



Image in the private collection of the author, Dennis Johannes McDonald. Hand-written note stating 'I was in this scrap' together with his initials.

Introduction: Historical Context of the Second Boer War (1899-1902)

These stories are set against the backdrop of the Second Boer War, a major conflict fought in South Africa between the British Empire and the two independent Boer (Afrikaner) republics: the South African Republic (Transvaal) and the Orange Free State.

Background: Tensions had been building for decades. The Boers, descendants of Dutch-speaking settlers, sought to maintain their independence and agrarian way of life. The British Empire, driven by strategic interests and the discovery of vast gold deposits in the Transvaal, aimed to bring the entire region under its control. Key issues included:

1. **Uitlander Rights:** Large numbers of foreigners (Uitlanders), mainly British, had flocked to the Transvaal goldfields. The Transvaal government, fearing being overwhelmed, denied them voting rights despite their significant economic contribution. Britain used this as a major point of contention.
2. **Imperial Ambitions:** Britain sought to unify South Africa under its flag, controlling the region's immense mineral wealth and strategic location.
3. **Boer Independence:** The Boers fiercely guarded the independence they had fought for (including in the First Boer War, 1880-1881, which they won).

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The War: War broke out in October 1899 after the Transvaal issued an ultimatum demanding British troop withdrawal from their borders. The conflict unfolded in distinct phases:

1. **Boer Offensive (Late 1899):** Boer commandos invaded the British Cape and Natal colonies, besieging key towns (Ladysmith, Mafeking, Kimberley) and achieving notable victories, such as the Battle of Stormberg described in the memoir. This period included "Black Week" for the British, marked by several defeats.
2. **British Counter-Offensive (Early 1900 - Mid 1900):** Under new leadership (Lords Roberts and Kitchener) and with massive troop reinforcements, the British relieved the besieged towns, defeated Boer forces in conventional battles (like Paardeberg, where Cronje surrendered), and captured the Boer capitals (Bloemfontein and Pretoria).
3. **Guerrilla Phase (Mid 1900 - 1902):** With their conventional forces defeated, the Boers resorted to highly mobile guerrilla warfare, led by figures like Christiaan de Wet and Koos de la Rey. They disrupted British supply lines and conducted raids.
4. **British Response:** The British implemented harsh counter-insurgency measures: a network of blockhouses and barbed wire fences to restrict commando movement, systematic farm burning to deny guerrillas resources, and the controversial establishment of concentration camps for Boer civilians (mainly women and children) and black Africans caught up in the conflict. Disease and malnutrition led to tens of thousands of deaths in these camps.

Outcome: The war officially ended with the signing of the Treaty of Vereeniging in May 1902. The Boer republics lost their independence and became British colonies (Transvaal Colony and Orange River Colony). However, the treaty included provisions for eventual self-government, which led to the formation of the Union of South Africa in 1910. The war left deep scars on South African society, fostering Afrikaner nationalism and contributing to the complex political landscape of the 20th century.

The narrative provides a vivid personal perspective on many aspects of this conflict: the initial mobilisation, the shock of battle, the successes and failures of Boer strategy, the hardships of the guerrilla phase, the pain of capture and imprisonment, and the difficult process of rebuilding life after defeat.

Glossary of Terms

- **Afrikaner:** Descendants of predominantly Dutch (but also French Huguenot and German) settlers in South Africa. In the context of the war, largely synonymous with "Boer".
- **Agterryer:** An attendant, often a coloured or black man, who accompanied a Boer fighter, typically looking after spare horses and personal effects.
- **Biltong:** Wind-dried meat, similar to jerky, a staple food for Boers on commando.
- **Boer:** Dutch/Afrikaans word for "farmer". Used historically to refer to the Dutch-speaking settlers and their descendants who established the independent republics.
- **Brandwag:** Picket, sentry, lookout post, or guard duty.

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- **Burger:** (Burgher) A citizen of one of the Boer Republics, liable for military service in the commandos.
- **Commando:** The basic unit of the Boer military system. Burghers from a specific district formed a commando, typically mounted infantrymen, under an elected Commandant.
- **Concentration Camp (Konsentrasiekamp):** Camps established by the British primarily for Boer women and children, and also for black Africans, ostensibly to deny support to the commandos but resulting in high mortality due to poor conditions and disease.
- **Drift (Drif):** A ford or shallow place where a river could be crossed.
- **Handsup / Handsupper:** Term used (often derogatorily by Boers who kept fighting) for Boers who surrendered to the British, especially after the fall of the capitals. Also used as the command to surrender.
- **Hoof Kommandant (Chief Commandant):** A senior commander, often in charge of forces from several commandos.
- **Khakis:** Slang term for British soldiers, derived from the colour of their uniforms.
- **Kommandant (Commandant):** The elected commander of a Boer commando.
- **Koppie:** A small, isolated hill or rocky outcrop, a common feature of the South African landscape (veld) and often strategically important in battles.
- **Laager:** A temporary camp, often one where wagons were drawn into a circle for defence (though in the text, it often just means encampment).
- **Martini-Henry:** A type of single-shot rifle used by some Boers, older than the Mausers.
- **Maxim Gun:** An early type of machine gun used by both sides.
- **Pom-Pom:** A 1-pounder (37mm) automatic cannon used by both sides, known for the sound it made.
- **Rebels (Rebelle):** Afrikaners from the British Cape Colony or Natal who joined the Boer forces. They faced harsher penalties if captured by the British, including potential execution for treason (though this was often commuted).
- **Republics (Republieke):** The two independent Boer states: the Orange Free State (Oranje Vrystaat) and the South African Republic (Zuid-Afrikaansche Republiek or ZAR), also known as the Transvaal.
- **Shrapnel:** Artillery shells filled with metal balls or fragments designed to scatter upon bursting, causing casualties over a wider area.
- **Sjambok:** A heavy whip, often made of rhinoceros or hippopotamus hide.
- **Skuit:** A punt or flat-bottomed boat, used for ferrying across rivers.
- **Tommies:** Common slang term for British private soldiers (from Thomas Atkins).
- **Veld:** Open grassland or countryside in South Africa.

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- **Veldkornet (Field Cornet):** A junior officer in a commando, often responsible for the burghers from a specific ward or sub-district.
 - **Vlei:** A shallow lake, marsh, or pan, often drying up seasonally.
 - **Volksraad:** "People's Council," the parliament or legislature of the Boer Republics.
 - **Vuurdoop:** "Baptism of fire," a soldier's first experience of combat.
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Further Information on Key Events Mentioned

- **Battle of Stormberg (10 December 1899):** Part of Britain's disastrous "Black Week." A British force under Lt-Gen Sir William Gatacre attempted a night attack on Boer positions at Stormberg Junction (a key railway point). Due to poor planning, faulty guides, and exhaustion, the attack failed badly. Gatacre was forced into a humiliating retreat, losing hundreds of men captured and significant equipment. Your great-grandfather's account captures the initial contact, the fighting on the ridge, the effect of artillery, and the Boer commanders' reactions (Olivier, Du Plooy). His observation about the failure to pursue vigorously and cut off Gatacre's retreat echoes historical analysis of a missed Boer opportunity.
- **Capture of Piet Cronje at Paardeberg (February 1900):** Following the relief of Kimberley, British forces under Lord Roberts trapped General Piet Cronje's commando and numerous civilians near Paardeberg drift on the Modder River. After a siege and heavy fighting lasting about ten days, Cronje surrendered with around 4,000 burghers on 27 February 1900. This was a major blow to the Boers, removing one of their most significant field forces. It's mentioned as a key event turning the war against the Boers.
- **Relief of Kimberley (15 February 1900):** The diamond mining town had been besieged by Boers since the start of the war. A large British cavalry division led by Maj-Gen John French broke through Boer lines to lift the siege. This success boosted British morale and was a prelude to the trapping of Cronje at Paardeberg.
- **Advance on and Capture of Bloemfontein (March 1900):** After Paardeberg, Lord Roberts advanced on Bloemfontein, the capital of the Orange Free State. Facing disorganised resistance, the British entered the city on 13 March 1900. This marked the fall of the first Boer capital and significantly impacted Boer morale, leading some to surrender (the "hands-uppers").
- **General De Wet's Raids and Trek into the Cape Colony (Late 1900 - Early 1901):** Christiaan de Wet became legendary for his guerrilla tactics and ability to evade capture. The trek described, where the author joined De Wet and President Steyn crossing the Orange River, was one of several attempts by De Wet to invade the Cape Colony, hoping to incite rebellion among Cape Afrikaners and relieve pressure on the Transvaal and Free State. These invasions caused considerable disruption but ultimately failed to spark a widespread uprising. The account of the crossing of the flooded vlei highlights the immense logistical challenges faced. De Wet's remarkable escape near Loxton, when trapped between two flooded rivers and a pursuing enemy, cemented his reputation as the "Boer Pimpernel."

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- **Night Attack near Spitskop (18/19 September 1901):** This detailed account describes a typical guerrilla raid. General Kritzinger, a prominent Cape Rebel leader operating in the Free State and Cape Colony, led a daring night attack on a British column (identified as Lovat Scouts, although the text says Natal Scouts under Murray/Thorncroft - unit identification could be confused). Such raids aimed to capture vital supplies (food, ammunition, horses, weapons) and disrupt British operations. The author's description of the stealthy approach, the charge, the confusion, and the specific actions (taking the cannon, Col. Murray's death, the Maxim gun being silenced) provides valuable insight into these actions.
- **Author's Capture (20 September 1901):** Occurring shortly after the successful raid, this illustrates the constant danger faced by commandos. Even after a victory, they could be ambushed by converging British columns. The author's capture during a rearguard action while the commando scattered highlights the chaotic nature of these encounters and the personal cost of the guerrilla phase. His mention of Col. Vincent of the opposing force treating him chivalrously reflects the complex relationships sometimes observed between combatants.
- **Escape Attempt from Trichinopoly, India (February 1902):** Trichinopoly (Tiruchirappalli) was one of several camps where Boer POWs were sent overseas (others included Ceylon, St. Helena and Bermuda). Escapes were rare and difficult due to distance, unfamiliar terrain, language barriers, and the local population often being incentivised to report escapees. The detailed account of the planning, the escape itself, the gruelling journey through rice paddies and villages, the interactions with locals, the near-miss with the French border at Karikal, and the eventual recapture provides a compelling narrative of determination against overwhelming odds.
- **Oath of Allegiance (Post May 1902):** After the Treaty of Vereeniging ended the war, Boer POWs could only return home if they signed an oath acknowledging King Edward VII as their lawful sovereign. This was a deeply divisive issue, especially for Cape Rebels who feared prosecution and for staunch republicans who saw it as a betrayal. The author's description of the debate and his pragmatic decision reflects the difficult choices faced by thousands of Boers eager to return to their families and rebuild their lives.

Boer War Stories: A Personal Account [English translation, Afrikaans original below]

By Dennis Johannes McDonald

Introduction: Author's Motivation and Context

These stories are taken from notes still in my possession, recounting what I personally experienced during the last War of Independence of the Republics. A portion of this writing appeared under my name fifty-one years ago in the Stellenbosch Quarterly, September 1904.

On the 1st of December 1955, I was seventy-seven years old. Now, so near the end of my life, I wish to describe my experiences briefly but more fully, and leave this account behind for my grandchildren and their descendants. My own children are two sons and one daughter. They are married to English speakers who also speak Afrikaans well. The grandchildren, the youngest of whom is six years old, are all bilingual. [Editor's note: As the author's grandson (also Dennis

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McDonald), I transcribed these handwritten accounts.] They often ask me to tell them what led to the war and about the war itself. They listen with the greatest interest and ask questions.

Fortunately, I have first-hand information and also recall what I personally saw and lived through. I also possess pictures of the main battles, which, for me who was there, depict them very clearly. I can also assure the reader of these stories that I do not intend with this writing to incite any form of racial hatred. I am writing what I saw happen with my own eyes.

The Outbreak of War: Joining the Commando and Early Decisions

In October 1898, I went on commando at Bethulie under the command of Commandant F du Plooy. We were encamped near Bethulie for more than a month. President Steyn and the leaders could initially not decide whether we should cross the Orange River (Groot River), the border line. Gen. Hertzog, as one of the government advisors, said cross over and advance towards the ports. We could then expect more favourable conditions from England and achieve peace. Many of us knew that delaying would give England the opportunity to bring its troops over, and once they were here in large numbers, we would have a poor chance of winning the war.

In the Transvaal, thoughts were also divided. Gen. Louis Botha said advance. The order finally came: advance only as far as Stormberg. There, the Bethulie, Smithfield, and Rouxville Commandos made laager [camped]. They were all under the command of Chief Commandant Oias Grobler from Phillipolis. He was also chairman of the Volksraad [People's Council] but lacked any military experience.

Now, every night, guards were posted at all the laagers, as well as pickets [brandwagte]; during the day, only pickets. Molteno, where a group of the enemy had camped, was closely watched. When a group of burghers gathers like this, idle and doing nothing, they have many clever talks and found much fault with everything done for them. Many boast about how they will shoot the Tommies [British soldiers]. Steytler, a burgher, then said we cannot make war with England and expect to win. This was reported to the Commandant. Steytler was immediately arrested and sent to Bloemfontein, where they put him in jail under guard. There, Gen. Roberts released him when he captured Bloemfontein.

My father Thomas and his brothers Roelof and Patrick Mc Donald, who were members of the Free State Volksraad, all predicted that if we went to war with England, we would lose the war. They added that the burghers would become disloyal to their country. Which is exactly what happened.

The Battle of Stormberg: First Experiences Under Fire

The Bethulie Commando now received orders to depart for Steynsburg. I was told to stay behind with the Smithfield Commando until the post [mail] for the Bethulie Commando arrived at Stormberg station, and then bring it to Steynsburg. At sunset, there were reports in the Smithfield laager that the enemy was moving from Molteno towards Stormberg. I chatted late with my friends. We didn't talk about the reports; didn't take them seriously.

Early the next morning, I was up. I had just saddled my horse when I heard a gunshot from the direction of the ridge on the other side of the Rouxville laager. The picket from the Rouxville laager under Commandant Olivier was just returning. One of the guards was still busy fastening his trousers when, in the dim morning light, about fifty paces from him, he saw one of the enemy

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walking towards him, and then the first shot of the Battle of Stormberg fell. The bullet struck fatally, the officer an enemy lieutenant.

Now I heard more shots fired, and also saw burghers running from the laager towards the ridge where the shots were falling. I mounted my horse and galloped across a stretch of plain towards the ridge. On the crest of the ridge, I now saw burghers here and there taking cover behind rocks. A few had nothing to hide behind; two stood upright, shooting as fast as they could load. Now I heard the bullets from the enemy's rifles whistling over us. This is my first experience. The Voortrekkers called it your baptism of fire. I felt nervous, scared, but I crawled forward. Now I carefully crawled on my stomach next to the burgher who was firing continuously. He had no cover from a rock, and now I saw, and he told me, the enemy was in large numbers behind cliffs about a hundred paces from us. They had charged a few times but were repulsed. Here, for more than an hour, I had enough shooting.

Now we moved through under shrapnel fire from three cannons. Under the cover of the cannon fire, the troops now advanced closer to us while our rifle fire fell silent. The bursting of the shells on the crest of the ridge made us first crawl back a bit to get some shelter. Now, for the first time, I saw Commandant Olivier. He was about ten paces behind me on the slope of the ridge, and he shouted, "Burghers, do not leave your positions!" I firmly believe that of the roughly sixty burghers who had held the defensive line against the enemy so far, not one had thought of fleeing. The burghers who had good cover behind large rocks on the crest of the ridge knew themselves that they were there to watch the troop movements, because when the cannon fire stopped, they immediately started shooting again; and we crawled back to our positions and resumed the fight.

Burger Olivier, the second man next to me, was now hit by a bullet through the head, and for a moment, it went dark before my eyes. The burghers between me and him were startled, jerked his body up, and quickly crawled a few paces back. Now, for the first time, I saw the blood and what it looks like when a man, barely two paces from you, is killed by a bullet through the head. For a moment I was stunned, and when I came to my senses, I was quite a distance back. How I got there, I don't know. I then felt in my pocket and found a piece of springbok biltong, chewed on it a bit, and began to feel like myself again.

I heard Commandant Olivier calling for a volunteer to take a report to the Bethulie Commando, which should now be on the western flank of the enemy. I took the report from the Commandant. He gave me another one to deliver to the station master at Stormberg station. I now had to ride in a semi-circle, through ridges and then plains, to get past the enemy. I managed to reach the Bethulie laager in about an hour. The report stated that Commandant du Plooy should attack the enemy from the rear. When he heard the cannons firing, he immediately knew what was happening. Commandant du Plooy did not wait. Soon he was on his blue horse, leading about a hundred burghers as fast as their horses could carry them, and took a position behind the enemy.

It wasn't long before they [the enemy] were forced to flee. Du Plooy was back in the saddle, shouting for his burghers to follow him. Unfortunately, only about twenty burghers followed him. He raced across a part of the veld the enemy had just abandoned and over the side of the positions defended by Commandant Olivier. He called on Olivier and his burghers to follow him, because now was the chance to cut off the enemy from Molteno, where they were now fleeing. Commandant du Plooy reached the Smithfield Commando, which held positions on the ridge

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where the road from Stormberg crosses the ridge towards Molteno. Du Plooy made an earnest appeal to Commandant Swanepoel and his burghers to pursue and cut off the enemy. Shamefully, not one of them had the courage to do it.

Du Plooy crossed the ridge with his small group of burghers, chased for a distance towards Molteno, then veered west to find the road the enemy was using to reach Molteno. At the rear end of the fleeing column, he intercepted a wagon with mules and a group of troops, taking them prisoner. General Gatacre with his officers, cannons, and troops would all have had to surrender if du Plooy's advice had been followed. A great fuss was made about the seven hundred soldiers we captured and the roughly four hundred killed and wounded. It meant little compared to what we could have achieved. What I write here, I can substantiate with pictures and reports taken and written by the enemy themselves at that time about the battle and their flight.

A Skirmish Near Stormberg: A Costly Mistake

I will briefly describe a few more battles I was personally involved in. We are still at Stormberg. Around nine in the morning, a report comes that the enemy is moving from Molteno towards Stormberg. Commandant du Plooy was quickly on his horse, and now I was with him. About one hundred and twenty burghers followed. We passed the first plain with grey rocky outcrops [vaalbanke] near the laager, galloping towards the second plain where our picket was stationed. Du Plooy ordered his burghers to stay with their horses and not come onto the plain. I then walked with him onto the plain and saw, about three miles from us, a hundred troops on horseback coming over a hill, heading towards a koppie [small hill] with ridges on one side. Now they were out of sight as they were in low-lying veld.

I pointed out to the Commandant where the Burgersdorp Commando's picket was taking cover. He then saw that if we could bring our cannon behind the hill, out of the enemy's sight, and position it near that picket, we could quickly shoot the enemy to pieces. He ordered me to immediately fetch the cannon from the laager. I met the cannon halfway from the laager. Now we raced behind the hill towards the point where the picket was hiding. When the cannon was in position to fire, the troops were busy climbing the koppie. We were barely eight hundred paces from them. They still didn't see us. I stood near the cannon, my eyes fixed on the enemy to see where the first shell would burst.

What did I see? Smoke erupted on the koppie, and here a burgher shouted, saying our men were mixed up in hand-to-hand combat with the enemy, and our cannon must not fire. After I had left to fetch the cannon, the Commandant had seen that while the enemy was out of sight, he might be able to reach the koppie with the burghers before the enemy occupied it. It was certainly a mistake for which he paid with the loss of his burghers' lives and was himself wounded. The Commandant, with a few burghers, while still on their horses at the foot of the koppie, were wounded and immediately withdrew from the fight.

