Journal of Central and Eastern European African Studies

"That They, Shakespeare's People, Play the Role of the Barbarians Here"

Imperial Aspirations, Armed Forces, and the Strategy of the British from the Perspective of the Hungarian Participants of the Anglo-Boer War[1]

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Abstract:

"We, abandoned Europeans, armed to the teeth, only have the pleasure of reading the news of the war left; but we are revelling in them, and woe to our poor newspapers if they do not accompany the freshly baked bun of our breakfast with even fresher news – from South Africa." (Szigethy, 1901, p. I) These lines come from the foreword of Lajos Szigethy's Anglo-Boer War recollections and capture the atmosphere and tremendous interest of contemporary Hungarian public opinion regarding a war in which Austria-Hungary was not directly involved and took place at a considerable distance from the country. There was particular interest in the Hungarian participants of the war, most of whom, like the Hungarian public, supported the cause of the Boer republics. How they viewed the enemy, i.e. the British, stands at the centre of the present paper. Special emphasis is put on the influence the pro-Boer narrative about the war that was popular in other European countries had on the ways the Hungarian veterans constructed their war reminiscences about the national characteristics, imperial aspirations, and armed forces of the enemy in their respective books, articles, and lectures.

Keywords:

Anglo-Boer War; British Empire; Boer Republics; Hungarians; foreign volunteering; pro-Boer journalism.

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Introduction

The Anglo-Boer War, which turned Southern Africa red between 1899-1902, can be regarded as a milestone, as a first example of certain phenomena in many respects. Among others, it was the first military conflict in which a large number of British soldiers wore khaki uniforms. New technological innovations, e.g. the telegraph, the bicycle, or the Mauser M1896 rifle, also modernized the battlefields and warfare in general (Potgieter, 2000). In addition, this war was not only fought on the battlefields but also in terms of ideology: British imperialism versus Afrikaner nationalism, and the Anglo-Boer War was the largest and most costly military conflict of the British in the almost century-long period that stretched from the Napoleonic Wars to the Great War. In fact, according to some historical assessments, the clash of the British Empire and the Boer Republics (the South African Republic/Transvaal and the Orange Free State) was the World War I, as the British mobilized troops from their colonies and dominions in the American and Asian continents. Soldiers from Canada, Australia, or New Zealand pressed shoulder to shoulder in the struggle against the Boer commandos, supported by some 2,500 foreign volunteers from all over the world, including 14 Hungarians.

The Anglo-Boer War had numerous Hungarian aspects, from the scandalous horse purchases of the British Army in Hungary between 1899 and 1902 to the clashes of the pro-Boer and pro-British standpoints at various levels of the contemporary Hungarian public discourse. For example, the war between the British Empire and the Boer republics was the subject of debates in the lower house of the Hungarian Parliament. Prime Minister Kálmán Széll (1899-1903), whose premiership covered the war, was accused by representatives of the opposition of indirectly assisting in the subjugation of "the small Boer nation, [which] is fighting with a heroism unparalleled in history." (Schmidt, 1901) Moreover, contemporary Hungarian poets and authors reflected on the war. Perhaps the most interesting among these aspects is the issue of the Hungarians who witnessed the battles of the Anglo-Boer War as soldiers, war correspondents, or interpreters. The overwhelming majority (14 of the 17) supported the cause of the Boer Republics. According to the recent state of research, three of the Hungarian pro-Boer soldiers published books on the Anglo-Boer War, and another two wrote articles and held lectures. Károly Bulyovszky, Vilmos Simon, and Lajos Szigethy were the three Hungarians who summarised their experience in Southern Africa related to the war and other events in the form of books (Bulyovszky, 1901; Simon, 1901, 1903; Szigethy 1901). Tibor Péchy and Baron Félix Luzsénszky toured with their lectures (Luzsénszky, 1900, 1902a, 1900b; Péchy n.d., 1901a, 1901b, 1901c, 1901d 1904).

