

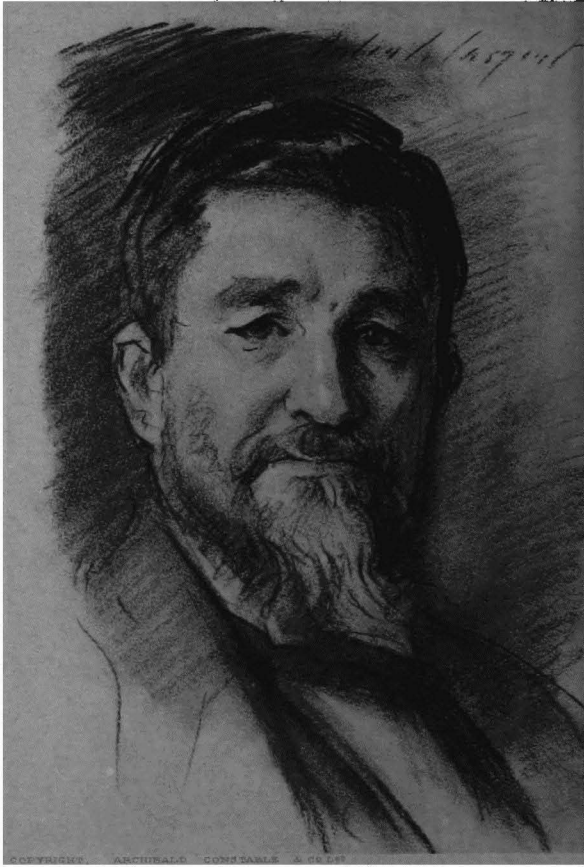
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THREE YEARS WAR



L. J. J. J.

THREE YEARS WAR

(October 1899—June 1902)

BY

CHRISTIAAN RUDOLF DE WET

WESTMINSTER

ARCHIBALD CONSTABLE AND CO LTD

2 WHITEHALL GARDENS

1902

V63:194.N02

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BUTLER & TANNER,
THE SELWOOD PRINTING WORKS,
FROME, AND LONDON.

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Contents

CHAPTER	PAGE
PREFACE	7
I I GO ON COMMANDO AS A PRIVATE BURGHER	9
II NICHOLSON'S NEK	19
III LADYSMITH BESIEGED	27
IV I AM APPOINTED VECHTGENERAAL	33
V THE OVERWHELMING FORCES OF LORD ROBERTS	39
VI PAARDEBERG	53
VII THE WILD FLIGHT FROM POPLAR GROVE	65
VIII THE BURGHERS RECEIVE PERMISSION TO RETURN TO THEIR HOMES	75
IX SANNA'S POST	83
X FOUR HUNDRED AND SEVENTY ENGLISH TAKEN PRISONER AT REDDERSBURG	93
XI AN UNSUCCESSFUL SIEGE	101
XII THE ENGLISH SWARM OVER OUR COUNTRY	109
XIII OUR POSITION AT THE END OF MAY, 1900	121
XIV ROODEWAL	127
XV I MAKE LORD KITCHENER'S ACQUAINTANCE	141
XVI BETHLEHEM IS CAPTURED BY THE ENGLISH	151
XVII THE SURRENDER OF PRINSLOO	159
XVIII I AM DRIVEN INTO THE TRANSVAAL	167
XIX I RETURN TO THE FREE STATE	183
XX THE OATH OF NEUTRALITY	197
XXI FREDERIKSSTAD AND BOTHAVILLE	205

CONTENTS

CHAPTER	PAGE
XXII MY MARCH TO THE SOUTH	217
XXIII I FAIL TO ENTER CAPE COLONY	227
XXIV WHEREIN SOMETHING IS FOUND ABOUT WAR AGAINST WOMEN	239
XXV I AGAIN ATTEMPT TO ENTER CAPE COLONY	249
XXVI DARKNESS PROVES MY SALVATION	265
XXVII WAS OURS A GUERILLA WAR?	277
XXVIII NEGOTIATIONS WITH THE ENEMY	283
XXIX PRESIDENT STEYN'S NARROW ESCAPE	297
XXX THE LAST PROCLAMATION	303
XXXI BLOCKHOUSES AND NIGHT ATTACKS	319
XXXII MY COMMANDO OF SEVEN HUNDRED MEN	327
XXXIII A SUCCESS AT TWEEFONTEIN	337
XXXIV I CUT MY WAY THROUGH SIXTY THOUSAND TROOPS.	347
XXXV I GO TO THE TRANSVAAL WITH PRESIDENT STEYN	363
XXXVI PEACE NEGOTIATIONS	371
XXXVII THE END OF THE WAR	385

APPENDICES

A.—THE FIRST MEETING OF THE NATIONAL REPRESENTATIVES AT VEREENIGING (MAY 15-17, 1902)	401
B.—THE CONFERENCE AT PRETORIA BETWEEN THE COMMIT- TEE OF THE NATIONAL REPRESENTATIVES AND LORDS KITCHENER AND MILNER (MAY 19-28, 1902)	436
C.—THE SECOND MEETING OF THE NATIONAL REPRESENTA- TIVES AT VEREENIGING (MAY 29-31, 1902)	472
INDEX	507

To
My Fellow Subjects of the
British Empire

Preface

BY way of introduction to my work, I wish, dear reader, to say only this short word: "I am no book-writer." But I felt that the story of this struggle, in which a small people fought for liberty and right, is justly said, throughout the civilized world, to be unknown, and that it was my duty to record my personal experiences in this war, for the present and for the future generations, not only for the Afrikaner people, but for the whole world.

Not only did I consider this my duty, but I was encouraged to write by the urgings of prominent men among my people, of men of various nationalities, and even of several British officers.

Well, dear reader, I hope that you will not feel disappointed in reading these experiences, as it is not in me, as is perhaps sometimes the case with historical authors, to conjure up thrilling pictures, imaginary things, and put them together merely to make up a book or to make a name for themselves. Be that far from me! In publishing my book (although it is written in simple style) I had *one object only*, viz. to give to the world a story which, although it does not contain the whole of the truth as regards this wondrous war, yet contains nothing but the truth.

The original has been written by me in Dutch, and I can therefore not be answerable for its translation into other languages.

C. R. Dewet

Appendix A

REPORT OF THE MEETING OF THE GENERAL REPRESENTATIVES HELD AT VEREENIGING, IN THE SOUTH AFRICAN REPUBLIC, ON THE 15TH OF MAY, 1902, AND THE FOLLOWING DAYS.

The first meeting of the representatives of the two Governments took place at 11.30 a.m. on May 15th.

There were present :—

For the South African Republic—His Honour the President, S. W. Burger; I. W. Reitz; Commandant-General L. Botha; Messrs. J. B. Krogh; L. J. Meijer; L. J. Jacobs; and His Honour the Staatsprocureur.

For the Orange Free State—States-President, M. J. Steyn; Judge, J. B. M. Hertzog; Secretary of State, W. J. B. Brebner; Commander-in-Chief, C. R. de Wet; and Mr. C. H. Olivier.

The first matter discussed was the formula for the oath which the delegates were to take, and it was decided that it should run as follows :—

“ We, the undersigned, duly swear that we, as special national representatives, will remain true to our people, country, and Government, and that we will serve them to the best of our ability, and fulfil our duties faithfully and with all necessary secrecy, as is the duty of all faithful burghers and representatives of the nation. So help us God.”

The question now arose as to whether the representatives had the right to decide, if circumstances rendered it necessary, upon any matter touching the independence of the country, irrespective of the powers given to the various delegates, for at some of the meetings the delegates had only received limited powers, whilst at others full authority had been given them to act according to their own judgment.

THREE YEARS WAR

After considerable discussion it was decided to lay the matter before the delegates themselves.

The following representatives were called into the tent, and took the oath :—

For the South African Republic.

1. H. A. Alberts, Vechtgeneraal ; for Heidelberg.
2. J. J. Alberts, Commandant ; for Standerton and Wakkerstroom.
3. J. F. de Beer, Commandant ; for Bloemhof.
4. C. F. Beijers, Assistant-Commandant-General ; for Waterberg.
5. C. Birkenstock, burgher ; for Vrijheid.
6. H. J. Bosman, magistrate ; for Wakkerstroom.
7. Christiaan Botha, Assistant - Commandant - General ; for Swaziland and the States Artillery.
8. B. H. Breijtenbach, Veldtcornet ; for Utrecht.
9. C. J. Brits, Vechtgeneraal ; for Standerton.
10. J. B. Cilluos, Vechtgeneraal ; for Lichtenburg.
11. J. de Clercq, burgher ; for Middelburg.
12. T. A. Dönges, Veldtcornet ; for Dorp Middelburg in Regeeringswacht.
13. H. S. Grobler, Commandant ; for Bethal.
14. J. L. Grobler, burgher ; for Carolina.
15. J. N. H. Grobler, Vechtgeneraal ; for Ermelo.
16. B. J. van Heerden, Veldtcornet ; for Rustenburg.
17. J. F. Jordaan, Commandant ; for Vrijheid.
18. J. Kemp, Vechtgeneraal ; for Krugersdorp.
19. P. J. Liebenberg, Vechtgeneraal ; for Potchefstroom.
20. C. H. Muller, Vechtgeneraal ; for Boksburg.
21. J. F. Naude, burgher ; for Pretoria, late Commandant with General Kemp.
22. D. J. E. Opperman, Veldtcornet ; for Pretoria.
23. B. J. Roos, Veldtcornet ; for Piet Retief.
24. P. D. Roux, Veldtcornet ; for Marico.
25. D. J. Schoeman, Commandant ; for Lijdenburg.
26. T. C. Stoffberg, Landdrost ; for Zoutpansberg.
27. S. P. du Toit, Vechtgeneraal ; for Wolmaransstad.
28. P. L. Uijs, Commandant ; for Pretoria.
29. P. R. Viljoen, burgher ; for Heidelberg.
30. W. J. Viljoen, Commandant ; for Witwatersrand.

APPENDIX A

For the Orange Free State.

1. C. C. F. Badenhorst, Vice-Commandant-in-Chief; for Boshof, Hoopstad, West Bloemfontein, Winburg, and Kroonstad.
2. A. J. Bester, Commandant; for Bethlehem.
3. A. J. Bester, Commandant; for Bloemfontein.
4. L. P. H. Botha, Commandant; for Harrismith.
5. G. A. Brand, Vice-Commandant-in-Chief; for Bethulie, Rouxville, Caledon River, and Wepener in the eastern part of Bloemfontein.
6. H. J. Brouwer, Commandant; for Bethlehem.
7. D. H. van Coller, Commandant; for Heilbron.
8. F. R. Cronje, Commandant; for Winburg.
9. D. F. H. Flemming, Commandant; for Hoopstad.
10. C. C. Froneman, Vice-Commandant-in-Chief; for Winburg and Ladybrand.
11. F. J. W. J. Hattings, Vice-Commandant-in-Chief; for the eastern part of Kroonstad, in the district of Heilbron.
12. J. A. M. Hertzog, Commandant; for Philippolis.
13. J. N. Jacobs, Commandant; for Boshof.
14. F. P. Jacobsz, Commandant; for Harrismith.
15. A. J. de Kock, Commandant; for Vrede.
16. J. J. Koen, Commandant; for Ladybrand.
17. H. J. Kritzing, Veldtcornet; for Kroonstad.
18. F. E. Mentz, Commandant; for Heilbron.
19. J. A. P. van der Merwe, Commandant; for Heilbron.
20. C. A. van Niekerk, Commandant; for Kroonstad.
21. H. van Niekerk, Commandant.
22. J. J. van Niekerk, Commandant; for Fricksburg.
23. I. K. Nieuwoudt, Vice-Commandant-in-Chief; for Fauresmith, Philippolis, and Jacobsdal.
24. H. P. J. Pretorius, Commandant; for Jacobsdal.
25. A. M. Prinsloo, Vice-Commandant-in-Chief; for Bethlehem in Ficksburg.
26. L. J. Rautenbach, Commandant; for Bethlehem.
27. F. J. Rheeder, Commandant; for Rouxville.
28. A. Ross, Commandant; for Vrede.
29. P. W. de Vos, Commandant; for Kroonstad.
30. W. J. Wessels, Vice-Commandant-in-Chief; for Harrismith and Vrede.

THREE YEARS WAR

The meeting now proceeded to choose a chairman, and the following were proposed :—J. de Clercq, C. F. Beijers, C. C. Froneman, W. J. Wessels, and G. A. Brand.

The choice of the meeting fell on General C. F. Beijers, who called upon the Rev. Mr. Kestell to offer prayer.

His Honour, S. W. Burger, now declared that the meeting was formally opened, and after the Chairman had spoken a few words, the representatives adjourned until three o'clock.

When they reassembled, the Chairman requested President Burger to explain the objects for which the meeting had been called.

Then the President spoke a few words of welcome to all ; he expressed his sorrow for the absence of some who would certainly have been present had they not given their lives for their country. But still there were many left to represent the two Republics.

“ The difficulties which confront us,” continued the President, “ are like a great mountain, at the foot of which we have just arrived. Everything now depends on us who are assembled together here. It is impossible to deny that the state of affairs is very serious, and that the future looms dark before us. Our position requires the most careful consideration, and as there are sure to be differences of opinion, it will be necessary for us to bear with one another, and yet, at the same time, to speak our minds freely.”

The President proceeded to refer to the correspondence which had taken place between Holland and England. A copy of this correspondence had been sent, through Lord Kitchener, to the Governments of the two Republics. The opinion of the Transvaal Government (which was the first to receive the correspondence) was that advantage should be taken of this opportunity. It was proposed to ask Lord Kitchener to allow the Transvaal Government to meet that of the Orange Free State, so that they might discuss the desirability of making a peace proposal to England. The two Governments had accordingly met, and had corresponded with Lord Kitchener and Lord Milner. As a result of this, a letter, with the above correspondence annexed, had been sent to the various commandos.

“ We felt,” continued President Burger, “ that we had no power to surrender our independence, and that we were only justified in making such terms of peace as would not endanger our national existence. Whether it is or is not our duty to

APPENDIX A

surrender our independence is a question that must be left to the decision of our people. And it is to represent the people that you are here. It is from your lips, then, that our Governments must learn the opinions of the two nations: It is clear enough that the English Government has no idea of allowing us to remain independent—it expresses surprise that we even dare to speak of such a thing.

“You have now to report upon the condition of the country, and upon the circumstances in which your wives and children are placed. You have also to decide whether you are willing to make any further sacrifices. We have lost so much already that it would be hard, indeed, to lose our independence as well. But, although this matter is so near to our hearts, we must still listen to the voice of reason. The practical question, then, which we have to ask ourselves is, whether we are prepared to watch our people being gradually exterminated before our eyes, or whether we should not rather seek a remedy.

“The Government can do nothing without the support of the nation. You, therefore, must determine our best course. For instance, if you come to the conclusion that we have exhausted every expedient, will you still continue the struggle? Are we not to desist until every man of us is in captivity, in exile, or in his grave? Again let me urge you to speak freely, and yet with consideration for the feelings of others. For myself, I can truly say that my spirit is not yet broken; but I would hear from you what the feeling of the people is.

“At this point, however, a difficulty arises. Some of you, having only received limited powers from your constituencies, appear to think that you would not be justified in exceeding your mandates, while others have been authorized to act as circumstances may seem to require. But I do not think that this difficulty should be insurmountable. At least I beg of you not to allow it to cause any dissension among you. Let us all be of one mind. If *we* are united, then will the nation be united also; but if we are divided, in what a plight will the nation find itself!”

A letter was then read from the deputation in Europe, which had been written five months previously, and which had been brought through the English lines in safety. It contained little more than an assurance that our cause occupied a better position in Europe than it had ever done before.

THREE YEARS WAR

The Chairman then asked Commandant L. Botha to address the meeting.

Complying with this request, the Commandant said that he wished to be assured, before anything further was done, that the fact that some of the representatives had been entrusted with limited powers, whereas others had been given a free hand, was not going to prove to be an insurmountable obstacle to united action on their part.

To this Judge Hertzog replied that it was a principle in law that a delegate is not to be regarded as a mere agent or mouth-piece of his constituents, but, on the contrary (when dealing with public affairs), as a plenipotentiary—with the right, whatever his brief might be, of acting to the best of his judgment.

States-Procureur Smuts concurred in this opinion, which appeared to satisfy both the Commandant-General and also all the other representatives, for no further allusion was made to the subject by anybody.

Commandant-General Botha now made his report:

In the districts of Vrijheid and Utrecht, he stated, the store of maize was so small that it could not last for more than a short time; but there was still a great number of slaughter-cattle. In the districts of Wakkerstroom there was hardly sufficient grain for one month's consumption. Two other districts had still a large enough number of slaughter-cattle—enough, in fact, to last for two or three months. In Ermelo, to the west and north-west of the blockhouses, and in Bethal, Standerton, and Middelburg, there was grain for one month. But the Heidelberg and Pretoria commandos had now, for the first time, no corn remaining for food. In the neighbourhood of Boksburg the only grain left was the old maize of the previous year, whilst there were no cattle at all in the district. When he had visited Boksburg he had found that the commandos had had no meat for three days. In the country between Vereeniging and Ermelo there were only thirty-six goats, and no cattle whatsoever. In the Wakkerstroom district, however, there were still a few slaughter-cattle. The horses were everywhere worn out and exhausted. They had been so constantly kept on the move, owing to the enemy's increasing attacks, they could now only cover the shortest distances.

The Kaffir question was becoming from day to day more serious. At Vrijheid, for instance, there was a Kaffir commando

APPENDIX A

which had already made several attacks upon the burghers. This attitude of the Kaffir population was producing a very dispiriting effect upon the burghers.

The women were in a most pitiable state, now that the lines of blockhouses had been extended in all directions over the country. Sometimes the commandos had to break through the lines and leave the women behind alone ; and when the burghers later on returned they would perhaps find that the women had been driven from their houses, and, in some instances, treated with atrocious cruelty.

Referring to the numbers in the field, he said that there were, in the whole of the Transvaal, ten thousand eight hundred and sixteen men, and that three thousand two hundred and ninety-six of them had no horses. The enemy during the summer had taken many of the burghers prisoner ; and since June, 1901, the commandos had diminished to the extent of six thousand and eighty-four men. The burghers thus lost to them had either been killed, or taken prisoner, or had surrendered their arms.

The number of households was two thousand six hundred and forty.

The Commandant-General concluded by saying that the three greatest difficulties with which they were confronted were their horses, their food supply, and the miserable condition of their women and children.

Commander-in-Chief de Wet then spoke. He said he would leave it to the delegates who were officers to make reports. They had come from far and near, and knew exactly what the condition of things was. He, however, could state that the number of burghers in the Orange Free State was six thousand one hundred and twenty, of whom about four hundred were not available for service. The Basutos, he found, were more favourably inclined to the Boer cause than ever before.

"General De la Rey," continued General de Wet, "like myself, does not quite know what task he has to perform here, but he thinks with me that the duty of making reports belongs to the delegates. However, he feels bound to state that in his divisions there is a great scarcity of everything. But precisely the same state of affairs existed there a year ago. And when his burghers were at that time without food—well, he went and got it for them." (Cheers.)

General Beijers (Waterberg) then addressed the delegates,

THREE YEARS WAR

telling them that he would not detain them long. In Zoutpansberg, he stated, they had still a plentiful supply of food, for they were able to buy from the Kaffirs. At Waterberg the Kaffirs were neutral, but at Zoutpansberg they were getting out of hand. Yet, since no co-operation existed amongst them, they were not to be feared, and any uprising could easily be quelled.

Besides this trouble, they had many difficulties to face, which were produced by horse-sickness and fever.

As to the question of grain, there was food enough for the whole of the Transvaal and the Orange Free State. But now the English were beginning to buy up the maize at £1 a sack.

General Muller (Boksburg) reported that in his division the burghers had never suffered from hunger. He could still hold out for a few months more, as food could be obtained from the Kaffirs. There was, it could not be denied, a tendency to mutiny amongst the Kaffirs, but he did not think that this need cause any anxiety. He believed that he would be able to carry on operations until the end of the winter.

General Froneman (Ladybrand) said that the condition of his divisions, namely Winburg and Ladybrand, gave no cause for uneasiness. There were still eighty families in the districts, but they were able to provide for all their necessities. The Kaffirs were peaceable and well disposed, and were of great service to the burghers, for whom they bought clothing in Basutoland. It was possible for the burghers, he considered, to hold out for more than a year.

General Hattingh (Kroonstad) declared that in one part of the Kroonstad district there were still plenty of sheep and cattle, and that seed had been sown for next year's harvest. But another part of the district was entirely exhausted, and had to obtain its supplies from Bethlehem.

General Badenhorst (Boshof) stated that he could report on the Boshof district and the parts of the Winburg and Bloemfontein districts to the west of the railway. There were enough cattle to last his commandos for years, even if they had no other food at all. Recently he had captured fifteen hundred head of cattle, and he was in a position to give assistance to other districts. Grain, however, was not so plentiful as it had been the previous year, but nevertheless there was still a large enough supply to permit him to send help to others.

General Nieuwoudt (Fauersmith) reported that his district was

APPENDIX .A-

entirely devastated, and that for the last seven months there had been a dearth of all provisions; nevertheless, his burghers had contrived to live. There was, moreover, enough corn left to last them for another year. There were now only three women in the whole of his district.

General Prinsloo (Bethlehem) declared that he would be telling a falsehood if he were to say that there was no food in his district. He possessed slaughter-cattle and corn, and could help other districts. One of his commandants had recently found a store of maize (consisting of one hundred and thirty sacks) buried in the ground. The enemy had made many inroads into his district, and especially during the last few months. The blockhouses were a source of constant annoyance to him.

General Brand (Bethulie) reported upon the south-western part of the Orange Free State, where he commanded. There were some parts of his division, he said, which had been entirely laid waste. Everything had been carried off; there was not a sheep left; and the burghers had been without meat for days. But he was able to capture booty, and could still hold out for a year.

General Wessels (Harrismith) drew attention to the constant passage of large Kaffir families through the districts of Harrismith and Vrede. He could tell the delegates that the Kaffirs had been quite astonished that there were still cattle and sheep and supplies of grain in the districts. He had not yet come to the end of his provisions; but, even if everything were taken, he saw a chance of obtaining food from elsewhere.

Commandant C. A. van Niekerk (Kroonstad) declared that if there was one part of the country which was entirely exhausted it was the part where he was in command, namely Hoopstad and a portion of Kroonstad. But yet, during the last twelve months, they had been able to obtain food, and even to sow for the ensuing year. There were no cattle in his district; but he had taken a thousand sheep and fifty-two cattle from the English.

Commandant van der Merwe (Heilbron) spoke to the same effect.

General Smuts was the next to address the meeting. He began by saying that his expedition into Cape Colony had been the outcome of the advice which the deputation had given in July, 1901, namely to continue the war. That he had been in command of it had come about in the following way. News had

THREE YEARS WAR

telli-
been received in the Transvaal that affairs in Cape Colony were taking a favourable turn, and accordingly General De la Rey had received orders to go thither, and to take over the command there. But afterwards it was thought wiser to annul these orders, because De la Rey could not well be spared from the western parts of the Transvaal. Owing to this, he (General Smuts) took the task upon his own shoulders, and crossed the Orange River with two hundred men. He had had a difficult task to accomplish. He had marched through Cape Colony to Grahamstad, and from thence he had pushed on towards the coast, through Graaff Reinet. Thence he had proceeded to the neighbourhood where he was now carrying on operations.

He had visited every commando, and as he had seen that there were signs of disorder amongst them he had taken them all under his own command. In this way he had found himself at the head of some fifteen hundred men. During his expeditions Commandant Lotter had been captured with a hundred men; this had reduced his force to only fourteen hundred. But since then the number had nearly doubled, so that they now had two thousand six hundred men (divided into twenty commandos) under arms in Cape Colony. In addition to these men there was a division under General de Villiers operating in Griqualand West, and another under Commandant van der Merwe in Bechuanaland. The total numbers of these two divisions amounted to about seven hundred men.

Passing on to the question whether help was to be expected from Cape Colony, General Smuts declared that there would be no general rising. The reports which represented such a rising as possible had exaggerated matters. There were great difficulties in the way of a general rising. First, there was the question of horses—and in Cape Colony the want of horses was as great, if not greater, than in the Republics. Secondly, it was exceedingly difficult for Colonials to rise, for they knew that not only would they have to be *voetgangers*,¹ but also that if they were captured they would be very severely punished by the English. The scarcity of grass was also greatly against any such attempt. The horses had to be fed, and, as the enemy had forbidden any sowing, it was almost impossible to find food for them. A counter proclamation had indeed been issued by the Republics, but it had been of no avail.

¹ Infantry.

APPENDIX A

He was of opinion that the small commandos which had already been in Cape Colony had done the best they could. The question that now arose was whether the whole of their forces ought to be sent from the Republics into Cape Colony. He himself thought that there was an opening for them, but the difficulty was to find a method of getting them there. The existence of this difficulty, and the facts which he had brought before the delegates, had forced him to the conclusion that a general rising in Cape Colony was an impossibility:

As to the continuation of the war and matters of that nature, they must naturally be settled by the Republics, and not by Cape Colony.

The meeting was then adjourned until eight o'clock in the evening.

Upon its reassembling, Commandant Uijs (Pretoria, North) said that in that part of the district of Pretoria which lay to the north of the Delagoa Bay Railway there were still cattle enough to last for a considerable time, but that the store of grain would be exhausted within a fortnight. The number of horses also was insufficient. The district could muster one hundred and fifty-three mounted men and one hundred and twenty-eight *voelangers*. In the division of Onderwijk, Middelburg, there were twenty-six mounted men and thirty-eight *voelangers*.

Commandant Grobler (Bethal) stated that in his district they had not been left undisturbed during the summer. Only a short time previously he had lost sixty-three men in an engagement, where he had been besieged in a kraal, out of which he, with one hundred and fifty-three burghers, had managed to escape. Bethal had been laid waste from one end to the other, and he had no provisions for his commandos. He had on his hands three hundred women and children; these were in a serious position, owing to the lack of food; some of the women had also been assaulted by Kaffirs.

General Christiaan Botha (Swaziland) then reported on the condition of the Swaziland commando. They had no provisions in hand, and were simply living by favour of the Kaffirs. They had no women there. His commando of one hundred and thirteen men was still at Piet Retief. As there was no grain to be had, they were compelled to go from kraal to kraal and buy food from the Kaffirs, and this required money. Yet somehow

THREE YEARS WAR

or other they had managed to keep soul and body together. "I have fought for the Transvaal," he concluded, "for two and a half years, and now, since I hear that there is food in the Free State, I shall fight for the Free State for two and a half years more."

General Brits (Standerton) said that he had still provisions for two months, but no cattle. He had sixty-five families with him, and found it very difficult to provide them with the necessaries of life. Altogether, things were in a most critical state.

Mr. Birkenstock (Vrijheid) spoke as follows :

"I shall go deeper into some of the points which the Commandant-General has brought forward in his general report of the matter. At Vrijheid we have been harassed by large forces of the enemy for six or eight months, and the district is now completely devastated. The presence of women and children causes great difficulty, for of late the English have refused to receive the families which, compelled by absolute famine, wished to take refuge with them. There is also continual danger from the Kaffirs, whose attitude towards us is becoming positively hostile. Both horses and grain are scarce; but as far as the latter is concerned there will be sufficient, provided that the enemy does not return. One morning recently a Kaffir commando, shortly before daybreak, attacked a party of our men, who lost fifty-six killed out of a total of seventy. That peace must be made at all costs is the opinion of all the families in my district, and I feel it my duty to bring this opinion before you."

Commandant Alberts (Pretoria and Middelburg) said that his burghers had had no rest for a year, and that during that period no ploughing or sowing had been done in the district. Consequently a commando would not be able to find the means of subsistence there. On three occasions he had been forced to take refuge in a kraal, but fortunately had always been able to make his escape. They had no cattle which they could use for food, although he had received some, through Commandant Rooß, from the Free State. Their horses were in the worst possible condition.

Landdrost Bosman (Wakkerstroom) then gave an account of the condition of affairs in his district. They were dependent for everything, except meat, upon the Kaffirs, giving them meat in exchange. This year there had been a very poor crop of mealies, and, such as it was, it had been much damaged by the enemy.

APPENDIX A

Still the burghers might manage, with what mealies they had, to last out for another two months; but the women and children also needed to be provided for. The cattle were beginning to run short, and the few horses that they had were so weak that they would require a fortnight's rest before they could be used. It might become necessary for the commandos to leave the district, and if so, what was to become of the families?

Mr. de Clercq (Middelburg) regretted that he was unable to give as cheery a report as some of the gentlemen present had done. The part of Middelburg which he represented was in an almost hopeless condition. There were no slaughter-cattle, and only enough grain to last for a very short time. Out of five hundred horses only one hundred now remained, and these could do no work, being too weak even to get away when it became necessary to retreat from the enemy. The state of the burghers was very discouraging; if they should be compelled to leave the district the question would arise whether, considering the condition of their horses, it would be possible for them to reach their new destination. There were fifty families in Middelburg, and things were going very badly with them. The district would have to be abandoned, and what would then be the fate of the families, which even now could only be scantily provided for? The women had wished to go on foot to the English, but he had advised them to wait until the results of the present negotiations should become known.

Commandant David Schoeman (Lijdenburg) said that although but a short time ago there had been eight hundred head of cattle in his district, they had now all been carried off. Grain there was none. Should fighting be continued, he was at a loss to know how he could provide for the women.

Commandant Opperman (Pretoria, South) reported on that part of the Pretoria district which lies south of the line. What he said agreed substantially with the report of Commandant Alberts. (See page 412.)

Commandant Liebenberg (Potchefstroom) stated that during the last eight or nine months blockhouses had been erected in his district. All that was now left to him was a strip of country about twelve miles long; here he could still exist. A good deal of seed had been sown, but the crops had of late fallen into the hands of the English. The grain was altogether spoilt; some of it had been burnt, the rest trodden down by the horses. There

THREE YEARS WAR

were ninety-three households in his district. Between Lichtenburg and Potchefstroom there were some women from the Orange Free State who were reduced to the most dire straits. They had told him that if things did not improve they intended to go on foot to Klerksdorp, and he had replied that they must wait for the result of the negotiations. He had still four hundred mounted men, in addition to one hundred *voetgangers*. He could hold out for a short time longer, and then would have to look for some way out of his difficulties.

General du Toit (Wolmaransstad) said that there were five hundred families in his district, but little enough for them to live on. Though his horses were weak, he would be able to save himself by strategy if he should get into a tight corner. His commandos were small—only four hundred and fifty mounted men. The cattle were in good condition, but grain was scarce.

Commandant de Beer (Bloemhof) had still under his command as many as four hundred and forty-four mounted men and one hundred and sixty-five *voetgangers*. Both grain and cattle were scarce, but then Bloemhof had never possessed many head of cattle. So far the families had not suffered from want. He would be able to hold out for another year:

General Kemp reported that he had under him Krugersdorp, Rustenburg, and parts of Pretoria and Johannesburg. In the district of Krugersdorp no more sowing was possible, and the majority of cattle had been carried away. Yet there was no want. Why should he lack for anything when he was in possession of a great "commissariat" extending as far as the Zoutpansberg, where General Beijers was in command? He took what he wanted from the Kaffirs—it was not their property; he was only taking back what really belonged to the burghers.

Commandant-in-Chief de Wet here asked why the eastern divisions of the Transvaal could not do like General Kemp, and take what they required from the Kaffirs?

General Kemp replied that the fact that in the eastern parts the Kaffirs were united with the English made the difference. The Kaffirs there, he said, gave all they looted to the English, who then sold them the cattle back again. If then cattle were taken in those parts, it would be cattle which was really the property of the Kaffirs. Moreover, the Zulus were Kaffirs of a different sort to those with which he (the General) had to deal. General Botha also had said that among the Kaffirs in the Eastern

APPENDIX

Transvaal there were not to be found any cattle belonging to the burghers:

Mr. J. L. Grobler (Carolina) had not as yet had to complain of any lack of cattle or grain in his district. The English, however, by their system of blockhouses, had cut the burghers off from the greater part of the crop. If nothing happened, the newly-sown crops ought to produce a good harvest; but he did not like the temper of the Kaffirs. His men could still hold out for another six or seven months. The three hundred horses still remaining to them were in a weak condition; such as they were, there was not one apiece for the burghers.

Mr. J. Naude (Pretoria) said that he represented a part of Pretoria and General Kemp's flying column. In his district sowing and harvesting went on as usual. There were fortunately no women and children. Although the commandos had not a superabundance of cattle, yet no one lacked for any of the necessaries of life.

The meeting was then closed with prayer, and adjourned until the following morning.

FRIDAY, MAY 16TH, 1902.

The meeting opened with prayer a little after nine a.m. The correspondence which the two Governments had addressed to the burghers, in order that it might be communicated to their representatives at one of these meetings, was first read. It was then debated whether the meeting should request Lord Kitchener to put it into communication with the deputation in Europe. After speeches *pro* and *con*, it was decided not to do so.

Thereupon General Froneman proposed the following resolution:

"This meeting is of opinion that the Governments should be asked in the first place to thank His Majesty the King of England and Her Majesty the Queen of the Netherlands, through Lord Kitchener, for the efforts which (as appears from the correspondence between the said Governments) they have made to set on foot negotiations for peace; and, in the second place, to express to them the regret of this meeting that His Majesty's Government has not accepted the proposal of Her Majesty's Government that the representatives of the two Republics now in Europe (who still enjoy the full confidence of their fellow-

THREE YEARS WAR

countrymen) should be allowed to return home, and also that Lord Kitchener has declined a similar request addressed to him by the Governments of the two Republics."

