

## A Tale of two Port Cities: the Relationship between Durban and New Orleans during the Anglo-Boer War

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The Anglo-Boer War<sup>1</sup> between the two independent Boer Republics, the Orange Free State and the Transvaal or the South African Republic on the one side, and the British Empire on the other, lasted from 11 October 1899 to 31 May 1902. This conflict had global implications that stirred the emotions of governments, countries, cities, towns and individuals alike. Neither the port of Durban, the largest settlement in the Colony of Natal and reliant on trade with the Boer Republics for its survival, nor the much larger southern American<sup>2</sup> port of New Orleans, were able to escape the impact of the last of the so-called “gentleman’s” wars. The War had an economic impact on both cities as ships, muleteers,<sup>3</sup> adventurers, horses, mules, disease, equine equipment, fodder and other products passed between them. This economic interaction in turn spawned physical violence, political and economic conflict, exploitation, military recruitment and court cases in both ports.

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1 Historically the War went by numerous names: Boer War, Engelse Oorlog (English War), Tweede Vryheidsoorlog (Second War of Independence), South African War and the politically correct term for the centenary commemorations - Anglo-Boer South African War. The author feels, the name, Anglo-Boer War remains, historically speaking, the most appropriate.

2 For the impact of the Anglo-Boer War on the USA see amongst others: L. Changuion, *Uncle Sam, Oom Paul en John Bull. Amerika en die Anglo-Boereoorlog 1899-1902* (Protea, Pretoria, 2001); J H. Ferguson, *American Diplomacy and the Boer War* (University of Pennsylvania, Philadelphia, 1939); R B. Mulanax, *The Boer War in American Politics and Diplomacy* (University Press of America, Lanham, 1994); T J. Noer, *Briton, Boer and Yankee, the United States and South Africa, 1870-1914* (Kent, Ohio, 1978).

3 The term muleteer refers to any person that worked on board ship with livestock, be it horses, mules or cattle. In Durban, at the time of the Anglo-Boer War, the term cattlemen was favoured. See J M. Wassermann, “Cattlemen: Involuntary Volunteers for Queen and King” in J M. Wassermann and B T. Kearney (eds), *A Warrior’s Gateway. Durban and the Anglo-Boer War 1899-1902*, (Protea, Pretoria, 2002), pp 98-111.

**“Horses and mules do not make good sailors”<sup>4</sup> - the equine trade between New Orleans and Durban**

The Anglo-Boer War was one of the last wars in which horses, mules and donkeys played a major role. Throughout the War the Imperial forces suffered heavy losses in horses and mules - 347 007, or 67 per cent of the 518 794 horses and 53 339 or 35 per cent of the 150 781 mules and donkeys supplied, died. A constant supply of fresh animals was therefore required. According to Colonel Stevenson, the Inspector of Remounts in the Colony of Natal, thousands of horses were purchased in the Colony between 1 October 1899 and 11 October 1900. The local market could, however, not satisfy the demand and the British Army was forced to turn to distant markets such as Australia, Argentina, Canada, Hungary, India, Italy, Spain and the USA.<sup>5</sup>

As early as July 1899, Colonel H.J. Schobell, Captain R.H. Marsham and Veterinary Captain Smith of the British Army were ordered to proceed to the USA to investigate the possibilities of purchasing mules and horses in the event of war breaking out between Britain and the Boer Republics. When their visit became public knowledge, they were inundated with offers from would-be sellers. This made their task much easier and as a result they merely needed to identify contractors in the most convenient centres, namely St Louis, Kansas City and Fort Worth. Thus, when the order came on 23 September 1899 to start purchasing, they could proceed with great efficiency. In March 1900, orders were given that only horses were to be purchased. After September 1901, however, only horses of the cob class were purchased. In December 1900, Colonel U.G.C. de Burgh took charge of the operations and purchasing expanded to Ogden, north of Salt Lake City to tap into the states of Utah, Washington, Montana, Oregon and Nevada. At this time Captain Marsham was seconded to take charge of the shipping arrangements.<sup>6</sup> Under the command of these men, the USA became the largest supplier of horses to the British Army. Between September 1899 and July 1902, 76 131 horses and 67 624 mules were transported in more than 520 voyages from New Orleans to various South African ports including Durban.<sup>7</sup>

Initially the shipping of horses from New Orleans took place from an area known as the “slaughter house, before moving to the abattoir.” Both of these sites proved to be highly unsatisfactory and consequently disused cotton sheds were acquired at Chalmette outside New Orleans and about ten kilometres down the Mississippi. Although it tended to be wet and muddy, the site at Chalmette conformed to all the requirements. It had sheds, corrals, shutes, feeding, watering and rail facilities. In addition, it was a mere 300 metres from the riverfront and the rent was only £500 per month. The favourable location allowed the British operations to grow and by April 1902, nine officers were working from Chalmette.<sup>8</sup> These staff officers, although generally hard-working, were not necessarily the cream of the British Empire. Colonel De Burgh had to dismiss seven of them, amongst others for drunkenness, theft,

4 L.S. Amery (ed), *Times History of the War in South Africa VI*, (Sampson Low Marston, London, 1900-1909), p 650

5 Amery (ed), *Times History of the War*, pp 650-655

6 Pietermaritzburg Archive Repository (hereafter PAR): Cd 995, Reports by officers, working for the Remount Department abroad, pp 1-10

7 PAR: Cd 963, Report on the working of the Army Remount Department, pp 10-14, 31-32; Amery (ed), *Times History of the War*, pp 655-658

8 PAR: Cd 995, pp 14-15

gambling debt, insubordination and, in the case of Veterinary Captain Smith, for allegedly taking commissions on each horse purchased by him. Such behaviour did not endear the small British military establishment to the press in the USA and Britain, and derogatory remarks were even made in the House of Commons about the conduct of British officers based at New Orleans.<sup>9</sup>

Getting the horses and mules to Chalmette involved a process that covered thousands of kilometres. The War Office would wire the establishment at Chalmette, informing them that a transporter was about to arrive. In turn the agents, who had monopolised the trade, the Sparks Brothers, Guyton and Harrington Horse and Mule Company in Kansas City, Maxwell and Crouch in St Louis would be wired and requested to forward a certain number of mules and/or horses. The animals would then be transported by train on trips that covered thousands of kilometres, sometimes from cold winters of the north to the tropical climate of New Orleans. Rest camps where horses were disembarked, watered and fed at the expense of the dealers intermitted the journeys.

The horses and mules would arrive in New Orleans four days prior to embarkation. During this period they were inspected, allowed to rest, and fed oats and timothy hay. A form of quality control and inspection was exercised by officers like Captain W.H. Fife, who evaluated the animals by having them trotted up and ridden. If accepted, they were branded on the foot with a number and a broad arrow. To speed up the process, Veterinary-Major Moore sometimes undertook the same proceedings in Kansas City. The horses were then ready to be embarked by officers like Captain Eden of the Royal Navy.<sup>10</sup> Simultaneous to the movement of horses and mules, the transporters were prepared. They were disinfected and new pitch pine fittings had to be constructed since the old ones were dismantled and thrown overboard during the return journey from Durban to New Orleans. The material for the fittings, including an additional 900 metres of timber to repair the fittings that had broken or were eaten by the mules during the trip, was supplied by the shipping-lines that were contracted to the Admiralty. As in the supply of horses and mules, this was also monopolised, in this case by three British companies: Elder, Dempsey and Company, M.J. Sanders and Alfred le Blanc. It was the responsibility of Captain Marsham to find local craftsmen to construct the fittings, as well as general labourers. For the last mentioned category, Marsham recruited mostly African Americans.

