

A F R E N C H VOLUNTEER IN THE RANKS OF THE BOERS

The denouement

by Robert de Kersauson

(Translated from L'illustration by C. de Jong)¹

Introduction by the editor of L'illustration.

Towards the end of 1899, at twenty years of age,² Robert de Kersauson left for South Africa to enlist in the forces of the two South African republics. In May 1902, when peace was signed in Pretoria, he was still under arms and prepared for war. He never joined the foreign volunteer corps but was attached to a commando and had become a real Boer. He spoke the language of his comrades fluently and had completely adjusted himself to their way of living and fighting. He had participated in the campaign in the Transvaal,³ thereafter in that in the Orange Free State,⁴ and early in 1901 he entered the Cape Colony under Commandant Jan Theron.⁵ In the western part of the Colony he continued fighting, under General Manie Maritz and the Commander-in-Chief, Jan Smuts, until the hour when the news of the Boer surrender came to cause shock and dismay in the small army which had until then fought victoriously.

Because active military service in the Transvaal does not count in French law, de Kersauson is now completing his military training in a regiment of dragoons. On his return to France he entrusted us with his war diary. When he is able to publish this it will be an important contribution to the history of that war which astonished the world.⁶ Our readers will be able to judge for themselves after the first part. They constitute the last pages of the book,⁷ and are full of details which so far have remained unknown. Neither the book of General de Wet⁸ nor that of President Kruger⁹ contains more moving descriptions.

Robert de Kersauson begins his narrative

Since my return to France I have been continuously asked questions such as: Why did the Boers surrender? How did they receive the news of the peace in the Western Cape Colony?

I shall answer these questions. Everyone

knows that the peace between the British¹⁰ government and the South African republics was signed in Pretoria, towards midnight on 31 May 1902. But it has never been told that the Boer commandos and rebels in the west of the Cape Colony were not informed until 14 June 1902 at 9 o'clock in the evening — two weeks after Europe and the whole world had been informed.

In the middle of April 1902 the operations in the far west of the Cape Colony were led by the Commander-in-Chief, Smuts (previously State Attorney of the Transvaal¹²), assisted by General Maritz and General van Deventer, who had 1 200 and 800 men, respectively, under their command. For a long time we had been absolute masters of the immense territory we had conquered. The most recent success of Smuts' and Maritz' commandos was the occupation of Concordia, an important village in Namaqualand, which had surrendered with its British garrison of 250 men, without firing a shot. Maritz had laid siege to O'okiep, which is situated about 100 kilometres from the coast.

At that time a British parlementaire arrived with important despatches for General Smuts. Smuts was summoned by the Boer government at Vereeniging to attend a conference which would take place on 15 May, to deliberate on the conditions of peace which His British Majesty had offered the two republics.

Because communications between the Transvaal and the Cape Colony were extremely slow, we received, at the same time, important despatches from De la Rey, Botha, and De Wet. These informed us of the disastrous defeats suffered by the British columns of Anderson and Kekewich in the Western Transvaal, and the crushing of Methuen by De la Rey at Tweebosch, his capture, and the taking of his eleven guns.¹³ Of course we knew nothing of subsequent events.

When we added these victories to our own in the western Colony we thought we could understand the reasons for the intended peace negotiations announced to Smuts. Doubtless Britain was inclined to yield, and to return freedom and independence to a

people which had sacrificed all for the defence of its flag. Or at least this was probable. and conclusion of peace seemed possible, even near at hand.

So far the word 'Peace' had sounded like a dream only. It seemed so far away that we had not even attempted to think of it. We thought that we still had years of war before us, and that before peace could be achieved the immense Cape Colony would have to rise to help the two republics. This work of raising rebellion, though well underway and certain of ultimate success, was only at its beginning.

Several of our comrades, the eldest or those who had misgivings of being killed, said: 'I shall never live to see the peace.' They were prepared to sacrifice their lives for a happiness which they would never enjoy but to which they were prepared to contribute with their blood, for their people.

When a man has been at war for almost three years he becomes used to the war,

and it becomes a natural occupation; he forgets the quietness and joy of peace and does not even attempt to imagine them.

Now from the information brought to General Smuts it suddenly seemed that peace was possible, even probable. Several of us refused to believe it, but at least it became the subject of discussion, one of the more or less probable realities.

