

which soldiers might gain, such as comradeship, the easy availability of recreation sex and periods of high life during a successful campaign.

Nor does Tallett ignore war's impact on society outside the armies. He queries the extent of militarization of society in general during this period of incessant and escalating warfare, delves into how easy it was for soldiers to be assimilated back into civilian society, and describes the destitution and life of crime that was the fate of those who were not. He shows how the effects of war differed from one region of Europe to another depending on whether it lay in a 'military corridor' or frontier zone or not; and weighs up the differing consequences to peasants, besieged townsfolk, international financiers or warrior nobility, and notes the perceived threats to social order of the dislocations consequent on war.

Tallett also investigates the growing burden to the state of the escalating size and costs of armies, the implications for the development of state institutions and bureaucracies, and the need for innovative financial expedients such as sale of offices, increased taxation and the raising of state loans. Finally, he looks at how attitudes towards war were affected by the printing press, propaganda and growing ethical debate, and shows how war was moving into arena of critical public debate.

Tallett has not extended his investigation to cover naval affairs as a discrete topic except where they affected the other matters he discusses. This can be excused, since they would require a full study in its own right. He has confined his coverage to western and central Europe and excludes Scandinavia and eastern Europe on the grounds that he lacks the necessary language skills and - more problematically - that trends in these outlying parts were in any case significantly different from those at the European core. Perhaps other military historians will yet prove him wrong.

What Tallett does demonstrate most convincingly is that war was a central, unavoidable element of life in Early-Modern Europe, and that its study in the full social, economic, political and ideological context is an ideal way of coming to grasp the basic dynamics on an entire era.

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## **THE BOER WAR- ARMY NATION AND EMPIRE**

Peter Dennis and Jeffrey Grey (eds.)

Army History Unit, Department of Defence, Canberra

2000

235 pp

Price Unknown

As could be expected, the proliferation of publications on the Anglo-Boer, 1899-1902, in the centenary period continues unabated. The advantage of the providence of hindsight after a hundred years is that recently the experiences of a wide variety of people that participated in the conflict are being recorded. This is apart from the two main antagonists, the British and the Boers. In the case of the

South African experience the role of black people is now gaining its rightful place. On the British side, this publication contributes towards understanding of how people in other parts of the empire, like Australia and Canada experienced this event. After all, the British Empire was never homogeneous and even amongst its English speaking subjects, a wide variety of cultures existed.

From the Dominions, Australia, Canada and New Zealand, books on the event were published as early as 1900. W.T. Reay's *Australians in war: with the Australian Regiment from Melbourne to Bloemfontein*, as well as F. Wilkinson's *Australia at the front: a colonial view of the Boer War* (1901) were the first publications. In Canada T.G. Marquis wrote *Canada's Sons on Kopje and Veldt* (1900). Shortly after this, S.E. Hawdon wrote a book *New Zealanders and the Boer War, 1899-1902* (1904).

A decade later, in 1911, an official Australian history was published (P.L. Murray: *Official Records of the Australian Military Contingents to the War in South Africa*). In New Zealand D.O.W. Hall wrote *The New Zealanders in South Africa, 1899-1902* in 1949. With the centenary approaching the New Zealanders took the lead in Richard Stowers's *Kiwi versus Boer: The First New Zealand Mounted Rifles in the Anglo-Boer War, 1899-1902*, published in 1992. In 1993 Carman Miller's *Painting the Map Red. Canada and the South African War* provided a comprehensive account of the Canadian experience in the war. Seven years later this was followed by J. Crawford and E. Ellis in *To Fight for Empire: An Illustrated History of New Zealand and the South African War, 1899-1902*. Presently, Craig Wilcox is compiling the Australian centenary official history of the war.<sup>1</sup>

The annual Chief of the Australian Army War Memorial Military History conference of 1999 led to the publication of *The Boer War: Army, Nation and Empire*. This book is mainly concerned with the Australian experience of the war and consists of the papers presented at the conference. This is significant, as Australia became a federation during the war, making it their first collective encounter as a nation. Therefore, rightfully, topics range from purely military matters, political issues, and role of the media and even Australian poetry that was created because of their participation in the war. The aim of the editors were to present the wide variety of influences that had an impact on Australian society because of the war.