The present study argues that the Hungarian pro-Boer activism, journalism, and narrative on the Anglo-Boer War followed the patterns of the pro-Boer activities in other European countries, although with specific Hungarian features. The paper focuses on one aspect of spreading the pro-Boer narrative in Hungary, namely the role of the Hungarian volunteers in this process, and the ways they understood British imperialism in Southern Africa. Furthermore, the key patterns of their texts are compared to the trends of European pro-Boer

journalism. In studying these issues, special emphasis is placed on the books and articles published by the Hungarian pro-Boer volunteers. Particular attention is paid to the pro-Boer war recollections: Károly Bulyovszky's Boer-angol tűzben (In Boer-English Fire), Vilmos Simon's A búr szabadságharcz (The Boer War of Independence), and Élményeim az angol-búr háborúban (My experiences in the Anglo-Boer War), as well as Lajos Szigethy's Búr földön (In the Land of the Boer), but the texts of Péchy's lectures are also examined. Two of the three only exist as manuscripts (Péchy 1901a, 1904).

The following aspects of these texts are examined:

1. the key patterns of the criticism towards the British imperial aspirations in Southern Africa;

2. the register adopted in the texts to describe the imperial and colonial policy the British pursued in the region, as well as the members of the British military and political elite and British imperialism in general.

The Anglo-Boer War as Interpreted by the Contemporary Hungarian Press and Public Opinion

Foreign volunteering is one of the widely known and well-studied aspects of the Anglo-Boer War (Davidson and Filatova, 1998; McCracken, 2013; Pretorius, 2010; Schmidl, 1985). Nevertheless, the Hungarian participants fighting on both sides of the battlefronts form only one of the numerous Hungarian aspects of the Anglo-Boer War. For example, Hungary was the source of a mule and horse supplement to the British armed forces in Southern Africa. Contemporary Hungarian writers and renowned poets such as Dezső Kosztolányi (Kosztolányi, 2006), Zsigmond Móricz (Móricz, 1931), and Endre Ady captured the Hungarian atmosphere following the outbreak of the war: "If the British do not make peace in time, the newspapers will either cease to exist, or they will be printed on white canvas. In England and America, since the war has been raging, newspapers have consumed so much paper that the paper mills are unable to supply the additional demand. We have it on good authority that the demand for paper is strongly resisted in Anglo-Boer and domestic circles." (Ady, 1999)

The quoted lines reflect one characteristic of the press coverage of the Anglo-Boer War in Hungary: the significant increase in the number of articles related to Southern Africa in the late 1890s. Reading through the newspapers of the time, one can indeed get the impression that there was no minor or major daily newspaper, journal, or magazine that did not in some way cover the war of the Boer and the British. What factors stood behind this phenomenon? This question leads us to another area in which the Anglo-Boer War can be seen as a milestone: it was one of the first mediatized wars. For the first time in history, the world had video coverage of a military conflict, and an army of war correspondents and the technical innovations of the recent past (e.g. photography) made the campaigns and battles more tangible for the readers (McLaughlin, 2016). The boom of the articles related to the Anglo-

Boer War rooted in two factors: rising demand for war news and the existence of technological innovations, i.e. the infrastructure required to meet the demand. Moreover, the media was recognised as another battlefront in which the Boer prevailed. The Boer were incredibly effective in exploiting these two factors. The British could not match that efficiency, and the Boer propaganda made enormous efforts to both satisfy and keep up the hunger of the people of the neutral countries for information about the fights in Southern Africa. The overwhelming majority of the European societies was of pro-Boer sentiment. The United Kingdom was obviously an exception, but the pro-Boer and anti-imperialist criticism of the war also had support within various circles of British society, for example, in the form of David Lloyd George's campaign criticising the government's war policy or the activities of the Scottish and Irish independence circles (Morrison Davidson, 1902; Rintala, 1988).

