THE PSYCHOLOGICAL IMPACT OF GUERRILLA WARFARE ON THE BOER FORCES DURING THE ANGLO-BOER WAR

by

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Abstract of:

"The psychological impact of guerrilla warfare on the Boer forces during the Anglo-Boer War"

The thesis is based on a multi disciplinary study involving both particulars regarding military history and certain psychological theories. In order to be able to discuss the psychological experiences of Boers during the guerrilla phase of the Anglo-Boer War, the first chapters of the thesis strive to provide the required background. Firstly an overview of the initial conventional phase of the war is furnished, followed by a discussion of certain psychological issues relevant to stress and methods of coping with stress. Subsequently, guerrilla warfare as a global concern is examined. A number of important events during the transitional stage, in other words, the period between conventional warfare and total guerrilla warfare, are considered followed by the regional details concerning the Boers' plans for guerrilla warfare. These details include the ecological features, the socio-economic issues of that time and military information about the regions illustrating the dissimilarity and variety involved.

In the chapters that follow the focus is concentrated on the psychological impact of the guerrilla war on the Boers. The wide range of stressors (factors inducing stress) are arranged according to certain topics: stress caused by military situations; stress caused by the loss of infrastructure in the republics; stress caused by environmental factors; stress arising from daily hardships; stress caused by anguish and finally stressors prompted by an individuals disposition. Then the psychological theories regarding an individual's resistance resources (or general resistance resources – GRRs) and the means of using these resources to cope with stress are applied to the actual circumstances that the Boers were faced with. This discourse is arranged according to material resources, motivational issues and intrapersonal resources.

Subsequently the complete guerrilla warfare phase is considered, the accent being placed on the psychological effect that the Boers' strategies, as well as the British counter strategies, had on the republican forces. The phase is subdivided into four stages according to the course of the war, while still furnishing an overall account of the guerrilla phase – ranging from the initial successes on Boer side, the gradual decline in Boer initiatives to the final months, when the few successful encounters that the Boers launched, came too late to change matters.

In the final chapter the impact of the guerrilla warfare on a selected group of Boers is examined in the form of case studies. The group includes President M.T. Steyn, whose health failed him in the end and Generals C.R. de Wet and J.C. Smuts, where their positive conduct is considered from a psychological perspective. The result of the continuous pressure on the young Commandant G.J. Scheepers is examined and the stress related experiences of Chief Field Cornet H.S. van der Walt, Burghers P.J. du Toit and R.W. Schikkerling are analysed.

Opsomming van:

"The psychological impact of guerrilla warfare on the Boer forces during the Anglo-Boer War"

Hierdie proefskrif is gebaseer op 'n multidisiplinêre studie wat beide militêre geskiedenis en sielkundige teorieë insluit. Om dus 'n sinvolle bespreking van die sielkundige ervaring van Boere tydens die guerrillafase van die Anglo-Boereoorlog moontlik te maak, word die eerste hoofstukke van die proefskrif gewy aan die daarstelling van die nodige agtergrond. Eerstens word 'n oorsig oor die aanvanklike konvensionele fase van die oorlog gegee. Daarna word die tersaaklike sielkundige agtergrond, veral kwessies rakende die ontstaan van stres en metodes om stres te hanteer, beskou. Vervolgens word guerrilla-oorlogvoering, as 'n wêreldwye verskynsel, bespreek. Na 'n hoofstuk waarin sekere gebeure tydens die oorgangsperiode van konvensionele na guerrillaoorlog ondersoek word, volg 'n uiteensetting van die verskillende streke waar guerrillaoorlog gevoer is. Daar word onder andere gekyk na die ekologiese eienskappe van die verskillende streke, die sosio-ekonomiese toestande wat tydens die betrokke periode geheers het en die militêre organisasie van die Boere in die streke om die uiteenlopende aard daarvan te illustreer.

In die hoofstukke wat volg word daar toegespits op die sielkundige impak wat die guerrillaoorlog op die Boere gehad het. Die wye verskeidenheid van stressors (faktore wat stres te weeg bring) wat bespreek word, word volgens temas ingedeel: stres wat deur militêre situasies ontstaan; stres as gevolg van die verlies van die republieke se infrastruktuur; stres wat deur omgewingsomstandighede veroorsaak is; stres as gevolg van daaglikse ontberings; stres veroorsaak deur angs en laastens stres wat voortspruit uit individue se persoonlikhede. Die sielkunde-teorieë wat te make het met individue se weerstandsbronne ("general resistance resourses" – GRRs) en verkillend maniere hoe hierdie bronne kan help om stres te bemeester ("to cope") word vervolgens op die omstandighede wat die Boere beleef het, toegepas. Die bespreking word onderverdeel in materiële hulpbronne, motiveringsaspekte van stresbemeestering en intrapersoonlike hulpbronne.

Vervolgens word die guerrilla-oorlog as geheel beskou, met die klem wat geplaas word op

die sielkundige uitwerking wat die Boere se strategieë, en die Britse teenstrategieë, op die republikeinsemagte gehad het. Die tydperk word in vier fases verdeel waarvolgens die verloop van die oorlog uitgestippel word. Dit gee terselfdertyd ‘n geheelbeeld van die guerrilla-fase, vanaf die Boere se suksesse gedurende die vroeë maande daarvan, die geleidelike afname aan inisiatief namate die Britse strategie ‘n uitwerking getoon het, tot by die laaste maande, toe die enkele suksesvolle veldslae deur die Boere te laat was om ‘n ommekeer te bewerkstellig.

Laastens word die uitwerking wat die guerrilla-oorlog op ‘n klein, geselekteerde groep Boere gehad het, as gevallestudies bespreek. Die groep sluit in president M.T. Steyn, wie se gesondsheid uiteindelik geknak het en generaals C.R. de Wet en J.C. Smuts wie se sterk optredes vanuit ‘n sielkundige hoek bekyk word. Die gevolge van druk op kommandant G.J. Scheepers word ook onder die loep geneem en die stres-verwante ervarings van hoof-veldkornet H.S. van der Walt, burger P.J. du Toit en burger R.W. Schikkerling word ontleed.

Key terms

Cognitive appraisal – The evaluation of a stressor (an agent causing stress) by means of the processes of observing, recognition, imagination, reasoning, judging, recollection, learning and thinking.

Alarm reaction stage – (AR) The first stage of Selye's *General Adoption Syndrom* (GAS) theory when the first experience of stress is encountered. The normal level of resistance will initially drop when the individual takes fright, however he soon recovers and the level of resistance increases to above the normal and the *fight or flight* principle becomes applicable.

Stage of resistance – (SR) The stage that develops as the individual continues to experience the stress, meaning that he is becoming adapted to the stressor. This stage will continue as long as the body can handle the situation or until the stressor disappears. Additional hormones (adrenalines and cortisones) are required throughout this period to maintain an adequate level of resistance.

Stage of exhaustion – (SE) The stage that develops when the body's capacity of producing the increased levels of hormones becomes exhausted and the level of resistance drops drastically leading to physical exhaustion and even illness.

Psycho-physical ailment – Prolonged or intense stress may damage bodily organs that may lead to illness. When the individual's response to stress is abnormally intense and prolonged, the damage to organ systems contribute to the disease process.

General resistance resources – (GRRs) Resources that an individual has at his or her disposal that he or she can use to manage or to overcome stress.

Sense of coherence – (SOC) This is a dispositional orientation of an individual involving the elements of perception, memory, information processing and affect that lead him or her into habitual patterns of appraisal which are based on repeated experiences of sense making. There are three rudimentary elements of SOC namely *comprehensibility,*

manageability and *meaningfulness.*

Salutogenesis – Meaning the origin of health. Not all stressors are adverse and if they are managed well their affect may be neutral or may indeed be health enhancing.

Fortigenesis – Meaning the origin of strength. Following the concept of salutogenesis a new construct called *fortigenesis* is developed arguing that the successful management of stressors may not only lead to improved health but to increased psychological strength.

Transitional warfare phase – The stage of the Anglo-Boer War when the initial conventional warfare was coming to a close and the guerrilla phase was gradually taking over.

Guerrilla warfare – Derived from the Spanish *small war*, it signifies a form of warfare adopted by the strategically weaker side to give it the capability of taking the tactical offensive at chosen times and in certain places.

Drive – A military manouevre adopted by the British to use their superior numbers to concentrate the republican forces into positions where they would either surrender or could be captured.

New model drive – A revised strategy by the British in the early months of 1902 involving even larger numbers of troops that virtually surrounded the Boers, closing in on them with the intention to capture combatants, non-combatants, animals and vehicles.

Uitskud – A term widely used by Boers implying the taking of a captured enemy's clothes, boots, arms and ammunition.

Loot – The Concise Oxford Dictionary defines it as the action of taking goods from an enemy after a victory. It is used in this context and does not imply criminal or violent acts of stealing or destruction of property.

Contents

Introduction

The major persuasion in embarking on a topic of this nature was to obtain an insight into the psychological influence that guerrilla warfare had in the lives on the Boers who were on commando from September 1900 to May 1902 – the guerrilla phase of the Anglo-Boer War. It will be demonstrated that this is a new sphere of research where modern psychological theories are applied to events that have become recognized as part of history.

1. The historical framework

The Anglo-Boer War generated a host of written works – both historical and fictional – dealing with different aspects of the war. Although the historiography of the war was initially characterized by books, articles and dissertations concentrating on military related themes such as the recounting and analysing of major events and strategies as well as recording the actions of prominent military leaders, the emphasis has recently begun to move away from the military historiography toward social historiography. This evolution is in line with modern trends, as F. Pretorius contended in the introduction of his work *Kommandolewe tydens die Anglo-Boereoorlog 1899-1902,* published in 1991. He asserts that the military facets of the history of the Anglo-Boer War has not been exhausted – and the influx of new books and the reprinting of older works which have become available over the past decade indeed confirms this view. However, the tendency of historical research in the USA and Europe has migrated towards social-history, and he supports his claim by referring to numerous works on this subject which have appeared since 1970.[1]

This genre of social history has consequently also become more important in the historiography of the Anglo-Boer War and Pretorius' work about the life of burghers on commando – assisted by a number of works by other authors that relate to Boer-civilians and Black people – opened new doors in this sphere. Within this domain several themes have emerged that deal primarily with the experiences and the fate of different categories of people – including several race groups. Most outstanding among these topics is the history of women, children and

[1] F. Pretorius, *Kommandolewe tydens die Anglo-Boereoorlog 1899-1902*, p. 15.

certain non-combatant men in the concentration camps. Several works have been published which relate to this issue, several of which were written by authors who viewed the matter rather subjectively. A recent balanced collection of chapters titled *Scorched Earth* was edited by Pretorius and contains several relevant reviews. Among them is one dealing with the concentration camp in Bloemfontein written Elria Wessels, one considering the schools in the camps by Paul Zietsman and another deliberating the clash between British doctors and the Boer women, by Elizabeth van Heyningen.[2] The book was published in 2001 both in Afrikaans and English and it includes several other excellent articles relating to the British strategy of scorched earth. Another authoritative article about women was written by Dione Prinsloo and published in *The Anglo-Boer War; Commemorative lectures at the Rand Afrikaans University* in 1999 with G. Verhoef as the editor.[3]

There were also Europeans of different origins who were not in camps but who were living either freely in their homes, or were hiding in the veld.The collection of lectures edited by Verhoef include a paper on the Jewish community of Johannesburg that stressed the role they played in maintaining vigilance in the city and after the majority had been relocated, how an ambulance corps was established by those who remained.[4] There were moreover Black people of various clans or groupings, either employed in doing military service for the British or working as civilians. Among them were many Black people who were held in camps by the British. The issue of Black people during the Anglo-Boer War was dealt with extensively by Peter Warwick in his dissertation which was published in1983 with the title *Black people and the South African War 1899-1902.* Warwick deals with Black people over most of southern Africa, and includes features such as the quest of the Black mineworkers, and the concentration camp system for Black people.[5] In *Scorched Earth* Stowell Kessler contributed a chapter titled "The black and coloured concentration camps" and J.S. Mohlamme wrote a chapter named "African refugee camps in the Boer republics".[6] It therefore becomes clear that the issues of women in concentration camps and those of Black people either in military service or held in camps are themes of the social history that have received substantial attention in recent years.

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2 F. Pretorius (ed.), *Scorched earth*, pp. 60-85, 86-109, 178-197.

3 G. Verhoef (ed.), *Die Anglo-Boereoorlog: Herdenkingslesings aan die Randse Afrikaanse Universiteit*, pp. 52-65.

4 G. Verhoef (ed.), *Die Anglo-Boereoorlog: Herdenkingslesings aan die Randse Afrikaanse Universiteit*, pp. 96-101.

5 P. Warwick, *Black people and the South African War 1899-1902.*

6 F. Pretorius (ed.), *Scorched earth*, pp. 110-131, 132-153.

Then there were those burghers who were no longer actively engaged on the side of the Boers, some of whom were held in prisoner of war camps, while others had merely laid down their arms to become known as "hendsoppers", or more serious, had joined the British forces earning them the derogatory name of "joiners". The issue of these two groups who had voluntarily laid down their arms is dealt with in detail by Albert Grundlingh in *Die "hendoppers" en "joiners": die rasionaal van verraad,* which was first published in 1979.[7] A second addition was published in 2000 by another publisher, forming part of the centenary commemoration of the Anglo-Boer War. This publication gives valuable data, as well as enlightening views on why burghers abandoned their struggle. Within the same group – burghers who were taken out of the war effort – but who were held as prisoners of war, there are numerous annotated diaries for example *"Dagboek" van Rocco de Villiers,* which was annotated by M.C.E. van Schoor and published in Christiaan de Wet-Annale 3 in 1975[8] and *Krijgsgevangenschap van L.C. Ruijssenaers* edited and annotated by O.J.O. Ferreira and published by the Council for Human-sciences Research in 1977.[9] There are moreover several other publications in a more popular style that support this range. It should be noted that except for the sources by Pretorius and Grundlingh mentioned above, the rest that are mentioned do not relate directly to this study.

This then leaves the category of participants who were combatants in the war. Naturally they were divided into the two sides, the Boers and the British. For this study it was decided to concentrate on the experiences of the Boers. Both Pretorius and Grundlingh worked from this same platform, but whereas this investigation is restricted to the experiences, hardships and ordeals of Boers during the guerrilla phase of the war, the works of both Pretorius and Grundlingh deal with the entire period of the war. Grundlingh focusses on Boers who yielded to the pressures applied by their enemies and who discontinued fighting for the Boers. Pretorius on the other hand goes into great detail regarding the life of burghers who were on commando but, in contrast with this research, his investigation does not take the war's psychological impact on the participants into account. The essence of this study is to delve deeper into the influence of guerrilla warfare on the lives of burghers and officers who were combatants during the guerrilla phase of the Anglo-Boer War. Hence the title of the study:

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7 A.M. Grundlingh, *Die 'hendsoppers" en "joiners": Die rasionaal van verraad, ibid.*

8 M.C.E. van Schoor (ed.), " 'Dagboek' van Rocco de Villiers en Bylaes" in *Christiaan de Wet-Annale*, pp. 3-103.

9 O.J.O. Ferreira (ed.), *Krijgsgevagenschap van L.C.Ruijssenaers.*

"The psychological impact of guerrilla warfare on the Boer forces during the Anglo-Boer War" is aimed at stressing the psycho-historical nature of the Boer's experiences during the guerrilla phase. As no secondary sources which have a direct bearing on this subject matter exist, the information was primarily derived from diaries and memoirs of burghers and officers and the appropriate psychological conclusions were then made.

Among the most important memoirs that were consulted are Christiaan de Wet's *Three years war,* a translation of his original work *De strijdt tusschen Boer en Brit* which was written shortly after peace had been agreed on and while De Wet was still *en route* to England with Generals Louis Botha and Koos de la Rey. De Wet's extensive portrayal of his important role in the war and his close relation with President M.T. Steyn are worthwhile sources of information. *Commando* was the journal written by Deneys Reitz the son of F.W. Reitz, State Secretary of the Transvaal. It deals with the experiences of Reitz as a youngster on commando from the very beginning of hostilities until the peace negotiations at Vereeniging. The preface was written by General Jan Smuts, under whose command Reitz had spent the final months of the war. It supplies meaningful pictures of the young burgher's adventures and enthusiasm. *Eighteen months under General De la Rey* was authored by Max Weber a Swiss geologist who fought as a volunteer during the guerrilla phase and describes his experiences often with critical remarks regarding the Boers' attitudes towards their country. The major diaries referred to in the study – some were annotated and others not – were *Diary of a National Scout P.J. du Toit 1900-1902* edited by J.P. Brits, in which the infidelity and lack of hope in the Boer cause leads Du Toit to join the British. *Oorlogsdagboek van 'n Transvaalse burger te velde,* is the candid diary of Fritz Rothmann that was edited by his sister M.E.R. (M.E. Rothmann). Rothmann's depiction of the tribulations leads to understanding of a Boer's life full of hardship. The diary of the young and knowledgeable burgher Roland Schikkerling under the title *Commando courageous (A Boer's diary)* not only explains the fear of battle and deprivations of those who were on commando, but it provides some of the humour and compassion that the young man experienced . Events and dates regarding the information mentioned in the diaries and memoirs, were confirmed by secondary sources such as five of J.H. Breytenbach's series *Geskiedenis van die Tweede Vryheidsoorlog 1899-1902*; by part V of *The Times history of the war in South Africa,* edited by L.S. Amery; Thomas Pakenham's *The Boer War*; André Wessels' *Die Anglo-Boereoorlog 1899-1902 'n oorsig van die militêre verloop van die stryd* and *Waarom die Boere die oorlog verloor het* by Leopoldt Scholtz.

The duration of the war has recently been conveniently divided into three periods. The first few months which lasted until Pretoria was occupied on 5 June 1900[10] is generally known as the "conventional phase" because of the conventional form of warfare that was generally employed at the time. The date of 5 June 1900 is, however, arbitrary, as some measure of guerrilla warfare indeed followed the Boer's defeat at Paardeberg on 27 February 1900.[11] It could therefore well be argued that the second phase or "transitional phase", began after the Battle of Paardeberg. There were still conventional battles fought, but at the same time a number of smaller and mobile-type encounters took place in a number of positions. It was only after the Boers had lost the battle at Dalmanutha in the eastern Transvaal, towards the end of August 1900,[12] that conventional warfare was finally considered to be over and it was replaced by "guerrilla warfare".

At that stage it was agreed that both republics would continue the war, but that the Boer commandos and cadres would henceforth be self reliant in respect of arms and ammunition, food and clothing, horses and saddlery as well as medical requirements. These units were to be highly mobile and would act as the aggressor wherever possible. Consequently the study deals primarily with the twenty-one months from September 1900 to May 1902. It should nevertheless, immediately be stated that, except where it bears a direct relation to the psychological background of the subject matter, the scorched earth policy as it was implemented by the British forces during those months and all its associated features such as concentration camps, the destruction of farms and homesteads or the technicalities of the blockhouse system, does not form an inherent part of this study.

One of the reasons for electing to concentrate the study on the guerrilla phase is the deficiency in the historiography of the Anglo-Boer War of a cohesive description of that phase of the war. Considering the wide geographical area where the conflict took place and also that this was the phase that lasted for the longest period of the 32 months of the war, the rationale for focussing on the guerrilla phase becomes obvious. If it should then also be argued that during the transitional phase – March 1900 to September 1900 – a certain amount of guerrilla-type of war was fought, the duration – and the impact – of this phase actually increases. The unfolding of the guerrilla phase of the war and the course that it eventually followed, forms the essential setting

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10 J.H. Breytenbach, *Geskiedenis van die Tweede Vryheidsoorlog,* V, pp. 546-547.

11 J.H. Breytenbach, *Geskiedenis van die Tweede Vryheidsoorlog,* IV, p. 421.

12 A. Wessels, *Die Anglo-Boereoorlog 1899-1902 'n oorsig van die militêre verloop van die stryd*, p. 29.

for the study of the psychological impact on Boers and it became clear that this aspect needed particular attention. Although many sources – some of which are mentioned above – deal with the experiences of individuals during the guerrilla phase, or alternatively, with specific manoeuvres that took place in this phase, there nonetheless remains a need for one cohesive account of that period. The complete picture of the guerrilla phase, its vacillations and its psychological influence have thus far not been recorded. This study will aim to fill these voids.

2. The psychological framework

The parameters as it is set out above implies that this research becomes a multi-disciplinary study and therefore it grows necessary to explore the psychological issues that have a bearing on this subject. Psychology, in contrast with history, does not rely on a foundation of the recording of adventures, explorations, political, military and other events of a national nature. Therefore it does not rely on a basis similar to "historiography". The term "epistemology", meaning the theory of knowledge, could probably be useful in this context. Alternatively, and this seems preferable, the phrase "a discourse on psychology" can be used. Because any discourse on psychology will be very diverse due to the many subdivisions within the discipline, only limited sources, which have a direct bearing on the subject matter of the study were used. The pivotal theme was health psychology with important works by researchers such as Aaron Antonovsky's *Unraveling the mystery of health; How people manage stress and stay well* which was published in 1987 and the important article by Suzanne C. Kobasa pertaining to commitment and coping which was published in *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* in 1982. Other important works which are in fact textbooks relating to this theme are *Health psychology: challenging the biomedical model* by C.L. Sheridan and S.A. Radmacher which appeared in 1992 and *An introduction to health psychology* authored by Andrew Baum, Robert J. Gatchel and David S. Krantz of which the third edition was published in 1997. Another significant segment of the discourse on health psychology are the two articles by the South African researcher D.J.W. Strümpfer, firstly his article on salutogenesis and, following that, his well argued paper on fortigenesis. In both these articles Strümpfer reviews the work of contemporaries such as Antonovsky and Kobasa. These articles were published in the *South African Journal of Psychology*, the first in 1990 and the next in 1995.

At the time of the Anglo-Boer War no firm theories that related to health psychology had been formulated and consequently no relevant literature exists. It was only after the Korean and the Vietnam Wars that psychologists began to realise the implications of warfare on the combatants. Several works have since been published relating to wars and their aftermaths. It is Hans Binneveld who in his book *From shellshock to combat stress,* published in 1997, first used the phrase *psychologically wounded,* indicating a third category of war victim. Previously war victims were classified as either dead or physically wounded. In 1990 Betty Glad edited a collection of essays with the title *Psychological dimensions of war.* It includes several chapters that are relevant to the subject, in particular a contribution by Anthony Kellett called "The soldier in battle: Motivational and behavioural aspects of the combat experience."[13] There are presently numerous works dealing with the issues of health psychology as it relates to war.

Associated to both the guerrilla phase as well as the psychological influences of such a war on the men involved, the present theory of guerrilla warfare had to be surveyed, as well as the history of the development of guerrilla war. A literary search revealed several works that are useful. The one book that seems to cover the subject matter most adequately is the work by Walter Laqueur called *Guerrilla: A historical and critical study.* This expansive study of the topic, which appeared in 1977, does exactly what the title says, namely reviews the history if the subject giving clarity on the variety of the terminology related to the issue and thereafter critically reviews guerrilla wars as they have transpired universally. This was a most useful source on the subject. Laqueur is a well known researcher in the realm of modern warfare. He is at present a prominent author of modern military history, specialising in political violence, terrorism, weapons of mass destruction and the eastern European dilemma. He is also co-chairman of the International Research Council situated in Washington.[14] Closer to home the work of Roland de Villiers called *Mobiele oorlogvoering,* published in1987, concentrated on the modern aspects of mobile warfare. It incorporates the modern materials of warfare in the situation of "bushwar" as it is focussed on the South African war in Anglola in the late 1980's and soon after. Nonetheless several principles remain basically the same as the theoretical writings on guerrilla warfare by Mao Zedong and Ché Guevara after the Chinese Communists successes in ousting the Nationalist Chinese in 1949 and the victory of Fidel Castro in 1959.

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13 B. Glad (ed.), *Psychological dimensions of war,* pp. 215-235.

14 http://usinfo.state.gov/journals

3. The blending of the elements

This then brings the three major elements of the study closer together. The last 21 months of the Anglo-Boer War called the guerrilla phase must by matched to the modern concepts of the doctrine of guerrilla warfare, while the topic of psychological health, with both its negative and positive elements, must the be intertwined in the scenario. Moreover, the information on which the deductions of the experiences of the Boers are made can only to be found in descriptions and other preserved documents of participants in a war that took place more than 100 years ago. It therefore means that modern theories and intelligence should be over-imposed on the recorded information, in an effort to reach a meaningful conclusion regarding the psychological impact of their ordeals. In summary it can be envisioned that there are three legs upon which this stool can stand. Firstly, the knowledge of modern theories concerning health psychology with its special relation to situations pertaining to warfare, and the situation of the *psychologically wounded* as compared to the earlier views concerning these soldiers and their behaviour on the battlefield. Secondly, most importantly, an understanding of the ideology of guerrilla warfare and the ramifications on the men who are involved in this age old, but nevertheless also modern form of warfare. Thirdly to develop an awareness of the Boers who were exposed to the stressors related to guerrilla warfare, what they had experienced and were forced to live through and how they coped with these situations by means of the resources at their disposal.

Consequently this thesis is structured along the following model: The first chapter, dealing with the conventional warfare in the first months of the war, supplies the required backdrop for the analytical and deductive portion of the work that follows. This brief overview of the conventional phase sets the scene in order that the two supplementary parts of the framework make sense. This first chapter does not pretend to be anything more than a brief outline of the opening stage of the war, a stage that has been well documented, analysed and commented on, over and over again. In fact, for many authors of historical works the first five months, with possibly including Lord Roberts' advance to Pretoria, were, in fact, the heart of the war, and consequently the remainder of the war is often left out or simply neglected.

The second chapter furnishes the background on the issues of health psychology that were

encountered in this study. The range of this topic starts with the concepts of stress and stressors, distinguishing between the different categories of stressors that lead to the cognitive appraisal of the stressors. The historical development of the concept of stress, beginning with Selye's GAS-theory and continuing to the more recent unfolding of certain constructs and theories, is also considered. Another important element of the study of stress and that receive critical attention is the matter of the general resistance resources (GRRs) that are at the disposal of an individual and that help him or her to cope with, or even to overcome stress. The negative outcomes, implying that the individual is not able to cope with stress, as well as the positive outcomes — called salutogenesis and fortigenesis — are finally referred to.

Then, in the third chapter, the theory of guerrilla warfare – the Spanish for *small war* – is examined and clarified. The terminology around the subject is often confusing and becomes misleading in the manner that it is used in the news-media. Therefore this aspect receives attention. The development and history of small war, ranging from Gideon and his band of 300 through to Mao Zedong's exploit in the mid 20th century, are discussed in order to illustrate, among other matters, how certain elements of small war changed over time according to the modernization of the tools of war. The essence or nature of guerrilla warfare is dealt with, accentuating the "David and Goliath" related principles of harassment, avoidance of decisive battles, sabotage of supplies and communication and effectively employing the elements of surprise and confusion. The fundamental requirements for successful small war, namely those of time, space and will as it was proclaimed by Mao Zedong, are examined. Additional thoughts on related issues such as the ideal combatants and the costs involved in guerrilla warfare are also considered.

With the frameworks regarding the elements of health psychology and the principles of guerrilla warfare now in place, the following chapter considers specific events that took place during the months of the transitional phase of the Anglo-Boer War, which were important to developments in the guerrilla phase. This chapter does not endeavour to give a complete historical account of those few months in the middle of 1900, but rather to lift out a number of the important incidents that were relevant to the guerrilla stage. In order to understand the progress of the war in the 21 months that followed, and to be able to envision the difficulties and problems encountered by the Boers, the next chapter furnishes an outline of the separate regions in terms

of their environmental features, the socio-economic issues of that time and the military aspects as viewed from the Boers' situation. The seven regions are chosen along the lines of the military organization of the republican armies at the time. The chapter includes a comprehensive table portraying the military actions in the seven regions over the period of guerrilla warfare and indicating whether the event was initiated by the Boers or the British. This table certainly has its deficiencies, but it serves to reveal the trends at certain times and under certain leaders.

The study then focusses of the most basic element of the stress concept, namely the identification of the profusion of factors that acted as stressors to the Boers during their life on commando. Because of the large number of situations that were involved in causing stress, whether it was short termed and cataclysmic stress, or of a prolonged and personal nature or possibly only irritating in essence, this becomes a voluminous chapter. The review of these stressors is arranged according to the actual situation as it applied in those months, rather than according to the theory of the psychology textbooks. The categories which are adopted reflect the military situations, the influence of the loss of the infrastructure of the two republics, environmental factors, daily hardships, anguish and, finally, the personal disposition of the men.

Following the study of the various stressors that were encountered by the Boers, it is logic that the topic of the Boer's resistance resources be examined and the question of their coping with, or alternatively yielding to, the wide variety or stressors, is explored. Once again the material is arranged according to the actual situation as it prevailed at the time, although, in a certain sense, Sheridan and Radmacher's guideline – as defined in their work on health psychology – is followed.[15] This chapter is concluded with a table detailing 41 men who served as Boer-generals during the closing months (January to May 1902) of the war. Once again, the purpose of this table is not intended to be used as a reference work concerning the Boer leadership. That would fall outside the scope of this study. It is merely intended to illustrate specific aspects related to the individual's ability to cope with the multitude of stressors brought on by military leadership. Among these facets are features such as the age of the officers, the extent of their education and supervisory experience and any formal military training they might have had. Although the average age of the generals coincides with the guidelines suggested by Laqueur, that is from their late twenties to early forties,[16] the general level of formal education

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15 C.L. Sheridan and S.A. Radmacher, *Health Psychology: challenging the biomedical model*, pp. 151-153.

16 W. Laqueur, *Guerrilla: A historical and critical study*, pp. 397-398.

and working experience is an indication of inability.

At this stage, with an understanding of the psychological elements that applied to the Boers at that time and with a grounding on the theory of guerrilla warfare, it is only logical that this knowledge should be applied on the war and that the guerrilla phase should be considered in its totality as it is seen from the Boer's point of view. Therefore the 21 months that are considered as the guerrilla phase are segmented into four stages, each one exhibiting the particular trend and style of the struggle that prevailed at that particular time. The first stage deals with the beginning of the guerrilla war (September 1900 to January 1901), followed by the term that points to the fact that the tide of war was turning against the Boers (February 1901 to August 1901). The third stage (August 1901 to December 1901) considers the months of the watershed in the guerrilla war and the following stage (January1902 to May 1902) depicts the last scenes of the war. A clear pattern emerges relating to the Boers' outlooks, and bears a strong relationship with the changing psychological status of the bulk of the Boers.

Finally the two questions that needed to be answered in the study can be addressed. Firstly, the issue of whether the protracted war could rightfully be labelled a guerrilla war is examined. Secondly the psychological impact of the guerrilla phase of the war on a number of Boers is considered. The group that is examined consists of men of different levels of seniority in the Boer hierarchy, various ages, unequal levels of education and varying origins. It is granted that it is a very small group when it is compared to the total number of Boers who where exposed to all the stressors, and it is neither claimed to be a statistical nor to be a representative sample. These particular seven individuals where specifically selected to demonstrate the infinite variety of psychological impacts that was possible among guerrilla combatants.

Although the study covered a wide range of themes, the crucial question of how the guerrilla war impacted psychologically on the Boers, be it individually or as a group, was always kept in mind and it acted as the guideline to stay on track.

Chapter I

The conventional war

A brief survey of the first phase of the Anglo-Boer War : from 11 October 1899 to 27 February 1900

1. The imbalances

This study deals primarily with the circumstances and the psychological influences on the Boers — officers and burghers — during the guerrilla phase of the Anglo Boer War. It would, however, be a mistake to approach this later phase of the war in isolation, as the scene for this type of warfare was set during the early months, when conventional positional warfare was waged. In this chapter the situation during the opening months will be examined. But before taking a closer look at what took place during the first phase of the war, one should perhaps pause to reflect on the vast dissimilarities between in the opposing sides.

Firstly, the military organization implemented by the British and that used by the Boers were markedly different. Traditionally the two Boer republics relied on the commando system when military action was required. In terms of the legislation of the republican governments,[1] the fighting force was made up of the citizens (burghers) of the country who were between 16 and 60 years old. It was called a citizen force (*burgermag*) and although it bears some resemblance to a militia force (which is normally used to supplement a regular army), in the case of the Boers very little military drill or training was provided. F. Pretorius points out, with reference to Jock Haswell's study on "citizen armies", that it was very much a people's army.[2] The Boers' method of operation was largely informal and initially most officers (excluding generals) were democratically elected.[3] During military action operational decisions were taken jointly by the officer-corps (*krygsraad*).[4] Each burgher was expected to supply his own rifle and thirty rounds of ammunition; in the Free State farm dwellers also had to have a horse, a saddle and bridle. In practice however the republican governments often supplied these necessities. Although many

1 J.H.Breytenbach, *Geskiedenis van die Tweede Vryheidsoorlog 1899-1902,* I, p. 32.

2 F. Pretorius, *Kommandolewe tydens die Anglo-Boereoorlog 1899-1902*, p. 18.

3 J.H. Breytenbach, *Geskiedenis,* I, pp. 37-39.

4 J.H. Breytenbach, *Geskiedenis,* I, pp. 44-45.

burghers were farmers with little education, there were men from the cities and towns who were, for example, civil servants, doctors, clergymen, teachers, shop assistants, black-smiths, transport drivers, students and school boys.

When the Anglo-Boer War broke out on 11 October 1899, the military strength of the non-professional commandos was augmented by state artillery units – who were paid soldiers – from both republics. In addition there were police force units, primarily from the Zuid Afrikaansche Republiek, with a small contingent (150 men) from the Free State, as well as numerous foreign volunteers.[5]

The British, on the other hand, used the usual infantry divisions as their major fighting force. These were supported by artillery batteries and cavalry, according to the Prussian model popular at the time.[6] The army was clearly demarcated into officers and those who belonged to the other ranks, namely the non-commissioned officers and privates. According to W. Baring Pemberton many officers viewed the army as a "congenial club for gentlemen" and showed little interest in the study of military matters.[7] Jay Luvaas quoted the British military historian, General Patric MacDougal, claiming as late as 1884 the British army had yet to produce a body of professional officers. He questioned the tactical instruction given to officers as being too focussed on offensive tactics at a time when, with the improved weapons, more could be gained by defence.[8] The British officer corps was clearly not as efficient as their German and French counterparts.

The other ranks in the British army were described by Pemberton as a "cross-section of the labouring population ... in general poorly educated ... a crowd of men in uniform; not an instrument of war."[9] Roland Schikkerling, a young burgher, described his first glimpse of a British soldier with some degree of disillusion. He claimed that they were small and that some had "naked bully beef slapped in their pockets, so that the grease oozed through."[10] They were clearly men who had signed up and were paid for their military duties. They were well drilled and were extremely well disciplined, but they lacked operational field training and musketry skills.

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5 J.H. Breytenbach, *Geskiedenis,* I, pp. 52-68.

6 C.J. Nöthling, A short overview of the Anglo-Boer Wars and the Jameson raid in *South African Military Yearbook, 1998*, p. 6.

7 W.B. Pemberton, *Battles of the Boer war*, p. 28.

8 J. Luvaas, *The education of an army*, pp. 123-124.

9 W.B. Pemberton, *Battles of the Boer war*, p. 26.

10 R.W. Schikkerling, *Commando couragous (a Boer's, diary)*, p. 10.

Secondly the difference in the size of the opposing forces needs some consideration. The exact numbers of republicans liable for call-up will probably never be known as sources differ considerably on this. Pretorius alluded to these differences and concluded that the most acceptable number of burghers who were subject to commando service was J.H. Breytenbach's estimate of 54 667 men, 32 353 from the Zuid Afrikaansche Republiek (ZAR) and 22 314 from the Free State.[11] Approximately 60% of these men were commandeered for military duty when war threatened in late 1899. Yet, according to statistics supplied by Breytenbach, many of these burghers did not answer the call. Of the Middelburg and Pretoria Commandos only 36.9% and 39.8% respectively reported for duty.[12] J.W. Meijer endorsed this tendency, noting the reluctance of members of the Johannesburg Commando to honour their call up orders.[13] The military attachés from the Netherlands reported that not even the commandant-general knew the exact number of burghers at his disposal. Then too, the number of ordinary burghers was augmented by the presence of foreign volunteers, Witwatersrand volunteers and the State Artillery Corps.[14] Ryane Kruger agreed that mobilization orders brought about 35 000 burghers into the field.[15] Unfortunately for the republics, this figure was to shrink dramatically as the war progressed.

Britain, on the other hand, was in a much stronger position. Although in October 1899 she only had 21 000 men in or on their way to South Africa, reinforced with an estimated 6 000 local colonial troops,[16] she had massive reserves to call upon. Even so, the borders of the two republics were too extensive to be held by the available men. On the eve of the war the British regular army was made up of nearly 228 000 officers, NCO's and men.[17] The additional reserves from the other colonies, namely Australia, New Zealand, Canada and India, are not included in these statistics. The British numbers increased sharply when it became clear that the Boers were not going to be easily defeated, and by early 1900 Lord Frederick Roberts had 180 000 men under his command.[18]

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11 F. Pretorius, *Die Anglo-Boereoorlog 1899 - 1902*, p. 13.

12 J.H. Breytenbach, *Geskiedenis,* I, pp. 153, 161.

13 J.W.Meijer, "Ben Viljoen se rol as kommandant van die Johannesburg-kommando, 1899-1900", in F. Pretorius (ed.), *'n Oorlog om by stil te staan - Die Anglo Boereoorlog 1899 – 1902*, pp. 243-245.

14 J.H. Breytenbach, *Geskiedenis,* I, pp. 160-161.

15 R. Kruger, *Good-bye, Dolly Gray*, p. 62.

16 A. Wessels, *Die Anglo-Boereoorlog 1899-1902 – 'n oorsig van die militêre verloop van die stryd*, p. 3; L. Scholtz, *Waarom die Boere die oorlog verloor het*, p. 31.

17 J.H. Breytenbach, *Geskiedenis,* I, p. 1.

18 R. Kruger, *Good-bye, Dolly Gray*, p. 201.

Thirdly the expertise of the men making up the two opposing forces differed notably. The burghers of the Boer force were not drilled to obey orders and were untrained in military matters. Their only training was in target-shooting practice and occasional military gatherings (*wapenskouings*).[19] However, their natural knowledge of the terrain, their ability to shoot accurately with the new Mauser rifles and their considerable horse riding skill compensated in some measure for other failings. Nevertheless, the lack of military drill meant that discipline would always be a stumbling block for the Boer forces, especially during the early part of the war. Pemberton, who called the 35 000 burghers who started the war "35 000 generals", claimed that at a later stage their frontiersman mentality, self-reliance and self-sufficiency naturally led to individuality and this in turn led to a lack of discipline.[20]

Offsetting this Boer image is that of the typical British soldier. His military training, although it included drill work, parades and inspections, did not entirely prepare him for a war in the rough, harsh South African veld. Nor did it equip him to fight against an unconventional enemy such as the Boers. He came from a cool, wet European climate to the hot, dry African summer. He was not trained to shoot accurately with his Lee-Metford rifle, but to fire in volleys. The most important requirement as far as the British were concerned was to fire simultaneously, whether standing or kneeling, in the direction of the enemy. During group practice sessions a mere 200 rounds of ammunition per man per year were allowed. He was not trained to make use of the terrain and the shelter it offered, but to advance in marching order. To take cover was considered degrading for a gallant British soldier.[21] At the time the use of horses other than by officers or the cavalry was practically unknown to the British.

An appraisal of the supply of weapons available to the two adversaries highlights the fourth basic difference between them. Britain was largely self-reliant as far as weapons and ammunition were concerned, manufacturing .303 inch caliber Lee-Metford (and after 1895, Lee-Enfield) rifles for their infantry,[22] and Armstrong and Howitzer guns for their artillery. The two Boer republics, in contrast, had to import all their weapon and ammunition requirements, primarily from Europe. These included the modern German Mauser 7 mm. bolt action rifles, that had been issued to many burghers, and the French Creusot and German Krupp guns, as well as all the ammunition they needed.

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19 J.H. Breytenbach, *Geskiedenis,* I, p. 48; F. Pretorius, *Kommandolewe*, p. 207.

20 W.B. Pemberton, *Battles of the Boer War*, p. 17.

21 W.B. Pemberton, *Battles of the Boer War*, p. 28.

22 J.H. Breytenbach, *Geskiedenis,* I, pp. 7-8.

Fifthly, the British were also supported in the field by the newly formed Royal Army Medical Corps which could deal with battle casualties and other health problems. This corps was part of the military command structure, with a trained doctor and two medical orderlies for each brigade. There were sufficient medical equipment and a good supply of medicines to accompany British troops in the field.[23] The republicans were not so fortunate. The burghers had to rely on the volunteer *Transvaalsche Roode Kruis*, which was later replaced by a government appointed medical commission, or on the Free State's ambulance corps under the direction of Dr. A.E.W. Ramsbottom. A number of civilian doctors and nurses offered their services, and several volunteer ambulance units came from Europe to augment the medical support for burghers on the war front.[24]

The British were technologically more advanced in matters of signalling and reconnaissance, as is shown by their early experiments with radio and their use of fixed balloons. Very important too was the fact that the British enjoyed the full use of four colonial harbours – Cape Town, Port Elizabeth, East London and Durban – each connected by rail to the interior (see Map I-1 below). Historian Leopold Scholtz makes the point that the development of rail transport since the mid 1800s had a positive as well as negative impact on military operations. While it enhanced the movement of troops and goods, making for faster transportation of larger quantities over difficult terrain, it also made armies much more dependent on the proximity of railways.[25]

In contrast to this situation, the two republics were landlocked. All their requirements from overseas before the war had to be channelled through Portuguese controlled Delagoa Bay (Lourenço Marques) in neighbouring Mozambique. Although there was a rail link between Pretoria and Lourenço Marques by the time the war started, the value of the railway was curtailed when Britain enforced an old, unratified, treaty she had with Portugal. When the British under Major-General R. Pole-Carew occupied the border at Komatipoort on 24 September 1900, this link was finally broken.

The influence of these disparities, largely in favour of Britain, become more complex when one considers that each Boer, from the commandant general to the lowliest burgher, perceived that he was fighting to maintain republican independence and to protect both his country and personal property. The British, though technically they did not begin the war, were nonetheless seen in Boer

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23 J.H. Breytenbach, *Geskiedenis,* I, pp. 18-19.

24 J.H. Breytenbach, *Geskiedenis,* I, pp. 72-74.

25 L. Scholtz, *Waarom die Boere die oorlog verloor het*, p. 36.

eyes as the aggressor, aiming to vanquish the *volk* and take control of their land. Scholtz makes this clear when he pronounces that Britain's strategy was to destroy the Boer republics and replace them with British colonies which could then be merged with the Cape, Natal and possibly Rhodesia. [26]

When the early progress of the war and the imbalances discussed above are considered, it becomes clear that it was a lopsided contest from the first. Despite the dissimilarities that made the gauge swing heavily in favour of the British, it was indeed the Boer republics who delivered their ultimatum on 9 October 1899. It is a well recorded fact that although the British were themselves planning to deliver an ultimatum by the end of October,[27] it suited them very well that the Boer republics had decided to take the initiative.[28]

2. The first battles

When hostilities commenced in October 1899, three major fronts could be identified. They were the eastern front along the Natal-Transvaal border, the southern front along the north-eastern Cape Colony and Free State borders and thirdly, the western front near the border between the north-western Cape Colony and the western Free State and western Transvaal. A fourth front, the so-called northern front between the northern Transvaal and the then Bechuanaland, is mentioned by various historians,[29] but it was comparatively insignificant. The disposition of the forces and the geographical location of the three fronts are illustrated below.

Table I–B.1. The disposition of the forces at the beginning of the hostilities in October 1899 [30]

Front	Republicans	British
Eastern (Natal / Transvaal border)	17 500	15 811
Western (NW Cape / Transvaal & OFS western borders)	10 800	5 145
Southern (NE Cape / OFS southern border)	2 500	approximately 3 300

26 L. Scholtz, *Waarom die Boere die oorlog verloor het*, pp. 15-16.

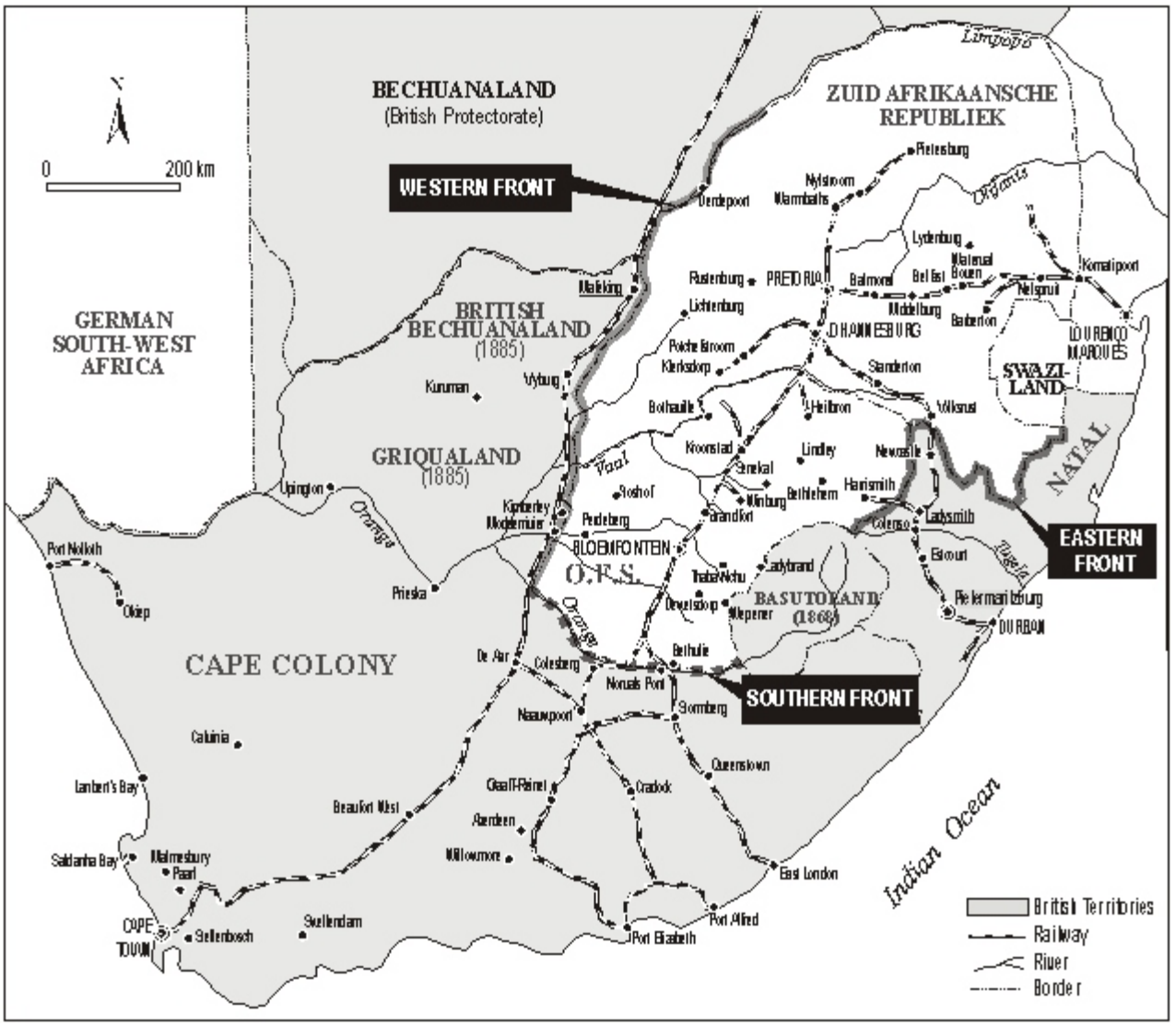
27 J.H. Breytenbach, *Geskiedenis*, I, pp. 126-127; L. Scholtz, *Waarom die Boere die oorlog verloor het*, p. 26.

28 R. Kruger, *Good-bye, Dolly Gray*, p. 55; T. Pakenham, *The Boer War*, p. 109; P.G. Cloete, *The Anglo-Boer War a chronology*, p. 34.

29 A. Wessels, *Die militêre verloop van die stryd*, p. 9.

30 J.H. Breytenbach, *Geskiedenis,* I, pp. 146-153.

Other (Northern Transvaal, Swaziland & Basutoland borders)	approximately 4 500	500



Map I-1. Southern Africa in October 1899, illustrating the harbours and railway lines and the three contested fronts.

When the surprisingly cheeky ultimatum[31] expired at five o'clock on 11 October 1899 there was no immediate action. The reason for this may be found in the fact that the Boer supreme commander, Commandant General P.J. (Piet) Joubert, was himself opposed to any direct confrontation with Britain. Furthermore, the Boer leaders did not see this as a war of conquest and

[31] T. Pakenham, *The Boer War*, pp. 103-104.

were thus reluctant to enter into enemy territory.[32] This might also have been the reasoning of General P.A. (Piet) Cronjé on the western front; he left it to his second-in-command and adviser General J.H. (Koos) de la Rey to initiate the first action of the war at Kraaipan, south of Mafeking, on 12 October 1899.

The debate about whether or not the leaders of the Boer republics had a clear plan to guide them once hostilities began, hostilities which they surely realised their ultimatum would unleash, is discussed in some detail by Scholtz. The lack of what General J.C. (Jan) Smuts called an "all encompassing plan" and the uncertainty that this gave rise to,[33] leads one to form the impression that the Boer leaders were hoping that the British would make the first aggressive move, which in the event, however, the British were loath to take.[34]

Instead, the British used the respite to their advantage. It gave them the opportunity to strengthen their forces and to make their final arrangements. In fact the designated commander of the British forces in South Africa, the somewhat reluctant General Sir Redvers Buller, only left Southampton docks aboard the *Dunottar Castle* on Saturday 14 October.[35] The war in South Africa had actually started without Britain's chosen commander. It is hardly surprising that they welcomed any deferment of military action.

The most significant early battles of the war took place on the eastern front. Breytenbach and Scholtz both show that the republicans were not planning to occupy Natal; they hoped to crush the threatening British force on the Transvaal border. Only on 14 October 1899 did Joubert cross into Natal and on the following day he occupied Newcastle. With the war already nine days old the Boers made an attempt to enter Dundee and the first real battle took place at Talana Hill. This turned into a comedy of errors. According to the Boers' battle plan, General Lucas Meyer would launch the attack from Talana Hill, supported by General D.J.E. Erasmus with 1 500 burghers.[36] However, due to heavy early morning mist, Erasmus did not move from his position as previously agreed.Deneys Reitz, who was a member of the Pretoria Commando under Erasmus, described how they were anticipating joining the fray, the sounds of which they could hear coming from below, while their general "merely stood glowering into the fog without reply". Breytenbach

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32 L. Scholtz, *Waarom die Boere die oorlog verloor het*, pp. 29-32.

33 L. Scholtz, *Waarom die Boere die oorlog verloor het*, pp. 29-32.

34 W.B. Pemberton, *Battles of the Boer War*, p. 29.

35 T. Pakenham, *The Boer War*, p. 113.

36 D. Reitz, *Commando*, p. 27.

confirms that Erasmus did not participate as planned.[37] During the action General William Penn-Symons, the commander of the Dundee force, rashly led a frontal counter attack against the Boers on Talana and was mortally wounded.[38] Despite this Meyer's burghers retreated, conceding defeat. The British supreme commander in Natal, General G.S. White admitted: "... it was hardly a satisfactory victory".[39] It was indeed a victory to the British only because the Boers had fled.

Then followed a few sparring actions. The very next day an over confident General J.H.M. Kock and about 1 000 men, including Commandant A. Schiel and 140 of his German Corps and roughly 130 Hollanders under V. de Witt Hamer, ran into trouble at Elandslaagte station.[40] A concerted attack by British units under Colonel Ian Hamilton, gave rise to serious problems for Kock and the hapless Hollanders and Germans, many of whom were killed and wounded and Adolf Schiel among those who were captured. When the Boers and their foreign compatriots fled in defeat, they ran into the waiting cavalry who applied cold steel, reputedly ignoring attempts to surrender.[41] On 24 October, General White with a sizeable force of over 5100 troops and 18 field guns, clashed with 1 000 Free State burghers under General A.P. (Andries) Cronjé at Rietfontein. In spite of the impressive British force, the action ended undecided, because the Free Staters were too scattered in the hills for White's artillery fire to be effective.

On 30 October 1899, nineteen days after the ultimatum had expired, two battles took place in close proximity. At Modderspruit the Boer artillery was responsible for a resounding victory over the three pronged attack out of Ladysmith by White's troops. Due to the difficult terrain, lack of proper communication and unexpectedly tenacious opposition from the Boers, the British were unable to implement their battle plan. When White received reports that Ladysmith was under threat, he faltered. Before noon he ordered to his forces: "Retire as opportunity arises".[42] While the British were still in full retreat, Joubert refused to push home his victory.[43] Reitz, who was embroiled in the nearby battle for Nicholson's Nek, reported that he could hear Acting Commandant Christiaan de Wet, mutter "Los jou ruiters, los jou ruiters!" ("Let loose your horsemen – let loose your horsemen!").[44] Scholtz discusses this incident in some detail, quotes *The*

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37 J.H. Breytenbach, *Geskiedenis*, I, p. 219; D. Reitz, *Commando*, p. 28.

38 J.H. Breytenbach, *Geskiedenis,* I, pp. 222-223.

39 Quoted in P.G. Cloete, *Chronology*, p. 43.

40 B. Pottinger, *The foreign volunteers*, pp. 95, 112, 114.

41 J.H. Breytenbach, *Geskiedenis,* I, pp. 237-263.

42 Quoted in J.H. Breytenbach, *Geskiedenis,* I, p. 333.

43 J.H. Breytenbach, *Geskiedenis,* I, pp. 327-328; A. Wessels, *Die militêre verloop van die stryd*, p. 11.

44 D. Reitz, *Commando*, pp. 42-43.

Times history and others and he concludes that Joubert, should undoubtedly have followed up on his earlier success. Had he done so, Ladysmith would have been taken and the road to Durban and the sea would have been open to the Boers. Instead, due to this one tactically wrong decision the long and unproductive siege of Ladysmith followed. Notwithstanding this blunder, the outcome of the day was grave enough for the British press to label it *Mournful Monday.*

Elsewhere the republican forces seemed even more shy of engaging in active warfare. After the skirmish at Kraaipan on 12 October, little action took place on the western front. Likewise on the southern front, the time passed without any dust being raised. The possibility of occupying strategic railway towns such as De Aar and Naauwpoort was not grasped when the opportunities arose, and the war drifted into an unproductive and boring affair. Only on 13 November did the commandos cross the Cape border and occupied Colesberg, Aliwal North as well as the railway junction of Stormberg. Still, no further penetration into the Cape Colony was attempted, presumably due to the "no conquest" policy of the republics.[45]

3. The three sieges

After the sluggish start to the war, the republican forces tied themselves down by besieging three towns. On the western front Mafeking and Kimberley and on the eastern front Ladysmith were placed under siege,. This was a passive style of warfare, merely leading to the constraint of the already-limited Boer forces and evading assertive confrontation with their enemy.

On 14 October 1899 Mafeking was encircled. Much has been written about the futility of this action. Firstly, the original number of Boers involved – approximately 6 000, or about 20% of the Boer force – was disproportionately high, both in terms of the total republican military strength, and of the 1 000 troops of various backgrounds who were restricted in the besieged town. Moreover Mafeking was an unimportant, remote town, on the border of the Transvaal, with a desert to the west. It was the administrative centre of British Bechuanaland and it is possible that the ZAR saw Mafeking as a symbol of British rule. A question which has often been posed is why the strong Boer force did not simply occupy this small town. It is well known that General De la Rey disagreed with Cronjé's views on the way the siege was carried out.[46] Cronjé's withdrawal with 4 000 burghers to the Free State border in order to help check General Lord Methuen's

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45 L. Scholtz, *Waarom die Boere die oorlog verloor het*, p. 60.

46 L. Scholtz, *Waarom die Boere die oorlog verloor het*, p. 57.

march on Kimberley[47] appears to indicate that the ZAR government had at last become aware of the relative unimportance of Mafeking. Nonetheless, the siege continued for 216 days until 17 May 1900.[48]

It is perhaps easier to justify the significance of a besieging of Kimberley. This encirclement was initiated on 15 October 1899. The new diamond centre was situated on the border of the Free State, and well within striking distance of Bloemfontein, thus indeed posing a threat to the capital of the Free State. It was defended by 4 200 men under Lieutenant-Colonel R.G. Kekewich. Nevertheless 7 000 Boers were used to enforce the siege. An additional 7 000 republicans under Cronjé were deployed specifically to waylay Methuen in his effort to liberate Kimberley.[49] Thus 14 000 men, or 40% of the theoretical total republican force of 35 000, were tied down in defensive positions to uphold the siege of Kimberley.

Lastly, the siege of Ladysmith began on 2 November, when the war had been in progress for 22 days. This action should be appraised somewhat differently as the town was indeed an important military base for the British, the hub of their operations in Natal. At the beginning of the siege, which lasted a total of 119 days, there were 13 500 British soldiers encircled by about 16 500 Boers.[50] The siege was finally lifted on 28 February 1900.[51]

4. Black Week

While these three seemingly ineffectual manoeuvres were in progress, three important battles – two of them related to the sieges – took place. They were fought on three different fronts and were destined to have a marked influence on the conventional stage of the war. Despite the fact that in all three cases the Boers were the victors, they were unable to capitalise on their successes.

On 10 December 1899 General W. Gatacre and his 2 700 men on the southern front tried to clear Stormberg railway junction which had been occupied by the Boers. This attempt failed as General J.H. Olivier, with only 1 700 burghers, managed to hold their position until reinforcements arrived. When the British subsequently fled in disorder, the republicans neglected to press home

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47 A. Wessels, *Die militêre verloop van die stryd*, p. 9.

48 P.G. Cloete, *Chronology*, p. 144.

49 J.H. Breytenbach, *Geskiedenis* II, pp. 57, 113.

50 S. Watt, *The siege of Ladysmith*, pp. 38-39.

51 S. Watt, *The siege of Ladysmith*, p. 25; P.G. Cloete, *Chronology*, p. 112.

their advantage.[52]

In the dark hours before dawn of the next day, 11 December, when the war had been in progress for two months, General Andrew Wauchope and his Highland Brigade marched on Magersfontein-koppie, south of Kimberley. Their purpose was to sweep Cronjé's force – which was still engaged in preventing Methuen from relieving Kimberley – out of the way once and for all. The battle, which followed has been exhaustively analysed and reappraised by historians and military theorists. It began in the pearly grey hours of dawn after a stormy night. Wauchope's Highlanders marched directly into the entrenched Boers. Murderous fire poured into them from the hundreds of Mausers fired by an invisible enemy.[53]

Nonetheless, the republicans suffered a grievous blow when the Scandinavian volunteer corps, which had moved forward into an exposed position during the night, was severely trounced by the Scottish troops. The Scandinavians fought back bravely, but suffered heavy casualties losing one out of every three of their men.[54]

After facing the Boers' deadly fire during the long, scorching morning hours, the Highlanders fled in disorder after midday, when their officers' orders were misunderstood and it was thought that the Boers were advancing out of their trenches. But once again a Boer general would not allow his men to follow up on their advantage. According to Breytenbach, he was unwilling to endanger any more human lives.[55]

On 15 December the British suffered a third disaster, this time on the eastern front. The newly-arrived General Sir Redvers Buller attempted to remove the Boer force under General Louis Botha from the Colenso Hills. The day started badly for the British artillery as well as for General A.F. Hart and his Irish Brigade. After a narrow escape when a shell exploded almost on top of him, a perturbed Buller decided at 10.00 to call off the attack. Cloete quoted a German staff historian as saying: "The general and not his gallant force was defeated."[56] And yet another Boer commander, this time Louis Botha, refused to push home his victory. Wessels maintained that because of this it could only be labelled a tactical defeat for the British.[57]

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52 A. Wessels, *Die militêre verloop van die stryd*, p. 21; P.G. Cloete, *Chronology*, p. 66.

53 G.R. Duxbury, *The battle of Magersfontein*, p. 26.

54 B. Pottinger, *The foreign volunteers*, pp. 138-139.

55 J.H. Breytenbach, *Geskiedenis* II, p. 164.

56 P.G. Cloete, *Chronology*, p. 72.

57 A. Wessels, *Die militêre verloop van die stryd*, p. 19.

The general reluctance of the Boer commanders to take full advantage of initial success was a serious deficiency in the republican offensive against a large, highly professional and well equipped army such as that fielded by the British.

Thus ended the week of three defeats for the British, a week which the cynical British press soon dubbed *Black Week*. In three battles the British lost 460 men dead and a further 1 550 wounded. The fact that this took place so close to Christmas when it had been confidently predicted that the forces would be home to celebrate the festive season, made the adversities all the more acute. Indeed, the British secretary of war, the Marquis of Lansdowne, and the deputy prime minister, A.J. Balfour, wasted no time in trying to set matters right. On Sunday 17 December the ageing General Lord Frederick Roberts, whose son had been mortally wounded two days earlier at Colenso, was appointed the supreme commander of the South African forces.[58]

This appointment was to prove a turning point in the war. Unlike Buller, who was disinclined to take command and had shied away from responsibility, Roberts was more than ready for the assignment. He had already formed his own strong ideas about how the situation should be handled and despite his age he welcomed the opportunity. Thus, out of the ashes of Black Week, an old, but talented and experienced strategist appeared, one who was soon to turn the tables on the republicans.

The first two months of the war were over but still the three sieges continued. What is more, the sieges were to drag on, Kimberley being the first to be relieved on 15 February 1900. Although it is argued that from the Boers' point of view this was a negative form of conducting a war, Pretorius has pointed out that the seiges caused considerable losses on the British side. Perhaps then Joubert and Cronjé should not be too harshly judged and some credit should also be accorded to them. He does add, however, that the tying down of the Boer forces provided the British with the ideal opportunity to assume the offensive.[59]

5. Roberts takes over

Lord Roberts and his chief-of-staff, General Lord Horatio Kitchener, arrived in Cape Town on 10 January 1900 and immediately began developing a new campaign. Scholtz described in detail how the ultimate plan – to relieve Kimberley by outflanking Cronjé to his left and then to

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58 T. Pakenham, *The Boer War*, pp. 244-246.

59 F. Pretorius, *Die Anglo-Boereoorlog 1899-1902*, p. 15.

straightaway proceed to Bloemfontein – was devised. It is interesting to note that Scholtz stressed the role of Maj. G.F.R. Henderson as adviser to Roberts. Henderson was at the time a leading military scholar in Britain, yet many of his theories originated from the American Civil War and in particular the role played by General Stonewall Jackson. He placed great importance on an army's mobility as a counter to trench warfare.[60] The merits of this approach were soon to be realized by the British.

While the planning and the necessary build up of men and equipment was in progress on the western front, Buller was left largely to his own devices in Natal. It was only after three costly, and unsuccessful battles, that he eventually managed to relieve Ladysmith.[61]

It should be stressed at this stage, that during these battles the Boer forces, under the newly-appointed General Louis Botha, were becoming increasingly disheartened. The motivating presence of the Free State president, M.T. Steyn, on the eastern front on 22 January 1900 helped to boost Boer morale over the short term,[62] but the negative spirit soon prevailed again. Schikkerling, who claimed that the Boer's national spirit was normally weak and that it was only during the hour of adversity that the sterner stuff showed itself, commented on the continual cry for leave by the burghers, which became so serious that many took *French leave,* and simply went home.[63] Despite this low morale of the Boers, the final encounter at Pieters Hill on 27 February cost Buller another 87 men killed and 427 wounded. Still, the next day the siege of Ladysmith was lifted and Botha's burghers were streaming northwards. Buller, like his Boer counterparts, failed to follow up on the fleeing Boers. In fact he stayed on in Ladysmith for two full months.

While Buller was struggling along in Natal, Roberts' new campaign was taking shape on the western front. He skilfully misled Cronjé and his senior officers as to his real objective by making a bogus move to Koedoesberg,[64] Thereby he took the republican leadership completely unawares. General John French and his cavalry were employed as a flying column to achieve the wanted mobility and after a few fient moves, he outflanked Cronjé to his left and entered Kimberley on 15 February 1900 – bringing relief after 123 days of siege. Roberts then showed his mettle by not allowing the unexpected capture that same day of his supplies at Watervalsdrift by General Christiaan De Wet — by then recalled from the eastern front and appointed combat general by

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60 L. Scholtz, *Waarom die Boere die oorlog verloor het*, pp. 84-85.

61 A. Wessels, *Die militêre verloop van die stryd*, p. 20.

62 P.G. Cloete, *Chronology*, p. 85.

63 R.W. Schikkerling, *Commando courageous*, pp. 11-13.

64 J.H. Breytenbach, *Geskiedenis* IV, pp. 141, 201.

President M.T. Steyn — to deter him from his objective. The aftermath was that his troops had to march from Kimberley to Bloemfontein, a route which had no railroad support, on limited rations. Despite this setback Roberts continued his advance.

At this stage most of the remaining Boers under Cronjé, having lived through two months of stressful inactivity at Magersfontein and Langberg, fled in an easterly direction in the hope of reaching Bloemfontein. The British, naturally expected this withdrawal and at Paardeberg (Vendusiedrif) the fleeing Boers were cut off and forced to hole up in the banks of the Modder River. Then followed a protracted battle lasting 10 days, which was marked by a number of dramatic events.

On 18 February, the day that Lord Kitchener was placed in command of the British assault, an ill advised frontal attack on Cronjé's well embedded force resulted in the highest British casualties for one single day namely 303 killed and 906 wounded. However after days of constant shelling by the British, which killed off most of the Boers' animals and destroyed their wagons, heavy late summer rains started on the afternoon of 23 February. The rainy weather persisted. Wet and muddy conditions and the unfordable Modder River made life agonizing for Cronjé's men.[65] Hence, when the daring Danie Theron managed to cross the British lines on the 25 February, and tried to convince Cronjé to follow De Wet's plan for a break out, Cronjé's *krygsraad* rejected the idea. The raging river, the lack of horses and draught animals and their unwillingness to abandon the laager, where a number of women and children still lingered, are often given as the reason for this decision. Yet, the utter exhaustion following the 65 days of stress at Magersfontein-koppie, probably played a crucial part in the *krygsraad's* decision.[66] Theron returned to take the bad news to De Wet, his daring achievement ensuring that his name was added to the list of Boer heroes.[67]

On 27 February, the nineteenth commemoration of Majuba Day, under pressure from his *krygsraad*, Cronjé sent a note to Roberts, stating that he was ready to surrender.[68] Cronjé's capitulation should be seen in the context of the events. His force was out-numbered by 10 to 1 by the British soldiers and 20 to 1 by their field artillery. The normally subdued Modder River was a torrent which made a break-out virtually impossible. Most of the few horses which the Boers had left when the battle commenced had been killed by the heavy shelling. Moreover the republicans were utterly demoralized. Demoralized to the extent that white flags were raised early in the

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65 T. Pakenham, *The Boer War*, p. 340; R. Kruger, *Good-bye Dolly Gray*, p. 244.

66 For more details see A.J. McLeod, *The Magersfontein sorjourn,* unpublished M.A-mini thesis, 2000, p. 75.

67 C.R. de Wet, *Three years war*, pp. 52-54; F. Pretorius, *Die Anglo-Boereoorlog 1899-1902*, p. 22.

68 J.H. Breytenbach, *Geskiedenis* IV, p. 421.

morning of 27 February, indeed even before Cronjé's note had been delivered.[69] The mass surrender that followed involved 4 091 persons, of whom 11 were women who apparently preferred to be sent to Cape Town.[70]

Much has been written about this battle and there have been many speculations. One thing remains certain – that this encounter was one of the most dramatic turning points in the Anglo-Boer War. There have been conjecture about the possible outcome if both republics had opted for peace in February 1900. Would a situation have developed as it did in the American Civil War, when after General Robert E. Lee's capitulation at Appomattox a period of reconstruction of the nation began? This will have to remain a hypothetical question. It did not happen that way. Instead Cronjé's surrender initiated the next stage upon which this study will concentrate – the phase of guerrilla warfare.

69 J.H. Breytenbach, *Geskiedenis* IV, p. 427, 428, 420.

70 J.H. Breytenbach, *Geskiedenis* IV, p. 424.

Chapter II

The psychological foundation

It is not stress that kills us, it is our own reaction to it.

Hans Selye[1]

1. Introduction

This chapter deals with the basic psychological issues that form the substructure of this psycho-historical study. Although the focus falls primarily on the concept of stress and its related principles, it is vital to broaden the perspective somewhat to capture the entire picture. The concept of stress, as it is understood today, needs to be clarified and its impact must be understood before the experiences of the burghers who participated in the guerrilla phase of the Anglo-Boer War can be intelligently assessed.

Stress is not an awareness that comes and goes, nor is it a condition that affects only certain individuals. The well known researcher at the Ben Gurion University in Israel, Aaron Antonovsky, maintains that stress is omnipresent.[2] However, the intensity of its effect might vary from one situation to another or from one person to the next. Stress is a natural and even an essential part of life. Moderate levels of stress are necessary for healthy functioning. Insufficient stress which leads to boredom and lack of stimulation can even be detrimental to health.[3]

It is self-evident that stress will play a far more important role during a war-situation, when the demands which are made on the population in general, and on the combatants in particular, exceed those normally experienced. Moreover, during guerrilla warfare there will probably be more factors involved causing stress and the impact of these will tend to compound. It is seldom that one particular event on its own will cause serious stress. The following discourse will explain these statements.

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1 *http://www.heartqoutes.net/monthly-Sept-2002.html*, keyword: Selye.

2 A. Baum, R.J. Gatchel and D.S. Krantz, *An introduction to health psychology*, p. 64.

3 M. Michal, *Stress, sources, signs and solutions*, p. 11.

2. What is stress?

Before one can discuss factors such as the omnipresence of stress, the compounding effect and the results of stress, it is essential that the exact meaning of the term is clearly understood.

Stress has, unfortunately, become a buzzword or catch-phrase in the modern idiom, the term is often misused to indicate excessive tension or pressure that is experienced by an individual, particularly as the result of the demands of modern life. It is even used as a verb, for example in the admonishment: "Don't stress!" This misapplication of the term has led to distortion of its true meaning and significance.

Baum, Gatchel and Krantz's explanation in their work *An introduction to health psychology* simply states: "Stress is the process by which environmental events (stressors) challenge or threaten us, how these threats are interpreted, and how they make us feel."[4] This definition makes it clear that stress is a transaction between people (us) and the environment, which of course includes other people. They claim that it is not merely pressure or tension and moreover the result is not necessarily unpleasant.

In the late 1950s one of the early researchers on the subject, Hans Selye, also went to great lengths to explain that stress is not nervous tension; it is not the result of some form of damage, nor is it an emergency discharge of hormones (see below). Moreover, stress as such does not cause alarm.[5] He explained that stress is a psychological outcome derived from some physiological change. It is a state that is manifested as a syndrome – the simultaneity of a number of symptoms. He also empathised that stress always implies change of some kind or other. It is caused by change and it creates change.

When a stressful situation arises, the body "turns itself on". It becomes more alert, more vigilant, and it gathers strength for a quick reaction or for a sustained resistance. This occurs automatically, initiated by the central and peripheral nervous systems.[6] The nervous system activates the secretion of certain hormones that are produced by the adrenal cortex of the brain.

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4 A. Baum *et al.*, *Health psychology*, p. 63.

5 H. Selye, *The stress of life*, pp. 53-55.

6 A. Baum *et al.*, *Health psychology*, p. 62.

These hormones comprise mainly the catecholamines (adrenalines) and corticosteroids. The increased flow of hormones is the first stage in the manifestation of physiological stress. The next step follows when these hormones modify certain body functions such as the heart rate, blood pressure, muscle potential and breathing tempo. These changes cause the body to be transferred into a state of readiness in order to withstand the perceived threat or danger.

3. A simplified stress model

According to Antonovsky's model potential stressors, meaning situations caused by environmental or social circumstances, are received by the individual who appraises them cognitively and perceives the situation either as benign or alternatively, as malicious – in other words threatening, harmful or challenging.[7] If the stressor is perceived as benign no further drastic measures are required. If, however, the stressor is appraised as malicious then the individual must cope with the situation.[8]

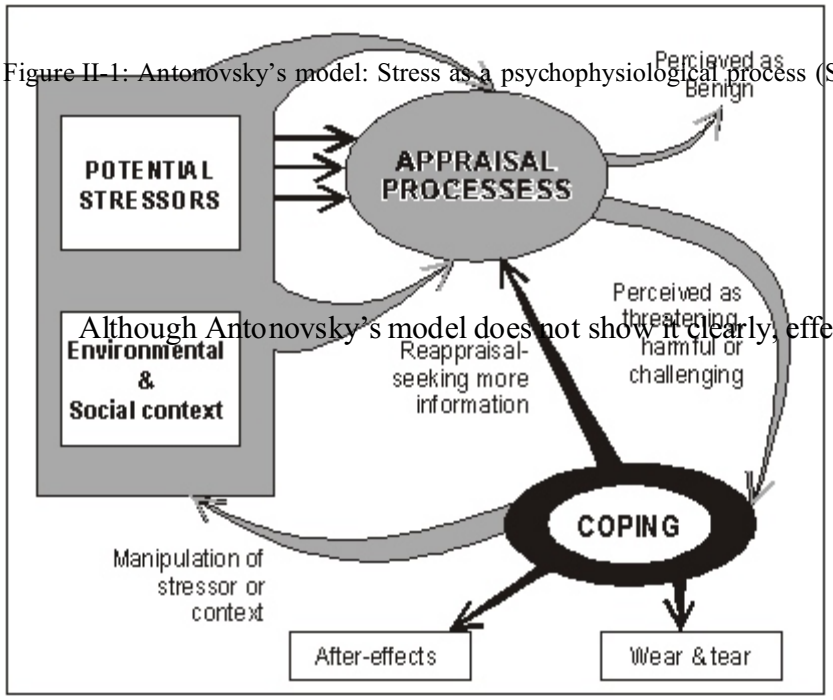

Figure II-1: Antonovsky's model: Stress as a psychophysiological process (Source: A. Baum, R.J.Gatchel and D.S. Krantz, *An Introduction to health psychology*, p. 64.)

Although Antonovsky's model does not show it clearly, effective coping actually relies on the individual's stress resistance resources also called generalized resistance resources (GRRs). These are the resources or the means which individuals have at their disposal to help them to

7 C. Plug, D.A.P. Louw, L.A. Gous and W.F. Meyer, *Verklarende en vertalende sielkundewoordeboek*, p. 190. They define cognition as all processes whereby individuals or organisms gain knowledge about a matter or become aware of its environment, by perception, recognition, imagination, reasoning, evaluation, recollection, learning or thinking

8 R.E. Allen (ed.), *The concise Oxford dictionary of current English*, p. 254.

cope with stressors.[9] They will be discussed in more detail later.

The model illustrates four issues which may arise in the process of coping. Firstly, the individual might need more information (or a re-appraisal) of the stressor in order to determine whether the stressor is indeed what it seems to be at first glance. Secondly, the individual might manipulate the stressor or change his emotional reaction to be able to deal with it. For example he may simply close a door to eliminate a draught. Thirdly, coping *per se* may cause certain after-effects such as might be the case with coping through heavy smoking, drinking or drug misuse. Lastly the process of coping, particularly over the longer term, may lead to wear and tear on the individual's health.

4. The historical development of the theory of stress

Hippocrates (circa 460-377 BC) was probably the first to separate the physiological illness or *pathos,* from the toil or the energy which the body needs to combat the illness. Thus, apart from being ill (that is suffering the direct physiological symptoms of a malady), a patient also experiences certain side effects. A head-cold may usually implies a runny nose and eyes, coughing and sneezing as the direct symptoms of the ailment, but these usually go side by side with a feeling of fatigue and irritability. Hippocrates called this *ponos,* meaning that the body is getting ready to combat the disease.[10]

Many similar notions appeared over the centuries, but it was only in 1914 that the American physiologist, W.B. Cannon, first used the term *stress*. According to him stress was the potential cause for certain medical problems. He thought that the well known *fight or flight* response was caused by heightened arousal within the individual. Cannon claimed that this is accomplished partly by increased secretion of epinephrine or adrenaline as well as by other chemicals in the body that increase the speed of response.[11]

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9 C.L. Sheridan and S.A. Radmacher, *Health psychology challenging the biomedical model*, pp. 149-150.

10 A. Baum *et al.*, *Health psychology,* p. 65.

11 A. Baum *et al.*, *Health psychology,* p. 66.

Real progress in this field was only made in the late 1950s when a Canadian endocrinologist, Hans Selye, claimed that stress could be caused by a vast number of factors, which he named *stressors*. He furthermore established that stress was related to the increased secretion of hormones by certain glands thereby causing physiological, psychological and behavioural responses. He identified three stages in the process of prolonged stress which he called the *general adaption syndrome* theory or GAS theory.[12]

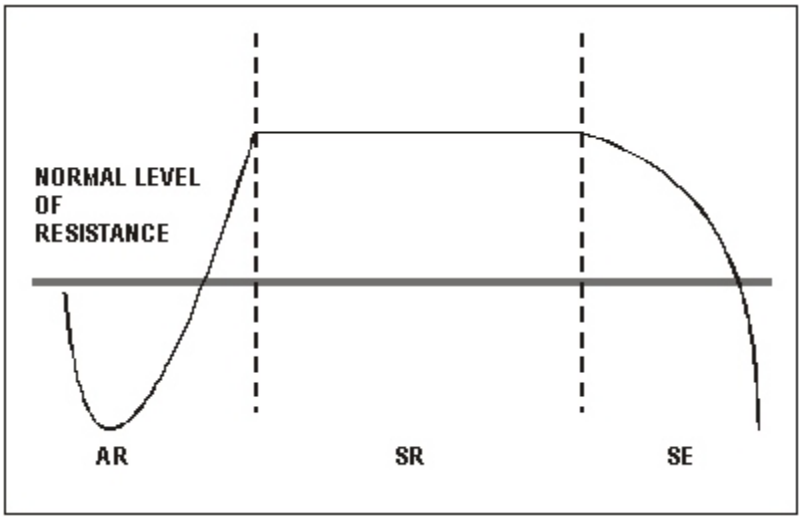

Figure II-2: Selye's GAS theory. (Source: H. Selye, *The stress of life*, p. 87.)

Figure II – 2 illustrates the three stages. The first stage Selye called the stage of "alarm reaction" (AR), when the first experience of stress is encountered. Although the normal level of resistance will initially tend to drop when the individual takes fright, he soon recovers and the level of resistance then increases to above the normal. The so-called *fight or flight* principle then becomes applicable. This stage may be of a limited duration depending on the type of stressor. As the individual continues to experience the stress he or she moves into a "stage of resistance" (SR), meaning that he is becoming adapted to the stressor. This stage will continue as long as the body can handle or cope with the situation or until the stressor disappears. Additional hormones, primarily the adrenalines and cortisones, are required throughout this period to maintain an adequate level of resistance, so that the prolonged stress can be managed. When the body's capacity of producing the increased levels of hormones eventually becomes exhausted a "stage of exhaustion" (SE) sets in and the level of resistance drops drastically.[13]

Selye's research work stretched over forty years. His 1956 publication, *The stress of life,*

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12 A. Baum *et al.*, *Health psychology*, pp. 66-67.

13 H. Selye, *The stress of life*, p. 57.

initially brought the subject to the attention of researchers from various disciplines and opened new fields of research.[14] His work and writings continued into the 1970s.The GAS theory will form an important cornerstone in the study of the stress experienced by burghers who took part in the Anglo-Boer War.

In the latter part of the twentieth century the work of R.S. Lazarus came to the fore. He maintained that, although stressors are not measurable, they can nevertheless be grouped into specific categories.[15] This categorization is still widely accepted and will be discussed below. In her work published in 1975, Marianne Frankenhauser, demonstrated that there is a strong psychological component in stress and concentrated on the role of the epinephrine and non-epinephrine hormones — the adrenalines and non-adrenalines — in the "readying" function.[16] Although her work is an example of the tremendous advances that have been made in the field of stress, the role of physiological processes will not be elaborated upon in this study, where the focus will be on the human experiences rather than endocrinological-based argumentation.

It was during the late 1970s and early1980s that from the research and writings of Antonovsky the paradigm of *salutogenesis* took shape. According to this theory there is a link between the individual's ability to cope successfully with the experience of stress, and his health. This indicates that, although stress is omnipresent, one should not assume that it invariably has negative implications.[17] More recent publications on the subject have come from the South African psychological researcher, D.J.W. Strümpfer, who expanded on Antonovsky's paradigm of *salutogenesis* and supporting it with five associated constructs, and subsequently followed it up with his own paradigm of *fortigenesis*, where it is argued that coping successfully with stress can lead to better health as well to increased well-being (fortigenesis).[18]

5. The elements involved in stress

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14 A. Baum *et al.*, *Health psychology*, p. 66.

15 A. Baum *et al.*, *Health psychology*, pp. 69-70.

16 A. Baum *et al.*, *Health psychology*, pp. 68-69.

17 D.J.W. Strümpfer, "Salutogenesis a new paradigm", *South African Journal of Psychology* 20 (4), 1990, p. 266.

18 D.J.W. Strümpfer, "Salutogenesis a new paradigm", *S.A. Journal of Psychology* 20 (4), 1990, pp. 265-276; D.J.W. Strümpfer, "The origins of health and strength: from 'salutogenesis' to 'fortigenesis' ", *S.A. Journal of Psychology* 25 (2), 1995, pp. 81-89.

a. Stressors

Stressor is the accepted term used for any agent (either noxious or wholesome) that causes stress. R.S. Lazarus and J.B. Cohen maintained that although stressors cannot be measured they can be classified into three categories. These three categories are widely accepted as constituting a practical grouping.[19]

Cataclysmic stressors are powerful events affecting whole communities or large groups of people. They are often unpredictable and can be either brief or may be prolonged. The events can be dangerous and life threatening and may cause damage or loss to property or the environment, such as floods, droughts or bush-fires. Other examples would be events such as war, mass persecutions, natural disasters and nuclear accidents. Cataclysmic stressors usually involve large numbers of people. Although coping with these stressors tends to be difficult on an individual basis, there may well be beneficial support from others who are in the same boat, or from organisations. Social support therefore plays a major role.

Personal stressors are those events that affect individuals or smaller groups of people. They may or may not be predictable but they do have a powerful impact on the people who are involved. Coping may well be very difficult, as the issue is often a personal or private matter and support may be limited. Examples of personal stressors are the death of a loved one, divorce, serious or terminal illness, financial dilemma, loss of employment or similar instances as is also the case with cataclysmic stressors. This category also includes situations where an individual is not personally involved in the stressful event but witnesses the event or its results. Positive circumstances such as an approaching vacation or falling in love could also be classified in this category since they require an adaptive response from the person. Some of these stressors would naturally be more intense than others.

Background stressors. This third category includes the persistent, repetitive events that are part of everybody's daily life. Lazarus and Cohen called them "...daily hassles – stable, repetitive, low-intensity problems encountered daily as part of one's routine".[20] They differ from the stressors in the first two groups insofar as that they are less powerful but their ultimate effect,

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19 C.L. Sheridan and S.A. Radmacher, *Health psychology*, pp. 149-150; A. Baum *et al.*, *Health psychology*, pp. 74-75.

20 Quoted by A. Baum *et al.*, *Health psychology*, p. 76.

seen cumulatively over an extended period, may be just as serious as the others. They are frequently of a chronic nature, such as the exposure to noise in the work place, job dissatisfaction or daily traffic jams.

Metabletics or the theory of changes is an issue which requires attention when discussing stressors. It is necessary to assess in this study whether the norms which apply in present times were relevant one hundred years ago during the course of the Anglo-Boer War. Undoubtedly, over time change occurs, not only in the sphere of technology but also in the criteria of acceptable norms and customs. J.H. van den Berg, a Dutch academic and author on psychological matters, argued that the human is not by any means an unchangeable element in history. Indeed, man has changed over time as can be observed in many domains such as family-life, architecture, spirituality, religion, relations between people and numerous other issues.[21] The norms of today differ from those that were applicable a hundred years ago. Van den Berg called this the theory of changes or *metabletics:* He maintained that an acceptable norm or standard in the past, is not necessarily acceptable in modern times and vice versa.

The theory of change must therefore come under careful consideration in this study. The tools of warfare developed dramatically, from the beginning of the American Civil War (1861) up until the end of World War I (1918). The Anglo-Boer War took place in this period of change. The norms of acceptability regarding warfare have likewise changed over time.

Two examples will suffice as illustrations: Whereas it was not unknown during the time of the Anglo-Boer War for the Boers and the British to leave their wounded to be cared for by the enemy, with changing circumstances and the aid of new war-tools such as helicopters, leaving one's wounded on the battlefield has become an unacceptable practice. Secondly, during the Anglo-Boer War most Boer officers refrained from aggressive actions on a Sunday. Pretorius mentioned this fact and J.F. Naudé confirmed it in his narrative of General Jan Kemp's silent protest when General Koos De la Rey gave orders to continue a battle at Hartbeesfontein on Sunday 24 March 1901.[22] In modern guerrilla warfare the question of Sabbath-breaking is of little or no importance.[23]

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21 hhtp:// www.reijnhoudt.nl/metableticaWH.

22 F. Pretorius, *Kommandolewe tydens die Anglo-Boereoorlog 1899-1902*, pp. 201-202; J.F. Naudé, *Vechten en vluchten van Beyers en Kemp bôkant De Wet,* p. 224.

23 Personal interview, E. Basson, ex-colonel: South African Infantry commanding officer, Ruacana, 1991, 15 September 2002.

b. Appraisal (or cognitive appraisal) of stressors

Although certain stressors are more severe or intense than others, the actual strength of a stressor can, scientifically speaking, not be measured. Different individuals will moreover perceive stressors differently, because of the personal makeup or the circumstances that are involved. What one person might see as a serious threat could possibly be no more than a challenge for the next. Experience and the knowledge that leads to acquired or learned sources of resistance could influence the result of the appraisal.

According to Lazarus, as quoted in Baum *et al*., for an event or a situation to be classified as a stressor it must be appraised as either threatening, harmful or posing an excessive demand.[24] Should the situation be perceived as benign it will not be classified as a stressor and therefore no further demand is made on the individual. Theoretically this is the primary appraisal which automatically takes place. The individual is really asking: "What is it going to cost me?" If the situation appears to be harmful or threatening, it is termed a stressful appraisal which will consequently involve a secondary appraisal or evaluation to determine its magnitude. The question asked is: "How am I going to handle this?" or "Am I able to deal with this?" In other words the primary appraisal deals with the question whether the situation is perceived as a stressor or not, the secondary appraisal whether the individual will be able to cope with it. In practice primary and secondary appraisals of a stressor occur practically simultaneously and the two reciprocally influence one another. The appraisal could perhaps be the assessment of a loss already suffered, or it could signify a threat with possible future dangers; alternatively it might be a challenge which the individual feels he is able to cope with or overcome.

c. Coping

After the stressor has been appraised according to the above outline, the individual moves into coping (or managing) behaviour. The method of coping may vary. Firstly it could change the stressor itself, for example by simply closing a door if the stress is a draught in the neck. Secondly more information or clarification might be sought so as to decide on the best course of action. Thirdly it may simply be ignored as some problems tend to solve themselves. However, denial can also lead to circumstances where the problem is increased. Lastly the decision may be to live with the situation or to try to deal with it – to accept the fact and cope with it accordingly.

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[24] A. Baum, *et al*., *Health psychology*, p. 71.

Coping depends largely on the resources that the individual has at his disposal, that is his general resistance resources (GRRs). When there are not enough resources available coping is not possible and the situation may turn into one of distress. This links with Selye's GAS theory (Figure II – 2 above). At the stage of alarm reaction (AR) the *fight or flight* response manifests itself. If the stressor persists and there are sufficient GRRs to deal with the stressor, coping becomes effective. That is when the individual enters into the SR. Resources during this stage may be of a material nature which would include money, clothes, food or goods. Alternatively they may be physical in context such as health, diet or attractiveness. Social position and personal qualities including leadership, self esteem and optimism may also be valuable assets to help an individual to cope with stress. Other factors that are regarded as resistance resources are educational background and a sound general knowledge of affairs and even cultural buttresses such as traditions, customs and rituals. The more GRRs a person has to his disposal the greater his chances become to succeed in coping with stress.[25]

Once coping is successfully accomplished or completed the individual will return to normal physiological and psychological levels, in other words he or she has adjusted to the situation.[26] However, if the individual fails to cope, stress will continue and the individual eventually moves into the stage of exhaustion (SE). The consequences of prolonged stress will follow. These range from physiological illness to psychological changes in mood such as depression, anxiety and even burnout.

The success of coping psychologically is determined by the strength of the available GRRs. This strength may depend on a number of factors such as firstly, the extent of social support. This is one of the well-studied agents of coping and it may include esteem support, informational support, social support and instrumental support.[27] Secondly, it may depend on the hardiness of the person. This personal trait shows itself in the individual's commitment, sense of control and the readiness to accept challenges. The gender of the individual may be relevant. Although women are emotionally more susceptible to distress, they show a better ability to deal with more functions simultaneously and often display greater coping ability than males.[28] Finally the individual's personality is significant in coping with stress. His or her general disposition of pessimism or

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25 C.L. Sheridan and S.A. Radmacher, *Health psychology*, p. 152.

26 A. Baum, *et al.*, *Health psychology*, pp. 64-65.

27 C.L. Sheridan and S.A. Radmacher, *Health psychology*, p. 159; A. Baum, *et al.*, *Health psychology*, p. 82.

28 C.L. Sheridan and S.A. Radmacher, *Health psychology*, p. 87.

optimism is relevant as that often relates to the style of approach to or avoidance of a challenge and whether he or she denies or ignores reality.[29]

The above factors are integrated in the construct of *sense of coherence* (SOC) which signifies the individual's ability to cope with the situation. The South African psychologist D.J.W. Strümpfer quoted Aaron Antonovsky who declared that to have a strong sense of coherence, one should be in a position to rely on a well developed repertoire of GRRs. The strong SOC is a dispositional orientation and not a characteristic or trait. It involves the elements of perception, memory, information processing and affect which then lead the individual into habitual patterns of appraisal which are based on repeated experiences of sense making.[30] In addition it is crucial to have the experience in dealing successfully with harmful or threatening situations. Antonovsky identified three rudimentary elements of SOC namely *comprehensibility, manageability* and *meaningfulness*.[31] These three elements are of vital importance in the development of a SOC.

By comprehensibility is meant that the individual perceives life as being ordered and consistent rather than being turbulent, unexpected or incomprehensible. Manageability is the extent to which the individual feels that the resources at his command are adequate to overcome the demands or threats he faces. Such an individual is confident that the resources to cope with his stress are either in his own hands or in those of someone who supports him. Meaningfulness relates to whether the situation which faces the individual is perceived as being a significant part of life and can be logically agreed to.[32]

In addition a successful coping strategy consists of certain elements. Sheridan and Radmacher quoted Antonovsky who maintained that there are three major elements involved in successful coping. The first element is *rationality* which means the gathering of information, analysing what is available and planning the application of resources. The next is *flexibility* which suggests that the individual should be prepared to consider more than one solution. Finally successful coping calls for *farsightedness.* The individual must realise the consequences of his strategy by asking the question "What if...?"[33]

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29 C.L. Sheridan and S.A. Radmacher, *Health psychology*, pp. 162-163.

30 D.J.W. Strümpfer, "Salutogenesis a new paradigm", *S.A. Journal of Psychology* 20 (4), 1990, p. 268.

31 C.L. Sheridan and S.A. Radmacher, *Health psychology*, p. 161.

32 Written information: J.B. Schoeman, Professor, Department of Psychology, University of Pretoria, 24 October 2002.

33 C.L. Sheridan and S.A. Radmacher, *Health psychology*, pp. 159-160.

This style of coping will fit in with *problem* focussed coping where the individual concentrates his attention on the stressor and endeavours to change the stressor. It involves firstly the gathering of information about the stressor, then evaluating the resources which are available to meet the stressor and lastly planning the course of action which is required in order to overcome or manage the stressor. This is a cognitive and also a behavioural process. The example mentioned above of closing the door to eliminate a draught, would fall into this category of coping. On the other hand there is emotional focussed coping, which can either be involuntary or voluntary and, to some extent, irrational. The individual knows that the stressor cannot be changed, so his own perceptions and reactions are altered. It could possibly take the form of self deception – to simply look for the silver lining and then continue life as before. Other forms of emotional coping include avoidance, ignoring or denial, humour, exercise, work and the pursuance of hobbies.[34] These different forms of emotional coping only makes it easier to live with or to forget the reality of the stressor.

