

## CHAPTER 12

### THE ECONOMIC IMPACT OF THE ANGLO-BOER WAR ON NATAL AFRIKANERS

In simplified Marxist theory the economy is the substructure on which the other societal aspects rest. For Natal Afrikaners this substructure was farming and almost every single one from the most affluent to the poorest, relied on this sector of the economy. As a group of people this made them extremely vulnerable to economic annihilation. This especially proved to be the case in Northern Natal with all the Afrikaners of the area suffering under either the Boer occupation, the British liberation, or both. In each of these situations some grouping within the Afrikaner society found themselves in a losing situation. Under the Boer occupation it mostly proved to be the loyalists and those who chose to join the Republicans in their flight from the area. When the British forces returned the mere fact of being an Afrikaner meant being subjected to an ethnic orientated economic liquidation under Martial Law by means of looting, confiscation, commandeering, and wanton destruction. In time only those Afrikaners who remained loyal managed to receive some relief. For the majority of Natal Afrikaners directly affected by the war, economic recovery never happened or took a long time to achieve.

#### 12.1 Economic experiences during the Boer occupation of Northern Natal

Realising that the war would result in shortages of food, fodder and other necessities, some Northern Natal Afrikaners bought up large quantities of maize and slaughter animals in the Vryheid district as well as wheat and slaughter animals in the eastern districts of the Transvaal.<sup>1</sup> These products were then sold to the Republican forces in Natal.<sup>2</sup> This enabled individual Afrikaners to exploit the war economy for financial gain. Lodewyk de Jager of Wasbank delivered ten oxen and four goats to the value of £162 to the Transvaal forces on 10 October 1899, a day before war broke out. On 25 October he sold them a further 50 “hamels” and four goats to the value of £58.5. The final transaction between De Jager and the Transvaal government took place on 4 December 1899 when he sold them seven oxen to the value of £105. De Jager’s account was settled on 8 March 1900.<sup>3</sup> Similarly JH Ries, JJ Kemp<sup>4</sup> and JS Vermaak of Helpmekaar sold large numbers of slaughter animals, fodder and maize to the invaders. Vermaak’s son, JC Vermaak, took receipts to the value of £1 500 to Pretoria where he exchanged them for cash which was buried on the farm Vermaakskraal, Helpmekaar. In the face of the Boer retreat in April 1900, JS Vermaak fled to the farm Vlakfontein near Newcastle, taking the money with him only to bury it again. He was subsequently imprisoned as a suspected rebel and shortly afterwards died in jail. In the meantime the money was removed by

---

1. J Ploeger, *Die lotgevalle van die burgerlike bevolking gedurende die Anglo-Boereoorlog, 1899-1902, Deel I*, pp.4:4-4:5.

2. WM, 3097: Kwitansies vir 6 sakke meel, 130 sakke mielies, 1 sak sout en 2 kiste vleis, 9.12.1899 and 28.2.1900.

3. NAR, KG 886: Proof submitted by the commandant-general of slaughter animals purchased from LJ de Jager, 10.10.1899-8.3.1900.

4. PAR, AGO I/7/42: Documentary evidence relative to Natal rebels who either surrendered or were captured, 21.5.1900.

an unknown party.<sup>5</sup>

Apart from the Natal Afrikaners, English businessmen like Albert Dunton, RD Kidd and Co. and Oldacre and Co. who remained in Northern Natal during the Boer occupation, conducted a roaring trade with the Boers. In the view of the Natal Government they hardly “hesitated to make any profit they could...and all of them either by themselves or their agents, seem to have had dealings with the enemy without compulsion.”<sup>6</sup>

At least one Natal Afrikaner saw the war as an opportunity to trade with the British forces. When it became clear that war was about to break out, JB van Blerk went down to Ladysmith from Newcastle to trade cattle with the military but was arrested for his initiative and had to endure the Siege of Ladysmith in prison.<sup>7</sup>

Just as the British military needed to be fed, so the Boer commandos also required food. In most cases, when food was requisitioned from local Afrikaners, the commandos provided them with either medicine goods, or some form of documentation which presupposed that payment by either of the Republican Governments would take place. In the case of Gert Boers for example, the Boers commandeered 100 bags of maize against a receipt.<sup>8</sup> In other cases Mrs WA Bester produced vouchers to the amount of £124 for payment by the landrost of Harrismith,<sup>9</sup> while Thomas Joubert, a rebel leader from Newcastle, commandeered slaughter cattle by means of a receipt from JJ Wessels.<sup>10</sup> Others suffered theft and looting from the commandos just as they would later suffer from the British forces. Especially vulnerable were loyalists who lost livestock, crops and other property on a large scale to the Boers.<sup>11</sup> JJS Maritz of Aletta near Dundee, lost 273 sheep to a Boer camp close to his home, within days after the Battle of Talana,<sup>12</sup> while FJ Swartz of Newcastle, lost sheep, goats, horses, and furniture to the invaders.<sup>13</sup>

The invading Boers, however, in all likelihood also brought some economic relief to the many Afrikaners in Northern Natal who were eking out a marginal existence as renters or as bywoners. Just after Christmas 1899, the Dundee justice of the peace, JB Wolmarans, reported that there were

---

5. VTR, JC Vermaak collection, 03/2554/1: Document entitled “Besonderhede van die uitgraving van die geld, hoe dit uitgehaal is en hoe ek gevang is”, no date.

6. PAR, GH 1302: Letter Governor W Hely-Hutchinson to Colonial Secretary J Chamberlain, 27.2.1901.

7. PAR, CSO 2909: Invasion Losses Enquiry Commission: Claim by JB van Blerk, 11.10.1902.

8. *Natal Witness*, 9.6.1900.

9. PAR, CSO 1661: Receipt issued to Mrs WA Bester by J van Rensburg, 2.2.1900.

10. PAR, CSO 2925: Invasion Losses Enquiry Commission: Claim by JJ Wessels, 14.2.1901.

11. PAR, CSO 2871: Invasion Losses Enquiry Commission: Claim by L Combrinck, 6.10.1900; PAR, CSO 2886: Invasion Losses Enquiry Commission: Claim by A Jansen, 27.10.1900; PAR, CSO 2900: Invasion Losses Enquiry Commission: Claim by Johanna Potgieter, 6.9.1900.

12. PAR, CSO 2892: Invasion Losses Enquiry Commission: Claim by JJS Maritz, 8.1.1903.

13. PAR, CSO 2906: Invasion Losses Enquiry Commission: Claim by FJ Swartz, 17.1.1901.

numerous Natal Afrikaners who due to poverty and other circumstances, did not have the necessary equipment such as plough shares to farm effectively. They applied to Wolmarans for such equipment and in turn asked General Piet Joubert whether he could supply this and if so, under what terms.<sup>14</sup> In further support of local Afrikaners food aid was given to the wives and children of the poor men of the Newcastle district who had been conscripted into service.<sup>15</sup>

Despite supportive measures such as the above committing high treason by joining the Boers was not a deed done by Natal Afrikaners in the hope of a better economic deal should the Republics be victorious. This is borne out by lists compiled in October 1901, regarding the economic status of suspected rebels not yet apprehended, for the governor of Natal. Of the 75 names that appeared on the first list 19 were landowners, 21 renters, while 29 were sons residing with their fathers. Only six names appearing on this list were managers/workers/bywoners. On a second list of suspected rebels, the names of 83 landowners appeared.<sup>16</sup>

Generally the economic experience of the majority of Natal Afrikaners during the Boer occupation was positive. This, however, changed dramatically when the Republicans retreated. One of the key questions faced by the military and the Natal Government alike was what economic measures were to be taken against Natal Afrikaners who were fighting with the Boers. One of the suggestions made was the confiscation of landed property belonging to Natal Afrikaners convicted of high treason. This, mainly due to the intervention of the Colonial Office, was discarded as an option.<sup>17</sup> With the confiscation of landed property not being an option, how then were Natal Afrikaners dealt with in economic terms during the war?

## 12.2 The economic impact of the actions of the British forces on Natal Afrikaners

Unlike the conduct of the Boer forces the actions of the British forces had a profoundly negative economic impact on the total Natal Afrikaner populace of Northern Natal in the occupied area. The tone of what was to happen was set soon after the relief of Ladysmith when WAC (William) Bester's farm, Fourieskraal near Ladysmith, and his house in the town were severely damaged and looted. According to *De Kerkbode* this damage was done "niet door de vijanden maar door degenen die zijne beschermers moesten geweest zijn."<sup>18</sup> Further south losses were also suffered. In the Weenen area Sergeant Jeffries of Thorneycrofts Mounted Infantry took 68 head of cattle belonging to CJ van Rooyen,<sup>19</sup> while CFW Snyman of Uitzicht, Gourton, lost more than 500 sheep to the military. His sheep were eventually sold as loot stock in Newcastle. Snyman also lost his baled wool and the 400

14. NAR, KG 818: Letter JB Wolmarans (JP) to General PJ Joubert, 28.12.1899.

15. OE Prozesky private collection, Diary of JJA Prozesky: Diary entry, 9.12.1899, p.103.

16. PAR, GH 1450: Name lists of suspected rebels who owned land, 27.10.1901.

17. See pp.157-160 for the debate pertaining to the suggested confiscation of the landed property of rebels.

18. *De Kerkbode*, 19.4.1900.

19. PAR, 1/WEN 3/2/3: Enquiry about the number of cattle taken from CJ van Rooyen, 15.6.1900-22.6.1900.

sheep he had hired from a Mr Gray to the British forces.<sup>20</sup>

Part of the problem was the view adopted by the military on property looted from Natal Afrikaners. A point in case was a matter-of-fact report in the *Natal Witness* which stated that three Hattingh families from near Estcourt had fled leaving the opportunity for, “our mounted pickets...to secure a supply of delicacies, such as poultry, fresh butter, and eggs.”<sup>21</sup> These were not the only losses suffered by the Hattinghs. JM Hattingh also protested that his cattle were being rounded up by the military and was told to speak to the officer in charge at Chieveley. When attempting to do this, he was imprisoned and then along with his family, deported to Mooi River. He was also refused a permit to go to Estcourt to make a sworn affidavit regarding his cattle.<sup>22</sup>

Such economic punitive measures aimed at Afrikaners were not unique in the area south of the Tugela River. During November and December 1899 the military indiscriminately arrested Afrikaners in the Weenen and Estcourt districts and looted their livestock, including the 31 cattle belonging to Miss EJ Hattingh “a cripple and lady of weak intellect” whose affairs were managed by a local lawyer, Chadwick. To recover the cattle Chadwick asked Colonel Long to intervene. At the same time he raised the cases of Izaak Marais, DB Snyman, PJ van Rooyen and the youthful McDuling brothers who had been arrested and had their cattle confiscated. Long reacted by asking Chadwick not to write to him as he was not in charge of the matter, but to Major Chichester, the provost marshal. Undeterred Chadwick kept up his correspondence. Matters came to a head when 70 cattle belonging to Van Rooyen were put up for sale by Colonel HG Morgan for the benefit of the Imperial Government at Nottingham Road on 20 December 1899. Chadwick asked that the cattle be released or withdrawn from the sale pending the investigation against his client and Lt-Col EJ Gallwey responded by conceding that a representative could be sent to Nottingham Road to identify and claim the cattle from the military authorities. Chadwick consequently went to Nottingham Road himself to identify the cattle branded with Van Rooyen’s mark. He, however, ran into difficulties as the officer in charge and the auctioneer both stated that they could not release the cattle except on the production of a sworn affidavit. As a result the cattle belonging to both Miss EJ Hattingh, Van Rooyen<sup>23</sup> and JM Hattingh were sold.<sup>24</sup>

This particular auction at Nottingham Road conducted by J Raw and Co<sup>25</sup> in conjunction with the Nottingham Road Farmers’ Association, worked out well for the military, the Imperial Government, and those Natalians who purchased livestock. All in all 936 sheep and goats, 756 head of cattle and

---

20. PAR, CSO 2907: Invasion Losses Enquiry Commission: Claim by CFW Snyman, 3.6.1901.

21. *Natal Witness*, 30.11.1899.

22. PAR, CSO 1881: Invasion Losses Enquiry Commission: Claim by JM and JG Hattingh, 6.4.1900.

23. PAR, CSO 1637: Correspondence between Chadwick and the Natal authorities regarding the looting and sale of cattle of Natal Afrikaners, 6.12.1899-10.1.1900.

24. PAR, CSO 1881: Invasion Losses Enquiry Commission: Claim by JM Hattingh, 7.4.1900.

25. PAR, CSO 1642: Application by JW Holding to be considered as an auctioneer, 14.3.1900-24.3.1900.

22 horses belonging to Natal Afrikaners were sold.<sup>26</sup>

All Chadwick could do was to express his anger and frustration to the colonial secretary about the economic persecution of innocent Afrikaners: "It is not just to seize a persons (*sic*) cattle, sell them, and keep the owner in goal, without trial and to sell their stock so I appeal on their behalf to His Excellency as Commander-in Chief of H.M. forces, to order the necessary steps to be taken to have a thorough investigation at once. How can these men be sufficiently compensated for their imprisonment if found not guilty?" The response from the military via the Natal Government to this serious accusation was standoffish. The cattle belonging to Van Rooyen and Hattingh got mixed up with looted stock and were therefore sold; the two individuals could claim for their losses from the Invasion Losses Enquiry Commission.<sup>27</sup>

In fact that it was virtually impossible for Natal Afrikaners resident south of Ladysmith to get their livestock back once the military took hold of it as can be gathered from the case of WAC Bester. He was detained in Ladysmith for the duration of the Siege and afterwards banned to Pietermaritzburg on suspicion of collaborating with the Boers. During this period the military took "possession of his Title Deeds, Securities, Livestock, Household Effects, and various movable property, in fact he was divested, so far as he knows, of everything, that he had on which the Imperial authorities could lay their hands, including cash to the extent of £437..." One of the biggest concerns Bester had was the plight of his herd of 1 463 Angora stud goats.<sup>28</sup>

The problem Bester faced was that security was necessary for the return of his goats and the guaranty required was in the form of a mortgage bond from someone other than himself. When approached on this matter by the lawyers Hathorn and Co acting on his behalf, the Natal Government, despite the fact that Bester was not charged with treason, offered no assistance and merely stated that the matter should be raised with the military. For their part the military did not bother responding to letters from the lawyers and the director of supplies, Colonel HG Morgan, proceeded to place an advertisement for the sale of the goats in the *Natal Witness*. Again Hathorn and Co remonstrated with the military about their ludicrous regulations regarding a guaranty. As an alternative they suggested that the goats be handed back to Bester on the undertaking that he produced them when required. Again the military did not bother replying. Hathorn and Co regarded the matter in such a serious light that they advised Bester to take it to the Supreme Court. The problem was that such a step would take time and the sale of the goats was about to take place on 19

---

26. *Natal Witness*, 15.12.1899, 18.12.1899, 19.12.1899. Similar auctions by the military were, for example, held at Melmoth, see: DAR, 1/MEL III/2/9: Correspondence regarding the confiscation of the cattle of JJ van Rooyen, 16.7.1903-15.8.1903.

27. PAR, CSO 1637: Correspondence between Chadwick and the Natal authorities regarding the looting and sale of cattle belonging to Natal Afrikaners, 6.12.1899-10.1.1900.

28. *Natal Witness*, 7.5.1900.