The feelings of the Boers¹⁴ and the rebels in the Western Cape Colony, who thought of peace, were strange. They asked each other all sorts of questions, and they tried to form ideas of their way of life in peace time. How could a man look at a cloud of dust on the horizon without suspecting the approach of a squadron of British cavalry? Would a man be able to unsaddle a horse and enter a house without going out repeatedly to look around distrustfully and listen to the sounds carried by the wind? Would a man be able to go to bed without a rifle at hand and sentries before the door of the house? Would a man be able to see



Officers of the Cape commandos, probably taken at Springbok or Constantia on 8 April 1902. Standing from left to right are: Fct Cornelis Brick, Cmdt B. D. ('Ben') Bouwer, Fct A. G. Boshoff, Genl J. ('Jaap') van Deventer, Pte B. D. Bouwer ('Oom Barend') Fct Willie Kotze, Genl S. G. ('Manie') Maritz, Cpl Hennie Vermaas, Fct Jan van Brummelen Cmdt Christoffel Schoeman, Military Commissioner Jacob Brink, Fct A. Standers. Sitting or lying are from left to right: Fct Jan van den Berg, Fct Piet F. Visser, Genl J. C. Smuts, physician Carl T. Muller, Lt Robert de Kersauson, Fct Ben Coetzee.

a silhouette of a horseman in the distance and not wish to shoot the stranger? Would this be possible? What a dream . . .

Most burghers and rebels could not think of the future and remained incredulous. Others were less sceptical and appealed to their own imagination, thinking of life in peace time. They wondered with emotion whether they could initially get used to it, and not automatically seize their rifle and cartridges every morning, to run at an enemy who had vanished after realizing the senselessness of trying to destroy a free people. But for those who believed in a peace with salvation of independence, these thoughts ended in outbursts of joy. So they had not assembled in vain every evening to pray to God for his help, they thought; God was just and good, He had listened to their daily supplications, He had heard the fervent prayers from their hearts to defend the weak against the strong, and right against wrong.

Departure of General Smuts to Vereeniging...

On the evening of 24 April, 1902, General Smuts took leave of us in the church of Concordia. Even now I can see that scene in the small temple, covered by the falling dusk, before me, Smuts made a short speech: 'Though they speak to us of peace, this gives no reason to be less watchful or to act less courageously and intrepidly. Frankly, I do not seriously believe that peace is possible, and it seems to me that General Maritz does so less than I do. It seems to me that the time for peace has not yet arrived, so do not stop the military operations, rather double your activities. Let none of you say: "What use will it serve if I am killed today? Tomorrow the war will be over!" By continuing the struggle until we are sure of peace, and behaving like the heroes you have always been, you will be working towards a glorious end. If on my return I can say "It is peace," then we shall have reason for joy. But if I say "The war goes on", then we shall take up arms again, and fight with more ardour than ever, and with new enthusiasm.'

When General Smuts had ended his speech, the chaplain took his turn. To many Europeans it may appear strange that a General should make a speech about war and peace in a church. But in the Transvaal, the Free

State and the Cape Colony, religion is so interwoven with all activities and events in life that this is considered quite natural. Therefore the chaplain spoke after Smuts as if it were something quite normal that a servant of the Gospel should support the arguments of a warrior.

The chaplain admonished us, saying we should trust God, who would not forsake His people. His were the same words of hope as those of General Smuts, but with a religious flavour. A psalm proper to the occasion was sung with fervour. This showed me the boundless confidence which these sons of Africa put in an almighty God who would terminate their tribulations and redeem them from the hands of the enemy.

On 25 April 1902, Smuts left on the long journey to Vereeniging, escorted by 250 men¹⁶ and accompanied by our hopes and good wishes. After a journey of two days in a westerly direction he was received with all military honours by Colonel Cooper, who gave him a safeguard to pass through the British lines unhampered.

As the General had recommended, our officers doubled their activities. It could not have been otherwise, for with a man like Maritz at our head, it was not difficult to add successes to those which had been won in the recent months. Maritz never spoke of peace. I believe that a secret forboding warned him that no good would come from it, and that he feared this. When asked his opinion on the matter his reply was always: 'What use is it to talk about peace when there is still so much to do?'

