

The Union Defence Force and the 1914 strike: The dynamics of the shadow of the burgher

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Then de la rey (sic) rode into the Rand with his commandos.
The shadow of the burgher lay over Johannesburg.¹

Introduction

The year 1914 was one of the most significant and turbulent years in the early twentieth-century history of South Africa, and in particular, the history of the young Union Defence Force (UDF). The UDF was not only called upon operationally by the government to suppress a strike in January 1914, but was also expected to subdue the Afrikaner Rebellion later that year and to participate in the First World War on the side of Great Britain² – an enormous challenge for an untested defence force besieged with controversy, conflict and contradiction.

In January 1914, a general industrial strike was called by the South African Federation of Trades, leading to unrest and riots in the Witwatersrand area of the Union of South Africa. It was essentially a continuation of the 1913 strike, one in which the strikers meant to protect and promote the interests of the white worker in a changing South Africa.³ The strike turned violent, and for the first time since the establishment of the Union on 31 May 1910, martial law was declared in South Africa. The new government was determined to end the strike swiftly and the fledgling UDF, only just established in 1912,⁴ was called upon for its first operation to subdue the strike and to enforce stability in the country.⁵

Since the UDF was still in a transformational and integration phase, the newly formed Permanent Force (July 1913) was not yet fully organised and ready to quash the strike on its own,⁶ therefore the commandos (also called the "rifle

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1. W.K. Hancock, *Smuts, the Sanguine Years, 1870–1919* (Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1962), p 368.
2. F.A. Mouton, "A Free, United South Africa under the Union Jack": F.S. Malan, South Africanism and the British Empire, 1895–1924", *Historia*, 51, 1, May 2006, pp 40–41; R. Geyer, "Die Eerste Operasionele Optrede van die Unieverdedigingsmag, Januarie 1914", MHCs dissertation, University of Pretoria, 2009, pp 63–65.
3. W.A. Dorning, "Kroniek van die SAW 1912–1987", *Militaria*, 17, 2, 1987, p 27; J. Ploeger, "Hoofstukke uit die Voor- en Vroeë Geskiedenis van die SAW", *Militaria*, 1, 3, 1969, p 48; H. Gillomee, *The Afrikaners. Biography of a People* (Tafelberg, Cape Town, 2003), p 330; J. Hyslop, *The Notorious Syndicalist, J.T. Bain: A Scottish Rebel in Colonial South Africa* (Jacana Media, Johannesburg, 2004), pp 229–230.
4. The Union Defence Force was established on 1 July 1912. *Government Gazette of the Union of South Africa*, Act No. 13 of 1912, pp 624–698; C.L. Grimbeek, "Die Totstandkoming van die Unieverdedigingsmag, met Spesifieke Verwysing na die Verdedigingswette van 1912 en 1922", DPhil thesis, University of Pretoria, 1985, p 139.
5. N. Mandy, *A City Divided: Johannesburg and Soweto* (MacMillan, Johannesburg, 1984), p 39; A.G. Oberholster, "Die Randse Staking van 1922", DPhil thesis, University of Pretoria, 1979, p 37; J. Meintjes, *General Louis Botha: A Biography* (Cassell, London, 1970), p 203.
6. Grimbeek, "Die Totstandkoming van die Unieverdedigingsmag", p 150.

associations")⁷ of the Citizen Force Class B Reserve – mainly drawn from the rural areas – were commandeered for service.⁸ This shortcoming was largely due to the fact that it was a complicated and time consuming task to forge the diverse military traditions of “Boer and Brit” together in one modernised military organisation in the new Union of South Africa.⁹ Since the commandos of the Citizen Force Class B Reserve was basically an extension of the commandos of the former Boer republics, the predominantly Afrikaner government opted to rely on the support and participation of many of the ordinary men who had fought in commandos in the Anglo-Boer War, to crush the strike.¹⁰ Hancock described the impact of this decision as follows: “Then de la rey (sic) rode into the Rand with his commando’s. The shadow of the burgher lay over Johannesburg”.¹¹ The traditional commando system of the former Boer republics (and the Transvaal and Orange River colonies when they achieved self-government in 1907 and 1908 respectively)¹² were therefore briefly revived during the 1914 strike, albeit in a new and multifaceted South African milieu.

The fact that the Citizen Force commandos were able to deploy rapidly and effectively amidst the transformation of the UDF and then crush the unrest should not be hastily dismissed. This success contributed to the discontent and the rising post-unification nationalism of the time, which also backed the Afrikaner Rebellion that arose that same year. A number of the “burghers” who served during the strike of January 1914 felt disillusioned and were encouraged to rebel against the government’s decision to invade German South West Africa on behalf of the

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7. Although the members of the Rifle Associations were officially called the Citizen Force Reserve, Class B, they were referred to in the general parlance as the “commandos”. In this study they are referred to as commandos. See *Government Gazette of the Union of South Africa*, Act No. 13 of 1912, Article 79, pp 630–632; G. Tylden, *The Armed Forces of South Africa* (F. Connock/ Africana, Johannesburg, 1954), p 217; and C.J. Jacobs, “Die Geskiedenis van Ons Kommandomag”, *Paratus*, 24, 10, October 1973, p 9.
 8. Oberholster, “Die Randse Staking van 1922”, p 37; Meintjes, *General Louis Botha*, p 203; C.J. Jacobs, “Die Rol van die Unieverdedigingsmag in die Onderdrukking van die Nywerheidsnoluste van Januarie 1914 met Spesifieke Verwysing na die Gebeure in Johannesburg”, BA Honours, Military Academy Saldanha, 1988, p 6; Ploeger, “Hoofstukke uit die Voor- en Vroeë Geskiedenis van die SAW”, pp 48, 68; J. Pietersen, “Stakings aan die Witwatersrand, 1913–1914”, MA dissertation, University of Pretoria, 1970, pp 91–96; National Archives of South Africa (hereafter NASA): Commissioner of South African Police (hereafter SAP) 10, 6/183/14/4, Correspondence about extraordinary government gazette proclamations signed by Governor-General Gladstone, 9 January 1914; NASA: Prime Minister (hereafter PM), 1/1/332; PM 200/1/1914 vol. 1, W.L. Bagots – General Botha, 19 January 1914; Anon, “Martial Law Declared at Midnight”, *The Transvaal Leader*, 14 January 1914; Anon, “The Crisis: General Strike Declared – Martial Law in Force”, *Rand Daily Mail*, 14 January 1914.
 9. E.M. Meyers, “Voorgeskiedenis tot die Stigting van die Unieverdedigingsmag”, *Militaria*, 12, 2, 1982, pp 2–3; J. Ploeger, “Op Brandwag: Drie Eeue Militêre Geskiedenis van Suid-Afrika”, *Militaria*, 1, 4, 1969, p 4; Tylden, *The Armed Forces of South Africa*, p 216; K. Anderson and B.G. Simpkins (eds), *Rand Light Infantry* (Timmins, Cape Town, 1965), p 1; Grimbeek, “Die Totstandkoming van die Unieverdedigingsmag”, pp 5, 66; I. van der Waag, “The South African Military and Post-conflict Integration in the Twentieth Century” in P. Dennis and J. Grey (eds), *Victory or Defeat? Armies in the Aftermath of Conflict* (Big Sky Publishing, Newport, 2010), pp 199–201.
 10. Giliomee, *The Afrikaners*, p 330; I. van der Waag, “Rural Struggles* and the Politics of a Colonial Command: The Southern Mounted Rifles of the Transvaal Volunteers, 1905–1912”, in S.M. Miller (ed.), *Soldiers and Settlers in Africa, 1850–1918* (Brill, Leiden, 2009), pp 266–270.
 11. Hancock, *Smuts, the Sanguine Years, 1870–1919*, p 368. “De la Rey” refers to the legendary General J. H. (Koois) de la Rey of Anglo-Boer War fame.
 12. Van der Waag, “Rural Struggles and the Politics of a Colonial Command”, pp 266–270.

