

APPENDIX 12.

NOTES ON REFUGEE CONCENTRATION CAMPS IN
SOUTH AFRICA.

THE subjoined telegrams account for the initiation of these camps at the end of 1900 :—

From Lord Kitchener to the Secretary of State for War.
(Telegram.)
(No. 117, cipher.)

“ Pretoria,

“ December 27th, 1900, 8.20 a.m.

“ As I consider some steps are necessary to induce Boers in field to surrender voluntarily, I am issuing instructions that all who do so will be allowed to live with their families, property, and live-stock in laagers, under our protection, near railway in their district. Those who took the oath of neutrality will also be allowed this privilege, unless it is proved that they went out on commando again without coercion.

“ At present, Boers who surrender are removed from their district, making others afraid to come in. Boer families will be brought into these laagers in their district, and notices posted up that burghers still out are free to join them until country is safe for them to return to their farms. I have formed a Burgher Peace Committee here, consisting of influential surrendered burghers; they are sending delegates to each district to induce Boers in the field to come in and do away with present misrepresentations of Boer leaders.”

From the Secretary of State for War to Lord Kitchener.
(Telegram.)

(No. 322, cipher.)

“ War Office,

“ December 28th, 1900.

“ Your No. 117, cipher. We fully agree with proposed policy. Is it not possible to extend it to ‘undesirables’ rather than send them into Cape Colony, where they produce similar result to Boers on parole?”

In a circular despatched by the Commandant-General of the Boer Forces in the Transvaal to all his commandants, dated Roos Senekal, November 6th, 1900, the following extract occurred :—

“ Do everything in your power to prevent the burghers from laying down their arms. If they do not listen to this, I shall be forced to confiscate everything from them, movable or immovable, and to burn their houses.”

At the meeting which subsequently took place at Middelburg between the rival Commanders-in-Chief,* this subject was raised by Lord Kitchener ; and General Botha then declared his views as follows :—

“ I am entitled to force every man to join me, and if they fail, to confiscate their property and leave their families on the veld. The only thing that you can do is to send them out of the country as if I catch them they must suffer.”

To this expressed intention Lord Kitchener replied to General Botha in a letter dated Pretoria, April 16th, 1901, from which the following is an extract :—

“ As I informed your Honour at Middelburg, owing to the irregular manner in which you have conducted and are conducting hostilities by forcing unwilling and peaceful inhabitants to join your commandos . . . I have now no other course open to me except to take the unpleasant and repugnant step of bringing in the women and children.”

In addition, therefore, to the burghers who voluntarily surrendered, and to the families of surrendered burghers who came into the British lines of their own accord, many such families were compulsorily brought in solely in order to save them from the reprisals of the enemy. There were, however, two other categories of refugees for whom the camps were intended :—

(a) Families who had habitually engaged in passing intelligence to the enemy.

* See Chapter VI., pages 119 and 120, and Chapter XXX., page 523.

- (b) Families from farms which had been constantly used by the enemy either as shelters from which to fire on the troops, or as commissariat depôts.

Refugees were therefore differentiated as follows :—

- (1) Self-supporting refugees who had voluntarily sought the protection of camp for themselves and their stock.
- (2) Refugees who were unable to support themselves, but who had sought the protection of the camps.
- (3) Families of persons who had been brought into camp either for protection or for military reasons. This class were in a minority in most camps and formed usually the malcontent portion of the inhabitants of a camp.*

With the above objects in view, camps were initiated early in 1901 by the military authorities, and were taken over by the civil governments of the Transvaal and Orange River Colonies on March 1st, 1901, and of Natal on November 1st, 1901. The increase of the concentration camps during 1901 can be gauged by the table of expenditure attached to this Appendix.

Accommodation for the refugees was provided as far as possible in wood and iron buildings, but mainly in marquees and bell-tents. Overcrowding was in all cases prohibited. Persons who arrived in camp without bedding, plates, knives, etc., were supplied with these articles at Government expense; clothing also was supplied free to destitute refugees. Dutch reformed ministers were encouraged to hold services in the various camps and received their usual stipends for so doing. Native servants were usually allowed to attend their employers. Refugees were permitted to correspond with their friends subject to censorship. Baths and wash-houses were provided, and as far as possible a continuous water supply was laid on.

