bath in water which the rebels described as very dirty.<sup>70</sup> Cell wrecking during regular searches were common in both establishments.<sup>71</sup> In the Eshowe Prison Sundays were generally reserved for such searches and other forms of provocation, such as Africans being instructed to chop wood in close proximity to the church service.<sup>72</sup>

Wardens also reported a number of rebels for contravening prison regulations. Invariably this led to punishment such as being locked-up in the “dark room”; a room with no furniture and only a water and toilet bucket. Bedding was only provided at night and only five minutes of exercise per day was permitted.<sup>73</sup> The first rebel prisoner to be incarcerated in the dark room was JC Donovan who was caught smoking and sentenced to three days in the dark room on half rations. He, however, spent only half a day in the dark room before he was moved to another cell.<sup>74</sup> MD Hessleman and P Cronjé were punished for an equally petty grievance. They gave some old clothes to African hard labour prisoners. Despite similar acts of charity having taken place in the past, Gaoler Martens reported the two men to the governor who placed them on half rations for two days.<sup>75</sup> The most severe punishment was reserved for JW Rall for having a saw in his room and CL and FAJ Breytenbach who made a fire in a tin in their room to heat some glue. All three were locked up for three days on half rations.<sup>76</sup>

Complaining to the governor of the prison about the ill-treatment seldom had a satisfactory outcome for the prisoners.<sup>77</sup> In Pietermaritzburg Warden Martin was reported to the governor and subsequently reprimanded. Afterwards he treated the prisoners even worse than before<sup>78</sup> with no further consequences.<sup>79</sup> This angered the inmates and J Zietsman wrote a letter to his family

---

66. OE Prozesky private collection, Diary of JJA Prozesky: Diary entry, 1.1.1901, p.468.

67. WM, Dagboek van Johannes Christoffel Buys: Deel 2, 28.4.1901, p.17.

68. WM, Dagboek van Johannes Christoffel Buys: Deel 2, 8-9.2.1901, p.8.

69. OE Prozesky private collection, Diary of JJA Prozesky: Diary entry, 14.1.1901, p.476

70. WM, Dagboek van Johannes Christoffel Buys: Deel 2, 11.3.1901, p.14.

71. OE Prozesky private collection, Diary of JJA Prozesky: Diary entry, 3.2.1901, p.481.

72. OE Prozesky private collection, Diary of JJA Prozesky: Diary entries, 5-6.2.1901 and 2.6.1901, pp.484 and 504.

73. OE Prozesky private collection, Diary of JJA Prozesky: Diary entry, *circa* November 1900, p.441.

74. WM, Dagboek van Johannes Christoffel Buys: Deel 2, 5.2.1901, p.7.

75. WM, Dagboek van Johannes Christoffel Buys: Deel 2, 19.5.1901, p.19.

76. WM, Dagboek van Johannes Christoffel Buys: Deel 2, 8.9.1901, p.29.

77. WM, Dagboek van Johannes Christoffel Buys: Deel 2, 11.3.1901, p.14.

78. WM, Dagboek van Johannes Christoffel Buys: Deel 2, 25.8.1901, p.27.

79. WM, Dagboek van Johannes Christoffel Buys: Deel 2, 20.10.1901, pp.32-33.

describing the bad treatment. Warden Spalding, when censoring the letter, complained to the governor who agreed with the views expressed by Zietsman. In this case the expression of dissatisfaction led to the creation of a set of rules which increased the amount of time the rebels could spend outside their cells.<sup>80</sup>

In an attempt to solve the above-mentioned problems the various prisons were inspected weekly by the local magistrate. At Ladysmith this was done on a Saturday at noon. The outcome of this was that “every thing was found in a most excellent order...” Regular inspections were, however, not maintained and long periods elapsed between magisterial visits forcing the PUS to reprimand Magistrate Matthews.<sup>81</sup> The Eshowe Prison at one stage was not inspected in more than a month.<sup>82</sup>

When inspections did take place, like when Governor McCallum visited the Pietermaritzburg Prison, rebel prisoners, out of fear, did not air their complaints.<sup>83</sup> When they did, however, express dissatisfaction it invariably worked in their favour, as when Colonel JG Dartnell inspected the Eshowe Prison on 15 June 1901.<sup>84</sup> On this occasion Missionary Prozesky raised a number of issues, amongst others the manner in which rebels were addressed, and the lack of time they spent out of doors. Immediately afterwards conditions changed for the better and they were allowed to spend much more time outside, were allowed lights until 21:00, and Prozesky received a chair and a table.<sup>85</sup>

The inspection of the Eshowe Prison was the result of earlier complaints. Real bitterness was rife amongst the prisoners and a riot threatened.<sup>86</sup> Consequently a group of prisoners, including FDJ Havemann, DJ de Waal, LW Meyer and Fred Colling, went to Dundee to act as witnesses, and confronted Attorney-General Bale with a petition regarding their “treatment as political prisoners.” Before meeting the prisoners Bale sought the prime minister’s permission. This he received on condition that he made them no promises. The rebels complained about their exercise times between 10:00 and 11:00 and 14:00 to 15:00 as these were the hottest times of day. After this they had to return to their cold cells with cement floors and were afraid that they could suffer chills. They also requested knives and forks to eat, and permission to smoke tobacco. It also concerned them that five to six men had to use the same bathwater, and that 70 prisoners had to share the limited toilet facilities with Africans.

---

80. WM, Dagboek van Johannes Christoffel Buys: Deel 2, 28.4.1901, pp.17-18.

81. PAR, CSO 1698: Minute paper Magistrate TR Bennett to PUS C Bird explaining why he did not inspect the Ladysmith Prison regularly, 29.1.1902.

82. OE Prozesky private collection, Diary of JJA Prozesky: Diary entry, 11.1.1901, p.473.

83. WM, Dagboek van Johannes Christoffel Buys: Deel 2, 11.7.1901, p.21.

84. OE Prozesky private collection, Diary of JJA Prozesky: Diary entry, 7.6.1901, p.508; Foy Vermaak private collection: Letter JC Vermaak to CT Vermaak alias Miss C Herzog, 17.6.1901.

85. VTR, JC Vermaak collection, 03/2553/1: Memoirs of JC Vermaak, p.34, 1941.

86. OE Prozesky private collection, Diary of JJA Prozesky: Diary entry, 14.1.1901, p.476

These complaints led to two positive results. Rebel prisoners were allowed to obtain their own knives and forks for use during mealtimes, and Governor Deane of the Eshowe Prison was expected to respond to the issues raised by the prisoners. Deane claimed that early morning and late afternoon exercise times were used when hot and maintained that the rebels did not exercise in the heat but sat around passively. He also indicated that under the regulations they were not allowed to smoke and that the use of knives and forks was prohibited in all prisons. Deane agreed with the complaints about bathing facilities and said that part of the problem was the inadequate water supply to the prison, something he had complained about repeatedly. The underground tanks were empty and African prisoners had to carry water in buckets over a distance of 1 500 metres. The problems with the toilets were similarly acknowledged. There were only five toilets available for the prisoners and wardens to share and Deane had also complained about this repeatedly.

When confronted with the problems the Public Works Department (hereafter PWD) blamed the drought, which made the well give in, for the lack of water, while the bad toilet facilities were blamed on the influx of rebel prisoners which had not been anticipated seven months earlier when the prison was completed.<sup>87</sup> According to the rebel prisoners the water supply problem was never solved because the PWD did not know how to construct a well.<sup>88</sup>

As a consequence of this petition other improvements followed. In the Pietermaritzburg Prison the food improved, toilet buckets were removed by Africans, and the inmates were allowed to burn candles at night.<sup>89</sup> At the same time the prohibition of smoking enforced by Bale under the provisional rules circular 21 was challenged by Renaud and Robinson, the legal representatives of the rebel prisoners in Eshowe. This also turned into a victory for the prisoners and “special rules” were sanctioned by the governor of the Colony allowing for smoking during recreation hours.<sup>90</sup>

Living conditions were contested up until the release of the last rebel prisoner. At times they secured concessions. For example, in September 1901 the governor of the Pietermaritzburg Prison granted prisoners permission to leave their doors open as long as they did not make a noise. An elected committee of three consisting of DC Uys, JM van Rooyen, and NJ van Rensburg had to see to it that the rebels adhered to the agreement.<sup>91</sup> Matches and tools were, however, banned from the

---

87. PAR, AGO I/8/78: Correspondence regarding the representations made by FDJ Havemann and other prisoners, 5.3.1901-18.4.1901; OE Prozesky private collection, Diary of JJA Prozesky: Diary entry, 21.3.1901, p.495.

88. OE Prozesky private collection, Diary of JJA Prozesky: Diary entries, *circa* December 1900, 11.1.1901, 4.6.1901, pp.461, 473 and 504.

89. WM, Dagboek van Johannes Christoffel Buys: Deel 2, 5.3.1901, p.13.

90. PAR, MJPW 83: Enquiry by Renaud and Robinson regarding permission for rebel prisoners to smoke, 5.3.1901-8.3.1901.

91. WM, Dagboek van Johannes Christoffel Buys: Deel 2, 29.9.1901, p.30.

cells.<sup>92</sup>

The rebel prisoners who had to endure the most were the 14 Natal Afrikaners sentenced to hard labour. They had far less privileges than their peers and worked in the streets of Eshowe alongside African prisoners. Part of their duty was to pull the carts loaded with sand used for road repairs. As a result they soon earned the nickname “government mules” while the prison became known as the “mule stable.” On their return to prison they also had to perform other duties. Once a week they had to wash the underclothes, sheets and pillowcases of the their fellow rebel prisoners. Even on Sundays they were not spared and Warder Hockley forced Johannes van den Berg to pick up all the pieces of paper in the courtyard of the jail.<sup>93</sup>

### 9.2.3 Food in prison

One of the persistent complaints the rebel prisoners had was with the quality and quantity of the food they received. According to JC Vermaak they received a pint of “skilly” or thin porridge without salt at 6:00 in the mornings. For lunch, served at noon, they got “mieliepap” with a spoon of sugar. Supper, served at 18:00, consisted of tea and bread. On Mondays and Thursdays the menu was altered and they received vegetable soup with some meat.<sup>94</sup> From time to time the diet slightly improved. Then they would received a cup of black coffee and a piece of bread for breakfast, mash potatoes or soup with meat for lunch, and bread and black tea for dinner.<sup>95</sup> This food was unlike the food the prisoners were used to and many were left feeling hungry.

Against this background strong sentiments were expressed about the quality of the food. The prisoners deemed the bread and potatoes to be raw, the coffee too strong and the soup full of insects.<sup>96</sup> Especially the quality of the potatoes served in Eshowe irked Missionary Prozesky, who complained that they were green and rotten.<sup>97</sup> The prisoners were also unhappy about the lack of access to boiling water to make coffee.<sup>98</sup> Their complaints about the quality of the food and the lack of hot water had very little impact.<sup>99</sup>

---

92. WM, Dagboek van Johannes Christoffel Buys: Deel 2, 2.6.1901, pp.19-20.

93. OE Prozesky private collection, Diary of JJA Prozesky: Diary entries, 12.5.1901, 4.6.1901, 8.10.1901, pp.502, 504, 533.

94. VTR, JC Vermaak collection, 03/2553/1: Memoirs of JC Vermaak, p.30, 1941.

95. WM, Dagboek van Johannes Christoffel Buys: Deel 1, 13.7.1900, p.8 ; VTR, JC Vermaak collection, 03/2553/1: Memoirs of JC Vermaak, 1941, p.31; PAR, AGO I/8/78: Special Rules applicable to prisoners sentenced to terms of imprisonment without hard labour - as revised by the attorney-general and colonial secretary in accordance with ministers' decision, 24.1.1901; Foy Vermaak private collection: Letter JC Vermaak to CT Vermaak alias Miss C Herzog, 24.3.1901.

96. WM, Dagboek van Johannes Christoffel Buys: Deel 2, 18.8.1901, p.26.

97. OE Prozesky private collection, Diary of JJA Prozesky: Diary entry, 11.1.1901, p.473.

98. WM, Dagboek van Johannes Christoffel Buys: Deel 2, 18.8.1901, p.16.

99. OE Prozesky private collection, Diary of JJA Prozesky: Diary entry, 26.1.1901, p.477.

In an attempt to prove that complaints about the food were unfounded, Governor Deane of the Eshowe Prison, compared the weights of the rebel prisoners when they arrived on 22 and 29 November 1900, 30 January, and 14 February 1901, to their weight on 19 March 1901. According to his calculations the 68 prisoners collectively lost 101 lbs and gained 158¼ lbs - a nett gain of 57¼ lbs. The most weight was gained by JC Engelbrecht and JJ Audie both of whom increased by between 11 and 12 lbs. The biggest weight losers were JJ Webb who lost 12¼ lbs and JH Hattingh who was performing hard labour and also suffering from a kidney disease.<sup>100</sup>

Deane, however, neglected to mention that the prisoners diets were supplemented in two ways. Firstly they could purchase food from outside the prison. Once a week a member of the prison staff would take a shopping list to a grocer and purchase what the prisoners had ordered.<sup>101</sup> Items on the shopping list ranged from tinned meat,<sup>102</sup> to jam,<sup>103</sup> and beer<sup>104</sup> until the purchase of alcohol was prohibited.<sup>105</sup> Secondly food was obtained from friends and relatives. This process began in Newcastle in May and June 1900 when Mrs Bosman sent fruit and food to the prison on a daily basis.<sup>106</sup> After this providing food to rebel prisoners became a common occurrence. Mrs J Adendorff of Hope Farm, Newcastle visited her family, the Boshoffs, Lindley Bosman and Paul Prozesky, in prison in Pietermaritzburg. She gave each a loaf of brown bread, a pound of butter and a tin of biltong. The men had to share a bottle of pickles.<sup>107</sup>

If the Buys brothers in the Pietermaritzburg Prison and PR Buys in the Weenen Prison were to serve as an example of the food received, the rebel prisoners did very well. Amongst other supplements the brothers received a box of peaches from GM Rudolph, a vat of butter from their sister Mrs Lotter, meat, biltong, peaches, grapes and rusks from family. As a result they had so much food that for long periods they did not have to eat the prison food.<sup>108</sup> The brothers were invariably very productive the day after receiving food from the outside. Izak went and painted the windows of the hospital and Stoffel made a little table from planks.<sup>109</sup> Because the food they received from their extended family was so tasty, some of it was intercepted. "Soldiers dressed in kilts" took most of the food, including a roast chicken, grapes, and some rusks from the basket sent to PR Buys in the Weenen Prison by his mother.<sup>110</sup>

---

100. PAR, AGO I/8/78: Correspondence regarding the representations made by FDJ Havemann and other prisoners, 5.3.1901-18.4.1901.