This proposal was seconded by Commandant Flemming, and carried.

After another proposal, made by H. J. Bosman, and seconded by J. H. Grobler, had been rejected, the correspondence referred to above came under discussion.

The first speaker was Mr. P. R. Viljoen, who spoke as follows :

"We can apply to our own country those words of Scripture, 'The place whereon thou standest is holy ground.' The soil on which we are now standing, wet as it is with the blood and tears of our forefathers and also of the many who have fallen in this present struggle, may well be regarded as 'holy ground.'

"That we should ever have to surrender this country is a horrible thought. Yet it must be faced. It is certain at least that many districts must be abandoned, for the enemy is doing his utmost to collect us together at a few isolated places, where he will be able to concentrate his forces upon us.

"From the reports which we have received it appears that the state of affairs in the Orange Free State is still hopeful. Not so in the Transvaal. There our prospects are of the gloomiest.

"My opinion is that we must endeavour to bring this war to an end. If there was the least chance of our being able to maintain our independence, we would still fight on, and not even the bitterest sufferings would appear unendurable. But have we any such chance?—that is the question which we have got to answer.

"We know nothing, it will be said, of the present state of affairs in Europe, for the report from our deputation, which has just been read in your presence, is six months old. Nevertheless, if anything favourable to us had occurred since then, we must have heard of it by now.

"It is evident that we must endeavour to obtain peace on terms honourable to ourselves. But how are we to do so? By keeping our independence in view when making terms with the enemy, you will answer. Nevertheless, I think it would be advisable for us to commission our Governments to ask the English Government once more what concessions it is prepared to make to us on condition of our surrendering our independence. Until we know this we can come to no final decision.

"Though it is a bitter thing to have to say, yet I feel it my

APPENDIX A

duty to tell you that I honestly believe it to be impossible for us to carry on the war any longer."

Mr. de Clercq then addressed the meeting in the following words:

"The question before us is, whether or not the war can be continued? To answer it, we must look forward into the future: We must ask ourselves what consequences will ensue from a continuance of hostilities, and what will be the result of their cessation:

"We have only fifteen thousand men against the enemy's quarter of a million. Our food and horses are scarce, and we have other difficulties besides these. It is impossible to go on with the struggle.

"Nevertheless, if I believed that to do so would give us a chance of retaining our independence, I also would be ready for further sacrifices. But as it is impossible to retain our independence, surely we shall only be storing up misery for the future if we continue fighting until every man of us is a prisoner or in his grave. I am of opinion that our most reasonable course is to save what is still left to us—our existence as a nation. It is not too late to save it now, but who can tell what the future holds in store for us? If we are to be still further reduced in number, we shall soon cease to exist as a nation. Can it be right to sacrifice a nation which has fought as the African nation has done?"

Commandant Rheeder (Rouxville) then spoke as follows:

"I know that the times are very dark, but still there are some rays of light. You have been asked whether you will continue fighting until you are exterminated. But there is another alternative. Will you not continue fighting until you are relieved? I maintain that our independence must be a *sine qua non* of any negotiations that we make—we cannot give it up. So long as we have life we must continue to fight, and we must only lay down our arms when relief arrives."

General Kemp now rose to his feet. "I am fully aware," he said, "of the very serious position in which we are placed. Yet, when the war began, the position was no less grave. We must continue our resistance. When we recall to our minds how much this war has cost us, and what rivers of blood have flowed, we feel that it is impossible to surrender. As far as I am concerned, unless relief comes, I will fight on till I die.

THREE YEARS WAR

“ But one should not look only at the dark side of the picture. It is true enough that in some districts food is scarce, but there are none in which it is absolutely unobtainable. The districts threatened by famine must be abandoned—that is the way to deal with the difficulty.

“ It has been pointed out that a large number of our men have been killed or taken prisoners. This fact, however, only fills me with courage. A cause that has cost us so dearly must never be forsaken. To own ourselves beaten would be to dig a grave for the African nation, out of which it would never rise. Why should we lose our trust in God ? Up to this moment He has aided us, and He will always be our Helper.”

Vice-Commandant Breijtenbach (Utrecht) then spoke as follows :

“ The burghers whom I represent have told me to inform them, when these deliberations have come to an end, whether a continuation of the war is possible, and if it be possible, how it is to be accomplished. If I cannot assure them that we are able to continue the struggle, the men of Utrecht will not fight any more. As you know, I can give them no such assurance.

“ There are ten districts in the Transvaal which are unable to fight any longer. It surely is not proposed to leave these districts in the lurch ! We must not only consult our sentiments, but also our reason. And what does the voice of reason say ? This—that the continuation of the war is an impossibility. Should you decide now to continue the war, you would have to start a fresh campaign ; and you know that that is beyond our powers.

“ A previous speaker has referred to the help of the Lord, but who is able to fathom His counsels ? Yet we can understand the answer God has given to our prayer—that prayer which we offered with the Mausers in our hands when the war began. And what was the answer we received ? I leave it to you to reply.

“ Yes, we must use our reason. If we continue the struggle we give the death-blow to our existence as a nation. We have been told that there are ten districts that cannot go on fighting. Are we going to say, ‘ We will continue the struggle and leave these districts to their fate ’ ? No ! We must save what we can.”

General Liebenberg then spoke. “ I am able to give my support,” he said, “ to all that has fallen from the lips of Messrs

APPENDIX A

Viljoen and De Clercq. It cannot be doubted that the future is very dark. Yes, we can only trust in God, and use our reason to the best of our ability. I have been commissioned by those whom I represent to retain our independence if possible, and if it be not possible to make peace on the best terms that we can get."

Commandant Uijts was the next speaker. He explained that if the war were to be continued he would have to leave his district and abandon the women and children to the mercy of the Kaffirs. He could see a chance of saving the mounted men if only he could feel certain that they would all follow him, but the case of the women and children would be hopeless. A serious difficulty confronted the delegates, and it was with them, and no longer with the Government, that its solution rested. Never before had he been called upon to face so gigantic a task. It was not the time now to criticize one another, but to practise mutual forbearance. The Bible had been quoted by one of the speakers, but let them not forget the text in which the king is spoken of who calculated whether he was strong enough with ten thousand to encounter him who marched against him with twenty thousand. Then there was the question as to the disposal of the widows and orphans. What was to become of them if the burghers, by refusing to come to terms with the enemy, should no longer be able to act as their mutual protectors? Let them make no more widows and orphans, but let them open their eyes and recognize that the hand of God was against them.

The next business was the reading of two letters—one from General Malan and the other from General Kritzinger. Malan reported on his doings in the Cape Colony, while Kritzinger advised that the war should be discontinued.

General du Toit then spoke, emphasizing the responsibility of the delegates and the importance of the occasion. He went on to say that he represented a part of the nation which had suffered very severely, but which nevertheless had commissioned him to stand up for independence, if by any means it could be retained; if he failed in this, he was to take whatever course seemed best to him. In his district the burghers were not reduced to such a pass as to oblige them to surrender, but the condition of other districts must also be taken into consideration, and if it appeared that the war could not be continued, the delegates must get the best terms they could. In their demands they must be united—this was the principal reason why dis-

THREE YEARS WAR

sension was so much to be avoided. For himself, he could only say that whether the meeting voted to continue the war or to bring it to a conclusion, he would fall in with the wishes of the majority. Any decision would be better than the failure of this conference, as that would leave everything undecided.

He was followed by Secretary of State Reitz, who said :

“ You all know what the Governments have done. The question now is, Is there anything further that we can do ? For my part, I think that there is. We might offer to surrender Witwatersrand and Swaziland ; we might also relinquish our rights to a foreign policy ; we might even accede to an English Protectorate. If France has been able to do without Alsace and Lorraine, surely we can do without the goldfields. What benefit have they ever done us ? Did the money they brought ever do us any good ? No ! rather it did us harm. It was the gold which caused the war. It is then actually to our advantage to cede the goldfields, and moreover by so doing we shall be rid of a very troublesome part of our population.”

Mr. Reitz then went on to discuss in detail the position in regard to Swaziland, the question of a British Protectorate, and the surrender of our right to treat with foreign powers.

General Muller (Boksburg) expressed sympathy with the views of the Secretary of State, while Vice-Commandant Roux (Marico) said that he was prepared to sacrifice many things, but that he intended to hold out for independence.

The next speech was made by Landdrost Stofberg (Zoutpansberg), who said :

“ I agree with General du Toit in what he said about the necessity for unity amongst us. Disunion must not be so much as mentioned. I have a mandate from the burghers of Zoutpansberg not to sacrifice our independence. But if anything short of this will satisfy the English, I am quite prepared to make concessions. Some of the burghers think that it might be well to surrender the goldfields for a certain sum of money, while others point out that the gold was the cause of the war. I also think that we have suffered through the gold, and that we might give up the goldfields without doing ourselves any harm. For what has the gold done for us ? It has enriched us, many will say. Yes ! but it has also been a stumbling-block to many a man. And is it not better to be a poor but independent nation than to be rich and at the same time subject to another Power ? Let the

APPENDIX

goldfields go. We shall still, with our markets, be rich enough."

Commandant Mentz (Heilbron) then rose.

"I appeal to the forbearance of the delegates," he said, "for making any speech at this meeting. I fear I am unable to give as rose-coloured a report as my brother Free Staters have done. My district has been continually harassed by the enemy's troops, and great devastation has been wrought. But the greatest trouble I have is the presence of so many families, for there are still two hundred in the district. I have only eighty burghers under my command, and it is clear to me that I shall soon be obliged to leave the district. What will then become of these families? I received a commission not to sacrifice our independence. But since my burghers met more than half of them have been made prisoners. The remainder have instructed me to do my best to preserve our independence, but if I find that it cannot be maintained, to act according to my own judgment. It appears to me that it may be possible to retain our independence by ceding some part of the country; if this be the case it ought most certainly to be done. I can remember the late President Brand saying in connexion with the diamond fields, 'Give them up; you will gain more by giving them up than by keeping them.' This remark may well apply to the present situation."

Commandant Flemming (Cape Town) reported that his district was well-nigh devastated. But they still possessed a fair number of cattle, which they had carried away with them. But even if they had no cattle, that would be no excuse for surrender, for in his district it was possible to live on the game. The view which he and his burghers had taken was that since they had already sacrificed nearly everything they possessed, they would not now sacrifice their independence. For should this also be lost, then there would be nothing left to them. That had been their opinion, but they had not then known how matters stood in the Transvaal. Now that he was aware of the state of affairs, he agreed with State-Secretary Reitz that their best course was to cede a part of their territory.

Vice-President Burger now rose from his seat, and said:

"This meeting has to formulate a fresh proposal to the English Government, and to await its answer. If this proposal be rejected, well, you will be no worse off than you are at present. If there be a man who has earnestly considered what the sacrifice

THREE YEARS WAR

of everything means to us, then I am that man. It has been said, we must retain our independence, or else continue to fight ; and we are still able to hold out for another six months, or even a year. Now, supposing that we can hold out another year, what should we gain by doing so ? Why, we should only grow weaker, whilst the enemy grew stronger ! I emphatically state that the war cannot be carried on any longer ; and I ask if there is any man here who can maintain with a clear conscience that the struggle can be successfully continued.

“ Some of you may tell me that complications may arise in Europe. But that is a groundless hope. Others may say that it is astonishing enough that we have been able to hold out till now, and that we have still the power of making our voices heard. Yes ! that is very surprising ; but shall we retain this power long ? I heard some delegates say, ‘ We shall fight till we die ! ’ That is a manly sentiment. But was it not, perhaps, prompted by a desire to make a fine speech, which would go down to posterity ? Was not the aim in some cases that future generations might recall these speeches when they were told of the brave fight our men had made ?

“ Let every one consider this well : Is he prepared to sacrifice the nation on the shrine of his own ambition ? Ambition, although it may cost us our lives, can never lead to martyrdom. A martyr is made of finer stuff !

“ Have we not arrived at the stage of our history when we must pray, ‘ Thy will be done ’ ? That prayer, considered rightly, is a prayer of faith. Do not let us imagine that we can compel God to do *our* will—that is not faith.

“ I beg of you to consider what will become of the women and the children and the banished burghers if you still persist until your last shot has been fired. What right shall we have to intercede for these unfortunate ones when we have rejected the proposals of the English Government ? We shall have no right whatsoever.

“ Perhaps it is God’s will that the English nation should oppress us, in order that our pride may be subdued, and that we may come through the fire of our troubles purified.

“ My opinion is that we should make a peace proposal to England, yielding as much as we rightly can ; and if England rejects our proposal, it will be time enough then to see what other course is open to us.

APPENDIX

“ There is one fact which we cannot ignore upon the views expressed. There are ten districts in the Transvaal I have listened to at present. In the Free State, too, there are ten, but losing ground. It is the opinion of lawyers that more than that, during the war, remain in a district their property cannot be confiscated; but if the district be abandoned, then confiscations can take place.

“ It is criminal to say, ‘ Come what may, we will fight till everything is lost and all of us are dead ! ’ ”

The following resolution was then proposed by General Kemp, and seconded by Mr. J. Nand :

“ This meeting decides, in order to expedite the work in hand, to depart from the original programme ; and to constitute a Commission, to be composed of the Hon. Jacob Smits and the Hon. Judge Hertzog, and to give this Commission authority to draw up, conjointly with the two State Presidents, a draft proposal, to be laid before the delegates to-morrow morning.”

This resolution was put to the meeting, and accepted by the delegates. The meeting then adjourned.

At half-past seven in the evening the delegates reassembled.

General Cilliers (Lichtenburg and Marico) was the first to make a report. “ In my division,” he said, “ things are in a very favourable condition. Yet we are bound to take the other divisions into consideration. My burghers said to me, ‘ Stand firm for independence ! ’ But when they gave me the order they did not know about the condition of the other districts. Will those other districts—such of them, I mean, as are in a worse predicament than ourselves—be able to co-operate with us in continuing the war ? Some of them have already answered my question in the negative. Must we then not ask ourselves, What will be the best for the nation as a whole ? Shall we say continue the war, or shall we approach the enemy and make a proposal ?

“ But are we really justified in prolonging the struggle, and making still further sacrifices ? Some will answer, ‘ Yes, for we have a God in whom we have trusted from the beginning ; ’ shall we not continue to trust in Him who has worked such wonders for us already ? ’ But I have heard a brother say, ‘ God’s hand is against us.’ It was bitter to hear these words from him, and for myself I will have none of them. My vote is given here and now for a continuance of the war.

THREE YEARS WAR

of everything means to us, though the rest of the delegates have to we must retain our independence out some other way by which we can we are still able to hold our national independence, we must be

year. Now, suppose what should be said, Sueman next addressed the meeting.

"Dear," he began, "that too much is being made of the condition of my division: things are not so prosperous with us as some here appear to imagine. But for all that, my burghers are for nothing short of absolute independence. They cannot forget the blood which has already been spilt in our cause. They mean to hold out until they are relieved.

"I sympathize deeply with those districts that are less happily circumstanced than my own, but it pains me to discover that there are some here who doubt that God is for us. For what has supported us up till now save faith in God?—the faith of those who first prayed God to prevent the war, and then, when they saw that this was not His will, fought like men, putting all their trust in Him.

"Up till now the Lord hath been my helper; the enemy has cut us off from everything, and yet we see our two little Republics still full of hope, still holding out."

He concluded his speech by saying that he would like to hear the opinions of Generals Botha, De Wet, and De la Rey. They ought to be able to throw much light upon the matter.

Commandant General Botha then rose, and said:

"I am glad to have an opportunity of giving my views upon the present state of affairs. We know that differences of opinion are to be found everywhere and on every question; when, therefore, a man differs from those who think that this war can and ought to be continued, we must ascribe his opinion to discouragement, weakness, or cowardice. We must acknowledge the truth of the facts from which he draws his conclusions, and which have compelled him to utter it. His object is to make known the true state of the country—which indeed is his plain duty. Were he not to do so on the present occasion he would be accused, later on, of having kept secret what he ought to have revealed. Differences of opinion then need not, and must not, cause a disunion and discord. Whatever our private opinions may be, yet, as delegates of the burghers, we must speak and act as one man.

"The war has now lasted two years. But the question for us to answer is this: Are we going forwards or backwards? My

APPENDIX 19

own conviction—a conviction founded upon the views expressed by my commandos and the speeches which I have listened to at this meeting—is that we are not gaining, but losing ground. There is nothing, in my opinion, more evident than that, during the last six months, the tide has been setting steadily against us, and in favour of the enemy.

“A year ago there were no blockhouses. We could cross and recross the country as we wished, and harass the enemy at every turn. But now things wear a very different aspect. We can pass the blockhouses by night indeed, but never by day. They are likely to prove the ruin of our commandos.

“Then, as regards food. We are told that there is food here, and food there; but how are we to get at it? How are we to transport it from one district to another? Outside the frontiers of our Republics there are plenty of provisions, but it becomes daily more difficult to get them into our hands. The cattle, for instance, that used to be at Ladysmith have now been removed to Estcourt. Even the friendly Kaffirs, from whom we are now able to obtain provisions, may quite possibly soon turn against us. The time is coming when we shall be compelled to say, ‘Hunger drives us to surrender.’

“The horses have been chased about so incessantly, and have suffered so much from want of forage, that their strength is almost exhausted. They are so weak that it is almost impossible to accomplish any long distance with them.

“As to the Cape Colony, I had always understood that the Colonists were going to rise *en bloc*, but General Smuts has just told us that there is no chance of such a thing happening. And he speaks from personal knowledge, having just returned from paying them a visit. Moreover, he has seen our horses, and says that it is impossible for them to go into the Colony, so it appears that our successes there are over. This is a severe check indeed; but it could not have been otherwise. We have not enough horses to enable us to give the Colonists effectual help, and they themselves have been cowed by the heavy penalties imposed upon all those who did rise. Many of those who are well disposed towards us dare not join us now.

“Again, there is no chance of European intervention: not one of the Powers will do anything for us. To see this it is only necessary to peruse that correspondence between the Netherlands and England, which was the cause of these negotiations.

THREE YEARS WAR

There we shall find that the Dutch Minister says that our Deputation is only accredited to Holland, whereas it had been accredited by the two Republics to all the Governments in Europe. Moreover, the correspondence makes it very plain that England will not tolerate the intervention of any foreign Power whatsoever. But the truth is, that no foreign Power wants to help us. When the women were first made prisoners I thought that European intervention might perhaps be attempted, because to make prisoners of women is a thing quite outside the usual methods of warfare. But nothing was done even then. We were told that we had the sympathy of the nations of Europe—their sympathy, and nothing more!

“I have come to a subject that is very near our hearts—our women-folk. If this meeting decides upon war, it will have to make provision for our wives and children, who will then be exposed to every kind of danger. Throughout this war the presence of the women has caused me anxiety and much distress. At first I managed to get them into the townships, but later on this became impossible, because the English refused to receive them. I then conceived the idea of getting a few of our burghers to surrender, and sending the women in with them. But this plan was not practicable, because most of the families were those of prisoners of war, and the men still on commando were not so closely related to these families as to be willing to sacrifice their freedom for them.

“We have heard much talk about fighting ‘to the bitter end.’ But what is ‘the bitter end’? Is it to come when all of us are either banished or in our graves? Or does it mean the time when the nation has fought until it never can fight again? As to myself, personally, I can still continue the struggle. I have horses, my household is well provided for, and as far as my own inclination goes I am all for going on. But am I only to consider myself? Is it not my first duty to look at the interests of my nation? I have always been, and still am, of the opinion that, before letting the nation go to rack and ruin, it is our duty to parley. We must not let the chance for negotiations slip out of our hands. When our numbers have fallen to only four or five thousand men under arms we shall no longer have that chance, and this will undoubtedly happen if we hold out for another year, or even six months.

“There are some who say, ‘We must trust in God and keep on

APPENDIX A

fighting,' and I grant them that miracles are possible at all times. But it is beyond our power to say whether God will work a miracle for us. We do not know what His will may be. If we continue the war, and if it should afterwards appear that everything has been in vain, our responsibility will be only the heavier, the blinder our confidence now is. And over and over again we shall hear, 'He is dead,' 'and he, and he.' Will not this make our remorse all the more bitter? Our commandos are so weak, our country so exhausted, that the loss of one great battle, the surrender of a single strong force, would spell ruin for us.

"'But we have managed to hold out for so long.' Yes, but there is a natural reason, a military reason, why this has been the case. The fact that our commandos have been spread over so large a tract of country has compelled the British, up to the present time, to divide their forces. But things have changed now; we have had to abandon district after district, and must now operate on a far more limited territory. In other words, the British army can at last concentrate its forces upon us.

"I firmly believe that, under like circumstances, no other nation in the world would have fought as our nation has done. Shall such a nation perish? No! we must save it. If we delegates are convinced that we can no longer offer resistance to the enemy, it is our plain duty to tell the people so. We must not let them be exterminated for want of timely advice. More than twenty thousand women and children have died in the camps during this one year.

"There are men of our own kith and kin who are helping to bring us to ruin. If we continue the war, it may be that the Afrikanders against us will outnumber our own men.

"What is there left to hope for? Are we to retain our independence by ceding a part of our territories? Most assuredly yes, if such a compromise is feasible. As regards Swaziland, it is of so little importance to us that we can give it up without a thought. Then there are the goldfields—let them go. They are but a cancerous growth, sapping the very life of our country.

"We must face the fact that things are not at a standstill: we are slipping back every moment. We must all pull together, or everything is lost. If our sacrifices will buy our independence, well and good. But suppose that we are compelled to give it up—well, if it even comes to this, we must never do so unconditionally. An unconditional surrender would be well enough if the leaders

THREE YEARS WAR

only had to be considered. But we must think of the interests of the nation. We must say to our people, 'We have no thought of ourselves : our only desire is to place ourselves in the breach, if so we may save you.' "

General Botha then proceeded to discuss eventualities in the event of independence being lost. Representative government, he said, might perhaps still be retained, and the national language need not necessarily be supplanted. Thus the nation would still retain its old ideals and its old customs. General Roux had been pertinently asked whether it were better to strive for the recuperation of the people now or to wait until they were altogether overpowered and reduced to such straits that it would require some thirty years before they could once more call themselves a nation. He then went into the terms of the proposal by the British Government, and repeated that there must be no idea of unconditional surrender.

The General concluded in the following words :

"Although we do not *wish* to accept terms, we have no right to refuse them altogether. On the other hand we must not say to the English, 'Do with us as you like.' For then our descendants would eternally reproach us. We should have lost the privilege of looking after our own wives and children. They would be handed over to strangers. No ! we must secure by some means or other that we ourselves shall be able to provide for them. The fate of our country is in the hands of the men in this tent. It has been bitter, indeed, for me to have to speak as I have done. But if I have not spoken the truth, convince me of my error, and I will be the first to own it. But do not condemn me, for I have had no other object than to tell you what I believe to be the truth."

General De la Rey then spoke.

"I will not detain you long," he began, "but there are a few points to which I wish to draw attention. In regard to the districts under my command, every one will understand that my burghers, after their recent brilliant successes, are firmly resolved not to sacrifice their independence. If I allude to the battles which I have just fought it is with no thought of boasting, but only that you may picture to yourselves the effect which they must have had upon the enemy ; and that no one may be angry with myself and my burghers for standing firm when our feet are on such solid ground.

APPENDIX A

" But since my districts where ma greeniging I have sent to any pa a far less favourable condition than in my own. So far as I myself am concerned, I cannot think of laying down my arms. Yet it appears to me that some parts of the country will be compelled by starvation to give up the struggle. It is well that those who represent these parts have spoken openly, and not left this meeting in ignorance of the state of affairs only to go and lay down their arms:

" I myself have never thought intervention possible. Even before the war broke out I said that nothing would come of it. I saw that South Africa was divided between Germany and England. And that if only the Republics could be extinguished, then England and Germany would be the only Powers left, and Germany would be safe. But if the Republics were victorious, then Germany would be in danger. Why then should Germany interfere in favour of the Republics, when she has everything to lose by such a course of action? No! intervention was entirely out of the question:

" There has been talk about fighting to the bitter end; but has not the bitter end already come? Each man must answer that question for himself.

" You must remember that everything has been sacrificed—cattle, goods, money, wife, and child. Our men are going about naked, and some of our women have nothing but clothes made of skins to wear. Is not this the bitter end?

" I believe that the time has now come to negotiate. England will never again give us the chance of doing so, should we allow this opportunity to slip by. But how shall we negotiate? I must leave it to this meeting to answer that question. If we do not obtain what we ask for, we shall at least stand or fall together. Yet let us act with reason.

" I cannot agree with one of the opinions expressed by Commandant-General Botha and States-Secretary Reitz. They have stated that they are against surrendering the goldfields to England; firstly, because England would never accept such a proposal, for by doing so she would declare to the whole world that she had only been fighting for the goldfields; and, secondly, because if we gave up the goldfields we should lose a source of revenue, without the aid of which we could not repair the damages which the war has wrought."

Commandant-in-Chief de Wet spoke as follows :

THREE YEARS WAR

only had to be seen that the circumstances in the Orange Free State are less critical than those in the Transvaal. Nine districts were entirely ruined ; but these, though at one time abandoned by the burghers, have now been reoccupied.

“ If I now differ from those who are of opinion that it is useless to prolong the war, it must not be thought that I am lacking in respect for their judgment. By no means. I know that what has been said about the wretched plight of the people is only too true ; but they must not take it amiss if I point out that the same condition of affairs was described in the correspondence from the Transvaal which fell into the hands of the English at Reitz. But, granting that the facts have been correctly stated, even then the Orange Free State will refuse to give in. Let me be candid with you, and say frankly that, in my opinion, this is virtually the Transvaal's war. This, however, makes no difference to me. For me the barrier of the Vaal River has never existed. I have always endeavoured to maintain the Nauwere-Vereeniging,¹ and I feel strongly the obligation which the union of the two States casts on each one of us. They are two nations, but their cause is one.

“ What, then, is the prevailing feeling in the Orange Free State ? Of the six thousand burghers who have been attending meetings, I myself have been in command of five thousand, and I can confidently say that never were five thousand men more unanimous in their opinion than were those I led when they cried, as with one voice, ‘ Persevere ; we have everything to lose, but we have not yet lost it.’ What, then, is the answer to be ? I am firmly persuaded that we have only one course before us. If we are unable to obtain what we are asking for, then it only remains for us to alleviate as best we may the lot of those who cannot help themselves. I do not as yet clearly see how this is going to be done, but, at all costs, let us continue fighting. What was our total strength when we began this war ? Sixty thousand men all told. Against this the English had a standing army of seven hundred and fifty thousand troops. Of these two hundred and fifty thousand, or one-third, are now in South Africa. We know from experience that they are unable to send more than one-third. And we ? Have we not also one-third of our army left ?

“ I do not wish to imply that I am not prepared to concede

¹ Closer Union.

APPENDIX A

something, but nothing will induce me to consent to any part of the country in *our* territory being given up. It will never do to have an English colony planted in our midst, for England then would have far too firm a hold upon our country.

"It is said, and with some truth, that the goldfields have been a curse to us, but surely there is no reason why they should continue to be so. I fail to see how, without retaining possession of these goldfields, the Republics are to be saved. Swaziland perhaps could be ceded, but never the goldfields. I feel that any intervention is out of the question; but is not the very fact that it has not taken place a sure proof that it was not the will of God? Does it not show that He is minded to form us, by this war, into a nation worthy of the name. Let us then bow to the will of the Almighty.

"My people will perhaps say, 'Our Generals see only the religious side of the question.' They will be right. Without faith we should have been foolish indeed to have embarked on this war and to continue it for so many months. Indeed, it *must* be a matter of faith, for the future is hidden from us. What *has been* is within our ken, but what is before is beyond the knowledge of the wisest man.

"Cape Colony is a great disappointment to me. I do not refer so much to what we have learnt about it from the reports as to the fact that no general uprising can be expected in that quarter. So much we have heard from General Smuts. But though there is to be no uprising, we have no reason to think that there has been any falling off in the number of our adherents in the Colony. The little contingent there has been of great help to us: they have kept fifty thousand troops occupied, with which otherwise we should have had to reckon.

"I feel deeply for our women and children; I am giving earnest consideration to their miserable plight. But their sufferings are among what we may call the necessary circumstances of the war. I have nothing to do with the circumstances. For me, this is a war of religion, and thus I can only consider the great principles involved. Circumstances are to me but as obstacles to be cleared out of the road.

"If we own ourselves defeated—if we surrender to the foe—we can expect little mercy from him. We shall at all events have dug the grave of our national independence, and, as things are,

THREE YEARS WAR

what difference is there between this and digging our own graves ? ”

Mr. Birkenstock said that the question about the goldfields must be carefully considered. This source of income must not be given up.

The meeting was then closed with prayer.

SATURDAY, MAY 17TH, 1902.

The Chairman first called upon Chief-Commandant de Wet to offer up prayer.

A private report from Mr. J. Schmorderer, who had brought the missive from the deputation in Europe, was then read:

The first delegate to speak was Landdrost Bosman (Wakkerstroom), who said :

“ My opinion is that the best way of ascertaining the probable future course of events is to see what has already happened in the past. A year ago there were six hundred burghers in my district, and each man had a horse ; now there are not more than half that number, and many of them have to go on foot. Last year we had from three to four thousand bags of maize ready to hand ; this year there are not more than as many hundred, and how to get at them is more than I can tell. If such has been the history of the past year, in what sort of condition shall we be at the end of the present one ?

“ The great difficulty with regard to our families is not how to clothe them, but how to feed them. I know of a woman who has lived for weeks on nothing but fruit. I myself have had to satisfy my hunger with mealies for days together, although I have no wish to complain about it. Even the scanty food we can get has to be obtained from the Kaffirs by persuasion. Moreover, the Kaffirs side with the English, who in their counter-marches are clearing all the food out of the country.

“ The men in my district told me that if I came back and reported that the war was to be continued, they would be obliged—for the sake of their wives and children—to go straight to the nearest English camp and lay down their arms. As to the women, it is true that they are at present full of hope and courage, but if they knew how matters stood in the veldt, they would think very differently. Even now there are many of them who say that the war ought to be put a stop to, if only for their sakes.

APPENDIX A

"The Kaffirs are another great source of trouble ; in this problem they are a factor which cannot be neglected.

"There is no hope of intervention, nor can we expect anything from the English nation. Facts that have come to my knowledge prove to me that England has become more and more determined to fight to the bitter end.

"I do not see what we can possibly gain by continuing the war. Our own people are helping the English, and every day the enemy are improving their position. What advantage can there then be in persisting in the struggle ? We have now a chance of negotiating, and we should seize that chance. For we have the opportunity given us of obtaining some help for our ruined compatriots, who would be entirely unable to make a fresh start without assistance.

"As to the religious side of this matter, I am not ashamed to say that I believe I am serving God in the course which I am taking. We must not attempt to obtain the impossible against all reason. If we make any such attempt, the results will probably be exactly opposite to what we wish. I have the greatest doubt whether it really is in order to give glory to God that the nation wishes to retain its independence. On the contrary I believe that the motive is obstinacy, a vice to which human nature is always prone.

"It has been said that it would be shameful to disregard the blood already spilt ; but surely one ought also to consider the blood that might yet be shed in a useless struggle."

The proposal of the Commission was now read, and after some discussion accepted. It ran as follows :

The meeting of national representatives from both Republics—after having considered the correspondence exchanged, and the negotiations conducted, between the Governments of the two Republics and His Excellency Lord Kitchener, on behalf of the British Government ; and after having heard the reports of the deputies from the different parts of both Republics ; and after having received the latest reports from the representatives of the two Republics in Europe ; and having taken into consideration the fact that the British Government has refused to accept the proposal of our Governments made on the same basis ; and notwithstanding the above-mentioned refusal of the British Government—still wishes to give expression to the ardent desire of the two Republics to retain their independence, for which already

THREE YEARS WAR

so much material and personal sacrifice has been made, and decides in the name of the people of both Republics to empower both Governments as follows:—To conclude a peace on the following basis, to wit: the retention of a limited independence offering an addition to what has already been offered by the two Governments in their negotiations, dated the 15th of April, 1902.

- (a) To give up all foreign relations and embassies.
- (b) To accept the Protectorate of Great Britain.
- (c) To surrender parts of the territory of the South African Republic.
- (d) To conclude a defensive alliance with Great Britain in regard to South Africa.

During the discussion it was clearly explained that the territory which it was suggested should be ceded was the already mentioned goldfields and Swaziland. The question was put whether the South African Republics would have to pay for the damage done during the war. "By all means let us pay," said Mr. de Clerq. "If I could only buy back the independence of the Orange Free State, I would gladly give all I possess."

Several other Transvaal delegates expressed themselves in the same sense, and said that they fully appreciated the sacrifices which the Orange Free State had made. General Froneman thanked them in the name of the Free State.

He felt that the two Republics no longer thought of themselves as having conflicting interests. In the fire of this war they had been firmly welded together.

Commandant Ross (Vrede) thought it wrong even to discuss the possibility of giving up independence. The delegates had received a definite mandate. They had been commissioned to see that the national independence had remained untouched, whatever else might have to be given up. This being the case, they might come to decisions on all other points, so long as they remembered that independence was not an open question.

Commandant J. van Niekerk (Ficksburg) spoke to the same purpose. He could not even think of sacrificing independence.

After some other delegates had made a few short remarks, General Brand, seconded by Commandant A. J. de Kock, proposed the following resolution, which was accepted by the meeting:

"This meeting of the national representatives of the two

APPENDIX A

Republics hereby charge the Governments to nominate a Commission for the purpose of entering upon negotiations with His Excellency Lord Kitchener, acting on behalf of His Britannic Majesty's Government: The Commission is to endeavour to make peace on satisfactory terms, and is then to lay the result of its negotiations before this meeting, for the sanction of the two Governments."