The first paper by Craig Wilcox, *Looking Back on the South African War*, interprets the events from the perspective of Australians as loyal subjects of the empire. He scrutinises the attitude that Australians, as British subjects, had a duty to participate in the war, especially the motives of cultural ties and economic advantages, perceived to be gained by fighting for British interests. Topics, such as Australian attitudes with regards to aspects like Anglicisation of the former republics, atrocities, racism towards black South Africans and their contribution to the society created in South Africa after the war, are analysed. This mirrors the type of Australian society that existed at the beginning of the twentieth century.

The one weakness in this regard is that it does not compare the attitude of the Australians towards the Aborigines and black South Africans. Did they transplant their own experience to South Africa, were their attitudes typical of that of white people in the imperial age or did events in the war zone itself determine their actions? This topic needs to be examined further. Historians accentuate the poor relationships

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<sup>1</sup> I am grateful to Lt Col I.J. van der Waag for the bibliographical information in these two paragraphs.

between the Boers and the blacks and coloured populations of South Africa. However, very little is written on the attitudes of imperial troops and their actions during the war. In this regard, Wilcox took an important step, but one on which more should be elaborated.

The next aspect concerns the relationship of Australian soldiers with the British military system and the cultural conflict between them. He also shatters the myth of Australians as natural horsemen and people of the countryside that could easily match the Boers in the fighting on the open plains of South Africa. The main reason for this being that most of them came from the urban areas. Last, but not least in this regard, the actions of people like Breaker Morant and his men are analysed. The reasons for their behaviour and the impact this had in Australia, especially as it coincided with this country's new founded nationhood.

The next paper is by Bill Nasson, titled *South Africa's Post Boer, Boer War*. This paper does not really fit in with the rest of the book, which is primarily concerned, with the experience of the war as seen from the Dominions, who participated under their own identities. In this context, it would have been more appropriate if the discussion had been on the experience of English South Africans, rather than that of the Boers/Afrikaners. The text, as presented, provides an overview of the role that the war played as a tool of Afrikaner nationalism in the twentieth century. According to the author, this is since 1994, being replaced by a predominately black version of the event.

In the explanation of this however, some confusion reigns. On page 15 he describes the two approaches after the war as *Afrikaner colonial nationalism vs unreconciled Afrikaner republicanism*. The logical assumption is that the first named represents the Afrikaners who saw their future as part of the empire, although also loyal to South Africa. This is more or less the same as the type of nationalism encountered in the Dominions such as Australia and Canada and represented by leaders such as Louis Botha and Jan Smuts. The attitudes of the English white South African community would also be reminiscent of this. The second group represents those Afrikaners who wanted a republic and whose aspirations centred round the breaking of ties with the empire. What is however confusing is the second sentence. "Britain had prevailed in its imperialist war to crush the white colonial nationalism of independent Boer republican communities..." The aspirations of republicanism before and after the war cannot be colonial nationalism at the same time, as these Afrikaners wanted a own republic in a country they regarded as their own, without political subservience to any European power.

This approach introduces a bias, which also manifests later in the text. Nasson's explanation of Afrikaners as a monolithic thinking entity is an oversimplification of reality. The following serves as an example: " Indeed, even when well past its zenith as a generalised mobilising cult of commemoration, the embers of 1902 could be stoked by moments of crisis, most especially by the combustible terminal turn of apartheid by the 1990s. In a striking 1993 observation, the quixotic (sic!) Afrikaner historian, Floors van Jaarsveld, concluded that 'Afrikanerdom has suffered two great defeats in its history: the first at the beginning of the twentieth century in the war with Britain...' " "... and the second at the end of the twentieth century- a political defeat at the hands of Africa.' "

Nasson makes the mistake of condemning one of the most respected historians in South Africa as an unthinking ultra rightwing ideologue. This creates the

impression that Nasson has an axe to grind with Afrikaners who do not conform to his line of thinking. Van Jaarsveld simply described the trauma of Afrikaners's loss of power over their destiny in South Africa in 1994. He never identified with radical political thinking of the type as depicted by Nasson further in the text. It is just unfortunate that one of South Africa's most famous historians has since past away and cannot defend himself in this regard.