101. VTR, JC Vermaak collection, 03/2553/1: Memoirs of JC Vermaak, p.30, 1941.

102. WM, Dagboek van Johannes Christoffel Buys: Deel 2, 31.1.1901, p.6.

103. WM, Dagboek van Johannes Christoffel Buys: Deel 1, 13.7.1900, pp.7-8.

104. WM, Dagboek van Johannes Christoffel Buys: Deel 2, 15.2.1901, p.9.

105. Foy Vermaak private collection: Letter JC Vermaak to CT Vermaak alias Miss C Herzog, 24.3.1901.

106. OE Prozesky private collection, Diary of JJA Prozesky: Diary entry, date unknown, p.428.

107. OE Prozesky Private collection, Diary of JJA Prozesky: Diary entry, 28.9.1900, p.338.

108. WM, Dagboek van Johannes Christoffel Buys: Deel 2, 13.7.1901, pp.1, 7-8.

109. WM, Dagboek van Johannes Christoffel Buys: Deel 2, 18.8.1901, p.26.

110. PAR, 1/WEN 3/2/3: Memorandum Magistrate M Matthews to magistrate Estcourt, 5.3.1900.

Well wishers also supplied the rebel prisoners with food. Afrikaners from Melmoth sent six eggs for each prisoner, as well as butter, rusks and bread to the Eshowe Prison.<sup>111</sup> This was followed by Louis Kritzinger who sent rusks, bread and butter and Mr Koekemoer who donated potatoes, cabbages, and pumpkins. Some of the vegetables were taken to the prison kitchen by Philip Vermaak but unlike the case in Pietermaritzburg, the chefs refused to prepare it. Vermaak then wrote to Koekemoer thanking him, but suggested that he send no more vegetables since it could not be cooked. On censoring the letter Governor Deane called in Vermaak and informed him that he should not do it since it was all a misunderstanding. Subsequently the vegetables were prepared without further ado.<sup>112</sup>

On Christmas 1901, the prisoners in Eshowe were treated to a large meal funded by Lady Saunders, the wife of the chief magistrate and civil commissioner for Zululand, and prepared by the women in the local concentration camp.<sup>113</sup> A similar meal was prepared by the women of the concentration camp for New Year. This time the money was donated by Doors Hansmeyer of Greytown.<sup>114</sup>

#### 9.2.4 Passing time

One of the most challenging aspects of imprisonment facing any prisoner is how to pass the time and deal with the longing for freedom and loved ones. The experiences of the imprisoned Natal rebels were no different. One of the rebels who kept a prison diary, Fred A Truscott, captured the longing for his wife on the cover: "Wherever I roam whatever I see my heart untravelled fondly turns to thee."<sup>115</sup> Similar feelings of melancholy were expressed by JC Vermaak: "...gescheiden van onsen dierbare bloedverwanten en vrienden, en met een onuitsprekelijk verlangen om weder met hen vereenigd te wesen."<sup>116</sup>

Dealing with the loneliness took on various guises. Like many of their counterparts in the POW Camps, some rebel prisoners turned to religion. All those initially imprisoned in the Newcastle Prison, except for JC Donovan, an English speaking rebel, had Bibles.<sup>117</sup> Elsewhere this was not the case. Here those without Bibles sometimes received copies from friends or relatives. JC Buys for example received a small Bible and some religious books from GM Rudolph when he visited the Durban Prison.<sup>118</sup> Reading the Bible and praying<sup>119</sup> was a common practice and many learnt whole

---

111. OE Prozesky private collection, Diary of JJA Prozesky: Diary entry, 23.12.1900, p.464.

112. OE Prozesky private collection, Diary of JJA Prozesky: Diary entry, 26.1.1901, p.477.

113. Eshowe Museum: Framed letter rebel prisoners to Lady Saunders, 2.1.1902.

114. VTR, JC Vermaak collection, 03/2553/1: Memoirs of JC Vermaak, p.34, 1941.

115. NAR, A 1531 FA Truscott-writings: Prison diary, cover page.

116. Foy Vermaak private collection: Letter JC Vermaak to CT Vermaak alias Miss C Herzog, 24.3.1901.

117. OE Prozesky private collection, Diary of JJA Prozesky: Diary entry, date unknown, p.427.

118. WM, Dagboek van Johannes Christoffel Buys: Deel 1, 4.6.1900, p.4.

119. VTR, JC Vermaak collection, 03/2553/1: Memoirs of JC Vermaak, p.35, 1941.

chapters by heart.<sup>120</sup> Bible study groups were formed and a singing group in the Newcastle Prison sang Dutch and English spiritual songs and hymns.<sup>121</sup> In the Eshowe Prison two rebels, Degenaar and Cronjé, under the guidance of Missionary Prozesky, took to reading the Bible in Zulu so that they could, when released, hold services for the Africans on their farms.<sup>122</sup> These religious activities were sustained by regular visits from dominees of the DRC and ministers of other denominations.<sup>123</sup>

Secular material was also read. The Pietermaritzburg Prison library was well stocked<sup>124</sup> and Missionary Prozesky took out Dante's *Inferno*, *Purgatory* and *Paradise*.<sup>125</sup> Newspapers to keep in touch with general news and war-related happenings were, however, more difficult to come by. Rebels who moved from the *Catalonia* to the Durban Prison sometimes received newspapers to read,<sup>126</sup> but this is where it ended. Prozesky, for example, was not allowed to receive the newspaper he had subscribed to,<sup>127</sup> while the legal representative of JG Zietsman, HM Millar, unsuccessfully petitioned for his client to receive a paper in prison.<sup>128</sup>

A small number of prisoners used their time in prison to improve their academic competencies. Stoffel Lotz was instructed in reading and writing and English language skills for two hours a day by his cell mate in the Eshowe Prison, Missionary Prozesky.<sup>129</sup> JDJ Havemann and DJ de Waal learnt shorthand and practised it an hour a day for months, Fred Colling worked as a chef in the Pietermaritzburg Prison<sup>130</sup> while JC Vermaak improved his accountancy skills and did the books of many of the wardens in the Eshowe Prison. Vermaak in turn instructed JS Hattingh who on his release secured a position at a shop in Estcourt.<sup>131</sup>

Writing was another common activity. Some men like JC Buys,<sup>132</sup> JJA Prozesky<sup>133</sup> and FA Truscott<sup>134</sup> kept diaries. Both the diaries of Buys and Truscott contain extensive lists of names of all the rebels sentenced, the fines they had to pay, the time they had to serve and where they came from. Writing in prison also took on a cultural dimension. JS Vermaak and AM Cronjé wrote a poem of

---

120. OE Prozesky private collection, Diary of JJA Prozesky: Diary entry, date unknown p.427.

121. OE Prozesky private collection, Diary of JJA Prozesky: Diary entry, date unknown, p.429.

122. OE Prozesky private collection, Diary of JJA Prozesky: Diary entry, 4.2.1901, p.483.

123. OE Prozesky private collection, Diary of JJA Prozesky: Diary entry, 5.2.1901, p.484.

124. VTR, JC Vermaak collection, 03/2553/1: Memoirs of JC Vermaak, p.35, 1941.

125. OE Prozesky private collection, Diary of JJA Prozesky: Diary entry, 5.11.1900, p.447.

126. WM, Dagboek van Johannes Christoffel Buys: Deel 1, 5.6.1900, p.4.

127. OE Prozesky private collection, Diary of JJA Prozesky: Diary entry, circa November 1900, p.449.

128. PAR, AGO I/8/77: Minute paper Attorney-General H Bale to minister of lands and works regarding the request for a newspaper in prison by HM Millar, 22.1.1901.

129. OE Prozesky private collection, Diary of JJA Prozesky: Diary entry, circa November-December 1900, p.462.

130. WM, Dagboek van Johannes Christoffel Buys: Deel 2, 28.1.1901, p.5.

131. VTR, JC Vermaak collection, 03/2553/1: Memoirs of JC Vermaak, p.35, 1941.

132. WM, Dagboek van Johannes Christoffel Buys: *passim*.

133. OE Prozesky private collection, Diary of JJA Prozesky: *passim*.

134. NAR, A 1531, FA Truscott-writings: Prison diary, pp.3-61.

more than a 100 verses on the condition Natal Afrikaners found themselves in after 11 October 1899.<sup>135</sup>

Another important way of passing time was singing and patriotic, sentimental, philosophical and melancholic songs were sung. Songs like “Venus my shining love”, “Old Folks at home”, “Verlaat my niet”, “Comic Song”, “Ons Vryheid” and “Di bruilof van Flip Kotze” were sang in the Eshowe Prison.<sup>136</sup> In the Pietermaritzburg Prison songs such as “Burger lied”, “Vrystaats Burgerlied”, “A true song”, “Transvaalsche Volkslied”, “Die sterwende wees op die Slagveld” and “Afscheids lied” formed part of the repertoire of the prisoners.<sup>137</sup> Not only were well-known songs sung, but new ones speaking of the experiences of the Natal rebels were also composed. One such very descriptive song entitled, “Lement of the rebels” appears in the diary of JC Buys.<sup>138</sup>

### **Lement of the rebels**

#### 1 Verse

Round the goal yart am a singing  
 The Rebels mournful song  
 Because they have to their sleeping  
 Laying on the cells hard ground  
 Where the kaffir police are watching  
 Inside the close barred gates  
 There the Rebels are a cussing

#### Chorus

Down in the goal yard  
 Hear that mournful song  
 How the Rebels are a cussing  
 Through sleeping on the cold hard ground

#### 2 Verse

When the gaoler comes to see them  
 Or calls them up to court  
 They know it means another witness  
 Swering what he shouldnt aught  
 Up they trot before the great B-  
 And witnesses a score  
 Listening to the evidence  
 That closes around hem more and more

#### Chorus

#### 3 Verse

Up again up on the morrow  
 It makes their tear drops flow  
 And fill their hearts with bitter sorrows  
 To see the grins of Miller & Co

---

135. Foy Vermaak private collection: Letter JC Vermaak to CT Vermaak alias Miss C Herzog, 24.3.1901.

136. NAR, A 1531, FA Truscott writings: Prison diary, pp.62-76.

137. WM, Dagboek van Johannes Christoffel Buys: Deel 2, handwritten copies of songs, no date.

138. WM, Dagboek van Johannes Christoffel Buys: Deel 2, Lement of the rebels, no date.

The joyful looks on Rebels faces  
At seeing the gaoler kind  
But don't they look a bit disgusted  
When he goes out and leaves them behind

Chorus

The singing was accompanied by violins built by prisoners from a book which they had ordered.<sup>139</sup> Music proved to be a powerful medium and according to JC Buys “mensen word oproeorig om musik in die tronk te hoor.”<sup>140</sup> No wonder that JC Vermaak recalled in his memoirs that singing was prohibited by prison regulations.<sup>141</sup>

Participation in various sport and games was also common. Prisoners regularly participated in chess, dominoes, draughts and long and high jump. Other games simulated life on the farm. One prisoner would represent a horse and the other his rider and races would take place. Young and powerful men played a game in which one represented an unbroken horse and another a rider who wanted to break it in. First the rider had to mount the horse, and once up, stay up.<sup>142</sup> In the Pietermaritzburg Prison the rebels made a ball with which they played during the day.<sup>143</sup>

Very few rebel prisoners remained passive and most manufactured curios and articles in an attempt to pass the time.<sup>144</sup> Some carved models out of stone;<sup>145</sup> or inserted objects into bottles;<sup>146</sup> others produced smoking pipes and walking sticks;<sup>147</sup> JDJ Havemann made a pin for a tie;<sup>148</sup> Missionary Prozesky painted pictures and made a medallion;<sup>149</sup> Nicholas Prinsloo Jordaan made a kist 305mm high, 550 mm long and 350 mm;<sup>150</sup> LW Meyer likewise made a kist;<sup>151</sup> JC Buys crocheted a necktie;<sup>152</sup> and Philip Meyer fixed shoes in the Eshowe Prison including that of Governor Deane and his wife.<sup>153</sup>

While the prison authorities were strict in not allowing prisoners to keep the walking sticks they

---

139. OE Prozesky private collection, Diary of JJA Prozesky: Diary entry, 7.10.1901, p.531; WM, Dagboek van Johannes Christoffel Buys: Deel 2, 2.6.1901, pp.19-20.

140. WM, Dagboek van Johannes Christoffel Buys: Deel 2, 2.6.1901, pp.19-20.

141. VTR, JC Vermaak collection, 03/2553/1: Memoirs of JC Vermaak, p.35, 1941.

142. OE Prozesky private collection, Diary of JJA Prozesky: Diary entry, date unknown, p.427.

143. WM, Dagboek van Johannes Christoffel Buys: Deel 2, 27.7.1901, pp.23-24.

144. VTR, JC Vermaak collection, 03/2553/1: Memoirs of JC Vermaak, p.35, 1941.

145. WM, Dagboek van Johannes Christoffel Buys: Deel 2, 25.1.1901-31.1.1901, pp.4-6.

146. WM, Dagboek van Johannes Christoffel Buys: Deel 2, 28.2.1901, p.12.

147. Foy Vermaak private collection: Letter JC Vermaak to CT Vermaak alias Miss C Herzog, 22.8.1901.

148. VTR, JC Vermaak collection, 03/2553/1: Memoirs of JC Vermaak, p.35, 1941.

149. OE Prozesky private collection, Diary of JJA Prozesky: Diary entry, circa November-December 1901, p.462.

150. E-mail Marthinus Willem (MW) Jordaan great grandson of Nicholaas Prinsloo Jordaan to JM Wassermann, 12.6.2002. The kist is currently in possession of MW Jordaan.