British government later that year.¹³

The purpose of this article is to offer fresh perspectives on the burgher commandos during the 1914 strike by making use of under-utilised primary sources at the Department of Defence Documentation Centre. The article emphasises important social military historiographical aspects of South Africa's history that have been neglected in the past. The use of burgher commandos during the 1914 strike has essentially been ignored, neglected or incorrectly reflected upon by most researchers. Moreover, no attention has been given to the reasons why the ordinary citizens served in the commandos during the strike a mere eight months prior to the Afrikaner Rebellion.¹⁴ For example, the 1914 strike received only cursory mention in the publication by Seegers, *The Military in the Making of Modern South Africa* (1996) and the author claims incorrectly that the Citizen Reserve Commandos were not mobilised in January 1914 to crush the strike.¹⁵ Regrettably, the primary sources were not consulted.

The inherent characteristics of Boer-Afrikaner men on commando have received much attention from Sandra Swart. In her master's dissertation, she focuses on masculinity, republicanism and the social forces that shaped the 1914 Rebellion in the context of the traditional Boer commando system.¹⁶ She also co-authored a book with Albert Grundlingh about the Rebellion, *Radelose Rebelle? Dinamika van die 1914–1915 Afrikanerebellie*,¹⁷ in 2009. While these studies were very valuable for this article, Swart incorrectly claims that the commando system and its familiar Boer leadership networks were "re-activated" in the 1913 strike.¹⁸ However, in 1913 the Union government in fact relied on the services of the imperial forces; the South African Police, special police constables; and the South African Mounted Rifles (SAMR)¹⁹ or Zuid-Afrikaanse Bereden Schutters (ZABS).

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13. Mouton, "A Free, United South Africa under the Union Jack", pp 40–41; A. Grundlingh and S. Swart, *Radelose Rebelle? Dinamika van die 1914–1915 Afrikanerebellie* (Protea Boekhuis, Pretoria, 2009), pp 21–32; Geyer, "Die Eerste Operasionele Optrede van die Unieverdedigingsmag", pp 69–71.
 14. See for example, the articles of S. Swart, "A Boer and his Gun and his Wife are Three Things always Together: Republican Masculinity and the 1914 Rebellion", *Journal of Southern African Studies*, 24, 4, December 1998, pp 737–751; and "Men of Influence: The Ontology of Leadership in the 1914 Boer Rebellion", *Journal of Historical Sociology*, 17, 1, March 2004, pp 1–30; A. Seegers, *The Military in the Making of Modern South Africa* (Tauris Publishers, London, 1996), p 26; B. Nasson, "A Great Divide: Popular Responses to the Great War in South Africa", *War and Society*, 12, 1, May 1994, p 53; I.L. Walker** and B. Weinbren, *2000 Casualties: A History of the Trade Unions and the Labour Movement in the Union of South Africa* (SA Trade Union Council, Johannesburg, 1961).
 15. Seegers, *The Military in the Making of Modern South Africa*, p 26.
 16. S. Swart, "The Rebels of 1914: Masculinity, Republicanism and the Social Forces that Shaped the Boer Rebellion", MA dissertation, University of Natal, 1997. See for example, Swart, "A Boer and his Gun and his Wife", pp 737–751; S. Swart, "You were Men in Wartime: The Manipulation of Gender Identity in War and Peace", *Scientia Militaria*, 28, 2, December 1998; S. Swart, "Desperate Men: The 1914 Rebellion and the Politics of Poverty", *South African Historical Journal*, 42, May 2000, pp 161–175; and Swart, "The Ontology of Leadership in the 1914 Boer Rebellion", pp 1–30.
 17. Grundlingh and Swart, *Radelose Rebelle?*
 18. Swart, "A Boer and his Gun and his Wife", p 740; Swart, "The Ontology of Leadership in the 1914 Boer Rebellion", p 13; Grundlingh and Swart, *Radelose Rebelle?* p 74.
 19. The SAMR are incorrectly referred to as part of the Active Citizen Force in some publications. For example, in Pietersen, "Stakings aan die Witwatersrand, 1913–1914", pp 39, 48. See NASA: PM 225, file 148/20/1913, Confidential report from the governor-general, H.J. Gladstone to Colonial Office, London, 30 July 1913. The SAMR was part of the Permanent Force of the UDF and had a police function. See Ploeger, "Hoofstukke uit die Voor- en Vroeëgeskiedenis van die SAW", p 35.

The Citizen Force Class B Reserve (rifle associations or commandos) were not used to suppress the industrial action of 1913.²⁰ The commandos or rifle associations of the UDF would only be deployed when the 1914 strike arose,²¹ and thus provide an opportunity for the “traditional Boer leadership to rebuild their suppressed political networks”.²²

This article illuminates the *zeitgeist* and character of Afrikaner society of the day by focusing specifically on the social dynamics and the experience of the “burghers” on commando that participated in the crushing of the 1914 strike. Topics such as the legal obligation to render military service; ideological differences; Afrikaner identity and nationalism; republican nostalgia; masculinity and commando service; leadership and white poverty, illuminate these experiences and perceptions in a changing society.²³

Legal powers: Defence Act of 1912

One of the underlying aspects that influenced so many of the Afrikaans-speaking burghers to adhere to the call up instructions in January 1914 was the legal compulsion to render military service when so ordered by the governor-general of the Union of South Africa. This obligation did not leave them any choice according to the regulations of the new Defence Act.²⁴ The Act provided that every citizen – which in time meant every white male²⁵ – had to render military service when