By the time that the horses and mules were on board in their fitted stalls, which allowed for some movement and for feeding, the water, oats, hay and bran were already loaded. The contract between the Admiralty and the various shipping-lines specified that the latter were responsible for water, fodder, staff and the general maintenance of the ships. Ideally each ship was supposed to carry a remount officer, who acted as the conducting officer, and a veterinary surgeon, in addition to the regular staff. The vessels were now ready to depart for Durban, a journey that could take between 28 and 42 days.<sup>11</sup>

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9 PAR: Cd 995, pp 10-15

10 National Archives of South Africa, Pretoria (hereafter NASA): Dr Leyds Argief, volume 512, Statement by P B Lynch, s a

11 PAR: Cd 994, Court of Enquiry Administration of the Army Remount Department, pp 43-53; 135-139

The provisions aboard ship varied between companies and individual ships. Generally, ships carried fodder for an extra fifteen days. This was not always the case, and consequently horses on board the *Knight Bachelor* starved to death.<sup>12</sup> In a similar case the *Monterrey* left New Orleans for Durban on 7 August 1900 with 1 168 horses on board. By the time it docked in Durban, 39 days later, 25 horses had died of starvation while three-quarters of the remaining horses were so weak that they were unfit for duty for two months. In this case only a civilian veterinary surgeon, prone to drinking, and no conducting officer accompanied the ship. Due to the lack of management, the stalls were not cleaned during the entire journey and the horses were standing up to their hocks in manure. Overcrowding also occurred from time to time. The *Manchester City*, which left New Orleans for Durban on 22 November 1899, carried 2 080 mules and was completely overloaded, a scenario the Admiralty had to accept due to the shortage of transporters. During the journey, 187 animals died of apoplexy.<sup>13</sup>

As the War progressed, the British Army increasingly favoured Durban as a disembarkation port for horses and mules. It was substantially closer to the front than the Cape ports, while a deal struck between the military and Natal Government Railways made it much cheaper to transport the horses and mules imported via Durban. A further attraction was that most Natalians were loyal towards the war effort. This was not necessarily the case in the Cape Colony where thousands of Afrikaners rebelled.<sup>14</sup>

On arrival in Durban some horses and mules were offloaded at the outer anchorage onto the decks of lighters or tugs using slings or horseboxes. The majority were, however, landed at the Point quays and either walked directly down gangways or were lowered in a horsebox. They would be received by a remount conductor, assisted by a party of African workers who would march the animals, tied in groups of three to five to the Lord's Ground Remount Depot roughly two kilometres away.<sup>15</sup> From here the animals were either railed directly to the front, herded to the Gillitts Remount Station about 32 kilometres from Durban, or sent to remount stations in the hinterland, such as those at Nottingham Road and Mooi River.<sup>16</sup>

Along with the horses and mules from New Orleans, an unplanned importation product arrived - glanders.<sup>17</sup> Due to the demands of war, tens of thousands of horses arrived in Durban from New Orleans without complying with the necessary quarantine regulations.<sup>18</sup> As a result some horses infected with glanders were disembarked. This created huge problems for the Army Veterinary Department and the attached veterinary surgeons. Glanders was possibly brought to Durban by ships such as the *Monterrey*, which arrived in New Orleans from Canada with glanders on

12 PAR: Cd 994, p 138

13 PAR: Cd 993, Proceedings of the Court of Enquiry Administration of the Army Remount Department, pp 17-18

14 B T Kearney, "Rail and steam" in Wassermann and Kearney (eds), *A Warrior's Gateway*, p 170

15 Public Record Office, London (hereafter PRO), War Office (hereafter WO): volume 108/117, Commander in Chief, South Africa – Quartermaster General, 10 May 1902

16 B T Kearney and H England, "Horses, mules and donkeys of war" in Wassermann and Kearney (eds), *A Warrior's Gateway*, pp 182-196

17 Glanders is a contagious disease in horses caused by a bacterium and characterised by swellings below the jaw and mucous discharge from the nostrils

18 PAR: Principal Veterinary Surgeon (hereafter PVS), volume 6, District Veterinary Surgeon – Acting Principal Veterinary Surgeon, 9 October 1900

board.<sup>19</sup> Fear of the disease exalted to such an extent that Captain Dixon, the conducting officer on board the *Cervona*, which left New Orleans on 8 February 1901 with 849 horses on board, destroyed 251 horses fearing that they had glanders. Since he acted without the consent of the veterinary officer, he was never employed again.<sup>20</sup>

Tens of thousands of the newly arrived horses, mules and donkeys became part of what Lord Kitchener described as “the great wastage of animals.” The Royal Commission of Enquiry into the Anglo-Boer War believed the major causes for the loss of horses were the long sea voyages the horses were subjected to, and once landed they were put to hard and continuous work on short rations without time for recuperation. In addition, horses from the northern hemisphere sometimes arrived in the southern African summer with heavy winter coats or in the winter with summer coats. To make matters worse, many of the horses were allocated to improvised mounted men with little or no knowledge of horsemanship.<sup>21</sup>

### **The muleteers - an unsatisfactory lot afraid of mules and horses**

Horses, mules and glanders were not the only wartime export product exchanged between New Orleans and Durban. Muleteers, who had the labour-intensive task of caring for the animals were another such product. Generally one muleteer was employed for every fifteen horses or for every twenty mules. A ship with a 1 000 horses therefore required 67 muleteers, while a ship carrying a 1 000 mules needed 50.

The process of hiring the muleteers was fraught with problems. Agents such as Maxwell and Crouch in St Louis and the Sparks Brothers of Kansas City would select possible muleteers from a group of men supplied by the boarding master. According to the British Consul in New Orleans, Arthur (A.G.) Vansittart, muleteers were signed on at the consulate or on board ship. He was adamant that they were given a careful explanation of every term of the agreement. This was where the duty of the consulate staff ended, as they had nothing to do with the contract signed between the shipping-line and the muleteer.<sup>22</sup>

The men who signed up as muleteers were very much products of the socio-economic circumstances in the USA at the time. The industrial age the USA had entered into brought many economic benefits, but also an unequal balance of wealth and power, therefore causing deplorable living conditions in cities, labour violence, discontent among farmers and poverty for millions.<sup>23</sup> Matters were made worse by a 20 per cent increase in population for the decade 1890-1900, and a 91 per cent growth in urban population for the same period.<sup>24</sup>

New Orleans did not escape these tumultuous changes and invariably the result was reflected in the signing-up of a motley group of muleteers, who were described as adventurers, drifters, petty criminals, troublemakers, corner boys, goalbirds and the

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19 PAR: Cd 994, p 263

20 PAR: Cd 994, p 18

21 PAR: Cd 1792, Royal Commission on the War in South Africa Minutes and Evidence, pp 97-98

22 PAR: Government House (hereafter GH), volume 838, W Hely-Hutchinson – A G Vansittart, 10 December 1900

23 D A Ritchie, M Altoff, and R Wilson, *Heritage of Freedom. History of the United States* (Macmillan, New York, 1985), p 455

24 O Handlin, *America. A History* (Holt, Rinehart & Winston, New York, 1968), pp 454-455

“dead brokes” of America.<sup>25</sup> These men were closer in age to thirty than twenty, but sometimes even older than fifty. Most, but not all, roved from port to port. As a result, many, especially during the early part of the War, arrived in Durban on a one-way passage, sometimes as extra hands or stowaways, who were prepared to work their way to the next port.<sup>26</sup> Generally the aspirant muleteers were difficult to deal with as is proven by those who boarded *Hydaspes* on 27 March 1902. When searched, weapons such as revolvers, knives and razors were confiscated.<sup>27</sup>

Very few of the enlisted muleteers knew much about working with horses and mules. The majority were, in the words of Civil Veterinary Surgeon J.T. Crosby, who made six trips from New Orleans, completely unaccustomed to working with animals and even afraid of them. This was not surprising as many had previously followed professions as arsenic-makers, boiler-makers, telegraphists and machinists, and were merely using the trip as a free passage to sell their skills somewhere else. Some did, however, go on to become experienced muleteers and signed up for numerous trips like those who worked on the *Yeddo*. This was only done if they liked the working conditions on a transporter.<sup>28</sup>