Coping is an important process in the entire concept of stress, and the success that an individual achieves when his or her life is filled with stress, depends on his or her ability or inability to meet the challenge and manage the stressors.

d. Control

Emanating from the concept of coping stems the next theme, that of control. By this is simply meant that the individual has power over or determines his actions and decisions. It is also seen as a sense of efficacy or belief in one's own capabilities — to have self confidence. Because this sensation is pleasant it bolsters the individual. An overestimation of one's ability to exert control over matters, however, may lead to bravado, which might place the blame elsewhere when things go wrong. Baum *et al.* quoted several researchers who claimed that individuals who controlled the tasks they were given – whose jobs were self-paced – exhibited less stress than those who had a regulated goal set for them and had little control over their work, as for example in mechanized production lines.[35]

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34 C.L. Sheridan and S.A. Radmacher, *Health psychology*, pp. 160-161.

35 A. Baum *et al.*, *Health psychology,* p. 116.

6. Negative outcomes of stress

a. Associated experiences and outcomes

It is generally recognized that while the body responds to a challenge or a threat by, for example, faster heart beat, increased blood-pressure and rapid breathing, an individual may also experience secondary or associated effects, such as irritability or loss of appetite. Baum *et al*. stated that stress responses go far beyond the activation of the hormonal systems and the organ systems which are subsequently affected. They claimed that in a situation of stress the whole body reacts.[36] Nearly all hormones, most muscle groups, the digestive as well as the immune systems are affected. When a stressful situation demands sudden action, a feeling of excessive fatigue can often be experienced afterwards. These responses are all part of stress. Thus it is important to note that, while stress may help an individual to perform better when under threat, it may also cause certain adverse secondary effects. Aside from the wear and tear on the body that is generated by repeated or prolonged stress, other less desirable outcomes may result. These may range from physiological dysfunctions to tissue damage or may even result in death.[37]

Furthermore, physiological stress, the increased body alertness which has been discussed here, may lead to psychological and emotional stress, inducing other cognitive and emotional experiences such as fear, depression, worry, sleeplessness, crying spells and frustration. On the other hand, once a stressful task has been successfully completed, the individual often feels emotionally good about it. The psychological after-effects of distress have been widely researched and include frustration, aggressiveness, helplessness, withdrawal and decreased sensitivity to others. There is additional evidence that anxiety, fear or symptoms of apprehension experienced at high stress levels frequently result in acute episodes of panic. Baum *et al*. added that depressive disorders may also occur. For such an individual the future looks bleak and he believes nothing can be done to change this condition.[38] It has, moreover, been found that in cases where individuals were able to cope successfully with their stress, there were fewer negative after-effects.[39]

b. Psycho-physiological disorders

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36 A. Baum *et al*., *Health psychology*, p. 88.

37 A. Baum *et al*., *Health psychology*, p. 89.

38 A. Baum *et al*., *Health psychology*, p. 90.

39 A. Baum *et al*., *Health psychology*, p. 91.

When distress (detrimental stress) develops and continues over a prolonged period, psycho-physiological disorders – previously called psychosomatic disorders – may develop. Indeed the prolonged or intense stress may damage bodily organs. It is argued that when the individual's response to stress is abnormally intense and prolonged, the damage to organ systems can contribute to the disease process.[40] "Thus the psychosomatic symptom emerges as a physiological concomitant of an emotional state ... Psychosomatic disorders may effect almost any part of the body, though they are usually found in systems not under voluntary control ... but it is generally believed that the form a disorder takes is due to individual vulnerabilities." Encyclopaedia Britannica continues that certain forms of hypertension, respiratory ailments, migraine, dermatitis and ulcers may occur.[41] Baum *et al*. observe that illnesses ranging from coronary heart disease to gastro-intestinal disorders and even cancer may develop in such cases.[42]

The term "individual vulnerabilities" used in the quotation above can perhaps be replaced with "weakest link". It simply means that should an individual, for example, be prone to respiratory disorders, it is highly likely that a psycho-physiological disorder such as asthma could occur during prolonged stress. It should be emphasized that these disorders are indeed real physical afflictions and not merely hypochondriacal situations. What complicates matters is when the physiological symptom *per se* becomes a stressor.[43] An example of this would be when, due to weakening vision that is partly brought on by prolonged stress, an individual's ability to perform his other functions adequately, declines and that this leads to further stress. The deteriorating vision then becomes a secondary stressor, accumulating with all the other stressors experienced.

c. Other negative outcomes

Apart from psycho-physiological disorders stress can also lead to a number of other negative outcomes and some of these are discussed below.[44]

i. Depression

Depression is characterized by a dejected mood, a loss of motivation and a disinclination on

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40 A. Baum *et al*., *Health psychology*, p. 98.

41 *Encyclopaedia Britannica* 2002, keyword: Psychosomatic disorder.

42 A. Baum *et al*., *Health psychology*, p. 98.

43 C.L. Sheridan and S.A. Radmacher, *Health psychology*, p. 150.

44 Written information: J.B. Schoeman, Professor, Department of Psychology, University of Pretoria, 24 October 2002.

the part of the individual to become involved in the events around him. It can furthermore be experienced as tiredness, a feeling of worthlessness and hopelessness, a loss of concentration, appetite, or sexual desire, sleeping problems and a general tendency to withdraw from others. During a guerrilla war, combatants suffering from these adverse symptoms are naturally unable to function as they should and would probably be classified by Hans Binneveld as "psychologically wounded".[45]

ii. Anxiety disorders

Anxiety is a state of fear and apprehension, which is doubtlessly common during war. In contrast anxiety disorders are manifestations of anxiety and distress in situations which would not normally evoke such a response. Prolonged stress such as can be experienced in time of war may lead to anxiety symptoms at times when no immediate danger exists. Again symptoms may include a faster pulse, increased blood pressure, sweating, intestinal discomfort and muscular tension. Other likely signs are insomnia, forgetfulness, irritability and panic.

iii. Burnout

Burnout normally follows long periods of chronic stress and ensues when the individual has reached the limit of resistance and is often no longer concerned about the consequences that his actions hold for those around him. It suggests that he has nothing more to give and that he has, psychologically speaking, reached the end of the line. Burnout can also lead to fatigue and insomnia, to persistent colds or stomach trouble, or to drug abuse. It should be understood that these are only a few of the possible outcomes and that burnout can be associated with numerous other signs.

iv. Post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD)

PTSD occurs as a result of or as a reaction to traumatic stressors that are highly threatening to life; they overwhelm the individual's coping abilities. War, and in particular violent battles, fall into the category causing PTSD. Symptoms may include social withdrawal, emotional numbness, exaggerated startle responses and sleeping difficulties. One of the common features of PTSD is the tendency for sufferers to experience "flashbacks" to certain situations, leading to sudden abnormal behaviour. Another important consideration is that the person who suffers from this

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[45] H. Binneveld, *From shellshock to combat stress,* p. 9.

disorder may not necessarily have been the target involved in the traumatic occurrence. He or she might only have been a witness to such an event that would later cause them to suffer from PTSD.

In terms of the aims of this study the impact and secondary effects of all three of these elements, namely physiological stress, psychological stress and psycho-physiological disorders will be frequently encountered and will receive careful analysis in the chapters to follow.

7. Positive outcomes

a. Salutogenesis

Aaron Antonovsky started a new direction of reasoning when, about 25 years after the Nazi concentration camps, he asked the question in the early 1970s,: "How do people manage [cope with] stress and stay well?" This deliberation originated from his realisation that psychology should not mainly focus on pathogenic factors, but should also assist the individual to maintain and enhance his or her health.[46] This led him to the concept of *salutogenesis* (the origin of health). Antonovsky argued that since stressors are omnipresent and ubiquitous, then microbiological, chemical, psychological, social and even cultural pathogens would constantly be bombarding the body. Why then is there not widespread death? How can we survive as long as we do? This led him to ask the question "Whence the strength?" Antonovsky came to the conclusion that general resistance resources (GRRs) are involved and from this point he developed the paradigm of salutogenesis.[47]

However, there are three ramifications in the paradigm which he developed that should be noted: Firstly, individuals are all on a health / disease, or a wellness / illness continuum, and are constantly moving somewhere between the two terminals of this continuum. Secondly, following from this conjecture, it should be underscored that not all stressors are inherently adverse. If they are managed well (coped with) their affect may be neutral or, on the reverse side of the coin, their influence may indeed be health enhancing. This led Antonovsky to ask the question: "How can we learn to live and even to live well, with stressors, and possibly turn their existence to our

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46 D.J.W. Strümpfer, "Salutogenesis a new paradigm", *South African Journal of Psychology* 20 (4), 1990, p. 265.

47 D.J.W. Strümpfer, "Salutogenesis a new paradigm", *S.A. Journal of Psychology* 20 (4), 1990, p. 267.

advantage?"[48] This question is of fundamental significance in this study. As the investigation progressed it became clear that for the Boers on commando their existence abounded with hardships that they simply had to live with and wherever possible they had to turn these hardships to their advantage. Thirdly Antonovsky claimed that there will always be the "deviant case", that is, individuals who do not succumb to the stressors; who against all odds continue a normal life. It must therefore be accepted that stressors may have a salutary effect.[49]

Strümpfer, probed Antonovsky's paradigm of salutogenesis in the context of five separate psychological constructs – some of which have been discussed briefly above. For greater clarity on Strümpfer's theory these are outlined below.

i. Sense of coherence (SOC): This suggests that in order to make sense of the countless stressors which constantly bombard an individual he or she should be able to rely on a well developed repertoire of GRRs, as well as experiences of success. These resources must then be used to deal with threatening situations. The components of SOC that have been discussed above, namely manageability, comprehensibility and meaningfulness should constantly be kept in mind in order to grasp the complexity of a SOC.

ii. Hardiness: This construct contends that there is a personality attribute called hardiness and that this moderates the stress-health relationship. This disposition includes three elements, namely commitment (belief in the truth and in that which is considered right), control (confidence that one possesses the ability to influence the events in one's life) and challenge (which implies a recognition of the reality that change presents opportunities). Strümpfer admits that the hardiness construct is being questioned by a number of psychologists on several issues, for example the buffering role of hardiness in countering stress and the serious concern regarding a "Hardiness Scale", however, he is inclined to consider it as part of the salutogenesis paradigm, despite these technical disputes. From the perspective of this study – the psychological impact of guerrilla warfare — it seems as if the construct of hardiness indeed has certain positive applications for this study.

iii. Potency: This construct implies that an individual's persistent confidence in himself, as well as in his social environment, leads to a mechanism that prevents tension or inadequate coping.

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48 D.J.W. Strümpfer, "Salutogenesis a new paradigm", *S.A. Journal of Psychology* 20 (4), 1990, p. 267.

49 D.J.W. Strümpfer, "Salutogenesis a new paradigm", *S.A. Journal of Psychology* 20 (4), 1990, p. 268.

iv. Stamina: It is maintained that a relationship exists between the individual's ability to withstand pressures on the one hand and certain other qualities such as his personal health and personal insight on the other hand. Stamina is also observed in elderly people, who have learned how to manage change.[50]

v. Learned resourcefulness (LR): It is asserted that LR is not a personality trait, but that it should be regarded as a personality repertoire. Furthermore it holds that coping calls for attempts at self-regulation. The essence of this view is that when success is achieved by the self-regulating of one's response, a basis is thereby provided for future use, in other words, that there is a development of resourcefulness. This understanding will then be relied upon by the individual should that stressor be encountered again.

In his conclusion Strümpfer asserted that even though the five constructs, viewed individually, may include certain imperfections, they nevertheless complement one another, thus validating the paradigm of salutogenesis.[51]

b. Fortigenesis

Based on the work involved in formulating the paradigm of salutogenesis, Strümpfer then posited that a cyclical pattern exists between the accessibility of GRRs and a strong SOC, the one element strengthening the other. Eventually this leads to the health and the well-being of the individual. From this concept, and based on Antonovsky's theory of a wellness / illness continuum, he developed a new construct which he called *fortigenesis.*

Antonovsky first posed the question "Whence the strength?" The answer, according to Strümpfer, is to be found in a new paradigm which he calls fortigenesis meaning the origin of strength, one that is more holistic than salutogenesis.

In his deliberation on the matter Strümpfer drew a number of conclusions. These include the fact that war trauma in particular, but military experiences in general, provide mechanisms for young men to overcome the psychological moratorium applicable to an age-graded career. He quoted G.H. Elder who stated that military service provides a place for young men to sort themselves out; it fosters greater maturity and increases social autonomy. He also stated that combat-experienced men were often more likely to succeed in later life, as they became more

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50 D.J.W. Strümpfer, "Salutogenesis a new paradigm", *S.A. Journal of Psychology* 20 (4),1990, p. 273.

51 D.J.W. Strümpfer, "Salutogenesis a new paradigm", *S.A. Journal of Psychology* 20 (4),1990, p. 274.

resilient and less helpless.[52]

In his conclusion Strümpfer pronounced that the undergird of his research is to find "an understanding of why and how some people find the strength to withstand and overcome pressures ... while others do not ..."[53] It is clear that both the constructs of salutogenesis and fortigenesis will be of importance is the chapters to follow.

8. A perspective of stress and the Anglo-Boer War

The theories and concepts discussed above lead to the question of how this background knowledge of stress and its impact can be applied to this study. First of all it seems appropriate that a model covering all the relevant facets be constructed. This model is given below.

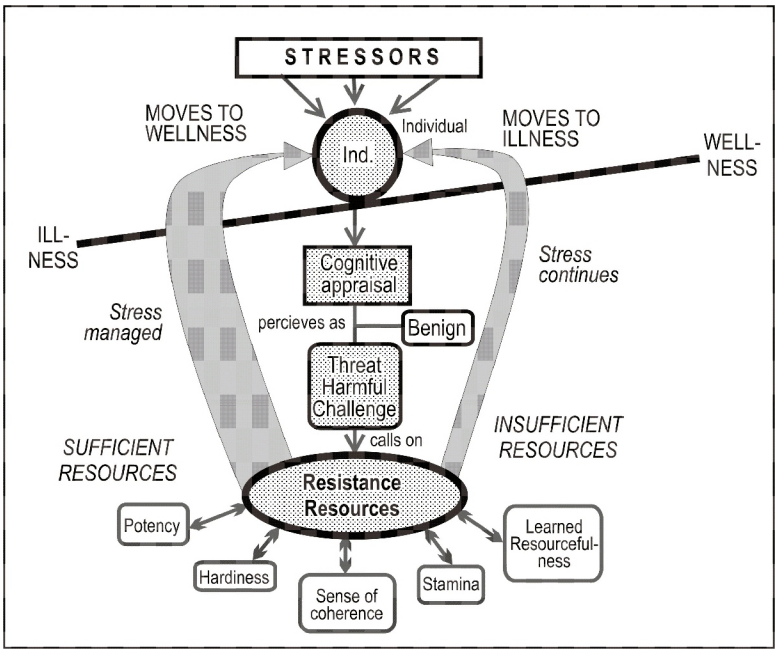

Figure II-3 A model illustrating the application of the constructs of salutogenesis and fortigenesis.

The model demonstrates the individual on a wellness / illness continuum. When the individual is bombarded with stressors, he appraises them cognitively and if they are perceived as noxious, he calls on his repertoire of GRRs. The GRRs are based on a number of constructs such

52 D.J.W. Strümpfer, "The origins of health and strength: from 'salutogenesis' to 'fortigenesis' ", *S.A. Journal of Psychology* 25 (2),1995, p. 85.

53 D.J.W. Strümpfer, "The origins of health and strength: from 'salutogenesis' to 'fortigenesis' ", *S.A. Journal of Psychology* 25 (2),1995, p. 87.

as SOC, hardiness and stamina. Should the foundation of GRRs be sufficient, stress will be managed and the individual could possibly be moved in the direction of wellness (upwards). However this is a difficult – uphill – process and is not as easy to realize as it is to go the opposite way – downwards – moving towards illness.

This psychological model will form much of the logic for the study of the psychological impact of the guerrilla phase on the Boers.

Chapter III

Guerrilla warfare as a global concern

> *...despite the impressive technological innovations of the twentieth century, the principles of warfare are not modern but ancient; they were well established when Caesar marched out on his first campaign. And what is true of war in general is even more true, if possible, of guerrilla warfare in particular.* [1]

1. Introduction

As this study concerns itself primarily with the guerrilla warfare phase of the Anglo-Boer War, it is appropriate to make a close examination of what is meant by the term guerrilla warfare and how this form of warfare differs from the conventional concept of war. Guerrilla warfare has been described as a subject for the historian rather than the sociologist. It has countless features and the term *guerrilla* has become too liberally used. Walter Laqueur wrote in the introduction to his book *Guerrilla – a historical and critical study,* that the term is now not only used in connection with liberation struggles and insurrection, but is often applied indiscriminately to refer to the highjacking of aeroplanes, kidnappings and even to certain disturbances at theatres, universities and indeed kindergarten schools. [2] Although this chapter will deal briefly with some of the more closely related characteristics of guerrilla warfare, the emphasis will be on its nature as it transpired during the latter part of the Anglo-Boer War.

2. Guerrilla warfare and related concepts

The term *guerrilla* is derived from the Spanish, literally meaning *small war*. It originated in the early 19th century, after the defeat of Spain's inefficient regular forces by Napoleon, when small groups of irregular fighters emerged to take up the fray. It became necessary to differentiate between conventional warfare (or positional warfare, where large armies traditionally opposed one

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1 R. Taber, *The war of the flea – guerrilla warfare theory and practice*, p. 131.

2 W. Laqueur, *Guerrilla – a historical and critical study*, p. vi.

another) and conflicts in which hostilities were conducted by smaller groups of warriors. Napoleon is said to have called this unwanted continuation of the strife his "Spanish ulcer".[3] Clearly he preferred conventional warfare.

There are various definitions for guerrilla warfare. Both Arthur Campbell, in *Guerrillas – a history and analysis,* and Walter Laqueur quoted Professor Huntington who described guerrilla warfare particularly lucidly as being: "... the form of warfare adopted by the strategically weaker side to give it the capability of taking the tactical offensive at chosen times and in certain places."[4] (My underlining)

It is thus a David and Goliath style of warfare, usually fought to the rules of the weaker side, the David side.[5] Unlike the history of David and Goliath according to the Old Testament, it is clearly not always the David side that triumphs, but it is certainly a useful way to differentiate between the two sides involved in this type of warfare. It is widely accepted that because guerrilla warfare is initiated by the David side, strategy is invariably based on the following four principles:

a. Harassment of the enemy
b. Avoidance of any decisive battles
c. Sabotage and destruction of enemy communications and supply lines
d. Tactical use of surprise and confusion.

These four principles are of key significance to this entire study.

The more powerful army, the one against which the guerrilla movement is pitched, is strengthened by its arsenal of weapons and its material wealth but it may be weakened by social and political factors. The guerrilla movement on the other hand, finds its major strength in being free from territorial restrictions; it mostly enjoys greater mobility and relies on the good relations with the local population. Its weakness lies solely in its lack of military strength.[6] Not all guerrilla movements fit into exactly the same pattern[7] and it is necessary to note the other forms that this type of warfare may take on. Furthermore it is not always possible to categorize the conflict, as there are generally areas of overlap.

Partisan struggle appears to be the closest to what is understood by guerrilla warfare. The

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3 *Microsoft Encarta 98 Encyclopaedia*, keyword: Peninsular War.

4 A. Campbell, *Guerrillas - a history and analysis*, p. 3; W. Laqueur, *Guerrilla*, p. 392.

5 H. Binnevld, *From shellshock to battle stress*, p. 49.

6 R. Taber, *The war of the flea*, p. 28.

7 W. Laqueur, *Guerrilla*, p. viii.

label "partisan" referrers to a strong, notably unreasoning, biassed supporter of a particular party or cause or a person.[8] Partisan usually describes the nature of guerrilla warfare fairly closely although it does not necessarily mean warfare. Partisan behaviour allude to moral or political support for a cause. The term partisan can, however, also be used to describe distorted news reporting or also robust support for a sports team. It can safely be assumed that most guerrilla fighters are indeed partisans for their cause. But the possible presence of mercenaries among the guerrilla forces who do not share the partisan's commitment to the cause, should also be kept in mind.

Insurrection refers to the open, usually armed rising against an established authority or government and it is perhaps more often called rebellion. The crucial feature of insurrection is that it is aimed at a legitimately established government. It is clearly not the continuation of an as yet inconclusive war.

A revolution is similar to an insurrection and could well be the result of a successful insurrection. It refers to the rising designed to overthrow an existing government, of a ruling class or order. Revolutionaries – the instigators and their supporters – frequently use insurrection as their tool to achieve their goal.

It is clear, then, that these terms all refer to similar and often closely interacting forms of conflict. For example, during an *insurrection* the *partisans* for a particular cause, could probably be using *guerrilla* tactics in order to achieve the *revolution* that they desire. In the modern idiom those people would commonly be called *freedom fighters*.

In the works of modern theorists certain parallel terms such as *people's war*, *mobile war* and *protracted war* are often found, as well as the expressions *of terrorism* and *urban-terrorism*. In essence these may all be related to *guerrilla warfare,* yet there are fundamental differences which should be kept in mind. Laqueur warns in the preface of his book that terms such as *revolutionary war*, *people's war* or *liberation struggle* may be applicable to certain specific cases, yet can be misleading if used elsewhere. Furthermore the description *urban-guerrillas* is more accurately expressed as *urban-terrorists.*[9]

Mobile warfare needs further attention. It signifies a broader concept, based on three

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8 R.E. Allen (ed.), *The concise Oxford dictionary of current English,* p. 868.

9 W. Laqueur, *Guerrilla,* pp. vii, ix.

elements, namely strike warfare (refer to the German term *blitzkrieg*), night warfare and guerrilla warfare. It is often motivated by the desire for expansion of land for example Germany's occupation of Poland and the Six-Day-War between Israel and Egypt. Roland de Vries, a South African military theorist, defined mobile warfare as a violent war aimed at achieving a speedy victory.[10] Similarly, many elements which are components of guerrilla warfare form part of mobile warfare, such as the principles of surprise and confusion, secrecy, stealth and speed, terrain exploitation and the strategy of assemble, strike and thereafter disperse. However, harassment and disrupting of communications do not form essential ingredients of mobile warfare.

Another often misunderstood term which is frequently used by military commentators and the news media is *unconventional warfare*. According to De Vries this description could apply to guerrilla actions, operations by special forces (*commando-troops*), para-military actions, psychological warfare and even rumour spreading and disinformation activities.[11] It should therefore be regarded as a general term which often refers to the opposite of conventional warfare.

Notwithstanding the frequent misuse of the term guerrilla and the existence of the many related frictions and operations, the focus of this study will be on guerrilla warfare as a strategy used to influence the result of a current war. However, it should be remembered that it was only after the Anglo-Boer War, and more particularly after World War II, that the theory of guerrilla warfare was carefully unravelled and expounded.

According to military theorists there are several types of war. Campbell ventured to explain this issue by claiming that four types of war can be identified, namely

i. Total war: A violent struggle between governments, each aiming at the destruction of the other, even to the extent of using nuclear weapons.

ii. General war: Very similar to a total war, yet without the element of total destruction.

iii. Limited war: A war fought between governments within a restricted geographical area, for example the Korean war.

iv. Revolutionary war: A struggle between an existing government and an anti-government party, where the latter endeavours to overthrow the government.[12]

It becopmes clear then that guerrilla warfare is simply a particular form of warfare, which can in fact be a part of any one of the four types of war outlined above.[13] Guerrilla warfare is a

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10 R. de Vries, *Mobiele oorlogvoering; 'n perspektief vir Suider-Afrika* , pp. xxi, 37.

11 R. de Vries, *Mobiele oorlogvoering*, p. 118.

12 A. Campbell, *Guerrillas*, pp. 1-2.

13 A. Campbell, *Guerrillas*, pp. 1-2.

pattern or a model adopted as a combat strategy in specific circumstances.

3. Guerrilla warfare over the ages

Guerrilla warfare is by no means a new way of conducting a war. Moreover it was not discovered in a stroke of genius by Mao Zedong (Mao Tse Tung) in the middle of the 20th century.[14] Although the term *guerrilla* only originated less than two centuries ago, the concept of the *small war* actually goes back much further. In this section guerrilla warfare will firstly be discussed as it evolved from the earliest times, roughly up until the beginning of Christianity. Secondly it will be viewed from the advent of Christianity until the end of the 19th century, that is, until the Anglo-Boer War and finally some occurrences which can be considered as guerrilla warfare in the twentieth century will be considered

a. Before Christianity

Laqueur referred to Murilis, the king of the Hittites, who complained in the 15th century B.C. that he was being harassed by *irregulars* at *night time*. These guerrilla type raids probably formed part of traditional custom of the time of embarking on sorties against one's foes, hit and run tactics, wife stealing and similar tussles.[15]

But perhaps the best example of ancient guerrilla warfare is reported in the Old Testament of *The Bible*. In the book of Judges, chapter 7, it is revealed how Gideon after sifting out the Israelites who were *fearful* and *afraid,* and then also those who drank water from their hands, assembled only a small select band of three hundred men to go forth with him to meet the Midianites and their allies. They were greatly outnumbered. It is written that their foes were reportedly as "thick as locusts" and their camels "could no more be counted than the sand of the sea". Gideon applied the basic elements of guerrilla warfare. He divided his band into three smaller companies – one hundred men in each. He avoided a pitched battle and organized that each company covered one side of the camp, leaving the fourth side open as an escape route. Moreover, it was *night time*, "at the beginning of the middle watch". Then the light from three hundred lamps suddenly appeared as the pitchers when the broken and the unexpected blowing of three hundred trumpets broke the night's silence. The Israelites both *surprised* and *confused* their enemy, and:

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14 W. Laqueur, *Guerrilla*, p. vii.

15 W. Laqueur, *Guerrilla*, p. 3.

" ... while each man held his position around the camp, all the Midianites ran, crying out as they fled." [16]

Many more examples of this form of warfare can be uncovered in historical literature. The Roman armies were often confronted by guerrilla-type opposition. Julius Caesar frequently encountered *small war* in his endeavours to conquer the Gauls and the Celts. Later, towards the end of this era, fierce guerrilla operations against the Romans by the Jewish Zealot sect took place. Its climax in the Masada drama is well known.

b. Guerrilla warfare after the advent of Christianity

History books provide information on many battles and struggles that could be classified as *guerrilla* which took place in the period after the dawn of Christianity. Only a few can be discussed here.

The protracted rebellion of the Welsh peasants, armed with their longbows, after the conquest by the Normans and King Edward I in the 12th century, is an early example of a peasant uprising. The serfs, when expected to pay the same taxes as freemen, fought against the English officials, using their simple longbows. The success of this modest weapon, made out of one piece of pliable yew and a string, against the mail-clad knights was remarkable and subsequently changed the traditional pattern of warfare. Archers and infantry were soon introduced by the English in their battles against the Scots and the French. The same Welsh peasants were recruited by the English as archers and thus became even more accomplished with their longbows; the peasants were in the process of freeing themselves from serfdom. When the black plague of the mid 1300s caused a shortage of labourers, the archers were not prepared to be forced back into serfdom. This unrest eventually led to what became known as the peasant revolt, with Owen Glendower attempting to free his country from English rule. Despite the fact that his uprising was crushed by England in 1405, his rebels continued their guerrilla resistance until 1412.[17]

The 100 Year Wars in Europe (1337 – 1453) also had its share of *small war* when Bertrand Duguesdin fought what soon became known as the "unchivalrous war".[18] Attacks under darkness and ambushes could not be parried by conventional tactics. Yet most of the European peasant

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16 *Holy Bible* - New International Version, Judges 7: 17-21, p. 209.

17 http://www.red4.co.uk/ebooks/shorthistory/riseofthepeasant; *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, keyword: Glendower, Owen.

18 W. Laqueur, *Guerrilla*, p. 13.

revolts in that period were unsuccessful. Undisciplined and badly organised groups frequently turned to brigandry.[19]

It was only during the second half of the second millennium AD that many major guerrilla-type wars were fought. A handful can be dealt with. The American War of Independence (1775 - 1783) is a fitting example of a *people's war,* when the local people in an outlying colony fought by unconventional means against the armies of the colonial power, Britain, whose army had been trained to wage conventional warfare. This war could be termed as a partisan war, and although many of the American combatants were later depicted as a pack of vagrants, deserters and even thieves, the war also gave the opportunity for warriors like the elusive Francis Marrion – popularly known as the Swamp Fox – to emerge. His exploits in the war baffled the English,[20] just as Christiaan de Wet's were destined to do 120 years later. Laqueur declared that this war had more likely been lost by the inflexibility of the British rather than won by the courage of George Washington's forces. It was a war fought about the control and occupation of land. The local people believed that they were fighting for their independence as residents on American soil. Their continued resistance also made the war one of attrition until the point was reached where Britain preferred to make peace rather than to persist.

On the other hand, the peasant revolt in the Vendée in western France (1793-1796) against the revolutionist government was not fuelled by hunger for territory. It was a spontaneous uprising primarily based on the religious beliefs of the peasants. The government soon defeated the rebel army of 65 000 at Cholet. In this case the dilemma of an undisciplined mass army confronting a well-organized force was clearly illustrated. The following year remnants (guerrillas) of the Vendeans were provoked into rising and only to be defeated repeatedly. The execution of the resistance leader Francois-Altenase Charette finally ended the revolt.[21] Although historians often quote this strife as an early example of guerrilla warfare, it does not completely fit into the criteria of guerrilla warfare mentioned above.

A better example of what is meant by guerrilla warfare is found in the continuation of the conflict in Spain. This protracted strife, which lasted from 1808 to 1813 followed the Napoleonic invasion of Spain and the proclamation of Napoleon's brother, Joseph Bonaparte, as king. Small

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19 W. Laqueur, *Guerrilla*, p. 14.

20 W. Laqueur, *Guerrilla*, pp. 18-19.

21 W. Laqueur, *Guerrilla*, p. 19.

bands of Spanish citizens began to pin down the French garrisons, intercept their dispatches and destroy their convoys, thus giving rise to escalating demands by Napoleon's forces for money and men. The persistent small conflicts were supplemented by a few major battles including those at Salamanca (1812) and Vitoria (1813), until the stage was reached that France was so weakened that the outcome was Napoleon's eventual defeat in Europe.[22]

During the 19th century many conflicts and wars erupted worldwide, which today are classified as guerrilla warfare. Apart from the numerous colonial wars which imperial Europe had to contend with, there are several other examples. Worth mentioning are the conflicts in Latin America (1810-1821), the American Civil War (1861-1865) and the Franco-Prussian War (1870-1871). Although several of these wars were fought primarily in the conventional style, there was always evidence of elements of guerrilla warfare. In 1864 guerrilla tactics became significant in the American Civil War when Confederate Colonel John S. Mosby harassed Federate supply lines so effectively that substantial numbers of General William Sheridan's troops had to be deployed to protect the roads in his rear.[23]

When studying warfare in the 19th century it is necessary to keep in mind that this was the period when significant developments were made in the tools of warfare. The scientific and industrial evolution of the time made each war different from the previous one. Some of these developments are discussed below.

i. Fire power was boosted when the inaccurate and slow loading musket made way for the rear-loading rifle in the mid 1800s. Further improvement came when the French chemist Paul Vieille developed a smokeless powder and central firing cartridges came into use. Machine guns were a natural development in this period.[24]

ii. Artillery, always the main source of fire power, but with many innate disadvantages, became more sophisticated when breech-loading was introduced; more mobile guns were manufactured with increased traversing becoming more refined.[25]

iii. Although nitroglycerine was discovered in 1846, it only became useful as an

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22 *Microsoft Encarta 98 Encyclopedia,* keyword: Peninsular War.

23 B. Catton, *Short history of the Civil War*, pp. 85, 224-225.

24 *Microsoft Encarta 98 Encyclopedia,* keyword: Small arms.

25 *Microsoft Encarta 98 Encyclopedia,* keyword: Artillery.

explosive when Alfred Nobel developed dynamite in 1864.[26] This explains why dynamite was not used for demolishing bridges and railways during the American Civil War (1861-1865) yet was used extensively during the Anglo-Boer War (1899-1902).

iv. The proliferation of railway networks helped the large armies to transport troops, munitions and equipment over longer distances, much faster than was previously possible and also in adverse weather. The advantages of this development were first exploited by the Confederate army during the American Civil War (1861). Later, during the Seven Weeks War (1866) in Europe, rail transport was again a major factor leading to Prussia's victories over Austria.[27]

v. The development of the telegraph in 1837 by Morse in the US and Wheatstone in Britain brought about radical changes in communications.[28]

These technological developments, which altered the strategies and tactics of conventional warfare, inevitably also affected guerrilla warfare. Although the horse remained an important means of mobility the guerrilla fighter soon had to cope with destroying new facilities such as railways and railway-bridges, telegraph lines, barbed-wire fences and small forts.

c. Guerrilla warfare during the 20th century

The first half of the 20th century was marked by a profusion of wars and conflicts which Laqueur classified as guerrilla warfare. These took place in many parts of the world, some such as in China lasting up to 18 years from 1927 to 1945. Several were aimed at emancipation from foreign rule, such as those in South America, while others hoped to revolutionize the existing order of the country as became evident in the Russian Revolution (1918-1921). Still others formed part of a greater war, for example the French resistance (1941-1944) during the Second World War. Four of these conflicts will be discussed briefly as case studies.

Mexico

The widespread unrest and strife in Mexico (1910-1917), although labelled guerrilla warfare by Laqueur, was in fact a period of turmoil between several groups who were attempting to

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26 *Microsoft Encarta 98 Encyclopedia,* keyword: Nitroglycerine.

27 L. Scholtz, *Waarom die Boere die oorlog verloor het*, pp. 36-37.

28 *Microsoft Encarta 98 Encyclopedia*, keyword: Telegraph.

establish their own dominance following the rule of the harsh Porfino Díaz. It is true that under Díaz Mexico had made tremendous advances in the economic and commercial spheres, but many of his undertakings were financed by foreigners. Díaz favoured the rich owners of large estates, awarding them with communal lands that rightly belonged to the native Americans. This caused serious discontent amongst most Mexicans. Several groups emerged, among them a group led by Pancho Villa, a former bandit, and another under Emiliano Zapata, a native American. Both were eventually brought to a fall by the major strategic blunder of attempting to occupy large cities. Both were guilty of pillaging and banditry and were, not surprisingly, both assassinated.

It was only after the appearance of Alvaro Obregon in 1920 and once the United States had recognized the Mexican government that the unrest ended. However political instability continued. Despite the fact that this was called a period of small wars, what happened in Mexico was not strictly speaking guerrilla war and the eventual outcome was not a direct result of militant strategies.[29]

China

China went through many years of upheaval after its inception as a republic in 1912. The Chinese people wanted to rid themselves once and for all of imperialism and to establish national unity. However the nationalist Kuomintong and the Communist Party embarked on a road of disagreement in 1928. The Nationalists, under the young general Chiang Kai-shek, soon encountered opposition from two communist factions, the one section concentrating on the urban areas and the other, under the leadership of Mao Zedong (Mao Tse Tung), on the countryside. Mao's tactics proved successful. He mobilized local support into forming peasant armies, thereby adhering to one of the basic principles of guerilla warfare. Japan entered the Chinese scene in 1937 and Chaing Kai-shek's Nationalist government forces had this additional element to cope with. While World War II continued the Communists under Mao Zedong capitalized on the opportunity and reinforced themselves in the rural areas behind the Japanese lines.

After the war, once the Japanese had been disposed of, the US attempted to bolster the Nationalists. However, after two decades of fighting the army of Chiang Kai-shek was spent. In addition to the disunity within the ruling party the country's inflation had, moreover, spiralled. During the 17 months of Mao's campaign (1946-1947) the Nationalists suffered 640 000 troops

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29 *Microsoft Encarta 98 Encyclopedia*, keyword: Mexico.

killed or wounded, while more than 1 000 000 were captured by the Communists. Soon the Communists took the initiative in the conflict, and when the government forces collapsed in 1949 the Peoples Republic of China, under chairman Mao Zedong, was formed. Over this long period Mao became the epitome of a guerrilla leader. Although the main objective of the Communists was to revolutionize China under the leadership of Mao, numerous principles of guerrilla warfare were shaped.[30]

Cuba

After the slave uprising of 1837 when the poet Gabriel Valdés was shot, Cuba experienced more than a 100 years of unrest, war, uprisings and political instability. When the former sergeant, later self proclaimed general, Fulgencio Batista, seized power in 1952, a period of decline and corruption set in. In December 1956 his former political prisoner Fidel Castro invaded Cuba with a mere 81 followers. They were soon to be reduced to a scant 12 during the first month, after which they retreated into the Sierra Maestra. However, Castro persevered and he implemented two important basics of guerrilla warfare, namely executing small raids and ambushes and consistently expanding his force. The small raids concentrated on seizing weapons and well-managed local and international propaganda actions were conducted. The mountains provided excellent shelter while Castro was engaged in recruiting a strong force. By April 1957 his followers numbered about 100 but still the numbers increased steadily. Batista's endeavours to flush them out of the Sierra Maestras failed; his task in the trackless wilderness was impossible, even for aerial bombing.

The *fidelistos* gradually took possession of the area and a *territoria libre* was established with its own code of law, schools and hospitals. It is significant that supplies were paid for and villagers treated as ordinary citizens, and most importantly banditry was not tolerated. All attempts by government troops to contain the rebels were thwarted and were eventually abandoned. The news that the US were aiding the *batistas* caused great embarrassment for both parties. Guerrilla action, sporadic and on a small scale, continued to be a thorn in the flesh of the government. Subsequently sabotage and terrorism were stepped up in the towns, armoured trains were derailed, troops captured and more weapons seized. The guerrillas became emboldened by their success and the government troops eventually retreated into their barracks. Finally Batista fled the country and

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30 *Microsoft Encarta 98 Encyclopedia*, keyword: China.

Castro declared himself prime minister of Cuba in February 1959.[31]

Castro's struggle in Cuba can be seen as an example of insurgency, which made use of guerrilla tactics to bring about the intended political change. However, the doctrine espoused by the rebel leaders and the eventual Marxist route that Cuba eventually followed did not correspond.[32]

Vietnam

A war that became the prime example of the inability of a major conventional military power to contain "a band of ragged guerrillas fighting with home-made weapons", as described by US senator George McGovern in September 1963,[33] started as a struggle between internal factions after the colonial authority, France, had been replaced. The South Vietnam republic under Ngo Dign Diem, supported by the US, refused to unify with its communist North Vietnamese brother. By the late 1950s many communist sympathizers from the south took up arms against the Diem government and became known as the Vietcong. The US increased its support for the Diem government, increasing the initial few thousand military advisors, to an astonishing 45 000 troops by May 1965 and finally to no less than 500 000 by the end of 1967.

Yet, as early as 1955 the Vietcong had been busy with isolated attacks on remote military and police posts while the Diem government played ostrich, pretending that nothing had happened – until it became too late to reverse the situation. When the US entered the fray and commenced their attacks on North Vietnam the struggle between the Vietcong and the South Vietnamese government continued. The Vietcong operated from a strong rear base where they, like Castro, maintained a rural economy. Government troops could not traverse or remain in these areas with a strong force, in other words, they were unable to enforce the *clear and hold* principle, as this would simply imply spreading themselves too thinly over the terrain to resist further guerrilla attacks. Meanwhile the Vietcong was able to employ guerrilla warfare principles at will, choosing its targets and accepting or rejecting combat.

The US people eventually questioned their government's involvement in somebody else's war, a war that moreover proved to be grinding into a stalemate. By March 1973 all the US troops had been withdrawn; the Communists then launched a major offensive (December 1974) and on

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31 R. Taber, *The war of the flea*, pp. 38-44.

32 W. Laqueur, *Guerrilla*, p. 337.

33 R. Taber, *The war of the flea*, p. 74.

30 April 1975 Saigon fell.[34]

This war does not only illustrates the power of the *small war* if the fundamentals are observed; it also shows how new generation anti-guerrilla tools such as the extensive use of helicopters (1 889 helicopters were lost by the Saigon command), napalm bombs and defoliants, were introduced to try to combat this type of warfare. Ironically, none of these new developments really changed the effectiveness of tried and tested guerrilla tactics or the eventual outcome of the Vietnam War.

4. The essence of guerrilla warfare

It becomes necessary to examine the nature of successful guerrilla warfare in terms of why it transpires, on what foundation it rests, what strategies should be employed and which tactics ought to be followed.

a. The reasons why guerrilla war occurs

It is generally agreed that there will always be a *political goal* for the launching of a *small war*. In recent times the accepted view is that there is a preconceived doctrine that provokes a guerrilla war. Yet Laqueur points out that this has not always been the case and that originally guerrilla warfare was often the instinctive choice due to circumstances. The guerrilla strives in Wales, in the Vendée and in Spain were spontaneous uprisings by the peasants (the people) against the suppression they had endured.[35] The guerrilla phase of the Anglo-Boer War developed out of dire necessity following a series of setbacks suffered during the initial conventional phase of the war.

It was because of this lack of formal doctrine that major powers in the second half of 1800s rejected guerrilla warfare as a "civilized" form of warfare. The British and the Germans in particular found it difficult to cope with irregular armies. To them guerrilla warfare was too erratic, too unprofessional and violated the established rules; it bordered on anarchy. It was derided as *ultima ratio,* the ultimate justification, in other words, to catch at a straw.[36] Captain

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34 R. Taber, *The war of the flea*, pp. 74-88; *Microsoft Encarta 98 Encyclopedia*, keyword: Vietnam War.

35 W. Laqueur, *Guerrilla*, p. 150.

36 W. Laqueur, *Guerrilla*, p. 51.

Caldwell, an ex-officer of the British army who served in South Africa during the Anglo-Boer War, warned in his book *Small wars* that regular armies should be wary of guerrilla warfare especially when it is directed by a genius with a talent for war.[37]

The political goal of the David side is often identifiable as a quest for independence, to desire to overthrow an existing order or in pursuit of religious freedom. Guerrilla warfare is seldom linked to imperial expansion or to land hunger (*lebensraum*), mineral riches or agricultural potential.

b. The fundamentals

> *The enemy advances, we retreat;*
> *the enemy camps, we harass;*
> *the enemy tires, we attack;*
> *the enemy retreats, we pursue.* [38]

These words by Mao Zedong capture the very essence of guerrilla warfare. But this description needs to be carefully analysed. Mao Zedong pointed out that three fundamental requirements for successful guerrilla warfare were needed. These are *time, space* and *will*.

The fundamental of time means that enough time is required for guerrilla warfare to be successful. The major power or existing government, the Goliath to use an earlier metaphor, will invariably aim to conclude the war as fast as possible. The cost of war in terms of money and human life should of course be kept as low as possible; to Goliath a protracted war can only be detrimental.

The guerrilla army, the David, on the other hand, should be in a position to exploit the Goliath's concerns about the cost of the war. David should not fight to secure ground, to occupy capitals or to run governments unless the war has been prolonged beyond the enemy's limit of resistance. The aim must *not* be to get the war over, as the Goliath so intensely wishes, but indeed to keep it going – to frustrate, irritate and bleed the opposition to the point where it is he who asks for peace.

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37 W. Laqueur, *Guerrilla*, p. 122.

38 Selected military writings of Mao Tse-tung (Zedong), quoted in R. Taber, *The war of the flea*, p. 27.

Space, the next fundamental requirement for successful guerrilla warfare, is closely related to the first fundamental of *time*. To be able to use the space he requires, the guerrilla fighter also needs time. To have space means freedom of movement; it gives the guerrilla army the choice of terrain, meaning that broken ground, marshes, forests or remote areas must be used to his advantage. To capitalize on space mobility is thus a primary prerequisite.

Will or motivation is the third fundamental of guerrilla warfare and is just as vital as the first two. The individual member and the guerrilla army has to be inspired; he has to share the will to achieve the ultimate goal. Without this measure of partisanship there is little chance of success. The question of *will* is discussed in more depth later.

Several writers on the subject discuss the theory of guerrilla warfare as espoused by Mao Zedong.[39] According to this theory guerrilla warfare is divided into three phases. The first and most crucial phase is of the period of strategic offensive. By this is meant to harass, concentrate and attack, circle and attack in the rear, disperse and give ground and to use the space to its utmost. Meanwhile the second phase, namely to actively involve and recruit the local population, gets under-way. Once this has been optimally accomplished, and the government forces realise that they cannot destroy the guerrillas, that they can, at best, merely contain them, only then phase three can be initiated. The guerrilla forces will then develop into mobile columns and ultimately seize the military initiative.

c. On strategy

Per definition strategy is the *art of war*. In layman's terms this refers to the *what;* what should the policy (plan) of operations (actions) be in conducting the war? The strategy of the leader who is engaging in guerrilla warfare will revolve around the four principles discussed above**.**

i. The constant harassment of the enemy at any point where he is vulnerable and by carrying out many small bothering raids aimed at aggravating the enemy and keeping him on the alert. Goliath is thus worn down, his morale tapped and drained while David chips away his nerve. The enemy is compelled to use his forces in non-essential places and for non-essential reasons. Taber calls this "the war of the flea". The analogy is that the large army can no more rid itself of

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39 R. Taber, *The war of the flea*, pp. 52-54; R. de Vries, *Mobiele oorlogvoering*, p. 113; L. Scholtz, *Waarom die Boere die oorlog verloor het*, p. 137.

recurrent small irritations in unexpected places than a dog can rid itself of fleas. Eventually the fleas will wear the dog down to a "tail-between-the-legs mutt".[40]

ii. To avoid major or decisive battles, or becoming tied down in one place. The guerrilla movement has neither the men nor the weapons to prevail in long, drawn out battles. It should use a *hit and run* strategy, causing as much damage as possible without incurring losses it cannot afford. This principle was stressed by Mao Zedong, who explained that the guerrilla force always stands to lose more than he can gain.[41]

iii. To sabotage enemy installations, to destroy or disrupt enemy communications and to interfere with enemy supply lines. Although this is part of the harassment principle, it has the added value of supplying the smaller guerrilla force with much needed arms and provisions.

iv. To aspire to continually surprise the enemy and to confuse him. Darkness, broken ground and a sympathetic local population are some of the guerrilla's major allies. The enemy should never know where his foe is and when to expect him next. This soon evolves into psychological harassment. The guerrilla is perpetually wearing him down and once more playing the role of the flea on the dog.

Taber summed it all up succinctly in his statement: "...the grand strategic objective of the guerrilla: to create the 'climate of collapse'. It may be taken as the key to everything he does."[42] This principle was illustrated in the essays on *The Art of War* by the Chinese Sun Tzu, writings predating the Christian era by several centuries:

> *All warfare is based on deception –*
> *when capable, feign incapability; when active, inactivity;*
> *when near, make it appear that you are far away; when far away, that you are near;*
> *attack where he is unprepared; sally out when he does not expect you ;*
> *pretend inferiority and encourage his arrogance;*
> *anger his general and confuse him;*
> *keep him under strain and wear him down.*[43]

Mao Zedong acknowledged Sun's wisdom and used it in his own writings.

d. On tactics

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40 R. Taber, *The war of the flea*, p. 29.

41 R. Taber, *The war of the flea*, p. 56.

42 R. Taber, *The war of the flea*, p. 131.

43 Quoted by R. Taber, *The war of the flea*, p. 131.

Tactics are the *means* adopted in carrying out a plan or a policy. Simply phrased, it will be the *how.* How should the guerrilla leader proceed to implement the strategies as spelt out above? In determining his tactics the guerrilla leader will always keep the enemy's strengths – superiority in numbers, weaponry and wealth – in mind. Furthermore, he will aim to concentrate on the enemy's weaknesses – clumsiness, immobility and inflexibility, his commitment to territory and possibly his foe's deficient relations with the local community. If he can moreover compel the enemy (the ruling power) to impose curfews, suspend liberties and gatherings of the local people, he has gained significant ground.[44]

There are several practical details that are an integral part of the guerrilla's successful existence. In order to employ effectively a *hit and run* strategy, the guerrilla fighter needs to be mobile. To this end horses, camels and more recently jeeps play a major role in guerrilla warfare where speed of movement is vitally important. It follows therefore that the guerrilla force should not be tempted to try to hold ground that it has taken from the enemy.[45] In guerrilla warfare there is no war front. This implies that it is necessary for the guerrilla cadre to divide (scatter) as soon as pressure is encountered and only to regroup (concentrate) for the next operation. By dividing into small groups the guerrilla's enemy is forced to stretch its resources, thus themselves becoming more vulnerable. Moreover, movement should always be undertaken in small groups thereby making detection all the more difficult. Should the guerrilla unit be challenged from the front, it must attempt to circle around and strike the enemy in the soft rear. Conditions such as darkness, false light and adverse weather are the guerrilla fighter's allies and should be used to their full advantage. Likewise the terrain, whether be it bush, marsh, undulating savanna or desert dunes, are natural primary elements of the guerrillas' environment and should be integrated in their tactics. Hence it follows that outstanding knowledge of the terrain is of the utmost importance. Furthermore, good relations with the local population, developing their loyalty and activating them for the cause, is a critical part of the guerrilla's program. Lastly when targets are selected it should be remembered that the enemy is also a major provider of weapons and supplies.

The records reveal that the most effective guerrilla warfare is usually instigated in rural areas. Only after a substantial foundation has been established in the countryside, can guerrilla tactics be brought to bear on the towns and smaller garrisons. And only after this stage has been reached can larger towns and eventually capitals, be occupied. The support of the urban civilian

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44 R. Taber, *The war of the flea*, pp. 28-30.

45 R. de Vries, *Mobiele oorlogvoering*, p. 137.

population, the *resistencia civica*, can then be employed in non-violent action such as the raising of funds, circulating petitions, furnishing the press with information and joining demonstrations.[46]

e. The combatants

Because the size of a guerrilla army is invariably smaller than that of its opponent, it is clear that the quality of the combatants is of paramount importance. This consideration is an important element of the psychological perspective of this study.

The leader of a group – often called a cadre – or indeed of the entire movement, needs to be a particularly gifted person with a strong personality. Laqueur quoted General de Brack, the author of an early 19th century handbook who stated that: "... a detachment is partisan, when ... under the genius of a leader, who is not controlled except by orders given in a general manner ... The profession of a partisan is a hazardous one. It can only be carried out by a skilful, rapid and bold leader ..."[47] If by *partisan* De Brack included what we presently define as a *guerrilla*, then it becomes clear that he meant that the leader of guerrilla fighters must be able to operate independently, yet keep within the boundaries of the wider plan of the group.

In his summing up Laqueur pointed out that most successful guerrilla leaders are relatively young – in their late twenties to early forties – that their manners made them popular in the group, but that they enforced severe discipline and banished all vice from their camps.[48] Taber contended that a leader should not only inspire the spirit to sacrifice but should also possess a high degree of selfless dedication and a high sense of purpose.[49]

The guerrilla fighter himself should also possess special attributes. Primarily, he should believe in the cause and be prepared to fight for it; in other words, he must have inner (psychological) strength. He must be fearless and of hardy mettle. He cannot have the character of a saint as scruples may turn him from his purpose. According to Taber he should have a cheerful, stoical temperament, savour the guerrilla's rigorous life and possess a strong ideological armour. Moreover, he must be prepared to stand firm on solid moral footing.[50] The guerrilla fighter, in contrast with what is often true of the common soldier, should not be a brigand, a

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46 R. Taber, *The war of the flea*, p. 28.

47 W. Laqueur, *Guerrilla*, p. 148.

48 W. Laqueur, *Guerrilla*, pp. 397-398.

49 R. Taber, *The war of the flea*, p. 148.

50 W. Laqueur, *Guerrilla*, p. 129; R. Taber, *The war of the flea*, p. 147.

pillager or a rapist. However, this is not always the case and Laqueur stated that there is frequently no clear dividing line between guerrilla warfare, terror and brigandage.[51] There are often bandits and marauders operating under the colours of guerrillas but they are usually small groups lacking strong political incentive.

Physically the guerrilla fighter should be tough and strong with iron legs and sound lungs. In a guerrilla army there are usually specialists such as saboteurs, arms runners, explosive experts, and medical men apart from the regular warriors. Although this fighter will be prepared to lead a hard and dangerous life, he will not carelessly throw his life away. Major Karl von Clausewitz, the German military theorist at the turn of the 18th century, summed it up in his work *Kleiner Krieg* that the *small war* involved not only greater courage and temerity, but also called for the utmost caution.[52] This is logical as the guerrilla group is generally of limited size and lives are therefore particularly valuable.

f. The costs involved

The cost of any warfare can be measured in two dimensions – the financial expenditure and the cost in human lives. Normally the monetary cost of waging a guerrilla war is far less than that of a large defending force. The budget for the Algerian FLN came to about $40 million per annum in the early 1980s. In their efforts to contain them the French government spent roughly the same amount in less than two weeks.[53] This same principle applies throughout. It was the exorbitant cost of the Vietnam War that made the US politicians start asking questions. By the end of 1967 when the US had in excess of half a million men in Vietnam the annual rate of expenditure was close to $30 billion. When the cost of the 1 889 lost helicopters, is added to the financial outlay for the 2 226 high technology fixed wing aircraft which were likewise lost, the magnitude of the American dilemma becomes clear.[54] It certainly explains why US politicians talked about the *Vietnam fiasco*.[55]

The longer the conflict is kept alive by the guerrilla army the more the costs for the Goliath escalate.[56] The enemy's spiralling expenses are thus a vital reason for perpetuating the war.

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51 W. Laqueur, *Guerrilla*, p. 93.

52 W. Laqueur, *Guerrilla*, p. 110.

53 W. Laqueur, *Guerrilla*, p. 379.

54 R. Taber, *The war of the flea*, p. 78.

55 R. Taber, *The war of the flea*, p. 75.

56 R. Taber, *The war of the flea*, p. 14.

The cost to the successful guerrilla movement is contained by their seizure of enemy weaponry and supplies, by the support provided by the local people and in certain cases by external powers who have a direct interest in the particular doctrine the guerrilla group is promoting. The aid that the USSR and Communist China have given to insurgents world wide is well known.

The cost in lives follows the same pattern. It is generally accepted by military theorists that compared to the conventional wars of the last century (World War 1, World War 2 and Korea) military and civilian casualties in guerrilla warfare are low.

Table III-1 The numbers of deaths due to military causes during World War I and World War II.[57]

Country	World War 1	World War 2
Russia	1 700 000	10 000 000
France	1 357 000	250 000
Britain	908 000	450 000*
Germany	1 773 000	3 500 000
Austria/Hungary	1 200 000	120 000

* Includes British colonies.

The losses in three years of war in Korea, a so called limited war, is reported as: South Korea, 1 313 000 (450 000 deaths); North Korea, approximately 2 000 000 (415 000 deaths); US, 157 530 (33 632 deaths)[58]. In the American Civil War (1861-1864) 620 000 men from a population of only 35 million lost their lives. Of those 360 000 were from the Federates (North) and 258 000 from the Confederacy (South). The fact that four out of every five deaths were as a result of disease and sickness,[59] makes the total impact of a conventional war even more frightening. Figures of the casualties in *small wars* are not easy to obtain as the element of propaganda plays a major role.

In recent times a third type of casualty, namely the psychologically-wounded soldier, as described by Hans Binneveld, is recognised.[60] This category of casualty is not measurable in

57 *Microsoft Encarta 98 Encyclopedia*, keywords: World War I; World War II.

58 *Microsoft Encarta 98 Encyclopedia*, keyword: Korean War.

59 *Microsoft Encarta 98 Encyclopedia*, keyword: American Civil War.

60 H. Binneveld, *From shellshock to battle stress*, p. 25.

tangible numbers such as those of deaths and injuries, yet it affects both sides when guerrilla warfare is being waged. It can be argued that the soldier in the larger, defensive force is more susceptible because he is subject to constant uncertainty and the often barbaric methods used by the guerrilla force. Binneveld has shown that this was the case in Vietnam. After the war psychologists realized that a deviant condition had surfaced, one which was subsequently called *post traumatic stress disorder* (PTSD). Today this condition is recognized as a major factor influencing the lives of many war veterans. The manifestation of PTSD does not form an integral part of this study.

All these issues correspond with the teachings of Che Guevara, who stressed that the guerrilla force must make maximum use of snipers to intimidate the enemy, should use the night as its friend in order to surprise and confuse its foe and above all should rely on mobility.[61] By following Guevara's advice, the guerrilla force will not only inflict physical casualties but also cause psychological wounds, that will eventually ruin the effectiveness of the conventional soldier.

g. The ratios and size of guerrilla units

Guerrilla warfare is not based on the parity of numbers as in conventional warfare. Indeed the essence of guerrilla warfare lies in the huge difference in the numbers of the two opposing forces. Moreover, it is impossible to define a specific or ideal ratio, this will be dictated by circumstances. Taber asserted that the ideal would be a ratio of 10 to 1 but that special cases of 500 to 1 were not unknown.[62] He referred to the instance in 1961 when more than 60 000 Castro troops were used to put down 600 anti-Castro guerrillas (a ratio of 100 to 1). At the end of the the Anglo-Boer War there were 20 800 Boers opposing more than 400 000 British troops (a ratio of 20 to 1) but this is perhaps misleading. The number of the Boers was shrinking daily, and many of the 20 000 were no longer equipped for combat. Yet in broad terms this follows the typical pattern.

On the subject of ratios De Vries stated that the size of a guerrilla unit should be in relation to its objective. He warned that an unduly large force can be just as damaging as one too small.[63] Linked to this, is the question of commando or unit size. As mobility and the ability to be self-sufficient are crucial for the guerrilla force, it seems natural that large cumbersome columns are

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61 R. Taber, *The war of the flea*, p. 141.

62 R. Taber, *The war of the flea*, p. 140.

63 R. de Vries, *Mobiele oorlogvoering*, p. 120.

to be avoided. The terrain and other local conditions will usually be the deciding factors. In the Sierra Maestra in Cuba, Castro operated with units of 100 to 120 while in the more densely populated rural regions smaller platoon-sized units of 30 to 40 were the norm. In suburban areas where concealment is crucial small units of three to eight are more effective.[64]

5. Guerrilla warfare: the road to success or failure

From the dawn of guerrilla warfare many centuries before Christianity until the present no clear answer has been found to the question of whether guerrilla warfare is the most effective way, for the Davids to settle disputes. The basic tenets of guerrilla warfare have remained the same and yet many *small wars* have ended in defeat for the guerrilla force. Laqueur pointed out that most guerrilla-type conflicts, especially those with a strong underlying partisan element, have failed, but he added that because circumstances differ the results have varied from country to country.[65] Studying the records, one could argue with some justification that in those cases where outright success was achieved, for example in China, Cuba and Vietnam, the basic principles, as spelt out by Mao Zedong in the 1950s, were indeed followed. On the other hand, in encounters where the Davids failed, the evidence frequently discloses that the principles were either ignored or were denied them by the opposing force. Both these factors were probably important in the failure of the Boer forces to succeed through guerrilla warfare.

At the beginning of the 21st century it appears that the small war, whether it is a guerrilla war in the true sense or a revolution, an insurrection or a limited partisan struggle, still plays a major role in the disputes between groups. In May 2001 *Time* magazine reported on the ongoing small war conflicts in 13 regions world wide.[66] There were no doubt many other conflicts in progress at the time which were not mentioned. This serves to illustrate that despite the sophisticated weaponry available in 2001, most conflicts still involve some measure of guerrilla techniques and are generally reasonably localized in nature.

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64 R. Taber, *The war of the flea*, p. 138.

65 W. Laqueur, *Guerrilla*, p. 52.

66 *Time International*; Worldwatch, 7, 14, 21 and 28 May 2001.

Chapter IV

Events during the transitional phase

1. Introduction

When General Piet Cronjé capitulated on 27 February 1900 at Paardeberg, with the result that 4 091 people were taken prisoner by the British, it could well have been the final act in the Anglo-Boer War, for it must have been clear, even at such an early stage of the war, that Lord Roberts' march to the two republican capitals would be unrelenting and could not be stopped. This was confirmed by a burgher of Heilbron, Cornelis van den Heever, who stated in an interview in 1962 : "Want voor ons hier weg is [na Brandwaterkom toe] kon jy vir 'n donkie vra of ons die oorlog sal wen en hy sou sy ore geskud het. Want dit was 'n hopelose ding nadat Blo[e]mfontein en Pretoria ingeneem is en die Engelse by duisende en derduisende ingekom het."[1] The war could at best be prolonged in the hope that some other solution could be reached. The British superiority in numbers and war equipment could not be equalled by the Boers. However, the war did not end after Paardeberg, nor did it end when Bloemfontein was occupied on 13 March 1900, or even when Pretoria fell on 5 June of the same year. It continued for another two years and three months after Cronjé's surrender.

It is well known that the continued conflict changed its form from conventional warfare to guerrilla warfare. Although this transformation did not take place overnight, it meant that in future the war would influence the lives of many more people than it had done before. Initially the cruel reality of war was only experienced in a few areas – northern Natal, the Free State -Cape Colony border and, to a lesser extent, Mafeking and its surroundings – and activities associated with war could be observed in the four harbour cities. The new phase brought war into almost every district

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1 C. M. van den Heever, A burgher from the Heilbron Commando -- according to an interview recorded by his grandson, N.C. Anderson, 1962. [Translated: "... because before we left (for the Brandwater Basin) you could have asked a donkey if we would win this war and he would have shaken his ears. Because it was hopeless after Bloemfontein and Pretoria had been occupied, and the English came in by the thousands upon thousands."]

of the two republics and also into many parts of the colonies. It was a war that spread over most of the countryside, towns and cities of southern Africa. In addition it also involved many more people than before, people of every colour and creed.

The reason why the governments of the Boer republics preferred to continue the battle must be examined, as many of their burghers did not agree with their thinking. Reflecting on the background and the qualities of the core of the Boer people, their intense quest for independence and their bitter sentiment towards the British – a sentiment that had been evident for more than half a century – stand out. Their ancestors, the Voortrekkers, left the Cape Colony and a few years later also Natal, with the express objective of freeing themselves from British rule and to be independent. And for many of the Boer people this anti-British sentiment had been kept alive for three generations. Their encounters with the British during the 1880-81 Transvaal War of Independence and again after the devious attempt made on their independence by Jameson's raid of 1895-96, merely reinforced this passion. To most of the republicans the concept of *independence* probably meant being *independent of the British* .

It should be kept in mind that either their forebears or they themselves had not long before left their European country of birth – France, Holland, Germany, Ireland or Russia – to settle in the Transvaal or in the Free State. They were, or stemmed from, pioneers with the inherent hardiness and perseverence that are characteristic of frontiersmen. The core of their belief was to have the freedom to make their own laws and live by them, without being governed by some foreign government.

Keeping control of the mineral riches of the Transvaal, despite all the progress that had become possible since the discovery of gold, was not a major reason for prolonging the war. The gold mines that had given rise to the *Uitlander* problem and had led to the urbanisation of the country, were probably perceived as a threat to the agrarian population of the republics. Proof of their willingness to part with the goldfields became clear during the final peace negotiations in 1902.[2] On the other hand, it should not be overlooked that the vibrant new city of Johannesburg and its satellite towns provided solid livelihoods for many young republicans, as well as for some

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[2] J.D. Kestell and D.E van Velden, *Die vredesonderhandelinge tussen die regerings van die twee Suid-Afrikaanse Republieke en die verteenwoordigers van die Britse regering wat uitgeloop het op die vrede wat op 31 Mei 1902 op Vereeniging gesluit is*, p. 71.

of their colonial cousins, including men such as Jan Smuts, Ben Viljoen, Danie Theron and Christiaan Beyers.

On the other hand, being a hardy people could also denote a degree of stubbornness in the general makeup of the republicans. President M.T. Steyn, as president and commander in chief of the Free State, a foreign trained jurist and former chief justice, is perhaps a fitting example. Throughout the war he stuck to his initial statement to his officers, declaring that if indeed they wanted war, then they could not simply turn around and come asking for peace as soon as matters soured – the war would be continued to the bitter end.[3] He upheld this position throughout the war, notwithstanding all the adversities, until the very end when his health completely failed him. This stubborn trait was characteristic of many burghers who continued the fight and will form part of this study.

The British, for their part, did not believe that the hostilities would continue after the two republican capitals had been occupied. Roberts (on the recommendation of Lieutenant-Colonel G.F.R. Henderson[4]) was convinced of the strategic value of occupying of the enemy's capital. He set his sights on Bloemfontein and thereafter on Pretoria. That this same conviction was held by many British nationals can be concluded from Sir Arthur Conan Doyle's view that the occupation of Pretoria heralded the end of the war.[5]

The majority of the republicans did not share the belief that the fall of their two capitals necessarily meant total defeat of their republics. They argued that the vast open spaces of their land had as yet not been occupied by their adversaries and this reasoning presented them with the opening to continue the war. Their capitals were relatively young cities and the seats of government were not necessarily inflexible. The capital of the ZAR had indeed been relocated twice before. The hostilities could certainly be prolonged, operating in the rural areas and employing smaller units. *Small war* was to be their means of achieving their goal.

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3 W.J. de Kock, "President Marthinus Theunis Steyn, die siel van die vryheidstryd" in J.H. Breytenbach (ed.), *Gedenkalbum van die Tweede Vryheidsoorlog*, p. 244; M.C.E. van Schoor, "President M.T. Steyn: sy rol in die Anglo-Boereoorlog 1899-1902", in *Genl. J.B.M. Hertzoggedenklesing XXVIII,* p. 2.

4 L. Scholtz, *Waarom die Boere die oorlog verloor het*, p. 86.

5 A. Conan Doyle, *The great South African War*, p. 508.

2. Transition commences

The transition from conventional warfare to the more offensive guerrilla-type warfare did not – in fact it could not – happen overnight. A more offensive type of warfare had been suggested by certain Boer leaders even before their defeat at Paardeberg. Scholtz maintained that Generals Smuts and Hertzog, the two republican leaders who were conscious of military-theoretical matters, proposed an offensive strategy right at the outset. Generals De Wet and De la Rey wanted to disrupt British communications during the Boers' sojourn at Magersfontein, by using, small mobile commandos.[6]

After Cronjé and his force had surrendered at Paardeberg, De Wet and 2 500 men were still in the vicinity and on 7 March 1900 they tried to delay the British march to Bloemfontein at Poplar Grove.[7] André Wessels claimed that 5 000 Boers were deployed over a wide front but that after French and his cavalry had flanked them large-scale desertion began.[8] Three days later the reduced Boer force was once more unable to stop the advancing British at Abrahamskraal. Clearly the defensive style of warfare was no longer effective. De Wet was faced with despairing and despondent burghers and, deeply disappointed, he sent them home with orders to reassemble at the Zand River railway bridge on 25 March 1900.

After Roberts had occupied Bloemfontein, his rapid advance to Pretoria was delayed for several weeks due to a serious outbreak of typhoid within the British ranks. This unexpected respite gave the republican leaders the opportunity to organize an extended *krygsraad,* or military council, at Kroonstad on 17 March 1900. This was a crucial meeting where both presidents and all the important generals were present. First of all it was agreed that the republican struggle for independence should indeed be continued. Four additional resolutions were taken on future strategies. These were:

a. That the Boers would forthwith operate in smaller, mobile units.

b. That the cumbersome wagon convoys would be abolished.

c. That the rank of corporal would be introduced for corporalships of 25 men.

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6 L. Scholtz, *Waarom die Boere die oorlog verloor het*, p. 20; C.R. de Wet, *Three years war*, p. 30.

7 A. Wessels, *Die Anglo-Boereoorlog 1899-1902 - 'n oorsig van die militêre verloop van die stryd*, p. 26;.J.H. Breytenbach, *Geskiedenis van die Tweede Vryheidsoorlog 1899-1902,* IV, p. 486.

8 A. Wessels, *'n Oorsig van die militêre verloop van die stryd,* p. 26.

d. That stricter disciplinary measures – including court martials – would be applied. [9]

Of these four resolutions the first two were critical in the successful transition to guerrilla warfare. However, one should not overlook the importance of the other two items in the Boer quest for success. .

Burgher C. van den Heever recalled that soon afterwards they were told, firstly by President M.T. Steyn at Smaldeel station and later by General De Wet, that there would no longer be unnecessary loss of life, they would operate in small patrols, hitting here and there and escaping when the fighting became too furious. He recalled that Steyn even hinted at help in the form of intervention by Russia.[10]

This confirmed to the burghers that there was to be a different form of warfare, although it proved that complete conversion would take time. To delay the British march to Pretoria, the old, familiar, conventional warfare was still considered the correct strategy by most of the Boer leaders.

It was General Christiaan de Wet who was to become renowned for his audacious tactics and his implementation of the new form of warfare. In his memoirs he recounted that he realised that the answer lay in rapidity of action, quick in fighting, quick in reconnaissance but also quick at flight. He added that from then on his mission was the disruption of enemy supply and communication lines – no matter what the cost might be.[11] He soon proved his resolve in a series of smaller-scale attacks: Sannaspost on 31 March, Mostertshoek on 3 and 4 April and Jammersbergdrift on 25 April 1900.

However, it was the lighting attack on Roodewal station on 7 June 1900,[12] only two days after the capitulation of the ZAR's capital, Pretoria, that not only caught the world's imagination, but stirred the hornet's nest. For it was there that De Wet and his small commando outwitted the British guard and destroyed substantial supplies that were sorely needed by Roberts' forces in view of the approaching winter. This was a major blow struck at a time when uninterrupted supply was crucial for the success of the British plans. The strategic importance of this action and

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9 P.G. Cloete, *The Anglo-Boer War a chronology*, p. 119.

10 C. M. van den Heever, A burgher from the Heilbron Commando – according to an interview recorded by his grandson, N.C. Anderson, 1962.

11 C.R. de Wet *Three years war*, pp. 80, 115.

12 P.G. Cloete, *Chronology*, p. 156.

Roberts' risk of having only one railway line via Bloemfontein to support his ever growing force is often underplayed against the sheer glory of the encounter. Perhaps the dramatisation of the attack can be ascribed to De Wet's own description of the exploding ammunition as the most beautiful fireworks that he had ever seen. De Wet was most certainly correct when he wrote that Lord Roberts was vexed with him,[13] because similar to the situation after his looting of the supply convoy at Watervals Drift on 15 February 1900, the loss of the supplies placed the British force in a serious dilemma. Pakenham recounts that more than half a million pounds' worth of plum pudding, bully beef, blankets and cordite was torched at Roodewal.[14] This victory was moreover a great boost to the morale of the retreating burghers in the Transvaal. This was truly timely because the occupation of Pretoria which was aggravated by the knowledge that their president was leaving the capital, had caused large-scale despondency and prompted wide spread laying down of arms.[15]

3. The first major laying down of arms

It is necessary to examine the reasons behind the large-scale laying down of arms and the abandonment of the war effort by substantial numbers of republicans. Burghers of the Free State abandoned their commandos and returned home in scores after the defeats at Paardeberg, Poplar Grove and Abrahamskraal. The impact of Roberts' proclamations and the occupation of Bloemfontein was likewise significant on the number of burghers who simply went home.[16] After the relief of Ladysmith in Natal and notably after Roberts' entry into the ZAR, many burghers from the Transvaal republic followed suit. This first period of abandonment – or "handsupping" as it was called – which took place from March to June 1900, has been analysed in detail by the historian Albert Grundlingh. Several factors are suggested as reasons why the Boers forsook their duty, notably war-fatigue, low combat morale, scepticism and despondence, all of which led to a general spirit of defeatism. In addition Grundlingh discusses the poor discipline in the commandos and the lack of proper leave arrangements that prevailed in the Boer military structure. He also suggests that the series of proclamations and promises issued by the British,

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13 C.R. de Wet, *Three years war*, p. 109.

14 T. Pakenham, *The Boer War*, p. 436.

15 A.M. Grundlingh, *Die "hendsoppers" en "joiners": die rasionaal en verskynsel van verraad*, pp. 29-30.

16 C.R. de Wet, *Three years war*, p. 61; A.M. Grundlingh, *Die "hendsoppers" en "joiners"*, pp. 26-27.

the burghers' growing awareness of Britain's massive war reserves and finally the prospect of reaping material benefits by switching loyalty all played a role.[17] Grundlingh adds that in some cases mass abandonment was even instigated by Boer officers, as indeed happened with the Edenburg Commando.[18]

In his summary Grundlingh asserts that demoralization of burghers was the main factor for this first wave of capitulation.[19] This shows that there had already been a psychological impact on the Boers and even though it took place during the transitional phase, before the actual guerrilla war, it is significant in terms of this study. The seeds of doubt had been sown, seeds that may even have lain dormant in the minds of many who remained on commando or those who later returned to resume fighting. These seeds that could probably sprout later when circumstances altered. This predicament was clearly illustrated by Field Cornet H.S. van der Walt of Winburg in the Free State. In the prologue of his diary he described how he too wavered about returning to the war, until he received a divine message while reading in Jeremiah 48.[20]

Many of those who abandoned the war effort, took an oath of neutrality when they handed over their weapons. This was one of the conditions included in a number of the proclamations that were issued by Lord Roberts. The aim was to convince the republicans of the futility of their struggle and reassure them of the reasonable attitude of the occupying force. The first proclamation was issued in February 1900 – even before the battle at Paardeberg had taken place – and was aimed at the Free State population in general. It demanded that citizens *desist from any further hostility* and it promised that such people would not be made to suffer, either in terms of their persons or their property.[21] After the British occupation of Bloemfontein, Roberts issued his next proclamation on 15 March 1900, pledging that passes would be issued to allow the burghers to return to their homes. They would not be made prisoners of war nor would their property be taken from them.[22] On 31 May 1900, after the British had crossed the Vaal River into the ZAR, Roberts issued a third proclamation aimed specifically at the burghers of the northern republic. It included the same basic promises as in the proclamation of 15 March, except that the section

17 A.M. Grundlingh, *Die "hendsoppers" en "joiners"*, pp. 20-32.

18 A.M. Grundlingh, *Die "hendsoppers" en "joiners"*, p. 35.

19 A.M. Grundlingh, *Die "hendsoppers" en "joiners"*, p. 40.

20 J.H. Coetzee, "H.S. van der Walt: Oorlogsdagboek" in *Christiaan de Wet-Annale,* 8, pp. 120-121.

21 A.M. Grundlingh, *Die "hendsoppers" en "joiners"*, p. 26.

22 A.M. Grundlingh, *Die "hendsoppers" en "joiners"*, p. 27.

promising that property would not be taken from the people was omitted. This proclamation was followed by another on 6 June 1900 undertaking that burghers laying down arms and taking the oath of neutrality would be allowed to keep their livestock and would be issued with passes to move their livestock to winter grazing veld.[23] Grundlingh declares that these proclamations had a significant effect on the already demoralized Boers. He quotes Frederick Rompel who had described the promises made in the proclamations and stressed that the prospect of being home with his wife and family was very alluring to many a burgher.[24]

The number of burghers who withdrew from the war during the four months from March 1900 until approximately July 1900 is estimated as being approximately 6 000 in the Free State and between 6 300 and 8 000 in the ZAR. This represented between 22% and 26% of the total number of burghers who were under obligation to perform commando service in the two republics, a significant portion of the already limited forces.[25]

4. The last conventional battles

At 2 o'clock on 5 June Roberts triumphantly entered Pretoria and the *Vierkleur* was replaced with a silken *Union Jack*. But there was little over which to triumph. None of the Cruessot guns had been fired, the four forts were deserted, the government had absconded and taken their gold with them. The too-easy occupation of the capital probably made Roberts extremely optimistic, presumably concluding that by taking Pretoria he had in effect won the war. This belief might well have been correct, had it not been for the hardheaded resolve of the Free State leaders. Only four days before a group of ZAR generals, including the new Commandant-General Louis Botha, had telegraphed Kruger and Steyn declaring that in their opinion the war should be ceased. They referred to the collapse of their organisation and the widespread demoralization of the Boer forces as the prime reasons for their stance.

Steyn was unwavering. According to Pakenham he replied bluntly in what was probably the most important telegram of the war: "We shall never surrender...". Jan Smuts, who was the first

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23 A.M. Grundlingh, *Die "hendsoppers" en "joiners"*, p. 29.

24 A.M. Grundlingh, *Die "hendsoppers" en "joiners"*, p. 38.

25 A.M. Grundlingh, *Die "hendsoppers" en "joiners"*, p. 37.

to see Steyn's telegram, later declared: "He practically accused the Tranvaalers of cowardice."[26] At a *krygsraad* on 2 June 1900 in Pretoria – while Roberts was just on the other side of the hill – the determination of their southern ally carried the day. After the young Captain Danie Theron's bold speech, the ZAR military leaders decided to continue fighting. But they also decided not to defend Pretoria.[27] This fateful decision determined the way the war was to be conducted in the weeks that followed. Shortly before the British formally occupied the capital, the government officials and the aged President Kruger, as well as a considerable amount of gold from the state coffers, left Pretoria in an easternly direction.

While the seat of the ZAR government moved first to Middelburg, then further east to Machadodorp and finally to Nelspruit, the Boers fought several delaying actions. The battle of Donkerhoek/Diamond Hill on 11 and 12 June 1900, in the first range of hills east and northeast of Pretoria and eventually the battle at Bergendal/Dalmanutha on 21-27 August 1900, near Belfast, were both significant and have been widely reported. The latter is besides usually quoted as being the last conventional battle of the Anglo-Boer War.[28] During the two months that elapsed between these two battles, a number of very important events took place. In reality it was an extremely critical two month period and needs closer attention.

5. De la Rey and the western Transvaal

While the ZAR government paused at Middelburg it was decided that General J.H. de la Rey would strive to reactivate the Boers in the western districts of the Transvaal. He was not only to mobilize the scattered Boer forces, but to break the concentration of the British onslaught. On De la Rey's request it was agreed that the young state attorney, Jan Smuts, should accompany him and that the two of them would constitute a separate government for the western districts of the Transvaal.[29]

A few important engagements followed in the western Transvaal. At Silkaatsnek, scarcely 30 kilometres west of Pretoria, De la Rey, who was still *en route* to the west, attacked a British

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26 Quoted by T. Pakenham, *The Boer War*, p. 432.

27 J.H. Breytenbach, *Geskiedenis*, V, pp. 539-541.

28 A. Wessels, *Die militêre verloop van die stryd*, p. 29; T. Pakenham, *The Boer War*, p. 455.

29 G. Nattrass and S.B. Spies (eds.), *Jan Smuts, Memoirs of the Boer War*, p. 77.

camp on 11 July 1900, where he caused 67 casualties and captured valuable weapons and ammunition. Three weeks later, early in August 1900, De la Rey fell upon a force of colonial troops under Colonel C.O. Hore and the siege of Elands River ensued. It is generally believed that his aim was to divert the British force that was hunting for De Wet not far away. He indeed succeeded in achieving this object, and Kitchener was ordered to divert three of his brigades that were at that time hunting for De Wet, in a attempt to relieve the beleaguered Hore.[30].

In Chapter VII the reason for this encounter will be considered from a different angle, namely the rebuilding of the Boer force in the western Transvaal. De la Rey used these victories as a tool to assist his campaign to reassemble the burghers of the western Transvaal. In this he was certainly effective because Grundlingh claims that within ten days he had convinced 1 200 burghers to take up their arms again and rejoin their commandos.[31] A number of vigorous military actions, some resulting in dramatic victories, underscored the weakness of the British occupation of the western Transvaal. Until the end of the war, during the first few months of 1902, the western Transvaal region under De la Rey remained a vexation to the British.

6. The Brandwater Basin

Despite their president's firm stand on the continuance of the war, a position which was supported by De Wet's strong views on the matter, a large body of Free State burghers, with substantial quantities of equipment and livestock surrendered in the Brandwater Basin near Bethlehem, on 30 July 1900. They were under the leadership of Ex-Chief Commandant Marthinus Prinsloo.[32] The circumstances surrounding this incident – which also took place in the period between the battles of Donkerpoort and Dalmanutha – are closely related to this research and need closer examination.

The crisis began when a substantial British force converged on the eastern Free State town of Bethlehem and the newly-elected Chief-Commandant De Wet chose to defend the town. Generals A.H. Paget and R.A.P. Clements attacked on 6 July 1900, but only succeeded in

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30 P.G. Cloete, *Chronology*, p. 179.

31 A.M. Grundlingh, *Die "hendsoppers" en "joiners"*, p. 49.

32 P.G. Cloete, *Chronology*, p. 175.

occupying the town the following day, after many Boers had abandoned their positions prematurely. The German artillerist, Oskar Hindrager, who was present at the time, expressed his disgust at the lack of discipline and enthusiasm among the Free State burghers.[33]

Pakenham describes the encounter with some understanding of the circumstances so far as the British were concerned. The converging troops, mostly from Scottish regiments, were doubtless relieved to see mountains once more – real mountains streaked with fresh snow – after weeks of tramping across the dry dusty Free State veld.[34] On the other hand, it is important to note the effect of this particular environment on the Boers. Bethlehem and its surrounding mountains can become extremely cold and harsh in mid winter and there was little shelter. At that time of the year it was certainly an unpleasant environment for the burghers. Oskar Hintrager confirmed this point in his entry of 3 July 1900, observing that during their night march towards Bethlehem it was icy cold and misty.[35] Furthermore, the winter's unpalatable sour-grass that is found in this high-lying region provided little nourishment for the hardworking horses and oxen. This issue will be clarified in a subsequent chapter. The fact that the wellbeing of their animals was of great importance to the highly mobile Boers, should not be overlooked.

After their half-hearted stand at Bethlehem, the Boers retreated southwards. Soon most of the Free State forces were concentrated in the geological basin known as the Brandwater Basin (see Map V–5). According to De Wet's description, it was enclosed by the *Roodeberge* or Red Mountains and the *Witteberge* or White Mountains with Fouriesburg at its centre. There were only six passes granting entry to, or exit from, the basin.

Originally the intention of concentrating the Boer forces was to defend themselves against the expected British onslaught. Did this make strategic sense, one might ask. Why did the republicans – under the command of the very man who propagated the idea of *small war* and *high mobility* – concentrate in this extremely confined position when logically they should have dispersed? Can some element of *safety-in-numbers* be detected? Considering the large number of burghers concentrated in the basin, the entire situation appears to contradict the decision taken on 17 March 1900 at Kroonstad, which was to continue with the war by making use of smaller

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33 J.J. Oberholster, "Dagboek van Oskar Hintrager – Saam met Christiaan de Wet, Mei tot September 1900" in *Christiaan de Wet-Annale,* 2, pp. 54-56.

34 T. Pakenham, *The Boer War*, p. 440.

35 J.J. Oberholster, "Dagboek van Oskar Hindrager", pp. 52.

units. Moreover, the principles of guerrilla warfare – despite the fact that they had not been formulated by a Mao Zedong or a Fidel Castro at that stage – dictate that a guerrilla force under duress should disperse and should only concentrate again when they are ready to attack. In this case virtually the entire Free State force was confined in a strategically hazardous basin, despite being under severe pressure from their adversaries.

De Wet eventually realised the pitfall of this concentration and a *krygsraad* was called for 13 July 1900. It is important to note too that De Wet had lived through a similar situation at Paardeberg barely five months before. It is thus reasonable to assume that he would have been particularly wary of entrapment. Freedom of movement had always been a fundamental requirement as far as De Wet was concerned.

At the *krygsraad* of 13 July it was agreed that the concentration of burghers should break up and retire from the basin in three separate groups. No time was to be wasted in doing so. De Wet, accompanied by Steyn and his entourage, left on 15 July via Slabbertsnek.[36] Assistant Chief-Commandant Paul Roux and 2 000 men were to leave the very next day while at the same time General R. Crowther with 500 men would seek contact with the Harrismith commandos to the east of the basin. A small force under the ex Chief-Commandant, Marthinus Prinsloo, would comprise a rear guard.[37] However, when the time came Roux, Crowther and their men failed to implement the planned withdrawal and instead merely remained static in the basin.

Pakenham, who relates these events from the British point of view, remarks that at that juncture Lord Roberts had taken off his "kid-gloves" and had begun to employ a strategy of farm burning and destruction of property as punishment for the Boer wrecking of trains and destroying of telegraph lines. "So, as Hunter's columns had tramped on to the Roodebergen, they left a new kind of signature ... a pillar of black smoke to add to the red dust."[38] It is a moot point just how much of this new threat to their families and their property was known to the burghers who were huddled in the basin and what effect did this awareness have on their sagging spirits. Hintrager reported on 13 July that according to newspaper reports General Rundell was also burning farms elsewhere in the Free State.[39]

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36 J.J. Oberholster, "Dagboek van Oskar Hindrager", p. 80.

37 E. Wessels, *Veldslae Anglo-Boereoorlog 1899-1902*, pp. 144-145.

38 T. Pakenham, *The Boer War*, p. 440.

39 J.J. Oberholster, "Dagboek van Oskar Hindrager", p. 72.

Pakenham categorically states that it was a tactical mistake by De Wet and Steyn, the two people best qualified to prevent the collapse of morale of the Free State burghers, that they were first to leave the Brandwater Basin. He argues that their absence left a vacuum which was soon filled by leaders who considered that the time had come to capitulate.[40]

After De Wet's departure the burghers were, however, not left in peace to plan their strategy of surrender. Although Hunter dallied at Bethlehem for a week before striking out for the mountains, the situation changed dramatically on 23 July 1900. The British troops attacked several passes and Hunter's 5 inch guns commenced regular shelling. The situation deteriorated to the extent that by 28 July 1900 of the six passes into the basin, only the one at Witsieshoek remained open. [41]

It is understandable that by this time the morale of the trapped burghers was at a very low ebb. This gave certain officers the chance to act. With the fiery De Wet safely out of the way ex-Chief-Commandant Marthinus Prinsloo was re-elected to his previous position. And on 29 July 1900 he negotiated a surrender with General Hunter.

De Wet raised many questions on this episode in *Three years war*. He pointed an accusing finger at Prinsloo for orchestrating the "definite act of treachery". He also speculated about the involvement of ex-Commandant G.S. Vilonel, who was a sentenced prisoner at the time, in the negotiation process. Lastly he criticised General Paul Roux's attempt to try and reverse the surrender, calling it an absurd escapade, which probably "afforded much amusement to the English General." [42]

On the other hand Pakenham maintains that the call: "*Huis toe"* [let's go home] had been intermittently heard ever since the capture of Bloemfontein. "Now it became the *cri de coeur* of the volk. All they wanted was to be allowed to take their wagons and go home."[43]

When the Harrismith and Vrede Commandos followed suit and also surrendered no less than 4 314 republicans (including 3 generals and 6 commandants) were taken out of the Boer force. This loss – following the 4 093 prisoners taken five months earlier at Paardeberg – as well

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40 T. Pakenham, *The Boer War*, p. 443.

41 T. Pakenham, *The Boer War*, pp. 441- 443.

42 C.R. de Wet, *Three years war*, pp. 130-131.

43 T. Pakenham, *The Boer War*, p. 443.

as the numerous smaller captures and the large-scale abandonments discussed above, placed the Free State forces in a very precarious position by the end of July 1900. On British side the cost of Brandwater Basin was 33 dead and 242 wounded.[44]

However, from the British viewpoint, what should have been a brilliant victory for Roberts was tarnished by the significant fact that De Wet and Steyn had absconded. This was the signal for *the first De Wet hunt* to be launched.

7. The hunt for De Wet begins

As soon as the British command realised that De Wet, President Steyn and his staff had left the Brandwater Basin on 15 July, Generals Paget and Broadwood were immediately dispatched in pursuit. This began what was to become known as *the first De Wet hunt.*[45] According to Pakenham "... the main [British] advance had now become of secondary importance to the task of hunting down the twin leaders and symbols of Boer resistance, Steyn and De Wet."[46]

After five days on the march De Wet was involved in another significant incident, one which would have far reaching repercussions in the months to come. His brother, General Piet de Wet – who according to Hintrager had been acting strangely since the affair at Lindley[47]– approached his brother on a farm near Heilbron, asking him whether he considered it worthwhile to continue the war. Christiaan de Wet answered his brother furiously with the words: "Are you mad?", turned away from him and entered the house.[48] Piet was later to play a major role in convincing Boers to lay down their arms. Thus the ways of two brothers parted, each to strive for his conviction during the months to come.

More British units were soon employed in the hunt. Among their leaders was General Sir C.E. Knox, a man with whom De Wet was destined to cross swords many times before the end of the war. Lord Roberts was indeed serious, so serious that he detailed his Chief of Staff, Lord Kitchener, to take overall charge of the hunt on 2 August 1900. De Wet and Steyn were gradually

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44 T. Pakenham, *The Boer War*, p. 444.

45 F. Pretorius, "Die eerste dryfjag op Hoofkmdt. C.R. de Wet" in *Christiaan de Wet-Annale*, 4, pp. 29-31.

46 T. Pakenham, *The Boer War*, p. 437.

47 J.J. Oberholster, "Dagboek van Oskar Hindrager", pp. 40-45.

48 C.R. de Wet, *Three years war*, p. 133.

forced into the northern districts of the Free State, to the banks of the Vaal River. Lord Methuen was ordered to deploy his force on the northern banks of the Vaal, in order to trap De Wet. The entire manoeuvre involved many critical encounters and it was only after a close battle in the hills west of Parys on 7 August 1900 that the last of the Free Staters managed to cross into the Transvaal at Schoemansdrif.[49]

Christiaan de Wet eventually escorted President Steyn northwards as far as the Crocodile River. On 18 August 1900 Steyn, accompanied by several Free State officials, continued eastwards to meet the aging President Kruger at Watervalonder.[50] De Wet then began his epic return home to the Free State.[51]

8. The ZAR finally embarks on guerrilla warfare.

While De la Rey was reassembling the ZAR forces in the western Transvaal, periodically confronting the British, and while De Wet was still trekking through the countryside on both sides of the Vaal River, the bulk of the ZAR forces were on their way to the east, along the Delagoa railway line. The battle at Dalmanutha – the last conventional battle – only commenced on 21 August 1900, a mere three days after De Wet and Steyn had parted company. This battle continued until 27 August and the very next day Kruger and Steyn moved from Watervalonder to Nelspruit, which town then became the official seat of the ZAR government. It was here that the discussion held at Watervalonder was confirmed and the decision to continue the war was taken. Steyn convinced the ZAR government to continue the war by using the enemy's ammunition and eating their food. Although Roberts had annexed the ZAR on 1 September 1900 and Kruger had left the republic on 11 September 1900, the decision to continue fighting was endorsed during a *krygsraad* at Hectorspruit.[52]

At this point the ZAR government's support for their burghers ceased. Surplus food supplies and 24 field guns, including the first of the Long Toms, were destroyed at Hectorspruit.[53]

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49 F. Pretorius, "Die eerste dryfjag op Hoofkmdt. C.R. de Wet" in *Christiaan de Wet-Annale,* 4, pp.118-134.

50 F. Pretorius, "Die eerste dryfjag op Hoofkmdt. C.R. de Wet", p. 187.

51 F. Pretorius, "Die eerste dryfjag op Hoofkmdt. C.R. de Wet", pp. 187-189.

52 F. Rompel, *Marthinus Theunis Steijn*, pp. 106-107.

53 F. Pretorius, *Kommandolewe tydens die Anglo-Boereoorlog 1899 - 1902*, p. 38.

Schikkerling described the scene of the destruction and how those men who were planning to carry on managed to salvage limited quantities of essentials.[54] The weak and the feint of heart and those without horses were sent over the Mozambique border into detention camps.[55] Burghers started moving in small groups towards the north and the northwest.[56] While some managed to reach higher lying areas and travelled via Lydenburg in the direction of Pietersburg, others had to face the dangers of the fever-ridden, parched Lowveld and eventually trekked over Heanertsburg to straggle into Pieterburg.

Hardly a year had passed since the ultimatum of 11 October 1899.

