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**The Black Concentration Camps of the South African
War
1899-1902**

by

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The Black Concentration Camps of the South African War Abstract

This thesis is an attempt to carry out a comprehensive study of the black concentration camps established as a war measure by the British Army during the South African War, 1899-1902. The study, itself, covers the period from October 1899 to February 1903. The research has been done over a sixteen year period. The primary sources used in the study are government documents and private documents in the government archives, government and private libraries in the Republic of South Africa, England, Lesotho and the United States of America. A comprehensive study of all available sources was undertaken. The hypotheses of the study were only developed after careful study of the sources.

The first concentration camps were formed by the order of Lord Frederick Sleigh Roberts, Field Marshall of the British Forces in South Africa, on 21 September 1900 as a "protective laager" for surrendered burgers who had signed the Neutrality Oath. The purpose of these camps was to assure that these surrendered Boers were not forced to return to the war or did not do so on their own. As soon as these camps were opened the families of men still on commando also took up residence in these camps. There is no record of any camps being formed for blacks during this period. Some house servants of the Boer women may have joined them in these camps, but there is no record of this being the case.

It was not until Roberts appointed Lord Kitchener, his Chief of Staff, to replace him as Commander in Chief that the concentration camp system was expanded and radically changed in purpose. On 21 December 1901, only three weeks after Lord Herbert Kitchener assumed command, he issued a field order to all his commanders to remove all the Boer and black families from the farms in those districts where the Boer commandos were carrying out guerrilla warfare. In March 1901 Kitchener also ordered that the black servants of the Boer women be allowed to accompany the Boer families to the camps. In some cases these servants lived in the same tents with the Boer families.

Already some blacks were clustering around the army camps and the white camps. By January 1901 there were some organised black camps in the Orange River Colony and several informal and unofficial black camps along the railway in the Transvaal where they had been dropped by the British columns after their forced removal from the farms. In all of these camps blacks constructed their own housing and basically had to fend for themselves. In the Orange River Colony blacks received some food in return for their labour and a very rudimentary level of sanitation and medical service. In the Transvaal no assistance at all was provided to these refugees until these informal camps were organised by the Department of Native Refugees in June and July 1901. Some of the men in these squatter camps found employment in the Johannesburg mines as guards and maintenance workers in some cases leaving their families to fend for themselves.

Lord Alfred Milner, the High Commissioner, finally persuaded Kitchener in early May 1901 to reopen a few of the gold mines on the Rand. The army having borrowed 4,000 mineworkers from the Chamber of Mines now, as agreed, had to return 2,000 of these workers to the mines. In addition massive sweeps were now in progress and tens of thousands of black women and children and elderly men were being swept off the veld. Primarily for the latter reason the Department of Native Refugees was ordered formed by Kitchener in the Transvaal Colony June 1901 and in the Orange River Colony in August. It soon became apparent that feeding and caring for these thousands of refugees would be very expensive. It was estimated that over a year's period the cost would be £120,000. To alleviate this burden on the British treasury, Captain de Lotbiniere, the newly appointed Officer in charge of the new Department appears to have adopted the migrant labour paradigm of the mining companies and formed new camps on abandoned farms where the women and children were induced to grow food for themselves and for the Army Departments. The black men and their families were induced to work by selling them rations at half price if they would do so. Unlike the white refugees they were required to pay for their food, clothes and some medicine and medical comforts. As in the original black camps the inmates were required to build their own

housing and to fend for themselves. Even the rations they paid for were very unhealthy, consisting only of mealie meal and salt which was provided at no cost.

The death rates and the numbers of deaths in both original black camps and the Department of Native Refugees, as in the white camps were very high. In the case of the black camps the level of medical service was considerably lower than in the white camps, and at times non-existent. The study shows that this was due to the adherence of Milner, Kitchener and the concentration camp officials to the British colonial medical policy, which was to only provide medical care for indigenous peoples when the failure to do would induce epidemic disease and thereby pose a threat to the health of the military and white population, or disrupt the labour supply. The study conclusively shows that this policy was followed without exception. This policy of doing as little as possible for the black inmates was also present in all other areas of the life in the camps. Basically nothing was done for the inmates of the black camps except in the direst of circumstances. This was particularly evident in the areas of housing and sanitation facilities as well as medical service. Extensive research documents that over 21,000 black women and children and elderly men died in the black and white camps. Many more undocumented deaths also occurred. Waterborne diseases, measles and respiratory diseases were the greatest killers. Overall the differential treatment accorded to blacks can be summarised as a policy of *deliberate neglect*.

When the war came to a close in May 1902 a new policy regarding blacks was instituted which required the complete suppression of the blacks to the Boers, the former enemy, and the British. Most promises made to the black chiefs and their peoples both explicit and implicit were betrayed and broken. The British officials in the Department of Native Affairs who were charged with the carrying out this betrayal of the allies of the British against the Boers, were themselves, quite surprised at this change of policy. When a few black chiefs were bold enough to complain about this new policy of suppression and subjection these same officials told them that this was none of their business. Loyal chiefs were, in some cases, banned from their tribal communities for fear of

their causing native uprisings. The inmates of the black camps in most cases were by manipulation and inducement repatriated back to their former Boer masters without their compensation claims having yet been paid. Despite the genuine efforts of Major de Lotbiniere the inmates returned to the farms in most instances without any livestock or ploughing animals. This was very detrimental to their health and to the cultivation of the first harvest, which was reduced by as much as 70% due to this lack of ploughing animals. The repatriation process in the black camps was used to insure the continued suppression of blacks in the new political structure of the newly united South Africa. Milner had foreseen the end result of the war as a joint rule of the nation by the two white races over a well treated black labour system from Cape Town to the Zambesi. The Boers were relegated to the role of food producers for the mines and the general population. Thus the major aims of the war envisioned by Milner were now realised.

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Colonel F. Jacobs the Director of *Die Oorlogsmuseum van Boere Republieke* provided me with a stipend and office space and other assistance from 1995-1999. Colonel Jacobs helped me at a very crucial time. Without this kindness the work would not have progressed. He was very interested to see that the story of the black camps was researched and published. During the four years of this assistance from the museum no attempt was made to influence the work or to affect the view of the work. His help has really made the effort possible. I felt very honoured as an American to have been a small part of the work of the museum.

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Finally I owe a special debt of gratitude to Professor Emeritus of the University of South Africa, S.B. Spies. His great work has both inspired me and also made me feel totally inadequate. Over the years I have talked with him just to find my bearings again. My only regret is that I have had so little time with him. My admiration for his work is even stronger than it was the first time I read it, now that I have been labouring in the same vineyard of the history of the war. Most of all I have admired his ethics and restraint as an historian.

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Introduction

The South African War has sometimes been called “The last gentlemen’s War.”¹ Yet when the smoke cleared from the battlefields, the burned out farms and kraals, and all the soldiers had gone home, the death toll revealed that almost twice as many women and children had died in the South African War as the number of soldiers who died on the battlefield.² Black and white mothers, and especially their children, died like flies in the concentration camps established by the British Army during the South African War. Emily Hobhouse in 1911 lamenting about war generally, but more specifically in remembrance of her experiences with the Boer women and children in the concentration camps, wrote these words of prophetic complaint: “For women folk, war is a hard time; the excitement and the glory so alluring to men do not fall to their share, only mental agony and the long slow days of suffering. It falls hardest on the children.”³

¹ J.F.C. Fuller, *The Last of the Gentlemen’s Wars: A Subalterns Journal of the War in South Africa 1899-1902* (London, 1937)

² This statement is not totally correct. If the numbers of black combatants who died in the war were added to the overall death toll, then the number of combatants who died might be higher than those of civilians. These numbers are not known as neither side recorded the deaths of black combatants or those employed as scouts or spies and other capacities. The research for this study has documented 21,042 deaths of black men women and children in the black and white concentration camps. By the term “documented” is meant that an archival document or published record of the British government or some other official document specifically records the numbers of deaths indicated in the study. [See Chapter Six and Appendix 6.1, “The Master Death List.”] These documents include weekly and monthly reports of the medical officers and superintendents of the various black and white camps, monthly reports of the Department of Native Refugees, statistics contained in the Command Papers of Parliament, Etc.. Careful checking by means of a computer sorting process has been used to eliminate duplication. The records used assure absolute numbers of deaths are counted. In one case a death list containing over four hundred names of black people who died in the Heidelberg Military District was excluded from the Master Death List of the numbers of deaths because it could not be determined if these deaths had already been recorded in the monthly reports of the Department of Native Refugees in the Transvaal. That the actual numbers of deaths in the black camps, and indeed the white camps as well, were higher than the numbers of deaths found in the extant record is beyond question. The problem of unrecorded deaths is addressed in Chapter Six..

³ *The Free State Provincial Archives*, Accession-156, Letters of Emily Hobhouse to Mrs. Isabel Steyn, wife of President M. T. Steyn.

This study has as its purpose to provide a comprehensive history of the black concentration camps, their role in the overall history of the South African War, and the tragic illness and death and suffering that resulted from the deprivation that took place in these camps. The focus of the thesis does not allow the study of the role of blacks in the war generally or outside the immediate subject of blacks in the concentration camps⁴. Finally the repatriation of the inmates and the compensation paid to them, as well as the betrayal of black peoples in the post war period and the breaking of promises made to loyalist blacks during the war are described.

The work hopes to fill a significant gap in the historiography of both the history of the war and the overall history of black people in South Africa. It is, nevertheless, not desirable, or even possible, to separate out the black history, from the history of the war itself. Scholars and others who have written about the tragedy of the white concentration camps and who have excluded the history of the black peoples who lived in those very same camps, and in some cases in the very same tents, have significantly weakened the accuracy of the history of the war.⁵

The thesis, in part, attempts to refute certain false paradigms regarding the black camps. In summary, these false paradigms are as follows. (1) That if the black camps existed at all, their establishment was motivated by the desire to provide labour to the British Army and that they were inherently less harsh than the white camps. (2) That the failure to provide adequate food, shelter and medical care was the result of the inability of the British Army to do so because of the logistical restraints of a lack rolling stock and engines and a single track railway. (3) That unlike the white camps' inmates, blacks were not compelled either to enter or remain in the black concentration

⁴ The term 'concentration camps' when no designation of black or white is given refers to both the black and white concentration camps.

⁵ Lord Kitchener issued AG Circular Memorandum 31, dated 15 March 1901, that permitted the black servants of the Boer women to be placed in the white concentration camps with their respective families. It appears this was only done when the Boer mistress requested it. These servants in most of the white camps were not provided with any rations by the British officials and the Boer family had to share their meagre rations with their servants and their children.

camps. (4) That the numbers of deaths in the black camps were considerably lower than in the white camps. (5) That the black and white camps were formed for humanitarian reasons.

The study rests upon a foundation of two hypotheses, which were generated by the research. The first being that the black and white concentration camps, were established solely for military reasons and not for humanitarian purpose. S.B. Spies and others have decades ago shown this to be the case. Nevertheless, this view still persists, even among some historians. The British Army, as part of an anti-guerrilla strategy to defeat the Boer Forces, formed both the black and white concentration camps for basically the same military reasons. The need was felt to establish this hypothesis beyond any reasonable doubt.

For this reason this issue is addressed in considerable detail in Chapter 2. Until this issue is resolved it is not possible to properly understand the reasons for the creation of either the black or white concentration camps. Previous histories have not fully explicated this subject. Furthermore it is necessary to recognise that the histories of both the black and white concentration camps are inextricably linked, because they arose out of the same anti-guerrilla warfare master plan. As a result considerable primary source materials and careful analysis of these sources regarding the white camps are an integral and essential part of the study. This inclusion of material on the white camps is, however, appropriately limited to those areas, which in some significant way have a bearing on the an understanding of the black camps and their history.

The second hypothesis of the study is based on the colonial policies strictly followed by the British imperial government in regards to the indigenous peoples of the Empire. These policies governed the treatment of black people in the war, and this is especially made evident in the black concentration camps. This overall policy is most clearly manifested in the British colonial medical policy. It is conclusively shown that this policy resulted in a deliberate neglect of the inmates of the black camps. This policy, both in theory, and in praxis, forbid any medical or material assistance to

the indigenous peoples of the colonies except when the failure to do so would result in epidemic disease that would endanger the health of British soldiers, the British settler communities, or would disrupt the labour supply. The Boer women and children in the white concentration camps were also treated as indigenous people although to a somewhat lesser degree. The idea that the British erred in their treatment of the Boer people because they were not used to fighting against white people is false. The British colonisation of Ireland in the sixteenth century is evidence of that fact, as is the treatment of the poor in England. The work, based on very comprehensive research of the primary sources, demonstrates that this colonial medical policy was followed apparently without exception.

The principle of doing as little as absolutely necessary for indigenous people of the Empire, as stipulated in the rationale of the British colonial medical policy, overflowed into all the other areas of life in the black concentration camps. The study shows that all the needed life sustaining supplies of such things as housing, food supplies and medicine needed for survival of both the black and white inmates could have been provided. That this was the case is shown in detail in Chapter Three and Four. The failure to do so was the result of Milner's, and Kitchener's refusal to allow the needed medical staffing and supplies. This, there can be no doubt, resulted in many more deaths than was necessary. The thesis refutes the old argument that because of the logistical problems of a single-track railway system the British Army was unable provide these needed supplies. This conclusion is based on extensive research of the railway capacity, which is presented in Chapter Four.

This study is based on primary sources, particularly documentary materials from the National Archives of South Africa and the provincial archives in Bloemfontein, Pietermaritzburg and Cape Town. As a result I find it necessary to address the arguments against historical studies based on documentary sources. The *post modernists* who take the position that government and private documents do not contain truth, or in the extreme, that there is no real difference between the genres of the novel and documentary history, are quite incorrect. A classic statement of this error follows.

"In this age of postmodernist literary criticism, we are more than ever aware of the ways in which historical writing resembles the novel as one individual's reconstruction of an imagined past."⁶

The thesis is based predominantly on the comprehensive use of archival documents. The post modernists are correct in cases where historians are selective in their use of primary source materials. The use of historical materials in a kind of salad bar approach where only those documents which support the writer's hypothesis are selected and used is, of course, bad history. The invention of writing, first used to document government expenditures in the ancient cuneiform texts, was itself, the beginning of recorded history. Documents when placed in juxtaposition with one another act as their own corrective. Further the task of the historian is to enter as far as possible into the hermeneutics of the text and to make judgements based upon the total scope of the documentary materials at hand. It is true that the intentions of the authors of government and private documents and the histories constructed with them cannot be known. Even, however, where historical materials are obviously on their face subjective, they reveal the view of the participants. Persons can be hermeneutically treated as a text whose inner self cannot be fully determined either by their words or recorded deeds. Obviously their subjective views drove the decisions made by these officials in very many cases. Historians interpret events, rather than just reporting them. The conclusions in this study are based on looking inclusively at thousands of pages of documents as well as the few secondary writings that have been published..

Writers in this school often seem to be quite as dependent as everyone else on the archival documents as well as other written materials. Sometimes the reader is treated to a discussion of why documentary history is to be rejected and then the writer proceeds immediately to use a series of documents in the work that follows. One outstanding Africanist, who rejects "documentary history," after making this statement, says he chose to confine his study to a particular province of South

⁶ Peter Mcphee, "Lunatic Liberty," *Sidney Morning Herald*, 17 October 1992, p. 45, cited in Keith Windschuttle, *The Killing of History* (San Francisco, 1996) p. 1

Africa because the archival sources are so much better and abundant there. His exemplary work refutes his anti-documentary view by his use of documentary sources.

The proponents of this school often express their preference for oral history. There is no assurance that oral history, especially in the second or third generation, is a more reliable source of the truth for historians. Quite to the contrary, diaries journals and letters along with oral recollections made long after the events being probed are, by their very nature often highly subjective, and exaggerated. Anecdotal accounts are particularly dangerous in obtaining comprehensive understandings of an historical events under consideration. Furthermore they are impacted by intervening historical events on the feelings and experiences of the oral history subject being interviewed. In some cases the oral history interviews of blacks regarding their memory of the South African war aside from being second or even third generation interviewees are greatly contaminated by their experience during the apartheid years. This phenomena was experienced at first hand by the writer in observing oral history interviews by a British film company at Mafeking regarding the treatment of blacks during the siege of Mafeking. Furthermore, various political and ideological beliefs of various racial, ethnic and cultural communities affect the oral history statements made. Whereas confidential memos and letters between officials contain very candid opinions that would not be acknowledged in an oral history interview.

Many of the documents used in this work are very concrete and objective. For example, lists of supplies sent to individual camps. This kind of information in a ledger book is hardly deceptive. Careful study of such documents can lead to significant conclusions. Certain documents such as reports by camp administrators to higher authority are suspect. The study of these documents has shown a tendency in such reports to gloss over their failures as concentration camp officials. This kind of statement is also betrayed by other documents that show that the statements made were lacking in truth or accuracy. Often in this study inconsistencies and questionable statements are revealed and commented upon.

Because of the need to ferret out the truth of the history I have felt it necessary to search for all primary source materials that have any connection at all with the subject at hand. For example every document regarding transportation during the war was copied to be sure that a full record of the transport problems faced by the concentration camps are seen in the perspective of the overall transport problem of the military operations. In the area of the mining companies during the war every document in the record that describes the operations of the mining companies during the war was collected. In fact a chapter on the role of the mines was written, but finally excluded from the finished study as it became apparent that it was not sufficiently related to the focus of the thesis. While much of the material in the files of this research was not used in the writing of the thesis this material has given a very in depth understanding.

Attempts were made to find oral history subjects. No suitable subjects were found with one exception. A member of the family refused to allow an interview because of an objection to telling this story which would undermine that family member's own racial views of the war. In one instance at the Brandfort black concentration camp site an oral history subject who was not alive at the time of the war, claimed to have been an inmate in the black camp at Brandfort. I have interviewed many black persons during my research trips to all parts of South Africa and Lesotho and none could remember that members of their families had been in the concentration camps.⁷ Much of what has been presented as oral history from the period of this war has been so contaminated by poor oral history interviewing methodology as to make these accounts highly questionable as reliable historical evidence. Some oral history materials are in fact not of that genre at all, but are reflections by later generations of what they think of the events that took place.

The study follows the pioneering efforts of S.B. Spies and to a somewhat lesser degree, Peter Warwick, which were primarily concerned with the policies regarding these camps rather than a

⁷ These interviews were not formally conducted, but were carried out as happenstance provided the opportunity in the course of the many research trips. Very often these interviews were with people carrying out research in the archives or who lived in the communities I was living in or visiting.

description of the conditions in these camps, such as medical service and housing. This work attempts to present as comprehensive an understanding as possible of every aspect of the history of these camps. Unfortunately this attempt at a detailed description these aspects is prevented by a lack of sources. As mentioned significant attention is paid to the policy of deliberate neglect of the inmates in these camps and the results of that neglect. While neglect is evident in all aspects of the logistics and life in the black camps, deliberate neglect is particularly evident in the area of the medical service in both the black camps white camps. This lack of medical service in contrast with the capabilities of the British medical establishment during the period of the war is described in Chapters 5 and 6.

Finally the aftermath of the war is considered with special attention to the payment of compensation, repatriation, the closing of the camps and the breaking of promises to black communities and chiefs who were loyal to the British. This betrayal of black people during the post war period was a harbinger of the even greater betrayal to come in the 1913 Land act and other similar legislation, which deprived the black people of both the land and the franchise and made them helots of both the mining and agrarian capitalists.

II. Secondary Sources.

The white concentration camps.

Although there have been a large number of books, magazine and newspaper articles, journal articles and pamphlets written regarding the white concentration camps, very little has been written about the black concentration camps. According to André Wessels “:Since the end of the Anglo-Boer War more than 2,500 books, more than 2000 journal articles, and approximately 900 pamphlets have been published, and approximately 100 M.A. and doctoral theses have been

completed that deal with the history of the war. However, so far no detailed study has been made of the black concentration camps of the war.”⁸

Writings and historical accounts of the white concentration camps, especially those written immediately following the war, were for the most part not based on scientific research utilising the archival record or other primary sources. A significant amount of the secondary literature published in Afrikaans was understandably subjective in nature, such as diaries and recollections of the camps, up to a half a century or more after the events.⁹ Many of these “accounts” are very selective compilations of such materials. Some of these writings on the white camps were quasi-political and stridently polemical. After the war some British authors wrote several apologist books regarding the white camps.¹⁰ All of these books are quite obviously meant to defend the British concentration camp policy and engage in an apologetic of blaming the victims who, in most cases, were incarcerated in these camps against their will. When culpability is conceded it is argued that the problem was due to the incompetence and a lack of medical knowledge on the part of camp staffs regarding the care of concentrated populations. The alleged insanitary habits of the Boer women are assigned a major portion of the blame for the high death rates. To date there has been no full-length comprehensive study of the white concentration camps, which I hope to be able to do in the future.

In 1954 J.C. Otto wrote the first scientifically researched study of the white concentration camps. This study, *Die Konsentrasiekampe*, was based primarily on British Command Papers and other official publications and a limited amount of archival material. Nevertheless this pioneering work is very valuable because it was the first attempt at a scientific study of the white camps. J.H. Hattingh’s *Die Irenekonsentrasiekamp* followed this ground-breaking work in 1965. This work used

⁸ Andre Wessels, personal communication.

⁹ Diaries and recollections are, of course, very valuable primary sources. However these materials must be judged in the context of the historical record. Unfortunately there was almost no material of these genres written by black people during the war. There is not a single journal or diary written by a black camp inmate.

¹⁰ A good example of this literature, although written at a later period, is a book by A.C. Martin, *The Concentration Camps, 1900-1902: Facts, Figures and Fables*. (Cape Town, 1957)

archival sources to a much greater extent as well as the British Command Papers. Of course this work only concerned the Irene camp, which because of its proximity to the Department of Burger Camps headquarters was in all likelihood better equipped and administered than the other white camps in the Transvaal. These important contributions to the historiography were confined to the white camp histories.

While it is true that in the pioneering work of J.C. Otto there was a good beginning of the exposition of the housing, food supply medical service and sanitation, it was the work of S.B. Spies, in *Methods of Barbarism?* that has provided the most definitive work in the area of the treatment of black and white civilians in the war. His work of over a quarter of century ago has stood the test of time. It is not possible to express how indebted I am to both his vast research and the excellence of his work as an historian. His work has been the paradigm for my own less able attempts to write this history. In addition to the quality of his research, I am especially admiring of his restraint in the writing of the history. His work is the watershed of this field of research.

The black camps

Some work has been done on the black camps as part of larger works. As indicated the work of S.B. Spies is exceptional. Also notable is the work Peter Warwick. Two black historians have also contributed to the literature, J.S. Mohlamme and Eric Mongalo. It is to be hoped that more black historians will write about this war from their cultural perspective.¹¹ Others, eminently, W R. Nasson, as well as D.J. Denoon, have written about the involvement of black people in the war outside the camps. Denoon's work has been very helpful in understanding the post war period and the role of racial viewpoints during that period. Nasson's work has been particularly valuable in this study. In particular I found the reading and study of his work regarding the Cape Colony very important in trying to understand the earliest stages of the evolvement of the first black

¹¹ Vide: S.B. Spies, *Methods of Barbarism* (Pretoria, 1976) and Peter Warwick, *Blacks in the South African War* (Johannesburg, 1983)

concentration camps in the Orange River Colony. His essay, "Moving Lord Kitchener"¹² is very important to this understanding. Two other aspects of the history of blacks in the war are significant. The first is the experience of black and coloured civilians during the war. The second aspect of his work is the whole area of the Army Labour Depot at De Aar, the smaller labour depots in the Cape Colony and the role of camp followers.

As stated very little work has been done on a detailed and comprehensive history of the black concentration camps. S.B Spies in his definitive doctoral study, *Methods of Barbarism?*,¹³ for the first time devoted considerable research, interpretation and space to the subject of the black concentration camps. Tracing the intricacies of the evolving policies that led to the establishment of both the black and white concentration camps is the great contribution of his work to this study. The vast use of archival sources makes this a guide to any student of the treatment of civilian population during the war. This study attempts build on this very important foundation. While Spies covered a much more comprehensive study of the treatment of the civilian population during the period January 1900 to May 1902, this study focuses more narrowly on the black concentration camps and over the wider period of October 1899 to February 1903. I have also tried to look at other work to assure a balanced presentation and understanding.

Peter Warwick's work, particularly *Blacks in the South African War*, is valuable in understanding the second phase of the history of the black camps when the Department of Native Refugees established in June 1901. His understanding of black labour gives this work a special insight. Regrettably from the point of view he begins his account at that point, just mentioning the original black concentration camps that existed prior to that time. I have disagreed with Warwick's apparent acceptance of the official statements of the Department of Native Refugees, especially the Final

¹² W.R. Nasson, "Moving Lord Kitchener: military transport and supply work. In W.R. Nasson, *Abraham Esau's War A Black South African War in the Cape, 1899-1902, 1899-1902* (New York, 1991) pp. 64-92.

¹³ S.B. Spies, *Methods of Barbarism Roberts and Kitchener and Civilians in the Boer Republics, January 1900-May 1902* (Cape Town, 1977)

Report of the Department in the Transvaal. Some of these statements are quite disingenuous especially in the area of medical service to the inmates of the Department. Warwick's overall work is a major contribution to the historiography.

The first effort by a black historian, J.S. Mohlamme, to write about the Department of Native Refugees is contained in one chapter of his thesis, *Black People in the Boer Republics during and in the Aftermath of the South African War* at the University of Wisconsin-Madison, 1985. It is helpful that his work uses different sources, in some cases, than the sources used by Spies and Warwick. In addition his insights and perspectives are very helpful in seeing these camps through a different set of lenses. As in Warwick and Ploeger there is no substantial discussion of the original black concentration camps under the Department Refugees in the Orange River Colony. The work generally follows Spies. With Warwick he accepts the British official explanations for establishment of the camps. This work being only one chapter in a larger work does not allow for a full discussion of the historical development of the camps in the Department of Native Refugees, but it does give a general overview of these camps. Generally I feel that the text substitutes large statistical tables for a more in depth interpretation of the camps themselves. As in the case of Eric Mongalo's thesis it would have been very helpful to have seen more analysis of the perspective of the black experience. In fact in some ways they seem to have been influenced by the false paradigms about these camps.

Ploeger, while the State Historian of South Africa, carried out very massive research regarding *Die Lotgevalle Van Die Burgerlike Bevolking Gedurende Die Anglo-Boereoorlog, 1899-1902*. Like Warwick and Mohlamme he only describes the black camps in the Department of Native Refugees.¹⁴ This focus, while very helpful in some respects, tends to see the purpose of the black

¹⁴ The National Archives only published 1,000 pages of the 2,800 pages which Ploeger wrote. The unpublished pages devote a chapter on each of the white concentration camps including some, which are not usually to be found on lists of these white camps. In some ways it appears that the change in political structures and ideology caused the National Archives to fail to pay the deserved attention to his work. The

concentration camps, *primarily* as labour camps, which as this study shows, is not correct. This focus, which excludes the black camps that existed prior to the formation of the Department of Native Refugees, has also resulted in lower numbers certifiable deaths in the black camps. His work also contains some other relevant materials, including a chapter on the *Reconcentrados* of Cuba.

The work of Fransjohan Pretorius, in his definitive study, *Kommandolewe Tydens Die Anglo-Boereoorlog, 1899-1902* is based largely on diaries and journals. While primarily concerned with the life of the Boer Commandos themselves, it also presents us with several specific pieces of narrative describing the role blacks played in giving assistance to the Boer commandos which has contributed to a more comprehensive understanding of the reasons the black camps were formed.¹⁵ In addition these descriptions of blacks assisting the Boer commandos belies the false idea that blacks in the war were universally the co-enemies with the British against the Boers. While the amount of material Pretorius included in his doctoral thesis, and the book that followed, regarding blacks outside the camps is not large in quantity, it is nevertheless a very significant and helpful contribution to the literature about blacks in the war.

The work of Donald Denoon contributed to a better understanding of the post war period and the role that race played in the thinking and policies of that period as well as the Army Labour Depot system. Especially important is his article "Participation in the 'Boer War': people's war, people's-non-war, or non-people's war?"¹⁶ and the full length work based on his doctoral dissertation, *A Grand Illusion*, especially Chapter four, "Race".¹⁷ Very germane is the work of Jeremy Krikler in

remaining pages should be published as major source document. While the remaining pages are devoted to individual camps we should remember that each of these camps was different and a full understanding of these camps cannot be fully comprehended by generalising. This is also the value of the series of books by A.W.G. Raath on some of the white concentration camps in the Orange River Colony. It would also be very important to publish both of these author's works in English so that historians outside South Africa can have access to their work.

¹⁵ Fortunately this very important work was translated into English in 1999.

¹⁶ Donald Denoon, "Participation in the 'Boer War': people's war, people's non-war, or non-people's war." In B. A. Ogot (ed.) *War and Society in Africa: Ten Studies* (London, 1972)

¹⁷ Donald Denoon, *A Grand Illusion: The failure of imperial policy in the Transvaal Colony during the period of reconstruction, 1900-1905* (London, 1973).

Revolution From Above; Rebellion From Below.¹⁸ Much of what is contained in this work is very important in understanding the relationship between the black farm workers and the Boers. His attempt to follow a Marxist analysis of the Boer and black societies is less convincing. Certainly the British were not, as he alleges, trying to destroy the Boer class. Rather they were trying to destroy their supplies and their ability to carry out guerrilla warfare. The failure of the British to allow the black peasants destroy the Boer ruling class after the war was, of course not a failure, but was quite deliberate and part of Milner's vision of the Boers and the British ruling together over the blacks who were to become a massive unskilled labour force from Cape Town to the Zambesi. He is very correct about the coercive apparatus of the Transvaal Government being used against the blacks after the war to accomplish this exploitation of black labour. His insights about the war against the Boers by blacks are quite correct. David Burton's work on the South African Native Affairs Commission has enriched the work in Chapter 7 on the post war treatment of blacks. I also found G. Cuthbertson's work along with that of Alan Jeeves very helpful in the introduction to this thesis. Cuthbertson also brought David Burton's work to my attention. The oral history work of Stanley Trapido and Charles Van Onselen provide this study with oral history material that allows a glimpse of the experience of blacks inside the camps. Although quite minor in their overall work this material was very valuable in understanding the impact on real people of the policies of the camps.¹⁹

The classic work of A.M. Grundlingh *Die "Hendsoppers" en "Joiners": Die Rasionaal en Verskynsel van Verraad*²⁰ has added a rich dimension to my own detailed research on the failure of the Neutrality Oath. Like Fransjohan Pretorius' work his work, is filled with very good source material. For the purpose of this study his very good work was not sufficient in covering the process

¹⁸ Jeremy Krikler, *Revolution From Above; Rebellion From Below: The agrarian Transvaal at the Turn of the Century* (Oxford, 1993)

¹⁹ Stanley Trapido, "Putting a Plough to the Ground." In William Beinart, Peter Delius and Stanley Trapido, *Putting a Plough to the Ground* (Johannesburg, 1986) pp. 337-369.; Charles Van Onselen, *The Seed is Mine: The Life of Kas Maine, a South African Sharecropper, 1894-1985* (Cape Town, 1994)

²⁰ A.M. Grundlingh, *Die "Hendsoppers" en "Joiners": Die Rasionaal en Verskynsel van Verraad* (Pretoria, 1999)

that led to the establishment of the first concentration camps -“the Hands Uppers Camps.” The focus is not on the British policies that led to these camps. Despite the fact that Grundlingh and Spies had covered the failure of the Neutrality Oath that led to the establishment of the first concentration camps they did not develop the understanding that was necessary to lay the foundation for this thesis. It is for this reason that Chapter 2 looked at this period from a different perspective, although at times drawing upon their work. Grundlingh in particular did not work on the actual process of the formation of the Hands Uppers camps and upon indicating their establishment proceeded immediately to the later camps formed by Kitchener. The reluctance by Lord Roberts to form these camps and how he came to change his mind on this very crucial issue is an important focus in this thesis. The very detailed content of Grundlingh’s study is invaluable and was an absolute joy to read. It gave me a much better feeling for these events. I am very grateful to B.M. Theron for her translation of Grundlingh’s important work and her willingness to allow me to read the portions of the translation I needed prior to publication.

Primary sources.

The most significant obstacle to the work is the very sparse extant archival record that can be found. A fundamental question arises. If we look at the history that has been written over the past centuries about all the eras of ancient and modern history did the lack of primary and secondary sources act as the criteria to decide whether or not a particular historical study should be undertaken? For the past seventeen years I have desperately been looking for the story of the black concentration camps. As an American I was often told there were no black concentration camps. A few archivists were certain that there were no records or very few records in their archives about these camps. I was determined to find the record of these camps. The scarcity of sources increased the desire to carry on the research. There were some who said it should not be attempted. History has always been a passion for me. It all started when as a young boy when I sat at the feet of an eighty year old man who told me about the history all the old houses and the people who had lived in them in one of the

New England towns where I grew up.²¹ It has been difficult, but I was not willing to abandon this quest. It became an obsession. I kept hoping to find the missing sources and some of them were found. I have had to grow up intellectually, even at this late age, to accept the realisation that not all the desired information can be found in historical research. Perhaps my previous work in biblical studies was part of the problem because the Church teaches that God has revealed all he willed to reveal. Perhaps the muse of history should be seen in the same way. Sometimes I could see what appeared to be evidence of the destruction of the record.

In the past the history of events has often been forgotten or has been hidden in a murky tunnel. For example the history of the Christian Church in the first and second century is inside a tunnel for the first two centuries. Lacking all the required sources should we just not write about the early Church? This is the fascination of studying lost civilisations. There is a certain longing to find the unknowable. The study is an effort to unwrap this gap in our historical understanding and to glean every little scrap of evidence that can be found. This was something I had to do. In the end it was not possible to use all the materials that were located. Some may critique this work as an exercise in vague snippets of historical evidence. I wanted to tell the story. I wanted to tell the story because over twenty one thousand boys and girls and little babies and mothers and old black farm workers died a century ago in these camps and lie buried for the most part in unmarked graves. So it is a passion for me. Most of all I want little white boys and little black boys and little black girls and little white girls to know that long ago behind barbed wire fences their ancestors died, and that they matter. I have done my best to tell their story within the confines of acceptable standards of scientific research. I was constantly reminded of John Calvin's²² warning that speculation to fill in the gaps of the unknown leads the inquirer to become lost in a maze from which there is no escape.

²¹ Andover, Connecticut.

²² The second generation reformer of the Christian Church whose primary work, the *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, is thought by some to have had the most significant and lasting effect on western thought.

This sparse record is particularly significant because the sources that describe the life and conditions in the camps, and which are the primary focus of the thesis, are very lacking in the official record. Not only is the record lacking but also it is at times very sporadic and random. For example all the reports of the superintendents of the individual camps of the Department of Native Refugees are missing. An extensive effort has been made to locate them, but none of these reports have been located. There is some record regarding housing, sanitation, food supply and medical service in some of the original black camps in the Orange River Colony formed in early 1901. There is much less information regarding the conditions in the Department of Native Refugees Camps formed in mid-1901. Death statistics are provided in the monthly reports, but these reports are totally devoid of the causes of death with the exception of some very general references in the final report of the Department of Native Refugees Camps in the Transvaal. There is some useful information in the cover letters of the monthly reports of the Department and a few inspection reports. The monthly reports of the Department in both the Orange River Colony and the Transvaal do contain some information on medical comforts, medicine and the numbers of doctors. Some detail has been gleaned from the records of some of the extant record of the original black camps, especially those camps at Bloemfontein, Brandfort, and Edenburg . These camps did, in some instances, provide a listing of the names and causes of death. Unfortunately the record does not contain a sufficient sample to make an overall assessment of the numbers and causes of death in the original black camps. Fortunately two of the camps, the Bloemfontein black camp in the Orange River Colony, and the record of blacks deaths in the Middleburg white camp in the Transvaal allow relatively detailed case studies of the causes of black deaths in those camps.

Despite the paucity of primary materials the study does provide some very valuable knowledge about these camps. Some information such as the death lists of the original black camps in the Orange River colony, which do, include names and causes of death, have not been included for

reasons of space restrictions and because of their lack of comprehensiveness over time and the nature of their reporting.

The earliest attempts to do this research were met with significant resistance and "undisguised hostility".²³ In addition some archivists, as indicated, stated that there were no materials in their archival holdings pertaining to the black concentration camps. Ms. L. Pretorius, a Senior Archivist at the National Archives of South Africa, gave me the first break in this wall of silence by introducing me to the papers of J. Plöeger, which fill ninety archival file boxes. Much of the content of these boxes was painstakingly hand copied over the many years of his work as the State Historian. Plöeger's collection forms a most valuable resource, which provided some important materials for this study. Reading this source made it apparent that a page-by-page search in the files of the National Archives in Pretoria and the Free State Provincial Archives in Bloemfontein would be necessary. Some fruitful research was also done in the in the Provincial Archives in Pietermaritzburg and Cape Town. This page-by-page research was necessitated, in part; by the fact that unlike the white camps there is only one archival file devoted exclusively to the black camps, and this file consists almost entirely of financial records.²⁴

Unlike much of the material on the white camps the documents regarding the black camps are spread amongst many different archival files. Thus was begun what may be called the *mountain of porridge method* of research.²⁵ Using this method also made it possible to provide the *South African Heritage Resources Agency*²⁶ with a list of over 1,200 names of black people who had died in the

²³ "Boer and Briton, *The Economist*, 2 October 1999, pp. 132-34.

²⁴ The Department of Native Refugees file, (NRD), located in the National Archives at Pretoria is almost exclusively ledger books containing records of supplies issued and some correspondence regarding the closing of the Department of Native Refugees.

²⁵ Colonel F. Jacobs at the War Museum of the Boer Republics describes the method in this way. "You come to a mountain of porridge and you take a bowl and a spoon and you eat the whole thing." Over three years of actual days weeks and months were spent in the archives doing this.

²⁶ Formerly the *National Monuments Council*.

concentration camps as well as a detailed list of the sites of the black camps.²⁷ Recently this list of names has been supplied to the new *Freedom Park* to be established by the South African Government in memory of all those who have struggled for the freedom of all the people of South Africa throughout its history. This method was applied to all aspects of the research. Some research was also carried out at the Brenthurst Library and the Rand Barlow Archives as well as the Africana Library in Johannesburg, and the South African National Library in Cape Town. Research was also done at the War Museum of the Boer Republics. Research was conducted at the McGregor and Sol Plaatje museums in Kimberly. Research was also conducted at the Railway Museum of the South African Railways.

Research trips have been made to Lesotho and Botswana. Stephen Gill, the curator of the Morija Archives and Museum of the Paris Evangelical Missionary Society in Lesotho, was very helpful in helping me to locate relevant materials on the role of the BaSothos in the war. In 1998 I spent several months at the Oxford University libraries including the Bodleian Library, Rhodes House, and the India Institute. This research trip was funded by the Oppenheimer Fund. In a second research trip that same year funded by the Wellcome Trust, research was also conducted at the Wellcome Institute of Medical History in London and Oxford University as well as the Public Records Office in London. During that period I also carried out research at the National Army Museum and the Library of the London Friends Society as well as the School of Oriental and African Studies at the University of London. I briefly did some research at the London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine. The fruits of these two research trips were considerable.

In the United States some research has been conducted at the University of Wisconsin, Milwaukee under the tutelage of Bruce Fetter. Earlier in 1986, with assistance of Leonard Thompson, some

²⁷ The purpose of this study was to help the *National Monuments Council* in considering the feasibility of erecting suitable monuments to the black and coloured people who died in these camps. The council paid my expenses during that period for this aspect of the research.

research was carried out at the South African History collection at Yale University and the library of the South African Research Project.

The archival resources regarding the white camps are significantly greater than the archival resources regarding the black camps. There is also evidence that some of the archival documents pertaining to the black camps are missing in the National Archives.²⁸ Much of the record that is known to have existed during the war, and immediately afterwards, is missing. This is particularly true of the death registration records. In 1904 the Director of Army Finance indicated that the records of the correspondence between the Military Governor of Pretoria and the Department of Native Refugees could not be found. In addition there is evidence that some archival documents regarding the black concentration camps have been removed, especially in the case of the National Archives at Pretoria. Specific documents, which are indicated by an archivist's note as being in another volume of the same file, are missing. This is especially true in the case of the death records of the black camps.

The most valuable file in the National Archives is the Secretary of Native Affairs file, (SNA). Not only does this file contain reports on the camps of the Department of Native Refugees in both the Transvaal and the Orange River Colony, but also it contains a great amount of material on the relationship between the Department of Native Refugees and the Department of Native Affairs. Another valuable resource for this study and other studies of the war are to be found in the file of the Military Governor of Pretoria. Here can be found numerous documents regarding the white camps and the establishment of the Department of Native Refugees. The Military Governor, General Maxwell was the most significant official in the Transvaal. As a result this file is very

²⁸ GOV, Vol. 25, 778. Chamberlain to Milner, 13 September 1902. Cover Letter indicating return of papers belonging to the burger camps, which were sent to Chamberlain by the War Office. Legal Department of the Transvaal, (LD) Vol. 1730, AG1007/09; Secretary to the Law Department of the Transvaal to Assistant Colonial Secretary, Pretoria, 22 May 1909. The Secretary to the Law Department indicated that the archives of the burger camps are still in the vaults of the Palace of Justice in the vault. Whether these records are the same records presently in the National Archives is not known.

comprehensive and covers many aspects of the treatment of the civilian population. Given the lack of documents in the file of the Director of Burger Camps this file is the best source to fill that void. The file of the Lt. Governor of the Transvaal (GOV) also contains valuable records regarding the camps. The file of the High Commissioner is particularly valuable in the area of medical staffing for the white concentration camps. The file of the Political Secretary to the Commander-in-Chief in South Africa is valuable in seeing the relationship between the mining companies and other entities and the British Army authorities. Valuable materials were also found in the financial files and the legal files of the Transvaal Government. The file of the Commissioner of South African Railways, (CSAR) is surprisingly lacking in records of the Department of Native Refugees. In 1904 the records of the Department were allegedly turned over to the Commissioner of the South African Railways. These records may have been discarded as being of import.

In the Free State Archives there is a wealth of archival material relevant to this study. The file of the Superintendent of the Department of Refugees of the Orange River Colony, (SRC), is undoubtedly the richest archive regarding both the black and white camps in the Orange River Colony. This file contains a very detailed record of the white camps and to a lesser degree the black camps, running to at least 20,000 pages of material. In this file there can be found accounts of everything from the ordering of water pumps to the major policies governing the black and white camps. There is a considerable amount of material regarding the medical problems in these camps. The second most valuable file, the Secretary to the Orange River Colony Administration, (CSO) also contains thousands of pages of material. Since the Deputy Administrator of the Orange River Colony was very involved in the day-to-day operation of the camps this file contains important records of the camps. In addition since there was no Department of Native Affairs established in this colony, this file contains material on the black people during the war and especially in the post war period in that colony. There is considerable material in this file on the compensation of blacks and whites for their war losses. While all the War Office files are held in the National Archives in Pretoria. There

are some valuable materials in the file of the Military Governor of Bloemfontein relevant to this study. Overall despite the fact that the record of the black camps is relatively sparse, many years of research have resulted in a more complete picture of these camps than previously had even been hoped for by researchers.

The reader must judge the veracity of the thesis, and whether the long research has borne any worthwhile fruit for the historiography of the South African War, which is the single most important event in the history South Africa.

Chapter 1

The Origins of the Black and White Concentration Camp System Established by the British Army During the South African War

I. Introduction

Neville Henderson, the British Ambassador to Germany from 1937-1939, tells of a confrontation he had with Hermann Goering about the Nazi Concentration Camps, which it was rumoured were camps for the extermination of Jews, gypsies and others deemed enemies or unworthy in Hitler's scheme for the Third Reich. In response to this allegation by the British ambassador, Goering read to his visitor from a German encyclopaedia, which stated that concentration camps were "... first used by the British in South Africa."¹ As will be seen this was not true. More importantly, there was no similarity between the Nazi Concentration Camps and the British concentration camps in the South African War, either in purpose, or numbers of dead. "Some people, especially the English, for obvious reasons, object to the terminology "concentration camp," despite the fact that the British Government, during the war, officially referred to these places of confinement interchangeably as "refugee" or "concentration" camps. Greg Cuthbertson and Alan Jeeves, in their introduction to a collection of papers on the war, cite A.J.P. Taylor, who on the occasion of the golden anniversary of the war remarked: "Even forty years afterwards every European, though few Englishmen, noted the taunt in the Nazi 'concentration camps,' which deliberately parodied in name and nature, the British 'methods of barbarism'."² Although it should be pointed out that the Spanish called the camps of confinement they established during the second Cuban insurrection in October 1896, three years prior to the South African War, *reconcentrados*, or concentration camps. Stanley Trapido some forty years later comments along the same lines; "...part of the rural black population were

¹ Neville Henderson, *Failure of a Mission, Berlin 1937-1939* (London, 1940) p. 29, cited in S.B. Spies, *Methods of Barbarism?* (Cape Town, 1977) p. 296.

² A.J.P. Taylor, *From the Boer War to the Cold War: Essays on Twentieth Europe* (London, 1995) pp. 37-38, cited in Greg Cuthbertson and Alan Jeeves (eds.) *Special Issue, South African War 1899-1902, South African Historical Journal*, (41) 1999, p. 16.

'concentrated' in protected and restricted settlements. This policy was also applied to the rural Afrikaner civilian population, whose original function gave its name to one of the horrors of the twentieth century, the concentration camp. It was, of course, not part of their function to decimate the inhabitants of the[se] camps."³ Dinah-Mpse-Molefe, an inmate of a black concentration camp give that place a different nomenclature, referring to it as a 'war location'.⁴ Thomas Pakenham and Iain Smith describe these camps as internment camps, which they were.

Although, Emily Hobhouse commenting in regards to some natives who had been shot by the Boers at Doorn River, said that she had "...frequently heard people crave for the extermination of the Boers,...suggesting the shooting of prisoners as a means to that end."⁵ Jeremy Krikler, in asserting that the conflict was a class war, argues that: "During the war, the British strategy came increasingly to concentrate on the destroying of this [Boer] class." From this premise he goes on to say that "The ferocious destruction and looting of Boer farms, livestock, crops and property and the herding...of the landlords' families into concentration camps constituted an effective expropriation of the rural ruling class."⁶ Certainly the scorched earth tactics of Roberts and Kitchener were not aimed solely at the Boer ruling class, but were equally aimed at blacks, especially on the Boer farms, who also suffered the burning of their homes and the destruction of their crops and the seizing of their livestock. The attack was not on a class of rulers, but upon their resources, as Krikler also concedes. There is not a shred of evidence in the archival record to show that any British official contemplated, or even flirted with the idea of exterminating the Boers, in or out, of the camps. Lord Kitchener did propose, in a different sense, their elimination from the territory of South Africa. [See Chapter 2, The St James Gazette's recommendations to adopt "Weyler's methods".]

³ Stanley Trapido, "Putting Plough to Ground." In William Beinart, Peter Delius and Stanley Trapido, *Putting Plough to Ground*, (Johannesburg, 1986) p.347.

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 349.

⁵ Jennifer Hobhouse Balme, *To Love One's Enemies: The Work and life of Emily Hobhouse compiled from letters and writings, newspaper cuttings and official documents*, (Cobble Hill British Columbia, Canada, 1994), p. 312.

⁶ Jeremy Krikler, *Revolution from above, Rebellion from below; The agrarian Transvaal at the turn of the century* (Oxford, 1993) p.1.

The Times History of the War in South Africa, along with other sources, reveals that the British Army was not the first to establish concentration camps for non-combatants.⁷ The *reconcentrados* of the First and Second Cuban insurrections were the first concentration camps used for that purpose, just a few years before the South African War. Some British civilian and military officials were aware of the tragic loss of life that occurred in the *reconcentrados*, as were many other people throughout the world, due to the reports of many newspaper journalists. This chapter also considers the role of blacks and their treatment during the Siege of Mafeking as embodying the same administrative policies in the treatment of the black civilians, who later in the war, ended up in the black and white concentration camps.

II. The reconcentrados of the Second Cuban Insurrection.

A.M. Davey begins an article regarding the first known use of concentration camps as follows. "In putting down the Second Cuban Insurrection of 1895-1898 the Spanish constructed blockhouses interconnected by barbed wire squares and placed the civilian population in reconcentrados [concentration camps] inside the garrisoned towns called "Fortified Cities".⁸

It is not coincidental that the Spanish and British Colonial powers used almost identical tactics in their respective theatres of war. G.H.L. Le May argues that this apparent similarity was generated by like circumstances and the similar tactics of their respective opponents. "It was demonstrated in South Africa, as it was demonstrated in Cuba and the Philippines at about the same time, that a large and elaborate army may be effective only when it is opposed by another large and elaborate army."⁹ It should be mentioned that both sides in the Cuban conflict used guerrilla slash and burn tactics.

⁷ L.S. Amery, *The Times History of the War in South Africa, 1899-1902* (London, 1909) Volume 5, pp. 401-02.

⁸ *The Encyclopaedia Britannica*, ed. 1947 "Cuba History." Cited in A.M. Davey, *The Reconcentrados of Cuba*, in *Historia*, 5(3), 1960, pp. 193-95.

⁹ G.H.L. Le May. *British Supremacy in South Africa*, (Oxford, 1965) p. 88.

That the British Army saw the war in Cuba and the Philippines as similar to the guerrilla warfare they were experiencing in South Africa is evident. Even before the guerrilla warfare phase began in South Africa the British military recognized the similarity. *The Friend* newspaper, the official newspaper of the British Army in the Orange River Colony in early April 1900, reprinted a story from *Harper's Weekly* which the newspaper entitled, "The Other War in the Philippines."¹⁰ In this article prominent mention is made of the annoyance of guerrilla warfare. "The insurgents are widely dispersed. The country is now covered by [American] troops." A British officer with *Rimington's Guides*¹¹ describes the tactical situation facing the invading force in the war in South Africa. "The Boers are all round and about us like the water round a ship, parting before our bows and reuniting round our stern. Our passage makes no impression and leaves no visible trace."¹² That is not entirely true as this British unit, along with many others, left in its wake massive devastation of crops and livestock and burned out farm houses and black huts.

As mentioned, blockhouses, barbed wire squares and reconcentrados were the means used by the newly appointed commander of Spanish forces, General Valeriano Weyler Y Nicolau, in putting down the Insurrection. As in the South African War, the first general in command had been unable to defeat the rebels. Prior to Weyler's arrival the Spanish forces suffered their worst defeat at the hands of the Cuban insurrectionists. The Spanish Government now came to the conclusion that very draconian measures were called for.

Upon arrival, General Weyler, said he was the strongman Spain needed in this crisis. Immediately he reminded his soldiers, in a dockside speech, of his previous record in Cuba during the first insurrection, known as *The Ten Years War*. He warned them that they should follow the severe example he had set in the previous war against the insurrectionists. This was unnecessary, as his

¹⁰ "The Other War in the Philippines, *The Friend* (newspaper), 6 April 1900., Reprinted from *Harper's Weekly* USA.

¹¹ A unique anti-guerrilla scouting unit of 200 men under Major Mike Rimington who had recruited them. They were nicknamed 'Rimington's tigers' because of the leopard skin worn on their Boer hats. They were hard to tell from the Boer enemy as they spoke their language as well as African languages, and knew the land they operated in as well as any trek Boer., see: Thomas Pakenham, *The Boer War*, (London, 1979) p.180.

¹² L. March Phillips, *With Rimington* (London, 1901) p. 123, Cited in Le May, p. 88.

reputation had preceded him. During the disturbances in Spain, and the African war with the Moors, he was the favourite lieutenant of the brutal chief Valmaceda under whose command he earned a reputation for barbarous cruelty.¹³ As a result he had earned the nickname of *Valmaceda's assistant butcher*. While serving in the United States as the Military Attaché in Washington, he is reputed to have become a great admirer of the Union Army General William Sherman and his scorched earth tactics in his infamous "March through Georgia" during the American Civil War.¹⁴

Upon arrival in Cuba, Weyler did not immediately engage the enemy. Instead he spent the first ten days in Havana writing and issuing proclamations to the civilian population. Along with Lord Roberts he believed that the civilian population had to be pacified and prevented from supporting the enemy. Beyond this, he believed that in guerrilla warfare every non-combatant might, in fact, be a insurrectionist fighter, a spy or a provider of logistical support to the enemy. Thus both Weyler and Roberts made war by proclamation against soldier, and civilian alike. They both saw non-combatants, even women and children, as potential enemies against whom very severe measures had to be taken.

The first three proclamations were issued on 16 February 1896 regarding circulation of information to the enemy, penalties for arson, giving arms or other material help to the enemy and penalties for destroying the railway and the telegraph lines. Both Weyler and Roberts came to the conclusion that the civilian population was not only assisting the enemy, but in a certain sense, they were the enemy. Both utilized proclamations to dissuade such support. Unlike Roberts, however, Weyler was not satisfied with a pledge of neutrality. Rather, citizens must demonstrate complete loyalty to Spain. They must not only refrain from helping the enemy in any form, but they must not speak well of the enemy or "discredit the prestige of Spain. Indeed, they must praise Spain."¹⁵ Beyond this, they must act as guides for the army and also report any sighting of, or contact with, the

¹³ Charles Morris, *The American War With Spain: A Complete History of the War of 1898*. (London, 1899) pp. 73-4.

¹⁴ S.B. Spies, *Methods of Barbarism? Roberts and Kitchener and Civilian in the Boer Republics: January 1900 to May 1902* (Cape Town, 1977) p. 148.

¹⁵ Henry Houghton Beck, *Cuba's Fight For Freedom: War With Spain*. (Philadelphia, 1898) p. 245.

enemy. Roberts would follow a similar policy ordering the burning of farms near locations of Boer destruction of the railway, arguing that they should have reported the presence of Boer Commandos in the area.”¹⁶ Roberts also engaged in retribution against community leaders and forced some to ride trains to dissuade attacks.

Weyler was particularly convinced that the civilian population was providing intelligence information to the rebel forces. He was determined that the previous situation of the enemy being better informed than the Spanish Army must come to an end. Like a carbon copy of the proclamations that Roberts would issue four years later upon entering the Orange Free State and the Transvaal, Weyler said to the civilian population in his proclamation, “Inhabitants of the Island of Cuba, lend me your help, [in this way]...you will defend your interests, which are the interests of the country.”¹⁷

Weyler did not rely on proclamations alone. A few days after issuing these first three proclamations the Spanish forces carried out “a massacre” in the small town of Guatao. According the account, in a somewhat propagandistic book, all the inhabitants of the town were killed. Prisoners taken by Spanish soldiers were summarily executed.¹⁸ The reliability of these reports is open to question, but it is apparent that Weyler attempted to quell the insurrection by the carrot and stick method. He offered leniency to those who would surrender and to those who would not, severe punishment and death. These measures, alone, did not end the insurrection. In consequence Weyler now reverted to a method he had originated during his previous experience in Cuba.

In the first insurrection, known as, *The Ten Years War*, a concentration camp was hastily created. This earliest concentration of civilians arose out of an immediate military circumstance, and was not a result of a pre-planned military policy decision. The population of a large district was herded into

¹⁶ *National Archives of South Africa-Pretoria*, A2404, Vol. 4 *Roberts Letters and Telegrams*, Tel..C4516, Roberts to Generals Barton and Kitchener, 11 September 1900.

¹⁷ Beck, *Cuba's Fight for Freedom*, p. 245.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 256.

in a small town and compelled to remain there by military guards. As would be the case in almost all of the concentration camps in the future, both they, and their captors, ended up as victims of disease dying in large numbers.¹⁹

Weyler had ordered the formation of concentration camps, upon arrival in Havana on 10 February 1896. The order was not implemented until 21 October 1896, more than eight months after his arrival. He then gave the civilian population only eight days to enter the reconcentrados, which were in barbed wire enclosures adjoining the towns that had been captured and garrisoned. Their farms were then systematically burned and all their livestock killed or driven off. Any one found outside the “fortified cities” after that date would be executed. In addition, he also ordered that no food be sent out from the towns to the countryside.²⁰ General Gomez, the insurrectionist guerrilla leader, long before Weyler’s arrival, proposed to drive the civilian population either into his own ranks, or into the towns. In reverse of Weyler’s idea regarding food supplies, he proposed ordering that no food be permitted to enter from the countryside into the towns. Weyler was determined that insurrectionists in the countryside were no longer to be permitted to fight as rebels one day, and appear as peaceable citizens the day after.²¹ At times Boer civilians came to the gates of the white concentration camps during the South African War seeking food from their relatives in the camps.²²

The reconcentrados would produce a terrible loss of human life and suffering. And while it is true that some American newspapers engaged in yellow journalism, some times involving exaggeration and made up stories, the reporting by trained and credible observers was very close to the tragic descriptions printed in these newspapers practicing yellow journalism. *The New York Journal*, A Hearst newspaper, was particularly accused of exaggeration and sensationalism.

¹⁹ Morris, *America's War With Spain*, (London, 1898) pp. 85, 251, 315, 321, cited in Davey “The reconcentrados of Cuba.”

²⁰ Walter Millis, *The Martial Spirit: A Study of Our War With Spain* (New York, 1931) p. 59.

²¹ *Ibid.*

²² Stowell V. Kessler, “The suffering Afrikaners and their civil religion.” Unpublished masters thesis, Princeton Theological Seminary, June 1986.

Joseph Springer, the American Vice-Counsel in Havana, and the longest serving Vice-Counsel in the American Foreign Service at that time, wrote a report on the *Los Fosos Reconcentrado*, the largest of the Cuban concentration camps. This report was written a little more than a year after the camp had been established. Springer described the camp as disease ridden and very overcrowded. He related the following example of the lack of care and neglect. A doctor told him of a man who he alleged died of thirst. "Weak and unable to help himself" the doctor recounted that this man had "...vainly called for water for three days," and then when it was finally fetched for him, "he drank deeply and died in fifteen minutes!"²³ If the reader wonders why someone did not bring water to this man the following description from that same report may explain why. "I saw one orphan family of ten little children, boys too weak to stand; much nudity and indifference to common decency; everywhere hunger, misery and starvation, and the sad look of woeful recognition in the eyes of all."²⁴

Generally he reported that the misery and sickness in these concentration camps, populated for the most part, by women and children, was indescribable and the death rate due to inanition²⁵ and fever, frightening. There were also black inmates in the these camps, but they seemed to be able to "resist the hardship of the period better than whites."²⁶ Clara Barton, the founder of the American Red Cross, having come just recently from the devastation of the earthquakes in Armenia in 1895 commented, "The slaughters of Armenia look merciful [compared] to what I see here [in the reconcentrados] in Havana."²⁷ She described the Los Fosos camp as the worst of all the reconcentrados. Her observations were based on working with the survivors of these concentration camps for a period of two years. In her history of the American Red Cross she recounts in her own words her first experience of Los Fosos.

²³ Horatio Rubens, *Liberty: The Story of Cuba* (New York, 1970) pp. 313-14.

²⁴ *Ibid.* p. 314.

²⁵ Exhaustion due to, mal-nutrition and starvation, emptiness.

²⁶ Rubens, *Liberty*, p. 313.

²⁷ A speech by, Arthur Gardner the American Ambassador to Cuba 22 February 1954, on the occasion of laying a plaque in memory of work of Clara Barton, "Clara Barton protector of the Cuban 'Reconcentrados. P. 16 {Holdings of the University of Delaware, Archives of the University Library.)

On landing we...drove to Los Fosos, a large long building filled with over four hundred women and children in the most pitiable condition for human beings to be in, and live; and they did not live, for the death record counted them out, a dozen or more every twenty-four hours, and the grim terrible pile of rude black coffins that confronted one at every doorway, [said] to each famishing applicant on her entrance what her exit was likely to be.

We went from room to room, each filled to repletion—not a dozen *beds* in all. Some of the inmates could walk, as many could not,—lying on the floors in their filth—some mere skeletons; others swollen out of human shape. Death-pallid mothers, lying with glazing eyes, and a famishing babe clutching at a milkless breast.²⁸

The reports of high-ranking Spanish military officials were similar. The report of the general who replaced General Weyler, in part, because of his harsh methods, echoes the reports presented above. “The diseases due to such herding of human beings in masses, and the inexorable belief that that a sure and inevitable death awaits them, deprived many of them of the needful energy to struggle for existence.”²⁹

The actual living conditions of these places of confinement are little known. The inmates were confined within a line drawn 150 yards around the town.³⁰ This incarceration area did not allow any cultivation of food and the inmates of these fortified towns were not provided with agricultural tools or seed.³¹ There is a description of the *Jaruco Reconcentrado*, which appeared in the *The New York Journal*. As previously mentioned, this newspaper was accused of sensationalizing the reconcentrados. Some caution is, therefore, advised. In addition to describing the very bad conditions, it does indicate something about the layout of this camp. “Filth lay ankle deep in the streets and plaza and made its way into a church used as a barracks. The Pacificos [non-combatants] occupied closely built rows of huts, holding from four to six persons each, while ten feet away were cavalry barracks occupied by sixty men and their horses, and left in a state of dangerous uncleanness.”³²

Clara Barton describes what she saw at Juraco with at least as much repulsion as the yellow journalists. After a tour of the town they ended up in the hospital, where upon seeing a wretched

²⁸ Clara Barton. *The Red Cross in Peace and War* (Washington, 1899) p. 521. The author expresses thanks to Larry S. Daley, a Cuban Exile, for providing a copy of this book.

²⁹ Rubens, *Liberty*, p. 311.

³⁰ Morris, *America's War With Spain*, p. 93.

³¹ *Ibid.*

³² *Ibid.*, p. 94.

patient lying on a cot at the far end of the room, their attempts to go to this suffering person were impeded by the stench as they approached. In addition there were dead bodies on the floor in a state of putrefaction, which added to the unbearable odour.³³ The people in the town were in similar, but not such extreme condition. Large numbers were crowded into "hovels" in very close proximity and in a state of extreme emaciation, or as Clara Barton described it, "...skeleton bodies with feet swollen to bursting."³⁴

The Cuban concentration camps produced a terrible loss of life and human suffering. Some have asserted that as many as 500,000 died in these reconcentrados.³⁵ A recent study published by the Cuban Government in 1997 concludes that there were over 300,000 deaths.³⁶ British historian, Iain Smith, suggests that guilt caused the older American historians to pick the figure of 400,000 deaths without substantiation. Smith says that recent research by Joseph Smith, (no relation), as well as Ernest R. May supports a figure of 100,000. This is the same figure proposed by S.B. Spies more than a quarter of a century ago. Spies was also correct in stating that such a figure "is still staggering". As in the British white concentration camps in South Africa the percentage of the total Cuban population who died was very high.

A United States Naval Officer reported that 50,000 of the 253,616 people in Matanzas Province had died during the war.³⁷ The estimates are obviously many and varied. A generally accepted figure, however, as stated by both observers and Cuban advocates was in the neighbourhood of 200,000.³⁸ On the other hand there were apologists like Walter Millis who attributed the high death figures to American officials who made rough estimates. One official thought that a census taken after the war would show that half the population had died. When the census was taken it showed a surprisingly low figure compared to this speculative estimate. The overall population, according to the final

³³ Barton, *The Red Cross in Peace and War*, p. 528.

³⁴ *Ibid.*

³⁵ Spies, *Methods of Barbarism*, p. 148.

³⁶ R.J. Canoja, *La Reconcentraci3n, 1896-1897* (Havana, 1997) p. 9.

³⁷ Rubens, *Liberty* p. 312.

³⁸ Morris, *America's War With Spain*, p. 93.

tabulation, only showed a decrease in the population of 58,895 people since the last census taken twelve years before. Obviously this is a very questionable way of determining the numbers of deaths during the period of the conflict, because we do not know what the population growth was during the twelve-year period. Further children die at much higher rates during concentration. Therefore, young children born after the previous census, but who died before the new census after the war, would be entirely lost in this count. There is no way of really knowing, but the estimate of 125,000, cited by Davey³⁹ and Spies,⁴⁰ seems a reasonable and conservative estimate. Nevertheless it was a loss of tragic proportions.

It is also tragic that so many thousands of human beings died in such a calamitous circumstance, and yet no one was able or willing to consistently register the names of the dead, or even the numbers who died. This was also situation in the black concentration camps during the South African War. Equally regrettable are the many black people who died as combatants in the South African War on both sides. This disastrous result of Weyler's methods should have been an omen for the policy makers in the British Army during the South African War. There is no evidence that such concerns existed, or if they did have such awareness, that this realisation had any significant influence on the decisions that brought about the establishment of the concentration camps.

III. The Mafeking model

The Siege of Mafeking catapulted that little known, but important outpost town of the British Empire, into instant fame and Mafeking quickly became a household word. For the British people the name of this town became one of the most indelible memories of the war. Brian Willan describes the town as being of considerable importance "...serving as a railway junction on the line northward to Rhodesia, as the administrative capital of the Bechaunaland Protectorate, and as the

³⁹ Davey "The *Reconcentrados* of Cuba", p. 195.

⁴⁰ Spies, *Methods of Barbarism*, p. 148.

market centre for the surrounding districts of both the Transvaal and the Cape Colony.⁴¹ Mafeking, lacking any natural defences, and sitting “like a piece of toast on a plate,” was surrounded, by several large Boer Commandos under the command the venerable old Boer General of the First Anglo-Boer War, Piet Cronje. The Boer Forces were equipped with state of the art long-range Creusot artillery,⁴² fast firing Krupp guns and the very modern and superior Mauser rifles paid for by the gold of the Rand. During the long siege the Boers, with their Mauser rifles, rained bullets on the besieged town. For seven long months this daily bombardment inflicted both, real and psychological damage, on the residents of Mafeking. But by far the greatest victims of the siege were the black residents and refugees of Mafeking. This was particularly true in the case of the black labourers who built the fortifications, bombproof shelters and covered trenches under rifle and artillery fire.

What happened at Mafeking was, in some respects, a harbinger of what lay ahead for black civilians during the war. This was particularly true in the case of those who were to be incarcerated, for the most part against their will, in the black and white concentration camps. Some significant consequences would follow from the kinds of policies formulated at Mafeking, with regards to the treatment of the black residents and refugees trapped inside the siege.

Inside the besieged town were the indigenous black peoples of Mafeking; the *Tshidi Barolongs*, the *Mfengus* and the *District Baralongs*.⁴³ In addition, Sol Plaatje reports in his diary, that there was a “miscellaneous collection of natives from the gold mines in Johannesburg on the Rand”.⁴⁴ While

⁴¹ Brian Willan, *Sol Plaatje: South African Nationalist, 1876-1932* (London, 1984) p. 58.

⁴² While President Paul Kruger was spending over £1,000,000 to re-equip the commandos with Mauser rifles in the years between the Jameson Raid and October 1899, Commandant General Piet Joubert built up an outstanding artillery, which included the purchase of four Creusot 155 mm “Long Toms” from France and four 120 mm howitzers from Krupp in Germany along with 75 mm Creusot and Krupp field guns. Cited in Thomas Pakenham, *the Boer War* (London, 1993) p. 41.

⁴³ In this chapter the nomenclatures for the various black tribal peoples follows those used by Peter Warwick in his book, *Blacks and the South African War*.

⁴⁴ John L. Comaroff discovered this diary, which is the earliest known writing of Sol Plaatje, who was to become a major advocate for black people in South Africa. The writer relies heavily on this diary, as it is the only eyewitness account of what happened at Mafeking recorded by a black writer, and thereby gives a more detailed account of the experience of blacks inside the siege. Indeed, this diary appears to be the only diary written by a black writer during war.

Baden-Powell in his report only mentions the Shangaans, Plaatje says additionally there were Pondos, Barotse, Zambezians “and South Central African breeds.” It was these black refugees who would suffer most deeply. Plaatje writes in his diary, “[they] thought that the war would last but a month or less.”⁴⁵ They came here as they thought Mafeking was safe enough to spend a month after which they would return to the revolutionised Rand.⁴⁶ Even after the siege had begun black refugees from the Rand gold fields were coming to Mafeking. Two days after the war began a group of black refugees was fired upon as they approached Mafeking because the defenders mistook them to be an enemy attack. This was a group of 500 refugees from the Rand gold mines who later were drafted into a defence unit known as the Black Watch.⁴⁷ *The Morning Post* correspondent described them as “a mixed Zulu crowd.”⁴⁸

Access to the bare ground and the opportunity and requirement to provide their wage labour as a means to purchase food, appears to have been all that was provided for these black refugees. These two rules governing their presence in the siege were to become the primary tenets of the policy that ruled over the inmates incarcerated in the black concentration camps. They found themselves in the dire circumstances of the siege due to the ensuing struggle between the two major white races for supremacy over the land and the minerals, diamonds and gold, and the black labour needed to dig these valuable minerals out of the ground.

It was Plaatje’s view that if Baden-Powell had foreseen that the siege would last seven months, they might not have been permitted to stay. As will be seen, this miscalculation regarding the probable length of the siege would end tragically for the black refugees, as well as the indigenous residents of the Barolong Stadt. As in the black concentration camps to follow, they were just dumped on the

⁴⁵ This supports the notion that Lord Milner obtained the support of the mining companies by assuring them that it would be a very short war. The black mine workers may also have been assured that this would be the case, in part to cause them to leave peaceably.

⁴⁶ John L. Comaroff, (ed.) *The Boer War Diary of Sol T. Plaatje*, (Johannesburg, 1973) p. 64.

⁴⁷ Brian P. Willan, *Edward Ross, Diary of The Siege of Mafeking, October 1899 to May 1900* (Cape Town, 1980) pp. 16-17.

⁴⁸ F.D. Baillie, *Mafeking: A Dairy of the Siege* (London, 1900) p. 108.

ground with no provision for their welfare. Plaatje's diary shows this quite vividly. Some were living under two trees between the British South Africa police camp and the Barolong Stadt. They would work at night when they needed a little cash to buy grain, which they mixed with horsemeat.⁴⁹ Here it is shown, that from the very beginning, black refugees were required to pay for their food.

In total, there were now about eight thousand "natives" in Mafeking, when the siege began. The District Barolongs, Mfengus and "Cape Boys" fled into Mafeking, according to Baden-Powell, "...when their villages were burnt and their cattle looted by the Boers."⁵⁰ In the mass exodus from the Rand many thousands of *Uitlanders*⁵¹ fled Johannesburg, just one week before the opening shots of the war. The railway lines running out of Johannesburg were so crowded with trains carrying British and other refugees, that mail and other necessities could not be shipped until the following day.⁵² Some black refugees also came from the diamond fields in Kimberly. Trains carried thousands of uitlander refugees away from Johannesburg everyday for weeks. There were tens of thousands of black mine labourers who were enticed to stay as long as possible; as they had been just before the Jameson Raid.⁵³

J.S. Marwick, the Natal Native Agent, obtained permission to march some 7,000 Zulus, employed in the mines, all the way back to Natal because there was no immediate room on the trains. He was sure that the police would very soon force these former mine workers out of Johannesburg. Thus some of the mineworkers left stranded on the Rand, with the closing down of most the mines, found their way to Mafeking. Altogether there were about 2,000 black refugees in Mafeking along with

⁴⁹ Ibid., p. 141.

⁵⁰ Ibid., p. 160.

⁵¹ The Rand gold mines attracted workers from all parts of Africa, Europe and America.

⁵² Milner's Papers (Bodleian Library, Oxford): Microfilm 27: Milner's Diary. 4 October 1899.

⁵³ *British Parliamentary Papers* Cd. 43. *Further Correspondence relating to Affairs In South Africa*, Enclosure in No. 77, "Report relative to the exodus of Natal Natives from the South African Republic, October, 1899."

about 6,000 Baralongs who lived in the Native *Stadt* ⁵⁴ which was located on a very poor piece of land called “the place among the rocks.”⁵⁵ Here everyone inside the siege lived together. While the white residents had sufficient food during the entire period of the siege the black peoples were eventually faced with the confiscation of their food and finally starvation and expulsion.

With the advent of the siege Baden-Powell felt that he must do something about the white refugees who had fled into Mafeking as well as those who were residents of the town. His plan was simple. On 7 October 1899, just four days before the war officially began, Baden-Powell published a notice to the “Inhabitants.” After announcing that “Forces of armed Boers [were] now massed upon the Natal and Bechaunaland [protectorate] Borders.” He warned that the town might be bombarded by the Boer forces and that every effort would be made to provide protective shelter for the women and children. He suggested arrangements be made to take these families to some safe place on the Transvaal border, such as Palapye, or some other small town, where living expenses would be less expensive than in the large overcrowded towns or cities.

A few hours before the war ultimatum issued by President Kruger took effect at 5:30 p.m. on the eleventh of October, an armoured train pulled out of Mafeking with some of the town’s white women and children and sped down the rails for Cape Town. The next day a second armoured train set out for Cape Town carrying more women and children. Unfortunately this train was forced to turn back when it was reported that the Boer Forces had destroyed the single line of track further south. The passengers demanded to return to Mafeking.⁵⁶ This may have been a rumour, because it was not until 13 October that the Boers tore up the railway track and cut the telegraph line, thus cutting off the town from the outside world. The siege had begun.

⁵⁴ The Afrikaans word for town, village or city. Afrikaans is the language of the descendants of the Dutch, German and French settlers with some Malaysian and English words as well as other languages. Although Afrikaans is primarily composed of Dutch words.

⁵⁵ J. Angus Hamilton, *the Siege of Mafeking* (London, 1900) p. 54.

⁵⁶ Willan, *Diary of the Siege of Mafeking*, p. 15.

A *Women's Laager* was created along with a sufficient bomb shelter.⁵⁷ There were 10 men and 188 women and 315 children as well as “*about 150 native servant girls* residing in this refuge.[Emphasis is mine.]”⁵⁸ Thus, on the very first day of the war there were black and white civilians concentrated together in a protective laager at Mafeking. It appears that some white women and children lived outside the Women's Laager as there were 229 women and 405 children listed as living in the town, while in the Women's Laager there were only 188 women and 315 children listed in the British Army report.⁵⁹ In the beginning about half the white residents in the women's laager were Boer women and their children. The rest were residents of Mafeking who were of British heritage.

Regarding the decision to protect and defend Mafeking Baden-Powell says in his final report, “I left the northern column in charge of Colonel Plummer and went myself to Mafeking, and (as far as I could, without the knowledge of the Cape Government,) [and] organised its defence.” Among the tactical reasons he gives for choosing Mafeking was that it had a large supply of food stocks, as well as forage for horses and transport animals.⁶⁰ After the siege, Baden-Powell writing about the decision to move into Mafeking, stated that he had obtained “permission from the Cape Government to place an armed guard in Mafeking to protect the stores, but as the strength of that guard was not stipulated, I moved the whole regiment into the place without delay.”⁶¹ Mafeking was a centre for food distribution prior to the war, in part, because it sat in the centre of several tribal districts, with roughly 200,000 inhabitants. This deception by Baden-Powell resulted in his regiment being trapped and confined inside the siege, where it could not carry out the assigned mission of protecting the border of the Bechaunaland Protectorate from incursions by the Boers. That mission was now left solely to Colonel H.C. Plumer's companion regiment, formed at the same time.

⁵⁷ A1643, Vol. 4, Resume of Baden-Powell's Final Report, 31 May 1900, “A large bomb proof [shelter] 180 yards by five feet was made for the accommodation of the whole of the inhabitants of the laager, with protected ways, latrines, etc.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 167.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 137.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 135.

⁶¹ R.S.S. Baden-Powell, *Lessons from the Varsity of Life*, p. 207, cited in Willan, *Dairy of the Siege of Mafeking*, p. 9.

There was another reason that Mafeking had such a large supply of food and other supplies. To take advantage of a new customs law regarding imports into Rhodesia the Julius Weil Company of Cape Town had developed a large warehouse capacity and had stockpiled large supplies of flour, meal and grain and other supplies. Facing a certain siege that might last weeks or even months, Baden-Powell knew he must acquire an even larger stockpile of food. Now follows one of the more intriguing examples of the fiscally conservative government wanting to fight a cheap quick war.

Baden-Powell brought with him as his Chief of Staff, Major Lord Edward Cecil, the son of the Prime Minister, who volunteered to go on a "dangerous mission". In a difficult marriage, which so depressed him that, he no longer wished to go on living, he saw Mafeking as a chance to go out in glory.⁶² Unfortunately, his assigned tasks did not portend a glorious last stand. One task was to shepherd the Cadet Corps, a forerunner of the Boy Scouts, which ironically was to be forever associated with Baden-Powell. The second task was to assure a sufficient food supply for a siege that might last several weeks or months. To achieve this very crucial goal Cecil approached Benjamin Weil, the Weil company agent, regarding purchase of this enormous amount of supplies, which Weil then allegedly valued at £500,000, according to several secondary sources.

Even though the government had not approved Mafeking as a garrison or a town to be defended, Lord Cecil requested that the government provide this large sum. This seems quite surprising as Baden Powell, by his own admission, organised Mafeking without the government's full approval. Even more important, he had deliberately kept Cape Town in the dark about his intentions. Not surprisingly the request was refused. Not to be denied, Lord Cecil returned to Weil encouraged by Milner, offering to pay for the goods himself if necessary.⁶³

⁶² Pakenham. *The Boer War*. p. 118.

⁶³ *Ibid.*

The actual amount of the promissory note, according to the Mafeking Museum, was actually only £50,000.⁶⁴ This seems reasonable, given the record of spending on food and supplies during the siege was just a little over £36,000. On Christmas Day 1899 when the siege was a little more than two months in duration Baden-Powell sent a message to Lord Roberts saying, "All's well-good spirits, 50 days supplies."⁶⁵ Four months later in April the Board of Officers reported that there were 52 days of foodstuffs left and ninety days of meat supplies.⁶⁶ There are many inconsistencies in the various communications during the siege, which may, in part, be due to Baden-Powell's tendency toward secrecy. On 14 November Baden-Powell, in his "confidential dairy," calculated the numbers of persons, black and white, to be fed, and the amounts of rations on hand. Thomas Pakenham cites the diary and lists the following very specific figures.

Nov. 14: The census shows our numbers to be as follows:
Whites: men 1,074, women 229, children 405
Natives: 7,500 all told.
Supplies: Meat, plentiful live and tinned 180,000 lb.
Meal and flour 188,000 lb.
Kaffir corn ⁶⁷ and mealies⁶⁸ 109,100 lbs.

Then Pakenham discovered what he characterises as a very "chilling" decision made by Baden-Powell. This, Pakenham says, he realised by just reading the next set of figures regarding the number of rations to be issued.

White rations required daily 1,340
Native rations required daily 7,000

Thus, we have 134 days for whites.
Thus, we have 15 days for natives.⁶⁹

Recent studies of the siege have raised questions about Pakenham's interpretation of Baden-Powell's entries in the dairy. It is clear, however, that there was much starvation among blacks in

⁶⁴ Further discussion with the museum indicates that they actually have no evidence of the amount of the note.

⁶⁵ A1643, Vol. 2, Baden-Powell to Roberts, 25 December 1899.

⁶⁶ A1643, Vol. 3, Mafeking Board of Officers to Roberts, 16 April 1900

⁶⁷ sorghum.

⁶⁸ corn.

⁶⁹ Baden-Powell's Staff Diary, 14 November 1899, cited in Pakenham, *The Boer War*, p.406.

the siege who, according to Brian Willan, were in some cases, too weak from starvation to even make their way to the gratis soup Kitchen.⁷⁰

In the beginning period of the siege the stores operated freely and without restriction. But under the surface there was a definite strain between the storeowners, especially Benjamin Weil, and the black and white residents. Edward Ross in his diary entry expresses what he claims to be a general discontent with the firm. "What has got people's backs up is...their taking such a big advantage of the present circumstances by raising prices of most of their stocks 100%."⁷¹

Edward Ross, an auctioneer, had a far different concern than the black residents of the Stadt. He was offended at the price of liquor, which he said "...was 1/6 for about the quantity one could get in one own tooth" and that Egyptian cigarettes were old and twice the usual price.⁷² It must be assumed that during the period of early October to January that there was lots of hoarding. Apparently the white population, who could afford it, ate well and enjoyed certain luxuries. Despite the bombardment, the bar at the Dixon Hotel operated during most, or all, of the siege. During one bombardment on 7 December 1899, a customer was killed while drinking at the bar of the Mafeking Hotel.⁷³

On Christmas Day 1900, and knowing that rationing was just around the corner, Benjamin Weil helped the white residents have "festive dinners either at the hotels (which supplied surprisingly sumptuous repasts,) or in shell damaged homes."⁷⁴ The Protectorate Regiment had a Christmas feast at the Dixon Hotel in the company of "British Aristocrats, viz. Lord Edward Cecil and Lady Sarah Wilson."⁷⁵ Plaatje recorded in his diary that Lady Sarah sent down a collection of toys and sweets

⁷⁰ Brian Willan. "Blacks in the Siege" in Iain R. Smith, (ed.) *The Siege of Mafeking*, Vol. II, (Johannesburg, 2001) p. 313.

⁷¹ Willan, *Diary of the Siege of Mafeking*, p.96.

⁷² *ibid.*

⁷³ *Ibid.*, p. 66.

⁷⁴ Comaroff, *Boer War Diary*, p. 49.

⁷⁵ Willan, *Diary of the Siege of Mafeking*, p. 77.

for distribution to the children in the Tshidi Barolong stad. ⁷⁶ That same day there was a Christmas tree at the Masonic Hall and gifts for 250 white children were carried away “in a delighted state.” ⁷⁷

Some time before Christmas, in early December, orders were issued to the stores, both wholesale and retail, and to private owners, that they were to declare just how much grain they had in their possession. Every kernel of grain was collected, including the food grains of the people in the Barolong Stad. This confiscated grain would be sold under a very strict rationing system. ⁷⁸ In the end, blacks would not be allowed to buy the grain, which had been confiscated from them, as eventually their grain would only be available for sale to the white residents. ⁷⁹

The Barolong residents were threatened with criminal action for making Kaffir beer. Both Ross and Plaatje saw that the administration of the rationing order was being implemented and enforced by junior officers, who were insensitive and inept. Plaatje ventilates his frustration in his diary. He said that charges would have been made were it not for the fact that the Civil Commissioner was a “white-native”. Plaatje accused these fledgling administrators of not knowing what goes into the making of Kaffir Beer. “Obviously they were ignorant of the contents. It is made of “meat vegetables and tea rolled into one.” Upon this concoction the average Morolong can live for a long time. And, he mused, what would become of the soldier who cannot make his own now?” ⁸⁰

Edward Ross complained in his diary about what he perceived to be a non-caring attitude toward the white civilian population. He accused the young military officers of eating tins of delicacies, and all they wanted, in an underground dugout where they had their own chef. He surmised that they had moved out of the Dixon Hotel where they ate their meals in the public dining room to this

⁷⁶ Comaroff, *Boer War Diary* p. 50.

⁷⁷ Willan, *Dairy of the Siege of Mafeking*, p. 76.

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 67-8.

⁷⁹ *Ibid.* To implement the rationing system three stores were set up to sell grain and other rationed items in the town, the stad and the location. Only those employed were granted free rations.

⁸⁰ Comaroff, *Boer War Diary*, pp. 68-69.

underground gourmet den, so that the rest of the people could not see their feasting in the midst of near famine.⁸¹

As the siege went on it was necessary to reduce the ration scale. The following initial and reduced scale appears in Baden-Powell's Resume Report. These scales were for whites only.

Food Item	Initial Scale	Reduced Scale
Meat	1 lb.	$\frac{3}{4}$-1 lb.
Bread	1 lb.	5 oz.
Vegetables	1 lb.	6 oz.
Coffee	$\frac{1}{3}$ oz.	$\frac{1}{3}$ oz.
Salt	$\frac{1}{2}$ oz.	$\frac{1}{2}$ oz.
Sugar	2 oz.	0
Tea	$\frac{1}{2}$ oz.	0
Sowans	0	1 qt.

Long before rationing was instituted for the white population in January and February 1900, the black refugees and resident Barolongs had been made to feel the bite of strict rationing. Baden-Powell informed Lord Milner, of this fact in a telegram dated November 24, 1899. The siege was only 41 days old. "Native food supplies being carefully economised." He also asked the government to assist the merchants by sending up meal as soon as possible.⁸² Mafeking was cut off from the rest of the world and there was no railway link due to the Boer destruction of the track. How could this be done? Perhaps by ox wagon. Even if that was possible how would they get through the siege line? This telegram was sent only ten days after Baden-Powell had recorded his plan for rationing the Natives, a plan that made no mention of any provision for them at all.

The "rations" for "Natives" were, in fact, handled in a very different manner. In early February just four days before the "starve or leave" policy was implemented, Plaatje laments in his dairy, "We have very great difficulty in feeding the natives." In the Stadt alone there were 7,000 residents, not

⁸¹ Willan, *Diary of the siege of Mafeking*, p. 114

⁸² A1643, Vol. 2, Baden-Powell to Milner, 24 November 1899 p. 139

to mention the Mfengu location and the servants living in town.⁸³ Having made the decision to exclude the back refugees and eventually the Baralongs, what would these people eat? They would eat horse feed. There were some 362,000 pounds of horse rations still on hand.⁸⁴ Plaatje also knew about the horse feed solution.⁸⁵ As he put it, “the horse feed would be taken away from the horses and ground up for human food.”⁸⁶

That was not to be end of the cheapening of the black food ration because, as Baden-Powell wrote in his final report, he would economise the horse feed solution one step further. The “master baker” of the Protectorate Regiment developed a process for extracting the flour from the oats. The oats were winnowed, cleaned, kiln dried, ground and steamed, sieved twice and made into bread.⁸⁷ There appears to have been a certain pride in this cleverness of saving the flour for making oat bread for the white residents. There was no expression of regret in providing much less nutrition, for the black population, than was provided for the horses. After all, with the flour removed the black people in the siege were left with the husks of the oats, with some horsemeat mixed in. This becomes more significant when it is remembered that many of these black residents were doing hard labour in building fortifications and bomb shelters to protect the town. Hard labour requires large amounts of carbohydrates. Removing the flour from the oats was removing that critical food group.

The result of this new policy was that the “Natives” were sold this “Sowans stew” made from oats bran laced with horsemeat at four kitchens.⁸⁸ The idea of Sowans was not unique to the cook at Mafeking. “Labourers on farms in some parts of Scotland [were] habitually given ‘sowens’ as part

⁸³ “Plaatje besides working as an interpreter and a clerk for the Civil Commissioner, C.G.H. Bell, also acted as an unofficial administrator of the latter’s organization of African welfare during the siege.” Comaroff, *Boer War Diary*, Footnote 15, p.160. Plaatje in another entry in the diary says that over half the refugees have left the siege by March. Here, he claims there are “7,000 in the Stadt, besides those in the location and the servants employed in the town.”

⁸⁴ A1643, Vol. 2, Baden-Powell to Milner, 24 November 1899 p. 139.

⁸⁵ Comaroff, *Boer War Diary*, p. 87.

⁸⁶ *Ibid.*

⁸⁷ A1643, Vol. 2, Resume of Final Report of Baden-Powell, p. 163.

⁸⁸ 100 pounds of bran in 37 gallons of water gave 35 gallons of Sowans.

of their diet; this is made from the fermented husks or bran of oats. 'Flummery,' in England, [was] something of the same sort..."⁸⁹ Closer to the study at hand, the inmates of the black camp at Vryburg, about sixty miles south of Mafeking, because of the dwindling food supply, were having to eat a porridge made from such ground barley as the troops' horses could be deprived of. Starvation was a real possibility. Ironically, some of these inmates at Vryburg, fearing for the survival of their young children, left the camp and set off for Mafeking, sometime in 1901.⁹⁰

At Mafeking Sowans was sold at 6d per quart to those not eligible for rations.⁹¹ Those who did not work had to pay for food. In contrast, a specially appointed Relief Committee issued free rations to the white uitlander refugees inside the siege. This was also the practice later in the concentration camps, where white inmates received free rations, and black inmates, whenever possible, were required to pay for their food, both in the original black camps and later in the camps of the Department of Native Refugees. Black men, whose families were living in the *original black camps*,⁹² were forced to have two thirds of their wages deducted, to pay for the food of their families.

On 2 March 1900, Plaatje, noted in his diary, that it was proposed to set up a soup kitchen in the stadt for the many poor there. This indicates that the "Starve or Leave" policy was softened, and in fact, rescinded, to a certain extent. The question arises, however, whether it was only open to the Baralong who lived in the Stadt. In more recent writings questions are raised about the "Starve or Leave" policy, but on one thing there is agreement, and that is that starvation was evident in the diaries of observers. Secondly, black refugees felt the need to run the Boer gauntlet to escape from

⁸⁹ Joseph M. Orpen, "The Diet of Native Labourers," A Lecture read before Rhodesia Scientific-Association, Salisbury Branch. 25 April 1902.

⁹⁰ Charles Van Onselen, *The Seed is Mine: The Life of Kas Maine, a South African Sharecropper, 1894-1985* (Johannesburg, 1994) p. 28.

⁹¹ *Ibid.*, p. 163.

⁹² The *original black camps* were those black camps that grew up near the white concentration camps in the Orange River colony and were eventually assimilated under the administrative structure of those camps. There were a few of these camps in the Transvaal that were under the control and supervision of various military entities and District Commissioners. See Chapter 3.

the starvation of the siege and to walk some eighty miles to the camp prepared for them in Kanya. It should be noted that Brian Willan, in his recent work on "Blacks in the Siege," does not refute Pakenham's "chilling" discovery in Baden Powell's Diary. In fact he does not mention it at all. Further, he states clearly that, "...by the end of January 1900 deaths were being reported regularly," and he cites the diary of J.R. Algie as saying that there were now four deaths per day instead of fifteen per month, and the deaths attributed to starvation are very considerable indeed.⁹³ That is an increase of 87.5 %. The recent attempts at the revision of Pakenham's pioneering work only confirm that, in almost all respects, Pakenham was quite correct over a quarter of a century ago.

Despite rationing, and the very successful cattle raids, the food supply allotted to the blacks was insufficient and there were signs of severe malnutrition early on. Even among some whites there was scavenging for locusts and other foods. And toward the end of the siege whites began eating horsemeat. Previously there had been stray cats on the veranda of the Dixon Hotel. Fattened cats were especially vulnerable, and cats in abandoned shelled out houses in town were now raided.⁹⁴ As early as February the starvation among blacks was so severe that dead dogs were consumed. Lord Edward Cecil served notice in the *Mafeking Mail* on 19 February that they were levying a tax on dogs to get rid of as many dogs as possible. Some unlicensed dogs were found and destroyed and then buried by the Town Ranger. Sol Plaatje describes somewhat humourlessly what happened in one instance. "Our local Zambesi friends unearthed these [dead dogs] as soon as the ranger's assistants left the scene, and promptly cooked them for dinner which gave the Barolong sections of the community the impression that that there is more in a dog than they were ever told there was."⁹⁵ In a more serious tone Ina Cowan complained, in her diary that she had seen "as many dreadful

⁹³ Brian Willan, "Blacks in the Siege," in Iain R. Smith, (ed.), *The Siege of Mafeking*, Vol. II, (Johannesburg, 2001) p. 310.

⁹⁴ Hamilton, *Siege of Mafeking*, p. 288.

⁹⁵ Comaroff, *Boer War Diary*, p. 116.

things as she ever wished to see. The Kaffirs dig up dead horses and eat them, and sit and pick on the rubbish heaps.”⁹⁶

Jim Jeal in his recent apologetics for Baden Powell asserts “...while an unknown number of blacks undoubtedly starved in Mafeking, they did not do so because Baden-Powell intentionally denied them food.”⁹⁷ The arguments made do not substantiate his view. A good example of this is his reference to the opening of the soup kitchen in the Stadt. This was not done until March. This was long after the starvation had reached its peak and many black refugees had been forced to escape through the Boer siege forces due to this circumstance. Plaatje reports in his diary that the day prior to learning of the soup kitchen proposal on 2 March that “thirty of the [black] refugees were sent out and that the Boers received them, it appeared quite cheerfully.”⁹⁸ This would indicate that the expulsion process had become quite routine. Finally it must be acknowledged that every military commander is responsible for the welfare of everyone under his care and command. If the numbers of blacks who became “walking skeletons” were unknown to Baden-Powell, then that in itself is a culpable wrong on his part. This was an enduring problem during the war. Blacks were out of sight and out of mind. They were invisible. Their needs were only considered when the failure to do so would be detrimental to the white civilians and the military.

The most important legacy from Mafeking during the siege was the paradigm of ration policies that would be adopted by the black concentration camps. Some inmates of the black camps who were elderly or sick and could not work were given rations at no cost. The camp superintendents complained bitterly about this because it affected their balance sheet. Their goal was to have no costs. The inmates were to be totally self-supporting. It was hoped that there would be a profit. In

⁹⁶ Ina Cowan, *Mafeking Besieged, Seven Months of a Lifetime*-The Diary of Miss Ina Cowan, 9 October 1899-17 May 1900, p. 30. Cited in Warwick, p. 36. Stephen Gill of the Morija Museum and Archives of the Paris Evangelical and Missionary Society told the writer that it is not uncommon for some black people to eat the flesh of dead horses in the present day in Lesotho. Later in the war there were reports of black concentration camp inmates at Heidelberg eating dead animals as well as reports of black people outside the camps who were near starvation, consuming dead animals as a means of survival.

⁹⁷ Tim Jeal, “Baden-Powell at Mafeking,” in Iain R. Smith. *The Siege of Mafeking*, Vol. II, p. 225.

⁹⁸ Comaroff, *The Boer War Diary*, p. 107.

the case of Mafeking the soup kitchens for the blacks had total receipts of £3,242. Some writers have called this a profit. When the siege was over it was discovered that there was no horse feed left. With receipts of 3,242 at 6d a serving it would appear that almost 130,000 bowls of Sowans stew was served to paying customers. How many, if any, were served at no cost is not known. Pakenham states that all Africans were made to pay, and pay handsomely for their rations.⁹⁹ The price was 6d, or a half a shilling a day.

In the meantime the restaurants, and white citizens in general, complained that they could not handle the ration levels. And in the beginning of the rationing in January, Baden-Powell pulled back somewhat, and allowed more meat for individual white citizens, and allowed the restaurants at least for the time being, to continue at the previous levels after they had met with him.¹⁰⁰ The black residents, however, continued to live on the reduced ration. They had been on a severe diet since December and had not been able to buy bread since November.¹⁰¹ Now the white residents were also beginning to feel the siege in their stomachs.

There was some resistance on the part of stadt residents. Sol Plaatje as the secretary to the Magistrate, Mr. Bell, got to see the trials of spies who were sentenced to death. Thieves of livestock were also sentenced to death, as were plain ordinary house burglars. This was felt necessary because many of the houses were open due to shell holes. Sol Plaatje wrote somewhat pensively in his diary about one case: "Here came 'poor Ngidi...on a charge failing to turn over a bag of kaffir corn. He was sentenced to 7 days H[ard].L[abour] and the confiscation of the kaffir corn.' Hard luck on poor little Alfred."¹⁰² But the resistance of "poor little Alfred" was not an isolated case. On the fifth day of January every "last crumb" was in the stadt store. This store was the only source of food and the amount of money they could spend daily was restricted to only 6d. "The *Barongali* (The Tshidi

⁹⁹ Pakenham, *The Boer War*, p. 407

¹⁰⁰ Willan, *Diary of the Siege of Mafeking*, p. 110

¹⁰¹ Warwick, *Blacks and the South African War*, p. 35

¹⁰² Comaroff, *The Boer War Diary*, pp. 67-8

Barolong women) told the storekeeper he could go to Hell.”¹⁰³ Now there was also a regulation against picking green mealies.¹⁰⁴ The mealies too, were now, also to be garnered into the government food supply and sold as rations.

By March the Tshidi Barolong women were doing something quite amazing, given the fact that they were under siege. On 12 March 1900 Plaatje wrote this surprising entry in his diary a little more than two months before the siege was lifted.

Women are now always going out to Moleloane and coming home with a lot of melons and Kaffircorn, so we are wondering why the Boers permit them to go out so far while they have previously been allowing them to go out and get some bushes for fuel behind the Convent on Sundays. Some of the women are driven back but go around to try somewhere else and come back successful.¹⁰⁵

Such permissiveness on the part of the Boers is difficult to explain given that the purpose of a siege is to starve a town into submission. During the total time of the siege it must be said that the siege was more of a sieve than a siege. This is evidenced by the fact that black runners so routinely ran through the Boer lines. There was a post office operating inside the siege, which included the printing of special siege postage stamps.¹⁰⁶ Other blacks were able to carry out raids on Boer cattle and bring the stolen cattle back through the Boer lines. At times, the Boer numbers were quite low as commandos were being pulled away for military operations elsewhere. The Barolong women going out to get vegetables was just a shadow of things to come as starvation set in and the siege lingered on. Having protected the town, both by fighting the enemy and digging the maze of fortifications, the blacks were now providing food for themselves and for the British Army, as well as the white residents of the town. The food supplies, provided by the black residents and refugees, inside the siege, were not confined to melons and “kaffir corn”.

Baden-Powell, in describing the food supply at Mafeking, said that there was “...a large stock of meat, both live and tinned.” It was necessary to expand the grazing ground because there were so

¹⁰³ *Ibid.*, p. 69

¹⁰⁴ Freshly picked eating corn.

¹⁰⁵ A village five miles northwest of Mafeking.

¹⁰⁶ A1643, Vol. 4, “Resume of Report on the Siege of Mafeking by Colonel Baden-Powell.” P. 146.

many cattle. He also reported that they ate the fresh meat first to avoid loss from enemy fire.¹⁰⁷ Sometimes the Boer artillery deliberately targeted livestock. Using somewhat amusing wording Baden-Powell sent a message to Lord Roberts a little over a month before the siege was lifted. "Mafeking, 7 April "All well here, enemy attempted to shell our cattle with quick firing guns for the past two days, but cattle always had timely warning. And got in without casualty. This annoyed the Boers who yesterday, again shelled the camp of women and children, fortunately without casualty."¹⁰⁸

How was it that fresh meat was so available throughout the siege? There is a certain tragic irony in the fact that Baden-Powell authorised Baralongs, and perhaps other African groups within the siege, to engage in livestock theft.¹⁰⁹ In the end they will be denied food despite the fact that they provided one of the most essential foods-meat. Plaatje's diary records that this was a regular practice. In fact it was so common that Edward Ross recorded in his diary that "The Colonel has ruled, in a new proclamation, that every man in Mafeking with looted cattle should pay the government the fourth part of whatever is brought in."¹¹⁰ Some eyewitnesses seem to suggest that these cattle raids were carried on autonomously by various small raiding parties of blacks within the siege without the express sanction of Baden-Powell. Ross in his diary indicated that some went out on their own, but expressed gratitude for their contribution to the meat supply.¹¹¹ Very much earlier in the days of the Voortrekkers, in the late 1830s, the Baralongs were well known for their ability to herd and rustle cattle out from under the enemies noses. They had been utilised for that very purpose by the Boers in their wars against the Matabele.¹¹²

¹⁰⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 155.

¹⁰⁸ A1643. Vol. 3, p. 100. Baden Powell-through Colonel Plummer to Roberts, April 7, 1900. British official records and diaries of eye witnesses claim that despite the presence of Red Cross flags the Woman's Laager, the hospital and the convent were often shelled by the Boer Forces. This may have been due to inaccuracy and the inexperience of Boer artillerymen with their newly imported long-range cannon.

¹⁰⁹ Meat provides protein, which cannot be stored by the body.

¹¹⁰ Comaroff, *The Boer War Diary*, p. 73.

¹¹¹ Willan, *Diary of the Siege of Mafeking*, p. 67.

¹¹² Edwin W. Smith, *The Life and Times of Daniel Lindley* (London, 1949) p. 103, In a revenge raid in 1837 one hundred and seven Boers, forty Griquas and Korannas, all fully mounted and fully armed and sixty Baralongs to drive the cattle they hoped to capture set out to attack the Matabele.

That at least some of the raids were officially sanctioned is well illustrated in one incident when an armoured train was sent south to cover a “native” cattle-raiding party.¹¹³ These parties were armed, and in some raids, the Boers killed members of these parties. In one case the Town Watch had an armed confrontation with a cattle-raiding party and this was not the first time that this had happened. Plaatje’s dairy records that on one occasion. “Some fellows came with three oxen they lifted from the Boers. They had another row with McKenzie’s Black Watch. It was only when a party of young Barolongs, prompted by the injustice done to them, challenged them with their rifles, that the Black Watch yielded to their taking the cattle away, but not before two of [the cattle] were wounded.”¹¹⁴ Further evidence of the official sanction of these raids took place when Baden-Powell wanted the Barolong to raid the Western Boer Lair but was convinced by a Barolong Chief that it would be very costly in lives.¹¹⁵ These thefts were primarily of Boer Commando cattle. In a classic piece of combat journalism J. Agnus Hamilton, a reporter for *The Times* and *The Black and White*, describes this practice with some humour, his own racial viewpoint, and in great detail.

If sniping be the rule by day, cattle raiding by night, gives the natives some profitable employment. During last night the Baralongs secured by a successful raid, some twenty-four head of cattle, and in the course of last week another raiding detachment looted some eighteen oxen. The native enjoys himself when he is able to participate in some cattle-raiding excursion to the enemy’s lines. Their success at lifting the Boer cattle confers upon them a unique value in the garrison.

The tribe eagerly anticipates these night excursions, and almost daily is the consent of the Colonel sought in relation to such an object. During the day the natives who have been authorized by Colonel Baden-Powell to take part in the raid, approach as near to the grazing cattle as discretion permits, marking down when twilight appears, the position of those beasts that can be most readily detached from the mob. Then, when darkness is complete, they creep up divested of their clothes, crawling on hands and knees, until they have completely surrounded their prey. Then quietly, and as rapidly as circumstances will allow them, each man ‘gets a move on’ his particular beast, so that in a short space of time some ten or twenty cattle are unconsciously leaving the main herd. When the raiders have drawn out of earshot of the Boer lines they urge on their captures, running behind them and on either side of them, but without making any noise, whatsoever. As they reach their Stadt, their approach having been watched by detached bodies of natives, who, lying concealed in the veldt, had taken up positions by which to secure the safe return of their friends, the tribes go forth to welcome them.¹¹⁶

The Boers also made forays against the cattle in the besieged town. In a message carried through the Boer lines by a black runner to be forwarded to Lord Roberts, Baden-Powell told the Field

¹¹³ Willan, *Diary of the Siege of Mafeking*, p.67.

¹¹⁴ Comaroff, *Boer War Diary*, p.72.

¹¹⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 55

¹¹⁶ Hamilton, *The Siege of Mafeking*, pp. 200-201.

Marshall, "Enemy yesterday under flag of truce attempted to raid our cattle whilst we were in church."¹¹⁷ We had a maxim [machine gun] in ambush ready, but it jammed at [a] critical moment and [the] enemy succeeded in getting away a few horses."¹¹⁸

Essential in a siege strategy is the ability to starve the blockaded town into submission. The ability of the Baralong to loot the Boer's travelling larders of cattle and other livestock, added to the failure of the Boer artillery to destroy the besieged town's own cattle, caused the Boers to secret their livestock deep into the Transvaal.

These almost daily cattle raids were carried out with Baden Powell's authority and the raiders were armed. Both Generals Cronje and his replacement, General Snyman, complained about the arming of the blacks in Mafeking. Baden-Powell consistently stated that this was only done for self-defence in view of the attacks by the Boer Forces on black villages and the raiding of their cattle. Relevant to this practice of arming the Baralong to carry out sanctioned cattle raids was Baden-Powell's argument in a letter to General Snyman, in which in a very hypocritical way, he tried to clinch his argument with Snyman by saying that the natives were quite upset with Snyman and his men for stealing their cattle, and the wanton burning of their kraals.¹¹⁹ The full truth is that both sides armed blacks and both sides attempted to cite violations of the agreement by the other side not to do so. Both the Boer Republics and Great Britain, at the beginning of the conflict, and prior to the outbreak of the war, stated their opposition to "the arming of the natives."¹²⁰

¹¹⁷ This is very reminiscent of the first recorded cattle theft by Africans in the Cape Settlement in 1652 when the herd boy Harry in collusion with other Khoi-Khoi stole the cattle of the Dutch East India Company while Jan Van Riebeeck and his settlers were in church as recorded in his journal. See: H.B. Thom. (ed) *Journal of Jan Van Riebeeck*, Vol. I, 1651-1655. (Cape Town, 1952) pp. 179-80.

¹¹⁸ A1643, V. 31, Baden-Powell to Lord Roberts. 10 May 1900. P. 154.

¹¹⁹ *The Mafeking Mail*, Baden-Powell to General J.S. Snyman, 11 December 1899, cited in Comaroff, *Boer War Diary*, pp. 33-5; Peter Warwick, *Black and the South African War*, p. 34.

¹²⁰ The reader is encouraged to read Peter Warwick's very excellent work, *Blacks and the South African War*, especially the chapter entitled, "Myth of a white man's war." pp. 6-27. See also the definitive study of S.B. Spies, *Methods of Barbarism?*, which is the watershed of all published material on the concentration camps (Cape Town, 1977). For a general understanding of especially the origins and the first half of the war read Thomas Pakenham, *The Boer War* (London, 1976)

The decision to arm the Barolongs was inextricably linked to the decision to include their stadt within the defence perimeter. This decision was not humanitarian, but was solely a military judgment, because without this perimeter and the protection of armed Barolongs, the centre of the town would have been quite vulnerable to a simple attack with nothing to impede the enemy. Despite this obvious need there was stiff resistance on the part of British military and civilian officials to arm the Barolongs and other blacks inside the siege. In addition, there was a great need for black labour to build all the fortifications, bomb shelters and some six miles of covered walkways. Thus the Barolong and the black refugees provided both the means of protecting the residents inside the siege and the related task of defending the perimeter as armed combatants against forays and attacks by the Boer forces. Several eyewitnesses attest that they carried out both these crucial tasks in a courageous and effective way. In this context the final fate of the black men and their families as determined by Baden-Powell's final solution takes on a much more ironic and grim image.

The Expulsion

Baden-Powell's fateful decision on 14 November 1899 combined with Lord Roberts' inability to lift the siege earlier led to the expulsion of the black refugees and some of the Barolongs. One can wonder if Baden-Powell read the dispatch of J Agnus Hamilton dated 22 March 1900. Hamilton began this short newspaper piece, "The History of the Baralongs," with a stirring testimony dramatically describing the role the Barolongs had played in the siege. "The Barolongs have done well by us, and have served us faithfully, and with no complaint. They have fought for us; they have preyed upon the enemy's cattle, so that the white garrison might have something better than horse flesh on their diet; they have manned the western defences of the Stadt, and they have suffered severe privations with extra ordinary fortitude."¹²¹

¹²¹ Hamilton, *Siege of Mafeking*, p. 261.

The fateful decision to adopt the “Starve or leave” policy was officially decided on 8 February 1900. Baden-Powell wrote this final solution into his Staff Diary on that date. But in reality that decision was made on 14 November 1899, when he decided to start feeding the “natives” with horse forage because, as Sol Plaatje put it in a kind of apologetic, “the horses can eat grass.” His strategy was a kind of carrot and stick policy. The carrot was to have Colonel Plummer lay down stocks of food at Kanya, eighty miles away in Bechaunaland, and at the same time to apply the stick, which was to stop the sale of food in town.¹²²

The exodus actually began even earlier than the dairy entry and decision of Baden-Powell. On 8 February Sol Plaatje wrote in his dairy, which was the first day of the issue of the horse feed “to be used as human food,” that there was some displeasure with the new rations.” But Plaatje hoped that by “energetic surveillance” that the “discontented masses” might be satisfied.¹²³ Plaatje was involved in a census of the black population. He estimated that about half the black population had left since the beginning of the siege. The African population was being encouraged to leave and seek refuge with allies elsewhere, as supplies were on the wane.¹²⁴

The first mention of an organised exodus was on 27 February. Colonel Plummer reported that Lt. Fielding of the Protectorate Native Police went on a trek to reconnoitre the road to Mafeking via Kanya and Moshware. On his return three days later on 8 February he reported that the route “presented no difficulties, the roads being good and water in sufficient quantities.”¹²⁵ In general preparation for the relief of the siege, and to provide supplies for Plummer’s force and for the black refugees who would thread their way through the Boer lines to Kanya, one other step was undertaken. The Assistant Commissioner of Rhodesia journeyed to Kanya for a meeting with Chief

¹²² Baden-Powell Staff Diary, 8 February 1900. Cited in Pakenham, p. 407.

¹²³ Comaroff, *Boer War Diary*, p.87.

¹²⁴ *Ibid.*, P. 87, footnote 16.

¹²⁵ A1643, Robert’s Papers. Vol. 65. Colonel Plummer to the Chief Staff Officer. Frontier Force (through the Base commandant in Rhodesia), pp. 172-3.

Bathoen. Bathoen expressed his willingness to render logistical assistance to any convoys passing through his territory, and also agreed to supply transport wagons for hire.¹²⁶

Plaatje wrote a very significant entry in his dairy on 10 February. This is the plan in stage one of implementation. "Things are looking mighty blue. Colonel Baden-Powell states he has received a message from Lord Roberts that we will not be relieved for another three months and that he has not got any food for any but Barolongs, the white people and fixed residents of the place."¹²⁷ Then comes the bad news. One wonders what Plaatje thought when he wrote these ominous words. "He is therefore going to shut up the Town Grain Store, which was only used for refugees from Johannesburg before the war, imagining that the war was going to be a matter of days. He is going to give them only ten days grace after which he is going to close all stores, and also shut the door against their employment at the Defence Works, where gangs of hundreds of them are employed every day and night."¹²⁸

Rather than escort the black refugees to outposts they were allowed to leave rather than face starvation. Among them were the Shangaans who had been diggers in the Rand mines and who brought their skills to the digging of the labyrinth of trenches that protected the town. Having served their purpose they were now being coerced to leave by cutting off their source of food and their source of income by stopping their access to employment. Having significantly contributed to the saving of the town the Shangaans were now expendable. In some sense this can also be understood because they were seen, by both the military leadership and the permanent black residents, as outsiders. Peter Warwick interprets the situation quite correctly in saying that relations between the Tshidi Barolong and the 2,000 black refugees were not good from the very beginning of the siege and deteriorated with the increasing pressure on the towns food resources."¹²⁹

¹²⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 173.

¹²⁷ Comaroff, *Boer War Diary*, p. 90.

¹²⁸ *Ibid.*

¹²⁹ Warwick, *Blacks and the South African War*, p. 36.

Plaatje, who helped carry out the rounding up of black refugees to be sent over the line saw them from the start as outsiders.¹³⁰ Both in the beginning of his account, and at the announcement of Baden-Powell that he had no food for blacks other than the Barolongs, he pointed to their having come thinking the war would be over in a few days. Like many people, they happened to be in the besieged town at the wrong time. He makes no complaint about their being told in effect to leave by starving them out when the stores were ordered closed. He was carrying out his official duties and no doubt he realised that their only hope was to leave the besieged town. It seems clear that Sol Plaatje at this stage of his life was acting more like a member of a black elite than as a liberator of black people.

Was there resistance to this expulsion policy on the part of Barolong leadership? On the third Sunday in January a meeting was held by the Civil Commissioner, Mr. Bell, in the *Kgotla*¹³¹ in the Barolong Stadt. Both Agnus Hamilton the correspondent for *The Times* and *Black and White* and the reporter for Reuters were present, as well as Sol Plaatje, who was acting as the official interpreter for Commissioner Bell.

The gist of the meeting was that Chief Wessels was no longer to function as Chief. According to Hamilton the announcement was made by Bell that the Chief was now on sick leave. Plaatje describes the meeting as angry and chaotic, with Wessels misconstruing, misunderstanding and misinterpreting everything. He does not mention that Wessels was deposed. He does say that he thought Wessels seriously objected to the suggestion by Bell that anyone who wanted to leave temporarily due to the food shortage, could. It was at this point that Wessels and Bell started to talk over each other and a most undesirable scene ensued. Plaatje was more concerned about the problem of interpreting these two angry men, "... each expecting me to translate his hot beans

¹³⁰ Comaroff, *The Boer War Diary*, p.101.

¹³¹ A *kgotla* was an assembly of the Chief, sub chiefs, headmen and adult men of the village or Stadt. The Chief made decisions after hearing all who wished to speak. The Chief usually spoke last. However under the colonial rule of the protectorates the Commissioner or other colonial official announced decision of the British Government. . (Stephen J. Gill, *A Short History of Lesotho* (Moriya, Lesotho, 1993) p. 129.

first.”¹³² Again Plaatje does not make any complaint regarding the treatment of the Africans at Mafeking. Rather, he places all the blame for the disturbance in the meeting on Chief Wessels.

Agnus Hamilton is much more specific about the substance of Wessels statement and the confrontation of Commissioner Bell. His description of what transpired is convincing because he generally had a somewhat low view of the Africans except when it came to their cattle theft raids on the Boers and their courageous contribution to defending the town. Hamilton asserts that the real reason for his dismissal was his “instigating his tribe to refuse to work” for the military. As a result, Hamilton said it had become difficult to obtain native labour and native runners.¹³³ The Chief, according to Hamilton, would tell them that the English wished to make slaves of them. He said that for their work they would be given nothing.¹³⁴ There was, however, another part of his argument that would turn out to be a very accurate prediction of the future fate of the blacks inside the siege. Should things take an unfortunate turn they would not be given any food and “they would be left to starve when the critical moment arrived.”¹³⁵

And so it was that the deposed chief had told it just the way it would be almost three weeks before, that fateful policy was announced. After the stores were closed many black refugees waited vainly at the doors sure that they would open again. But open again, they never did.¹³⁶ Thus began the siege within the siege. They were like the grasshoppers of the summer days who having fulfilled their purpose die at the end of their season. They had been used up. Once their instrumentality was no longer needed they could be sent to the enemy lines where some would also be pressed into service. Some would be beaten and returned and some would die. Some would survive the long trek to Kanya where, they were placed in a concentration camp especially prepared for them. This was the first black concentration camp of the war. This camp was quite different than the later camps in

¹³² Comaroff, *Boer War Diary* p. 77.

¹³³ Hamilton, *Siege of Mafeking*, p. 196.

¹³⁴ There is no evidence that the British Army forced blacks to work without pay in some form or another during the course of the war.

¹³⁵ Hamilton, *Siege of Mafeking*, p. 196.

¹³⁶ Comaroff, *Boer War Diary* p. 98.

that it was formed for humanitarian reasons and not as these later camps, which were formed solely for military purposes.

In the beginning the plan had been to send the black refugees out and as stated previously, Baden-Powell had decreed there would only be food for the Barolong and the white residents. And when he had complained about the critics who wanted to give some of the plentiful rations, being given to the whites, to the blacks, the Colonel, according to Emerson Neilly, informed the blacks they could go over the Boer lines in "comparative safety."¹³⁷ Evidently the black refugees were not convinced because they continued to starve and scavenge for whatever scraps of food and sustenance they could find. Neilly wrote one piece in the genre of the muckrakers that is a classic of the siege literature, though overly emotive and no doubt highly exaggerated.

They picked up meat tins and licked them. They fed like outcast curs. They went further than the mongrel. When a dog gets a bone he polishes it white and leaves it there. Day after day I heard outside my door continuous thumping sounds. They were caused by living skeletons, who having eaten all that was outside the bones, smashed them up with stones, and devoured what marrow they could find. They looked for bones on the dust heaps, on the roads and everywhere.¹³⁸

Some apologists for the concentration camps have argued that the British Army could not have known what the concentration of both black and white non-combatants would produce in the way of sickness and death. It is clear that the results of concentration in the reconcentrados of Cuba were well known by the British Government. The almost identical model in Cuba of barbed wire squares and concentration in laagers attached contiguously to the fortified towns was implemented in almost total paradigm fashion in South Africa. It is not credible to argue that the architects of the concentration camp system implemented during the South African War had no knowledge of the consequences of the concentration of women and children and the elderly in such camps. The high sickness and death rates, which occurred in the Cuban camps, were publicised throughout the world.

¹³⁷ A correspondent of *The Pall Mall Gazette*.

¹³⁸ *Ibid.* This is a somewhat inaccurate piece of journalism. Dogs often break open bones and eat the marrow. In addition certain studies have shown that early hominids in Africa acted as scavengers taking bones left by lions and other predators and breaking the bones to eat the marrow. Certainly some blacks in the siege were dying of starvation and were being denied rations at times.

England supported the intervention of the United States of America in the Spanish attempts to repress the Cuban Insurrection, which in part, was justified by the outcry against “Butcher Weyler’s” methods of concentration and scorched earth tactics.

The treatment of blacks inside the siege at Mafeking not only traces the origins of some of the policies that would govern the black concentration camp system, but it also shows the colonial policy of refusing to aid indigenous peoples even in times of near starvation in the case of the siege of Mafeking. The policies of the differential treatment of blacks and whites in the concentration camps are clearly revealed in the study of Siege of Mafeking. A study of the sieges at Kimberly and Ladysmith would also show this same differential treatment. More importantly it will be shown that some of the policies of the differential treatment of black people in the Mafeking siege are identical to those policies that were later adopted by the black concentration camps. This similarity arises out of the colonial policies of the treatment of indigenous peoples in the British Empire. As will be shown throughout the thesis that policy was only to provide the barest of food rations, shelter, sanitation and medical care. Anything beyond this level of support was only provided when the failure to do so would threaten the well being of the military forces and the white communities of British descent.

Chapter 2

Reasons for the establishment of the black concentration camps

I. Introduction

This chapter chronicles Lord Roberts' Neutrality Oath policy and how the failure of that policy was a major cause leading to the establishment of the black and white concentration camps. The second part of this chapter traces the genesis of the black camps and the more specific reasons for their establishment. Some considerable detail of this process is essential to show that both the black and white camps were formed solely for reasons of military necessity and were embodied in the same policy as an integral part of the anti-guerrilla war strategy of the British Army. The previous work of historians, notably A.M. Grundlingh and S.B. Spies, who have written brilliantly about the surrendered Boer combatants and the Neutrality Oath do not show the process of the failure of the Neutrality oath and the resultant process of the establishment of the black and white concentration camps in sufficient detail to meet the requirements of this study.

This extensive discourse is required to fulfil one of the two hypotheses of this study: "Both the black and white concentration camps were established by the British Army as a military strategy to defeat the very devastating Boer guerrilla warfare which the British forces were unable to effectively defeat. This, in consequence, led to what G.H. L. Le May calls the "the lingering war".¹ Although others have previously shown, notably S.B. Spies, that neither the black or the white concentration camps were humanitarian in motivation or purpose, the view that they were formed for humanitarian reasons still lingers outside the walls of the academic institutions. And indeed, even among a few historians the humanitarian paradigm at times emerges. At least as late as 1957 A.C. Martin, an apologist for the concentration camps, claimed that the white concentration camps were formed for humanitarian reasons.² Even such an outstanding historian as Fransjohan Pretorius

¹ This apt descriptive term appears to have been coined by G.H.L. Le May in his important study, *British Supremacy in South Africa, 1899-1907* (Oxford, 1965) which contains a chapter bearing that title, pp. 73-93.

² A.C. Martin, *The Concentration Camps, 1900-1902: Facts, Figures, and Fables* (Cape Town, 1957)

in the year 2001 could couch the explanation of the formation of the white camps as a need to solve the problems of what "...to do with the growing number of homeless Boer women and children..." whose homes had been destroyed by the scorched earth tactics of Roberts and Kitchener.³ Ironically some historians who rejected the humanitarian argument in the case of the white camps, saw the black camps as humanitarian in purpose or as voluntary labour camps.⁴ So long as the advocates of the position that the black camps were formed for humanitarian purposes continue to pitch their tents on the same ground with those who have shown that their establishment was an integral part a purely military strategy to hasten the end of the war, the true nature of the policy, and the camps themselves, will remain in the murky darkness of the tunnel of the unresolved issues of the historiography of the war. Experience has shown that unresolved issues keep coming up until they are resolved. Until this false premise is removed the historiography will also present a false understanding of the black concentration camps.

There was widespread condemnation in the United States, and in many countries throughout the world, regarding "Weyler's methods" in Cuba. This outcry against the Spanish concentration camps in Cuba eventually trickled down to the southern tip of Africa where the *Cape Argus* newspaper declared in a March 1897 headline: "Spain a Disgrace to Civilisation." Some Cape Colony politicians and citizens, as a result, were also very critical of "Butcher Weyler's" military tactics. Among others John Xavier Merriman, the most prominent 'Cape Liberal' of the time, was shocked at what Weyler had done in Cuba.⁵

Despite the furore over "Weyler's methods" and the scathing attack by the *Cape Argus*, a London newspaper, frustrated with "the lingering war," saw it in reverse. *The St. James Gazette* published a

³ Fransjohan Pretorius, "The Anglo-Boer War, an overview" in Fransjohan Pretorius, (ed.) *Scorched Earth* (Cape Town, 2001) p. 22.

⁴ One of the purposes of Martin's work was to reject the book. *Die Konsentrasie Kampe* by J.C. Otto who took the opposite view. Martin devotes a whole chapter to an attack on Otto's work.

⁵ Phyllis Lewsen (ed.) *Selections From The Correspondence of John X. Merriman, 1899-1905* pp. 214-15, John X. Merriman to Mrs. J. Merriman, 21 May 1900.

strident editorial "Our Reconcentration Order," recommending to Lord Roberts that "Butcher" Weyler's policy of the concentration of non-combatants be used to confine the Boer civilian population in the Transvaal. Interestingly, historians have not commented on the most draconian suggestion made in that editorial. The editor was recommending a measure that significantly exceeded anything that Weyler had done in Cuba. The Boers in the Transvaal Colony, both the commandos and the women and children were to be deported to St. Helena or Ceylon. And fearing "half measures," the newspaper "urged "...the clearing of all the Transvaal districts at once."⁶

There is no mention of blacks. This proposal of the mass removal of all the Boers from the Transvaal is, nevertheless, relevant to the establishment of the black concentration camps. Even if such a mass deportation of the Boer families had been possible to carry out, thousands of black farm workers would have been scattered across the landscape. As a result it would have soon been necessary to remove them to some kind of confinement, to prevent their assisting the Boer guerrilla units. In essence, all sources of succour for the Boer bands had to be removed or destroyed. The black and white civilians on the Boer farms had to be confined, deported, or in some other way removed from the veld to deny the roving Boer guerrillas any material support, intelligence information, and most important-moral encouragement.

As Roberts, Milner, and later Kitchener recognised, the rounding up of the Boer guerrillas, now operating as small groups, would be a long ongoing process of attrition by the wearing down of the Boer forces. According to Spies the presence of the blacks on the farms was considered to be a serious military liability for the British Army as they would be a source of support for these small commandos.⁷ Thus it is beyond doubt that the blacks on the farms and the veld would also by necessity have had to be removed and subjected to some type of confinement or deportation.

⁶ W.T. Stead, *How Not to Make Peace*, (London, 1900) pp. 76-7

⁷ S.B. Spies, *Methods of Barbarism: Roberts and Kitchener and Civilians in the Boer Republics, January 1900- May 1902* (Cape Town, 1976) p. 185.

In light of the *St. James Gazette*'s recommendation to carry out a mass deportation of the total Boer population of the Transvaal it is significant to note the proposal made by Lord Kitchener to the Secretary of State for War almost a year later on 21 June 1901. This proposal seemed to echo Cecil Rhodes who wished to reserve the whole continent for the British race.⁸ Kitchener's motivation and reasoning, however, came from his long held belief that if the Boers were not removed to some other country permanently they would eventually become a problem to British rule in the future. Rudyard Kipling also held this point of view. Regarding getting "a bad knock" for putting down the 1914 Rebellion he said "I suppose we may count on more trouble from the Boer. It's the only half caste race with a constitution in the Empire and [which] evidently doesn't fit the breed."⁹

Milner's settlement program was another approach to encourage a higher ratio of English people to Boers and thus achieving political control over the Boers. Milner wished to have an English majority before self-rule was granted. It was for this reason that part of the Transvaal was ceded to Natal. It was with this same mindset that Kitchener proposed the deportation of the Boers. "There seem to be only two safe courses to pursue. Settle on some island country where we can safely establish the boers¹⁰, Fiji, for instance, or get some foreign power to take them, such as France, to populate Madagascar and send them all as prisoners of war and let their families join them, have no more voluntary surrenders, and ship all as they are caught to the new settlement. We should then only have the surrendered burgers and the country would be safe and available for white colonials."¹¹ Both Donald Denoon, and to a lesser extent, Albert Grundlingh assert that most of the Hands Uppers were *bijwooners* (poor white tenant farmers) while most of the *bitterenders* were land owners and in some cases landlords. Even before the conflict commenced some of these poor white tenants complained that even though they owned no property they were forced, without any

⁸ Basil Williams: *Cecil Rhodes* (London, 1938) p. 50.

⁹ Selborne Papers, Vol. 113, Rudyard Kipling to Selborne, 10 June 1915. (Bodleian Library, Oxford University, England)

¹⁰ Kitchener when referring to the Boer people never capitalised the word Boer which may be some indication that he did not consider them as a nation or a recognised people.

¹¹ FK, Vol. 1622, pp. 252-553, Commander-in Chief, South Africa, Lord Kitchener to Secretary of State for War, St. John Brodrick, 21 June 1901.

pay, to protect militarily the property of the land owners. Some land lords had to force their Afrikaner tenants join the Boer commandos during the war. No doubt some of these forced conscripts were among the first to desert the commandos when the Boers were defeated at Paardeburg and during the next four months when the Boer towns and cities fell.¹²

Two days earlier on 19 June, Kitchener had wired Chamberlain asserting that he should be allowed to inform Botha that all Prisoners of War overseas would be refused return and that their families would be sent to them. In addition, Boers surrendering, either voluntarily or involuntarily, after a given date would be made Prisoners of War.¹³ A week later Milner who was in London wired Kitchener, who was acting as High Commissioner during Milner's absence, to inform him that the Government would not approve this proposal and telling him that he could not urge approval because he thought that they had bewildered the Boers by too many changes in policy in the past and that they should not make any more changes "unless we feel absolute certainty that they will finish the business."¹⁴

A leading mining company magnate proposed a similar, but less permanent deportation plan. At the end of August 1901 Julius Wernher of Wernher and Beit Company¹⁵ made a proposal to Georges Rouliot, his partner and the President of the Chamber of Mines. "Let the Government proclaim a country as a place where the banished Boers could be sent."¹⁶ This could all be reversed when peace was established. The camps should be shifted nearer the coast to facilitate supplies & [so that] ordinary life [could] be resumed in the various centres."¹⁷ His obvious motivation was to make it possible to operate the Rand gold mines at full tilt as soon as possible. The greatest problem in

¹² Jeremy Krikler, *Revolution From Above, Rebellion From Below: The Agrarian Transvaal at the Turn of the Century* (Oxford, 1993) p. 9.

¹³ *National Archives of South Africa*, Photo Copy Series, FK, Vol. 495, Telegram 458, Acting High Commissioner, Lord Kitchener, to Colonial Secretary, Joseph Chamberlain, 19th June 1901.

¹⁴ Milner's Papers Milner Manuscripts pct. 191, 115C, Telegram, Milner to Kitchener 26 June 1901. (Bodleian Library, Oxford, England)

¹⁵ Commonly known as Corner House.

¹⁶ The Harry Eckstein Papers. Vol. 167, G. Rouliot, Internal Correspondence. Julius Wernher to Georges Rouliot, 30 August 1901. (Rand Barlow Archives, Johannesburg)

¹⁷ *Ibid.*

achieving this was to obtain a free and abundant flow of supplies into the Rand. This proposal was made in the same month that the Department of Native Refugees was establishing black camps all along the railway in both the Orange River Colony and the Transvaal, in part, to facilitate the reopening of the mines.

If Roberts and Kitchener were not aware of the Gazette article, then there was the letter from H.R. Abercrombie, Lord Methuen's Intelligence Staff officer, addressed to Roberts' Political Secretary, G.V. Fiddes.¹⁸ Writing two weeks before the Gazette editorial appeared in print, and acting outside of his usual role, Abercrombie boldly expressed his concern that "innocent" Boer farmers were being punished for acts committed by others. He was convinced that surrendered Boers keeping the Neutrality Oath were having their farms destroyed when the railway or other infrastructure near their farms was destroyed. In a somewhat prophetic tone he harped politely, "whereas our object, I take it, is to reach the guilty parties."¹⁹ In addition, those keeping the oath were existing within a patchwork quilt like situation in which some Boers were firing on the British forces from farms, which were then destroyed. The following excerpt from a telegram sent by Major General Hildyard to Roberts headquarters gives a good picture of this circumstance. "Have visited neighbouring farms [and] taken some stock & destroyed two farms from which Boers had fired. A certain number of Boers who took neutrality oath have kept it & remain on farms."²⁰ It can only be imagined what pressures were placed on those keeping the oath by neighbouring farmers who were slipping away to the commandos or firing on the British troops.

¹⁸ The Political Secretary, G.V. Fiddes, had formerly been Lord Milner's Imperial Secretary and was appointed to the position of Political Secretary to Lord Roberts. He was perceived to be Milner's representative and some thought to be an informer on Robert's staff.

¹⁹ *The National Archives of South Africa, Pretoria*, Political Secretary, (PSY), Vol. 64, 201, H.R. Abercrombie to G.V. Fiddes, 28 August 1900.

²⁰ *National Archives of South Africa, Pretoria*, A1643, Roberts Papers, Vol. 50, p. 65, General Hildyard to Chief of Staff, Headquarters, Belfast, 8 September 1900.

Roberts agreed with this maxim. He told General Hunter that the reason he was against whole towns being destroyed was that “both the innocent and guilty suffer alike.”²¹ Only six days before the town of Bothaville had been burned to the ground with the exception of the church and the public buildings.²² Previously he had stated that he did not think that wholesale destruction was desirable, unless there were just a few houses. In this instance there were forty-five houses.²³

Abercrombie suggested that “all surrendered farmers and their families should go into laagers and that the same policy should apply to the “natives”.”²⁴ It is significant to note that in this proposal to form protective laagers, blacks were included. From the beginning the formation of black camps was inextricably linked with the establishment of white camps. This program would also give the British forces a good fighting environment. Not only would such action lessen the skirmishes between the Boers and the British, but such problems as sniping would be somewhat deterred. Sniping was a serious problem especially for small garrisons and outposts.²⁵ Boers on the neutrality oath could engage in sniping activity without significantly making themselves vulnerable to capture, as they would be if they actually rejoined a commando. This would also necessitate their prolonged absence from their farms, which might be reported by their neighbours, some of whom were employed as spies by the British, or be detected by a chance visitation by British troops.

II. The rise and fall of the Neutrality Oath.

In February 1900 General E.Y. Brabant engaged in unauthorised negotiations with the Dordrecht rebels in the Cape Colony. Brabant had a history of acting on his own volition. As a Member of Parliament, he sometimes went over the heads of his military superiors and made direct contact with

²¹ *National Archives of South Africa, Pretoria, A2404, Roberts Letters and Telegrams*, Vol. 5, P. 130, Roberts to General Hunter, 27 October 1900.

²² A1643, Roberts Papers, Vol. 55, PP. 66-8. Tel. A 926, General Hunter to Lord Roberts, 23 October 1900.

²³ A2404, *Roberts Letters and Telegrams*, Vol. 5, P. 116, Roberts to General Barton, 22 October 1900.

²⁴ PSY, Vol. 64, 201, H.R. Abercrombie to G.V. Fiddes, 28 August 1900.

²⁵ A1643, Roberts Papers, Vol. 22, p. 32, Buller to Roberts, 19 August 1900.

Milner. He was the only Colonial Officer in the Cape Colony to be made a general in the Imperial army during the war.

Despite General Brabant's improper behaviour the Colonial Secretary and Milner finally sanctioned his efforts because of their great desire to cause the rebels to lay down their arms and return to their farms.²⁶ Milner conveyed to Roberts his concern that Brabant might be establishing precedents that could hamper the Imperial Government in any future settlement of the war. Milner instructed Brabant not to make any commitments without his approval.²⁷ These negotiations took place three weeks before the Neutrality Oath Proclamation was issued on 15 March 1900 at Bloemfontein.

Milner expressed the view that it was desirable to encourage "prompt submission" of the Cape rebels so long as the terms were not so easy that rebelling would be seen as a game that could be safely undertaken."²⁸ This desire to induce surrender would result in very inconsistent applications of the Neutrality Oath policy. The oath by policy was not to be granted to commandants or anyone who had fostered the declaration of war. Ironically, this ban on granting neutrality oath status to Boer commandants was often waived, to induce their cooperation in persuading their commando to surrender *en masse*. The terms of this informal neutrality oath proposed by Brabant to the Cape rebels were almost a carbon copy of those contained in the proclamation issued by Roberts at Bloemfontein.

On 15 March 1900 Lord Roberts issued this proclamation shortly after entering the Orange Free State granting the opportunity for all surrendered burgers to return to their families and their farms for the duration of the war.²⁹ In the main the proclamation stated that:

All Burgers who have not taken a prominent part in the policy which has led to the war between Her Majesty and the Orange Free State, or commanded any forces of the Republic, or commandeered or used violence [against] any British subjects and who are willing to lay down their arms at once, and to bind themselves by an oath to abstain from further participation in the war, will be given passes to allow them

²⁶ A1643. Vol. 60, pp. 59-60, Milner to Roberts, 28 February 1900.

²⁷ A1643, Roberts Papers. Vol. 60, p. 43, Assistant Adjutant. General to Kitchener, 23 February 1900.

²⁸ A1643, Roberts Papers. Vol. 60, pp. 44-5, Milner to Roberts, 23 February 1900.

²⁹ A1643, Roberts' Papers. Vol. 60, pp. 108-9, Milner to Roberts, 13 March 1900.

to return to their homes and *will not be made prisoners of war, nor will their property be taken from them.*"³⁰ Roberts, Commanding-in-Chief, Her Majesty's Forces. 15 March 1900 [Emphasis is mine.]

It may be wondered just how few commandos had not done at least one of these proscribed activities? This proclamation was issued at Milner's request, and indeed, it appears that he was the author. In all such matters he took iron-fisted control. On 11 March he instructed Roberts that no proclamation "of any political importance should be issued without instruction and the approval of Her Majesty's Government."³¹ This requirement that the proclamation of 15 March 1900 be specifically approved by London is interesting in view of the fact that an almost identical notice had been issued on 10 December 1899.³² Like the origins of so many of the other policies of the war, the Commandant at Mafeking, Colonel Baden-Powell, one month before Lord Roberts and Lord Kitchener arrived in Cape Town, issued this notice during the siege at Mafeking. It seems clear that Milner was the author in both cases. A final condition in the Mafeking Government Notice stipulated. "To ensure their property being respected, all the men of a family must be present at home when the troops arrive and be prepared to hand over a rifle and 150 rounds of ammunition each."³³ This provision would appear again in the later stages of the lifetime the Neutrality Oath under Roberts. Similar to Roberts' Bloemfontein proclamation, Baden-Powell's notice excluded officers or members of the *Staats Artillerie*,³⁴ and rebels from British territory."³⁵

Inadequate numbers of British troops.

The formation of both the black and white concentration camps can be almost totally attributed to the failure of the Neutrality Oath. The oath was a conditional contract, which involved the promise to stay on their farms and remain out of the war. The contract was repeatedly violated. The

³⁰ *British Parliamentary Papers*, Cd. 426, Proclamation No. III, 13 March 1900.

³¹ A1643, Robert's Papers, Vol. 60, p. 89, Milner to Roberts, 11 March 1900.

³² The Mafeking Mail, 10 December 1899, cited in John Comaroff, *The Boer War Diary of Sol T. Plaatje: An African at Mafeking* (Johannesburg, 1973) p. 42.