Initially muleteers, like those who boarded the *Manchester City* on 22 November 1899, *en route* to Durban were offered a shilling for the voyage and an additional 5 shillings, should they have applied themselves, as well as a one-way passage. When informed of these conditions, thirty of the one hundred and twenty muleteers who had signed up, deserted, leading to a scramble for last-minute replacements.<sup>29</sup> Such attempts at saving costs and enhancing profits proved to be counter-productive and by 1901, almost all contracts included a return passage as part of the clause. The most lucrative contract the muleteers could negotiate was £15 for the journey and a return ticket. Some money could also be earned on the return trip by cleaning the ship, shovelling coal, breaking down the fittings and dumping them in the ocean.<sup>30</sup> Hoping to attract a better class of muleteer, the British officers working from New Orleans made several suggestions. Captain W.H. Fife suggested that the remount officer should hire the muleteers and that better pay would ensure a better quality muleteer. This was disputed by Colonel U.G.C. de Burgh who felt that quadrupling the pay would not lure a better class of person to the job.<sup>31</sup>

Taking command of the muleteers, prior to the departure of the ship, proved problematic. The conducting officers were never quite sure where they stood in relation to the ship’s captain when it came to taking control of the muleteers. This meant that the conducting officer would sometimes only take authority when the ship had already reached the open sea and when many of the men were struggling with seasickness. At times, this led to a deterioration in discipline. Colonel De Burgh therefore suggested that the conducting officer should take control while the ship was still on the Mississippi and inform each man of his tasks.<sup>32</sup>

25 PAR: Cd 994 and 995, *passim*

26 PAR: GH volume 838, W Hely-Hutchinson – A G Vansittart, 10 December 1900

27 PAR: Cd 995, pp 10-12

28 PAR: Cd 995, pp 13-14

29 PAR: Cd 994, pp 135-139

30 PAR: GH, volume 838, W Hely-Hutchinson – A G Vansittart, 10 December 1900

31 PAR: Cd 995, pp 10-13

32 PAR: Cd 995, pp 14-15

The tasks required to be performed by the muleteers included feeding, watering and caring for the animals and getting rid of the manure and urine. It was not always easy to perform these duties. One such example was the working conditions on board the *Manchester City* which left New Orleans for Durban on 22 November 1899, carrying 2 080 mules. Feeding the overcrowded animals in the hull as well as the removal of their manure and urine, became so difficult that no muleteer could stay in the hull for longer than twenty minutes before coming up for fresh air. Some even found it impossible to enter the hull.<sup>33</sup>

Despite the difficult working conditions, unpleasant weather, travelling circumstances and alleged abuse of muleteers by officers and shipping staff, the demand for muleteers soon outstripped the supply. Muleteers therefore had to be brought from other parts of America to New Orleans to enlist.<sup>34</sup> This shortage created a chance for unlikely muleteers like the 17-year-old Max Gordon. Gordon ran away from his home in New Orleans to join the Durban bound *American*. Although he provided his correct name, he lied about his address. He gave his address as 14 Bauer Avenue, Cincinnati, instead of 1207 Baronne Street, New Orleans. In a moving plea, the boy's father, Reverend S. Gordon, wrote to Magistrate H.C. Koch in Durban, asking him to: "Kindly use your influence to have him safely returned to his home and thus save his mother and father untold anguish" Magistrate Koch's response seemed almost unsympathetic. He requested the Immigration Restriction Officer (IRO) to stop "... the lad's landing should he come within the provisions of the Act. The master of the *American* might be induced to take him back."<sup>35</sup>

In the decade prior to the Anglo-Boer War, the dumping of muleteers like Gordon at a port of call became a major problem.<sup>36</sup> To deal with the arrival of such unwanted immigrants, the Natal Government had passed the Immigration Restriction Act 1 of 1897, which prevented paupers, criminals, prostitutes and non-Britons from landing. The Act was to be administered by the Immigration Restriction Department (IRD), headed by the IRO, Harry Smith. It proved to be ineffective in preventing the illegal disembarkation of muleteers arriving in Durban from New Orleans.<sup>37</sup>

One of the main reasons for muleteers from New Orleans disembarking in Durban, both legally and illegally, lay in the newspaper advertisements which appeared on a daily basis calling for volunteers. In a single edition of the Durban newspaper, the *Natal Mercury*, Bethune's Mounted Infantry, Thornycroft's Mounted Infantry, Steinaecker's Horse, the First and Second Scottish, Johannesburg Mounted Rifles, South African Light Horse, Kitchener's Fighting Scouts, Damant's Horse, Pietersburg Light Horse, the Canadian Scouts, Driscoll's Scouts and the Railway Pioneer Regiment advertised for recruits. In addition to this, advertisements occasionally appeared in the *Natal Mercury* for farriers, saddlers, smiths, wheelwrights, hospital staff and sub-conductors for ox or mule wagons.<sup>38</sup>

These advertisements targeted both the thousands of refugees who had fled, especially from the Transvaal to Durban, and the arriving muleteers. In the case of the muleteers,

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33 PAR: Cd 994, p 13

34 PAR: Cd 995, pp 10-15

35 PAR: Immigration Restriction Department (hereafter IRD), volume 8, S Gordon – H C Koch, 14 April 1902

36 PRO: Colonial Office (hereafter CO), volume 179/208, Documents concerning Italian muleteers on British vessels, 21 September 1899

37 PAR: IRD, volume 4, H Smith – Colonel O'Neil, 27 March 1901

38 *Natal Mercury*, 13 May 1901 – 24 May 1902

Harry Smith explained the process followed to fill the positions advertised:

The Recruiting Officer has played an important part in the disposal of these men, the majority of whom it may be said that in him they met the very individual they had journeyed to South Africa to see. He has not kept them waiting either, but with a keenness on being early that would have done credit to a newspaper man, has commonly gone outside to do business from the pilot boat, and even in some instances travelled down the coast to board vessels bound for this port.<sup>39</sup>

By recruiting any muleteer willing to serve, the order that Americans were not allowed to be conscripted, was ignored. The strategy of boarding ships followed by the recruiting officers vindicated the viewpoint of J.Y.F. Blake that many of the muleteers had already been recruited in New Orleans while others were convinced or forced to join while on board ship.<sup>40</sup> The recruiting in New Orleans was possibly done by someone like Lieutenant Carmody, a Virginian, who had served in the British Army, was wounded in the Anglo-Boer War and had been sent to New Orleans to "recruit his health."<sup>41</sup>

The British military could, however, not enlist all the recruited muleteers. Some were rejected on medical or other grounds.<sup>42</sup> Since these men, who under normal circumstances would have been prevented from entering Natal, were unable to return to their ships, they were subsequently allowed to remain in Durban, to the horror of the Durban Refugee Relief Fund who had struggled to fulfil the needs of a city overcrowded with thousands of refugees.<sup>43</sup> Criticism by the Durban Refugee Relief Fund led to a stricter enforcement of the Immigration Restriction Act, and each captain of a vessel that docked in Durban was issued with a reminder that he was responsible for his men, and that they were to be taken back on board the ship should they have disembarked for whatever reason.<sup>44</sup>

Harry Smith soon discovered that the stricter application of the Act would not necessarily have the desired effect. After denying residence to the 72 muleteers that arrived from New Orleans on board the *Mount Royal*, he was to discover that the military had recruited twenty of these men, thereby undermining his authority. Smith initially took a philosophical view of events, namely that the military was the superior force in these matters and had the power to state: "we want men whom you would send away and if those men are willing to serve us we set your order aside."<sup>45</sup> Later he sought clarification from the Commandant of Durban, Colonel O'Neil, on his authority and the right of the recruitment officers to override this. As an example of the overriding of the Immigration Restriction Act by the recruitment officers, Smith cited the example of the *Mount Royal* where the military recruited men he had prohibited from landing. He therefore suggested that the recruiting officer should ascertain whether any restriction had been placed upon the landing of the muleteers

39 PAR: Natal Colonial Papers (hereafter NCP), volume 7/4/7, Report from the IRO on muleteers arriving during 1900, January 1901

40 J Y F Blake, *A West Pointer with the Boers* (Angel Press, Boston, 1903), p 21

41 NASA: Dr Leyds Argief, volume 512, Statement by P B Lynch, s a

42 PAR: Colonial Secretary's Office (hereafter CSO), volume 1655, Durban Refugee Relief Fund complaining about the landing of large number of muleteers without the means of subsistence, 2 August 1900