May 1900. As a last resort the Natal Government was therefore approached and told “that the Imperial authorities are exercising powers under Martial Law in a matter which does not seem to be justifiable...wrong is being done and we appeal to the Government to assist in this matter and to prevent the loss of Mr. Bester of these goats. It is in the power of Government to bring pressure to bear on the Imperial Authorities.”<sup>29</sup> Hathorn and Co regarded this as necessary as they “believe it is not impossible that the Military Authorities are acting without, we think, troubling to enquire or attempting to exercise discretion under the influence of persons who are anxious to acquire these much prized goats of Mr. Bester’s.”<sup>30</sup> The Natal Government did nothing to intervene or to rescue the goats belonging to Bester.

But the greatest economic deprivation amongst Natal Afrikaners took place north of Ladysmith during and immediately after the advance of Buller’s Army in May 1900.<sup>31</sup> In its northward drive almost all the livestock belonging to Natal Afrikaners amounting to tens of thousands of animals, were swept away by the “looting corps.”<sup>32</sup> Especially active in this regard were the Natal colonial and British irregular troops as a Natal Carbineer testified in May 1900: “I have looted lots of grub. I looted lots of horse feed last night for ‘Scout’. It’s rather a quick business looting, as Thorneycroft’s, BMI, SALH, and BMR are awful beggars at it, and you always know that there are thousands of men after just what you are wanting.”<sup>33</sup>

Examples of such operations repeated on almost every Afrikaner-owned farm, took place in the Dundee district. On passing the farm Rest in May 1900 the British military took seven horses, 1 330 sheep and 550 goats from Mrs EM Cronjé,<sup>34</sup> while Mrs Pieters of Dundee lost 480 sheep and 459 head of cattle and Mrs Kemp 1 000 sheep.<sup>35</sup> Others suffered even more and Jan Meyer was left with only the clothes he was wearing.<sup>36</sup> In the shadow of Buller’s Army came the Natal Police and agents who worked for the military and mopped up what the army might have missed. On 30 May 1900 all the cattle, a wagon, a spider and horses belonging to Mrs MC Cronjé of Camelot Newcastle were confiscated by two white members of the Natal Police. The two policemen on the same day also took the cattle belonging to Mrs JJ Smit, JS van Niekerk, and LP Adendorff.<sup>37</sup> The scale of the looting of farm animals is reflected in a report in the *Natal Witness* of 25 May 1900: “A herd of about 2 000

---

29. PAR, CSO 1643: Correspondence regarding the detention of WAC Bester and the sale of his property by the military, 22.3.1900-17.5.1900.

30. PAR, CSO 1643: Letter Hathorn and Co to colonial secretary, 17.5.1900.

31. PAR, CSO 2900: Invasion Losses Enquiry Commission: Claim by JH Potgieter, 12.11.1903.

32. PAR, CSO 2896: Invasion Losses Enquiry Commission: Claim by WS Naude, 9.12.1901.

33. MS Coghlan, p.146; PAR, CSO 2886: Invasion Losses Enquiry Commission: Claim by AA Jansen, 19.3.1901.

34. PAR, 1/DUN 3/1/8: Letter EM Cronjé to magistrate Dundee, 21.5.1900.

35. OE Prozesky private collection, Diary of JJA Prozesky: Diary entries, 24.5.1900 and 31.5.1900, p.206 and p.214.

36. PAR, HF Schoon collection, A 72: Letter PC Cronjé to HF Schoon, 23.6.1900.

37. PAR, PM 18: Request for assistance by MC Cronjé, JS van Niekerk, JJ Smit and LP Adendorff for the return of their cattle, 19.6.1900-15.8.1900.

head of cattle was left at Dundee, and the number of sheep, cattle and goats at Newcastle is already very large.”<sup>38</sup>

In the process of looting almost all the Afrikaner farms north of the Tugela, the military initially drew no distinction between the property of those who were guilty and those who were merely accused or suspected of treason, or those who were completely innocent like the loyalist Jansen family.<sup>39</sup> Plundering as part of the military operations in Northern Natal was supposed to end on 11 June 1900 when the following orders were issued:

No stock, supplies or other property, except such as may be required for military purposes, and then only by orders of Directors of Transport, Supplies, or Remounts, is to be taken by the troops. Officers who may have issued to others orders or authority to collect stock, etc., are held strictly responsible that such orders or authority are at once cancelled. Collection and custody of derelict stock and horses, whether of loyalists or rebels is entirely a matter for civil authority. If any such stock is brought in, it should be directed to the nearest Magistrate or Police post, who have received instructions on the subject.<sup>40</sup>

The rationale behind this order was spelt out by Buller: “The proper way to end a war is to defeat the enemy in the field. This you will never achieve if you scatter your forces and turn them into herds to guard cattle or sheep.”<sup>41</sup> The reality was, however, different and Africans and Europeans like J Browning of Newcastle,<sup>42</sup> and Wade of Dundee,<sup>43</sup> employed by the military and by units like Loxton’s Horse<sup>44</sup> and the Dundee Local Farmer’s Corps’ also known as Symon’s Horse or Symon’s Looters continued to seize livestock from Afrikaner farms up to the end of the war.<sup>45</sup> Within this context not even Natal Afrikaners arrested outside the Colony could save their livestock. PJ Cromhout and JCJ Cronjé were arrested near Louis Trichardt (modern day Makado) on their way to Rhodesia (modern day Zimbabwe). On instruction of Lord Kitchener their wagons and cattle were confiscated and handed over to the appropriate military units.<sup>46</sup>

Complaints to the military concerning the continued looting and confiscation of livestock had little impact since no uniform answer was forthcoming. Responses ranged from “all goods captured

---

38. *Natal Witness*, 25.5.1900.

39. PAR, CSO 2886: Invasion Losses Enquiry Commission: Claim by A Jansen, 27.10.1900; PAR, CSO 2886: Invasion Losses Enquiry Commission: Claim by AA Jansen, 19.3.1901; PAR, CSO 2910: Invasion Losses Enquiry Commission: Claim by ADC van Niekerk, no date.

40. PAR, PM 87: Orders by Lt-Col H Heath, 29.7.1900; PAR, 1/DUN 3/1/8: Telegram GOC to officer commanding, troops, 11.6.1900.

41. PAR, PM 17: Letter General R Buller to GOC lines of communication, 24.5.1900.

42. OE Prozesky private collection, Diary of JJA Prozesky: Diary entry, *circa* November 1900, p.430; PAR, NT 93: Letter Watt and Pike to J Browning, 19.8.1903.

44. PAR, CSO 2925: Invasion Losses Enquiry Commission: Claim by HJ Strydom, 9.10.1900.

44. PAR, CSO 2876: Invasion Losses Enquiry Commission: Claim by AS Eksteen, 6.10.1902.

45. MS Coghlan, p.344.

46. NAR, PMO 22: Documentation regarding the cattle belonging to PJ Cromhout and CJ Cronjé, 17.7.1901-8.12.1901.

become contraband of war”,<sup>47</sup> to the GOC, Natal, claiming that the looting of livestock by the military from Afrikaners was never ordered. All he was prepared to do was to hand the livestock back once located.<sup>48</sup> What made matters worse for the Afrikaners was that the military only issued receipts for the animals taken in exceptional cases<sup>49</sup> since it was argued that “during a campaign, it is not practicable to keep complete records of transactions...”<sup>50</sup>

The looting and uncontrolled movement of livestock by the military had a further negative impact on the animals which Natal Afrikaners managed to save.<sup>51</sup> Veterinary regulations were generally ignored by the military prompting the Natal Cabinet to complain that diseases were introduced into Northern Natal and Zululand by the introduction of captured stock from the Transvaal and the OFS.<sup>52</sup> Scab amongst sheep<sup>53</sup> and lungsickness amongst cattle<sup>54</sup> became relatively common and even rinderpest appeared in June 1901 between Greytown and Pietermaritzburg, prompting convicted rebel JC Vermaak to comment philosophically that it did not bother him since he had no cattle left to lose.<sup>55</sup>

In the end livestock taken from Natal Afrikaners by the British forces were disposed of in three ways: oxen and horses were taken for transport and remount purposes; large numbers of sheep, goats and cattle were slaughtered to feed the thousands of troops passing through the area, and substantial numbers were either sold at the initial military auctions or handed over to the commissioner of agriculture to be sold as derelict stock.<sup>56</sup>

With such large numbers of stock up for grabs under the lawless conditions, an unofficial way of disposing of animals taken by the military, appeared. At the heart of these illegal operations were men like J Browning who worked as a conductor of captured stock<sup>57</sup> and GP “Digger” Robinson of Mooi River who worked as a guide for Buller’s army. Livestock and other moveable property would be commandeered from Afrikaner farms in the Newcastle area under the pretext that it was on

---

47. PAR, CSO 1707: Enquiry by NC Adendorff regarding the commandeering of his cattle and sheep, 27.6.1902-11.8.1902.

48. PAR, PM 99: Correspondence about the removal of livestock in Northern Natal by the military, 22.6.1900-3.7.1900.

49. PAR, CSO 1663: Invasion Losses Enquiry Commission: Claim by JW de Jager, 7.6.1900-6.1.1901.

50. PAR, CSO 1707: Enquiry by NC Adendorff regarding the commandeering of his cattle and sheep, 27.6.1902-11.8.1902.

51. See for example: PAR, PVS 3, 5, 9,11, 12.

52. PAR, GH 1040: Minute paper by the Natal Government, 16.7.1901.

53. PAR, PVS 5: Report by Stock Inspector Klingenberg regarding the sheep of PRN Vermaak, 11.10.1900; PVS 20: Report by District Veterinary Surgeon Hutchinson on the cattle of PRN Vermaak, 7.9.1901.

54. PAR, PVS 5: Report by Stock Inspector Klingenberg that the sheep of PRN Vermaak had scab, 11.10.1900; PVS 20: Report by Stock Inspector Walker that the cattle of PRN Vermaak had lungsickness, 5.2.1902.

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

56. PAR, CSO 1663: Invasion Losses Enquiry Commission: Claim by JW de Jager, 7.6.1900-6.1.1901.

57. PAR, NT 93: Letter J Browning to Watt and Pike, 28.8.1903.

instruction of the military. This was partially true because some animals and goods would be handed over to the military, but the rest was kept to be sold for personal gain.<sup>58</sup> Although well aware of this fraud, neither the military nor the civil authorities were willing to take action. The final links in the chain of “shady transactions in connection with loot stock” were men like Ludwig Ohlson who would buy it from men like Robinson.<sup>59</sup> Postwar enquiries made by PR<sup>60</sup> and AC Vermaak to the government reveal the scale of these criminal activities. Both men wanted to know how they could reclaim their cattle from the people who had taken possession of them. It was easy to recognise the cattle as they did not carry the brands of animals that were sold by either the Derelict Stock Fund or the military. Rather than intervene, however, the government suggested that they speak to a solicitor, Hathorn and Co, who “has(d) several cases of a similar nature in hand.”<sup>61</sup>

The looting, confiscation and commandeering of property belonging to Natal Afrikaners by the military continued for the duration of the war and, under Martial Law, the military became a law unto themselves. Even graves in farm cemeteries were broken open in search of loot.<sup>62</sup> Afrikaners who owned goods other than livestock were also targeted for confiscation. One of the favourite targets by military patrols was wool<sup>63</sup> and mohair which was sold on behalf of the Imperial Government.<sup>64</sup> Maize was another product regularly taken from Afrikaner farms.<sup>65</sup> The military apparently waited until the maize was harvested and removed from the cobs before they commandeered it.<sup>66</sup> A man by the name of Jowett was awarded the contract by the commandant for Dundee, Colonel Gore, to bring in all the maize found on uninhabited Afrikaner farms in the district. Jowett was rewarded handsomely as he could keep half the maize he collected as payment. Initially the maize brought in was stored under the authority of the local magistrate, RH Beachcroft, who operated on the assumption that since the Natal Government had taken over all Afrikaner livestock from the military, the same applied to crops. Beachcroft was, however, quickly informed by his superiors that the order excluded crops and that he should hand back all crops to the military. Five hundred bags were consequently returned to the military who had it crushed and issued at Dundee and Colenso. Once the government distanced itself from the reaping of Afrikaner-owned maize, Jowett was ordered to cease cutting maize but between Beachcroft and the entrepreneurial Jowett they found alternative Afrikaner “farm produce” to confiscate. Jowett had to collect all the wool and

---

58. PAR, CSO 1707: Enquiry by NC Adendorff regarding the commandeering of his cattle and sheep, 27.6.1902-6.8.1902; PAR, AGO I/8/89: Enquiry by Griffin and Muller on behalf of AM Cronjé regarding the removal of livestock by GP Robinson, 27.4.1903-2.6.1903.

59. PAR, SGO III/I/150: Permission requested for the transfer of the farm Ouklip, 10.1.1902-1.2.1902.

60. PAR, AGO I/8/89: Letter PR Vermaak to attorney-general, 12.4.1903.

61. PAR, CSO 1730: Correspondence regarding the cattle of AC Vermaak which were in the possession of other people, 7.2.1903-19.3.1903.

62. OE Prozesky private collection, Diary of JJA Prozesky: Diary entry, *circa* November 1900, p.427.

63. *Natal Witness*, 11.10.1900.

64. PAR, CSO 2896: Invasion Losses Enquiry Commission: Claim by SJ Naude, 4.6.1903.

65. PAR, CSO 2910: Invasion Losses Enquiry Commission: Claim by JSJ van Rensburg, 4.2.1903.

66. Foy Vermaak private collection: Letter JC Vermaak to CT Vermaak alias Miss C Herzog, 28.8.1901.

deposit it with the magistrate.<sup>67</sup>

Beachcroft was not the only Natal official involved in dealing with crops belonging to Afrikaners. The overzealous Magistrate Thomas Maxwell of Umsinga mailed a cheque for the sale of maize from the farm of CJ de Villiers to the Natal Government on 20 November 1901.<sup>68</sup> Maxwell had to defend himself against other allegations of irresponsible economic behaviour as well namely the exploiting of absentee Afrikaners. Some local Africans and the Natal Police claimed that cows belonging to CJ de Villiers and pigs and poultry belonging to a certain Vermaak had been taken by Maxwell for his own use.<sup>69</sup> This was not the end of the accusations against Maxwell who ended up in a war of words with HE Wohlberg about the orange grove on the farm of De Villiers. Wohlberg accused him of claiming the oranges as his own and of interfering with the property of De Villiers. In turn Maxwell stated that Wohlberg was undermining his authority by removing large quantities of oranges from the farm. The dispute was eventually settled when Wohlberg was told that the African overseer on the farm would give him some oranges on Saturdays.<sup>70</sup> This did not end the saga and Maxwell had to reprimand the Reverend Dedekind of Elandskraal because his son had also taken some of the oranges without permission.<sup>71</sup>

The losses suffered to moveable property went hand in hand with the wanton destruction of immovable Afrikaner property. Reminiscent of the situation during the total war that raged in the two Republics, Afrikaners in parts of Northern Natal also experienced farm burning and property wreckage. Around Dundee Lord Kitchener's scorched earth policy was implemented by Colonel GR Blomfield, the regional commander.<sup>72</sup> Especially active in these operations were the volunteer units made up of English Natalians such as the VCR. In October 1900, JAF Meyer of Mauchlin, Dundee, complained that the house on his farm Meyer's Land was destroyed by volunteers. At roughly the same time Mrs CJ Pieters complained that her house and four outbuildings on the farm Zwartwater between Dundee and Helpmekaar were burnt down by a band under the leadership of Major Mckenzie of the Natal Carbineers. Mckenzie, then commander of the VCR, denied the charges.<sup>73</sup>

---

67. PAR, 1/DUN 3/1/8: Correspondence regarding the request by R du Bois to purchase maize confiscated from Natal Afrikaner farms, 23.7.1900-22.8.1900.

