



The Transvaal Horse Artillery History Fund has kindly sent me a copy of R.J. Bouch's review of 'The History of the Transvaal Horse Artillery, 1904–1974', in which the reviewer raises a very interesting point which I think should be clarified.

He states that 'the South African historian of war is going to be continually hampered unless writers start to produce work which enquires more deeply into fundamentals. For instance, we are told that the Transvaal Horse Artillery was part of 5 SA Infantry Group in North Africa, but the nature of the infantry brigade group is not explained, nor is its efficiency in the context of desert warfare examined.'

I feel that such an observation indicates some lack of understanding of just how regimental and similar histories see the light of day in South Africa, where – I can assure your readers – *no one* could make a living out of writing analytical military history. Regrettably, the reading public is not sufficiently interested to make such an occupation profitable.

In my experience, which now covers the compilation of nine published books on military subjects – all but one historical – I have in every case worked on behalf of a Committee, and I think this is the case with most regimental historians. I am not asked – or even permitted – to give personal opinions or analyses of situations. My task has been to record *facts* for the benefit of the unit or formation concerned, and to present such facts in a readable form for the benefit of anyone interested.

Once or twice I have felt compelled to draw the readers' attention to facts which might otherwise escape his attention, but comment of any sort has in almost every case been severely frowned upon by those who have commissioned me to write military histories. In fact, I doubt whether the authorities would be so helpful in making the records available, if I freely expressed my personal opinions about certain operations and those who directed them.

As things stand today, the so-called 'military historian' in the Republic cannot afford to analyse. If anyone does want to know all about 5 SA Infantry Brigade Group, for example, its brief career in the desert is exhaustively recorded and commented upon in the official 'The Sidi Rezeg Battles, 1941', which is not a regimental history of the Transvaal Horse Artillery.

Colonel Neil D. Orpen, JCD.

CAPTAIN BOUCH REPLIES

It was never my intention to question the importance of Colonel Orpen's book; this should be clear from the last paragraph of my review, and indeed I am sure that Colonel Orpen has not interpreted the review in that way. My remarks were made in the context of my ideas about history-writing in general. Let me elaborate.

Before its dissolution in 1959, the Union War Histories Committee completed three of the finest analytical works to come out of World War II. This is justifiable praise; *Crisis in the Desert*, *The Sidi Rezeg Battles, 1941*, and *War in the Southern Oceans* stand as masterpieces of calculated evaluation and penetrating writing. In them, nevertheless, the reader will not find a single value judgement. Decisions by one side are contrasted with, and balanced against, decisions by the opposing side; facts are weighed against other facts; and from this continual testing and probing, historical judgement emerges. That is not at all the same thing as 'value judgement'; grades of excellence and poorness do not enter into it. My comments were intended to point out that there is an urgent need in this country for more studies of the same scope.

I cannot agree with Colonel Orpen's pessimism about the prospects for analytical military-historical writing in South Africa. Granted, one probably could not earn a respectable living by it, but that is not usually possible in overseas countries either, and is surely a most unfortunate criterion by which to determine either need or justification for such studies! Consider also that *Crisis in the Desert* and *War in the Southern Oceans* are entirely unavailable, except now-and-again from Africana book-sellers at high prices, and that *The Sidi Rezeg Battles, 1941* is fast approaching the same situation. Consider, too, that Dr C.M. Bakkes' profound study of the Battle of Pietershoogte (*Die Britse Deurbraak aan die Benede-Tugela op Majubadag 1900*) went out-of-print within six months of publication, and the existence of a market for such works is proved. This present journal, which is the only military journal in South Africa to publish critical studies based on the South African military archives for the period since 1912, has enjoyed a large increase in circulation during the last two years. Most of the increased demand comes from persons outside the Defence Force.

The academic study of history flourishes at our Universities, but military history barely features in the syllabi. Nor is this likely to change, unless good analytical books are published, and that is a very sad thing.

I have, I admit, begged the question of writing for a Committee. Colonel Orpen's letter draws attention to a situation with which I was not very well acquainted, and I quite understand the point he makes. It is a difficult situation, and for me to comment on it would not be proper.

The foregoing paragraphs should illuminate my remarks in the original review, and I hope that they remove any misunderstanding which may have arisen.

— R.J. BOUCH

DIE SAW MOET OOK SY ANDER WAPENS EFFEKTIEF AANWEND

Hoe dikwels gebruik 'n soldaat papier in plaas van 'n geweer. Papier — die lees en skryf van korrespondensie, verhandelings, studiestukke, gevegs-hanteringshandboeke maak, sonder gevaar van teenspraak, 'n groter deel van 'n soldaat se lewe uit as sy geweer. Selfs binne 'n operasionele gebied, is die soldaat nie vry van papier nie. Patrolierapporthe, oorlogsdagboeke, vlugskrifte en 'n stortvloed propaganda om hom positief of negatief — al na gelang die opsteller se mikpunt — te beïnvloed, maak deel van sy daaglikse lewe uit.