The meeting was then closed with prayer:

Appendix B

THE CONFERENCE AT PRETORIA BETWEEN THE COMMISSION OF THE NATIONAL REPRESENTA- TIVES AND LORDS KITCHENER AND MILNER (MAY 19TH-MAY 28TH, 1902)

Minutes of the Conference held at Pretoria on May 19th, 1902, between Lord Kitchener and Lord Milner, representatives of the British Government, and Commandant-General L. Botha, Commander-in-Chief C. R. de Wet, General J. H. De la Rey, Judge J. B. M. Hertzog, and General J. C. Smuts, delegates of the national representatives, who had met at Vereeniging on May 15th, 1902.

Mr. N. J. de Wet acted as interpreter; Mr. O. Walrond was secretary for the English Government; and the Rev. J. D. Kestell and D. van Velden acted in a similar capacity for the Commission.

The Conference met at ten o'clock in the morning at the house of Lord Kitchener. After having greeted each other, the members took their seats at the table in the centre of the room.

Commandant-General L. Botha opened the proceedings in the following words:

"Allow me to state that, although the negotiations have taken a longer time than we expected, I am able to assure your Excellencies that we are acting in good faith, and that everything has been done with the sole aim of concluding the peace which we all desire.

"I must also draw attention to the fact that everything we transact here must be submitted to our national representatives, in order to obtain their sanction."

The suggestion was then made that the proposals which the Commission was prepared to make should be laid before the

APPI B

Conference, whereupon the Council consisting of the
meeting : Council, which latter shall
members and also of a
PREP wish of His Majesty's
19th May, 1902.

To their Excellencies, Lord Kitchener and Lord Milner, Pretoria.

YOUR EXCELLENCIES,—

With a view to finally concluding the existing hostilities, and being fully empowered by the Government of the two Republics, we have the honour to propose the following points—in addition to the conditions already offered in the negotiations of April last—as a basis for negotiations :

- (a) We are prepared to cede our independence as regards our foreign relations.
- (b) We wish to retain self-government in our country, under British supervision.
- (c) We are prepared to cede a part of our territory.

Should your Excellencies be prepared to negotiate on this basis, then the above-mentioned points can be elaborated.

We have the honour to be,

Your Excellencies' most obedient servants,

LOUIS BOTHA.

C. R. DE WET.

J. H. DE LA REY.

J. B. M. HERTZOG.

J. C. SMUTS.

When this letter had been read, a discussion followed.

Lord Milner : " Considering the wide difference between this proposal and that made by His Majesty's Government, when we last met, I fear that I can hold out very little hope of any good results following negotiations on the basis you have suggested."

Lord Kitchener : " We can take those proposals into consideration, but I cannot see how it is possible to bring them into harmony with those of His Majesty's Government."

Commandant-General Botha : " If this is the position you take, we should like to receive from you a final answer to our proposals."

Lord Milner : " Do you wish us to refer your proposals to His Majesty's Government ? "

na : " Yes, unless you have full
ply."

quite convinced that your proposal will
bound to say that to refer it, as it stands,
His Majesty's Government will only do you harm."

Commandant-General Botha : " If you have no power to de-
cide upon this proposal here, we should like you to refer it to
His Majesty's Government."

Lord Milner : " I have no objection to taking the responsibility
of refusing your proposal on myself. The instructions received
by myself and Lord Kitchener are quite clear on this point."

Commandant-General Botha : " I must then understand that
when Lord Salisbury said that this war was not carried on with
a view to annex territory, he did not mean it."

Lord Kitchener : " It is no longer a question of territory, for
annexation is an accomplished fact."

Commandant-General Botha : " I am unable to see how our
proposal is inconsistent with annexation."

Lord Milner : " I cannot now recall the exact words used by
Lord Salisbury, but it is true that Lord Salisbury declared that
his Government did not begin the war with the intention of
obtaining territory. But in the course of the war circumstances
developed in such a way that the decision to annex the Republics
became a necessity, and the British Government have pro-
nounced their firm intention not to withdraw from this deci-
sion."

Judge Hertzog : " I should like to be informed as to what the
great difference is between the basis now proposed by us and that
laid down by His Majesty's Government during the negotiations
of last year—I do not mean the difference in details, but in
principle."

Lord Kitchener : " Do you mean by your proposal that the
Boers will become British citizens ? "

General Smuts : " I cannot see that our proposal is necessarily
in contradiction to that of last year. Our proposal only makes
provision concerning the administration."

Lord Milner then quoted from the terms offered at Middelburg
by the British Government the previous year :

" At the earliest possible date military administration shall
cease, and be replaced by civil administration in the form of a
Crown Colony Government. At first there will be in each of the

APPENDIX B

new Colonies a Governor, an Executive Council consisting of the highest officials, and a Legislative Council, which latter shall consist of a certain number of official members and also of a nominated non-official element. But it is the wish of His Majesty's Government to introduce a representative element as soon as circumstances permit, and, in course of time, to grant to the new colonies the right of self-government.

"It may be that I do not properly understand your proposal but it seems to me to differ not only in detail, but also in spirit from the scheme I have just read to you."

Judge Hertzog: "I entirely agree with you that there is a difference in idea between the two proposals; but only such a difference in idea as might well be found between Colonies of the same State. In other words, one constitution is adapted for one colony, whilst another constitution is found fitting for another colony, but yet they all belong to the same Empire."

Lord Milner: "Exactly. There are different constitutions in different Colonies; but it seems to me that the *policy* laid down in your proposal differs from that laid down by His Majesty's Government."

Judge Hertzog: "I think that I am expressing the opinion of the whole Commission when I say that we wish for peace. I draw attention to this to show the way in which, according to my opinion, we should consider the matter. For if we on both sides are really desirous of coming to a settlement, we should not make too much of theoretical difficulties, so long as the practical aim has been obtained. For instance, the different Colonies which now are joined to form the United States once possessed constitutions differing much from one another. Now the constitution laid down in our proposal does not differ so much from that laid down in yours that a practical difference should arise therefrom; and such a practical difference would arise if you insisted upon carrying on negotiations on your own basis. I imagine that England has a certain object before her in South Africa, and I believe that that object can be as well obtained by our proposal as by that of Middelburg. I therefore ask, Is the difference so great that, in order for England to obtain her object, an entirely new status must be called into existence?"

Lord Milner: "We are comparing two different things. Here in the Middelburg scheme there are a number of definite proposals, which enter upon a great mass of particulars. I do not

THREE YEARS WAR

mean to imply that *we* have not the power to go into particulars. I perfectly understand that it lies within the power of Lord Kitchener and myself to carry on further deliberations with you about details, so/as to throw light on any doubtful points, and, perhaps, to make such changes as would not fundamentally affect the scheme. As you say that your proposals are not in contradiction with those formulated at Middelburg, then there is no reason why you should not lay aside your proposals and discuss the Middelburg proposals, which are definite."

Judge Hertzog: "I quite admit that you, Lord Milner, are entitled to say that there is a fundamental difference between our proposals. But it is another question whether the difficulty that thus arises is of such a nature that we—those of us who on both sides are anxious to conclude peace—should not be able to find a solution to it satisfactory to both parties. I cannot answer that question; nor can I see why the same result would not be reached by negotiating on the basis proposed by us as by carrying on negotiations on the Middelburg proposal."

Lord Milner: "I understand, then, that you acknowledge that there is a fundamental difference between the two bases. Well, I do not think that we are empowered to negotiate on a basis differing from that laid down in the last report of His Majesty's Government, and also differing from the tenor of the Middelburg proposal. I may say that I believe that His Majesty's Government in their latest message went as far as it was possible for them to go with the object of meeting you. The whole spirit of the telegram was to that effect."

Commander-in-Chief de Wet: "I hope you will understand that I do not speak as a lawyer. (Lord Kitchener, laughing: "That's the case with me too!") I fully concur with what General Botha and Judge Hertzog have said in regard to our eagerness to establish peace. In order to be brief, I will only remark that I did not understand His Excellency, Lord Milner, to mean—any more than I myself meant—that we should go to the nation with the Middelburg proposal, with the idea of coming back with it unaltered."

Lord Milner: "No; if I gave that impression, I did not intend to do so. But I believe that when you went to your people with the last message from His Majesty's Government it was with the knowledge—which the message itself made clear—that His Majesty's Government was not prepared to take into con-

APPENDIX B

sideration any terms which differed widely from the policy laid down in the Middelburg proposal."

Commander-in-Chief de Wet : " That is indeed what I understood ; and accordingly we have now come with a proposal which does not differ very much from the Middelburg proposal."

General Smuts : " I thought that the vital principle your Government had in view was the destruction of our independence, and in our proposal the independence of the two Republics with regard to foreign relations is given up. I was therefore of opinion that the two parties might come to an arrangement on this basis. I did not think that for the restoration of peace the Middelburg terms were essential."

Lord Milner : " Not in the details, but in the general ideas. As the British Government has laid down a basis, and you have had weeks in which to consider the matter, it would not do for you now to put it on one side. Lord Kitchener has given your nation considerable time in which to take counsel ; and now you come back, and, ignoring the Middelburg terms, you propose entirely different ones of your own, and say, let us negotiate on these. I do not believe that I and Lord Kitchener would be justified in doing this. But in case he is of another opinion, the British Government can be asked if they are prepared to set on one side all the former deliberations and begin again on a new basis."

Commander-in-Chief de Wet : " We cannot, of course, prevent Lord Kitchener from asking his Government any questions he pleases, but, at the same time, we request that you will cable our behests to the English Government."

Commandant-General Botha : " I cannot see that we are beginning again on a new basis, for, in consequence of the negotiations in April last, you were ordered by the British Government to encourage us to make fresh proposals. Our present proposal is the direct result of that order."

Lord Milner : " I did my best to get fresh proposals from you, but you would not make any. You forced the British Government into making proposals."

Commandant-General Botha : " I am of opinion that we must both work together in this matter of formulating proposals."

Lord Kitchener : " You were asked to make proposals, but you did not do so ; and now, after the British Government has made a proposal, you yourselves come forward with one of your own."

THREE YEARS WAR

General De la Rey: "I think that it was the encouragement given us by correspondence between the Netherlands and the British Government that caused us to make our proposals."

Lord Milner: "That correspondence was at the beginning of the negotiations."

Commander-in-Chief de Wet: "If we had been obliged to make a new proposal in April, we would not have been able to make one so fair, and so much to the advantage of the British Government, as our present one, for, not having consulted the nation, we would have been compelled to insist on entire independence."

Lord Milner: "I must remind you of what has taken place; not with the object of putting you in the wrong, but in order to make the position clear, for there are some points about it which are not very clear. You came and made a proposal. The British Government gave you a distinct answer—they refused to accept it. Their answer was perfectly outspoken, and perfectly intelligible. At the same time they said, 'We are anxious for peace; will you make other proposals?' You then said, 'No! we have no power to do so; we must first consult the nation.' We admitted that argument. Then you said, 'Let the British Government make proposals.' The British Government did so, and they are fully entitled to an answer. In what position do you think you are placing Lord Kitchener and myself? You come back with a totally fresh proposal, and do not say anything about ours. This is not fair treatment to the British Government, and we are not bound to take your proposal into consideration."

Judge Hertzog: "I have endeavoured to show that our reply really cannot be taken as ignoring the proposal of the British Government. The great question in the correspondence in April between us and the British Government was the question of independence; and now, after having consulted the nation, we come here and say that we are prepared to sacrifice in some degree our independence, and we indicate how far we will give it up. And, as General Smuts has said, that is the basis which we have laid down in our present proposal."

Lord Milner: "You say that you give up your independence as regards foreign relations."

Judge Hertzog: "Yes. But then you must understand that this is only a general principle, which we treat in detail later on."

APPENDIX B

General Smuts: "The independence is given up both in regard to our foreign relations and in regard to interior administration, which will be placed under the supervision of the British Government. So that the effect of these two articles is, that the independence is sacrificed, and that the two Republics will not in the future be able to be regarded as Sovereign States."

Lord Milner: "I understand perfectly well that they would not be Sovereign States any longer, but my intellect is not bright enough for me to be able to say what they really would be."

Lord Kitchener: "They would be a new kind of 'international animal.'"

General Smuts: "It has more than once happened in the course of history that difficulties have been solved by compromise. And this draft proposal goes as near as seems possible towards making us a Colony."

Lord Kitchener: "Do you accept the annexation?"

General Smuts: "Not formally; but I do not see in what way this proposal is in opposition to the annexation proclamation."

Lord Kitchener: "I am afraid I am not clever enough to comprehend this; There would be two Governments in one State. And how do you imagine that this arrangement could be carried on?"

General Smuts: "A more ample explanation will have to be given of the word 'supervision'; and I thought that this was just one of the points on which we could carry on further discussions and negotiations."

Lord Milner: "I am certainly not going to give up an explicit basis for a vague proposal."

Lord Kitchener: "I feel convinced that your proposal would never be able to be carried out in the practical governing of a country."

Commander-in-Chief de Wet: "I agree that our proposal has not been fully worked out, but neither have the Middelburg proposals. This was clearly indicated by Lord Kitchener and Lord Milner when these proposals were made, and they were only looked upon as a basis on which we could negotiate, so that the business might be begun. We naturally cannot compel the British Government to accept our proposal; but, at all events, it is a basis."

Lord Milner: "I am very anxious that these discussions should

THREE YEARS WAR

not end in smoke, and I shall not allow any formalities to stand in the way, but to abandon the definite proposals of Middelburg (March 7th) for a thing like this, and to begin a fresh discussion on the basis of something which is so very vague will surely land us in trouble. I believe we are quite entitled to keep you to the Middelburg proposal, which we might modify in regard to details."

Commandant-General Botha : " Perhaps it would be well if you would first give an answer to our proposals."

Commander-in-Chief de Wet : " I think that (unless your Excellencies have power to give a final answer to our terms) it would not be unfair if we were to ask you to lay our proposal before your Government."

Commandant-General Botha : " We are come here with the earnest intention of concluding peace ; and I think that if our proposal is carried out Boer and Briton will be able to live side by side in this country. I presume that it is the wish of both parties to be fair and just, and to make a peace by which both can abide, and which will be permanent in South Africa."

Lord Milner : " That is certainly our aim."

Lord Kitchener : " Your proposal would involve important changes in our own—changes which, so far as I understand them, we should be unable to permit."

Commandant-General Botha : " I am of opinion that before a proposal is made from your side you should give a definite answer to ours."

Lord Kitchener and Lord Milner : " Well, then, change your proposal into ours."

Lord Milner : " I do not believe that the British Government is prepared to go any further to meet you than they have done in their last proposal. They think that they have already gone far in their efforts for peace—further, indeed, than the general opinion of the British public would warrant."

Lord Kitchener : " The difference between our proposals seems to be too great."

Commandant-General Botha : " We shall always remain under the supervision of the British Government."

Lord Kitchener : " Will you then consider yourselves British subjects ? ' Supervision ' is a new word, and ' suzerainty ' has already caused us too much trouble."

Judge Hertzog : " The idea is not so very new. There are

APPENDIX B

eral kinds of different States, all belonging to the British Empire. For instance, there is Basutoland."

Lord Milner: "There are many different kinds, but this one is a new variety."

Judge Hertzog: "If your Excellencies could only understand us! We have no wish to lose a single minute. We have been to the nation, and we know what the nation wants and what their temper is. If, then, we are to make a proposal here, it must be:—Firstly, a proposal which shall meet the English Government in a fair way; and, secondly, a proposal which we are honestly convinced will be acceptable to our nation. And such a proposal we have laid before you. And now we are placed in a disadvantageous position, for we are here before your Excellencies, who have not full power finally to decide the matter."

Lord Kitchener: "We are in the same position as yourselves."

Judge Hertzog: "We offer you here what we know is in accordance with the mind of the nation; we cannot possibly do anything that is against it."

Lord Milner: "Are we to understand that the Middelburg proposals are not according to the mind of your people?"

General Smuts: "As yet no answer has been given to them. The only decision come to by the national meeting is that which we are now laying before you."

Lord Kitchener: "Are you prepared to set aside your present proposal and to hand in another one bearing a closer resemblance to that of Middelburg? We must try and find some middle course; and as we are here to endeavour to arrive at something definite, let us try to obtain a basis for discussion. Shall we make a new proposal?"

General Smuts: "As soon as there is a final answer to our proposal we shall be able to take a fresh one into consideration."

Lord Milner: "I believe that the fact that you have refused to enter upon the proposal made by the British Government justifies us in not considering your proposal. Let us rather say that your very refusal implies your answer to what we have proposed."

General Smuts: "I understand the position to be as follows—The British Government has declined our proposals, and at the same time holds fast to the old basis, but without prejudice to its power of making a new proposal."

THREE YEARS WAR

Lord Milner : " The whole difference between you and myself is that I take the letter of 7th March to be the utmost concession that the British Government is able to grant ; not that that letter binds us down to every clause of the proposal, but that it is an indication of how far our Government is prepared to go on the general question. Your answer, however, is no answer at all."

Lord Kitchener then read his telegram, dated 14th April. [" A difficulty has arisen in getting on with the proceedings ; the representatives state that constitutionally they have no power to discuss terms based on the surrender of independence, inasmuch as only the burghers can agree to such a basis. Therefore, if they were to propose terms, it would put them in a false position with regard to the people. If, however, His Majesty's Government could state the terms which, subsequently to a relinquishment of independence, they would be prepared to grant, the representatives, after asking for the necessary explanations, and without any expression of approval or disapproval, would submit such conditions to their people."] " Clearly you have not kept to what you undertook in this telegram."

Commander-in-Chief de Wet : " If it had only been a question of our feelings being hurt by having to give an answer on the basis proposed to us by the British then it would not have been necessary for the people to come together at Vereeniging. But in matter of fact we have come here with a proposal, which, rightly understood, is nearly equivocal to the Middelburg proposal, and which meets the wishes of the English Government as far as possible."

Commandant-General Botha : " I do not see why we should insist so much on our proposal. If it is not to the mind of your Excellencies, if it is an unacceptable proposal, then let us have a definite answer to it."

Lord Milner : " We wish to have an answer to the proposal made by us."

General Smuts : " I do not see that any proposal has been made by the British Government. A certain basis only has been laid down, and therefore no formal answer is required."

Lord Milner : " Our proposal is six times as definite as yours, and I believe that the British Government is justified in wanting to know if your people are inclined to come to terms on the general lines which have been placed before them."

Lord Kitchener : " Here is quite an original suggestion : How

APPENDIX B

would it be if you were to go back if they would not make a proposal alter them."

General Smuts: "You must understand that this was originally written as a proposal, with all that took place in Middelburg proposals. But the people. Their answer was neither, this document is now drawn up simply elected the delegates. Then to formulate the proposals given any answer. They are still considering the matter, and, in order to gain time, they have commissioned us to see whether we could not come to some arrangement."

Lord Milner: "We are getting away from the subject. Tell us what alterations you want, and then place our proposal before your people."

Lord Kitchener: "Should you agree that your proposal is not in opposition to the annexation, we shall have accomplished something."

General Smuts: "Is it your opinion that our proposal must be set aside?"

Lord Kitchener: "Yes, surely. It is impossible for us to act on it."

Lord Milner: "It is impossible for us to take your proposal into consideration. We can send it to England, but this would certainly tend to hinder the negotiations. This is my personal opinion, which naturally you are not bound to accept. All that we can say is, that this is the only answer that we can give you."

Lord Kitchener: "It would be better to draw up a new document, in which everything of importance would be noted down, and all unimportant matters left out."

General Smuts: "But paragraph 3 of our proposal has not even been mentioned. We are prepared to cede a part of our territory."

Lord Milner: "This would be in contradiction to the annexation of the whole. If the *whole* becomes annexed by us, how then can a *part* be ceded by you?"

General Smuts: "The ceded part would then become a Crown Colony, the remaining part being governed as is here proposed."

Lord Milner: "You mean that one part would become a British Colony of the ordinary type, and another part a protected Republic?"

Lord Kitchener: "Two forms of government in the same country would lead to great friction. Our proposals are too divergent. From a military point of view, the two forms of

THREE YEARS WAR

Lord Milner : " The whole dit. Before a year was over we is that I take the letter of 7th M that the British Government turned till the afternoon. letter binds us down to every Commission discussed the situation, is an indication of how far ou to deliberate on several points with the general question: Your anner.

The meeting opened again at four o'clock.

Lord Milner : " In consequence of an informal conversation with General Smuts, Lord Kitchener and I have drawn up a document, which will show the form in which, as we think, the only agreement that can be arrived at must be worded. It is a draft document, and we believe the Governments will be able to sign it. Our idea is that after it has been taken into consideration here it might be laid before the burghers, and you could ask them, ' Are you willing that we should put our signatures to it ? ' "

This document ran as follows :—" The undersigned, leaders of the Boer forces in the Veldt, accepting, in their own name, and in that of the said burghers, the annexations as mentioned in the proclamations of Lord Roberts, dated respectively the 24th May, in the year of our Lord, nineteen hundred, and number 15, dated 1st day of September, in the year of our Lord nineteen hundred, and accepting as a consequence thereof their status of British citizens, agree herewith immediately to lay down their weapons, and to hand over all guns, small arms, ammunition, and stores in their possession, or under their hold, and to cease all further resistance against the Government of His Majesty King Edward Seventh, or his successors. They do this trusting in the assurance of His Majesty's Government that neither their personal freedom nor their property shall be taken away from them, or from the burghers who surrender with them ; and that the future action of His Majesty's Government in relation to the consequences of the war shall be in harmony with the declaration mentioned below. It is clearly understood that all burghers who at present are prisoners of war, in order to be able to enjoy the above-mentioned assurance, will have to notify their acceptance of the status of British citizens."

Commandant-General Botha : " Are we to understand that our proposal is now altogether rejected ? "

Lord Milner and Lord Kitchener : " Yes."

Commandant-General Botha : " Then I understand that you are going to be guided only by the Middelburg proposals ? "

APPENDIX B

Lord Kitchener : " No ; we can alter them."

Lord Milner : " This draft document was originally written out in order to be annexed to the Middelburg proposals. But instead of the Middelburg proposals, this document is now drawn up, in order to place us in the position to formulate the proposals differently."

General Smuts : " If the idea is then that the Middelburg proposals should be amended, would it not be best to do so now, and then to annex them to this document ? "

Lord Milner : " That which will take the place of the Middelburg proposals has to be added as a schedule to this document, and we have to work out this schedule together."

General Smuts : " I think it would be far better if you were to alter the proposal yourselves, and then lay it before us for consideration ; we could then see what we could do to meet you."

Lord Kitchener : " I think that a sub-committee should be formed by you in order to draw up the schedule."

Lord Milner : " My idea is that the schedule should be drawn up, so that it and the document could be taken into consideration together."

General Smuts : " We should like to consider first whether we will help in drawing it up."

Lord Milner : " I am willing to draw it up in conjunction with you, or to let it be drawn up by you alone, but, from past experience, I must decline to draw it up by myself."

General Smuts : " If we were to sign this document, would not the outcome be that we leaders made ourselves responsible for the laying down of arms by our burghers."

Lord Milner : " Yes. And should your men not lay down their arms it would be a great misfortune."

Lord Kitchener : " I do not think so, for if some of the burghers refused to lay down their arms, the signatories could not help it. There are sure to be some who are dissatisfied."

General Smuts : " The document does not mention this."

Lord Kitchener : " It can be amended."

General De la Rey : " Well, then, there can be no peace, for one part of the burghers will hold back and continue the war."

Lord Milner : " If the national meeting agrees to give you power to sign this document, it will certainly mean that the burghers as a whole are agreeable ; and those who after this do not submit

THREE YEARS WAR

will be—well, I do not know what I can call them—outlaws. But we will not consider such an eventuality possible.”

General Botha : “ We desire a peace that will be honourable to both parties. And, as I understand this document, we are leaving honour behind us, for we are now not only surrendering our independence, but we are allowing every burgher to be fettered hand and foot. Where is the ‘honourable peace’ for us? If we conclude peace, we have to do it as men who have to live and die here. We must not agree to a peace which leaves behind in the hearts of one party a wound that will never heal. I will do everything in my power to obtain peace. But it seems to me that this document asks too much of us, because, if I interpret it aright, it means that we must surrender our independence, that every one must give up his weapons, and that the leaders, in addition, must sign an undertaking to this effect.”

Lord Milner : “ All that we wish is that the people should live peacefully together as British citizens. If we do not obtain this, then I do not know what we do obtain.”

Lord Kitchener : “ I do not think that the Commandant-General realizes what the schedule contains. In it we state what we are ready to grant. Perhaps it would be best that the schedule should be arranged now, and then you will see that an honourable peace is proposed.”

General Botha : “ Well, then, explain the document.”

Lords Kitchener and Milner : “ You are to help us : we do not know what the burghers demand.”

Commander-in-Chief de Wet : “ By signing this document we shall place ourselves in the position which the Commandant-General has so clearly described.”

General De la Rey : “ We cannot form a judgment on anything that is not properly elaborated. I have no objection to the constitution of a sub-committee with the duty of helping in the work.”

Commandant-General Botha : “ I also have no objection, since I understand that it binds nobody to anything.”

Lord Kitchener : “ No, nobody will be bound.”

General De la Rey : “ We wish to have the matter concluded, so that we may know what is before us.”

Commander-in-Chief de Wet : “ I should like to have it clearly understood that I do not think there is the least chance of a

APPENDIX B

Government of which Lords Kitchener and Milner are the heads being accepted. An arrangement of this nature would, it seems to me, be an insurmountable difficulty. When I feel so strongly in this matter, it would not be fair to their Excellencies for me to remain silent."

Lord Kitchener: "I think it would be better if General de Wet were to wait until he has seen the whole document before he gives his opinion."

It was then agreed that Judge Hertzog and General Smuts should act as a sub-committee, in order to draw up a complete draft with Lord Kitchener, who was to be assisted by Sir Richard Solomon.

The meeting then adjourned.

On Wednesday, 21st May, 1902, the conference reassembled. Lord Milner laid before the meeting a document which he had drawn up with the help of the members of both Governments were now filled in. The document was the same as that telegraphed, with the exception of Article II, dealing with the notes and receipts and the sum of three million pounds.

It was read in Dutch and English, and ran as follows:—

"General Lord Kitchener of Khartoum, Commander-in-Chief, and His Excellency Lord Milner, High Commissioner, on behalf of the British Government;

"Messrs. S. D. Burger, F. W. Reitz, Louis Botha, J. H. De la Rey, L. J. Meyer, and J. C. Krogh, on behalf of the Government of the South African Republic and its burghers;

"Messrs. M. T. Steyn, W. J. C. Brebner, C. R. de Wet, J. B. M. Hertzog, and C. H. Olivier, on behalf of the Government of the Orange Free State and its burghers, being anxious to put an end to the existing hostilities, agree on the following points:—

"Firstly, the burgher forces now in the Veldt shall at once lay down their arms, and surrender all the guns, small arms and war stores in their actual possession, or of which they have cognizance; and shall refrain from any further opposition to the authority of His Majesty King Edward VII., whom they acknowledge as their lawful sovereign.

"The manner and details of this surrender shall be arranged by Lord Kitchener, Commandant-General Botha, Assistant Commandant-General J. H. De la Rey, and Commander-in-Chief de Wet.

THREE YEARS WAR

" Secondly, burghers in the Veldt beyond the frontiers of the Transvaal and of the Orange River Colony shall, on their surrender, be brought back to their homes.

" Thirdly, all prisoners of war, being at the time burghers out of South Africa, shall, on their declaring that they accept this status of subjects of His Majesty King Edward VII., be brought back to the farms on which they were living before the war.

" Fourthly, the burghers who thus surrender, or who thus return, shall lose neither their personal freedom nor their property.

" Fifthly, no judicial proceedings, civil or criminal, shall be taken against any of the burghers who thus return for any action of theirs in connexion with the carrying on of the war.

" Sixthly, the Dutch language shall be taught in the public schools of the Transvaal and of the Orange River Colony, where the parents of the children demand it ; and shall be admitted in the courts of justice, wherever this is required for the better and more effective administration of justice.

" Seventhly, the possession of rifles shall, on taking out a licence in accordance with the law, be permitted in the Transvaal and in the Orange River Colony, to persons who require them for their protection.

" Eighthly, military administration in the Transvaal and in the Orange River Colony shall, as soon as possible, be followed by civil government ; and, as soon as circumstances permit it, a representative system tending towards autonomy shall be introduced.

" Ninthly, the question of granting the franchise to the natives shall not be decided until a representative constitution has been granted.

" Tenthly, no special tax shall be laid on landed property in the Transvaal and Orange River Colony to meet the expenses of the war.

" Eleventhly, a judicial Commission shall be appointed, to which the government bank notes, issued under Law No. 1 of the South African Republic, may be presented within six months. All such notes, if found to have been duly issued in conformity with the terms of the law, and if the presenting party shall have given consideration in value, shall be honoured, but without interest.

" All receipts issued in the Veldt by the officers of the late

APPENDIX B

Republics, by their orders, which the Republics to obtain Commission within six months; and England." In *fidem* in exchange for goods used by the belligerents. In *fidem* shall be paid full to the persons to whom it is no more than fair issued.

"The amount payable on account of the said Government notes and receipts shall not exceed £3,000,000: and in case the whole amount of such notes and receipts accepted by the Commission should exceed that amount, a *pro rata* reduction shall be made.

"The prisoners of war shall be given facilities to present their notes and receipts within the above-mentioned six months.

"Twelfthly, as soon as circumstances shall permit, there shall be appointed in each district of the Transvaal and of the Orange River Colony a Commission, in which the inhabitants of that district shall be represented, under the chairmanship of a magistrate or other official, with a view to assist in the bringing back of the people to their farms, and in procuring for those who, on account of losses through the war, are unable to provide for themselves, food, shelter, and such quantities of seed, cattle, implements, etc., as are necessary for the resuming of their previous callings. Funds for this purpose, repayable by instalments extending over a number of years, shall be advanced—free of interest—by the Government."

Lord Milner: "If we come to an agreement, it will be the *English* document which will be wired to England, on which His Majesty's Government will decide, and which will be signed."

Commandant-General Botha: "Will not a Dutch translation be annexed?"

Lord Milner: "I have no objection to the addition of a Dutch translation. This, then, is the document which we are prepared to lay before the English Government."

Commandant-General Botha: "There are a few points on which I wish to speak. The first is in reference to the receipts given by our officers. It seems to me quite right that they should be mentioned in the paragraph about government notes. These receipts were issued, in accordance with instructions given by our Government, for the purchase of cattle, grain, and other necessaries for the support of our commandos; and the chief officers now present, as well as all other officers, have acted according to these instructions and issued receipts. Therefore I

THREE YEARS' WAR

"Secondly, burghers in the Vase receipts were actually paid Transvaal and of the Orange government notes. But many were tender, be brought but not believe that the amount is great, but it

"Thirdly, all our hands to be able to take up this affair honour of South Africa honour is concerned in so far as we have signed the statements. It will be a great point in our favour to be able to go before our delegates and tell them that they are guaranteed on this point, for most of them are officers."

Lord Kitchener: "I understand that General Botha refers not to commandeer or requisition notes, but only to actual receipts issued on the Treasury."

Lord Milner: "I do not see any difference between these receipts and commandeer notes. The willingness of persons to sell goods makes no difference in a legal document."

Lord Kitchener: "I mean that it makes a difference whether it is an order on the Treasury or a requisition note. I should limit this (guarantee) to receipts on the Treasury, issued in consequence of a law that permitted a certain sum to be issued."

Commander-in-Chief de Wet: "No decision was come to in the Free State as to how much was to be issued."

Lord Kitchener: "Am I to understand by this that it is an unlimited amount, or does it come within the amount decided on by the Volksraad?"

General Smuts: "While the Government existed the Volksraad empowered it to issue notes up to a certain amount. And this was done. Moreover the officers in the Veldt had the right to make purchases for the commandos and to give receipts for them."

Lord Milner: "I can see no difference between receipts and requisition notes, and they have been issued for an unlimited amount."

General Smuts: "These receipts were issued under a totally different law. They were not paid out of the credit voted by the Volksraad."

Commander-in-Chief de Wet: "I would have it clearly understood that I quite agree with what has been said by the Commandant-General, namely that the honour of every officer is engaged for these documents, and if your Excellencies agree it will give us a strong weapon with which to return to the delegates."

Lord Milner: "The proposal is *de facto* that the British Govern-

APPENDIX B

ment shall repay all the which the Republics to obtain
with the object of fighting a England.”

Commander-in-Chief de W. (et we have fought h^{er}. In
ably, and if we give up our inde^{verp-} lence it is no more than fair
that you should meet us in this manner.”

Commandant-General Botha : “ Am to understand your
position to be that we must surrender everything, and that whilst
you take away the freedom of our country (which amounts to
many millions) you at the same time refuse all responsibility for
our debts. We had been recognized by you as belligerent, and
so are entirely in our rights in asking that when you seize the
riches of the country you shall also take its debts upon your
shoulders. So long as the British Government reaches the great
goal at which it is aiming, a matter so easily arranged as this
should not cause any difficulty : we are not bickering about
trifles, but are bringing forward what to us is a real hardship, and
you must take it for granted that when we say something here we
really mean it. And now we tell you that this matter is an
obstacle in our way. Personally, we have not signed many
receipts : it was the officers of lower rank who signed the greater
number, and it is these very officers who form the majority of the
national meeting at Vereeniging. In some instances, I may add,
special persons were appointed for the purpose of carrying out
this work.”