The incredibly large waves of pro-Boer sentiment towering above European societies were partly generated by the propaganda activities of Boer agents settled in various European countries. One of the most effective and influential ones was William Leyds, who kept a close connection to pro-Boer circles and had a lion's share in shaping and directing the Boer, and even more so, the Transvaaler war propaganda in Europe (Kuitenbrouwer, 2012). This propaganda also left its marks on the Hungarian pro-Boer activities, for example in terms of political messaging, the adopted language, heroizing, describing the enemy, or defining the causes of the war. Another special feature of the activity of Boer diplomats and agents in Europe can be detected in Hungarian pro-Boer journalism, in the disparity in the amount of attention the two republics enjoyed in the public discourses of the non-belligerent countries. This phenomenon may be explained through the effectiveness of Leyds' well-planned propaganda activities or the less conceptual communication of the Orange Free State (OFS), although the Transvaal played a much more central role in Hungarian pro-Boer journalism than the OFS. The contemporary European public learned names such as Geberal Christiaan De Wet, General Koos de la Rey, and above all, Paul Kruger, President of the South African Republic, around whom myths were woven. The Boer narrative on the war as a freedom fight, a war of independence (Tweede Vrijheidsoorlog) dominated European public discourse on Southern Africa.

Similarly to other European countries, the Hungarian public followed the fights of the Hungarian volunteers of the war with great interest. The dominance of the pro-Boer against the pro-British can easily be noticed in Hungary as well, and none of the pro-British participants took up the fight in the field of journalism. The only exception is Duka Tivadar/Theodore Duka, who kept writing articles and open letters in order to balance out the pro-Boer dominance in Hungarian public opinion, although with moderate success (Duka, 1901). Duka was a former officer of the British Army, and his son Theophilus Duka followed his father's path and wore the British uniform and actively took part in the battles of the Anglo-Boer War. Moreover, Duka, an officer of the Hungarian armed forces, who had fought against the Habsburg rule, had left Hungary following the fall of the Hungarian War of Independence in 1848-49 and found a new life and existence in the United Kingdom. Apart from serving

Queen Victoria and the British interests as a major in the Medical Corps in Bengal for two decades (1854-1874), Duka also became one of the distinguished Hungarian migrants in Britain at the time, as a scholar of Alexander Csoma de Kőrös, "the earliest student of the Tibetan language" (BMJ, 1908, p. 1337).

A few words on the pro-Boer Hungarian volunteers and authors. In terms of their personal background, they have much in common in that they all had military training and experience, and they had been promoted to officers before the Anglo-Boer War. Bulyovszky, Luzsénszky, Péchy, and Simon had known each other from the Austro-Hungarian armed forces. Furthermore, as Szigethy names Luzsénszky Félix as the leader of the legion of foreigners he wished to join in his book, and Bulyovszky's book mentions Szigethy, it is easy to conclude that they knew each other, too. Following their return to Hungary, these volunteers took advantage of the enormous interest among the Hungarian public in everything related to Southern Africa. The books of Bulyovszky (Boer-angol tűzben), Simon (A búr szabadságharcz), and Szigethy (Bur földön), were all published within a few years and are quite similar in structure: a brief overview of the geography, history, and antecedents of the conflict is followed by the author's own war experience. Apart from this, the books are quite different. Of the three, Bulyovszky's work stands out for its maps, photographs, and military analysis, while Simon's first book includes some map sketches of the battles. Regarding the language and the narrative, A búr szabadságharcz focuses more on the military aspects than the other two. Most of the text deals with the operations and describes the clashes between the British and the Boer armed forces. In contrast, Bulyovszky and Szigethy express their personal views and give space to their first-hand experiences with for example, the circumstances that existed in military camps, their fellow soldiers, Africans, and their assessment of the Boer, their strategies and military tactics, as well as the enemy. Péchy and Luszénszky structured their lectures and articles in almost the same way. Baron Luzsénszky went on two large lecture tours, both of which were advertised as a series of fundraising events, with the proceeds to be donated to the Association for Public Education of Upper Hungary (NV, 1901; EV, 1901; Tolnavármegye, 1901; Békés, 1901d). Péchy's readings also had charitable purposes. In Debrecen, he gave a lecture during an event organised in exchange for "free bread", aiding the less fortunate (Péchy, 1901d).