After Smuts' departure, Maritz even took measures to strike a heavy blow against the enemy. He conceived a bold plan to penetrate south towards Cape Town itself to stir the Britishers' imaginations by showing them how much the Boers and rebels were masters of the western Cape Colony. With this intention, he had all his commandos march to the south, except Schoeman's¹⁷ corps of 300 men, which stayed behind in the vicinity of Garies. Gradually the talk of a probable end to the war died down. Maritz imbued his men with new fire and they thought no more of peace. Only on 15 May, 1902, on the day when all Boer leaders assembled at Vereeniging, did all the commandos send fervent prayers to heaven for the

cessation of the war by the liberation of the republics.

The Afrikaners who took no part in the war, or who were temporarily on their farms to sow, thought more often of Vereeniging than the combatants. Everywhere they hailed us and asked anxiously, almost in anguish, for news. We could give them no news, but they were reassured by our bravery and calmness. They thought they could read on our faces that we were sure of a good outcome, peaceful as well as triumphant. And on all the farms where there were young ladies dancing parties were improvised in our honour. We danced, and bouyed ourselves up with hope. Our hopes of victory were strengthened by the behaviour of the enemy, who everywhere withdrew before our commandos, leaving the villages unguarded and retreating farther and farther to the south. The construction of blockhouses, started by the enemy between Victoria Rand and Lamberts Bay, was stopped.

Soon we heard rumours in towns through which escaped prisoners had passed, that the peace negotiations had made progress and that the independence of the Transvaal and the Orange Free State was assured. It was said that the only issue on which the parties had not yet agreed, concerned the Dutch rebels in the Cape Colony, since they were British subjects.

Maritz did not heed those rumours, and massed his troops at Calvinia. Day and night he was in the saddle, industriously preparing the march to Cape Town, which he hoped would frighten the Britishers. The enemy consistently avoided battle, even with the small bands sent out to open the roads ahead of us. The fateful date, 31 May, 1902, dawned without any suspicion on our part that the fate of the republics had been decided . . . and in what a disastrous way . . .

On 5 June, (1902), at dawn, Maritz went out to reconnoitre for the attack on a British camp at Zoetwater¹⁹. The camp had to be eliminated in order for us to march unhampered in the direction of Cape Town, two days later, as planned. A few miles from Van Rhynsdorp he was accosted by a parlementaire, who handed him a letter from General Kitchener. In it, Kitchener wrote that the peace had been signed, and he asked Maritz to send his commandos to the nearest rail-

way. Further, he wrote that General Smuts would return within a few days to inform everyone of the conditions of the peace and the general disarmament.

Maritz informed all commandos that the hostilities had ceased, but instead of sending them to a railway station he directed them as far away as possible. He ordered all of them to retreat to Bushman Land — a territory inaccessible to the British troops — meanwhile he and his staff went to Tontelboschkolk, on the Fish River.

At the first news of peace the whole region of the western Cape which we occupied resounded with cries of joy. The farmers did not doubt that the peace conditions complied with all the wishes of the burghers. Instantly the Transvaal flag was displayed in the windows of all farms and they ended their evening prayers with the glad singing of the national anthem.

In the commando's camps the outlook was different, there was only amazement and fear. I noticed that the combatants' mood was more sombre than during the darkest days of the war. What did the words 'general disarmament' mean? The optimists interpreted this as meaning disarmament of the British as well as the Boers. They thought that everyone would lay down their arms that the Cape rebels would return to their farms, and that the British would evacuate the occupied territories and embark for Britain. Lawfully, such a disarmament would be general, not so? But there were also pessimists who doubted that the outcome would be favourable, shook their heads, and declared that they understood nothing of it all. Vehement discussions occurred, as to whether the Cape Colonists who had fought for the Boers would perhaps be treated less favourably than those of the republics. All were of the certain opinion that, in the case of peace, the Orange Free State and the Transvaal would regain their independence, and the whole day long we repeated this assurance to convince ourselves of it.