Lord Milner : “ We do not take over the assets without taking
also the liabilities. We take over all the debts owed by the
country before the war, and we have even agreed to take over a
debt—a legal debt—in the shape of notes, which notes we are fully
aware it only became necessary to issue on account of the war,
and thus we are already paying a part of the cost incurred in
fighting us. I think this is a very great concession ; and when
I agreed that it should be put down I said that I believed (and
I still am of the same opinion) that the English Government
would take exception to it, although I hope that this will not be
the case. But to go further than this, and to ask us to pay not
only a debt contracted under a law for the furtherance of the
war, but also every debt contracted by every officer in the armies
of both Republics, for the purpose of fighting us, is to my mind a
most extravagant proposal. In answer to what General Botha
has said, I may observe that the Commission appears to think
that we have no persons behind us whose feelings and prejudices

THREE YEARS WAR

use that word) we are bound to take into consideration. "Sec matter causes a difficulty among your burghers, I can only Transnat I am sure that your proposal will cause the British Government the greatest trouble when dealing with the nation, with whose feelings they have to reckon."

Commander-in-Chief de Wet : " I should like to explain the position of the Orange Free State. In the Transvaal a law was passed empowering the Government to issue £1,000,000 ; but in the Orange Free State nothing was done, as the Government possessed the right to pay with receipts, and we thought that a receipt was as good and as legal as a note ; and therefore, from my point of view, the two are of equal importance."

Commandant-General Botha : " I might point out that we should not insist so much on the technical meaning of words—and this is especially true for your side, because we have assembled here with the aim of stopping the hostilities which cause you such great expenses every month ; and our meeting may be able to bring these expenses to an end. Therefore, if you accept our proposal and pay these receipts, you might save almost enough to cover the cost you incur. It would be much cheaper to make an end of the war by co-operation than to let matters drift on. Therefore I believe that it is the duty of both parties to be willing to make concessions when obstacles appear."

General de Wet : " I can assure His Excellency, Lord Milner, that the people always believed that should everything be lost they still would be able to obtain this money due on receipts. If this is not granted, I cannot imagine what the results will be. I am afraid of the consequences ; and I trust that you will do your best to meet our wishes."

Commandant-General Botha : " It will not be a very large sum, but we cannot give you the exact amount."

Commander-in-Chief de Wet : " You can well understand that our expenses are only a drop in the ocean compared with yours. If I am right, the Orange Free State had three-quarters of a million when the war began, and the issue of receipts only started when that sum was exhausted. Your Excellencies must acknowledge that we have the same obligation of creditor through these receipts as we should have in any other case."

Commandant-General Botha : " You have already many of our notes in your possession. In one case alone there were fifty thousand hidden away, and found by you. I have stated pri-

APPENDIX B

vately to Lord Milner that what we are now striving to obtain has already been granted to us *de facto* by Lord Kitchener. In Lord Kitchener's Middelburg proposal the paying of the government notes was refused, but there was a proviso that the receipts should be paid to the amount of one million. Should this now be withdrawn, surely such a withdrawal would form a deviation from the Middelburg proposal. The paying of notes is legal, and is on quite another footing, and I cannot understand how it could have been refused in the Middelburg proposal. That it should be granted now is only reasonable. But as regards the payment of receipts, although it was allowed then up to a certain amount, it is now withdrawn. At this present stage of the proceedings I think that a point which had already been practically conceded in the previous negotiations should not be allowed to form a stumbling-block to a final agreement. I believe that the amount is only small; I was for one year in conjunction with De la Rey in command of the forces of the South African Republic. During that period of time an account was kept of all the receipts, and only a short time back the books were still in our possession. These receipts were issued in an orderly manner, and each of them was duly entered in a book, as far as I was able to judge. These receipts amounted to quite a small sum; and although Lord Milner would draw back if the sum was very big, the question how far he will go can be settled when the proposal is accepted. Yet I personally think that there are no grounds for fear, and the amount is really far smaller than you imagine."

Lord Milner: "I do not think it is so much a question of amount. This paying of notes and requisition notes appears to me very unreasonable. I believe that in this matter I am only voicing the opinion of the great majority of the British nation when I say that my countrymen would much prefer to pay a large sum at the conclusion of hostilities with the object of bettering the condition of the people who have been fighting against them than to pay a much smaller sum to meet the costs incurred by the Republics during the war. Whether such a view is right or wrong, it is a view you have to reckon with. We do not wish to pay the accounts of both parties; and my opinion of the clause quoted from the Middelburg proposal is that that clause was one of its faults. But should anything of the kind become necessary, then I think that the paying of the notes is less objectionable than the paying of the requisition notes. I placed this

THREE YEARS' WAR.

point about the payment of notes in the draft because I thought that if it came to a choice between paying one or the other you would prefer that the notes should be paid. However, if it should be thought better to return on this point to the Middelburg proposal, although I am greatly against the clause, I will waive my objection to it if Lord Kitchener is agreeable.

General Smuts: "I am afraid that we cannot agree to this for we thought that the notes would be beyond all dispute."

Judge Hertzog: "I do not think that your Excellency is representing the matter fairly when you say that you will not pay the bills of both parties. There is one thing to be taken into consideration as regards the Orange Free State, and which must be considered before everything else, and that is, that we have made no loans, nor have we given any government notes. The notes we used were notes of the South African Republic, which had been sent to the Orange Free State. Our law was formed on the idea that in case of war all the costs should be paid by commission notes. The Orange Free State acted on this principle, and receipts were issued. If we take into consideration at the same time that we have been and still are recognized by you as belligerent, then we can only say: On our side we surrender everything that we possess, and we only ask the other party to acknowledge the fact that if we had contracted a loan it would have been to the charge of the British Government, who, in taking everything from us, renders itself responsible for our public loans. Lord Milner should understand that it is of just as much importance to us for the receipts to be paid as it is to the South African Republic for the loan, which it contracted before the war, to be taken over by the British Government. But I can even go further and give Lord Milner the assurance that we have acted more economically when issuing these receipts than we should have done had we contracted the loan previous to the war. Now we have only what is absolutely necessary to meet our present needs. So that Lord Milner must own that we find ourselves in the same position towards those who are in possession of receipts, as we should have occupied towards any other creditor we might have had before the war began. I must give my support to what the Commandant-General has said; and I can only repeat what I have already informally told Lord Milner, namely, that this difficulty is almost insurmountable."

APPENDIX B

Lord Milner : " We can refer this to our Government. But your proposal is altogether antagonistic to the Middelburg proposal, which absolutely rejected the idea of taking over all the debts of the two States."

Lord Kitchener : " I should like to know the amount."

General De la Rey : " My issue of notes amounts to between twenty and fifty thousand pounds ; but I cannot say what the issue in receipt has been."

Lord Milner : " There really is a feasible compromise, namely, to allow the notes and receipts to come in and to establish the suggested limit of £1,000,000."

Lord Kitchener : " Would that meet your difficulty ? "

Commandant-General Botha : " No."

Lord Kitchener : " Well, would two or three million be sufficient ? We must have a limit before we can do anything."

Commander-in-Chief de Wet : " It is impossible to stipulate the amount."

Lord Kitchener : " If you were in a position to give a limit, it would simplify matters."

Commander-in-Chief de Wet : " I agree with that entirely, and I can quite understand the position in which you are placed. Yet it is absolutely impossible to assign an amount. Will you give us your permission to adjourn for a moment in order to discuss the matter ? "

The meeting was then adjourned. It reassembled at 2.30 p.m.

Commander-in-Chief de Wet : " We have agreed to fix on a sum of £3,000,000 for the government notes and receipts ; their amount paid *pro rata* can be lowered should this sum prove insufficient. We have drawn up an article to lay before the meeting."

General Smuts then read a draft which was inserted at the end of Article 11 in the draft agreement.

In answer to a question by Lord Kitchener, Commander-in-Chief de Wet said : " The prisoners of war on the different islands who are in possession of such notes should be given an opportunity of sending them in for payment."

Lord Milner : " What is the next point you wish to raise ? We now understand what your position is."

Commandant-General Botha : " Am I to understand that you mean that we are getting away from the point in discussion ? "

THREE YEARS WAR

Lord Milner : " This document contains your view of the matter, so we are now aware of your idea."

Commandant-General Botha : " We must know what to say to the delegates."

Lord Kitchener : " Is this the only point you wish to bring forward, or are there others in addition ?"

Commandant-General Botha : " There is another concerning the protection of debtors, which is a vital question for us."

Lord Milner : " We must not have any beating about the bush. Everything must appear in the document."

General Smuts : " Most of the debts contracted before the war will have to be paid after the war ; and if the debtors cannot pay we are afraid that it will result in the ruin of a great part of the inhabitants. We should like to see steps taken to prevent this. If Lord Milner intends to take such steps, we should like to be informed what they are."

Lord Milner : " I think it would be best if you were to make a proposal on this point."

General Smuts : " Our proposal is roughly that all interest which became payable during the war should be joined to the principal, and that this should be payable six months after the war."

Lord Kitchener : " Is it necessary to make a proposal about this ?"

General Smuts : " If the Government is prepared to meet us in this difficulty it will be unnecessary to place a formal clause in the draft agreement."

Lord Milner : " As I look at the matter, the Government is making certain promises in this document, and I consider that all promises to which a reference may be made later should appear in it. Everything to which the Government is asked to bind itself should appear in this document, and nothing else. I do not object to clauses being added, but I wish to prevent any possible misunderstanding."

General Smuts : " Well, in that case we are quite willing to propose such a paragraph."

Commandant-General Botha : " We waive this question, so that early measures may be taken to arrive at an understanding. In case a great number of the inhabitants become subjects of His Majesty, it is to every one's interest, and principally to that of the Government, that these people should not be ruined."

APPENDIX B

They will be thrown upon the mercy of a Government, whose duty it is to study their interests. If steps are not taken to prevent it, speculators who have been buying up the liabilities will, as soon as peace is concluded, enforce them, and directly the Courts of Justice are opened they will issue summonses. Against this we have to be on our guard."

Lord Milner : " I agree with the Commandant-General. I think that as these people become subjects of His Majesty, then some provision will have to be made for them. But I believe it to be neither necessary nor advisable to point out in every particular case the way in which His Majesty's Government has to provide for these people. I think that an idea exists—perhaps it is a very natural idea—because we have been fighting against the burghers that, therefore, after peace has been concluded we shall still retain a feeling of enmity against them. Just the opposite, however, is the truth. Our endeavour will naturally be, from the moment hostilities cease, to gain the confidence of the people and to do our best to promote their welfare. But if we have to bind ourselves beforehand in regard to the manner in which we shall deal with all sorts of involved legal questions, further misunderstandings are certain to occur. If you have not confidence in us—that we shall try to be a righteous Government, and to maintain the balance between the different classes of His Majesty's subjects—then you must put in writing every point that strikes you, and let them be laid before His Majesty's Government, to see what they think about them."

Commander-in-Chief de Wet : " I trust that you will not think that we are trying to tie the hands of His Majesty's Government. There are many other points which will give the Government opportunity to win the confidence of the people. But about things which concern the financial position of burghers who are entirely ruined we feel it our duty to obtain definite promises. They will be a weapon in our hands when we return to the delegates."

Commandant-General Botha : " I do not quite understand, Lord Milner. I did not interpret Mr. Chamberlain's telegram in the sense that we had to present new proposals in order to bind our hands further. I thought that proposals were to be made with a view to establishing peace."

Lord Kitchener : " I do not think that it is altogether necessary to include this proposal in the document. It concerns the

THREE YEARS WAR

very involved legal questions as to what the rights of creditor and debtor shall be, and as to what the law in the Transvaal may be on the matter. I think that every one can rest assured that the interests of the Boers will be protected by the Government in every way; and this, whether the point is put down now or left in the hands of the Government, with the recommendation from this Commission to take the matter into serious consideration.

“ I think that I know of a better way to deal with this involved question. Let this matter be brought under the consideration of the Government. I may be mistaken, but, as far as I can see, it will prove a very thorny question for the lawyers, and will take a long time before it can be clearly stated. It is, however, the wish of us all that you should return to the delegates equipped in such a way that you will be able to arrive at a decision. You may rest assured that the matter which you have brought before us has been included in the minutes of this meeting. I do not think that it is necessary for you to go further than this. The matter can now be carefully considered, not only here, but also in England; and you may be quite sure that your interests will receive, in every way, full consideration.”

General De la Rey: “ I think that the matter has been sufficiently discussed in the presence of your Excellencies, and that it need not be placed in the draft contract, for by so doing one might stumble on legal questions.”

Commander-in-Chief de Wet: “ This is my point of view: There are two parties, and one of them is about to cease to exist. It is, therefore, natural that this party cannot allow a vital question to pass unnoticed. It is for this reason that I cannot agree that this matter should be omitted from the draft contract. It will not be necessary that the military Government which now exists should continue after the war.”

Lord Kitchener: “ But the question will have to be settled by the Civil Government. It is a matter for lawyers, and must be laid before them, and will require much consideration.”

Commandant-General Botha: “ When hostilities are concluded will it be possible to summon a burgher for a debt contracted before the war? I put this request because our law states that no burgher can be summoned till sixty days have elapsed since the conclusion of peace.”

Lord Kitchener: “ You may entirely rely upon this, that when-

APPENDIX B

ever the war is over each burgher will have the absolute right to obtain consideration for his position in every way, and that his interests will be protected under the new as under the old régime."

Commandant-General Botha : " I understand that perfectly. But the possibility exists that syndicates may be formed to buy up all the debts, and the people may be ruined before a single burgher is in the position to earn anything or to have his position restored."

Lord Kitchener : " I quite agree with what the Commandant-General has said, and he is quite right to bring the question up. Yet I do not think that the draft contract is the best place in which to bring it forward. Once peace is a fact, then it will be the duty of every one to draw the attention of the Government to what is required to aid the nation ; but to bring up difficulties at the present moment, and to attempt to right them, seems to be an endless task, and one for which this document was not destined."

Commander-in-Chief de Wet : " I am of opinion that this is a matter which should be settled by a proclamation ; but I want to have as many weapons as possible in my hands when I return to the national delegates, and one of the first questions that will be asked me is this : ' What guarantee do we possess that we shall not be ruined by our creditors ? ' It would not be much trouble to you to give us now a draft of the proclamation which would be issued as soon as peace is concluded."

Lord Kitchener : " But this would be something quite apart from the matter under discussion."

Commander-in-Chief de Wet : " Yes."

Lord Milner : " What is the good, then ? "

Commander-in-Chief de Wet : " It is such a vital question for us that you cannot take it amiss if we insist upon it, for we have to give up everything."

Lord Kitchener : " Of course, no one is blaming you."

Lord Milner : " But without any thought of blame, I must point out that the effect of their proposal would be that another clause would have to be inserted in the draft contract, undertaking that such a proclamation would be issued."

Lord Kitchener : " I think that as long as the delegates receive an assurance that the Government will take this matter into consideration, in the interests of their subjects, whom they are bound to protect, that such an assurance ought to suffice."

THREE YEARS WAR

There should be no written undertaking, but only a promise that the matter shall receive attention. It is not advisable after the subject has been brought before the Government to press the matter further. The feelings of the burghers, moreover, in other ways than this, will be brought before Lord Milner."

Commander-in-Chief de Wet : " If we wished to do so, we could insist upon many other little points, but we only bring up vital questions."

Lord Kitchener : " This is one of the questions which, when once brought under the consideration of the Government, cannot be put aside ; and you may tell the burghers that their interests will be protected as fully as is possible. I think that, in so complicated a matter, this ought to be sufficient for them. All that is debated here is recorded in the minutes, and these minutes will be considered not only here, but also in England. Are you satisfied with this ? "

Commandant-General Botha : " Yes, so far as I am concerned."

Commander-in-Chief de Wet : " I also am satisfied."

Lord Milner : " I hope it is quite understood that if the matter is allowed to remain where it is, my Government will be under no obligation to treat the matter in any particular way."

Lord Kitchener : " But there is a pledge that the matter will be properly considered."

Lord Milner : " Yes, naturally, if we put anything down in writing. I am convinced that it is necessary to make it quite clear that this document must contain everything about which there is anything in the form of a pledge."

Lord Kitchener : " There is, then, a pledge that the point upon which you have touched will be considered in your interests."

General Smuts : " There still remains the question of the payment of receipts."

Lord Kitchener : " That will be placed before the Government. The sum is an essential point ; I believe the amount to be considerable. I should now like to know that it is understood that we are agreed about all these draft proposals, including your amendments, and that there are no further questions to be brought forward—it is necessary to know this, as they would have to be telegraphed to England."

Commander-in-Chief de Wet : " We have no further points to raise."

APPENDIX B

Lord Milner: "The telegram that I shall despatch is as follows:

'The Commission is prepared to lay before their burgher meeting the following document (in the event of it being sanctioned by His Majesty's Government), and to ask of the meeting a "Yes" or "No."'

"Is that satisfactory?"

Commander-in-Chief de Wet: "Yes, naturally. Only I cannot say that this document has my approval. Yet I shall be content to abide by the decision of the delegates."

Judge Hertzog: "I should not like to think that we are bound to use our influence with the delegates."

Lord Milner: "I think that is understood. I understand that the members of the Commission are not bound in respect of the opinions they may express before the burghers. They are only bound, if the British Government approves of the document, to lay it before the people, I propose to send the following telegram:

'The Commission is prepared to lay the following document before the burgher meeting at Vereëning, for a "Yes" or "No" vote, in the event of His Majesty's Government approving of it.'

"I want also to state that we have completely deviated from the Middelburg proposal. I believe everyone is fully aware that the Middelburg proposal has been annulled altogether. Should an agreement be arranged in conformity with this document, and signed, then no attempt must be made to explain the document, or its terms, by anything in the Middelburg proposal."

The meeting was now adjourned.

WEDNESDAY, MAY 28TH, 1902.

The Commission met Lord Kitchener and Lord Milner at eleven o'clock with the purpose of hearing the British Government's answer to the draft proposal sent by their Lordships.

Lord Milner read the following memorandum:

"In answer to the telegram composed at our last meeting with the consent of the Commission, and of which the members

THREE YEARS WAR

have received a copy, the following message has been received from His Majesty's Government :—

' His Majesty's Government sanctions the laying before the meeting for a " Yes " or " No " vote the document drawn up by the Commission and sent by Lord Kitchener on the 21st May to the Secretary of War, with the following amendments :

' The final proposal made by the British Government, on which the national representatives at Vereeniging have to answer " Yes " or " No. "'

' General Lord Kitchener of Khartoum, Commander-in-Chief, and His Excellency Lord Milner, High Commissioner, on behalf of the British Government ;

' Messrs. S. W. Burger, F. W. Reitz, Louis Botha, J. H. De la Rey, L. J. Meyer, and J. C. Krogh on behalf of the Government of the South African Republic and its burghers ;

' Messrs. M. T. Steyn, W. J. C. Brebner, C. R. de Wet, J. B. M. Hertzog, and C. H. Olivier on behalf of the Government of the Orange Free State and its burghers, being anxious to put an end to the existing hostilities, agree on the following points :

' Firstly, the burgher forces now in the Veldt shall at once lay down their arms, and surrender all the guns, small arms, and war stores in their actual possession, or of which they have cognizance, and shall abstain from any further opposition to the authority of His Majesty King Edward VII., whom they acknowledge as their lawful sovereign.

' The manner and details of this surrender shall be arranged by Lord Kitchener, Commandant-General Botha, Assistant Commandant-General J. H. De la Rey, and Commander-in-Chief de Wet.

' Secondly, burghers in the Veldt beyond the frontiers of the Transvaal and of the Orange River Colony, and all prisoners of war who are out of South Africa, who are burghers, shall, on their declaration that they accept the status of subjects of His Majesty King Edward VII., be brought back to their homes, as soon as transport and means of existence can be assured.

' Thirdly, the burghers who thus surrender, or who thus return, shall lose neither their personal freedom nor their property.

' Fourthly, no judicial proceedings, civil or criminal, shall be taken against any of the burghers who thus return for any action in connexion with the carrying on of the war. The benefit of this clause shall, however, not extend to certain deeds antagonistic to the usages of warfare, which have been communicated

APPENDIX B

by the Commander-in-Chief to the Boer Generals, and which shall be heard before a court martial immediately after the cessation of hostilities:

'Fifthly, the Dutch language shall be taught in the public schools of the Transvaal and of the Orange River Colony when the parents of children demand it; and shall be admitted in the Courts of Justice, whenever this is required for the better and more effective administration of justice.

'Sixthly, the possession of rifles shall, on taking out a licence in accordance with the law, be permitted in the Transvaal and the Orange River Colony to persons who require them for their protection.

'Seventhly, military administration in the Transvaal and in the Orange River Colony shall, as soon as it is possible, be followed by civil government; and, as soon as circumstances permit it, a representative system tending towards autonomy shall be introduced.

'Eighthly, the question of granting a franchise to the native shall not be decided until a representative constitution has been granted.

'Ninthly, no special tax shall be laid on landed property in the Transvaal and Orange River Colony, to meet the expenses of the war.

'Tenthly, as soon as circumstances permit there shall be appointed in each district in the Transvaal and the Orange River Colony a Commission, in which the inhabitants of that district shall be represented, under the chairmanship of a magistrate or other official, with the view to assist in the bringing back of the people to their farms, and in procuring for those who, on account of losses in the war are unable to provide for themselves, food, shelter, and such quantities of seed, cattle, implements, etc., as are necessary for the resuming of their previous callings.

'His Majesty's Government shall place at the disposal of these Commissions the sum of £3,000,000 for the above-mentioned purposes, and shall allow that all notes issued in conformity with Law No. 1, 1900, of the Government of the South African Republic, and all receipts given by the officers in the Veldt of the late Republics, or by their order, may be presented to a judicial Commission by the Government, and in case such notes and receipts are found by this Commission to have been duly issued for consideration in value, then they shall be accepted by the

THREE YEARS WAR

said Commission as proof of war losses, suffered by the persons to whom they had originally been given. In addition to the above-named free gift of £3,000,000, His Majesty's Government will be prepared to grant advances, in the shape of loans, for the same ends, free of interest for two years, and afterwards repayable over a period of years with three per cent. interest. No foreigner or rebel shall be entitled to benefit by this clause.'

Lord Milner: "In making this communication to the Commission we are instructed to add that if this opportunity of concluding an honourable peace is not taken advantage of within a time to be fixed by us, then this conference shall be regarded as closed, and His Majesty's Government shall not be bound in any way by the present terms. I have, in order that there may be no mistake about these terms, made a copy of the documents and of Lord Kitchener's telegram, also of the amendments and additions determined on by His Majesty's Government, and of the memorandum to which I have just drawn your attention."

A debate now followed on the time that should be allowed for the discussion of the proposals at Vereeniging, and it was agreed that Commandant-General Botha should propose a term that very day before the Commission left Pretoria.

It was subsequently settled that the delegates must arrive at a decision before Saturday evening, May 31st.

General Botha asked if there were any objection to the delegates erasing any paragraph of the proposal sent by the British Government.

Lord Milner: "There must be no alteration: Only 'Yes' or 'No' is to be answered."

Commandant-General Botha: "I think that the burghers have the right to erase any article they may wish, for they have the right to surrender unconditionally."

Lord Milner replied that the burghers certainly had the power to do so; but the document of the British Government could not be changed.

There now followed an informal discussion about the colonists who had been fighting on the side of the Republics.

Lord Milner communicated what the British Government's intentions were with regard to these colonists; and read the following document:—

"His Majesty's Government has to formally place on record that the colonists of Natal and the Cape Colony who have been

APPENDIX B

engaged in fighting and who now surrender shall, on their return, be dealt with by the Colonial Governments in accordance with the laws of the Colonies, and that all British subjects who have joined the enemy shall be liable to be tried under the law of that part of the British Empire to which they belong.

“His Majesty's Government has received from the Government of Cape Colony a statement of their opinion as regards the terms to be offered to British subjects of the Cape Colony who are still in the Veldt or who have surrendered since April 12th, 1901. The terms are as follows:—In regard to the burghers, they all, on their surrender, after having laid down their arms, shall sign a document before a resident magistrate of the district in which their surrender has taken place, in which document they shall declare themselves guilty of high treason; and their punishment, in the event of their not having been guilty of murder, or of other deeds in contradiction to the customs of civilized warfare, shall be that for the rest of their lives they shall not be registered as voters, nor shall they be able to vote in Parliamentary, district, or municipal elections. As regards justices and veldtcornets of the Cape Colony, and all other persons who had occupied official positions under the Government of Cape Colony, and all who held the rank of commandant in the rebel or burgher forces, they shall be brought on the charge of high treason before the ordinary Courts of the country, or before such special Courts as later on may legally be constituted. The punishment for their misdeeds shall be left to the discretion of the Court, with this reservation, that in no case shall capital punishment be inflicted.

“The Government of Natal is of opinion that the rebels should be judged by the laws of the Colony.”

The meeting now adjourned.

The secretaries and Messrs. De Wet and J. Ferreira, with the help of lawyers, set themselves the task of making copies of the proposal of the British Government for the use of the national representatives at Vereeniging. This work kept them engaged until the evening.

At seven o'clock the Commission left Pretoria and returned to Vereeniging.

THREE YEARS WAR

THE MIDDELBERG PROPOSAL:

LORD KITCHENER TO COMMANDANT-GENERAL BOTHA:

PRETORIA, *March 7, 1901.*

YOUR HONOUR,—

With reference to our conversation at Middelburg on the 28th February, I have the honour to inform you that, in the event of a general and complete cessation of hostilities, and the surrender of all rifles, ammunition, cannon and other munitions of war in the hands of the burghers, or in Government depots, or elsewhere, His Majesty's Government is prepared to adopt the following measures:

His Majesty's Government will at once grant an amnesty in the Transvaal and Orange River Colony for all *bonâ fide* acts of war committed during the recent hostilities. British subjects belonging to Natal and Cape Colony, while they will not be compelled to return to those Colonies, will, if they do so, be liable to be dealt with by the laws of those Colonies specially passed to meet the circumstances arising out of the present war. As you are doubtless aware, the special law in the Cape Colony has greatly mitigated the ordinary penalties for high treason in the present case:

All prisoners of war, now in St. Helena, Ceylon, or elsewhere, being burghers or colonists, will, on the completion of the surrender, be brought back to their country as quickly as arrangements can be made for their transport:

At the earliest practicable date military administration will cease, and will be replaced by civil administration in the form of Crown Colony Government: There will, therefore, be, in the first instance, in each of the new Colonies, a Governor and an Executive Council, composed of the principal officials; with a Legislative Council consisting of a certain number of official members to whom a nominated unofficial element will be added. But it is the desire of His Majesty's Government, as soon as circumstances permit, to introduce a representative element, and ultimately to concede to the new Colonies the privilege of self-government. Moreover, on the cessation of hostilities, a High Court will be established in each of the new Colonies to administer the laws of the land, and this Court will be independent of the Executive.

Church property, public trusts, and orphan funds will be respected:

APPENDIX B

Both the English and Dutch languages will be used and taught in public schools when the parents of the children desire it, and allowed in Courts of Law:

As regards the debts of the late Republican Governments, His Majesty's Government cannot undertake any liability. It is, however, prepared, as an act of grace, to set aside a sum not exceeding one million pounds sterling to repay inhabitants of the Transvaal and Orange River Colony for goods requisitioned from them by the late Republican Governments, or subsequent to annexation, by Commandants in the field being in a position to enforce such requisitions. But such claims will have to be established to the satisfaction of a Judge or Judicial Commission, appointed by the Government, to investigate and assess them, and, if exceeding in the aggregate one million pounds, they will be liable to reduction *pro rata*.

I also beg to inform Your Honour that the new Government will take into immediate consideration the possibility of assisting by loan the occupants of farms, who will take the oath of allegiance, to repair any injuries sustained by destruction of buildings or loss of stock during the war, and that no special war tax will be imposed upon farms to defray the expense of the war.

When burghers require the protection of firearms, such will be allowed to them by licence, and on due registration, provided they take the oath of allegiance. Licences will also be issued for sporting rifles, guns, etc., but military firearms will only be allowed for purposes of protection.

As regards the extension of the franchise to Kaffirs in the Transvaal and Orange River Colony, it is not the intention of His Majesty's Government to give such franchise before representative Government is granted to those Colonies, and if then given it will be so limited as to secure the just predominance of the white race. The legal position of coloured persons will, however, be similar to that which they hold in the Cape Colony.

In conclusion I must inform Your Honour that, if the terms now offered are not accepted after a reasonable delay for consideration they must be regarded as cancelled.

I have, etc.,

KITCHENER, GENERAL,

Commander-in-Chief British Forces, South Africa:

To His Honour, Commandant-General Louis Botha:

Appendix C

MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE SPECIAL NATIONAL REPRESENTATIVES AT VEREENIGING, SOUTH AFRICAN REPUBLIC, THURSDAY, THE 29TH OF MAY 1902, AND THE FOLLOWING DAYS.

MAY 29TH, 1902:

The Rev. J. D. Kestell having offered prayer, the Chairman requested Vice-President Burger to address the meeting.

Vice-President Burger said that the documents laid before the Governments by the Commission would now be read to the meeting. Thereupon Mr. D. van Velden read the following letter :

REPORT OF THE COMMISSION: PRETORIA,

28th May, 1902:

To the Governments of the Orange Free State and the South African Republic :

HONBLE. GENTLEMEN,—

In accordance with instructions received from you, we went to Pretoria in order to negotiate with the British authorities on the question of peace. We have the honour to make the following report :

The meeting lasted from Monday, May 19th, to Wednesday, May 28th, its prolongation having been principally caused by the length of time taken up by the cable correspondence with the British Government.

We first handed in a proposal (annexed under A) ¹ in which we attempted to negotiate on the basis of a limited independence with surrender of part of our territory. Lords Kitchener and Milner refused emphatically to negotiate on this basis, and ex-

¹ See page 433 *et seq.*

APPENDIX C

pressed the opinion that to cable this proposal to the British Government would be detrimental to the objects of these negotiations. They told us they had already informed the two Governments that the British Government would only negotiate on the basis of an amended form of the Middelburg proposal. In order finally to formulate this proposal, Lord Milner asked the assistance of some members of the Commission; and this was granted, on the understanding that the assistance of these members of the Commission should be given without prejudice to themselves.

As the result of the deliberations of this sub-committee, Lord Milner produced a draft proposal, in which we insisted that a fresh clause (No. 11) should be inserted; and this was done. This draft proposal (annexed under B)¹ was then cabled to the British Government, revised by them, and then communicated to us in its final shape (annexed under B).² We were informed by the British Government that no further revision of this proposal would be allowed, but that it must now be either accepted or rejected in its entirety by the delegates of the two Republics; and that this acceptance or rejection must take place within a stipulated time. We then told Lord Kitchener that he should know our final decision by the evening of the next Saturday at latest.

During our formal negotiations certain informal conversations took place in reference to the British subjects (in Cape Colony and Natal) who have been fighting on our side. As a result of these informal conversations a communication from the British Government was imparted to us (annexed under B).³

We have the honour to remain, etc.,

LOUIS BOTHA.

J. H. DE LA REY;

C. R. DE WET;

J. B. M. HERTZOG;

J. D. SMUTS.

Vice-President Burger said that the delegates must proceed to discuss this document, and that they would then be asked to decide—firstly, whether the struggle should be continued; secondly, whether the proposal of the British Government should be accepted; and, thirdly, whether they were prepared to surrender unconditionally.

¹ See page 451 *et seq.* ² See page 465 *et seq.* ³ See page 468 *et seq.*

EE YEARS WAR

It was decided that minutes of the meeting should be kept, and the delegates then proceeded to discuss the different articles of the British Government's proposal. The whole of the morning and a part of the afternoon sitting were devoted to questions dealing with the meaning of the several clauses, the members of the Commission answering to the best of their ability:

After these questions had been disposed of, Mr. De Clercq rose to speak. He said that he had already given his own opinion, but that now it was for the whole meeting to decide whether they would give up the war, and, if they resolved to do so, whether they would accept the proposal unconditionally. As to the proposal, it could not be denied that it did not give all that they themselves desired, but *that* could not have been expected. Should they now return to their commandos and be asked by their burghers what they had effected, they would have to reply, "Nothing." How would they be able to meet their burghers with such an answer as that? It would therefore be better to get terms from the British Government; and by doing so they would also gratify the British nation. As for himself, he was for accepting the proposal, unless it could be proved to him that unconditional surrender would be a still better course to take:

General Nieuwoudt then proposed that the meeting should, without further delay, proceed to vote whether the war should be terminated, and whether the terms offered to them should be accepted.

General Froneman seconded this proposal.

Mr. Birkenstock (Vrijheid) felt that this was too important a matter to be treated with such haste. A decision about such a document as the one now lying before the meeting could not be come to in a moment. The delegates would hardly agree with the last speaker in his opinion that they should at once proceed to vote whether the war should or should not be continued. Time was required before coming to such a decision. Moreover it had to be proved whether it were possible to continue the war. There were some districts where it certainly could no longer be carried on. Was it possible for one part of the nation to continue fighting without the other? Then there was the question whether their resources and the troops which they still had were sufficient to justify them in prolonging the struggle. If they were insufficient the war must be discontinued and terms must be accepted. It would not be an easy thing to do; one

APPENDIX C

could not, with a light heart, give up the independence of the country; but half a loaf was better than no loaf. He such a sacrifice as this might be necessary if those districts be saved.

Commandant Jacobs (Harrismith) was at one time the speaker in holding that they must not be in too great a hurry to vote on the proposal.

Mr. P. R. Viljoen (Heidelberg) felt that the proposal of the British Government would so tightly bind them that they would never again be free. They were *knee-haltèred* now, but under certain circumstances they might even be *hobbled*.³

He considered that the meeting should ask the Governments to stop the war.