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20. British Blue Book, Cd. 6942, Further correspondence relating to the recent disorders on the Witwatersrand and the employment of regular troops, Governor General – Secretary of State, Pretoria, 3 July 1913, pp 7–8 and 21–25; British Blue Book, Cd. 7112, Report of the Witwatersrand Disturbances Commission, Commissioner South African Police – Secretary for Justice, Pretoria, 27 June 1913; Secretary for Justice – Commissioner of Police, Pretoria, 27 June 1913, pp 20–21; Department of Defence’s Documentation Centre (hereafter DOD DOC C): South African Citizen Force (hereafter SA Cit. Force), Box 59, File 765, Report of the Witwatersrand Disturbances Commission, Minutes of evidence, 17 September 1913, p 60; J. Krikler, *The Rand Revolt. The 1922 Insurrection and Racial Killing in South Africa* (Jonathan Ball, Johannesburg, 2005), p 37; Ploeger, “Hoofstukke uit die Voor en Vroeë Geskiedenis van die SAW”, pp 53–62; Hyslop, *The Notorious Syndicalist*, p 215; Grimbeek, “Die Totstandkoming van die Unieverdedigingsmag”, p 175; W.P. Visser, “The South African Labour Movement’s Responses to the Declarations of Martial Law, 1913–1922”, Paper presented at the “War and Society in Africa” conference, South African Military Academy, Saldanha Bay, 12–14 September 2001, p 5.
 21. Geyer, “Die Eerste Operasionele Optrede van die Unieverdedigingsmag”, pp 63–65; Ploeger, “Hoofstukke uit die Voor- en Vroeëgeskiedenis van die SAW”, pp 66–73; DOD DOC C: SA Cit. Force, Box 97, File 7164A, Proclamation No. 10 of 1914, signed by Governor General Gladstone, 9 January 1914; and Proclamation No. 11 of 1914, signed by Governor General Gladstone, 10 January 1914.
 22. Grundlingh and Swart, *Radelose Rebelle?* pp 74–75; Van der Waag, “Rural Struggles and the Politics of a Colonial Command”, pp 262–265.
 23. Giliomee, *The Afrikaners*, p 330; K. Fedorowich, “‘Sleeping with the Lion?’: The Loyal Afrikaner and the South African Rebellion of 1914–1915”, *South African Historical Journal*, 49, November 2003, pp 90–94; Swart, “The 1914 Rebellion and the Politics of Poverty”, pp 161–162 and 167; Grundlingh and Swart, *Radelose Rebelle?* pp 23–41; Geyer, “Die Eerste Operasionele Optrede van die Unieverdedigingsmag”, pp 69–75.
 24. *Government Gazette of the Union of South Africa*, Act No. 13 of 1912, Article 79, pp 662, 664–665,
 25. *Government Gazette of the Union of South Africa*, Act No. 13 of 1912, Article 7, p 626. Persons not of European descent were excluded from compulsory military training and service in a combatant capacity. However, they were allowed to serve voluntarily in a non-combatant capacity. In accordance with the spirit of the time, women were totally ignored in the Defence Act.

called upon by the government.²⁶ Desertion was an offence according to the new law and anyone found guilty was liable to punishment.²⁷

However, legal compulsion in a new state characterised by controversy, discord and division, only goes so far. As is often the case, when ordinary men who did not undergo formal military training are called upon for active service, the discipline of some of the commando members during the strike of 1914 was not always satisfactory. Indiscipline was a recurring problem throughout the history of the commandos in South Africa.²⁸ During the period of the 1914 strike, a number of burghers did not adhere to the call to mobilise.²⁹ After the strike, the district officers of the various military districts had to record the total number of members who failed to join their commandos and the various reasons for neglecting their duty. According to these records, a number of burghers in the various military districts refused to serve. The highest proportion of these dissidents was resident in the Witwatersrand area and the second highest in the Northern Free State.³⁰ These incidents are at odds with the belief that all the Boer-Afrikaners “longed for the old way of life”³¹ as embodied in commando service. On the other hand, some of them saw the new Defence Force and its modernising institutions as a foreign system that threatened the identity of the Afrikaner and were therefore not keen to serve³² while others possibly positioned themselves with the striking workers.

J.C. Smuts, as minister of defence, originally decided that the disciplinary code of the Defence Act had to be strictly enforced upon anyone who failed to comply with the proclamation calling upon the forces to mobilise. He ordered that all cases of absenteeism had to be investigated and every burgher who refused to serve had to be prosecuted.³³ It is interesting that Major J.J. Collyer,³⁴ an English-speaking staff officer in the UDF, requested the commandant general to enforce this “with caution”,³⁵ and only to prosecute those burghers who were already enrolled in the rifle associations (commandos). The concept of rifle associations was still a delicate situation, one that still required much nurturing because of the resistance that there was to the weakening of the traditional Boer commando system in the new UDF. The strict enforcement of the military disciplinary code was therefore not well-received at that stage. It was subsequently decided to prosecute only those burghers who had refused to serve or took longer than seven days to mobilise. Punishment for the deserters varied from fines to imprisonment of not more than one month, depending on the seriousness of the case. Most of

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26. *Government Gazette of the Union of South Africa*, Act No. 13 of 1912, pp 624, 626, 664.
 27. *Government Gazette of the Union of South Africa*, Act No. 13 of 1912, pp 674–683.
 28. G. Tylden, “The Development of the Commando System in South Africa 1715 to 1922”, *Africana Notes and News*, 13, 8, December 1959, p 307; I. van der Waag, “Boer Generalship and the Politics of Command”, *War in History*, 12, 1, 2005, pp 29–30.
 29. DOD DOC C: SA Cit. Force, Box 59, File 765, Letter Major C.R. Burgess – District staff officer, No. 9 Military District, 12 February 1914.
 30. DOD DOC C: SA Cit. Force, Box 59, File 765/12/11, Reports from district staff officers, Prosecution of citizens who failed to comply with proclamation calling out forces, 12 February 1914.
 31. Fedorowich, “The Loyal Afrikaner and the South African Rebellion of 1914–15”, pp 71–72.
 32. Swart, “A Boer and his Gun and his Wife”, pp 737; Van der Waag, “Boer Generalship and the Politics of Command”, pp 37–38.
 33. DOD DOC C: SA Cit. Force, Box 63, File 1399, Letters Commandant J.M. Els and Commandant D.H. van Coller – Commandant General C.F. Beyers, 30 January 2014.
 34. Later major-general in the UDF and military secretary to General Smuts. See I. Uys, *South African Military Who’s Who, 1452–1992* (Fortress, Germiston, 1992), p 48.
 35. DOD DOC C: SA Cit. Force, Box 59, File 765/12/11, Letter Major J.J. Collyer – Commandant General C.F. Beyers, 21 February 1914.

the alleged deserters only received a warning because they did not fully understand the requirements in terms of the new Defence Act, and/or their responsibility to serve in a military capacity when called upon by the government.³⁶

Traditional military customs were important for mobilising the republican nostalgia and the gender identity of the Afrikaner.³⁷ Some of the burghers failed to join their commandos during the industrial crisis of 1914 because they did not own a horse.³⁸ This was an unthinkable scenario for the Afrikaner because the concept of a “Boer en sy perd” (Boer and his horse) on commando symbolised not only a particular way of life but also his identity as a man and a warrior. The regulations of the Defence Act of 1912 actually stipulated that every member of the Active Citizen Force (ACF) who had to perform mounted duties in the field, was required to bring with him a serviceable riding horse.³⁹ The burgher had to register a horse that was *bona fide* his own property.⁴⁰ During the 1914 strike, the UDF bought, hired and commandeered riding horses for those burghers who did not own or could not afford to buy a horse. Riding horses were still the most reliable and familiar way of transportation for the commandos in January 1914 and thus strengthened Boer masculinity and tradition.⁴¹