³³ *Ibid.*

³⁴ No doubt this proscription against the *Staats Artillerie* stems from two causes. The first is that these soldiers were almost daily bombarding Mafeking, and secondly the members of the *Staats Artillerie* were members of the only standing and professional military units in the forces of the Orange Free State. *Vide*: Fransjohan Pretorius, *Kommandolewe Tydens Die Anglo-Boereoorlog, 1899-1902* (Cape Town, 1991) p. 82.

³⁵ *Ibid.*

Neutrality Oath was just not working and it was becoming increasingly apparent that it was working less and less.

In turn this failure can be laid at the door of inadequate numbers of British troops to cope with the rigors of an unrelenting, day after day, slash and burn form of guerrilla warfare. This involved the destruction of not only the British lines of communication, but also the burning of black homes and huts, crops and the commandeering or purchasing of the livestock and foodstuffs of the black people on the Boer farms and independent black farms on the veld. In addition the inadequate numbers of troops also meant that the required monitoring of the activities of the oath takers was not possible. In the Utrecht district an attempt was made to do some monitoring by requiring surrendered Burgers to register their livestock and the amount of forage supplies. Upon doing so a certificate of "protection" was issued. Failure to have such a certificate meant that all their livestock and supplies could be seized ³⁶ This was an attempt at monitoring the surrendered Burgers and thus preventing them from supporting the men on commando by providing them with any kind of support.

If, as some claimed, the veld was a sea in which the Boers operated, surrendered Boers were still able to sail on that sea, with few limitations. Kitchener conceded that "owing to the vastness of the country the boers can roam at their own pleasure, and being excessively mobile, they are able to surprise any post not sufficiently on the alert. [They are able] to suddenly show [up] in considerable numbers and act with great boldness when they get a chance."³⁷ The vastness of the country was one of the primary causes of the lingering war. It made progress very slow.³⁸ In many cases the violators of the oath who returned to the Boer commandos also took some of their black farm workers along as *agterreyers*³⁹ and in some cases as armed participants in the commandos.

³⁶ PSY, Vol. 57, pp. 17-18, Government Notice, Utrecht District, September 1900.

³⁷ FK, Vol. 1621, p. 21, Kitchener to Brodrick, 20 December 1900.

³⁸ FK, Vol., 1622, p. 438, Kitchener to Brodrick, 29 November 1901.

³⁹ Literally, "rear rider". They actually performed many tasks beyond just holding the reins of their master's horse, behind the hill, while the Boer commando was engaging the enemy. They carried extra rifles and led extra horses, and though it

When Roberts and Kitchener docked at Cape Town in early January 1900, Lord Milner confided to his personal diary "I feel now we shall not be shot sitting."⁴⁰ Milner's greatest source of anxiety was that he had not been able to get the Military to provide a sufficient defence for the Cape Colony. Cape Town was just a stopping off place for the military task forces on their way from England to Natal and the Boer Republics. Just as General Redvers Buller had marched off to Natal leaving Milner sitting, so too Roberts and Kitchener, less than a month after disembarking at Cape Town, were marching northwards out of the Cape Colony to relieve the siege of Kimberly and to invade the Orange Free State. Milner saw that once again he would be left sitting.

Just two days before Roberts led his troops northward, Milner wrote Roberts regarding the defence of the Cape Colony and his fears of a rising of the Cape Afrikaners. He spoke in military terms sounding more like Roberts' military superior than the High Commissioner.⁴¹ Milner agreed with Chamberlain that there was "...nothing more dangerous than a civilian mixing himself in matters of the military." In the same letter, however, he went on to say that he felt "...compelled to warn, suggest, remind-to worry, the soldiers in 100 ways much to their annoyance, ...though they are very courteous...."⁴² In this Chamberlain was wrong and Milner correct. The role of the military is to carry out the will of the politicians and the state. In this vein he now expressed a fear that the Boers might by-pass the British forces and get into the Cape Midlands causing a rising that would immediately bring 10,000 recruits to the enemy.⁴³ He also feared that the colonial rebels would wait till the British troops were well to the front, and then cut them off by a general rising directed against the lines of communications. Such a strategy, according to Milner, "...was eminently in

was denied, they also in some cases fought the enemy. They also performed the duties of a normal servant such as cooking and washing clothes.

⁴⁰ Milner's Papers.: Microfilm 2, Milner's Diary, 10 January 1900. (Bodleian Library, Oxford)

⁴¹ In times of peace the High Commissioner was also the Commander-in-Chief of the military in the Cape Colony. My thanks to Professor Andre Wessels for his assistance with this question as well as many other insights.

⁴² *National Archives of South Africa, Pretoria*, Milner's Papers, FK, Vol. 1102, p. 1327, Milner to Chamberlain, 27 December 1899.

⁴³ A1643, Roberts Papers, Vol. 60, p. 5, 4 February 1900.

accordance with Dutch thought and habits of warfare.”⁴⁴ Milner was trying desperately to get Roberts to leave a defence force in the Cape Colony.

Roberts answered Milner, just before marching his task force out of the Cape. He very cogently argued that the risk of taking his troops out of the Cape was a necessity because, while there was some risk that an invasion of the Cape might take place, it was inevitable that besieged Kimberly would fall if he did not. Further he argued that by engaging the enemy in the Orange Free State and Kimberly, in the Northern Cape, the Boers would not be able to assist the Cape rebels. Only an offensive action could shorten the war and he then pointed out that Milner himself was of the opinion that “the longer the war lasts, the greater is the danger of a rebellion within the...Cape Colony.”⁴⁵

From the beginning guerrilla warfare placed the British forces in a serious predicament. It has often been noted that the Boer forces were outnumbered by a factor as high as twelve or thirteen to one. The nature of the guerrilla warfare practised by the Boers, however, was such that they were not sufficiently outnumbered to assure control and consolidation of the military gains achieved. And indeed, Milner pointed out to Sir George Hamilton that Roberts had bypassed large numbers of Boers in his rush to Pretoria, rather than securing the countryside. He did not have sufficient numbers of troops to leave an occupying force. Clausewitz had early in the previous century defined the task of an army: “To take and *hold* the land.” [Emphasis is mine]

The problem was to have enough troops to protect against such guerrilla warfare, and at the same time to have sufficient troops to carry out the major offensive operations required in the invasion of the Boer Republics. As Lord Kitchener would lament in early 1901 when he was trying to keep General de Wet and the Boers from invading the Cape Colony, “the country is too big and there are

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*

⁴⁵ A2404, *Robert's Letters and Telegrams*, Vol. 1, Memorandum, 5 February 1900, pp. 19-20.

so many places to guard....”⁴⁶ The blockhouses established by Kitchener, as part of his anti-guerrilla entrapment strategy, tied down thousands of troops that might have been used in an attempt to prevent invasions of the Cape Colony. Before even one British soldier had taken a single step on the road north out of the Cape Colony the roots of the formation of both the black and white concentration camps were planted deeply in the soil of the war.

Later in the war the inability of the British to maintain permanent garrisons in the smaller towns, like Heilbron, inhibited the Boers from surrendering because the return of the Boers forces to these towns would be very dangerous for those who “had gone over to the Khaki side” during the interim periods. This was the result of inadequate numbers of troops to sustain these garrisons.⁴⁷ And in the end this was the primary reason that the black and white concentration camps had to be established. Inadequate numbers of troops meant that the Boers could outride and outwit the British units.

The Boer guerrillas were very effective in destroying the infrastructure and sustaining a vociferous disruption of the attempts of the British Army to consolidate its control over the countryside. As a result it became very apparent to soldiers like Abercrombie that the only way to achieve victory was to clean the veld of all sources of logistical and intelligence support for the Boer Forces. This could only be accomplished by placing thousands of black and white non-combatants in laagers of confinement-concentration camps. In addition all livestock and all foodstuffs and crops would have to be confiscated or destroyed.

Roberts’ strategy was to take aggressive military actions against the armed enemy while at the same time encouraging them to surrender, and simultaneously attempting to pacify those who had not yet become involved in the war. Roberts was walking the fence between pacification of the Boer population and stringent, or even draconian methods, directed at those in arms. Thus Roberts tried to walk his forces out of the Cape Colony without stirring up the Afrikaner population. Three days

⁴⁶ FK, Vol. 1623, pp. 159-60, Kitchener to Brodrick, 12 February 1901.

⁴⁷ A1643, Roberts’ Papers, Vol. 53, pp. 69-70, Captain Farrar, Colonial Division to Lord Roberts, 3 October 1900.

before the beginning of the movement of his forces northward, Lord Kitchener, his Chief of Staff, issued orders that civilians were to be treated with respect. They were only to be apprehended when they had clearly committed serious criminal offences, acts of disloyalty, or high treason.⁴⁸ This two-fold strategy of attack and pacification called for a finesse akin to walking on eggs without cracking the shells.

The day after Roberts began his march northwards out of the Cape Colony an incident occurred which rang alarm bells all the way up to the office of the Colonial Secretary in London. Roberts in answering an inquiry from Chamberlain regarding the incident explained what had taken place. Two Boer deserters had given themselves up at Rensburg and were “immediately” made prisoners, and their horses sold. When Roberts was told about this he was quite appalled. “This was not the way to encourage desertion from the enemy’s ranks.” He issued instructions that “all deserters should be properly treated.”⁴⁹ This instruction by Roberts induced the Intelligence Department to issue a circular “...inviting men belonging to the Orange Free State and South African Republic to desert and offering them the restoration to their farms.”⁵⁰ Since this proclamation made certain promises to those who voluntarily surrendered, it was felt to obligate the British Government inappropriately and was withdrawn until the government could rule on its content.⁵¹ This early incident shows the kind of tension that existed between the offensive operations and the pacification strategies.

Inducements to surrender.

The purpose of the Neutrality Oath policy was to induce the Boer Commandos to surrender. Some of the actions taken to induce surrender were very situational. Wars cannot be effectively waged based on hard and fast rules. Rather they must be informed by the dialectic of the arising

⁴⁸ *British Parliamentary Papers*, Cd. 426, Chief of Staff’s Circular Memorandum No. 7, 3 February 1900.

⁴⁹ A2404, *Robert’s Letters and Telegrams*, Vol. I, p. 19. Roberts to Milner, 9 February 1900.

⁵⁰ A1643, *Roberts Papers*, Vol. 60, pp. 18-20, Roberts-Milner, 8 February 1900.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, Attempts to obtain a copy of this circular have failed.

circumstances. In one case a wounded Boer came in to the British lines suffering from a very severe wound, as no medical care was available with his commando. Major General G. Barton offered to get a doctor to treat his wounds. He told Roberts such assistance would have very good effect on the wounded man's Commando and the district. He asked Roberts if he could promise that the wounded man would not be sent out of the country. This was obviously an attempt induce the surrender of the entire Commando.⁵² Barton's promise to permit this injured man to remain in the country as a prisoner of war was rejected by the wounded commando, himself. Barton then recommended that the wounded man be allowed to come in with no conditions. He sent a medical officer to see him the next day.⁵³ The pattern in these negotiations was that Boer demands were usually granted even when the conditions stipulated in the proclamations were being significantly violated. Entire Boer Commandos sometimes agreed to surrender if certain terms and conditions were offered. As an example, seven Boers offered to surrender if they were allowed to stay in Machadodorp and to have their cattle protected. Part of the inducement from the Boer side was that three of these Boers were influential men.⁵⁴ One inducement process was to grant parents permits to go to their sons in the field to ask them to surrender. In some cases black servants were sent for the same purpose.⁵⁵ Another form of inducement to surrender was tried in the Pretoria District which entailed granting surrendered Burgers permission to purchase seed oats at a low cost.⁵⁶

In late December 1900 Kitchener informed Milner that in order to induce the Boers in the field to surrender voluntarily, he was issuing instructions that would allow those Boers who surrendered voluntarily to live with their families in protective laagers near the railways in their districts. They would also be allowed to bring in their property and livestock. In addition he announced the formation of a Peace Committee composed of influential surrendered burgers who would be sent to

⁵² A1643, Roberts' Papers, Vol. 39, p. 191, General Barton to Lord Roberts, 30 July 1900.

⁵³ A1643, Roberts' Papers, Vol. 39, pp. 196-7, General Barton to Lord Roberts, 31 July 1900.

⁵⁴ A1643, Roberts' Papers, Vol. 59, p. 78, Director of Military Intelligence to Lord Roberts, 2 November 1900.

⁵⁵ *The National Archives of South Africa, Pretoria*, The archives of the Military Governor of Pretoria, (MGP), Vol. 27, 3879/00, Parent to The Military Governor of Pretoria, General John Maxwell, 25 September 1900.

⁵⁶ MGP, Vol. 17, Notice published in the Transvaal Government Gazette, August 1900.

the Commando units to persuade them to surrender.⁵⁷ This shows that Kitchener was very naive about the Boer culture and the strong sense of loyalty that inhabited their thinking. In fact the strongest obstacle for the Boers still on commando, who wished to surrender, was how to lay down their arms without being labelled as traitors.

The promise that as prisoners of war they would not be sent overseas was evidently a major inducement for many men to surrender. This led to the establishment of a new prisoner of war camp in the Cape Colony in September 1900. The numbers of such prisoners were significant. In September 1900 Milner informed Roberts that while the new camp was being built the prisoner of war camps in the Cape Colony could accommodate an additional 1,000 prisoners.⁵⁸ This number becomes more significant when it is realised that it was at this point that Proclamation No. 12 was issued in August 1900, rescinding any future opportunity of taking the Neutrality Oath. Thus there was now a need for much more accommodation for prisoners of war. Prior to this time, the surrender of some Boers not eligible to return to their farms, and who should have been made prisoners of war, were granted permission to return to their farms as a means of encouraging others to surrender.⁵⁹

Now the only bargaining chip that remained to induce surrenders was the promise not to be sent to overseas prisoner of war camps. Often this promise was not kept. The Commandant of the concentration camp in Durban reported that "it was the rule to send all prisoners of war who arrived at Durban to Ceylon, irrespective of the conditions under which they surrendered."⁶⁰ On the day Roberts authorised the formation of the Hands Uppers Camps, 20 September 1900, he also decreed

⁵⁷ FK, Vol. 480, p. 564, Kitchener to Milner, 27 December 1900.

⁵⁸ A1643, Roberts Papers, Vol. 62, p. 140, Milner to Roberts, 8 September 1900.

⁵⁹ *National Archives of South Africa, Pretoria*, The archives of the Provost Marshall. (PMO), Vol. 35, 2378, Commanding Officer, Lines of Communication to Provost Marshall, 6 November 1901.

⁶⁰ PMO, Vol. 16, 1141, Forster to Provost Marshall, Pretoria, 8 January 1901. Cited in A.M. Grundlingh, *Die "Hendsoppers" en "Joiners": Die Rasionaal en Verskynsel van Verraad* (Pretoria, Protea, 1999) P. 64.

that surrendered Boers would still be regarded as prisoners of war, but would not be sent out of the country.⁶¹

The commandeering of surrendered burgers back to the war.

The commandeering of surrendered Boers was, at times, an integral part of the carrying out of various kinds of guerrilla warfare activities including burning, devastation and the commandeering of cattle.⁶² General Christian de Wet, however, organised what he envisioned as “a great plan “of bringing under arms all the burgers who had laid down their weapons and had taken the Oath of Neutrality.”⁶³ De Wet writing after the war, said that he gave instructions to his subordinate commanders that no burger was to be compelled to rejoin the war as he was of the “...opinion that a coerced burger would be of no real value, and would besides, be untrustworthy.”⁶⁴ A.M. Grundlingh argues there is conflicting evidence regarding the forced commandeering back to the war of surrendered burgers. He cites several sources, which describe surrendered burgers being tied up with reins, or being handcuffed and being brought away. Captain Danie Theron, the famous Boer scout, had very little patience with deserters and said they “...must be forced by means of loaded rifles to do their duty.”⁶⁵ Kitchener gave this mistreatment of surrendered Burgers as one of the reasons for the establishment of the concentration camps.⁶⁶

It was decided that those who rejoined the commandos were to be compelled to take a loyalty oath and to renounce the Neutrality Oath they had signed because the integrity of some of the former Hands Uppers was suspect.⁶⁷ Several thousand were quickly returned to the war. Between Generals

⁶¹ A2400, Vol. 5, *Roberts Letters and Telegrams*, C4822, Roberts to Military Governor, Bloemfontein; District Commissioner, Kroonstad, 20 September 1900.

⁶² A1643, Roberts Papers, Vol. 39, p. 58, Lt. Col. Hore to Roberts, 31 July 1900.

⁶³ Christian R de Wet, *Three Years War*, (New York. 1902) p. 156.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 157.

⁶⁵ Grundlingh, “*Die ‘Hendsoppers,’*” p. 52.

⁶⁶ War Office, Confidential Telegrams, 558A and 559A, Kitchener to Brodrick, 24 and 25 June 1901. Cited in Grundlingh, “*Die Hendsoppers,’*” p. 52.

⁶⁷ Leyds Archive, 721(d), telegram 5 of 12 April 1900, Kruger-Steyn; Cited in Grundlingh, “*Die ‘Hendsoppers,’*” p. 52.

Fourie and Hertzog over 1,900 were returned to the war in the first recruiting drive.⁶⁸ Reports from the British commanders in the field indicate another view was held, by at least some Boers, who claimed as early as June 1900 to be tired of the war, but at the same time were very afraid of President Steyn.⁶⁹ General Louis Botha was carrying on similarly successful commandeering efforts in the Transvaal. In part the success of the recruitment and commandeering of surrendered burgers back into the war was a function of the Boer leader's reputation among the Boers. Grundlingh affirms this view. "De Wet...had an almost magnetic influence over the burgers. At the end of July 1900 when he was encamped near the Vaal River, many surrendered burgers came forward on their own accord to rejoin the commandos."⁷⁰ Deneys Reitz describes the work of General De la Rey in fanning a new spirit into the fighting men by his ceaseless activity and by the great affection they had for this wonderful man."⁷¹ The success of this recruitment and commandeering of Boers back into the war is attested to by Kitchener, who in one of his periodical letters to Brodrick in late December 1900, lamented that "...there has been a very considerable revival of hostilities every where and many more Boers are now in the field than there were a short time ago."⁷² It has been estimated that about 3,960 Free Staters took up arms again."⁷³

Another cause of the success of the Boer leaders in getting back the surrendered burgers was the British violation of the neutrality oath agreement with some of the oath takers. When General Froneman's recruiting expedition netted almost five hundred returnees De Wet rhetorically thanked Lord Roberts "for this welcome addition to our troops." In many areas, burgers who had faithfully observed the oath, were made prisoners of war by the British columns that paid no attention to their

⁶⁸ de Wet, "Three Years War," pp. 158-59.

⁶⁹ A1643 Roberts Papers, Vol. 34, General Coville to Lord Roberts, 14 June 1900.

⁷⁰ Grundlingh, *Die Hendsoppers*, p.49

⁷¹ Deneys Reitz, *Commando: A Boer Journal of the Boer War* (London, 1929) P. 132.

⁷² Fk, Vol. 1621, Kitchener to Brodrick, 20 December 1900.

⁷³ Grundlingh, *Die Hendsoppers*, p. 51.

neutrality oath status.⁷⁴ De Wet humorously quipped with President Steyn. "Lord Roberts is the best recruiting sergeant I have ever had."⁷⁵

Boer attacks on surrendered burgers.

In addition to British troops making sporadic visits to the Boer farms to assure they were maintaining the conditions of the oath, surrendered Burgers were visited by Boer commandos and were forced back on commando or deprived of their wagons, livestock and crops.⁷⁶ Roberts complained to Botha that marauding bands of Boers were compelling surrendered burgers to go out on commando again while their families were compelled to supply food to these bands.⁷⁷ The British are also accused by the Boers of similar behaviour. Troops or policemen arriving on the farm of a surrendered burger compel the burger "...to tend their horses, take their animals to the water and see to it that they are stabled; while ...the soldiers go into the house. Here they sit and enjoy coffee and cake they have demanded, which has to be served personally by the farmer's wife."⁷⁸ General Settle reported to Military Intelligence that a captured British officer was told by the Boer General, Badenhorst that a Commando of 550 men would soon commandeer all farmers in that district to fight or shoot them.⁷⁹ In the District of Utrecht it was reported to the District Commissioner that several small bands of Burgers were travelling around the Utrecht District and intimidating surrendered Burgers and stealing their horses and stock.⁸⁰ The Military Governor of Bloemfontein indicated that the Boers were using even more harsh methods of retribution. In May 1900 he told Roberts " a force of Boers... is roving about the district robbing and murdering farmers who have laid down their arms."⁸¹ Whether that was a valid report cannot be verified. It is

⁷⁴ De Wet. *Three Years war*. p. 80.

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*

⁷⁶ A1643 Roberts Papers, Vol. 52, p. 220, General Knox to Roberts, 25 October 1900.

⁷⁷ A2404, *Roberts Letters and Telegrams*, Vol. 3, p. 135. Roberts to Botha 5 August 1900.

⁷⁸ Leyds Archive, 734,, (16) Republican Circular, 15 June 1900, Translated from the Dutch by B. Theron-Bushnell. Cited in Grundlingh, *Die Hendsoppers*, p. 58.

⁷⁹ A1643, Roberts Papers, Vol. 61, General Settle to Military Intelligence, 18 October 1900.

⁸⁰ PSY, Vol. 57, pp. 25-26, Government Notice, District of Utrecht issued by the District Commissioner of Utrecht, 12 October 1900.

⁸¹ A1643, Roberts Papers, Vol. 32, p. 55, Military Governor of Bloemfontein to Lord Roberts, 12 May 1900.

true that in July 1900 President Steyn issued a proclamation ordering that any conscript who leaves his commando without lawful reason will be tried and condemned to death.⁸²

The District Commissioner of Heidelberg reported that a large commando wanted to surrender "but are being kept back by more bitter men."⁸³ He claimed that these *Bitter Enders* "have been very active in the last few days arresting burgers who have laid down their arms."⁸⁴ Another document records that the Boers kept some surrendered burgers in custody because they had signed the oath.⁸⁵ This may have been, in part, due to the fact that some surrendered burgers were sending in information to the British about the Boer Commandos. For this reason the District Commissioner requested that a punitive column be sent to protect these surrendered burgers.⁸⁶ In an interesting twist General Paget reported that some Boer women were given black dresses so that they could pose as widows, thus avoiding questions of where their men were.⁸⁷ Boers posing as British soldiers visited farms. "They ask farmers and Kaffirs for news of the Boers, and when they have made them commit themselves, beat them. and it is reported have shot one Kaffir."⁸⁸ Obviously this was part of the process that led to the formation of the "Hands Uppers Camps".

Indiscriminate devastation

One of the most significant causes of the failure of the neutrality oath was the indiscriminate devastation of the farms without regard for those that had taken and faithfully adhered to the oath. Grundlingh well describes this problem. "The British Army made no concerted effort to differentiate between those who had broken the oath, the *bona fide* surrendered burgers and the

⁸² Grundlingh, *Die Hendsoppers*, p. 53.

⁸³ PSY, Vol., 55, p. 45, District Commissioner of Heidelberg to Fiddes, 26 September 1900.

⁸⁴ *Ibid.*

⁸⁵ MGP, Vol. 28, p. 161, 4086B/00, Captain W. Bonham, Assistant Provost Marshall to Secretary to the Maxwell, 24 September 1900.

⁸⁶ PSY, Vol. 55, pp. 46-7. Telegram S-312, District Commissioner of Heidelberg to The Political Secretary, 26 September 1900.

⁸⁷ A1643, Roberts Papers. Vol. 53, p. 140, General Paget to Lord Roberts, 6 October 1900.

⁸⁸ A1643, Roberts Papers. Vol. 50, p. 41, District Commissioner of Heidelberg to the Military Secretary, 19 September 1900.

Bitter Enders who were still fighting.”⁸⁹ This became a serious issue of contention between Milner and Kitchener. This problem not only affected those who had taken the oath, but also extended to the protected areas where farmers were being asked to defend their farms and those of their neighbours. On 20 March 1901 Milner wrote a very strong letter to Kitchener. He cited complaints from Hamilton Goold-Adams, the Deputy Administrator of the Orange River Colony, as well as others in that colony, regarding Kitchener’s ordered acts of devastation and commandeering of livestock. Milner condemned Kitchener’s indiscriminate sweeps of the countryside which were “hitting our friends ... and were not as harmful to the enemy as they could be.” Milner said he could not see why there would be any difficulty in agreeing that certain areas are “sufficiently within the protection of our garrisons to justify being exempted from a general order to sweep up all the livestock in the country.”⁹⁰ The Cape Colony was also being swept clean and private property was being commandeered of both loyalists and rebels. According to G.H.L. Le May this was reported as causing citizens positive toward the British to become “...sullen, indifferent and lukewarm.”⁹¹

The arguments of General Christian de Wet were given great credence by the surrendered Burgers. He asserted, somewhat acidly, that it was the English who had first broken the oath by not adhering to their own promise that the oath takers would be protected from the actions of the British columns. He further argued that “Old people who had never stirred one step from their farms were fined hundreds of pounds when the railway or telegraph lines in their neighbourhood were wrecked.”⁹² This allowed de Wet to make the ironic argument that it really does not matter whether you keep the oath or not, because the British will come along and destroy your farm and make you a prisoner of war with no regard for your status. They will ignore the fact that you are a surrendered burger who has signed the neutrality oath and have faithfully abided by its conditions. This is

⁸⁹ Grundlingh, “*Die Hendsoppers*” p.58.

⁹⁰ Milner’s Papers, Microfilm No. 173, Milner to Kitchener, 20 March 1901. (Bodleian Library, Oxford, England)

⁹¹ Cape Colony Minister’s Minute No. 1/214. Cited in G.H.L. Le May, *British Supremacy in South Africa, 1899-1907* (Oxford, 1965) p.117.

⁹² De Wet, *Three Years War*, p. 159.

another example of Abercrombie's argument that the innocent were, in many cases, being punished for the acts of the guilty.

It soon became clear that many, if not a majority, of the oath takers were violating the agreed to conditions. There seems to be no record extant, which even roughly estimates the numbers of violators of the conditions of the oath. And, in fact, it seems very unlikely that the military officials had even a rough knowledge of the numbers of violators. At first, and at other times, throughout the life of the oath, the strategy was to indicate that violators "would be treated with utmost rigour if they are found in arms against us." In April Roberts informed Brabant that he had issued a proclamation to that effect.⁹³

At first, oath violators were allowed to return to their farms, if it was believed that they had been compelled by force to return to the war.⁹⁴ Later violators were subject to a wide variety of punishments, which were in many cases, inconsistently implemented. Some penalties that appear in the record are: penal servitude, incarceration as a prisoner of war, destruction of their farm or farms, destruction of the violator's wagons and confiscation of his cattle, and finally the most severe punishment, execution by firing squad. The Boer commanders, in turn, meted out the following punishments to dissident surrendered Burgers who tried to remain neutral "...a fine, a prison sentence, corporal punishment-usually 25 lashes...or their moveable assets were confiscated."⁹⁵

II. The establishment of the first white concentration camps- the Hands Uppers Camps.

Despite the persuasive logic of Brabant's proposal to form a protective laager for surrendered burgers in May 1900, Roberts still persisted in the use of the neutrality oath despite its ever increasing failure. "I am allowing all the Free Staters who gave up their arms to return to their

⁹³ A2404, *Roberts' Letters and Telegrams*, Vol. 1, p. 98. Roberts to Brabant, 9 April 1900.

⁹⁴ A2404, *Roberts' Letters and Telegrams*, Vol. 2, p. 28, Roberts to General Chermiside, 7 May 1900.

⁹⁵ Grundlingh, *Die Hendsoppers*, p. 54.

homes. A good many are coming in throughout the state and more would do so in Brabant's opinion, if they were made prisoners of war, and sent to some place near the Free State border. He suggested a place like Aliwal North, where they could remain until peace is made, in order to prevent their getting into trouble with their compatriots for deserting the cause. If you see no objection I will act in this sense."⁹⁶ By this, Roberts is telling Milner he will continue to send the surrendered burgers to their farms. He is only mentioning Brabant's proposal in passing. Later in October the Transvaal General Clements reported to Roberts that many small parties of Boers, who had not surrendered, had gone to their farms.⁹⁷ This was in the same month that the first "Hands Uppers" camps began to operate.

In May Roberts' Military Secretary informed the Military Governor of Bloemfontein that Roberts had no objection to loyal or desirable applicants returning to their homes in districts occupied by us. "I am giving instructions to stop civilians being sent to Bloemfontein."⁹⁸ This was just two days after Brabant's recommendation to form a protective laager. This appears to be following Milner's policy of only allowing the return to the farms in the districts under the control of the British forces. This policy was also adhered to in the Cape Colony. In fact, the countryside was never secure enough during the war to allow families to return to their farms. On 11 May 1902 only twenty days before the end of the war Kitchener proposed returning some of the women and children in the white concentration camps to farms inside a protected area to be guarded by block houses and National Scouts. His purpose was to demoralise that Bitter Enders still fighting by showing them that the country was settling down despite anything they could do.⁹⁹

⁹⁶ A2404, *Roberts' Letters and Telegrams*, Vol. 2, p. 36, C1593, Roberts to Milner, 14 May 1900.

⁹⁷ A1643, *Roberts Papers*, Vol. 54, p. 35, General Clements to Roberts, 4 October 1900.

⁹⁸ A2404, *Roberts' Letters and Telegrams*, Vol. 2, p.42, C.1616 Military Secretary to Military Governor of Bloemfontein, 15 May 1900.

⁹⁹ FK, Vol. 1624, p. 650, Kitchener to Brodrick, 11 May 1902.

It is certainly consistent with General Sir Henry Redevers Buller's compassionate concern for his own troops and his opposition to burning the Boer farms¹⁰⁰ that he also expressed concern for the fate of surrendered burgers and the need to provide protection for them. General Buller's effort in obtain protection for surrendered burgers provides a good case study of the problems which eventually caused the ultimate failure of the Neutrality Oath and the need to form concentration camps. Buller wrote to Roberts on 16 June, only eleven days after the fall of Pretoria. "I find that I must do something to settle the Wakkerstroom District. About 70 men have surrendered and signed the neutrality promise and the Landdrost says about 150 more are ready to do so if they are promised protection. I have no troops to spare to give them protection and I am offering them permission to keep their arms, and so protect themselves, if they sign."¹⁰¹ Here can be seen that the British Army was not offering to form a protective laager to protect the surrendering burgers. Quite to the contrary, those considering surrender were asking this to be done as part of the agreement to surrender. This shows, at least in this instance, that these camps were not formed by any humanitarian motivation of the British military authorities. Roberts expressed regret that protection could not be provided to all the burgers who surrender, but urged Buller to do everything that could be done to get them to do so as this would shorten the war.¹⁰² It was becoming more and more clear that protective laagers were the only solution to the problem of persuading Boer Commandos to surrender, especially after the Proclamation No. 12 of 14 August 1900, which rescinded the opportunity to return to the farms by taking the Neutrality Oath.

Inadequate number of troops and Roberts' stubborn refusal to form protective laagers caused a prolongation of the war as many who would have surrendered, would not, because protection was not offered. This instance occurred right after the fall of Johannesburg and Pretoria. At this point there was no alternative other than making prisoners of war of voluntary surrenders. By this time

¹⁰⁰ Thomas Pakenham, *The Boer War*, (London, 1979) p. 453. This objection to farm burning may have been in large measure strategic in purpose as he also opposed the occupying the Boer towns.

¹⁰¹ A1643, Roberts' Papers, Vol. 21, p. 29, Buller to Roberts, 16 June 1900.

¹⁰² A2404, *Roberts Letters and Telegrams*, Vol. 3, p., 31, C 2401, Roberts to Buller, 30 June 1900.

the ineffectiveness of the neutrality oath had already become apparent. Robert's refusal to adopt Brabant's proposal in May 1900 meant that the Boers had been able to continue, almost unimpeded, their intensive destruction of the lines of communication. The withdrawal of the Neutrality Oath was an admission of the failure of the oath and meant that that all surrendered burgers henceforth would be made prisoners of war as the proclamation mandated. This meant that now there was to be no difference in treatment of those who voluntarily surrendered and those captured by British troops. There was the one exception that a promise could be given that they would not be sent to the overseas camps. The only solution was the formation of protective laagers as suggested by Brabant and Abercrombie. Roberts still refused.

On the Boer side steps were taken to form their own laagers for women and children. In August 1900 President Kruger, according to British military intelligence, ordered all women into a laager at Piet Retief. This was confirmed by correspondence found in Kruger's laager stating he was leaving Ermelo on 4 August 1900 with women and wagons for Piet Retief.¹⁰³ General Jan Smuts had attempted to form women's laagers on the veld, but these had to be disbanded due to attacks by blacks on these laagers.¹⁰⁴

The day of reckoning for the civilian population seems to have come on 23 August 1900. Roberts' stubborn resistance to Milner's desire to follow General Brabant's suggestion finally collapsed. No explanation is to be found in his telegrams and correspondence. What follows seems to be a plausible reason for his change of policy. There is no concrete evidence to explain his change of mind on this crucial matter. One particular incident, however, which in itself was not unusual, apparently caused Roberts to react in a way that can only be described as losing his patience, if not his temper. There is no other day recorded in his papers like this one. He sent the following telegram to the General Officer Commanding at Krugersdorp, General Barton: "Girouard [The

¹⁰³ A1643, Roberts Papers, Vol. 22, p. 19, Buller to Roberts, 8 August 1900.

¹⁰⁴ Spies, *Methods of Barbarism*, p. 144.

Director of the Imperial Military Railway] informs me [railway] line was blown up last night at Roodepoort. Nearest farm should at once be blown up and the people belonging to it be made prisoners of war. Inform me and Johannesburg of action taken. For present stop running trains at night”¹⁰⁵ This destruction was quickly repaired by the next day. This confirms that the damage was not very great. Indeed, in the daily attacks on the railway by the Boers, this was a rather typical and perhaps a relatively minor incident. Barton mentioned that two days previously he had recommended a cessation of night traffic, but only now did he issue the order not to run trains at night. Obviously then, this incident was not unexpected. Why this strong reaction?

The Boer’s incessant destruction of the railway, and the cutting of the telegraph lines, was like a persistent and pesky horsefly constantly stinging the thick hide of the great horse of the British Imperial Army. On this day the diminutive Lord Roberts, who was used to being able to control his environment, seems to have reached the breaking point, and he just could not, or would not, take it anymore. Normally cool and methodical, and very structured in his policies and decisions, the Commander-in-Chief of the British Army in South Africa seems to have had a small temper-tantrum. He normally wanted to make sure his field commanders did not over react. Therefore it was his routine operating policy to require his field commanders to apply for his permission to burn and destroy farms and houses. He normally demanded to know the reasons for such recommended actions.

On this day, he was not his usual controlled self. One can note here an anger and frustration. “*The nearest farm should be blown up...*” [My Emphasis]¹⁰⁶ rather than the usual order to “burn the farm.” There are no other British documents that I have been able to find that give an order to “blow

¹⁰⁵ A2404, *Roberts Letters and Telegrams*, C.3817, Roberts to General Barton, Krugersdorp 23 August 1900.

¹⁰⁶ A2404, *Roberts Letters and Telegrams*, Vol. 4, p. 60, C3817, Roberts to General Barton, Krugersdorp. 23 August 1900.

up a house,” or *specified* the use of explosives.¹⁰⁷ Even in an instance in the Standerton District where explosives were found in a farmhouse, the house was burned, rather than being blown up.¹⁰⁸ Perhaps he took his cue from the fact that the railway tracks had been blown up. But that was the usual method used by the Boers in destroying the railway and other infrastructure, as well as houses. This use of explosives by the Boers was necessitated by the hit and run tactics of `guerrilla warfare, and in some cases the nature of the material to be destroyed. This message on 23 August 1900 was, however, driven by what was seemingly a much higher level of passion, suggesting it was an act, at least bordering on revenge, rather than the normal retribution.

On this same day, Roberts decided to arrange for the deporting of some of the wives of the Boer leaders, as well as other influential women in Pretoria, who were very anti-British and were letting their feelings be heard. He asked Milner if they could be sent to some other place, such as Grahamstown or Cape Town.¹⁰⁹ In another action on this date he ordered that several columns be formed to sweep areas in the Transvaal and the Orange River Colony. He also ordered on that date that the units assigned to defend the railway must remain in place and he told General Kelly-Kenny that martial law would not be withdrawn from the districts he had previously inquired about.¹¹⁰

In a letter to General Botha that same day he complained, with a certain cutting sarcasm, that he realised that he could not depend on many of the Boers keeping their oaths. He also enclosed a copy of Proclamation No. 12 rescinding the neutrality oath and imposing harsh punishments for those who do not keep the oath as promised. All of the actions of that day were part of a process of tightening the screw on the Boers in the field. He ended that very eventful day by wiring Milner and praising the good marching of the troops in pursuit of General De Wet. Of course, we have no way

¹⁰⁷ This was an extensive search of every document in the archives of Lord Roberts that refers to farm burning and destruction. The term “destruction” is used inter-changeably with the word, “burning” in these telegrams. There were some instances where houses were destroyed by firing several artillery shells into them. My research file contains over 100 documents on this subject. Some houses, no doubt, were “blown” up with explosives, but no other order instructing this action has been found.

¹⁰⁸ A1643, Roberts Papers, Vol. 59, p. 44, General Wynne to Roberts, 15 November 1900.

¹⁰⁹ A2404, *Roberts Letters and Telegrams*, Vol. 4, P. 61, C. 3822, Roberts to Milner, 23 August 1900.

¹¹⁰ *Ibid.*

of knowing what Lord Roberts' inner feelings, or intentions, were on that very busy and eventful day. The actions he took following the blowing up of the railway station at Roodepoort that day do show he wished to take decisive action against the civilian population and the Boer commandos.

Less than a month later he authorised the formation of the first concentration camps of the war. It is also true that he had rescinded the possibility of surrendered Burgers availing themselves of the Neutrality Oath eleven days before. In any case, the decision to form concentration camps was the beginning of a very devastating chapter in the lives of the civilian population, whatever the reason for that decision may have been. In essence, the Boer forces had made this decision inevitable. This decision, like the hinge in a Greek drama, would make turning back from the tragedy of the camps impossible and would also lead inexorably to the incarceration of some 120,000 women and children and men in the black concentration camps.

This careful narration of the history showing the slow evolution of the development leading up to the formation of the first concentration camps was a crucial necessity, in order to show conclusively, that the decision to establish these camps was a decision based inherently on military strategic requirements. It is essential to recognize that the establishment of the black and white concentration camps was spawned by the inability of the British Army to defeat the guerrilla warfare of the Boer enemy, which was one of the best horse cavalries in the world at this time.

The decision to form the first concentration camps.

The desire of Milner to see some protective laager and detention camp, similar to General Brabant's idea come to fruition, was often present in the form of letters and telegrams to Roberts. Ironically 23 August was no exception. Milner, referring to what he called the "first relapse," the retaking of almost the whole of the south Free State in April 1900, once again repeated his view that surrendered Boers should not be allowed to return to their farms in districts not totally pacified and under British control. "I have been convinced," he said, "that it was no use allowing the Boers

simply to surrender and go back to their farms from all districts, where the possibility of a return of armed Commandos was not absolutely excluded. It was better to remove the able bodied men and keep them in custody elsewhere.”¹¹¹

There could no longer be any logical resistance on Roberts part. to the establishment of some form of protective laager or concentration camp, because that had ended on 12 August when he, himself, had rescinded the neutrality oath policy. By decreeing that all voluntary surrenders would be made prisoners of war some new inducement to surrender needed to be found, that would at the same time, remove these surrendered burgers from the veld. In essence Roberts had stayed with the neutrality oath until it fell by virtue of its own ineffectiveness. The oath had died eleven days before the attack near the Roodepoort Railway Station. If Lord Roberts still had any reluctance about forming “protective laagers,” he no longer expressed them. Now there was a vacuum to be filled. The protective laager’s time had come.

Until this juncture, Milner and Roberts had carried on an exclusive dialogue concerning the establishment of a protective laager for surrendered Burgers who had taken, and were abiding by the Neutrality Oath.. Now Lt. General Kelly-Kenny, an immediate subordinate of Lord Roberts, took up the Brabant-Abercrombie concept. On 7 September 1900 he sent a telegram to Roberts. “I have suggested to the Military Governor [of Bloemfontein] that we should have refugee camps here & at Kroonstad for loyal farmers threatened by the Boers. If you approve, I will sketch out proposals. I think, although an expense, & a little risky, it is necessary.”¹¹² The answer came the very next day saying he would be glad to receive his proposals “...for rest camps.”¹¹³

Two days later, on 9 September 1900, and after having received Kelly-Kenny’s proposal, Lord Roberts gave his approval saying, he thought his proposal *admirable*, and hoped he would carry it

¹¹¹ Cecil Headlam, *The Milner’s Papers*, Vol. II, *South Africa, 1899-1905* (London, 1933) P. 85.

¹¹² A1643, Roberts Papers, Vol. 48, p. 100, General Kelley-Kenny to Roberts, 7 September 1900.

¹¹³ A2404, *Roberts Letters and Telegrams*, Vol. 4, p. 129, Roberts to Kelly-Kenny, 8 September 1900.

out at Bloemfontein and Kroonstad. "Please let me know how it...[works] so that we may follow suit in the Transvaal."¹¹⁴ [Emphasis is mine] This was not only a willingness to change his stance, which he had stubbornly resisted. Indeed he seemed to be hopeful for this new policy and was willing to extend it to the Transvaal if it proved successful. Thus, the first two concentration camps were authorised for Bloemfontein and Kroonstad with, the possibility of a third at Irene near Pretoria. Roberts objections had died without a whimper. He never said a word regarding why he changed his mind. At this time there were also informal white camps at Barberton, Mafeking, and at Pietermaritzburg in Natal,¹¹⁵ which began in very primitive form in April, June and August respectively.

IV. The establishment of the black concentration camps.

It might be supposed that this development of the first concentration camps only affected those blacks working and living on the Boer farms. Roberts also informed General Kelly-Kenney in a telegram on 8 September, the day before he approved the formation of the first two concentration camps, that "Kaffirs who are reasonably suspected of having assisted the enemy should also be made prisoners."¹¹⁶ This was certainly one of the precursors to the removal of blacks to the concentration camps. There were both black and white men, women and children in the jails in the larger towns. This is shown by the ration scales for the jails, which listed the amounts of food to be issued to women and children as well as male prisoners in the two racial groups.¹¹⁷

Kitchener would radically change this policy. Whereas, Roberts wanted to remove blacks who were "reasonably suspected" of voluntarily assisting the Boers, Kitchener would remove all blacks on the

¹¹⁴ A2404, *Roberts Letters and Telegrams*, Vol. 4, p.132, Roberts to Kelly-Kenny, 9 September 1900.

¹¹⁵ Annette Ursula Wohlberg, "The Merebank Concentration Camp in Durban, 1901-1902," unpublished Master of Arts Thesis, University of the Orange Free State, Bloemfontein, 2000.

¹¹⁶ A2404, *Roberts Letters and Telegrams*, Vol. 4, p. 129, Roberts to Kelly-Kenny, 8 September 1900.

¹¹⁷ *The Free State Provincial Archives*, Bloemfontein, South Africa. The archives the Secretary to the Orange River Colony Administration, (CSO), Vol. 18, 1488/01, Chief Inspector of Jails, Orange River Colony to Secretary to Orange River Colony Administration, H.F. Wilson, 13 May 1901.

Boer farms in the districts where Boer Commandos were “active.”¹¹⁸ In this way he was determined to remove all blacks who might “voluntarily or involuntarily” assist the Boer Commandos.¹¹⁹ This eventually evolved into a policy that called for the removal of all blacks, except those in “...the Native Reserves near Pietersburg and along the Northern boundaries of the Transvaal and the lands of the Moroka District around Thaba’nchu by mid 1901.”¹²⁰ This included black independent farmers and at a later time the “Regular Locations” near some the larger towns.¹²¹ To escape the deprivations and dangers of the war some black families fled to the Native Reserves. Chief Soeping and his followers left their farm in the Marico District, which was their legal property, and entered the Native Reserve. When they applied after the war to return to their farm this was approved. Chief Soeping had had considerable complaints lodged against him with recurring frequency between 1891 and 1895. Normally the British did not approve requests involving tribes that had been a source of disturbance. In part, the motive for approval was stated to be that this land which they now resided upon could be used for other purposes.¹²² This demonstrates that some black tribes who owned their own farms moved into the Native Reserves during the war as a place of refuge.

It would be historically inaccurate to say that the black concentration camps, which would follow, were created for the detention or confinement of blacks suspected, charged or convicted of offences against the British military forces. There is no evidence to show that they were used for that purpose at any time during their existence. Black prisoners of war held by the British Army were incarcerated in jails in the larger towns and in prisoner of war camps, in South Africa and overseas in such places as Bermuda, Ceylon, and St. Helena. The Provost Marshal personally ordered the placement of some black prisoners in the Pretoria Jail. The numbers of black prisoners incarcerated

¹¹⁸ MGP, Vol. 258, P. 17, *A.G. Circular Memorandum No. 29*, W.F. Kelley, Major General, Adjutant General to Field Commanders, 21 December 1900.

¹¹⁹ *Ibid.*

¹²⁰ *The National Archives of South Africa Pretoria*, The archives of the Secretary of Native Affairs, Transvaal (SNA), Vol. 59, 2097, p. 2, de Lotbiniere to Milner, 30 September 1901.

¹²¹ “Regular Locations” were defined by Kitchener as those black communities that existed prior to the war and were indicated on the maps of the pre-war period.

¹²² SNA, Vol. 46, 1710, The Rustenburg Native Commissioner, C. Griffith, 15 August 1902.

in the jails were not large. The February 1902 return for the Pretoria jail lists 27 inmates. Fifteen of these inmates had been ordered kept in jail until the end of hostilities, but only four of these remained at the time of the February 1902 Return.¹²³ There is a record of some black prisoners who were detained in jails merely on suspicion. As a result it was decided that they had to be released because the likelihood of conviction was poor. It was considered unwise to release these “prisoners” back into the immediate community, as it was felt they would find their way back to their Boer masters and would then continue where they had left off in providing assistance of various kinds. In one instance 34 black prisoners in the Pretoria Jail, detained on suspicion, were sent to the Natal Labour Corps.¹²⁴ One of the folk myths often recounted to the writer is that there were no black concentration camps; the argument being that blacks were kept in jails where allegedly conditions were far better than the conditions in the white concentration camps.

There is considerable evidence of blacks reporting the movements and presence of Boer commandos to the British military authorities. These reports often came from black civilians, rather than from spies and scouts in the employ of the British Army. Numerous reports by black informers are contained in the reports of the British field commanders. Jeremy Krikler argues that blacks held in subjection by Boer landowners “...availed themselves constantly of the opportunities provided them to settle accounts with exploiters by providing intelligence to the British Army.”¹²⁵ The choice of which side to give their spying and scouting services, sometimes had to do with settling old scores with members of their tribe or with the Boers. Charles Van Onselen cites an example of one such scout working on the British side. “Mofubathi Mokawane’s job as a scout for the British was one of which his family’s highveld hosts of Vryhof¹²⁶ wholeheartedly approved since the rival

¹²³ PMO, Vol. 3, Doc. 217, The Provost Marshal to the Director of Prisons, 28 February 1902.

¹²⁴ Spies, *Methods of Barbarism*, p. 156.

¹²⁵ Krikler, *Revolution From Above*, p. 10.

¹²⁶ The family had taken refuge with these relatives while fleeing from the Vryburg black concentration camp.

Rapulana BaRolong had used the war to settle an old score with their neighbours by siding with the Boers.”¹²⁷

Typical of these reports are as follows. “Natives report that Boer Commandoes left Malaba drift on 1 (February 1901), some going to Speloken, some up Crocodile River.”¹²⁸ Black farmworkers also spied upon their employers “...aiding the Boer cause and even planted incriminating evidence that was used against them.”¹²⁹ W.R. Nasson describes this kind of activity in the Cape Colony especially in regard to Cape Afrikaners appearing before the Treason Courts. This, according to Nasson, engender[ed] “a general fear in those Afrikaner farming families sympathetic to the Boer forces.”¹³⁰ Nasson cites a comment in a journal of one of the accused that illustrates the perceived revenge and even false statement that was taking place. “Kleinbooï, Gentleman, Sixpence, February, or whatever his name is...seems quite intent on getting rid of his master.”¹³¹ One such spy in the Transvaal, Jantjie Mosiaan claimed “On the outbreak of...war we seized every opportunity which offered to render the British troops all possible assistance, and generally identified ourselves with the British Cause.”¹³²

This is not to say that all blacks on the veld were willing to inform on their Boer masters or the Boers in general. We are given detailed evidence that this was not the case in the records of the trial of Breaker Morant and other members of the Bushveldt Carbineers. The notorious Captain Alfred Taylor, a British Intelligence Officer connected with Breaker Morant and the Bushveldt Carbineers, is reported to have “...burnt the hut of a black who did not want to tell him where the Boers

¹²⁷ Charles Van Onselen, *The Seed is Mine; The Life of Kas Maine, A South African Sharecropper, 1894-1985* (Cape Town, 1996) p. 28.

¹²⁸ A1643, Robert's Papers, Vol. 65, Resident Commissioner. Salisbury, to Milner. 12 March 1900.

¹²⁹ Krikler, *Revolution From Above*, p.11.

¹³⁰ W.R. Nasson, “Doing down their masters: Africans, Boers and treason in the Cape Colony during the South African War of 1899-1902,” *Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History*, 12, (1983), cited in Krikler, *Revolution From Above*, p. 11. According to Krikler, Nasson implies that this also went on in the Transvaal, and to even a greater extent, because it was in the theatre of war.

¹³¹ *Ibid.*, p. 11.

¹³² SNA, Vol. 46, NA 1519/02, Mosiaan to Secretary of Native Affairs, 28 July 1902, cited in Krikler, *Revolution From Above*, pp. 11-12.

were.”¹³³ On another occasion in late October 1901 Taylor sentenced another black man to death for refusing to give information regarding Boers. It is believed he carried out the sentence by his own hand.¹³⁴ On still another occasion earlier in October some “faithful Kaffirs when questioned by Taylor refused to “reveal the whereabouts of their wounded Boer masters.” One of these black men when confronted by Taylor was shot dead when he refused to tell where his Boer master was. There were many witnesses to this incident.¹³⁵ These incidents, while not typical, were not unique. Many blacks were loyal to the Boers and assisted them in many ways at considerable risk. This is precisely one of the reasons that blacks on the Boer farms were removed to the black and white concentration camps.

Native runners helped British commanders locate units under their command, whose precise whereabouts were not known.¹³⁶ Some black scouts entered the Boer laagers and reported important intelligence to British commanders regarding troop movements and plans. As an example: scouts operating out of the Thaba’nchu Native Reserve reported during the siege of Wepener, “Boers trekking towards Wepener. British relief force just arriving Dewetsdorp. Boer Laager was at Tochgekry just south East of Dewetsdorp.”¹³⁷

Such reports were numerous and appear throughout the military records of the war. Boer commandos often killed blacks found in the open veld, even when unarmed, as it was assumed they were spies. Intelligence information was reportedly hard to obtain when the Boers in an area had killed some of the black scouts working for the Army intelligence operations.¹³⁸ In some instances, to prevent this shooting of blacks on the open veld, and to deter spying activity, as at Tafelkop, blacks were told by the Boers to stay on the farms or they would be killed.¹³⁹ Such activity on the

¹³³ Arthur Davey, (ed.), *Breaker Morant and the Bushveldt Carbineers*, (Cape Town, 1987) p. 46.

¹³⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 71-2.

¹³⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 103.

¹³⁶ A1643, Robert’s Papers, Vol. 65, Commandant Kroonstad to Chief of Staff, Germiston, 1 June 1900.

¹³⁷ A1643, Roberts Papers, Vol. 57, General Hunter to Roberts, 24 November 1900.

¹³⁸ Roberts Papers, Vol. 52, p. 35, General Clements to Roberts, 4 October 1900.

¹³⁹ MCB, Vol. 138, A Scott, Army Provost Marshall, Ventersdorp to Military Compensation Board, 18 November 1901.

part of the Boers is understandable, given the large amount of spying and scouting being carried out by blacks. At Winburg there was a large black scouting camp containing over 4,000 black scouts under the supervision of a Boer, Colonel O.M. Bergh.¹⁴⁰ There was another large scouting and spy operation in the Thaba'nchu Native Reserve.

The shooting of spies is traditional in warfare. Being, by necessity, very mobile the Boers commandos, in most cases, could not take and hold prisoners. There were instances of the killing of blacks, that were violations of the laws of warfare. In the Bethlehem District during very heavy scorched earth operations, on both the Boer and English side, General Rundle warned Boers in the district that if the indiscriminate killing of "Kaffirs" continued he would hold them responsible. He informed Roberts that older Dutch in the district had informed him "... that if it goes on the Kaffir question was likely to become a very serious one & may end in a native rising, which would be difficult to control especially as they would undoubtedly receive assistance from the Basuto border. I can gather the natives here are becoming very restless."¹⁴¹

The black concentration camps were formed solely for reasons of military necessity.

In the past, the black concentration camps have been seen generally as humanitarian in purpose, and intrinsically different, both in terms of their purpose and the levels of suffering, than the white concentration camps. Ironically, British apologists for the white concentration camps after the war, also made the argument that the white concentration camps were primarily formed for humanitarian reasons. As shown above, this was definitely not the case.

Charlotte Searle in a classic piece of apologetic asserted her understanding of the reasons that the black concentration camps were established in her history of nursing in South Africa.

Not only Republican families were removed to the Concentration camps. For some *obscure* reason, allegedly stated to be *the necessity of preventing them from falling between the two warring groups*.

¹⁴⁰ Stowell Kessler, "The black and coloured concentration camps," in Fransjohan Pretorius, (ed.) *Scorched Earth* (Cape Town, 2001) p. 135.

¹⁴¹ A1643, Roberts Papers, Vol. 46, pp. 191-92, General Rundle to Roberts, 12 September 1900.

Some 80,000 natives and coloureds were also admitted to the concentration camps. Some came voluntarily, others were ordered to the camps. The basic reason for this mass removal of non-whites probably lay in the fact that these persons had lived on the farms, which had been destroyed under the scorched earth policy, and there was no means of subsistence for them. Necessity forced their removal to the camps. Some thousands of them died in the camps.¹⁴² [Emphasis is mine]

Leonard Thompson, writing at the same time, partially joins this view regarding the white camps, but does not mention the black camps at all. He states that about 110,000 Boer men, women and children were away from their homes in 'concentration camps' where they had been placed by the British Army to prevent their assisting the commandos *and to save them from starvation* [Emphasis is mine.]. He correctly states that these camps were not formed to exterminate the Boers.¹⁴³ In contrast, Peter Warwick, gives three reasons for the establishment of the black camps, none of which are humanitarian in purpose. "First, their livestock and supplies of food were useful to the British. Second, such Africans provided a ready source of labour. Third, the use of livestock and produce as well as the services of the Africans would be denied to the Boers."¹⁴⁴ The third reason given is really the primary purpose behind the formation of these camps and also the white camps. During the war some blacks moved onto the state lands, to escape the scorched earth devastation, to protect their livestock,¹⁴⁵ and to escape being swept into the concentration camps. In reality, moving to these lands would not be sufficient protection from the British columns, especially during the period January 1901 to June 1902. Blacks living in such isolated places were easily victimised by both sides in the war.

B.E. Mongalo and Kobus Du Pisani, to a certain extent, subscribe to Searle's position. They give a balanced overview of the British official position, drawing mainly on Warwick and arguing that protection had to be given to black communities who were urged to seek refuge in the black camps. They contrast this official position with my own, coming down somewhat on the official British

¹⁴² Charlotte Searle, *The History of the Development of Nursing in South Africa, 1652-1960* (A Socio-Historical Survey) (Cape Town, 1965) p. 211.

¹⁴³ Leonard Thompson, *The Unification of South Africa, 1902-1910* (Oxford, 1960) p.12.

¹⁴⁴ David Raymond Burton, "The South African Native Affairs Commission, 1903-1905: An Analysis and Evaluation. Unpublished Master of Arts Thesis, University of South Africa, June 1985, p. 36.

¹⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 117.

side of the argument that the camps were humanitarian, but admitting that the British view was not entirely true.¹⁴⁶ The document cited to show that the black camps were humanitarian in purpose, actually shows that many blacks were forced to leave their homes, but having been forced into the camps, they were taken care of with no “remuneration”, which the black camp superintendent argued, “atones for all.”¹⁴⁷ In contrast, Warwick concluded that “...the neglect of the black refugees problem during the war, and its aftermath, conceal a story of profound misery and inhumanity.”¹⁴⁸ Stanley Trapido in his work regarding the war experiences of three Vereeniging Estates families, shows that their times in three different black concentration camps were quite varied¹⁴⁹ Trapido, based on his oral history research, affords us a very rare glimpse of life inside three of the black camps.

The women and children in all three families were...placed in various camps, the Mokales at Taaibos, the Molefes at Vredefort [Road] and the Molopes at Kroonstad. Abraham Mokale who was nine years old when the war began, recalled the camp with some equanimity, retaining his childhood perception of events in which the need for food was transformed into a prank. He remembered running alongside the British troop train, which passed through their camp, shouting ‘koekies, koekies, beef, koekies’. The soldiers threw tins of beef down... to them. [In contrast] Emelia Molefe, who thought of the camp as her first experience of ‘location (i.e. town) life,’ ...remembered that they ate porridge made of a type of maize which had previously been thought of as an animal feed. ...the elderly Mrs. Poee [an inmate at the Zandfontein Camp] recalled with...amazement that they were now allowed to eat green mealies by the camp administration....The camps were remembered for the disruption they brought to family life. Thus the young Dinah-Mpse-Molefe emerged from a ‘war location’ in which brothers and sisters had been lost and their homes had become a ruin.¹⁵⁰

Charles Van Onselen, in his oral history study of Kas Maine and his family, provides another rare glimpse of the true nature of these camps. When members of the family were confined in the black camp at Vryburg and “...came up against the realities of a dwindling food supply...” and were forced to eat a porridge made from horse feed, they left the camp, fearing for the family members if they stayed there, this in spite of the dangers of travel. They fled to relatives at Setagole near

¹⁴⁶ B.E. Mongalo and Kobus Du Pisani, “Victims of a white man’s war: Blacks in concentration camps during the South African War (1899-1902), *Historia*, Vol. 44(1), May 1999, pp. 152-53.

¹⁴⁷ Mongalo and Du Pisani. “Victims of a white man’s war...”, p. 153, Document cited is SRC, Vol. 4, 1121, Monthly Report, March 1901, Supt., Kaffirfontein black camp to Chief Superintendent, Department of Refugees, Orange River Colony, 31 March 1901.

¹⁴⁸ Peter Warwick, *Black People and the South African War, 1899-1902* (Johannesburg, 1983) p. 114.

¹⁴⁹ The Mokales, the Molefes and the Molopes families.

¹⁵⁰ Stanley Trapido, “Putting Plough to Ground.” in William Beinart, Peter Delius and Stanley Trapido, *Putting Plough to Ground* (Johannesburg, 1986) p. 348.

Mafeking to spend some time there with the family "recovering from the ordeal of the Vryburg camp."¹⁵¹

Because of the scorched earth program of the British Army, some blacks came in for protection. According to David Burton, some blacks moved in closer to the urban centres on the Witwatersrand, "...in the hope that they, their livestock and supplies of food, would be more secure."¹⁵² Burton does not mention the very important fact, that despite this "voluntary" coming in of refugees as a result of their fears and experiences of the scorched earth policy, no camps were formed to assist these refugees with food or shelter by the Transvaal military government prior to the formation of the Department of Native Refugee Camps in June-September 1901. In September 1900, just four days before the first two concentration camps were formed for the Hands Uppers, 250 Boer refugee women and children were brought out of Potchefstroom along with 150 black refugees "of all ages and sexes." According to General Hart "...starvation and fear were the cause of this exodus."¹⁵³ What happened to these refugees is not clear. Hart simply said he "...passed them all into Welverdiend." Among these refugees there were, as he described them, nine "turbulent" Boer women who he wished to make prisoners, but Roberts instructed that they "...be released and dealt with hereafter if they are guilty of any breach of the peace."¹⁵⁴ Already suffering starvation and fear due to their experience of the scorched earth operations their fate must have been dire. The British columns did feed refugees in their custody. In contrast to the Transvaal, refugees seeking protection in the Orange River Colony migrated to towns such as Thaba'nchu, Bloemfontein and Brandfort. There the military authorities, in conjunction with residential magistrates and district commissioners, formed concentration camps for both "voluntary" and "involuntary" refugees.

¹⁵¹ Van Onselen, *The Seed is Mine* (Cape Town, 1994) p. 28.

¹⁵² Burton, "The South African Native Affairs Commission," p. 36.

¹⁵³ Roberts Papers, Vol. 46, pp. 43-44, General Hart to Chief of Staff, Lord Kitchener, 17 September 1900.

¹⁵⁴ *Roberts Letters and Telegrams*, Vol. 5, p. 21, Tel. C. 4804, Roberts to Generals Barton, Hart and Colonel Edwards, 19 September 1900.

Searle's estimate of 80,000 black inmates incarcerated in the original and the later black concentration camps is quite low. At the peak of the population in the black camps at the end of the war there were 115,914 inmates in the black camps. This figure is based on the Monthly Report of the Department of Native Refugees in the Orange River Colony for May 1902, which records a population of 60,004.¹⁵⁵ The Monthly Report for the Department in June 1902 shows a peak population of 55,910 in the Transvaal Department of Native Refugees camps.¹⁵⁶ To this figure must be added the 21,042 documented deaths, which brings the minimal number of inmates who were in the black camps to 136,960.¹⁵⁷ This does not account for the numbers of black deaths that were not recorded in the black camps or the numbers of blacks who resided with the Boer families in the white camps. In addition it does not include the several hundred who deserted the black camps. It does include the numbers of recorded black deaths in the white camps that did record black deaths. As indicated in Chapter 6 not all white camps recorded the black deaths that took place within their confines. [See Chapter Six -Unrecorded black deaths.]

The statement by Charlotte Searle, above, presents two perceptions, which require some further comment. The first is that blacks on the farms were in danger of "falling between the two warring groups." By the time the black families were being swept into the concentration camps, most of the black farm workers had already joined the British columns or the Boer commandos. By this time hostilities between British and Boer forces had almost ceased. At this time small guerrilla bands of Boers were being pursued by British columns but battles were not taking place.

¹⁵⁵ SNA, Vol. 44, 1411, Monthly Report of the Department of Native Refugees in the Orange River Colony for May 1902, Officer in Charge, Department of Native Refugees, Captain de Lotbiniere to Commissioner of Native Affairs, Sir Godfrey Lagden, 12 July 1902.

¹⁵⁶ SNA, Vol. 59, 2073, Monthly Report of the Department of Native Refugees for June 1902, de Lotbiniere to Lagden, 20 September 1902.

¹⁵⁷ See Appendix 6.1, "The Master Death List" These deaths are documented by specific documents in the archival record or the publications of the British Government, in most cases the Cd. Series in the Parliamentary Papers.

By the time of the establishment of the concentration camps and the massive sweeps large scale battles were over. The reason for sweeping both black and white families off the Boer farms into the black and white camps was solely for military purposes. Rather than protecting black families from the “warring parties” they were removed by the British columns to prevent their livestock and foodstuffs being taken from them by the Boer commandos, either voluntarily or involuntarily, and to prevent them from assisting the Boers in other ways.. This shows that in many cases, blacks on the farms had livestock and food grains. In June 1901, and prior to that time, it was reported that because the military transport was not sufficient grain belonging to the black farmworkers had to be largely destroyed. As a result the blacks being removed to the camps were allowed to “retain a limited amount only.”¹⁵⁸ This shows that many black families on the farms, as the raisers of the crops, were not, in most cases, removed because “...there was no subsistence for them.” Quite to the contrary it was just the opposite. It was feared by the British military that they would provide subsistence to the enemy.

Secondly, there was nothing “*obscure*” about these removals of black families from the farms. Kitchener makes it very clear why they were to be removed. Certainly it cannot be asserted that they were removed to alleviate hunger or other deprivations. There were many blacks in very severe destitution, living in extreme deprivation outside the camps in the tribal areas. Pleas by blacks for assistance during the war did not result in their being placed in the concentration camps or receiving food or the means to grow food unless they were able to pay for their needs. Those who came in voluntarily, in most cases, did so because their huts and food supply had been destroyed.

A similar hypothesis to explain the reason for the formation of the black concentration camps was suggested by H.M. Taberer, the Native Commissioner for the Pretoria Heidelberg District , in 1903.

¹⁵⁸ TKP, Vol. 135, *Final Report of the Work Performed by the Native Refugees Department of the Transvaal, June 1901 to December 1902*, p. 1.

He asserted that small communities of blacks squatting on private farms suffered considerably from looting and commandeering, in the earlier stages of the war, and that because of their isolation and their small numbers, they were unable to offer resistance. Their position seems to have been speedily recognised and to have been remedied by the formation of Native or Concentration camps, into which all native families, who with their stock and grain, could not otherwise be protected, were gathered up and taken to the Native Camps. In these camps, the natives, with their women and children, were housed and fed. They were, where possible, afforded labour and ground for gardens. Their stock was protected, and at the cessation of hostilities, they were repatriated to their abodes. Every care was taken to see that each family was provided with sufficient food to last until they could again fend for themselves.¹⁵⁹

This short overview of the black camps is generally quite inaccurate, although containing some historical truths. Overall, however, it is a classic example of the kind of colonial gloss of the history of the of the black concentration camps, which was used to cover up the truth about the deliberate neglect that took place in these bare bones camps.

Its greatest lack is the failure to mention the fact that most of the blacks swept into the camps were removed along with the Boer women and children rather than being left on the farms by themselves where allegedly they were caught between the warring parties and without subsistence. [See Appendix 2.1] "Table of sweeps and removals of black and white families from the Boer farms and the veld."]

The research shows that none of the black concentration camps were formed for humanitarian reasons, with the possible exception of the Thaba'nchu black camp inside the Thaba'nchu Native Reserve. Only destitute refugees incapable of supporting themselves were eligible for admission to this camp. The Reserve itself, however, was a protected area into which many blacks had fled from the Boers and the British to keep their livestock from being confiscated. Black families living on the Thaba 'nchu town commons who needed rations were required to enter the camp in order to be eligible to receive rations. This was also the general policy in the case of white refugees throughout the country. The official reason given for this policy was to prevent food from falling into the hands of the Boer Commandos.

¹⁵⁹ SNA, Vol. 106, 491/03. Native Commissioner, Pretoria and Heidelberg District to Secretary of Native Affairs, 21 February 1903

In the Transvaal nothing was done to provide black refugees swept off the farms and dumped at the terminal points on the railway by the British columns with in an officially supervised and organised refugee camp. These black families were not provided with any of the bare essentials of food, shelter, sanitary facilities or medical care prior to the establishment of the Department of Native Refugees in June 1901. Until this time black refugees in the Transvaal by necessity formed their own informal settlements and camps along the railway, where they constructed housing from the limited materials on hand, or with the minimum of material they were able to bring with them. The construction of their own huts was a common practice for black migrant workers, as for example, at the diamond fields in Kimberly and elsewhere.¹⁶⁰

By Kitchener's order the house servants of the Boer women, were allowed to follow their Boer mistresses into the white concentration camps as early as 31 March 1901.¹⁶¹ These servants, however, were not provided rations in most of the white camps and had to be fed out of the meagre rations of the Boer family. Some "Natives" came into the military bases seeking protection before any concentration camps were formed. The following document illustrates how this was handled in lieu of forming a humanitarian refugee camp. The Secretary to the Military Governor of a district in the Transvaal wrote to the Assistant Director of Civil Supplies with a problem. "It often happens that natives from outlying districts come in to claim protection. They are generally penniless & without food. The Military Governor will be obliged if you can arrange to issue them food on the requisition of Mr Marwick, the Native Commissioner [of Pretoria]."¹⁶²

+ "The Natives must be self-supporting." That was the motto of Lord Kitchener and all British military and colonial officials. This was the consistent colonial policy throughout the Empire and in the period prior to the war and in England during the Victorian age. Enquiries by the British

¹⁶⁰ Patrick Harries, *Work Culture and Identity: c. 1860-1910* (Johannesburg, 1994) p. 55.

¹⁶¹ MGP, Vol. 258, AG. Circular 31, *Orders for Clearing Farms*, 31 March 1901.

¹⁶² MGP, Vol. 215, Letter Book, p.328, Secretary to Governor, District D to Assistant Director of Civil Supplies, 14 August 1900.

Parliament regarding provision for the black civilian population, whose crops and homes had been destroyed by the war, received no response regarding measures being taken to assist them, simply because no such measures were being taken. It is apparent from the very terse responses to these enquiries that Lord Milner and other British officials, while acknowledging scarcity and some deprivation, did not feel it was their responsibility to alleviate their suffering.¹⁶³

The British colonial policy regarding the black locations in the Cape Colony for the period 1890-1910 shows that non-intervention was the consistent British colonial policy regarding food deprivation among the residents of those locations. Even in times of severe famine, due to lack of rain and plagues of locusts, no grants of food were approved. The reason given by the British colonial officials was that they feared the "pauperisation" of the "Natives." This was also the policy, even in India during the great famines and the plagues from the 1850s on. There was only a willingness to provide "relief" works where the victims of hunger or disease were offered the "opportunity" to carry out "useful works." We can note that while charitable subscriptions were collected for the Boer families in the white camps and the uitlander refugees, none were provided for blacks, in or out, of the camps.¹⁶⁴

It was not until Lord Kitchener assumed the duties of the Commander-in Chief on 27 November 1901 that the full implementation of the concentration camp system was envisioned and ordered. Kitchener's use of concentration camps was not only more massive in numbers of camps and inmates, but its purpose was also significantly altered. The concentration camp policy of Lord Roberts was solely a war measure to protect the surrendered burgers from being commandeered back into the war. Even this limited use of concentration was authorised only after unrelenting pressure from the High Commissioner and Roberts' immediate subordinate, Lieutenant General

¹⁶³ CSO, Vol. 26, 2457/01, Chamberlain to Kitchener, Acting High Commissioner 14 June 1901.

¹⁶⁴ Transvaal Government Gazette, 1901, p. 1,000. Government Notice No. 52, 22 May 1901; Transvaal Government Gazette, 1900, p. 193, Government Notice No. 16, 1900, 15 August 1900; Transvaal Government Gazette, p. 511, Government Notice No. 134, 1900, 14 November 1900; A2404, *Roberts Letters and Telegrams*, Vol. 4, p. 4, C.3383, Roberts to Acting Military Secretary, 8 August 1900.

Kelley-Kenny. S.B. Spies summarised the role of the concentration camps system in this way: “The concentration camp system, inaugurated by Roberts and extended by Kitchener formed part of the strategic measures employed to end Boer resistance. The establishment of the camps enabled the authorities to clear the country of civilians—both white and black—whose presence on the farms was considered to be militarily undesirable.”¹⁶⁵

Kitchener’s concentration camp policy went far beyond an extension of Roberts’ concentration camp system. Roberts policy was designed to protect the surrendered Burgers from being commandeered back into the war, so that British troops would not have to face them again on the battlefield. Kitchener’s new policy was not designed to protect; but rather to confine every non-combatant, man, woman and child, black or Boer who could be the source of any intelligence or logistical assistance. More radically, Kitchener ordered the removal or destruction of every living creature and sustenance giving plant in order to deny the Boer guerrillas any resources to continue their stinging slash and burn guerriolla warfare. It was this new policy that resulted in the establishment of the black concentration camps. It is not clear if in the early months of the protective laagers for surrendered Burgers and their families if their house servants or farm workers accompanied them as had been proposed by Abercrombie.

In just a little over three weeks after Lord Kitchener took charge of the war he issued an Army Circular to his field commanders that would turn out to be the most important document of the war regarding the treatment of non-combatants. This field order, Army Circular No. 29, laid out a major facet of Kitchener’s master plan to end the persistently effective guerrilla warfare tactics of the Boer forces. The very first sentence of the circular clearly states Kitchener’s reason for this strategy. “The General Commanding-in-Chief is desirous that all possible means be taken *to stop the present guerrilla warfare.*” [Emphasis is mine.] The circular then goes on to explain how this is to be

¹⁶⁵ Spies, *Methods of Barbarism*, p. 189.

accomplished. It is clear that the concept of this program arose out of the "Hands Upper's" camps at Bloemfontein and Kroonstad.

Of the various measures suggested for the accomplishment of this object, one, which has been strongly recommended, and has lately been successfully tried on a small scale, is the removal of all men, women and children and *natives* from districts which the enemy's bands persistently occupy. This course has been pointed out by surrendered Burgers who are anxious to finish the war, *as the most effective method of limiting the endurance of the Guerrillas, as the men and women left on the farms, if disloyal, willingly supply, Burgers, if loyal, dare not to refuse to do so.* Moreover, seeing the unprotected state of women now living out in the districts, this course is desirable to insure their not being insulted or molested by natives.

With regards to the natives it is not intended to clear the Kafir locations, but only such Kafirs and their stock as are on Boer farms. Every endeavour should be made to cause as little loss as possible to the natives removed and to give them protection when brought in. *They will be available for any works undertaken, for which they will receive pay at native rates.* [Emphasis is mine]¹⁶⁶

It is therefore an incorrect view to see the reason for the establishment of the black concentration camps as a humanitarian policy to provide black people with food and shelter, or solely for the development of a work camp system. The utilisation of the labour of the black concentration camp inmates by the Army Departments was a by-product and an added benefit of this radical reformation of Roberts' original concentration camp policy. This utilisation of black labour was not the motivation for the burning of their kraals and their forced removal to the concentration camps. In essence the black and white concentration camps were both part of an anti-guerrilla warfare system, which had as its goal the *removal, as far as possible, of every living person, animal and sustenance giving plant from the veld.*

Charles Van Onselen in his oral history study of a black farmer, Kas Maine, provides us with a very early example of this process. "When [the British forces] eventually reached Holpan, [in the western Transvaal] the 'Tommies' put the grain stores and huts to the torch and then *offered* to escort the destitute black tenants and their livestock to a place of safety.[Emphasis is mine.] Hwai and the rest of the Maines were marched off in a westerly direction...and entered the village of Vryburg several days later [where]....they were confined to a makeshift camp in a 'location'

¹⁶⁶ MGP. Vol. 258, P. 17. AG Circular Memorandum, No. 29 By order of W.F. Kelly, Major-General, Adjutant General, 21 December 1900.

situated on the outskirts of the white village.”¹⁶⁷ If, as stated, this ‘camp’ was in existence in “early 1900” it was one of the first black concentration camps of the war. This was before any of the black or white concentration camps had formally come into existence. This predated the Mafeking and Pietermaritzburg white camps which had begun their gathering in of white “refugees in June and August 1900 respectively.

The reason that the British Army established the black concentration camps was for the same basic reason that the white concentration camps were established. Both the black and white concentration camps were an integral part of Kitchener’s anti-guerrilla warfare master plan that consisted of three chess game-like interlocking pieces (1) block houses and interconnecting barbed wire squares, (2) black and white concentration camps and (3) Massive dragnet sweeps by the British flying columns. The use of the sweep by flying columns was the one device not used by General Weyler in Cuba. These sweeps are the reason that Kitchener finally succeeded and Weyler did not. As stated the goal was to make the veld such a barren and hostile environment that the Boer Commandos would not be able to continue their very successful guerrilla warfare. At first this scheme was conceived of as an entrapment system consisting of a barrier of block houses connected by barbed wire squares up against which the Boers could be driven and killed or captured. Kitchener wanted to recreate the one great battle, indeed the only battle he had commanded troops in, which he had won at Omdurman in the Sudan, a few short years before. If he could just confine the illusive Boers forces in one place somewhere in the Free State he could then proceed to annihilate them as he had done with the “whirling dervishes” who were slaughtered *en masse*, some said unnecessarily.¹⁶⁸ By March 1902 Kitchener had finally concluded “...that it was no use attempting to corner the boer.”

¹⁶⁹ This was especially true in the last two years of the war when the Boer forces were formed into small groups of guerrilla fighters. In this circumstance of small groups of Boers hiding in the veld,

¹⁶⁷ Van Onselen, *The Seed is Mine*, p. 27.

¹⁶⁸ Trevor Royle, *The Kitchener Enigma* (London 1985) p. 122.

¹⁶⁹ FK, Vol. 1624, p. 570-1, Kitchener to Brodrick, 16 March 1902.

Kitchener believed that the blacks were more helpful to the Boers than to the British.¹⁷⁰ In fact, what is clear is that most of the inmates of the camps were plucked off the farms by sweeps of long British columns that were really, in large part, forays to extract black and white women and children from their domiciles on the farms.

The assistance of the Boer women and families to the burgers on Commando is well known. Although diary and journal writing was not a common practice among the Boer people, there were still a substantial number of personal accounts of life in the camps in diaries and journals written by the Boer inmates of the white camps. There are in addition, some accounts written prior to the forced removals to the white camps and the relatively few who were able to remain outside the camps during the course of the war. A.W.G. Raath in *Vroueleed*, recounts the experiences and misfortunes of the Boer women and children who remained outside the concentration camps during the war.¹⁷¹ Because of this logistical and intelligence support by the Boer women they were swept into the concentration camps. It appears that those women and their children who were able to remain outside the camps along with their black servants were for the most part in districts where the Boer Commandos were not active against the British forces.

The record of the assistance that was rendered by blacks to the Boer Commandos, in contrast, is totally nonexistent as far as personal accounts by the blacks themselves are concerned. The inmates of the black concentration camps were almost totally illiterate farm workers and domestic servants swept off the Boer farms. To date there has not been discovered a single diary or journal written by a black inmate in the camps. Indeed were it not for Victor Molema, the grandson of Sol Plaatje, and the historian John L. Comaroff, we would not have the single known diary written by any black writer during the war. *The Boer War Diary*, written by Sol T. Plaatje during the Siege of Mafeking,

¹⁷⁰ *Ibid.*

¹⁷¹ A.W.G. Raath, *Vroueleed: Die Lotgevalle van Die Vroue en Kinders Buite Die Konsentrasiekampe, 1899-1902* (Bloemfontein, 1993)

as shown in the previous chapter, is a valuable work for understanding the circumstances of some blacks during the war.¹⁷²

It is in the genre of diaries, journals and personal remembrances, that material on the personal experiences and involvement of blacks during the war is most likely to be found. In the papers of Robert's and Kitchener, and the War Office papers, as well as the Boer military archives, there is almost no specific record of black involvement in the war. Even when black soldiers died in battle, these statistics were not included in the commander's field reports and casualty lists. When blacks were found dead on the veld, and it was thought they had been killed or "murdered" by the Boer forces these incidents were recorded for obvious reasons. Therefore, since many of the Boers were quite literate and some were exceptional in the keeping of diaries and journals, the Boer commando diaries provide us with some of the few accounts of black involvement in the war.

Black people on the farms and the open veld gave or sold needed food and other supplies to the Boer commandos. It was, in part, due to this assistance, or the possibility of such assistance, that caused the black farm workers and other blacks to end up in the concentration camps. That the Boer commandos living off the land survived, in part, by what they could purchase or commandeer from the blacks is attested to by General C.F. Beyers who said at the Vereeniging peace talks that the supplies they required...they simply took from blacks in the area.¹⁷³ Blacks on the veld were also very helpful to British soldiers and often fed them and supplied them with food and other needs. In one instance several British soldiers were wandering the veld looking for food under a white flag after they had been released by General de la Rey. They were looking for a Boer patrol and while doing so they carefully avoided the farms to avoid recapture. They reported being stopped by Boer

¹⁷² John L. Comaroff (ed.) *The Boer War Diary of Sol T. Plaatje: An African at Mafeking*, p. xviii (Johannesburg, 1973)

¹⁷³ Spies, *Methods of Barbarism*, p. 286.

patrols who questioned them and let them go. They reported that they "...got plenty of food from the Kaffirs who treated them well always and said they would do anything for the English."¹⁷⁴

Here we draw upon the work of Fransjohan Pretorius. Blacks on the veld, as stated, routinely met the essential logistical needs of the Boers on commando, particularly in the area of food. A good example of this was the lack of such a common commodity as salt, which was an urgent matter in the minds of a number of the burgers. Some believed that they would become ill if they did not use salt. There was some bartering for salt with the blacks. A well known Boer commando recorded in his diary how he benefited from contact with some black salt miners. In August 1901, near the Moos River in the Eastern Transvaal, [Roland] Schikkerling learned that local blacks were extracting salt from saline soil. Schikkerling and others got to work at the appointed place, and through a laborious, but ingenious process, managed to distil 24 ounces of bitter, muddy salt in two days.¹⁷⁵ He noted, in what must be considered a piece of proverbial Boer wisdom, that "Whoever is active and constantly riding about among the natives and villagers acquires many more necessities than he who remains at home."¹⁷⁶

The following story provides some comic relief, but also illustrates the way in which friendly blacks assisted the Boers. "In august 1901 an elderly black woman in the eastern Transvaal served a group of burgers porridge and milk, explaining that when guests came to her they were to eat their fill, so that their bellies shall not rumble during the night."¹⁷⁷ Pretorius presents several examples where Boer Commandos commandeered the cattle and crops of blacks without the proper channels being at least consulted, such as Landdrosts, Native Commissioners and tribal chiefs. In response to complaints by the chiefs in one district, the Landdrost assured the chiefs that this had been done without the approval of the government. He also warned every officer in the district, "...on no

¹⁷⁴ Roberts Papers, Vol. 54, pp. 112-13, General Hart to Roberts, 13 October 1900.

¹⁷⁵ R.W. Schikkerling Dairy, 10.8. 1901, p. 280 and 29.8. 1901, p. 292. Cited in Fransjohan Pretorius, *Life on Commando During the Anglo-Boer War, 1899-1902*, (Cape Town, 1999) p. 43, Published originally in Afrikaans in 1991.

¹⁷⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 289.

account [were they] to commandeer oxen, horses, arms, slaughter animals and the like from blacks. This should be done by the *Landdrost* and commissioners in order prevent further agitation among blacks.”¹⁷⁸ General Louis Botha had a particular respect for private property according to one writer.¹⁷⁹ Ironically Lord Roberts had Botha’s farm utterly and completely destroyed.

When Kitchener in A.G. Circular No. 29 referred to “...the men and women left on the farms, if disloyal, willingly supply Burgers [and] if disloyal, dare not refuse to do so,” it seems almost certain that he was referring to the Boer families still on the farms. But obviously he was also aware that the “natives” left on the farms were also potential sources of cattle, foodstuffs and intelligence information. The Boer Commandos had stolen many of the sheep, goats and cattle from blacks on the veld or from black farm workers. In addition many blacks voluntarily gave or sold their livestock to the Commandos. Blacks were also roaming the veld with cattle stolen from the Boers or other blacks, either on their own or as agents of the British.¹⁸⁰ The British were also using black scouts, in some cases formed into “looting corps,” to steal cattle from black farm workers and residents of the various “African kraals”. Blacks who tried to follow their livestock were threatened with death or imprisoned.¹⁸¹ So prevalent was the theft of cattle by blacks that the Military Governor of Pretoria published a Government Notice ordering that if “Natives” attempted to sell livestock, and it was suspected that the livestock is not theirs, then a very strict process of verification is to be followed.”¹⁸²

Because the Boer Commandos were commandeering the livestock of blacks, on and off the farms, the British routinely burned their huts and commandeered their cattle and foodstuffs. In some cases the black residents were made homeless and destitute and were forced, both by circumstance and military order, to enter the black camps. A typical example of this process took place in the

¹⁷⁸ H.J. Botha, “Die moord op Derdepoort”, *Militaria* 1(1). 1969, p. 6. Cited in Pretorius, *Life on Commando*, p. 280.

¹⁷⁹ Richard Mendelsohn, *Sammy Marks: The Uncrowned King of the Transvaal*, (Cape Town, 1992) p. 120.

¹⁸⁰ *The National Archives of South Africa, Pretoria*, Archives of the Provost Marshall’s Office, (PMO), Vol. 3, 279, Memorandum written by Captain W. Bonham, Provost Marshall, 30 August 1902.

¹⁸¹ SNA Vol. 32, 1211, pp. 47-71. Looting Corps documents. 17 July 1901.

¹⁸² Government Gazette-Transvaal, p. 627, Government Notice, No. 139/00, 13 November 1900.

Heidelberg District. The District Commissioner at Heidelberg complained to the Military Governor of Pretoria. "General Spens, does not appear to be acquainted with the orders as to the treatment of natives in District. I have told him that foodstuffs cannot be allowed to remain with them and that their huts, which are used, as Boer barracks, should be levelled and all the natives sent into the native refugee camps."¹⁸³

As stated above, the prevention of logistical and intelligence support to the Boer Commandos was the primary reason for the forced removal of blacks to the concentration camps. There were other reasons, sometimes stated by the British officials, and these included the following, which space forbids any detailed explanation.¹⁸⁴ Most of these reasons were military in nature: to prevent the looting of farms and towns, the destruction of the railways, telegraph lines, bridges and culverts, to protect surrendered burgers and their black servants and farm workers from the Boers still operating in the field. In addition, certain humanitarian concerns were also given, such as providing for the starvation and destitution and deprivations caused by the war. The protection of white women and children from molestation, rape and murder from blacks in the veld was also a stated reason. It was also true that some British soldiers molested the Boer women. Emily Hobhouse quoted the account of the wife of General De la Ray "...women were for the greater part alone on the farms and their cattle were at the mercy of the cruel kaffirs who used to come and steal them away, generally at night. They would burst into the houses and make their way to the women and tell them they must have their money, using such threats and violence, that many a one fled in the night with her children, and often wandered for hours before she could find shelter."¹⁸⁵

S. J. Maphalala relates the opinion of a British official, who stated that prior to the murder of the Boers at Holkrantz (Mthashana), brought on allegedly by mistreatment of Zulus by the Boers, that

¹⁸³ MGP, Vol. 109, 9370/01, DC, Heidelberg District to the Military Governor of Pretoria, 26 July 1901.

¹⁸⁴ See more complete list, Stowell Kessler, "The black and coloured concentration camps" in Fransjohan Pretorius (ed.) *Scorched Earth* (Cape Town, 2001) p. 139.

¹⁸⁵ Emily Hobhouse, *War Without Glamour : Women' War Experiences written by themselves*. (Bloemfontein, 1924) p. 17.

he could "...not remember any instance of a Boer woman or child being killed by the Kaffirs."¹⁸⁶ A Report by G.A. Mills in May 1902 stated that "The [Zulu] Kaffirs had many opportunities of killing Afrikaner women and children...as the women and children remained on the farms....Kaffirs respect the owners of the farms, on which they live, and treat them and their wives, respectfully; but when Kaffirs accompany the [the British] columns they go into the farms and take what they like. The farm Kaffirs join them, and they go through the houses and do not respect anyone. Even on these occasions I did not hear of any personal ill treatment of women and children by the Kaffirs."¹⁸⁷

Incidents of abuse of the Boer women also took place in the presence of British officers by blacks during the process of removals, ostensibly, as stated, to protect them from the blacks wandering the veld. Emily Hobhouse reported the statement of one such officer who said that blacks assisting in the removals of the Boer women and children from the farms were allowed to loot the Boer farmhouses in lieu of being paid for their work by the British military, as they had no funds to pay them.¹⁸⁸ Selaki Matala, a black leader, who was sued for destroying a Boer farm, freely admitted, according to Krikler, "that when British troops engaged in their merciless destruction of landowner's homes, 'natives availed themselves of the opportunity of looting Boer houses.'"¹⁸⁹ In Emily Hobhouse Mrs. Grobler complained bitterly that "The enemy stormed the house like wild barbarians and cruelly drove me forth, everything being abandoned to the destroyers."¹⁹⁰ I received no protection from the so called civilised officers. The turncoat Boers who were working for the British Army were also paid in loot taken from the farms, usually cattle."¹⁹¹ It can be noted that there was no mention here of sexual attack or molestation. Such an admission for a Boer woman, especially of high social class, would have been very difficult as it is, even today, in the case of all

¹⁸⁶ Simon Jubulani Maphalala, "The Participation of the Zulus in the Anglo-Boer War, 1899-1902," Unpublished Master of Arts Thesis, University of Zululand 1978, p. 123.

¹⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 122.

¹⁸⁸ R. Van Reenen, (ed.), *Emily Hobhouse: Boer War Letters* (Cape Town, 1984) p. 101.

¹⁸⁹ Krikler, *Rebellion from above*, p. 15.

¹⁹⁰ Van Reenen, *Boer War Letters*, p.7.

¹⁹¹ Albert Grundlingh, "Collaborators in Boer Society" in Peter Warwick and S.B. Spies (eds.) *The South African War, The Anglo-Boer War 1899-1902* (London, 1980) p.265.

women everywhere. A.W.G. Raath has done some new work on the molestation of the Boer women.¹⁹² He has provided the following sworn testimony of such an event.

The story of Aletta Cecilia de Jager ...in the Bethlehem district about events on [a] farm on 8 February 1902:

After a British column had moved approximately three kilometres from the house, two armed black troops arrived. One of them blatantly entered and asked to sleep in the room with her. She threatened to stab him with a knife, but he disarmed her. When she tried to flee out of the door, she was grabbed by one of them and dragged back to the room. The other one also entered the house and held her, while the first one raped her. "I resisted, but they were too strong and wanted to strangle me, which weakened my strength and enabled them to rape me. I told them I was sick, but they did not listen....Once both had finished, they let me go and then left. I was then bedridden [for] four days on account of the blows and the abuse."¹⁹³

Aside from any policy reasons that led to the formation of the black concentration camps the underpinning of the need to form the black camps lay in the order of Kitchener to clear the Boer farms of black farmworkers and house servants along with the Boer families. Previous visions of the Boer families being removed, and in all cases leaving the black residents of those farms behind, have been shown to be incorrect by the archival record of the sweeps and removals. Although far from a verbatim record, it is clearly shown in very many instances that both blacks and Boers were swept from the farms together, while at other times they were removed separately. [See Appendix 3.1-Table of sweeps and removals of black and white families from the Boer farms and the veld.]

When Lord Roberts approved the establishment of "rest camps" for the surrendered Burgers he had no intention of seeing thirty-nine camps along the railway where eventually almost 28,000¹⁹⁴ Boer civilians, mostly women and children, would die. Certainly he did not visualise that eventually over 21,000 black civilians would die in over 100 black camps. [See Appendix A-Sites of the black concentration camps] Unlike Kitchener he saw the two camps he reluctantly authorised as a military

¹⁹² A.W.G. Raath has recently published a book in Afrikaans, containing such material.. However, I have not been able to obtain a copy.

¹⁹³ *Free State Archives*, A 69, Havenga Collection, Sworn statement by A.C. de Jager before M.W. Serfontein, Magistrate of Reitz, 3. March 1901. (Translation by A.W.G. Raath) in Fransjohan Pretorius (ed.) *Scorched Earth* (Cape Town, 2001) p. 58.

¹⁹⁴ The official figure presented in many sources is that of P.L.A. Goldman, appointed by the Transvaal Government after the war, lists 27, 927 Boer deaths in the concentration camps as follows: 26,251 women and children' 1,676 men above the age of sixteen of which no fewer than 1,421 were old men. Cited in Spies, "Methods of Barbarism?" p. 265.

expedient, which arose totally out of the circumstances of the British Army's lingering struggle with the Boers. He went home a little over two months later. Kitchener's task was to clean up the straggling bands of Boer and like Roberts to exit to India as Commander-in-Chief of British troops in the queen of all the colonies. The decision embodied in the Army Circular ordering everybody on the Boer farms into concentration camps was part of that exit strategy.

This can be seen in the very different scale of the new camps. He wished to protect the Army from the Boers, rather than other way around. Everybody wanted to end it as soon as possible. St. John Brodrick wrote to Kitchener three days before he was promoted from Under Secretary to Secretary for War. "I have taken office under great difficulties." In this very first communication he was letting Kitchener know that he should get this war over quickly. These great difficulties were the "prolongation of the war & detention of so many of our best officers in South Africa ties our hands here.". And then to light a fire under Kitchener to get this thing done, he informed Kitchener that he needed him in London to carry out the much need reforms. "I have known for some time that you wish to go to India." He told him that both in the cabinet, and outside the cabinet, there was a strong feeling to have him as soon as possible in the War Office. The message was clear-end the war as soon as possible.¹⁹⁵ The war would linger on for almost two more years, but nobody envisioned that terrible possibility then. Kitchener put in place his plan to end the war as soon as possible-concentration camps, block houses and squares and massive sweeps. This was a drastic shift toward draconian measures that would tighten the screw and end it.

These new camps under Kitchener started right after Christmas and they were just regular army camps. Some Hands Uppers had advised Kitchener that this was the way to end the war. It didn't. Kitchener became very depressed that it didn't and even offered to resign if somebody else could do better. The Hands Uppers were now with their families in protective laagers of confinement. All of this had been done for military reasons. This chapter has recounted that process. The next chapter

¹⁹⁵ FK, Vol. 1621, Under Secretary or War, St. John Brodrick, to Lord Kitchener. 9 November 1900.

records the development of more and more camps and a scale of deaths that was not foreseen or even considered. As at Mafeking nobody knew that it would take so long. These black and white women and children removed from the Boer farms to give the British Army a good fighting environment would experience a lingering suffering as the seemingly never ending war continued. The black inmates endured along with Boers a long confinement whose worse aspect was that nobody knew when it would come to an end. Milner would come to a conclusion finally, untypical of his normal approach to the war, that the concentration camps were a “great blunder which like most blunders, were not designed....It has been a Titanic struggle, and even now [that the child mortality is down]...I shall never feel easy while the camps exist at all, lest some new hideous plague should break out from to-day to to-morrow.”¹⁹⁶ The next chapter describes the beginning of that struggle in the original black concentration camps.

¹⁹⁶ FK, Vol. 1147, p. 1236 (Vol. 58 in Milner's Papers) Milner to Mrs. Chapin, 26 January 1902.

Chapter 3
The Original Black Concentration Camps
September 1900 to September 1901

I. Introduction.

The previous chapter discussed in detail the reasons and the circumstances leading to the formation of the first concentration camps established for the confinement of those who had signed and kept the neutrality oath." This detailed narrative, was found to be essential in order to lay a sufficient foundation for the first hypothesis of the study, which argues that the concentration camps were formed as an integral part of a military strategy, rather than as a humanitarian measure.

As discussed in the previous chapter, unlike these first two camps established at Bloemfontein and Kroonstad, the black and white camps which followed, were radically changed in purpose by Lord Kitchener and incorporated in his anti-guerrilla warfare master plan designed to put an end to very successful guerrilla warfare of the Boer Commandos. Indeed, as was shown, Kitchener's rationale for the establishment of the concentration camps was almost anti-thetical to the reason that Roberts formed the first two Hands Uppers Camps.

The history of the black concentration camps falls naturally into two distinct periods. The first being the period from September 1900 to September 1901 when the black concentration camps were under the white camp administration in the Orange River Colony. There were no black concentration camps under the supervision of the Department of Burger Camps in the Transvaal Colony: although there were some black and coloured inmates in the white camps of the Department. There were a few black camps established by and under the supervision of local military authorities. The second covers the period beginning in June 1901 to February 1903 when the black concentration camps were reorganised and placed under the administration of the newly

formed Department of Native Refugees.¹ This period is described in the next chapter. These early black concentration camps in the Orange River Colony and the handful of black camps in the Transvaal under the local authorities, are hereafter referred to as the *original black camps*.

These early black camps in the Orange River Colony evolved from informal settlements, which had grown up spontaneously as clusters around the military bases, and later around the newly formed white concentration camps. Eventually these camps were assimilated under the structure of the nearby white camps by the superintendents and the white camp administration of the Department of Refugees.² The growing numbers of black families being swept off the veld who were being dumped down near the white concentration camps by the British columns, eventually necessitated this assimilation. The perceived threat to the health of the white camps due to the high rates of disease and sickness in these informal black camps was a primary reason for their takeover by the white camps.

This chapter covers the relationship of black camps to the white camps, and the living conditions and policies governing those conditions, as far as they can be known. These aspects include housing, rations, fuel and the utilisation of inmate labour. Medical service, sanitation and the causes and numbers deaths are discussed in chapters 5 and 6, respectively.

II. Sweeps and removals of black families from the Boer farms, the veld and the “regular locations”.

The great majority of the black inmates were removed from the Boer farms by military force and compelled to enter the black and white concentration camps. Later Kitchener ordered blacks in

¹ Lord Kitchener ordered the establishment of the Department of Native Refugees, on or about 15 June in the Transvaal and on 15 August in the Orange River Colony. These camps were not fully operational until September, 1901.

² The reader should not confuse The Department of Refugees in the Orange River Colony and the Department of Native Refugees which had camps in both the Orange River Colony and the Transvaal. The Department of Refugees in the Orange River Colony did have nine black camps under its supervision until they were transferred to the Department of Native Refugees during July, August and September 1901. Two of these original camps were physically located in the northern Cape Colony at Aliwal North and Kimberly.

many of the “regular locations”³ removed to the concentration camps. Eventually Kitchener ordered that all blacks in the Orange River Colony and the Transvaal, except those in the Native Reserves, were to be swept into the camps. Some blacks voluntarily entered the camps. Most of these did so because the scorched earth devastation by the British Columns and Boer Commandos had made them destitute and homeless. In many cases the British Army and the Boer forces had destroyed their homes and had also commandeered their forage for their horses, and destroyed most or all of their crops. In fact, Kitchener who had ordered all standing crops, forage, mills, ovens and indeed everything present on the farms destroyed, complained that this was not being done everywhere as it was ordered.⁴ Some of these blacks who initially gathered in the towns looking for work, or wishing to leave the Boer farms, were eventually incarcerated in the black camps. Most of the rural black population, except some 20,000 blacks who were returned to the British protectorates, were compelled to remain in the camps for the duration of the war and into the early days of the post war period until their repatriation back to the Boer farms or other white employers could be facilitated.

While the archival sources do not provide us with a verbatim record of the forced removals of the black men, women and children from the Boer farms, there is more than sufficient documentary evidence to demonstrate that black and white families were removed from the farms by the British columns, sometimes together, and sometimes separately, as ordered by Lord Kitchener on 21 December 1900. [See Appendix No, 3.1 Table of sweeps and removals of black and white families from the Boer farms and the veld. January 1901 to May 1902 .]

In the beginning, as stated, the removal of black people to the black and white concentration camps was limited to those living on the Boer farms.⁵ Some sweeps of blacks into the camps are not specifically noted in the telegrams indicating the number of refugees being brought in. The most

³ Kitchener defined “regular locations” as black communities, usually located near the larger white towns, which were on maps printed prior to the war.

⁴ *British Parliamentary Papers*. Cd. 426, Army Circular Memorandum, No. 37, “General Instructions to Columns-“Orders for Clearing the Farms.” 17 May 1901.

⁵ *The National Archives of South Africa, Pretoria, British Parliamentary Papers*, Cd., 426, AG Circular Memorandum No. 29, Adjutant General, Major General Kelley to Field Commanders, 21 December 1900.

significant example of this was the dumping down by General Rundle's flying column of some 3,000 "refugees" at the gates of the Brandfort black and white camps. Were it not for the report of a doctor sent from Bloemfontein to check on the health of this unusually large number of "refugees" it would not be known that some of these "refugees" were blacks. The doctor reported having examined 3,000 refugees, both, black and white, and he indicated that "... the Kaffirs, generally, were in a very good state of health."⁶

As mentioned not all black civilians on the veld were confined in the concentration camps until the end of the war. Those who were native to the British protectorates and Natal were, in some cases, allowed to return there, provided those governments were willing to accept them. In March 1901 the Acting Resident Commissioner of Basutoland, Godfrey Lagden, approved the return of BaSothos now in the Orange River Colony in areas immediately contiguous with Basutoland. It was ordered that lists be prepared of blacks in the various camps who would be willing to return to Basutoland. Among others, sixty BaSothos in the Brandfort black camp were returned in March 1901.⁷ Due to a shortage of grazing land and other economic restraints, requests of blacks to enter Basutoland later in the war, were refused. In January 1902 there was an attempt to send some blacks in the Winburg area in the Orange River Colony to Basutoland. This was requested as a means of speeding up the clearing of the country, and because "the majority of Kaffirs" were willing to go there. Hamilton Goold-Adams, the Deputy Administrator of the Orange River Colony, had no personal objection but had been informed previously that the Basutoland authorities would be hard pressed to provide food, accommodation and grazing for their livestock.⁸ He therefore rejected the request.

⁶ *The Free State Provincial Archives, Bloemfontein*. The archives of the Chief Superintendent of Refugee Camps, Orange River Colony, (SRC), Vol. 11, 4247, Medical Officer, Bloemfontein white camp to Superintendent, Brandfort white camp, 15 August 1901.

⁷ SRC, Vol. 2, 465, Acting Residential Commissioner, Basutoland, Godfrey Lagden to Deputy Administrator, Orange River Colony Administration, Major Hamilton Goold-Adams, 5 March 1901.

⁸ *Free State Provincial Archives, Bloemfontein*, Archives of the Secretary to the Orange River Colony Administration, (CSO), Vol. 53, 160/02, Goold-Adams to Chief Supply Officer, Bloemfontein, 15 January 1902.

Many destitute Boers fled into Basutoland and some lived in BaSotho villages until the end of the war. Some Boer families who had taken refuge in Basutoland were sent to the white concentration camp at Aliwal North, sometimes at their own request. In November 1901 Lord Kitchener learned that some Boers were being sent to a refugee camp in Basutoland. He immediately ordered this stopped.⁹

Black house servants of the Boers in the white camps.

That there were blacks in the white camps is recorded both in the archival record and the writings of observers. More importantly, Lord Kitchener, himself, had ordered that "...if possible household natives should be permitted to accompany the families, or to be sent to the same station..."¹⁰ On several occasions in her letters, and other writings, Emily Hobhouse attests to the presence of blacks in the white camps. She described in almost poetic genre that she often saw "...little Kaffir servant girls [who had been] whipped up and carried off with their mistresses."¹¹ In her visits to families in the Bloemfontein camp she noted that some black servants were living in the same tent with the Boer family.¹² The Superintendent of the Barberton white camp complained that there appeared to be an undue familiarity between the Boer families and their black servants. "Some servants [were] sleeping, eating, and drinking in the same tents with the whites, and this cannot be allowed,"¹³ he said. The superintendent of the Bloemfontein white camp reported that "Several refugees...have natives...they brought in with them from their farms and are using them as servants."¹⁴ Even though this placement of household servants was authorised by Lord Kitchener, no rations were authorised for these servants in most of the camps. They had to be fed out of the usually very scanty and poor quality food issued to the Boer families. This shows that, at least in some cases, the Boer families

⁹ CSO, Vol. 49, 4469, Commander-in Chief, South Africa, Lord Herbert Kitchener to Goold-Adams, 12 November.

¹⁰ Cd. 426, AG Circular, No. 31, 17 May 1901.

¹¹ Rykie Van Reenen *Emily Hobhouse: Boer War Letters*, (Cape Town, 1984) p. 83.

¹² *Ibid.*, p. 49.

¹³ *British Parliamentary Papers*, Cd. 902, *Further Papers Relating to the Working of the Refugee Camps in South Africa*, p. 56.

¹⁴ SRC, Vol. 11, 4173, Supt. Bloemfontein white camp to Chief Superintendent, Department of Refugees, Orange River Colony, Captain A.G. Trollope, 13 August 1901.

were very anxious to have their servants with them in the camps. Kitchener's order regarding the house servants was not issued until 31 March 1901. The record seems to indicate that only a very small number of the Boer families had their household servants with them. Some of the black servants used by the Boer women in the camps were hired locally. In the case of the Volksrust camp a Boer women tried to hire a young black girl about 11 or 12 years old as a servant. The girl's father refused to allow her to accept the work, not because of her age, but because the woman owed his daughter a years wages. He had another reason for refusing. He complained that a member of this Boer family who was still on Commando had recently visited his kraal with three other Boers who "took off three cows," which had not yet been returned. The Resident Magistrate felt the father was more than justified in his refusal.¹⁵

In a most unusual instance, a man in the Middleburg white camp, having had his other male servants commandeered by the British Army, forced his last remaining servant, "Gelboy," who had been his gardener on the farm, to dress in women's clothes. The servant complained to the camp officials and was relieved of this indignity. Arye Kroon, a Hollander, whose wife had recently died, thought that in this way his servant would escape notice.¹⁶ There is also indication that the Boers, in some cases had a very close and loving relationship with their servants. In one instance a young eight-year-old "Hottentot"[Khoi-Khoi] girl, who died in the Middleburg white concentration camp, was buried in the white cemetery when she died of typhoid fever.¹⁷ She was the only black or coloured person to have been buried in the white cemetery according to the record. So prevalent was the presence of blacks and coloureds in the white camps that the superintendents of the camps

¹⁵ *National Archives of South Africa, Pretoria*, Legal File, Wakkerstroom District, (LWM), Vol. 8, The Resident Magistrate, Volksrust to Commandant Sanetsspruit Station Camp, 26 June 1901.

¹⁶ *National Archives of South Africa, Pretoria*, Archives of the Army Provost Marshall (PMO) 1263, Captain W.S. Burnaby, to Army Provost Marshall, Middleburg, 14 May 1901

¹⁷ *National Archives of South Africa, Pretoria*, Archives of the Department of Burger Camps, (DBC), Vol. 85, Middleburg white camp. WR 5.1.02, 5 January 1902.

in the Orange River Colony were required to list the numbers of “coloured” residents of their camps in their weekly statistics.¹⁸

It is necessary to determine how widespread this practice was in the white camps. Fortunately, when the Committee of Ladies, of The Concentration Camps Commission, herein referred to as the Committee of Ladies, inspected the white camps they included a brief comment regarding the black servants present in each camp. Six of the thirty camps provided rations and required labour on the part of the recipients in return. The report only lists the actual numbers of black servants in three of the camps as follows: Barberton, 100; Harrismith, 45 and Howick, 50. Most of the remaining camps are listed, as having some or a very few black servants. A. Wohlberg indicates that in the Merebank white camp by December 1901 there were 73 black servants up from 22 in September, for whom no rations or accommodation were provided.¹⁹

The Committee did not specify where these servants were accommodated in eighteen of the thirty camps visited. In two camps these servants slept in their own location. In three of the camps they slept in the regular “Native Location”. In one camp the servants slept in the camp, but were not compelled to do so. In another camp the servants slept in the Boer houses in the town that were being used to house Boer refugees. In some camps the family was divided. The women slept in the camp and the rest of the servant’s family slept elsewhere. A. Wohlburg indicates that “Black Staff members resided in tents next to the road near the hospital, wood depot and the entrance into the camp in a very wet and marshy area.”²⁰

¹⁸ SRC, Vol. 1, 68, Trollope to Superintendent, Norvals Pont white camp, 5 February 1901.

¹⁹ Various sources in Annette Ursula Wohlberg, “The Merebank Concentration Camp in Durban, 1901-1902, unpublished Master of Arts thesis, University of the Orange Free State University, Bloemfontein. On page 169 is a listing of the names of black and coloured person in the Merebank camps taken from the Hospital Register and Death Register. Natal Provincial Archives, Department of Burger Camps 131 and 132 respectively. Wohlberg acknowledges that the record keeping regarding black people in the camp was poorly kept and incomplete. This is a consistent problem in the records of black camps.

²⁰ A. Wohlburg private collection (Durban): Merebank Burger Camp, February 1902 (original photograph); P.J. Van der Walt, *Vrouweverdiert: herinneringe uit die Konsentrasie kampe van Petronella Johanna van der Walt (Olivier)*, p. 35 cited in Annette Ursula Wohlberg, “The Merebank Concentration Camp in Durban, 1901-1902, p. 167.

The removal of “regular locations.”

On 21 December 1900 when Lord Kitchener issued his order to remove the Boer and black families from the Boer farms he stipulated that this order did not apply to the “regular locations” that had existed prior to the war. By August 1901 it became policy to completely clear the countryside of every person.²¹ As mentioned this eventually included the “regular locations”. “At least as early as June 1901 the Transvaal Colony and the Orange River Colony were being swept by columns with orders to bring in all natives except those found in the existing reserves. According to Major de Lotbiniere, the Officer in charge of the Department of Native Refugees, these instructions had been in operation in the Orange River Colony for a considerable period prior to June.”²² Despite this blanket order some of the larger locations escaped removal. The Native Commissioner for Pretoria and Heidelberg claimed that blacks living under tribal rule in large locations were not very affected by the war and during the whole period of the conflict. He stated that they were able to continue ploughing as they always had. He indicated, however, that those living in small communities as squatters on private farms suffered a far different fate. Because of their inability to offer resistance they suffered considerably from looting and commandeering. It was his view, that this was the reason that the black concentration camps were formed.²³

The initial ban by Kitchener regarding the removal of the regular locations did not last very long, especially in the Orange River Colony. For example as early as April 1901 at Kroonstad the military decided that the permanent black locations outside the town needed to be removed because the 1,000 residents, while having some cattle and grain making them self sufficient, were being raided by the Boers.²⁴ Some regular locations survived to a period very late in the war. As an example the Vryburg Location, although self-supporting, was removed by the military to a camp formed for that

²¹ *National Army Museum, London England*, 7101-23-33, Kitchener to Roberts, 9 August 1901.

²² *National Archives of South Africa, Pretoria*, Archives of the Transvaal Secretary of Native Affairs, (SNA), Vol. 1, NA 23/01, Officer in charge, The Department of Native Refugees, Captain G.F. de Lotbiniere to High Commissioner, Lord Alfred Milner, 30 September 1901.

²³ SNA, Vol. 106, na 491/03, Native Commissioner, Pretoria, Heidelberg District, to Secretary of Native Affairs, W. Windham, 21 February 1903.

²⁴ SRC, Vol. 5, 1304, Report, of Camps Inspector, Orange River Colony, Mr. Daller, to Trollope, 15 April 1901.

reason at Brussels just a month before the war ended in May 1902.²⁵ There appears to have been a temporary camp for black refugees in the Vryburg Location in March 1900. [See Chapter 2, IV. The establishment of the black concentration camps,—black concentration camps formed solely for military reasons.] Most of the regular locations, however, had been removed by mid 1901. Spies cites an assistant to the Military Governor of Pretoria in October 1901 as saying that "...Kitchener had ordered all 'Native stads (villages) to be destroyed and the inhabitants removed to 'refugee camps'".²⁶

There was another exception to the policy of the removal all the blacks to the concentration camps. In some cases regular locations or loyal tribal groups were not removed because their presence made it difficult for small parties of Boers to operate freely. An example of this was the decision to maintain of the garrison at Lydenburg during a period in the war when the garrison might have been removed because of the needs for troops elsewhere. It was decided that this garrison should be maintained in order to secure the allegiance of Chief Sekukunie's "natives."²⁷

III. The historical evolvement of the black concentration camps. In the Orange River Colony

The early stages of the sweeps of refugees into the towns.

The *Times History* argues that the black camps were put in place due to the large numbers of blacks congregating in the towns or near the white camps seeking British protection.²⁸ This seems to have been the case at Kroonstad black camp in its earliest stages. In May 1901 the General Officer Commanding wired Goold-Adams asking for the appointment of a superintendent of "native" refugees be made at once, because of the numbers of refugees who were suffering from sickness and starvation. The term "protection" needs some definition. As used in the British documents it applies almost always to blacks who came in from the veld looking for food and shelter, having

²⁵ CSO, Vol. 1493, CL Report, April 1902, 23 May 1901. (Document does not indicate what the letters "CL" stands for.)

²⁶ SNA, Vol. 2, NA 33/01. Major J. Weston Peters, Assistant to the Military Governor of Pretoria to Pretoria Superintendent of Native Affairs, 14 October 1901. Cited in Spies, p.227.

²⁷ *National Archives of South Africa, Pretoria, Accession 1643, Roberts Papers, Vol. 23, General Buller to Roberts, 25 September 1900.*

²⁸ L.S. Amery, *The Times History of the War in South Africa 1899-1902*, Vol. IV, (London, 1911), pp. 25-6.

been driven from their kraals by the scorched earth operations of the British columns and the Boers, or in cases where they were fleeing the Boer forces. A typical incident took place near Bloemfontein in October 1900. General Kelley-Kinney wired Roberts: "Enemy reported to be crossing Modder River...I have Kaffirs coming in for protection. I will feed them."²⁹ In some cases blacks brought in grain supplies and other property seeking protection for their goods from being commandeered by the Boers. In one incident, some Boers shot one native dead and wounded two others when they were bringing in grain in a wagon to Kraaipan for protection.³⁰ The British military were, of course, very concerned that the livestock of the blacks on the veld not fall into Boer hands.

In some towns, refugees found shelter in the "regular locations". As an example, in the first sweeps of blacks from Luckhoff, into Bloemfontein, they were told that "...those who had friends in the locations ought to go there and find room for living". This meant they had to pay rent and support their families. "An old Lutheran evangelist, Petrus Van Wyk, who had been swept into Bloemfontein with this group of refugees from Luckhoff asked to be transferred to the small black concentration camp at Kaffirfontein where he could continue to preach and teach his people, and where he would not have to pay rent."³¹ In Edenburg the black concentration camp was just an extension of the "permanent location." This camp stretched north from the permanent location and was about 600 yards from the town."³² The Edenburg Commandant in referring to the camp called it "the location" and made no distinction between the permanent location and the almost 2,000 blacks who had been swept into Edenburg by the military columns. Dot Serfontein, the Afrikaans writer, describes the formation of a black camps at Kroonstad when blacks coming in from the farms tried to move in the Kroonstad location which she states at that time was inhabited exclusively by

²⁹ A1643, Roberts Papers, Vol. 52, 181-3, General Kelley-Kinney to Roberts, 18 October 1900.

³⁰ A1643 Roberts Papers, Vol. 58, pp. 171-72, Colonel Western to Roberts, 17 November 1900.

³¹ SRC, Vol. 6, 1751, Rev. J. Arndt to Trollope, 6 May 1901.

³² SRC, Vol. 5, 1206, Medical Inspector for the Department of Refugees to the Secretary to the ORC Administration, H.F. Wilson, 1 April 1901.

“coloured artisans, cab drivers,...harness makers, etc., and were refused access by the inhabitants, who did not want this bunch of Kaffirs in their location.”³³[My translation.]

Another example of this practice of moving into a regular location took place in the Waai Hoek Location in Bloemfontein. As a result, serious overcrowding took place at Waai Hoek. This alarmed the Bloemfontein Town Council because of the potential for the spread of disease to the white population in the town by this “pest house in their backyard”.³⁴ Newly arrived blacks, from the outlying districts, who were working for the Army Departments, were part of the reason for this overcrowding. Goold-Adams, ordered these black refugees removed to the very recently formed black concentration camp in Bloemfontein.³⁵ In February 1901, another dramatic example of this process was revealed in the plea of the British commandant of Vereeniging who reported to Trollope that there were “Crowds of Kaffirs coming into vicinity of the camps.” He claimed there was not room for them and stated in a later telegram that there were 1,000 nearby.” Overall he wished to know how to feed them and what should be done with them. Some took up residence in the several black locations near Vereeniging.³⁶

This process can also be seen in April 1901, when black farm workers were being swept into Heilbron. At first they were allowed to take up residence in the black location in the town. When , however, a third drop of 900 more black refugees was brought in from the veld the garrison commandant ordered them to encamp outside the town boundary because he felt the town location was becoming overcrowded.³⁷ Blacks swept into Thaba'nchu by the British, as well as others seeking protection for their cattle, took up residence on the town commons. Those with cattle were placed on a farm in February. In April due to the growing unsanitary condition of the commons

³³ Dot Serfontein, “Swartes in kampe het ‘van vettigheid van oorlogsmasjien geeleef.’” *Die Volksblad*, 8 October 1996, p. 10.

³⁴ CSO, Vol. 7, 470/01, Dr. Friedman to Chief of Police, Bloemfontein, 13 March 1901.

³⁵ CSO, Vol. 7, 470/01, Goold-Adams to Wilson, 30 March 1901.

³⁶ SRC, Vol. 1, 17, Commandant Vereeniging to Trollope, 18 February 1901.

³⁷ SRC, Vol. 5, 1399/01, Supt., Heilbron white camp to Trollope, 13 April 1901.

those who needed to be rationed were required to enter the black camp eight miles outside of town.

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Displaced and removed families.

In the beginning, black workers from the Boer farms and blacks in the countryside who were being displaced from their huts and homes by the scorched earth operations began to cluster and loiter in the British garrisoned towns. In some cases, as at Jacobsdal, Boer and black families were being brought into the towns from the farms. No provisions or plans had been made for feeding these families or providing shelter. This particular instance took place well after the formation of both the black and white concentration camps. It was apparently a common practice for the British columns to bring Boer families made homeless by the scorched earth tactics into the towns.³⁹ As the result of military operations the Resident Magistrate reported “thousands of came into the town at Thaba’nchu with their cattle.”⁴⁰ Some rural blacks came in involuntarily because the Boer or the British forces had destroyed their homes. In some instances, as in the very first encounter between the British and the Boers in the war at Mafeking, “Kaffir huts” were used as cover.⁴¹ For this reason African huts were burned and destroyed by both sides throughout the war. The Boer General, Christian De Wet, said “...ruined Kaffir kraals’ provided the British with excellent positions.”⁴² A good example of this was the demand of the District Commissioner at Heidelberg that the kraal huts at the Eerste Fabriken whisky factory site be levelled and all the natives be sent into native refugee camps. The reason he gave for this request was that these huts were being used by the Boers as barracks. The notorious Morley’s Scouts, as ordered, destroyed the thirteen huts, which had housed

³⁸ CSO, Vol. 11, 924/01. Acting Residential Magistrate, Thaba’nchu to Wilson, 18 April 1901.

³⁹ SRC, Vol. 10, 3934/01, Resident Magistrate, Jacobsdal to Wilson, 6 August 1901.

⁴⁰ CSO, Vol. 10, 734/01. Resident Magistrate, Thaba’nchu to Wilson, 3 April 1901.

⁴¹ Brian P. Willan. (ed), *Edward Ross Diary of The Siege of Mafeking October 1899 to May 1900*, (Cape Town, 1980) p. 19.

⁴² Christian R. De Wet, *Three Years War*, (New York, 1902) p. 14.

250 blacks and they were ordered into the black camp at Bronkhorstspuit in July 1901.⁴³ Obviously this is not true as they were occupied by black families.

Blacks deserting farms for better wages and better treatment.

Some blacks deserted the Boer farms and came into the towns hoping the British would give them work and for what they hoped would be a better situation. Some were whipped for loitering and refusing to work, as at Brandfort. The presence of the British forces in the towns acted like a magnet, which induced desertion from the Boer farms. As a result there was considerable disappointment and even anger when it became apparent that the laws regarding the "Natives" previously enacted by the Boer republics were to be retained by the British who felt the Boers understood better than they how to control the "Native" population.⁴⁴ "Chamberlain conceded when he returned from [his inspection tour of] South Africa in 1903 that Afrikaners, though sometimes cruel, had in some mysterious fashion 'understood the Native character.'"⁴⁵ This was also true of the urban blacks that had lived in the towns prior to the war. Blacks in Pretoria, for example, complained that they were still forced to wait in a separate window from whites when they came to collect their post. When the British forces entered and occupied Johannesburg many blacks destroyed their passes believing that they would no longer be required under the British who claimed that they were there to liberate the blacks from the rule of the Boers.⁴⁶ On the other hand the British officials were worried that the blacks not get the impression that as their new overlords that they would act in the same ways as the Boers had. When Captain Alfred Taylor, an Intelligence Officer associated with the infamous *Bushveldt Carbineers*, was being considered for removal from his work with the "Natives" the new Native Affairs official assigned to that area in the Transvaal

⁴³ *National Archives of South Africa, Pretoria*, Archives of the Military Governor of Pretoria, (MGP), Vol. 109, 9370/01, District Commissioner of Heidelberg to the Military Governor of Pretoria, General J. G. Maxwell, 26 July 1901. This was one of the first Department of Natives Refugees camps and this order came on the same date that black refugees were allowed to begin farming near the Middleburg white camp. This was the forerunner of the Middleburg Department of Native Refugees camp.

⁴⁴ *National Archives of South Africa*, Archives of the Political Secretary to the Commander-in-Chief, (PSY), Vol. 55, p. 125, Acting Magistrate, Volksrust to Commandant, Volksrust, 6 October 1900.

⁴⁵ Donald Denoon, *A Grand Illusion: The Failure of Imperial Policy in the Transvaal Colony During the Period of Reconstruction, 1900-1905* (London, 1973) p. 96.

⁴⁶ Thomas Pakenham, *The Boer War*, (London, 1979) p. 429.

expressed his fears about Taylor. "The [black]...people associate his actions with a promised [sic] continuance of Boer methods."⁴⁷

The Cape Colony black and coloured refugees.

There was an additional source of black refugees congregating in the garrisoned towns. Black and coloured people hired in the Cape Colony by the British forces often ended up in the garrisoned towns as a consequence of their employment, primarily as transport drivers, having ended there. According to W. Nasson black labourers received staple rations and up to 1 shilling monthly as camp followers. They carried out various tasks as grooms, grass cutters, woodcutters and general servants.⁴⁸ Now many of these workers were unemployed and congregated in the towns or on abandoned farms. An incident, although later in the war, is illustrative of the process. A considerable number of BaSothos and Fingoes and other blacks had gathered on several government farms in the Ladybrand District. The Commandant at Ladybrand described some of these squatters as "Cape Colony Kaffirs who, he said, were "mostly deserters and droppings from convoys & the Transport Service." In response to this problem he said, "I presume the best thing to do would be to place them in some native refugee camp."⁴⁹

The specific travel and service patterns of the estimated 14,000 Cape transport riders are not known.⁵⁰ Certain rail lines were able to serve the sheltered areas between the ports and the railhead stockpiles at Nauuwport and De Aar, Stromberg and Colesburg.⁵¹ Nasson confirms my own view that some transport riders made short runs between supply sources and depots and the military units at the places where they were progressing northwards.⁵² Many drivers and camp followers,

⁴⁷ Arthur Davey, (ed.) and commentary, *Breaker Morant and the Bushveldt Carbineers* (Cape Town, 1987) p. 68.

⁴⁸ W. Nasson, *Abraham Esau's War: A Black South African War in the Cape, 1899-1902*, "Moving Lord Kitchener: military transport and supply work." (New York, 1991) p. 75.

⁴⁹ CSO, Vol. 42,3994/01, Commandant.. Ladybrand to Goold-Adams, 29 October 1901.

⁵⁰ Peter Warwick, *blacks in the South African War*, (Johannesburg, 1983) p. 21.

⁵¹ Nasson, *Abraham Esau's War*, p. 65.

⁵² W. Nasson, personal communication, 23 June 2001.

however, accompanied the military units to their destinations being used to bring along in tandem the artefacts and supplies, which were part and parcel of the things needed for the war.

At the transport depot in Bloemfontein there were numerous cases of "Natives" who had been employed in various capacities by the British Army and who, upon completion of their employment, were unable to obtain their pay from the British Army. They were willing to do anything they could to earn money so they could return home.⁵³ Major Sandilands, the President of the Military Compensation Board at Bloemfontein, confirmed this to be the case. As late as February 1903 sixteen of these transport drivers were still unpaid both for their labour and for a burnt wagon they had provided the British Army under contract.⁵⁴ Many of the wagons purchased from "native" transport riders and owners were not paid for, at least not for a long time. One report of the Inspector of Native Reserves in Taungs in September 1900 indicated that the Imperial Transport Authorities had not yet paid the "natives" for their wagons in this service. He indicated that thirty summonses, forty six demands and seven "Writs of Execution, "... had been taken out against defaulters."⁵⁵

In the end some of these transport riders, who tended to be British "loyalists," in all likelihood, ended up in the black camps. In the white camps, inmates who were discovered to be loyal British subjects were, in some cases, released and given their freedom. In contrast, many of the inmates in the black camps who were the former employees of the British Army, or the families of blacks serving with the British columns, continued in their confinement until they were repatriated in the early post war period.. The death lists of the black camp inmates show many Dutch surnames, which would seem to indicate that at least some of these inmates were Cape coloureds who had come north with the British forces. According to Nasson some transport riders may have been

⁵³ MGP. Vol. 146, pp. 62-3, President of the Military Compensation Board to Trollope, 3 January 1902.

⁵⁴ SNA, Volume 102. Rustenburg Native Commissioner to Secretary of Native Affairs, W. Windham, Johannesburg, 7 February 1903.

⁵⁵ *Cape Provincial Archives*. Archives of the Native Affairs Department, (CSNA) Vol. 263. 312421D/1900, Report for the month of September 1900.

allowed to return home with their wagons, depending on the attitudes of the various Army Transport Officers. The proportion of contracted transport riders to those hired by the Army Transport and Remount Depots was quite small.⁵⁶ These claimants hired and contracted, were, no doubt, typical of some of those who became residents of the clusters of squatters, which sprang up near the military bases and later clustered like satellites around the white concentration camps. Some of these informal settlements were the forerunners of the black concentration camps.

Clustering of refugees around the army camps and their gradual assimilation.

In consequence, some of these newly created homeless blacks and coloureds in many areas of the theatre of war, became camp followers. When these military units formed garrisons in Bloemfontein and other towns they clustered nearby and performed manual labour in return for food, later receiving a small amount of remuneration and free rations. Some were also hired by the nearby Army Departments. Later, beginning in September 1900, they settled in the already existing "regular locations" and newly formed clusters of squatters around the recently established white concentration camps. These refugees found work in the white camps cleaning latrines, doing hospital service work or cleaning the campgrounds as noted by the Ladies Committee in their inspection to the Brandfort white concentration camp. "The camp," they reported, "is scavenged by a gang of boys (unpaid) with wheelbarrows, and the surface is most beautifully clean."⁵⁷ They probably received some food for their work. This work must have been very well done as the Committee of Ladies did not mention this kind of thing in their reports on the other camps.

In time a culture of mutual interdependence⁵⁸ developed between black and white camps, and the superintendents of the white camps began at first to take some informal responsibility for these black refugees. As the British columns dumped down more and more black refugees in the vicinity

⁵⁶ W. Nasson, personal communication, 23 June 2001

⁵⁷ *British Parliamentary Papers* Cd. 893, *Report on the Concentration Camps in South Africa* by Committee of Ladies of the Royal Commission on the Concentration Camps. p. 79.

⁵⁸ This concept developed from conversations with Derek Du Bruin a senior archivist with the Free State Provincial Archives.

of the white camps in the Orange River Colony it became necessary to put some formal structure into the relationship. Mutual interdependence fostered these growing administrative relationships. The white camps utilised the black camp inmates to carry out menial, but crucial tasks, essential to the health of the white camp inmates. In return, they, at first, earned food, and later the nearby and associated white camp superintendents, took an ever increasing responsibility for their general welfare. Over time as suggested above they began to be paid for their work in the white camps. The Army Departments hired most of the able bodied men, concurrent with the recruiting of black labour outside the camps through the Army labour depots recruitment monopoly system.

Black farmworkers and house servants removed from the Boer farms and regular locations in the Transvaal January to June 1901, and their relationship to the Transvaal military government.

In contrast, in the Transvaal Colony, the black families removed from the Boer farms and other places were just dumped down by the British columns along the railway, at their designated terminal points, where they were left to fend for themselves. Some found employment in the mines on maintenance crews and as guards. Nothing was done to assist these black families. There were about 15,000 of these refugees in approximately 2,500 families by June 1901.⁵⁹ The Department of Burger Camps did not assimilate any significant number of these "refugees" with the exception of the house servants of the Boer families swept off the veld who, as stated, were permitted to live in the white camps with their Boer employers, as authorised by Lord Kitchener. Unlike the Orange River Colony Department of Refugees no formal black concentration camps were formed by the Department of Burger Camps in the Transvaal. Nor was any assistance given to these blacks swept off the veld by the British columns, or those fleeing from the devastation of the scorched earth tactics of the British flying columns. As in the Orange River Colony some blacks came in seeking employment and hoping for a better life than they had had under the Boer farmers.

⁵⁹ SNA, Vol. 1, na 23/01, Officer in Command of the Department of Native Refugees, Captain G.F. de Lotbiniere, to Milner, 30 September 1901.

In fact, the Department of Burger Camps was not even allowed to contract or use the labour of these black refugees.⁶⁰ The policy of the Transvaal Military Government forbid the Department of Burger Camps to deal with the black refugees in any circumstance, with the exception of the black servants and their families residing in the white camps.⁶¹ When superintendents of the white camps needed black labour they had to apply to the Johannesburg Army Labour Depot. Specifically they were not allowed to take control over blacks in the vicinity of their camps. Kitchener ordered that all “natives” should be handed over the nearest Army Department so that they could be self-supporting.⁶² In practice, at least in most cases, these blacks were actually handed over to the Johannesburg Army Labour Dept who, in turn acting as a black labour recruitment monopoly, distributed them to the individual Army Departments. No provision was made for their families, as the labour depots forbid labourers to be accompanied by their families. This was following the paradigm of the policies governing migrant mine workers who were not allowed to bring their families to the mining company sites.

Spies states that “...during the first half of 1901 the black concentration camps in the Transvaal and the Orange River Colony were controlled by the general superintendents of the so called burger refugee camps”⁶³ F. Pretorius follows Spies in this view.⁶⁴ As shown, this was certainly true in the Orange River Colony, but this was not true in the Transvaal. There were no black camps under the supervision of the Department of Burger Camps in the Transvaal. Given that S.B. Spies, the consummate historian on the treatment of the civilian population during the war, states that there were some black camps under the administration of the Department of Burger Camps in the Transvaal it is necessary to examine this matter in some detail.

⁶⁰ MGP, Vol. 73, 2062B/01. District Commissioner of Heidelberg to Maxwell, 17 February 1901.

⁶¹ MGP, Vol. 248, Telegram Books, MG 2143, Maxwell to District Commissioner, Standerton. 18 March 1901.

⁶² MGP, Vol. 248, Telegram Book. Maxwell to Supt. Standerton white camp, 18 March 1901.

⁶³ Spies, *Methods of Barbarism*, p. 227.

⁶⁴ Fransjohan Pretorius, *The Anglo Boer War, 1899-1902*, (Cape Town, 1998) p. 80

Spies correctly states: "Unlike the Orange River Colony reports, the Transvaal burger camp department did not initially contain statistics regarding Africans in their control, and very little is known of them before June 1901. Then continuing he says that, "...in June 1901 there were 11,570 Africans in the Transvaal Camps."⁶⁵ According to the Department of Burger Camps official statistics the number of 'coloured' inmates on 28 June 1901 was 2,879 as is indicated in Table 3.1 below.

Spies rejects this figure and argues for the number of black inmates listed in the return of the population of the new Department of Native Refugees for the first month of operation, June 1901. Spies evidently reasoned that the population listed by the Department of Native Refugees for June 1901, as 11, 570 inmates, was the result of the transfer of the black and coloured inmates from the Department of Burger Camps. The same table containing the figure of 2,879, however, also shows a much smaller "coloured" population two weeks later on 12 July. It should also be taken into account that the house servants of the Boer women were not transferred to the Department of Native Refugees. It is important to clarify the actual population in trying to determine if there were any significant number of blacks or any separate black camps under the supervision of the Transvaal Department of Burger Camps.

Table 3.1 as published in Cd. 819
Official return showing number of 'Coloured' Inmates and Deaths in Burger Camps,
Transvaal, for two weeks ending 12th July 1901.⁶⁶

Population	Men	Women	Children	Total
In [DBC] Camps 28 th June	244	800	1,835	2,879
In [DBC] Camps 12 th July	395	257	412	1,064

The table above, taken verbatim from Cd. 819, p. 114, shows a significant change in population over this two-week period. Very significant is the increase in the number of men at a time when a substantial decrease in the numbers of women and children took place. The increase in the numbers

⁶⁵ Spies, *Methods of Barbarism*, p. 192.

⁶⁶ *British Parliamentary Papers, Cd., 819, Reports, Etc. on the Working of the Refugee Camps in the Transvaal, Orange River Colony, Cape Colony and Natal, 1901*(London, 1901) p. 114.

men amounted to 151, the decrease in the numbers of women, 543; and children under age 15, 1,423, respectively, for a total decrease in overall population of 1,815. It appears that for some reason Spies, the definitive historian on this subject, does not cite this statistic of 12 July 1901, which indicates that on that date there were only 1,064 blacks in the Transvaal Burger Camps, which a decrease of 1,966 women and children. Perhaps Spies was using another source in his calculations. This decrease in the 'coloured' population in the Department of Burger Camps can only be accounted for by their transfer to the newly formed Department of Native Refugees. This decrease in population cannot be explained as being due to deaths and desertions. The Transvaal Department of Burger Camps reports a total of only 5 "coloured"⁶⁷ deaths for June 1901, the month in question.⁶⁸ The additional inmates that went to make up the 11, 570 black people in the Department of Native Refugees camps in June 1901 can be easily explained.

Soon after the Department of Native Refugees was established in June 1901 de Lotbiniere, the Officer in charge, sent a superintendent out to each of the informal settlements along the railway who immediately began the process of registering the approximately 15,000 refugees in these informal camps and set up sanitation, medical care and supplies.⁶⁹ This process did not begin until late June as the new Department was only authorised by Lord Kitchener on 15 June 1901. It is my view that the newly assimilated camps by the end of June account for the population figure of 11, 570. This total consisted of all, or most, of the 1,966 women and children transferred from the Department of Burger Camps plus some men⁷⁰ and some portion of the approximately 15,000 blacks in the informal camps, along the railway, that were in the process of being organised and assimilated into the Department of Native Refugees. In addition since the sweeps were in progress

⁶⁷ The term "coloured" as used in Cd 819 in this table refers to both black and coloured inmates in the white camps.

⁶⁸ See Appendix 6.1-Master Death List under DBC-TVL, 30 June 1901. FK, Vol. 1130, CO 100, Confidential Print, Telegram s-493, Kitchener to Brodrick, 12 July 1901.

⁶⁹ SNA, Vol. 59, 2097, pp. 92-93, de Lotbiniere to the High Commissioner, 30 September 1901.

⁷⁰ Even though there was an increase in the number of 'coloured men' in the Department of Burger Camps, there may have been still some men transferred to the new Department, as we do not know how many men entered the Department of Burger Camps during the interim period.

the British columns may have dropped some blacks at the gates of the new camps just being organised.

Since no returns of the numbers of black inmates in the individual camps in the Department of Burger Camps are contained in the British Blue Books or in other archival sources, it is very problematic to identify any of the black camps which may have been under the supervision of the Department of Burger Camps, if there were any. Spies indicates that by the end of March 1901 there were black camps at Heidelberg, Standerton, Nigel and Potchefstroom.⁷¹ The Heidelberg and the Potchefstroom camps, however, were not under the supervision by the Department of Burger Camps, and the Standerton and Nigel camps were not official camps under the Department of Burger Camps.

There is ample evidence that the Heidelberg Camp was not under the control or supervision of the Department of Burger Camps. This camp was under the direct supervision of the District Commissioner of Heidelberg. All concerns about this camp, as for example in the case of sanitation and medical problems raised by the Medical Officer of Health for the Transvaal were directed to the District Commissioner by the Military Governor.⁷² When the camp was ordered transferred to the Department of Native Refugees the District Commissioner stated that "...this Refugee Camp has always been in my charge."⁷³ When there was starvation at the camp and inmates were eating dead animals Maxwell refused to provide any food to the inmates of the camp.⁷⁴ Nor did he refer these concerns to the General Superintendent of the Department of Burger Camps or the Superintendent of the Heidelberg white camp. This is further evidence that this camp was not under the care and supervision of the Department of Burger Camps. If this black camp had been under the white camp or the Department, food would have been provided. Finally, when Maxwell learned that most of the

⁷¹ Spies, *Methods of Barbarism*, p. 192.