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54 R.W. Schikkerling, *Commando Courageous (A Boer's diary)*, 16.9.1900 - 18.9.1900, pp. 67-68.

55 O.J.O. Ferreira., *Viva Os Boers*, pp. 20-21.

56 J.W. Meijer, *Generaal Ben Viljoen, 1868-1917*, p. 172.

Chapter V

Regional background to the guerrilla warfare

Not long after the new strategies had been agreed upon – in the last days of October 1900[1] – a planning meeting was held at Cyferfontein in the Magaliesberg, south of Rustenburg. Here certain republican leaders, among them President Steyn, Commandant-General Botha, Generals De la Rey and Smuts, planned their overall strategy for the war that was to follow. It is important to note that the Free State's Chief Commandant De Wet was absent from these deliberations. Scholtz emphasised this fact, claiming that this was one of the important reasons why the plans that were laid did not come to fruition. Smuts, who described the meeting in considerable detail in his memoir, outlined the two major components of the plan.[2] Firstly, they intended to destroy the gold mines on the Witwatersrand, which would constitute an economic obstacle for the enemy. Secondly they wanted to shift the theatre of war away from republican soil, by invading the two British colonies and simultaneously seeking support from sympathetic colonists. Bill Nasson calls their plan a "grand design".[3] This plan embraced two basic guerrilla essentials. Firstly it would in effect expand the area of Boer activity considerably thereby provoking the enemy forces to spread themselves more thinly over the vast country. Secondly it would help to boost their dwindling numbers by recruiting colonial Afrikaners, thus drawing the local population into the struggle.

This new form of warfare would take the harsh realities of the war into the entire far reaching territories of both the republics, as well as large areas of the Cape Colony and parts of Natal. This meant that the country under consideration is vast, with extremely diverse ecology and also possessing a very varied economy. Any type of war, wherever it is fought, needs to be adapted to the local circumstances. To deal with these dissimilarities, this study of the guerrilla phase of the Anglo-Boer War will thus be presented along regional lines. Seven regions have been

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1 G. Nattrass and S.B. Spies (eds.), *Jan Smuts, Memoirs of the Boer War*, p. 35.

2 G. Nattrass and S.B. Spies (eds.), *Jan Smuts*, pp. 128-132.

3 Bill Nasson, *The South African War 1899 - 1902*, pp. 193-195.

selected according to the military structure of the two republics.[4]

During the planning of the guerrilla war the regional or district commandos were for the most part divided under commanders, each responsible for a particular territory. The ZAR State Artillery and ZAR Police were reorganised into commandos and subsequently allocated to particular regional commands.

As in any guerrilla war, the respective operational regions were not demarcated by clear boundaries. The regional guerrilla forces usually operated within the areas allocated to them, concentrating their efforts on disrupting the enemy transport and communication lines, attacking their camps and garrisons and generally aggravating them wherever possible . In other words, they aimed to follow the basic rules of guerrilla warfare, surprise, harass, disrupt and then disappear. Initially they had the extensive areas – so essential to guerrilla fighters – in which to move about. Moreover they were not encumbered with the slow moving supply trains, as was the case during the conventional phase of the war. The intention was that they should be self sufficient as far as arms, ammunition, clothes, food and horses were concerned. At the stage when the guerrilla strategy was implemented in late 1900, it was believed that the rural civilian-population – primarily the women and the older men who were non-combatants – would supply the burghers with most of their daily needs and would also provide the necessary medical care and furnish information about the enemy's movements. However this aspect of the strategy did not realise, because of the British the scorched earth policy.

As the boundaries between these regions were vaguely demarcated the allocated territories were often ignored and sorties frequently took place outside a commando's home domain. A case in point was the aid which De Wet and his Free Staters provided for General P.J. Liebenberg, during the siege of Frederickstad near Potchefstroom. General Ben Viljoen, on his way back after the meeting of ZAR leaders at De Emigratie in the southeastern Transvaal, attacked a British column of about 150 wagons and 850 men at Mooifontein.[5] These incidents demonstrate that despite the regions allocated to commanders, guerrilla war was waged countrywide. Wherever the Boers could inflict damage on the enemy, it was their duty to do so.

In order to clarify the diversity of the war, the main environmental features (including the

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4 A. Wessels, *Die Anglo-Boereoorlog 1899 - 1902 'n oorsig van die militêre verloop van die stryd, passim*; P.G. Cloete, *The Anglo-Boer War a chronology*, *passim.*

5 L.S. Amery, *The Times history of the war in South Africa,* V, pp. 10-11, 293.

topography and climate), the socio-economical considerations (the major towns, main roads, railways, population, agriculture and industries) and the military background of the seven regions will be considered below. A map depicting the major features of each region is provided with the discussion of the region concerned. The information in each case is directed specifically to meet the parameters of this study, namely, to investigate the circumstances under which the Boer officers and burghers had to fight. Furthermore it aims to illustrate the conditions which prevailed in the various regions at the time. These would unquestionably have affected the daily life and the hardships that the republicans had to endure. The discussion will therefore provide greater understanding of the stressors that are to be examined in the next chapter, and the coping mechanisms which are dealt with in Chapter VII.

Background information is provided in Table V – 1, a comprehensive analysis of the different types of military encounters during the months of the guerrilla phase in the different regions.[6] Although the details in the table may not include all the encounters that took place during the guerrilla phase of the war, it does give an indication of the most important battles, ambushes, railway disruptions, towns that were destroyed or occupied and military drives. The overall aim of the table is to illustrate the variety of military engagements that took place in the different regions both on Boer and on British side. Finally it shows how the tide of the war gradually swung away from the Boers in favour of the British, in other words, how the successful British strategies reflected on the entire issue of stressors experienced by the Boers and what the eventual results turned out to be.

Table V – 1 Analysis of military encounters during the guerrilla warfare period - September 1900 to May 1902, per region, per month.

Key: **Boers** = actions initiated by the Boers; ***British*** = actions initiated by the British; ✚ = light contact or skirmish; ✱ = major battle; ♣ = ambush; **Dr** = drive; **Ndr** = New model drive; ▲ = railway disruption; ● = town burning or occupation; **Bh** = attack on blockhouse.

6 P.G. Cloete, *Chronology*, *passim* This table only reflects the encounters reported in this source and does not attempt to show every engagement during the guerrilla phase of the Anglo-Boer War.

Column 1 SE-TVL : Column 2 NE-TVL : Column 3 W-TVL : Column 4 N-TVL : Column 5 N-OFS : Column 6 S-OFS : Column 7 Cape ■

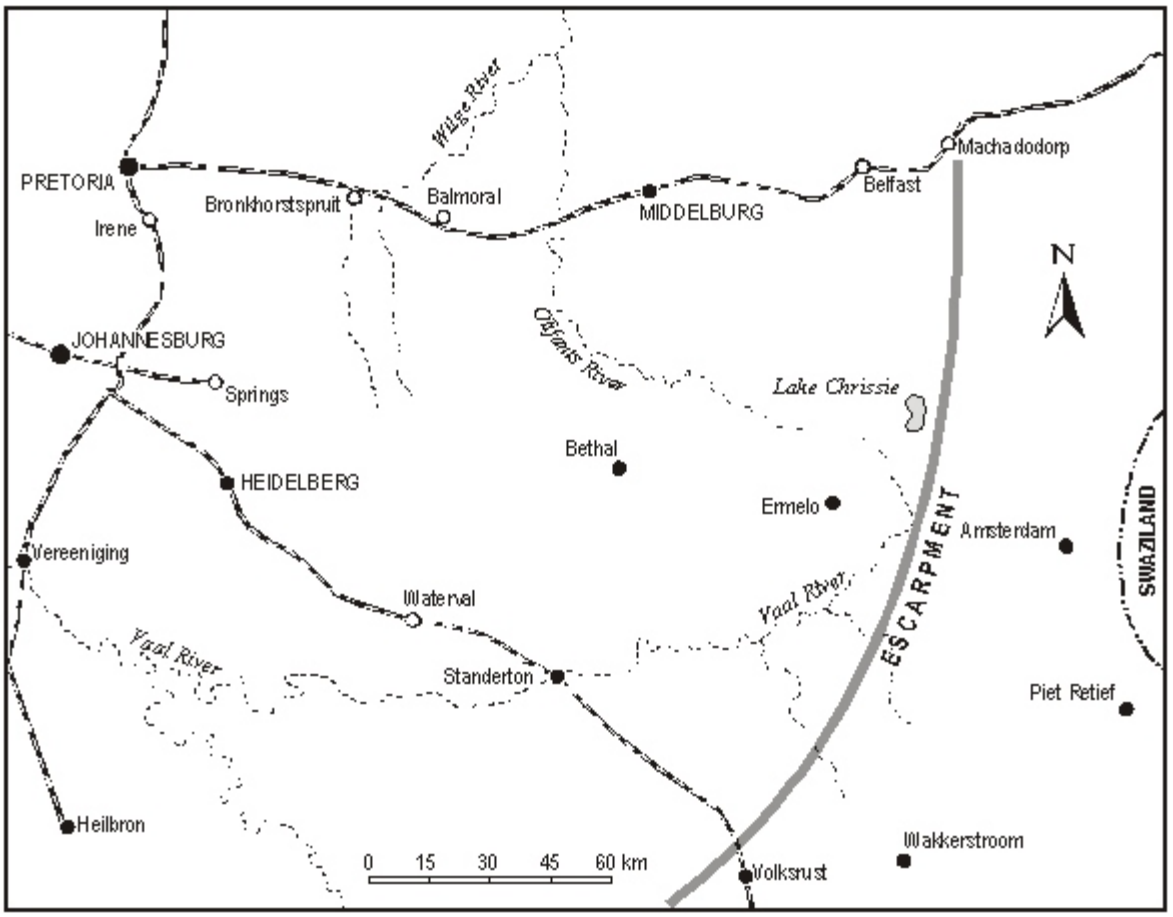
	Boers	*British*	Boers	*British*	Boers	*British*	Boers	*British*	Boers	*British*	Boers	*British*	Boers	*British*
Sep 00	+	●●●● ++	+	●●					▲		+●			
Oct 00	▲▲▲+	Dr Dr		++	(+●) + +	Dr ++ ●●			▲	Dr	+++++ ++			
Nov 00	■ ++	Dr ●	+	■+		(+●)			▲+	●+	■ +	Dr ++		
Dec 00	+++++ ▲		■		■ +++						+	++ Dr	●●+	+
Jan 01	■ +++	Dr	▲▲▲		■ ■ ■++				+	Dr		Dr	●	
Feb 01	■+	+ Dr Dr ●●	▲	Dr		■ ++ Dr					▲▲	++	++	++
Mar 01		+ Dr-cont		+	■ +	+						+ Dr	●	
Apr 01		Dr-cont	▲▲+	Dr ●●+	■	+		●●++	+	Dr Dr ●	▲	+	+	
May 01	+			Dr-cont	+ ■	Dr Dr Dr +				Dr			+++	+
Jun 01	■		▲▲		+				+	Dr			(+●) +	+
Jul 01	▲●			++	++	+ Dr	▲		+	■ Dr Dr			+	+++ Dr
Aug 01		++	▲+	+		●				+	+(Bl)	Dr Dr ++	++	+
Sep 01	■ +++	++++Dr Dr			■+			++		++	++	+	+++	+++++
Oct 01	++++*	++++	+		■		+	+		■			●++++ ++	++
Nov 01		+++		+					+	Dr++			++++	++
Dec 01	Bh ++	+++++	■		++	++			■ ■ ++++	Dr		+++	++	+
Jan 02	++	+++++		+		+	++		+	+		+++	+++	+
Feb 02	●●	+		+	■	+++			+	+ Ndr NDr			▲++++	+Dr
Mar 02		+			■ ■ +	++Dr Dr Dr	●	+++		NDr				+
Apr 02		Dr Dr Dr Dr				Dr Dr Dr +			++	Dr			+●●	+
May 02		+				Dr							+++++	

1. Southeastern Transvaal

Environmental features

This region is situated to the east of the Johannesburg-Durban railway and south of the Pretoria-Delagoa railway lines. The great South African escarpment, forming the watershed between east and west, runs through the region from Machadodorp, east of Carolina and Ermelo into the Free State in the south. West of the watershed it is a high lying area, varying from 1 500 metres to 2 000 metres above sea level,[7] with sour grass covering the rolling hills and many streams and rivulets. This region, normally called the Highveld, is exposed to extremely low night temperatures in winter and early spring, while enjoying relatively mild summers. To the east of the escarpment the topography is broken by sandstone ridges and bushy valleys and enjoys a considerably milder climate during winter.

Map V–1: The southeastern Transvaal during the Anglo Boer War. (Reproduced from TAB: G 3/257 Kaart van die Z.A. Republiek Oranje Vrijstaat Natal en gedeelte Kaap Kolonie – Landmeter Generaal Pretoria Januari 1 1900.)



[7] C.F. Albertyn (ed.), *Ensiklopedie van die wêreld,* Indeks/Atlas, p. 279.

By South African standards, the region enjoys a relatively high rainfall, with 600 mm to 800 mm of rain per annum west of the escarpment and 800 mm to 1 000 mm per annum east of the watershed.[8] The rainy season is normally from mid October until April. The Highveld often suffers a few dry weeks during mid summer, and frequently – as indeed occurred in 1900- 1901 and again in 1901-1902 – it has continual soft rain during the late summer (February to April) This weather is locally known as geelperskereën literally meaning yellow peach rain — the time when yellow peaches ripen. Due to the altitude, low temperatures and high humidity, mist occurs frequently, even during the summer months. In the extreme east, that is near the towns of Amsterdam and Piet Retief, it becomes difficult to distinguish between the soft geelperskereën and mist and local people often use the Swazi term, chisa for this cold, bleak weather. Conditions such as this undeniably made the life of the burghers unpleasant during the war.

There are many pans, natural hollows in the countryside, in the area between Bethal and Middelburg, often retaining water throughout the year. The best known of these, one which had a direct bearing on the guerrilla warfare, is Lake Chrissie (refer map V–1). The fact that these pans form in depressions in the terrain means that the low-lying localities provided concealment for both Boers and British patrols.

Socio-economical issues

By the end of the nineteenth century the area was already comparatively well populated by white settlers, due to the healthy climate, reliable rainfall and the relative absence of belligerent black communities. This statement is borne out by the exceptionally large number of towns that had sprung up in the southeastern Transvaal by the late 1800s. On the railway from Johannesburg to Durban there were the towns of Heidelberg, Greylingstad, Standerton and Volksrust. On the Pretoria to Delagoa line were Bronkhortspruit, Middelburg, Belfast, Machadodorp and Nelspruit. The major towns within the boundaries of the region were Carolina, Ermelo, Bethal, Amersfoort, Wakkerstroom, Piet Rietief, Vryheid and Utrecht. By the time that the guerrilla phase commenced many of these towns had been placed under British control, which meant that the Boer commandos were restricted to the open countryside. The two railway lines essentially formed the western and northern borders of the region.

The northwestern part of the southeastern Transvaal comprised the industrialised and mining

[8] C.F. Albertyn (ed.), *Ensiklopedie van die wêreld*, Indeks/Atlas, p. 283.

zone of Vereeniging , Johannesburg and Pretoria. The British high command was located in Pretoria which made it the hub of anti-Boer activities. Because of its proximity to the Highveld, the life and military activities of the republicans were severely restricted.

Despite the sour grass, this region is an excellent agricultural area and at the time of the Anglo-Boer War maize farming and cattle and sheep husbandry were the main agricultural activities. The veld to the east of the escarpment, which is still today called the Winterveld by local farmers, has a mixture of sour and sweet grass and therefore provides more suitable grazing for livestock during winter when the sour grass becomes unpalatable for livestock with a lower nutritional value. At the time of the Anglo-Boer War many local farmers owned land on both sides of the watershed to solve this problem.

Military aspects

Commandant-General Louis Botha, who hailed from Vryheid, was the Boer commander in this region, at the same time being the supreme commander of all the ZAR forces. When hostilities commenced in October 1899 there were eleven commandos from the rural parts of this region. Approximately 5 700 burghers between the ages of 18 and 34 years, in other words within the age limit of the first group of men who were eligible for call-up, came from these eleven commandos.[9] This represented roughly 35% of the total ZAR force. The total number of burghers who were active at the outset of the guerrilla phase is unknown because the numbers captured by the British and abandonments – permanently or temporarily – cannot be gauged. During the guerrilla phase there were at least 15 Boer officers who held the rank of general, Combat-General or assistant general in this region.[10] Several of these officers were killed during combat – among these were Generals C.J. Spruyt of the Heidelberg Commando and J.C. Fourie of the Carolina Commando. A number were captured by the British, including General J.J.C. Emmett of the Vryheid Commando while General Tobias Smuts of the Ermelo Commando was relieved of his rank due to improper behaviour.

The small body of men that functioned as the ZAR government, including the acting president of the ZAR, S.W. Burger, and the state secretary, F.W. Reitz, stayed in the southeastern Transvaal from early April to mid December 1901, frequently moving from one venue to another

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9 P.G. Cloete, *Chronology*, p. 29.

10 J. Malan, *Die Boere-offisiere van die Tweede Vryheidsoorlog, 1899-1902*, pp. 11-58.

in their effort to stay out of the hands of the British.[11] Their presence in the region tied down many burghers in secretarial, protection and other government related activities, keeping them from active guerrilla tactics. Because the British were constantly hunting the government, these burghers became the hunted instead of the hunters as befits a guerrilla fighter.

Column 1 of Table V–1 illustrates the monthly encounters in the southeastern Transvaal region during the guerrilla warfare phase. The table also illustrates the impact of environmental features of the region on the military activity.

On the one hand, Kitchener's original strategy to use an extended line of columns over the Highveld in the hope of either annihilating the Boers near Ermelo or driving them against the Swazi and Zulu borders and so forcing them to surrender,[12] miscarried. The inclement weather of the first months of 1901, when the heavy, muddy soils thwarted the movement of artillery and supply wagons, was an unexpected burden.[13] On the other hand, a number of environmental circumstances such as the cooler climate, the fact that the towns were closer to one another and that there were areas within the region where the local population was largely of British descent, were factors that contributed to make life easier for the British soldier. Furthermore, the undulating, open terrain was largely free of trees and shrubs and consequently the movement of burghers in daytime was greatly restricted. The low frequency of encounters initiated by the Boers during the latter part of the war can probably be regarded as an indication of this environmental feature. At the same time – as it will be discussed later – Colonel G.E. Benson was confronted with the identical problem, which probably led to his well-known night raids in August and September 1901. [14]

2. Northeastern Transvaal

Environmental features

The second region under discussion, the northeastern Transvaal, was situated north of the Pretoria to Delagoa railway line and east of the Pretoria to Pietersburg railway, extending towards

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11 L.S. Amery (ed.), *The Times history of the war in South Africa*,V, Map at the end of chapter XX; P.G. Cloete, *Chronology*, *passim.*

12 L.S. Amery (ed.), *The Times history*, V, p. 159.

13 L.S. Amery (ed.), *The Times history*, V, pp. 176-177.

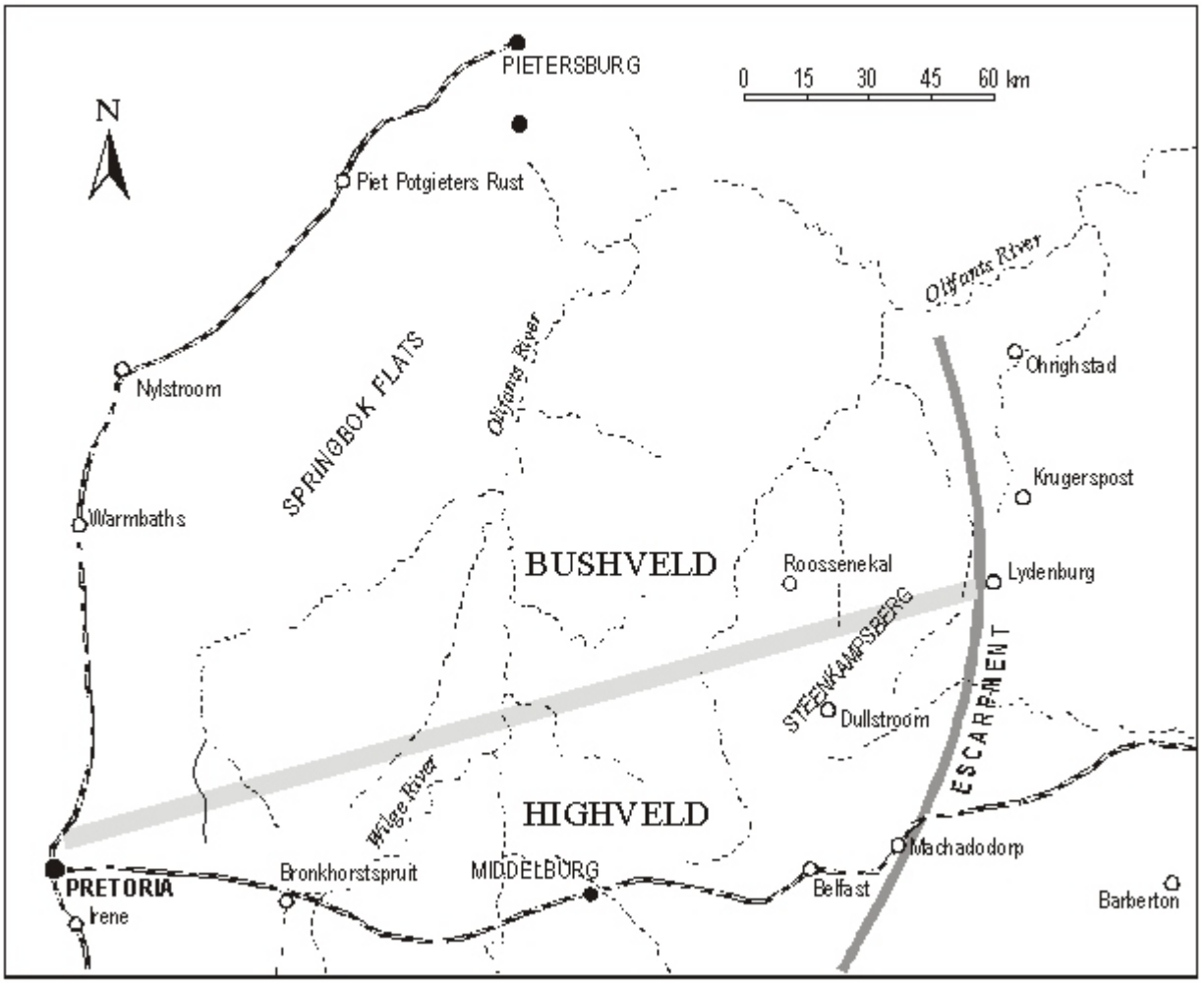
14 L.S. Amery (ed.), *The Times history*, V, pp. 329-330.

the east over the great escarpment into the Lowveld.[15] Two major ecological systems can be recognized in this area. An imaginary line, running roughly northeast from Pretoria to Lydenburg, divides it into two major zones. Firstly, to the south of this imaginary line there is a high lying region with primarily sour grass as vegetation. Secondly, to the north there lies a vast area at a lower altitude, where the terrain is primarily covered by bush and shrubs with sweet grass. The topography of the region is very diverse. In the southeast it is uneven or irregular terrain, with altitudes ranging from under 1 000 m in the Lowveld east of the escarpment, rising to between

Map V–2: The northeastern Transvaal during the Anglo Boer War (Reproduced from TAB: G 3/257 Kaart van die Z.A. Republiek Oranje Vrijstaat Natal en gedeelte Kaap Kolonie – Landmeter Generaal Pretoria Januari 1 1900)

15 J.W. Meijer, *Generaal Ben Viljoen 1868-1917*, p. 158.

1 800 m and 2 100 m on the Highveld. Towards the east the land becomes increasingly undulating, and eventually mountainous, until the escarpment is reached. A geographical feature that played an important role during the guerrilla war, namely the Steenkampsberg, is a plateau with an average altitude exceeding 2 100 m. In contrast to this rugged and broken countryside a large part of the northwestern sector is a savanna plain known as the Springbok flats. The transition from Highveld to Bushveld, that is to say along the imaginary line, is generally very broken country with steep declines, many streams and thickly bushed valleys. This area – the Bankenveld – offered ideal terrain for guerrilla activity.



Because of the diverse topography the rainfall of the region also varies considerably. In the high-lying grass veld and the mountainous areas the rainfall is similar to that of the southeastern Transvaal Highveld. Long spells of rainy weather may occur during the late summer. In contrast

the rainfall in the Bushveld sector is less reliable, and declines from east to west. Most of the northeastern Transvaal – the high-lying grassy hills as well as the Bushveld – receives an average of 600 to 800 mm of rain per annum, while in the mountainous east the rain varies from 800 to 1 000 mm.[16] The late summer months of 1900-1901 as well as those in 1901-1902 were extremely wet. The incessant rain for days on end was debilitating and weakened the morale of the burghers, as this will be discussed in the next chapter.[17] In the mountainous areas the altitude, high moisture and low temperatures, often brings heavy mist down like a blanket over the countryside.

Temperatures vary greatly between day and night and from one season to the next; but especially between the high-lying and low-lying areas. The climate on the grassy, moist, mountain sides, which are often shrouded in mist, differs profoundly from that in the humid Lowveld below the escarpment to the east – an area which is furthermore plagued with malaria and many livestock diseases such as redwater fever and horse sickness. Environmentally this region is clearly one of great contrasts; which on the one hand suited the guerrillas, while on the other it led to great hardship and uncertainty.

The major river in the northeastern Transvaal is the Steelpoort River with its two main tributaries, the Waterval and Spekboom Rivers. They eventually flow into the Olifants River, which circumvents the region in the north.

Socio-economical issues

Although the high-lying regions, much as in the southeastern Transvaal, were fairly well populated at the time of the Anglo-Boer War, the Bushveld was sparsely settled. This area of sweet grass veld was primarily used as a winter grazing area. The threat of the Pedi living to the north of the Steelpoort River and the unhealthy climate were among the reasons for the sparse population. Many of the white farmers, who had originally settled in the vicinity of Ohrigstad, had moved to the healthier Highveld areas by the 1890s.[18] This explains why there were few major towns in that part when the war began. Ohrigstad and Lydenburg and the gold mining town of Pilgrim's Rest, lay to the east of the escarpment with Roossenekal and Dullstroom to the west. The British military activities north of the Pretoria to Delagoa railway was controlled from Bronkhorstspruit, Middelburg, Belfast, Machadodorp and Nelspruit and later also from

16 C.F. Albertyn (ed.), *Ensiklopedie van die wêreld*, Indeks/Atlas, p. 283.

17 R.W. Schikkerling, *Commando courageous* (*A Boer's diary)*, 17.2.1901 to 21.2.1901, p. 155.

18 Personal information: Mr .J. Smit, owner of the farm Goedehoop, Carolina, August 2001.

Lydenburg. These towns were occupied by the British and their troops could therefore penetrate into the region with relative ease. On the railway to Pietersburg were the towns of Warmbaths and Nylstroom. At the time of the war the northeastern Transvaal was predominantly a stock farming region although farmers normally cultivated small areas of grain, vegetables and deciduous fruit, for their own use.

Pilgrim's Rest was originally established as a centre for the alluvial exploitation and also mining of gold. However, after the discovery of gold on the Witwatersrand in 1886, Pilgrim's Rest, like Barberton, declined rapidly. The unclaimed gold from some mines however still played a small, but romantic, role in the Anglo-Boer War when 986 gold pounds were minted there in February 1902.[19]

Military aspects

When the planning and organization of guerrilla forces took place in October 1900 General Ben Viljoen was appointed Assistant Commandant-General in command of the northeastern Transvaal region. His force included his own Johannesburg Commando, the Boksburg Commando, elements of the Pretoria and Johannesburg police force and several members of the ZAR State Artillery. The initial strength of Viljoen's force in this area was 700 men.[20] The number increased as members of Pretoria and Middelburg Commandos joined him. Furthermore, J.W. Meijer observes that certain members of the Lydenburg Commando took part in the assaults on the Balmoral and Wilgerivier stations. Based on this information the eventual strength of Viljoen's force was probably somewhat more than 1 000. Meijer also makes mention of a fieldcornetship from Lydenburg when reviewing the battle of Helvitia station.[21] He contends that Viljoen had a direct order from Louis Botha to improve the morale of his burghers at the onset of the guerrilla phase, to which Viljoen responded by immediately implementing an aggressive strategy that led to a number of confrontations with the enemy.

General G.H. Gravett was appointed as Viljoen's aid. However, he was mortally wounded at Mapochsgronden in the very early days of the guerrilla phase.[22] Botha appointed Commandant

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19 E. Levine, *The coinage and counterfeits of the Zuid-Afrikaansche Republiek*, pp. 69-70.

20 J.W. Meijer, *Generaal Ben Viljoen,* p. 159.

21 J.W. Meijer, *Generaal Ben Viljoen*, p. 166.

22 P.G. Cloete, *Chronology*, p. 192.

Chris Muller of the Boksburg Commando to the position of combat-general, to become Viljoen's second in charge.[23] These were the only generals who operated in this sector. When Viljoen was captured by the British near Lydenburg on 25 January 1902, Muller was appointed in his position and Viljoen's brother, Willem Viljoen, took over the Johannesburg Commando.[24]

Because the British military activities in the region were largely dependent on the two railways, Viljoen's men had no other option but to surprise, harass and disrupt the enemy by focussing on railway targets such as stations, bridges, supply trains and troop trains. The Boers' attacks on the Balmoral and Wilgerivier stations on 19 November 1900 were the first of these assaults. Roberts immediately reacted by ordering a force to punish Viljoen's commandos at their headquarters near Renosterkop, just north of Bronkhorstspruit. However, after a battle on 29 November, Viljoen and his burghers managed to escape entrapment by the British and on 29 December 1900 they once again attacked the British at Helvetia station, won a significant victory and captured the British naval gun, the so-called "Lady Roberts".

Assaults on railway installations and supply trains were an essential part of the guerrilla strategy in the northeastern Transvaal. This is demonstrated in column 2 of Table V–1. The names of the Irish volunteer, Captain Jack Hindon and Captain Henry Schlegtkamp appear frequently in the reports of these assaults on railways and trains. The demand for food and equipment and the fact that there were few other British targets for Viljoen's men to focus on, probably influenced the frequency of these attacks. As the war wore on the British improved their protection of the railways. Consequently the situation changed and assaults became less.

3. Western Transvaal

Environmental features

The third region stretched westwards from Pretoria and Johannesburg to the border between the Cape Colony and the Transvaal and south and west from a broad imaginary line, drawn roughly from Pretoria to Mafeking (refer map V–3). This region once again differs significantly from both those discussed above and includes a number of prominent ecological systems. Firstly,

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23 J. Malan, *Die Boere-offisiere*, p. 46.

24 P.G. Cloete, *Chronology*, p. 296.

the Magaliesberg mountain range in the northeast forms the northern ridge of a fertile valley – the so called Moot or Groot Moot – which played an important role during the guerrilla phase of the war. Next is an extended area of broken terrain and low hills, valleys and ridges with scattered thorn bush that covers most of the eastern part of the region. Finally the arid western plains which are crossed by occasional rivers and streams – often no more than dry gullies or sandy river beds – with bush covered banks. This last zone is in fact the beginning of the great semi-desert that covers the western part of southern Africa. In the northwestern sector numerous low mountains mark the transition between the primarily grassy Highveld of the southern part of the region and the Bushveld in the north. There is a significant difference in the altitudes of these two areas – which can be as much as 400 m. This mountainous area has many densely bushed kloofs, that provided good cover, ample grazing and abundant water for the Boers, a feature that played an important role particularly during the latter stages of the war.

The average rainfall of the region drops notably from east to west. The eastern parts, including Krugersdorp and the Moot enjoy an average rainfall of 600 mm per annum. Lichtenburg, which is centrally situated receives an average of 500 mm of rain per year, while still further west Schweizer Reneke lies on the 400 millimetres isohyet. Furthermore, the rainfall in the western Transvaal is unreliable and fluctuates widely. Years of devastating droughts – often two or three years in succession – are frequently followed by seasons of excessive rain when floods cause immense damage. Like most of the southern African interior the summers of 1900-1901 and 1901-1902 experienced unusually long spells of rainy weather that led to countless hardships for the burghers in the veld.[25] This was unusual for a region where there were generally concerns about getting a consistent, reliable water supply. Indeed pioneers in the region normally settled at places where they found steady water, and many farm names have the suffix of fontein or "fountain".

The southern Highveld zone comprises a mixture of sour and sweet grass which is of a mediocre grazing quality while the northern Bushveld has sound sweetveld grazing. However, the Bushveld is prone to many of the subtropical diseases. These differences were significant, and during the summer months the Highveld zone offered better grazing with less danger of disease,

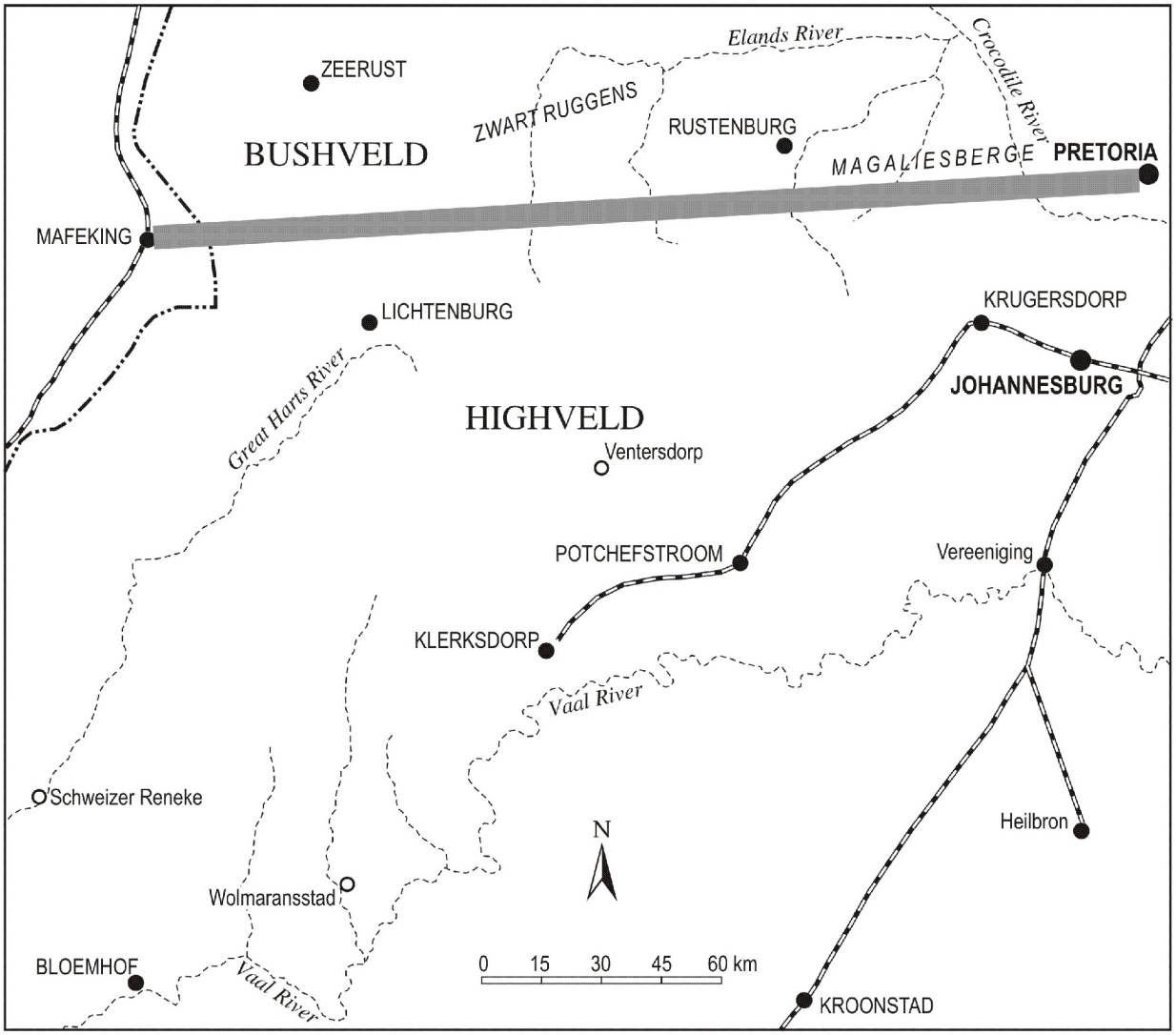
Map V–3: The western Transvaal during the Anglo Boer War.(Reproduced from TAB: G 3/257 Kaart van die Z.A. Republiek Oranje Vrijstaat Natal en gedeelte Kaap Kolonie – Landmeter Generaal Pretoria Januari 1 1900.)

[25] A.G. Oberholster (ed.), *Oorlogsdagboek van Jan F.E. Celliers*, 3.4.1901 to 4.4.1901, pp. 228-229.

while during the winter the Bushveld offered better grazing and pests were less critical. Horse sickness was one of the major hazards, prompting Boers to move from one territory to the other according to the season.

Socio-economical issues

At the time of the Anglo-Boer War the western Transvaal was comparatively sparsely populated, as is shown by the few towns in the region in the 1890s. In the dry west Lichtenburg, Bloemhof and Schweizer Reneke were the only towns of any significance. Diamond digging had not yet commenced in the area and the towns were founded by and large by agrarian settlers who cared little about the Uitlander problems of the Witwatersrand. Further to the east, along the southern boundary of the region, lay Wolmaransstad, Klerksdorp, Potchefstroom and



Krugersdorp and to the north Rustenburg and Zeerust were situated on the perimeter of the

Bushveld.

Towards the end of the 19th century the land on the southern plain and eastern hilly territory was primarily used for stock farming, with limited grain production where the soil conditions allowed. Towards the northern mountainous parts, fertile soil and plenty of water in the valleys allowed limited irrigated cropping, consisting primarily of wheat, maize and fodder. One such area is the Moot, the fertile valley that Jan Smuts described as: "... the Shenandoah valley of the Transvaal, and De la Rey is its Stonewall Jackson."[26]

To the north, into the Bushveld area, and to the west, into British Bechuanaland, the region was inhabited by African peoples. Many of these communities saw the Boers as unwelcome settlers who stole their land and their cattle and accordingly they were antagonistic towards the republicans. Although there were some black family groups who were friendly, they were of little consequence during the war. The presence of hostile Africans in the region and the role they played were important during the guerrilla phase in the western Transvaal.[27] This aspect will be discussed further in Chapter VI.

There were only two roads of any importance in the region. These were the road running from Kimberley to Johannesburg which passed through Bloemhof, Wolmaransstad, Klerksdorp and Potchefstroom and secondly, the road from Mafeking to Pretoria which went via Rustenburg and Zeerust.

By 1899 there was only one railway in the region, namely the line from Johannesburg to Klerksdorp. The railway from Cape Town to Rhodesia ran along the western perimeter of the Transvaal within the boundary of British territory. It is thus clear that guerrilla attacks on railroads and the disruption of British supplies and troop movements played a much less prominent role in the western Transvaal.

Military aspects

The Boer commander of the area from the beginning of the guerrilla phase in July 1900, right until the very end of the war, was Assistant Commandant-General J.H. (Koos) de la Rey. Although he only commanded six rural commandos, strengthened by the modest Krugersdorp

26 G. Nattrass and S.B. Spies (eds.), *Jan Smuts*, p. 111.

27 P. Warwick, *Black people and the South African War 1899 - 1902*, pp. 45-46.

Commando, the number of burghers in the region who were between 18 and 34 years at the beginning of the war in October 1899 was reported as 6 000. This figure represented nearly 38% of the total ZAR force, compared to the 35% from the southeastern Transvaal.[28] However more than half of these burghers came from only two commandos; the Potchefstroom Commando and the Rustenburg Commando. Together they provided 3 246 burghers, which demonstrates the low population density in the western reaches of the region. It can perhaps be reasoned that many burghers who reported for duty at the initial stages of the war were older than 34 years because, despite the fact that the reaction to the first call to arms was generally poor, the number of burghers involved in the initial stage of the siege of Mafeking came roughly to 6 000.

Again the tally at the beginning of the guerrilla warfare phase is impossible to determine with any accuracy, but it is known to have been very low. A brief look at the events and the subsequent developments will demonstrate this. Firstly, after the surrender at Paardeberg on 27 February 1900 it was reported that 2 613 of the burghers who were captured were from the Transvaal.[29] As most of these burghers would have been members of the ZAR force that was ordered to move south from Mafeking with General Piet Cronjé in November 1899, it seems clear that the majority of these burghers came from the western Transvaal. It then follows that a significant number of the western Transvaal's able-bodied burghers were removed from the war scene by the end of February 1900. Despite this many burghers (including a number from the Bloemhof Commando under Commandant Tollie de Beer[30]) who escaped the Paardeberg capitulation, returned to the western Transvaal. Secondly, during the British advance to Pretoria and particularly after the relief of Mafeking, many western Transvaal burghers accepted the British claims that the war was over. These men simply laid down their arms and took the oath of neutrality. Although Grundlingh attests to the fact that an accurate assessment of the number of burghers who laid down their arms at this stage of the war is impossible, he nevertheless gives some indication of how prevalent this was. He claims, by way of an example, that when Colonel R.S.S. Baden-Powell occupied Rustenburg on 14 July 1900, 1 000 rifles were immediately forfeited by Boers.[31] Finally Smuts's statement that it was the explicit purpose of General De la Rey on his return to the western districts early in the second half of 1900, to once more encourage

28 P.G. Cloete, *Chronology*, p. 29.

29 J.H. Breytenbach, *Geskiedenis*, IV, p. 423.

30 Written information supplied by Mrs C.M. Combrinck, daughter of Commandant Tollie de Beer, 1959.

31 A.M. Grundlingh, *Die "hendsoppers" en "joiners": Die rasionaal en verskynsel van verraad*, p. 37.

and motivate the region's burghers to return to combat and so to rebuild the republican force, must be borne in mind.[32]

It could further be reasoned that if a large proportion of the western Transvaal burghers who were captured at Paardeberg were essentially those in the younger age bracket – in other words those who were called up at the beginning of the war – it seems logical that the burghers who took up arms in the guerrilla warfare stage were either the older men or the young boys or penkoppe,[33] and this situation should be kept in mind in the discussion of the guerrilla phase.

At this stage of the war De la Rey had a total of 10 generals or combat-generals in his command structure in the western Transvaal. General S.F. Oosthuizen of the Krugersdorp Commando died as a result of his wounds in August 1900 and General H.R. Lemmer of the Lichtenburg Commando fell in December 1900. General J.C. Smuts left the western Transvaal late in 1901 to operate in the Cape Colony, and General L.A.S. Lemmer was only promoted from Assistant General to the rank of general during the final months as peace was being negotiated.[34]

Column 3 of Table V–1 shows clearly how the guerrilla activities in the western Transvaal developed, demonstrating the fact that the Boers of the western Transvaal remained relatively aggressive. This is especially true of the first few months. As time passed the British under General Lord Paul Methuen gradually placed more pressure on the Boers with various military drives. The effect of the scorched earth policy can also be recognized in the table. It is nevertheless clear that the Boers of the region made good use of the broken, bushy terrain in harassing the enemy, and a number of important battles were fought in the final months of the war. Comparable to the situation in the southeastern Transvaal, the Boers derived little benefit from the major towns of the region which were mostly occupied by the British. However the table makes it clear that there were more "significant" offensive actions in the western Transvaal than in most of the rest of the Transvaal. The quality of leadership, the overall commitment of the burghers and the intelligent use of the diversity of the terrain were certainly important reasons for this trend.

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32 G. Nattrass and S.B. Spies (eds.), *Jan Smuts*, p. 76.

33 F. Pretorius, *Kommandolewe tydens die Anglo-Boereoorlog 1899 - 1902*, pp. 256-259.

34 J. Malan, *Die Boere-offisiere*, pp. 17-58.

4. Northern Transvaal

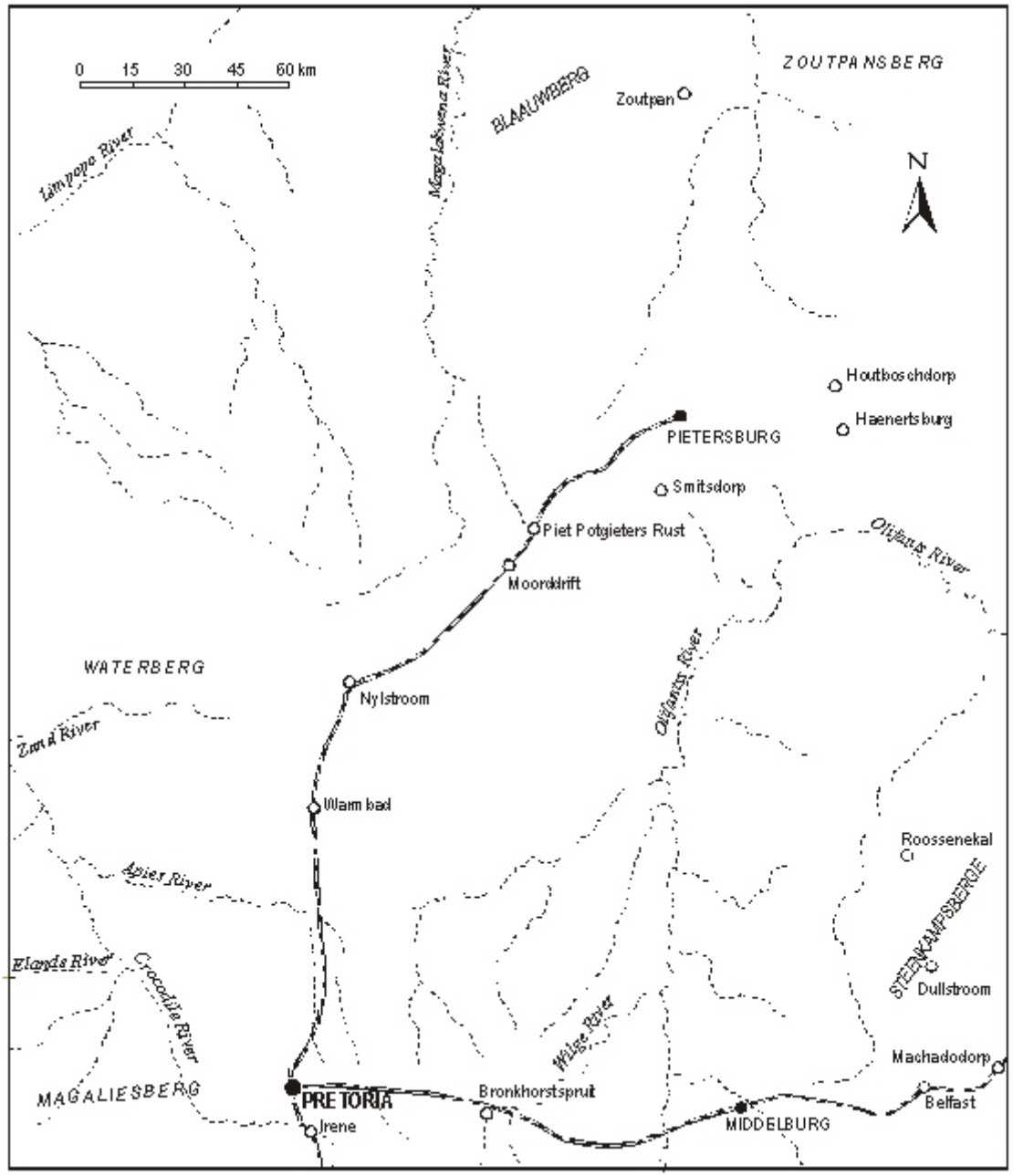
Environmental features

The fourth region, the northern Transvaal, made up the largest area of the Transvaal, yet it was of far less significance in the war than the other three areas. It comprised the vast area to the north of Pretoria, and included two major mountain ranges, which both stretch from east to west. In the southern area the Waterberg range begins to the north of Warmbad and continues westwards for roughly 100 km before diverging into a series of smaller mountains that extend to the Bechuanaland border. In the northern part the Soutpansberg range begins to the northeast of Zoutpan and continues westwards until it breaks up at the Blouberg. There are numerous smaller mountains and hills scattered through the northern Transvaal. There is also a vast plain bordering on Bechuanaland and another north of the Soutpansberg range.

The Tropic of Capricorn lies to the north of Pietersburg, which explains why the climate of most of the region is predominantly subtropical, with mild winters but with very hot and often exceedingly dry summers. The vegetation of the region is predominantly savanna Bushveld, with sweet grass supplemented by browsable shrubs and trees, for example the red bush willow (Combretum appiculatum) and the mopane (Colophospernum mopane) as well as a variety of thorn trees (Acacia spp.). The combination of sweet grass and browsable trees signify that,

Map V-4: The northeastern Transvaal during the Anglo Boer War. (Reproduced from TAB: G 3/257 Kaart van die Z.A. Republiek Oranje Vrijstaat Natal en gedeelte Kaap Kolonie – Landmeter Generaal Pretoria Januari 1 1900.)

from a nutritional point of view, this region is excellent cattle country but, on the other hand, the



subtropical climate causes many pests and diseases which jeopardise the livestock particularly during the summer months. At the time of the Anglo-Boer War the vaccines, tick-control dips and antibiotic medications which today make cattle farming possible in the region, did not exist.

The rainfall of the region is highly variable and unreliable and rain normally falls from the middle of November to the end of March. These are often in the form of thunderstorms in the late

afternoon following a scorching hot day. Most parts of the northern Transvaal receive from 400 to 500 mm of rain per annum, although along the western frontier the average rainfall is below 400 mm.[35] Hence few of the rivers in the region enjoy a constant flow of water and many are merely dry sand gullies, periodically washed open by summer flash floods. One important exception to the rule is the Crocodile River, which rises near Pretoria and Johannesburg, crosses the region northwestwards and eventually becomes the Limpopo River. Another notable feature is the elongated wetland which begins east of Nylstroom and stretches northwards to Naboomspruit, forming the origin of the Nyl River and eventually the Magalakwena River before it too joins the Limpopo.

Socio-economical issues

In 1849 a town called Schoemansdal was established to the south of the Soutpansberg where for a number of years hunters and traders made brief stopovers. This settlement never became a permanent feature as it was destroyed in a war with a black clan in 1867. The region remained sparsely populated and in1899 the main towns were situated along the road and the railway to the north, namely Warmbad, Nylstroom, Naboomspruit, Piet Potgietersrust and Pietersburg. The railway was constructed from Pretoria northwards to Pietersburg because of the discovery of gold at Eersteling south of Pietersburg.

The numerous black people who had been living in the region by the time the white settlers arrived in the mid 1800s remained a stumbling block for the ZAR authority in the northern Transvaal. By the late 1890s, much of the land – primarily to the west and the north – was still occupied by indigenous people. Many of these clans, such as the Kgafela-Kgatla Tswana under chief Lentshwe in the southwestern parts and the Bahananoas of chief Malaboch near the Blouberg in the north, had been in conflict with the ZAR authorities for years before the Anglo-Boer War. It was in these wars, where most of the ZAR burghers' purported military experience was gained. Hence the widespread hostile feelings that the black people harboured towards the Boers is explicable.[36]

Due to the subtropical climate and the subsequent problems with animal diseases, agrarian

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35 C.F. Albertyn (ed.), *Ensiklopedie van die wêreld*, Indeks/Atlas, p. 283; E. Rosenthal (ed.), *Ensiklopedie van Suidelike Afrika*, p. 545.

36 P. Warwick, *Black people and the South African War 1899 - 1902*, pp. 38-41; C. Sonntag, *My friend Maleboch, chief of the Blue Mountains*, pp. 14-21.

activities in the northern Transvaal were poorly developed by 1899. The rinderpest of 1897, which killed over four million cattle in the Transvaal and Free State, was a huge blow to farming ventures in the northern Transvaal, virtually wiping out the backbone of its agricultural industry. Fortunately the savanna Bushveld provided an abundance of game and hunting – by local farmers as well as by hunters from elsewhere – soon became a major enterprise, with skins, biltong and ivory enjoying a ready market.

Military aspects

The commander of the ZAR's guerrilla activities in the region was the young Boksburg lawyer, Christiaan Beyers, who was promoted to Assistant Commandant-General for the districts of Waterberg and Zoutpansberg in September 1900.[37] The Soutpansberg Commando, Waterberg Commando and sections of the Pretoria, Rustenburg and Krugersdorp Commandos were assigned to him. Some members of the ZAR Police and ZAR State Artillery were also included in his force and this brought its strength to roughly 1 000 men. No other generals were appointed under his command for the duration of the war.

Initially Beyers was not a popular choice to lead the burghers of the northern Transvaal.[38] Firstly, he did not come from the Bushveld, he was a city lawyer, and besides he was considered to be too young. Secondly his roots were in Stellenbosch and he had no experience of the black-wars which the burghers regarded as being a requirement for any leader. He was stern, unyielding and devoutly religious in his approach towards the war and life in general.[39] When initially there was open opposition against his appointment he stood firm and soon had the cooperation of the majority of officers and burghers of the northern Transvaal.[40]

Due to the harshness of the nature, its vastness, the low population and the unhealthy features of the region the northern Transvaal was probably not considered of great importance by the British. Column 4 of Table V–1 demonstrates that there were relatively few significant military encounters in the region. Nor was it occupied by the British to the same extent as the southeastern Transvaal or even the western Transvaal. Cloete reported only one attack on the

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37 J. Taitz (ed.), *The war memories of Commandant Ludwig Krause 1899 - 1900*, p. 105; J. Malan, *Die Boere-offisiere*, p. 18.

38 J.F. Naudé, *Vechten en vluchten van Beyers en Kemp "bôkant" De Wet*, pp. 171-172; J. Taitz (ed.), *The war memories of Commandant Ludwig Krause 1899-1900*, pp.105-108.

39 D. Reitz, *Commando,* p.129.

40 J. Taitz (ed.), *The war memories of Commandant Ludwig Krause 1899 - 1900*, pp. 106-108.

railway, namely the capture of a troop train near Naboomspruit early in July 1901, when nine British soldiers were killed. Naudé recounted that on this occasion the burghers under Beyers found more clothing and food on the train than they could haul away.[41] In the final months of the war the Boers were trounced by Colonel J.W. Colenbrander at Pietersburg and again at Fort Hendrina and at Malepspoort. In the battle of Malepspoort Beyers was wounded and the Boers suffered serious losses.[42]

During the course of the guerrilla phase Beyers had serious problems of another kind. Naudé maintained that roughly half the burghers were without mounts, which made mobility in the boundless bushveld an enormous predicament. Moreover the unhealthy climate endangered the life of both man and beast. The threat of attack by the unfriendly black population and the treachery and spinelessness of many of the Boer officials were added difficulties. According to Naudé Beyers had to care for the welfare and safety of 300 families.[43] Although Beyers' function in the northern Transvaal was primarily of a military nature, he was also involved in the protection and welfare of the civilian population, an issue which often falls within the realm of the guerrilla leader.

5. The Orange Free State

The small republic of the Orange Free State, locked between the horns of the Orange River and the Vaal River is generally fairly homogeneous. Therefore, in order to avoid duplication, the environmental features and socio-economical issues of the northern and southern regions will not be discussed separately. On the other hand the military organisation and the course of events during the guerrilla phase make a division between the northern Free State and southern Free State logical.

Environmental features

The republic of the Orange Free State was a compact, oval-shaped country roughly 1 000 km from south to north and varying between 450 to 700 km from east to west. The eastern

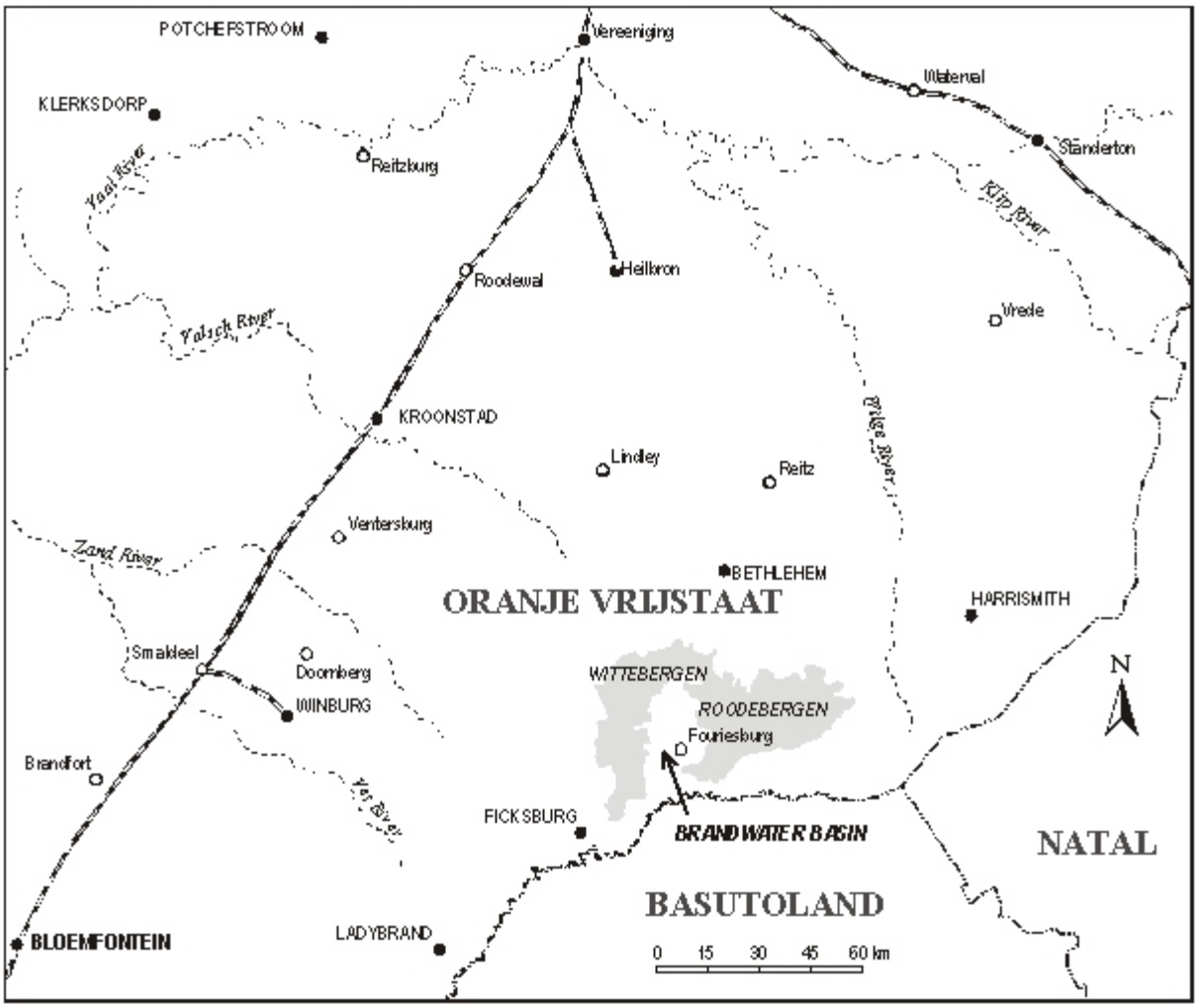
41 J.F. Naudé, *Vechten en vluchten*, p. 259.

42 P.H.S. van Zyl, *Die helde-album*, p. 395

43 J.F. Naudé, *Vechten en vluchten,* pp. 232-233.

districts are mountainous, with countless sandstone bluffs and cliffs, which are part of the western reaches of the Drakensberg range. Moving towards the west the topography gradually levels out with only occasional shrub covered hills. In certain areas, for example in the vicinity of the station of Roodewal, there are level plains with only slight elevations or depressions.[44]

Map V-5: The northern Free State during the Anglo Boer War. (Reproduced from TAB: G 3/257 Kaart van die Z.A. Republiek Oranje Vrijstaat Natal en gedeelte Kaap Kolonie – Landmeter Generaal Pretoria Januari 1 1900.)



Like most of southern Africa, this is a summer rainfall region, although isolated rain can occur in very late summer and in early winter in the eastern districts. The average annual rainfall tapers

44 C.R. de Wet, *Three years war*, p. 104.

off from 800 mm near the mountains in the eastern districts, to below 400 mm on the plains to the west. Naturally the vegetation matches the available rain, with grasslands in the east, where vast fields of Redgrass (Themeda triandra), which supplies good grazing veld, cover the flat landscape. As the rainfall becomes lower to the southwest this veld type is gradually replaced by False Karoo veld with Bitter Karoo (Pentzia globosa) and Bitter Bush (Chrysocoma tenuifolia) being the major vegetation.[45]

The altitude is predominantly 1 200 m to 1 500 m above sea level, which means that temperatures are often extreme with severe short term fluctuations.[46] In summer the daytime temperatures soar and although the winter days are normally sunny and pleasant, the nights can be bitterly cold, with frequent frost. The late winter and spring are characterised by westerly winds, often blowing for days on end causing blinding dust storms in the dry, western areas.

There are relatively few rivers in the Free State and all of these originate in the wetter, higher lying east and flow either into the Vaal or the Orange Rivers. The Modder River, the Zand River and the Valsch River were important during the Anglo-Boer War. The seasonality of the flow of these rivers and the rush of water following heavy rains have caused steep eroded banks. Along the course of these rivers, and many of the secondary streams the terrain is normally bushy. These two factors – the steep banks and the abundant bushes – made the riverine areas good places for the burghers to hide their animals and other possessions.[47]

Socio-economical issues

Although the Free State had been declared an independent republic as far back as 1854, it was neither densely populated nor very industrialised by the last decade of the 19th century. It was primarily an agrarian society, with towns scattered across the country to accommodate trade and the religious requirements of the farming communities. Bloemfontein, developed around the site selected by the British Resident, Captain H.D. Warden as his headquarters in 1846,[48] had been the official capital since the proclamation of independence. During the war the seat of the republican government moved first to Kroonstad and then to Bethlehem. Bloemfontein, however, remained

45 J.W.C. Mostert *et al.*, *Veldbestuur in die O.V.S.-Streek*, p. 6.

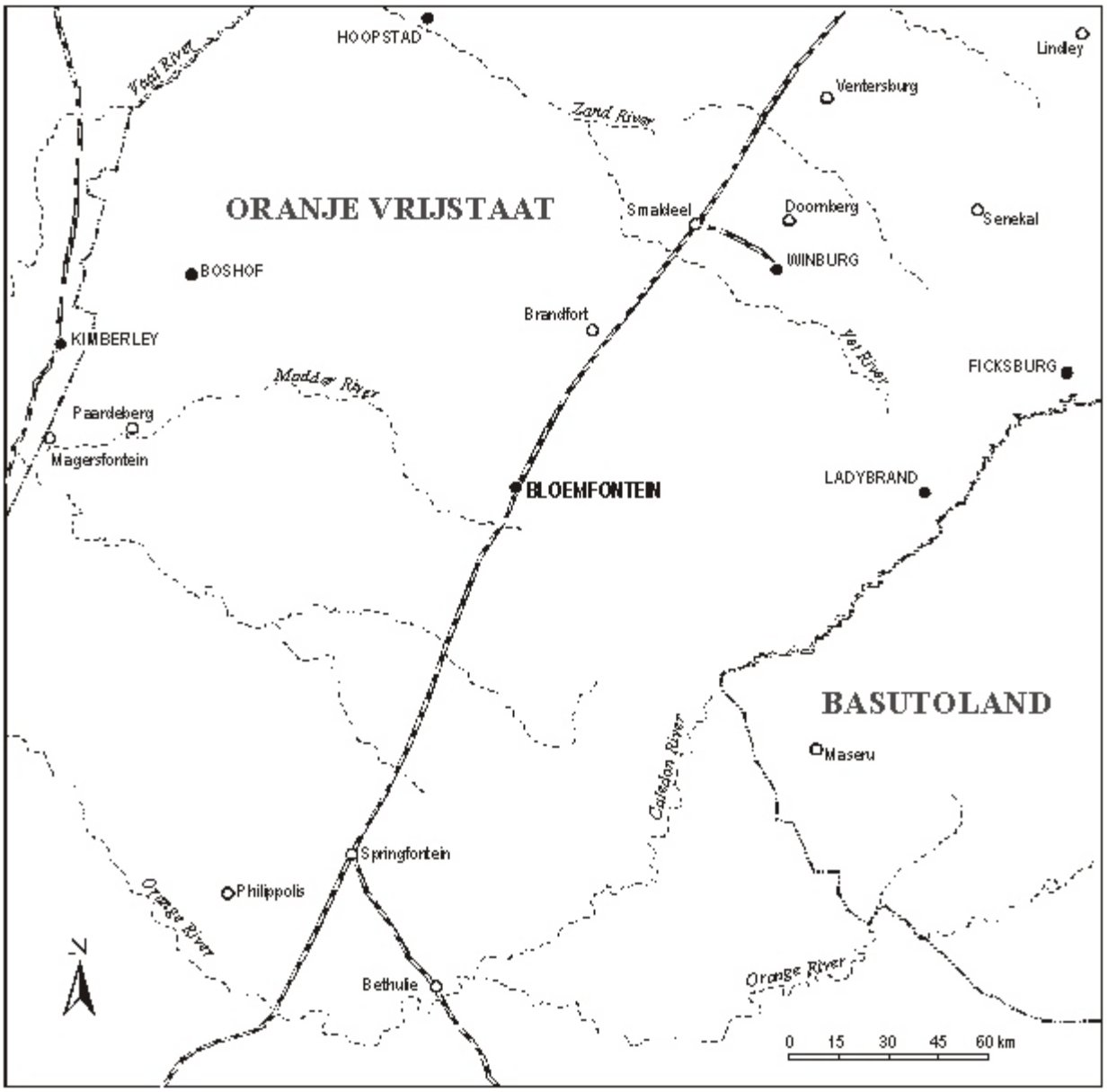
46 C.F. Albertyn (ed), *Ensiklopedie van die wêreld,* Indeks/Atlas, pp. 279, 283, 284.

47 G.J. Joubert, "'n 'Waenhuis' in die oorlogsjare" in J.C. Steyn (ed.), *Veg en vlug – manne en vroue vertel hulle ware verhale uit die Anglo-Boereoorlog*, p. 54.

48 S.M. Botes, "Die stoommeule en bierbrouery op die terrein van Fort Drury, Bloemfontein, 1868-1920", *South African Journal of Cultural History,*15(2), November 2001, p. 2.

the capital of the Orange River Colony after the British occupation. The main towns were Bloemfontein, Winburg, Kroonstad, Bethlehem, Harrismith, Heilbron and Vrede.

Map V-6: The southern Free State during the Anglo Boer War. (Reproduced from TAB: G 3/257 Kaart van die Z.A.



Republiek Oranje Vrijstaat Natal en gedeelte Kaap Kolonie – Landmeter Generaal Pretoria Januari 1 1900.)

The rich diamond fields to the west, in the confluence of the Vaal and Orange River were

cut off from the Free State by the 1875 arbitration and thereafter formed part of the Cape Colony. Accordingly the Free State did not have the same problem with fortune seeking immigrants (uitlanders) as their northern neighbour. Small scale diamond mining activities took place near Koffiefontein in the southwest.

The main railway line ran from Springfontein in the extreme southern Free State through Bloemfontein and Kroonstad to Johannesburg. Springfontein was the junction where the lines coming from Cape Town, Port Elizabeth and East London converged.[49] A short spur connected Smaldeel (presently Theunissen) on the main line with the town of Winburg , in the centre of the Free State. In the north Wolwehoek – also on the mainline – was connected with Heilbron.

Military aspects

Under the leadership of Chief-Commandant C.R. de Wet the Free State forces were the first to implement guerrilla warfare strategy using small, fast moving units to torment the British and disrupt their organisation and communications wherever possible.[50] Initially the restless De Wet used the entire Free State countryside as his theatre of war, in accordance with the principles of guerrilla warfare. However, in order to reach a sound understanding of the military situation, the southern and northern regions will be discussed separately.

Northern Free State

Although many of Chief-Commandant Christiaan de Wet's outstanding feats took place outside this particular part of the Free State – notably at Sannaspost and Sprinkhaansnek in the southern Free State and his escape over the Magaliesberg in the western Transvaal – it was largely in the vicinity of Kroonstad, Heilbron and Bethlehem that De Wet and the Free State burghers under his command struck, fought and fled. The Free State Boers' commitment to continue the war after their capital had been occupied initially caught their opponents off-guard, leaving the gate wide open for several of the spectacular Boer successes which are so often quoted.

An analysis of the military actions according to column 5 of Table V–1, indicates that after a number of attacks, primarily rail disruptions, in late 1900, only sporadic aggressive operations

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49 L. Scholtz, *Waarom die Boere die oorlog verloor het*, p. 9.

50 C.R. de Wet, *Three years war*, p. 135.

were undertaken by the Boers in the northern Free State.[51] Other than the battle at Graspan in June 1901, this remained the case until the last few months of the war. The reason for this slackening of pace can probably be explained by De Wet and his burgher's repeated absences from the area. They were either escorting President Steyn to the Transvaal or attempting to invade the Cape Colony. Then too, the pressures of winter on man and animal should not be forgotten.

The British blockhouse lines also became a serious deterrent to guerrilla actions in the region. From a British point of view events in the northern Free State – or perhaps more correctly the freedom of De Wet and his commandos in this region – were of great importance in their quest to end the protracted war. The blockhouse system became an important tool to reach this goal. Eventually there was a blockhouse line along the railway from Kroonstad northwards and another to the east, stretching from Kroonstad, over Bethlehem to Harrismith. Another stretched along the Valsch River northwestwards to the Vaal River while yet another extended from the railway at Vredefort Road to Vrede in the eastern Free State.[52]

The various British drives to capture De Wet must also be noted here. De Wet had been operating in the northern Free State since his return from the Waterval discussions in June 1901. He was rebuilding the Free State force and biding his time during the severe winter. By early November he had a commando of seven hundred burghers gathered near Bethlehem. Two successes in quick succession – which will be discussed in Chapter VIII, probably triggered the British drives that followed. Despite the wide international publicity and the growing outcries from Britain following the three previous De Wet-hunts,[53] the British had not yet been able to net the elusive De Wet. Pakenham asserts that De Wet's success had depressed Kitchener[54] and, with the blockhouse system well advanced in the area, he then decided to corner his quicksilver adversary by means of a massive "steam-roller" drive. This was the so-called New-model drive (NMD) that will be dealt with in more detail at a later stage. Twice De Wet and many of of his burghers managed to slip through the cordon. But the cost to the Boers, particularly at that late stage of the war, was unduly high.

Southern Free State

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51 Bill Nasson, *The South African War 1899 - 1902*, p. 195.

52 L. Scholtz, *Waarom die Boere die oorlog verloor het*, p. 179.

53 P.G. Cloete, *Chronology*, pp. 170-174, 199-205, 218-229.

54 T. Pakenham, *The Boer War*, pp. 544-545.

Column 6 of Table V–1 shows clearly how the tide in the southern Free State turned in favour of the British as the guerrilla war progressed. During the latter months of 1900 the encounters that were instigated by the Boers were often directed at southwestern Free State towns with British garrisons.[55] The Boer forces acted under the leadership of Geneneral J.B.M. Hertzog, but the outcome was never impressive enough to do more than harry the occupying force, occasionally leading to retributions against the local communities.[56] Having said that, it was precisely at this time that Roberts ordered the destruction of Boer food supplies and sanctioned the concept of refugee camps that later came to be called concentration camps. This indicates that the situation indeed distressed the British and that a tougher line had to be taken to end the war.[57]

De Wet's occupation of Dewetsdorp in November 1900 did little more than make the enemy aware of his whereabouts and his intention to invade the Cape Colony. It was an act of personal vengeance. His own comment on the matter, namely that it was his reaction to the "thorn" in the his eye which plagued him after the fiasco at Doornfontein near Bothaville earlier in that month, confirms this view.[58] However, it should be noted in fairness that the guerrilla fundamentals of harassment and fragmenting of the enemy's attention had been well exploited. If the main Boer objective was to reach the Cape Colony then the siege of Dewetsdorp was a pointless waste of time.[59] De Wet probably realised his mistake and regretted this folly when he failed to cross the swollen Orange River into the Cape Colony.

The British troops were primarily, and conveniently, concentrated in Bloemfontein. This location gave them easy access into most parts of the southern Free State. Distances were not great and although much of the region is semi-desert, the terrain is ordinarily easy to negotiate. This made hunts and drives on Boer commandos relatively simple operations, which meant that one of the main objectives of the guerrilla, namely to retain the initiative, was frustrated. This can be recognized in column 6 of Table V–1

On 19 June 1901 Judge J.B.M. Hertzog, who had been operating as a Combat-General in the southern Free State and the Cape Colony for most of the war, was appointed general and chief

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55 P.G. Cloete, *Chronology*, pp. 193-197.

56 Bill Nasson, *The South African War 1899-1902*, p. 193; P.G. Cloete, *Chronology*, p. 194.

57 P.G. Cloete, *Chronology*, p. 190.

58 C.R. de Wet, *De strijd tusschen Boer en Brit*, p. 235. (This phrase does not appear in the English translation *Three years war*.)

59 L. Scholtz, *Waarom die Boere die oorlog verloor het*, p. 146.

commandant for the south-western districts by President M.T. Steyn.[60] Hertzog, who was a trained jurist with no previous military training, had been involved in military matters since the beginning of the war. It was he who had warned Steyn earlier about the danger of appointing "old-school" generals.[61] He also accompanied the visiting German artillerist Oskar Hintrager to Boer positions near Lindley during June and July 1900, at times discussing issues of discipline, martial law and the Boer's self interest in protecting his personal property.[62] He was afterwards involved in several guerrilla strikes in the southern Free State and later in the Cape Colony. It would seem that his appointment to the position of chief commandant for the south-western districts came too late to bring new life into the guerrilla activities in the region. Kitchener's blockhouse system and the British drives in August and September 1901were having an affect that could no longer be arrested. The guerrilla warfare in the south was clearly running out of steam.

6. The Cape Colony

Political setting

The Cape Colony had been under British rule since 1806, forming an important part of the growing Empire.[63] Nevertheless there were many people in the interior whose allegiance to Britain was dubious. The British influence was well established in the port cities of Cape Town, Port Elizabeth and East London and their immediate surroundings. This was also true in the eastern Cape interior, where the British settlers of 1820 had established themselves. Further into the interior in the great Karoo and Griqualand as well as parts of British Bechuanaland and along the dry west coast, where the population had divided loyalties, most were descendants of early Dutch and French immigrants. In many cases the republicans across the Orange River were their relatives, binding them to the Boers' struggle in the sense that blood is thicker than water. Moreover, their attitude towards the British was one of distrust, a suspicion that had developed over years fired by events such as Slagtersnek and the great exodus which became the Great Trek. As time passed this animosity was repeatedly rekindled, for example the British annexation of Natal (1843) after the Voortrekkers had settled there. The same can be said of Shepstone's annexation of the Transvaal

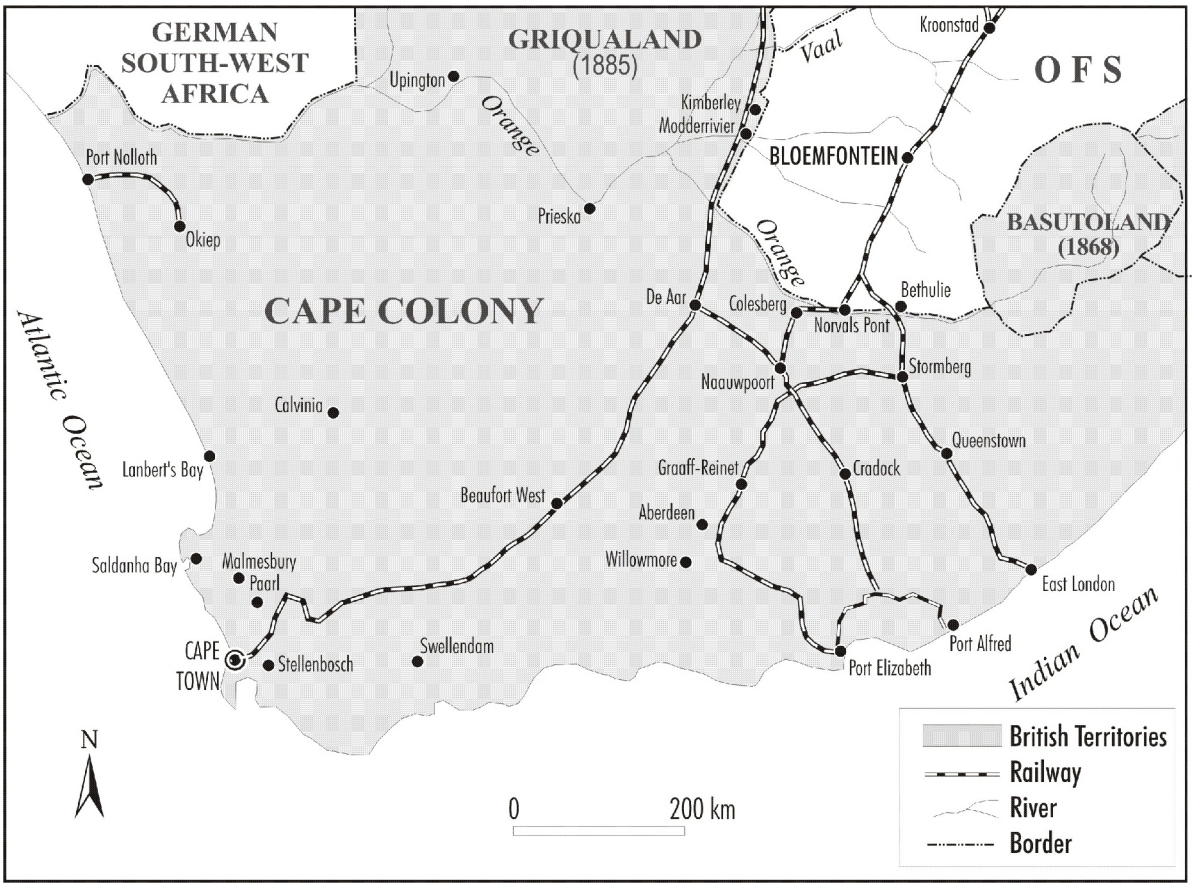
60 P.G. Cloete, *Chronology*, p. 245.

61 F. Rompel, *Marthinus Theunis Steijn*, pp. 64- 65.

62 J.J. Oberholster, "Dagboek van Oskar Hintrager", pp.38, 46-47.

63 L. Scholtz, *Waarom die Boere die oorlog verloor het*, pp. 11-12.

(1877) and of the Jameson Raid (1895). Despite this resentment there remained a particular sense of respect for the Crown, and for the stability they enjoyed as part of such a great empire.[64]



Map V-7: The Cape Colony during the Anglo-Boer War.

C. Louis Leipoldt (1880-1947), novelist and poet, wrote about this dual loyalty in his English novel Stormwrack. Although it is a work of fiction that is set in a small town in the southwestern Cape, the story has a ring of credibility about it, all the more so because Leipoldt himself grew up in the region.[65] Dr. Radie Kotzé, a retired medical practitioner living at Redelinghuys in the western Cape, whose father was with General Manie Maritz, confirmed in an interview that his mother often told him of their great esteem for Queen Victoria, despite the fact that the family was intensely sympathetic towards the plight of the republics.[66]

64 C. Lucas, *A historical geography of the British Dominions*, Vol IV, Part II, p. 53.

65 C.L. Leipoldt, *Stormwrack*, pp. 58-64.

66 Personal information: Dr. R. Kotzé of the farm Jakkalskloof, Redelinghuys, Western Cape, 20 September 2002.

By 1899 the struggle to develop an Afrikaner or South African Dutch identity, and yet not break entirely from the British empire, reached its peak. The Afrikaner Bond, initiated in 1879, had under the guidance of J.H. (Onze Jan) Hofmeyr become a significant political force. After the Transvaal's victory at Majuba and once again after the ZAR's quelling of the Jameson Raid, the Cape Afrikaner's flame of loyalty towards his northern kinsmen burned brightly. The Afrikaner Bond came to power in the Cape Colony in 1898 with W.P.Schreiner as prime minister at the time when war between Britain and the republics was imminent. The Bond found its support primarily in the platteland or rural territory of the Colony and it was precisely the vast platteland that was the Achilles heel of the British rule.

The fact remains that no matter how strong their family ties were or how strong their anti-British sentiment or pro-republican fervour was, to take up arms in support of their republican kinsmen was an act of rebellion against the Crown. Taffy and David Shearing, authors of several books on the Anglo-Boer War in the Cape Colony, the historian Elria Wessels, as well as Dr. Kotzé all agree that it was principally the young, adventurous and unattached men of between 15 to 22 years of age who responded to the call of their republican neighbours.[67]

Environmental issues

> Young Hodge the Drummer never knew –
> Fresh from his Wessex home –
> The meaning of the broad Karoo,
> The Bush, the dusty loam,
> And why uprode to nightly view
> Strange stars amid the gloam.[68]

The interior of the Cape, comprising the Great Karoo, Griqualand, Namaqualand and British Bechuanaland (refer map V–7) have few features in common with the other regions where the war raged. It is primarily flatland with plains interspersed by low, often flat-topped mountains and koppies or hills. The altitude varies around 1 200 m and 1600 m, except for the eastern zone, which is more mountainous and forms the southern part of the Drakensberg range.[69]

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67 T. and D. Shearing, *Commandant Gideon Scheepers and the search for his grave*, p. 37; Personal information: Miss E. Wessels, War Museum of the Boer Republics, Bloemfontein, 19 September 2002; Personal information: Dr. R. Kotzé, Jakkalskloof, Redelinghuys, Western Cape, 20 September 2002.

68 Extract from Drummer Hodge by Thomas Hardy in G. van Lingen (compiler), *Battlefields of South Africa*, p. 90.

69 C.F. Albertyn (ed.), *Ensiklopedie van die wêreld*, Indeks/Atlas, p.279.

This enormous area is a harsh, arid country and becomes increasingly desiccated from east to west. It is intersected by streams or dry ravines, that can instantly turn into raging torrents after summer storms. The 400 mm per annum isohyet runs approximately along the 26° eastern longitude through South Africa, which implies that most of the Cape territories under discussion receive less than 400 mm of rain per annum. Moreover, the rainfall, as is normally the case in arid regions, is highly erratic and unevenly distributed, and droughts are common. The temperatures vary markedly, ranging from extremely hot summer days to freezing winter nights. Due to the altitude and the low moisture snow is rare, except over the eastern mountains. During the frequent droughts the lack of water in combination with the high temperatures makes life unbearable for man, beast and vegetation. Yet, if drought is merciless then the breaking of the drought, usually accompanied by heavy lightning and thunder storms and flash floods, can be even more damaging.[70] The vegetation is largely Karoobush (Pentzia spp.) and succulents such as vygie (Mesembryanthenum spp.) on the plains and hillsides and hardy trees such as sweet-thorn (Acacia karoo) and karee (Rhus gueninzii) in the stream beds. There is little or no natural grass vegetation.

Socio-economical issues

Most of the present towns in the region were there at the turn of the 19th century and new settlements are sporadic and often associated with irrigation schemes. However, judging by the size of the churches that were built in the towns during the late 1800s the white population was higher than it is a century later. One such example is the church in Vosburg which was built in 1895 to accommodate 1 200 people. The membership of this congregation in 1984 was 222 and in January 2003 it was 130.[71] The higher population in the region in the late 1800s was probably due to larger families – 10 to 12 children per family was not unusual – and bywoners or tenant farmers and their families who lived on many of the farms. The farms were extensive, generally between 5 000 and 6 000 hectares and therefore the people usually lived in comparative isolation.[72] The economy of this immense, dry land revolved around animal husbandry, primarily sheep farming. Farmsteads were usually established in or near a kloof or sheltered glen where there was sufficient underground water to be pumped by windmills for animals and used for some limited irrigation. Towns often evolved around churches, thus becoming the centre of religion, education and modest commerce for the

70 L.G. Green, *Karoo*, p.17.

71 Personal information supplied by Rev. J. Oosthuizen on 29 January 2003.

72 L.G. Green, *Karoo*, p. 12.

farming communities of the surrounding country.

By 1899 several railways crossed the area (refer Map V-7). There was a line from Cape Town over De Aar to Kimberley and another from Port Elizabeth over Graaff-Reinet, or alternatively over Cradock, to Colesberg. There was also a line from East London to Burgersdorp. Furthermore there were a number of inter-connecting lines. The railway system of the Cape Colony's interior was to be vital for the transport of British troops and equipment from the coast to the war zones.

Military aspects

The guerrilla warfare in the Cape was by and large fragmented and uncoordinated. During the early stages of the war the Boer leadership anticipated that the rural population of the interior districts of the Cape would actively support their effort. At the planning conference held at Cyferfontein in October 1900, it was decided to take the war into the enemy's territory, especially into the Cape Colony.[73] That the Boer leadership had high expectations of this strategy, has been substantiated by Scholtz, who claimed that the republicans firmly believed that an invasion would lead to a general insurgence of the Cape Afrikaners, which in turn could lead to a collapse of Britain's forces in South Africa.[74] The Boers probably also argued that greater military presence in the colony would lead to the disruption of the enemy's transport and communications, thereby alleviating the pressure on the republican forces within the borders of the Transvaal and the Free State and forcing the enemy to spread their forces over the vast Cape Colony.

De Wet was not present at Cyferfontein, but he decided – on the strength of a letter from General Hertzog – that he should personally invade the Cape as soon as possible. Scholtz is critical of De Wet's actions in his discussion of the eventual causes for the failure of the invasion of the Cape.[75] However, Hertzog with 1 200 men and Commandant P.H. Kritzinger with Captain G.J. Scheepers and a further 300 men, succeeded in penetrating into the colony around 16 December 1900 and for a time they operated in the Karoo areas (Nasson claimed that 2 000 men had crossed on 17 December).[76] As already mentioned, De Wet's first attempt at invading failed due to the raging Orange River. His second attempt to cross the river succeeded but the operation faltered due

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73 G. Nattrass and S.B.Spies (eds.), *Jan Smuts*, pp. 128-129.

74 L. Scholtz, *Waarom die Boere die oorlog verloor het*, p. 140.

75 L. Scholtz, *Waarom die Boere die oorlog verloor het*, pp. 144-146.

76 A. Wessels, *Die militêre verloop van die stryd*, pp. 36-37; L. Scholtz, *Waarom die Boere die oorlog verloor het*, p. 138; Bill Nasson, *The South African War*, p. 196.

to the adverse weather conditions and the unremitting pressure applied by the British. Eventually De Wet was compelled to return to the Free State.[77] Commandants W.C. Malan and S.G. Maritz and a small number of their burghers remained behind and they eventually managed to collect enough rebels to force the British to heed them. Hertzog returned with De Wet on 28 February 1901 to take up his responsibilities in the Free State. Kritzinger continued his harassment of the British through the central parts and into the southern Cape, until April 1901. He later returned for a second and even a third foray into the vast Karoo. Eventually, by September 1901 – nearly a year after the Cyferfontein meeting – General Jan Smuts, at the head of a commando of only 200 men, entered the Cape. They started a long and difficult trek that took them through the eastern and southern Cape, in their quest to recruit the long envisaged support from among the local Afrikaners. In addition to these various invasions into the Cape, there were various groups who roamed the land and harassed the enemy whenever possible. Among their leaders were Commandant B.D. Bouwer, Commandant H.W. Lategan, Commandant J.L. van Deventer, Commandant J.C. Lötter and Commandant H. Hugo.[78] Many of these officers were promoted to the rank of Combat-General by Smuts when he attempted to systemize the Cape operations at the farm Soetwater near Nieuwoudville on 27 December1901.[79] This issue will be further discussed in Chapter VIII.

Even though the presence of these groups was never large enough to precipitate a general uprising of Cape Afrikaners, a number of important goals were achieved, viewed from the Boer's perspective. This becomes evident in column 7 of Table V–1. Firstly, the large number of actions recorded indicate that the Boer forces in the Cape, even though they were highly fragmented, were by no means idle, which can indeed not be said of some of their northern compatriots. Secondly, when interpreting the right hand side of column 7, that records the occasions on which the British were the instigators, it is important to recognize that had the Boers – whether they were republicans or rebels – not been militarily active in the territory, the effort by the British would have been unnecessary. The attention and the resources of the British force were thus successfully distracted from the main theatre of war – the two Boer republics. The British were forced to spread their force more thinly over a vast country, deploying more and more troops, which cost more and more money. This reaction is fully in line with the guerrilla doctrine.

The fact that the British authorities in general, and Sir Alfred Milner in particular, had all along

77 L. Scholtz, *Waarom die Boere die oorlog verloor het*, p. 149.

78 A. Wessels, *Die militêre verloop van die stryd*, p. 39.

79 P.G. Cloete, *Chronology*, p. 287.

been wary of the danger of an Afrikaans uprising, becomes clear from Pakenham's frequent reference to Milner's apprehension,[80] culminating in his discussion of Milner's reaction to Hertzog's and Kritzinger's invasion in December 1900. According to Pakenham Milner wrote in his diary on 31 December: "I managed by gigantic effort to galvanise people to activity today ... finally resulted in a 'call to arms' of all loyal inhabitants issued by the military today. I am also pressing for Martial Law."[81] On 17 January 1901 Martial Law was indeed proclaimed in virtually the entire Cape, with the exclusion of the ports.[82]

Pakenham's sidelong comment, that the action by the Cape authorities caused Kritzinger's invasion to fizzle out, is unfair. The mere fact that the presence of Hertzog and Kritzinger's commandos forced the Cape authorities to take these drastic and costly steps at such an early stage of the new Boer threat, confirms that a vital principle in guerrilla warfare had already been achieved. One must furthermore bear in mind that the British forces in the occupied Free State were at that very time doing their utmost – without success – to keep De Wet from crossing into the Cape. By and large the eventual combined outcome of the various guerrilla actions in the Cape Colony had been more successful than is commonly acknowledged.

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80 T. Pakenham, *The Boer War*, pp. 281, 315, 317.

81 T. Pakenham, *The Boer War*, p. 486.

82 P.G. Cloete, *Chronology*, p. 216.

Chapter VI

Stressors Boers encountered in the guerrilla phase

1. Introduction

According to Hans Selye the term stressor refers to the cause of or the agent leading to stress. Stress is therefore the result of one or more provoking agents.[1] However, Antonovsky pointed out that potential stressors only become actual stressors depending upon the individual's perception or appraisal thereof (refer Figure II–1). A stressor is something that the individual perceives as an issue that will make a demand on him. This demand may be threatening or challenging or may merely require some response – including which might also be a positive response. Whatever that demand may be, it is associated with a potential change as far as the individual is concerned. It may simply be a minor matter or it may be of major importance. As discussed in Chapter II it can be cataclysmic in nature, in other words affecting many individuals, or alternatively it may be private or personal in nature. The demand can merely be perceived as a hassle or recurring frustration to the individual. Certain stressors would not be called cataclysmic, yet may not be private or personal either. These, for the purposes of this study, will be termed common stressors.

There are many physical aspects relating to the Anglo-Boer War, such as the British superiority in numbers, that may be called stressors in this chapter, while in fact it was the interpretation of the particular aspect which determines whether it was a stressor or not. So as not to become too theoretical, there are many physical issues dealt with below which will simply be labelled as stressors when it is clear that they were perceived as stressors of some kind or another.

War in itself is generally recognized as a cataclysmic stressor, but emerging from the general situation of war several types of stressors can be identified which have an effect on the participants. In this chapter which deals with the guerrilla phase of the Anglo-Boer War, the stressors

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[1] C.L. Sheridan and S.A. Radmacher, *Health psychology challenging the biomedical model*, p. 149.

experienced by the burghers of the two republics are analysed. It should however be emphasized that in an ongoing situation such as the guerrilla phase of the Anglo-Boer War, it is clearly incorrect to imagine that one single stressor would incur a level of stress to induce a specific reaction in an individual. Thus, although the stressors are discussed individually, it should be borne in mind that there would certainly have been a cumulative effect produced by various stressors. Then too, because of differences in an individual's resistance resources and coping abilities, the way each person was affected would unquestionably have differed. Resistance resources and coping abilities are dealt with in later chapters, but at this juncture in order to focus on the relative importance of a wide range of stressors they are arranged into various categories.

