

# ARGENTINE BOERS RETURN

JUN 21 1937

## UNEXPECTED ARRIVAL IN CAPE TOWN

## REST OF THE EXILES TO FOLLOW

THIRTY-THREE years ago 600 Boers went into voluntary exile in the Argentine; on Saturday 32 of them returned to Cape Town in the Arabia Maru, wearied with the desperate struggle for existence and filled with an urgent desire to live once again in their own country.

Conditions of life in Patagonia and the absolute lack of prospects for the children were the main reasons for the sudden return. The rest of the 900 still living in exile will probably return in small parties during the course of the next two years.

ELEVEN of the Boers are staying in Cape Town for a short while and then going to farms further up-country. Two families sailed yesterday for East London and will farm in the North-Eastern Districts, while another family is going to Durban and then to a farm in Griqualand East, near Umtata.

Those who arrived on Saturday have paid their own passages and have a certain amount of money with them. Those left behind, however, are mainly too poor to do this, and the Cape Times understands that there is a movement afoot to raise funds to bring them back.

Interviewed by a representative of the Cape Times yesterday, Mr. Francois D. Conradie, a member of the returned party, said that he had no doubt that the Boers would make good on farms in South Africa.

### HOW THEY TREKKED

Discontent with conditions in South Africa was rife among many Boers after the South African War. A movement was started to build a new country on the old traditions. In 1903, after the peace of Vereeniging, Mr. C. E. Visser obtained a concession from the Argentine Government for a block of farms there.

The Argentine Government at that time was in need of immigrants and welcomed the idea of settling South African farmers in Patagonia. In 1903, 86 Boers settled on Visser's farms. Later Louis Bosman, of Bloemfontein, also obtained concessions, and Mr. M. M. Venter organised a trek of 340 people. Subsequently several more families migrated, until, towards the latter part of 1907, the settlement consisted of some 600 people.

Aires. It has a seating capacity of 4,000, which is greater than that of any cinema in the world outside New York. The building includes billiards saloons, bowling alleys and

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Government aid consisted only of an initial gift of 600 morgen and the option of buying a further 1,500. After that the farmers were left to make their own way. Even the initial gift had restrictions in that the land had to be fenced, trees planted, and a decent house built. Many of the farmers lived in tents during the first few years.

Chubut is the name of the district inhabited by the farmers. It is over a thousand miles below Cape Town and consequently very much colder.

"The main force driving us to South Africa," said Mr. Conradie, "is

our concern for the future of our children. There are no schools whatsoever, except one at Comodoro Rivadavia, a long distance away. There, education is free up to Grade Six, but above that it is very expensive. Boarding facilities are not provided.

Another reason for our return is that our South African tradition, nationalism, and ideals are being sacrificed. The religious atmosphere is certainly not in accordance with our desires. Sundays are days for elections, sports, races, politics, and amusements.

"Another very important reason is the condition of farming. Sheep farming is the main occupation and nothing could be said against the conditions, were it not for the periodical blizzards and snowstorms. Every few years these terrible storms occur, and anything from 40 to 70 per cent. of the stock is destroyed.

"One of my friends lost more than 700 sheep last year, and he was one of the more fortunate ones. Progress is almost stationary and there is no future for the children.

"I myself have brought over with me five of my grandchildren and another child of a friend of mine. I want to give them a fair chance for a successful future."

Mr. and Mrs. Biggs, who, with their two sons, arrived in the party, confirmed Mr. Conradie's story. Mr. Biggs described his first struggles, building roads and planting trees living in a tent. He stated that the people who arrived first received even the 600 morgen.

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