

## Hungarians in the Anglo-Boer War

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### Abstract

The Anglo-Boer War (1899–1902), also known as the South African War, had many Hungarian connections in the areas of economy, politics, and culture. Great Britain and the Boer Republics attempted to purchase agricultural products (especially horses and flour) in Hungary, to be used during the war. Hungarian journals and newspapers published a large number of articles and other features on the war, and outstanding Hungarian poets and novelists, as well as politicians and other public figures reflected on the conflict and expressed their pro-Boer, pro-British, or neutral opinions. Hungarians who served in the Boer commandos or who fought under the Union Jack in South Africa constitute the closest connection between the Carpathian Basin and the Anglo-Boer War. Seventeen Hungarians have been identified who took an active part in the war, the majority of them (twelve people), on the Boer side, while only five supported the British war effort. This article focuses on three of the Hungarian participants: Tibor Péchy, Albert Wass, and Albert Theophilus Duka. While Péchy and Wass were pro-Boer volunteers, Duka served in the British Army. After describing their South African activities, a comparison is made of the motivation for their participation in the Anglo-Boer War.

**Keywords:** Anglo-Boer/South African War; Count Albert Wass; Dr Albert Theophilus Duka; Félix Luzsénszky; Hungarians; Hungarian Revolution and War of Independence, 1848–1849; Lajos Kossuth; Tibor Péchy; President Paul Kruger.

### Opsomming

Die Anglo-Boereoorlog (1899–1902) het verskeie Hongaarse konneksies gehad op ekonomiese, politieke en kulturele gebied. Brittanje en die Boererepublieke het gepoog om landbouprodukte (veral perde en meel) in Hongarye, vir gebruik in die oorlog, aan te koop. Hongaarse joernale en koerante het 'n groot aantal artikels en rubrieke oor die oorlog gepubliseer, en vername Hongaarse digters en skrywers, sowel as politici en ander openbare figure, het oor die oorlog besin en hul pro-Boer, pro-Britse, of neutrale menings daarvoor uitgedruk. Hongare wat in die Boerekommandos gedien het, óf diegene wat onder die Union Jack in Suid-Afrika geveg het, verteenwoordig die nouste

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band tussen die Karpatiese Kom en die Anglo-Boereoorlog. Sewentien Hongare wat aktief aan die oorlog deelgeneem het is geïdentifiseer; die meerderheid (twaalf) aan die Boere-kant, terwyl net vyf die Britse oorlogspoging gesteun het. Hierdie artikel fokus op drie van die Hongaarse deelnemers: Tibor Péchy, Albert Wass en Albert Theophilus Duka. Péchy en Wass was pro-Boer vrywilligers, met Duka wat in die Britse weermag gedien het. Hul Suid-Afrikaanse bedrywighede word beskryf, waarna 'n vergelyking getref word tussen die faktore wat hulle beweeg het om aan die Anglo-Boereoorlog deel te neem.

**Sleutelwoorde:** Anglo-Boereoorlog/Suid-Afrikaanse Oorlog; Graaf Albert Wass; Dr. Albert Theophilus Duka; Félix Luzsénszky; Hongare; Hongaarse Revolusie en Vryheidsoorlog, 1848–1849; Lajos Kossuth; Tibor Péchy; Pres. Paul Kruger.

## Introduction

Participation by foreign volunteers is a widely known feature of the Anglo-Boer War, which is also called the South African War. More than 2 500 foreigners joined the Boer forces between 1899 and 1902. Not surprisingly, most of them came from the Netherlands, France, and Germany, but there were significant numbers of Irish, American, Scandinavian, Russian, and Italian pro-Boer volunteers as well. Although it is far less well known, in addition to these nations, the Anglo-Boer War also had various Hungarian connections, with Hungarian volunteers joining the war. The question emerges: what connections are there between Hungary, the Hungarians (or in a geographical sense, the Carpathian Basin), and southern Africa? Although the Irish, Russian, or Dutch engagement in this war has been studied thoroughly, the motivating factors of the Hungarian participants have been neglected, or have only been examined in passing by Hungarian and international scholars.<sup>1</sup>

The participation of foreign volunteers in the Anglo-Boer War and the international aspects of the war have been studied comprehensively. Various books and articles explore North American and European narratives of the Anglo-Boer War, pro-Boer propaganda activities and methods, while others focus on the volunteers who

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1. L. Pap, “Magyarország és a második angol-búr háború”, PhD thesis, University of Debrecen, 2015; L. Pap, “Búrmagyarok, avagy magyarok az angol-búr háborúban”, *Acta Acad. Agriensis, Sectio Historiae*, 42, 2014, pp 145–166; L. Pap, “A második angol-búr háború és a magyar politikai élet”, *Acta Acad. Agriensis, Sectio Historiae*, 43, 2015, pp 291–319; Sz. Biernarczky, “Búrok a magyar művelődés történetében”, *Afrika Tanulmányok*, 7, 1, 2013, pp 89–119; Z. Tefner, “Külpolitika, népcsoport, tömegtájékoztató: Az osztrák-magyar liberális sajtó és a második búr háború”, *Valóság*, 45, 6, 2002, pp 33–60; K. Szabó, “Magyarok a búr háborúban”, <http://www.roncskutatas.hu/node/12472> (11 July 2014); E.A. Schmidl, “Österreicher im Burenkrieg, 1899–1902”, PhD thesis, University of Vienna, 1985; J.A. du Pisani and J.J. Hugo, “'n Hongaarse Entrepreneur in die ZAR: A.H. Nellmapius se Vervoerskema na Delagoabaai, 1874–1883”, *Historia*, 52, 6, November 2007, pp 83–111.

fought in the war.<sup>2</sup> The Irish, Polish, and Hungarian interpretations of the Anglo-Boer war show much similarity in many of their elements. Failed revolutions, a fight for national independence, and the oppression of great powers are components of the Irish and Polish nationalist historical narratives, as with Hungarian ones. For example, Charles T. Strauss shines a light on different pro-Boer public figures, societies, and the press of the Irish-American community,<sup>3</sup> while Piotr Szlanta investigates similar issues in the case of the Poles.<sup>4</sup> Regarding foreign volunteering, Fransjohan Pretorius reviews the relationship between the Boers and the volunteers, as well as their motivating factors in great depth.<sup>5</sup> His perspectives and methods (e.g. exploring and categorising the reasons for their participation, their difficulties in integrating into the Boer camps and the narratives of the pro-Boer foreign participants) are similar to the approach employed in the present article. Pretorius focuses on the French, Dutch, Russian, Irish, German, and Scandinavian participation, and although Austrian volunteers are mentioned (such as Count Sternberg and Franco Seiner), Hungarians do not feature in his study, however. In contrast, Erwin A. Schmidl concentrates on the Austrian participants, mostly by studying documents written in German. Overall, the private papers of the Hungarian volunteers as well as the economic and political aspects of the Hungarian involvement in the Anglo-Boer War have remained out of researchers' focus.