General Du Toit (Wolmaransstad) said that the times through which they were passing were very critical; every one ought to say exactly what he thought, and no one ought to be condemned for doing so. A delegate who should say that the war could not be continued must not be considered disloyal to his country because he did so. As regarded the three questions before the meeting, according to the opinion of his burghers the war ought to be continued. The views of his burghers when he left the commandos had been clearly expressed. "Let us retain our independence, or go on fighting," they had said. But why were they of this mind? Because they were unaware how matters stood in other districts. The eyes of the delegates, however, while directed towards God, were also able to observe the condition of the eastern parts of their country. If the burghers in those parts could not hold out, it would be impossible for the other commandos to do so. It could not be denied that some of the commandos were no longer able to continue fighting. That being the case, even if there were a majority in favour of prolonging the struggle, that majority would have to yield to the wishes of the minority, and for this reason: if the war were to be continued in conformity with the wishes of the majority, and if the minority were to be compelled to surrender (and nobody would be surprised at this), then the majority would find themselves too weak to go on fighting. Thus there were clear reasons

¹ The Boer form of this proverb is: Half an egg is better than an empty shell.

² The head fastened to the knee.

³ Having two legs fastened together.

THREE YEARS WAR

It was decided to be ended. Moreover, its continuation would and the delegates the *national* but also the *moral* death of the of the British Government it was still to be proved that a continuation of and a part of it was possible; for himself he feared that it was not dealing with it he must he could only fight without hope and the Committee. If he were now to go back to his burghers, and they were to ask him why he persisted in the war, and he was compelled to reply that he was doing so on the strength of opinions expressed in newspapers, and on the encouragement given to the cause of the Republics in their pages, he would be told that he was building on sand. Again, he feared that if the war were to be continued, detached parties would be formed which would try to obtain terms from the English for themselves. And should the commandos in time become so weak as to be forced to surrender unconditionally, what then would be the fate of the officers? Would they not lose everything, and be banished into the bargain? Let no one think, however, that he was trying merely to do what was best for himself. No. There was now a chance for negotiating; should the meeting let slip that chance, unconditional surrender would most certainly result, and that would be disastrous to all. He hoped that he would not be misunderstood; if the meeting decided to go on with the war, he, for one, would not lay down his arms. No, he would actively prosecute the war, and operate in conjunction with the other generals. But what would be the use of it: he sided with those who held that the struggle could no longer be carried on.

Commandant Rheeder (Rouxville) wished to reply to those who demanded reasons for the continuation of the war. One reason, he said, was to be found in the fact that England would not allow them to have any communication with the deputation in Europe; that meant that something advantageous to us was being held back. Another was the consideration of what their descendants in time to come would say. "How is it," they would ask, "that we are not now free men? There were a large number of burghers in the veldt to continue the war—what has become of our independence?" And what answer shall we be able to make?—we whose courage failed us before such tremendous odds, and who laid down our arms when victory was still possible. The speaker would only be satisfied if the meeting were unanimous for stopping the war, not otherwise. He

APPENDIX

thought of the families. How would the de-^{as to duty} families on their return, after the sacrifice of ir-^{independence?} He considered that the commandos should leave those districts where resistance was no longer possible and go to others. If to discontinue the war meant to surrender independence, then the war must not be discontinued.

Vice-President Burger said that he had not heard from the last speaker any reasons whatsoever for continuing the war.

Commandant Rheeder then remarked that if they wanted to surrender their country they should have done so earlier, when the burghers were not entirely destitute. But now nothing was left to them. As to the narrowness of the field of operations, there was still room enough to fight.

Commandant P. L. Hijs (Pretoria) referred to the frequent allusion which had been made to their European deputation. That deputation was now in Holland, and must know if anything was going on there to the advantage of the Republics. If there were any hopeful signs there, their comrades would certainly have informed them. They had not done so, and therefore the meeting should dismiss this subject from its thoughts.

The meeting then adjourned until 7.15 p.m.

Upon reassembling, Commandant Cronje (Winburg) said that he would not detain the meeting for long; he only wished to say a very few words. It had been rightly said that they were passing through a momentous period of their history. To his mind the present was *the* critical epoch in the existence of the African nation, whose destinies they had now to decide. Delegates were asking what hopes they could now entertain. But what grounds for hope were there when the war began? In his opinion there were none. It was only that men believed then that Right was Might, and put their trust in God. And God had helped them. When the enemy had entered their country everything was dark. There had been a day on which more than four thousand men had surrendered. Then, even as now, they had been without hope. Then, even as now, those who wanted to continue the war had been told that they were mad. That had been some two years ago, and yet the war was still going on. Then, even as now, there had been no food, and yet they had managed to live. The delegates represented a free people; let them not take a step of which they would afterwards repent. As regarded intervention, he had often said that one could not

THREE YEARS WAR

It was decided they could rely on God. When he returned to his burghers, the delegates was questioned as to his reason for the course of action which Litz had advocated, he hoped to be able to answer, "Belief in God." There had always been times when there was no food, and yet they had always managed to live. A deputation had been officially sent to Europe, and was now there to represent their interests. Had the meeting lost its confidence in that deputation? Did it not realize that if the case of the Republic was hopeless in Europe the deputation would send word to that effect? It had been said that by continuing the war they would be exterminating the nation: He did not believe this. The way to exterminate the nation was to accept the British proposal. To go on with the war was their only policy, and it was a very good policy. The deputation had claimed that their advice should be taken before any negotiations were attempted. What right, then, had the delegates to give up the war on the basis of the proposal now before them? To do so was to give the death blow to their national existence; later on they would have cause to rue it. Moreover, the proposal did not safeguard the interests of their brethren in Cape Colony: Again, landed property belonging to burghers had already been sold, and in all probability these burghers would never see any of the proceeds. The sum (£3,000,000) which the proposal offered to compensate for all damages, was not sufficient to cover damage already done. For these and other reasons the proposal could not be accepted. No other course was open to them except to reject the proposal and to continue hostilities:

General Froneman (Ladybrand) agreed with the last speaker. He loved his country, and could not think of surrendering it. The reasons which had induced them to begin the war were still in force: He had been through the whole campaign, and saw stronger reasons now than ever before for the continuing of the war. His districts, like those of others, were exhausted, and yet his burghers remained in the veldt. He had been present at the surrender of the four thousand; he had seen General Cronje give up his sword. Those had been dark days, but the struggle still went on; they could still keep on their legs. It had been God's will that this war should take place. Prayers had been offered that it might be averted, but God had ruled it otherwise. Therefore they must carry the war through, and never think of surrender. They were Republicans: What would it be to have to

APPENDIX

give up that name for ever? He had consulted his le's duty to do their womenfolk; he had asked them, "What conditiof the war will you accept?" They had answered, "No peaeen begun in it means any loss of independence." And so, befor been begun vote for peace, he would have again to take the opinion of the burghers,

Veldtcornet B. H. Breijtenbach (Utrecht) urged that a definite yes or no must be given to the question, Is the war to continue? The general condition of the country had been laid before the meeting, and it had been clearly shown that its condition made the carrying on of the war impossible. One could not escape from that fact. Why then should they argue any longer? What reason had they for wishing to prolong this struggle? They surely would not do so blindfold. Unless good reasons could be alleged for continuing it, the war would have to be stopped. As those good reasons were not forthcoming, he would vote with those who were for peace. To continue the war would be a crime. Some of the last few speakers had stated that there had been no sufficient reasons for commencing the war. That might be true. They might have been over-confident then. Be that as it might, they certainly had lost so much ground since then that they must now give up the struggle. This was his irrevocable opinion. It had been clearly shown that fourteen comandos were unable to continue in the veldt. This made peace a necessity, for what was to be gained by continuing a struggle without a proper army. The war might last a few months longer, but it must end then—and end in disaster.

Commandant W. J. Viljoen (Witwatersrand) said that some speakers were for and others against the continuation of hostilities. The first were guided by faith alone; the second had brought forward definite grounds for their opinion. A year ago both parties had been inspired by faith, but what had been the result? He would be glad enough to be convinced, but those who wished to continue the war must show grounds for such a line of action.

General De la Rey would only say a few words. He had received definite instructions before he went to his burghers neither to encourage nor discourage them, whatever they might say at their meetings. He had strictly observed these instructions, and had never attempted to influence them. There were present among the delegates nine men (one being from Cape Colony) who

THREE YEARS' WAR

It was decided, his burghers, and who would testify as to their state of action would bear witness how full of courage the men were. "Belief in God, the war could not be continued. Say or do what no for" would at that meeting, the war must cease. Some had talked about faith. But what was faith? True faith consisted in saying, "Lord, Thy will, not mine, be done." They must bow before the will of God. The delegates, he continued, must choose one of the three courses which were open to them. It would be a great calamity if they were to decide to surrender unconditionally. Had it been necessary to do so it should have been done while they still possessed something. Should they then continue the war? But the question as to what would become of the people under those circumstances must be faced—to continue fighting would be the ruin of the nation. The delegates might go away determined to fight, but the burghers would lay down their arms, and the state of affairs which would thus ensue would not redound to their honour. But the British Government offered guarantees; it would help the nation so that the nation might help itself. If any one were to say now, "Continue fighting," he and his generals might have the heart to do so if they kept their minds fixed on their recent exploits. For himself, however, he would refuse absolutely to accede to that request. And what real advantage had accrued from his successes in the veldt? What had followed on them? All his cattle had been taken away, some three hundred of his men had been killed, wounded, or taken prisoner. Some of the delegates set their hopes on the European deputation, but what did that deputation say a year ago? It said that all depended on their continuing to fight. They *had* continued to fight. What more, then, was there left for them to do? Some gentlemen present had definite mandates from their burghers, who very likely had no knowledge of the actual state of affairs when they gave those mandates. He himself had not known at that time in what a plight the country was. He challenged each and all of the delegates to show their burghers the proposal of the British Government, and then to see if those burghers were not in favour of unconditional surrender. But if the meeting insisted on the continuation of hostilities, the nation would be driven into *hands-upping*; thus the war would end in dishonour and disgrace.

Landdrost Bosman (Wakkerstroom) was glad that General De

APPENDIX C

la Rey had spoken out so boldly ; it was every one's duty to do so. He himself also was against the continuance of the war.

Although it had been said that the war had been begun in faith, it ought not to be forgotten that it had also been begun with hope of intervention, as was shown by the sending of the deputation to Europe—that deputation which, as they had often heard, had done so much good work. Another proof that there had then been hope of intervention was that the burghers had ordered the delegates to keep them in communication with the deputation. And that they had not relied exclusively on faith at the beginning of the war was shown by the fact that they had founded great hopes on what their brethren in Cape Colony might accomplish. These hopes had now been dissipated by General Smuts, who had just said that there was no chance of a general insurrection:

Again, could the war be continued when their commandos were so much weakened, and when food was so scarce? It was nonsense to say that food had been scarce a year ago; there had been a sufficiency then, and at the present time there was not. One could ride from Vereeniging to Piet Retief without seeing more than two or three herds of cattle. Moreover, the women and children were in a most pitiable condition. One delegate had spoken against any scheme which would be as it were a trampling on the blood which had already been spilt—he shared that delegate's sentiments; but he considered that to shed yet more blood in a cause which was to all appearance hopeless would be still more reprehensible. He should prefer not to enter into the religious aspect of the question. It was difficult to fathom the purposes of God; perhaps it might be the Divine will that they should lose their independence. All that they could do was to follow the course which seemed to be good and right. Were they, then, to surrender unconditionally? He would say no. It would be giving the enemy opportunities for doing things from which they might otherwise desist. Moreover, by voting for such a policy the leaders would incur the displeasure of the nation. In choosing what course they would pursue the delegates should let nothing else sway them save the good of the nation: They must not be carried away by their feelings; they must listen only to the voice of reason.

Commandant H. S. Grobler (Bethal) felt that, under the circumstances, the war could not be continued. It had already

THREE YEARS WAR

reduced them to such straits that they would soon have to fly to the utmost borders of their territories, leaving the enemy unopposed in the very heart of the country. At the beginning of the war they had not relied on faith alone; there had also been guns, war material and provisions. But now none of these things were left to them. It was terrible to him to think that they must sacrifice the independence of their country. He was a true son of his country, and could not consent to the surrender of her independence unless that were the only way of saving the women and children from starvation. But it was not only the women and children who were on the verge of starvation; the burghers still left in the laagers were in the same predicament. What, moreover, was to happen to the prisoners of war, if the struggle were to be continued? And to the families in the camps? The delegates must not forget those families. If the people generally were dying a *national*, the families were dying a *moral*, death. It was a sad thought that there were among their women in the camps, many who were thus losing their moral vitality. It was a thought which should make them determined to conclude the war.

Commandant van Niekerk (Ficksburg) said that his commandos had commissioned him to hold out for independence. The proposal of the British Government could not be accepted. They must take no hasty step. If they persevered in the war, the enemy would grant them better terms. All they had to do was to act like brave men.

General J. G. Celliers (Lichtenburg) had already told the meeting what mandate he had received from his burghers. But he was there to do the best he could for the nation as a whole. The condition of the country was very critical. The fact that his own commandos were faring well was not a sufficient reason for continuing the war. He must take all circumstances into consideration. He had said that he was in favour of an arrangement by which peace should be made without the sacrifice of independence. Such an arrangement they had attempted to bring about. They had elected a Commission, which had done all in its power to give effect to their wishes in this matter. And the result was the proposal of the British Government now lying before them. That was what the Commission had obtained for them. Which of them could say that he could have obtained better terms for the people than those contained in that proposal?

APPENDIX C

Or that, if the war were to be continued, the people would gain any advantage which that proposal did not give them? It had been said that the Deputation in Europe had encouraged the burghers in their prolonged struggle. The last message they had received from the Deputation had been: "Go on till every remedy has been tried." Could that be called encouragement? It had also been said that the nation must have faith. He admitted the necessity—but it must not be the sort of faith which chose what it would believe, and what it would disbelieve. They must be prepared to believe that it might be the will of God that they should yield to the enemy. As he had more insight into the state of affairs than his burghers, and therefore was better qualified to form a judgment, he did not feel himself bound by their mandate. Had the burghers known what he now knew, they would have given him a very different commission. He felt that it was a serious thing to continue sacrificing the lives of his fellow countrymen. Moreover, however dear independence might be, it was useless to attempt impossibilities. Their one aim should be to safeguard the interests of the nation. His vote would be with those who were for accepting the proposal of the British Government.

Commander-in-Chief de Wet was the next to address the meeting. His speech was as follows:—

"As I feel it to be my duty to speak out all my mind before this meeting, I shall go back to the very beginning of the war. And recalling my feelings at that period, I can say that I had less hope then for intervention than I have now. I do not mean to say that I am sanguine about it even now; but I know to-day, what I did not know then, that great sympathy is felt for us by other nations. Even in England this sympathy is to be found, as is shown by the largely-attended "Pro-Boer" meetings which have been held in that country. And that the feeling in our favour is widespread is evident from the reports which we received by word of mouth from the messenger to whom the deputation entrusted its recent letter, for we cannot believe that the deputation would have employed an unreliable person. And what did that messenger say? Among other things, he said that our cause was winning new adherents every day. It may be asked, however, why the deputation did not send a report of its own? I reply that it had its hand upon the pulse of the Governments, and that the information it was thus gaining was

THREE YEARS WAR

of such a character that it could not be entrusted to any messenger whatsoever. Perhaps the deputation was unable *in any way* to communicate what it knew to us—it would never do to noise abroad the secrets of European policy. The silence of the delegates ought not, then, to discourage us; on the contrary, we should regard it as a hopeful sign.

“If there is any one man who feels deeply for the critical condition of our country, I am that man. And critical our condition certainly is; so that I am not surprised that some of us are asking, ‘What hope have we now in continuing the struggle?’ But I would ask another question: ‘What hope had we at the beginning of the war?’ Our faith in God—we had nothing else to rely on! At the very outset of the war I knew that we, with our forty-five thousand troops, were engaged in a contest against a nation that had no less than seven hundred and fifty thousand men under arms, and who could easily send against us a third of that number. And to counter-balance the terrible odds against us, we had nothing, as I knew, but our faith. At that time there were some who expected that effectual help would come from Cape Colony. I was never deluded by this hope. I knew of course that there were men there who would fight with us against England; I knew how much those men sympathized with our cause; but I also knew that the circumstances of that country would make it impossible for the colonists to help us more than they have, as a matter of fact, done. No! God was our one Hope when the war began. And if, when the war is over, victory lies with us, it will not be the first time that faith in God has enabled the weaker nation to overthrow the stronger.

“Those of you who urge that the war should be discontinued, ask us, who are for carrying it on, what tangible reason we have for our hope. But what tangible reason for hope was there at the beginning of the war? Are our affairs darker now? Quite the contrary—miracles have been worked in our favour during the last twenty-two months. General Botha wrote to me some time ago, saying that the scarcity of ammunition was causing him much anxiety. And he had good cause for that anxiety—ammunition was exhausted. When a burgher came to me at that time with an empty bandolier, it absolutely terrified me. But now, to use an expression of General Joubert’s, my pleasure is tempered with shame when I think of the

APPENDIX C

plentiful store of ammunition which we possess. I am not angry with those of my compatriots who ask for reasons—I give my reasons—nor have I given a thousandth part of them.

“The enemy has already made us some concessions. There was a time when Lord Salisbury said that the English Government would be satisfied with nothing short of unconditional surrender. He does not say so to-day. England is negotiating with us—that is to say, she shows signs of yielding to our demands. If we continue the war, England will negotiate again; she will offer still more favourable terms; she will not even stick at independence.

“Do you want more of my reasons? Look back once more upon our past history, and you shall find them. Recall the time when the Transvaal was at war with England. At that time we did not know the English so well as we now know them; we had only thirteen cartridges for each man; and there were the so-called ‘Loyalists’—a chicken-hearted crew—to hamper us. Faith was our only support then—and you all know how that war resulted.

“I am asked what I mean to do with the women and children. That is a very difficult question to answer. We must have faith. I think also that we might meet the emergency in this way—a part of the men should be told off to lay down their arms for the sake of the women, and then they could take the women with them to the English in the towns. This would be a hard expedient, but it may be the only one possible.

“America has been referred to by some of the speakers, who have compared our circumstances with those of the United States, when they made war upon England. The comparison is, in one respect at least, an apt one, for we also have large territories to which we can always retreat.

“As to Europe—we know little of the condition of things there. Our information about Europe comes only from newspapers, and ‘Jingo’ newspapers at that. If there is not a great deal going on in Europe which England wants to hide from us, why is she so careful not to let us see European journals? If there were anything in them *unfavourable* to our cause, England would flood our country with them in her own interests. We must also note that England will not permit our deputation to return to us.

“Taking all these facts into consideration, and remembering

THREE YEARS WAR

that the sympathy for us, which is to be found in England itself, may be regarded as being, for all practical purposes, a sort of indirect intervention, I maintain that this terrible struggle must be continued. We must fight on, no matter how long, until our independence is absolutely secure."

General Beijers (Waterberg) said that he had to give an answer to the question whether he ought to follow his reason or his conscience; he could only reply that conscience had the first claim upon him. If he were to perish whilst following the guidance of reason, he would feel that he had been unfaithful; whereas, were he to die whilst obeying the dictates of conscience, he would not fear death. Martyrs of old had died for their faith; but he feared that the martyr spirit was now only to be met with in books! Those martyrs had died, and with their death it had seemed that all was lost; but the truth, for which they had given up their lives, had lived!

But how is it now with us? We think our cause a righteous one, but are we willing to die for it? Some spoke of our existence as a nation—but whether that were to be preserved or lost, did not lie with us—it was in the hands of God—He would take care of it. Right must conquer in the end. They must take care to be on the side of right, should it even cost them their lives. He agreed with those who said that, even if the present deliberations were to come to nothing, they would have another chance, later on, of negotiating. This had been proved by what had already happened. General de Wet had shown them how Lord Salisbury had gone back upon his first demands; he (General Beijers) could tell them that on one occasion Lord Roberts had declined even to speak to General Botha—and yet the English were negotiating with them now. He was quite open to conviction, but at present he could not see that the war ought to be stopped. Nevertheless he was not blind to the critical state of their affairs. But their case was not yet hopeless; their anxiety about food, their lack of horses—these were not insurmountable difficulties. They might even find some means by which to save their womenfolk.

No. These difficulties were not insuperable; but there was one difficulty which *was* insuperable—the present spirit of the nation. When a spirit, be it what it might, inspired or ruled a man, then that man would submit to no other sway. The spirit that now ruled the burghers was a spirit that was driving

APPENDIX C

them over to the enemy. Against that spirit it was impossible to contend. General De la Rey had said that, if the proposal now before the meeting were to be shown to the burghers, they would at once accept it—that was the sort of spirit that was in them, and one must take it into consideration, for he was convinced that it presented an insurmountable obstacle to the continuation of the war.

The meeting was then closed with prayer:

FRIDAY, MAY 30TH, 1902:

After the preliminary prayer had been offered, Vice-President Burger said that before beginning the business of the day, it was his sad duty to inform the meeting that the President of the Orange Free State had been obliged to resign, on account of serious illness. President Steyn had been compelled, in order to obtain medical assistance, to put himself in the hands of the enemy. He had further to communicate that Commander-in-Chief de Wet had been appointed Vice-President of the Orange Free State. He wished to express his deep sympathy with the representatives in the severe loss which they had sustained. President Steyn, he said, had been a rock and pillar to their great cause.

Vice-President de Wet having thanked the Vice-President of the South African Republic for his kind and sympathetic words, Mr. J. Naude (the representative of Pretoria, and of General Kemp's flying columns) put some questions with regard to the colonists who had been fighting on the Boer side. These questions were answered by General Smuts. Mr. Naude then asked if the delegates were expected to come to any decision about independence.

General Botha replied that the Governments had informed Lords Kitchener and Milner that they were not in a condition to decide that question—that it was a matter for the nation to settle. The delegates had then gone to their burghers, and now had returned, and were present.

Mr. Naude said that it must therefore have been known at Klerksdorp that the delegates had to decide upon the question of independence. If that were so, he found himself in a difficulty: Either the delegates had been misled, or they were the victims of a mistake, for they had never been told that they had been

THREE YEARS WAR

lected as plenipotentiaries. Notwithstanding all that the lawyers might say, he considered himself as having a certain definite mission. He had obtained the votes of his burghers on the understanding that he would take up a certain position. He had asked them whether independence was to be given up, and they had answered in the negative. He could not therefore vote for the acceptance of the proposal now before the meeting, for that proposal demanded the surrender of independence. His burghers had also insisted on being allowed to keep their arms, and on the use of their language in schools and Courts of Justice, both of which conditions were refused by the British proposal. Since, therefore, he could not agree to the proposal, he was for continuing the war. Some asked what were the chances of success? He remembered the state of feeling among the burghers at Warmebad—that was a dark time indeed. The Commandant-General had paid those burghers a visit, and had told them that they had nothing to lose, but everything to win, by continuing the struggle. That had been enough for them. They had not had much prospect then; they could not see whither their road was leading. But they had found out afterwards. It had been a dark time, too, when Pretoria was taken, but most of the burghers had remained steadfast. And after the darkness the light had come back. Again a dark cloud was over them—it would pass away, and the light would reappear.

General De la Rey explained that he had not intended to mislead anybody at the gatherings of the burghers. Every document which the Government had handed over to him had been laid before those gatherings. Mr. Naude had asked whether the delegates at that meeting had to decide about independence. Most certainly they had. And to do so was a duty devolving upon Mr. Naude as much as on any other delegate present. They would have to decide, not for their own districts alone, but for the whole country.

Mr. Naude said that he had no wish to free himself from his responsibility, but he could not forget that he had come there with a definite mission.

Judge Hertzog wished again to explain the rights of the question from a legal point of view. One must ask: If the nation were here, what would it wish to be done? And one must act in conformity with what one thinks its answer would be. The Judge then proceeded to speak on the matter in general. What,

APPENDIX C

he asked, were the arguments in favour of continuing the war? In the first place, England was growing weaker just as their own nation was. Any one could see that with their own eyes. It was true as regarded the financial side of the question: No doubt England could still collect millions of pounds, if she wished, but the time would come when she would have trouble with her tax-payers. Already the British Government found it difficult to pay the interest on the sum borrowed for war expenses, as was proved by the fact that a corn tax had been levied in England. That tax would not have been levied unless things had been in a serious condition. In the second place, he would ask how it was they had not been allowed to meet their deputation? It would only have taken the deputation fourteen days to perform the journey; by now it would have been among them. But permission had been refused them. And why? It was said that to grant a permission would have been a military irregularity. But the present meeting was also a military irregularity. There must be something more behind that refusal. But what were the arguments against going on with the war? He would enumerate them—the situation in which they found themselves was critical; the country as a whole was exhausted. Nearly all the horses had died or had been captured. The strongest argument of all, however, was that some of their own people had turned against them, and were fighting in the ranks of the enemy. Then the condition of the women, caused great anxiety; a fear had been expressed that a moral decay might set in among the families in the camps. That consideration had great weight with him. No one with any heart could remain indifferent to it. If there was one thing which more than anything else made him respect Commandant-General Botha, it was that the Commandant-General had the heart to feel, and the courage to express, the importance of that consideration: The present war was one of the saddest that had ever been waged. He doubted if there had ever been a war in which a nation had suffered as they had. But all those sufferings, horrible though they were, did not influence his decision. Did he but see the chance of finally securing freedom for the nation, he would put all such considerations on one side, and go on fighting till death. No; it was not the horror of the situation which influenced him; there was something that weighed upon his heart yet more heavily—it was *the holding of that meeting at*

THREE YEARS WAR

Vereeniging: He reproached no one. Every one had acted with the best intentions. Nevertheless that meeting was a fatal error; it would give them their death blow. For what had it produced?—a statement from the lips of the Commandant-General himself that the condition of the country was hopeless. If there were yet any burghers whose courage was not gone, would they not be utterly disheartened when they heard what their leaders had said at that meeting? That was the saddest thought of all. He could understand that those burghers who had already lost heart should be leaving the commandos, but now those who had never yet been disheartened would become so. But notwithstanding all this, it was difficult to feel certain which was the right course to pursue—to give up the war or to continue it. He could only suggest that those who were now in doubt on the matter should support the line of action which, before their doubt began, had appeared to them to be best.

Mr. L. J. Meyer (a member of the Government of the South African Republic) then gave some account of the devastation of that part of the country which lay to the north of the Eastern Railway, and on the further side of the Sabi River. (This report coincided with those already given by the delegates.) He went on to say that as they were all in the dark, and could not see the road they were travelling along, they must take reason and conscience for their guide. They had already lost much: let them not lose everything. And what could they hope to gain by continuing the struggle? To do so might be to throw away their last chance of peace. What would their progeny say of them if they were to persist in the struggle and thus lose everything they had possessed? They would say, "Our forefathers were brave, but they had no brains." Whereas, if they were to stop the war, their progeny would say, "Our forefathers did not fight for their own glory." He pointed out that however little the British proposal contained of what they desired, it nevertheless promised them representative Government. In the past he had been against the war; he had wished that the five years' franchise should be granted. Although the people had opposed this measure he had always supported it: And why? Because he had feared that were that measure not conceded African blood would stain the ground: Must they still continue to shed blood? After the capture of Bloemfontein there had been a secret meeting of the council of war at Pretoria:

APPENDIX C

His Government had then been willing to surrender, but the Free State had refused. The two Governments had therefore decided to go on with the war. A year later, in the month of June, there had been another meeting. A letter had been sent to the Free State. The two Governments had met at Waterval, and had once more decided to continue the struggle. Later on; again, the Government of the South African Republic wrote another letter to the Free State; but there had been no opportunity of meeting until the present occasion, which saw them assembled together at Vereeniging. Were they again going to decide to continue their resistance? It was a matter for serious consideration. There was but little seed-corn left. This must, if they had to go on fighting, be preserved from the enemy at all costs; were it to be destroyed, the African nation must cease to exist. But they could not continue the war: It was the Boers now who were teaching the English how to fight against us; Boers now were with the enemy's forces, showing them how to march by night, and pointing out to them all the foot passes.

Commandant Van Niekerk (Kroonstad) pointed out that the Colonists had already rendered them valuable aid, and could still do so. Were they now to abandon these colonists, and—thinking only about saving themselves—leave them to fight on alone? It would be sad indeed if the burghers were compelled to lay down their arms.

Commandant-General L. Botha said that in regard to the holding of a national meeting, he had already chosen delegates with power to act. He spoke of the state of affairs at the beginning of the war—the two Republics had then at least sixty thousand men under arms. In reference to the Cape Colony, he said that it had never been expected that that country would allow its railways to be used for the transport of troops. The Commandant-General then proceeded as follows:—

“I used to entertain hopes that the European Powers would interfere on our behalf. All that they have done, however, has been to look on while England was introducing all sorts of new methods of warfare, methods, too, which are contrary to all international law.

“When the war began we had plenty of provisions, and a commando could remain for weeks in one spot without the local food supply running out. Our families, too, were then well provided for. But all this is now changed. One is only too

THREE YEARS WAR

thankful nowadays to know that our wives are under English protection. This question of our womenfolk is one of our greatest difficulties. What are we to do with them? One man answers that some of the burghers should surrender themselves to the English, and take the women with them. But most of the women now amongst us are the wives of men already prisoners. And how can we expect those not their own kith and kin to be willing to give up liberty for their sakes?

"As to the deputation, we must remember that it was accredited to all the Powers of Europe. And yet it has only been able to hand in its credentials to the Netherlands Government. Does not this prove that no other Government is willing to receive it? If you need further proof, I refer you to the letter in which the deputation—they were still allowed to write to us then—said: 'There is no chance for us in Europe.' The deputation wanted to be allowed to return home, but our Government advised them to remain in Europe, because their arrival in South Africa would be a death blow to the hopes of many. That is why the deputation is still in Europe. Later on they said that, although they knew that there was no chance of intervention, yet they felt that they ought to persist in their efforts, because of the sacrifices which we had already made. It is possible that a war may arise in Europe from which we shall gain something, but what right have we to expect such a contingency? Moreover, great nations take but little interest in the fate of small ones—indeed, it is to the advantage of the former that the small nations should be wiped out of existence.

"I cannot refrain from alluding to the faithlessness of some of our burghers, who are to be found in the ranks of the enemy. But this is not the only sign of the way in which affairs are trending—I look back on the past. I remember that we have been fighting a full year since we last heard of our deputation. What have we gained since June, 1901? Nothing. On the contrary, we have been going backwards so fast that, if this weakening process goes on much longer, we shall soon find ourselves unable any more to call ourselves a fighting nation. What have we not undergone in the course of this year which is just over! In the concentration camps alone, twenty thousand women and children have died. When I was in Pretoria I received reports from our information office, and otherwise, of our losses. I found that there were thirty-one thousand six

APPENDIX C

hundred prisoners of war, of whom six hundred had died, and that three thousand eight hundred of our burghers had been killed in the war. Is not a loss such as this, in so short a time as two and a half years, a serious matter? Think, too, of the sufferings which those twenty thousand women who died in the camps must have endured!

“I am not deaf to the claims of the colonists who have been fighting for us. I have said that if we surrender our independence, we must provide for them. Should we serve their interests by continuing the war? No, indeed! The best thing for them would be that we should bring it to a close. But if we are absolutely determined to go on fighting, let us at least say to them, ‘We advise *you* to desist.’

“What I am saying now is in substance what I said at Warmbad, at a time when there were two thousand men of that district in the Veldt. How many are there now? Four hundred and eighty! On that occasion I also said that we must continue the war until we were driven by sheer starvation to make peace. Well, in some divisions starvation has already come. The delegates themselves have had to confess that our strength up till now has lain in the fact that we have been able to continue the struggle in every district. In this way we have divided the enemy’s forces. But if we are compelled to abandon some of our districts, and to concentrate on certain points, then the English also will concentrate, and attack us with an irresistible force.

“It has been suggested that we ought to march into Cape Colony. I know, however, what that would mean—Commander-in-Chief de Wet marched into the colonies. He had a large force, and the season of the year was auspicious for his attempt, and yet he failed. How, then, shall we succeed in winter, and with horses so weak that they can only go *op-eeen-stap*.¹

“What, then, are we to do? Some will reply, ‘Go on with the war.’ Yes, but for how long? For ten or twelve years? But would that be possible? If in two years we have been reduced from sixty thousand fighting men to half that number, where will our army be after another ten years of war? It is clear enough to me that if we go on any longer, we shall be compelled to surrender. Would it not be better to come to some agreement with the enemy, while we have the opportunity?

¹ The step of a tired horse.

THREE YEARS WAR

We have all received the gift of reason ; let us use it on the present occasion.

“ As far as I and my own burghers are concerned, to continue the struggle is still possible. But we must not only think of ourselves. We must also think of others: There are, for instance, the widows and orphans. If we accept the terms now offered to us, they will remain under our care. But if we go on with the war until we are forced to surrender, who will then take care of them ? Or if we were all killed, what could we do for them ? We should not even be able to send a deputation to Europe, to ask for money to help us to rebuild our farms, and to feed our burghers.

“ There are three questions now before us—three alternatives between which we have to choose—the continuing of the war, unconditional surrender, and the acceptance of the British proposal. With regard to the first, I fail to see what satisfactory result can come to us from persisting in this unequal contest, which must result in the end in our extermination. As to the choice between the other two, in many ways unconditional surrender would be the better. But, for the sake of the nation, we may not choose it. Although to reject it may involve us in many hardships, yet we must think of nothing else but the interests of the nation. Our only course, then, is to accept the proposal of the English Government. Its terms may not be very advantageous to us, but nevertheless they rescue us from an almost impossible position.”