68. PAR, 1/UMS 38: Letter Magistrate T Maxwell, Umsinga, to PUS, 20.11.1901.

69. PAR, MJPW 117: Report that Magistrate T Maxwell, Umsinga, had seized and retained cattle belonging to rebels for his own use, 12.10.1901-28.10.1901; MJPW 117: Correspondence regarding the removal of cattle belonging to rebels, 9.10.1901-18.11.1901. This was not the first time that such an accusation was leveled against Maxwell. LJR and MAS Kritzinger of Melmoth, the previous posting of Maxwell, charged him with confiscation of their milking cows for his personal use, and keeping a horse of theirs for five months for his personal use and that of his friends. DAR, 1/MEL III/2/8: Letter MAS and LJR Kritzinger to Magistrate A Hulley, Melmoth, 30.7.1900.

70. PAR, 1/UMS 30: Request by HW Wohlberg to rent grazing rights on the farm Craigwether, 29.5.1901-4.6.1901; 1/UMS 38: Letter Magistrate T Maxwell, Umsinga, to HW Wohlberg, 1.6.1901.

71. PAR, 1/UMS 38: Letter Magistrate T Maxwell, Umsinga, to Reverend Dedekind, 11.6.1901.

72. MS Coghlan, pp.341-342.

73. PAR, 1/DUN 3/1/9: Correspondence regarding the burning of farms by the Natal Volunteers, 30.11.1900-5.11.1900.

Other Afrikaner farms such as Kilburnie<sup>74</sup> and Blinkwater<sup>75</sup> in the Dundee district, Snelster near Estcourt,<sup>76</sup> Geduld Nr 2 near Dannhauser,<sup>77</sup> and the farmhouses of JW O'Reilly and Jacobus de Wet who resided roughly ten kilometres north of Newcastle, were also completely wrecked by the military either as a punitive measure or as a means to flush out rebels.<sup>78</sup> In this process of "pacification," the burning of houses was from March 1901 onwards followed by orders to also destroy farm equipment and "Dutch crops" in Northern Natal. The order remained intact until the end of the war and resulted in the routine destruction of everything in the path of in this case, the VCR.<sup>79</sup> The extent of the destruction of immovable property is illustrated by the 11 page inventory of lost goods compiled by ME Kok of Dalry, Dundee.<sup>80</sup>

Within the context outlined above the scorched earth strategy was not a military response to a guerrilla situation since this hardly existed, but rather a punitive measure against an ethnic group related by blood but not political affiliation to the invading force. For Northern Natal Afrikaners this meant, alongside the fines meted out and the imprisonment imposed, a triple punishment.

In addition to the physical destruction meted out by the military the oppressive measures enforced under Martial Law made farming very difficult. Permission to move livestock between farms in a district or to visit other farms that they owned were not readily granted to Afrikaners.<sup>81</sup> Similarly Afrikaners, loyalist or otherwise, found it hard to secure permits to move about, which hampered their ability to transact their business.<sup>82</sup>

Very little action was taken by the Natal Government concerning the loss of Afrikaner property. In April 1900 Attorney-General Bale suggested that the Natal Police take steps to protect houses containing moveable items belonging to Natal Afrikaners by placing all their goods in one room of the house which would then be nailed shut and guarded by an African appointed at 5/- per month. The problem was, however, that by the time these measures were implemented very little remained to be stored. At the same time it did little to prevent continued pillage by the military.<sup>83</sup>

---

74. PAR, CSO 2892: Invasion Losses Enquiry Commission: Claim by MF Maritz, 4.6.1901.

75. OE Prozesky private collection, Diary of JJA Prozesky: Diary entry, 6.7.1901, p.512.

76. *The Morning Leader*, 14.2.1900 and 15.12.1900. Robertson's statements caused a heavy debate in the *Pall Mall Gazette* of 18 and 20.12.1900 and *The Times* of 20.12.1900.

77. JC Kannemeyer, *D.J. Opperman - 'n Biografie*, p.19.

78. PAR, PM 24: Letter Prime Minister AH Hime to GOC, Natal, 17.9.1901; PAR, CSO 1726: Enquiry by CL de Wet regarding the destruction of his house by the military, 23.2.1903-7.3.1903.

79. MS Coghlan, pp.342-343.

80. PAR, CSO 2888: Invasion Losses Enquiry Commission: Claim by ME Kok, 24.10.1902.

81. PAR, 1/UMS 38: Letter Magistrate T Maxwell, Umsinga, to H Adams, 10.6.1901.

82. PAR, 1/DUN 3/1/9: Correspondence regarding the request by AJG Meyer for a permit, 30.10.1900-4.11.1900.

83. PAR, AGO I/8/71: Correspondence regarding the protection of Natal Afrikaner property, 16.5.1900-9.6.1900; PAR, CSO 2894: Invasion Losses Enquiry Commission: Claim by CM Meyer, 13.1.1903.

Subsequent attempts to protect Afrikaner property did not originate from the central administration but rather the local authorities. In an attempt to safeguard what remained of the livestock of Afrikaners absent from their farms on the Biggarsberg, Magistrate Maxwell moved all the livestock to the farm Balgownie near Helpmekaar, the property of PRN Vermaak. WW Strydom (JP) who held the keys to all the deserted houses, was placed in charge of the stock while Sergeant Salter of the Natal Police kept the property under surveillance.<sup>84</sup> This arrangement brought Maxwell into conflict with the commandant of Dundee who wanted all animals belonging to rebels and undesirables rounded-up. The commandant was informed that the outlined arrangement was made pending the Natal Government's decision on the disposal of the livestock, and that any other orders issued would be regarded in conflict to this.<sup>85</sup> This had little impact and during the night of 13-14 October 1901, 29 head of cattle belonging to Vermaak were removed by the military.<sup>86</sup>

The farm Balgownie situated approximately three kilometres from a military camp was continuously looted.<sup>87</sup> In April 1901, planks and an old rifle were removed despite the protests of the loyalist overseer, Combrink.<sup>88</sup> Magistrate Thomas Maxwell's enquiry into the matter led to a promise from the commanding officer at Helpmekaar that the goods would be returned. This never happened. A month later the soldiers again looted the farm, this time removing four pigs. In a strongly worded letter Maxwell requested the military to return the pigs and to "desist from taking anything further from Balgownie."<sup>89</sup> From the Pietermaritzburg Concentration Camp, Vermaak complained to Maxwell about the military looting his property while WW Strydom, the local JP, did likewise. All Maxwell could do, having had little support from the commanding officer at Helpmekaar, was to forward the complaints to the Dundee commandant.<sup>90</sup>

In the light of the continued military plundering and destruction of Natal Afrikaner property Attorney-General Henry Bale could do nothing but admit that such happenings were common in Natal and were bringing discredit on the English. He also felt that the looting of livestock was an extremely severe punishment as women and children were in many cases the sufferers, and that these deeds were impoverishing the Afrikaners of upper Natal.<sup>91</sup> This feeling is supported by the statement of Dr Douglas of Dannhauser. Making it very clear that he was not pro-Boer, Douglas informed Magistrate Jackson of Newcastle that several Afrikaner families in his neighbourhood were facing or would soon face food shortages. The Natal Government's response to Jackson's

---

84. PAR, 1/UMS 38: Letter Magistrate T Maxwell, Umsinga, to Sergeant Salter, 10.11.1900.

85. PAR, 1/UMS 38: Letter Magistrate T Maxwell, Umsinga, to commandant, Dundee, 7.2.1901.

86. PAR, 1/UMS 38: Letter Magistrate T Maxwell, Umsinga, to officer commanding troops, Helpmekaar, 19.10.1901.

87. PAR, CSO 2910: Invasion Losses Enquiry Commission: Claim by PRN Vermaak, 11.10.1900 and 9.1.1903.

88. PAR, 1/UMS 38: Letter Magistrate T Maxwell, Umsinga, to officer commanding troops, Helpmekaar, 18.4.1901.

89. PAR, 1/UMS 38: Letter Magistrate T Maxwell, Umsinga, to officer commanding troops, Helpmekaar, 28.5.1901.

90. PAR, 1/UMS 38: Letter Magistrate T Maxwell, Umsinga, to PRN Vermaak, 20.7.1901.

91. PAR, AGO I/9/74: Correspondence regarding the looting of the property of JM de Jager, Kemp's Hoek, Dundee, 13.10.1900-4.10.1900.

enquiry about what he should do was cool, punitive, and impractical. He was asked to supply a list of the Afrikaner families who faced hunger “so that their male representatives who are now in goal may be afforded an opportunity of arranging for maintenance of such families.”<sup>92</sup> This inhumane attitude of the Natal Government to Afrikaners impoverished by the war, is further highlighted by the response to the plight of the time-expired rebel TR Dannhauser and his extended family of eight. Both the Natal Police and JP Cooke reported early in 1903 that the family was starving, had no animals apart from an old mare, and were begging mealies from Africans to survive. The cold reply from the Natal Government was that Mr Dannhauser’s relations were well off, and that it was their duty to assist him.<sup>93</sup>

Cases of poverty because of the war also appeared south of the Tugela River. ILJ Pieterse of Ladysmith was arrested and sent to the central prison in Pietermaritzburg only to be released a short while later and allowed to reside under police surveillance in Weenen. Pieterse subsequently successfully applied to the Mansion House Fund<sup>94</sup> for assistance to his extended family to the value of £8 to be distributed by Magistrate Matthews over a four month period. When this amount ran out Matthews applied to the treasurer of the local Transvaal Relief Committee. This time he had no success and the suggestion was made that the Pieterse children should find employment for board and lodging from wealthy Afrikaners who resided in the Weenen area.<sup>95</sup>

In some cases the Natal Government did waver and allowed poor Natal Afrikaners into the concentration camps on their account.<sup>96</sup> This was, however, the exception rather than the rule as can be gleaned from the analysis in Chapter 10 on the policy and attitude of the Natal Government towards allowing Natal Afrikaners entry into the concentration camps.

Throughout this process of economic destruction and willful impoverishment of Northern Natal Afrikaners the Natal Government did very little to either protect them as subjects, or confront the military about their actions. In the light of this it would be fair to assume that the view of the Natal Government was, as is borne out by the derelict stock sales explained later in this chapter, that the loss of movable and destruction of immovable property suffered by Afrikaners were part of the punishment they deserved. This would also serve to explain why all representations on the matter to the Natal Government by Afrikaners and their legal representatives alike, elicited no reaction.

---

92. PAR, CSO 1650: Correspondence between Magistrate Jackson and the colonial authorities regarding destitute Afrikaner families, 15.6.1900-21.6.1900.

93. PAR, CSO 1723: Petitions by JP Cooke and the Natal Police regarding the poverty TR Dannhauser and his family were living under, 30.1.1903-18.2.1903.

94. This fund was named after the official residence of the mayor of London and collected money for victims of wars and disasters.

95. PAR, 1/WEN 3/2/3: Correspondence regarding assistance to the Pieterse family, 14.2.1900-10.4.1900.

96. PAR, PM 22: Letter HE van Vure to Lt CM Threlfill, VIII Hussars, 29.6.1901; PM 22: Correspondence relative to HE van Vure, 7.7.1901-21.7.1901.

According to the historian Mark Coghlan, this could be explained by the popular view of Victorian and Edwardian Britain, namely that the burning of farmhouses and confiscation of livestock were just desserts for challenging the Empire.<sup>97</sup>

The most critical voice regarding the economically destructive actions of the military came from Judge William Smith, President of the Special Court:

In almost every case in which rebels have been convicted before us, it is stated that the whole of their stock, in some instances to the value of some thousands of pounds, was, at the time of their arrest, seized by the military or police authorities. It is urged upon us that these rebels have already been severely punished in anticipation of the sentence of the Court, and the matter places us in some difficulty in determining the amount of fine that should properly be imposed on conviction. We are unaware of the reasons which led to these seizures, whether any of the stock can be recovered, or whether any claim for compensation can be sustained. It is undesirable that the effect of the sentence upon the rebels should be so severe as to reduce them and their families to absolute beggary, and we are reduced, in the fixing of the amount of fines, to make them proportionate to such rough estimate of the landed property of the prisoners as we are able to form from the meagre evidence before us. In one instance a prisoner, whose stock had been seized, was acquitted. The result of these seizures is that those whose wealth consists solely of stock suffered a far greater measure of punishment than those whose property is land, and that this punishment is incurred irrespective of the degree of a person's guilt. The seizure of the whole of the farming stock must inflict incalculable hardship on the families of rebels.<sup>98</sup>

Smith's was a lone voice and it had no impact on alleviating or ending the economic suffering of Natal Afrikaners because it was ignored by the Natal Government and drowned out by more acceptable jingoistic statements.

The Afrikaners who best dealt with the destructive wartime economic policy as outlined above were those with business acumen. Jan Meyer jnr of Eversholt, Estcourt, was acquitted after 10 months in prison. The fact that he lost everything he owned and was not eligible for compensation did not bring him down as he himself testified: "I have recently been trading with the military exchanging horses for cattle and goats. I commenced with £15 which I borrowed from Mr Lawford and I now have 60 goats and ten head of cattle. I sold 8 head of cattle to Mr George Spearman, 4 for £26 and 4 for £28. I have since repaid £2.10 to Mr Lawson and now owe him £12.10."<sup>99</sup> Economic ingenuity

---

97. MS Coghlan, p.340.

98. PAR, AGO I/8/74: Representations regarding the seizure of the property of rebels, 16.11.1900-3.12.1900.

99. PAR, CSO 2894: Invasion Losses Enquiry Commission: Claim by J Meyer jnr, 1.6.1901.

was also shown by Natal Afrikaners who rented their land to English Natalians as a means to not only earn money but also to protect their property against looting.<sup>100</sup> WS Naude of Dundee who was banned south, for example, managed to make an arrangement with William Wade to work his lands on a half-share basis. This worked well for both parties because in 1901 Wade harvested 380 bags of maize. Naude was also quick to take advantage of the sales of property of fellow Afrikaners and bought carriage horses belonging to Mrs Pieters.<sup>101</sup>

For most of the other Afrikaners the best they could hope for was some form of compensation from the Invasion Losses Enquiry Commission.

### **12.3 The question of compensation - The Invasion Losses Enquiry Commission**

From the moment that war broke out both the Boer commandos and British Army caused extensive damage to civilian property. The question uppermost in the minds of many Natalians who suffered material losses was: Who would pay? The answer came via an article in mid-November 1899 in the *Natal Mercury* which stated that General Buller had issued an order to General Gatacre, then stationed in the Eastern Cape, that: "Owing to the distance from the Government, it has not been possible to give the frontier districts at first the protection they need; and the enemy's troops having in places entered our territory, make it known as widely as possible that her Majesty's Government will exact compensation for any actual injury done to property of individuals who remain loyal."<sup>102</sup>

Natal politicians immediately raised the issue of compensation sustained in the Colony with Governor Hely-Hutchinson who in turn asked for clarification from Colonial Secretary Joseph Chamberlain and High Commissioner Alfred Milner.<sup>103</sup> The reply from Milner hardly satisfied the Natal authorities. According to his sources the damage was caused by rebels acting against loyalists and therefore "the rebellious district ought in the first instance to be held responsible for the damage..."<sup>104</sup> This was disputed by the Natal Government who clarified that it was actually the "Boer Irregular Horse" who were destroying property, raiding stock, and driving inhabitants from their homes.<sup>105</sup> This explanation won the day and on 21 November 1899 Buller's proclamation was extended to include Natal.<sup>106</sup>

To implement the proclamation, the Invasion Losses Enquiry Commission was constituted in

---

100. Foy Vermaak private collection, letter JC Vermaak to CT Vermaak alias C Hertog, 22.3.1901.

101. PAR, CSO 2896: Invasion Losses Enquiry Commission: Claim by WS Naude, 9.12.1901.

102. *Natal Mercury*, 17.11.1899.