⁷² MGP, Vol. 78. 2713A/01, Maxwell to D.C. Heidelberg, 11 March 1901.

⁷³ MGP, Vol. 101. 7366B/01 D.C. Heidelberg to MGP, 22 June 1901.

⁷⁴ It was actually common practice for black Africans to eat animals who had died from disease, as it is today in some parts of Africa.

men were working in Johannesburg, primarily in the mines, he asked the District Commissioner if he could arrange with the Superintendent of Native Affairs to have the "natives in receipt of wages to contribute to their families."⁷⁵ The District Commissioner at Heidelberg resisted the transfer of the camp to the Department of Native Refugees and argued his case with Maxwell, saying that "Mr. Lavers, appointed by you as Sanitary Inspector, has acted as Supt. & manages the natives well, supplies all available labour to different employers."⁷⁶ De Lotbiniere informed Maxwell's office that he would be willing to leave the camp under the District Commissioner but thought all the native camps should be under one department.⁷⁷

There may have been a black camp at Standerton, but if so, this camp was not an official camp of the Department of Burger Camps. Maxwell informed General Wynne at Standerton on 20 May 1901 that there was some difficulty in feeding "Kaffir Women and children who have been brought in. The [white] Refugee Camp store can be drawn upon through the Superintendent on emergency, but cannot it not be arranged for these ladies to go out and take [the] standing crop belonging to Boers on commando for their own use?"⁷⁸ Obviously, this camp was not directly under the supervision of the white camp superintendent at Standerton. One indication of this is the desire to avoid feeding these refugees by getting them to harvest standing crops. That food could be obtained through the superintendent from the white camp store, on an emergency basis, is also evidence that these refugees were not officially under the Standerton white camp's direct supervision. In the Standerton white camp two tents were set aside for the treatment of black servants and perhaps other blacks living inside the camp.⁷⁹

The Nigel camp was the first informal Hands Uppers camp established on an unofficial basis. It was a mine site and had a wire enclosure. There were some "native refugees" at Nigel and a white man

⁷⁵ MGP, Vol. 78, 2713A/01, MGP to D.C. Heidelberg, 11 March 1901.

⁷⁶ MGP, Vol. 101, 7366B, District Commissioner, Heidelberg to Maxwell, 22 June 1901.

⁷⁷ MGP, Vol. 101, 7366B, de Lotbiniere to Assistant to Maxwell, 28 June 1901.

⁷⁸ MGP, Vol. 245, Telegram Book I, MG 2621, Maxwell to General Officer Commanding, Standerton, 20 May 1901.

⁷⁹ *British Parliamentary Papers* CD 893, Report of the Committee of Ladies on the Burger Camp, Standerton, 23rd, 24th and 25th November 1901, p. 191.

was hired to supervise them. Like Heidelberg this arrangement was made outside the Department of Burger Camps organisation. The hiring of an overseer for the black refugees was authorised by the Divisional Commander of the South African Constabulary at the request of the Adjutant of Kitchener's Rifles.⁸⁰

As described in the previous chapter the Hands Uppers Camps came into existence by order of Lord Roberts on 9 September 1900. This was followed three months later on 21 December by Lord Kitchener's order to remove both the black and Boer families from the Boer farms. In the beginning the Boer families were placed in spartan military style camps, established by the local army commanders. The formation of the black concentration camps, however, were much more spontaneous in origin. Some of the black camps in the Orange River Colony were created by the military and civilian authorities, apparently by necessity, to provide some semblance of order and control, as well as the utilisation of black labour needed by the local military units.

In the beginning some of the black camps were created by the local Commandants of the Army garrisons. Their genesis arising out of the military circumstances, rather than any deliberate planning, resulted in ad-hoc measures being taken to accommodate the ever growing numbers of blacks being swept off the farms by the British columns. Due to these sweeps of the countryside it became more and more obvious that it was essential to remove all blacks on the Boer farms to the concentration camps.⁸¹ As indicated above, the removal from the farms of large numbers of blacks and dropping them near the white camps was the primary cause of the establishment the black camps in the Orange River Colony. To a major extent It was the growing fear of disease spread and other negative impacts on the whites that spawned a sense of urgency. Prior to any formal organisation of incoming refugees, as at Vereeniging, blacks congregating near the white camps

⁸⁰ MGP, Vol. 80, 3061/01. Divisional Commander, Heidelberg, to Adjutant Kitchener's Rifle's, 1 March 1901.

⁸¹ Spies, *Methods of Barbarism*, p. 157.

were sometimes allowed to purchase food from the District Commissioner.⁸² At Kroonstad the General Officer Commanding wired Hamilton Goold-Adams, saying he thought it was imperative that a superintendent of native refugees be appointed at once due to the increasing numbers of black refugees. He also said that due to increasing sickness the need for starting a hospital was increasing.⁸³ The concern about the spread of disease to the white population may have motivated the request for a superintendent and a more formal structure.

The establishment of two private black concentration camps and one military black concentration camp.

An example of the establishment of a private black concentration camp occurred in the Johannesburg mining District. A former pass office administrator for the South African Republic retained by the incoming British military Government, in March 1901 formed a "...native refugee camp on the farm of a Boer military leader away on commando. The camp consisted of "700 or 800 black men, women and children." He succeeded in feeding these refugees at no cost to the Government.⁸⁴ The motivation for forming this private camp was to retain black labourers for use by the mining companies and other private employers in the Johannesburg mining district. In the Cape Colony the practice of forming private locations for blacks was quite common. A farm in the Cape Colony in Richmond in May 1900 was used for the cattle of some Native refugees.⁸⁵

A private black camp was formed on a private farm near the Eerste Fabriken factory. The Commandant at Eerste Fabriken reported to Maxwell that when the native kraals were destroyed by Morley's Scouts, he arranged with the owner of the Willows Farm for the natives to reside near there. "They are now settled [and] have put up houses with galvanised iron collected from old camps here." It was later decided that these black families should be removed to the Bronkhorst

⁸²SRC, Vol. 1, 17, Commandant, Vereeniging to Trollope 18 February 1901.

⁸³ SRC, Vol. 7, 2121, GOC, Kroonstad to Goold-Adams, 23 May 1901.

⁸⁴ SNA, Vol. 2, p. 79, Report of the Native Affairs Department for September 1900, T.M.C. Nourse, 19 January 1901.

⁸⁵ DBC, Vol. 10, Accountant, Department of Burger Camps to Public Works Officer, Bloemfontein, 24 November 1903.

Spruit black concentration camp. Their kraals were burned allegedly because they had given information to the Boers.⁸⁶

A black camp was formed in November 1901 by the British Army about a half mile from the Zuurfontein railway station and about six miles from the dynamite factory at Modderfontein. Some blacks brought in by the British columns were placed in this camp. By November 1902 the remains of this large military location was home to approximately 150 black inmates who were coming and going, to and from, various nearby work sites in the Boxburg Labour District. By this time the camp was under the control of the South African Constabulary for whom many of these inmates worked.⁸⁷

The establishment of some of black camps under the Department of Refugees of the Orange River Colony in 1901.

The Thaba'nchu black concentration camp.

The Thaba'nchu black concentration camp is an important example of the informal and co-operative process of the formation of a black camp by local British officials. From the very beginning this co-operation bode well for this camp because the Military Commandant and the District Surgeon approved the site for this new black camp.⁸⁸ When new camps were established in Natal to incarcerate white internees it became standard practice for the District Surgeon to approve such sites along with the provision of wooden huts instead of canvas tents.⁸⁹ Almost always in the theatre of the war the local military commandant arbitrarily chose of the black and white campsites. For legitimate military reasons all sites had to be approved by the military.⁹⁰ This was largely due to the fact that the military were charged with task of protecting the concentration camps from enemy intrusion. A.W.G. Raath states that the black campsites were placed in close proximity to the

⁸⁶ MGP, Vol. 124, 12985/01. Assistant to the Military Governor of Pretoria to Native Affairs Department, 9 October 1901.

⁸⁷ SNA, Vol. 74, 2555, Inspector of Department of Native Affairs, Johannesburg, to Chief Inspector, Department of Native Affairs, 18 November 1902.

⁸⁸ SRC, Vol. 5, 1217/01, Supt., Thaba'nchu black camp to Trollope, 9 April 1901.

⁸⁹ *National Archives of South Africa, Pretoria, Archives of the High Commissioner, (HC), Vol. 81, Telegram 5585, Secretary of the Law Department, Cape Town to Magistrates, Port Elizabeth, East London and Port Alfred, 23 November 1901.*

⁹⁰ *British Parliamentary Papers*, Cd. 819, p. 9, Letter of instructions to newly appointed superintendents. No date.

military garrison to prevent them from joining in any attempt by the Boers to liberate the Boer women and children in the white camps.⁹¹ This would seem to indicate that the British were of the opinion that many of the black inmates were loyal to the Boers.

The result of campsites being selected solely on military criteria was that many sites were very unhealthy. Military commanders usually chose sites for their own camps that were healthy. Proper drainage and a sufficient and healthy water supply were the two most important criteria. I suggest that one of the reasons for choosing unhealthy sites for the concentration camps was that having chosen the military camp sites at an earlier date, and for military reasons needing to place the concentration camp near the military camp, the sites available were, in some instances, unsuitable from a health point of view.

This rare and excellent team approach at Thaba'nchu may have been due to the personal interest of the Deputy Administrator of the Orange River Colony, Hamilton Goold-Adams, in this particular camp.⁹² Goold-Adams was very directly involved in decision-making and problem solving in matters regarding the camps. He was also an advocate for both Boers and blacks in the Orange River Colony. Normally, in contrast, the attitude toward black camp inmates was one of "deliberate neglect." The policy was based on the idea of doing as little as possible for as little Imperial expenditure as possible.

The Thaba'nchu Resident Magistrate informed the Orange River Colony Colonial Secretary, H.F. Wilson, in early April 1901 that because of military operations thousands of "Natives" were coming in with their stock to reside in, and around the town.⁹³ At this time the grazing ground around the town was nearly exhausted. Trollope estimated that there were 160,000 head of cattle there

⁹¹ Personal interview with Professor A.W.G Raath, August 1995. I wish to thank Professor Raath for this and many other valuable insights.

⁹² SRC, Vol. 4, 1024/01, Trollope to Supt. Thaba'nchu white camp, 4 April 1901.

⁹³ CSO, Vol. 10, 734/01, Resident Magistrate, Thaba'nchu to Wilson, 3 April 1901.

already.⁹⁴ It is apparent that the British respected the ownership of this large amount of cattle as they evidently did not seize this livestock. They also at least by policy respected the livestock of surrendered burgers. They confiscated the livestock of burgers captured in the war. When the war ended there were about 20,000 blacks around Thaba'nchu who were nearly independent and had been allowed to retain their cattle.⁹⁵ As a result of this communication, Trollope made inquiries of the white camp superintendent regarding the numbers of "Natives" handed over to him whose wives and families were at Thaba'nchu. He wished to assure the black refugees, that having a record of their losses, he was trying to recover their cattle taken by the military. Permits would be issued to those who wished to rejoin their families and who were willing to support themselves. Finally he said that it was possible that the Goold-Adams was considering the opening of a "Native" refugee camp there. Actually there was a plan in the works to bring all the natives living in the Moroka District into refugee camps. Because they would bring with them a large amount of livestock, Goold-Adams wanted to know if the military would have any objection to the formation of a black concentration camp at Klipkraal west of Sannah's Post, near Bloemfontein where these blacks could graze their stock on the farms Donkerpoort and Kleinpalmietfontein. He added that the South African Constabulary would form posts at Donkerpoort and Leeuwkop, "and will be entirely responsible for...safeguarding...the stock."⁹⁶

Trollope cautioned, however, that the blacks already within the town, should not be told because "if they found out that they will be supported in Thaba'nchu free of charge, they will all say they are unable to support themselves."⁹⁷ This was at least part of the motivation, no doubt, for trying to recover their cattle, which was the basis of their economy and therefore their means to support themselves.

⁹⁴ SRC, Vol. 5, 1352, Trollope to Deputy Assistant Attorney General, Bloemfontein, 18 April 1901.

⁹⁵ SNA, Vol. No. 31, 1170, de Lotbiniere to Lagden, 7 June 1902.

⁹⁶ *Ibid.*

⁹⁷ SRC, Vol. 4, 1024, Trollope to Supt., Thaba'nchu white camp, 4 April 1901.

A few days later on 9 April 1901, Trollope was informed that a site had been selected and approved by the Commandant and the District Surgeon.⁹⁸ According to Trollope the families of some black refugees were removed from their farms at Bethany and arrived at Thaba'nchu on 4 April 1901. A careful search of the record shows that this site was actually selected and used in early February as a black concentration camp. A compensation claim filed by P.F.R. Steytler, who falsely asserted he was the owner of the farm, stated that the Farm Victoria had been used as a black refugee camp during the period 1 February 1901 to 31st August 1902.⁹⁹ In this compensation claim the black camp superintendent, Robert Dickie, also said that Mr. Steytler was the owner of the farm.¹⁰⁰ This, however, was not correct. In October 1903 the Principal Native Commissioner for the Orange River Colony officially revealed "...Mr. Steytler had leased the farm from a black woman, Mafane, at a yearly rental of £50."¹⁰¹ C. Murray has shown how land grants to headmen in Thaba'nchu, as a reward for loyal service, were to create the only area in the Orange Free State where blacks owned any substantial amounts land.¹⁰² This explains the unique circumstance in which a black woman was the true owner of the land, which was the site of the black concentration camp, inside the Thaba'nchu Native Reserve. This revelation of the true owner of the black campsite is one of the more ironic twists in the history of the black concentration camps.

The process of development of the Thaba'nchu black camp is clear. As black refugees entered the town with their livestock they were placed on the Farm Victoria, which had been requisitioned by the military. Obviously they could not be placed on the town commons with their livestock. Then in April some refugees who lived on the commons in the town, and those who were unable to support themselves, were also placed in the black camp on the Farm Victoria, which was located several miles outside Thaba'nchu. The situation at Thaba'nchu was unique in that there were some 16,000

⁹⁸ SRC, Vol. 5, 1217, Supt., Thaba'nchu white camp, Robert Dickie, to Trollope, 9 April 1901.

⁹⁹ CSO, Vol., 190, 5082/03 Chief Staff Officer to Roberts to Trollope, 6 November 1903.

¹⁰⁰ CSO, Vol., 190, 5082, Robert Dickie to Mr. Qualye Dickson Esq., Native. Commissioner, Orange River Colony, Thaba'nchu, 29 June 1901.

¹⁰¹ CSO, Vol. 190, 5082/03, Principal Native Commissioner to Acting Colonial Secretary, 5 August 1903.

¹⁰² Colin Murray, *Black Mountain: Land, Class and Power in the Orange Free State* (Johannesburg, 1992) See table in Murray of land deeds and names of owners. Parcels 101 and 102 are the site of the Farm Victoria.

Moroka and other blacks in this reserve and the concern of Goold-Adams was that government not have to feed and shelter all of these 16,000 black residents of the Native Reserve along with the refugees. This is why Goold-Adams had instructed Robert Dickie not to inform the natives that he was going to open a black camp. And this is no doubt the reason that only those who could not support themselves were allowed admission to the camp. In the end about 2,000 black refugees became inmates of the black camp. In contrast, all blacks outside the Natives Reserves were to be incarcerated without considering their ability to support themselves.

The Edenburg black concentration camp.

The military columns sweeping the veld had their own terminal points along the railway where "refugees" swept off the veld were dumped down on the ground. Edenburg was one such terminal. The Edenburg black concentration camp came into being in late January 1901 and was composed primarily of refugees swept into Edenburg when the populations of towns of Jagersfontein and Fauresmith were forcefully removed.¹⁰³ According to Emily Hobhouse the whites from these towns were taken to the white camp at Norvals Pont.¹⁰⁴ In April 1901 Mr. Daller, a camp inspector, for the Department of Refugees, ORC, described the Edenburg camp in vivid terms. "The 2,000 inmates, primarily children under the age of twelve,¹⁰⁵ were scattered in slightly built wigwams covered with sacking, the camp looking like a large gypsy encampment. The first comers pitched among the houses of the location, but regular streets at intervals are now observed."¹⁰⁶

In early February 1901 the Commandant at Edenburg appointed a civilian, Mr. Simpson, to manage the camp under a military officer who was appointed as the official superintendent. Simpson was, in part, selected because he spoke "Kaffir and Dutch."¹⁰⁷ His salary of £9 pounds a month was paid by

¹⁰³ SRC, Vol. 1, 182, Supt., Edenburg black camp to Trollope, 21 February 1901.

¹⁰⁴ Rykie Van Reenen, *Emily Hobhouse* (Cape Town, 1984) p. 85.

¹⁰⁵ Daller gave the following approximate breakdown of the population as follows: 150 men, 1100 children under the age of twelve, 300 over twelve and under eighteen and the remaining, 450 were women.

¹⁰⁶ SRC, Vol. 5, 1206, Daller to Wilson 1 April 1901.

¹⁰⁷ SRC, Vol. 2, 543, Supt., Edenburg black Camp to Trollope 25 February 1901. There was a small white camp at Edenburg, which was closed in February 1901.

the Residential Magistrate's Office, rather than out of army funds. In practice he ran the camp on a day to day basis with the assistance of a staff of four black assistants, George Mochalo, Joseph May, Mossdasie and Koet Zomo, all of whom received no pay.¹⁰⁸ At the end of February, at the instruction of Trollope, the camp was handed over to the Residential Magistrate, Mr. Fourie. The assimilation of this camp into the new Department of Refugees was now complete. The Commandant at Edenburg reported on 14 February "...that there are 1,686 black refugees in the "location here," but that most of the able bodied men had been taken by the Transport and the Remounts Departments.¹⁰⁹

Relationship of the black camps to the white camps in the Orange River Colony.

In June 1901, Trollope writing in the genre of the colonial bureaucracy, described the relationship between the white and black camps. This document reveals much about that relationship and the difference in treatment accorded to black and white inmates.

"Side by side with the gradual growth of the European Refugee Camps the [Orange River Colony Refugees] Department has witnessed the steady increase in numbers of people of the native races who have been brought [in] to live under military protection and depend on the Department for their food supply."

"Numbering about 15,500, these people are distributed in nine camps, generally speaking near centres chosen for the European Camps, and supervised by a male staff under orders of the Superintendent. With a plentiful supply of wood, *housed in old tents*, or huts of their own building, and conforming nearly to their usual habits, the people are contented, fairly healthy, and easily managed. The military authorities draw as far as possible on the able bodied males for labour for which they pay a fair wage."¹¹⁰ [Emphasis is mine]

There is much in this statement that calls for comment. Briefly, there is no acknowledgement of the policy of deliberate neglect of not providing the essential needs of these refugees, especially in the areas of medical care, adequate housing and sanitation. The phrase "fairly healthy" means that there were some health and disease problems. No mention is made of the services performed by the black inmates for the white camp superintendents. It also shows that prior to the formation of the

¹⁰⁸ The names of the black staff are provided, in part, because the records of the black camps contain very few names of black staff or inmates.

¹⁰⁹ SRC, Vol. 2. 486. Interim Supt., Thaba'nchu black camp to Trollope, 28 February 1901.

¹¹⁰ CSO, Vol. 26. 2390/01, p.5, Trollope to Wilson, 28 February 1901.

Department of Native Refugees that the black camps were already providing labour to the Army Departments. All able bodied men were being utilised either by the Army Departments or the white camp superintendents. Colonial policy required that as little expenditure as possible be undertaken in meeting the basic needs of the inmates in the black camps. This was also true, but to a far lesser degree, in the white camps. This policy of economic spartanism was so well inculcated in the minds of the subordinate camp superintendents that they sometimes had to be ordered to spend enough money to save lives. Goold-Adams in his concern for the high death rates instructed Trollope not to put economic restraints on medical care.¹¹¹ The record does not indicate whether or not this admonition applied to the black camps.

Economics played a major role in the process of developing a formally structured relationship. At Brandfort this process is very evident. A "Native Headman," Peter, was recommended to Trollope by the white camp superintendent for appointment as the black camp superintendent. The superintendent justified his actions to Trollope by saying that "...it was with a view to economy that I proposed him to you."¹¹² By this appointment, 60 Pounds a year was saved. This was half the salary paid to white superintendents of black camps. Shortly after his appointment Peter died of typhoid and was replaced by a white superintendent because of the very high rate of infant mortality.¹¹³ It was felt that a white superintendent would be better able to cope with the sanitation and medical problems. The failure to provide any latrines was, no doubt, the major cause of typhoid in this camp. The idea of appointing headmen as supervisors was not unique to the Brandfort camp. In February 1902 The Acting Resident Magistrate of Thaba'nchu appointed a headman "for each of the different government locations."¹¹⁴ The pattern of dealing high death rates in the black camps, as

¹¹¹ *National Archives of South Africa, Pretoria, Archives of the High Commissioner,(HC), Vol. 87, p. 31, Trollope to Wilson 31 May 1901.*

¹¹² SRC, Vol. 2, 476, Supt., Brandfort white camp to Trollope, 5 March 1901.

¹¹³ SRC, Vol. 4, 1101, Monthly Report for March 1901, Supt., Brandfort white camp to Trollope, 2 April 1901.

¹¹⁴ CSO, Vol. 56, 535/02, Acting Resident Magistrate, Thaba'nchu, to Wilson, 20 February 1902. By "location" is meant a black community and not a concentration camp.

will be seen in Chapter 5, was to take steps to correct the causes of sickness and death only after the medical disaster occurred, rather than to take a preventative approach.

The Brandfort staffing was a perfect example of the principle of spending as little possible on the black population. Superintendents of the white camps were almost always cost conscious regarding staffing costs, knowing that their superiors demanded and would highly approve of such spartan frugality. The Superintendent of the Norvals Pont white camp offered to administrate the black camp himself, and only asked for a rations issuer and two native constables, at low salaries. He justified this by saying that this would not entail much extra work.¹¹⁵ This shows the attempt of camp superintendents to impress Trollope with their frugality. This also indicates the kind of minimal attention that was paid to the black camps by the white camp superintendents. It appears that some white camp superintendents only visited the black camps when there was a serious problem, and some cases not at all.

IV. Living conditions in the black camps in the Orange River Colony.

The state of housing in the black and white camps in the Orange River Colony.

The photographs of the white concentration camps show a sea of white canvas. Jennifer Hobhouse Balme, the grand niece of Emily Hobhouse, comments that the Bloemfontein Camp “must have had the appearance of a tent town outside the town.”¹¹⁶ These photographs show literally thousands of bell tents, marquee tents for hospitals, and “E.P. tents.”¹¹⁷ The actual numbers of tents on hand, however, were far greater than those, which could be seen. The Brandfort white camp in February 1902 had an inventory of 1, 263 tents, but this same return shows that only 300 tents were sufficiently serviceable for use. Even in the white camps, many of the tents were old, frayed and rotted. Sometimes two or three tents were set one on top of the other in order to provide adequate

¹¹⁵ SRC. Vol. 8, 2364. Supt. Norvals Pont white camp to Trollope, 6 June 1901.

¹¹⁶ Jennifer Hobhouse Balme, *To Love One's Enemies: The work and life of Emily Hobhouse compiled from the letters and writings, newspaper cuttings and official documents* (Cobble Hill, British Columbia, Canada, 1994) p. 87.

¹¹⁷ The “E.P.” (European Private tent) was a relatively large tent, 20 X 20 foot tent.

cover from the elements.¹¹⁸ Dr. Pratt Yule, the Medical Officer of Health for the Orange River Colony, reported in November 1901 that in the Brandfort white camp “many of the bell tents [were] now rotten and gradually falling to pieces, especially about the doors...”¹¹⁹ The housing situation in the white camps had for many months been reaching crisis proportions.

Because it would take considerable time to obtain new tents from England Milner suggested that perhaps, used tents might be obtained from India.¹²⁰ This process was to take a long time in coming to fruition. By June 1901 the shortage of tents had reached a very serious stage. Something had to be done while waiting for tents to arrive. Trollope sent telegrams to the superintendents of the black camps asking for able-bodied men to be sent to the Chief Ordnance Officer to repair several hundred tents that were urgently needed as a stopgap measure. So urgent was this need for serviceable tents that he sent 363 men of the 545 men available in the black camps to Bloemfontein to do this repair work.¹²¹ So while tents were rarely provided for black inmates their labour was used to repair tents to be used by the white camps. Milner asked the Viceroy of India for 2,000 tents. He indicated these tents were for refugees in the Orange River Colony. There seems little doubt based on the record of the policies of differential treatment of black and white refugees that these tents were ordered to be used in the white camps only. It was customary to provide old tents to the black camps when available. What is very significant is that such requests for housing were rarely made on behalf of the black camp inmates. In those few cases where black camp superintendents made such requests the response was either to ignore, deny the request or to approve much less expensive alternative. No documents have been found in which upper level administrators specifically requested material assistance, including housing, for black inmates.

Because it was the policy of British officials not to provide equally for the inmates of the black camps, the black inmates were forced to fend for themselves in almost all areas of their living

¹¹⁸ SRC, Vol. 4, 1136, Trollope to the Chief Ordnance Officer, Bloemfontein, 9 April 1901.

¹¹⁹ SRC, Vol. 15, Dr. Pratt Yule to Goold-Adams, 16 November 1901.

¹²⁰ CSO, Vol. 11, 919/01, Milner to Chamberlain, Minute No. 2183/01, 6 April 1901.

¹²¹ SRC, Vol. 11, 3962, Trollope to Goold-Adams, 21 June 1901.

conditions including, the area of housing. They made their own "Kaffir sleeping mats" out of available natural materials. At Brandfort these mats were used to protect the roofs of the huts and tents from the rain and cold weather. Unfortunately, in some areas there was very little in the way of natural materials available for this purpose. Boer women and children were often forced to sleep on the bare ground because they had not been allowed to bring beds and bedding when they were removed from their farms.¹²² Had the camp superintendents observed the ways in which black inmates used their skills to make their own beds, bedding and tent covering materials many lives could have been saved in the white camps. Even when white inmates were moved to the "coastal camps" in Natal late in the history of the white camps some families were still without beds. For example the superintendent of the Merebank Camp contracted with a man in the camp to make wooden cartels and agreed to pay up to 4 shillings for each one made. He hired other inmates in the camp to carry out this work.¹²³

As indicated when it came to the black camps, requests for tents, even for such important uses as hospitals, were often refused primarily on the basis of cost. Consequently housing in the black concentration camps, generally, was very poor. Indeed policy dictated that this would be the case. In August 1901 Trollope instructed the Superintendent of the Brandfort white camp in regards to the tents being sent to him that, "On no account must these tents be given to Natives. They must be used entirely for the White Camp."¹²⁴ This particular order may be explained, perhaps, as due to a shortage of tents at the time due to the dropping of 3,000 refugees, both black and white, at the Brandfort camp. But even if that was the concern, it demonstrates that the needs of black inmates were not of equal priority in the policies of the concentration camp administration. Perhaps Trollope feared that the new superintendent at Brandfort was more inclined to assist the black inmates than the other white camp superintendents.

¹²² SRC, Vol. 3, 648, Trollope to Deputy Assistant Advocate General, Bloemfontein; *Republication of the Principal Circulars Issued During 1900, Army Headquarters Pretoria, January 1901*, "A.G. Circular, No. 30, Confidential Circular." 16 January 1901.

¹²³ FK, Vol. 607, CO417/349, CO9620, Milner to Chamberlain, 4 February 1902.

¹²⁴ SRC, Vol. 11, 4118, Trollope to Supt., Brandfort white camp, 13 August 1901.

A very typical request for tents by the Heilbron white camp superintendent, during a time of impending sweeps, reveals this policy quite well. After saying he has caused the "Natives" to construct sod and stone huts and expecting more to be brought in he said, "I have no further means of shelter. Can you send me a number of second hand tents?" The differential treatment of blacks can be seen in his statement that "I have requisitioned another 20 good tents in the event of other whites being brought in."¹²⁵ Tents were only provided to the black camps when there was no way of avoiding it. In consequence of a bad report by the Medical Officer of the Aliwal North black camp, Trollope did suggest to the superintendent of the camp that he might request some tents for the "Natives" from the Ordnance Department in Bloemfontein.¹²⁶ This appears to have been a rare statement on Trollope's part.

In another rare example, good tents were provided to black refugees being moved from the Kaffirfontein black camp to the Bloemfontein black concentration camp.¹²⁷ This may have been done to facilitate the relatively large number of black refugees being received into the Bloemfontein camp all at once. Significant numbers of blacks, however, were routinely being swept into the camps, or just being dumped on the ground with no housing having been prepared for them. This was also true in the case of many of the white refugees being swept into the camps. This exemplary preparation and provision of housing was probably more due to the capable management of the Bloemfontein black camp, which was the best organised and most efficiently operated of the black camps in the Orange River Colony. It was the only black camp in the Orange River Colony that had a full-time doctor. The superintendent of this black camp was the one who reported directly to Trollope and this access due to propinquity was no doubt helpful. White camp superintendents who supervised the satellite black camps under their direct supervision, both by policy and inclination, tried to hold on to most of the supplies and materials needed for housing the white inmates. There

¹²⁵ SRC, Vol. 5, 1399/01, Supt., Heilbron white camp to Trollope, 13 April 1901.

¹²⁶ SRC, Vol. 8, 2746, Trollope to Supt., Aliwal North white camp, 18 June 1901.

¹²⁷ SRC, Vol. 2, 372, Supt., Bloemfontein black camp to Trollope 28 February 1901.

was also a perception among camp superintendents that blacks were used to a primitive style of living and did not need what white inmates needed.

In an incident in April 1901, involving both black and white refugees, the shortage of tents created a very serious circumstance. In order to prepare accommodation at Kroonstad for a group of black and white refugees being brought into Wolvehoek, Goold-Adams requested that these refugees be permitted to retain the wagons they were being transported in as shelters for three days. Time was needed to find tents to house them at the Kroonstad Camp. They were finally sent to Vredefort Road, as no tents could be found for Kroonstad.¹²⁸

This lack of shelter for black and white families when they were dropped by the British columns at times placed them in a life-threatening situation.. The new inmates, were already physically exhausted and emotionally spent, In the removals from the farms both blacks and Boers at times had to walk long distances up to 50 miles or more. Those who were on foot, upon arrival, sometimes had nowhere to sleep and had no shelter from the elements. Those who came in ox wagons and other vehicles were more fortunate as they could temporarily use their transport as a place to sleep.

This effort to prepare for the influx of a group of refugees should be contrasted with the large drops of black and white refugees near the white camps with no prior notice by the column commanders.¹²⁹ Trollope was quite aware that the military had the sole prerogative of determining where refugees were to be dropped. Trollope was told by the military that in some cases it might not be possible to give advance warning. The military were told, however, that Trollope's instructions regarding where refugees should be taken, were to be followed except in special circumstances.¹³⁰ Lack of warning and dropping refugees at camps where there was little or no accommodation available, was a serious cause of inadequate housing for both black and white refugees.

¹²⁸ SRC, Vol. 5, 1294. Goold-Adams to the G.O.C. Kroonstad, 16 April 1901.

¹²⁹ SRC, Vol. 11, 4026/01. Trollope to the Deputy Assistant Adjutant General, 10 July 1901.

¹³⁰ SRC, Vol. 19, 7457, Commandant, Ficksburg to Trollope, 2 February 1902.

It is noteworthy that lists of the amounts of accommodation available at the various white camps were wired to the British columns, but no such lists were compiled or sent regarding the accommodation available at the black camps. It is clear that there was no sense that blacks had to be provided for. They were expected in most cases to construct their own housing after they arrived. Despite this disparity between the white and black camps one inspector reported that the Vredefort black camp had "... excellent patrol tents or huts made of boughs of thick thatch."¹³¹

Inadequate housing as a cause of sickness and death.

Inspectors and administrative officials attributed the high death rate among the young black infants and children, as being primarily due to the inadequate shelter, especially during periods of heavy rains and damp cold weather. The Medical Officer at the Aliwal North white camp regarding the high infant mortality in the black camps, said that these deaths were "...largely due the exposure the natives have had to endure..." which was due to inadequate housing or no housing at all.¹³² A major cause of sickness and death was also the fact that many women and children were sleeping on the bare damp or wet and cold ground. This was also the case in many of the white camps.

Black inmates were required both by policy and necessity to construct their own huts. The problem was that often, suitable natural materials were not available and as a consequence the traditional "kraal" hut could not be properly constructed. As a result these huts in many instances were not adequate protection against inclement weather conditions. Some huts had relatively large cracks or openings in the sides of the hut, which permitted the entry of cold winds and rain.¹³³ Among others, Mr. Daller an inspector for the Department of Refugees, inspecting the Edenburg black camp blamed the cold and damp weather for "...the high mortality rate among children at Edenburg as in all the camps." He noted, however, that the overcrowding was now alleviated as the ordered tents

¹³¹ SRC, Vol. 5, 1304, Mr. Daller, Camps Inspector, Department of Refugees to Trollope, 15 April 1901.

¹³² SRC, Vol. 5, 1163, Medical Officer to Supt., Aliwal North white camp, 31 March 1901.

¹³³ Certain areas of the Orange Free State experience below freezing temperatures and light snow in the peak of winter.

had now arrived. No doubt the recent overcrowded condition was responsible for a much higher rate of sickness. The sending of any tents had been denied in February.¹³⁴

The causes of death among children in the Bloemfontein camp very dramatically support Daller's contention. Even a casual reading of the Master Death List, [Appendix 6.1], well illustrates this fact. Dr. Friedman's Report at the Bloemfontein black camp for the week ending 8 June 1901, shows that children's deaths constituted 86.7% of the recorded deaths during that week. Eleven, or 84.62%, of these thirteen child deaths, were in turn due to Bronchitis, Broncho-pneumonia and Pneumonia.¹³⁵ Friedman had foreseen in April that combination of inadequate housing the cold nights of winter would cause a great many deaths among the children who were already "... suffering from Bronchitis...", and that most of the deaths even before the onset of winter, were due to Pneumonia.¹³⁶

Housing built by the inmates themselves.

It was normal practice for black mine workers and black people generally in rural settings to construct their own huts and place of habitation out of natural materials. The problem in many of the black camps was the needed materials were very often not available. As a consequence the traditional "kraal" hut could not be properly constructed. The result was that these huts, in many instances, were not adequate protection against inclement weather conditions. Some huts had relatively large cracks or openings in the sides and the roof of the hut, which permitted the entry of cold winds and rain.¹³⁷ This approach was also used in the plague separation camps in India. The "Natives lived in huts "built of Pampas grass, instead of tents."¹³⁸ The 15,000 blacks in the unofficial camps strung out along the railway in the Transvaal in early 1901 also constructed their own housing.. Some, who came in from the farms and fields voluntarily, may have been able to

¹³⁴ SRC, Vol. 5, 1206, Camps Inspector, Department of Refugees, Orange River Colony to Wilson, 1 April 1901.

¹³⁵ SRC, Vol. 8, 2495, Medical Officer, Bloemfontein black concentration camp to Trollope, 8 June 1901.

¹³⁶ SRC, Vol. 5, Medical Officer, Bloemfontein black camp to Trollope, 13 April 1901.

¹³⁷ Certain areas of the former Orange River Colony experience below freezing temperatures, and on rare occasions light snow in the peak of winter.

¹³⁸ HC, Vol. 87, Memorandum to Milner, 16 November 1901.

bring their housing materials with them. The majority who were swept into the railway line could not even bring in the food grains they had raised because of the inadequate transport of the British columns that removed them to the railway.¹³⁹

At the Aliwal North black concentration camp in the Cape Colony, each black family had allegedly built their own huts with no apparent problems.¹⁴⁰ In most of the black camps, however, this requirement created significant difficulties for both the inmates and the superintendents of the camps. The housing problem at the Edenburg black camp is illustrative of the process that took place in many of the black camps. The Edenburg Interim Superintendent in his initial report to Trollope in January 1901 said that the 1,700 inmates were living under 26 sailcloth covers obtained from the Army Commander's supplies, and such covering as sacks stretched over a framework of wood for sides.¹⁴¹ Only a month later in his February report he had, changed his view and said he did not feel the housing in the camp overall, was satisfactory because the sailcloth was just being used to provide shelter for the most "necessitous cases," while the rest were forced by circumstance to build these wooden framed sack houses, which did not provide adequate shelter. Three days later he wrote Trollope to say, since a good many refugees have no means to buy anything to build a hut with, he asked for ten tents. Trollope quickly responded saying that "As regards shelter you should construct by some means of sacking and wood scantlings, which you are authorised to purchase locally as cheaply as possible."¹⁴²

Dr. Pratt Yule, during an August 1901 visit to Brandfort said that the situation in the white camp was good and that the "same good condition prevailed [in the black camp]."¹⁴³ In April, however, a camp inspector described the conditions in the black camp quite differently. He reported that the

¹³⁹ *National Archives of South Africa, Pretoria, Archives of the Transvaal Administration, (TKP), Vol. 135, Final Report of the Work Performed by the Native Refugee Department of the Transvaal From June 1901, to December, 1902.* p. 1.

¹⁴⁰ SRC, Vol. 8, 2746, Report of the Medical Officer for June 1901, Aliwal North white camps forwarded by camp Supt. to Trollope, 2 July 1901.

¹⁴¹ SRC, Vol. 1, 182, Interim Superintendent, Edenburg black camp to Trollope, 21 February 1901.

¹⁴² SRC, Vol. 2, 478, Supt., Edenburg black camp to Trollope, 4 March 1901.

¹⁴³ CSO, Vol. 30, 2879/01, Medical Officer of Health, Orange River Colony. Dr. Pratt Yule to Wilson, 10 August 1901.

camp contained about 1800 refugees in very poor huts except for some that had been covered with "Kafir matting".¹⁴⁴ In that same month of April the superintendent reported that he was issuing sacks to arriving heads of families as far as the supply allowed. These sacks were used to thatch their huts.¹⁴⁵ Yule during his August visit reported "very varied materials had been employed in the construction of the shelters-reeds, sacking, galvanised iron, mud bricks and old biscuit tins."¹⁴⁶ In contrast two roomed cottages of sun-dried brick were built by some of the white inmates at Brandfort to replace the tents.¹⁴⁷

When the Thaba'nchu black camp was officially taken over by the Department of Refugees, Robert Dickie, the Superintendent, proposed that the new inmates build their own shelters immediately. As at Edenburg there was no wood available out of which the frames of the huts could be made. Dickie suggested that he be allowed to purchase inexpensive strips of wood that could be sold when no longer needed. This is another example of the policy of providing the blacks with as little as possible for as little as possible. In response Trollope said nothing about this proposal.¹⁴⁸ No approval was given to purchase these needed materials. This was consistent with the British colonial philosophy and policy regarding the indigenous peoples. Blacks were expected to meet their own needs as far as possible themselves without assistance. When assistance was absolutely necessary it should be done at as little cost as possible.

Even in the Bloemfontein black camp where, as previously stated, the housing and living conditions in general were better than in most of the black camps, many deaths were attributed to inadequate housing. Dr. Friedman, the Medical Officer in the camp explained that the improvement in the

¹⁴⁴ SRC, Vol. 5, 1304, Camps Inspector, Dept. of Refugees to Trollope, 15 April 1901.

¹⁴⁵ SRC, Vol. 5, 1359, Supt., Brandfort white camp to Trollope, 15 April 1901.

¹⁴⁶ FK, Vol. 1038, CO 224/4, CO 35688, pp. 279-82, Dr. Pratt Yule to Goold-Adams, 17 August 1901. Such use of materials that can be found at hand is still prevalent and widespread in the construction of housing by poor black people in South Africa. The author saw one house built with pieces of galvanised iron. An automobile has been inserted and welded lengthways into one outside wall. Thus the house was now provided with the equivalent of a bay window with windows that roll up and down. This ingenuous idea also provides places to sit.

*British Parliamentary Papers*¹⁴⁷ Cd. 893, Report on the concentration camps in South Africa, p. 80.

¹⁴⁸ SRC, Vol. 5, 1217, Dickie to Trollope, 9 April 1901.

sickness and death rates he had reported the week before had been “interrupted” because the heavy rains had caused a lot of sickness chiefly among the new arrivals, as no adequate shelter could be provided for them.¹⁴⁹

Distance between tents and huts and proper drainage.

The distance between tents, usually expressed as the distance from tent pole to tent pole, or between huts was understood by at least some camp Medical Officers and Superintendents as a crucial factor in the prevention of disease spread. Illustrative of this principle is Dr. Kendall Franks’ description of the layout and distance between tents in the Belfast white camp well illustrates this necessary practice. “...the tents are pitched with mathematical accuracy, and the openings of the tents are arranged so that no one tent can look into the other. The distance between the tents is thirteen yards from pole to pole; each tent is surrounded by a trench.” E. Van Heyningen remarks that Dr. Franks had “... a passion for mathematical accuracy in the pitching of tents”¹⁵⁰ His concern for the placement of tents, despite any over precision, is still quite commendable, and it can be said that many died because others in charge of sanitary arrangements did not follow such principles.

“In an early report of the Bloemfontein black camp the superintendent assured Trollope that the shelters erected by the refugees were “sufficiently” wide apart and that a trench running the length of the camp provided good drainage.¹⁵¹ While this open trench may have provided for good drainage the water in this trench was probably enteric and some inmates may have used this water for washing and cooking. Such a trench was undoubtedly a source of potential disease spread. In the black camp at Vredefort Road the huts were “laid down in straight lines at a distance of thirty feet with a space of twenty feet between huts.”¹⁵² The Kroonstad black camp was laid out in similar fashion in straight lines with huts being twenty-five yards apart. At Brandfort the lines ran in

¹⁴⁹ SRC, Vol. 3, 625. Medical Officer, Bloemfontein black Camp to Trollope. 16 March 1901.

¹⁵⁰ Elizabeth Van Heyningen, “British Doctors versus Boer women,” in Fransjohan Pretorius, (ed.) *Scorched Earth* (Cape Town, 2001) p. 185.

¹⁵¹ SRC, Vol. 2, 372. Supt. Bloemfontein black camp to Trollope, 28 February 1901.

¹⁵² CSO, Vol. 31, 2976, Dr. Pratt Yule to Gool-Adams, 19 August 1901.

generally straight lines with the huts being placed about 35 yards apart.¹⁵³ The present day site of the black camp reveals that the huts in the lines were quite close to each other as they stood on the line. As noted above, in the early stage of development at Edenburg, not all camps were laid out with proper distances between tents and huts, especially in the beginning.

Rations

The rations supplied to refugees in the first white concentration camps, authorised by Lord Roberts in late September 1900, were probably the standard military rations provided for the troops. Three months later when Kitchener ordered the establishment of the camps for the incarceration of the Boer and black families he stipulated that the District Commissioners would provide food “on the scale now in use.”¹⁵⁴ It is not totally clear if he was referring to the standard military rations or the rations being provided to the “Hands Upper Camps”.

In 1888 the British Army engaged in considerable scientific study of the amounts and kinds of food required by soldiers. In the past it appears that the food provided to British soldiers had not been a major concern, in part due to the class system in the British Army with an officer class that had a low regard for the lower class line soldiers. In the United States Army during the Civil War the ration for each soldier was simply stated: Soldier needs 3 pounds food daily- Horse or Mule 20 pounds daily.¹⁵⁵ The subject of soldier’s rations in late 1888 became a topic of considerable discussion in the British press. It was of such importance that Surgeon A.M. Davies delivered a paper in November of the same year presenting considerable information on this subject.

The focus of this study does not permit anymore than a presentation of a few salient facts concerning Davies’ recommended ration scale. “[The soldier’s ration] is composed of the Government ration together with what he buys for himself. The former consists of 1 lb. of bread and

¹⁵³ CSO, Vol., 31, 2976, Dr. Pratt Yule to Goold-Adams, 17 August 1901.

¹⁵⁴ Cd. 426, AG Circular Memorandum, No. 29, 21 December 1901.

¹⁵⁵ *University of Delaware Archives, Newark, Delaware, United States of America*, UD-MS-157, F35, (no other details given)

¾ lb. meat. The latter varies very much with individual tastes and opportunities, but on a broad average it consists of extra bread, potatoes and other vegetables, milk sugar, salt coffee and tea. To these may be added either cheese, butter or bacon.”¹⁵⁶ He asserted that 4,500 to 5,000 grains of carbon and somewhat over 300 grains of nitrogen are required on a daily basis. Further this intake must be in four basic food groups; (1) Albuminoids-nitrogenous materials, (2) Fats-carbon hydrogen and oxygen, (3) Carbohydrates consisting also of carbon, hydrogen and oxygen, (4) Salts, i.e., food of inorganic and mineral origin. Of importance to this study is his statement that the body cannot be kept in good health unless food contains some proportion of each of these four classes of food. To this he adds the common sense statement that the more work done by the body, the more food that is required.¹⁵⁷ This principle was adhered to in the jails in the Orange River Colony where both black and white prisoners doing hard labour received 50% more mealie meal than those awaiting trial, but black prisoners received no meat.¹⁵⁸ Davies provided the specific amounts of the four food groups that are needed at various levels of activity:

Table 3.2¹⁵⁹

**Table of food requirements for different levels
Of work as calculated in 1888 by A.M. Davies**

Elements of the four food groups	Rest Diet	Ordinary Work	Hard Work
	Ounces	Ounces	Ounces
Albuminoids	2.5	4.5	6.5
Fats	1	3.0	5.0
Carbohydrates	12	14	16
Salts	0.5	1.0	1.5
Total	16.0	22.5	29.0

Davies also presented a table of the percentage of the composition of the four food groups of certain foods.

¹⁵⁶ Royal Army Medical Corps, RAMC/474/6, Vol. 37, “The Food of the Soldier.” A paper presented to the Committee of the Aldershot Military Society, 22 November 1888, (Wellcome Institute of Medical History Archives, RAMC Collection),

¹⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, p.4.

¹⁵⁸ CSO, Vol. 18, 1488/01, Chief Inspector of Jails to Wilson, 13 May 1901.

¹⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, p.5.

Table 3. 3
The percentage of the composition of the four food groups of certain foods.

Food Item	Water	Albu- minoids	Fats	Carbo- Hydrates	Salts
Meat	75	15	8.5	—	1.5
Bread	40	8	1.5	50	1
Flour	15	11	2	70	1
Butter	6	3	90		1
Rice	10	5	1	83	0.5
Sugar	3			96	0.5
Milk	87	4	3.7	4.7	0.7
Eggs	73	13.5	11.5		1
Cheese	37	33	25		5
Potatoes	75	2		20	1

The earliest official ration scale for black refugees was probably issued in January 1901. The earliest published scale in the record is an amended scale issued in February.

Natives over 12 years of age

Daily Rations

1 ½ lbs. either mealies, kaffir corn

Unsifted meal or mealie meal

¼ oz. Salt.

Weekly Rations¹⁶⁰

¾ lb. fresh or tinned meat

½ oz. coffee

2 oz. sugar

Natives under 12 years of age

Daily Rations

1 lb. either mealies, kaffir/corn

Unsifted meal or mealie meal

¼ oz. Salt

Weekly Rations

¾ lb. fresh or tinned meat

½ oz. coffee

2 oz. Sugar

It appears in some instances the weekly rations were not issued. Trollope issued an amended ration scale about three weeks later in Circular No. 7 on 8 March 1901. The only difference was that the meat ration for black inmates over 12 years of age was raised from ¾ of a pound of meat per week to 1 pound a week along with 1 more oz. of sugar. White inmates were allowed ½ pound on a daily

¹⁶⁰ There is a notation after the weekly rations as follows: Over 12 year of age "4 ¼ lbs. per ration. Under 12 years of age the notation is 3 ¼ lbs. per ration. This may mean that this is the maximum amount number of pounds of meat that may issued to a family each week. In the following publication Circular No. 7 dated 8 March 1901 this notation does not appear.

basis or 3 ½ pounds per week. The ration scale for blacks under 12 years of age remained the same.¹⁶¹ In early 1902 some improvements in the rations were provided to the inmates of some of the white camps. At the same time precautions were taken to assure that these rations were not ending up with the Boer Commandos still in the field.¹⁶² Unfortunately very often in the case of the black camps the ration scale was not adhered to for various reasons as are shown below, and that was especially true in the case of meat and coffee and sugar.

Some superintendents decided to exclude certain items of the ration scale using the argument that these inmates did not have these kinds of food in their normal daily diet. Davies says that it may be argued, "...that the class from which [the army recruits come]... are not as well fed as the soldier is at present, and that therefore the present...diet being a considerable improvement on what he was used to is plenty. He argues, however, that the opposite course should be taken to build up this soldier so that he can cope with the work he is required to do. He cites another paper, which showed that the soldier's weight and muscular development improve during the early period of his service."¹⁶³ British soldiers who were being held captive in a jail in October 1900 by the Boers, who were very short of food provided these prisoners daily with 1 lb. of meat and 1 lb. of mealie meal. When they bitterly complained to General de la Rey about the poor rations he said they should have been let go long ago. He gave them a white flag and sent them on their way.¹⁶⁴

If the rations actually issued to the inmates of the black camps are considered in light of the above tables it can be easily seen that especially in the case of men engaged in hard labour that the rations were very inadequate and no doubt contributed to the high death rates of the black men working at hard labour. There is no record of the ration scale provided to black workers employed by the Army

¹⁶¹ SRC, Vol. 2, 487/01, Trollope to superintendents of all concentration camps in the Orange River Colony, 8 March 1901; FK, Vol. 1299, 079/5939, 8 March 1901. In the Transvaal the ration scales for "Native Refugees" were reprinted on page 6 in the Circulars of the Director of Supplies, which was not found in the National Archives. Cited in MGP, Vol. 152, 3174/02.

¹⁶² SRC, Vol. 19, 7480, Trollope to D.A.A.G., 7 February 1902.

¹⁶³ Davies, "The Food of the Soldier." P. 14.

¹⁶⁴ A1643, Roberts Papers, Vol. 54, General Hart to Roberts, 13 October 1900, pp. 111-13.

Departments. From what is known of the mining company diets for black labourers their diet lacked fruit and vegetables.¹⁶⁵ The restricted diet of mealie meal and salt which many black labourers in the later black camps received was calculated to produce scurvy. In the white camps and some of the black camps limejuice was issued to overcome this problem. Limejuice may also have reduced colds and other viruses impacted by vitamin C. Lime juice was sometimes provided in the later black camps.

Military commanders who were feeding some refugees in the field during the removal process asked what scale of rations should be issued to natives.¹⁶⁶ This was early in the sweeps of blacks to the railway and it appears that Maxwell at this point envisioned feeding these blacks, but Kitchener prevented that by his insistence that the Army Service Corps not feed them and that they could only receive rations if they worked for one of the Army Departments. The kinds and amounts of food issued are not specified. In the case of whites the rations issued in the field were probably the standard military ration or somewhat less.

Cost of rations for blacks versus whites

It was official policy that the daily cost of rations provided to black inmates was to be half that of white inmates, i.e. 9 pennies for whites and 4 ½ pennies for blacks.¹⁶⁷ Ration costs for prisoners in jails were set at 1 shilling and five pennies per person per day in the Orange River Colony.¹⁶⁸ In May 1901 the jails in the Orange River Colony had allowed white prisoners 2 shillings and 3 pennies while black prisoners were only allowed 1 shilling and 6 pennies.¹⁶⁹ Despite this there was a determination by the British authorities to require, and indeed to force, black male refugees working for the army departments, to pay for at least some portion of their family's' food. This situation should be placed in the context that their presence in the concentration camps was, in the great

¹⁶⁵ Joseph M. Orpen "The Diet of Native Labourers," A Lecture read before Rhodesia Scientific-Association, Salisbury Branch. 25 April 1902. p.6.

¹⁶⁶ MGP, Vol. 74, General Wynne to Maxwell, 20 February 1901.

¹⁶⁷ SRC, Vol. 2, 280, Trollope to Supt., Harrismith white camp, 27 February 1901.

¹⁶⁸ SRC, Vol. 19, 7324, Wilson. to the Legal Advisor, Orange River Colony Administration, 15 May 1902.

¹⁶⁹ CSO, Vol. 18, 1488/01. Chief Inspector of Jails to Wilson, 13 May 1901.

majority of cases, the result of their being compelled to enter the camps by the British columns. There were some attempts to require Boer families in the white camps to pay for their rations, but these proposals were denied after some discussion.

Special rations for children.

On 7 December 1901 Trollope implemented a proposal made by Dr. Pratt Yule in November changing the rations of children 5 years of age and under. This new ration included oatmeal and rice and Maizena instead of mealie meal, which could not be digested properly by infants and young children along with many things not included in the bare bones ration scale for the black camps.¹⁷⁰ John Buchan,¹⁷¹ the member of Milner's staff charged with improving the conditions in the white concentration camps, asked Trollope on behalf of the Colonial Secretary, Joseph Chamberlain, why the children in the white camps were getting four times as much meal, rice, etc as an adult. Trollope's reply: "... the meat and coffee ration has been cut down and babies require lots of slops and pappy food. They are doing nicely on it and the death rate shows an enormous decrease."¹⁷² The meat ration was reduced because it was felt babies and infants could not digest meat properly. In the early period of the white camps and the black camps a special diet for children was not authorised.¹⁷³ The Committee of Ladies of the Concentration Camp Commission, who were all doctors, had also seen this problem, attributing the high death rate among children as being in large measure due to their being deprived of ...suitable food for their tender age."¹⁷⁴

The Medical Officer at the Kroonstad black and white camps commented at length on the problem of indigestion as a cause of sickness and death as being crucial particularly in the case of very young children. It was suggested that that for all children under 12 years of age, a ration of mealie meal (fine) should be served out in the place of bread with a larger allowance of milk and sugar; ½

¹⁷⁰ *Ibid.*

¹⁷¹ John Buchan later became a well-known British novelist.

¹⁷² SRC, Vol. 19, 7524, Trollope to John Buchan, 11 February 1902.

¹⁷³ SRC, Vol. 1, 68, Trollope to Supt., Norvals Pont white camp, 5 February 1901.

¹⁷⁴ *British Parliamentary Papers*, Cd. 893, *Report of the Committee of Ladies on the Concentration Camps in South Africa*, p.15.

lb. of mealie meal, 2 oz. of sugar and 1 tin of condensed milk to six children per diem.¹⁷⁵ The black inmates had been transferred to the Department of Native Refugees five months previously. The rations in the Department of Native Refugees camps consisted exclusively of mealie meal, “Kaffir corn,” and salt. These food grains were coarse, and therefore indigestible, especially for babies and infants. Their meat ration was not reduced because they were not getting any meat during most of the period in which these camps were in operation. Thus there can be no doubt that this differential treatment of blacks in the concentration camps contributed to many infant and children’s deaths.

Rations actually provided

As already mentioned the official scale of rations was seldom followed, in the case of black inmates. For example it appears that rations were not always issued in the Edenburg camp. This was in part due to the failure of the supply system, which caused a shortage of food. In the early part of February 1901, the first month for which a record exists, the Superintendent reported that because of the irregularity of the delivery of food supplies that he had been forced to get 1,000 biscuits from the army supply officer. In early March we see evidence that not all black refugees at Edenburg were issued rations on a regular basis, but the decision was made situationally depending on the seriousness of the state of health the refugees were in. The superintendent felt the need to justify his desire to issue rations. “As several of the Native Refugees...are suffering from dysentery, I think it necessary that they should at least once a week draw meal rations, so that the invalids can have a light diet.” For the invalids he also wished to issue coffee and sugar.¹⁷⁶ These requests were approved.¹⁷⁷ It is important to note that these obvious needs had to be approved by the Trollope rather than the staff on the ground with the refugees. This was a financial control process.

From this it can be seen that the policy of food distribution to black inmates, as with medical care, housing and sanitation, was only to do what was absolutely necessary, and foremost of all, to keep

¹⁷⁵ SRC, Vol. 3, 591. Medical Officer, to Supt Kroonstad white camp, 12 March 1901.

¹⁷⁶ SRC, Vol. 2, 478. Supt., Edenburg black camp to Trollope, 4 March 1901.

¹⁷⁷ *Ibid.*

the costs down to the absolute minimum. Furthermore, wherever possible, the black inmates were asked to provide for themselves and also to pay for their food. Thus despite the ration scales which had been put in place the food issued was not related to the scale, but to the judgement of the officials regarding the dire nature of the situation. This spartanism was driven by the colonial policy of spending as little as possible on blacks and other indigenous peoples in the British Empire. This food for money policy is clearly shown at Edenburg where the families of those who were working and contributing to the food for their families were treated quite differently. But even here certain items, particularly coffee and sugar and other food items considered a luxury, were not issued. Since Trollope had to approve these rations on a case by case basis it is clear that the other original black camps in the Orange River Colony also were following the same policy. It should also be noted that almost all the black men in these camps were performing labour for the camp superintendents or the Army Departments. Those who were employed in this way were granted free rations. Trollope enunciated this policy in March 1901 in answer to a question from the superintendent of the Brandfort white camp in regards to the inmates in the black camp who were working. "Families of natives earning wages receive rations and hospital patients who are not on hospital diet."¹⁷⁸

Fuel

In both the black and white camps, inmates gathered wood within the confines of the camp. The inmates in the black and white camps at Brandfort cut down the trees on the farm where the black Camp was located for firewood. The trees cut down were valued at £600.00, a very considerable sum at that time.¹⁷⁹ Sometimes military intelligence allowed collection of wood outside the camps. When the black inmates were either forbidden to gather wood outside the confines of the camp or were restricted to a small area beyond the perimeter then it was necessary to apply for an increased

¹⁷⁸ SRC, Vol. 2, 409, Trollope to supt., Brandfort white camp, 5 March 1901.

¹⁷⁹ CSO, Vol. 107, 4442, Attorney J.P. Van Zyl to Wilson 17 October 1902.

pay at native rates.¹⁸⁴ Kitchener had maintained a consistent policy, from the beginning, that all “natives” should be handed over to the nearest Army Department “for work, for which they will be paid [so they] can support themselves and their families.”¹⁸⁵ The removal, however, of blacks from the Boer farms, and later from the regular locations, was not done to provide labour to the Army Departments. Obviously the Army Labour Depots had all along been able to provide the labour needed by the British Army. As mentioned, some black and coloured labourers were recruited directly by the army garrisons.

Many of the black inmates had worked for the Army Departments before the camps were officially established. In fact, as has been shown, one of the reasons blacks left the farms and came into the garrisoned towns was to obtain employment with the Army Departments. During the existence of these “original black camps,” most able-bodied black men were working for the Army Departments. Some black inmates were hired to help construct fortifications, including the blockhouses and barbed wire squares, which were in some cases in the vicinity of the black camps. Some men were retained by the black camps to perform work for the camp superintendents, especially in the areas of sanitation and the camp hospitals in the nearby white camps. On some occasions the Army Departments drew upon those able bodied men directly who were not yet contracted with the Army Departments.

Rates of pay and deductions.

The Transvaal Colonial Government stipulated that the rate of pay for unskilled native labourers as of 1 December 1900 would be thirty shillings per month and free rations. All employers of domestic servants were urged to cooperate to prevent artificially high rates of pay to natives.¹⁸⁶ The Chamber of mines instituted this rate of pay in June 1900 when 4000 of their mineworkers were temporarily

¹⁸⁴ *British Parliamentary Papers*, Cd. 426 Army Circular No. 29, 21 December 1900.

¹⁸⁵ MGP, Vol. 248, Military Governor of Pretoria to District Commissioner, Standerton., 18 March 1901.

¹⁸⁶ The Transvaal Government Gazette, Government Notice 140/1900, p. 267, 20 November 1900.

lent to the Army Departments when the British Army occupied Johannesburg.¹⁸⁷ It was not until the end of May 1901 that this provision, adopted by the Transvaal colonial government, was fully implemented in the black concentration camps in the Orange River Colony. Goold-Adams learned that the black inmates employed by the Army Departments were contributing nothing to their wives and children and as a result the refugee camps were providing for them totally. Kitchener's *starve or work* policy was designed, as Kitchener said, to enable the black refugees "to support themselves and their families."¹⁸⁸

Actually there is evidence of this policy of deduction of money for the families in the black camps being in operation as early as February 1901. In February, the Superintendent of the Edenburg black camp wrote to Trollope regarding the monies that had been deducted from the monthly wages of men who were working for the Army Departments, and whose families were living in the Edenburg Camp. In his February report the superintendent stated that upon receipt of a food shipment from Port Elizabeth he fed the wives and families of black refugees employed by the Remounts depot,¹⁸⁹ from whose wages £1 is being deducted."¹⁹⁰ To those families who did not have a family member working for the army departments, and from whose salary no deduction was being collected for the support of the family, he said he issued "sufficient meal and mealies."¹⁹¹ By June 1901, the Remounts Depot was sending deducted funds directly to the Commandant at Edenburg.¹⁹²

Evidently this deduction system was not being carried out by all the Army Departments. Goold-Adams ordered that "...the minimum wage paid to any male native engaged from a refugee camp shall be 30 shillings per mensem and further that each employer of such native labour shall deduct

¹⁸⁷ This was also the rate of pay of line soldiers in the British Army. In 1896, according to Pakenham, Lansdowne, then Secretary of War, "had nervously agreed to propose to the cabinet that they might raise soldier's pay a few pence in order to get a better class of recruit." Pakenham, *The Boer War*, p. 73.

¹⁸⁸ MGP, Telegram Books, No. 2140 (MG 2025), Military Governor of Pretoria to General Wynne, Standerton, 22 February 1901.

¹⁸⁹ The remounts depots were a major employer of the inmates of the black camps. The task of the remounts' depots was to round up exhausted horses and other livestock and to rehabilitate them and then after a period of rest to ship them back to the British Army units in need of them.

¹⁹⁰ SRC, Vol. 2, 486, Supt. Edenburg Black Concentration Camp to Trollope, February Report dated 1 March 1901.

¹⁹¹ *Ibid.*

¹⁹² SRC, Vol. 9, 3015/01, OC Remounts Depot to Commandant, Edenburg, 24 June 1901.

20 shillings monthly from such wages of each native whose family is receiving support in a refugee camp and remit this amount to the Chief Superintendent, Refugee Camps at the end of the month.” He further stipulated that if the employer did not carry this out, permission for the “native” to leave the camp would be withdrawn.¹⁹³ This would seem to indicate some resistance to this deduction system on the part of the Army Departments. This deduction system was very unpopular with the workers, which may explain this resistance. As a result when the Department of Native Refugees took over the original black camps this deduction system was terminated.

The research indicates that the average black family consisted of 6 persons.¹⁹⁴ With at least one family member away working for the army departments that would leave 5 persons to be fed of whom 2-3 would be children. In cases where 20 shillings a month were deducted and the rations policy limited the cost of rations per person was not to exceed 4.5 pennies a day this deduction paid a significant part of the food expenditure to feed the black families in the camps. Careful calculation shows that about one third of the meals were thus paid by the black man. More precisely given a family of five person being fed in the black camp with the sixth person away working, the number of *person/ days* = 5 persons X 30.4 days = 152.0 person /days. Thus at 4.5 pennies a day per person the deducted £1 could pay for 53.3 of the 152 person/days or 35% of the feeding cost on average. In addition the rations provided were primarily food grains, mealie meal and sorghum (Kaffir corn) so that it is certain that this very reduced ration cost was well below 4.5 pennies allotted for each inmate. In fact it was probably less than 2 pennies a day given the actual rations provided.

There was ample precedent for deducting monies from the wages of employees for the support of families both by the mining companies and the British Army. The mining companies had special offices for black mine workers to remit money to their families in Basutoland and other places

¹⁹³ SRC, Vol. 8, 2268, Goold-Adams to Trollope, 31 May 1901.

¹⁹⁴ This figure was obtained by noting that the 15,000 Black refugees who were strung along the railway in the Transvaal were said to consist of 2,500 families. This to be sure was a rough estimate, although it was probably based on some observation when these informal settlements were formed into the organised camps when the Department of Native Refugees was formed in June and July 1901.

under British rule or protection.¹⁹⁵ Boer Commandos in the field sent money to their families in the camps. This money was not given to the families, but at Milner's directive was retained until the end of the war on the basis that commandos still fighting were not allowed to have contact with their families.¹⁹⁶

Now along the railway were some 22,500 black women and children and men confined in black camps. These camps had not been planned. They arose out of the circumstances of the war and the mutual dependence that had always existed between black people and white people in the history of southern Africa. These camps were places of some misery and destitution with poor housing, inadequate food and poor sanitation. As will be seen in Chapter 5 there was a minimum of medical service. There were, as a result, many deaths and much sickness. The men were working for the Army Departments and the white camp superintendents. These laagers of suffering and survival had stabilised now into struggling black communities that lay a mile or so away from the white camps. This was not to last. In August and September they would be removed to new camp sites on abandoned farms where they would be required to grow food for themselves and for the Army Departments. The next chapter describes this continuing saga of the black concentration camps which were now transferred to the newly formed Department of Native Refugees in mid 1901. Now once again these camps were under direct military control and supervision.

¹⁹⁵ SNA, Vol. 67,2360, Secretary of Rand Mines Limited to The Secretary of Native Affairs, 25 October 1902.; SNA, Vol. 75, 2577, G.D. Wheelwright to Controller of Passports, 20 November 1902.

¹⁹⁶ High Commissioner (HC). Vol. 81, Circular No. V, 22 October 1901.

Chapter 4

The Department of Native Refugees June 1901 to February 1903

I. Introduction:

Two consecutive days in June 1901 are very important in this history. On 14 June 1901, the Army Labour Depots, described below, were officially closed. On that same day the Witwatersrand Native Labour Association, the black labour recruitment monopoly entity of the Transvaal Chamber of Mines, was also put into operation.¹ The next day the Department of Native Refugees was established by order of Lord Kitchener. Captain G.F. de Lotbiniere, a staff officer to the Director of Railways, was appointed Officer in Charge of the new Department.² He was assisted by other staff of the now defunct Johannesburg Army Labour Depot. Since the roots of the Department of Native Refugees lay in the Army Labour Depots, a brief historical overview of these depots, and especially the Johannesburg Depot, is required.

One of the primary hypotheses of this study requires the presentation of evidence that the Department of Native Refugees, like the original black concentration camps, was part of the overall anti-guerrilla strategy of Lord Kitchener, and that these camps were formed for purely military reasons. It will be shown that the primary motivation for the establishment of the Department of Native Refugees was not to provide a work camp system. Although the need for a relatively small amount black labour when a few mines were reopened in May 1901 was an unnecessary initiating cause. Rather, the new Department was established to provide a cheap

¹ Lord Milner granted the Witwatersrand Native Labour Association exclusive rights to the recruitment of black labour in other African countries and the Transvaal, denying that right to any other entity, including Natal or other government agencies. Milner by this act betrayed his promises to the Governor of Natal that they would not be excluded from recruiting black labour. The charter for the WNLA was approved in October 1900. The close connection of this recruitment monopoly to Lord Milner is shown by the appointment of his Imperial Secretary as the first President of the organisation. Milner denied being in the service of the mining company capitalists, but this action shows that claim to be in doubt. See Stowell Kessler, "A Shilling a Day" unpublished paper presented to the South African Historical Society, July 1998 for a detailed discussion of the establishment of the WNLA by the Transvaal Chamber of Mines and Lord Milner.

² *National Archives of South Africa, Pretoria*, Archives of the Secretary of Native Affairs, (SNA), Vol. 20, 519/02, The Officer in Charge, the Department of Native Refugees, Captain G.J. de Lotbiniere to Deputy Administrator, Orange River Colony Administration, 18 January 1902.

means of accommodating and feeding the thousands of black farmworkers who would be swept into the black camps for military reasons. In addition there were almost 50,000 black inmates already incarcerated in the original black camps in the Orange River Colony and the unofficial informal camps in the Transvaal. Part of the design of the Department of Native Refugees was to provide a way to cut the costs of feeding the 120,000 inmates who it was thought would eventually inhabit these camps. This problem was solved by the development of an agricultural sharecropping scheme on abandoned farms where the women and children were induced, if not coerced, to raise food for themselves. This system was almost identical to the mining industry migrant labour paradigm that required the families of the mineworkers to remain at home to raise their own food and the next generation of mine workers. This was also in compliance with the British colonial work relief policy which strictly adhered to the work or starve policy which was in force throughout the British Empire

Added to the British colonial policy that indigenous people must be self-supporting was the additional requirement to grow crops for the Army Departments. This was a betrayal of the original promise that everything raised by the inmates would be theirs. Somewhat surprising was the decision to require the camp inmates to pay for their own food until the first harvest. Those who refused to work for the Army Departments, or to participate in the growing of crops, were required to pay double for their food supply. Those who did agree to work for the Army Departments, or in the case of the women and children, agreed to grow crops, only had to pay half the cost price of the mealie meal or "kaffir corn". The previous policy requiring men working for the Army Departments to have money deducted from their monthly wages to support their families in the concentration camps was rescinded by de Lotbiniere on 29 August 1901.³ This was explained as being due to the unpopularity of the deduction system with the

³ *Provincial Archives of the Free State, Bloemfontein*, Archives of the Secretary of the Orange River Colony, (CSO), Vol. 32, Chief Superintendent of the Department of Native Refugees in the Orange River Colony, Captain Wilson Fox to Secretary to the Deputy Administrator of the Orange River Colony, H.F. Wilson, 29 August 1901.

men working for the Army Departments. Now all the burden of supporting these black families rested with the women and children and elderly and bodily unfit men.

As a result of the impending massive sweeps one of the primary reasons for the establishment of the camps on abandoned farms was to save the estimated cost of £10,000 a month in feeding the Native refugee families. According to this scheme, conceived of, and proposed by de Lotbiniere, a month after the initial establishment of the new Department, the inmates in the original black camps were moved to abandoned farms where they were, induced, if not coerced, to raise crops for themselves and the Army Departments.⁴ The end result of this involuntary movement to the new farm camps was nearly seven and a half thousand deaths due to the severe living conditions in these hastily erected camps, which were poorly prepared and lacking in adequate levels of the most basic essentials necessary to the survival of human life in concentrated confinement.

Initially, the presenting cause of the establishment of the Department of Native Refugees camps was a need to replace 2,000 of the 4,000 black mineworkers loaned by the Chamber of Mines to the Army Departments in June 1900 when the British Army entered and occupied Johannesburg. In May 1901 they were ordered returned by Lord Kitchener to the Chamber Mines when he allowed a few of the gold mines on the Rand to reopen. As will be seen these replacements could have easily been obtained without the creation of the Department of Native Refugees composed initially of some fifty new black concentration camps.

II. The Army Labour Depots.

As discussed briefly in Chapter 3, the use of indigenous unskilled labour by the British Army was an official policy of the British Army in its recent wars, especially in the tropical areas of the world. *The Detailed History of the Railways in the South African War*, hereafter referred to

⁴ In some cases the farms of British loyalists were used for this purpose.

as *The History*, gives the rationale for this policy. "Because so many of our wars are undertaken in countries where unskilled labour is indigenous, army departments should supplement their trained units with native labour, thereby considerably reducing the numbers of soldiers required for fatigue duties."⁵ By 1898 *War Establishments*, the British Army manual of military organisation, contained an official table of staffing and organisation for an army labour depot.⁶ Each depot was to consist of one thousand unskilled labourers.⁷ Edwin Pratt estimates that there was a maximum of about 20,000 black unskilled labourers employed by the army at any one time during the war.⁸

The railway construction labour system utilised by Lord Kitchener in the Sudan War in 1897 was very similar in size and structure to the model outlined in the 1898 edition of *War Establishments* and consisted of 1,000 indigenous labourers.⁹ The first army labour depot formed during the South African War at De Aar, followed this same model which consisted of a work force of 1,000 black labourers. In Bloemfontein this practice of recruiting labour regiments numbering 1,000 was continued. When, however, the British Army arrived in Johannesburg there was a ready supply of black mineworkers, made available to the British Army by the Transvaal Chamber of Mines, thereby initially, making labour recruitment unnecessary.

⁵Royal Engineers Institute, *Detailed History of the Railways in the South African War, 1899-1902* (Chatham, England, 1904) p. 257 Vol. 1-Letterpress. (Chatham, 1904) p. 256. Originally planned as a four volume work it was based on the *History of the Railways During The War in South Africa, 1899-1902* by Lieut. Colonel E.P.C. Girouard, Director of the Imperial Military Railway during the South African War.

⁶By 1926 the British Army in India published a very detailed Field Service Manual for a "Labour Group Headquarters, Labour Company and Labour Depot." (Calcutta, 1927) pp. 1-28. (India Institute, Oxford University) This manual was very detailed down to even the field ration in the exact number of pounds of grains, dry grass and salt for each different kind of animal. It gave exact numbers of soldiers and what the manual called "followers." There was different scale of rations for British troops and Indian troops and followers. [Probably camp followers]

⁷The Royal Engineers Institute, *Detailed History of the Railways in the South African War. 1899-1902.*

⁸Edwin A. Pratt, *The Rise of Rail Power in War and Conquest, 1833-1914* (London, 1915) p. 242.

⁹In 1998 I was able to conduct research at the *Royal Engineers Institute* in Chatham England. Very little relevant material was available, including Girouard's private diary, which had been loaned to some member of the staff and was now apparently lost. The archivist tried very hard to assist me, for which I am very grateful.

During the war the Imperial Military Railway was the largest user of black labour because of the single-track railway lines leading to the front and the almost daily destruction of the railway line by the Boers. As the major employer of black labour, the Army Labour Depots were placed under Colonel E.P.C. Girouard, the newly designated Director of Railways for the British Army in South Africa who was appointed just four days before the war began. Immediately upon his arrival in Cape Town, on loan from the Egyptian National Railway, Girouard immediately set out to establish a system for the provision of black labour¹⁰ needed by the Army Departments.¹¹ Lord Milner relied upon Girouard whenever the need for "native" labour arose.¹²

There was, however, another reason for the decision to place the Army Labour Depots under Girouard's supervision. Girouard had considerable experience in railway construction and in recruiting and supervising indigenous unskilled labour in railway construction in Africa. He had been assigned by Lord Kitchener in 1897 to construct a railway across two hundred miles of hostile desert during the Sudan War.¹³ Previously he had worked on the wonder of imperial railway construction, the Canadian Pacific Railway. Despite his very young age of thirty-three he was an expert railway engineer, surveyor and most important an experienced manager of railway construction in wartime.¹⁴ The scope of the work Girouard now faced in South Africa, however, involved an exponentially larger railway system, and a much more difficult task than he had faced in the sands of the Sudan. During the South African War, he would spend two and a half years repairing and rebuilding a railway system extending 4,268 miles¹⁵ as opposed to supervising 200 miles of new railway construction across the desert expanse in the Sudan where the only enemies were desert and disease.

¹⁰ E.P.C. Girouard. *History of the Railways During the War in South Africa* (London, 1903) p. 66.

¹¹ The History of the Railways lists the following Army Departments as recipients of black labour from the Army Labour Depot system in addition to the railways; the: Army Service Corps, Ordnance Stores Corps and field units of the Royal Engineers. To this list must be added the Remounts Depots.

¹² *The National Archives of South Africa, Pretoria*, Accession, 1643, Roberts Papers, Vol. 56, p. 48, Milner to Roberts, 8 May 1900.

¹³ Pratt, *The Rise of Rail Power, 1833-1914* (London, 1915) p. 233.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 232.

From the beginning of the war it was clear given the frequent attacks on the railway and the telegraph lines by the Boers that it would be necessary to supplement the two Royal Engineers railway companies, which had been sent out from England in July 1899.¹⁶ To overcome this deficiency a railway pioneer regiment was formed "...composed of miners, artisans and labourers who had been previously been employed at Cape Town and Johannesburg."¹⁷ Specially fitted construction trains took work crews to the repair sites. "At convenient sidings on the railways construction trains were stationed with repair gangs of whites and blacks-varying in number from 300 to 1,000 as required, along with Infantry working parties wherever possible."¹⁸ The army labour depots supplied most of the black labour for these repair gangs.

The role of the mining companies.

It appears that the Army Labour Depots were modelled after the mining industry system of black labour recruitment monopoly depots. The idea of a labour depot to recruit and distribute labour to mining industry employers in South Africa was first proposed in 1876 in Kimberly. This early model envisioned the formation of a labour depot to recruit and distribute black labour to the mines to prevent competition, thus assuring low wages. The British Colonial Office vetoed this proposal as being unfair to the "natives".¹⁹

The Army Labour Depots followed this same paradigm. Labourers recruited by the Army Labour Depot were paid a uniform wage to eliminate competition between the departments.²⁰ The *History* explains the reason for this recruitment monopoly policy. "It is imperative that the Departments of the Army should, in dealing with native labour, avoid all competition."²¹ Despite the Army Labour Depots attempts to control the wages of black labour hired by the

¹⁶ Girouard, *History of the Railways*, p. 7. Each company consisted of 150 men.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 242.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 243.

¹⁹ *National Archives of South Africa, Pretoria*, Confidential Print, Microfilm M320, CO 879/9, pp. 34-5, Memorandum from Mr. Manning to Her Majesty's Special Commissioner, Colonel Crossman, R.E.. V.L. Allen, *The History of Black Mineworkers in South Africa* (Johannesburg, 1992) p. 60.

²⁰ E.P.C. Girouard, *History of the Railways*, p. 66.

²¹ Royal Engineers Institute, *Detailed History of the Railways*, p. 256.

Army Departments there were serious problems. Even down to the last month of the war the mining companies were complaining that the army departments were paying very high wages, making recruitment almost impossible. The Secretary of the Witwatersrand Native Labour Association, the black labour recruitment monopoly of the Transvaal Chamber of Mines, complained to the Secretary of Native Affairs. "I learnt that Natives returning from Johannesburg, are reporting to the Natives here (in Mozambique) that the mines are only paying 10 shillings to 30 shillings per month, whereas the Military are paying from 50 shillings to 80 shillings per month. This may not be true, but it is ...doing us a lot of harm."²² *The History* comments: that "Natives are quick to take advantage of the highest bidder, and great chaos would ensue if each Department recruited on its own terms."²³ This statement implies that other cultural, racial or ethnic groups do not do the same. This view that the "native mentality" was inherently different from that of whites was the common view of the colonial officials of the time.

That Girouard called upon the mining industry for advice and followed the model of the largest and most experienced employers of black labour in South Africa was logical. This may have been facilitated by Lord Milner who had a close working and mutually beneficial relationship, with the mining industry. [See: Historical development of army labour depots-Bloemfontein; "Reopening the Rand gold mines."] To suggest that the highest political official in southern Africa would not have had a close relationship with the largest corporate citizens of the region, seems rather improbable. It is also true that the mining industry had a legitimate vested interest in advising the British Army in the handling of black wage labour. That the mining companies wished to protect their huge investments is obvious. To what extent these interests influenced their work with the labour depots is not known. It is apparent that some of their involvement

²² SNA, Vol. 28, 1024/02, Secretary, Witwatersrand Native Labour Association (WNLA) to Secretary of Native Affairs, W. Windham, 22 May 1902.

²³ Royal Engineers Institute, *Detailed History*, p. 258.

with Milner and the Government was, of course, done outside public view and is not recorded in the archival record available to historians.²⁴ It was the anxious concern of the mining industry that the black labourers hired by the Army Departments not be paid higher wages than the mining companies had decided to pay when the mines were reopened. This was especially crucial in the case of the black mineworkers loaned to the Johannesburg Army Labour Depot by the Transvaal Chamber of Mines. Immediately after the war the Chamber of Mines set a wage scale that was lower than had been previously paid. By October 1902, because many blacks refused to come to the mines due to the low wages, the Transvaal Chamber of Mines agreed to return to the rates paid according to the schedule adopted on 25 October 1900 and that some[could] be paid a higher wage at the discretion of the [mine] managers based on piece work.²⁵ In January 1903 wages for individual mine workers were based on the kind of work and level of risk, and to a certain extent, the skill and experience of the worker. The Chamber of Mines agreed on 16 January 1903 to return to the Schedule of Native Wages of 1897.²⁶ Thus it can be seen that this attempt to keep wages down to a level in the Johannesburg Army Labour Depot that the mining industry wished to pay after the war, in the end did not succeed.

The primary liaison between the mining industry and the Army Labour Depots was the Mine Managers Association. At least that was the case in the Johannesburg Depot. The mine managers were very experienced in a "hands on way" with black labour and naturally based their advice on their mining industry experience, as well as the general wishes of the mining companies.

²⁴ Rand Barlow Archives and a few other mining companies are enlightened exceptions. Notable in their attempts to prevent academic research are the De Beers Consolidated Mining Company and the Transvaal Chamber of Mines. Both these entities are willing to allow research by persons who have demonstrated a bias in their favour. The research for this thesis was greatly affected by this very unfair policy. In the outstanding archives at Rhodes House at Oxford I was able to find much of the record of Cecil Rhodes and the De Beers Consolidated Diamond Mining Company with the assistance of the Director, John Pinfold, and his very able staff.

²⁵ SNA, Vol. 67, 2361, Secretary of the Chamber of Mines to Secretary of the Department of Native Affairs, 13 November 1902.

²⁶ SNA, Vol. 91, 163/03, Secretary of the Chamber on Mine to Secretary of Native Affairs. "Revised Schedule of Native Wages approved by the Association of Mine Managers was attached, 16 January 1903.

What appears to be the standard mining company contract was adopted by all three Army Labour Depots and subsequently by the Department of Native Refugees, which replaced them. The standard mining industry labour contract utilised by the first Army Labour Depot at De Aar was as follows. The Bloemfontein and the Johannesburg depots used the same contract with the exception that the wages were considerably lower at Johannesburg.

- (1) "Boys were enlisted for three months."
- (2) "The pay was £3.00 per month with free rations. Passages were paid both ways, with rations. Money was supplied in lieu of rations while travelling to the depot."
- (3) "The free passage back was subject to a boy giving satisfaction during his term."
- (4) "No women are allowed at any time to accompany boys."

A prominent provision of that agreement was the three-month contract. Black migrant workers were usually unwilling to sign on for more than two to three months with a new employer, especially in the case of the mines. After the war the Chamber of Mines tried to get black workers to accept a six month contract, but most were unwilling to do so. Patrick Harries says "workers incarcerated in closed compounds were coaxed into registering for periods of two to three months, that through regular renewal, could amount to nine or even eighteen months."²⁷ Even in situations less restrictive, the tendency would be to opt for an initial contract period of three months. Short-term contracts allowed workers to change employers and thus bargain for higher wages.²⁸

Short-term contracts were, in part, based on the need of black mineworkers to return home to plough and harvest crops as in African culture and religion women were not allowed to work with ploughing animals or other cattle, including milk cows in some tribal communities. In testimony before the South African Native Affairs Commission a solution that would allow that custom to be honoured was explained. "Take a family in which there are four sons: The father will say to two of the boys 'you two go to Cape Town for six months and these two boys will stay at home, and look

²⁷ Patrick Harries, *Work Culture and Identity: Migrant Labourers in Mozambique and South Africa, c. 1860-1910* (Johannesburg, 1994) p.68.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, 119.

after the cattle and so on.; then they will relieve you and you can come and stay at home.”²⁹ According to Jean-Claude Mporamazina, at least among the Tutsi, milking cows was a male job. This, however, was a habit rather than a taboo.³⁰

According to Captain G. de Lotbiniere, employees of the Army Labour Depots, and later in the Department of Native Refugees, were allowed to return home to visit their families at the end of the three-month contract. This was the policy, but there is no evidence that this was routinely carried out in practice. Likewise there is also no evidence that inmates of the department could choose not to renew their contracts when they expired. In commenting on the low birth rate in the Department of Native Refugees camps D. Gerrard speaking for de Lotbiniere explained that “...the bulk of the able-bodied men had been away from their families for many months, either in our employ or that of the Boers.”³¹

The historical development of the Army Labour Depots.

The original Army Labour Depot was established at the De Aar railway junction. As the British Army moved northwards to invade the Boer Republics army labour depots were also opened at Bloemfontein and finally at Johannesburg. While intensive research was carried out on the first two depots at De Aar and Bloemfontein space and the focus of the study, does not allow the presentation of that work here. The Johannesburg Depot requires more attention because of the significant role that depot played in the eventual creation of the Department of Native Refugees. In summary, these first two depots followed the paradigm of the mining industry labour contract and operated as recruitment monopolies to provide black labour to the various Army Departments.

The first of the three major Army Labour Depots was established at the De Aar railway junction, a key railway terminal and staging area, where several major railway lines from the

²⁹ *South African Native Affairs Commission 1903-1905, Minutes of Evidence*, testimony of N. J. Lowe, Supt. of Docks Location, Cape Town, Question 1299, 8 October 1903.

³⁰ Jean-Claude Mporamazina, E-mail communication, 10 June 2002.

³¹ SNA, Vol. 13, 96/02, D. Gerrard for de Lotbiniere to Commissioner of Native Affairs, Sir Godfrey Lagden, 13 January 1902.

south came together. By mid January the De Aar depot recruiting black labour, primarily from the Transkei, had enlisted 1,000 black labourers.³² By March 2,182 men had been recruited.³³ According to W. Nasson, 10,000 workers would work for this depot during the course of the war.³⁴ A wage of £3.00 plus rations was paid each month.

When Lord Roberts reached Bloemfontein Girouard was able to obtain several labour regiments each consisting of 1,000 men from Basutoland through the efforts of Lord Milner who interceded with Sir Godfrey Lagden, the Resident Commissioner of Basutoland. As a result a Basutoland newspaper³⁵ in late April 1900 was able to report that “a peaceful army of 3,000 BaSothos under the leadership of three indigenous chiefs left Maseru in order to repair the railway line.”³⁶ Roberts had suggested to Lagden that the wage should be £2 a month with rations and a 3-month contract. The length of the contract was fine, but the pay was not. *The History* makes the observation that “Unfortunately it was found impossible as the natives discovered what had previously been paid [at De Aar] and objected to taking less.”³⁷ According to E.T. Maloka, “the Paramount Chief...told Lagden that his men were only willing to work for £3 [a month].”³⁸ Evidently £2 per month became fairly standard payment by the various Army Departments outside of Johannesburg and the Department of Transportation. This was the rate of pay at the Remounts Depots in the Cape Colony in December 1901. Headmen accompanying workers were routinely paid £3 per month.³⁹

³² Royal Engineers Institute, *The Detailed History*, p. 258.

³³ *Ibid.*, p. 259.

³⁴ W. Nasson, *Abraham Esau's War: A Black South African War in the Cape, 1899-1902* (Cambridge, 1991), p. 26.

³⁵ Steven Gill, the Curator of the Morija Museum of the Paris Evangelical Missionary Society in Morija, Lesotho uncovered this account published in the *Journal Des Missions Evangeliques*, of the missionary society. This was done at my request for which I express my thanks.

³⁶ The Morija Archives of the Paris Evangelical Missionary Society, in Morija Lesotho. (MA-PEMS-L) *Journal Des Missions Evangeliques*. P.486. Translated from the French by Pusetso Nyabela. The research was done by Stephen Gill, who also provided very helpful advice and allowed me to copy the Doctoral thesis of Edward Tshidiso Maloka. The work of Dr. Maloka has been very valuable in the writer's attempts to understand the BaSotho migrant labour history.

³⁷ Royal Engineers Institute, *The Detailed History of the Railway*, p. 256.

³⁸ E.T. Maloka, *BaSotho and the Mines: Towards a History of Labour Migrancy, c. 1890-1940* Unpublished Ph.D thesis University of Cape Town, September 1995. p. 35. Maloka does not cite the source for this statement.

³⁹ *The provincial Cape Archives, Cape Town*, The Archives of the Secretary of Native Affairs, Vol. 500, A102, Inspector of Native Locations to Assistant Secretary to Native Affairs Department, Cape Town, 31 December 1901.

Despite this demand to Lagden, a propaganda piece appeared in the *Friend* newspaper in Bloemfontein in late March [1900]. The Paramount Chief was quoted as saying that he would send as many as 20,000 men and that they would work just for food with no pay. The editor commented, "This is what we call genuine loyalty."⁴⁰

Lord Roberts marched unopposed into Johannesburg on 31 May 1900. Unlike the situation at Bloemfontein and De Aar, there were 10,000 black migrant mine workers labouring in seven of the Rand gold mines being operated by the Boer Government. Another 5,000 black migrant workers were maintaining the inactive mines. Most of these black migrant mine workers were from Mozambique. *The history* states that it was decided to open "a fresh depot for the requirements of the Army in the Transvaal."⁴¹ Four thousand of these mineworkers were distributed to the Army Departments through the newly formed Johannesburg Army Labour Depot. The Railway Administration employed another 6,000⁴² The rest were used to guard and maintain the mines. *The History* is surprisingly candid about the role of the Mine Managers Association in the labour depot and reveals not only the significant involvement of the mining companies, but also their motivation.

It is impossible to write a sketch of the Army Labour Depots without touching slightly on the Native Labour question in South Africa, especially as regards the Rand Mines. It will not be out of place to point out that, if the employment of Natives on Army work had not been left entirely under the control of one department, *considerable harm might have resulted. The whole of the mining community were on the watch to see whether the Military were prepared to be guided by their experience of past years and by their hopes for the future, or whether they would establish some new precedent which might take years to eradicate, thus doing great harm to the future development of the Mines.* ⁴³
[Emphasis is mine]

The phrases, "some new precedent," and "thus doing great harm," simply refer to the paying of higher wages than the mine workers had received before the war and the even lower wage they were going to receive after the mines were reopened, i.e., a shilling a day.

⁴⁰ *The Friend Newspaper*, 4 April 1900.

⁴¹ Royal Engineers Institute, *The Detailed History of the Railways*, p. 260.

⁴² SNA, Vol. 59, 2097, p. 91. Officer in Charge of the Department of Native Refugees, Captain G.F. de Lotbiniere, to High Commissioner, 30 September 1901.

⁴³ *Ibid.*

The *History* says that "The Transvaal Depot" being under completely different circumstances, a reduced rate of 1 shilling per day was fixed at that level and maintained from the time the Depot was formed."⁴⁴ This wage had been established by the Executive Committee of the Transvaal Chamber of Mines meeting in Cape Town on 25 October 1900.⁴⁵ A shilling a day was becoming the standard wage for black labour in both army and private employment. What were these "completely different circumstances"? Simply, these contracted mine labourers were consigned to the Director Railways temporarily by the Transvaal Chamber of Mines. These migrant workers, a very long way from home, were caught in the trap of the war and had no choice but to do the work they were assigned to. Because of the situation the mining companies were in a position to limit the wage to a shilling a day. Peter Warwick says that the wage of one shilling a day, the standard wage in the Department of Native Refugees, was inherited from the Johannesburg Army Labour Depot.⁴⁶ Indeed, this wage was dictated and stipulated by the Transvaal Chamber of Mines.

III. The establishment of the Department of Native Refugees.

The reopening of the Rand Gold Mines.

The reopening of some of the mines on the Rand was the initiating cause of the formation of the Department of Native Refugees. The focus of this study does not allow for a detailed description of the extensive research that the writer has carried out to understand this very important area of the period under consideration. In summary it can be stated that both Milner and Roberts in the early days following the occupation of Johannesburg agreed that "...the mining question [would] have to be taken up [before]...long."⁴⁷ It would be a long time, however, before any of the mines were once again in operation. Milner took this occasion to

⁴⁴Royal Engineers Institute, *The Detailed History*, pp. 257-8.

⁴⁵SNA, Vol. 32, 1235/00, *Schedule of Native Wages* issued by the Secretary to the Transvaal Chamber of Mines, 25 October 1900.

⁴⁶Warwick, *Blacks and the South African War*, p. 149.

⁴⁷*The National Archives of South Africa, Pretoria*, Accession 2404, Vol. 2, p. 76, *Roberts Letters and Telegrams*, Roberts to Milner, 2 June 1900.

make significant demands and attempted to rush Roberts into allowing hundreds of mining company and other private interests to begin right away to reopen the mines and to restore Johannesburg as a hub of capitalist endeavour in the midst of severe shortages of food and supplies due primarily to the incessant destruction of the railway and other infrastructure by the Boer guerrillas. One of the causes of the food shortage was that the Boer families left behind by the Commando leaders now ironically had to be fed by the British Army. This was also the case in Pretoria and some other major towns. Long before the war began in February 1898 a memorandum was issued by the British stipulating that: "When war breaks out...women, children and non-combatants will be given twenty-four hours notice to clear out, if circumstances permit."⁴⁸ While there was a mass exodus from Johannesburg during the three weeks prior to the commencement of hostilities the great percentage of Boer families remained in the city.

As a result a struggle ensued between the British Army on the one side and Milner and the mining companies on the other. This long power struggle between the generals and Milner and the mining magnates ended in a stalemate. Obviously during a time of military operations the Army had the need and the right to control the civilian communities. Finally in August Roberts had had enough and dug in his heels telling Milner that "There is not the least use in the exiles worrying themselves about Johannesburg, no one will be allowed to return until peace is made."⁴⁹ This series of events shows how the mining interests through their advocate Lord Milner tried to take control of the political and economic institutions as soon as Johannesburg was occupied by Lord Robert's forces.

When Roberts turned over his command to Kitchener in late November and returned home no agreement had yet been reached regarding, either the reopening of the mines, or allowing the

⁴⁸ *The National Archives of South Africa, Pretoria, FK, Vol. 1143, Milner to Chamberlain, 460 S. Enclosure, Memorandum, 24 February 1898.*

⁴⁹ *National Archives of South Africa, Pretoria, Accession 2404, Roberts Letters and Telegrams, Vol. IV, Letter, pp. 10-11, Roberts to Milner, 10 August 1900.*

return of the uitlander refugees. It seemed almost certain that Kitchener would also refuse to reopen the mines until the war was over. Where Milner had failed to get Roberts to reopen the mines he was, however, able to persuade Kitchener by means of an argument that appealed to Kitchener's desire to end the war as soon as possible. He told Kitchener that reopening a few mines would demoralise the Boers still in the field. A.P. Cartwright stating that it was very slow going until Milner moved his office to Johannesburg, and was presented with the real reason for reopening the mines. "The realization of the utter ruin...of the Transvaal speeded things up. The only remedy for the desperate situation of the country was to get the mines going again..."⁵⁰ It was Corner House staff who searched for a house for Milner and also pressured him to settle in Johannesburg instead of Pretoria, which was under consideration.⁵¹

In late April 1901, Kitchener agreed with the Chamber of Mines to allow a few mines to be restarted. It had been a very long struggle for Milner who had tried everything he could think of to get the mines operating again. In October, 1900, for example, he had tried to get several thousand Uitlanders up to Johannesburg arguing that they could provide "a substantial volunteer force" to act as a security force to check on the machinations of our enemies who are numerous. Allowing some 6,000 such men to come up cannot do any harm. Food and supplies could slowly be brought up ahead of time."⁵² Once there, Milner hoped it would be seen that they could, if the opportunity arose, begin the operation of a few mines since they were already in place. Roberts was still in command and he did not fall for this argument at all. Roberts went home a month later but the Uitlanders went nowhere. Some of them heard Roberts farewell speech on the dock at Cape Town. They were bitterly disappointed as he made no mention of their return in his final words before boarding the ship that would take him home to England.

⁵⁰ A.P. Cartwright, *The Corner House: The early history of Johannesburg*. (Cape Town, 1965) pp. 180-81.

⁵¹ There are numerous documents, mainly in the archives of the Political Secretary, G.V. Fiddes, Milner's former Imperial Secretary. Lionel Curtis was very involved and one of the houses under consideration was that of Barney Barnato. Curtis even arranged for a house keeper for Milner's house. In a coded telegram from Sworden in Cape Town the Political Secretary was asked to tell Curtis to try and find a suitable house. In this cable Barnato's house was inquired about. PSY, Vol. 3, p. 40. Telegram HC 267. Some of the arrangements were made through Mr Carpenter in Eckstein's Office.

⁵² FK, Vol. 1205, pp. 1034-1042, Milner to Kitchener, 25 October 1900.

Three days before the mines were to be officially reopened on 4 May 1901, Georges Rouliot, a partner in Corner House, the largest mining house on the Rand, and more importantly the President of the Chamber of Mines, was invited to a private dinner by Milner to meet Kitchener to set things in final order. According to Rouliot, Kitchener was very friendly and co-operative, saying several times that nothing would please him more than to see all the mines on the Rand in operation. "As he told me," Rouliot said in a letter to a partner in Corner House, "I want to help you as far as possible, but you must understand that my army must come first; the transport capacity of the railway is limited and therefore I give you permission to start only 350 stamps."

It was left to the Executive Committee of the Chamber of Mines to decide the sensitive issue of which mines would be allowed to reopen. The mines selected were the Simmer and Jack, City and Suburban, Jubilee and the Salisbury, which the Chamber said should "get the ball rolling."⁵³ Kitchener even offered to provide the mines with some "colonial boys" should the mining companies find themselves short of black labour.⁵⁴ In October Kitchener wrote Brodrick in one of his periodic letters that he had convinced Milner that he was doing as much as he could to increase the numbers of returning uitlander refugees. "It would be very rash to go too fast & have to send people away again and close the mines."⁵⁵

Kitchener's attempts to find black labour to replace the black mine workers being returned to the Chamber of Mines.

In a little over a week after the first few mines began operating again, Kitchener wrote to Brodrick, saying that the Native question was being carefully looked after. "... a good many are coming in for work and wish to return to Johannesburg [to] the mines. I am having these sent down and I hope the mines will, in turn, get enough Native labour."⁵⁶ It is not entirely clear

⁵³ Cartwright, *The Corner House*, pp. 180-81.

⁵⁴ Rand Barlow Archives, The Harry Eckstein Papers, Vol. 175, pp. 482-83, Georges Rouliot to Julius Wernher, 3 May 1901.

⁵⁵ FK, Vol. 1623, p. 390, Kitchener to Brodrick, 11 October 1901.

⁵⁶ FK, Vol. 1623, pp. 217-18, Kitchener to Brodrick, 18 May 1901.

what he meant by being "sent down". Previously de Lotbiniere had been receiving black labour from military intelligence and private recruiters in the Northern Transvaal. Military Intelligence had been recruiting black labour in the Northern Transvaal all along for the Johannesburg Army Labour Depot. In late December 1901, Kitchener reported sending 10,000 "boys" from Pietersburg to Johannesburg. On another occasion Maxwell referred Captain De Bertodano, an intelligence officer at Pietersburg, to de Lotbiniere as he wanted to send down "2,000 boys".⁵⁷ The Boers had not allowed blacks from the Northern Transvaal to be recruited for fear of the European influences they would be exposed to if they worked in the mines.⁵⁸ Most surprising in all this correspondence with Brodrick about finding black labour, he never mentioned the 2,000 mineworkers that now had to be returned to the mines as soon as possible. He talked only of finding labour for the mines.

Every drama has a hinge, which when turned assures that there is no turning back from the consequences of that historical moment. All along Kitchener had been having trouble with Hamilton-Goold Adams regarding his massive sweeps, which previously, according to Milner, and General Pretymann, had been doing more harm to the friendly Boer farmers than the "Bitter Ender" Boers who were still on Commando.⁵⁹ Albert Grundlingh shows that these "loyal farmers" formed into the "Farmer Guard" engaged "in clearing farms, removing Boer families, destroying crops, capturing stock and expelling bands of Boers."⁶⁰ Thus they attacked fellow Boers in a much more selective manner. Milner also criticised Kitchener for the massive and indiscriminate sweeps in Natal in the midlands, which was also upsetting loyalists, some of whom had had their homes ransacked in a district that had supplied a large number of men. As in Bloemfontein, Milner wished

⁵⁷ *The National Archives of South Africa, Pretoria*. The archives of the Military Governor of Pretoria, General John T. Maxwell, (MGP), telegram, 2964. 7379B, Maxwell to de Lotbiniere, date not legible.

⁵⁸ FK, Vol. 1623, pp. 482-3, Kitchener to Brodrick, 27 December 1901.

⁵⁹ FK, Vol. 1205, Telegram No. 98, Goold-Adams to Milner, 9 March 1901. At times things became so hostile that Milner found it necessary to intervene with Kitchener.

⁶⁰ Albert Grundlingh, "Collaborators in Boer Society," in Peter Warwick, and S.B. Spies (eds.) *The South African War: The Anglo Boer War 1899-1902* (London, 1980) p.266.

for a defence corps, which he maintained would be more selective and better able to protect against invading Boer forces.⁶¹

Now Kitchener came, somewhat hat in hand, with a crucial question concerning a request he had made to Goold-Adams ten days previously pertaining to the need for black labour to replace the black mineworkers being returned to the Chamber of Mines. "Re: my letter of 17 May, can you give me an idea of how many able bodied Kaffirs will be available for work with the Army Departments?"⁶² Considering the fact that the request came from the Commander-in-Chief, the response came with unusual delay; five days later. The response was unusually abrasive in style, and very untypical of Goold-Adams who had a deserved reputation as a very friendly and co-operative official. Previously he had served as the British Resident Commissioner in both Bechaunaland and Barotseland.⁶³ His response was both terse and confrontive. "Army Departments have already been supplied with labour for a total [of] 271. No more presently available. There are Natives in the various locations in the country, but they are not refugees, and as free agents, I have put no forcible pressure on them to induce them to work for the military. *I am not prepared to do so.*"⁶⁴ [Emphasis is mine]

This response of Goold-Adams laid down the gauntlet to Kitchener, who was after all a hero of the Sudan War and the Commander-in-Chief. It must have been clear now that the only way he could have a free hand to use the black labour he so badly needed at the time was to form the Department of Native Refugees. S.B. Spies also came to the same conclusion. "The formation of a 'Native Refugees Department' promised to ensure that the military would control an important source of African labour."⁶⁵ Spies, however, does not cite Goold-Adams refusal, but cites de Lotbinière's

⁶¹ FK, Vol. 1205, pp. 1058-1062, Milner to Kitchener, 8 February 1901.

⁶² MGP, Telegram Book 245, Book 2, Telegram 2710, File No, 5389A/01, Kitchener to Goold-Adams, 27 May 1901.

⁶³ Spies, *Methods of Barbarism?*, p. 78.

⁶⁴ *The Free State Provincial Archives, Bloemfontein*, The archives of the Secretary to the Orange River Colony Administration, (CSO), Vol. 20, 1751/01, Deputy Administrator, Orange River Colony, Hamilton Goold-Adams to Kitchener, 1 June 1901.

⁶⁵ Spies, *Methods of Barbarism*. p. 228.

Final Report in which he said that Kitchener only felt the need of native labour when the mine "boys" had to be returned. The reason he felt the need to form the Department of Natives Refugees is clear on the surface. He had an immediate need to replace the labourers being returned to the mines. This may tend to support the view that that the Department of Native Refugees was formed to provide black labour. As will be seen, however, there was much more to it than that, and this was only the immediate presenting cause. In a letter to Milner he gave the assurance that he had arranged for the mines to get sufficient labour without unpleasant questions being raised with the Portuguese, regarding reopening the flow of labour from Mozambique. So touchy was this problem that he suggested direct contact with Lisbon.⁶⁶ Mozambique was very upset that their black migrant workers had been forced to stay in Johannesburg throughout the war.

De Lotbiniere in a report to Goolld-Adams made what appears to be a diplomatic, but disingenuous statement, regarding the reason that the Department of Native Refugees was formed. "It is only fair to [the Burger Camp Administration] to state that owing to the daily increased responsibilities in connection with the Burger Camps, it could not be expected that the Native Refugee question could receive any close study."⁶⁷ This explanation is far from credible. As has been described in the previous chapter the Transvaal Department of Burger Camps never did anything to take responsibility for the black refugees who had been dropped along the railway to fend for themselves. Quite to the contrary, by policy they were not allowed to do so. Specifically as at Standerton, these camps were not permitted to assimilate black refugees into their camps or to form a black camp to utilise their labour.⁶⁸ In another example of this policy, the District Commissioner at Heidelberg informed the Military Governor of Pretoria, who was the immediate superior over the General Superintendent of the Department of

⁶⁶ FK, Vol. 1205, pp. 1109-1112, Acting High Commissioner, Lord Kitchener to Milner, 31 May 1901.

⁶⁷ FK, Vol. 1051, 224/7, CO 251441/02, de Lotbiniere to Goolld-Adams, 18 January 1902.

⁶⁸ MGP, Vol. 248, Telegram Book, Maxwell to District. Commissioner, Standerton, 18 March 1901.

Burger Camps, that "...the Burger Camp [in Heidelberg] is not permitted to deal with the Refugee Kaffirs."⁶⁹

The case of the Department of Refugees in the Orange River Colony was entirely different, Trollope, the Chief Superintendent, had things very well organised and had no problem in administering the black camps. Just three days before de Lotbiniere began the work of organising the Department of Native Refugees in the Transvaal, Trollope described the black camps under his supervision to Hamilton Goold-Adams as "easily managed".⁷⁰ As stated in the previous chapter there were approximately 15,500 black inmates distributed in nine camps near centres chosen for the white camps.⁷¹ A staff under the orders of the white camp superintendents supervised these camps. Unlike the informal camps in the Transvaal, the inmates were provided with at least a minimal level of housing, food, fuel for cooking, sanitation, and medical care.

The transition from the Johannesburg Army Labour Depot to the Department of Native Refugees -the pre-agricultural scheme phase.

In addition to the mineworkers who were loaned to the newly formed Army Labour Depot, there were "natives" who were sent to the Johannesburg Army Labour Depot as a means of removing unwanted blacks in the community. There was great concern on the Rand about the former mineworkers wandering loose on the reef. As indicated in Chapter 1 J.S. Marwick had marched over 7,000 Zulu mine workers back to Natal because he was sure that the police would very soon force these former mine workers out of Johannesburg to get rid of them.⁷² It was felt blacks who were not under the strict control of a white employer would vandalise and steal. General Pole-Carew complained to Maxwell that 400 natives at Bronkhorstspuit were "getting out of hand," and asked if the railway could take them. Maxwell replied that the railways would

⁶⁹ MGP, Vol. 73, 2062B/01. District Commissioner, Heidelberg to Maxwell, 17 February 1901.

⁷⁰ CSO, Vol. 26, 239/01. Trollope to Goold-Adams, 12 June 1901.

⁷¹ CSO, Vol. 26, 2390/01, p.5, Trollope to Wilson, 28 February 1901.

⁷² *British Parliamentary Papers* Cd. 43, *Further Correspondence relating to Affairs In South Africa*, Enclosure in No. 77, "Report relative to the exodus of Natal Natives from the South African Republic, October 1899.

take them... to get rid of them."⁷³ At Maxwell's suggestion they were sent to the Johannesburg Army Labour Depot which was under the Director of Railways.⁷⁴

It is apparent that Maxwell was using the Johannesburg Labour Depot as a place of *confinement, concentration and control*. These "refugees" were forced to enter the Labour Depot and forced to work.⁷⁵ This was, without doubt, a forced removal to a secure labour camp that was the parent organisation of the concentration camps to be formed by the Department of Native Refugees. Less than a year later in June 1901 the Johannesburg depot was closed and eventually after a period of transition was fully resurrected as the Department of Native Refugees.

The early historical development of the Department of Native Refugees.

De Lotbiniere said that he had taken a "Native Refugee Department in hand" by orders of the Commander-in-Chief on 15 June 1901. The eventual form that the Department of Native Refugees was to take was not the sole creation of de Lotbiniere. He drew upon his experience in the Johannesburg Army Labour Depot. There, having learned the principles of black labour management, utilised by the mining companies, he now apparently applied the lessons learned through his experience in the depot to the design and the operating structure of the new Department of Native Refugees. He also acknowledged that he had drawn upon the lessons learned by the British in the famine and plague camps of India to create the solution for accommodating the ever-increasing problems of the thousands of blacks being swept into the camps.⁷⁶

It is clear after careful study that the scheme of placing the black women and children and unfit and older men on abandoned farms, to grow food for themselves and the Army Departments

⁷³ MGP, Telegram Book, 237, Tel. No. MG 302, Maxwell to General Officer Commanding, Balmoral, 10 August 1900.

⁷⁴ MGP, Telegram Book 237, Tel. No. MG 257, Maxwell to General Pole-Carew, 2 August 1900.

⁷⁵ MGP, Telegram Book 237, Book No. 3, Tel. MG 253, Maxwell to Girouard, 2 August 1900.

⁷⁶ TKP, Vol. 135, *Final Report... of the Native Refugee Department*, p.1.

was not part of the initial design. of the Department of Native Refugees when it was ordered established in mid-June 1901. Initially Kitchener ordered de Lotbiniere just to "...take charge of all Native Refugees brought to the railway line from their kraals by the troops, and to find employment for as many able-bodied men as possible in the various Army departments."⁷⁷ The following telegram from the Military Governor of Pretoria, to the Magistrate at Boxburg, a major mining center, illustrates the paradigm of the task of the Department as it was seen in the very beginning, even before de Lotbiniere was officially tasked as the Officer in charge. "Reference to your wire to Director of Civil Supplies Johannesburg for 25 Bags of mealies for Native Refugees. Wire immediately if these refugees are men or women. If men, work can be found for them on the Rand, if not, women and children will be sent to the camp."⁷⁸ This was a week before the new Department was established by order of Lord Kitchener and placed in the hands of Captain de Lotbiniere.

The first eleven camps formed by the new Department were located in mining centres. The Boxburg Camp was one of the earliest of these camps.⁷⁹ The Department to be was part of the Army Labour Depot at Johannesburg at this time. At this early stage, the Department was in a very embryonic stage and its final form was yet to be born.

Yet the seed had already been planted by the Military Governor of Pretoria in a telegram to de Lotbiniere on 6 June 1901 that would lead to the agricultural scheme. It is evident they had been discussing the feeding of the tens of thousands of black refugees who were now being transferred to the new Department, and the many more who would soon be swept into the new camps of the Department. yet unborn.

⁷⁷ SNA, Vol. 59, 2097, de Lotbiniere to Milner, 30 September 1901.

⁷⁸ MGP, Vol. 245, Telegram Book, Tel. MG 2805, 6595B, Secretary to Military Governor of Pretoria to Magistrate, Boxburg, 7 June 1901.

⁷⁹ SNA, Vol. 59, 2097/01, Return of the Native Refugee Camps, July 1901. (This was the earliest return.) Officer in Charge, Captain H. Hugh Cowie, Army Labour Depot.

I see your side of the case, but the natives we are dealing with are totally different from the ordinary supply, and come off farms. There are 2,000 at Heidelberg and 3,000 at Vereeniging, mostly women and children, *The males working [in the mines] but not supporting their families and the question is, who is going to feed them?*⁸⁰ [Emphasis is mine].

This shows that Maxwell and de Lotbiniere were working together from the beginning to develop the needed structure and system. In particular, the issue was how to feed all these black civilians being removed by the British columns to the new camps.

It is clear that the agricultural scheme of the Department of Native Refugees was not even in the planning stage until late July 1901. In the first of two Circular Memorandums, establishing the Department of Native Refugees, A.G. Circular No. 44, it is evident that the Johannesburg Army Labour Depot was the entity being used to create the new way of dealing with blacks coming under the Department of Native Refugees. In part, Circular Memorandum No. 44, dated 1 July 1901, stated that "...in order to prevent refugee natives, who had been brought in by Columns returning to their Kraals, Commandants at stations where natives are brought in...should take over the natives and be responsible for their safety until the [Officer Commanding] of the Johannesburg Army Labour Depot has sent a representative for that purpose. The Memorandum continues: "Commandants at stations should give the O.C. Army Labour Depot, Johannesburg every assistance in their power to enable him to form native refugee camps in the most suitable localities where natives are required for supplying the Departments of the Army with labour."⁸¹ By this it can be seen that these earliest camps were not farm camps, but simply camps placed in the vicinity the Army Departments work sites so that the labour of the inmates could easily be made available. Thus, de Lotbiniere's statement in his Final Report, "⁸²...our first

⁸⁰ MGP. Vol. 245. Telegram Books, Tel. 2793. Military Governor of Pretoria to de Lotbiniere, 6 June 1901.

⁸¹ *The Free State Provincial Archives, Bloemfontein*. The archive of the Superintendent of the Department of Refugees, Orange River Colony,(SRC). Vol. 10, 3422, Adjutant General Circular Memorandum, No. 44, 1 July 1901.

⁸² *The National Archives of South Africa, Pretoria*, The archives of the Transvaal Administration. (TKP), Vol. 135, *Final Report of the Work Performed by the Native Refugee Department of the Transvaal From June 1901 to December 1902..*

consideration was the supply of native labourers to the Army."⁸³ Here the term 'first' referred to what they set out to do first, rather than being necessarily of first importance.

This explains why Maxwell was asking Kitchener on 28 July 1901 for the supplies and livestock for the agricultural scheme to be implemented on the abandoned and loyalists farms. The reason for this innovation is to be found in de Lotbiniere's same report to Milner. "By the middle of July the number of Native Refugees brought in by the British columns had increased to 20,000."⁸⁴ And he said he feared that the number would soon be double that figure because the massive sweeps now taking place would bring in thousands more. By 9 August the numbers had reached 30,000.⁸⁵ Further, those who were not brought in by force would "...perforce have to come in or starve." This was because the columns were not only sweeping blacks and Boers into the camps but they had orders to destroy all crops and livestock which could not be brought in. Knowing that the sweeps would increase he knew there would be a famine.

De Lotbiniere contradicts this argument in the same report when he says that Kitchener had ordered that all Natives were to be brought in except those in the Native Reserves.⁸⁶ He made it even clearer in his *Final Report*. He said that the necessity of forming these native refugee camps was not felt until June sometime after the work of clearing the civilised portion part of the Transvaal of everything that might assist the burgers to prolong the war. He added the real reason for forming the camps. "Besides the burger's families, their native servants and farm labourers, together with all stock were brought in." The food grains belonging to these blacks being forcefully removed were destroyed due to a lack of transport.⁸⁷ Later in August, he did

⁸³ TKP, Vol. 135, *Final Report*, p. 1.

⁸⁴ *Ibid.*

⁸⁵ MGP, Vol. 112, 10468/01, de Lotbiniere to Deputy Assistant Adjutant General, Army Headquarters, 9 August 1901.

⁸⁶ SNA, Vol. 59, 2097, de Lotbiniere to Milner, 30 September 1901.

⁸⁷ TKP, Vol. 135, *Final Report*, P. 1.

say that the blacks more recently driven in from the Transvaal had a food supply that was not exhausted.⁸⁸

Maxwell in requesting the start-up supplies and livestock for the scheme from Kitchener summed up the problem and the reason for the agricultural scheme. "The question of the organisation of the Native Refugee Camps, and *their economical maintenance...is an important one and likely to increase beyond expectations.*"⁸⁹ [Emphasis is mine.]

This necessity, arising out of the circumstances of the massive sweeps and forced removals, required a solution to the problem. Following his statement that thousands and more thousands; were being swept off the farms into the new Department of Native Refugees camps de Lotbiniere decided what had to be done. This circumstance of having to deal with so many blacks being forcefully removed was not fully apparent until the middle of July. Fearing that the numbers might be doubled he told Milner "*I therefore decided to ask... [Kitchener] to allow the families of all native refugees to be located on deserted farms along the railway lines [where] they might cultivate and grow sufficient food for their own consumption.*"⁹⁰ [Emphasis is mine.]

Thus, it can be seen that the official reason given for the establishment of these camps was to provide economically for the existing inmates, but more importantly, for the thousands who were yet to be swept into these camps, and not primarily to replace the black migrant workers being returned to the mines. It is also clear that the agricultural scheme was de Lotbiniere's *afterthought* and idea. It is proper to draw a distinction between the long-term necessities to form the camps and the immediate need felt by Lord Kitchener to replace the 2,000 mineworkers being returned to the mines. The labour of the inmates was a by-product of the scheme designed to accommodate and feed the blacks forcefully removed to the camps during the clean sweep of the Boer farms. In the original orders of Lord Kitchener, contained in A.G.

⁸⁸ MGP, Vol. 112, 10468/01 de Lotbiniere to D.A.A.G, Army Headquarters, 9 August 1901.

⁸⁹ MGP, Vol. Letter book 222, 8917b, Maxwell to Kitchener, 28 July 1901.

⁹⁰ SNA, Vol. 59, NA 2097, p. 94 de Lotbiniere to Milner, 30 September 1930.

Circular No. 29 of 21 December 1900, these sweeps were to be confined to the districts where the Boer forces were active. Prior to this time, at least in some areas of the Transvaal, blacks engaged in "pursuing their own vocations were not removed, or as one document said, "arrested." But those "travelling in the country and travelling in or out of town should be arrested and brought to the Commandant for disposal."⁹¹ But sometime prior to June 1901 all the blacks, except those residing in the Native Reserves, were ordered removed to the black concentration camps.⁹²

Therefore, it is clear, that these new camps were not created primarily to provide black labour. Rather they were established to provide a veld swept clean of all support and sustenance that would allow the Boer commandos to continue their overwhelmingly effective guerrilla warfare. Secondly, the Department of Native Refugees was not established because the white camps officials could not cope with the administration of the increasing numbers of blacks being swept into the camps. Rather they came into existence, despite the fact that the British forces outnumbered the Boer guerrilla units by a ratio of more than eleven to one, they could not cope with the incessant Boer attacks and the destruction of the lines of communication.

The new wave of massive sweeps, beginning in July 1901, was brought about by Kitchener's determination to turn the screw tighter on the Boers to hasten the end of the war. On 12 July, Kitchener explained the rationale for his decision to Brodrick. Some letters found in President Steyn's baggage, correspondence between Steyn and President Kruger were the presenting cause. "The letters show very clearly the state of affairs. The Free Staters are evidently those who keep the war going and I will do my best to make them regret it. I do not think we shall get an end of the war for a long time unless we use more pressure."⁹³ In a personal letter dated 22 July 1901 Kitchener also sought the approval of Lord Milner. "I hope you will support my view

⁹¹ *The National Archives of South Africa, Pretoria*, Archives of the Political Secretary to the Commander-in-Chief, (PSY), Vol. 57, p. 14, Major H. Graham, District Commissioner, Utrecht to Officer Commanding, Utrecht, 7 October 1900.

⁹² SNA, Vol. 59, 2097, p.2, de Lotbiniere to Milner, 30 September 1901.

⁹³ FK. Vol. 1623, pp. 297-98. Kitchener to Brodrick, 12 July 1901.

that now is the time to bring home to the Boers that they cannot go on as they are now doing.”⁹⁴

Milner agreed that now was the time to turn the screw. “I am most anxious to help you to bring the intensest⁹⁵ pressure on the Boers to terminate... [the] war.”⁹⁶

This tightening of the screw and this “intensest” pressure came in the form of a second wave of massive sweeps that called for the removal all the black and Boer families to the concentration camps. It is therefore evident that the Department of Native Refugees camps were formed to accommodate the thousands of black and coloured people on the Boer farms, and indeed all blacks and coloureds everywhere in the theatre of war, except in the Native Reserves, and not just to accommodate the inmates in the already existing concentration camps. In addition they also would bring in all the those who were in the squatter camps in the Transvaal strung along the railway. Now a less expensive way to accommodate and feed the additional 50,000 black women and children and old men, who would be forcefully removed from the farms and regular locations, was needed.

The agricultural scheme was only officially announced on 10 August with the issuance of a second Circular Memorandum, No 50, which referred back to the first memorandum, No. 44 and now stipulated a different program. Rather than asking local commanders to give their assistance to the Johannesburg Army Labour Depot to form refugee camps near the Army Departments, this memorandum asked that assistance be given by district commanders to facilitate the formation of camps on deserted farms where the inmates could grow crops.⁹⁷ The final form of the department had now become manifest. Even at this time, however, the memorandum directed inquiries of interested parties in the Transvaal to the Commanding Officer of the Army Labour Depot. The first monthly report of the Department of Native

⁹⁴ Milner's Papers, Microfilm No. 187, pp. 128-9, Telegram 521, Kitchener to Milner, 22 July 1901. (Bodleian Library, Oxford)

⁹⁵ It is interesting to note that Milner used this word, “intensest” for emphasis which does not appear in any English dictionary.

⁹⁶ FK, Vol. 1206, p. 1314, Milner to Kitchener, 1 August 1901.

⁹⁷ AG. Circular Memorandum, No. 50, *Cultivation of Crops, etc., by Native Refugees*, 12 August 1901.

Refugees Camps in the Transvaal is set under that same heading, “ The Johannesburg Army Labour Depot, Johannesburg: Native Refugee Camps.”⁹⁸ De Lotbiniere refused to take full responsibility for the new farm camps until September 1901. It was not until mid September that the full transition from the Johannesburg Army Labour Depot to the Department of Native Refugees had been fully carried out.

The establishment of the agricultural scheme in the Orange River Colony

The Agricultural scheme actually began at the same time in both the Transvaal and the Orange River Colony. This is clear from the chronology of Maxwell’s attempts to obtain the required seed, farm implements and ploughing oxen and livestock from Kitchener in a letter dated 28 July, since de Lotbiniere only went to Bloemfontein on or about 1 August to meet with Goold-Adams, the Deputy Administrator of the Orange River Colony Administration, for the purpose of expanding the Department of Native Refugees into the Orange River Colony. With the possible exception of the Middleburg black camp it is obvious that there were no farm camps in operation in the Transvaal on that date. .

After beginning the operation of some non-farm sites in the Transvaal during June and July 1901, as stated above, Captain de Lotbiniere approached Hamilton Goold-Adams, as well as the General Officer Commanding in Bloemfontein on approximately 1 August 1901.⁹⁹ With Kitchener’s authorisation, he proposed to expand the work of the Department of Native Refugees to include the Orange River Colony. It may be wondered what Goold-Adams thought about this proposal considering his refusal to allow Kitchener to draft the blacks in the regular locations as labourers for the Army Departments. Kitchener was now taking over the original black camps as well as sweeping these blacks formerly denied to him into the new camps by means of military force, in most cases.

⁹⁸ SNA, Vol. 59, 2097, Monthly reports for July and August 1901. 15 August 1901. (Contained in one report.)

⁹⁹ FK, Vol. 1051, CO 224/7, CO 25144/02, p. 1, de Lotbiniere to Hamilton Goold Adams, 18 January 1902.

As mentioned there was one black camp following the paradigm of the agricultural scheme which started in the Transvaal at Middleburg on or about 25 July 1901. Just three days before Maxwell asked Kitchener for the livestock and supplies needed to start-up the agricultural scheme on deserted farms he gave permission for some black women and children to grow crops in protected areas along the railway near Middleburg. Maxwell ordered that the men able to work among these 150 refugees be turned over to the Army Departments.¹⁰⁰ The new Department later absorbed this informal camp. This camp was the latest of the many informal camps which had sprung up like mushrooms along the railway composed of blacks dropped by the British columns at their railway terminal points. No doubt, Maxwell gave this permission to cultivate crops with the intention of incorporating this camp in the new Department now that these squatter camps were being organised and incorporated into the Department of Native Refugees.

Site Selection in the Orange River Colony

The military had always had the prerogative and the responsibility to determine where the concentration camps were to be placed. These site selection decisions were primarily based on military considerations. The only demand made by the Commanding General of Bloemfontein regarded the specific location of these new campsites on abandoned farms along the railway. Moving the original black camps away from the larger garrisoned towns still required that these camps be protected. The placement was decreed as having to be “sufficiently well blockhoused to assure a protected area for a couple of miles on each side of the [railway] line.” By the time of the placement of these camps Kitchener had constructed a blockhouse every 2,500 yards and often closer, along the railway “...so that,” as Kitchener told Roberts, the “...boers cannot cross the line without being fired at.”¹⁰¹ Additionally, it was stipulated that crops were not to be

¹⁰⁰ MGP. Vol. 109, 9372A/01, Resident Magistrate, Middleburg to Maxwell, 25 July 1901.

¹⁰¹ *National Army Museum, London*, 7101-23-33, Kitchener to Roberts, 21 June 1901.

planted within one mile of a blockhouse because it was feared the Boers would use the crops as cover to cross the railway. Cultivation was not to be closer than 400 yards and not further than 2 miles from the railway Line.¹⁰²

It was the suggestion of Thomas. Smith, the Agricultural Advisor to the Orange River Colony Administration, that the original black camps should be shifted to the north of their present location where the seasonal rainfall comes earlier. De Lotbiniere took a trip north from Bloemfontein along the railway line with Mr. Smith to select the most suitable sites "where mealies, kaffir corn and pumpkins might be grown."¹⁰³ These selected site areas had the advantage of being free of locusts and hailstorms.¹⁰⁴ Because the land to be used was dry and unirrigated, the growth of the crops would depend exclusively on rainfall. From the point of view of the intended task, many sites were very unsuitable because of the necessary military stipulations regarding the site location. Obviously, the conditions laid down regarding the proximity to the blockhouses and the railway greatly limited the amount land from which the areas for cultivation could be selected. It was for this reason along with security concerns that campsites were extended along the railway on both sides from Alleman's Siding to Taaibosch Spruit in broken sections, with intervals of several miles between sections. In this way, the best land could be selected¹⁰⁵

These sites were broken down into three areas with their respective headquarters at Bloemfontein, Kroonstad and Harrismith.¹⁰⁶ The sites were only in the proposal stage as of 27 August 1901, which shows how late these camps were slated to be in operation. It is clear that

¹⁰² FK, Vol. 1051, P. 2, CO 224/7, CO 25144/02, de Lotbiniere to Goold-Adams, 18 January 1902, CSO, Vol. 33, 3180/01, Trollope to Wilson, 5 September 1901.

¹⁰³ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁴ MGP, Vol. 112, 10468, de Lotbiniere to Deputy Assistant Adjutant General., Army Headquarters, Pretoria, 9 August 1901.

¹⁰⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁶ CSO, Vol. 32, 3078/01, Superintendent, Department of Native Refugees, Orange River Colony, Major Henderson, to Wilson, 27 August 1901. The camps were located as follows: Under the Bloemfontein headquarters camps were proposed to be formed at Alleman's Siding, Brandfort, Houtenebeck, Eensgevonden, Vet River, Welgelegen, Ventersburg Road, Holfontein. Under the Kroonstad headquarters camps were proposed at Honingspruit, Serfontein, Kopjes, Vredefort Road, and Steenpan. The camps to be formed under Harrismith had not yet been selected.

these sites were placed, not only near blockhouses and their associated barbed wire "squares," but that they were also placed near military posts, which formed the headquarters for each of the cultivated areas. To assure effective security and monitoring, the cultivation areas were clustered close together, thus further reducing the opportunity to use the most fertile land. The final approval to move the camps to the newly selected sites had to be obtained from Kitchener, himself.¹⁰⁷ This is another example of Kitchener's unwillingness to delegate any authority and to control every aspect of his command, despite the fact that most of the generals under his command were senior to him both in actual rank and experience.

IV. The Agricultural Scheme.

The oft-repeated official reason given for the establishment of the agricultural scheme is contained in a report by Goold-Adams to Lord Milner in September 1901. "It was thought to be obviously undesirable that so large a number of natives should be supported by the government in idleness. On instruction of Lord Kitchener, himself, the coloured refugees have now been removed from their camps and placed under their former superintendents in carefully selected locations along the railway line to the north of Bloemfontein for the purpose of raising crops for their own support."¹⁰⁸ In summary, de Lotbiniere told Kitchener that the reason for the agricultural scheme was to assure that the inmates of the Department of Native Refugee camps "...become independent of the Government support as soon as possible."¹⁰⁹ This is an example of the difference in policy regarding white and black refugees. Blacks were to be self supporting, while whites were to be fed at no cost. There is some indication that Boer refugees, in a few instances, were seeking, or were asked, to grow food for themselves. In June 1901, the same month the Department of Native Refugees was established, Maxwell asked the army if there was nay objection to allowing inmates of the Nylstroom white camp to cultivate on a farm

¹⁰⁷ CSO, Vol. 29, 2738/01, Wilson to Kitchener, 5 August 1901.

¹⁰⁸ CSO, Vol. 36, 3481, Goold-Adams to Milner, 18 September, 1901.

¹⁰⁹ MGP, Vol. 112, 10468/01, Trollope to D.A.A.G., Army Headquarters, 9 August 1901.

near the camp. Maxwell said he could procure the seed.¹¹⁰ He gave as his reason for this activity that it would "give occupation and be profitable." Stanley Trapido advances the view that in order "...to cope with malnutrition in the camps the British Administration began to organize the growing of food by inhabitants."¹¹¹ This will be shown to be incorrect. Obviously the bare bones diet of mealie meal and salt, that the inmates were required to buy, refutes that contention. Further there is nothing in the record to show that this was the motivation for requiring the women and children to grow their own food. The following section shows, rather conclusively, that the reason was purely economic.

To save £10,000 a month in feeding costs.

De Lotbiniere in his report of 30 September 1901 gave Milner several more specific reasons for implementing scheme. "First," he said, "...it had been costing the government some £10,000 a month to feed these Refugees."¹¹² This estimate is probably overstated. Nowhere is this figure documented and must therefore be taken as a rough estimate. Certainly, the 15,000 refugees along the railway in the Transvaal were not receiving any food from the British Military Government or the Army. Since there were no black camps in the Transvaal under the supervision of the Department of Burger Camps, and since they were receiving no food from the government the estimate of £10,000 cannot include the Transvaal camps. More significant, however, is the fact that there is no mention of Goold-Adams' order to the Army Departments to deduct twenty shillings a month from each inmate's pay in the original black camps in the Orange River Colony. Since these deductions were forwarded to Trollope or the superintendents of the individual black camps, they should be deducted from the total feeding costs. He may have been referring to the costs of feeding the thousands of black "refugees" in his care from 15 June to the date of their placement on the farms, and many of those were the

¹¹⁰ MGP, Vol. 245, Telegram Book 4, Tel. MG2949, Maxwell to Colonel Hall, Pietersburg, 23 June 1901. The farm Erasmus was located one mile from Warm Baths.

¹¹¹ Stanley Trapido, "Putting Plough to Ground" in William Beinart, Peter Delius, and Stanley Trapido, *Putting Plough to Ground* (Johannesburg, 1986) p. 348.

¹¹² SNA, Vol. 59, 2097, p. 4, de Lotbiniere to Milner, 30 September 1901.

refugees formerly in the squatter refugee camps along the railway, which had now been organised into official camps under the supervision of his department.

Blacks removed from the farms required to be self-supporting.

In Kitchener's order of 21 December 1900 to remove the "Kaffirs" from the Boer farms he had decreed that "Every endeavour should be made to cause as little loss as possible to the natives removed, and to give them protection when brought in." There was however, one twist included in this provision of protection that reveals a significant difference in the treatment of black refugees and white refugees. "The natives will be available for any works undertaken, for which they will receive pay at native rates."¹¹³ The phrase, "They will be available for any works undertaken," indicates that in return for protection and feeding in a concentration camp they would be required to work.

Maxwell restated this policy in March 1901. "The Commander-in-Chief's directions regarding refugee natives are that they are to be turned over to the nearest Army Department for work, for which they will be paid and can [thereby] support themselves and [their] families."¹¹⁴ When the Department of Native Refugees was created, it was the stipulated policy that refugees should be turned over to the Army Departments, and when assigned to a particular department only then would they be issued rations.¹¹⁵ Thus only when assigned to an army employer could the blacks removed from the Boer farms be fed. When refugees were brought in by the British Columns it was ordered that they be taken into custody to prevent their returning to "their kraals."¹¹⁶ This constituted forced removal, forced confinement and forced labour. The policy in the Department on paper was that blacks could not be forced to work. On the other hand faced with empty stomachs from the gruelling removal process they were manipulated by hunger to work if they wished to receive rations. Those unfit for labour with the Army Departments were used

¹¹³ *British Parliamentary Papers*, Cd. 426, A.G. Circular Memorandum No. 29, W.F. Kelly, Major General, Adjutant General for Lord Kitchener, to all field commanders. 21 December 1900.

¹¹⁴ MGP, Telegram Book 248, Tel. No. MG 2143, Maxwell to District Commissioner, Standerton, 19 March 1901.

¹¹⁵ Cd. 426. AG Circular Memorandum No. 44, 1 July 1901. This instruction was typewritten on face of circular.

¹¹⁶ *Ibid.*

as agriculturists along with the women and children. Those who were sick or too old to work were given free rations.

In July 1901, when the major sweeps were bringing black farm workers into the camps, along with other blacks from the "regular locations" and black independent farmers and herders, Maxwell assured Kitchener that, his *Work or Starve policy* would be followed. Maxwell continued. "The system proposed is that Natives should not only work, but also produce their own food."¹¹⁷ This shows that by 25 July the idea of placing the women and children on farms was proposed. (De Lotbiniere had already informed Kitchener of this plan.) Maxwell makes this statement because he is asking Kitchener to provide him with supplies, transport and ploughing oxen for the new camps on abandoned farm sites.

It must not be thought, however, that this *work or starve* approach was an innovation of Kitchener, Maxwell, or even Milner. Both Maxwell and de Lotbiniere were following traditional colonial policy regarding the indigenous peoples of the Empire. "It is all important that work would be the basis of relief and that there be no pauperisation of the Natives." The root of this policy lay in the British imperial policy that the indigenous peoples of the colonies must be self-supporting. All of this must be seen in the more fundamental concern of British policy toward the war, and the colonies generally, to be as financially frugal as possible. British colonial policy regarding expansion always required that it be demonstrated that a proposed new colony would be at least self-supporting.¹¹⁸ A century before the war the reluctance to annex more areas of Southern Africa was generated by the fear that these new colonies would not be self-supporting. Thus, it was the discovery of great mineral wealth in the Boer Republics made them newly found objects of acquisitive British colonialism.

¹¹⁷ MGP, Vol. 222, Letter book, 8917B/01, Maxwell to Kitchener, 25 July 1901.

¹¹⁸ For a classic discussion of this subject see John S. Galbraith, *Reluctant Empire*, (Los Angeles, 1963)

Further the policy forbid any assistance to the indigenous population except in the most dire circumstances, such as levels of starvation that would lead to death or endanger the British settler populations or the military. This was everywhere evident in the Empire from the black locations in the Cape Colony during famine from poor rainfall and crop destruction by locusts to the famine and plague camps in the largest colony of the Empire, India. Even when victims of the plague or famine in India were too weak to work, they were only fed until they could work. So important was this principle that even when charity was offered by people in London it was resisted in fear that the “natives” would be pauperised.

De Lotbiniere’s innovative idea that the families incarcerated in the camps of the new Department of Native Refugees could support themselves while the men were away working with the Army Departments and private employers by placing them on abandoned farms where they could grow crops may have been inspired by the migrant labour paradigm of the mining industry. As the massive sweeps starting July 1901 progressed the British Army was faced with feeding these ever increasing numbers of thousands of women and children and old men. It was the practice of the mining companies to forbid women and children to come with the mine worker to the mining site. In addition the only paid a sufficient age to support the needs of the worker. The families stayed at home and raised crops and the next generation of mine labourers. Placing the families on these abandoned farms to raise their crops and even requiring them to pay for food until the harvest follows that paradigm very well. Whether de Lotbiniere’s agricultural scheme arose out of that mining industry model is not known. Since the Mine Managers Association was involved with the Johannesburg Army Labour Depot that association with mining staff may have spawned this idea. In addition the labourers in the depot were migrant mine workers on loan from the Chamber of Mines and certainly that would have made de Lotbiniere intimately aware of that practice. The rescinding of the deduction from the salary of the black men by the Army Departments is another policy that follows the migrant labour paradigm as these mine workers while away at the mines did

not support their families, although some mining companies did provide a means for mine workers, on a voluntary basis, to send money to their families.