My brother Thomas and ten other burghers dismounted and stormed the koppie. Five of them quickly reached the summit. Hendrik Viljoen, a friend of mine, fired just one accurate shot when a fatal bullet from the enemy hit him. Smith received a flesh wound through the neck. There were still three burghers left to hold the summit of the koppie. Combrink and Lessing, each with Martini-Henry rifles (which require reloading after every shot), made every shot count. They stood behind a large rock and knew how to use cover effectively. They were about six to seven hundred paces from the enemy. It wasn't long before they had shot eight of the foremost enemy soldiers dead – all shot through the head with the large Martini-Henry bullets – who were also

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sheltering behind large rocks and peeking over to shoot. Captain Montmorency and Collett were among the foremost of the enemy. I saw them after the battle.

Our officers and I were very indignant when we saw the next morning that some of our cowardly burghers, who had stayed behind the battle, had gone there and taken clothes from the corpses – what a shameful deed.

Life in the Laager: Oom Gert and the Russians

Our laager remained at Stormberg for a few more months. I found amusement with Oom [Uncle] Gert Engelbrecht. He was very comical to me, cheeky with his tongue when he spoke, and always had his own news about the war and the laager. Oom Gert couldn't read or write, but he always had a newspaper in his tent. I visited Oom Gert regularly. When I entered the tent, Oom Gert was usually lying on his stretcher and would tell me to throw a blanket on the ground and read to him what was in the newspaper. I would read, but before long, I'd make up my own news as follows: "Ten thousand Russians with heavy cannons have landed in Delagoa Bay and are departing to come and help the Boers." Oom Gert sat upright and said, "What, young man? Read that again." Now Oom Gert jumped up quickly and said, "Wait a moment." He walked swiftly out of the tent, saying to himself, "Now we'll show these devilish jetsam from the sea." Oom Gert walked crisscross through the laager, telling everyone he had now read with his own eyes in the newspaper about the great force of Russians with heavy cannons coming to help us.

The Tide Turns: Retreat and Betrayal

Now the war began to turn against us. Piet Cronje, who fought at Magersfontein [likely Maarsfontein], was captured by Lord Roberts with his entire laager at Paardeberg [likely Pereberg]. Gen. French relieved Kimberley. We received orders to fall back quickly. Meanwhile, Lord Roberts advanced towards Bloemfontein. There was nothing stopping him. The Boers were in flight. Our laager was here at Bethulie behind the heights. We received orders to move towards De Wetsdorp.

Disorder was now rife in our laager. Most burghers took their belongings and went to their farmhouses. You couldn't even ask them how they could do such a thing without them becoming terribly angry. They all consisted of the true Afrikaners who wanted to drive the Englishman into the sea. Now, at their homes, they prayed to be able to speak a little English, gestured with their hands what they wanted to say. Played buddy-buddy and helped the enemy to shoot and capture their fellow burghers. The Hollanders said of them: "Traitors, monsters, curse of the earth, debased creatures of nature, God's vengeance that spared you thus far, destroy you one day through hellfire."

A Narrow Escape

One of my cousins led the enemy during the night and surrounded me and two burghers in a house in the Smithfield district, trapping us. One of the two burghers, Engelbrecht, also played the traitor and tried to get us to surrender without firing a shot. The enemy paid dearly. One was shot dead in the doorway of the house. Enslin and I then mounted two of their horses, and we were away. Engelbrecht from Stofpoort, Smithfield district, then joined the enemy. The next day, he led them and showed them in Boesmans Berg where the Boers had hidden flour and other necessities under the cliffs.

With General De Wet in the Cape Colony

I joined Gen. de Wet and President Steyn. They crossed the Orange River between Philippolis and Colesberg (Sanddrif) with two thousand men. The next day, we had a major battle at Hamelton [Hamilton?]. Commandant Giep Joubert, on whose staff I was, had to defend the outermost point of the position de Wet had taken, with twenty burghers. We had to leave our horses behind a small ridge. We walked stooped for about two hundred paces so the enemy wouldn't see us, where we then lay flat without any cover. The enemy now wanted to outflank the visible ridge, de Wet's best position, and unknowingly sent a group of troops towards us. We had to stand up to shoot them.

But it wasn't long before they turned two cannons on us. I lay as flat as I could. Every shell that burst seemed like the next one would hit me. Snyman next to me was fatally hit by a piece of shell through his body. The Commandant jumped up and said, "Come!" Veldkornet [Field Cornet] van Wyk and I followed him. The other burghers ran towards their horses. When we had run about fifty paces from where the shells were falling, he said, "Stand and shoot now." He started firing; the enemy was then about three hundred paces from us. The Commandant gave me courage, and I started shooting. Now a few shells burst near us. The Veldkornet ran away; he hadn't fired a shot yet. After a little while, the Commandant saw we couldn't hold out longer or we'd be captured. He said, "Go back slowly, see if Snyman is dead, and get our horses." I ran, quickly saw Snyman was dead, and then I really ran. I looked back and saw my Commandant could run very well because he wasn't far behind me. Now all the positions were being shelled, and Gen. de Wet's Commando was in flight, and from then on, it was flight. Now and then, we had a short skirmish to drive back the foremost of the enemy.

The Vlei Crossing

Between Houtkraal and De Aar, there was a washaway [wolbreek?] across a very large vlei [marshy area]. It was dark, and we came to cross the vlei.

In all my experiences, I had never seen anything like it. The water flowed about eighteen inches deep, and then you still sank more than a foot deep into the mud. I saw in time that it was now beyond my horse's strength to carry me. I dismounted and led the horse. Now and then, he was up to his belly in mud and water. It now required all my strength and effort to carry my rifle and struggle forward in the water and mud, which often reached above my knees. There were no orders for the burghers to dismount and lead their animals. Some saw it in time while the horses still had strength to continue if led. Many burghers stayed on their horses until the animals stopped. Now he dismounts and wants to lead his horse, but the animal is so exhausted it won't move a step forward. Its owner leaves it standing just like that, with saddle and bridle. Now the burgher himself experiences how inhuman his demands were of his poor horse; now he struggles to get away. We struggled on through the entire night without a break. Many times in the dark, you had to struggle to free one leg from the mud because you were exhausted and at the end of your strength. When the sun rose, I was still at the head of de Wet's commando, and we had just crossed the vlei.

Attempted Recruitment in the Cape

De Wet lost all his cannons and wagons with provisions and ammunition. Now a large part of his burghers were on foot. Why do we never see anything in print or hear talk of Gen. de Wet's trek into the Cape Colony? De Wet had expected that with President Steyn alongside him and a Commando with cannons and wagons, the Cape Colony burghers would join him as one man.

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To me, it seemed that anyone who would join us under the circumstances we were in must have the intelligence of a baboon. I encountered such a burgher from the Colony. He was busy saddling his horse as I passed his house. I said to him, "What are you doing now?" He said, "I want to join your Commando. What do you think of that?" he asked me. Without stopping, I said, "If I were you, I wouldn't do it." When I looked back again, I saw him pulling the bridle off the old horse's head. Nobody can blame the burghers of the Cape Colony for not wanting to join then.

Trapped and Escaped near Loxton

Now we arrived at the Brak River where it flows into the Groot River [Orange River]. Both rivers were overflowing their banks. No human could cross there, and a large enemy force that had been pursuing us for days was about three miles behind us. We were now trapped. De Wet gave orders to off-saddle where the two rivers meet. There was little grazing for our hungry horses. As the sun was setting, he gave orders to saddle up, and when it got dark, he began to retreat along the bank of the Groot River. Every moment I expected us to clash with enemy pickets. We trekked through the night and the next day until about one o'clock in the afternoon, when de Wet gave orders to off-saddle. Until then, we had seen or heard nothing of the enemy. No wonder some of our burghers now believed the rumour that the Khakis [British soldiers] were now fleeing from de Wet! An enemy report that later fell into our hands stated that they could give absolutely no account of how de Wet and his Commando had escaped.

The next day, we were near Loxton at a drift [river crossing] where we found a punt [skuit]. The punt could only take twenty men at a time. The burghers on foot had preference. Some of my comrades were busy getting our horses to swim across the river. It was now about twelve o'clock midday. I started getting restless that the enemy could storm down on us at any moment. I managed to get a place on the punt, and as I stepped ashore on the other side of the river, a report came through from de Wet's spies that the enemy was near and advancing rapidly. Now I was in Griqualand West. We were about two hundred burghers. My luck held again; my horse had swum across. I said goodbye to General de Wet there and then and never saw him again during the war.

On My Own: An Encounter in an Abandoned House

For a time, I was on my own, but I had a friend with me whom I could rely on. We were in the Smithfield district. We rode, and it rained on us all day. It was dark, and now we came across a small deserted house. The front door was level with the ground. The door stood open. I dismounted from my horse. Now I whispered and told Casper, my companion, to dismount and hold the horses. I would then go inside to see if everything was safe. To my surprise, Casper said, "I'm not dismounting. I don't like it here. I'll stay on my horse and hold your horse like this." Agitated now, I whispered, "Get down, if you run, I'll shoot you." Casper then dismounted and took the reins of my horse. Still with my finger on the trigger of my rifle, I stepped carefully so as not to make a noise, into the house, lowering the rifle close to the floor. If someone were lying asleep on the floor, I would feel them with the tip of the rifle. I walked and listened for breathing. It was a tense moment for me, and now I touched something with my rifle. Instantly, there was a scream that went through marrow and bone [chilled me to the bone] and left you stunned, powerless, and frozen with fright. The second scream came as the thing ran into my legs, nearly making me fall. Only then did I realize from the sound that it was a pig. The pig must have slept in the house for more than one night. Now we could sleep peacefully in the house.

Under General Kritzinger: Capture Near Spitskop

My brother Roelof, who was a field preacher, and I were now with Gen. Kritzinger. I was on Kritzinger's staff. My brother was his private secretary. From the experience I had with many Free State officers under whom I served in battles, there was not one I could equate with Gen. Kritzinger. I say this after being captured under his command. On his order to shoot back at the vanguard of the enemy while our burghers were fleeing on their horses, I was captured, after firing the last cartridge in my rifle and shooting an officer dead a few paces from me. Six burghers whom I managed to stop to help me shoot back at the enemy stood a few paces behind me, and my orders to them were to shoot the enemy who were then surrounding us. Meanwhile, I stood with my back to the six burghers, shooting at those storming directly towards us. I will mention something more about this later.

18 September 1901: A Night Attack

Just past Spitskop. Zastron District. It was cold and dark, and here I sat with Commandant [name missing, indicated by (...)] Wessels and a few burghers around a small fire. We had just abandoned the positions we had taken early this morning and defended against the enemy all day. We were hungry and tired. Here and there, a few more such small fires could be seen. It was General Kritzinger's Commando, more or less 200 burghers, mostly rebels, about 15 coloured men, agterryers [batmen/attendants] tasked with the spare horses. The horses were very hungry, but still no orders to off-saddle. Here, my faithful agterryer Andries appeared out of the darkness, pulling from the pocket of his dirty and tattered jacket the leg of a chicken he had roasted. It tasted good, but I still had room for many chicken legs.

Then came the General's order that he wanted sixty selected burghers immediately, and their rifles must be in order; ten cartridges in the magazine and one in the chamber. It wasn't long before we were on the move. The General led us at the front, as he had done the reconnaissance himself. It was now a pitch-dark night, and there were no landmarks for him to keep the right course. I was always next to him, and it had been about half an hour that our horses were moving at a walking trot, and no other sound could be heard but the tread of the animals on the ground. Suddenly, the General brought his horse to a halt and said, "There is the enemy." It was a small light, not visible for long, but enough for him to change our course so that it wasn't long before we heard the command, "Stop and dismount."

Quickly, ten burghers were ordered to stay with the horses, and the other fifty burghers gathered in a circle around the General to listen to his address. He said he had scouted the column well and estimated their strength at 250 men, one cannon, and one maxim gun. He expected none of us to behave cowardly, fall out of line, or lag behind when the order came to charge, and also not to fire a shot before he gave the order.

Now we had to follow him two by two, and he led us in dead silence past the enemy's picket, and it wasn't long before we saw tents and wagons before us. Now the General very quietly arranged us in a single straight line with about five paces between each burgher. Commandant Wessels quickly walked past the burghers and said, "Charge!" We charged, each burgher in his place in the line. The General moved back and forth behind the line and, truly [wragtig], in the darkness, he managed to keep his fifty burghers each in their places, until death.

We still had no order to shoot when I saw something strange on the ground in front of me. I bent low with one knee on the ground and my rifle in my right hand. Then I noticed some of the enemy

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lying here asleep. I pushed the one nearest me in the face with my left hand and said, "Hands up!" and then stepped aside one pace, ready with my rifle to see what would happen. As they lay sleeping in a row, by this time a few more had woken up and jumped up, and then the first shot fell; the signal that the fight was under way.

It wasn't long before we were through from one side of the column to the other. The cannon on the right side of the column had just been swung around and loaded; a few of the enemy lay dead and wounded there. Colonel Murray must have met his death in the first clash because he lay dead in his tent in front of his stretcher.

I heard Captain Murray nearby giving the command, "At them boys, at them; get the maxim into action," and soon the maxim made itself heard and showed where it was placed. Those were Captain Murray's last words because at that moment a bullet hit him fatally. The maxim was quickly put out of action, thanks to our brave Commandant C. [name missing, indicated by (...)] Wessels, who suddenly leaped forward and so surprised the soldier who had begun firing the maxim that we heard no more from that danger.

Everything was now over. We searched the wagons for food. There was enough. We exchanged rifles and packed ammunition. Colonel Murray's leather bag with letters came into my possession. We took the cannon with us and one [wagon/cart? - indicated by (k ...)] which, with the help of my comrades, I loaded full of food and other necessities. With a heavy heart, I now departed from this gruesome [afgropelike] scene because here I left behind a good, brave friend, an old schoolmate from the days in Wellington; K.P. Matie Liebenberg. Matie received an instantly fatal shot next to me. He must have had a premonition of this because what he told me shortly before his death clearly proves he was aware of something like it.

When the sun rose, we were back with the other part of our Commando. Now we could saddle up. Now we had plenty of food and ammunition again. The General and all sixty burghers were very pleased with themselves. However, I didn't hear anyone boast or brag.

The Ambush and Capture

It is now still a few hours before sunset. We are well-rested, and everyone has eaten enough. Now we saddle up and move in the direction of Wepener; Spitskop on our left and Basutoland [Lesotho] on our right. Later on the trek, we had a bare hill on our left and further a long plain before us. We knew of a strong enemy column just behind this hill, but our path ahead was clear as far as the naked eye could see. It seemed so safe that none of our spies were sent ahead. The commando moved forward bunched together as if it were peacetime. The general and the commandant with a few of us had to first stop to write out a report. A report that had to be given to two burghers from Commandant Reeder's commando. When we followed the commando afterwards, they were already about a mile ahead of us.

Suddenly, I noticed something strange right in front of the commando, about half a mile further, and I asked the general what looked so odd there. He and I dismounted from our horses, and then we saw with our binoculars what looked to the eye like large broom bushes here and there – one sometimes sees them in our veld on a bare hill. It was nothing other than groups of horses drawn into circles with their heads towards the inside of the circle. Immediately, the general gave Pieter Hugo the order to go as fast as his horse could run and lead the commando towards the hill on our left; we could not go right into Basutoland. The general and the few of us went to see if the column behind the hill was in contact with the enemy now right in front of our commando.

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We were some distance away when the general noticed that the commando had stopped, and that the enemy began to move and also aimed the Pom-Pom Maxim. Then the general knew what was about to happen, and it was then that I received the order to ride in and bring the commando in the direction the general was going. But then the first shells from the Maxim burst right on the commando, and the burghers scattered; some to the right, others again towards Basutoland. Fortunately, I was riding my favourite horse, Nock. Nock ran well, and his stamina was endless. Nock then showed me that he was worthy of my trust. The commando quickly took the right direction, but now I was behind them.

I looked back to where the first shells had burst, and there I saw one of the burghers running towards me. Suddenly, I saw a horse with a saddle running some distance ahead of me. I chased the horse, grabbed the reins, then raced back, and soon the man was in the saddle. The two of us were now completely behind, and what did we see now? The enemy was on their horses, about a hundred men, and the foremost were already halfway past us, trying to cut off part of the commando. I loosened the reins a bit for Nock, and soon I was a short distance past the foremost of the enemy, but then the leading enemy riders swung so that a few of them started getting in among the rearmost of our burghers, and now I also saw, not far from me, one of the enemy chasing down one of our burghers and pulling him out of the saddle. Now I completely loosened the reins for Nock, and the enemy didn't see me anymore.

Over the hill I went. But what did I see now! The General and the commandant were trying to get the burghers to take up position here behind the hill and shoot back at the enemy. But it was useless; even the sjambok [whip] didn't help. It was a bare, open hill with no cover for you or your horse. When I reached the general, he said, "Dismount and shoot back at the enemy." My brother, Kritzinger's private secretary, was also with him then. I said to my brother, "You take Nock and ride out," and I quickly took his horse. Attached to its saddle was Colonel Murray's leather letter bag. In the bag was a long letter he had written to his wife just a day before his death. If it had remained in my possession, I would have taken the first opportunity to get it to Mrs. Murray.

Now I managed to stop six burghers, among them my brave comrade Tommie Willemse from Bethlehem. I gave orders to one of the six, a young boy, to hold the horses, stepped forward about five paces to get a better view of how the enemy was approaching, and there, no more than fifty paces in front of me, about twenty of the enemy came charging. With my first shot, they stopped, dismounted, and started shooting. But about eight of them remained on their horses and rode around us. I said, "Shoot at those going around us." I then shot at those in front of me, with no thought that things were going wrong behind me with the five burghers, one of whom was Tommie. I was just ready to shoot again, unfortunately with the last cartridge in my rifle, when I heard shouts, "Hands up!" When I swung around with my rifle still ready to shoot, I looked into several revolvers being fired at me. My rifle was immediately aimed at the soldier closest to me, and it was a fatal shot. With my rifle empty, I surrendered, but revolver shots still fell. I don't know what would have happened if it wasn't for Colonel Vincent, commanding the enemy, charging towards us on his blue charger at that moment. With a few questions, he quickly proved that he was not only a brave officer but also a chivalrous enemy. Tommie comforted me and said, "Mac, I couldn't shoot straight before they were upon us."

Captured: Reflections on Prisoner of War Status

20 September 1901, captured left of Spitskop in the district of Zastron, in the veld on the farm of Snyman. In the grave with an inscription on it lies a soldier buried, the victim of the last shot fired by me for the freedom of the two Republics.

This Column was the Natal Scouts under the command of General Thorncroft. Captain Bird was one of those who captured me. His life at that moment was spared only by a miracle. If he is still alive, he will testify to this. It was a lightning-fast decision at that moment, and the decision was in his favour. Had it been otherwise, it couldn't miss, his death was certain. Now I was a prisoner of war, and only those who have experienced it know what that means. I was afraid of nothing more than being captured. The deafening noise and the bursting of bombs and the buzzing of bullets made me feel less afraid than the thought of a state of absolute powerlessness and defencelessness. Not only was the thought of exile in foreign lands unpleasant to me, but also that I would no longer have the privilege of fighting for my fatherland. This thought was extremely painful to me. My fate, however, was decided.

No sooner had I relinquished my rifle than I began making plans to escape. It was utterly in vain – the English guards watched us too well. Captain Bird told us that he was very pleased to capture this type of Boer. There were thirteen of us captured here and taken to Aliwal North.

Prisoner of War: Journey to India

Fourteen days in the jail at Aliwal North, then sent to Bloemfontein where our accommodation was again the jail. Here I spent fourteen days in the military hospital. Now we departed again. Each truck was divided thus; one half of the truck for the guards, about seven of them, and ten of us, with one paraffin lamp between us and the guards. Early in the morning, the train arrived at Elandsfontein station. When we were counted, it was found that four of the burghers had jumped off during the night and escaped. When we left here in the afternoon, the soldiers brought straps and tied each burgher's hands securely together. For me and a few of us, it didn't help much because under the blanket, with my hands tied, it wasn't long before I was loose and could then also help my mate.