The mobilisation instructions during the 1914 strike also stipulated that every member of the Citizen Force Reserve commandos had to bring his own rifle, if he owned one, to the place of mobilisation. This was in line with the traditional way of the commandos in the history of South Africa.⁴² However, the Union Defence Force and the burghers experienced a critical shortage of weapons at the time of the 1914 strike and the British Imperial Forces in South Africa had to loan the Union government additional weapons and ammunition.⁴³ The shortfall was a long-term result of the Anglo-Boer War during which the British Forces confiscated the Boer weapons and later destroyed them.⁴⁴ This is an important dynamic; for the Boer being disarmed in the Anglo-Boer War emasculated him because his

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36. DOD DOC C: SA Cit. Force, Box 59, File 765/12/11, Reports from district staff officers, Prosecution of citizens who failed to comply with proclamation calling out forces, 12 February 1914; DOD DOC C: SA Cit. Force, Box 63, File 1399, Letters Commandant J.M. Els and Commandant D.H. van Coller – Commandant General C.F. Beyers, 30 January 2014.
 37. Grundlingh and Swart, *Radelose Rebelle?* p 49.
 38. DOD DOC C: SA Cit. Force, Box 59, File 765/12/11, Reports from district staff officers, prosecution of citizens who failed to comply with proclamation calling out forces, 12 February 1914.
 39. *Government Gazette of the Union of South Africa*, Act No. 13 of 1912, Article 65, pp 658–659; DOD DOC C, Secretary for Defence (hereafter DC) 2, Box 1436, Correspondence on the commandos’ accounts during the strike, 1914.
 40. *Government Gazette of the Union of South Africa*, Act No. 13 of 1912, Article 66, pp 658–659; DOD DOC C, DC2, Box 174, File 7454, Notes on strike accounts, 1914.
 41. DOD DOC C, DC2, Box 174, File 7451, Transport accounts for the industrial crisis, January 1914; DOD DOC C, DC2, Box 1436, Strike accounts No. 6 district, Standerton, January 1914; DOD DOC C: SA Cit. Force, Box 88, File 29/227, Report on horses commandeered during strike, January 1914.
 42. Tylden, “The Development of the Commando System in South Africa”, p 307; F. Pretorius, *Kommandolewe tydens die Anglo-Boereoorlog 1899–1902* (Human & Rousseau, Cape Town, 1991), p 28; DOD DOC C, DC2, Box 39, File 765/10/10, Communication Major C.R. Burgess – District staff officer, Kroonstad, 9 January 1914.
 43. DOD DOC C, DC2, Box 147, File DC5256, Correspondence on ordnance on loan to UDF by Imperial authorities, 1913 and January 1914; NASA: SAP 9, 6/183/14/3, Instructions issued on protection of coal mines, Witbank area, 3 January 1914.
 44. DOD DOC C, SA Cit Force, Box 59, File 722, Minute, Under Secretary for the Interior, 30 July 1910, and minute Under Secretary for Defence, 25 July 1913.

male identity was weakened. However, when called up for service in January 1914, the Afrikaner was again armed and felt empowered. This sense of empowerment represented by the Boer and his gun is significant; it created the sense of having his power restored; he could use this power to return to his old traditional lifestyle. A number of the Afrikaner burghers seized this myth of power and carried it forward in rebellion against the government a few months later.⁴⁵

Ideological differences, Afrikaner identity and nationalism

Generals Louis Botha and Smuts both desired to unite the Afrikaans and English-speaking citizens in a modern South Africa that formed an integral part of the British Empire.⁴⁶ There were those in the Afrikaner community who identified with the political philosophy of Botha's South African Party, but there were also those who visualised republican nationalism and supported the National Party of J.B.M. Hertzog. The jingoists felt progressively estranged from the new government structures and modernising environment, while their fellow Afrikaners adjusted to it. It was within this increasingly divided Afrikaner society that the industrial strike of 1914 unfolded and burghers on both sides of the political divide participated in the suppression of the strike, albeit for different reasons.⁴⁷

The Afrikaner's pursuit of a national identity post-1910 therefore contributed to the participation of the burgher on commando during the 1914 strike. For the Afrikaner, commandos symbolised nationalism and an own identity.⁴⁸ Serving in the commando during the strike fuelled a sentiment of nationalism among some burghers and later that year this erupted into a rebellion. Apparently, some of Hertzog's supporters – those on commando service during the strike – said that "... Beyers should utilize the commandos to overthrow Botha's Government, in order to proclaim a Republic".⁴⁹ A number of burghers grasped that the Botha government and its new political philosophy did not identify with their republican nationalism.⁵⁰ It seems that the strike and the immediate mobilisation of the commandos already afforded the disgruntled jingoistic Afrikaners an opportunity to rebel against the government. They did not seize the opportunity, but a number of the burghers were undeniably inspired by their commando experience to join the rebellion a few months later.

The district officers recorded quite a few incidents where members of the Orange Free State commandos, mainly in the Vredefort and Heilbron area, refused to serve in the Transvaal.⁵¹ This area was a melting pot of rebellious and

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45. Grundlingh and Swart, *Radelose Rebelle?*, pp 21–32; DOD DOC C, DC2, Box 147, File DC5256, Correspondence, ordnance on loan to UDF, 1913 and January 1914.
 46. J. Lambert, "Britishness, South Africanism and the First World War", in P.A. Buchner and R.D. Francis (eds), *Rediscovering the British World* (University of Calgary Press, Calgary, 2005), pp 285–286; N.G. Garson, "South Africa and World War 1", *The Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History*, 8, 1, October 1979, p 71; D.W. Krüger, *The Making of a Nation: A History of the Union of South Africa, 1910–1961* (Macmillan, London, 1969), pp 67–68.
 47. Nasson, "Popular Responses to the Great War in South Africa", p 49; Krüger, *The Making of a Nation*, pp 68–70; Fedorowich, "The Loyal Afrikaner and the South African Rebellion of 1914–15", pp 71–72; Swart, "A Boer and his Gun and his Wife", p 744.
 48. Lambert, "Britishness, South Africanism and the First World War", pp 285–288.
 49. Meintjes, *General Louis Botha*, p 205.
 50. Swart, "The Ontology of Leadership in the 1914 Boer Rebellion", pp 9–10.
 51. DOD DOC C: SA Cit. Force, Box 59, File 765/12/11, Reports from district staff officers, Prosecution of citizens who failed to comply with proclamation calling out forces, 12 February 1914; DOD DOC C: SA Cit. Force, Box 63, File 1399, Letters Commandant J.M.

desperate men who felt politically and economically marginalised. Many of the Free State people, according to Grundlingh and Swart, felt little kinship for Botha, a “Transvaal leader”; they resented and fiercely opposed the Botha government and many of them were predisposed to rebel against the government. The Free State burghers evidently did not trust the new government, especially since it seemed unable to bring relief from the dire economic circumstances that were exacerbated by the post-Anglo-Boer War capitalisation and commercialisation of the agriculture sector.⁵²

Another possible explanation for their antagonism is that many of the burghers in these areas were Anglo-Boer War bitter-enders,⁵³ and they still blamed the Transvaal for surrendering in the war.⁵⁴ Meintjes concludes that a large number of patriotic burghers of the Heilbron commando treated Botha’s call to mobilise with suspicion and there were rumours of mutiny and/or rebellion amongst the burghers.⁵⁵ This incident reflected on the struggle and division within the Afrikaner community between those burghers who idealised and longed for traditional republicanism and those who could not identify with this philosophy and thus supported the governing party.