103. PRO, CO 179/207: Telegram Governor W Hely-Hutchinson to Colonial Secretary J Chamberlain, 18.11.1899.

104. PAR, GH 1035: Telegram High Commissioner A Milner to Governor W Hely-Hutchinson, 19.11.1899.

105. PAR, GH 1035: Minute paper Prime Minister AH Hime, 21.11.1899.

106. *Natal Witness*, 21.11.1899.

December 1899,<sup>107</sup> underpinned by the philosophy that “compensation is an act of grace to those who were loyal and had suffered through adherence to their loyalty.”<sup>108</sup> In terms of its brief, the Invasion Losses Enquiry Commission was only to consider direct losses and was responsible directly to the governor. The funding would come from an Imperial advanced account created for the purpose.<sup>109</sup> The three members initially appointed to the committee were supplemented by another three in August 1900 to deal with the immense workload,<sup>110</sup> the complexity of the “Compensation Question,”<sup>111</sup> and complaints that the “most enterprising and persistent” were favoured over “modest sufferers.”<sup>112</sup>

Natal Afrikaners found the process of claiming from the Invasion Losses Enquiry Commission a difficult task. Many were disadvantaged because they spoke no English,<sup>113</sup> and others lacked a political understanding of the system which demanded that claimants file their claims with the resident magistrate of the district in which the losses were sustained.<sup>114</sup> Crucially some lacked information of what had happened to their movable property; information without which they were unable to submit a claim.<sup>115</sup>

Natal Afrikaners also had questions about possible compensation. One of the first concerns raised was by attorneys Chadwick and Miller of Estcourt who wanted to know “whether the said Commission will deal with the claims made against the Imperial Government for direct losses sustained through the action of the military such as houses in Natal suffering damage by the acts of the Imperial forces, during the absence of the owners - and claims for cattle, the property of loyal Dutch Natal residents which have been seized by the Military and sold on account of the Imperial Government.”<sup>116</sup>

This query received no quick answer and the initial policy that only losses suffered at the hands of the Boers would be compensated, was maintained. Sir William Smith, the president of the Special Court, added his voice by declaring: “Looting is not considered to be in harmony with modern military law, but I do not think this Government is under any obligation, either legal or moral, to

---

107. PAR, CSO 2859: Government notice No. 673. 1899, 13.12.1899; PRO, CO 179/208: Letter Governor W Hely-Hutchinson to Colonial Secretary J Chamberlain, 16.12.1899.

108. PAR, GH 1302: Letter Governor W Hely-Hutchinson to Colonial Secretary J Chamberlain, 27.2.1901; PAR, CSO 1726: Enquiry by CL de Wet regarding the damage to his property by the military, 23.3.1903.

109. PAR, GH 1707: Letter Governor HE McCallum to High Commissioner A Milner, 3.8.1903.

110. PAR, GH 1302: Letter Governor W Hely-Hutchinson to Colonial Secretary J Chamberlain, 24.8.1900.

111. *Times of Natal*, 14.7.1900; *Natal Witness*, 17.9.1900.

112. PRO, CO 179/213: Report chairmen of the Invasion Losses Enquiry Committee, MS Evans to colonial secretary, 7.7.1900.

113. PAR, GH 1707: Letter Governor HE McCallum to High Commissioner A Milner, 3.8.1903.

114. PAR, PM 118: Letter Secretary GO Plowman to JD Marais, 5.6.1903.

115. PAR, AGO I/8/91: Enquiry by nine Natal Afrikaners of what happened to their moveable property, 1.10.1903.

116. PAR, CSO 1637: Letter Chadwick and Miller to the colonial secretary, 11.1.1900.

compensate people in respect of these actions of men who were subject to military discipline and control."<sup>117</sup> This point of view was adopted despite initial estimates indicating that of the £117 000 damage and losses sustained south of the Tugela River £16 000 were caused by the Imperial forces and a further £25 000 by both armies. In the light of this Governor Hely-Hutchinson made it clear to Joseph Chamberlain that many cases of serious damages caused by the military existed on both sides of the Tugela River and that the loyal farmers expected prompt compensation.<sup>118</sup> The Imperial Government was reluctant to agree to this.<sup>119</sup> The Natal Government thus had no choice but to tow the line. In the words of Henry Bale: "The Colonial Government is unable to recognise any obligation to compensate people in respect of the action of forces subject to the control of the Imperial authorities."<sup>120</sup> The Natal authorities were, however, placed under immense and continuous pressure by the public on this issue and eventually capitulated and decided to authorize the payment of 75% of the assessed claims "in the full belief that the Imperial authorities will ultimately agree to reimburse such advances."<sup>121</sup> This the Imperial authorities eventually agreed to do.<sup>122</sup>

Where then did the outlined process leave Natal Afrikaners suspected or convicted of high treason? For those guilty of treason the decision was, as far as Governor McCallum was concerned, simple: they had lost all their rights since they were considered to have "unclean hands"<sup>123</sup> and would not be compensated in any way.<sup>124</sup> This meant that all the claims received from convicted rebels were rejected; a bitter financial blow to more than 400 Natal Afrikaners and their families.<sup>125</sup> The disdain with which their requests for compensation was treated is illustrated by the reaction to JG Döhne's letter written from the Pietermaritzburg Prison. He complained that the military had destroyed his farm, including fences, house, outbuildings, fruit trees and had removed all movable property causing damages estimated between £5 000 and £6 000. All his family was left with were two head of cattle and some bedding and clothes. Döhne's request that his letter be forwarded to the Invasion Losses Enquiry Commission received a venomous response from Bale: "I do not care to correspond with rebels on matters of this kind."<sup>126</sup>

---

117. PAR, AGO I/9/74: Correspondence regarding the looting of the property of JM de Jager, Kemp's Hoek, Dundee, 13.10.1900-4.10.1900.

118. PRO, CO 179/213: Telegram Governor W Hely-Hutchinson to Colonial Secretary J Chamberlain, 24.8.1900.

119. PRO, CO 179/214: Government notice No. 426. 1900, 25.8.1900.

120. PAR, AGO I/8/74: Correspondence regarding the looting of property belonging to J de Jager, 4.10.1899-5.1.1901.

121. PRO, CO 179/213: Correspondence regarding the unwillingness by the Imperial Government to pay compensation for losses caused by the British military, 14.9.1900-21.9.1900.

122. PAR, 1/UMS 30: Notice by Capt FS Reeves regarding claims against the military, 13.5.1902.

123. PAR, GH 1707: Letter Governor HE McCallum to High Commissioner A Milner, 3.8.1903.

124. PAR, CSO 1657: Correspondence regarding claims by imprisoned Natal Afrikaners for compensation, 1.9.1900-2.10.1900.

125. PRO, CO 179/214: Application on behalf of HW and GJ Boers by TF Carter, 4.10.1900; PAR, CSO 1681: Correspondence regarding the claim by W Adendorff, 15.7.1901-17.7.1901.

126. PAR, AGO I/8/81: Representation by JG Döhne that all his property had fallen into the hands of the military, 4.9.1901-7.9.1901.

What made matters worse for convicted rebels was the declaration by Governor McCallum that rebels could not claim compensation for losses sustained subsequent to their conviction.<sup>127</sup> Not only did this mean that rebels were punished twice for the same crime, but also that their property would not be protected by the authorities.

Not so clear-cut was the question of compensation to Afrikaners merely suspected or acquitted of treason. On enquiry to the secretary of state if compensation should be paid to persons acquitted of treason, the following statement was issued: "...the fact of a charge being withdrawn or an accused person acquitted after trial, where no malice or impropriety of conduct existed, or can be imputed to the Police or any public official concerned on behalf of the public in the conduct of prosecution, affords no grounds for 'compensating' such accused person at the public expense."<sup>128</sup> The Natal Cabinet approved this and made it clear that only once innocence was proven beyond doubt would compensation be paid. Consequently 75% of the payments were withheld from Natal Afrikaners suspected of treason. If the commission found that their suspicions could be upheld, the outstanding amounts were not paid.<sup>129</sup> This was, however, not a clear-cut issue and the Invasion Losses Enquiry Commission continued to grapple with claims from Afrikaners who were not charged or convicted of high treason.<sup>130</sup> These men and women invariably found themselves at the wrong end of the stick as can be gathered from the examples below.<sup>131</sup>

Salomon Hercules de Jager was arrested and spent the duration of the Siege of Ladysmith as a prisoner in Ladysmith. Afterwards he was banned to Pietermaritzburg for several months thus taking no part in the war. De Jager eventually claimed compensation for losses sustained to the value of £865.3.2 from the Invasion Losses Enquiry Commission. His claim was, however, not honoured because his wife and children had moved to the OFS during the war.<sup>132</sup> Seasonal migration or movement of any kind to any of the Republics became a crime; that of going to the country of the enemy. The vagueness of the workings of the Invasion Losses Enquiry Commission is further illustrated by the application of JW de Jager of Cotswold, Dundee, a Republican who owed allegiance to Natal. Such being the case, he could be found guilty of treason. His claim for compensation was, however, rejected because he was a Boer. Scant wonder De Jager proclaimed: "If I had taken refuge in the Colony, I should have been liable to stand my trial for High Treason. This

---

127. PRO, CO 179/224: Letter Governor HE McCallum to Colonial Secretary J Chamberlain, 24.10.1902.

128. PRO, CO 179/208: Letter KE Digby to under secretary of state, 27.4.1900.

129. PAR, AGO I/8/72: Minute paper on the payment of compensation to suspected and convicted rebels, 17.8.1900-22.8.1900; PAR, CSO 1657: Correspondence regarding claims by imprisoned Natal Afrikaners for compensation, 1.9.1900-2.10.1900; PAR, GH 1707: Letter Governor HE McCallum to High Commissioner A Milner, 3.8.1903.

130. PAR, GH 1302: Report Governor W Hely-Hutchinson to Colonial Secretary J Chamberlain, 14.12.1900.

131. For a comprehensive account of claims by Natal Afrikaners from the Invasion Losses Enquiry Commission see: PAR, CSO 2864-2914.

132. PAR, CSO 2874: Invasion Losses Enquiry Commission: Claim by SHF de Jager, 6.9.1900.

is what I mean by saying I owe local allegiance and have a right to claim.”<sup>133</sup>

In an equally absurd case Mrs ME Labuschagne received no compensation. Her husband became insolvent prior to the war meaning that all the horses, cattle and other property looted by the military from their farm, belonged to her. Regarding women and children the Invasion Losses Enquiry Commission had a special rule: “...it was decided not to allow damages for property lost by wives and minor children of convicted rebels. It will in some cases mean that innocent persons will suffer thr’o [sic] the act of another. If compensation is allowed it would mean that property really belonging to the convicted person would also be claimed for by the wife. In the present case it is clear that the property belong to the claimant. But the commission is of opinion that it would be a mistake to break the rule even in this case.”<sup>134</sup>

The only group of Natal Afrikaners who benefited from the Invasion Losses Enquiry Commission were the loyalists. Although they sometimes had to wait up to three years before compensation was paid they were handsomely rewarded and the 121 loyalists who successfully submitted claims, received more than £63 000 or an average of roughly £520 each.<sup>135</sup> Even losses incurred outside the war zone by loyalists were entertained by the commission. JC Martens of Broedershoek, Kranskop, for instance, successfully claimed for damages caused by the military to his farm in October 1901. Amongst others he claimed for the damage caused by the building of sangers.<sup>136</sup>

Invariably these loyalists, as can be gleaned from the Table 12.1 below, suffered at the hands of both the Boers and the British, with most of the damage occurring in the Dundee district. However, the compensation received made remaining loyal economically worthwhile. Furthermore many of the loyalists had retained some of their livestock and were allowed by the military to continue relatively uninterrupted with their economic activities.

**Table 12.1: Losses sustained by 121 loyal Natal Afrikaners per district as recognised by the Invasion Losses Enquiry Commission (75%)<sup>137</sup>**

DISTRICT	LOSSES TO BRITISH	LOSSES TO BOERS	DUAL	TOTAL
Dundee	£17 072	£8 133	£7 070	£32 275

133. PAR, CSO 2874. Invasion Losses Enquiry Commission: Claim by JW de Jager, 4.12.1901. For a similar verdict, see: PAR, CSO 2904: Invasion Losses Enquiry Commission: Claim by SJ Schoeman, 24.8.1901.

134. PAR, CSO 2888: Invasion Losses Enquiry Commission: Claim by ME Labuschagne, 25.10.1901.

135. For the names of those compensated see Appendix C.

136. PAR, CSO 2892: Invasion Losses Enquiry Commission: Claim by JC Martens, 26.11.1902.

137. PAR, CSO 2864-2914: Invasion Losses Enquiry Commission: Claims, 1900-1903.

Newcastle	£397	£5 890	£2 600	£8 887
Ladysmith	£7 816	£3 396	£1 676	£12 888
Estcourt	£2 422	£433	£2 426	£5 281
Weenen	£3 215	£152		£3367
Upper Tugela		£86		£86
Melmoth	£116	£563		£679
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>£31 038</b>	<b>£18 653</b>	<b>£13 772</b>	<b>£63 463</b>

The Invasion Losses Enquiry Commission brought no relief to the majority of Natal Afrikaners who suffered losses due to the war. In time an alternative compensation option would open up, namely the Derelict Stock Fund.

#### 12.4 The Derelict Stock Fund

On 17 June 1900 General Buller declared that the military would hand over to the civil authorities all the livestock they had looted or taken as booty in Northern Natal. The rationale behind this was that the civil authorities were in the best position to return the thousands of animals held on the farm of Lodewyk de Jager near Wasbank to their rightful owners.<sup>138</sup> The Natal Cabinet agreed to accept the livestock as soon as they had made the necessary arrangements for herding and grazing at Newcastle and Wasbank.<sup>139</sup> By 26 June 1900 the military had handed over 2 951 head of cattle, 29 144 sheep, 6 122 goats - both angora and other, 281 horses and five donkeys to the Natal authorities.<sup>140</sup> While the military and specifically Major-General Wolfe-Murray harboured the chivalrous idea of handing back livestock to the wives and families of suspected rebels,<sup>141</sup> this was not the intention of the Natal Government who via Attorney-General Henry Bale declared: "Booty belongs to the captor."<sup>142</sup>

To deal with the livestock looted from Natal Afrikaners the Supreme Court on, 22 June 1900, appointed the commissioner of agriculture, CB Lloyd, as curator bonis of all derelict stock.<sup>143</sup> Lloyd was placed in control of:

...all derelict stock of which the owners are unknown or nonresident, with power to arrange for the care, custody and control thereof, with power to sell the same or any part thereof by public auction at such time's, in such manner and upon such conditions as he may think fit, but so

138. PAR, AGO I/8/79: Telegram GOC to Prime Minister AH Hime, 17.6.1900.

139. PAR, AGO I/8/79: Telegram Prime Minister AH Hime to GOC, 19.6.1900.

140. PAR, AGO I/8/74: Representations regarding the seizure of the property of rebels, 16.11.1900-3.12.1900.

141. PAR, AGO I/8/79: Affidavit by Major-General J Wolfe-Murray, 8.8.1900.

142. PAR, AGO I/7/43: Letter Attorney-General H Bale to Prime Minister AH Hime, 31.8.1900.

143. PAR, 1/DUN 3/1/8: Minute paper Colonial Secretary C Smythe to Magistrate RH Beachcroft, 31.7.1900.

that a true and correct description and account be taken and kept of all stock sold, and of the proceeds of the sale thereof; such proceeds after deduction of all expenses, to be paid to the Master of this Court; with liberty to any person prejudiced by the order to apply to redress.