2. Stress caused directly by military situations

a. War as a life-threatening experience

The mere fact that war is life-threatening, and disrupts the normal pattern of life causing uncertainty and hardship, means that war *per se* can be classified as a stressor. And although its cataclysmic nature also means that those subjected to it will frequently form groups which share their hardships, the varied effects which war brings about on individuals, also places it within the group of personal or private stressors.

During the guerrilla phase of the Anglo-Boer War the burghers and their officers all experienced an intense measure of stress, as can be expected in any guerrilla war. Whereas Binneveld places the emphasis on the stress experienced by the "Goliath"- army,[2] it is only natural to accept that the soldiers of the smaller force will likewise experience high degrees of stress. While the bigger force is mostly subjected to the sudden, surprising and often barbaric nature of the guerrilla's actions, the latter will, on the other hand, be at a disadvantage in details such as weaponry, military discipline and numbers of fighters. This disadvantage in itself will be a major stressor to the guerrilla-fighter.

During the Anglo-Boer War, in those cases where a particular action was planned beforehand, e.g. attacks on enemy camps or convoys or the destruction of railways to capture

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2 H. Binneveld, *From shell shock to combat stress*, p. 49.

supply trains, the period of time preceding the action became a stressor. The participant would conceivably have reflected how the coming action would change his life. The risk of losing his life or, worse still, of being badly wounded, would naturally have been recognized and reflected on. These dreads would further have been complicated by the looming humiliation of being captured by the enemy and sent overseas or else by the self-doubt in his ability to stand firm under enemy fire. The "time of waiting" can no doubt be defined as a stressor. In this situation the overall gnawing uncertainty of what could happen would become a stressor, probably of a very private nature as each man reflects on his own thoughts. And although this holds true for any soldier in any war, the increasingly unfavourable situation of the republicans as the war progressed made it even more so.

Pretorius related these sensations as they were described by several authors of diaries and memoirs.[3] One of the burghers he quoted was the young Roland Schikkerling of the Johannesburg Commando, who wrote about the moments prior to the battle at Bergendal (Dalmanutha) – 21 to 27 August 1900 – : "The minutes preceding a fight, after the enemy comes into view, and until the strife commences, are for me full of nervous excitement ... it cannot be fear, rather intense anxiety to begin ... yet no farther than red is from purple, sweet from sour ..."[4] Even though this battle took place before the guerrilla phase of the war, the anticipation experienced also applies to later guerrilla encounters. Neither Schikkerling nor Pretorius specifically identified the time of waiting in terms of a "stressor", and yet it is clear that this was indeed the case. There are examples of other comments made before moving into action. Marthinus Viljoen, the son of General P. R. Viljoen of the Heidelberg Commando, referred to the wisecracks and boasting of some burghers before a planned train derailment and the subsequent looting: "Want ons proe al die jam en die zuiker."[5] This was probably adrenaline charged bravado caused by the increasing tension but it could also be regarded as humour used in an attempt to release the tension of the moment. Pretorius also quoted the American correspondent, H.C. Hillegas, who made the observation of De Wet's men before their surprise attack on the British at Sannaspost: "Some walked nervously up and down, others ... prayed, a few lighted their pipes ... many sat ... looked vacantly into space ... younger burgers joked and laughed."[6]

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3 F. Pretorius, *Kommandolewe tydens die Anglo-Boereoorlog 1899-1902*, pp. 153-155.

4 R.W. Schikkerling, *Commando courageous (A Boer's diary)*, p. 47.

5 Quoted by F. Pretorius, *Kommandolewe*, p. 153. [Translated: "For already we can taste the jam and the sugar."]

6 Quoted by F. Pretorius, *Kommandolewe*, p. 150.

Although the calm and positive attitude of officers helped burghers to cope with the stress of the waiting period,[7] there were those officers whose behaviour was the complete opposite. Max Weber, a Swiss volunteer who fought under General De la Rey, mentioned the strange conduct of Commandant Claassen who : " ... suffered from hernia, which usually worried him at the most inopportune times, such as just before a battle."[8] This usually kept him from the battle and would no doubt have heightened the stressful effect of the waiting time for his junior officers and burghers.

The effect of the tension before an encounter is illustrated by the many cases where burghers fired their rifles prematurely, thereby giving the enemy advance warning and so spoiling the surprise element of the planned action. Weber described such an instance before the battle of Yzerspruit, when a shot fired prematurely doubtlessly alerted the unsuspecting British.[9]

Once the battle started there were different emotional reactions. For many the tension was replaced by a calm rationality. Deneys Reitz described how shortly after he entered the Cape Colony with General Smuts, he calmly shot down two gunners during a skirmish when he and his comrades were in a precarious position.[10] Shortly thereafter he shot, and presumably killed, a number of the enemy. In contrast, Dietlof van Warmelo of the Pretoria Commando described how during a battle he experienced an oppressive feeling, always suspecting that the enemy's fire was meant especially for him.[11] The brothers Viljoen of the Heidelberg Commando gave graphic descriptions of the chaos and panic in the dark, during the ill-fated battle at Lake Chrissie. To them it was a wretched and heartbreaking night, culminating in disaster.[12] This sombre picture of a battle gone wrong is reinforced by Schikkerling's remark: "There is no place in the world where one's feelings bounce up and down so much as on the field of battle."[13]

Not all burghers were prepared to remain on the battle field under difficult situations. Weber recalled that during the battle at Yzerspruit, he saw how Generals De la Rey and Kemp

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7 F. Pretorius, *Kommandolewe*, p. 151.

8 M. Weber, *Eighteen months under General De la Rey*, p. 152.

9 M. Weber, *Eighteen months under General De la Rey*, p. 211.

10 D. Reitz, *Commando*, p. 227.

11 F. Pretorius, *Kommandolewe*, p. 154.

12 F. Pretorius, *Kommandolewe*, p. 162.

13 R.W. Schikkerling, *Commando courageous*, 29.11.1900, p. 106.

made liberal use of their sjamboks on "indecisive" burghers.[14] For many Boers, the trauma of battle at this late stage of a war – which was well-nigh lost – was just too much. However, seen from General De la Rey's point of view, victory on 25 February 1902 at Yzerspruit was an important factor in boosting the morale of the burghers at that very late stage of the war.[15] Pretorius has pointed out that during the guerrilla phase certain Boer officers recognized the effect of a full-out charge (stormjaag). A concerted effort of this kind not only instilled fear in the enemy, but also dislodged any doubts within their own ranks, encouraging them once more.[16]

The visual result of battle was frequently experienced as a stressor. The sensitive Jan Celliers wrote in his diary of his aversion to seeing slain comrades arriving at Bokkraal in the western Transvaal after the battle at Driefontein towards the end of October 1901. The ten corpses lay in the pale moonlight with half-dried blood clinging to their hair and their bodies, their eyes staring, their faces without expression. "O, wat een aandoening van afgrijzen voelde ik mijn liggaam doortrekken!'[17] The harsh reality of battle is suddenly realized and it is an extremely unpleasant feeling. General P.R. Viljoen witnessed the horrific death of his son, Henning, when he was decapitated by a shell: "Het verlies van myn kind was bitter zwaar, voornaamlyk de wreede wijze, zijn geheele hoofd was weg. O dat was bitter te aanschouwen."[18] Schikkerling recounted the distress he felt at the deaths and the subsequent burial of his comrades Field Cornet Seroni, Antonio Lamberto and Botha, who were all touched by "death's purple finger" in the battle at Belfast.[19] Schikkerling was a young man, not yet twenty-one years old and even though it was not his first encounter with the "purple finger", these men were his close companions. He probably reflected that it might well have been his fate too, but does not say so. Weber recounted the death of "Mot" Meier, the German Field Cornet, who "received a death shot in this purposeless skirmish. The news that Meier was missing made a very deep impression on the

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14 M. Weber, *Eighteen months under General De la Rey*, p. 212.

15 J.J. van Heerden, "Genls. De la Rey en Kemp en die stryd in die Wes-Transvaal", in J.H. Breytenbach (ed.), *Gedenkalbum van die Tweede Vryheidsoorlog*, p. 183.

16 F. Pretorius, *Kommandolewe*, p. 157.

17 A.G. Oberholster (ed.), *Oorlogsdagboek van Jan F.E. Celliers*, 26.10.1901, p. 307 [Translated: "Oh, what an sensation of horror do I feel spreading through my body."]

18 Quoted by F. Pretorius, *Kommandolewe*, p. 163. [Translation: "The loss of my child was very painful, especially the cruel manner in which it happened, he was completely decapitated. Oh, that was bitter to behold.]

19 R.W. Schikkerling, *Commando courageous*, 8.1.1901, p. 130.

commandos".[20] And although Weber was proud of Meier, it is likely that he too would have had deeper thoughts about their loss.

b. The British numerical superiority

It is a well-recorded fact that Britain had an immense advantage in the number of men which they could field, as compared to the limited strength of the republican forces. This issue has already been discussed in chapter 1.

Leopold Scholtz also pointed out that whereas the Boers started the war with a slight advantage of approximately 34 000 men in the field and a further 20 000 in reserve, as compared to the British force numbering slightly over 27 000, this advantage was soon wiped out. By the end of the war in May 1902, the Boers could field only approximately 21 800 burghers against the 210 221 of the British.[21] The increase in strength of the British force was not a gradual one. By the end of February 1900 the imperial forces were 50 000 strong.[22] Roberts, and after him Kitchener, continued to increase the number of their forces. *The Times history* reported that the grand total of nearly 240 000 British troops was reached in May 1901, supported by 100 heavy field guns, 420 horse and field-guns and 60 pom-poms. It supplied statistics showing that the effective fighting strength of the imperial force on 19 June 1901 was just short of 164 000 men.[23] This compared to the Boer force of 44 000 men and young lads at large in the veld, of whom only 13 000 were in fighting trim.[24] These numbers of Boers are estimates made from the British point of view and could perhaps be disputed. Notwithstanding the possible discrepancies, the fact remains that there was a huge disparity in fighting strength between the two forces in the period when the guerrilla phase of the war was in full swing. This was a crucial issue for the Boers.

In addition to the already overwhelming imbalance in numbers, two further factors should be borne in mind. Firstly, that blacks were increasingly used not only for unarmed auxiliary duties but also armed for direct military service. Peter Warwick, a British historian, quoted Lloyd George who suggested in March 1902 that there were 30 000 armed blacks in British military

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20 M. Weber, *Eighteen months under General De la Rey*, p. 183.

21 L. Scholtz, *Waarom die Boere die oorlog verloor* het, p. 216; F. Pretorius, *Scorched earth*, p. 21.

22 J.H. Breytenbach, *Geskiedenis van die Tweede Vryheidsoorlog,* IV, pp. 125.

23 L.S. Amery, *The Times history of the war in South Africa,* V, pp. 248-249.

24 L.S. Amery, *The Times history,* V, p. 251.

employ in South Africa. Warwick believed that this number was not widely exaggerated.[25] Secondly, it is also significant that many surrendered Boers were starting to assist the British. *The Times history* mentioned that by January 1902 there were 1 000 National Scouts (ex ZAR-fighters), a number which increased to 1 480 by May 1902. There were also nearly 500 Orange River Colony (ORC) Volunteers. Grundlingh calculated that the final strength of these units was 1359 and 448 respectively.[26] These two local corps provided valuable knowledge of regional conditions and of their enemy's *modus operandi* to the British forces.

The ever increasing pressure of the enemy, combined with strategies such as the blockhouse-lines deprived the republicans of vital freedom of movement. This predicament was no doubt experienced as a stressor by officers and burghers alike. The initiative, which is such an essential element of successful guerrilla warfare, was taken out of the Boer's hands. They were being forced into a defensive mode and the realisation that they were no longer in control of the situation became a general stressor – probably more so to the leadership, as they were faced with the problem of developing alternative tactics.

This is mentioned several times in the literature. Fritz Rothmann, who was with General B.J. Viljoen and General C.H. Muller in the northeastern Transvaal described in his diary how their movements were curtailed during July 1901 by the ever increasing presence of the British troops. On 28 July he recounted how the burghers were threatened by the enemy from several sides: "Ons kommando's is nie sterk genoeg om aan al hierdie Engelse weerstand te bied nie."[27] In terms of coping with the situation the manageability had been taken out of their hands.

Soon afterwards, in the middle of August, his daily entries concentrated on how the British forces closed in on him and twenty of his comrades while they were escorting nine families with their wagons and cattle. Several times they were surprised by British soldiers in places where they had assumed that they were safe. It became a cat and mouse game with the Boers constantly pursued, and moreover suffering from the miserably cold, misty weather, from lack of food, little sleep and the loss of many of their horses.[28] One can only conclude that these circumstances

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25 P. Warwick, *Black people and the South African War 1899 - 1902*, p. 25.

26 L.S. Amery, *The Times history,* V, p. 408; A.M. Grundlingh, *Die "hendsoppers" en "joiners": Die rasionaal en verskynsel van verraad*, pp. 254, 267.

27 M.E.R. (ed.), *Oorlogsdagboek van 'n Transvaalse burger te velde*, 29.6.1901to 28.7.1901, pp. 194-204. [Translated: "Our commandos were not strong enough to withstand the multitude of English."]

28 M.E.R.(ed.), *Oorlogsdagboek*, 11.8.1901to19.8.1901, pp. 210-213.

linked with the dominance of the enemy gave rise to further distress in their everyday lives.

J.F. Naudé, who was with General J. Kemp in the western Transvaal, described how the British came after them at the battle of Vlakfontein on 29 May 1901: " ... kwamen de Engelshen als zwermen bijen, die verstoord en boos gemaakt waren omdat wij in het nest gestoken hadden. Zij kwamen nu, zooals zoo dikwijls te voren, om de astrante Boeren te vangen. Ze trokken uit drie oorden... " Kemp subsequently divided his force into three, and eventually he and his men managed to escape unscathed, due mainly to the British lack of intelligence and the Boers' better use of the terrain. Naudé described how the horsemen and infantrymen teemed in front of, next to and behind the wagons of the one British column. Not a single scout was active to the left, the direction from which the Boers watched. Although Naudé described this escape as if the Boers had achieved an extraordinary feat, the episode was nonetheless stressful. The relieved Naudé regarded the success of their escape as a fitting birthday present for the young General Kemp, but it should be noted that once more the guerrillas had been forced into a defensive position.[29]

c. The blockhouse lines

General Christiaan de Wet is said to have called Lord Kitchener's blockhouse system the "blockhead" system.[30] Johan Hattingh, a historian who has researched the issue of blockhouses, argued that this label, as well as De Wet's other nickname, "white elephants" were in truth unwarranted. He pointed out that during the peace talks at Vereeniging Commandant General Botha acknowledged that the blockhouse lines divided the country into camps and that this undeniably hampered the mobility of the Boers.[31]

From the beginning of 1901 blockhouses were erected to protect strategic points in the British supply lines, for example railway bridges and stations.[32] Once the Boers had decided to continue the war despite the British advance and occupation of their capitals, the principle of disrupting communications and capturing supplies became an important Boer strategy. De Wet recollected his resolution after his success at Roodewal and his subsequent manoeuvres to avoid

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29 J.F. Naudé, *Vechten en vluchten van Beyers en Kemp "bôkant" De Wet*, pp. 272-273. [Translated: "... the English came at us like a swarm of bees, disturbed and angered because we had agitated their nest. They came, as so often before, to 'capture these impudent Boers.' They advanced from three directions..."]

30 T. Pakenham, *The Boer War*, p. 541.

31 J. Hattingh, "The British blockhouse system", in F. Pretorius (ed.), *Scorched earth*, pp. 236-237.

32 J. Hattingh, "The British blockhouse system", in F. Pretorius (ed.), *Scorched earth*, pp. 227-228.

Kitchener during June 1900: "I also felt myself bound to wreck this line, for it was the only railway which Lord Roberts could now utilize for forwarding the enormous quantities of stores which his vast forces required."[33] Records show that the destruction of railway lines and the seizing of supplies, led by men such as Danie Theron, Jack Hindon, Henry Slegtkamp and Gideon Scheepers, did in fact take place regularly during the early months of the guerrilla war.[34] Yet the British soon realised how vulnerable they were and extended their blockhouse lines. They also began using armoured trains for the protection of their communications. Nevertheless after the capture of most members of the Free State government in July 1901, De Wet reiterated in his memoir that he was still convinced that the answer lay in the destruction of the enemy communications: "I now impressed upon my officers as forcibly, as I could the importance of intercepting the communications of the enemy by blowing up their trains."[35] Notwithstanding these words the number of rail disruptions indicate the success of the counter measures.

Table VI–1: Number of rail-disruptions per month.[36]

Year	Month	Number of reported rail disruptions
1900	September	23
	October	32
	November	30
	December	21
1901	January	16
	February	30
	March	18
	April	18
	May	12
	June	8
	July	4
	August	No report
	September	2

33 C.R, de Wet, *Three years war*, p. 115.

34 P.G. Cloete, *The Anglo-Boer War a Chronology*, pp. 184, 216, 223.

35 C.R, de Wet, *Three years war*, p. 257.

36 P.G. Cloete, *Chronology*, *passim.*

After September 1901 no further reports are made.

Naudé reported that in July 1901 General Beyers ambushed a train between Naboomspruit and Pietpotgietersrust in the northern Transvaal. After a brief skirmish with the Gordon Highlanders, the train provided more clothes and food than the Boers could handle.[37] This was probably one of the last "train-battles" and it is worth noting that it did not take place in the highly contested northern Free State or the western Transvaal.

Once an individual's ability to control a particular situation declines, stress is bound to develop. Therefore the mere fact that the disruption of railways became increasingly difficult would have become a stressor for the Boers. This applied not only to those directly involved in the act of the destruction of lines and capturing of supplies, but also to the officers who fully realised the importance of this guerrilla activity. The looted goods were usually sorely needed by the burghers in the veld, and if one superimposes the effect of this dwindling "source of supply" on the already difficult situation in which the Boers found themselves during the first half of 1901, the importance of De Wet's second remark becomes understandable.

The system of blockhouses was soon adapted to accomplish more than guarding critical railway installations against damage or disruptions; it was also applied to redress the British inability to occupy the vast country effectively. It gave them a greater presence in the rural areas and it was soon evident that it curtailed the mobility of the Boer commandos. Although it could not completely check the movement of determined Boers, the possibility of death, the likelihood of being wounded or captured always loomed. Hattingh claimed that even the mercurial De Wet was forced to plan his crossings with great care every time it became necessary. He added that at the peace talks at Vereeniging Louis Botha conceded that the blockhouses had a negative impact on the burghers' morale and that it frustrated them to have to move through the lines.[38] Frustrations, like hassles, might well be regarded as stressors of low intensity, but when the senses of fear and uncertainty are added and the situation is further compounded with cold, hunger and possibly longing, a desperate picture emerges. The blockhouse lines eroded the guerrilla warriors' confidence and enthusiasm which were crucial elements in their bid to keep going. The Boers certainly sensed that their control of the situation was threatened. Strümpfer quotes Suzanne Kobasa who asserts that having a sense of control is an important component of

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37 J.F. Naudé, *Vechten en vluchten*, p. 259.

38 J. Hattingh, "The British blockhouse system", in F. Pretorius (ed.), *Scorched earth*, p. 237.

"hardiness",[39] one of the constructs of salutogenesis that was discussed in Chapter II.

Table VI–2 below demonstrates that it took the British several months to install the system and that therefore it did not have an immediate overall impact on Boer commandos. Nevertheless it must be remembered that reasonably reliable news, inevitably augmented by wild rumours, would inflame the burghers' nagging awareness that these dreaded lines were relentlessly snaking over the veld, depriving them of the space which they needed. This must undoubtedly have been perceived as a growing threat, a common stressor.

Table VI–2: Kilometres of blockhouse lines completed per month. (June 1901 to April 1902) .[40]

Year	Month	Kilometres completed per month	Cumulative total
1901	June	565	565
	July	-	565
	August	290	855
	September	80	935
	October	500	1 435
	November	200	1 635
	December	760	2 399
1902	January	700	3 095
	February	387	3 482
	March	95	3 577
	April	608	4 185

Deneys Reitz related how he and his comrades unexpectedly ran into a blockhouse in the dark, while trying to cross the railway in the southern Free State on their way in to join Smuts in the Cape Colony. He described how he and his horse became entangled in the barbed wire, how he had to abandon his mount and how their group were eventually forced to spend a cold night

39 D.J.W. Strümpfer, "Salutogenesis a new paradigm", *South African Journal of Psychology* 20 (4), 1990, p. 170.

40 P.G. Cloete, *Chronology*, *passim.*

behind a kopje.[41] Although the ever enthusiastic Reitz, who did not compile his memoirs until after the war, did not mention it, it can be expected that this experience made him and his friends aware of the dangers of blockhouses. Field Cornet H.S. van der Walt recounted in his diary that during January 1902 the British were speeding up the construction of the blockhouse line along the Vet River in the western Free State and that his men were thus forced to restrict their "work" to the Hoopstad region.[42]

On 17 August 1901 the National Scout P.J. du Toit reported in his diary that the British were building blockhouses along the crest of the Magaliesberg range in the vicinity of Damhoek while they were trying to clear the mountains of Boer refugees.[43] Weber confirmed this detail in his memoir: "The English then built the row of blockhouses on the mountain. That broke the spirit of the hidden Boers. Thirst and hunger chased them out, while others were found in their hiding places by dogs."[44] Grundlingh pointed out that the blockhouse lines indeed compelled the Boers to travel long distances in order to avoid advancing British troops.[45]

d. Drives to pin down mobile commandos.

When Kitchener succeeded Roberts as Commander-in-Chief at the end of November 1900, one of his priorities in his aim to bring the war to a speedy end, was to clear the rural areas of fighting Boers. He ordered large sweeping manoeuvres, which later became known as drives. *The Times history* described the first of these drives, early in 1901, against Botha in the southeastern Transvaal as follows: "Kitchener's conception for this movement was to make a clean sweep of the country between the Delagoa and Natal Railways by an eastward advance from Johannesburg to the Swazi or Zulu Borders."[46] MapV–1 in the previous chapter illustrates the territory in question. The operation was made up of five columns, four of which were under the command of the vigorous General John French. The columns were to move from the base line in an easterly direction hoping to "envelope and annihilate the enemy in the neighbourhood of Ermelo or driving

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41 D. Reitz, *Commando*, pp. 192-193.

42 J.H. Coetzee (ed), "H.S. van der Walt: Oorlogsdagboek", *Christiaan de Wet-Annale* 8, Day 610, p. 141.

43 J.P.Brits (ed.), *Diary of a National Scout P.J. du Toit 1900 - 1902*, 17.8.1901, p. 65.

44 M. Weber, *Eighteen months under General De la Rey*, p. 90.

45 A.M. Grundlingh, *Die "hendsoppers" en "joiners"*, p. 169.

46 L.S. Amery (ed.), *The Times history,* V, p. 158.

them against the Swazi and Zulu borders and there forcing them to surrender."[47]

It was a long drawn out operation, lasting from 27 January to 14 April 1901. It was marked by Botha's unsuccessful attempt to crush General H.L. Smith-Dorrien at Lake Chrissie in the dark morning hours of 6 February and by the failed peace talks between Kitchener and Botha at Middelburg which started on 28 February and ended with Botha's rejection of Britain's terms on 16 March. It was further marked by extremely heavy rains on the Highveld, which hampered French's movements. In the end, like the peace talks, Kitchener gained very little by the whole manoeuver. *The Times history* reported that 1 332 Boers were taken out of the war, of which 730 surrendered voluntarily.[48] The cost to the British, even though it is unknown, was probably unduly high for such a disappointing result.

It is not within the domain of this study to examine this or subsequent drives from a military perspective, but to probe them as stressors. Firstly, the fact that during this very early stage of the guerrilla war, the commandos under the commandant general of the ZAR were placed in a defensive situation, focussing on avoidance of the enemy and continuous flight, could not have augured well for the burghers in the veld. Secondly, the wide-ranging destruction of their farms would naturally have aggravated their apprehension. [49] Thirdly, even though the Boers were exposed to the same foul weather conditions as their opponents, they most probably were obliged to survive with less protection against the elements than their British opponents. Fourthly, all around them comrades were being lost, not in the act of seriously harassing their enemy as they should have, but in actions of evasion and escape. And moreover, the rumours which reached them about their leader's peace talks in Middelburg would have raised uncertainties in many minds, uncertainty as to whether the war had lost its meaning. It can be understood that these circumstances would doubtlessly have contributed to a general feeling of discontent amongst the Boers.

Although the results of this drive was not as shattering to the Boers as Kitchener had hoped it would be, he followed it up with yet another drive in the northeastern Transvaal, in which he tried to curtail General Ben Viljoen's activities. During the subsequent avoidance manoeuvres Viljoen moreover experienced motivational difficulties among his men. *The Times history*

47 L.S. Amery (ed.), *The Times history,* V, p. 159.

48 L.S. Amery (ed.), *The Times history,* V, pp. 180-181.

49 H.F. Wichman, *Oorlogsherinneringe van 'n oudstryder,* pp. 13-14.

reported that 100 burghers deserted him when he ordered them to escape between two advancing British columns.[50] Viljoen's personal feeling at that stage was probably one of having lost control over the entire situation. Eventually the drive cost Viljoen about 1 100 men, most of whom had voluntarily surrendered.[51]

Schikkerling described the chaos of that flight when they were informed on 18 April of the advance on the British from Middelburg to Tautesberg: "We pass more farms and many wagons, men, women children and cattle, moving along and flying [fleeing] to some place or other."[52] On the following morning he wrote: "In wagons, in carts, on horseback and on foot came the men. Trekboers with their wagons, families, and cattle ... many barefooted ... now realized that their independence had shrunk to ... these few stony hills." The chaos among the fleeing people finally caused him to cry out: "Shall I ever forget the sight. The shouting and confusion of exited people, each with his wagon, mule or donkey, to which he selfishly clung, loading and preparing to get away or meditating to remain and surrender."[53]

That evening a number of Schikkerling's comrades also decided to surrender. He too was utterly weary of flight and lack of sleep and remarked: "I am sick at the thought of going back all the way with my weary beasts ... I am almost tempted to remain and surrender or die ..."[54] It is quite possible that a measure of depression had set in at this stage after the days of sustained tension.

Schikkerling's entries of those fateful days clearly prove that the drives not only reduced the numbers of the Boer forces, but that the methodical advance of great numbers of troops, destroying farms and capturing women and children as they went, became a severe stressor to the burghers. Yet, once again this stressor did not stand alone. It was linked to the superior numbers of the British as discussed above.

Once Kitchener realised that the tactics used in the drives did not yield the expected results and once the blockhouse lines had reached a point where they could effectively be used as a

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50 L.S. Amery (ed.), *The times history,* V, p. 211.

51 L.S. Amery (ed.), *The times history,* V, pp. 214-215.

52 R.W. Schikkerling, *Commando courageous,* 18.4.1901, p. 177.

53 R.W. Schikkerling, *Commando courageous,* 18.4.1901, pp. 178-179.

54 R.W. Schikkerling, *Commando courageous,* 18.4.1901, p. 182.

barrier, a new method or "new model drive" was implemented. These drives were expressly aimed at capturing De Wet and thereby removing his annoying presence in the northern Free State. *The Times history* described in detail where the lines of men, consisting of enormous numbers of British troops, theoretically enough men to advance ten yards apart, stretched over the veld. They pointed out how the blockhouse lines and armoured trains with searchlights were incorporated in the plan and how, during night-time, these lines would remain effectively in place, preventing breakthroughs in the dark.[55] De Wet exclaimed: "We have seen them: they are a great big lot!"[56]

Three of these new model drives took place in the early months of 1902. Of these the second drive yielded the best results from the British point of view: 778 prisoners were taken, 50 Boers killed and 25 000 head of cattle captured.[57] To these figures Pakenham added 2 000 horses, which were most vital to the Boers survival, as well as 200 wagons.[58] At a period when the burghers were fighting with the minimum material support, this loss unquestionably caused a significant further dent in their morale. According to De Wet's own accord the ever-closing net of British soldiers caused panic and fear. With his sjambok he tried to force his burghers to break through, yet many turned back. In the resulting chaos, his son Kotie who was his secretary, together with his horsecart containing all his documents, were lost.[59] The presence of large numbers of women, children and old men only added to the disorder and the lack of discipline within the Boer-ranks.

Those late summer days and weeks preceding the drive, while the enemy's preparation was visible to many Boers and civilians in the area, must be recognised as another mushrooming stressor of cataclysmic nature shared by many. Compounding the vexing uncertainty of the morrow, were the existing hardships relating to food and clothes and an alarming awareness of the enemy's superior forces. The eventual pandemonium and terror that followed were the culmination of this stressful period.

One more factor which one should keep in mind, is the awareness of the burghers, as guerrilla fighters, of having become the hunted – instead of being the hunter. The reality that they

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55 L.S. Amery (ed.), *The Times history,* V, pp. 473-492.

56 C.R. de Wet, *Three years war*, p. 302.

57 L.S. Amery (ed.), *The Times history,* V, p. 491.

58 T. Pakenham, *The Boer War*, p. 549.

59 C.R. de Wet, *Three years war,* pp. 302-303.

had been encircled, forced into a "kraal" (corral), that they had been deprived of the opportunity to harass, disrupt and cause setbacks to their enemy, would no doubt have caused many to wonder about the sense of any further resistance. According to De Wet's memoir, Commandant Jan Meyer and 400 men fell into the hands of the British on 27 February 1902, ironically 21 years after the ZAR had triumphed over the British at Majuba. De Wet perceived this event as an adverse sign: " We had sinned – but not against England!"[60] Yet, although he himself remained positive until the very last day of the peace negotiations, it is doubtful if many of those burghers whom he had to compel into fight with his sjambok and many of those who had escaped his "encouragement", shared his confidence.

Nevertheless, if it seems as if Kitchener's NMDs ended in an anticlimax because De Wet and Steyn were not captured, this perception is wrong. Considering the gradual building up of tension among the Boers when it became clear what the British were planning and the eventual cost of the drives to the already crippled republican forces, then it should be recognized that the NMDs were probably the last straw for many guerrilla commanders and their burghers.[61]

e. Night attacks

The Times history, pointed out that although the British scarcely interfered with Botha's plans for the coming summer during the winter of 1901, a column under Lieutenant Colonel G.E. Benson was indeed active in the Highveld districts of the southeastern Transvaal. According to *The Times history* his method of night raiding proved successful: "... the best way of catching a commando at a disadvantage was to march for it by night and attack at dawn. The Boer detested this method. Once in the saddle, rifle in hand and a full bandolier buckled round him, he was more than a match for the British trooper; pounced on while he was still in laager, he was liable to panic." It continued that the horseless Boers, many of whom were always present in any laager, were even more vulnerable.[62] On the open Highveld, where daytime manoeuvres were always a problem, Benson's night raids made good military sense.

During August and September 1901, Benson carried out numerous night raids on Boer commandos, with varying degrees of success. Although his activities only impacted upon a small

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60 C.R. de Wet, *Three years war,* p. 305.

61 C.R. de Wet, *Three years war,* pp. 294, 303.

62 L.S.Amery (ed.), *The Times history,* V, pp. 329-330.

corner of the Highveld "... he surprised laagers and made his column a terror to the district."[63] Similar tactics were soon to be implemented by other British commanders, including Colonel M.F. Rimington in the Free State.

The threat of nightly strikes – especially in those areas where the aggressor was known to have implemented these tactics before – would torment the burgher by night and by day. Not only was his commando forced to move its camp site every day, but the burghers' much needed rest was interrupted, leading to catnaps (jokingly called "kleindood" or small death) by day and sleeping with his rifle close at hand by night.[64] The mere menace of having to get hold of his horse in the dark, saddling, loading his belongings and absconding without losing touch with his comrades, was in itself a strenuous exercise. The unpredictability of his immediate future then became the stressor; the Boers were only drifting with the tide of events. Having to put up with the likelihood of such nocturnal interruptions and speculating on the probability of a recurrence when he and his comrades rolled themselves into their blankets on the bitterly cold Highveld of August 1901, indubitably turned night attacks into a common stressor among the burghers .

That Benson's night raid system was successful at a time when little else was happening on the war front, cannot be denied. However, when *The Times history* discussed the strength of the Boer forces by the end of September 1901, it stated that the British official estimate of approximately 6 500 men who were still in the field was inaccurate. It was argued that this was a grossly shrunken estimate and that a figure of "about 35 000" was closer to the mark. On the other hand this figure may have been inflated and it is also debatable. Be that as it may, it should be acknowledged that "... the proportion of weak men was relatively smaller and the proportion of stalwarts relatively greater, and ... more formidable...".[65] Fortigenesis – gaining strength through stress – among the hard-pressed Boers was clearly recognized by the compilers of *The Times history*.

f. The influence of the British proclamations on Boer morale

During the course of the Anglo-Boer War numerous proclamations were issued by the British. Roberts' first proclamation on 17 January 1900 shortly after his arrival in South Africa,

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63 L.S.Amery (ed.), *The Times history,* V, p. 331.

64 F. Pretorius, *Kommandolewe*, p. 139.

65 L.S.Amery (ed.), *The Times history,* V, p. 332.

was aimed at the Free State burghers. It warned them to desist from hostilities and promised them that if they stayed at home they would not be made to suffer.[66] Subsequently numerous proclamations with similar promises were issued, promises which were seldom adhered to. Roberts' second proclamation, issued after his victory at Paardeberg declared that those "... who are willing to lay down their arms ... bind themselves by an oath to abstain from further participation ... will be given passes to return to their homes ... will not be made prisoners of war ... [and] property will not be taken from them."[67] Proclamations of this nature were thus – even though it was not realised at the time – used as a psychological instrument to change Boer attitudes.

Those Boers who reacted positively to these promises and laid down their arms were subsequently called "hendsoppers" by their former comrades-in-arms. These men soon realized that the British occupying force did not view their undertakings as binding. According to A.M. Grundlingh Brigadier General H.H. Settle declared in November 1900 that: " ... the order of the day appeared to be capturing those farmers, who had remained true to their oath, and rounding up all their stock without giving receipts."[68]

Gradually the Boers became wary and took less heed of Roberts', and later Kitchener's, proclamations, because it had become clear that the pledges were not intended to be met. Many sources mentioned these proclamations – which became known as Kitchener's paper bombs – and many jokes about them were circulated . On 26 April 1901 Rothmann, with his tongue in cheek, wrote of a proclamation from "My Lord Kitchener" urging the burghers to surrender and become lawful and loyal citizens of His British Majesty. He remarked that proclamations had been send out on such a regular basis that a joker from Middelburg approached the British under protection of a white flag asking for the latest proclamation from their supreme commander.[69]

The ultimate of this "paper-bomb" tactic of breaking down the enemy morale was probably Kitchener's "banishment proclamation" of 7 August 1901. The reaction to this proclamation varied considerably. Celliers' entry on 15 August read: "Wij lachten hartelik om de nieuwe

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66 P.G. Cloete, *Chronology*, p. 101.

67 Quoted by A.M. Grundlingh, *Die " hendsoppers" en "joiners"*, p. 27.

68 Quoted by A.M. Grundlingh, *Die " hendsoppers" en "joiners"*, p. 59.

69 M.E.R (ed.). *Oorlogsdagboek*, 26.4.1901, p. 176.

jakhalsstreek van Khaki en daarmee was alles uit."[70] Rothmann was in an optimistic mood on the day that he reported Commandant N. Groenewalt's success in capturing a train well laden with coffee, sugar, flour, shoes and shirts, and he was understandably condescending when he mentioned this proclamation as an afterthought: "Lord Kitchener is weer aan huil in sy jongste proklamasie ... Genl Botha het hom geantwoord dat die burgers nog nie lus het om sulke stappe te doen nie."[71] Reitz recalled that they received this proclamation only two days before 15 September 1901, the expiry date which Kitchener had set, and that the announcement was met with derision by Smuts' commando.[72] Nevertheless the matter was more serious for certain burghers. Field Cornet Van der Walt, in his austere manner, called the proclamation "harsh", but made no further comment on how he felt about it.[73] Weber stated that the effect on the fighting burghers would amount to very little, but that on the bushlancers (local Boers with little or no inclination to fight for the republican cause) it might have been different: "as it [the proclamation] had been written for the fickle and the doubting."[74] Naudé recounted that General Beyers convened a meeting of his officers on 7 September 1901 to discuss the matter openly. It was agreed that although the destruction of property, burning of homesteads and maltreatment of women caused them grief, bitterness towards their enemy compelled them to carry on their struggle until the very end.[75] It appears that for some Boers it was not a simple laughing matter, yet from a psychological perspective it can be claimed that the threat of banishment merely made the burghers more united and more determined to continue the strife.

President Steyn, immovable as ever, viewed the proclamation seriously but quipped: "May I be permitted to say that your Excellency's jurisdiction is limited to the range of your Excellency's guns". He subsequently pointed out that Kitchener had hitherto ruined the country, wrecked their homes, looted and killed cattle by the thousand, imprisoned, insulted and carried away their women. "Can we now – when it is merely a question of banishment – shrink from our

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70 A.G. Oberholster (ed.), *Oorlogsdagboek van Jan F.E. Celliers*, 15.8.1901, p. 277. [Translated: "We laughed heartily at this new jackal stunt of Khaki and that was it."]

71 M.E,R (ed.), *Oorlogsdagboek,* 8.9.1901, p. 219. [Translated: "Lord Kitchener is crying once more in his most recent proclamation ... General Botha answered him that the burghers were not yet ready to take such steps.]

72 D. Reitz, *Commando*, p. 221.

73 J.H. Coetzee (ed.), "H.S. van der Walt: Oorlogsdagboek", Day 451, p. 138.

74 M. Weber, *Eighteen months under General de la Rey*, p. 95.

75 J.F. Naudé, *Vechten en vluchten*, p. 263.

duty? ... but we are not asking for magnanimity, we demand justice." [76] Although Steyn did not take it lightly, neither did he flinch from the threat. Kitchener's proclamation was probably a stressor to him, as it surely was to many of his subjects, but it was a stressor that gave the Boers even greater determination to continue their struggle. *The Times history* agreed on this point when it called Kitchener's proclamation a serious error. What was said about fortigenesis above is also pertinent in this context. The "skulkers and incapables" mentioned in *The Times history* and in Weber's words the "fickle and doubting " might well have succumbed to such a threat.[77] But the fact that in contrast, the "stalwarts" became even stronger, is undeniably true. For them the meaningfulness of the war – in terms of Antonovsky's sense of coherence (SOC) theory (refer Chapter II) – did not disappear in the face of setbacks and threats.

What President Steyn wrote later about his opinions concerning peace, was likewise applicable to the threats in this proclamation: "Van de plus minus 20 000 man die nog in het veld waren, waren de meesten veteranen, die gehard waren in de strijd, die alles reeds hadden opgeofferd, en die nu streden voor iets hogers dan bezitting." [78]

Grundlingh regarded the proclamation as a tool aimed at intimidating the burghers, pressing them to surrender. According to him J.D. Kestell, the Free State minister with the commandos, claimed that he was not aware of more than 30 Boers who actually withdrew from the strife as a result of the proclamation. Grundlingh, like *The Times history*, considered the proclamation a pitiful failure.[79]

Whether this "deportation proclamation" was derided or whether it was taken seriously by the Boers, it should be noted that many diarists and authors of memoirs and other historians have made mention of it. It was issued at a time, soon after a gruelling winter, at a stage when numerous stressors were building up. It is clear that one way or another it did have an effect on the guerrilla fighters who were still in the field. And if that effect was negative it most probably became a private stressor among burghers, one which the individual naturally preferred not to discuss with his comrades.

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76 Quoted by P.G. Cloete, *Chronology*, p. 259.

77 M. Weber, *Eighteen months under General de la Rey*, p. 95.

78 N.J. van der Merwe, *Marthinus Theunis Steyn, 'n lewensbeskrywing*, II, pp. 86-88. [Translated: "Of the more or less 20 000 who were still in the field, the majority were veterans, toughened by the struggle, who had sacrificed everything and who now fought for something greater than possessions."]

79 A.M. Grundlingh, *Die "hendsoppers" en "joiners"*, p. 171.

g. The effect of the scorched earth policy on burghers on commando

The scorched earth policy of Roberts and Kitchener is well documented. Pretorius wrote in the introductory chapter of *Scorched earth*: "The republics were subjected to systematic devastation. Whole towns, as well as thousands of farmhouses, were burnt down or extensively damaged. This onslaught on the Boer's means of survival was intensified by the destruction of all food supplies: livestock was killed in enormous numbers, and fields of grain and maize were burnt and destroyed."[80] Grundlingh estimated that approximately 30 000 houses were destroyed.[81] Most Boers had struggled over years and endured many hardships to secure and develop their property, it was their little piece of independence. Its destruction naturally embittered them, yet it also hardened their resolve.

Deneys Reitz, who was a youngster at the time, recalled the scene in January 1901, as the British were implementing their first drive in southeastern Transvaal. They were near Olifantsfontein between Johannesburg and Pretoria when they became aware of the British advance: "During the course of the morning, pillars of smoke began to rise behind the English advance, and to our astonishment we saw that they were burning the farmhouses as they came ... it was borne in on us that a more terrible chapter of the war was opening."[82] Naudé described how several houses were destroyed in the "Moot" – the long glen south of the Magaliesberg. He described how the "moot" was blanketed in by smoke for at least nine miles, with new smoke pillars constantly rising. Burghers who were on the crest of the mountains saw their labour of many years disappear in smoke, yet, according to Naudé, they were ever calm, courageous and full of trust. He expressed his emotion in a short poem:

> "Hij sien zijn vruchtbaar land
> Door de oorlogsvuur vernielen
> Maar voelt met nieuwen moed
> Zijn edele borst bezielen; [83]

His memory of the events was perhaps clouded by subjectivity. Did the burghers comprehend the British aim with their strategy of destruction and did it not perhaps make them question the meaningfulness (see Antonovsky's SOC theory) of the war? This will never be

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80 F. Pretorius, "The Anglo-Boer War: an overview", in F Pretorius (ed.), *Scorched earth*, p. 28.

81 A.M. Grundlingh, *Die "hendsoppers" en "joiners"*, p. 167.

82 D. Reitz, *Commando*, p. 148.

83 J.F. Naudé, *Vechten en vluchten,* pp. 205-207. [Translated literally: "He saw his fertile land despoiled by the fire of war. But a new valour infused his noble breast ..."] [The poem is probably from Goethe's play *Torqua Tasso.*]

known and at this stage one can only speculate on it.

P.J. du Toit, who laid down his arms and joined the British as a National Scout on 31 May 1901, wrote in his diary on 25 May 1901: "Everywhere I saw signs of the English visit: here a burnt house, there an empty dwelling, while the 'bults' were literally strewn with dead cattle, horses and sheep, killed by the enemy on their devastating tour."[84] Once again one can only speculate if this was perhaps a final prod in Du Toit's long vacillation about the issue of surrender.

This was only the beginning of the thrust of destruction which was to continue for many months over large parts of the country. Schikkerling described his visit to a spot where five fine farmsteads had once stood. He found only the blackened ruins, as "the Torch of Civilisation" had been applied to them. Furiously, he wrote that: "I would have given my life to have been at hand with fifty rounds and my trusty Mauser."[85] This loathing for the British action was a typical reaction among the Boers. Rothmann depicted how the town of Roossenekal was totally destroyed, with not a living soul to be seen. Here and there he saw a piece of furniture or an undamaged pot or pan, items collected by housewives over twenty or thirty years: "Dit was jammerlik om te aanskou ... deur sulke ellendige werk kan die vyand sy doel nie bereik nie."[86]

The destruction continued throughout the middle of 1901. Van Heerden described, somewhat emotionally, how Methuen and Kekewich continued their terrible expeditions of destruction and plunder, how the Boers were in danger of losing all their sustenance, yet not they did not lose their spirit.[87] The destruction of homes, animals and crops, apparently failed to break the Boers' resolve. In fact, the opposite was rather true and could, in the light of modern research, be termed fortigenesis (refer Chapter II). The ever optimistic character of the farmer came to the fore when Naudé described how, in October 1901, the good rains had caused the wheat, which had been trampled by the British, to sprout once more ... but this time even better than before.[88] In his diary Celliers several times mentioned the devastation of houses, orchards and wheat, as well as the stealing of money, rings, knives and forks. His entry of 1 November 1901 also referred

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84 J.P. Brits (ed.), *Diary of a National Scout*, 25.5.1901, p. 49.

85 R.W. Schikkerling, *Commando courageous*, 28.3.1901, p. 165.

86 M.E.R (ed.), *Oorlogsdagboek*, 22.8.1901, p. 214 [Translated: "It was pitiable to see ... by such wretched method the enemy will not reach their goal."]

87 J.J. van Heerden, "Genls. De la Rey en Kemp en die stryd in Wes-Transvaal", in J.H. Breytenbach (ed.), *Gedenkalbum*, p. 178.

88 J.F. Naudé, *Vechten en vluchten*, p. 299.

to the wheat which the British had trampled and which was upright once more, because not even the plants would bow to the "Khaki".[89]

Grundlingh quoted Smuts who stated that a weak man is broken by adversity and that there is little doubt that the devastation discouraged some burghers.[90] The destruction of farms and denudation of the country was indeed a stressor to the Boers. The Free Stater Van der Walt, somewhat forlornly, wrote that as the enemy could not overpower them, they were trying to starve them.[91] But most of the sources indicate that instead of causing distress, as Kitchener had no doubt hoped, the deprivation made the Boers even more determined to overcome their predicament. Pretorius quoted the historian S.B. Spies who suggested that rather than hastening the end of the war, the destruction and devastation had the opposite effect on the Boers.[92] It was indeed a matter of fortigenesis, where strength, and not distress, evolved from the stress. The brutal destruction of personal belongings and animals, was probably more perturbing to the Boers than the sight of blackened ruins and warped corrugated iron.

The scorched earth policy of the British is one aspect of the war which, together with the "black spot" of the concentration camps, has remained imprinted on the memories of the defeated Boers. Yet the real impact was not felt as keenly while the Boers were still on commando. It was after the war, when the Boers – the bitterenders as well as the prisoners of war – returned to their desolated farms that great hardship was experienced. Both Emily Hobhouse and J. Ramsay MacDonald described this suffering in detail.[93] This aspect of the war however does not fall within the confines of this study.

3. Stress caused by the loss of infrastructure

a. Loss of capitals and towns

Lord Roberts' fixation on capturing the two republican capitals, which is often regarded as one of his serious misjudgements, was in fact not completely misguided. Once Bloemfontein

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89 A.G. Oberholster (ed.), *Oorlogsdagboek van Jan. F.E. Celliers*, 1.11.1901, p. 310.

90 A.M. Grundlingh, *Die "hendsoppers" en "joiners"*, p. 168.

91 J.H. Coetzee (ed.), "H.S. van der Walt: Oorlogsdagboek", Day 492, p. 139.

92 F. Pretorius, *Kommandolewe*, p. 357.

93 R. van Reenen, *Emily Hobhouse, Boer War Letters*, pp. 163-320; J. Ramsay MacDonald (translated by J.A. Coetzee), *Wat ek in Suid Afrika gesien het, September en Oktober 1902*, pp. 76-95.

fell into British hands, the Boers of that "model republic" had to make do with Kroonstad, thereafter with Bethlehem, Fouriesburg and finally Vrede as their republic's capital.[94] Similarly as the Transvaal rebublicans retreated eastward the towns of Middelburg, Machadodorp and then Nelspruit were all called the "capital". Although these towns were the temporary seats of the respective republican governments, they were never capitals in the true sense of the word, but were rather makeshift venues for members of the governments to convene, with a core of civil servants to aid them and supply elementary services.

Although the republics were both relatively young, the burghers had every right to be proud of the infrastructure in Bloemfontein and Pretoria. As far as government buildings, churches, schools, military installations, banks and shops, official and other residences, parks and squares were concerned both towns were at the time well developed. In contrast, the improvised and often primitive facilities used in the makeshift "capitals" were somewhat belittling. On 14 April 1900 Celliers diarised that Hurmans Hotel in Kroonstad had to be used to house the Free State *Volksraad*. He was clearly not impressed with Kroonstad: "Kroonstad is niet veel bezonders. De kerk is het eenige gebouw dat eenigszins de aandacht trekt." [95]

According to the historian W.J. de Kock, President Steyn was deeply moved by the occupation of Bloemfontein and later said: "Niemand die de verslagenheid na de inneming van Bloemfontein niet persoonlik heeft aanschouwd, kan 'n denkbeeld vormen hoe groot en diep dié was. Er was geen moed, geen lust meer om te strijden bij de burgers."[96] Grundlingh alluded to the wave of defeatism generated by the circumstances of the war as one of the factors which led to the laying down of arms.[97] This mood of despondence was confirmed by Naudé, who observed that when the British crossed the Vaal River without the anticipated bloody battle: "...een vlaag van neerslachtigheid had van het volk bezit genomen; men kon niet gelooven dat deze dezelfde Burgers waren, die zoo vrolijk en moedig den strijd tegemoed gingen." [98] He continued to describe how it was decided that Pretoria would not be defended, in spite of the costly forts and

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94 Personal information: Miss. E. Wessels, War Museum of the Boer Republics, Bloemfontein, 31 May 2002.

95 A.G. Oberholster (ed.), *Oorlogsdagboek van Jan F.E. Celliers*, 14.4.1900, p. 93. [Translated: "Kroonstad is hardly impressive. The church is the only building which draws the attention."]

96 W.J. de Kock, "President Martinus Theunis Steyn, die siel van die vryheidstryd", in J.H. Breytenbach (ed.), *Gedenkalbum*, p. 248. [Translated: "No one who had not observed the dejection can envisage how great and how deep it was. There was no spirit, no urge to fight left in the burghers."]

97 A.M. Grundlingh, *Die "hendsoppers" en "joiners"*, p.172.

98 J.F. Naudé, *Vechten en vluchten*, p. 104. [Translated: " ... a wave of despondence had taken hold of the people; one could hardly believe that these were the same burghers who had so cheerful and fearless when they began the war."]

the guns which were supposed to guard the capital. When some stalwart burghers, including Danie Theron, wanted to stand firm, they had to learn at Irene that the government had already left Pretoria. "Er heerschte diepe verontwaardiging bij velen, die zich in sterke taal openbaarde."[99] This was virtually a repetition of the situation at Bloemfontein a few months earlier. The keys of the city were peacefully, even somewhat ceremoniously, handed over to the British. That the indignation described by Naudé, would gradually turn to dejection and despondence is a logical deduction.

The instability and uncertainty caused by the constant shift of their capitals and the loss of their symbols would have played an important role in causing the moods described above. These were most certainly stressors; as change was the main element which threatened them. The burghers who survived this threat and who continued their war-effort after losing their capitals, were soon faced with new problems such as the lack of commissariat and medical support, impaired government and commercial services – including banks, shops and hotels – and even the inability to detain and feed their prisoners of war.

Although universally this could be called a normal situation for guerrilla fighters, the difference lies in the fact that as far as the Transvaal and the Free State were concerned the guerrilla fighters had previously enjoyed these benefits from their governments. In other cases such as those of Cuba and China, the guerrillas were without these facilities from the beginning.

The phrase "te velde" – meaning: in the veld or in rural areas – was frequently used to indicate that the element or person was not operating from a capital or a major town. It was used for example to indicate that hospitals, government printing presses and even the makeshift press used for minting the one pound gold coins, called *Veldponde*, near Pilgrim's Rest had been set up in the veld. Yet on closer analysis this phrase appears to convey some sense of forlornness, as it suggested being without a capital. Burghers who were without the backing of normal government facilities, who were truly "te velde", were bound to start asking questions, to appraise whether all their self-denial was really worth their while.

b. Governments on the move

Both republics' governments, that is to say a few elected members under the president or acting president (in the case in the ZAR) and their staff, were also "te velde" for most of the

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99 J.F. Naudé, *Vechten en vluchten*, p. 109. [Translated: "Intense indignity was experienced by many, which resulted in strong language."]

guerrilla phase of the war. Furthermore, as the net flung out by the British was a constant threat to them they were forced to remain mobile. After the fall of Pretoria, President Paul Kruger and the ZAR government fled eastwards, until Kruger entered Mozambique. Pakenham put it: "President Kruger, after weeks as a fugitive in a railway carriage, had finally crossed the border to Mozambique ..."[100]

Thereafter the ZAR government, under acting president Schalk Burger, operated primarily in the eastern Transvaal. They were stationed on Paardeplaas near Tautesberg in the Dullstroom area under the protection of General Ben Viljoen until 5 April 1901. They then left the area in order to avert capture by the British who were executing a drive under Lieutenant General Bindon Blood.[101] Thereafter they stayed on the Highveld for most of the remainder of the war, but were obliged to move their headquarters frequently so as to stay out of enemy hands. *The Times history* indicated 51 positions in this area where the government had stopped during the critical eight months from April to November 1901.[102] To claim that they were constantly on the run is by no means exaggerated. Many burghers were aware of this situation and it most certainly eroded their confidence in the eventual outcome of the war.

The fact that in the early morning hours of 11 July 1901 virtually the entire Free State government and their entourage including the presidential bodyguard, the republic's money-boxes and all its documents were captured in the town of Reitz by the British, lends further support to the above argument. President Steyn himself escaped capture thanks to the cunning of his *agterryer* Ruiter.[103]

To fight for the independence of one's country under such arduous conditions, while the government was either on the run or indeed captured, could only have sown yet more seeds of doubt, nagging away at the back of the burgher's minds, accumulating daily along with the many other stressors.

c. The vain hope of foreign intervention

The governments of the two republics optimistically decided that a deputation should be sent to Europe to support Dr. W.J. Leyds, the ZAR's envoy in Europe in his quest to mobilize aid

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100 T. Pakenham, *The Boer War*, p. 458.

101 P.G. Cloete, *Chronology*, p. 233; J.W. Meijer, *Generaal Ben Viljoen, 1868 - 1917*, p. 171.

102 L.S. Amery, *The Times history*,V, map at end of chapter XX..

103 W.J. de Kock, "President Martinus Theunis Steyn, die siel van die vryheidstryd", in J.H. Breytenbach (ed.), *Gedenkalbum*, pp. 255-256.

from either France, Holland, Germany, Russia or the United States of America. The three men who were entrusted with this task, A. Fischer, A.D.W. Wolmarans and C.H. Wessels, left for Europe in March 1900. Pakenham called them fortunate, perhaps because they were escaping the hardships that were to follow.[104] Breytenbach pointed out that at least two of them, Wessels and Wolmarans, had no diplomatic background at all,[105] implying that they had little hope of making an impression on the governments in Europe and elsewhere.

But this was written with hindsight. For the duration of the guerrilla phase the Boer leaders and burghers were hopeful that the mission would bring relief. At times it was even believed that the aid might be in the form of direct military intervention and at others it was hoped that enough pressure would be placed on Britain to end the war. Towards the end the hope was merely for financial support.

When it became clear that President Kruger could not remain in the ZAR he too was sent to Europe. He left for Lourenço Marques on 11 September 1900. Part of his mission was to bolster the effort of the four men who were already working in Europe. Two constructive developments took place while Kruger was en route. Firstly the deputation reported on 15 September 1900 that the Czar of Russia might be willing to help them, but that there were certain stumbling blocks as far as Germany was concerned. Two weeks later the International Peace Congress passed certain resolutions in favour of the republics. But these were, however, later toned down to suit Britain.[106]

Even before Kruger arrived in Europe a request for an audience with the German Kaiser Wilhelm II was denied and a few days later Leyds was requested not to visit Germany.[107] This stance of Germany, and in particular that of Kaiser Wilhelm II, can probably be traced back to the reprimanding letter he received from Queen Victoria, his grandmother, following his expression of support to Kruger and the ZAR after the Jameson Raid in January 1896.[108] Nevertheless Kruger was received enthusiastically in countries such as France and the Netherlands, and in June 1901 Czar Nicholas II approached King Edward VII directly about ending the war.[109]

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104 T. Pakenham, *The Boer War*, p. 389.

105 J.H. Breytenbach, *Geskiedenis,* V, p. 172.

106 P.G. Cloete, *Chronology*, pp. 187, 189, 191.

107 P.G. Cloete, *Chronology*, pp. 192-193.

108 M.S. Geen, *The making of South Africa*, pp. 184-185.

109 P.G. Cloete, *Chronology*, pp. 217, 233, 242.

In March 1901 Celliers reported that a formal debate had been held in their laager questioning the desirability of foreign intervention. According to him the general feeling was against intervention. But he added that most burghers probably did not understand what was meant by intervention. On 31 May 1901, one year before peace was signed, Schikkerling reported that General Ben Viljoen, addressing his men from a wagon, told them that rumours of intervention were nonsense and added that it was the intention of the leaders to ask for an armistice. Despite this he said that he was sure that "some pecuniary aid will come from Europe." Schikkerling was clearly not impressed by his general's talk and his entry for the day ended: "Intervention will not come, and who will interest himself in a lost cause? We must just continue."[110] Bruce Catton, whose work is on the American Civil War, agreed with this sentiment; foreign powers do not support a loser.[111] And as the weeks and months rolled on there was indeed no intervention, nor any financial aid from Europe or America.

Schikkerling's steadfast attitude was, however, not the standard emotion among the Boers. Grundlingh, in summing up the burgher's reasons for laying down of arms, stated that certain burghers held on to the futile hope of European intervention: "Toe dit nie die geval blyk te wees nie, het sommige burgers alle hoop laat vaar en was hulle nie soos hul makkers bereid om die stryd in eie krag voort te sit nie."[112]

As the possibility of foreign support dwindled and the hope faded that deliverance would come, dejection would probably have been a common reaction. But this did not necessarily lead to the decision to handsup or to change sides. This did not cause enormous private stress, as will be explained later when intangible stressors are discussed. There were many other factors that also played a role. The lack of foreign intervention on its own, would most likely not have caused burghers to abandon the war, but combined with the multitude of other stressors, this aspect cannot be ignored.

4. Stress caused by environmental factors

a. Hardships caused by the weather

110 R.W. Schikkerling, *Commando courageous*, 31.5.1901, p. 213.

111 B. Catton, *The Civil War*, pp. 131-132

112 A.M. Grundlingh, *Die "hendsoppers" en "joiners"*, p. 170. [Translated: " When it became clear that this would not happen some burghers lost all hope and were not, as were their comrades, prepared to continue the war on their own.]

The critical first summer of the guerrilla war was marked by an exceptionally high rainfall over most parts of the southern African interior, as illustrated in the table below:

Table VI–3: Monthly rainfall in millimetres.

1900 : 1901

		Sep.	Oct.	Nov.	Dec.	Jan.	Feb.	Mar.	Apr.
De Aar	A	0	0	11	81	?	80	46	55
	Y	13	19	25	20	30	27	52	34
Maseru	A	0	12	0	93	76	145	152	61
	Y	26	61	81	85	124	113	96	63
Kimberley	A	0	42	10	60	17	81	198	50
	Y	12	27	40	45	63	67	71	41
Johannesburg	A	?	61	201	95	132	69	176	108
	Y	27	67	125	143	149	128	114	43

A = Actual; Y = Long Term Average; ? = figure unknown

Source: SA Weather Bureau, Statistics Department

These figures reveal that during the late summer months, February, March and April of 1901, the rainfall was significantly higher than the long term average. Seen from the Boer leadership's viewpoint, these were precisely the critical months, when the guerrilla warfare should have been escalated according to the plans agreed upon at Cyferfontein, in October 1900. But it was also the time when the British realised that the war was far from over and that new counter measures had become necessary.

The days, often weeks, of rainy weather, are reflected in many of the diarists consulted in this study. The virtually unbroken wet weather had two major influences on the Boers. Firstly, the mobility of the commandos and especially that of their field guns and wagons, was greatly impeded. This issue will be discussed in this section. Secondly, the personal well-being of the burghers, living in the veld under unpleasant and unhealthy conditions, was adversely affected. This aspect will be discussed later, under the heading of health and well-being.

Regarding the mobility of both the guerrillas and the British, the excessive rainfall caused

two major obstacles. The areas where the guerrilla war was waged, as described previously, are such that most of the rivers and streams do not flow permanently. They are at best dry ditches, sometimes with pools of standing water in deeper places. To cross them meant finding a place where the embankments were not too steep for oxen, horses or mules pulling a wagon or field gun. The Afrikaans term *drif* was adopted by the British military, and others as *drift* and this term will thus be used in this study. These places where crossings were possible were naturally of paramount military significance in a country where few other natural barriers exist.

Due to the topography of the country the rivers and streams flow fast and strong when they are fed by good rains in the higher lying areas. The quandary which arose due to the excessive rain in early 1901 was that even the few drifts became virtually unfordable. Nor did the Boer commandos enjoy the use of the main or even the secondary roads, since by early 1901 these were mostly controlled by the enemy. The occasional bridges that were to be found on these major roads were simply not available to them. Moreover, the British attempted to control the smaller drifts as a means of restraining the free movement of the commandos. The Boers therefore had to make use of the little known roads crossing difficult, often dangerous, drifts. When excessive rain caused the rivers and streams to flow, and to flow fast, the Boers' progress was frequently blocked.

A well known example of this kind of situation was when De Wet, was prevented from invading the Cape Colony in December 1900, by a raging Orange River.[113] When he eventually succeeded on his second attempt, to invade the Cape and crossed the Orange on 10 February 1901, sudden flooding of the river between 10 and 12 February provided him with some respite from the pursuing British, who had been constantly on his heels.[114] Once De Wet and President Steyn were on Cape territory, they were by no means left in peace to enlist the support of loyal colonists they had planned on: "De grote macht werd achter genl. De Wet en mij gekoncentreerd ... Manschappen en paarden waren uitgeput ..."[115] Writing many years later Steyn said they were worn out and exhausted, not only by the constant British pressure, nor by the unusual weather, but also because they had been obliged to search along the swollen Orange River, all the way from Prieska almost to Norvalspont before, at their fifteenth attempt, they were able to cross the river

113 C.R. de Wet, *Three years war*, p. 183.

114 L.S. Amery (ed.), *The Times history*, V, pp. 138-139.

115 N.J. van der Merwe, *Marthinus Theunis Steyn, 'n lewensbeskrywing,* II, p. 68. [Translated: "The vast force was concentrated behind General De Wet and myself ... both men and horses were exhausted ..."]

once more on their return.[116] The pressure exerted by their pursuers was aggravated by the full river. The stress and frustration caused by this situation becomes evident in De Wet's description of the burghers' relief on being back on Free State soil: "I can hardly describe the different exclamations of joy, the Psalms and songs that now rose up from the burghers splashing through the water."[117]

It was not only the swollen rivers and spruits that hampered operations; the continuous rain turned low-lying areas into muddy bogs, making the passage of heavily laden wagons and field guns, most agonizing and at times impossible. Celliers reported on 7 April 1901 while they were near Syferfontein in the western Transvaal, how a heavy laden wagon could not be hauled through a stretch of mud and water, even after they had inspanned 46 oxen. The only solution was to offload the wagon and carry the goods through the water manually, before the wagon could be freed.[118] There were many occasions when the turf made it impossible to move a wagon, and it simply had to be abandoned.

However, it should be appreciated that the inclement weather did not only affect the Boers. *The Times history* referred to the difficulties experienced in February 1901 by French's drive in the southeastern Transvaal, due to the floods: "On the 17th the rain came down in torrents; three execrable drifts were met with, and, by extraordinary exertions, safely crossed; but a final drift at the Pivaan River was too much for the exhausted cattle ... "[119] Hence the Boers also enjoyed some measure of benefit from the heavy rains.

During the following spring, heavy rains in the southeastern Transvaal once more came to the Boers' assistance, when two loaded wagons from Benson's column became bogged down. Rain was falling in the form of cold, misty showers – weather which is not unusual on the Highveld at that time of the year. The column's rearguard halted to wait for the two wagons and to keep the harassing Boers under control. However, at that stage Louis Botha, who had been approaching the position in great haste, arrived with reinforcements for the Boers. A fierce battle, the well remembered battle of Bakenlaagte, on 30 October 1901, ensued and the tormentor of the southeastern Transvaal, Benson, was fatally wounded.[120] The comparatively minor problem caused

116 C.R. de Wet, *Three years war,* p. 219; P.R. Cloete, *Chronology*, p. 226.

117 C.R. de Wet, *Three years war,* p. 219.

118 A.G. Oberholster (ed.), *Oorlogsdagboek van Jan F.E. Celliers,* 7.4.1901, p. 231.

119 L.S. Amery (ed.), *The Times history*, V, p. 175.

120 L.S. Amery (ed.), *The Times history*, V, pp. 366-374.

by two bogged down wagons, the result of heavy rain in an area known for its heavy turf soils, precipitated the battle. Moreover, it had happened at a stage when the Boers in the eastern Highveld needed a morale booster. They had managed to transform a stressor, the Highveld spring weather, into an advantage.

b. Lack of mobility due to loss of horses, cattle and wagons

The Boers' mobility, one of the basic elements of guerrilla warfare, suffered several serious setbacks as the guerrilla war progressed and the circumstances became more difficult for the republicans. Without horses and mules as mounts and pack-animals, and without well nourished oxen for the wagons that carried the few remaining possessions, the Boers' mobility was seriously hampered and many hardships followed. These hardships were outlined in *The Times history* which sketched the Boers' position as the winter of 1901 set in " ... with all its attendant hardships and disabilities for guerrillas whose home was the veld, whose horses and draught cattle depended on fresh grass ... Surely ... the Boers could not survive the winter."[121] This might have reflected wishful thinking on the part of the British, who were themselves at that particular stage seriously reappraising their own war effort. But there can be little doubt that the Boers themselves, the burghers and even their leaders, were speculating along these lines.

In truth, there were numerous cases where there were no horses left for activities as winter set in. A few examples can be noted. Field Cornet Van der Walt returned from De Wet's second invasion of the Cape with a group of men most of whom had lost their mounts and were essentially *voetgangers* (footsloggers). He described their difficult journey home, crossing the rail near Belmont station and how he forbade his burghers to loot horses from farmers.[122] Celliers, on the other hand, who had lost his own horse during the battle at Lake Chrissie, lamented that as a "wagon-rider" he and his rifle had become no more than an encumbrance because the wagon was fully loaded, with seating space only. Moreover, during the night it had started to rain once more and he found that his coat had been lost together with his horse. He was exhausted, wet and thoroughly miserable.[123] Reitz also became a footslogger when his horse died of horse-sickness while he and his mount were alone in the veld. He wrote: "I threw my saddle over my shoulders, and carrying my rifle in one hand, and my cooking-tin in the other, I started back on a journey that

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121 L.S. Amery (ed.), *The Times history*, V, p. 277.

122 J.H. Coetzee (ed.), "H.S. van der Walt: Oorlogsdagboek", Day 274, p. 133.

123 A.G. Oberholster (ed.), *Oorlogsdagboek van Jan F.E. Celliers*, 7.2.1901, p. 207.

was to take me very far indeed."[124] Without a horse a guerrilla fighter experienced a feeling of uselessness. Indeed his situation was no longer self-manageable. The impact of this will be discussed later.

Many Boers enjoyed the luxury of a pack horse or a pack mule. Schikkerling described the virtues of a mule in the harsh winter veld of the Steenkampsberg, having no need for horseshoes nor for food other than the available meagre veld grass. He compared mules, previously mainly used as draught animals, with horses and concluded that even for riding purposes the mule measured up favourably. He alleged that in some commandos roughly one half of the burghers were mounted on mules.[125] Schikkerling was very appreciative of his own mule, Vos, when he and his comrades abandoned their wagon during Colonel Bindon Blood's drive in the northeastern Transvaal during April 1901. At this stage Vos became his pack mule. His praise for this much-maligned animal can well be interpreted as an expression of the importance of mobility for the guerrilla.[126]

Although De Wet struggled to free commandos from their cumbersome wagon trains, in practice his ideal could never really be implemented, and the quota of one wagon for every 25 burghers proved unrealistic.[127] There were always necessities and certain luxuries which "had" to be transported. The utopian picture of burghers mounted on horses, carrying all their requirements – including weapons, blankets and food – is a figment of the imagination and over simplified. Right up until the end of the war there were wagons – although the numbers did decrease as the war lingered on. The British drives played a major role in effecting this decline. French's drive in the southeastern Transvaal early in 1901 yielded 2 300 vehicles while Bindon Blood's drive during April of that year in the northeastern Transvaal netted 611. At the theoretical ratio of 1 wagon for 25 burghers, these wagons would have been enough for 72 000 burghers.[128] Pakenham claimed that during Kitchener's second new model drive, during the latter half of February 1902, no fewer than 200 wagons, compared to 778 prisoners and 25 000 cattle were captured.[129]

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124 D. Reitz, *Commando*, p. 157.

125 R.W. Schikkerling, *Commando courageous*, 23.6.1901, p. 264.

126 R.W. Schikkerling, *Commando courageous*, 23.6.1901, p. 263-264.

127 F. Pretorius, *Kommandolewe*, pp. 218-219.

128 P.G. Cloete, *Chronology*, pp. 234, 237.

129 T. Pakenham, *The Boer war*, p. 549.

Every wagon that was abandoned or lost to the enemy made life just that fraction more difficult for those who carried on fighting, because with the wagon a multitude of belongings were also lost. It can well be imagined that even the loss of modest possessions, items that made life a little more bearable, be it a blanket, an extra jacket, a few pots and pans or perhaps a personal diary – as indeed happened to Schikkerling – would cause added misery. Nevertheless, as the number of wagons dwindled, the efficiency of the guerrillas was not automatically decreased: "As we have now [29 May 1901] no more wagons, nearly every man is in consequence burdened with a pack mule."[130]

Ultimately, whether it was the loss of a horse, a mule, a wagon or some cherished possession, that loss undeniably became a personal as well as a common stressor. It meant that there had been some change for the worse and that henceforth life could become even more difficult.

c. Winter grazing on the Highveld

Those burghers who still had horses at the beginning of the winter of 1901 and who were operating in high lying regions, areas which are known as "sour-veld", for the sour grass which normally grows there,[131] were most decidedly dreading the effect which the coming months would have on their animals.

While it is growing actively in the spring or early summer, sour grass is both palatable and nutritious for grazing animals. But as soon as the seed has set and the leaves lose their green colour, sour grass not only becomes low in its protein content thus less nutritious, it also becomes unpalatable to most grazing animals. Winter in these regions therefore meant that less grass was available, it was moreover less nutritious and less palatable. Horses and other grazing animals which live relatively inactive in camps, can probably survive on substandard veld grass but working animals, especially hard working horses suffer a great deal if grazing is inferior. Furthermore, even in those districts where the natural grazing was of a better quality during autumn and winter – the so-called *sweetveld* – the amount of roughage available in the veld was frequently insufficient for horses who were constantly on the move. It should also be noted that under normal circumstances any fodder, either green or dry, should ideally be supplemented by

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130 R.W. Schikkerling, *Commando courageous*, 29.5.1901, p. 211.

131 The Highveld areas include the southeastern Transvaal, the adjoining portion of the northeastern Transvaal and the northeastern Free State. See chapter V.

some form of grain, usually oats. This was seldom available for the Boers' horses once they were on the move.

The Boers realised fully that they were dependent on healthy, well fed horses. Rothmann reported with delight on 13 May 1901 that he was able to supply his horse with green fodder and maize found on a deserted farm. The following week he loaded supplies onto a scotch-cart, prior to his move to a warmer area and included were the two pails of mealies for his horses. This was clearly so important to him that it was mentioned second on his long list.[132] In the narrative about his mule, Vos, Schikkerling stressed the fact that this animal could subsist on less and humbler food than a horse.[133] Then too, Van der Walt described how numerous burghers who were with De Wet's invading force in the Cape Colony, lost their horses during the heavy rains.[134] In the light of the testimony that these commandos were constantly under British pressure and considering the type of veld (Karoo) in that area, these horses were certainly not only over-worked but also under-fed.

It is undeniable that if the burghers were to remain mobile and effective it was of prime importance that their horses be properly maintained. Contemplating the dilemma of supplying food during the approaching winter, would naturally have been experienced as a threat to the burgher's ability as a fighter and most probably this would have developed into yet another stressor for most of the burghers.

5. Stressors caused by daily hardships

a. Food

When the Boers realized that war with Great Britain was imminent, certain steps were taken to put the republics on a war footing. Food was to be supplied by the government although the burghers had to prepare it for themselves. In certain privileged cases the cooking was done by coloured servants. According to the young Reitz, at the start of hostilities Boers would group themselves into corporalships, pooling their cooking utensils and collecting their food supplies

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132 M.E.R. (ed.), *Oorlogsdagboek*, 13.5.1901, p. 187.

133 R.W. Schikkerling, *Commando courageous*, 23.7.1901, p. 263.

134 J.H. Coetzee (ed.), "H.S. van der Walt: Oorlogsdagboek", Days 271 to 274, p. 133.

from the food depot. Meat was supplied from an immense herd of cattle.[131] This system was used throughout the conventional phase of the war, but was no longer practical once the guerrilla phase began.

Pretorius explained how the Chief Commissariat, supported by the Provisions Committee, and generally operated by the magistrates, functioned in the ZAR to obtain food, cattle and sheep, horses and mules and distributing these necessities to the commandos. The Free State had a similar arrangement for its commissariat, but they relied heavily on the ZAR as indeed they did for arms and ammunition. [132] However, in practice these systems did not function as smoothly as was hoped. The large volume of supplies caused bottlenecks that neither rail transport nor wagons were able to cope with. Pretorius quoted Dietlof van Warmelo who recounted that despite assurances given to them earlier by their field cornet, on their arrival at the Natal border there were no tents nor foodstuffs for the burghers, although arms and ammunition were readily available.[133]

These supply problems were encountered throughout the first months of war until, in the middle of September 1900, when it was decided to continue the war in another style, all surplus provisions were destroyed at Hectorspruit station. Thereafter commandos had to supply their own needs. Schikkerling described how he and his comrades secured a wagon and some mules and loaded it with necessities and several "dainties". When they left on their trek to Pietersburg he had less than 10 shillings in his pocket to carry him through the guerrilla period.[134] The time for the burghers to supply their own needs had arrived.

During the early stage of the guerrilla war the Boers were not unduly concerned about the availability of food. The scorched earth policy had not yet exposed their dependence on being supplied with food from surrounding farms. Naudé recalled that initially there were no real problems in obtaining food because there were enough *zakpatriotten* – burghers who were out to make a quick profit from the war – who were prepared to sell cattle to the commandos.[135] This was supplemented by food supplies seized after successful battles, for example the one at

131 D. Reitz, *Commando*, p. 22.

132 F. Pretorius, *Kommandolewe*, pp. 44-45.

133 F. Pretorius, *Kommandolewe*, p. 46.

134 R.W. Schikkerling, *Commando courageous*, 16.9.1900, p. 66.

135 J.F. Naudé, *Vechten en vluchten*, p. 183.

Nooitgedacht on 13 December 1900 when commodities such as tea, coffee, sugar, jam, soap as well as numerous other luxuries were looted.[136] Trains that had been derailed or captured were likewise a ready source of food.

However, as 1901 progressed the food situation deteriorated. The farms were methodically razed and denuded of food and livestock, the drives by the British forced the burghers to flee rather than to attack and loot, and the supplies from captured trains dwindled as rail-disruptions declined.

During the early months of 1901 fruit was a frequent item on the Boer menu. Schikkerling and Rothmann mentioned that on the Highveld peaches and prickly pears were welcome additions to their diets. On 29 March 1901Schikkerling and his companions found one particular peach orchard with: " ... plenty of sweet and juicy peaches. Some had worms, but we were not vegetarians".[137] Vegetables such as pumpkins, potatoes, onions and sweet-potatoes were always welcome because of their good keeping quality. These were frequently supplied by the women or old men who kept their gardens going.[138] Celliers scorned the British, who in their destruction process, did not realise that sweet potatoes bore their harvest beneath the soil. Their oversight supplied him and his comrades with two wagon loads of sweet-potatoes. "Try again Khaki!" he wrote with a snigger.[139]

However, when the winter of 1901 set in the supply of food gradually dried up. Schikkerling indeed refused the position of field cornet to replace the fallen Meyburgh, although Commandant W. Viljoen tried to persuade him. "If it were only for the fighting I would be charmed and honoured ... my chief objection lay in the disagreeable duty of seeking food and clothing for the grumbling and ragged men, at this stage when farms, cattle, and crops have been plundered, denuded and destroyed; also ... forcing from the poor and helpless farmers their few remaining cattle for nothing but worthless receipts and blind blue backs [printed money]."[140] This was written on 5 July 1901 when the impact of winter and of the scorched earth policy had only

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136 D. Reitz, *Commando*, p. 137; A.G. Oberholster (ed), *Oorlogsdagboek van Jan F.E. Celliers*, 14.12.1900, p. 180.

137 R.W. Schikkerling, *Commando courageous*, 12.1.1901, 29.3.1901, pp. 135, 168; M.E.R. (ed.), *Oorlogsdagboek*, 17.1.1901, 5.2.1901, pp.121, 133-134.

138 F. Pretorius, *Kommandolewe*, p. 70.

139 A.G. Oberholster (ed.), *Oorlogsdagboek van Jan F.E. Celliers*, 6.9.1901, p. 285.

140 R.W. Schikkerling, *Commando courageous*, 5.7.1901, p. 245.

began to be felt. One should consider this comment in combination with Grundlingh's statistics on the increase of capitulations as winter approached:

Table VI – 4: Number of Boers who laid down their arms during the winter months of 1901.

May:	1 055
June :	894
July :	451
August :	554

This total of 2 954 Boers represents 49% of the 6 025 capitulations during the period January 1901 to May 1902.[141] The destruction of farms, the fear that food would become scarce and the unwillingness to "stick it out" undoubtedly weighed heavily when taking the decision to surrender.

Food as such should not only be viewed in terms of availability but also as far as the variety and method of preparation as well as from a social perspective. Rothmann remarked once how strange it seemed to be able to enjoy a good meal once again, at a table set with white linen and clean serviettes.[142] Utensils for the preparation of food were likewise valuable and often ingenious. Weber mentioned items such as enamel cups, tar cans, oil cans, paraffin tins, milk and jam tins and naturally the trusty old three-legged black pot.[143] Schikkerling mentioned the shortage of salt several times during the last few months of the war and could even find the humour to remark wryly: "Salt is now so scarce that notwithstanding our sorrows we dare not shed tears."[144] Reference to the shortage of salt was made frequently by other authors including Pretorius who claimed that in high rainfall, the eastern Free State districts such as Harrismith, salt was virtually unobtainable. Lizzie Geldenhuys, the young Free State woman who helped a group of Boers along the banks of the Valsch River, recalled the occasion when a couple of burghers travelled all the way by wagon from Bothaville to Brandfort in order to fetch salt.[145]

Still, despite the hardships which the bitterenders learned to accept, certain positive aspects

141 A.M. Grundlingh, *Die "hendsoppers" en "joiners"*, p. 170.

142 M.E.R. (ed.), *Dagboek*, 5.2.1901, p. 134.

143 M. Weber, *Eighteen months under General De la Rey*, p. 102.

144 R.W. Schikkerling, *Commando courageous*, 1.12.1901, 1.2.1902, 4.3.1902, 29.3.1902, 20.4.1902, pp. 333, 350, 366, 375, 381.

145 F. Pretorius, *Kommandolewe*, p. 63; L. Geldenhuys, *Die oorlogsherinneringe van Lizzie Geldenhuys*, (unpublished), p. 66.

arose from the food dilemma. There are several references to the fact that Generals De la Rey and Kemp used the spring of 1901 not only to organise the harvesting of wheat and other small grains in the Marico district, but also to send burghers to their farms to plant maize for the coming summer season. Rothmann also mentioned that there was wheat along the Orighstad River that could be harvested and which would be a welcome substitute for the inevitable *mieliepap* – maize porridge. Both Naudé and Van Heerden mentioned the Boers' inventiveness in using the entire hide of an ox, sewn up into a huge holder to serve as receptacle for grain. This could safely be buried; it withstood fire and at the time was a very practical solution when jute bags were unobtainable. Naudé was perhaps somewhat partial when he wrote in November 1901 that the Boers were cheerful and were prepared to carry on with the war.[146] It should be remembered that stressors do not always cause distress but may also lead to eustress or positive stress.

Many Boers had grown up on the veld, and they did not flinch from eating veld fruits when they came across them.[147] This was probably a welcome variation to their dismal diet, except for the incident when Smuts and his commando, whilst invading the Cape Colony, ate a plant locally known as *Hotnotsbrood*. Reitz reported that both Smuts and his second in command, Lieutenant J.L. van Deventer, along with several others, became seriously ill at a critical stage when the British were attacking.[148]

Another significant factor which merits attention is the tendency of Boers to raid black communities for food. This mainly happened later in the war when conditions became extremely grave. Schikkerling wrote on 4 February 1902: "Our provisions have run very low, and a dozen of us therefore decide to make a little foray, of a private nature, into the territory of the native." Their booty was considerable and included eight goats, two bags of mealies and four bags of sorghum. Schikkerling could not help lamenting that this did not compare at all well with the 60 000 bags of flour destroyed at Komatipoort [Hectorspruit].[149] Similarly Celliers reported on 16 December 1901 that a raid was carried out on blacks at Saulspoort and that roughly 8 000 head of livestock were looted. He reasoned that the resistance was negligible as only three

146 J.F. Naudé, *Vechten en vluchten*, p. 307; J.J. van Heerden, "Genls. De la Rey en Kemp en die stryd in Wes-Transvaal", in J.H. Breytenbach (ed.), *Gedenkalbum*, p. 181; A.G. Oberholster (ed.), *Oorlogsdagboek van Jan F.E. Celliers*, 18.10.1902, 1.11.1901, pp. 304, 310; M.E.R. (ed.), *Oorlogsdagboek*, 26.11.1901, p. 244.

147 A.G. Oberholster (ed.), *Oorlogsdagboek van Jan F.E. Celliers*, 5.11.1901, p. 311.

148 D. Reitz, *Commando*, pp. 240-241.

149 R.W. Schikkerling, *Commando courageous*, 4.2.1902-6.2.1902, pp.353-356.

burghers were lost.[150] Nevertheless raids such as these, where burghers were forced to take actions to improve their food predicament, meant that they were exposed to added danger. This was probably perceived a stressor by many.

In summary it can undeniably be claimed that during the guerrilla phase of the war the issue of food, in its widest sense, was experienced as a common stressor by the majority of burghers on commando. It surfaced in many forms and was of varying intensity, at times leading to distress, and at others to eustress.

b. Clothing

The ordinary republican forces, that is those who were not attached to the State Artillery units or police units, did not wear regulation uniform. Even during the first part of the war their clothes were diverse. Each man chose his clothes from what he had available or whatever he could lay his hands on or commandeer. It is logical that burghers coming from farms dressed differently from townsfolk. Primarily their dress comprised trousers worn with braces, waistcoats and loose fitting jackets. Popular fabric was moleskin (fustian), corduroy, tweed and serge. According to Malan and Carelson, researchers at the National Museum for Cultural History, many different types of material were used, while Pretorius claimed that the sole requirement was that the clothing be serviceable and functional.[151] This wide assortment of clothing led a British prisoner to remark: "You seem to have a lot of regiments, as each man has a different dress." [152]

Of course there were personal quirks and mannerisms found among the Boers. Pretorius noted that certain officers were always neatly dressed and were recognized as officers without wearing insignia.[153] Commandant General Botha normally wore a suit of military cut, as did General Ben Viljoen, while General De Wet favoured his distinctive narrow banded hat and jodhpurs. General C.H. Muller affected a starched white dress shirt until the end of the war and Commandant F.J. Potgieter of Wolmaransstad wore his characteristic blue shirt until the day he

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150 A.G. Oberholster (ed.), *Oorlogsdagboek van Jan F.E. Celliers*, 16.12.1901, p. 325.

151 A. Malan en A. Carelson, *Kleredrag tydens die Anglo-Boereoorlog 1899-1902*, p. 4; F. Pretorius, *Kommandolewe*, p. 82.

152 W. Lane (ed.), *The war diary of burgher Jack Lane 1899 - 1900*, 12.12.1899, p. 44.

153 F Pretorius, *Kommandolewe*, p. 82.

was killed during the heroic charge on 11 April 1902, at the battle of Roodewal.[154]

Once the guerrilla war was in full progress, clothing became a constant vexation to the burghers. There were no more supplies from the commissariat, as there had been at Magersfontein on 13 December 1899.[155] Towns, with proper shops, had either been occupied by the British, or had been looted by the Boers themselves. Pietersburg for example, had been looted by the burghers of General Ben Viljoen and the artillerists under Major Lood Pretorius.[156]

As the war dragged on, and clothes either became worn, torn or lost, the situation worsened. Reitz who was well-known for the bad condition of his clothes, wrote that by the end of March 1901 "... my clothes had fallen from my body, owing to the rains, and my entire wardrobe consisted of a blanket and a pair of sandals ... with winter coming on, I felt the cold pretty severely." He was still bedraggled and tattered when eventually he entered the Cape Colony with General Smuts in September of that year.[157]

Blankets were always important to the guerrilla fighters. Weber felt that when one was forced to flee, your blanket was more important than your rifle: " ... it is a man's house and home and mantle ..." he wrote.[158] According to the historian M.C.E. van Schoor President M.T. Steyn's clothes became so threadbare and worn by the end of the war that a suit was made for him from a blanket.[159]

The diary of Jan Celliers perhaps depicted the problems of clothing experienced by a burgher te velde most vividly. He of course, was not brought up in a rugged rural community. At the age of eight he went with his family from Cape Town to Pretoria, but he received his schooling in Stellenbosch and Wellington. At the age of 22 he went to Holland to train as a land surveyor but he disliked the work as a surveyor, and at the age of 28 he became the State Librarian of the ZAR. From his diary it becomes clear that Celliers was indeed a man of books,

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154 L.S. Amery (ed.), *The Times history,* V, p. 533; C.H. Muller, *Oorlogsherinnerinmge van Generaal Chris H. Muller*, pp. 136-137; M.A. Gronum, *Die Bittereinders*, p.124.

155 W. Lane (ed.), *The war diary of burgher Jack Lane 1899 -1900*, 12.12.1899, p. 46.

156 J. Taitz (ed.), *The war memoirs of commandant Ludwig Krause*, p. 133; See also F. Pretorius, *Kommandolewe*, p. 247.

157 D. Reitz, *Commando*, p. 163, 209.

158 M. Weber, *Eighteen months under General De la Rey*, p. 110.

159 M.C.E. van Schoor, "President M.T. Steyn: Sy rol in die Anglo-Boereoorlog, 1899-1902" in *Genl. J.B.M. Hertzoggedenklesing XXVIII*, p. 11.

rather than a son of the veld. Nevertheless, he joined the commando voluntarily despite finding life inordinately difficult.

On 9 June 1901 he received a "new" pair of trousers from his brother Isaac. It needed only five patches to be fairly presentable while his own had worn as sheer as paper. On 15 July he related that he had spent an entire day fiddling with and adjusting his trousers and on 5 August he boasted that he had no less than 15 patches on the pants. Six days later he despaired that no one else in the laager was more dishevelled – *verplukt* – than he. On 25 September he once more remarked that he had spent the whole morning patching his trousers with patches coming from an old alpaca jacket. And finally, on 11 October 1901, he received a very worn pair of pants to use for patches. "Het waren *gelapte lappen* waarmede ik de *gelapte lappen* van my broek weder wat moest opknappen, want zelfs voor ons ingewijden, vond ik dat toch wat al te onfatzoenlijk uitzag."[160]

Footwear, whether it was boots, *velskoene* or sandals, was of great importance to the burghers, especially those on foot. Schikkerling bemoaned the fact that on 9 March 1901 his boots had "gone all to pieces". Celliers too reported with some distaste on 9 September 1901 that he was forced to tie wet oxhide around his feet to serve as shoes. Pretorius even alleges that certain burghers were forced to face the cold and wet seasons with no shoes at all. When Commandant N. Groenewald derailed a goods train early in September, Rothmann was bound to mention that besides the food that was salvaged, there were shirts and shoes.[161]

Shoes and boots coming from the British, did not only fall into the Boers' hands because of train derailing. The clothes shortage on the one hand and the fact that during the guerrilla phase the Boers were forced to set prisoners free immediately, led to the custom known as *uitskud.* This was the practice whereby British prisoners were deprived of their clothes and boots, and then left in the Boers' castoffs or indeed in their underclothes and on bare feet. Pretorius discussed the practise in detail in *Kommandolewe.* According to him it was usually done with a certain amount

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160 A.G. Oberholster (ed,), *Oorlogsdagboek van Jan F.E. Celliers*, 9.7.1901, 15 7.1901, 5.8.1901, 11,8,1901, 25.9.1901, 11.10.1901, pp. 252, 262, 270, 276, 293, 301. [Translated: "It was with *patched patches* that I *patched* the *patches* of my trousers which I had to revive once again, as even for us, the initiated, I find the sight somewhat indecent."]; also see F. Pretorius, *Kommandolewe*, pp. 89-94.

161 R.W. Shikkerling, *Commando courageous*, 9. 3. 1901, p. 161; A.G. Oberholster (ed.), *Oorlogsdagboek van Jan F.E. Celliers*, 9.9.1901, pp. 287-288; F. Pretorius, *Kommandolewe*, p. 91; M.E.R. (ed.), *Oorlogsdagboek*, 8.9.1901, p. 218.

of goodwill on both sides, often with a touch of humour, usually because the Boers knew very little English or because of the *laissez-faire* attitude with which the soldiers accepted their plight.[162]

The arguments about whether this practice was acceptable in terms of the Hague Convention, or indeed whether the Convention applied to the republican fighters, had little effect on the burgher in the field; he needed trousers or boots and was suddenly placed in a position to secure them. What was probably of more importance to him was the British proclamation that all Boers captured wearing British uniform would be executed. On the one hand they desperately needed the good quality clothes, while on the other hand they lived in the uncertainty and fear of the British decree. Reitz, who fitted himself out in a British officer's uniform complete with regimental badges and insignia, knew about the proclamation, but claimed that he never dreamt that he was under sentence of death. In fact he admitted that his khaki uniform saved him twice on one day: " ... for a batch of troopers rode by in the dusk, and, mistaking me for one of their men, shouted that I was to hurry ..." [163] Then, from a local farmer, he heard that his friend, Jack Baxter, had been captured and shot for wearing khaki: "We were thunderstruck," he exclaimed.[164]

There were other cases where this proclamation was enforced, but that did not stop the custom of *uitskud* – the need was too great. Nevertheless, the threat of being captured whilst wearing khaki would most certainly have been one of those nagging stressors. It was yet another of the risks that constantly pressured a guerrilla fighter.

Weber saw it from a different perspective. He reported that a bushlancer told them that he had wounded an "Englishman" and shot another's horse. It later turned out that the "Englishmen" were in reality Boers wearing khaki uniforms. One of these burghers was later found dead and the other was shot through the arm.[165] The mistaken identity of a Boer in Khaki uniform could certainly have had negative effects, and this threat would have indeed caused stress.

The dilemma of worn and torn clothing was solved in other ways than *uitskud* or the looting of trains. Several diaries and memoirs mentioned inventive methods used to replace clothing.

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162 F. Pretorius, *Kommandolewe*, pp. 95-100.

163 D. Reitz, *Commando*, p. 255.

164 D. Reitz, *Commando*, p. 258; see also F. Pretorius, *Kommandolewe*, p.100.

165 M. Weber, *Eighteen months under General De la Rey*, p. 114.

Reitz related how he and his comrades entered a large farmhouse after it had been raining continuously."The housewife at the farm gave me a pair of old-fashioned elastic sided boots, and I unearthed an empty grain-bag in which I cut a hole for my head and one at each corner for my arms, thus providing myself with a serviceable great-coat."[166]

The mere fact that there were ample animal skins available made it a logical option to switch to "buckskin" clothes. In his memories of the final summer months, Naudé recalled how many of his comrades were wearing clothes made from hides – as neatly made as any suit – which one could acquire from the best tailor.[167] Celliers, while discussing how the war had forced the people to return to a primitive way of life where they would literally " ... in het zweet onzes aanschijns ons brood zouden eten ... er zijn er onder ons die een heel pak kleeren dragen – hoed in kluis – van zelf gelooide en gebreide vellen, zelf genaaid, met eigen gemaakte naalden ... ".[168] This statement is borne out by samples of such clothing that are housed at the National Museum for Cultural History in Pretoria.