151. Interview with Hans Meyer conducted at Ingagane, 10.7.2000.

152. WM, Dagboek van Johannes Christoffel Buys: Deel 2, 2.2.1901, p.6.

made in their cells,<sup>154</sup> they were more lenient and accommodating in other aspects. Casper Truscott was, for example, allowed a saw and plane to work with in prison.<sup>155</sup> In time the privileges were expanded and groups of prisoners in the Pietermaritzburg Prison were allocated rooms in which they could do woodworking and keep their tools.<sup>156</sup>

### 9.2.5 Contact with the outside world

Despite being imprisoned Natal rebels managed to keep contact with, and gain news from, the world outside prison. The easiest way to establish contact with the outside world was through letters. The first group of arrested Natal Afrikaners to write letters for this purpose were those on board the *Catalonia* in the Durban harbour. In their correspondence to family and friends they refrained from writing about the war and generally focussed on personal matters.<sup>157</sup> In time certain codes related to the weather and farming were used to circumvent the censorship of letters. The word “vooros” in a letter apparently referred to a general, “osse” meant officers, “springhane” meant soldiers, “donder/onweder” meant a battle and “hagel” signified destruction by soldiers. Stamps affixed to letters also carried clues. When things went badly stamps were pasted in a skew manner - the more skew the stamp the worse matters and/or conditions were.<sup>158</sup> Such elaborate secretive measures were not always necessary. While in exile in the Netherlands and later German South West Africa (Namibia), CT Vermaak kept up a steady correspondence with his brother JS Vermaak in the Eshowe Prison, without being detected. The pseudonym Miss Cora Herzog was used to protect the identity of CT Vermaak. In the process they conducted business affairs and exchanged news on the war and family.<sup>159</sup>

Frequently letters or telegrams received by prisoners brought bad tidings, such as the removal of women and children to concentration camps, looting of livestock and the death of a family member.<sup>160</sup> Theunis Paulus Lezar, whose correspondence was handled by Prozesky, received such a letter from his wife informing him that one of his daughter had died of measles.<sup>161</sup> JC Buys and his brother Izak of Rietkuil, Ladysmith, likewise received sad tidings: “Op de 14de van die maant heeft ons een treurige tyding gekrygen, ons heef een telegram gekregen dat ons oude Vader gestroven is. Het is bitter swaar om in deze plek zoo een treurige tyding te krygen, mar wat kan ons doen ons moet mar tevrede en geduldig wees onder de hand des Heere.” The Buys family was particularly

---

153. VTR, JC Vermaak collection 03/2554/2: Document entitled “Grappe in die tronk”, no date.

154. WM, Dagboek van Johannes Christoffel Buys: Deel 2, 16.11.1901, p.33.

155. WM, Dagboek van Johannes Christoffel Buys: Deel 2, 28.2.1901, p.12.

156. WM, Dagboek van Johannes Christoffel Buys: Deel 2, 11.8.1901, p.25.

157. PAR, AGO I/7/46: Incriminating letters written by Natal rebels imprisoned on board the *Catalonia*, no date.

158. OE Prozesky private collection, Diary of JJA Prozesky: Diary entry, 17 or 19.11.1900, pp.451-452.

159. Foy Vermaak private collection: JC Vermaak between 19.3.1901 and 5.6.1902 wrote at least 27 letters to CT Vermaak alias Cora Herzog.

160. OE Prozesky private collection, Diary of JJA Prozesky: Diary entry, 6.1.1901, p.473.

161. OE Prozesky private collection, Diary of JJA Prozesky: Diary entry, 4.9.1901, p.524.

hard hit and while imprisoned not only had to deal with the death of their father but also that of their sister Mrs P Lotter,<sup>162</sup> and their brother, JP Buys, who died while awaiting trial in the Ladysmith Prison.<sup>163</sup> On a more positive note, the brothers received permission from the authorities, just before their father's death, to accompanied by policemen go and visit him. On arrival in Ladysmith by train they hired a cart and horses from the Royal Hotel and proceeded to the farm Rietkuil for a visit which lasted from 10:00 to 16:00. Afterwards they returned to Ladysmith and waited in prison until the train arrived to take them back to Pietermaritzburg.<sup>164</sup>

Generally the military authorities had no problem in allowing rebel prisoners to attend funerals or visit sick family members. The only condition was that the civil authorities accept full responsibility and provide a police escort.<sup>165</sup> In line with this policy the Meyer's, incarcerated in Pietermaritzburg, attended the funeral of Andries Naude,<sup>166</sup> while the ill Jim Truscott's brother was granted leave from Pietermaritzburg Prison to visit him in the Estcourt Hospital.<sup>167</sup>

Not all such requests were, however, granted. The Cronjé brothers, HB and PJ, asked to visit their dying mother on the farm Dwars Rivier between Wasbank and Ladysmith. This was denied because Inspector Dorehill of the Natal Police regarded the proposed escort as insufficient since a third Cronjé brother, for whom a warrant of arrest had been issued, was presumed to be in the area.<sup>168</sup> Apart from the above-mentioned visits the only other way in which prisoners could venture beyond the confines of the prison was when they were subpoenaed to testify in other rebel cases. On such occasions they could, for example, travel from Eshowe and Pietermaritzburg to Northern Natal and back. In the process information would be obtained about the war, families and other prisoners.<sup>169</sup> Returning witnesses were thus able to report in March 1901 that the districts of Ladysmith, Dundee and Newcastle were cleared of livestock and that most of the women and children had been removed to the Pietermaritzburg Concentration Camp. The only Afrikaner residents left were loyalists and old people.<sup>170</sup>

The most regular direct contact with the outside world was through visitors.<sup>171</sup> Regulations stated

---

162. WM, Dagboek van Johannes Christoffel Buys: Deel 2, 16.11.1901, p.33.

163. PAR, 1/LDS 3/1/16: Letter Magistrate TR Bennett to colonial secretary, 7.9.1900.

164. WM, Dagboek van Johannes Christoffel Buys: Deel 2, 13.10.1901, pp.31-32.

165. PAR, CSO 1682: Telegram magistrate Newcastle to PUS C Bird, 5.8.1901.

166. Foy Vermaak private collection: Letter JC Vermaak to CT Vermaak alias Miss C Herzog, 17.6.1901.

167. WM, Dagboek van Johannes Christoffel Buys: Deel 2, 6.3.1901, p.13.

168. PAR, 1/LDS 3/3/14: Correspondence regarding the request of HB Cronjé to be allowed to visit his mother, 31.10.1900-7.11.1900.

169. Foy Vermaak private collection: Letters JC Vermaak to CT Vermaak alias Miss C Herzog, 22.3.1901 and 12.6.1901; PAR, AGO I/8/80: Minute paper regarding the summons of rebel prisoners as witnesses, 12.7.1901-17.7.1901.

170. Foy Vermaak private collection: Letter JC Vermaak to CT Vermaak alias Miss C Herzog, 24.3.1901.

171. PAR, CSO 1662: Application by J Shepstone to visit Piet Hogg, 12.11.1900-22.11.1900; PAR, CSO 2583: Telegram Sub-Inspector Meiners to chief commissioner of police, 6.11.1899.

that prisoners could only receive visitors twice a week for 30 minutes at a time. The prisoners were called by the warden on duty and after the visit they had to sign a register indicating that they had received visitors. The wardens, either through oversight or kindness, sometimes allowed three visits per week. It was also possible to receive three groups of visitors per week by conveniently forgetting to sign the visitors register, thus providing no proof of an earlier visit.<sup>172</sup>

Especially the Pietermaritzburg Prison was frequented by visits from friends,<sup>173</sup> family members,<sup>174</sup> and even the wife and daughter of General Christiaan de Wet of whom JC Buys wrote as follows: “sy kan regte veel praat zij is nog een opregte boer.”<sup>175</sup> These visitors brought gifts for the prisoners ranging from fruit and food to tobacco. Prisoners treasured both the goods and the packaging in which it was brought as this useful material could be turned into shelves and sorely needed storage space.<sup>176</sup>

The importance prisoners attached to the visits from family and friends can be gauged by the conflict it caused in the Pietermaritzburg Prison with the Sunday sermons. Ds WP Rousseau’s complaint that some prisoners were called out for visits while he preached, and his subsequent request that no visitors be allowed during his sermons caused such tension that some prisoners indicated they would not attend at all as they did not want to jeopardise Sunday visits from relatives and friends. In response the governor of the prison threatened to put a stop to the regular Sunday sermon.<sup>177</sup> Furthermore, when the inhabitants of the Pietermaritzburg Concentration Camp were stopped from visiting the prison apparently to prevent the spread of measles, the rebel prisoners protested. They refused to accept the explanation and interpreted it as a punitive measure since the camp inhabitants could move about Pietermaritzburg without restriction.<sup>178</sup>

In contrast to the Pietermaritzburg Prison, Eshowe received very few visitors. Since it was geographically isolated and difficult to reach, only very determined family members like Annie Krogman and Mrs Meyer made the journey.<sup>179</sup> Both prisons, however, received visits from curious local inhabitants on a regular basis. These were brought into the prison to gape at the rebel prisoners in their cells.<sup>180</sup> This kind of visitor was generally not welcomed by the prisoners and JC Buys

---

172. WM, Dagboek van Johannes Christoffel Buys: Deel 2, 8.2.1901-19.2.1901, pp.8-10.

173. PAR, CSO 1662: Application by J Shepstone to visit Piet Hogg, 12.11.1900-22.11.1900; WM, Dagboek van Johannes Christoffel Buys: Deel 2, 27.1.1901, p.5.

174. WM, Dagboek van Johannes Christoffel Buys: Deel 2, 10-12.2.1901, p.8.

175. WM, Dagboek van Johannes Christoffel Buys: Deel 2, 25.8.1901, pp.27-28.

176. WM, Dagboek van Johannes Christoffel Buys: Deel 2, 27.1.1901, 19.2.1901, 9.3.1901, pp.5, 10 and 13.

177. WM, Dagboek van Johannes Christoffel Buys: Deel 2, 28.4.1901, pp.17-18.

178. WM, Dagboek van Johannes Christoffel Buys: Deel 2, 25.8.1901, pp.27-28.

179. OE Prozesky private collection, Diary of JJA Prozesky: Diary entry, 6.2.1901, p.485.

180. OE Prozesky private collection, Diary of JJA Prozesky: Diary entry, *circa* February 1901, p.490.

derogatorily referred to them as “Engelsche vleries.”<sup>181</sup>

One local English visitor who was welcomed to the Pietermaritzburg Prison was an entrepreneurial photographer. Over a three day period he took photographs of individual and groups of rebels. One woman even came into prison with her children to be photographed with her husband for what was described as “een goede aandenking.”<sup>182</sup>

All the contact with the outside world, however, did not ease the pining for freedom. According to Prozesky this feeling was worst during exercise time: “... when we look eastwards, we see beyond the wall of the prison a little piece of world, and whenever I look that way, I feel as if I am still connected to the outside world. And when I look up, I see the beautiful sky in which the clouds pass by. Whey they are going in a northerly direction, I send greetings to my dear ones, and when they are coming from the north, I imagine that my dear ones are sending greetings to me.”<sup>183</sup>

### 9.2.6 The release of the rebel prisoners

In line with the longing for their loved ones the rebels always hoped that they would obtain amnesty before the completion of their sentences. Consequently there was much talk that they would be liberated at the time of Queen Victoria’s death, late January 1901. To exploit this opportunity the rebels, under the leadership of Johannes Vermaak, drew up a telegram of condolences to the king-to-be, Edward. The governor of the Eshowe Prison, however, refused to forward it.<sup>184</sup>

The second occasion on which rebels were hopeful that they could obtain amnesty was with the visit to Natal by Prince Arthur, the Duke of Connaught. Several letters published in the *Natal Witness* expressed the view that the “political prisoners” should be released or their sentences reduced during the visit.<sup>185</sup> From within the Afrikaner community Gert van Rooyen wrote to Attorney-General Henry Bale asking that as an act of royal mercy the rebels be released. The rebel prisoners incarcerated in Pietermaritzburg also did their bit to try and secure freedom and sent the duke a violin, a frame, a bottle, and a slangkassie (jack-in-a-box) so that he could see “dat de barbaarsche natie welke hy van gehoor heeft niet zoo is also wat hy dag.” These requests were unsuccessful and all the prisoners gained from the visit was to see flags hoisted in preparation of the visit and hear the sounds of the festivities such as the singing of African voices.<sup>186</sup>

---

181. WM, Dagboek van Johannes Christoffel Buys: Deel 2, 27.1.1901, pp.5.

182. WM, Dagboek van Johannes Christoffel Buys: Deel 2, 21.7.1901-23.7.1901, pp.22-23; OE Prozesky private collection, Diary of JJA Prozesky: Diary entry, 17 or 19 November 1900, p.453; NAR, Photographs 7163 and 7164: Veroordeelde rebellen in de gevangenis te Pietermaritzburg, 1.2.1902.

183. OE Prozesky private collection, Diary of JJA Prozesky: Diary entry, Introduction, p.384.

184. OE Prozesky private collection, Diary of JJA Prozesky: Diary entry, 11.1.1901, p.473.

185. *Natal Witness*, 14.8.1901.

186. WM Dagboek van Johannes Christoffel Buys: Deel 2, 18.8.1901, pp.26-27.

The Natal authorities were also not willing to release rebels from prison before their sentences were served. In the light of this Gerrit Adendorff, who was condemned to nine months imprisonment, had his request to be released because of a valvular disease of the heart and enteric fever, rejected by the governor of Natal.<sup>187</sup> Similarly AE Douglas of Dannhauser failed to have Hendrik Dafel's nine month sentence remitted. Douglas testified that Dafel and his family had showed great kindness to him and his brother during the Boer occupation of Northern Natal. With the arrival of the British forces in the area in May 1900, Douglas his brother and three other people, had brought Dafel's good deeds to the attention of Lt-Col David Henderson of the military intelligence. Henderson used this information to give a favourable report to AAG Intelligence Natal to help Dafel should he be brought to trial. Dafel did not get the benefit of Douglas's request because the letter written by Henderson could not be found.<sup>188</sup> In the end the only rebel to be pardoned by the governor of Natal was the elderly and sickly AC Vermaak from Paddock, Dundee.<sup>189</sup> Vermaak died five months before peace was declared.<sup>190</sup>

The only way in which convicted rebels could gain their freedom was by serving their sentences. Any release was preceded by extensive administrative duties. A fortnight before the discharge of a rebel the prison involved had to provide the Natal Police with the appropriate names.<sup>191</sup> The names were then, along with a notification of the time-expired rebel's intended place of residence, forwarded to the military so that the commanding officer of the district in question could be consulted.<sup>192</sup> Once released, the rebel prisoner had to report to the commandant of Pietermaritzburg. On completion of an interrogation session, the former prisoner was ordered to the office of the Criminal Investigation Department (CID) where the officer in charge, mostly Inspector Clarke, would command the rebel to remain in Pietermaritzburg and report to the police twice a week. In a limited number of cases rebels were allowed to proceed to the areas they came from, or to the homes of friends and family.<sup>193</sup>

If and when time-expired rebels were allowed to reside outside Pietermaritzburg, security to the amount of £500 had to be paid by those who were prepared to accommodate the individual. The person willing to harbour the ex-prisoner was also first investigated by the Natal Police. This was the procedure when BA Bester applied for permission for his son JJ (Johannes) to reside on the farm

---

187. PAR, CSO 1662: Petition by G Adendorff for his release from confinement, 16.11.1900-15.12.1900.

188. PAR, AGO I/8/78: Enquiry by AE Douglas about the possible remittance of the sentence imposed on H Dafel, 24.3.1901-22.4.1901.