A clause stating that he could hand back cattle to owners on proof of ownership and payment of charges was added to the brief.<sup>144</sup>

The appointment of the curator bonis and the process involved did not appeal to amongst others, JC Adendorff of Newcastle who declared that Afrikaner livestock was taken in an unlawful manner. He believed that the advertising of the livestock was a farce since: "...all the farmers in this district with the exception of only a few, are imprisoned, and some are forced to remain in town on parole, there is no one who could claim the cattle, and hand them back to the starving families. In accordance with the notification appearing in the paper a further sum of 5/- per head for large cattle, and 1/- per head for sheep and goats, is to be paid in order to recover the same, adding to the misery of our families have had to undergo..." Attorney-General Bale reacted in a sympathetic manner and while asking Prime Minister Hime to deal with the matter he suggested that care should be taken not to impoverish Natal Afrikaners. He also suggested that facilities be afforded to Afrikaners to identify their stock.

When probed by the prime minister on the possibility of allowing Natal Afrikaners on parole or awaiting trial to point out their animals, the Natal Police indicated that this would be very difficult to achieve for a number of reasons including an objection that allowing suspected rebels under escort to search for their livestock amongst thousands of animals would be time-consuming and expensive, and would mean that all rebels would, at some stage or another, be allowed out of prison. Hime immediately latched onto this hardline stance and declared: "I foresee great difficulty in letting these men go up to identify their cattle, as their word will not be sufficient, and they will have to furnish proof by means of other witnesses of their ownership of the stock." Thus the Natal Police managed to, greatly based on an argument of logistics, deny Afrikaners from Northern Natal the opportunity to regain their livestock. This step meant instant impoverishment to most suspected rebels. The only recourse they had was to apply to the Special Court for bail to then search for their stock.<sup>145</sup>

Curator Bonis Lloyd, when he took office, thus inherited a messy situation. He could not assist Natal Afrikaners in the search for their livestock since the military neither informed him where the stock handed to him originally came from and whom it belonged to, nor did they provide appropriate written records. The sole solution, according to Attorney-General Bale, was for the affected parties

---

144. PAR, PM 18: Supreme Court order appointing CB Lloyd as curator bonis, 22.6.1900.

145. PAR, AGO I/8/72: Correspondence regarding the difficulties suspected rebels had in releasing their livestock, 11.7.1900-14.8.1900; AGO I/8/72: Correspondence involving AG Debenham regarding the difficulties suspected rebels faced in getting their livestock back, 30.7.1900-14.8.1900.

to apply to the Supreme Court for the release of their livestock.<sup>146</sup>

Some Natal Afrikaners, when their requests to the police and military to be allowed to search for their livestock failed, decided to follow the advice of Bale. AJ Nel and LC Koch instructed their legal representatives to apply for an order from the Supreme Court to prevent Curator Bonis Lloyd from selling their livestock. This was fought tooth and nail by the Natal Government. Affidavits were secured from amongst others, Major-General Wolfe-Murray and Lloyd, to justify the government's hardline position. Both Koch and Nel were also thoroughly investigated in preparation for the case. In the case of Koch it was argued that he was a Republican fighting for the Boers and the military therefore correctly viewed his livestock as loot. The strongest argument against Nel was that he did not correctly complete the affidavit for the release of his stock. Up against such formidable forces Nel and Koch found the legal route to secure their property closed; their order was refused and their animals sold.<sup>147</sup>

Other legal attempts surrounding the sale of derelict stock also failed. JDJ de Necker of Bultfontein in the OFS, a surrendered burgher, was allowed to reside in Natal with his livestock. In the course of military operations he was arrested and his 1 050 sheep were sold by the curator bonis for the amount of £596.17. De Necker regarded this action as unlawful and wanted the proceeds of the sale to be paid to him and not to the colonial government. When it seemed that he might be successful in his application, the Natal Government hastily applied to the Supreme Court that the money owed to De Necker be paid to the GOC, Natal "without prejudice to any legal claim to the said money which any person may thereafter establish." This neat legal sidestep ensured that he did not get his money, but more importantly, also served to close all legal routes for the recovery of Natal Afrikaners' stock or the amounts they were sold for.<sup>148</sup>

The curator bonis could thus advertise without impediment the derelict stock up for sale. Such advertisements appeared regularly, for example in the *Natal Mercury* in September 1900: "The government informs the public OHMS that the auctioneers Walton and Tatham will on various days sell derelict stock, i.e. confiscated stock, in Estcourt, Ladysmith, Wasbank, Newcastle, Acton Homes and Greytown without reserve. Altogether 412 horses, 6 mules, 2 006 head of cattle, 1 625 goats, 11 800 sheep, 60 pigs. Scab and lungsickness is present."<sup>149</sup> At other times the curator bonis advertised the stock to be sold as well as their brands. Owners were also informed in the advertisements that should they want to claim their own animals they "must apply for permission to inspect the same,

---

146. PAR, PM 18: Request for assistance by MC Cronjé, JS van Niekerk, JJ Smit and LP Adendorff for the return of their cattle, 19.6.1900-15.8.1900.

147. PAR, AGO I/7/43: Application by LC Koch and AJ Nel to have their livestock released, 6.8.1900-9.8.1900; AGO I/7/43: Applications and affidavits in the case of LC Koch and AJ Nel, 2.8.1900-14.8.1900.

148. PAR, AGO I/8/79: Application by JDJ de Necker for the proceeds of sale of his sheep, 13.11.1900-24.4.1901.

149. *Natal Mercury*, 17.9.1900; 25.9.1900.

and, in case any are identified, must forward a “Form of Affidavit in Support for Application for Release of Stock.” If livestock was not claimed by a certain date, the sale went ahead.<sup>150</sup>

For Natal Afrikaners to claim their animals from amongst the derelict stock advertised proved to be very difficult. Many of those affected were either in prison or had been banned to Pietermaritzburg. Coenraad de Wet of Newcastle for instance saw the advertisement for the sale of his livestock while in the Eshowe Prison.<sup>151</sup> Some, however, mostly loyalists, were fortunate enough to receive permission to attend derelict stock sales or search such stock to identify their own.<sup>152</sup> AJG Meyer managed to get a pass to search the derelict stock at Wasbank and recovered 50 head of cattle but no sheep,<sup>153</sup> while JA Landman managed to get 806 of his sheep back,<sup>154</sup> and AL Jansen 36 sheep and 31 head of cattle.<sup>155</sup> After lengthy correspondence, PRN Vermaak likewise received a pass to attend a derelict stock sale.<sup>156</sup> He recovered 13 sheep.<sup>157</sup>

Like the earlier sales of Afrikaner livestock organized by the military, the derelict stock sales drew opportunists, bargain hunters, farmers, entrepreneurs and the like. As a result Newcastle was crowded on the day the sale took place in early October 1900.<sup>158</sup> These sales usually offered a range of animals and other odds and ends as can be gathered from the sales list of the Acton Homes auction held on 10 October 1900: sheep were sold @ 13/3; goats were sold @ 21/; oxen were sold @ between £9 and £17 and horses were sold @ between £8 and £19. Also sold on the day were pigs, geese, fowls, ploughs, yokes and harrows. In total the sale yielded £1 943.2.6.<sup>159</sup> A similar sale held in Newcastle on 15 December 1900 grossed £3 560.2.6. On this occasion 1 130 sheep, 35 goats, 15 mules, 26 horses and 297 head of cattle were on offer. The money earned through these sales was paid over to the master of the Supreme Court for safe keeping.<sup>160</sup>

In the light of the above sales it was not surprising that rumours of large takings at these events made the rounds, for example that the auctioneer, Mr Francis, allegedly took £20 000 during the sale at Dundee.<sup>161</sup> This was, however, hardly the case since by January 1901 derelict stock sales only

---

150. *Natal Witness*, 27.4.1901.

151. OE Prozesky private collection, Diary of JJA Prozesky: Diary entry, 8.10.1901, p.533.

152. PAR, 1/DUN 3/1/8: Letter Carter and Robinson to magistrate Dundee, 9.6.1900.

153. PAR, CSO 2894: Invasion Losses Enquiry Commission: Claim by AJG Meyer, 10.12.1901.

154. PAR, CSO 2888: Invasion Losses Enquiry Commission: Claim by JA Landman, 11.2.1901.

155. PAR, CSO 2886: Invasion Losses Enquiry Commission: Claim by AL Jansen, 21.10.1900.

156. PAR, 1/UMS 38: Letter Magistrate T Maxwell, Umsinga, to PRN Vermaak, 3.9.1900.

157. PAR, CSO 2910: Invasion Losses Enquiry Commission: Claim by PRN Vermaak, 11.10.1900 and 9.1.1903.

158. OE Prozesky private collection, Diary of JJA Prozesky: Diary entry, 5.10.1900, pp.356-360.

159. PAR, AGO I/8/79: Account of sales by Walton and Tatham for the curator bonis of derelict stock at Acton Homes, 10.10.1900.

160. PAR, NT 93: Account for the derelict stock sale at Newcastle, 15.12.1900.

161. OE Prozesky private collection, Diary of JJA Prozesky: Diary entry, 5.10.1900, pp.356-360.

amounted to £46 000.<sup>162</sup> The sales of derelict stock came to an end in February 1902 when the depot on the farm Vrede in the Newcastle district was closed down.<sup>163</sup>

Those who gained most from these sales, according to Foy Vermaak, a descendant of Natal Afrikaners who had their stock sold, were English farmers from the Natal Midlands who became wealthy from the healthy and well-bred stock they bought at reasonable prices.<sup>164</sup> Vermaak's claim is substantiated when the prices fetched by derelict stock is compared to that of pre-war stock sales.<sup>165</sup>

In stark contrast were the raw emotions, described by Missionary Prozesky, expressed by the Northern Natal Afrikaners who suffered incredible economic losses through these sales: "How many sighs, how many oaths, how many prayers, how many curses have not ascended to, the Lord."<sup>166</sup> Little wonder then that the derelict stock sales pitted neighbours against each other. JL Colling had some cattle removed by African scouts which were eventually sold as derelict stock. Amongst the cattle sold were two bullocks which he spotted in the possession of a Mr Millar. Colling demanded these back but Millar refused to adhere to his request. When Colling took his case to the Police he was told that he had no claim over the animals.<sup>167</sup>

For several years after the end of the war the money from the derelict stock sales, a rumoured £50 000, remained untouched. In time this amount shrunk to a little over £30 000 because, according to JC Vermaak, "mot en roes" managed to get into the treasure chest. The first real contestation for this money took place when a former rebel, CJ Uys of Newcastle, applied to the Supreme Court to have £242.15.6 paid to him for the loss of livestock to the military from his farm Dumblaine.<sup>168</sup> Although Uys failed in his attempt, his application was groundbreaking in two ways: the principal was established that convicted rebels could not be denied access to the derelict stock sales money, and appropriate legislation was needed to administer the fund.

By 1904 "Boereverenigings" were formed on the Biggarsberg and in the Newcastle district to amongst other things, manage the process of gaining access to the money. On the Biggarsberg the driving forces were PRN and JC Vermaak.<sup>169</sup> Their pressure, as well as that of other members of the "Boereverenigings," led to the constitution of the Derelict Stock Fund by Act 22. of 1905.<sup>170</sup> Notices

---

162. PRO, CO 179/217: Letter Governor W Hely-Hutchinson to Colonial Secretary J Chamberlain, 4.1.1900.

163. PAR, CSO 1699: Statement by the curator bonis regarding the closure of a derelict stock depot, 24.2.1902.

164. Interview with Foy Vermaak conducted at Helpmekaar, 10.7.2000.

165. *Natal Witness*, January-April, 1899.

166. OE Prozesky private collection, Diary of JJA Prozesky: Diary entry, 25.9.1900, p.330.

167. PAR, CSO 2871: Invasion Losses Enquiry Commission: Claim by JL Colling, 2.4.1902.

168. PAR, NT 93: Summons by CJ Uys for payment of proceeds of sale of derelict stock, 26.9.1903-20.2.1904.

169. PAR, MJPW 130: Correspondence between JC and PRN Vermaak and the minister of justice, 9.1.1905-22.3.1905.

170. PAR, NCP 5/3/13: Act 22 of 1905, circa 1905; VTR, JC Vermaak collection, 03/2553/1: Memoirs of JC Vermaak,

of the creation of the fund appeared in the *Government Gazette*, *Newcastle Advertiser* and the *Dundee Courier*.<sup>171</sup>

The refunding of the impoverished Natal Afrikaners from the fund did not prove to be an easy task and was obstructed by bickering and politics. The minister of justice, Thomas Watt, a Newcastle gentleman well-known to Northern Natal Afrikaners, apparently agreed that they were unjustly treated by the military during the war but he was not prepared to alter clause 11 of Act 22 of 1905 which stated that when money was accepted from the Derelict Stock Fund, all rights to claim from the Imperial Government would be waived. This deeply annoyed the Northern Natal Afrikaners, but they had no choice other than to accept the conditions.<sup>172</sup>

HC Koch, the former magistrate of Greytown, Afrikaner sympathiser and then master of the Supreme Court, was appointed as commissioner to the fund.<sup>173</sup> His task was to act on the initial report regarding the fund prepared by Sir TK Murray. He held numerous meetings throughout the northern part of the Colony to explain the process and dealt with applications.<sup>174</sup> In his official report Koch somewhat unsympathetically shed some light on the duty of dividing the available £32 699 fairly: "...the task has been a very labourious one, and I am afraid to a certain extent a thankless one. Of course I could only apportion the amount in hand, and I have done so as fairly as I could, but from my knowledge of the Dutch people I may say that nothing could ever satisfy them but payment in full for every beast, fowl, pigeon, etc., they have lost either directly or indirectly during the war."<sup>175</sup>

Despite the act only allowing livestock claims, demands were submitted for poultry, maize, furniture, dogs, and fines imposed on rebels. A further problem was that Afrikaners could only claim for stock which was taken to a derelict stock camp and sold there. Numerous Afrikaners, however, insisted on claiming for all stock taken by the military including those sold by the Imperial auctioneers, Raw and Co, used by the military for transport, and slaughtered to feed Buller's Army of 27 000. Apart from dealing with these claims, Koch also had to manage bogus and inflated claims amongst the 358 submissions. Eventually 78 claims were disallowed for a range of reasons but mostly for lack of proof that the livestock was sold as derelict stock. The 280 accepted claims amounted to £228 687 or an average of £816 each. These included claims for 310 horses, 2 208 head of cattle, 22 192 sheep and 5 143 goats. Koch, however, only had £32 377.5.6 to divide, which meant that each claimant received £115 on average, a far cry from the £520 which Afrikaner loyalist

---

pp.44-45, 1941.

171. PAR, MJPW 131: Notices of publication of the Derelict Stock Fund Act, 27.7.1905.

172. *De Natal Afrikaner*, 22.6.1905.