Then we were three weeks in Ladysmith. Here we were in military buildings. It wasn't bad at all; ample space to sleep. From here we went to Durban, and soon we were placed on a transport ship. We were now about five hundred prisoners of war in total. The sea journey was very unpleasant [miserable/nauseating]. I was fortunate never to be sick, but those little creatures they call lice could not have been fewer on the ship than the time when dust turned into lice [Biblical reference to the plague of lice].

Life in Trichinopoly Camp, India

On 30 November 1901, about 250 of us arrived at Trichinopoly in southern India. In that camp, there were already 650 prisoners of war. Then I gave up hope of being of any service to my people and country in this war. But that only lasted as long as the body was tired and exhausted from the torturous sea voyage. After a little rest, the desire came back even stronger to reach South Africa before the peace. I then heard everyone talking about a French port that couldn't be far from here. I spoke to H. Wessels, who had already been a prisoner of war for sixteen months, and told him that I did not intend to stay here long. I was glad when I heard he was ready to undertake such a venture with me. Fortunately, he was also the right man; someone I could rely on and who would not back down even if it came to death.

Planning the Escape

We had to figure out how to get out of the camp and also find out in which direction the French port lay, and get hold of food, etc. We now had to proceed very carefully to avoid suspicion among friend and foe. Towards evening, we would walk along the wire fence of the camp, which was enclosed with approximately forty strong wires and illuminated by electricity at night and guarded by several sentries. We looked for places where the wire crossed a water furrow, small ditch, or depression in the ground. Also where the guards occasionally met each other, only to separate again soon after. No, that would be too risky because it's only a few minutes that they don't see each other, and we could easily get stuck in the wire for ten minutes or so. We abandoned this plan.

What now? There was still hope. Next to our camp was a small camp enclosed by a single wire. In this camp, we went to play football in the afternoons. By six o'clock, we had to return to the main camp. Then the guards from the football camp, where there was also a hut, were withdrawn. Now we reckoned the solution was found. We had a chance to hide ourselves near this hut when our friends returned to the main camp, and not long after, it would be dark enough to escape safely. But alas, it failed. Disappointment upon disappointment would be our lot.

While we were busy getting ready, we learned one morning that two of our officers, Veldkornet von Mallitz and Commandant Muller, had escaped. Our plan was thwarted again because we knew immediately how they had escaped. The hut was also quickly demolished. We then just longed and wished that they would succeed, but to our regret, they were caught the next day about seven miles from the camp. They were brought back to the camp and informed us in detail that there was absolutely no chance of escape. The country, they said, is so densely populated that it was utterly impossible for anyone to hide during the day without being seen. Furthermore, no one can form an idea of how difficult it is to walk through the rice paddies, mostly under water, in the dark night. You must take water and food with you because unboiled water is very unhealthy, and you will hardly find food. We listened to all these objections, but still, the strong desire remained with us. We wanted to try ourselves, too, and if only we could get out of the camp, even just to breathe the free air. The guards were doubled, more wire was strung up, and we were watched very closely, so all our chances were at an end.

Meanwhile, we gathered more information. We told two officers of our intentions. They were well acquainted with the country and very taken with our plan, giving us all the information they had. They showed us the direction to the French port Karikal, which, according to their opinion, was 85 miles from Trichinopoly. They also pointed out a star that we could find using a compass and which would lead us to the safe, free coast or harbour. If only we could get out of the camp, then everything would be alright, so we thought. The day passed, and against our will, we had to stay in the camp.

A New Opportunity: The Measles Epidemic

But look, there was another ray of light on the dark path of exile. A sad event would this time give us the chance to escape. In January 1902, a measles epidemic broke out among the prisoners of war. Outside the camp, a hospital was erected, also fenced with wire and under the care of guards, but not as carefully as the camp, because the sick were naturally not so exposed to the temptation to abscond without first politely giving notice that they were vacating their happy quarters. It wasn't long before our help was called upon to nurse the sick. With the greatest willingness, Wessels and I offered our services. Nothing could give us greater pleasure than the

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opportunity to help our sick, and who knows if this opportunity wouldn't open the way for another opportunity.

Our services were accepted, however, there was another difficulty in the way. We were never allowed to be on duty simultaneously in the hospital. From 10 pm to 2 am, I had to stay with the sick, and from 2 am to 5 am, my place was taken by Wessels. The guard would then take me back to the camp and take Wessels with him. What to do now? We decided to risk going to the hospital together around ten o'clock, and if the Tommy guarding the camp gate wasn't alert, we would make him believe we had permission from the camp commandant to go to the hospital together so we could pass the time playing cards.

Around half-past nine that night, when there were no more lights visible in our huts, we put on our civilian clothes. We filled our pockets with rye bread, tied binoculars and water canteens around our bodies, then put our prisoner-of-war clothes back on over them. Dressed like this, we now walked towards the gate where we were always used to finding only one Tommy. However, instead of one, there were now four, staring at us in surprise. I looked at my friend for the first time and saw how unnaturally bulky he looked, so much so that the simplest person could notice something was amiss. At that moment, I became very anxious because suddenly I saw the corporal, whom I knew to be a very cheeky little man. His eyes flashed like fire, "Where are you going?" I did my best to answer as calmly and composedly as possible that we were on our way to the hospital and thought it would save extra work and trouble to take us both at the same time. "One at a time," was his curt reply. At this, I turned back because I knew we wouldn't get past him. He would arrest us very quickly, and for nothing in the world would I let him touch me at that moment. Wessels then went to the hospital with his fat, padded body. It certainly wasn't pleasant for him to remain in that state for four hours.

Well, now try another plan, because we had many plans, and one had to succeed. We then asked one of our Boer corporals, without telling him what was really behind it, if he would please ask the English Camp Commandant to let us go to the hospital together in the evening. We said it wasn't pleasant to get up during the night, and we could then play a bit of cards to pass the time. Against expectations, it was granted.

The Escape: February 6th, 1902

It is the 6th of February 1902, and my friend and I are finally together in the hospital. At twelve o'clock midnight, the guards are relieved, and then we will risk it. Life or death, tonight we will be free, cost what it may. I managed to turn down the wick of the lamp placed in the entrance hall unnoticed, bit by bit, so the light became dimmer or duller. This would help prevent us from being missed so quickly or discovered that we were gone.

The desired moment finally arrived. The patients were all asleep now. Wessels lay on a bench next to a table where I sat. Our shoes were off; there must be no noise. Then I noticed the guards were no longer pacing, and I knew those who were to relieve them were coming. I strained both ears to listen, and suddenly I heard, "Halt! Who comes there?" "Friend," was the answer. Now, not a moment longer to delay. Wessels jumped up when I gave the signal. One Tommy stood with his back to us, about five paces from the door where we slipped out quietly, and a few moments later, we were through the wire and free. Who can describe such joy?

The Flight: Hardships and Close Calls

We now had four hours, and within that time, we had to get as far away from the camp as possible. We knew that close to the camp, the military had two hundred and fifty Indian troops equipped with Arab horses, and they would be sent after us. Unfortunately, it happened that the guard who was supposed to fetch us at six o'clock, as arranged, didn't yet know about the new arrangement. They came at one o'clock, giving us only an hour's head start on our pursuers.

We were now running fast on a very dark night. It went very well for about a mile, when suddenly we fell into a very deep ditch. Fortunately, there was a thick layer of sand at the bottom of the ditch, which prevented us from being injured. We immediately took off the prisoner-of-war clothes. They consisted of a blue flannelette jacket that reached the knee and trousers. We buried them in the sand, and away we went.

It wasn't long before we encountered a very big disappointment; the first deep and wide canal of water. Clothes off quickly, and through we went. But something much worse met us now; rice paddies standing about four inches deep in water. No one who hasn't seen such rice paddies themselves can form an idea of the effort required to cross such a field in the dark night. The reader can imagine the reason [struggle?] when I say that I then felt like one abandoned by God and man. More than once, it felt as if I would breathe my last from exhaustion. Yet, we struggled through in the dark, and after about an hour, we came upon a road that, according to our compass, led in the direction we needed to go. We took off our shoes so as not to leave tracks on the road. Now running again, full of courage, because now we were going to make progress.

Alas, it was not granted to us. Along the road, we saw an Indian hut, and suddenly there was a ringing of bells. It was a small herd of goats in a kraal [enclosure] that got frightened. With the noise, the Indian woke up and, shouting, chased after us. We now found ourselves in one of their villages, and many Indians were sleeping on their verandas in front of their huts. They were now woken by the shouting, as everyone pursuing us was now shouting. In flight, I ran into an idol statue in the middle of the street and nearly fell badly. Quickly, I grabbed my helmet and shoes again, but barely regaining my senses, I heard a group of Indians shouting coming from the opposite end of the street. I had always warned Wessels that we must not lose each other. Now I noticed that on one side of the street was a hedge of wild prickly pears. Probably about 15 feet high, and now I made a leap as high as I could and broke and wrestled my way through. Wessels was better off because he followed in my tracks. Immediately, everything was quiet. I'm sure no one could imagine that humans had passed through these prickly pears. Head to toe, we were now covered in long thorns. We went through barefoot. With an open wound on my leg that I got from running into the idol.

Now we were on bare open veld and just hobbled and felt our way forward. Day began to break, and we now had to look for a place to hide for the day. In the distance, we saw trees and bushes; that would be the most suitable place, but as we approached, smoke began to rise among the trees. It was inhabited there. We couldn't continue walking. We would be seen. We had to hide ourselves as best we could today. We hadn't gotten as far from the camp as we had expected. Here there was no bush, tree, or ditch where we could hide. Finally, we came upon what I can call a dip in the ground or hollow place. We saw if we lay flat, we wouldn't be seen from a distance. Very unfortunately, we learned too late that under such circumstances, the open flat veld is often the safest place for a fugitive to hide, because you are not thoroughly searched there, as your pursuers don't expect you there. Here we lay now, without a shadow, under the

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burning sun of India. Little water was in our canteens, just enough, if you could hold out no longer, to just wet your throat. It was now difficult and painful to get all the prickly pear thorns, some broken off, out of your body and clothes. This kept us busy because we couldn't sleep.

The sun was now down. We had carefully checked the direction indicated by our compass. It was now dark enough. Painfully and laboriously, the feet and legs first had to get used to carrying the body. A rifle shot rang out, another, and then a few more. We then knew for sure that these were signals the Indian troops on their horses, pursuing us, were giving each other. At the same time, we knew for sure they were now ahead of us. We now just walked. We managed not to encounter canals and rice paddies. Sometimes we were diverted from our course by places we saw were inhabited. When we then came close to such a place in the dark, we first carefully looked for drinking water. We found a well and a bucket with a rope attached to draw water. We drank; it didn't matter how deadly and unhealthy such water is in India if not first boiled.

It is the second day; we have a better place to hide, but still, we can get no sleep. When it got dark, we started walking. Now we heard no more signal shots. Tonight things went well over bare, rough veld. Third day, a very suitable place to hide. Hills with bushes here and there. No sign of Indians to be seen. Everything quiet and still. We chose a dense bush, covered it with loose branches. Now we had shade from the sun that exhausted us so much every day. We would also be able to get some sleep now. It was about 11 a.m. Now we heard a soft sound, very far from us. We couldn't make out what it was. Not long, and we were sure the sound was getting closer. Now we saw the reason for the sound: a herd of Indian cattle known as "Kudus" [Translator's note: likely Zebu cattle, not African Kudus] with bells around their necks, grazing towards us. We sat dead still. But now the kudus caught our scent and charged at us, surrounding the bush, and with their tails in the air, they stood snorting, so you could really hear them. We jumped up and scared them. They ran off but not far away, then they turned and charged us again, standing and snorting. This time we sat still; what would happen now? Soon we had the answer: here came the herder of the kudus, driving them away with a long stick and then looking into the bush. There the two of us stood now, ready to face him. What would happen now? To our luck, he got such a fright that he took off running, driving the kudus away as fast as his legs could carry him. He was just out of sight when we took off in the opposite direction. We had the good fortune to get away for six nights without very serious trouble.

It is the tenth night. Day began to break, and we were again in rice paddies. It got light, and we again saw bushes and trees some distance from us, but smoke began to rise there, inhabited again as always. Near us stood a single tree in the rice paddy. We would take the chance and lie flat there. When the sun had been up for a while, about thirty Indian[workers] came to work in the rice paddy very close to us. They didn't see us, and late in the afternoon, they went back. The tree we were lying under stood on the bank of a canal. The water here flowed over a stone slab. The sun was close to setting, and there came an Indian walking from their dwelling place, a small village. He came straight towards where we lay under the tree. He didn't see us, climbed into the canal near us, and began washing himself. Now he turned around and looked towards the tree, and here he saw us lying about two paces from him. I have never heard such a scream from a human being. With one leap, he was out of the canal and ran as hard as he could towards the village. We just lay there, waiting for things to happen.

It wasn't long before about 100 came walking with sticks and clubs. Now they were shouting, talking, and making a very loud noise. We were very hungry and decided in the meantime, it couldn't get worse than losing our heads [doller as nek af], and trying to flee was unthinkable. I

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said to Wessels if they attacked us, we should just defend ourselves as best we could. When the Indians were about a hundred paces from us, we stood up, and we must have looked very large to them because now it was as if a bomb exploded among them. They turned and fled back. We sat and waited to see what would happen. There they came again. The group was larger now. When they were a short distance from us, we stood up, and again most of them fled. About fifteen remained standing. I told Wessels he must stay standing here. In case they attacked me, it was for him to decide what he would do.

I walked through the canal, and on the way towards them, I beckoned with my hand for them to come closer. But they stood still. Now they began to approach, and when we met, they surrounded me. Now it was a babble, a noise, and gestures... if it lasted longer, I would go mad. I stood still and waited until it quieted down. Then I pointed with my hands to my mouth and then to my stomach, which had already shrunk considerably. Now the babbling was just as bad, so I took heart because a few began to run back. I now got the others to go with me to where Wessels still stood. The babbling still continued. The sun was setting when a small group came walking quickly. They now sat down before us bananas and monkey nuts [peanuts], which they peeled themselves for us. Never were we more thankful for such a meal. We agreed with each other that we must keep them busy until it got dark and then go with them to their village. If it was dark, we always had a chance to break free if they wanted to hold us prisoner.

We now had to get a supply of food and do our best to find out where we were, how far from the railway line and station, how far the sea and Karikal were. According to our estimation, we should have reached Karikal, the French port, already. The village and their dwellings didn't look large; everything very primitive. There were men, women, and children around us now. There I saw a few chickens, and I pointed to the chickens and to my stomach and mouth, and I showed them a rupee (Indian money). Then they caught four chickens and brought a few eggs too. We gave them three rupees, and they were very satisfied. But now they babbled and made us understand we must leave. We couldn't find out anything, however much we gestured, about the train or the sea. Not far from here, we found bushes and water. Everything was quiet here. The chickens' necks were quickly wrung. Holes were made in the eggs and sucked out. The worst feathers were plucked off, and now we roasted the chickens in the flames of a fire. Not long, and we began to eat. It was hard to keep down what you swallowed, but with a mouthful of water afterwards, you overcame the difficulty. Now we felt strengthened and started walking with new courage, and without knowing it, we were inspired with a spirit that would risk more than was wise and safe for what we had undertaken.

We made rapid progress; it began to get light, and we saw a large, densely planted plantation of trees where we would be completely safe for the day. Alas, we now encountered an evil we hadn't expected. It began to rain, something that rarely happens in the part of India where our camp was. We had no waterproofs to keep our backs dry. It rained continuously, and we were soaked through and through. Around 4 p.m., we started walking. We were in the plantation, and we had to use the compass more often. When it became completely dark, we were out of the plantation and fortunately on a road that lay in the direction we were going. We now met a group of Indians. All the information we could get from them was by him pointing with his hands that we would see something on the right side of the road. It was now raining as if poured from buckets. We walked on the right side of the road, looking as best we could for when we might see something.

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Yes, here we saw a bungalow. Everything was dark in the bungalow. We walked around and then saw there was light at the back; we saw the door and just walked straight in. Water dripped from our clothes, and we looked such that we could scare anyone. Just a few paces in front of us lay a large fat Indian in his white clothes on a bench. He jumped up and stood staring at us in amazement. I said, "Don't be alarmed to see us like this. We got off the train at Fonora Junction and we are on our way to Nagapatan" (which is an English port near Karikal.) Among other things, we said we were walking the distance to get a better impression of the country and the people. We were from Scotland and had just landed in Bombay. He was very taken with us. Ordered his cook to make food for us, and not long after, he brought us rice with curry prepared in several different ways. Now we ate until the tears streamed because 'strong' is not the word for it. We carefully and circuitously found out where we were now. Later, he drew the railway line from Bombay to the east coast of India on paper for us, with the most important stations and the miles. The Indian was a qualified engineer. After a few hours of conversation, he went to sleep and told us that when we left, he had given orders to his orderly to accompany us and show us the way. This kindness did not appeal to us, and we felt, without saying anything, we wouldn't make use of it. We went to lie down and pretended we were going to sleep now. The orderly lay down a short distance from us. It wasn't long before he was asleep and began to snore. Quietly and carefully, we were gone.

Now we knew exactly where we were, and it was at most 15 miles from Karikal. We couldn't make it tonight, but we now had to get as far away from this Indian's place as possible and find a very good place to hide for the last day. We were very certain now that our pursuers would get word of us. We then managed to hide safely for the day in dense bushes beside a canal.

Recapture Near Karikal

With the last strength at our disposal, we now pressed forward. Tonight we had to reach Karikal, the French port. Alas, we were again in rice paddies that seemed endless. Day broke, it became light, and still, it was rice paddies. On our right, some distance away, were trees and bushes from which smoke began to rise, but right in front of us in the distance were bushes and trees showing no sign of smoke. We intended to reach the trees unnoticed. Instead of just lying flat in the rice paddy, we made the stupidest mistake of our lives. Yes, there on our right, two came running. There was now no chance to flee; the trees and shrubs in front of us were too far. The safest now was to see what would happen when they reached us, because we kept walking.

When they reached us, they addressed us politely in English and asked us to come with them. "And have a cup of tea."

"Thank you, we are on our way to Negapatan. Have to reach the port in time to catch our boat."

"I am sorry Sir, I have to arrest you on suspicion as two escaped Boer prisoners from Trichanopoly camp."

Naturally, I flew into a temper. "What damn nonsense to take us for two Boer prisoners."

"I must arrest you on suspicion."

"Now show me your warrant for our arrest."

"I left it at the office."

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"We will send for it and in the meantime you may accompany us. We refuse to be delayed any longer."

We now walked on, and they followed us. Here we came to a canal, wide and deep. He began to warn us that if we didn't stop now, he was going to raise an alarm. We then saw that the trees and bushes on the other side of the canal were also inhabited. Now I said to Brown, alias Wessels, "Let us go back to satisfy our good friend." Now I saw we had to play our last card and try a compromise... offer a little money. We didn't have enough money because there was a 100 rupee reward on each of us for whoever captured us.

The Indian now took the lead, Brown followed, and behind him came I on the narrow bank of the rice paddy. I wanted Wessels to walk slower so the Indian couldn't hear me speaking a strange language to Wessels. I pushed him with my stick. Now he thought we should flee. Wessels was the champion runner of 900 burghers in our camp. With one leap, he was in the canal. I had to follow. The water was up to our shoulders. Reaching the other side, we were among Indian huts. The inhabitants fled left and right because we looked like two wild animals. Again we were in rice paddies. We could run no more and now saw that on one side of us, about 100 of them were running along comfortably with us. We lay down now because we were out of breath. They surrounded us but made sure to stay a good distance away. Our 'friend' had gone around via a bridge over the canal. He arrived and forcefully insisted we walk back with him. We were dead tired and noticed that the Indians wouldn't just attack us to drag us along. I then said, "You better send for something to convey us to where you want us." It wasn't long before they came with a small cart with two Kudus [Zebu oxen] in front, and there we went with an escort of about 100 Indians.