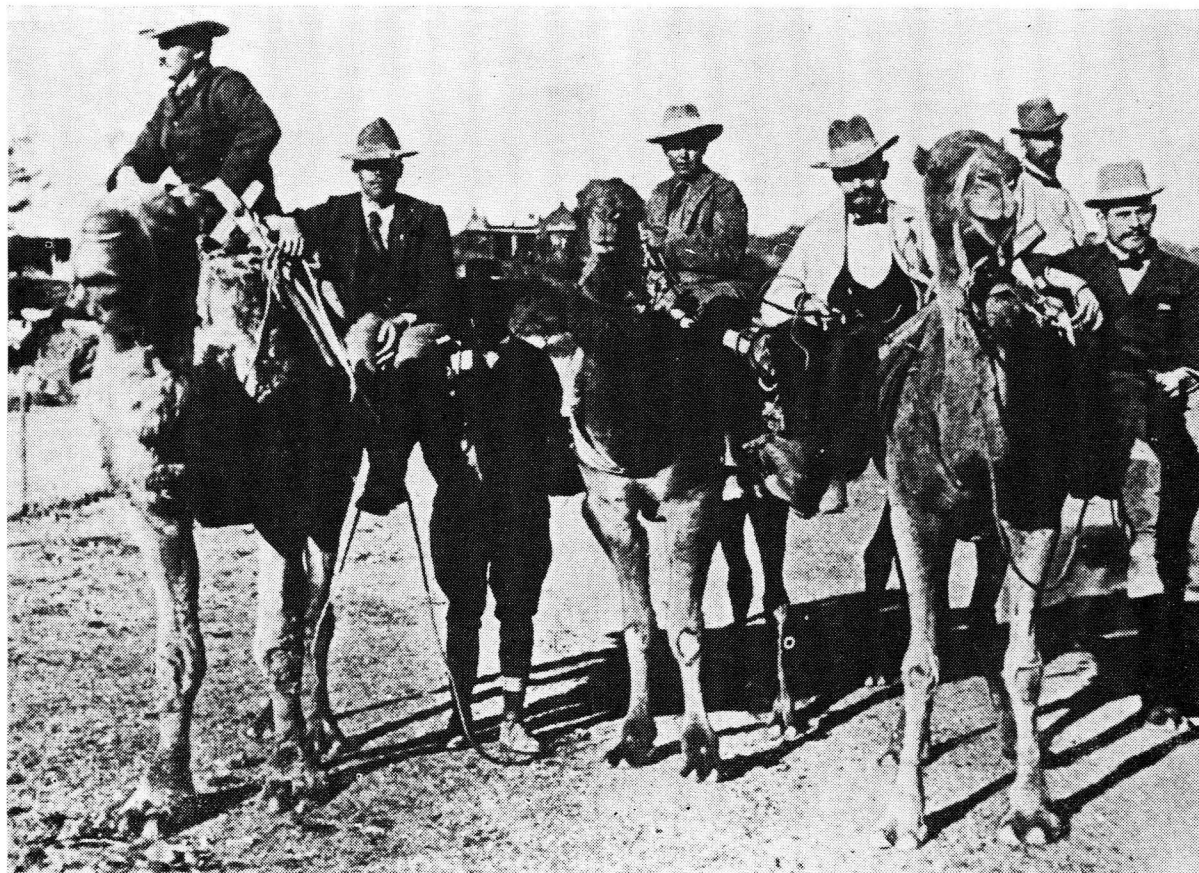
But why had not General Smuts himself sent us notice? For what reason had he not immediately informed us of the peace conditions? When would he return? What a long time he had been away!

That was the situation on Sunday, 8 June,

1902. To give an idea of the opinion of the majority of the Cape Colonists, I have written down the sermon the chaplain gave us. He started by thanking God, who had at last redeemed his people from the yoke of tyranny, then he asked for forgiveness for the murderers of Boer women in the concentration camps. Because the enemy was compelled to retreat it was not difficult to forgive and forget. Yes, the Lord had listened to the fervent prayers sent up to him by all Afrikaners, since the beginning of the war, and their prayers had been heard. Undoubtedly the war had caused long and terrible suffering, but God had intended to test the Boer people, and at last he had saved them, because the people had put their trust entirely in Him. We should thank the Creator profoundly, and those who sometimes had doubts, should feel guilty because of the frailty of their belief. It was true that the details of the peace conditions were so far unknown, but what did a few days of delay matter after all? Peace had arrived, God had willed it so, and the peace could only be just. The sermon had a beneficial effect, because

several of the men were set at ease or exhorted to have patience. Only Maritz fretted, and could not find peace. When I attempted to calm him, he said: 'In 18 months I have not suffered as much as since I have been waiting for General Smuts. I long fervently to see him and yet I fear to know the truth. I cherish no illusions the day of peace has not yet arrived. And yet . . . and yet . . . No, it is not possible! If the peace conditions do not entail our victory then there is no God above, no justice, there is nothing! But forgive me, I must not talk like this, such a thing is impossible, God is justice Himself. He has heard our prayers. We are free! Oh, how I long to see General Smuts!'