173. PAR, NT 106: Appointment of HC Koch as commissioner of the Derelict Stock Fund, 26.7.1905-26.9.1905.

174. PAR, 1/LDS 3/3/17: Letter assistant under secretary to magistrate Klip River district, 5.10.1905.

175. PAR, NT 113: Documents relating to the Derelict Stock Fund, 1905-1906.

had received from the Invasion Losses Enquiry Commission. Of the money paid out, the bulk of £21 500 went to claimants of the Newcastle and Dundee districts.<sup>176</sup> In the end Koch believed that the distributions were made in the “fairest and most conscientious manner”.<sup>177</sup> This view was not necessarily shared by everybody and enquiries regarding the fund were still received in 1908<sup>178</sup> and 1909.<sup>179</sup> However, the payments made must have gone a long way towards halting the rampant poverty amongst Afrikaners in Northern Natal.

### 12.5 Issues surrounding Afrikaner owned land

With confiscation of Natal Afrikaner farms ruled out by the Natal Government, the authorities, both civil and military, had to decide what to do with the unoccupied landed property which belonged to this group.

One of the uses the military envisaged for unoccupied Natal Afrikaner farms was to accommodate surrendered burghers. As early as July 1900 General Redvers Buller requested permission from the Natal Government to send hendsoppers and their stock, as a measure to protect them from fellow Republicans, to reside on Natal Afrikaner farms near Wasbank. At the time of Buller’s request he had already dispatched a Transvaler, Bernardus Johnstone, the brother of a Natal MLA, from Volksrust to Newcastle with the view of placing him on the farm Bergvlei near Wasbank. Johnstone, who brought 2 700 sheep, 200 mixed cattle and 12 horses, with him was, however, unwilling to reside on Bergvlei because he considered the grazing inferior. He gathered several witnesses, including JJ Kemp and ISJ Meyer of Dundee, to convince the military that the appointed farm was not suitable for sheep. His objection was successful and the military allowed him to settle on the farm Jackalsfontein near Hattinghspruit.<sup>180</sup>

The Natal Government had a range of concerns regarding Buller’s planned placement of surrendered burghers on Natal Afrikaner farms. One such concern was that they had earmarked the Afrikaner farms as grazing for the oxen commandeered from farmers south of the Tugela. This was a necessary measure as the crown lands did not provide sufficient grazing to the oxen who were prevented from being returned south of the Tugela in an attempt to halt the spread of rinderpest and lungsickness.<sup>181</sup> A second concern the Natal Government had was the fact that they had no legal authority over land belonging to people suspected of treason. Suspected rebels could furthermore be released on bail or acquitted and be allowed to return to their farms only to find them occupied by hendsoppers. It was

---

176. *Ibid.*

177. PAR, NT 113: Documents relating to the Derelict Stock Fund, 1905-1906; PAR, CSO 3037: List of stock claimed from the Derelict Stock Fund, 1904.

178. PAR, CSO 1851: Claims by GM and JJH Dekker for cattle lost to the Imperial authorities, 28.2.1908-3.3.1908.

179. PAR, NT 148: Enquiry by DJ van Niekerk on his claim to the Derelict Stock Fund, 26.6.1909-28.6.1909.

180. PAR, MJPW 77: Correspondence regarding the request by B Johnstone to settle on the farm Jackalsfontein, 5.8.1900-14.8.1900.

181. PAR, CSO 1690: Minute paper regarding the introduction of livestock from the OFS, 9.11.1901-11.11.1901

also a concern that loyalists who had temporarily abandoned their farms out of fear could return only to find that Transvalers had been placed on it. Another problem was that Buller's placement of surrendered burghers meant that some contract would have to be concluded with rebels for the use of their land, a step viewed as highly undesirable by the Natal Government. Concerns also existed that public opinion would disapprove of the settling of burghers rather than loyal colonists on rebel farms. Lastly the proposal was frowned upon out of fear that cattle diseases might be introduced from the Transvaal.<sup>182</sup>

The Natal Government, however, made it clear that should the military choose to ignore their objections they would not resist, but compensation claims could be expected from individuals as a result of finding surrendered burghers residing on their farms. The solution to the concerns expressed by the Natal Government, as far as the military was concerned, was to set a precedent and charge Bernardus Johnstone rent of £10 per month for residing on an unoccupied Afrikaner farm. In addition he had to undertake to deal with any compensation claims that might be forthcoming relating to his residence on Jackalsfontein. The rent was, as instructed by Major-General Wolfe-Murray, paid into the account of the chief paymaster in Pietermaritzburg.<sup>183</sup>

Despite the misgivings of the Natal Government other surrendered burghers were soon settled on the farms of Natal Afrikaners. Piet van Niekerk who worked as a "secret spy" for the British at the outbreak of the war was given permission to reside on the farm of Piet Potgieter near Van Tonder's Pass between Dundee and Helpmekaar,<sup>184</sup> while JZ Moolman, whose son was a scout with the column of General Spence, was settled on a farm in the Dundee district.<sup>185</sup> Loyalist Natal Afrikaners also got in on the act and AL Jansen's request to run 300 cattle on the farm Blinkwater, Dundee, belonging to the rebel leader DC (Dirk) Uys, met with favour. The commandant for Dundee wanted Jansen's £15, as a means of preventing Uys from accessing the money, paid into the colonial treasury. The Natal Government disagreed and made it very clear that: "It is very undesirable that this government should mix itself up in this matter...it is preferable that the Imperial Government acting under the powers of Martial Law should receive payment..."<sup>186</sup>

The Natal Government remained steadfast in its view that it had no right to deal in any way whatsoever with unoccupied Afrikaner farms. It was difficult to stand firm in this decision as

---

182. PAR, GH 544: Correspondence pertaining to the request by General R Buller to place surrendered burghers on abandoned rebel farms, 25.7.1900-31.7.1900; PRO, CO 179/213: Correspondence pertaining to the request by General R Buller to place surrendered burghers on abandoned rebel farms, 25.7.1900-31.7.1900.

183. PAR, MJPW 77: Correspondence regarding the request by B Johnstone to settle on the farm Jackalsfontein, 5.8.1900-14.8.1900.

184. PAR, 1/UMS 30: Correspondence regarding joiner Piet van Niekerk, 15.4.1902-26.4.1902; SB Spies, p.187.

185. PAR, 1/DUN 3/1/10: Correspondence regarding the return of the family Moolman to Wakkerstroom, 19.6.1902-24.6.1902.

186. PAR, 1/DUN 3/1/8: Correspondence regarding the running of stock on the farm of DC Uys, 11.8.1900-21.8.1900.

numerous English Natalians had their eyes on the rebel farms as can be gleaned from the following instances: E Cruikshank enquired from the Natal Government if the farms of suspected rebels would be confiscated on their arrest as he was interested in acquiring one.<sup>187</sup> A certain WJ Leslie of Chieveley in turn explained that “four young colonials” were looking for farms in the Newcastle district,<sup>188</sup> while an unemployed former Natal Carbineer, RWF Collins, wanted to try his hand at farming on one of the rebel farms in the Dundee district,<sup>189</sup> AH Cuming asked to occupy the farm Knostrope, near Helpmekaar, plus the property of NJ Vermaak with a view to purchasing same should the government decide to sell rebel farms,<sup>190</sup> while WRA White requested permission to “run stock on or cultivate a Government farm which has been sold to a Rebel and which is at present lying idle.”<sup>191</sup> Not even the six colonists removed by the military because of constant commando activities from the foothills of the Drakensberg and placed on the farms of Natal Afrikaners, could get permission from the Natal Government to cultivate the land.<sup>192</sup> Failing to receive permission to cultivate the Afrikaner farms they resided upon, had negative economic consequences as WR and AS Bowes of the farm Endsel discovered. They were unable to meet the instalments due on their own farm and had to request deferment to 1903.<sup>193</sup>

At grassroots level the policy regarding the economic use of unoccupied Afrikaner farms was much more fluid. Noticing that the lands on the farm of CJ de Villiers in the Umsinga district had been cultivated, HW Wohlberg assumed that grazing would be available for rent from the government. His request was, however, rejected by the local magistrate, Thomas Maxwell, apparently because he had sufficient grazing available to him on his own farm. In reality the request by Wohlberg was turned down because of a feud regarding oranges with Maxwell.<sup>194</sup> As a result another local German farmer, Johannes Dedekind, less than a month later received permission to graze his cattle on the farm.<sup>195</sup> In the Klip River district PS Twyman was granted permission by Magistrate Bennett, by order of the military, to reside with his livestock on the farm Up George, Ladysmith, the property of his neighbour Mrs FI Meyer. Twyman could also reap the crops on the farm for the military, keeping half as his reward. The return of Meyer led to a series of complaints. She, backed up by the testimony of several of her African labourers, accused Twyman of not only reaping her crops but also of cutting wood on her farm and removing large quantities of tools, four bales of angora hair,

---

187. PAR, SGO III/I/141: Letter E Cruikshank to surveyor-general, 28.7.1900.

188. PAR, SGO III/I/143: Letter B Creydt to surveyor-general, 4.12.1900.

189. PAR, PM 19: Request by RWF Collins to be allowed to occupy an abandoned rebel farm, 19.10.1900-25.10.1900.

190. PAR, MJPW 76: Application by AH Cuming to occupy Knostrope with the view of purchasing it, 11.6.1900-19.6.1900. The author spent a large part of his youth on this farm.

191. PAR, CSO 1678: Request by WRA White to run stock and cultivate an unoccupied farm, 4.6.1901-14.6.1901.

192. PAR, CSO 1689: Correspondence regarding the placement of loyalists on rebel farms and their right to reap and sow crops, 5.11.1901-19.11.1901.

193. PAR, SGO III/I/153: Letter Walton and Tatham to surveyor-general, 4.7.1902.

194. PAR, 1/UMS 30: Request by HW Wohlberg to rent the grazing on the farms of CJ de Villiers, 29.5.1901-10.6.1901

195. PAR, 1/UMS 38: Letter Magistrate T Maxwell, Umsinga, to Stock Inspector A Klingenberg, 6.8.1901.

curtains and furniture. Her accusation had little effect.<sup>196</sup>

With the Natal Government being unwilling to become involved in the management of unoccupied rebel farms and the military renting some out for the benefit of the motherland, there was much room for exploitation of the farms of absentee Afrikaners. Under the circumstances the Natal Government complained that “considerable areas of unoccupied lands are being used for grazing by persons who have not asked for permission either from the military authorities or from the civil government.”<sup>197</sup> An example of such a person was R Boshoff who entered the Umsinga district without permission with the intention of settling on the farm of J van Tonder.<sup>198</sup>

In the light of such opportunism the Natal Government could not maintain its tough stance and by April 1901 many of the arguments previously offered were also no longer valid. As a result they relented and adhered to a request from the military to allow hendsoppers and their stock from Volksrust, Utrecht, and Wakkerstroom to be accommodated in Northern Natal during the winter of 1901. The only condition was that the animals needed to be disease free and that all the cattle were to be subjected to the Lung sickness Act.<sup>199</sup>

Despite making this decision the Natal Government remained steadfast in its resolve not to give people occupational or any other rights on uninhabited Afrikaner farms.<sup>200</sup> The military could, however, now place people without impunity on farms as Afrikaners from opposing political persuasions discovered. WS Naude against whom no treasonable evidence existed, was removed from his farm and not allowed to return because the military had placed surrendered burghers on his property.<sup>201</sup> Similarly TJ Botha, the brother of General Louis Botha, could not visit his farms near Newcastle as they were occupied by people placed there by the military.<sup>202</sup> The experience of the convicted rebel Gerhardus Marthinus Dekker of Indumeni, Dundee, was even more traumatic. On completion of his sentence he was allowed to return home only to find a Mr Crawley, who was taking care of military stock, residing on it. Crawley had also plowed and sown maize which he intended to reap. Dekker's discussions with both Crawley and the local commandant proved fruitless. A petition by Dekker's agent, WG Griffin, to Prime Minister Hime did little to resolve the matter and Dekker was informed that the military still required his farm and would keep on renting it

---

196. PAR, 1/LDS 1/7/9: Correspondence regarding the charges brought by Mrs IJ Meyer against PS Twyman, 20.2.1901-2.4.1901.

197. PAR, CSO 1678: Request by WRA White to run his stock on unoccupied rebel farms, 4.6.1901-14.6.1901.

198. PAR, 1/UMS 38: Letter Magistrate T Maxwell, Umsinga, to R Boshoff, 13.9.1901.

199. PAR, GH 534: Correspondence regarding a request by the military to allow surrendered burghers and their stock into Natal, 26.4.1901-27.4.1901.

200. PAR, CSO 1678: Request by WRA White to run his stock on unoccupied rebel farms, 4.6.1901-14.6.1901; PAR, SGO III/I/146: Enquiry by EH Mahon on what is to happen to the farm Koodoo Pass, 21.6.1901.

201. PRO, CO 179/213: Documents regarding the protection of livestock belonging to surrendered burghers, 27.7.1900-20.8.1900.

202. NAR, SOP 13: Refusal of application by TJ Botha to visit his farms near Newcastle, 28.6.1901.

at £5 per month.<sup>203</sup>

Actions such as these, the settlement of hendsoppers on Natal Afrikaner farms, and the unwillingness of the military to allow his daughter to return to Dundee from Greytown prompted the ultra-loyal August Jansen to request that “loyal British subjects be trusted as well or better.”<sup>204</sup>

The residential rights given by the military also proved very problematic to the civil authorities in the medium term. The Dundee magistrate explained this in early 1903: “A number of ex-Burghers were permitted, by the military authorities, to reside on the farms of absentees who retreated with the Boers...a good deal of confusion of property and rights has resulted which is left to the Civil authorities to endeavour to resolve and settle.”<sup>205</sup>

The war not only had a serious impact on the economic use of Natal Afrikaner-owned farms but also on the continued ownership thereof. Many struggled to keep up the payments on the government farms they had purchased, while others had to sell their farms. At the same time some English colonists attempted to get their hands on farms belonging to Natal Afrikaners. B Creydt for example asked whether the farms of Afrikaners who had not paid their instalments would be thrown open for purchasing.<sup>206</sup> English Natalians were still petitioned against land ownership by Afrikaners as late as February 1902 when G Lawrence suggested that Afrikaners had to buy their government farms with immediate effect; that they should only be allowed to buy 1 000 acres; and that the majority of the land be transferred to “industrious English farmers.”<sup>207</sup> The Natal Government again made its position clear: rebels could not be discriminated against by imposing conditions of purchase,<sup>208</sup> and government farms would only become available should rebels not fulfill their financial obligations. Until such time the Natal Government exercised no control over Afrikaner land.<sup>209</sup>

The eyeing of Afrikaner farms during the war was not a consequence of a shortage of land, but rather a desire to get hold of farms already developed. In the Klip River county 120 000 acres of government land was available for sale and in the Weenen county 180 000. In total 12 million acres were attainable in the Colony of Natal by prospective farmers. This land was normally sold in areas not exceeding 2 000 acres by public auction at 10/- per acre and had to be paid in 20 annual interest

---

203. PAR, PM 24: Correspondence regarding the placement of Crawley by the military on the farm of GM Dekker, 26.10.1901-12.11.1901.