Nevertheless, not all burghers that served in the commandos during the strike of 1914 would later that year rebel against the government. A large number of men who served in the commandos in 1914 did not support the republican cause and were loyal to the Union government. It was these loyal men that the government deployed to suppress the Afrikaner rebels a few months later.⁵⁶ The ongoing feud between Boer and Briton also motivated some of the Afrikaners to mobilise for commando service during the strike. A number within the Afrikaner community identified strongly with Hertzog’s fierce anti-British and anti-capitalist sentiment. It is possible that many of the burghers considered serving in the commandos during the strike as an opportunity to revenge themselves on the “English”. Their reason, among others, was the bitter legacy of the Anglo-Boer War and the subsequent humiliating British anglicisation policies against the Afrikaner, especially with regard to language and education.⁵⁷ This meant that some burghers were enthusiastic about commando service and the prospect of crushing the striking workers; for them the urban workers were tantamount to British dominance. Deney’s Reitz even indicated that Commandant General Beyers, when addressing the commandos during the strike, said, “... the English townspeople have forgotten what a Boer commando looks like, and ... [it is] time to refresh their memories”.⁵⁸ The period before the First World War was therefore one of ongoing tension between Boer and Briton; nationalism and imperialism competed fiercely with one another.⁵⁹

Els and Commandant D.H. van Coller – Commandant General C.F. Beyers, 30 January 2014.

52. Grundlingh and Swart, *Radelose Rebelle?*, pp 33–35.

53. A faction of the Boer forces who during the Anglo-Boer War did not want to negotiate peace, but preferred to fight to the bitter end.

54. Seegers, *The Military in the Making of Modern South Africa*, p 9.

55. Meintjes, *General Louis Botha*, p 204.

56. Nasson, “Popular Responses to the Great War in South Africa”, p 51; Grimbeek, “Die Totstandkoming van die Unieverdedigingsmag”, p 331; Grundlingh and Swart, *Radelose Rebelle?*, pp 20–21.

57. Fedorowich, “The Loyal Afrikaner and the South African Rebellion of 1914–15”, pp 71–72; Grimbeek, “Die Totstandkoming van die Unieverdedigingsmag”, p 330.

58. Meintjes, *General Louis Botha*, p 204.

59. J. Lambert, “South African British? Or Dominion South Africans? The Evolution of an

It seems that the majority of Afrikaners on commando service during the 1914 strike regarded the industrial revolt as an internal problem rather than one of British origin – and was thus a problem to be resolved among themselves. Hence the willingness of many of the burghers to serve in the commandos to suppress the strike; they felt that they were serving their homeland rather than Great Britain. Both the so-called “loyal” and “disloyal” Afrikaners participated in crushing the strike.⁶⁰ One of the political reasons for the outbreak of the Rebellion of 1914 was that a number of Afrikaners were not in favour of the use of South African forces for British service in a war that was not seen as a South African conflict, and this only twelve years after the Anglo-Boer War.⁶¹

Republican nostalgia, masculinity and commando service

As stated by Kent Fedorowich, Afrikaner dissatisfaction and resentment after unification had more to do with the “memories of the past”, and the yearning to reconstruct the old order of things under a familiar republican flag.⁶² The willingness of the Afrikaner to mobilise for commando service during the strike was therefore, among other reasons, due to a longing back to their traditional way of life. This republican nostalgia explains in part the burghers’ decision to serve in the commandos and their actions during the strike of 1914. It was an attempt for some to reconstruct their past and to revive all they had lost since the Anglo-Boer War. Hence, Hancock’s subtle reference to the “shadow of the burgher” as a representation of the Afrikaner that was reliving his past.⁶³ For many Afrikaners the commando system symbolised the former republican lifestyle that they longed for. It had thus developed a heroic element for the Afrikaner, especially after the bitter outcome of the Anglo-Boer War. Furthermore, it was gaining momentum in the new South Africa of the time, plagued as it was with dissent and fission.⁶⁴

In this period, warfare was seen as a masculine endeavour and the fighting was conducted (with some rare exceptions) entirely by men. The culture of the military was characterised by masculine values, preoccupations and metaphors. The socialisation of boys specifically, involved tacit and explicit preparation for the “warrior” role. This was seen as essential to masculine identity.⁶⁵ The Afrikaner was no exception to this aspect of masculinity and had traditionally confirmed, and strengthened their masculine identity, in the republican commando system.⁶⁶ However, the traditional commando structures of the former Boer republics disappeared after the Anglo-Boer War only to be revived as rifle clubs in the Transvaal Colony and Orange River Colony after they received self-government in 1907 and 1908 respectively.⁶⁷ Nonetheless, this traditional perception and

Identity in the 1910s and 1920s”, *South African Historical Journal*, 43, November 2000, pp 197, 202.

60. Fedorowich, “The Loyal Afrikaner and the South African Rebellion of 1914–15”, pp 73, 77–79.
61. Nasson, “Popular Responses to the Great War in South Africa”, p 49.
62. Fedorowich, “The Loyal Afrikaner and the South African Rebellion of 1914–15”, pp 71–72; See also, Swart, “A Boer and his Gun and his Wife”, pp 737–738 and 743–744.
63. Hancock, *Smuts, the Sanguine Years, 1870–1919*, p 368.
64. Seegers, *The Military in the Making of Modern South Africa*, p 10; Swart, “A Boer and his Gun and his Wife”, p 743.
65. W.R. Caspary, “New Psychoanalytic Perspectives on the Causes of War”, *Political Psychology*, 14, 3, September 1993, p 436.
66. Swart, “A Boer and his Gun and his Wife”, pp 737–738 and 751.
67. Van der Waag, “Rural Struggles and the Politics of a Colonial Command”, pp 266–270.

expression of masculinity was part of a waning culture in a time driven by modernising influences. A new era was very soon to be introduced in South African military history.