In this article, four groups of sources are analysed. First, the private papers (journals and correspondence) of the Hungarian Anglo-Boer War volunteers are explored. Accessing this material is difficult because during the twentieth century thousands of archival documents (including the personal papers of the pro-Boer Hungarian volunteers) disappeared, which makes Tibor Péchy's South African journal and correspondence a valuable source of information on the participation of the Hungarians in the war. Second, official (public) documents are examined. These include the reports of the British ambassadors and consuls in Vienna, Budapest, and Fiume, and the correspondence between them and the Foreign Office. These documents are

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2. A. Davidson and I. Filatova, *The Russians and the Anglo-Boer War, 1899–1902* (Human & Rousseau, Cape Town, 1998); D.P. McCracken (ed.), *Teddy Luther's War: The Diary of a German-American in an Irish-Boer Commando* (30° South Publishers, Pinetown, 2013); V. Kuitenbrouwer, *War of Words: Dutch Pro-Boer Propaganda and the South African War (1899–1902)* (Amsterdam University Press, Amsterdam, 2012). I recognise that the conflict which I discuss is referred to by many historians as the South African War, but this article refers to Anglo-Boer War, which is the term most usually used in Hungarian accounts.
  3. C.T. Strauss, "God Save the Boer: Irish American Catholics and the South African War, 1899–1902", *U.S. Catholic Historian*, 26, 4, 2008, pp 1–26.
  4. P. Szlanta, "Long Distance Solidarity: Polish Public Opinion and the Boer War 1899–1902", *Werkwinkel*, 12, 1, 2017, pp 49–69.
  5. F. Pretorius, "Welcome but Not That Welcome: The Relations between Foreign Volunteers and the Boers in the Anglo-Boer War of 1899–1902", in C.G. Krüger and S. Levsen (eds), *War Volunteering in Modern Times: From the French Revolution to the Second World War* (Palgrave Macmillan, Houndmills, Basingstoke, 2010), pp 122–149.

kept at the National Archives of the United Kingdom.<sup>6</sup> British and Hungarian parliamentary debates also belong to this group. Third, books on the Anglo-Boer War written by Hungarians are scrutinised. Five books were published in Hungary dealing with this war between 1899 and 1902. Four of the five books were written by pro-Boer Hungarian volunteers, namely Károly Bulyovszky<sup>7</sup>, Vilmos Simon<sup>8</sup>, and Lajos Szigethy<sup>9</sup>. These books are similar in their structure, as they include a short overview of the history of South Africa, the Anglo-Boer War, and provide a description of Boer culture, ethnography, and traditions. Most of the chapters focus on the personal experiences of the Hungarian volunteers. The fourth book is by Theodore Duka,<sup>10</sup> and it is an exception not only because in contrast to Bulyovszky, Simon, and Szigethy, Duka did not fight in the Anglo-Boer War, but also because his book is a collection of pro-British writings, while the other three were pro-Boer.

Fourthly, contemporary Hungarian articles and pamphlets were studied, because the Anglo-Boer War awakened huge interest in Hungary. So much so that the contemporary Hungarian journals and newspapers published a large number of articles on South Africa. In comparison with other contemporaneous wars in other parts of the world, for example, the Philippine-American War or the Boxer Rebellion (in which Hungarian marines were also involved), the Anglo-Boer War generated by far the greatest waves of interest in various spheres of contemporary Hungarian public discourse. Two factors could explain this surge of interest. A similar impact was seen in other European countries, such as Germany, and a significant number of the articles published in Hungarian newspapers were taken from German journals. It appears that Hungarian journalists and publicists were able to draw parallels between the Anglo-Boer War and the 1848–49 Hungarian Revolution and the War of Independence and this made interpretation of the Anglo-Boer War easier for the Hungarian public. Through the example of the Anglo-Boer War, it is possible to study how contemporary Hungarian public opinion interpreted wars or conflicts in which Austria-Hungary was not directly involved.

This present article explores Hungarian volunteers' motivation and how those who were pro-Boer described the people and the terrain they encountered in South Africa. The article focuses primarily on the sources derived from the first group of volunteers, namely the private papers of the Hungarian participants in the war. In addition, the sources from the contemporary press are used to study the changing views of the pro-Boer Hungarian volunteers.

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6. The National Archives, Kew, London (hereafter NA): Foreign Office (hereafter FO) 7/1288-1290; FO 7/1294-1298; FO 7/1302-1303; FO 7/1329.

7. K. Bulyovszky, *Boer-Angol tűzben* (Az Atheneum Rt. Könyvnyomdája, Budapest, 1901).

8. V. Simon, *A búr szabadságharcz* (Belvárosi Könyvnyomda, Budapest, 1901); V. Simon, *Élményeim az angol-búr háborúban* (Árpád Könyvkiadó Vállalat, Budapest, 1903).

9. L. Szigethy, *Búr földön* (Röttig Gusztáv Könyvnyomdája, Sopron, 1901).

10. T. Duka, *Levelek a boer-angol háborúról* (Hornýánszky Viktor Cs. és Kir. Udvari Könyvnyomdája, Budapest, 1901).

## Hungarian aspects of the Anglo-Boer War

The South African War or Anglo-Boer War had numerous Hungarian points of connection. These can be classified into five aspects or categories. The first concerns those Hungarians who actively participated in the war, and it is this which stands at the centre of the present article, allowing us to explore their motivating factors as well as identifying transformations in their narratives about the Boers.

The second, identified as the commercial and economic category of connections includes the British Army's "scandalous" horse purchases in Hungary. British officers purchased hundreds of horses there and transported them from the port of Fiume to the South African frontlines. According to official British documents, in January and February 1900 the Imperial Yeomanry signed a contract with the Hungarian merchant and businessman, Lajos Foglár (Ludwig von Foglar) for purchasing 3 800 cobs. The British government's Remount Department then followed the same example and purchased 7 000 cavalry and artillery horses, as well as 5 346 cobs for the Mounted Infantry, from Hungarian traders. Once in South Africa, however, the horses soon perished in large numbers. These dubious sales were investigated by the British Army, revealing that the Hungarian horse traders had sold them ill, infected, and malnourished horses. The majority of these animals were unfit for military service. The ensuing scandal awakened the interest of both the British parliament and the press. A committee was set up to investigate the circumstances of the purchases, focusing on the British officers and the Hungarian merchants.<sup>11</sup> The British agents and army officers blamed the Hungarians for selling them low-quality horses, while the traders insisted that the British had had the opportunity to check the mares before the purchase. This was an important issue and articles were published in *The Times* and other newspapers.<sup>12</sup> In addition to the British, the two Boer Republics also attempted to build commercial relations with Austria-Hungary. According to the reports compiled by the British ambassadors and consuls in Hungary, Boer agents planned to buy Mannlicher rifles in Austria and flour produced by the mills of Budapest, and, just as the British Army had done, the Boers were keen to purchase horses bred in Hungary.<sup>13</sup>

The third category includes Hungarian political reflections on the Anglo-Boer War, especially the way the war appeared in Hungarian parliamentary debates. As was the case in Britain, the British horse purchase was also debated in the bi-cameral Hungarian Parliament.<sup>14</sup> Opposition representatives asked Kálmán Széll, the prime minister of Hungary, why he had allowed the British to buy horses in this country, and