After a short adjournment the delegates again assembled at about 2 p.m.

General C. H. Muller (Boksburg) said that his burghers had sent him to defend their menaced independence. One part of them had authorized him to act as his judgment should dictate ; another part had ordered him to hold out for independence and to try to get into communication with the European deputation. He had long ago told his burghers that they must trust in God if they wished to continue the war, for they could not do so by relying only on their guns and rifles. He did not like to think of what they would say if he were to go back to them and tell them that he had not been in communication with the deputation, and that the proposal of the English Government had been accepted. He could not bring himself to surrender. Nevertheless, having in view what the Commandant-General

APPENDIX C

and others had said, he felt that he must do so, for it was impossible for him to prosecute the war single-handed: But could not the delegates continue to stand by one another, and make a covenant with the Lord? The district which he represented was one of the poorest in the whole country, and the £3,000,000 offered by the enemy did not include any provision for those who, like his burghers, could do nothing to help themselves. He would again suggest that the delegates should make a vow unto the Lord: For himself, he could not vote for the acceptance of the British proposal:

General J. H. Smuts then spoke as follows:—

“Up till now I have taken no part in this discussion, but my opinions are not unknown to my Government; we have arrived at a dark period both in the history of our war, and in the course of our national development. To me it is all the darker because I am one of those who, as members of the Government of the South African Republic, provoked the war with England. A man, however, may not draw back from the consequences of his deeds. We must therefore keep back all private feeling, and decide solely with a view to the lasting interests of our nation. This is an important occasion for us—it is perhaps the last time that we shall meet as a free people with a free Government. Let us then rise to the height of this occasion; let us arrive at a decision for which our posterity shall bless, and not curse us.

“The great danger for this meeting is that of deciding the questions before it on purely military grounds. Nearly all the delegates here are officers who in the past have never quailed before the overwhelming forces of the enemy, and who therefore are never likely to do so in the future. They do not know what fear is, and they are ready to shed the last drop of their blood in the defence of their country.

“Now if we look at the matter from *their* point of view, that is to say, if we look at it merely as a military question, I am bound to admit that we shall come to the conclusion that the war *can* be continued. We are still an unconquered power; we have still about eighteen thousand men in the field—veterans, with whom one can accomplish almost anything. From a purely military standpoint, our cause is not yet lost. But it is as a *nation*, and not as an *army*, that we are met here, and it is therefore for the nation principally that we must consult. No one sits here to

THREE YEARS WAR

represent this or that commando. One and all, we represent the African nation, and not only those members of it which are now in the field, but also those who rest beneath the soil, and those yet unborn, who shall succeed us.

“No! We do not only represent our burghers on commando, the troops over which we are placed in command; we represent also the thousands who have passed away, after making the last sacrifice for their country; the prisoners scattered all the world over; the women and children dying by the thousand in the prison camps of the enemy; we represent the blood and the tears of the whole African nation. From the prisons, the camps, the graves, the veldt, and from the womb of the future, that nation cries out to us to make a wise decision now, to take no step which might lead to the downfall or even to the extermination of their race, and thus make all their sacrifices of no avail. Our struggle, up to the present, has not been an aimless one. We have not been fighting in mere desperation. We began this strife and we have continued it, because we wanted to maintain our independence and were prepared to sacrifice everything for it. But we must not sacrifice the African nation itself upon the altar of independence. So soon as we are convinced that our chance of maintaining our autonomous position as Republics is, humanly speaking, at an end, it becomes our clear duty to desist from our efforts. We must not run the risk of sacrificing our nation and its future to a mere idea which can no longer be realized.

“And ought we not to be convinced that independence is now irretrievably lost? We have been fighting without cessation for nearly three years. It is no exaggeration to say that during that period we have been employing all the strength and all the means which we possess, in the furtherance of our cause. We have sacrificed thousands of lives; we have lost all our earthly goods; our dear country is become one continuous desert; more than twenty thousand of our women and children have perished in the camps of the enemy. And has this brought us independence? Just the reverse; it is receding further and further from us every day. The longer we fight, the greater will be the distance between us and the aim for which we are fighting.

“The manner in which the enemy has been conducting, and still continues to conduct, this war, has reduced our country

APPENDIX C

to such a state of exhaustion, that it will soon be a physical impossibility for us to fight any longer: Our only hope lies in the chance of help from outside. A year ago I, in the name of my Government, communicated the condition of our nation to His Honour States-President Kruger, in Europe. He wrote in reply that we must rely on the state of affairs in Cape Colony—and the sympathy of European nations—and that we must continue the war until all other means were exhausted.”

The speaker here enlarged upon the political developments which had taken place in the United States and in the principal European countries during the preceding two years, and then continued:—

“So far as we are concerned, the sum total of the foreign situation is that we obtain a great deal of sympathy, for which we are naturally most grateful. More than this we do not obtain, nor shall obtain for many a long year. Europe will go on expressing sympathy with us until the last Boer hero has died on the field and the last Boer woman has gone down to her grave—until, in fact, the whole Boer nation has been sacrificed on the altar of history and of humanity.

“I have already, on a former occasion, told you what I think about the situation in Cape Colony. We have made great mistakes there; perhaps even now Cape Colony is not ripe for the sort of policy which we have been pursuing with regard to it. At all events, we cannot entertain any hopes of a general rising of the Colonists. We cannot, however, give too much honour to those three thousand heroes in the Colony who have sacrificed all in our behalf, even though they have not succeeded in securing our independence for us.

“Thus we have given President Kruger’s advice a fair trial: For twelve months we have been testing the value of the methods which he urged upon us. And, as a result of it all, we have become convinced that those methods are of no avail—that if we wish to remain independent we must depend upon ourselves alone. But the facts which the various delegates have brought before our notice show that we *cannot* thus depend upon ourselves; that, unless we obtain outside help, the struggle must come to an end. We have, then, no hope of success. Our country is already devastated and in ruins; let us stop before our people are ruined also.

“And now the enemy approaches with a proposal, which,

THREE YEARS WAR

however unacceptable it may be to us in other respects, includes the promise of amnesty for our colonial brethren who have been fighting side by side with us. I fear that the day will come when we shall no longer be able to save these so-called rebels, and then it will be a just ground for reproach that we sacrificed their interests in a cause that was already hopeless. Moreover, if we refuse the proposal which the British Government now makes to us, I am afraid that we shall considerably weaken our position in the eyes of the world, and thus lose much of the sympathy which to-day it evinces in our favour.

“Brethren, we have vowed to stand fast to the bitter end; but let us be men, and acknowledge that that end has now come, and that it is more bitter than ever we thought it could be. For death itself would be sweet compared with the step which we must now take. But let us bow before the will of God.

“The future is dark indeed, but we will not give up courage, and hope, and trust in God. No one shall ever convince me that this unparalleled sacrifice which the African nation has laid upon the altar of freedom will be in vain. It has been a war for freedom—not only for the freedom of the Boers, but for the freedom of all the nations of South Africa. Its results we leave in God’s hands. Perhaps it is His will to lead our nation through defeat, through abasement, yes, and even through the valley of the shadow of death, to the glory of a nobler future, to the light of a brighter day.”

Commandant A. J. Bester (Bloemfontein) said that at the meeting at which he had been elected his burghers had told him that they were resolved not to become the subjects of England. The arguments now urged against the continuation of the war were not new—they had been used in former times of depression. History gave many instances in which their nation had been delivered out of the most critical positions. One could not help believing that Right would conquer. How was it to be explained that two hundred and forty thousand troops had failed to exterminate two small Republics? Then there had been miraculous escapes; surely the thoughts of these ought to encourage them. They must all be of one mind. His own decision was to stand or to fall for his freedom.

Mr. Birkenstock (Vrijheid) asked whether the proposal could not be accepted under protest.

General J. C. Smuts answered that the meeting could em-

APPENDIX C

power the Governments to accept the proposal, and to add that they did so with such and such provisos.

Commandant A. J. Bester (Bloemfontein) thought that there had been enough said, and recommended that the discussion be closed:

Commandant J. E. Mentz (Heilbron) also thought that it was not necessary to argue any more: He believed that the war could not be continued. In Heilbron, Bloemfontein, and part of Bethlehem there were not five head of cattle left. The helpless condition of the women and children also demanded consideration. The state of the country was becoming so desperate that they were now obliged to break away from the kraals. He himself had been compelled to do this not long ago, and had lost forty men in one day. He would have to leave his district, but could not bring it to his heart to leave the women behind. It was quite clear to him that the war must be stopped, for some parts of the Transvaal were absolutely unable to go on fighting: Moreover, were the war to continue, commando after commando would go over to the enemy:

General Kemp (Krugersdorp) took a more encouraging view of affairs: He would stand or fall with the independence. His mandate was to that effect: His conscience also would not justify him in taking any other course: He thought that the proposal of the English Government was vague, that there was not sufficient provision for the Boer losses in it, and that it treated the Dutch language as a foreign tongue: Circumstances had often been dark, and the darkness would pass away this time as it had done before: Remembering the commission which had been given to him by the burghers, he could not do otherwise than vote for a continuation of the war.

Vice-President Burger: "I have already given my opinion: I am sorry that the meeting seems to be divided: It is necessary for the welfare of our nation that we should be of one mind: Are we to continue the war? From what I have seen and heard, it is clear to me that we cannot do so: I repeat that there is no possibility of it, neither does any real hope exist that by doing so we should benefit the nation: It is idle to compare our condition in the struggle in 1877-1881 with that in which we now find ourselves; I speak from experience:

"It is true that the victory was then ours; that it was so is due to the help which we received from outside: The Orange Free State remained neutral, but assistance came from President

THREE YEARS WAR

Brand in South Africa and from Gladstone in England : thus it was not by our own sword that we were enabled to win:

“ It will be asked why, if we have kept up the struggle for two years and a half, can we not still continue to do so ?

“ Because, in the meantime, we have become weaker and weaker, and if we persist the end must be fatal. What grounds have we for expecting that we may yet be victorious ? Each man we lose renders us weaker ; every hundred men we lose means a similar gain to the enemy. England’s numerical strength does not diminish ; on the contrary, there are even more troops in the country at this moment than when Lord Roberts had the command. England also has used our own men against us, and has not been ashamed of arming the Kaffirs ; the enemy are learning from our own men in what way they should fight—he must be blind indeed who cannot see these facts.

“ I do not think we can appropriately call this altogether a ‘ war of faith.’ Undoubtedly we began this war strong in the faith of God, but there were also two or three other things to rely upon. We had considerable confidence in our own weapons ; we under-estimated the enemy ; the fighting spirit had seized upon our people ; and the thought of victory had banished that of the possibility of defeat.

“ The question still remains, What are we to do ? I have no great opinion of the document which lies before us : to me it holds out no inducement to stop the war. If I feel compelled to treat for peace it is not on account of any advantages that this proposal offers me : it is the weight of my own responsibility which drives me to it:

“ If I think that by holding out I should dig the nation’s grave, nothing must induce me to continue the struggle:

“ Therefore I consider it my duty, as leader of our nation, to do my utmost that not one man more shall be killed, that not one woman more shall die.

“ The sacrifice must be made ; is not this also a trial of our faith ? What shall we gain by going on ? Nothing ! It is obvious that further surrenders will take place—here of a few, there of many—and our weakness will increase.

“ We shall also be obliged to abandon large areas of the country. Will this make us stronger ? Rather, will it not enable the enemy to concentrate still more ? And the abandoned tracts—to whom will they belong ? To the enemy !

APPENDIX C

"In all probability this is our last meeting. I do not believe that we shall be given another chance to negotiate: we shall be deemed too insignificant. If we reject this proposal, what prospects have we in the future? If we accept it, we can, like a child, increase in size and strength, but with its rejection goes our last opportunity.

"Fell a tree and it will sprout again; uproot it and there is an end of it. What has the nation done to deserve extinction?

"Those who wish to continue the war are influenced chiefly by hope; but on what is this hope founded? On our arms? No. On intervention? By no means. On what then? No one can say.

"I am sorry that the Transvaal and the Orange Free State are at variance on this point, and I regret that it is the Transvaal which has to declare itself unable to proceed further; but the enemy have concentrated all their forces in this State, and we can hold out no longer."

Mr. L. Jacobsz: "I have hitherto not spoken, because I am a non-combatant. I have also suffered much, although less than others. I have listened to what has been said, but my opinion is not changed by the views I have heard expressed.

"I repeat now what I said at Klerksdorp, namely that the struggle cannot continue. I have noted the condition of the country, which is such that the commandos can no longer be supported: I would point out the condition of the women and children, of whom many are dying, and all are exposed to great dangers. If there was a chance of succeeding in the end, then we might hold out, but there is no such chance; there is no possibility of intervention, and the silence of the deputation is ominous:

"I sympathize with the heroes present at this meeting; we must have a foundation for our faith, and we cannot altogether compare our people with the people of Israel. Israel had promises made to them; we have none. I would further point out that, in the interests of the nation, it will not do to surrender unconditionally; the terms before us may be deceptive, but they are the best obtainable.

"With regard to the difficulty of those delegates who consider that they are bound to act as they have been commissioned, I am of the same opinion as Judge Hertzog and General Smuts."

Commandant J. J. Alberts (Standerton) spoke more or less

THREE YEARS WAR

in the same strain: He was of opinion that the war should be finished by ceding territory, but, failing this, that it should be ended on any terms obtainable.

Vice-President de Wet expressed his opinion that, considering the short time at their disposal, they should proceed, if possible, to make some proposal.

General D. A. Brand said that he would have spoken if he had not thought that enough had been said; he considered it desirable to close the discussion, and was willing to make a proposal.

Veldtcornet D. J. E. Opperman (Pretoria South) considered that the difficulties of continuing the war, and of accepting the proposal, were equal. Some of his burghers would fight no longer. What troubled him most was the condition of the women; it went to his heart to see these families perish. He was of opinion that, for the sake of the women and children who were suffering so intensely, the proposal should be accepted under protest.

Veldtcornet J. van Steedden, seconded by Veldtcornet B. J. Roos, moved that the discussion be now closed:

The meeting was adjourned after prayer:

SATURDAY, MAY 31ST, 1902:

The meeting was opened with prayer:

General Nieuwoudt, seconded by General Brand, made the following proposal:—

“This meeting of special deputies from the two Republics, after considering the proposal of His Majesty's Government for the re-establishment of peace, and taking into consideration (a) the demands of the burghers in the veldt and the commissions which they had given to their representatives; (b) that they do not consider themselves justified in concluding peace on the basis laid down by His Majesty's Government before having been placed in communication with the delegates of the Republic now in Europe, decides that it cannot accept the proposal of His Majesty's Governments, and orders the Government of the two Republics to communicate this decision to His Majesty's Government through its representatives.”

Mr. P. R. Viljoen, seconded by General H. A. Alberts, made a proposal, amended afterwards by General Smuts and Judge

APPENDIX C

Hertzog, which appears later on under the proposal of H. P. J. Pretorius and C. Botha.

A third proposal by General E. Botha and General J. C. Celliers was laid upon the table, but subsequently withdrawn.

Mr. J. W. Reitz considered it to be his duty not only to the nation but also to himself as a citizen, to say that, in case the proposal of the British Government should be accepted, it would be necessary for the meeting to make provisions as to whose signatures should be attached to the necessary documents. He himself would not sign any document by which the independence would be given up.

Remarks were made by several members on the first proposal, and Mr. P. R. Viljoen asked that no division should arise.

Vice-President de Wet then said that, as the time was limited, and all could not speak, he would propose that a Commission should be nominated in order to draw up a third proposal in which various opinions of the members should be set down; and that, whilst the Commission was occupied in this way, the Orange Free State delegates on their part and those of the South African Republic on their part, should meet in order that an understanding might be come to between them. They must endeavour to come to a decision, for it would be of the greatest possible advantage to them.

Commandant-General Botha thought that this hint should be taken. They had suffered and fought together: let them not part in anger.

The above-mentioned Commission was then decided upon, and Judge Hertzog and General Smuts were elected.

Then the Orange Free State delegates went to the tent of Vice-President de Wet, whilst those of the South African Republic remained in the tent in which the meeting was held.

After a time of heated dispute—for every man was preparing himself for the bitter end—they came to an agreement, and Judge Hertzog read the following proposal:—

“We, the national representatives of both the South African Republic and the Orange Free State, at the meeting held at Vereeniging, from the 15th of May till the 31st of May, 1902, have with grief considered the proposal made by His Majesty's Government in connexion with the conclusion of the existing hostilities, and their communication that this proposal had to be accepted, or rejected, unaltered. We are sorry that His Majesty's

THREE YEARS WAR

Government has absolutely declined to negotiate with the Government of the Republics on the basis of their independence, or to allow our Government to enter into communication with our deputation. Our people, however, have always been under the impression that not only on the grounds of justice, but also taking into consideration the great material and personal sacrifices made for their independence, that it had a well-founded claim for that independence.

“ We have seriously considered the future of our country, and have specially observed the following facts :—

“ Firstly, that the military policy pursued by the British military authorities has led to the general devastation of the territory of both Republics by the burning down of farms and towns, by the destruction of all means of existence, and by the exhausting of all resources required for the maintenance of our families, the existence of our armies, and the continuation of the war.

“ Secondly, that the placing of our families in the concentration camps has brought on an unheard-of condition of suffering and sickness, so that in a comparatively short time about twenty thousand of our beloved ones have died there, and that the horrid probability has arisen that, by continuing the war, our whole nation may die out in this way.

“ Thirdly, that the Kafir tribe, within and without the frontiers of the territory of the two Republics, are mostly armed and are taking part in the war against us, and through the committing of murders and all sorts of cruelties have caused an unbearable condition of affairs in many districts of both Republics. An instance of this happened not long ago in the district of Vrijheid, where fifty-six burghers on one occasion were murdered and mutilated in a fearful manner.

“ Fourthly, that by the proclamations of the enemy the burghers still fighting are threatened with the loss of all their movable and landed property—and thus with utter ruin—which proclamations have already been enforced.

“ Fifthly, that it has already, through the circumstances of the war, become quite impossible for us to keep the many thousand prisoners of war taken by our forces, and that we have thus been unable to inflict much damage on the British forces (whereas the burghers who are taken prisoners by the British armies are sent out of the country), and that, after war has raged for nearly

APPENDIX C

three years, there only remains an insignificant part of the fighting forces with which we began.

“ Sixthly, that this fighting remainder, which is only a small minority of our whole nation, has to fight against an overpowering force of the enemy, and besides is reduced to a condition of starvation, and is destitute of all necessaries, and that notwithstanding our utmost efforts, and the sacrifice of everything that is dear and precious to us, we cannot foresee an eventual victory.

“ We are therefore of opinion that there is no justifiable ground for expecting that by continuing the war the nation will retain its independence, and that, under these circumstances, the nation is not justified in continuing the war, because this can only lead to social and material ruin, not for us alone, but also for our posterity. Compelled by the above-named circumstances and motives, we commission both Governments to accept the proposal of His Majesty’s Government, and to sign it in the name of the people of both Republics.

“ We, the representative delegates, express our confidence that the present circumstances will, by accepting the proposal of His Majesty’s Government, be speedily ameliorated in such a way that our nation will be placed in a position to enjoy the privileges to which they think they have a just claim, on the ground not only of their past sacrifices, but also of those made in this war.

“ We have with great satisfaction taken note of the decision of His Majesty’s Government to grant a large measure of amnesty to the British subjects who have taken up arms on our behalf, and to whom we are united by bonds of love and honour ; and express our wish that it may please His Majesty to still further extend this amnesty.”

Mr. P. R. Viljoen then withdrew his proposal:

Commandant H. P. J. Pretorius, seconded by General C. Botha, presented the proposal, as read by the Commission.

General Nieuwoudt also withdrew his proposal, but it was at once taken over by General C. C. J. Badenhorst, seconded by Commandant A. Rester, of Bloemfontein:

The meeting then adjourned till the afternoon.

In the afternoon at 2.5. it again met:

Proceeding to the voting, the proposal of H. P. J. Pretorius, seconded by General C. Botha, was accepted, by fifty-four votes against six: Then Vice-President Burger spoke a few words

THREE YEARS WAR

suitable to the occasion as follows :— “ We are standing here at the grave of the two Republics. Much yet remains to be done, although we shall not be able to do it in the official capacities which we have formerly occupied. Let us not draw our hands back from the work which it is our duty to accomplish. Let us ask God to guide us, and to show us how we shall be enabled to keep our nation together. We must be ready to forgive and forget, whenever we meet our brethren. That part of our nation which has proved unfaithful we must not reject.”

Later, Vice-President Burger spoke a few words of farewell to the Commandant-General, to the Members of the Executive Councils, and to the delegates.

In the afternoon, as it turned out for the last time, Commandant Jacobsz, seconded by General Muller, made the following proposal, which was unanimously accepted by the meeting :—

“ This meeting of Delegates, having in view the necessity of collecting means to provide for the wants of the suffering women and children, widows and orphans, and other destitute persons, who have through this war come to a condition of want, and also having in view the desirability of nominating a Committee, whose duty it shall be to arrange the necessary steps in this matter, and to finally decide on the management and distribution of the donations received, decides :—

“ To nominate the Hon. Messrs. M. J. Steyn, S. W. Burger, L. Botha, C. R. de Wet, J. H. De la Rey, A. P. Kriel, and J. D. Kestell, as the Committee, to carry out all arrangements for the above-mentioned purposes, that may seem desirable and expedient to them, and also to appoint new Members, Sub-Committees and working Committees ; and the said Committee is empowered to draw up regulations, and to amend them from time to time as shall seem to them expedient:

“ This meeting further decides to send abroad from the above-mentioned Committee, Messrs. C. R. de Wet, L. Botha, and J. H. De la Rey, in order that they may help in collecting the above-mentioned donations.”

Then this—the last meeting of the two Republics—was closed with prayer.

Index

- Aard, Commandant Frans van—
Election as Commandant of
Kroonstad, 150
Killed in engagement between
Kroonstad and Lindley,
200
- Abraham's Kraal—Bombardment
by British, Boer Flight, 70
- Achmerlaers*, 9
- Active Service—Calling up of
Orange Free State Burghers,
10
- Commando Law as to Equip-
ment, Provisions, etc., 9
- Notification to Orange Free
State Burghers to hold
themselves in readiness, 9
- Alberts, Capt.—Tribute to, 300
- Albrecht, Major—Command of
Boer Reinforcements at
Koodoosberg, 43
- Ammunition—Amount possessed
by Boers in 1902, 484
- Capture of Ammunition by the
Boers, 220
- Dewetsdorp, 225
- Doonspruit, Capture of Train
near, 172
- Roodewal—Amount cap-
tured, 135
- Digging up, 241, 243
- Disposal of, 136, 138
- Tweefontein, 345
- De Wet's, Commander-in-Chief,
Ammunition hidden in
Cave, 365
- Amnesty—General Amnesty for
Boer Sympathisers in Cape
Colony and Natal, pro-
posed, 390
- Annexation of the South African
Republic—Battles fought
after the alleged Annexa-
tion, 282
- Peace Negotiations at Pretoria,
References to the Annexa-
tion, 438
- Armistice to admit of attendance
of Officers at the Vereenig-
ing Meeting (May, 1902),
382
- Misunderstanding on the part
of the British Columns, 384
- Arms, Surrender of, *see* titles Ban-
ishment and Surrender
- Assistant-Commander-in-Chief
Gen. de Wet obtaining
Post from Government, 126
- Assistant-Commander-in-Chief
of the Orange Free State
Frinloot, Mr. Martinus, Illegal
Election of, 164
- Steenekamp, Commandant, Noma-
ination of, 185
- Badenhorst, Siege of, by Comman-
der-in-Chief de Wet, 103,
104
- Abandonment of Siege, 105
- Badenhorst, Veldtoornet, 125
- Vice-Commander-in-Chief in
Districts of Boshof, etc.,
Appointment, 202
- Baggage Animals of British
Troops—Exhaustion of,
189
- Use of, 342
- Baker's, Col., Column—Comman-
der-in-Chief de Wet lying in
wait with a view to Re-
prisals, 333
- Banishment Proclamation of Aug.
7, 1901 (Lord Kitchener's
Proclamation), 306-309
- Battles fought subsequent to,
309
- Burghers, Effect on, 309
- Kitchener's, Lord, Letter to
Commander-in-Chief de
Wet enclosing copy of Pro-
clamation, 306
- De Wet's, Commander-in-
Chief, Reply, 308
- Officers, Effect on, 309
- President and Commander-in-
Chief of Transvaal and
Orange Free State—Re-
plies, 309, 316
- Steyn's, President, Letter to
Lord Kitchener, 309-318
- Terms of, 306-309
- Bank Notes of the South African
Republic—Peace Terms,
Arrangements for honou-
ring Notes, 452
- Prisoners of War, Opportunity
of sending in Notes for
Payment, 459
- Barbed Wire Fences, *see* Wire
Fences
- Barton, Gen., Attack on at Fre-
deriksdorp by Commander-
in-Chief de Wet and Gen.
Liebenburg, 210-212
- Beijers, Gen.—Continuance of the
War, Spirit of the Nation
an obstacle—Speech at
Vereeniging Conference, 486
- Waterberg District, Situation
in—Report to the Vereen-
iging Conference, 407
- Bergh, Capt.—Attacks on Boer
Forces with bands of Kaf-
fers, 333
- Bester, Commandant A. J.—Con-
tinuance of the War, Ar-
gument in favour of at the
Vereeniging Conference, 498
- Bester Station, Skirmish at, 16
- Bethlehem—Commandants of Boer
Forces, Appointments, 281
- Defence of—British Reinforce-
ments, Arrival of, 157
- Dispositions of Commander-
in-Chief de Wet, 156
- Voetgangers* on Wolhuters-
kop, Bravery of, 157
- Engagement near, 244
- Fall of, 158
- Bethlehem Commando—Fidelity
of Burghers, 125, *note*
- Berzidenhoutspas—Occupation
by Vrede Commando, 13
- Biddulphsberg Engagement—
English wounded burnt by
veldt fire, 113
- "Big Constable"—Transvaalers
mistaking President Steyn
for Police Agent, 115
- Birkenstock, Mr.—Continuance
of the War, Terms of Surren-
der, etc., 474
- Situation in South Africa on
May 15, 1902—Report to
the Vereeniging Confer-
ence, 412
- Blauwbank, Fight at, 45
- British Camp abandoned—
Booty taken by Boers, 48
- British Convoy, Commander-in-
Chief de Wet's Attack on, 47
- Blijdschap—Arrival of Laager of
Women, 330
- De Lange sentenced to death
for High Treason at, 330,
note
- Massing of Commandos, at 330
- Bikkiesoot*, 10
- Blockhouse System—
"Blockhead" System, alleged,
321
- Boer Success in breaking
through Blockhouses, 321,
322
- Bothaville, Boers breaking
through Blockhouse Line,
366
- British loss of faith in Block-
houses, 356
- Cost of erection and mainten-
ance, 323
- Description of, 323
- Districts surrounded by the
British, 322
- Failure of, alleged, 322
- Lindley-Kroonstad Line, Boers
breaking through, 352
- Palmietfontein, Boers breaking
through Line near, 354
- Prolongation of the War by,
alleged, 324
- Small number of Captures ef-
fected, 321, 322

THREE YEARS WAR

- Blockhouse System, *continued*—
Springhaansnek—Commander-in-Chief de Wet breaking through the Line of Blockhouses on the march to the South, 220
- Thaba'Nchu and Sanna's Post, Forts between—Capture by Commander-in-Chief de Wet, 253
- Trenches dug by British near Blockhouse Lines, etc., 353, 359
- Bloemfontein—Capture by British, 73
- Defence of — Commander-in-Chief de Wet's Arrangements, 72
- Water Works—Occupation by General Broadwood, 85
- "Boer Biscuits," 9
- Boer Forces—
Burghers who had returned home after fall of Bloemfontein, Re-call to the Front, 95
- Commandos left with Commander-in-Chief de Wet after fall of Bloemfontein, *note* 78
- Confusion among Burghers at Holspruit, 359
- Discipline, *see* that title
- Disposition of Forces after fall of Bethlehem, 162
- Harrismith Commando, Refusal to part with Waggon—Return home, 207—209
- Medical Certificates, Abuse of, *note* 80
- Mobility, *see* that title
- Numbers at Outset of War, 484, 491
- Numbers at the Termination of the War, 390, 407, 417, 430, 432
- Orange Free State Commandos—Commander-in-Chief, Election of, 12
- Harrismith, Concentration at, 10, 12
- Heilbron Commando, *see* that title
- Number of Burghers ready to fight after fall of Pretoria, 125
- Panic after Paardeberg, 64, 67, 69, 70, *note* 78
- Permission given to Burghers by Commander-in-Chief de Wet to return home, 77, *note* 78—Gen. Joubert's Protest, 78
- Reduction in numbers due to Paardeberg Surrender, etc., 118
- Roberts', Lord, Surrender Proclamation—Effect on Numbers rejoining Commandos, 81
- Non-observance of Terms, Burghers returning to Commandos, 106
- Separation of Free Staters and Transvaalers after fall of Kroonstad, Reasons for, 118
- Boesmanskop Skirmish, 106
- Boshof, Vrow—Gift of Clothes to Burghers who had swum the Orange River, 273
- Boesman, Landdrost—Continuance of the War, Terms of Surrender, etc., 480, 481
- Situation in South Africa on 15th May, 1902—Report to the Vereeniging Conference, 432
- Botha—Capture at Honingkopjes, Subsequent Escape and Death, 145
- Botha, Commandant-General—Continuance of the War, Arguments against—Terms of Surrender, etc., 491
- Estcourt Skirmishes—Capture of Armoured Train, etc., 29
- Fortitude after Fall of Pretoria, 124
- Independence of the South African Republic and Orange Free State—Vereeniging Conference Delegates' power to decide as to Independence, 487
- Junction with Commander-in-Chief de Wet at Rhensosterriviersburg, 117
- Middelburg Peace Proposals, *see* that title
- Mission to Europe on behalf of Relief Fund Committee, 506
- Peace Negotiations—Member of Commission of National Representatives at the Pretoria Conference, 388, 436-469
- Situation in South Africa on 15th May, 1902—Report to the Vereeniging Conference, 406, 407, 424-428
- Botha, General Philip—
Dewetsdorp Defences, Occupation of, 222
- Engagement with General Knox's Forces, 244
- Kroonstad War Council, Presence at, 79
- Reinforcements sent to Commander-in-Chief de Wet before Paardeberg, Command of, 51
- Stiaksfontein—Failure to recapture Position, 62
- Storming of, 56
- Tabaksberg, Engagement at, 112
- Botha, Mr. Jan—Commander-in-Chief de Wet's Tribute to, 101
- Bothaville — Boers breaking through Blockhouse Line, 366
- Surprise Attack by the British on Commander-in-Chief de Wet's Forces—Boer Panic, 214-216
- Losses of the Boers, 216
- Boys' Spas, 11
- Boys—Presence with Commandos, 352, 354
- Children killed and wounded, 354, 360
- Brabant's, General, Successes, 68
- Brabant's Horse—Attack on
- Brabant's Horse, *continued*—
Commandant Kritzinger and Captain Scheepers, 234
- De Wet's, Commander-in-Chief, Opinion of, 99, 100
- Brand, President—Assistance rendered to South African Republic in War of 1877-1881, 500
- Brandfort, Boer Forces at—Hottels closed by Commander-in-Chief, 81
- Brandenbach, 35
- Brajtenbach, Veldtcorneet B. H.—Continuance of the War, Impossibility of Carrying on the Struggle, 479
- British Forces—Artillery, Commander-in-Chief de Wet's Tribute to, 38
- March from Bethlehem to Reitz, under guidance of Free Staater, 324
- Sixty Thousand Men, Cordon of, 356, 358
- Broadwood, General — Occupation of Thaba'Nchu, Nchu Retreat towards Thaba'Nchu before General Olivier, 86
- Broodspioen, 259
- Bruwer, Commandant—Appointment to Command of Bethlehem District, 281
- Buller, Sir Redvers—Drakensberg Frontier, Crossing of, 124
- Landing at Cape Town, 31
- Relief of Ladysmith, 68
- Strength of Positions operated against by Sir Redvers Buller, 31
- Bulwana Hill—Boers surprised by British, 31
- Burger, Vice-President—Continuance of the War, Terms of Surrender, etc., 473, 499, 502
- Meeting with Orange Free State Government, Letter to President Steyn, 368
- Situation in South Africa on 15th May, 1902—Address at the Vereeniging Conference, 404-405, 421-423
- Steyn, President, Resignation of—Announcement at Vereeniging Conference, 487
- Cape Colony—
De Wet's, Commander-in-Chief, Attempted Inroad — March towards Cape Colony—
Blockhouses — Commander-in-Chief de Wet breaking through the Line at Springhaansnek, 220, 236, 237
- Dewetsdorp—
Defences, British neglecting to hold, 222
- Storming of, 222-225
- Forces under Commander-in-Chief de Wet, 219
- "Good Hope" Farm, Engagement near, 230
- Knox's, Gen., Arrival with British Reinforcements, 230
- Gun and Amount of Ammunition taken, 220