Another example is that according to Nasson, even Carl Niehaus, as a member of the ANC is guilty of this. His argument is based on a statement of Niehaus, when he called upon the British Queen to lay not only wreaths at graves of the World Wars in South Africa, but also that of the concentration camps of the Anglo-Boer war. It is inconceivable that Niehaus would in any way identify with Afrikaner nationalism. If Nasson wants to make accusations against right wingers of abusing the memory of the war for their own purposes, he must make sure that identified individuals fit into that category.

The paper by Ian Beckett, *The South African War and the Late Victorian Army*, is more appropriate to the central theme of the book. The manifestation of this military system had a direct impact on the experience of the contingents of the different Dominions. The same is true of the paper by Ian van der Waag on the Boer military system, as this was the system against which the Australians and Canadians had to fight. However, his statement on page 51 that the Boers enjoyed a supply of horses almost to the end of the war is not completely true. In most of the commandos one of the biggest problems was the scarcity of enough horses during the guerrilla phase.

*The Boer War as a Media War*, by Stephen Badsey analyses the role of the media predominately from a British perspective. This would have had an impact on the Dominions, but the role of the media in countries like Canada and Australia, would have made it more relevant. However, the paper provides information of an aspects of the war often overlooked, yet had a crucial impact. Carman Miller's paper on the relationship between Canadian and British soldiers is an extension of his book on Canada's experience in the war. This provides a more complete picture of the experiences of the Dominions, albeit a deviation from the central theme of the book.

The next two essays deal with tactical aspects of the war with specific reference to the use of horses. This is significant, as this was the last war in history in which the horse played a dominant role. Thus, from a military point of view, this discussion makes an important contribution to the comprehension of adaptations that all imperial forces had to make in the middle of a war against a wily opponent.

Stephen Clarke delivered a paper on the type of recruiting system used in Australia during the conflict. He examines the myths surrounding spontaneity and coercion in terms of recruiting, thus providing an interesting approach on how the war influenced Australian society. The next two papers deal with the personal experiences of Australian soldiers as depicted in letters and poetry. This is also an important contribution in providing a more complete understanding of how the war influenced Australian society.

In the following paper, D.M. Horner analyses the impact of the war on Australian commanders during the First World War. He describes how the influence manifested on the officers who participated in both wars, but also the actions of those officers who did not participate in the campaigns in South Africa. Also provided are

the lessons learnt that anyone could, and did use during the next war. This paper will be of special value to historians researching the guerrilla phase of the Anglo-Boer War.

Oliver's paper on the role of people in Australia opposed to the war is interesting. Previously it was known that there was opposition to the war, but here the nature of and the influence of this phenomenon is analysed. One gets to know the personalities, their motives and the impact that they had on Australian society. Another important aspect is the raising of funds in Australia during the war, which highlights how financial matters were influenced as a result of the war. This indicated a strengthening of ties with the empire, but also creating a stronger loyalty towards Australia. John Hirst discusses the impact of the political dimension of the war on Australia in the next paper. The war cemented the new federation and its manifestation can be traced to the establishment of an own military system, as is described in the last paper by Luke Trainor. What is also very important is how Australia fitted into the world wide defence system of the empire, not just with regards to South Africa, but also towards the rest of the world.

*The Boer War, Army, Nation and Empire* provides a different perspective of the war. It contributes to the understanding of the historical experience of especially Australians of the war. Thus, it leads to a better understanding of the world at the turn of the century and how it was influenced by events in South Africa.

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## **PEACE, PROFIT OR PLUNDER: THE PRIVATIZATION OF SECURITY IN WAR TORN AFRICAN SOCIETIES**

J. Cilliers & P. Mason (eds.)

Institute for Security Studies: 1999

245 Pages

Maps: Angola and Sierra Leone

Tables and Diagrams of Private Security Companies

Abbreviations

This publication is about a theme that is presently a rising issue of concern on the national security agendas of states and other bodies grappling with security issues. This concern takes place against the tendency of an increasing number of issues being dumped into the security dustbin. Privatisation of security holds both the potential to soften the security dilemmas of countries as well as to threaten the marginal security of weak states. The publication deals with both sides by pointing out the constructive as well as the destructive potential of the private security industry.

In an environment where the conceptual understanding of the security of countries are underdeveloped or, at the minimum, extremely complex, this publication strives towards creating some sense of understanding on at least one matter - that of private security vs the traditional role of the state. In addition its primary focus is