The weekly ration per head varied, but was approximately as follows :—

For adults and children over twelve years :— 7 lbs. of meal or flour; 4 ozs. salt; 6 or 7 ozs. coffee; 12 or 14 ozs. sugar; 3 to 3½ lbs. meat; ½ to 1 lb. rice; 14 lbs. fuel; 3½ lbs. potatoes.

Children under twelve years received the same ration, with the exception of meat, of which they were given usually one half the quantity allowed to adults. In many camps soap and candles also

* Reports on Working of Concentration Camps, November, 1901 (Cd. 819).

formed part of the weekly rations, and children under twelve received oatmeal and milk.

Provision of medical comforts was also made by the Colonial Administrations, at a total cost in the Transvaal and Orange River Colony camps alone of some £7,000 per mensem. It was on so liberal and comprehensive a scale that the Committee of Ladies appointed by the Secretary of State to report on the condition of the camps declared it "very difficult to discover any suitable channel into which they could direct the flow of private charity."*

The Colonial Administrations adopted the policy of offering paid employment to the inmates of the refugee camps for work done in the camps. In some cases families received as much as £20 a month for such work. The monthly bill for labour in the Transvaal camps alone amounted in August, 1901, to some £6,000—the whole of which sum was paid into the pockets of the refugees. Eventually labour for three hours daily for the good of the camp was usually made compulsory for all adult males in the camps. Whenever, as was usually the case, the camp was in the neighbourhood of a town, able-bodied men had the opportunity of earning wages at the usual Colonial rates of pay, still living on free rations in the camp. Ultimately, however, owing to the dissatisfaction this caused in the labour market, the free rationing of competitors for employment outside the camps was abandoned.

In each camp shops were established containing supplies of groceries, clothing, and a few luxuries—of which the price was regulated by martial law. In addition, large charitable gifts of clothing were distributed to the refugees free. Arrangements were also made by which such refugees as had cattle or other stock with them obtained grazing under their own guards, so as to protect them from the depredations of marauding parties of the enemy.

Soon after the refugee camps were initiated a systematic effort was made by the Education Department to provide the means of free education for the children in the camps. Tents, frame-houses or more solid structures were erected as school houses; furniture, books and other apparatus were provided, and a staff of teachers was employed at the expense of the Colonial Governments. An unique opportunity was thus seized for placing the means of education

* Report on Concentration Camps, by a Committee of Ladies appointed by the Secretary of State for War (Cd. 893, page 4).

within reach of many children who hitherto had lived in remote parts of the veld, many miles from any school. Early in 1901 "organising inspectors" were sent to open schools in the camps; and soon, in spite of the difficulties caused by want of accommodation, of furniture and other requisites, and of teachers—in spite also of the sickness in the camps and of the hostile feelings of the refugees—in almost every camp in South Africa there was a flourishing school, and in many the number of children, who, without compulsion, at once attended school, was large.* Moreover, the schools were open to adults; and many young men and women availed themselves of this their first opportunity of receiving an elementary education.† Ultimately, attendance at school was made compulsory for all children in the camps. By the end of 1901 there were more children receiving education in the refugee camps than had been known in the history of the State Schools. Much of the charitable funds at the disposal of an organisation called the "Victoria League" was employed in providing school teachers of cooking and of hygiene—and in forming lending-libraries of books for the benefit of the inmates of the camps.

The principal officials at each camp usually consisted of the following:—

One superintendent,

One storekeeper (with clerks),

One medical officer,

One dispenser,

One matron with nurses and assistants as required; the latter being drawn at first when procurable from the refugee women in the camp, who were encouraged to seek paid employment at work calculated to promote the benefit of the camp.

The successful organisation of each refugee camp depended primarily upon the superintendent. "Each camp bore the impress of the character of its superintendent."† Good water, drainage, and sanitation, an excellent hospital and teaching staff were important factors in the successful conduct of such a camp; but the paramount

* Up to the end of September, 1901, that is to say, for some six months, the camp schools cost £7,250. This figure does not include the cost of the schools in Natal, nor of the refugee schools in the towns.

† See footnote page 662.

element was the capacity of the individual superintendent, and the extraordinary difficulty of his task may be imagined.