Here we were now at an outpost with administration offices. Our 'friend' was very friendly and polite. We were given a good meal. After the meal, he asked Wessels to come with him to another room. They were alone for a short while when I walked to the room and opened the door. They were still in conversation. Wessels then told me he had told the Indian that we were the Boer prisoners. I then made a very earnest appeal to the Indian. I spoke like someone pleading for his life. I pleaded with the aim that he should send us from here to Nagapatan when it started getting dark. I knew this would still be our only chance to escape. Among other things, I said to him, "You were also once a free people. You know what you sacrificed to remain free. Look now at us and be convinced of what we have gone through." I must have spoken with such earnestness that when I fell silent, he said with a moved voice, if only I had said, right there where he first met us, "Save us." God knows he would have saved us, but after raising such an alarm, how could he turn the heads of all these people.

The report had already gone, and not long after, the soldiers came to fetch us to Nagapatan. Arriving there, we were locked up in a cell with iron bar doors, and an armed guard stood before the door. My leg with an open wound was quickly treated by a doctor. Plenty of food and cigarettes were given to us. Negapatan is a large Indian university centre. The next morning around ten o'clock, Indians began walking past the cell and the guard. Now we saw it was arranged by two guards, that each one was given just a chance to see what we looked like. This went on for a long time when two Indians stopped in front of our cell and began talking to us. The guard later said they were two professors from the university. They chatted with us and showed much sympathy for the freedom of our Republics.

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The next day, a sergeant we knew, with seven armed soldiers, arrived here by train from Trichinopoly camp. Then we were handcuffed on either side to one of their largest soldiers and marched to the station with a reinforced escort of Indian troops. In the train, the sergeant with his seven soldiers took their places well opposite us. With a red flag in his possession, he could stop the train should any mischief occur. We were amused and found all these precautions comical. Arriving at Trichinopoly, we were locked up separately in two cells with barred doors, near our Boer camp, with a guard day and night before our doors. To my surprise, the Camp Commandant arranged for our midday meal to be brought from our camp by our friends. While we ate, a few friends could wait outside and talk to us under the supervision of the guards. This went on for a few days. Then I arranged with one of my friends that he should hide writing paper and a pencil in the plates of food he brought me. Paper and pencil were soon in my possession. I now sat at times in a corner of the cell where the guard couldn't see me and wrote my report for our officers in the camp. This report reached their hands safely. The report was the cause of the successful escape of de Villiers. He then arrived in Holland. After a month here, we appeared before the magistrate. Our sentence was three months' hard labour in a military prison... Bangalore, located in the Himalaya mountains [Translator's Note: Bangalore is in South India, not the Himalayas].

Post-Escape Imprisonment and the Oath of Allegiance

Hard labour in a military prison, I won't describe it. We were very glad when the sentence was served. Back in Trichinopoly camp. We experienced much respect and affection from officers and burghers. That evening at Bangalore station, we learned from Hollanders who were well-disposed towards us that we had lost the freedom of the two Republics, and it would be a requirement if we wanted to return to the Republics, that we would have to take the oath of allegiance to the Crown of England. When we now saw the feeling of hatred among the burghers in the camp against such a requirement, we kept quiet for a time about how the two of us thought about the matter.

On a certain day, I decided it couldn't go on like this any longer. Twenty of my friends, mostly Griqualand West rebels. The conversation was again about taking the oath. I took no part in it. The rebels were fierce and very serious. I was tired of the unpleasant arguing, and I now said with a spirit of decisiveness, "I am going to take the oath, and what are you going to do to me?" It seemed then as if they didn't believe me. My best friends, I said. It is for you and me a matter of honour and vital importance. You are aware of what Wessels and I went through. Here you still see the marks of it on us. Our goal was to reach South Africa and our Commandos. Let me now assure you that should it happen that our enemy makes me take their oath under false declarations, such an oath will not prevent me, if I get to South Africa and there are still fighting Commandos of ours, I will hasten to reach them."

Now everyone's mood was very full. There was a deathly silence at first, and now one said, "You are a citizen of the Free State, but what about us rebels?" My most faithful comrade Greef, a rebel from the Ventersdorp district, on whose head was a reward of 250 Pounds for the person who would identify Greef to the enemy. Greef went under the name du Plessis. I now put myself in your place, feel with you the responsibility of what I am going to propose. It could mean an immediate end for you, that you are left behind with us, and also an end to the measure of freedom you have experienced so far, and for some of you, it could mean the death sentence. My friends, it might happen, but I tell you, with such a thought constantly with you, and the

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postponement of knowing what will happen, it will make cowards of us. Don't postpone, decide now.

Two of us were immediately chosen and sent to the English Commandant of the camp. These were anxious moments, waiting for your verdict. Yes, there the two came walking quickly. When they reached us, I could see from their faces that their report was favourable. Everyone who takes the oath will be sent back to South Africa, and where there are accusations against persons, each case will be treated on its merits. With the conclusion of peace at Vereeniging, it was one of the conditions that the death sentence may not be applied. Now everyone was satisfied, and the news quickly spread through the camp. The day and days we could take the oath, we stood before the camp gate waiting like a flock of sheep because everyone wanted to take the oath before the others now. Because many thought then you would be the first to get away to South Africa. The first ship we could take was in about another two months.

Return to South Africa and Post-War Life

Early one morning, having arrived alone in a truck at Bethulie station, I walked to the town. My father, mother, and two sisters, Sarah and Letta, I found in our town house, all still healthy. The enemy had taken all our livestock, given receipts for the livestock, and then sent my parents and two sisters to the concentration camp in Bloemfontein. Sir John Fraser, who knew my father, made an effort, used his influence, and persuaded the military to let them go to Bethulie, to stay there in their house until the end of the war. My possessions were 60 pounds that I had buried. My father had no mortgage on his land, but he had no cash when the war was over. The farms Jakkalsfontein and Perefontein, which was still an outpost that he rented out. The rent then was just enough for them to live on. For me, he had reserved the right to a part of the veld, but he couldn't help me with money to buy livestock, which was then very expensive. Ordinary merino ewes were then one pound ten shillings each.

Working as a Livestock Buyer in the Cape Colony

After being in Bethulie for a few days, I received a letter from a partnership in Johannesburg, asking me to go and buy livestock for them in the Cape Colony. It was a very great trust they placed in me because sometimes I had control over more than 2000 pounds. A lot of money for that time. For nine months, I did this work. With a bicycle, I crisscrossed the districts... Richmond, Victoria West, Murraysburg, Nelspoort, Beaufort West, Colesberg, Phillipstown, De Aar, Hopetown, Petrusville. My salary was only twenty pounds per month. My train expenses were paid; otherwise, I had to manage on my own. It was very hard and responsible work, but the experience was very valuable to me in my later life. I met many good and sympathetic people during this time.

A Karoo Experience

I mention one single exception. Early in the morning, I left Richmond Road on my bicycle. I rode towards the Victoria West district. The day was terribly hot on the Karoo plains. I rode without delay, calling at farms and inquiring about the sale of livestock. Nowhere was I asked if I had had breakfast or coffee that morning. When the day drew towards one o'clock, I saw a farm in the distance. Now I rode for all I was worth to get there before the midday meal. The front door of the house was a stable door [bo en onder deur - top and bottom halves open independently]. When I knocked, I could still hear the plates clinking on the table.

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Now the man opened only the top half of the door and asked what he could do for me. I asked if he had livestock to sell. Yes, he said, there they are by the windmill. Go look at them, and then you can go rest in that outside room, because I am going to sleep now. I went to look at the sheep, came back, and lay down on an old coir bed. After a while, his son came there. I said, "Son, go ask your mother for food for half a crown for me." He brought me a small piece of ostrich biltong, a mug of black coffee, and a slice of bread. When I finished eating, I said thank you, got on my bicycle, and rode away. He was also surely one of those who now talk about how much they love the Afrikaner. Their love goes no further than just lip service. If you want to be deceived or betrayed, then believe what they say.

Post-War Travels and a Surprising Encounter

I was sent to the Middelburg district in the Transvaal, where I had to sell a herd of cattle. I drove the cattle from farm to farm, sometimes through areas inhabited by black Africans where I could also sell a fair number of cattle. I travelled with a traps [a type of light cart] and one horse, arriving just as the sun was setting before the house of a farm. Before I could climb down from the traps, an old tante was out of the house and on the stoep. With both hands on her hips, agitatedly, she asked, "Are you a Rooikop?" [Redhead – a derogatory term for Boer traitors].

"No, I don't know what a Rooikop is. I am a burgher of the Free State, fought for the Republics until the bitter end."

"Climb down, my 'neef' and she came and greeted me. "Outspan and come to the house. The 'Oom' is not here at the moment."

I wasn't long in the house when she brought me a cup of coffee. The Oom now came in. She said, "Old man, you can greet him; he is no Rooikop." Rooikoppe was the name given to the traitors, burghers who joined the enemy and took up arms against us. In the Free State, we called them 'Joiners'.

When we sat before the fire that evening, the Oom told me his experiences of the war. He had been captured right at the beginning. Sent to India, to the Trichinopoly camp where later there were nine hundred prisoners of war. When he had now told me everything in detail (everything he told me, I knew was the truth), I then asked him if he knew two burghers (prisoners of war) there, with the names Wessels and O'Donell. That was my name when I was captured.

"Ah yes," he said. He had always cooked Wessels' food for him, and O'Donell often came to eat with him. He was amazed when I told him that I was O'Donell.

Translator's Note: McDonald recounted to his son, Abe McDonald, that he had assumed the surname of O'Donell upon his capture. This, he explained, was due to him having shot a British officer after men behind him had raised the white flag. He feared that there could be repercussions later on in spite of the fact that a British officer had absolved him at the scene. Interestingly, in Albert Blake's book 'Ontsnap', he refers to an 'O'Donald when recounting this escape from Trichinopoly':

An example of this is the case of Hendrik Wessels from Kroonstad and Daniël O'Donald from Johannesburg who worked as medical orderlies in the hospital at Trichinopoly. The two prisoners of war did not return to the camp at the end of their shift on the evening of 7 February 1902. Wessels and O'Donald succeeded in evading capture for longer than a week. More details about their escape could not be traced, apart from a fellow prisoner's description of how they had to

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walk "day and night, especially during the night, right through rice paddies standing under water" [English translation of the original].

Starting Anew: Farming and Family Life

Now, my grandchildren, you are surely bored and tired of reading Grandpa's war experiences. I went to buy myself about 150 ewes in the Barkly East district and trekked with them from there to the little farm ['plaasie'], a part of Spitskop, where I then started farming.

Here there were two rooms, a flat roof covered with zinc, as hot as a baking oven in summer, and in winter, it was an icebox. There was another kitchen and room; this one had a 'brakdak' [a flat roof made of reeds/sticks covered with clay/mud, prone to leaking]. My first wool cheque was 25 pounds.

Within a year, I began making plans to marry. Grandma knew how poor I was, but she was willing ['kans gesien'] to marry me notwithstanding all my circumstances, discomfort, and poverty. We both then had to struggle and work hard. Yet, we were very happy. My meagre farm equipment was of such poor quality, also my draught animals: one ox and one cow, which I also harnessed into a 'bokkie kar' [a light two-wheeled cart or buckboard] to sometimes pull us to town; also one horse I could ride.

Later, the little farm was surveyed and sectioned off from Spitskop. It was then that we gave the little farm the name Nimra. Nimra is a name in the Bible and means clear water [Translator's Note: Nimrah appears in Numbers 32:3, associated with pastureland; Beth-nimrah means 'house of the leopard' or possibly 'house of clear water'].

Final Reflections: Faith and Connection to the Land

On Nimra lie many drops of our sweat. I am very attached to Nimra, hence my earnest desire that my ashes should be buried in the rock crevice above the Spitskop [koppie/hill]. It is there that I more than once sought the face of my Best Friend [God]. Told Him all my needs, confessed my sin, asked His forgiveness, which I always received from Him. With new courage, faith, and trust in Him, I could then return to my work and duties.

Boer War Stories

Deur Dennis Johannes McDonald

Voorwoord

Hierdie verhale is geneem van aantekeninge wat ek nog in my besit het, en wat ek self ondervind het met die laaste Vryheidsoorlog van die Republieke. Een deel van hierdie skrywe het een en vyftig jaar gelede onder my naam verskyn in die *Stellenbosch Quarterly*, September 1904.

Die laaste Desember 1955 was ek sewe-en-sewentig jaar oud. Nou so naby die end van my lewe, verlang ek om in kort meer volledig my ondervindinge te beskrywe en dit agter te laat vir my kleinkinders en hulle geslagte. My eie kinders is twee seuns en een dogter. Hulle is getroud met Engelssprekendes wat goed Afrikaans ook praat. Die kleinkinders, waarvan die jongste ses jaar

oud is, is almal tweetalig. [Redakteursnota: As die skrywer se kleinseun (ook Dennis McDonald), het ek hierdie handgeskrewe verslae oorgetik.] Dikwels vra hulle my om hulle te vertel wat aanleiding gegee het tot die oorlog en van die oorlog self. Met die grootste belangstelling word dan geluister en vrae gestel.

Gelukkig beskik ek oor eerstehandse informasie en ook wat ek self gesien en deurlewe het. Ook het ek in my besit prente van die vernaamste gevegte, wat vir my, wat daarin was, dit baie duidelik voorstel. Ek kan ook die leser van hierdie verhale verseker dat ek met hierdie skrywe geensins bedoel om enige vorm van rassehaat te wek nie. Ek skrywe wat ek met my oë gesien gebeur het.

Op Kommando

Oktober 1898 het ek op Kommando gegaan te Bethulie onder bevel van Kmdt. F du Plooy. Ons het vir meer as een maand in laer gestaan naby Bethulie. President Steyn en die hoofde kon eers nie tot 'n besluit kom of ons die Oranjerivier (Grootrivier), die grenslyn, moes oorsteek nie. Genl. Hertzog as een van die adviseurs van die Goewerment het gesê trek oor en trek aan na die hawes. Ons kan dan gunstiger kondisies van Engeland verwag en dan vrede kry. Baie van ons het geweet, om uit te stel, gee ons Engeland die geleentheid om sy troepe oor te bring en as hulle in groot getalle hier is, dan het ons 'n slegte kans die oorlog te wen.

In die Transvaal was die gedagtes ook verdeeld. Genl. Louis Botha het gesê trek in. Die bevel het ten laaste gekom, trek net so ver as Stormberg. Daar het die Bethulie-, Smithfield- en Rouxville-Kommando's laer getrek. Hulle was almal onder bevel van Hoofkommandant Oelias Grobler van Phillipolis. Hy was ook voorsitter van die Volksraad maar sonder enige militêre ondervinding.

Nou word elke nag by al die laers wagte uitgesit, asook brandwagte; gedurende die dag net brandwagte. Molteno, waar 'n klompie van die vyand laer getrek het, word goed opgepas. As 'n klomp burgers so bymekaar en ledig niks doen nie, het hulle baie slim praatjies, en vind baie fout met alles wat vir hulle gedoen word. Baie vertel hoe hulle die Tommies sal skiet. Steytler, 'n burger, sê toe ons kan nie met Engeland oorlog maak en meen om te wen nie. Dit word aan die Kommandant oorgedra. Steytler is dadelik gearresteer en na Bloemfontein gestuur en daar het hulle hom in die tronk onder toesig van die wagte gesit. Daar het Genl. Roberts, toe hy Bloemfontein inneem, hom vrygelaat.

My vader Thomas en sy broers Roelof en Patrick McDonald, wat lede was van die Volksraad van die Vrystaat, het almal voorspel dat as ons oorlog kry met Engeland, ons die oorlog sou verloor. Hulle het daarby gevoeg, dat die burgers ontrou vir hulle land sal word. Wat ook alles net so gebeur het.

Die Slag van Stormberg

Die Aanloop

Bethulie Kommando kry nou orders om na Steynsburg te vertrek. Vir my word gesê om by Smithfield Kommando agter te bly tot die pos van Bethulie Kommando by Stormberg stasie sou aankom en dit dan aan te bring na Steynsburg. Sonder is daar berigte in Smithfield-laer, dat die vyand van Molteno af beweeg in die rigting van Stormberg. Ek het laat met my vriende gesels. Ons het nie oor die berigte gepraat nie; nie ernstig dit geneem nie.

My Vuurdoop

Vroeg was ek die volgende môre op. My perd het ek net opgesaal, toe hoor ek 'n geweerskoot val in die rigting van die rand aan die ander kant van Rouxville-laer. Die brandwag van Rouxville-laer onder Kmdt. Olivier was net aan die teruggaan. Een van die wagte was nog besig om sy broek te verbind, toe hy in die skemer môrelik, omtrent vyftig tree van hom af, een van die vyand sien aangestap kom, en toe val die eerste skoot van die geveg by Stormberg. Die koeël tref dodelik, die offisier, 'n luitenant van die vyand.

Nou hoor ek meer skote val, en sien toe ook burgers van die laer af, na die rand waar die skote val, hardloop. Ek is op my perd, en jaag oor 'n deel vlakke na die rand toe. Op die spits van die rand sien ek nou burgers hier en daar skuil agter klippe. 'n Paar het niks om agter te skuil nie, twee staan regop en skiet so vinnig as hulle kan laai. Nou hoor ek die koeëls van die vyand se gewere fluit oor ons. Dit is my eerste ondervinding. Die Voortrekkers noem dit jou vuurdoop. Ek voel senuagtig, bang, maar ek kruip aan. Nou seil ek versigtig op my maag aan tot langs die burger wat aan een skiet. Hy het geen skuiling van 'n klip nie, en nou sien ek, en sê hy vir my, die vyand is in groot getal agter kranse omtrent honderd tree van ons af. Hulle het 'n paar maal storm geloop maar is teruggeslaan. Hier het ek vir meer as 'n uur genoeg geskiet gehad.

Die Geveg

Nou loop ons deur onder skrapnelvuur van drie kanonne. Onder dekking van die kanonvuur, kom die troepe nou nader na ons terwyl ons geweervuur nou stil is. Die bars van die bomme op die spits van die rand het gemaak dat ons eers 'n bietjie agteruit geseil het om 'n bietjie skuiling te kry. Nou sien ek vir die eerste maal Kmdt. Olivier. Hy is sowat tien tree agter my teen die skuinste van die rand, en skree hy nou: "Burgers moenie julle posisies verlaat nie!" Ek glo stellig dat van omtrent 'n sestigtal burgers wat sover die defensief teen die vyand gehou het, by nie een die gedagte was om te vlug nie. Die burgers wat goeie skuiling agter groot klippe op die spits van die rand gehad het, het by hulleself geweet dat hulle daar is om die bewegings van die troepe dop te hou, want toe die kanonvuur ophou, toe begin hulle dadelik skiet; en ons seil na ons posisies toe en begin die geveg.

Burger Olivier, die tweede naas my, kry nou die koeël deur die kop en vir 'n oomblik word dit donker voor my oë. Die burgers tussen my en hom skrik en ruk sy lyf op en kruip vinnig 'n paar tree agteruit. Nou sien ek vir die eerste maal die bloed en hoe dit lyk as 'n man skaars twee tree van jou af dood is met 'n koeël deur die kop. Vir 'n oomblik was ek stom en toe ek my weer kry was ek 'n hele end agteruit. Hoe ek daar gekom het weet ek nie. Ek voel toe in my sak en kry 'n stukkie springbokbiltong en kou so 'n bietjie daaraan en begin myself weer voel.

Kmdt. du Plooy se Aksie

Ek hoor Kmdt. Olivier roep vir 'n vrywilliger om 'n rapport na Bethulie Kommando te neem, wat nou aan die westekant van die vyand moet wees. Ek neem die rapport by die Kommandant. Hy gee my nog een om aan die stasiemeester by Stormberg stasie af te gee. Ek moet nou in 'n halfmaan jaag, plekke deur randjies en dan weer vlaktes om by die vyand verby te kom. Dit het my geluk om in sowat 'n uur tyd Bethulie-laer te bereik. Die rapport was dat Kmdt. du Plooy die vyand van agter moes aanval. Toe hy nou die kanonne hoor skiet, het hy dadelik geweet wat aan die gang was.