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11. NA: WO 32/8757, Report of the Committee on Horse Purchases in Austria-Hungary Together with Minutes of Evidence and Appendices.
  12. "The War Office and Hungarian Horses", *The Times*, 26 August 1902, p 4; and "The Remount Inquiry", *The Times*, 21 October 1902, p 8.
  13. NA: FO 120/17-291 (248), Register, Arms for Transvaal, 5 November 1899.
  14. K. Schmidt, in Képviselőház, 11 December 1901, <http://www3.arcanum.hu/onap/opt/a090302.htm?v=pdf&q=WRD%3D%28b%FAr%20h%E1bor%FA%29&s=SORT&m=7&a=rec> (25 October 2010).

why he was contributing to a war waged by a powerful empire against two small Boer Republics. Some Opposition parliamentarians, who wanted Hungary to secede from Austria took the opportunity to criticise the government and to keep the idea of an independent Hungary alive.<sup>15</sup> Despite Széll's attempts to deny these charges in the parliament, according to the official correspondence between Sir Horace Rumbold (British ambassador in Vienna) and Prime Minister Lord Salisbury, the Austro-Hungarian political elite and certain circles of the government had been informed about the activities and objectives of the British officers and agents in Hungary. Moreover, the Austro-Hungarians asked the British to keep their intended purchases a secret in order to avoid a scandal:

The Govt. have given me a private and friendly hint through the Foreign Office here that, although they would be glad if we could procure horses for South Africa in Hungary, they are anxious we should purchase them quietly and, if possible, without mentioning the fact that the question of a breach of neutrality may be raised as the Anglophobe press have already mentioned the matter.<sup>16</sup>

The fourth category of connection between the Boer Republics and Hungary was the contemporary Hungarian press and the public discourse on the Anglo-Boer War. In line with those in the rest of Europe, most of the articles published in Hungary were pro-Boer. Hungarian pro-Boer journalism was similar to the Irish and Polish journalism, because nationalist Irish and Polish public opinion viewed the Anglo-Boer War through the lens of their fallen revolutions and the Austrian, Prussian, and Russian oppression of their homelands. All these movements and public figures seized on the opportunity provided by the Anglo-Boer War to conduct their own rousing independence campaigns in the press.

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15. The 1848–1849 Revolution and War of Independence determined the internal political relations of Hungary in the second half of the nineteenth century (1849–1914). Following the suppression of the revolution, the Hungarian political parties and the majority of the Hungarian political elite divided into two groups. The first included those who were willing to compromise and cooperate with the Habsburgs and constituted the political base that supported the Austro-Hungarian Compromise of 1867. The Hungarian governments between 1867 and 1918 were mostly formed by these politicians. The opposition in the Hungarian parliament was dominated by MPs who criticised the compromise. As true representatives of the ideas of the Revolution and War of Independence (as they described themselves), their most cherished dream was secession from the Habsburg Empire. The public figures, politicians, and journalists of this political group grabbed every chance to keep this cause alive in the Hungarian political theatre and public life, and the Anglo-Boer War offered an excellent opportunity to question relations with Austria and remind the Hungarian public of the War of Independence. This is why journals belonging to the opposition sometimes published extremely pro-Boer articles, while pro-government publicists wrote less critical or neutral columns about the Anglo-Boer War.

16. NA: FO 120/763, Sir H. Rumbold to Lord Salisbury, 22nd January 1900.

Pro-Boer Hungarians, just like their Irish and Polish counterparts, tended to draw parallels between the history, culture, and destiny of the Boers and their own nations, and in particular, the similarities between the Anglo-Boer War and the 1848–49 Hungarian War of Independence were over-emphasised. Pro-Boer journalism underlined the fact that both the Hungarians and the Boers were small nations, and the people of the Transvaal and the Orange Free State had to fight for their freedom against a dominant power, the British Empire. The Hungarians had done it against the Habsburg Empire and Russia. The Boers were depicted as living heroes, symbols of gallantry, purity, innocence, bravery. They valued their freedom and their independence. In contrast, the British were described as greedy imperialist oppressors. In these depictions, neither the British soldiers nor their leaders could compete with the Boer warriors in virtue, pluck, and devotion; the Boers were the “true spiritual successors” of the Hungarian freedom fighters:

On days of March we commemorate the wars of our forces more painfully... The March wind brings back the past, dark memories. Concerning the Boers, battle scenes appear gleaming in the light of fires and under the flag of the Virgin Mary... the victorious giants charge forth from the darkness of the graves who waged the battle for our freedom fifty years ago. ... the tragedy of our nation is revived in the far South, in the country of the Transvaaler rocks ...<sup>17</sup>

Not surprisingly, a parallel was drawn between the political leaders of the two nations as well. President Paul Kruger was compared to Lajos Kossuth, the emblematic leader of the Hungarian freedom movement and governor of Hungary (1848–1849). There were certain similarities between the two politicians that made a comparison easy for the pro-Boer Hungarian journalists. Both these leaders died far away from their home country. Paul Kruger was depicted as the “Boer Lajos Kossuth”, the old wise leader, who, like Kossuth the “Hungarian Moses”, never gave up the fight for the freedom of his people. Moreover, Paul Kruger once mentioned the parallel between the Anglo-Boer War and the Hungarian War of Independence when a Hungarian delegation visited him in the Netherlands. He said that the Hungarians had fought a “war of independence as well” and added “you were not left alone as we are. Nobody cares about us and nothing is done for us”.<sup>18</sup> In sum, it is safe to say that regarding the Anglo-Boer War the pro-Boer narrative had made its mark in contemporary Hungary.

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17. “A burok Világosa”, *Debreczeni Ujság*, 5, 73, 1901, p 1.

18. “Krüger a magyarokról”, *Világkrónika*, 22, 1901, p 172.

Finally, several poems and novels were written by famous Hungarian poets and novelists about the war in South Africa. Endre Ady<sup>19</sup> and Dezső Kosztolányi<sup>20</sup> were among those who stirred the emotions of Hungarians. While Ady responded to the fact that Hungarian newspapers at the time were filled with articles on South Africa, Kosztolányi wrote about his and his childhood peers' general support of the Boers during the war.

### **Hungarian participants in the Anglo-Boer War**

Seventeen Hungarians who participated in the war as volunteers, soldiers, or interpreters have been identified. They were the closest connection between the Hungarian nation and the Anglo-Boer War. The majority, twelve of the seventeen, supported the cause of the two Boer Republics. They were Kálmán Bornemisza, Károly Bulyovszky, Gyula Edvi Illés, Mihály Ferenczy, Pál Fleischer, Géza Gössing, Lajos Janssen, Félix Luzsénszky, Tibor Péchy, Vilmos Simon, Lajos Szigethy, and Albert Wass. Only five Hungarians wore the uniform of the British Army in South Africa between 1899 and 1902, they being Pál Bornemisza, Albert Theophilus Duka, Elemér Kemény, János Propper, and Lajos Vadász.