According to David Burton this paradigm of providing the families of black labourers who were away working on the mines with a place where they could support themselves by growing their own food was also adopted by the Department of Native Affairs during the post war period.¹¹⁹ In lieu of the families supporting themselves by raising their own food the South African Native Affairs Commission made recommendations, which if effective, would have led to the employment of "African" women as domestics, and the creation of urban locations. The encouragement of African women to seek domestic employment would release the men....to [work in]... the mines."¹²⁰ And indeed the Department of Native Refugees did provide young boys and girls to work as domestics in Johannesburg. [See below V. Employment of the inmates of the Department of Native Refugees.]

Even before the war, at least one mining company, Vereeniging Estates, had a similar process in effect. In some respects, the model which Sammy Marks followed in the use of this land, was very similar to the paradigm of the Department of Native Refugees camps. In 1887 Marks explained the basis of his allowing blacks to take up residence on these farms, which shows the connection between the agricultural and mining activities of the company.

One of the conditions upon which these natives are allowed to settle on our land is that, when not employed in agricultural pursuits, the able bodied men are obliged to work in our coal mines, a few elderly men always remaining behind to keep order in the settlements to look after the families and to superintend the work necessary to be done on the lands.¹²¹

In September 1900 a year almost to the day prior to the date when the Department of Refugees began to cultivate crops on abandoned farms, Sammy Marks proposed to the Director of Supplies in the Transvaal, that the 1,000,000 blacks in the Transvaal be provided with ploughing animals to plant crops because most of the farm animals had been requisitioned by the army for slaughter, or

¹¹⁹ David Raymond Burton, "The South African Native Affairs Commission, 1903-1905." Master of Arts Thesis, University of South Africa, June 1985, p. 13.

¹²⁰ SANAC, I, paragraph 383, cited in Burton, "South African Native Affairs Commission", pp. 95-6.

¹²¹ Stanley Trapido, "Putting a Plough to the Ground: A History of Tenant Production on the Vereeniging Estates, 1896-1920." in William Beinart, Peter Delius and Stanley Trapido (eds.), *Putting a Plough to the Ground*, (Johannesburg, 1986) p. 340.

for transport. If something was not done the Government would end up feeding these large numbers of blacks, with the exception of about 100,000 who would be employed by the mines. He foresaw that when they were returned to their homes that there would be no food. "There will be an outcry for food which will have to be imported, and how will the impoverished inhabitants pay for the same?" Marks proposed the establishment of an Agricultural Commission to distribute ploughing stock and other required supplies.¹²² Ironically the obtaining of ploughing stock for the Department of Native Refugees, a year later, would be the biggest stumbling block to the start-up of the farming operations. Marks' proposal contains the basic elements of the agricultural scheme established by Maxwell and de Lotbiniere. The Director of Supplies forwarded this proposed scheme to Maxwell, who in turn forwarded the scheme proposal to Lord Roberts on 17 September 1900. Maxwell may well have remembered this proposal when he sat down with de Lotbiniere to design the agricultural scheme.

Startup of the agricultural scheme.

There was a crisis in obtaining the barest minimum of primitive farming implements, seed and food to begin the work of cultivation. General Maxwell, requested oxen for ploughing, tools, and seed for planting. Even though de Lotbiniere stated that Kitchener had instructed him to form these camps, it is clear that he was not the originator of the proposal. In fact, it is evident that Kitchener was not very supportive of the idea. General Maxwell was met with considerable resistance on Kitchener's part, when he made his request. Maxwell informed de Lotbiniere that in response to his request for these things Kitchener had complained, saying that he would not give either seed or trucks. He said the only thing he would give was the land and that "I must *let the Kaffirs do the rest.*" [Emphasis is mine] At the end of this same letter Kitchener asked Maxwell to have de Lotbiniere to come to see him.¹²³

¹²² PSY, Vol. 25, Sammy Marks to Director of Supplies in the Transvaal, 14 September 1900.

¹²³ MGP, Letter Book 222, p. 772, Maxwell to de Lotbiniere, 20 July 1901.

Perhaps he was able to convince Kitchener to provide at least some of what was needed. In his final request to Kitchener, de Lotbiniere said, "...these requests are the minimum that I can work on." He also said that both Godfrey Lagden and Hamilton Goold Adams had concurred fully in his proposals.¹²⁴ With Kitchener's autonomous personality and his poor relationship with Goold-Adams, this strategy may not have been very effective.

Somewhat surprisingly, de Lotbiniere gave a very positive report to Milner. "Without delay," he wrote in the report, "the necessary agricultural requirements, such as ploughs and gear, Kaffir picks and hoes, cattle, seed, kaffir corn, mealies and pumpkins-the three essential foodstuffs to native life in South Africa-were procured."¹²⁵ In the colonial bureaucratic mindset, admitting to any difficulty was tantamount to admitting personal failure, even if the fault lay with other officials. In the end the railway trucks, seed and hoes were provided. Maxwell asked for oxen, but at first, it was even difficult to get hoes. In the final request de Lotbiniere, among other things, requested that the Stock Department be authorised to loan him "...400 footsore cattle-not suitable for transport purposes-but capable of ploughing..."¹²⁶ This request was denied and the consequences of that decision were to become very serious.

De Lotbiniere after several months experience of the cultivation of the farm camps without the benefit of sufficient numbers of ploughing animals understood the serious impact of this problem on crop production." From our experience of the last season's crops, the picked and hoed lands, have not produced, acre per acre, crops equivalent to more than 30% of the ploughed lands. This can be accounted for by the dryness of the season, and the picks and hoes being unequal to breaking up new lands to a sufficient depth to resist drought."¹²⁷ The site location criteria stipulated by the military may have, at times, brought about the need to break

¹²⁴ MGP, Vol. 112, 10468/01, de Lotbiniere to Deputy Assistant Adjutant General, Army Headquarters, Pretoria, 9 August 1901.

¹²⁵ SNA, Vol. 1, 23/01, de Lotbiniere to Milner, 30 September 1901.

¹²⁶ MGP, Vol. 112, 10468/01, de Lotbiniere to Deputy Assistant Adjutant General, Army Headquarters, Pretoria, 9 August 1901.

¹²⁷ SNA, Vol. 31, NA 1170, Trollope to Commissioner of Native Affairs, Sir Godfrey Lagden, 7 December 1902.

up previously uncultivated land. Not only was it difficult to begin cultivation, due to the failure to obtain tools, ploughs and livestock, but in early September, right after de Lotbiniere was faced with a more immediate crisis, food. In a telegram marked urgent, and indeed it was, Captain Cowie, his immediate subordinate and the Superintendent of the Transvaal Camps called down the wire to Maxwell. "I am now completely out of food for the refugees & as 20,000 Souls are dependent on the supply can you not make move with Civil Supplies to arrange the trucks for the 2000 bags from Weson and Son, Maritzburg which have been waiting to come forward 600 per week for the last six weeks. My food supply in the greatest difficulty & causes much anxiety. This could be avoided if the weekly supply of mealies *promised* was sent. [Emphasis is mine] Have sent several wires about it to civil supplies, etc., but cannot get delivery of the mealies." Maxwell's answer to this plea for immediate food was that these inmates in the camps should be sent out to assist in policy of clearing the country of foodstuffs. Maxwell put the shoe on the other foot, asking Cowie, "Cannot you not arrange to send out natives to bring in mealies into your kraals."¹²⁸ This refusal to keep promises of transport was part of a pattern dictated by Kitchener.[See below-Transport for the movement of the original black camps to the new farm sites. See also Appendix 4.1 Requests for railway space.]

On 11 December 1901 Maxwell informed the Chief of Staff that the population in the Department of Native Refugee Camps was rapidly increasing "...and it is difficult to foresee where the end will be as our troops clear the country." He added, however, a positive note in regards to the future problem of feeding these increasing numbers of black women and children being swept into the camps. "It is hoped these [camps]... will soon be in a self supporting condition, and will in addition, raise sufficient food stuffs for their own needs for the coming year and possibly be able also to provide the army with forage and vegetables."¹²⁹

¹²⁸ MGP, Vol. 118, 11518A/01, Superintendent, Transvaal Department of Native Refugees Camps to Maxwell, 9 September 1901.

¹²⁹ MGP, Vol. 139, 16726B/01, Maxwell to Chief of Staff, 11 December.

In the Orange River Colony, as in the Transvaal, there were also severe logistical problems in providing the new farm camps with agricultural implements and farm animals. Some inmates in the camps may have brought their own ploughs and other tools with them. Stanley Trapido in an oral history account records one such instance. "[The]...Mokales, who were held, had taken their ploughs with them into a camp on the farm Taaibos..."¹³⁰ In general, there was great difficulty in obtaining ploughing oxen and animals. De Lotbiniere told Milner that because of the difficulty of procuring ploughing cattle for so many families, picks and hoes were largely used, as well as all the ploughs that could be used with the small numbers of ploughing cattle that could be obtained.¹³¹

Quite by coincidence Goold-Adams happened to be at Vredefort Road when a large number of cattle were brought in by an army column. It was suggested to Goold-Adams that he ask the officer in charge for permission to obtain 240 head of trek cattle for the Department of Refugees. The officer was not satisfied with the legitimacy of the program because he did not know all the details of the scheme.¹³² As a result, this army Major refused the request of the highest official of the military Government in the Orange River Colony. More important this obstruction caused great harm to the inmates of the black camps. Unfortunately, this opportunity to obtain the ploughing animals, so desperately needed, was missed.¹³³ At the end of September, cultivation was now taking place in all the camps but in many camps was progressing very slowly. This was largely due to a lack of oxen and ploughs. Rinderpest had infected the livestock at Winburg and was spreading rapidly. De Lotbiniere received 700 head of cattle at America [Siding]. He hurriedly inoculated them before the Rinderpest reached that area.¹³⁴ In contrast to the overall problem of obtaining the needed equipment and livestock the Native Reserve at Thaba'nchu was much more successful. By 30 September the Superintendent

¹³⁰ Trapido, *Putting Plough to Ground*, p. 348.

¹³¹ SNA, Vol. 59, 2097, P. 7, de Lotbiniere to Milner, 30 September 1901.

¹³² CSO, Vol. 28, 2696/01 Wilson to de Lotbiniere, 10 August 1901.

¹³³ MGP, Letter book 222, 8917B, Maxwell to Kitchener, 25 July 1901.

¹³⁴ CSO, Vol. 95, 3530/01, de Lotbiniere to Goold-Adams, 26 September 1901.

of the black camp could report that with 200 ploughs operating they were cultivating twenty four farms in the Thaba'nchu District. Four of these farms were Government farms, the remaining twenty were being prepared for planting with the owners permission.¹³⁵ It appears from this statement that these were not abandoned farms. So scarce and valuable were trek oxen, that could be used for ploughing, that the Adjutant General issued an order that all oxen must be retained, and none should be disposed of. Those who were unfit temporarily, were to be placed on livestock farms until required. Generals commanding columns, operating in defined districts, were to establish central depots for the reception of Government oxen. There is no record that these depots were asked to provide oxen to the Department.¹³⁶ This order was issued in the month following the beginning of the operation of the agricultural scheme. On the sixteen stock farms in the Orange River Colony operated by the British Army at the time the DNR camps began their agricultural scheme there were 141,403 sheep and goats and 5,255 cattle as well 106 horses and a few mules.¹³⁷ A report to this effect was given to H.F. Wilson who was the Colonial Secretary to Goold-Adams. Why this source of ploughing livestock was not tapped is not known.

The problem regarding ploughing animals reoccurred in February 1902, when 200-plough horses lent by the Transport Department to the Department of Native Refugees were suddenly called in by an Army Order. On behalf of the Department, Wilson, the Secretary to the Orange River Colony Administration, appealed to Milner, saying it would be impossible to find any replacements for them. He said great dissatisfaction would result among the natives at harvest time. He asked Milner to use his influence with Kitchener to remedy the problem. The order

¹³⁵ CSO, Vol. 38, 3668, Supt. of Department of Native Refugees Camp at Thaba'nchu to Chief Superintendent, Department of Native Refugees, Orange River Colony, 30 September 1901.

¹³⁶ Army Orders, South Africa, Government Oxen, By order W.F. Kelly, Maj. Genl. D.A.G, 6 October 1901.

¹³⁷ CSO, Vol. 38, 3605/01. Agricultural Adviser for the Orange Free State to Wilson, 8 October 1901.

was suspended until other arrangements could be made.¹³⁸ This is another example of the problems created by the military.

Major Henderson, who was the original Superintendent of the Orange River Colony Department of Native Refugees, also reported on the preparations in a very positive manner, almost echoing de Lotbiniere. "As regards all arrangements conducted by me there has not been the slightest hitch. I have made satisfactory arrangements to meet every contingency possible to foresee." Henderson, however, was actually very displeased and complained that he had very short notice to prepare for the takeover the native refugees from Thaba'nchu, Kimberly and Orange River [Station]. In addition, at Trollope's request the locations outside the Springfontein white camp were formed into a Departmental camp on 12 August 1901.¹³⁹ Henderson reasserted that this very short notice was very unfair to him. Nevertheless, "arrangements have been satisfactorily made." He also complained that he thought that Goold-Adams was of the view that the new Department was in a state of confusion.¹⁴⁰ He wished to know who had given Goold-Adams that impression, so that he could rectify that misinformation. In addition there were serious problems in getting "kaffir picks and hoes" and he was having trouble getting any railway trucks."¹⁴¹

On 23 August 1901 de Lotbiniere wired Goold-Adams regarding transport, saying he had seen the request for trucks and that they had been approved. But that they would not give me any others in addition. He then asserted that it was essential for Henderson to have eight trucks [during] these months to complete his supply on taking over the work of rationing natives from Messrs Champion. Finally he told Goold Adams that he had wired Henderson to see him.¹⁴²

¹³⁸ CSO, Vol. 55, 357/02, Wilson to Milner, 7 February 1902.

¹³⁹ CSO, Vol. 32, 3078, de Lotbiniere to Goold-Adams, 28 August 1901. (Handwritten note by Henderson on the face of the report.) The camp does not appear on the official lists of the Department of Natives Refugees camps. Records of the Springfontein white camp indicate that this camp did exist and continued to operate.

¹⁴⁰ CSO, Vol. 32, 3078, de Lotbiniere to Goold-Adams, 28 August 1901.

¹⁴¹ CSO, Vol. 32, 3071, Henderson, to Goold-Adams, 25 August 1901.

¹⁴² CSO, Vol. 26, 2418/01, de Lotbiniere to Goold-Adams, 23 August 1901.

Three days later Goold-Adams wired de Lotbiniere requesting a meeting with him as soon as possible. "I am doubtful about things going quite right."¹⁴³ Kitchener gave a typical response. He said he could provide no trucks. In the end, however, eight trucks filled with food grains were sent from Durban.¹⁴⁴ In summary, Henderson was saying that despite all the problems from the higher echelons of the Military Government he was able to overcome the problems and make satisfactory arrangements. Thus, his statement that there was not the slightest hitch only referred to his having overcome the logistical and rushed planning.¹⁴⁵

It appears that Henderson's complaint about the Deputy Administrator's perception of his work was objected to. He had broken the unspoken creed in the colonial system that everything must be described as very satisfactory, even when it was not. He was not retained in his position as Chief Superintendent. Dr. Milne, a mining company doctor, replaced him, but returned to the mines shortly thereafter, and was succeeded by Captain F. Wilson Fox who held the position until the Orange River Colony camps were closed. At the time that he was hired he was an official in charge of recruiting black labour for the British South Africa Company in Rhodesia.¹⁴⁶

Fox, unlike de Lotbiniere, was not as willing to gloss over the problems. In a report to Goold-Adams, he claimed the difficulties were "very great". The major problem, according to Fox, was inducing the women to cultivate by pick and hoe and convincing them that all crops would be for their benefit.¹⁴⁷ Even though Fox was an old hand in South Africa prior to the war he seemed to be unaware that in African culture women performed the bulk of the *Jimmy Higgins*¹⁴⁸ agricultural work. This is especially strange in view of his experience in recruiting black labour for the mines in Rhodesia. Jeremy Krikler correctly indicates that the land used for

¹⁴³ CSO, Vol. 32, 3071/01, Tel. 588, Goold-Adams to de Lotbiniere 26 August 1901.

¹⁴⁴ CSO, Vol. 32, 3078/01, Henderson to Wilson. 27 August 1901.

¹⁴⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁴⁶ SNA, Vol. 43, Graham S. to "My Lord Duke," 10 September 1901.

¹⁴⁷ CSO, Vol. 55, 358/02, Henderson to Goold-Adams, 18 January 1902.

¹⁴⁸ hard labouring work.

agricultural purpose "...was worked by all members of the household.... The various members of the household fulfilled different, sometimes more onerous tasks within production, all viewed the land as a collective and inalienable resource whose function... was to sustain the household *as a whole*."¹⁴⁹ [Emphasis is Krikler's] While this was the African cultural practice, the lack of ploughing animals meant that these women and children had to do everything with pick and hoe and for the most part, did not have the traditional assistance of the men at planting and harvest time.

Henderson's complaint was correct. The hurry to create these camps was a major part of the problem. The speed with which the camps were established in the Orange River Colony was quite amazing. De Lotbiniere met with the G.O.C. of Bloemfontein on 1 August 1901 (approximate date) to discuss the expansion of the Transvaal program, which had been started just six weeks before in mid June. On 10 August, Goold-Adams approved of the plan. The following camps in the Orange River Colony were selected and ready for cultivation on 27 August 1901. De Lotbiniere reported he "[Had] inspected Taaibosch, Heilbron, Vredefort Rd., Koppies, Zuurfontein, Honeyspruit Native Refugee Camps where suitable land has been selected and Natives are eager to cultivate and hopeful of results."¹⁵⁰ This last comment about the attitudes of the black inmates is questionable. He did indicate that the way the Kroonstad Camp received the proposal to cultivate crops indicated that no pressure would be necessary to induce Natives to cultivate, as they appear very willing to assist themselves.¹⁵¹ Even though there had been some thought that cultivation could start in August, on 5 September, Fox reported that the "refugees" had not settled down permanently on the farms, but he hoped things

¹⁴⁹ Jeremy Krikler, *Revolution From Above, Rebellion from below: The Agrarian Transvaal at the Turn of the Century* (Oxford, 1993) p. 5.

¹⁵⁰ SNA, Vol. 1, NRC/01, de Lotbiniere to Lagden, 27 August 1901.

¹⁵¹ MGP, Vol. 112, 10468/01, de Lotbiniere to D.A.A.G., Army Headquarters, 9 August 1901.

would be settled in about 10 days.¹⁵² On 12 August, station commanders were notified of the general content of de Lotbiniere's scheme and where the camps were to be located.¹⁵³

Transport for the movement of the original black camps to the new farm sites.

Now that the original black concentration camps were ordered transferred to the new abandoned farms camp sites of the Department of Native Refugees. There were some 22,700 black inmates in the Orange River Colony camps, who would now have to be removed to the newly established camps, staked out on specially selected abandoned farms.¹⁵⁴ Adding the informal black camp inmates in the Transvaal the total number to be moved in both colonies, according to de Lotbiniere, was about 50,000 inmates, who would need to be transported to places suitable for growing crops along the railway.¹⁵⁵ The ability to provide the railway truck space needed to move so many families and their livestock and possessions reveals the deliberate policy of Lord Kitchener not to provide the original black camps and the white camps with sufficient railway space to ship the minimal food, medicine, tents and sanitary supplies. Had this been done many hundreds and even thousands of lives would have been saved. This was particularly true of the most vulnerable population of young children and babies.

Kitchener, despite his extensive duties as Chief of Staff, and later as Commander-in-Chief, personally controlled the allotment of railway truck space allotted to the concentration camps, overruling railway administrators and army supply officials. He had what can only be called an obsession with economising, especially in the area of transport cost. Shortly after assuming the office of Commander-in-Chief, Kitchener assured the Under Secretary for war, St. John Brodrick that that he would do his utmost to reduce transport expenditure. He reported to Brodrick, the Secretary of War, that he had recently been able to save between £80,000 and

¹⁵² CSO, Vol. 33, 3180/01, de Lotbiniere to Wilson, 5 September 1901.

¹⁵³ MGP, Telegram Book 248, Telegram MG 3450, Maxwell to the G.O.C. Bloemfontein., 12 August 1901.

¹⁵⁴ Some of these farms were owned by British and loyalist farmers who made significant claims for compensation during and after the war.

¹⁵⁵ GOV, Vol. 560, 201, de Lotbiniere to Milner, 7 September 1901; MGP, Vol. 112, 10468/01, de Lotbiniere to Deputy Assistant Adjutant General, Army Headquarters, 9 August 1901.

£90,000 a month by abolishing a major transport contract and taking the whole work being carried out by this contractor into his own hands.¹⁵⁶ He had created a most serious problem with the whole transport system from his early days in the war when he took away all transport from the regiments and created a central transport pool. This was a new innovation and a mistake of very great proportions. It was standard procedure in both the British Army and the American Army, and European armies of the time, to provide individual military units with their own transport. Individual units were deprived of their own ambulances, which resulted in tragedy.

This insistence on Kitchener's part to control all transport personally is noted because it is obvious that the failure to provide adequate supplies to the camps was not the result of decisions, actions or mistakes carried out by subordinates. Kitchener in his entire career had been loath to delegate power and decision-making¹⁵⁷ His autonomous personality showed itself very clearly in the way Kitchener intervened on matters of railway allocation of space and refused to allow those charged with that responsibility to make the decisions regarding railway space allotted to the concentration camps. He had won the war in the Sudan, in very many respects, by building a railway across a desert. He had a reputation as an expert in logistics and transport and by strict economising of the costs of warfare. Emily Hobhouse said of this reputation: "I thought Kitchener was such a great organizer, but is it good organization to have so little forethought and make so little preparation that thousands of people find themselves dumped down in strange place where there is *nothing* ready for reception-in hundreds of cases, not even a canvass covering?"¹⁵⁸

The real issue is whether despite the logistical limitations of a single track of railway Kitchener and the British Army had done all that they could to supply the black and white camps with food and medicine and other life preserving supplies. Had there been a deliberate neglect of the

¹⁵⁶ FK. Vol. 1621, Kitchener to Brodrick, 20 December 1900.

¹⁵⁷ See Trevor Royle, *The Kitchener Enigma*, (London, 1985).

¹⁵⁸ Jennifer Hobhouse Balme, *To Love Your Enemies: The work and life of Emily Hobhouse compiled from letters and writings, newspaper cuttings and official documents*. (Cobble Hill, British Columbia, 1994) p.137.

camps? Milner stated the ever-increasing needs of the concentration camps were an obstacle to supplying the transport required by the mines.¹⁵⁹ Milner engaged in an exercise of blaming the victim by blaming the destitution of the inmates on themselves, but did not mention the massive sweeps bringing more and more “refugees” into both the black and white camps. Nor did he allude to the refusal of some British columns to allow those being swept into the camps to bring their possessions with them. As mentioned this was such a serious problem that a proclamation was issued to field officers to allow refugees to bring more of their clothes, bedding, etc. to the camps.¹⁶⁰

One of the most telling documents in regard to the lack of sufficient railway space is a letter from the Director of Civil Supplies in Bloemfontein to Goold-Adams in April 1901. “Sometime ago I verbally raised the point whether the South African Constabulary would have to be provided for out of civil supplies and you then advised me that arrangements were being made with the Military for their provision. I am now informed that the customs regulations prohibit the Field Force Canteen from selling to any except those drawing pay from the Imperial Government, and that therefore, the South African Constabulary will have to be provided for out of civil supplies. The South African Constabulary will number about 5,000. This will mean a heavy additional drain on our limited truck accommodation.” It is obvious that the South African Constabulary was performing a military function by guarding the “protected areas,” as at Bloemfontein.

“[There has been] ... a large increase in the Refugee Camps during the last two months. When there were some 7000 or 8000 refugees the contractor was allowed six trucks per week and now

¹⁵⁹ FK, Vol. 1200, p. 158, Milner's *Papers*, Milner to Chamberlain, 15 November 1901.

¹⁶⁰ *British Parliamentary Papers*, Cd. 422, AG Circular, No. 37, Orders for Clearing Farms, 17 May 1901.

although the number of refugees has increased to over 20,000 he still has to manage with the same number of trucks."¹⁶¹

When this letter was referred to the Assistant Director of the Railway in Bloemfontein, he saw no reason not to apply to the Quarter Master General for more trucks because things had quieted down on the railway.¹⁶² He also said it was not much use until the twenty trucks per week that had already been allotted started coming up from the port. They were only getting ten trucks a week at the time. Still, he said that the Director of Civil Supplies was better able to make that judgement and he would not "venture an opinion on the matter."¹⁶³ Appendix 4.1 shows the attempts in the Orange River Colony and the Transvaal to obtain adequate railway truck space to supply both the black and white camps. The pattern was to authorise much less space than needed, to provide less space than authorised, and not to respond to requests for addition space due to large increases in inmates.

In April 1901 the crisis became acute. The need for all civilian supplies in the Orange River Colony was 30 trucks a week. Making this request presented a serious problem because the present authorisation of 20 trucks was not being met. They were to date only actually receiving exactly half of the authorised railway space, 10 trucks a week. The population had grown from 7,000 to 20,000. This did not include the black camps population, which was 8,811 and increasing at a similar rate. In addition to providing for the South African Constabulary, which was really a military unit, the civilian population outside the camps also had to be supplied. In April Goold-Adams asked the Quartermaster General for just 3 more trucks on a temporary basis. Kitchener said that he could not approve "three extra trucks a week." Here it can be seen that Kitchener made the decision and did not allow the Quartermaster General to handle this matter. Further, he did not say that as soon as additional trucks were available he would approve

¹⁶¹ CSO, Vol. 11, 896/01, Bloemfontein Director of Civil Supplies to Goold-Adams, 15 April 1901.

¹⁶² There had just previously been a great increase in military traffic due to large reinforcements from England.

¹⁶³ CSO, Vol. 11, 896/01, Bloemfontein Director of Civil Supplies to Goold-Adams, 15 April 1901.

their use. Rather he told the third highest official in the military Government that he should make application from time to time.¹⁶⁴ Here Kitchener shows his total lack of interest in supplying the concentration camp inmates in particular, and the civilian population in general. There is no doubt that there was a shortage of engines and railway trucks. As will be seen, however, there was adequate railway space rolling on the rails to accommodate the camps with the food, medicine and other supplies essential to the survival of life in the concentration camps.

Even if it is argued that there were not enough railway trucks and engines to pull them the record shows that a serious culpability lies with the British Government, and especially the military. In May 1901, the British Government had the opportunity to buy fourteen engines, two hundred trucks and twelve break vans, which had originally been built for the *Nederlandsche Zuid Afrikaansche Spoorweg Maatschappij* (Netherlands Railway Company) by Messrs Macuse and Company. When the original offer to sell each engine for £2,000 was raised to £2,350, Brodrick without consulting Milner or Girouard, cancelled the sale.¹⁶⁵ This is another example where unwise economising dictated tragic results. There was also great anger regarding the Netherlands Railway Company because of their alleged sabotage of the railway and their collusion with the Boers during the early stages of the war.¹⁶⁶ These engines and rolling stock had already been manufactured and could have been used to transport much needed supplies in a relatively short time. Previously in March, Girouard had been sent to England to arrange for more rolling stock. It was not until August 1901, however, that orders were issued for 60 engines and 1,200 trucks.¹⁶⁷ It would be November before the railway was able to function as

¹⁶⁴ CSO, Vol. 11, 896/01, Kitchener to Goold-Adams, 15 April 1901.

¹⁶⁵ FK, Vol. 534, CO 20423, Brodrick to Under Secretary of State, Colonial Office, 14 June 1901.

¹⁶⁶ *The National Archives of South Africa, Pretoria*, The archives of the Provost Marshall, (PMO), Vol. 3, 219, Deputy Assistant to the Director of Railways to Provost Marshall Army Headquarters, 28 May 1902. Most Dutch employees of the railway and their families were deported to the Netherlands.

¹⁶⁷ FK, Vol. 1200, p. 189. Milner's Papers, Milner to Chamberlain, 14 December 1901.

required without delays.¹⁶⁸ Some of the highest death rates in the camps occurred in October. In the white camps there were 3,157-recorded deaths in that month.¹⁶⁹ This was 11.3% of all recorded deaths in the white camps. The deaths in the Department of Native Refugees camps recorded for that same month were 1,489, which is 9.5 percent of all deaths in the Department of Native Refugees. In addition, there were some black deaths in the Orange River Colony white camps, plus 37 black deaths in the Transvaal white camps, which were undoubtedly the deaths of the servants of the Boer women and their children. In November the numbers of deaths were a little bit lower, but still very high.

Of the 22,700 black concentration camp inmates in the Orange River Colony 18,500 black camp inmates needed railway transport.¹⁷⁰ The record does not indicate the number of trucks that were used. We have a certain amount of information, however, that will allow an accurate estimate of the numbers of railway trucks that were required. De Lotbiniere stated that a 10-ton railway truck could accommodate about 20 families with their goods, and in some cases, this included their old housing materials.¹⁷¹ He reported that this move took about a month. This would require approximately 154 railway trucks during that thirty-day period. This is calculated based on the average family size of 6 persons which indicates that there were about 3,083 families.¹⁷²

This number of trucks would only be sufficient for the Orange River Colony. Altogether, if the Transvaal is included there were total of 50,000 refugees to be moved.¹⁷³ Based on the assumption that a similar percentage, 81.49%, would have to be moved by railway as was required in the Orange River Colony, the total number of black inmates to be moved would have been 40,745 inmates and

¹⁶⁸ FK, Vol. 1200, p. 154, Milner's Papers, Milner to Chamberlain, 15 November 1901.

¹⁶⁹ *British Parliamentary Papers*, Cd. 853, p. 129.

¹⁷⁰ CSO, Vol. 55, 358/02, de Lotbiniere to Gool-Adams, 18 January 1902.

¹⁷¹ CSO, Vol. 33, 3180/01, Chief Superintendent Department of Native Refugees, Orange River Colony, F. Wilson Fox to Secretary to Orange River Colony Administration, H.F. Wilson, 5 September 1901.

¹⁷² This previous calculation is also confirmed by the numbers of families in the Orange River Colony DNR Camps at the end of the war on 6 June 1902 when there were according to de Lotbiniere 9,330 families in a total population of 56,000. This gives an average family population of 6.01 as recorded in SNA, Vol. 31, 1170/02.

¹⁷³ GOV, Vol. 560. 201, de Lotbiniere to the Private Secretary to Milner. 7 September established 1901. P. 1.

would have required a total of 340 trucks for both colonies.¹⁷⁴ This does not include the trucks needed to move the camp equipment, the hospital and camp food and other supplies. In at least one case, the Middleburg, black camp, refugees in the Transvaal were allowed to plant crops along the railway where they were dropped as long as it was in a protected area.¹⁷⁵ The camp at Springs was established by de Lotbiniere in November 1901, when "...natives had already been allowed to build their huts and settle themselves down." There may have been other newly organised camps in the Transvaal, which, were allowed to stay where they were. There is, however, also evidence that some farms were used for this purpose as well as at least one mining company estate.¹⁷⁶ In the Orange River Colony an official listing of the farms that were used as Department of Native Refugees Camps was published on 4 July 1902 in the *Government Gazette*.

It is not clear that black refugee livestock were in all instances shipped with the refugees in the railway trucks. Some black inmates had considerable amounts of cattle and other livestock, which would have precluded their movement with the black families on the train. In May 1901, Kitchener ordered that in cases where surrendered burgers were transported to the camps by train "...arrangements were to be made for their stock and property to follow them by road, passing from post to post."¹⁷⁷

Despite the fact that the requests of the white camps for more truck space were denied, this large number of trucks was found, and notably at a time of heavy concentration of troops to carry out the massive sweeps being conducted at that same time. The scheme was based on the idea of using "...empty railway trucks moving North as opportunity affords without affecting

¹⁷⁴ This total number of railway trucks was estimated in the following way. In the Orange River Colony of the 22,770 refugees 18,500 or 88.12% had to be moved by railway. Taking the total estimated population given by de Lotbiniere as 50,000 in both the ORC and the Transvaal and multiplying that by 88.12% the numbers of inmates to be moved was 44,060. Based on de Lotbiniere's statement that 20 families could be moved with their livestock and other possessions in each railway truck and estimating that the average family was composed of 6 members we arrive at the figure of 7,343 families to be moved. With twenty families in each truck the total numbers of trucks for both colonies is 340 trucks. That does not include the trucks needed to move the camp staff, equipment and supplies.

¹⁷⁵ MGP, Vol. 109, 9372A/01, Maxwell to the Residential Magistrate, 25 July 1901.

¹⁷⁶ MGP, Vol. 125, 13284, p. 142, de Lotbiniere to The Secretary, Geldenhuis Estate & G.M. Co., Johannesburg 11 October 1901.

¹⁷⁷ SRC, Vol. 5, 1183A, Army Order No. 8, 11 May 1901.

the ordinary railway traffic.”¹⁷⁸ As stated all supplies for the civilian population, the South African Constabulary, and the black and white camps were limited to 20-30 trucks per week for all civil supplies for the colony. This ability to provide at least an additional 340 trucks during the month of August to move the black camps and at a time according to the Assistant Director of Railways in Bloemfontein, of maximum troop concentration and military supply transport is *prima facie* evidence that many more trucks could have been allocated to the camps, but were by Kitchener's personal orders not provided. It took 100 trucks to move the Kimberly black camp to Taungs and Dry harts alone.¹⁷⁹ It is interesting to note that based on the population at Kimberly and Orange River Station a truck was allotted to five families instead of the twenty families to a truck as estimated by de Lotbiniere.

A month after the move in a report to Lord Milner de Lotbiniere makes a very revealing statement regarding the logistics of the movement of these inmates and their possessions during that very busy period for the railway. “With but one line of railway burdened with the strain of military moves and supplies, the Imperial Military Railways rendered me such assistance as enabled me to move and transport about 18,500 Native Refugees with all their household goods and chattels, food grain and housings from stations south of Bloemfontein and from Heilbron and Kroonstad to places further along the line *without raising difficulties*.¹⁸⁰ [Emphasis is mine] The refusal of Kitchener to even allow three additional trucks per week to the civil suppliers of the Orange River Colony, when in practice they were getting only half of their regular allotment of 20 trucks was a very serious matter. Thus, Kitchener's refusal to provide an additional three trucks a week in April 1901 during a period of low strain on the capacity of the railway space is a glaring indictment of Kitchener's allotment of railway space. Here is seen just how involved the causes of death in the camps were related to the deliberate refusal to

¹⁷⁸ CSO, Vol. 29. 2758, de Lotbiniere to Chief Supply Officer, Lines of Communication, 2 August 1901.

¹⁷⁹ SNA, Vol. 59, 2097, de Lotbiniere to Milner, 30 September 1901.

¹⁸⁰ SNA, Vol. 1, NA 23/01, de Lotbiniere to Milner, 30 September 1901.

provide adequate transportation of food and other necessities, when as shown, more transport space could have been provided. All the numbers of trucks requested and granted both in this narrative and Appendix 4.1 are hard data based on British documents.

The transport of mining company black labour and supplies.

In May 1900 Lord Roberts was frustrated by two demands being made on the limited railway capacity, just before he was about to launch the push northwards to Johannesburg and Pretoria from Bloemfontein. These demands came at the wrong time and for the wrong reasons. With a kind of "business as usual" attitude De Beers Consolidated Mining Company and Cecil Rhodes were trying to push both their perceived, and real influence, to the brink of unreasonableness by attempting to bring substantial numbers of recently recruited black labourers and supplies to Kimberly via the Imperial Military Railway. Roberts told Lagden that from a military point of view this was very undesirable "as a great deal of railway plant required for other purposes is taken up in providing food, coal, etc. for the existing Kimberly population."¹⁸¹ The mining companies kept trying to get railway space even at times when it was obviously inappropriate. [See Appendix No. 4.1, section three, "Transport of Mining Industry and Private Industry Equipment during 1901-1902"]

Lord Roberts may have planted some of the seeds of this refusal to provide adequate amounts of essential supplies for civilians during the war several months before the first concentration camps were formed. General G.T. Pretymann, the Military Governor of Bloemfontein, informed Roberts in May 1900 that with the approach of winter¹⁸² there was a need to bring substantial amounts of oil and coal for the Orange Free State population. Roberts in an agitated tone and argument gave a kind of backhanded agreement to General Pretymann who had made the request. Further, he laid down a rationale to justify doing as little as absolutely necessary for the

¹⁸¹ *National Archives of South, Pretoria*, Accession 2404, Vol. 2, C 1439, Roberts to Resident Commissioner, Basutoland, Godfrey Lagden, 2 May 1902.

¹⁸² In the southern hemisphere of Africa, winter comes during the period June-September.

civilian population. "I will issue orders that the number of trucks you consider necessary for the supply of oil, coal, etc for the use of the inhabitants of Bloemfontein shall be provided. And though I regret women and children should suffer, it is just as well that everyone should feel that the war cannot be carried out without serious injury to a nation. The longer the war lasts the greater will be the suffering."¹⁸³ Here is the idea that the conditions experienced by the civilian population in the theatre of war, and later in the concentration camps must not be such as to make the prolonging of the war possible.

The first broken promise.

In March 1902 de Lotbiniere informed General Maxwell that even though the departmental crops had just recently been planted he had already delivered produce to the Army Service Corps. No doubt, then, this produce was purchased or taken from the crops of the black inmates of some of the camps. The various garrisoned towns such as Volksrust, Klip River, Vereeniging and Krugersdorp were able to purchase over £731 worth of fresh vegetables.¹⁸⁴ De Lotbiniere made arrangements in December 1901 with the Director of Supplies to "...fix [the] rates for the sale of produce being cultivated in the camps, and he offered the military rate less 12.5%.¹⁸⁵

De Lotbiniere told the refugees when he visited the camps on his early inspection tours that "Everything you grow will be yours, but any surplus must be sold to the Government."¹⁸⁶ As late as January 1902 Wilson Fox could tell Goold-Adams that the inmates of the camps were "...readily turning out for work...on the lands round the camps, which are be cultivated for their own benefit."¹⁸⁷ They were no doubt surprised that they had been lied to in the beginning and that not all the crops would be theirs and that they would be forced to grow crops for the

¹⁸³ A2404, *Roberts Letters and Telegrams*, Roberts to General Pretymann, 21 May 1900.

¹⁸⁴ MGP, Vol. 153, 3578A/02, p. 180, de Lotbiniere to Maxwell, 1 March 1902.

¹⁸⁵ MGP, Vol. 144, 17B, Director of Supplies to de Lotbiniere, 31 December 1901.

¹⁸⁶ SNA, Vol. 59, 2097, de Lotbiniere to Milner, 30 September 1901.

¹⁸⁷ CSO, Vol. 54, 298/02, Fox to Goold-Adams, 2 January 1902.

Army Departments.¹⁸⁸ In a very short time after their arrival on the farm sites, they learned that this was not the case. From the beginning, land was set aside to grow crops for the Army Departments rather than just selling surplus crops to the Army Departments as they had originally been told. In this same report de Lotbiniere said, “The Natives are fully alive to, and appreciate the opportunity the Government has given them of growing sufficient food for their own maintenance during the coming year, with a view of enabling them to return to their kraals on completion of the hostilities. *They also appreciate the fact that all the grain grown will be theirs, and the Government does not work on the half system—which is the one in vogue among the [Boer] farmers.*”¹⁸⁹ [Emphasis is mine] The departmental crops mentioned in later reports seem to belie both of these statements, as does the selling of their produce to the Army Service Corps as indicated above. Regarding the money received the document reads, “This money when received will be credited in the usual way.”¹⁹⁰ This meant that the inmates would not receive the proceeds, but that they would be paid into the army treasury.

Similarly, de Lotbiniere had 2,000 cases of potatoes, 2,500 bags Sidonian and Algerian oats, planted by the inmates, which,” he said, “... would raise about £15, 500, and would be ample to pay all expenses in the Transvaal for one year.” He did this, he said, to make the Department of Native Refugees camps truly self-supporting, and suggested the same be done in the Orange River Colony.¹⁹¹ Thus, in addition to growing crops for the Army Departments these inmates, who in most cases had been removed from the farms and their communities by military force, were required by their labour to pay all the expenses of their incarceration.

Farming operations and results.

A week after the end of the war de Lotbiniere confided to the Secretary of Native Affairs that the resultant harvest had not met the hoped for expectations. In the original projections of the

¹⁸⁸ *Ibid.*

¹⁸⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁹⁰ MGP, Vol. 153, 3578A/02, de Lotbiniere to Maxwell, 1 March 1902.

¹⁹¹ MGP, Vol. 137, 16312A/01, de Lotbiniere to Maxwell, 3 December 1901.

harvest, it had been hoped to produce grain crops in significant amounts of 120,000 to 200,000 bags (containing 180 pounds each of mealies and “kaffir corn”.) This was due to a lower rainfall than usual and the “incessant damage caused by our own troops.”¹⁹² In some cases it was decided if the blacks in a drought affected camp agreed to “harrow the crop over instead of ploughing new ground and they would also pay some compensation to the blacks who had cultivated the ground, by providing them with some of the departmental crops that had grown up successfully. This was done at one of the two camps at Vereeniging. The other camp across the river had received good rainfall.¹⁹³

One of the more serious incidents of damage to the crops of the inmates by the military occurred at the Smaldeel Camp. A District Inspector reported that the “Natives seemed generally disgusted on account of having been shifted so often by the commandants order [and] all their original lands had been taken away and the Stock Farm officials had turned their animals in to eat up the growing crops.”¹⁹⁴ At the Albertina camp about 150 acres of mealies (corn) were destroyed, mostly eaten to the ground, and where it was not so, the mealie pods have been torn off by the camp followers. One thousand to twelve hundred horses were kept in the field all Saturday night. These crops were the property of the native refugees who had raised them and they were depending on them to keep their families in food during the coming winter months. They will now, unless compensated for their loss, have to subsist on the charity of the Government, as 600 of them are practically destitute.¹⁹⁵ The inmates of the camp were compensated for their losses. [See Chapter 7-Valuation of receipts]. Ironically, the original order establishing these farm sites, addressed to all military commanders, stated that it was the

¹⁹² SNA, Vol. 31, 1170/02, de Lotbiniere to Secretary of Native Affairs, W. Windham, 6 June 1902.

¹⁹³ CSO, Vol. 54, 326/02, Fox to de Lotbiniere, 3 February 1902.

¹⁹⁴ CSO, Vol. 54, 326/02, Fox to de Lotbiniere 3 February 1902.

¹⁹⁵ CSO, Vol. 48, 4353/01, Major P.H. Slee, Commander, Van Reenen to G.O.C., Harrismith District, 5 March 1902.

wish of the Commander-in-Chief that the Native Refugees "...should be given every assistance to raise crops for their own maintenance."¹⁹⁶

V. Employment of the inmates of the Department of Native Refugees.

The black men swept off the veld were quickly hired by the various Army Departments. Their employment with these departments has been described in Chapter 3. Nothing really changed as far as their utilisation except that no deductions were taken from their salaries, to defray the cost of feeding their families in the concentration camps. This decision was explained by saying that these deductions were very unpopular with the men involved. It is to be noted that the mining companies provided the facility for black mine workers to send money to their families through the Native Deposit and Remittance Agency, at least that was the case in September 1902.¹⁹⁷ In fact, the black men working for the Army Departments, in many instances, had been working for the departments prior and throughout the period of transition. The major change was that the 2,000 black mineworkers loaned through the Johannesburg Army Labour Depot now had to be returned, which meant that abled bodied black men swept off the veld now had to work for the Army Departments. Most of those swept into the camps, as in the period of the original camps, were women and children.

Several months prior to January 1902, the Officer in charge of the Department of Native Refugees in Johannesburg had provided military officers, government officials and a few townspeople with servants such as houseboys, girls and "piccaninis" from the various refugee camps in the Transvaal. In January 1902, it was reported that there was an increase in demand for these servants. By mid January a registry for servants had been established. De Lotbiniere asked Lagden if the provision of servants should continue. In asking this question, he

¹⁹⁶ MGP, Vol. 112, 10468/01, de Lotbiniere to Deputy Assistant Attorney General, (D.A.A.G.) Army Headquarters, 9 August 1901.

¹⁹⁷ SNA, Vol. 57, 2006/02, Registrar and Accountant, The Native Deposit and Remittance Agency to Controller of Passports, General C. Y. Brabant, 18 September 1902. This letter was written on Department of Native Affairs letterhead. This would seem to indicate that this agency was in that Department.

recommended for the benefit of the natives, that "a few suitable young girls and boys be employed in Johannesburg."¹⁹⁸ Lagden agreed that this practice should continue. Two agencies were established for the employment of boys and girls. 275 boys and 133 girls were employed.¹⁹⁹ Most of the employers were private citizens in Johannesburg.

There was a great demand for black labour by both army and private employers. In Circular Memorandum No. 50 authorising the establishment of camps on abandoned and loyalist farms in August 1901 the Army Departments were informed that they could obtain required labour from the Army Labour Depot in Johannesburg which was now the operational headquarters for the Department of Native Refugees in the Transvaal. Likewise Army Departments in the Orange River Colony could obtain labour from the Chief Superintendent, Wilson Fox in Bloemfontein.

There was an increasingly heavy demand for labour from all of the camps. In February 1902 de Lotbiniere informed the Commissioner of Native Affairs that the "...demands for labour from the different Army Departments are increasing daily in the Orange River Colony as well in the Transvaal." He said he feared that would become a difficult matter to meet all the demands.²⁰⁰ In his December 1901 monthly report he indicated that while the demand for labour from his Department was much higher in the Transvaal he could report that out of 8,434 men registered in the Orange River Colony Camps 2,803 were in Army employ with 205 in private employ, leaving a balance of 5,000, which included old, sick and men on leave and men employed locally. He could not say how many men were employed locally. There were also eight women and seven children in Government employ.²⁰¹ The Assistant Superintendent of the Orange River Colony indicated that "...a large number of "boys" were put to work with private firms

¹⁹⁸ SNA, Vol. 1, 92/02, de Lotbiniere to Lagden, 11 January 1902.

¹⁹⁹ TKP, Vol. 135, *Final Report*, p. 3.

²⁰⁰ SNA, Vol. 16, 331/02, de Lotbiniere to Lagden, 5 February 1902.

²⁰¹ *Ibid.*

towards the end of the month of June.”²⁰² In August when repatriation was well on the way those who were reluctant to return to the Boer farms “on account of the active part taken by them in the war...were provided for, as far as possible, in Government employment, such as railway work, the South African Constabulary, and transport.”²⁰³

VI. Living Conditions in the camps

Very little is known about the life and conditions in these camps, because all the reports of the individual camp superintendents, after an exhaustive search, appear to have been lost or destroyed. The monthly reports of the Department of Native Refugees camps are statistical and are primarily designed to give a financial accounting. Even in the record of the numbers of deaths contained in these monthly reports the causes of death are not provided. Related to this is the lack of any medical reports.

De Lotbiniere's *Final Report* does provide some summary of the causes of death and the treatment of illness in the Transvaal camps. The record of the numbers of deaths listed under gender and age do give some indication of the health conditions in the individual camps, along with the percentage of deaths, as these reports do indicate the populations of the individual camps. The reports of de Lotbiniere and Fox contain some general, but limited information. Some useful information was obtained from the listing of expenditures for medical staffing, sanitation, medical comforts and other supplies. The Department District Inspectors reports contain some valuable descriptions of camp conditions. The correspondence and reports of de Lotbiniere and F. Wilson Fox the Officer in Charge of the Department of Native Refugees and the Chief Superintendent of the Department in the Orange River Colony also contain some helpful information.

²⁰² CSO, Vol. 88, 2991, Monthly Report of the Department of Native Refugees in the Orange River Colony for the month of June 1902.

²⁰³ CSO, Vol. 105, 4316/02, Monthly Report of the Department of Native Refugees in the Orange River Colony for August 1901.

The fact that the record of the life and conditions in these camps is very sparse, is all the more reason to attempt to ferret out, by scientific research, as much as can be ascertained. This problem is to be seen in many periods of history. The “tunnel period” of early Church history and the “Dark Ages” are well known eras bearing the same burden of inadequate and sparse sources. Libraries are full of books, that have by diligent historical research and scientific method, attempted to strip away, as far as possible, the dark shroud that conceals these periods of history. To be sure we must not draw conclusions based on insufficient evidence. Nevertheless the information that is to be found in the record does give basis for at least tentative conclusions.

J.A. du Pisani and B.E. Mongalo have done some interesting research on the life in camps utilising the oral history holdings of the former Institute of Contemporary History at the University of the Witwatersrand.²⁰⁴ The authors come to the conclusion in their study of these interviews that “...the life of black people in these camps was the typical life of a manual labourer in the case of men and either a domestic servant or crop cultivator in the case of women.”²⁰⁵ Of course, to that description must be added the milieu of confinement in which that labour took place. They do follow this somewhat pastoral description, with the following ameliorating statement. “Despite De Lotbiniere’s pledge to create ‘normal conditions’, the lives of the camp population were inevitably disrupted in the abnormal environment of the camps. This becomes clear when statistics and information regarding deaths and births are studied.”²⁰⁶ Their view seems to reinforce the idea that the black camps were intrinsically less severe than

²⁰⁴ J.A. Du Pisani and B.E. Mongalo, “*Victims of a White Man’s War: Blacks in concentration camps during the South African War*” (1899-1902). *Historia*, Vol. 44 (1) May 1999. p. 153. These interviews done 70 years later may be contaminated by the apartheid experience, causing persons being interviewed to be less critical of their British captors due to their feeling about the Boers. I witnessed this kind of reaction at Mafeking when oral history interviews were being conducted by a television production company.

²⁰⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 164. I attempted to carry out research in this collection but with the departure of the founder of the collection, Charles Van Onselen, the collection was not functioning for research purposes. My inability to access this collection of oral history was a loss for this study. I hope to carry out this research in the future.. Van Onselen’s work is briefly covered in this study, but his work will hopefully be very valuable for future studies of the history of black people during the war period. Of course his major contribution has been in the area of black labour in the mines..

²⁰⁶ *Ibid.*

the white camps and were simply labour camps very similar to the normal agricultural life on the farms. This comes very close to the view conveyed by the British officials that the inmates were contented with their situation in most of the camps.

Peter Warwick cites the testimony of missionaries who had an entirely different view. Both missionaries, The Rev. E. Farmer and the Rev. W.H.R. Brown describe the misery and pessimism they found in the camps and their loss of cattle, homes and gardens and their separation from family members. Brown said he was dismayed by the dreadful physical condition and low spirits of the people at the Dryharts camp.²⁰⁷

The life of the inmates in the black camps must be seen in two contexts. The white inmates in the concentration camps were not in most cases required to work. In no case were they required to pay for their food. The black inmates, especially those who had formerly been incarcerated in the original black camps, were very aware of this.

They also shared the experience with the white inmates of having seen their homes and crops destroyed and had undergone the rigors of the removal process. The black inmates, like their white counterparts, both suffered very similar and high death rates and were grieving for their dead children and other family members. Something not usually mentioned was their shared experience of worrying about their husbands, brothers, fathers and sons who were still fighting and dying in the war that was still going on outside the confining enclosures of the camps. The anxiety caused by not knowing what was happening to them out there on the now increasingly barren veld was demoralising. This was, in part, the idea behind the establishment of the white camps. The British thought the Boers would surrender out of concern for their wives and children. This must also have been a cause of anxiety for black men fighting on both sides of the conflict. This idea that black people are intrinsically different than white people as described

²⁰⁷ Peter Warwick, *Black People and the South African War* (Johannesburg,, 11983) p.156.

in Mark Twain's *Huckleberry Finn* is very helpful in trying to understand that black people also love their families and are lonely for those they love during periods of separation. Both black and white inmates experienced the jail like confinement, which breeds a sense of hopelessness', and isolation. Separation from loved ones, even today in prisons and mental institutions and other places of confinement, is the greatest cause of suffering. It is this understanding that is missing in the case of the previous view of the black concentration camps.

The heavy work of cultivation by pick and hoe carried out by the women and children was made even more difficult and energy sapping because of the very inadequate and monotonous diet of mealie meal and salt. Overall, these camps were places of deprivation and the melancholy of high rates of sickness and death, which were part of their daily experience. Certainly, historians have not suggested that the Boer inmates were content or grateful for their incarceration. It is also true that blacks outside the camps were also suffering greatly from starvation and severe conditions. Both the black and white inmates suffered from deprivation that was the result of the transport policies of Lord Kitchener and the British Government. The degree of deprivation in the black camps, however, was worse in all areas of their life in the camps where, for the most part, they were neglected and left to fend for themselves. This policy of deliberate neglect is documented throughout the pages of the study.

Food supply and rations

Now that the original black camps under the Department of Refugees in the Orange River Colony were being transferred to the Department of Native Refugees the question arose on the part of the food contractors, who had provided the rations for the original black camps up to that point, if they would continue to do so. The agricultural scheme had as its basic rationale to save the cost of feeding the thousands of black inmates being swept into the camps. Even before the Department of Native Refugee camps were formed, Kitchener had insisted that blacks should be turned over to the Army Departments to work for their food or starve. So obviously the

rationing that had previously been carried out in the old camps, which was not totally based on the work relief principle, was now rescinded.

The new system was drastic and bare bones. In early August 1901, as the Department of Native Refugees camps were being planned and set up, the General Officer Commanding of the Lines of Communication stipulated the following ration scale for these new places of confinement. "In order that the risk from Boer looting the Native Refugee rations may be reduced to the minimum it is proposed to ration the kraals daily, thus, 3 bags of Mealie Meal or mealies will be issued daily to each kraal of 50 families for their immediate consumption. No reserve rations were to be kept in any of the kraals." The oxen required for ploughing, and the reserve of rations would be kept under protection of the military posts nearby or serving as the headquarters of each of the cultivated areas. Salt was to be provided at no cost.²⁰⁸

From the early days of the camps the rations provided consisted only of mealie meal and salt. This can be seen in the October Monthly Report of the Transvaal camps in July 1901. That report contains the following notation: "Meal and mealies is reckoned @ 7 shillings per 180 lb. Bag. Salt reckoned @ 2d per lb. Coal reckoned @ actual cost."²⁰⁹ There is no indication of any other costs and it is obvious that no other rations were being provided.

According to Johan Ellis, at least among the BaSotho, two types of Sorghum—"black/red and green/white continued to be the staple diet, despite the fact that maize had been introduced prior to the nineteenth century. Some under pressure adopted maize by the time of the war. Because the chief owned all the cattle and only milk was made available, most meat obtained was from hunting, which was quite highly developed. Eland was the preferred game. Insects such as locusts were sometimes used as a protein supplement, although this may have been mainly in times of drought as mentioned in the black locations in the Eastern Cape and at Mafeking

²⁰⁸ CSO, Vol. 27, 2758/01, G.O.C. Lines of Communication to Kitchener, 3 August 1901.

²⁰⁹ SNA, Vol. 59, 2097, Monthly Report of the Department of Native Refugees in the Transvaal, July 1901.

during the siege.²¹⁰ The diet may have included milk, some meat and pumpkin (squash). Since over 90% of the inmates in the black camps were farm workers from the Boer farms their diet may have been closer to that of the Boer people than to their traditional food. Many farm workers had their own cattle on the farms. As discussed in the previous chapter, the refusal to provide a balanced diet with sufficient quantities of food cannot be justified with the argument that the people being fed had previously been the recipients of an inadequate diet. Furthermore, the amount of physical labour being carried out must be a determinant in establishing a ration scale. The rations provided were quite inadequate and no doubt contributed to the rates of sickness and death. [See Chapter Three-Rations]

There is, however, another aspect to this decision. A few days later on 9 August de Lotbiniere informed the Deputy Assistant Adjutant General at Army Headquarters that he had "...reduced the government ration to a fair scale, as it was abnormally high before my arrival. The difference in the two scales will effect a saving of about £4,000 per month."²¹¹ It may be relevant to consider that at the very time that these camps were being established, in September 1901, Kitchener was resisting the request to reduce the numbers of troops under his command. To placate London he was trying to reduce the monthly costs of the war which were primarily pay and rations.²¹² Here no mention is made of the military order to limit rations. Prior to this decision a higher ration scale of 2 lbs of mealie meal for adults and 1-½ lbs. for children under 12 had been ordered. This statement is a typical exercise in overstatement. The new scale ordered by de Lotbiniere simply states officially the rations, that in most cases, were actually being provided. From a cost point of view the missing food item, that cost the most, was by far, that of meat.

²¹⁰ Johan Ellis, E-mail communication dated 3 July 2002. I am grateful for his contribution.

²¹¹ MGP, Vol. 112, 10468/01, de Lotbiniere to-D.A.A.G. Army Headquarters, Pretoria, 9 August 1901.

²¹² FK 1191, Vol. 102, Milner to Brodrick, 11 September 1901, p. 1025.

The official ration scales during period of the original black camps called for a meat ration, but it appears meat was seldom provided. Sugar and coffee were usually not provided, and given the small amounts of these condiments, their cost compared to meat was quite small. Food prices were regulated and coffee was sold to the military for 4 shillings, 3 pennies per pound. Sugar was 3 pennies per lb.. Meat 4.5 shillings per pound.²¹³ Considering that the published ration scale only called for ½ oz. of coffee per day and 2 oz of sugar per day it can be seen such huge savings, as de Lotbiniere referred to, can only have been based upon removing meat. In contrast to this very bare bones ration scale the Army Remounts Depot near Queenstown in the Cape Colony was feeding the black labourers on a daily basis in December 1901 as follows: 1 ¼ lbs. Meat, 1 ¼ lbs. of biscuits-or a proportionate quantity of meal in lieu-of coffee and sugar, if they prefer it. In addition an issue of lime juice was given owing to the scarcity of vegetables. This ration was considered both plentiful and wholesome by the Native Locations Inspector who was investigating a complaint by a few of the “ordinary labourers” who felt the rations insufficient.²¹⁴

There was another problem with this diet. Eating just one food item, every day over a long period creates a monotony that is detrimental to the sense of well-being. The unvarying diet of mealie meal was thought to be the cause of sickness by some of the Boers on Commando. Jan Celliers a Boer commandant when receiving some dripping to fry fat exclaimed in his dairy, “A welcome change from the eternal, *porridge, porridge, porridge*.”²¹⁵ The ration scale adopted by de Lotbiniere follows:

Adult Native ration scale

Mealie Meal. 1 ½ lbs. per day.
Salt. ½ oz. Per day

Children under the age of 12

Mealie Meal. 1.0 lbs. Per day
Salt. ½ oz. Per day.

²¹³ MGP, Vol. 73, p. 41, 2730/01 “Prices of Supplies” as authorised by the Director of Supplies, 12 March 1901.

²¹⁴ *Cape Provincial Archives*, Archives of the Secretary of Native Affairs, Vol. 500, A101, Native Locations Inspector to Asst. Secretary to the Native Affairs Department, Cape Town.

²¹⁵ Pretorius, “*Life on Commando*”, p.47.

This was a very Spartan allotment of food. In addition to not providing meat, sugar and coffee, it also provided ½ lb. less mealie meal for both adults and children under 12 than had been issued in the original black camps. Obviously this was not an adequate diet, as discussed in the previous chapter, especially for inmates, men women, and children involved in heavy labour. Furthermore, food now had to be paid for at the rate of ½ penny per pound of mealie meal for those who were working for the Army Departments or cultivating crops for themselves and the Army Departments. This cost was estimated to be half the cost incurred by the Department in buying mealie meal. Those who were not working either for an employer or in the cultivation project were charged double the price, or 1 penny per pound. Salt was distributed at no cost.²¹⁶ Rations were provided free to the sick and unable to work. The numbers of inmates in this category, and this combined with a higher cost of purchasing food grains than had been estimated, defeated the goal of making the camps totally self-supporting. In lieu of providing the normal rations provided previously stores were opened to sell these and other items to the inmates from which a profit was made selling clothes, food and medicines as the monthly reports of the camps indicate.

The Director of Supplies in March 1902, a little over two months before the war's end, authorised the use of captured livestock, which was not needed by the military, to provide fresh meat for the inmates of the white concentration camps, when needed. Limited amounts were also issued to Fox when requisitioned by him.²¹⁷ This meat ration was limited to 1½ lbs. per adult and ¾ lb. per child between 10 and 16 years of age.²¹⁸ This would seem to indicate that meat was not being provided prior to this date.

A major lack in the diet, especially for babies, young children and the sick, was milk, which was so scarce that usually it was only used as a medical comfort. There was great difficulty in

²¹⁶ SNA, Vol. 20, 519/02, p. 5, de Lotbiniere to Goold-Adams, 18 January 1902.

²¹⁷ SRC, Vol. 21, 7932, The Director of Supplies to Chief Inspector of Military Stock and Farms in Military Occupation, Orange River Colony and Cape Colony, 10 March 1902.

²¹⁸ SRC, Vol. 21, 7932, The Director of Supplies to Chief Inspector of Military Stock and Farms, 10 March 1902.

providing fresh milk in all the concentration camps. De Lotbiniere in listing four reasons for the high death rates placed the lack of milk at the top of the list.²¹⁹ In discussing compensation and repatriation he warned that it would never do to send the inmates "...to their Kraals without giving them some cattle for the sake of their health, which will suffer greatly unless they have stock."²²⁰ This primarily referred to the milk these animals could provide. This is an interesting observation, given that milk was hardly ever provided to the inmates of the black camps. De Lotbiniere explained that one of the reasons for forming the camp at Springs as being due to the fact that moving the approximately 100 families found living, in and around, the compounds at Brakpan to Frederickstad would have required the selling of their livestock, which would have been detrimental to their health, as it would have deprived them of their milk supply.²²¹

Joseph Chamberlain, reading a medical report on the white concentration camps, noted that there was a reference to a deficiency of fresh milk. He asked Milner why this was the case when the military were capturing thousands of cattle? "Are there no milch cows among these?" He suggested that if there were, a number of these cows could be attached to each camp. Milner reacted by saying that the percentage of milch cows to cattle was "infinitesimal". "Boer farmers owning 1,000 cattle, rarely possess even one milch cow and would rather use tinned butter and milk to taking the trouble to operate a dairy. Milner said all the milch cows they captured were given to the Military Hospitals and there were none to spare for the camps."²²²

Milner, could not, or would not, grasp the idea that very little children and babies, in some cases, were more in need of milk than some adult men in the military hospitals. The military hospitals got almost all the milk available. As of January 1901 in the Transvaal any person having cows "in milk" before selling them on the market, or privately, had to first offer them to

²¹⁹ FK, Vol. 1051, CO 224/7, CO 25144, de Lotbiniere to Goold-Adams, 18 January 1902, p. 14.

²²⁰ MGP, Vol. 146, 838A/02, de Lotbiniere to Maxwell, 11 January 1902.

²²¹ MGP, Vol. 146, 17217, de Lotbiniere to General Officer Commanding, Lines of Communication, Elandsfontein, 19 November 1901.

²²² *The National Archive of South Africa, Pretoria*, Archive of the High Commissioner of South Africa, (HC), Vol. 87, Chamberlain to Milner, 9 December 1901.

the Director of Supplies.²²³ Milk was basic to the diet of typhoid patients, and a very large number of the soldiers in the military hospitals were typhoid patients. Nevertheless, colonial medical policy always put the military first and then came the British white community. Such prioritising was based, not on need, but upon the group, of which the patient was a member. The severe sickness in the black camps had little ability to garner in milk cows or milk in this pecking order.

As in the white camps, the death rates in the black camps were extremely high among children, especially in the first few months of the operation of the newly created camps. Of the 3,961 deaths in the camps in the Orange River Colony for the months of September-December 1901 3,102 deaths were children. Unfortunately, the camps did not keep a record of the causes of death. De Lotbiniere in commenting on these very high death rates to Goold-Adams said that the high death rate is put down to various causes. He listed the loss of stock and the consequent loss of milk as the most important cause.²²⁴ Even when milk was available on the market, there was a tendency to abstain from purchase. Wilson Fox reported to de Lotbiniere that he had found that many superintendents were rather afraid of acting on their own responsibility in the matter of issuing free comforts to some of the destitute, such as milk. "I told them that the Government would rather stand the loss of a few pounds than of several lives."²²⁵

As a result de Lotbiniere was determined to somehow obtain a sufficient amount of milk. The Department did have some "milch" cows. De Lotbiniere complained to the Director of Supplies that the military were charging thirty shillings a head per month for 50 milch cows and refuse to sell. The price of hire seems exorbitant. "The principle of charging this department for the hire of milch cows, urgently needed for hospital purposes in the Native Refugee Camps, cannot, I believe, have received your approval" This head on approach was typical of his approach to

²²³ Transvaal Government Gazette, Government Notice No. 10, 1901, 21 January 1901.

²²⁴ CSO, Vol. 55, 358/02, de Lotbiniere to Goold-Adams, 18 January 1902.

²²⁵ CSO, Vol. 54, 326/02, Fox to de Lotbiniere, 3 February 1902.

obstructions to his advocacy for the inmates under his care and his Department. He offered an alternative way of handling the situation. After once again asserting his criticism, he made a proposal. "...this custom of leasing milch cows to my Dept. is both unsatisfactory and illiberal." He proposed that he should take the cows over on loan [from the military] and then pay £12 per head for any that died or were lost. The Director of Supplies made short shrift of this complaint and proposal, saying that he had no idea the Department was being supplied with milch cows on any terms. "Every milch cow I can collect is most urgently required for the use of the Military Hospitals, where Soldiers are suffering from enteric fever. I consider that the milk requirements of the troops in the Military Hospitals should take precedence [over] the requirements of the Native Refugee Camps."²²⁶

Having explained the high death rates, especially among the children, and seeing the lack of milk as the primary cause, de Lotbiniere was upset when an order was issued by the Director of Supplies in January 1902 to send "surplus" milch cows from Harrismith to Pretoria. He asked that 100 of these cows now in the possession of the Department of Native Refugees, with General Rundle's approval, be allowed to remain for our sick natives.²²⁷ The General Officer Commanding of Harrismith pleaded on behalf of the inmates of the Department camps, saying that the only cows surplus to hospital requirements are those handed over for use in the "Native Refugee Camps." He recommended the cows not be withdrawn, because a small amount of milk was considered the only means of stopping the heavy mortality, especially among the children. He also argued that these cows were of little value as milkers. Maxwell was able to get the Director of Supplies to put a hold on this order. The request was approved and these cows remained with the Harrismith black camp.²²⁸ In January 1902, de Lotbiniere could tell Goold-

²²⁶ MGP, Vol. 146, 826A/02, Director of Supplies to de Lotbiniere, 10 January 1902.

²²⁷ MGP, Vol. 146, 826A/02, de Lotbiniere to Maxwell, 15 January 1902.

²²⁸ MGP, Vol. 146, 826A/02, General Officer Commanding, Harrismith to Director of Supplies, 11 January 1902.

Adams he had "...secured a considerable number of milch cows. Beneficial results are now commencing to be felt."²²⁹

Housing.

Inadequate housing was one of the major sources of death and sickness in these camps. The movement of the original black camps to the new sites in cold weather in open coal trucks was probably a cause of severe illness and no doubt some deaths due to pneumonia and other respiratory diseases. The record of deaths during the first few months, however, shows that most died several months after the removal process. In the first four months of September to December 1901 7,076 deaths occurred. The numbers of deaths in the months September to December inclusive were as follows: September, 728 deaths; October, 1,318 deaths; November, 2,199 and December, 2,831.²³⁰ From this escalating death toll, it can be seen, that the removal process itself, was not the major cause of deaths.

These deaths from September through December 1901 amounted to 45.88% of all the recorded deaths that occurred in the Department of Native Refugees during the twenty months of its existence. This increase in the death rates took place during the months of increasing temperatures and heavy rains. This combination of warm and wet weather is the season of typhoid and dysentery and other water borne diseases. Since these were also the first four months of the development of these campsites, inadequate housing and sanitary facilities, would also have contributed to the death rate. Wilson Fox on an inspection tour of the camps noted at two of the camps at Serfontein and Rooiwal, that due to the lack of natural materials in the areas of these camps, the huts were inadequate and uncomfortable, or that they had been built on low lying ground that was swampy and unhealthy.²³¹ In January 1902, an assistant to de Lotbiniere

²²⁹ FK, Vol. 1051, CO 224/7, CO 25144, de Lotbiniere to Goold-Adams, 18 January 1902, p. 14.

²³⁰ Stowell Kessler, "The Black concentration camps of the Anglo Boer War," *Historia*, Vol. 44(1) May 1999, p. 143; TKP, Vol. 135, *Final Report*, p. 3; Monthly Reports, Department of Native Refugees, Orange River Colony, September to December inclusive 1901.

²³¹ CSO, Vol. 54, 326/02, Fox to de Lotbiniere, 3 February 1902.

said that he had been told that the high death rate was partly due to the declimatisation of the natives, due to their having been removed from their permanent dwelling places which he claimed was sufficient to upset the weaker ones, and especially the women and children.²³²

The reports of the early preparations of the sites make no reference to anything being done to prepare the sites for the incoming families, with the exception of the provision of food. Major Henderson, the first Superintendent of the new camps in the Orange River Colony, said, "The Refugees will construct their kraals with materials brought with them, and as such as they find on the spot, on fixed sites."²³³ That this is what actually took place is attested to by de Lotbiniere who reported to Milner that the 18,700 native refugees in the Orange River Colony had been moved to the new campsites "...with all their household goods and chattels, food grain and housings."²³⁴ Sailcloth and some other materials may have been provided. There is no evidence, however, that this was done. De Lotbiniere in his final report did indicate that they had received some "old tents" from the army.²³⁵

In the view of some observers the quality of the construction involved in huts put together by the blacks required very little effort or material. The British Missionary A. T. Bryant described these huts in a very demeaning way. "The Kafir's dwelling [was] merely a rough binding together with twigs and grass, [and] marked only one step in advance of the cave-dwellers."²³⁶ This rudimentary form of construction was, indeed, what many inmates were living in due to a lack of required materials, which was far below the standard of their usual kraal huts. One of the major defects in these huts according to de Lotbiniere was that there were spaces in the sides of the huts, due to the shortage of building materials, which allowed cold air and rain to

²³² SNA, Vol. 13, 96/02, Assistant to de Lotbiniere to Commissioner for Native Affairs, 13 January 1902.

²³³ CSO, Vol. 33, 3180/01, Fox. to Wilson, 5 September 1901.

²³⁴ SNA, Vol. 59, 2097, de Lotbiniere to Milner, 30 October 1901.

²³⁵ TKP, Vol. 135, *Final Report*..., p. 7.

²³⁶ A.T. Bryant, *Zulu Medicine and Medicine Men*, (Cape Town, 1970) p. 8.

enter these enclosures.²³⁷ In contrast, Dr. Pratt Yule saw this imperfection of holes and crevices in the sides of the huts as a boon to health because of the perfect ventilation due to this imperfect construction.²³⁸ When the campsites in the Orange River Colony were chosen there is no indication that the availability of thatching straw and other materials was part of the site selection criteria. In Natal when towns were asking to be considered as a site for the placement of black refugees, who had fled into Natal, they were informed that one of the criterias was that there must be hut-building materials in the vicinity.²³⁹

The difference in treatment of white and black inmates is particularly evident in the area of providing tents or building materials to create decent and healthy huts or shelters. As was seen in the previous chapter, when the black camps were under the Department of Refugees in the Orange River Colony, materials were only provided in dire circumstances, as in the Edenburg black camp, and even then, only the skimpiest and cheapest materials were authorised for purchase. These materials were to be retained for other uses when they were no longer needed to house the black inmates.

These inmates moved from the original black camps were now dumped down on the ground at the railway siding, after one or more days travel in railway trucks or ox wagons. They may have also been left sitting on a side rail while higher priority trains used the single track railway. Some Boer inmates report having been sidelined in this way for many days in the hot sun or cold winds with no food being provided. In all likelihood, they had to carry their belongings considerable distances to the farm camp site, perhaps up to a mile from the railway track, including their meagre hut materials. Now weary from this journey, they had to immediately

²³⁷ FK, Vol. 1051, CO 224/7, CO25144, de Lotbiniere to Goold-Adams, 18 January 1902.

²³⁸ CSO, Vol. 31, 2976, Medical Officer of Health for the Orange River Colony, Dr. Pratt Yule to Goold-Adams, 17 August 1901.

²³⁹ *The Natal Provincial Archives*, The archives of the Natal Secretary of Native Affairs, (NSNA), Vol. 292, 1793/01, Natal Secretary of Native Affairs to Magistrate, Weenen, 18 October 1901.

begin to reconstruct a hut with old feed sacks or sailcloth and thin strips of wood in August or September, two of the coldest and windiest months of the year.

Compelled to enter and remain in the camps.

As shown in the previous chapter, the inmates of the black camps were compelled to enter the camps and were compelled to remain there. From the beginning there was a policy on the part of the military authorities, and that was particularly true in the case of the army intelligence officers, that the movements of blacks must be restricted as carefully as possible to prevent their assisting the Boer commandos in any way.

The requests for the release of inmates of the black camps caused the same kind of denial on the part of Army Intelligence to take place as mentioned in the last chapter. Requests for the release of even elderly inmates were routinely denied on the basis that they needed to remain in the black camps where they could be controlled.²⁴⁰ De Lotbiniere said that he had "...steadily refused all applications to bring native refugee families to Johannesburg. By keeping these families in the camps I can control them."²⁴¹

Even on a day-to-day basis, inmates were confined and compelled to remain in the camps because of the fear that they might in some way aid the enemy. When shop keepers complained that black inmates were not allowed to come to their shops outside the camps, they were informed that stores had been opened inside the camps to prevent their going into the towns because the military commandants objected to their be allowed outside the confines of the camps. In this regard Wilson Fox informed H.F. Wilson that he had developed a compound system providing everything the Natives need, to keep them in the camps as far as possible.²⁴²

In some of the white camps there was greater freedom to come and go from the camp into

²⁴⁰ SNA, Vol. 29, The Chief Superintendent of the Department of Native Refugees to the Secretary of Native Affairs, 27 May 1902.

²⁴¹ SNA, Vol. 29, de Lotbiniere to Windham, 27 May 1902.

²⁴² CSO, Vol. 56, 483/02, Wilson Fox to Wilson, 22 February 1902.

nearby towns. Others were more restrictive and had heavy wired fences as at Vredefort Road.²⁴³ In at least one case the white inmates in the Krugersdorp white camp were asked by Lord Kitchener if they objected to a proposed fence around their camp. The inmates were stated to be “indifferent” about the fence. There was some suggestion that the superintendent, a Boer man, was “stirring up the refugees against the military.”²⁴⁴

Inmates were only allowed to leave the camps to work or spy for the British. A very notable example of this was the large spy camp in a protected area in the Winburg District where 4,000 black inmates were part of a massive spy and scouting operation under the command of a Boer collaborator, Colonel O.M. Bergh. This camp of spies and scouts was, at least in part, composed of black inmates taken from the Winburg black concentration camp by British intelligence. The Department of Native Refugees was happy with the transfer of these inmates to the Military Intelligence Department because this large number of blacks would no longer be a financial cost to the Department.²⁴⁵ When the war was over blacks could only be released from their confinement and repatriated from the Department of Native Refugees camps if a white employer took custody of them. Evidence that they were incarcerated is that if inmates left the camps without permission they were listed as deserters. Whites who left the camps without permission were termed to be absconders, a lesser offence.

Education and religion in the black camps.

While education was almost an obsession, in the case of the white camps, and greatly advocated by Milner and the Ladies' Commission, Lord Kitchener forbid education in the black camps. In late December 1901 Milner's Director of Education, Edward. Beale Sargent, in a meeting with Kitchener, was told, “...he was strongly opposed to any educational action.” When the Political

²⁴³ A. W. G. Raath once showed the writer a very thick piece of wire that he said was used to confine the refugees in the Vredefort white camps.

²⁴⁴ MGP. Vol. 245. Telegram Book No. 2, MG 2756, 6212B, Maxwell to Officer in Command of the Krugersdorp District. 1 June 1901.

²⁴⁵ S. Kessler, “The black and coloured concentration camps,” in Fransjohan Pretorius, (ed.) *Scorched Earth*, (Johannesburg, 2001) p. 135; CSO, Vol. 67, 1254, Wilson Fox to Goold-Adams, 1 May 1902.

Secretary was informed of this, he wired Milner, exclaiming "This seems extraordinary."²⁴⁶ Two weeks before the peace treaty de Lotbiniere upon being sent proposal for opening schools in the Department of Native Refugees camps by the Director of Education for the Transvaal and Orange River Colony, informed Godfrey Lagden that since the camps were temporary, that it seemed hardly worthwhile for the Educational Department to consider this matter. Perhaps, more importantly, he considered that as long as the war lasts "...the introduction ...of a schoolmaster or clergyman...would only tend to unsettle the natives' *present system of control* and weaken the hands of my superintendents.[Emphasis is mine] Lagden concurred and echoed de Lotbiniere's objections. While appreciating Mr. Sargant's desire to benefit the natives in the camps he felt that since the camps were only temporary, it seemed unnecessary to do this while the war was still going on. And he also agreed "...anything that might disturb your discipline or impair a useful control had better be avoided."²⁴⁷

In late October 1902 Lawrence Richardson, of the London Friends Society, recorded in the diary of his humanitarian tour of South Africa, that the only "Native schools" in the Transvaal were mission schools."²⁴⁸ In 1905 Lagden reported that since 1901 the question of native education had occupied his attention. In 1906 he along with the Director of Education decided to just do what had been done under the Boer governments, which was to subsidize the various missionary denominations in the country.²⁴⁹ In December 1902 when Joseph Chamberlain made his tour of South Africa a committee of Basutos in Johannesburg, after offering their "hearty welcome," petitioned him to establish schools for the Basuto children "so as to enable our children to receive at least an elementary education." They correctly pointed out, that in Basutoland "liberal provision has been made for the education of Native Children; but in the

²⁴⁶ PSY, Vol. 76, Political Secretary to Milner, 26 December 1901.

²⁴⁷ SNA, Vol. 28, 1037/02, de Lotbiniere to Lagden, 17 May 1902.

²⁴⁸ Arthur M. Davey, (ed) *Lawrence Richardson: Selected Correspondence, (1902-1903)* (Cape Town 1977) p. 48.

²⁴⁹ Selborne Papers, Vol. 167, *1906 Annual Report of the Native Affairs Department*. (Bodleian Library, Oxford University)

Transvaal, no steps whatever, have so far as we are aware, been taken in that direction.” Their request to address the Secretary personally was denied “due to pressure on his time.”²⁵⁰

In both the black and white camp administrations, there was a great concern that there be no outside agitation on the part of ministers of religion, charity workers or teachers. In the white camps, accredited ministers of the Dutch Reformed Churches were denied access or removed if Military Intelligence came to the conclusion that they were in any way opposed to the British Government. Military Intelligence reported on past sermons of the Dutch ministers and any statement they considered antagonistic to the British Government became the basis for exclusion from the white camps. In the case of the black camps, ordained black ministers were not allowed. Ministers of the African Methodist Episcopal Church, referred to as the Ethiopian Church, were seen as encouraging a black resistance movement. When applicants were not approved, the Government refused to explain their reasons for doing so. The most strongly felt need by blacks, in and out of the camps, was for ‘native marriage officers.

One rejected applicant asked why his application had been rejected. “Since the past government was only against our colour...please let me know the reasons of our present Government, because she has come to take us out of slavery so that the Gospel may be spread abroad.”²⁵¹ The South African Republic had rejected all applications for “Native” marriage officers even though the law of 1897 allowed such applicants to be approved. Justifying the complaint, the rejected applicant continued: “A child who never cries, dies in the cradle....” The Native ministers of the Lutheran Bepedi Church appealed to Godfrey Lagden, as his children, to be allowed to bless the marriages of their own people after they had been married by the British officials. Lagden who said it was not in his power to do so, promised that this would be addressed at some time in

²⁵⁰ SNA, Vol. 84, 2843, Chairman of a Committee of Basutos residing in Johannesburg, Peter Alex Malla to Joseph Chamberlain, 20 December 1902.

²⁵¹ *The National Archives of South Africa*, The archives of the Transvaal Colonial Secretary, (CS), Vol. 23, 2837/01, Rev. S. Brander, Presiding Elder of the A.M.E. Church, 1 July 1901.

the future.²⁵² The names of those who died in all the black camps and the lists of those receiving compensation, show a preponderance of Christian names.

In January 1902 the minister in charge of religious services in the Orange River Colony Department of Refugees, recommended the bringing of three missionaries to work in the Department of Native Refugees camps. De Lotbiniere refused on the basis that that there were "many Native evangelists within the camps." and that in addition he could not afford to pay for additional staff.²⁵³ One such evangelist, an elderly man, has been mentioned previously. A Lutheran evangelist, Petrus Van Wyk, had been swept by a British column into Bloemfontein. At his own request he was transferred to the black concentration camp at Kaffirfontein, where he could continue to preach and teach his people.²⁵⁴ In April, Wilson Fox, appointed the three District Inspectors of the Department as marriage officers for the camps in the Orange River Colony.²⁵⁵ The original complaint of the black ministers was that they wanted to be able to bless the marriages of their own people.

In addition, the racial attitudes of the British officials were consistent with the time. Some black petitioners complained to Maxwell that they were not allowed to worship with whites in a church in Pretoria and that the new minister was following the same policy as the previous minister, Rev. Orr had done. An assistant to Maxwell told the Superintendent of the Native Affairs of Pretoria: "Please deal with these Nigger gentlemen."²⁵⁶ Perhaps if they were informed that they are likely to follow in Mr. Orr's footsteps, it would quiet them."²⁵⁷

VII. The Establishment of the Department of Native Refugees in Natal.

²⁵² SNA, Vol. 8, 718/01, Under Secretary of Native Affairs to Presiding Minister, 18 November 1901.

²⁵³ CSO, Vol. 53, 149/02, Goold-Adams to Rev. W. Robertson, 24 January 1902.

²⁵⁴ SRC, Vol. 6, 1751, Rev. J. Arndt to Fox, 6 May 1901.

²⁵⁵ CSO, Vol. 62, 935/02, de Lotbiniere to Wilson, 2 April 1902.

²⁵⁶ The word "gentlemen" was written into the text after it was typed. Originally it was "these Niggers."

²⁵⁷ MGP, Vol. 96, p. 121, 6203B/01, Fred Jacobs, et al, to Maxwell, 1 January 1901.

In late July 1901, it became apparent to Goold-Adams that the blacks on the veld, especially in the southeastern region of the Orange River Colony, would be swept by the British and the Boers towards Harrismith and Natal. In July British intelligence reported some "natives" coming into Natal for protection from the Boers. This same report indicated that British scouts were reporting that there were numbers of blacks with stock "fleeing from the Orange River Colony."²⁵⁸ The Magistrate at Ladysmith, noting that so many black refugees were coming down with cattle, suggested placing these people on a farm at least 15 to 20 miles from the Berg²⁵⁹ where they were now residing.²⁶⁰ The District Commissioner informed Colonial Secretary Wilson that 500 black refugees were being swept into Harrismith by General Rundle's column, and asked what was to be done with these refugees?²⁶¹ Goold-Adams informed the District Commissioner about the Department's agricultural scheme now being implemented in the Orange River Colony and the Transvaal. "...in settling natives coming in, bear this in mind." Thus from the very first sweeps of black refugees toward Natal this model in the process of being instituted in the former Boer republics was being recommended to Natal.²⁶²

Natal's Under Secretary of Native Affairs arrived at the possible solution of placing these refugees on some unoccupied farms belonging to a farmer in the Klip Port sub-division. The farms contained about 4,000 acres, that were in close proximity of another farm, and all of these farms were near the Tugela River.²⁶³ Telegrams were also sent to the other Divisional governments in Natal regarding this possible solution. Three towns expressed an interest and met some of the stipulated conditions. These requirements as set out by the Under Secretary were to form a location some place South of the Tugela, and near the railway line, for families

²⁵⁸ *Natal Provincial Archives*- NSNA, Vol. 292, 1793/01, Intelligence Officer, Intelligence Dept. to the D.A.A.G., Ladysmith, 28 July 1901.

²⁵⁹ The term "Berg" is a short form of the Drakensberg Mountains.

²⁶⁰ NSNA, Vol. 292, 1793/01, Residential Magistrate to D.A.A.G. Ladysmith, 30 July 1901.

²⁶¹ CSO, Vol. 29, District Commissioner, Harrismith to Wilson., 30 July 1901.

²⁶² *Ibid.*, Goold-Adams. to District Commissioner, Harrismith, 2 August 1901.

²⁶³ NSNA, Vol. 292, 1793/01, Residential Magistrate to Secretary of Native Affairs, 10 August 1901.

without stock. Because of the rinderpest epidemic cattle north of the river were not allowed below the Tugela.

The Magistrate of the town of Weenen said that the railway was only 12 miles away, and the only place he could suggest was the town lands where there were ample natural materials for hut building. The blacks could also provide labour to private builders and the town irrigation project. He was of the opinion that the natives would be content there, because corn is cheap and the wages paid are good.²⁶⁴ As early as May 1900 the town of Weenen had offered to provide 80 "natives" for the Natal Labour Corps.²⁶⁵ The use of town lands by black people had been a common practice prior to the war. The town of Estcourt was also willing to allow the refugees to be located on their town lands and offered to provide police supervision.²⁶⁶

In the meantime, the General Officer Commanding of Natal, informed the Prime minister that the question of where to place the Native refugees was becoming quite urgent.²⁶⁷ Native Affairs now favoured the placement of these refugees on some abandoned farms in the Klip River District. The Secretary of Native Affairs demanded that the costs of providing for these refugees be paid by the British Army, because, as he said, this problem "... has nothing to do with Natal natives."²⁶⁸ This concern for finding the least expensive alternative in handling this refugee crisis was a major determinant of the policies that were to be adopted. The Prime Minister proposed the following to the Secretary and asked for his remarks. "No doubt some location could be found in the Province of Zululand for those natives, having stock, and some other location South of the Tugela for families who have no cattle or stock."²⁶⁹

²⁶⁴ NSNA, Vol. 292, 1793/01, Magistrate, Weenen to Natal Secretary of Native Affairs, 24 August 1901.

²⁶⁵ *Natal Provincial Archives*, Archives of the Town of Weenen (WEN), Vol. No. 3/2/3, W965/ 1900, Supt. Native Labour Corps to Magistrate, Weenen, 18 May 1900. My thanks to Professor Johan Wasserman for this document and several others from this file.

²⁶⁶ NSNA, Vol. 292, 1793/01, Magistrate, Estcourt to Natal Secretary of Native Affairs, 27 August 1901.

²⁶⁷ NSNA, Vol. 292, 1793/01, General Officer Commanding, Natal to Prime Minister, Natal, 23 August 1901.

²⁶⁸ NSNA, Vol. 292, 1793/01, Secretary of Native Affairs to the Prime Minister of Natal, 12 August 1901.

²⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, Prime Minister to Secretary of Native Affairs, 24 August 1901.

On 9 October 1901, the Secretary of Native Affairs, on instruction from the Government ministers, appointed A. Leslie as Chief Superintendent of the newly established Natal Department of Refugees. The charge listing his duties reveals the vast difference in the approach of the Natal Government in handling the black refugee problem. "You have been appointed... for carrying into effect all such arrangements as may be made by the Government from time to time, for the disposal and supervision of Native Refugees from the Orange River and Transvaal Colonies."²⁷⁰ It was finally decided not to form any black concentration camps in Natal. Instead the Natal Government's solution was to literally farm them out to the supervision and care of Zulu headmen, where it was requested that they be given a piece of ground upon which they could grow their own food. In some cases, they were assigned to private companies as labourers. There was considerable demand from private companies for their labour, which was in very short supply.

No records of death and sickness were kept. One census of the refugees was taken in June 1902, to facilitate repatriation. The census revealed that there were 6, 648 black refugees in Natal.²⁷¹ The Natal Government provided almost no logistical support. It was stipulated that any rations issued should be paid for by the Military. Some returning Zulu refugees were provided rations in transit back to their home areas and this account was referred to the Army Paymaster for payment.²⁷² Natal did not wish to even pay for their own people fleeing from the war back to their homes.

The end of this chapter brings us to the conclusion of the general history of the black concentration camps, their genesis in the failure of the Neutrality Oath, the massive sweeps of all the civilian population in the former Boer Republics and the nature of these camps. Despite the sparse sources in the record, the general problems of logistics and the deliberate neglect of

²⁷⁰ NSNA, Vol. 294, 2709/01, Secretary of Native Affairs to A. Leslie, 9 October 1901.

²⁷¹ NSNA, Vol. 296, 1963/02, Secretary of Native Affairs-Prime Minister of Natal, 23 June 1902

²⁷² CSO, Volume 1691, 10, 110/01, District Paymaster, Natal to H.A. Hime.

the black camps have been described sufficiently to allow us to understand the problems inherent in living in these camps.

The few works that have been published which touch on the black concentration camps have dealt almost exclusively with the Department of Native Refugees camps described in this chapter. These previous descriptions have generally accepted the official line of the Government regarding the reasons these camps were established, and did not question the veracity of the arguments made to explain the need to do so. The Government of Natal, even though encouraged to follow the model of these new camps, decided not to form camps at all based on the terrible consequence that had taken place in the original black camps.

This study has confronted some of the statements previously accepted. These camps were not formed because 2,000 black labourers borrowed from the Transvaal Chamber of Mines had to be returned to the mining companies. It was not, as stated, necessary to create some fifty new concentration camps with an initial population of almost 50,000 inmates to replace 2,000 workers. Nor were these camps formed because the white camp administrations did not have time to consider the organisation of the black inmates. Rather these camps were formed for precisely the same reason that the original black camps were formed, -to carry out Kitchener's plan to remove all living beings and all living things from the veld as part of his master plan of anti-guerrilla warfare. This movement of nearly fifty thousand black inmates to new camp sites, hastily prepared, cost over seven thousand deaths. This was 45% of all the deaths of black women and children and men who died in all the black concentration camps during their entire existence. Now the study proceeds to a discussion of the fundamental core of the history of the black concentration camps- the loss of life in the black camps due to a deliberate neglect of the medical service needs of the inmates of these camps and the resulting numbers and causes of deaths.

Chapter 5

Medical Services in the Black Concentration Camps

"Experience [in times of war] has shown in hundreds of campaigns that there is a large amount of sickness. The almost universality of this is that, with every care, the conditions of war are unfavourable to health. The strenuous exertions, the broken rest, the exposure to cold and wet, the scanty ill cooked, or unwholesome food, the bad water, and the foul and over crowded camps and tents, account for the amount of disease."
*Edmund A. Parkes-1864*¹

I. Introduction.

The history of the black and white concentration camps, is largely a history of medical tragedy, and is therefore, to a great extent, a medical history. It is this aspect of the history that confirms Joseph Chamberlain's prophecy in 1896 that a war in South Africa "...would leave behind it the embers of a strife which... generations would hardly be long enough to extinguish."² The high rate of death and sickness in the white camps are the cause of this indelible memory of these laagers of confinement. The black concentration camps appear to have played little, or no role, in this memory as they were invisible to historians until recently, and especially the ruling authorities. Indeed, were it not for the almost forty-nine thousand documented deaths,³ that were to a certain extent preventable, all the concentration camps⁴ would be a mere footnote to the history of the war. For this reason, this chapter, and the one that follows, regarding the causes and numbers of deaths, constitute the core of this history.

¹ Edmund A. Parkes, *Manual of Practical Hygiene: Prepared Especially for Use in the Medical Service of the Army*. (London, 1864) pp. 593-94.

² Excerpt from a speech by the Colonial Secretary, Joseph Chamberlain, to the House of Commons in May 1896. Cited in Thomas Pakenham, *The Boer War*, (London, 1979) p. 25.

³ The numbers of deaths of the white inmates in the white concentration camps have long been accepted as 27,927 deaths and my own work has verified the deaths of black inmates in both the black and white concentration camps as 21,042. Thus the total number of deaths in the black and white concentration camps was at least 48,973 deaths. [See Appendix 6.1-"The Master Death List."]

⁴ The term "concentration camps" as it is used in the study, refers to both the black and white concentration camps. The term "concentration" refers exclusively to the placement of non-combatants in a small confined space and does not have any other meaning, nor does it infer any moral or political judgement about the placement of the inmates in these camps. When referring specifically to the black or white concentration camps that designation will be specified with the adjective "black" or "white". The term "concentration camps" when used without these prefixes refers to both the black and white concentration camps during the South African war.

The true nature of the British colonial medical policy is clearly manifested in the history of the medical service in the black concentration camps. The official response to the needs of the black people in the war generally, and in the black concentration camps specifically, was one of *deliberate neglect* on the part of the hierarchy of the British civilian and military leadership of the war; Joseph Chamberlain, Lord Milner, Lord Roberts and Lord Kitchener. [Emphasis is mine.] Peter Warwick' holds the view that the misery and suffering in the black camps was the result of "military neglect and indifference".⁵

In contrast to this attitude of neglect on the part of high level officials, some of their subordinates in the Military Government, particularly General J.G. Maxwell, Major G.F. de Lotbiniere and Major Hamilton Goold-Adams, showed a definite concern and attempted to overcome some of the deficiencies caused by their superiors. A greater culpability for the inadequate medical service beyond the deliberate neglect of indigenous peoples in the Empire was the deliberate underfunding of the Royal Army Medical Corps by the British Government. It may be thought that the medical authorities did not know how to prevent the epidemics of the prevalent diseases that were causing the highest numbers of deaths in the concentration camps. R.J.S. Simpson, a well trained doctor and the eminent historian of the Royal Army Medical Corps, stated in his medical history of the war that: "There seems to be no reason why with proper methods of filtration, or sterilisation (which seem now obtainable) that...the risk of infection... should not be rendered almost entirely negligible...."⁶ This is also Thomas Pakenham's view. After reviewing what happened in the concentration camps he concludes that, "...at least twenty thousand whites and twelve thousand coloured people had died in the concentration camps, the majority from epidemics of measles and

⁵ Peter Warwick, *Black People and the South African War* (Johannesburg, 1983) p. 146.

⁶ R.J.S. Simpson, *Medical History of the South African War*, in *Journal of the Royal Army Medical Corps*, Vol. XV, September 1910, p. 268.

typhoid, *that could have been avoided.*”⁷ {emphasis is mine}. This would, by definition, also apply to other waterborne diseases such as dysentery.

The deliberate neglect of the inmates in the black camps is the most consistent finding of the research. This is particularly evident in the area of medical services. At first during the research it appeared that the lack of doctors for the black camps was the result of a kind of pecking order of first providing doctors to the white camps. In January 1902 when the white camps finally received their allotted numbers of doctors and nurses Milner informed Chamberlain to end the recruiting of doctors. This confirms that there never was any intention to provide sufficient numbers of doctors to the black camps and, no professionally trained nurses. There was no established program of lay nurses or bedside attendants as in the white camps. Literally only a handful of bedside attendants or lay nurses were provided in just a few of the black camps.

This decision by Milner and Chamberlain was not an arbitrary judgement by two high-level British officials responding to their own convictions or the particular situations encountered in the war. Rather, this very consequential decision was a manifestation of the British colonial medical policy as practiced in regards to the indigenous peoples of the British Empire. The second hypothesis of this study is embodied in this policy. That hypothesis is as follows. That there was a *deliberate neglect* of the black inmates in the camps that was the product of the British Colonial policy, and that this was particularly true in the case of the policies that governed the provision of medical service to the black camps. The inmates of the black concentration camps were the objects of deliberate neglect and were required to fend for themselves in almost all areas of their needs. Even in the military hospitals black wounded were treated with less concern and care. One British observer described an example of this at the Rondebosch Military Hospital after describing the excellent treatment being provided to wounded British soldiers. “A pitiful object was lying in a corner of one tent, a wounded Kaffir, the driver of an ambulance wagon. His thigh having been

⁷ Thomas Pakenham, *The Boer War* (London, 1979) p. 518.

badly broken, he lay of necessity in a terribly uncomfortable position, feebly fanning the flies away, and casting pleading glances like some wounded dog that craves for sympathy.”⁸ This was the policy regarding indigenous peoples throughout the Empire. Medical assistance was minimal and was only provided when failure to do so would result in a danger to the military or white population, particularly British settlers and residents.

The colonial medical policy, or more correctly, tradition, has been very well revealed by the work of historians in the study of the medical aspects of the history of the Empire. In particular this portion of the study is indebted to the work of Leslie Doyal, J. de Villiers, Bruce Fetter, M. Lewis, R.M. MacLeod, Shula, Marks, M. Stone, Elizabeth Van Heyningen, as well as others who have very ably written about the British colonial medical policy.

The method employed was to look in a comprehensive way at the total record of the black camps and not to be selective of cases that support the hypothesis of the colonial medical policy. Indeed the research did not find a single instance where this policy was not followed. So ingrained was this paradigm in the minds of the colonial bureaucracy that when the death rates became very high the white concentration camp superintendents had to be ordered by their superiors to provide more food, including milk and other medical comforts. No such order, however, appears to have been issued to the administrators and medical officers of the black camps. This may have been done but the record does not show this to be the case.

Although the Boer women and children in the concentration camps generally received a higher level of medical service, they also suffered from neglect in the areas of food, housing as well as medical service. While medical staffing was almost non-existent in many of the black camps, especially in the beginning of their existence, the white camps were very understaffed and unable to cope with the high sickness and death rates.

⁸ Dosia Bagot, *Shadows of the War* (London, 1900) pp. 23-4.

II. Medical Arrangements for the South African War

Until the medical reforms of the military medical system of World War I, the long history of medical service in the British Army was a history of insufficient medical arrangements, inadequate transport for the sick and wounded, insufficient numbers of trained physicians and surgeons, resistance to female nursing and civil surgeons and physicians. Underlying these failures was a fiscal policy that mandated a much reduced army medical establishment between wars and a very grudging level of funding of the medical arrangements for the war at hand. Edmund Parkes saw that in theory, at least, "...an army should...be ready to take to the field at literally a moment's notice. The various parts composing it should be so organised that, almost as quickly as the telegram flies, they can be brought together at any point, prompt to commence the combined actions by which a body of men are moved, fed, clothed...maintained in health, and cured if sick..." and then he warned "...It is a narrow and dangerous view which sees in war merely the movements of the soldier without recognising the less seen agencies that assure that the soldier shall be armed, fed, clothed, healthy and vigorous."⁹

A single Army Corps of fifty thousand men sent to South Africa under General Buller had exhausted the available medical resources of the Royal Army Medical Corps in England. When the number of soldiers sent to South Africa was raised to 194,000, the *London Times* said that the Parliament had made no medical provision for a 144,000 of them.¹⁰ The paper also stated that the Royal Army Medical Corps would be found to be the most wanting in the areas of "its organization, its efficiency and its mobility."¹¹ In actuality the greatest lack was in the provision of the required medical staffing, medical supplies and equipment.

⁹ Parkes, *Manual of Practical Hygiene*, p. 588.

¹⁰ RAMC, Royal Army Medical Corps, 322-1799, *British Army Review*, No. 76, 4/84 (Wellcome Institute of Medical History, Archives, RAMC Collection)

¹¹ RAMC, 176, Box No. 4, p.783. (Wellcome Institute of Medical History, Archives, RAMC Collection.)

The culpability for inadequate medical arrangements.

The *Times* article laid the blame on the Royal Army Medical Corps, rather than on the War Department and the Parliament where the primary culpability lay. In reality this failure to provide adequate medical service during the South African War had little to do with the Royal Army Medical Corps doctors, nurses and orderlies. Rather the blame lay at much higher levels, and at the same door, as so many of the other failures of the Army in the South African War- the War Office. The War Office prepared for a small war, a short war, or no war at all. The planners of the medical arrangements believed that the war would be over in six weeks.¹² Because the Parliament underfunded the War Department, decisions regarding medical arrangements were driven not so much by the perceived need, but by budgetary restrictions. Internally, the War Department was inefficient, and according to Pakenham, not concerned with matters of war, leaving those arguments to the generals to fight out among themselves.¹³ Unfortunately for the sick and wounded the generals did not have much concern for the medical arrangements of the war because they did not see this as their primary responsibility either. Of the initial £10,000,000 granted for the war only £50,000 was allotted for the care of the sick and wounded.¹⁴

This lack of medical service capacity was not unique to the South African War. The envisioned reforms of past wars, and the lessons learned, were quickly forgotten.¹⁵ The medical arrangements and reforms continued to be deficient and minimal during the intervening period between the Crimean War and the South African conflict. As indicated economic determinism was the major driver of the failure to implement permanent reforms and sufficient medical arrangements, as in all the decisions of the fiscally conservative and archaic War Department.

¹² Charlotte Searle, *The History of the Development of Nursing in South Africa, 1652-1960* (Cape Town, 1965) p. 187.

¹³ Pakenham, *The Boer War*, p. 75.

¹⁴ RAMC, Vol. 176, Box OS 4, p. 76. (Wellcome Institute of Medical History, Archives, RAMC Collection)

¹⁵ John Shepherd, *The Crimean Doctors* (Liverpool, 1991) p. 7.

The transition from the very different level of demands of a neglected peacetime army to the medical staffing requirements during wartime was very problematic. The problem was exacerbated in the South African War because the War Office thought that this war would never take place, and if it did, it would surely be a short skirmish. Only after the breakdown of the talks at Bloemfontein in May 1899 did the War Office take seriously the possibility of war.¹⁶ The *Official History* expressed this problem in regard to the war generally. "...the necessary modification of the plan of the campaign was influenced by the unwillingness of Her Majesty's Government to believe in the necessity of the war."¹⁷ More fundamental was the failure to build into the system, the means by which the medical staff could be expanded in the event of war.¹⁸ Consequently, the rapid expansion required could only be accomplished, as in recent past wars, by employing civil surgeons, physicians and nurses.

An underlying root cause of these failures was the inherent class system in the British military establishment in which enlisted men were treated as an underclass. The attitude of the doctor-officer class as expressed by a civil-surgeon during the war, well demonstrates this view. "After all an army represents fairly well the scum of the earth at its very best; and it is because it gives the scum the chance of getting to its very best and becoming no longer scum, the army is perhaps the greatest philanthropic institution in the nation."¹⁹ The medical needs of this underclass were not of much import to the decision makers.

In defending the army medical system's failures, which were largely responsible for the very high sickness and death rates, it was argued before the *Royal Commission on the Care and Treatment of the Sick and Wounded* as follows: "...the object of war is not the care of the sick and wounded but

¹⁶ Pakenham, *The Boer War*, p. 71.

¹⁷ Fredrick Maurice *et al*, *History of the War in South Africa, 1899-1902, Compiled By Direction of His Majesty's Government* (London, 1906) p. 1.

¹⁸ *British Parliamentary Papers*, Cd. 453, *Report of the Royal Hospital Commission Appointed to Consider and Report on the Care and treatment of the Sick and Wounded*. p. 4.

¹⁹ Francis E. Fremantle, *Impressions of a Doctor in Khaki* (London, 1901) p. 26

the winning of battles.”²⁰ Under funding, poor medical arrangements and the view that this was not the responsibility of the military, was a prescription for a medical disaster both for British troops and the black and white populations swept into the concentration camps.

III Medical service in the black and white concentration camps during the period January 1901 to September 1901.

When Lord Milner sent teams of civilian administrators to the Transvaal and the Orange River Colony to take over the white concentration camps, in February and March 1901, there was a modicum of doctors, nurses, and some Royal Army Medical Corps orderlies, assigned to the white camps.²¹ When the new Medical Officer for the Kroonstad white camp arrived he noted that no provision had been made for the medical care of the black servants of the Boer women. He reported that there were three cases of typhoid among them.²² Failure to treat these black servants and their children who came down with a contagious disease would have threatened the health of both the white inmates and the staff of the white camps. Study of the diagnoses of the causes of death among the black servants and their families in the white camps shows that these black families did receive at least some medical service. The record of the causes of death suggests that the medical care received by the black inmates residing in the white camps was better than that received by the black camp inmates in that the diagnoses were more specific and greater in number. This would seem to indicate that the black inmates in the white camps had received more frequent and consistent medical attendance by a doctor. [See footnote]²³ It should be noted that ailments more

²⁰ *British Parliamentary Papers*, Cd. 453, *Report of the Royal Commission on the Care and Treatment of the Sick and wounded. 1901*, p. 98.

²¹ *British Parliamentary Papers*, Cd. 819, *Papers Relating to the Working of the Refugee Camps in the Transvaal, Orange River Colony, Cape Colony and Natal*, p. 6, George A Goodwin, General Superintendent to the Military Governor of Pretoria, General Maxwell, 22 March 1901.

²² *Free State Provincial Archives*, Archives of the Superintendent of Department of Refugees, Orange River Colony, (SRC), Vol. 2, 483, Resident Medical Officer to Supt. Kroonstad, white camp, 5 March 1901.

²³ List of diseases diagnosed of black inmates in the black camps for which we have a very limited record: Bronchitis, Diarrhoea, Dysentery, Enteric Fever, Enteritis, Heart disease, Heart Failure, Measles, Old Age, Broncho-Pneumonia, Pneumonia and Tuberculosis. List of diseases diagnosed of black inmates in the white camps: Bronchitis, Convulsions, Diarrhoea, Dysentery, Enteritis, Fever, Gastro-intestinal Catarrh, Heart Disease, Heart Failure, Influenza, Malaria, Marasmus, Measles, Pneumonia, Broncho-Pneumonia, Sarcoma of the thigh, Senectus, Senility, Tabes Mesenteria, Whooping Cough.

prominent with infants, namely convulsions and exhaustion, are only found in the white camp diagnoses of the causes of death.

The blacks swept off the Boer farms and living in the informal squatter camps along the railway in the Transvaal received almost no medical service until mid June 1901, at which time they were organised into official camps by the Department of Native Refugees. The only recorded instance in which blacks in the informal settlements received any medical care was in March 1901 when the Medical Officer of Health for the Transvaal authorized the establishment of a "small hospital and the hiring of a Kaffir woman as a nurse"²⁴ in the Heidelberg black camp.²⁵

In contrast the black concentration camps in the Orange River Colony, herein referred to as the "original black camps", were formally organised and under the direct supervision of the white camp superintendents and the Department of Refugees. By June 1901, there were approximately 15,500 black in nine black concentration camps.²⁶ In August 1901 there were approximately 22,700 black inmates.²⁷ Over time the white camp superintendents began to provide minimal, although sporadic medical service to the inmates of these camps.

The origins of medical services in the black and white concentration camps.

The presentation of medical service in the white concentration camps in this chapter is limited to those aspects, which are essential in gaining an adequate understanding of medical service in the black camps. The study is not designed to be a comparative history, although some comparisons, at times, are made. In addition, the description of some aspects of medical service in the white camps and the differences in the medical services provided for the inmates of the black camps, reveal the

²⁴ *The National Archives of South Africa, Pretoria*, The archives of the Military Governor of Pretoria, (MGP), Vol. 78, 2713A/01 District Commissioner, Heidelberg to Maxwell 15 March 1901

²⁵ The Heidelberg black camp was under the supervision of the District Commissioner at Heidelberg and had no official relationship to the Transvaal Department of Burger Camps.

²⁶ *The Free State Provincial Archives*, The archive of the Secretary to the Orange River Colony Administration, (CSO), Vol. 26, 239, Chief Superintendent of the Department of Refugees, Captain A.G. Trollope to the Secretary of the Orange River Colony Administration, H.F. Wilson, 12 June 1901.

²⁷ CSO, Vol. 55, 358/02, de Lotbiniere to Goold-Adams, 18 January 1902.

principles of the British colonial medical policy. The medical services in these original black camps in the Orange River Colony were, in most cases, provided by the doctors of the associated white camps. The six independent black camps in the Transvaal were not assisted by the white camps and were not under the supervision of the Department of Burger Camps. We know nothing about the medical services in these camps with the exception of the camps at Heidelberg and Standerton. And even about them we know very little. The reason for that, in part, is that almost no medical service was being provided to them. In the Orange River Colony the black refugees gradually received some medical assistance as they came under the control and supervision of the white camp superintendents. Medical service in the white concentration camps was, of course, less adequate than the medical care given to the sick and wounded troops of the British Army, which nevertheless was also quite inadequate. Indeed, in England this insufficiency in taking care of the sick and wounded soldiers became a roaring scandal, both in Parliament, and in the daily newspapers.

Upon assuming the office of Commander-in-Chief²⁸ and ordering the farms cleared of the black and Boer families, Lord Kitchener organised the logistics for these new concentration camps. To provide for the Boer families he was of the opinion that it would be sufficient to erect a series of small army style camps along the railway. He formulated a very spartan like plan. He ordered the Ordnance Department to supply the necessary tents and the District Commissioner to issue the standard food ration provided for the soldiers of the British Army. No provision for medical service for either the black or white "refugees" was contained in these initial orders and instructions. As described in Chapter Two, the "Hands Uppers Camps" had already been put in place by order of Lord Roberts at Bloemfontein and Kroonstad in September 1900. It seems probable that military doctors provided some medical service to these two camps as well as the new camps ordered formed by Kitchener after late December 1900. For the period September through December 1900

²⁸ Lord Kitchener, Chief of Staff under Lord Roberts succeeded to the office of the Commander-in Chief of the British forces in South Africa on 27 November 1900 when Lord Roberts returned to England to become Commander-in- Chief of the British Army.

no records have been found. It can generally be said that when the white camps were under the supervision of the military there was little or no record keeping. As a result there is no record of medical service in any of the black or white concentration camps in the Orange River Colony until January 1901. By early March the camps had been transferred to civilian supervision and routine record keeping was instituted. There is a limited record of the medical service in some of the black camps beginning in February 1901.

This lack of medical staffing to provide an accepted level of medical service in the black camps was particularly important because of the hardships endured by refugees, who in many cases arrived at the camps in very poor emotional and physical condition. Some died along the way during the process of removal, or shortly after arrival, due to a lack of adequate housing upon arrival. Some blacks and Boers arriving at the camps were suffering with significant sickness, debilitation and some were in a state of near starvation.²⁹ Some camps were ill prepared to admit the large numbers of both black and white inmates dropped by the British columns into the camps because of a shortage of housing. Many arriving refugees had to sleep on the ground or in the wagons they had had been brought to the camps in. A survivor of the Bloemfontein white camp recounted such a circumstance. "I was only a couple of months old when my mother [and] her sister were caught. My Oupa was a man already in his seventies. Then they were sent to Bloemfontein where the tents were insufficient and my Oupa had to sleep underneath the wagon. My mother said it rained a lot and Oupa was old and soon was sick. The eighth day he died under the wagon."³⁰

Many very elderly black people were also removed to the camps. As an example one death register records the death of a 90-year-old black woman, Daatje who died in the Edenburg camp along with

²⁹ A.W.G. Raath, (ed.) *The British Concentration Camps of the Anglo-Boer War, 1899-1902: Reports on the camps* (Bloemfontein, South Africa, 1999) p. 192.

³⁰ Stowell Kessler, *The Suffering Afrikaners and their Civil Religion: The Theological Roots of Apartheid*, unpublished thesis Princeton Theological Seminary, 1986. Oral history interview with Elsie Jacoba Coetzee on 21 February 1986 in the Hervormde Kerk Old Age Home, Parys, South Africa conducted by the author and D.J. Steyn.

several others in their eighties.³¹ A black inmate 100 years old died in the Middleburg black camp diagnosed with Bronchitis and senility.³² This is the oldest person found in the death lists of the black camps. Such circumstances of the hard experience of the removals and the lack of housing upon arrival in combination with little or no medical service certainly resulted in many preventable deaths.

Medical Staffing in the early white concentration camps.

As indicated, by March 1901 each of the white concentration camps, either was in the process of obtaining, or had obtained, at least a rudimentary form of hospital and a small medical staff. From the beginning there was a definite attempt to minimise spending on medical staffing. New camp superintendents were informed that if a medical officer had not yet been attached to his camp the Principal Medical Officer of the Royal Army Medical Corps would provide medical officers to the camps. "So it will be unnecessary for you to employ a civil surgeon except in extreme cases."³³ The "Concentration Camp Regulations" stipulated that no staff, including medical staff, could be hired without the approval of the heads of the Military Government.³⁴

As part of that austerity program these same regulations authorized the hiring of white camp refugees as nurses, for which they were to be paid a small daily stipend. Each camp was authorised one matron to supervise these Boer-nursing assistants.³⁵ No such scale of authorized staff was established for the black camps. Doctors for the white camps were recruited from the railways, the mines and the Royal Army Medical Corps as well as local communities, other colonies and from England and Scotland. Some doctors were obtained temporarily from the shut down gold mines. In one notable case, a mining company employee, Dr. Milne, served for a period of time as the Chief Superintendent of Department of Native Refugees in the Orange River Colony, returning to his

³¹ SRC, Vol. 99, Deaths in the Edenburg black concentration camp, May 1901, pp. 1-4.

³² *National Archives of South Africa, Pretoria*, The archives of the Director of Burger Camps, (DBC), Vol. 85, Weekly Report, 11 June 1901.

³³ *British Parliamentary Papers*, Cd., 819 p. 9. Letter of Introduction to be presented to the military commander upon arrival at the camp location. signed by Major George A. Goodwin, General Superintendent.

³⁴ *Ibid.* P. 12.

³⁵ *Ibid.*

work with the mines in December 1901.³⁶ It is evident that doctors served in the camps at their own volition and none were drafted into service in the concentration camps, no matter how dire the circumstances. There is also some indication that a few matrons and nurses were also recruited from the major private hospitals. All of these nurses, recruited locally, appear to have been English nurses, and in many cases they were uitlander refugees from Johannesburg. E. Van Heyningen expresses doubt that there were many Boer nurses in the Transvaal or the Orange Free State before the war.³⁷

Most of the white camp hospitals were fortunate enough to have one or two trained nurses. Some camps had no trained nurses at all in the early stages. In one instance an untrained Boer nurse who had performed well in the Kroonstad camp, a Miss Wessels, was appointed as the matron of the camp hospital, despite the fact that there were two trained nurses on the staff.³⁸ She had the advantage of being of the same culture and speaking the same language as her patients. While there were some Royal Army Medical Corps doctors and a few orderlies in the early period of the white camps, there is no mention of any R.A.M.C. nurses having worked in any of the concentration camps.

Inadequate medical staffing in the white camps.

In July 1901, the Medical Officer for the Kroonstad white camp and the associated black camp informed the superintendent that the medical needs in the camp was getting beyond his capacity to deal to with.

We have close on to 4,000 whites and 3,200 Natives and at least 10 per cent are more or less seriously ill. The hospital is full to the overflowing and in many beds we now have 2 children. There is an epidemic of Pneumonia, Measles (malignant type) & whooping cough... [and] also a few cases of diphtheria. The death rate has increased at an alarming rate since the beginning of the month. I would not trouble you, but in fairness to my patients & myself I must have help at an early date, as my nervous system cannot stand the strain much longer. Signed, *The medical Officer, Dr. Van der Walt.*³⁹

³⁶ CSO, Vol. 48, 4356/01, Secretary to the Orange River Colony Administration to de Lotbiniere, 24 December 1901.

³⁷ Personal communication from Professor Elizabeth Boudina van Heyningen, 14 August 1999.

³⁸ SRC, Vol. 2, 461, Supt. Kroonstad white camp to Trollope, 12 March 1901.

³⁹ SRC, Vol. 10, 3556, Medical Officer, Kroonstad white camp, to camp Supt., 20 July 1901.

This staff was also providing some medical service to the 3,200 inmates in the black camp nearby. It is not clear if black patients were treated in this hospital. The camp superintendent endorsed the seriousness of the situation and stated that sixty-two persons had already died during the month so far.⁴⁰

Throughout most of the period of the existence of the white camps, there was a constant shortage of both nurses and doctors until January 1902. Individual camps were actually in competition with each other for doctors and nurses. Requests for additional doctors by some of the camps were met with the argument that other camps with higher populations were handling their medical needs with fewer doctors.⁴¹ Of course the real issue is not the population but the death and sickness rates in the individual camps, which varied greatly due such things as impure water, inadequate sanitation and diseases being injected into some camps due to the removals from the farms in different districts and transfers from other camps. [See Chapter Six-Measles]

Comparison of medical staffing in British Army and the white and black camps.

There was a shortage of both military and civilian doctors during most of the war. This was particularly true in the first two phases of the war when battle casualties were high, along with even higher rates of enteric fever (typhoid) and other infectious diseases.⁴² To give the proper context for the death statistics that follow, the work of Daniel Low-Beer is cited. He compares the percentage of deaths in other wars. "Among British soldiers, both the losses from battle (1.25%) and from disease (2.46%) in the South African War are relatively low." D. Low-Beer notes that in all conflicts, except the Franco-Prussian War, there were greater soldier deaths from disease than from battle wounds. He cites J. Keegan as claiming that the South African War was the last war where

⁴⁰*Ibid.* p. 2

⁴¹ SRC, Vol. 5, 1163, Trollope to Supt., Aliwal North white camp, 12 April 1901.

⁴² *The National Archives of South Africa, Pretoria*, Accession 1643, Roberts' Papers, Vol. 17, p.35, General Buller to Military Secretary to Commander-in-Chief, 30 March 1900. Note. Reference is made to just one instance when General Buller was short of Medical Officers, but this was the general situation at this stage of the war. "As we are short of Medical Officers. Can you send one doctor of junior rank to Natal?"

that was the case.⁴³ During the period of highest military casualty rates, October 30, 1899 to July 1900 of the 5,277 deaths of British and Colonial troops 4,561 or 86% died of sickness and disease, mainly typhoid and other waterborne diseases. Looking at the numbers of troops invalided to England, 3,671 or 15.36% were sent back due to battlefield wounds, while 20,240 or 84.65% of the 23,911 soldiers who were invalided were returned due to sickness and disease.⁴⁴ These figures do not include the numbers being treated in the Army Hospitals in South Africa for disease or less serious wounds. Member of Parliament and sometime journalist Burdett-Coutts who had been seriously ill with typhoid in the Crimean War, and saw at first hand the treatment of the sick and wounded in South Africa, spoke with some authority. He stated the obvious. "The sick require far more attention and nursing than the wounded."⁴⁵ Typhoid and other water borne diseases require very labour intensive nursing care.

Since patients with sickness due to dysentery, typhoid and other water borne diseases require intensive medical services; the following question arises? How many doctors were required in a wartime hospital? The Portland private Hospital was encamped at Bloemfontein during the height of the epidemic,⁴⁶ The hospital staff expressed the view that four doctors were required to take care of from 104 to 150 beds.⁴⁷ The care of 208 beds would require more than six doctors while 416 beds could be adequately worked by 12 doctors. A General Hospital, consisting of 520 beds would require 16 doctors.⁴⁸ In the thirteen white concentration camps in the Orange River Colony with a population on 1 March 1901 of 11,563 whites and 8,811 blacks, for a total of 20,374 inmates, there

⁴³ Daniel Low-Beer, Matthew Smallman-Raynor and Andrew Cliff, "Mortality during the South African War: the crossing of military and refugee disease histories" p. 4 (to be published in *Social History and Medicine*, in 2003.)

⁴⁴ Charlotte Searle, *The History Of The Development Of Nursing in South Africa 1652-1960: A Socio-Historical Survey*. Table 14.2, (Cape Town, 1965) p. 187.

⁴⁵ W. Burdett-Coutts, *The Sick and Wounded in South Africa* (London, 1900) p. 28.

⁴⁶ Anthony Bowlby, et. al, *A Civilian War Hospital* (London, 1901) p. 68.

⁴⁷ 104 beds constituted one fifth of a General Hospital, which had 520 beds.

⁴⁸ *Ibid*, p. 46. The Portland Hospital was the first civilian hospital to be sent to South Africa during the war and was probably the first volunteer hospital attached to the British army at the front.

were only 18 doctors.⁴⁹ Even though the black camp inmates are included in the census of the population, the report does not include them in the medical service section of the report. This is a doctor to inmate ratio of 1,621 inmates per doctor if the black inmates are included. In the Transvaal there were 22 doctors for a population of 45, 659 white inmates.⁵⁰ This is a doctor to inmate ratio of 2,075 per doctor.

Because the medical staffs of concentration camps were treating patients almost exclusively for contagious disease and sickness, it might be thought that physicians would have been more appropriate than surgeons in that situation. Kay de Villiers, an historian of military medicine of the South African War, says that virtually all of them had qualified in the British Universities or Medical Schools and were, therefore, in possession of both M.B and Ch.B degrees which meant a first degree in medicine and surgery. According to de Villiers they were equally competent to deal with the problems in South Africa.⁵¹ Edward Squire, an eminent military surgeon with considerable field experience asserted in March 1900 that, "...the physician is as necessary in the field as the surgeon."⁵² This had been an ongoing debate in the British Army medical service for several generations of British wars. Dr Richard Brackelsby (1727-1777) advocated that regimental medical officers should be trained more thoroughly in medicine than in surgery as "he had to treat medical cases twenty times more frequently than surgical cases."⁵³ Military doctors would have had little experience with treating children who accounted for the highest number of deaths in the camps. In all likelihood surgeons were chosen in greater numbers, as they would generally have been intended to treat the wounds of soldiers.

⁴⁹ *British Parliamentary Papers*, Cd. 819, p. 36, "Report on Refugee camps, Established for the Benefit of Orange River Colony Refugees," Captain A.G. Trollope, 8 March 1901.

⁵⁰ Cd. 819, "June Report, Transvaal Department of Burger Camps, Maxwell to Kitchener. 26 July 1901, p. 113.

⁵¹ Personal communication from Professor J. de Villiers, 29 April 2001.

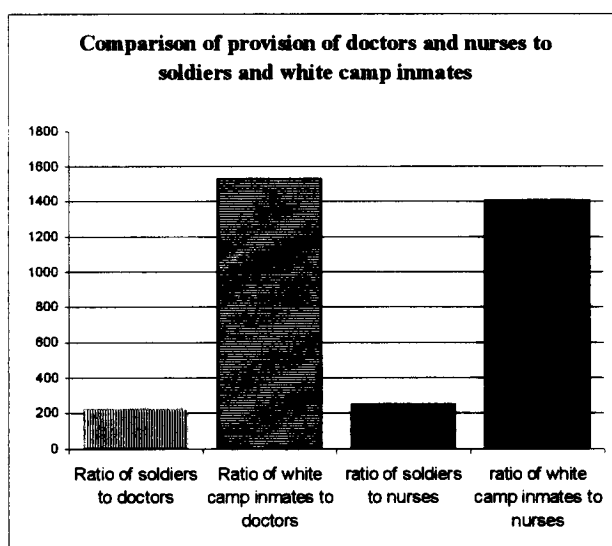
⁵² J. Edward Squire, "The Medical Side of War." In *Treatment, A Journal of Practical Medicine and Surgery*, Vol. IV, No. 1, RAMC, 76, Vol. 6, Pamphlet 15, Physician to the North London Consumption Hospital, Senior Surgeon, Lieut. Colonel Commanding, London Companies Volunteer Medical Staff Corps, Senior Medical Officer in the Red Cross Society, Suakin Campaign 1885. (Wellcome Institute of Medical History, Archives, RAMC Collection.)

⁵³ Shepherd, *Crimean Doctors*, p.2

The escalation of the numbers of soldiers being sent to South Africa, and the corresponding increases of medical staff drawn from an ever decreasing pool of available medical personnel in England, is well described in *The Hospital Commission Report*. "The total number of troops landed between September 1899 and July 1900 [was approximately] 230,000 men. At the beginning of the war there were in the country [only about] 30 medical officers and 270 hospital subordinates. During September and October 1899 about 50 medical and 1,000 hospital subordinates, and 12 nurses arrived. During the following six months about 600 medical officers (including civil surgeons) 5,000-hospital subordinates, and 275 nurses were landed. In July [1900] there were about 224,000 soldiers...and the medical staff consisted of about 1,000 medical officers (including civil surgeons) 7,000 hospital subordinates, and 900 nurses."⁵⁴

Table 5.1
Comparison of total populations served by doctors and nurses in the British Army and the white concentration camps in the South African War in July 1900.

Ratio of. Soldiers to Doctors	Ratio of white camp Inmates to Doctors	Ratio. of Soldiers to Nurses	Ratio. of white camp Inmates to Nurses
224	1527	248	1403



⁵⁴ *British Parliamentary Papers*, Cd. 453, *Royal Commission on South African Hospitals: Report of the Royal Commission Appointed to Consider and Report Upon the Care and Treatment of the Sick and Wounded During the South African Campaign*, p. 10.

The doctor inmate ratio in the original black camps in the Orange River Colony in July 1901 was approximately 1,800 inmates to each doctor. This is based on the number of doctors, full time or part time, known to have been serving these camps and the total population of these camps based, as shown above, on the doctor to soldier ratio was 224. The ratio of white camp inmates to each nurse was 1,403. The ratio of soldiers to the British Army nurses was 248. As stated there were no trained nurses and only a mere handful of untrained nursing assistants, or bedside attendants, in all of the black concentration camps.

The major staffing problem, in the case of the concentration camps, formed a year later, was that they were obviously a very low priority in the assigning of medical staff of the Royal Army Medical Corps. When the hectic period of the military engagements of the set piece⁵⁵ and invasion phases of the war were over the pressure on the Royal Army Medical Corps was significantly diminished. Another possible source was denied the camps as most of Boer and British indigenous and uitlander nurses were quickly absorbed by the military hospitals. Further, as has been stated, the Principal Medical Officer only loaned Royal Army Medical Corps doctors to the white concentration camps on a temporary basis. When the concentration camps were turned over to civilian administrators, the Principal Medical Officer would no longer allow British Army nurses or doctors to serve in the camps and withdrew those who were working in the white camps in April 1901. This was an ironic twist, in upper level reasoning, given that the concentration camps were an integral part of the military strategy. It is also significant that at this time the need for doctors by the military was far less.

By early 1902, the death rates in the black and white concentration camps decreased to a level not much higher than would be expected in normal conditions. It may appear that the camp

⁵⁵ The "set piece" phase refers to the Boer sieges of Kimberly, Ladybrand and Mafeking that occurred in the earliest stage of the war. The final siege to be lifted, was at Mafeking on 17 May 1900.

administrations, superintendents, and especially the medical officers in the individual camps, had learned by experience over time how to cope with the medical and sanitary problems and eventually developed the necessary medical expertise and technology required to prevent the high rates of sickness and death. Low-Beer points out that, although, the high mortality was caused by the camp conditions that in the case of measles the death rate declined more due to the decline of the epidemic cycle than improvements in camp conditions.⁵⁶ This would also account for decreases in death due to respiratory disease and other diseases induced by measles complications.

The facts, however, argue to the contrary. British military medicine was the best in the world at that time. During the decades prior to the war beginning in the 1850's British military medicine experienced a revolutionary change. The new knowledge gained from the work of Robert Koch and Louis Pasteur and other microbiologists' resulted in a growing body of knowledge that led to a significant decrease in deaths due to waterborne and other contagious diseases. For a more detailed discussion of the British military medical establishment's knowledge of the prevalent diseases prior to, and during the war, see [Chapter 6- Causes and Numbers of Deaths.]

All the procedures and equipment recommended by Emily Hobhouse and the Ladies Commission to reduce the high rates of sickness and death in the white concentration camps were well known before the war and were routine practice in the British Army hospitals before any of the concentration camps began their operation in late September 1901. Both Emily Hobhouse and the Ladies' Committee of the Concentration Camp Commission made recommendations regarding sanitation and prevention of disease. Despite the fact that the Ladies Committee was sent, in part, to counter Emily's criticisms they both saw immediately that the white concentration camp hospitals were ill equipped, and were not able to deal with epidemic levels of infectious and contagious diseases, especially measles and typhoid and other waterborne diseases. That such was the case is

⁵⁶ Daniel Low-Beer, Matthew Smallman-Raynor and Andrew Cliff, "Mortality during the South African War: the crossing of military and refugee disease histories." To be published in *Social History and Medicine*, 2003, p. 13.

illustrated by the fact that Emily Hobhouse, who was not a medically trained person, recommended basically all the same measures and use of medical equipment, as did the Ladies Committee, which was composed of seven doctors. It is very significant that as a layperson she knew what needed to be done, and how it could be done.⁵⁷ It is an irrefutable fact that the British Army medical system had the knowledge, medical equipment and technology to have significantly reduced the death rate in both the black and white camps. It is also clear that since the black camps, as well as the white camps, were deliberately located along the railway they could have been provided the supplies and equipment necessary to provide adequate medical service to both the black and white camps in a much better fashion than they were.

The capability of the Portland Hospital, which was the first civilian hospital to arrive in South Africa, is *Prima facie* evidence that this was the case. The hospital did precisely what was needed and recommended by the all the medical investigators of the white camps. When the hospital and its staff arrived in Bloemfontein in mid-April 1900, the hospital brought all the medical comforts, medicines and surgical equipment, as well as boilers and sterilisers for laundering disease contaminated clothes and stool destructors for the sanitary disposal of enteric waste. The Portland Hospital doctors and nurses understood the diseases, at hand, and the necessary procedures to treat them. This hospital had everything needed to save a significant number of lives in the concentration camps six to nine months before the camps were established.

Even outstanding historians of the war have accepted the argument that the high death rates in the camps were due to the incompetence of the medical and administrative staffs of the concentration camps. This chapter shows, however, that, for the most part, this was not true. The Committee of Ladies did recommend the removal of a few white camp superintendents for "... age, feeble health,

⁵⁷ Stowell Kessler, "The Suffering of Emily Hobhouse." Yearbook of the Africana Society of Pretoria, 1994, pp. 66-75.

or a lack of natural governing and organising capacity...⁵⁸ The Committee also recommended the removal of a small number of medical staff. Even so, a few of these criticisms appear to have been unfounded. The supply of food and other necessary supplies had already improved considerably by January 1902 due to a relaxing of Kitchener's transport restrictions, which appear to have been a major reason for the significant decreases in death rate. Now it was possible to import much more food and to be allowed sufficient railway space to transport these goods.⁵⁹

Medical service in the original. black concentration camps.

In the early stages of the research it seemed plausible to suggest that there was a kind of pecking order as far as the delivery of medical service to the army units, the white camps and finally the black camps. I surmised that these decreasing levels of medical service could be explained as merely the problem of prioritizing the amount of medical service provided to each of the different entities. This solution seemed to be a sound explanation of the decreasing levels of medical service in these three entities. After all, because of the inadequate medical arrangements, there was a medical services crisis in even providing the medical staff and in delivering needed medical supplies to the battlefield where the need was the greatest. Secondly, the white concentration camps housed the families of the enemy and received less logistical support and medical staffing. It seemed reasonable that in a kind of "trickle down" policy that the black concentration camps just got the little that was left over. The racial views of the time would have placed a very low priority on providing medical care to the black inmates in these camps. As a result this lowest class, in the minds of the colonial officials and the military, would receive very little medical service staffing or supplies. Despite the argument that follows there may still be some kernel of historical reality and relationship to this initial hypothesis.

⁵⁸ *British Parliamentary Papers*, Cd. 893, *Report of the Committee of Ladies on the Concentration Camps in South Africa*, p. 7.

⁵⁹ CSO, Vol. 55, 429, Director of Civil Supplies to Goold-Adams, 12 February 1902.

The Stone-Macleod-Doyal hypothesis.

What follows is the foundational argument that establishes the validity of second hypothesis of the two hypotheses that this study is predicated upon. The first hypothesis argues that the black and white concentration camps were established for solely military reasons. [See Chapter 2]. *The second hypothesis argues that there was a deliberate neglect of the black inmates in the camps that was the product of the British Colonial policy, and that this was particularly true in the case of the policies that governed the provision of medical service to the black camps, and to a somewhat lesser degree, the white camps.* The colonial medical policy is really the result of the more general colonial policy, which governed the treatment of indigenous peoples in the British Empire. Other factors such as logistical and financial pressures at home were involved. Certainly, the British authorities would have had difficulty, at times, in providing the black and white concentration camps with all they needed. The real question that must be addressed, however, is whether everything that could have been done was done, and if not, why not?

In Chapter 4 it was shown that logistically much more could have been done to provide both the black and white camps with the food, housing, sanitation supplies and adequate medical service, including medicine and medical comforts, essential to health and survival. This refusal to provide adequate railway accommodation was a significant cause of the high death rates in both the black and white concentration camps. As described in the previous chapter, Lord Kitchener refused to authorise the needed railway truck space, claiming incorrectly, if not falsely, none was available. This is also the case in the deliberate decision by Milner not to provide adequate medical staffing to the inmates of the black camps.⁶⁰ So now the question that arises both in the case of the white camps and especially the black camps is why did the British authorities refuse to do what could have been done in the areas of the provision of the material needs and medical service, both of which were crucial to the survival of these black and white families removed to the concentration

⁶⁰ *The National Archives of South Africa, Pretoria*, The archives of the High Commissioner of South Africa, (HC), Vol. 86, Maxwell to Milner, 27 January 1902.

camps. The original hypothesis of a pecking order system is only upheld if the British Army did as much as was possible under the restrictions of a logistical stricture, caused by a "single track of railway." To the contrary, the study has demonstrated explicitly with documentary evidence that this was not the case.

Martin Stone cites the paradigm of Lesley Doyle, which also embodies in the work of R. Macleod as well as others "

Resources were rationed strictly along racial lines. The first concern of the colonial government was to secure the health of the military garrison and the white settler community. The well being of the indigenous population was considered *only when it was being ravaged by epidemics such as [Bubonic] plague and tuberculosis. And [even] then, the colonial government was not so much concerned about these people's well being as it was worried that the epidemic might spread to the white community, or severely disrupt the labour market.*⁶¹ [Emphasis is mine.]⁶²

The focus of this study causes us to ask the following question. Was the failure to do all that was necessary for the inmates of the white camps also, in part due, to the feeling of the British officials that the Boers were a primitive people, and thus were not a "white Settler community" in the sense that British descent people were. Generally, British officials saw the Boers, as previously stated, as "sliding backwards into barbarism" and saw little difference between them and what they considered to be the primitive black population. Indeed, the famous English writer Rudyard Kipling who had spent some time during the war an associate-editor of the official Army newspaper, *The Friend*, in Bloemfontein, suggested they were related by blood. After the 1914 rebellion Kipling explained his view of the Boer nature. In a letter to Lord Selborne he made this very stark statement. "I suppose it is their being laced with black blood, which has made them so unstable. All

⁶¹ M.S. Stone, "The Victorian Army; Health, Hospitals and Social Conditions as Encountered by British Troops during the South African War, 1899-1902", Unpublished Ph.D dissertation, University of London, 1992. P. 15.

⁶² *Ibid.* The following sources are cited. Doyal, *Political Economy*, pp. 241-2; Roy Macleod, 'Introduction', in Macleod and Lewis (eds.) *Medicine and Empire*, pp. 8-9; K.D. Patterson and G.W. Hartwig, "The Disease Factor: An Introductory Overview" in Patterson and Hartwig, (eds.) *The Disease Factor*, p. 17.

the tales of the prophet⁶³ and his visions ... and their inability to understand themselves, strikes one as very Negroid.”⁶⁴

The most scathing of low opinions of the Boers, however, came from Lord Kitchener himself.

These Boers are uncivilized Afrikaner savages with only a thin white veneer. The people that have lived their lives with them have only seen the veneer, hence they have no idea that bringing up in this wild country produced savages.

Kitchener continues with what appears to have been his observation, while visiting one of the white camps, which he did on a few rare occasions. This excerpt which follows, from one of his letters to the Secretary of State for War, is reproduced in full because it was the view of the person ultimately responsible for the welfare of the Boer women and children, which he ordered swept into the concentration camps.