43 PAR: NCP, volume 7/4/7, Report from the IRO on muleteers arriving during 1900, January 1901

44 PAR: IRD, volume 3, Document regarding the landing of 50 muleteers from *Langton Grange*, 10 October 1900

45 PAR: Prime Minister (hereafter PM), volume 21, Enquiry if it is true that Australians are only allowed to land if they agree to enlist, 18 March 1901



before boarding the ship. Smith also suggested that muleteers, who were rejected on medical grounds, be returned to their ships by the military. O'Neil agreed with these suggestions and informed Smith that, in the case of the *Mount Royal*, this was adhered to. The captain of the ship, however, possibly due to a vested interest in the recruiting business, disregarded the regulations by bringing some of the muleteers to the drill-hall, saying that the restrictions had been removed and the men could be enlisted.<sup>46</sup>

Yet, when Smith and the IRD attempted to apply the Immigration Restriction Act more rigorously following the agreement with O'Neil, they came up against different obstacles. Seventy-two muleteers, mostly Americans, but also Germans, Dutch and British, arrived on board the *Politician* from New Orleans. Under the stricter application of the Act, the immigration authorities prohibited them from disembarking. When the American muleteers became aware of this, many pretended their nationality was Canadian. This complicated matters, as they were now British subjects who could be recruited. Smith, therefore, had to waive the regulations on the condition that the chief recruiting officer provided him with the names of the "Canadian" muleteers on board the *Politician* whom he wished to enlist. The recruiting officer not only provided such a list, but added a further 24 names of muleteers recruited from the *Glanton* that had also arrived from New Orleans. The majority of the recruited muleteers immediately went to the drill-hall, to be enlisted into the various corps.<sup>47</sup> Trying to plug the porous Durban port therefore proved impossible and the enlisting of muleteers, arriving from New Orleans, continued until 12 April 1902, when seven muleteers who had arrived on board the *Hortensius*, were enlisted.<sup>48</sup>

The struggle to curb the landing of muleteers from New Orleans, both for recruitment purposes and otherwise, drew the Natal Government into the fray. The British Consul in New Orleans, Arthur Vansittart, was asked to explain to the Governor of Natal, Sir Walter Hely-Hutchinson, how the recruiting of muleteers for British ships worked. According to Vansittart, muleteers, when signed on at the consulate, were given an explanation of the agreement. This was where the duty of the consulate staff ended.<sup>49</sup>

Vansittart's vague explanation did not help to solve the problem. Instead, the authorities in Durban soon began to realise what would happen once the military contracts of enlisted muleteers expired. An American, John McPetree, was enlisted from a ship arriving from New Orleans in Cape Town. After completing his six-month contract, he proceeded to Durban, via Port Elizabeth, to link up with some friends, who had in the meantime moved on. With £15 in his pocket and having fought in the War, he was considered a legal immigrant and given permission to disembark. McPetree soon ran into trouble with the police and, because he was not an illegal immigrant, the Natal Government, which did not want to go to the extremity of deporting him, allowed McPetree to stay. The only solution was to attempt to secure a passage home for McPetree with the aid of the United States Consul.<sup>50</sup>

46 PAR: IRD, volume 4, H Smith – Colonel O'Neil, 27 March 1901

47 PAR: IRD, volume 4, document concerning enlistment of muleteers from the *Politician*, 27 March 1901

48 J M Wassermann, "Cattlemen: involuntary volunteers for king and queen", in Wassermann and Kearney (eds), *A Warrior's Gateway*, p 104

49 PAR: GH, volume 838, W Hely-Hutchinson – A G Vansittart, 10 December 1900

50 PAR: IRD, volume 6, Documents asking that John McPetree be deported as an undesirable, 12 December 1901

### The lesser partner - the outcomes for Durban of the wartime interaction with New Orleans

In terms of the War itself, it is still uncertain how much Durban benefited from the hostilities. Historian Bill Guest correctly argues that the city entered an economic boom period from 1899 to 1902.<sup>51</sup> This was, however, not nearly on the scale it could have been, because Natal politicians at the time were mostly farmers, who favoured dealings with the military rather than with merchants and traders. Consequently, due to long delays in Durban, the businessmen, hoping to cash in on the war economy, preferred to use the ports of the Cape Colony and Delagoa Bay in Mozambique to ship their goods to the market which they served before war broke out, the Witwatersrand goldfields.<sup>52</sup>

In the light of the above, the question therefore needs to be posed - how much did Durban benefit from its wartime relationship with New Orleans? Large numbers of transports from New Orleans carrying horses, mules and rough muleteers, passed through the harbour, but none of these remained in the city for long. The port of Durban, therefore, merely served as a break-of-freight point charging demurrage. In terms of exports to New Orleans, Durban only supplied some food and lesser items to the returning ships. A case in point was the goods supplied to the *Milwaukee*<sup>53</sup>, which left Durban bound for New Orleans on 10 November 1900: 16 legs of ham, 200 lbs sugar, 30 lbs dried fish, 1 000 cigars, 21 lbs of hard soap, and some fruit and vegetables.<sup>54</sup> All in all, the economic benefit Durban derived from its wartime relationship with New Orleans was, economically spoken, almost insignificant. This was partially due to the fact that the British Army literally monopolised the port of Durban, and partially due to the inability of the local business community to identify an emerging market outside of the constraints of empire.

The most important outcome of Durban's wartime relationship with New Orleans was dealing with the muleteers arriving on board the transports that called at Durban, such as the *Milwaukee*.<sup>55</sup> The first time this ship was brought to the attention of the Durban authorities for the wrong reasons, was in November 1900, when the Austro-Hungarian Consul, E. Munder, was informed that 43 Austro-Hungarian muleteers and 14 stowaways were proceeding from Cape Town to Durban. The captain of the ship had promised the muleteers and stowaways a free return passage to Cape Town, should

51 B Guest and A Duminy, "The Anglo-Boer War and its economic aftermath" in B Guest and A Duminy (eds), *Natal and Zululand from earliest times to 1910*, (University of Natal Press, Pietermaritzburg, 1989), pp 349-353

52 J M Wassermann, "The Economic Impact of the Anglo-Boer War on Durban: The Struggle for a Fair Deal" in Wassermann and Kearney (eds), *A warrior's gateway*, pp 390-397

53 The *Milwaukee* had eight cargo compartments, nine crew compartments and could carry 7 323 gross tons and 4 784 nett tons. See NASA: Microfilm A 729, selected foreign inward cargo vessels at New Orleans, 2 October 1899 – 24 November 1902

54 NASA: Microfilm A 729, Selected foreign inward cargo of vessels at New Orleans, 2 October 1899 – 24 November 1902

55 Problems were also caused on board other ships on the New Orleans - Durban route, such as the *Montreal*. Muleteer Albert Roberts refused to work, faking various ailments, including diarrhoea. When his superiors realized this, he was incarcerated. On arrival in Durban, he was tried for subordination and sentenced to two months' imprisonment. In a separate incident, a group of British muleteers broke into a store-room, stealing "three gallons of port wine and claret and quantities of whisky and brandy". In the ensuing spree, the officers had to draw their pistols to restore order. The main culprit, Gleeson, was put in chains but later released by a mob of muleteers. Order was never again really restored. Magistrate Millar showed little sympathy with the ringleaders and sentenced them to six months in prison with hard labour. See *The Natal Mercury*, 14 March 1901

they be unable to find employment in Durban. As these Austro-Hungarian subjects could not claim a passage home from their government, and as there was little likelihood of them finding work in Durban, the Consul wanted the IRD to ensure that the captain of the *Milwaukee* kept his promise. To prevent the men from landing, Consul Munder wrote no less than four letters to the IRD concerning the matter. In the end he received a promise from Harry Smith that the matter would be dealt with.<sup>56</sup>