When his outburst had passed he fell again into sombre brooding. Suddenly he would spring onto his horse and race non-stop for 25, 30 or 40 kilometres accompanied by only two or three men. However, he could not solve the terrible question or banish it from his thoughts. At other times he would tell us that he intended to pass the day in a distant place, but after half an hour he would mount his horse and ride away in a direc-



Marquis de Kersauson journeying with Andries de Wet through German South West Africa.

tion opposite to which he had indicated. He spoke to no-one, and forbade that any-one should speak to him, particularly about peace . . .

This state of affairs lasted until 14 June, 1902. On the previous day the men had attempted to cheer themselves up by organizing camp games, which gave us a little diversion from our irresolute thoughts. In the evening we suddenly heard carts approaching and fresh female voices singing the Transvaal anthem. What did this mean? Never had this national anthem moved me as much as on that evening. Even its pauses touched me deeply. Sometimes the tones of 'Kent gij dat volk?' changed, died away as the wind carried them off, then they came back to us, as clearly and fully as a truth which enlivens everything, strong and invincible. I felt like laughing and weeping at the same time. A large group of young girls had come from farms in the neighbourhood in the good cause of cheering us combatants up, and to celebrate the peace with us, which they believed to be glorious.

And now, amidst a great cloud of dust, the carts, each spanned with eleven mules and with the republican flag on top, entered the camp. In their turn all our men started loudly singing the national anthem, with so much enthusiasm that a thrill ran through me, because at this moment I understood better than ever the fervent patriotism which enabled the Boer people to resist powerful Britain for almost three years. How terrible it would be if their expectations were to be disappointed.

With the general's permission a ball was immediately organized in the open air, while a placid and smiling moon viewed the scene. Two violins, a guitar and an accordion were brought from somewhere. Men and girls danced so that it was a pleasure to look at them, until dawn. Indeed it was a harmless celebration, as everywhere among South African youth. In old Europe such nocturnal merrymaking by young men and women in the open air would certainly have led to dissoluteness. But among this healthy and naive South African race the relations between the sexes are idyllically chaste. If at the end of some ball such as I am speaking of, the hands and eyes of a young couple meet, they give a silent promise of marriage in

the near future. But never does a bad thought disturb the gaiety and enthusiasm of the laughing youths. Moreover, on that evening many of us danced and laughed simply to escape from our painful thoughts and to forget the day of tomorrow.

Smuts' Return

On the following day, 16 June, 1902, a despatch was received early, announcing that General Smuts would arrive in the evening. We were at Zoetwater, 30 km from Calvinia and 3 km from a British camp. On that day the hours seemed like years, so slowly did they pass. To kill time Maritz mounted his horse again, I left with him, and we rode away like arrows from a bow. We passed the day at Matjiesfontein²⁰, 5 km from Zoetwater, intending to return towards evening. At 8 o'clock, as we prepared to return to camp we heard the approach of a horse. I recognized the rider as an orderly of General Smuts. He asked for General Maritz and whispered a few words to him. I saw the General's face darken and understood the reason. I felt a sting in my heart but did not ask a single question.

We mounted our horses to ride to Zoetwater. Because an old wound in the breast troubled Maritz he had not carried his arms since the news that peace would be made and he had handed them to an orderly to keep them. He whispered to me: 'Let my arms be returned to me and see to it that my Mauser revolver is loaded!' I did not question him. His eyes flamed with rage. Soon we rode in a furious gallop to the camp. The general did not slow his pace for a single moment; it was as if he would calm his rage and grief by a wild note.

On our arrival at our destination a strange scene surrounded us. Our comrades walked to and fro and were silent as the grave. The camp fires had gone out and no-one had thought of re-kindling them. Here and there small groups stood and talked in low voices, but they stopped whispering as we approached. They all seemed to avoid our gazes. As yet they knew nothing, however, only that General Smuts had just arrived. But something depressing hung in the air as if a great disaster menaced us.

The men had seen Maritz coming at a gallop:

an officer accompanied him to the house where General Smuts had dismounted. In the pitch dark evening the groups turned to face that side. I walked up and down the road in front of the house where General Smuts was, and spoke to no-one. The crowd grew steadily and their whispering conversation betrayed their anxiety. They were like accused who would hear their sentence of life or death from the judge's mouth.

