**Boer War: How People Were Treated and Why**

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The Boer War: How People were Treated and Why

Throughout the Boer War both the British and the Boers were treated inhumanely by each other, each side having reasons for their actions. The Boers though, were the ethnicity who were targeted the most but the British were not excluded from being treated poorly either. The most common form of war cruelty was the British concentration camps set up throughout and in the surrounding areas of Africa. Yet each side partook in acts of war such as unjust trials, prisoners of war were taken, and deadly fire was used excessively and unnecessarily. Even though both of the opposing sides believed that they had the justification for their actions or at a minimum orders from someone who did believe it was the right thing to do the Boers were there first.

During the fighting of the Boer War the Boer’s significantly outnumbered the British. The Boers also had an advantage as the European had “difficulties in Africa in terms of geography, climate and disease” ¹ at least this is what was sent back to Britain for the newspapers. This I because the Boers have been there much longer and as John MacKenzie states that other European settlers have been able to survive successfully in Africa concluding that the European’s excuse was not very accurate. These scenarios would have led to frustration among the British as they were unable to conquer their opposition as easily as they had become accustomed to. With this frustration an outsider could conclude that the British military channelled this emotion into more violent acts.

One of the main acts was placing Boer people into concentration camps. These concentration camps were located all around Africa and some of the locations were better than others. There was one located in “Sri Lanka where five thousands Boer guerillas were [and others alike were] in India, St. Helena and Bermuda” ² Along with camps in these exotic locations there were local ones where common women and children were held. In these camps the women and children “were kicked and beaten if they disobeyed the orders” ³ as well as the women being used as sexual objects for the soldiers. In total “27,000 (many of them very young children) are estimated to have died in the concentration camps” ⁴, and the rest were most their mothers. In my opinion the reason for the concentration camps were to keep the mothers and their children contained and controlled. This would be so that they could not plot against them or join the Boer forces that already had a significantly larger army than the British. Back in Britain there were protests against the camps “and efforts were made late in the war to alleviate the situation” ⁵. This was a productive step for the British but the fact that they still constructed them in the first place will not be forgotten in the Boers of the time nor their ancestors.

Throughout the war both sides opposed the laws and practices of the other. The Boers felt with the British military invading their towns “that [there was] no security for [their] life or property” ⁶ leading them to retaliated against the new forces. The only aspect of the Boers that the British seemed to oppose was the fact that the Boer’s military was considerably larger than theirs. The British dealt with their opposition to the Boers by persecuting them for acts that they didn’t commit as well as placing them in concentration camps. This enraged the Boers, and they did fight against the British but they weren’t able to fight evenly as the British were too skill full in their military tactics.

A segment of the British military were from Scotland because at the time Scotland was under the control of the British. Early in the war “Sir Evelyn Wood had signed a peace agreement with the Boers, despite protests from the [British] queen among others” ⁷ that it would bring down Britain’s honour. This was a step forward for the Boers which later was taken from them but the British forces in the Mafeking Incident. Later, the Boer’s were successful against the small British forces of Captainn Nosbittand so they continued to go and attack Mafeking not knowing that the British had gained more men to fight their 7000. ⁸ In the end at Mafeking the Boer’s were defeated by the smart military tactics of the British.

In total the war “lasted three years between 1899 and 1902” ⁹ and in the end the British defeated the Boers. The British citizens who stayed in South Africa were only part on the privileged minority, but they were “in control of a newly fashioned Union of South Africa, which was granted virtual independence in 1910” ¹⁰. Today, South Africa is finally a democratic country, still dealing with the aftermath of the apartheid, but it is on its way to becoming a better, more prosperous nation.

Endnotes

¹ MacKenzie, John M. *The Partition of Africa, 1880-1900 and European Imperialism in the Nineteenth Century,*19-23 (London, New York: Taylor & Francis Routledge, 2005.) Uvic NetLibrary.

² Uys, Errol Lincoln. “A Boer Girl’s Memories of the War, Hester Johanna Maria Uys, (Interviews with Errol Lincoln Uys, 1970)” Accessed December 1st, 2010. <http://www.erroluys.com/BoerWarChildsStory.htm>.

³ Lincoln. “Boer Girl’s Memories.

⁴ [Morgan, Kenneth O. “ The Boer War and the Media” Accessed December 1st, 2010. http://ics.leeds.ac.uk/papers/pmt/exhibits/1215/Morgan.pdf](https://webmail.shaw.ca/Morgan,%20Kenneth%20O.%20%E2%80%9C%20The%20Boer%20War%20and%20the%20Media%E2%80%9D%20Accessed%20December%201st,%202010.%20http:/ics.leeds.ac.uk/papers/pmt/exhibits/1215/Morgan.pdf)

⁵ Totten, Samuel; Bartrop, Paul R. and Jacobs, Steven L. *Dictionary of Genocide*, 84-85 (Westport, Conn: Greenwood Publishing Group, 2008) Uvic NetLibrary.