189. Foy Vermaak private collection: Letter JC Vermaak to CT Vermaak alias Miss C Herzog, 17.6.1901.

190. PAR, CSO 2910: Invasion Losses Enquiry Commission: Claim by H Vermaak, 15.1.1903

191. VTR, JC Vermaak collection, 03/18987: Discharge certificate for JJ Kemp from the Pietermaritzburg Prison, 3.2.1902.

192. PAR, MJPW 83: Correspondence regarding the discharge of rebels from prison, 3.3.1901-25.3.1901.

193. PAR, PM 22: Correspondence regarding application by PC Cronjé to proceed to the farm of CJ Labuschagne, 8.6.1901-18.6.1901.

Rama near Ladysmith. He gave his farm Abergeldie, which was valued at £500, and which he had to prove was free from mortgage, as security. Once this was proved Johannes moved to Rama on the following Martial Law conditions: he could only leave the farm with the permission of the officer commanding; he had to refrain from communicating with burghers or colonials who supported the Republican cause; and was not allowed to show any disloyalty towards the king or the British forces by word or deed.<sup>194</sup>

Released rebels also faced other obstacles in their attempt to return home. Lawyers Hershensohn and McGillewie requested permission from the colonial secretary for TR Dannhauser, a time expired rebel from Cecilia Dale, Dundee, to return home. They pointed out that Dannhauser was poor and one of the first rebels whose sentence had expired. He was, however, compelled to remain in Pietermaritzburg while his family was on the farm. This disturbed both Dannhauser and his lawyers as the greater majority of the rebels from the Dundee district who had served their sentences had been granted passes to go home. Hershensohn and McGillewie thus alleged that “passes to return to Dundee have been issued indiscriminately at Dundee and men who were released long after our client has returned to their farms, and in one case one Cronjé received his pass to return although he had still a month to serve.” The lawyers brought these facts to the attention of the CID in Pietermaritzburg who was aware of the fact that passes were being issued by either Captain Stieble<sup>195</sup> of the VCR or the commandant of Dundee without reference to the CID. Hershensohn and McGillewie also felt aggrieved by the system since all their applications received negative responses while the agents and lawyers acting from Dundee had no problem in satisfying their clients.<sup>196</sup> The Natal Government acknowledged the problem but were, under Martial Law, unable and unwilling to act.<sup>197</sup>

The Natal Government also found itself in a predicament when the military refused to allow rebels, who had completed their prison sentences, to return home. The government tried its level best to keep these former prisoners out of the concentration camps, so that they would avoid having to pay for their keep. In fact, the Natal Government was not even prepared to pay for the railway tickets of rebels allowed to leave Pietermaritzburg since they did not regard it as their duty to do so.<sup>198</sup> A point in case was AJ and JJ Moolman. On their release in Ladysmith, after serving their sentence of five months, these former rebels found themselves destitute. Consequently the GOC wanted to send them

---

194. PAR, PM 29: Application by JJ Bester to be allowed to return to his fathers farm, 8.2.1902-26.2.1902; For another example of this process see: PAR, 1/GTN 3/2/9: Correspondence about the conditions under which JE Jordaan could proceed to Greytown, 20.5.1902-31.5.1902.

195. Other members of the VCR, notably Captain Gold, also had a good relationship with Natal Afrikaners. Under his command CL Cronjé and Miss Meyer were allowed to search the house of PD Twyman for stolen goods. See PAR, 1/LDS 3/3/5: Statement by PD Twyman, 5.8.1901.

196. PAR, CSO 1687: Letter Hershensohn and McGillewie to colonial secretary, 2.10.1901.

197. PAR, CSO 1687: Letter assistant under secretary to Hershensohn and McGillewie, 9.10.1901.

198. PAR, CSO 1684: Natal Government Railways passenger account for discharged prisoners, 5.9.1901.

down to the Pietermaritzburg Concentration Camp. Prime Minister Hime immediately wanted to know if this move was to be paid for by the military or the Natal Government. Fortunately for the men they found work in Ladysmith.<sup>199</sup>

The tightfistedness of the Natal Government made life extremely difficult for the liberated rebels as shown by the following examples. Hershensohn and McGillewie applied on behalf of Johannes Hermanus Potgieter, on completion of his sentence, for admission into the Pietermaritzburg Camp. He had been living on the charity of friends since his release from prison and could not afford to pay his board and lodging and was prevented from returning to his farm by the military. Potgieter had a half share in the farm Grootgeluk near Newcastle, the instalments of which were paid by his mother-in-law, Mrs JJ Meyer. As was normal, the Natal colonial authorities tasked the police to conduct an investigation into the case. The investigation found that Potgieter's grandfather, an owner of four farms equalling 5 436 acres, had recently passed away. Although his estate was not yet settled, Potgieter's father would inherit the farms. This, together with the fact that he owned property in Natal, caused the Natal authorities to deny his request to enter the concentration camp.<sup>200</sup> Abraham Marthinus Cronjé who owned four farms,<sup>201</sup> and Daniel Rudolph de Wet of Rietspruit, Newcastle, whose family owned a large amount of landed property but had lost all their livestock, were likewise, barred from entering the Pietermaritzburg Concentration Camp.<sup>202</sup>

The same fate befell the requests of another time-expired rebel, PH Labuschagne of Stonehill, Dundee. On his release from prison Labuschagne requested permission to be admitted into the Pietermaritzburg Camp so he could join his parents, but failed in his application because he stated that he could not find work in Pietermaritzburg. Inspector Clarke of the Natal Police believed Labuschagne did not "want work, he appears to be of the loafing type." Labuschagne soon proved Clarke wrong and obtained employment, but only earned 4/- per day on the days when there was sufficient work, while his board and lodging cost him 5/6 per day. Consequently Labuschagne again applied to be allowed to reside in the camp where his mother "will do her best to provide for me in the way of rations, and with my slender pay I can assist her." His request was again rejected and Clarke unfairly stated: "I judge from the present actions and demeanour of these people that they intend, in the event of a first refusal, to inundate the Government and the Commandant with repeated applications, with a view to tiring the Government into consent."<sup>203</sup>

---

199. PAR, CSO 1682: Correspondence regarding the status of AJ and JJ Moolman, 27.7.1901-16.9.1901.

200. PAR, MJPW 87: Correspondence regarding the application of JH Potgieter to join the Pietermaritzburg Concentration Camp, 4.9.1901-18.9.1901.

201. PAR, MJPW 89: Correspondence pertaining to the applications of JL and AM Cronjé to enter the Pietermaritzburg Concentration Camp, 18.11.1901-14.12.1901.

202. PAR, MJPW 91: Correspondence regarding the request by CJ de Wet that her son might join her in the Pietermaritzburg Concentration Camp on his release, 7.1.1902-13.1.1902.

203. PAR, MJPW 89: Correspondence regarding the application by PH Labuschagne to enter the Pietermaritzburg Concentration Camp, 25.11.1901-30.12.1901.

Time-expired rebels stood no chance against such an attitude as LP de Jager found out. As a man with no property he had before the war resided with his father on the farm Bakenkop near Dundee. At the time of his request to return home he was residing in the boarding house of Mrs de Haas in Boshoff Street, Pietermaritzburg. When interviewed about his financial standing De Jager's demeanour was described as "...very impudent in his manner and slouched out of the office before any more information could be gathered on his means..." Not surprisingly his request was denied, as was a later request.<sup>204</sup>

The plight of these time-expired rebels is best described by WP Rousseau: In "Maritzburg verscheidenen na maanden lange gevangenis nu vrijlaten en die toch niet naar hunne woningen mogen terugkeeren. Zij moeten nu hier zonder een pfenning op zak leven. Enkelen hunner zijn zoo gelukkig geweest verlof te krijgen om in het kamp te gaan wonen en daar 'rations' te krijgen. Doch velen loopen rond op de straten in armoede en gebrek. Wat in deze gevallen te doen, is ons een raadsel."<sup>205</sup>

The situation as outlined caused rebel prisoners to develop their own philosophy on liberation from prison. Comparing his own status to that of individuals who could not get permission to leave Pietermaritzburg and had to report regularly to either the police or the military, Prozesky stated: "... he is worse off, in that his prison is bigger and he has to pay for his own board and lodging."<sup>206</sup> The conditions associated with liberty, as a result, acted as an incentive to some rebels not to pay their fines and thus remain in prison.<sup>207</sup> Missionary Prozesky who held this view was threatened that if he did not pay his fine his property would be sold. He refused and argued that he did not have property to the value of £500 as most of it was stolen. Prozesky was thus informed that the sale of his property would take place on 6 July 1901.<sup>208</sup> His belongings eventually fetched £123.14. - a highly inflated price according to him.<sup>209</sup> JC Buys likewise failed to pay his fine of £100 and had to serve another three months.<sup>210</sup>

This hard-nosed attempt of the Natal Government at saving costs, which at the same time acted as a punitive measure, was maintained until it was realised in late 1901 that the policy was almost

---

204. PAR, MJPW 88: Correspondence regarding the application of LJ de Jager to enter the Pietermaritzburg Concentration Camp, 31.10.1901-18.1.1902.

205. *De Kerkbode*, 12.12.1901.

206. OE Prozesky private collection, Diary of JJA Prozesky: Diary entries, 26.9.1901, pp.528.

207. OE Prozesky private collection, Diary of JJA Prozesky: Diary entry, 15.6.1901, p.508; PAR, AGO I/7/44: List of prisoners undergoing sentence for high treason, 25.6.1902.

208. OE Prozesky private collection, Diary of JJA Prozesky: Diary entry, 7.6.1901, p.504.

209. OE Prozesky private collection, Diary of JJA Prozesky: Diary entry, 16.7.1901, p.516.

210. WM, Dagboek van Johannes Christoffel Buys: Deel 2, 15.9.1901, p.29.

impossible to implement.<sup>211</sup> From then onwards the procedure was relaxed and time-expired rebels such as PH Nel of Kalverfontein, Dundee, FAJ van Niekerk of Langklip, Newcastle, NJ Degenaar of Ingagane, Newcastle, JC and IJM Buys of Rietkuil, Ladysmith, and SJ Brooks of Newcastle, amongst others, were allowed to enter the concentration camps at the expense of the government.<sup>212</sup>

Of all the hundreds of Natal Afrikaners who served prison sentences for high treason only one, a certain Van Niekerk, described by JC Buys as, “zoo een schurk”, was rearrested after his release. He received a sentence of one month hard labour because he had broken into a tent in the Pietermaritzburg Concentration Camp.<sup>213</sup>

Contrary to what happened in POW camps, not a single rebel attempted to escape from prison. This was the case in spite of the successful escape by Burghers Felix Coetzee, Southall and Le Roux from the Pietermaritzburg Prison, proving that such a step was possible.<sup>214</sup>

### 9.3 Natal Afrikaners in the concentration camps

The largest number of Natal Afrikaners to be detained were those in the concentration camps.<sup>215</sup>

These camps, erected to pacify and care for the Boer population, resulted in the creation of several camps in Natal namely at: Ladysmith, Eshowe, Howick, Colenso, Pinetown, Pietermaritzburg, Jacobs, Wentworth and Merebank.<sup>216</sup>

#### 9.3.1 Removal and life in the concentration camps

The first concentration camp to be created in Natal was the one located at Fort Napier in Pietermaritzburg. The camp was officially created in August 1900 making it, after Mafeking, the

---

211. PAR, CSO 1732: Correspondence regarding the admission of CJ Lombaard into the Pietermaritzburg Concentration Camp, 3.4.1902-23.8.1902.

212. NAR, DBC 139: List of bachelors in the Pietermaritzburg camp, undated; WM, Dagboek van Johannes Christoffel Buys: Deel 2, 14.12.1901, p.34; PAR, MJPW 88: Correspondence regarding the application of SJ Brooks to enter the Pietermaritzburg Concentration Camp, 21.9.1901-10.10.1901; OE Prozesky private collection, Diary of JJA Prozesky: Diary entry, 26.9.1901, p.528.

213. WM, Dagboek van Johannes Christoffel Buys: Deel 2, 4.8.1901, pp.24-25.

214. VTR JC Vermaak collection, 03/19980: Letter unknown (possibly JC Vermaak) to Professor Uys, 3.11.1955; PAR, 1/PMB 2/3/2/2: Minute paper from the governor of the Pietermaritzburg Prison regarding the placing in irons of three prisoners, 29.7.1901.

215. For general works from various historiographical perspectives on the concentration camp system see, amongst others, the following: N Devitt, *The concentration camps in South Africa during the Anglo-Boer War of 1889-1902*; AC Martin, *The concentration camps 1900-1902: facts, figures and fables*; JC Otto, *Die konsentrasiekampe*; SB Spies, *Methods of barbarism? Roberts and Kitchener and civilians in the Boer Republics: January 1900 - May 1902*.

216. The history of several Natal Concentration Camps are well documented, see: AU Wohlberg, *The Merebank Concentration Camp in Durban, 1901-1902*. MA-thesis, UOFS, 2000; AU Wohlberg, *The Durban Concentration Camps: Merebank, Wentworth and Jacobs*, in JM Wassermann and BT Kearney (eds.), *A warrior's gateway: Durban and the Anglo-Boer War 1899-1902*, pp.272-303; JM Wassermann, *The Eshowe concentration and surrendered burghers camp during the Anglo-Boer War 1899-1902*; JM Wassermann, *The Pinetown Concentration Camp during the Anglo-Boer War (1899-1902)*. It is beyond the scope of this thesis to investigate any of the mentioned camps in detail but merely to illuminate the experiences of Natal Afrikaners in these, and other camps, in the system.

second oldest camp in the system.<sup>217</sup> The first inhabitants arrived on 10 August 1900.<sup>218</sup> The first Natal Afrikaners to arrive were Mrs JH Breytenbach and her seven children from Newcastle who were described as destitute and accused of hiding dynamite on their farm. After their arrival, a steady trickle of “undesirable” Natal Afrikaners such as Mrs GF Maritz, Mrs M Botha and her baby, Mrs JB Louw and her four children all from Newcastle, joined them. In their wake followed, on 2 November 1900, so-called undesirables namely Mrs Gregory and her governess Miss Latty, and Mrs ME Kock<sup>219</sup> and her four children, all from Dundee.<sup>220</sup>

From then on, until just before the war ended, hundreds of Natal Afrikaners were deported to especially the Pietermaritzburg Concentration Camp. The full range of justifications for sending Natal Afrikaner women and children becomes clear when studying the camp registers.<sup>221</sup> Reasons offered included: “Anti British”; “For protection”; “Undesirable”; “Destitute”; “Suspect”; “Refugee”; “Husband tried for treason”; “Own request”; “Military reasons farm had to be cleared”; “No reason given”; “Cattle in the Transvaal”; “Rebel” and “Harbouring enemy.”<sup>222</sup> Clearly a large range of reasons, many punitive as part of the total war waged against Natal Afrikaners, others humanitarian in nature<sup>223</sup> or motivated by Martial Law.