Kmdt. du Plooy het nie op hom laat wag nie. Gou was hy op sy blouperd en lei hy 'n honderdtal burgers so vinnig as hulle perde hulle kan dra en neem 'n posisie agter die vyand in. Dit was nou nie lank nie, toe word hulle gedwing om te vlug. Du Plooy is weer in die saal en skree op sy

burgers om hom te volg. Jammer, net 'n twintig burgers volg hom. Hy jaag oor 'n deel van die veld wat die vyand nou verlaat het en oor die kant van die posisie wat Kmdt. Olivier verdedig het. Roep op Olivier en sy burgers om hom te volg want nou is die kans om die vyand af te keer van Molteno waarheen hulle nou vlug.

Gemiste Kans

Kmdt. du Plooy kom by Smithfield Kommando wat posisies het op die rand waar die pad van Stormberg af, die rand oorgaan na Molteno toe. Du Plooy maak 'n ernstige beroep op Kmdt. Swanepoel en sy burgers dat hulle die vyand moet voorjaag en afkeer. Skande, nie een van hulle het die moed om dit te doen nie. Du Plooy gaan die rand oor met sy klompie burgers, jaag 'n end in die rigting van Molteno, dwaal nou na die weste om die pad te kry wat die vyand gebruik om Molteno te bereik. Op die agterpunt van die kolom, soos hulle vlug, keer hy 'n wa met muile voor, en 'n klompie troepe af en neem hulle gevange. Generaal Gatacre met sy offisiere, kanonne en troepe, sou almal moes oorgee, was Du Plooy se raad gevolg. Groot opskudding is gemaak met die sewehonderd soldate wat ons gevang het en sowat vierhonderd dood en gewond. Dit het weinig beteken teen wat ons kon bereik het. Wat ek hier skrywe, kan ek staaf met prente en verslae wat die vyand self geneem en geskrywe het daardie tyd van die geveg en hulle vlug.

Nog 'n Skermutseling by Stormberg

Ek sal in kort, nog enkele gevegte beskrywe wat ek self in was. Ons is nog op Stormberg. Sowat nege-uur in die môre kom die rapport dat die vyand beweeg van Molteno af na Stormberg. Kmdt. du Plooy was gou op sy perd en nou is ek by hom. Sowat honderd-en-twintig burgers volg. Ons gaan die eerste plaat met vaal banke (klippe) naby die laer uit, jaag na die tweede plaat waar ons brandwag is. Du Plooy order sy burgers om by hulle perde te bly en nie op die plaat uit te kom nie. Ek stap toe saam met hom op die plaat uit en sien sowat drie myl van ons af, 'n honderd troepe op perde oor 'n bult kom en trek in 'n rigting na 'n koppie met randjies aan die een kant. Nou is hulle uit ons gesig want hulle is op lae veld. Ek wys die Kommandant waar Burgersdorp se Kommando se brandwag skuilhou. Hy sien toe dat as ons ons kanon agter die bult uit gesig van die vyand, en dit by daardie brandwag bring, dan skiet ons hulle, die vyand, net gou vrenters. Hy order my om dadelik die kanon by die laer te gaan kry.

Die kanon kry ek halfpad van die laer af. Nou jaag ons agter die bult af na die punt waar die brandwag skuil. Toe die kanon in posisie was om te vuur, was die troepe besig die koppie uit te klim. Ons is nouliks agthonderd tree van hulle af. Hulle sien ons nog nie. Ek staan na aan die kanon en my oë bly op die vyand om te sien waar bars die eerste bom. Wat sien ek, rook slaan uit op die koppie en hier skree 'n burger en sê daar is ons mense deurmekaar, handgemeen met die vyand en ons kanon mag nie vuur nie.

Nadat ek weg was om die kanon te haal, het die Kommandant gesien terwyl die vyand uit gesig was, kon hy die koppie met die burgers miskien bereik, voor die vyand dit in besit het. Dit was stellig 'n fout wat hy met verlies van lewens van sy burgers en hyself gewond, voor moes betaal het. Die Kommandant met 'n paar burgers, terwyl hulle nog op hulle perde was, by die voet van die koppie, is gewond en is hulle toe dadelik terug uit die geveg.

My broer Thomas en nog tien burgers spring van hulle perde af en loop die koppie storm. Vyf van hulle het gou die spits van die koppie bereik. Hendrik Viljoen, 'n vriend van my, het net een raak skoot gelos toe 'n dodelike koeël van die vyand hom tref. Smith kry 'n vleeswond deur die nek. Daar is nog drie burgers om die spits van die koppie te hou. Combrink en Lessing, elk een met

Martini-Henry-gewere, waar jy elke maal wat jy skiet weer 'n patroon moet insteek, skiet elke skoot raak. Hulle staan agter 'n groot klip en weet om die regte skuiling te gebruik. Hulle is sowat ses-, sewehonderd tree van die vyand. Dit was nie lank nie toe het hulle agt van die voorste van die vyand, wat ook agter groot klippe skuil en dan regoor die klip uitkom om te skiet, doodgeskiet, almal skote deur die kop met die groot Martini-Henry koeël. Kaptein Montmorency en Collett was van die voorste van die vyand. Ek het hulle na die geveg gesien.

Ons offisiere en ek was baie verontwaardig toe ons die volgende môre sien dat van ons lafhartige burgers agter die geveg verby was, daarheen gegaan het en van die klere van die lyke geneem het. Voorwaar 'n skandelijke daad.

Oom Gert Engelbrecht en die Nuus

Ons laer was nog 'n paar maande op Stormberg. Ek vind tydskorting met Oom Gert Engelbrecht. Hy is vir my baie komieklik, stout met sy tong as hy praat en het altyd sy eie nuus van die oorlog en die laer. Oom Gert kan nie lees of skrywe nie maar hy het altyd 'n koerant in sy tent. Ek besoek Oom Gert gereeld. As ek die tent instap lê Oom Gert gewoonlik op sy stretcher en sê dan vir my om 'n kombers op die grond te gooi en vir hom te lees wat in die koerant staan. Ek lees dan, maar nie lank nie, dan maak ek my eie nuus as volg: "Tien duisend Russe met swaar kanonne in Delagoabaai geland en hulle vertrek om die Boere te kom help." Oom Gert sit regop en sê: "Wat jong? Lees dit weer." Nou spring Oom Gert vinnig op en sê: "Wag so 'n raps". Hy stap vinnig die tent uit en sê by homself: "Nou sal ons die duiwelse opdrifsels van die see wys." Oom Gert stap die laer kruis en dwars deur en vertel hy het nou met sy eie oë in die koerant gelees van die groot mag van Russe met swaar kanonne wat ons kom help.

Die Oorlog Draai Teen Ons

Die Val van Bloemfontein en Verraad

Nou begin die oorlog teen ons draai. Piet Cronjé wat by Magersfontein geveg het, word deur Lord Roberts gevang met sy hele laer by Paardeberg. Genl. French ontset Kimberley. Ons kry orders om vinnig terug te val. Intussen ruk Lord Roberts op na Bloemfontein. Daar is niks wat hom keer nie. Die Boere is op die vlug. Ons laer is hier by Bethulie agter die hoogte. Ons kry orders om in die rigting van Dewetsdorp te trek.

Wanorde is nou in ons laer. Die meeste burgers neem hulle goed en gaan na hulle plaashuise. Jy mag hom nie eers vra hoe hy so iets kan doen nie, dan word hy vreeslik kwaad. Hulle bestaan almal uit die ware Afrikaners wat die Engelsman die see wou injaag. Nou by hulle huise bid hulle om 'n bietjie Engels te kan praat, beduie met hulle hande wat hulle wil sê. Speel boetie-boetie en help die vyand om hul mede-burgers dood te skiet en te vang. Die Hollanders sê van hulle: "Verraders, monsters, vloek der aarde, vernederde schepsels der natuur, Gods wraak die u tot hiertoe spaarde, verdelg u eens deur het helse vuur."

Een van my neefs het die vyand gelei in die nag en my met twee burgers in 'n huis in Smithfield-distrik omsingel en vasgekeer. Een van die twee burgers, Engelbrecht, het ook verraaiers gespeel en probeer om ons te laat oorgee sonder om te skiet. Die vyand het duur betaal. Een is in die deur van die huis doodgeskiet. Enslin en ek is toe op twee van hulle perde, en weg was ons. Engelbrecht van Stofpoort, Smithfield-distrik, het toe by die vyand aangesluit. Die volgende dag, hulle gelei en gewys in Boesmansberg waar die Boere meel en ander benodighede onder die kranse versteek het.

By Generaal de Wet

Ek is by Genl. de Wet en President Steyn. Hulle trek met tweeduisend man die Oranjerivier deur tussen Philippolis en Colesberg (Sanddrif). Die volgende dag het ons by Hamelfontein (?) 'n groot geveg. Kmdt. Giep Joubert, op wie se staf ek was, moes met twintig burgers die uiterste punt van die posisie wat De Wet ingeneem het, verdedig. Nou moes ons ons perde agter 'n randjie laat staan. Omtrent 'n tweehonderd tree gebuk loop om die vyand ons nie te laat sien nie, waar ons nou plat gaan lê sonder enige skuiling.

Die vyand wil nou die sigbare rand, die beste posisie van De Wet, omtrek (outflank), en stuur sonder hulle dit weet, 'n klomp troepe op ons af. Ons moet nou regop staan om hulle te skiet. Maar dit is nie te lank nie of hulle sit twee kanonne op ons. Ek lê so plat as ek kan. Elke bom wat bars lyk vir my die volgende een gaan my kry. Snyman naas my kry 'n stuk bom deur sy lyf, dodelik. Die Kommandant spring op en sê: "Kom!". Veldkornet van Wyk en ek volg hom. Die ander burgers hardloop na hulle perde toe. Toe ons omtrent vyftig tree van waar die bomme val gehardloop het, sê hy: "Staan en skiet nou." Hy begin toe skiet; die vyand was toe sowat driehonderd tree van ons af. Die Kommandant gee my moed en ek begin skiet. Nou bars 'n paar bomme naby ons. Die Veldkornet hardloop weg; hy het nog geen skoot geskiet nie. Nog 'n rukkie, toe sien die Kommandant ons gaan dit nie langer staan nie of ons word gevang. Hy sê: "Gaan stadig terug, kyk of Snyman dood is en kry ons perde in die hande." Ek het gehardloop, baie gou gesien Snyman is dood en toe hardloop ek eers. Ek kyk om en sien my Kommandant kan baie goed hardloop want hy is nie ver agter my nie.

Nou word al die posisies gebom en Genl. de Wet se Kommando is op die vlug en dit was van nou af vlug. Nou en dan het ons 'n kort skermutseling om die voorste van die vyand terug te skiet.

Generaal de Wet se Trek deur die Kaapkolonie

Die Groot Vlei

Tussen Houtkraal en De Aar was daar 'n wolbreek oor 'n baie groot vlei. Dit is donker en ons kom om die vlei te kruis. Ek het met al my ondervindinge nooit so iets gesien nie. Die water loop sowat agtien duim en dan trap jy nog meer as een voet diep in die modder. Ek sien betyds dit is nou bo die krag van my perd om my te dra. Ek klim af en lei die perd. Nou en dan is hy tot by sy pens in die modder en water. Dit vereis nou al my krag en inspanning om my geweer te dra en voort te spartel in die water en modder wat baie maal tot bokant my knieë reik. Daar is geen orders dat die burgers moet afklim van hulle perde en die diere lei nie. Sommige het dit betyds gesien toe die perde nog krag het om voort te gaan as jy hulle lei. Baie burgers het op hulle perde bly sit tot die diere gaan staan. Nou klim hy af en wil sy perd lei maar die dier is so gedaan dat hy nie 'n tree wil vooruit nie. Sy baas laat hom met saal en toom net so staan. Nou ondervind die burger self hoe onmenslik sy eise was van sy arme perd; nou spartel hy om weg te kom. Ons het die hele nag deur sonder afbreek, voort gespartel. Baie keer moet jy in die donker sukkel om jou een been los te kry uit die modder want jy is uitgeput en by die end van jou kragte. Toe die son opkom was ek nog by die voerpunt van De Wet se kommando en toe is ons net deur die vlei.

Verwagtinge en Werklikheid

De Wet het al sy kanonne en waens met provisie en ammunisie verloor. Nou loop 'n groot deel van sy burgers te voet. Waarom sien ons nooit iets in druk of word gepraat van Genl. de Wet se trek in die Kaapkolonie nie? De Wet het verwag dat met President Steyn by hom en 'n Kommando met kanonne en waens, gaan die Kaapkolonie-burgers as een man aansluit by hom. Vir my was

dit dat iemand wat sou aansluit by ons onder die omstandighede waarin ons nou verkeer, die verstand van 'n bobbejaan moet hê.

So 'n burger van die Kolonie het ek teëgekom. Hy was besig om sy perd op te saal toe ek by sy huis verbygaan. Ek sê aan hom: "Wat maak jy nou?" Hy sê: "Ek wil aansluit by julle Kommando. Wat dink jy daarvan?" vra hy my. Sonder om stil te hou sê ek: "As ek jy is sal ek dit nie doen nie." Toe ek weer omkyk sien ek dat hy die toom van die ou perd se kop aftrek. Niemand kan die burgers van die Kaapkolonie kwalik neem dat hulle nie toe wou aansluit nie.

Vasgekeer by Brakrivier

Nou kom ons by Brakrivier waar hy in Grootrivier loop. Albei riviere loop oor hulle walle. Geen mens kan daar deur nie en 'n groot mag van die vyand wat ons nou al dae agtervolg is sowat drie myl agter ons. Vasgekeer is ons nou. De Wet gee orders om af te saal waar die twee riviere in mekaar loop. Daar is weinig te vreet vir ons hongerige perde. Toe die son aan die ondergaan is gee hy orders om op te saal en toe dit donker word begin hy terugtrek al langs die kant van Grootrivier. Elke oomblik verwag ek dat ons met wagte van die vyand sal bots. Ons trek deur die nag en die volgende dag sowat een uur in die dag, gee De Wet orders om af te saal. Tot nog toe het ons niks gesien of gehoor van die vyand nie. Geen wonder dat van ons burgers nou die gerug glo dat die Kakies vir De Wet nou vlug! 'n Rapport van die vyand wat later in ons hande geval het, sê die vyand daarin dat hulle hoegenaamd geen verslag kon gee van hoe De Wet met sy Kommando ontsnap het nie.

Afskeid van De Wet

Die volgende dag is ons naby Loxton by 'n drif waar ons 'n skuit kry. Die skuit kan maar twintig man neem op 'n slag. Die burgers wat te voet loop, het voorkeur. Van my maats is besig om van ons perde deur die rivier te laat swem. Dit is nou sowat twaalfuur in die dag. Ek begin onrustig word dat die vyand enige oomblik op ons kan afstorm. Dit geluk my om plek op die skuit te kry en toe ek op die ander kant van die rivier aan wal stap, het 'n rapport deurgekom van De Wet se spioene dat die vyand naby en vinnig aan die opruk was. Nou is ek in Griekwaland-Wes. Ons is sowat tweehonderd burgers. My geluk is weer in; my perd het deurgeswem. Ek het daar en dan goeiedag vir Generaal de Wet gesê en het hom nooit weer met die oorlog gesien nie.

Avonture op Kommando

Vir 'n tyd is ek op myself maar ek het 'n vriend by my op wie ek kan reken.

Die Vark in die Verlore Huis

Ons is in Smithfield-distrik. Ons ry en die hele dag reën dit op ons. Dit is donker en nou kom ons by 'n klein verlate huis uit. Die voordeur is gelyk met die grond. Die deur staan oop. Ek het afgeklim van my perd. Nou fluister ek en sê vir Casper, my maat, om af te klim en die perde vas te hou. Ek sal dan ingaan om te sien of alles veilig is. Tot my verbasing sê Casper: "Ek klim nie af nie. Dit staan my nie aan hier nie. Ek sal op my perd bly sit en so jou perd vashou." Opgewonde fluister ek nou: "Klim af, vlug jy, skiet ek jou." Casper klim toe af en neem die toom van my perd. Nog met die vinger aan die sneller van my geweer, stap ek versigtig om nie 'n geraas te maak nie, die huis in, laat die geweer sak na aan die vloer van die huis. As iemand sou lê en slaap op die vloer sou ek hom voel met die punt van die geweer. Ek loop en luister vir asemhaling. Dit is 'n gespanne oomblik vir my en nou raak ek iets aan met my geweer. Oombliklik is daar 'n gil wat deur murg en been gaan en jou stom, magteloos en verys van skrik laat staan. Die tweede gil is

toe die ding teen my bene vasloop en my byna laat val. Nou hoor ek eers aan die geluid dat dit 'n vark is. Die vark het seker meer as een nag in die huis geslaap. Nou gaan ons gerus in die huis slaap.

By Generaal Kritzinger

My broer Roelof, wat veldprediker is, en ek is nou by Genl. Kritzinger. Ek is op Kritzinger se staf. My broer is sy privaatsekretaris. Met die ondervinding wat ek gehad het van baie Vrystaatse offisiere wat ek in gevegte onder gedien het, is daar nie een wat ek gelyk kon stel met Genl. Kritzinger nie. Ek sê dit nadat ek onder bevel van hom gevang is. Op bevel van hom om die voorste van die vyand terug te skiet terwyl ons burgers besig was om te vlug op hulle perde, is ek gevang, nadat ek met die laaste patroon in my geweer, nog 'n offisier 'n paar tree van my af doodgeskiet het. Ses burgers wat ek kon stop om my te help die vyand terugskiet, het 'n paar tree agter my gestaan en my orders aan hulle was om die vyand wat toe om ons jaag, te skiet. Intussen het ek met my rug na die ses burgers gestaan en skiet op die wat reg van voor op ons storm. Later haal ek weer iets hiervan aan.

'n Nag aanval (Spitskop)

18 September 1901, 'n nag nooit te vergeet nie. Regs verby Spitskop, Distrik Zastron. Dit is koud en donker en hier sit ek met Kmdt. (...) Wessels en 'n paar burgers om 'n vuurtjie. Ons het sopas ons posisies wat ons vroeg vanmôre geneem het en die hele dag teen die vyand verdedig het, verlaat. Ons is honger en moeg. Hier en daar sien ek nog 'n paar sulke vuurtjies. Dit is Generaal Kritzinger se Kommando, min of meer 200 burgers, meestal rebelle, sowat 15 kleurlinge, agterryers wat met die handperde belas is. Die perde is baie honger maar nog geen orders om af te saal nie. Hier kom my getroue agterryer Andries uit die donker te voorskyn, trek uit die sak van sy vuil en flenter baadjie, die boud van 'n hoender wat hy gebraai het. Dit het goed gesmaak maar ek het nog plek gehad vir baie hoenderboude.

Toe kom die Generaal se order dat hy sestig uitgesoekte burgers dadelik wil hê en die gewere moet in order wees; tien patrone in die magasyn en een in die loop. Dit was ook nie lank nie toe was ons op die trek. Die Generaal op die voerpunt lei ons want hy self het die spioenwerk gedoen. Dit is nou 'n swart donker nag en daar is geen teken vir hom om die regte koers te hou nie. Ek was altyd naas hom en dit is nou min of meer 'n halfuur wat ons perde op 'n drafstap gaan en daar is geen ander geluid te hoor as die trap van die diere op die grond nie. Skielik bring die Generaal sy perd tot stilstaan en sê daar is die vyand. Dit was 'n klein lig wat nie lank te sien was nie maar genoeg vir hom om ons koers so te verander dat dit nie lank was toe ons die bevel hoor: "Stop en klim af." Spoedig het tien burgers die bevel gekry om by die perde te bly en die ander vyftig burgers het in 'n kring om die Generaal versamel om te luister na sy toespraak.