The Boer woman in the refugee camp slaps her protruding belly at you and shouts, ‘when all our men are gone these little Khakis will fight you.’ This is a type of savage pioneer spawned by generations of wild life and back in their farms and their life in the veld they will be just as uncivilized as ever *and a constant danger*. [Emphasis is mine] Change their country and they may become civilized people fit to live with. The leaders and towns people are sufficiently educated and civilized. I refer only to the bulk of the population who live in distant farms and trek into the bushveld with their cattle every winter. This explains the anomalies of the conduct of the war by the Boers. The leaders *enjoin* civilized treatment but occasionally the uncivilized Boer is met and shows all his native savagery.⁶⁵ [Emphasis is Kitchener’s]

Representative of this view were the sentiments of Sir Garnet General Wolseley who was the Commander-in-Chief of the British Army when the war began, a view probably shared by many British officers of the time. In his mind the Boers were “...the only white race that had been steadily going backwards to barbarism... [and is] now in many respects below the black man.”⁶⁶ They were white, but so were the Irish who were brutally colonized in the 16th Century by the British,⁶⁷ as were

⁶³ Siener Van Rensburg made many prophecies regarding the events of the war and the events to come in the future. The Boer General, de la Rey relied on “the Prophet” very heavily for prophetic and military advice.

⁶⁴ Selborne Papers, Vol. 113, Rudyard Kipling to Selborne, 10 June 1915.

⁶⁵ FK, Vol. 1622, Lord Kitchener to Under Secretary of War, 21 June 1901, pp. 255-56.

⁶⁶ Thomas Pakenham, *The Scramble for Africa; 1876-1912* (New York, 1991) p. 89.

⁶⁷ George M. Fredrickson, *White Supremacy: A Comparative Study in American and South African History* (New York, 1981) p.15.

the poor of London. The skin colour of the Boers obtained for them better treatment in the concentration camps than the blacks, but not good or sufficient treatment.

At least as early as 1894, Joseph Chamberlain, the Colonial Secretary, saw the granting of medical services to indigenous subjects as offering the prospect of enhancing an efficient and productive labour force.⁶⁸ Simply stated, medical care was given to Africans and other indigenous people in the colonies when such effort was in the self-interest of the military, the capitalists and white settler groups. The concern for the safety of the military was that they also protected these same interests. As is commonly stated, the role of both the police and the military in capitalist societies has as its first priority to protect the propertied classes, and not primarily the lives of the population in general. Thus the British colonial medical policy was concerned not for the population in general, but for two groups within the overall community, and with a motive of what can only be described as self-interest.

Does the record of the colonial medical policy, carried out by the British Army and civilian authorities during the South African War, support the Stone hypothesis? Is it an adequately substantiated hypothesis that clearly demonstrates the lack of medical service in the black concentration camps was due to a policy driven by *deliberate neglect* rather than the inability to carry out an effective program of medical service? If, as Stone states, it was the accepted policy of the British Government to deliberately refuse to assist indigenous people in times of illness, except when failure to do so would cause serious problems for the colonial establishment, then the historical record should consistently show this to be the case. Such a survey must not be selective but instead must consider all cases described in the archives of the concentration camps and the war.

⁶⁸ See M. Worboys, 'The emergence of tropical medicine: a study in the establishment of a new scientific speciality', in G. Lemaire et al (eds.), *Perspectives of Scientific Disciplines* (The Hague, 1997), pp. 76-98.; E.J. Hart, 'An address to the medical profession in India, Its position and its work', *The British Medical Journal* (1894) pp. 1469-74. Cited in Mark Harrison, *Public Health in British India* (Cambridge, 1994) p. 3.

To be sure that the war was not an aberration in the application of the colonial medical policy it is helpful to look at the treatment of indigenous people in the British controlled domain prior to the war in South Africa. A study of the Eastern Cape Colony "Native Locations" shows no medical staffing in these locations or significant medical service before or during the war until the "Bubonic Plague Scare." Even then, the medical service was rendered solely in special plague hospitals, which were established primarily to protect the white population from the plague. The one instance where nursing services are mentioned in the in the Cape Colony black locations was in a bubonic plague hospital for blacks. When the plague scare was over the hospital requested that the white nurse be allowed to continue her work in the hospital, which had now reverted to being a general location hospital. The Cape Colony Medical Officer of Health denied the retention of the nurse, saying that that the expense for this nurse had been covered by the [bubonic] plague vote [budget] funds. There was some non-resident doctor care given to the locations and minimal medical supplies.⁶⁹ In contrast Van Heyningen states that there were doctors at least visiting the location hospitals in Cape Town.⁷⁰ This would seem to show that the provision of medical staffing to black communities throughout the Cape was not uniform.

The situation in Cape Town may have been enhanced by the fear of disease spread from the black locations in Cape Town, which if unattended, could become a threat to the white population in the city. A classic example of such fears and the reaction to such anxiety follows. Maynard Swanson in a very significant article, "The Sanitation Syndrome," describes the response of the Cape Town health authorities to the bubonic plague scare in 1901. The perceived insanitary condition of the blacks and coloureds caused a strong belief that the plague was, at least, in part, being spread by the slums and the "native" locations in the city. Cape Town's Medical Officer of Health "...had warned for years of the danger of epidemic disease, such as Typhus arising from the 'scattered nests of filth'

⁶⁹ *The Cape Provincial Archives, Cape Town*, Archives of the Secretary of Native Affairs Department, 580-B2038 235/02, The Medical Officer of Health for the Cape Colony to the Secretary of Native affairs for the Cape Colony, 14 August 1902.

⁷⁰ Elizabeth Van Heyningen in a personal communication, 28 July 2001.

where 'Kafirs' lived." The newly arrived presence of bubonic plague intensified these fears. As a result of these growing anxieties and fears the Plague Administration rush[ed] a native location into being under the Public Health Act at the *Uitvlucht Sewage Farm*, several miles from town, on the Cape Flats. In March 1901, six to seven thousand black people were removed to this location. Their living conditions were somewhat better than the conditions in the black concentration camps. They were provided with six hundred lean-tos, five hastily constructed wood and iron barracks, a twenty-bed hospital, and various outbuildings.⁷¹ Although a twenty bed hospital for more than six-thousand inmates, especially in a time of a possible bubonic plague epidemic, seems hardly adequate.

Neil Anderson and Shula Marks describe a very similar set of attitudes and actions on the part of health officials in the Typhus epidemics and the related attempts at "social control" in South Africa in 1917-1950.⁷² This article gives several examples of a sanitation system based on the separation of the black communities from the white communities. This separation I suggest has a two-fold purpose of protecting the white communities from the threat of disease and the elimination of the need to provide medical and sanitation in the black towns and locations. Swanson cites the work of J.S. La Fontaine, regarding pre-independence Leopoldville, which was divided into "two distinct parts: European and Congolese, [and were] separated by a *cordon sanataire* of uninhabited ground to prevent the spread of African disease into white residential areas."⁷³ In the case of Typhus [in South Africa] the government in a similar fashion chose to isolate the carriers in the "Native Reserves."⁷⁴ In this way they were segregated from the white population. The concept that sanitary and health situations were used as a rationale for political apartheid, needs to be tempered with acknowledgement that quarantine of persons with infectious diseases is a traditional process by medical authorities.

⁷¹ Maynard W. Swanson, "The Sanitation Syndrome: Bubonic Plague and Urban Policy in the Cape Colony, 1900-1909", *Journal of African History*, XVIII, 3 (1977) pp. 393-94.

⁷² S. Marks and N. Anderson, "Typhus and social control: South Africa, 1917-50," in R.M. MacLeod and M. Lewis, (eds.), *Medicine and Empire*, (London, 1988) pp. 257-283.

⁷³ S.A. La Fontaine, *City Politics. A Study of Leopoldville* (Cambridge, 1970) p. 19, cited in Swanson, "The Sanitation Syndrome," p.388.

⁷⁴ Marks and Anderson, "Typhus and Social Control:" pp. 277-8.

An example of the colonial medical policy paradigm is the case of the Waai Hoek Location in Bloemfontein. In response to a complaint by the Bloemfontein City Council the Chief of Police for the City of Bloemfontein and Dr. Friedman, the Bloemfontein black concentration camp doctor, made a preliminary inspection to determine the degree of overcrowding in the Waai Hoek Location. Of the six houses inspected, only one was satisfactory. Based on the doctor's ventilation standard that the "ordinary native" needs 250 cubic feet of air, it was determined that they would be compelled to remove one fifth of the population.⁷⁵ Dr. Friedman seems to have been primarily concerned about the health of "refugees" as well as those in the employ of the "Imperial forces." The Town Council, however, felt that this situation was a threat to the white community, especially if bubonic plague should break out. The Orange River Colony officials did not think that immediate steps were necessary. The Town Council did not agree and wanted something done right away. The Council felt that the excess population in Waai Hoek should be removed to the Bloemfontein black concentration camp. The Board of Public Health also felt drastic steps were needed, but the Orange River Colony Colonial Secretary, H.F. Wilson, said such radical measures were not "immediately essential."⁷⁶ In essence the request that the refugees be moved was made because of the fear on the part of the council that this overcrowding might endanger the health of the white community. It was a fear of what might happen in the future, should the plague make its appearance that caused their forced removal. There were no official expressions of concern for the well being of these black refugees. Meanwhile, outside of town there was a very unhealthy situation in the black concentration Camp.

During that same month of March 1901, the weekly death registers show a serious disease presence including typhoid fever, diarrhoea, and pneumonia causing an average of 6 deaths a week, mainly

⁷⁵ CSO, Vol. 7, 470/01, Chief of Police of Bloemfontein to the Secretary of the Bloemfontein Board of Health, 21 March 1900.

⁷⁶ CSO, Vol. 7, 470/01, Wilson to Goold-Adams, 26 March 1901.

among infants and children.⁷⁷ On 9 March Dr. Friedman reported “diarrhea has been very bad amongst the children during the last three weeks, nearly every child has been, more or less, affected by it.”⁷⁸ During this same month, the small but overcrowded black concentration camp at Kaffirfontein, about thirty miles away, was moved to the Bloemfontein camp. Dr. Friedman suggested that a separate camp of tents be established outside the town limits, which he claimed had worked well in the case of the black concentration camp. In view of his reports on the health of his camp, it is difficult to understand this view.

Following this series of events, the black refugees in Waai Hoek were inoculated with plague serum, some time before 7 April 1901.⁷⁹ In part, this was done to eliminate the need of moving the excess population to the black camp. There is no indication that the inmates of the black camp were administered plague serum, or any inoculation for any diseases.

In contrast, small pox vaccinations were carried out in all the Orange River Colony white concentration camps under the direct supervision of the Medical Officer of Health of the Orange River Colony, Dr. Pratt Yule. He provided the serum and required a report on the result of each case.⁸⁰ This vaccination program was not carried out in the black camps despite the fact that many of these inmates were entering the white camps every day to work in very close proximity to the white inmates, including carrying out duties in the camp hospital. Despite the fact that there was a large black camp at Aliwal North no vaccination was requested for the black camp when vaccination was requested for the white camp due to the fear that the plague or might break out there.⁸¹ When a doctor was requested for the Aliwal North black camp the Superintendent of the white camp cited the “...the increasing epidemic of PLAGUE in the Cape, the large population in

⁷⁷ SRC, Vol. 1, 200; Vol. 2, 406; Vol. 3, 625; Vol. 3, 770; Reports of Dr. Friedman to Trollope.

⁷⁸ SRC, Vol. 1, 200, Dr. Friedman, Medical Officer, Bloemfontein black camp to Trollope, 16 March 1901.

⁷⁹ CSO, Vol. 7, 470, Wilson to Chief of Police, 7 April 1901.

⁸⁰ *Free State Provincial Archives, Bloemfontein*, Archives of the Orange River Colony, Public Health Department, (PHD), Letter Book I, Medical Officer of Health, Dr. Pratt Yule, Letters to white camp superintendents regarding small pox vaccination results, dated from 16 May 1901 to 25 June 1901.

⁸¹ SRC, Vol. 5, 1163, Report of Public Health, March 1901, Luther Watson, Medical Officer of Health for the municipality and the refugee camps, Aliwal North.

the native camp...and the increasing sickness in the camp since the last rains,”⁸² this request was approved. A previous request had also been made the day before and Trollope had noted on the face of telegram, “TAKE NO NOTE OF THIS.”⁸³ That telegram made no argument about the plague nor were the other reasons given, as in the second telegram.

When a doctor in the Brandfort white camp vaccinated some inmates in the black camp and then applied for the allowances offered to doctors for this activity in the white camps, Yule informed him that these allowances only applied to the vaccination of white refugees.⁸⁴ Evidently the officials who authorized this vaccination program, were so absorbed with the colonial medical policy that excluded medical service to blacks that they did not see the threat to the military and white populations due to the highly contagious nature of small pox and the close contact between black and white camp inmates. There was no expression of concern for the health and welfare of the black inmates at all. They did not see the inmates in the black camp as a health hazard to the white camp or the town of Brandfort. His official objection was a bureaucratic response, stating that the funds did not allow payment for black inmates. It seems clear from this situation that he also had no concern for the health of the black inmates themselves. If Dr. Yule was concerned, there is no indication in his correspondence files that he attempted to facilitate vaccination for the inmates of the black camps by obtaining the required funding.

Yet, as shown above, 50,000 serum doses were ordered for Bloemfontein, in case small pox should infect Waai Hoek. Their assumption that small pox would strike Waai Hoek first, rather than the white residents of Bloemfontein was part of the thinking of the time. Yule's office was located in Bloemfontein. Dr. Yule would relent only in regards to the danger of bubonic plague. Even the mention of plague protection was enough to overcome the resistance to inoculating even the blacks in the camps, even though, as shown, Dr. Yule denied the vaccination for small pox.

⁸² SRC, Vol. 4, 962, Supt. Aliwal North white camp to Trollope, 23 March 1901.

⁸³ SRC, Vol. 3, 764, Supt., Aliwal North white camp to Trollope, 22 March 1901.

⁸⁴ (PHD), Letter book, 1, p. 60, Dr. Yule to Dr. Trumps, Brandfort white camp. 3 March 1901.

At the end of August 1901 de Lotbiniere called on Dr. Yule and mentioned his desire to vaccinate all his refugees against the plague, but was afraid of the cost.⁸⁵ This was the month when all the blacks in the original black camps, who Yule had refused to vaccinate, were being moved to deLotbiniere's farm camps in the Department of Native Refugees. Yule's response is in stark contrast to his refusal to authorise small pox vaccinations for the black concentration camp inmates. "I told him that I would let him have as much lymph as he wanted. He then said, 'But vaccination in the O.R.C?' I took it upon myself to assure him that I did not care where they were, as long as they were vaccinated."⁸⁶ So complete was this turn around that he added this very pregnant comment. "It occurred to me that with all these refugees in camps it is a fine time to vaccinate."⁸⁷ This begs an obvious question. Why wasn't this also obvious to Dr. Yule, whose responsibility it was, to maintain the health of the Orange River Colony, when it came to the extremely contagious disease of small pox.? There was the special vote (budget) for plague prevention.

Within the concentration camp establishment, itself, there was an awareness on the part of some officials, that the black camps, and locations themselves, were a threat to the health of the inmates and staff of the white camps nearby. An example of this was the Balmoral camp. In discussing the need to move the white camp Maxwell argued that if a reason was wanted, other than the high sickness and death rates, "the proximity of the large Native location is, in itself, a sufficient reason for moving a camp of women and young children."⁸⁸

Generally in the colonial administrations, as well as in the former Boer Republics, there was no sense of responsibility for blacks when they became ill, except in some cases of those working on the Boer farms. The Department of Native Affairs noted with some considerable interest that in the South African Republic, in the case of a small pox epidemic, a special tax was imposed. Under the

⁸⁵ CSO, Vol. 31, 3045. Dr. Pratt Yule to Wilson, 26 August 1901.

⁸⁶ *Ibid.*

⁸⁷ *Ibid.*

⁸⁸ MGP, Vol. 149, 1872A, Maxwell to the General Officer Commanding, Lines of Communication, February 1902.

South African Republic Law No. 12 enacted in 1895, "Whenever there was an outbreak of small pox in any locality the black male adult population had to pay a tax of 10 shillings per head towards the expense of stamping out the disease."⁸⁹ This is another example of the idea that the blacks should fend for themselves and that Government should incur as little expense as possible, irrespective of their contribution to the building of the prosperity of the state.

A request was made to Goold-Adams in March 1901 "...to appoint a civil practitioner to provide medical treatment to the refugee Kaffirs at various small posts along the line of the railway who [were] now being attended by the military Medical Officers at their posts."⁹⁰ The reason given for doing this was clearly stated. "This duty, I think, is important in view of the spread of plagues."⁹¹ There is no specific concern expressed here for the welfare or health of these refugees. Rather the concern is the possibility that they will become a generator of plague that might spread to the surrounding white communities and military encampments. It should be noticed here that this was recognition that the use of military doctors on a part time basis as Medical Officers of Health to attend to the needs of black camps was inadequate. This statement also shows that the Military command was aware of this deficiency.

Dr. Yule also held the view that the main motivation for extending medical care, or any other assistance to black and coloured people, was to protect the nearby white population. In his failure to register black deaths, he did admit to such registration being appropriate. In a 1906 report, he conceded that although he had not yet carried out this activity with the "Native races" it was very important to do so. "The registration of births and deaths is no whit less important among natives than among whites, and, in view of the direct bearing that disease amongst natives may, and does exercise, on the well being of their white neighbors, this deficiency should be rectified in the early

⁸⁹ SNA, Vol. 39, 1300, p. 49, "Fee Smallpox" [No date indicated.]

⁹⁰ CSO, Vol. 6, 396/01, General Officer Commanding of Kroonstad to Goold-Adams, 12 March 1901.

⁹¹ *Ibid.*

future.”⁹² Again he gave the lack of funding for this activity as the reason for not doing so. Generally Dr. Yule demonstrated that he did not support providing any more medical care for blacks than was absolutely necessary. When it was suggested by the Mayor of Bloemfontein that a Native Hospital be built, he suggested that the small pox hospital could be used for that purpose and that the town, and not, the military government, pay the expenses.⁹³

One of the tenets of the British colonial medical policy was that medical service was extended to indigenous people, when the failure to do so, might “severely disrupt the labour market.” In November 1900, the British authorities mandated a massive inoculation of “Natives” which called for the smallpox vaccination of over 100,000 blacks because all “natives” returning to the mines should be vaccinated for small pox.⁹⁴ This followed by only a few weeks the agreement to establish the Witwatersrand Native Labour Association between Lord Milner and the Transvaal Chamber of Mines to act as a recruiting monopoly for the Rand gold mines. This would require 50,000 to 100,000 lymph injections. Obviously this was not primarily a concern for the health of the ‘natives, but to assure a healthy labour force to work the mines when they were allowed to resume full-scale operations. In a proclamation dated 12 August 1901, Kitchener ordered that all natives be vaccinated who had previously been employed by the various mining companies. All “natives” would be required to carry passes to assure that all black mineworkers had been vaccinated.⁹⁵

The passing of this war into the pages of history was not the end of the policy of deliberate neglect and the colonial policy of not providing medical service to Africans, except when absolutely

⁹² ORC, Vol. 253, Public Health Department, Orange River Colony Administration, Registration of Births and Deaths, Report of the Registrar of Births and Deaths for the Orange River Colony, June 1906, (Bloemfontein, 1906), p. 3.

⁹³ *The Free State Provincial Archives, Bloemfontein*, Archives of the Municipality of Bloemfontein, (MBL), 1/1/1/10, “Minutes of Ordinary Meetings,” 17 January, 1902.

⁹⁴ *National Archives of South Africa, Pretoria*, Archives of the Political Secretary to the Commander-in-Chief, (PSY), Vol. 15, DC-382, Acting Medical Officer of Health, Johannesburg to Acting Mayor of Johannesburg, 14 November 1900.

⁹⁵ All natives were required to carry passes as required by Public Law No. 23 of 1899 as ordered by the Volksraad of the South African Republic.

necessary. Howard Phillips comments about the medical service concerns of the government after the Spanish Flu epidemic of 1918.

In the wake of the ravages of the epidemic, calls proliferated for vast improvements in medical facilities, sanitary conditions and health education among Blacks. These were not made purely on *humanitarian* grounds. [Emphasis is mine] For instance, the Native Affairs Department soberly pointed out that the demand for native labour is likely to grow more insistent with the return of peace and a period of industrial and agricultural expansion. From the purely commercial aspect, therefore apart from any higher motive, this question of [better medical services] is of first importance.⁹⁶

Medical Staffing in the original black concentration camps.

As indicated, the black concentration camps in the Orange River Colony were associated with a particular white camp and eventually supervised by the superintendent of that camp or some official appointed by him. With the exception of the Bloemfontein, Edenburg and the Thaba'nchu camps, the meager medical service in the black camps was provided by the medical staff of the nearby white camp, or in a few instances by military doctors from nearby military posts. As stated this provision of medical service by the medical staffs in the associated white camps evolved over time, more by individual circumstance than by a uniform policy implemented by the officials of the Department of Refugees. Only one recorded instance has been found where the question of medical treatment for the black inmates was raised by higher authority. The Superintendent of the Brandfort white camp was asked what arrangement he had made for the doctoring of natives in the refugee camp.⁹⁷ This question appears to have been generated by the refusal of a doctor in the Brandfort white camp to adhere to the conditions of his contract. The superintendent of the white camp stipulated that "The terms of the M.O.'s appointment specify nothing beyond his being appointed to attend the white Refugees and also the natives, until such time as they are sent away."⁹⁸ This occurred at the time of the transition from military to civilian administration in February 1901. The

⁹⁶ Howard. Phillips, *Black October: The Impact of the Spanish Influenza Epidemic of 1918 on South Africa*, The Archives Year Book for South African History, Fifty-third year, Volume I, (Cape Town, 1990), p. 89.

⁹⁷ SRC, Vol. 2, 402, Trollope to Supt., Brandfort white camp, 15 February 1901.

⁹⁸ SRC, Vol. 3, 543, Supt., Brandfort white camp to Trollope, 9 March 1901.

new civilian superintendent did not like this provision in the contract. He wanted the full service of this doctor to be given to the white inmates.

When there were severe epidemics of measles and other diseases in the associated white camps, the already inadequate medical service to black camp inmates, was probably reduced or even eliminated. Medical service to the black camps appears to have been carried out on a time available basis, and in some cases, the doctor rendering this service requested extra duty pay for this service.⁹⁹ Very often even when the doctor was contracted to provide medical service to the black camps it was not carried out. Almost all white camp doctors refused to visit the black camps and required even very sick inmates to walk to the white camp for medical attendance. The usual distance to be transversed was a mile up to two miles. In contrast, in the case of the white camps, the medical officers and matrons or the Boer-nursing assistants were instructed to carry out daily visits to each of the tents in the camp.

It may be argued that this was the standard practice in treating black patients by white doctors under the peacetime British colonial regimes. The practice of missionary doctors, who were the major source of medical practitioners to treat Africans, shows that this was not always the case. Missionaries often went to the patient in their place of habitation. In Malawi in the general period of the South African War, Dr. John Kerr, a Scottish medical missionary, made many visits to outlying villages to attend needy cases.¹⁰⁰

An example of this approach of non-visitation can be seen in the work of Dr. Daniel at Thaba 'nchu who did not practice visitation to black patients. Thaba' nchu, in addition to being the location of a black concentration camp, had been set aside as a Native of reserve, primarily inhabited by the Moroka people. The Superintendent of the black camp explained to Trollope how this more

⁹⁹ SRC, Vol. 3, 588, Supt. Vereeniging white camp to Trollope, ~1 March 1901.

¹⁰⁰ Michael and Elspeth King, *The Story of Medicine and Disease in Malawi: The 130 Years Since Livingstone* (Blantyre, Malawi, 1992) p. 53.

expansive community could be provided with medical advice and care. He suggested that the only feasible way would be to arrange with the doctor there to give all native refugees (belonging to this district) medical advice and medicines at his dispensary in town. All native refugees, whether squatting in the vicinity of the town, or the surrounding districts, would come under this arrangement. His rationale for this proposal was that “natives” have always come into town when in need of medical treatment, so it will be no hardship for them to continue to do so. Trollope approved this arrangement.¹⁰¹

Obstacles to providing doctors for the black camps.

In the white camps, there was a definite sense of urgency to acquire medical officers. In time it became policy that for every 1,000 refugees' one medical officer and one trained nurse would be authorised.¹⁰² Beyond this policy, however, there was always the concern that there be at least one medical officer present in every white camp. When a doctor was sent from Cape Town to the Standerton white camp, and upon arrival, refused to accept the position, it was immediately arranged that the local railway medical officer attend the hospital and the sick.¹⁰³ When a military doctor or a District Surgeon, or a white camp doctor, attended a black camp, this doctor was only present sporadically or on a part time basis. There was no established standard of medical staffing levels for the black camps.

Because of the urgency, and also the cost of providing doctors and nurses to the white camps, Milner was personally involved in the recruiting of the doctors and nurses through Chamberlain. In part, this was due to the very strong recommendations of the Ladies' Commission. In January 1902 the recruiting of doctors from England was terminated when a “sufficient number” of doctors for the white camps had been recruited.¹⁰⁴ This decision confirms that the Stone thesis was correct. As

¹⁰¹ SRC, Vol. 6, 1619, Supt. Thaba 'nchu black concentration camp to Trollope, 22 April, 1901.

¹⁰² *National Archives of South Africa, Pretoria*, Archives of the High Commissioner, (HC), Vol. 87, p. 37, Trollope to Wilson, 31 May 1901.

¹⁰³ *British Parliamentary Papers*, Cd. 819, P. 24 Goodwin to Maxwell 17 February 1901.

¹⁰⁴ HC, Vol. 86, Maxwell to Milner, 27 January 1902.

stated until that action occurred it might have been possible to argue that the failure to provide doctors to the black camps was due to a decision to first find doctors for the white camps. As stated, this decision by Milner is *prima facie* evidence that there was no intention by Milner or Chamberlain to provide adequate medical staffing for the black camps.¹⁰⁵ In all the correspondence between them regarding their recruitment of doctors there was no mention of the recruitment of doctors for the black camps. Once again the black camps were invisible in the concerns of the highest officials involved in managing the war. The medical and other needs of the black camps were not an issue one way or another with Milner, Chamberlain or Kitchener. They were invisible and expendable.

At the time of the war there were no black doctors in South Africa and probably only a handful of black nurses and nursing assistants, if there were any at all. Missionaries were the first to provide training of black nursing staff and beginning in 1846 had trained almost all, if not all, of the black nurses and nursing assistants in the mid to late 1800s. By the time of the war, however, this endeavour appears to have come to an end, and very few, if any black nursing assistants or nurses, were still employed or available for employment. A major reason that missionaries had trained black nurses was to attract black patients away from the indigenous healers for both evangelical and medical reasons. Shula Marks in *Divided Sisterhood*, presents this struggle between the *Insongomas* and the *Injangas*¹⁰⁶ on one side and the missionaries on the other.¹⁰⁷

Shortly before the war it had been proposed to establish a "Medical School on the grounds at Lovedale School." The proposal was to establish medical and surgical training as soon as possible to enable black students to become (a) assistants to medical missionaries, [dressers or compounders in Native Hospitals,] (b) fully qualified medical missionaries, or (c) fully qualified native medical

¹⁰⁵ Chamberlain was well aware of the recruitment policy as Milner worked with him to recruit doctors.

¹⁰⁶ Shula Marks defines the *Insongoma* as a diviner who diagnoses the cause of illness and the *inyanga*, the herbalist who provides the medicine.

¹⁰⁷ The diviner or witch finder after making diagnosis turned the patient over for treatment to the *Injanga*.

men who could practice their profession as a means of livelihood. The proposal also provided for the training of black nurses.¹⁰⁸ When it was learned that Cecil Rhodes was proposing the establishment of a medical faculty in connection with the Teaching University¹⁰⁹ projected for the Cape Colony, it was recommended that no further steps be taken to establish a medical school at Lovedale.¹¹⁰

In Nyasaland in August 1898 the first black Medical Assistant was formally trained who subsequently passed the required examination with distinction.¹¹¹ The year before John Dickinson in Malawi trained a young black man, liberated from slavers, to be a medical assistant (dresser).¹¹² By the time of the war there were a good number of black dressers trained and working in the hospital. Despite the fact that this possible source of black medical staffing was only a little over 600 miles away this desperately needed medical staff pool was not tapped.

There was at least one other possible source of medical staff, which could have been used to provide medical service to the black camps. In the days leading up to, and during the war, India provided troops and supplies to the British Army in South Africa. Milner ordered and received several thousand used and urgently needed tents from India for the concentration camps. The famous Mohandas Gandhi formed a stretcher-bearer unit composed of Indian men who were not allowed to fight due to the racial sensitivities of the Boers.¹¹³ Therefore following these precedents and the involvement of India in the logistics of the war it would not have been considered exceptional or unusual to request Indian doctors and nurses for the black camps. In addition Indian

¹⁰⁸ *The Jagger Library Manuscripts Collection, University of Cape Town*, (UCT-T) BC 106 6256.23, "Amended Constitution of the Society for the Medical Education of Natives." p. 1 (No date indicated.)

¹⁰⁹ The Teaching University was the forerunner of the University of Cape Town.

¹¹⁰ University of Cape Town CT-A, BC 106 C256.25, "Medical School for Native Africans." (Hand written document. No author's name or date of writing.)

¹¹¹ Michael and Elspeth King, *The Story of Medicine and Disease in Malawi*, P. 132.

¹¹² *Ibid.*, p. 14.

¹¹³ Pakenham, *The Boer War*, p.225.

doctors could have been provided for the white camps. Ann Beck refers to the use of Indian hospital assistants in East Africa just a few years after the war.¹¹⁴

One particular source of medical staffing in India was well known to Milner and his subordinates. In the Plague and Separation Camps in India during the period of the war, "Native doctors" working with the Medical Officer, as well as nurses, made daily visits to each of the huts of the inmates of these camps. These nurses were probably white nurses, as Indian families were reluctant to let their daughters leave home. In addition lower caste males traditionally provided nursing care.¹¹⁵ These nurses, whatever their gender or race, were working with native doctors in a camp situation very similar to the black concentration camps in South Africa. Certainly some of these "native" doctors and nurses could have worked very effectively to alleviate the high rates of sickness, death, and suffering in the black camps. Several British doctors and sanitation experts from those camps and the Indian Medical Service were brought to South Africa in early 1902 to take over the Department of Burger camps in the Transvaal. Lieutenant Colonel S. J. Thompson, an expert on sanitation, was appointed as the General Superintendent of the Department of Burger Camps.¹¹⁶ He along with several other Indian officers began their work in March 1902.

Some of these Native doctors could have been requested from India, as other military and civilian personnel were. The failure to make such requests is *prima facie* evidence that there was no concern to provide adequate numbers of doctors or any nurses at all for the black camps. Since black people in the war were in a sense not part of the focus of attention of British officials, it is perhaps more accurate to say that, in all likelihood, the idea of staffing the black camps with Indian doctors and nurses never occurred to Milner and his staff, or any other upper level British official. There is no indication that such a possibility was ever considered. At the time of the war there may have been as

¹¹⁴ Ann Beck, *History of the British Medical Administration of East Africa, 1900-1950*, p. 13 cited by Bruce Fetter in a personal communication, 3 April 2001.

¹¹⁵ Marks, *Divided Sisterhood*, p. 172.

¹¹⁶ S.J. Thomson, *The Transvaal Burger camps, South Africa*, (London, 1904) p. 5.

many as sixty of these "Native" doctors in the Indian Medical Service."¹¹⁷ Obviously there was need for these doctors in India. Had even a few of these Native Indian doctors been sent, certainly many lives in the black camps would have been saved. There was already a long tradition of using doctors of the Indian Medical Service in England's wars. In all the wars between 1815 and the Crimean War, Indian doctors had been used.¹¹⁸ Although all of these doctors were white doctors, in most cases of British origin. The British Army was very creative in solving their need for doctors. When doctors were home on leave from India they recruited them, and those that accepted received senior posts.¹¹⁹ No such sense of urgency and creativity was evidenced in meeting the needs for doctors in this war.

Obstacles to providing nurses for the black camps.

Providing nurses for the black camps would have been even more problematic because of the taboo of nurses attending male patients, although the colonial medical policy of deliberate neglect was probably the determining factor. Florence Nightingale was opposed to female nurses attending to males in military hospitals, especially those with venereal disease.¹²⁰ She did not, however, show this to be her view during the Crimean War where she spent considerable time with soldiers in the hospitals. In one case she personally assigned a nurse not only to care for a patient, but she also instructed this nurse to accompany the soldier-patient home for his period of convalescence.¹²¹

Once the preserve of upper class white ladies, beginning with the royalty, by the late 1800s nursing had become, in addition to its contribution to the welfare of patients, a feminist movement. "All over Europe women were replacing men as nurses on male wards."¹²² This taboo survived in the case of white nurses attending to black males. If nursing sisters of the religious orders were attending black male patients in such places as the Kimberly mining hospital, this was accepted,

¹¹⁷ Dr. Mark Harrison, Personal communication, 4 April 2001.

¹¹⁸ Shepherd, *The Crimean Doctors*, Vol. I, p. 8.

¹¹⁹ *Ibid.*, Vol. 2, p. 560.

¹²⁰ Byron Farwell, *The Great Anglo-Boer War* (New York, 1976) p. 243.

¹²¹ John Shepherd, *The Crimean Doctors*, Vol. II, p. 500.

¹²² Searle, *The History of the Development of Nursing*, p. 144.

although not with full approval. This was one of the few hospitals in which there were both blacks and whites in the same hospital, although in different wards.¹²³ The Volks Hospital in Bloemfontein in January 1901 was taking in "Native cases."¹²⁴ According to Shula Marks this issue of white nurses caring for black male patients continued officially in South Africa into the 1940s and later.¹²⁵

The failure, however, to provide adequate medical service to the inmates in the black camps was a matter of a long engrained, and perhaps unconscious policy, rather than purely a case of the inability to do so. Phillips G. Rosen has postulated, "...that the health care received by the various groups in a society reveals the structure of a society, particularly its stratification and class divisions."¹²⁶

Trained black nurses and untrained nursing assistants prior to and during the South African War.

The wars of the eighteenth century in India soon indicated the need for bedside assistants and orderlies in the military hospitals. "From very early times the East India Company employed Indians and occasionally European soldiers as compounders, dressers and apothecaries."¹²⁷ Prior to and during the Crimean War orderlies were recruited from the military units. They learned the needed medical skills in their daily work in the hospital wards.¹²⁸ Early in the history of the mining hospitals in South Africa, according to C. Searle, "Bantu and Coloured men were appointed as bedside attendants."¹²⁹ This was a typical practice throughout the history medicine in South Africa.

As stated, for political, medical and evangelistic reasons British missionaries in South Africa devoted themselves to the training of black nurses in the 1850s and 1860s. Some time before the

¹²³ *Ibid.*, pp. 139-40.

¹²⁴ MBL, 1/1/1/10, "Minutes of Ordinary Meetings," of the Bloemfontein Town Council, 10 January and 17 January 1902.

¹²⁵ Shula Marks, *Divided Sisterhood*, see especially Chapter 6, "A Taint on the Flower of Womanhood in South Africa," pp. 138-163.

¹²⁶ G. Rosen: "Health, History and the Social Sciences in *Social Science and Medicine*, Vol. 7 (1973) cited in Phillips, *Black October*.

¹²⁷ Mark Harrison, *Public Health In British India*, p. 7.

¹²⁸ Stone, "The Victorian Army," p. 52.

¹²⁹ Searle, *The History of the Development of Nursing in South Africa*, pp. 75-76.

war this practice had apparently died out. Phillips states that until 1924 there were only two institutions recognized in South Africa for the training of black nurses, the Lovedale Mission and the Crown Mines Hospital on the Rand.¹³⁰ According to Van Heyningen, Dr. Jane Waterston, "... may have trained a few black assistants at [the] Lovedale Mission in the 1880s. However, because Waterston only spent about six months at Lovedale the training would have been very superficial. The hospital at Lovedale was established just before the war and as a result there would not have been very much time to train black nurses who could have practiced nursing during the war years."¹³¹ Searle says that the credit for producing the first black professional nurses belongs to the Lovedale Mission Hospital. In 1898, The hospital had introduced an experimental training course for black nurses. In 1902 a course for black nurses was introduced.¹³² Alternatively, in Cape Town itself, where Waterston ran the Ladies Branch of the Free Dispensary, Van Heyningen is of the opinion that she certainly trained nurses and may have been doing so before 1900.¹³³

According to one source, Waterston was the only doctor in Cape Town who could speak some African (black) languages and that she established a night school for the training of black medical assistants, contributing her earnings to this effort. She also had a concern for poor women in general, especially young girls. She spoke freely before the 1893 Labour Commission advocating compulsory education for girls. She was far ahead of her time in her even handed treatment of white, black, and coloured people. The Free Dispensary provided mid-wife services to all races of married women.¹³⁴ Ironically she seems to have shared both the feminism and a concern for the health of women with Emily Hobhouse, who was unduly critical of her. Her pro-imperialism and negative views of the Boer people were probably the cause of the great divide between them. It can

¹³⁰ Howard Phillips, *Black October*, p. 90.

¹³¹ Van Heyningen, personal communication, March 15, 2001.

¹³² Searle, *The History of the Development of Nursing*, p. 268.

¹³³ Van Heyningen, personal communication, 14 August 1999.

¹³⁴ Percy Laider and Michael Gelfand, *South Africa, Its Medical History, 1652-1898: A Medical and Social History* (Cape Town, 1971) pp. 341, 375.

be said with assurance that she was much more of a humanitarian advocate for blacks than Emily Hobhouse was.

When she was appointed as the only South African doctor to the Ladies' Commission on the Concentration Camps in South Africa she "...consented very unwillingly to go on this commission." She told her closest friend and confidant, Dr. Stewart, "I am told it is my bounden duty to the Colony and the Empire. So it is a case of buckling on the Armour again. Having taken up the sword she told Dr. Stewart that, "Between ourselves, I am going to look into the native question & Native Camps a bit, but I am saying nothing about that now."¹³⁵ The request for confidentiality and her statement that she was not going to say anything "now," would seem to indicate that, at least in her own mind, such activity on her part would not have been welcomed and perhaps misunderstood. Two "Dutch" women suggested for the commission were rejected. A prime requisite seems to have been loyalty to the British Government. She did not find the opportunity, or perhaps the official acceptance, that would have allowed her to visit these black camps. This failure to visit the black camps is most unfortunate as her influence, knowledge of African culture and observation skills would certainly have had great import for the welfare of the black inmates of the camps and for historians of the war. In any case the original black camps had either been moved, or were in the process of being moved to the new isolated farm camps, during the period of the visits to the white camps by the Committee of Ladies. Even if she had been able to visit any of the black camps she would have found them in a state of disarray due to their recent establishment and no credible assessment could have been made.

The question being addressed is whether nursing services could have been provided in the black concentration camps. Regarding the question of the availability of black nurses during the war as stated Van Heyningen, expresses "... doubt [that] there were many white nurses in the Transvaal or

¹³⁵ *The Jagger Library, Manuscripts Collection, University of Cape Town, the Stewart Papers, BC 700, folio 6, Letter, Dr. Waterston to Dr. Stewart, 28 July 1901.*

the Orange Free State before the war, let alone black nurses.”¹³⁶ It is not certain how many Boer nurses there were. Burdett-Coutts remarked: “The Boers themselves have female nurses in their field hospitals, and very admirable nurses they seemed.”¹³⁷ Nevertheless, since for cultural reasons in the period before the war the only vocation open to Boer women was as teachers, it is unlikely that there were very many trained Boer nurses.¹³⁸

There is some indication of the possible existence of black nurses at the time of the war. In January 1901 the Bloemfontein Town Council proposed the building of a “Native Hospital” and it was suggested that “Native nurses” should be hired. At a meeting of the council in that same month the Mayor questioned whether or not it would be possible to obtain “native” nurses.¹³⁹ This seems to indicate that there were some black nurses at the time. It is unlikely that such black nurses, if they existed at all, had received formal training. Perhaps the terminology “black nurse” may just indicate a caring black woman to look after patients, as a mother nurses her own child. In his statement to the Council on 17 January 1901, however, he conceded that it was questionable whether proper “Native” nurses could be obtained for such a Native Hospital¹⁴⁰. The term “proper” seems to indicate he was referring to experienced, if not trained nurses. Evidently this inability to hire black nurses was one of the reasons that the Council decided not to build a “Native” hospital.

Nursing throughout its history has been shown to be an essential element to the survival of seriously ill patients. The following definition of nursing by M. Goodnow describes nursing in its most elementary form, folk nursing:

Nursing is one of the oldest arts. There has always been helplessness of one sort or another and to a greater or lesser degree; wounds have demanded attention; babies and people have needed care; and disease in some form—due to wilful or ignorant disregard of natural laws—have always been present in the world. The great universal mother instinct has met these emergencies by what we call ‘nursing.’¹⁴¹

¹³⁶ *Ibid.*

¹³⁷ Burdett-Coutts, *The Sick and Wounded in South Africa*, p. 128.

¹³⁸ Searle, *The History of the Development of Nursing*, p. 119.

¹³⁹ Municipality of Bloemfontein, MBL, 1/1/10, “Minutes of Ordinary Meetings 10 January and 17 January 1901.”

¹⁴⁰ *Ibid.*

¹⁴¹ M. Goodnow, *Nursing History* (Philadelphia, 1948) p. 1, cited in Searle, *History of Nursing*, p. 4.

It should, therefore, be agreed that the concentration of thousands of people in insanitary camps with the consequential high death rates would require nursing in one form or another. It must be accepted that such a lack of nurses would result in higher numbers of critically ill inmates and deaths. According to Burdett-Coutts, "Medical Officers during the war were unanimous in their contention that the death rate would have been much higher if the nurses had not served with such dedication, and that it would have been much lower if more nurses would have been available."¹⁴² The impact on the sickness and death rates in the black camps where no nurses were provided, speaks for itself.

There is a long history in South Africa of bedside attendants and lay nursing. Often slaves or former patients had been used in that role. For example during the Small Pox epidemic of 1755, the College of Deacons of the State Church (Diakonie) in the Cape, appointed slaves as nursing attendants who worked under the supervision of the Diakonie doctor. These slaves were drawn from the ranks of those who had survived an earlier outbreak of the disease.¹⁴³ This practice was greatly dictated by the problems of isolation and immunity. Nevertheless, the earliest bedside attendants were also drawn from the residents of the facility in which the sick were being treated. As in the case of the Boer refugee nursing assistants they had the advantage of being from the same culture and of speaking the same language as the patients. Slaves, and the others, used as bedside attendants, including the Boer-nursing assistants, had no previous training or formal medical knowledge.

The use of young Boer girls in the white camps follows this tradition. In some of the white camps a primary function of these lay nurses was to perform daily tent visitation, identifying the sick and reporting their names to the doctor. Chamberlain saw the advantage of using these Boer-nursing assistants, in that they could gain access to the tents of refugees at any time of the day.¹⁴⁴ In some

¹⁴² Burdett Coutts, *The Sick and Wounded in South Africa*, p. 63.

¹⁴³ Searle, *History of Nursing*, p. 59.

¹⁴⁴ *British Parliamentary Papers*, Cd. 853, Colonial Secretary to the High Commissioner, 20 November 1901.

camps the nursing assistants also tended to the routine medical needs of those being visited.¹⁴⁵ This practice would have been even more appropriate in the original black camps, which were up to two miles from the white camp as a means of providing a sanitary barrier. As mentioned, white camp doctors often refused to visit patients in the black camps. Patients in severe stages of waterborne diseases with chronic diarrhoea or suffering from respiratory disease were certainly too weak to walk a mile or more to come to the doctor in the white camp. In the plague camps in India a doctor and a nurse went through the plague camps everyday. Even if it was not deemed possible for the white nurses to train black women to carry out a similar program of tent visitation, it would have been possible for the doctors in the white camps to bring either a nurse or a nursing assistant to tour the tents and in the black camps.

The Military Governor of Pretoria authorised the formation of a small temporary native hospital at the Heidelberg black camp with authority to hire one "Kaffir woman as nurse at one shilling a day and rations." This was in response to the report from the Medical Officer of Health for the Transvaal that there was a death rate of one a day and other conditions of starvation.¹⁴⁶ This is half the pay given the Boer refugee nursing assistants, and the same wage paid to black labourers working for the Government. There is no evidence that this nurse had had any formal or informal training. In the Standerton white camp two tents were set aside for the treatment of black servants living inside the camp. "For these black women and their children there was a native woman working as a nurse...."¹⁴⁷ Richard Moffat, the acting Superintendent at Standerton, in his report for May 1901, mentioned that in addition to the Boer refugee nursing assistants there were several coloured assistants."¹⁴⁸ The report does not specify what their duties were. A photograph of the

¹⁴⁵ HC, Vol. 87, Medical Officer, Klerksdorp white camp to the Supt. Klerksdorp white camp, 31 November 1901.

¹⁴⁶ Boer refugee nursing assistants in the white concentration camps were paid, in most instances, 2 shillings a day. Untrained nurses were paid 3 shillings a day. Trained nurses were paid 5 shillings a day; MGP, Vol. 78, 2713a/01, Maxwell to the District Commissioner Heidelberg, 11 March 1901.

¹⁴⁷ Cd. 893, Report on the Burger Camp, Standerton, 23rd, 24th and 25th November 1901, p. 191.

¹⁴⁸ *British Parliamentary Papers*, Cd. 819, Monthly Report, May 1901, Acting Superintendent of the Standerton Burger Camp to the General Superintendent of Burger camps, Pretoria. P. 64.

medical staff of the Bloemfontein white concentration camp shows a black or coloured nurse in cap and cape in a prominent position in the picture. The hospital in the Harrismith camp utilised the services of a black servant, Sarah. She was employed on 15 October 1901 which is interesting in that her employment was approved by the Department of Refugees in Bloemfontein after the black camps were transferred to the Department of Native Refugees.¹⁴⁹ She may have been providing service to the white inmates at Harrismith.

Obviously the use of "native" women as nurses would have worked perfectly well in all of the black camps. The Field Service Manual of the Royal Army Medical Corps, wanting to avoid direct nursing of soldiers, stated in the hiring of eight nursing sisters for each General Hospital that "...these sisters are rather to superintend the orderlies than to do actual nursing of the hospitals."¹⁵⁰ The certified nurses and matrons in the white camps could have trained black inmates for this work. In line with this recommendation it had recently become the practice in the army stationary hospitals to use female nurses to supervise the orderlies rather than to do direct nursing.¹⁵¹

There was another source of nursing or bedside care for the black camp inmates. It was a common practice in the British Army to take men from the ranks of the British Army and to utilise them as orderlies, despite the fact that they were untrained in medical service. For example when General Hospital No. 9, the first General Hospital to come on the scene in Bloemfontein, arrived on site a group of 150 orderlies were drafted from the various regiments.¹⁵² During the war soldiers nearing the end of their required service time in South Africa could apply to do service in the various Army Departments including working in hospitals as orderlies and other kinds of work. In July 1901 the

¹⁴⁹ SRC, Vol. 14, 5500, Supt., Harrismith black camp to Trollope, 8 October 1901.

¹⁵⁰ *British Parliamentary Papers*, The Field Service Manual of the Army Medical Service, cited in Cd. 453, *Report of the Royal Commission on Care of Sick and Wounded*, p. 7.

¹⁵¹ *Ibid.*

¹⁵² J.W. Smith, "An Address to the Clinical Society of Manchester," 18 December 1900. P. 247 *The Medical Chronicle*, Vol. IV, Series Three, October 1900—March 1901, (The Wellcome Institute of Medical History Library)

Medical Superintendent of the Pretoria Lunatic Asylum noting that an Army Order¹⁵³ issued in the previous month authorised the transfer of non-commissioned Officers to various other departments of the army,¹⁵⁴ requested that this provision be extended to the asylum as there were many vacancies for attendants requiring men to fill those positions.¹⁵⁵

This idea of using ex-soldiers to staff mental hospitals was not new. In 1884 the lunatic asylum at Pietermaritzburg employed ex soldiers as male attendants. Later black male attendants were even used to care for black female patients. White women were used to supervise coloured female nursing assistants. The Superintendent did oppose the use of “Kaffirs” as attendants as he alleged they were harsh in their treatment of insane patients and who he alleged were unable to understand that the patients were not responsible for their behaviour.¹⁵⁶ The Lunatic Asylum in Pretoria was staffed by soldiers as orderlies and had both black and white patients. The only instance of the use of black male nurses was at Harrismith in January 1902. The Resident Magistrate established a “Native Enteric Hospital for Natives employed by civilian employers. The hospital was located four miles out of town preventing their “...being nursed by the Cottage Hospital. Two black male nurses were hired at £1.10 and £1.00 a month respectively. This was well below the minimum wage paid for black Labour of one shilling a day. The parents of young children were also allowed to assist in the nursing.”¹⁵⁷

With the few exceptions indicated above, no effort was made to provide nursing assistants to the black camps as had been done in the white camps. In the case of black males in the camps needing nursing care this would have been a solution. Obviously orderlies were able to handle the medical

¹⁵³ Army Order No. 344, 26 June 1901, issued by W.F. Kelley, Adjutant General, Pretoria.

¹⁵⁴ The South African Constabulary, The Imperial Military Railway Police; and the Prisons Departments.

¹⁵⁵ *National Archives of South Africa*, The archives of the Colonial Secretary of the Transvaal Military Government, (CS), Volume 23, 2854, The Medical Superintendent of the Pretoria Asylum to the Secretary to the Transvaal Administration, Pretoria, 1 July 1901. P. 1.

¹⁵⁶ Searle, *History of the Development of Nursing*, p. 118.

¹⁵⁷ CSO, Vol. 54, 190/02, Monthly Report for the Harrismith District, Resident Magistrate, Harrismith to Wilson, 16 January 1902.

needs of both black and white male patients in a hospital setting. Royal Army Medical Corps orderlies had been utilised in the white camps in the early period of their operation.¹⁵⁸

IV. Hospitals in the original black concentration camps in the Orange River Colony.

The record available to historians does not specify how many of the original black camps had their own hospitals. The failure of Trollope and other higher authorities to require periodic medical reports regarding the medical service, including the hospital care provided to the inmates of the black camps, is further evidence of the lack of concern and the deliberate neglect of the black inmates. So too is the failure to require a monthly return of numbers and causes of deaths on a consistent basis. In contrast Trollope required a monthly report on the hospitals in each of the white camps as part of the standard format of monthly report from the superintendent of each camp. In addition a listing of the names of all medical staff are included in Trollope's report to the High Commissioner dated 15 July 1901. The doctors and nurses of all the white camps in the colony are all named in this report. The listing of medical staff for the white camps shows eighteen doctors and sixty-one nurses.¹⁵⁹ Even though this report portends by its title to report on the "Burger and Native Refugee Camps", the report, itself, does not contain any information at all on the black camps. Despite the fact that some of the doctors on this list were providing medical service to some of the inmates from black camps, no mention of this activity is mentioned.

No concrete steps to prevent sickness and death could have been taken unless those responsible for the care of blacks incarcerated in the camps made it their business to know the causes and numbers of deaths.. There is not one report even listing the state and numbers of hospitals in the black camps. What we do know is presented below and is of some value in understanding, at least in a rudimentary way, the medical care of the sick and dying in the black concentration camps.. As is

¹⁵⁸ SRC, Vol. 2, 402, Supt., Brandfort white camp to Trollope, 28 February 1901. This was the time when civilian administrators took over the camps at the instruction of Lord Milner and the Royal Army Medical Corps orderlies were withdrawn at this time by the Principal Medical Officer of the Royal Army Medical Corps. This is the only specific record found regarding the Royal Army Medical Corps orderlies in the camps.

¹⁵⁹ Cd. 819, "Report on Burger and Native Refugee Camps in the Orange River Colony." P. 106

often the case the record only discusses the circumstances of the black inmates in the camps when some problem or need arises and is recorded in the correspondence and reports. A good example of this pattern is the problem of over crowding in the Waai Hoek location, which was discussed above. Only because there was a concern on the part of white community officials was the black refugee presence in the Waai Hoek location notated in the record.

The following descriptions of the hospitals in these camps are the only camps that the record indicates had their own hospitals. How hospital care was provided to the inmates of the other camps is not known. This is not to say that these other camps did not have their own hospital. Even these few hospitals we do know of in the original black camps in the Orange River Colony were created following the paradigm of the colonial medical policy which dictated that such measures only be undertaken when the protection of the military and British communities from the plague and epidemic disease was an apparent danger.

Some of the Brandfort black camp inmates were treated by the hospital in the associated white camp hospital, as at Brandfort:

All those who are servants of the Refugees are treated here, and any hospital cases are treated in the ambulance wagons. At present only one has so been treated. All natives belonging to the Native Refugee Camp are also treated at the hospital *when they come for medical advice*. About twelve are treated weekly.¹⁶⁰ 9 March 1901. [Emphasis is mine]

The superintendent of the Edenburg black camp wrote to Trollope, saying "I have no building in my camp to be used as a hospital. Would you kindly, *with an eye on Bubonic Plague*, authorise me to have one constructed, say of a wooden framework covered with sail [cloth]. I think a room 35 feet by 10 feet and 10 ft. high will be sufficient!"¹⁶¹ [Emphasis is mine]

This short memorandum reveals the two elements of British policy regarding medical service to the black population. Those two elements, are the protection of the British soldiers and the British white settler community, and the second element was the ever present need to economise, which was a

¹⁶⁰ SRC, Vol. 3, 543, Supt. Brandfort white camp to Trollope, 9 March 1901.

¹⁶¹ SRC, Vol. 4, 930, Supt. Edenburg, black camp to Trollope, 30 March 1901.

major determinant of all decision making. They were in Marxian terms, truly economic determinists. The first element is abundantly clear in the statement regarding bubonic plague. The second involves the description of the building he wishes to have constructed, which he describes as. "...a wooden frame work covered with sail [cloth]!" Why does he insert an exclamation mark after such a simple request? The superintendent had suggested a very inexpensive building. The materials the superintendent proposed using and the methods of construction were the same as those employed in the construction of cheap inmate housing.¹⁶² The rationale of this request was to provide a quarantine facility to isolate suspected bubonic plague patients. Despite his attempt to fall within the parameters of the British colonial medical policy by mentioning the plague, the request was still denied. Trollope replied by saying a hut was now on order and a marquee tent would be forth coming.¹⁶³

In the white camps the hospital normally consisted of at least, four or five marquee tents and sometimes a building. The larger Marquee tents had been used for hospital accommodation at least as far back as the Crimean War, 1853-1856.¹⁶⁴ A multiple tent hospital provides a means of isolating patients with contagious diseases as well as quarantining new arrivals. There was no hospital at Edenburg at this time. There was just a part time doctor who saw sick inmates in the former "native" schoolroom.¹⁶⁵ In Edenburg if the inmates were too sick to come in for "medical advice," the doctor attended to the patients in their huts.

In Kroonstad, there was a crucial problem for blacks both inside and outside the concentration camp. The Medical Officer, for both the white and black camps, was also the District Surgeon for

¹⁶² SRC, Vol. 1, 182, Commandant, Edenburg black concentration Camp to Trollope, 21 February 1901, p. 1. The "marquee" tent was a much larger tent than the bell tent normally used to house inmates in the camps. These tents were commonly issued as hospital tents in the white camps.

¹⁶³ SRC, Vol. 4, 930, Supt., Edenburg black camp to Trollope, 8 March 1901.

¹⁶⁴ Shepherd, *Crimean Doctors*, p. 247.

¹⁶⁵ Captain Bray, was an Royal Army Medical Corps doctor. The "native" school room would have been used by missionaries, as all native schools were provided by missionaries. There is no indication that any missionary doctors were involved in the black camps. Missionary doctors provided most of the medical care to blacks in other countries in Africa during this period.

Kroonstad. It was his opinion that despite the great amount of illness and large numbers of deaths among the inmates of the black camp that it was "...useless to go and visit them and give advice." It was his stated view that they pay no attention to such advice.¹⁶⁶ For this reason, he concluded that it was essential to establish a Native Hospital.¹⁶⁷ His recommendation made in an environment of economic austerity indicates the sincerity of his opinion. The cost, however, of erecting a new building was very high to which would have to be added the cost of equipping it. It was felt that at present the need for a hospital for the black refugees was much greater than for the blacks outside the camp. When the request was made that blacks be allowed to enter government hospitals the response was that only those in government employ could be admitted to these hospitals. Finally the Board of Health stated that it could not fund a "Native Hospital" because the Board was solely constituted to make provision against the introduction and spread of bubonic plague.¹⁶⁸

The military Government decided that a "native" church should be commandeered and converted into a hospital. In addition, Trollope agreed to send a shelter for the accommodation of sick inmates in the black Camp, which it was now conceded, was badly needed.¹⁶⁹ This was the common practice of the army. When the British troops occupied Kroonstad in early May 1900 they commandeered two hotels in the town to be used as hospitals.¹⁷⁰ This practice of the British Army medical service in commandeering a large building for a hospital goes back at least to the 1690s during the war in Ireland.¹⁷¹ The Volksraad Chamber in Bloemfontein was now being used as a hospital for British soldiers. From this it is apparent that hospitals for the black camps were only instituted when there was no other choice, and even then facilities were created as cheaply as possible.

¹⁶⁶ The use by British doctors of the term, "medical advice" in today's parlance would be the act of going to see a doctor for treatment, which included the dispensing of medicine as well as medical advice. It appears that most of the black camps did have a dispenser to provide a limited amount medicine.

¹⁶⁷ SRC, Vol. 4, 1103, Supt., Kroonstad white concentration camp to Trollope, 1 April 1901.

¹⁶⁸ CSO, Vol. 10, 697/01, General Officer Commanding, Kroonstad to President of the Kroonstad Board of Health, 1 April 1901.

¹⁶⁹ CSO, Vol. 12, 870/01, Wilson to Trollope, 24 April 1901.

¹⁷⁰ *British Parliamentary Papers*, Cd. 453, *The Hospital Commission Report*, p. 47.

¹⁷¹ Shepherd, *The Crimean Doctors*, p. 2

Despite the concern of the officials in Kroonstad, the superintendent felt that there was no serious medical service problem. Only a month after the inquiries regarding the need to build a new hospital he made a very strong statement denying that need. "Reports have been circulated lately that in the Native Locations immediately under my control, the Kafirs are dying in great numbers, but I have personally inspected these natives in the company of [Dr. Pratt Yule] and I am now convinced that these statements are untrue."¹⁷² Yule was very loyal to the administration of the camps and the colony, and he defended them even when he should not have done so.

It is significant that the superintendent had to make an inspection tour in order to know the state of health of the refugees who "were under his immediate control." As stated, in the white camps, it was policy that some medical staff member should visit each tent daily to look for persons who needed to be removed to the hospital or provided with some medical assistance. There were no monthly reports on the over 3,000 blacks in this camp. Note also that he gives no death statistics, which would seem called for as part of his defensive argument, as the claim was made that blacks were "...dying in great numbers." No death registers for the black refugees in this camp have been found, and it is likely that none were kept given the superintendent's attitude toward the black inmates. Blacks in this camps were being provided with medical service by the white camp hospital as indicated above. Perhaps the hospital records contained some information of this kind. That record has not been found.

The final black camp hospital to be considered is the hospital in the Bloemfontein black concentration camp. This camp was unique in that the proximity of this camp to the headquarters of the Department of Refugees seems to have had a very positive impact on the medical services rendered to the camp. This camp had a hospital consisting at first, of two tents, to which at a later time, several other tents were added. This allowed a tent for isolation and another for a dispensary. In addition these hospital tents were located a quarter of a mile from the main camp to prevent

¹⁷² SRC, Vol. 7, 1911, Report for April 1901, Supt., Kroonstad white camp to Trollope, 1 May 1901.

disease spread.¹⁷³ The weekly reports of Dr. Friedman, the Medical Officer, show a definite diligence in caring for the inmates, especially the infants and children. This was the only one of the original black camps with a full time doctor and the hospital appears to have been well administered. He reported directly to the Chief Superintendent of the Department of Refugees, rather than reporting to the camp superintendent as was the case in all the other black camps. The most complete death list showing the causes of death was kept by this doctor. [See Appendix 6.2]

V. Medical service in the Department of Native Refugees camps, June 1901 to December 1902.

Medical Staff assigned to provide care in the Department of Native Refugees.

This is a discussion of the medical service during the second period of the history of the black concentration camps. The new way of dealing with the inmates transferred from the original black camps in the Orange River Colony to the new camps in the Department of Native Refugees meant even less medical service than the meagre care previously received. The reverse was true in the Transvaal where the black families in the informal camps had received no medical service and were now receiving some medical service for the first time. The Department of Native Refugees In organising these camps in the Transvaal sent a superintendent out to these camps and one of his first duties was to "...introduce sanitary and 'medical arrangements...'"¹⁷⁴ There are no documents, which describe these relationships, the names of these doctors or, the specific camps served. Now that the black camps were once again under direct control and supervision of the British Army the record keeping became very minimal. The monthly report of the Department of Native Refugees camps were designed like an accountant's spread sheet, and contained almost no narrative,¹⁷⁵ only

¹⁷³ SRC, Vol. 2, 372, The February Monthly Report of the Supt., Bloemfontein black camp to Trollope, 1 March 1901.

¹⁷⁴ SNA, Vol. 59, 2097, de Lotbiniere to Milner, 30 September 1901, pp. 2-3.

¹⁷⁵ The monthly Report was forwarded to the Commissioner of Native Affairs, Sir Godfrey Lagden in the Transvaal and the Deputy Administrator of the Orange River Colony, Hamilton Goold-Adams in the Orange River Colony. A cover letter addressed to these officials sometimes accompanied the report and contained a brief overview of that months activities. This letter explained such things as increases in expenses and death rates and the attitudes of the inmates. The monthly report form contained the following categories of information arranged in columns like an accountants spread sheet as follows: Name of the Camp; Total Number of Refugees under the headings: men, women and children; In government employ and drawing

statistics showing the populations, numbers of death and cost of maintaining the camps. The monthly report to higher authority sometimes included a cover letter, which contained some information.

By July 1901 twelve camps had been organised from the populations of these informal refugee settlements. As indicated in the previous chapter, these early camps were mainly in mining centres, and were not on abandoned farms. In July six medical officers were contracted to serve the 16,730 inmates in these camps.¹⁷⁶ These doctors only visited these camps on a part time basis. The frequency of the visits of these doctors is not indicated in the record. In his Final Report regarding these camps in the Transvaal de Lotbiniere claimed that the contracted medical officers provided medical service to the inmates of the camps daily. This seems questionable given that by de Lotbiniere's own account in this report these doctors were "the nearest military doctors."¹⁷⁷ Certainly their duties with the military stations had to take preference, and as a result they would not have been able travel very far away from the military post. Some of these doctors were responsible for several camps and it seems unlikely that they were able to make daily visits to each of the camps given the distances of travel to the various camps. Perhaps not all these camps received the service of a doctor, unless they were able to make some *ad hoc* arrangement with a military doctor at a nearby military post or a civilian doctor in the local community as at Kroonstad as indicated above.

rations; In private employment; Births under the headings male and female; Deaths under the headings: men, women, and children; Desertions; Rationed by government on full payment; Rationed free; Not rationed; Quantity of food distributed; Cost of issues; Amount recovered from natives; Total cost to government. These categories were arranged in columns alongside the name of the camp. There was also an accounting sheet showing various expenditures for such things as staff salaries, sanitation costs, medical comforts purchased, food supplies purchased, etc.. In some months the salaries paid are not given separately for administrative staff and medical staff which represents some difficulties in calculating expenditures for medical service.

¹⁷⁶ SNA, Vol. 59, 2097, Department of Native Refugees, Transvaal Colony, Monthly Report, July 1901, Officer Commanding, Johannesburg Army Labour Depot to Officer Commanding of the Department of Native Refugees, 15 August 1901.

¹⁷⁷ TKP, Vol. 135, *Final Report of the work performed by the Native Refugee Department of the Transvaal from June 1901, to December 1902.* p. 3.

It is revealing to look at the medical staffing and services provided to prison settings. For example, the Director of Prisons in the Transvaal requested that a visiting medical officer be appointed for the Johannesburg Prison in February 1902, because of the "irregularity of attendance by the District Surgeon. The request was denied, but the District Surgeon was instructed "...to visit the prison at a definite hour each day."¹⁷⁸ The record does not indicate any standard at all regarding medical attendance by a medical doctor in any of the original camps or the Department camps. In the white camps, civilian doctors were hired on a contract basis in cases where there were not sufficient medical officers in these camps, as at the Barberton white camp in September 1900.¹⁷⁹

We have no knowledge of what the process was in insuring that sick inmates were seen and treated. Did these doctors just see those who presented themselves for treatment? This seems likely, given that there were no nurses or medical assistants to carry out daily hut visitation to find those too sick to come to the doctor, or resistant to doing so. How resistant to "khaki" medicine the blacks in the camps were is not known. A patient in the crisis stage of an illness would be unable go to the doctor to receive treatment. Certainly these part time doctors did not have the time to visit each tent or hut in the camp, or even any reasonable number of them. Perhaps family members of sick inmates may have brought this fact to the attention of the camp staff.

¹⁷⁸ CS, Vol. 68, 1439, Asst. Secretary to the Transvaal Administration to Director of Prisons, 26 February 1902.

¹⁷⁹ PSY, Vol. 60, pp. 103-107, Garrison Adjutant to District Commissioner, Barberton, 14 December 1900. The "medical Orders" state that this doctor was "...appointed as District Surgeon, and to have charge of the jail and to afford medical aid to Boer families unable to pay. " Barberton was a staging area where Roberts attempted to return the Boer families from Johannesburg and Pretoria to the Boer forces. This is the only document found indicating that the Boer families were required to pay doctors for medical service. Attempts to require well off Boer families to pay for food or their quit rents failed. This practice probably occurred only in the early stages of the development of the white camps. This request for payment by the doctor covered the period 17 September until 12 October 1900. A payment of £138 was requested for the period. The earliest camps at Bloemfontein and Kroonstad were not formally authorised until late September and were probably not established in fact until some time in October. Evidently this assignment ended at that time. Barberton had for some period before the war been a town where the South African Republic stored and distributed food to poor Boer families. There are photographs of poor boer families receiving rations at Barberton in 1886.

In the case of the Department camps in the Orange River Colony there is no complete record of the numbers of doctors assigned during this period.¹⁸⁰ The record shows that medical officers were often not assigned to the black camps until high death rates due to epidemics occurred. When the deaths in the Orange River Colony Department camps reached 1,518 deaths in November 1901¹⁸¹ de Lotbiniere, in regards to this high death rate, explained that he was doing everything in his power to improve the situation. "...and [had]... hired three additional Medical Officers to devote the whole of their time to visiting the camps, in addition to the present medical staff."¹⁸² This may have contributed to the decrease of 101 deaths in the month of January 1902.¹⁸³ This decrease takes on even greater importance when it is realised that these camps experienced an increase in population of 3,067 inmates.¹⁸⁴ In February the death rate continued to decrease substantially from 3.14% to 1.75% of the population.¹⁸⁵ This would seem to indicate that had adequate numbers of medical officers been hired prior to the occurrence of the high death rates in November and December 1901 a good number of these deaths may have been prevented. By October's return it was obvious that the death rate was escalating. Furthermore, based on the British Army's experience in the original black camps and the white camps they should have hired an adequate number of medical staff at the time the Department of Native Refugees was established.

A very specific example of this policy of not hiring adequate medical staff until there was a medical crisis occurred in Harrismith in September 1901. A black man working for the military and living

¹⁸⁰ The monthly reports for this period, in the case of some particular months, only record the amounts of funds expended. It is interesting that in August £151.7 was expended, but in the next two months the amounts were reduced to £99 and £80 respectively. In December when the highest number of deaths occurred the amount expended was £131 and 8 shillings. These figures do not allow a calculation of the actual number of doctors and the nature of the contracts such as the numbers of days of service each month. It was not until the last month of the war that the specific numbers of doctors serving these camps are recorded.

¹⁸¹ In the following month of December 1901 the number of death reached 1,643 deaths, which was the highest number of deaths in the Department of Native Refugees Camps in the Orange Rive Colony. See SNA, Vol. 16,331/02, 5 February 1902.

¹⁸² SNA, Vol. 13, 96/02, D. Gerrard for de Lotbiniere to Commissioner of Native Affairs, Sir Godfrey Lagden, 13 January 1902. D. Gerrard should not be confused with Col. Girouard the Director of the Railway.

¹⁸³ CSO, Vol. 57, 5861/02, Department of Native Refugees, Orange River Colony, Monthly Report, January 1902.

¹⁸⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁸⁵ CSO, Vol. 61, 893/02, Department of Native Refugees, Orange River Colony, Monthly Report, February 1902.

with his wife and two children in the Harrismith black camp was discovered by the sanitary officer to have smallpox. By order of the District Surgeon the family was isolated and their tent destroyed. The military appointed a doctor on a temporary basis because the three sites of the Harrismith camp had no doctor. A doctor from Durban was instructed to come and take charge of medical work in the Harrismith camps. "Military doctor will receive remuneration until relieved. A doctor is necessary for the camps."¹⁸⁶ Normally the Colonial Treasurer would have had to approve the hiring of staff and to authorise funding. It is obvious that this doctor was provided because of the smallpox case, which would threaten the nearby military population. The outbreak of this highly contagious disease necessitated the immediate presence of a doctor. What is very significant was that they were able to provide a doctor without delay. When a case of leprosy occurred in a "Native Kraal" a mile away from the Army Camp at Virginia immediate action was taken by the authorities to place this child in the Leper Hospital in Bloemfontein to assure protection not only of the military camp, but the surrounding population.¹⁸⁷

The monthly reports of the Department of Native Refugees in the Orange River Colony only recorded the number of medical officers providing medical service in four of the seventeen months of the existence of these camps. [See Appendix 5.1: The numbers of medical officers in the Department of Native Refugees and the accompanying death rates. The first record of the numbers of medical officers working in the camps only occurred in the last month of the war. The monthly report for May 1902 indicates there were nineteen medical officers serving the thirty-four camps in the Orange River Colony.¹⁸⁸ This resulted in a doctor to inmate ratio of 3,158 and a deaths per doctor ratio¹⁸⁹ of 12.37. In the following month of June, the first month in the post war period, the

¹⁸⁶ CSO, Vol. 34, 3264/01, Supt., Harrismith black camps, to Wilson 10 September 1901.

¹⁸⁷ CSO, Vol. 15, 1175/01, Commandant Virginia Army Camp to Provost Marshall, Bloemfontein, 26 April 1901.

¹⁸⁸ SNA, Vol. 44, 1411, Department of Native Refugees, Orange River Colony, Monthly Report May 1902, Supt., Wilson Fox to de Lotbiniere, 12 July 1902.

¹⁸⁹ These two ratios are used to evaluate the degree of medical service offered in the camps. The numbers of deaths per doctor is an indication of the connection between the numbers of doctors in the camps and the death rate.

numbers of doctors were reduced to sixteen. The number of deaths had decreased from 235, including 149 children in May to 147 deaths, of which 90 were children in June.¹⁹⁰

In September ¹⁹¹ and October 1902 ¹⁹² there were only five medical officers assigned to the remaining camps. Because the repatriation process had not sufficiently reduced the population of the remaining camps, five doctors were not sufficient to adequately provide the amount of medical service required. In September there were still 23 camps with a population of 36,549. In October there were 17 camps with a populations of 24,278 inmates. The statistics show that even in October with fewer camps and a reduced population, five doctors were obviously quite insufficient.

The published standard in the white camps that there must be at least one doctor present in each camp is the minimum standard that should have been followed. It is apparent that five medical officers for 23 or 17 camps could not provide adequate medical treatment, even had the populations been considerably lower, because of the many camps to be serviced and the distances to be travelled between camps. The doctor to inmate ratio was as a result increased to 7,309 in September with a doctor to deaths ratio of 27.40. In October there was a doctor to inmate ratio of 4,856 and due to the increase in the number of deaths a doctor to deaths ratio of 29.8. In May 1902 with nineteen medical officers and 235 deaths, the doctor to deaths ratio was only 12.37. The number of deaths in September was 137 and in October 149. According to the Chief Superintendent, Fox, there was an increase in the percentage of deaths from 5.3 in September 1902 to 7.03 in October 1902.¹⁹³ This,

¹⁹⁰ CSO, Vol. 88, 2991/02, Department of Native Refugees, Orange River Colony, Monthly Report, June 1902, Assistant Superintendent, Department of Native Refugees to Goold-Adams, 6 August 1902.

¹⁹¹ CSO, Vol. 114, 5079/02, Department of Native Refugees, Orange River Colony, Monthly Report, September 1902, Wilson to Goold-Adams, 7 November 1902.

¹⁹² CSO, Vol. 119, 5537/02, Department of Native Refugees, Orange River Colony, Monthly Report, October 1902, Superintendent, Department of Native Refugees to de Lotbiniere, 6 December 1902.

¹⁹³ How Fox arrived at these death rate percentages is not clear. I arrived at the death rate percentage by dividing the total population of all the camps into the total numbers of deaths for the month. The statistical method used in many reports was based on the numbers per thousand of population times 12 months. I have abandoned that method, as it is a very misleading system. Using the method described I arrived at a death rate for the months of September and October of 0.38% and 0.62% for September and October respectively.

Fox said, was due to "...the more robust people being selected first by the farmers to leave the camps."¹⁹⁴

In January 1902 Wilson Fox, made an inspection tour of the camps under his supervision. In his report to Wilson on the progress these camps were making in growing crops, and in the living conditions in these camps, he also mentioned the failure to deliver medical service in a consistent and effective way. In the Heilbron camp he reported that the inmates, while generally contented, were "...depressed about the sickness among them." He reported that the assigned medical officer who resigned after his inspection of the camp, appeared to take no interest in his work at all." In that same report Fox indicated he was able to find another "health officer".¹⁹⁵ This demonstrates again that the lack of medical doctors in the black camps was not so much a function of their scarcity, as that of a lack of will and policy to provide adequate numbers of doctors to the camps.

Next Fox inspected the camp at Roodeval. He found that a doctor had not visited the camp for more than a month. Upon his return he made arrangements for the Medical Officer at Rhenoster to come over once a week.¹⁹⁶ Obviously in a situation where there was no nursing staff, and in some cases no hospital, a visit once a week was hardly adequate. It seems evident that the claim of de Lotbiniere that these camps were visited almost daily is not credible, at least in the case of some of the camps.¹⁹⁷ Fox appeared to think weekly visits were satisfactory and that is what he arranged for. Perhaps that was all that this particular doctor could offer.

Nothing had really changed in a positive direction. Medical service was only provided in the original black camps when it was deemed necessary. The request cited above for the hiring of a civilian doctor to treat the black "refugees" scattered along the line of the railway at various military

¹⁹⁴ CSO, Vol. 119, 5537/02, Department of Native Refugees, Orange River Colony, Monthly Report, October 1902, Superintendent, Department of Native Refugees to de Lotbiniere, 6 December 1902.

¹⁹⁵ CSO, Vol. 54, 326/02, Fox to de Lotbiniere 3 February 1902.

¹⁹⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁹⁷ De Lotbiniere may have just been referring to the camps in the Transvaal as his "Final Report" regarded the Transvaal camps. Nevertheless this claim still seems questionable.

posts during the plague scare is a classic example of this policy and practice in the Department of Native Refugees camps as well. It was felt that the Military medical officers at these posts would not be able to adequately provide the service needed to protect the military troops.¹⁹⁸

Because of the lack of record keeping much less is known about the conditions and the medical services in these camps than in the original black camps. We do not even know what medical facilities were in these camps. Since all the reports of the individual camp superintendents we have not been found we have no specific record about the individual camps. We do have the numbers of deaths that occurred in each camp, and the camp population, which gives some general indication of the health of the various individual camps. A study of the individual camp statistics would reveal some understanding of the individual camps and their administration.¹⁹⁹ The resumption of the direct control by the British Army of the black concentration camps meant a return to the former spartanism of the military style camps and the military administration of these camps and an accompanying dearth of record keeping.

Splitting up of the camps as a health measure.

De Lotbiniere argued that traditional medical service had not been very successful in the camps under his supervision. "Medicines alone had little effect and we relied more on the splitting up of the camps."²⁰⁰ It is not entirely clear if this splitting up the camps referred to the period when the new Department of Native Refugees camps were formed or at a later time in the life of this Department. Of all of the statements regarding medical service in the Department of Native Refugees the claim that the original black camps were split up into smaller camps is the least credible, and is not borne out by the archival record. These newly formed camps in the Department of Native Refugees in the Transvaal, as previously stated, were organised from the informal black

¹⁹⁸ CSO, 396/01, General Officer Commanding of Kroonstad to the Deputy Administrator, ORC, 12 March 1901.

¹⁹⁹ I hope to do more work in this area in the future.

²⁰⁰ TKP, Vol. 135, *Final Report of the Work Performed by the Native Refugee Department of the Transvaal from June 1901, to December 1902*, p. 3.

camps along the railway and since the populations of these camps are not known it is also as a consequence not known whether they were split up into smaller camps.

In the case of the of the Department of Native Refugees camps in the Orange River Colony an early planning document regarding the formation of the new camps shows that the original black camps, in most cases were not split up into smaller camps when the inmates and the superintendents of these camps were moved to the new camp sites. Of the ten original black camps in the colony only three of these camps were split into two camps.²⁰¹ The Edenburg camp with 4,000 inmates was to be moved to Ventersburg Road and Holfontein. The Kroonstad camp was to be sent to Honing Spruit and Serfontein. Some of the inmates in the Bloemfontein were to be moved to Allenby's Siding. Some of the inmates in the Brandfort camp were slated to be sent to Houtenbek as a means of dividing that camp into two camps. In the end all of the inmates at Brandfort were transferred to the Houtenbek camp with the exception of two hundred and fifty inmates who were temporarily left behind due to sickness among them. They were to be sent to Houtenbek as soon as soon they were able to travel.²⁰² The Superintendent of the Brandfort white camp obtained permission from Trollope to retain a small number of the black inmates who had been working in the white camp and he formed a small location for them just outside the white camp where they could live.²⁰³

There was another opportunity to reduce the size of some of the larger camps, but this too, did not result in any substantial reduction of camp populations. The number of camps in the Transvaal was expanded from 20 camps that were in existence in October 1901 to 31 camps in November 1901. During that same period the over all population increased from 32,006 to 39,323 inmates. The average population of these camps in October 1901 was 1,600. The average camp population in

²⁰¹ CSO, Vol. 29,2758, de Lotbiniere to Chief Supply Officer, the Lines of Communication, 2 August 1901.

²⁰² CSO, Vol. 34 3302, Goold-Adams to Fox, 12 September 1901.

²⁰³ SRC, Vol. 12, 4689, Supt., Brandfort white camp to Trollope. The small cemetery located five hundred yards from the white camp contains the graves of some of these former black inmates. This cemetery is not the cemetery of the Brandfort black concentration camp, which is located about one mile North of the small cemetery. My attempts while employed as a consultant with the Department of Arts and Culture to correct this error with the State President's Office failed.

November after this increase in the number of camps was 1,268 inmates. The average population in these camps steadily increased in the months following and by May 1902 at wars end they had reached an average population of 1,505.

More important is the fact that the seven largest camps with a population of 1,900 and above with the exception of the camp at Klerksdorp, which had the highest population, experienced no significant reductions in population. It is apparent that these new camps were formed to accommodate the large numbers of blacks being swept into the camps at that time. Specifically, the four camps at Boksburg, Vereeniging, Krugersdorp and Klerksdorp with a total population of 10,930 had an overall reduction from the end of October to the end of November of 908 inmates, or a sum total only 8.3%. These camps were in mining districts and their size may have been due to their use in connection with the mines. The other two large camps at Koekemour and Greylingstad had an increase of 54 or 2.06%, and 467 or 5.45% respectively. At the end of the war four of the seven larger camps had increased in population by 1,321 and three of these camps had decreased in overall population by 1,010. This was an overall increase in the large camps of 311, which means that there was no real reduction in the size of these camps. After all the greatest danger of higher death rates would be in the larger camps. The largest of the camps at Klerksdorp at the end of the war had been reduced in population by 647 or 14%, but this was the one exception.

De Lotbiniere said in his final report that "owing to the restricted areas under military protection, the huts were unfortunately located much closer than they would have been under normal conditions and the natives suffered in consequence."²⁰⁴ It is the proximity of huts to one another that is the greatest cause of disease spread. "By the splitting up of the informal refugee camps and moving the Natives to other places on the railway system we were enabled to put nearly 9,000 acres

²⁰⁴ TKP, Vol. 135, *Final Report*... P. 3.

under mealies.”²⁰⁵ Thus, this was the real reason for splitting up the camps, in the beginning, and not, as he suggested, for health reasons.

The specific causes of deaths in these camps are not known as the names and causes of deaths were not listed in the death statistics. In his *Final Report* de Lotbiniere summarized the diseases present in the camps as “Epidemics of chicken pox, measles, dysentery, etc.”²⁰⁶ This listing seems very incomplete, as there is no mention of respiratory diseases. The particularly high death rates during the summer period of warm weather and rain in October, November and December were probably due to waterborne diseases. Fox in his report for the month of November 1901 commented that: “The death rate appears high. but under the circumstances, I think it can scarcely be called excessive. Food has been scarce, and the natives have had to put up with considerable privations before they were brought into the camps, and it must be taken into consideration the invariable increase in death rate in this country during hot weather before the breaking of the rains, especially so in the case of young children.”²⁰⁷ Fox chose the second highest number of deaths for any month in the Orange River Colony camps to say that he did not consider that death rate as excessive.

There is much in this statement that is untrue and very misleading. Many of those brought into the camps at this stage had been in the original black camps. The comment on scarcity of food seems quite disingenuous, as the meager diet of mealie meal and salt was a matter of policy as described in the previous chapter. While the population increased during these first four months by 9.24%, the increase in the death rate during the same period was as follows. Calculating the numbers of deaths per thousand of population there were: 6.37 deaths per 1000 population in September; 18.23 deaths per thousand in October; 34.89 deaths per thousand in November and 35.73 deaths per thousand in

²⁰⁵ *Ibid*, p.4.

²⁰⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 3.

²⁰⁷ Fox to Chamberlain, 2 January 1902 cited in Emily Hobhouse, *The Brunt of the War and Where it Fell* (London, 1902) p. 353.

December, 1901. The rate of the growth of death rate for the period is 460.91%. This is not the death rate, but the percentage of the growth of death rate itself.

The diseases prevalent in this period of the year were waterborne diseases. Further there is no mention of Pneumonia, Broncho-Pneumonia and Influenza, which were the usual actual causes of death following measles.

In regards to the death rate de Lotbiniere said in an apologetic gloss, "...natives do not thrive under normal conditions and sudden changes."²⁰⁸ Mark Harrison of the Wellcome Medical Institute in 1999 wrote a full-length study of the role of the acclimatisation theory in imperial policy and the British Army's experience in India, *Climates and Constitutions*.²⁰⁹ In addition to refuting this theory he shows how such a theory was useful in explaining away the failures of medical care in India from 1600 to the late 1800s. De Lotbiniere in his cover letter to Lagden regarding the over 1,500 deaths in the Orange River Colony camps in the November Monthly Report said that he had been informed that the high death rate was partly due to the declimatisation of the natives, because most of them had been removed from their permanent dwelling places this was itself sufficient to upset the weaker ones, especially the women and children.²¹⁰ Edmund Parkes the definitive authority on health and sickness in wartime, for his time, gave this advice in 1864.

It is a constant observation that men who have led outdoor lives are far more healthy in war than men whose occupations have kept them in houses. The soldiers life should therefore be an outdoor one. This can only be done properly by keeping him in tents in summer... wooden huts are too much like barracks.²¹¹

Most of the black inmates had been removed from relatively nearby farms. Although Curtin has shown that service by British troops in the low areas in India, as opposed to the camps in the high

²⁰⁸ TKP, Vol. 135, *Final Report*, p. 1.

²⁰⁹ Mark Harrison, *Climates and Constitutions: Health, Race, Environment and British Imperialism in India*, (Delhi, India, 1999) My thanks to Dr. Harrison of the Wellcome Medical Institute for allowing me to have the proofs of this book prior to publication and for many other contributions to this thesis.

²¹⁰ SNA, Vol. 13, 96/02, D. Gerrard for de Lotbiniere to Commissioner of Native Affairs, Sir Godfrey Lagden, 13 January 1902

²¹¹ Edmund A. Parkes, *Manual of Practical Hygiene*, p.p. 589-90 (Wellcome Institute of Medical History, Archives, RAMC Collection).

places, caused greater numbers of deaths. The hill stations had lower death rates because of the absence of Malaria rather than the direct effect of the climate itself.²¹²

Another example from de Lotbiniere's brief explanation of the death rates, as mentioned above, was the claim that "medicines alone had little effect." As mentioned, at least one superintendent of a white camp with a black camp under his supervision had argued that giving medical advice and medicine to the blacks "was useless."²¹³ Obviously the effectiveness of dispensing medicine is highly related to the treatment of the sickness by a medical practitioner. The previous experience of the patient in taking medicines is also a factor. In the case of measles and waterborne diseases, such as typhoid, two of the major killers, medicine and medical advice are no substitute for hospital care. In fact, medicine plays a minimal role in treating these diseases. [See chapter six-typhoid.] Nursing care is the most essential need for patients especially in the case of typhoid and other waterborne diseases.

Therefore, the shifting of these camps to a new location and to a new administrative agency would not be cause for a policy of increased assistance to the camp inmates. And indeed, military supervision, as opposed to the civilian administration, overall resulted in less medical service. Added to this was the fact that the normal view of blacks during that era militated against providing a better level of medical or other services.

The failure to provide even a minimal level of the required medical service to the inmates of the original black concentration camps and the later camps of the Department of Native Refugees was a policy decision rather than a logistical failure, or a lack of knowledge, on the part of Lord Milner and Lord Kitchener or the medical officials. The failures of the medical system were not, as has sometimes been suggested, a result of the incompetence of the various medical officers and camp administrators. The failures lay in the combination of the British colonial medical policy and

²¹² Curtin, *Death by Migration*, p.61.

²¹³ SRC, Vol. 4, 1103, Supt. of the Kroonstad white concentration camp to Trollope, 1 April 1901.

economic determinism, which was further exacerbated by the view of the British Army, and other armies of the time, that the care of sick and wounded was not the responsibility of the British Army. Historians must conclude that the misery and the suffering in the black concentration camps was the result of *deliberate neglect*, and not solely the misfortunes of war. Much more could have been done to alleviate the sickness and resulting deaths than was done. The sins that brought about this tragedy were not sins of omission, They were sins of commission. And this can also be said of most of the deaths of British soldiers recruited out of the pubs of London and other places. They died a long way from home, a less than glorious death, from typhoid and other diseases, which as E. A. Parkes had said long ago in 1860, could be eliminated from the returns of the dead. A nation that did not care about the suffering and welfare of its own soldiers cannot be expected to care about the families of the enemy. In World War I much needed reforms to the British Army Medical system were finally enacted.

Chapter 6

The Causes and Numbers of Black Deaths in the Concentration Camps.

Measles may be termed the opprobrium of present-day sanitary science. With the doubtful exception of diphtheria, it is the only zymotic [infectious] disease which has not proved amenable to preventive discipline. A Campbell Munro (1890-91)¹

The grand fact is clear that the occurrence of typhoid fever points unequivocally to defective removal of excreta, and that it is a disease altogether and easily preventable. Typhoid fever ought soon to disappear from every return of the diseases.² *Edmund A. Parkes, Professor of Military Hygiene, Army School of Medicine, 1860.*

I Introduction

The causes of death in the black concentration camps.

As discussed in the previous chapter the concentration camps were a very significant aspect of the war, in large part, because of the nearly 49,000³ documented deaths, mainly women, young children and infants, who died of disease and sickness, and in some instances from old age.⁴ Of this overall total, 21,042 black deaths have been documented from archival sources or British Government publications.⁵ Added to this fully authenticated number of deaths are several hundreds, or possibly several thousands of additional deaths, of black people who also died in the camps which cannot be documented. [See below under "Numbers of deaths-unrecorded black deaths."]

¹ A.C. Munro, "Measles: an epidemiological study", *Transactions of the Epidemiological Society*, Vol. 10 (1890), cited in Anne Hardy, *The Epidemic Streets: Infectious Disease and the Rise of Preventive Medicine, 1856-1900* (Oxford, 1993) p. 28.

² E.A. Parkes, "Hygiene in 1860." p. 361. Incomplete citation in Phillip Curtin, *Death by migration* (New York, 1989) p. 59 (May be part of Parkes' series "Report for Hygiene." which was a series of publications by this name begun in 1861 and published thereafter until 1907)

³ This figure of almost 49,000 deaths is based on the documented and verified 21,042 documented deaths in the original black camps and the Department of Native Refugees camps documented in this study and the 27,927 deaths in the white concentration camps where Boer and some black families were also confined. This gives a total of 48,973 deaths. [See Appendix 6.1-"Master Death List."]

⁴ Since many very old people were swept into the black camps, as well as the white camps, there were a certain number of deaths registered as being due to heart disease, heart failure, senility and old age. One BaSotho man died in the Bloemfontein black camp at age 100. The stress of the removals process and the conditions in the camps no doubt had significant impact on these older inmates. Many black and white inmates had been forced to walk long distances to the camps, and at night had no real shelter except to sleep under an ox wagon or out on the open veld. Some were transported in open railway trucks, and were sometimes left for days on these trucks with very little food, when trains carrying military supplies and troops were given priority on the single track railway. Upon arrival at concentration camps there was often no accommodation for them, as the camps had not been warned of their coming in sufficient time to prepare for them, or there were no tents available from the supply system.

⁵ *British Parliamentary Papers*, Particularly Cd. 819 and Cd. 853, *Reports, Etc., On the Working of the Refugee Camps in the Transvaal, Orange River Colony, Cape Colony and Natal.*

Almost no work has been done on the medical history of the black camps and very little work in this area has been carried out on the white camps, with the exceptions of the work of Bruce Fetter, Elizabeth Van Heyningen and Daniel Low-Beer and the writer who have begun that task. Given that the history of the concentration camps is substantially a medical history, this has resulted in a significant gap in the historiography of both the black camps and the war itself.

Previous work regarding the causes of death in the black concentration camps has been, for the most part, almost totally lacking or general in nature. As a result there has been a tendency to draw certain insufficiently substantiated conclusions. This was in large measure due to the focus of previous studies, which were not concerned with a medical history of the camps or even a general study of the life of the black inmates in the camps.

There is another very important reason for the lack of work in this area. Unfortunately very little record was kept of the causes of death in most of the original black camps in the Orange River Colony,(ORC). In some of the white camps the deaths of the black servants, their children and other blacks residing in these camps were not recorded. The Department of Native Refugees, (DNR), camps established in mid-1901 did not record the names of those who died, or the causes of death in their monthly reports, recording only the numbers of deaths under the headings of men, women and children.

Since the original black camps in the ORC were under the Department of Refugees in which the white camps were required to consistently report the causes of death, it must be concluded that the Chief Superintendent of the Department, Captain A.G. Trollope, did not consistently order the causes of death of blacks to be included in the returns of deaths. Furthermore, some of the original black camps under this Department did not send in any returns at all, which is evidence that neither Trollope or the Medical Officer of Health for the ORC, Dr. Pratt Yule, had any significant interest in the causes of deaths in the black camps and saw no need to be provided with this information.

Trollope, in all matters he felt to be essential, was a very consistent administrator including the returns of the deaths and births of white inmates. This failure to require returns of black deaths flies in the face of the order of Lord Roberts in October 1900 to register the births and deaths of both blacks and whites as discussed below. [See IV. A. Death Registration]

Fortunately the original black camp at Bloemfontein in the Orange River Colony and the white camp at Middleburg in the Transvaal Colony did maintain a *relatively* consistent record of black deaths and their causes. A case study of the causes of death in both of these camps follows.

The first part of this chapter addresses the question of the knowledge and capability of the British medical establishment to cope effectively with the high rates of sickness and death in the black camps. To limit this aspect of the study to a reasonable length the diseases that were the major contributors to the high deaths toll, primarily measles and typhoid, were researched and studied to determine the knowledge of the British medical profession in the prevention, aetiology and treatment of these diseases during the period 1890-1910. The study shows that the British medical establishment had a good theoretical and working knowledge of these diseases and indeed all the diseases present in the concentration camps.⁶

It is necessary to get beyond the very vague understandings of the medical crisis in the black camps and to look, in a more detailed and scientific way, at the specific causes of the high rates of sickness and death. This chapter attempts to answer the following question. What did the British medical profession know about field sanitation, diet, the aetiology and the treatment modalities of the major diseases in the camps.

⁶ The great preponderance of the research regarding the knowledge of the aetiology of the diseases in the camps and the needed treatment methods and medical equipment of the period of the war, was carried out at the Wellcome Institute of Medical History in London. A careful search of the literature on measles, typhoid, dysentery and some respiratory diseases during the period 1890-1910 was undertaken. The focus of the thesis does not allow the full value of that research to be reviewed and demonstrated. It has been possible, however, to gain important insights regarding the focus of the thesis from this in-depth study of the medical literature. I am very grateful for the assistance I received from the librarians and Dr. Anne Hardy, Mark Harrison and many others at the Institute.

The numbers of deaths of black people in the black and white concentration camps.

The second part of the chapter attempts to uncover and substantiate, as far as possible, the numbers of black and coloured people who died in the black and white camps. From the first days of the war, as during the Siege of Mafeking, the numbers of black deaths were minimised by an inadequate and incomplete recording of the numbers, causes of deaths and the names of those who died throughout the war. The numbers of deaths of inmates in the black concentration camps listed in previous studies are considerably lower than the numbers of black deaths this study has been able to document and verify with certainty.

The research of the numbers of black deaths in the camps has been as exhaustive as possible in an effort to discover the actual numbers of deaths, and at the same time recognising that the total number who died can never be fully known, because of the very incomplete record. Careful research has validated as many of the deaths which can be documented as certain. As a result of a detailed page by page research in the National and Provincial Archives of South Africa it has been possible to certify 21,042 deaths. There were many more deaths in the camps for which no documentation could be found. Since the number of deaths of the Boer people in the white camps has been a prominent feature of the literature on the war it seems surprising that some historians have raised some objection and controversy about this aspect of the study. One historian, Albert Grundlingh, accuses the writer and others of “trying to prove who suffered the most,” and adds, “it’s a rather tawdry spectacle of the Olympics of suffering.”⁷ Grundlingh has turned the argument around as it was the Afrikaner writers and historians during the apartheid era, who in arguing that the Boer women and children were the sole sufferers during the war, buttressed their claim to “sole martyrdom”⁸ by listing in careful detail the numbers of Boer women and children who tragically died in the concentration camps.⁹ The failure in the past to reach a higher and more accurate death

⁷ Linda Vergnani, “Rethinking the Boer War: historians prod post-apartheid South Africa to reconsider a bloody conflict 100 years ago,” *Chronicle of Higher Education*, 2000.

⁸ The term “sole martyrdom” is a term created by the author in a 1999 journal article.

⁹ Stowell V. Kessler, “The black concentration camps of the Anglo Boer War,” *Historia*, Vol. 44(1) pp. 110-147.

count is, in part, due to the extensive time consuming archival research that is required. The most important reason to achieve a much more accurate death count is the fact that the numbers and causes of death are a very good indicator of the conditions in these camps. Therefore it is crucial to achieve as accurate a census of the numbers and causes of deaths as possible. Indeed, because the incomplete record makes an accurate counting of the dead so difficult, it becomes all the more essential to establish as carefully as possible the numbers of deaths that can actually be documented by scientific research.

II. The knowledge of measles, dysentery and typhoid fever in British medicine during the period 1890-1910. and before.

This section of the chapter is concerned with the question of what the British medical establishment knew about the diseases which caused the highest numbers of deaths in the black camps. To impose a reasonable limit on the length and scope of the work, the discussion is confined to those diseases. Due to the very incomplete, sporadic and at times non-existent record of the causes of black deaths in the concentration camps, the task of identifying these diseases is quite problematic. In order to accomplish this task a careful analysis and interpretation of the death registers that we do have is essential.

Unfortunately some reports from the superintendents and medical officers of individual black camps regarding the diseases in the camps were sometimes given in summary form without specific numbers of deaths being attributed to specific diseases. An example of this is to be found in the record of the black camp at Aliwal North where "considerable sickness" was reported by the Medical Officer of the white camp who was also the Medical Officer for the black camp and the municipality. From mid January to the end of March 1901 he reported 53 deaths of which there was

considerable infant mortality. He listed the following principal diseases: gastroenteritis, dysentery, typhoid, measles, bronchitis, pneumonia, and conjunctivitis.¹⁰

Two case studies of black deaths in the Bloemfontein black camp and the Middleburg white concentration camp.

1. A case study of the causes of death in the Bloemfontein black concentration camp in the Orange River Colony from 2 February 1901 to 30 August 1901.

A generalised summary of the causes of death in the Aliwal North black camp, as cited above, is obviously not sufficient to come to a conclusion regarding the identification of the major causes of death in a particular camp. Nor are the death registers of camps that are not comprehensive, either in the period covered, or in the numbers and causes of deaths that took place during the total period of the camp's existence, suitable for that purpose. Two camps are selected for analysis which kept the most detailed records of the numbers and causes of death of black inmates, the black camp at Bloemfontein in the Orange River Colony and the white camp at Middleburg in the Transvaal. Even these records are not ideal. The Bloemfontein record is missing several weekly death lists and the Middleburg record is a very small sample of only 72 deaths. Nevertheless, these records being the most complete records available, it seems worthwhile to take advantage of the information that they provide. The reader may consult Appendix 6.1, "the Master Death List," which contains some record of the causes of death in other camps. The limited record in these camps is not sufficient to draw any overall conclusions regarding the deaths in those camps.

The Bloemfontein black camp record for the period 2 February 1901 to 31 August 1901 records 235 deaths and their respective causes.¹¹ As the inmates of this camp were transferred to the Department of Native Refugees on 1 September 1901 the recording of deaths ended at this time. As this camp was formed in late January or early February 1901 these death reports represent fairly well the

¹⁰ *The Free State Provincial Archives, Bloemfontein*, The archives of the Superintendent of Department of Refugees, (SRC), Vol. 5, 1163, Medical Officer to Supt. Aliwal North white camp, 31 March 1901.

¹¹ These death lists and weekly reports are located in SRC, Vol. 99. The complete listing of these 235 deaths are contained in Appendix 6.2. The dates of these lists and weekly reports are notated in table.

deaths that took place during the existence of this camp.¹² [See Appendix 6.2-The Names and Causes of Death in the Bloemfontein black concentration camp.]

The following table and graphs summarise the causes of death in the Bloemfontein black camp taken from Appendix 6.2.

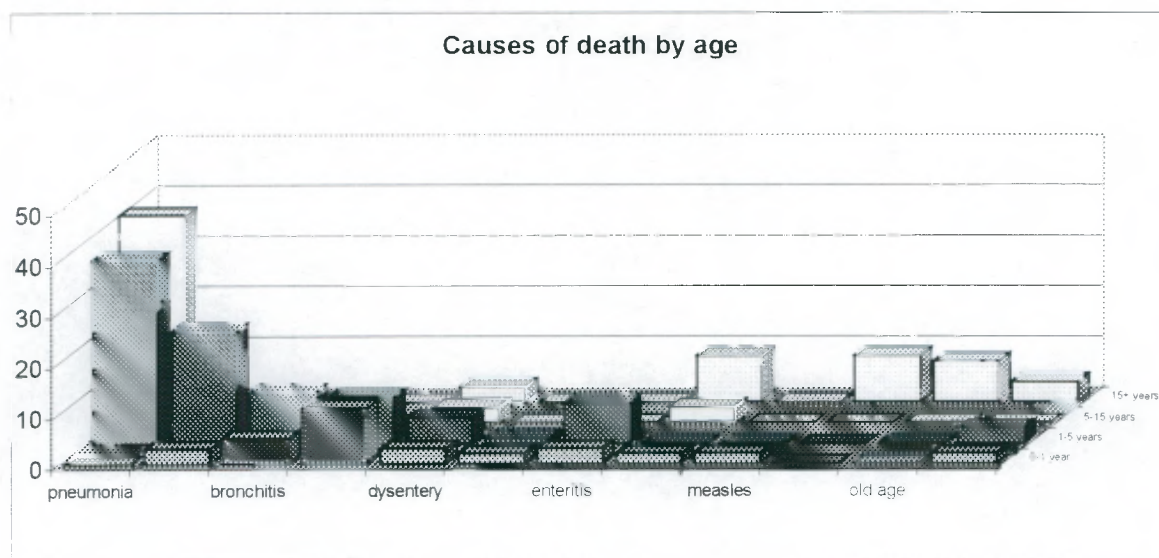
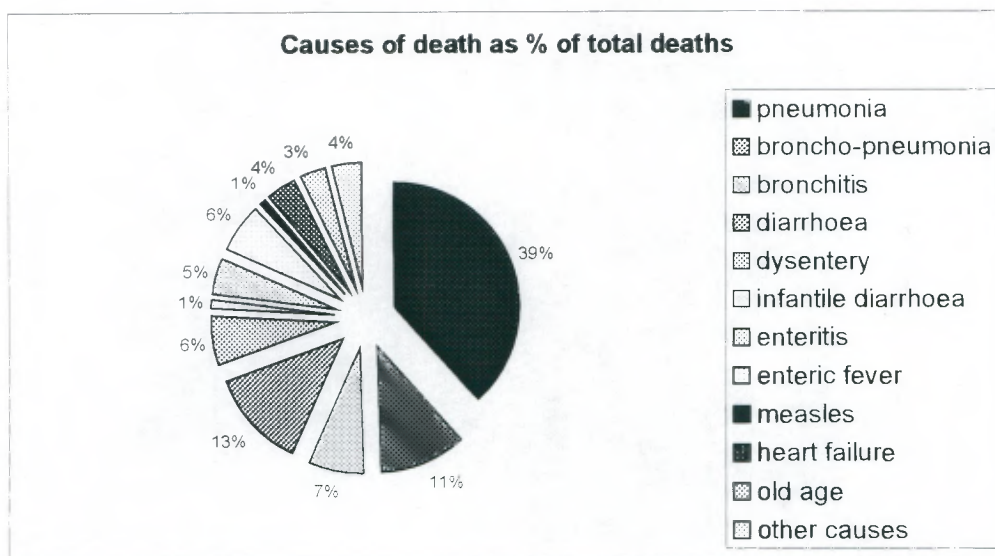
Table 6.1
Summary of the Causes of Death in the Bloemfontein Black Camp
2 February to 31 August 1901

Disease	Numbers of Deaths	% of total deaths	Deaths 0-1 year	Deaths 1-5 years	Deaths 5-15 years	Deaths 0-15 years	Deaths 15+ years
Pneumonia	90	38.30	0	36	41	77	8
Diarrhoea ¹³	30	12.77	11	9	Unknown	9	0
Broncho-pneumonia	26	11.07	3	22	2	27	0
Bronchitis	16	7.18	5	10	1	16	0
Dysentery	15	6.39	3	5	3	12	3
enteric fever	15	6.39	2	0	3	5	9
enteritis	11	4.68	3	8	0	11	0
Heart failure	9	3.83	0	0	0	0	9
Diarrhoea infantine	3	1.28	2	1	0	3	0
Measles ¹⁴	2	0.86	2	0	0	2	0
Ventriculi	1	0.43	0	0	0	0	1
Meningitis	1	0.43	0	1	0	1	0
tuberculosis pulmonum	1	0.43	0	0	0	0	1
Old Age	8	3.41	0	0	0	0	8
Cause of death not indicated	6	2.56	2	2	0	4	2

¹²Death lists for the weeks ending 19 April, 26 April, 17 May, 24 May, 3 August and 23 August 1901 are missing.

¹³Diarrhoea accompanies waterborne diseases such as enteric and dysentery and may indicate the presence of those diseases. Thus this statistic may be masking the presence of these diseases in some cases.

¹⁴It appears that deaths due to measles were often listed under the name of the secondary disease, or diseases, which actually caused the deaths. Note that these two deaths were infants less than 1 year of age. At this early age the cause of death may have been due to measles, itself, rather than a secondary disease such as pneumonia or some other respiratory disease. Note also that both of these measles deaths occurred within five days of each other during July, one of the two coldest months of the year in the southern hemisphere.



Analysis of causes of death in the Bloemfontein black concentration camp contained in Table 6.1

Of the total 235 deaths: 132 deaths, or 56.17%, were due to respiratory disease: pneumonia, 90 deaths; broncho-pneumonia, 27 deaths; and bronchitis, 16 deaths. Waterborne diseases account for 66 deaths or 28.21% of the total deaths as follows: diarrhoea, 33; dysentery, 15; enteric fever (typhoid), 15 and enteritis, 11.¹⁵ Death lists do not necessarily indicate the actual prevalence of

¹⁵ Enteritis manifests itself as an inflammation of the intestines, and is caused by bacterial contamination of food and or water. I have chosen to include this disease under the heading of waterborne diseases.

particular diseases in a camp. In some cases there may be a high rate of sickness caused by a given disease that has been effectively treated, thus significantly preventing a higher number of deaths from that cause. This was the case with typhoid fever in the Bloemfontein camp where effective sanitation and treatment prevented many deaths of patients who were sick from the enteric and dysentery bacilli. [See Appendix 6.2C] In addition the 33 deaths due to diarrhoea have been placed under the heading of waterborne diseases, because in very many cases, diarrhoea is an accompanying symptom of those diseases. Quain's Medical Dictionary, a standard British medical reference work published in 1894, lists diarrhoea as arising in many circumstances and emotional states and in cases of the following diseases: "...in pyaemia, measles, scarlatina, confluent, small pox, malaria, gout, and in anaemia and exhaustion, as well as cancer, Addison's disease and Hodgkin's disease."¹⁶

Surprisingly, only two measles deaths appear in the Bloemfontein death lists. Both of these deaths took place within a five-day period during the winter month of July 1901. As will be discussed below under the heading of [measles, deaths due to secondary causes] some of the deaths listed as respiratory diseases were probably initiated by the onset of measles. In contrast the Bloemfontein white camp record shows 151 cases of measles during 1901. Considering the fact that many of the black inmates were constantly working on a daily basis in the Bloemfontein white camp, where measles was the second highest cause of death, it seems likely that many deaths initiated by measles were attributed to respiratory diseases. Respiratory diseases were the highest cause of death. These diseases commonly follow measles and are usually the actual cause of death. Such a low death rate due to measles seems questionable. In all likelihood, as stated, many of the deaths listed under the heading of broncho-pneumonia and pneumonia, were initiated by a bout with the measles virus.

¹⁶"Diarrhoea" in Richard Quain and Frederick Thomas Roberts, (eds.) *A Dictionary of Medicine Including General Pathology, General Therapeutics, Hygiene and Diseases of Women and Children in Two Volumes*, Vol. I, (London, 1894) p. 470.

The Bloemfontein black camp was the only “original black camp” in the Orange River Colony with a full time doctor who according to the record appears to have been very conscientious and competent. As a result it is likely that the diagnosis of measles in this camp would have been consistent and routine, although the diagnosis of dark skinned patients was somewhat difficult. He would have been entirely correct in listing the cause of death as being due to a secondary disease when that was the actual cause of death. In cases where an initial diagnosis of measles had not been made, the presenting cause of death would also correctly have been given as the cause of death.

It can be seen in appendix 6.1 that of the 11 deaths due to enteritis, 9 of the deaths from that cause occurred in July, and the remaining two cases occurred in late August, which are the two coldest months of the year and which is also the time of the greatest vulnerability to measles deaths. The Quain Medical Dictionary attests that “Enteritis with diarrhoea and dysentery, is a fatal... complication of [measles].”¹⁷ Some of these deaths due to enteritis may have been initiated by a measles attack. The Bloemfontein death register only presents one disease under the heading, “cause of death,” with no secondary diseases being listed. There are 15 deaths listing typhoid fever as the cause of death and an equal number of deaths under the heading of dysentery. It can be observed that almost any disease or sickness can follow measles and cause the death of the patient.

2. A case study of the causes of the deaths of black inmates in the Middleburg white concentration camp in the Transvaal Colony from 10 June 1901 to 5 December 1902.

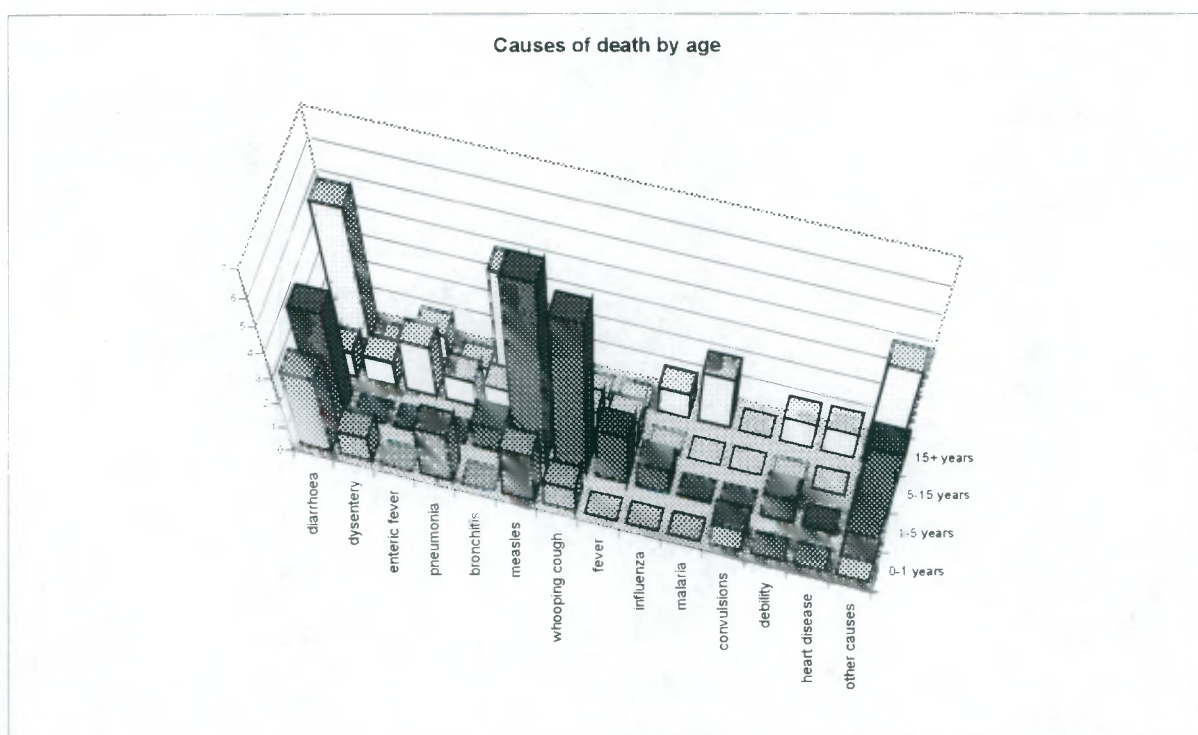
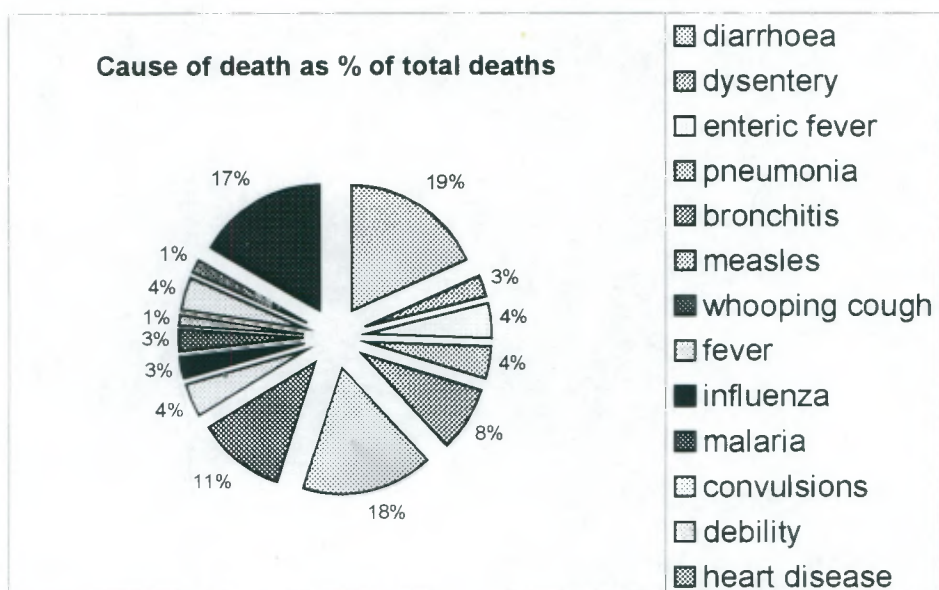
The following table and graphs of the black deaths in the Middleburg white camp may shed more light on the low number of measles deaths listed in the Bloemfontein black camp death register.

¹⁷ “Measles.” in Richard Quain and Frederick Thomas Roberts, (eds.) *A Dictionary of Medicine Including General Pathology, General Therapeutics, Hygiene and Diseases of Women and Children in Two Volumes* (London, 1894), Vol. 2, p.19

Table 6.2
Summary of Black Deaths in the Middleburg White Camp

Disease	Numbers of Deaths	% of total deaths	Deaths 0-1 Year	Deaths 1-5 Years	Deaths 5-15 Years	% of deaths 0-15 Years	Deaths 15+ Years
diarrhoea	13	18.37	3	4	1	61.54	5
Measles	12	16.91	2	7	1	83.34	2
whooping cough	8	11.27	1	6	1	100	0
Bronchitis	6	8.45	0	1	1	33	4
Enteric fever	3	4.23	0	0	2	66.66	1
fever	3	4.23	0	2	1	100	0
Pneumonia	3	4.23	2	0	1	100	0
dysentery	2	2.82	1	0	1	100	0
Influenza	2	2.82	0	1	0	50	1
Malaria	2	2.82	0	0	0	0	2
convulsions	1	1.41	1	0	0	100	0
Debility	1	1.41	0	0	0	0	1
Died in hospital	1	1.41	0	0	0	0	1
Exhaustion	1	1.41	0	1	0	100	0
Heart disease	1	1.41	0	0	0	0	1 (age 16)
Lighting stroke	1	1.41	0	0	0	0	1
Marasmus	1	1.41	0	0	1	100	0
Not indicated	9 ¹⁸	14.1	1	4	0	55.56	2

¹⁸ Two of the nine deaths in which the cause of death is not indicated the ages of the victims are not indicated.



Analysis of causes of death in the Middleburg white concentration camp contained in Table 6.2

Of the 72 black deaths in the register, 26 deaths were from measles, and or a respiratory disease. Of these deaths 37.14 percent of these deaths were labelled "measles and bronchitis". Two deaths were

listed as due to measles and diarrhea. Three deaths were registered as solely due to measles. Five deaths were listed as due to bronchitis and some other cause of death. Five deaths were listed as due to pneumonia or influenza. Seven deaths were due to whooping cough. These deaths from whooping cough were all babies under 6 months of age. The numbers of deaths registered due to measles and some other cause are 12, or 16.67 percent. The numbers of deaths due to measles and or respiratory disease amount to 26.39 percent of all registered black deaths in the Middleburg white camp.¹⁹

As a result, and in contrast to the death lists of the Bloemfontein black camp, measles are shown to be the second highest cause of death in the Middleburg white camp. Of the twelve deaths attributed to measles, bronchitis is listed as a secondary disease in six of the deaths, which was probably the actual cause of death. So common was it to list a secondary cause of death that printed death register forms in some of the white camps had a "secondary disease" heading under which the secondary disease could be notated.

As in Table 6.1, listing the deaths in the Bloemfontein camp, there are three infants measles deaths in which no secondary diseases are listed and as in the Bloemfontein camp these three deaths are infants less than 1 year. The remaining two measles deaths in this group of 12 are that of a three year old boy and a ten year old girl in which the secondary cause of death is listed as diarrhoea. Diarrhoea which is listed as the cause of the highest numbers of deaths claimed victims in the following age groups. Of the 13 deaths three were infants less than a year old, four were less than five years old and the remaining five were adults. There were only three deaths listed as being due to typhoid fever and two deaths as being due to dysentery. Some deaths listed as being due to diarrhoea may have been due to typhoid fever or dysentery.

¹⁹*The National Archives of South Africa, Pretoria, The archives of the Director of Burger Camps, (DBC) Box 5.*

As will be discussed further, there had always been difficulties in accurately diagnosing these two diseases sufficiently to distinguish them from one another. During the period of the war typhoid was certainly misdiagnosed as dysentery. George Sternberg, the former Surgeon General of the United States Army, wrote in 1903: "Dysentery [is] due to a bacillus which resembles in many respects the bacillus of typhoid fever, [whose]...specific differences...can only be recognised by the expert bacteriologist. [As in the case of typhoid]...this bacillus is found in the excreta of the sick and an attack of either disease depends upon the introduction of the germ to the to the intestinal tract, by way of mouth."²⁰ In 1903 a military authority on aetiology of South African dysentery stated that "...the various diseases which are at present included under the term dysentery is, after all; merely a name for a symptom."²¹ [See II.D.1, Diagnosis of typhoid below.]

Measles.

The research approach used throughout this chapter involves the use of the medical literature of the period 1880 to 1910 as a means to determine what understanding British doctors had of the aetiology and treatment methodologies of the diseases that were the major causes of death in the concentration camps. In this section these understandings are investigated in the case of measles.

Quain's Dictionary of Medicine, a standard medical reference published in 1894, and used by British doctors prior to and during the war gives the following definition of measles. (The study relies heavily on this dictionary because of its detail and comprehensiveness.) "An infectious specific fever, with an eruption on the fourth day after catarrhal²² symptoms, of a deep red spotted rash. It persists as a general mottling after the subsidence of the fever, and where intense, may cause a fine desquamation [patches of scales on the skin]. Very important is the observation that "Measles very rarely attacks the same person more than once."

²⁰ George M. Sternberg, *Infection and Immunity With Special Reference to the Prevention of Infectious Diseases* (London, 1903) p. 140.

²¹ *British Parliamentary Papers*, Cd. 1498, Commission on the Nature, Pathology, and Causation of Dysentery and Relationship to Enteric Fever. Part I, "On the Etiology of South African Dysentery," by Lieut. Colonel David Bruce, R.A.M.C., p. 7.

²² Catarrh: "Inflammation of a mucous membrane, especially of the respiratory tract, accompanied by excessive secretions."

The disease usually prevails as an epidemic, and spreads by direct infection. Contagion is the cause of the measles infection which spreads from person to person. In large towns in England, and generally elsewhere where the disease is endemic, epidemics appear about every four years, chiefly among children as a fresh series of the susceptible victims become exposed. In a statement that is very germane to the measles outbreaks in the concentration camps, Anne Hardy states what was known in the late 1800s and perhaps before that period. "There was no question of avoiding measles; [because] it is one of the most infectious diseases known to [humanity]."²³ ²⁴ The history of measles epidemics is resplendent with evidence that this is the case. For example, in March 1807 during an outbreak of measles at St. Helena not a single family escaped the epidemic.²⁵

Few adults suffer the disease because most of them have had measles as children. That was certainly the case in Great Britain. *Among scattered populations long periods may elapse without infection reaching them.*²⁶ [Emphasis is mine] Therefore, to Hardy's statement "unless protected by immunisation..." should be added the words "or geographical isolation."²⁷ This shows that the principle of *geographical isolation* was well understood, at least as early as 1894. The isolation of the Boer farms on the veld was the reason that so many in the concentration camps, both adults and children, were so susceptible to the measles epidemics.

The death statistics for the white camps in the Orange River Colony, for 1901 show 2,661 deaths due to measles, of which 10.34% were persons over fifteen years of age, and by which time almost all potential victims should have contracted the disease according to previous studies. In the Bethulie camp, a very insanitary and poorly administrated camp with a high death rate, there were

²³ When appropriate and when it does not detract from the meaning of a quotation I am using inclusive language.

²⁴ Anne Hardy, *Epidemic Streets*, (Oxford, 1993) p.28

²⁵ Hudson Ralph Janisch, Compilation, *Extract from the St. Helena records*, 2nd edition; *Chronicles of Cape Commanders* cited in Percy Ward Laidler and Michael Gelfand, *South Africa, Its Medical History, 1652-1898: A Medical and Social History* (Cape Town, 1971) p. 113.

²⁶ Richard Quain, et al (Eds.) *A Dictionary of Medicine*, (London, 1894) p.16.

²⁷ See the excellent work of Andrew Cliff, Peter Haggett and Matthew Smallman-Raynor, *Measles: An historical geography*, as well as the recent work of Daniel Low-Beer, Matthew Smallman-Raynor, Andrew Cliff, "Mortality during the South African War: the crossing of military and refugee disease histories, scheduled for publication in *Social History and Medicine*, 2003.

335 deaths attributed to measles of which 77 or 21.20% of the deaths were persons over fifteen years of age. Thirty-one deaths were that of persons between the ages of fifteen and twenty-five. Twenty-four of these deaths were women. This being the age range of the birthing of children, it can be noted that there were thirty-five deaths of infants during the first year of life in this camp, which is the highest number of deaths in this age group in any of the white camps in the Orange River Colony during 1901.²⁸ It has also been shown in a five year study (1979-1983) in a West African community that a high intensity exposure to the measles virus can in some cases overcome the acquired immunity from maternal anti-bodies.²⁹ This means that in a camp like Bethulie where measles was raging even infants who had acquired immunity from their mothers could still come down with measles.

The Quain "measles" article makes a highly relevant statement when considering the high measles death rate in the concentration camps. "Those who escape measles during childhood are very likely to be seized upon taking their place in a mixed community."³⁰ In a 1927 study of the measles epidemic in Glasgow in four affected schools in the poorer residential neighbourhoods, the majority of the children escaped exposure until they attended school. A survey in Willesden England of 14,000 elementary school children confirmed this finding. By the time these students reached age fifteen, 97.5% of them had come down with the disease.³¹

²⁸ *Free State Archives*, Orange River Colony printed materials, (ORC, Vol. 251) *Refugee Camps Mortality Statistics for the period from 18 February to 31st December 1901*. The former date is the date at which the camps were taken over by the Civil Administration. Dr. Pratt Yule, the Medical Officer of Health for the ORC, who compiled these statistics stated that the information was incomplete. "From lack of returns it has been impossible to work out the case-mortality of the various diseases. I am therefore of [the] opinion that information of the numbers of those sick of infective diseases at least, should be forwarded (weekly) with the death returns, in order that case-mortality from these diseases may be ascertained. It is only by this means, with due consideration of the other factors, that a comparison can be obtained of the virulence of any infection with the same infection treated under European conditions."

²⁹ P. Aaby, *et al*, "High measles mortality in infancy related to intensity of exposure." *Journal of Paediatrics*, July 1986, Vol. 109(1) pp. 40-44.

³⁰ *Ibid.*,

³¹ James L. Halliday, "An inquiry into the relationship between housing conditions and the incidence and fatality of measles," The Public Health Department, Glasgow, Date not given, but is probably 1927 (Wellcome Institute of Medical History, Library)

Measles for adults is much more serious than measles contracted during childhood. J. Squire in March 1900 observed that measles is dangerous to young troops in proportion to the amount of exposure they have had. "Small Pox, scarlet fever or measles if introduced into the force may cause much trouble."³² Measles for mothers with children or during pregnancy is even more serious. They present a very serious threat to young babies. "At present it is known that measles during pregnancy results in a high rate of spontaneous abortion and premature delivery. There is some evidence that measles may be transmitted transplacentally as infants delivered during the mother's incubation often develop a rash simultaneously with the mother. While some infants with perinatally acquired measles have mild illnesses, others develop a severe form of the disease with pneumonia."³³

Some babies, who would have normally acquired temporary immunity from their mothers did not do so because their mothers had not contracted measles prior to their pregnancy. The length of this inherited immunity is not entirely clear. In [Africa]"... as many as one in five measles cases occur in children less than 1 year of age."³⁴ Recent research in India in rural villages shows a rapid decline in maternal antibodies in the 6-9 months period to only 18%.³⁵ Andrew Cliff explains that in affluent countries with good nutrition measles is a mild disease and mainly occurs among children 3-5 years of age. Conversely in poor countries the illness tends to be severe, with high mortality and prominently involves children under the age of 2."³⁶

This study now makes it clear that the British medical authorities should have expected a measles epidemic if concentration camps were formed. The military decision makers were probably not conversant with the medical literature. Some decision makers may have been aware of the tragic

³²J. Edgar Squire, "The Medical Side of the War," in *Treatment, A Journal of Practical Medicine and Surgery*, Vol. IV. No. 1. March 1900 (Wellcome Institute of Medical History, Archives, RAMC Collection)

³³Internet Source, "<http://Virology-online.com/viruses/MEASLES.htm>." No author's name provided. P.3.

³⁴T.L. Avery, "An analysis over 8 years of children admitted to a hospital in Sierra Leone, West Africa," *West African Medical Journal*, 1963 12, 61-63. Cited in Cliff, *et al*, *Measles*, p. 194.

³⁵Khan Z, *et al* *Saudi Medical Journal* "Measles antibody titre in children up to five years of age in rural areas of Aligarh District, India, *Saudi Medical Journal*, 21 February 2000 (2) pp. 175-79.

³⁶Andrew Cliff, Peter Haggett and Matthew Smallman-Raynor, *Measles: An Historical Geography of a Major Human Viral Disease From Global Expansion to Local Retreat, 1840-1900*; (London, 1993) p.33.

death rates in the Cuban Reconcentrados. It is even more likely, however, that they did not consider the medical aspects of concentration at all. It should also be taken into account that when the camps were formed the expectation was that these camps would not be in existence very long, as it was believed that the war would end long before it did. The issue is not that the British Army could have stopped the measles epidemics, but that the decision to confine families in camps brought with it epidemics. Certainly better conditions in the camps would have reduced the number of deaths due to respiratory diseases which are almost always the actual cause of death, as previously stated. In this respect the very poor housing was a major contributor to these deaths.

It was believed, correctly, that the family and the schools were the major locations of infection. One of the reasons given for this view was that measles is not far diffusible in air. Obviously confinement in a closed space with numbers of persons is a very good environment for the spread of measles by means of contagion from person to person, as is also the spread of the respiratory diseases, which almost invariably follow measles. This is part of the reason that measles are much more prevalent in cold and dry weather. In a study of epidemic disease in pre-industrial Europe, during the mortality peak of the 1740s, John Post, states that climate has an effect on the appearance of epidemics. "In eighteenth century Europe, severe and protracted cold seasons inevitably lengthened the period of time that the working population were in close indoor personal contact. The living quarters of the majority of [these people]...were small and poorly ventilated..."³⁷. The concentration of black and Boer families in a much smaller space than that of the expansive milieu of the farms would lead not only to epidemic levels of the disease, but would also result in more severe forms of the disease with higher dose rates. As stated, close contact was the means by which the disease was conveyed.

³⁷ John D. Post, *Food Shortage, Climactic Variability, and Epidemic Disease in Preindustrial Europe: The Mortality Peak in the Early 1740's* (London, 1985) p. 270.

Quain gives two examples of this principle. "Children with full eruption have been brought into a house among others and nursed in a room apart, without any extension of the disease even to the most susceptible. When young infants are said to escape infection it is where the family is small and they are less exposed.³⁸ The next example is more illustrative of actual physical contact with the rash of the eruption. "A big dog after licking the hands and face of a child with measles contracted the condition of *coryza*³⁹ a week after, and died in the following week with fever and bronchitis. Spots of measles-like congestion were found in the pharynx and trachea, with engorgement of the lymphatic glands."⁴⁰

James Halliday illustrates this principle of the isolation of children from active measles cases in his study of the spread of measles in tenement houses in England. Out of ten children in a tenement, nine children developed measles. The child who did not become infected with measles was aged 2 and lived on the ground floor. There were no other children on the ground floor. One student from the public school brought home the measles and six families in the tenement were totally infected.⁴¹ Obviously the very confined space of a bell tent precluded isolation of family members with the disease from the rest of the family. This was exacerbated by the application of the military standard, stipulating that 15 persons were to occupy a bell tent.⁴² Emily Hobhouse in her very penetrating style said, "When the 10 or 12 persons who occupied the bell-tent were all packed into it...there was no room to move and the atmosphere was indescribable."⁴³ Later this requirement was reduced to 6-8 persons. This was still a very crowded domicile, conducive to high dose rates.

³⁸ Richard Quain, (Ed.) "Measles." in *A Dictionary of Medicine: Including General Pathology, General Therapeutics, Diseases and the Diseases of Women and Children by Various Writers*, Vol. II: (London, 1894) p. 17.

³⁹ Coryza, "1. *Pathology*: acute inflammation of the mucous membrane of the nasal cavities; cold in the head. 2. *Vet. Scientific*: a contagious disease of birds, esp. poultry, characterised by the secretion of thick mucous in the mouth and throat.

⁴⁰ Quain, *Dictionary of Medicine* "Measles," p. 17.

⁴¹ James L. Halliday, *An inquiry into the relationship between housing conditions and the incidence and fatality of measles*, (Oxford, 1927) p. 11.

⁴² SRC, Vol. 4, 856, Trollope to Supt. Kroonstad white camp, 28 March 1901.

⁴³ Daniel Low-Beer, *et al*, "Mortality during the South African War," p. 12.

This view of the role of isolation and quarantine was confirmed at a later time in a study in Guinea-Bissau in a rural area where it was found that the fatality rate was significantly higher in houses with several cases of measles, than in those with a single case.⁴⁴

Problems in the diagnosis of measles.

One of the major problems in the diagnosis of measles is that the characteristic rash in the measles patient, is not as visible in the case of dark skinned peoples. A test was discovered in 1896 by a New York physician, Henry Koplik,⁴⁵ that allowed a dark skinned person to be more easily, and more surely, diagnosed by examining the inside of the lips or the buccal mucous membrane. This would still require examination by a medically trained person. Unfortunately Koplik's spots are usually gone by the fifth or sixth day.⁴⁶ Koplik, himself, pointed out that that these spots were best seen before the eruption. Obviously this means that by the time rash appears, the spots on the inside of the mouth are gone. The first symptom was a high fever for more than three days prior to the rash.⁴⁷ Mothers could have been warned about this symptom and could have been told to bring the child to the doctor. This would require routine access to a doctor. As a result, black inmates were probably not diagnosed during the Koplik's spots period. The literature of British medicine does not mention this test prior to, or during, the war. It seems quite likely that British as well as South African doctors during the war were not aware of this test. As mentioned above, in the case study of the causes of death in the Bloemfontein black camp, in cases where the initial onset of measles was not diagnosed, the secondary disease, would have been diagnosed as the cause of death. With the exception of some infant deaths, this would have been, in fact, the actual cause of death.

⁴⁴ Based on a study by the Ministry of Health, Guinea-Bissau, and the Swedish Agency for Research Cooperation with Developing Countries (SAREC). Cited in Abby, et al, "Overcrowding and intensive exposure as determinants of Measles mortality." P. 51.

⁴⁵ My thanks to Professor Bruce Fetter at the University of Wisconsin, Milwaukee for bringing the work of Dr. Henry Koplik to my attention.

⁴⁶ A. Nicoll and P. Rudd, *British Paediatric Association Manual on Infectious Diseases and Immunizations in Children*. (Oxford, 1989) p.82.

⁴⁷ Alfred S. Evans, (ed.) *Viral Infections of Humans: Epidemiology and Control, Third Edition* (New York, 1984) p. 451.

For military doctors there was another possible problem in the diagnosis of measles. It is probable that military doctors who had never been in private practice had not encountered measles in the treatment of their patients. An article, "Eruptive and continued fevers," written in 1900 by Dr. J.W. Moorew, stated "...that Prodromal [early or precursor] rashes in measles may lead to errors in diagnosis, and especially to mistaking measles for scarlet fever." In an article in a leading British medical journal in November 1899, listing the prevailing diseases in previous military encounters in South Africa, did not mention measles at all.⁴⁸ This had been the case in England's previous wars.. Parkes in his famous *Manual of Practical Hygiene* in listing the sicknesses plaguing soldiers in wartime lists all the major diseases, and few minor ones, except measles.⁴⁹

Daniel Low-Beer cites the following statistic regarding the causes of death in the British Army during the South African War. There were 8,082 deaths due to typhoid and only four deaths due to measles.⁵⁰ This was due to the fact that most of the British soldiers were drawn from urban areas where measles is endemic, and hence these soldiers had, in almost every case, contracted measles during childhood. In contrast, in the American Civil War, where most of the soldiers were drawn from rural farms, "8,000 cases of measles were reported in the [Union] Army of the Potomac during the Months of July, August and September 1861..."⁵¹ As a result some British military doctors were not familiar with the diagnosis and treatment of measles. It must be remembered that while the Royal Army Medical Corps' doctors were withdrawn from the white camps in April 1901 many of the black camps, including those in the Department of Native Refugees, were served by part time military doctors.

⁴⁸ "The War in South Africa." in *The Lancet, Journal of British and Foreign Medicine*, Vol. II for 1899. P. 1320 (Wellcome Institute Library, London)

⁴⁹ Edmund A. Parkes, *Manual of Practical Hygiene Prepared Especially For Use in the Medical Service of the Army* (London, 1864) pp. 594-95.

⁵⁰ Daniel Low-Beer, "Mortality in the South African War," p.2.

⁵¹ Cliff, *Measles*, p. 104.

The cold hot syndrome.

In South Africa during the last half of the nineteenth century the average cycle of the measles epidemics lasted for a period of approximately six to eight years before exhausting itself of victims in a particular geographical area of the country.⁵² A major cause of measles epidemics in the concentration camps was brought about by bringing families into camps that were "hot, i.e., where an epidemic was in progress from areas that were "cold," where the measles virus, not finding any more victims, had died out, just as a burning ember dies out, when all the fuel has been consumed. It was policy that families removed from the farms were to be "dropped" at the concentration camp nearest to the farm from which they had been removed, whenever military circumstances allowed. This practice must have helped to prevent this problem of bringing refugees from cold areas into camps that were "hot" or *vice versa*. It must be noted, as already stated, that people from isolated farms were vulnerable at any age due to their never having had measles. Babies brought into the camps did not have acquired immunity if their mothers had never had measles. Unfortunately British column commanders, who had the final say as to where refugees were to be dumped down, very often violated this policy.⁵³ In addition available housing space in the camps, which was wired to column commanders, sometimes dictated that refugees be dropped at camps that were further away. In some instances this may have resulted in the mixing of inmates from hot and cold districts.

There was an additional cause of the measles epidemics in the camps. In a few cases refugees were transferred from one camp to another camp. Inmates with full eruptions of measles, and hence very contagious, were transferred to other camps. In some cases inmates of the camps with active measles were transferred into camps where no measles were present and immediately an epidemic of measles raged in that camp just as a fire bursts into flame when new fuel is added. In August 1901 nineteen inmates from the Kroonstad white camp were transferred to the Heilbron camp..

⁵²Bruce Fetter and Stowell Kessler, "Scars From a Childhood Disease; Measles in the Concentration Camps of the Boer War." *Social Science History* 20:4 (Winter 1996), p. 595. The research in this portion of the paper is the work of Bruce Fetter at the University of Wisconsin, Madison Wisconsin, for which I am most grateful.

⁵³ SRC, Vol. 19,7457, Cmdt., Ficksburg to Trollope, 2 February 1902.