The process involved in removing Natal Afrikaners to the concentration camps, as explained by CM Meyer of Gladstone, Dundee, mimicked that experienced by their Republican kin:

At noon on the 6<sup>th</sup> of November 1900 some Policemen came to my house and told me that my family and I must all be at the station at 3 o’c that afternoon - I had no opportunity of making any arrangements but had to leave everything on the farm just as it was...We were sent to the Refugee Camp P.M.B. but only remained there 3 days after which we obtained permission to live in town. I went to a boarding House where I remained with my family for two months when I took a house for myself. I was not allowed to go back to my farm till 17<sup>th</sup> April 1901.<sup>224</sup>

The arrival in the concentration camps of these Natal Afrikaners was a continuous process which carried on up to the end of hostilities. The process of cleansing the northern districts of Natal was greatly aimed at Afrikaners who were, with few exceptions, all viewed as disloyal. Under Martial Law it was possible for the military to remove people whom they suspected, like for example, Piet

---

217. Cd. 893: Report on the concentration camps in South Africa by the Committee of Ladies appointed by the secretary for war containing reports on the camps in Natal, the Orange River Colony and the Transvaal, p.30.

218. NAR, DBC 135: Register of residents M-Z in the Pietermaritzburg Concentration Camp, Aug 1900-Jun 1901.

219. PAR, CSO 2888: Invasion Losses Enquiry Commission: Claim by ME Kock, 24.10.1902.

220. J Ploeger, pp.41.4-41.6.

221. NAR, DBC, 140: Register of residents in the Pietermaritzburg Concentration Camp, Aug 1900-Jun 1900.

222. NAR, DBC 134-142: Register of residents in the Pietermaritzburg Concentration Camp, 1900-1902.

223. PAR, PM 22: Letter HE van Vure to Lt CM Threlfill, VIII Hussars, 29.6.1901. Her husband, Stephanus Johannes, spelt his surname Van Vuuren.

224. PAR, CSO 2894: Invasion Losses Enquiry Commission: Claim by CN Meyer, 13.1.1903.

Conradie and his son from the Newcastle district to the Pietermaritzburg Concentration Camp, at will while leaving their wives and children behind on the farm.<sup>225</sup> In this process the colonial authorities had very little say. They merely had to tow the line and try and influence the process by means of enquiries and correspondence.

Transfers of Natal Afrikaners between the various concentration camps in the Colony also took place from time to time. The rationale behind this was that allowing people to join families and friends would alleviate the population pressure in certain camps. A point in case is the transfers that took place shortly after the creation of the Howick Concentration Camp.<sup>226</sup> On 2 February 1901, to accommodate some members of the burgeoning population of the Pietermaritzburg Camp, 82 Natal Afrikaners were transferred to Howick. Included in the number were “undesirables” like Annie Vermaak of Helpmekaar<sup>227</sup> and DJ Pringle and his six children from Newcastle, who after a Boer raid in December 1900 in the Newcastle area, asked to be sent to a concentration camp.<sup>228</sup> The same process took place when the Merebank Concentration Camp was created in September 1901. Sixty five Natal Afrikaners, including some time expired rebels, were transferred to the camp from Pietermaritzburg. The first of these to arrive on 24 October 1901, were Judith Margaret Rall (aged 26) and her five-year-old son Adriaan Matthys from Klippoort, Newcastle. Her husband Johannes was convicted as a rebel and sentenced to nine months imprisonment. By 12 November 1901, there were 65 Natal Afrikaners in the Merebank Concentration Camp from either the Newcastle, Dundee or Melmoth districts. The oldest in this group were the 83-year-old Adrian Johannes Rall and his 75-year-old wife Johanna Susika, while the youngest was the six-month-old Fredrika van der Walt from the farm Belfry in the Dundee district.<sup>229</sup> In time Natal Afrikaners were also relocated to the newly created Jacobs Camp in Durban.<sup>230</sup> Moving from Transvaal to Natal Camps was also allowed. One such example was JS Lezar, the wife of rebel TGP Lezar, and her seven children between the ages of four and 13 who were, on 3 August 1901, relocated from the Volksrust to the Pietermaritzburg Camp.<sup>231</sup>

The concentration camp experiences of Natal Afrikaners differed very little from those experienced by other inhabitants of the well managed Natal Concentration Camp system. One aspect of camp life shared by all inhabitants was death. Although the death rate in the Natal Camps is not comparable to that in the camps under the Transvaal and OFS administration, a significant number of deaths did occur. Amongst these were 28 Natal Afrikaners. (see Appendix G) The majority of the deaths

---

225. PAR, CSO 2871: Invasion Losses Enquiry Commission: Claim by P Conradie, 15.10.1902.

226. NAR, A 2030, 81: Besonderhede oor die kamp te Howick, no date.

227. NAR, DBC 111: Register of residents A-L in the Howick Concentration Camp, Jan 1901-Nov 1902.

228. PAR, CSO 2900: Invasion Losses Enquiry Commission: Claim by DJ Pringle, 13.10.1902.

229. PAR, CSO 1732: Reply by H Bousfield to a enquiry about the number of Natalians in Merebank, 12.11.1901.

230. PAR, CSO 1710: List of Natal Afrikaners who were sent to Merebank, 16.8.1902.

231. NAR, DBC 142: Register of residents in the Pietermaritzburg Concentration Camp, Oct 1900-May 1901.

amongst Natal Afrikaners occurred in the camp which housed the highest number of Natal Afrikaners, namely Pietermaritzburg.<sup>232</sup> The most important causes for the deaths suffered by Natal Afrikaners mirrors those of the concentration camp system in general: pneumonia, measles and enteritis. Certain families were also harder hit than others and the Botha/Van Niekerk, the Coetzer and the Shorter families lost several members each.<sup>233</sup> These deaths were to a certain extent balanced by the births to Natal Afrikaners. Like the deaths this occurred almost exclusively in the Pietermaritzburg Camp.<sup>234</sup>

The approximate number of Natal Afrikaners who were at one stage or another listed in the registers of the various Natal Camps roughly totalled: Pietermaritzburg 537, Merebank 130, Howick 70, Jacobs 43 and Eshowe 1. A further 194 Natal Afrikaners resided at one stage or another in the Volksrust Concentration Camp,<sup>235</sup> and 23 in the Standerton Concentration Camp.<sup>236</sup> When studying the figures it must be borne in mind that many individuals transferred between camps and were resident in more than one before leaving to reside with family or friends or returning home.<sup>237</sup> The approximate 900 to 1 000 Natal Afrikaner concentration camp inhabitants constituted between 20% and 25% of the Afrikaner population of Natal. Amongst them were individuals who fulfilled important roles within the camp system like Mrs van Schalkwyk who acted as midwife,<sup>238</sup> and PRN Vermaak who did sterling work as the head of the concentration camp school in Pietermaritzburg.<sup>239</sup>

Although Natal Afrikaners had much in common with their fellow camp inhabitants from the Republics such as language and culture, and many of them had also suffered greatly during the war, they were a sub-group which could be differentiated by the fact that they were British subjects who had support structures at hand, for they could appeal directly to their government or local politicians. They could also easily call on members of their extended families because they were geographically not far from their homes. At the same time, unlike their Republican counterparts, Natal Afrikaner camp inhabitants did not suffer the feeling that they had lost their country and that they were imprisoned in a foreign state. As such they were, according to Mrs Isabella A Grobler in the

---

232. Natal Afrikaners banned to Pietermaritzburg, but who resided outside of the concentration camps, also lost family members to death. For example, Carolina Vermaak died of enteric fever. Foy Vermaak private collection: Letter JC Vermaak to CT Vermaak alias Miss C Herzog, 2.3.1902

233. PAR, AGO I/8/85: Minute paper regarding the death of Carl Posselt, 3.6.1902-10.6.1902; PAR, GH 554: Monthly reports for Natal Concentration Camps, 1901-1903; NAR, DBC 110-157: Registers for Natal Concentration Camps, 1900-1903; NGKA: Doodslyste vir die Merebank en Jacobs Konsentrasiekampe, 1900-1903; AU Wohlberg, *The Merebank...*, pp.242-261.

234. NGKA: Doopregister vir die Pietermaritzburg Konsentrasiekamp, circa 1900-1902.

235. NAR, DBC 105-107: Registers of residents in the Volksrust Concentration Camp, Jan 1901-Jan 1903.

236. NAR, DBC 95-98: Registers of residents in the Standerton Concentration Camp, Jan 1901-Jan 1903.

237. NAR, DBC 134-142: Registers of residents in the Pietermaritzburg Concentration Camp, Aug 1900-Dec 1902.

238. MM Postma, (versamelaar), *Stemme uit die verlede. 'n Versameling beëdigde verklarings van vroue wat tydens die Tweede Vryheidsoorlog in die konsentrasiekampe verkeer het*, p.89.

239. NAR, A 2030, 98: A South African diary - reprinted from the *Daily News; De Kerkbode*, 4.4.1901.

Pietermaritzburg Concentration Camp, referred to as the “Natal Rebels.”<sup>240</sup>

### 9.3.2 The Natal Government and the economics of keeping their subjects in the concentration camps

Like with the rebel prisoners the Natal Government's attitude regarding the maintenance of its subjects, sent down to the concentration camps by the military was clear - they should “be told to shift for themselves.”<sup>241</sup> In the case of destitute members of society the Natal Government would, at times, make an exception.<sup>242</sup> The reluctance and even unwillingness of the Natal Government to support deported individuals was based on their principle that, since the small Colony had a limited amount of funding available to deal with the enormous expenses caused by the war, those who could afford it should pay for themselves. At the same time it was reasoned that forcing deportees to pay their own way would serve to stop the military from unnecessarily removing people to Pietermaritzburg. The policy of self-payment furthermore also served to punish “disloyal” Afrikaners financially. The Natal authorities could, however, not apply this policy in a watertight manner while dealing with the whims of the military.

The case which served to alter the Natal Government's attempts at non-payment for Natal Afrikaner families deported to Pietermaritzburg, was that of JF Britz and her two children, and Mesdames Isak, Johanna and Susannah Landman, all family members of rebels. They were handed over by the military to the civilian authorities in Newcastle for deportation to the Pietermaritzburg Concentration Camp. Because they were Natal subjects Prime Minister Hime stated that “...we have no concern in the matter.” As a result the women and children could not be transferred and were forced to sleep in the office of the police sergeant at Newcastle, while the magistrate ordered food for them from the Commercial Hotel. The situation left the magistrate with no choice but to deport the families to Pietermaritzburg where they arrived unannounced at the camp.<sup>243</sup> The reluctant camp commandant was consequently forced to accommodate the Britz and Landman families.<sup>244</sup>

This series of events did not please PUS Bird who enquired under whose authority the group was sent down. The military replied that the GOC had ordered the removal of several families including the Britz and Landman households<sup>245</sup> and that they had merely acted in accordance with their agreement with the Natal Government. This statement sent a clear signal to the Natal authorities that

---

240. MM Postma, p.89.

241. PAR, CSO 1732: Report by the magistrate Newcastle that the military had ordered him to send the De Wet, O'Reilly and Cronjé families to Pietermaritzburg, 4.7.1901-19.7.1901.

242. PAR, PM 22: Correspondence relative to HE van Vure, 7.7.1901-21.7.1901.

243. PAR, CSO 1732: Enquiry on whose authority the Britz and Landman families were relocated to Pietermaritzburg, 8.7.1901-9.7.1901.

244. PAR, CSO 1732: Correspondence regarding the transfer of the Britz and Landman families from Newcastle to Pietermaritzburg Camp, 23.6.1901-15.7.1901.

245. PAR, CSO 1732: Enquiry on whose authority the Britz and Landman families were relocated to Pietermaritzburg,

the military would decide who goes where under Martial Law, regardless of the concerns of the civilian authorities.<sup>246</sup> To put some finality to the matter, the civilian authorities requested the military to send the documents related to the transfer of the said families to Pietermaritzburg. These the military could not locate.<sup>247</sup>

The bullying tactics of the military left the Natal Government no choice but to agree to pay for the maintenance in the concentration camps of certain pauper families. In the case of those able to maintain themselves, the Natal authorities were adamant that they should be told to do so.<sup>248</sup> This decision did not conclude the matter. PUS Bird was concerned that the Natal authorities would be unable to determine whether Natal Afrikaners deported to the concentration camps were loyal or disloyal. Consequently loyalist could possibly be unfairly punished by paying for themselves. At the same time he knew of no funds from which the accounts could be settled. This financial predicament forced the Natal cabinet to find other means to resolve the problem. It was therefore decided to ask the Natal Police to ascertain which of the Natal Afrikaners in the concentration camps had property. On completion of this investigation the authorities intended to inform the military that they would not maintain Natal Afrikaners who were property owners, in the Natal Concentration Camps.

The Natal Government's idea to force Natal Afrikaners with landed property to pay for their maintenance in the concentration camps was scuttled when the acting attorney-general pointed out that it would be "undesirable that anything should be done until the expiration (*sic*) of the period fixed by the Proclamation recently issued by Lord Kitchener when the matter can be further considered."<sup>249</sup> After further consideration, on 8 November 1901, the head of the concentration camps in Natal, Sir TK (Thomas) Murray, was informed that the Natal Government could not take any liability for Natal colonists who could henceforth be admitted into the concentration camps, unless they had, after due enquiry, been admitted with approval and sanction.

This decision meant that wealthy Natal Afrikaner families such as that of Pieter Cronjé who owned 2 042 acres and five plots in Weenen and Newcastle, Hendrick Ostawald Eksteen who owned 5 680 acres, Johannes Abraham Landman who owned 7 563 acres, Lodewyk JJ Muller who owned 15 050 acres, and various others, could reside in the Pietermaritzburg Concentration Camp on the account of the Natal Government because they were accepted prior to 8 November 1901. The Natal Police,

---

8.7.1901-9.7.1901.