As the war continued, considerable experience was gained in the management of the refugee camps. Travelling inspectors of camps, with a staff of an inspecting medical officer, and an inspecting water engineer, were appointed, who practically standardised the best features of camp management throughout the country. Public boilers for boiling water and public ovens for baking were supplied by the Administration to all camps. Vegetables, lime juice, butter and jam were added to the rations of adults, and more milk to that of small children. More school teachers were applied for. The number of matrons* in the camp was increased, and the supply of food-stuffs on sale in the camp shops was supplemented. Additional doctors and nurses† were despatched to those camp hospitals which were particularly in need of their services; and as far as possible a reserve staff of doctors and nurses was formed.

The dispensaries were invariably well-stocked; the supply of invalid food was almost unlimited; and in spite of the insufficient number of medical officers and trained nurses, the work of the medical and nursing staff in most cases left little to be desired.

A certain amount of transport was allowed to all superintendents so that they might deal efficiently with the sanitation and water supply of their camps. Every effort was made to supply the refugees with beds, and the number of inmates of any individual camp was as far as possible limited; any sites found to be insanitary were moved; and the fencing-in of camps and restrictions upon free ingress and egress in the interest of health gradually became universal.

The death-rate, especially amongst the children, in the camps was naturally higher than normal; it was to be attributed:—(1) To the insanitary condition of the country engendered by the war. Small children were peculiarly susceptible to the tainted drinking water and atmosphere, and to the want of food suitable to their age; but these conditions would have been at least “as severely felt by the child population had they been left to live on their farms.”‡

* See previous footnote.

† Hitherto the usual proportion of doctors had been one per thousand, and of nurses three per thousand inhabitants.

‡ Report on Concentration Camps by a Committee of Ladies appointed by the Secretary of State for War (Cd. 893, page 15).

(2) To causes within the control of the refugees themselves. Even under the best circumstances protracted existence in stationary camps has always been productive of disease, especially of enteric disorders. The massing together of large numbers of persons is, in itself, liable to cause the propagation of disease, owing to the resultant contact between them. In the concentration camps conditions were particularly unfavourable owing largely to the character and inexperience of their inhabitants. "The majority of the refugees were filthy in their habits,"* and did not realise that "what might be comparatively harmless when family was separated from family by miles of open veld was dangerous when thousands of people were gathered together in a small area." Moreover, the Dutch refugees had a rooted objection to sending their children into hospital, and did all in their power to conceal cases of disease among them. Thus infection was spread broadcast. The cubic space in the tents was small, and the infected patient came into intimate contact with every other occupant of the tent. The mothers had little idea of feeding and nursing a sick child—and their neglect in this respect, and their invariable objection to proper ventilation, rendered any check on infection a matter of extreme difficulty.

Europeans, hardened by the frequent recurrence of epidemics in Europe, enjoy a certain immunity from infection, which appears to have been lost by the South African Dutch, owing, perhaps, to their long sojourn in that country and to the complete isolation of their homes.* Whatever the cause, the susceptibility of the Afrianders to infection of most kinds was markedly greater than that of Europeans. Such diseases as measles, pneumonia, whooping cough, chicken-pox, mumps—all of a malignant type—spread rapidly amongst the refugees, both children and adults, in a manner unheard of amongst a similar population of Europeans. The variation of temperature was also a potent factor in the production of disease. It was often as much as 60° Fahrenheit, and provided, especially for children and aged persons, the very conditions most conducive to the germination of disease.

Often, too, the refugees were admitted to camp in a low and destitute state, particularly in the case of women and children who had been following a commando. In one case at Kroonstad, a

* Papers relating to the Refugee Camps (Cdl. 853, pages 113 and 114).

batch of refugees brought into camp eight moribund cases and three dead bodies. It was unquestioned that the epidemics were primarily caused by the sufferings of women and children previous to entering the camps, and no sooner did one species of disease germ die out in a camp than it was quickly re-introduced by fresh arrivals from the veld. Under similar circumstances in the future, some system of quarantine camps where suspected incomers could be kept under observation before being given free pratique to the permanent camp, would be advisable.

The subjoined Tables contain much statistical information with regard to the camps:—

AngloBoerWar.com

TABLE SHOWING POPULATION OF CONCENTRATION REFUGEE CAMPS DURING THE LAST PHASE OF THE WAR.

TRANSVAAL, 1902.