INDEX

- Cape Colony, *continued*—
 Karnaal, March towards, 230, 231
 Knox's, Gen., Pursuit of Commander-in-Chief de Wet, 234, 235, 238
 Orange and Caledon Rivers in flood—Commander-in-Chief de Wet "cornered," 231, 232
 Prinsloo's, Commandant Michal, Commando—Appearance in the nick of time, 236
 Retreat across Orange River, 233
 De Wet's, Commander-in-Chief, Expedition into—
 Capture of Farm held by British Troops, 259
 Courage and Endurance of Burghers, 263
 Diminution in number of Boer Forces, 258
 Engagements with British Troops, 258, 263
 Escape of Boer Forces in the darkness, 268, 271
 Fodder, Lack of, 258
 Knox's, Gen., Movements, 253, 254
 Miraculous Nature of Boer Achievements, 275
 Modderlei, Passage of—
 Boer Loss of Ammunition and Flour Waggon, 260, 261, 263
 Officers serving with Commander-in-Chief de Wet, 245
 Position of Boer Forces after crossing Orange River, 257
 Retreat across Orange River, Difficulties of, etc., 269-273
 Strategy employed to mislead Gen. Knox, 254, 255
 General Rising of Burghers, Impossibility of—Reports of Delegates at the Vereeniging Conference, 409, 410, 411, 425, 431, 481
 Position of affairs at the beginning of 1901—Colonial Burghers' Sympathy with Boer Cause, 245
 Sheep-farming, success of in North-Western Districts, 262
 Small Commandos sent to Cape Colony, Policy of, 289
 Cape Mounted Rifles, Commander-in-Chief de Wet's opinion of, 103, 104
 Cartwright, Mr., Editor of *South African News*—Punishment for publication of "not to take prisoners" Anecdote concerning Lord Kitchener, 233
 Casualties, *see* Losses in Killed and Wounded, etc., on either side
 Cattle—Blockhouse Line between Lindley and Kroonstad, Boer Cattle breaking through, 353
 Capture of Boer Cattle on "Majuba Day," 361
 Cattle, *continued*—
 Destruction by the British, 242, 287
 Supply available on May 15, 1902—Report of Vereeniging Delegates, 406, 408, 409, 412, 413, 414, 415, 421
 Causes of the War—British Government Interference with the inner policy of the South African Republic, 311
 Declaration of War by the South African Republic as the Cause—President Steyn's Contradiction, 310
 Extermination of the Republics already determined on by England, alleged, 313
 Franchise Law—British Government Demands, 311, 312
 Goldfields the main object, alleged, 410
 Jameson Raid as a Cause, alleged, 310, 311
 Memorials to H.M. Government concerning alleged grievances—President Steyn's efforts to keep the Peace, 311, 312
 Orange Free State joining issues with the Transvaal, 313
 Steyn's, President, Letter to Lord Kitchener, 309-318
 Troops landed by the British Government prior to outbreak of War, 312
 Ultimatum of Boers—Lord Salisbury's Assertion, 71
 Ceylon—Boer Prisoners taken with General Prinsloo sent to Ceylon, 199
 Chamberlain, Mr. J.—Boer Ultimatum—Telegrams to Sir A. Milner, 397
 Jameson Raid—Defence of Mr. Rhodes, President Steyn on, 310
 Cilliers, Gen. J. G.—Continuance of the War, Terms of Surrender, etc., 480
 Situation in South Africa on May 15, 1902—Address at the Vereeniging Conference, 423
 Cilliers, Sarah—Death at Frederikstad, Engagement, 212
 Clothing—De Wet's, Commander-in-Chief, Clothes hidden in Cave, 305
 Difficulty of obtaining, 288
 Hides for tanning, Destruction by the British, 288
 Stripping British Prisoners to obtain, 288
 Colenso—British Losses at, 36
 Colesburg—Strength of Boer Positions, 41
 Colonial Burghers—British subjects fighting on Boer side, Boer Hopes of Assistance unfulfilled, 481, 484, 497
 British Government Intimations with regard to Rebels, 468
 Proposal for General Amnesty, 390
 Safeguarding in Peace Nego-
- Colonial Burghers, *continued*—
 tations, 473, 478, 487, 491, 493, 498, 505
 Commandeering—Provisions of Commando Law, 9
 Commander-in-Chief of Orange Free State—
 De Wet, Gen.—Appointment of, 67
 Secret Election of, 154
 Prinsloo, Election of, 12
 Commando Law—Provisions as to Commandeering, 9
 Commandos—Division of into small parties, 279
 Advantages of, 281
 List of Districts and Commandants, 279-281
 Skirmishes, Splendid Record, 329
 Small Commandos sent into Cape Colony—De Wet's Policy, 289
 (For particular Commandos *see* their names)
 Commissariat—Comparison of Boer and British Commissariat Arrangements, 10, 11, 12
 Compensation for Boer Losses, *see* Repatriation
 Concentration Camps—Number of Deaths in, etc., 492, 496, 504
 Women—Flight of to avoid being sent to Camps, 243, 342
 Maintenance of Boer Women and Children by the British Government—President Steyn on, 316
 Treatment of, 287, 316
 Conduct of the War by British—
 Exhaustion of the Republics, 495
 Continuance of the War in 1902, Vereeniging Conference—
 Burghers, Attitude of, 480, 486, 487
 Effect on Vereeniging Meeting, 490
 Comparison of Situation with that of 1877-1881, Futility of, 499
 De Wet's, Commander-in-Chief, Speech, 483
 Kruger's, President, Advice, 497
 Possibility, Question of—Situation in South African Republic, Reliance on Government, etc., 416, 417, 418, 419, 421, 422, 423, 424, 424-428, 429, 430-432, 433, 474, 475, 476, 477, 478, 479, 480, 481, 484, 486, 488, 489, 490, 491, 492, 494, 495, 497, 498, 499, 500, 501, 502, 504
 Reasons for, 476
 Correspondence relating to the War, Preservation of, 306
 Court Martial on Commandant Visonel, Composition of, *note* 114
 Cowboys, Capture by Boers—
 Blauwbank Capture, 48
 Zwavelkrans, 129, 130
 Cronje, Commandant—Continuance of the War, Reliance on God, etc., 477

THREE YEARS WAR

- Cronje, Commandant, *continued*—
European Intervention, Boer
Deputation to Foreign
Courts, 478
- Cronje, Gen. A. P.—Modder
Spruit, Command at, 17
- Sanna's Post, Share in Engage-
ment, 87
- Vechtgeneraal of Orange Free
State, Nomination as, 17
- Cronje, Gen. Piet—De Wet's,
Commander - in - Chief,
Scheme for breaking Lord
Metbuen's Railway Com-
munications—Refusal to
permit Execution of, 36
- Ladysmith, Occupation of Posi-
tions South and South-
west of, 29
- Magersfontein—Command at,
35, 37
- Refusal to profit by Comman-
der-in-Chief de Wet's Ad-
vice, 38
- Message in reply to Comman-
der - in - Chief de Wet's
warning before Paarde-
berg, 46
- Retreat towards Paardeberg, 51
- Surrender at Paardeberg (*see*
Paardeberg)
- Cronje, Vechtgeneraal Andreas—
Command of Boers' Re-
inforcements from Bloem-
fontein, 61
- Cropper, F. C., Death of, near
Lindley, 331
- Dakasburg Engagement, 252
- Dalgety, Colonel—Command at
Badenhorst, 103
- Davel, Commandant—Command
of President Steyn's Body-
guard, 241
- Days of Thanksgiving and Hu-
miliation, Appointment of,
300
- De Clercy, Mr.—Continuance of
the War, Terms of Surren-
der, 474
- Situation in South Africa on
May 15, 1902—Report to
the Vereeniging Confer-
ence, 413, 417
- De la Rey, General—Colesberg
Command, 37
- Continuance of the War, Terms
of Surrender, etc., 470, 480
- Fortitude after Fall of Pretoria,
124
- Independence of the South
African Republic—Powers
of Vereeniging Delegates
to decide on Question, 483
- Kraaipan, Capture of Armoured
Train, 14
- Kroonstad, War Council, Pres-
ence at, 79
- Magersfontein Laager, Com-
mand at, 36
- Mission to Europe on behalf of
Relief Fund Committee, 506
- Peace Negotiations—Member of
Commission of National
Representatives at the
Pretoria Conference, 388,
435-469
- Permission given to Burghers
to return home, 78
- De la Rey, General, *continued*—
Reitfontein, Work at, 70
- Roberts', Lord, Attempt to
cross the Orange River—
Success in preventing, 41
- Situation in South Africa on
May 15, 1902—Report to
the Vereeniging Confer-
ence, 428
- Steyn's, President, and General
de Wet's visit to, 367
- De Lange—Sentence of Death for
High Treason at Blijels-
chap, 330 *note*
- De Wet, General Piet—Advice to
Commander-in-Chief de
Wet after Siege of Baden-
horst, 107
- Discontinuance of Struggle pro-
posed — Commander - in-
Chief de Wet's Reception
of Proposal, 170
- Lindley Garrison, Capture of,
123
- Sanna's Post Engagement,
Share in, 87
- Swartbootskop, Guarding after
Fight at Nicholson's Nek,
25
- De Wet, Jacobus, Capture of, 361
- De Wet, Johannes—Death near
Smithfield, 230
- De Wet, Veldtcoronet—Wounded
during Retreat from De-
wetsdorp, 230
- Debtors, Protection of, against
Creditors for Six Months
after the War—Peace Ne-
gotiations at Pretoria (May
1902), 460
- Declaration of War by South
African Republic (*see* Ul-
timatum)
- Deputation to European Powers
to ask for Intervention
(1900)—Departure from
Delagoa Bay, 71
- Failure of, 425, 426
- Encouragement to continue
struggle, 481
- England's Refusal to permit
Return of Deputation, 483,
480
- European Governments un-
willing to receive, 452
- Object of, 72
- Silence of, 477, 478, 480, 483,
507
- Delagoa Bay Harbour, Forbidden
to Boers by Portuguese
Government, *note*, 71
- Destitution caused by the War,
389, 390
- Appointment of Committee to
Collect and Administer Re-
lief Funds, 506
- Discipline of Boer Forces—Im-
perfect Discipline, 13, 14,
78
- Failure to remove Cattle along
Railway Line, 146
- Roodewal, Commander - in -
Chief de Wet's Difficulties
in carrying away Booty,
135
- Sanna's Post, irritating Re-
sults at, 90
- Stricter Discipline, Results of,
85
- Discipline of Boer Forces, *cont.*—
Taljaart's and Prinsloo's, Veldt-
cornets, Burghers "pre-
ferred to go their own way,"
351
- Waggon Difficulty, 156
- Harrismith Burghers' Refusal
to part with their Waggon
at Spitskopje, 207-209
- Devastation by the British—War
against Boer Property, 242
- Crops destroyed, Corn burnt,
etc., *note*, 112
- Male Attire, Burning of, 273
- Farm-burning and Waggon
(*see* those titles)
- Dewetsdorp — Occupation by
British, 95
- Storming by Commander-in-
Chief de Wet's Forces, 221-
225
- Diederiks of Boshof, Commandant,
37
- Doornberg, War Council at—De-
cision as to Presidential
Election, 249
- Doornspruit—Line near crossed
by Commander-in-Chief de
Wet, Capture of Train,
Ammunition, etc., 172
- Drakensberg Range—
Boundary between Boer and
British Territory in 1899,
13
- Passes, Occupation by Orange
Free State Commandos, 13
- Drive Tactics of British—
Bethlehem-Lindley to Frank-
fort-Vrede Line—Cordon
of Sixty Thousand Men,
355-360
- Boer Forces caught between
Cordon of Troops and Vaal
River, 175
- Harrismith, Hellbron and
Bethlehem District, 350,
351
- Du Toit, General—Continuance
of the War, Terms of Surren-
der, etc., 475-476
- Dundee, Line near, cut by Com-
mander-in-Chief de Wet, 15
- Elandsfontein Engagement—
Commandant Michael
Prinsloo's Exploit, 159
- Elandskop—British Attack in
Hope of Capturing Com-
mander-in-Chief de Wet,
355
- Elandslaagte Engagement, 140
- Els, Veldtcoronet—Marthinus,
wounded outside Lady-
smith, 30
- Epithets applied by the British
to the Boer Forces, 281
- European Journals kept from Re-
publics by England, 485
- Bustin, Lieut. Banie wounded
and captured by British,
256
- Extermination of the South Afri-
can Republics—British De-
termination to exterminate
the Republics prior to the
Outbreak of War, alleged,
313

INDEX

- Fanny's Home Farm—Recapture of Guns by British, 350
- Farm-burning, etc. by the British—Heilbron, Bethlehem and Harrismitth District, 350
- Roberts', Lord, Proclamations, ordering, 242
- Shelter, Lack of—Women living in Narrow Sheds, 355
- Wholesale Destruction of Farms by the British, 287
- Faure-Smith and Jacobsdal Burgers—Failure to rejoin Commandos, 81
- Return Home without Permission after Poplar Grove, 77
- Ferreira, Mr. T. S., Commander-in-Chief, at Kimberley—Death due to Gun Accident, 67
- Firing of the Veldt by Commander-in-Chief de Wet, 181
- Fischer, Abraham—Member of Boer Deputation to Europe (1900), 71
- Food Supply—Failure of Food Supply, Reason for Acceptance of British Peace Terms, 288, 389, 477, 481, 482, 486, 493, 499, 505
- Kemp's, Gen., Plan of Commandeering Food Supplies from the Farmers, 414
- Situation in the various Districts on May 15, 1902—Reports of the Delegates to the Vereeniging Conference, 406, 408, 409, 411, 412, 413, 414, 415, 425, 432
- Forces—Comparison between numbers, etc., engaged on either Side in the War, 275 (See also titles Boer and British Forces)
- Fourie, General Piet—Bethlehem Engagement, 244
- Blauwbaak, Exploits at, 48, 49
- Cape Colony Expedition, Part in, 253, 254, 255, 257, 258, 261, 263, 264, 273
- Commandoes escaped from behind the Roodebergen, Command of, 123
- Despatch of, to the South-Eastern Districts, 279
- Engagement with British Troops from Bloemfontein (1900), 106
- Prinsloo's Surrender, Escape from, 166
- Springhaansnek, Leader in Attack on Blockhouse Line, 236, 237
- Vice-Commander-in-Chief in Bloemfontein District, Appointment, 200
- Franchise—British Government Demands on the South African Republic prior to Outbreak of War, 311, 312
- Frankfort, British Success at (1900), 111
- Ross', Commandant, Engagement with Colonel Rivington's Troops, 327
- Fraser, Gordon—One of two faithful Burgers of Philipolis District, 123
- Frederikstad Station—Attack by Commander-in-Chief de Wet and General Liebenberg on General Barton, Causes of Failure, etc., 211-213
- French, General—Koedoesberg, Fight for, 42
- Magersfontein—Boer Lines broken through, 51
- Froneman, General—Continuance of the War at all Costs advocated, 478
- Escape from Paardeberg, 57
- Frederikstad, Attack on General Barton—Failure to hold advanced Position, 211, 212
- Koedoesberg, Share in Fighting at, 42, 43
- Kroonstad War Council, Presence at, 79
- Prinsloo's Surrender—Escape from, 166
- Railway Line wrecked near America Siding, 150
- Reddersburg, March on, 96, 97
- Rhenosterriviersbrug Engagement, 131, 133, 136
- Sanna's Post Engagement, Share in, 86
- Smithfield Expedition, Results of, 105
- Train captured by near Jagersfontein Road Station, 255
- Ventersburg, Failure to hold Position, 114
- Gatacre, General—Capture of Stormberg, 69
- Gatsrand—Death of Danie Theron, 194
- Germany—Attitude towards the War, Reasons for Non-intervention, 429
- Gladstone—Assistance rendered to South African Republic in War of 1877-1881, 500
- De Wet's, Commander-in-Chief, Tribute to, 114
- Goldfields—Surrender of, to the British proposed, 420, 421, 427, 429, 431, 432, 434
- Gouvenousskop—Generals de Villiers' Exploits at, 112
- Government of Orange Free State—Accompanying Commander-in-Chief de Wet in Departure from Roodebergen, 162, 169
- Bethlehem, Transference to, 153
- Cape Colony, Expedition into, Decision to accompany, 249
- Capture of Members of the Government by the British at Reitz—Escape of President Steyn, 301
- De Wet's, Commander-in-Chief, Operations after Prinsloo's Surrender—Government accompanying Commander-in-Chief de Wet, 162, 169
- Executive Raad, Constitution of, 250
- Government, continued—Heilbron, Transference to, 115
- Kroonstad, Transference to, 79
- Third Transference, Reasons for, 123
- Versaard—Impossibility of assembling a legally constituted Volksraad, 250, 251
- Government of South African Republic—Capture of Members by the British at Reitz, 301
- Appointments to Vacancies, 301
- Treachery on the part of Burgher Steenkamp, 301
- Steyn's President, Visit to Machadodorp, 185
- Termination of the War (See that title)
- Governments of the Orange Free State and South African Republic—Peace Deliberations, Meeting at Klerksdorp, 370, 373
- Peace Negotiations at Pretoria, Boer Proposals for Retention of Self-Government under British supervision, 437, 443
- Grain Waggon, captured by British near Vredefort, 173
- "Granary" of Orange Free State lost to Boers, 113
- Grant by the British Government for Repatriation Purposes, Re-stocking Farms, etc., 467
- Great Britain, King of—Thanks of Boer Generals for Efforts to promote Peace—Resolution at the Vereeniging Conference, 415
- Groenkop, Description of, 341
- Grobler, Commandant H. S.—Continuance of the War, Impossibility of carrying on the Struggle, 481
- Grobler, Mr. E. R.—Colesberg Command, 36
- Guns—Boer Captures—Blauwbank, 48
- Colenso and Stormberg, 36
- Dakasourg Engagement—Capture of a Maxim-Nordenfeldt, 252
- Dewetsdorp, 225
- Nicholson's Nek, 24
- Sanna's Post, 90, 92
- Tweefontein, 345
- Boer Losses, 268
- Bothaville, Number lost at, 216
- Fanny's Home Farm, Recapture of Guns by the British, 350
- Frederikstad, Retreat after—Loss of one gun, 213
- Springhaansnek, Gun Abandoned, 238
- Ventersdorp, Loss of Krupp Gun near, 181
- "Guerrillas"—Designation of Boer Forces by the British as "Guerrillas," Objections to the term, 282
- Meaning of the term, 282

THREE YEARS WAR

- "Hands-uppers," British use of, 26
- Harbour, Boer Lack of, *note* 71
- Harrismith—
Engagement with British Troops near, 334-336
Boer Casualties, 336
Failure of Boer Charge, 335
Orange Free State Troops, Concentration at, 10, 12
- Harrismith Burghers—
De Wet's, Commander-in-Chief, Visit to, 321
Surrender following Prinsloo's Surrender, 166
Wagon, Refusal to part with—Return home, 207-209
- Hasebroek, Commandant—Cape Colony Expedition—Holding the Enemy in Check, 263, 267, 271
Engagement with Colonel White near Thaba'Nchu, 238
- Hattingh, General—Command at Harrismith and Vrede Commandoes, 207
Commander-in-Chief in the Drakensberg Appointment, 153
- Hattingh, Veldtoornet Johannes—Leader in Springhaansnek Attack on Blockhouse Lines, 236
- Heenop, David—Swimming the Orange River, 272
- Heilbron—District to which Commander-in-Chief de Wet belonged, 10
Government of Orange Free State transferred to, 115
- Mentz, Commandant F. B., Engagement with Colonel Byng's Column, 329
- Heilbron Commando—Commandant, Mr. L. Steenekamp, 10
Vice-Commandant, Election of Commander-in-Chief de Wet, 13
Visits to by Commander-in-Chief de Wet, 286, 301
- Heliographic Communication, Use by Boers, 351 *note*, 354
- Hertog, Judge—Continuance of the War. Arguments for and against—Vereeniging Conference, 488
Despatch of, to the South-Western Districts, 279
Mission to bring back Commandoes which had escaped from Prinsloo's Surrender, 177
Peace Negotiations—Member of Commission of National Representatives at the Pretoria Conference, 388, 436-462
Rejection of British Terms—Proposal, 503
Report on Attitude of Burghers in North-Western Parts of Cape Colony, 245
Vice-Commander-in-Chief, Appointment in Districts of Fauresmith, etc., 201
- Hides for Tanning—Destruction by the British, 288
- Hij, Commandant, P. L.—Impossibility of European Intervention, 477
- Holspruit—Boers breaking through British Lines, 358
- Honing Kopjes—Commander-in-Chief de Wet's first Engagement with Lord Kitchener, 143-145
- Honingspruit Station, Failure of Commandant Olivier's Attack, 150
- Horses—Bothaville, Capture of Horses by Boers, 366
Condition of Boer Horses, 407, 410, 411, 412, 413, 415, 425
Dependence of the Boers on their Horses, 219
Fodder, Scarcity of, 410, 425
Skin Disease among, 331
Wild Horses of the Veldt, Use of, by the Boers, 357
- Humiliation Days, Appointment of, 300
- Independence of the Republics—
Afrikander Feeling as to, 79
British Government Attitude towards, 405
Correspondence between Presidents Kruger and Steyn and Lord Salisbury, 398-400
- De Wet's, Commander-in-Chief, Meetings to ascertain the feeling of the Burghers as to Surrender of Independence, 380
- "Irretrievably Lost," 496
- Maintenance of—Burghers' Mandate to Vereeniging Delegates, 401, 403, 406, 417, 433, 475, 477, 479, 480, 483, 487, 488, 494, 496, 501
- Peace Negotiations—Conferences at Pretoria between Commission of the National Representatives and Lords Kitchener and Milner (May 19-28, 1902), 437, 442
- Refusal of the British Government to consider Terms based on Retention of Independence, 71, 377, 472
- Steyn, President, Views of, 374
Surrender of—Conditions offered by the British in exchange, 416, 428
- Vereeniging Conference, opinions of Burghers' Delegates, 401, 404, 416, 417, 420, 422, 423, 424, 433, 434
- Intervention of Foreign Powers on behalf of the Republics—
Attitude of England towards, 426, 433
Boer Deputation to European Powers (*see* Deputation)
Boer Hopes unfulfilled, 481, 488, 491, 492, 501
Germany, Reasons for Non-intervention, 429
Improbability of Intervention, 425, 429, 431, 433
Intervention not desired by Boers, 72
Steyn, President, on, 313
- Jameson Raid, President Steyn on, 310
- Jew at Nicholson's Nek—Burgher declining to do Business, 23
- Johannesburg Police, Behaviour at Nicholson's Nek, 23, 24
- Jonson, Burgher, Death at Bester Station—First Victim in the Fight for Freedom, 16
- Joubert, General—Junction with Orange Free State Forces at Rietfontein, 21
Kroonstad War Council, Presence at, 72
- Kafirs—Arming by England, 500
Attitude towards the Boers—
Reports of Vereeniging Delegates, 406, 408, 412, 415, 425, 432, 433
Boer Women, Treatment of, 192, 193
Capture of Kafirs by Boers at Dewetsdorp, 225
Release of Prisoners, 230
Treatment of Kafirs by Boers—
Kafirs captured at Leeuw-spruit Bridge, 148
Vrijheid Atrocities—Murder and Mutilation of Burghers, 584
- Warfare, Native Methods—
Boer Sufferings at the Hands of Zulus and Basutos, 26
- Kemp, General—Continuance of the War, Independence of the Republics, etc., 499
Situation in South Africa on May 15, 1902—Report to the Vereeniging Conference, 414, 417
- Kitchener, Lord—Armistice agreed on, to admit of Attendance of Boer Officers at the Vereeniging Meeting, 383
Misunderstanding on the Part of the British Columns, 384
Capture of President Steyn and Commander-in-Chief de Wet anticipated—Visit to Wolvehoek Station, 355
Escape from Armoured Train near Leeuwspuit Bridge, 147
- Honingkopjes and Roodepoot—
Commander-in-Chief de Wet's first Engagement with Lord Kitchener, 143, 144
- Independence of Republics as basis for Peace Negotiations, Refusal to consider—
Pretoria Conference, 377, 472
- Kroonstad, Arrival at, 146
- Middelburg Peace Proposals (*see* that title)
- Peace Negotiations—Conference at Pretoria with Commission of National Representatives (May 19-28, 1902), 388, 436-469
Proposals by the Boer Representatives in April, 1902, 373-380
Prisoners, Order given to Gen.

INDEX

- Kitchener, Lord, continued—**
 Knox "not to take prisoners"—*South African News Statement*, 233
- Klerksdorp—**Peace Deliberations, Meeting of Governments of the Republics, 370, 373
- Knight, Captain Wyndham—**
 Surrender at Rheosterrieviersbrug, 137
- Tribute to, by Commander-in-Chief de Wet, 139**
- Knox, General—**Bethlehem, Engagement near, with Generals Botha and Fourie and Commandant Prinsloo, 244
- Cape Colony—**Commander-in-Chief de Wet's Operations—Attempted Inroad—Fighting near Smithfield, 230
- Expedition into Cape Colony, Dispositions to prevent, 253, 254**
- Kroonstad taken by, 244**
- Pursuit of Commander-in-Chief de Wet, 234, 235, 238**
- Thaba'Nchu, Engagement near, with Gen. Fourie, 253**
- Koedoesberg—**Struggle between General French and Commander-in-Chief de Wet, 42, 43, 44
- Kotzé, Mr. (General Prinsloo's Secretary)—**Bearer to Commander-in-Chief de Wet of News of General Prinsloo's Surrender, 175, 176
- Kraaipan—**Armoured Train captured by Boers, 14
- Kritzinger, Commandant—**
 Crossing of Orange River, Seizure of British Outpost, 245
- Kritzinger, Commandant, and Captain Scheepers—**Engagement with Brabant's Horse, 234
- Krom Ellenborg, Sub-district to which Commander-in-Chief de Wet belonged, 10**
- Kroonstad—**British Advance, 115; Abandonment by Boers, 116
- Capture by General Knox, 244**
- Government of Orange Free State transferred to, 79**
- Government of Orange Free State transferred to Heilbron, 115**
- Kitchener's, Lord, Arrival—**Strength of British Forces, etc., 146
- Kroonstad Commando, Share in Battle of Modderspruit, 16**
- Kruger, President—**Despatch of Mission to Europe to represent Condition of the Country to President Kruger, proposed, 201, 202
- Peace, Joint Letter to Lord Salisbury stating Conditions on which the Republics were willing to make Peace, 398-400**
- Poplar Grove, Visit to Boer Troops at, 68**
- War Council at Kroonstad, Presence at, 79**
- Krugersdorp —** Potchefstroom Railway — Crossed by Commander-in-Chief de Wet, 190
- Ladysmith—**
 British Retreat on Ladysmith, 15
- Bulwana Hill—**Boers surprised by British, 31
- Engagement of 3rd Nov., 1899, 29, 30**
- Relief, 68**
- Landsheer, Doctor de—**Death at Bothaville, English Newspaper Report, 216
- Language Question—**
 Equal Rights for English and Dutch Languages in Schools—Boer Peace Proposals to Lord Kitchener (April, 1902), 376
- Terms of the Peace Protocol, 452, 467**
- Objections to, 488, 499**
- Leeuwspruit Railway Bridge—**Commander-in-Chief de Wet's Scheme for breaking British Lines of Communication, 147
- Froneman's, General, Failure to carry out Instructions, 148**
- Kitchener's, Lord, Escape, 147**
- Liebenberg, General—**
 Frederiksstad—Failure of Attack on General Barton, 210-212
- Mooi River, Junction with Commander-in-Chief de Wet, 180**
- Retreat from Rustenburg, 182**
- Liebenbergsvlei—**
 British Retreat, 349
- Guns, Recapture by British at Fanny's Home Farm, 350**
- Lindley—**
 British Garrison Captured by General Piet de Wet, 123
- Destruction by the British, Alleged, 333**
- Engagement near, 330**
- Postponement of Second Boer Attack — Escape of the British during the Night, 332**
- Halt of Commander-in-Chief de Wet's Forces, 333**
- Lindley-Kroonstad Line of Block-houses —**Boers breaking through the Line, 352
- Lines of Communication—**Boer Attempts to cut British Lines, 219, 305
- America Siding Railway Line Wrecked by General Froneman, 150**
- De Wet, Commander-in-Chief, Schemes of, 190, 191, 193**
- Frederiksstad Station—**Wrecking of Railway Bridge and Line, 180
- Leeuwspruit Scheme, Failure of, 147, 148**
- Methuen's, Lord, Railway Communications —**General Cronje's Refusal to permit Execution of Com-
- Lines of Communication, con.—**
 mander-in-Chief de Wet's Scheme for Cutting, 36
- Orange Free State Railway—**Commander-in-Chief de Wet's Work on, 194, 195
- Scheepers, Captain, Work of, 194**
- Wolvehoek, Wrecking the Railway, 209**
- "Little Majuba"—**Name given to Swartbooiskop after Nicholson's Nek, 21
- Loans by the British Government for re-stocking Farms, etc., 468**
- Long Tom damaged by Dynamite, 31**
- Looting by British, 12**
- Losses in Killed, Wounded, etc., on either side during the War, 253, 306, 326, 492, 493, 500**
- Blijdschap, 331**
- Bothaville, 216**
- Cape Colony Expedition, 258, 260**
- Colenso, 36**
- Dakasburg Engagement, 252**
- Dewetsdorp, 224, 225**
- Engagement between Commandant Hasebroek and Colonel White, 238**
- Frederiksstad Engagement, 212**
- Heilbron, 329**
- Koffiefontein, 50**
- Ladysmith, Engagement of 3rd Nov., 289, 300**
- Leeuwspruit Bridge, 147, 148**
- Lindley, 329, 331**
- Magersfontein, 36**
- Modder Spruit, 17**
- Nicholson's Nek, 24**
- Paardeberg, 68**
- Prinsloo's Surrender, 165**
- Reddersburg, 109**
- Reitz, 326**
- Rheosterrieviersbrug, 137**
- Roodewal, Extent of British Losses, 134**
- Sanna's Post, 89, 91, 92**
- Stinkfontein, 56, 62**
- Stormberg, 36**
- Tijgerfontein, 178**
- Tweefontein, 344**
- Vanvurenskloof, 179**
- Verkijkersdorp, 294**
- Vrededorf Engagement 174**
- Loyalty to British Government—**Commander-in-Chief de Wet's Final Advice to the Boers, 392
- Lubbe, Commandant —**Return from Paardenberg's Drift, 51
- Wounded and Captured near Thaba'Nchu, 111**
- Lyddite Shells, Effect of—**
 Bethlehem Incident, 157
- Magersfontein Laager, 37**
- Maagbommen, 11**
- Mackdonald, General Sir Hector—**Command of Reinforcements against Bethlehem, 157
- Machadodorp—**President Steyn's Visit to the Government

THREE YEARS WAR

- Machadodorp, continued—**
of the South African Republic, 185
- Magalies Mountains, Passage of, by Commander-in-Chief de Wet, 186, 187, 188**
- Magersfontein Engagement—**
British Losses, 36
- Magersfontein Lager—**
De Wet's, Commander-in-Chief, Command, 36, 37
Duties and Annoyances of Command, 37
Shelling by British, 37
Women, Presence of—Commander-in-Chief de Wet's Failure to induce Government to Prohibit, 38
- Mailbags captured at Rooedwal, Contents used by Boers, 134**
- "Majuba Day" — Capture of Commandant van Merve and men, 361**
- Malan, Lieut.—Expedition into Cape Colony, 258**
- Martial Law—Proclamation by Governments of the Republics, 13**
- Massey, Major — Command at Dewetsdorp, Commander-in-Chief de Wet's Tribute, 222**
- Matthijssen, Corporal Adriaan and the crossing of the Magalies Mountains, 187, 188**
- Mauser Rifle in Portrait of Commander-in-Chief de Wet, History of, 192**
- Mears, Commandant—Loss of Guns at Fanny's Home Farm, 190**
- Medical Certificates, Abuse of by Burgheers, note 80**
- Meijer, Commandant J.—Tribute to, 333**
- Mentz, Commandant J. B.—**
Continuance of the War, Impossibility of, 499
Situation in South Africa on 15th May, 1902—Report to the Vereeniging Conference, 421
- Merve, Commandant-General van, wounded at Sanna's Post, 91**
- Merve, Commandant van der—**
Appointment to Command of Winburg Burgheers, 87
Capture of on "Majuba Day," 361
- Meyer, Mr. J. L.—**
Continuance of the War, Arguments against, Vereeniging Conference, 490
Meyer, Veldtcornet—Loss of Position at Stinkfontein, 58
- Middelburg Peace Proposals—**
Annulled by the Terms of Peace arranged at the Pretoria Conference (May, 1902), 465
Communications between the Boer Leaders with reference to the proposed Conference, 285
Difference between the Basis of Negotiations proposed by the Boer Representa-
- Middelburg Peace Proposals, continued—**
tives in May, 1902, and the Middelburg Proposals, 438, 444
Kitchener's, Lord, Letter to Commandant - General Botha, 479
Receipts issued by Boer Officers, Proviso as to Payment, 457
- Milner, Lord—**
Boer Ultimatum—Mr. Chamberlain's Telegrams, 397
Independence of Republics as Basis for Peace Negotiations, Refusal to consider—Pretoria Conference, 436-469, 472
Peace Negotiations—Conference at Pretoria with Commission of National Representatives (May 18-29, 1902), 368, 436-469
- Mobility—British Incapacity to keep pace with Boers, 180 (See also Waggons)**
- Modder River—**
British entrenched at, 37
Modder Spruit, Battle of, 15, 16
Boer and British Losses, 17
Modderivierpoort (see Poplar Grove)
- Muller, Capt.—**
Exploit at Rooedwal, 133
- Muller, General C. H.—**
Continuance of the War—Vereeniging Delegates' Refusal to accept British Surrender Proposal, 494
- Myrining, Burger killed at Rheinsterriviersbrug, 137**
- Naauwpoort — Prinsloo's Surrender, 114**
- Natal—**
British Subjects fighting for the Boers (see Colonial Burgheers)
- Natal Operations—**
Absence of Commander-in-Chief de Wet after 9th Dec. 1899, 31
Bester Station Skirmish, 16
Colenso, Magersfontein, and Stormberg Engagements—British Losses, 36
Drakensberg Passes, Occupation by Orange Free State Commandos, 13
Estcourt Skirmishes—General Louis Botha's Exploits, 29
Failure of Boers to cut off English at Dundee and Elands-laagte, 15
Kraaipan, Capture of Armoured Train by General De la Rey, 14
Ladysmith (see that title)
Modder Spruit, Battle of, 15, 16
Natal Frontier, Commander-in-Chief C. de Wet's Reconnaissance, 13
Nicholson's Nek (see that title)
National Representatives (see Peace Negotiations)
- National Scouts—**
Arming men who had taken the Oath of Neutrality, 202
Bergh's, Captain, Attacks on
- National Scouts, continued—**
Boers with bands of Kaf-firs, 333
Night Attacks by the British instigated by, 324
Services to the British, 233, 275
- Naude, Mr. J.—**
Independence of the South African Republic and Orange Free State, Vereeniging - Delegates' power to decide as to Position of British Subjects fighting on Boer side, etc., 487
- Neikerk, Altie van—**
Capture at Honingkopjes, 145
- Neikerk, Captain—**
Appointment as Commandant of President Steyn's Bodyguard, 302
- Nel, Commandant—**
Farm stormed by English—Escape of Commander-in-Chief C. de Wet, 191, 192
Modder Spruit—West Wing of Boer Forces commanded by Nel, 16
Nicholson's Nek—Failure to hold Swartbooiskop, 21, 22
Resignation, 150
- Nerwe, Van de—**
Drowned in crossing Orange River, 269
- Netherlands—**
Peace—Correspondence with the British Government, 368
Boer Response to the Invitation implied in the forwarding of the Correspondence, etc., 373, 374, 422
Queen of—Thanks of Boer Generals for efforts to promote Peace—Resolution at the Vereeniging Conference, 415
- Newspapers—**
Circulation of European Papers prohibited in Republics by England, 485
- Nicholson's Nek—**
Ambulance for British Wounded—Sir G. White's Delay in sending, 25
Booty taken by Boers, 24
Swartbooiskop—
Nel's, Commandant, Failure to hold, 21, 22
Storming by Steenekamp and Commander-in-Chief C. de Wet, 22, 23
White Flag Incident, 23
Transvaal Burgheers, Work of, 25
- Niouwoudt, General—**
Peace, Rejection of British Terms, Proposal, 502
- Night Attacks by the British—**
Success of, Losses caused to the Boers, 324
- Norvalspont —**
Commander-in-Chief C. de Wet's Schemes for Operations in rear of British, 107, 111
- Oath of Neutrality, Breaking—**
Re-arming of Burgheers who had taken the Oath, Commander-in-Chief de Wet's Scheme, 199-203