The second time the *Milwaukee* brought trouble to Durban from New Orleans was of an equally serious nature, namely mutiny. On arrival in Durban, 31 of the 73 muleteers on board were marched off to prison, on the charge that they had “neglected their duties so as to imperil the ship, and limbs and lives of officers, men, and animals, by combining in disobeying lawful commands of the captain.” The court case opened on 16 May 1901. From the outset, the IRO, Harry Smith, viewed the trial as illegal as the court had no authority to try the muleteers, as they had been brought ashore illegally. He argued that the men should therefore be returned to their ship and taken to a port where they could be legally landed. Furthermore, Smith maintained that if the muleteers were tried and sentenced to a term in prison, they would, on release, become dependent on charity in Durban, as the captain of the *Milwaukee*, out of fear, would not take them on board. The muleteers would also struggle to find employment on any other ship. Prosecutor J.S. Wylie and Magistrate James Stuart did not agree with Smith, as the muleteers had joined the *Milwaukee* on a contract for a round voyage, and the court was obliged, at the very least, to draw up a bond to enforce the terms that had been agreed upon. At this stage, the alleged mutineers demanded the protection of the American Consul, A.H. Rennie, and to speak to Eugene Renaud, their attorney.<sup>57</sup>

When the case reopened the following day, the captain of the *Milwaukee*, Horace E. Shaltis, and its agents, W. Dunn and Company, refused to bind them to a bond of thousands of pounds without the authority of the owners. Stuart, who was now concerned about what would happen to the men after the trial, wanted to fix a bond of £200 for their return passage. This was challenged by Wylie who regarded such a step as beyond the jurisdiction of Stuart. At this point of the proceedings, Consul Rennie interjected. He maintained that the men, as part of the crew of a British steamship, were legal immigrants and would therefore have to stand trial. This settled the matter and the trial started without the security of a return voyage for the men.<sup>58</sup>

The decision by Stuart angered Smith and when he failed to convince the magistrate that the accused were prohibited immigrants, he wrote to the Colonial Secretary, who in turn referred the matter to Attorney-General Henry Bale. For Bale the central issue was the conflict of laws and whether the captain of the *Milwaukee* could land the muleteers for trial under Section 220 of the Merchant Shipping Act, if they were prohibited immigrants within Act 1 of 1897 of the Colony of Natal. His interpretation was simple - Imperial Acts were paramount, and the captain was therefore correct in landing the men for trial. The fact that the men were landed illegally in the first place did not impress Bale, and he concluded it to be a matter of indifference how the muleteers came ashore.<sup>59</sup>

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56 PAR: IRD, volume 3, Documents on Austro-Hungarian horse attendants and stowaways arriving per *Milwaukee*, 5 November 1900

57 *Natal Mercury*, 17 May 1901

58 *Natal Mercury*, 18 May 1901

59 PAR: IRD, volume 4, Documents on the mutineers from the *Milwaukee*, 17 May 1901

The court case, which would eventually last fifteen days, continued. The 31 muleteers were charged with contravening subsections C and D of Sections 225 and 220 of the Merchant Shipping Act during the trip between New Orleans and Durban. From the evidence given by the crew and the 31 alleged mutineers, the following account emerged. On 2 April 1901, the muleteers complained about the salted meat, and with the way in which it was dished up. Captain Shaltis investigated the matter with the assistance of the medical officer, Doctor Joseph George Stubbs. Stubbs, after “a biological analysis” found nothing wrong with the meat, despite its smell. The captain’s solution to this complaint was to serve each muleteer rations separately and to cut the meat in smaller pieces to make it more palatable. This seemed to have pacified the muleteers.

On 20 April 1901, there was another dispute. This time the muleteers complained that the bread was sour. The captain agreed, and ordered out extra tea, biscuits, bread, butter and jam. This did not solve the problem. Instead, Lalor, the ringleader, demanded, according to the captain, a second course for breakfast, puddings and tarts for dinner, as well as jam and meat to be added to the tea rations. The captain refused, but he had the salted meat ration increased from twice to three times a week. Lalor was, however, still unhappy and demanded the “board of trade rations” until he and his companions saw the ration scale.

Further trouble erupted on 22 April 1901, once again over the salted meat. A group of muleteers complained that they could not eat the salt meat. Stubbs investigated and again he pronounced the meat good. On informing the muleteers of his verdict, they swore, cursed him and started to throw the meat overboard, passing comments such as: “We can’t eat your d\_\_\_\_\_ British meat; we are United States citizens.” By 16:00, Lieutenant Thompson of the remount section and the chief foreman reported a virtual mutiny. The more than thirty dissatisfied muleteers refused to work and intimidated others to join them by “dumping them” or knocking the “stuffing” out of them.

The captain called each muleteer in and the 31 who refused to work were imprisoned in the lower forecandle.<sup>60</sup> The other muleteers were sent to work, some under the protection of the crew. The law of the jungle soon reigned supreme in the forecandle. It was hot and stuffy and those who did not submit, like Ferdinand Pardon of New Orleans, were violently brought into line. When Pardon knocked on the hatch of the forecandle asking to be let out, he was dragged before a “kangaroo court” which meted out the following punishment: each of the 31 men was to strike him on the jaw as hard as he could with the fist, and “give him 40 licks” with a rope. Doctor Stubbs was later called upon to attend to Pardon and found him in a critical state, and only managed to revive him after almost an hour. His report stated that Pardon suffered from contusion of the neck, buttocks and sides and was unable to open his mouth more than one centimetre. It took four days before he could eat again, and eight days before he was pronounced fit. Prompted by his officers, Captain Shaltis docked at Ascension Island seeking protection. When the *Milwaukee* resumed its journey, it had a guard consisting of a sergeant, a corporal and eight marines on board.

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60 The mutineers were not the only prisoners on board the *Milwaukee*. On 31 March 1900, the *Milwaukee* sailed from Cape Town for St Helena with 514 Boer POW’s, including General Piet Cronje. The vessel arrived at St Helena on 14 April 1900, before departing for New Orleans. J.H. Schoeman, “St Helena is a tiny island”, *Military History Journal*, 3, 1, June 1974.

The quality of the salted meat and other food seemed to be the central issue of the mutiny. While the 31 alleged mutineers complained about the food, the 58 other crew members and the remainder of the muleteers were satisfied. What the alleged mutineers also agreed on was that “the strike on board the ship was not the result of a combined movement, but was individually resolved upon.” In other words, individual displeasure was expressed rather than it being a coordinated mutiny. With this evidence at his disposal, Stuart had to pass judgement.

Magistrate Stuart did not regard the assault on Pardon as endangering anybody’s “life or limb” and the magistrate acquitted the accused on the charge of assault. On the charge of disobeying orders and neglecting duty, Stuart found that there was some combined effort by the muleteers “to make a determined stand about their food, which in their opinion, was not good enough, or sufficient.” In this, however, no definite order was disobeyed. Instead, the men merely neglected their duty. Matters were exacerbated by the fact that the muleteers were not experienced seamen, but mere novices who did not know that they could have availed themselves of rulings in subsections 1 and 2 of section 199 of the Merchants Shipping Act of 1894. Considering the punishment the men had already endured during the journey, he found them guilty of not performing their duties. All the muleteers were sentenced to two months’ imprisonment, except the ringleaders Lalor and Farley, who received a sentence of three months.<sup>61</sup>

With the riotous muleteers of the *Milwaukee* sentenced, one issue remained unresolved: what would happen to them on their release from prison? The only means left to Harry Smith, whereby he could force the owners and agents of the *Milwaukee* to fulfil their contract to provide return passages for the imprisoned muleteers, was to prevent the ship from departing. When the captain applied for clearance to leave Durban, Smith turned down the application. To Smith, the matter was simple - under the Merchant Shipping Act, subsection 4 of section 233, the captain of a ship had the right to ask for the return of any of his imprisoned crew. This attempt by Smith to see the contract of the muleteers honoured, was thwarted by the military under Captain King-Hall, the Divisional Transport Officer - Durban, who wanted the *Milwaukee* to sail as soon as possible as it had part of the garrison of the island of Ascension on board. Since the captain had done no wrong, his vessel could not be detained, nor inconvenienced for the sake of a return passage for the mutineers. As a result, Smith was ordered to hand over the necessary documents to the ship’s agents so that the *Milwaukee* could leave. With the ship ready to depart, Smith played his last card. He instructed Sergeant Edwards of the Water Police to board the *Milwaukee* to see which men were not on board. The captain was able to account for only 42 muleteers, having left two men in prison for offences committed while in port.