With regard to the social background of the Hungarian participants, we note that Baron Pál Bornemisza, Baron Kálmán Bornemisza, Baron Félix Luzsénszky, and Count Albert Wass were aristocrats. Gyula Edvi Illés and Tibor Péchy came from influential noble families as well. The rest of the Hungarian volunteers came from a bourgeois background. In addition, records show that the overwhelming majority of the Hungarian participants had gained military experience prior to the Anglo-Boer War, most having served as officers in the Austro-Hungarian army. Furthermore, some of the pro-Boer volunteers had known each other before they met again in the South African battlefields. For example, Tibor Péchy and Károly Bulyovszky both took part in the military exercises of 1897 in Balassagyarmat.<sup>21</sup>

Some of the Hungarian volunteers, such as Mihály Ferenczy and Tibor Péchy were living in South Africa before 11 October 1899, but most of them travelled there after the outbreak of the war, mainly during 1900. Although the pro-Boer Hungarians arrived separately, after their arrival they attempted to find one another so that they could go into combat together. In the late spring of 1900, a small Hungarian contingent of Károly Bulyovszky, Gyula Edvi Illés, Mihály Ferenczy, Pál Fleischer, Géza Gössing, Lajos Jansen, Félix Luzsénszky, Tibor Péchy, and Vilmos Simon served in the Austrian

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19. E. Ady, "Búrok", in J. Láng and P. Schweitzer (eds), *Ady Endre összes versei 2.* (Szépirodalmi Kvk., Budapest, 1982), p 471.

20. D. Kosztolányi, "Ó, búrok, ha én most csak húszéves lennék", in P. Réz (ed.), *Kosztolányi Dezső összes versei* (Madách Szépirodalmi Kvk., Bratislava, 1989), p 441.; D. Kosztolányi, "Öreg pap", in P. Réz (ed.), *Kosztolányi Dezső összes novellái II* (Szukits Könyvkiadó és Könyvkereskedés, Szeged, 2002), pp 325–327.

21. Bulyovszky, *Boer-angol tűzben*, pp 85–86.



commando,<sup>22</sup> commanded by Anton Ritter von und zu Goldegg und Lindenburg, former First Lieutenant of the Austro-Hungarian Army.<sup>23</sup> In the military camps and battlefields the pro-Boer Hungarians spent most of their time with Austrian, German and Swiss volunteers, because the Hungarians spoke fluent German, as was usual at the time.

Most of the Hungarians returned to Hungary after 1902 or even during the Anglo-Boer War itself. Only a few of them, for example, János Propper and Mihály Ferenczy, stayed in South Africa. Back in Hungary, the reception of the pro-Boer and pro-British participants differed in many ways. First, the pro-Boer volunteers were celebrated by the Hungarian public and treated as heroes. Numerous lengthy articles were published about their military engagements. One of these publications had the title “Hungarian Champions of the Boer War”.<sup>24</sup> In contrast to the pro-Boer volunteers, the pro-British Hungarians garnered less interest, and only a few short news columns informed the contemporary Hungarian public about the South African military career of Pál Bornemisza,<sup>25</sup> Albert Theophilus Duka, János Propper and Lajos Vadász. Moreover, the pro-Boer participants wrote several articles, and Károly Bulyovszky, Vilmos Simon, and Lajos Szigethy even published books on their South African experiences. As for Tibor Péchy, he wrote articles<sup>26</sup> and held two lectures on South Africa and his military career in the Boer commandos.<sup>27</sup> Apart from publishing,<sup>28</sup> Félix Luzsénszky supported the Hungarian Cultural Society of Transylvania (Erdélyi Magyar Közművelődési Egyesület) by giving presentations on the Anglo-Boer War during a charity tour.<sup>29</sup>

### **Albert Theophilus Duka, Albert Wass, and Tibor Péchy**

For the purposes of this article, three Hungarian participants have been chosen for a comparison of the motives behind their participation in the war: Dr Albert Theophilus Duka, Tibor Péchy, and Count Albert Wass. While Duka fought for the British, Péchy and Wass were pro-Boer volunteers. Their wartime activity, motivation and the available sources on their South African military careers make these three men stand

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22. Péchy Family Archives (hereafter PFA): Tibor Péchy, “Diaries in the Transvaal, II”, 7 June 1900.
  23. Schmidl, “Österreicher im Burenkrieg, 1899–1902”, p 176.
  24. “A boer háború magyar bajnokai”, *Vasárnapi Ujság*, 46, 1900, pp 766–767.
  25. “Angol hadi érem”, *Vasárnapi Ujság*, 22, 1901, pp 613–614.
  26. T. Péchy, “Tábori élet a boeroknál”, *Világkrónika*, 10, 1901, pp 74-75.; T. Péchy, “Bur földről”, *Debreczeni Ujság*, 1901, pp 60–67.
  27. PFA: T. Péchy, “Boer földről”, Unpublished paper presented at the meeting of the Kölcsey Egylet, Szatmárnémeti, 18 February 1904; PFA: T. Péchy, “Előadás Dél-Afrikáról”, Unpublished paper.
  28. F. Luzsénszky, “Magyarok Transvaalban”, *Magyar Salon*, 1900, pp 461–464; F. Luzsénszky, “Utazásom Pretoriába I”, *Vasárnapi Ujság*, 35, 1902, pp 562–563.; F. Luzsénszky, “Utazásom Pretoriába II”, *Vasárnapi Ujság*, 36, 1902, pp 579–580.
  29. “Felolvasás a búr háborúról Debreczenben”, *Uj Debreczeni Friss Ujság*, 38, 1901, p 3; “Fényes ünnepély – az ingyen kenyér javára”, *Debreczeni Ujság*, 53, 1901, p 4.

out from the group of Hungarians who took part in the Anglo-Boer War. Although they had different social backgrounds, these three Hungarians came from influential families. Count Wass was a member of the Transylvanian aristocracy, while Duka's father, Theodore Duka was a highly-respected scientist, well-known in Hungary and Great Britain. There were also famous Hungarian artists, scientists, and politicians in the Péchy family. For example, Tibor Péchy's uncle, Tamás Péchy headed the Ministry of Public Works and Transport (1875–1880), and he was the Speaker of the lower parliamentary chamber for twelve years (1880–1892).<sup>30</sup>

Dr Albert Theophilus Duka (1866–1923) was born into an emigrant Hungarian family in Britain in 1866. He was a highly-educated medical doctor, studying at Cheltenham College and obtaining an MA at Cambridge University. In 1897, Duka left Britain and moved to Queensland, Australia. On 9 March 1899 he was commissioned in the Queensland Army Medical Corps, and on 20 January 1900 he volunteered for special duty as a medical officer in South Africa.<sup>31</sup> Duka served as a surgeon captain in the Third Contingent of the Queensland Mounted Infantry, in the Queensland Army Medical Corps.<sup>32</sup> Although he took part in the relief of the besieged town of Mafeking, the defence of the Elands River Post was the most remarkable moment of his South African military career. Boer troops commanded by General De la Rey besieged the Elands River Post between 4 and 16 August 1900.<sup>33</sup> Duka had a crucial role in the success of the defenders, who were outnumbered by the Boers. In his report on the conflict, Major W. Howard Tunbridge emphasised the key role Duka played:

The casualties were very heavy on the first day (among whom were 5 deaths) and nearly all being from fragments of shells were very bad wounds. Several men were hit a second time [and are] in hospital. Surgeon Captain Duka and his staff – one of them, Trooper W Hunt of your Colony – were untiring in their work, which was all done under shell fire, Captain Duka did splendid work the whole time and had his hands very full.<sup>34</sup>

Not only officers but also ordinary soldiers such as Private John Thomas Masterton appreciated Duka's services:

The doctor, the hero of the siege – Dr. Duka, of the 3<sup>rd</sup> Queensland Contingent – pulled me out from under the frantic kicking horses and with assistance got me over to the ambulance, and dressed my very severe muscular and flesh wounds, and there was also a splintered bone.<sup>35</sup>

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30. See the online database of the Péchy family at <http://pechy-de-pechujfalu.hu/csalamfa/index.php?id=115> (31 August 2008)
  31. "Obituary", *The British Medical Journal*, 3278, 1923, p 788.
  32. M.A. Stein, *In Memoriam Theodore Duka (1825-1908)* (Horace Hart, Oxford, 1914), p 34.
  33. "Hero of Elands River", *Boer War Despatches*, March 2013, p 5.
  34. "Report by Major Tunbridge", 15 September 1900, p 7, [http://alh-research.tripod.com/Light\\_Horse/index.blog/1841573/report-by-major-tunbridge-about-eland-18-august-1900-page-7/](http://alh-research.tripod.com/Light_Horse/index.blog/1841573/report-by-major-tunbridge-about-eland-18-august-1900-page-7/) (30 July 2014).
  35. "One of the Elands River Heroes", *The Brisbane Courier*, 13 October 1900, p 2.

Duka also rendered valued service during the siege, for example he performed several emergency operations. His work was recognised by the leadership of the British Army. He was even mentioned in Lord Roberts's despatches.<sup>36</sup> Duka was awarded the Distinguished Service Order (DSO) as well as the Queen's Medal with two clasps for the defence of the Elands River Post.<sup>37</sup> These made him the most decorated Hungarian participant in the Anglo-Boer War. In Australia he is still regarded as a hero of the Elands River Post today.<sup>38</sup>

Count Albert Wass (1881–1902), was a talented young nobleman from Transylvania. He belonged to one of the most prominent Transylvanian families and his father, Count Béla Wass, was Lord Lieutenant and a member of the Hungarian Parliament.<sup>39</sup> Albert Wass was studying law at Sorbonne University in Paris when the news of the first clashes between the Boer commandos and the British Army reached Europe. In 1901, accompanied by his Dutch friends from Sorbonne, he visited President S.J.P. (Paul) Kruger of the South African Republic, who had left the Transvaal when Roberts occupied Pretoria in June 1900. Kruger was in the Netherlands garnering support for the Boers. Subsequently, during the European spring of 1902 the small group of European youngsters travelled to South Africa. After their arrival in May 1902, their purpose was to get through the British lines and join the Boer forces.<sup>40</sup> They did not succeed, however, and on 14 May 1902 in a place called Reach Picket, "nine miles from the Portuguese border" they were stopped by a British patrol. Although his Dutch friends surrendered, Wass attempted to escape.<sup>41</sup> The British soldiers fired at him, and 21-year-old Count Albert Wass died in the arms of the leader of the patrol. Lieutenant Bailey was recorded as feeling deeply sorry. Wass died only a few weeks before the Anglo-Boer War ended. One of the British officers later met a friend of the Wass family and expressed his sorrow:

I think I have been dreaming today to sit and listen to Lieutenant Bailey and to hear how he spoke of your young brother: The bonny boy, a splendid young fellow. How sorry we all were. How we despised his companions and made them dismount and walk all the way in front of their horses and his. There was a telegram in one of his pockets signed Margaret.<sup>42</sup>

The British soldiers buried Wass and tended to the grave. Albert Wass's blood-stained shirt and his belongings, as well as photos of the grave were sent to Hungary, to his

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36. *The London Gazette*, 27305, 16 April 1901, p 2607.

37. "Obituary", *The British Medical Journal*, p 788.

38. "Hero of Elands River", *Boer War Despatches*, p 5.

39. A.W. Kovács, *A Wass család czegei levéltára* (Erdélyi Múzeum Egyesület, Kolozsvár, 2006), p 76.

40. I. Siemers, *Wass-kor* (Mentor Kiadó, Marosvásárhely, 1999), p 138.

41. NA: FO 120/784, From FO Treaty, Africa, Consular Library: Death of Count Albert DiWass, Telegram from FO, 31 May 1902.

42. Siemers, *Wass-kor*, p 138.

father Béla Wass, who was shocked by the death of his young son.<sup>43</sup> Some members of the Wass family visited the grave in 1908, and they appreciated that the British government assisted them in organising the journey.<sup>44</sup> According to the diary of Albert Wass's sister, Ilona Siemers, "Lieutenant Bailey behaved nobly" and remained in contact with the Wass family. The British Army erected a tombstone where Wass had died, and the Wass family installed a marble plaque in the Reformed Church of Kolozsvár commemorating Albert Wass, the only Hungarian to die in the Anglo-Boer War. The Hungarian press emphasised the heroism and tragic death of Albert Wass:

Wherever people fought for freedom, Hungarians did not miss the chance to take part in these struggles. The mortal remains of many of our heroic fellow countrymen are crumbling in the battlefields of Italy, Poland, and North America, and recently the noble blood of an enthusiastic young Hungarian has mixed with the spilled blood of the Boer heroes in South Africa, too.<sup>45</sup>

Finally, Tibor Péchy (1868–1924) stands out among the group of Hungarian participants in many respects. First, he had been living in South Africa for three years when the Anglo-Boer War broke out. In contrast to the overwhelming majority of the pro-Boer Hungarian volunteers, Péchy spoke Dutch/Afrikaans and knew about the Boers' cultural outlook. Péchy also came from a prominent Hungarian family. His uncle, Tamás Péchy, was the speaker of the lower chamber of parliament and Minister for Public Works and Transport. He also occupied influential positions in Hungary in the 1870s and 1880s. Young Tibor Péchy chose a military career and studied at the Theresianum Military Academy in Wiener Neustadt. After his graduation in 1889, he served as a lieutenant in the 12<sup>th</sup> Hussar Regiment. Although Péchy was promoted to First Lieutenant on 1 November 1895, he demobilised on 16 February, 1896,<sup>46</sup> for reasons unknown. On the advice of Fedor Zubovits, a well-known Hungarian adventurer, Tibor Péchy moved to the Transvaal in order to offer his services as a highly educated officer to the government of the Boer republic.

After several unsuccessful attempts to join the Transvaal military, Péchy ran a café in Pretoria. He later worked in Modderfontein (1896–1899), in a dynamite factory owned by a German magnate, Franz Hőnig.<sup>47</sup> During the four years he spent in South Africa, Péchy had numerous adventures, and by 1899 he was the most experienced Hungarian in South Africa. He later wrote that he had met President Kruger and had enjoyed coffee with him in the modest presidential residence in Church Street,

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43. Library and Information Centre of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences (hereafter HNA): Department of Manuscripts & Rare Books (hereafter DMRB): Ottó Hermann Papers, MS 282/379, Béla Wass – Ottó Hermann, 10 May 1902.

44. HNA: DMRB, Ottó Hermann Papers, MS 282/389, Béla Wass – Ottó Hermann, 28 December 1908.

45. "Gróf Wass Albert, A Transzváiban elesett Magyar ifjú", *Képes Folyóirat*, 19, 1902, p 449.

46. Schmidl, "Österreicher im Burenkrieg, 1899–1902", pp 232–233.

47. PFA: Tibor Péchy – Erzsébet Móricz, 10 December 1899; Emil Kumlik, "Egy Magyar tanító Dél-Afrikában", *Vasárnapi Ujság*, 53, 1899, p 883.