246. PAR, CSO 1732: Correspondence regarding the transfer of the Britz and Landman families from Newcastle to Pietermaritzburg Camp, 23.6.1901-15.7.1901.

247. PAR, CSO 1732: Request by the civilian authorities for the papers concerning Britz and Landman families from the military, 8.7.1901-9.7.1901.

248. PAR, CSO 1732: Report by the magistrate Newcastle that the military had ordered him to send the De Wet, O'Reilly and Cronjé families to Pietermaritzburg, 4.7.1901-19.7.1901.

249. SB Spies, pp.269-278; Foy Vermaak Private collection, Proclamation by Lord Kitchener, as published in an extraordinary *Government Gazette*, 7.8.1901.

however, suggested relief work such as road making for the members of the “bywoner” class who wanted to enter a concentration camp for it would “be a sure test as to their inability to secure the wherewithal to live in P.M.Burg.”<sup>250</sup>

How much money was the Natal Government trying to save by getting Natal Afrikaners to pay for their board and lodging in the concentration camps? For the month of June 1901, 3 859 rations were issued to Natal Afrikaners in the Pietermaritzburg Camp. This amounted to £122.4.9.<sup>251</sup> If this is multiplied by the number of months per year it would have cost the Natal Government roughly £2 440 to maintain their subjects during 1901 in the Pietermaritzburg Camp. The Natal Government was billed an additional £109.3.6 for the diets and extras issued to Natal Afrikaners in the hospital in Pietermaritzburg for the period November 1900 to September 1901.<sup>252</sup> Although this is not a huge amount, the Natal Government was trying to come to terms with the principle which implied that they were expected to finance disloyal property owners and decisions made by the military.

One way to compensate for the financial expenditure was to convince Natal Afrikaner men in the concentration camps to seek employment “so that the government may be relieved of the cost of maintaining them in the refugee camp.” Inspector Clarke of the Natal Police thought it would not be difficult to procure work for able-bodied men, while some of the younger women could work as housemaids and nursemaids. Before this new scheme could be implemented it had to be discussed with Sir TK Murray. The idea did not find favour with him. Murray was worried that some Natal Afrikaners may have land but no money, while others may have paid one or two instalments on government land and to turn them out of the camp would mean financial ruin. He was, however, adamant that no able-bodied man should be kept idle or be supported by the government. Murray therefore provided a list of all the Natal Afrikaner men in the camp system between the ages of 14 and 50 who could, with the intervention of the chief commissioner of police, be employed as convict guards in Durban. This suggestion came to nought since the commissioner thought he could find more suitable men than those offered.

The Natal Government’s attempts to get the Natal Afrikaner men to work also failed for numerous other reasons ranging from laziness, subverting the system, to the manual nature of the work they had to perform which was normally done at the time by Africans. By February 1902, 49 Natal Afrikaner men aged between 14 and 50 resided in the various Natal Camps. Of the 16 such men in the Howick Camp, only two were employed while only two of the ten resident in Merebank were employed. In total only 21 out of the 49 Natal Afrikaner men were employed. Declining rations to men eligible to work did not seem to alter the situation as many of those who were not on rations

---

250. PAR, CSO 1732: Correspondence regarding the maintenance of Natal colonists in the concentration camps, 18.6.1901-8.11.1901.

251. PAR, CSO 1732: Debit voucher from chief army service corps to colonial secretary, 7.1901.

were not employed either.

The Natal Afrikaner camp inhabitants who did work were generally those who wanted to, and not because policies and threats forced them to do so. This source of labour was ready to be exploited and especially young men performed manual labour in and around Howick<sup>253</sup> and Pietermaritzburg, on farms, in houses, in industry, for the military and in the concentration camps. The work done was in line with their lack of qualifications, thus they did mostly manual labour at for example the brickyards and in the brewery in Pietermaritzburg. (Table 9.1) Natal Afrikaner women also sold their labour. Miss LLA Zietsman of Leviathan, Dundee, worked for M Roberts at the locomotive shed in Pietermaritzburg, while PUS C Bird employed a certain Mrs EJ Prinsloo.<sup>254</sup>

**Table 9.1: Employment of male Natal Afrikaner concentration camp residents**

NAME	CAMP	AGE	OCCUPATION	RATIONED
DJ Botha	Pietermaritzburg	16	Burgher guard	No
W Bowen	Pietermaritzburg	20	Burger guard	No
JH Breytenbach	Pietermaritzburg	17	At brewery, £1.17 per week + overtime	Yes
JRT Budge	Pietermaritzburg	40	Army Service Corps	No
JJ Coetzer (Coetzee?)	Pietermaritzburg	40	Employed in Pietermaritzburg	No
SJ Dauth	Howick	30	Burgher guard, 1/ per diem	
JE de Wet	Pietermaritzburg	15	At brewery, 17/6 per week	No
H Huyser	Merebank		Burgher guard	

252. PAR, CSO 1691: Debit voucher for hospital expenses chief army service corps, 21.11.1901.

253. NAR, DBC 111-112: Register of residents in the Howick Concentration Camp, Jan 1901-Nov 1902.

254. NAR, DBC 116: Register of Howick Concentration Camp inhabitants working in Pietermaritzburg, Jan 1901-Sept 1902.

UJ Kok	Pietermaritzburg	15	At brewery, 15/ per week	Yes
JJ Kok	Pietermaritzburg	14	At brewery, 12/ per week	Yes
HO Eksteen	Pietermaritzburg	28	Employed in Pietermaritzburg	No
HJ Lourens	Pietermaritzburg	34	Employed in camp	No
HS Lombaard	Pietermaritzburg	41	Mowatt and Still, 5/ per diem	No
JH Oosthuizen	Pietermaritzburg	44	Pietermaritzburg Corporation	No
DJ Oosthuizen	Pietermaritzburg	36	Mowatt and Still, 5/ per diem	No
SM Oosthuizen	Pietermaritzburg	28	Mowatt and Still, 5/ per diem	No
MJJ Oosthuizen	Pietermaritzburg	36	Employed by PWD - dismissed as unsatisfactory	No
DJ Pringle	Howick		Sanitary officer	
JH Robbertse	Howick	15	Orderly in camp, 1/ per diem	
MC Swart	Pietermaritzburg	14	Army Service Corps	No
NG Swart	Pietermaritzburg	18	Army Service Corps	No
JJ van den Berg	Pietermaritzburg	20	Burger guard	No
PJ van der Westhuizen	Merebank	17	Burgher guard	

PRN Vermaak	Pietermaritz burg	25	Schoolmaster	Yes
-------------	----------------------	----	--------------	-----

Against this background the Natal authorities could not but admit defeat. On 18 March 1902 a memo went out stating that no further action was to be taken with regard to people who were already in the concentration camps. All accounts for maintenance charges were to be accompanied by a list containing the names of Natal Afrikaners.<sup>255</sup>

The upkeep of Natal Afrikaners in concentration camps did hold an unforeseen sting in the tail for the Natal Government. In June 1903 the Burgher Camps Department issued them with a statement “to refund of costs of maintenance of, and repatriation issues, to Natal families, as incurred and paid by the Burgher Camps Departments at the initial cost of the Imperial Government.” The costs referred to amounted to £3 358.4. and were calculated at 1/6d per day for the 23 Natal Afrikaners kept in the Standerton Concentration Camp and the 71 in the Volksrust Camp.<sup>256</sup> This amount was to be added to the £7 171.2. owed to the Burgher Camps Department for the upkeep of Natal families in Natal Camps, - a total of £10 529.6.

The Natal Government was not prepared to pay unconditionally and had each of the Natal Afrikaners who were resident in either the Standerton or Volksrust Camps<sup>257</sup> investigated by the Natal Police to determine whether they were *bona fide* Natalians. The matter of the maintenance of Natal Afrikaners in the two Transvaal Camps remained unresolved and on 13 June 1904 the auditor-general of Natal requested a detailed statement of how the amount was made up. Major Leggett, the person in charge, found it impossible to detail every item and opted to merely forward a certified copy of the original statement.<sup>258</sup> Once the investigation was satisfactorily concluded a cheque for the full amount was forwarded, on 28 March 1904, to the Burgher Camps Department.

### 9.3.3 The support of the Natal Afrikaner community for the concentration camp inhabitants

In contrast to their government the Afrikaner society in Natal, not directly affected by war, rendered great support on various levels to fellow Afrikaners, friends and family members caught up in the

255. PAR, CSO 1732: Correspondence regarding financing the Natal Afrikaners in the Natal Camps, no date.

256. It is difficult to determine why claims were made for only 71 Natal Afrikaners in the Volksrust Camp. In reality 194 Natal Afrikaners resided in this camp at one stage or another. NAR, DBC 105-107: Register of residents in the Volksrust Concentration Camp, Jan 1901-Jan 1903. An earlier attempt by the Natal Police to determine the number of rebels in the Volksrust Camp proved fruitless as the commandant had no records. PAR, AGO I/8/80: Correspondence with the camp commandant Volksrust, 3.6.1901-4.6.1901.

257. Fortunately for the Natal Government they were not billed for rebels CP and JH Hattingh of Doornkop and CH Hattingh of Rama near Estcourt who found themselves in the Middelburg Concentration Camp after they had surrendered in 1901. They were subsequently sent down to Estcourt to be tried as rebels. PAR, AGO I/8/80: Collection of evidence against CP, JH and CH Hattingh, 21.5.1901-17.6.1901.

258. PAR, CSO 1732: Correspondence regarding claims made by the Imperial Government for the maintenance of Natal Afrikaners in the concentration camps, 27.5.1903-13.6.1904.

concentration camps. Afrikaners of Greytown regularly sent loads of firewood as well as fruit and vegetables to the Pietermaritzburg Camp.<sup>259</sup> Particularly active in this regard was the daughter of rebel Piet Hogg, Mrs JJ Maré. After visiting the Pietermaritzburg Camp to remove her stepmother, Maré came to the conclusion that the rations issued to the inhabitants were insufficient. She therefore enquired via the Greytown magistrate from the Natal Government if any objection existed to her making a collection in Umvoti county for the purpose of supplying extra articles of food to families detained in Pietermaritzburg. Maré was given the green light from both the colonial and military authorities.<sup>260</sup> Other fundraising efforts were also undertaken in Greytown. A concert held under the guidance of Mrs Boshoff, by inhabitants of the Pietermaritzburg Camp in the Masonic Hall in Greytown in aid of the children in the camp, was so well supported that some members of the audience had to stand. The evening brought in £30.<sup>261</sup> A second concert held at the same venue in Greytown this time “ten voordeele der nagelaten betrekkingen van in den Oorlog gevallen Burghers” took place on 1 November 1902.<sup>262</sup>

The small Afrikaner community of Pietermaritzburg, who at the time of the war consisted of roughly 40 families, likewise gave strong support to the local concentration camp. Schoolmaster PRN Vermaak organized a concert on 6 August 1901, featuring the Pietermaritzburg Camp inhabitants, to collect funds for the local DRC.<sup>263</sup> A second concert was held at the YMCA in Pietermaritzburg.<sup>264</sup> But the biggest support, especially for the Pietermaritzburg Camp, came from the local dominee WP Rousseau who galvanised some friends in Stellenbosch and other parts of the Cape Colony into action to collect clothes and money.<sup>265</sup> He also managed to secure money from the Netherlands which was handed over to a committee of women in the camp to look after the needs of the poor and the ill.<sup>266</sup> But most importantly he looked after the spiritual needs of the inhabitants of many of the camps. Possibly the best recollection of the dedication of Rousseau is to be found in the memoirs of AP Smuts who recalled how he preached in sunshine and in rain, while a member of the congregation held an umbrella.<sup>267</sup>

Assistance for the concentration camp inhabitants by Natal Afrikaners also took other forms. Friends or family members residing in Natal often requested camp inhabitants to reside with them. This was fully supported by Sir TK Murray as it served to alleviate the population pressure and the strain on

---

259. E Neethling, p.241.

260. PAR, 1/GTN 3/2/8: Correspondence regarding the request by JJ Maré to make a collection for the Pietermaritzburg Camp inhabitants, 24.11.1900-28.11.1900.

261. *Natal Witness*, 30.6.1902.

262. Local History Museum, Durban, 4596/1: Concert programme conducted by the Pietermaritzburg Concentration Camp, 6.8.1901 and 1.11.1902.

263. *Ibid.*

264. *Natal Witness*, 13.10.1902.

265. NAR, A 2030 98: Beknopte geskiedenis van die Pietermaritzburg Konsentrasiekamp, no date.

266. E Neethling, p.241.

267. NAR, GS Preller collection, 76: Herrinerige van AP Smuts, no date.

resources in the Natal Camp system, for as soon as inhabitants left the camp their host families took care of all their needs. In the case of surrendered burghers, surety had to be found to guarantee that they would adhere to their parole conditions.<sup>268</sup>

Initially this policy worked well. CM Triegaardt and her son PJ, were in December 1899, told by the Boers to proceed to Harrismith in the OFS. Here she resided with her daughter until December 1900 when the military ordered her to the Pietermaritzburg Camp. She remained here for only two weeks before she received permission to join her son-in-law near Mooi River.<sup>269</sup> PR Botha of Greytown managed to obtain permission for an aged aunt and her daughter, Mrs and Miss Liebenberg, originally from Standerton but then in the Pietermaritzburg Camp, to join him,<sup>270</sup> while Lewies Nel of Welgegund near Greytown took in 10 members of the Lawrence family of Beith near Dundee.<sup>271</sup> In other cases Mr and Mrs August Jansen, sent down on 10 November 1900 as undesirables by the military from Dundee, were allowed to proceed to Greytown on 17 November, while Mr and Mrs Adrian Jansen who arrived a day earlier for the same reason were allowed to join the Boshoff family in Loop Street, Pietermaritzburg.<sup>272</sup> Others who could afford it, such as Mrs Gregory and Miss Latty of Cotsworld near Dundee, opted to reside in Pietermaritzburg town rather than in the camp.<sup>273</sup>

The initial window period during which families could transfer from the Pietermaritzburg Camp to private homes or lodgings ended in late February 1901 when the military adopted a tougher centralised system of granting permission for inhabitants to reside outside the camps. Where the camp and colonial authorities and the local commanding officer had previously made the decisions, it now reverted to the GOC based in Newcastle. Bureaucratic paperwork, however, hampered the process and success was not necessarily always forthcoming.