British Imperialism and the Origins of the Boer War in Light of the Narratives of the pro-Boer Hungarian Volunteers

The above-mentioned texts contain certain criticism of British imperialism, and the patterns and targeted characteristics are similar in many respects. The authors' assessment of British empire-building in Southern Africa was in line with the views propagated by Hungarian pro-Boer journalism, where the narrative of the pro-Boer Hungarian volunteers regarding the clash between the Boer and the British was one of a fight between good and evil, in which the Boer

were mostly depicted as living symbols of pluck and heroism, while the British Empire was the evil enemy.

These books, lectures, and articles name “divide and conquer” as a central element of the British imperial and colonial policy in Southern Africa. The British are described by Bulyovszky as “hypocrites”, who presented themselves as an empire that promoted democracy and fought against slavery while oppressing independent nations that cross their paths. Furthermore, dullness and greed are among the key characteristics of the British, who are misguided by a false sense of superiority. The British worked on turning the Africans (or “kaffirs” as the Hungarian authors called them), the Xhosas, or the Zulus, led by the “cunning” Dingane, against the Boer. According to the Hungarian volunteers, the British were obviously responsible for the bloody history of the region, in contrast with the Boer, who were forced to wage war as a result of the covert manipulative policy pursued by the imperial government seated in London. It seems contradictory that Bulyovszky understood the war as a huge step the British made to subjugate a small and freedom-loving nation, while he also condemned the abolishment of slavery as a “devastating blow” to the Boer. Moreover, he labelled the British in Southern Africa as “alien invaders”, although the other rulers of the region that had European roots (i.e. the Boer) were not marked with such a title (Bulyovszky, 1901).

The studied authors agreed on the factors behind the outbreak of the war. The British policy of gradual expansion (e.g. annexing Griqualand West following the discovery of diamond fields) and the resulting growing British influence was categorised by Károly Bulyovszky as “unlawful” (Bulyovszky, 1901). Péchy highlighted the “excessive greed” of the “ever-hungry British lion” (Péchy 1904). The books, articles, and lectures echoed another widely disseminated element of the pro-Boer narrative on the outbreak of the war: the pro-war British were to blame for the escalation of the conflict. The British pushed the Boer to pull the trigger, to shoot the first bullets. Although the Boer started the war, it was a war of independence, according to Vilmos Simon. Already the title of his book (A búr szabadságharcz – The Boer War of Independence) sets the framework within which his work understands the Anglo-Boer War, a nation’s fight for freedom against an empire that has its eyes on the Boer goldmines, a pattern that perfectly fits the image of the evil, excessive British (Simon, 1901). Bulyovszky considered the First Boer War, or the First Anglo-Boer War (1880-81), a war of independence (Bulyovszky, 1901). In contrast with the pro-Boer volunteers, Tivadar Duka sought to refute this narrative and the approach that put the Hungarians who had fought for their independence fifty years before and the Boer fighting now in the same category. It can easily be concluded that Duka called the conflict the Boer-Anglo War instead of the far more widespread Anglo-Boer War to emphasise that the Rubicon had been crossed by the Boer and not the British (Duka, 1901).

Another characteristic element of the way the pro-Boer propaganda approached the antecedents of the war, namely overemphasizing the impact of the gold, was taken up by the Hungarian pro-Boer volunteers as well. According to this standpoint, the gold brought misery

to the Republics, and the outbreak of the war could be traced back directly to the discovery of the gold fields in the Transvaal in 1886. According to Bulyovszky, the British were mesmerized by the treasures of the South African Republic: "In the Transvaal, chance has led to the discovery of vast quantities of gold, and gold has a magical power over the English that they cannot resist" (Bulyovszky, 1901, p. 16). Simon shared this view: "As soon as rich gold deposits were discovered in the Transvaal, England began to harass the republic again, because now it was also after its gold mines." (Simon, 1901, p. 5) Szigethy went one step further and came to the conclusion that people died on the battlefields of Southern Africa for the interests of the imperial capitalist, financial elite, which had succeeded in misleading the society of the mother country. He believed that it was a war waged for gold, driven by greed, and it had nothing to do with "civilising aspirations" (Szigethy, 1901). As the title of the present paper also suggests, in the context of the Anglo-Boer War the original colonial roles were reversed, and the European conquerors (i.e. the British in the present context) acted like "barbarians". This nasty greed and almost satanic possessiveness is contrasted with the "puritanical lifestyle, deep patriotism, deep religiousness" of the Boer, who "in their modesty, poverty, unsophisticated nature" represent a much higher spiritual and moral quality than their counterparts (Szigethy, 1901, p. 57). Poverty, along with patriotism and loving freedom fervently are among the key national characteristics according to the Hungarian pro-Boer volunteers, who considered these to be sources of moral superiority in which the Boer towered above their enemies. As Bulyovszky points out, they are a "pastoral nation struggling with the ills of poverty". Or as Szigethy puts it, "[…] the Boer does not lament or curse – he endures, hopes, and prays." (Szigethy, 1901, p. 22) "They are a wonderful people!" (Szigethy, 1901, p. 16)