With the departure of the *Milwaukee*, the main concern, namely how the owners of the ship were going to honour their contract of a return passage to the USA for the jailed muleteers, still remained. Consul A.H. Rennie asked for a guarantee of a return passage from the agents of the *Milwaukee*. Agents W. Dunn and Company refused, saying that the magistrate had in his ruling indicated that the *Milwaukee* could not be called upon to undertake such a responsibility. The bitterly disappointed Rennie approached the Natal Government, pleading with them to insist that the owners of the *Milwaukee* honour their agreement. In a thinly veiled threat, the consul made it clear that if no assistance was forthcoming, the Government of the USA would report the

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61 *Natal Mercury*, 18 May 1901, 21 May 1901, 23 May 1901, 30 May 1901, 31 May 1901

matter to the Imperial Government. Rennie also made it clear that if the Natal Government failed to act, and the men were stranded in Durban on their release from prison, the Government of the USA would not assume responsibility for their maintenance.

In an attempt to solve the issue which was now heading towards a diplomatic incident, the Natal Government telegraphed the IRD for comment. The response from Harry Smith was unceremonious: "I regret to inform you that no guarantee has been obtained either by myself or by the shipping master." On receiving Smith's message, the Natal Government informed Rennie that:

the circumstances were brought to the notice of the Agents of the vessel, (Messrs Dunn & Co ), who were asked to undertake that the men should be deported to the United States on the completion of their sentence: this they refused to do, and the Government is advised that it has no power to insist upon such an undertaking

A disgruntled Rennie was not satisfied by this lukewarm response, especially as contracts had been signed with the men that guaranteed them return passages. Rennie, who had himself worked for a shipping-company, believed that such contracts had to be adhered to. His own company had paid £500 in return passages for muleteers, brought from New Orleans to Durban earlier in 1901. As he could not see how the owners of the *Milwaukee* could escape their responsibility, Rennie reported the matter to the American Consul in Cape Town, requesting him to take the matter up with the American Government.

On 25 July 1901, the fears of Harry Smith were realized. Twenty-nine of the muleteers were released from prison with 20 shillings each in their pockets and with nowhere to go. Again the matter was referred to Smith who was asked for advice. Before he could make any recommendations, the various volunteer units enlisted most of the ex-muleteers. Lieutenant T. Hart, the recruiting officer for Kitchener's Fighting Scouts, recruited 18 muleteers, 16 of whom were Americans, while Captain G. Roseshine, the recruiting officer of Bethune's Mounted Infantry, recruited four, all American citizens.

The seven remaining ex-muleteers had no intention of joining the military and approached their lawyer, Eugene Renaud, who referred them to Harry Smith. The men by now were penniless, unable to find employment and a long way from New Orleans. To keep themselves from starvation, they worked for the Durban Corporation, breaking stone in exchange for free beds and meals. The only option open to Smith was to refer these men to Consul Rennie, who again unsuccessfully tried to persuade the agents of the *Milwaukee* to agree to a return passage for the men. Finally, they also signed up with the irregular forces.

After completing their contract of six months at the front, five of the muleteers returned to Durban, hoping to secure a passage home. Attempts to force the Natal Government to deport them as undesirable immigrants failed, and the military record of the men counted for little. The viewpoint of Magistrate Stuart was simple: "... ships are frequently coming to this port and surely with a little care, ... able-bodied men as they are can get away."<sup>62</sup>

The third time the *Milwaukee* created trouble in Durban, murder was involved. The ship steamed from New Orleans for Durban on 15 December 1901, with the usual ragtag bunch of muleteers aboard, including one Pietro Raymondi, an Italian who

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62 PAR: IRD, volume 4, Documents on the mutineers from the *Milwaukee*, 17 May 1901

spoke no English. Two days into the journey, Raymondi committed murder. Raymondi, who was feeding the horses, was ordered in English by John Long, assistant-muleteer-foreman, to attend to twenty horses. Raymondi indicated that he did not understand the language and continued with his work. This angered Long so much that he started punching Raymondi. The latter responded by hitting Long with a bucket in self-defence. Long then went away and returned with John Williams, the muleteer-foreman. Together the two men dragged Raymondi to the bridge, punching him continuously. At the bridge Raymondi was put in irons. Later that day he was removed to the engine-room, while continuously being punched. By now Raymondi had had enough, and in an effort to defend himself, he took a knife from his pocket, opened the blade with his teeth and stabbed Williams and Long. John Williams died on Christmas Day 1901 leaving a wife and children in New Orleans. Raymondi was handcuffed and incarcerated in a cabin. Despite this, he attempted to commit suicide twice during the remainder of the journey.<sup>63</sup> Once in Durban, Raymondi was brought to trial.

After a preliminary hearing by Magistrate J. Colenbrander, the case took a new turn. An ordinance, applicable in Natal, determined that all witnesses giving evidence in the Colony would have to appear in court in Durban. If such witnesses were unwilling or unable to enter into a bond, £500 in this case, they could be jailed. In the case against Raymondi, the medical officer, Chief Officer Owen Williams, a fireman and John Long, had to remain behind when the *Milwaukee* departed. This proved problematic for Owen Williams who would lose his billet if he stayed. The muleteers brought out by the *Milwaukee* were informed that they were free to leave and were taken on board by the *Montreal*, but not before five were recruited by the military.<sup>64</sup>

The fact that several of the crew had to remain behind in Durban for the trial of Raymondi, which was scheduled only to start on 15 March 1902, created problems, and Governor H.E. McCallum was petitioned to intervene. McCallum was very sympathetic, especially to the plight of Owen Williams, and suggested that his evidence be taken in commission and that he be allowed to accompany the *Milwaukee* on its voyage. Attorney-General Henry Bale would not agree to this and made it clear that the witnesses were required to be “kept” in Durban as their evidence could not be taken in commission.<sup>65</sup> What eventually happened to Pietro Raymondi remains a mystery as no report or record could be found of the trial.

The principal legacy of Durban’s wartime relationship with New Orleans was costly, not only in terms of finances but also in terms of time, administration and manpower, dealing with muleteers who broke the law. This was much to carry for a small port city in a colony that was already heavily burdened by the financial costs incurred by the invasion of its northern districts by the Boer forces.

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63 *Natal Mercury*, 27 January 1902, 28 January 1902, 30 January 1902

64 *Natal Mercury*, 28 January 1902; PAR: IRD, volume 7, Documents concerning the case of murder on the *Milwaukee*, 27 January 1902

65 PAR: PM, volume 26, Documents on the detention of the chief officer of the *Milwaukee*, 27 January 1902

### The ups and downs of horse-trading - the impact of the wartime trade with Durban on New Orleans

In contrast, economically, New Orleans benefited much more from its wartime trade links with Durban. Ships like the *Anglo-Australian*, *Angola*, *Kelvin Grove*, *India*, *European*, *Politician*, *South America*, *Monterrey*<sup>66</sup> and many others, after being equipped with fittings shipped, apart from tens of thousands of horses and mules, large quantities of hay, bran, oats and halters from New Orleans. The *Mount Royal*, for example, on 29 January 1901, shipped 240 tons of hay, 100 tons of bran and 6 250 bushels of oats to the value of \$7 595, while the *Milwaukee* on 27 March 1901 shipped 240 tons of hay, 90 tons of bran, 5 600 bushels of hay and 1 000 halters to the value of \$8 264.<sup>67</sup> When considering that an estimated 520 transporters passed through New Orleans during the War, the value of fodder and halters taken on board amounts to roughly \$4 000 000. In addition, the British Army spent between \$15 000 000 and \$20 000 000 on horses and mules exported via New Orleans. These expenses boosted not only the economy of the city, but also that of the south, southwestern and central USA. The hidden economy, such as the jobs that were created and the hiring of facilities in the city, like the St Charles Hotel which acted as offices, is excluded from this figure.