Hy sê dat hy die kolom goed gespioen het en hy skat hulle sterkte op 250 man, een kanon en een maxim. Hy verwag van ons dat nie een hom lafhartig sal gedra en uit die lyn raak en agterbly as die bevel kom om storm te loop nie en ook om geen skoot te skiet voor hy die order gee nie. Nou moet ons twee-twee agter hom volg en hy lei ons toe in doodse stilte by die vyand se brandwag verby en dit was nie lank nie, toe sien ons tente en waens voor ons. Nou laat die Generaal baie stil, ons in 'n enkel reguit lyn kom met sowat vyf tree tussen elke burger. Kmdt. Wessels stap vinnig voor die burgers verby en sê: "Storm!"

Ons storm, elke burger op sy plek in lyn. Die Generaal gaan heen en weer agter die lyn en (wragtig) so in die donker kon hy dit regkry om sy vyftig burgers elkeen hulle plekke te laat hou,

tot die dood toe. Ons het nog geen bevel om te skiet toe ek iets vreemd voor my sien op die grond. Ek buk laag met my een knie op die grond en my geweer in my regterhand. Toe gewaar ek dat van die vyand hier lê en slaap. Ek stoot toe met my linkerhand, die een naas my in die gesig en sê "Handsup!" en staan toe 'n tree opsy, reg met my geweer om te sien wat nou gaan gebeur. Soos hulle in 'n ry geslaap het, het by die tyd 'n paar meer wakker geword en opgespring en toe val die eerste skoot; die teken dat die geveg aan die gang was. Dit was nie lank nie toe was ons van die een kant van die kolom deur tot die ander kant. Die kanon op die regterkant van die kolom was net reg geswaai en gelaai, daar het 'n paar van die vyand dood gelê en gewond. Kolonel Murray moes net in die eerste botsing, sy dood gevind het want hy het in sy tent voor sy stretcher dood gelê.

Kaptein Murray het ek naby my hoor bevel gee: "At them boys, at them! Get the maxim into action!", en gou ook het die maxim hom laat hoor en gewys waar dit geplaas was. Dit was die laaste woorde van Kaptein Murray want op daardie oomblik het 'n koeël hom dodelik getref. Die maxim was spoedig buite geveg gestel danksy ons dapper Kmdt. (...) Wessels wat met eens vorentoe gespring het en die soldaat wat toe met die maxim begin vuur het, so verras dat ons niks meer van daardie gevaar gehoor het nie.

Alles is nou verby. Ons soek kos op die waens. Daar is genoeg. Gewere ruil ons om en ammunisie pak ons in. Kolonel Murray se leersak met briewe het in my besit gekom. Die kanon het ons saamgeneem en een kar wat ek met hulp van my maats vol kos en nog ander benodigdhede volgelaai het. Met 'n beswaard gemoed vertrek ek nou van hierdie afgryse toneel want hier laat ek nou agter 'n goeie dapper vriend, 'n ou skoolmaat uit die dae op Wellington: K.P. Matie Liebenberg. Matie het naas aan my 'n oombliklike doodskoot gekry. Hy moes 'n voorgevoel hiervan gehad het want wat hy vir my gesê het kort voor sy dood, bewys duidelik dat hy van so iets bewus was.

Toe die son uitkom was ons terug by die ander deel van ons Kommando. Nou kan ons opsaal. Nou het ons kos en ammunisie weer volop. Die Generaal en al die sestig burgers was met hulleself baie tevrede. Ek het egter nie een gehoor roem of grootpraat nie.

Die Hinderlaag en Gevangeneming

Dit is nou nog 'n paar uur voor die son sal ondergaan. Ons is goed uitgerus en almal het genoeg geëet. Nou opsaal en ons trek in die rigting van Wepener; Spitskop aan ons linkerkant en Basoetoland aan ons regterkant. Later met die trek het ons toe 'n kaal bult aan ons linkerkant en verder 'n lang vlakte voor ons. Ons wis van 'n sterk kolom van die vyand net agter hierdie bult maar ons pad voor ons is skoon so ver die blote oog kan sien. Dit het so veilig gelyk dat nie een van ons spioene vooruit gestuur is nie. Die kommando trek op 'n klomp voort asof dit vrede is.

Die Generaal en die Kommandant met 'n paar van ons moes eers stop om 'n rapport uit te skrywe. 'n Rapport wat aan twee burgers van Kommandant Reeders gegee moes word. Toe ons nou daarna die kommando volg was hulle al sowat 'n myl van ons af. Meteens merk ek iets vreemds op reg voor die kommando omtrent 'n halfmyl verder en ek vra die generaal wat lyk daar so snaaks. Hy en ek klim af van ons perde en toe sien ons met ons verkykers, wat vir die oog lyk soos hier en daar 'n groot besembos - mens sien dit soms in ons veld op 'n kaal kop. Dit was toe niks anders as klompies perde in kringe met hulle koppe na die binnekant van die kring getrek nie. Dadelik gee die Generaal Pieter Hugo die orders om so vinnig te gaan as wat sy perd kan loop en die kommando na die bult aan ons linkerkant te lei; regs in Basoetoland kan ons nie gaan nie.

BOER WAR STORIES

Die Generaal en ons paar gaan om te sien of die kolom agter die bult in verbinding is met die vyand wat nou reg voor ons kommando is. Ons was 'n ent weg toe die Generaal merk dat die kommando gestop het, en dat die vyand begin beweeg en toe ook die Pom-Pom Maxim regtrek. Toe wis die Generaal wat nou gaan gebeur en dit is toe dat ek die order kry om in te jaag en die kommando in die rigting wat die Generaal gaan te bring. Maar toe bars die eerste bomme van die Maxim al, so op die kommando en daar spat die burgers uitmekaar; 'n deel regs, anders weer in die rigting van Basoetoland. Gelukkig sit ek op my geliefkoosde perd Nock. Nock loop goed en daar was geen end aan sy asem nie. Nock het my toe gewys dat hy my vertrouwe werd was.

Die kommando het gou die regte rigting geneem maar nou is ek agter hulle. Ek kyk terug tot waar die eerste bomme gebars het en daar sien ek kom een van die burgers aangehardloop. Meteens sien ek een perd met 'n saal op, 'n ent voor my hardloop. Ek jaag die perd in, gryp die toom, toe jaag ek terug en gou was die man in die saal. Ons twee is nou heeltemal agter en wat sien ons nou? Die vyand is op hulle perde, sowat 'n honderd man en die voorstes is al half by ons verby, om 'n deel van die kommando af te sny. Ek los toe so 'n bietjie die toom vir Nock, en gou was ek so 'n endjie verby die voorste van die vyand, maar toe swaai die voorste ruiters van die vyand sodat enkele van hulle tussen die agterste van ons burgers begin inkom en nou sien ek ook, nie ver van my af nie, een van die vyand, een van ons burgers so injaag en uit die saal pluk. Nou los ek die toom heeltemal vir Nock en die vyand sien my nie meer nie.

Oor die bult is ek. Maar wat sien ek nou! Die Generaal en die Kommandant probeer die burgers kry om posisie in te neem hier agter die bult en die vyand terug te skiet. Maar dit is verniet; selfs die sjambok help nie. Dit is 'n kaal ope bult met geen skuiling vir jou of jou perd nie. Toe ek by die Generaal kom, sê hy: "Spring af en skiet die vyand terug." My broer, Kritzinger se privaatsekretaris, is toe ook by hom. Ek sê toe aan my broer: "Vat jy vir Nock en jaag uit," en ek neem toe gou sy perd. Aan dié se saal was die leëbriewesak van Kolonel Murray. In die sak was 'n lang brief wat hy net 'n dag voor sy dood aan sy vrou geskrywe het. As dit in my besit sou gebly het, sou ek van die eerste geleentheid gebruik gemaak het om Mev. Murray dit te laat kry.

Nou geluk dit my om ses burgers te stop, onder andere my dapper maat Tommie Willems van Bethlehem. Ek gee orders aan een van die ses, so 'n jong seun, om die perde vas te hou, stap so 'n tree of vyf vorentoe om beter te kan sien hoe die vyand kom en daar, nie meer as vyftig tree voor my nie, kom sowat twintig van die vyand aangestorm. Met my eerste skoot stop hulle, spring af en begin skiet. Maar sowat agt van hulle bly op hulle perde en jaag om ons. Ek sê toe: "Skiet op dié wat om ons gaan." Ek skiet toe op dié voor my, geen gedagte by my dat dit hier agter my, met die vyf burgers, waarvan Tommie een was, verkeerd gaan nie. Ek was weer net gereed om te skiet, ongelukkig met die laaste patroon in my geweer, toe ek hoor skree: "Handsup!"

Toe ek omswaai met my geweer nog reg om te skiet, kyk ek op na 'n paar rewolwers wat op my gevuur word. My geweer was toe dadelik op die soldaat naaste aan my en dit was 'n doodskoot. Met my geweer leeg, was ek oorgelewer maar nog val daar rewolwerskote. Ek weet nie wat sou gebeur het as dit nie was dat op hierdie oomblik Kolonel Vincent, in bevel van die vyand, op sy blou charger op ons afgestorm kom nie. Met 'n paar vrae het hy gou bewys dat hy nie alleen 'n dapper offisier was nie maar 'n ridderlike vyand. Tommie het my getroos en gesê: "Mac, ek kon nie raak skiet voordat hulle op ons was nie."

20 September 1901 gevange geneem links van Spitskop in die distrik van Zastron in die veld op die plaas van Snyman. In die graf met 'n opskrif daarop, lê 'n soldaat begrawe, die slagoffer van die laaste skoot, deur my gevuur, vir die vryheid van die twee Republieke. Hierdie kolom was die

Natal Scouts onder bevel van Generaal Thornicroft. Kaptein Bird was een van die wat my gevang het. Sy lewe op daardie oomblik was net gespaar deur 'n wonderwerk. As hy nog lewe sal hy dit getuig. Dit was 'n blitsmsnelle besluit op daardie oomblik en die besluit was in sy guns. Was dit andersom, dit kon nie mis nie, sy dood was gewis.

Krygsgevangenskap

Na Indië

Nou was ek een krygsgevangene en wat dit beteken weet alleen dié wat dit ondervind het. Ek was vir niks meer bang as om gevang te word nie. Die oorverdowende geraas en die bars van bomme en gegons van koeëls het my minder bang laat voel as die gedagte aan 'n toestand van absolute onmag en weerloosheid. Nie alleen was die gedagte aan ballingskap in vreemde geweste, my onaangenaam, maar ook dat ek nou nie meer die voorreg sal hê om vir my vaderland te veg nie. Hierdie gedagte was vir my uiters pynlik. My lot was egter beslis.

Pas het ek afstand gedoen van my geweer of ek begin planne maak hoe om te ontsnap. Dit was nou eenmaal tevergeefs – die Engelse wagte pas ons te goed op. Kaptein Bird, het ons gesê dat hy baie in sy skik was om van hierdie soort Boere te vang. Daar was dertien van ons wat hier gevang is en na Aliwal-Noord geneem. Veertien dae in die tronk op Aliwal-Noord, toe na Bloemfontein gestuur waar ons verblyfplek weer die tronk was. Hier was ek veertien dae in die militêre hospitaal. Ons vertrek nou weer. Elke trok word so gedeel; die een helfte van die trok vir die wagte, omtrent sewe van hulle en tien van ons, met een parafienlamp tussen ons en die wagte. Vroeg in die oggend het die trein op Elandsfontein stasie aangekom. Toe ons nou getel word, is gevind dat vier van die burgers die nag afgespring en ontsnap het. Toe ons die middag van hier vertrek, bring die soldate rieme en bind elke burger se hande goed aanmekaar. Dit het vir my en 'n paar van ons niks gehelp nie want onder die kombers, met my hande vas was dit nie lank nie of ek was los en kon toe ook my maat help.

Toe was ons drie weke in Ladysmith. Hier was ons in militêre geboue. Dit was glad nie sleg nie; ruim plek om te slaap. Van hier is ons toe na Durban en spoedig was ons op 'n transportschip geplaas. Ons is nou altesaam sowat vyfhonderd krygsgevangenes. Die seereis was baie mislik. Ek was gelukkig nooit siek nie maar hierdie klein diertjies wat hulle luise noem, kon nie minder gewees het op die skip, as die tyd toe stof luise geword het nie.

Die Kamp by Trichinopoly

30 November 1901 kom sowat 250 van ons by Trichinopoly in Suid-Indië aan. In daardie kamp was toe al 650 krygsgevangenes. Toe gee ek die hoop op om in hierdie oorlog my volk en land tot enige diens te wees. Maar dit het net so lank geduur as wat die liggaam moeg en uitgeput was van die folterende seereis. Na weinig rus kom die begeerte des te sterker by my op om voor die vrede Suid-Afrika te bereik. Ek hoor toe een en almal praat van 'n Franse hawe wat nie ver van hier kan wees nie.

Ontsnappingspoging uit Trichinopoly

Beplanning

Ek praat toe met H. Wessels wat al sestien maande krygsgevangene was en sê hom dat ek nie voornemens is om hier lank te bly nie. Ek was bly toe ek hoor dat hy gereed was om saam met my so 'n waagstuk te onderneem. Gelukkig was hy dan ook die regte man; iemand op wie ek kon reken en wat nie sal terugstaan as dit tot die dood sou kom nie. Ons moes sien hoe om uit die

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kamp te kom en ook uitvind, in welke rigting die Franse hawe lê, en kos in hande kry, ens. Ons moes nou baie versigtig te werk gaan om suspisies by vriend en vyand te vermy.

Teen die aand loop ons dan so langs die draad van die kamp wat omhein was met ongeveer veertig sterk drade en in die nag met elektrisiteit belig en bewaak deur 'n aantal wagte. Ons soek na plekke waar die draad oor 'n watervoor, klein sloot of duik in die grond gaan. Ook waar die wagte nou en dan mekaar ontmoet, om dan straks weer uitmekaar te gaan. Nee, dit sal te veel gewaag wees want dit is maar weinige minute dat hulle mekaar nie sien nie en ons kan maklik vir tien minute of so in die draad vassit. Hierdie plan het ons laat vaar. Wat nou gedaan?

Daar was nog 'n hoop. Naas ons kamp was daar 'n klein kamp wat omhein was met 'n enkele draad. In hierdie kamp gaan ons middag voetbal speel. Teen sesuur moet ons weer terug na die groot kamp. Dan word die wagte van die voetbalkampie, waar ook 'n hut was, teruggeroep. Nou reken ons is die oplossing gevind. Ons het 'n kans om ons by hierdie hut te versteek wanneer ons vriende teruggaan na die groot kamp en nie lank daarna sal dit donker genoeg wees om in veiligheid te ontsnap. Maar helaas, dit het misluk. Teleurstelling en nogmaals teleurstelling sou ons deel wees. Terwyl ons besig is om klaar te maak, verneem ons een môre dat twee van ons offisiere, Veldkornet von Maltitz en Kmdt. Muller, ontsnap het. Ons plan is weer verydel want ons wis dadelik hoe hulle ontsnap het. Die hut was ook gou afgebreek. Ons het toe maar verlang en gewens dat dit hulle moet geluk maar tot ons spyt is hulle die volgende dag sowat sewe myl van die kamp af gevang. Hulle is teruggebring na die kamp en hulle het ons breedvoerig meegedeel dat daar hoegenaamd geen kans is om te ontsnap nie. Die land, sê hulle, is so dig bewoon, dat dit volstrek onmoontlik was vir iemand om hom gedurende die dag so te versteek dat hy nie gesien word nie. Daarby kan geen mens 'n denkbeeld vorm van hoe moeilik dit is om deur die ryslande, wat merendeels onder water is, in die donker nag te loop nie. Water en kos moet jy saamneem want ongekoekte water is erg ongesond en kos sal jy beswaarlik kry. Ons het na al hierdie besware geluister maar tog het die sterk begeerte by ons gebly. Ons wil self ook probeer en as ons maar net uit die kamp kan kom al is dit maar net om die vrye lug in te asem.

Die wagte is verdubbel, meer draad is gespan en ons word baie goed opgepas sodat al ons kanse op 'n end is. Intussen wen ons meer informasie in. Ons vertel aan twee offisiere ons voornemens. Hulle was goed bekend met die land en baie opgenome met ons plan en gee ons toe alle informasie waaroor hulle beskik. Hulle wys ons die rigting aan na die Franse hawe Karikal wat volgens hulle mening 85 myl van Trichinopoly geleë was. Hulle wys ook 'n ster wat ons met die gebruik van 'n kompas kan vind en wat ons sal lei na die veilige vrye kus of hawe. As ons nou maar net uit die kamp kan kom, dan is alles reg, so dink ons.

Die dag gaan verby en teen wil en dank moet ons in die kamp bly. Maar sien, daar is weer 'n ligstraat op die donker pad van ballingskap. 'n Treurige voorval sou ons hierdie keer die kans gee om te ontsnap. In Januarie 1902 breek daar 'n masel-epidemie onder die krygsgevangenes uit. Buite die kamp word 'n hospitaal opgerig, ook met draad omhein en onder sorg van wagte maar nie so sorgvuldig soos die kamp nie, want die siekes is natuurlik nie so blootgestel aan die versoeking om te dros, sonder om eers beleefd kennis te gee dat hulle hul gelukkige kwartiere gaan ontruim nie. Dit was nie lank nie of ons hulp word ingeroep om die siekes te verpleeg. Met die grootste gewilligheid bied Wessels en ek ons dienste aan. Niks kon ons groter genot gee as die geleentheid om ons siekes tot hulp te wees en wie weet of hierdie geleentheid nie die pad sou oopmaak vir 'n ander geleentheid nie. Ons dienste is aanvaar, dog daar is ander moeilikheid in die pad. Ons mag nooit gelyktydig diens doen in die hospitaal nie. Van 10 vm. tot 2 nm. moet

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ek by die siekes bly en van 2 tot 5 nm. word my plek deur Wessels geneem. Die wag neem my dan terug na die kamp en neem Wessels mee. Wat nou te doen?

Ons besluit toe om te waag om saam teen tienuur na die hospitaal te gaan en indien Tommy wat by die hek van die kamp waghoe, nie op sy hoede is nie, gaan ons hom wysmaak dat ons verlof het van die kommandant van die kamp om ons twee saam na die hospitaal te laat gaan sodat ons die tyd kan verdryf met kaartspeel. Teen halftien die aand, toe daar nie meer ligte in ons hutte te sien was nie, trek ons ons privaat klere aan. Ons maak ons sakke vol rogbrood, gord, verkyker en waterkantientjies om die lyf, trek toe weer ons krygsgevangeneklere aan. So gekleed stap ons nou aan na die hek waar ons nou altyd gewoon was om net een Tommy te kry. Dog pleks van een was daar nou vier wat verbaas na ons staan en kyk. Ek kyk na my vriend vir die eerste maal en sien hoe onnatuurlik dik hy lyk, sodat die eenvoudigste onraad kon merk. Op die oomblik word ek baie benoud want meteens sien ek daar die korporaal wat ek ken vir 'n baie astrante mannetjie. Sy oë het soos vuur gevlam: "Where are you going?" Ek het my bes gedoen om so kalm en bedaard as moontlik te antwoord dat ons op pad was na die hospitaal en ons dog dit sou ekstra werk en moeite spaar om ons twee tegelyk te neem. "One at a time," was sy nors antwoord. Hierop draai ek terug want ek wis by hom sal ons nie verbykom nie. Hy sou ons baie gou arresteer en vir niks in die wêreld sou ek op daardie oomblik aan my laat vat nie. Wessels is toe met sy vet, opgestopte liggaam na die hospitaal. Aangenaam was dit seker nie vir hom om vir vier uur lank in daardie toestand te verkeer nie.

Wel, nou weer een ander plan probeer want planne het ons baie en een moet geluk. Ons vra toe een van ons Boere-korporaals, sonder om hom te sê wat daar eintlik agter sit, of hy asseblief die Engelse Kommandant van die kamp wil vra om ons saam in die aand na die hospitaal te laat gaan. Ons sê dit is nie aangenaam in die nag op te staan nie en ons kan dan tog 'n bietjie kaart speel om die tyd om te kry. Bo verwagting word dit toegestaan.