Even more remarkable is the incident reported by Rothmann on 9 November 1901. In the Pilgrim's Rest hospital he came across a mattress ticking cover. He disinfected it with "Jeyes Fluid" and forthwith made a fine shirt for himself. He added that afterwards his friends were always on the lookout for mattresses. Schikkerling, however, clearly steals the show with his story of how he used the outside canvas, which he removed from a disused mine hosepipe, to fashion firstly a pair of trousers and a few days later a jacket with "... epaulettes on the shoulders and flaps over the pockets".[169] Even in the final stage of the war when living conditions had indeed become critical, there were still those who could turn the negative features of stressors into useful assets.

It has been stated authoritatively that a good wash and shave and clean clothes are at present an accepted routine to reverse low morale of soldiers who have endured long periods of deprivation.[170] This idea is borne out by Izak Meyer's anecdote about Reitz and Van Warmelo

166 D. Reitz, *Commando*, p. 213.

167 J.F. Naudé, *Vechten en vluchten*, p. 322.

168 A.G. Oberholster (ed.), *Oorlogsdagboek van Jan F.E. Celliers*, 20.11.1901, p. 317. [Translated: "By the sweat of our brow we will eat our bread ... there are those among us who wear a complete suit, including a hat, made of dressed and tanned skins, self stitched with home made needles..."]

169 M.E.R. (ed.), *Oorlogsdagboek*, 9.11.1901, p. 241; R.W. Schikkerling, *Commando courageous*, 4.3.1902, 7.3.1902, 13.3.1902, pp. 366, 368, 369; see also F. Pretorius, *Kommandolewe*, p. 93.

170 A. Jansen, Paper on battle weariness, presented at Bloemfontein conference "The Anglo-Boer War (1899-1902): a reappraisal", 12 October 1999.

who gleefully danced naked on a counter of the shop where they were taken to buy new outfits in readiness for their journey with Smuts to Vereeniging. When he next saw them, Smuts asked sardonically: "Waar het jy ingebreek?"[171]

c. Arms and ammunition

Even though about half the Boers had been issued with new Mauser rifles at the beginning of the war, it appears that situations frequently arose where burghers on commando were without weapons. According to Pretorius the explanation for this can be found in the many burghers who rejoined the commandos after the first abandonment, and the subsequent laying down of their arms. Furthermore the fact that many burghers joined the commandos for the first time during the rebuilding of the Boer forces in 1900, meant that they had not been issued with Mausers.[172]

When he rejoined the Pretoria commando in September 1900 Celliers was apparently without a rifle for nearly a month. On 16 October he was given a Lee Metford which was left behind by a deserter, but unfortunately he had to hand it back when the very same man returned and claimed his weapon. Thereafter he received a rusted old Martini-Henri, after refusing to do guard duty without a rifle. From his diary it appears that it was expected of him to borrow a rifle from a comrade, something Celliers refused to do. Evidently he was obliged to continue with the old Martini until after the battle at Nooitgedacht. His entry for 14 December 1900 read that, as of that morning, "they" all had rifles.[173]

From the psychological perspective Celliers' struggle to obtain a decent weapon, was probably linked to the fact that he was a loyal burgher who had escaped from Pretoria while it was under British occupation, because he felt himself driven to be with those who were fighting for the Boer cause. His escape and subsequent eventful journey to reach acting Commandant C.P.S. Badenhorst's commando on 13 September 1900, confirms his commitment to his country's plight. Yet, once he had joined them, he was not only snubbed by his new tent mates, but was left without a rifle for over a month.[174] He was frustrated in his quest to do what he had come to do

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171 J.H. Meyer, *Kommando-jare: 'n oud-stryder se persoonlike relaas van die Tweede Vryheidsoorlog*, pp. 335-336. [Translated: "Where did you break in?"]

172 F. Pretorius, *Kommandolewe*, p. 34.

173 A.G. Oberholster (ed.), *Oorlogsdagboek van Jan F.E. Celliers*, 16.10.1900, 27.10.1900, 14.12.1900, pp. 150, 157, 180.

174 A.G. Oberholster (ed.), *Oorlogsdagboek van Jan F.E. Celliers*, 16.10.1900, p. 150.

– to defend his country. That this paradoxical situation – being a combatant but having no weapon – was a private stressor which this highly impressionable man was forced to bear, is evident.

When Van der Walt and the burghers he had assembled, joined De Wet's second attempt to invade the Cape Colony he approached De Wet to supply them with weapons. This could apparently not be done and instead they were sent home.[175] Once more we find men who volunteered their services, but who did not have any weapons; they were sent home because of a technical weakness in the Boer command.

Mausers were gradually replaced by the British Lee Metford rifles simply because there was a sustainable source. With a bit of ingenuity the .303 ammunition was freely available as Reitz confirmed. He and his comrades followed a British column collecting fallen cartridges until they had enough.[176] Of course the scarcity of Mauser ammunition, as pointed out by Pretoriuis, also promoted the use of Lee Metfords. He quoted Steyn's message to the Boer deputation in Europe: "Ons Mauser ammunitie is byna geheel en al uitgeput ... gelukkig zyn onze burgers voor het grootste gedeelte met Lee Metford geweren gewapend en zyn wy van tyd tot tyd door de Britsche troepen ... met patronen voorzien ..."[177]

Towards the end of the war, on 25 February 1902, when all necessities, including ammunition, had become extremely scarce, De la Rey seized a half a million Lee Metford cartridges at the battle of Yzerspruit. Together with the captured rifles, horses and mules, these would have made a considerable contribution to ease the critical shortages that worried western Transvaal burghers.[178] But by then it was too late.

Reviewing the matter of arms and ammunition, it could be argued that those Boers who were still in the field during the guerrilla phase of the war, constantly lived under the threat of not having the necessary equipment to continue the war. Their generals urged them to persevere, despite the threat of confiscation of their possessions[179] or worse still, execution, if they were

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175 J.H. Coetzee (ed.), "H.S. van der Walt: Oorlogsdagboek", Day 264, p. 132.

176 D. Reitz, *Commando*, p. 187.

177 F. Pretorius, *Kommandolewe*, p. 35. [Translated: "Our Mauser ammunition is virtually depleted ... fortunately most of our burghers are in possession of Lee Metford rifles and periodically we are supplied by the British troops ... with cartridges."]

178 F. Pretorius, *Kommandolewe*, p. 37; J.F. Naudé, *Vechten en vluchten*, p. 326; P.G. Cloete, *Chronology*, pp. 304- 305.

179 J.P. Brits (ed.), *Diary of a National Scout*, 25.11.1900, p. 27.

found to be traitors. Yet they could not supply them with the most basic means of battle such as rifles and ammunition.

Even though Grundlingh did not mention this issue as one of the reasons for capitulation, he quoted Smuts in a letter to Kruger in June 1901 as saying "Is het wel verwonderlijk dat een zeker gedeelte der burgers ontmoedigd, teneergeslagen is ...?"[180] On the other hand Pretorius pointed out that Smuts later claimed that burghers often came away from battle with more ammunition than they had when battle started. Nevertheless he acknowledged that there were specific situations where commandos opted to flee rather than fight with insufficient ammunition.[181]

That the issue of arms and ammunition would have been one of the reasons for the despair of which Smuts wrote in June 1901, seems very probable. In truth, it would most likely have been a stressor to many burghers. Shortage of weapons could perhaps have been experienced as a private or a personal stressor for the majority, but there were certainly also those who made it a common stressor as they sat around their camp fires, discussing the course of the war.

d. Weather conditions

On 3 May 1901 Schikkerling ended his daily entry with the words: "At one time our halting spots were camps of tents and vehicles. Now they are merely fields of saddles ..."[182] This passage serves as evidence that the burghers literally lived in the veld. They were utterly exposed to the elements. Supporting the rainfall figures in Table VI–3 several diaries and memoirs relate to the very wet, late summer of 1901.

Celliers made 21 entries of rainfall for the period December 1900 to April 1901. Schikkerling mentioned rain and mist on ten occasions in the period from January to March 1901. Rothmann made 15 entries which refer to rain between 4 December 1900 and 25 February 1901. Furthermore Naudé remembered that while they were at Groenfontein in March 1901 it rained

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180 A.M. Grundlingh, *Die "hendsoppers" en "joiners"*, p. 170. [Translated: "Is it any wonder that a certain segment of the burghers are depressed.?"]

181 F. Pretorius, *Kommandolewe*, p. 43.

182 R.W. Schikkerling, *Commando courageous*, 3.5.1901, p. 194.

for eight consecutive days and P.J. du Toit mentioned rain twice during March of 1901.[183]

Roland Schikkerling noted briefly but somewhat disgustedly on 2 March: "Rise early from a watery bed, it having rained during the night, seek my horse in the mist." Fritz Rothmann, who was evidently not a robust man and who was in the same area, wrote that he had slept on the mountain, in rain and mist on 20 February. P.J. du Toit, who was at that stage already considering yielding to the British, was probably discontent when he wrote on 8 March: "Arrived on 'bult' close to Witpoort where we slept in a continuous pouring rain," and Deneys Reitz grumbled about the incessant wet weather aggravated by cold winds during the spring of 1901 when he was part of Smuts' invasion of the Cape Colony: "We now travelled on for the next three days across windy barrens ... The weather grew more and more tempestuous ... we suffered severely from the cold and ... intermittent rains."[184]

These are the remarks made by some of the thousands of Boers who were in the veld at the time. It is clear from the rainfall figures that this wet late summer in 1901 was experienced in most parts of the country where the war was in progress. Furthermore, the burghers were not all young, healthy men. Fritz Rothmann, who was 41 at the time, suffered of bronchial troubles, arthritis and general body aches.[185] If the incessant wet weather had become a stressor, the ensuing prolonged stress would probably also have affected the immune system of the burghers, more than likely resulting in actual illness.

When winter set in, the privations simply continued, because the burghers were not as well kitted out with warm clothing, blankets and shelter as their opponents were. Naudé reported on 7 May 1901 that while they were trekking to Baberspan in the western Transvaal a piercing cold wind caused the burghers to pull their blankets up over their shoulders as they led their weary horses. Reitz remembered his trek to the Cape Colony: "By day clouds of dust and biting winds drove across the bleak plains, and at night we could hear the crackle of ice forming on the pools as we lay shivering beneath our threadbare blankets. From now onward ... five months ahead, we

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183 A.G. Oberholster (ed.), *Oorlogsdagboek van Jan.F.E. Celliers*, 6.12.1900 to 9.4.1901, pp. 175-231; R.W. Schikkerling, *Commando courageous*, 4.1.1901 to 20.2.1901, pp. 122-155; M.E.R. (ed.), *Oorlogsdagboek*, 3.12.1900 to 23.2.1901, pp. 94-139; J.F. Naudé, *Vechten en vluchten*, p. 219; J.P. Brits (ed.), *Diary of a National Scout*, 8.3.1901, 16.3.1901, pp 41, 42.

184 R.W. Schikkerling, *Commando courageous*, 2.3.1901, p. 160; M.E.R. (ed.), *Oorlogsdagboek*, 20.2.1901, p. 137. J.P. Brits (ed.), *Diary of a National Scout*, 8.3.1901, p 41; D. Reitz, *Commando*, p. 211.

185 M.E.R. (ed.), *Oorlogsdagboek*, 30.3.1901, 10.7.1901, pp. 158, 198.

endured great hardship and suffering, for never ... had there been so prolonged a spell of bitter weather all over South Africa."[186] The time Reitz referred to was probably May 1901 while he was roving through the southern Free State. It was shortly after he had broken his leg.[187] Indeed an extremely harsh season was to follow as it has been confirmed by Raath and Louw in their work dealing with Springfontein concentration camp. They referred to heavy snowfall there on 21 June 1901.[188] Yet that winter's cold weather was experienced countrywide. Schikkerling's entry for 19 May stated that his blankets were white with frost and frozen stiff each morning, and some of the burghers decided to move to the warmer bushveld, with or without permission from their officers.[189]

As is mentioned above, Grundlingh's statistics of the number of Boers who laid down their arms during the winter months and returning home, prove that giving up was undeniably associated with the harshness of that particular winter. Being cold as well as hungry were demoralising in the extreme. For those who were determined to persevere until their enemies had disappeared, the awareness in May, or early June, that their situation would most certainly deteriorate in the months to come, would have become a serious stressor.

e. Lice

During the first stage of the war, when large camps existed, where large numbers of people were assembled, flies were the important problem. However, once the phase of large immobile concentrations of soldiers had passed, the fly problem was replaced by a lice problem. Pretorius ascribed this to the fact that commandos – and surely also the British units – moved around much more, hence unhygienic situations were less likely to arise.[190] However, it was the very fact that they were more mobile that brought the Boers into contact with the another vexation, namely lice. Pretorius maintained that lice were an even greater plague than flies. One burgher complained that someone who had no experience of them, would never know what it meant to be tormented, day and night, by lice. Another burgher said to his brother: "Boetie die Here weet ik sal nooit

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186 J.F. Naudé, *Vechten en vluchten*, pp. 244-245; D. Reitz, *Commando*, p. 168.

187 D. Reitz, *Commando*, p. 167.

188 A.W.G. Raath and R.M. Louw, *Die konsentrasiekamp te Springfontein gedurende die Anglo-Boereoorlog 1899 - 1902*, pp. 25-26..

189 R.W. Schikkerling, *Commando courageous*, 18.5.1901, p. 199.

190 F. Pretorius, *Kommandolewe*, p. 110.

Hands up, maar als ik moet Hands up dan sal die luise die oorsaak daarvan wees."[191]

The Boers believed that the lice were brought upon them by their enemies. There appeared to be two routes of contamination. The first was to use a campsite previously used by the British. Weber asserted that when they occupied a camp vacated by the enemy, it would be infested with lice. "What neither hunger, horse sickness nor the English could bring about, was achieved in a very short while by a small insect," he wrote.[192] Du Toit also mentioned the fact that their commando preferred not to sleep at a campsite near Eleazer, where the British had camped previously, because they feared that it would be overrun by lice.[193] The Khaki uniforms which the Boers looted were the second way in which lice reached the burghers. [194] In this case it was a choice between two evils – wearing rags or putting up with the vexation.

Many diarists made mention of this annoyance, however for the refined Jan Celliers the problem was evidently particularly repulsive. In January 1901 he complained that he slept on a wagon with three other burghers but that the lice preferred to feast on him. The next month he spent a sleepless night after the battle at Lake Chrissie. Despite being dog tired he could not sleep because of the vermin that crawled over his body. In June 1901 he comforted himself with the fact that the German doctor was also experiencing the same horrors. By the end of July he bemoaned the fact that not only did the lice cover his whole body, the "Khakis" were moreover threatening to attack. His disgust was clear by the end of August when he wrote that he was driven to nausea.[195]

Lice were a hassle in the form of a physical irritation that gradually became a psychological stressor. The plague was not life threatening, it did not pose a looming danger, it was experienced as a common annoyance. It was most likely the cause of many complaints and a source of moods of pessimism amongst Boers, especially during the long periods of inactivity during the last months of the war.

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191 Quoted by F. Pretorius, *Kommandolewe*, p. 111. [Translated: "Brother the Lord knows that I will never handsup, but if I do handsup, then the lice will be the reason."]

192 M. Weber, *Eighteen months under General De la Rey*, p. 76.

193 J.P. Brits (ed.), *Diary of a National Scout*, 28.9.1900, p. 10.

194 F. Pretorius, *Komandolewe*, p. 110.

195 A.G. Oberholster (ed.), *Oorlogdagboek van Jan F.E. Celliers*, 20.1.1901, 7.2.1901, 2.6.1901, 31.7.1901, 30.8.1901, pp. 197, 207, 250, 268, 282.

6. Stress caused by anguish

a. Concern about women

Women, children, non-combatant men and servants were selectively placed in camps after the occupation of the Free State and the ZAR. These are well known and well reported facts. This process was, however, accelerated early in 1901, after Kitchener had taken over from Roberts. Kitchener's precise rationale in establishing these camps, badly placed and poorly planned as they were, will probably never be clear. Whether the sudden rush to establish the camps suggested by surrendered Boers – as was stated in the official memorandum of 21 December 1900, which ordered the formation of the camps[196] – is not of relevance to this study. Furthermore, the fact that Lord Alfred Milner who initially agreed with the policy and eventually, in his "Black Spot" letter, recognised that it had been a mistake, provided scant consolation to the Boers who were fighting their guerrilla war.

What is indeed of significance is the fact that thousands of men who were on commando had their close families, relatives and friends removed from their homes to one of the 50 white concentration camps.[197] The methods applied in the process of removing these people were often inhuman. Another important issue is that many women and children fled before the British arrived and lived in the veld managing as best they could, rather than be taken to the camps. These women and their families were in many cases an additional responsibility for the Boer officers. This whole situation was fraught with various threats and hazards; all of which became a torment to the Boers.

The Times history claimed that the Boers probably welcomed the fact that their women were placed in camps because " ... they were relieved of all responsibility for their women and children, were free to devote their energies with a clear conscience to the single aim of fighting".[198] This perception is grossly incorrect . It does not correspond with irrefutable evidence found in the literature. The sentiment of the burghers was unquestionably one of anxiety about the well being of their women and children in the camps.

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196 S.B. Spies, *Methods of barbarism?Roberts and Kitchener and civilians in the Boer republics January 1900 - May 1902*, p. 183.

197 F. Pretorius, "The Anglo-Boer War: an overview" in F. Pretorius (ed.), *Scorched earth*, p. 8.

198 L.S. Amery (ed.), *The Times history*, V, p. 88.

Rothmann was most distressed about the way in which the women were rounded up. He regularly referred to the treatment that the women received at the hands of the British soldiers and blacks. On 19 January 1901 he described how callously the women were treated while their homesteads were being burnt down. Useful objects which they tried to save were often thrown back into the fire. The treatment which befell the widow Steenkamp of Skoonpoort he described as "beastly", as even her plough was destroyed. Three months later, when the rounding-up operation was in full stride, he told about the horsemen who tracked women into *kloofs*; and once they were caught, they were borne away like prisoners of war. On 15 May he diarised the testimony of a Mrs Breytenbach. She and several other women and girls were pinned down by British fire on a group of Boers. One woman who tried to flee, was shot by a mounted British officer with his revolver, who claimed that she could have been a Boer informer. Rothmann made several similar entries including, on 28 June, an account that a number of women, some of them with infants not even wrapped in blankets, being marched along over the cold Highveld. He was so shocked that he exclaimed: "God slaap. Ja vas ook."[199]

Naudé, who was mainly active in the northwestern Transvaal, also made several references to the injustice of Kitchener's policy regarding women. He related how in July 1901 they were awakened by weeping women and children from Damhoek in the Magaliesberg. They had left their homes, braving the cold night and the hazards of the rough veld, in their fear of being taken to the camps. Naudé painted a vivid picture of old grandmothers, weak women and crying infants who had to cross the mountain by a narrow footpath: "Wie kan een denkbeeld vormen van de ellende en gruwelen van deze oorlog?"[200]

At approximately the same time the volunteer, Weber, reported coming across a number of women and young girls hiding in the ruins of a house near Swartkoppies, north of the Magaliesberg. Despite their miserable situation, these women offered the burghers each a cup of mealie-coffee. One young girl was wearing a linen dress made from tobacco bags that had been stitched together, with the well-known blue elephant trademark on each bag. "The women were just as sorry for us as we were for them, but there was little we could do for each other." wrote

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199 M.E.R. (ed.), *Oorlogsdagboek*, 10.1.1901, 25.4.1901, 15.5.1901-16.5.1901, 28.6.1901, pp. 123, 173, 189, 194. [Translated: "God is asleep. Fast asleep."]

200 J.F. Naudé, *Vechten en vluchten*, p. 279. [Translated: "Who can even begin to visualize the misery and atrocities of this war?"]

Weber.[201]

Nevertheless, there were occasions when the Boers were able to help these women. More than once Boer commandos confronted their enemies in attempts to free women who were being taken to camps. On 6 June 1901 De Wet and De la Rey with 53 burghers attacked a much stronger British column, that was taking a group of women off to a camp. The well known battle of Graspan ensued. De Wet related how, when De la Rey asked what their action should be, he straightaway replied that the women had to be rescued.[202] The fact that they were on a different mission – indeed a very important one – that their force was far smaller than that of the enemy, and that they had the president of the Free State under their protection, did not change the situation. The women simply had to be freed.

General Beyers, who was operating in the northern Transvaal, gathered women in laagers in order to care for them. He hoped to prevent their being taken to camps and to protect them from maltreatment at the hands of the enemy.[203] Indeed in most areas women were gathered in groups to escape being taken to camps.[204] Celliers reported on 20 October 1901 that once more there were numerous women and children with their commando, fleeing from the "Khaki".[205] It is thus clear that it was not only women and children in camps who suffered because of the scorched earth policy. And, furthermore, those who were not in camps placed a heavy burden of responsibility on the commandos, who were themselves enduring dreadful hardships.

However, the fact remains that the women who were held in concentration camps, and the burden they had to bear, were a hard yoke for the Boers in the veld to bear. Early in April 1901 when H.S. van der Walt reached his home on his return from the ill-attempted invasion of the Cape, he diarised: "O, het was een blijdschap onze dierbaren noch bij onze woningen te venden."[206] In constrast to this, J.J. Heinecke of the Potchefstroom Commando suffered intense torment because his family was in a camp: "Het is bitter zwaar. Denk tog my fammili zet en de

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201 M. Weber, *Eighteen months under General De la Rey*, pp. 87-88.

202 C.R. de Wet, *Three years war,* p. 249.

203 J.F. Naudé, *Vechten en vluchten*, p. 263.

204 F. Pretorius, *Kommandolewe*, pp. 329-331.

205 A.G. Oberholster (ed.), *Oorlogsdagboek van Jan F.E. Celliers*, 20.10.1901, p. 305.

206 J.H. Coetzee (ed.), "H.S. van der Walt: Oorlogsdagboek", Day 287, p. 135. [Translated: "Oh, it was such a pleasure to find our loved ones still at home."]

medde van de vyand en geen kost kan ik daar krygt. Denk tog wat bittere bekommernes ... Zwaar is geen naam ... Denk wie kan dit staan ... zonder dat wij haar kan behulpzaam wezen."[207]

Spies pointed out that as early as the middle of 1901 the Boer leadership were aware of the suffering in the camps and raised their concerns with the British authorities.[208] The burghers themselves were also very much aware of the situation. Pretorius quoted the case of P.A. Vermeulen who received news that his wife, one of his children, his parents and several of his sisters had died in a camp.[209] That bad news like this would soon spread among burghers, leading to anguish and uncertainty is revealed in Dietlof von Warmelo's opinion. According to him it would have been perfectly understandable that upon hearing grievous news a burgher would simply lay down his arms and rush back to his wife and children – thereby implying that he would capitulate.[210]

Apart from the threat posed by the British in their scorched earth operation, there was the added menace that blacks and coloureds were often involved too, either as informants or in assisting with the burning and evacuation activities. This concern was probably even more distressing for the Boers. Both Naudé and Rothmann mentioned this quandary.[211]

According to Grundlingh, both Kitchener and Lieutenant Colonel D Henderson of the British Intelligence Service, ascribed the increased laying down of arms in the winter of 1901 to the influence of the concentration camps on the fighting Boers.[212] Although there might well have been certain burghers on whom the pressure of having their families in the camps was enough to abandon the strife, it is difficult to gauge the impact of this with any accuracy. Certainly the concern for their womenfolk and children would have been an important stressor in the minds of those who carried on the fighting.

The historian, J.J. Van Heerden, stated that by February 1902, General De la Rey received

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207 Quoted in F. Pretorius, *Kommandolewe*, p. 329. (Translated: "It is bitter hardship. Just think of my family in the midst of the enemy and I cannot get food to them. Think about the terrible anguish ... Hardship is putting it mildly ... Think how I can withstand it ... not being able to help her.")

208 S.B. Spies, *Methods of barbarism?*, pp. 220-221.

209 F. Pretorius, *Kommandolewe*, p. 329.

210 F. Pretorius, *Kommandolewe*, p. 329.

211 J.F. Naudé, *Vechten en vluchten*, p. 258; M.E.R. (ed.), *Oorlogsdagboek*, 25.4.1901, 12.9.1901, pp. 174, 220.

212 A.M. Grundlingh, *Die "hendsoppers" en "joiners"*, p. 168.

regular reports about " ... die jammerlike toestande in die konsentrasiekampe, die genadelose agtervolging van swerwende vroue en kinders ... volgens inligting ... ergste gruweldade in die omgewing van Jakkalsfontein ..."[213] These reports would doubtlessly have had a telling impact on the psyche of a man who was at heart a pacifist. They could probably explain the stance taken by De la Rey during the peace talks at Vereeniging when, on the evening of 16 May 1902, he demanded: "Daar is manne en vroue wat niks meer aan het nie as die skone vel op die naakte liggaam. Is dit nie die bittere einde nie?"[214]

The burghers fighting the guerrilla war, were exposed to a multitude of stressors, and the ever present concern for their women and children was simply one more burden to bear. It is impossible to determine how great the influence of this stressor was, but it certainly caused ongoing distress, uncertainty and anguish among the Boer fighters. Certain officers carried the unremitting responsibility for the welfare of vulnerable women and this could well have caused profound stress, even leading to burnout.

b. Concern about their horses

> *For the want of a nail, the shoe was lost;*
> *For the want of the shoe, the horse was lost;*
> *For the want of the horse, the rider was lost;*
> *For the want of the rider, the battle was lost;*
> *For the want of battle, the kingdom was lost,*
> *All for the want of a horseshoe nail.*[215]

The mobility of the guerrilla fighter depended largely upon his horse. Naudé recalled that during the spring of 1901 "Het paard was in een Kommando bijna meer waard ... dan een Burger, want een voetganger was gemakkelijker te bekomen dan een paard ...".[216] Even though he made this comment with reference to the threshing of wheat in the Marico area, its truth cannot be

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213 J.J. van Heerden, "Genls. De la Rey en Kemp en die stryd in die Wes-Transvaal", in J.H. Breytenbach (ed.), *Gedenkalbum*, p. 182. [Translated: " ... the miserable conditions in the concentration camps and the merciless pursuit of women and children who were roaming in the veld ... according to information ... the worst atrocities were commited in the vicinity of Jakkalsfontein..."]

214 J.D. Kestell en D.E van Velden, *Die vredesonderhandelinge tussen die regerings van die twee Suid-Afrikaanse Republieke en die verteenwoordigers van die Britse regering wat uitgeloop het op die vrede wat op 31 Mei 1902 op Vereeniging gesluit is*, p. 83. [Translated: "There are men and women with no more than the skin on the naked body. Is that not the bitter end?"]

215 http://www.Google.com, keyword: For the want of a nail.

216 J.F. Naudé, *Vechten en vluchten*, p. 306. [Translated: A horse was worth more to a commando than a burgher ... because a footslogger was easier to come by than a horse."]

denied. Horses had to be used with care. The well being of his horse was always of paramount importance to the burgher.

The nursery rhyme quoted above is of direct bearing to the Boers. Schikkerling made the point that while mules could go unshod, horses, once shod, can never again be used on rough ground without shoes.[217] And a lame horse is even worse than no horse at all. It must still be fed and cared for. On 3 January 1901 he diarised that he had his horse shod – the nails had to be made from fencing wire. To disrupt the enemy communications even further, they used telegraph wire when fencing wire ran out. J.A. Smith recalled that nails were so scarce that they were used as currency – four nails was the asking price to take someone's place in standing guard.[218] The want of a nail may well have become a stressor to the burgher who cared for his horse.

Still, there were other factors which caused concern. Horses, as mentioned previously, had to be well fed if they were required to do strenuous work. The republicans did not have the back-up that the British army enjoyed, such as the provision of good quality feed for their mounts. Rothmann remarked on 4 August 1901, after he had seen British horses killed during the skirmish at Mazebe's Drift, how plump they seemed compared to their own thin and jaded horses. Cold, wet weather, as Reitz described while on trek into the Cape, only intensified the effect of poor feeding and he remarked that many horses simply had to be abandoned: "with tuckered flanks and drooping heads, waiting for the end".[219] He added that the burghers were nevertheless urged on by Smuts, as the enemy was near to their right. They were ordered to go on foot and haul their horses along, in order to husband the horse's strength. This was not a new experience for the young Reitz. A few months earlier, while still in the western Transvaal, he and his group stuck close to the heels of a British column, which in turn was following the same commando they were trying to reach: " ... our worst anxiety being the weak state of our horses ... the dust clouds ahead of us showed us that the English were advancing too, and in this manner we crawled along on foot, leading our horses by the reins."[220] Horses in poor condition had been a predicament not only to Reitz and Rothmann, but most likely to the large majority of Boers on commando. The officers, who themselves might well have been better mounted, were nevertheless impeded by the

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217 R.W. Schikkerling, *Commando courageous*, 23.7.1901, p. 264.

218 R.W. Schikkerling, *Commando courageous*, 3.1.1901, p. 121; F. Pretorius, *Kommandolewe*, pp. 77-78.

219 M.E.R. (ed.), *Oorlogsdagboek*, 4.8.1901, p. 207; D. Reitz, *Commando*, pp. 211-212.

220 D. Reitz, *Commando*, pp. 174-175.

poor condition of their burghers' horses. This hampered a commando's mobility and curtailed any aggressive actions the officers might have planned.

A third problem which the burghers had to contend with, was that of horse sickness. At the time there was no preventive treatment, as there is today. Horse sickness is a virus infection where the vectors are gnats or midges. The disease is usually contracted during the months January to March primarily in low laying areas, near rivers or marshy terrain, in the warmer regions. [221] Although mules and donkeys are both susceptible, horses are much more vulnerable. Naudé confirmed that in January 1902, horse sickness kept Kemp's commandos in the Highveld regions of the western Transvaal, which meant the Boers found themselves within the territory where the blockhouse lines were restricting their movements.[222] Horse sickness is a fast acting affliction as several burghers confirmed. Reitz reported how his "Malpert" died overnight in an orchard near the Magaliesberg, after showing signs of distress and lagging in his steps only the previous afternoon. Schikkerling's trusty "Ramkat" contacted the dreaded disease during the wet April of 1901. Early in the morning he noted that the horse was exceptionally dull and by midday the animal was dead. "I had always hoped to be able to pay this gallant animal my debt to him," Schikkerling wrote, "and now he dies. I sat on a stone among the suikerbosch and wept over my latest sorrow."[223]

c. Dread about roving blacks

The issue of blacks who assisted the British forces has been mentioned above. In his well-known work Warwick pointed out that the participation of black people in the war was eventually so extensive that the name Anglo-Boer War could justifiably be replaced by South African War.[224] As the guerrilla war continued the large number of blacks who sided with the British and the role they played became a serious problem to the Boers. Although there were those – many of them armed, wearing some type of uniform and frequently under the control of a white officer – who openly helped the British forces to carry out their scorched earth policy, there were also the informal "roving bands". Although Warwick claimed that "during the guerrilla war they [the black

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221 H.O. Mönnig and F.J. Feldman, *Handboek oor veesiektes*, pp. 79-80.

222 J.F. Naudé, *Vechten en vluchten*, p. 320.

223 D. Reitz, *Commando*, p. 154; R.W. Schikkerling, *Commando courageous*, 22.4.1901, p. 187.

224 P. Warwick, *Black people and the South African War 1899 – 1900*, p. 4.

people] effectively closed hundreds of square miles of the annexed states to commando penetration ...",[225] the Boers themselves saw these roving groups in a different light. They perceived the vagrant blacks as cattle thieves, plunderers and even murderers, particularly threatening the groups of women and old men.[226]

The Boers, on the other hand, were not altogether blameless for committing atrocities. A black captain complained to General C.H. Muller in the northeastern Transvaal about a burgher who had shot and killed a young black girl,[227] and General S.G. Maritz and his men were responsible for the massacre of coloured people at Leliefontein in the northwestern Cape Colony on 28 January 1902.[228]

Incidents of outrages by blacks were not uncommon and the Boers generally perceived the black people as a threat. Rothmann's diary has several entries which pointed to the danger of armed black groups in the northeastern Transvaal. On 2 July 1901 he started his day's log with: "Rapport van Jaap Kruger van genl. Viljoen. Tien burgers, wyk Roossenekal, vermoor deur Kaffers deur die Engelse bewapen."[229] He made similar entries on 10 August, 27 August and 4 October 1901.[230] Weber recalled that when they were near Toelansdrift in the northwestern Transvaal the commandant "warned everybody not to go far from the camp, since in the dense bush one could not be safe from the blacks ... blacks were able, despite all the sentries, to approach camp without being seen through the dense bush."[231] The threat was thus not only to the women, but also to the burghers themselves. The massacre of 56 Boers on 6 May 1902 by Sikhobobo's Zulus at Holkrans, was perhaps the final manifestation that the threat was indeed a real one.

It is clear that particularly in the northwestern, northern and northeastern regions of the Transvaal and in northern Natal, the peril which hostile blacks held for the Boers would undeniably have been experienced as a common and highly incessant stressor.

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225 P. Warwick, *Black people and the South African War 1899 – 1900*, p. 5.

226 M.E.R. (ed.), *Dagboek*, 4.4.1901, 20.4.1901, 30.4.1901, pp. 161, 171, 177; M. Weber, *Eighteen months under General De la Rey*, pp. 85, 135.

227 C.H. Muller, *Oorlogherinneringe van Generaal Chris H. Muller*, pp. 150-151.

228 Bill Nasson, *Abraham Esau's war. A Black South African in the Cape, 1899 - 1902*, pp. 108-112.

229 M.E.R. (ed.), *Dagboek*, 2.7.1901, p. 196. [Translated: "Report by Jaap Kruger of Geneneral Viljoen. Ten burghers, Roossenekal ward, murdered by blacks armed by the English."]

230 M.E.R. (ed.), *Dagboek*, 10.8.1901, 27.8.1901, 4.10.1901, pp. 209, 216, 226.

231 M. Weber, *Eighteen months under General De la Rey*, p. 124.

7. Stressors prompted by the individual's disposition

a. Personal doubts or misgivings

The Merriam Webster dictionary defines *doubt* amongst other things as "a state of affairs giving rise to uncertainty, hesitation and suspense." It also defines *misgiving* as "doubt concerning a future event."[232] Although the experience of doubt or misgiving could be confused with that of fear, for the purposes of this study, fear is regarded as an emotion concerning the situation presently at hand, while doubts or misgivings are seen as threats which are embodied in future events and are thus classified as stressors.

Normally these stressors would be private or personal, experienced as the innermost soul-searching of the individual concerned. Yet it is also feasible for people to discuss their misgivings with others in an attempt to gain support and empathy. In modern times this behaviour would probably be called "counselling" and it would be a structured exercise. However, at the time of the Anglo-Boer War, these discussions would only have happened spontaneously when conditions were conducive, and then probably only on a restricted scale. But then too, many burghers were on commando as part of a family group and the stern example and domination of the senior members of such groups would naturally have restrained what might have been termed loose talk.

A commonly felt misgiving was the individual's uncertainty of how he would withstand the grim realities of combat in a battle situation. This concern was not unique to the Anglo-Boer War; it has always been a reality of war. In the book of Judges we read that Joshua sent the faint at heart home, prior to the attack on Jericho. A few years after the American Civil War, Stephen Crane wrote a novel about a young Union soldier's inner uncertainty and doubts of his ability to stand firm in the proximity of death.[233] During the First World War women in Britain would shame men who were not in uniform by presenting them with a white feather, indicating that they were cowards who were unable to deal with the thought of war.

It is thus probable that there were many burghers in the commandos to whom the gnawing uncertainty of being able to cope with combat acted as a powerful stressor. Sheridan and

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232 Encyclopaedia Britannica 2002, *Merriam Webster dictionary*, keywords: doubt, misgiving.

233 S. Crane, *The red badge of courage*, pp. 8-9.

Radmacher explained that the secondary cognitive appraisal of a stressor poses the question: "How am I going to handle this?" to the person.[234] After all, they were not trained soldiers, nor were they strengthened by military discipline and comradeship. To aggravate matters many of them had misgivings about the need for the war and the fact that it was being prolonged.

The burghers' reluctance to face the danger of battle has often been mentioned and debated by historians, and reasons for this have been posited. Whatever the cause, it is probably true that many burghers stayed on commando because they were under pressures to do so, even though they were obviously loathe to risk their lives if this could possibly be avoided. The poor discipline which has often been under discussion probably made avoidance of battle just that much easier.

There are numerous indications in various sources that the Boers were generally reluctant to go into battle. Naudé reported that on 28 May 1901, when the Rustenburg commando under Commandant L.P. Steenekamp was called to arms, only 100 out of 2 000 turned up. The rest simply remained on their farms.[235] Did they simply lack courage? Or were they being selfishly concerned about their own possessions? Or alternatively were they unconvinced about the necessity of the war? It was probably a combination of all these issues, but self preservation would have been high on the list. Weber remembered how many burghers preferred to remain in camp when the call came for help from their compatriots during the battle of Moedwil at the end of September 1901. Moreover, he criticised those burghers who, despite having possessed horses, and thus being geared for battle, preferred to shun from "the far more exiting service of the fighting commandos" and rather stayed with the wagon laager, acting as guards and scouts. He did not elaborate on this tendency, but plainly it confirms that many men preferred to stay out of harm's way: "There was the usual confusion," wrote Weber. "a few especially nervous Boers were immediately swallowed up by the surrounding bushes. They appeared only when the crack of bullets had ceased." [236]

Schikkerling's reflection of the anxious anticipation immediately before a battle as discussed above would probably not fall within this category, however Rothmann provided a good example. He diarised on 15 April 1901 that the Lydenburg commando virtually disintegrated because many

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234 C.L. Sheridan and S.A. Radmacher, *Health psychology*, p. 150.

235 J.F. Naudé, *Vechten en vluchten*, p. 249.

236 M. Weber, *Eighteen months under General De la Rey*, p. 109.

Boers had gone home or had taken their wagons and were hiding in the veld with their families. Commandant Schoeman had no more than 60 or 70 men left in his commando.[237]

Weber's description of Commandant Claasen's frequent absences due to his hernia (as discussed above) could either indicate that the stress caused a physical intensification of the commandant's hernia problem or alternatively that his gnawing doubt about his own ability to withstand the pressure of a skirmish took over. The possibility of the stress actually exacerbating the hernia – or any other chronic physical disorder – should not be simply overlooked. P.J. du Toit's suspected asthma[238] is a case in point.

An element of life on commando that could without doubt be experienced as a stressor by many burghers, was the need to do picket duty – *brandwagstaan* – on the outskirts of the laager. This was invariably an unpleasant task and when the night attacks became popular it was also highly dangerous. After the mounted scouts who were roving in the vicinity, had formed the outside shield, the *brandwag* was usually placed on guard two to six kilometres from the camp.[239] Apparently the attitude and diligence with which burghers performed this duty depended largely upon the prevailing dangers in the area. Pretorius mentioned that commandos in the Cape Colony, particularly those under the two commandants, namely P.H. Kritzinger and Wynand Malan, regarded this as a most important duty, because of the constant threat of night attacks by British columns. He added that P.J. du Plessis claimed that this duty was not only the most difficult and boring task but was also the most nerve-racking, yet without which a commando could not function in the eastern Cape.[240] The climate naturally played an important role and inclement weather could make picket duty decidedly unpleasant. Nevertheless tension was often relieved by the many pranks and humourous incidents that took place at the posts.[241] The prospect of leaving the relative security of the camp, of becoming the eyes and ears of one's comrades, braving the elements, and facing the associated dangers all made it natural to try and avoid *brandwag* duty, even to the extent of paying four horse-shoe nails for the privilege.[242] It is once again evident that

237 M.E.R. (ed.), *Oorlogsdagboek*, 15.4.1901, p. 166.

238 C.M. Bakkes, Commentary on the inside flap of the dustcover of J.P. Brits (ed.), *Diary of a National Scout P.J. du Toit, 1900 - 1902.*

239 F. Pretorius, *Kommandolewe*, p. 115.

240 F. Pretorius, *Kommandolewe*, p. 117.

241 F. Pretorius, *Kommandolewe*, pp. 117-118.

242 F. Pretorius, *Kommandolewe*, p. 77.

responsibility for the welfare of others can be perceived as a stressor. A burgher's misgivings about his safety, how he would cope with facing the enemy, his avoidance of battle and his decision to capitulate are all linked to the issue of personal stress. The influence of the multiple British proclamations on what Weber calls the "fickle and the doubting" are also significant in this respect. It all relates to stressors impacting negatively on certain burghers, while others were able to cope with them. Therefore, it is clear that the personal perception of a circumstance comes into play.

Cape Rebels faced another distressing issue which would certainly have tormented their thoughts. If they were captured by the British, there was only one punishment that awaited them – the death sentence. Their ZAR and Free State comrades may well have feared the idea of being sent by boat to an unknown place, far over the sea and far from their homeland, but the fate of the Cape Rebel was sealed. Over and above this, the man who decided to join the Rebels went through much soul searching even before his decision to join the republican cause was taken. What would his family and neighbours say about his intended action? In many cases he was loyal to the Queen but family ties with republicans were also strong. What would happen to his family, property and community if retaliatory measures were taken? What would the loyalists do to them? The fact that the average age of the Rebels was below 25 serves to indicate that the daring and dauntless youths were more easily coaxed to join the ranks of the Rebels than older men who had families and property to consider.[243]

b. Frustrations, irritations and hassles

Frustrations, irritations and hassles all relate to unpleasant experiences taking place over an extended period of time. *Frustration* can be defined as a chronic sense of dissatisfaction arising from unresolved problems. *Irritations* provoke anger or displeasure. *Hassles* are persistent, annoying and troublesome concerns.[244] It is of little relevance to establish the exact difference in meaning of these expressions, as far as to the experiences of the burghers during the guerrilla phase of the Anglo-Boer War are concerned. The American psychologists R.S. Lazarus and S. Folkman classified them together as "the small, but persistent problems that irritate and distress people".[245]

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243 Personal information: Miss E. Wessels, War Museum of the Boer Republics, Bloemfontein, 19 September 2002; Personal information: Dr. R. Kotzé, Jakkalskloof, Redelinghuys, Western Cape, 20 September 2002.

244 Encyclopedia Britanica 2002, *Memriam Webster dictionary*, keywords: Frustration, irritate, hassle.

245 Quoted by C.L. Sheridan and S.A. Radmacher, *Health psychology*, p. 150.

Sheridan and Radmacher added that in the long run these elements may even cause more damage than cataclysmic or personal stressors. They also referred to this category of stressors as "background" stressors.[246] In an endeavour to discuss circumstances prevailing during the guerrilla war as accurately as possible, it has been decided that the term "frustration" is the most appropriate one for the purpose of this section. It would be normal to expect that the burghers would have suffered from numerous frustrations; which would depend on the individual's disposition and the prevalent circumstances he experienced.

It was a major frustration for a burgher to be horseless. This made him a pedestrian or footslogger *(voetgangers)*. The physical problems of being without a horse, including having to beg a ride on an overloaded wagon and then bumping along over the veld or otherwise walking and carrying one's belongings – often including a saddle, as Reitz did when his Malpert died – was agonizing in itself. The many ways in which horses were lost during the guerrilla war and the extent to which the guerrilla operations were curtailed by the burgher's lack of mobility have already been discussed.

But even worse than the physical discomfort of being without a mount was probably the stigma of inferiority which seemed to cling to the horseless men. Pretorius discussed the matter in some detail, stating that mounted burghers frequently looked down on the *voetgangers* with disdain. He pointed out that the horsemen felt that these burghers were in fact hampering the war effort, because of their restricted mobility. The horseless burghers, on the other hand, felt slighted. Despite their loyalty and the personal sacrifices they had made to be on commando – in most cases voluntarily – they were accorded the status of second-grade Boers.[247] Hendrik Verloren van Themaat described the social gulf between horsemen and footsloggers: "Als voetganger kan men toch niets goeds uitrichten, men hoort niet in het boerenleger thuis en is steeds te zamen met een minder slag Afrikaners."[248] Weber, who had experience as a horseman and a footslogger during the war, apparently agreed with Verloren van Themaat and generalized somewhat in saying that while mounted men were united in times of danger, footsloggers were inclined to be without

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246 C.L. Sheridan and S.A. Radmacher, *Health psychology*, p. 150.

247 F. Pretorius, *Kommandolewe*, pp. 276-277.

248 Quoted by F. Pretorius, *Kommandolewe*, p. 277. [Translated: "As footsloggers were men who could serve no real purpose, they do not belong in the Boer army and are associated with a lower class of Afrikaner."]

purpose and had no understanding for the great ideal of freedom.[249]

Similarly officers had little use for footsloggers, except to fulfil menial tasks such as guarding the horses and harvesting crops. Naudé confirmed the general feeling about horseless burghers when he reported in July 1901: "Hij [genl. Beyers] had nu een Kommando van 500 voetgangers, doch slechts 100 paardenruiters. Wegens de wijze, waarop er in die dagen gevochten moest worden, beteekende een voetganger niets op kommando, zoodat hier slechts van 100 man sprake kon zijn, ..."[250] Naudé's statement was probably a true reflection of the general's feeling. M.A. Gronum confirmed that in the western Transvaal " ... Kemp en Celliers [het] honderde voetgangers in die grammadoela's rond gehad wat gehunker het om perde in die hande te kry vir aktiewe diens."[251] As has been shown above it seems that most burghers were footsloggers at one stage or another, due to a wide variety of reasons.

There were various ventures undertaken to secure wild horses. Schikkerling reported that on 31 January 1901 such an attempt was made on O'Grady's farm in the Steenkampsberg after lightning in the vicinity had killed nineteen mules and three horses. The attempt, however, only yielded two horses that were in good condition. [252] Reitz recalled that at the end of August 1901 shortly before joining Smuts to go to the Cape Colony the "Rijk Section" were able to corral several wild horses in the southeastern Free State, enough to supply every member of the section with two fresh mounts,.[253]

Even though being horseless was a great frustration, Celliers preferred this to the alternative that General De la Rey devised. During March 1901, in an attempt to relieve the situation, De la Rey supplied a number of them with donkeys for travelling alongside the wagons. Celliers was pleased that he no longer had a saddle or bridle and therefore could not be appointed to the "donkey corps". His droll description of the donkeys' nocturnal behaviour indicated that he preferred to be a footslogger. On 1 July 1901 when he eventually was assigned a horse, it was an

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249 M. Weber, *Eighteen months under General De la Rey*, p. 75.

250 J.F. Naudé, *Vechten en vluchten*, p. 259. [Translated: "He (General Beyers) now has a commando of 500 footsloggers, with only 100 horsemen. According to the way that the war was fought in these days a footslogger means nothing on commando, so that one can really only talk of there being100 men."]

251 M.A. Gronum, *Die Bittereinders*, p. 24. [Translated: "...Kemp and Celliers had hundreds of footsloggers who hankered after horses to take part in active duties."]

252 R.W. Schikkerling, *Commando courageous*, 31.1.1901, pp. 140-141.

253 D. Reitz, *Commando*, pp. 199-200.

unmanageable animal that kicked one of his comrades before he could halter it. It took Celliers a full nine days before he finally managed to ride it. Then, only one day later he abandoned his horse, during a desperate flight from the enemy.[254] Perhaps being a footslogger was even less humiliating than being the owner of a spiteful horse.

The literature on the war provides many examples of the negative influence of passivity on the burghers. The historian, A.N. Pelzer, declared that the lack of action in the northeastern Transvaal during March 1901, led to a passivity which in turn led to a negative attitude amongst burghers.[255] The seeds of the poor performance by Ben Viljoen's burghers during Bindon Blood's drive the following month may well have been planted during this period of passivity. Factors such as lack of ammunition, dwindling faith and hope of eventual victory and increased despondency, took their grip on the burghers and played into the hands of the British. Certainly the sedentary days led to long hours of complaining and negative speculation.

This was by no means the only instance of inactivity during the war. Like any other, this was also a war of watching and waiting. The untrained and largely undisciplined burghers were, however, unaccustomed to sitting around idly, biding their time, waiting endlessly for their officers to plan their tactics while back home their own farms were being ruined or at least were fast deteriorating.

On the other hand, M.A. Gronum related that in the western Transvaal the footsloggers were by no means idle. According to him they planted and harvested, cured hides to make shoes and made horseshoe nails from telegraph wire.[256] Although Weber and Celliers confirmed that the burghers did indeed undertake these various tasks, Gronum appeared to generalize and was inclined to be subjective. Weber reported that their commando enjoyed their extended stay on the farm Wagenboomskop until conditions became disagreeable. Because there was very little to do, "... the men had grown lazy and bored. They complained and quarrelled as always when no enemy was there to cause the necessary excitement ...".[257] It seems clear that inactivity caused boredom which in turn led to internal quarrels – and probably a measure of soul searching, self-questioning

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254 A.G. Oberholster (ed.), *Oorlogsdagboek van Jan F.E. Celliers*, 27.3.1901, 1.7.1901 to 10.7.1901, pp. 226, 256-260.

255 A.N. Pelzer, "Generaals Louis Botha, Ben Viljoen en Christiaan Muller en die stryd in die ooste", in J.H. Breytenbach (ed.), *Gedenkalbum*, pp. 155-156.

256 M.A. Gronum, *DieBittereinders*, p. 24.

257 M. Weber, *Eighteen months under General De la Rey*, p. 165.

and eventually to doubt.

The lack of reliable news about the progress of the war, the well-being of relatives and friends and about the strategies implemented by the enemy were also bound to create a feeling of uncertainty, which could well be perceived as a stressor by the burghers who were isolated in the veld. Naudé reported that by September 1900, while they were trekking over Heanertsburg, the isolation and lack of news was dreadful, something which could not easily be described.[258] The republican leaders wisely employed a system of dispensing news called *oorlogsberig* or war reports. Each region informed the others of their activities, concentrating on the more successful events. These reports, which were read out to the men in the veld, served several purposes. Firstly it assembled the scattered groups of men and was at least a form of activity that could possibly create some feeling of expectancy. Secondly, the positive news would tend to lift their spirits. Thirdly, and this is purely a speculative deduction, it might have given the burghers fresh topics to discuss and debate during the long idle hours. It probably also had an inhibiting effect on the grumbling and quarrelling which Weber mentioned. Consequently it may be regarded as an effective tool employed by the leadership to alleviate the stress and despondency.

Rothmann mentioned several of these *oorlogberigte*, one as early as 20 December 1900 – in which the battle of Bloubank and the capture of 60 wagons was reported. Another as late as 4 December 1901 described the constant pressure applied on De la Rey.[259] He also made at least 13 similar entries about war reports and their news in the intervening months.[260] On 7 November 1901 he stated that the news that fighting was still continuing throughout the country was significant to them.[261] From this remark it may be deduced that a measure of despondency was setting in. Pelzer confirmed this when he stated that during the spring of 1901 Viljoen constantly reorganised his force because his burghers were becoming disgruntled and disheartened.[262]

News that came in via the *oorlogsberigte*, at least had some measure of validity, but the burghers were also constantly exposed to rumours and campfire gossip. The bone most frequently

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258 J.F. Naudé, *Vechten en vluchten*, p. 165.

259 M.E.R. (ed.), *Dagboek*, 20.12.1900, 4.12.1901, pp. 99, 247.

260 M.E.R. (ed.), *Dagboek*, *passim.*

261 M.E.R. (ed.), *Dagboek*, 7.11.1901, p. 240.

262 A.N. Pelzer, "Generaals Louis Botha, Ben Viljoen en Christiaan Muller en die stryd in die ooste", in J.H.Breytenbach (ed.), *Gedenkalbum*, p. 164.

chewed upon was "peace". Camp debates were usually about their ardent wish that the authorities would negotiate a peace agreement. Celliers made frequent mention of his deep yearning for peace, but he remained sceptical whether it would realize in the near future. On 15 March 1901 he wrote: "Vredespraatjes zijn bij ons in de laatste dagen erg in de mode – voor de zooveelste keer sedert de oorlog begonnen. ... Door zure ondervinding wijs geworden behoor ik tot de beslist ongeloovigen."[263] However, on 3 September 1901 he claimed that there was a general feeling among the men that the time for fighting had passed, and on 13 December he noted that it had been prophesied that by February there would be peace. Then by 13 February 1902 he remarked that the so called peace date was repeatedly being moved nearer to the end of that month and that there are rumours that white flags were being flown in the Free State and on the British forts.[264]

Some rumours were extremely far fetched. Rothmann reported on 15 October 1901 that De Wet was rumoured to have occupied Ladysmith. However impossible these stories may have been, they nevertheless improved morale.[265] It was something new, something heartening to talk about during the difficult times.

Another frustration concerned officers. Not only the burghers but many of the more efficient officers, were disgruntled by the shortcomings of some of their leaders. There were even allegations of dishonesty directed at several officers. According to Pretorius no less than seven Boer generals, who had taken part in the Battle of Donkerhoek (Diamond Hill), were eventually replaced.[266] P.J. du Toit remarked after the battle at Frederickstad in late October 1900 that the officers concerned were neither trustworthy nor capable. Japie Brits, the editor of his diary and historian, confirmed in a footnote that only half the Boers who were ordered to occupy a certain position obeyed this instruction.[267] By the end of March 1901, in the vicinity of Hartbeesfontein, Du Toit once more blamed "rotten generalship" for the lack of positive results in an operation which included the generals Koos De la Rey, Jan Kemp and Jan Smuts.[268]

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263 A.G. Oberholster (ed.), *Oorlogsdagboek van Jan F.E. Celliers*,15.3.1901, p. 223. [Translated: "Rumours of peace are becoming fashion these days – for the umpteenth time since the beginning of the war ... Through experience I have become wise and remain unconvinced."]

264 A.G. Oberholster (ed.), *Oorlogsdagboek van Jan F.E. Celliers*, 3.9.1901, 13.12.1901, 13.2.1902, pp. 283, 324, 343.

265 M.E.R. (ed.), *Dagboek*, 15.10.1901, p. 230.

266 F. Pretorius, *Kommandolewe*, p. 229.

267 J.P. Brits (ed.), *Diary of a National Scout*, 22.10.1900 to 25.10.1900, pp. 17-19.

268 J.P. Brits (ed.), *Diary of a National Scout*, 17.3.1901 to 25.3.1901, p. 43.

There were apparently no *brandwagte* posted at Doornkraal near Bothaville when the British almost captured Steyn and De Wet on their return to the Free State in early November 1900. Celliers also related a similar case when on 7 September 1901 the British attacked Field Cornet Marthinus Schoeman's laager in the early hours of the morning. He subsequently escaped with only his rifle, ammunition and blanket, but he blamed their predicament on the negligence of the officer because no guards had been placed on duty. This allegation was confirmed by J.P. du Toit in his diary.[269] The absence of picket guards merely because it was assumed to be safe, was inexcusable and pointed to poor leadership and indeed to negligence.

Not only did the burghers criticise the ability of their officers, they also accused them of several other failings. Celliers declared that many officers suffered from excessive ambition and selfishness. Weber related, with some bitterness, General Kemp's disparaging remarks when he and his group rejoined Kemp's commando. Here the officer's high-handed opinion of foot-sloggers once again becomes apparent.[270]

The officers' lack of sincerity was likewise often criticised. Weber described an incident when some burghers found a large quantity of hidden goods along a small stream. They were quick to search for more booty until Camp Commandant Mynhardt appealed to them to refrain from taking items that clearly belonged to poor compatriots. Weber commented that he "... would immediately have put the coffee-mill I had found back again had I not known that the camp commandant had tied a strip of shoe-leather round his waist and hidden a roll of tobacco in the mealie-meal before he made his speech". [271]

Unfair favouring of horsemen by officers would obviously cause offence among those who were without mounts. The uneven distribution of livestock looted at Mafeking in early January – giving footsloggers less of the booty – caused bitterness that was reflected by Celliers in his entry of 16 January 1902. He maintained that if the horseless burghers had possessed horses they would certainly have been part of the operation. Moreover he argued that footsloggers were often sent over long distances to harvest mealies, which was evidence that they were indeed of great value

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269 F. Pretorius, *Kommandolewe*, p. 118; A.G. Oberholster (ed.), *Oorlogsdagboek van Jan F.E. Celliers*, 7.9.1901, p. 286; J.P. Brits (ed.), *Diary of a National Scout*, 7.9.1901, p. 68.

270 A.G. Oberholster (ed.),*Oorlogsdagboek van Jan F.E. Celliers*, 22.5.1901, p. 245; J.F. Naudé, *Vechten en vluchten*, p. 311; M. Weber, *Eighteen months under General De la Rey*, p. 104.

271 M. Weber, *Eighteen months under General De la Rey*, p. 111.

to the Boer cause. Nevertheless Celliers preferred not to join in any protest action that would divide the Boers.[272]

Some officers were alleged to have made irresponsible statements to the burghers. Schikkerling recounted that on 31 May 1901Viljoen urged the burghers to persevere, because there was money somewhere in it for all of them. Schikkerling was sceptical: "For myself, I do not see eye to eye with the general. Having reached this pass, and everything being now lost save honour, we may as well go to the last extremity by continuing to fight as long as humanly possible."[273] This was Schikkerling's view exactly one year before the peace treaty was finally signed. In other words, he lived through the winter, spring and summer harbouring his doubts.

The fact that officers were often a source of frustration which could well have become a stressor to the burghers should, however, be regarded in the light of the circumstances. Firstly, the generals, commandants and field cornets were not trained military leaders. They came from a very limited number of available candidates. That all of them could not be of the same calibre as the De Wets or De la Reys, is only natural. The situation of commandants and field cornets, whether they had been appointed or elected, was a more disconcerting one. As the numbers of Boers in the veld dwindled, the pool of potential leaders became even more restricted. Moreover, the willingness of men to fill a vacant position and so become exposed to all the criticism that went with it was a definite obstacle as Schikkerling argued.[274] Secondly, during the guerrilla phase the task of an officer when his men were widely scattered, must have been a truly daunting one. Pretorius remarked that "Diegene wat al aan 'n verlate sytak van een van die talle Oos-Transvaalse riviere gestaan het, sal besef hoe moeilik dit moet gewees het om die verspreide kommando's te beheer en toe te sien dat hulle aktief bly en die Britse kolonnes soveel skade as moontlik berokken."[275] There is a great deal of insight in this statement.

This naturally brings up the issue of the frustration which officers must have endured as a result of the poor discipline of the burghers. This lack of discipline of the Boers had widespread

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272 A.G. Oberholster (ed.), *Oorlogsdagboek van Jan F.E. Celliers*, 16.1.1901, p. 334.

273 R.W. Schikkerling, *Commando courageous*, 31.5.1901, p. 213.

274 R.W. Schikkerling, *Commando courageous*, 5.7.1901, p. 245.

275 F. Pretorius, *Kommandolewe*, p. 231. [Translated: "Those who have stood next to a remote branch of one of the many eastern Transvaal rivers, will realise how difficult it must have been to control the scattered commandos and to ensure that they remained active and did as much damage to the British columns as possible."]

implications, and although discipline in general improved markedly after the beginning of the guerrilla war, and many personal interests were overcome, many examples of poor discipline are found throughout the literature.[276]

There was some divergence of opinion about Boer discipline. General Muller declared that his burghers were aggressive and brave during the attack on 7 January 1901 on the Delagoa railway, and that it was a pleasure to lead men and officers of such a nature. In contrast General Viljoen reported to Botha in December of that year that he found it difficult to keep the absconders together.[277] Indeed at times even the strict De Wet and the unrelenting Kemp had to deal with the unwillingness of their subordinates.[278]

The officers were frequently confronted with reluctance on the part of the burghers to undertake dangerous missions – as would be expected from any untrained and nonprofessional people's army. This frequently required the application of the sjambok by the general. Weber quoted Kemp after the rout at Lindleyspoort as saying: "I can tell by the way a Boer catches his horse and saddles it, whether we will be successful or whether we will be put out to flight. In the first case one finds it difficult to keep up with the commando during the attack. In the second case, on the other hand, every Boer requires a General at his back to chase him forward."[279]

Once a skirmish was nearing victory, the Boers were inclined to start plunder rather than complete the skirmish.[280] Moreover, the burghers would simply take leave and return home as and when it pleased them, regardless of the situation in the veld.[281] Burghers would easily move from one unit to another, often from one commando to another, as the whim took them.[282] Small groups would roam independently or hide in a kloof, making life extremely difficult for the officers.[283]

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276 F. Pretorius, *Kommandolewe*, p. 229.

277 C.H. Muller, *Oorlogsherinneringe*, p. 110; F. Pretorius, *Kommandolewe*, p. 232.

278 C.R. de Wet, *Three years war,* p. 15 ; J.F. Naudé, *Vechten en vluchten*, p. 250.

279 M. Weber, *Eighteen months under General De la Rey*, p. 140.

280 J.F. Naudé, *Vechten en vluchten*, pp. 252-253.

281 F. Pretorius, *Kommadolewe*, pp. 233-234.

282 D.Reitz, *Commando*, pp. 61, 127, 175.

283 R.W. Schikkerling, *Commando courageous*, 10.6.1901, p. 215; D. Reitz, *Commando*, p. 195; see also F. Pretorius, *Kommandolewe*, p. 231.

Cases of theft of belongings, food or horses were reported frequently.[284]

Although there were many incidents of this nature, it is the impact of this poor discipline on the officers concerned, that is of real importance here. Apart from serious misdemeanours such as treason for which regulations existed, the officer, especially during the guerrilla phase of the war, was more or less powerless to deal with day-to-day stumbling blocks . This, naturally, would have led to a lack of respect of his subordinates, as discussed above. Not all officers were as outspoken and forceful as Kemp. To many officers, probably to the majority, the unsatisfactory conduct of their burghers which left them powerless, would have been sensed as a stressor. A feeling of ineptitude, of being unable to perform his task properly, must conceivably have plagued many officers. This could possibly have been a private perception or it might have been shared with fellow officers, as the sloppy discipline was widespread throughout commandos. Either way it would have been an ongoing awareness, constantly eroding the officer's self-esteem. All the more so, if the specific officer secretly suffered from a lack of self-confidence, but presented a facade to the contrary.

c. Faith and superstitions

The Boers were generally regarded as a God-fearing people, though Pretorius warned that this idea should not be overrated. There may have been superficial similarities to the Cromwellites, with the republicans regarding themselves as the chosen people, and there was a implicit pious fervour in their prayers and psalm singing, but one should not generalize.[285] There was indeed a deepening of spiritual life during the war which included the belief that they were fighting for a just cause. Many Boers believed that God was on their side, and that they should trust in Him, that if every man continues to do his duty– despite all the terrible sufferings – they will be saved.[286] One should, however, remember that among the Boers there were many different views on their dependence on God and why they were being made to suffer. The origins of the *Boervolk* were too varied and their religious perspectives too dissimilar to group them under one category.

As the guerrilla phase of the war progressed the religious outlook of the Boers changed

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284 M. Weber, *Eighteen months under General De la Rey*, p. 157; D. Reitz, *Commando*, pp. 194-195. R.W. Schikkerling, *Commando courageous*, 26.5.1901, p. 204; see also F. Pretorius, *Kommandolewe*, p. 243.

285 F. Pretorius, *Kommadolewe*, p. 185.

286 F. Pretorius, *Kommadolewe*, pp. 194-195.

somewhat. The fact that the ministers who had been active in the commandos dwindled from about 45 in the early stage of the war to a mere 7 *bitterenders* is perhaps a feature of this turnabout, although the changed method of warfare could likely have influenced this decline.[287] Various burghers took over the responsibility of leading religious services as the number of ministers shrunk. This was confirmed by both Celliers and Van der Walt.[288]

The pressure exerted by the enemy – probably even more than their deep rooted faith – caused the leadership of the two republics to turn to God in time of need and they called for a day of atonement and a day of thanksgiving on 8 and 9 August 1901 respectively. Certain doubts can be raised about the religious sincerity of the leadership in the matter of these two official days of prayer. By August 1901, partly as a consequence of the scorched earth policy, the numbers of Boers who had laid down their arms during that winter had swelled significantly. Then too there were smouldering differences between the two republics about peace-talks. Nevertheless the two days were widely observed. The accent of the gatherings was to fall on the violation of the Sabbath, drunkenness, lack of faith, lovelessness, selfishness, ceremonial religion, unfaithfulness to one another such as capitulating and lastly the problem of theft.[289] Judging by the issues, it seems as if the point of departure was indeed more man-orientated than religious.

Reports on the response to this call by the governments varied. Rothmann wrote that he decided not to end, as he did not think that his prayers could be of much help. General Muller, on the other hand, was enthusiastic about the success of the whole enterprise. The adventurous young Reitz, who was roaming in the southern Free State, made no mention of these days at all, as he and his comrades were probably unaware of the arrangement. Celliers, who was indeed religious but despised hypocrisy, could not attend the service as his feet were too painful. The occasion was attended by General Kemp, but it was soon disrupted by approaching British. Schikkerling noted that he attended the thanksgiving service on 9 August, which was held, according to him, to ensure their safe conduct across the railway line on 26 July: " In these panting times our gratitude is falling in arrear, and our causes for thanks accumulating," he writes. The conservative and deeply devout Van der Walt merely mentioned that the thanksgiving was held as was laid down by the authorities.

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287 F. Pretorius, *Kommadolewe*, pp. 171, 173.

288 A.G. Oberholster (ed.), *Oorlogsdagboek van Jan F.E. Celliers*, 3.11.1901, p. 311; J.H. Coetzee (ed.), "H.S. van der Walt: Oorlogsdagboek", Days 444, 445, p. 138.

289 F. Pretorius, *Kommandolewe*, pp. 190-191.

He soon moved on to add that Boer houses were still being burnt and their animals taken.[290]

What none of these sources mention in their subsequent entries, is whether, in their view, the days of atonement and thanksgiving had any effect on later events, or whether, indeed it had led to better morale among the burghers. Of course, these issues cannot really be evaluated, neither then nor now. What the topic does however indicate, was that the leadership of the republics still professed to their dependence on their God. On the other hand some burghers might have interpreted it that their leaders were distressed by the war situation and were now suddenly seeking support on a spiritual level. This could have had both favourable and unfavourable affects. Favourable, if the burghers held strong religious feelings themselves and had their convictions strengthened by attending. Unfavourable, if the deduction was made that the leaders were grabbing at straws – that they had waited until things were going really badly before turning to God for help. If this latter reaction was the case it would certainly have undermined the burghers' trust in their leadership.

Among those who were in the veld during 1901 and the first months of 1902, there were also burghers who, because of their own lack of faith, caused misgivings in the minds of others. Celliers, described a situation in October 1901 when a friend's answer to his proclaiming his firm faith was: " Ja...ja vertrouw maar niet te veel."[291] This mood of desperation was most probably exploited by certain Boers who had already capitulated. Piet de Wet, C.L. Botha and D.J.H. van Niekerk, all prominent "handsuppers", claimed that in the light of the setbacks the republics had experienced, to continue the struggle was directly against the will of God.[292]

Closely related to the matter of religion was the role that superstitions played in the Anglo-Boer War. The Great Comet of 1901, which the Boers could see clearly during most of May, was declared to mean peace, as the double tail formed a V which meant *vrede* (peace). This, according to Reitz, was the "prophet" Van Rensburg's view. But a disbelieving joker retorted that it actually stood for *vlug* (flight). *Siener* Van Rensburg, "a strange character with a long flowing beard and

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290 M.E.R. (ed.), *Dagboek*, 9.8.1901, p. 209; C.H. Muller, *Oorlogherineringe*, p. 147; D. Reitz, *Commando*, p. 170; A.G. Oberholster (ed.), *Oorlogsdagboek van Jan F.E. Celliers*, 8.8.1901, p. 273; R.W. Schikkerling, *Commando courageous*, 9.8.1901, p. 279; J.H. Coetzee (ed.), "H.S. van der Walt: Oorlogsdagboek", Day 444, p. 138.

291 A.G. Oberholster (ed.), *Oorlogsdagboek van Jan F.E. Celliers*, 27.10.1901, p. 308. (Translated: "Yes...yes, trust but not too completely.")

292 A. Grundlingh, *Die "hendsoppers" en "joiners"*, pp. 173-174.

wild fanatical eyes, who dreamed dreams and pretended to be possessed of occult powers," [293] was with General De la Rey and made many predictions, some of which proved to be uncannily correct. Celliers reported that the sight of the comet led to many different interpretations,[294] but although Schikkerling mentioned it twice, he attached no supernatural meaning to the phenomenon.[295] Carla Gallorini states in her book *Spells from Ancient Egypt* in times when there were no rational explanation for things they were attributed to spiritual powers. She adds that in the countryside where traditions are stronger, superstition is usually more active.[296]

d. The indecision before capitulating

According to Grundlingh the number of burghers and officers who capitulated during the seventeen months of the guerrilla war, was slightly more than 6 000 compared to the 12 000 to 14 000 who capitulated in the first period until just after the occupation of Pretoria.[297] This number was nevertheless significant in terms of the meagre manpower resources the Boers had at their disposal after the first abandonment, and the mass surrenders at Paardeberg on 27 February 1900 and Brandwaterkom on 30 July 1900. It has already been established that most of these burghers laid down their arms during the winter of 1901.

Grundlingh also pointed to the detail that *The Times history* suggested that by May 1901, that is a full year before peace was signed: " ... two opposite processes were at work, a sifting process and a moulding process, corresponding to the different effects produced by stress of war on individual characters. Outside the existing nucleus of sturdy fighters, there was a large class of burghers whose course was undecided." [298]

It is not clear just how large this undecided group was , but it was on these burghers that the the question of continuation or capitulation would have been a stressor. This indecision would most likely have been a private matter, one which silently but perpetually seethed within the individual. The history of P.J. du Toit clearly validates this reasoning. Since his third call-up in

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293 D. Reitz, *Commando*, p. 162.

294 D. Reitz, *Commando*, p. 170; J.F. Naudé, *Vechten en vluchten*, p. 238; A.G. Oberholster (ed.), *Oorlogsdagboek van Jan F.E. Celliers*, 3.5.1901, p. 239.

295 R.W. Schikkerling, *Commando courageous*, 2.5.1901, 17.5.1901, pp. 193, 199.

296 http://www.metimes.com/issue51/commu/03superstition.htm.

297 A.M. Grundlingh, *Die "hendsoppers" en "joiners"*, p. 167.

298 L.S. Amery (ed.), *The Times history,* V, p. 251.

September 1900 he clearly had his misgivings, until he eventually wrote sardonically on 13 May 1901, that after the sacking of Hartbeesfontein and the subsequent looting of the remains by " ... common class Boers ... I am damn certain this is a bloody mug's game to keep on. The whole country is going to blazes and we are daily being reduced to starvation and ruination."[299] There is little doubt that he had reached the end of his tether.

There were a number of factors which tipped the balance for a wavering burgher. Grundlingh discussed these details at length. One of the most important was Kitchener's campaign of destruction, as Du Toit saw it in Hartbeesfontein and again on 25 May 1901, six days before his capitulation. The concentration camp system was another important issue. The yearning of many burghers to join their families in the camps and thereby to assist them was definitely a strong motivation. The physical exhaustion and demoralising effect of the blockhouse system played an increasingly crucial role. Finally the effect of the harsh commando life, demoralizing as it was, further aggravated by the effects of the harsh winter were all, no doubt, vital stressors.[300]

There was of course the reverse side of the coin, which caused the unsure burgher to pause before acting. Du Toit mentioned his fear of losing his property: "We are under strict control and orders of our generals and if one deserts, your property is confiscated by your own people."[301] However, it should be realised that this entry was made on 25 November 1900, at a stage when many thought that there might still be a reasonable chance that the Boers would eventually be the victors or at least preserve their much-valued independence. As the months of 1901 dragged on, and the picture gradually changed, the fear of losing property would naturally have diminished. The likelihood that their farms might still be damaged or even destroyed by Boers, would no doubt have remained. This was a real risk and "the fickle and the doubting" would have been well aware of this.

The Boers who contemplated capitulation also realised that they would be sent to a concentration camp, to be confined with the women, children and old men. Even though this may have been what they wanted, as mentioned above, it is also probable that they had heard of the

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299 J.P. Brits (ed.), *Diary of a National Scout* , 13.5.1901, p. 49.

300 A.M. Grundlingh, *Die "hendsoppers" en "joiners"*, pp. 167-170; J.P. Brits (ed.), *Diary of a National Scout*, 25.5.1901, p. 49.

301 J.P. Brits (ed.), *Diary of a National Scout*, 25.5.1901, p. 27.

scorn and derision which awaited these "handsuppers" in the camps.[302] Finally, the hazard of losing their reputation and dignity among their family and friends would have kept many of the irresolute burghers on commando. The threat of becoming a pariah, even after the war was over, might well have stopped many men from laying down their arms and taking the oath of allegiance.

From the above it is clear that, whatever the eventual decision, the procrastinator would initially have experienced his sense of uncertainty and internal conflict as a stressor. And it must be repeated again that in the majority of cases, this would have been a private, nagging matter, which would once again be part of an accumulation of stressors.

8. Résumé

The wide variety of stressors and potential stressors discussed above were by no means unique to the Boers fighting during the Anglo-Boer War. Nevertheless it is important to note that these stressors had different roots, as is indicated by the six main groups of stressors used above. Some may have been the result of military situations, others because of the lack of infrastructure. Natural circumstances, daily hardships, anxiety and personal disposition are the other groups into which the stressors are arranged. It is further important to realise that as the situation deteriorated from the republican point of view, so the stressors continued to spiral in number and intensity.

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302 A.M. Grundlingh, *Die "hendsoppers" en "joiners"*, pp. 177-178.

Chapter VII

Resistance resources and coping during the guerrilla warfare phase

"Although the world is full of suffering, it is full also of the overcoming of it ..."

Helen Keller, 1904.[1]

1. Introduction

The previous chapter deals with the issue of stressors as agents causing stress and in Chapter II reference is made to Antonovsky's belief that although stress is omnipresent and part of our everyday lives, people generally possess resistance resources which assist them to cope with the wide diversity of stressors.[2] This chapter deals with these resources that are the medium by which people cope with the stress and are able to achieve a feeling of "wellness".

During the guerrilla war stressors were seldom experienced singly, nor were they always of the same dramatic dimensions. At times they would last for no more than a fleeting moment or alternatively they could be prolonged for days or even weeks. Jan Celliers described how he experienced the retreat of burghers and civilians on 29 January 1901 in the vicinity of the Wilge River in the southeastern Transvaal. He vividly portrayed the scene of shells exploding in the mud and of ice cold rain water running down his spine while reluctant horses turned their backs to the wind. He told of fleeing families abandoning their furniture, blankets and chests in a quest to speed up their retreat; of a swollen spruit to be crossed and the nerve-shattering bleating and bellowing of the animals that were being driven away from their homes. "Niets kan zoo sarren en tergen als een opeenhooping van kleine tegenspoeden ..." recounted Celliers.[3] On the other hand he went on to say that the awareness of having successfully withstood the tribulation, agony

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1 D.J.W. Strümpfer, "The origins of health and strength: from 'salutogenesis' to 'fortigenesis'", *South African Journal of Psychology* 25 (2), 1995, p. 81.

2 D.J.W. Strümpfer, "Salutogenesis a new paradigm", *S.A. Journal of Psychology* 20 (4), 1990, p. 267.

3 A.G. Oberholster (ed.), *Oorlogsdagboek van Jan F.E. Celliers*, 30.1.1901, pp. 200-201. [Translated: "Nothing is as exasperating and wearying than the culmination of small adversities."]

and danger of the incident, left him with a sweet after-taste, making one ashamed of one's impatience and faintheartedness.[4] What he was really saying was that the mere fact that they had been able to manage, or in other words had possessed the necessary resources to cope with the crisis, gave them a feeling of accomplishment. It had created an inner feeling of "wellness".

The model, figure II–3, demonstrates that the individual's ability to cope with stressors depends largely on whether resistance resources are readily available to him. The terms *cope* and *resistance resources* will be examined briefly in order to clarify their use.

The Merriam Webster dictionary defines the word *cope* as meaning to deal with and to attempt to overcome problems or difficulties.[5] Words and expressions with similar meanings which may be used are manage, survive, endure, deal with and manipulate. The opposite or the failure to cope, would be *to yield* to the stress. The term to yield can thus commonly be regarded as *a person's inability to cope*. Expressions with similar meaning, which may be used are relinquish, capitulate, renounce, abandon or surrender. These words will refer to an individual's failure to cope. During the Anglo-Boer War the term "hands-up" was used in a figurative sense, denoting that the person had abandoned the struggle. In Afrikaans the word was promptly turned into *hendsop*. Such a person would be called a "hands-upper" or in Afrikaans a *hendsopper*, which became a derogative expression reflecting on the individual's courage.

According to Sheridan and Radmacher coping can be either problem focussed or emotion-focussed depending on the type of stressor involved. If the manner of coping is problem focussed it signifies gathering information of the problem, considering the available resources and planning the use of the resources. If, on the other hand, coping is emotion focussed the style of the individual involved may vary. A common coping strategy is simply by avoidance or denial of the stressor. Other emotion focussed strategies include exercise, humour, work and hobbies. It is usually adopted when the stressor cannot be changed or eliminated.[6] Both these coping tactics, problem focussed or emotion focussed, will be encountered in this chapter.

The term *resistance resources* also requires some explanation. According to the Merriam Webster dictionary a resource can be a source of supply or of support; it can be a source of

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4 A.G. Oberholster (ed.), *Oorlogsdagboek van Jan F.E. Celliers*, 30.1.1901, p. 202.

5 Encyclopaedia Britannica 2002, *Merriam Webster dictionary*, keyword: Cope.

6 C.L. Sheridan and S.A. Radmacher, *Health psychology challenging the biomedical model*, pp. 160-161.

wealth; it can be an element to which one has recourse to in difficulty and it can be the ability to meet or deal with a situation. The term resource, in its literal sense, means "to raise again" and is derived from the word "resurrection".[7] Stress resistance resources – also called general resistance resources – refer to those resources which the individual may call upon to help him to deal with the stress he experiences. They are sources from which he can draw, just as water is drawn from a well, when it becomes needed. In this study the term general resistance resources (GRRs) will generally be used.

Sheridan and Radmacher classify resistance resources in a number of categories: Firstly, there are the *material resources* which would include items such as money, food, clothing and shelter. For the burghers in the guerrilla phase of the war it would also have included objects such as arms and ammunition, horses and a variety of everyday articles which would have made their life easier for them. Secondly there are the *physical resources,* which include the positive physical attributes of an individual such as his strength, his health or attractiveness. From the perspective of burghers in the veld, this would have involved qualities such as their physical endurance and the ability to ride and shoot. *Intrapersonal resources* is the next category and refer to the inner strength that helps an individual to withstand life's daily onslaughts. These include characteristics such as his self acceptance, ego-integrity and ego-identity, giving the individual a stable yet dynamic and flexible sense of the self. These are partly inborn characteristics, but they mostly develop under specific circumstances. This issue is discussed in chapter II under the heading of fortigenesis. Sheridan and Radmacher identify *educational resources* as the fourth category. Knowledge is regarded as a particularly valuable resource, as it is often a tool whereby material resources may be obtained. Possessing a wide-ranging knowledge was of great importance during the guerrilla war. Finally there are *cultural resources* which include traditions, customs and rituals. These resources frequently help the individual to a better comprehension of the implication of the events taking place. It helps to understand that there are certain details that can be relied upon not to change despite the circumstances. At the time of the Anglo-Boer War religion, and spiritual matters, the importance of the republican flag, the observance of 16 December as Dingaan's Day were all cultural resources which provided important emotional support.

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[7] Encyclopaedia Britannica 2002, *Merriam Webster dictionary*, keyword: Resource.

This classification of resistance resources are not necessarily the only correct one, but it does supply a convenient base from which to work. It is however always vital to realise that certain resources may give rise to others. For example, inborn physical strength would probably induce greater self confidence within the individual. This classification should therefore be regarded as flexible and subject to change.

It should further be appreciated that although during the Anglo-Boer War the inability to cope often induced a burgher to yielding, this was by no means the only reason why Boers relinquished the struggle. Grundlingh mentions several additional factors such as material gain and self-indulgence as reasons why some Boers yielded.[8] Lack of loyalty towards the Boer republics could likewise have been a factor that influenced burghers to capitulate.

2. Material issues

Whereas all humans have a constant need for the basic material resources which are mentioned above, the burghers who were in the veld during the guerrilla phase of the war were often deprived of these details. They then had to devise other means of overcoming the deficiencies in order to survive. There was no shortage of ingenuity, and there are records of remarkable solutions to some problems.

Even though money is the first material resource mentioned by Sheridan and Radmacher, the lack of money was by no means crucial for the survival of the Boers in the veld. They were not paid soldiers, and furthermore few of them possessed substantial funds of their own to rely on. Roland Schikkerling claimed that he had less than 10 shillings on hand when the guerrilla phase of the war started.[9] But this did not seem to upset him. Because many of the towns were either under British control, as for example larger towns such as Kroonstad and Middelburg, or others had been destroyed, such as Heilbron, Schweizer Reneke and Dullstoom, few businesses remained open. This meant that whatever little money the Boers possessed, essential goods were difficult to come by. Money was nevertheless necessary for buying goods from individual farmers or from black people. As for food and clothes from the farms, by the middle of 1901 the scorched

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8 A.M. Grundlingh, *Die "hendsoppers" en "joiners": Die rasionaal en verskynsel van verraad*, p. 170.

9 R.W. Schikkerling, *Commando courageous (A Boer's diary)*, 16.9.1900, p. 66.

earth strategy had progressed to such a stage that only a handful of isolated homesteads were still standing. After all, this was of course one of the major objectives of the scorched earth policy – to deny the Boers of the support of the rural communities. Therefore to have money may have been convenient but it was definitely not always crucial.

Before the destruction of farms had become widespread and when money was still important, Schikkerling related the episode of a farmer near Bothasberg who "... tried to sell apricots at a very high price, whereat we were mighty indignant and preferred to steal."[10] This remark reveals that although it was war, where a commodity was still available, the desire to make some money was frequently stronger than patriotism. Naudé disparagingly called these people "... zakpatriotten, die vaderlandsliefde bezaten zoolang zij achter de Kommandos konden schuilen ...".[11] The Boers simply had to be resourceful. Commandeering, looting or even blatant stealing was often the answer and it was even considered permissible due to the extenuating circumstances.

The republic's inability to sustain the war effort is underscored in De la Rey's address to his burghers after the battle at Moedwil on 30 September 1901: "... Burghers, our Government has nothing more to give us, our Commissariat has long been exhausted and destroyed. For over a year the commandos have supported themselves. Our only supplier of weapons, munitions and clothing is the enemy."[12]

This comment with reference to the government's lack of funds possibly explains why Schikkerling was persuaded to write on 5 July 1901 of the " ... worthless receipts and blind blue backs ..." [13] when he turned down the position of Field Cornet.[14] The gold and the money that J.C. Smuts had removed from Pretoria, before the general withdrawal from the ZAR capital was used to promote the republican cause elsewhere.[15] However, towards the end of January 1902 when the Boers in the northeastern Transvaal sensed reluctance among non-combatants and black

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10 R.W. Schikkerling, *Commando courageous*, 17.12.1900, p. 111.

11 J.F. Naudé, *Vechten en vluchten van Beyers en Kemp "bôkant" De Wet*, p. 183. [Translated: " ... pocket patriots, who had love for their fatherland as long as they could hide behind the Commandos."]

12 M. Weber, *Eighteen months under General De la Rey*, p. 133.

13 E. Levine, *The coinage and counterfeits of the Zuid-Afrikaansche Republiek*, p. 116.

14 R.W. Schikkerling, *Commando courageous*, 5.7.1901, p. 245.

15 G. Nattrass and S.B. Spies (eds.), *Jan Smuts Memoirs of the Boer War*, p. 47; E. Levine, *The coinage and counterfeits of the Zuid-Afrikaansche Republiek*, p. 116.

people to accept government notes, the ingenuity of a few burghers led to the minting of nearly 1 000 gold pound coins using machinery recovered from the abandoned mining works.[16] This incident is a fine example of coping by relying on the GRRs of both knowledge and ingenuity.

As De la Rey indicated, the enemy had indeed become the main source of material goods for the Boers. This was so not only in the western Transvaal but throughout the republics. This meant attacking any supply convoys, derailing and plundering trains and even raiding supply dumps and garrisons. In retrospection this might perhaps sound like an easy solution and a profitable undertaking. However, taking provisions from the enemy demanded a high degree of risk. Boers had to jeopardise their lives so that the war effort might continue. A few stout-hearted men had to face the dangers while many others shared in the spoils. Seizing goods from the enemy is however an integral part of guerrilla warfare, even in modern guerrilla conflicts.

The proverbial Boer resourcefulness took over when his material resources fell short. They developed a very basic method of laying mines on railway tracks to derail and capture trains. Schikkerling described exactly how this was done. First they modified a rifle to ignite the dynamite, then two intrepid men carefully approached the spot where the dynamite was to be placed, walked along the rails so as not to leave any footprints.[17] By combining resourcefulness with courage, the Boers were thus able to cope in their quest for material goods. However, it is important to take cognisance of the fact that the pressure involved was by no means equally shared by all the burghers. As always it was a small group who had to shoulder the burden for the benefit of many. The stress involved was not experienced at the same level by all the burghers.

The pillaging of British supplies after the battle of Nooitgedacht on 13 December 1900 – despite General Christiaan Beyers' orders to the contrary – probably boosted the morale of the Boers. Celliers reported on the large-scale looting that took place and that burghers who were previously clothed in rags suddenly appeared in brand new khaki clothes. Reitz also recalled how he and his brother helped themselves to food, clothing and other luxuries.[18] It was a phase emphasized by securing goods from the enemy. Johan Hattingh claims that the sabotage of

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16 E. Levine, *The coinage and counterfeits of the Zuid-Afrikaansche Republiek*, pp. 69-71.

17 R.W. Schikkerling, *Commando courageous*, 25.2.1901, pp. 156-157.

18 A.G. Oberholster (ed.), *Oorlogsdagboek van Jan F.E. Celliers*, 13.12.1900, p. 180; D. Reitz, *Commando*, p. 137.

railway lines peaked during the months of November and December 1900.[19] Disruptive actions such as these meant that supplies that were expressly meant for the British troops found their way to Boer commandos.

The wave of success in purloining supplies from the enemy probably influenced the ZAR government's thinking in that early stage of the guerrilla phase. While stationed on Tautesberg in the northeastern Transvaal at the end of January 1901, they apparently judged that living off enemy supplies would become the general practice in the months to follow. Bureaucratic reasoning subsequently led them to decide that this system should be regulated. Schikkerling's entry of 24 January referred to the new regulations regarding booty that had been announced: "All spoil is to be equally divided among the members of the commando who were involved in finding it, but guns, ammunition, and money, in large quantities was to go the Government."[20] This might have been well-intended but it proved to be naive and impossible to enforce. Then too the British soon began to implement their counter-measures. They constructed blockhouses to curb the increasing number of rail disruptions and the resulting loss of their much needed supplies.[21] Table VI–1 illustrates that the British indeed countered the derailing and commandeering from trains. The episode early in July 1901 also mentioned in the previous chapter when General Christiaan Beyers and his men captured the train between Naboomspruit and Pietpotgietersrust and seized more clothes and food than they could carry away, was probably one of the last train incidents of the war.[22]

Uitskud of British soldiers – in other words taking useful objects from the captive's person – became another regular source of supply for the Boers, not only for weapons and ammunition, horses and saddles, but most importantly for the much needed clothing and footwear. Pretorius described this practice in fair detail. He mentions that by and large the British soldiers accepted this stoically and that some humourous moments even ensued: "There stood the khakies, with their sunburnt noses and spotty faces, neatly lined up wearing old ragged clothes. In some cases their toes stuck out of broken velskoene and in other cases their hair stuck out of the holes in their hats ... One of the more comical Tommies grabbed his friend ... pretended that he wanted to kick

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19 J. Hattingh, "The British blockhouse system", in F. Pretorius (ed.), *Scorched earth*, p. 230.

20 R.W. Schikkerling, *Commando courageous*, 24.1.1901, p. 138.

21 J. Hattingh, "The British blockhouse system" in F. Pretorius (ed.), *Scorched earth*, pp. 227, 230, 239.

22 J.F. Naudé, *Vechten en vluchten*, p. 259.

him, the said: 'Come on, get on you damn Boer!' Both sides burst out laughing...".[23] Perhaps, after all, there is some measure of truth in the cliché that this was a gentleman's war. From a psychological perspective the Boers came out of these encounters not merely wearing better clothes but with an increased sense of superiority, having briefly had the better of their enemy. This momentary psychological boost probably helped to counter some of the many stressors they experienced. *Uitskud* can thus be regarded as a dual coping mechanism.

The Boer's legendary inventiveness of *'n boer maak 'n plan* – literally meaning a farmer makes a plan – did not end at making use of the enemy uniform. President M.T. Steyn's suit created from a blanket, and Schikkerling's "uniform" fashioned from the outside canvas of a disused mine hosepipe with "... epaulettes on the shoulders and flaps over the pockets ..." have also been mentioned in Chapter VI.[24] There is evidence that clothes were made out of animal skins. Not only were the tanned skins of sheep, goats, cattle and horses used, but also those of wild animals such as antelope, ape and leopard. It was said that a well-fashioned pair of trousers made from skin was both durable and comfortable for riding but, on the other hand, it was not designed for wet weather and it also creaked whenever the user moved. Old men who were no longer fit for battle and women in the veld were often involved in the tanning and making of these skin clothes.[25] The co-operation between combatant and non-combatant groups in their common quest to overcome difficulties is what Sheridan and Radmacher call social support of an instrumental nature.[26] The fact that the Boers managed to deal with the problem of clothing in one way or another is irrefutable. Sheer tenacity, refusing to yield to the hardships of life in the veld, inborn creativeness and an intricate knowledge of their environment stood them in good stead. This aspect should be viewed as a form of learned resourcefulness as discussed in Chapter II. Nevertheless they must have appeared a rather motley and often garish spectacle compared to the uniformly khaki-clad British soldier.

Natural creativity and dexterity – the result of their frontier-life – served the burghers well in their effort to cope with the ever recurring periods of inactivity. Many articles that could no

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23 Quoted in F. Pretorius, *Kommandolewe tydens die Anglo-Boereoorlog 1899 - 1902*, pp. 95-96.

24 M.C.E. van Schoor, "President M.T. Steyn: Sy rol in die Anglo-Boereoorlog, 1899 - 1902" in *Genl. J.B.M. Hertzoggedenklesing XXVIII*, p. 11; R.W. Schikkerling, *Commando courageous*, 4.3.1902, 7.3.1902, 13.3.1902, pp. 366, 368, 369.

25 F. Pretorius, *Kommandolewe*, p. 92.

26 C.L. Sheridan and S.A. Radmacher, *Health psychology*, p. 157.

longer be obtained were made by hand in these slow times. These "laager-industries" included the manufacture of pocket knives from the steel blades taken from cart-springs, stylish pipes created from stone or wood, neat drinking cups, combs carved from horn and horsewhip handles fashioned with plaited horsehair.[27]

Creativity also extended to more practical spheres when the course of the war forced people to find new ways to secure what they needed. Weber related how, by the middle of 1901, when the Moot west of Pretoria was being wasted in the scorched earth campaign, a few lowly *boslansers* (bushlancers) in a bushy kloof in Damhoek in the Magaliesberg provided a number of essential services to their companions. One man operated the rudimentary *Kloof Mill*, which was well hidden and functioned surprisingly efficiently, grinding 15 to 18 bags of maize within 24 hours. This service was supplemented by a shoemaker's workshop, which produced the well known *Damhoek velskoen.* His tannery was hidden in an unapproachable *kloof*. There was a smithy, operating with homemade bellows contrived of hide and a rifle barrel. Items such as hoof-nails, knifes in leather sheaths, forks and even copper coal-tongs made from looted telegraph wire were produced. Weber added that the smith besides accepted watches for repair and added, tongue in cheek: "These bushlancers were skilful, industrious people. In the spreading of rumours I consider them unequalled. Reports from the Cape Colony, descriptions of battles, news from Europe of which no General ever dreamt ... one simply had to admire them."[28] In this way these frequently scorned people fulfilled a double function in sustaining the hapless, fleeing Boers. First, by supplying them with the necessary material resources and second, by entertaining them with their incredible stories. This is another example where instrumental social support served as a resistance resource.[29]

The Boers frequently went to great lengths in their quest for survival. On 19 October 1901 Celliers diarised that they had dismantled their steam mill – which had been working all night – and loaded it onto a wagon to take it with them, when they fled once more from the advancing British troops.[30] Under the arduous circumstances, this procedure could not have been a simple task. It also establishes another important fact, namely that the burghers were not prepared to flee

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27 F. Pretorius, *Kommandolewe*, p. 129.