The Armed Forces, Military Strategy, and the Tactics of the Enemy

All the examined pro-Boer Hungarian authors reviewed and evaluated the armed forces of the enemy in some way. Most of their remarks are not very positive. In general, the soldiers who fought under the Union Jack do not play the role of noble adversaries in the studied texts. The British and their allied troops, rank and file soldiers, their military leaders, as well as the arms, military strategy, and tactics adopted by the enemy appear in Luzsénszky's and Péchy's lectures and articles as well as in the books of Bulyovszky, Simon, and Szigethy. Péchy's view of the British armed forces and the enemy soldiers was more or less balanced, although most of the Hungarian volunteers did not have a high opinion of the average British soldier, and it is negative connotations that are mostly associated with them in the studied recollections. For example, Vilmos Simon evaluated the training of the British Army as "inadequate" (Simon, 1901). Nevertheless, there are rare exceptions of positive experiences. For example, Szigethy recalls memories about a British officer who treated the civilian population of Pretoria well, especially the ladies, who did not have to stand in line for interrogation, they could skip the line. This made a good impression on Szigethy. Furthermore, he also paid tribute to the defenders of Kimberley, Ladysmith, and Mafeking with respect and appreciation. These three

towns were besieged for month by the Boer commandos in the early stages of the war. Simon was surprised that, contrary to his preconceptions that the “English mercenary was not a very brave soldier”, their officers fought in the front line (Simon, 1903, p. 32). He lauded the Highland Brigade as “England’s most valiant unit”, and the commander of the Brigade, Major-General Andrew Gilbert Wauchope, as well as Major-General Sir William Penn Symons, both were killed in the first month of the war (Simon, 1901, pp. 27-28, 47).

The criticism of the pro-Boer Hungarian volunteers towards the British soldiers is related to the general pro-Boer narrative of the war. It was deduced from the “great empire versus small nation(s)” war, or in other words the narrative of the heroic struggle for national freedom against imperial conquest. According to this description of the Anglo-Boer War as good against evil, mercenaries (the British) clashed with freedom fighters (the Boer) on the soil of Southern Africa. In line with this narrative, money and getting rich were the key motivating factors of the enemy troops. The determination and moral superiority of the invincible Boer are patterns that appear in all the texts. Luzsénszky describes the Boer as a nation ready to defend its freedom to the last drop of their blood (Luzsénszky, 1900, p. 461). In contrast to the Boer titans driven by patriotism and loving freedom, in Bulyovszky’s narrative the British soldiers were well-paid mercenaries (Bulyovszky, 1901). This description, categorising the enemy trooper as an “English mercenary”, also appears in Simon’s narrative (Simon, 1903, p. 32). Bulyovszky attributes the low morale of the British troops in field to the fact that they were paid good wages (5 shillings per day) even as prisoners of war (POWs), so it was not worth for them to risk a clash with the enemy: “Of course the London rascal is happy not to hear the bullets whistling, he'll get his money after the war" (Bulyovszky, 1901, pp. 44-45). This is partly contradicted by Szigethy, who states that the British advance was the most effective around Johannesburg, as that city attracted the money-grubbing British more than any other Boer township in the republics, due to the “irresistible thirst for gold, auri sacra fames” (Szigethy, 1901, p. 57). According to his narrative, British soldiers approaching Johannesburg forgot hunger and thirst and rushed forward into “the promised land”. For Szigethy the average British trooper was motivated by the lies told at home about the “mountains of gold” he could acquire from the Boer: “Here, they say, is the fairy-tale golden land come true.” (Szigethy, 1901, p. 57)