Some of these transferees were in the eruption stage. The Heilbron Superintendent reported, "7 children attacked 28 days ago. Five children attacked within 15 days ago, one eruption came out last Sunday, and all are capable of spreading infection."⁵⁴ Circular 104 issued on 11 October 1901 ordered that inmates were not to be transferred who were suffering with an infectious disease.⁵⁵ Following this incident Trollope informed the Superintendent of the Bethulie white camp that it was inadvisable to "translocate" refugees to another camp until the measles epidemic was over in his camp.⁵⁶

A much more flagrant violation of the policy forbidding inmates with measles and other infectious diseases being transferred to other concentration camps also took place in August 1901. Early in that month the Vredefort white camp transferred some refugees to the Heilbron white camp that were not inspected for "infectious" [contagious] disease, which resulted in a measles epidemic in that camp. When the Kroonstad camp, as a result, was told that the Heilbron camp would not accept any inmates from Kroonstad. The Superintendent of that camp without authority from Trollope, and with no previous notice, sent 629 refugees to Heilbron. The Heilbron Superintendent, in understandable upsettiness, complained to Trollope: "Supt. Kroonstad notifies that six hundred twenty-nine Refugees have been sent here from his camp." These refugees had not been isolated from the rest of the population, some of whom had measles.⁵⁷

There is no record of this kind of policy in regards to the black camps. Nor is there any record of the transfer of black inmates infected with measles or other diseases, or any concern regarding this possibility, or any preventative measures. As mentioned above, there was at times a misdiagnosis of measles and scarlet fever. If scarlet fever cases were misdiagnosed as measles, then scarlet fever could be spread to the measles victims, if they were mixed together in isolation, and to the general camp population if they were not isolated. According to the reports of the Committee of Ladies,

⁵⁴ SRC, Vol. 12, 4395, Supt., Heilbron white camp "B" to Commandant Heilbron, 15 August 1901.

⁵⁵ SRC, Vol. 20, Trollope to Supt, Brandfort white camp, 27 February 1902.

⁵⁶ SRC, Vol. 13, 4879, Trollope to Supt., Bethulie white camp, 12 September 1901.

⁵⁷ SRC, Vol. 12, 4569, Supt. Heilbron white camp to Trollope, 29 August 1901.

quarantine and isolation were not always done properly, or done at all in some of the white camps. Fortunately very few cases of scarlet fever were reported in the white camps.

Dr. Friedman at the Bloemfontein black camp noted in his report for the week ending 23 February 1901 that he had isolated four of the five cases of typhoid and was waiting for another tent so that he could isolate the fifth one. He did not indicate that he had isolated the one new case of dysentery.⁵⁸ This would seem to indicate that this was his practice and policy. Since many black inmates worked in the white camps carrying out certain tasks that brought them into contact with white inmates, including patients in the camp hospital it would have been essential for both the black and white inmates, that quarantine was practiced. The Medical Officer of the Brandfort white camp indicated in early March 1901 that he had isolated a few black inmates with syphilis and leprosy, but that there was no hospital for these isolates.⁵⁹

It seems likely that, as in the case of the white camps, that black inmates were transferred to other camps so that the Army Departments could utilise their labour, or for other reasons. In one recorded instance black inmates were transferred from the nine original black camps in the Orange River Colony to perform labour for the Chief Ordnance Officer in Bloemfontein. They stayed in the Bloemfontein black camp during period.⁶⁰ It is possible that some of these men were suffering from infectious and contagious diseases. Coming from nine different camps they found themselves working together repairing tents. Such a circumstance has the same impact as transferring inmates to other camps. There is no record of any policy forbidding the transfer of black inmates to other camps that were suffering from contagious disease. Nor is there indication that incoming black refugees were isolated from the populations of either the black or white camps. Such instructions were sent to the white camp having a supervisory relationship to the black camp. The research has involved reading all the record in the Orange River Colony white camps. No such instructions were

⁵⁸SRC, Vol. 1, 157, Weekly Report for the week ending 23 February 1901, Friedman to Trollope, 23 February 1901.

⁵⁹ SRC, Vol. 3, 543, Supt. Brandfort white camp to Trollope, 9 March 1901.

⁶⁰ SRC, Vol. 4, 1118, Trollope to Chief Staff Officer, Bloemfontein, 9 April 1901.

found in the records of the individual white camps regarding the transfer of black inmates. This does not mean that there were no such policies or instructions regarding the black camps. It seems, however, quite unlikely that such orders were issued.

This reveals a rather naïve understanding of the problem of disease spread. This is especially glaring in light of the colonial medical policy whose core principle was the protection of the military and the British descent population. In requesting black inmates for labour needs, Trollope received telegrams from the superintendents of the black camps regarding the numbers of inmates available for such labour. No indication was given in these responses that some inmates could not be provided because they were sick with an infectious or contagious disease. It would only take one such inmate with typhoid, for example, to contaminate the camp he was sent to. This was according to Dr. Walter Reed the way in which whole American army camps contracted typhoid, despite very good sanitation practices. [See below: Diagnosis of typhoid:-Dr, Walter Reed.]

Measles deaths due to secondary causes.

As stated almost all measles deaths are due to a secondary disease, which follows and is induced by the measles attack, usually: pneumonia, broncho-pneumonia, influenza or some other respiratory sickness. Indeed, "measles is a respiratory disease caused by a virus. The virus normally grows in the cells that line the back of the throat and in cells that line the lungs."⁶¹ Presently measles is seen as a typical childhood disease, but unlike other common viral diseases, i.e. Varicella -Zoster Virus, rubella, mumps and parvovirus infections, measles often leads to severe complications that may be fatal. Presently in the third world there may be up to 900,000 deaths each year due to measles, and or, the complications arising out of a measles attack.⁶² According to Quain some of the symptoms of these secondary diseases are as follows: "In fatal cases the bronchi are congested, sometimes with exudation on the lining membrane, or more frequently covered with catarrhal mucus. Capillary

⁶¹ Internet. Information provided by the National Immunization Program of the United States Center for Disease Control. www.cdc.gov/nip/diseases/measles/vac-chart.htm.

⁶² Internet Source, "http://virology-online.com/viruses/MEASLES.htm" No author's name provided.

bronchitis with bronco-pneumonia is frequent." Many other complicating conditions are presented as bearing on the respiratory system.⁶³ It can be concluded that in 1894 the secondary causes of death following the onset of measles were well known by British doctors.

The impact of diet on measles.

Deaths due to measles have been considered, by some, as being, at least in part, a result of malnutrition. Anne Hardy asserts that the history of measles is of particular interest because of the recognised link between malnutrition and mortality from the disease.⁶⁴ While there was not a condition of starvation in the black camps, with the exception of Nelspruit and the Honingspruit DNR camps in two instances,⁶⁵ there was certainly malnutrition. Measles fatality in recent history has become more serious in the developing countries and as a result mal-nutrition has been credited with this higher mortality rate. Recent work by Peter Aaby, however, has argued that the state of nutrition for children who died of measles was no different than general child population or those children who survived measles.⁶⁶ I would suggest that higher rates of measles deaths in developing countries may more likely be due to a lack of immunisation and the availability of medical care.

Hardy cites the view of Thomas McKeown, who argues that "rising standards of living reduced chronic malnutrition, which had impaired resistance to the disease."⁶⁷ While acknowledging the work of Abby above, she concludes that the connection between malnutrition and measles must be pursued. She cites the work of David Morley, describing him as "a distinguished student of childhood infections in developing countries." He supports McKeown's thesis that the nineteenth century decline of measles deaths was due to improved nutrition.⁶⁸ Observation of the present day diet of black people in South Africa is very similar to the diet in the black camps. Indeed the food supply of mealies and salt was worse than the present day diet in undeveloped countries. This is

⁶³ Quain, *Medical Dictionary*, "Measles." p. 17.

⁶⁴ Anne Hardy, *Epidemic Streets*, p.33.

⁶⁵ CSO, Vol. 46, 4282/01, Daniel Marome and G.J. Oliffhant, inmates to Goold-Adams, 23 November 1901.

⁶⁶ Department of Pathology, Gentofte Hospital, 2820 Gentofte, Denmark. Cited in *The American Journal of Epidemiology*, Abby et al, "Overcrowding and Intensive Exposure as Determinants of Measles Mortality", p. 49

⁶⁷ Thomas McKeown, *The Modern Rise of Population* (1976) cited in A. Hardy, *Epidemic Streets*, p. 34.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*

especially true in light of Morley's study of the change in diet in the west during the nineteenth century. "When western children were weaned on a low energy diet of high fibre bread sops, they, like poor African children today, did not have enough energy reserves to resist the severer forms of measles."⁶⁹ He continues in another place by saying: that nutrition for children was improved with the steel milling of cereals, the removal of some of the fibre and the addition of things like dairy products and refined sugar so that mothers had no problem in providing a high energy diet.⁷⁰

Recent studies have shown that vitamin A can help prevent pneumonia following measles. One study regarding Zambian children shows that vitamin A lowers the risk of measles related pneumonia in children with a vitamin A deficiency.⁷¹ Another study indicates that vitamin A supplementation reduces measles deaths in young African children.⁷² These studies generally agree that Vitamin A deficiency is a recognised risk factor for severe measles. The diet of both black and white inmates was devoid of foods that supply vitamin A. It may be that this lack of vitamin A in the concentration camps was a significant factor in the severe form of measles recorded in the camps. This would be especially prominent in the diet of the Department of Native Refugees which only supplied mealie meal and salt. As described in Chapter 3, the British Army after considerable scientific research in 1888 asserted that the diet of the soldier must include potatoes and other vegetables and foods from all the major food groups. [Chapter 3-Rations, p. 131] It has already been shown that some of the original black camp superintendents, on their own, decided not to issue the official ration of sugar and coffee. As also indicated when the Department of Native Refugees was established, the ration consisted solely of mealie meal. Salt was the only other item provided and this was given to the inmates at no cost. [See Chapter 3, "Rations; Chapter 4, "Rations"]

⁶⁹ David C. Morley, "Nutrition and infectious disease" in E.J. Clegg and J.P. Garlick (eds.), *Disease and Urbanisation* (1980) p. 40.

⁷⁰ David C. Morley, "Severe measles", in N.F. Stanley and R.A. Joske (eds.), *Changing Disease Patterns and Human Behaviour* (1980) p. 126.

⁷¹ F.J. Rosales, "Vitamin a supplementation of vitamin a deficient measles patients lowers risk of measles-related pneumonia in Zambian children, *Journal of Nutrition*, Vol. 132(2), December 2002, pp .3700-3.

⁷² A. Coutoudis, et al, "Vitamin A supplementation reduces measles morbidity in young African children...", *American Journal of Clinical Nutrition*, Vol. 54(5), pp. 890-5, November 1991.

As described in Chapter 3, [See: Special diet for children, p. 136] in January 1902 the Department of Refugees in the ORC, following the recommendation of Dr. Pratt Yule, established a special diet for children providing them with what was called "slops and pappy food," which required giving them four times as much mealie meal and rice than was issued to adults. When Chamberlain complained about the cost Trollope explained that the children were doing nicely now.⁷³ The black children who had been moved away to their new farm camps, several months previously, did not benefit from this change in diet, nor is it likely they would have been provided with this special diet, had they not been moved. It is also true that the mealie meal, which was very coarse was a great cause of indigestion sometimes leading to diarrhoea and eventually causing death among young infants. Now in the black camps that was all their was,-mealie meal that had to be purchased.

Overall in this contest for an explanation of the cause of increases or decreases in measles mortality between overcrowding and malnutrition, it must be conceded that both circumstances reigned in the black concentration camps. The presence of a more severe form of measles as being due to malnutrition with its darker rash and more severe complications, especially pneumonia and broncho pneumonia, would also find an ideal milieu in the black camps. Charles West in 1908, argued that diarrhoea, which evidently was thought by the poor to be a "salutary provision of nature," could in fact, "either seriously threaten life, or in some cases destroy it." He said that he had often seen cases of neglected measles diarrhoea.⁷⁴

As the death lists of the Bloemfontein black camp show, the highest number of deaths were due to diarrhoea. It may be asked what either mothers or medical staff in the black camps could do to treat diarrhoea? The Quain Dictionary article on diarrhoea recommended the following treatment for acute or occasional outbreaks of diarrhoea.

⁷³ SRC, Vol. 19, 7524, Trollope to John Buchan, 11 February 1902.

⁷⁴ Charles West, *Lectures on the Diseases of Infancy and Childhood*, seventh edition, (1884) p. 857. cited in Hardy, *Epidemic Streets*, p 41.

...everything should be taken in small quantity...Farinacea, arrowroot, sago, rice, tapioca, and the like are useful and may be taken in milk, or in chicken or mutton broth, or weak beef tea. Animal broths-and especially beef tea-when concentrated, or in large quantities, are apt to aggravate diarrhoea. Demulcent drinks-white of egg in water or milk, rice, or barley or arrowroot water; and astringent liquids-infusion of dried whortle-berries or roasted acorns, red light wines-may be given. Brandy is often of service, and may be given. in aromatic water with Farinacea. Lime water with milk is in many cases of much value.⁷⁵

There follow several more paragraphs of detailed instructions for treatment. Many of these medical comforts were made available to the white camps. The specific medical comforts made available to the black camps are not fully known. In any case since there were no nurses or bedside attendants most of these comforts, even if available, could not have been administered. It was Morley's revelation a century later "that diarrhoea may precipitate children into malnutrition."⁷⁶

Causes of measles spread.

The spread of measles in the black camps lay primarily in two aspects of their circumstances. As stated many of the inmates of the original black camps worked every day in the white camps. At times measles epidemics were in progress, and in some instances, caused high rates of sickness and death. More specifically, many inmates from the black camps were working in the white camp hospitals where active measles cases were present. It has been shown that just rubbing against the clothing of persons with active eruptions of measles could result in infection.⁷⁷ The task of removing human waste from the latrines and rubbish from the living areas no doubt also brought black inmates into close contact with white inmates with active cases of measles. In some of the camps this worked to bring together inmates from "hot" and "cold" areas. In the case of measles there are no carriers.

Ventilation and exposure to cold and wet weather.

The very inadequate housing, which resulted in over exposure to the rain and cold caused black mothers to take their children to bed under the blankets with them to keep them warm. Having, in

⁷⁵ Quain's Medical Dictionary, "Diarrhoea," p. 470.

⁷⁶ David Morley, "Severe measles." Cited in Hardy, *Epidemic Streets*, P. 123.

⁷⁷ M. Vallin, "Disinfection of Measles", Meeting of the Academy of Medicine 20 February 1900, *The Lancet*, 1900 Vol. 1 p. 654. (Wellcome Trust Library, London.)

most cases, to construct their own traditional huts; these huts in some cases, due to a shortage of thatching and other materials, were such that there were holes and crevices in the walls and roofs that allowed both wind and rain to enter from above and from the sides. Blacks in the camps were also more vulnerable to pneumonia and other respiratory diseases because they were much less likely to have blankets and adequate clothing. The Boer families also suffered this lack due to the refusal of some British columns to allow them time to gather their belongings.⁷⁸ Since many of the black inmates were removed at the same time this problem also affected them. During the American Civil War a special committee indicated that when the measles convalescents are exposed to cold and wet along with poor diet and poorly ventilated tents and hospitals this contributed to the large number of sick in the Confederate Army.⁷⁹

Low-Beer cites Cliff as saying that "Part of the success of treating measles was attributed to the simple remedy of providing sufficient space...and adequate ventilation."⁸⁰ Cliff is citing A.G. Butler in his work regarding the Australian Army Medical Services in World War I, in a hospital setting where such steps could be accomplished.⁸¹ The relevance of this excerpt from Butler to the circumstances in the overcrowded tents and huts in the concentration camps is minimal. Because of the almost faddish belief during this era of British medicine about the necessity for good ventilation, the staff in the white camps ordered that the tent flaps be rolled up even on cold days with high winds. E.A. Parkes, warned that tent flaps should not be rolled up when the wind exceeds 5 miles per hour and in cold weather.⁸² Low-Beer writes as follows:

...general malnutrition and a lack of treatment and hygiene...varied between the camps and explain high mortality rates. This is particularly evident in complications to measles infection and high levels of associated pneumonia and respiratory infections, 'conditions of camp life render the successful treatment of this disease particularly difficult, especially with respect to warding off lung complications, which are the chief cause of

⁷⁸ *British Parliamentary Papers*, Cd. 426, A.G. Circular Memorandum No. 30, 16 January 1901.

⁷⁹ H.H. Cunningham, *Doctors in Gray: The Confederate Medical Service* Baton Rouge, Louisiana, 1958, p. 189 Cited in Andrew Cliff, et al, *Measles: An Historical Geography of a Major Human Virus Disease From Global Expansion to Local Retreat, 1840-1990* (Oxford, 1993) p. 106.

⁸⁰ Cliff, *Measles*, p. 149, cited in Low-Beer, "Mortality during the South African War" p. 12.

⁸¹ A.G. Butler, *Australian Army Medical Services in the War of 1914-1918*, Vol.I, (Second Edition) (Melbourne, 1940) p.932, cited in Cliff, *Measles*, p. 149.

⁸² Edmund A. Parkes, *Manual of Practical Hygiene; Prepared Especially for Use in the Medical Service of the Army* (London, 1864) p. 272.

death.' As a camp official reports 'since measles became so rampant in the camps a form of pneumonic fever has occurred, which is exceedingly infectious, and promises to carry off almost as many lives as measles has done in the past. I regret, that so far, I cannot offer any explanation of the pneumonia.'⁸³

First of all pneumonia is a routine sequela to measles. Secondly the poor housing, rotten tents that sometimes required several tents being placed on top of the other to keep the cold damp air and the rain out, and the practice of rolling up the tent flaps, certainly explain the heavy death toll due to pneumonia following measles. Low-Beer concludes this discussion with these words. "Pneumonia is probably closely related to measles infection and its complications, and suggests that measles may also have resulted in much reported pneumonia in the black camps."⁸⁴

I argue that the resulting cold wind drove the Boer mothers to take their children to bed with them under the blankets. This decision, arising out of dire necessity on the part of mothers, acted to incubate their children's measles. And due to their bodies being in such close contact a much higher dose rate in the open lesions stage would result. R.J.S Simpson mentions a similar situation in the case of British soldiers in the field, who in order to keep warm, slept under their shared two blankets. Simpson says of this custom that "...there can be little doubt that this practice was responsible for the spread of disease, probably, and certainly skin diseases and vermin." This would account, in part, for what many officials described as "a malignant form of measles."⁸⁵

According to the Committee of Ladies, "...the Boer woman has a horror of ventilation; [and] any cranny through which fresh air could enter is carefully stuffed up, and the tent becomes a hot-bed for the breeding of disease germs."⁸⁶ The Committee saw this aversion to ventilation as a primary cause of the measles epidemics in the camps. Measles is a virus that multiplies by finding a host, rather than breeding as does a bacteria.

⁸³ Low-Beer, "War and civilian mortality." P. 12.

⁸⁴ *Ibid.*

⁸⁵ R.J.S. Simpson, *Medical History of the South African War*, in the *Journal of the Royal Army Medical Corps*, Vol. XV, No. 3, September 1910, p. 257.

⁸⁶ *British Parliamentary Papers*, Cd. 893, Concentration Camps Commission, *Report on the Concentration Camps in South Africa* by the Committee of Ladies, 12 December 1901(London, 1902) p. 16.

It is not easy to describe the pestilential atmosphere of these tents, carefully closed to all fresh air. The Saxon word "stinking" is the only one appropriate....It is, therefore, no wonder that measles once introduced, has raged through all the camps and caused many deaths. Because the foul air especially enervates the children [they] fall more easy victims to disease than would be the case if the tents were *fairly* ventilated. *Every camp has a rule that the tent flaps are to be lifted daily; but the Boer women so hate fresh air that this rule is only very partially carried out.*⁸⁷ [Emphasis is mine]

The Committee of Ladies did indicate during their visit to the Howick white camp that the raising of tent flaps was being done fairly well, "weather permitting."⁸⁸ This very important condition apparently was not taken into consideration in most of the camps. As mentioned Parke's saw this caution regarding the wind and the temperature as necessary for soldiers, who were a lot less vulnerable than babies, infants and mothers, and keeping in mind that British soldiers were not afflicted by measles.

Since almost all the black women in the camps had worked on the Boer farms, they may also have acquired this practice of making their huts as air tight as possible to prevent the cold, wind and rain from entering. The doctors and nurses in the white camps when treating black inmates, however, may have suggested that they follow various sanitary measures, including ventilation. Communicating such information may have been difficult, given the language barrier, along with the view of some superintendents and medical officers that black patients did not pay any attention to medical advice.⁸⁹

While black mothers were not, as far as the record indicates, required to roll up the tent flaps in cases where they were living in tents, or to open the doors to their huts, the poorly constructed housing, no doubt, resulted in the same practice of taking their children under the blankets with them. In most cases the black inmate families were sleeping on their hand made thatch woven mats on the bare ground, which in cases of cold and rainy weather, resulted in their being cold and sometimes wet. In the Brandfort and perhaps some other camp sites the soil turned into a clayish

⁸⁷ *Ibid.*

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 27.

⁸⁹ SRC, Vol. 4, 1103, Supt. Kroonstad white camp to Trollope, 1 April 1901.

mud after rain storms, which coated everything with this highly sticky soil.⁹⁰ An aerosol spreads the measles virus. If the family members were sick with respiratory disease, coughing or even breathing could spread the measles virus. In the milieu of measles epidemics there would also be an abundance of respiratory sickness concurrent with measles.

The Committee of Ladies was certainly not alone in this concern about inadequate ventilation and its impact on measles. In 1897 D. Williams argued that among the main causes of high mortality due to measles are overcrowding and insufficient ventilation." At the turn of the century when the measles mortality rates were high in Europe and the United States, overcrowding and housing conditions were sometimes seen as the major causes of the disease.⁹¹ Obviously both of these conditions were present in the tents and huts of the concentration camps.

As indicated the British medical authorities had a very strong belief, in ventilation. Thus was set up what Elizabeth Van Heyningen has called a "clash of medical cultures."⁹² What was really being confronted in this particular case were the medical views of two cultures carried to extremes. As mentioned previously one official inspecting the black huts in the camps said that the fact that the these huts were constructed with the available materials meant that there were slits in the sides, which he asserted saved lives because of the resultant ventilation.⁹³ Another official came to the opposite opinion that because of this deficient construction resulting in holes and spaces in the sides of the huts the result was increased cases of pneumonia and other respiratory diseases.⁹⁴ These two views of ventilation or non-ventilation were most evident in the death causing arbitrary application of the tent flaps policy.

⁹⁰ My thanks to an agronomist at the Glen Agricultural School for showing me the soil at the Brandfort site.

⁹¹ Peter Abby et al, "Overcrowding and intensive exposure as determinants of Measles mortality." *American Journal of Epidemiology*, Vol. 120, No. 1. October 26, 1984. p. 49.

⁹² "British doctors versus Boer women: Clash of medical cultures." In Fransjohan Pretorius (Ed.) *Scorched Earth*, (Cape Town, 2001) pp. 178-97.

⁹³ *Free State Provincial Archives, Bloemfontein* Archive of the Secretary to the Orange River Colony Administration, (CSO), Vol. 39, 2976. Dr. Pratt Yule, Medical Officer of Health, ORC to Goold-Adams, 17 August 1901.

⁹⁴ CSO, Vol. 55, 358/02, Trollope to Goold-Adams, 18 January 1902.

Dysentery.

It is only possible to distinguish between dysentery and typhoid by means of a sophisticated bacteriological analysis. Generally such an analysis was not available in South Africa during the war period. Observing the evacuations of the patient would show a difference, especially in the late stages of the disease. 'Stools at first [were] more or less faeculent, later on yielding dysenteric products without much or any faeculence, such as blood, mucus, slime, and gelatinoid exudation, or as in the sloughing gangrenuous forms-like the washings of meat, and possessing a putrid or gangrenuous odour. Given that the diagnosis of the dysentery and typhoid bacilli could not be differentiated, the discussion in these pages of waterborne diseases is focuses on typhoid because of the long experience of that disease in the military campaigns of the British Army. Due to the very small sample of recorded causes of deaths it is not possible to state whether typhoid or dysentery was the highest cause of deaths due to waterborne diseases in the black camps. British doctors had a good knowledge of both these diseases which caused so many deaths among British troops.

Typhoid Fever

There was, with one singular exception, no capability in South Africa to conduct bacteriological analysis. That exception was a bacteriological laboratory in Pretoria, *The Staats Laboratorium*, which was closed for some reason by the Military Government shortly after the British Army occupied Pretoria. On 23 July a physician with the Irish Hospital learning that this laboratory was well equipped with incubators and culture media for bacteriological research, said that this facility would be of benefit to the patients of his hospital, if it was reopened. "In many cases the accurate diagnosis of enteric fever depends on bacteriological method which could be carried out in this laboratory."⁹⁵ Van Heyningen points out regarding this capability that there were no universities or medical schools in South Africa during, or prior to the war.

⁹⁵*The National Archives of South Africa, Pretoria*, The archives of the Military Governor of Pretoria, (MGP), Vol. 11, 1164/00, G.B. Coleman, physician, Irish Hospital to Military Governor of Pretoria, General John T. Maxwell 23 July 1900.

Typhoid had been a scourge of the British Army in all of its wars, large and small. The diagnosis of some diseases were easier than others to determine, such as smallpox, plague, yellow fever, cholera and typhus, which were identifiable from clinical observation. Malaria could be identified by its reaction to quinine. But as late as 1854 when the Crimean war commenced, "...the nomenclatures for fevers, and for bowel conditions..." often encountered in military life were extremely vague.⁹⁶ Thus, the fevers were divided into intermittent, common continuous, remittent and typhus. For bowel diseases there was only a vague differentiation between acute dysentery and diarrhoea. Enteric or typhoid fever was often confused with typhus. Indeed, the two were often still regarded as the same disease. The uncertainty often led to confused treatment. So many drugs were prescribed for the patient, that in the event of recovery it was near impossible to identify which, if any, had been effective.⁹⁶ Even as late as 1903 the medical officers in the Witwatersrand gold mines in reporting the causes of death to the Commissioner of Native Affairs included dysentery and other diarrhoeal diseases under the heading of "Enteric Fever".⁹⁷

With the discovery of the germ theory in 1881 by Robert Koch, and the advent of bacteriology and blood chemistry, the typhoid fever bacillus could be cultured from blood. The presence of the disease is followed by the appearance of protective substances-agglutinins. The evidence of their presence was determined by the Widal's test.⁹⁸ The term typhoid used outside of England instead of enteric is evidence of the confusion that existed between typhus and typhoid. According to Philip Curtin, the term typhoid actually means, *typhus like*. Typhoid was the name for the disease popularised by Pierre Louis.⁹⁹

⁹⁶ John Shepherd, *The Crimean Doctors: a History of the British Medical Services in the Crimean War*, Vol. I, (Liverpool, 1991) pp. 53-54.

⁹⁷ *The National Archives of South Africa, Pretoria*, The archives of the Transvaal Administration, (TKP), Vol. 135, *Report by the Commissioner of Native Affairs, Transvaal for the year ended 30 June 1903*, "Report on the Mortality Amongst the Natives Employed on the Mines of the Witwatersrand." Medical Officers of some of the mines to Commissioner of Native Affairs in the Transvaal.

⁹⁸ Z. Cope, *Almroth Wright: Founder of Modern Vaccine Therapy* (London, 1966) p.15.

⁹⁹ Philip Curtin, *Disease and Empire: The Health of European Troops in the Conquest of Africa*, (Cambridge, 1998) p. 116.

In Quain's Medical Dictionary the definition of typhoid fever was defined as "A continued fever of long duration; usually attended with diarrhoea; and characterised by peculiar intestinal lesions, an eruption of small rose spots, and enlargement of the spleen."¹⁰⁰ The cause of typhoid, which is due to an infection from a microbe, was first identified by Eberth in 1880 who first isolated and created a culture of the micro organism in 1894. Thus it was first known as *Eberth's bacillus*. Later it was called *Bacillus typhosus* and in the present time *Salmonella typhi*.¹⁰¹

Theories of the causes and sources of typhoid fever.

Having isolated and identified the typhoid bacillus, the question that needed to be answered was what was the source of the microbe? This is a most important question, rather than an intellectual nicety. If you cannot diagnose a disease you cannot treat it. It also follows that if you do not know from whence the disease comes you cannot prevent, or at least reduce, the numbers of cases of the disease. In essence the question resolves down to this; What did medical officers and military commanders know about the sources of the disease?

E. A. Parkes, the first Professor of military hygiene at the Army Medical School, was one of the most credible doctors advising the British Army in the 1860s. He defined the external cause of typhoid as "A poison of animal origin." In this he was incorrect. He was, however, correct in saying that one mode of propagation is by the intestinal discharges of persons sick of disease..." He agreed, "Other origins...were not disproved."¹⁰² By the late 1890s, however, they would be. In 1894 the writer in Quain's Medical Dictionary tended to the view that it must be inherited from a previous case. Person to person direct contamination, such as by the breath of the infected person, was rejected. This, it was argued, is demonstrated by the fact that visitors to typhoid patients such as medical men, clergymen and others do not come down with the disease. Nurses rarely get the

¹⁰⁰ Quain, *Medical Dictionary*, "Typhoid," Vol. 2, p.1093.

¹⁰¹ Cope, *Almroth Wright: Founder of Modern Vaccine-therapy*, p. 15.

¹⁰² E.A. Parkes, *Manual of Practical Hygiene*, p. 437.

disease unless adequate measures for handling and laundering contaminated clothing and bedding and proper bathing of the patient are not observed. He concludes the discussion by saying, "There is overwhelming evidence that, as a rule, the poison is derived from some previous case. The only facts, which seem to require the supposition of its independent origin are occasional outbreaks of fever in villages or isolated buildings, which cannot be traced to any known source."¹⁰³

Dr. Walter Reed, and his colleagues, in a report in 1898 on the origins of typhoid among American troops during the Spanish American War, also rejected the theory that "typhoid may be generated independent of a previous case by fermentation of faecal, and perhaps other forms of organic matter." Reed argued against this saying one or more men with typhoid had enlisted in nearly every command.¹⁰⁴ This explains why some towns could have a typhoid problem, seemingly without a previous case.

By the turn of the century it was quite well accepted that typhoid was only transmitted person to person through faeces, urine and contaminated water and soil. According to William Osler, Robertson had shown that under entirely natural conditions typhoid bacilli may live in the upper layers of the soil for up to eleven months.¹⁰⁵ In 1899 the Royal Army Medical Corps recognised that "Enteric fever and cholera are supposed to be connected with the rise and fall of groundwater." They also understood that the air in the soil might be a potent cause of disease by aiding the evolution of organic substances from ground having damp and filthy subsoil. The rise and fall of groundwater will influence the amount of air, when one is at its maximum the other is at its minimum.¹⁰⁶

¹⁰³ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁴ Walter Reed, *et al Abstract of Report on the Origin and Spread of Typhoid Fever in U.S. Military Camps During the Spanish War of 1898* (Washington, 1900) p. 176. (Wellcome Institute of Medical History, Archives RAMC Collection)

¹⁰⁵ William Osler, *The principles and practice of medicine*, (Edinburgh, 1901) p.5.

¹⁰⁶ RAMC, Vol. 141, Box 8, 1899, No author is given (Wellcome Institute of Medical History, Archives, RAMC Collection)

The sites of the concentration camps, frequently plagued with poor drainage, and in too long use, were highly dangerous to the health of the inmates of those camps for these reasons among others.

¹⁰⁷ The fouling of the ground was generally much more pronounced in the black camps where there were sometimes few or no latrines, especially in the early months of the existence of these camps. The Medical Officer of Health for Kimberly, in his annual reports for 1898 and 1899, reported that when the mean temperature of the soil 1 inch below the surface falls to 60 degrees F, enteric fever practically ceases, and that when the temperature of the surface of the soil again reaches this temperature the disease reappears.¹⁰⁸

Parkes in his manual of military hygiene devotes considerable detail to the examination of the condition of the soil in the selection of a site for a military camp. Drainage is a most important factor. And this is determined by the lay of land. A gentle slope is ideal. Parkes summarised this criteria with a simple maxim. " Always choose a spot from which there is drainage, and into which, there is no drainage." ¹⁰⁹ Site selection for the black and white camps was not usually based on such niceties. Obviously the water absorption characteristic of the soil is crucial in the case of typhoid bacilli and other disease bearing micro organisms.

The drainage problems in many of the concentration camps along with fouled soil meant that this contaminated soil was tracked into the tents and huts. Emily Hobhouse noted that at the Bloemfontein white camp, clothes were being washed in stagnant water in a "dam" filled with occasional rain.¹¹⁰ Rain would enliven the bacilli under the soil surface and women washing clothes would, as a result, track contaminated soil into their living areas. If any of these clothes were enteric then all clothes would become contaminated and a source of typhoid fever spread. All of these problems were well understood prior to the war. In cases where tents and huts leaked badly in the

¹⁰⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁸ *British Parliamentary Papers*, Cd 1498, *Report of the Commission on the Nature, Pathology, Causation and Relationship to Enteric Fever*, (London, 1903) p. 52.

¹⁰⁹ Parkes, *Manual of Practical Hygiene*, p. 260.

¹¹⁰ Balme, *To Love One's Enemy's*, p. 212.

rain this situation was a very serious problem. Since the subsoil would sustain the enteric bacilli for up to eleven months the constant walking on the floor of the abode would churn up enteric soil. As mentioned, black inmates slept on straw mats laid down on the floor rather than on beds. This would mean that it is likely that enteric soil, when wet, would, in some cases, seep through the straw matting. The Boer women and children also slept on the ground in many camps, especially during the early months of the existence of the white camps because they had not been allowed to bring their beds and bedding when they were removed from the farms by British troops.

Water was understood to be the most common means by which typhoid is transmitted. According to Curtin, "Typhoid flourishes where pure drinking water is hard to find and where human crowding makes for easy transmission through faecal contamination."¹¹¹ The means by which water becomes enteric are many and varied. The most common source of contamination occurred when typhoid waste found its way into a stream or water supply. Exposure to sunlight and open air as well as rapidly flowing water is inimical to the growth and survival of the typhoid bacilli. It was observed that soldiers on the march were less vulnerable to typhoid than soldiers in a stationary camps because they obtained their drinking water from fast flowing streams.¹¹² On the other hand, warmth, stagnation, seclusion from open air, accumulation and concentration of the infected discharges intensify the poison, and a small amount of typhoid faeces and urine may give rise to a large amount of contaminated human waste with which they become mixed. This growth and multiplication of the typhoid bacilli is particularly great in milk.¹¹³

Surgeon General, James Jameson, although rejecting special medical arrangements for typhoid, did suggest "...a few precautionary measures such as suitable clothing and Berkefeld Water Filters in the ratio of one per every hundred men."¹¹⁴ He might well have suggested that the milk given to

¹¹¹ Philip Curtin, *Disease and Empire* (Cambridge, 1992?) p. 113.

¹¹² RAMC, Vol. 174, Box 4, p. 15 (Wellcome Institute of Medical History, Archives, RAMC Collection.)

¹¹³ Quain, *Medical Dictionary*, "Typhoid," Vol. 2, p. 1098.

¹¹⁴ M.S. Stone, *The Victorian Army: Health Hospitals and Social Conditions as Encountered by British Troops during the South African War, 1899-1902*, Unpublished Ph.D dissertation, University of London, December 1992. p. 82.

patients in the military hospital and camps be protected and pasteurised. In August 1900 Dr. Turner, the Medical Officer of Health for the Transvaal, received the test results for milk samples taken from a military general hospital in Pretoria. Some of these samples had been adulterated with water. That was not Turner's main concern. He was much more concerned that the water used to dilute the milk could have been contaminated with typhoid or other waterborne bacilli.¹¹⁵ The Committee of Ladies observed that in the dilution of tinned milk the water being used was not being boiled and that as a result the water could be contaminated. They recommended "...tinned milk should be issued to children mixed in the boiled water and not in the tin."¹¹⁶

In the black camps a common source of this contamination was the use of nearby streams, which had been used as latrines. This was not only due to a lack of conveniently located latrines, but according to W.J.R Simpson in 1903 pure water is hard to find in the tropics, "...mainly due to the pollutions to which water is subjected by the customs of the people."¹¹⁷ Even when the stream was not directly used in that way, faeces and urine deposited on the banks of a stream were washed into the stream when the rains came. Often in the camps clothes were washed in typhoid contaminated streams and the clothes even of non-enteric inmates become a source of the disease. The handling of enteric clothing prior to washing can cause the handler to become infected.

Both the water and the soil near rivers and streams were possible sources of typhoid. The soil on the Modder riverbank at Kimberly was undoubtedly contaminated with human waste. Typhoid was a common visitor to Kimberly. Roberts' troops had stopped there during the lifting of the siege on their way to Bloemfontein. They bathed, washed clothes and drank water from the river. The first four registered typhoid cases were those of four soldiers, known to be friends, who had drunk water on a farm together. By the time they reached Bloemfontein the 40,000 man force was well on its

¹¹⁵ MGP, Vol. 20, 2859/00, Dr. M. Smits-Dumont to Medical Officer of Health, Transvaal, 31 August 1900.

¹¹⁶ *British Parliamentary Papers*, Cd. 893, Report of the Committee of Ladies, p.10, 12 December 1901. It is important to note that even in relatively recent times it was alleged that baby formula powdered milk caused many infant deaths in African communities when this formula was mixed with contaminated water.

¹¹⁷ W.J. Simpson, "Water supplies," *Journal of Tropical Medicine*, Vol. 6, 132-8, 1723-74, 192-4. cited in Phillip Curtin, *Death by Migration* (New York, 1989) p. 109.

way to an epidemic of typhoid. When men are on the march the infection rate may not be as noticeable. Although, Anthony Bowlby, the Senior Surgeon, of the Portland Hospital expressed the opinion that "...their men were falling out all the time, sick with enteric fever." He evidently thought that they had primarily been infected after their arrival at the Modder River.¹¹⁸

Now arriving at Bloemfontein a large camp was formed by the Modder River. Such a massive and concentrated gathering of potential victims of the disease created the conditions conducive to epidemic. It was Chamberlain's view that camps with large populations always result in excessive mortality and suggested to Milner that the remedy required might be to break up these camps into smaller units.¹¹⁹ Chamberlain's concerns were in the end ignored.

The Portland Hospital listed the most "obvious factors in the spread of the disease which they had observed during the typhoid epidemic at Bloemfontein." The water supply was contaminated with dead horses¹²⁰ and possibly dead Boers. There were windstorms, which blew sand and dust from [disease infested] latrines spreading contaminated particles and debris over everything and in every crevice in the living areas and coating any uncovered food. Last in this group of causes they listed personal infection from person to person caused by faeces and urine. In addition they list as a cause, "The Probable Influence of certain conditions antecedent to the onset of the disease."¹²¹ This refers to victims who had previously been exposed to the typhoid bacilli in England at some time in the past, and in whose bodies there was a residual presence of the bacilli lying dormant and awaiting a fresh exposure. Since typhoid was endemic in both England and South Africa this would also be true of the Boers and blacks in the camps. In essence the typhoid bacilli most commonly resides in water, whether in river or stream, or in the soil contaminated by the excrement of enteric victims.

¹¹⁸ Anthony Bowlby, et. al, *A Civilian War Hospital: Being an account of the work of the Portland Hospital, and of experience of wounds and sickness in South Africa, 1900* (London, 1901) p. 68.

¹¹⁹ *British Parliamentary Papers*. Cd. 853, p. 8, Tel. No. 1 Chamberlain to Milner, 8 November 1901.

¹²⁰ Typhoid is not caused by the waste or the dead bodies of animals. Although other kinds of fevers can be caused by this kind of contamination.

¹²¹ Bowlby, *A Civilian War Hospital*, pp. 69-70.

Water purification methods utilised by the British Army prior to and during the South African War.

Crucial to the understanding of the typhoid crisis, both in the British Army and in the concentration camps, is the need to discuss the purification of water, as understood by the British medical and military authorities. For the purposes of this study it is necessary to confine the subject to water purification as practiced in the field by the British Army and what was known about water purification at the time of the war. In many respects the continual scourge of typhoid fever in the field operations of the British Army was the result of inconsistent measures being applied to the provision of pure drinking water for the army in the field, although as will be seen, typhoid also plagued the army in garrison. The incidence of typhoid fever in the British army at home had been reduced from 7.2 per thousand in 1884 to 4.37 and to 3.42 in 1897. Other armies with even higher rates of waterborne disease had by sanitary reforms substantially reduced the rates of sickness and death over several decades.¹²² The circumstances in the field produce the two most significant causal factors in the rates of sickness and death due to the disease; an impure water supply and problems of human waste disposal and the deliberate fouling of the ground. The work of Robert Caldwell, who had served as a medical officer, on disease prevention, as practiced by the British Army in the field, provides very valuable insights about the problems he encountered in the field, in Egypt and in South Africa during the war.¹²³

According to Caldwell, the army units serving in Egypt in 1885 sometimes neglected the boiling of water. Filtration in those days consisted of "allowing the water to trickle through the germ laden pores of a filthy earthenware jar, and collecting [the water] in another receptacle..." At times even this precaution was abandoned.¹²⁴ Caldwell argued that boiling water in the field for drinking purposes was not feasible because of a shortage of firewood or inconsistency in administering the

¹²² Sternberg, *Infection and Immunity*, p.129.

¹²³ Robert Caldwell, *The Prevention of Disease in Armies in the Field*, (London, 1904. A librarian of the Wellcome Institute of Medical History provided me with a copy of this book from his own private collection for which I am deeply indebted.

¹²⁴ Robert Caldwell, *The Prevention of Disease* pp. 11-12

process. This is not as large a problem in a stationary situation like a concentration camp, provided sufficient fuel and suitable equipment is available. Unfortunately that was not the case in either the black or white camps. In the black camps there was not even sufficient wood and coal to cook with. Caldwell stated that in the field the army was not provided with any special apparatus. Camp kettles are needed for other purposes. It is especially essential to have the means of sterilising as well as cleaning when it comes to clothes contaminated by enteric faeces and urine. It was suggested to the white camps that a plain "Kaffir pot" would be sufficient if nothing else was available.

Emily Hobhouse was particularly concerned during her visits to the Bloemfontein white camp about the need to boil water coming from the Modder River, because she said the people might as well swallow the typhoid germs whole as drink from this river. The water could not be boiled because of a shortage of fuel and because they had nothing to boil it in. She ordered that each tent be supplied with an additional pail or crock and that a proclamation be issued that all drinking water be boiled.¹²⁵ The Committee of Ladies also noted the lack of equipment to boil water and recommended that all camps be provided with boilers. They specifically recommended, "That every [white] camp should be provided with the proper apparatus for disinfecting and boiling the linen of enteric patients and a destructor for stools."¹²⁶

Water systems in the concentration camps.

British Army garrisons throughout the world, according to Phillip Curtin, had to rely on public water supplies.¹²⁷ A few of the white camps were also using public water supplies, but in most cases these piped water supplies were far superior to the water sources, which by necessity, were developed by the white and certainly the black camps. Obviously the sanitary conditions in a theatre of war result in higher mortality rates than in the conditions achievable in a peacetime army garrison. Both the British military commanders and the Army medical officers were aware that in

¹²⁵ Jennifer Hobhouse Balme, *To Love One's Enemies* (Coble Hill, British Columbia, 1994) p. 92.

¹²⁶ *British Parliamentary Papers*. Cd. 893, *Concentration Camps Commission Report of the Committee of Ladies*, 12 December 1901, p. 13.

¹²⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 55.

choosing campsites or hospital sites an adequate and good water supply was one of the most important criterias.

When the Portland Hospital, a British privately funded hospital, arrived at Bloemfontein in mid April 1900 the Boers had taken control of the waterworks outside the city. Since the mid 1800's in England there had been awareness that water appearance and taste were not any assurance of water purity.¹²⁸ The British Army, however, was quite slow in adopting testing methods that would detect the presence of disease agents undetectable by traditional chemical testing. The largest water supply at hand was a spring, but while the water "looked clear and good," even the preliminary chemical testing was unfavourable. A member of the hospital staff was immediately assigned to locate and evaluate the water supply because of the crucial importance of obtaining a good water supply for the hospital.¹²⁹ This was especially important in view of the very high number of patients who had contracted typhoid fever. The hospital arrived during the infamous Modder River typhoid epidemic.

When the rates of sickness and death were high in the white camps only chemical testing was done, because as mentioned, there was no capability to carry out bacteriological analysis. And in most cases not even that was done. There is no record that the water in the black camps was tested at all. In some cases the white camp and the adjoining black camp used the same water supply such as a river or a spruit, as at Brandfort. Often the same water source was used for washing clothes and for personal use was heavily enteric. In some cases enteric contaminated sheets and clothes were being washed with other clothes. The clothing of enteric patients was being stored with the clothes of inmates who did not have the disease. There were stool destructors to dispose of enteric faeces in some of the white camps. There is no indication that such equipment was available to the black camps.

¹²⁸ Philip Curtin, *Death by Migration*, pp. 51, 116

¹²⁹ Anthony A. Bowlby, et al, *A Civilian War Hospital*, p. 71

Despite the very vulnerable water supplies utilised by the camps there is no indication that water filtration systems were ever used in either the black or white camps. In December 1901 an Army major invented a charcoal filter system. One Army officer converted a water cart to a charcoal filter system with a tap on the bottom of the cart.¹³⁰ The transport of the water to the camps was carried out in very diverse ways. A few camps, such as the Merebank white camp in Natal, had piped water. Dot Serfontein claims that the black camp at Kroonstad had piped water due to its proximity to the municipal water supply.¹³¹ According to the head of public works in the Orange River Colony, initially nearly all the white camps in the colony carted water from sources that were between one and two miles distant from the camps. A large number of animal carts working all day and into the night carried out this task.¹³² By the end of the war some of the white camps had piped in water or used wells.

There is almost no record describing the water supplies in the black camps. Apparently in the case of the original black camps they helped in the cartage and shared the water supply of the white camps. Other black camps evidently just found water in nearby streams. Such sources were in many cases enteric due to the use of these streams as latrines and the washing of clothes, which were enteric. There is no record at all regarding the water supply in the Department of Native Refugees camps. Since almost all of these camps were located on abandoned farms, there would certainly have been wells or other water sources on those farms, such as a river or a pond or a “dam” constructed to collect water for the livestock.¹³³

¹³⁰ RAMC, Vol. 174, Box 4, p. 15, (Wellcome Institute of Medical History, Archives, RAMC Collection.)

¹³¹ Dot Serfontein, “Swartes in Kampe het ’ van vettigheid van oorlogsmasjien geleef”, *Die Volksblad*, 8 October 1996, p.9. This was submitted as evidence that the black inmates had far better living conditions than the inmates in the white camps.

¹³² Henry C. Trollope, Publication of The Institution of Civil Engineers, Sect. II—Other Selected Papers (Paper No. 3377) *Work Done in the Orange River Colony Refugee Camps* (London, 1903) p.3. Henry Trollope was the brother of the Chief Superintendent of the Orange River Colony Department of Refugees, Captain G.V. Trollope.

¹³³ The term “dam” refers to a round receptacle several meters in width constructed by the farmer.

Waste disposal from latrines in-British Army units

As shown, water supplies and latrines were the most dangerous sources of the spread of typhoid. As early as 1867 a rather thorough, though primitive latrine system, was adopted by the hospitals in the famine relief camps in India. Long trenches were dug, into which the inmates defecated. Earth was placed nearby and thrown over the excreta. A fresh pit was to be dug everyday, "the old ones being carefully filled in by the sweepers. This plan was found to be easy and efficacious."¹³⁴ The trench system was used in many of the white and black camps

In 1885 in Korosko, a small settlement on the Nile, the waste disposal system previously consisting, of a trench system was replaced with the bucket system. The contents of the buckets were carefully buried at a suitable distance from the camp and the latrines established well away from the huts.¹³⁵

Latrines and waste disposal in the black concentration camps.

Latrines in the black camps.

The Brandfort camp is a well documented example of the lack of adequate latrines in the black camps. In mid-April 1901, after the camp had been in existence for three months, and had a population of over 2,000 inmates, Dr. Yule inspected the camp. He made the following observation. "At present the natives report to a wooded kloof a mile across the camp for purpose of nature." Standing in the camp and looking to the north, it is so far away that on a foggy morning it cannot be seen. At that time a century ago, unlike today, there were many trees on this land, which were cut down for firewood by the white and black refugees.¹³⁶ This means that in the dark at night the inmates and their children would have to work their way through the rocks and trees, and tree stumps. At night it is beyond possibility that anyone would, or could walk, in the darkness over this

¹³⁴ J.C. Geddes, *Former Famines: Extracts From Official Papers containing Instructions For Dealing With Famine, Compiled Under Orders of the Government of Bengal*, "Medical Arrangements." Cuttack, 1867. Mr. Kirkwood's Report, pp. 182 (The India Institute Library, Oxford University)

¹³⁵ Caldwell, *The Prevention of Diseases*, p. 13.

¹³⁶ CSO, Vol. 107, 4442, Fox to J.P. Van Zyl, Esq. Attorney, 25 October 1902.

ground such a long way, especially in the many cases of those with typhoid, and other diseases, accompanied by diarrhoea.

Yule thought it unwise to make exceptions in the case of sanitary arrangements of the black camps. He recommended the adoption of the trench system.¹³⁷ A month later Trollope inspected the camp and found no substantial latrines had been dug.¹³⁸ Despite this failure to provide any sanitary facilities for the inmates, the Brandfort white camp the superintendent complained that “No part of my duty is more onerous than that of making people accustomed, with their children, to perform all the calls of nature anywhere and at any time, obeying the common laws of health.”¹³⁹ He was complaining that the inmates did not walk the mile to the kloof with their children. This was an exercise of blaming the victim for his failure to carry out the most basic of responsibilities to the black inmates under his supervision. Given the very poor conditions in the black camp, compared with the white camp, the numbers of deaths from typhoid, were probably quite high. All the requirements to treat typhoid were lacking at Brandfort to an alarming degree. These would include, proper sanitation, intensive-nursing care, a safe water supply, suitable hospital accommodation or at least suitable conditions in the patient's tent or hut.

In Thaba'nchu many black refugees were camped on the town commons and there were no latrines at all for the “Natives.” The town needed a cart for taking away night soil and some sanitary police. There was no money allocated to construct a “native” latrine. It was suggested by Colonial Secretary Wilson that a tax be levied on the blacks to collect the needed money. Wilson said the Government would pay half the cost, if needed.¹⁴⁰

¹³⁷ SRC, Vol. 5, 1304, Dr. Pratt Yule to Trollope, 15 April 1901.

¹³⁸ SRC, Vol. 7, 1938A, Trollope to Goold-Adams, 16 May 1901.

¹³⁹ SRC, Vol. 4, 1101, Supt. Brandfort white camp to Trollope, 2 April 1901.

¹⁴⁰ CSO, Vol. 11, 924/01, Acting Residential Magistrate to Secretary Orange River Colony, 18 April 1901.

Latrines in the black camps not being used.

One of the most often mentioned sanitary problems by the black camp superintendents was the habit of many black inmates in “responding to the call of nature” wherever they happened to be, rather than using the latrines in those camps, where they were available. At Aliwal North the order was issued by the superintendent that any of the black inmates who, “... commits a nuisance in the spruits,¹⁴¹ or elsewhere are to be taken to the Army Provost Marshall & awarded punishment and lashes.”¹⁴² At Bloemfontein the superintendent remedied this problem to a great extent by “making an example of any ‘boy’ caught in the act of not using the latrines.”¹⁴³ It was noted by the Committee of Ladies that in the white camps it was a common problem that the white inmates did not use the latrines at night, but fouled the ground near the tent.¹⁴⁴ It appears that this was due to the placing of the latrines at considerable distance from some, or all, of the tents.

Insanitary practices of black inmates.

There was a generally held view by the British medical establishment of the period that the lower classes of British citizens were less amenable to reform in their sanitary practices. Ann Hardy cites the view of David Davies, the Medical Officer for Bristol, England. “In 1879...Davies...noted forcefully that the management of infectious diseases was comparatively easy among educated people, who are prepared to carry out preventative measures...,but when [these diseases] appear in force among the undisciplined classes the Sanitarian finds his endeavours thwarted on every hand by gross carelessness or blind fatalism.”¹⁴⁵

This blaming the victim was also the perception of the British doctors and other officials in the concentration camps, as well as the members of the Committee of Ladies. In regards to the latrines

¹⁴¹ A spruit is a small stream, creek or tributary.

¹⁴² SRC, Volume 8, 2746, Trollope to Supt. Aliwal North white concentration camp, 18 June 1901.

¹⁴³ SRC, Vol. 6, 1739, Supt., Bloemfontein white camp to Trollope, 4 May 1901.

¹⁴⁴ SRC, Vol. 21, 7839, John Buchan, to Milner, 13 March 1902.

¹⁴⁵ David Davies, “Typhoid Fever in Bristol,” p. 19, cited in Ann Hardy, *Epidemic Streets: Infectious Disease and the Rise of Preventive Medicine, 1856-1900* (Oxford, 1993) pp. 273-4.

used by both black and white inmates in the camps, as well as in the nearby towns, there were reports of serious fouling and soiling of the latrines. There was very little said about the latrines within the black camps, as there were very few inspections of these camps. The record of these inspections has disappeared.

Soil Contamination as a source of typhoid.

Caldwell observes that despite the very poor sanitation practices in the work of transporting horses up the Nile River that no typhoid sickness resulted from using the unboiled river water. In contrast he stated that the very good sanitation at a permanent town did not prevent the disease from manifesting itself.¹⁴⁶ The stationary condition of the town was the culpable agent despite the relatively adequate sanitation. That the use of unboiled and poorly filtrated water did not result in cases of typhoid can be explained in several ways. The flowing river in open sunlight may have killed the bacilli. That the soldiers did not remain in a given area of the river was also helpful. Certainly not all streams are enteric or inhabited by waterborne diseases.

Caldwell, consistent with his hypothesis that contaminated soil was the major cause of typhoid epidemics, also indicated that in old standing army camps, typhoid was increasing steadily in spite of "a rigid maintenance of sanitary vigilance." This seems confirmed by the fact that men in a mounted infantry unit living under the same conditions, with the exception of an outbreak of ophthalmia, an eye disease, remained singularly free from any kind of sickness.¹⁴⁷ The ophthalmia can probably be explained by the carrying of the disease by flies. [See section below on "Flies as disease spreaders."]. Caldwell also gave another example of a camel regiment in Natal in South Africa in December 1899 that was not able to practice any significant water sanitation and yet there was only one case of typhoid. The camp was set on ground that was a sea of mud. One of the reasons that water could not be boiled was that it rained so often and so hard that campfires could

¹⁴⁶*Ibid.*

¹⁴⁷*Ibid.*

not be sustained. Again his explanation was that the camping grounds had not previously been used by large number of troops for any long periods.¹⁴⁸

Later this same unit was camped near the Tugela River on ground that that had been occupied for a sufficient time to become, more or less saturated, with filth. It was here that a typhoid epidemic began. Caldwell traces the whole campaign showing that contaminated soil was the primary cause of the typhoid epidemic. He mentions the problem in the blockhouses where the surrounding area and the floors of the blockhouses were contaminated. The soil in the blockhouses was highly absorbent and impossible to keep clean.¹⁴⁹ This situation is very similar to the concentration camps where the contaminated ground was tracked into the tents and huts.

Flies as disease spreaders.

When human excreta is removed to open trenches some distance from the residents of a camp, flies and other insects are attracted to such waste, especially in open trenches. From these pits of waste they would then be drawn to the camp kitchens and would land on the food being prepared and consumed, thus depositing the enteric and other bacilli, which were then ingested. Just how aware the British military medical profession was of vector contamination by flies is not clear. The earliest article in the Journal of the Royal Army Medical Corps regarding this subject did not appear until 1909. Other medical journals, however, had made this connection many years earlier. Dr. G.M. Kober had seen the connection between flies and the contamination of food with the typhoid bacilli in 1895.¹⁵⁰ Hardy cites the *Lancet* medical journal in 1871 as warning that instead of some text books describing flies as being "dipterous angels dancing attendance on Hygeia..." they should have described these flying filth carriers as "... winged sponges speeding hither and thither to carry out the foul behests of contagion."¹⁵¹

¹⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 19

¹⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 21

¹⁵⁰ C.G. Hewitt, *House Flies and How They Spread Disease*, (Cambridge, 1912) p. 78. (Wellcome Institute of Medical History Library)

¹⁵¹ *Lancet*, (1871), ii. 270, see also (1889), ii. 232. Cited in Anne Hardy, *Epidemic Streets* pp. 184-5.

Emily Hobhouse during her first visit to the Bloemfontein white camp bemoaned the fact that "...flies lay thick and black on everything."¹⁵² Prior to the discovery that flies acted as vectors for the transfer of bacteria it may have been thought that flies were little more "...than a mere irritating and disgusting nuisance."¹⁵³ Perhaps that was the limit of her concern. Dr. C.G. Hewitt writing in 1912, citing the 1898 Walter Reed report on the typhoid epidemic among American soldiers during the Spanish American War, described flies as "...the pests, which had inflicted greater loss upon the American soldiers than the arms of Spain." Hewitt said that this was also the situation just a few years later in the British camps during the South African War where he said "...ample opportunities for the carriage of infection by flies were offered." ¹⁵⁴

One investigator reported that he saw faecal matter fresh from the bowel in its most dangerous condition covered with myriads of flies a short distance from the men's tents, equally open to the air for dining and cooking.¹⁵⁵ Others observed flies with feet white with lime from the latrines on the food. "What more perfect conditions... for the dissemination of the typhoid bacilli than open latrines frequented by incipient or convalescent cases of typhoid, millions of flies breeding in the latrines and visiting the mess tents a short distance away. "Where the mess tents were protected by mosquito netting little or no typhoid was contracted." ¹⁵⁶

In a debate regarding typhoid fever during the war, Dr. H.H. Tooth and Dr. George N. Poore, formerly a doctor at the Portland Hospital, agreed that the number of flies in the army camps was prodigious and that flies may convey infection. Looking at the way in which flies procreate the only limit to their multiplication is a source of food. It was concluded that a normal housefly creates 25,000,000 descendants in a single season. "As flies multiply on, and in, organic refuse of every

¹⁵² Rykie Van Reenen (Ed.) *Emily Hobhouse Boer War Letters*, Emily Hobhouse to Lady Hobhouse, Bloemfontein, 26 January 1901 (Cape Town, 1984) p. 49.

¹⁵³ Hewitt, *House Flies*, p.79.

¹⁵⁴ W.I. Walter Reed, et al., *Abstract of Report on the Origin and Spread of Typhoid Fever in U.S. Military Camps During the Spanish War of 1898* (Washington, 1900) p. 172.

¹⁵⁵ Hewitt, *House Flies*, pp. 78-9.

¹⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 79

kind, it is obvious that the sooner such refuse is placed where it cannot serve for the feeding and hatching of flies... the sooner will the numbers of flies be lessened."¹⁵⁷

During the epidemic at Bloemfontein the medical staff of the Portland Hospital marvelled at the way flies passed over the sunstroke patients and then hovered around and settled on the enterics. "The moment an enteric patient put out his tongue one or more flies would settle on it. "They were strengthened in their belief that flies were vectors of the disease by the fact that enteric fever in South Africa practically ceases every year with the coming of cold weather."¹⁵⁸

W.J. Simpson, a medical historian with hands on experience in the war, stated that in a climate such as South Africa there are numerous flies which swarm from latrines to the nearest unprotected food."¹⁵⁹ Simpson reported that the "natives...use sluits, veldt and retired pots as latrines. After heavy showers the sluits and riverbeds that were previously dry get filled up with water polluted with excrement. Since Natives suffer both from enteric fever and dysentery these open collecting areas were quite dangerous as disease spreaders."¹⁶⁰ The lack of sanitary facilities in the black camps, in combination with this cultural practice, along with the similar practice of white inmates at night who resisted using the latrines, infested both the black and white camps with typhoid.

The camp administrators and medical officers should have been aware of problems of flies as vectors of disease. Even without such knowledge the need to bury human waste in deep pits a considerable distance from the living and food preparation areas of the concentration camps was clearly understood. The Committee of Ladies commented on the distance of the disposal trenches as well as the presence of flies. In addition in some camps such as Kroonstad they noted that inmates

¹⁵⁷George Vivian Poore, *The Earth in relation to the Preservation and Destruction of Contagia: Being the Milroy Lectures Delivered at the Royal College of Physicians in 1899 Together with Other Papers on Sanitation*, Chapter XIX, "Sanitation of Camps-Flies and the science of scavenging." (New York, 1902) PP. 189-200.

¹⁵⁸Bowlby, *Private Hospital*, p. 73.

¹⁵⁹W.J. Simpson, *Report of the Commission on the Nature, Pathology, Causation and Prevention of Dysentery and its Relationship to Enteric Fever, Part II* (London, 1903) p. 53.

¹⁶⁰*Ibid.*, p. 54.

"...were using the dongas and sluits, which run into the river as receptacles for all sorts of offensive refuse and as latrines, and the flies had settled in swarms on these."¹⁶¹

During the South African War medical officers were also responsible for sanitation. A publication on the "Sanitary Care of the Soldier" defined this sanitation responsibility of medical officers. "It is absolutely essential that we in the medical service should know...we are not solely the treaters of disease; we are essentially a preventive service of sanitary specialists, specially enlisted and specially paid as the preventers, as well as the curers of disease...."¹⁶² The office of the sanitation officer had been eliminated in a previous reform of the army medical service, thus making this statement very essential. Among other responsibilities this made the medical officers responsible for the problem of flies as disease carriers.

The overall awareness of the importance of sanitation by medical officers and military commanders was a long struggle in the British Army. A considerable effort was made by the Army Medical Service to develop a culture of military hygiene in the nineteenth Century. With the appointment of E.A. Parkes, a former medical officer in India, as Professor of Hygiene at the Army Medical School in 1861, there began a long effort to teach and publish manuals of hygiene with a view to changing the sanitation and medical practices of the army in the field.. This was an important facet of the revolution in British medicine, including the work on the germ theory in the 1880s, that eventually led to a reduced mortality rate both among the civilian population in England and in the British Army stationed throughout the empire.

By the time of the South African War the aetiology of waterborne diseases was well understood, including that of typhoid and other continuing fevers. The importance of field sanitation was well accepted. Praxis in the field, however, was carelessly applied. As in past wars typhoid fever was a

¹⁶¹ Cd. 893, Concentration Camp Commission, Committee of Ladies, p. 95.

¹⁶² RAMC, 474/52 *The Sanitary Care of the Soldier*, ~1894. P. 6 (Wellcome Institute of Medical History, Archives, RAMC Collection)

scourge of death and the greatest cause of death of British troops during the South African War. Typhoid appears to be, overall, one of the highest causes of death in the black and white concentration camps. Typhoid is a disease of filth which only effective sanitation can eliminate. Nevertheless, filth being the cause, the British military medical authorities, as early as 1860, were of the opinion that this disease could be removed from the lists of the causes of deaths. While the crucial importance of sanitation was generally recognised by the white concentration camp administrations and camp superintendents were urged to provide adequate sanitary facilities, water supplies, bathing and clothes washing and waste disposal, there were very serious sanitation deficiencies in the white camps.

Typical of the problem was the situation in the Kroonstad camp where 90 % of the inmates were not provided with soap and most had no money to buy anything with which they could wash themselves or their clothes.¹⁶³ The washing of hands is a major deterrent to typhoid and other waterborne diseases. The Committee of Ladies and Emily Hobhouse repeatedly reminded the camp officials of the need for boilers for the boiling all drinking water in those camps where typhoid was present.¹⁶⁴ There was little or nothing in the way of supplies such as carbolic acid to sanitise the latrines, in the early months in the white camps in the Orange River Colony.¹⁶⁵ The Medical Officer at Brandfort had complained of this deficiency in both the January and March monthly report.¹⁶⁶ The sanitary facilities and sanitation supplies in the black camps are not described, with a few exceptions.

Prevention and treatment of typhoid. Inoculations for Typhoid

One of the most significant advances in medicine at the turn of the century was the development of an anti-typhoid serum by Almroth Wright. A detailed look at his very important work and achievements is beyond the scope of this study. A small percentage of British troops were

¹⁶³ SRC, Vol. 4, 1012, petition of the Kroonstad white camp inmates to Supt., 2 April 1901.

¹⁶⁴ SRC, Vol. 17, 6664, President of the Ladies' Committee, Concentration Camps Commission, M.G. Fawcett to Trollope, 3 November 1901.

¹⁶⁵ SRC, Vol. 4, 1101, Supt. Brandfort white camp to Trollope, 2 April 1901.

¹⁶⁶ SRC, Vol. 2, 382, Supt., Brandfort white camp to Trollope, 2 March 1901.

inoculated with some success on an experimental basis, (about 4%). Low-Beer argues that since the vaccine administered to 4.5% of the British troops was very effective, reducing the incidence rate by 52% and mortality by 69%, more troops should have been inoculated, but the army refused requests for compulsory vaccination.¹⁶⁷ Indeed, according to Philip Curtin, when the Army authorities heard of Wright's experimental inoculations among British troops in India he was ordered to stop. With the advent of the South African War Wright sought permission for a general vaccination of the troops being sent overseas. The opposition overcame even the endorsement of the *British Medical Journal*, arguing correctly that the data from his India work was imperfect. Curtin concluded that this denial was advisable.¹⁶⁸

The army refused compulsory vaccination, but it allowed Wright to vaccinate those who chose to volunteer. The total number vaccinated ... is unlikely to have been more than 15,000 men, or less than 4 percent of the whole force, and some vaccine may have become ineffective through overheating. The typhoid mortality was 2.04 even among the vaccinated. The vaccine may not yet have been perfect, or perfectly administered, but the typhoid death rate of the whole South African expeditionary force was 21.08-more than ten times higher.¹⁶⁹

As shown below such a step would probably have been unjustified because of the newness of the vaccine and the fact that inoculation was administered on a voluntary basis, many refusing to do so when asked. The Wright serum was never used to inoculate the inmates of either the black or white concentration camps, even though the white camps, at least in the Orange River Colony, were inoculated for Small Pox. The black inmates in the Transvaal Department of Native Refugees were inoculated for bubonic plague. Some blacks in the mining districts in the Transvaal and in Bloemfontein were inoculated for Small Pox.

Wright's anti-typhoid vaccination was still very much in the experimental stage as the war began, and during the war. As mentioned above it was not until late 1898 and early 1899 while serving on the *Indian Plague Commission* that Wright, without permission from the military authorities,

¹⁶⁷ Daniel Low-Beer *et al.*, "Mortality during the South African War." p 5

¹⁶⁸ Phillip Curtin, *Disease and Empire: The Health of the European Troops In the Conquest of Africa* (Cambridge, 1998) p. 124.

¹⁶⁹ Frederick Russell, "Anti-typhoid Vaccination," *American Journal of Medical Science*, Vol. 146:803-33 (1913) 804; Almroth Wright, *British Medical Journal*, 1901, 1, 647 (March 16); Leonard Colebrook, *Almroth Wright: Provocative Doctor and Thinker* (London: Henemann, 1954) pp. 37-38. Cited in Philip D. Curtin, *Disease and Empire: The health of European troops in the conquest of Africa* (Cambridge, 1998) pp. 208-209.

administered the serum he had developed to over 4,500 soldiers in fourteen¹⁷⁰ garrisons that lay along the route of their travels of enquiry for the commission.¹⁷¹ So clandestine was this action on his part that they had to manufacture the serum on their way to India and during their travels in India. The authors provide information on the results of these vaccinations as follows:

Numbers under observation.

Inoculated: 2,835

Uninoculated: 8,460

Cases of enteric fever among the inoculated subjects.

Number of cases: 27

Per Cent. 0.95

Cases of enteric fever among the uninoculated subjects.

Number of cases 213

Per Cent. 2.5

Numbers of deaths among inoculated subjects

Number of deaths: 5.0

Per Cent of deaths 0.2

Numbers of deaths among uninoculated subjects

Numbers of deaths: 23.0

Per Cent: 0.28

Most of those who were inoculated were young. Younger people are more vulnerable to typhoid.¹⁷²

Treatment modalities for typhoid, prior to, and during the war.

There is a two-fold issue regarding the treatment of typhoid in the concentration camps. The first question is simply to determine the state of knowledge, both in theory and praxis, of the British medical profession at the time regarding the treatment of typhoid. And the second and corollary question is to what extent was this knowledge was applied to the medical care of the inmates in the concentration camps, and particularly the black concentration camps. It is the contention of some that the concentration camp doctors did not know how to treat typhoid patients. Whether these doctors would have been able to handle the large numbers of typhoid patients with their limited

¹⁷⁰ Almroth Wright and W.B. Leishman, "Remarks on the results which have been obtained by the Anti-typhoid inoculations and on the methods which have been employed in the preparation of the vaccine." *The British Medical Journal*, 20 January 1900. P.123.

¹⁷¹ In this same article describing the incident Wright with a co-author discreetly said, "The inoculations in question were done by one of us."

¹⁷² Almroth Wright and W.B. Leishman, "Remarks on the results which have been obtained by the Anti-typhoid inoculations and on The Methods which have been employed in the preparation of the vaccine." *The British Medical Journal*, 20 January 1900. P. 123.

¹⁷² W.W.C. Topley and G.S. Wilson, *The Principles of Bacteriology and Immunity* (London, 1929) p. 1197.

staffing is another question to be considered. In any case, the policy was only to allow one medical officer to every 1,000 inmates in the white camps. Thus the low level of medical staffing was a deliberate policy, given that Milner stopped recruiting doctors in January 1902 when the white camps had this level of doctor to inmate ratio.

The prevention of epidemics of typhoid is really a matter of sanitary preparations and enforcement, something every army officer should have known how to do, given that typhoid was a centuries old scourge of the British Army. Indeed typhoid was a problem that had been recorded as far back as Hippocrates in ancient Greece. During the American Civil War "...field sanitation was the responsibility of the line officer-from the colonel down through the lieutenant....Diarrhoea and dysentery caused a high sick rate of 64% of all troops in the first year of the war, and this increased to 99.5% in 1862. Better field-sanitation conditions brought this rate down dramatically."¹⁷³ Van Heyningen is of the view that Royal Army Medical Corps did not have the "requisite" knowledge to cope with epidemics. She argues that "The discovery of pathogens [in the Nineteenth Century] does not mean that there is any ability to treat, let alone prevent."¹⁷⁴ Certainly since the early work of Koch was concerned with the proper construction of sand filters that could effectively remove bacteria from water supplies,¹⁷⁵ his contribution could have been used to construct effective field water purification systems. Consequently typhoid and other waterborne diseases could have been reduced substantially. Furthermore water purification systems for stationary concentration camps would have been much easier to construct and maintain. It should also be noted that after April 1901 the doctors in the white camps were not R.A.M.C. doctors.

Surgeon General Jameson acknowledged that "if sanitation had been understood, not alone by our officers, but by the rank and file and the military officers, I think it would have saved thousands of

¹⁷³ Robert E. Denney, *Civil War Medicine: Care and comfort of the wounded* (New York, 1994) p. 9.

¹⁷⁴ Personal communication from Elizabeth Van Heyningen, 28 July 2001.

¹⁷⁵ Curtin, *Death by Migration*, p.117.

lives.”¹⁷⁶ Lt. General Charles Warren testifying before the Royal Commission held the view that “Whenever sanitary precautions are taken typhoid fever is at once reduced to a minimum.” He conceded that if there had been sufficient sanitary regulations in the army during the war and if they had been attended to, four fifths of the losses due to typhoid would have been prevented.¹⁷⁷

In 1901 in considering the reform of the medical services the formation of a Sanitary Corps was recommended to be composed of a sanitary officer and a staff trained to ensure that the “requisite measures” were carried out. Nevertheless, it seems reasonable to suggest that consistent and prompt treatment of typhoid patients and the proper disposal of the “evacuations” from these patients as well as the boiling and sterilising of their bedding and clothing would have greatly reduced the extent of the typhoid epidemics that would take place. These measures were well understood and recommended by Parkes as early as 1867. According to General Warren there had been a serious deterioration of this knowledge in the Army.

F. W. Welch, in 1883 in his detailed exposition on *Enteric Fever*, devoted the last chapter in his study to a discussion of treatment. At the time of the writing he was a Surgeon Major in the Army Medical Department. His study includes very detailed research regarding the experience of the British Army with typhoid, especially in its overseas stations.¹⁷⁸ Thus his work is particularly relevant to this study. Welch fully understood that the problem of an epidemic is part of the goal of treatment. “We have two objects in view—to restore health, and prevent danger to others.”¹⁷⁹ There was no medicine to prevent the evolution of the disease from occurring or to short cut its stages. “Hence,” he said, “we have to guide the individual through the necessary disease cycle with the least injury to the system; and we may do much in limiting the range of disease action to that which

¹⁷⁶ RAMC, Vols. 173-176, p. 16, The Royal Commission on the South African War—the Sanitary Commission, Testimony of Surgeon General, Jameson, 5 February 1903 (Wellcome Institute of Medical History, Archives, RAMC Collection.)

¹⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 28.

¹⁷⁸ Francis H. Welch, *Enteric Fever: Its prevalence and modifications; Aetiology; pathology and treatment as illustrated by Army data at home and abroad* (London, 1883) pp. 160-185.

¹⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 159.

is essential and [also to limit] the sympathetic systemic disturbance."¹⁸⁰ The lack of any nursing staff and minimal supervision by doctors in the black camps negated any kind of guidance through the stages of the disease cycle.

Under the second heading, medicine, the treatment was to attempt to curtail the pyrexia [feverish condition] and to decrease the degree of the disease. Two large doses of quinine were given over a 24-hour period. Admittedly the quinine had no impact on the disease itself. Rather it appeared to act as a sedative on the vascular system and brain. In large doses it also decreases the rise in temperature and the morning remission was more marked and prolonged.

When gland lesion was in progress, Welch observed that the dispensing of mercury could modify these lesions, although in 1883 they did not know why. He favoured the use of limewater, especially when used with milk over very strong astringents as more efficacious medicines and less questionable in their side effects.

From the point of view of treatment in the concentration camps both these items were available. Limejuice was being used to prevent scurvy. Milk was very scarce but was provided when possible. Limejuice was made available to the black camps in some instances. In at least one of the Remounts Depots in the Cape Colony lime juice was part of the standard ration scale provided to black workers.¹⁸¹ Lime juice is specifically listed in some of the monthly reports of the Department of Native Refugees camps as having been supplied as a medical comfort. Another suggested substance for this purpose was small doses of carbolic acid.¹⁸² This chemical was at times available in the camps as it was used as a disinfectant in the latrines, at least that was the case in the white camps. Some white camp staff complained that they could not obtain this disinfectant. It may be asked if carbolic acid issued for sanitary purposes was of sufficient medicinal quality for treatment of

¹⁸⁰ Welch, *Enteric Fever*, p. 160.

¹⁸¹ *Cape Archives*, Native Affairs, Vol. 500, A102, Inspector of Native Locations, Queenstown District, to Assistant Secretary to the Native Affairs Department, Cape Town, 31 December 1901.

¹⁸² Welch, *Enteric Fever*, pp. 163-5.

typhoid cases. This shortage of carbolic acid was in all likelihood due to the Surgeon General's fateful decision not to make any medical arrangements for the prevention and treatment of typhoid, believing that the war would be over before the advent of typhoid.

As can be seen Welch prescribed a very detailed and sophisticated treatment system in a military situation, albeit in a garrison setting. His book was published 1883, but it can be claimed that at least a quarter century before the war the British Army had a good understanding of the causes of typhoid and its treatment. It can also be seen that his primary treatment method involved the use of drugs at various stages of the disease.

The typhoid article in Quain was published a decade later than Welch's work in 1894. Some general remarks are made indicating that the patient should be in a well-ventilated room with windows and door open *depending on the weather*¹⁸³. *Conscientious, skilful and efficient nursing is required.*¹⁸⁴ [My emphasis] Burdett Coutts commenting on the typhoid epidemic at Bloemfontein recounted his own experience with typhoid, saying that seven weeks in a small hospital at the end of the Turkish [Crimean] War had taught him what the ceaseless devotion of doctors and nurses can do with this disease." He compared the much lower death rate of 7.75 percent there with the 21 per cent death rate at Bloemfontein.¹⁸⁵ It was urged that a very careful record of the condition of the patient, of the food, stimulants and medicines administered, and of the evacuations passed, be kept so that nothing would be overlooked.¹⁸⁶

The crucial need for bedside attendance is shown by the following instruction in Quain. "The patient is to be sponged night and morning with warm or lukewarm water. At other times general sponging may be done when it seems that the patient is overly warm or restless." Here again is a

¹⁸³ It should be noted in regards to the tent flap policy of the camps that this article requires that such ventilation should not be done in inclement weather conditions.

¹⁸⁴ Quain, *Medical Dictionary* p. 1102.

¹⁸⁵ Burdett-Coutts, *Care of the Sick and Wounded*, p.5.

¹⁸⁶ Quain, *Medical Dictionary*, p. 1102.

treatment modality requiring intensive nursing. Now follows another requirement not available in the black camps.

Welch lists diet, as the most important element in the treatment of typhoid. [The diet] should be exclusively liquid, and the staple constituents will be milk and beef tea or broth's of one kind or another.¹⁸⁷ Milk was a standard part of the special diets for typhoid patients during the war. As previously described, however, the concentration camps, both black and white, were not provided with milk on a sufficient and regular basis. Requests by the concentration camps for milk were routinely denied by the military, claiming that all the milk available was needed by the military hospitals for typhoid patients. [See chapter 3, IV-Milk rations]

In 1901 William Osler argued against the basic treatment approach of Welch. "The [medical] profession has been long in learning that typhoid fever is not a disease to be treated mainly with drugs. *Careful nursing and a regulated diet are the essentials in the majority of cases.*"¹⁸⁸ [Emphasis is mine] He is in agreement with the recommendations in Quain's Dictionary. He indicates that some modification has been made in the nature of the bed. Whereas in Quain the bed was not to be too soft, Osler says it should not be too hard. This concern may seem somewhat lacking in enough importance to be mentioned here. But that is not the case because he mandates that the patient "...should be confined to bed from the outset, and there remain until the convalescence is well established. He recommends a very finely selected set of qualities for the enteric bed. "The bed should be single, not too high, and the mattress should not be too hard. The woven wire bed, with soft hair mattress upon which are two folds of blanket combines the two great qualities of a sick bed, smoothness and elasticity."¹⁸⁹

¹⁸⁷ Welch, *Enteric Fever*, pp. 177-8.

¹⁸⁸ William Osler, *The Principles and Practice of Medicine: Designed for the use of practitioners and students of medicine* Fourth Edition (Edinburgh, 1901) p. 41.

¹⁸⁹ *Ibid.*

These instructions regarding the suitable enteric bed take on even greater relevance when the bedding and beds in the black camps and the white camps are considered. Even in the white camps there were very often no beds at all. At Bloemfontein, as mentioned, Emily Hobhouse was trying to find fabric and straw to manufacture very crude mattresses for the Boer women. Many Boer and black inmates were sleeping on the bare, and often damp ground. Osler stipulates that an intelligent nurse should be in charge. When this is not possible the attending physician should write out specific instructions, regarding diet, treatment of discharges, and the bed linen¹⁹⁰ Obviously the very insufficient numbers of doctors in the black camps would preclude this very needed supervision. In any case with no nurses or bedside attendants there was no medically aware person to give instructions to.

There are no extant patient medical records in either the black or white camps. It is not even known what kind of records may have been kept. In the black camps it very unlikely that any record was kept at all. To follow the progression of the typhoid crisis a temperature chart is necessary to monitor the changes in the temperatures of the fever stage. Given the large number of patients in the black camps assigned to a single doctor it seems very improbable that such individual care and instruction was given. Obviously neither of these essential requirements were obtainable in the black camps.

Milner on several occasions visited the military hospitals in Cape Town and he was certainly aware of the medical staff required for treating typhoid patients who comprised approximately 80% of the patients treated by those hospitals.¹⁹¹ He was also the major recruiter of doctors and nurses for the white concentration camps. Therefore his complete neglect of the black camps in regards to medical staffing was not a matter of knowing what was needed.

¹⁹⁰ *Ibid*, pp. 41-2

¹⁹¹ Milner's Papers, Microfilm Roll, No. 28, Milner's Private Diary, for the year 1899, 14 August 1899; and the year 1900, 20 February 1900. (The Bodleian Library, Oxford University)

III The ability and the capacity of the British government to provide adequate medical treatment to its own soldiers and the inmates of the concentration camps.

The Portland Hospital.

Determining what the British medical profession knew about measles and typhoid has been the focus up to this point. There is an accompanying question, which begs to be answered. Given the general conservatism of the War Department and its resistance to change, and the similar tendency of the Royal Army Medical Corps, to what extent was the knowledge gleaned from research and practice by the British medical establishment implemented in South Africa during the war, especially in the concentration camps? Considering the deficiencies in medical care in the concentration camp hospitals and the recommendations of Emily Hobhouse and the Committee of Ladies, were these recommended changes far in advance of any of the capabilities of the hospitals of the British Army during the war?

In the case of typhoid, which was the greatest source of death and sickness among British troops, there is a very rich source of information that can be applied to answering that question. The staff of the Portland Hospital, the first private hospital to provide medical service to soldiers in the war, published a detailed account of their experience, medical practice and informed observations. In this record, *A Civilian War Hospital*, great detail is given of their equipment, supplies, medicines, and medical comforts. The hospital came with it all the appliances and supplies needed to work with both disease and wounds. In the case of typhoid they had all the equipment recommended by the Committee of Ladies and Emily Hobhouse a year before they came on the scene.

Very important they recorded their opinions, theories and insights about the medical practice in, which they were engaged. They described their sanitation processes in detail and especially the way in which they sanitised clothing and bedding. The staff of the Portland Hospital may have been better informed and more versed in the latest medical equipment. Still this hospital account should

provide at least an idea of what knowledge could have been applied to the sick inmates in the camps. It also shows what medical technology and equipment could have been provided.

Treatment of typhoid patients in the Portland Hospital.

The treatment of typhoid was the most time consuming and significant activity engaged in by the Portland Hospital staff. Regarding their work they said "...the most important place must be given to the consideration of enteric fever, without which scourge it must be remembered the medical casualties of this campaign would have been comparatively insignificant."¹⁹² And since the Portland Hospital was present during the infamous typhoid epidemic at Bloemfontein their frame of reference was that of a medical crisis brought on by an epidemic, which was very akin to the milieu present in the concentration camps.

The treatment modality in the case of typhoid was based on careful nursing, diet, the sparing use of alcohol, only in cases where they feared heart failure, and the free use of various medicines, including digitalis and strychnine as cardiac stimulants. Headaches as the first symptom were treated along with insomnia. The treatment of the tongue and mouth was considered crucial as when the tongue dried and cracked it could inhibit the ingestion of food. The treatment and prevention of intestinal perforation was a major concern.¹⁹³ Detailed information is presented on the treatments used but are not presented here. The excellence of their treatment capabilities and performance are evident.

Treatment of typhoid patients in the black concentration camps.

There are no medical records of the treatment modalities used in either the original black camps or the later camps under the supervision of the Department of Native Refugees. This is also true of the white camps. Even in the case of the very detailed inspection reports of Dr. Kendall Franks, the

¹⁹² Anthony Bowlby, et al, *A Civilian War Hospital; Being an account of the work of the Portland Hospital and of the experience of wounds and sickness in South Africa, 1900 With a description of the equipment, cost and management of a civilian hospital in time of War* (London, 1901) p. 67. (The library of the War Museum of the Boer Republics, Bloemfontein, South Africa.)

¹⁹³ *Ibid.*, pp. 102-06.

consulting physician to the Commander-in-Chief, there is no description or discussion of the specific treatment modalities utilised in the white camp hospitals. It can be reasonably assumed that conventional treatment schemes were being practiced in the white camps within the constraints of limited nursing staff, medicines and medical comforts. It would be helpful, particularly in the case of typhoid to know the procedures used. That the Committee of Ladies composed of doctors did not comment on this important aspect of the medical service in the white camps would seem to indicate that the medical procedures were acceptable from their perspective. Many of the Boer doctors along with the British doctors working in the white camps, and providing service to some of the original black camps, had been trained in England and Scotland and undoubtedly were following the conventional treatment modalities of the British medical establishment. The sole interests of the medical investigators and inspectors seemed to be in the area of sanitation and other preventive methods such as quarantine procedures in the white camps.

In summary, the British medical system in regards to the treatment of typhoid, along with other waterborne diseases was normally to be treated by diet, nursing and some medicines. So far the study has given great attention to the very poor sanitation, poor diet and the total lack of nursing as well as inadequate numbers of doctors in the black camps. It is apparent that generally the fundamental aspects of the prevention and treatment of typhoid and other waterborne diseases were absent in the black camps. Although there was some attempt by Dr. Friedman, the Medical Officer to isolate typhoid patients in the Bloemfontein original black camp. Very early in that camp's existence Dr. Friedman was isolating typhoid patients.¹⁹⁴ He set up a separate camp for the hospital tents as a means of protecting the inmates in the main camp. On 16 February 1901 of the 886 inmates in the camp, 219 were residing in the hospital camp.¹⁹⁵ Quarantine procedures were also carried out in the Brandfort and Kroonstad black camps and perhaps others. In the area of nursing,

¹⁹⁴ SRC, Vol. 1, 157, Medical Officer of the Bloemfontein black camp to the Chief Superintendent of the Department of Refugees, Orange River Colony, Captain A.G. Trollope, 23 February 1902.

¹⁹⁵ SRC, Vol. 1, 11, Weekly report for the week ending 16 February 1901, Lt. Cole Bowen to Trollope, 16 February 1901.

the medical officers of all of the black camps must have been aware of the crucial need for nursing, and this must also have been understood from the highest level starting with Lord Milner down through all the administrative levels. There were literally only a handful of black bedside attendants, as described in the previous chapter. The failure to provide some kind of lay nursing care was the most serious problem and had the effect of producing much higher death rates than would otherwise have been the case.

IV. The numbers of black deaths in the black and white concentration camps.

A recent study by Pieter Cloete in 2000 contains an estimate of the numbers of deaths in both the black and white camps. This estimate of the number of blacks who died in the black camps also shows a much lower death toll than the numbers of deaths that this study has documented, which is stated as being “at least 14,100”. This estimate is apparently not based on an exhaustive search of archival and official published returns of the British Government. Cloete along with others also entirely leaves out the original black camps and generally appears to be following Warwick. What follows substantiates 21,042 deaths based on extensive research of all the available archival documents and British publications listing the numbers of deaths. This figure is not based on estimates and eliminates counts that are not concretely supported by definite official figures and other documents. It also eliminates records of deaths that may have been counted in other death lists[See Appendix 6.1-“The Master death list.”]

Death Registration.

The Committee of Ladies in their General Report on the Concentration Camps stated that neither the Orange Free State nor the South African Republic had kept any record of births or deaths.¹⁹⁶ In this they were only partly correct. At least in the case of the Orange Free State, which kept such records not only in the larger towns, but also in most of the smaller towns. Lord Milner also indicated that there were no statistics of births and deaths in the Transvaal. Due to the controversy

¹⁹⁶ *British Parliamentary Papers*, Cd. 893, p. 14, The Concentration Camps Commission, 12 December 1901

in Parliament regarding the high death rates in the concentration camps Chamberlain asked Milner to collect statistics of the death rates in the larger towns such as Pretoria, Cape Town and Port Elizabeth for purposes of comparison that would act to justify these high death rates in the camps.¹⁹⁷ It was Milner's belief, however, that it would be more helpful to collect statistics of child mortality in the Boer country districts as they are more suitable for purposes of comparison than those in large towns, in which the population is largely British, and some sanitary rules are observed." He said he had "...always understood that the ordinary death rate of children in country districts is exceptionally high. Confirmation of this is important."¹⁹⁸ The use of death statistics from the Cape Colony are really not acceptable as the conditions and the climate are substantially different.

Given the high rates of deaths arising from measles, there was a particular interest in the measles epidemics that had taken place previously in other parts of the British Empire. The Governor of the Cape Colony suggested that Milner refer Chamberlain to the vital statistics of Malta... of 1885." An Epidemic of measles among children "...carried off large numbers and the rate of death increased enormously."¹⁹⁹ All this collecting of statistics was an effort to show that the high death rates due to measles were a normal occurrence outside the white camps. It should have been seen that concentration would greatly exacerbate the death toll. It can be noted that it was politicians and not medical doctors who made these suggestions and attempts.

The proclamation of Lord Roberts in October 1900 ordering the registration of births and deaths of both blacks whites did not apply to the Orange River Colony. This is shown by the decision to eliminate the death registration fee to encourage registration in that colony.²⁰⁰ According to the Resident Magistrate of Winburg, "In chapter 32 of the Law Book the registration of births, which is open to white children only, appears to be merely voluntarily." He asked if the registration of white

¹⁹⁷ *British Parliamentary Papers*, Cd. 853, p. 9., Chamberlain to Milner, 9 November 1901.

¹⁹⁸ *National Archives of South Africa, Pretoria*, Archives of the High Commissioner of South Africa, (HC), Vol. 87, Milner to Governor of the Cape Colony, 11 November 1901.

¹⁹⁹ HC, Vol. 87, Governor of Cape Colony to Milner, 12 November 1901.

²⁰⁰ CSO, Vol. 27, 2483/01, Residential Magistrate, Heilbron to Wilson, 10 July 1901.

children was now compulsory. Goold-Adams said that pending passage of a compulsory registration law he should try to influence people to register.²⁰¹ The previous tradition of registration for whites only, and then only on a voluntary basis, resulted in no registration of the births and deaths of black people in the colony. In the case of whites it was not required and in the case of blacks it was not allowed. The failure to register black and coloured people was probably a manifestation of a view that such persons were not part of the community, in a legal sense as citizens.

It was not until the end of December 1900 that a central office of births and deaths registration was established in Pretoria. This office issued instructions to the urban and district registrars to assure that a uniform system of registration and tabulation was followed throughout the Transvaal Colony.²⁰² Registrars were appointed in the ten military districts of the Transvaal.²⁰³ In August 1901 Lord Kitchener issued a proclamation in his role as the Acting High Commissioner and Acting Administrator of the Transvaal, during Milner's absence in England, requiring the superintendents of the white concentration camps to give notice when any death occurred as required by Public Law No. 12 of 1870. Such notice was to be given to the Resident Magistrate, or to the Orphan Master if there was no Resident Magistrate.²⁰⁴ This proclamation applied only to the white camps in the Transvaal. The proclamation did not specify that black births and deaths should be registered. No mention is made of race one way or another.

In the Orange River Colony Captain A. G. Trollope, the Chief Superintendent of the Department of Refugees, sent notices of white deaths to the Orphan Master in Bloemfontein. The names of the white inmates were provided, and in a few cases the numbers of blacks who had died were indicated

²⁰¹ CSO, Vol. 25, 2296/01, Secretary ORC Adm. to Mr. Williams, 4 July 1901.

²⁰² MGP, Vol. 105, 8188A/01, The Registrar for Births and Deaths for the Transvaal Colony to the Registrar of Births and Deaths, Johannesburg, 27 December 1900.

²⁰³ *The National Archives of South Africa, Pretoria*, Legal files Wakkerstroom District, (LWM), F. K. Matthews to Resident Magistrate, Wakkerstroom, Transvaal, 7 November 1901.

²⁰⁴ *The National Archives of South Africa, Pretoria*, TKP, Vol. 85, Transvaal Proclamation No. 22, 12 August 1901.

without providing their names.²⁰⁵ These numbers have not been included in the death statistics in this study, as it is not known if they had already been recorded elsewhere.

Captain Trollope, soon after assuming the duties of Chief Superintendent, set out to construct a complete record of those who had died in the camps previous to his coming to the office. He had a list of all those who had died before 27 March 1901. He did not, however, have a listing of the causes of death. This list had been compiled by the military, and typical of their record keeping, they did not record the cause of death. This problem would reoccur when they once again took over the black concentration camps in mid 1901 when the Department of Native Refugees was established. Milner asked Trollope for the causes of death, especially among children, because of all the concern in London. Trollope hoped to obtain this information from the superintendents of the camps. Previous to taking over he said some records had not been kept up. This request also came as a result of a suggestion to Milner that the names of the people dying in the camps and the causes of death should be published in the Government Gazette.²⁰⁶

No mention was made regarding the deaths in the black camps. The research shows there was very little interest in keeping a record of the black deaths in black camps and the white camps, other than perhaps the numbers who died. This problem of inconsistent and incomplete records regarding the deaths of black inmates was not confined to the black concentration camps. The record shows that the mining companies and other private employers did not consistently record the deaths of black employees. In one instance thirty to forty uncertified deaths had occurred in the mines in 1902.²⁰⁷ Even beyond this situation with the mining companies the general view of British colonial officials and whites was to treat blacks as peripheral to their responsibilities and as an invisible irrelevance.

²⁰⁵ SRC, Volume 4, 820, Trollope to Orphan Master, Bloemfontein, 27 March 1901.

²⁰⁶ SRC, Vol. 4, 828, Trollope to Private Secretary to the High Commissioner.

²⁰⁷ SNA, Vol. 87, 47/03, District Surgeon, Johannesburg-the Rand to Commissioner of Native Affairs, 6 January 1903.

As in all aspects of the treatment of the inmates of the camps there was much more interest in the recording of the deaths of Boer inmates and especially the Boer children. To assure proper identification Trollope instructed the camp superintendent at Norvals Pont that a death certificate be made out for each and every death and that at the foot of each certificate a relative should sign to authenticate that the person named was, in fact, the person who had died.²⁰⁸ Evidently these certificates were forwarded to Milner or some higher authority. These certificates have not been found.

Six months after the war had ended the Superintendent of the Balmoral white camp, when handing over the death registers to the next superintendent, informed his successor that the former superintendent, when recording the death of a woman inmate recorded the death in her husband's name, and never her own. If an enquiry was made regarding these women he stated he had to send for friends or relatives to find out the woman's name.²⁰⁹ This is mentioned to show that the record of deaths in the white camps is, at least in some cases, inaccurate. The records of deaths in the black camps, and of blacks and coloureds who died in the white camps, were considerably less accurate and often non-existent.

The white camps kept relatively complete death lists. This was not the case in the black camps. Some white camp superintendents recorded the deaths of the black servants of the Boer families and other blacks residing in their camps, and some did not. Despite the provision in Roberts' proclamation that the deaths of "Natives" should also be registered there appears to have been considerable resistance to this aspect of the proclamation and repeated questions and objections were raised regarding this requirement.

²⁰⁸ SRC, Vol. 2, 459, Trollope to Supt., Norvals Pont white camp, 22 February 1901.

²⁰⁹ The files of the Director of Burger Camps presently only contain death registers and registers of the names of camp inmates. This letter is the only piece of correspondence extant in these files. No doubt whoever removed all the correspondence left this letter because it specifically pertained to the recording of deaths. What happened to the correspondence of the Burger Camps is unknown and extensive effort to trace them has failed to locate them. This does not affect the study of the black camps as they were not under the Department of Burger Camps as was shown in Chapter 3.

The Medical Officer of Health in the Transvaal was anxious that births and deaths of "Natives" in the rural areas also be carried out. J.S. Marwick, the Superintendent for Native Affairs of Pretoria expressed the view that the registration of "Native" deaths in rural areas presented several problems. First by legal tradition there was a problem, in that, in the former South African Republic, the registration of births and deaths, even in the case of whites, was not regulated by law.²¹⁰ Even the law of 1895 regarding the spread of Infectious and contagious diseases did not mandate any kind of reporting or registration of deaths as did the same kind of law in England.²¹¹

Marwick then went on to comment on what he saw as a more difficult problem. No registration of births and deaths had been attempted with black people previously, and he expressed the opinion that any such attempt now would be met with "vague suspicion". Marwick was well versed in the customs and the *mores* of the Zulu culture as the former representative of the Zulu mine workers in Johannesburg for the Natal Department of Native Affairs to the Transvaal Chamber of Mines prior to the war.

He suggested that rather than carrying out direct registration by a British official, a more indirect approach would not only be better, but essential. He gave an example of such an approach. "In the Transkei and the Native territories there is, I believe, a system of registration by which the Native Headman is looked to for information of births and deaths occurring in his district; and on his recording the same with the Registration Officer he is rewarded at a given rate for every birth or death reported."²¹² Other than this kind of approach being used and first explaining the process to the "Natives" he was opposed to trying to carry out registration in rural districts. Contrary to Marwick's view, Major de Lotbiniere, the Officer in Charge of the Department of Native Refugees,

²¹⁰ SNA, Vol. 14, NA 258/02, Superintendent of Native Affairs, Pretoria to the Assistant to the Military Governor of Pretoria, 30 April 1901.

²¹¹ Statute Law of the Transvaal 1839-1910, Law No. 12, 1895, Amendment of Law No. 4, 1887, "Containing measures against the spread of infectious diseases." 3 July 1895.

²¹² SNA, Vol. 14, 258/02, Marwick to Maxwell, 30 April 1901.

held the opinion that while blacks objected to the registration of births, this objection did not apply to deaths. He claimed that for every death that was registered, four births were not registered.²¹³

When the town of Kroonstad in the Orange River Colony, in September 1901, amended its municipal regulations the question arose as to whether or not the deaths of blacks should also be registered. According to the regulation on registration of deaths it was the duty of the other occupants of the dwelling where a death had taken place to report the death to the town government. The Deputy Administrator of the Orange River Colony, Hamilton Goold-Adams, suggested that the inhabitants, including the "Natives," should be required to come forward and give the required information.²¹⁴ The idea of coming forward was somewhat problematic in the case of the concentration camps inmates. Obviously since the black and white inmates were incarcerated, and since at least in the white camps there were medical officers, it would be their duty to report such deaths to the municipality or the Chief Superintendent.

Numbers of black and coloured deaths not recorded

Chamberlain wrote to Milner in April 1902 to say the Parliament was making an enquiry regarding the numbers of deaths in the "Native Camps," complaining that he had received "... no information since November [1901]."²¹⁵ It was not uncommon that deaths of indigenous peoples in the British colonies were not recorded. In the 1861 famine in India no general register of deaths was kept. A report on the mortality rate indicated that even had such a record been kept "the fact that it was framed amid confusion would [have] very much weakened its claim to accuracy."²¹⁶ That is also the case in counting black deaths in the camps during the South African War. For this reason the study

²¹³*The National Archives of South Africa, Pretoria, The archives of the Transvaal Administration, (TKP), Vol. 135, Final Report of the Work Performed by the Native Refugee Department of the Transvaal, From June 1901 to December 1902, P. 3.*

²¹⁴CSO, Vol. 53, 3191/01, Goold-Adams to Town Clerk, Kroonstad, 11 September 1901.

²¹⁵HC, Vol. 86, Telegram No. 2, Chamberlain to Milner, 22 April 1902.

²¹⁶"Statistics of distress and of relief measures in North West Provinces, 1860-1861-summarised by Colonel Baird Smith." PP. 295-96. (The India Institute, Oxford University Libraries, England)

only counts those deaths that can be certified from the archival record and official publications, and no estimates are included in the final tally of the deaths in the black camps.

The lack of organised camps for blacks swept off the veld in the Transvaal prior to the establishment of the Department of Native Refugees in June 1901 meant that the many deaths in the informal camps along the railway were not recorded. There were about 15,000 refugees making up 2,500 black families in these camps in June 1901. The blacks in these unofficial camps, had not received any medical care, housing or food assistance. Certainly the death rate in these camps must have been quite high. It was reported in March 1901 that the residents of one of these camps at Heidelberg were dying at the rate of one a day.²¹⁷ The Heidelberg refugees, were, according to the report, without food and were eating the carcasses of animals that had died of lung sickness. None of the deaths in these camps were recorded.

In the large black camp at Kroonstad, only 33 deaths were recorded that occurred during the month of August, 1901.²¹⁸ The deaths that took place during all the other months do not appear in the record. There was a lot of sickness in that camp which consisted of about 3,500 black inmates. It was not an officially designated black camp where the British columns could drop blacks being swept off the veld, and that appears to be the reason that no regular monthly statistics were sent to Trollope at Bloemfontein. In still another example, the black camp at Harrismith reported 42 deaths for the period September 1901 to 16 January 1902.²¹⁹ No other death returns have been found for the other periods of the existence of this camp. Prior to this period there were a few recorded deaths, but most of this period is devoid of any death records.

Another example of the sporadic recording of black deaths is the four infant deaths in the Orange River Station white camp over a two-month period.²²⁰ No other records of black deaths in that camp

²¹⁷ MGP, Vol. 78, 2713A/01, Turner to Maxwell, 13 March 1901.

²¹⁸ CSO, Vol. 46, 4292, 17 August 1901.

²¹⁹ CSO, Vol. 54, 190/02, Resident Magistrate, Harrismith, to Wilson, 16 January 1902.

²²⁰ SRC, Vol. 99, Death Notices dated 21 February 1902, 8 March 1902, 11 March 1902.

have been located. The Brandfort black camp is still another example of incomplete and sporadic record keeping of the deaths in the black camps. Of the eight months that this camp was in existence from January 1901 to September 1901 death returns were only sent to Trollope for the three months of May, June and July 1901 for a total of 101 deaths.²²¹ When that camp was transferred in the following month of August to the newly formed Department of Native Refugee there were 4,000 inmates in this camp. 250 of these inmates were allowed to remain behind under the supervision of the white camp superintendent²²² because of severe sickness. How many deaths took place among this group of very sick inmates is not known.

Only eight of the eighteen white Transvaal "Burger Camps" recorded any black deaths. The remaining white camps recorded no black deaths. Since it was Kitchener's order that the house servants of the Boer women should be permitted to accompany the Boer families to the white camps it is apparent that some white camp superintendents chose to record the deaths of these servants and their children and some did not. Although it is possible that some camps did not have any deaths in this category, it is not likely that more than half of these white camps were devoid of any black deaths.²²³ What is noticeable is that some camps had a number of black deaths and others had none at all.

Dr. Pratt Yule in being requested to comment on the newly proposed Bloemfontein Municipal Regulations regarding the registration of births and deaths made no mention of the registration of births and deaths of black and coloured people.²²⁴ The Resident Magistrate of Boshof on making inquiry about the registration of births and deaths was informed that as of 1 September 1901 such

²²¹ See Master Death List, Appendix 6.1.

²²² CSO, Vol. 34, 3302, Deputy Administrator, Orange River Colony Administration to Chief Superintendent Department of Native Refugees, Orange River Colony, 12 September 1901.

²²³ The various monuments located at the sites of the white camps, while listing the names of the Boer people who died in those camps, do not list the names of blacks who died in those camps.

²²⁴ CSO, Vol. 8, 586/01, Medical Officer of Health for the ORC to the Mayor and Sanitary Committee of Bloemfontein, 2 July 1901.

registration was now required for both whites and blacks.²²⁵ The superintendents of the white camps were required to report all the details of births and deaths in their camps to Trollope.

Yule in his role as the Medical Officer of Health had the responsibility to record births and deaths of all persons, and the causes of those deaths, in the Orange River Colony. He, however, did not register black deaths even after the war. The Colonial Secretary for the Orange River Colony provided him with returns of births and deaths on a regular basis. Yule received these returns, but to date they have not been found.²²⁶ Whether these returns included a listing of black deaths in the black camps, and or, the white camps is not known. He published very elaborate statistical reports on the deaths and causes of death in the white camps. He excused this lack of registration of black people saying "The Births and Deaths Registration Proclamation No. 15 of 1902 [had] only been applied to the...white section of the population. Provision is made in the proclamation for the registration of births and deaths among the native races, but Government has not yet sanctioned this extension of the work." He went on to say that, "The registration of births and deaths is no whit less important among natives than among whites, and, in view of the direct bearing that disease amongst natives, may and does, exercise on the well being of their white neighbours, this deficiency should be rectified in the early future."²²⁷ This rationale is consistent with the colonial medical policy in that his concern was the impact that disease among the blacks might have on the health of the white population.

A final source of unrecorded deaths occurred in the Department of Native Refugees camps where no returns of deaths in either the Orange River Colony and Transvaal camps were issued after November 1902 when the camps were officially closed. There were some inmates still residing in these camps as late as February 1903. These final residents of the camps were those who were

²²⁵ CSO, Vol. 33, 3253, Sec. to ORC-Administration. to Resident Magistrate, Boshof, 2 September 1901.

²²⁶ See CSO, Vols. 39,48, 49,52 and 56 from 8 October 1901 to 4 February 1902. Later volumes may contain other minute sheets similar to these listed files.

²²⁷ *Free State Provincial Archives, Bloemfontein*, Orange River Colony printed materials, (ORC), Vol. 253, Public Health Department, Orange River Colony Administration, Registration of Births and Deaths, Report of the Registrar of Births and Deaths for the Orange River Colony, June 1906, (Bloemfontein, 1906) p. 3.

sickly or hard to place. There were undoubtedly at least a few deaths in these camps during December 1902 and January and February 1903. There were still approximately 70 inmates in the Orange River Colony black camps on 13 February who were then transferred to the Brandfort white camp on or about that date.²²⁸ No doubt these black refugees were placed in the location for blacks just outside the white camp. Some of them who were very sickly may have died there and may have been buried in the small black cemetery near the white camp. There is no record of these deaths if, indeed, any took place. The record of the Transvaal camps does not indicate how many, if any, black inmates remained in the black or white concentration camps after 30 November 1902. Finally there is no record of those black and white inmates who died shortly after repatriation due to their poor condition at the time of release. Nor is there any record of those who died during the removal process. This is also true in the case of the white camps.

Numbers of recorded black deaths in the black and white concentration camps.

Previously the accepted numbers of deaths of blacks in the concentration camps were first stated by S.B Spies to be 13,315 in 1976²²⁹ and 14,154 by Peter Warwick in 1983.²³⁰ Both of these figures are well below the actual numbers of deaths that have been documented by this study. As of this date by extensive examination of the record, 21,042 deaths of black inmates in the black and white concentration camps have been absolutely verified by the documentary record contained in both the National Archives and the Free State Provincial Archives of South Africa and the published statistics of the British Parliamentary Papers in the Cd series, commonly known as the "British Blue Books."

Regarding the numbers of black deaths stated by Spies he calculates a total of 13,315 black inmate deaths. He does not give sources for that figure, only stating in a footnote that there were

²²⁸ CSO, Vol. 143, Fox to Wilson, 13 February 1903.

²²⁹ Spies, *Methods of Barbarism*, p. 266.

²³⁰ Peter Warwick, *Blacks in the South African War* (Johannesburg, 1983) p. 151.

“Altogether 5,915 in the Transvaal and 7,400 in the Orange River Colony.”²³¹ These figures are low even if one only considers the official death statistics of the Department of Native Refugees which show 6,345 deaths in the Transvaal²³² and 8,032 in the Orange River Colony²³³ or a total of 14, 377 deaths as of 31 October 1902 when the camps were officially “closed.” Spies apparently arrived at the figure of 5, 915 deaths in the Transvaal by stopping the count on 31 May 1902 the day the Peace Treaty was signed. The Transvaal monthly report for 31 May 1902, records the total number of deaths to date as 5,915.²³⁴ The monthly report for May 1902 in the Orange River Colony shows 7,328 deaths²³⁵ In addition neither Spies or Warwick counted the deaths recorded in the files of the original black camps in the Orange River Colony. Even though these records are sporadic and many deaths were not recorded, the deaths that are documented in these camp records have been counted in my figure of the total number of deaths which are tabulated in Appendix 6.1-The Master Death List..

The black deaths recorded in the white camp death registers were labelled in large letters, "NATIVE". In some registers every Boer person who died is repetitiously labelled as "Dutch". It is therefore likely that most, if not all, of these black or coloured deaths would have been labelled, “Native”. In a few instances some deaths were labelled as “Hottentot.” Even without such labelling the names would in most cases be recognised. Very often in the case of black and coloured deaths only a first name was used. This was not done in the case of the Boers, except in the case of infant deaths where no baptism had been performed. The only possibility of a problem would be coloured and black inmates who often had been given the “Dutch” names of their employers.

²³¹ Spies, *Methods of Barbarism*, p. 381 Footnote 161.

²³² TKP, Vol. 135, *Final Report of the Work Performed by the Native Refugee Department of the Transvaal from June 1901, to December 1902*, p. 3.

²³³ CSO, Vol. 119, 5537/02, Department of Native Refugees, Orange River Colony, Monthly Report, October 1902, de Lotbiniere to Goold-Adams, 6 December 1902.

²³⁴ SNA, Vol. 44, NA 1411, Department of Native Refugees, Transvaal, Monthly Report, May 1902, Chief Supt. to de Lotbiniere, 25 June 1902.

²³⁵ SNA, Vol. 44, NA 1411, Department of Native Refugees, Orange River Colony, Monthly Report, May 1902, Chief Supt. to de Lotbiniere, 12 July 1902

In the ten military districts in the Transvaal a registrar of births and deaths was appointed by the British Army in accordance with Lord Roberts' order in October 1900 that all births and deaths were to be registered. The death registers of nine of the districts have disappeared. In the singular case of the Heidelberg District in the Transvaal Colony the register of deaths shows a listing of the deaths of blacks at Greylingstad, Florida Kop, Meyerton, Nigel, and Vereeniging. These towns were all home to one of the Department of Native Refugees camps, and in addition all were towns that were the location of coal mines or gold mines. This list may contain the names of black inmates of the DNR camps of the same name. This very valuable document was found in the Heidelberg white camp records in the Director of Burger Camps file in the National Archives. This may be the only reason that this register survived. The register records the date of registration, the date of medical certificate of death, the name of the person and the location where the person died. The age of the deceased was left blank on the form. No causes of death were recorded in the case of black deaths recorded in the register. The few sheets detailing the Boer deaths do include the cause of death.²³⁶ The 773 black deaths recorded in this register have not been included in the final tally of the deaths in the black concentration camps, as these deaths may have been included in the death statistics of

²³⁶The right side of the form contains a space to record information on the cause of death and place of residence, etc. Among some of these blue sheets were a few sheets that recorded the deaths of Boer people. But the right side of the sheet is devoted to the black and coloured victims have been removed by tearing off that portion of the sheet. Not one of these long blue forms pertaining to black deaths escaped this process. The tear along the edge seems to indicate that this was done recently. It may be argued that the missing right hand portion of the form was not filled out and was ripped away for that reason. Why would anyone go to that trouble? The removal of any material from the archives is a criminal offense and violates statutory law. In the National Archives it appears that every death list containing the names of black or coloured inmates of the concentration camps is missing. Even when a archivist's note indicates where such lists can be found, in another volume of the file, when that file is consulted the information is not to be found in that volume. Such consistent disappearance of documents would seem to indicate that this was done with intention and purpose by some person or persons unknown and for reasons unknown. When archivists were asked they did not know how to explain this problem. This may have been done quite properly, but it is still a mystery. There are also some files that have disappeared from the Free State Archives. The missing files in the Free State Provincial Archives do not necessarily contain death lists. In particular files that existed in 1988 concerning food supplies issued and copies of materials on the Transvaal Camps are no longer available and may have been sent to the National Archives. Other files may also be missing. I worked with the files listed in 1988. According to the Archives a large amount of archival materials were sent to the University of the Orange Free State. The University has no record of this having occurred, nor does the Library have the specific documents previously used by the author. The Free State Archives is certainly the best organised and administrated in South Africa.

the Department of Native Refugees, although this cannot be confirmed. The study errs on the side of recording only those deaths that can be documented with assurance. See footnote.²³⁷

The high death rates in the black concentration camps, according to *The Times History*, were due to the deprivations of the inmates on the veld and the fact that the camps were not well ordered in the early stages.²³⁸ The first part of this general statement implies that the inmates of these camps were brought into the camps because of their need for assistance, as opposed to being removed from the farms and locations for solely military reasons. Furthermore, there is no evidence in the record that the black concentration camps were improved, as in the case of the white camps. Since no investigator like Emily Hobhouse as an outside authority visited these camps, this is part of the reason for this failure. The high death rates were due to a lack of sanitary facilities, adequate housing, sufficient food and medical care, which were consistently lacking throughout the history of these camps. More important is the fact that the first inmates were removed to the new camps from the original black camps, especially, in the case of the Orange River Colony camps. In the Orange River Colony 22,700 inmates of the original black camps were removed to the new farm camps of the Department in the months of August and early September 1901. Another almost equal number of inmates were swept off the farms to come to a total of 42,098.²³⁹

The death rate actually escalated during the first four months of the operation of the Department of Native Refugees camps. Therefore, the argument that the high death rate was due to the deprivations on the veld and the rigors of the removal process, is not shown to be a valid explanation. In regards to the removal process, which to a great extent involved transport in open

²³⁷ The form lists the address of the place where the death took place. All of these places are towns or areas where a Department of Native Refugees Camp was located. I have assumed that these designations of the place names where the deaths took place were Department of Native Refugees Camps. The addresses are as follows Vereeniging, Florida Kop, Greylingstad, Meyerton, and Nigel. It is interesting to note that all of these towns or areas were locations of coal or gold mines. I consulted with Professor Andre Wessels on this problem and he concurs with my interpretation. I have not included these 773 deaths in the final death tally.

²³⁸ Amery, *The Times History of the War*, Vol. 6, p. 26.

²³⁹ CSO, Vol 42, Chief Superintendent Department of Native Refugees, Orange River Colony to Chief Superintendent of the Department of Native Refugees, 30 September 1901.

“The Master Death List,” indicates the archival or officially published source of each figure listed in the appendix. The type of document is also noted. No record of deaths is included in the total unless there is no question that the numbers of deaths listed in the sources are reliable and accurate. As mentioned above there were 773 deaths recorded by the Heidelberg Registrar which are not included in this total as it could not be verified whether or not these deaths had been included in the monthly death returns of the Department of Native Refugees. The author has compiled lists of some of the names of black inmates who died in the camps. Only about 1,500 names appear on these lists. These lists have not been included in the final form of the thesis due to space considerations. Appendixes 6.2 and 6.3, the tables of deaths in the Bloemfontein black camp and the Middleburg white camp, do contain the names of the dead in those camps.

It is clear that as many as 25,000 or even more deaths actually took place in the black concentration camps. Several very important factors underlie this estimate and it is important to briefly list them. First of all a significant amount of the record of the black deaths in the concentration camps has substantially disappeared or never existed. There are no death records or registers in the case of the Transvaal informal camps.

The British Army also operated Army Labour Depots where several thousand black workers were contracted out to the various Army Departments. There are no death registers or statistics for these depots and ancillary camps. Some of these black men who died in the work camps of the Army Departments were the fathers, husbands, sons and brothers of the black families in the temporary camps along the railway in the Transvaal and in the original black camps in the Orange River Colony. Whether these deaths were registered in all cases by the Department of Native Refugees is not known.

Town, 2001) p. 122. “In commemoration of the estimated 300 black people who died in the concentration camp for black people in Aliwal North during the Anglo Boer War 1899-1902 and who lie buried in this cemetery. I indicated 240 deaths based on this estimate, to which was added 53 deaths that were certified by a document located in the War Museum of the Boer Republics in Bloemfontein.

As described in Chapter 4 in August 1901 British Columns began sweeping black farm workers and small tribal settlements from the Orange River Colony into the Natal Colony.²⁴⁶ Some refugees from the Transvaal also were driven into the Colony. The Natal authorities decided not to form concentration camps in view of the disastrous results in the concentration camps in the former Boer Republics. Instead they farmed the Refugees out to various Zulu headmen and sub-chiefs. Some of these refugees were allowed to take refuge in caves and other available land. The Natal Department of Native Refugees, by policy of the Natal Government, provided almost no support to any these refugees in the way of food, shelter or medical services. The total known number of black refugees present in Natal in August 1902 was 16,657²⁴⁷ The total number of black refugees in Natal counted in a census just before their repatriation was 6,648.²⁴⁸ Certainly some of these refugees must have died, but there is no way of estimating how many, as no death records have been found, and it seems likely that none were kept.

In Howard. Philips' doctoral thesis regarding the 1918 Spanish Influenza Epidemic he comments on the significant lack of accurate death registration information. In part, the press of the disease itself on administrative work excuses this. "...in many cases the greater proportion of whole communities were incapacitated." He states that the data available on whites and Indians is reasonably accurate, but the greatest shortcomings were in the report of the deaths in the predominantly black rural areas. In common with the South African War most secondary sources accepted the very inaccurate figures of the numbers who died.²⁴⁹

In leaving the medical history portion of the study it has been shown that all the required medical knowledge, practical expertise, medical equipment and technology necessary to the proper medical

²⁴⁶ SRC, Vol. 11, 4289, Telegram, G.O.C, Natal to Deputy Administrator Orange River Colony, 17 August 1901.

²⁴⁷ *The national Archives of South Africa, Pretoria* Accession 2030, Plöeger's Papers, Vol. 67, Monthly Report, August 1902 de Lotbiniere to Governor of Natal, 1 September 1902.

²⁴⁸ *Natal Provincial Archives*, The Archives of the Natal Secretary of Native Affairs, (NSNA), Vol. 296, 1963/02, Secretary of Native Affairs-Prime Minister of Natal, 23 June 1902.

²⁴⁹ H. Philips, " 'Black October': The Impact of the Spanish Influenza Epidemic of 1918 on South Africa." Ph.D thesis University of Cape Town, 1984. Published in *The Archives Year Book for South African History*, Fifty-third Year, and Vol. I (Pretoria, 1990) 1990

care if the inmates in the black camps were understood and common praxis in British military medicine. The black concentration camps were not provided with adequate medical staffing, equipment and supplies. The denial of these crucial essentials was the result of a deliberate neglect mandated by the British colonial medical policy that precluded any assistance to the indigenous peoples of the Empire unless the failure to do so would endanger the military, the British population or the labour supply. It may be asked if this policy should have been applied in a time of war and devastation and against families of many men who had fought on the side of the Empire?

The Portland Civilian Hospital is *Prima facie* evidence that the knowledge, supplies and equipment that were required to save many lives in the concentration camps were understood and could have been provided, despite the logistical and transport pressures on the British Army. This was exacerbated by the same kind of colonial policy in other non-medical areas of the administration of these camps that resulted in inadequate housing, insufficient food supply and inadequate sanitary facilities, which acted as a generator of significant amounts and levels of sickness. In the face of inadequate medical care this resulted in the high death rates in these camps. One of the most serious causes of death was the failure to provide nursing care in the black camps for diseases that could only be successfully treated by skilled and intensive nursing. Regrettably, this very serious deficiency could have been easily remedied as has been shown in the previous chapter. As a result many deaths occurred that could have been prevented. In the next and final chapter the compensation, repatriation and the betrayal of the promises and the expectations of the surviving black concentration camp inmates are discussed.

Chapter 7

The Aftermath

I gather from the reports received that many natives are very exercised in their minds as to whether or not they will receive adequate compensation for the losses they have sustained during the present war.¹ *Hamilton Goold-Adams, Deputy Administrator, Orange River Colony. 31 December 1901*

"It is clearly our duty to help in the resettlement of the country as far as possible, and avoid creating difficulties for either the farmer or his native labourers." *Major de Lotbiniere, Officer in Charge of the Department of Native Refugees.*²

If the new British Administration of the Transvaal (and its coercive apparatus) had left the returning Boers and the peasantry to their own devices on the farms, if it had not intervened in the class struggle between them, the Boer landowners—the fundamental ruling class of the Transvaal might have been unable to restore their social existence. So sweeping had their expropriation been, so crushed were they by the war, and so armed were the agrarian workers that this was a real possibility in 1902. *Jeremy Krikler*³.

I. Introduction

With the end of the war, the relationship between the British Government and the black peoples of South Africa was reversed. Having defeated the Boers with significant assistance from thousands of black soldiers, spies, scouts, sappers, transport drivers and labourers a pattern of betrayal of promises and expectations took place. This turn of events even surprised some of the District Commissioners of the Department of Native Affairs charged with implementing the new policies, which subordinated the black and coloured people to the status of an underclass of "helots" to the two white races. This had been Milner's vision and plan from the beginning. Just six weeks after the commencement of hostilities he confided this view to Sir Percy Fitzpatrick, a mining company operative and a co-conspirator in Milner's working up to the war.⁴ "The *ultimate* end is a self governing white community, supported by *well treated* and *justly governed* black labour from Cape

¹ *The Free State Provincial Archives, Bloemfontein* The archives of the Secretary to the Orange River Colony Administration, (CSO), Vol. 51, 4619/01, Hamilton Goold-Adams, Deputy Administrator, Orange River Colony Administration, to the High Commissioner, Lord Alfred Milner, 31 December 1901.

² *The National Archives of South Africa, Pretoria*, The archives of the Secretary of Native Affairs, (SNA), Vol. 45, NA 1474, Circular L-38 to District Inspectors and camp Superintendents of the Department of Native Refugees, 12 July 1902.

³ Jeremy Krikler, *Revolution from Above, Rebellion from below: The agrarian Transvaal at the turn of the Century*. (Oxford, 1993) p. 37

⁴ Thomas Pakenham, *The Boer War* (London, 1979) pp. 46-58.

Town to Zambesi. [Emphasis is Milner's]"⁵ It should not be thought that this idea and this possibility crossed Milner's mind just prior the war. These two cardinal principles were embodied in a speech of Henry. H. Asquith, a rising liberal imperialist, delivered sometime prior to 18 November 1897. These principles captured Milner's attention, at least enough to cause him to write a long letter to his old university days friend and romantic rival about his speech.

"With your great two principles that (1) we seek '... to restore the good relations between the Dutch and the English'" and (2) we should 'secure for the Natives, particularly in...Rhodesia, sufficient protection against oppression and wrong. I most cordially agree, with this reservation,...It seems to me, we are equally bound to secure the good treatment of the natives in the Transvaal, where we specially and most solemnly promised them protection when we gave back the country to the Boers....'"⁶

Milner now confessed that the easy way to reconcile the two white races was "...to sacrifice the nigger and the game is easy." He vehemently rejected this solution at the time because this would mean the abandonment of "...the black races, to whom you have promised protection, and the tolerance of a state of things, in a self governed state under the British flag, which you would never tolerate for a moment in India, in Egypt, or in any of the crown colonies."⁷

Ironically some of the tribal chiefs who had been the most loyal to the British and had carried out attacks on the Boers and their property were now banned from their tribes. Lest these former comrades armed by the British to fight the Boers should consider continuing the war against the whites they were ordered to turn in their arms. Not only had they lost their former status as allies, but most important they were now ordered to be subservient to the former enemy. When the more bold among the chiefs objected to this sudden betrayal they were told it was none of their business. Added to these draconian measures and reversals were the policies of compensation and repatriation, which assured a much more coercive and structured regime of oppression than they had known under the Boer republics.

⁵ *The National Archives of South Africa, Pretoria*, Photo Copy Series, FK, Vol. 1102, p. 1405, Milner to Percy Fitzpatrick, 28 November 1899.

⁶ Cecil Headlam, (ed.), *The Milner Papers: South Africa, 1897-1899*, (London, 1933) p. 177.

⁷ G.H.L. Le May, *British Supremacy in South Africa, 1899-1907* (Oxford, 1965) p. 11. Headlam edited out this statement from the letter cited above. Headlam should not be used except when necessary, and then with great caution, as this is a common problem with his edition of *Milner's Papers*, which is an apparent attempt at a dishonest apologetic.

"The native's attitude towards compensation resembled that which he had previously shown towards the concentration camps and repatriation. He did not complain. He expected nothing, he got something; he was grateful."⁸ This brief summary of the attitudes of blacks toward their experiences of the black concentration camps and the compensation received for their war losses, by G.B. Beak, a repatriation official, is quite typical of the way that some British and Boer officials dismissed the suffering and the aspirations of black people during war and its aftermath.⁹

The British Government, except in a few rare instances, did not pay compensation to blacks for the destruction of their homes, their crops or their land. Blacks only received payment for requisitioned or commandeered livestock, farm equipment, food grains and moveable property. In one of many broken promises, cattle looted from the Boers under the orders of the British Army or given to them as payment for their services, had to be returned to the Boer owner. The black claimant only received about 25% of the assessed value, or considerably less, as determined by the compensation boards. On the other hand their livestock in the hands of the Boer did not have to be returned.

Lord Kitchener demonstrated, both by policy and by his actions, that he felt a certain antipathy, bordering on hostility, towards the civilian population and he was certainly much less concerned for black families and Boer families than most British officials. Despite this, in his order to forcefully remove the black and Boer families to the concentration camps, he stipulated: "Every endeavor should be made to cause as little loss as possible to the natives removed, and to give them protection when brought in."¹⁰ In most instances, "protection" meant being confined in a concentration camp.

The giving of receipts for requisitioned property of the civilian population from the beginning of the invasion of the Orange Free State shows that the British Government fully intended at least to pay for livestock and supplies commandeered by the British Forces. It can also be seen that from the

⁸ G.B. Beak, *The Aftermath of War*, (London, 1906) p. 243.

⁹ Beak served as an intelligence officer during the war and later as a repatriation officer for five years from 1900 to 1904. See Beak, p. x.

¹⁰ *British Parliamentary Papers*, Cd. 426, Army Circular Memorandum No. 29, The Commander-in-Chief to Field Commanders, 21 December 1900.

very beginning Lord Roberts attached great importance to the payment for requisitioned property of the civilian population. Only six days after arriving in South Africa he ordered that "In all cases in which supplies of any kind are required, they must be paid for upon delivery and a receipt taken."¹¹ Likewise, Roberts in his the first proclamation addressed to "The Burgers of the Orange Free State" upon entering the Orange Free State made it clear that compensation would be paid for any requisitioned goods or livestock taken by British troops.¹² Kitchener reiterated this policy six months later, saying that "In all cases receipts should be given for everything taken."¹³

The promise of compensation was a significant provision of the Vereeniging peace agreement. On 16 June 1902 the British Government appropriated £3,000,000 "...for the purpose of assisting the restoration of the Boer people to their homes and supplying those, who owing to war losses, are unable to provide themselves, with food, shelter and the necessary amount of seed, stock, implements, etc. indispensable to the resumption of their normal occupations."¹⁴ From this it can be seen that these payments were not, *per se*, compensation for actual losses and damages incurred, but were provided to restore the agricultural industry which was so essential to the restarting of the economy. According to Milner outright compensation, rather than the granting of loans to the Boer farmers, was objected to by loyalists,. These objections were raised during his discussions in the Orange River Colony.¹⁵

That this was not compensation for the total losses is shown by the fact that this amount of payment did not even approach the actual losses incurred by the Boer farmers or the black farm workers and house servants, not to mention independent black farmers. General de la Rey in a conversation with Sammy Marks on 14 April 1902 in Pretoria regarding the problems and prospects for ending the

¹¹ *British Parliamentary Papers*, Cd. 426, Circular Memorandum, No. 2, Issued by the Chief of Staff, 16 January 1900.

¹² Cd., 426, *Proclamation: To the Burgers of the Orange Free State*.

¹³ Cd. 426 Circular Memorandum No. 20, *Instruction for Officers engaged in Foraging Duties*, 26 June 1900.

¹⁴ C8-1, Army Headquarters, South Africa, *Peace Agreement Conditions, Paragraph 10*, 31 May 1902. ..published by order of The High Commissioner, 5 June 1902 .

¹⁵ FK, Vol. 1191, p. 1 114, Milner's Papers, Milner to Chamberlain, 21 April 1902.

war, described his country as being ruined and argued this made “getting out” of the war very difficult. Sammy Marx, responded to the General

“ ‘...if it were a question of money he might rest assured that Great Britain would deal liberally with them and would restore, as far as possible, the damage done by her troops.’ When I estimated the damage done at £5,000,000, at most, he laughed and said that even £80,000,000 would not cover the destruction done. He told me that if I had seen, as he had, between 40,000 and 50,000 sheep driven together and maxims turned on them so that not one came out alive, and had seen horses driven together in a kraal around which were men stationed with guns and ordered to fire, I might realize the extent of the damage.”¹⁶

Later in November 1902, in what was obviously an afterthought, an additional £2,000,000 was provided as compensation “for British Subjects and Foreigners and the Natives”. The official published statement said of this additional compensation funding that “It was purely voluntary. It expressed not the obligations, but the bountiful gift of the Imperial Authorities to resident Foreign Subjects and to Natives, as well as its own Subjects.”¹⁷ Sir Godfrey Lagden, the Commissioner of Native Affairs, said “The payment of compensation to natives who suffered losses during the war was an act of grace on the part of His Majesty’s Government towards the native subjects.”¹⁸ Of this total amount of £2,000,000, cited above, only £300,000 or 15% of this money was allotted to the blacks both inside and outside the black concentration camps. Leonard Thompson in his classic work, *The Unification of South Africa* says that overall the British Government provided “...free grants totaling about £7 millions in partial compensation for war losses, in addition to about £2½ millions which were paid out against receipts issued by the military during the war, while the colonial governments spent another £9 millions in grants and loans for resettlement.”¹⁹ Thompson does not mention the compensation paid to blacks. Most of the claims of the inmates of the black camps were paid out of the military compensation funds.

¹⁶ Selborne Papers, Vol. 197, pp. 181-183, Resume of a conversation with J.H. de la Rey [and Sammy Marks, 14 April 1902. (Bodleian Library, University of Oxford, England)

¹⁷ *British Parliamentary Papers*, Cd. 3028, Further Correspondence relating to Affairs in the Transvaal and Orange River Colony, *Final Report of the Central Judicial Commission*, Part III addressed to the High Commissioner, 4 April 1906.

¹⁸ Selborne Papers, Vol. 167, *1906 Annual Report of the Commissioner of Native Affairs*, Sir Godfrey Lagden, to Lord Selborne, Governor, Transvaal and Orange River Colony, to Colonial Secretary.

¹⁹ Leonard M. Thompson, *The Unification of South Africa, 1902-1910* (Oxford, 1960) p. 12.

Milner decided upon this relatively small percentage of the total after consultation with the Governments of the Transvaal and the Orange River Colony.²⁰ Payment for goods and livestock requisitioned by military units were charged to military accounts and were not to be paid for with this grant. Considering the large numbers of blacks compared with the numbers of foreigners and British subjects, the British attitude toward black war losses is clear. It may be argued that the needs of the black peasants were much less than that of whites. When it is considered that all that was being replaced was livestock and farm implements, and the major importance of their losses of homes, furniture, and personal possessions which were not compensated, it can be seen how costly this decision was for the poorest of the victims of the war.

Major De Lotbiniere made the decision that compensation to the black inmates, as far as possible, should be in the form of livestock rather than money. The rationale of this policy was to assure the health of the repatriates, particularly milk for infants and children, and to provide them with ploughing stock to get the farms operating again. He also feared that "Jews" and other exploitive traders and law agents would strip the repatriates of their money. Then the fact that the British Government had fairly compensated them for their losses would be forgotten and any loyalty gained in this way would be lost. Finally, blacks who were not an official party to the war, complained that the Boers who they perceived as having started the war, were in its aftermath, treated not as defeated enemies, but as allies.

Almost from the very beginning the design, structure and policies of the Department of Native Refugees had incorporated certain aspects of the overall master plan of Lord Milner for both the blacks and the Boers in the post-war period. One of the foundational principles upon which this plan rested was the restoration of the Boer farms as the primary providers of food for both the mines and the nation. The repatriation policy was the reverse of the sweeps strategy that had funneled the Boer

²⁰ *British Parliamentary Papers*, Cd. 3028, Further Correspondence relating to Affairs in the Transvaal and Orange River Colony, *Final Report of the Central Judicial Commission*, Part III addressed to the High Commissioner, 4 April 1906.

and black families into the concentration camps. It was now contrived to drive the black camp inmates in the opposite direction back into the arms of their former Boer masters.

It was Milner's view that the two white races who had waged this long and lingering war against each other should now become co-rulers, although distinctly unequal rulers, of the newly formed nation of South Africa. That, however, was not the primary reason that the black inmates were manipulated, cajoled and coerced into returning to their former masters. By returning the black inmates to the farms they had previously worked before the war they would be best able to get the agricultural industry, devastated by the scorched earth tactics, up and going again, as quickly as possible. In this situation the payment of compensation to the black farmworkers and rapid repatriation back to the farms was crucial to the goal of as rapid a restoration of the agricultural industry as possible. The agricultural restoration plan consisted of a three-legged strategy. The first two legs being, (1) compensation in the form of livestock and, (2) rapid repatriation. The third and final leg was the accumulation of large amounts of mealies (corn meal) and Kaffir corn (Sorghum) cultivated by the inmates of the camps which the inmates could take back to the farms to feed them until the first harvest.

The inmates of the new camps in the Department of Native Refugees had to be motivated by showing them the advantages of this scheme. While conducting his initial inspections of the various newly formed camps, de Lotbiniere had gathered the inmates together and told them that the Government did not wish them to go back to their kraals empty handed. By the end of the war, he told them, they should have at least 30 or 40 bags of grain for their own use.²¹ To control the black population after the war they needed to be provided with food and livestock and to be placed under the firm supervision of a white employer. De Lotbiniere had visions of the disaster that would result

²¹ SNA, Vol. 59, 2097, PP. 8-9 Officer in charge, Department of Native Refugees, Captain G.F. de Lotbiniere to Milner, 30 September 1901.

if the thousands of black inmates in the camps were suddenly released into the veld under no supervision and without food and livestock.

It was stated repeatedly in official reports that their growing crops was solely for their own benefit. "They... appreciate that all the grain grown will be theirs and that Government does not work on the half system, which is the one in vogue amongst the farmers.(sic)"²² This promise was not kept. They soon learned that they had to also grow crops for the Army Departments. And working in a system very much like "the halves" is precisely what did happen. Carrying this idea even further, de Lotbiniere established nineteen grain warehouses, where by the time the camps closed, large amounts of grain were stored. When the camps in the Transvaal were closed in January 1903, these warehouses were turned over to the Department of Native Affairs. It was planned that the repatriated black inmates could draw grain from these storage depots for up to two years.²³ In what was another broken promise they would have to pay for this grain received from the warehouses when the time came, even though they had grown this grain themselves.

II. Compensation for the war losses of the inmates of the black concentration camps.

In the last days of 1901 de Lotbiniere set out to present his reasons for compensating the inmates of the black concentration camps to his immediate superior General John Maxwell, the Military Governor of Pretoria. It was his opinion that the payment of compensation would have the salutary effect of causing the natives to be "loyal and happy," which was obviously in the interest of the Government. What de Lotbiniere hoped for was destroyed by the many promises that were not kept to the blacks in the post war period. Lord Selborne said in 1906 in the midst of the debris of these promises unfulfilled that "It would be an evil day for South Africa if ... the coloured people and the natives lost their faith in the British [and they then]... transferred their allegiance to the Boers."²⁴

²² SNA, Vol. 59, 2097, p. 7, de Lotbiniere to Milner, 30 September 1901.

²³ SNA, Vol. 73, 2500, de Lotbiniere to Godfrey Lagden, Commissioner of Native Affairs in the Transvaal 12 January 1903.

²⁴ Selborne Papers, Vol. 167, Proof 11334, Lord Selborne, Governor, Transvaal and Orange River Colony, to Colonial Secretary, Lord Elgin, 12 March 1906 (Bodleian Library, Oxford University, England)

De Lotbiniere reminded Maxwell that he had had ample opportunity in the Johannesburg Army Labour Depot to form an estimate of the injustice that would surely fall upon the "Native" agricultural population, unless immediate steps were taken to settle their claims in a practical and simple manner.²⁵ This was the goal he struggled for down to the last days of his tenure in January 1903, and which he failed to achieve, because of the obstacles placed in his way by the military authorities and the very rapid repatriation of the inmates.