An officer came out of the house and announced that at 9 o'clock General Smuts would appear and speak to us. A quarter of an hour to wait — it seemed almost a century! At last 9 o'clock struck and the general appeared arm in arm with Maritz. They walked to an open space in the centre of the camp. Smuts climbed upon a cart and we waited in breathless silence for his words.

His first words were spoken in a hoarse voice and were as follows: 'Children! The two republics called the Transvaal and the Orange Free State are no more. They died on Sunday 31 May²¹ at midnight . . .'

He continued his speech, but for several minutes we could not hear a word, for his voice was drowned by the sobs bursting out around him. Warbitten fighters who had fearlessly ventured their lives a hundred times were in tears. Sons cast themselves into their fathers' arms. Others lifted their fists threateningly towards heaven and cursed, with wild eyes. No scene that I had so far witnessed had touched me so deeply. Never had I realized so clearly the profound moral evil which war can cause, apart from the material and visible evils recorded by history. Even if it were only for a moment, for an hour of despair and rebellion, the profoundly religious Boer people had lost its simple and arduous faith which had hitherto sustained it, though subject to so many trials. Would this doubt pass or would it leave an indelible impression on the spirits, the hearts, the morale, the life of the Boers? This is a question which I have not investigated. I can only record in passing the gripping fact which struck me.

When the calm returned somewhat, General Smuts continued his speech in a language that attempted to salve the wound which he had just inflicted. 'Alas! At my departure from Concordia, I who had always led you to victory, told you that we would rejoice

if peace were concluded, but that we would continue the war more bravely if it was to be war. But now I am compelled to tell you that we can neither rejoice nor continue the struggle. Because I am now a British subject I must ask you to behave as such. But before I point out to you the considerations which can alleviate our grief, let me explain the reasons which have compelled the majority of the Boers to surrender. We who battled in the western Cape Colony always judged the situation in the Transvaal and Free State after our own position. Our women and children did not hamper our movements here. We have no families to support and to feed. We have clothes, arms and provisions in sufficient quantities, and as many horses and cattle as we like. You must know that the blood of our wives in the Transvaal and the Free State has flowed profusely. Twenty-one thousand women and children²² have already died in the British concentration camps and, had the war continued, they would all have died.²³ Our race would have disappeared. As far as the commandos are concerned, they are starving because the enemy has destroyed everything. Neither cow nor sheep is left. The last battles of De la Rey, in which the British concentrated all their forces, were disastrous.²⁴ We have sworn to fight to the bitter end. We have now arrived at the bitter end. All is lost, except our honour, for each of you may hold his head even among his enemies. Though we are vanquished we have a right to retain all our pride.

A single word at last. You have put all your trust in God, do not forsake him. Though He has not granted us the freedom for which we prayed, His reason is that the favourable moment has not yet arrived, because He wishes to prolong our trials. Let us keep our belief in Him. He will not tolerate that the blood of our brethren has flowed in vain on the battlefield, that our mothers, sisters, wives and children have sacrificed their lives in vain for our freedom. No, I shall never believe that God could doom so much exertion and sacrifice to futility. Let us pray to Him that He will help us to bear our present misfortune. As for the future, let us confide in Him.'

These were literally General Smuts' words. They consoled the vanquished heroes to some extent. The chaplain also spoke to

them in mild words which worked like refreshing dew on a dried-out field. They sang a psalm which rang full of melancholy in the majesty of the evening.

Departure of the heroes

And now the most painful task remained. General Smuts left again for the Transvaal, but to Maritz fell the task of informing the other commandos in the Western Cape Colony of the peace conditions. As for me, I would return to France. With Commandant Schoeman and Andries de Wet²⁵ we went into German territory. On 18 June, 1902, we crossed the Orange River, on 20 June we arrived at Warmbad. Maritz had told me he would join me as soon as his work had ended. He had said to me: 'For never shall an Englishman have the honour to get my rifle in his hands.' He assembled all his commandos at Katkop²⁶, made the sad statement which was necessary, and said farewell to them. He sent part of his men under the command of a senior officer to Calvinia to lay down their arms. He himself led 500 men to Kenhardt for the same purpose, where he arrived on 24 June.

The British Major Clarke was to receive the arms of these 500 men. He did it with respect. Maritz stipulated that none of the natives armed by the British against the Boers should attend the surrender. Major Clarke had to comply. When the 500 had laid down their arms it was the turn of the officers, Maritz included. He declared however to Major Clarke that he would not surrender his weapons and would not submit, and he bade Clarke to give him safe conduct to the German territory. Major Clarke acceded. On 26 June Maritz crossed the Orange River, on 28 June he joined us at Warmbad. From there we continued our journey to Swakopmund to board the German ship which would carry us to Europe.