The first application to suffer because of the new tougher measures was that made by EM Greene, a member of the Natal Legislative Assembly, who petitioned the Natal authorities to secure consent from the military to allow five families consisting solely of women and children to transfer from the Volksrust Camp and the temporary camp at Utrecht to friends in Natal. The application ran into problems as Greene had failed to address it to the GOC, neglected to indicate the names and addresses of the people prepared to accommodate the mentioned families, and because it did not come directly from the concentration camp inhabitants who were involved.<sup>274</sup> Greene paid very little

---

268. JM Wassermann, *The Eshowe...*, pp.65-67.

269. PAR, CSO 2909: Invasion Losses Enquiry Commission: Claim by CM Triegaardt, 4.4.1901.

270. PAR, 1/GTN 3/2/8: Correspondence pertaining to the application by PR Botha, 26.2.1901-28.2.1901.

271. NAR, DBC 142: Register of residents in the Pietermaritzburg Concentration Camp, Oct 1900-May 1901.

272. NAR, DBC 141: Register of departures from the Pietermaritzburg Concentration Camp, Aug 1900-Dec 1902.

273. NAR, DBC 138: Register of residents in the Pietermaritzburg Concentration Camp, Aug 1900-Jun 1901.

274. PAR, CSO 1677: Correspondence between EM Greene and the colonial authorities regarding the transfer of some families from Volksrust, 23.5.1901-18.6.1901; See also PAR, CSO 1679: Letter SW Cadle to colonial secretary, 24.6.1901 for a similar request and response.

attention to these instructions and when he submitted another list, he was curtly referred to the first letter.<sup>275</sup>

The military also took a dim view of applications coming from camp inhabitants who still had close family members on commando. An application by AJ Bruyns, that Mrs JS Pretorius and her children resident in the Volksrust Concentration Camp be allowed to join him failed, because her husband was still on commando.<sup>276</sup> The same fate befell the requests of Lucas and W Potgieter of Kranskop who asked that their sister Catriena Stadler be allowed to join them from Volksrust,<sup>277</sup> while the application by IM Botha that Mrs IM van Rooyen and family also resident in the Volksrust Camp be allowed to proceed to Greytown, did not even illicit a response from the military.<sup>278</sup>

Even when permission was granted it would be revoked when it was discovered that the applicants had relatives on commando. A point in case was the withdrawal of approval granted to Mrs Moolman and her family to join Mrs LL Nel near Greytown when the military discovered that her husband and two sons were still on commando. This prompted Mrs LJ Botha, the daughter of Mrs LL Nel, to raise some issues regarding the process. According to Botha, Mrs Moolman was under doctor's orders to escape the cold at Volksrust, while she also wanted to know: "Why should she be detained here because of her sons and husband? There are several families in Greytown who have husbands and sons fighting. Mrs Wessels and Mrs Maré are two I could mention." Botha also reminded the colonial authorities that the father of Mrs Moolman, Piet Uys, and several of his sons had died in the Anglo-Zulu War while fighting on the side of British.<sup>279</sup> This letter served to convince the colonial authorities to request the military authorities to reconsider the application. The military, however, allowed no deviation from the set regulations and stated that Mrs Moolman had to apply to the GOC, Natal.<sup>280</sup> Moolman's application must have failed for a month later her daughter Sarah sent a telegram to Lewies Nel reading, "Mother died last night." This time round the military did not hesitate to ignore procedures and granted Lewies Nel permission to travel to Volksrust to bring the Moolman children to Greytown.<sup>281</sup>

---

275. PAR, CSO 1679: Correspondence between EM Greene and the colonial authorities regarding the transfer of families from Volksrust, 16.6.1901-21.6.1901.

276. PAR, CSO 1676: Refusal of application by AJ Bruyns, 21.5.1901-24.6.1901.

277. PAR, 1/KRK 3/1/3: Refusal of application by W and L Potgieter, 24.5.1901- 29.7.1901.

278. PAR, 1/GTN 3/2/8: Application by IM Botha for the transfer of IM van Rooyen, 11.6.1901-12.6.1901.

2749 This was not the only occasion during which Natal Afrikaners recalled past contributions to get family members released from incarceration. CJ (Casper) Labuschagne (MLC) asked that his 75-year-old father, JHC, a POW in the Umbilo Camp, be released on parole into his care. According to Casper Labuschagne his father came to Natal as a Voortrekker in the 1830s and served in the Weenen Burgher Force during the Free State-Basotho War. Labuschagne senior left Natal in 1866 to settle in the OFS. He did, however, return to Natal in 1873 to volunteer for service during the Langalibalele uprising. This must have counted in his favour for he was granted parole. NAR, SOP 31: Correspondence regarding the possibility of parole for JHC Labuschagne, 18.4.1902-30.4.1902.

280. PAR, CSO 1679: Correspondence regarding the transfer of Mrs Moolman and her family to Greytown, 21.6.1901-27.6.1901; PAR, PM 23: Letter LJ Botha to Major G Leuchars, 21.7.1901. For an insistence on this procedure see also: PAR, AGO I/8/80: Correspondence regarding the request by L Bester, 15.6.1901-17.6.1901.

281. PAR, 1/GTN 3/2/8: Correspondence surrounding the death of Mrs Moolman, 4.8.1901-6.8.1901.

The regulations drawn up by the military also applied to Natal rebels. L Bester applied to have his sister-in-law, Elizabeth Hester Maria Nienaber and her young child released from the Pietermaritzburg Concentration Camp, to join him in Weenen, but this was refused because her husband, Piet Nienaber, was fighting on the Boer side as a rebel. When Nienaber was captured a while later Magistrate Matthews of Weenen again assisted Bester in an application and stated "...that no possible objection can exist in the way of the unfortunate wife's relations giving her a home." Objections did exist for once again, the request was turned down.<sup>282</sup>

By August 1901 the military started to relax their rigid regulations. FJ van der Merwe of Weenen applied successfully to have J van Rhyn and family liberated from the Harrismith Concentration Camp. The Van Rhyn's, however, turned down the offer as their financial position made it impossible for them to reside outside the camp.<sup>283</sup> At the same time RJJ van Rooyen (JP), a loyalist from Weenen, successfully petitioned to have his sister-in-law and her children released from the Pietermaritzburg Concentration Camp.<sup>284</sup>

The relaxation of regulations by the military were in anticipation of the transfer of the administration of the concentration camps to civilian authorities during October 1901. This switch signalled the turning of the tide for the transfer of concentration camp inhabitants to the residences of Natal Afrikaners. The first successful application under the new dispensation came when L van Ahlften secured permission for Mrs Kuhn and her family to reside with him on his farm Wonderboom in Umvoti county.<sup>285</sup> At the same time, Johanna Catherine Rensburg, who resided on the farm Boschberg near Elandslaagte, received a pass to join her father in the Heidelberg Concentration Camp.<sup>286</sup>

The news must have spread amongst Natal Afrikaners that applications for removals from the concentration camps were treated with greater compassion under civilian rule, for a flood of applications streamed in. Eight requests were received from Weenen alone between 9 December 1901 and 4 February 1902, including: RJJ van Rooyen who applied to have AP, S and Jacob Nel and their families transferred from Volksrust;<sup>287</sup> Martha Roos who applied to leave Merebank for Weenen;<sup>288</sup> A Boshoff and her five children who appealed to leave the camp at Howick to reside

---

282. PAR, 1/WEN 3/2/4: Correspondence regarding the application by L Bester, 3.7.1901-18.7.1901.

283. PAR, 1/WEN 3/2/4: Correspondence regarding the transfer of the Van Rhyn family to Weenen, 9.8.1901-2.9.1901.

284. PAR, 1/WEN 3/2/4: Correspondence regarding the release of J van Rooyen and family, 1.8.1901-5.8.1901.

285. PAR, 1/GTN 3/2/8: Correspondence regarding the release of Mrs Kuhn from Merebank, 7.11.1901-9.11.1901

286. PAR, 1/LDS 3/1/1/17: Letter magistrate Klip River district to inspector of police, 18.10.1901.

287. PAR, 1/WEN 3/1/2: Letter Magistrate CG Jackson to OC Pietermaritzburg, 9.12.1901; Letter Magistrate M Matthews, Weenen, to OC Pietermaritzburg, 14.1.1902.

288. PAR, 1/WEN 3/1/2: Letter Magistrate CG Jackson to OC Pietermaritzburg, 4.1.1902.

with AP Stieger;<sup>289</sup> and CH Heine who had applied on behalf of his sister-in law, J van Rhyn of the camp in Harrismith to move to Weenen.<sup>290</sup> These applications were all successful.<sup>291</sup>

This process continued unabatedly up to the end of the war and even applications that were earlier rejected by the military, such as that of AJ Bruyns to have DJ and G van Rooyen proceed from the Eshowe Concentration Camp to his farm Weltevreden near Harburg,<sup>292</sup> met with favour.<sup>293</sup>

As far as the transfer of surrendered burghers from concentration camps was concerned, other rules came into play. JS Els of Mooi River requested for permission to be granted that ECJ Vermaak and his family from the Eshowe Camp be allowed to reside with him. For this application to be considered Els had to stand security to the amount of £500. This seemed to be beyond the financial capacity of Els.<sup>294</sup> PJ van Rooyen of Middelrus had to provide security of a similar amount before his uncle, LJ Nel, could be released from the Volksrust Camp. Van Rooyen successfully raised the money with the help of family and friends, but the bureaucratic wheels turned so slowly that by 30 May 1902, a day before the signing of peace, the matter was still unresolved.<sup>295</sup>

Not all those Natal Afrikaners who left the concentration camps to reside with relatives or friends managed to improve their living conditions. Mrs Dauth and her two children left the Pietermaritzburg camp for Greytown and ran into trouble when charity ran out. This forced Ds GS Malan of Greytown to notify the authorities that with “the husband, being in prison up at Dundee, the wife with her two children is in most necessitous circumstances, having hardly any food to eat. The landlord of the little house they now occupy, threatens them with a writ of ejectment. We have been trying to help them for several months, but our funds too are exhausted. I therefore wish to ask whether the authorities cannot send them back to the refugee camp at P.M.Burg, where they will be perfectly cared for.” Consequently an investigation into the conditions the Dauth family found themselves in, was ordered. When Sub-Inspector R Keating of the Natal Police confirmed the conditions, as outlined by Malan, the family was allowed to return to the Pietermaritzburg Camp.<sup>296</sup>

---

289. PAR, 1/WEN 3/1/2: Letter Magistrate M Matthews, Weenen, to OC Pietermaritzburg, 13.1.1902; 1/WEN 3/1/2: Letter Magistrate M Matthews, Weenen, to OC Pietermaritzburg, 14.1.1902.

290. PAR, 1/WEN 3/1/2: Letter Magistrate M Matthews, Weenen, to OC Ladysmith, 4.2.1902.

291. See the following registers in the DBC collection for transfers from the camps to the homes of Natal Afrikaners: Howick Concentration Camp 111, 112, 134, 135; Pietermaritzburg Concentration Camp 134-145; Merebank Concentration Camp 126, 127, 129, 130; Jacobs Concentration Camp 118-119 and Wentworth Concentration Camp 153-154.

292. PAR, CSO 1678: Correspondence regarding the application by AJ Bruyns, 14.6.1901-18.6.1901.

293. Wassermann, *The Eshowe...*, p.65. Concentration camp inhabitants who left to reside with Natal Afrikaners at times passed the concentration camp diseases to their host families. See, PAR, NCP 8/1/11/3/2: Health report Kranskop district 1902, 12.1.1903.

294. PAR, 1/WEN 3/2/4: Correspondence regarding the transfer of ECJ Vermaak, 4.3.1902-30.5.1902.

295. PAR, 1/WEN 3/2/4: Correspondence regarding the transfer of LJ Nel, 1.3.1902-15.6.1902.

296. PAR, 1/GTN 3/2/8: Correspondence regarding the re-admittance of the Dauth family into the Pietermaritzburg Concentration Camp, 24.6.1901-3.7.1901.

### 9.3.4 Going home

The departure from and the arrival of new inmates in the concentration camps were an intertwined process. While the military allowed certain Natal Afrikaners to return home during the war, for example, during the winter of 1901, others were removed from the same areas to concentration camps. This process, which at times defied all logic, repeated itself up to the end of the war.

Mrs MM van der Linden and her child, Mrs SJ Labuschagne and her one-year-old daughter and Widow SJ Laas and her two children and, all of the farm Paardeberg in the Dundee district, arrived in the Pietermaritzburg Concentration Camp on 21 November 1900. Roughly six months later, on 26 June 1901, they were allowed to return to their farm. Similarly Mrs JM Labuschagne and her two children from Stonehill near Pomeroy were sent to the Pietermaritzburg Camp on 28 November 1900. She was joined by her rebel husband, Willem Adrian, on 4 October 1901 on completion of his prison sentence. The family was allowed to return home on 30 December 1901.<sup>297</sup> This scenario persisted until shortly before the end of the war as can be gleaned from the case of Joseph Chiole and family of The Oaks, Dundee. They were allowed to return home on 21 March 1902, a mere 19 days after their arrival in the Howick Camp.<sup>298</sup>

Gaining permission to go home from a concentration camp was not necessarily an easy process. The first application of the 72-year-old JJ Kemp of Calvin, Dundee, an owner of 10 000 acres and resident of the Pietermaritzburg Camp, to return home was rejected. This did not deter him and in an interview with Attorney-General H Bale he again requested permission to return home. To have his application considered, Kemp was required to answer several questions regarding his involvement in the war. He denied that the party who had burnt down the Wasbank Station in October 1900 had taken horses from him. Kemp also denied that he looted any goods and stated that the wagons loaded with goods found on his farm belonged to his brother Gert, who was ordered away from his farm by the Boers. In his response, Clerk of the Peace Charles Tatham, made it clear that he did not believe Kemp and insisted that he provided horses to the raiding party and that he had numerous disloyal family members. Based on Tatham's statement Kemp was denied permission to return home. Less than a month later this decision was overturned without any new evidence being introduced.<sup>299</sup>

Carl Posselt was not that fortunate. On completion of his prison sentence he requested that he and his family be allowed to return from the Pietermaritzburg Camp to their farm De Waar near Dundee. His reasoning was simple, he wanted to reap his crops and tend the stock that might be left. Furthermore, all his neighbours, JH Ries, JD Pelster and JJ Kemp were given permission to return.

---

297. NAR, DBC 138: Register of residents in the Pietermaritzburg Concentration Camp, Aug 1900-Dec 1902. These are but a few examples of the numerous Natal Afrikaner families who were removed by the military for a period of time only to be allowed to return home.