While New Orleans had a far better economic deal than Durban, it had to deal with the political fallout of the lucrative trade in horses and mules. Thanks to the evolution of the wire service, the Anglo-Boer War became the first war to be reported on in a global manner in newspapers. Ordinary citizens in the USA could, as a result, form their own opinions of events taking place in South Africa. In New Orleans, newspapers such as the *New Orleans Times* and the *New Orleans Picayune* covered the War extensively, and served to shape views on the conflict.<sup>68</sup>

As a result, when early in the War, the Boers and their supporters realized that horses and mules were shipped via New Orleans to South Africa, they protested to the American authorities, through Montagu White the representative of the Transvaal in the USA. Boer sympathisers even threatened to use violence to end the exportation of animals from New Orleans. Others viewed the trade taking place via New Orleans in the same serious light. On 19 February 1901, the House of Representatives of the American Congress adopted a resolution by William Sulzer of New York to investigate the exportation of horses and mules from New Orleans. The investigation had to determine whether the exportation of horses and mules constituted a violation of the Treaty of Washington of 8 May 1871 between the USA and Britain, and specifically Section 2 Article IV which stated that:

A neutral government is bound not to permit or suffer belligerent to make use of its ports or waters as the base of naval operations against the other or for the purpose of renewal or augmentation of military supplies or arms or the recruitment of men<sup>69</sup>

The stipulations of the Treaty of Washington became one of the focal points of the numerous very active and vocal pro-Boer organizations that existed across the USA. These organizations and pressure groups used the trade via New Orleans, because of

- 66 London Times Shipping Reports -1899-1902 - South African War Virtual Library at <http://www.bowlerhat.co.au>
- 67 NASA: Microfilm A 729, Selected foreign inward cargo of vessels at New Orleans, 2 October 1899 – 24 November 1902
- 68 Personal information: Marshall Schott, University of Houston, San Antonio, Texas, 18 April 2003
- 69 Changuion, *Uncle Sam, Oom Paul en John Bull*, pp 191-192



its tangible links with the War, as the driving force behind their arguments. Peter van Vlissingen, on the behalf of the Chicago Branch of the American Transvaal League, for example, petitioned President Theodor Roosevelt on several occasions, pointing out to him that they saw the exportation of horses and mules as a violation of the Treaty of Washington.<sup>70</sup> Likewise, a group called the Boer Legislative Committee, regarded the British Military Base at New Orleans as a violation of the Treaty of Washington.<sup>71</sup>

The exportation of horses and mules via New Orleans was legally challenged in early April 1901. Samuel H. Pearson, a citizen of the Transvaal, with the assistance of Edward van Ness of New York, filed suit against the captains of the *Anglo-Australian* and the *Montezuma*. Pearson argued that he had suffered personal loss because of the exports which violated the neutrality of the American Constitution, and Article 6 of the Treaty of Washington. He therefore wanted the exportation of horses and mules from New Orleans halted.<sup>72</sup> This did not happen, as the court ruled in favour of the defendants, the Elder, Dempster and Company shipping-line, by declaring "...that the enforcement of treaty obligations is a function of the Executive Branch of the Government with which courts of equity have nothing to do." To the anger of the pro-Boer lobby, the "unlawful traffic" was allowed to continue.<sup>73</sup>

When a second Boer deputation arrived in the USA on 24 February 1902, they again requested that the USA should stop assisting the British war effort by allowing horses to be shipped via New Orleans. According to Louis Changuion, the idea behind the protests against the shipping of horses out of New Orleans was that if it could be proven that American neutrality was being violated, they would have been forced to end the shipping of animals. This in turn could have been the starting-point for arbitration.<sup>74</sup>

The American Secretary of State, John Hay, rejected the plea by the Boers after an informal meeting with the deputation and pointed out that it was the policy of the USA that both sides could purchase horses and mules from the country. A belligerent Hay in fact felt very strongly about the right to free trade and is quoted by Changuion as having said:

The administration has observed the laws of neutrality strictly I do not know whether Englishmen have bought horses in this country or not If they did, they had a perfect right so to do If the President had attempted to interfere arbitrarily with this traffic of our people, he would have deserved impeachment The right of trading in all munitions of war, is absolutely incontestable We are perfectly free to sell to both belligerents all they are able to pay for<sup>75</sup>

To Hay, it was a question of the USA not forsaking its old ally Britain for two small republics, even though Britain was probably operating outside of the Treaty of Washington.

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70 NASA: Dr Leyds Argief, volume 514, Petition by Chicago Branch of the American Transvaal League to President T Roosevelt, 1901, P van Vlissingen – President T Roosevelt, 18 April 1902

71 NASA: Microfilm A 730, records of the Department of Justice relating to the Anglo-Boer War: petition and brief by C S Keyser and E F Carson, 13 June 1902

72 NASA: Microfilm A 73, records of the Department of Justice relating to the Anglo-Boer War: D J File 18594/99, 1899-1902 Boer War

73 NASA: Dr Leyds Argief, volume 514, Petition by Chicago Branch of the American Transvaal League to President T Roosevelt, 1901

74 Changuion, *Uncle Sam, Oom Paul en John Bull*, p 193

75 Changuion, *Uncle Sam, Oom Paul en John Bull*, p 192

The meeting with Hay was followed by a meeting between the deputation and President Roosevelt. The Boers found this meeting more fruitful and it was decided that the secretary of the Boer deputation, J.M. de Bruin, should visit New Orleans to investigate the trade in horses and mules taking place, and then report to Roosevelt. Prior to their return to Europe, the deputation handed over the report compiled by De Bruin. The report had the desired effect for the Boers, and Roosevelt requested a full report from the State Department on the exportation of horses via New Orleans. To compile the said report, John Hay wrote to W.W. Heard, the Governor of Louisiana, for his opinion and requested Lieutenant-Colonel E.H. Crowder, the advocate for the American Army, to investigate matters at the port.<sup>76</sup>

Heard's response was not what Hay had anticipated. He believed the shipping of equine animals from New Orleans constituted a violation of the neutrality laws of the USA. The report of Attorney John Clegg, a very active pro-Boer, who had previously acted on behalf of R.J. Tourras and C.J. Cole against their employees, the British Military at New Orleans, influenced Heard in his verdict. According to Clegg, it

... established beyond question the existence of a British Army Post at this City, in this State; and that there is maintained a basis of military operations and this port is made the basis for the purpose of the renewal and augmentation of military supplies and the recruitment of men The conduct of these operations by the British Officers is open, undisguised and unequivocal<sup>77</sup>

Clegg pleaded with Governor Heard in the "interest of public order" and "for love of humanity" to call the attention of the federal authorities to "the war-like operations on Louisiana soil." A flour, grain and hay trader of New Orleans, H.T. Lawler, in a letter to Heard, expressed equally strong sentiments. He found it remarkable that the British could use the Port of New Orleans unlawfully as a military post. What especially irked him, with reference to the war of 1812 between Britain and the USA, was that the British were allowed to use

... the great battle ground where that Grand Democrat Gen'l Jackson thrashed Packinham, and his army of free booters; and by so doing secured to this Republic freedom from just such treatment as the British Government is now meeting out to the Boers of South Africa<sup>78</sup>

Governor Heard was also troubled by the arrival of General Sir Richard Campbell Stewart, and aides of the British Army, who were on an inspection tour of the facilities at Chalmette.<sup>79</sup>

Feeling that the tide had turned in their favour, the pro-Boers started to organize with renewed vigour and even planned on inviting the exiled President Paul Kruger of the Transvaal to the USA. Optimism also mounted that Roosevelt would intervene in the War, while pro-Boers, like William Sulzer, revived the issue of the exportation of

76 Changuion, *Uncle Sam, Oom Paul en John Bull*, pp 187-193

77 NASA: Dr Leyds Argief, volume 513, J Clegg – Governor W W Heard, 23 March 1902

78 NASA: Dr Leyds Argief, volume 513, H T Lawler – Governor W W Heard, 10 March 1902  
It is possible that Lawler's views, as a hay trader, were tainted by the fact that he was not in on the lucrative trade of supplying the ships carrying mules and horses. At least one court case, No 62770 Civil District Court Parish of New Orleans between W B Leonard and Sparks Brothers and McGee, dealt with the right to supply fodder. See NASA: Dr Leyds Argief: volume 512, documents regarding the case between Leonard and Sparks Brothers and McGee, 30 December 1899