Camp.	January.			February.			March.			April.			May.	
	Men.	Women and Child-ren.	Total.	Men.	Women and Child-ren.	Total.	Men.	Women and Child-ren.	Total.	Men.	Women and Child-ren.	Total.	Men.	Women and Child-ren. Total.
Barberton	248	1,329	1,577	241	1,292	1,533	233	1,275	1,508	236	1,319	1,555		
Balmoral.....	425	2,278	2,703	414	2,019	2,433	479	1,852	2,331	459	1,807	2,266		
Belfast	245	1,100	1,345	268	1,206	1,474	266	1,114	1,380	274	1,154	1,428		
Heidelberg	484	1,763	2,247	477	1,725	2,202	477	1,687	2,164	454	1,456	1,910		
Irene	935	3,132	4,067	946	3,116	4,062	957	3,197	4,154	1,216	4,236	5,452		
Johannesburg ..	502	2,055	2,557	483	1,728	2,211	400	1,332	1,732	337	1,247	1,584		
Klerksdorp ...	511	3,468	3,979	506	3,477	3,983	473	3,059	3,532	415	2,550	2,965		
Krugerdsdorp...	991	3,638	4,629	993	2,945	3,938	930	3,013	3,943	914	3,008	3,922		
Meintjes-Kop ..	11	68	79	57	269	326	81	346	427	92	366	458		
Middelburg ...	1,026	4,032	5,058	1,132	4,039	5,171	1,083	3,913	4,996	951	3,381	4,332		
Maifeking.....	787	3,525	4,312	798	3,530	4,328	807	3,540	4,347	727	3,331	4,058		
Nylstroom	291	1,359	1,650	290	1,333	1,623	272	1,202	1,474					
Potchefstroom ..	1,129	5,997	7,126	1,023	4,793	5,816	919	4,344	5,263	910	4,248	5,158	9,279	37,871
Standerton ...	628	2,826	3,454	774	2,655	3,429	762	2,633	3,395	726	2,708	3,434		
Vereeniging ...	167	770	937	187	768	955	183	761	944	184	770	954		
Volksrust	685	4,488	5,173	919	2,869	3,788	884	2,669	3,553	869	2,520	3,389		
Vryburg	282	1,318	1,600	357	1,419	1,776	361	1,517	1,878	350	1,499	1,849		
Lydenburg Mil- itary Post	—	93	93	—	95	95	—	95	95	—	95	95		
Pretoria Relief. Johannesburg Relief	102	1,120	1,222	107	1,123	1,230	110	1,140	1,250	87	812	899		
Vryheid Military Post	283	3,016	3,299	249	2,685	2,934	213	2,266	2,479	135	1,231	1,366		
Vryburg (Town) Pietersburg....	11	150	161	11	97	108	13	151	164	13	149	162		
	—	—	—	38	157	195	50	304	354	74	460	534		
	561	2,322	2,883	66	368	434	24	111	135	29	122	151		
Totals	10,304	49,847	60,151	10,246	43,478	53,724	9,977	41,521	51,498	9,452	38,499	47,931	9,279	37,871
														47,150

TABLE SHOWING POPULATION OF CONCENTRATION REFUGEE CAMPS DURING THE LAST PHASE OF THE WAR (*continued*).

ORANGE RIVER COLONY AND CAPE COLONY, 1902.

Camp.	January.			February.			March.			April.			May.	
	Men.	Women and Child-ren.	Total.	Men.	Women and Child-ren.	Total.	Men.	Women and Child-ren.	Total.	Men.	Women and Child-ren.	Total.	Men.	Women and Child-ren. Total.
Aliwal North .	827	3,687	4,514	815	3,657	4,472	813	3,671	4,484	799	3,684	4,483		
Bloemfontein .	879	4,970	5,949	966	4,914	5,880	972	4,722	5,694	977	4,677	5,654		
Brandfort	629	3,514	4,143	624	3,466	4,090	572	3,329	3,902	581	3,547	4,128		
Bethulie	638	3,450	4,088	629	3,414	4,043	630	3,417	4,047	503	2,534	3,037		
Heilbron	545	2,333	2,878	544	2,315	2,859	174	747	921	173	783	956		
Harrismith ...	210	1,260	1,470	93	515	608	62	286	348	61	291	352		
Kroonstad	649	2,806	3,545	626	2,874	3,500	620	2,908	3,528	608	2,879	3,487		
Kimberley	641	2,828	3,469	639	2,864	3,503	628	2,257	2,885	649	2,794	3,443		
Norval's Pont .	672	2,513	3,185	703	2,776	3,479	713	2,763	3,476	716	2,772	3,488		
Springfontein .	422	2,170	2,592	415	2,158	2,573	412	2,152	2,564	404	2,140	2,544		
Vrededor Road	310	1,577	1,887	303	1,568	1,871	299	1,576	1,866	114	637	751		
Winburg	484	2,494	2,978	423	2,138	2,561	419	2,118	2,537	374	2,044	2,418		
Orange River ..	226	1,480	1,706	226	1,473	1,699	223	1,465	1,688	222	1,446	1,668		
East London ..	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	(about)	353	1,594	1,947		
Uitenhage	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	290	1,694	1,984		
Totals	7,232	35,172	42,404	7,006	34,132	41,138	6,528	31,411	39,789	6,824	33,516	40,340	7,734	37,412 45,146