Greed and hunger for gold as the national characteristics of the British comes up in the books of Bulyovszky, Simon, and Szigethy in another context as well. Looting is mentioned in these works as a condemnable activity practiced by the British troops. Simon juxtaposes General Botha’s order strictly prohibiting robbery in the pro-British German settlements of Biggarsberg with the larceny committed by the enemy in the occupied territories of the South African Republic (Simon, 1903). Bulyovszky dedicates several pages to recounting what he heard about the looting and harassment of civilians. The most telling story was from a German railway clerk from Johannesburg, whose house was searched in his absence. A gold watch and other valuables were taken, and almost his wife’s wedding ring, too. The soldiers returned later, in the middle of the night and “he had great difficulty in keeping them from his wife’s

bedroom." (Bulyovszky, 1901, p. 146) As Szigethy describes, under the pretext of conducting a search for weapons and ammunition, the enemy soldiers mostly robbed the abandoned houses of Pretoria. In Bulyovszky's work, but even more so in Szigethy's, the reader is presented with the image of a barbarian band of thieves in the context of the invading units hunting for gold and silverware, emphasizing that the soldiers would crush any object that was not made of precious metal. This serves as another example of the narrative suggesting that the typical colonial roles were reversed in the Anglo-Boer War. The British and imperial troops behaved as barbarian herds, fighting in the hope of prey and breaking anything they did not consider valuable. "I saw with my own eyes the Australian soldiers taking from one of the houses, among other things, a whole set of silver coffee or tea service, and when, hearing the noise of breaking, I looked in through the window, I saw one of the soldiers with a table leg in his hand, smashing everything in sight, then kicking the piano in the room with his foot for a change." (Szigethy, 1901, p. 126) It is telling which objects Szigethy mentions as associated with European civilisation, while the description of the behaviour of the invading enemy soldiers evokes images of peoples that were considered at that time primitive and to be civilised according to the ruling colonial narrative. The contrast between the hard-working, diligent, God-fearing Boer and the destructive imperial troops is further highlighted by the author: "The result of the work of a lifetime lies in ruins; wild-eyed Australian and Indian troops are rampaging everywhere, the beautiful rich country is a vale of tears, and the Boer does not weep - he trusts and prays." (Szigethy, 1901, p. 22) Another aspect that makes these quotes interesting is that no other Hungarian volunteer differentiated between the enemy units on the basis of nationality or ethnic background, the enemy is called "English". However, Szigethy considered it important to present Australian soldiers in a negative context twice in his book.

As the quoted sources show, in many cases the elements of criticism towards the British Empire were extended to her soldiers, but how do the military and political leaders appear in the texts written by the Hungarian pro-Boer veterans? Bulyovszky's book is neutral regarding the members of the British general staff (e.g. William Forbes Gatacre), but it is very critical of Theophilus Shepstone, Special Commissioner to the annexed Transvaal. Shepstone is depicted as a sinister despot, an ardent enemy of the Boer, who were heavily oppressed under the rule of the evil Special Commissioner (Bulyovszky, 1901). In Péchy's lectures the diamond magnate and politician Cecil John Rhodes is called the "Napoleon of South Africa" (Péchy, 1901d, 1904). This was a widespread label for the tycoon in the contemporary press (Kuitenbrouwer, 2012). Horatio Herbert Kitchener, Commander-in-chief of the imperial troops fighting the Boer, also received the name the "hyena of Omdurman", referring to the British military leader's role in repressing the Mahdist Revolt (Péchy, 1901a). What makes this interesting is a personal background factor in that Péchy's private papers reveal that in 1897 he did everything he could to flee from the Transvaal, where the government had rejected his offer of military service, and British-Egyptian army led partly by Kitchener was among the armed forces he had wished to join (Péchy, 1897). Kitchener's portrayal as a bloodthirsty devilish figure who was ready to "sentence the last Boer hero to death" was also present in the pro-Boer circles, as he was a