28 M. Weber, *Eighteen months under General De la Rey*, pp. 77-79.

29 C.L. Sheridan and S.A. Radmacher, *Health psychology*, p. 157.

30 A.G. Oberholster (ed.), *Oorlogsdagboek van Jan F.E. Celliers*, 20.10.1901, p. 305.

and save themselves without first securing a piece of machinery vital for their continued survival. As a group, they were not ready to yield to the pressure and they still had faith in their future. The steam mill was a material resistance resource providing them with a method with which to overcome the problem of milling their grain. For the burghers on commando, as well as the civilians in hiding in the kloofs, the milling of maize or sorghum was a general problem. Several sources refer to the existence of hidden mills, and at times even small kitchen coffee mills were used for grinding the grain to be used for porridge or for the customary mealie coffee. In the destruction of Boer homes it became normal for the enemy to smash the kitchen coffee grinders in order to deprive the people of yet another instrument of survival.[31] Some mills did however survive, as Celliers showed in his entry for 25 August 1901. "Er zijn twee molentjes in ons lager; bij het eene moet men een shilling per uur betalen voor het malen en bij het andere moet men een paar bakjes meel afstaan. Heel een dag zijn de molentjes aan den gang."[32] This remark indicates that, linked with their inborn drive for survival, there was still an element of commercial enterprise present among the Boer people. It should be remembered that the laager which Celliers wrote of, was in fact a *walaer* or wagon laager which consisted primarily of non-combatant and horseless Boers.[33]

Naturally food was an important resistance resource for people who were under constant pressure by the enemy, people who were deprived of their homes and farms and were hiding somewhere in the veld. Another example of such instrumental social support was described by a young Free State woman, Lizzie Geldenhuys. She joined a group of women in the vicinity of Bothaville, and they made it their task to provide food to a number of fighting Boers in the vicinity. In her memoirs she related that during December 1901 they had cooked unripe peaches with honey and served these to replace vegetables. They also dried lamb ribs to preserve the meat and used maize burnt in a black-pot for coffee. They even made soap from mutton fat, using burnt thorn wood for lye ash. Early in 1902 they remained on one farm for three weeks while they dried yellow peaches for their group of Boers, always aware that the construction of blockhouses was

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31 C.H. Muller, *Oorlogsherinneringe van Generaal Chris H. Muller*, p. 187; M.E.R. (ed.), *Oorlogsdagboek van 'n Transvaalse burger te velde*, 8.5.1901, p. 184.

32 A.G. Oberholster (ed.), *Oorlogsdagboek van Jan F.E. Celliers*, 27.4.1901, 21.8.1901, 27.8.1901, 30.9.1901, pp. 237, 279, 281, 296. [Translated: "There are two small mills in our laager; at one a person must pay one shilling per hour for milling and at the other, contribute a few bowls of meal. These mills are busy all day long."]

33 A.G. Oberholster (ed.), *Oorlogsdagboek van Jan F.E. Celliers,* p. 7.

continuing nearby along the Valsch River.[34]

The availability of salt was an ongoing problem for the Boers throughout the guerrilla phase of the war. In the previous chapter it was mentioned that in the latter months of 1901 a number of Boers travelled by ox wagon all the way from Bothaville to Brandfort in the Free State – about 160 kilometres as the crow flies – just to fetch salt.[35] Schikkerling described how he had obtained salt by taking soil from a site where a burnt out wagon that had been carrying salt, was lying in the veld. He astutely mixed the soil with water, then filtered the mixture, evaporated the water and eventually he was the proud owner of 10 pounds of salt. It must have been a labourious and time consuming task, but throughout his diary it is evident that Schikkerling experienced the lack of salt very keenly. On 19 October 1901 he reported that he had produced salt by creating a chemical reaction between hydrochloric acid and bicarbonate of soda that he had found in a deserted mine store in Pilgrim's Rest. His comrades did not believe that the white powder was salt, until the lack of any adverse effect on Schikkerling satisfied them that it was safe. It is clear that Schikkerling was a well read and knowledgeable young man who used his knowledge as a resistance resource to the benefit of his whole corporalship. Notwithstanding all his ingenuity, on 18 January 1902 he was obliged to end his entry for the day: "All this for a breakfast of coarse porridge, without meat or milk or salt. We have today been twenty-six days without salt."[36] In the same vein, Rothmann mentioned how he discovered a 10 pound tin containing sodium chloride in the melting room of a goldmine near Pilgrim's Rest. Apparently no one else had realised that this chemical was nothing but pure table salt, and Rothmann delightedly reaped the benefit for himself.[37] There are numerous other recorded cases where Boers suffered from the shortage of salt. They even resorted to roasting the meat over a fire, to produce a salty taste from the ashes.[38]

Being without salt was a common daily stressor, and to cope with the problem the GRRs of knowledge, ingenuity and physical ability were frequently brought into effect. The lack of salt was comparable to the lack of coffee or the lack of tobacco, both items which were important to the average burgher but not essential for his survival. Coffee had several substitutes, among them

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34 L. Geldenhuys, *Die oologsherinneringe van Lizzie Geldenhuys* (Unpublished), pp. 64-76.

35 L. Geldenhuys, *Die oologsherinneringe van Lizzie Geldenhuys* (Unpublished), p. 65.

36 R.W. Schikkerling: *Commando courageous*, 7.9.1901, 19.10.1901, 18.1.1902, pp. 299, 319, 346.

37 M.E.R. (ed.), *Oorlogsdagboek*, 21.9.1901, p. 223.

38 F. Pretorius, *Kommandolewe*, pp. 63-64.

mealie coffee and *witgat* coffee. The first was merely coarsely ground, roasted mealies while *witgat* coffee was made from the roots of the shepherd's tree (*Boscia albitrunca*).[39] Tobacco was by times replaced by pumpkin, peach or potato leaves and even by sacking dipped in tobacco extract, then dried and shredded.[40]

As the scorched earth strategy progressed the food situation deteriorated and the plight became a serious stressor. Many sources provide evidence of the pressure that the shortage of food placed on the Boers. General Chris Muller alluded to one method of coping with this stressor, explaining how the burghers would take turns in leaving the commandos and return to their farms to plough and plant.[41] Naudé described how the burghers threshed the grain they had harvested along the Elands and Marico Rivers. They would then either beat the wheat with sticks, or use horses or mules in the traditional manner. To his amazement he saw them using a threshing-machine – which had been assembled from sundry parts collected from all over. Their great concern was that not even the tiniest fraction of the grain should be lost in the threshing process.[42] Celliers, who also mentioned the threshing of wheat on the farm Brakfontein in the period between 17 November and 5 December 1901, referred to the pears, apricots and mulberries that they enjoyed on another farm.[43] Rothmann's entry of 24 October 1901describes how to their great joy, he and his comrades had come across a patch of sweet potatoes. They immediately cooked a part of their treasure because they had run out of mealie meal three days before.[44] By late January 1902 Schikkerling reported that he and his friends went foraging for food. He found some prickly pears and *stamvrugte* or wild plums, while two of his comrades returned to their laager with a whole wagon loaded with fruit.[45]

For the knowledgeable burgher some form of relief could usually be discovered. Although the availability of grain, vegetables and fruit may only have been sporadic, meat of one kind or another was usually readily available. Taking livestock from the black communities was one way

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39 R.W. Schikkerling, *Commando courageous*, 4.11.1901, p. 326; M. Weber, *Eighteen months under General De la Rey*, p. 87; F. Pretorius, *Kommandolewe*, pp. 72-73.

40 F. Pretorius, *Kommandolewe*, p. 75.

41 C.H. Muller, *Oorlogsherinneringe*, p. 186.

42 J.F. Naudé, *Vechten en vluchten*, p. 306.

43 A.G. Oberholster (ed.), *Oorlogsdagboek van Jan F.E. Celliers*, 6.12.1901, 18.12.1901, pp. 323, 325.

44 M.E.R. (ed.), *Oorlogsdagboek*, 24.10.1901, p. 236.

45 R.W. Schikkerling: *Commando courageous*, 26. 1. 1902, p. 347.

of solving this problem. Naudé, Celliers and Weber all mentioned the raid on the black chief Lentshwe in December 1901, where between 2 000 and 3 000 cattle were collected. Weber claimed that although this foray was not meant "... to chastise the blacks, which had become bold, but to obtain meat. In any case it is a punishment to the black man to take away his cattle."[46] Although the cattle were eventually distributed among or sold to the burghers and officers,[47] Weber maintained that many of the smaller livestock went to the poor people who lived in the surrounding bush.[48]

It is thus clear that despite the pressure placed on the Boers by the British scorched earth policy, their knowledge of the environment, their inborn tenacity and their *hardiness* – the belief in the truth and what they considered right[49] – helped them to cope with a situation which was becoming increasingly problematic. Many of the sources that discuss the food difficulties, also referred to how the burghers longed for peace and their growing doubts about the outcome of the war. The shortage of food was clearly demoralising. But as these works were predominantly written by republicans who did not capitulate, it is impossible to determine the number of Boers who in fact did abandon the struggle due to the hardship suffered of not having enough food. Nevertheless, as the months passed the burghers found it increasingly difficult to cope with the shortage of food.

By the time that the delegates assembled at Vereeniging in May 1902, their views on the food problem varied considerably. The statements of ten of the representatives, chosen at random, are briefly recounted below. Generals C.F. Beyers and J.C.G. Kemp both referred to the fact that the food shortage was alleviated by food confiscated from black communities. One delegate from the northern Free State, Assistant Chief Commandant F.J.W.J. Hattingh, was of the opinion that although Kroonstad could last for another year, the situation in Heilbron was critical as all food supplies had by then been depleted. General T.K. Nieuwoudt from the southern Free State was more positive and claimed that although they only had 70 bags of grain and no stock left, they were living fairly well. Among the delegates from the southeastern Transvaal Commandant H.S.

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46 M. Weber, *Eighteen months under General De la Rey*, p. 170.

47 J.F. Naudé, *Vechten en vluchten*, p. 310; A.G. Oberholster (ed.), *Oorlogsdagboek van Jan F.E. Celliers*, 16.12.1901, p. 325; M. Weber, *Eighteen months under General De la Rey*, p. 175.

48 M. Weber, *Eighteen months under General De la Rey*, p. 173.

49 C.L. Sheridan and S.A. Radmacher, *Health psychology*, p. 328.

Grobler of Bethal, Mr. J. de Clerq of Middelburg and Magistrate H.J. Bosman of Wakkerstroom all declared that the situation in their areas was desperate because the enemy had destroyed most of the grain. In contrast, Mr. J.L. Grobler of Carolina was more optimistic. He claimed that, despite the blockhouses in the area, the people could survive for another seven to eight months. From the western Transvaal General S.P. du Toit of Wolmaransstad claimed that livestock was in a fair condition but that grain was scarce, while Commandant D.J. Schoeman of Lydenburg in the northeastern Transvaal complained that the area which he represented had no grain left and moreover that 800 head of their cattle had recently been stolen.[50]

These statements paint a sombre picture of the situation by May 1902. It is furthermore significant that by the end of the Vereeniging talks, 54 of the 60 representatives finally voted that the peace proposals be accepted. Were the initial optimistic reports given by some delegates only a matter of sheer bravado? Or did they and those who had appointed them not fully comprehend that they had come to the end of the road? When General De la Rey asked his well-known question on the evening of 16 May: "Is dit nie die bitter einde nie?"[51] the majority of those present probably reflected and finally realised that they had coped bravely and as long as they possibly could. While it was humanly possible to overcome the effect of many other stressors, living without food was impossible. Ultimately the lack of food was the one vital stressor to which the Boers were forced to yield.

The high rainfall during the early months of 1901 and the lack of shelter were discussed as stressors in Chapter VI. Material resources were occasionally found to help the burghers cope with the stress caused by constantly being cold and wet. On 16 March 1901 P.J. du Toit mentioned that despite the heavy rains they were comfortably housed on the Afrikander Mine. In the same vein Weber recalled that during a howling gale many of his comrades: "... sought refuge in the undamaged houses of hands-uppers, although we were expecting an attack from hour to hour."[52] But undamaged buildings were not always available, and many burghers had to make the best use of whatever form of shelter they could find. It often came down to coping through sheer

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50 J.D. Kestell and D.E. van Velden, *Die vredesonderhandelinge tussen die regerings van die twee Suid-Afrikaanse Republieke en die verteenwoordigers van die Britse regering wat uitgeloop het op die vrede wat op 31 Mei 1902 op Vereeniging gesluit is*, pp. 60-68.

51 J.D. Kestell and D.E. van Velden, *Die vredesonderhandelinge*, p. 83. [Translated: "Is this not the bitter end?"]

52 J.P. Brits (ed.), *Diary of a National Scout*, 16.3.1901, p. 42; M. Weber, *Eighteen months with General De la Rey*, p. 138.

endurance, a hardship to which many burghers eventually yielded. As mentioned above the rigours of being cold and wet probably cracked the spirit of countless burghers and contributed to the large numbers who capitulated before the winter of 1901. After months of excessive rain and discomfort, the added prospect of having to endure an icy winter, wanting the necessary warm clothes and blankets, no doubt brought large numbers of Boers to that point where their resistance simply snapped – the point where the stage of exhaustion (SE) of Selye's GAS-theory was reached. Grundlingh's observation that many Boers preferred luxury to discomfort[53] indeed applied to numerous guerrillas who yielded to the stressors and simply went home.

Coping with the stressors caused by the lack of arms and ammunition usually hinged on the Boers' boldness and their ability to make use of opportunities. Although it is generally agreed that the Lee Metfords and .303 calibre ammunition that the burghers seized from the enemy were the basic weaponry used during the guerrilla phase, it must be emphasised that these items only came into the possession of the Boers after they had faced considerable danger. If a burgher had a rifle and ammunition it probably meant that he, or a comrade, had been exposed to some degree of danger. This being so it can only be speculated upon just how many of *the fickle and the doubting*, preferred to yield to the pressure, to hands-up and rather return home. Perhaps the message that President Steyn sent to the Boer deputation in Europe in April 1901 – that the Boers were generally armed by the British – should be judged in the context of the time that it was sent. At that stage the blockhouse system and all the other implications of Kitcheners strategy had begun to unfold to counter the Boers' mobility and their disruption of British transport. This is borne out by Pretorius who pronounced that a shortage of weapons and especially of ammunition was a major problem during the guerrilla phase of the war. It was one of the dilemmas that ultimately led to the decision to accept the conditions for peace. Unsuccessful and infrequent action against arsenals only increased the scarcity of those items which were, after all, a prerequisite for military success. It became a vicious circle. In January 1902 Ben Viljoen admitted to Botha that a lack of ammunition forced his men to flee rather than to fight.[54] This sense of inadequacy, viewed from a military angle, would surely have created the impression of not being in control of matters, with the consequent effect on the "wellness" of the burghers.[55] It is also

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53 A.M. Grundlingh, *Die "hendsoppers" en "joiners"*, p. 170.

54 F. Pretorius, *Kommandolewe*, p. 367.

55 C.L. Sheridan and S.A. Radmacher, *Health psychology*, p. 162.

significant that it was soon after making this statement, on 25 January 1902, that Viljoen was captured by the British on his way back to Pilgrim's Rest.[56]

Coping with the recurring stress of keeping their horses well fed and alive was not always possible. Large numbers of burghers ended the war without horses. During the peace talks at Vereeniging Botha declared that 3 296, or 30.5% of the Transvaal burghers were footsloggers.[57] This was a significant factor in determining the Boers' inability to continue the struggle because mobility is such a vital element of guerrilla warfare. Many burghers were not prepared to carry on without their horses and used alternative means to maintain mobility. An example of coping by using an alternative material resource to overcome the dilemma was described by Schikkerling. He used a pack mule called Vos and confessed that he became quite attached to this "dull" animal, adding that the mule possessed qualities superior to that of either of its parents. He claimed that "...in some commandos more than half of the rank and file are mounted on mules ... we come to understand their extraordinary sagacity and endurance ...".[58] Riding on a mule, a "... bastard [that] never was in Noah's ark..."[59], was certainly preferable to walking or, worse, riding on an ox-wagon.

3. Motivational issues

As the stressors began building up and the burghers were under all manners of pressure, their resistance resources were naturally gradually becoming depleted and coping became progressively difficult. At the same time the will to continue under the difficult circumstances often declined and the need for continual encouragement increased. These factors are discussed below.

Max Weber remarked : "The warrior is ruined by inactivity in the field."[60] This was indeed a profound declaration. It was written with reference to the last phase of the war, when

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56 P.G. Cloete, *Chronology*, p. 296; M.A. Gronum, *Bittereinders*, p. 41.

57 F. Pretorius, *Kommandolewe*, p. 366.

58 R.W. Schikkerling, *Commando courageous*, 23.7.1901, p. 264.

59 R.W. Schikkerling, *Commando courageous*, 23.7.1901, p. 264.

60 M. Weber, *Eighteen months with General De la Rey*, p. 197.

circumstances caused certain commandos to endure long periods of inactivity, leading to the lowering of morale with many burghers sinking into a crater of despondency. In that final stage the stress that needed to be coped with, was constantly increasing. The situation was aggravated by the inactivity, giving the burghers more time to brood on the multitude of problems and uncertainties.

Idleness had been a scourge in Boer ranks since the early stages of the war. In the 65 days after the battle of Magersfontein, from middle December 1899 to middle February 1900, thousands of Boers were kept inactive on the slopes of Magerfontein-kopje. This led F.D. Conradie to declare that if idleness was not directly to blame for the poor discipline among the burghers, it was clearly to blame for giving them time to yearn for their loved-ones.[61] This phenomenon of intensified longing for home and family during times of idleness, was encountered by many men, including Celliers, during the guerrilla war. In the early summer of 1901 when their laager moved aimlessly hither and thither around Zwartruggens, he regularly wrote about his longing for his family in his diary.[62] These entries were probably written on days when his yearning became too strong simply to ignore, although there are many indications in his journal that the separation from his loved ones was a constant stressful hassle to him.

The effect of the morale destroying idleness or passivity as it was reviewed in the previous chapter was offset in a number of ways. One unusual event – mentioned by both Schikkerling and Rothmann – was a theatrical production, staged in Pilgrim's Rest at the end of September 1901.[63] The play was a comedy that had been written locally and both General Ben Viljoen and Schikkerling were in the cast. The story was about the entrapment of a family of potential handsuppers in Dullstroom. The audience must indeed have been impressed because Rothmann went to great lengths to explain the plot in his entry of 1 October 1901. The occasion was important for a number of reasons. It took place at the end of September 1901, at a time when it was clear to many Boers that the tide was turning against them and there must have been many who were considering yielding to the increasing pressure. The theme of the play carried the clear message that handsupping was treason. Then too, it supplied the generally apathetic burghers with

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61 F.D. Conradie, *Met Cronjé aan die wesfront*, pp. 89-90.

62 A.G. Oberholster (ed.), *Oorlogsdagboek van Jan F.E. Celliers*, 22.9.1901, 2.11.1901, 1.12.1901, 6.12.1901, pp. 292, 310, 320, 323.

63 R.W. Schikkerling: *Commando courageous*, 30.9.1901, p. 310; M.E.R. (ed.), *Oorlogsdagboek*, 1.10.1901, pp. 224-225.

some welcome entertainment to lighten their mood. The fact that a number of ladies from the vicinity playacted in the piece would naturally also have been a welcome diversion for the war-weary burghers. Sheridan and Radmacher quote both R.S. Lazarus who claimed that a little illusion is necessary for good mental health, and D. Mechanic, who found that humour can be used as a defence against stress. These issues are regarded as emotion-focussed coping strategies.[64]

Singing, particularly communal singing or group singing, was also more than just a pleasant form of recreation or a way to fill the many idle hours. As the numerous stressors of the guerrilla war accumulated and created ongoing stress, singing became an important coping mechanism, functioning in several ways. First it offered emotional release for burghers who were living in uncertainty and fear for the morrow while they were also worried about and longing for their loved ones. Second it was a form of social support providing companionship with their comrades who shared the same hardships. Third, patriotic songs were motivating and inspirational, uplifting at a time when depression was common particularly in the later stages of the guerrilla warfare when Boer morale was wavering.

It is natural for groups of people who have the same values or culture to turn to song as a way of expressing their feelings. This is particularly true during time of war. During the American Civil War the songs "Dixieland" and "The battle hymn of the republic" were popular among soldiers. During World War I it was "Pack up your troubles...." and "It's a long way to Tipperary" that aroused soldiers and civilians alike. And during World War II Vera Lynn made songs like "Lili Marlene" and "Wish me luck..." popular. Singing generally evokes a feeling of "wellness" or "feeling good" about life. Examples showing that singing was popular during the guerrilla phase of the Anglo-Boer War are numerous. Patriotic songs such as those written by F.W. Reitz, religious songs from the "Sankey sacred song book", even traditional English songs and fun songs were frequently sung.[65] Celliers, the loner and at times also the cynic philosopher, questioned the words of a popular song about Christ sitting on a golden throne. To him gold was the great corrupter of men and of nations. It is obvious from his long review on the subject that

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64 C.L. Sheridan and S.A. Radmacher, *Health psychology*, p. 161.

65 F. Pretorius, *Kommandolewe*, p. 137; A.G. Oberholster (ed.), *Oorlogsdagboek van Jan F.E. Celliers*, 23.12.1901, pp.326-327.

the unrighteousness of this song irritated rather than inspired him.[66] However Celliers could not have been adverse to all kinds of singing, because when a group of young women sang to the burghers as they passed them near Pretoria, he declared that it filled his heart with a new resolve as they proceeded into the dark.[67] Lizzie Geldenhuys, who as a young girl had received formal music training, recalled with pleasure that even while their group was forced to move from Bothaville towards Hoopstad during January 1902, the communal singing from the "Globe song book" created a convivial atmosphere. In her case communional singing acted as a source of social support in their group's stressful life.[68]

In a number of cases singing was a formalised activity, probably in an endeavour to inspire and brace the spirit of burghers. Several choirs were formed during the second half of 1901. The Heidelberg Commando initiated the "Trap Zang Vereeniging" under T.A.H. Dönges ("Trap" literally implied "to get out", referring to flight from the British). There was also a choir comprising members of the Carolina Commando.[69] It is significant that these formalised cultural activities only took place at a stage when the tide was turning against the Boers. One final example of the significance of singing to the Boers was the makeshift choir which was formed in March 1902 when De la Rey received news that President Steyn and General De Wet were on their way to him. According to Naudé the Boers practised the anthems of the two republics which they planned to sing when their Free State comrades arrived.[70] This incident should not be perceived as singing for recreational purposes, rather as singing within a patriotic or motivating framework and can be regarded as a GRR because it formed a part of their cultural values.[71]

Debating was another activity that formed part of the Boer's cultural background at the time and by careful selection of the subject could be instrumental in bolstering resistance resources. Van den Berg's theory on metabletica does however have a bearing on this subject because as the leisure media developed over the past century the popularity of debating as a

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66 A.G. Oberholster (ed.), *Oorlogsdagboek van Jan F.E. Celliers*, 23.12.1901, pp. 326-327.

67 A.G. Oberholster (ed.), *Oorlogsdagboek van Jan F.E. Celliers*, 13.1.1901, p. 196.

68 L. Geldenhuys, *Die oologsherineringe van Lizzie Geldenhuys* (Unpublished), p. 73.

69 F. Pretorius, *Kommandolewe*, p. 178.

70 J.F. Naudé, *Vechten en vluchten*, pp. 337-338.

71 C.L. Sheridan and S.A. Radmacher, *Health psychology*, pp. 152-153.

recreational activity has diminished.[72] To the burghers on commando debating was an accepted and enjoyable social pastime that could readily be adapted to their circumstances. Debating meetings could take place virtually anywhere at a time when burghers were inactive. Celliers mentioned a debate on the afternoon of 14 March 1901, the gathering being held under some large willows. In his diary he related at length how he was to defend the presumably unpopular position that black people were treated inhumanely and unfairly by the Boers.[73] Naudé was also involved in this event, probably as chairman, and Celliers mentioned that he spoke a few words of introduction. To indicate the importance of debating Naudé commented that the burghers under the command of the newly-appointed Combat-General Jan Kemp held debating meetings twice a week. According to Celliers the discussions were lively and the meetings well attended.[74] Another debating society, the *Veld Debat Vereeniging* or Field Debating Society was founded by the Heidelberg Commando in October 1901 near Ermelo. The topics of their debate were usually of a military or a political nature, with the general point of departure that the republics would retain their independence. It is clear that again the aim was to inspire the men but apparently the attendance of these gatherings was relatively poor, ranging between 17 and 33 individuals per meeting.[75] It could be argued that by October 1901, the positive mood among burghers, especially those in the southeastern Transvaal, had dulled considerably and that it was an uphill task to create enthusiasm for an activity that was so obviously intended to improve their sagging morale. Under current circumstances it might well be difficult to visualise debating as a coping mechanism for guerrilla warriors, yet considering the shift in time and the situations of the burghers living in the veld, often bored and disheartened, then attending a debating meeting could well have sparked some feeling of normality among them. Whether issues of a patriotic nature would have served to boost their morale, is highly questionable.

Both Schikkerling and Celliers alluded to occasions when dancing parties were held, but it would seem that these gatherings should merely be regarded as social occasions.[76] Even though

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72 http://www.reinhoudt.nl/metabletica/ [Van den Berg's term "metablica" deals with the theory of change. He maintains that the human being has not been an unchangeable element in the progress of history.]

73 A.G. Oberholster (ed.), *Oorlogsdagboek van Jan F.E. Celliers*, 14.3.1901, pp. 220-222.

74 J.F. Naude, *Vechten en vluchten*, p. 216; See also F. Pretorius, *Kommandolewe*, pp. 130-131.

75 Quoted by F. Pretorius, *Kommandolewe*, p. 131.

76 R.W. Schikkerling: *Commando courageous*, 2. 2.1902, p. 351; A.G. Oberholster (ed.), *Oorlogsdagboek van Jan F.E. Celliers*, 26.2.1902, p. 347; See also F. Pretorius, *Kommandolewe*, pp. 337-339.

these would generally only take place when the burghers were in areas where there were still women in the vicinity, there were occasions where men danced with men to the rousing sounds of the concertina.[77] Dancing was frowned upon by the more conservative elderly people, as well as by the church, but this did not stop the parties taking place whenever commandos were within reach of farms or towns where there were young girls.[78] Attending a pleasant dancing party would have been an exhilarating and thrilling experience to young burghers, lifting their gloomy moods and distracting their minds from the daily hardships. In other words it might well have helped improve the burgher's feeling of "wellness". Dancing could well have a salutory effect in generating positive emotions, but whether it could be considered as a serious coping strategy is doubtful.

Another topic that requires attention is the importance of reading as a source of information that might have influenced a burgher's resolve either to cope or to yield. This important issue may however be somewhat distorted, as the burghers who kept diaries, or those who wrote their memoirs after the war, were both literate and usually of a higher intellectual level than the majority of burghers in the veld. On 21 August 1901 Celliers, commented: "Ik schreef ook nooit een aanteekening in mijn boekje op of er naderen een of meer die mij vragen wat ik schrijf, en anderen staan mij met open mond en oogen aan te gapen."[79] This is confirmed by Pretorius who claims that the majority burghers were semi-literate or even illiterate.[80]

Nevertheless, the fact remains that whether it was in the form of books, periodicals, newspapers or even the Bible, reading matter was precious to the Boer. P.J. du Toit's entry on 28 December 1900 claimed that he had recently read a number of Australian newspapers, which painted a picture of gloom for the ZAR: "What is there now to save us?" was his conclusion. It presumably helped to influence his reasoning about the significance of the war. On 13 April 1901 Rothmann received a *Cape Argus Weekly* which came from a train derailed at Pan station on the Pretoria to Delagoa line. The prospect of an evening spent reading the news from the outside world, seemed like a feast to Rothmann. Being so isolated as they were at the time, he was hoping

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77 F. Pretorius, *Kommandolewe*, p. 138.

78 F. Pretorius, *Kommandolewe*, p. 337.

79 A.G. Oberholster (red.), *Oorlogsdagboek van Jan F.E. Celliers*, 21.8.1901, p. 279. [Translated: " I can never make a note in my little book without one or more men approaching me, asking me what I am writing, while others merely stand gaping at me with open mouths and eyes."]

80 F. Pretorius, *Kommandolewe*, p. 131.

to stay informed about the outside world. In contrast to these cases Schikkerling mentioned on 11 March 1901 that he had travelled three miles to fetch a few newspapers from General Viljoen's tent to " ... find out what is going on in the world and what unkind things are being said about us. What does the world care about us, and who but ourselves, are interested in our fate?"[81] Although he went to much trouble in order to read the newspapers he was sceptical about the content. To him outside opinion became a stimulus to persevere with the war despite the difficulties.

Reading was also a means of escaping from the realities of their situation for many burghers. Sheridan and Radmacher claim that avoidance and denial are common emotion-focussed coping strategies. "Denial involves mentally escaping a stressor by ignoring it or trying to explain it away."[82] The young Schikkerling was one of those engrossed in reading and several entries in his diary mentioned this passion of his. On 27 July 1901 he wrote about the "library" that he and his friends carried in their saddle bags, books that helped them to pass the hours of idleness. "Our literary taste must not be commented upon, " he wrote, "since we have no choice. All day in the shade of a thorn tree I lie reading a book called 'First Person Singular'..." Celliers was another burgher who had great love for words. Towards the end of August he deplored the lack of depth in the plot of a book he was reading – one of many mentioned in his diary – entitled "Die Lampenputzer". On 17 November he noted that he had found a number of periodical magazines and books in a deserted house. The magazines were soon distributed among his fellow passengers on their wagon. It delighted him that he was once more the librarian that he had been before the war.[83]

For many burghers the Bible was the most important book to read, as indeed it had always been for their ancestors. For Boers such as President M.T. Steyn, Rev. J. D. Kestell, Rev. J.M. Louw and D.S. van Warmelo reading was of extreme importance.[84] It was not only a method of remaining informed, it was also a welcome diversion. This means that it was a resistance resource at a time when the everyday anguish and uncertainty became prolonged stressors which only led to depression and weariness. This is one example where knowledge *per se* proves to be a

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81 J.P. Brits (ed.), *Diary of a National Scout*, 28.12.1900, p. 32; M.E.R. (ed.), *Oorlogsdagboek*, 13.4.1901, p. 165; R.W. Schikkerling: *Commando courageous*, 11.3.1901, p. 161.

82 C.L. Sheridan and S.A. Radmacher, *Health psychology*, p. 161.

83 R.W. Schikkerling: *Commando courageous*, 27.7.1901, p. 266; A.G. Oberholster (ed.), *Oorlogsdagboek van Jan F.E. Celliers*, 26.8.1901, 17.11.1901, pp. 281, 316.

84 F. Pretorius, *Kommandolewe*, pp. 131-132.

significant GRR. However, for the majority of Boers, many of whom were illiterate, reading was not an important element in coping with their multiple stressors.

Several routines that were more physical in nature were implemented to deal with the demon of idleness during the later months, when the Boers' offensive tactics reverted to defensive operations. Some of these diversions were contests between commandos or groups of Boers using horsewhips, switches or even ropes of plaited bulrushes, providing plenty of fun.[85] In the same vein Weber related the *kleilat* or clay stick fight that was instigated by "the frolicsome" General Kemp when he considered that the burghers needed bracing of their *esprit de corps*. From a psychological perspective this should be regarded as a social support tool, in other words, it was a resistance resource provided by the interaction with other people.[86]

4. Intrapersonal resources

The attributes required of guerrilla leaders have been discussed in Chapter II. To summarise, it is essential that a guerrilla leader should have a genius for leadership, he should be skilful, rapid and bold.[87] Accordingly, it implies that a leader should possess the ability to influence others – either positively or negatively and must have a distinctive visible personality. He must be someone with a unique strong motivation and possess an extraordinary intellectual power which manifests itself in his creative activity. Taber's pronouncement on leaders is worth repeating, namely that they can only be able to inspire the *spirit of sacrifice* in others by themselves having a high measure of selfless dedication and demonstrate a sense of purpose.[88] This corresponds with Kobasa's GRR of *hardiness,* as discussed in Chapter III. Hardiness includes the three elements of commitment to the objective, having control over the events that are involved and accepting the challenge of change.

Military background

Hans Binneveld briefly outlines the development of organised warfare since the 1500s,

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85 F. Pretorius, *Kommandolewe*, p. 125.

86 C.L. Sheridan and S.A. Radmacher, *Health psychology*, p. 156.

87 W. Laqueur, *Guerrilla*, p. 148.

88 R. Taber, *The war of the flea guerrilla warfare theory and practice*, p. 148.

maintaining that military reform originated in Holland under Prince Maurits of Orange-Nassau (1567–1623). His experiments were carried forward by King Gustav Adolphus of Sweden (1594–1632) who reasoned that the officers corps should receive greater attention than before, while Oliver Cromwell (1599–1658) revolutionised the use of the cavalry in his army. Eventually Frederick the Great of Prussia (1712–1786) brought all these developments together by forming battle units over which control could be exercised at the peak of a pitched battle.[89] Subsequently, in the early 1800s, military academies were established throughout Europe, Britain and the United States of America, where officers underwent training in preparation for their military careers. Most British officers who served during the Anglo-Boer War attended either the Royal Military College at Sandhurst or the Royal Military Academy at Woolwich.[90] The majority of military commanders during the American Civil War had received their training at West Point Military Academy.[91]

It is well known that the leaders and burghers of the two republics were not professional soldiers and were broadly speaking untrained in military matters. Very few Boers had undergone military training in Europe or other countries, although it is known that Major P.E. Erasmus and Major J.F. Wolmarans of the ZAR Artillery Corps both received military training in Holland.[92] Major F.W.R. Albrecht who was the commanding officer of the Free State Artillery Corps, had been a non-commissioned officer in the German army, participating in the French-German War of 1871.[93] However, Albrecht had been captured by the British before the guerrilla war phase. Likewise Colonel Aldolf Schiel, who led the German Corps in the Anglo-Boer War, had served four years in the Prussian army, three of them in the Black Hussars. He emerged as a sergeant, although he referred to himself as a lieutenant, but he too was captured before the guerrilla phase of the war began.[94] The Italian, Colonel C. Ricchiardi, was a foreign volunteer with military training and experience, but he was wounded during the Battle of Colenso in December 1899, and

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89 H. Binneveld, *From shellshock to combat stress*, pp. 9-12.

90 http://www.Google.com, keyword: Sandhurst.

91 http://www.Google.com, keyword: Westpoint/Civil War.

92 O.J.O. Ferreira (ed.), *Geschiedenis werken en streven van S.P.E. Trichard Luitenant kolonel der vroegere Staats-artillerie Z.A.R.*, p. 81.

93 D.W. Krüger and C.J. Beyers (eds.), *Suid Afrikaanse biografiese woordeboek,* III, p. 11.

94 B. Pottinger, *The foreign volunteers: They fought for the Boers (1899-1902)*, pp. 19-20, 93-108.

likewise took no part in the guerrilla war.[95] It is clear that when the war turned into guerrilla warfare there were few men with any formal military training. One of the handful of foreign volunteers with military experience was Colonel John Blake, an Irish-American who had received his training at West Point Military Academy in the United States of America. Although he was wounded in an early stage of the war, he remained active in the Anglo-Boer War until 1902.[96]

None of the prominent Boer generals who were active during the latter period of the war – men such as Botha, De Wet, De la Rey, Smuts, Hertzog and Beyers – had undergone any formal military training. Whatever military experience they possessed was acquired in the punitive expeditions undertaken against black communities. De Wet was involved in the Battle of Majuba in the 1880-1881 Anglo-Transvaal War. De la Rey was a commandant of the Lichtenburg commando at the time, but he had also fought in the 1865 war against the Basuto.[97] Botha had played a role in conflicts against the Zulu during the 1880s.[98] It thus becomes clear that the military grounding of the Boer leadership was extremely meagre. As a GRR which could support them in their duties as leaders, it could be said to be non-existent. Scholtz states that there were only two prominent republicans who were knowledgeable about military theories, namely Smuts and Hertzog.[99] But their insight was based on their own reading and probably their wider general perception of affairs, rather than on any military training.

It is perhaps significant that members of the two artillery corps who had received military training, albeit principally as artillerists – S.P.E. Trichard, of the ZAR Corps and W.E. Thuynsma of the Free State Corps – were never placed in any senior command positions or even in consulting positions. After the ZAR Corps had been dissolved Trichard became a commandant of a section of the Middelburg Commando[100] and Thuynsma was a captain in President Steyn's body guard when he fell during the battle of Graspan on 6 Juny 1901.[101]

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95 B. Pottinger, *The foreign volunteers*, pp. 173-177.

96 D.W. Krüger and C.J. Beyers (eds.), *Suid Afrikaanse biografiese woordeboek,* III, pp. 73-74.

97 W. J. de Kock (ed.), *Suid Afrikaanse biografiese woordeboek,* II, pp. 243, 223.

98 P. Bateman, *Generals of the Anglo-Boer War*, p. 97.

99 L. Scholtz, *Waarom die Boere die oorlog verloor het*, p. 20.

100 O.J.O. Ferreira (ed.), *Geschiedenis werken en streven van S.P.E. Trichard Luitenant kolonel der vroegere Staats-artillerie Z.A.R.*, p. xv.

101 C.R. de Wet, *Three years war*, p. 251.

Of the Boers who held the rank of general during the final stages of the war it is notable that only three had received any form of military training whatsoever before the war, namely B.J. Viljoen, S.G. Maritz and J.C. van Deventer. It then becomes even more obvious that whatever military expertises the senior Boer officers possessed was probably rather the result of their background as frontiers men than any competence they acquired through formal military training. Therefore the fact that these men were placed into positions of military leadership involving great responsibility without having undergone supportive training and combat experience or grounding that their adversaries would assuredly have relied on, suggests that this shortcoming could well have contributed to much of the stress they experienced. The fact that despite this situation many of them were still able to cope with the stress, suggests that they possessed sufficient alternative GRRs.

Educational background

It was pointed out in Chapter II that Sheridan and Radmacher claimed that education is a most important GRR.[102] Whether this claim had the same relevance to the Boer society of 100 years ago is debatable, although education as such would generally have led to greater understanding of life and its vicissitudes. However Table VII–1, at the end of this chapter, shows that only seven of the 34 generals who were active towards the end of the war, had enjoyed any post-school training. They were T. Smuts of Ermelo, C.F. Beyers, J.C. Smuts, L.A.S. Lemmer, J. Kemp, J.B.M. Hertzog and J.H.B. Wessels. Other burghers who are mentioned in this study and who are known to have received post-school training are J.F.E. Celliers who had studied as a land surveyor, P.J. du Toit who was trained as a teacher, L. Krause who held four degrees, among them a masters degree in law from the University of Cambridge, J.F. Naudé who had partly completed his studies as a theologian and H. Verloren van Themaat, a Hollander, who had a doctorate in law. Several of the generals had previously held positions as magistrates, prosecutors, post masters and other prominent civil service posts, which would appear to indicate that they too had enjoyed an adequate education. General Louis Botha attended a small school in the Free State, where an occasional wandering Dutch *meester* or tutor might turn up to fill the teacher's position. Other than this he gleaned what he could from his parents.[103] Several sources mention the fact that Christiaan de Wet only enjoyed a few, some say only three, months of

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102 C.L. Sheridan and S.A. Radmacher, *Health psychology*, p. 152.

103 J. Meintjes, *General Louis Botha a biography*, pp. 3-4.

school.[104] Most of the generals had been farmers before the war and the status of their education is uncertain.

On the other hand it is interesting to note that D. Reitz, the son of F.W. Reitz, the State Secretary of the ZAR, R.W. Schikkerling, F. Rothmann and H.S. van der Walt, whose works are frequently quoted in this study, did not enjoy any post-school training, although they were well able to describe their experiences. Notwithstanding these few exceptions the majority of burghers were illiterate or only partially literate.[105]

The low level of education, and consequently the lack of knowledge in its wider sense, can assuredly be associated with a lack of cognitive GRRs. Strümpfer quoted Antonovsky when he explained that cognitive GRRs rely on "knowledge intelligence", which is of course subject to education. Antonovsky furthermore argued that all GRRs facilitate the ability to *make sense* of stressors or of a stressful situation. He argued that the repeated experience of this *sense making* ultimately leads to the development of a sense of coherence (SOC). The three components of a strong SOC which Antonovsky identified as *comprehensibility, manageability* and *meaningfulness* logically stem partly from, or are at least linked to, education and knowledge.[106]

The knowledge of matters concerning life in the veld, riding and caring for their horses, of accurate shooting and of the climate to a very large extent sustained the rural burghers during the guerrilla war phase. But their general lack of knowledge – which could primarily be derived from their ability to read – was an obstacle in the development of a strong SOC. The importance that reading material, in particular newspapers, held for those few burghers who could read, has been discussed above. Du Toit, Rothmann and Schikkerling used the newspapers in expanding the basis of their knowledge about the greater war situation as it was developing around them, using it to *make sense* of the circumstances. And the fact that they reacted differently to the news accentuates that they were able to form opinions for themselves. Those who could not read, had to rely on others to form opinions and this would no doubt have led to subjective views. In view of the fact that the majority of representatives at the peace talks at Vereeniging arrived there with the instruction of their constituents not to relinquish the independence of their republics, the

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104 W.J. de Kock (ed.), *Suid Afrikaanse biografiese woordeboek*, I, p. 243; P. Bateman, *Generals of the Anglo-Boer War*, p. 111; B. Olivier, *Krygsman Christiaan de Wet*, p. 3.

105 F. Pretorius, *Kommandolewe*, p. 131.

106 D.J.W. Strümpfer, "Salutogenesis a new paradigm", *S.A. Journal of Psychology* 20 (4), 1990, p. 268.

question could well be asked how strong the SOC of the Boers in general and of the delegates was.

Age as a resource of resistance

After the lack of success during the first phase of the war, the older generation of Boer generals, many of whom held their positions because of their political affiliations and long service to their countries, were replaced by a new, younger group of leaders. According to Scholtz the most important senior officers such as P.J. Joubert (born 1831), P.A. Cronjé (born 1838), M. Prinsloo, E.R. Grobler (born 1861) and C.J. Wessels were either over cautious or simply incompetent.[107] The names of H.J. Schoeman (born 1840), D.J.E. Erasmus (born 1845), J.H.M. Kock (born 1835) and J.P. Snyman (born 1838) would surely also find a place on this list. It is clear that these men were elderly and that a strenuous life, full of physical and psychological demands would have proved too demanding. De Wet, for example, considered the appointment of A.P. Cronjé as Combat-General in November 1899 to be a mistake. He respected him as an old friend and a fellow member of the Volksraad, but he considered that at 66 years of age he was too old for the strenuous physical demands which a general had to meet.[108] In his review of the problems that the young and enthusiastic Captain Koos Jooste encountered while trying to convince the ZAR leadership of his plan to invade Griqualand, J.H. Breytenbach claimed that the authorities of the time preferred to appoint men who had reached a certain prominence in life as senior officers. Generals usually came from the ranks of senior politicians, members of the *Volksraad* or the Executive Council, and he quoted Andries de Wet that men who did not boast long beards were not considered as commanders in the two republics.[109] However, most of the "long beards" had left the scene by the time that the guerrilla warfare phase commenced. Some of them had by then died, some had been taken prisoner and others had simply stepped back into civilian life.

Table VII–1 shows the age of the generals who were still active during the early months of 1902. At this stage the average age of the ZAR's generals was just under 38 years, those of the Free State just under 34 years and the average age of the generals who operated in the Cape

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107 L. Scholtz, *Waarom die Boere die oorlog verloor het*, p. 41.

108 C.R. de Wet, *Three years war,* p. 19.

109 J.H. Breytenbach, *Geskiedenis van die Tweede Vryheidsoorlog 1899-1902,* IV, p. 93.

Colony was only 30 years. This again corresponds well with Laqueur's view that guerrilla commanders should be young, in their late twenties to early forties.[110] Not only are the younger men more energetic, they are normally more enterprising, even more audacious than older men. They are usually more hardy and less prone to the aches and pains that develop during middle age.

This premise did not only apply to generals and senior officers but to the whole guerrilla force. During the strenuous guerrilla phase of the war younger men were generally able to resist physical stressors better than middle-aged or elderly men. As an example the youthful Reitz's ability to triumph over his fractured leg, persevering and eventually reaching his goal to join Smuts' commando in entering the Cape Colony, can be compared with the much older Rothmann who was constantly hampered by his bronchial problems and more than once had to spend time in hospital.[111] It is significant that during those last difficult months of the war many of the burghers were in fact *penkoppe,* or young boys. This was confirmed by Dietlof van Warmelo who outlined his admiration for them. "Er waren ook onder ons dappere kleine jongens, die, ontnuchterd en ontgroend, vroegtijdig in de moeielijkheden van het leven ingewijd werden, doch tintelend van energie in de ontberingen van het commando-leven met een onbezorgd, avontuurlijk behagen deelden."[112] This also corresponds with the statement made in Chapter IV. that the average age of the Cape Rebels was under 25 years.[113]

It should however be noted that although younger men were probably have been more capable to cope with the physical hardships than their older comrades, their general exposure to the stressors of life was limited and their smaller repertoire of experiences in successfully coping with stressors, would probably mean that their SOC had not yet come to full maturity and that eventual burnout could probably result more readily in younger men than it would in older men.

Rural background

Table VI–1 reveals that most of the generals were farmers prior to the war. This was also

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110 W. Laqueur, *Guerrilla*, pp. 397-398.

111 D. Reitz, *Commando*, pp. 167, 168, 174, 200; M.E.R. (ed.), *Dagboek*, *passim.*

112 Quoted by F. Pretorius, *Kommandolewe*, p. 257.[Translated: "There were also among us brave young boys, who, inexperienced and soon to be disillusioned, were introduced into the ordeals of life far too soon. Nevertheless they partook of the hardships of commando life with sparkling energy and carefree, adventurous delight."]

113 Personal information: Miss E. Wessels, War Museum of the Boer Republics, Bloemfontein, 19 September 2002; Personal information: Dr. R. Kotzé, Jakkalskloof, Redelinghuys, Western Cape, 20 September 2002.

the case with regard to other officers and burghers. Therefore the exposure of the average Boer was primarily to matters directly related to farming, such as familiarity with the veld, horse riding, shooting and even his deep-seated religiousness. Exposure to other issues would have been limited. This rural background, which focussed principally on survival in an untamed, often hostile land, would have had little influence on his general perception of circumstances regarding the war and other war-related affairs. International politics, the power of Britain and her colonies, the British reasoning leading to the scorched earth policy, the importance of discipline and the reluctance of the European powers to intervene, were presumably not part of the average Boer's frame of reference.

Physical appearance and self-image

A number of closely related issues concerning the way the Boers coped with stressors still need to be examined. These all revolve around the *self-concept* of the individual, namely beliefs and attitudes about themselves.[114] Among these is the concept of *potency* as it has been posited by Professor Zeev Ben-Sira of Jerusalem. According to this concept, a person's confidence in his own capabilities prevents tension which may follow inadequate coping.[115] Potency is related to *self-efficacy* – a person's belief in his or her ability or competency to perform a certain task.[116] Antonovsky argued that the *ego-identity* – the nature or essence of the self – as an emotional GRR, forms part of the individual's coping mechanism.[117] Ego-identity is an inherent trait and does not develop according to circumstances. It is clear that self-confidence plays an important role in successful coping. *Self-image* is another element that forms part of this category. However, a positive self-image may develop as a result of certain ambientconditions such as wealth or status. In other words, the person's inherent self-assurance, his confidence in his own capabilities and his self-image are related features which all become instrumental in helping the individual to overcome obstacles.

Such a person would also frequently be concerned about his or her physical appearance. In the case of guerrilla leaders a sturdy, impressive and dynamic persona is the accepted norm. This

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114 R.A. Baron and D. Byrne, *Social psychology*, p. 162.

115 D.J.W. Strümpfer, "Salutogenesis a new paradigm", *S.A. Journal of Psychology* 20 (4), 1990, p. 272.

116 R.A. Baron and D Byrne, *Social psychology*, p. 180.

117 D.J.W. Strümpfer, "Salutogenesis a new paradigm", *S.A. Journal of Psychology* 20 (4), 1990, p. 268.

form of non-verbal communication is known in modern psychology by the term *impression management*. This signifies efforts by individuals to produce favourable impressions on others.[118] The impressive individual could presumably rely on his appearance to overcome smaller obstacles. A typical example during the Anglo-Boer War would be Christiaan de Wet, who was always neatly dressed, wearing his distinctive hat and jodhpurs. Even when wearing a greatcoat he projected a formidable image of authority. De Wet apparently enjoyed being photographed and many photographs can still be found in diverse sources. Some are individual poses and in other he is part of a group, almost always as the central figure.[119] His early efforts to obtain his splendid mount, an Arab by descent, the imposing dappled horse Fleur, can probably be interpreted as part of this image-management trait.[120] A formidable outward appearance does not however, necessarily imply that the individual has a strong SOC, as it could also be a facade.

5. Resumé

The variety of coping mechanisms form the wide range of GRRs that have been discussed above does not by any means imply that all the Boers were always able to cope with the stress that assailed them. Had thisbeen the case then there would not have been so many burghers who laid down arms and abandoned the struggle. Notwithstanding the many who did in fact yield to the pressures, there were still more than 20 000 burghers in the field when the peace agreement was signed.[121] In other words, these burghers had been able to cope more or less successfully with the stress brought on by the myriad of stressors during the guerrilla warfare phase of the war.

Table VII –1 Background of Boer generals who were still active in the early months of

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118 R.A. Baron and D Byrne, *Social psychology*, p. 69.

119 P.G. Cloete, *Chronology*, p. 94; J. Malan, *Die Boere-offisiere*, p. 12; P.H.S. van Zyl, *Die Helde-album: verhaal en foto's van aanvoerders en helde uit ons vryheidsstryd*, p. 192.

120 W.J. de Kock (ed.), *Suid Afrikaanse biografiese woordeboek* I, p. 244; P. Bateman, *Generals of the Anglo-Boer War*, p. 112.

121 F. Pretorius (ed.), *Scorched earth*, p. 21.

1902.[122]

	Name	*Initials*	*Age in 1900* [123]	*Region*	*Education*	*Occupation*	*Military Background*
ZAR	Alberts	H.G..	45	Eastern Tvl.	Unknown – fair writing ability	Farmer and businessman	
	Beyers	C.F.	31	Northern Tvl.	Stellenbosch Gymnasium & Victoria College	Lawyer	Offered service during Jameson Raid
	Botha	C.	36	Swaziland	Unknown	Farmer	Commandant Swazi Police
	Botha	L.	38	Eastern Tvl.	Limited, mostly informal	Farmer, politician	Served to subdue Zulu unrest
	Bouwer	B.D.	25	Eastern Tvl.	Attended school in Angola & Pretoria/ Spoke five African languages	Dept of Justice as translator and later Prosecutor	
	Brits	C.J.	32	Eastern Tvl.	Unknown	Farmer	
	Celliers	J.G.	36	Western Tvl.	Unknown	Farmer, moved to Witwatersrand - gold mines	ZAR Police
	De la Rey	A.J.C.	55	Western Tvl.	Unknown	Farmer	
	De la Rey	J.H.	53	Western Tvl.	Limited, informal	Land surveyor, Native commissioner, politician	1880-81 War – 1895 Comdt of Lichtenburg Commando
	Du Toit	S.P.	36	Western Tvl.	Unknown	Farmer, politician	
	Emmett	J.J.C.	34	Eastern Tvl.	Unknown	Farmer, politician	

122 W.J. de Kock (ed.), *Suid-Afrikaanse biografiese woordeboek*, I, II, *passim*; C.J. Beyers (ed.), *Suid-Afrikaanse biografiese woordeboek*, III, IV, V, *passim*, P.H.S. van Zyl, *Die helde-album*, *passim*; P.J. Nienaber, *Afrikaanse biografiese woordeboek,* I, *passim.*

123 Approximate age when guerrilla phase began in 1900, given as an indication of the general age-grouping of leaders in the latter stages of the war.

	Fourie	C.E.	42	Eastern Tvl.	Unknown	Farmer	Served in1880-81 War and several Black wars.
	Grobler	J.N.H.	36	Eastern Tvl.	Unknown	Farmer, Asst. Native commissioner	Served in several Black wars
	Joubert	D.	51	Eastern Tvl.	Unknown	Farmer, politician	
	Kemp	J.C.G.	28	Western Tvl.	High School State Gymnasium, Pretoria	Clerk, Education Dept. & Office of Mining commissioner	Served during Jameson Raid
	Lemmer	L.A.S.	36	Western Tvl.	High school– Studied at Stellenbosch	Teacher, farm school, Tax official (1896)	Served in 1880-81 War
	Liebenberg	P.J.	43	Western Tvl.	Unknown	Farmer, politician	Served in 1880-81 War
	Muller	C.H.	35	N.Eastern Tvl.	Unknown		Served during Jameson Raid
	Myburgh	M.W.	30	Eastern Tvl.	School, Somerset East.	Conveyancer, cattle farmer, politician	
	Smuts	J.C.	30	Western Tvl.	Victoria College, Cambridge, Middle temple, London	Advocate, State Attorney - ZAR	
	Smuts	T.	39	Eastern Tvl.	School education in Stellenbosch	ZAR Public servant, magistrate's clerk, farmer	
	Van Zyl	J.A.	36	Western Tvl.	Studied theology (unfinished)	Teacher, Kuruman	
	Viljoen	B.J.	32	N.Eastern Tvl.	Informal yet fully literate	Limited journalistic experience, politician	Served during Jameson Raid, Established volunteer corps
	Viljoen	P.R.	47	Eastern Tvl.	Unknown	Mine commisioner , magistrate	Served in several black wars
OFS	Badenhorst	C.G.J.	29	Western OFS	Farm school	Farmer	

	Botha	H.N.W.	33	Northern OFS	Informal	Farmer	
	Brand	G.A.	25	Southern OFS	School in Bloemfontein, SA College Cape Town	Prosecutor, Frankfort	
	De Wet	C.R.	46	OFS	Informal	Farmer, politician	Served in 1880-81 War
	Froneman	C.C.	54	Eastern OFS	Informal	Farmer	Served in last Basotho War
	Hattingh	F.J.W.J.	27	Eastern OFS	Informal	Farmer	
	Hertzog	J.B.M.	34	Southern OFS	Victoria College, Univ. of Amsterdam, Doctorate in Law	Advocate and reporter of High Court, Pretoria, Judge, Bloemfontein	
	Krog	P.J.F.	26	Southern OFS	School in Uitenhage		OFS Artillery
	Niewoudt	T. K.		Southern OFS	Unknown	Unknown	
	Prinsloo	A.M.	38	Northern OFS	Limited	Farmer, Bethlehem	
	Wessels	J.H.B.	26	Northern OFS	School in Bloemfontein, Teachers diploma – Grey College	Teacher, Hoopstad	
	Wessels	W.J.	35	Northern OFS	Unknown	Farmer	
Cape	Conroy	E.A.	21	NW Cape	Limited	Clerk, Johannesburg, Shop assistant, Britstown	
	De Villiers	P.J.	47	NW Cape	Unknown	Unknown	
	Kritzinger	P.H.	30	Karoo	Unknown	Farmer	

	Malan	W.C.	28	Karoo	Attended school in Franschhoek	Unknown	Afrikaander Cavalry Corps and Theron Scout in early phase of war
	Maritz	S.G.	24	SW Cape	Limited	See military background	ZAR Police, Volunteered service during Jameson raid
	Van Deventer	J.C.	26	Karoo		See military background	ZAR Artillery, Adjudant Officer

Chapter VIII

The final appraisal

"Napoleon never waited for his adversary to become prepared, but struck him the first blow."

Stonewall Jackson[1]

1. Introduction

In the previous two chapters the various factors responsible for the stress experienced by the Boers during the guerrilla phase of the Anglo-Boer War and the resources that that had to deal with the stress were discussed. The ability, or the want of ability, to cope with the different types of stress, were explored primarily from a psychological angle. However, from a historical viewpoint, these factors cannot be assessed in isolation. In order to gain a broad perspective of the psychological impact of guerrilla warfare on the Boer forces, an overview of the unfolding of events of approximately the last 20 months of the war is needed. With this in mind an outline of the development of war strategies and the implementation of operational tactics, as well as other issues of a political and personal nature, will be reviewed for that period. This will throw more light on the psychological developments that took place simultaneously. Hence this chapter embraces a final appraisal of the war. But it can only be meaningful if the theory of guerrilla warfare, as discussed in Chapter III, is taken into account.

The different issues that were involved will become clearer if the period known as the *guerrilla warfare phase* is divided into four sub-phases or stages. Stage 1 is the period lasting roughly from September 1900 until the end of January 1901, and deals fundamentally with the beginning of the guerrilla war, the strategy that the Boers had decided to use to continue the conflict. Stage 2 covers the late summer months of 1901 until the end of the winter, when the British regained some of the initiative and the first cracks appeared in the armour of the Boers. Stage 3 constitutes the watershed period, that lasted from the end of winter, through spring and early summer, until the end of 1901. Finally, stage 4 covers the decisive few months of the war in 1902. It should nonetheless be emphasised that this classification cannot be bound by rigid dates, because conditions varied throughout the theatre of war. This arrangement is simply a

[1] G.F.R. Henderson, *Stonewall Jackson and the American Civil War*, p. 317.

technique to demonstrate the flow of events and to give an indication of how the circumstances changed as the guerrilla war progressed.

2. Stage 1: Guerrilla war begins

From September/October 1900 to January 1901

The Free State's President M.T. Steyn advocated a new form of warfare when he visited President S.J.P. Kruger and members of his government in the eastern Transvaal by the end of the winter of 1900. He persuaded the ZAR leadership, first at Waterval Onder and again at Nelspruit and finally at the general *Krygsraad* at Hectorspuit, to implement his scheme of using the enemy's own ammunition against them and living from their food supplies.[2] During September 1900 the Executive Councils of the two republics had also agreed to implement new structures, concentrating on smaller commandos and sub-units. Furthermore officers would henceforth be appointed according to their leadership ability instead of the commandants and lower ranks being democratically elected as previously.[3] Although it was not called guerrilla warfare at that stage, the principle that was visualized at that point was very similar to that which is outlined in Chapter III.

When the ZAR government destroyed its remaining war supplies in October 1900 at Hectorspruit station, it was the symbolic ratification of the joint decision of the two governments to reorganise and to continue with guerrilla warfare. But at that point the future for the ZAR looked decidedly bleak, as was the case in the Free State after the Brandwater Basin debacle. According to Cloete only about 2 000 burghers, officers and government members left Hectorspuit to travel northwards in order to escape the British advance.[4] Many burghers who were not suited or who were not prepared to continue the battle, moved over the Mozambique border and were handed over to the Portuguese authorities.[5] Roland Schikkerling, Deneys Reitz

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2 F. Pretorius, *Kommandolewe tydens die Anglo-Boereoorlog 1899-1902*, p. 227; F. Rompel, *Marthinus Theunis Steijn,* pp.106-107.

3 F. Pretorius, *Kommandolewe*, p. 227.

4 P.G. Cloete, *The Anglo-Boer War a chronology*, p. 189.

5 R.W. Schikkerling, *Commando courageous (A Boer's diary)*, p. 65.

and Fritz Rothmann were among those present at Hectorspruit and lived through the subsequent dispersal of the Boer force. Rothmann listed the twelve serviceable field guns, as well as a few older field pieces, that were destroyed, and having been an artillerist himself he commented on the feeling of regret at losing these old friends. Schikkerling recounted the willful wrecking of a train by a drunken locomotive driver, an incident that resulted in the death of many horses and mules that could later have been of use to the fleeing Boers. Supplies and equipment were distributed among the burghers and the remainder was destroyed by fire or dumped into the river.[6] All these actions must have been a harrowing experience for all the burghers who experienced the changes.

It must be emphasised that at that stage a number of guerrilla-type encounters had already been carried out with great success in the Free State following the *Krygsraad* of 17 March 1900 at Kroonstad. These actions were initiated for the most part by General Christiaan de Wet. The successes at Sannaspost, Mostertshoek and Roodewal, as well as several attacks on the railway line north of Kroonstad,[7] were the first strides in the transitional stage between the initial conventional war and the guerrilla war phase that is discussed in Chapter IV. De Wet's confidence as leader and his conviction about the new strategy, was certainly bolstered by these achievements. And this was at a stage when the tide of the war was clearly turning against the Boers. His ability to encourage and, if necessary, to drive his men became clear to all, and this issue will receive closer attention in the next chapter.

The burghers who set out from Hectorspuit after the large scale destruction, cannot be described as stalwart fighting material. They had been on the retreat for many months, subjected to one misfortune after another. Although some followed an easier route over high-lying veld, most of them were obliged to trek in smaller groups through the unknown, dry and fever-infested Lowveld, in their attempt to reach Pietersburg. They were responsible for providing in their own needs as far as food, water and medicine were concerned. This was indeed an inauspicious beginning for the new guerrilla warfare.

The fact that Roberts – as well as some prominent British authors such as Sir Arthur Conan Doyle – considered that the war was over at this stage and that only a few clearing up operations

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6 R.W. Schikkerling, *Commando courageous*, pp. 63-64; D. Reitz, *Commando*, p. 125; M.E.R. (ed.), *Oorlogsdagboek van 'n Transvaalse burger te velde*, 17.9.1900, p. 85.

7 P.G. Cloete, *Chronology*, pp. 123-124, 156, 163.

were needed before the final chapters could be written, should not be regarded as altogether ludicrous.[8] The seemingly desperate actions taken by the Boers, following the forceful progress made by the British force into the eastern Transvaal, probably explains why Roberts judged that he might just as well hand over the command to Kitchener and return home. Kitchener could deal with the dreary routine details of installing a British administration.

But the tenacity and resolution of the Boers had not yet been crushed. In fact, in the weeks that followed several developments led to the reappearance of a positive spirit. In accordance with the decision taken at Waterval Onder, Botha reorganised his force as explained in Chapter V. This action alone once more brought some form of structure into an army that had all but collapsed. Burghers sensed that they were again part of a larger entity. Ludwig Krause, a jurist from the northern Transvaal, explained this new spirit that arose after the period of chaos in Pietersburg. General C.F. Beyers assigned him the task of uniting a number of independent scouting corps, but before accepting this responsibility he requested that Beyers consult with the men involved and was informed that they all welcomed him as their new leader.[9] Reitz, who had previously been a member of one of these corps, known as the Africander Cavalry Corps (A.C.C.), was one of those who accepted the invitation to become part of Krause's command.[10] Thus from a few loosely functioning groups a stable new unit was developed that soon became a significant factor in the war. In his entry of 5 November 1900 Rothmann mentioned a similar case. Major F.G.A. Wolmarans, previously of the ZAR State Artillery, whom Rothmann refers to as Majoor, had received orders to assemble all artillerists who were at a loose end after their guns had been destroyed. He was then to proceed with them to Bothasberg in order to form a new mounted troop.[11] It becomes clear that the reorganisation of the Boer force did not end with the appointment of new commanders for certain regions. Indeed, it also served to form new fighting units which no longer acted independently or were uncertain of their function.

These and other measures which were implemented at the time, were in accordance with the decisions taken in September 1900. Viewed from a psychological perspective they served to

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8 T. Pakenham, *The Boer War*, p. 458; R. Kruger, *Good-bye Dolly Gray*, p. 365, Bill.Nasson, *The South African War 1899 - 1902*, p. 190; A.C. Doyle, *The great Boer War*, p. 508.

9 J. Taitz (ed.), *The war memoirs of Commandant Ludwig Krause 1899 - 1900*, pp. 117-119.

10 D. Reitz, *Commando*, pp. 128-129.

11 M.E.R. (ed,), *Oorlogsdagboek*, 5.11.1900, pp. 89-90.

restore the burgher's sense of solidarity and security. This had previously been at a very low ebb. According to Baron and Byrne self esteem and interpersonal trust stand to benefit when a sense of greater security is perceived.[12] It would furthermore have led to a sense of increased manageability of the situation – one of the three components of Antonovsky's concept of sense of coherence (SOC).It can also be linked with Kobasa's views on a sense of control.[13]

At the same stage some strategic planning was undertaken. As mentioned in Chapter V, towards the end of October 1900, certain generals of the Transvaal and President Steyn of the Free State gathered at Cyferfontein to plan future strategy. It should perhaps be noted that the arrival of Botha and Steyn at Cyferfontein to discuss general policy and a new plan of action, was somewhat unexpected and unplanned.[14] At the time the ZAR government was on the move east of Ermelo and De Wet who had just completed his assistance to General P.J. Liebenberg at Frederickstad, was heading back to the Free State.[15] The fact that not all parties were present at Cyferfontein indicates that it did not have the full status of a planning conference. In fact Smuts experienced the days that they spent at Cyferfontein rather as refreshing and pleasant although they all realized that the British were well aware of the gathering.[16] It is natural to presume that the leaders not only discussed the greater strategy but also more immediate problems such as morale, discipline, supplies and the developing plight of the women and children. All these were daily problems that the leaders naturally had to deal with. Even though the meeting was not entirely representative, those present went away with a formulated plan, something to guide their decisions and actions in the days to come.[17]

It is significant that although this gathering took place towards the end of October 1900, De la Rey had been actively rebuilding the Boer force in the western districts since July and August. In his memoirs Smuts described the reaction of those Boers who had returned home after the British occupation of Pretoria and certain parts of the western Transvaal. They had thought that the war had been lost and had consequently signed the oath of neutrality . However, the return of their

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12 R.A. Baron and D. Byrne, *Social phychology*, pp. 308-309.

13 D.J.W. Strümpfer, "Salutogenesis a new paradigm", *South African Journal of Psychology* 20 (4), 1990, p. 267.

14 G. Nattrass and S.B. Spies (eds.), *Jan Smuts Memoirs of the Boer War*, p. 124.

15 L.S. Amery (ed.), *The Times history of the war in South Africa*, V, map at end of chapter XX.; P.G. Cloete, *Chronology*, p. 195.

16 G. Nattrass and S.B. Spies (eds.), *Jan Smuts*, pp. 123-124.

17 G. Nattrass and S.B. Spies (eds.), *Jan Smuts*, p. 133.

erstwhile comrades and leaders convinced them that the struggle had to continue. Their patriotism was revived and they responded to the new call to arms with alacrity. They had been deceived by Roberts' promises of compensation which were never honoured. Smuts was scathing in his criticism: "It was the antecedent promise of payment wilfully broken when the promise had served its purpose that disgraced the name of the military and disgusted the duped surrenders."[18] De la Rey soon proved to the burghers that he was determined to disrupt and harass the British, when he attacked Colonel Hore's garrison of colonials at Elands River. It has been claimed that this action was designed to relieve the pressure on De Wet.[19] But perhaps it is more appropriate to ask whether this was not De la Rey's formula to remotivate the burghers from the west. After all, that was a major part of his mission. According to Smuts after the siege at Elands River the awakening among the people of the west and the rush to arms exceeded all expectations. "The weak knees and weak hearts received a new access of strength and ardour and were flocking to the commandos ... youngsters ran away from the farms in order to join the commandos ... women laughed, and baked, and cooked ... and told yarns of the British occupation."[20] De la Rey was certainly accomplishing his mission, namely to rebuild the Boer forces in the western districts.

Table VIII – 1. Analysis of military actions during **Stage 1** of the guerrilla war – September 1900 to January 1901.[21]

	SE-TVL		**NE-TVL**		**W-TVL**		**N-TVL**		**N-OFS**		**S-OFS**		**Cape**	
	Column 1		**Column 2**		**Column 3**		**Column 4**		**Column 5**		**Column 6**		**Column 7**	
Mth	**Boer**	***Brit***	**Boer**	***Brit***	**Boer**	***Brit***	**Boer**	***Brit***	**Boer**	***Brit***	**Boer**	***Brit***	**Boer**	***Brit***
Sep '00	✚	●●● ● ✚ ✚	✚	●●					▲		✚●			
Oct	▲▲ ▲✚	Dr Dr		✚✚	(●✚) ✚✚	Dr ● ●✚ ✚			▲	Dr	✚✚ ✚✚ ✚✚ ✚			
Nov	✱✚ ✚	Dr ●	✚	✱✚		(✚●)			▲✚	●✚	✱✚	Dr ✚ ✚		
Dec	✚✚ ✚✚ ✚▲		✱		✱♣ ✚✚						✚	✚✚ Dr	●● ✚	✚
Jan '01	✱✚ ✚✚	Dr	▲▲ ▲		✱✱ ♣✚ ✚				✚	Dr		Dr	●	

18 G. Nattrass and S.B. Spies (eds.), *Jan Smuts*, p. 88.

19 P.G. Cloete, *Chronology*, p. 177.

20 G. Nattrass and S.B. Spies (eds.), *Jan Smuts*, p. 104.

21 P.G. Cloete, *Chronology*, *passim.*

Key:	**Boer**	= actions initiated by the Boers
	Brit	= actions initiated by the British
	✚	= light contact or skirmish
	✱	= major battle
	♣	= ambush
	Dr	= drive
	▲	= railway disruption
	●	= town burning or occupation

During those first months, as the Boer forces were becoming more accustomed to their new role as aggressors and became more forceful, several encounters took place that frustrated the enemy. *The Times history* comments about that period: "The first symptoms had appeared of a vigorous offensive revival among the Transvaal Boers ... In the period under review Viljoen's activities ... were the first murmur of the storm which was to break with violence in December."[22] It was a new storm that would take the British forces unawares; it would certainly require some time to adapt to the new Boer tactics.

One such encounter occurred in the southeastern Transvaal. Major-General H.L. Smith-Dorrien with a column of 1 000 infantry, supported by 250 mounted troops and six field guns were advancing towards Carolina when they came into contact with the Boers under General J.C. Fourie and Commandant H.F. Prinsloo. On the morning of 7 November 1900, after a day of skirmishes between the two sides, Smith-Dorrien decided that it would be best to retreat to Belfast, leaving the rearguard duty to the Royal Canadian Dragoons. By engaging in classical guerrilla tactics Fourie and his burghers executed a daring charge on the Canadians, but by sheer determination the gallant Dragoons managed to escape with the guns. In a renewed effort to capture the guns the Boers ran into a cluster of Canadians hidden in the summer grass. Commandant Prinsloo was mortally wounded and shortly thereafter General Fourie too received a bullet in the head. Three of the Canadians were awarded the Victoria Cross for their valour in saving their field guns, but it was a high price to pay because their casualties totalled 31 of the 95 men who were engaged in the encounter. On the other hand, the death of a Boer general as well as a commandant – two exceptionally brave officers – from one commando in a single battle, seriously affected the future operation of the Boers in the Carolina district.[23]

The calculated attack on 3 December 1900 by De la Rey and Smuts on a supply column

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22 L.S. Amery (ed.), *The Times history,* V, p. 60.

23 P.G. Cloete, *Chronology*, p. 198; E. Wessels, *Veldslae Anglo-Boereoorlog 1899-1902*, pp. 179-181; http:// www.Google.com, keyword: Witkloof.

under Major A.J. Wolridge-Gordon, provides another example of aggressive Boer action in the early stage of the guerrilla war. The convoy was transporting much-needed supplies to General R.G. Broadwood's troops near Rustenburg. According to Smuts the Boers themselves were sorely in need of new clothes and ammunition, and they were also looking forward to "... success on the field of battle ... when our untiring efforts would find their proper reward."[24] However the Boers eventually only succeeded in capturing the 138 wagons of the convoy. Their attempt to take the British guns had to be abandoned as ammunition and time were running out and the risk had simply become too great. They had to be satisfied with 15 wagons filled with selected supplies and nearly 2 000 oxen and simply burned the rest of the supplies. From the guerrilla perspective, De la Rey and Smuts followed the correct tactic, which is to strike at a weak victim and take as much as was needed. The burghers were not to be exposed unnecessarily in extended battles and should disappear before the enemy can be reinforced. Smuts concluded his report by stating that they "... slept that night with the profound pleasure which only the weary know".[25]

There are several other examples of guerrilla-type battles or skirmishes during the same period. One of these was General Ben Viljoen's attack on 19 November 1900 on the stations of Balmoral and Wilgerivier, east of Bronkhorstspruit. According to Cloete the Boers failed in their main objectives, capturing only an outlying post near Balmoral. But Schikkerling's account of the early morning battle and of the wild rush on the British fort tells much more about the perceptions of a guerrilla fighter. "There are few truer sayings than that fortune favours the brave. A determined rush is rarely unsuccessful, whereas halting or lying down at such time is nearly always fatal."[26] His portrayal of the encounter exhibits the adrenaline-charged determination and daring of the burghers.

Two other battles that also demonstrate the high spirit in the Boer ranks at the time are worth mentioning. The first was the well-known Battle of Nooitgedacht in the Magaliesberg where Major-General R.A.P. Clements had established a big camp in a kloof. At daybreak on 13 December 1900, De la Rey's western Transvaal commandos and the northern Transvaal commandos under Beyers attacked the British camp. However, because the attack was ill co-

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24 G. Nattrass and S.B. Spies, *Jan Smuts*, p. 142.

25 G. Nattrass and S.B. Spies, *Jan Smuts*, p. 146; T. Pakenham, *The Boer War*, pp. 476-477; G. van den Bergh, *24 Battles and battlefields of the North West Province*, pp. 97-101.

26 P.G. Cloete, *Chronology*, p. 199; R.W. Schikkerling, *Commando courageous*, 19.11.1900, pp. 94-102.

ordinated, the Boers were not able to crush Clements completely. Nevertheless, apart from capturing the British field guns the Boers inflicted serious damage. The British casualties were 295 killed or wounded and 368 prisoners were taken and large quantities of military supplies and livestock were captured. Smuts recounted that the victory was followed by "... indescribable pandemonium in which psalm-singing, looting and general hilarity mingled with explosions of bullets and bombs ... Kemp had unwisely set most of the wagons on fire ...". The encounter and its aftermath has been described by various authors, many of whom were present at the scene.[27] The other notable example was the Battle of Helvetia on 29 December where General Ben Viljoen and Commandant Chris Muller captured the 4.7 inch British naval gun known as "Lady Roberts". This feat generally afforded the Boers great pleasure and even inspired the State Secretary, F.W. Reitz, to write a poem which soon became a popular song, the words of which were recorded by Rothmann in his diary.[28] There can be no doubt that despite the difficulties encountered in the beginning of the guerrilla war, the latter months of Stage 1 revealed great enthusiasm among the Boers - principally those in the Transvaal. *The Times history* reports on six attacks by Boers on British garrisons early in January, that were "carried out with extraordinary punctuality but were not all pressed with equal vigour ... in every case fog permitted the enemy to get within close range ...".[29]

De Wet had escaped in spectacular fashion from the British hunt on him, a hunt which had commenced immediately after he and Steyn had averted capture at the Brandwater Basin. But apparently he had his own agenda and although he was a staunch advocate of the principle of guerrilla warfare, his actions did not conform with the plans laid at Cyferfontein.[30] He did not engage the same level of harassment and ransacking of the enemy as he had done previously. His new mission was to mobilize as many faint-hearted Free State burghers as possible and have them operate in their local areas while he himself planned to invade the Cape Colony with a selected group of men. The various records of events during this period show that De Wet, the chief-commandant of the Free State, furthermore spent precious time helping a Transvaal comrade at Frederickstad. From that time onwards he tried to keep out of the hands of the British, making

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27 D. Reitz, *Commando*, pp. 133-138; J. Taitz (ed.), *The war memoirs of Commandant Ludwig Krause 1899 - 1900*, pp.123, 126-127; J.F. Naudé, *Vechten en vluchten van Beyers en Kemp "bôkant" De Wet*, pp. 189-193; T. Pakenham, *The Boer War*, pp. 476-481; G. Nattrass and S.B. Spies (eds.), *Jan Smuts*, pp. 148-151.

28 M.E.R. (ed.), *Oorlogsdagboek*, 28.12.1900, pp. 104-107.

29 L.S. Amery (ed.), *The Times history*, V, pp. 124-125.

30 L. Scholtz, *Waarom die Boere die oorlog verloor het*, pp. 128, 142.

his way southwards to the Orange River.

The same cannot be said about the other Free State leader, General J.B.M. Hertzog, who was annoying the British in the occupied towns in the southwestern Free State.[31] No major battles took place, but the role of the guerrilla can be likened to that of a wasp – to irritate, to sting and then to disappear. Hertzog's campaign can therefore by no means be regarded as meaningless.

The destruction of rails and the capture of supply trains played an important role in the Boers' plan to fight the war with the enemy's food, their clothes and ammunition. A few examples of this important tactic will suffice. De Wet's wrecking of a train on 1 November near Wolwehoek in the Free State was followed by two incidents near Vlakfontein on the Natal line on 8 and 9 November. Another was De Wet's destruction of the line from Bloemfontein to Kroonstad near Doornspruit on 10 November, while he was on his way to the Orange River. To dampen the British spirit even more Colonel S.P.E. Trichard captured a train loaded with supplies and Christmas presents for the troops at Uitkyk Station near Middelburg.[32] It has been mentioned before that destruction of rails and the capturing of supply trains were frequent affairs during the early months of the guerrilla war. Cloete cites 137 incidents of rail damage for the six month period from August 1900 to January 1901.[33] Despite the danger that was always involved in these operations, the sabotaging of railway lines serves as another indication of the Boers' spirit of enterprise that marked the first stage. Nevertheless, Table VI-1 illustrates that the peak had been reached in the last three months of 1900.

Mao Zedong declared that fundamentals of guerrilla warfare are *time, space* and *will.*[34] Against the background of dynamic guerrilla operations the fundamental involving *space* in the early period should be closely investigated. Referring to the situation in October 1900, Ludwig Krause argued that the *conquest* and *annexation* of the two republics was : "... only *on paper*, that excepting the towns and a small stretch of country around them – say 0 to 10 miles radius, the enemy has not possession of the field, moving about as they like – the reader will understand how President Steyn was able to move about in this manner."[35] Krause made this claim about President

31 P.G. Cloete, *Chronology*, pp. 193, 194, 196.

32 P.G. Cloete, *Chronology*, pp. 191, 192, 199, 208.

33 P.G. Cloete, *Chronology*, *passim.*

34 R. Taber, *The war of the flea guerrilla warfaretheory and practice*, p. 27.

35 J. Taitz (ed.), *The war memoirs of Commandant Ludwig Krause 1899 - 1900*, p. 102.

Steyn's journey though the northern Transvaal on his return to the Free State. It illustrates that the Boers were largely at liberty to travel around the countryside at will. This freedom gave the commandos the opportunity to position themselves strategically, to move just about anywhere they chose, and to keep in contact with the many women who were still on the farms. In other words the Boers still experienced a sense of control over the situation. De Wet also had the opportunity to trek southwards, through virtually the entire Free State, in his quest to reach the Orange River. At that stage the British forces had not yet been able to restrict the mobility of the guerrilla fighters and consequently the Boers felt that they had control over the situation. Sheridan and Radmacher point out that having a sense of control over a difficult situation is associated with an increased ability to deal with stress.[36]

Notwithstanding the Boers' successes during those initial months and the fact that they were generally, perhaps instinctively, doing the right things in accordance with guerrilla warfare theory, a number of basic errors were made. One such mistake was their inclination to lay siege to their enemy, hoping to force them to surrender. This had often been the strategy in their battles against black communities in the 1880s and 1890s. The same tactic was applied at Potchefstroom during the 1880-1881 Anglo-Transvaal War [37] and it seemed natural that this should be the approach at Mafeking, Kimberley and Ladysmith during the first part of the Anglo Boer War.[38] When the new form of warfare was launched in the second half of 1900, the Boers were still very much inclined to this passive form of campaigning – a tactic which is contrary to the essence of guerrilla warfare. One of the first instances was De la Rey's siege of Colonel Hore's colonial troops at Elands River from 4 to 16 August 1900. Later there was De Wet's siege of Dewetsdorp from 18 to 25 November 1900.[39] Despite the fact that there are some logical motives for these tactics, the fact that the burghers were inactive and were tied down in one locality – when they were supposed to be mobile and aggressive – means that important principles of guerrilla warfare were ignored. In addition, the pattern which De Wet allowed to develop, namely to be pursued by the British while he was attempting to reach and cross the Orange River, whereas he should rather have been harassing the enemy, did not conform to the spirit of guerrilla warfare.

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36 C.L. Sheridan and S.A. Radmacher, *Health psychology - challenging the biomedical model*, p. 162.

37 G. van den Bergh, *24 Battles and battle fields of the North West Province*, pp. 28-40.

38 P.G. Cloete, *Chronology*, pp. 40, 41, 50.

39 P.G. Cloete, *Chronology*, pp. 177-179, 200-201.

During the period under reflection the scorched earth policy had not yet been fully implemented. This strategy was intended to denude the country of all means of survival and so to contain the Boer forces. The farm burnings were supposed to be a punishment to the Boers for the damage they had caused to rails, bridges and other British installations.[40] The camps that Emily Hobhouse learnt about on her arrival in Cape Town towards the end of this first stage of guerrilla war,[41] were indeed primarily refugee camps, although the term concentration camp soon became more appropriate. But many women were still on the farms, helping the commandos in any manner of ways. Kitchener's large-scale destruction of farms and the rounding up of women and children only really begun in earnest after his circular of 21 December 1900 to his commanding officers. This outlined ways to halt the threatening guerrilla war: " ... one which has been strongly recommended, and has lately been successfully tried on small scale, is the removal of all men, women and children, and natives from the districts which the enemy's bands persistently occupy. This has been pointed out by surrendered burghers who are anxious to finish the war ...".[42] The mere fact that the presence of women on the farms disturbed Kitchener indicates that they were indeed helping the so-called "roving bands".

If the above arguments are viewed collectively, then the conclusion must be that up to the end of the first stage in January 1901, the wide range of stressors discussed in Chapter VI had not yet become a serious obstacle to the Boers. Certain stressors would have been present from the beginning, factors such as the life-threatening character of war, the British superiority in manpower, the loss of the Boer capitals and major towns and the fact that the two republican governments were reduced to small groups of men moving from one sheltered site to the next. For some burghers the inner conflict resulting from having taken the oath of allegiance to the British Empre and subsequently breaking their pledge to resume fighting, might also have been a stressor. But this has to remain pure speculation. For many burghers and officers regular retreat from the persistent pressure of a pursuing enemy could have become stressful. The important offensive element of guerrilla warfare was forfeited and the issue of not having a sense of control arises once more. An example of this is the response of many burghers, firstly during the so-called First De Wet-hunt and later in his trek to invade the Cape Colony which led to the Second and

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40 F. Pretorius, *Die Anglo-Boereoorlog 1899 - 1902*, p. 54.

41 R. van Reenen (ed.), *Emily Hobhouse Boer War letters*, p. 34.

42 Quoted by A.M. Grundlingh, *Die "hendsoppers" en "joiners": die rasionaal en verskynsel van verraad*, p. 115; See also: Transvaal Archives Depot (TAD), Pretoria, A. 2044 *Journal of principal events connected with South Africa,* VII, p. 74.

Third De Wet-hunts.[43] The burghers had become the hunted instead of the hunters. It follows that they depended heavily on their GRRs in order to cope with the stress they were undergoing. But then too their knowledge of the veld, and their ability with rifle and horse would generally have gone a long way towards helping them to cope with the situation. On the other hand this does not imply that there were no cases of burghers laying down their arms, or that all burghers were prepared to continue the fight. Grundlingh mentions two cases of burghers of the northern Transvaal – A. Pohl and L.J. le Grange – who declared in October 1900 that they were no longer prepared to continue because the ZAR no longer had a legitimate government.[44] P.J. du Toit declared in his entry of 18 November 1900 that he was inclined to agree with the Klerksdorp lawyer, J.A. Neser, who recommended to General P.J. Liebenberg that the Boers under his command should lay down their arms. Despite these cases, which were probably only exceptions, by the end of January 1901 the influence of stressors had not yet taken a firm grip on the war and on the Boer forces.

In summary it can be claimed that during Stage 1 the Boers still had access to numerous GRRs – including forms of material, emotional and social support – and to the majority it seemed meaningful to continue with the war even though there were hardships and setbacks. From the entries made during January 1901 in their diaries by burghers such as Celliers, Schikkerling, Rothmann and Van der Walt, it can be deduced that although there were many tribulations a general feeling prevailed that they were still able to cope with the situation.[45]

3. Stage 2: The tide turns

From February 1901 to approximately August–September 1901

By the late summer of 1901 the tide was about to turn against the Boers. However, *The Times history* is of the opinion that during December and January the events in the Transvaal were

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43 J.H. Coetzee (ed.), "H.S. van der Walt: Oorlogsdagboek" in *Christiaan de Wet-Annale*, 8, day 274-day 277, pp.133-134; C.R. de Wet, *Three years war*, pp. 209-210, 218-220; N.J van der Merwe, *Marthinus Theunis Steyn, 'n lewensbeskrywing*, II, p. 68.

44 A.M. Grundlingh, *Die "hendsoppers" en "joiners"*, p. 33.

45 A.G. Oberholster (ed.), *Oorlogsdagboek van Jan F.E. Celliers*, 1.1.1901 to 31.1.1901, pp. 191-203; R.W. Schikkerling, *Commando courageous*, 1.1.1901 to 31.1.1901, pp. 121-141; M.E.R. (red.), *Oorlogsdagboek*, 1.1.1901 to 31.1.1901, pp. 108-131; J.H. Coetzee (ed.), "H.S. van der Walt: Oorlogsdagboek", in *Christiaan de Wet-Annale,* 8, day 231 to day 261, p. 131.

far from satisfactory from the British point of view and that the Boers had been the aggressors in almost every section.[46] Table VIII-2 illustrates that by February and March 1901 the fervour of the Boers' military offensive began to wane. By this time the British had had recovered from their first naive opinion that the war was virtually over and that they were only faced with a few roving bands. During the first months of Stage 2 they began to implement their new strategies which had a dramatic effect on events to come. The table below shows the sway in the control of the campaign. This transformation occurred gradually as the summer ended and winter approached.

By February 1901 the number of confrontations initiated by the Boers had declined significantly, while on the other hand the British actions were better planned and executed more purposefully. The random defensive tactics that they had been obliged to adopt during Stage 1, merely reacting to counter the offensive approach of the Boers, was gradually replaced by an aggressive strategy aimed at taking the initiative, following up on their successes and thus neutralising the Boers.

Table VIII – 2. Analysis of military actions during **Stage 2** of the guerrilla war – February 1901 to July 1901.[47]

	SE-TVL		**NE-TVL**		**W-TVL**		**N-TVL**		**N-OFS**		**S-OFS**		**Cape**	
	Column 1		**Column 2**		**Column 3**		**Column 4**		**Column 5**		**Column 6**		**Column 7**	
Mtth	**Boer**	***Brit***	**Boer**	***Brit***	**Boer**	***Brit***	**Boer**	***Brit***	**Boer**	***Brit***	**Boer**	***Brit***	**Boer**	***Brit***
Feb	✱ ✚	✚ Dr Dr ● ●	▲	Dr		✱ ✚ ✚ Dr					▲ ▲	✚ ✚	✚ ✚	✚ ✚
Mar		✚ Dr-cont		✚	✱ ♣	✚						✚ Dr	●	
Apr		Dr-cont	▲ ▲ ✚	Dr ● ● ✚	✱	✚		● ● ✚ ✚	✚	Dr Dr ●	▲	✚	✚	
May	✚			Dr-cont	✚ ✱	Dr Dr Dr ✚				Dr			✚ ✚ ✚	✚
Jun	✱		▲ ▲		✚				✚	Dr			(✚●) ✚	✚
Jul	▲ ●			✚ ✚	✚ ✚	✚ Dr	▲		✚	✱ Dr Dr			✚	✚ ✚ ✚ Dr

Key: **Boer** = actions initiated by the Boers

46 L.S. Amery (ed.), *The Times history*, V, p. 125.

47 P.G. Cloete, *Chronology*, *passim.*

Brit = actions initiated by the British
✚ = light contact or skirmish
✱ = major battle
♣ = ambush
Dr = drive
▲ = railway disruption
● = town burning or occupation
cont = action continued

This was the stage when *drives* became the main British strategy, under the command of the newly appointed British Commander-in-Chief Lord Kitchener. The first of these was the great drive in the southeastern Transvaal aimed against Botha and his commandos (see Map V – 1). It commenced on 27 January 1901, when 21 000 British troops with 58 field guns under five commanders began their march eastwards from five points south and east of Pretoria.[48] The starting point was a line drawn north and south from the Delagoa railway line to the Natal line through Springs.[49] The main purpose was to sweep the country in an easterly direction and thereby enveloping and destroying the Boers in the vicinity of Ermelo or if necessary to drive them against the Swazi and Zulu borders and so force them to surrender.[50]

Initially four of the five columns were under French's command, but as the net tightened he took command of the entire operation and it became known as *French's drive*. It was an enormous operation, with great concentrations of troops and support systems sprawled over the undulating Highveld. But there were only the two railway lines skirting the operational area to supply the columns with the enormous quantities of war materials that were needed. Subsequent transport from the railway stations to the troops had to be undertaken by ox wagon. It should be kept in mind that the operation took place during that particular late summer when there was exceptionally high and continuous rainfall over a wide area, particularly in the eastern Transvaal Highveld. The logistical magnitude of this operation would clearly have made it highly vulnerable and there should have been ample opportunity for guerrilla fighters to strike at their enemy. To what extent these opportunities were seized is unclear, although Table VIII – 2 does not reflect any major encounters of this nature.

The one notable encounter where the Boers took the initiative did not help to improve their

48 P.G. Cloete, *Chronology*, pp. 218-219.

49 L.S. Amery (ed.), *The Times history*, V, p. 159.

50 L.S. Amery (ed.), *The Times history*, V, p. 159.

waning morale. On 4 February 1901 a 20 km gap developed between the columns of Colonel W.P. Campbell and that of Major-General H.L. Smith-Dorrien near Lake Chrissie. General Louis Botha, with a strong detachment of the Carolina, Ermelo, Witbank and Pretoria Commandos, about 2 000 men in all, managed to slip back through the gap. The rest of the eastern Transvaal commandos, about 1 500 burghers, continued their retreat eastwards. On the night of 6 February three British regiments were camped near the tiny village of Bothwell, on the northern shore of the large pan, known as Lake Chrissie (Map V– 1). Under cover of darkness Botha's burghers approached the village from the direction of Ermelo and at about 02.50 a tremendous fusillade broke out near the encampment of the West Yorkshire Regiment. According to *The Times history* it was a pitch dark and misty night and the sudden rifle fire caused the horses of the nearby 5th Lancers and Imperial Light Infantry to stampede, contributing to the general confusion.[51]

Celliers, who was present as part of the Pretoria Commando, also recorded in his diary that – typical of the eastern Highveld – it was a cold night with wild, low, misty clouds racing across the moon.[52] The Boers had tied up their horses and approached the camp quietly on foot, until heavy rifle fire broke out from both sides, sometimes as close as 30 or 40 yards from where they were. There was no rocky shelter on the grass hillock and they were forced to fall flat in the grass – which in late summer would normally have been high with seed. *The Times history* sums up the battle with the following paragraph: "Botha had staked his success on surprise and a crushing volume of magazine fire. A very short time sufficed to prove that his calculations had failed. His gallant men were falling fast, and once the golden moment for an assault had gone by, persistence was futile."[53] This seems to confirm with Schikkerling's opinion that to fall down instead of continuing the determined rush, is nearly alway fatal.[54]

When the Boers decided to retreat, they found that their horses had stampeded and many men were forced to flee on foot. Reitz, who for once was a spectator, commented: "... for by sunrise came the trampling of many riderless horses, followed later by galloping riders ...".[55] The outcome of the night's attack was disheartening. The Boers had not achieved their goal of occupying the British camp at Bothwell; moreover they had been forced to flee in disarray. Reitz

51 L.S. Amery (ed.), *The Times history*, V, pp. 167-168.

52 A.G. Oberholster (red.), *Oorlogsdagboek van Jan F.E. Celliers*, 6.2.1901, p. 205.

53 L.S. Amery (ed.), *The Times history*, V, p. 168.

54 R.W. Schikkerling, *Commando courageous*, 19.11.1900, p. 95.

55 D. Reitz, *Commando*, p. 151.

added that when it grew light they could see the English camp lying intact below. Botha, stoically, was not discouraged, and commented that there were bound to be ups and downs. Celliers, on the other hand, was less complacent. According to him the Boers had lost 40 men killed or wounded and he and his brother had both lost their horses. Not only had they now become footsloggers but to add insult to injury he had lost his coat and the rain was pelting down again. Celliers concluded that it was a great pity that such a brave charge had ended in panic. *The Times history* reported that the British casualties were 75 killed or wounded and the loss of 300 horses, either killed or stampeded. The Boer losses were reported as 80. The result of the encounter was inconclusive. Smith-Dorrien's mobility had been severely checked by the loss of his horses and Botha, for his part, was forced to disperse his men and leave the small groups to forage for themselves. In his diary Celliers' related how his commando set off on a disheartened trek back to the northwest.[56]

Whether it was the indecisive result of the battle at Lake Chrissie that prompted Botha to accept Kitcherer's invitation to attend peace talks at Middleburg at the end of February 1901 is not clear. What ever the case may be, on 8 February Mrs Annie Botha, Louis Botha's wife, received permission from Kitchener to visit her husband and on 22 February she returned to Pretoria with a letter from Botha to Kitchener.[57] The fact that Botha was prepared to partake in peace-talks following Kitchener's suggestion, disturbed many burghers and especially the Free State leaders, who had not been consulted in the matter.