TABLE SHOWING POPULATION OF CONCENTRATION REFUGEE CAMPS DURING THE LAST PHASE OF THE WAR (*continued*).

NATAL, 1902.

Camp.	January.		February.		March.		April.		May.	
	Men.	Women and Child-ren.	Men.	Women and Child-ren.	Men.	Women and Child-ren.	Men.	Women and Child-ren.	Men.	Women and Child-ren.
Ladysmith										
Colenso										
Howick										
Pietermaritzburg	1,386	10,820	12,206							
Merebank			Not shown separately.							
Jacobs										
Wentworth										
Eshowe										
Totals	1,386	10,820	12,206							
					19,175	3,010	17,711	20,721	3,362	20,659
									3,418	20,858
										24,276
					19,175	3,010	17,711	20,721	3,362	20,659
									3,418	20,858
										24,276

GRAND TOTAL POPULATION OF CONCENTRATION REFUGEE CAMPS DURING THE LAST PHASE OF THE WAR.

Colony.	January.	February.	March.	April.	May.
Transvaal	60,151	53,724	51,498	47,951	47,150
Orange River and Cape Colonies	42,404	41,138	39,789	40,340	45,146
Natal	12,206	19,175	20,721	24,021	24,276
Totals	114,761	114,037	112,008	112,312	116,572

With regard to the expense of the system, in the absence of figures for the year 1902, an average may be estimated from the following Tables, which show the monthly expenditure, *in the Transvaal alone*, from January to November, 1901, the last four months in detail.

January.	February.	March.	April.	May.	June.	July.
£ s. d. 23,247 15 2	£ s. d. 15,008 9 6	£ s. d. 14,482 5 3	£ s. d. 15,451 0 5	£ s. d. 28,576 12 5	£ s. d. 33,671 8 5	£ s. d. 39,733 1 2

	August.	September.	October.	November.
Rations issued.....	£ s. d. 16,032 6 0	£ s. d. 17,768 16 1	£ s. d. 27,398 1 2	£ s. d. 26,138 13 8
Medical comforts issued	2,688 4 0	2,942 16 9	3,643 8 1	4,070 3 1
Clothing distributed	2,324 13 7	3,758 13 11	2,514 12 5	845 2 10
Wages to refugees and natives	5,291 16 11	5,443 7 8	6,693 12 0	7,232 9 5
Other charges.....	1,964 18 6	3,315 9 9	2,545 16 1	1,839 17 5
Staff pay	3,936 1 11	4,351 19 3	5,243 17 10	5,663 15 6
Railage on stores	4,087 6 2	4,902 0 10	1,732 10 1*	1,046 2 0*
Railway fares	281 2 2	1,351 7 9	1,707 0 5	799 0 1
Travelling, refugees.....	—	—	23 2 3	76 16 6
Stationery	91 18 10	23 5 0	2 5 2	3 5 6
Stores lost in transit	158 4 10	64 9 8	135 12 1	134 8 10
Depreciation and loss	—	—	72 10 0	—
	36,856 12 11	44,122 6 8	51,712 7 7	47,849 14 10
Maefeking.....	4,919 18 3	3,422 15 3	—	—
Other centres	1,249 13 3	535 8 10	727 11 11	157 0 7
Medical attendance	—	—	54 10 0	—
	43,026 4 5	48,080 10 9	52,494 9 6	48,006 15 5
Total number of rations issued	1,881,692	1,949,779	2,179,294	1,841,688
Cost per head per day	4.70d.	5.45d.	5.70d.	6.23d.

* Cape Government Railways railrage account for October and November not included.