Papier of liever die geskrewe en gesproke woord, is dus van groot belang in die Suid-Afrikaanse Weermag. Hierdie stelling kan verder gevoer word. Dink maar aan die tradisionele vraag: wat is die magtigste, die pen of die swaard. Vir die kinderverstand van jare terug was dit geen kwessie om op die jaarlikse debatsvereniging die swaard as die magtigste te besing nie. Vandag is die saak egter meer gekompliseerd. Vandag kan ons praat van papier teenoor ammunisie of van 80% praat en 20% skiet of van 'winning the hearts and minds of people' of selfs detente teenoor wapengeweld.

Seker die belangrikste aspek van papier, is dié wat gebruik word om menings te vorm, om soldate en burgerlikes positief te beïnvloed. Die algemeen aanvaarde term hiervoor is propaganda. Propaganda is 'n wapen wat teen die vyand gebruik kan word en ook positief na binne om die gewenste resultaat te kry. Propaganda is eintlik noodsaaklik om 'n eie volk, 'n eie groep, se denke te rig. Die positiewe gebruik van propaganda om 'n gewenste effek te kry, is dus 'n volkstaak.

In 'n Opleidingspamflet wat deur die destydse Generale Staf, Verdedigingshoofkwartier op 10 Junie 1941 uitgegee was, kom die volgende para-graaf voor:

'Total warfare, as understood by Ludendorff and other German writers, implies the mobilisation of all the country's forces in the

effective preparation and successful prosecution of war. It is only natural that German War Lords, imbued with such totalitarian conceptions, should have turned early to the study of weapons used in the war of morale. One of Germany's leading theorists, General von Metzsch, expressed this idea in crisp military style: Propaganda is just as much a weapon as artillery or the chemical arm'.

Die voordeel van propaganda is dat dit 'n wapen is wat op die eie gerig kan word en dit net vir hulle eie beswil. Trouens dit is eintlik 'n verpligting dat propaganda ook op die eie gerig moet word sodat dit as 'n teenvoeter vir vyandelike propaganda kan dien. Dit is selfs 'n wapen wat in die volk se hand gestop moet word om hom te verdedig teen ondermynende propaganda deur die vyand.

Dit is egter ook 'n feit dat die skyf van 'n propagandaveldtog soms nie getref word nie bloot omdat die veldtog halfhartig aangepak word. Hieroor het die Generale Staf hom soos volg in die reeds genoemde pamflet uitgelaat: 'Propaganda is a weapon that must be used with unrelenting persistence. It is not a field for tip and run tactics.'

Met ander woorde om propaganda effektief te maak, moet op die een noot gebly hamer word. Dit moet aanhoudend voor die oë van die teiken gehou word en vir so 'n voluit poging is geld noodsaaklik.

Die Suid-Afrikaanse Weermag het tans net twee publikasies wat amptelik goedgekeur is, naamlik *Paratus* en *Militaria*. Beide leen hulle by uitstek om die Weermag se idees uit te dra. *Paratus* verskyn een keer per maand en *Militaria* een keer per kwartaal. Dit is nie genoegsaam om die volk oor die Suid-Afrikaanse Weermag toe te lig nie.

Paratus wend 'n lofwaardige poging aan om na buite en na binne die Suid-Afrikaanse Weermag se beeld op te bou en juis daarin lê sy leemte. As *Paratus* bedoel is om die volk oor sy weermag in te lig, om die volk by die verdedigingspoging te betrek, dan moet die blad inhoudelik verander en nie poog om vir die ernstige militêre intellektualis ook pitkos voor te sit nie. Dit moet net vir Sannie en haar ma vertel wat Jannie in die Weermag doen. Hoe goed die Suid-Afrikaanse Weermag is, moet in leketaal in kort artikels — met baie foto's — vertel word. Verder sal dit goed wees as *Paratus* gratis en so wyd as moontlik versprei word.

Die *Byvoegsel* tot *Paratus* is 'n baie goeie koerant maar behoort los van *Paratus* en slegs binne die Suid-Afrikaanse Weermag versprei te word. Die breë leserspubliek stel tog nie belang in die Weermag se sosiale lewe nie.

Militaria daarenteen regverdig slegs verspreiding binne die Suid-Afrikaanse Weermag. Slegs die