Swart argues that the South African Defence Act of 1912, which introduced the Union Defence Force, with its strong British and modernising influences, threatened the gendered identity of the Boer male. She indicates that subsequent to the Anglo-Boer War, the 1914 Rebellion was the last opportunity, his last battle, for the Afrikaner to recover his threatened manhood in a modernising and industrialising society.⁶⁸ Similarly, the strike in January 1914 also presented the prospect of reinforcing a flagging Boer masculinity. When the commandos were commandeered for active service during the 1914 strike, many Afrikaners saw it as an opportunity to regain their threatened identity, which for them, was characteristically encoded in the commando system.⁶⁹ According to Swart, the 1912 Defence Act “imposed modern training methods, uniforms, ranking systems, disciplinary codes and promotional norms” and all this “threatened the traditional identity of the Afrikaner”.⁷⁰ However, when the commandos were deployed for service in January 1914 to quell the strike, very few of these new methods and regulations had been introduced in the Citizen Reserve Force and the Afrikaner commandos reverted back to the only military system that they were familiar with – the traditional commando system of the former Boer republics⁷¹ that was later nurtured by General Botha as rifle clubs in the Transvaal.⁷²

Their defeat in the Anglo-Boer War and the ensuing British dogmas humiliated and undermined the masculine identity of the Afrikaner as a warrior; he thus tried to revive his masculine identity by forming “rifle clubs” in the former Boer colonies.⁷³ The deployment of the traditional Boer military commando system during the strike of 1914 was thus an escape for “die Boer en sy perd” (the Boer and his horse) and a means of regaining his dignity. For a fleeting moment he saw himself and was seen as a mighty warrior; therefore the perception was created that he was yet again in control and significant. The “shadow of the ‘mighty’ burgher”⁷⁴ had risen from the ashes of the Anglo-Boer War.

The Defence Act of 1912 and the mobilisation instructions of January 1914 made provision for young Afrikaner men, many of whom had not been old enough to serve in the Anglo-Boer War, to serve in the commandos at the time of the 1914 strike.⁷⁵ Here, again, Swart has provided some useful insights by explaining that many of the Afrikaners considered the tradition of commando service as a sort of

68. Swart, “A Boer and his Gun and his Wife”, pp 737–738, 751.

69. Geyer, “Die Eerste Operasionele Optrede van die Unieverdedigingsmag”, pp 78–84.

70. Swart, “A Boer and his Gun and his Wife”, p 737.

71. DOD DOC C, DC2, Box 39, File 765/10/11, Telegram Major C.R. Burgess to all district staff officers, 10 January 1914; DOD DOK C: DC2, Box 39, File 765/10/10, Communication, Major C.R. Burgess – District staff officer Kroonstad, 9 January 1914; Geyer, “Die Eerste Operasionele Optrede van die Unieverdedigingsmag”, pp 75–108; Tylden, “The Development of the Commando System in South Africa”, pp 307–310; Pretorius, *Kommandolewe*, pp 28, 56, 82, 83.

72. Van der Waag, “Rural Struggles and the Politics of a Colonial Command”, pp 266–270; Van der Waag, “Boer Generalship and the Politics of Command”, pp 29.

73. Van der Waag, “Rural Struggles and the Politics of a Colonial Command”, pp 266–270.

74. Hancock, *Smuts, the Sanguine Years, 1870–1919*, p 368.

75. *Government Gazette of the Union of South Africa*, Act No. 13 of 1912, pp 624, 626; DOD DOC C: SA Cit. Force, Box 97, File 7164A, Proclamation No. 10 of 1914 signed by Governor General Gladstone, 9 January 1914.

“rite of passage to manhood”, by which his social status would be measured.⁷⁶ To achieve his masculine identity, a boy had to identify with his father.⁷⁷ Commando service thus traditionally also represented the relationships in the patriarchal society of the Afrikaner.⁷⁸ Most probably young Afrikaner males adhered to the call-up during the strike because they yearned to be part of the traditional lifestyle of their grandfathers, fathers and brothers, which was forged in the commando.

Leadership

According to W.R. Caspary, it has been generally concluded in history that most soldiers fight not out of aggressiveness, but obedience, and therefore obedience can be perceived as a response to trust in and devotion to leaders. Such obedience is usually focused on idealised and charismatic leaders with the power to command the service of their men.⁷⁹ As per Hermann Giliomee’s conclusion, to quell the 1914 strike, Smuts had put his faith in the assistance of the men with whom he had fought in the Anglo-Boer War. He rightly states that “Rural Afrikaners called up for commando duty, enthusiastically took up their weapons ‘to shoot Englishmen’ in Johannesburg”.⁸⁰ Consequently, there were those in the Afrikaner community who heeded the call to mobilise for commando duty because of loyalty, reverence and obedience to not only Smuts, but also other generals such as Botha (then prime minister), the well-known and charismatic De la Rey, and Beyers, who was commandant general of the ACF.⁸¹ These generals were the “new leadership”⁸² of the Anglo-Boer War “who had conducted the successful guerrilla campaign against the British”.⁸³ This reflects the prevalence in the Afrikaner political psyche of the time where hero-worshiping, popularity and personality of leaders were critical in maintaining support. Loyalty to leaders took precedence over politics,⁸⁴ and was in the South African milieu characterised as “local rather than national loyalty”.⁸⁵ It also strengthened the Afrikaner perception of the concept of a leader as a “father figure” – one in whom he could put his trust.⁸⁶ Lange notes that it is interesting that some of the very same generals who led the attack against the white workers in January 1914 also commanded the rebels later that same year.⁸⁷

The commando system of January 1914 also retained the traditional ranking and leadership systems of the former Boer commandos, that is, commandants, field-cornets, assistant field-cornets and ordinary burghers. The

76. Swart, “A Boer and his Gun and his Wife”, p 738.

77. Caspary, “New Psychoanalytic Perspectives on the Causes of War”, pp 437–438.

78. Swart, “The Ontology of Leadership in the 1914 Boer Rebellion”, p 13.

79. Caspary, “New Psychoanalytic Perspectives on the Causes of War”, p 423.

80. Giliomee, *The Afrikaners*, p 330.

81. Uys, *South African Military Who’s Who, 1452–1992*, p 18; and DOD DOC C: SA Cit. Force, Box 89, File 76/4, Document indicating Commandant General Beyers’ particulars of service.

82. Van der Waag, “Boer Generalship and the Politics of Command”, pp 35–42.

83. I. van der Waag, “Smuts’s Generals: Towards a First Portrait of the South African High Command, 1912–1948”, *War in History*, 18, 1, February 2011, p 53.

84. Van der Waag, “Smuts’s Generals”, p 39; Fedorowich, “The Loyal Afrikaner and the South African Rebellion of 1914–15”, pp 90–94.

85. Van der Waag, “Rural Struggles and the Politics of a Colonial Command”, p 255.

86. Caspary, “New Psychoanalytic Perspectives on the Causes of War”, p 423; Swart, “The Ontology of Leadership in the 1914 Boer Rebellion”, p 2.

87. L. Lange, *White, Poor and Angry: White Working Class Families in Johannesburg* (Ashgate, Burlington, 2003), p 140.

burghers of 1914 were familiar with these military rankings.⁸⁸ During the strike, regions of unrest were divided into control areas and district officers of the Union Defence Force were appointed as military control officials. The burghers were not familiar with this new ranking system of appointed officials and some disillusioned burghers did not trust the new structure or the leaders appointed by the Botha government.⁸⁹ This inconsistency in the new defence force that was plagued by controversy evidently contributed to conflicting feelings among the burghers.