INDEX

- Oath of Neutrality, Breaking, *continued*—
 British Military Authorities' Breach of Terms of Lord Roberts' Proclamation justifying Scheme, 202, 203
- Olivier, Commandant—
 Bethlehem District, Appointment to Command, 28r
 Homingspruit Station, Failure of Attack on, 150
 Prinsloo's, General, Position as Private Burgher, Dissatisfaction with, 154
- Olivierschoekpas—Occupation by Bethlehem Commando, 13
- Orange Free State—
 Annexation of—Battles fought after the alleged Annexation, 282
 De Wet, Commander-in-Chief, Return of, 185, 191
 Government (*see* Government of Orange Free State)
 Number of Burghers in Arms after Fall of Pretoria, 125
 Outbreak of War—Orange Free State joining issues with the South African Republic, 313
 President—Powers granted to President in Matters Concerning War, 15
 Situation of Boer and British Forces in 1901, President Steyn on, 314
 Ortel, Mr. Charles—Owner of Abraham's Kraal, 69
 Outbreak of the War, 13
- Paardeberg — General Cronje's Forces surrounded by the British, Bombardment of Laager, etc., 55
 Boer Reinforcements, Arrival of, 61
 Cronje's, Gen., Determination not to abandon Laager, 57
 Efforts to release General Cronje—Storming of Stinkfontein, etc., 56-62
 Abandonment of Position by Boers, 60
 Botha's, General, Attempt to recapture Position abandoned on 25th February, 61
 British Efforts to recapture Position, 58, 59, 60
 Way of Escape opened to General Cronje, 57, 59
 Sketch of Boer and British Positions, 54
 Surrender of General Cronje, 63
 Effect on Boer Forces, 64, 67, 69
 Themisson, Mr., Capture by British, 12
 Paardenberg's Drift, British Advance on, 45
 Camp of "Water-draggers" surprised by British, 47
 Palmietfontein—Boers breaking through Blockhouse Line, 354
- Panic among Boer Forces—
 Burghers returning to Farms after Fall of Pretoria, 124
 Holspruits, 359
- Peace Negotiations—Boer Overtures, etc.—
 Armistice agreed on, to admit of attendance of Officers at the Vereeniging Meeting, 382
 Misunderstanding on the part of the British Columns, 384
 Concessions in addition to the Terms already offered in the Negotiations of April, 1902, 437
 Conference at Pretoria between the Commission of National Representatives and Lords Kitchener and Milner (19-28 May, 1902), 388, 436
 Draft Document drawn up to place Negotiations in a position to amend the Middelburg Proposals, 448, 449
 Prolongation of Meetings due to Cable Correspondence with Great Britain, 472
 Report of Commission discussed at Vereeniging Meeting, 472
 Governments of the Republics, Meeting at Klerksdorp, 370, 373
 Burger's, Vice - President, Letter to President Steyn, 468
 Independence (*see* that sub-heading)
 Middelburg Peace Proposals (*see* that title)
 National Representatives—
 Commission sent to the Pretoria Conference (May, 1902)
 Decision to appoint Commission, 435
 Names of Members, 388
 Election of Representatives for the Commandos, 380, 381
 Meeting at Vereeniging (15th May) to consider the Situation, 422, 429, 433
 Peace Terms proposed, 433, 434
 Netherlands' Communication with the British Government, 368
 Boer Response to the Invitation implied in the forwarding of the Correspondence, etc., 373, 374, 442
 Letter sent to Commandos, 404, 415, 416
 Presidents of the Republics—
 Correspondence with Lord Salisbury, and Lord Salisbury's Reply (5th March, 1900), 68, 71, 398-400, 485
 Proposals to Lord Kitchener (April, 1902), 374
 Correspondence between Lord Kitchener and the Secretary of State—Independence Difficulty, 377
 Signing of Peace at Pretoria, 391
 Steyn's, President, Views, 317
 Terms of Peace sanctioned by the British Government and accepted by the Boers (May, 1902)
- Peace Negotiations, *continued*—
 Acceptance of British Terms, 388, 505
 Acceptance under Protest proposed, 498
 Dissatisfaction among men of the Commandos, 392
 Failure of Food Supply as reason for acceptance, 389
 Unconditional Surrender v. Acceptance, 474, 476, 480, 494, 501
 Better Terms, Possibility of obtaining, 482, 485, 486, 501
 Decision as to Acceptance or Rejection essential, 503
 Middelburg Proposal Annulled by the Terms of the Peace Protocol of May, 1902, 465
 Milner's, Lord, Telegrams, 465
 Rejection of Terms proposed, 502
 Signatures to Acceptance, Question of, 503
 Sub-committee appointed to aid in formulating Peace Proposals, 450, 473
 Text of Draft Proposal and of Draft Proposal with Amendments sanctioned by the British Government, 451, 466
 Time allowed for discussion of Terms, 468
 "Ultimatum," Description of British Terms, 389
 Penzhorn, Mr., Relatives of—
 Kindness to Commander-in-Chief de Wet, 186
 Petrusberg — Capture of by British, 69
 De Wet's, Commander-in-Chief, Visit, 287
 Plans, Sketch Plans of Engagements, 54, 128, 338
 Plessis, Veldtcorneet du—Death due to White Flag Treachery at Reddersburg, 100
 Poplar Grove—
 Concentration of Boer Troops at, 68
 Kruger's, President, Visit to Boer Troops, 68
 Panic among Boers — Commander-in-Chief de Wet unable to prevent flight, 69
 Potchebroom, Portrait of Commander-in-Chief de Wet, History of Mauser Rifle, which appears in the photograph, 192
 Potgieter, Commandant (of Wolmaranstadt)—Escape from Paardeberg, 57
 Potgieter, Mr. Hendrik—Appointment as Public Prosecutor of Orange Free State, 250
 Prosl, Vice-Commandant Ignatius du, killed near Bethlehem, 244
 Presidency of Orange Free State—
 Expiration of President Steyn's term of office—Difficulties

THREE YEARS WAR

- Presidency of Orange Free State, continued—**
 in the way of an Election, Action of the Doornberg War Council, 249, 250
 Resignation of President Steyn, 487
 Rhodes, Mr., proposed as Candidate, 250
Pretoria—
 Capture by British, 123
 Panic ensuing among Transvaalers, 124
 Peace Negotiations—Conference between Commission of National Representatives and Lords Kitchener and Milner (May 19—28, 1902), 388, 436
Pretorius, Willem—
 Storming of British Schanze on Orange River, 256
 Tribute to, 333
 Veldcornet, Nomination as, 257
Prinsloo, Commandant Michal—
 Bethlehem Engagement, 244
 Elandsfontein Exploit, 155
 Liebenbergsveld Engagement, 349
 Springhaansnek, Covering Commander-in-Chief de Wet's Passage of Blockhouse Lines at, 236
 Train captured and burned by, 193
 Vice-Commander-in-Chief of Bethlehem and Picksburg Sub-districts, Appointment, 281
Prinsloo, Mr. Marthinus—
 Assistant Commander-in-Chief, Irregular Election as, 164
 Commandant of Winburg District, 12
 Commander-in-Chief of Orange Free State, Election, 12
 Natal Campaign, Preliminary Arrangements, 13
 Resignation of Post as Commander-in-Chief in the Drakensberg, 153
 Surrender at Naauwpoort, 114
 Letter to Commander-in-Chief de Wet announcing Surrender and Commander-in-Chief de Wet's Reply, 176
 News brought to Commander-in-Chief de Wet, 175, 177
 Suspicious Circumstances of Surrender, 165
Prinsloo's, Veldcornet, Burghers, Capture of, 317
Prisoners—Boer Prisoners—
 Bank Notes of the South African Republic, Opportunity of sending in for Payment, 459
 Ceylon—Prisoners taken with General Prinsloo sent to Ceylon, 199
 Merwa, Commandant, and men—Capture on "Majuba Day," 361
 Number taken by the British, Frederiksstad, 56, 62, 216, 325
Prisoners, continued—
 Total Number (35,000) in the Hands of the British in 1901, 315
 Taljaart's and Prinsloo's Veldcornets, Burghers, Capture of, 351
British Prisoners—
 Boer Inability to keep their Prisoners, 281, 504
 Clothing taken by the Boers, 288
 Numbers taken, 24, 36, 89, 92, 100, 134, 137, 147, 148, 209, 225, 234, 244, 254, 257, 258, 274, 329, 344
 Release on Fall of Pretoria due to Transvaalers' negligence, 123
 Treatment by Boers—
 Personal Property of Prisoners, etc., Disposition of, 133 *note*
 Prisoners taken in Cape Colony Expedition, Treatment of, 261
Kaffir Prisoners taken by Boers—
 Dovesdorp, 225
 Release of Prisoners, 230
 Leeuwspuit Bridge, 148
 "Pro-Boers"—
 De Wet's, Commander-in-Chief, Tribute to, 270
 Meetings in England, 483
Public Prosecutor of Orange Free State— Appointment of Mr. Hendrick Potgieter, 250
Railways— Wrecking the Lines, Cutting British Lines of Communication, 219, 299
 America Siding, Line near, wrecked by General Froneman, 150
 De Aar and Hopetown, Line blown up, 260, 262
 Frederiksstad Station, Bridge and Line wrecked, 150
 Leeuwspuit, Failure of Commander-in-Chief de Wet's Attempt, 147, 148
Orange Free State Line, Commander-in-Chief de Wet's Work on, 194, 195
 Scheepers, Captain, Work of, 194
 Schemes of Commander-in-Chief de Wet, 190, 191, 193
 Wolvehock, 209
Rebels— Colonial Burghers Fighting on Boer Side (*see* Colonial Burghers)
Roberts, Lord, Description of Burghers continuing to fight after annexation of the Republic as "Rebels," 281
Receipts issued by Boer Officers for the Purchase of Cattle, Grain, etc.— Peace Negotiations, Boer Representatives' Request for a Guarantee of Payment, 454
 Amount likely to be required, 459
 Middelburg Proposal, 457
 Orange Free State, Position
- Receipts, continued—**
 with reference to Receipts, 456, 458
 Terms of Peace Agreement, 452
Reddersburg— Boer Messenger fired on by British, 98
British Commanding Officer's Reply to Commander-in-Chief de Wet's Advice to Surrender, 98
De Wet's, Commander-in-Chief, Dispositions, 95—98
Mostershoek, British Failure to reinforce Detachment at, 99
 White Flag Treachery, 99, 100
Reich, Dr.— Commander-in-Chief de Wet's Meeting with at Senekal, 286
Reitz— Engagement near, 324—326
 Surrender of Arms by Commandos after Declaration of Peace, 391
Reitz, Secretary of State— Situation in South Africa on May 15, 1902, Report to the Vereeniging Conference, 420
Relief Funds for Destitution caused by the War— Appointment of Committee to Collect and Administer, 506
Repatriation of Boers— Compensation for Losses sustained during the War—District Commissions, Institution of, 467
 Grant of £3,000,000 by the British Government, 467
 Inadequacy of Proposals, 478, 499
 Loans by the British Government, 468
Rheeder, Commandant— Continuance of the War, Terms of Surrender, etc., 476
Rhenoster River, Fighting on, 118
Hurried Retreat of Commander-in-Chief de Wet, 119
Rhenosterviersbrug— General Froneman's Success, 136, 137
Rhodes, Mr. C.—
 Jameson Raid—Mr. Chamberlain's Defence of Mr. Rhodes, 370
 Presidency of Orange Free State—Mr. Rhodes proposed as a Candidate, 250
Rietfontein, Battle of (see Modder Spruit)
Roberts, Lord—
 Advance of, into the Orange Free State, 41
 Bloemfontein, Appearance before, 72
 Dispositions after Capture of Kroonstad (May 18, 1900), 117
 Inaction after Paardeberg, 68
 Thaba'Nchu, Operations near (1900), 111
Proclamations—
 Burning of Buildings within radius of Ten Miles from Railway wrecked by Boers, 242
 Oath of Neutrality, Pro-

INDEX

- Roberts, Lord, *continued*—
 clamations as to Charge
 against Lord Roberts of
 violating Terms of Procla-
 mation, 106, 202
 Effect in preventing
 Burghens from rejoining
 Commandos, 81
 Roodewal Disaster due to negli-
 gence of Lord Roberts, 137
 Sanna's Post, Failure to rein-
 force Troops at, 92 *note*
 Ventersburg, Attack on, 114
 Roch, General—Natal Campaign,
 General Roch's Command
 in Opening Movement of
 Boer Forces, 15
 Roodebergen—De Wet's, Com-
 mander-in-Chief, Departure
 from, 162, 169
 Occupation by Boer Forces—
 Commander-in-Chief de
 Wet's Opposition to
 Scheme, 162
 Passes of, 161
 Roodepoort — Commander-in-
 Chief de Wet's first Engage-
 ment with Lord Kitchener,
 143, 144
 Roodewal Station, Action at, 130-
 133
 Booty burnt by Boers, 136
 Sketch Plans, 128
 Roux, Assistant Commander-in-
 Chief—Prinsloo's Surrender,
 weak and childish
 Conduct of General Roux,
 164, 165
 Roux, Deacon Paul, Appointment
 as Vechtgeneraal, 114
 Russian Reception of Escaped
 Burghers, 145 *note*
 Rustenburg — General Lieben-
 berg's Retreat, 182
- Salisbury, Marquess of—Peace
 Negotiations, Boer Propo-
 sals of March 5, 1900—
 Reply to, 68, 71, 485
 Peace—Correspondence with
 Presidents Kruger and
 Steyn, 398-400
 Sanna's Post, Action at—
 Broadwood's, General, Troops,
 Arrival of, 88
 De Wet's, Commander-in-
 Chief, Preparations, 86, 87
 Koom Spruit, Position occupied
 by Commander-in-Chief de
 Wet, 87, 88
 Women and Children from
 Thaba'Nchu, Commander-
 in-Chief de Wet's Care for,
 89
- Scheepers, Captain, and Command-
 ant Kritzinger, *continued*—
 Scouting Services, 164, 171
 Zandnek Engagement, 179
 Scouting—
 Boer and British Methods—
 Services rendered to the
 British by Boer Deserters,
 etc., 26, 157
 Importance of, 211
 National Scouts, Services of
 (see National Scouts)
 Secrecy as to Future Movements
 —Commander-in-Chief de
 Wet's Determination to
 keep his Plans secret, 85,
 251
 Self-Government, Retention of
 under British Supervision
 —Peace Negotiations, Boer
 Representatives' Proposals
 at the Pretoria Conference
 (May 19, 1902), 437, 443
 Sheep—Huge Tail of African
 Sheep, 262
 Situation in South Africa on
 May 15, 1902—De Wet's,
 Commander-in-Chief, Ad-
 dress at the Vereeniging
 Conference, 429-432
 Situation of the Boer and British
 Forces in 1901, President
 Steyn on, 314
 Sketch Plans of Engagements, 54,
 128, 338
 Smith, Veldtoornet Hans, of
 Rouxville, Desertion after
 Roodewal, 138, 139
 Smuts, General—
 Continuance of the War, Argu-
 ments for and against—
 Vereeniging Conference, 495
 Peace Negotiations—Member of
 Commission of National
 Representatives at the Pre-
 toria Conference, 388, 436-
 469
 Situation in South Africa on
 May 15, 1902—Report to
 the Vereeniging Confer-
 ence, 409-411
 Sobriety of Boers, 81
 South African News—Publication
 of, Order not to take Pris-
 oners, Anecdotes of Lord
 Kitchener, 233
 South African Republic—
 De Wet's, Commander-in-Chief,
 Journey with General De
 la Rey, Incidents during,
 293, 299
 Extermination of, by the British
 determined on prior to the
 Outbreak of War, alleged,
 313
 Government of (see Government
 of South African Republic)
 Situation of, in 1902—Impos-
 sibility of continuing the
 War, 499
 Situation of Boer and British
 Forces in 1901—President
 Steyn on, 314
 Speller, Veldtoornet, of Wepener
 —Capture by British at
 Stinkfontein, 60
 Springbaansnek — Blockhouse
 Line broken through by the
 Boers, 220, 236
- Spruit, Commandant—Capture by
 British at Stinkfontein, 58;
 Subsequent Escape, 59
 States-Procureur of Orange Free
 State—Capture of Mr.
 Jacob de Villiers at Botha-
 ville, 216, 250
 Steenkamp, Burgher—Betrayal
 of Members of the South
 African Government to the
 British, 301
 Steenkamp, Commandant—
 Assistant-Commander-in-Chief,
 Nomination as, 185
 Heilbron District, Commandant
 of, 10, 12
 Illness of, 13, 14, 15
 Vredefort Road Station, Attack
 on, 130, 137
 Steyn, President—
 Accompanying Commander-in-
 Chief de Wet in his Departure
 from Roodebergen,
 169
 Bethlehem Engagement, Pre-
 sence at, 153
 Bloemfontein, Departure from,
 78
 Bodyguard—
 Davel, Commandant, Com-
 mand of, 241
 Niekert, Captain—Appoint-
 ment as Commandant, 302
 Botha, General Philip, Visit to,
 115
 Burger's, Vice-President, Re-
 quest for Meeting with
 Orange Free State Govern-
 ment, 368
 Cape Colony Expedition, De-
 cision to accompany, 249
 Capture of Members of Govern-
 ments of the South African
 Republics by the British at
 Reitz—President Steyn's
 Escape, 301
 Causes of the War—Letter to
 Lord Kitchener, 309-318
 Commander-in-Chief of Orange
 Free State, Refusal to al-
 low Election—Consent to
 Election of Commander-in-
 Chief de Wet, 154
 De Wet's, Commander-in-Chief,
 Schemes for operating in
 the Rear of the British, Op-
 position to, 111
 De Wet's, Commander-in-Chief,
 Tribute to, 268
 Eyes, Weakness of—Visit to Dr.
 van Rennerkamp, 367
 Government of the South Afri-
 can Republic, Meetings
 with—
 Machadodorp Visit, 185
 Vrede Meeting, 286
 Illness of, 387
 Independence of the Republic,
 Refusal to surrender, 374
 Intervention of Foreign Powers,
 Attitude as to, 72
 Kroonstad War Council pre-
 sided over by President
 Steyn, 79
 Peace—Correspondence be-
 tween Presidents Kruger
 and Steyn and Lord Salis-
 bury, 398-400
 Re-election as President in 1901

THREE YEARS WAR

- Steyn, President, *continued*—
 Resignation owing to illness, 487
 Ventersdorp — Meeting with Commander-in-Chief de Wet, 214
 Western Parts of the State, Visit to, 365-368
 Steyn, Willie, Capture at Honing Kopjes—Subsequent Escape, 145 *note*
 Stinkfontein, Stormed and Abandoned by Commander-in-Chief de Wet, 56
 Stormberg—
 British Losses at, 35, 36
 Capture by General Gatacre, 68
Stormjagers, 11
 Strauss, David—Prisoner taken by the British in contravention of Lord Roberts' Proclamation, 106
 Stripping British Prisoners in order to obtain Clothing, 288
 Supervision of the British Government—Peace Negotiations, Boer Representatives' offer to accept Supervision as a Compromise on the Independence Question, 437, 443, 444
 Surrender—
 Banishment Proclamation (*see* that title)
 Oath of Neutrality, Lord Roberts' Proclamation (*see* Oath of Neutrality)
 Peace Negotiations at Pretoria in May, 1902—Draft Agreement, 448
 Surrender of Arms after Declaration of Peace, 391, 392
 Swartbooisloep—
 Nel's, Commandant, Failure to hold, 21, 22
 Storming by Commandant Steenkamp and Commander-in-Chief de Wet, 22, 23
 Swaziland—Cession to the British, Proposals of the Vereeniging Conference, 420, 431, 434
 Sympathy felt for Boer Cause in England—Indirect Intervention, etc., 483, 486, 497
 Tabaksberg Engagement, 112
 Taljaart's, Veldtcoronet, Burgbers, Cap. 116 of, 321
 Telegraph Wires—Cutting Wires between Walvebock and Viljoensdriif, 366
 Telegraphic Communication between Orange Free State and Transvaal, 123
 Termination of the War—
 Attitude of the Burgbers, 292
 Boer Women, Opinion of, 432
 Conference between Transvaal and Orange Free State Governments—
 Decision to continue Fighting, 299, 300
 Klerksdorp Meeting, 370, 373
 Termination of the War, *continued*—
 De Wet's, Commander-in-Chief, Forebodings, 79
 Letter from Commandants in the Field to Secretary of the Orange Free State—Conference with Transvaal Government, 299
 Discussion of, by President Steyn and Generals De la Rey and De Wet, 289
 Steyn's, President, Answer, Extracts from, 291-293
 Terms of, 289-291
 Mission to President Kruger on behalf of South African Republic proposed, 291, 292
 Vereeniging Conference—Views of the Representatives, 416, 417, 418, 419, 421, 422, 423, 424-428, 429, 430-432, 433
 Territory, Cession of—Peace Negotiations—
 Pretoria Conference, Boer Representatives' Offer, 437, 447
 Vereeniging Conference Proposals (15th May, 1902), 420, 421, 427, 429, 431, 432, 434
 Thaba'Nchu—
 De Wet's, Commander-in-Chief, Retreat on after Badenhorst, 107
 Occupation by General Broadwood, 88
 Thanksgiving Days, Appointment of, 300
 Theron Danie—
 Death at Gatsrand, 194
 Paardeberg—Passing Enemy's Lines to carry Message from Commander-in-Chief de Wet to General Cronje, 62
 Scouting Party, Appointment as Chief by Commander-in-Chief de Wet, 72
 Scouting Services, 117, 162, 171
 Train Captured by, 172
 Theron, Jan—Appointment to succeed Commandant Danie Theron, 194
 Theunissen, Commandant of Wynberg, 61
 Capture by British at Stinkfontein, 62
 Election as Commandant of Wynberg, 12
 Thring, Veldtcoronet—War Experiences, Commander-in-Chief de Wet's Tribute, etc. 116, 117
 Tijgerfontein Engagement, 178
 Tintwaspas — Occupation by Kroonstad Commando, 13
 Tonder, Mr. Gideon van—Killed by Lyddite Shell at Magersfontein, 38
 Trains—
 Blowing up with Dynamite, 285, 305
 Devices to throw the British off the scent, 305
 Mechanical Devices, 305
 Boer Captures of, 172, 193, 255
 Transvaal (*see* South African Republic)
 Transvaalers—
 Negligence in leaving Prisoners at Pretoria, 123
 Nicholson's Nek, Work at, 25
 Truter, Commandant—Abandonment of Krupp gun and Ammunition, 231
 Tweefontein—Attack on British Position, 339-345
 Sketch Plan, 338
 Uijs, Commandant—Situation in South Africa on May 15, 1902, Report to the Vereeniging Conference, 419
 "Uitschudden"—Institution of, in order to obtain Clothing, 288
 Ultimatum by the South African Republic—
 Cause of the War alleged—
 Salisbury's, Lord, Assertion, 71, 485
 Salisbury's, Lord, Demand, 71, 485
 Steyn's, President, Contradiction, 310
 Chamberlain's, Mr. J., Telegrams to Sir A. Milner, 397
 Text of the "Ultimatum," 393-396
 Unconditional Surrender—Discussion at Vereeniging Meeting of May 29, 1902, 473, 474, 476, 481, 502
 Vaal River—Crossing of President Steyn's Party, 367
 Valsch River Bridge, Destruction by Commander-in-Chief de Wet, 117
 Van Dam, Under Captain—Command of Johannesburg Police at Nicholson's Nek, 24
 Van Niekerk, Commandant—Continuance of the War, Argument in favour of, 492
 Van Reenen's Pass—
 Occupation by Harrismith and Winburg Commandos, 13
 War Council at—Commander-in-Chief de Wet attending in place of Commandant Steenkamp, 14
 Vanvurenslidoo, Boer Retreat from, 179
 Veughtgeneral of the Orange Free State—
 Abolition of Post, 126
 Creation of Post, 15
 De Wet, Commander-in-Chief, Appointment of, 35
 Roux, General Paul, appointed by Commander-in-Chief de Wet, 114
 Ventersburg—Boer Lines broken through, 114
 Ventersdorp—
 Fighting near, 180, 181
 Meeting between President

INDEX

- Venterdorp, *continued*—
Steyn and Commander-in-Chief de Wet, 214
- Vereeniging—
Meeting of General Representatives to discuss the Situation (May 15, 1902), 401-435
Authority given to Delegates to voice the wishes of their Constituencies, 401, 405, 406, 475, 477, 479, 480, 483, 487, 488, 494, 499, 501
Thanks of the Meeting to the King of England and Queen of the Netherlands for efforts to promote Peace, 415
Unity among Delegates essential, 405, 406, 419, 420, 427
Meeting of Special National Representatives to discuss British Peace Terms (May 29, 1900), 472
Amnesty agreed on to admit of Attendance of Officers, 382
Misunderstanding on the part of the British Columns, 384
Divisions among Delegates, 409, 501, 503
Meeting a Fatal Error, 490
Questions to be decided, 473, 481, 494
(For details of subjects discussed see Independence, Peace Negotiations, etc.)
- Verklersdorp — Capture of Women's Laager near, by the British, and Rescue by Commander-in-Chief de Wet's Commando, 293-296
British Casualties, 294
- Vice-Commanders-in-Chief, Orange Free State—
Badenhorst, Veldtcoronet, C. C., Appointment for Districts of Boshop, etc., 202
De Wet, Gen., Appointment of, 67
Fourie, Gen., Appointment for Districts of Bloemfontein, etc., 200
Hertzog, Gen., Appointment for Districts of Fauresmith, etc., 201
Vice-President of Orange Free State—
Appointment of Commander-in-Chief de Wet, 487
Creation of Temporary Post, 250
Viljoen, Mr. P. R.—Situation in South Africa on May 15, 1902, Report of the Vereeniging Conference, 416
- Villiers, General de—Death due to Wound received at Bidulphsberg, 113
Natal Expedition, Commanding as Vechtgeneraal, 14
Prinsloo's Surrender, Escape from, 166
Work in South-Eastern Dis-
- Villiers, General de, *continued*—
tricts of the Orange Free State, 112
- Villiers, Mrs Jacob de, States-Procureur of Orange Free State, Capture of at Bothaville, 216, 250
- Vilonel, Commandant—
Resignation—Enforced Resignation due to Insubordination, 87
Surrender to British—Recapture by Captain Pretorius and Trial for Desertion, 113
Removal from Bethlehem to Fouriesburg, 157
Waggons, Persistence in use of, 86
- Visser, Commandant—Death of at Jagersfontein Engagement, Faithfulness and Valour of Commandant Visser, 201
Vleeschkorporaal, Duties of, 10, 11
- Vrede—
De Wet's, Commander-in-Chief, Meeting with Louis Botha, 286
Meeting between President Steyn and the Transvaal Government, 286
Vrede Commando, Surrender following Prinsloo's Surrender, 166
- Vrededorp—
Capture of British Outpost, 287
Engagements near, 173, 174
Retreat of the Boers to the Vaal River, 210
Surrender of Arms by Commando after Declaration of Peace, 391
Vrededorp-weg Station — Commandant Steenekamp's Success at, 130, 137
- Vrijheid—Kaffir Atrocities, Murder and Mutilation of Burgbers, 504
- Waggons—
Boer Reluctance to abandon use of, 86, 156, 169, 171, 175
Harrismith Burgbers' Refusal to part with their Waggons at Spitskopje, 207-209
De Wet, Commander-in-Chief, Use of Little Waggon, 358, 365
Destruction by British, 156, 241
No Waggons with Commander-in-Chief de Wet's Commando, 342
- Vilonel's, Commandant, Persistence in using Waggons, 86
Waggon Camps, Regulation prohibiting, 79
- War Commission—Orders to commence Natal Campaign, 10
War Councils, 29
Decisions of Council of March 28, 1900, 85
Doornberg, Council at—Deci-
- War Councils, *continued*—
sion as to Presidential Election, 249
Kroonstad Council — Officers present, Decisions, etc., 79 *note*, 80
War of 1877-1881—Futility of Comparison with War of 1899-1902, 499
Warfare, Boer Methods of—
Checking an Enemy's Advance, —Boer Tactics, 264
Rapidity of Action, Importance of, 99
- Wauchops, General—Death at Magersfontein, 36
- Weilbach, Commandant—Desertion of Post at Bloemfontein, 72
- Wessels, General J. B.—
Kroonstad War Council, Presence at, 79
Sanna's Post Engagement, Share in, 87
Wessels, Mr. C. J.—
Commander-in-Chief of Free Staters at Magersfontein and Kimberley, 36
Member of Boer Deputation to Europe (1900), 71
- Wessels, Veldtcoronet—
Capture of, at Frederiksstad, 212
Dewetsdorp Exploits, 223, 224
- White, Colonel—Engagement with Commandant Hasebroek near Thaba'Nchu, 238
White Flag Treachery at Reddersburg, 99, 100
- Wire Fencing—
Bothaville, Boers cutting the Wire, 366
Erection of, by the British, 323
Lindley-Kroonstad Line of Blockhouses — Escape of Boers, 352
Palmietfontein, Boers breaking through Line, 354
Witkopjes Rhebokfontein Engagement, 175
- Witwatersrand, Cession to the British—Proposals of the Vereeniging Conference, 420, 431, 434
Wolfaard Brothers—Wounded by Lyddite Shell at Magersfontein, 38
- Wolmarans, Daniel—Member of Boer Deputation to Europe (1900), 71
- Wolvehoek—Railway blown up by Commander-in-Chief de Wet, 209
- Women and Children—
De Wet's, Commander-in-Chief, Care for, after Sanna's Post, 89
Difficulties of providing for—
Deliberations of the Vereeniging Conference, 407, 411, 412, 413, 414, 419, 421, 422, 426, 481, 482, 486, 489, 492, 493, 501, 502, 504
Flight of Boer Women to escape Capture by the British, 342
Kaffir Treatment of Boer Women, 192, 193
Magersfontein Laager, Presence in, 38

THREE YEARS WAR

<p>Women and Children, <i>continued</i>— Sufferings in Concentration Camps, etc, 250, 355, 499, Treatment by the British, 287, 294, 296, 316 Verkijkersdorp Lager, Capture of by British, and rescue by Commander-in-Chief de Wet's Commando, 297-296 Wonderkop—General de Villiers' Exploits, 112</p>	<p>Wounded, Boer Treatment of— Doornspruit, Care of Wounded after, 173 Nicholson's Nek—Care for Wounded by Commander- in-Chief de Wet, 25 Yeomanry, Imperial—Gallantry at Tweefontein, 344</p>	<p>Yule, General—Ladysmith Re- treat conducted by, 15 Zandnek—Captain Scheeper's En- gagement near, 179 Zwavelkraus Farm—British Con- voy Captured by Com- mander-in-Chief de Wet, 129, 130.</p>
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GENERAL MAP OF SOUTH AFRICA-1902