Die Ontsnapping

Dit is die 6de Februarie 1902 en my vriend en ek is nou uiteindelik saam in die hospitaal. Om twaalfuur in die nag word die wagte afgelos en dan gaan ons dit waag. Lewe of dood, vannag is ons vry, laat dit kos wat dit wil. Ek het daarin geslaag om die pit van die lamp wat in die voorportaal geplaas was, ongemerk, nou en dan weinig af te draai, sodat die lig flouer of dower word. Dit sou help om ons nie so spoedig te mis of te ontdek dat ons weg is nie. Die gewenste oomblik breek nou eindelijk aan. Die pasiënte is nou almal aan die slaap. Wessels lê op 'n bank naas aan 'n tafel waarby ek sit. Ons skoene is uitgetrek; daar moet geen geraas wees nie. Toe merk ek dat die wagte nie meer stap nie, en wis ek, dié wat moet aflos, is aan die kom. Ek rek toe beide ore om te luister en meteens hoor ek: "Halt! Who comes there?" "Friend," was die antwoord. Nou nie 'n oomblik langer versuim nie. Wessels spring op toe ek die teken gee. Een Tommy staan met sy rug na ons, omtrent vyf tree van die deur waar ons stilletjies uitspring en weinige oomblikke daarna was ons deur die draad en vry. Wie sal ons vreugde kan beskrywe?

Die Vlug

Ons het nou vier uur en binne dié tyd moet ons so ver moontlik van die kamp weggom. Ons weet dat digby die kamp beskik die militêre oor tweehonderd-en-vyftig Indiese troepe wat met Arabierperde uitgerus is en dié sal ons agterna sit. Per ongeluk gebeur dit dat die wag, wat ons sesuur moes kom haal, soos gereël, nog nie geweet het van die nuwe reëling nie. Hulle kom toe een uur en dit gee ons maar 'n uur voorsprong op ons vyand. Ons is nou op 'n vinnige draf in 'n baie donker nag. Dit het vir sowat 'n myl baie goed gegaan, toe ons meteens in 'n baie diep sloot

val. Gelukkig was daar 'n dik laag sand op die bodem van die sloot wat verhoed het dat ons beseer is. Dadelik het ons toe die krygsgevangeneklere af. Hulle het bestaan uit 'n blou flanelette-baadjie wat tot jou knie gekom het en 'n broek. Ons begrawe dit in die sand en weg is ons.

Dit was nie lank nie of ons ontmoet met 'n baie groot teleurstelling; die eerste diep en breë kanaal water. Die klere was gou af en deur is ons. Maar iets baie slegter ontmoet ons nou; ryslande wat so vier duim in water staan. Niemand wat sulke ryslande nie self gesien het nie, kan 'n gedagte vorm van wat 'n inspanning van kragte dit vereis om in 'n donker nag, so 'n land deur te gaan. Die leser kan dink wat die (rede) was as ek sê dat ek toe gevoel het as een wat deur God en mens verlate was. Meer as een maal was dit vir my asof ek van afgematheid, my laaste asem uitblaas. Tog het ons in die donker deurgespartel en na sowat 'n uur kom ons op 'n pad wat volgens ons kompas, die rigting neem wat ons moet gaan. Ons trek ons skoene uit om nie spore in die pad te laat nie. Nou weer op 'n draf, vol moed, want nou gaan ons vordering maak. Helaas, dit was ons nie gegun nie.

Langs die pad sien ons 'n Indiese huisie en meteens is daar 'n gelui van klokkies. Dit was 'n klompie bokke in 'n kraaltjie wat geskrik het. Met die geraas skrik die Indiër wakker en met 'n geskreeu is hy agter ons aan. Ons vind nou dat ons in een van hulle dorpies is en baie Indiërs slaap op hulle stoepe voor hul huisies. Hulle word nou wakker van die geskreeu want almal wat ons agtervolg is nou aan die skree. In die vlug loop ek my vas teen 'n afgodsbeeldjie in die middel van die straat en val my byna kapot. Gou het ek weer my helmet en skoene in die hande, maar skaars nog by al my sinne, hoor ek toe 'n klomp Indiërs aangeskreeu kom van die teenoorgestelde kant van die straat. Ek het nog altyd Wessels gewaarsku dat ons nie mekaar moet verloor nie. Nou merk ek dat aan die een kant van die straat 'n laning wilde turksvye is. Seker sowat 15 voet hoog en nou maak ek 'n spring so hoog ek kon en breek en worstel my pad deur. Wessels was beter af want hy het op my spoor gevolg. Dadelik was alles stil. Ek is seker nie een kon dink dat dit mense is wat hier deur die turksvye gegaan het nie. Kop tot voete was ons nou vol lang dorings. Ons is kaalvoet daardeur. Met 'n oop wond aan my been wat ek gekry het met die vasloop teen die afgodsbeeld.

Nou is ons op kaal oop veld en gaan maar kruppel en voel-voel vorentoe. Die dag begin aanbreek, en ons moet nou uitkyk vir 'n plek om ons te versteek vir die dag. Op 'n afstand sien ons bome en bosse, dit sou dan die geskikste plek wees, maar toe ons nader kom, begin daar rook opgaan tussen die bome. Dit was daar bewoon. Ons kon nie meer aanhou met loop nie. Ons sal gesien word. Ons moet ons vandag op ons beste versteek. Ons het nie sover weggekome van die kamp as wat ons verwag het nie. Hier is nou geen bos, boom of sloot waar ons ons kan versteek nie. Eindelik kom ons op wat ek kan noem 'n duik in die grond of hol plek. Ons sien as ons plat sou lê, dan sal ons op 'n afstand nie gesien kan word nie. Baie jammer, ons het te laat ondervind dat onder sulke omstandighede, die oop gelyk veld vir die vlugteling baie keer die veiligste plek is om hom te versteek, want jy word nie daar goed gesoek nie, want jou vervolgers verwag jou nie daar nie. Hier lê ons nou, sonder 'n skaduwee, onder die brandende son van Indië. Min water is in ons waterkannetjie, net genoeg as jy nie meer kan uithou nie, om dan net jou keel nat te maak. Dit gaan nou moeilik en pynlik om al die turksvyedorings, sommige afgebreek, uit jou liggaam, en jou klere te kry. Dit het ons besig gehou want slaap kon ons nie.

Die son is nou onder. Ons het die rigting goed bekyk wat ons kompas aanwys. Dit is nou duister genoeg. Pynlik en beswaard moet die voete en bene eers gewoon gemaak word om die liggaam te dra. Daar val 'n gewerskoot, nog een en dan nog 'n paar. Ons wis toe seker dat dit tekens is,

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wat die Indiese troepe op hulle perde, waarmee hulle ons agtervolg, vir mekaar gee. Terselfdertyd weet ons nou verseker hulle is nou voor ons. Ons gaan nou maar op 'n stap. Dit geluk ons om nie met kanale en ryslande te ontmoet nie. Soms word ons van ons koers weggestuur deur plekke wat ons sien bewoon word. Wanneer ons dan in die donker na aan so 'n plek kom, soek ons eers versigtig na drinkwater. Ons vind 'n put en 'n emmer met 'n tou aan om die water mee op te trek. Ons drink; dit kom nie daarop aan hoe dodelik en ongesond sulke water is in Indië, indien dit nie eers gekook word nie.

Dit is die tweede dag, ons het 'n beter plek om ons te versteek, maar nog kan ons geen slaap inkry nie. Toe dit donker word, begin ons loop. Nou hoor ons geen tekenskote meer nie. Dit gaan van nag voorspoedig oor kaal ruwe veld. Derde dag, baie geskikte plek om ons te versteek. Koppies met hier en daar bosse. Geen teken van Indiërs te sien nie. Alles rustig en stil. Ons kies 'n digte bos, steek dit met los takke toe. Nou het ons skaduwee teen die son wat ons elke dag so uitput. Ons sal dan ook nou bietjie kan slaap. Dit is ongeveer 11 uur v.m. Nou hoor ons 'n sagte geluid, baie ver van ons af. Ons kan nie uitmaak wat dit is nie. Nie lank nie, of ons is seker die geluid kom nader. Nou sien ons die rede vir die geluid, 'n klomp Indiese beeste bekend as "Koedoes" met klokkies om hulle nekke, kom aangewei in ons rigting. Ons sit toe maar doodstil. Maar nou kry die koedoes ons reuk en storm op ons af en omsingel die bos en met hulle sterte in die lug, staan hulle en blaas, dat jy hulle ver kan hoor. Ons spring op en maak hulle skrik. Hulle neem die loop maar nie ver weg nie, toe hulle omspring en ons weer stormloop en staan en blaas. Hierdie keer sit ons stil, wat gaan nou gebeur? Gou het ons die antwoord, hier kom die wagter van die koedoes, dryf hulle weg met 'n lang kiere en kyk toe in die bos. Daar staan ons twee nou, gereed om te ontmoet. Wat gaan nou gebeur? Tot ons geluk kry hy so 'n skrik dat hy die loop neem en die koedoes wegdryf so vinnig as sy bene hom kan dra. Hy is net uit gesig toe ons in die ander rigting die loop neem. Ons het die geluk om ses nagte weg te kom sonder baie ernstige moeilikheid.

Byna Vry

Dit is die tiende nag. Die dag begin aanbreek en ons is weer op ryslande. Dit word lig en ons sien nou weer bosse en bome 'n ent van ons af maar daar begin die rook opgaan, weer bewoon soos altyd. Hier naby ons staan 'n enkele boom in die rysland. Ons sal die kans neem en daar gaan plat lê. Toe die son 'n rukkie op was, kom sowat dertig indiers, baie naby ons in die rysland werk. Hulle sien ons nie en laat in die middag gaan hulle terug. Die boom waar ons onder lê, staan op die kant van 'n kanaal. Die water loop hier oor 'n klipplaat. Die son is naby ondergaan en daar kom 'n Indiër aangestap van hulle woonplek, 'n klein dorpie. Hy kom reguit na waar ons onder die boom lê. Hy sien ons nie, klim naby ons in die kanaal en begin homself was. Nou draai hy om en kyk in die rigting van die boom en hier sien hy lê ons sowat twee tree van hom af. So 'n gil het ek nog nooit van 'n mens gehoor nie. Met een spring was hy uit die kanaal en loop so hard hy kan na die dorpie toe.

Ons lê nou maar dinge en afwag. Dit was ook nie lank nie toe kom aangestap sowat 100 met stokke en kieres. Nou raas, praat en maak hulle baie groot lawaai. Ons is baie honger en besluit intussen, doller as kop-af kan dit nie gaan nie en om te probeer vlug is nie aan te dink nie. Ek sê toe aan Wessels as hulle ons aanval, dan moet ons maar te verdedig so goed ons kan. Toe die Indiërs sowat honderd tree van ons af was, staan ons op en ons moes vir hulle baie groot gelyk het want nou is dit asof daar 'n bom tussen hulle ontplof. Spring om en neem die loop terug. Ons sit nou en wag maar om te sien wat sal gebeur. Daar kom hulle. Die klomp is nou meer. Toe hulle 'n endjie van ons af was staan ons op en weer vlug die meeste van hulle. Sowat vyftien bly staan.

BOER WAR STORIES

Ek sê aan Wessels hy moet hier bly staan. Ingeval hulle my aanval, is dit vir hom om te besluit wat hy gaan doen. Ek stap deur die kanaal en op pad na hulle wenk ek met my hand dat hulle moet nader kom. Maar hulle bly staan. Nou begin hulle nader kom en toe ons bymekaar kom, omsingel hulle my. Nou is dit 'n gebabbel, 'n geraas en gebare... as dit langer sou duur sou ek dol word. Ek staan stil en wag tot dit stiller word. Toe wys ek met my hande na my mond en dan na my maag wat toe al baie weggeval was. Nou is die gebabbel eens so erg dat ek moed skep want 'n paar begin om terug te hardloop. Die anders kry ek nou om saam met my te gaan waar Wessels nog staan. Die gebabbel gaan nog altyd aan.

Die son was aan die ondergaan toe 'n klompie vinnig aangestap kom. Hulle sit nou voor ons neer piesangs en grondboontjies wat hulle self skoonmaak vir ons. Nooit was ons seker meer dankbaar vir so 'n ete nie. Ons spreek met mekaar af dat ons hulle moet besig hou tot dit donker word en dan saam met hulle na hulle dorpie gaan. As dit donker is dan het ons altyd 'n kans om los te breek as hulle ons wil gevangene hou. Ons moet nou 'n voorraad kos in die hande kry en ons bes doen om uit te vind waar ons is, hoe ver van die treinspoor en stasie, hoe ver die see en Karikal is. Volgens ons beraming moes ons Karikal, die Franse hawe, al bereik het. Die dorpie en hulle woonplekke lyk nie groot nie, alles baie primitief. Daar is mans, vrouens en kinders nou om ons. Daar sien ek 'n paar hoenders en ek wys na die hoenders en na my maag en mond en ek wys hulle 'n roepee (Indiese geld). Toe vang hulle vier hoenders en bring 'n paar eiers ook. Ons gee hulle drie roepees en hulle is baie tevrede. Maar nou babbel hulle en laat ons verstaan ons moet loop. Ons het niks kon uitvind, hoe ons ook al beduie het, van trein of see nie. Nie ver hiervandaan nie, kry ons bosse en water. Dit is alles hier stil. Die hoenders is gou die nekke omgedraai. Die eiers gaatjies in gemaak en uitgesuig. Die ergste vere afgetrek en nou braai ons die hoenders in die vlam van 'n vuur. Nie lank nie, en ons begin eet. Dit gaan swaar om binne te hou wat jy insluk maar met 'n mond vol water agterna kom jy oor die moeilikheid.

Nou voel ons versterk en begin met nuwe moed loop en sonder dit te weet, is ons besiel met 'n gees wat meer gaan waag, dan wat wyslik en veilig is vir wat ons onderneem het. Ons maak vinnig vordering, dit begin lig word en ons sien 'n groot dig beplante plantasie van bome waar ons vir die dag heeltemal veilig gaan wees. Helaas, ons ontmoet nou met 'n euwel wat ons nie verwag het nie. Dit begin reën, iets wat min gebeur in dié deel van Indië waar ons kamp is. Ons het geen waterproef om ons rûe droog te hou nie. Dit reën aaneen en ons is deur en deur nat. Teen 4 uur nm. begin ons loop. Ons is in die plantasie en die kompas moet ons meer dikwels gebruik. Toe dit heeltemal donker word was ons uit die plantasie en gelukkig op 'n pad wat die rigting lê wat ons gaan.

Ons ontmoet nou 'n klompie Indiërs. Al inligting wat ons van hulle kon kry is met die wys van sy hande dat ons op die regterkant van die pad iets sal sien. Dit reën nou asof dit met emmers gegooi word. Ons loop aan die regterkant van die pad en kyk so goed ons kan wanneer ons iets sou sien. Ja, hier sien ons 'n bungalow. Alles is donker in die bungalow. Ons loop toe om en sien toe dat daar lig is in die agterkant, sien ons die deur en stap toe sommer binne. Die water tap van ons klere af en ons sien so daaruit dat ons enige mens die skrik op die lyf kan jaag. Net 'n paar tree voor ons lê op 'n bank 'n groot vet Indiër met sy wit klere aan. Hy spring op en staan ons verbaas en beskou. Ek sê: "Don't be alarmed to see us like this. We got off from the train at Tanjore Junction and we are on our way to Nagapattinam" (wat 'n Engelse hawe na aan Karikal is.) Onder andere sê ons, ons loop die end om 'n beter indruk van die land en die volk te kry. Ons is van Scotland en so pas geland in Bombay. Hy was baie opgenome met ons. Order sy kok om vir ons ete te maak en nie lank nie bring hy vir ons rys met kerrie op verskillende maniere

voorberei. Nou eet ons dat die trane loop want sterk is nie 'n naam daarvoor nie. Ons het versigtig en met 'n omweg uitgevind waar ons nou is. Later het hy vir ons die spoorlyn van Bombay na die ooskus van Indië op papier geteken met die belangrikste stasies en die myle. Die Indiër is 'n gekwalifiseerde ingenieur. Na 'n paar uur se gesels gaan hy slaap en sê aan ons dat wanneer ons loop, het hy orders gegee aan sy orderly om saam te gaan en vir ons die pad te wys. Dié vriendelikheid het ons nie geval nie en ons het gevoel, sonder iets te sê, ons gaan daar nie gebruik van maak nie. Ons gaan lê en gee voor ons gaan slaap nou. Die orderly gaan so 'n entjie van ons af lê. Dit was nie lank nie toe is hy aan die slaap en begin hy snork. Stil en versigtig en weg is ons.

Nou wis ons presies waar ons is en dit is uiters 15 myl van Karikal. Vannag kan ons dit nie haal nie maar ons moet nou van hierdie Indiër se plek so ver wegkom as moontlik, en 'n baie goeie plek kry om ons te versteek vir die laaste dag. Ons is baie seker nou dat ons agtervolgers tyding van ons gaan kry. Dit geluk ons toe om by digte bosse, aan die kant van 'n kanaal, veilig die dag, ons te versteek.

Weer Gevang

Met die laaste kragte tot ons beskikking, beur ons nou vorentoe. Vannag moet ons Karikal, die Franse hawe bereik. Helaas, ons is weer in ryslande wat geen end aan is nie. Die dag breek, dit word lig en nog is dit ryslande. Aan ons regterkant, 'n end van ons af, is bome en bosse wat rook begin uit opgaan maar reg voor ons in die verte is bosse en bome wat geen teken van rook wys nie. Ons meen om die bome ongemerk te bereik. Inplaas dat ons toe gaan plat lê in die rysland, maak ons die domste fout van ons lewe. Ja, daar aan ons regterkant, kom twee aangehardloop. Daar is nou geen kans om te vlug nie, die bome en struik voor ons is te ver. Die veiligste nou, is om te sien wat gaan gebeur as hulle by ons kom, want ons hou aan met loop. Toe hulle by ons kom, spreek hulle ons beleef aan in Engels en vra ons om met hulle saam te kom. "And have a cup of tea."

"Thank you, we are on our way to Nagapattinam. Have to reach the port in time to catch our boat."

"I am sorry Sir, I have to arrest you on suspicion as two escaped Boer prisoners from Trichinopoly camp."

Naturally I flew into a temper. "What damn nonsense to take us for two Boer prisoners!"

"I must arrest you on suspicion."

"Now show me your warrant for our arrest."

"I left it at the office."

"Well send for it and in the meantime you may accompany us. We refuse to be delayed any longer."

Ons stap nou aan en hulle volg ons. Hier kom ons by 'n kanaal, breed en diep. Hy begin ons waarsku dat as ons nou nie stop nie, "he is going to raise an alarm." Ons sien toe dat die bome en bosse aan die ander kant van die kanaal ook bewoon word. Nou sê ek aan Brown alias Wessels. "Let us go back to satisfy our good friend." Nou sien ek ons moet nou maar ons laaste kaart speel en probeer 'n kompromie... 'n bietjie geld offer. Ons het nie genoeg geld nie want daar was 100 rupees op elk van ons vir wie ons gevange neem. Die Indiër neem nou die leiding, Brown volg en

agter hom kom ek op die smal wal van die rysland. Ek wil dat Wessels stadiger loop sodat die Indiër nie kan hoor dat ek met Wessels 'n vreemde taal praat nie. Ek stoot aan hom met my kiere. Nou meen hy ons moet vlug.