Disempowering social and economic influences: white poverty

White poverty was certainly one of the motivations that drove many of the burghers from mainly rural areas to mobilise for commando duty in January 1914. Prior and post the catastrophic Anglo-Boer War, many rural Afrikaners found themselves landless, needy and powerless due to the ongoing poor economy; devastating drought and pestilence; the exploitation of the capitalistic landowners; increasing use of black labour on farms; commercialisation; and outdated inheritance laws. They felt politically and economically marginalised in the new Union of South Africa and increasingly desperate due to the economic crisis in the period preceding 1914.⁹⁰

Many “plattelanders” (peasant farmers in the countryside) and landless “bywoners” (sharecroppers) had found it impossible to support themselves economically in the period preceding 1914 and their dire circumstances forced destitute white farmers to migrate to the cities in search of work. The employment available was usually low-paid jobs in the mining industry.⁹¹ In the post-unification period, many of the poor white Afrikaners in search of a new identity developed this in solidarity with white workers and their fight for better economic circumstances. For example, a Free State burgher named Terblance,⁹² refused to cross the Vaal River to serve in the Boksburg commando. He said that he was a working man and that he would not fire on other workers. He threw down his weapon and requested his commandant to grant him leave, which was subsequently refused, so he simply returned to his home on his own.⁹³ It is therefore apparent that one of the reasons for neglecting commando duty was sympathy for the cause of the (mainly foreign nationals) strikers.

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88. DOD DOC C: DC2, Box 168, File 2/7164, Correspondence, Under Secretary of Defence about pay and allowances of burghers on commando, 1914; DOD DOC C: SAMR, Box 1084, File 215/4/3, Under Secretary of Defence – District control officer Pretoria, 20 January 1914; NASA: SAP, Volume 130, File S49, Police Commissioner – Defence Force commandos re recognition of services, January 1914.
89. DOD DOC C: DC2, Box 39, File 765/10/13, Under Secretary of Defence – District staff officer, Military district No. 13, January 1914; Jacobs, “Die Rol van die Unieverdedigingsmag in die Onderdrukking van die Nywerheidsnoluste”, pp 7–8; the C.J. Jacobs article is also published in *Militaria*, 18, 4, 1988, see p 50; Ploeger, “Hoofstukke uit die Voor-en Vroeë Geskiedenis van die SAW”, pp 33–34.
90. Oberholster, “Die Randse Staking van 1922”, pp 42–43; Giliomee, *The Afrikaners*, pp 315–323; Lange, *White, Poor and Angry*, p 135; Krikler, *The Rand Revolt*, p 27.
91. Lange, *White, Poor and Angry*, p 135; Krikler, *The Rand Revolt*, p 27; Swart, “The 1914 Rebellion and the Politics of Poverty”, pp 161–162, 167; Giliomee, *The Afrikaners*, pp 321–323 and 330; E. van Heyningen, *The Concentration Camps of the Anglo-Boer War* (Jacana Media, Auckland Park, 2013), pp 6, 23, and 321–323; Grundlingh and Swart, *Radelose Rebelle?*, p 26.
92. Spelling in accordance with original source.
93. DOD DOC C, SA Cit. Force, Box 59, File 765/12, Commandant General C.F. Beyers – Secretary of Defence, 24 June 1914. No further information about the incident could be traced.

The underlying feeling of personal ineptitude and increasing fear can easily strengthen and distort feelings of political powerlessness stimulated by negative experiences in the political system.⁹⁴ The political philosophy and modernising influences of the new Botha government threatened not only the identity, but also the lifestyle of numerous nationalistic and anti-capitalistic Afrikaners. Many poor Afrikaners opposed the changes in their traditional way of life and therefore served in the commandos during the 1914 strike in an attempt not only to relive their bygone identity but also to be rewarded financially for their commando service.⁹⁵ As quoted by Swart, O’Conner concludes that many of the discouraged poor burghers envisioned the former republican lifestyle which the government provided for them and their families.⁹⁶ It was an opportunity for many of the needy and desperate white burghers to earn an income.

The terms of the Defence Act of 1912 provided for the payment of a daily wage; this was paid after demobilisation. However, several members of the commandos requested advances on their wages and the military authorities provided for a significant number of needy families while the men were on commando. This is an indication of the desperate economic need in the white Afrikaner community of the time. After demobilisation, the military discontinued the financial contributions and supplies provided to the poor families.⁹⁷ These Afrikaners felt that the government was yet again abandoning them. Many of the indigent and landless burghers who assisted with the suppression of the strike were also fiercely anti-capitalistic.⁹⁸ It appears, therefore, that some of the impoverished burghers who heeded the instruction to mobilise did so not because of patriotism, nationalism, nostalgia or loyalty to the former Boer generals, but for sheer economic survival. Later that same year, many of these burghers joined the rebellion against the government.⁹⁹

As previously mentioned, a number of burghers did not adhere to the call to mobilise during the 1914 strike.¹⁰⁰ The military district officers recorded the number and names of those who failed to join their commandos and the reasons why they neglected to carry out their duty. Most cases of desertion (224 cases) occurred in military district eight, an area that included Boksburg, Johannesburg, Germiston and Krugersdorp in the Transvaal.¹⁰¹ The deserters from these urban areas were most probably part of, or sympathetic towards, the striking workers. It appears that a number of commando members were poor white Afrikaner workers that supported the cause of the white working class and were strikers themselves. This is evident in the fact that the white Afrikaner was now part of the working

94. Caspary, “New Psychoanalytic Perspectives on the Causes of War”, p 426.

95. Nasson, “Popular Responses to the Great War in South Africa”, p 52; Swart, “The 1914 Rebellion and the Politics of Poverty”, pp 171–173; Swart, “A Boer and his Gun and his Wife”, p 741.

96. Swart, “The 1914 Rebellion and the Politics of Poverty”, p 174.

97. DOD DOC C: DC2, Box 168, File 2/7164, Correspondence, Under Secretary of Defence about pay and allowances of burghers on commando, 1914; DOD DOC C: SAMR, Box 1084, File 215/4/3, Under Secretary of Defence – District control officer Pretoria, 20 January 1914.

98. Swart, “The 1914 Rebellion and the Politics of Poverty”, pp 170–172.

99. Grundlingh and Swart, *Radelose Rebelle?*, pp 23–32.

100. DOD DOC C, SA Cit. Force, Box 59, File 765, Letter Major C.R. Burgess – District staff officer No. 9 military district, 12 February 1914.

101. DOD DOC C, SA Cit. Force, Box 59, File 765/12/11, Reports from district staff officers, Prosecution of citizens who failed to comply with proclamation calling out forces, 12 February 1914.

force in a changing and industrialising society. Due to his ongoing political and economic alienation, the poor Afrikaner in the city did not promise his loyalty to any of the political parties, but increasingly joined workers unions in order to protect his interests in the workplace.¹⁰² Marwick summarises the social tendency by which some underprivileged members of society participated in the crushing of uprisings in the following way: "... there is greater participation on the part of larger, underprivileged groups in society, who tend correspondingly to benefit, or at least to develop a new self-consciousness."¹⁰³

The 1914 strike worsened the dismal economic situation in South Africa and most of the Afrikaners who took part in the rebellion later that year were from the poor white community.¹⁰⁴ A connection between the participation of the poor white "plattelandse" Afrikaner in the commandos during the strike of 1914, and their later involvement and actions in the 1914 Rebellion can therefore be observed.