79 NASA: Microfilm A 730, records of the Department of Justice relating to the Anglo-Boer War: Attorney-General P C Knox – Secretary of State John Hay, 4 April 1902; NASA: Dr Leyds Argief, volume 512, Statement by P B Lynch, s a

animals via New Orleans in the House of Representatives. As a result John Hay was called upon to reveal all information regarding the matter. Another pro-Boer, Bourke Cockran, pointed out that the Hague Convention of 1899 had declared horses as contraband of war. He therefore posed the question:

Can the United States, under this rule, permit the further maintenance of a British military supply on American soil from which thousands of horses are being shipped to South Africa?<sup>80</sup>

In the American Congress, Henry Burke of Pennsylvania, submitted a resolution that horses and mules be declared contraband. The debates stemming from this resolution resulted in the Foreign Affairs Committee of the House of Representatives deciding to grant the Boer representatives an audience. Despite their initial scepticism, for it took two years to secure such a meeting, Montagu White and his supporters, backed by petitions signed by 200 000 Americans, jumped at the opportunity.<sup>81</sup> The large number of petitioners provided a clear indication of the strong pro-Boer sentiments among ordinary American citizens.

In the meantime, the threat against the British establishment at New Orleans intensified. Feeling that nothing much had come from the Boer protests to the American Government, Samuel H. Pearson who had previously attempted to stop the exportation in a legal manner and who had built up a large pro-Boer following in New Orleans, wrote to Roosevelt, threatening to use violence to end the shipping of equine animals which he saw as an act of war on American soil. Pearson asked:

Will I be permitted to strike these with the force I might assemble here? I pray your excellency to either put an end to this state of affairs, or permit me to strike here one blow With every respect for the authority of the United States Government, may I not consider your silence or inaction the equivalent of consent for me to stop the further violation of the neutrality laws of this port, or to carry on war here for the burghers?<sup>82</sup>

Attorney-General Knox did not take the threat of violence by Pearson seriously and maintained that the object was merely “to bring forcibly to the attention of the Government that he considers the proceedings of the British equivalent to ‘carrying on war’ upon our territory.”<sup>83</sup>

Consul Arthur Vansittart took the threats of violence more seriously. He regularly complained to Lord Pauncefote, British Ambassador to the USA, that they were threatened and that the citizens of New Orleans were unfriendly towards them. These threats intensified after the visit of J.M. de Bruin and Pauncefote complained to Secretary of State John Hay that “the Irish ‘physical force’ party are planning the destruction of the next shipment at New Orleans of horses and mules.”<sup>84</sup> The anti-British sentiment in New Orleans was not restricted to the Irish, but took on a wider ethnic dimension. The small but influential German business community, as well as the Cajuns, or inhabitants of French origin, were equally hostile.<sup>85</sup>

The British Government, as a result, immediately asked the Government of the USA

80 Changuion, *Uncle Sam, Oom Paul en John Bull*, pp 192-194

81 J C G Kemp, *Vir Vryheid en Reg*, (Nasionale Pers, Kaapstad, 1941), p 339

82 Changuion, *Uncle Sam, Oom Paul en John Bull*, pp 190-191

83 NASA: Microfilm A 730, records of the Department of Justice relating to the Anglo-Boer War: Attorney-General P C Knox – Secretary of State John Hay, 4 April 1902

84 Changuion, *Uncle Sam, Oom Paul en John Bull*, p 190; This day in History, p 9, at <http://daybyday.dk.com/C20UK/TODAYINHISTORY/07-Feb.htm>

85 Personal information: Marshall Schott, University of Houston, San Antonio, Texas, 17 April 2003

to protect the ships that were loading horses. Governor Heard was requested to take special precautions to prevent injury or assault upon the British officers and transports by either disgruntled muleteers and/or Boer sympathizers. Arthur Vansittart personally appealed to the New Orleans Chief of Police for protection, claiming that suspicious characters, whom he believed Boers, were following him.<sup>86</sup> Captain R.H. Marsham likewise complained that he was being stalked, and even the locals employed by the British were suspected of being disloyal.<sup>87</sup>

By now the pressure was mounting on both the USA and British Governments and matters came to a head when Montagu White and his delegation presented the Boer case to the Foreign Affairs Committee of the House of Representatives. While they were presenting their case, Britain on 18 May 1902 announced that it had ceased the purchase of horses and mules in the USA.<sup>88</sup> This major reversal not only happened because peace negotiations between Britain and the Boer Republics were taking place at the time, but also because of the work of the pro-Boer pressure groups. The Boer deputation was still presenting its case when the news was received that peace was signed on 31 May 1902. This meant that the report of Crowder, which was made public on 5 June 1902, and the fact that it was not favourable to the Boers, was of little consequence.<sup>89</sup>

### Concluding comments

The signing of peace also meant the end of the wartime relationship between Durban, for the most the importer, and New Orleans, the exporter. This relationship greatly favoured New Orleans, which benefited economically due to the exportation of large numbers of horses, mules and related merchandise. The threat of violence, legal action and the unhappiness of pro-Boer Americans, both from New Orleans and other parts of America, was but a small price to pay for regional economic gain. On a larger, global scale the Anglo-Boer War created some uncertainties in the markets, and combined with unrest in China and the Philippines, to some measure stalled economic recovery and growth in the USA.<sup>90</sup>

Durban, on the other hand, gained very little economic prosperity and mostly served as a transit point for horses, mules and muleteers bound for the front. At the same time Durban had to deal with the arrival of unwanted characters who only brought trouble to the city. The major beneficiary of the relationship between the two port cities was the British Empire, a mature entity with global reach. From their base in New Orleans, with the blessing of the Government of the USA and in contravention of the Treaty of Washington, tens of thousands of horses and mules were forwarded to the warzone.<sup>91</sup> In doing so the mobility of the British Army was greatly enhanced, which in turn, assisted them in ultimately achieving victory. At the same time, New Orleans and the transporters were fertile grounds for recruiting volunteers for the British Army to fight against the Boer Republics.

86 *New York Times*, 4 April 1902

87 PAR: Cd 994, p 137

88 Changuion, *Uncle Sam, Oom Paul en John Bull*, p 195

89 E H Crowder, *Alleged Supply Camp in the State of Louisiana*. Report to the USA House of Representatives Document No 649 57th Congress 1st session, 1902

90 Personal information: Marshall Schott, University of Houston, San Antonio, Texas, 17 April 2003

91 Amery (ed), *Times History of the War*, p 418

### **Abstract**

The Anglo-Boer War resulted in a huge increase in the volume of shipping between Durban and New Orleans. This article examines the various relationships which existed between the two cities, as well as the impact of the war on each. The purchasing of horses and mules in the USA as well as the shipping of these animals and their handlers via New Orleans to Durban is discussed. Furthermore it analyses the impact of the arrival of mules, horses and specifically muleteers in Durban. The role and policy of the government of the USA in the relationship between the two cities, as well as the resistance in especially New Orleans against this policy, is also highlighted.

### **Opsomming**

#### **'n Verhaal van Twee Hawestede: Die Verhouding tussen Durban en New Orleans tydens die Anglo-Boereoorlog**

Die Anglo-Boereoorlog het 'n reuse toename in skeepsverkeer tussen Durban en New Orleans tot gevolg gehad. In die artikel word die vele vlakke van die oorlogsverhouding tussen die twee hawestede, asook die impak van die Oorlog op elk ondersoek. Daar word beskryf hoe perde en muile in die VSA aangekoop is en tesame met hulle hanteerders, via New Orleans na Durban verskeep is. Verder word daar gelet op die impak van die aankoms van die perde, muile en veral die hanteerders op Durban. Die ekonomiese en politieke impak van die oorlog op New Orleans word verder ontleed. Die rol en beleid van die VSA-regering in die verhouding tussen die twee stede, asook die verset teen die beleid, in veral New Orleans, kom ook onder die soeklig.

### **Key Words**

Durban, New Orleans, Anglo-Boer War, horses, mules, muleteers, shipping, USA.