NOTES

1. Original in *L'illustration*, volume 58, No. 3126, Paris, 24 January, 1903, entitled 'Un volontaire français dans les rangs boers, le dénouement'. I received a copy of this article from a namesake and nephew of the author, le Comte Robert de Kersauson de Pennendreff, général de brigade de cavalerie (C.R.), who lives in La Trinité sur Mer, Bretagne, in 1975. The article in *L'illustration* was translated very freely into Dutch and published in *Bataviaasch Nieuwsblad*. Batavia, Saturday 11 April, 1903, No. 111, page 4, with the remark 'translated from French' but

without mention of the source. Previously I had received a copy of the article in Dutch from the Royal Library in The Hague and published an Afrikaans version of it in *Jaarboek 1975* of the *Africana Vereniging van Pretoria*.

2. The date of Robert's departure to South Africa was the end of April, 1900.

3. Campaign from Pretoria to Komatipoort on the Mozambique frontier during June-September, 1900 with battles at Bronkhorstspuit and Dalmanutha, Warmbad (?) and Lydenburg, so Robert states. In October, 1900 he accompanied two despatch riders of General C. R. de Wet who returned to De Wet in the Free State.

4. In the Orange Free State Robert joined Theron's scouts, known as '(Danie) Theron se Verkennerkorps' or T.V.K.

5. After Danie Theron's death on 5 September 1900 some of his scouts chose his cousin Jan Theron as commandant. Robert fought under him in the battles at Bothaville on 5 November 1900 and Dewetsdorp on 21 to 23 November 1900. He attended the abortive first raid of De Wet, to invade the Cape Colony in December 1900 and De Wet's second raid into the Colony in January-February 1901. On 9 February he crossed the Orange River under Jan Theron. In the Cape Colony he soon joined Commandant S. G. ('Manie') Maritz and stayed with him until the end of the war with an interruption from July 1901 to April 1902, when he was sent by the republican governments to their representatives in Europe to deliver reports. The history of Robert's mission to Europe and of his return to the Boer commandos has been told by Dr Jan Ploeger in 'Verbindings gedurende die Anglo-Boereoorlog: Rapportgangers', in *Lantern*, vol. 25 no. 1, Pretoria, 1 September 1975, p. 64-73, based on documents in the Leyds Archive, State Archives, Pretoria.

6. Robert's war diary was published in Afrikaans as late as 1960 with the title *Ek en die Vierkleur*, by Afrikaanse Pers-Boekhandel, Johannesburg-Cape Town, 141 p.p. According to the Curator of the Huguenot Memorial Museum at Franschhoek the diary is written in English and is in this museum. It was translated into Afrikaans by Ds M. S. Louw and Mr J. J. F. Joubert, teacher, both at Franschhoek.

7. P. 135-141 of the book *Ek en die Vierkleur* contain a concise report of events on 1 to 14 June 1902. Robert has extended this sober report and published it in *L'illustration*.

8. C. R. de Wet, *De strijd tusschen Boer en Brit*, first edition 1902, in Dutch, translated into many other languages.

9. S. J. P. Kruger, *De gedenkschriften van Paul Kruger*, first edition 1902, in Dutch, translated into many other languages.

10. Robert usually write 'English', which I translate as 'British'.

11. Robert has often written 'Dutch' where he means 'Afrikaners'.

12. Dutch: Staatsprokureur. On p. 109 of *Ek en die Vierkleur* Robert writes: 'The impression which General Smuts made on me was that he is a gentleman, well educated, kind and a pleasant talker. He seems to be more a diplomat than a soldier.'

13. These were the battles of General J. H. de la Rey at Ijzerspruit on 25 February 1902 and at Tweebosch on 6 March 1902.

14. By 'Boers' Robert means here the Transvalers and Free Staters, not the Cape Colonists.

15. This must be Ds J. Kriel, then 50 years o'd. He had arrived from the Free State after General Smuts, with a small commando under Naudé, to care for the spiritual needs of the Cape Commandos.