Conclusion

The motives for the participation of the ordinary burghers in the suppression of the 1914 strike are as many as they are varied. The legal compulsion to render military service was one of the basic reasons why so many of the Afrikaans-speaking burghers adhered to the call-up instructions. The changing nature of the society of the day as experienced by the ordinary burgher on commando are illuminated by specific factors such as ideological differences, Afrikaner identity, nationalism, republican nostalgia, commandos and masculinity, leadership and white poverty.¹⁰⁵ Commandos were the expression of their identity as Afrikaners.¹⁰⁶ Some of the Afrikaners also considered the suppression of the strike as an opportunity to take revenge on the British, mainly because of the bitter memories of the Anglo-Boer War.¹⁰⁷

The military experience of the burghers on commando that participated in the 1914 strike did not differ fundamentally from those of the former Boer republics. However, the modernising influences of the Defence Act of 1912 driven by Smuts did introduce a few changes, although the fledgling defence force was not able to introduce many of these changes by January 1914. The deployment of the commandos during the 1914 strike marked the end of the use of the Boer commando system in its traditional style by the Union Defence Force.¹⁰⁸ The

102. Giliomee, *The Afrikaners*, pp 324–325.

103. A. Marwick, *War and Social Change in the Twentieth Century: A Comparative Study of Britain, Germany, Russia and the United States* (Macmillan, London, 1974), pp 12–13.

104. Swart, "The 1914 Rebellion and the Politics of Poverty", pp 161, 174.

105. Giliomee, *The Afrikaners*, p 330; Fedorowich, "The Loyal Afrikaner and the South African Rebellion of 1914–1915", pp 90–94; Swart, "The 1914 Rebellion and the Politics of Poverty", pp 161–162 and 167; Grundlingh and Swart, *Radelose Rebelle?* pp 23–41; Geyer, "Die Eerste Operasionele Optrede van die Unieverdedigingsmag, pp 69–75; *Government Gazette of the Union of South Africa*, Act No. 13 of 1912, Article 79, pp 664–665.

106. Lambert, "Britishness, South Africanism and the First World War", pp 285–288.

107. Fedorowich, "The Loyal Afrikaner and the South African Rebellion of 1914–1915", pp 71–72; Grimbeek, "Die Totstandkoming van die Unieverdedigingsmag", p 330.

108. The government deployed mainly Afrikaans-speaking ACF members to crush the 1914 Rebellion. The Union Defence Force also deployed commandos during the 1922 strike but the modified British influence on the military was already substantive. See for example, Giliomee, *The Afrikaners*, p 382; Ploeger, "Op Brandwag: Drie Eeue Militêre Geskiedenis", pp 28–29.

modified British and colonial influences on the UDF and its Citizen Force Reserve commandos increased with time and some Afrikaners felt deprived of their traditional customs and way of life.¹⁰⁹ The colonial and British links to the UDF would be transformed by the policies of F.C. Erasmus (then minister of defence) after the National Party came into power in 1948.¹¹⁰ Although the traditional military commando system of the Afrikaner was deployed briefly by the Union Defence Force to quell the 1914 strike, it formed part of a vanishing lifestyle and culture that was destined to be replaced by the modernising military systems of the twentieth century. It was the dawning of a new era in the military history of South Africa, but the haunting spirit of the “shadow of the burgher” still lingered in the minds and hearts of many disillusioned Afrikaners. Therefore, in September/October 1914, many of these frustrated Afrikaners joined the rebellion against the government.

Abstract

In January 1914 a general industrial strike took place in the Union of South Africa, which resulted in unrest in the Witwatersrand area. Subsequently the fledgling Union Defence Force, for the first time since its inception in 1912, was called upon operationally by the government to suppress the strike. Because the Defence Force was still in a transformational and integration phase, the Permanent Force was not yet ready to quash the strike on its own, and therefore the commandos of the Citizen Force Reserve were commandeered for service. The traditional commando system of the former Boer republics and of the Transvaal Colony and Orange River Colony were thus briefly revived to quell the 1914 strike, albeit in a new and multifaceted South African milieu. This article focuses on conflict and society and emphasises important social military historiographical aspects in South Africa that have been neglected in the past. It illuminates the *zeitgeist* and character of Afrikaner society of the day by focusing specifically on the social dynamics and the experience of the “burghers” on commando that participated in the crushing of the strike. Theoretical concepts such as ideological differences, nationalism, leadership, commando and Afrikaner identity, masculinity, nostalgia and white poverty elucidate these experiences and perceptions.

Key words: Military history; Union Defence Force; 1914 strike; 1914 Rebellion; commando, masculinity; nationalism; nostalgia; white poverty.

Opsomming

In Januarie 1914 het 'n algehele industriële staking in die Unie van Suid-Afrika uitgebreek wat tot onrus in die Witwatersrand area gelei het. Gevolglik is die Unieverdedigingsmag (UVM) vir die eerste keer sedert sy ontstaan in 1912, operasioneel deur die regering aangewend om die staking te onderdruk. Die UVM was egter midde in 'n organisasie- en integrasieproses en gevolglik was die Staande Mag nog nie gereed om die staking op sy eie te onderdruk nie. Die UVM moes dus noodgedwonge die kommando's van die Burgermagreserwes vir diens opkommandeer. Die tradisionele kommandostelsel van die voormalige Boererepublieke asook die Transvaal- en Oranjerivier-kolonies sou dus vlugtig met

109. Van der Waag, “Smuts's Generals”, pp 60–61; Grimbeek, “Die Totstandkoming van die Unieverdedigingsmag”, p 330.

110. Van der Waag, “Smuts's Generals”, pp 60–61; D. Visser, “British Influence on Military Training and Education in South Africa: The Case of the South African Military Academy and its Predecessors”, *South African Historical Journal*, 46, May 2002, pp 74–76.

die 1914-staking herleef maar in 'n nuwe en veelsydige Suid-Afrikaanse milieu. Die artikel fokus op konflik en gemeenskap en beklemtoon belangrike sosiale militêre historiografiese aspekte in Suid-Afrika wat in die verlede verwaarloos is. Dié artikel belig die tydsges en karakter van die Afrikaner gemeenskap van destyds, deur te konsentreer op die sosiale dinamika en ondervinding van die burgers wat aan die onderdrukking van die staking deelgeneem het. Onderwerpe, soos ideologiese verskille, nasionalisme, leierskap, kommando en Afrikaner-identiteit, manlikheid, nostalgie en wit armoede werp lig op hierdie ervaringe en omstandighede.

Sleutelwoorde: Militêre geskiedenis; Unieverdedigingsmagte; 1914-staking; 1914-Rebellie; kommando; manlikheid; nasionalisme; nostalgie; wit armoede.