Pretoria.<sup>48</sup> He had also shaken hands with General Christiaan de Wet.<sup>49</sup> From January to September 1900, Péchy spent nine months among the Boer commandos. He joined the Boer forces on 19 January, 1900 together with Mihály Ferenczy, one of his Hungarian colleagues in the Modderfontein dynamite factory. He first served under the command of General Hendrik Schoeman in Colesberg, in the Cape Colony. After the capitulation of General Cronjé in at Paardeberg, the unit Péchy belonged to was gradually pushed north.<sup>50</sup> In June, he participated in the battles in the vicinity of Dalmanutha, where he was responsible for a military squad.<sup>51</sup> Then in September 1900 he crossed the border into Portuguese-ruled territory at Komatipoort, along with other Hungarian and foreign volunteers. This meant the end of his South African military career.<sup>52</sup>

### **Motivation of the Hungarian volunteers**

Motivation is among the most interesting elements of the Hungarian participation in the Anglo-Boer War. Why were Hungarians willing to give their lives and shed their blood in a war that took place so far from their home and one in which Hungary was not involved? Historians such as Fransjohan Pretorius, Stephen M. Miller, and Donald P. McCracken have studied the probable motivations of volunteers in the Anglo-Boer war, both on the pro-Boer and the pro-British (for example, Imperial Yeomanry) side.

Pretorius focuses on three elements: a sense of adventure and opportunism; a rejection of the ruling ideologies of the volunteers' historical time and country (such as capitalism and imperialism); and their idealism.<sup>53</sup> Similar factors are examined here regarding the background of the Hungarian volunteers: their ideological devotion; the ideas that inspired the 1848–49 Hungarian Revolution and War of Independence; the volunteers' loyalty to a new and chosen country (the Boer Republics or alternatively the British Empire); and of a family identity, making a living economically, and emulating a military past. Although these factors cannot be easily separated from each other, and Duka, Wass, and Péchy had numerous motives, in every case one factor can be identified as being more dominant than the others.

For example, family background could have played a key role in Duka's motivation. Duka's father served in the Hungarian revolutionary army, and after the failed War of Independence he fled to Britain, where he started a new life and became a distinguished Hungarian emigrant loyal to his adopted country. Duka spent 20 years in the uniform of the British Army in Bengal (1854–1874), as a major in the Medical

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48. PFA: Tibor Péchy, "Előadás Dél-Afrikáról", p 6.

49. PFA: Tibor Péchy, "Előadás Dél-Afrikáról", p 31.

50. PFA: Tibor Péchy – Erzsébet Móricz, 27 March 1900; PFA: Tibor Péchy – Erzsébet Móricz, 20 April 1900.

51. PFA: Tibor Péchy – Erzsébet Móricz, 6 August 1900.; Simon, *A búr szabadságharcz*, pp 125–126.

52. PFA: Tibor Péchy – Erzsébet Móricz, 22 September 1900.

53. Pretorius, "Welcome but Not That Welcome", pp 132–133.

Corps. As to Albert Theophilus Duka's motivation, the possibility of following his father's path, and serving their new home as an army medical doctor cannot be excluded. Furthermore, the Dukas found other ways of expressing loyalty to Great Britain. During the years of the Anglo-Boer War, Theodor Duka published numerous articles and a book to rebuff the parallels between the Boers and the Hungarians. Duka, alone in contemporary Hungarian public discourse, called for a more objective view of the Anglo-Boer War in an almost quixotic struggle: "The purpose of the hereby collected, mostly already published letters and articles is to raise the question: is there any relevant similarity between the South African War and our War of Independence of 1848–49?"<sup>54</sup>

As a former officer of the Hungarian revolutionary army, devoted to the cause of the war of independence, Duka put great emphasis on denying the then popular parallel drawn between Paul Kruger and Lajos Kossuth, the emblematic leader of the Hungarian revolution: "Kruger is a millionaire, his retinue is abundantly supplied; the bulk of our fellows who survived needed benefits from England, and Kossuth died abroad as a very poor man."<sup>55</sup> Furthermore, he took the opportunity to remind the Hungarian pro-Kossuth nationalists that they should be grateful to Britain for receiving and supporting the Hungarian migrants of 1849.

In contrast to Duka, family background was surely not among the motivational factors for Albert Wass. In order to mislead his family, Wass had written false letters about his university studies and life in Paris before he left Europe. He was aware of the fact that his father would not allow him to fight in South Africa. According to family papers, emotional reasons, such as sympathy for the Boer cause as well as his love of freedom, motivated Wass to volunteer. Furthermore, he travelled together with his Dutch friends, whose influence on him cannot be neglected. As his sister noted in her journal:

In that year he [Albert Wass] spent a lot of time with Dutch students. As patriots they were worried about the future of the poor Boers ... The Dutch students volunteered, and they convinced my brother to join them in the fight against the English.<sup>56</sup>

Péchy differed from both Duka and Wass. His motivation can be traced back to the reasons that led him to leave Hungary and move to the Transvaal. As a highly educated military officer, he was confident that the political and military elite of the Boer republic would employ him and he would be able to make a military career there in a short space of time. Péchy left Europe to begin a new life in southern Africa in the spring of 1896, only a few months after the Jameson Raid. News of the conflict between the troops led by Cecil Rhodes' agent and the untrained army of Boer farmers reached the Hungarian public, and this information induced Fedor Zubovits to suggest that Péchy

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54. Duka, *Levelek a boer-angol háborúról*, p 3.

55. Duka, *Levelek a boer-angol háborúról*, p 40.

56. Siemers, *Wass-kor*, p 138.

should choose the Transvaal to exploit his skills and education. However, Péchy's cherished dreams of a rapid military career in South Africa were not realised, and as far as he was concerned the Boers were to be blamed for this. Indeed, his disappointment became aversion. Some of Péchy's letters, and his journal entries testify to a high level of antipathy towards the Boers:

... day after day I hate this country and its prestigious Boer population more, so I think I will praise the hour when I leave it, even if in the place where destiny takes me I will have a worse time than here.<sup>57</sup>

As a former First Lieutenant of the Hungarian cavalry, Péchy had expected to start serving in his commando as an officer, not a private, and this held him back from volunteering until January 1900. What changed his attitude? The answer can be found in his military past. For Péchy the Anglo-Boer War presented an opportunity to be a soldier again, which was an important issue for him. This is evident in his letter to his mother: "Sometimes when I saw a commando leaving to the front, my heart beat heavily, and I accused myself because I was not among them."<sup>58</sup> He became really depressed when it became clear that there was no chance of a military career in the Transvaal. He was forced to accept work he found low-profile and humiliating, such as running a bar. Because he was not at all satisfied with his social status in the Transvaal, Péchy did not give up on his goal and kept trying to apply to other armies in countries, such as Siam, German East-Africa, India, Uruguay, Persia, and Cuba. According to his letters to his mother, being a military officer was a crucial part of his identity, which probably deeply influenced his participation in the Anglo-Boer War. As he put it: "Because I am a soldier with all my heart and soul, there is no denying it. In the evenings, when I arrive home and look at my sword, I almost shed tears."<sup>59</sup>

### **War stories: Differing narratives**

On 1 November 1900, the *Styria* steamer dropped anchor in Trieste with a small group of Central European pro-Boer volunteers on board. *The Illustrated London News* covered the event, featuring a fascinating article together with a tableau of the volunteers. It was published under the title "Foreign Officers with the Boers" on 22 December 1900. According to the coverage, the war drew "adventurous mercenaries" from various countries to southern Africa. Some of them had joined up because of "that romantic sympathy which puts certain natures into touch with lost causes and weaker sides".<sup>60</sup> The article describes the figures of the tableau, stating that they were members of a Hungarian unit. Among them special attention is paid to a young Italian peer:

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57. PFA: Tibor Péchy – Erzsébet Móricz, 17 November 1898.