By the middle of April, when French's supply lines became threatened, he abandoned Piet Retief and moved northwards to the Delagoa railway line. The extended drive over the eastern Transvaal Highveld had eventually come to an end. Despite the many problems of mud and the transport that became bogged down, the drive had not been without some measure of success. The British had taken 1 332 Boers, consisting of combatants, non-combatants, old men and boys, out of the field of action. They also captured 272 000 rounds of ammunition, between 7 000 and 8 000 horses and 2 300 vehicles.[58] This, from a guerrilla's point of view, represented a serious loss.

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56 A.G. Oberholster (red.), *Oorlogsdagboek van Jan F.E. Celliers*, 8.2.1901, p. 208; P.G. Cloete, *Chronology*, pp. 221-222; D. Reitz, *Commando*, p. 151.

57 P.G. Cloete, *Chronology*, pp. 222, 225.

58 L.S. Amery (ed.), *The Times history*, V, pp. 180-181.

Kitchener was determined to break the back of the Boer resistance, which was continually tormenting him. His next target was the Boer force under General Ben Viljoen in the northeastern Transvaal. Unlike French's sweep of the southeastern Highveld, this drive was to be a three-pronged operation under the command of Lieutenant-General Sir Bindon-Blood. The one column was to approach southwards from Pietersburg, the second would move northwards from Middelburg and Belfast, while a third force was to move in from Lydenburg and Witklip in the east.[59] The aim was to clear the mountainous area between Dullstoom and Roossenekal (see Map V– 2) of Boers and remove the women who were supporting the guerrillas. In Chapter V it is made clear that the topography of this region differs considerably from the gentle undulating grass hills of the Highveld. The task that awaited the British columns was entirely different from that in the southeastern Transvaal.

At the time of French's drive the ZAR government was located at Tautesburg, east of Roossenekal. According to Meijer the preparations for Bindon-Blood's drive in the northeastern region soon became known to Botha and the ZAR government and consequently they decided to move south crossing the Delagoa line on 6 April 1901. They proceeded to the vicinity of Ermelo, thus escaping the danger of being trapped by the British columns.[60] Viljoen himself did not flee and in Chapter VI there is a discussion on how Schikkerling and Rothmann experienced the increase of British troops in their area in this period. Suddenly they too became the hunted, hiding in valleys and wooded country. Meijer claimed that there was a certain degree of indecision and lack of leadership, an opinion based largely based on Schikkerling's report of events. Viljoen left his burghers to their own devices – divided up into small groups.[61] From the guerrilla's point of view the dispersal of one's men when the enemy is applying pressure, is the correct thing to do. However, the impression grows that the Boer generals and the government steadily moved into a mode of hide and evade, instead of employing tactics of opportunistic offensiveness and aggression. They were now fighting from the back foot, defending, evading, hiding and merely trying to survive. It was this type of negative approach that allowed the British to gradually take over the initiative.

The situation in the western Transvaal where Lord Methuen was constantly criss-crossing

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59 J.W. Meijer, *Generaal Ben Viljoen, 1868 - 1917*, pp. 200-202.

60 J.W. Meijer, *Generaal Ben Viljoen, 1868 - 1917*, p. 201; P.G. Cloete, *Chronology*, p. 233.

61 J.W. Meijer, *Generaal Ben Viljoen, 1868 - 1917*, p. 203.

the region in an attempt to neutralise De la Rey and his generals, was significantly different. Until May 1901 the Boers were still in a position to initiate a number of important battles, such as the attack on Lichtenburg on 2 and 3 March – which only failed because of one general's independent and impulsive action. On 22 March De la Rey with 400 burghers conducted a charge on the Imperial Light Horse at Geduld, firing from the saddle as they went. The ILH escaped in the nick of time and eventually managed to fight their way through to Hartbeesfontein. Then too, on 22 April a commando attacked a British convoy with 400 escorts, at Platberg near Klerksdorp. The escort put up a gallant defence, allowing the convoy and the two guns to escape.[62] It is clear that the growing lack of enterprise shown by the Boers elsewhere had not yet reached the west. On 1 May Methuen launched a drive to clear the Lichtenburg/Venterdorp/Klerksdorp triangle. This was a short-lived and unproductive manoeuvre because by 11 May Methuen abandoned his drive having taken less than 100 prisoners.[63]

The various Transvaal operations were not the only military enterprises that occupied Kitchener's attention. In the last days of January 1901 De Wet left Doornberg near Winburg with 2 200 men, one field gun and a pom-pom, on his second crusade to invade the Cape Colony. The British were aware of this development and Kitchener felt compelled to divert two columns that had been designated to join French's drive, in order to protect the Cape Colony from an invasion by the dreaded De Wet. Lieutenant-General N.G. Lyttelton was appointed to take charge of the force around Naauwpoort.[64] According to De Wet himself, since leaving Doornberg they were pressed by British units from all sides, trying to impede the Boer progress.[65] The main adversary was Major-General C.E. Knox, the officer of whom De Wet conceded: " My old friend, General Knox, whose duty it had been to prevent me entering Cape Colony on a previous occasion, was once again entrusted with the same task. Any person who has had dealings with this General will acknowledge that he is a rather troublesome friend; for not only does he understand the art of marching by night, but he is also rather inclined to be overbearing when he measures his strength with that of his opponents."[66] De Wet did not say so in as many words, although President Steyn

62 P.G. Cloete, *Chronology*, pp. 227-228, 231, 235.

63 P.G. Cloete, *Chronology*, pp. 237, 238.

64 P.G. Cloete, *Chronology*, p. 219.

65 C.R. de Wet, *Three years war,* pp. 197-199.

66 C.R. de Wet, *Three years war,* p. 199.

did,[67] but he and his commando were hunted from the very beginning of their expedition. His burghers were constantly under the pressure of pursuit and the spark of aggression had weakened.[68] The continuous hardship and peril caused ongoing stress – extending the stage of resistance (SR) according to the GAS-theory and causing prolonged demands on the hormonal supply of each individual. The fact that they were in a situation where they probably felt that they were not in control, would naturally have aggravated the state of affairs.

Despite this general negative attitude, General C.C. Froneman and his burghers, who were at the time moving towards Zand Drift, between Norvalspont and Hopetown, captured a train close to Jagersfontein Station and the burghers were able to seize much-needed supplies, including blankets, saddles and ammunition, before they destroyed the train.[69] This episode was a pinpoint of light in the all-but-forgotten guerrilla strategy of the Boers.

The rest of De Wet's expedition appeared to have been one continuous flight, breaking through cordons and experiencing narrow escapes. Eventually, on 10 February 1901, De Wet and those who were still with him crossed the Orange River at Zand Drift into the Cape Colony. With him was President M.T. Steyn, Commandant (later General) W.C. Malan and Corporal (also later General) S.G. Maritz. The heavy rains of early 1901 had begun and the British were hard on their heels. Steyn's summary of the expedition namely that a vast force was concentrated behind them and the burghers and horses were exhausted is quoted in Chapter VI.[70] This was certainly not the type of guerrilla action visualised by De Wet when he began the *small war* at Sannaspost and Roodewal.

One other strategy upon which the Boers still relied heavily was the disruption of enemy rail transport. This not only upset the enemy's supply of war goods needed in the vast interior of southern Africa, but was also a source for their own much-needed necessities. However as Stage 2 progressed the British began exercising better control over this vulnerable aspect of their campaign. The rail disruptions totalled 137 during Stage 1 (September 1900 to January 1901) but Cloete reports only 82 disruptions in Stage 2 (February 1901 to July 1901). Table VI–1 illustrates this clearly. In the northeastern Transvaal the names of Captain Jack Hindon, Captain Henry

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67 N.J. van der Merwe, *Marthinus Theunis Steyn, 'n lewensbeskrywing*, II, p. 68.

68 J.H. Coetzee (ed.) "H.S. van der Walt: Oorlogsdagboek" in *Christiaan de Wet-Annale*, 8, day 274, p. 133.

69 C.R. de Wet, *Three years war*, pp.200-201; P.G. Cloete, *Chronology*, p. 221.

70 N.J. van der Merwe, *Marthinus Theunis Steyn, 'n lewensbeskrywing,* II, p. 68.

Slegtkamp and Commandant S.P.E. Trichardt were well known for the leading role they played in train disruptions. Naturally the British realised that to counter these setbacks the blockhouse lines should be systematically and, above all, rapidly extended, with connecting barbed wire entanglements to make the system more efficient.[71] This new development presented yet another quandary for the Boers just at a time the tide was gradually turning against them.

Stage 2 was also the period when the distrust between the two allies, the ZAR and the Free State, began to take on serious proportions. It began with Botha's much publicised talks with Kitchener at Middelburg at the end of February 1901, where Botha eventually turned down the British proposal. The ZAR leaders were still irresolute and a *Krygsraad* was held on 10 May 1901 at De Emigratie, where the ZAR decided to renew peace negotiations and to contact President Kruger in Europe to ask his advice.[72] Following this development they were of course under an obligation to discuss the matter with their Free State partners. A meeting took place at Waterval on 20 June 1901, where President M.T. Steyn, General C.R. de Wet, General J.B.M. Hertzog and General J.H. de la Rey were all present. Steyn was once again ready to take the ZAR leaders to task about their unwillingness to continue the struggle and was about to declare that the Free State was prepared to continue the war on its own. However, an about turn came following the tone set by President Kruger's answer, in which he seriously urged the burghers to continue the struggle. The ZAR leaders thereupon agreed that no peace would be made and no peace conditions accepted that would endanger the independence of the two republics.[73] But a crack had now appeared in the bell of solidarity. Its sound would henceforth be one of mutual distrust. Cracked bells don't ring true.

Associated with the strained relationship between the two partners was the conviction held by many leaders and burghers that there was still a possibility of international intervention. This hope faded as the tide turned against the Boers. It is notable that Bruce Catton, an author on the history of the American Civil War, aptly claimed : "European recognition and intervention – that will-o'-the-wisp which still flickered across the Confederate horizon – could never be won by defensive warfare."[74] This view seems to have been equally applicable to the situation in the

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71 P.G. Cloete, *Chronology*, pp. 227, 247.

72 P.G. Cloete, *Chronology*, p. 238.

73 L. Scholtz, *Generaal Christiaan de Wet as veldheer*, p. 261.

74 B. Catton, *The Civil War*, p. 131.

Transvaal and the Free State more than three decades later.

Another issue which began to weigh increasingly on the burghers on commando was Kitchener's escalation of the scorched earth policy. The burghers knew about the new camps that had been so hastily erected and many of the burghers had seen the women being carried away, frequently by means that were quite ungentlemanly.[75] It was also common for the men to worry about the fate of their families who were in the camps. The burghers were often witness to homesteads and farms being destroyed, or came upon the grim results of these acts. Although it has been claimed that the British actions only served to make the burghers more determined – as Naudé's brave quote in Chapter VI reflects – it was without a doubt a painful awareness that they constantly carried in their heart of hearts. It was certainly a crushing blow to any remaining morale. From a more practical angle, the scorched earth strategy was systematically depriving the burghers of food, or at least of sources where food could be foraged, and this did not only apply to the burghers themselves, but also to their horses, cattle and mules. This was, after all, what Kitchener was aiming to accomplish.

At that stage Kitchener certainly had more than enough men at his disposal to execute his scorched earth policy. *The Times history* claims that by May 1901 the total British army in South Africa, including the defence forces of the Cape Colony, was 240 000 strong.[76] This massive number shows just how serious the British authorities were to destroy the "few roving bands" of Boers who were frustrating their war effort. *The Times history* also discusses at some length the role played by surrendered Boers – they referred to them as a lower class of Boer – and by black people in aiding the British to implement their scorched earth strategy.[77] According to this source both these groups were used as scouts, transport drivers and labourers. The debate about Kitchener's use of surrendered Boers and black people is also covered by Grundlingh, Nasson and Warwick and it becomes clear that every effort was made to break the spirit of the Boers.[78]

Compared to the early months of the summer, November and December 1900, the late summer, January to March 1901, brought about the unusual rainfall pattern discussed in Chapter

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75 M.E.R. (ed.), *Oorlogsdagboek*, 25.4.1901, 28.6.1901, pp. 173, 193-194.

76 L.S. Amery (ed.), *The Times history*, V, p. 248.

77 L.S. Amery (ed.), *The Times history*, V, p. 249.

78 A.M. Grundlingh, *Die "hendsoppers"* en *"joiners"*, pp. 201-233; Bill Nasson, *The South African War 1899 - 1902*, pp. 215-216, 224-225; P. Warwick, *Black people and the South African War 1899 - 1902*, pp. 22-23.

VI. This pattern prevailed over almost the entire area where war was waged, causing unforeseen hardships and obstacles. The discomfort of constantly living and sleeping in the soggy veld, preparing food in the rain with wet wood as fuel and the effect on the health of the weaker or infirm burghers, men such as Rothmann and Du Toit, was significant. The high incidence of horse sickness due to the influx of midges in the many wet, swampy areas, was a secondary disadvantage. Additional problems were experienced with mobility in the muddy low lying areas and when brimming rivers had to be crossed. De Wet experienced this dilemma in his effort to return to the Free State between 19 February and 28 February 1901. For men who were sleeping out in the open veld, the appearance of the Great Comet of 1901 in April and May must have seemed like an omen. Many different interpretations were attached to its appearance at that specific time and it was even optimistically suggested that it signified the coming of peace.[79] Superstition is mentioned in Chapter VI as being a stressor, simply because it is a reflection of uncertainty and vacillation within the individual.

After the extremely wet late summer and autumn, and with their daily requirements becoming increasingly scarce as the scorched earth policy took effect, it was natural for the burghers to reflect on the coming winter. At this stage there were in fact only two options open to them. Either they believed so strongly in the cause for which they were fighting and were prepared to endure the coming hardships. For these men perseverence was the only possible answer. Schikkerling must have held this opinion. In Chapter VI it was stated that on 31 May 1901, after listening to Viljoen's words, he declared: "For myself, I do not see eye to eye with the general. Having reached this pass, and everything being now lost save honour, we may as well go to the last extremity by continuing to fight as long as humanly possible."[80] Alternatively, there was the option of avoiding all the hardships and surrendering to the enemy. Reasons to justify such action were numerous. It was during May 1901 that Du Toit decided that he had had enough of the "mugs game" and joined the British in Ventersdorp. He was by no means an exception. The numbers given by Grundlingh and quoted in Chapter VI illustrate clearly that the approaching winter was indeed a weighty obstacle to many of those burghers that Weber called "the fickle and the doubting".[81] It also corresponds with the statistics given in the *Journal of the principal events connected with South Africa*, namely that 4 293 Boers

79 D. Reitz, *Commando*, p. 170.

80 R.W. Schikkerling, *Commando courageous*, 31.5.1901, p. 213.

81 M. Weber, *Eighteen months under General de la Rey*, p. 95.

surrendered during the six months of Stage 2 while 5 448 burghers were taken prisoner in the same period.[82] According to the source, there were 14 624 men in "refugee" camps on 1 July 1901, while one month later, on 31 July 1901, it reported a total of 15 359 men.[83] It should be recognized that these figures included all adult male republicans, including those who were too old or too ill to do commando service. The sudden increase in July should probably be attributed to burghers whose GRRs had by that time been depleted to such a level that further coping became impossible.

An overview of Stage 2 shows that although the enthusiasm which was demonstrated by the Boers in Stage 1 was gradually on the wane as the enemy introduced new strategies, the majority of the Boers were still willing to continue fighting, striving to stay free and mobile and looking for means of survival. But the basic elements of guerrilla warfare were becoming increasingly difficult to apply, and stressors were beginning to mount. In fact for the average burgher his life had been invaded by a multitude of stressors. His sense of helplessness at the British superiority in numbers, the hardships he was obliged to endure due to the incessant rain, his concern for his wife and family and the dread caused by the constant hiding or fleeing all weighed heavily on him. The statistics above indicate that many could no longer cope with the stress and decided to yield, to lay down their arms and to abandon the struggle.

Moreover, by the end of June 1901 there were 15 377 Boers – relatives, neighbours, friends and comrades of those who were still doing battle – who were held as prisoners of war, 13 060 of whom were in camps in far-off countries.[84] The fear of the unknown is explained by Baum *et al.* as the individual being concerned about future dangers, in other words, the anticipatory appraisal of a threat without knowing what the situation actually holds.[85] Regardless of all these menaces there were still several thousand burghers, who like Roland Schikkerling, believed that they had nothing more to lose except their honour and who were prepared to carry on into the period that has been outlined as Stage 3.

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82 Transvaal Archives Depot (TAD), Pretoria, A. 2044, *Journal of principal events connected with South Africa*, IX, X, XI and XII, *passim.*

83 TAD: A. 2044, *Journal of principal events connected with South Africa,* XI, pp. 1, 39.

84 TAD: A. 2044, *Journal of principal events connected with South Africa*, X, p. 47.

85 A. Baum, R.J. Gatchel, D.S. Krantz, *An introduction to health psychology*, p. 80.

4. Stage 3 – The watershed

August 1901 to December 1901

As the winter of 1901continued the daily hardships became increasingly trying for the burghers who were still *te velde*. Rothmann made numerous entries during August about the many British patrols and black scouts that were active in the northeastern Transvaal. There was a constant need for Boers to hide in kloofs with their livestock and wagons. It was cold, rainy and misty and they had little sleep.[84] Celliers' entries for that period focussed on the difficulties of fleeing over the Magaliesberg to the north into the Bushveld, with the British constantly at their heels. No sooner had they settled down, when the order "Inspan!" was heard. In his diary Du Toit confirmed that in August 1901 – soon after he had crossed over to the British – he was involved in clearing the Magaliesberg of Boers and women, and on 17 August 1901 he recorded that blockhouses were being built on the mountain range.[85] The Boers were doing their utmost just to stay out of the enemy's net. Table VIII – 3 below illustrates that it was only in September 1901 that meaningful offensive action, as seen from the Boers' perspective, was resumed.

Table VII – 3. Analysis of military actions during **Stage 3** of the guerrilla war – August 1901 to December 1901.[86]

	SE-TVL		**NE-TVL**		**W-TVL**		**N-TVL**		**N-OFS**		**S-OFS**		**Cape**	
	Column 1		**Column 2**		**Column 3**		**Column 4**		**Column 5**		**Column 6**		**Column 7**	
Mth	Boer	*Brit*	Boer	*Brit*	Boer	*Brit*	Boer	*Brit*	Boer	*Brit*	Boer	*Brit*	Boer	*Brit*
Aug		✚✚	▲✚	✚		●				✚	✚ (Bh)	Dr Dr ✚✚	✚✚	✚
Sep	✱✚✚ ✚	✚✚✚ ✚Dr Dr			✱✚			✚✚		✚✚	✚✚	Dr ✚	✚✚ ✚	♣✚ ✚✚ ✚
Oct	✚✚✚ ✚✱	✚✚✚ ✚	✚Bh		✱	Dr	✚	✚		✱			●✚ ✚✚ ✚✚ ✚	✚✚
Nov		✚✚✚		✚					✚	Dr ✚ ✚			✚✚ ✚✚	✚✚
Dec	Bh ✚ ✚	✚✚✚ ✚✚	♣		✚✚	✚✚			✱✱✚ ✚✚✚	Dr		✚✚✚	✚✚	

84 M.E.R. (ed.), *Oorlogsdagboek*, 1.8.1901 to 30.8.1901, pp. 206-216.

85 J.P. Brits (ed.), *Diary of a National Scout 1900 - 1902*, 6.8.1901 to 21.8.1901, pp. 64-66; A.G. Oberholster (ed.) *Oorlogsdagboek van Jan F.E. Celliers*, 3.8.1901 to 23.8.1901, pp. 269-279.

86 P.G. Cloete, *Chronology*, *passim.*

Key:	Boer	= actions initiated by the Boers
	Brit	= actions initiated by the British
	✻	= light contact or skirmish
	✱	= major battle
	♣	= ambush
	Dr	= drive
	▲	= railway disruption
	●	= town burning or occupation
	Bh	= attack on blockhouse

On 3 September 1901 Smuts and his small band of only 200 burghers at last managed to commence their journey to infiltrate the Cape Colony, while a few days later, on 7 September, Botha left Ermelo with 1 000 burghers to invade Natal. As explained in Chapter V both these manoeuvres were the outcome of the decisions originally taken at the Cyferfontein meeting of October 1900, when one of the two main resolutions was to take the war into the enemy's territory. However this planning had been done a year earlier and in the intervening months the tide of war had certainly changed. The necessity of implementing such an invasion remained and it was reiterated during the meeting between the leaders of the two republics which took place at Waterval on 20 June 1901 where General De la Rey was instructed to send General Smuts with a well-supplied commando to the Cape.[87]

A cursory glance at the table also reveals that the military actions initiated by the Boers were mainly small skirmishes, the bulk of which took place in the Cape where a number of small rebel commandos were stirring the hornet's nest. A few examples of these encounters will suffice. Commandant S.G. (Manie) Maritz and his commando attacked Vanrhynsdorp on 7 August, but their major achievement was the seizure of three heavily laden supply wagons. Maritz and his commando went as far as Darling, only 60 kilometres from Cape Town, presumably the most southernly point reached by republicans during the war.[88] On 17 September 1901 Smuts, while still on his way to the eastern Cape, clashed with a squadron of 17th Lancers at Modderfontein in the Tarkastad district. Smuts achieved a resounding victory, but his triumph was cut short by the arrival of more lancers and he was forced to leave his prisoners behind and destroy the two captured guns.[89] On 15 October Commandant J.L. (Jaap) van Deventer overpowered a column of Somerset East District Mounted Troops at Doornbosch where he captured 210 troops and 220 horses.[90] On 28 November four commandos – those of W.C. (Wynand) Malan, Manie Maritz, Jaap

87 L. Scholtz, *Generaal Christiaan de Wet as veldheer*, pp. 261-262.

88 P.G. Cloete, *Chronology*, pp. 258, 272.

89 W.K. Hancock, *Smuts the sanguine years 1870 - 1919*, p. 139.

90 P.G. Cloete, *Chronology*, p. 271.

van Deventer and H.W. (Hendrik) Lategan – attempted to seize the remount depot at Tonteldooskolk, 85 kilometres northwest of Calvinia. Although they were unsuccessful, and a standoff lasting several days followed, they managed to capture 300 horses, a most meaningful accomplishment.[91] Many of these encounters were no more than casual skirmishes, and contributed little in general military terms. But their success lay in the fact that the British authorities were forced to react and consequently to spread their manpower over vast, arid areas far away from the critical war arenas in the republics.

Despite their achievements, the invading republicans and their Cape rebel comrades received a number of setbacks when certain spirited leaders were captured. Commandant J.C. Lötter was born in the Cape Colony and was thus a British subject and consequently a rebel. He was captured by Colonel H.J. Scobel near Cradock on 5 September 1901 and was executed on 12 October.[92] Commandant G.J. Scheepers was taken captive on 11 October 1901 while he was seriously ill. From the description given by T. and D. Shearing the unknown illness had been plaguing Scheepers for some time. The diagnosis was a mystery, and varied from suspected typhoid to slow poisoning, while Scheepers himself mentioned on 3 October that he had been sick since 28 September and that his pain had become so acute that he could not mount his horse. At the time his commando was under severe pressure from the Hussars. Shearing claims that the "British was handling the commando roughly." and "Now the Hussars were waiting for them at every turn."[93] It could well have been that he had psychologically reached the extreme stage of exhaustion (SE) (or even that the point of complete burnout, as discussed in Chapter II, had been reached). This issue is discussed in more detail in the next chapter. Although Scheepers was a ZAR subject, he was sentenced to death and executed on 18 January 1902 at Graaff-Reinet.[94] A third Boer leader to be captured was General P.H. Kritzinger. This happened on 16 December, after he had been seriously wounded at Hanover Road Station. Fortunately for him he was acquitted of the charges of murder and was then classified as a prisoner of war.[95] These incidents are mentioned to illustrate two important aspects. Firstly, that the British and colonial forces in the Cape Colony were very serious in their pursuance of the rebels and invading republicans. Secondly the Cape Afrikaners who ventured to take up their weapons and confront the British, were exposing themselves to

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91 P.G. Cloete, *Chronology*, p. 280.

92 T. and D. Shearing, *Commandant Johannes Lötter and his rebels*, pp. 31, 41; P.G. Cloete, *Chronology*, pp. 263, 271.

93 T. and D. Shearing, *Commandant Gideon Scheepers and the search for his grave*, pp.136-137.

94 T. and D. Shearing, *Commandant Gideon Scheepers and the search for his grave*, pp. 140-141, 167-169.

95 P.G. Cloete, *Chronology*, pp. 283, 317.

conviction as traitors.

Smuts' original aim to rally the Cape Afrikaners and thus form a significant force in the Cape Colony, led him through the eastern Cape, into the Little Karoo in the southern Cape until eventually he reached the farm Soetwater between Calvinia and Nieuwoudtville in December 1901. It was a long, meandering trek, marked by many encounters with the enemy.[96] Some of these were of major import, such as the one at Modderfontein, while many were merely isolated contacts. However his extended trek proved to be reasonably successful in recruiting local inhabitants for the Boer cause.

At this point one should perhaps speculate on the impact of Queen Victoria's death to see if there was any decline in the loyalty of Cape Afrikaners towards British rule. But this would have to remain mere speculation, as no firm conclusions can be drawn. It might also be worthwhile to deliberate upon the antagonism caused by the introduction of Martial Law in virtually the entire Cape Colony in early 1901, and particularly on the harsh way that it was implemented. The question may well be asked whether Milner's fear of a unified uprising of the *platteland* population did not act as a backlash against him and encouraged the younger rural population to take action in favour of the republics.[97] This probably played a positive role in the success of the republicans' mission to take the war into the enemy's territory.

On 27 December, upon Smuts' instructions, there was a gathering of about 3 000 rebels, 16 commandos and roving bands, at Soetwater. Here Smuts reorganised the Cape rebels into three units under the command of three new Combat-Generals: Manie Maritz, Wynand Malan and Jaap van Deventer.[98] This was to be the operational structure in the last stage of the war.

Botha's incursion into Natal, which formed the other leg of the plan to extend the enemy's manpower over the country, met with numerous setbacks and was short lived. After the initial successful encounter on 17 September 1901 at Blood River's Poort, where Colonel G. Gough's column was surprised by 500 galloping Boers and suffered heavy losses, the invasion did not produce decisive results. The unexpected early rain of September was heavy and made the roads virtually impassable. The Buffels River which was in flood and the British forces – 16 000 men

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96 D. Reitz, *Commando*, pp. 202-274; T. and D. Shearing, *General Jan Smuts and his long ride*, pp. 31-156.

97 P.G. Cloete, *Chronology*, pp. 215, 216.

98 T. and D. Shearing, *General Jan Smuts and his long ride*, p. 156; P.G. Cloete, *Chronology*, p. 287.

and 40 guns according to Johannes Meintjes – both obstructed Botha's progress.[99] He was forced to adapt his plans and move his 2 000 burghers towards Zululand. The two attacks on relatively small fortified posts on the Zululand border, Itala on 25 October 1901 and Fort Pospect on the next day, both failed despite the Boers' significant superiority in numbers. They had to be satisfied with capturing 30 wagons that were being escorted by a few Zulu policemen near Melmoth.[100] The concerted British effort to capture the Transvaal military commander meant that Botha and his burghers suffered virtually the same strain and hardships as did those under De Wet when he invaded the Cape earlier in 1901. Botha decided to return to the eastern Transvaal, but even in this manoeuvre his commandos were harassed and frequently forced to take evasive action before reaching Piet Retief on 9 October 1901.[101] For many burghers, however, the safe return was not so sweet. Meintjes recorded that a "howl of rage went up from the men from Ermelo and Carolina who found that their homes had been burnt down in their absence and their lands and crops devastated."[102]

In sharp contrast to the action in the Cape Colony, the military initiative within the two republics was by this time dominated by the British, primarily in the form of drives and in the rapid completion of their blockhouse lines. For the guerrilla it became a lean time. In the southeastern Transvaal the night attacks, discussed in Chapter VI, led by Colonel G.E. Benson, forced the Boers to fight constantly from a defensive position. One exception to the Boers' tribulations concerned the same Benson. The heavy spring rains and the ponderous British columns, combined with the Boers' spirited riding power, enabled Botha and his men to defeat Benson at Bakenlaagte on 30 October where the British commander was mortally wounded.[103]

In the Free State De Wet had been under intense pressure for some time. Kitchener launched a concentric drive with 15 000 troops in the central Free State starting early in November, a manoeuvre which lasted only six days and had limited success as far as the number of burghers captured or killed was concerned. However, on the positive side for the British, the drive resulted in the seizure of 10 000 cattle. At that time when the food shortage was becoming such a serious dilemma for the Boers, this was a grievous blow to the people of the area. In December another

99 J. Meintjes, *General Louis Botha a biography*, p. 87.

100 P.G. Cloete, *Chronology*, p. 268.

101 P.G. Cloete, *Chronology*, pp. 269-270; M.A. Gronum, *Die Bittereinders*, pp. 27-28; J. Meintjes, *General Louis Botha*, pp. 87-88.

102 J. Meintjes, *General Louis Botha*, p. 88.

103 P.G. Cloete, *Chronology*, pp. 274-275.

elaborate drive was launched in the Kroonstad, Heilbron and Frankfort areas, once again with the primary intention of cornering De Wet. This drive lasted five days and not a single burgher was captured.[104] Nevertheless, these two drives certainly increased the pressure on the burghers even more. Following this, and probably as an act of retribution, De Wet's burghers then achieved two notable victories in close succession. On 20 December the deceptive tactics of General Wessel Wessels completely fooled Colonel J.H. Damant's force at Tafelkop near Frankfort. Wessels and his burghers approached in typical British cavalry fashion, until they disappeared from sight into a small ravine where they left the horses and attacked on foot. Before reinforcements could arrive the Free Staters had inflicted serious casualties and would have captured the field guns and pom-poms, had the gun horses not been killed.

Five days later, in the dark hours of Christmas morning, De Wet and 500 burghers approached a British camp on the summit of a hill called Groenkop. Once within range, the enthusiastic De Wet ordered "Storm burgers",[105] and the Boers overwhelmed the sleeping pickets and unleashed murderous fire into the tents of the Yeomanry. The British defeat was staggering although the Boers could not follow the fleeing British, because they had left their horses at the foot of the hill. Despite this failing the encounter was a resounding success, considering that the booty included an Armstrong gun, a Maxim-Nordenfeld, twenty wagons with oxen plus ammunition, rifles, 500 horses, and mules – and one wagon laden with liquor "... so that the burghers who were not averse to this, could now satisfy their thirst."[106] The guerrilla principle of using a small force, relying on surprise, causing confusion, and avoiding a prolonged battle, had once again proved successful for De Wet.

However, it should be emphasized that these three encounters – Bakenlaagte, Tafelkop and Groenkop – were only a few remaining tokens of the original Boer guerrilla type aggression. By the last weeks of Stage 3 the British had virtually taken control over most of the *space* of the republics.[107] The tables had already been turned.

The strategy which Kitchener implemented in his effort to bring the war to an early end, the scorched earth policy, also bore fruit. The concentration camps that were opened in Stage 2,

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104 P.G. Cloete, *Chronology*, pp. 276-277, 281-282, 283.

105 L. Scholtz, *Generaal Christiaan de Wet as veldheer*, p. 291.

106 C.R. de Wet, *Three years war*, pp. 290-292.

107 L. Scholtz, *Waarom die Boere die oorlog verloor het*, p. 157.

hastily constructed along the railway lines, had by September and October all but broken the Boer spirit. The statistics may show that the death toll had reached its peak in October, but it is reasonable to assume that the Boers' grief and their loathing of the enemy, surely lingered in the hearts of those burghers who were still active in the battle zone. Of the 27 927 white people who died in these camps, 22 074 were children under the age of 16 years.[108] Considering the large number of men in the camps it can also be accepted that at the time of their death some of these children may have had their fathers with them. But most were still on commando and probably only received the tragic news weeks or even months after the event. Whatever the individual's circumstances, there can be no doubt that information on the shocking death rate in the camps, would have filtered through to the commandos. Most certainly it would have crushed the spirit, not only of those who were directly affected, but also of their comrades, friends and relatives. Kitchener's letter to his commanders of 21 December 1900 has a paragraph about the camps as a possible means to hasten the end of the war and these words were probably far more prophetic than even he realised at the time.[109]

To aggravate matters, the second leg of the scorched earth policy, namely the destruction of farm buildings, killing of livestock and devastating the crops, had been completed by early spring of 1901 and the lack of food indeed had become a serious problem for the Boers, just as Kitchener had foreseen it would. In certain areas Boers were able to harvest winter grain and in other cases livestock was seized from black people. But these were the exceptions. The gravity of the food shortage during this stage and the innovative methods they devised to cope with the problem need not be repeated here. A fact that should, however, be appreciated is that the shortage of food endured by the burghers on commando, as well as the many women and children who were seeking the protection of the commandos, was part of the turn-about phase that had been reached in those months. Besides, lack of grazing and feed for horses and cattle would have troubled the burghers. Good veld grazing is normally not available before the end of October or even later in the western areas. The heavy rain reported at Bakenlaagte, and presumably in other parts of the eastern Highveld on 30 October 1901, would only have had an impact on the grazing two to three weeks later. The situation became a vicious circle: without sufficient feed the horses were of little use, without a good horse a guerrilla was unable to raid enemy columns to obtain

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108 F. Pretorius (ed.), *Scorched earth*, p. 21.

109 Quoted by A.M. Grundlingh, *Die "hendsoppers" en "joiners"*, p. 115; See also :TAD: A. 2044, *Journal of principal events connected with South Africa*, VII, p. 74.

food for himself, feed for his animals and much needed weapons to continue the war. This was one more element in the accumulation of stressors tormenting burghers by the end of Stage 3.

The speedy progress with the construction of the blockhouse lines was just one more factor adding to the mounting problems. Table VI – 2 illustrates that whereas only 565 kilometres of these fortified lines had been completed by the end of July 1901, the increased rate of construction of the Rice blockhouses,[110] meant that there were 2 399 kilometres completed by the end of December 1901.[111] This rapid increase had an impact on the Boers in several ways. Firstly, the essential mobility of any guerrilla fighter was suddenly restricted and commandos were often forced to take long, time consuming detours or to run new risks to reach their objectives. Secondly, the greater number of blockhouses naturally restricted their ability to target the railways and so to capture supplies. Thirdly, the many blockhouses – all of which had to be manned and serviced – provided the British with a larger presence across the countryside of the republics, a presence which they previously had lacked. All these factors clearly hampered the Boer cause and made life more difficult for men already under strain.[112]

Threatening proclamations had become one of Kitchener's popular strategies to impose his authority. However, because the burghers had become accustomed to the many proclamations, most of them scoffed at the so-called banishment proclamation of 8 August 1901. Nonetheless it was considered more seriously in certain cases, as discussed in Chapter VI. The important issue is that this proclamation was issued at a time when the Boer was already overwhelmed by a host of negative issues and his morale was at an unduly low ebb. The number of Boers who yielded to the different forms of pressure applied upon them by the British was nevertheless declining. According to British statistics only 1 562 Boers surrendered in Stage 3 (August 1901 to December 1901), compared to 4 293 in Stage 2 (February 1901 to July 1901).[113] This in itself might have been perceived as a promising turn of events for the Boers, had it not been for another related matter. In early December 1901 the National Scout Corps was formally inaugurated in the Transvaal, although Grundlingh states that the corps0 had been operating on an organised footing since October 1901. In the northern Free State a similar body, known as the Orange River Colony

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110 J. Hattingh, "The British blockhouse system", in F. Pretorius (ed.), *Scorched earth*, pp. 233-234.

111 P.G. Cloete, *Chronology*, *passim.*

112 H.F. Wichmann, *Oorlogsherrineringe van 'n oudstryder*, pp. 49-51; J. Hattingh, "The British blockhouse system", in F. Pretorius (ed.), *Scorched earth*, pp. 233-234.

113 TAD: A. 2044, *Journal of the principal events connected with South Africa*, XII, XIII, XIV, *passim.*

Volunteers (ORC volunteers), was also organised at about the same time.[114] It should, however, be made clear that many Boers, who had laid down their arms, had in fact been actively aiding the enemy for some considerable time, as witnessed in the case of P.J. du Toit of the western Transvaal.[115] Grundlingh also mentions that a third group – ex-burghers who rendered service to the British on an *ad hoc* basis – existed, but that they did not enjoy fixed conditions of service.[116] The effect that the support of these groups by their ex-comrades had on the Boer commandos was severe. Because of the skills that these ex-burghers took with them, they could inform the British on how the commandos operated, where they normally sought shelter and how they used the terrain. Therefore, the most important factor was not so much the number of National Scouts or ORC Volunteers, but the mere fact that a strong, but unskilled British unit needed only a few of these men to convert the unit into a productive and aggressive contingent. It stands to reason that the burghers who were still fighting for their cause considered these men as out-and-out traitors and treated them as such.[117]

Despite the smaller proportion of burghers who surrendered voluntarily during this period, the number of men captured as prisoners of war was actually increasing during the latter months of 1901. The statistics provided for the five months of Stage 3 show that 6 303 burghers were captured compared to the 5 448 burghers in Stage 2.[118] There are a number of reasons for this trend, most of which have already been examined above. It can thus be asserted that a turning-point had been reached during the five months of Stage 3; the drives, the blockhouses, the manpower and the expertise service of ex-burghers were beginning to yield results for the enemy. Also notable was the loss of loyal burghers who were taken prisoner, which resulted in a further reduction in the number of Boers still on commando. Although it could be argued that the statistics supplied by the British War Office and quoted in the *Journal of the principal events connected with South Africa* could possibly have been questionable or even inflated, the crux of the matter is that the already limited number of active Boers was progressively shrinking. It was more likely that those who were still able to enter into battle, those who were in the frontline, would be the men who had now been taken prisoner, thereby making the loss so much more significant.

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114 A.M. Grundlingh, *Die "hendsoppers" en "joiners"*, p. 209.

115 J.P. Brits (ed.), *Diary of a National Scout*, 31.5.1901 to 28.6.1901, pp. 51-58.

116 A.M. Grundlingh, *Die "hendsoppers" en "joiners"*, pp. 208-209.

117 J.H. Coetzee (ed.), "H.S. van der Walt: Oorlogsdagboek" in *Christiaan de Wet-Annale*, 8, day 698, p. 143.

118 TAD: A. 2044, *Journal of the principal events connected with South Africa,* XII, XIII, XIV, *passim.*

Throughout most of this stage the body of men that acted as the ZAR government was roving in the southeastern Transvaal Highveld, attempting to evade of the British net. *The Times history* reports that during the period from 5 August to 26 November they had occupied twenty different positions in the vicinity of Ermelo, Lake Chrissie, Lothair and Klipstapel (Breyten). Then in early December they moved back to Viljoen's headquarters, Windhoek, in the northeastern Transvaal. They were there on 16 December when *Dingaansdag* was commemorated. Contrary to what one might expect, the morale of the burghers at that late stage was apparently reasonably buoyant. The eldest son of General P.R. Viljoen, Marthinus Viljoen – who was a member of the Presidential bodyguard – described the events at Windhoek in his diary as "uplifting". According to him the proceedings were ceremonious, with a mounted guard of honour to receive the acting president, a salute played on the trumpet and a word of welcome delivered by General Muller. Viljoen claimed that the 300 to 400 burghers and 30 women and girls were quite taken up by the proceedings: "De oorlog moeilikhede ware voor gehelen dag uit ons midde en onze gedachte. Alles scheen zoo naar vrede te zyn, op een ieders aangesicht kon men een glimlacht bemerken, elkeen had een vrolijke houding. Men moet aannemen dat zy hun gedurende de dag hebben verbeeld op een Paardekraal Feest in vredestyd te zyn want net waar men kykt zag men de vier en vyf-kleur aan een stokje wapperen ...".[119] Although the turning point had in fact been reached and the situation had swung greatly in favour of the British, certain republican leaders still tried to boost the morale of their people, and there were many who believed that there was still hope for victory. It should however be noted that despite the positive drift of the report, Viljoen began his day's entry by referring to the hardships caused by the war.

If the shortage of food, fodder, clothes and weapons, that have been discussed as stressors and all the other adverse factors that have rapidly accumulated over the months of Stage 3, are considered collectively, then it must be clear that whatever GRRs the burghers had been able to draw upon, were now becoming exhausted – just as overuse will deplete any source – and as a consequence coping was becoming increasingly difficult. Many had yielded by this time, or were taken out of the turmoil of war by the enemy's strategies. Despite this, by the end of 1901 there must still have been in excess of 25 000 burghers on commando. To what extent they were still physically and psychologically militarily fit is open to conjecture.

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119 TAD: W81, Viljoen Accession, 3, M.J. Viljoen, Diary no. 9, 15.12.1901. [Translated : "All thoughts of the hardships caused by the war was out of our midst and our thoughts for the entire day. Everything seemed just as it was in peacetime, and a smile could be seen on everybody's face, people were in a amiable mood. It was as if in their imagination they were at a Paardekraal festival in peacetime and all over you could see *vierkleurs* or *vyfkleurs* being waved ..."]

5. Stage 4 – The last scene

From January 1902 until the end of May 1902

By the time the sands of 1901 had run out the pendulum was swinging in favour of the British But the final outcome was still in the balance. In the last days of December 1901, Kitchener wrote to Lord Roberts that as long as De Wet was "out there" he could see no end to the war.[120] The trouncings at Tafelkop and Groenkop must still have rankled in his mind. In the Cape Smuts had optimistically reorganised the Boer forces with the clear intention that the enemy would be harassed on a wider front.[121] Both Schikkerling and Celliers, however, mentioned that rumours were circulating that peace was imminent, although Schikkerling regarded such idle talk as only "a sure forerunner of fighting."[122] The pendulum swung even further in favour of the British when on 25 January 1902 General Ben Viljoen was captured while on his way back to his commandos after consultations with the ZAR government.[123]

Before the final curtain could come down, a number of important events were still to take place. By this time the scorched earth strategy had virtually run its course and the British were no longer eager to accommodate the Boer women and children in their concentration camps.[124] However, the months of witnessing the destruction of homesteads, crops and fodder and the savage killing of sheep, pigs and poultry were still having its disheartening affect on the Boers. Many of the stressors that are discussed in Chapter VI were either the indirect result of the scorched earth policy or the outcome of the war of attrition.

At this stage it is perhaps worthwhile to reiterate a few of the issues that played an important role in the general sentiment among the Boers at the beginning of 1902. First of all, there was the widespread and persistent predicament of food shortages and lack of clothing. Celliers continued with the patching of his clothes, until he was even driven to patch his trousers with cloth already

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120 Quoted in P.G. Cloete, *Chronology*, p. 287.

121 W.K. Hancock, Smuts the sanguine years 1870 - 1919, pp. 140-141.

122 R.W. Schikkerling, *Commando courageous*, 11.1.1902, p. 345; A.G. Oberholster (ed.), *Oorlogsdagboek van Jan F.E. Celliers*, 26.12.1901, p. 328.

123 P.G. Cloete, *Chronology*, p. 295.

124 D.J. Kestell and D.E. van Velden, *Die vredesonderhandelinge tussen die regerings van die twee Suid-Afrikaanse Republieke en die verteenwoordigers van die Britse regering wat uitgeloop het op die vrede wat op 31 Mei 1902 op Vereeniging gesluit is*, p. 79.

patched. Schikkerling's fashioning of a suit from discarded canvas strips also comes to mind.[125] The persistent rumours about peace certainly raised the hopes of many burghers, only to have them shattered again.[126] There were cases of a lack of faith in the republican cause which, in terms of Antonovsky's SOC construct, meant that the burghers failed to regard the war as meaningful.[127] This issue should perhaps be considered jointly with Grundlingh's arguments on the reason why Boers switched their loyalty in favour of the British – the reasoning behind their betrayal or selling out.[128] There was, moreover, the longing for their loved ones and the concern for the women and children, both those in the camps as well as those looking for support from the commandos. This was demonstrated by Van Heerden who claimed that from October onwards De la Rey regularly received reports about the grave position the women were facing in the camps.[129] Many burghers endured daily anxiety about black people in the knowledge that hundreds of them were being armed and were often under the control of the British.[130] Other stressors such as the torment of lice, horse sickness and the physical discomfort due to the weather as well as countless other issues, were a constant part of their lives. The statistics mentioned above show that by that time many burghers had yielded to these pressures and had laid down their arms. Of course these stressors also impacted heavily on the morale of those Boers who still persevered. It can safely be presumed that by the beginning of January 1902 a discouraged and disheartened mood prevailed among large numbers of the burghers who remained on commando.

But it would be a mistake to create the impression that throughout the republics there was only widespread despondence. To large numbers of burghers the strength of their conviction and their ability to make sense of the situation – or other words, their strong *sense of coherence* – supported them through that difficult time. Such a man was Chief Field Cornet Hendrik van der Walt, who served under Assistant Chief Commandant C.C.J. Badenhorst in the northwestern Free State. In mid April 1902, when two burghers were sentenced to death for treason, Van der Walt, although he had been part of the tribunal, still possessed the fortitude to request permission to assist the condemned men and sustain them in their last spiritual needs. According to his diary he

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125 A.G. Oberholster (ed.), *Oorlogsdagboek van Jan F.E. Celliers*, 11.10.1901, p. 301; R.W. Schikkerling, *Commando courageous*, 7.3.1902 to 13.3.1902, pp. 368-369.

126 A.G. Oberholster (ed.), *Oorlogsdagboek van Jan F.E. Celliers*, 29.11.1901, 13.12.1901, pp. 319, 324.

127 D.J.W. Strümpfer, "Salutogenesis a new paradigm", *S.A. Journal of Psychology* 20 (4), 1990, pp. 267-268.

128 A.M. Grundlingh, *Die "hendsoppers" en "joiners"*, pp. 284-294.

129 J.J. van Heerden, "Genls. De la Rey en Kemp en die stryd in die Wes-Transvaal", in J.H. Breytenbach (ed.), *Gedenkalbum*, p. 182.

130 M.E.R. (ed.), *Oorlogsdagboek*, 12.9.1901, 16.10.1901, pp. 220, 230.

undertook this most difficult task with empathy and composure.[131]

Against this background of low morale, and in many cases complete disillusionment, four elements still need to be explored. Three of these are of a military nature. Firstly, the persistent offensive approach to the war under General Koos de la Rey in the western Transvaal; secondly, Lord Kitchener's elaborate new model drives in the northern Free State as part of his continued crusade to capture General Christiaan de Wet. Thirdly, attention must be given to the intensified activities of the Cape rebels after General Jan Smuts' reorganisation at Soetwater at the end of December 1901. The fourth and final issue that will be surveyed is the diplomatic and tactical developments that took place and ultimately led to peace. The military scene of the period is summarised in Table VIII – 4 below.

Column 3 of the table reveals that four major battles were initiated by the Boers in the western Transvaal during Stage 4 (January 1902 to May 1902). The first of these was the Battle of Ysterspruit on 25 February 1902, when De la Rey concentrated his commandos west of Klerksdorp, waiting for Von Donop's supply column that was approaching from Wolmaransstad. It was still early morning and the conditions were wet and misty. On the banks of the Jagd Spruit the Boer attack created chaos among the wagons and De la Rey ordered that the burghers charge while firing from the saddle. The British lost 48 men killed and 130 wounded, and large quantities of rifles and ammunition and artillery were seized. It was a resounding Boer victory at a very significant stage for the faltering Boer cause.[132]

Less than a fortnight after the battle at Ysterspruit, on 7 March 1902, a melodrama unfolded when Lord Methuen assembled an unusual heterogenous column of 1 500 troops, coming from 14 different units. For two years he had been duelling with De la Rey and he now aimed to accost the Boer general, whom he thought to be on his way to the Marico Bushveld. The mixed column was moreover burdened with 39 ox wagons, 46 mule wagons, four guns and two pom-poms.But De la Rey was not on his way to the Marico. He was waiting for the column at Tweebosch (near the present day Sannieshof). The Boers attacked the entire length of Methuen's column from the rear r ight with three successive lines of skirmishers, pouring accurate fire into the strung out British line. De la Rey then ordered a fourth line into attack, the burghers firing from the saddle as they charged past.

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131 J.H. Coetzee (ed.), "H.S. van der Walt: Oorlogsdagboek", Day 698, p. 143.

132 L.S. Amery (ed.), *The Times history*, V, p. 499.

Table VII– 4: Analysis of military actions during **Stage 4** of the guerrilla war – Junuary 1902 to May 1902.[133]

	SE-TVL.		NE-TVL		W-TVL		N-TVL		N-OFS		S-OFS		Cape	
	Column 1		Column 2		Column 3		Column 4		Column 5		Column 6		Column 7	
Mth	Boer	*Brit*	Boer	*Brit*	Boer	*Brit*	Boer	*Brit*	Boer	*Brit*	Boer	*Brit*	Boer	*Brit*
Jan	✚✚	✚✚ ✚✚ ✚		✚		✚	✚✚		✚	✚		▲✚ ✚✚		
Feb	♣♣	✚		✚	✱	✚✚ ✚			✚	✚NDr NDr			▲✚ ✚✚ ✚	Dr ✚
Mar		✚			✱✱ ✚	Dr Dr Dr ✚ ✚	●	✚✚✚		NDr				✚
Apr		Dr Dr Dr Dr			✱	Dr Dr Dr ✚			✚✚	Dr			✚● ●	✚
May		✚				Dr							✚✚ ✚✚ ✚	

Key Boer = actions initiated by the Boers
Brit = actions initiated by the British
✚ = light contact or skirmish
✱ = major battle
♣ = ambush
Dr = drive
Ndr = new model drive
▲ = railway disruption
● = town burning or occupation

Supported by their dismounted comrades, De la Rey's commandos crushed Methuen's assortment of troops. "A rout ensued, shameful in one sense, natural enough if we consider the ... troops concerned," *The Times history* concludes.[134] The battle continued for some time, with two brave British officers being killed while giving tough resistance. Then, at 09.30 Methuen was wounded in the leg and his thigh was crushed when his horse was hit and fell on top of him. Lord Methuen was captured, the first British general to fall into Boer hands since the beginning of the war. After a somewhat stilted conversation between the two opposing generals, in an act of traditional Boer compassion General De la Rey's wife Nonnie sent a dish of fried chicken to the wounded Methuen. Amid protest from some burghers, General Koos de la Rey nevertheless decided to release Methuen, so that he could receive medical care in Klerksdorp. He was even allowed to travel in his "own" springed wagon, which he had taken from a farm in Zeerust. In a further act of humanity De la Rey sent a telegram with the news to Lady Methuen. The melodrama climaxed when Kitchener, on hearing the

133 P.G. Cloete, *Chronology*, *passim.*

134 L.S. Amery (ed.), *The Times history*, V, p. 505.

shocking news, experienced a nervous breakdown that lasted for 36 hours.[135]

Shortly after the "Methuen disaster" De Wet and Steyn escaped from the net of the second new model drive in the Free State (to be discussed below) and the British decided to clear the one region which was still giving them serious problems – the western Transvaal. Troops were rushed from the Free State to Klerksdorp, but on 24 March their first hastily organised one-day drive failed dismally and De la Rey, with Steyn under his care, escaped with ease.[136] Thereafter four British columns, a total of 16 000 troops, were organised to operate throughout the western Transvaal. On 31 March a section of General Walter Kitchener's force under Lieutenant-Colonels Cookson and Lowe ran into 2 000 burghers led by Generals P.J. Liebenberg, J.C.G. Kemp, S.P. du Toit and J.G. Celliers at the farm Boschbult on the banks of the Brak Spruit. The burghers under Kemp and Du Toit attacked from the brush on the north bank of the spruit, and Liebenberg's men galloped in from the northeast. When the mule drivers panicked and the mules stampeded, the British decided to fall back to their fortified positions at the farmhouse. A prolonged battle loomed – until De la Rey turned up in the late afternoon and sensibly called off the attack. The Boers dispersed into the night, once again conforming with an important guerrilla principle of avoiding any long drawn-out battles.[137]

The final encounter came on11 April 1902. General De la Rey had left for Klerksdorp to attend the peace talks between the leaders of the two republics. He appointed General Kemp as Acting Commandant-General in his absence, leaving him with a warning to avoid contact with the enemy if at all possible.[138] But Kemp, as Weber had remarked, was "... this ambitious twenty-eight-year-old firebrand".[139] No sooner was he in control of the 2 600 burghers under Generals L.A.S. Lemmer, Du Toit, Liebenberg, Celliers and Commandant F.J. Potgieter, when he decided to exploit a tactical error in the enemy's sweeping manoeuvre because a gap had developed between the columns of Colonel S.B. von Donop and Colonel H.M. Grenfell at Roodewal. On the afternoon of 10 April Kemp tried to draw the left column away, thereby widening the gap. But his ploy failed, and unbeknown to Kemp, Grenfell had closed the gap during the night. Kemp therefore acted on misleading information when he attacked the British on the following morning. He also misjudged the size of Grenfell's column because of the tall maize plants that hampered the Boers' vision. The Boers approached at a leisurely canter but the

135 L.S. Amery (ed.), *The Times history*, V, pp. 501-505; P.G. Cloete, *Chronology*, pp. 309-310, 312; G. van den Bergh, *24 Battles and battlefields of the North West Province*, pp. 144-153.

136 L.S. Amery (ed.), *The Times history*, V, pp. 515-516.

137 P.G. Cloete, *Chronology*, pp. 314-316.

138 P.G. Cloete, *Chronology*, p. 317.

139 M. Weber, *Eighteen months under General De la Rey*, p. 257.

situation suddenly changed when the enemy realised that the approaching horsemen were not their own mounted infantry. Prompt action by Grenfell, and the fact that the Boers had by then approached too far to be recalled, led to a courageous, but desperate, charge by 800 Boers, with the eccentric Potgieter in his blue shirt, in the lead. According to *The Times history* the Boers stormed ahead despite the "torrent of bullets and shells ... the line should have been annihilated ... ponies fell headlong ... a desperate minority, still led by Potgieter, pressed on ... Potgieter fell ... 70 yards from the British bayonets."[140]

It was a heroic attempt but an unfortunate one based on unnecessary errors. Van den Bergh argues that Kemp failed in his attempt to emulate the successes of Ysterspruit and Tweebosch because of poor reconnaissance of his enemy's strength and formation.[141] In the British pursuit that followed, Kemp once more misjudged the situation and only just managed to save his men, but the two field guns and one pom-pom that had been captured from the British at Tweebosch were lost. The Boer losses were 43 killed, 50 wounded of whom 40 were captured, with a further 36 also captured. The death of the audacious and beloved Commandant F.J. Potgieter made the defeat even harder to bear.[142]

These four confrontations, all initiated by the Boers, differ in important aspects. At Ysterspruit the aim was still firmly founded on the basic guerrilla principles of harassment and looting, Tweebosch was an opportunity provided to warriors who were still radiant in the aftermath of their recent victory, Boschbult was a chance confrontation that was fortunately terminated in good time, but Roodewal was an uncalled-for and unfortunate episode due to the overzealous "firebrand" Jan Kemp. What is noteworthy is that these four encounters all took place within a period of less than seven weeks and what is more, at a stage when it is generally accepted that the Boers had lost their fighting spirit.

The second notable element of this final stage was Kitchener's obsession to net De Wet and Steyn, which led to his so-called new model drives. The drives as stressors have been examined in Chapter VI. All that remains is to evaluate them as part of the final scene. The previous two drives had not yielded the results Kitchener had hoped for. He was therefore compelled to improve his tactics. The new model drives were elaborate manoeuvres using the British superiority in numbers and means. The blockhouse system – there were 300 blockhouses in the northeastern Free State alone – as a method of restricting mobility, was by then in place. There were seven armoured trains and 17 000 troops used

140 L.S. Amery (ed.), *The Times history*, V, pp. 530-534.

141 G. van den Bergh, *24 Battles and battle fields of the North West Province*, p. 167.

142 L.S. Amery (ed.), *The Times history*, V, pp. 534-535.

in the first drive.[143] The operation yielded 286 burghers killed, wounded or taken prisoner. De Wet and 1 000 burghers broke through the southern section of the line on 7 February 1902.[144] The second drive was to be even more elaborate, with roughly 25 000 troops employed, spread over a much larger area.[145] However, *The Times history* observes that on the night of 23 February De Wet and Steyn, their staff, plus a multitude of burghers, followed by "... a medley of bellowing cattle and yelling Kaffirs, of wagons, buggies and spiders, of frightened women and crying children ..."[146] all managed to break through at Kalkkrans. As mentioned in Chapter VI the British took 778 prisoners and seized a significant number of cattle and horses in the second drive. A third drive was launched from 4 to 11 March but " ... the great machine worked blindly and badly ..."[147] and produced less than 100 prisoners.[148] However, despite all the planning, all the men and means involved, all the energy spent by generals and other staff officers, De Wet and Steyn, with thousands of their burghers still had not been trapped. They would continue to take part in the war, when the British had firmly believed that the drives would surely allow the final curtain to descend. It is interesting at this point to restate that the Battle of Tweebosch, the capture of Methuen, and the nervous breakdown of Kitchener, occurred on 7 March 1902, while the third, comparatively unsuccessful, new model drive was just winding down. But Kitchener's personal distress does not form part of this study.

The third notable issue of a military nature is also clearly evident in column 7 of the table, namely the relative high rate of activity instigated by Boers (or Cape Rebels) in the Cape Colony. Compared to the stalemate situation in most of the regions in the two republics, the Rebels were still dynamic and aggressive, although their campaign eventually ended on a more subdued note. When the commandos went their separate ways after the meeting at Soetwater, January 1902 produced a number of diverse events. There was the controversial execution of Commandant Gideon Scheepers at Graaff- Reinet, General Ben Bouwer's farcical attack on *HMS Partridge* at Doorn Bay, General Manie Maritz's infamous action at Leliefontein on 27 January 1902 and General Jan Smuts recruiting and collecting grain in the dry northwestern Cape Colony.[149] February opened with Malan's 800 men harassing Crabbe's column that was clearing the way for Major Crofton's convoy of 100 donkey wagons

143 L.S. Amery (ed.), *The Times history*, V, p. 478.

144 L.S. Amery (ed.), *The Times history*, V, p. 489.

145 L. Scholtz, *Generaal Christiaan de Wet as veldheer*, p. 302.

146 L.S. Amery (ed.), *The Times history*, V, p. 489.

147 L.S. Amery (ed.), *The Times history*, V, p. 493.

148 L. Scholtz, *Generaal Christiaan de Wet as veldheer*, p. 308.

149 L.S. Amery (ed.), *The Times history*, V, p. 545; P.G. Cloete, *Chronology*, p. 295.

transporting supplies from the railhead at Beaufort West, through the dry Karoo to Fraserburg. The encounter lasted several days and ended on 5 February when Malan attacked the entrenched convoy on Uitspanningsfontein. Crofton, after fighting valiantly, lost his life and the convoy was looted and burned.[150] On 6 February Smuts reinforced Van Deventer at Middelpost where 30 wagons and 400 horses and mules were seized. Then, on 10 February Bouwer overconfidently attacked a convoy of 1 500 troops between Calvinia and Clanwilliam but was repulsed. French consequently ordered a sweep with six commanders north of Beaufort West, an operation that began on 17 February. This, again conforming to good guerrilla principles, induced the commandos under Van Deventer and Malan to scatter and according to *The Times history* "... the result [of the drive] was only to multiply the centres of disturbance in yet more inconvenient regions ... Malan, with 200 men, doubled round the British right ... and flung himself into the peaceful midlands. At the end of February the situation ... was worse than it had been since ... Smuts made his entry."[151] The vigour of the rebel units in the midlands – under the command of experienced generals who came from the republics – was becoming a serious concern to the British.

Further west the cost of Smuts' confrontation with the Cape Police at Windhoek on 25 February caused him to revise his plans. He realised that French was launching a systematic campaign against him and he abandoned his intention to invade the western Cape, turning instead to the north to Namaqualand.[152] By taking this option he virtually brought the Cape campaign to an end, because the vital guerrilla concept of surprise, harassment and mobility once more reverted to the passive occupation of towns and the beleaguering of the copper mine at Okiep on 4 April. A stalemate had been reached. On 26 April Smuts was called to the peace talks in Vereeniging and on 4 May the siege of Okiep was lifted by Colonel H. Cooper.[153] *The Times history* claims that this brought the Boer campaign in the Cape Colony to an end, as four-fifths of the rebels were in the west. The same source adds that Smuts had raised 3 000 men in arms during his seven month long invasion of the Cape, of whom 85% were rebels. It concluded: "Strategically, by means of an insignificant abstraction from the fighting strength of the two republics, he [Smuts] had kept one of the best British generals [French] and eight or nine thousand Imperial troops actively employed in defending British territory".[154]

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150 L.S. Amery (ed.), *The Times history*, V, pp. 546-547; P.G. Cloete, *Chronology*, p. 300.

151 L.S. Amery (ed.), *The Times history*, V, p. 549.

152 L.S. Amery (ed.), *The Times history*, V, p. 550; P.G. Cloete, *Chronology*, p. 306.

153 L.S. Amery (ed.), *The Times history*, V, pp. 550-553; P.G. Cloete, *Chronology*, pp. 316-324.

154 L.S. Amery (ed.), *The Times history*, V, p. 553.

This more or less sums up the issue of extending the war into the enemy's territory, except that certain aspects should be noted. Although there was no scorched earth policy as applied in the republics, the enforcement of Martial Law caused much stress and discontent among Afrikaner colonials. The divided loyalty of the Cape Afrikaners, and the uncertainty of where the loyalty of individuals truly rests, also played an important role. Then too, the psychological growth, or *fortegenesis ,* of Smuts must be considered and, on the other hand, the possible *burnout* of Scheepers must be considered.

The last, non-military aspect of Stage 4 is the diplomatic and tactical developments that led to the final signing of the peace accord. It is appropriate to mention at the outset that the international intervention on which the Boers had placed such a high premium, was in fact realised, but in an unexpected manner. On 25 January 1902, the government of the Netherlands sent an *aide-memoire* to the British Secretary of Foreign Affairs, Lord Lansdowne, suggesting that because one of the contending parties was completely enclosed and cut off from the rest of the world, his British Majesty might find it beneficial to make use of the services of a neutral country to facilitate peace negotiations. The Netherlands was prepared to undertake this responsibility.[155] The detail of this offer, as well as Lansdowne's rejection of it, was passed on to Kitchener and Milner with the request that they communicate directly with the Boers. The offer from the Netherlands government, even though it was turned down by the British, can therefore be regarded as the international impulse that sparked off the final peace negotiations.

According to the *Journal of the principal events connected with South Africa,* the sequence of events was reported in the parliamentary report of the [*London*] *Times* of 7 February 1902.[156] Kitchener, however, only informed Acting President Schalk Burger of the ZAR of this new development on 4 March. In the light of Kitchener's commitment with, and hopes for the new model drives that were under way in the northern Free State during February, the delay until March, before the matter was finally taken up with the Boers, certainly raises a question. Besides President M.T. Steyn of the Free State was not informed of the offer at all.

The events that followed are well recorded, especially in J.D. Kestell and D.E. van Velden's work on the peace negotiations and S.J. du Preez's D.Phil. thesis on the subject,[157] and do not form

155 J.D. Kestell and D.E. van Velden, *Die vredesonderhandelinge*, pp. 16-17.

156 TAD: A. 2044, *Journal of principal events connected with South Africa*, XIV, p. 29.

157 J.D. Kestell and D.E. van Velden, *Die vredesonderhandelinge*; S.J. du Preez, *Die Vrede van Vereeniging,* Unpublished D.Phil thesis, University of Pretoria, 1986.

part of this study. A few issues with regard to the tactics used by the various parties during the process should, however, be examined. Firstly, it should be noted that Kitchener and the British government were very aware of the rift that existed between the ZAR and the Free State on the urgency for peace, and this was certainly exploited by them. Not only did the British accommodate the Free State and the ZAR delegates from 9 to 11 April 1902 in separate suburbs of Klerksdorp but they did so again in Pretoria from 12 to 17 April. According to Steyn the Free Staters were lodged in the less prestigious suburbs of the towns and were all but isolated from their allies.[158] During the Vereeniging meeting the tents of the delegates of the two republics were once again separated by the great central meeting tent.[159] In a telegram to the War Office on 17 May, when the debate between the delegates in Vereeniging was already in progress, Kitchener reported to the War Office that there was no love lost between the leaders of the two republics and that some chance existed that there might even be a split between them. He added that this would be for the best.[160] It is thus reasonable to deduce that the British were following a strategy of "divide and rule" in their effort to expedite peace. This apparent eagerness of the British to end the hostilities ties in with Steyn's argument that the British too had reached a point where the continuation of war would be to their disadvantage.[161] These apparently insignificant issues of separate accommodation were increasing the tension between the two parties, who, at the beginning of the Vereeniging talks, clearly held different views on the subject of peace. From the telegram mentioned above, as well as several others that Kitchener despatched to the War Office, it is clear that the British knew exactly how the talks in Vereeniging were progressing and the sentiments of the delegates. For example during the afternoon of 16 May Kitchener sent the following messages to the War Office: "The conference held their first meeting yesterday. The Orange Free State people were very truculent, and it transpired the majority of them were pledged to vote for independence. This caused some discussion and recriminations." and later "Smuts gave an account of Cape Colony. He said they could not expect anything from the movement in the colony and that the only advantage of operating there was detaining a large number of troops, which would otherwise be deployed against the Orange Free State and the Transvaal."[162]

The information which Kitchener relayed to the War Office and the guidance that he received in return placed him and Milner too, in a solid position regarding the British reaction to the proposals

158 N.J. van der Merwe, *Marthinus Theunis Steyn, 'n lewensbeskrywing*, II, pp. 84, 92.

159 J.D. Kestell and D.E. van Velden, *Die vredesonderhandelinge*, p. 51.

160 TAD: A. 2044, Secret War Office Telegrams – S.A. No 1152, 17 May 1902.

161 N.J. van der Merwe, *Marthinus Theunis Steyn*, pp. 87-88.

162 TAD : A 2044, Secret War Office telegrams – S.A. No 1149, 16 May 1902.

made by the Boers. Kitchener and Milner did not really stand alone facing a battery of patriotic Boers, who were demanding, above all else, that they retain their independence. They were actively assisted by professional politicians. What Rayne Kruger had to say about the political astuteness of Paul Kruger, namely: " His courage had been proved by prodigious feats in his youth ... his patriotism by leadership of the revolt against the annexation ... he lacked formal schooling and experience of government in a modern state ...",[163] could equally as well apply to many of the 60 delegates who were debating the future of their republics in Vereeniging. They were faced by men who had been schooled in the political arena. Men such as St John Brodrick, Lord Lansdowne and Joseph Chamberlain. While comparing these men with the Boers, it is important to recognize that Steyn, who was perhaps of the same stature, was already a very sick man. At the first Pretoria negotiations his health was declining and he was not even present during the second round of talks. Hertzog and Smuts were two young jurists with a certain degree of military experience, but they were by no means knowledgeable in international diplomatic matters. The remainder of the Boers had been involved in their own republican governments but this was not comparable to the level of British diplomacy. In addition, the unyielding attitudes of both Steyn and De Wet made the match between the Boers and the British even more lopsided.

The subject of Smuts' presence at the Vereeniging talks raises certain questions. He was not a member of the ZAR delegation that was involved in the initial discussions at Klerksdorp on 9 to 11 April. However the Free State legalist, General J.B.M. Hertzog, was present at the time. In fact it was he who pointed out to Steyn that according to the constitutions of the two republics, only the *volk,* the people, could take a decision on the question of relinquishing their independence or not.[164] In Pretoria this argument was put to Kitchener on 12 April and again on 14 April, when Milner was present. After much debate, and communication with the War Office, this eventually led to the agreement that 60 representatives of the people – or *volksverteenwoordigers* – would be selected to decide on the issue of independence.

At that stage Smuts was still in command of the siege of Okiep and was based in the nearby village of Concordia. Apparently he had read about the negotiations in the north in a Cape Town newspaper on 18 April.[165] On 26 April – while the *volksverteenwoordigers* were still being elected, he received a communication from Lord Kitchener, delivered by two British officers, "... to say that a

163 R. Kruger, *Good-bye Dolly Gray*, p. 11.

164 N.J. van der Merwe, *Marthinus Theunis Steyn*, p. 89.

165 T. and D. Shearing, *General Jan Smuts and his long ride*, p. 189.

meeting between English and Boer leaders was to be held at Vereeniging ... with a view to discussing peace terms, and he was summoned to attend."[166] According to Reitz, who was included in the Smuts group, they travelled by cart and by train to Port Nolloth. He recollected that before boarding the train they were received by a British guard of honour. At Port Nolloth they boarded one of the many troopships, the *Lake Erie,* which took them to Simonstown in just five days. From there they travelled northwards by train. At Matjiesfontein, Smuts met French briefly, and from there they travelled by night, with an armoured train as escort, "... puffing ahead all the way, its searchlight sweeping the veld ... it took us the better part of a week to reach Kroonstad ... where Lord Kitchener was to meet us."[167] Kitchener and Smuts held a meeting in Smuts' compartment, and according to Reitz it became clear that Kitchener was anxious to bring the war to an end. Smuts and his staff were taken all the way to General Botha in the eastern Transvaal, whereupon they retraced their steps to Vereeniging.

It is notable that Kitchener went to great lengths and in the process spent a considerable amount of the British taxpayer's money in order to make certain that one specific Boer general could be present at Vereeniging. Meintjes maintains that Smuts was not at Vereeniging as a delegate, but that he had been invited.[168] Who summoned or invited him is not clear. According to T. and D. Shearing the invitation originated from General Botha and reached Smuts via Van Deventer.[169] President Steyn mentioned that when it was agreed to elect people's representatives, it was suggested that General Smuts, Commandant Fouché and Commandant [General] Malan be allowed to attend the meeting. However, at that stage he did not elaborate on his statement.[170]

It could be argued that Kitchener took the trouble to have the young general on hand to counter-balance the obstinate stance of the Free State delegation. But the fact that Smuts was present did nothing to cheer the ailing Steyn. He complained that Smuts' report about the situation in the Cape Colony painted a sombre picture and only helped to create a gloomy atmosphere. He maintained that things might have been different had Malan and Fouché also been present, but that the British placed all kinds of obstacles in their way to block their attendance.[171] What Steyn did not take into account was that approximately 80% of the rebels were situated in the western part of the Cape[172] and that

166 D. Reitz, *Commando*, p. 315.

167 D. Reitz, *Commando*, pp. 317-319.

168 J. Meintjes, *General Louis Botha*, p. 100.

169 T. and D. Shearing, *General Smuts and his long ride*, p. 189.

170 N.J. van der Merwe, *Marthinus Theunis Steyn*, p. 94.

171 N.J. van der Merwe, *Marthinus Theunis Steyn,* p. 96.

172 J.D. Kestell and D.E. van Velden, *Die vredesonderhandelinge*, p. 62.

Smuts probably knew best what the situation was.

But by then Steyn was a very sick man. He lay in his tent in Vereeniging receiving regular reports about the progress of the deliberations from men such as Hertzog.[173] Besides his anguish about the direction that the peace talks were taking he was disturbed by other matters, such as the fact that relatives of certain delegates were allowed into the camp. He also experienced dismay at the presence of Sammy Marks and others and about the dispute between Botha and De Wet concerning private discussions that Botha and Smuts had held with Kitchener. Steyn's illness has been described as the culmination of the protracted stress which he had endured during the months of war. In other words, according to Selye's GAS-theory, he had reached the stage of exhaustion (SE) as it is described in Chapter II.[174] Before the negotiations were finalised and the final voting took place Steyn signed his parole and left with Dr. Van der Merwe to receive medical treatment at Krugersdorp.[175] The fact that the man who had stood so firmly for upholding the independence of the two republics, was no longer on the scene on the night before the final vote was to be cast, might well have contributed to the fact that 27 of the 30 Free State representatives eventually voted for the acceptance of the British terms, despite what Kitchener had expressed in the telegram of 16 May. But that is pure speculation.

From the above discussion it is clear that notwithstanding the hard arguments about food shortages, the suffering and deaths of women and children in concentration camps, the ever declining number of Boers in the field, the shortage of arms and ammunition, the influence of the blockhouse system, the need for serviceable horses, the danger of belligerent black groups as well as the religious and patriotic arguments, there were additional factors involved when 54 out of the 60 delegates voted for the acceptance of the British peace proposal. These factors, of a more psychological nature, included issues such as the rift between the leaders of the two republics and the British capitalizing on their knowledge of this rift, the British professional manipulation of diplomatic affairs, Smuts' influence to counter the Free State's unyielding attitude and the affect of Steyn's illness at a crucial time. These facets were all to a greater or lesser extent involved in the Peace of Vereeniging.

6. Resumé

173 N.J. van der Merwe, *Marthinus Theunis Steyn*, pp. 96-97.

174 A. McLeod and F. Pretorius, "M.T. Steyn se ervaring van die Anglo-Boereoorlog vanuit 'n sielkundige perspektief", *Historia* 47(1), May 2002, pp. 52-55.

175 J.D. Kestell and D.E. van Velden, *Die vredesonderhandelinge*; p. 145; TAD: A. 2044, *Journal of principal events connected with South Africa*, XVII, 29 May 1902, p. 24.

When the guerrilla war had moved through the four stages as set out above and the peace agreement was signed on 31 May 1902, the cost to the Boers, in terms of the number of able-bodied men that were lost to the republican cause during the major part of the guerrilla war, was considerable. The extent of this loss is demonstrated in Table VII – 5 below. Other physical costs, such as those caused by the destruction of homes and farms and the killing of animals are not considered in this study, nor are the mortalities in the concentration camps included because they do not fall within the parameters of the study.

This indicates that the strength of the Boer forces declined by a very significant 29 217 men in the17 months that followed the initial creative and offensive stage of the guerrilla war. In terms of the total reserve of able-bodied men that were available in the republics the loss of such a great number would undoubtedly have had a crippling effect on the capability of the Boers. The fact that 60,8% of the total were captured indicates the success of the British strategy to deploy greater numbers of troops, the various drives and perhaps the fact that due to the blockhouse lines, troops were spread more evenly throughout the country. It could furthermore be argued that the British success in this area had an indirect influence on the number of burghers who surrendered. The line between being captured and surrendering was a thin one and often unclear. The statistics reported in the *Journal of principal events connected with South Africa* makes no division between burghers who were captured during battle and those who surrendered during a drive. An example of this was described by Schikkerling who was among those hunted during Lieutenant-General Sir Bindon-Blood's drive through the northeastern Transvaal in April 1901. Eleven of his comrades decided that they would surrender rather than proceed one step further before the advancing troops.[176] Hence the reported total of 6 359 Boers who surrendered does not reflect the number who voluntarily laid down arms.

The total number of Boers who were wounded during this period can also be misleading. It surely does not include burghers who were wounded but did not fall into the hands of the enemy. In other words, those who were removed from the scene of battle by their comrades and who then – like General J.G. Celliers and Commandant (later General) L.A.S. Lemmer, who were both wounded during the battle of Lichtenburg on 3 April 1901[177] -– returned to their commandos and continued their duties. It is also uncertain how many of those reported as wounded in the table above were also counted as captured.

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176 R.W. Schikkerling, *Commando courageous*, p. 182.

177 G. van den Bergh, *24 Battles and battlefields of the North-West Province*, p. 118.

Table VIII–5: Numbers of Boers lost to the republican forces during 1901and the first five months of 1902.[178]

Year	*Month*	*Died*	*Wounded*	*Captured*	*Surrendered*
1901	February	161	175	530	501
	March	199	234	610	406
	April	105	118	1100*	1093*
	May	237	315	1164	948
	June	220	193	970	894
	July	160	135	1074	451
	August	186	75	1384	529
	September	242	164	1505	334
	October	155	97	1192	162
	November	133	118	884	162
	December	148	64	1338	375
1902	January	124	70	1013	256
	February	150	146	1921	334
	March	70	85	599	261
	April	128	121	736	164
	May	29	6	942	28
	Total	**2447**	**2643**	**17768**	**6359**

* This is an arbitrary division of the single number of 2 193 Boers captured and surrendered in April 1901, that was reported in the *Journal of the principal events connected with South Africa* X , and is largely based on the statistics for May.

Despite the fact that these uncertainties cast some doubt on the validity and reliability of the figure of 29 217, it is undisputedly true that the Boer forces suffered heavy losses during the last 17 months of the war. The total number of Boer prisoners of war by the end of the war was reported to be 29 188 of whom 3 194 were in the so-called refugee camps.[179] Although it is unknown how many of the 3 194 were old, sickly or otherwise unable to take up arms, it can be assumed that it included a significant number who were able-bodied men, but had surrendered to the enemy. However, they did not form part of the National Scouts (that totalled 1 359 by the end of the war), the ORC Volunteers (that had 448 members by the end of the war) or other ex-burghers who served the British army on an

178 TAD: A. 2044, *Journal of principal events connected with South Africa*, XI to XVII, *passim.*

179 TAD: A. 2044, *Journal of principal events connected with South Africa*, XVII, p. 37.

ad hoc basis (the numbers fluctuated between 2500 and 4000 in the last few months).[180] The two groups – the able-bodied burghers in the refugee camps and those who were actively aiding the enemy – were made up of those burghers who yielded to the pressures, the hardship and the stress of the guerrilla war, or indeed those whose dedication to the republican cause simply flagged. As Grundlingh pointed out, an accurate final number of this group simply cannot be calculated. On the strength of the above numbers a good estimate would probably be between 7 000 and 8 000 men. This figure can then be compared to the estimate provided by Pretorius that by the end of the war there were still about 20 800 Boers, or *bittereinders,* in the field.[181]

It can thus be concluded that despite the fact that the burghers who were on commando during the guerrilla warfare phase had suffered a multitude of hardships under a wide variety of stressors – and that many had succumbed to the stress – the general resistance resources (GRRs) of the burghers and officers were for the most part powerful enough to afford them the ability to cope with the psychological impact of the guerrilla war.

180 A.M. Grundlingh, *Die "hendsoppers" en "joiners"*, pp. 252, 257, 207.

181 F. Pretorius, *Scorched earth*, p. 21.

Chapter IX

The ultimate impact

I hope to God I have fought my last battle. It is a bad thing always to be fighting. While I am in the thick of it I am too much occupied to feel anything; but it is wretched just after. It is quite impossible to think of glory. Both mind and feelings are exhausted.

Duke of Wellington[1]

1. Guerrilla war? Yes or no

The first part of this chapter is devoted to the question whether the period of the Anglo-Boer War that is commonly known as the "guerrilla phase" was truly a guerrilla war. This phase of hostilities began, symbolically at least, when the ZAR leadership destroyed their war equipment and supplies at Hectorspruit Station. It lasted until the afternoon of 31 May 1902 at Vereeniging, or technically until that evening, when the treaty was signed in Melrose House in Pretoria. This issue is important because it forms the cornerstone for the psychological element of this study.

Chapter III deals with the theory of guerrilla warfare and it is therefore relevant to compare what is known as the guerrilla warfare phase of the Anglo-Boer War, with the theoretical explanation provided in that chapter. Firstly, it is meaningful to reiterate the four principles of guerrilla warfare and to compare them with what actually took place. These principles can be summarised as the harassment of the enemy, the avoidance of decisive battles, the sabotage and destruction of the enemy's communications and supply lines and finally, tactical use of the elements of surprise and confusion.

Concerning the issue of harassment, the analysis of the guerrilla war in Chapter VIII makes it clear that as the months passed the Boers' assertive strategy of harassing the enemy whenever practical was gradually replaced by a policy of avoiding the enemy if at all possible. Furthermore decisive battles were not always avoided as they should have been. Even towards the end of the war the battles in the western Transvaal, that the Boers generally regarded as successful, but which ended with General Jan Kemp's ill fortune at Roodewal, were in fact essentially contrary to the second principle of guerrilla warfare. Thirdly, sabotage and destruction of the enemy's

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[1] H. Binneveld, *From shellshock to combat stress*, p. 2. Quotation from a letter by the Duke of Wellington to Lady Shelley written one month after the Battle of Waterloo.

infrastructure – tactics which the Boers frequently effected with great mastery in the early stages of the guerrilla phase of the war – steadily declined as the British became better equipped to counter these moves. Finally, towards the end of the war, the British were generally well informed of the position of large commandos and the whereabouts of important generals, thanks mainly to their use of Boer collaborators who acted as scouts. However, smaller groups of burghers still managed to surprise patrols and blockhouse squads, although it should be recognized that the scarcity of ammunition limited the implementation of this kind of enterprise.

Lack of manpower was doubly problematic for the Boers. On the one hand they were steadily losing men who were opting out of the war and those who were being captured by the British, as is illustrated in Table VIII–5 in the previous chapter. On the other hand the British numbers increased and the replacement of wounded and sick troops was ongoing. On 17 May 1902 it was reported that the total number of Boer prisoners of war was 32 384, of whom 24 277 were in overseas camps and 3 192 in refugee camps.[2] This number should be compared with the10 816 burghers in the field in the Transvaal – 3 296 of them were horseless – and 6 100 in the Free State, according to statistics reported in the minutes of the peace talks at Vereeniging. These same figures were also provided in the *Journal of principal events* on 16 May. Furthermore, General Smuts claimed that there were 3 300 men active in the Cape Colony.[3] This meant that by May 1902 there were just over 20 000 burghers under arms to face the British force of approximately 207 000. Although this seems to compare favourably with the ideal ratio of 1:10 mentioned in Chapter III, numerous other factors should also come into reckoning before such a claim can be made.

It was mentioned in Chapter III that Mao Zedong saw the three fundamentals of successful guerrilla warfare as *time, space* and *will.* It was also shown that *time* and *space* are closely related. First of all, space became a dilemma for the Boer commandos as the expansion of the blockhouse system increasingly restricted their movements. Secondly, as their sources of food began to run out, time became a compounding factor. At Vereeniging these two fundamental issues were mentioned time and again by the representatives in their reports on the state of affairs

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2 TAD: A. 2044, *Journal of principal events connected with South Africa*, XVII, p. 14.

3 D.J. Kestell and D.E. van Velden, *Die vredesonderhandelinge tussen die regerings van die twee Suid-Afrikaanse Republieke en die verteenwoordigers van die Britse regering wat uitgeloop het op die vrede wat op 31 Mei 1902 op Vereeniging gesluit is*, pp. 59, 62; TAD: A.2044, *Journal of principal events connected with South Africa*, XVII, p. 13.

in their areas. As far as Mao's third fundamental is concerned, the *will* to fight, the number of Boers who surrendered as illustrated in Table VIII–5 above, linked to the widespread longing for peace,[4] shows that the element of *will* was also fading. Their strong commitment to the Boer cause had gradually weakened as the circumstances became more difficult and as the influence of the scorched earth strategy became more pronounced. Strümpfer indicates that in Antonovsky's theory of a sense of coherence (SOC), the components of *meaningfulness* and *manageability* are most vital, just as is *commitment* in Kobasa's construct of hardiness.[5] These essential elements were clearly diminishing. For many burghers the time had arrived when, for numerous reasons, they decided to offer their pioneer-hardiness and their knowledge of local circumstances to assist the enemy. This is in direct contrast with the requirements of ideological armour that both Laqueur and Taber set for the guerrilla fighter, as described in Chapter III.[6]

The scorched earth strategy furthermore deprived the Boers of the civilian support that is so essential for successful guerrilla warfare. In fact it left the country open for the third party that was affected by the war – the Black and the Coloured people. Although some of them were friendly towards the Boers, the majority harboured strong feelings of animosity and many black people joined the enemy as scouts and guards.[7] This in turn led to Boers summarily executing any Black or Coloured people who were found to be armed and several outrages and atrocities occurred, such as the burning of Bremersdorp by General Tobias Smuts in June 1901 and the massacre of 35 Coloureds by General Manie Maritz at Leliefontein Mission Station in late January 1902.[8] According to Laqueur actions of this type should be guarded against by guerrilla leaders and should be avoided at all costs.[9]

On the basis of the discussion of Stage 1 in Chapter VIII, it can be accepted that the first months of the conflict, the period September 1900 to January 1901, could well be called *guerrilla warfare*, forming part of a limited war as was explained by Campbell.[10] However, as hostilities

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4 F. Pretorius, *Kommandolewe tydens die Anglo-Boereoorlog 1899 - 1902*, p. 127.

5 D.J.W. Strümpfer, "Salutogenesis a new paradigm", *South African Journal of Psychology* 20 (4), 1990, pp. 268-270.

6 W. Laqueur, *Guerrilla – a historical and critical study*, p. 129; R. Taber, *The war of the flea guerrilla warfare theory and practice*, p. 147.

7 P. Warwick, *Black people and the South African War 1899 - 1902*, p. 25.

8 D. Reitz, *Commando*, pp. 298-299.

9 W. Laqueur, *Guerrilla*, p. 129.

10 A. Campbell, *Guerrillas - a history and analysis*, pp. 1-2.

dragged on and the situation changed, it could probably more correctly be defined as a war of attrition. President Steyn's justification for the continuation of the war, provided just before the commencement of the peace negotiations, confirms this view. He, and probably many others, had hoped that even though it became impossible to wage guerrilla warfare in its true sense, a situation would eventually be reached where it would become unrealistic and pointless for Britain to continue with their efforts.[11] Whatever the exact technical definition of guerrilla warfare may be, the fact remains that the conflict between September 1900 and May 1902 was a form of *small war* where the "flea kept on biting the dog". The term *guerrilla warfare* is therefore regarded as justified, in the search to determine its psychological impact on the Boer forces.

2. The impact of the guerrilla war on the Boers: some case studies

It has been already been made clear that the guerrilla war made for a wide variety of stressors among the Boers. The stress caused by these stressors impacted differently on different individuals – while many Boers were able to cope with the stress, despite all its negative effects, there were many who could not and yielded under the pressures. The resistance resources (GRRs) at an individual's disposal determined whether, and to what degree, he was impaired by the stress – as explained by Selye's GAS theory. Alternatively whether he might have been stimulated by the challenge of the situation, as expounded by Strümpfer's theories on salutogenis and fortigenesis. To demonstrate the wide dissimilarity of the psychological impact of the guerrilla war on the Boers, the experiences, perceptions and reactions of seven individual Boers are examined in this final chapter. It should be emphasized that the selection of these seven men was made to illustrate the multiplicity of psychological reactions in a number of different individuals. It does not presume to be a representative sample of Boers based on rank, age, geographical area of activity or educational background, although these factors might well play a role in the way they experienced and reacted to the guerrilla phase of the Anglo-Boer War.

a. President M.T. Steyn

The psychological impact or stress experienced by the president of the Free State,

[11] N.J. van der Merwe, *Marthinus Theunis Steyn, 'n lewensbeskrywing*, II, pp. 86-88.

Marthinus Theunis Steyn, was extremely severe and eventually resulted in serious physical affliction. Steyn was relatively young, only 42 years old, when the war began in 1899. He had been the president of the Orange Free State since 1896,[12] and prior to the outbreak of hostilities between Britain and the two republics he had been deeply involved in the military relationship between the Free State and the ZAR. Nevertheless Steyn had no military training or experience.

Probing into his background reveals that Steyn had a solid grounding for his task as the president of the Free State. He came from a prominent family in Bloemfontein and as a young boy had spent some time on his father's nearby farm. He enjoyed local and overseas studies and qualified as a lawyer in London. Back home Steyn served as the Free State's State Attorney and at an early age became its Chief Justice. He married a refined and very capable lady, Rachel Isabella (Tibbie) Fraser, who grew up in the southern Free State.[13] In terms of his general resistance resources it can safely be argued that he possessed hardiness and stamina,[14] which were supported by a wide field of reference as well as numerous acquired skills, such as his knowledge of the veld, shooting and horse-riding abilities, leadership, the aptitude for problem and situation analysis and a proficiency to express himself in writing. All these elements contributed to a very solid foundation of GRRs, which must have been a bulwark that protected him, as a leader who was constantly under pressure, for a considerable time.

Although he was actively involved in the military treaty between the ZAR and the Free State, he had not been in favour of a war against Britain and even took positive steps to avoid hostilities – such as hosting the meeting between President S.J.P. Kruger and Sir Alfred Milner in Bloemfontein in May 1899.[15]

Steyn was exposed to numerous stressors even before guerrilla warfare became a reality. Despite the many stressors that a head of a state would normally have to face when at war, the ZAR's inclination to call an end to the war, was a recurring stressor which he had to endure. This issue began as early as 5 March 1900, when he was confronted by President Kruger's idea of making certain proposals to Lord Salisbury concerning peace. Soon afterwards Steyn suffered the ignominy of the loss of his capital, Bloemfontein, and the resulting reluctance of his own burghers

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12 F. Rompel, *Marthinus Theunis Steijn,* pp. 31-32.

13 F. Rompel, *Marthinus Theunis Steijn,* pp. 18-23.

14 D.J.W. Strümpfer, "Salutogenesis a new paradigm", *S.A. Journal of Psychology* 20 (4), 1990, pp. 270-274.

15 J.H. Breytenbach, *Geskiedenis van die Tweede Vryheidsoorlog 1899-1902*, I, pp. 118-119.

to continue fighting.[16] His difficult role at this stage as the chairman at the extended *krygraad* on 17 March 1900 in Kroonstad, where it was decided to continue the strife according to new guidelines, should not be overlooked.[17] As the Boers' position deteriorated, Steyn remained steadfast and on 2 June 1900, shortly before the capitulation of Pretoria, he found it necessary to send a strongly worded message on continuing the war to the wavering ZAR leaders.[18] On his own home front he unquestionably must have experienced a feeling of let-down and dismay after the debacle of the Brandwater Basin. Finally there was the critical role he fulfilled during his visit to President Kruger and the ZAR leadership in August-September 1900, just prior to the well known events at Hectorspruit.[19]

In a matter of roughly six months – the so-called transition period of the war – Steyn was time and again forced to take the initiative to keep the ZAR from yielding to the British force. It is also significant that during this period he spent roughly three months in the Transvaal, knowing full well that in his own republic the tide had also turned against the Boers. These facts clearly demonstrate that when general guerrilla war began by the end of September 1900, Steyn was already heavily burdened by a multitude of stressors.