popular target of the anti-British propaganda (Péchy, 1901a; Veber, 1901). On the other hand, Szigethy is much more critical towards the general staff of the British in Southern Africa. It is telling that, in his view, the Boer might well have had the final, decisive victory while the British fought under the command of General Sir Redvers Henry Buller or Lieutenant-General Paul Sanford Methuen. Moreover, when Buller's troops succeeded in seizing Pietersburg, and soldiers were putting up posters all over the city with the words "Glory to Buller", Szigethy considered these actions over-celebration (Szigethy, 1901, p. 123). Field Marshal Frederick Roberts had a much better reputation than Buller or Methuen, and Szigethy saw Lord Roberts' arrival to Southern Africa as a turning point of the war. The field-marshal is described as a "determined", single-minded military leader, who brought a new approach to the battlefield (Szigethy, 1901).

The weaponry, military strategy, and tactics applied by the British armed forces were also evaluated by the pro-Boer Hungarian volunteers, and especially the ways the enemy conducted operations were judged negatively. The general perception among the volunteers was that following great and humiliating defeats on the battlefield, the British adopted disgraceful means to turn the luck of the war. Bulyovszky found dumdum bullets a "weapon rejected by any civilised nation", and he believed that the British spread fake news about the war all around Europe (Bulyovszky, 1901, pp. 131, 143). Szigethy predicted that the conflict could only be settled by the means of diplomacy, as the British could not defeat the Boer with weapons (Szigethy, 1901).

Both Bulyovszky's and Simon's books mention British espionage. The latter highlights the fact that the enemy had many all-round spies in the Transvaal. Bulyovszky points out the correlation between the arrests of Boer civilians and the agents of the British: "Pretoria and Johannesburg were full of secret police, made up of people with a dodgy background, runaway waiters, ponces, and fallen women." (Bulyovszky, 1901, p. 146) The main motivation of these operatives was, just like in the case of the British in the studied texts, money. As the reward per each "victim" was around "10-15 shillings", the agents were financially interested in increasing the number of captives, which resulted in a growing number of arrests among civilians.

The majority of the pro-Boer Hungarian volunteers criticized the way the British waged war against the Boer not only in terms of the inequalities in numbers and resources, but also because they extended the war to the civilian population. The scorched earth policy, the harassment of the unarmed, the transformation of war, and the strategy adopted by the British was due to the failures of the British armed forces in the regular and the guerrilla phases of the war, as well as the resulting anger. This induced the British to take steps such as burning farms and deporting civilians into concentration camps, which was condemned by the pro-Boer Hungarian veterans. Szigethy concluded that Britain's position as the leading power of the world was at stake, as a probable defeat from the Boer republics would lead to a loss of prestige in the international arena. Nevertheless, this did not justify "the dragging of

defenceless women and children to campsites and the inadequate supply of necessities to the unfortunate" (Szigethy, 1901, p. 134). This fury fundamentally changed the British, who should find peaceful ways to resolve the conflict: "Who would have thought that this great nation of culture would have resorted to such desperate and unworthy means in its conquest?!" (Szigethy, 1901, p. 134) Luzsénszky came to a similar conclusion. According to his narrative, the war was a clash between violence on the British side and law and justice on the side of the Boer Republics (Luzsénszky, 1900). Bulyovszky's book labels the British "unlawful and cruel". To support this view, it points out that while the British took the Boer POWs to the island of St. Helena and kept them under horrible conditions, the Boer treated the captured enemy well (Bulyovszky, 1901, p. 38). The British and Boer treatment of the POWs is also compared in Szigethy's book, with almost the same result. According to Simon, the Boer dealt with the British prisoners very lightly, they did not even execute the POWs who had attempted to escape three times (Simon, 1903).

Boers versus Britons on the Battlefield

What has been presented so far is a typical good versus evil narrative on the war, and in most respects the accounts of the Hungarian volunteers have many similarities with the typical pro-Boer materials published in other European countries. Nevertheless, the studied texts include some contradictory remarks. In general, the volunteers admired the Boer, but in the case of some details or certain issues their comments are less positive. Criticism of the Boer mostly comes up when describing battle experience, especially combat morale, discipline, opportunities for promotion, or more precisely the lack thereof, which were modestly or harshly criticized.