He warned that if this was not done, "...the natives will condemn, and be restless under British rule in the future."²⁶ Two weeks later the Resident Magistrate of Harrismith echoed de Lotbiniere's view with great emphasis, saying, he could not too strongly urge the necessity of compensating these natives for all the stock taken from them. Presently, he said, they were feeling very dissatisfied and are losing confidence in us. He was so concerned that he also spoke with de Lotbiniere about this urgent need.²⁷ Further, de Lotbiniere went on to say that since the "natives" form a large and important community with which the old and new settlers will have to deal, it is well worth compensating them.²⁸ His motivation seems always to have been driven by what he thought would best serve the needs of the Government as well as the inmates. He concluded by saying that the best way to do this was send them back to their kraals with a few head of cattle.²⁹ He saw dire consequence unless this was done. "...we cannot send the natives back without some stock, as many will die on account of being unable to cultivate and provide a means of subsistence...in addition...young children should have milk, cows and milch goats, [are] therefore essential."³⁰

²⁵*The National Archives of South Africa*, The archives of the Military Compensation Board, (MCB), Vol. 48, D822, de Lotbiniere to Maxwell, 20 December 1901.

²⁶ *Ibid.*

²⁷ CSO, Vol. 54, 190/02, Resident Magistrate, Harrismith to Secretary to the Orange River Colony Administration, H.F. Wilson, 16 January 1902.

²⁸ *The National Archives of South Africa, Pretoria* The archives of the Military Governor of Pretoria, (MGP), 888A/02, de Lotbiniere to Maxwell, 11 January 1902.

²⁹ *National Archives of South Africa, Pretoria*, Archives of the Military Compensation Board, MCB, Vol. 48, 838A/02, de Lotbiniere to Maxwell, 11 January 1902.

³⁰ SNA, Vol. No. 31,1170, p. 5, de Lotbiniere to Lagden, 7 June 1902.

He may also have been aware by this time that the giving of cattle by tribal chiefs was a long tradition in African culture to assure the loyalty of their subordinate headmen and followers.³¹ According to Johan Ellis such rewards to headmen or other chiefs should be viewed for their symbolic value. "Like marriages, gifts of cattle represented and indicated the nature of the political relation between two or more chiefs"³² Lotbiniere believed that compensation in the form of livestock would be remembered much longer than monetary payments, which would soon be spent and even stolen from them by law agents and other exploiters. This policy would ensure more and longer lasting loyalty from the former inmates of the concentration camps. Likewise the taking back of cattle given to loyalist chiefs, for services rendered would result in a negative political impact. Cattle was a medium of exchange and for this reason blacks on the veld did not very often eat their wealth. Cattle was bride wealth paid to the men by the father who married his daughters To have no livestock was to have no status or wealth.

Some officials were of the view that very little needed to be done for the black repatriates because they had not suffered significant losses in the war. There has been some discussion by historians regarding the degree to which the black communities and individual black people suffered during the war. W. Nasson has shown that a considerable number of coloured and black civilians in the Cape Colony profited significantly from the war by working in various capacities for the British forces.³³ The Native Commissioner at Rustenburg reported that the possibility of obtaining black labour for the mines in Johannesburg was greatly lessened because of the fact that the natives were in possession of so much cash earned during the war.³⁴ Officials in other districts also attested that this was the case. Joseph Chamberlain complained to Lord Kitchener, "I fail to see what reason there is to suppose that natives have suffered in this...war. On the contrary they have nearly

³¹ Diana Wylie, *A Little God: The Twilight of Patriarchy in a Southern African Chieftdom*, (Johannesburg, 1991) p. 8.

³² Personal communication from Johan Ellis, Lecturer, Military History, Stellenbosch University of South Africa, 15 July 2002.

³³ Bill Nasson, *Abraham Esau's War: A Black South African War in the Cape, 1899-1902* (New York, 1991) pp. 64-92

³⁴ SNA, Vol. 106, NA 491, Native Commissioner, Rustenburg to Secretary of Native Affairs, W. Windham, 18 February 1903.

amassed large fortunes, the military having paid them excessive wages in many instances."³⁵ According to David Burton some blacks had also reaped good profits by selling livestock, cereals and other produce at inflated prices.³⁶ This was also the view of Godfrey Lagden, the Commissioner of Native Affairs and many other officials as well as mining company heads.³⁷ Representatives of the Friends Society in England were persuaded by British officials and Boers during their 1902-1903 humanitarian tour of the country that the blacks had done quite well during the war and that there was generally an abundance of work available to the "natives". In some districts they found special need for assistance and they supplied "...seed mealies to be distributed to special cases at the Bethany Mission Station, and a small sum of cash to be used for the temporary assistance of Natives at Reitz who could not get out to work, whilst waiting for their claims of compensation to be heard."³⁸

De Lotbiniere disagreed with this view and made it known that some well to do natives were now absolutely destitute through no fault of their own. While some were destitute, it was also true that many of the inmates in the camps were "not without money," as was shown by the fact that each month the camps in each colony collected about £5,000 from sales of clothing and groceries.³⁹ He also reported that some inmates could not understand "...why the British should rob them of everything."⁴⁰ Obviously this view of the inmates was another reason why the payment of compensation was deemed necessary to assure a peaceful aftermath to the war.

This phenomenon of high wage opportunities was not uniformly spread across the landscape of the war. S.B. Spies correctly argues "That the war had an adverse affect on most African inhabitants of the Republics is surely not in doubt." He cites D. J. Denoon's view of the condition of blacks in the

³⁵ CSO, Vol. 26, 2457, Despatch 3205, Wilson to Lord Kitchener, Acting High Commissioner, 14 June 1901.

³⁶ David Raymond Burton, "The South African Native Affairs Commission, 1903-1905: An Analysis and Evaluation." Unpublished Master of Arts thesis, the University of South Africa, June 1985, p. 21.

³⁷ SNA, Vol. 11, Commissioner of Native Affairs, Godfrey Lagden to Rose Innes, 31 October 1901.

³⁸ *The Jagger Library, Manuscripts Collection University of Cape Town Archives*, BC 749, N1, Folio 6, p. 5, James Butler and Lawrence Richardson, "Report on S. African Relief." December 2003.

³⁹ SNA, Vol. 31, NA 1170, de Lotbiniere to , Lagden, 7 June 1902.

⁴⁰ MCB, Vol. 148, D822, de Lotbiniere to Maxwell, 20 December, 1901.

war. "It is implausible to argue that any significant number of Africans came through the scorched earth campaign in a state of affluence."⁴¹ Both the British and the Boers made use of the stock and supplies of blacks to feed themselves. As a result blacks were deprived of a large percentage of their stock and grain.⁴² Stanley Trapido describes the impact of the war on the black settlement on the Vereeniging Estates farms:

The coming of the South African War brought destruction, chaos, and even death to many families on the new settlement. Boer forces ranged across the farms of the estate conscripting men where they could, commandeering, raiding grain stores and in the process destroying the dwellings which families had built.⁴³

Spies is, therefore, correct in concluding that, "The methods employed by Roberts and Kitchener also increased the number of poor blacks."⁴⁴ Kitchener, himself, conceded to the Secretary of State for War that "...the natives...have suffered considerably."⁴⁵

In response to a telegram from de Lotbiniere the Deputy Administrator of the Orange River Colony, Hamilton Goold-Adams, wrote a strong plea to Lord Milner advocating payment of compensation to blacks who had endured losses in the war. "It is needless for me to point out... that the natives ought not be made to suffer in consequence of the events which have taken place in this colony since the beginning of the war, and that it would be very impolitic were their just claims ignored."⁴⁶

Proposal for separate compensation commissions.

As indicated it was not until early December 1901 that de Lotbiniere focused his attention on the subject of compensation for the war losses of the blacks under his supervision. He informed Maxwell, that inmates in filing claims for war losses encountered two major problems. The first was the lack of any agency where they could "...make representations regarding their losses." Second,

⁴¹ D.J.N. Denoon, *The Transvaal Labour Crisis, 1901-6*, *Journal of African History*, VII, 3, 1967, p. 483. See also Denoon, "Participation in the 'Boer War': People's War, People's, People' Non-War, Non People's War ? in A Ogot, *War and Society in Africa: Ten studies*, p. 115.

⁴² SNA, Vol. 106, NA 491/03, Native Commissioner, Pretoria and Heidelberg District to Windham, 21 February 1903.

⁴³ Stanley Trapido, "Putting a Plough to Ground," in William Beinart, Peter Delius and Stanley Trapido, *Putting a Plough to Ground: Accumulation and Dispossession in Rural South Africa, 1850-1930* (Johannesburg, 1986) p. 347.

⁴⁴ S.B Spies, *Methods of Barbarism?: Roberts and Kitchener and Civilians in the Boer Republics, January 1900-May 1902*. (Cape Town, 1977) p. 305.

⁴⁵ FK, Vol. 1624, p. 607, Kitchener to Brodrick, 3 April 1901.

⁴⁶ CSO, Vol. 51, 4619/01, Goold-Adams to Milner, 31 December 1901.

in many instances the natives were unaware of the notices regarding compensation claims, and in cases where they did know, their incarcerated status precluded them from taking the required actions.⁴⁷ As a result he told Maxwell that "The settlement of natives' claims will have to be dealt with on a systematic basis apart from the white population." He suggested that a commission composed of two or three members each and acting in concert with his department should undertake this work.⁴⁸

Again on 20 December 1901 de Lotbiniere reminded Maxwell that before the formation of his Department, refugee natives had nobody to appeal to." He also said that until recently he had not realised how heavy the losses of black inmates were.⁴⁹ Here we see the beginning of de Lotbiniere's growing sense of advocacy for the black inmates under his supervision. Eric Mongalo and Kobus du Pisani well describe de Lotbiniere as probably being more enlightened than most of his contemporaries in his attitude towards black Africans and having empathy for the blacks placed under the care of his Department, and understanding their plight, and being possessed of a strong sense of fairness.⁵⁰

Acknowledging his Department was the only one, which had direct contact with the natives, he admitted that until now he had done practically nothing.⁵¹ De Lotbiniere had warned Maxwell that the only way to deal with black claims was directly "on the spot". It would not work for the Central Compensation Board in Pretoria to handle this matter from a distance. He believed that the use of a centralized compensation entity would not work. De Lotbiniere thus proposed a decentralised system in which the commissioners paying the compensation claims would come to the camps to process the claims, with the claims then being paid by the camp superintendents. Hopefully, and very importantly, this could be accomplished prior to their repatriation back to the farms. He urged

⁴⁷ MGP, Vol. 146, p. 72, de Lotbiniere to Maxwell, 7 December 1901.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 73

⁴⁹ MCB, Vol. 48, 838/02, de Lotbiniere to Maxwell, 20 December 1901.

⁵⁰ B.E. Mongalo and Kobus Du Pisani, "Victims of a white man's war: Blacks in concentration camps during the South African War (1899-1902) in *Historia*, Vol. 44(1), May 1999, p.150.

⁵¹ MGP, Vol. 146, p. 72, de Lotbiniere to Maxwell, 7 December 1901.

the appointment of two separate commissions, each composed of two officers for the camps in the Orange River Colony and the Transvaal. The members of these commissions were to be chosen on the basis of their hands-on-work with blacks as well as having an intimate knowledge of their language, customs and culture. Their task would be to collect the evidence regarding the inmate's claims on the spot.⁵²

While he agreed that the claims did not have to be paid until the cessation of hostilities, the amount and the nature (cash or in kind) should be definitely settled. He saw the provision of livestock as the payment of compensation prior to the end of the war as a positive way of assuring the inmates that the Government was fair and just. He also believed this would help the inmates to settle down. Finally he expressed the view that his department working in concert with these commissions could make a valuable contribution because his Department had camps all along the railway and a system of District inspectors, which enabled the department to be in close contact with every family in the camps.⁵³

Major Sandilands, President of the Bloemfontein Compensation Board, concurred with de Lotbiniere in all the major aspects of his proposal. He said giving the "Natives" a few head of livestock immediately would help them settle down and that it would also assist them in becoming self supporting." Sandilands held the common view of the time that black people were mentally different than whites both in knowledge and in ways of thinking. "Natives, like children, are unable to understand the more remote reasons under which payment is held over until the cessation of hostilities, moreover, I am of the opinion that this argument, however proper in the case of white persons, is not so applicable to the Native population."⁵⁴

⁵² MCB, Vol. 48, D 822, de Lotbiniere to Maxwell, 20 December 1901.

⁵³ *Ibid.*

⁵⁴ MCB, Vol. 48, D916, President, Compensation Board, Bloemfontein to Fox, 3 January 1902.

Goold-Adams also agreed with de Lotbiniere's proposal for separate commissions. And he also thought that because the black inmates had not known when the claims had to be filed or how to present their claims, they had been unable to file their claims. He concluded in a letter to Milner that unless something was done the natives would not receive any compensation at all. He warned Milner that unless something like this was done a very serious level of discontent among the "natives" would result.⁵⁵ There appears to have been no reply to this communication. Milner routinely ignored the situation of the blacks in the camps, as his correspondence files clearly show.

It had been de Lotbiniere's hope that the compensation payments could be disbursed before the end of the war, although he recognised that with such a large number of claims the investigation and settlement of the legitimate claims would take a long time. A few days before the end of the war, he told Colonel Trench, the President of the Military Compensation Board, that as far as he could tell, very little had been done towards investigating their claims. On 27 May 1902, Just four days before the end of hostilities, he once again explained that this was because the inmates in the camps had not understood the various proclamations, which had been issued. This he claimed was due to the Department being so busy in organising the camps that he had been unable to address this problem.⁵⁶ This seems questionable as by January or February the camps were fairly well organised. Certainly there had been time to at least explain these proclamations, but to carry out the instructions for filling claims was another matter as the following shows.

De Lotbiniere's proposal for separate compensation commissions was summarily rejected. On 23 December 1901 Lord Kitchener informed Godfrey Lagden, the Commissioner of Native Affairs, that he would not approve any special board to deal with the claims of "Natives". The reason given was that "Compensation Boards for investigation of claims have already been legally constituted

⁵⁵ CSO, Vol. 51, 4619/01, Goold-Adams to Milner 31 December 1901.

⁵⁶ MCB, Vol. 48, 7195 de Lotbiniere to Trench, 27 May 1902.

and that such Boards are accessible to any person having claims.⁵⁷ What had been initially established for handling compensation was quite antithetical to de Lotbiniere's paradigm. Less than two months after the end of hostilities on, 21 July 1902, the Executive Council of the Transvaal Colony passed a resolution outlining a very different policy in which the Department of Native Refugees would simply provide information regarding the claims of the inmates to the Native Commissioners. A most important restriction was placed on what could be claimed. Only the losses the natives sustained *while in the camps* would be eligible for payment.⁵⁸ [emphasis is mine]

Obviously this plan meant that the losses incurred by the inmates prior to being swept into the black camps were not covered. Indeed, a primary reason for their removal in the first place was to prevent the Boer Commandos from taking their livestock, either voluntarily or involuntarily. A high percentage of livestock taken from the black farm workers and independent farmers were taken previous to and at the time of their removal to camps. This is illustrated by the experience of some of the black families who resided on the farms of the Vereeniging Estates as recorded by Stanley Trapido in his oral history account of one of the black families on the farms. "The Mokaes and the Molefes lost all their cattle, sheep and horses early in the war, the Mokaes to a marauding commando, the Molefes to British troops who rounded the family up before moving them to a concentration camp. The Molopes, on the other hand, like some others, were to hand their cattle to a kinsman who was to move them to safe keeping in Lesotho.⁵⁹ The livestock of many Boer farmers were also saved in this way by their black workers who took them to Basutoland and returned them after the war, with a dividend born during their absence. For some Boer farmers this was crucial as these returned livestock were to be their only livestock with which to survive and begin again. Since all these black families, according to Trapido, ended up in the camps their losses would not have

⁵⁷ MGP, Vol. 146, p. 71, A.H.Q/2/161/1, Kitchener to The Commissioner for Native Affairs, Godfrey Lagden, 23 December 1901.

⁵⁸ SNA, Vol. 148, Transvaal Executive Council Resolution No. 350, 21 July 1902.

⁵⁹ Stanley Trapido, "Putting a Plough to the Ground" p. 337.

been covered since this, their most valuable asset was taken from them prior to entering the camps.⁶⁰

Significant amounts of livestock had been commandeered from blacks on the farms and in some black communities long before their incarceration in the concentration camps. In many cases no receipts had been issued. De Lotbiniere recorded that military commandants often held receipts for livestock, which had been requisitioned or commandeered from the inmates. An example of this practice is the case of the significant amounts of livestock taken from the black refugees in the Smaldeel camp. The numbers of livestock in this one instance belonging to 51 inmates included 1,238 sheep, 468 goats, 375 cattle, 308 horses and 26 oxen.⁶¹ In addition the Transvaal Executive Council Resolution also precluded the payment of compensation for any losses other than livestock, grain, seed and agricultural implements, unless the Commissioner of Native Affairs personally approved payment of other losses.⁶² This meant that the destruction of their huts and homes would not be covered. As shown in Chapter 2, the huts of black civilians were routinely burned and destroyed by both sides to prevent them from being used as places of ambush or as barracks.

Cooperation between de Lotbiniere and other government entities to settle inmate claims, as well as the claims of blacks outside the camps.

Because Lord Kitchener had refused to approve separate compensation commissions and because many of the inmates in the black camps had already been repatriated back to the farms, de Lotbiniere made very strenuous efforts to establish working relationships with the army commanders of the various military districts, the Military Compensation Board and the Department of Native Affairs to facilitate payment of the claims of these repatriates. He was determined to see that all claims were paid if possible. Kitchener's view that the compensation boards could handle the claims of both black and white claimants was not working adequately, and certainly not quickly

⁶⁰ It is significant to note that even though all these three families lived on the twenty-two farms of the Vereeniging Estates they ended up in three separate black camps at Taaibosch, Vredefort Road and Kroonstad which shows that they were not dropped by the British columns at the camp nearest their farm of residence according to the stated policy.

⁶¹ MGP, Vol. 146, 17638. President of the Military Compensation Board to Commandant, Smaldeel, 30 November 1901.

⁶² SNA, Vol. 148, Transvaal Executive Council Resolution No. 350, 21 July 1902.

enough. Time was the enemy as repatriation was rapidly taking away the black claimants and distributing them over the landscape on hundreds of farms spread across the veld like a patchwork quilt.

De Lotbiniere now endeavoured by creative innovation to get around Kitchener's ban. This was the first of several efforts on his part of what can be termed, *government agency brokering*,⁶³ in which several agencies share resources and staffs. He would now invent a substitute for separate commissions that would hopefully accomplish the same results. He asked Colonel Trench, to appoint an officer, thoroughly qualified and conversant with the regulations of the Military Compensation Board, to do this work. If that was not possible, he asked if he could recommend someone qualified to carry out the task of processing the claims. Perhaps because he recognised Kitchener's obsession for economising, he offered to pay this person out of his own funding. He also asked if overdue claims could now be considered on the basis that the inmates and the Department had been unable to submit the necessary forms by the required deadlines. He was only asking that inmate's claims with the proper receipts be considered even though there were hundreds of black families in the camps who had valid claims for which receipts had not been given.⁶⁴

In early August 1902 in response to the process contained in A.G. Circular 7905 for the handling of compensation claims, de Lotbiniere proposed a special procedure. The receipts from each camp would be sent to the local compensation board to be passed for payment. A check for the total amount for all the camps would then be sent to him and he would designate a responsible officer to superintend the payments to the inmates. He said that by the time the checks were received many of the claimants would have been repatriated. He also suggested that if his scheme was approved for the Orange River Colony it would considerably facilitate the final settlement of the black claims, as it is most important that, as far as possible, they should be dealt with before the camps were broken

⁶³ The concept of "agency brokering" was the creation of Dr. Bruce Hobler while serving as the Chief of the Bureau of Juvenile Correction in the State of Delaware, in the United States in 1980.

⁶⁴ MCB, Vol. 48, 7195, de Lotbiniere to President, Military Compensation Board, 27 May 1902.

up.⁶⁵ The Chief Paymaster agreed to forward checks for all black claimants to the Secretary of Native Affairs with the exception of the checks for the “Native Refugees”, which were to be sent directly to de Lotbiniere.⁶⁶

Unfortunately, by this time, most of the claimants “had been repatriated back to the farms. Since some of these inmates were swept into black camps relatively near the farms where they had been removed they were probably in the same military district. There is no record of where they were repatriated to. Some Superintendents exacerbated this problem by delaying the distribution of the checks. Payments were in many cases slowed down because ten days notice had to be given to the individual camps to get the claimants to come in from the farms to receive their payments.”⁶⁷

A more serious problem was the fact that the military officers charged with processing claims were not cooperating and were demanding that claimants come to their office, sometimes as much as a hundred miles distant. To overcome this obstacle de Lotbiniere asked if he could be permitted to pick up the receipts from the Staff Officer for Receipts in those districts. This request was approved.⁶⁸ This considerably reduced the processing time of the claims.

So far we have traced the attempts to create a relationship with the Military Compensation Board that would facilitate a more timely payment of claims. In September 1902 the problems with exploitive law agents caused some Staff Officers for Receipts to turn to de Lotbiniere to pay the claims of blacks who had never been inmates in the concentration camps. Unfortunately the receipts of blacks inside and outside the camps, in the hands of various law agents, had very often been mixed together. Since in many cases no written acknowledgments were given to the original owners of the receipts there was no way to resolve the problem except to take all the receipts into hand, which is what de Lotbiniere did. He said identifying a “native” is very difficult when a third party

⁶⁵ MCB, Vol. 48, 7905/37, D/2833/, de Lotbiniere to the District Paymaster, Bloemfontein, 5 August 1902.

⁶⁶ MCB, Vol. 48, C.P./4476, Chief Paymaster to Assistant Adjutant, Military Compensation Board, 15 September 1902.

⁶⁷ MCB, Vol. 48, 10489/4, de Lotbiniere to Colonel Trench, 17 September 1902.

⁶⁸ MCB, Vol. 48, 10489/A, de Lotbiniere to President of the Military Compensation Board, 25 November 1902.

has taken the receipt away and [has] given no acknowledgement to the claimant.⁶⁹ For this reason, and in the interest of everyone concerned, he offered to do everything in his power to supervise cash payments to blacks outside the camps. It was agreed to do this "...in all cases when we have come into possession of receipts while endeavouring to trace our own native refugee claimants." While accepting this responsibility he also proposed a definite process for handling these claims.⁷⁰

As early as July 1902 de Lotbiniere offered the services of two of his staff members, skilled in black and Dutch, languages, to the General Officers in Command in the Transvaal Colony. He explained that he had previously appointed these men to create a Departmental Register of Claims in each of the camps. Their role was to assist the military officers appointed to pay claims.⁷¹ The reason for this offer was the crucial need to save time in processing claims as repatriation had already commenced. While it was important to settle their claims before leaving the camps he also acknowledged that it was important that they leave the camps as soon as possible as the planting season begins in September.⁷² Understandably large numbers of inmates were very reluctant to leave the camps until they had received payment for their receipts.⁷³

In September 1902 Trench informed Lagden, that payments of claims by the Military Compensation Board were being processed through de Lotbiniere. Other claimants outside the camps were to be paid by sending the checks to any address furnished by the claimant. Trench also indicated that the "Bank,"⁷⁴ had in some cases, paid law agents on presentation of a "Power of Attorney". These claims were to be registered both in the areas where the goods were requisitioned

⁶⁹ MCB, Vol. 48, 10489/4, de Lotbiniere to Trench, 17 September 1902.

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*

⁷¹ MCB, Vol. 48, 7905, de Lotbiniere to The Adjutant General, Army Headquarters, Pretoria, 4 July 1902.

⁷² *Ibid.*

⁷³ CSO, Vol., 114, 5079/02, Monthly Report of the Department of Native Refugees in the Orange River Colony for September 1902.

⁷⁴ It is not clear which bank this was, but in all likelihood it was the bank in which the compensation funds were placed, which was the Standard Bank in Pretoria.

and in the military district and area where the payment is approved. In this way duplicate receipts could be identified in either location, eliminating any possibility of double payments.⁷⁵

De Lotbiniere's staff was to assist the Transvaal District Native Sub Commissioners in tracing former black refugees and processing their claims. At the same time de Lotbiniere was willing to supervise cash payments for other natives and he agreed to process claims of natives not on the books under certain conditions. In September 1902 W. Windham, the Secretary of Native Affairs, offered to make payments directly to "natives" and where there were no Native Sub Commissioners remittances could be made through Residential Magistrates.⁷⁶

In late October 1902 de Lotbiniere met with Lagden. As stated, he held the view that the process of identifying the claimants had become the most crucial factor in trying to prevent fraud or error. He also knew at the same time that it was essential to expedite the payment of claims. Lagden had ordered that if positive identity could not be assured the money was to be returned to the treasury. As was his bent, de Lotbiniere proposed a practical solution. He argued that the drafts could only be properly paid out if they were placed alongside the original receipts. To facilitate this he suggested that the receipts be sent to the districts. An officer would then be sent to carry out the direct payments to the natives who would be asked to come in from the various farms to receive the payment of their approved claims.⁷⁷ He specified that this new procedure and the assistance of the Department of Native Affairs was not to be seen, in any way, as doing away with his system for the payment of the claims of the black inmates. Rather it was framed with a view to including in his system all the black claims in the Transvaal, and in which work, the Native Commissioners & Sub Commissioners were to work cooperatively with him.⁷⁸

⁷⁵ SNA, Vol. 52, NA 1857; The President of Central Board, Military Compensation, Col. Trench, 5 September 1902.

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*

⁷⁷ MCB, Vol. 48, 10489/10, p.1, de Lotbiniere to Trench, 4 November 1902.

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 3.

As the end of 1902 approached and the closing of the camps became more immanent the payment of the remaining claims took on an ever increasing sense of urgency. By the end of the year it was planned that the Department of Native Refugees would cease to exist and the Department of Native Affairs would assimilate what remained of the Department property and livestock and the approved claims which were still unpaid. The Department of Native Affairs would assume responsibility for the processing and the payment of the remaining compensation claims.⁷⁹

In November 1902 the Department of Native Refugees staff were still assisting the District Native Commissioners in getting the receipts passed to the Chief Paymaster for disbursement. De Lotbiniere told Lagden that part of his staff could not be withdrawn until January and the rest in February 1903. It was his understanding this was the final date when the military would allow the submission of receipts. Therefore de Lotbiniere reasoned that "their services could only be dispensed with after completing the payment of claims. For this same reason he also felt the hiring of extra staff was justifiable. To expedite the speeding up of the payment of claims he organised a schedule of payments in some of the towns on specific dates and arranged to send members of his staff to attend to the claimants in those areas."⁸⁰

Realising that his staff were familiar with these former inmates, (for by now almost all of the nearly 60,000 inmates in the Transvaal black camps had been repatriated) they were therefore an essential link in assuring that only the legitimate claimants were paid. He may also have been trying to assure that his staff members were employed as long as possible. For these reasons he also tried to get Lagden to hire some of his staff to run the grain depots and carry out other tasks formerly part of their work.⁸¹

⁷⁹ SNA, Vol. 73, NA 2500, de Lotbiniere to Lagden, 7 November 1902.

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*

⁸¹ The white camp administration in the Transvaal also attempted to find employment for their medical and administrative staff with other departments as the war ended and plans were being made to close the Burger Camps.

When the time came for the transfer of the camps to the Department of Native Affairs de Lotbiniere recommended to the Secretary of Native Affairs, W. Windham, the final process that should be used in seeing that the record of claims paid was carried out as efficiently and as soon as possible. Windham had the recommended circular published and sent to all the Native Commissioners. In essence the circular, dated 12 January 1903, instructed that vouchers of all monies paid to natives for military receipts were to be sent to his office immediately after the payments were made.⁸² This was the same process used to assure the elimination of fraud and double payments.

Obstacles to paying of compensation to the inmates of the Department of Native Refugees.

As early as July 1900 the question arose regarding what the policy should be in cases where supplies were requisitioned or commandeered, but no receipts were given.⁸³ In one of the original black concentration camps it was the policy of the Orange River Colony Administration that blacks bringing cattle with them into the camps should be given receipts especially in cases where they were trying to prevent their livestock from being seized by the Boer forces.⁸⁴

It was often the case that no receipts were given to either blacks or Boers by the British columns or in many cases the receipts were defective in various ways. Goold-Adams reported to Milner that he had learned that in a large majority of cases where well to do natives were brought in, no receipts were given, or where receipts were given the numbers of livestock were not indicated. In addition, "... many of the receipts bear on their face an arbitrary valuation, which does not truly represent the true value of the stock."⁸⁵

In the case of receipts for requisitioned livestock and property the receipts were recorded and charged to the military unit, which had commandeered the property. Some cases arose in which the requisitioning officer had failed to put these receipts, "on charge to the responsible unit," i.e., the

⁸² SNA, Vol. 73, NA 2500, Circular No. 13/03, Windham to all District Native Commissioners, 12 January 1903.

⁸³ *The National Archives of South Africa, Pretoria*, The archives of the Political Secretary, (PSY), Vol. 55, pp. 168-9, District Commissioner of Heidelberg to the Political Secretary, G.V. Fiddes, 27 July 1900.

⁸⁴ CSO, Vol. 6, 391 Wilson to Commandant of Edenburg, 16 March 1901.

⁸⁵ CSO, Vol. 51, 4619, Goold-Adams to Milner 31 December 1901.

unit which had requisitioned the livestock or property. Because of this failure it was determined that the receipts given to inmates of the camps, as well as those outside the camps, would not be honoured if these receipts had not been charged to the proper military account. De Lotbiniere was vehement in his criticism of this policy. How could he explain to those blacks who had legitimate claims for commandeered or requisitioned livestock that they would not be paid, "...because the officer who took the stuff omitted to put it on charge." This, he said, would cause a great deal of bad feeling. It must be realized that he and his staff would have to face the music of this legitimate discontent since they were living on the ground with the inmates. In the particular case that generated this discussion. Trench said that the General Officer in Command at. Elandsfontein was informed that he must decide the extent and nature of the inquiries to be made by Staff officer of Receipts under AG Circular 7905.⁸⁶ In other words these failures to assign receipts must not be a reason for non payment of the claims, if after investigation it was determined the property, had indeed, been taken by the military.

De Lotbiniere, as stated above, reported that the receipts given inmates for requisitioned livestock were in many cases held by military commandants who were by military necessity shifted from one place to another. As a result, sometimes the receipts were lost. "The natives naturally consider this a fresh proof of our disinterestedness in their affairs, and the disinclination to treat them fairly."⁸⁷

De Lotbiniere often received reports from his district inspectors concerning the seizure of livestock owned by blacks without receipts being given. In one instance he told Maxwell, British scouts had stolen a half dozen of an inmate's horses grazing on the veldt near one of the black camps. When he complained to the commander of the troops involved he was told that if they brought these horses six miles they were entitled to them.⁸⁸ In response de Lotbiniere proposed an Army Order that would prevent such incidents. Consistent with his pattern of rejecting requests regarding the welfare

⁸⁶ MCB, Vol. 48, CCB/565, de Lotbiniere to Trench, 15 August 1902.

⁸⁷ MCB, Vol. 48, D822, de Lotbiniere to Trench, 20 December 1901.

⁸⁸ MGP, Vol. 146, de Lotbiniere to Maxwell, 30 December 1901.

of the concentration camp inmates, Kitchener refused to approve the draft proposal, saying no special Army Order was required, "seeing that it is quite well understood that stock is not to be taken away from Natives without a proper receipt being given." Kitchener also chastised de Lotbiniere. "Natives in Refugee Camps should on no account be permitted to keep horses."⁸⁹ De Lotbiniere, obviously upset with this decision, said that he had nothing more to add, except "...to reiterate that these horses appear to have been taken without any receipts being given, and hence my proposed draft for Army Orders."⁹⁰ This is another example of de Lotbiniere's advocacy for the inmates, which had reached the point of confronting the Commander-in-Chief through his immediate superior, General Maxwell. It is clear that he had now become much more concerned about the inmates under his supervision than going along with the violations of Army proclamations by British serving officers. It is unlikely that Maxwell passed on this comment to Kitchener who was his immediate superior. Clearly de Lotbiniere was no longer playing the officers club game.

Valuation of receipts and claims without receipts in the Department of Native Refugees.

De Lotbiniere informed Lagden, that he had not given instructions to his Inspectors to assess the values of stock, farm implements, etc. taken from the "Natives". Instead he had recorded such losses in kind without fixing a valuation. This omission on his part may have stemmed from his view that it would be preferable for the inmates to receive compensation in the form of livestock to take home with them, rather than paying them in cash. He did include an estimated scale being used by the Staff Officers for Receipts in the various Districts. There was no uniform scale being used throughout the country. Rather these prices were regulated in the various Districts by the different Staff Officers for Receipts. In February 1900 Roberts stated as his troops crossed into the Orange Free State that the prices paid would be based on local "market prices."⁹¹ According to one British official "...cattle have so appreciated on the market that the price paid to Natives for requisitioned

⁸⁹ MGP. Vol. 146,18B//02 Kitchener to Maxwell, 4 January 1902.

⁹⁰ MGP. Vol. 146,18B//02, p.78, L348, de Lotbiniere to Maxwell, 11 January 1902.

⁹¹ *British Parliamentary Papers*, Cd. 422, Proclamation No. 1, Lord Roberts to the civilian population of the Orange Free State, February 1900.

cattle will not replace those cattle. This is much felt by the Natives."⁹² Thus a fixed price would present some difficulty. Cattle was normally selling for about £10 a head in September 1901.

In this same month of September Kitchener offered to sell 2,000 head of good quality cattle to Cecil Rhodes for his farms in Rhodesia for £10 a head. Lt. Jones, Kitchener's representative, wired Cecil Rhodes to say ten thousand more head of cattle were available, which could be brought to Pretoria for safekeeping.⁹³ In that same month of September, both the quality and quantity of meat in the white concentration camps was thin, scraggly and very poor. In the black camps in September 1901, as a matter of policy, there no meat at all, only mealie meal and salt. No doubt the cattle in question had been swept off the Boer farms or captured from the Boer Commandos. Some livestock also belonged to blacks on the Boer farms or independent herders and farmers.

The problem in allowing military or civilian officials to assign a value to the receipts for the war losses is shown in the following evaluation of the losses at the Department of Native Refugees camp at Albertina previously mentioned in Chapter 4. About 150 acres of mealies had been deliberately and completely destroyed. Army camp followers had ripped off the mealie pods. In addition some 1,200 horses were allowed in the planted fields of the camp for the whole of one night by the military. A total of £1130 was paid and goats worth £993 were given to the inmates. The inmates were reported to be delighted with this payment and the claim was made that this immediate payment had good effect on their view of the British.⁹⁴

This apparently positive report of the compensation paid to the black inmates at the Albertina camp masks the way the inmates were actually deprived of some of the compensation due to them. The report on the settlement of the claims of the inmates reveals how these black inmates were manipulated into agreeing to forego compensation for valid losses. "I refused to take into

⁹² SNA, Vol. 106, NA 491/03, Native Commissioner, Waterberg to Windham 19 February 1903.

⁹³ *Oxford University, Rhodes House*, Rhodes Papers, Vol. 1, 1900-1902, 4 September 1901.

⁹⁴ CSO, Vol. 48, 4353/01, 5 March 1902. District Inspector, Department of Native Refugees to Commandant Albertina, 5 March 1902.

consideration the unavoidable destruction of certain plots of mealies near watering places for troops as being a small matter. I also refused to take account of pigs and fowls taken by the troops, the former number considerably over 100 and the latter were unnumbered. The natives themselves admitted that such losses were incidental to wartime. They also showed the fairest spirit of compromise and placed themselves entirely in our hands, stating at the same time that they were ruined, and would have to fall on us for sustenance during the coming winter. The Natives are well aware that the troops have been doing hard work in their defence."⁹⁵

Obviously these inmates who were completely under the control of their captors, like all persons in such helpless and powerless relationships, certainly must have feared doing anything that would place them in a more susceptible position. Powerless persons resort to pleasing their captors in manipulative ways to secure for themselves a less vulnerable relationship. They would have feared that whatever compensation being offered might be totally lost if they failed to acquiesce to the demands of these British officials.

In some cases the value on receipts was very low, or as shown above, there were no prices written on the face of the receipt at all. The Superintendent of the Harrismith black camp informed General Blomfeld, the Harrismith District Commander, that as of that day, 9 September 1902, he was paying receipts of those Native Refugees that "... appear to me to have been fixed at a fair prices for stock taken." He was unhappy with some of the receipts, which were so much lower than the scale of prices in the official scale in A.G. Circular 7905 that they needed to be rectified "...in the interest of fairness and justice to the Natives." He now made a very strong argument. In cases where no value is written on the receipt we are supposed to fix a fair price. This, he argued, appears "to enunciate the principle on which one should base a similar procedure in cases in which prices for stock taken by British Officers are undoubtedly below value. If we continue this line of reasoning further, the fact that the circular orders the decrease of prices on Stock taken, although marked on receipts due

⁹⁵*Ibid.*

to Natives, is further evidence that such a principle has already been enunciated."⁹⁶ General Blomfeld completely agreed with the Superintendent and said that he "...consider[ed] it of the utmost importance that Natives should be treated with scrupulous fairness." He concluded that this issue of reducing or increasing prices is one that applies to the whole colony, and he therefore suggested the papers be sent to Major de Lotbiniere so that he could obtain the ruling that seemed to him to be required."⁹⁷

In forwarding these papers to Trench Blomfeld advocated the establishment of a fixed scale be drawn up so the great disparities in receipts could be rectified. De Lotbiniere addressed his letter to the Military Compensation Board, informing Colonel Trench that on his last trip to Harrismith he had recommended to Blomfeld that a fixed scale be adopted so that the "enormous disparities" in receipts could be rectified. "As you will readily understand my position is a difficult one if I have to pay natives at different rates for [the] same class of produce." He applied friendly pressure by informing Trench that Blomfeld agreed with this policy of a fixed scale and only wanted authorisation to do so. He attached a suggestion for an authorised scale of prices. De Lotbiniere explained that he had not developed a uniform scale previously because he wished to pay compensation in kind, rather than in cash.⁹⁸

In response to this proposal and the supporting arguments Colonel Trench sent a letter to the Director of Supplies outlining his views and asking for his opinion. He stated, "...a uniform scale would not be fair or practicable in view of the varying quality and therefore [varying] value of the different classes of supplies." Instead he recommended that in cases where the officer in the field, who could not be expected to have expert knowledge, had given a low value, the General Officer Commanding in each of the military districts should correct prices that appear to be unduly low.

⁹⁶ MCB, Vol. 48, Headquarters Office, A/c111/02, Harrismith, Superintendent Harrismith Camp to G.O.C. Harrismith, 9 September 1902.

⁹⁷ MCB, Vol. 48, Headquarters Office, A/c111/02, Harrismith, G.O.C. Harrismith to Superintendent Harrismith black camp, 15 September 1902.

⁹⁸ MCB, Vol. 48, 10489, de Lotbiniere to Trench, 17 September 1901

The price lists published in Army Orders would be the only limit to their discretion. Trench in hand written script said "It is presumed that the list contains the prices suggested by Major Lotbiniere for authorization."⁹⁹

Form of compensation payments.

In the beginning of the post war period while the inmates were still present in the camps de Lotbiniere, along with other officials, was in favour of compensation payment in kind. "It is hoped that every endeavour will be made to compensate them with stock when they are repatriated from the Refugee Camps. I am afraid should the natives be paid out in money, a great portion of it will get into the hands of speculators and Jew traders, and the natives will always look upon the British as having despoiled them."¹⁰⁰

In a later letter to Maxwell, as mentioned above, de Lotbiniere gave more reasons for payment in kind. "...it will never do to send them back to their Kraals without giving them some cattle." This would have a two-fold benefit; first for the sake of their health, which will suffer greatly without stock and secondly for the recovery of the agricultural industry.¹⁰¹ The great need after repatriation would be for milk for young children and therefore cows and milking goats would be essential.¹⁰² The following statement is real evidence of de Lotbiniere's genuine concern for the black families in the camps. Furthermore it shows his ability to envision practical solutions. "I am strongly of the opinion something should be done to arrange for sufficient cattle to supply each group of families with-say,-at least one team of 8 plough oxen, 2 milch cows and 25 milch goats, otherwise it will not safe to send the people back. The balance of the compensation due to the natives might be paid in money."¹⁰³

⁹⁹ MCB, Vol. 48, 10489, President Central Board, Military Compensation to Director of Supplies, 19 September 1902

¹⁰⁰ MGP, Vol. 146,p. 73, de Lotbiniere to Maxwell, 11 January 1902

¹⁰¹ *Ibid.*

¹⁰² SNA, Vol. 31, NA 1170/02, de Lotbiniere to Lagden, 7 June 1902.

¹⁰³ *Ibid.*

The fact that in the end the repatriated inmates were not given compensation in the form of livestock had a very detrimental effect in restoring the agricultural industry. When repatriation took place the fact that most of the inmates did not have livestock and their compensation payments were still unpaid meant they returned home without any livestock or money to purchase at least some ploughing stock and milk producing animals. Stanley Trapido commenting on the repatriation of the Mokale family from the Taaibosch camp summed up the situation now faced by most of the inmates of the black concentration camps. "For the Mokales the end of the war saw a return to Vaalbank without cattle, horses or seed..."¹⁰⁴ In chapter 4 we saw that the Mokales had taken their ploughs with them into the concentration camp.¹⁰⁵ In all likelihood they did return to the farm, with some of the bags of mealies and "Kaffir corn," they had grown. And it may be hoped that they also returned with their ploughs, which they once again "put to ground".

The lack of ploughing animals in the Department of Native Refugees in carrying out the cultivation of crops had shown in the previous year's harvest that lands prepared by picks and hoes only produced 30% of the normal yield per acre for acre of ploughed ground. This was accounted for as the result of the dryness of the season, and the picks and hoes being unequal to breaking up parched ground and new land.¹⁰⁶ There was also a shortage of oxen among the Boer farmer who were working harder than ever before with borrowed oxen or animals bought with borrowed money. During the first planting season.¹⁰⁷ As indicated in Chapter 4 on the sixteen stock farms in the Orange River Colony there were there were in addition to 141,403 sheep and goats 5,255 cattle as well as horses and a few mules, some of which could have been used to provide ploughing stock.¹⁰⁸ The army also had several other livestock farms, which could have provided livestock for this

¹⁰⁴ Trapido, "Putting a Plough to the Ground," p. 349.

¹⁰⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 348.

¹⁰⁶ SNA, Vol. 31, NA 1170/02, de Lotbiniere to. Lagden, 7 June 1902.

¹⁰⁷ *The Jagger Library*, Manuscript Collection, University of Cape Town, Report on South African Relief, The Society of Friends, James Butler, Lawrence Richardson, December, 1903. For a more complete account of this work of the Friends Society see: Arthur M. Davey, (ed.) *Lawrence Richardson, Selected Correspondence, 1902-1903* (Cape Town, 1977)

¹⁰⁸ CSO, Vol. 38, 3605/01, Agricultural Adviser for the Orange Free State to Wilson, 8 October 1901.

purpose. Hamilton Goold-Adams had asked that some of the best cattle at Bain's vlei be set aside as breeding stock for the Boer farmers after the war.

The problem of law agents

By August 1900 only two months after the fall of Pretoria there was a serious concern about the activities of law agents and others who were buying up receipts from both blacks and whites who had had their property requisitioned or commandeered. To counter this very common practice Maxwell ordered that payment only be made upon the production of the original receipt by the person to whom it was granted. The only exceptions would be that if satisfactory proof in writing of the loss could be obtained, or if the original receipt holder could not attend in person such payment would be made to the person producing the original receipt, and a power of attorney in his favour from the receipt holder duly dated, witnessed by two witnesses..." Violations would be punished under Martial Law.¹⁰⁹ It would seem that such a strong provision would have put an end to most of the dishonest practices in the traffic of receipts. That was not to be.

In the following year, in March 1901, Maxwell was required to issue a follow-up Government Notice that carried the same provision. In some ways this second Government Notice probably caused encouragement to the very same law agents that the original notice had tried to deter from trafficking in receipts. "Notice is hereby given to all concerned that the Military authorities will only recognise the original grantee of such receipts *or their bona fide representatives*, holding a proper power of attorney."¹¹⁰ [Emphasis is mine.] Whether Maxwell was drawing back from the protections for the owner of the lost property is not clear. This notice also indicated that payment for such claims would be deferred until the conclusion of hostilities.¹¹¹ The Director of Supplies had ordered suspension of all payments on 15 September 1900. This in effect meant that this problem would remain dormant until then. Until that time "...receipts were to be given to the person

¹⁰⁹ MGP, Vol. 83, p. 80, 3449A/01 Government Notice No. 58 of 1900, Restraining Trafficking in Government Receipts. The Military Governor of Pretoria, 6 August 1900.

¹¹⁰ *Ibid.*

¹¹¹ MGP, Vol. 83, p. 81, 3449A/01, Government Notice No. 29 of 1901, 9 March 1901.

from whom the supplies have been requisitioned, on the back of which should be briefly stated whether any member of the family has been fighting against us, and if a prisoner, the date upon which he surrendered, voluntarily or was captured.”¹¹²

In March 1901 the Legal Advisor to the Military Governor of Pretoria gave notice that "...the Military Authorities will only recognise the original grantee of such receipts or their bona fide representatives holding a proper power of attorney."¹¹³ Eventually this provision for bona fide representatives with a power of attorney would be seen as unwise and a way for dishonest law agents to profiteer from blacks in or outside the camps. This exploitation of blacks by some law agents continued to be an issue that would not go away throughout the war and into the post war period. In June Maxwell echoed what de Lotbiniere would say at the end of the war. "I agree that the danger of speculators buying up [receipts] is very real; we know what happened with slave compensation."¹¹⁴ I am inclined to recommend that a notice be at once issued that no assignment of these chits will be recognised. Milner also concurred that no assignment of receipts would be recognised in the Cape Colony.¹¹⁵ It may be asked if this refusal to allow law agents to represent blacks with claims was on the other hand designed to reduce the number of claims that would have to be paid by the Government. It was in fact true that some blacks without such assistance would not be able to file their claims. This problem would be especially acute for those outside the camps.

At least as early as September 1901 forms for presenting claims, at least in some cases, contained the following disclaimer "I...declare that no person, or persons, other than those mentioned in the foregoing affidavit have any interest in the claim either directly or indirectly."¹¹⁶ Since the policy

¹¹² MGP, Vol. 62, 363A/02, *Extract from Army Order, South Africa*, No. 245, 15 September 1900.

¹¹³ MGP, Vol. 77, 2053A/01, The Legal Advisor of the Transvaal, 2 March 1901.

¹¹⁴ Manfred Nathan, *The Voortrekkers of South Africa: From the Earliest Times to the Foundation of the Republics* (London, 1937) pp. 12-13. When the British Government abolished slavery in 1807 the slaveholders in South Africa were eventually forbidden in 1834 to retain their slaves. There was much dissatisfaction regarding the payment received and particularly the very just grievance that they had to go to London to receive payment. This issue was allegedly one of the reasons for the Great Trek in 1834-1836.

¹¹⁵ PSY, Vol. 38, p.5, Military Governor of Pretoria, General John T. Maxwell to Mr. Fraser, 18 June 1901.

¹¹⁶ MCB Vol. 153, R 1283, Justice of the Peace at Krugersdorp, 12 September 1901.

was to defer payment until the end of hostilities there was very little official activity. The law agents, however, appear to have ignored the official policy and it seems evident that, especially in the case of those blacks outside the camps, they were busy buying up receipts and providing service to the original owners of receipts at very expensive rates. As mentioned previously despite the attempts of the Commissioner of Native Affairs the "Bank" evidently in some cases paid compensation to Law Agents upon presentation of a Power of Attorney.¹¹⁷

Some law agents engaged not just in the exploitation of black claimants, but also in outright fraud. One of the more interesting incidents in the record involved a law agent who brought 30 Natives into the office of the Resident Magistrate at Ermelo to have him witness their sworn statements. It was soon apparent, however, that this whole business was a joke. " 'A' was a sworn witness to 'B's' sworn claim, and then 'B' was a witness to 'A's'. The claims were up to over £500 a piece. On top of this there were no official receipts."¹¹⁸

In many official communications regarding the payment of compensation to the inmates of the black camps, as well as blacks outside the camps, the concern about, and the opposition to, the use of law agents was very prominent. Indeed, this subject of the exploitive involvement of the law agents was one of the most often raised issues during the post war period. Lagden often complained about this problem to de Lotbiniere and the compensation boards. At the request of military intelligence and other military authorities Lagden as Commissioner of Native Affairs, at times, made direct compensation payments along with other monies that were due to blacks.

When Lagden learned that compensation was at times being paid through law agents he recommended that this practice be discontinued. for reasons, he said, he would rather express verbally.¹¹⁹ This would seem to imply that he did not wish to make his reasons known to some of

¹¹⁷ SNA, Vol. 52, NA 1857, President Central Board, Military Compensation, 5 September 1901.

¹¹⁸ SNA, Vol. 46, 1566, Resident Magistrate, Ermelo to The Colonial Secretary, Transvaal, 25 July 1902.

¹¹⁹ MCB, Vol. 48, 10489, 853/02, Lagden to Trench, 5 September 1902.

the employees of the Military Compensation Board. According to de Lotbiniere some of the staff of the board were involved in corrupt activities. In a letter to Col. Trench in July 1902 he said that at the Vereeniging black concentration camp the Clerk to the Compensation Commission was charging inmates for preparing their claims and had allegedly obtained £25 by this activity. Two other officials at Vereeniging and the Magistrates Office were also involved "in this thing". On 17 July de Lotbiniere informed Trench that he had written the Residential Magistrate at Vereeniging and that he was satisfied that the problem had been looked into and was now settled.¹²⁰

Some Staff Officers for Receipts also objected to the use of law agents. While de Lotbiniere thought this was generally a correct decision he indicated that this decision was affecting the Department of Native Refugees very seriously. Staff Officers for Receipts ask us to pay many blacks who have never been in our camps, and of whom we have no record. He also indicated another serious problem that was connected with the use of law agents by some black inmates. Many inmates had given their receipts to law agents who did not note that that they were in the black camps and had mixed their receipts up with other native receipts.¹²¹ This necessitated de Lotbiniere taking over all the receipts of the black claimants the law agent had in his possession. He informed Trench that the question of identifying a claimant is made very difficult when a third party has taken the receipt away and has given no receipt of acknowledgement to the claimant.¹²² One of the concerns of compensation officials was that dishonest law agents could find natives to impersonate legitimate claimants. This was one of the primary reasons that de Lotbiniere had from the beginning favoured a plan that would include direct payment to the black claimants in the camps prior to repatriation.¹²³

Despite a continuous effort to eliminate law agents from the compensation process these profiteers persevered. September 1902 was a time of intensive effort on de Lotbiniere's part to resolve the

¹²⁰ MCB, Vol. 48, de Lotbiniere to Trench, 15 July 1902.

¹²¹ This statement seems quite unlikely, for how else would the law agent pay the claim to the inmate. It seems more likely that when de Lotbiniere asked for these receipts they did not wish to turn them over and he may have then used this as a reason to take them all.

¹²² MCB, Vol. 48, 10489/4, de Lotbiniere to Trench, 17 September 1902.

¹²³ MCB, Vol. 48, 10489, Trench to Lagden, 19 September 1902.

problems of settling the claims of the inmates. At that same time the decision was made to allow late claims of black inmates to be submitted. Large numbers of late claims were sent in by law agents and as a result it was suspected that these agents were using this new dispensation to induce the blacks to hire law agents to submit their claims. In order to inhibit law agents no more claims submitted by these agents were accepted. Instead blacks submitting late claims were instructed to submit these claims to a Magistrate or a Native Commissioner. Where this was not possible Claims Officers were to assist in the filling out of the required forms and in filing them.¹²⁴

At the same time de Lotbiniere was trying to get the problem of a uniform scale of compensation payments adopted, a law agent, J.A. Nesor, was also very busy representing large numbers of blacks, both inside and outside, the camps. What follows shows how much power, real and imagined, some of these law agents had. Considering de Lotbiniere's objection to law agents he received a very interesting note from Windham, requesting his opinion on two enclosed letters addressed to Lagden from Nesor who asked that Lagden treat him in the same way "as the Native Refugees Department have done."¹²⁵ The apparent purpose of Nesor's letters was to pressure Lagden to order the Pay Master to speed up the payment of the claims of his clients. These letters also seemed to be written as a basic primer of how Lagden should conduct the duties of his office. Nesor proceeded to tell Lagden what he as a law agent is going to do, rather than asking if such actions would be acceptable. The response from Windham was very direct and to the point. "In reply I am to inform you that this Department proposes to have all such monies paid to the natives direct, and that Attorneys and Agents are not to be recognised as acting for native claimants either in filing claims or in receiving the amounts assessed."¹²⁶

This letter evoked a very angry response from Nesor who accused Lagden of being impolite and unjust. His basic complaint was that law agents were now being eliminated from the compensation

¹²⁴ MCB, Vol. 48, 11139, President Military Compensation Board to the General Officer Commanding of each military district, 29 September 1902.

¹²⁵ SNA, Vol. 59, 2075, W. Windham to de Lotbiniere, 21 October 1902.

¹²⁶ *Ibid.* P.69.

process with no previous notice. As a result Mr. Nesor claimed he had spent considerable funds in hiring extra clerks and in the processing several hundred claims.¹²⁷ Overall it appears that the Government agencies were inconsistent in their enforcement of the ban on law agents. And now and then, as in this case, they would deny the payment of law agents. De Lotbiniere, despite his overall objection to law agents, defended Nesor, arguing that he was ethical and gave acknowledgement slips when taking the receipts. Further he argued that it seemed unfair to deny payment for the considerable work that he had already done. Here de Lotbiniere shows his willingness to take on very high officials with whom he had a necessity to work with cooperatively, when he sensed an aroma of unfairness.

In October 1902 just a few weeks before the camps were closed a law agent convinced some blacks to pay a fee to assist them with their claims, even though another law agent already had their receipts. Klass Masombuka, who had been removed to the Olifantsfontein Camp, described his experience of this dishonest law agent.

Some weeks after I left the Refugee Camp at Oliphantsfontein... I heard that there was a European down at the location near by who would assist anyone who had sustained losses during the war. I went to the location and found that there were two Europeans in a tent... One of the Europeans told me... that he was a lawyer and that he wants to assist me if I had a case. He asks me what goods had been taken from me, and I told him four oxen and added that the receipt for the oxen had been handed by me to Mr. Marais in Pretoria. The lawyer then asked me If I had taken hold of a pen?. On my telling him that I had not he said that if I paid him twenty-two shillings he would put right my case for me. The lawyer then took down the facts. I placed my mark on the bottom of the statement. I then paid the 22 shillings.¹²⁸

Windham in a letter to the Secretary to the Law Department said that, "Obviously [the lawyer], must have known that he could not advance the claims of "Natives" whose receipts have been handed to other agents."¹²⁹ He also said that this lawyer is reported to have approached other "Natives" in the same way. Circular No. 2794 in December 1902 confirmed what is shown in this incident in its opening statement. "Occurrences are brought to the notice of this Department with increasing frequency which indicate the eagerness of a certain class of Law Agent to take advantage

¹²⁷ *Ibid.*

¹²⁸ SNA, Vol. 65, 2269, Windham to Secretary of the Law Department, 29 October 1902.

¹²⁹ *Ibid.*

of the ignorance of natives." The circular describes the procedure generally utilised. Native touts solicited natives with claims, or needing passes. The agent is very careful to avoid liability for any specific offense while taking advantage of the simplicity and confidence of the client. Officials were asked, as a result, to expose this evil to the "Natives" under their jurisdiction, and to inculcate the desirability of primary resort in every case to a Government Official.¹³⁰

The persistence of law agents attempting to obtain a percentage of the compensation funds was never really eliminated despite very strong measures by the Government agencies. As late as April 1903 agents were arguing that blacks needed assistance to file their claims. It was still the fact that published notices were not reaching the blacks on the farms. Since farm workers were illiterate some assistance was still needed.¹³¹ The content of their arguments was very similar to the reasons given by de Lotbiniere request for separate compensation boards to process the claims of black inmates.

De Lotbiniere, himself, was plagued with the problem of dishonest and incompetent law agents right down to the end of his tenure. Perhaps the most glaring example of this problem was shown in the case of a law agent, Mr. Thwalis. In contrast to Neser he was evidently a very disreputable person. De Lotbiniere had previously reported this law agent to the Resident magistrate of Heidelberg and the Attorney General. Once more he registered a complaint with this magistrate reasserting that this agent and his assistant were unreliable and always under the influence of alcohol. "These men are unreliable and are doing the Natives a great injustice by not assisting them to get their papers back." If the magistrate was unable to act he asked that the case be referred to the Attorney General.¹³²

¹³⁰ SNA, Vol. 80, 2721, Circular 2794, Windham to Lagden, 3 December 1902.

¹³¹ SNA, Vol. 128, 1052, Mr. Hughes to the Colonial Secretary for the Transvaal., 25 April 1903.

¹³² *National Archives of South Africa, Pretoria*, Archives of the Department of Native Refugees, (NRD), Vol. 1, "C", de Lotbiniere to Resident Magistrate, Heidelberg, 17 January 1903.

Return of livestock to their rightful owners.

A circular was issued on 13 September 1902 in response to some questions regarding stock formerly the property of the Boers, now in the hands of the "natives", and which was now being claimed by the original owners.¹³³ In cases where livestock was given for "services rendered" by blacks to the British Army the livestock was ordered returned to the Government. The Government would in turn compensate the black person for the full value of the animals. Livestock, which was looted under military orders would be, compensated equal to half the value. Stock, which had not been obtained in the above ways, or by lawful means, would have to be returned to the rightful owner with no compensation being paid. As an example of the ratio of those who qualified for compensation: the ratio in the Rustenburg District from 1 August 1902 to 1 February 1903 in returning cattle in the hands of blacks to the Boers was; without compensation, 93; and with compensation, 19.¹³⁴ There is no way of knowing if this ratio was typical of other districts.

The following account is illustrative of the one sided attitude of the British officials and the policy regarding compensation for black livestock in the hands of the Boers. A Boer Commando attacked the "kraal" of a black man who was working for the British as a scout. The Boers killed five blacks and looted two horses. This man wanted to file a claim for the loss of these horses. It was decided that this claimant could not receive compensation because he was in the service of the British as a scout and the Boers being on active service had a right to retain all loot so acquired.¹³⁵ We can note here that cattle looted from the Boers during the war by order of the British Army had to be returned to the Boer owner. Another type of case follows. A claim was made for the loss of some 570 head of cattle that were left for safe keeping with a tribal chief. The Native Commissioner spent eight months trying to resolve this case and was able to restore a fair number to the owners, but a large number were still unaccounted for and were probably seized by British columns. The balance,

¹³³ Circular 1516/02, 13 September 1902.

¹³⁴ SNA, Vol. 106, 491, Native Commissioner, Rustenburg to Windham, 18 February 1901.

¹³⁵ SNA, Vol. 70, 2440/02, Standerton Sub-Native Commissioner to Windham, 1 November 1902.

(some 125 head), had been seized by the Director of Supplies a few days before the Declaration of Peace.¹³⁶ On the other hand when a Boer farmer, Barend Vorster, sued Selaki Matala, a black leader on the British side, his legal action was unsuccessful. The local Native Commissioner warned his superiors with the following persuasive argument:

There is no doubt Natives were employed to break down and destroy Boer houses....If Vorster were to succeed in this case it would open an immense amount of similar litigation as *every* Boer in this District would sue Natives for damages done to their homes.¹³⁷ [J. Krikler's emphasis]

III. Repatriation of the inmates of the black concentration camps.

The development of the repatriation process.

One week after the signing of the Peace Agreement de Lotbiniere sent a memorandum to Lagden containing a few comments on the question of the repatriation of the Native Refugees.¹³⁸ He told Lagden that he had not sent these remarks to the military authorities as this appeared to him to be a matter for the civil administration to thrash out. He did send a copy of this letter to Lord Milner, thinking he might like to read what he had to say on this important subject. Indeed this was either fortunate, or a sign of wisdom, as Joseph Chamberlain, the Colonial Secretary, had decreed that all the decision making in the early post war period would be left to Milner.¹³⁹ In addition he also sent a copy to Goold-Adams, because, as he said, "...his representative at Bloemfontein, Capt. Wilson Fox, as the Superintendent of the Department of Native Refugee camps in the Orange River Colony reported to Goold-Adams, and was an ex-officio member of the repatriation board for that Colony."¹⁴⁰

There was a certain irony in this decision to exclude the military authorities from the repatriation question given that Lord Kitchener had established the Department of Natives Refugees in order to take military control over the black concentration camps. Even more significant was his exclusion of the most important official in the creation of Department of Native Refugees, the Military

¹³⁶ SNA, Vol. 106, NA 491/03 Native Commissioner to Windham Pretoria 21 February 1903.

¹³⁷ Krikler, *Rebellion from above*, p. 15.

¹³⁸ SNA, Vol. 31, 1170/02, de Lotbiniere to Lagden, 7 June 1902.

¹³⁹ Burton, "The South African Native Affairs Commission.", p. 1.

¹⁴⁰ SNA, Vol. 31, NA 1170/02, de Lotbiniere to Lagden, 7 June 1902.

Governor of Pretoria, General Maxwell. S.B. Spies has very correctly described Maxwell's position as Military Governor of Pretoria as tantamount to that of the military governor of the whole territory under British control in the Transvaal with the exception of the Witwatersrand.¹⁴¹ Therefore he was both the titular military and civil official in the Transvaal. More important, Maxwell, along with de Lotbiniere, was the real driving force behind the establishment of the Department of Native Refugees and not Kitchener as was often stated.

De Lotbiniere's ongoing conflict with the military authorities may have led to his moving away from his military superiors due to the conflicts resulting from some military units taking certain prerogatives that were inappropriate, and abusing their power in dealing with the Department's legitimate agricultural operations. From the beginning his efforts had been severely inhibited by Kitchener and his subordinates, as seen in Kitchener's reluctance to provide either the needed livestock and supplies to get the agricultural scheme going or the transport to get them there. In addition he had obstructed de Lotbiniere in the compensation process and in the protection of the property of the inmates under his supervision. Milner and the Military Authorities showed themselves totally disinterested in the fate of the blacks in the concentration camps except as a source of labour. De Lotbiniere's troubles with Kitchener were only now beginning at that point, as was seen in the discussion of compensation above.

As de Lotbiniere had chosen to exclude the military from the repatriation process, Milner now made a major decision that would substantially exclude and reduce the authority of de Lotbiniere, himself. He informed Goold-Adams, who was now the Lieutenant Governor of the Orange River Colony, of a major change in the operation of the Department of Native Refugees. Milner decreed that the Department of Refugees under de Lotbiniere was to be divided into two separate Departments and de Lotbiniere's subordinate, Captain Wilson Fox as the Superintendent of the Orange River Colony Department of Native Refugees, would now become the Superintendent of the newly separated

¹⁴¹ Spies, *Methods of Barbarism?* p. 65.

Department of Native Refugees in the Orange River Colony. Milner's stated rationale was that since the repatriation departments in each colony were run separately, it seemed appropriate therefore that the refugee departments should also become separate administrative entities.¹⁴²

The process of repatriation established by the Department of Native Refugees.

Despite de Lotbiniere telling Lagden he wished to discuss a few points regarding the impending repatriation process, he actually described the process that he had already implemented. The inmates of the Department of Native Refugees were now being manipulated or coerced to return to the farms. Krikler correctly states that the British Administration of the Transvaal operated with a coercive apparatus.¹⁴³ This process of repatriation was a significant facet of that apparatus. The corollary plan for the Boers was that they were to be the food producers for the post war mining industry expansion that envisioned eventually hiring a black workforce of 200,000 as well as feeding the country in general.

De Lotbiniere's repatriation plan was tailored to accomplish that end. "A camp register has been prepared in each camp, which will enable us to send every native family back to their original masters. Thus camp by camp, farmers' names have been registered alphabetically with a list of their natives. On being informed of a farmer's name, the name of the farm and the district, he can be looked up in our Registers and his native families got ready to send back as soon as possible."¹⁴⁴ This is a classic example of the subordination of black people to British interests. This process was not designed to favour the Boer farmers, but rather it was done to place the former farm workers back on the same land they had worked on before the war. This it was felt would be the most effective means of rapidly restarting the agricultural industry as they would be familiar with the farm and farmer. It was also the opinion of Owen Thomas, appointed to evaluate the agricultural

¹⁴² CSO, Vol. 80, 2313/02, Milner to Goold-Adams, 8 July 1902.

¹⁴³ Krikler, *Revolution From Above*, p. 37.

¹⁴⁴ SNA, Vol. 31, NA 1170/02, de Lotbiniere to Windham, 7 June 1902.

potential of the two new colonies that generally "...the archaic Kaffir is the best all around cultivator of South Africa so far."¹⁴⁵

Black families were only to be repatriated when a white man applied to take them into personal employment and custody or when the Head Office of the Department issued instructions for their release. The Boer farmers were sent messages to come to the particular camp to pick up their former farm workers. And in addition, inmates of the black camps could not return to a farm where they had previously lived and worked unless a white man was already in residence there and agreed to their return. In the beginning this was an inviolable principle, no matter how desirable their release from the camps might be. De Lotbiniere felt it would be "...highly undesirable [if] the former inmates of the camps would be allowed to wander freely around the country or to squat on a farm free from the supervision of a white man."¹⁴⁶ A major principle of this repatriation model was the perceived need to maintain control over the inmates after their release. If for some reason the inmates could not, or would not return to his former employer, de Lotbiniere proposed to the Secretary of Native Affairs that they could be settled on farms belonging to the mining companies or on crown lands.¹⁴⁷ According to de Lotbiniere some of the reserve had been taken away by the Government of the South African Republic and given to Boer settlers. By 1904 Lagden estimated there were 180,427 blacks living in the Crown lands.¹⁴⁸ De Lotbiniere concedes in his final report that they finally relaxed this rule and accepted an inmate's statement that he had made his own arrangements to return to a particular farm. He also indicated that the inmates were allowed to take a few days leave "in order to see the farmers to make their own arrangements."¹⁴⁹

¹⁴⁵ Owen Thomas, *Agricultural and Pastoral Prospects of South Africa* (London, 1904) pp. 15-17 cited in Denoon, *A Grand Illusion*, p. 109.

¹⁴⁶ CSO, Vol. 109, 4566/02, Circular No. 63 issued by Fox, 4 November 1902.

¹⁴⁷ SNA, Vol. 45, 1473/02, de Lotbiniere to Windham, 23 July 1902.

¹⁴⁸ South African Native Affairs Commission, (SANAC) 1903-1905, Vol. 1, paragraph 127, cited in Burton, "The South African Native Affairs Commission," p. 118.

¹⁴⁹ TKP, Vol. 135, *Final Report*..., p. 7.

On the other hand it was permissible for able-bodied men to leave the camps to repair their huts and kraals before taking their women and children back to the farms. Many black inmates returned to the Boer farms to find that their homes had been burned to the ground. In some cases their relatives were also "flat on the ground and sick and destitute."¹⁵⁰ Many white concentration camp inmates also returned to their farms to find no shelter of any kind. In their mutual experience they both returned home to find nothing but scorched earth and "blue sky." De Lotbiniere believed that many of the inmates would prefer to do this and he therefore urged Departmental officers to consult the inmates "over all details and meet their views as far as possible." In what was really his basic philosophy of the work he said "It is clearly our duty to help in the resettlement of the country as far as possible, and avoid creating difficulties for either the farmer or his native labourers."¹⁵¹

It was de Lotbiniere's approach to help in resolving conflicts between farmers and their former residents by requiring the farmers to come to the camps to discuss the matters in dispute with their former workers as well as establishing an agreement regarding the work required by the farmer in return for the right of the black family to reside on his farm. The Squatter's Law of 1895 stipulated that before a family could be settled on a farm it was necessary for the owner to make some terms or a contract in nearly all cases including the rendering of a personal service...in exchange for the privilege of residence on the farm. These contracts were styled on the past agreements, which the farmers were experienced in formulating.¹⁵²

In view of the fact that the British were now to be in much fuller control over these peoples the advocates for the blacks in England were concerned to protect the rights of blacks. Both the British and Foreign Anti-Slavery Society and the Aborigines Protection Society in November 1900 and January 1901, respectively, wrote the Colonial Secretary urging him to protect the future legal rights of the Natives, particularly in the case of black labourers employed by the mining industry.

¹⁵⁰ Trapido, *Putting a Plough to the Ground*, p. 349.

¹⁵¹ SNA, Vol. 45, 1174, Circular L 38, to District Inspectors and Camp Superintendents, 12 July 1902.

¹⁵² SNA, Vol. 67, 2336, The Acting Private Secretary to the Commissioner of Native Affairs to the Leut. Governor of the Transvaal, 25 October 1902.

Fox Bourne of the Aborigines Protection Society also asked that "...the Natives be released from the oppressive arrangements, which had kept them in a more or less servile condition and made it difficult, if not impossible, for them to obtain even such legal protection from tyrannical masters as has been theoretically allowed them."¹⁵³ Chamberlain promised to submit their views to the Government and in answer to the concerns of the Anti-Slavery Society he said that the question was under consideration by Lord Milner "and will receive the most careful attention of her Majesty's Government."¹⁵⁴ The South African Native Races Association also asked Lord Milner for consideration of their proposal as outlined in a 251-page report regarding the future treatment of the Natives of South Africa.¹⁵⁵ In the end Milner's strategy was to put off any decisions. He told Chamberlain that decisions on these matters should not be hurried and that he agreed with Godfrey Lagden in his remark that "there are many sides to the native question, administrative and political, which it would be premature to enlarge upon. There is much to be learnt by those who are vested with the control of native affairs, and every reason why they should not be hurried."¹⁵⁶ Like other promises, these promises to look into the possibility of protection of black rights were not acted upon. Thus these agreements between the inmates and the Boer farmers were based on the same "tyrannical law" which the black advocates had urged be reformed. The inmates in the black camps could not oppose this old way if they wished to be released from their confinement.

This discussion regarding the return to the control of the farmer and the contract was to be carried out in the presence of the camp Superintendent to give the Department the opportunity to use its influence in resolving any problems between the farmers and their former workers before these inmates were taken away.¹⁵⁷ The major cause of bitterness was the fact that most of the black

¹⁵³ *British Parliamentary Papers*, Cd. 904, *Transvaal: Papers Relating to Legislation Affecting Natives in the Transvaal*. Fox Bourne to Joseph Chamberlain, 9 November 1900; Bourne for the Aborigines Protection Society to Chamberlain, 11 January 1902.

¹⁵⁴ Cd. 904, p. 6, Colonial Office to the British and Foreign Anti-Slavery Society, 21 January 1901.

¹⁵⁵ Cd. 904, p. 13, Honorary Secretary to the South African Native Races Committee to Milner, 29 March 1901.

¹⁵⁶ Cd. 904, p. 19, "Memorandum by Sir Godfrey Lagden, Commissioner of Native Affairs..." regarding various proclamations issued in the Transvaal", 29 November 1901.

¹⁵⁷ *Ibid.*

farmworkers had “walked over to the “Khaki Side.” It seems unlikely that Boer farmers would have been in a position to express these feelings in the presence of British officials who could refuse to release their former workers. The stated official policy also stipulated that no black inmate could be forced to return to a former Master and no farmer was forced to take a black family he did not wish to re-employ.¹⁵⁸ It may be wondered what happened as soon as they were all back on the farm together?

In August 1902 fifty-four Basutos from two of the camps filed an objection to returning to the English and Boer farms in the Rustenburg area with the Native Court for the Witwatersrand. They told the Acting Magistrate of the court that orders have been given by the authorities that they are to leave the Refugee Camps immediately and return to the farms, but this order did not apply where the heads of families are away in service. They asked that the Government form locations near the towns where it would be very easy to find employment and where in time they might be able to; purchase cattle and implements.¹⁵⁹

As the black families were repatriated the camp superintendents were instructed to erase the names of the repatriated families from their camp registers. In addition a return of the names of the repatriated families was to be sent to the head office each month.¹⁶⁰ Camp superintendents and the five District inspectors were instructed to treat Boer farmers coming "to get their natives" with courtesy and to give every assistance to assure that they were able to return to their farms without delay.¹⁶¹ Likewise an instruction was given to the camp superintendents to caution visiting Boers against threatening any “natives” in their charge, because the “natives” would then undoubtedly

¹⁵⁸ *Ibid.*

¹⁵⁹ SNA, Vol. 48, NA 1657, Acting Magistrate of the Native Court for Witwatersrand to Magistrate Native Court, Johannesburg, 12 August 1902.

¹⁶⁰ CSO, Vol. 109, 4566, Circular No. 63 issued by Fox, 4 November 1902.

¹⁶¹ SNA, Vol. 45, 1474/02 de Lotbiniere to camp superintendents and District Inspectors, 12 July 1902.

refuse to return with them to the farm.¹⁶² This had already happened in some camps and the inmates so treated had then refused under any conditions to serve their former masters.¹⁶³

Sometime before the 23rd of July 1902 the process and the procedures of repatriation were formalised and set in place with the approval by the Repatriation Board of Circulars L38 and L39, which had been written and submitted by de Lotbiniere. On 23 July 1902 de Lotbiniere proposed that families leaving the camps would be provided with "Repatriation forms that would be of use to civil authorities if these repatriated families appeared before them at any time with complaints or raised questions regarding their claims for compensation."¹⁶⁴ The form in addition to listing family and personal information, also contained a statement of the living and employment arrangements made with the Boer farmer and listed the property the family had taken with them and the seed, implements and rations provided by the Department of Native Refugees and information on their claims, where filed, etc.. Finally these forms were not to be transferable to any other person and would not confer or benefit any other person.¹⁶⁵

Rate of repatriation.

There was a great desire on the part of some officials, particularly in Natal, to repatriate the blacks in the camps as quickly as possible. This, however, was fraught with difficulties of a very practical nature. Approximately seventy percent of the able bodied men were away from the camps working for the Army Departments when the war came to an end. De Lotbiniere anticipated that the demand for black labour would not decrease for several months. He indicated that there were several large orders now on hand for able-bodied men that would be filled by the armed natives who were being disbanded and on the way back to the respective camps. It would take at least three months to get

¹⁶² *Ibid.*

¹⁶³ *Ibid.*

¹⁶⁴ SNA, Vol. 45, 1474/02, de Lotbiniere to Windham, 23 July 1902.

¹⁶⁵ *Ibid.*

the families back together, as the various Military departments would be unable to recruit fresh "boys". To get them back sooner would dislocate their work.¹⁶⁶

In July 1902 a goal was set to try to get as many of the black inmates as possible away before the 1st of September so that the crops could be planted. Here again is the primary principle of the repatriation policy, which was to get the farms operating as soon as possible.¹⁶⁷ There was an ongoing need for black farm labourers. More than fifteen months after the final Department Natives Refugees camp was closed in the Orange River Colony in February 1903 some farmers in outlying districts, who were unaware that these camps no longer existed, acted upon this desire for farm labour. The Congress of the Orange River Colonies Central Farmers Union passed a resolution in May 1904 asking for the break-up the refugee camps along the railway lines to enable the farmers to get back their former servants, and to give them a better opportunity to recruit labour in the country districts.¹⁶⁸ De Lotbiniere's Circular L-38 proposed that if farmers within 20 miles of a Department of Native Refugees camp were willing to accept families whose men had not yet returned those families could leave the camps and the men would rejoin them when they returned.¹⁶⁹ With the exception of ploughing and harvesting, which required the use of farm animals, women and children were the primary agriculturists in African culture.

As mentioned, there was a resistance by some of the inmates in regards to leaving the camps. A significant change in policy designed to motivate these inmates to leave the camps, decreed that after 1 September 1902 the Camps would no longer sell mealies at half price. In addition de Lotbiniere proposed to close nineteen of the thirty-five camps in the Transvaal. It was also ordered that all inmates who had previously lived in towns should be repatriated at once, and any other natives, who have found employment for themselves in towns, or in the mines, could remove their families from the camps. Inmates who wished to return to their former employers should not be sent

¹⁶⁶ SNA, Vol. 31, 1170/02, de Lotbiniere to Windham, 7 June 1902.

¹⁶⁷ SNA, Vol. 45, 1474, Circular L-38, 12 July 1902.

¹⁶⁸ CSO, Vol. 296, 4252/04, Congress of the Orange River Colony Central Farmers Union to Wilson, 9 June 1904.

¹⁶⁹ SNA, Vol. 45, 1474, Circular L-38, 12 July 1902

to Government employers if their former employers were likely to take them at an early date, but local work should be found for them.¹⁷⁰ This was to be done in order to prevent any hindrance to their early repatriation.

Circular L 39 picked up where Circular L 38 left off and reads as follows. "The inmates of the camps are to be informed, and to understand, that we propose closing our camps as early as possible and that the Government has no intention of making them into permanent locations for their benefit. If they are unwilling to return to their old employers they must seek new employers for themselves or let the Department find new employers for them."¹⁷¹

The promise of land to loyal blacks

Many inmates resisted leaving the camps in the hope for land and the desire to be liberated from working on the Boer farms. The expectations of blacks were well known and indeed were fostered by the British Government prior to and during the war. Blacks generally believed that after the Boers had been defeated their farms would be handed over to them by the British Government.¹⁷² This would be inimical to Milner's post war plan to turn as many blacks as possible into wage labourers. There is no indication that Kitchener ever made such promises. My own conclusion is the same as Burton's "The prevalence of this belief suggests that this was a military tactic designed to win African cooperation."¹⁷³

This promise was the basis of a lingering hope on the part of loyal blacks in the camps. It was a radical reversal of all of these promises and expectations that took place as soon as the new regime of the Department of Native Affairs began their rule over the blacks in the Transvaal. Lagden made it clear in a speech at Hammanskraal in September 1903 to the blacks who had no land that he was

¹⁷⁰ The camps to be closed were Volksrust, Platrand, Greylingstad, Meyerton, Klip River, Springs, Boxburg, Sandpan, Koskemoer, Olifantsfontein, Pienaars Poort, Elands River. Van der Merwe, Wilge River, Balmoral, Belfast, Elandshoek and Nelspruit.

¹⁷¹ SNA, Vol. 45, NA 1474/02, Circular L-39 to District Inspectors and Camp Superintendents, 18 July 1902.

¹⁷² TKP, Vol. 135, *Transvaal Administration Reports, Native Affairs Department, 1902*, p. A2.

¹⁷³ Burton, "The South African Native Affairs Commission," p. 38.

not going to give them land because there were no longer large areas of land to be given to them. Rather they must depend on their labour to survive.¹⁷⁴ This was, of course, by design to cause them to accept wage labour in the mines. The tribal Chiefs testifying before SANAC stated with a certain sadness: "The Boer Government used to allow Native Chiefs to purchase land, and today we like the English Government, the Government we always needed, but now the Government we love refuses to allow chiefs to buy land."¹⁷⁵ This was perhaps the surest sign of the betrayal of all the promises made. Only when they were ordered out of the camps did they finally realise that they would not receive anything that would change their lives. As de Lotbiniere said the black inmates soon saw that the burgers were being returned to their farms. They hoped for the same kind of liberal treatment. Indeed they went home on an ox wagon with some of the crops they had grown to burned out huts and in many cases without the livestock and the compensation owed to them.

Repatriation of the black refugees from Natal.

More than 16,000 black refugees were driven from the Boer farms and their tribal homesteads streamed into Harrismith and Natal in late 1901. Of these approximately 6,000 black refugees were located at the foot of the Drakensburg Mountains from Witzies Hoek to Botha Pass.¹⁷⁶ These black displaced persons, primarily from the Orange River Colony, had been allowed to locate themselves on deserted farms and in native locations and reserves.¹⁷⁷ The delay in the repatriation of these refugees from Natal was to become a subject of some tension and controversy when the repatriation was not carried out as quickly as the Natal officials and some Natal citizens thought it should have been. The Secretary of Native Affairs in Natal demanded their removal, as "they were not wanted in Natal." He also said, that in fairness to them, they should not be detained any longer as they were

¹⁷⁴ *The Star* newspaper, 19 September 1903, cited in Burton, "The South African Native Affairs Commission." P.74.

¹⁷⁵ SANAC, IV, paragraph 42126, evidence of the African Chiefs, cited in Burton, "South African Native Affairs Commission," p.108.

¹⁷⁶ FK, Vol. 973, de Lotbiniere to Goold-Adams, Lt. Governor, Orange River Colony, 5 September 1902.

¹⁷⁷ FK, Vol. 973, Memorandum written by de Lotbiniere, Late August 1902.

anxious to return to their "kraals and to take advantage of the approaching season for the cultivation of their crops."¹⁷⁸

Major de Lotbiniere was asked to supervise and take responsibility for the return of these blacks who were scattered about the Natal countryside. Since most of these black refugees were from the Orange River Colony, it is significant that he was chosen for this work. This obviously indicates that Milner and the Orange Free State authorities knew he was the most experienced person to carry out this important task, despite the fact that Captain Fox had been removed from de Lotbiniere's command, and had been appointed as the head of the now separate Department of Native Refugees in the Orange River Colony. Fox was the obvious choice in the chain of command, given that these repatriates would be coming into his jurisdiction. Having accepted this task de Lotbiniere announced that all of the refugees who wished to return to their "former kraals in the Orange River Colony and the Transvaal were allowed to do so." Those who could not walk all the way back were given railway transport to Harrismith or Volksrust. Those with cattle, however, would have to herd their livestock on foot.¹⁷⁹ All refugees, it was anticipated, would be repatriated by the end of October 1902.

In order to facilitate repatriation when black refugees initially entered Natal they were directed immediately to register with the local Magistrate for an inward pass. Each refugee's name was taken down and where he was going to live and under what chief he and his family members were being provided for. In this way they had a thorough hold on these refugees so that when the hostilities were over and it was time to return to their former area of residence they would have very little difficulty in locating the family and seeing to it that they went back again.¹⁸⁰ This also facilitated the taking of a census, which was done only once during their approximately one year

¹⁷⁸ *Ibid.*

¹⁷⁹ FK, Vol. 973, Memorandum written by de Lotbiniere, Late August 1902.

¹⁸⁰ *The Natal Provincial Archives, Pietermaritzburg.* The archives of the Natal Secretary of Native Affairs, (NA-SNA), Vol. 294, 2612/01, A. Leslie, Chief Superintendent of the Natal Department of Native Refugees to Secretary of Native Affairs for Natal, 10 March 1902.

stay in Natal. When repatriation took place the Department of Native Affairs in the Transvaal provided each family originally from the Transvaal with repatriation passports for the information of the Natal Residential Magistrates.¹⁸¹

The Orange River Colony Administration complicated the repatriation process. It had been agreed that as soon as the war was ended their refugees would be repatriated without delay. In practice the delays were long and very much laden with a contentious dialogue between Natal and the Orange River Colony. In September Goold Adams, sent a message to the Superintendent of the Natal Department of Native Refugees, which was quite blunt and consistent with the way in which blacks were treated in the post war period. No black refugees in Natal were under any circumstances to take up residence at Witzies Hoek unless they had resided there before the war.¹⁸² It was conceded that the late Orange Free State Government from time to time had occupied Native territories removing the natives and distributing them among the farmers. Goold-Adams was now determined to dispel any illusion among the "natives" that the British Administration would restore any of their former lands or give them free reserves.¹⁸³

Obstacles to the Repatriation Process

The unwillingness of some black farmworkers to return to the Boer farms.

The Native Commissioner at Warmbad said what was generally believed. "Such farmers as treated their tenants fairly before the war, have no difficulty in obtaining labour [under] the old conditions."¹⁸⁴ According to de Lotbiniere in June 1902, sixty percent of the camp inmates wished to return to their old masters and about forty percent wished to return to the native reserves or to work for new settlers. By the process indicated above he was trying to get most of the inmates to return to their old employers.¹⁸⁵ De Lotbiniere was especially concerned that the Moepcke in the

¹⁸¹ FK, Vol. 973, Fox to Leslie, 5 September 1902.

¹⁸² *Ibid.*

¹⁸³ FK, Vol. 973, Fox to Supt., Natal Department of Native Refugees, 5 September 1902.

¹⁸⁴ SNA, Vol. 47, p. 8, First Report, District Commissioner of Warmbaths to Windham, 31 July 1902.

¹⁸⁵ SNA, Vol. 31, 1170, de Lotbiniere to Lagden, 7 June 1902.

Transvaal, and the Baralong in the Orange River Colony, who had shown, almost to a man, that they wished to return to their former native reserves and that their chiefs would do just that. If natives were released in a willy-nilly fashion de Lotbiniere envisioned that they would go away from the camps without foodstuffs and would loot freely, and give trouble, getting entirely out of hand, and many would be lost to the agricultural industry of the future, and disappear into towns and native reserves.¹⁸⁶

In July 1902 it became policy that any inmates wishing to return to their former chiefs and the Native Reserves would be required to apply to the Department Head Office giving full information and the situation connected with each case.¹⁸⁷ The farmers in several areas were complaining in early 1903 that the "Natives" were taking up residence in the Native Reserves and refusing to return to the farms. It is not clear how many of these black men who refused to return to the farms had been inmates in the black camps. The Lt. Governor of the Transvaal complained to Lagden that all the farmers in the Western Division were concerned about this problem and that repatriated blacks were being received into the Government reserves and were doing nothing. Lagden denied this assertion stating that there were no large reserves in that area and that it was his policy "to induce the natives to settle on the land and work for the farmers on amicable terms, whether as tenants or wage labourers was immaterial."¹⁸⁸ He had explained in a circular to the Native Commissioners and other officials in December 1902 that he had a very definite reason for opposing placement of blacks in the Reserves or in large locations. "I am in principle decidedly against the establishment of large locations where natives can feel that they are at liberty to go, if and when, they dispute with their masters and want to leave in a huff."¹⁸⁹

¹⁸⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁸⁷ SNA, Vol. 45, NA 1474, Circular L-38, 12 July 1902.

¹⁸⁸ SNA, Vol. 114, A 117/03 Lagden to Native Commissioner, Rustenburg, 13 February 1903.

¹⁸⁹ *National Archives of South Africa, Pretoria, Circulars Issued by the Department of Native Affairs, Transvaal, 1902*, Circular No. 81, Commissioner for Native Affairs, Godfrey. Lagden, 6 December, 1902.

De Lotbiniere's comment that the inmates of the camps were not to be issued food supplies unless they agreed to return to their former masters or some other white employer, shows that the scheme of providing the repatriates with up to a years supply of food grains, which they had grown themselves, was at least manipulative, if not coercive. It was a policy of forcing the black inmates back to the farms, rather than a humanitarian act. Here is another example of how British officials, while not actually ordering blacks to do things against their own will and volition, used food as a weapon to induce them to do so. In contrast Lagden expressed strong objection to the idea of returning blacks farm-by-farm or district-by-district. "We cannot force natives to settle on farms. Some Dutchmen are hard masters and never can keep any natives."¹⁹⁰,

Some inmates were also fearful of returning because they believed, with good reason, that they would be punished for deserting their Boer masters. For much less offense such as contradicting the Boer owner some blacks had been tied down to a barrel and beaten with clubs until they had a bowel movement and had to be carried home. Often after such beatings they could not work for several weeks or died as a result.¹⁹¹ Many black farmworkers had not only gone over to the British side, but had engaged in spying on their Boer employers. But even more significant some 10,000 to 30,000 had served as armed combatants with the British columns.¹⁹² There is only one incident in the record which has already been described, where some blacks sought legal assistance to avoid being forced to return to their former Boer masters. Fifty-four Basutos appealed to the Native Court of the Witwatersrand regarding their being ordered to return to the farms. The Magistrate said many of them had served with the Imperial troops during the war and were afraid to place themselves in a position where they would be unprotected and thus afford the Boers an opportunity of wreaking vengeance on them."

¹⁹⁰ SNA, Vol. 31, NA 1170, de Lotbiniere to Lagden, 7 June 1902.

¹⁹¹ Tim Keegan, *Facing the Storm: Portraits of black lives in Rural South Africa* (Cape Town, 1988) p.10.

¹⁹² Jeremy Krikler, *Revolution From Above*, p. 12.

The BaSothos claimed, "That several instances had occurred during the war where Natives have been murdered in cold blood and that they fear that this may be repeated in the future."¹⁹³ The BaSothos had a long history of bad relations with the Boers. Blacks were killed in the open veld during the war, in most cases, because they were suspected of being spies and scouts for the British forces. There were reports of the shooting of blacks that were apparently not spies or scouts. (It was the position of the Boers that blacks wandering the veld were spies or scouts and they were warned to stay on the farms to avoid being killed.) At Rhodes Drift in the Bechaunaland Protectorate it was reported that some Boers carried off 5 men, killed a headman of a kraal, also women and children, while drinking at a river. Some escaped, dropping their bundles and fleeing."¹⁹⁴

In his final report de Lotbiniere said that most of the blacks in the camps were willing to be returned to their former masters, but a considerable number were frightened to do so because their former employers knew their British sympathies. Some were also afraid because their former masters had treated them badly in the past.¹⁹⁵ The Native Commissioner of the Waterberg District reported in February 1903 that these fears were probably justified. "I think that there is no doubt that unscrupulous Boers are threatening natives by stating that every native must remember the vengeance taken on them after the 1881 War, when they thought that they would always be under British protection, and that what happened then will probably happen again."¹⁹⁶

The Native Commissioner said in this same report that a large number who were in outside employment during the war have not yet returned to their homes. In the Waterberg District about 800 blacks were working for the Government service in February 1903.¹⁹⁷ At any given time at least half of the black men in the camps were away working for the Army Department and private

¹⁹³SNA, Vol. 48, NA 1657. Acting Magistrate, Witwatersrand Native Court to Magistrate Native Court Johannesburg. 11 August 1902.

¹⁹⁴Roberts' Papers, Vol. 65, p. 202, Commandant General, Bulawayo to Milner, 10 December 1900.

¹⁹⁵TKP, Vol. 135, *Final Report of the Work Performed by the Native Refugee Department of the Transvaal, From June 1901 to December 1902*, p. 7.

¹⁹⁶SNA, Vol. 106, NA 491, Native Commissioner, Waterberg to Windham 19 February 1903.

¹⁹⁷*Ibid.*

employers. What is not known is how many continued to work for these employers after their release from the camps.¹⁹⁸

The only other way they could extricate themselves from their incarceration in the concentration camps was to find some other white employer. As mentioned, some inmates preferred to stay in the camps as long as possible. In addition to fearing retribution, some may have hoped for something better than returning to their former masters. The mines recruited some. The detailed research of the documents shows only one mining company, the Lace Diamond Mining Company, in the Orange River Colony, which, attempted to recruit black inmates.¹⁹⁹

The Native Commissioner for Rustenburg reported in February 1903 that in many instances labourers had been persuaded [The word induced is crossed out and replaced with the word persuaded] to return to the farms where they resided before the war. Some were also recruited to work for the Repatriation Department as well as the Public Works Department, Telegraph, and the Railways.²⁰⁰ The statement by one Native Commissioner that any inmate of the camps who did not wish to return to his former master was allowed to live wherever he wanted to live is quite misleading.²⁰¹

How many of the inmates of the camps actually returned to the farms is not known. Wilson Fox commenting on the completion of the repatriation of the inmates in the Orange River Colony told the Colonial Secretary "that...the [great]... bulk of these natives have gone back to the land, and in a large number of instances to their former employers. He also reported that in most cases there was not any trouble between the Boers and the "natives" because of their involvement in the war. Fox reported to Goold-Adams in his August report that "The natives who were originally very nervous about going out are... fast regaining confidence, and with few exceptions, mainly owing to want of

¹⁹⁸ J.S. Mohlamme, "African Refugee Camps in the Boer War," p.116 in Fransjohan Pretorius, *Scorched Earth* (Cape Town, 2001)

¹⁹⁹ CSO, Vol. 89, 3078, Manager, Lace Diamond Mining Company to Goold-Adams, 6 August 1902.

²⁰⁰ SNA, Vol. 106, 491, Native Commissioner, Rustenburg, to Windham, 18 February 1903.

²⁰¹ *Ibid.*, 21 February 1903.

tact shown by returning Boers, are willingly going out to their old farms and masters.”²⁰² The rest had taken employment with the diamond and coal mines along the Vaal valley. He claimed that very few were still working for the Army Departments, the Railways and the Municipal Councils.²⁰³

Squatters Law: Numbers of black families permitted on the farms under the provisions of Law 21, 1895 Squatters Law.

In the strict sense of the term Law No. 21 was not a “squatters” law. Rather it was a “labour tenant law”. The official definition by the British authorities defined the term squatter to “include Africans residing on Crown land not formally set apart for African occupation and whose settlement thereon is regarded as not entitled to the recognition accorded to those who have been permanently allotted locations, and Africans on private property who are not labour tenants nor in continuous service of the owner or [an] occupier of such property.”²⁰⁴

The previous section discussed the unwillingness of some inmates to return to their former masters. This section regards the numbers of families in the camps that were allowed by law and policy to reside on individual farms. One of the problems that had to be faced in carrying out the repatriation of the inmates of the Department of Native Refugees camps was Public Law 21 of 1895 of the former South African Republic, which allegedly forbid more than five black families to live on a farm. De Lotbiniere in his original plan did not see this as a problem. Because, in addition to sending the inmates to their old farms irrespective of the numbers involved, he also wished to “issue” black refugee families in accordance with land settlement requirements. His concern was not that there would be too many families repatriated to each farm in violation of the 1895 law. Rather he wished to give each “...settler, old or new, a limited number of families to enable the supply to go as far as possible, and to be distributed evenly to everyone alike.” He expressed regret that he had not been able to provide some of the new settlers with blacks for their farms and also

²⁰² CSO, Vol. 105,4316/02, Monthly Report of the Department of Native Refugees in the Orange River Colony for August 1901.

²⁰³ CSO, Vol. 143, Fox to Wilson, 13 February 1903.

²⁰⁴ SANAC, 1, paragraph 167.

indicated that some farmers had gotten more than their share.²⁰⁵ De Lotbiniere presumed that this process would be carried out in a businesslike manner. Specifically he thought that “either they will be sent back farm by farm as the white farmers return or by whole districts as they are declared as open for resettlement.”²⁰⁶

This law may have had its roots in a recommendation of the 1878 Labour Commission that a statutory limitation should be placed on the numbers of tenant black families allowed on a farm. Ordinance 7 of 1881 stipulated that no landowner could permit more than five families on his farm or two families if the farm was unoccupied by a white man.²⁰⁷ The problem at that time was that some farmers were renting out vacant farms to blacks, which were thought by some to be centres for stock theft and beer drinking. But in addition such situations deprived other farmers of sorely needed labour. On the other hand the Select Committee on Labour in 1890 said that often this system was resorted to, to secure a reserve supply of labour.²⁰⁸

This is precisely what some English farmers suggested to the Department of Native Refugees in June 1902. They wished to retain some of the camps as permanent native locations from which they could draw native labour as needed, and thereby avoid the inconveniences and disadvantages of permanent black settlers on their farms. It was also suggested that not all the inmates should be repatriated, especially near the larger towns and cities, as the whites would need their labour to rebuild and construct housing and industries.²⁰⁹ One of the District Inspectors of the Department of Native Refugees at Kroonstad in the Orange River Colony reported to Wilson Fox that several groups of blacks along the railway had been taken over by the gangers²¹⁰ on the railway. He

²⁰⁵ TKP, Vol. 135, *Final Report*..., p. 7.

²⁰⁶ SNA, Vol. 31, 1170, de Lotbiniere to Lagden, 7 June 1902.

²⁰⁷ Timothy J. Keegan, *Rural Transformations in Industrialising South Africa: The Southern Highveld to 1914*, (Johannesburg, 1986) pp. 13-14.

²⁰⁸ The Cape Select Committee on Labour, 1890, A. 12, p. iii. cited in Sheila T. Van der Horst, *Native Labour in South Africa* (Johannesburg, 1971) p. 147.

²⁰⁹ SNA, Vol. 31, NA 1170, de Lotbiniere to Lagden, 7 June 1902.

²¹⁰ Gangs of railway labourers and workers.

specifically mentioned a group at Amerika Siding and several such groups around Kroonstad.²¹¹ There was a Department of Native Refugees camp at Amerika Siding. These "independent" blacks may have been associated with the DNR camps. These groups consisted of women and children as well as men.²¹² At exactly the same time the Superintendent of the Frederickstad DNR camp, Mr. Allensberg, forwarded a very detailed "Scheme for the Settlement of Natives in the Transvaal and the Orange River Colony to de Lotbiniere. He proposed an elaborate system of what may be termed labour reserve locations where farmers and commercial employers could access their needed labour supply. The whole scheme was set up to benefit the white employers. De Lotbiniere sent a copy of this proposed scheme to the Secretary of Native Affairs recommending its provisions highly and offered to come to the Secretary's office to discuss the scheme further.²¹³ This scheme, and others very like it, may have been the genesis of some of the present day black townships.

In the period prior to the war black families were required to sign an agreement to work for the owner of the land if they wished to live there. In October 1900 the District Commissioner of Utrecht described the agreement that existed on the farms in the Transvaal. "On the farms the children of the five families allowed per farm are bound to work for no remuneration except food. The families thus work off the rent. But it is usual to give a Kafir²¹⁴ a horse or young beast after a years good work."²¹⁵ De Lotbiniere understood that in return for their labour blacks on the farms were "... as a rule either paid in stock as well as being allowed to cultivate a certain number of acres of mealies and Kaffir corn and to graze a limited number of cattle.²¹⁶ They preferred to be paid in livestock."²¹⁷ Sol Plaatje defined what it meant to be a squatter in South Africa. "... a native who owns some livestock and having no land of his own, hires a farm for grazing and ploughing rights from a

²¹¹CSO, Vol. 82, 2887/02, District Inspector, Kroonstad, Department of Native Refugees to Fox, 17 July 1902.

²¹² On an exploratory trip in 2001 looking for a possible camp site at Amerika Siding I discovered a large labour facility which may be the previous site of the camp.

²¹³ SNA, Vol. 45, 1458/02, de Lotbiniere to Windham, 21 July 1902.

²¹⁴ Kafir is an alternative spelling of the usual spelling of the word 'Kaffir' sometimes found in the documents and literature of the day.

²¹⁵ PSY, Vol. 57, p. 34, District Commissioner, Utrecht to Political Secretary, 29 October 1900.

²¹⁶ TKP, Vol. 135. Final Report... p. 7.

²¹⁷ The Labour Commission Report of 1893-4. Cited in Sheila T. Van der Horst. *Native Labour in South Africa* (Johannesburg, 1971) p. 147.

landowner, to raise grain for his own use and to feed his stock."²¹⁸ Those who had enough equipment and livestock including the ability to plough land could make an agreement to farm on the halves system as share croppers. Many inmates returning to the farms were forced to sign an agreement as a tenant farmer if he had no livestock, plough or the cash to buy them with. As an example on the Vereeniging Estates "...the Molefe family, as well as the brothers, David, Salthiel and Napthali Poee...[had] ...an opportunity to earn money [during the war]...and it was claimed that this extra cash made possible their return to sharecropping. But not every African peasant on the estates- or in the region for that matter had the resources to become a sharecropper. Without stock, ploughs, sufficient family labour, or savings to buy these commodities, peasants were reduced to labour tenants on the white farms or part time miners on the estates' coal mines or on the Johannesburg gold mines."²¹⁹

Thus the failure of the Department to compensate the inmates with livestock lost during the war prior to returning to the farms was disastrous for the families who prior to the war had worked their way up to the status of a sharecropper. Some sharecroppers had substantial livestock and wealth. One household on the farm Zandfontein, one of the former black camps, had twenty oxen, sixteen cows, fifty sheep, a wagon, three ploughs and a harvest of 248 bags of maize.²²⁰

In some cases more than five families had lived on the Boer farms prior to their removal to the concentration camps. It was common for farmers to evade this law and to place many black families on one farm, taking half of their crops.²²¹ This is an interesting practice in view of the fact that Law 21 stated as its primary purpose, as the need "...to prevent the spreading of infectious...diseases, to preserve a good general state of health...."²²² By setting up a farm as a kind of native location their

²¹⁸ Sol T. Plaatje, *Native Life in South Africa; Before and Since the European War and the Boer Rebellion*, (Johannesburg, 1991) pp. 21-2. [Originally published in 1916.]

²¹⁹ Trapido, "Putting a Plough to Ground," p. 349.

²²⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 350.

²²¹ TKP, Vol. 135. Final Report... p. 7.

²²² Carl Jeppe, and J.H. Gey Van Pittius, *Statute Law of the Transvaal, 1839-1910*. Law No. 21, "Squatters Law," 1895 Vol.I, 1839-1900, (Pretoria, 1910) p. 329.

sanitary and disease problems could be contained by a kind of prophylactic apartheid to protect the whites on the other farms. Technically a farmer with five farms, for example, could put twenty-five families on one farm. Lagden was evidently aware of this practice. He commented, "The farming of Natives instead of farming the land is well known." This was an old saw among the Boers. Sol Plaatje quotes "Old Baas M- responding to the demand that he evict his black tenants. "How dare any number of men wearing hats and frock coats...order me to evict my natives? This is my ground; it cost my money, not Parliament's, and I will see them banged (barst) before I do it."²²³ Later in 1913 the Orange River Colony farmers were anxious to do just that and successfully agitated for the passage of the infamous 1913 Land Act.

Some farms, which had been purchased by tribal chiefs, were interpreted as being under the provisions of the 1894 law. At least one Chief, Chief Manakholla, and his small tribe had been removed from their farm, the Farm Elandsfontein, at Molok in the Potchefstroom District to the Nauwport DNR camp.²²⁴ Their repatriation back to that farm, of course, violated the five family rule. There were many black locations located on farms that had been previously purchased and where several thousands of blacks resided.²²⁵ The rule was never intended to apply to this situation, but rather to limit the numbers of black families who could move onto a Boer farm.

Reports from the Vryheid and Utrecht Districts, now part of Natal, stated that the South African Republic had not enforced Law 21 of 1895, Windham sent an excerpt of a circular issued to the Native Commissioners of the Transvaal in September 1902 stating that Law 21 of 1895 was very clear. Not more than five families are allowed on any farm without the express consent of the Government.²²⁶ At least one large mining and agricultural company, Vereeniging Estates settled 250

²²³ Plaatje, *Native Life in South Africa*, p.31.

²²⁴ SNA, Vol. 37, 1293. Officer Commanding, Major H.J.A. Eyre, Department of Native Refugees, Johannesburg to Windham, 1 July 1902.

²²⁵ *Transvaal Administrative Reports for 1902, Appendix 6, Report by Native Commissioner Pretoria and Heidelberg Districts*, 21 February 1903, p. A19.

²²⁶ SNA, Vol. 98, 232 /02 Windham to Under Secretary for Native Affairs, 7 April 1903.

black families on the 22 farms owned by the company. The political power of the company, was able to get by with this violation of the laws of both the Orange River Colony and the Transvaal.²²⁷

There is an additional reason and explanation for restricting the number of families to each farm. Law 21 in its opening statement lists its purpose as the, "...encouraging [of] native [wage] labour.". The method of doing this all along had been to deprive blacks of land and the opportunity to earn a living in cultivation and cattle raising. The reports of some of the Native Commissioners indicate that because some blacks had returned to the farms recruitment of labour for the mines or for government employment was failing to obtain any significant amount of black labour. It had long been understood that blacks who were engaged in farming were not motivated to work in the mines or other wage labour. Thus allowing blacks to live on the farms in return for the provision of labour or a share of the crops was a disincentive for the recruitment of black labour by the mining companies and other employers.

This strict interpretation of the law made the repatriation of the black inmates back to their former employers problematic. The Transvaal Repatriation Board arrived at a solution on 12 July 1902. It was decreed that no limit was to be placed on the number of families allowed to return to a particular farm that they had resided on prior to the war. Families who had lived on other farms would not be allowed to settle on a farm that already had five families.²²⁸ Thus, in one respect, the British authorities were more restrictive than Law 21 required. Those blacks who had hired farms prior to the war from whites where the owner had not lived on the farm could return to those farms if the owner was in agreement. They would have to come to an agreement with the owner regarding the conditions and terms of the contract. This was also the case regarding black families who had lived on estates and mission stations if they were invited to return.²²⁹

²²⁷ Trapido, "Putting a Plough to Ground," p. 340.

²²⁸ SNA, Vol. 45, NA 1474, Circular L-38, 12 July 1902.

²²⁹ *Ibid.*

Transport logistics.

De Lotbiniere had incorrectly predicted that transporting repatriated inmates back to the farms could be accomplished without great difficulty because most of the inmates had been placed in camps near the farms they had been removed from.²³⁰ In fact repatriation was significantly delayed due to a lack of transportation. This was particularly true in the Orange River Colony, as de Lotbiniere had correctly predicted. Transport was so scarce that every animal in the Department of Native Refugees camps capable of providing transport of the inmates and their property, food grains, seed, and farm implements, was trained and prepared to assist in the repatriation process in the Transvaal. Circular L-38 called for the training of such animals, the hiring of the animals belonging to the inmates of the camps and for the repair of carts. Department District Inspectors were given a free hand to incur any expense considered necessary to providing the necessary transport for repatriation.²³¹ The last six weeks of repatriation in the Orange River Colony presented some difficulty in that the transport wagons having to go very long distances were sometimes away as long as a week and were only able to carry the black families for one farm.²³² Some farmers sent their own wagons to pick up their workers.

The 7,000 black inmates at Harrismith in the Orange River Colony, located on the edge of Natal, were transported in September 1902 by ten mule wagons which had been hired from the Military Authorities at a cost of £12 per day for all ten wagons. These wagons were transporting large numbers of black repatriates between [the] Railhead at Elands River and the Bethlehem District. Eight ox-wagons were also obtained at no cost to assist in the transport of blacks from the camps.²³³ Some transport was needed to transport grain to blacks already repatriated. In January 1903 the

²³⁰ SNA, Vol. 31, 1170/02, p. 1, de Lotbiniere to Lagden, 7 June 1902.

²³¹ SNA, Vol. 45, NA 1474, Circular L-38, 12 July 1902.

²³² CSO, Vol. 143, 1154/03, Fox to Wilson, 13 February 1903.

²³³ FK, Vol. 973, de Lotbiniere to Superintendent of the Natal Department of Native Refugees, 5 September 1902.

Superintendent at Boxburg was authorised to do this. Using mule wagons he was instructed that he could not charge more than 5 shillings per bag for the transport of the grain.²³⁴

IV-The closing of the Department of Native Refugees.

Closing the camps in the Transvaal

In June 1902 just a few days after the end of hostilities de Lotbiniere began to consider the future of the department and the facilities that were now in place. He wrote to Windham describing the Department and its capabilities for repatriation and other tasks associated with the war's end. This was the beginning of what appears to have been an effort on his part to find continued employment for the members of his staff. His Department, he argued, was fully staffed with many camps, supply depots, and men located along the railway with head offices and supply departments at Johannesburg and Bloemfontein. These facilities along with the staff he suggested could be expanded at any time. He saw the possibility of not only carrying out the repatriation of the Department's camps, but he also offered to concurrently assist in the repatriation of the families in the Burger Camps. He suggested that the camps could serve as centres for collecting livestock for the restocking of the Boer farms. He concluded with an earnest request that his Department be made as much use of, as possible, in the general resettlement of the Country.²³⁵

The Transvaal. grain depots

As de Lotbiniere contemplated the closing of the department and turning it over to the Native Affairs Department he was concerned about the food supply of the repatriates, which would be needed for their survival until the first harvest. He tried to pay as many receipts as possible and told Lagden that he would get as many additional grain depots established, as would likely be needed, given that the Department of Native Affairs would assume the post war functions of the Department of Native Refugees.²³⁶ It was his vision and plan from the very beginning to provide food for the inmates of the camps after their release until the first harvest. It will be remembered how he

²³⁴ NRD, Vol. 1, de Lotbiniere to Supt., Boxburg DNR Camp, 17 January 1903.

²³⁵ SNA, Vol. 31, 1170, de Lotbiniere to Windham, 7 June 1902.

²³⁶ SNA, Vol. 73, 2500, de Lotbiniere to Lagden, 7 November 1902.

gathered the inmates together as he made his first inspections of the new camps to tell them that they would be able to take thirty to forty bags of mealies and Kaffir Corn home with them. Unfortunately, that promise would not be kept entirely. At some stage in the history of the Department he decided to form grain depots for this purpose. He proposed to Lagden that the grain depots should be handed over to his District Native Commissioners who would understand the needs of the blacks and at the same time would be able to consult with the remaining Department of Native Refugees staff. He suggested transfer of the depots at the end of December and because they would have to be in operation for a considerable time he thought some of his staff should be transferred to the Department of Native Affairs.

He urged an early discussion of these matters because he believed his department would be closed by the end of the year [1902] when Imperial Army funds were scheduled to be withdrawn.²³⁷ There were a considerable number of these depots amounting to nineteen in all. By November 1902, however, there were only eleven depots in operation of which five were opened at the request of the Department of Native Affairs.²³⁸ Independent of this program there were also some grain depots at Pietersburg, which had been established by the Director of Civil Supplies in August 1901.²³⁹

When a grain depot was closed the grain in that depot was shipped to one of the remaining depots. In the end the Grain Depots, containing over 15,000 two hundred pound bags of mealies and kaffir corn, were transferred to the Department of Native Affairs. Blacks were coming to the grain depots to buy grain, sometimes from a long distance.²⁴⁰ This comment along with others is evidence that the depots sold the mealie meal and kaffir corn, which the women and children and some older and unfit men had been induced to grow in the concentration camps with the initial promise that this surplus grain would be theirs to take home with them.

²³⁷ *Ibid.*

²³⁸ These eleven depots were located at Belfast, Bronkhorstspuit, Carolina, Krugersdorp, Frederickstad, Greylingstad, Standerton, Ermelo, Bethal, and Volksrust & Platrand. The following Grain Depots had been shut down; Vereeniging, Kaalfontein, Boxburg, Klerksdorp, Van der Merwe, Brugspruit, Middleburg, Heidelberg.

²³⁹ NRD, Vol. 1, de Lotbiniere to A. Corcoran, 13 January 1903.

²⁴⁰ *Ibid.*

The grain depots were instrumental in relieving severe shortages of food among blacks, some of whom had not been incarcerated in the black camps. These depots became a source of food for areas with poor harvests or where harvests had not yet taken place. For example in December 1902 de Lotbiniere sent a convoy loaded with 600 bags of mealies from Standerton to Ermelo and another 400 bags to Bethal to relieve the starvation among the blacks there. Fearing that these shipments might deprive him of the food needed for the black refugees he asked Windham to obtain a report from each district commissioner to determine if he needed to procure more bags of mealies and sorghum.²⁴¹ After much discussion regarding the near starvation of blacks in the Wakkerstroom District de Lotbiniere provided mealies out of the grain depot in that area. Consistent with British colonial policy Windham resisted such action unless it was determined that failure to do so would result in deaths due to starvation.²⁴²

In addition to poor rainfall the failure to provide ploughing stock resulted in harvests that were considerably lower than they would have been otherwise. Finally in November 1902 de Lotbiniere reported, "...that distress among natives of the Vrede District in the Orange River Colony was partially relieved by our depot at Standerton." There is no indication that there were any grain depots established in the Orange River Colony. This may have been in part the indirect result of Milner's decision to remove de Lotbiniere as the head of the Department of Native Refugees in the Orange River Colony when the repatriation process began. Although such a program would have had to have started long before that time. Perhaps de Lotbiniere had planned to supply the Orange River Colony from his grain depots in the Transvaal.

²⁴¹SNA, Vol. 78, 2650, de Lotbiniere to Windham, 3 December 1902.

²⁴²SNA, Vol. 65, 2288, de Lotbiniere to Windham, 18 November 1902

Disposal of equipment and supplies and transfer to the Department of Native Affairs in the Transvaal.

By early November 1902 all of the equipment, groceries and clothing in the Department of Native Refugees camps in the Transvaal had been sold and only the bare essential supplies needed to run the grain depots were retained. The other buildings had been dismantled. They were sold at market price.²⁴³ Some buildings were sold to private individuals. In one case the railway authorities laid claim to some buildings that had been sold to a private buyer and prevented the buyer from removing the buildings.²⁴⁴ All tents, buildings or structures were to be removed within six months as of the date of the notice (19 November 1902) and the owner was to be entitled to compensation for the occupation or damages due to the failure to remove these structures within the six months period.²⁴⁵

Despite the very diligent work done by the staff working long hours seven days a week to dispose of the Department livestock, equipment and supplies, there was still a stock of grain and some equipment left when the Department was transferred to Native Affairs. This property was worth in excess of £12,000.²⁴⁶

The Department of Native Refugees was transferred to the Department of Native Affairs on 15 January 1903.²⁴⁷ Actually the Department was placed under the control of the Commissioner of Native Affairs on 1 January.²⁴⁸ The Grain Depots, and associated staffs, were also transferred on the same date.²⁴⁹ Down to the very last days of his tenure de Lotbiniere tried to clean up all the loose ends of the transfer of his now defunct agency, including an attempt to secure employment for his staff with the Department of Native Affairs. As early as 23 July he had tried, as he put it, to

²⁴³ *Ibid.*

²⁴⁴ NRD, Vol. 1, J.H.S. Findlay, Attorney, Pretoria to de Lotbiniere, 28 January 1903.

²⁴⁵ Government Gazette Extraordinary, Ordinance No. 39 enacted by the Lt. Governor of the Transvaal with the advice and consent of the Legislative Council, 19 November 1902.

²⁴⁶ SNA, Vol. 73, 2500. Windham to The Assistant Secretary to the Treasury, 17 January 1903.

²⁴⁷ *Ibid.*

²⁴⁸ SNA, Vol. 73, 2500. Windham to The Assistant Secretary to the Treasury, 29 January 1903.

²⁴⁹ SNA, Vol. 73, 2500. de Lotbiniere to Windham, 12 January 1903.

“ventilate” the process by which the transfer should be carried out with the Secretary of Native Affairs. He said that he didn’t want his Department to be kept open indefinitely if there was any way to wind it up satisfactorily. He did say at that time that it seemed to him that they would have to keep his old staff.²⁵⁰ Like so many well intentioned ideas of this very able administrator, things did not come out as he had planned, through no fault of his own. It had been his intention to leave the final administration of the compensation claims and the grain depots to his immediate assistant, H.D. Williamson, who had been with him from the beginning as the chief Storekeeper and accountant. Williamson in those last days, however, chose to accept employment with the South African Railways. Finally Major de Lotbiniere and his wife and her maid left South Africa by a mail ship which sailed to England on 21 January 1903.²⁵¹

The closing of the DNR Camps in the Orange River Colony

Operationally all the Department of Native Refugees camps in the former Boer republics were considered closed on 30 November 1902 and no monthly reports were issued after that date. There were, however, still approximately 70 inmates in the Orange River Colony black camps on 13 February who were then transferred to the Brandfort white camp on or about that date.²⁵² The Brandfort camp was the last camp to be closed in the Orange River Colony and was used as a repository for white orphans and refugees who had not yet been placed back in the community. No doubt these black refugees were placed in the location for blacks just outside the white camp.

In July 1902 in preparation for eventually closing the camps the owners of farms where the camps were located were informed that every effort would be made to repatriate the inmates of those camps as soon as possible. Due, however, to transport shortages the removals of the camps on the farms would take several months before the farms could be entirely evacuated. Until that time the Department offered to assist the owners of the farms in cultivating any portion of his farm he

²⁵⁰ SNA, Vol. 45, pp. 105-106, 1474, de Lotbiniere to Windham, 23 July 1902.

²⁵¹ SNA, Vol. 73, NA 2500. Windham to Assistant Secretary to the Treasury, 29 January 1903.

²⁵² CSO, Vol. 143, Fox to Wilson, 13 February 1903.

wished help with.²⁵³ Compensation was paid for the use of the farms. Compensation was to be paid in the amount of 1 shilling per family for each month of occupation beginning on 1 August 1902.²⁵⁴

In the Orange River Colony some owners of the farms used as campsites submitted claims for damages to their property, including a claim regarding the Farm Victoria at Thaba'nchu which was actually owned by a black woman, Mafane. Another claim by Vereeniging Estates, a coal mining and agricultural company was a matter of some considerable dispute with the Department of Native Refugees in the Orange River Colony. Vereeniging Estates, formerly the South African and Orange Free State Coal and Mineral Company,²⁵⁵ founded in 1886, consisted of twenty two farms, used by the Taaibosch-Zandfontein Camp which belonged to Sammy Marx and Isaac Lewis....²⁵⁶

The following is background to the struggle that ensued over this claim. Sammy Marks, referred to by a biographer as "The uncrowned king of the Transvaal,"²⁵⁷ was accustomed to receiving privileged treatment in the Transvaal, having cultivated close relations with both Paul Kruger and highly placed British officials to further his own interests. During the war he spied on the Boers for the British. Prior to the taking of Pretoria he provided the British with information regarding the state of the Boer Army and other very secret military information.: Milner sent this very secret telegram to Roberts.

8th May 1900. No. 89. Following received from Consul General at Lorenzo Marquez. Begins. May 7th. This morning received following information from Mr. Wood National Bank of Johannesburg communicated to him by Mr. Samuel Marks. Begins "at a secret meeting on May 4th at President's house in Pretoria: present Kruger, Schalkburger,²⁵⁸ Botha, Grobller, they stated that only 25,000 Boers are at the front in O.F. State, that they are short of ammunition and commissariat is entirely broken down and that if Lord Roberts were to push forward immediately he would meet but slight opposition, and reach Pretoria before the Boers could complete arrangements for the move to Lydenburg. Mr Wood has information that one of our codes or ciphers...is known, and our messages are intercepted and deciphered."²⁵⁹

²⁵³ Government Gazette, Orange River Colony, 4 July 1902, p. 518.

²⁵⁴ CSO, Vol. 131, 314/02, Fox to Wilson., 13 January 1903.

²⁵⁵ *Afrikaansche en Oranje Vrij Staatsche Kolen en Mineralen Vereeniging*.

²⁵⁶ *Ibid*.

²⁵⁷ Richard Mendelsohn, *Sammy Marks: 'Uncrowned King of the Transvaal.'* (Cape Town, 1992)

²⁵⁸ General Schalk Burger and acting President of the South African Republic, having been the Vice-President under President Paul Kruger.

²⁵⁹ Roberts Papers, Vol. 56, p. 49, telegram No. 89, Milner to Roberts, 8 May 1900.

At the end of the war Marks provided the site for the camp of the Boer delegates to the peace negotiations 200 yards from his brick yards including lights and water. The delegates “were well looked after as far as food and drink and pleasure goes.” Both Smuts and de la Rey asked him to meet them in May 1902 and he also corresponded with Botha regarding how peace could be made. Marks reported all of these conversations to Kitchener.²⁶⁰ This is the context of what follows. Is it any wonder that he was the recipient of many favours and when caught in violation of martial law he was not held accountable.

Some of the inmates of the Taaibosch camp had been former labourers in the company’s coal mines. In July 1902 the company began asking that any of the inmates who wished to, could return to work. If they agreed they were to bring their families with them and this, they suggested, would speed up the repatriation process. Some were unwilling to return. No doubt some remembered or had heard about the massacre of BaSothos who dissatisfied with the pay received tried to “break out” of the coal mining compound and were shot by the army in September the year before. Seven died and twelve others were wounded.²⁶¹ The Secretary of the company visited the camp evidently to persuade or pressure the holdouts to come back to work.

In August 1902 a serious confrontation between the company and the Department of Native Refugees took place. First the company wanted to take possession of their farms again and they wanted all the blacks thrown off the land. The visit of the Vereeniging Estates officials to the farms to recruit labour was upsetting to them. According to the Secretary of the company, “The Company’s property at Zandfontein has been almost entirely destroyed and this can be easily proved to anyone who may care to visit the farm.”²⁶² There was even a threat to burn down their huts if the inmates did not leave. Then in early January the company demanded half of the crops that had been grown. On 1 January 1903 the Estate Manager in a letter said that the company “... did

²⁶⁰ Selborne Papers, Vol. 197, Marks to Isaac Lewis, 21 May 2002.

²⁶¹ SNA, Vol. 2, 640. Assistant Commissioner of Vereeniging to Superintendent of Native Affairs, Pretoria, 12 September 1901; MGP, Vol. 119, 11846B/01, Lagden to Maxwell, 4 October 1901.

²⁶² CSO, Vol. 131, Secretary of Vereeniging Estates to Fox, 12 February 1903.

not want any rent from the department for the use of our farm Zandfontein as a native refugee camp.” Rather they wanted half of the 1,628 bags of Mealies which were “...reaped by your department from our Mealie fields sown and ploughed on Zandfontein by our tenants. It was their claim that “... as soon as a native puts a plow into the ground on any of our farms he is a tenant and has to give us half of the crop, which he reaps, from such land. I may add that notwithstanding the war, our share of grain from the Zandfontein Native Tenants in 1900 was 628 bags of Mealies.”²⁶³

Wilson Fox, the Chief Superintendent of the Department in the Orange River Colony explained that these mealies were a Government crop, sown for the benefit of the natives and reaped and distributed among them as rations before the end of the war. Fox termed this claim of the company, as “a piece of bluff, which if acceded to would mean a payment of £800. This would be an extravagant price for having not only kept their property in good order, but [having] considerably increased the value of it by improving the homestead and breaking up hundreds of acres of land.”²⁶⁴ In November 1901 the Resident Magistrate of Heilbron who inspected the camp reported there were 900 acres under cultivation covering a three mile radius. This land had been partly ploughed and partly hoed by the older women. Kraals had been built, a house and office for staff, a large garden planted with vegetables and the water supply carefully guarded. He also reported that the “village” was laid out in wide streets winding along the crest of a hill, with plenty of space between the neat hostel huts.”²⁶⁵

In the end the company was offered a little over £82. This was a payment of 1 shilling per family from the 1st of August 1902 until the end of the year.²⁶⁶ In mid-September Lagden informed the Resident Commissioner of Basutoland that the Vereeniging Estates had made application for any

²⁶³ CSO, Vol. 113, 314/03, Estate Manager, Vereeniging Estates to Inspector Native Refugee Camp, Taaibosch, 1 January 1903.

²⁶⁴ CSO, Vol. 113, 314/03, Fox to Wilson, 13 January 1903.

²⁶⁵ CSO, Vol. 42, 3913/01, Camps Inspector, A.G. Daller to Assistant Director, Imperial Military Railway, Bloemfontein, 29 November 1901. He was quoting from a report of the Resident Magistrate of Heilbron regarding his visit to the Taaibosch Camp.

²⁶⁶ CSO, Vol. 113, 314/03, Fox to Estate Manager Vereeniging Estates, 21 January 1902.

assistance he could give in obtaining "a supply of native labour." While explaining to the company that the Government does not get directly involved in recruiting labour he asked that the Resident Commissioner to do anything he could in the matter.²⁶⁷ No doubt this was partly in response to the problems encountered in getting the inmates of the camp located on their property to work in the coal mines of the company.

Wilson Fox was asked to close the Orange River Colony camps by 31 December 1902. Goold-Adams conveyed this closing date to Milner telling him that he hoped that a considerable proportion of the Camps would be abolished by that Date.²⁶⁸ Milner's great concern was to stop the bleeding of the British treasury as soon as possible. On the other hand there was pressure from another direction entirely. In urging the closing of the camps by the end of the year the Colonial Secretary gave as the primary reason the fact that the farmers and others in most districts appeared to be anxious to obtain the early services of blacks for work on the land.²⁶⁹ As with the white camps the Colonial Secretary excluded the sick and the elderly from being repatriated immediately, suggesting that it would take some time to find placement for them. The Springfontein and the Brandfort white camps were kept open for that purpose.²⁷⁰

Captain Fox replied that this deadline could not be met. Due to a shortage of transport there would still be 5,000 to 6,000 inmates needing repatriation still to be carried out in January. As of 31 October 1902 there were 24,278 inmates in the Orange River Colony camps.²⁷¹ There was also a great difficulty in getting grain from the coast. This shows that there was not even enough grain to give repatriates sufficient food grains to get through to the next harvest. Contrast this with the elaborate grain depot system developed by de Lotbiniere in the Transvaal. "In the meantime," Fox

²⁶⁷ SNA, Vol. 57, Lagden to Resident Commissioner, Basutoland, 18 September 1902.

²⁶⁸ *The Free State Archives, Bloemfontein*, The Archives of the Lieutenant Governor of the Orange River Colony, (LTG.) Vol. 142, 115/28, Goold-Adams to Milner, 26 November 1902.

²⁶⁹ LTG, Vol. 142, 115/28, Wilson to Fox, 18 November 1902.

²⁷⁰ LTG, Vol. 142, 115/28, Wilson to Fox, 18 November 1902; LTG, Vol. 142, 115/28, Fox to Wilson, 19 November 1902

²⁷¹ CSO, Vol. 119, 5537/02, Monthly Report of the Orange River Colony Department of Native Refugees for October 1902, 6 December 1902

assured the Colonial Secretary, "...the camps will be done away with as fast as possible, and the balance of the population concentrated at as few points as possible and with as small a staff as is consistent with efficiency."²⁷² This is more evidence that there were probably no grain depots in the Orange River Colony, as in the Transvaal. It may be asked what amounts of food grains were given to the black repatriates when they were sent away from the camps?

The final closing of the camps in the Orange River Colony took place towards the end of April 1903. Wilson Fox left for England in early April. On 28 March he estimated that it would take another three weeks to close the camps. Reginald Turner, the Assistant Superintendent, was appointed as superintendent on Fox's recommendation.²⁷³ Fox returned to Africa at some point after the war and resumed his work as a black labour recruiter for the British South Africa Company in Rhodesia.

V. The Aftermath.

When the betrayal became clear, even muted complaint was disallowed. H. M. Taberer, the Pretoria District Commissioner for the Department of Native Affairs in a report to Godfrey Lagden made these observations in a tour of his district in mid August 1902. Note how he seems to disassociate himself from the British Government and indicates some understanding of what was obviously a blatant injustice.

Throughout the District the Natives appear to be quite peaceful,...everywhere they were practically ignorant of the consequences of the late war and the terms upon which the Boer farmers were being permitted to return to their farms.... What appears to surprise the Natives is the policy of the British Government in allowing the Boers to return to their farms: This policy, one or two of the Chiefs presumed to criticize, but I informed them that I could not permit them to question the Government's policy *in matters that did not concern them*.²⁷⁴ [Emphasis is mine]

C. Griffith, the Native Commissioner at Rustenburg, in a report to Windham betrays a certain sense of betrayal on the part of British officials, and perhaps some disbelief that the tables had been

²⁷² LTG, Vol. 134, 115/28, Fox to Goold-Adams, 20 November 1902.

²⁷³ CSO, Vol. 157, 2340/03, Fox to Wilson, 28 March 1903.

²⁷⁴ SNA, Vol. 47, NA 1569, pp. 14-15, Native Commissioner of the Pretoria District to Lagden.

turned so violently on the blacks in his district. "The effect of the war upon the native mind"²⁷⁵ was demoralizing; the natives were taught to despise the Boers and when the war was at an end they exhibited the lessons they had learned."²⁷⁶ Griffith indicates that he and his subordinates then set out to "...disabuse the native mind with regard to their relations with the Boers." While every effort has been made, leaving no "stone unturned" to restore the blacks to the farms it should also be borne in mind that the natives assisted our troops in every possible way against the Boers."²⁷⁷

The Native Commissioner Zoutpansberg was of the opinion that the impact of the war had been chiefly to impress on the natives the strength of Great Britain. Previous to the war the blacks in that district had always been a considerable power "which the Boer Government had not quite overcome."²⁷⁸ To the blacks in this part of the Transvaal this reversal must have been even more of a startling surprise. Having used their natural antipathy against the Boers, the British now asserted a much greater control over them than the Boers had previously. Thus was set in motion the absolute hegemonic power that would lead to their total subjection. Shula Marks cites Denoon as stating that "...if anything the improved bureaucracy of the reconstruction period meant a tightening of colonial rule-the more intense imposition of pass laws, increased taxation, etc. for Africans."²⁷⁹ The one exception was that they were to be allowed to use their native courts to settle internal disputes and crime.

Lord Kitchener had the opposite view. Less than two months before the war's end, he was anxious about the response of the blacks that would take place when peace came. In one of his periodic letters to the Secretary of War, he said that he "...could not help thinking that before long we shall

²⁷⁵ The idea that the natives have a far different way of looking at their circumstances than Europeans was an almost universal perspective held by many British and Boer people. This view held that the process of thinking among black people was intrinsically different. There was an implication, racist in nature, that black people were inferior in mental ability. This view can still be observed among some whites in South Africa in the present time.

²⁷⁶ SNA, Vol. 106, NA491/03, Native Commissioner Rustenburg to Windham, 18 February 1903.

²⁷⁷ *Ibid.*

²⁷⁸ *Transvaal Administration Reports for 1902, Appendix 7*, Native Commissioner, Zoutpansberg District to Windham, 24 February 1903.

²⁷⁹ Donald Denoon, *A Grand Illusion* as informally cited by Shula Marks in a personal communication dated 13 May 2003. Marks also states that this position is attested to in Jeremy Krikler in his book and Marks and Trapido "Lord Milner and the South African State."

have some trouble with the natives all round the Transvaal. They have seen for the past two and a half years white men being chased by other white men and have suffered considerably and have got out of hand. The Boers have sold them rifles for food and are much afraid of them."²⁸⁰ On another occasion Kitchener recounted his words with the Boer generals regarding the consequences of their ways of dealing with the blacks during the war. "I have given it to their generals pretty hot on their treatment of the natives and selling them arms. They are much afraid of a native rising and I have told them they are entirely responsible if such an event occurs. I cannot detach troops to protect them from the result of their own conduct which has caused the natives in many parts to get beyond any control."²⁸¹

After the war the blacks were ordered to surrender all their arms. Burton correctly states that the decision to disarm Africans was to ensure that they would be unable to resist British policies. "Altogether 50,488 weapons were taken in and assessed at a value of £ 60,990."²⁸² General Louis Botha had pleaded with Kitchener at Middleburg in March 1901, to allow the Boers to retain their personal arms after the war.²⁸³ Sammy Marks in trying to allay the fear of de la Rey regarding being left to the mercy of the sea of blacks surrounding them without arms to protect themselves and their families, assured them that they would not be left in a disarmed state. He told them that even in England everyone who wants a gun must be licensed and he believed that they would be allowed the same right to bear arms as the English people are.²⁸⁴ Hence the former enemy was to remain armed and loyalist blacks who had been armed were to be disarmed after the war. Provision was made to allow the Boers and others to buy the weapons surrendered by the former black allies of the British.²⁸⁵ In line with this original request by Botha when the *bitterenders* laid down their arms after the war, some were immediately permitted to take them up again, to protect themselves in

²⁸⁰ FK, Vol. 1624, p. 607, Kitchener to Brodrick, 4 April 1902.

²⁸¹ FK, Vol. 1624, p. 613, Kitchener to Brodrick, 13 April 1902.

²⁸² Burton, "The South African Native Affairs Commission," June 1985, p. 39.

²⁸³ FK, Vol. 1205, S.264, Kitchener to Proemial, London, 28 February 1901

²⁸⁴ Selborne Papers, Vol. 197, p. 187, Sammy Marks to Isaac Lewis, 21 May 1902.

²⁸⁵ Department of Native Affairs, Circular No. 47, 25 October 1902; Circular No. 82, 22 December 1902.

areas heavily populated by blacks.²⁸⁶ According to Milner, farmers in the Northern Transvaal, in order obtain arms in 1905, circulated a rumour that blacks were about to rise against the whites..

General Louis Botha summed up the situation now faced by the black people in his testimony before *Transvaal Labour Commission* "...the Kaffirs are gradually beginning to see that the Boers are just as much their masters as the other white men, and that the two white races are standing together."²⁸⁷ But this anxiety and feeling that the Government had betrayed the expectations of the blacks did not go away. In 1906 Lord Selborne the highest British official in South Africa lamented:

Both coloured people and educated natives had high hopes as to the immediate and permanent amelioration of their status on the annexation of the Transvaal and the Orange Free State to the British Empire; and my anxiety arises from the fact that they have been largely disappointed.

The central point of the disappointment lies in the fact that in the Terms of Surrender it was promised that no franchise should be granted to coloured people or natives unless granted by a legislature.²⁸⁸

This greatly inhibited the granting of these privileges because of Selborne's understanding of the necessity to "...prevent the boers thinking that the British were going to put them on the same level as the natives and the coloured people."²⁸⁹ That previous August, Selborne lamented that the educated blacks and coloureds resent that stipulation in the Terms of surrender at Vereeniging, which practically deprived them in advance, of any chance of obtaining the franchise.²⁹⁰

The refusal to grant land, the denial of the franchise and the demand for disarmament were the cardinal pillars of the temple of British Imperialism being erected like the Phoenix arising out the ashes of scorched earth devastation.. A devastation directed against Boers and the blacks alike.

Major de Lotbiniere's great idea was to imbue the black people under his care with a sense of loyalty to the British nation. He tried to accomplish this by doing everything he could to assist the

²⁸⁶ Denoon, *A Grand Illusion*, p.99.

²⁸⁷ *Transvaal Labour Commission*, Evidence given by Louis Botha, Question 11,250

²⁸⁸ Selborne Papers, Vol. 167, Proof 11334, Selborne to Lord Elgin, 12 March 1906, p. 2.

²⁸⁹ *Ibid.*

²⁹⁰ Selborne Papers, Proof, 32457, Selborne to Colonial Secretary, 21 August 1905.

black farm workers and the Boer farmers to restore the farms. This was his understanding of paying compensation in milk cows for the health of the children, oxen for ploughing along with goats instead of cash. He said it would never do to send them back to their kraals empty handed. He was met at every hand with obstacles not of his own making. In the end it was as Stanley Trapido said of the Mokale family. "For [them] the end of the war saw a return to Vaalbank without cattle, horses or seed."²⁹¹ Was G.B. Beak correct when he said The native's attitude towards compensation resembled that which he had previously shown towards the concentration camps and repatriation. He did not complain. He expected nothing, he got something; he was grateful."²⁹²

In fact the former inmates of the concentration camps did expect something. Certain promises had been made. When the great reversal and betrayal of these promises and expectations came, the few who objected were now told that it was none of their business. Even had de Lotbiniere been more successful, whatever good feelings of loyalty would have been lost. As stated even the British Officials charged with implementing the new policies were quite dismayed.

When the war was over and the black farm workers and their families went back to the farms. And "putting plough to ground" they planted the seed they had grown in confinement. They came without ploughing oxen. Some came to only scorched earth and blue sky. They came in most cases without compensation. The promises of having their own farms and the franchise and freedom were now broken and had to be forgotten. Almost nothing had changed. Well, one thing had changed.. They left behind the many who had died. That loss, along with the same terrible loss in the Boer family on the farm, of brother, sister, parent and child, is something they had in common with each other. Something that would not be forgotten. It was a bond of sacrificed blood and mutual suffering.

²⁹¹ Trapido, "Putting a Plough to the Ground," p. 349.

²⁹² G.B. Beak, *The Aftermath of War*, (London, 1906) p. 243

Conclusion

Correcting the false paradigms

"The formation of the Concentration camps has been adopted for purely military grounds as a means of hastening the war, which is, after all, the first interest of the refugees," and as a military measure it is, his excellency believes, succeeding.¹ Lord Alfred Milner.,

"Undeserved suffering is redemptive" Martin Luther King, jr. American civil rights leader.