⁶ Crane, Stephen. *Great Boer Trek.* 153-158 (Charlottesville, Va.: University of Virginia Library, 1996.)

⁷ Spiers, Edward M. *The Scottish Soldier and Empire, 1854-1902,*41-60, 157, and 193 (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2006.) Uvic NetLibrary.

⁸ “The Story of Mafeking”. *Marlborough Express,* May 19th 1900. Accessed December 1st, 2010. <http://paperspast.natlib.govt.nz/cgi-bin/paperspast?a=d&d=MEX19000519.2.32&cl=CL2.1900.05&e=-------10--1----0-->.

⁹ Seddon, David, and Seddon-Daines, Daniel. *A Political and Economic Dictionary of Africa, Europa Political and Economic Dictionaries Series; 1st Ed.*, 51, 62, 363 and 478 (London: Taylor & Francis Routledge, 2005). Uvic NetLibrary.

¹⁰ Seddon and Seddon-Daines. Political and Econmoic Dictionary.

Annotated Bibliography

**Crane, Stephen. *Great Boer Trek.* 153-158 (Charlottesville, Va.: University of Virginia Library, 1996.)**

The Great Boer Trek was written by Stephan Crane in 1996 in Virginia. He wrote this book to represent the Boer`s side and opinion of the Boer War occurring in what is now South Africa. Great Boer Trek demonstrates to the reader that the Boer`s believe that they were not treated how they thought they should be and, subsequently, retaliated against the British government and troops.  Word of these retaliations made it back to the British government who then sought to punish some of the Boer`s. The British did not seem to care whether the Boer was male or female they seemed to be treated equally. Also the natives treated the Boers badly as well by taking their livestock and even though the Boers knew who took them they were never able to retrieve them.

**MacKenzie, John M. *The Partition of Africa, 1880-1900 and European Imperialism in the Nineteenth Century,*19-23 (London, New York: Taylor & Francis Routledge, 2005.) Uvic NetLibrary.**

J.M. Mackenzie writes this pamphlet, as it is called within the source, in 1983 in England. This is a brief piece on the development and decline of the European partitioning of Africa. His intended audience was “students preparing for Advanced Level examinations” as well as students in introductory level courses at colleges or universities. John MacKenzie is focused on what the cause of the partition of Africa was, as well as why it occurred; in particular, why the European monarchs and politicians wanted to establish direct control over Africa even if at first they were against it. He states that the sudden movement into Africa seemed to be in fear of some cataclysm (int their minds) occurring and their departure was particularly quick as well. Given the level of economic success the Europeans were experiencing in their markets with goods from Africa, their quick departure was slightly surprising. In the pamphlet MacKenzie expresses the opinion that the Europeans easily excused their losses as being due to terrain, weather and disease. He refutes these excuses because even though terrain is different in Africa, the terrain in Europe made wars difficult as well and if “[t]he Portuguese managed to hold trading posts in...the Zambezi region for over 70 years” other Europeans should be able to survive disease and weather. This leads the reader to conclude that he does not support the sudden partition of Africa by the Europeans.

[**Morgan, Kenneth O. “ The Boer War and the Media” Accessed December 1st, 2010. http://ics.leeds.ac.uk/papers/pmt/exhibits/1215/Morgan.pdf**](https://webmail.shaw.ca/Morgan,%20Kenneth%20O.%20%E2%80%9C%20The%20Boer%20War%20and%20the%20Media%E2%80%9D%20Accessed%20December%201st,%202010.%20http:/ics.leeds.ac.uk/papers/pmt/exhibits/1215/Morgan.pdf)

Kenneth O. Morgan`s paper titled “The Boer War and Media” was written at Queens College, England in 2002. The paper was written as an college assignment demonstrating that both the British and the Boer`s were affected during the war, yet both sides treated the other same, in a generally brutal fashion. He touches on the influence the invention of the camera had on the British media as well. It enabled the newspapers as well as common people to photograph whatever they wished. With this technology the British were able to actually now see what it was like for their fellow citizens to travel and go off to war. The downside of this was that the brutality of the war could not always be censored like it used to be.

**Seddon, David, and Seddon-Daines, Daniel. *A Political and Economic Dictionary of Africa, Europa Political and Economic Dictionaries Series; 1st Ed.*, 51, 62, 363 and 478 (London: Taylor & Francis Routledge, 2005). Uvic NetLibrary.**

This dictionary is summarizing the significant political and economic conflicts, personnel and imperialistic events that occurred in Africa’s past during the period of 1815 – 2005. The book only reaches the year 2005 as the book was written in 2004 /2005 in London by David Seddon a “Professor of Politics and Sociology in the School of Development Studies” at East Anglia University located in Norfolk, United Kingdom. [1] He was assisted by his son Daniel Seddon- Daines who, at the time was a first year undergraduate at Cambridge University. Throughout the book the authors summarize critical events that effect Africa including events that affected the Boer peoples, namely the Boer or South African War. There are many other events that this book summarizes all of which play a role in the partition of Africa during the imperialistic stage of Europe, Africa's modern political and economic structure, and since Africa is still changing these events will affect the future. This book does not seem to be aimed at a particular audience as it is available for the public but it is only printed in English at the moment.