58. PFA: Tibor Péchy – Erzsébet Móricz, 19 January 1900.

59. PFA: Tibor Péchy – Erzsébet Móricz, 27 July 1896.

60. "Foreign Officers with the Boers", *The Illustrated London News*, 117, 3218, 1900, p 939.

These wandering soldiers of fortune, who mostly belong to Italy and France, even when they are classed as serving with the Hungarian legion, include a nephew of Pope Leo XIII, Lieutenant Count Pecci, not the first of his family to seek a roving life far away from the narrow bounds of the family home of the Peccis in Carpineto.<sup>61</sup>

A copy of the original photograph can be found among the private papers of Tibor Péchy. Could Tibor Péchy be the nephew of Pope Leo XIII? Definitely not. Péchy had no family connection to the Pope, he was neither a count, nor Catholic. Contemporary Hungarian journals wrote about the case with great amusement,<sup>62</sup> as “an interesting example of foreign superficiality”.<sup>63</sup> The name Péchy most likely sounded very similar to the Pope’s family name, Pecci, which could have served as a basis for the story of the prodigal nephew.<sup>64</sup>

It was not only *The Illustrated London News* that wrote about the Hungarian volunteers. After returning home, a significant number of Hungarian pro-Boer veterans took advantage of every opportunity to publish and sell their own Anglo-Boer War stories. None of the pro-British Hungarian participants of the war even tried to match their pro-Boer countrymen. While three of the pro-Boer volunteers (Károly Bulyovszky, Simon Vilmos, and Lajos Szigethy) wrote books, others published travelogue-like articles in journals or gave lectures on the experience they had gathered in southern Africa.

Comparing the narratives of the Anglo-Boer War veterans’ stories brings interesting results. The texts show a high level of similarity in their structure, narrative, language, register, and message. Bulyovszky’s book (*Boer-Angol tűzben*) is the largest and most illustrated among them. In addition to the vivid descriptions of the battles and campaigns, Vilmos Simon’s *A búr szabadságharcz* and Lajos Szigethy’s *Búr földön* also include chapters on the geography of southern Africa. These similarities are not surprising, especially considering the authors’ background: all of them were soldiers who had served in the Austro-Hungarian Army before their Anglo-Boer War adventures. Regardless of their original goals, Károly Bulyovszky, Tibor Péchy, Vilmos Simon, and Lajos Szigethy were all involved in clashes with the British armed forces at some point, and apart from their careers in the Austro-Hungarian Army, they were also all pro-Boer volunteers.

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61. “Foreign Officers with the Boers”, p 939.

62. “Magyarok a boer hadseregben”, *Vasárnapi Ujság*, 47, 52, 1900, p 876.

63. “XIII Leó pápa”, *Szalon Ujság*, 8, 13, 1903, p 7.

64. It was not only Péchy who was misidentified by *The Illustrated London News*. Two other Hungarian volunteers also received new names and identities from the British journal: Félix Luzsénszky (Captain Max Schiffi), and Géza Gössing (Baron von Goldek). The photograph was published in Hungary as an illustration for Félix Luzsénszky’s article. See Luzsénszky, “Magyarok Transvaalban”, pp 463–464.



Other similarities can be found in the texts written by the Hungarian volunteers. Their narratives about black South Africans focused on the same aspects, such as the characteristics of their “kraals” (homesteads), their herds and marital customs.<sup>65</sup> Although neither Bulyovszky nor Péchy had a high opinion of those Africans they met, both were nevertheless shocked by the way the whites treated the black people. Péchy found the sjamboking distasteful.<sup>66</sup> Bulyovszky, in his book, recalled an incident when he accompanied a German officer to defend two Africans against a wealthy local white citizen.<sup>67</sup> For the most part the black people appear in these war reminiscences as servants who cooked for the white gunmen<sup>68</sup> and grazed their horses.<sup>69</sup> It is telling that while Bulyovszky, Péchy or Simon recorded many of their Boer comrades’ and officers’ names, the Africans who served them day by day are mentioned in the said documents without giving their names.

The volunteers’ military past had a critical impact on these narratives because they viewed the Anglo-Boer War and recorded their southern African experience as soldiers. That was the standpoint they had, the point of view they shared, even if their initial ambition was merely to report on the Anglo-Boer War to inform the Hungarian public. As a result, military issues were the main focus. Besides the battles, they told of the feeding of horses, the scale of weapons, the accuracy of the British guns, the Boer artillery, the strategy and the tactics applied by the Boer commandos. There was also mention of the lack of discipline and the conditions prevailing in the military camps. It seems the Hungarians experienced some culture shocks in southern Africa.

Even before coming home, Baron Félix Luzsénszky of Luzsina and Riglicze became the most well-known and most celebrated pro-Boer Hungarian volunteer. Exploiting that fame and curiosity, he went on a tour of the country. His lecture series on the Anglo-Boer War in the service of charitable organisations, was organised by a Transylvanian cultural association the Erdélyi Magyar Közművelődési Egyesület (EMKE). Among other major cities of Hungary, Luzsénszky’s tour also included Debrecen, although Debrecen was the city where Tibor Péchy and his family resided. The proud citizens of Debrecen expressed their disapproval of Luzsénszky’s presentation, and the local press amplified the sympathy towards the city’s own Anglo-Boer War veteran. According to another local journal, the *Uj Debreczeni Friss Ujság*, a city recorder, Arthur Komlóssy, advised EMKE not to bring Luzsénszky’s lecture tour to Debrecen, because the city was lucky to have Péchy.<sup>70</sup> One may conclude that they were comrades on the battlefields and became rivals as veterans, but their contest can be traced back to southern Africa. Barely a month after Péchy made up his mind to join the Boer forces in the Cape Colony, the news of Luzsénszky’s fame in Hungary as

65. Bulyovszky, *Boer-angol tűzben*, pp 79–80.

66. PFA: T. Péchy, “Boer földről”, Unpublished paper presented at a meeting of the Kölcsey Egyesület, Szatmárnémeti, 18 February 1904.

67. Bulyovszky, *Boer-angol tűzben*, p 97.

68. Simon, *A búr szabadságharcz*, p 122.

69. Bulyovszky, *Boer-angol tűzben*, p 81.

70. “Felolvasás a burháboruról Debreczenben”, p 3.

commander of the Boer forces reached him through his mother's letters. In his answer to her, Péchy underlined the fact that Luzsénszky was serving as a private, since the Boers did not promote foreigners, otherwise they would have chosen him first instead of the newcomer Baron.<sup>71</sup> Nevertheless, Péchy was also "promoted" to a commandant by the Hungarian press.<sup>72</sup> Félix Luzsénszky kept the myth alive that he had attained the rank of commander among the Boers.