204. PAR, AGO I/8/79: Letter A Jansen to attorney-general, 17.5.1901.

205. PAR, NCP 9/1/11/3/2: Annual report magistrate Dundee, 1902.

206. PAR, SGO III/1/142: Letter WJ Leslie to surveyor-general, 15.9.1900.

207. PAR, MJPW 91: Correspondence with G Lawrence regarding quit rent farms in possession of Afrikaners, 17.2.1902.

208. PAR, SGO III/1/42: Enquiry on the payments due by Solomon Maritz, 4.10.1900.

209. PAR, CSO 1678: Enquiry by WHA White on what the Natal Government intends to do with unpaid rebel farms, 4.6.1901-13.6.1901.

free instalments. Two of the conditions attached to the sale conditions were that the land had to be occupied and that permanent buildings had to be erected.<sup>210</sup>

Making annual mortgage payments proved very difficult during the war. By 1 July 1900, £60 956.5.8. was still outstanding on land sold on the deferred payment system. A very large portion of this amount was owed by residents of Northern Natal. Many of the defaulters were assumed to still be on commando with the Boers since demands forwarded were constantly being returned from the dead letters office. Others were willfully withholding payments fearing that their farms would nevertheless be confiscated and down payments be lost.<sup>211</sup> With the consent of the attorney-general, the surveyor-general was given permission to, act against defaulters, despite the existence of Martial Law.<sup>212</sup> Action meant the delivery of a document stating the arrears amount and a threat that if the person in question failed to pay he or she would be sued for the outstanding amount.<sup>213</sup>

Prior to the war, receiving deferment on payments was not difficult. AM Cronjé and PW Huyzer, both later convicted of treason, received “two-years extension on payment of interest” in June 1899,<sup>214</sup> while the rebel who received the heaviest punishment, CS Botha, was granted extensions in 1897 and 1898.<sup>215</sup> This privilege was extended during the war to loyalist Natal Afrikaners not convicted of treason. For example, NJ Robbertse of Smaldeel, Estcourt, and AS Vos of Land’s End, Newcastle, were granted deferments.<sup>216</sup> Similarly Ignatius de Waal of Lombard’s Kop, Ladysmith, received extension on payments up to the sitting of the Invasion Losses Enquiry Commission in the area because he was imprisoned by the British forces in Ladysmith during the siege.<sup>217</sup>

Rebels received far less sympathy. JC Adendorff of the farm Bradford near Newcastle for example was denied an extension and ordered to pay the arrears amount.<sup>218</sup> Consistent with this policy, the rebel JL Fourie of Glastonbury, Newcastle, was instructed to pay the two installments he owed with

---

210. PAR, MJPW 75: Minute paper regarding crown lands for sale in Natal, 28.5.1900.

211. Foy Vermaak private collection: Letter JC Vermaak to CT Vermaak alias Miss C Herzog, 24.7.1901.

212. PAR, SGO III/1/42: Request by Surveyor-General J Masson to proceed against those who defaulted on their payments on government land, 3.10.1900-5.10.1900.

213. PAR, SGO III/I/151: Letter GL Fraser to surveyor-general, 14.2.1902.

214. PAR, SGO III/I/136: Applications by P and AM Cronjé and PW Huyser for extension on payments due, 27-28.6.1899.

215. PAR, SGO III/1/118: Letter CS Botha to minister of lands and works, 2.6.1897-26.6.1897; PAR, SGO III/1/127: Application by CS Botha for instalments due on the farm Dry Cut, 25.5.1898.

216. PAR, SGO III/1/142: Letter T Hellett to surveyor-general, 20.8.1900; SGO III/I/142: Letter AS Vos to surveyor-general, 20.8.1900.

217. PAR, SGO III/1/42: Request by FI de Waal to defer payments on the farms Goedgeloof and Ignisdale, 29.6.1900-13.8.1900.

218. PAR, SGO III/I/142: Application by JC Adendorff for an extension on the payments due by him, 9.7.1900-7.8.1900; SGO III/I/142: Application by Mrs LM du Preez for an extension of the payments due by her husband, 12.7.1900-17.7.1900.

immediate effect.<sup>219</sup> The Natal Government's policy was non-negotiable and all rebels were expected to adhere to the conditions of their contracts of purchase and to pay their instalments as they became due.<sup>220</sup> Not even a request from prison in Pietermaritzburg by JM Maritz that interest be added to his arrears on Springboklaagte, Newcastle, was accepted.<sup>221</sup>

Some Natal Afrikaners managed to make their payments despite the war. DJ Opperman, grandfather of the renowned Afrikaans poet of the same name, managed to, on 6 February 1901 and 8 February 1902, make payments to the value of £27.13.3. on the farm Geduld No 2.<sup>222</sup> Despite numerous economic setbacks 12 Afrikaners from the Dundee district managed to pay their instalments for the year ending 31 December 1901. Most, however, were loyalists whose suffering during the war was less severe.<sup>223</sup>

Economic partnerships between Afrikaners involving landownership also floundered because of the war. PC Nienaber and LJJ Bester were co-owners of the farm Landmeters Draai, Dundee. The former, who had the responsibility of paying the instalments due to the government, joined the Boers. Consequently a summons was issued against Bester.<sup>224</sup> Another partnership that did not function as planned because of the war was the one between JH Potgieter and Mrs IJ Meyer, co-owners of the farm Groot Geluk, Newcastle. Unbeknown to each other, both made payments on the farm, resulting in an overpayment of £75 according to Potgieter, a fact disputed by the government.<sup>225</sup>

Natal Afrikaners who could not pay their instalments on government farms lost their properties in a variety of ways. One way of losing your farm was when someone else held a bond over your farm. P van Breda held a bond of £1 360 over JTM Joubert's farms Darwin and Cliffdale, Newcastle. Joubert had fled with the Boers and had taken all his stock with him. While Van Breda was prepared to pay the outstanding instalments of £17.12.1. on the farm Darwin to have it ceded to him, he was not prepared to do so if rebel properties were to be confiscated. The authorities were, however, not prepared to cede the properties to Van Breda since only a small amount was outstanding.<sup>226</sup>

The second manner in which Natal Afrikaners could lose their farms was by selling it. Such a move

---

219. PAR, SGO III/1/147: Correspondence regarding the instalments owed by JL Fourie, 25.7.1900-27.7.1900.

220. PAR, SGO III/1/143: Correspondence pertaining to the question by E Cruikshank whether OFS burghers are allowed to suspend payments on crown lands, 1.12.1900-4.12.1900.

221. PAR, SGO III/1/149: Correspondence regarding the instalments owed by JM Maritz, 11.12.1901.

222. PAR, 1/DUN 3/1/9: Letter DJ Opperman to magistrate, Dundee, 6.1.1901; 1/DUN 3/1/10: Letter DJ Opperman to magistrate Dundee, 7.2.1902; PAR, SGO III/1/43: Letter D Turnbull to surveyor-general, 25.10.1900.

223. PAR, 1/DUN 3/1/10: Letter Tatham and Tandy to magistrate, Dundee, 30.1.1902.

224. PAR, SGO III/1/150: Letter W Black to Surveyor-General JL Masson, 25.2.1902.

225. PAR, SGO III/1/146: Correspondence regarding the payments on Groot Geluk, 6.5.1901-10.5.1901.

226. PAR, SGO III/1/142: Enquiry by P van Breda on the cession of the farms Darwin and Cliffdale, 1.9.1900-3.9.1900.

was generally caused by the economic difficulties they found themselves in as a result of the war. CT Vermaak who was in exile, first in Holland and then in German South-West Africa, wanted to sell his farms Dondo and Stonehill near Umsinga on “account of severe losses sustained during the war.” A cynical Vermaak commented: “I will not need them any more during my life.”<sup>227</sup> An additional motivation for Vermaak was the fear that rebel farms would eventually be confiscated resulting in a tremendous economic loss. Such losses, it was argued, could be minimised by selling their farms.<sup>228</sup>

According to Surveyor-General Masson especially “men who have been tried for treason are getting rid of their farms by sale.”<sup>229</sup> Such sales were at the time prompted by the fines imposed by the Special Court. JJ and PJ Kemp of the Dundee district were, apart from a prison sentence, fined £500 and £200 respectively. The fines must have placed a heavy burden on them for they sold the farm Vlaklaagte to a Mr Havemann of Umvoti.<sup>230</sup>

These economic difficulties imposed on Natal Afrikaners were easily exploited by opportunists, speculators and entrepreneurs. One such person was Ludwig Ohlsen<sup>231</sup> who was described by the Natal Police as “vindictively anti-British in Boer company, and vice versa in British company, result produced that he is now the possessor of a number of reputed coal farms”,<sup>232</sup> and “the man has been mixed up in several very shady transactions in connection with loot stock”<sup>233</sup> as well as being “a cattle dealer associated with the Military Authorities.”<sup>234</sup> The depths of economic despair on which Ohlsen capitalised are illustrated by the sale of the farm Ouklip, Dundee, by rebels JC Botha and HG Jordaan. The men owed just £22 on the farm and were collectively fined £100.<sup>235</sup> The reasoning behind men such as these selling so readily to Ohlsen is explained by two other rebels, CP Cronjé and PC Döhne, who sold the farm Zuluknoll to Ohlsen for £900: “we were being pressed for

---

227. Foy Vermaak private collection: Letter JC Vermaak to CT Vermaak alias Miss C Herzog with notes by CT Vermaak, 9.4.1902.

228. Foy Vermaak private collection: Letter JC Vermaak to CT Vermaak alias Miss C Herzog, 24.7.1901.

229. PAR, MJPW 91: Correspondence with G Lawrence regarding quit rent farms in possession of Afrikaners, 17.2.1902.

230. PAR, SGO III/1/149: Correspondence regarding the cession of the farm Vlaklaagte to Havemann, 16.12.1901-16.1.1902.

231. The dubious wartime economic activities of Ohlsen, originally from Heidelberg in the Transvaal, meant that he ended up in several court cases. See: PAR, Archives of the Registrar of the Supreme Court (hereafter RSC) 1/5/168: JC Kippen versus L Ohlsen; RSC 1/5/172: L Ohlsen versus Williamson and Gawler; RSC 1/5/172: L Ohlsen versus J Emery; RSC 1/5/172: L Ohlsen versus RA Faux.

232. Possible mineral rights was a very lucrative prospect for Natal Afrikaners. See for example: DAR, 1/MEL III/2/8: Agreement between LJR Kritzingler and CAS Yonge 12.6.1901, in which Kritzingler sold his rights for several thousand £.

233. PAR, SGO III/I/150: Permission requested for the transfer of the farm Ouklip, 10.1.1902-1.2.1902.

234. PAR, SGO III/I/147: Correspondence regarding the cession of the farm Black Bank to L Ohlsen and then to Dukes, 24.7.1901-20.8.1901.

235. PAR, SGO III/I/150: Permission requested for the transfer of the farm Ouklip, 10.1.1902-1.2.1902.

outstanding debts.”<sup>236</sup> Similarly PRN Vermaak sold the farm Black Bank to Ohlsen possibly as a result of receiving a second reminder from the colonial treasurer that he owed £22.16.<sup>237</sup> The speculative nature of Ohlsen’s transactions is borne out by the fact that he immediately resold Black Bank to a Mr Jukes of Johannesburg.<sup>238</sup>

Sales such as the above were not easy to conclude as the Natal authorities under the leadership of the minister of lands and works who was also the prime minister, the registrar of deeds and the attorney-general, either vetoed the sales or prolonged the process when people with Afrikaans names were involved.<sup>239</sup> The idea behind this was not to protect Afrikaner landowners but because cession was a form of contract, the government did not want to be part of transactions involving parties who were in arms against the king.<sup>240</sup> Furthermore, it was a measure to ensure that the fines imposed for high treason, and instalments due on government farms, were paid. A point in case was the delay of the sale of the farm Droogdaal, Newcastle, by NM and GM Dekker to Enoch Warwick. The Natal authorities only allowed the sale to proceed after two outstanding instalments to the value of £31.0.6. and a fine of £150 imposed on NM Dekker, were paid.<sup>241</sup> Likewise, CJ Uys was only allowed to sell his farm after paying the fine of £20 imposed on him for high treason.<sup>242</sup>

Despite Natal Afrikaners having to deal with continued economic hardship and being impoverished, historian Verne Harris, in studying Klip River county farm records for the period 1900-1910, claims that they loathed selling their land. In a more specific study dealing with 30 Afrikaner-owned farms from the Klip River county, he found that only three changed hands during this period and of these only one was sold to an English person.<sup>243</sup> The truth is most probably somewhere in between. For the first year after the war, according to the records of the surveyor-general, eight farms were sold in Northern Natal by Afrikaners. Of these, five were purchased by Englishmen and three by Afrikaners. A further four Afrikaner farms were on offer to any prospective buyer.<sup>244</sup>

---

236. PAR, SGO III/I/150: Proposal by Bale and Green that the farm Zuurknoll be ceded to L Ohlsen, 23.1.1902-6.2.1902.

237. PAR, 1/UMS 38: Letter Magistrate T Maxwell, Umsinga, to PRN Vermaak, 16.8.1901.

238. PAR, SGO III/I/147: Correspondence regarding the cession of the farm Black Bank to L Ohlsen and then to Dukes, 24.7.1901-20.8.1901.

239. PAR, AGO I/8/72: Lists of suspected rebels forwarded to the registrar of deeds, 16.7.1900.

240. PAR, PM 30: Enquiry by T Watt about the reasons for the difficulty of getting government consent for the cession of Afrikaner owned land, 26.6.1902-17.7.1902.

241. PAR, SGO III/I/148: Correspondence regarding the cession of the farm Droogdaal to E Warwick, 14.9.1901-26.11.1901.

242. PAR, AGO I/8/82: Letter surveyor-general to minister of lands and works, 14.1.1902; PAR, AGO, 1/8/82: Letter attorney-general to minister of lands and works, 18.4.1902.

243. VS Harris, p.53.

244. PAR, SGO III/1/154: Application by AG Spies to cede Last Chance to TH Brokensha, 7.6.1902; SGO III/1/154: Letter Watt and Pike to surveyor-general, 1.7.1902; SGO III/1/154: Application on behalf of CJ Uys to cede Vaalkrantz to SW Reynolds, 25.7.1902; SGO III/1/154: Application by DJ Huyser to transfer Paddadors to HJ Niewenhuizen, 11.9.1902; SGO III/1/154: Application by PCJ Nienaber to cede Landmetersdraai to DWH Tandy, 19.8.1902; SGO III/1/154: Application to transfer Bernard and Byron from A Joubert to AH van Dyk, 12.9.1902; SGO III/1/154:

The largest proposed land sale in the immediate post-war period came from the extended Vermaak family of Helpmekaar. At first CT Vermaak, then still in exile in German South-West Africa, attempted despite protests, to sell two farms by public auction.<sup>245</sup> This was partly successful as only one farm was sold. The Vermaaks then offered all 12 their farms, 23 000 acres in total, for sale to the Natal Government who declined the offer after due consideration.<sup>246</sup> The thinking behind this was possible emigration from Natal. In time some members of the Vermaak family did move to the Vet River area in then ORC where their attempts at making a fresh start failed.<sup>247</sup>

### 12.6 The Umvoti Afrikaners fight back

Was it then not possible for Natal Afrikaners to fight back economically? Unlike in the Cape Colony Afrikaners in Natal did not have the economic muscle to retaliate by, for example, effectively boycotting English-owned businesses. The exception was in the Afrikaner stronghold of Umvoti county with Greytown as the most important town where local Afrikaners attempted to initiate a boycott of English businesses, and created a cooperative store (Boeren Maatschappij). This initiative troubled Attorney-General Bale who requested Inspector Keating of the Natal Police to investigate. Keating reported that the plan was taking shape under the chairmanship of Gert J van Rooyen of Pinedale, that land had been acquired; and that the design of a building had been submitted to the local board for approval. The only problem according to Keating, was that the monied section of the Afrikaner community was unwilling to support the venture. Consequently the envisaged venture failed and the boycott was not realised. The Afrikaners therefore still supported the shops of Ireland and Co and especially Handley and Sons. The only Afrikaner shop to open in Greytown during this time was the chemist of Thos Hannah but despite this Afrikaners continued to support the chemist of CW Handley.