As the guerrilla war got underway in the ZAR, Steyn continued to play an important role in reorganising and motivating of the ZAR force, even participating in the planning meeting with Generals Botha, De la Rey and Smuts at Cyferfontein in the last days of October 1900.[20] Returning at last to his own republic – *en route* he once more had to reassure Transvaal burghers at Klerksdorp, following one of Kitchener's proclamations – he and De Wet narrowly escaped capture on the morning of 6 November 1900 at Doornkraal near Bothaville. The Boer's losses were significant, including 17 dead, 17 wounded, and 97 taken prisoner – as well as all of De Wet's artillery.[21] This was one of many close shaves Steyn experienced while he was in the veld

16 W.J. de Kock, "Pres. Marthinus Theunis Steyn, Die siel van die vryheidstryd" in J.H.Breytenbach (ed.), *Gedenkalbum van die Tweede Vryheidsoorlog*, p. 248; A.J. McLeod and F. Pretorius, "M.T.Steyn se ervaring van die Anglo-Boereoorlog vanuit 'n sielkundige perspektief" in *Historia* 47(1), May 2002, p. 41.

17 M.C.E. van Schoor, "President M.T. Steyn: sy rol in die Anglo-Boereoorlog 1899 - 1902" in *Genl. J.B.M. Hertzoggedenklesing,* XXVIII, pp. 9-10, 11.

18 P.G. Cloete, *A chronology,* pp. 153, 154; J.H. Breytenbach, *Geskiedenis van die Tweede Vryheidsoorlog 1899-1902*, V, pp. 539, 541; T. Pakenham, *The Boer War*, p. 432.

19 F. Rompel, *Marthinus Theunis Steijn,* pp. 106-107.

20 G. Nattrass and S.B. Spies (eds.), *Jan Smuts Memoirs of the Boer War*, pp. 124-132.

21 L.S.Amery (ed.), *The Times history*, V, pp. 16-20; A. Wessels, *Die Anglo-Boereoorlog 1899-1902 'n oorsig van die militêre verloop van die stryd*, p. 35.

with De Wet, and it can be surmised that this all contributed to the stress load impacting upon the president.

Steyn also accompanied De Wet on his first unsuccessful attempt to cross into the Cape Colony in December 1900, a move that was frustrated by the determined British pressure and by full rivers.[22] After being re-elected as president of the Free State on 25 January 1901, he again accompanied De Wet on his second attempt to enter the Cape Colony. Although they were able to cross into the British colony, from the Boers' point of view the manoeuver was a disaster. As mentioned in the previous chapter, the tide was beginning to turn against the Boers. Steyn himself described the foray as follows: "De grootte macht werd achter genl. De Wet en mij gekoncentreerd. Daar de Brakrivier onpassabel was konden wij niet dieper doordringen, en keerden wij tussen de linies van de vijand naar de Vrijstaat terug. Manschappen en paarden waren uitgeput."[23] On their trek through the central Karoo they repeatedly lost burghers, horses and wagons. For the most part it was a situation of fight or flee and ended with the Boers fleeing, with very little to show for their effort.[24] This issue must surely have impacted upon Steyn's cognitive awareness.

It was just at this time that General Botha held peace talks with Lord Kitchener at Middelburg. Steyn received this news as soon as he was back on Free State soil. It certainly caused his displeasure and he urged the burghers with him to remain firm and to withstand the onslaught.[25] By the end of March 1901, following the failure of these talks, Steyn received a serious request from Botha to meet with the ZAR government; yet again as so often before, they were showing signs of wavering.[26] At the meeting at Klip River in April 1901, it was once again agreed that the two republics would persist with the struggle. Needless to say, when Steyn received the letter from the ZAR State Secretary, F.W.Reitz, in May 1901 which suggested that peace talks should nonetheless be held with Kitchener, he was bitterly disappointed and indignant. The ZAR's suggestion was the outcome of the De Emigratie *krygsraad,* which was discussed in the previous chapter. It is entirely understandable that Steyn was under severe stress prior to

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22 A.Wessels, *'n Oorsig van die militêre verloop van die stryd*, p. 35.

23 N.J. van der Merwe, *Marthinus Theunis Steyn*, p. 68. [Translated: "The great force was concentrated behind General De Wet and myself. Because it was not possible to ford the Brak River, we could not penetrate any deeper and we retreated through the enemy lines, to the Free State."]

24 L.S.Amery (ed.), *The Times history*, V, pp. 142, 144, 152; R. Kruger, *Good-bye Dolly Gray*, pp. 402-404.

25 N.J. van der Merwe, *Marthinus Theunis Steyn*, p. 68.

26 N.J. van der Merwe, *Marthinus Theunis Steyn*, p. 69.

meeting the ZAR leaders at Waterval . The problem with an unwilling ally was becoming so pervasive that mistrust of the ZAR's intent had begun to emerge. In his written reply to them he used strong words: "Al deze punten doen mij gelooven dat wij een volksmoord zullen begaan als wij thans ingaven. Broeders! staat dus nog langer vast! Maak toch niet dat ons lijden en strijden in het verleden vergeefs is geweest en dat het vertrouwen op den God onzer vaderen tot spottenij wordt."[27] But surprisingly at the meeting of 20 June 1901,[28] the ZAR again agreed to continue the war.

The strong foundation of GRRs which helped Steyn to master his stress, was gradually being eroded. Soon after he returned to the Free State with De Wet, political frustration was replaced by an unfortunate episode of a military nature. On 11 July 1901 Steyn, with the help of his *agterryer* (groom) Ruiter, narrowly escaped capture during a dawn raid by the British on the town of Reitz. The Free State's entire Executive Council, the presidential secretaries and bodyguard, most of the important state documents and £11 500 in cash, were seized in the raid. Thereafter Steyn was left without any administrative support services for the remainder of the war, further compounding his tribulations, albeit on another level.[29]

Throughout these months Steyn was acutely aware of the outcome of the enemy's scorched earth policy, and of the suffering of the women and children in the concentration camps. These concerns would also have nagged at his conscience. Nevertheless, on 15 August 1901, he replied dryly to Kitchener's proclamation which threatened the loyal Boers with deportation, that Kitchener's authority stretched no further that his best gun could shoot.[30] However, when Kitchener threatened to release the women and children from the camps in December 1901, Steyn became most upset. No matter how deeply he wanted to see their sufferings come to an end, the grievous consequence of releasing them at that stage, to return to their destroyed farms and homes was unthinkable. His reply to Kitchener was strongly worded: "Now as if the martyrdom of the women and children were not sufficient ... His Majesty's Government knows ... that there is hardly a single house in the Orange Free State that is not burnt or destroyed, that all furniture

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27 N.J. van der Merwe, *Marthinus Theunis Steyn*, II, p. 74. [Translated: "All these points make me believe that we will be committing genocide if we surrender now. Brothers! Continue to stand firm! Don't be the cause that our suffering and struggle of the past become futile and that our trust in the God of our fathers become a mockery".]

28 G. Nattrass and S.B. Spies (eds.), *Jan Smuts*, p. 36.

29 L.S.Amery (ed.), *The Times history*, V, p. 301; T. Pakenham, *The Boer War*, p. 513; M.C.E. van Schoor (ed.), " 'Dagboek' van Rocco de Villiers" in *Christiaan de Wet-Annale*, 3, pp. 24-29.

30 P.G. Cloete, *A chronology*, p. 259.

... bedding and clothing have been burnt or looted by His Majesty's troops ... therefore ... we must on account of the above-mentioned reasons emphatically refuse to receive them ..."[31]

Early in 1902, together with De Wet and thousands of Free State burghers, Steyn was exposed to Kitchener's new model drives, described in the previous chapter. Days of being conscious of the enemy's preparations, being aware of the threat of this colossal operation, realising at all times that capture by the British would mean the final blow to the republics, were unquestionably days of continuous stress. It is no wonder that the physical body of the president began to break down. Steyn was by then developing double vision. After he and De Wet had at last broken out of the threatening entrapment, he convinced De Wet to accompany him to General De la Rey and his surgeon Dr. Von Rennenkampf to examine and treat his eyesight problem. Steyn was greatly concerned that his duties as head of state would suffer because of his inability to read. This demonstrates a situation of multiple stressors, where the result of stress, in other words the double vision, in itself becomes a secondary stressor, thereby exacerbating the problem.[32]

No sooner had they joined up with De la Rey, in mid March 1902, near Wolmaransstad, when they received word that the ZAR government had unilaterally been in contact with Kitchener to discuss peace and that they were awaiting Steyn in Kroonstad. Steyn was shattered by this new development. He recalled: "Al die overwegingen waren nu ijdel; want de kogel was door de kerk. De Zuster-Regering zat te midden van de Engelsen ...Toen ik genl De la Rey z'n tent had verlaten, bespeurde ik, voor de eerste maal, dat mij benen zwakker werden, daar ik mijn paard niet kon bestijgen."[33]

Then followed a series of events which rapidly wore down Steyn's previously inflexible resistance, increasing his physical distress. Flexibility is, according to Antonovsky, an essential prerequisite for succesful coping. Steyn was still bitterly opposed to any idea of compromise in the pursuit of peace, well knowing that he was regarded as a hard-headed stumbling block by some individuals in the ZAR government.[34] Although Steyn's lack of flexibility could, according

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31 Quoted inS.B. Spies, *Methods of barbarism?*, p. 258.

32 C.L. Sheridan and S.A. Radmacher, *Health psychology challenging the biomedical model*, p. 150.

33 N.J. van der Merwe, *Marthinus Theunis Steyn*, II, pp. 83-84.(Translated: "All the considerations became irrelevant; it was too late in the day. Our ally was in the midst of the English ... When I left General de la Rey's tent I noticed for the first time that my legs had lost their strength and I had difficulty in mounting my horse.")

34 N.J. van der Merwe, *Marthinus Theunis Steyn*, p. 85.

to Kobasa's theory, have provided him with a sense of being in control, it also posed the risk that it could limit his ability to adjust to changed circumstances.[35] While accompanying the delegations to Pretoria in mid-May 1902 to discuss proposals with Kitchener, and later with Milner, he visited a local doctor, who diagnosed his ailment as *locomotor ataxy,* literally meaning the loss of the ability to move from one place to the next.[36] By the time the sixty delegates had gathered in Vereeniging, Steyn's condition had declined to such a degree that he remained in his tent where he had to receive verbal reports on the progress of the meeting. Even at that stage he could not escape from the pressure of the dissent between the Free State and Transvaal leaders – including General De la Rey who had declared that the Boers had indeed arrived at the bitter end. At a later stage Steyn recalled that he was aware that he was becoming progressively weaker and he believed that the end was near.[37] Eventually his infirmity became so bad that on 29 May 1902, on the advice of Dr Van der Merwe, he resigned as the Free State's president, transferring his authority to De Wet. He then left for Krugersdorp with his physician.[38]

The psychological impact of the guerrilla war on the Free State leader is perhaps an extreme example of the power of continued stress on the physical being and it should moreover be underlined that Steyn was not a conventional warrior. Conceivably he did experience many more stressors than the average burgher or officer. However, it is important to realise that despite Steyn's exceptionally firm foundation of resistance resources, the prolonged stress eventually overcame the president and contributed to his breakdown.

b. Chief Commandant C.R. de Wet

It is well known that Christiaan Rudolph de Wet spent long periods in the guerrilla phase of the war with President Steyn, but this does not imply that the psychological impact of guerrilla warfare on De Wet followed the same pattern as it did with Steyn. In fact, it was significantly different, probably because of the marked dissimilarity in their predispositions and background. De Wet, who was also born and raised in the Free State, had received only limited schooling.

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35 C.L. Sheridan and S.A. Radmacher, *Health psychology,* p. 160; D.J.W. Strümpfer, "Salutogenesis a new paradigm", *S.A. Journal of Psychology* 20 (4), 1990, p. 270.

36 N.J. van der Merwe, *Marthinus Theunis Steyn*, p. 95.

37 N.J. van der Merwe, *Marthinus Theunis Steyn*, p. 97.

38 N.J. van der Merwe, *Marthinus Theunis Steyn*, pp. 99-100; D.J. Kestell and D.E. van Velden, *Die vredesonderhandelinge*, p. 145.

Having lost his mother at the age of fourteen, he spent his youth helping his father on their farm in the southern Free State. As a boy of eleven years old he had already accompanied his father to the Free State-Basuto War of 1865.[39] The seed of his lifelong sentiment about the independence of his homeland, may well have been sown at this early age.[40] Later in his life, the strong conviction which he held about independence was to steer him to take part in the Battle of Majuba on 27 February 1881, and – even though he lived in the Free State at the time – he was just too late to play a role in terminating the Jameson Raid in the first days of January 1896.[41] It can therefore be presumed that De Wet placed a high premium on the principle of independence, which according to Antonovsky's SOC construct, would have made the war against the much stronger Britain *meaningful* to him.[42]

De Wet's *commitment* to his beliefs and values – together with his conviction that he had *control* over events – formed an integral part of his hardy personality, and was a powerful source of resistance against stress during the guerrilla war. However the third element that according to Kobasa shapes a hardy personality – the recognition of the *challenge* that change is a norm of life[43] – was lacking in De Wet. An example of this can be found in his refusal in May 1902 to accept the reality that the war was indeed lost.[44] This also suggests an inflexibility in his character, although he generally seemed to be able to cope with stress. Perhaps this was the result of his remarkable confidence in his own capability, a feature which is associated with Ben-Sira's personality construct of *potency*. In other sources this attribute is labelled *self-efficacy*.[45] As a commander he was never averse to confronting larger forces, always believing in the superiority of the Boers.[46] In many sources he has been portrayed as an outstanding military strategist, a natural leader and a man embracing action rather than placidity. It is clear that he was a man who saw matters in either black or white. For De Wet there was no compromise, no in-between.

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39 W.J. de Kock (ed.), *Suid-Afrikaanse biografiese woordeboek*, I, p. 243.

40 B. Olivier, *Krygsman Christiaan de Wet: 'n lewenskets van genl. C.R. de Wet*, pp. 4-5.

41 W.J. de Kock (ed.), *Suid-Afrikaanse biografiese woordeboek*, I, pp. 243-244.

42 D.J.W. Strümpfer,"Salutogenesis a new paradigm", *S.A. Journal of Psychology* 20 (4), 1990, p. 269.

43 D.J.W. Strümpfer, "Salutogenesis a new paradigm", *S.A. Journal of Psychology* 20 (4), 1990, pp. 270-271.

44 J.D. Kestell and D.E. van Velden, *Die vredesonderhandelinge*, pp. 83-85.

45 D.J.W. Strümpfer, "Salutogenesis a new paradigm", *S.A. Journal of Psychology* 20 (4), 1990, p. 272; R.A. Baron and D. Byrne, *Social psychology*, p. 180.

46 C.R. de Wet, *Three years war*, pp. 102-106, 249-250.

De Wet could well be called the instigator of the *small war* phase of the Anglo-Boer War. Soon after the occupation of Bloemfontein in mid March1900, he executed a number of actions using limited numbers of burghers and aiming at aggravating the triumphant British. According to his memoirs he was rightly proud of these encounters. On the entrapment of a large British force at Sannaspost on 31 March 1900 he wrote: "As soon as they reached the stream they were met by the cry of 'Hands up!'... a forest of hands rose ... More troops quickly followed, and we had disarmed two hundred of them before they had time to know what was happening. The discipline among the burghers was fairly satisfactory until the disarming work began ... the burghers kept asking: 'Where shall I put this rifle ... what have I to do with the horses?' ... this sort of thing sorely tried my hasty temper."[47] Here he admitted the fact that he had a quick temper and wanted duties and matters generally, to be speedily resolved.

He described the destruction of the British supplies the Boers had captured at Roodewal on 7 June 1900 particularly eloquently: " ...I ordered fifteen men to set the great heap of booty alight. The flames burst out everywhere simultaneously ... When we had covered fifteen hundred paces, we heard the first shells, and wheeled round to view the conflagration ... It was the most beautiful display of fireworks that I have ever seen."[48] It is clear that De Wet was proud of the victory which was in reality a serious blow to the British supply line at a most critical stage of the war.

Lord Roberts soon realised that De Wet had become a thorn in the British flesh and ordered the first "De Wet-hunt". However the Free State general outwitted his pursuers for many weeks, moving rapidly through the northern Free State and western Transvaal. He then turned his flight into triumph when he and about 250 men crossed the Magaliesberg in spectacular fashion on their way back to the Free State.[49] But gradually the British tightened the screws in their effort to capture De Wet. He found himself increasingly in the position of being the hunted rather than the hunter. Despite this his own perception of the situation was that he was not starting to lose control. Nevertheless, in his numerous endeavours to elude the enemy and to avoid capture, an issue that is often overlooked, is the high price he had to pay for his success. Time and again he

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47 C.R. de Wet, *Three years war*, pp 72-73.

48 C.R. de Wet, *Three years war*, p. 108.

49 C.R. de Wet, *Three years war*, pp. 147-150; F. Pretorius, "Die eerste dryfjag op Hoofkmdt. C.R. de Wet" in *Christiaan de Wet-Annale*, 4, pp. 187-188.

suffered heavy losses in terms of men, artillery, other equipment and animals. This, for example, was the case at Bothaville on 6 November 1900, again so at Springhaansnek on 14 December 1900[50] and also after the ineffective invasion of the Cape Colony in February 1901. Rayne Kruger alleged that, as he was pursued through the Karoo by Lieutenant-Colonel H. Plumer, De Wet left a "trail of hundreds of exhausted horses ... [and] a great litter of derelict vehicles."[51] Nevertheless, the fact that he regularly forfeited parts of his force did not seem to concern him. De Wet remained the great opportunist, always ready to enter into any contest if there was a chance to harm the enemy in any way. This was evident at Graspan on 6 June 1901 and even as late as 25 December 1901 at Groenkop near Bethlehem.[52]

The British inability to capture De Wet received international attention on a regular basis as the British, European and American press kept abreast of the war in South Africa. Eric Rosenthal devoted a full chapter in his biography on De Wet to "Oom Krisjan's" international fame, citing remarks made by a cockney outside the Bank of England, a conversation among a few Frenchmen on a Parisian Boulevard, an advertisement board on a sidewalk in New York and even a picture of De Wet in a hotel in Siberia.[53] As discussed in Chapter VII, it is reasonable to assume that De Wet was well aware of this acclaim and that it bolstered his continued self assurance and the high degree of impression management he exhibited.

This by no means suggests that De Wet did not experience stress. His farm was the first to be destroyed by Roberts' proclamations and the scorched earth strategy that followed. His wife was held by the British in Pietermaritzburg and he had two of his sons under his direct care during his many dangerous exploits, as well as having the responsibility of escorting President Steyn on many occasions. To his absolute disgust De Wet's brother, Piet, had not only surrendered to the British, but was playing a leading role in assisting them to win the war. Moreover, the loss of a major part of the Free State's force at Brandwater Basin was a cruel blow that must have lingered at the back of his mind for many months. Pakenham's criticism of De Wet and Steyn's early departure has been discussed in Chapter V. To become the prime target hunted by the many British operations, might have verged on being glamorous for a man of De Wet's predisposition,

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50 L.S. Amery (ed.), *The Times history*, V, pp. 16-20, 40-42.

51 R. Kruger, *Good-bye Dolly Gray*, p. 402.

52 P.G. Cloete, *A chronology*, pp. 242-243, 287.

53 E. Rosenthal, *General de Wet – A biography*, pp. 69-74.

but prolonged pressure would certainly have had a negative influence on his person and undoubtedly it wore away his GRRs. On the other hand his natural positive self-esteem would have acted as an important bolster in his stress management structure.[54] He managed to control stress not least because he was enjoying the esteem of so many people, including his comrades, his enemies, the press and even the international public.

In the words he spoke and the stance he took during the peace talks at Vereeniging, and in the final, for him unpleasant, role he fulfilled when he signed the peace accord as acting president of the Orange Free State,[55] it is clear that throughout it all, he was able to cope successfully with the multitude of stressors he encountered. It seems reasonable to conclude that because of his hardy personality and his highly developed self-efficacy he experienced the guerrilla war as an arena where he could satisfy his energy and drive. It provided him with the opportunity to exercise his natural urge for leadership, to live by his conviction that he was in control of matters and to satisfy his need for taking risks. In short, it is conceivable that the guerrilla war suited De Wet and even if his arguments were highly unfounded or egocentric, he would indeed have preferred the war to continue.

c. General J.C. Smuts

The psychological impact of the guerrilla war on Jan Christian Smuts differed markedly from that on most other commanders and burghers. The stress he must have experienced apparently had a positive rather than a negative effect on the young Smuts. It could probably be claimed that it had a *salutogenic* or even, according to Strümpfer's theory, a *fortigenic* affect on him.[56] Smuts did not enter the war in a military capacity, although, as the State Attorney for the ZAR, he was intensely involved in the preparations for the war. He played a leading role in assisting President Kruger with administrative and policy matters during the first phase of the war.[57] It was only after Pretoria had fallen into British hands, with the ZAR government located in Middelburg, that it was decided that Smuts should become directly involved in military matters

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54 C.L. Sheridan and S.A. Radmacher, *Health psychology*, p. 158.

55 J.D. Kestell and D.E. van Velden, *Die vredesonderhandelinge*, pp. 83-85.

56 D.J.W. Strümpfer, "The origins of health and strength: from 'salutogenesis' to 'fortigenesis' ", *S.A. Journal of Psychology* 25 (2), 1995, pp. 81-89.

57 W.K. Hancock, *The sanguine years* 1870 - 1919, pp.85-104; G. Nattrass and S.B. Spies (eds.), *Jan Smuts*, pp. 43-51.

by assisting General De la Rey in the reorganisation of the Boers' campaign in the western Transvaal. He embarked upon his military career when he followed De la Rey to the west in the second week of July 1900.[58]

Although Smuts had only turned thirty in May of that year, he had already accomplished a great deal in his life. At the age of twenty one, after spending five years at Stellenbosch, he achieved a "mixed" bachelors degree – in literature and in science – and was awarded a scholarship for advanced study at Cambridge University. At Christ College he studied law in which he excelled and then proceeded to the Middle Temple in London where he achieved his Honours degree at the end of 1894. After less than two years of practising law in the Cape, it was the inequitable Jameson Raid that awakened his republican sentiment and prompted him to move north. In June 1898 he became State Attorney of the ZAR and in that first year in office, apart from attending to his normal legal duties, he worked unceasingly to prevent the looming war. By September 1899 when all his efforts were clearly futile, he suddenly changed his position and recommended that certain assertive actions be taken by the ZAR government "... to launch a sudden whirlwind of assault and simultaneously to prepare for a long war; to fall on the British in Natal and destroy them before they built up their forces; to drive through to Durban and Cape Town ... ".[59] His tract *Een eeuw van onrecht,* which the ZAR government published in September 1899, outlined his three-point plan to resist the British threat.[60]

For the twenty-nine year-old Smuts it must have been a few hectic weeks before 11 October when the war officially began. According to Hancock he played a crucial role on 3 October 1899 in a meeting with the young Quaker, Guy Enock, in convincing the State Secretary, F.W. Reitz, General F.A. Grobler and President Kruger himself, that there was no alternative but war.[61]

It is clear that Smuts, who had the ability to convince people not only older but also more senior than himself, also possessed the faculty to accept realities and to change his position when the situation demanded it. Not only was he a well-educated man, but he had read widely on modern as well classical history and had also studied philosophy and German literature during a

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58 G. Nattrass and S.B. Spies (eds.), *Jan Smuts*, p. 77.

59 W.K. Hancock, *The sanguine years*, pp. 104-105.

60 W.K. Hancock, *The sanguine years*, pp. 108-112. [Translated: "A century of wrong".]

61 W.K. Hancock, *The sanguine years*, pp. 105-106.

short stay in Germany. Prior to this he had received a firm grounding in botany in his undergraduate years. Jan Smuts was married to Sybella [Isie] Krige, who came from a well-known Stellenbosch family.[62] Smuts was, however, slight of build, with "flaxen hair and a clear, glowing complextion which was always ready (such a nuisance to him, even after he had grown middle-aged) to flush like a girl's."[63] He had a high pitched voice, serious blue eyes and an earnest nature. He certainly lacked the forceful, devil-may-care, look that is often associated with military leaders.

When he arrived in the western Transvaal, Smuts observed the military strategies and tactics of his mentor, General Koos de la Rey, and although he had no previous experience of war, his intelligence and his general knowledge of similar events – such as the American Civil War (1861-1865) – soon saw to it that he not only participated in battles but could take up the responsibility of leadership. He arrived just in time to take part in the siege of Elands River in August 1900. After the conference at Cyferfontein, he was involved in the encounter at Buffelspoort (3 December 1900), the well-remembered battle at Nooitgedacht (13 December 1900), the fight at Modderfontein (29 January to 2 February 1901) and several others. He had by then been promoted to the rank of Combat-General and was rapidly making a name for himself as a military leader. His self assurance, sound comprehension of situations and wide frame of reference all contributed to his success in a realm that was as yet completely new to him.

In a letter to his wife on 2 June 1901 he was optimistic and in high spirits. He assured her that military life agreed wonderfully with him. However, even at that early stage of the guerrilla war – probably because it was a private communication to his wife – he wrote: "Our [the Boers'] future is very dark – God alone knows how dark. Perhaps it is the fate of our little race to be sacrificed on the altar of the world's Ideals; perhaps we are destined to be the martyr race."[64]

What is more, he was still playing a role as adviser to the ZAR leadership during their vacillations in the winter of 1901. At the meeting between the ZAR leaders and the Free State leaders at Waterval on 20 June of that year it was decided that Smuts would lead the invasion into

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62 W.J. de Kock (ed.), *Suid-Afrikaanse biografiese woordeboek*, I, pp. 770-771.

63 W.K. Hancock, *The sanguine years*, p. 68.

64 W.K. Hancock, *The sanguine years*, pp. 130-131.

the Cape Colony to relieve the enemy's pressure on the Boer forces within the republics.[65] This plan came into operation a month later and after a difficult trek through the Free State he and 250 men eventually crossed into the Cape on 3 September 1901.

At that stage, when the British were rapidly increasing their stranglehold on the Boers, Smuts found that he had stepped into a cauldron of troubles. Shearing claims that Kitchener had sent six units to block Smuts' route.[66] The problems began during the first few days when Smuts and three of his men were ambushed while they were out scouting for a reported British camp. Smuts narrowly escaped, but his three companions did not. On this episode Reitz observed: "Had Smuts been killed I believe that our expedition into the Cape would have come to a speedy end, for there was no one else who could have kept us together."[67] This must be regarded as an indication of how crucial their general's leadership was to the burghers. Their situation was also aggravated by the cold, windy, rainy and misty weather of the mountainous northeastern Cape, a vexation that lasted for many days. Although such inclement weather is not unusual for that region in September, the Boers from the north were ill-equipped for it and their horses also suffered, many of them dying. To make matters worse, they could hardly put up a fight when they encountered the enemy, because of the shortage of ammunition.[68] On 12 September, Smuts and 200 men escaped after being completely surrounded and outnumbered by a British force near Penhoek Pass; according to both Reitz and Shearing their escape was only made possible with the aid of a hunch-backed cripple who lived in the area.[69] The British were pressing ever harder and closer and it seemed as if the weather had also joined the fight against them. It is needless to emphasize again the many stressors experienced by the burghers and to an even greater extent by their leader.

Miraculously they escaped one encounter after another. They passed west of Queenstown and on 17 September 1901 at Modderfontein in the Tarkastad district, they surprised a unit of the 17th Lancers, killing 28 and wounding 51 British. The triumphant Boers ransacked the tents and wagons and Reitz remarked that they left the scene with "fresh horses, fresh rifles, clothing,

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65 W.K. Hancock, *The sanguine years*, p. 129; P. G. Cloete, *A chronology*, p. 245.

66 T. and D. Shearing, *General Jan Smuts and his long ride*, p. 37.

67 D. Reitz, *Commando*, p. 211.

68 D. Reitz, *Commando*, pp. 212-214; T. and D. Shearing, *His long ride*, pp 42-43.

69 D. Reitz, *Commando*, pp. 218-219; T. and D. Shearing, *His long ride*, pp. 45-46.

saddlery, boots and more ammunition than we could carry away, as well as supplies for every man."[70] This event was a significant boost to the morale of the commando: "... we had renewed confidence in our leader and in ourselves, a factor of considerable importance to a body of men in a hostile country."[71]

This was also perhaps a turning point in Smuts' invasion, a venture that had started off very shakily. They left the mountains and moved into the open plains of the Karoo and fortunately for them the weather improved as the summer approached. But the pressure on Smuts and his commando had by no means diminished and as they moved southwards they had numerous encounters with the enemy. Besides, the local military units were a constant threat.[72]

To add to the military tribulations they experienced a setback of another nature. On reaching the Zuurberg at the end of September, between sixty and seventy men of the commando, including Jan Smuts himself and his two lieutenants, fell seriously ill after eating wild fruit from the Zuurberg cycad (*Encephalartos longifolius),* also known as *Hottentot's Brood.*[73] From the two major sources it appears that Smuts was indeed extremely ill and that his recovery was slow,[74] and all the time pressure from the British forces persisted. Smuts and his lieutenants, perhaps instinctively, employed the correct guerrilla tactic of dispersing into smaller units. And if the encounter at Modderfontein can be regarded as the turning point in the success of the invasion into the Cape, the *Hottentot's Brood* incident should be regarded as the turning point in Smuts' personal military strategy in the Cape. He decided to swing west, towards the Atlantic Ocean, taking Commandant Ben Bouwer with him, while Commandant Jaap Van Deventer and his commando moved northwestward into the Greater Karoo.[75]

Smuts probably still had a holistic strategy in mind for upsetting the British control in the Cape Colony. After splitting his force in October1901 he moved steadily towards the western Cape. Shearing claims that he reached the Tanqua River by 3 November 1901. "Gen Smuts

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70 D. Reitz, *Commando*, p. 230; P.G. Cloete *A chronology*, p. 266.

71 D. Reitz, *Commando*, p. 230.

72 T. and D. Shearing, *His long ride*, pp. 65-73.

73 D. Reitz, *Commando*, pp. 240-242; T. and D. Shearing, *His long ride*, p. 74; P.G. Cloete, *A chronology*, p. 269.

74 D. Reitz, *Commando*, pp. 244, 248; T. and D. Shearing, *His long ride*, p. 76.

75 D. Reitz, *Commando*, p. 248; Also refer to map of route taken by Commandant van Deventer in T. and D. Shearing, *His long ride*, p. 122.

though, was just getting his second wind. He was clearly in better health, and had informed Bouwer and Pypers ... that he felt restored to health and indifferent to the enemy knowing where he was."[76] In the weeks of November and early December there were frequent fragmented contacts between the many enemy troop-units – both local District Mounted troops (DMTs) as well as British and Colonial troops – and small groups of Boers (Rebels). The one major action as mentioned in the previous chapter, was when a number of commandos combined their efforts on 28 November 1901 and surrounded the remount depot at Tonteldooskolk. By this time Smuts must have realised that numerous disparate and uncoordinated actions did not yield the required results. In December 1901, when he had reached the Calvinia district, he called a general meeting of commandos and roving bands on the farm Soetwater near Calvinia (also mentioned in Chapter VIII). He reorganised the insurgent force into three main commandos, each with an allotted operational area.[77] He thus took overall command of all operations in the Cape, which was more in line with Smuts' predisposition to orderliness. This certainly demonstrated to the various loose units that he was the man who was in command. It also signified his strong sense of being in control of the situation, of perceiving it as eminently *manageable*.[78]

It can justifiably be argued that during the extended period that Smuts' physical strength was being restored after the food poisoning episode – a matter which in itself would naturally have caused him a certain amount of stress on a psychological level – his mind was, in all likelihood, also going through a salutary evolution. It is credible to suggest that he was in the process of developing a stronger SOC. Strümpfer points out that Antonovsky sees a SOC as follows: "It embraces components of perception, memory, information processing and affect, into habitual patterns of appraisal, based on repeated experiences of sense-making that have been facilitated by [the individual's] GRR's."[79] This definition can be directly applied to Smuts, if his personal attributes and qualities are considered in the light of his experiences over the previous few months.

The success of the Soetwater reorganisation was demonstrated by the subsequent Boer actions and have been discussed in the previous chapter. Hancock claimed that in the first few

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76 T. and D. Shearing, *His long ride*, p.145.

77 P.G. Cloete, *A chronology*, p. 287.

78 D.J.W. Strümpfer, "Salutogenesis a new paradigm", *S.A. Journal of Psychology* 20 (4), 1990, p. 268.

79 D.J.W. Strümpfer, Salutogenesis a new paradigm, *S.A. Journal of Psychology* 20 (4), 1990, p. 268.

months of 1902 Smuts was still hopeful of success.[80] But Smuts' plan to penetrate into the southwestern Cape floundered at Windhoek on 25 February 1902,[81] and thereafter he settled in for the siege of the Okiep mine. This proved to be a period of irritating inactivity but it seems that his forces gradually gathered around him.[82] During this time Smuts himself must surely have contemplated the swing in the tide of the war and the possible outcome, not only of his invasion into the Cape Colony, but of the military and social developments within the republics. Reitz recalled that when the two British officers brought Kitchener's message to Smuts at Concordia one afternoon near the end of April 1902, Smuts initially walked away into the veld to ponder the matter. The question that arises is what made the young general act in the way that he did? Was he accepting the inevitable or exhibiting farsightedness as a cognitive component of coping?[83] Whatever the true reason, by that same evening he had made his decision and agreed to proceed to Vereeniging.[84] The role that he played there and at Melrose House is well documented.

Considering all the information discussed above it is posited that Jan Smuts' experience of the guerrilla war and the multitude of stressors that he managed to cope with so successfully, helped to lay the firm foundations – or to develop the strong sense of coherence – on which his later career was built.

d. Commandant G.J. Scheepers

In comparison to J.C. Smuts, a study of the psychological impact of the guerrilla war on Commandant Gideon Johannes Scheepers – particularly his time as a leader of rebels in the Cape Colony – illustrates the extreme negative impact of stress on a young leader, who finds himself pressurised on all sides by a maelstrom of forces.

Gideon Scheepers was born in on 4 April 1878 and died on 18 January 1902. His short life was filled with action and drama and in retrospect it may well be asked whether he was promoted

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80 W.K. Hancock, *The sanguine years*, p. 142.

81 W.K. Hancock, *The sanguine years*, pp. 143-144; A. Wessels, *Die Anglo-Boereoorlog 1899-1902 - 'n oorsig van die militêre verloop van die stryd*, p. 39.

82 D. Reitz, *Commando*, p. 313; J.D. Kestell and D.E van Velden, *Die vredesonderhandelinge*, p. 62; W.K. Hancock, *The sanguine years*, the photograph opposite p. 144 shows that two of Smuts' three generals (Maritz and Van Deventer) and numerous other officers were present at Okiep.

83 D.J.W. Strümpfer, Salutogenesis a new paradigm, *S.A. Journal of Psychology* 20 (4), 1990, p. 271; C.L. Sheridan and S.A. Radmacher, *Health psychology*, p. 160.

84 D. Reitz, *Commando*, pp. 314-315.

as captain of a scout-corps too soon, before being exposed to life's realities and the rigours of war for a long enough period. He joined the ZAR Artillery at the age of 16 and lived through the months before the war as the sergeant responsible for the installation of the heliograph system between the Free State and its northern ally, the ZAR. When the war broke out he became involved as a member of the Free State Artillery. He saw the Battle of Magersfontein on 11 December 1899 and served as a scout under General De Wet in the weeks leading up to General Piet Cronjé's surrender at Paardeberg on 27 February 1900.[85] De Wet recognised his potential as a leader and in May 1900 Scheepers was promoted to the rank of captain, commanding a corps of about thirty scouts.[86] From this time onwards Scheepers' career became a whirlwind of adventure.

Scheepers had already been involved in the action at Sannaspost on 31 March 1900[87] before leading his newly-formed corps to fetch ammunition at Greylingstad on 28 May 1900,[88] and he also advised De Wet before the battle at Roodewal on 7 June 1900.[89] Together with Steyn and De Wet he escaped from the Brandwater Basin on 15 July 1900, [90] and he remained with De Wet throughout the first De Wet hunt in the northern Free State and into the western Transvaal. He and his thirty men were engaged in a skirmish with an enemy convoy near Zandnek on 8 August and he was still scouting for De Wet when they escaped over the footpath across the Magaliesberg on 21 August 1900.[91] On his return to the Free State, De Wet could once again concentrate on his original objective, namely to disrupt the enemy's lines of communication and transport as much as possible, and it appears that Scheepers was an important instrument in the execution of this mission.[92] Shearing quotes *The Times history* that the railway north of Kroonstad was wrecked repeatedly between 3 and 20 September 1900 and attributes these successful forays to Scheepers.[93] In October of that year Scheepers went south to assist General J.B.M. Hertzog

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85 W.J. de Kock (ed.), *Suid-Afrikaanse biografiese woordeboek*, II, p. 643.

86 W.J. de Kock (ed.), *Suid-Afrikaanse biografiese woordeboek*, II, p. 643.

87 T. and D. Shearing, *Commandant Gideon Scheepers and the search for his grave*, p. 20.

88 T. and D. Shearing, *Commandant Gideon Scheepers*, p. 21.

89 C.R. de Wet, *Three years war*, p. 103.

90 T. and D. Shearing, *Commandant Gideon Scheepers*, p. 22.

91 F. Pretorius, "Die eerste dryfjag op Hoofkmdt C.R. de Wet" in *Christiaan de Wet-Annale* 4, pp. 58-61, 67, 129-130, 134, 158, 187-191.

92 C.R. de Wet, *Three year war*, p. 115.

93 T. and D. Shearing, *Commandant Gideon Scheepers*, p. 25.

with the re-recruitment of burghers in the southern Free State and on 18 October 1900 he was in command of an unsuccessful attack on Philippolis.[94] Thereafter, when De Wet's first attempt to invade the Cape Colony in December 1900 failed due to the raging Orange and Caledon Rivers he ordered Commandant P.H. Kritzinger with Captain G. Scheepers and 300 men, to wait until the river became fordable, and then to cross into the Cape.[95]

In the relatively short period from March 1900 to December 1900 the 22 year old heliographer was thus turned into a reliable scout and became the leader of a scout corps. He had developed into a pillar of reliability for De Wet, mastered the handling of dynamite and the demolition of railway lines, bridges and culverts, and had been involved in several active encounters with the enemy. He had also been used by his superiors in the remotivating and recruiting of demoralised burghers. Although still young, he had proved himself to be a man with many talents and exceptional energy. It was therefore predictable that he be nominated by De Wet as second in command under the more sedate Commandant Kritzinger on a venture into the Cape Colony.[96] They crossed the Orange River near Norvalspont on 16 December 1900.[97] Scheepers was destined to remain in the Cape Colony until his death on 18 January 1902.

The first weeks of the invasion resembled the first rounds of a boxing bout with the contestants testing each other's strengths and weaknesses. Minor skirmishes, attempts to wreck railways and a brief foray into Venterstad, made Burghersdorp and Steynsburg farmers eager to rush and join the invading Boers. The local defence system proved inefficient and General Hector MacDonald was soon obliged to despatch reinforcements to the area to bolster the Town Guards and District Mounted Rifles.[98] Despite this the Boers managed to harass the enemy while keeping continually on the move. They were the aggressors while the enemy, most of whom were untrained men, were more often than not on the defensive.

But Sir Alfred Milner, the British High Commissioner, who had been uneasy about a general uprising among the colonists for some time, managed to have the Colonial Defence Force called up throughout the Cape Colony on 1 January 1901. In his diary he confessed that he would have

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94 P.G. Cloete, *A chronology*, p. 194.

95 C.R. de Wet, *Three year war*, p. 183.

96 T. and D. Shearing, *Commandant Gideon Scheepers*, p. 32.

97 A. Wessels, *'n Oorsig van die militêre verloop van die stryd*, p. 37.

98 T. and D. Shearing, *Commandant Gideon Scheepers*, p. 35.

preferred to have Martial Law proclaimed in the entire Cape,[99] and this was indeed accomplished on 17 January 1901, with the exception of the Cape ports and black territories.[100]

The screws were now turned even tighter on the men under Kritzinger and Scheepers. Scheepers' commando, known as the "Witkoppen" because of the distinctive white bands they wore on their hats, began to move eastwards in an attempt to reach Middelburg where they believed that there was plenty of looting to be done.[101] However Middelburg proved to be a difficult nut to crack because Lieutenant-General H.M. Grenfell and a significant force had arrived there first. According to Shearing, newspapers reported that by the first day of 1901 there were 2 000 soldiers camped around the Middelburg station, with more units arriving.[102] Although this development tied in with Kritzinger's aim to draw the British forces out of the Free State, it more than likely did not fit in with Scheepers' idea of adventure. Shearing contended that "Scheepers rode into the Cape Colony, self-confident and sure of Boer victory."[103] When the Boers realised that Middelburg was not to be taken, they promptly diverted to Graaff-Reinet.

The implementation of Martial Law in the middle of January 1901 appeared to have an immediate affect on the fortunes of the invaders. The Colonial authorities promptly removed farmers who were suspected of conspiring with the Boers – the so-called "Undesirables" – from the community. Land owners who would previously have provided the commandos with food, fodder and other essentials, now frequently came up with the same excuse: "Commandant ... the problem is actually my young family, my old mother, and all my dependents. Without them I would be in the saddle riding with you tomorrow. Why, if I were free and had no wife, if I were poor and needy, I would be the first to rebel!"[104] This might have been typical journalistic reporting of the situation, but Shearing nevertheless contends that it was mostly the young men who heeded the call to adventure and excitement and that Scheepers was still able to recruit colonials for the Boer cause.[105]

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99 T. Pakenham, *The Boer War*, p. 486.

100 T. Pakenham, *The Boer War*, p. 486.

101 T. and D. Shearing, *Commandant Gideon Scheepers*, p. 36.

102 T. and D. Shearing, *Commandant Gideon Scheepers*, p. 37.

103 T. and D. Shearing, *Commandant Gideon Scheepers*, p. 33.

104 Sergeant A.W. Arnold's report in the *Beaufort Courier*, quoted by T. and D. Shearing, *Commandant Gideon Scheepers*, p. 37.

105 T. and D. Shearing, *Commandant Gideon Scheepers*, p. 37.

It seems that Kritzinger and Scheepers parted company for short periods in January, as shown on the map depicting their movements from 17 January to 1 February 1901.[106] Although Shearing does not provide exact dates, the execution of two of General H. Settle's Coloured scouts, Jacob Fillies and Kiedo, as spies and the alleged castration of one Arrie Maans, apparently took place at this time, as did the alleged shooting of a Black constable, Moyewka, west of Willowmore.[107] Scheepers was apparently responsible for these deeds. Coloured people were often employed as Town Guards much to the dissatisfaction of the Boer.[108]

Kritzinger and his second-in-command, Scheepers, finally parted company after having been together for eight weeks in the Cape Colony. Shearing alludes to a disagreement between the two leaders and she adds: "There was no De Wet to stop the nonsense and enforce the respect that should have kept them together ...".[109] At a later stage Shearing makes a sidelong remark hinting that a feud of some sort had developed between Kritzinger and Scheepers.[110]

A period followed when Scheepers and his commando were primarily active in the Greater Karoo, visiting Murraysburg no less than 17 times.[111] They made a habit of taking prisoners – often from the District Mounted troops (DMT) – and then forcing these men to accompany them on foot.[112] Whether Scheepers hoped to demonstrate the authority of his commando to the local population or whether his actions stemmed from his conviction that these colonials rightly belonged on the Boer side and should identify with the Boer cause is not clear. What is certain is that his bullying attitude led to unnecessary animosity and could not have been of any military advantage to the commandos.

Two aspects that have a bearing on Scheepers' behaviour at the time are discussed by Shearing. Firstly, that he was very conscious of the fact that he was a trained soldier and the leader of his commando, and secondly, that he was inclined to be restless; he slept very little, and

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106 T. and D. Shearing, *Commandant Gideon Scheepers*, p. 45.

107 T. and D. Shearing, *Commandant Gideon Scheepers*, pp. 43, 48.

108 T. and D. Shearing, *Commandant Gideon Scheepers*, pp. 49-50.

109 T. and D. Shearing, *Commandant Gideon Scheepers*, p. 55.

110 T. and D. Shearing, *Commandant Gideon Scheepers*, p. 96.

111 Information supplied on map of Scheepers' routes from 1 February to 18 March 1901 in T. and D. Shearing, *Commandant Gideon Scheepers*, p. 58.

112 T. and D. Shearing, *Commandant Gideon Scheepers*, pp. 59, 69.

never camped where he ate.[113] Both these elements could be interpreted as signs of insecurity and psychological distress, although admittedly moving camp during the hours of darkness can be viewed as a normal guerrilla tactic when under pressure.[114] Perhaps Scheepers was uncertain of his capability and was overly cautious. Another source, George Claassen, assistant editor of *Die Burger*, remarked that in the evenings Scheepers often paced up and down, cracking his knuckles and would suddenly give the order for his burghers to saddle-up and move on.[115] It can of course be speculated whether the constant looting and burning of shops and houses, the ill treatment of prisoners and the execution of Coloureds and Blacks, often on unsubstantiated suspicion of supplying information to the enemy, was troubling his conscience. On the other hand, the fact that he and his commando were constantly pressurised, not only by local colonial troops, such as the Graaff-Reinet Guides, Taute's Scouts, Brabant's Horse regiments and the Kaffrarian Rifles, but also by units of the Imperial Yeomanry, the Inniskilling Dragoon Guards and the 9th Lancers led by the determined Lieutenant-Colonel H.J. Scobell, could possibly have affected his mental stability.

A turning point came on 16 March 1901, when Scheepers, with Captain Wilhelm Fouché, one of Kritzinger's original captains, and their commandos, met up with Captain Wynand Malan, formerly of "Theron's Verkenning Korps" (TVK), and his men in the Aberdeen district. With Malan was Manie Maritz, also an old TVK member and later to become one of Smuts' Combat-Generals, and a promising young "embrionic De Wet", Piet van der Merwe. This combined Boer force then experienced a time of increased pressure from the enemy. For the next few months they were repeatedly compelled to seek refuge in the Camdeboo Mountains north of Aberdeen and within easy reach of Graaff-Reinet.

In June 1901 General John French was given the supreme control of operations in the Cape Colony,[116] and on 14 July 1901 French forced Scheepers out of the Camdeboo Mountains prior to commencing on the first of his concerted drives to curtail the operations of the Boers and the Rebels.[117] Scheepers and Van der Merwe, who was now assistant commandant, still had time to

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113 T. and D. Shearing, *Commandant Gideon Scheepers*, pp. 59, 60.

114 R.A. Baron and D. Byrne, *Social psychology*, p. 180.

115 Written information from Dr George Claassen of *Die Burger* supplied by e-mail on 17.9.2003.

116 L.S. Amery (ed.), *The Times history*, V, p. 311.

117 L.S. Amery (ed.), *The Times history*, V, p. 315.

destroy and loot a train at Ganna Siding, in the Nelspoort Hills, but then trekked in a southerly direction, leaving the plains of the Great Karoo behind them, entering the Langkloof at Misgund. In Shearing's words: " Now that Scheepers and the aggressive Van der Merwe trekked together, they threw caution to the wind, and, living only for the day, took off for the southern Cape, surrounded by 300 young men intent on war."[118] This marked the beginning of a new phase of house-burning, sjamboking or shooting of Black and Coloured people and unduly harsh treatment of prisoners. It appears that the combination of Scheepers and Van der Merwe led to mayhem and destruction. The upshot was that by August 1901 Scheepers had been informed by the British authorities that should he be captured he would be brought to trail for the killing of unarmed scouts.[119]

The sequence of events subsequent to the combination of the two Boer groups under Scheepers and Van der Merwe is unclear and is not directly relevant to this study. However, the three maps in Shearing's work that trace Scheepers' movements from 21 July 1901 to 11 October 1901, paint a picture of frenzied and hectic movements in the last weeks of his leadership.[120] Unfortunately these maps do not demonstrate the highly relevant information on the topography of the region and how the commandos were confined between enormous mountain ranges running parallel south and north of the Langkloof and the Little Karoo. Squeezed in between the mountains their area of operation became more limited and the chances of detection greater. Moreover the passes and mountain trails were easy for the enemy to guard, further inhibiting the Boer's freedom of movement. On the other hand they enjoyed an advantage that guerrilla fighters relish – that is the protection of mountain gorges and bushy terrain.

The British units – The Hussars and the 12th Lancers[121] – kept up the pressure relentlessly and it is reasonable to assume that Scheepers' stage of resistance (SR) eventually moved into the

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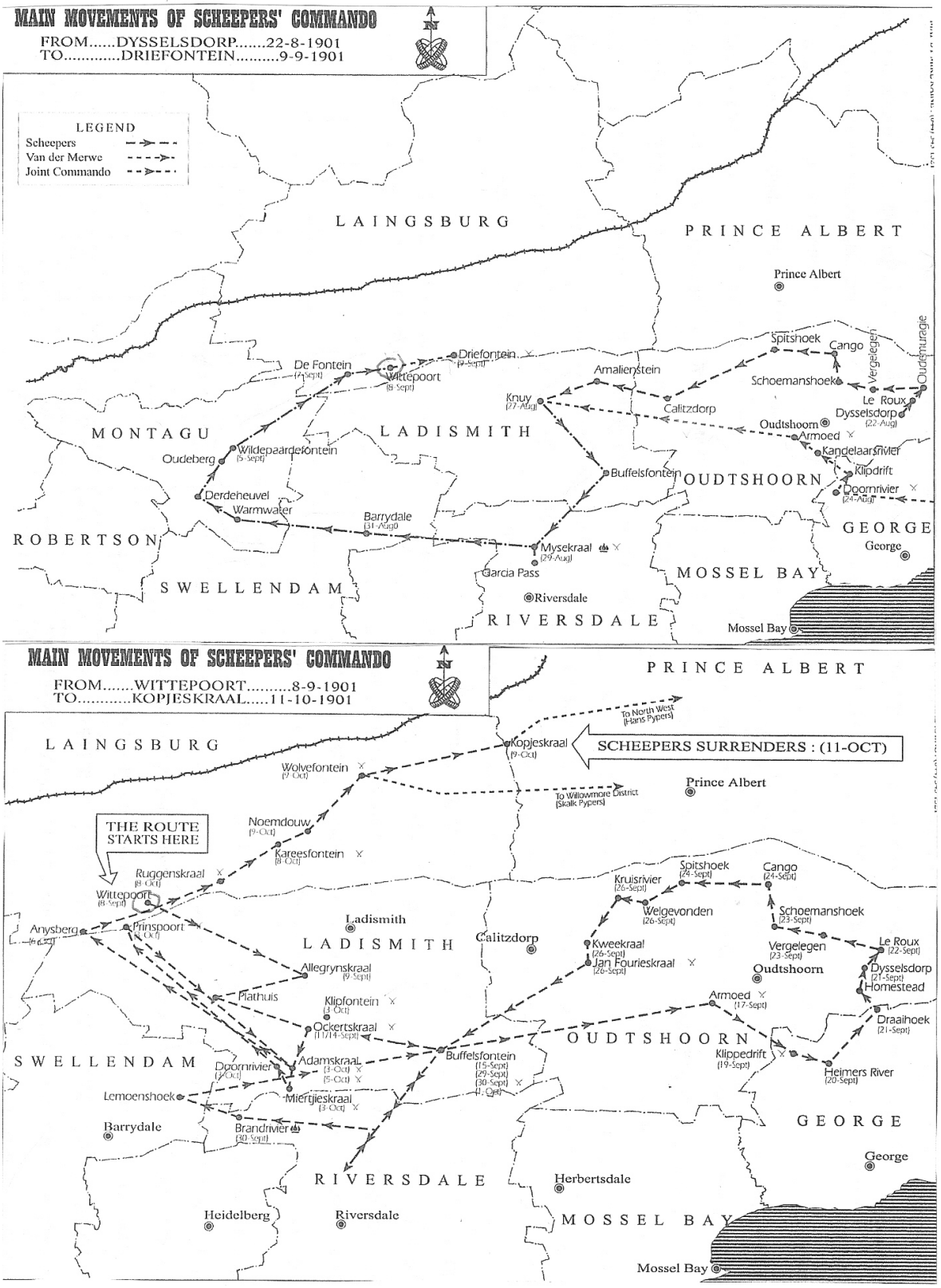
118 T. and D. Shearing, *Commandant Gideon Scheepers*, p. 109.

119 T. and D. Shearing, *Commandant Gideon Scheepers*, quoted from a communication between Lord Kitchener and the Governor [Lord Milner], GH 32 a/21 Folio 321, 2.8.1901, p. 112.

120 T. and D. Shearing, *Commandant Gideon Scheepers*, Maps covering Scheepers' movements for the periods 21.7.1901 to 22.8.1901, 22.8.1901 to 9.9.1901, 8.9.1901 to 11.10.1901, pp. 108, 116, 128.

121 T. and D. Shearing, *Commandant Gideon Scheepers*, p. 122.



Map IX-1. Maps illustrating Commandant G.J. Scheepers' erratic moves from 22 August to 10 October 1901. From T. and D. Shearing, *Commandant Gideon Scheepers*, pp. 116, 128.

stage of exhaustion (SE).[122] Shearing claims that by the end of August 1901, Scheepers had become a shadow of his former commanding self. "Gone was the man of energy, the first to leap into the saddle ... Scheepers was brooding listlessly in a cart, staring into space or tagging behind his riders. His eyes were weary and his face exhausted. He didn't cough, he wasn't wounded."[123] On 1 or 2 September 1901 he did not mount his horse, Albany, but struggled into the cart and lay down, pulling a blanket over him. Two doctors were present, Drs Smith and Bosch, but apparently they could do nothing to help him. At this stage it is perhaps appropriate to consider two conditions that may have had a bearing on this case, given that Scheepers had been under severe stress for a considerable length of time. The first of these, called burnout, was mentioned in Chapter II. Burnout normally follows long periods of chronic stress and ensues when the individual has reached the limit of his endurance and is no longer concerned about the consequences of his actions. Although Scheepers' surrender does not indicate this, there may in some cases even be a negative or callous attitude towards those the individual is supposed to help. At this juncture the individual is often troubled with fatigue and insomnia, feels shivery and experiencing stomach trouble and believes that he has nothing more to give.[124] Dr M.J.A. Paffen, a prominent Dutch author on stress prevention, explains burnout as having three related features, namely emotional exhaustion, de-personification (a feeling of becoming a mere object) and thirdly, experiencing feelings of diminishing competence.[125]

The other condition that may have been present in Scheepers' case is an affliction known as fibromyalgia or chronic pain syndrome. As yet the exact cause of this condition has not been determined but it is generally agreed that the ailment is stress-related, and has a bearing on a negative personal history. It is also said to be associated with chronic sleeping disorders and depression.[126] In the notes made by Scheepers in the diary he started at the time of his surrender, there are several remarks which can be related to fibromyalgia. A biokineticist with a special knowledge of fibromyalgia, Christa Venter, has identified several entries in the diary for the period from 1 October 1901 until Scheepers arrived in Naauwpoort in mid-November 1901, as typical

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122 H. Selye, *The stress of life*, p. 57.

123 T. and D. Shearing, *Commandant Gideon Scheepers*, p. 123.

124 Written information: Professor J.B. Schoeman, Department of Psychology, University of Pretoria, 24 October 2002.

125 http://burnout.health.nl/thema/burnout.

126 http://my.webmd.com/content/article/1680.51256

symptoms associated with this condition. These include his frequent references to pain – for example the intense pain during his journey on horseback while crossing the Witteberg – subsequently the descriptions of the extremely uncomfortable journey by train to Naauwpoort, enduring a night of pain, weakness, sleeplessness, bouts of alternating cold and hot (night-fever).[127]

There are many parallels between what today is termed burnout and/or fibromyalgia, and the mysterious malady that affected Scheepers. He eventually decided that his condition had become so bad that he should surrender rather than place his comrades in jeopardy. This clearly does not indicate any callousness. He took leave of his men early on the morning of 10 October 1901 and stayed behind on the farm Knopjeskraal, waiting for the arrival of his captors. Scheepers' trial began in Graaff-Reinet on 18 December 1901 and he was executed on 18 January 1902.[128]

Although there are many mysteries and myths surrounding the Scheepers saga, there can be little doubt that the burden became too heavy for the volatile young man. He clearly did not have enough GRRs at his disposal, and according to Antovsky's theory, GRRs facilitate making sense out of the countless stressors that an individual encounters and help him to develop a sense of coherence.[129] Scheepers' inadequate SOC probably led him to the irresponsible actions which eventually caused him to crumble.

e. Chief Field Cornet H.S. van der Walt

Hendrik Stephanus van der Walt was a relatively unknown officer during the guerrilla phase of the Anglo-Boer War and the psychological impact of the war on this earnest, and God-fearing man was dissimilar from that experienced by many other burghers. Van der Walt was a farmer from the central region of the Free State. He was in his late forties and had married for a second time after the death of his first wife. The editor of his diary, J.H. Coetzee, mentions that he could read and write well, was a man of some prominence in his community and was an elder in the Reformed Church in Ventersburg. He evidently had a firm belief in the Bible and in the principles

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127 Information supplied by Mrs C. Venter, biokinetist, after studying G.S. Preller, *Scheepers se dagboek en die stryd in Kaapland (1 Okt 1901 – 18 Jan 1902)*, pp.73-79.

128 G.S. Preller, *Scheepers se Dagboek en die stryd in Kaapland (1 Okt 1901 – 18 Jan 1902)*, pp. 91, 45-49.

129 D.J.W. Strümpfer, "Salutogenesis a new paradigm", *S.A. Journal of Psychology* 20 (4), 1990, p. 268.

of his church, which helped him to evince a well developed understanding of matters in general.[130] The diary kept by Van der Walt is concise and often written in a terse style; he was a man of few words, numbering the days rather than making use of dates.

It becomes clear in the diary that Van der Walt relied heavily on the Bible and his relationship with God to help him in times of stress or uncertainty. Like most of the Boers on commando he was subjected to many stressful situations but his strong faith was a source of resistance. His religious predisposition was part of his culture and tradition, which according to Antonovsky helps to give the individual a SOC.[131] A number of examples of the situations that Van der Walt experienced during the war are taken from the diary in order to demonstrate the psychological impact that the guerrilla phase had on him and how he was able to cope with this stress.

After the fall of Bloemfontein, in middle March 1900, Van der Walt also returned home. On the Sunday during their family devotions he read from Jeremiah 48, verse 10: "vervloek zij die des Heeren werk bedrieglik doen: ja vervloek zij die zijn swaart den bloede onthoudt".[132] This, to him, was the sign that he should rejoin his commando. According to his diary, a few days later, he again experienced a strong urge to return home but was able to resist this because he had received a divine message not to succumb to this feeling, but rather to continue fighting. This was enough to keep him on commando until the "bitterend".[133] Together with his comrades he managed to escape from the Brandwater Basin, where Marthinus Prinsloo so ignominiously had surrendered. For several weeks he and his commando maneuvered in the eastern Free State and when he reached his home, nearly three months later, he was grateful to find that his family was still safe, although they complained to him about the hardships they had experienced. Despite this unhappy news, his first reaction was for them all to go down on their knees and thank God for His love and safekeeping during the time that he had been away from his home.[134] He did not reflect on any feelings of hatred or harsh judgments about those who had victimized his family.

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130 J.H. Coetzee, "H.S. van der Walt: Oorlogsdagboek" in *Christiaan de Wet-Annale* 8, p.109.

131 C.L. Sheridan and S.A. Radmacher, *Health psychology*, p. 153.

132 J.H. Coetzee, "H.S. van der Walt: Oorlogsdagboek", pp. 120-121. (Translated: "A curse on him who is lax in doing the Lord's work! A curse on him who keeps his sword from bloodshed!" — From the Holy Bible, New International Version).

133 J.H. Coetzee, "H.S. van der Walt: Oorlogsdagboek", Day 5, p. 122.

134 J.H. Coetzee, "H.S. van der Walt: Oorlogsdagboek", Day 167, p. 128.

About a month later he recounted the problem of his son's breakdown while they were on commando. This episode undoubtedly would have caused stress for the father. From his brief description it would seem that the young boy was so overwhelmed by anxiety, that he moved as if in a daze and refused to have anything more to do with the war. He had buried his rifle and was only prepared to ride on his father's horse. Although it is not quite clear what Van der Walt meant, it appears that a measure of fatherly intolerance had crept in. A fortnight later, however, he reported that his son was again prepared to use a rifle, albeit one captured from an enemy, and to continue as before. Van der Walt's only comment was that by God's grace his son had once more completely recovered.[135] But it is clear that this episode must have placed additional stress on Van der Walt as father and as Field Cornet. The important issue here is not the son's breakdown but the recognition that the father's calm conduct during a time of crisis relates to his utter dependence on God as his resource of resistance to the stress.

Despite his piousness, Van der Walt was not reluctant to engage in battle, whether this involved fighting against the British themselves or Boers who had changed sides. He collected a group of burghers and joined De Wet on his second invasion into the Cape Colony in February 1901.[136] However, due to the poor condition of their horses he and his burghers were obliged to turn back early.[137] Calculated from other known dates in his diary, they probably re-crossed the strong flowing Orange River towards middle February 1901.[138] On their difficult return trek most of his men were on foot and with empty bandoliers. After they had crossed the railway line near Belmont station they were once more in the Free State but he still refused to allow his burghers to take horses which were not rightfully theirs. Instead he bought horses where he could until all his men were mounted.[139] His firm conviction in the morals of his religion meant that he refused to sanction any plundering which was a widely-accepted practice, even in a difficult situation.

They moved back towards their homes and Van der Walt recounted that on the evening of the 361st day he was able to visit his ailing mother. There he must have stopped over, because on the 364th day he wrote: "Door de zegen des Heeren hadt ik die paar dagen aan het krankbed

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135 J.H. Coetzee, "H.S. van der Walt: Oorlogsdagboek", Days 198 and 212, pp. 130, 131.

136 J.H. Coetzee, "H.S. van der Walt: Oorlogsdagboek", Day 268, p. 132.

137 J.H. Coetzee, "H.S. van der Walt: Oorlogsdagboek", Day 274, p. 133.

138 J.H. Coetzee, "H.S. van der Walt: Oorlogsdagboek", Days 276 and 364, pp. 134, 136.

139 J.H. Coetzee, "H.S. van der Walt: Oorlogsdagboek", Day 280, p. 134.

mijner moeder mogen door bringen. Deze morgen is zij overleden."[140] On Sunday 4 August 1901 his own house was burned down and his family taken away. He saw this as a loving chastisement by the Lord, for his sacrilegious act of helping another woman on the Sunday two weeks previously, reflecting that this mission could well have been left until the next day. In his own mind this was God's warning, not only to himself but to everybody.[141] Still, he did not complain and in the same entry he even marvelled that his mill, after nine months, had not been destroyed by the enemy.

Gradually he and his men were forced to operate increasingly to the west of the Free State. When they linked up with Assistant Chief Commandant C.C.J. Badenhorst, Van der Walt was appointed as a member of a tribunal to try two men for alleged treason. As mentioned in the previous chapter, when the men were sentenced to death, Van der Walt requested permission to assist the condemned men in their spiritual need.[142] This clearly indicates that the stamina or emotional resilience[143] which he derived from his faith was a mainstay in his life, helping him in a very demanding situation. Not only could he comprehend and accept the fact that they had to be punished for their treason, but, above all, he had the compassion and the courage to undertake an extremely sensitive task. Once again, comparable to the situations referred to above, and as defined by Antonovsky, this relates to Van der Walt's comprehension of the situation and his perception of its implications.[144]

And, finally when the burghers received the news that peace had been negotiated, he observed that there was a general feeling of indignation among the burghers. In contrast Van der Walt exclaimed "Let us kill the fattened calf." He argued that De Wet and Steyn had done all they could; if there had been a better way, they would surely have taken it. But God had decided otherwise. "Hij is de Heere, hij doet dat reg is en zijne oogen."[145]

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140 J.H. Coetzee, "H.S. van der Walt: Oorlogsdagboek", Day 364, p. 136. [Translated: "By the grace of God I had a few days to stay by the side of my mother's sickbed. She passed away this morning."] A footnote by the editor mentions that his mother died on 24 May 1901.

141 J.H. Coetzee, "H.S. van der Walt: Oorlogsdagboek", Day 440, p. 137.

142 J.H. Coetzee, "H.S. van der Walt: Oorlogsdagboek", Day 698, p. 143.

143 D.J.W. Strümpfer, "Salutogenesis a new paradigm", *S.A. Journal of Psychology* 20 (4), 1990, p. 272.

144 D.J.W. Strümpfer, "Salutogenesis a new paradigm", *S.A. Journal of Psychology* 20 (4), 1990, p. 268.

145 J.H. Coetzee, "H.S. van der Walt: Oorlogsdagboek", Day 743, p. 146. [Translated: "He is the Lord, he does what is right in his eyes."]

During the guerrilla phase Van der Walt had been faced with the burden of having to lead others and receiving little or no physical support from his government. As a leader he encountered the same dangers and hardships of commando life as thousands of other Boers. He lived daily with the same concerns and uncertainties about his family, whether they were with him or at home. Notwithstanding it all Van der Walt was able to cope with the stressful elements and, moreover, to stay positive. The information gathered from his diary shows that there can be little doubt that the foundation of his forbearance and tenacity was the exceptional strength he gained from his faith. The guerrilla war certainly had an impact on him, as it did on others, but Van der Walt managed to cope with his stress and to persevere until the very end.

f. Burgher P.J. du Toit

The psychological impact of the guerrilla war on burgher Petrus Johannes du Toit contrasted from that of the individuals discussed thus far, primarily because his perception of the war was completely dissimilar to the previous cases. Firstly, when he was commandeered on 5 September 1900, he was most unwilling to comply. According to the first entry in his diary he appealed to the Field Cornet to exempt him from taking up arms again, because he had already completed two spells of duty. This unwillingness was probably partly due to his lack of commitment towards the republican ideals, having been born in the Cape Colony, educated in English and brought up in the English tradition.[146] Secondly, he was not a robust, physically strong man and his health seemed to fail as the guerrilla war progressed.[147] Thirdly, it is pertinent that he was a teacher by training and probably had little in common with the other burghers, many of whom were semi-literate or illiterate farmers.[148] C.M. Bakkes also makes the point that he was an artistic, sensitive bachelor.[149]

From Du Toit's diary it becomes apparent that he did not feel a strong sense of loyalty towards the Zuid-Afrikaansche Republiek. The editor immediately makes this point clear in the chosen title of the diary: *Diary of a National Scout.* Then too the entry for 16 December 1900

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146 C.M. Bakkes, Commentary on the inside flap of the dustcover of J.P. Brits (ed.), *Diary of a National Scout P.J. du Toit, 1900 - 1902.*

147 J.P. Brits (ed.), *Diary of a National Scout P.J. du Toit 1900 - 1902*, 16.12.1900, pp. 2, 30.

148 F. Pretorius, *Kommandolewe*, p. 131.

149 C.M. Bakkes, Commentary on the inside flap of the dustcover of J.P. Brits (ed.), *Diary of a National Scout.*

reads: "Dingaansday! Independence day! Where are they now? Poor Transvaal."[150] Notwithstanding his lack of loyalty he initially did not choose to disobey the orders that commandeered him for the third time. And throughout the section written while he was with the Boer guerrilla fighters – which, in fact, only lasted from 5 September 1900 to 31 May 1901 – he frequently considered the possibility of laying down arms and joining the British. This incessant inner vacillation was heightened in late November 1900, when a Klerksdorp lawyer, J.A. Neser, sent a letter to General P.J. Liebenberg, for whom Du Toit acted as secretary. In the letter Neser wrote that the Boers had fought bravely against mighty odds, but he believed that they should take up Major-General C.W.H. Douglas' offer to lay down their arms while their property would still be respected. Du Toit made it clear that although Liebenberg did not respond to the letter, he himself felt rather inclined to go with Neser's plea, as he was of the same opinion.[151]

Du Toit was often gloomy and depressed. On 6 October 1900 his entry began: "A windy, sad and melancholy day. I am lying in the tent writing and reading."[152] Then on 31 December 1900 he complained "Last day of century and bloody year of 1900. How sad the century closes, with blood and fire, thousands of weeping widows and orphans, thousands of homeless mothers and families ... What misery, what lamentations, broken hearts ... Oh, God of Gods, hast thou let us over to ourselves ... If our case is a hopeless one, what can I do to stop it? All is a mystery. I shall act soon, yes this very day or tomorrow." [153]

The problem he had in taking the final step to "act", in other words to lay down his arms and change sides, could well have been a major cause for his downcast feeling. It certainly caused him a great deal of stress, which probably precipitated his attacks of feeling "seedy" or perhaps even accounts for the bouts of asthma that plagued him.[154]

When he was called to give evidence at a treason trial at Wolmaransstad on 16 January 1901, and five of the accused were sentenced to death,[155] it affected him to such an extent that

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150 J.P. Brits (ed.), *Diary of a National Scout*, p. 7.

151 J.P. Brits (ed.), *Diary of a National Scout*, 18.11.1900 to 25.11.1900, pp. 26-27.

152 J.P. Brits (ed.), *Diary of a National Scout*, 6.10.1900, p. 12.

153 J.P. Brits (ed.), *Diary of a National Scout*, 31.12.1900, p. 33.

154 J.P. Brits (ed.), *Diary of a National Scout*, 16.1.1901, p. 35; C.M. Bakkes, Commentary on the inside flap of the dustcover of J.P. Brits (ed.), *Diary of a National Scout*.

155 A.M. Grundlingh, *Die "hendsoppers" en "joiners": die rasionaal en verskynsel van verraad*, p. 55.

he retired to a farm that he frequently visited. He stayed there until 11 February 1901, reporting that he was feeling "very seedy".[156] For the following three and a half months Du Toit remained in a state of indecision about what action he should take until 31 May 1901, when he finally changed sides and became a paid scout for the British.[157]

When an examination is made of the psychological aspects of Du Toit's situation during his nine months with the guerrilla forces it is clear that, in terms of GRRs, there were a number of weak links in the chain. Strümpfer quotes Kobasa who claims that hardiness involves three components namely commitment, control and challenge. These elements were all lacking to some extent in Du Toit's makeup.[158] His first entry on 5 September 1900 and several subsequent remarks point to the fact that he did not feel himself committed to the republican cause. Moreover, the mere fact that he meekly accepted the commandeering orders, albeit reluctantly, suggests that he experienced a feeling of powerlessness and that he did not have firm control over the circumstances of his own life. As mentioned before the perception of not having control over one's life may well lead to physical ailments and psychological distress.[159] Strümpfer quotes examples where it is considered that hardiness and social support are two sides of the same coin of coping resources.[160] According to Du Toit's diary he had very little social support while on commando. Another possibility in Du Toit's case is Antonovsky's theory concerning the "health ease/disease continuum". This maintains that all individuals fall somewhere between the extreme poles of illness and well-ness, depending on how well they are able to cope with their stress.[161] Salutogenesis arises from highly efficient coping with stress, and the inability to cope may lead to physical ailment. This theory probably explains many of Du Toit's maladies.

It could be argued that after Du Toit had taken the "action" that had been tormenting him for so many months, his general disposition improved. Although he spent two months in Wakkerstroom hospital towards the end of the war, this was due to typhoid fever and apparently

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156 J.P. Brits (ed.), *Diary of a National Scout*, 16.1.1901, p. 35.

157 J.P. Brits (ed.), *Diary of a National Scout*, 31.5.1901, 1.8.1901, pp. 51-52, 63.

158 D.J.W. Strümpfer, "Salutogenesis a new paradigm", *S.A. Journal of Psychology* 20 (4), 1990, pp. 270-271.

159 C.L. Sheridan and S.A. Radmacher, *Health psychology*, p. 162.

160 D.J.W. Strümpfer, "Salutogenesis a new paradigm", *S.A. Journal of Psychology* 20 (4), 1990, p. 271.

161 D.J.W. Strümpfer, "Salutogenesis a new paradigm", *S.A. Journal of Psychology* 20 (4), 1990, p. 267.

was not related to his earlier ailments.[162] Petrus du Toit was discharged from the British force on 13 June 1902 and subsequently became an attorney in Klerksdorp. He continued living an active life, taking part in local politics and cultural activities, until his death from asthma at the age of seventy.[163]

In conclusion, it is surmised that the negative psychological impact of having to fight in the guerrilla war for the republics, defending a cause to which he was not committed, was the prime reason for his frequent bouts of moodiness and depression, as well as his numerous physical ailments. Furthermore, these conditions were apparently of a temporary nature which passed when he had taken the step to change sides.

g. Burgher R.W. Schikkerling

The psychological impact of the guerrilla war on the Boers was not always as extreme as some of the cases discussed above.There were many thousands of burghers and officers who experienced the stress of the guerilla war – and suffered the hardships caused by stress – but who coped with the situation, who relied on their resistance resources and stayed on commando until the peace was signed. One such burgher was a young man from Johannesburg, Roland William Schikkerling.

When Schikkerling left from Braamfontein station for the Natal front on 4 October 1899, he was only 19 years old.[164] He remained a member of the Johannesburg Commando until the end of the war. Before considering the impact of guerrilla warfare on him, it might be worthwhile taking a closer look at the youth Roland Schikkerling. He grew up with his mother and sisters in Johannesburg and enjoyed only two years of formal schooling,[165] but was knowledgeable on a wide range of subjects. His love of books and reading – particularly the works of Shakespeare which he often quoted in his diary – played a big role in his life,[166] presumably contributing greatly to his knowledge in other fields such as geometry and astrology. One example that demonstrates his insight of the world around him was his attempt to construct a sundial with the help of a piece

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162 J.P. Brits (ed.), *Diary of a National Scout*, notes following the entry for 2.3.1902, p. 93.

163 J.P. Brits (ed.), *Diary of a National Scout*, p. 6.

164 R.W. Schikkerling, *Commando courageous (A Boer's diary)*, p. 9.

165 R.W. Schikkerling, *Commando courageous*, 5.12.1901, p. 336.

166 R.W. Schikkerling, *Commando courageous*, 18.9.1901, 7.10.1901, pp. 306, 313.

of mahogany and a brass pin. This venture was prompted by his growing interest in the stars: "I have fallen into primitive ways, and can tell the time by the stars to within a few minutes. I know when Orion, the Pleiads and several other heavenly bodies, rise and set, and the time the Southern Cross dips ...".[167] He also knew that salt could be produced by reacting bicarbonate of soda with hydrochloric acid,[168] and he enjoyed describing the colourful lowveld birds and the delicate role of insects in the pollination of flowers.[169] It is obvious that Schikkerling possessed an above average general knowledge for such a young man. His understanding of life and its mysteries would have been a significant resistance resource in times of stress.

Schikkerling had a leaning towards philosophical comments, a feature that became more pronounced as the war wore on and the situation on commando became more gloomy. Even at the beginning, when it was clear that war was unavoidable, he professed: "I must confess I saw very little hope of – for us – a successful issue. But why need there be hope? And who of so little spirit as to regard the odds, when so much was at stake?"[170] One could argue that this was a typically bold statement from an impetuous young man, however, it is clear that from the outset he had a highly developed sense of loyalty towards his country and a firm resolution to stand by that allegiance. Kobasa claims that the firm belief in the truth and the value of what one is doing are key components for a hardy personality.[171] Schikkerling's commitment and his inclination to become philosophical might furthermore have gone hand in hand. In April 1901, when the burghers under General Viljoen were pursued in the course of General Bindon Blood's drive in the northeastern Transvaal, Schikkerling, with two of his comrades and an old gentleman, Mr. Cogill, were fleeing from the enemy over mountainous terrain. They carried on until after dark, but when they became lost and hungry they simply slept at the roadside. His comment on the event was: "Old Mr. Cogill, though stricken in years and in sorrow, had made the gruelling ride with us. If one has not known utter exhaustion, the pangs of natural thirst and hunger, or has not been soothed to sleep by the wind and the stars, one has not lived."[172] This is only one of many philosophical remarks related to his determination and commitment that he made in his diary.

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167 R.W. Schikkerling, *Commando courageous*, 5.12.1901, pp. 334-336.

168 R.W. Schikkerling, *Commando courageous*, 18.10.1901, pp. 318-319.

169 R.W. Schikkerling, *Commando courageous*, 24.8.1901, 17.10.1901, pp. 289, 318.

170 R.W. Schikkerling, *Commando courageous*, p. 8.

171 D.J.W. Strümpfer, "Salutogenesis a new paradigm", *S.A. Journal of Psychology* 20 (4), 1990, p. 270.

172 R.W. Schikkerling, *Commando courageous*, 21.4.1901, p. 187.

Towards the end of May 1901, Schikkerling entered into a lengthy discourse – partly technical and partly philosophical – on the military strategy of the Boers as compared to that of the British.[173] He clearly recognized the Boers' strengths, such as their field-craft, their mobility and ability with the long-range magazine rifle, but he did not hesitate to criticize their lack of discipline and excessive individuality. His sound approach can be closely associated with Antonovsky's opinion that rationality, meaning accurate, objective assessment of a situation, is a major component of coping.[174] Twenty months after his arrival on the Natal border in October 1899 he had experienced both victory and defeat and lived through some very harsh realities of war. Schikkerling's lucid and comprehensive discussion strongly suggests that at this stage of the war he had begun to develop the "dispositional orientation" that Antonovsky describes as a SOC. As in the case of Jan Smuts the phrase Strümpfer uses, namely " ... habitual patterns of appraisal, based on repeated experiences of sense-making that have been facilitated by [one's] GRRs ..." fits in completely with Schikkerling's circumstances.[175]

By suggesting that Schikkerling may have had a well developed sense of coherence, it is by no means implied that he did not undergo the usual forms of stress encountered by the guerrilla fighter. He too longed for his loved ones, looking for social support from home. "Every day comes the longing to see dear ones who may be no more, for much may have happened during the year and a half in which I have heard no word from them."[176] This was written at a stage of the war when the "watershed" had already been reached as is illustrated in Table VIII–3 in the previous chapter.

Schikkerling's mood of despondency was also evident when he wrote on 9 September 1901: "A losing cause and a lingering war blunt one's courage and every battle takes a little off the edge. I have seen men of steel tempered down to hoop iron ...".[177] Many of those "men of steel" had crossed his path during the months of the guerrilla war, and he had witnessed the death of such men. His deep distress at the death of some of his comrades and close friends who were "... all

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173 R.W. Schikkerling, *Commando courageous*, 28.5.1901, pp. 207-211.

174 C.L. Sheridan and S.A. Radmacher, *Health psychology*, p. 159.

175 D.J.W. Strümpfer, "Salutogenesis a new paradigm", *S.A. Journal of Psychology* 20 (4), 1990, p. 268.

176 R.W. Schikkerling, *Commando courageous*, 27.11.1901, p. 333.

177 R.W. Schikkerling, *Commando courageous*, 9.9.1901, p. 300.

touched by Death's purple finger ..." was related in Chapter VI.[178] Schikkerling came face to face with death several times as the months of guerrilla warfare passed. He managed to avoid being present at the execution of the traitor, Drosky, on 26 June 1901, but on that same evening his bedfellow,[179] Field Cornet Meyburgh, was shot dead at his side during an attack on a blockhouse.[180] However, it does seem as if it was the death of a young boy, Japie Olivier, during an early morning attack on three wagons on 24 October 1901, that disturbed the by now seasoned Schikkerling more than usual. "When we came up to our companions we saw one leading a horse to which Japie's body was strapped, his lifeless arms and purpling hands dangling limply against the horse's flanks ... we buried Japie on a bleak prominence where he will await the Day of Judgement. He was a youth of outstanding bravery."[181] Of significance here is that a traumatic experience of stress does not require that the person involved must be directly exposed to the stressor, such as a battle during war. According to Baum, *et al*. merely being exposed to the consequences of an event such as the grotesque death of a person or learning about violence against somebody close to one, could be severely distressing to a person.[182] Perhaps it was the fact that the war had gone on for so long that heightened his grief at this particular stage. The repeated contact with death, either that of his comrades or of the enemy, certainly did cause stress in the young burgher's mind, but at no time did it appear that he was unable to cope with his stress.

Food played an important part in the daily thoughts of the young Schikkerling, as it probably does in the lives of most young men between 19 and 21. Shortage of food or of certain ingredients, and the monotonous diet of burghers in the field has been dealt with extensively in Chapter VI where stressors were discussed and also in Chapter VII which deals with resistance resources. However the subject is mentioned so frequently in Schikkerling's diary that the procurement of food in general and of certain basic ingredients, such as sugar and salt, seem to have been more than a mere hassle to him. In the later stages of the war it became a personal stressor, although not a private one, as it was shared by all his comrades. He was, however, not disinclined to be involved in the preparation of food – in fact he confidently described how best

178 R.W. Schikkerling, *Commando courageous*, 8.1.1901, p. 130.

179 See F. Pretorius, *Kommandolewe,* p. 252, for comment on partnerships and bedmates among burghers.

180 R.W. Schikkerling, *Commando courageous*, 26.6.1901, pp. 234-236.

181 R.W. Schikkerling, *Commando courageous*, 24.10.1901, pp. 322-333.

182 A. Baum, R.J.Gatchel and D.S. Krantz, *An introduction to health psychology*, p. 92.

to prepare a sheep's head in the embers of a fire .[183] While looting the camp of the 5th Victoria Mounted Rifles, following a large scale capitulation of the much-feared Australians, Schikkerling recounted that despite articles such as an overcoat and two blankets which he flung into his bag, he expressly looked for " ... jam and sugar, for I had almost forgotten what sweets tasted like."[184] A few weeks later, on 24 July 1901, he described how he and a good friend, Sidney Rocher, and two others went under cover of darkness to steal eighteen pumpkins and some mealie cobs. The next day his entry begins with: "We have pumpkin and chops for breakfast."[185] By18 January 1902, by the time when everything about the war had become gloomy, he recounted: "All this for a breakfast of coarse porridge, without meat or milk or salt. We have today been twenty-six days without salt".[186] There is no doubting that he was stressed about the issue of food on commando.

It should, however, not be assumed that the stress brought on by food shortages and the monotonous diet could not be coped with by the young burgher and his comrades. On the one hand young people tend to have short memories about their adversities, while on the other hand there were those special occasions when the hardships were temporarily set aside. On Christmas day of 1901, Schikkerling and three of his friends had Christmas dinner with the Munros in Pilgrim's Rest. "The feast, to me at least, with my now shrunken standards, beggared all description. Among other fare we feasted on plum pudding, tarts, custard pudding and jelly."[187] Is it possibly incidental that he remembered to mention only the sweet dishes? On another occasion Schikkerling and his comrades came upon a farm with a variety of wild as well as cultivated fruit ranging from figs and pomegranates to medlar (*mispel*) and wild plums (*stamvrugte*).[188] So there were times of good and abundant food as well as lean and trying times. When studying the diary it becomes apparent that the topic of food became increasingly important to Schikkerling from the middle of the winter of 1901 onwards. This is in accordance with the account of the war provided in Chapter VIII.

The stress caused by the unavailability of horses and the merciless effect of horse sickness is discussed in Chapter VI and VII. Schikkerling experienced this when his trusty horse, Ramkat,

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183 R.W. Schikkerling, *Commando courageous*, 21.1.1901, p. 137.

184 R.W. Schikkerling, *Commando courageous*, 12.6.1901, pp. 219-224.

185 R.W. Schikkerling, *Commando courageous*, 24.7.1901 and 25.7.1901, p. 265.

186 R.W. Schikkerling, *Commando courageous*, 18.1.1902, p. 346.

187 R.W. Schikkerling, *Commando courageous*, 25.12.1901, p. 343.

188 R.W. Schikkerling, *Commando courageous*, 14.9.1901, p. 304.

succumbed to the dreaded disease. With the sorrow born of the affection that grows between a man and his horse in time of war, he simply sat down and cried. This was a man who had seen death on the battlefield and had somehow coped with everything yet he felt that he had an unpaid debt to his gallant animal.[189] All he could do was to weep. This was a natural coping mechanism for the stress he was experiencing. It might well have been a means of release after troubled days of flight before the British drive of April 1901, which has been mentioned above, but it was nevertheless prompted by the sudden anguish of losing his horse.

For the greatest part of the guerrilla war phase Schikkerling was in the region of the northeastern Transvaal where the extremely high rainfall of the late summer months, February to April of 1901, was experienced. Not only did the rain cause physical discomfort among the burghers, it also led to melancholy and psychological dulling. On 2 March 1901 Schikkerling's entire entry was about the weather: "Rise early from my watery bed, it having rained during the night, seek my horse in the mist, and ride eighteen miles to laager. Shortly after our arrival, a terrific hailstorm breaks over us, overflowing the tiny moat around our dwelling, and flowing beneath us drenches our bedding. The storm subsides as quickly as it came. We slaughter a few sheep, and all is well."[190] This shows clearly that despite the stress and hardship of a hailstorm and drenched bedding, Schikkerling – and his mess mates – could cope with the situation. As soon as they had slaughtered some sheep and, by implication, the meat was grilling on the fire, all was well and the distress had been dispelled.

After the battle of Helvetia on 29 December 1900 when the famous "Lady Roberts" was captured, rain was a major factor limiting the removal of the prize. Schikkerling and a comrade, Kenny Malherbe, were temporarily separated from their friends. "We found them struggling in the rain, on the steep and slippery road, with the 4.7 which was being drawn by eighteen oxen and was skidding to and fro in the mud. Up to now this is the biggest gun taken in the war and as I admired it I reflected: 'But for these vile guns I would myself have been a soldier' – Shakespeare."[191] The rain and the mud did not dampen the flush of victory which he saw fit to punctuate with a witticism from Shakespeare.

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189 R.W. Schikkerling, *Commando courageous*, 22.4.1901, p. 187.

190 R.W. Schikkerling, *Commando courageous*, 2.3.1901, p. 160.

191 R.W. Schikkerling, *Commando courageous*, 29.12.1900, pp. 118-119.

Throughout his diary Schikkerling managed to palliate the stress with his two strongest resistance resources. The first was his inclination to humour and wit and the second his strong feeling of compassion and loyalty towards his comrades and to others. His ability to see the amusing side of events and people was a GRR that braced him on frequent occasions. But his kindly predisposition towards others, his sensitivity and empathy go hand in hand with his humour. An example of this is his remark about a middle aged mess mate, Boetdan de Villiers, whose main task it was to mind the horses. "Of the good things, Fate had dealt him only 6/8 in the pound. He is nevertheless happy; either because he is too philosophic to be unhappy, or, because he had at one time become so submerged in wretchedness that his point of view had shifted ..." He continued to liken this man to Cervantes' Sancho Panza, saying: "... every man is as God made him, and some a great deal worse".[192]

The anecdote of "Swart Lawaai" who because of his greediness was pecked by a breeding hen is one of the classic tales of humor of the war. He firmly believed that he had been bitten by a snake and that he was about to die. He begged his comrades to read to him from the Bible in his saddlebag before he died. Like any good yarn this one also had its punchline – the pages with the most appropriate words for a "dying" man had been torn out of the Bible to roll a cigarette.[193]

As will become evident in the discussion below, Schikkerling's relationships with others was characterized by what Baron and Byrne describe as prosocial behaviour.[194] Some of his comrades formed part of his war experience right from the very beginning of the war. The brothers Jack and Sidney Rocher and Barn and George Greeff were among his comrades during the campaign in Natal, and they were often mentioned in his diary even in the last months of the war.[195] In June 1901 when food was scarce and they had only Kubu mealies for breakfast, he wrote: "We are fortunate in having the restless Barn [Greeff] with us. He is ever on the move and foraging, therefore we will not starve. With his impulse and fire he has the kindest heart and will give away his last item. He has spent much pains on me and helped me out of dangers innumerable."[196] Among his companions there was also the strange character Blankenberg, who carried his violin

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192 R.W. Schikkerling, *Commando courageous*, 21.7.1901, p. 260.

193 R.W. Schikkerling, *Commando courageous*, 27.5.1901, pp. 205-206.

194 R.A. Baron and D Byrne, *Social phychology*, pp. 406-407.

195 R.W. Schikkerling, *Commando courageous,* 25.12.1901, pp. 13, 16, 343.

196 R.W. Schikkerling, *Commando courageous*, 29.6.1901, p. 241.

with him at all times, there was Kenny Malherbe who accompanied him on many expeditions. Another was the compassionate Polly Burger who once held a water bottle to the lips of a wounded enemy and who at a later date accompanied Schikkerling on a carefree visit to Mrs Munro in Pilgrim's Rest for a sumptuous meal. Then there was also the good Boetdan de Villiers, who cared for the horses, and several others.[197] Schikkerling formed part of a social group who provided moral support and he gave as much as he received. He knew he could rely on these men and this was an important GRR to Schikkerling. Then too the assistance which he could give to them must have made him feel good, and probably was an uplifting experience in a time filled with distress.[198]

His compassion for those comrades who surrendered is illustrated by his account of the farewell scene when, during Bindon-Blood's drive of April 1901, a number of men decided that they could run no further and would wait for the British to capture them. There was no recrimination or bitterness in his words; rather there were a sense of empathy and perhaps just a touch of sadness to be detected in his words.[199] Baron and Byrne stress that empathy does not merely mean "I feel your pain," but also "I understand your pain".[200] In his characteristically philosophical manner, reinforced by a quotation from Shakespeare, Schikkerling extolled the virtues of the women and young girls who endured a great deal of suffering. "One girl of about eighteen, barefoot, and with hardly a dress to her body, was all alone catching and harnessing donkeys. No one cared to help her ... A woman is probably more adaptable than a man ... There are few women that have not a store of pent up virtue against the call of need."[201]

Schikkerling was certainly an extraordinary burgher and his diary paints a vivid picture of the guerrilla war seen by a young man with remarkable sense of coherence, humourous streak and social disposition, but it is important to realize that there were many Boers who possessed similar positive traits and coped successfully in various ways with the many stressors. Some of them, like Field Cornet Meyburgh, perished. Others, like the unusual Barn Greeff or the reliable Boetdan de Villiers disappeared from the pages of history once the war ended. Nevertheless, the psychological

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197 R.W. Schikkerling, *Commando courageous, ibid.*

198 R.A. Baron and D Byrne, *Social phychology*, pp. 406-407.

199 R.W. Schikkerling, *Commando courageous*, 19.4.1901, p. 182.

200 R.A. Baron and D Byrne, *Social phychology*, p. 408.

201 R.W. Schikkerling, *Commando courageous*, 19.4.1901, p. 179.

impact of guerrilla warfare – encountered in its many different forms – was experienced by all and countless burghers managed to cope with it in a positive spirit.

Perhaps Schikkerling's balanced nature can be best summed up by his penultimate entry in his diary. On his way home, after the peace accord had been signed, he spent a last night near a British blockhouse adjoining the road, "...occupied by a few of the 3rd Kings Royal Rifles. The half-dozen occupants were kinder than I am able to describe. They questioned me and listened with great deference, treating me like a long-lost brother. They walked up and down with me in the cool evening air and would hardly let me go. Two came with me down to the stream, H.T. Dell and John Cornish, and on parting asked, of all things, for my card. This guerrilla etiquette is overpowering."[202]

3. Resolution

In analysing the psychological impact of guerrilla warfare on the Boers it is of course necessary not only to examine the examples that are reviewed above, but to look far wider. By keeping in mind the experiences of the many other burghers and officers that have been dealt with in this study it becomes clear that there was not simply one universal effect on all the thousands of men who were involved in the war. The impact varied; indeed it varied greatly. It cannot simply be assumed that the stress experienced by every Boer during the guerrilla phase, albeit at different intensities or under different circumstances, had the same negative result on everyone who was engaged in the war. Nor can it be claimed that the physical hardships and the mental suffering made the burghers better or stronger individuals. The eventual outcome of the stress differed from one man to the next. However, and this is unquestionably true, the guerrilla phase engendered an extremely wide range of stressors and in fact the burghers and officers experienced stress in many ways, to a greater extent and over longer periods of time than was the case in the conventional phase of the war or, for that matter, in time of peace. Therefore the demand on their resistance resources in order to cope with the stress and eventually survive the ordeals of the war in other words, to be a bitterender, was huge. Hopefully this multi-disciplinary approach will lead to a better understanding of the history of the Anglo-Boer War.

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202 R.W. Schikkerling, *Commando courageous*, 16.6.1902, p. 395.

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