Péchy named two factors that distinguished him from Félix Luzsénszky and the other Hungarian pro-Boer volunteers: the amount of time he had spent in southern Africa, and his knowledge of the Dutch/Afrikaans language and the culture of the Boers.<sup>73</sup> According to Pretorius, these were key for a foreign volunteer to be accepted by the Boers.<sup>74</sup>

Another aspect puts Péchy above the other volunteers. In the manuscripts and writing he produced in southern Africa and after he returned home it is possible to observe the change and development of Péchy's narrative on the Boers. In contrast to contemporary Hungarian public opinion, Péchy had a low opinion of the Boers, and his journals and letters to his mother assessed them quite negatively. Aversion and antipathy gradually developed into hatred, which was mostly fuelled by the rejection of his requests to join the Boer armed forces. This put him in a very difficult situation, and by the late spring of 1896 it became clear to him that it had been a mistake to move to southern Africa. This had great impact on the words he used to describe the Boers such as his frequent reference to what he described as their "retrograde character". Péchy was critical of the Boers' conservatism and accused the Boer political elite of refusing everything that was foreign, new, or unknown. As he put it: "No nation is more reactionary than the Boer. ... It's a miracle they permitted railway construction."<sup>75</sup>

Péchy's views about the Boers did not get better at the battlefield. He made some very serious allegations of cowardice and treason. As a professional military officer, Péchy was shocked by the Boers' reaction to the British artillery bombardments: "... after the first shot they rush behind the rocks".<sup>76</sup> As for treason, he named both specific groups and individual people. Following the success of Lord Roberts's offensive during the spring and summer of 1900, Péchy accused the troops and the Free State commandos<sup>77</sup> of giving up their lines and trenches. Péchy's manuscripts from southern Africa mention certain officers in neutral contexts, e.g. Christiaan de Wet, Willem J. Kolbe, and Koos de la Rey, but he did not have a high opinion of the other members of the general staff and the political elite. Key targets of

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71. PFA: Tibor Péchy – Erzsébet Móricz, 18 February 1900.

72. "A bur parancsnok felolvasása", *Debreczeni Ujság*, 5, 57, 1901, p 5.; E. Kumlik, "Egy magyar tanító Dél-Afrikában", *Vasárnapi Ujság*, 46, 53, 1899, p 883.

73. PFA: Tibor Péchy – Erzsébet Móricz, 18 February 1900.

74. Pretorius, "Welcome but Not That Welcome", pp 132–133.

75. PFA: Tibor Péchy – Erzsébet Móricz, 27 July 1896.

76. PFA: T. Péchy, "Diaries in the Transvaal I", 24 February 1900.

77. PFA: Tibor Péchy – Erzsébet Móricz, 26 June 1900.

criticism were artillery officer Major Erasmus, Commandant-General Joubert, and President Paul Kruger. After his application to the Transvaal Staats Artillerie had been rejected, Péchy became convinced that Major Erasmus was a “coward” and too young to reach such a rank,<sup>78</sup> while the commander of the artillery was a “haughty, ignorant peasant”.<sup>79</sup> Piet Joubert received an even worse assessment, as Péchy had believed since 1897 that the commandant-general was a paid agent of the British.<sup>80</sup> Regarding the president of the South African Republic, Péchy recorded various fascinating anecdotes, for example, the story of the opening ceremony of a synagogue in Johannesburg, which was opened by the president in “the name of Jesus Christ”.<sup>81</sup> Furthermore, Tibor Péchy did not sympathise with the policy and ideology Kruger’s administration pursued. He was convinced that the president and his “bigoted, old reactionary Boer party” stood in the way of progress.<sup>82</sup>

Cowardice and treason: Péchy often used these words to describe the Boers in the manuscripts written in southern Africa, but a very different image of the Boers emerged in the lectures he held after his return home. Heroism and pluck took the place of treachery and timidity, and these texts refer to the Boers as a heroic nation. Moreover, after his arrival back in Hungary, the Anglo-Boer War started to remind him of the Hungarian War of Independence of 1848–49, and just like the pro-Boer Hungarian journalists, Péchy drew parallels between the Boers and the Hungarian freedom fighters. Regarding the attitude of the Boers on the battlefield, cowardice disappeared from his narrative, and their fight against the “greedy”, “selfish” and “ever hungry British lion”,<sup>83</sup> became unquestionably “heroic”.<sup>84</sup> Péchy’s lectures mirror various elements of the pro-Boer Hungarian interpretation of the Anglo-Boer War. This can be traced back to two factors: the above-mentioned competition among the volunteers in selling their own accounts, as well as the dominance of the pro-Boer Hungarian approach in contemporary Hungarian public discourse.

## Conclusion

Hungarian participants, just like other non-Boer or non-British combatants, were drawn to southern Africa by various factors, and at the battlefield they faced difficulties that were very similar to the problems of the German, Austrian, or American volunteers. Although the Hungarian volunteers had a minor impact on the war, they had certain special characteristics. First, the pro-Boer Hungarian narrative tended to understand the Anglo-Boer War through the lens of Hungarian history, especially the lost cause of the 1848–49 Hungarian Revolution and War of Independence. Despite the

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78. PFA: Tibor Péchy – Erzsébet Móricz, 16 May 1897.

79. PFA: Tibor Péchy – Erzsébet Móricz, 18 May 1896.

80. PFA: Tibor Péchy – Erzsébet Móricz, 16 May 1897.

81. PFA: T. Péchy, “Diaries in the Transvaal I”.

82. PFA: Tibor Péchy – Erzsébet Móricz, 24 November 1897.

83. PFA: T. Péchy, “Boer földről”, Unpublished paper presented at the meeting of the Kölcsey Egylet, Szatmárnémeti, 18 February 1904.

84. PFA: T. Péchy, “Előadás Dél-Afrikáról”, Unpublished paper.

contemporary reports published in Hungarian newspapers about the Hungarian pro-Boer volunteers, and although after their homecoming most of them emphasised their sympathy towards the Boers, solidarity with them as a small freedom-loving nation and the parallels between Hungary and the Boer Republics were important factors only for Albert Wass. In the other cases it was the volunteer's military past, fortune-hunting, their family background, or loyalty to the adopted country (the British Empire or the Boer Republics) that motivated the participation of the pro-Boer and pro-British Hungarians. Thus, it was not one factor but rather a mixture of motives that drove Hungarian volunteers to join the Anglo-Boer War.

After they returned home, many pro-Boer Hungarian volunteers attempted to "sell" their Anglo-Boer War experiences by publishing articles, books, and holding lectures. These texts reflect the context and myths created by the Hungarian pro-independence narrative on the Anglo-Boer War that enjoyed a dominant position in Hungary. The heroism and devotion of the Boers was praised even by Tibor Péchy, who had felt very different about them before returning home.

The aim of this article is to provide some insight into the research on the Hungarian participants of the Anglo-Boer War. Special emphasis is on the motivating factors of those who went to the battlefronts. Furthermore, the comparison of their narratives on southern Africa, the war and above all, the people who lived there brings one closer to understanding the way Hungarians understood the conflicts in which their homeland was not directly involved.

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