As part of their attempt to create a commercial establishment free of English influence the Afrikaners of Umvoti also intended, despite the fact that an Afrikaner J Hansmeyer was already practising in Greytown, to bring an Afrikaner lawyer from the Cape Colony.<sup>248</sup> They also planned to bring an Afrikaner medical doctor to Greytown. Through the initiative of Thos Hannah<sup>249</sup> the services of Dr H van Niekerk Rademeyer were secured. Rademeyer previously practised as a medical doctor in Boksburg. On the British occupation of the Witwatersrand at the end of May 1900

---

Application by JA van Rooyen cede a subdivision of Sterkfontein, 28.11.1902; SGO III/1/154: Application by J Joubert to cede Schaap Krantz to DP Walker, 13.1.1903.

245. PAR, SGO III/I/159: Letter GS Saunders to surveyor-general, 9.12.1902; PAR, CSO 1719: Request by RJ du Bois that the envisaged sale of two farms by CT Vermaak be prevented, 8.12.1902-9.1.1903.

246. PAR, MJPW 102: Offer by PR Vermaak to the Natal Government of a number of farms, 22.5.1903-25.6.1903.

247. Interview with Foy Vermaak conducted at Helpmekaar, 10.7.2000.

248. PAR, AGO I/8/74: Report by Inspector R Keating on the creation of an Afrikaner cooperative and the boycott of English-owned businesses in Greytown, 29.10.1900; *De Natal Afrikaner*, 29.5.1900.

249. PAR, CSO 1682: Letter T Hannah to PUS C Bird, 30.7.1901.

he had surrendered and was subsequently sent to Germiston for political reasons. On the authority of the military governor he was allowed to proceed to Natal where he obtained a licence to practice. Dr Rademeyer did not remain in Greytown for long before he was banned to Pietermaritzburg by the local commandant, Colonel Mills. In so doing the plan of self-reliance of the Umvoti Afrikaners was partly scuttled,<sup>250</sup> for Rademeyer was not allowed to return to Greytown and for the remainder of the war he worked as a medical doctor in the Merebank Concentration Camp.<sup>251</sup>

The Afrikaners also wanted to start their own newspaper in Greytown. A printer who had previously worked for *De Natal Afrikaner* purchased machinery from P Davis and Sons with the intention of opening a business in Greytown. The editor of this envisaged paper would be Thos Hannah. Inspector WJ Clarke of the Natal Police believed the object of the newspaper was to keep the spirit of rebellion alive; to instill in the minds of the local Afrikaners the ideas of the Afrikaner Bond; and to boycott local English businesses. Clarke immediately took steps to suppress any publications of a suspected treasonable nature.<sup>252</sup>

*De Natal Afrikaner* in an article captioned: “Welk nut zal het hebben?” questioned the motives behind the economic empowerment drive of the Umvoti Afrikaners. The article stated that Afrikaners who were targeted as the main investors would not benefit from their investments; only the proprietors would.<sup>253</sup> In the end the idea of Afrikaner self-reliance did not come off the ground, simply because of a lack of support for the short-sighted venture.

## 12.7 Concluding comments

Niemand kan dit hom voorstel met hoe `n gevoel ons weer by ons huise gekom het nie. Alles verlore, alles verwoes, ons moes van onderaf weer begin...verwoes, vervalle, verwaarloos, geen heel ruit in die vensters nie, van die deure en vensters was verwyder. Geen enkele draadheining was daar nie. Seker `n paar duisend pond se waarde draadheining was niks van oor nie as miskien net hier en daar `n paal wat aangedui het waar die draad gespan gewees het. Veekrake was ingetuimel. Die pragtige vrugteboord op Vermaakskraal, waar ook honderde-duisende lemoene elke jaar geproduseer was, was verander in `n beeskraal waar duisende beeste wat van die Boere gebuit is, elke nag in moes slaap...Geld het ons nie gehad nie, wat ons gehad het is betaal vir boete ons opgelê deur die Spesiale Hof en aan advokate wat van die geleentheid goed gebruik gemaak het.

These words by JC Vermaak<sup>254</sup> explained the economic circumstances which awaited most Northern Natal Afrikaners returning to their farms during and after the war. The picture painted by Vermaak is verified by Magistrate Colenbrander of Ladysmith who, as early as 1900, already reported that crops

250. NAR, PMO 35: Telegrams relating to the position of H v N Rademeyer, 29.8.1901-8.11.1901.

251. AU Wohlberg, *The Merebank...*, pp.175-193.

252. PRO, CO 179/214: Letter Inspector WJ Clarke to minister of lands and works, 3.10.1900.

253. *De Natal Afrikaner*, 29.5.1900.

254. VTR, JC Vermaak collection, 03/2553/1: Memoirs of JC Vermaak, p.44, 1941.

had failed in most areas because of drought, and the fact that little planting, ploughing and harvesting was taking place during the war. In addition lung sickness was rife due to the influx of infected cattle while horses, cattle, and sheep were very scarce and only affordable at ridiculously high prices. Farms and houses had been ruthlessly looted and this made any homecoming a “sorrowing experience” as the work done over an entire lifetime was lost.<sup>255</sup> Other economic disasters could be added to the descriptions of Vermaak and Colenbrander.<sup>256</sup> The military allowed horses and other livestock to graze in planted fields, implements were stolen, and to boot in May 1901 hailstorms destroyed the crops which were not looted.<sup>257</sup> At the same time the war seriously interrupted the annual livestock migration by Natal Afrikaners<sup>258</sup> to the highveld in especially the Free State but also in the Transvaal.<sup>259</sup>

The circumstances outlined hit Natal Afrikaners particularly hard since they were almost exclusively reliant on a single economic activity, farming. In the region of between 700 and 800 Afrikaner men in some way involved in the war hardly practised any economic activities during the conflict. Simultaneously tens of thousands of head of livestock were lost and immovable property destroyed. Furthermore, in the words of the to the Dundee magistrate many Afrikaners: “... have been so impoverished by the fines they had to pay, and by the losses sustained during the progress of the war that they have not sufficient capital left to carry on their farms successfully, and it will probably take them some years to recover themselves.”<sup>260</sup>

These challenges Natal Afrikaners had to face were dealt with differently by each individual or family. Some had to find employment outside of farming to survive. Nicholaas Prinsloo Jordaan went from farmer near Dundee prior to the war to being a blacksmith in the town after the war and eventually ended up working on the sugar plantations on the Natal north coast.<sup>261</sup> Christoffel Lotz van Zyl who was a small-scale farmer near Newcastle, worked after completion of his prison sentence as a manual labourer in Kroonstad,<sup>262</sup> before moving to Germiston presumably to work on the railways.<sup>263</sup> Others remained and tried to overcome what the Dundee magistrate described as the “irreparable injury done to farmers and stock...”<sup>264</sup> by repairing buildings and fences<sup>265</sup> while dealing

---

255. PAR, 1/LDS 3/1/1/16: Report on conditions in the Klip River district by Magistrate HJ Colenbrander, 12.7.1900.

256. PAR, CSO 1944: Annual report magistrate Dundee, 1901; PAR, CSO 2909: Claim by G van der Merwe, 3.4.1900.

257. Foy Vermaak private collection: Letter JC Vermaak to CT Vermaak alias Miss C Herzog, 30.5.1901.

258. PAR, 1/LDS 3/1/1/16: Report on returning Natal Afrikaners from Magistrate HJ Colenbrander to colonial secretary, no date; PAR, CSO 1661: Request for a permit by JH Nel to remove cattle from the OFS to Natal, 5.11.1900-21.11.1900.

259. PAR, CSO 2910: Invasion Losses Enquiry Commission: Claim by PAJ van Rensburg, 4.2.1903.

260. PAR, NCP 8/1/11/3/2: Annual report magistrate Dundee, 1902.

261. E-mail MW Jordaan to JM Wassermann, 12.6.2002.

262. OE Prozesky private collection, Diary of JJA Prozesky: Diary entry, 13.10.1902, p.536.

263. PAR, NT 113: Documents relating to the Derelict Stock Fund, 1905-1906.

264. PAR, NCP 8/1/11/3/2: Annual report magistrate Dundee, 1900.

265. PAR, NCP 8/1/11/3/2: Annual report magistrate Dundee, 1902.

with poverty, rinderpest and drought.<sup>266</sup>

To overcome these challenges was extremely difficult as the ancestors of the renowned Afrikaner poet, DJ Opperman, found. All the family had to eat was maize porridge, green maize, and bread. Now and then this was substituted by potatoes, tinned fish, eggs, and vegetables. Meat was only eaten on Sundays since they had no animals to slaughter. Their slow process of economic recovery was halted when a hail storm wiped out their wheat harvest and livestock. This event, and the suffering caused by the war, gave birth to the following saying in the Opperman family: "Eers is ons deur die Engelse vernietig en toe deur God." As a result of this set-back the Oppermans moved to Zululand.<sup>267</sup>

Unlike in the two former Republics, no postwar reconstruction program was initiated for Natal Afrikaners, and the Natal Government offered very little in terms of reconciliation, relief or reconstruction. This lack of financial assistance was based on clause 10 of the Vereeniging Articles of Surrender which dealt with the provision of relief and stated that "no foreigner or rebel will be entitled to the benefit of the clause." As a result, although it cannot be described as a major exodus, the former Republics proved a favoured destination for a number of Natal Afrikaners, in all possibility because they could benefit from the economic reconstruction worth millions of pounds that was taking place in these areas.<sup>268</sup> But even in this attempt they were unable to escape the long arm of the Natal Government as Natal rebels who had settled in the Vryheid district were to find out. Their efforts to gain assistance from the Repatriation Commission who was supplying seed, implements, and oxen amongst other goods was, with the assistance of the Natal authorities, snuffed out.<sup>269</sup> The Natal authorities also prevented the rebels from joining the Natal Border Police in the Vryheid district.<sup>270</sup>

The only reconstruction project to be launched was the one initiated by Mistrs Wilson, Turton and Jansen in the Dundee area. This trio consulted with the local magistrate, WG Wheelwright, who, although open to the suggestion, only managed to identify three destitute local Afrikaners, John, Gert and JFA Dekker aged 55, 65 and 78 respectively. The first two men were convicted as rebels while JFA Dekker gave himself up after conclusion of the war. Gert Dekker also had to take care of his daughter and five grandchildren while his son-in-law, CF Marais, was serving a three-year

---

266. PAR, NCP 8/1/11/3/2: Annual report magistrate Newcastle, 1902; Annual report magistrate Estcourt, 1902; Annual report magistrate Umsinga, 1902.

267. JC Kannemeyer, p.20. At least two families from Dundee investigated the possibility of joining the groups of Afrikaners who moved even further afield, namely to Argentina. See, PAR, CSO 1748: Application by JW Holding on behalf of two Natal Afrikaner families about possible settlement in Argentina, 10.12.1903-15.12.1903.

268. PAR, CSO 1733: Letter of resignation as field-cornet in Umvoti by TJ Botha as he was moving to the Transvaal, 28.5.1903-29.5.1903; F Pretorius, *The Anglo-Boer War...*, p.89.

269. PAR, CSO 1713: Telegram magistrate Vryheid to colonial secretary, 23.9.1902; PAR, PM 39: Telegrams exchanged between president repatriation commission and Prime Minister AH Hime, 21.4.1903.

sentence for high treason. Magistrate Wheelwright conferred with the government who recommended that he refine his terms of assistance with the initiators of the idea. In the end it was recommended that destitute farmers who wanted to return to their land should each receive: eight oxen valued at £160; a cart and harness valued at £30; a plough valued at £2.10; two cows valued at £30; a horse and saddle valued at £15 and oats and maize valued at £3. These goods were to be lent to the farmers for a period of two years interest free after which a small interest rate set by the government would be charged. In all cases satisfactory security was required. The Natal Government agreed to this initiative but only seven Afrikaners as outlined below, applied. Of these men Labuschagne, Döhne and Hattingh, did not return to their pre-war residences.<sup>271</sup>

**Table 12.2: Profiles of Dundee Afrikaners who benefited from reconstruction**

NAME	ADDRESS	SENTENCE	REQUIREMENTS
Döhne, FW	Whitebank, Dundee	12 months imprisonment and a fine of £100	6 oxen and gear; 4 bags oats, 10 rolls barbed wire, 10 standards: <b>Value:</b> £144. <b>Security:</b> His 500 acre farm. Already had a bond of £150 on his farm.
Hattingh, JH	Landmetersdraai, Dundee	18 months imprisonment	8 oxen; 2 cows; 1 cart and gear: <b>Value:</b> £220. <b>Security:</b> His 600 acre farm
Laas, CJ	Paardeberg, Dundee	10 months imprisonment	8 oxen; 2 bag of oats: <b>Value:</b> £162. <b>Security:</b> His mother Sarah Laas.
Labuschagne, WA	Schielhoek, Dundee	9 months imprisonment	8 oxen; 2 bags maize; 3 bags oats; 2 cows: <b>Value:</b> £195. <b>Security:</b> His father-in-law, PH Nel.
Landman, IJA	Ruigtefontein, Dundee	18 months imprisonment; fined £250	2 cows; 1 horse saddle and bridle; 1 bag maize; 1 cart and gear; 1 harrow: <b>Value:</b> £245. <b>Security:</b> His 2 000 acre farm. Already had a bond of £550 on his farm.

270. PAR, PM 31: Telegrams exchanged between Colonel Mansel and the Natal authorities, 1.8.1902-16.9.1902.

271. PAR, CSO 1713: Representations of relief for indigent farmers, 16.9.1902-8.11.1902.

Nel, PH	Kalverfontein, Dundee	Fined £50	6 oxen; 2 cows: <b>Value:</b> £150. <b>Security:</b> His 3 000 acre farm. He also stood security for Van Tonder and Labuschagne.
Van Tonder, TA	Dundee	He claimed to have been imprisoned for 18 months, but no rebel with this name could be identified.	6 oxen; 2 bags maize; 2 cows: <b>Value:</b> £152. <b>Security:</b> PH Nel. Had no property at all.

In conclusion one needs to consider why so few farmers took advantage of this opportunity to start again. It is possible that the scheme was not but a local initiative but also that only a limited number could offer the security required. In all likelihood those who could afford the security opted to either deal with fellow Afrikaners or the banks rather than the Natal Government. The wartime treatment they had received must understandably have hardened attitudes towards the colonial authorities. The poor Afrikaners on the other hand resumed their roles as bywoners. This group struggled the hardest to recover from the body-blow of the war.<sup>272</sup>

In the medium-term the economy of the districts north of the Tugela River took longer to recover than their counterparts to the south who benefited much more from the booming wartime economy. This recovery was constrained by the post-war depression suffered by the Colony which resulted in many businesses, for example in Dundee, grinding to a halt by 1906.<sup>273</sup> The central victims of suffering in this process were Natal Afrikaners. In a visit in 1908, to the areas in which Natal Afrikaners resided, the co-owner of *De Afrikaner*, Ben Vorster, commented on the large numbers of “monuments to the war” or ruins of farmhouses still to be found. The residents resided in the outbuildings because they were “schijnbaar moedeloos geworden door de verwoestende oorlog.”<sup>274</sup>

272. VS Harris, Time to trek: landless whites and poverty in the Northern Natal countryside, 1902-1939, in RG Morrell, (ed.), *White but poor. Essays on the history of poor whites in Southern Africa 1880-1940*, p.68.

273. PAR, NT 113: Letter WH Tatham to HC Koch, 5.6.1906.

274. PJJ Prinsloo, p.23.