Now we return to the theme of this story of the black concentration camps. Now that the tale has been told the question arises: Were these camps deliberately established for military reasons alone, and were the inmates of these camps deliberately neglected? The thesis says a resounding yes to both parts of this question. A more important question is this. Do what these many pages have discovered really matter? If that old maxim that those who refuse to learn the mistakes of history are doomed to repeat them is true, then it matters very much. Having told the tale, will the listener say, so what? If so, then it has been a total intellectual exercise with little meaning or purpose. What was discovered in the process? Was there anything new? There was something new. It was not that so many people died. That is a common experience for the human race in war. Was it that these camps were much worse than they needed to be? It was something more than that. It was that the victims were invisible and nobody even noticed. And then over the years myths grew up to explain the unimportance of these deaths of women and children and little babies. Thus, one of Donald Denoon's descriptions of the war, a "non-people's war."²

In the Introduction to the study the false paradigms and myths regarding the black concentration camps were listed as follows. (1) That if the black camps existed at all, their establishment was motivated by the desire to provide labour to the British Army, and that they were inherently less harsh than the white camps. (2) That the failure to provide adequate food, shelter and medical care

¹ Michael Davitt, *The Boer Fight For Freedom*, (New York, 1902) p. 582. Excerpt from a letter from Milner to the Uitlander Committee of Cape Town in early September 1901.

² Donald Denoon, "Participation in the "Boer War": people's war, people's non-war, or non-people's war? In B.A. Ogot (ed.) *War and Society in Africa; Ten Studies* (London, 1972) p. 109.

was the result of the inability of the British Army to do so because of the logistical restraints of a single track railway. (3) That unlike the white camps, blacks were not compelled either to enter or remain in the black concentration camps. (4) That the numbers of deaths in the black camps were considerably lower than in the white camps. (5) That the black and white camps were formed for humanitarian reasons.

The thesis proposed to address these false paradigms. Have these paradigms been successfully refuted? I now proceed to answer that question.

(1) That if the black camps existed at all, their establishment was motivated by the desire to provide labour to the British Army and that they were inherently less harsh than the white camps.

This view suggests that "...there were two kinds of camps, true 'refugee camps' for black families and *strafkampe* [punishment camps] for the Boer women and children and old men." Of these "Punishment camps" it is stated "The memorandum for this action was given by Lord Kitchener on 20 December 1900, and said from the beginning that all provisions must be destroyed and all Boer families removed and placed in camps, neutrals with better accommodation, 'undesirable' with husbands and sons on Commando with poorer accommodation."³ The so called "undesirable" families, nevertheless received much better housing and better food than the inmates in the black camps, and in fact by 1 March 1901 the reduced diet, which was meatless, was rescinded by London.⁴

³ Dot Serfontein, "Swartes in kampe het 'van vettigheid van oorlogsmasjien geleef,' *Die Volksblad* 8 October 1996. Dot Serfontein is a well known Afrikaans novelist and former editor of *Die Volksblad*; Cd. 422, Army Circular Memorandum No. 29, Lord Kitchener to the Field Commanders, 21 December 1900.

⁴ *British Parliamentary Papers*, Cd. 819, *Reports, &c., Working of the Refugee Camps in the Transvaal, Orange River Colony, Cape Colony, and Natal*. (London, 1901) p. 7. In his report dated 23 March 1901 the General Supt., Transvaal Department of Burger Camps, stated "Classes 2 and 3 are rationed on the same basis, and no distinction whatsoever is... made...." Class 3 were the families of men still on commando. Class 2 persons were inmates being punished for breaking the rules and during the period of their punishment they received no meat. The study has shown that black refugees seldom received meat or coffee or sugar, even though their ration scales called for the issue of these items in the original black camps in the Orange River Colony. the original black camps in the Transvaal apparently received no rations from the Department as they were not under the supervision of the Department. What rations they did receive is not known. There was severe starvation at one of these camps in the Transvaal, the Heidelberg black camp and it was reported they were eating dead livestock.

This study has shown that the black camps were not established to provide labour to the British Army and that they were certainly not less harsh than the white camps. Indeed, the study shows that in all areas of life in these camps they were much more severe, the deprivations were much greater and that the misery in these laagers of suffering were the result of the deliberate neglect by the military and high level civilian leaders.

(2) That the failure to provide adequate food, shelter and medical care was the result of the inability of the British Army to do so because of the logistical restraints of a single track railway.

It is wrong to say that the failure to provide adequate food, shelter and medical care was the result of the inability of the British Army to do so because of the logistical restraints of a single track railway. The study supports the following conclusion:

Despite the shortage of railway transport, as well as other transport during the war, the study shows that much more railway space could have been allotted to both the black and white concentration camps. [See Appendix 4.1 "Requests for railway truck space for the transport of food and other supplies to the concentration camps and the civilian population in the Orange River Colony and the Transvaal"]. Since Lord Kitchener demanded that he, himself, make the final decisions regarding the allotment of railway space to the concentration camps, he must be held accountable for at least some of the high death toll of men, women and children, that was the direct result of his refusal to allow the use of the available railway capacity. The ability to move the black camps populations in July and August 1901 is *prima facie* evidence that this was the case. Those who did survive this restriction of transport capacity suffered much sickness due to poor housing, food supplies and medical comforts, as well as other crucially needed supplies and equipment.

(3) That unlike the white camps, blacks were not compelled either to enter or remain in the black concentration camps.

Of all the false paradigms that grew up during the past century, this idea that blacks could come if they pleased, and go if they pleased, is the most impossible to defend. The evidence to the contrary is overwhelming. It is true, as the study has described, that some of the inmates of the black camps were true refugees who came in voluntarily to the towns. Having been burned out of their homes and having lost all their cattle and crops to the scorched earth operations, they came in seeking food and shelter. No concentration camps were formed to provide food and shelter for these true refugees

of the circumstances of the war, as the informal camps of the Transvaal testify to. Some came in thinking they would find a better life than they had on the Boer farms.

There are numerous records showing that black farm workers, and especially their families, were brought in from the farms by military force. [See Appendix 3.1-Table of sweeps and removals of black and white families from the Boer farms and the veld and the regular locations] The old idea that only the Boer families were swept off the farms is totally incorrect, and the evidence shows that to be true. In fact, by June 1901 all blacks, except those in the Native Reserves, were ordered into the concentration camps. This was done solely as a military strategy. Kitchener made this very clear in his field order of 21 December 1901. This mass removal of every human being from the farms and the veld was being done for a very simple reason, and that was "...to stop the present guerrilla warfare."⁵ Just in case some may see some other possibility we can read in Major de Lotbiniere's Final Report why the blacks were removed to the confinement of the black concentration camps. The civilised portion of the country was cleared, he said, "...of everything that might assist the burgers to prolong the war..." In essence the black and white concentration camps were both part of an anti-guerrilla warfare system, which had as its goal to denude the veld of all sources of food, intelligence support or moral encouragement, in fact any source of succour that would allow the Boer guerrillas to continue their very effective struggle against the British forces. That is what was done, and this is why it was done.

He then makes it clear that to accomplish this goal of sweeping the veld clean. "The Boers and their farm labourers, together with all stock were brought in."⁶ We must acknowledge that this was a military operation of forced removal. They were not brought in because they had nothing, rather they were swept into the concentration camps to prevent the Boer Commandos from taking what they did have, "either voluntarily or involuntarily."

⁵ *British Parliamentary Papers*, Cd. 422, Army Circular Memorandum No. 29, 21 December 1900.

⁶ TKP, Vol. 135, *Final Report of the work performed by the Native Refugee Department of the Transvaal. from June, 1901 to December, 1902.*

In addition to the evidence the study presents of forced removals as a general policy there are well documented incidents where whole black communities outside the Boer farms, despite the fact that they were self supporting, were removed to a concentration camp precisely for that reason. An example of that kind of removal took place at Kroonstad. In April 1901 the whole location was removed to a concentration camp to prevent the Boers from raiding their livestock and taking their food stuffs. These removals of black communities were taking place right down to the last days of the war.

The second part of this paradigm states that black inmates were not forced to remain in these camps as the Boers were. The study has presented evidence that military intelligence prevented black inmates from even going outside the immediate confines of the camp to collect wood in the fear that they would make contact with the Boers. As indicated the only reason that black inmates were allowed outside the camps was to work or spy for the British. Later in the Department of Native Refugees the need to control the inmates resulted in creating mining company style compounds, so that the black inmates had no need to go outside the camps to buy at local stores.⁷ Major de Lotbiniere stated that it was his policy not to even allow elderly inmates with families in Johannesburg to be released to their care. He explained he needed to keep them in the camps where he could control them.⁸ Finally when the war was over the inmates could not leave their places of confinement until they were under the control of a white employer. There is absolutely no evidence that this paradigm is true. They were compelled to enter the camps and they were compelled to remain there. The reason for this can easily be understood. They were confined as a war measure to prevent any assistance to the Boers. Having been removed to assure that the veld was a hostile unsupportive environment for the Boer guerrilla forces, they had to be confined for exactly the same

⁷ *Free State Provincial Archives*, Archives of the Secretary to the Orange River Colony, Chief Superintendent of the Department of Native Refugees in the Orange River Colony to Secretary to Orange River Colony Administration, 22 February 1902.

⁸ *National Archives of South Africa*, Archives of the Secretary of Native Affairs, (SNA), Vol. 29, NA 1088, 27 May 1902.

reason. This, the study has conclusively demonstrated. It is the nature of concentration camps that the inmates are confined and controlled.

(4) That the numbers of deaths in the black camps were considerably lower than in the white camps.

The cramming of non-combatants, and combatants alike, into a concentrated space of confinement leads almost invariably to sickness and death spread by concentration. There was that very earliest concentration camp in Cuba formed during the First Cuban Insurrection. What happened there, happens everywhere when men women and children, and especially little babies are concentrated and confined. This hastily created concentration camp in the confines of a town resulted in large numbers of deaths, both among the inmates, and their guards.⁹ Overall the story of the black and white camps can be summed up with the phrase, "death by concentration." Placing families in overcrowded small tents and huts stacked up against each other on very small plots of land, often on very unhealthy soil and terrain, combined with inadequate medical service, spreads disease and death.

Perhaps the most important contribution of this work has been the realisation of the impact of the British colonial medical policy on the high death rates in the black camps. At first this concept seemed like a very clever intellectual paradigm. Over the long period of research and study it became increasingly clear that it was the truth, without exception. Like a very stark relief in a painting the thesis shows that these black camp inmates were deliberately, as a matter of tradition and policy, denied adequate medical staffing, hospital facilities and medical supplies. The deliberate cut off of the recruitment of doctors in January 1902 by Lord Milner, when the required numbers of doctors had been obtained for the white camps shows that this policy was followed even in the face of life preserving needs in the black camps. This policy forbid any assistance to the indigenous populations of the colonies unless failure to do so would have resulted in danger to the health and

⁹ Morris, *America's War With Spain*, pp. 85, 251, 315, 321.

welfare of the military, the British settler population or the disruption of the labour supply. In each and every case of the provision of medical doctors and materials to build hospitals, or other needs such as housing, it has been shown that this policy was in effect without exception. It is very unusual, given human behaviour, that any theory is proven by such overwhelming consistency.

Beyond this deliberate policy of neglect was the fact that, as Chapter 6 has shown, that the British medical establishment's knowledge of the major disease killers in the camps was not only adequate, but was the best in the world at the time. And very important is the finding that before any of the concentration camps were set in operation the British military medical establishment had extensive knowledge, both of the aetiology of these diseases, and the methods of treatment required. The Portland Civilian Hospital that arrived in Bloemfontein in the midst of the greatest typhoid epidemic of the war, had the knowledge, experience and equipment to cope with this crisis, and all of the diseases in the camps, five months before the first concentration camps began their operations.

The finding of the study is as follows. The British medical authorities had the knowledge, experience, medical technology and equipment to adequately treat black and white patients in the camps prior to the establishment of the camps. It is not true that in time they learned how to handle diseases in the camps. While the epidemics could not have been entirely prevented, the numbers sick persons the numbers of deaths could have been significantly reduced if there had been adequate housing, proper diet and most important adequate medical staffing and supplies. The most glaring fault lay in not providing nursing to patients suffering with diseases that can only be treated effectively by adequate and intensive nursing. This was a fact that was understood by British medicine since the 1870s.

Given the problems of a war with all its unhealthy circumstances and logistical pressures, did the British Government do all that it could have done to alleviate the high sickness and death

rates? To this question the thesis provides ample evidence that the answer to this question is clearly, no. The colonial medical policy was the most significant cause of that failure. The thesis has devoted much thought and exploratory work to uncover the details of the policies and praxis that have previously been hidden from view by the previous lack of focus on the causes of the high numbers of deaths. The final results of the research, analysis and interpretation which make up the thesis, allows us to draw the following conclusions.

A. The black camps were not provided with adequate medical staffing, even in the latter part of the war when recruitment of doctors for the white camps had been completed. No nursing or bedside attendants were provided with only three very inadequate exceptions at Harrismith, Heidelberg and Standerton, and even in these cases, no trained nurses were provided. Since the prevalent diseases could only be treated effectively with nursing care this, in itself, was responsible for many deaths. See Appendix 5.1 Table of comparison of the ratio of patients per doctor in the black and white concentration camps and Appendix 5.3, "Comparison of medical staffing in some white and black camps."

B. The black camps, in some cases, were not provided with adequate sanitation facilities and supplies that could have, at least at times, been provided. Despite the recommendation of the Surgeon General, no attempts to filter water in either the black or white camps were engaged in. Given the demonstrated need for filtration, which was demonstrated at the siege of Ladysmith, this was a serious failure causing many deaths. Adequate housing was also not provided, and in most cases, inmates were left to construct their own housing, often in situations where no materials were available either from the camp administrators or the natural surroundings. See Chapters 3 and 4. Inspectors and superintendents attributed the high rates of sickness and death to this lack, especially among young children, and particularly during cold and rainy periods.

C The rations provided to inmates of the Department of Native Refugees camps were economised to the extent of not providing a sufficient diet. This was done despite the extensive knowledge of the British Army regarding daily food requirements, especially in cases of persons doing heavy labour. The food raised in the early months of the operation of the Department of Native Refugees could have been sold to the concentration camp administrations instead of being sold to the British Army. This food was raised by the black inmates on a shares basis, which was in violation of the stated policy of the Department. The profit from this practice was placed in the treasury, rather than being paid to the inmates. Inmates were required to raise certain cash crops to pay the expense of their forced incarceration.

D. The cardinal finding of the thesis, in area of the high death rates in the concentration camps, is that the colonial medical policy, and the general colonial policy of economic determinism which demanded that as little cost be incurred as possible in the operation of the black camps was, in large measure, a direct cause of these high death rates. This policy as described by M. S. Stone following the work of Doyal and McLeod, as discussed in Chapter 5, explains the policies of deliberate neglect that resulted in the denial of the required level of medical service and staffing. This policy can be summed up as a demand that the black inmates must fend for themselves, as far as possible, in all areas of need and that no assistance is to be given unless failure to do so would threaten the health and welfare of the British military units and the British population. This doctrine was also applied to the inmates of the white camps, although a

higher level of assistance was provided. In conclusion, it is argued that the British Army could have done much more to reduce the high death toll.

(5) That the black and white camps were formed for humanitarian reasons.

The decision by Roberts and Kitchener to establish concentration camps was dictated by the failure of the Neutrality Oath, and the success of the Boer forces. The forced removal of the black and Boer civilians to these camps was legitimate as a military strategy. Once, however, the over 200,000 inmates were confined in these camps the British Army was responsible to do everything possible to safeguard the lives of these innocent civilians caught up in the dire circumstances of the war. Further in the event of non-combatants being forced into the camps the responsibility becomes even greater. This is especially the case when the confinement of these non-combatants is carried out as a war measure, and not as a humanitarian effort. Lord Milner himself stated that these camps were formed for “purely military reasons”. Throughout the study this was shown to be the case.

The significance of the black concentration camps for the historiography of the South African War.

Both the black and white concentration camps established by the British Army as a significant part of the anti-guerrilla warfare strategy to defeat the Boers are of paramount importance in understanding the war. It is not possible to place the camps on the periphery of the battles and the political settlement of the war, as several have done in their histories of the war. If for no other reason, the almost fifty thousand deaths in the concentration camps out of the approximately 70,000 total deaths during the war, raises the camps to a place of prominence in the historiography of the war.

The concentration camps were one of the primary motivations for the surrender of the Boer forces who were no longer able to fight, as they were in rags, and without food and finally without hope. They had maintained this struggle to the *bitter end* in the hope that Germany or Russia would intervene. S.B. Spies in the conclusion to his own definitive study of the treatment of civilians under

Robert's and Kitchener cites the very plaintive words of Schalk Burger, the acting President of the Transvaal, in the Peace Negotiations, who said that it was:

Not the arms of the enemy which directly compelled us to surrender, but another sword which they had stretched over us, -namely the sword of hunger and nakedness, and what weighed most heavily of all, the awful mortality amongst our women and children in the Concentration Camps.¹⁰

Kestell and Van Velden did not draw the connection between the two aspects in this famous statement of Schalk Burgers. "The black and white concentration camps were both part of what may be described as an *entrapment system*, which had as its goal to remove *every living person, animal and sustenance giving plant from the veld*. The original plan to force the Boer forces up against the barbed wire squares someplace in the Orange Free State never came to fruition. The many hunts to capture General Christian de Wet never succeeded. But in the end the bitter enders could not escape the barren and scorched earth that had been stripped of everything that could sustain them. The black camps contained the black farm workers and the servants of the Boer women, and eventually the black families in the locations. They were part of the total suffering of the lingering war in these two laagers of death and sickness. The black camps were a significant factor in the war and the final defeat of the Boers. They also provided labour to the Army Departments and guarded their cattle. Many families in the black camps were the women and children of black men who fought on the British side and contributed substantially to the Boer defeat. Therefore, it is not possible to sustain the historiography of the war that has any meaning, unless this story be told by historians and by mothers and fathers to their children.

As a result of this study, 21,042 deaths in the black camps have been documented. Many more certainly died. Much about the life in these camps is still unknown. Much more remains to be done. Despite all the inadequacies of the record, this work expands our knowledge of the history of the black people of South Africa and the historiography of the war.

What remains to be done.

¹⁰ Kestell and Van Velden, *Vredesonderhandelungen* (London, 1912) p. ix. Cited in Spies, *Methods of Barbarism*, p. 284.

When the inmates of the black concentration camps were repatriated back to the farms and the countryside, and in some instances to the urban areas, they rejoined and disappeared into the black population. They did represent a large percentage of the black population in the farming areas of the former Boer republics. There appears to be no record of what happened to these black families after their repatriation from the camps. They now faced with all those who had survived the war outside the camps the reversal, betrayal and broken promises. Still it seems appropriate through oral history and other methods to attempt to obtain an understanding about their fate. The struggle over the franchise land and the use of black labour during the post war period seems to be fruitful ground for research. Perhaps this has already been accomplished to a sufficient degree. My research into the post war period along with the reading of Jeremy Krikler, Donald Denoon and David Burton convinces me that this was also a very sad time for black people.

Regarding further work on the camps themselves, the lack of record makes such work very problematic. In my own quest for the record of these camps I kept hoping to find some of the missing record. It will be very important if other researchers can find some of the missing pieces of the history of these camps. I will continue this search myself. Much more work needs to be done on the white camps. I hope to do that.

Finally I feel that much more work needs to be done on the life and work of Lord Milner. He did not wish a biography written and it seems that his wishes, to a certain extent, have been honoured. I was struck by Donald Denoon's view that Milner was not really in charge of events in the post war period. Milner and Kitchener are the two pivotal figures in the war, and I firmly believe that the war will never really be fully understood until we know more about these enigmatic personalities.

Personal Impact Statement.

I used to watch little black boys and girls come to the Boer War museum and walk up the pathway between the memorial stones upon which are engraved the numbers who had died in each of the white concentration camps. The path then wends its way to the woman's memorial. One day a black teacher with some young black children were standing on that pathway. They stood quietly in the twilight of the day looking at one of the stones. I quietly walked up to them. After a time of silence I said, "Many black women and children also died in the concentration camps." The teacher in quiet tone said she would like to know about that. That is why this tale is told; so that little black girls and little black boys will know that a century ago many little black boys and little black girls along with many little white boys and many little white girls died behind barbed wire and they can be proud of their ancestors and remember that they also suffered and died as children of the nation together. That is why the myths need to be demythologised, that the truth may be known.. Now upon that truth reconciliation can be found and seized upon. That this mutual suffering of all the black and coloured and white women and children and old men, who died like flies in these laagers of suffering so long ago, can form the basis of a true understanding of the history. That is why I have such a passion for the telling of this tale "The truth is beautiful when told." It has been correctly said that a history thesis should not be emotional. That in scholarly writing there must be total objectivity. I believe that is true. Yet the myth makers have been allowed to rise to great heights of emotion in the writing of the "sacred history". There are some things that have been done to poor miserable humankind that demand our tears.

These words by Emily Hobhouse may be the appropriate way to end this work. They were written to be delivered at the dedication of the Woman's Memorial on 16 December 1913.

We meet today on Dingaan's Day, your memorial of victory over a barbarous race. We too, the great civilised nations of the world, are still but barbarians in our degree, so long as we continue to spend vast sums in killing or planning to kill each other for greed of land and gold. Does not justice bid us to remember today how many thousands of the dark race perished also in Concentration Camps in a quarrel that was not theirs? Did they not thus redeem the past? Was it not an instance of that community of interest, which binding all in one, roots out racial animosity? And may it not come about that the associations linked with this day will change merging into nobler thoughts as year by year you celebrate the more

inspiring *Vrouwen-Dag* we now inaugurate? The plea of Abraham Lincoln for the black comes echoing back to me: "They will probably help you in some trying time to come to keep the jewel of liberty in the family of Freedom."¹¹

¹¹ Rykie Van Reenen, *Emily Hobhouse: Boer War Letters* (Cape Town, 1984) pp. 406-407. From a speech written by Emily Hobhouse to be delivered on 16 December 1913 the day of the dedication of the Woman's Memorial at Bloemfontein. On her way to Bloemfontein she became very ill, and though in South Africa, could not reach Bloemfontein. The speech was printed and distributed to the people in attendance. Dingaan's Day has now been changed and is now Reconciliation Day. My thanks to Christopher Saunders for this passage from the writings of Emily Hobhouse, who also lies buried at the site of the Woman's Memorial. There she lies buried with General Christian de Wet, the man she most admired in her lifetime.

¹² TKP, Vol. 135, *Final Report of the work performed by the Native Refugee Department of the Transvaal from June 1901 to December 1902*. p.1

Appendix A

Listing of the Sites of the black concentration camps of the South African War

Original black camps in the Orange River Colony Under the supervision of the Department of Refugees

Name of Camp	Comments
1. Aliwal North	
2. Bethulie	Unofficial camp
3. Bloemfontein	The only black camp with a fulltime Medical Officer and under the direct supervision of the Chief Superintendent of the Department of Refugees, Orange River Colony
4. Brandfort	
5. Edenburg Camp	
6. Harrismith	
7a. Heilbron Leeuwpoort ¹	Located four miles outside of the town of Heilbron
7b. Heilbron (town)	
7c. Heilbron-Fairfield Farm	
8. Kaffirfontein	A small camp approximately 20 miles south of Bloemfontein. The inmates of this camp were transferred to the Bloemfontein Camp, but some blacks were still residing in that camp after the transfer of inmates.
9. Kroonstad	
10. Norvals Pont	
11. Springfontein	Unofficial camp composed of nearby black locations which was not formally organised until taken over by the Department of Native Refugees in August 1901.
12. Thaba'nchu	Located on the Farm Victoria and 24 other sites. ²
a. Loboba-Middel Erf	
b. Abraham's Kraal	Government farm
c. Government Location-Grounel	Government farm
d. Eden	
e. Paulmiel Spruit	
f. Rovelkop	
g. Meloensdrift	
h. Ngakantsis Poort	
i. Vaal Spruit	
j. Mooi Pan	
k. Wonderkop	
l. Thaba Patenvel	
m. Leemufontein	
n. Paradys	

¹ CSO, Vol. 23, 2023.

² CSO, Vol. 38, 3668/01, Supt. Thaba'nchu black camps to Chief Superintendent Department of Native Refugees, Orange River Colony, 30 September 1901.

Name of Camp	Comments
o. Mamoto	
p. Noetlaagte	Government farm
q. Khmmo	Government farm
r. Andriesfontein Tafelkop	Government farm
s. Egypt (part of)	
t. Marato	
u. Vlak Spruit	
13. Vredefort Road	
14. Winburg	

**The original black camps in the Transvaal and Bechaunaland
(Not under the supervision of the Department of Burger Camps)³**

Name of camp	Comments
1. Heidelberg	Under the supervision of the District Commissioner
2. Nigel	Under military supervision
3. Potchefstroom	Unofficial
4. Standerton	Unofficial
5. Vereeniging	Unofficial
6.. Vryburg	Formed in early 1900. Probably the first black camp in South Africa during the war. ⁴
7. Kanya	Located in present day Botswana-the first black camp of the war. Established in early 1900 to receive blacks being forced out of the siege of Mafeking by Baden-Powell. [See Chapter 1, "Expulsion"]
Zuurfontein ⁵	Military location where blacks being brought in were housed and fed.

The Department of Native Refugees Camps

The Chief Superintendent of the Department of Native Refugees reported a few days after the war that "...there are 38 Camps in the Transvaal, very evenly distributed over the Railway System, containing about 54,000 natives or approximately 9,000 families. There are 28 Camps belonging to the Orange River Colony Organization (including 3 between Kimberly and Vryburg, containing about 56,000 natives or approximately 9,330 families. These camps are on the railway system north of Bloemfontein."⁶

**The Black Camps of the
Department of Native Refugees
In the Transvaal Colony**

**The Black Camps of the
Department of Native Refugees
In the Orange River Colony**

³ Although previously understood to be under the administration of the Department of Burger Camps in the Transvaal, the research shows that these camps were locally established camps under local civilian and or military officials.

⁴ See Charles Van Onselen, *The Seed is Mine* (Cape Town, 1994?) pp. 27-8

⁵ SNA, Vol. 74, 2556. See Chapter Three

⁶ SNA, Vol. 31, 1170, p. 1, de Lotbiniere to Lagden, 7 June 1902.

Name of camp	Name of the Camp
1. Balmoral	1. Albertina
2. Bantjes	2. Alleman's Siding
3. Belfast	3. America Siding
4. Bezuidenhout Valley	4. Bloemfontein
5. Boksburg	5. Bosch Hoek
6. Bronkhorstspuit	6. Boschrand
7. Brugspruit	7. Brandfort
8. Depot Johannesburg	8. Brussels
9. Driefontein (Late Brakpan)	9. Doorn River
10. Elandshoek	10. Dry Harts
11. Elandsriver	11. Eensgevonden
12. Frederickstad	12. Fairview (Heilbron) site
13. Girl's Depot	13. Geneva (1)
14. Great Olifant's River	14. Geneva (2)
15. Greylingstad	15. Heilbron
16. Heidelberg	16. Holfontein
17. Kaalfontein	17. Honing Spruit
18. Klerksdorp	18. Houtenbek
19. Klip River	19. Kaffir Kop
20. Klippoortje	20. Karee., Office Commanding
21. Klipriversberg	21. Kimberly
22. Koskemoer	22. Kopjes
23. Krugersdorp	23. Kromellonboog
24. Langlaatie Royal	24. Kroonstad
25. Meyerton	25. Orange River
26. Middleburg	26. Reit Spruit
27. Natal Spruit	27. Roodeval Spruit
28. Natal Spruit	28. Schoon Draai
29. Nauwpoort West	29. Serfontein
30. Nelspruit	30. Smaldeel
31. Nigel and Floridakop	31. Springfontein
32. Olifantsfontein	32. Taaibosch (Zandfontein Farm)
33. Paardekop	33. Taungs
34. Pienaars Poort	34. Thaba'nchu
35. Platrand	35. Van Reenans
36. Rietfontein West	36. Ventersburg Road
37. Sandpan	37. Vet River
38. Springs	38. Virginia
39. Standerton	39. Vredefort Road
	40. Vryburg
40. Van der Merwe	41. Walton
41. Vereeniging	42. Winburg
42. Volksrust	43. Winburg Scout and spy camp
43. Watervaal Bridge	44. Wolvehoek
44. Wilgeriver	
45. Witkop	

Some of the Department of Native Refugee Camps listed above did not exist for the entire period of the Department Of Native Refugees. Some of the camps associated with the Army Departments such as the railway repair and construction camps are not listed. Private camps are not listed.

¹Appendix No. 3.1

Table of sweeps and removals of black and white families from the Boer farms and the veld.

January 1901 to May 1902

Date	No. of Whites	No. of Blacks	No. Pers.	Description	Source-Documents
				Blacks on the farm Jackalsdan located in the Pretoria District had been removed to a Refugee Camp according to the Native Commissioner. He visited these former inmates on the farm after the war.	² SNA, Vol. 47. p. 14
010125	5	1 + 1 POW		2 men, 1 woman, 2 children, 1 native, also 1 native prisoner	MGP, vol. 67, 1207B/01
010200		1,700		1, 700 blacks removed from the evacuated towns of Jagersfontein and Harrismith.	SRC, Vol., 182
010220		~50		"native refugees at Rhenoster in destitute condition.	SRC, Vol., 115
010300				Black families members separated during sweeps and removals. Some were sent to Springfontein and some to Thaba'nchu. Request that those at Springfontein be sent to Thaba'nchu.	SRC, Vol. 15, 5674
010301	700	200		Colonel Rochman reports from Reddersburg that he is sending to Bethany 700 refugees, 200 natives, ³	SRC, Vol. 4, 940
010302				Families should certainly brought in[to] (Irene Camp) Native Stock should be brought in where there is grazing for them, water and protection	MGP, Vol. 253,2059,
010303		14 ⁴		14 Hottentots...from Spitskop came [voluntarily] into the Bloemfontein Black Concentration Camp	SRC
010331	1055	200		It is possible 1055 White refugees, 200 natives may leave Bethany for Norvals Pont to be placed in a new camp on the North Bank. These Black and White refugees were to be placed together.	SRC, Vol., 941
010404		6,000	6,000	Due to military operations all natives from this district have	CSO, Vol. 9, 693/01

¹

² SNA, Vol. 47, p. 14, Native Commissioner Pretoria District to Windham, 14 August 1902.

⁴ "Hottentots."

Date	No. of Whites	No. of Blacks	No. Pers.	Description	Source-Document
				Been ordered in with their stock are already within the picket—expecting thousands more within the next weeks	
010626	0	6,000	7,000	'Native refugees here number about 6,000 all told. A further lot of 1,000 have been brought in today by Western Column. The camp here now in course of formation. Captain de Lotbiniere for the Director of Railways. ⁵	MGP, Vol. 102, 7610/01, 26 June 1901
010410	375	53		375 refugees, 53 natives, 24 cows, 12 calves	MGP, Vol. 85, 3710B/01
010413				Heilbron: There are now 1,298 Whites and 1,264 Blacks. Blacks are in a camp some little distance from town.	SRC, Vol. 5, 1300/01
010413		900		3 batches of the natives brought into Heilbron by British Columns. The last batch was 900	SRC, Vol. 5, 1399/01
010415		~1,000		Residents of Black Locations at Kroonstad removed to a new black concentration camp. "I recommend that they be concentrated under a separate staff [where] labour can be tapped by the military. Were self supporting, but fear of Commandeering of food stuffs and live stock as well as Becoming a health hazard to Whites caused their removal. .	SRC, Vol. 5, 1304
010416				GOC Kroonstad: "GOC Vereeniging [asks] can...you arrange that white and black refugees being brought into Wolvehoek be permitted to retain, for a day or so, the wagons in which they were brought in, as shelters.	SRC, Vol. 5, 1294/01
010416			700	700 refugees will arrive here {Edenburg} on the 18 th . We can accommodate blacks but cannot arrange for whites pls. Instruct where to send them.	SRC, Vol. 5, 1348
010505	439	A few		Refugees arrived today: men 23, women 99, children 317; total 439, and a few natives from Aliwal North.	SRC, Vol. 6, 1730
010506	2 + "others."			Black refugees from Luckhoff brought into the Black Concentration Camp at Kaffirfontein.	SRC, Vol. 6, 1751
010513	350			About 350 women and children have been brought here {Heidelberg} by {General} Knox. ⁶	MGP, Vol. 92, 5203

⁵ Although the Department of Native Refugees was ordered to be "taken into hand" by de Lotbiniere, the Depart was not yet formally in place.

Date	No. of Whites	No. of Blacks	No. Pers.	Description	Source-Documents
010604		300		300 Blacks brought into Norvals Pont bring total to 500. Asks that Black Camp be formed.	SRC, Vol. 8, 2364
010710			3,000	3,000 refugees have been handed over to me at Brandfort without any warning. ⁷ Some of these refugees were Blacks although not indicated in this document. This shows that not all Blacks brought in are identified as such. Another document reveals this was the case when the refugees were examined by a doctor and he reported that there were black refugees in this group	SRC, Vol. 11, 4026/01. SRC, Vol. 11, 4247. 15 August 1901
010711				Natives on the farm Merebank removed in February 1901 by Colonel Williams to the Bloemfontein Black Concentration Camp.	SRC, Vol. 10, 3346
010711		~12	~12	Malgas, Adam, Jim and Manet and their families removed from the farms to the Bloemfontein Black Concentration Camp. ⁸	SRC, Vol. 10, 3346
010716		200		About 200 refugees have been brought in from north by Pilcher's column.	SRC, Vol. 10, 3424.
010725		150		"About 150 natives have already been sent into the new Middleburg Camp."	MGP. Vol. 109, 9372a/01 ⁹
010806				Numbers of women and children including natives ORC Continually being brought to Jacobsdal from surrounding farms.	SRC, Vol. 10, 3934/0
010813				I am badly in want of natives for latrine cleaning on account of recent influx of refugees. Several refugees in this camp have natives whom they brought with them from their farms and are using them as servants. {Bloemfontein White Concentration Camp}	SRC, Vol. 11, 4173

⁸ These Black families were filing for compensation for war losses and this document mentions the fact that they cannot accurately prepare their claims while incarcerated in the Bloemfontein Black Concentration Camp.

⁹ This was probably one of the new DNR Camps. It is included in this table because of the date.

Date	No. of Whites	No. of Blacks	No. Pers.	Description	Source-Document
010814				Blacks on the farm Jackalsdan were moved to refugee camp. Date not given.	SNA, Vol. 47, p. 14
010822	77	63		Refugees 21 women, 56 children and 63 natives	SRC, Vol. 12, 4360
010822	32	3		Refugees, 14; children, 18; 3 natives arriving with Williams Column. Where should they be sent?	SRC, Vol. 12, 4545
010822	77	63	140	Refugees: 21 women, 56 children and 63 natives left Pernisburg {?} by convoy this morning. "Please note re natives."	SRC, Vol. 12, 4360
010826		130		Some 130 native refugees have been brought in here {Winburg} by Colonel Delislies Column.	SRC, Vol. 12, 4437/0
010827			90	"About 90 women and children. Captain Rawlinson's Column	SRC, Vol. 12, 4535
011007				250 Blacks at Eerste Fabriken removed to Black Concentration when their huts were destroyed by British anti-guerrilla unit.	SNA, Vol. 3
011204				Military intelligence brought in "natives from Kraals north of the Crocodile River to an area guarded by blockhouses set within a Triangle of defence posts where they planted crops. Kitchener ordered them moved to the DNR Black Concentration Camps. ¹⁰	MGP, Vol. 136, 15774
020523				Blacks removed from Vryburg Location to DNR Brussels Camp	CSO, Vol. 70, CL Repo April/02
Unknown				Chief Manakholla and his small tribe removed to the Department of Native Refugees camp at Nauuwport.	SNA, Vol. 37, 1293, pp. 163-67
Unknown				Natives removed from the Farm Jackalsdan to a Refugee Camp in Pretoria District.	SNA, Vol. 47. P. 14

¹⁰ These Kraals were in the triangle Alkman, Elandshoek and Kapsshehoek ... surrounded by defence posts.

Appendix 4.1

Requests for railway truck space for the transport Of food and other supplies to the Concentration Camps and the civilian populations in the Orange River Colony and the Transvaal

Date	#Trucks	Period	Destination	Disposition	Reason	Request	Source
001104	2	1	Potchefstroom	No answer in file		General French asks Kitchener for 1 truck per fortnight as there is considerable sickness-civil population	MGP V. 44, 6690
010118	17	Per month	7 ORC WC ¹	Approved	Fuel needed	Military Governor of Pretoria (MGP) approves tender for coal and wood	SRC V. 1, 62
010207	15	To date	Standerton	Approved	None given	MGP tells General. Wynne that he has sent 15 trucks from Durban so far and has done all he can do	MGP V. 243, MG 1948
010304	6	Per month	ORC and Cape WC's	Approved		6 trucks for WC Camps, But dispute was that the two Cape Colony Camps were also to be supplied. Allotment of 6 trucks was given for 7,000 refugees. There are now 24,000. Trollope said that having to supply camps was not fair and requested 1 truck each for Norvals Pont and Aliwal North plus 5 trucks for ORC Camps. Claimed his refugees would be without supplies and said if he had not put 14 days supply in reserve rations at each camp he would be difficulties now.	SRC V. 2 363
010401						Supt. Kroonstad white camp tents occupied by large and sickly families are unserviceable and overcrowded. Would be glad if tents on order can be hurried forward.	SRC, 1103, to CSRC-DR-ORC
010415	30	Per week	ORC and Cape WC's	Denied by Kitchener	Implied that there	The 20 trucks per week have not been coming and only receiving 10. Need 30 trucks per week due to the fact that army refuses to supply SAC	CSO v. 11, 896/01

¹ WC = White Camp or Camps

Date	#Trucks	Period	Destination	Disposition	Reason	Request	Source
					were no trucks available	as originally agreed claiming they are not a part of the army. Decided to wait until 20 trucks are coming on a regular basis. In addition to SAC there is a large increase in refugees. No breakdown is given here of number of trucks going to Black Camps. "During last two months increase has been from 7,000 to 20,000 and we are still only getting 6 trucks per week. In May Deputy Adm. asked the Quarter Master General. <u>for an additional 3 trucks per week. Kitchener replied a few days later saying he could not sanction of three extra trucks a week but said they could make application from time to time which would be considered in connection with general traffic state and hope they would he would economise as much as possible.</u>	
010418	4	per week	SAC Bloemfontein	Denied	No truck space to give	SAC requested three trucks to send canteen supplies from Cape Town to Bloemfontein plus 1 truck each week. These trucks would have to be taken out of the 20 trucks for all civil supplies, which had never arrived in any month.	CSO V. 11, 923/01
010506	Unknown	When needed	All WC	Denied by Milner	Inadequate space	Request made by Sec. of State for war to allow person representing charity organisation to distribute clothing to Boers in the Camps. Milner: "I do not think it reasonable to ask us to do anything which could cause transport difficulty <i>at this time</i> as we require all the transport there is for our troops and for [returning mining industry staff and engineers] to their homes from which they have been exiled	FK, V. 1830

Date	#Trucks	Period	Destination	Disposition	Reason	Request	Source
						for two years. The mines were reopening the next day. ² Railway space was needed to bring fifty gold mining stamps and certain mining company staff to Johannesburg.	
010621	3	Weekly	Standerton Burger Camps	Denied	Truck space	Kitchener would not to approve this on a permanent basis but would allow it on a space available basis.	MGP V. 101, 7310A/01
010625	50	Weekly	Johannesburg, Pretoria and 24 towns	Unknown	To feed and supply troops and civilians	Request Director of Civil supplies	MGP, V. 102, 7513B/01
010625	50	Per week	Burger Camps in Transvaal	Unknown		Document lists towns in the Transvaal and requested number of trucks for each town submitted by Director of Civil Supplies. No indication if this was approved.	MGP, V. 102, 7513B/01 request Director of Civil supplies
010625		One time	Burger Camps	Pending		Permission sought for man to bring down from Pietersburg some tobacco required for Burger Camps	MGP, Vol. 245, Book 4, MG 2973
010725	36	Monthl y	DNR Camps	Denied by Kitchener	"I have given the land, the Kaffirs must do the rest	Maxwell to Kitchener, "Also and until crops can be raised your [approval] for the supply from the coast of 4000 bags of mealies per month...36 trucks per month. When crops are raised trucks can be released	MGP, v. 222, 8917

² Milner placed the reopening of the mines as his highest priority. That evening he had a dinner meeting with Kitchener and the President of the Chamber of Mines to get Kitchener to make a firm commitment to authorise the bring by rail way fifty stamps and hopefully more in the future. It is questionable if the railway space needed to carry out this humanitarian effort would have been very great. When Emily Hobhouse came in January of the same year the truck was sufficient for all the clothing and other gifts she brought for the Boer families in the Camps. Kitchener who concurred with Milner but for a different reason. Contrary to Brodrick's assurance that these "Ladies" were coming for an "entirely humanitarian and non-political reason Kitchener said that "experience has shown that persons who from sympathy with the enemy visit camps on these so-called humane missions are, as a matter of fact, unable to control their political sympathies, and do mischief sometimes without intending."

Date	#Trucks	Period	Destination	Disposition	Reason	Request	Source
010812	N/A	N/A	Nauwpoort	Approved	On availability basis only	Trucks from Port. Elizabeth would be sent when available if civil supplies depot opened.	CSO V. 30,2873
010815				Denied	Military could not provide	The Resident Magistrate, Ladybrand was authorised to draw 6,000 lbs.of seed oats for planting but was informed that no transport was available but it was suggested that he borrow ox wagons to transport the seed.	CSO, Vol.30, 2911/01.
010816	30	Weekly	Civil supplies, ORC				
010817			Civil supplies, ORC			Because the SAC was now under the direct command of Lord Kitchener they would no longer be eligible to draw supplies from the truck space allotted to civil supplies. This is the beginning of the period of the move of the black camps to the DNR farms.	CSO, V. 31, 2954/01
010820						Tobacco and Cigars shipped to Field Force Canteens to be duty free	CSO, Vol. 31, 2979/01
010821	10 additional weeks	Weekly for 3 weeks	White Camps	Approved by Kitchener	Large increase in inmates	Deputy Adm. ORC asks Quarter Master General for an additional 10 trucks per week for the next three weeks. There are now 73,000 persons to feed. In September hope to draw mealies from Basutoland for Native Refugees to avoid drawing from coastal ports. This was the time when the black camps in the ORC were being physically moved to the new DNR campsites.	CSO, V. 31, 2991
010909	600 bags of mealies	Weekly for six weeks	Black camps of the DNR in the Transvaal Colony	Denied	Promised shipment not made.	Black refugees out of food in Transvaal Department of Native Refugees camps due to failure to deliver 600 bags of mealies every week. As a result 20,000 black refugees were out of food. When urgent request for transport of food was made the Department was told to send the black refugees out to the countryside	MGP, V. 118, 11518A/01.

Date	#Trucks	Period	Destination	Disposition	Reason	Request	Source
						to bring mealies into the camps.	
010928	16	Weekly	WC-ORC	Approved by Kitchener	Large increase in WC population	Deputy Adm.-HC Difficulties of housing and feeding great, thanks to Kitchener for increasing truck from 20-30 per week of which 16 are now [for] refugee Camps. The Black Camps are now with the DNR so this was for WC only.	CO, 224/7, 37513
011014	10 more trucks/ week / total of 44 trucks	Weekly	Orange River Colony	Not known	Increase needed	Asst. Dir. Civil Supplies to Asst. Dir. Railways. The present allotment of trucks for Civil supplies is 30 trucks a week excluding special grant of 4 trucks a week. 15 trucks are given to the to the refugee contractors (white camps) The other 15 are just sufficient to bring up here rations on a prison basis to the civil population, but are unable to provide jams, fresh fruit, vegetables, boots and clothing, disinfectants, etc. Important sanitary alterations are being shelved, food not grown for lack of seeds, sheep are rotting away with scabs, and cattle are dying for want of coarse salt. Civilians starving in some towns. Contractor for SAC draws his supplies from the civil allotment.	CSO, Vol. 40, 3819/01
011031	52	One time	Transvaal Burger Camps	Approved by Milner ³	Needed supplies for White Camps	Civil Supplies Director said that he believed that there would soon be an opportunity to obtain additional truckage. MGP then wrote to Milner and attached request for 515 tons. Orders sent on 21 October. Letter to each Sept. instructed how material was to be used. Were probably materials for housing. Will be more healthy and comfortable than before.	CD 902, p. 42 Military Governor to High Commissioner. 31 October 1901
011108	14	Weekly	Orange River Colony			Three months ago an extra grant of trucks was given the Civil Supplies to enable the Refugee Contractor to hold a supplies emergency stock.	SRC, Vol. 17, 6668

³ Even though Kitchener held very tight control of railway space this is an example where Milner got involved.

Date	#Trucks	Period	Destination	Disposition	Reason	Request	Source
						Since then for actual rations, I have allotted 14 trucks per week for the last 8 weeks. 14 trucks a week for 8 weeks = 112 trucks each carrying 22,400 Lbs. = 2,508,800 Lbs. Feeding 30,500 refugees = 1,943,704 lbs. This leaves an excess of 3 trucks per week. Tinned beef may be wanted, and I understand a special truck allotment will be asked for this. Asst. Dir. Civil Supplies to Asst. Dir. Railways (Nathan)	
011123	15	Weekly	Orange River Colony	Approved		Deputy Adm, ORC to Director of Railways. "I learn from HC that there is no difficulty in a continuance of 15 trucks per week provisionally granted at present for Civil Supplies. These trucks are really urgently required for both civil and refugee supplies. Please arrange with the Assistant Director (railways) to set apart the trucks in question.	CSO, Vol. 46, 4242/01
011126	49	Weekly	Orange River Colony	Approved		In response to DA-ORC wire 761 to D.R., Kitchener approves 49 trucks per week provisionally extended until further notice.	CSO, Vol. 47, 4315/01
011203	3	Weekly	Dept. of Native Refugees	Approved	Until food is harvested	De Lotbiniere asks for 3 trucks per week for months of December 1901-January 1902, In October and November he had also received 3 trucks/wk. Bringing potatoes and oats from Durban to plant for profit to pay camp expenses and needs trucks for that purpose.	MGP, Vol. 137, 16312A/01
020212	49	Weekly	Orange River Colony	Violation of weekly allotment		In January 1902 the Director of Civil Supplies granted permits for 488 trucks of which 190 were used for Refugee supplies. Accused of giving trucks in excess of the 49 trucks which were authorised he explains why this was done. This increase was authorised by the Deputy Adm. ORC.	CSO, Vol. 55, 417/02
020219	N/A	N/a	Orange River Colony	Reversed	Needed by	All refrigeration trucks for shipment of meat at Cape Town to be allotted to the military. This	CSO, Vol. 56, 498/01

Date	#Trucks	Period	Destination	Disposition	Reason	Request	Source
					by Military	Cape Town to be allotted to the military. This included trucks that had been allotted to the Orange River Colony. The Director of Supplies replied that in past three weeks he had only received one small truck load of frozen meat and that "This colony is practically suffering meat famine..."	498/01

Appendix 4.2
Luxury Items Transported During 1901-1902
Transport of Mining Industry and Private Industry Equipment During 1901-1902

Date	# Trucks	Period	Destination	Disposition	Reason	Request	Source
010823		Once	Jagersfontein , ORC`	Approved	Might have military use in feeding army	Machinery consists of two traction engines w/ 6 wagons & necessary parts for transport purposes & plant for hauling & washing blue ground from mine. 170 tons {Diamond mining}	CSO, V. 32, 3077
011218			Kimberly			De Beers requests shipment from Port Elizabeth to Kimberly [?] of 3,000 cases by armoured trucks, which are waiting. {Probably explosives} Previously received 1,500 cases which is three weeks supply.	MGP, V. 141, 17373A/01
010329				"Mines should apply"	No comment	Company supplying wishes to send "mining poles to the Rand. IMR Traffic Manager says that he will have no trouble providing trucks for this purpose but Military Governor Pretoria must approve.	MGP, V. 82, 3299/01
001024			Nigel	Approved by Kitchener		District Commissioner Heidelberg asks MGP if 1.5 tons of boiler tubes from Durban to enable mine [to] continue pumping {water}	MGP, V. 33, 5217/00
000806	Unknown	Unknown	Kimberly	Approved Rhodes		Decision made by Board of Directors to expand De Beers Cold Storage with new building 220,000 Square Feet. Ten insulated railway cars ordered. [Obviously the building materials would have to be transported probably on the Cape General	RH, Rhodes Papers, V. 7B
020211	23	January 1902	Jagersfontein	Approved Dir. Supplies`	No reason given	During the month of January the Dir. Of Supplies granted 488 trucks to the Orange River Colony, which was authorised only 49 trucks a week or 210.7 trucks a month. Exclusive of 190 trucks granted to the Refugee Camps. He also granted 24 trucks for meat of which only eight came forward due to a shortage of refrigerator trucks. The 23 trucks were sent to Jagersfontein Mines and the Lace Diamond Mining Company	CSO, Vol. 55, 417/02
011203	4-5 trucks	Monthly		Approved DA-ORC		Reopening of Lace Diamond Mine. Native labour and transport for supplies	CSO, Vol. 48,4384/01

010213	1.5 tons	Monthly	Johannesburg -Rand	Approved	100 mining Companies Allowed 1.5 tons each month	Military allowing 1.5 tons for each mining company each month. Foodstuffs for whites and natives, timber and certain other articles not allowed up.	MGP, V. ?, 1469/01
001106	100 bags of mealies	Monthly	Modder- fontein	Denied	Factory not needed by military	Request permission to buy 100 bags of mealies for feeding animals and natives.	MGP V. 39, 6031B/00
001109				Approved	To prepare to restart mines`	34 Mine manager were allowed to return by this date. These managers would need to be housed and fed.	PSY V. 3
000502	Mine workers for De Beers	As needed	Kimberly	Denied	Space needed by army	Roberts informed Resident Commissioner that he understood that De Beers were enlisting large numbers of "Natives" to work in their mines. This would use a great deal of the railway pant needed to provide food, coal, etc. for the existing Kimberly population. Roberts also wanted 2,000 more Basuto for work on the railway and they would need to be transported by the railway.	A2404, C. 1439
000724	Wood for De Beers	As needed	Kimberly	Approved	Space needed by army	Base Cmdt. Bulwayo-Cecil Rhodes, "Your wire today. I have [had] to stop all traffic southward between here and Mafeking for anything but military. The movement [will last] a month. I have to use the full capacity of all trains for now and I do not think could assist in any other way than by directing that De Beers wood would have shall have precedence over other traffic.... If full capacity on any train is not absolutely required for troops [the perhaps some wood could be shipped]	RH-Rhodes Papers, Vol. 7B 1900-02 249

Appendix 5.1

Numbers of medical officers and percentage of deaths in the Transvaal Department of Native Refugees camps

No. of Camps	Average. Camp Population	Month and Year	No. Medical Officers	Deaths	Population	Doctor Inmate Ratio	Deaths Doctor Ratio	% of Deaths
11	1,521	July 1901 ¹	6 Medical Officers	None listed	14,759	2,459.84		
13	2,072	August 1901 ²	8 Medical Officers	145	22,795	2,849.38	18.13	0.06%
15	1,899	September 1901 ³	No figure given	441	28,491			1.5%
20	1,600	October 1901 ⁴	No figure given	687	32,006			2.1%
31	1,268	November 1901 ⁵	Illegible	956	39,323			2.4%
31	1,397	December 1901	21	1.160	43,420	2,067.62	55.24	2.7%
34	1,398	January 1902 ⁶	27	992	48,932	1,812.30	36.74	2.0
36	1,448	February 1902 ⁷	30	530	52,139	1,737.97	17.67	1.0
36	1,461	March 1902 ⁸	30	417	52,606	1,753.54	13.90	0.79

¹ SNA, Vol. 59, 2097, Department of Native Refugees, Transvaal Colony, Monthly Report, July 1901, Officer Commanding, Army Labour Depot to de Lotbiniere, 15 August.

² SNA, Vol. 59, 2097, Department of Native Refugees, Transvaal Colony, Monthly Report for December 1901, Officer in Command, Army Labour Depot, to de Lotbiniere, 14 December 1901.

³ TKP, Vol. 135, *Final Report of the Work Performed by the Native Refugee Department of the Transvaal from June 1901, to December 1902*, p. 3.

⁴ SNA, Vol. 59, 2097/01, Department of Native Refugees, Transvaal Colony, Monthly Report, October 1901, Supt. Department of Native Refugees to de Lotbiniere, 25 November 1901.

⁵ FK 607 CO 417/349 CO 9620, Department of Native Refugees, Transvaal Colony, Monthly Report, November 1901, Supt. Department of Native Refugees to de Lotbiniere, 26 December 1901.

⁶ SNA, Vol. 20, Department of Native Refugees, Transvaal Colony, Monthly Report, January 1902, Superintendent, Department of Native Refugees, to de Lotbiniere, 24 February 1902.

⁷ SNA, Vol. 25, Supt., Department of Native Refugees in the Transvaal to de Lotbiniere, 25 March 1902

No. of Camps	Average. Camp Population	Month and Year	No. Medical Officers	Deaths	Population	Doctor Inmate Ratio	Deaths Doctor Ratio	% of Deaths
36	1,477	April 1902 ⁹	34	297	53,198	1,564.65	8.74	0.55
37	1,505	May 1902 ¹⁰	39	290	55,696	1428.11	7.44	0.52
38	1,285	June 1902 ¹¹	39	169	55,910	1433.59	4.34	0.30
36	1,355	July 1902 ¹²	30	141	48,815	1627.17	4.70	0.28
27	844	August 1902 ¹³	17	55	22,805	1341.47	3.24	0.24
15	0.0	September 1902 ¹⁴		48	11,198			0.42
4	0.0	October 1902 ¹⁵	4	17	3,809	952.25	4.25	0.44
	1,283 Average camp population			5186.16				

⁸ SNA, Vol. 28, Department of Native Refugees in the Transvaal Colony, Supt, Department of Native Refugees to de Lotbiniere, 21 April 1902.

⁹ SNA, Vol. 30, 1129, Department of Native Refugees, Transvaal Colony, Monthly Report, April 1902, Supt., Department of Native Refugees to de Lotbiniere, 26 May 1902

¹⁰ SNA, Vol. 44, Monthly Report for May 1902, Superintendent Department of Native Refugees to de Lotbiniere, 26 June 1902.

¹¹ SNA, Vol. 59, 2073, Department of Native Refugees, Transvaal Colony, Monthly Report, June 1902, Superintendent, Department of Native Refugees to de Lotbiniere, 24 July 1902.

¹² SNA, Vol. 59, 2073, Department of Native Refugees, Transvaal Colony, Monthly Report, July 1902, Superintendent, Department of Native Refugees to de Lotbiniere, Superintendent, Department of Native Refugees to de Lotbiniere, 10 September 1902.

¹³ SNA, Vol. 69, Department of Native Refugees, Transvaal Colony, Monthly Report, August 1902. Superintendent, Department of Native Refugees to de Lotbiniere, 9 October 1902

¹⁴ TKP, Vol. 135, *Final Report of the Work Performed by the Native Refugee Department of the Transvaal from June 1901, to December 1902*, p. 3.

¹⁵ TKP, Vol. 135, *Final Report of the Work Performed by the Native Refugee Department of the Transvaal from June 1901, to December 1902*, p. 3.

Numbers of Medical Officers and Percentage of Deaths in the Orange River Colony Department of Native Refugees Camps

No. of Camps	Ave. Pop.	Month and Year	No. Med. Off. Or Total Salaries	Deaths total	Deaths Children	Population	Doctor Inmate Ratio	Deaths Doctor Ratio	Percentage of Deaths
27	1,559	August-September 1901 ¹⁶	£151.7 ¹⁷	271	202	42,098			0.6 %
26	1,690	October 1901 ¹⁸	99	802	629	43,944			1.8
32	1,431	November 1901 ¹⁹	80	1,518	1,254	45,791			3.31
27	1,817	December 1901 ²⁰	131.8	1,650	1,328	49,054			3.36
29	1,640	January 1902 ²¹	Salaries not listed separately ²²	1,542	1,183	49,054			3.14
26	1,769	February 1902 ²³	Salaries not listed separately	661	392	49,030			1.34
30	1,623	March 1902 ²⁴	Salaries not listed separately	467	326	48,696			0.95
29	1,724	April 1902 ²⁵	Salaries not listed separately	262	178	46,023			0.56

¹⁶ CSO, Vol. 45, 4183, Department of Native Refugees, Orange River Colony, Monthly Report, September-October, 1901, 19 November 1901

¹⁷ In this first two months of operation it is probable that local district surgeons and, private doctors and nearby military doctors were hired at non-standard rates and it is not possible to calculate the numbers of doctors hired as a result. Later the standard rate adopted was £3 per month to 20 shillings a day.

¹⁸ CSO, Vol. 46, 4292, Department of Native Refugees, Orange River Colony, Monthly Report, October, Date of submission not indicated.

¹⁹ CSO, Vol. 54, 298/02, Department of Native Refugees, Orange River Colony, Monthly Report, November 1901, 2 January 1902.

²⁰ SNA, Vol. 16,331/02, Department of Native Refugees, Orange River Colony, Monthly Report, December 1901, 5 February 1902.

²¹ CSO, Vol. 57, 586/02, Department of Native Refugees, Orange River Colony, Monthly Report, January 1902, 27 February 1902.

²² Salaries of all administrative positions were listed in a lump sum.

²³ CSO, Vol. 61, 895/02, Department of Native Refugees, Orange River Colony, Monthly Report, February, 1 April 1902.

²⁴ CSO, Vol. 67, 1254/02, Department of Native Refugees, Orange River Colony, Monthly Report, March 1902, 28 April 1902

No. of Camps	Ave. Pop.	Month and Year	No. Med. Off. Or Total Salaries	Deaths total	Deaths Children	Population	Doctor Inmate Ratio	Deaths Doctor Ratio	Percentage of Deaths
32	1,818	May 1902 ²⁶	19 Medical Officers	235	149	60,004	3158.11	12.37	0.39
34	1,764	June 1902	16 Medical Officers	147	90	59,914	3744.63	9.19	0.25
Report missing	0.0	July, 1902		251	Unknown				
30	1,598	August 1902 ²⁷	Salaries not listed separately	124	47	47,934			0.25
23	1,108	September 1902 ²⁸	5 Medical Officers	137	45 ²⁹	36,549	7,309.80	27.40	0.37
17	1,428	October 1902 ³⁰	5 Medical Officers	149	56	24,278	4855.60	29.8	0.23
	1,497 Average			8,032					

²⁵ CSO, Vol. 70, 1493, Department of Native Refugees, Orange River Colony, Monthly Report, April 1902,

²⁶ SNA, Vol.44, 1411, Department of Native Refugees, Orange River Colony, Monthly Report, May 1902, 12 July 1902.

²⁷ CSO, Vol. 105, 4316, Department of Native Refugees, Orange River Colony, Monthly Report, August 1902, 7 October.

²⁸ CSO, Vol.114, 5079, Department of Native Refugees, Orange River Colony, Monthly Report, September 1902, 7 November 1902.

²⁹ For the first time more women died than children. This was probably due to the repatriation of the younger women with children leaving behind a higher percentage of older women without children. Only 12 men died in this month and that is likewise due to repatriation

³⁰ CSO, Vol. 19,5537, Department of Native Refugees, Orange River Colony, Monthly Report, October 1902, 6 December 1902

Appendix 5.2

Table of comparison of the Ratio of Patients per doctor in the black and white concentration camps

white camps						black camps					
CAMP	No. of Doctors	Population	Inmate Doctor Ratio	No. of Nurses	Comments	CAMP	Number of Doctors	Population	Inmate Doctor Ratio	No. of Nurses	Comments
Aliwal North	3	4428	1476	2	No untrained nurses	Aliwal North	0	1905		0	Request ignored ¹
						Edenburg	1/2 ²	1,680	1394	0	RAMC-Extra Duty ^{3 4}
						Thaba'nchu	1			0	
Brandfort ⁵	4	3929	982	4	8 BRNA ⁶ + 40 Camp Assts.	Brandfort	1 ⁷	4,000	1394	0	Extra Duty ⁸
Vredefort Road	1	1365	1365	1 ⁹	6 BRNA	Vredefort	1/3	1,864	1394	0	
Bloemfontein	3	4753	1584	5	12 BRNA	Bloemfontein	1 ¹⁰	1302 ¹¹	1394	0	See footnote

¹ SRC, Vol. 3, 764/01, OC Edenburg to CSRC-DR-ORC, 22 March 1901, Accompanying population figure is for 13 April, about three weeks later than the request. No population figure for that date available.

² The amount of time or percentage of this doctor's time which was devoted to the inmates of the camps since he was attending the sick on an extra duty basis according to SRC-2-543/01 [PCF 1195]

³ SRC, Vol. 2, 543/01, Supt. Edenburg to CSRC-DR-ORC, 25 February 1901

⁴ The Principal Medical Officer, (PMO) of the RAMC provided Edenburg Camp with a dispenser in April 1901. This was probably at the request of the RAMC doctor serving the camp.

⁵ CD 893, 29 October 1901. In July there was only one doctor, but this was a temporary situation, thus the use of the Women's Commission Report.

⁶ BRNA = Boer Refugee Nursing Assistants. In most cases young women selected from the camp

⁷ Probably less than full time service given to blacks whose camp was about 1 mile away. In February the Medical Officer refused to visit black Camp. The record does not indicate that this was ever resolved. The service by this doctor was in addition to his regular duties. It is not clear how much time he devoted to the sick from the black Camp.

⁸ SRC, Vol. 3, 588, Supt. Vredefort Road to CSRC-DR-ORC.

⁹ SRC, Vol. 2, 372, Monthly Report, Supt. Bloemfontein black Camp to CSRC-Dr-ORC, 1 March 1901

CAMP	No. of Doctors	Population	Inmate Doctor Ratio	No. of Nurses	Comments	CAMP	Number of Doctors	Population	Inmate Doctor Ratio	No. of Nurses	Comments
Heidelberg	2	1086	543	2	4 BRNA	Heidelberg	0	600 ¹²	0	0	No medical Service. 1 death per day.

¹⁰ As far as can be determined the Bloemfontein black Camp was the only black Camp with a full time doctor assigned exclusively to a black Camp

¹¹ Population figure taken from Plöeger's Papers HC, CO, 5 July 1901 FK 1036, CO 224/3, Vol. 5, CO 26026. Population for 22 June 1901. I have selected this population report because it is the date closest to the white camps "*Return of Strength on 30th June, 1901*" in CD 819, p. 105

¹² MGP., Vol. 78, 2713A, Medical Officer of Health for the Transvaal Colony to the Military Governor of Pretoria,

Appendix 6.1 “Master Death List of Black Inmates who died in the British Black and White Concentration Camps, 1900-1903.”

See Legend of the Abbreviations and notation of ages and causes of death which appear at the end of the table.

Camp	Men	Women	Children	Total	Date	Source	Comments
Aliwal North ¹ NC				240		Fransjohan Pretorius, (ed.) <i>Scorched Earth</i> (Cape Town, 2001) p. 122	This figure of 240 deaths is the only statistic not based on documented sources. This figure is based on the number of deaths inscribed on the monument at Aliwal North. 53 deaths are listed on a document.
Aliwal North NC	6	0	1	7		Boer War Museum BWM-5350/58 ²	No other information provided.
Aliwal North NC				53	010331	SRC, Vol. 5, 1163, Report of Public Health on sanitation of camps from 14 January to 31 March 1901.	Principle diseases gastroenteritis, dysentery, bronchitis, measles and several cases of typhoid. High death rates due to poor housing.
Balmoral EC ³			9	48		DBC, Vol. 53-Death List. Death Certificates and lists of deaths sent to the Transvaal Government Gazette for publication.	Some of the deaths listed were only recorded on death certificates. These certificates do not indicate the cause of death. The following are those deaths where the cause of death is recorded on other documents in the file. 0-1 ⁴ : bronchitis, diarrhoea, enteritis,

¹ A monument at Aliwal North states that “300 black people died in the concentration camp for black people at Aliwal North. This is based presumably on the cemetery found at Aliwal North. Since two documents in the extant record record a total of 60 deaths I have indicated an additional 240 deaths. This figure is the only statistic in the table not totally certified by documentation, but seems legitimate. See. Fransjohan Pretorius, (ed.) *Scorched Earth*, p. 122.

² Bevattende Die Name? Volgens ‘Army Book’ No. 134.”

³ 1-7 November 1901” For insertion into Transvaal Government Gazette, “1 adult male, 1 male child, 8 female children.

⁴ See legend at the end of the table.

Camp	Men	Women	Children	Total	Date	Source	Comments
							convulsions, inanition, still born child. 1-5: diarrhoea (6), bronchitis, gastro-intestinal catarrh, pneumonia. 5-15: diarrhoea (4), dysentery (2), enteric fever, enteritis, sarcoma of the thigh, tabes mesenterica. 15+: enteric fever (3) [25], [27], [60], senectus [50], diarrhoea [30]. Deaths where only age is given. 1-5: 4; 5-15: 2; 15+: 2; Some deaths in the death register do not record either age or cause.
Barberton- EC			9	9		Free State Archives- Barberton File. Death certificates. ⁵	100% of deaths were children. Deaths, age and cause: 0-1: bronchitis, marasmus, (2) convulsions; 1-5: bronchitis, diarrhoea, acute hepatitis; 5-15: bronchitis, pneumonia.
Belfast-EC			1	1		DBC, Vol. 65 Death Register.	0-1: dysentery..
Bloemfontein-NC	1		5	6	010216	SRC, Vol. 1, 11, WRS, week ending 16 February 1901	Death rate: 1.25%. 83.34% of deaths were children
Bloemfontein-NC				8	010223	SRC, Vol. 1, 157, WRMO, week ending 23 February 1901	"Five cases of typhoid of which I managed to isolate four while I am waiting for a tent to isolate the fifth one. One case of dysentery. diarrhoea continues to be bad amongst the children. 4 deaths in

⁵ In 1988 I located a file in the Free State Archives in Bloemfontein which contained hospital and death records of the Barberton white concentration camp in the Transvaal. This along with other valuable records have disappeared. These records were not transferred as initially claimed to the National Archives in Pretoria, or if they were they cannot be located in that repository. I also copied other documents in the Free State Archives that were Transvaal documents that are also missing. Later it was claimed that all records not directly concerned with the Free State had been loaded on a truck and taken to the Library University of the Orange Free State. The librarians deny that these records had ever been received by them. Fortunately I made a copy of the file in 1988 which is available from my personal archives of the black and white concentration camps. The removal or destruction of any of the records of the period of the South African War is allegedly forbidden by statute. The mystery of these missing records has not yet been resolved or satisfactorily explained.

Camp	Men	Women	Children	Total	Date	Source	Comments
Bloemfontein-NC				23	010228	SRC, Vol. 2, 372 ⁶ MRS, month of February 1901	each camp.” “Considerable infantile diarrhoea among children. Dr. hopes to be able cope better when he receives necessary medical comforts which have been ordered.”
Bloemfontein-NC			5	5	010302	SRC, Vol. 2, 406, WRMO, week ending 2 March 1901	100% of deaths were children. “All typhoid patients recovering and no new cases this week. 5 deaths from diarrhoea and 1 from dysentery. Kaffirfontein Camp at last moved to the big Camp [at Bloemfontein]. and it can be expected that health will improve among them.”
Bloemfontein-NC	2	2	11	15	010306	SRC, Vol. 4, 1061, WRMO, week ending 6 March 1901.	74.34% of deaths were children. “State of health very bad for the last fortnight. dysentery prevalent among children as well as among adults of 15 deaths 4 were adults.”
Bloemfontein-NC				6	010309	SRC, Vol. 1, 200, WRMO, week ending 9 March 1901.	“diarrhoea very bad among the children. 5 deaths due to this cause.”
Bloemfontein-NC				5	010316	SRC, Vol. 3, 625, WRMO, week ending 16 March 1901.	“Rain caused sickness among new arrivals because no adequate housing. could be provided for them. No cases of infectious disease have occurred since last report.”
Bloemfontein-NC	0	0	8	8	010323	SRC, Vol. 3, 770, WRMO, week ending 23 March 1901	Death rate: 0.42% 100% of death were children. “While death rate among adults is small that of the little children continues to be very high; so out of a population of

⁶ Monthly Report for February 1901 lists 29 deaths. Weekly Report for 16 February lists 6 deaths. Have reduced total 23 deaths

Camp	Men	Women	Children	Total	Date	Source	Comments
							1,924, eight deaths occurred during last week all of diarrhoea and pneumonia amongst the children." Several cases of influenza which have recovered very slowly.
Bloemfontein-NC	0	2	22	24	010413	SRC, Vol. 5, 1250, WDR; SRC, Vol. 5, 1252, week ending 13 April 1901	91.67 of deaths were children. Deaths by age and cause: 0-1: diarrhoea (2), dysentery (2), 1-5: pneumonia (5) dysentery ; 5-15: pneumonia; 15+: typhoid [30]. "By far the worst week since new camp was opened." While we averaged 5-6 deaths per week this week there were 24 deaths nearly all children.. The cold nights of the last few days had a very bad effect on the children, most of whom are suffering from pneumonia and bronchitis. " I am afraid the mortality among the children will continue to be great among the children during the winter."
Bloemfontein-NC				21	010420	SRC, Vol. 5, 1400, WRS, week ending 20 April 1901	dysentery has not stopped-still daily fresh cases. State of health has improved very little."
Bloemfontein-NC	1	1		2	010427	SRC, Vol. 6, .1565, WRS, week of 27 April 1901. Death Report for this week is missing from the file as is the record of the deaths.	These two inmates had been living outside the camp and were returned in "a dying state."
Bloemfontein-NC		2	16	18	010427	SRC, Vol. 6, 1563, WRMO, week ending 27 April 1901	"Mortality amongst the children still very high as their were 18 deaths. Amongst these were two women who were admitted to the camp without approval of the

Camp	Men	Women	Children	Total	Date	Source	Comments
							Medical Officer in violation of his order.” They had typhoid, which he argued they acquired in washing clothes in hospitals outside the camp.
Bloemfontein-NC				23	010430	SRC, Vol. 6, 1739, MRS, month ending 30 April 1901.	There were 89 deaths recorded in this report for the month. After subtracting the 66 deaths recorded in the weekly reports there were still 23 additional deaths, which are recorded in this section of the table.
Bloemfontein-NC	1	7	12	20	010510	SRC, Vol. 7, 1830, WRMO, Death Roll for the week ending 10 May 1901	60.00% of deaths were children.. Deaths, age and cause. 0-1: pneumonia (3), Death of 1 female 10 month old baby-no cause given; 1-5: pneumonia (6); 5-15: pneumonia, dysentery; 15+: typhoid (3) [20] [25] [27], heart failure[25] [60] [74], No cause given, [23] 93].
Bloemfontein-NC				36	010518	SRC, Vol. 7, 1977, WRMO, week end 18 May 1901.	“No new cases of typhoid during the week, but many new cases of dysentery. There were 36 deaths, mostly children, who died of bronco-pneumonia.”
Bloemfontein-NC	1	14	16	31	010531	SRC, Vol. 7, 1830, WDR, week ending 10 May 1901.	
Bloemfontein-NC	1	3	17	21	010531	SRC, Vol. 99, p. 5, WDR; SRC, Vol. 7, WRMO, Weekending 1 June 1901	80.96 of deaths were children. Deaths by age and cause. 0-1: broncho-pneumonia (2); 1-5: pneumonia (2), broncho-pneumonia (2), diarrhoea infantum, dysentery; 5-15: pneumonia (6), dysentery (2); 15+:

Camp	Men	Women	Children	Total	Date	Source	Comments
							old age (2) [both 70], pneumonia [30], dysentery [40], tuberculosis pulmonum [25] While dysentery did not stop, no fresh case of enteric occurred this week, bronchitis was the cause of most of the deaths.
Bloemfontein-NC	1	3	13	17	010608	SRC, Vol. 8, 2495, WRMO, ; SRC, Vol. 99, p. 13, WDR, week ending 8 June 1901	76.47% of deaths were children. Deaths by age and cause. 0-1: broncho-pneumonia; 1-5: pneumonia (2), broncho-pneumonia (2), bronchitis (2); 5-15: pneumonia (4), dysentery; 16+: old age (2) [70] [80] typhoid [50], heart disease [57]. "Death rate continuing to decrease."
Bloemfontein-NC	0	3	14	17	010615	SRC, Vol. 99, p. 14, WRMO; SRC, Vol. 99, p.4, WLR, week ending 15 June 1901	82.36% of deaths were children. Deaths by age and cause. 0-1: diarrhoea, diarrhoea infantine; 1-5: pneumonia (3), dysentery (2) broncho-pneumonia; 5-15: pneumonia (6), dysentery; 15+: dysentery [30], old age [70] hentrieuli? ⁷ [20].
Bloemfontein-NC	0	3	15	18	010621	SRC, Vol. 99, p. 16, WDR, week ending 21 June 1901.	83.34% of deaths were children. Deaths by age and cause. 1-5: diarrhoea (4), pneumonia (3), broncho-pneumonia (2), diarrhoea infantum.; 5-15: pneumonia (5); 15+: old age [70], heart failure [60], dysentery [45].
Bloemfontein-NC	1	2	11	14	010629	SRC-99, Vol. 99, p. 18, WDR, weekending 29 June 1901	78.58% of deaths were children. Deaths by age and cause: 1-5: broncho-pneumonia (4),diarrhoea

⁷ First letter not clear. H?, G?

Camp	Men	Women	Children	Total	Date	Source	Comments
							(3), pneumonia; 5-15: pneumonia (3) 16+: Typhoid, [18], heart Failure [80], old age [75]
Bloemfontein-NC			14	14	010706	SRC, Vol. 99, p.20, WDR, week ending 6 July 1901.	100% of deaths were children. Deaths by age and cause: 0-1: measles, diarrhoea, typhoid; 1-5: pneumonia (3), broncho-pneumonia (5), enteritis; 5-15: typhoid (2);
Bloemfontein-NC	1	1	11	13	010713	SRC, Vol. 99, p 26, WRMO; WDR, week ending 13 July 1901.	"No fresh cases of measles this week." 84.62% of deaths were children. Deaths by age and cause. 0-1: bronchitis (2), enteritis (2) diarrhoea, measles; 1-5: bronchitis, enteritis, pneumonia; 5-15: pneumonia; 15+: pneumonia (2) [45] and [40].
Bloemfontein-NC	1	1	19	21	010720	SRC, Vol. 99, p.23, WRMO, 1901 ; p. 24, WDR, p. 23, week ending 20 July 1901	"Owing to cold nights mortality is increasing.." 90.48% of deaths were children. Deaths, age and cause: 0-1: diarrhoea (2), bronchitis [13 days] 1-5: bronchitis (4), broncho-pneumonia (2), enteritis (2), diarrhoea, 1 two year old boy-no cause given. 5-15: pneumonia (5); 15+ pneumonia, One 22 year old man, no cause given.
Bloemfontein-NC	0	1	14	15	010727	SRC, Vol. 99, p.30, WDR; p. 29, week ending 27 July 1901	93.34% of deaths were children. No cases of an infectious nature in the camp. Deaths by age and cause. 0-1: No cause given for one 17 day old female death; 1-5: broncho-pneumonia (3), enteritis (3); 5-15: pneumonia (5), broncho-pneumonia (2); 15+: heart failure.

Camp	Men	Women	Children	Total	Date	Source	Comments
							[60].
Bloemfontein-NC				9	010810	SRC, Vol. 99, p.37, WRMO, week ending 10 August 1901.	"Health of the camp continues to improve. No cases of an infectious nature in the camp."
Bloemfontein-NC	0	3	12	15	010817	SRC, Vol. 99, p.38; WRMO.	80.00% of deaths were children. Deaths: age and cause.. 0-1: diarrhoea (3), bronchitis (2), typhoid (2), meningitis; 1-5: bronchitis, broncho-pneumonia; 5-15: pneumonia (2) 15+: pneumonia [17] [45], old age [70]
Bloemfontein-NC				14	010823	SRC, Vol. 99, p. 39, WRMO, Week ending 23 August 1901	"No cases of an infectious nature in the camp for the last four weeks. Some cases of typhoid and dysentery at the camp among the new arrivals. There have been 14 deaths...mostly bronchitis and pneumonia.."
Bloemfontein-NC	2	2	10	14	010831	SRC, Vol. 99, p. 40 WRMO, WDR, p. 41. week ending 31 August 1901	71.43% of deaths were children. Deaths: ages and causes. 0-1: diarrhoea (2), enteritis (2); 1-5: bronchitis (2), enteritis; 5-15: pneumonia (3); 15*: heart failure (3), pneumonia. "Not one case of an infectious nature in the camp." Two of the five patients not receiving rations died from diarrhoea.. Three other deaths due to pneumonia, bronchitis and enteritis were persons not on rations. No patients presently in the hospital."
Brandfort-EC			1	1	010216	SRC, Vol. 91, Death Register-white camp	"Pete" a 14 year old boy. There are three other names in this list that appear to be black persons, but they are not labelled as "Native" as

Camp	Men	Women	Children	Total	Date	Source	Comments
							was usually done..
Brandfort-NC	3	4	26	33	010603	SRC, Vol. 99, pp. 6-7, "Death Return for May 1901.	78.79% of deaths were children. No causes of death or ages given. Death rate for May was ~ 1 death each day.
Brandfort-NC	2	3	10	15	010630	SRC, Vol. 99, p. 19, "List of Deaths in Native Refugee Camp during June 1901."	66.67% of deaths were children. No causes of death given. Deaths, ages: 0-1: 1; 1-5: ; 5-15: 3; 15+: ,
Brandfort-NC				38	010731	CSO, Vol. 31, 2976	
DBC-TVL				5	010630	FK 1130,, CO 100, Confidential Print, Tel. S 493, Kitchener to Brodrick, 12 July 1901	Death rate: 0.18%. No gender, ages or causes of death given.
DBC-TVL				3	010712	CD 819, p. 114, FRGS, fortnight period ending 12 July 1901.	Death rate: 1.064/3 = 0.29%
DBC-TVL				7	010731	CSO, Vol. 34, 3276, Official Statistics for the month ending 31 July 1901.	Death rate: 0.77%
DBC-TVL				37	010831	CD 694. Official statistics of the Concentration Camps in South Africa, month ending 31 August 1901.	Death rate: 3.01%.
DBC-TVL				22	010930	CSO, Vol. 40, 3806/01, Return of deaths of blacks in the Department of Burger Camps.	Death rate: 1.08%.
DBC-TVL				20	011031	CD 853, p. 130, Appendix No. 1, Concentration Camps in South Africa-Statistics for the Month of	Death rate: 1.03%.

Camp	Men	Women	Children	Total	Date	Source	Comments
						October 1901. FRCS, for period 16 to 31 October 1901	
DBC-TVL	6	7	6	19	020808	DBC Transvaal Folder-WDR, week ending 8 August 1902	Return issued by Director of Burger Camps-Transvaal.
DBC-TVL	3	3	3	9	020822	Transvaal Folder-DBC, WDR, week ending 22 August 1902	Return issued by Director of Burger Camps-Transvaal.
DBC-TVL	6	2	2	10	020905	DBC, Transvaal Folder, WDR ending 5 September 1901	Return issued by Director of Burger Camps-Transvaal.
DNR-ORC	43	49	164	256	010731	FK Vol. 1130, p. 214, Concentration Camps in South Africa-Statistic for the month of July 1901, printed as CD 694.	Death rate: 1.12%, 64.07% of deaths were children. Age; gender and cause of deaths were not given.
DNR-ORC	40	57	333	430	010831	CD 789, Camps of Refuge ⁸ in South Africa, month ending 31 August 1901.	Death rate: 70.60%. 77.45% of deaths were children. Ages and causes of death were not given
DNR-ORC	20	44	202	266	010930	CSO, Vol. 45, 4183, MRCS, August and September 1901	Only gives September 1901 statistics.
DNR-ORC				277	010930	CD 793 "Concentration Camps in South Africa: Statistics For The Month Of	

⁸ Previously the term concentration camps was used, but beginning in July the term Refugee Camps was instituted.

⁹ Considerable confusion was at first encountered in reconciling the official returns in the Monthly Reports of the Department of Native Refugees and the official statistics in the British Parliamentary Papers which were published. During the early transition period when the black inmates in the camps under the supervision of the Department of Burger Camps in the Transvaal where there were no separate camps for blacks and the Department of Refugees in the Orange River Colony where blacks were confined both in separate camps and in the white camps. In these published statistical returns there were no explanation that the new Department of Native Refugees. Since these returns were published covering the deaths taking place in both the previous camps and the new camps it is necessary to distinguish between the two entities. After the transfer to the new camps there were still some black families in the white camps and there were some deaths

Camp	Men	Women	Children	Total	Date	Source	Comments
						September 1901. ⁹	
DNR-ORC	72	101	629	802	011031	CSO-46-4292, MRCS, month ending 31. October 1901	
DNR-ORC	104	160	1254	1518	011130	GOV-2176/02, month ending 30 November 1901	"In regards to high death rate have hired three full time additional medical officers to devote all of their time to visiting the camps in addition to present medical staff." Death rate also attributed to declimatisation.
DNR-ORC	113	202	1328	1643	011231	SNA, Vol. 16, 331/02, MRCS, month ending 31 December 1901.	Death rate: 3.88%. *0.83% of deaths were children " Death rate was very high but returns for January show a steady decrease. De Lotbiniere was confident that numbers of deaths would continue to decrease as 3 additional medical officers have been hired "...and the greatest care and attention is being given to the health of the camps.."
DNR-ORC	152	207	1183	1542	020131	CSO-57-586/02, MRCS, month ending 31 January 1901.	"This return shows a decrease of 101 deaths despite an increase in population in the order of 3,000." This would seem to indicate that had adequate numbers of medical officers been hired prior to the high death rates a good number of these deaths could have been prevented."

among those families. The means of distinguishing which camps the returns were from eventually became apparent. By looking at the population of the camps it can be determined which camps are involved. In the return for September 1901 this is made very clear. In the case of the Transvaal camps the population for "Coloured." Person in the camps the population figure is given as 2,041, while the population figure for the white camps in the Transvaal is given as 59,406. In the case of the Orange River Colony statistics in that return the population of the "Coloured" camps was given as 36,482. This population figure must be that of the new Department of Native Refugees Camps in the colony.

Camp	Men	Women	Children	Total	Date	Source	Comments
DNR-ORC	97	172	592	861	020228	SNA-25-795/02, MRCS, month ending 28 February 1901	Death rate continued to decrease from 3.14% in January to 1.75% in February. This was considered to be the normal death rate among blacks. During February many of the staff of the camps were sick with typhoid fever..”
DNR-ORC	47	94	326	467	020331	CSO-67-1254/02. MRCS, month ending 31 March 1901	Percentage of deaths to population was down to 0.96%
DNR-ORC	25	55	178	258	020430	CSO-70-1493,MRCS, month ending 30 April 1902	The death rate is still decreasing and is now 0.47%
DNR-ORC	32	52	149	233	020531	SNA-44-1411, MRCS, month ending May 31, 1902	Death rate is 0.39%
DNR-ORC	24	53	90	167	020630	CSO-88-2991, MRCS, month ending 30 June	Death rate is 0.28%.
DNR-ORC				251	020731	Monthly report was not found in either the National or Free State Archives.. See footnote. ¹⁰	Death rate was 0.44%. ¹¹
DNR-ORC	40	37	47	124	020831	CSO-114-5079/02, MRCS, month ending 31 August 1901	Slight increase in the death rate mainly due to an outbreak of scurvy which has broken out among boys working in the towns, and taken by them back to the camps.” It was believed by some medical doctors that scurvy was contagious, not realising that it was due to a diet deficiency of vitamin C.
DNR-ORC	42	50	45	137	020930	CSO-114-5079/02, month	Death rate has increased due to

¹⁰ The number of deaths for July was calculated by subtracting the total deaths to date for June from the total number of deaths to date for August. This figure was provided in each monthly report.

¹¹ Calculated from June and August 1902 total deaths figures for the ORC DNR Camps. June =7495; August =7746. Total = 251

Camp	Men	Women	Children	Total	Date	Source	Comments
						ending 30 September 1901	scurvy. Death rate was 0.38%. ¹²
DNR-ORC	35	58	56	149	021031	CSO-119-5537/02, MRCS, month ending 31 October 1901. ¹³	Death rate was 0.62%. Increase was explained as a result of having repatriated the more robust people first. Deaths occurred primarily among the elderly
DNR-TVL					7	CSO, Vol. 34, Official Statistics of the Concentration Camps, month ending 31 July 1901	Death rate: 0.50%.
DNR-TVL	13	13	119	145	010831	SNA-59-2097, MRCS, month ending 31 August 1901	Death rate was 0.64% 82.07% of deaths were children
DNR-TVL	17	30	394	441	010930	TKP-135, p. 3, MRCS, month ending 30 September 1901	Death rate was 1.55% 89.35% of deaths were children
DNR-TVL	35	69	583	687	011031	SNA, Vol. 59, 2097, MRCS, month ending 31 October 1901 ¹	Death rate was 2.15% 84.87% of deaths were children
DNR-TVL	35	69	583	687	011031	SNA-59-2097, MRCS ¹⁴ month ending 31 October 1901.	Death rate was 2.15%. 84.87% of deaths were children. No breakdown by gender or age.
DNR-TVL	39	83	834	956	011130	FK-607-CO 417/349, CO 9620, p. 373, MRCS, month ending 30 November 1901	Death rate was 2.44% 87.24% of deaths were children.
DNR-TVL	67	114	979	1160	011231	SNA-59-2097, MRCS, month ending 31 December 1901	Death rate was 2.68% 85.4% of deaths were children

¹² To make this calculation the population figure of 57,800 necessary to calculating the percentage of deaths was obtained from the monthly report for August 1902 where it was noted in relating the numbers who had been repatriated.

¹³ Does not contain the return of deaths for Harrismith and Dryharts Camps

¹⁴ Captain Hugh Cowie

Camp	Men	Women	Children	Total	Date	Source	Comments
DNR-TVL	63	98	831	992	020131	SNA, Vol. 20, MRCS, month ending 31 January 1901	Death rate was 2.03% 83.77% of deaths were children
DNR-TVL	36	65	429	530	020228	SNA, Vol. 25, 795/02, MRCS, month ending 28 February.	Death rate was 1.02% 80.95% of deaths were children.
DNR-TVL	23	66	328	417	020331	SNA, Vol. 28, 966/02, MRCS, month ending 31 March 1902	Death rate was 0.80%. 78.66% of deaths were children .
DNR-TVL	20	47	230	297 19010	020430	SNA, Vol.-30, 1129/02	Death rate was 0.56%. 77.45% of deaths were children. "The numbers have slightly increased during the month, and the death rate has continued its steady decrease..."
DNR-TVL	25	53	212	290	020531	SNA, Vol. 44; MRCS, month ending 31 May 1902.	Death rate was 0.52% 73.11% of deaths were children
DNR-TVL	25	46	98	169	020630	SNA, Vol. 59, 2073, MRCS, month ending 30 June 1902	Death rate was 0.31% 57.99% of deaths were children.
DNR-TVL	31	30	80	141	020731	SNA, Vol. 59, 2073, MRCS, month ending 31 July 1902	Death rate was 0.29% 56.74% of deaths were children
DNR-TVL	15	17	23	55	020831	SNA, Vol. 69, 2399/02, MRCS, month ending 31 August 1902	Death rate was 0.25% 41.82% of deaths were children. "Repatriation is... practically complete.
DNR-TVL	19	18	11	48	020930	TKP-135, p. 3, MRCS, month ending 30 September 1902	Death rate was 0.42% 22.92% of deaths were children.
DNR-TVL	2	6	9	17	021031	TKP-135, p.3, MRCS, month ending 31 October 1902	Death rate was 0.45%. 52.95% of deaths were children.
DR-ORC	43	49	164	256	010731	FK, Vol. 1130, FRCS,	64.07% of deaths were children.

Camp	Men	Women	Children	Total	Date	Source	Comments
						two week period ending 31 July 1901.	
Edenburg NC				60	010221	SRC, Vol. 1, 182, Report of Superintendent covering the period 15 January to 21 February 1901	
Edenburg NC	0	0	10	10	010228	SRC, Vol. 2, 802, Partial "List of deaths in the Edenburg Camp for the month of February 1901."	100% of deaths were children.. No causes of death given. Deaths, age: 0-1: 4; 1-5: 5; 5-15: 1.
Edenburg NC	3	1	40	44	010331	SRC, Vol. 3, 664,; MDR, month ending 31 March 1901	93.03% of deaths were children. causes of death not given.. Deaths: ages : 0-1: 14; 1-5: 21; 5-15: 5; 15+: 4.
Edenburg NC	6	2	83	91	010531	SRC, Vol. 99, p. 1, MRS, month ending 31 May 1902	91.21% of the deaths were children. Deaths, ages: 0-1: 31; 1-5: 34; 5-15: 18; 15+: 8.
Edenburg NC	3	6	92	101	010630	SRC, Vol. 99, Death List, month ending 30 June 1901.	91.09% of deaths were children. Causes of death not given. Deaths: ages: 0-1: 21; 1-5: 49; 5-15: 22; 15+: 9.
Harrismith				246	010116	CSO, Vol. 54, 190/02, Harrismith District Report records these deaths for the period September 1901 to 16 January 1902. ¹⁵	No information was provided regarding ages or causes of death.
Harrismith	1			1	010918	CSO, Vol. 35, Death report	Death of Native Dickory attached to Veterinary Department from

¹⁵ The Harrismith Camp was under the Department of Native Refugees, however these deaths do not appear to be in this camp. The January 1902 Monthly report of deaths in the Harrismith camps shows only 14 deaths, 2 men, 4 women and 8 children.. The document records the Resident Magistrate as saying in his Report to Wilson, the Colonial Secretary, "Deaths: European; Native 246 since September [1901] He indicates that "The camps have been broken up and the natives allowed to live in small groups about their lands." This does not describe the DNR Camp system. Thus these deaths must be added to the deaths for Harrismith in addition to the deaths listed in the monthly reports of the Department of Native Refugees.

Camp	Men	Women	Children	Total	Date	Source	Comments
							pneumonia.
Harrismith ¹⁶	1	0	0	1	011230	CSO, Vol. 50, 4536/01, Death Notice	
Harrismith-NC		1	3	4	010331	SRC, Vol. 5, 1202, Report for March 1901	
Irene-NC				1	020905	DBC, Folder of weekly death reports, week ending 5 September 1902	
Kroonstad				33	010817	CSO-31-2976, MRMO Deputy Administrator, Orange River Colony	Deaths: 100% children, primarily due to broncho-pneumonia following measles.
Mafeking EC				5	011031	CD 902, p. 90	
Mafeking-EC				1	020808	DBC, TVL, WDR, weekend 8 August 1902	
Middleburg-EC				1	020931	Plöeger Papers, Vol. 66	
Middleburg-EC				1	021010	Plöeger Papers, Vol. 66	
Middleburg-EC				1	021205	Plöeger Papers, Vol. 66	
Middleburg-EC				9	011006	CD 853, p. 77 MR Sept. 1901	No ages or causes of death given
Middleburg-EC			12	13	011031	CD 902, p 85, MRS, for month ending 31 October 1901	Deaths of blacks not included in camp deaths, but mentioned in report. Gender of adult death not specified.
Middleburg -EC			.34	71	020901 ¹⁷	DBC, Vol. 5 and Weekly Reports of the camp. Some deaths are not fully notated with ages and causes. ¹⁸	Of the 46 deaths that are fully notated 93.92% deaths were children. Deaths notated as to ages and causes: 0-1: diarrhoea (3), pneumonia (2), measles (2),

¹⁶ Department of Native Refugees Camp

¹⁷ This list was compiled by the author from the death register of the Middleburg white camps which are a separate listing of deaths from the death statistics of the Department of Native Refugees in the Transvaal. As far as can be ascertained these deaths were not counted in the Department monthly reports. The deaths listed in the CD 853, p. 77 and CD 902, p.85 may be part of the 71 deaths listed in this composite list. This would amount 21 deaths. There is no way to tell if this was the case.

¹⁸ As a result the full statistics cannot be provided such as the percentage of deaths that were children or the causes of death of each and every death.

Camp	Men	Women	Children	Total	Date	Source	Comments
							dysentery (1), whooping Cough, convulsions, 1 death no cause given, age 1 month. 1-5: measles (7), whooping cough (5), diarrhoea (4), fever (2), influenza and dysentery, marasmus, typhoid; 5-15: diarrhoea (2), measles (2), typhoid (2), fever, exhaustion, spinal paralysis, whooping cough, dysentery, pneumonia and cardiac failure [14] 15+: diarrhoea (4) [19], [25], [48], [50], malaria (2), [20], [31], measles, [41] debility, heart failure [16], influenza [40] typhoid, died in hospital, lighting strike.
Middleburg-EC				1	011205	Plöeger Papers, Vol. 66	
Middleburg-EC				1	021114	Plöeger Papers, Vol. 66	
Natal EC			2	2	0109	CD 793,	
Native Labour Corps Natal ¹⁹	1			1	011127	CSO, Vol. 49, 4423/01, Death certificate.	Worked for Veterinary Service-Pietermaritzburg .
Nylstroom-EC			1	1	011004	CD 902 p. 92, month ending 31 October 1901	A child between 1 month and 1 year.
Nylstroom-EC	1			1	011009	PMO, Vol. 2, 142, Memo to Commandant, Nylstroom.. Attempting to escape from white camp.	
Orange River Station-NC			4	4	020221	SRC, Vol. 99, pp. 42-45	3 deaths due to whooping cough, and 1 death due to chronic diarrhoea. There were probably many more deaths, but documentation has not been found.
Pietermaritzburg				3	010930	CD 853, p.27, month	Death rate: 4.55%, No causes of

¹⁹ This man was attached to the veterinary Department and was an Orange River Colony resident who was in Natal Native Labour Corps and many of these men were forced into this labour corps when suspected of spying or other activity against the British Army.

Camp	Men	Women	Children	Total	Date	Source	Comments
						ending 30 September 1901	death given. Under the heading, "Hospital" it is stated that "There has been an epidemic of measles and whooping cough among the children which has occasioned several deaths."
Pietersburg-EC	0		4	4	010831	CD 819, p.376, MRS, month ending 31 August 1901	4 coloured children. No other information provided.
Standerton EC				1	010930	CD 853, p. 96, MRMO, month ending 30 September 1901	One native died from pneumonia along with 7 others.
Volksrust-EC	0	1	0	1	010123	DBC, Vol . , 109, Death Certificate.	Zulu woman, aged 20, Mazotja. No cause of death given.
Volksrust-EC	1			1	020124	LWM, Vol. 9, Report of the death of a native,	Native was found dead in his tent in the Volksrust Camp
Vredefort Road NC		1	4	5	010614	SRC, Vol. 99, WDR, week ending 14 June 1901.	80% of deaths were children. Deaths: age and cause: 1-5: diarrhoea, marasmus and bronchitis; 5-15: diarrhoea; 15+: dysentery [27]
Vredefort Road NC	0	3	1	3	0'0705	SRC, Vol. 99, p. 17	
Vredefort Road NC				2	010217	SRC-1-75, Report of the medical officer to camp superintendent.	"dysentery prevalent among native refugees."
Vredefort Road NC	2	0	3	5	010607	SRC, Vol. 99, WDL, week ending 7 June 1901.	40% of deaths were children. Deaths: ages: 0-1: 1; 5-15: 1; 15+:3. No causes of death given
Vredefort Road NC	0	3	2	5	010607	SRC, Vol. 99, p. 12, WRS, week ending 7 June 1901	
Vredefort Road-NC	1	0	3	4	010613	SRC, Vol. 99, p.14, WRS, week ending 13 June 1901	dysentery, diarrhoea, marasmus, bronchitis
Vredefort Road-NC	1	3	4	8	010620	SRC, Vol. 99, p. 15, WRS, week ending 20	broncho-pneumonia, senility, dysentery, cardiac failure

Camp	Men	Women	Children	Total	Date	Source	Comments
						WRS, week ending 20 June 1901	dysentery, cardiac failure, marasmus, enteritis
Vredefort Road-NC	0	0	3	3	010628	SRC, Vol. 99, p. 17, L WRS, week ending 28 June 1901	broncho-pneumonia, infantile enteritis
Vredefort Road-NC	1	3	0	4	010705	SRC, Vol. 99, p. 22, WRS, week ending 5 July 1901	Three deaths of persons over 60 years of age, senility, chronic bronchitis, pneumonia, acute pneumonia
Vredefort Road-NC	2	1	2	5	010712	SRC, Vol. 99, p. 6, WRS, week ending 12 July 1901	pneumonia, bronco-pneumonia, senility, chronic enteritis. One man 89 years old and one woman 62 years
Vredefort Road-NC	1	2	1	4	010719	SRC, Vol. 99, p. 25, WRS, week ending 19 July 1901	25% of deaths were children. Date: ages and causes. 0-1: bronchitis, 15+: pneumonia (2) [46] [27] senility [70]

Total number of deaths as calculated from this list is 21, 042. all listings of the number of dead are based on actual documentation and there are no estimates included in this list of the numbers of black people who died in the black and white concentration camps.

Legend of abbreviations of types of source documents and method of notation:

WRS	Weekly Report of the Superintendent regarding the health of the camp.
WRMO	Weekly Report of the Medical Officer regarding the health of the camp.
WDR	Weekly Death Report of the camp
MRS	Monthly Report of the Superintendent of the camp
MRCS	Monthly Report of the Chief Superintendent or the Officer in Charge of the Department of Native Refugees in the Orange River Colony or the Transvaal Colony.
MDR	Monthly Death Report or Register of Deaths.
FRCS	Fortnight Report of the Chief Superintendent or the Officer in charge in the Orange River Colony Or the Transvaal Colony.
FRGS	Fortnight Report of the General Superintendent of the Department of Burger Camps in the Transvaal.

Death rate: Death rate is calculated by the division of the number of deaths by the population for that week or month. The British method of calculating the numbers of death for each 1,000 of population and then multiplying by 12 for an annual death rate per thousand is very misleading and in a sense has no real meaning.

Legend of ages and causes of death in the deaths lists and registers.

At the time of the South African War British death statistics, at least since the 1850s, had traditionally been divided as follows: from birth up to one year; one year to five years; six years to fifteen years; sixteen years and above.²⁰ These categories in the table are shown as follows: "0-1" year, "1-5" years, "6-15" years, "15+." years and older In the above 15 category the age of the dead person is indicated by the use of [70],

in this case a person who was seventy years of age at the time of deaths. It appears that these upper age designations were estimated as they usually are notated in even decades of age, i.e. 70, 80, etc.. This convention was followed in the concentration camp records with the exception that in the Transvaal Colony in the early period until December 1901 the age for children was 0-12 years. This was standardised by the Colonial Secretary's order to assure a uniformity in the death returns with the 15 year age level being used in the Orange River Colony.²¹ When only one case of a given disease is listed it shown, for example, as Pneumonia, When there is more than one case of the disease listed in the return it is shown, for example, as Pneumonia (5), which indicates that five persons in that particular document were listed as having died of that disease.

²⁰ *Vide* :Florence Nightingale, *Sanitary Statistics of Native Colonial Schools and Hospitals* (London, 1858) p. 27

²¹ HC, Vol. 87, Chamberlain to Milner, 3 December 1901

Appendix 6.2
The Names and Causes of Death in the Bloemfontein Black Concentration Camp
From 5 April to 31 August 1901¹ During the South African War

Name of Deceased	Age	Sex	Cause of Death	Date of Death	Age Category	Comments
Not Indicated	N.I.	N.I.	Diarrhoea	010202	0-15	
Not Indicated	N.I.	N.I.	Diarrhoea	010202	0-15	
Not Indicated	N.I.	N.I.	Diarrhoea	010202	0-15	
Not Indicated	N.I.	N.I.	Diarrhoea	010202	0-15	
Not Indicated	N.I.	N.I.	Dysentery	010202	0-15	
Not Indicated	N.I.	N.I.	Diarrhoea	010309	0-15	
Not Indicated	N.I.	N.I.	Diarrhoea	010309	0-15	
Not Indicated	N.I.	N.I.	Diarrhoea	010309	0-15	
Not Indicated	N.I.	N.I.	Diarrhoea	010309	0-15	
Not Indicated	N.I.	N.I.	Diarrhoea	010309	0-15	
Eliza	1	F	Dysentery	010405	0-1	
Nina	1	F	Dysentery	010405	0-1	
Malachive	0.6	M	pneumonia	010405	0-1	
Maria Seykie	3	F	pneumonia	010405	1-5	
Klein Frantz	3	M	Dysentery	010407	1-5	
Sara Mochowe	30	F	Enteric	010407	15-40	
Wellume Mararkye	5	M	pneumonia	010407	1-5	
Ellen	6	F	pneumonia	010407	5-15	
Dotea Motobea	1	F	diarrhoea	010409	0-1	
Ompie Cetewayi	1	M	Diarrhoea	010409	0-1	
Grenie	2	M	pneumonia	010409	1-5	
Samuel Haestock	4	M	pneumonia	010409	1-5	
Leoaba Combrinck	2	F	pneumonia	010410	1-5	
Maria	19	F	pneumonia	010411	15-40	
Pulleny	1	F	pneumonia	010411	0-1	
Spelman	2	M	pneumonia	010411	1-5	
Isaac Oliphant	1.8	M	pneumonia	010412	1-5	
Klein Lasier	1.8	F	pneumonia	010412	1-5	
Klein Friday	2	M	pneumonia	010412	1-5	
Low Bezelbout	2	M	pneumonia	010412	1-5	
Secauma	2	F	pneumonia	010412	1-5	
Andrie Lebtuur	4	M	pneumonia	010412	1-5	
Samuel Spoor	4	M	pneumonia	010412	1-5	
Maria Flesh	N.I.	F	Enteric	010424		
John Plaatje	N.I.	M	Enteric	010426	15 +	
Not Indicated	N.I.	F	Enteric	010427	15 +	SRC, Vol. 6,

¹ This camp was transferred to the Department of Native Refugees in September 1901 and no longer reported death statistics after 31 August 1901. The Department only provided statistics of the number of the dead given under the headings of Men, Women and Children and no longer reported the names of the deceased persons and the causes of death. There are no death lists for the period prior to the week ending 5 April 1901. Death lists for the weeks ending 19 April, 26 April, 17 May, 24 May, 3 August and 23 August 1901 are missing.

Name of Deceased	Age	Sex	Cause of Death	Date of Death	Age Category	Comments
						1563, WRMO
Not Indicated	N.I.	F	Enteric	010427	15 +	SRC, Vol. 6, 1563, WRMO
Maelennie Viljoen	60	M	heart failure	010503	40 –80	
Virginia	0.10	F	not indicated	010503	0-1	
Miekye Low	25	F	heart disease	010504	15-40	
Linkye Contraet	14	F	pneumonia	010504	5-15	
Muinalye	0.5	M	pneumonia	010505	0-1	
Petrus Kunyah	1	M	pneumonia	010505	0-1	
Magdalena Cornelius	8	F	pneumonia	010505	5-15	
Oue Mielie Combrink	74	F	heart failure	010506	40 –80	
Miriam Dors	1.8	F	pneumonia	010506	1-5	
Mielkye Elias	25	F	Enteric	010507	15-40	
Dutihayan	1	M	pneumonia	010508	0-1	
Maria	27	F	Enteric	010509	15-40	
Troyke	23	F	not indicated	010509	15-40	
Serune Glatraye	3D	F	not Indicated	010509	1-5	
Klein Catherine	2	F	pneumonia	010509	1-5	
Monaihye	3	M	pneumonia	010509	1-5	
Rebecca	3	F	pneumonia	010509	1-5	
Pietrus Troy	4.6	M	pneumonia	010509	1-5	
Johnakye Leku	4	F	Dysentery	010510	1-5	
Miriam Senekal	20	F	Enteric	010510	15-40	
Motete Pat	5	M	pneumonia	010510	1-5	
Maria Setiu	70	F	old age	010525	40 –80	
De Oue	7	M	pneumonia	010525	5-15	
Casea Matone	2.6	F	pneumonia, Broncho	010525	1-5	
Arsons Low	25	M	tuberculosis pulmonum	010525	15-40	
Intow	12	M	pneumonia	010526	5-15	
Klein Anna	9	F	pneumonia	010526	5-15	
Elissa Low	2	F	diarrhoea Infantum	010527	1-5	
Klein Botha	5	F	pneumonia	010527	1-5	
Stphle Mactharty	10	M	pneumonia	010527	5-15	
Salemon Havasak	0.8	M	pneumonia, Broncho	010527	0-1	
Sarkie August	2	F	Dysentery	010528	1-5	
Magdeline Wolff	7	F	Dysentery	010528	5-15	
Solomon Low	1	M	Dysentery	010529	0-1	
Sannie Hastock	30	F	pneumonia	010529	15-40	
Cornelius Joss	2	M	pneumonia, Broncho	010529	1-5	
Cristina Van Wyk	4.6	F	pneumonia	010530	1-5	
Kastiron Botha	7	F	pneumonia	010530	5-15	
Malcoss	9	M	pneumonia	010530	5-15	
Sarah Best	40	F	Dysentery	010531	15-40	
Hanna Mullah	70	F	old age	010531	40 –80	
Peter Cowanyan	0.5	M	pneumonia, Broncho	010531	0-1	

Name of Deceased	Age	Sex	Cause of Death	Date of Death	Age Category	Comments
Hamyke Botha	10	F	pneumonia	010601	5-15	
Willia Malioss	4	M	pneumonia, Broncho	010601	1-5	
Katipe	6	M	pneumonia	010602	5-15	
Magness	2	M	pneumonia, Broncho	010602	1-5	
Glysium Lepieve	2	M	Bronchitis	010603	1-5	
Laura Pepper	5	F	Bronchitis	010603	1-5	
Flackie Malioss	7	F	Dysentery	010603	5-15	
Velling Reit	70	M	old age	010603	40 –80	
Lucas Majaine	5	M	pneumonia	010603	1-5	
Letia	7	F	pneumonia	010603	5-15	
Ronter McTrence	2.6	F	Diarrhoea	010605	1-5	
Caitye Eckelton	50	F	Enteric	010605	40 –80	
Old Sara	80	F	old age	010606	40 –80	
Bulomine Angela Lepiere	6	F	pneumonia	010607	5-15	
Sarah McKass	1	F	pneumonia, Broncho	010607	0-1	
Letear Sekw	1	F	diarrhoea Infantine	010608	0-1	
Jeuiss Mooi	12	M	pneumonia	010608	5-15	
Miekye Low	2	F	pneumonia, Broncho	010608	1-5	
Solomon Oliphant	1	M	Diarrhoea	010609	0-1	
Sarah Glatraye	20	F	ventriculi	010609	15-40	
Manikye Robertson	30	F	Dysentery	010610	15-40	
Sara Machoudye	5	F	pneumonia	010611	1-5	
Springkent Spoor	8	M	pneumonia	010611	5-15	
Johannes Chaca	4	M	Dysentery	010612	1-5	
Teit January	6	M	Dysentery	010612	5-15	
Martha Smith	10	F	pneumonia	010612	5-15	
Debourser Robertson	7	F	pneumonia	010612	5-15	
Martha McCass	4	F	Dysentery	010613	1-5	
Christina Low	6	F	pneumonia	010613	5-15	
Anna Hoedar	70	F	old age	010614	40 –80	
Lina Soule	3	F	pneumonia	010614	1-5	
Maria Soule	4	F	pneumonia	010614	1-5	
Katrucia Sekw	4	F	pneumonia	010615	1-5	
Elizabeth Martha	2	F	Diarrhoea	010616	1-5	
Lettea Low	1	F	diarrhoea Infantum	010616	0-1	
Josepha Mahapela	4	M	pneumonia, Broncho	010616	1-5	
Rebecca Haversack	5	F	pneumonia	010617	1-5	
Anna Sekw	7	F	pneumonia	010617	5-15	
Louboury	7	M	pneumonia	010617	5-15	
John Machoudye	2	M	Diarrhoea	010618	1-5	
Marcus Mena	3	M	Diarrhoea	010618	1-5	
Oue Sarah Soule	70	F	old age	010618	40 –80	
Suica Laikye	6	F	pneumonia	010618	5-15	
Sara Sekw	9	F	pneumonia	010618	5-15	
Petrus De Wet	3	M	pneumonia, Broncho	010618	1-5	
Leus Gert	4	F	pneumonia	010619	1-5	

Name of Deceased	Age	Sex	Cause of Death	Date of Death	Age Category	Comments
Malicie Sope	2	M	Diarrhoea	010620	1-5	
Mickie Swartbooi	60	F	heart failure	010620	40 –80	
Letta Hounot	10	F	pneumonia	010620	5-15	
Sara Chow	45	F	Dysentery	010621	40 –80	
Bethual Hiulork	2	M	Diarrhoea	010622	1-5	
Martha Botha	8	F	pneumonia	010623	5-15	
Garusa Sope	5	F	pneumonia, Broncho	010623	1-5	
Joseph Karboua	2	M	pneumonia, Broncho	010624	1-5	
Meakye Botha	12	F	pneumonia	010625	5-15	
Majanie Hessie	3	F	Diarrhoea	010626	1-5	
Korant Tillaway	18	M	Enteric	010626	15-40	
Oue Garuse Pretorius	80	M	heart failure	010626	40 –80	
Maria Low	7	F	pneumonia	010626	5-15	
Klein Sara Soule	2	F	pneumonia, Broncho	010626	1-5	
Matheid	4	M	pneumonia, Broncho	010627	1-5	
Sodenyau Swaartbooi	3	M	Diarrhoea	010628	1-5	
Elias	75	M	old age	010628	40 –80	
Hendrick Sekw	5	M	pneumonia	010628	1-5	
Sara January ²	1	M	Diarrhoea	010629	0-1	
Sebeana Maria	13	F	Enteric	010629	5-15	
Abraham Maria	4	M	pneumonia	010629	1-5	
Elea Oliphant	4	F	pneumonia, Broncho	010630	1-5	
Maphouie Hannah	1	F	Enteric	010701	0-1	
Jacobus De Wet	5	M	pneumonia	010701	1-5	
Elissa Low	5	F	pneumonia, Broncho	010701	1-5	
Meta Maria	1.8	F	enteritis	010703	1-5	
Armanshe Van Ross	1	M	measles	010703 ³	0-1	
Klein Jacob Grais	2	M	pneumonia, Broncho	010703	1-5	
Anna Solomon	14	F	Enteric	010704	5-15	
Piet Mactharty	4	M	pneumonia	010704	1-5	
Piet Lebone	5	M	pneumonia	010705	1-5	
Jdecyoure Veeta	4	F	pneumonia, Broncho	010705	1-5	
Kikie Van Den Burg	0.8 ⁴	F	bronchitis	010707	0-1	No rations
Maria Waebodi	4	F	pneumonia	010707	1-5	
Klein John Low	5	M	pneumonia	010707	1-5	
Abraham Dick	1	M	Diarrhoea	010708	0-1	
Maucnietow Masheesh	2	F	enteritis	010708	1-5	
Welleum Pretorius	1	M	measles	010708	0-1	

² This is how the death list reads. Names that in Europe are always of a particular gender often are used for both genders. The months of the year that normally are given to females in Europe appear to be used for males.

³ This is the first listed death due to Measles. Contains the following note: (Not on Ration Strength) Evidently they saw a connection between Measles and diet as they often make this same notation alongside deaths listed as due to Measles.

⁴ 0.8 =1 year and 8 months. 0.8 = 8 months. 0.8 does not 0.8 of 1 year. A number followed by the letter D = that number of days. 8D = 8 Days.

Name of Deceased	Age	Sex	Cause of Death	Date of Death	Age Category	Comments
Leukey	45	F	pneumonia	010708	40 – 80	
Isaac Prince	0.9	M	bronchitis	010710	0-1	No rations
Elissa Maria	1.8	F	Bronchitis	010710	1-5	
Piet Mochaw	40	M	pneumonia	010710	15-40	
Sara Cornelius	1	F	enteritis	010711	0-1	
Stephanus Comdare	1	M	enteritis	010711	0-1	
Petrus Maria	4	M	pneumonia, Broncho	010711	1-5	
Stuur Fouriuan	1	F	Diarrhoea	010713	0-1	
Piet Mochowe	55	M	pneumonia	010713	40 – 80	
Lizzie Swaartbooi	7	F	pneumonia	010713	5-15	
Kikie Sekw	1	F	Diarrhoea	010714	0-1	
Macquaue Hendrick	2	F	Diarrhoea	010714	1-5	
Klein Ardouas	2	M	enteritis	010714	1-5	
Klein Goo	4	M	pneumonia, Broncho	010715	1-5	
Daffey Hail	3	M	Bronchitis	010716	1-5	
April Sophia	4	M	Bronchitis	010716	1-5	
Sarah Johnas	15	M	pneumonia	010716	5-15	
Anna January	3	F	pneumonia, Broncho	010716	1-5	
Phillipi Raster	5	M	Bronchitis	010717	1-5	
Klein Piet Machowe	6	M	pneumonia	010717	5-15	
Infant child of Maria Johnmiwye	13D	M	bronchitis	010718	5-15	No rations
Samea Eckelton	2	F	enteritis	010718	1-5	
Metta Low	4	F	pneumonia	010718	1-5	
Hans Sekw	9	M	pneumonia	010718	5-15	
Gracie Low	2	F	Bronchitis	010719	1-5	
Piet Flint	22	M	not indicated	010719	15-40	
Robert Fesh	2	M	not indicated	010719	1-5	
Sarah Emby	9	F	pneumonia	010719	5-15	
Sarah McQueena	1.5	F	enteritis	010720	1-5	
Gracie Cornelius	4	F	enteritis	010720	1-5	
Johannestellaway	4	M	enteritis	010720	1-5	
Boshmate Solomon	14	F	pneumonia	010720	5-15	
David Marthimus	14	M	pneumonia	010720	5-15	
Dottea Mena	4	F	pneumonia, Broncho	010720	1-5	
Magdaline Combrinck	6	F	pneumonia, Broncho	010720	5-15	
Sarah Johnas	4	F	pneumonia, Broncho	010721	1-5	
Piet Low	5	M	pneumonia, Broncho	010721	1-5	
Infant child of Lena	17D	F	not indicated	010722	0-1	No rations
Samkye Van Roos	6	F	pneumonia, Broncho	010722	5-15	
Anna Marthuius	10	F	pneumonia	010723	5-15	
Meakye Frantz	13	F	pneumonia	010723	5-15	
Mountrek	60	F	heart failure	010725	40 – 80	
Isaac Teboukau	11	M	pneumonia	010725	5-15	
Katrina Brandts	45	F	pneumonia	010810	40 – 80	
Abraham Renoster	0.8	M	Diarrhoea	010811	0-1	

Name of Deceased	Age	Sex	Cause of Death	Date of Death	Age Category	Comments
Dothea Modema	0.8	F	diarrhoea	010811	0-1	No rations
Infant child of Naria	42D	F	bronchitis	010812	0-1	No rations
April Lori	2	M	Bronchitis	010812	1-5	
Elsie Kaptain	70	F	old age	010812	40 –80	
Rachel Jacobs	1	F	Enteric	010813	0-1	
Raport Rodama	6	M	Enteric	010813	5-15	No rations
Jan Saebonca	6	M	pneumonia	010813	5-15	
Rebecca Latrea	1.8	F	pneumonia, Broncho	010813	1-5	
Madsecampa Melk	35D	F	bronchitis	010814	0-1	No rations
Wilhemina	0.9	F	Diarrhoea	010814	0-1	
Managon	5	F	masingotis	010814	1-5	
Mina Badenhorst	7	F	pneumonia	010814	5-15	
Letea Melatosi	17	F	pneumonia	010816	15-40	No rations
Baaltyu	30	M	pneumonia	010824	15-40	No Rations
Sara	0.9	F	Bronchitis	010825	0-1	No rations
Karatina	1	F	enteritis	010826	0-1	
Marie	6	F	pneumonia	010827	5-15	
Leua	4	F	Bronchitis	010828	1-5	
Seinou	11	M	pneumonia	010828	5-15	
Piet Tou	4	M	Bronchitis	010829	1-5	
Mieta	3	F	enteritis	010829	1-5	
Piet Flink	75	M	heart disease	010829	40 –80	
Ou Sara	70	F	heart failure	010829	40 –80	
Heytack Pla atye	8	M	pneumonia	010829	5-15	
Andries	0.2	M	Diarrhoea	010830	0-1	No rations
April	0.5	M	Diarrhoea	010830	0-1	No rations
Ou Anna	80	F	heart failure	010830	40 –80	

Total deaths: 223

Appendix 6.2B
Population of the Bloemfontein Black Concentration Camp
16 February to 31 August 1901

Date	Population	Source
010216	886	SRC, Vol, 1, 11
010323	1924	SRC, Vol, 3, 770
010405	1352	SRC, Vol, 6, 1725
010407	1459	FK 1034
010422	1384	SRC, Vol. 6, 1725
010513	1398	Fk 1034
010525	1363	Fk 1035
010605	1248	CSO, Vol. 13, 1620
010615	1380	Fk 1035
010629	1264	FK 1036
010706	1264	Fk 1034
010714	1302	FK 1036
010721	1262	FK 1036
010803	1347	FK 1037
010817	2575	FK 1038
010824	2409	FK 1038
010831	2593	FK 1038

Appendix 6.2C
Cases of Sickness Due to Enteric Fever (Typhoid) in the Bloemfontein
Black Concentration Camp

Date	Source	Description
010309	SRC, Vol. 1, 200	"While the previous cases of enteric have perfectly recovered two new cases during the week have been isolated
010427	SRC, Vol. 2, 1563	"Some cases of enteric appeared again in the camp and have been isolated, while there was no new case of dysentery
010202	SRC, Vol. 2, 406	"While nearly all the patients suffering from Enteric have recovered and no new case occurred during the week diarrhoea continues to be very bad among the children and out of the 5 deaths which took place during the week in both camps four are due to that disease and one to dysentery."
010223	SRC, Vol. 1, 157	"there are at present five cases of enteric, four of which I managed to isolate while I am waiting for a tent to isolate the fifth one."
010824	SRC, Vol. 99, p. 39	While there was no case of an infectious nature at the camp for the last few weeks and the state of health was slowly improving some cases of dysentery and enteric occurred at the camp amongst the new arrivals.
010831	SRC, Vol. 99	No fresh cases of enteric or dysentery occurred at the camp during the week. (This shows that there was a great concern about enteric fever and dysentery.
010228	SRC, Vol. 2, 372	"All motions passed by the patients is buried and every prevent any infection." This precaution is particularly done to prevent the spread of typhoid, dysentery and other waterborne diseases.

Numbers and percentages of deaths by population in the Bloemfontein black concentration camp

Date of Report	Period in Days	Population	Nos. of Deaths	Percent of Population	Causes of deaths
010216	14	886	5	0.57	Diarrhoea (4), Dysentery(1)
0100323	35	1924	5	0.26	Diarrhoea(5).
010405	11	1352	3	0.23	Dysentery(2), Pneumonia(1)
010407	2	1459	4	0.28	Pneumonia(2),Dysentery(1), Enteric(1).
010422	14	1384	15	1.09	Pneumonia(13), Dysentery(1)
010513	21	1398	25	1.79	Pneumonia(13), Enteric(6), Heart disease(3), Dysentery(1), Not indicated(3).
010525	14 ⁵	1363	4	0.30	Old age(1), Pneumonia(1), Broncho-Pneumonia(1), Tuberculosis Pulmonum(1).
010605	11	1248	29	2.33	Pneumonia(12), Broncho-Pneumonia(5), Dysentery(5), Bronchitis(2), Old Age(2), Diarrhoea Infantum(1), Diarrhoea(1), Enteric(1)
010615	10	1380	21	1.53	Pneumonia(10), Dysentery(4), Broncho-Pneumonia(2), Old Age(2), Diarrhoea Infantum,(1), Diarrhoea(1), Hentriculi(1).
010629	14	1264	34	2.69	Pneumonia(11), Diarrhoea(9), Broncho-Pneumonia(6), Enteric(2), Old Age(2), Heart Failure(2), Dysentery(1), Diarrhoea Infantum(1).
010706	8	1264	11	0.87	Broncho-Pneumonia(4), Pneumonia(3), Enteric(2), Enteritis(1), Measles(1),
010714	8	1302	19	1.46	Pneumonia,(6), Enteritis(4), Diarrhoea(3, Bronchitis

⁵ Missing the death returns from 14 May to 24 May 1901

Appendix 6.3
The Names and Causes of Death of the Black and Coloured Inmates
Who Died in the Middleburg White Concentration Camp

Name of Deceased	Age	Sex	Cause of Death	Date of Death	Age Group	Comments
Jan	100	M	bronchitis, senility	010610	80-100	The oldest known black inmate. "Basuto" Reported to be 100 years old
Abraham	~50	M	diarrhoea, exhaustion	010612	40-80	
Kleinbooi	20	M	malaria	010612	15-40	
"Native child."	0.17		measles	010616	0-1	2 Months
Slallen	16		heart disease	010620	15-40	
Jan	76		bronchitis	010625	40-80	Senility. Zulu
Koos	3.0		influenza, dysentery	010706	1-5	
Hendrick	16		measles, bronchitis	010706	15-40	
Adam	1.58	M	not indicated	010718	1-5	! year, 7 Mos., 4 days. (Bushman)
Taboel Annie	0.08	F	not indicated	010722	0-1	
Sien	2	M	measles, bronchitis	010724	1-5	"Bushman"
Bethseba	0.58	F	pneumonia	010724	0-1	
Dalia	40	F	influenza, pneumonia	010726	40-80	
Sophia	41	F	measles, bronchitis	010726	40-80	
Stephanus	3	M	not indicated	010729	1-5	
Mietje	1.5		not indicated	010803	1-5	
Willem	0.66	M	measles ¹	010804	0-1	
Smardrik	1		measles	010809	1-5	
Hans	3.29	M	measles, bronchitis	010818	1-5	"Griqua"
Dorthea	1.5	F	measles, bronchitis	010821	1-5	"Griqua"
Belfast	4		measles, bronchitis	010821	1-5	"Kaffer"
Dina	40	F	bronchitis, chronic	010823	40-80	"Griqua woman"
Dina	N.i. ²	F	not indicated	010824 ³		
Ardrina	1.08	F	not indicated	010824 ⁴	1-5	
Johannes	40	M	died in hospital	010912 ⁵		

¹ Illegible, appears to be Measles.

² Not indicated

³ Date of registration rather than date of death.

⁴ Date of registration

Name of Deceased	Age	Sex	Cause of Death	Date of Death	Age Group	Comments
Meloek			care			
Magriet	0.33	F	pneumonia	010915	0-1	
Willem Francois Koene	2..58	M	measles, bronchitis	010918	1-5	
Bolauw	~19		bronchitis, paralysis	010919	15-40	
Salieka	4.33	M	diarrhoea	010920	1-5	"Mixed native male"
Hermanus	3	M	measles, diarrhoea	010922	1-5	"Mixed native male"
Gideon van Zyl ⁶		M	not indicated	010925 ⁷		"Mixed race"?
Jante	12 ⁸		exhaustion	010927	5-15	
Mapoch	19 ⁹		diarrhoea, vomiting	010930	15-40	"Basuto"
Native child of Katakela	0.02		dysentery	011001	0-1	7 Days.
Jeremias	0.58	M	whooping cough, diarrhoea	011002	0-1	Actually 6 Mos., 26 Days. "Bushman"
Child of Willem Slabel	0.07		diarrhoea, exhaustion	011003	0-1	23 Days. ¹⁰
Petrus	11.08	M	bronchitis, spinal paralysis	011005	5-15	11 yrs. 1 Mos., 1 Day. "Bushman"
Selina	~15	F	diarrhoea, influenza	011005	15-40	
Suzanna	5.29	F	marasmus	011006	5-15	"Hottentot"
Tungile	1	F	diarrhoea	011011	1-5	
Cleopas Kunnene	1.083		whooping cough	011011	1-5	1 yr., 1 Mo., 1 Day
Fokkie	2.83		whooping cough	011011 ¹¹	1-5	2 yrs., 10 Mos., 19 Days "Bushman"
Clara Bosman	30 ¹²	F	enteric fever, asthma	011018	15-40	
Africa, Beauchard	13.5	M	enteric fever	011019	5-15	"Basterd"
Hessie	30.5	F	malaria and asthma	011019	15-40	
Child of Willem Slabel	0.05		diarrhoea, asthma	011022	0-1	20 Days. One of a set of twins."
Maria child of Kleinbooi	0.58	F	diarrhoea, exhaustion	011101	0-1	7 Mos.
Rachel	9	F	dysentery	011104	5-15	"The Hottentot girl"
Feile, Native	2..17	M	whooping cough	011104	1-5	2 Yrs., 1 Mo., 25 Days

⁵ Date of registration

⁶ Comment on the registration certificate book, "European born in CC-but supposed to be mixed race."

⁷ Date of registration

⁸ Approximately 12.

⁹ Approximately 19

¹⁰ The dates of death in the tragic deaths of these twin babies who were twins shows only 2 days, but the age given is 20 and 23 days..

¹¹ Date of registration

¹² Approximately 30.

Name of Deceased	Age	Sex	Cause of Death	Date of Death	Age Group	Comments
Son of Maklyd.						
Arora	5.04	F	enteric fever, bronchitis	011105	5-15	
Celina	0.42	F	convulsions	011106	0-1	
Zambesi	14	M	pneumonia, cardiac failure	011106	5-15	
Martha	~25	F	diarrhoea	011109	15-40	
Elsie	10.83	F	measles, diarrhoea	011109	5-15	10 Yrs., 10 Mos., 16 Days
Jantje	35	M	not indicated	011119 ¹³	15-40	
Picanien	16	M	not indicated	011120 ¹⁴	15-40	
Susar	6	M	diarrhoea, exhaustion	011122	5-15	"Hottentot"
Hannah	12.92	F	whooping cough, diarrhoea	011124	5-15	
Magriet	1.92	F	fever	011206	1-5	
Africa Beauchard	48	M	diarrhoea, exhaustion	011207	40-80	May be the father of "Africa Son of Africa" Beauchard in this list
Jacobus	1.66	M	fever	011211	1-5	
Sheekwish	1.17	F	whooping cough, diarrhoea	011212	1-5	1 Yr., 2 Mos., 12 Days
Phillip	3.17	M	diarrhoea, exhaustion	011213	1-5	3 Yrs., 2 Mos., 4 Days
Matheus Swanepoel	6	M	fever	011214	5-15	
Jsann J? Maria	3.58		whooping cough, diarrhoea	011225	1-5	3 Yrs., 6 Mos., 25 Days
Willem	1.33	M	whooping cough, diarrhoea	011229	1-5	
Dina	14	F	enteric fever	020105	5-15	"Hottentot"
Filemon Maseko	~25		lighting stroke	020109	15-40	
Jim	~26	M	debility, diarrhoea, exhaustion	020218	15-40	
Maijes	1.17		diarrhoea, exhaustion	020407	1-5	
Jan	1	M	bronchitis, dentition	021205	1-5	"Swasie"

¹³ Registration date.¹⁴ Registration date.

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CS	Archives of the Colonial Secretary of the Transvaal Colony. Volumes 7, 25, 57, 74, 152, 820, 197
CSAR	Archives of the Commissioner South African Railways. Contains extensive records of staffing including doctors and nurses. Contain many documents and correspondence of the Imperial Military Railway. Includes some material on the immediate Post War period. The records of the Department of Native Refugees were turned over to the Commissioner of the South African Railway in 1904, but cannot be located in this file where they should be located.. Volumes 1-11.
CT	Archives of the Colonial Treasure of the Transvaal Volumes. 13
DBC	Archives of the Director of Burger Camps. These files only contain certain registers, primarily register of deaths. All the correspondence files are missing. Some paper of the Department were sent to the War Office in 1901. They were returned in 1904 and placed in a vault in the Palace of Justice. In the index of this file there are no black camps listed. Some of the servants of the Boer women and other black were placed in the white camp as allowed by Lord Kitchener. See Chapter 3. Volumes 10, 13, 77, 80.
FK	Fotocopy Series: A large collection of photographed documents including some official confidential and secret print. This file contains Milner's Papers and the Middleton Papers which are the correspondence between Lord Kitchener and St. John Brodrick, Lord Middleton who served as the Secretary of State for War. During the war period. File contains many other important documents. This whole series was photographed by the National Archives in England. Volumes, 476, 492, 503, 516, 602, 611, 658, 683, 1100-1203, 1621-1624, 1761, 1766, 1956, 2025-2026,
GOV	Archives of the Secretary of the Governor of the Transvaal Volumes 127, 148, 276
LWM	Landdros/ Magistrate, Wakkerstroom District. This is an extensive file primarily consisting of court and legal documents. Contains some relevant documents regarding compensation payments and the Vryburg white concentration camp. Volumes 8-11.
MCB	Archives of the Military Compensation Board. Contains extensive records of compensation payments and correspondence between the Department of Native Refugees and the board regarding payment of

compensation to the inmates of the Department of Native Refugees Vol. 48 contains the correspondence between the Department of Native Refugees and the Military Compensation Board. Volumes 48,146, 148, 153.

MGP

Archives of the Military Governor of Pretoria .

This is a most important file regarding the military government of the Transvaal. The Military Governor of Pretoria was the most important official in the Transvaal. Since the Department of Burger Camp file is devoid of all records except certain registers, primarily death registers, and since the Department was under the authority of the Military Governor it contains the best record of the white concentration camps in the Transvaal. Contains the correspondence between the Military Governor and the Department of Native Refugees and the Department of Burger Camps. The file is very well organised and very comprehensive on all matter regarding the Transvaal except for the Johannesburg area of the colony which had its own Military Governor. Volumes 5,9,14-16,23,2829,32-67, 73-8184-85, 87, 89-105, 107-110, 114-116, 121, 124-126, 129-137, 139,143-144, 153, 214-215, 222, 228, 230,243, 248,258.

NRD

Archives of the Department of Native Refugees.

Many of these files are missing. They were handed over to the Commissioner of Railways but cannot be located in these files or at the South African Railway Museum in Johannesburg. The files that remain are mainly accounting ledgers. Records of food and supplies issued to the individual camps and files regarding the closing of the camps. Volumes 1-8,

PSY

Archives of the Political Secretary

G. V. Fiddes, the Political Secretary to the Commander-in-Chief was very involved with the mining companies. Contains very important correspondence regarding the mines during the war and the relationship of Lord Milner to these companies as well as many other documents regarding the civilian population. Contains correspondence from military official intended for the action of the Commander-in-Chief. Some materials relevant to the concentration camps are contained in this file. Is arranged chronologically and has no document numbers. As a result the letter and other documents used in the study identify the volume numbers and page numbers. Volumes 3, 15, 44, 53, 57,64.

SNA

Archives of the Secretary of Native Affairs and the Department of Native Affairs, including the Commissioner of Native Affairs. This file does not contain the correspondence of the Superintendent of Native Affairs for Pretoria, J.S. Marwick, which can be found in the archives of the Military Governor of Pretoria. This is the most important file in matters regarding the Department of Native Refugees and contains monthly reports of both the Department of Native Refugees in the Transvaal and the Orange River Colony. Contains many documents regarding black labour, the Transvaal Chamber of Mines and all matters pertaining to the black civilian population.. The over 700 volumes of this file are arranged first by topic and then chronologically. There is a good computer finding aid for this file. The file was researched thoroughly page by page and hundreds of references in the thesis pertain to this file. Volumes 1-3, 7-11, 14-17,,20, 26-31,45, 57, 59,65, 68-69, 73, 77, 83-84, 91, 118.

TKP

Transvaal Administrative Reports

Contains the Final Report of the Department of Native Refugees in the Transvaal and the reports of all the Transvaal government agencies including annual reports of the Commissioner of Mines in the Transvaal.

Accessions

- A1643 Roberts Papers. Contains Telegrams and letter to Roberts. A2404, *Roberts Letters and Telegrams* contains his Letters and Telegrams to his subordinates and Lord Milner. Volumes. 1-4, 21-22, 31-32, 34, 39, 42, 46, 50, 52-55, 57-59, 60-62, 65.
- A2404 *Roberts Letters and Telegrams*.
Volumes 1-6.

2. In the Free State Provincial Archives-Bloemfontein.

- CSO Archives of the Secretary to the Orange River Colony. Administration.
This file contains a substantial files of correspondence and reports concerning to black and white concentration camps because the camps were under the authority of the Deputy Administrator of the Orange River Colony Administration. Also contains all correspondence regarding black civilians as there was no Department of Native Affairs in the Orange River Colony. This file is arranged chronologically. This file was thoroughly researched and the thesis contains many references to this file. Volumes 5-9, 11-12, 23, 26,29-35, 37, 45-48, 52-57, 61-62, 67, 70, 77-78, 82, 87, 89, 107-109, 11, 113, 119, 120, 122,, 131,143, 145-147, 155, 157, 195, 232, 234, 296.
- MBL Municipality of Bloemfontein, Minutes of Bloemfontein Council Meetings.
Some documents pertaining to medical service, hospitals and black nurses and the black camp at Bloemfontein. The overcrowding of the Waai Hoek Location is also contained in these minutes. MBL 1/1/1/10 pp. 67-68; 10 December 1900, pp. 79-83, 21 February 1901, p. 100, 4 April 1901, p. 132; Meeting with Deputy Administrator ORC and Deputation from Town Council, 28 June 1901, pp. 177-178; Town Council Meeting, 4 July 1901, p. 183, Town Council Meeting, 1 August 1901, pp. 194-195; Town Council Meeting 5 September 1901, pp. 200-202; Town Council Meeting, 3 October 1901, p. 211, 215-216; Town Council Meeting, 7 November 1901, pp. 239, 240, 242; Town Council Meeting, 19 December 1901 pp. 265, 267-268; Town Council Meeting, 20 February 1902, p. 300; Town Council Meeting, 6 March 1902, p. 306; Special Meeting of the Town Council, 12 April 1902; p. 332; Town Council Meeting, 17 April 1902, p. 337; Town Council Meeting, 1 May 1902, p. 351-352; Special Town Council Meeting, 7 May 1902, p. 358; Town Council Meeting, 15 May 1902, pp. 362-363;
- PHD Archives of the Public Health Department and the Medical Officer of Health in the Orange River Colony. Volumes 1, 3.
- SRC Archives of the Superintendent of the Department of Refugees, Orange River Colony. This file is quite extensive and very detailed. It has the most information on the original black camps and has some 20,000 pages of materials on the white camps. All volumes up to number 22 have been exhaustively search. Discontinued at the point when the black camps were transferred to the Department of Native Refugees. Volumes 1-22, 23,25, 27-33.

Accessions

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3. In the Natal provincial Archives.

- NSNA Archives of the Natal Secretary of Native Affairs.
The Natal Department of Native Refugees was an agency of the Natal Department of Native Affairs. There is very little correspondence regarding this Department except in the beginning stages when the black refugees were being farmed out to the various Zulu headmen. There were no black camps in Natal. Volumes, 292-297, Confidential Papers, Volumes C 33,
- NA-CSO Archives of the Colonial Secretary of the Natal Colony.
Volumes. 1691
- WEN' Archives of the Town of Weenen
Volumes. 1/WEN

4. in the Cape Archives

- CA-NA Archives of the Secretary of the Cape Colony Native Affairs Department
Volumes .258, 259, 261, 262, 263, 376, 281, 495, 513, 515, 516 500, 505, 508, 524, 546, 547 580 629 640,
- CA-GH Archives of the Governor of the Cape Colony
Volumes. 1018,
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- NA-CSO Natal Archives-Colonial Secretary Office

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