[[1]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Boer#cite_note-Du_Toit_1998_1-0) “CREST, Contact”, University of East Anglia accessed December 1, 2010, <http://www.google.com/cse?cx=017206723852458922445%3Ak-pi2er7fim&ie=UTF-8&sa=Search&q=David+Seddon>

**Spiers, Edward M. *The Scottish Soldier and Empire, 1854-1902,*41-60, 157, and 193** **(Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2006.) Uvic NetLibrary.**

Edward M. Spiers completed his book, “The Scottish Soldier and Empire: 1854-1902” in 2005 in the United Kingdom. He wrote this book in order to explain a Scottish soldier’s view on the events that occurred from 1854-1902 as Spiers felt that some of these events are not represented in Scottish history as they should be. So he writes about Scotland`s soldiers and their contributions to European imperialism. Specifically, their involvement in West Africa, their imperialistic endeavours against the Zulus, Afghans and Boers and their efforts in Egypt and the Sudan. Spiers also makes sure that he commemorates the soldiers lost and the effort that they sacrificed in this range of conflicts. The views represented in this book are from sources that are mainly Scottish documents from around 1854- 1902, in particular letters from Scottish soldiers. So the opinions portrayed are mostly from a Scottish nationalist’s point of view. In the epilogue of his book Spiers talks about how the soldiers were treated when they finally came back from their expeditions, in particular the ceremonies that were held in their honour.

**“The Story of Mafeking”. *Marlborough Express,* May 19th 1900. Accessed December 1st, 2010.** [**http://paperspast.natlib.govt.nz/cgi-bin/paperspast?a=d&d=MEX19000519.2.32&cl=CL2.1900.05&e=-------10--1----0--**](http://paperspast.natlib.govt.nz/cgi-bin/paperspast?a=d&d=MEX19000519.2.32&cl=CL2.1900.05&e=-------10--1----0--)**.**

In the Marlborough Express an article was written on May 19, 1900 by an unknown author in Marlborough New Zealand.  This article`s intended audience was the local newspaper readers in Marlborough and it shared with them what was happening in part of the Boer War, specifically the defence of Mafeking by Baden-Powell. The Mafeking incident is known as the most significant event in the Boer War. It`s significance was largely based upon the fact that the British had significantly less troops than the Boers and the British were still able to defeat them.  Since New Zealand was still a British colony some of the people there supported British troops on their imperial endeavours in South Africa.

**Totten, Samuel; Bartrop, Paul R. and Jacobs, Steven L. *Dictionary of Genocide*, 84-85 (Westport, Conn: Greenwood Publishing Group, 2008) Uvic NetLibrary.**

            The “Dictionary of Genocide” is a two book collection of terms, organizations, people and events that are directly related to genocide. This idea was Samuel Totten`s who brought together a group of authors who had expertise on the topic to assist him in writing the definitions as well as omitting and adding terms. Finally he and Paul Bartrop compiled it all together. The final product was published in 2008 while Totten was in Arkansas and Bartrop was in Melbourne. This dictionary was compiled because academics in a wide variety of fields started paying more attention to the issue of genocide and Totten felt that there was a need for a dictionary which defined terminology related to and including genocide so as to minimize confusion. This is because many of these terms included have varying meanings, and defining them will help keep things more simple when people from around the world discuss genocide. Even though the original audience was to be academics it has been grown to “scholars, government officials, intergovernmental personnel, [and] university students” who will come across the issue of genocide and its related terms.

**Uys, Errol Lincoln. “A Boer Girl’s Memories of the War, Hester Johanna Maria Uys, (Interviews with Errol Lincoln Uys, 1970)” Accessed December 1st, 2010.**[**http://www.erroluys.com/BoerWarChildsStory.htm**](http://www.erroluys.com/BoerWarChildsStory.htm)**.**

Errol Lincoln Uys is interviewing his mother, Hester Johanna Maria Uys, about her experiences during the Boer War. Errol Lincoln is an author who lives in Boston Massachusetts, which is also where he interviewed his mother in 1970, to write her story for the public to read and learn. Throughout Johanna`s story it is obvious that they were pro- Boer as they believe that the British military treated the Boers with complete disrespect. The real life story of Johanna`s childhood lets the reader experience, to the extent that can be told, what being in a concentration camp is like. In short how a group of them were taken to the camp, how they were treated while they were in the camp, as well as the mysterious move that they were selected for which resulted in them traveling to a much nicer place.