16. This large retinue soon left Smuts. Smuts' adjutant, Deneys Reitz states that only a small patrol accompanied Smuts and his two com-

- panions (Deneys Reitz and Smuts' brother-in-law Totie Krige) to the British camp at O'okiep; see Deneys Reitz, **Commando**, Faber and Faber, London 1973, p. 316. eRitz' statement is confirmed by Jan H. Meyer, **Kommando-jare**, Human en Rousseau, Kaapstad-Pretoria 1971, p. 342; Meyer was a member of the abovementioned patrol.
17. Christoffel Schoeman was born in the Orange Free State, served in the Rhodesian police of the British South African Company (Rhodes' creation), was assistant of the famous professional hunter Selous. In the Ang'lo-Boer War he served first with the scouts under Danie Theron, then in the Cape Colony under Wynand Malan and as commandant under General Manie Maritz. He was one of the many staunch diehard officers over the Cape commandos. After the peace he settled like other Afrikaners in German Southwest Africa. In 1914, when the World War broke out, he became commandant of a small volunteer corps of Afrikaner living in Southwest Africa and he fought at the side of the rebels under Manie Maritz against the Union forces. I have no later information about him.
 18. There was much wheat land along the Zak River near Tontelbosch which served as the bread store of the Cape commandos.
 19. Zoetwater lies 23 km west of Calvinia according to S. G. Maritz, **My lewe en strewe**, Johannesburg 1938, p. 54.
 20. This is not the village of Matjesfontein on the railway between Touwsrivier and Laingsburg, but a farm near Zoetwater.
 21. This must be Saturday 31 May 1902. Also, other members of the Cape commandos were sometimes wrong in their dates.
 22. At the end of the war the death toll in the concentration camps was about 27 000.
 23. I must remark that the bad conditions in the concentration camps responsible for the high mortality rate, were improved considerably from the end of 1901 onwards and that the mortality rate fell in 1902.
 24. Probably Smuts refers here to Kitchener's large concentration of forces against the victorious De la Rey, which started on 23 March 1902, to the action at Boschbult, 60 miles west of Klerksdorp, where De la Rey broke off Kemp's charge and retreated, and the battle at Roodeval on 11 April 1902 when Kemp's warriors intrepidly charged but were thrown back. On that day De la Rey was absent, he was in the conference of Boer leaders at Klerksdorp, preliminary to the peace conference at Vereeniging. Obviously the news of the brave Kemp's defeat, exaggerated by the British, impressed the leaders in conference.
 25. Andries de Wet was born in the Cape Colony at Cameron and emigrated to the Transvaal at an early age. Under Commandant Lukas Steenkamp, he participated, with Koos Jooste, in the abortive first invasion of the Cape Colony which went as far as Upington (December 1899). He served in the Afrikaansche Cavallerie Corps under Commandant Abraham Malan in the Anglo-Boer war. Becoming ill, he travelled via Lourenco Marques to Germany, where he underwent an operation, possibly for appendicitis. De Wet wrote a booklet in Germany, which was edited by Ds A. Schowalter. He returned after one year, via German Southwest Africa, with reports from the republican governments to the Boer Commandos in the Cape Colony. There he fought under Manie Maritz, alongside his brother Piet de Wet. After the peace he fled with a few Afrikaners to Southwest Africa and settled there. In 1914, when the World War broke out, he and his brother Piet founded a volunteer corps of about 100 Afrikaner settlers (in Southwest Africa), to fight against the Union forces. He was the first commandant of this corps, but retired and was succeeded by Stoffel Schoeman; note 17 above. I have no information regarding the life of Andries de Wet, subsequently. He published **Der Freiheitskampf der Buren**, edited by Ds A. Schowalter, in German, and translated into Dutch, entitled **Die vrijheidsoorlog der Boeren**, Baarn 1901, 35 p.p., and together with H. van Doornik (a Dutch volunteer) and G. C. du Plessis the book **Die Buren in der Kaapkolonie im Kriege mit England**, also edited by A. Schowalter, J. F. Lehmanns, Verlag, Munchen, no year. Other comrades of Robert de Kersauson who fled to German Southwest Africa for different reasons, were, besides Stoffel Schoeman, Andries de Wet and his brother Piet, Commandant Lategan (a Cape rebel from the first hour), Commandant Jaap Neser, Commandant C. J. Botha, Commandant Louis Wessels, Veldkornet Jan van Brummelen, H. van Doornik and C. P'okhooy (the two last-mentioned being Dutch-born and volunteers).
 26. Robert writes Khapkop.