298. NAR, DBC 111: Register of residents in the Howick Concentration Camp, Jan 1901-Dec 1902.

299. PAR, AGO I/8/79: Application by JJ Kemp to return to his farm, 12.4.1901-24.4.1901.

The military at Dundee did not view matters as Posselt did and regarded him as “most undesirable” and therefore he was denied permission.<sup>300</sup>

When peace came about the repatriation process of the relatively small number of Natal Afrikaners resident in the concentration camps was much easier to administer than the large numbers of people from the former Republics. This was partially the case because the civil administration for the various Natal districts was up and running. In most cases the husbands and fathers were also able to accompany their families home, except for the small group of rebels who were still serving their sentences. To a certain extent it was also easier to repatriate Natal Afrikaners since the structural damage in Northern Natal to homes under the scorched earth policy was not as extensive as in the former Republics.<sup>301</sup>

Before repatriation could commence certain administrative tasks had to be completed. Under instructions from the British Army Headquarters, men in concentration and POW camps could only depart for home once they had taken the oath of allegiance.<sup>302</sup> It was therefore expected of Natal Afrikaner men over the age of 21, despite being British subjects, to sign an oath of allegiance. The camp superintendents were appointed as administration officers to manage this process.

Natal Afrikaner inhabitants of the Merebank Camp which took such oaths included Johannes Phillipus Kemp of the Dundee district, Hendrik Huyser, Cornelius Janse Uys, Daniel Petrus Botha, Joshua Joubert, Abraham Johannes Swamers and Petrus Johannes Swart of the Newcastle district and Jacobus Philipus Moolman of Melmoth.<sup>303</sup> The oath forms of the Newcastle men were forwarded by the colonial secretary to the magistrate of Newcastle who in turn forwarded Kemp’s form to the Dundee magistrate.<sup>304</sup> This procedure was only nullified by a notification in the *Natal Government Gazette* of 24 February 1903.<sup>305</sup>

To facilitate the prompt return home of Natal Afrikaners, special arrangements were made. From mid-June 1902 the Natal Government Railways laid on special trains to Northern Natal which carried residents from the various Natal Camps. Tents and rations for 30 days were also issued. Transport from the railway line to the farms was provided by the Natal authorities. The same preferential treatment was extended to the residents of the two newly acquired districts, Vryheid and

---

300. PAR, PM 21: Correspondence regarding the return of Carl Posselt, 30.4.1901-6.5.1901.

301. NAR, DBC 141: Departure register from the Pietermaritzburg Concentration Camp, Aug 1900-Dec 1902.

302. PAR, GH 545: Telegram GOC Natal to Governor W Hely-Hutchinson, 12.6.1902.

303. PAR, CSO 1710: List of Natal residents resident in Merebank who have taken the oath, 16.8.1902.

304. PAR, CSO 1719: Letter and counterfoil HM Bousfield to colonial secretary, 12.12.1902; PAR, CSO 1719: Note AH Hime to magistrate Newcastle, 13.12.1902; PAR, CSO 1719: Note magistrate Newcastle to magistrate Dundee, 16.12.1902.

305. PAR, GH 554: Monthly report for Natal Concentration Camps - June 1902, 7.7.1902.

Utrecht.<sup>306</sup>

The repatriation of Natal rebels resident in the Volksrust and Standerton Concentration Camps took on a different dimension. Under the terms of surrender no rebel could be compelled to return to his domicile. Although this safeguarded them from prosecution it meant that no assistance, including rations, was to be given to them on leaving the concentration camps.<sup>307</sup>

Not all Natal Afrikaners did, however, return home readily. In December 1902, TK Murray forwarded a list of 13 destitute Natal Afrikaners families or individuals to the Natal Government with the view to “obtaining instructions regarding their destinations on the closing of the Pietermaritzburg Camp.” Each of those listed had their own visions for the future. Aletta Sophia Lezar of Rattlekloof, Newcastle wanted to be transferred to the Volksrust Camp where her relatives would assist her. Likewise the 84-year-old former rebel, Jasper Johannes Slabbert and his 63-year-old wife and their children aged 20 and 13 wanted to go to the Volksrust Camp. Maria Elizabeth Kok of Situnga, Dundee wanted to be transferred to Middelburg, Transvaal, to join a friend, JN Swart, on the farm Rietkuil, while HJ Pitzer, a convicted rebel, wanted to return with his family to the Transvaal. Elena Vermeulen of Rietspruit, Newcastle, whose husband had died in prison, could not return to the farm where they had resided as she had no friends or relatives in Natal. She also needed a marquee because her dwelling was destroyed. Lucas Johannes Meyer of Berlinge, Newcastle, was likewise prepared to return home if provided with a marquee. Former POWs, Petrus Gerhardus and Philip Jacobus Meyer of Brakwater, Newcastle, were willing to proceed home if a marquee and transport were provided for them and their families. Johannes Jacobus Coetzer also indicated that he would only be able to return to the farm Laingsnek of Frank Johnstone (MLA) near Newcastle if he and his family were supplied with a tent. Johannes Stephanus Swart, a bywoner with a wife and six children, formerly of Huddersfield, Dundee, applied to his brother-in-law, Jan van Rensburg of Dannhauser for a portion of land to live and farm on. If the Pietermaritzburg Camp broke up before he received an answer, he requested to be transferred to Dundee. He also asked for a tent, table and bedstead. Hermanus Stephanus Lombard of Mowtherp, Upper Tugela, was prepared to return to the farm as his father and brother-in-law resided nearby. All he needed was transport from Ladysmith.

The hopes of all except the Slabberts were immediately dashed. The ruling was that they belonged to Natal and that the Transvaal was not prepared to pay for their maintenance. After enquiries were made by the magistrates of the districts from where the families and individuals emanated, the following decisions were made. The three Meyer’s and Coetzer were to be provided with marquees

---

306. AU Wohlberg, *The Merebank...*, pp.228-232; PAR, 1/NEW 3/1/19: Correspondence from camp commandant Wentworth Concentration Camp to Magistrate A Crawford, Newcastle, 29.7.1902-1.8.1902.

307. NAR, CS 206: Enquiries and orders regarding the repatriation of Natal rebels from the Volksrust and Standerton Concentration Camps, 16.12.1902-20.12.1902.

and despatched to Newcastle and then to their farms or the farms they resided on, JS Swart and his family were to be sent to Dundee, the family of HS Lombaard was willing to provide for him on condition that he undertook to find work, while HJ Pitzer found employment with the repatriation department. The destitute women, Lezar, Kok and Vermeulen, were to be sent to the almshouse should they be unable to earn a living in domestic service or otherwise.<sup>308</sup>

The plight of ME Kok and her four children were typical of the economic impact of the war on numerous Natal Afrikaners. Prior to the war she had leased a farm on which she farmed successfully. Her removal to the Pietermaritzburg Concentration Camp resulted in her losing all she possessed. The inventory of her losses were 11 pages long. She, however, received some reprieve when she was compensated to the amount of £515.15.1. in 1903 for losses sustained.<sup>309</sup> Other Natal Afrikaners suffered equally. Paul Jacob Lombard, the son of a Natal rebel and resident of the Pietermaritzburg Concentration Camp recalled that they only returned to their farm near Oliviershoek in 1904 because they had no transport or movable property. They used corrugated iron sheets to create a shelter in the ruins of the farmhouse. This was later replaced with a thatch roof. For an economic start an African provided them with a cow and a calf and mealie meal.<sup>310</sup>

#### **9.4 Natal Afrikaners in internment in Portugal**

During the diaspora caused by the war, some Natal Afrikaners, such as the Dreyer family, ended up in another camp system, the internment camps in Portugal. Hercules Albertus Dreyer (49), his wife Lucia Maria (45), and their nine children were from a farm near Pieters Station, Ladysmith. On the advance of the Boers into Natal the Dreyer's moved to Colenso, where the British troops ordered them to move further south. The Dreyers subsequently camped with their wagon, nine oxen, a bull, 20 cows, two horses and some goats on Johannes Christoffel Buys', farm in the Weenen district. When the Boer forces sojourned as far as Weenen the Dreyers decided to return to their home.<sup>311</sup> Their homecoming was, however, short-lived because they decided to follow the retreating Boers into the Transvaal when the British forces gained the upper hand.

When the invading British forces penetrated into the Eastern Transvaal in mid-1900 many families of the ZAR, OFS, the Cape Colony, and seven members of the Dreyer household crossed the border into Mozambique. The two oldest sons, HA and LJ Dreyer, remained to join a Boer commando that operated in the Barberton area. They were eventually captured in mid-1901 and returned to Natal to

---

308. PAR, CSO 1719: Correspondence regarding the destinations of destitute Natal Afrikaners in the Pietermaritzburg Concentration Camp. 13.12.1902-23.12.1902.

309. PAR, CSO 2888: Invasion Losses Enquiry Commission: Claim by HE Kock, 13.1.1903.

310. Interview conducted by Ina van Rensburg with PJ Lombaard on 10.10.1987 at Aandrus, Geluksburg. Lombaard was born on 18.7.1900 at Kerkenberg in the OFS, his family having fled Natal.

311. PAR, AGO I/7/34: Sworn statement by JC Buys before the magistrate of Weenen, 19.7.1901.

stand trial.<sup>312</sup>

One of the refugee groups to cross into the Portuguese Colony tallied 290 people. This group included 153 Afrikaners from the Cape Colony and the Dreyers. Proposals to return home did not suit the members of this group because they were viewed as rebels and would therefore be tried as such.<sup>313</sup> They could, however, not remain in Lourenco Marques indefinitely, and when the pressure by Britain on Portugal became too much the Afrikaners were deported to Portugal. The Dreyers were interned at Caldas Da Rainha, 96 kilometres north of Lisbon. After the conclusion of peace, the refugees returned to South Africa on board the *Bavarian* which arrived in Cape Town on 5 August 1902.<sup>314</sup> All the men older than 16, including HA Dreyer and his son MJJ, were on arrival removed to the Simon's Town POW Camp. The purpose of this was to identify the rebels in the group. HA Dreyer was eventually cautioned and discharged. His son was also discharged because his name appeared on none of the lists of wanted rebels.<sup>315</sup>

With all the men removed the women and children were taken to the Port Elizabeth Concentration Camp.<sup>316</sup> By the end of September 1902, all the interned women and children, except the Dreyer family had left the concentration camp.<sup>317</sup> Uncertain of what had happened to her husband and son, Mrs LCJ Dreyer wrote to Ds HF Schoon in Ladysmith, asking him if he knew anything about their whereabouts.<sup>318</sup> Schoon replied that the Dreyer men were not in prison but were residing in the Weenen district.<sup>319</sup>

Bringing the rest of the Dreyer family from Port Elizabeth to Weenen proved to be a major undertaking. On the request of the military authorities it was decided to bring the Dreyers back at the expense of the Natal Government. The government could, however, not decide from which budget the expense to be incurred should come. The bureaucratic gridlock came to an end when finances were allocated from the "contingencies" account.<sup>320</sup> The funding secured a third class berth for the

---

312. PRO, CO 179/222: Correspondence regarding the capture and surrender of Natal rebels outside the Colony, 24.12.1901-7.3.1902. For the legal uncertainties and impact surrounding the trial of the Dreyer's see, pp.207-208.

313. Another internee, Jan Jonathan Maré, was born on 27.04.1869 on the farm Politique near Pietermaritzburg. He grew up and attended school in Greytown. After school he worked as a shopkeeper in Natal before moving to Vryheid. His two brothers and four of his five sisters remained Natalians. PAR, A 743: Herrinerige van JJ Maré, 17-18.11.1952. Casper Johannes Combrinck of the Peniche Camp had numerous relatives in the Helpmekaar area and enquiry about their well being from Ds HF Schoon. See, PAR, HF Schoon collection A 72: Letter CJ Combrinck to HF Schoon, 26.12.1901. The Combrinck's were loyalists who enlisted with the UMR.

314. For a detailed analysis of the Afrikaners who sought refuge under Portuguese rule see: OJO Ferreira, *Boeregeinterneerdes in Portugal tydens die Anglo-Boereoorlog, 1899-1902: 'n Kultuur-historiese studie*. DPhil-thesis, UP, 1994.

315. PAR, SOP 34: Telegram Natal Police, Ladysmith to CIO, 25.8.1902.

316. OJO Ferreira, p.197.

317. JJ Roodt, *Die Port Elizabethse Konsentrasiekamp, 1899-1902*. MA-thesis, UPE, 1990, p.179.

318. PAR, A 72 HF Schoon collection: Letter LMJ Dreyer to HF Schoon, 16.9.1902.

319. PAR, A 72 HF Schoon collection: Letter Johanna Dreyer to HF Schoon, 27.9.1902.

320. PAR, CSO 1717: Report of landing officer on the departure of the Dreyer family, 24.11.1902.

Dreyers to Durban aboard the *RMS Saxon*. The passage, excluding food, amounted to £10.2.6.<sup>321</sup> while Messina Bros had to be paid £1.8.9. for transfers and the handling of baggage in Port Elizabeth. On arrival in Durban the journey home was only halfway completed and it took 12 telegrams between the Natal Government, the Natal Government Railways and the military to organize the second part of the journey on 25 November 1902 by “kafir mail” to Ladysmith. This delay came about because the military had thus far only dealt with POWs, and it needed to be pointed out to them that the Dreyers case required different treatment.<sup>322</sup>

## 9.5 Concluding comments

The imprisonment in one form or another of Natal Afrikaners had a range of impacts, both individually and collectively. Individually those who were imprisoned, as well as their families, had to carry the burden and scars of the experiences peculiar to them. Collectively those incarcerated alongside Republicans in the concentration and POW camps experienced a collective sense of suffering which served to create a sense of unity and shared experience and emotionally integrated Natal Afrikaners into the broader Afrikaner society. Others, especially imprisoned on charges of high treason, were extremely bitter. Oscar Prozesky made it clear that he would only asked forgiveness from God and “not the English Government - on the contrary, they or their representatives have sinned against me. They have sent us to prison for a short time by their false witness; if we do not forgive them we deliver ourselves into an eternal prison.”<sup>323</sup> These shared experiences and bitterness in time contributed to a new unity amongst Afrikaners which transcended geo-political boundaries and challenged British overlordship.

---

321. PAR, CSO 1718: Account for the passage of the Dreyer family from Union Castle Mail, 1-4.12.1902.

322. PAR, CSO 1717: Report of landing officer on the departure of the Dreyer family, 24.11.1902.

323. OE Prozesky private collection, Diary of JJA Prozesky: Diary entry, Introduction, p.386.