Wessels is die baas hardloper van 900 burgers in ons kamp. Met een spring was hy in die kanaal. Ek moes maar volg. Die water is tot aan ons skouers. Op die ander kant gekom, is ons tussen Indiese hutte. Die bewoners vlug links en regs want ons lyk soos twee gediertes. Weer is ons in ryslande. Ons kan nie meer hardloop nie en sien nou dat aan ons een kant, hardloop sowat 'n 100 van hulle op hulle gemak saam. Ons gaan nou lê want ons asem is uit. Hulle omsingel ons maar sorg dat hulle 'n goeie end van ons af bly. Ons vriend is met 'n ompad by 'n brug oor die kanaal. Hy kom en met geweld wil hy hê ons moet saam met hom terugloop. Ons is doodmoeg en merk toe dat die Indiërs ons nie sommer sal aanval nie, om sodoende ons saam te sleep. Ek sê toe: "You better send for something to convey us to where you want us." Dit is nie baie lank nie of hulle kom met 'n karretjie met twee Koedoes voor en daar gaan ons met 'n eskort van sowat 100 Indiërs. Hier is ons nou by 'n buitepos met administrasiekantore. Ons vriend is baie vriendelik en beleef. Ons word 'n goeie ete gegee.

Na die ete vra hy Wessels om met hom na 'n ander vertrek saam te kom. Hulle was 'n rukkie alleen toe ek na die vertrek stap en die deur oopmaak. Hulle was nog in gesprek. Wessels sê my toe dat hy die Indiër gesê het dat ons die Boere-prisioniers was. Ek maak toe 'n baie ernstige beroep op die Indiër. Ek praat soos iemand wat vir sy lewe pleit. Ek pleit met die doel dat hy ons van hier na Nagapatam moet stuur, wanneer dit begin donker word. Ek wis dit sal nog ons enigste kans wees om te ontsnap. Onder andere sê ek vir hom: "Julle was ook eens 'n vrye volk. Jy weet wat julle opgeoffer het om vry te bly. Kyk nou na ons en wees oortuig wat ons deurgemaak het." Ek moes met soveel erns gepraat het dat toe ek swyg, sê hy met 'n bewoë stem: "If you had only, there where I first met you, said 'Save us'. God knows he would have saved us, but after raising such an alarm, how could he turn the heads of all these people."

Die rapport was toe al weg en nie lank nie toe kom die soldate om ons te haal na Nagapatam. Daar aangekom, word ons in 'n sel met ystertraliedeure opgesluit en met 'n gewapende wag voor die deur. My been met 'n oop wond was gou deur 'n dokter verpleeg. Volop kos en sigarette is ons gegee.

Gevolge en Straf

Nagapatam is 'n groot Indiese universiteitsentrum. Die volgende môre sowat tienuur, begin daar Indiërs tussen die sel deur en die wag verby loop. Nou sien ons dit word gereël deur twee wagte, dat elkeen net 'n kans gegee word om te sien hoe ons lyk. Dit het 'n lang tyd so aangegaan toe twee Indiërs voor ons sel stop en begin praat met ons. Die wag het later gesê dat hulle twee professore van die universiteit was. Hulle het met ons gesels en baie simpatie bewys vir die vryheid van ons Republieke. Die volgende dag het 'n sersant wat ons ken, met sewe gewapende soldate, van Trichinopoly-kamp hier aangekom per trein. Toe is ons weerskante aan een van hulle grootste soldate vasgeboei en met een versterkte eskort van Indiese troepe na die stasie gemasjeer. In die trein het die sersant met sy sewe soldate hulle plekke goed teenoor ons ingeneem. Met 'n rooi vlag in sy besit, kon hy die trein stop sou daar 'n spokery plaasvind. Ons was in ons skik en het al hierdie voorsorg grappig beskou.

By Trichinopoly aangekom, is ons apart in twee selle met traliedeure voor, naby ons Boerekamp opgesluit, met 'n wag dag en nag voor ons deure. Tot my verbasing reël die Kampkommandant dat ons middagete uit ons kamp vir ons gebring word deur ons vriende. Solank ons dan eet kan

die paar vriende buite wag en met ons praat onder toesig van die wagte. Dit het 'n paar dae so aangegaan. Toe reël ek met een van my vriende dat hy skryfpapier en 'n penseel moet versteek in die borde met kos wat hy vir my bring. Papier en penseel was dan ook gou in my besit. Ek sit nou met tye in 'n hoek van die sel waar die wag my nie kan sien nie en skrywe dan my rapport vir ons offisiere in die kamp. Hierdie rapport het veilig in hulle hande gekom. Die rapport was die oorsaak van die suksesvolle ontsnapping van De Villiers. Hy het toe in Holland aangekom. Na 'n maand hier het ons toe voor die magistraat gekom. Ons straf was drie maande harde arbeid in een militêre tronk... Bangalore, geleë in die Himalaya-berge. (*Skrywer se nota: Bangalore is nie in die Himalayas geleë nie, maar dit is hoe hy dit onthou het.*)

Harde arbeid in 'n militêre tronk, ek gaan dit nie beskrywe nie. Ons was baie bly toe die straf uitgedien was. Terug in Trichinopoly-kamp. Ons ondervind baie respek en liefde van offisiere en burgers.

Die Eed van Getrouheid

Die aand by Bangalore op die stasie, het ons van Hollanders wat ons goed gesind was, verneem dat ons die vryheid van die twee Republieke verloor het en dit gaan 'n vereiste wees as ons wil teruggaan na die Republieke, dat ons die eed van getrouheid aan die Kroon van Engeland sal moet neem. Toe ons nou die gevoel van haat onder die burgers van die kamp sien teen so 'n vereiste, het ons vir 'n tyd nie laat hoor hoe ons twee omtrent die saak dink nie.

Op 'n sekere dag het ek besluit dit kan nou nie meer langer so aangaan nie. Twintig van my vriende, meestal Griekwaland-Wes rebelle. Die gesels is weer oor die neem van die eed. Ek neem geen deel daaraan nie. Die rebelle is kwaai en baie ernstig. Ek is moeg vir die onaangename gestry, en ek sê nou met 'n gees van beslistheid: "Ek gaan die eed neem en wat gaan julle met my maak?" Dit skyn toe vir my of hulle my nie glo nie. "My beste vriende," sê ek. "Dit is vir julle en my 'n saak van eer en lewensbelang. Julle is bewus van wat Wessels en ek deurgemaak het. Hier sien julle nog die spore daarvan op ons. Ons doel was om Suid-Afrika en ons Kommando's te bereik. Laat ek julle nou verseker dat sou dit gebeur dat ons vyand my eed onder valse verkларings van hulle laat neem, sal so 'n eed my nie belet as ek in Suid-Afrika kom en daar veg nog van ons Kommando's, sal ek my haas om hulle te bereik nie." Nou is almal se gemoed baie vol. Daar is 'n doodse stilte eers en nou sê een: "Jy is 'n burger van die Vrystaat, maar wat van ons rebelle?"

My getrouste kameraad Greeff, 'n rebel uit die distrik Venterstad op wie se kop 'n beloning was van 250 Pond vir die persoon wat Greeff sal bekendstel aan die vyand. Greeff gaan onder die naam Du Plessis. "Ek stel my nou in julle plek," [sê ek,] "voel saam met julle die verantwoordelikheid van wat ek gaan voorstel. Kan beteken dat daar vir julle dadelik 'n end sal kom, dat julle by ons gelaat word, en ook 'n end aan die mate van vryheid, wat julle so ver ondervind en vir enkele van julle kan dit wees die doodvonnis. My vriende dit mag gebeur, maar ek sê julle met so 'n gedagte gedurig by julle, en die uitstel daarvan om te weet wat gaan gebeur, dit gaan van ons lafharte maak. Moenie uitstel nie, besluit nou."

Twee van ons is dadelik gekies en na die Engelse Kommandant van die kamp gestuur. Dit is angsvolle oomblikke om [jou vonnis te hoor?] (*Oorspronklike teks hier korrup*) en te sit en afwag. Ja, daar kom die twee vinnig aangestap. Toe hulle by ons kom, kon ek aan hulle gesigte sien dat hulle berig gunstig is. Almal wat die eed neem word teruggestuur na Suid-Afrika en waar beskuldigings teen persone is, sal elke saak op sy meriete behandel word. Met die sluiting van vrede by Vereeniging was dit een van die kondisies dat die doodvonnis nie mag toegepas word

nie. Nou is almal tevrede en die nuus was gou deur die kamp. Die dag en dae wat ons die eed kon neem, het ons voor die kamphek gestaan en wag soos 'n klomp skape want die een wou voor die ander nou die eed neem. Want baie meen dan gaan jy die eerste wees om weg te kom na Suid-Afrika. Die eerste skip wat ons kon neem was in die loop van nog twee maande.

Terugkeer na Suid-Afrika en die Lewe Daarna

Huis Toe

Vroeg vanmôre alleen in 'n trok aangekom op Bethulie stasie, stap ek na die dorp. My vader, moeder en twee susters, Sarah en Letta, kry ek in ons dorps huis, almal gesond nog. Die vyand het al ons vee geneem, bewyse vir die vee gegee en toe my ouers en twee susters na die konsentrasiekamp gestuur in Bloemfontein. Sir John Fraser wat my vader geken het, het moeite gedoen, sy invloed gebruik, en die militêre beweging om hulle na Bethulie te laat gaan, om daar in hulle huis te bly tot die einde van die oorlog. My besittings is 60 pond wat ek begrawe het. My vader het geen verband op sy grond gehad nie, maar hy het geen kontant geld gehad toe die oorlog verby was nie. Die plase Jakkalsfontein en Perefontein wat nog 'n pos was, het hy verhuur. Die huur toe was net genoeg vir hulle om daaruit te lewe. Vir my het hy die reg op 'n deel veld uitgehou maar hy kon my nie met geld help, om vee wat toe baie duur was, aan te koop nie. Ordinêre merino-ooie was toe een pond tien stuk.

Werk as Vee-koper

Na ek 'n paar dae op Bethulie was, kry ek 'n brief van 'n vennootskap op Johannesburg, wat my vra om vir hulle vee in die Kaapkolonie te gaan koop. Dit was 'n baie groot vertrouwe wat hulle in my stel want soms het ek beskik oor meer as 2000 pond. Baie geld vir daardie tyd. Nege maande lank het ek die werk gedoen. Met 'n bicycle het ek die distrikte deurkruis... Richmond, Victoria-Wes, Murraysburg, Nelspoort, Beaufort-Wes, Colesberg, Philipstown, De Aar, Hopetown, Petrusville. My salaris was maar twintig pond per maand. My treinonkoste word betaal, verder moes ek op myself klaarkom. Dit was baie harde en verantwoordelike werk, maar die ondervinding was in my later lewe vir my baie werd. Ek het baie goeie en simpatieke mense in dié tyd ontmoet.

'n Karoo-ondervinding

Een enkele uitsondering noem ek. Vroeg in die môre is ek weg met my bicycle weg van Richmond Road. Ek ry in die rigting van Victoria-Wes distrik. Die dag is vreeslik warm op die Karoo-vlaktes. Ek ry sonder versuim by plase aan en verneem na die verkoop van vee. Ek word nêrens gevra of ek al brekfis of koffie die môre gehad het nie. Toe die dag nou so na een uur toe trek, sien ek op 'n afstand 'n plaas. Nou ry ek vir al wat ek werd is om voor die middagete daar te kom. Die voordeur van die huis is 'n bo-en-onderdeur. Toe ek aanklop hoor ek nog die borde klink op die tafel. Nou maak die man net die bo-deur oop en vra wat hy vir my kan doen. Ek vra of hy vee het om te verkoop. "Ja," sê hy, "daar is hulle by die windpomp. Gaan kyk na hulle en dan kan jy in daardie buitekamer gaan rus, want ek gaan nou eers slaap." Ek het na die skape gaan kyk, teruggekom en op 'n ou toingsbed gaan lê. Na 'n tyd kom sy seun daar. Ek sê: "Seun, gaan vra vir jou ma kos vir 'n halfkroon vir my." Hy bring vir my 'n stukkie volstruisbiltong, 'n beker swart koffie en 'n sny brood. Toe ek klaar met eet is, het ek gesê dankie en op my bicycle geklim en weggery. Hy was ook seker een van dié wat nou praat hoe lief hulle die Afrikaner het. Hulle liefde gaan nie verder as net lippetaal nie. As jy wil bedrieg of verraai wees, glo dan wat hulle sê.

Slotgedagtes

Ek is na die Transvaal Middelburg distrik gestuur waar ek n klomp bees moet verkoop. Ek trek met die beste van plaas tot plaas, plekke deur kaffer dele waar ek ok tamelik beste kon verkoop. Met n traps en een perd ry ek en kom net toe die son onder gaan, voor die huis van n plaas. Voor ek kon afklim van die traps, was die Transvaal tante uit die huis en op die stoep. Met beide hande op haar heupe, opgewonde vrae sy. Is jy n Rooikop? Nee ek weet nie wat n Rooikop is. Ek is n burger van die Vrystaat, het ver die Republieke geveg tot die bitter einde. Klim af my neef en sy kom en groet my. Span uit en kom na die huis. Die oom is nie op die oomblik hier. Ek was nie lank in die huis toe bring sy my n koppie koffie. Die oom kom nou in. Sy se ou man jy kan hom groet hy is geen Rooikop nie. Rooikoppe was die naam wat gegee was aan die veraaiers, burgers wat by die vyand aangesluit en die wapen teen ons opgeneem het. In die Vrystaat het ons hulle joiners genoem. Toe ons die aand voor die vuur sit, vertel die oom my sy ondervindinge met die oorlog. Hy was in die begin al gevang. Na India gestuur, na die kamp Trichinopoly waar later nege honderd krygsgevangene was. Toe hy my nou alles omslagtig vertel het, (alles wat hy my vertel het, wis ek was die waarheid) vrae ek hom toe of hy twee burgers (krygsgevangene) daar geken het, met die name Wessels en O Donell. Dit was my naam toe ek gevang was. Ag ja se hy. Hy het altyd ver Wessels sy kos gekook en O Donell het dikwels by hom kom eet. Hy was verbaas toe ek hom se dat ek O Donell was.

Redakteursnota:

McDonald het aan sy seun, Abe McDonald, vertel dat hy die van O'Donell met sy gevangenneming aangeneem het. Dit, het hy verduidelik, was omdat hy 'n Britse offisier geskiet het nadat manskappe agter hom die wit vlag gehys het. Hy het gevrees dat daar later gevolge kon wees, ten spyte van die feit dat 'n Britse offisier hom op die toneel vrygespreek het. Interessant genoeg, in Albert Blake se boek 'Ontsnap', verwys hy na 'n 'O'Donald' wanneer hy hierdie ontsnapping uit Trichinopoly oortel:

Een voorbeeld daarvan is die geval van Hendrik Wessels van Kroonstad en Daniël O'Donald van Johannesburg wat as mediese ordonnansie in die hospitaal by Trichinopoly gewerk het. Die twee krygsgevangenes het die aand van 7 Februarie 1902 nie aan die einde van hul skof na die kamp teruggekeer nie. Wessels en O'Donald het langer as 'n week daarin geslaag om gevangenneming te ontduik. Meer besonderhede oor hul ontsnapping kon nie opgespoor word nie, buiten 'n medegevangene se beskrywing hoe hulle "dag en nag, veral gedurende die nag, dwarsdeur rysvelde wat onder water staan" moes loop.

Nou my klein kinders julle is seker al verveelig en moeg om Oupa se oorlog ondervindinge te lees. Ek het ver my sowat 150 ooie in Barkly Oos distrik gaan koop en het met hulle daar van daan na die plaasie, n deel van Spitskop getrek, waar ek toe begin boer het.

Hier is twee kamers, n plat dak met sink op, so warm as n bakoond in die somer en die winter is dit n yskas. Nog n kombuis en kamer, die het n brakdak op. My eerste wol tjek was 25 pond. Binne n jaar begin ek plan maak om te trou. Ouma het geweet hoe arm ek was maar sy het kans gesien om met my te trou nietteenaastende al my omstandighede, ongerief en armoede. Ons moes toe albei sukkel en hard werk. Tog was ons baie gelukkig. My bietjie plaasgereedskap was van so n swak gehalte, ok my trekdiere, een os en een koei wat ek ok in n bokkie kar inspan om ons soms na die dorp te trek, ook een perd wat ek kon ry. Later is die plaasie op gemeet en afgesny van Spitskop. Toe was dit dat ons die plaasie die naam van Nimra gegee het. Nimra is n naam in die Bybel en beteken helder water.

BOER WAR STORIES

Op Nimra le baie sweet druppels van ons. Ek is baie verbonde aan Nimra, van daar my ernstige begeerte dat my as in die klipskeur boe die Spitskop, moet begrawe word. Dit is daar wat ek meer as eenmaal die aangesig van my Beste Vriend gesoek het. Hom al my noode vertel, my sonde bely, Sy vergiffenis gevrae, wat ek altyd van Hom ontvang het. Met nuwe moed, geloof en vertrouwe op hom, kon ek dan weer na my werk en pligte gaan.

1014/65

STERFKENNIS

Volgens die Voorskrifte Vervat in die Boedelwet, 1913.

1. Naam van die oorledene... DENNIS JOHANNES McDONALD. ✓
2. Geboorteplek en nasionaliteit van oorledene... SPRINGFONTEIN SUID-AFRIKANER.
3. Name en Adresse van die Ouers van die oorledene

Vader... Thomas McDonald.	Oorlede.
Moeder... Onbekend.	Oorlede.
4. Ouderdom van oorledene... 86 jaar 6 maande.
5. Beroep van die oorledene, of, indien 'n vrou, van haar eggenoot... Rustende Boer.
6. Gewone woonplek van die oorledene, of, indien 'n vrou, van haar eggenoot... Greystraat 19, BETHULIE. ✓
7. Gehuud of onghuud, wewenaar of weduwee... Gehuud.

(a) Naam van oorbywende eggenoot (indien enige), en of in gemeenskap van goedere gehuud of nie	MARGARETHA ELIZABETH JOHANNA McDONALD (Gebore GRIESEL) 20/70 Binne Gemeenskap.
(b) Naam of name en so na moontlik, die dag van oorlyde van vooroorlede eggenoot of eggenote	N. V. T.
(c) Plek van laaste huwelik	BETHULIE 3 Augustus 1904. ✓
8. Sterfdag: SONDAG Op 27 Junie 1965. ✓
9. Sterfplek

Huis	Greystraat 19, BETHULIE.
Dorp of Plaas	BETHULIE.
Distrik	BETHULIE.
Abe McDonald	Roelof Daniel McDonald.
Lydia Collett getroud buite gemeenskap	van goedere met Richard Neville Collett.
10. Name van kinders van oorledene en of hulle meerderjarig of minderjarig is.

Gee afsonderlik die name op van die kinders wat uit die verskillende huwelike gebore is, en vermeld die geboortedag van elke minderjarige. Name moet voluit geskrywe word. Wanneer daar geen kinders is nie, en een of beide ouers oorlede is, gee dan die name en adresse op van die broers en susters van die oorledene.

Mercia McDonald (oorlede)
Geen kinders.

11. Het die oorledene losse goedere nagelaat? Ja.
 12. Het die oorledene vaste goedere nagelaat? Ja.
 13. Is die boedel na skatting meer as R600 werd? Ja.
 14. Het die oorledene 'n testament nagelaat? Ja. No. 1014/65 S. 16 Bous ✓
- Gedagteken op BETHULIE hierdie 1ste dag van JULIE 1965.
(Handtekening) *[Handwritten Signature]*
Skoonseun wat lyk gesien het.

(Vermeld in watter hoedanigheid en of asdan op of by die sterfplek).

Hierdie sterfkennis moet ingevul en geteken word deur die naaste bloed- of aanverwant van die Oorledene, wat hom ten tyde van die oorlyde op of by die sterfplek bevind of, by gebreke van sodanige bloed- of aanverwant, deur die persoon wat ten tyde van, of onmiddellik na die dood die hooftoesig het in die huis of op die plaas, waar die sterfgeval voorgeval het, en moet binne veertien dae na die dood, in dubbel, gestuur word hetsy aan die Meester, of indien die sterfgeval plaasgevind het in 'n distrik waar geen provinsiale regeringsetel gevestig is nie, aan die landdros van die distrik.

Uitgegee kragtens Kopiereg-auteursreël No. 86 gedateer 3 Junie 1936 van die Staatsdrukker. M.S.C. 1. Gedruk deur Hortors.

BOER WAR STORIES