The gold thirst of the British as a national characteristic, a very popular feature of pro-Boer journalism, was echoed by the Hungarian veterans as well. They presented the war as a conflict rooted in the nasty greed of the British. However, at the very beginning of his book Szigethy tells the story of travelling to Pretoria with four Dutch and two French pro-Boer volunteers, who were motivated by getting rich quick: "Their imagination has built the house of cards of happiness... the Boers will win quickly... the rewards will not fail... they will be rewarded with a diamond field or a gold mine for their services" (Szigethy, 1901, p. 1).

A recurring element in the volunteers' reminiscences is the issue of courage. Bulyovszky believed that the valour of the Boer could come from their freedom-loving nature. This was highlighted by Szigethy as well, but in contrast to Bulyovszky, he pointed to this factor as a key source of the failure of the republics on the battlefield. In his understanding, the British were close to a military collapse in the first months following the outbreak of the war, but the Boer could not take advantage of the opportunities offered by the mistakes Buller or Methuen made. In fact, the strategy adopted by the British and the harassment of civilians and their cruelty was what had prompted the "commitment, determination and bravery" of the Boer in the guerrilla phase of the war (Szigethy, 1901, p. 133).

What factors stood behind this dichotomy? The relationship between the Boer and the foreign volunteers was far from harmonious. Péchy's private papers written in the Transvaal testify of deep disappointment, and in many cases hatred (Péchy, 1896a, 1896b, 1898, 1900). Although these harsh critical elements were left out of their books and lectures, the lack of courage in battle was indicated by both Bulyovszky and Péchy as a national characteristic of the Boer. Szigethy is perhaps an exception in this respect because in his book he openly writes about the conflicts he had with the Boer. The hardest pill to swallow for the Hungarian volunteers was that as former officers they had to start their service in the commandos at the bottom of the Boer military hierarchy. However, this did not hold back any of them from presenting themselves to the Hungarian public as officers, as commanders of the Boer armed forces (Péchy, 1904; Luzsénszky, 1900; Tolnavármegye, 1901).

Why were positive characteristics such as loving freedom magnified, while the negative impressions were disregarded or toned down? Different patterns taken by the contemporary Hungarian press can be easily noticed in comparison with the pro-Boer journalism of other European countries, such as Germany, France, or the Netherlands. The most widespread elements, for example, the greed of the British, the impact of gold as a leitmotif, or the brutal and inhumane practices of Kitchener's forces were echoed by the Hungarian pro-Boer volunteers as well. Nevertheless, the pro-Boer narrative of the war had several aspects specific to the Hungarians. The best example for this phenomenon is the parallel drawn between the desperate fight of the heroic, freedom-loving small nation (the Boer) against a great empire, and the Hungarian Revolution and War of Independence of 1848-1849. Moreover, Paul Kruger was juxtaposed with Lajos Kossuth, and Kruger was called the Boer Kossuth by the Hungarian pro-Boer journalists (VU, 1900; Világkrónika, 1901; Duka, 1901; Szalay, 1901). The fact that both of them died in exile, for example, supported the belief that "the tragedy of our nation is revived in the far South, in the country of the Transvaaler rocks" (DU, 1901e, p. 1). Not surprisingly, by focusing on the fight against an empire for national freedom, the Hungarian narrative on the Anglo-Boer War was similar to the Polish or the Irish ones (Strauss, 2008; Szlanta, 2017). The studied war recollections reflect the narrative created by the Boer war propaganda as well the Hungarian features of the pro-Boer approach to the Anglo-Boer War. While the books of Bulyovszky, Simon, and Szigethy[3] emphasize the freedom-loving nature of the Boer and label the war as a fight for the freedom and independence of the republics, Péchy and Luzsénszky adopt the above-mentioned parallel between the two nations: "Their war of independence was accompanied by this warm sympathy. The course and results of their fights were similar to ours in 1848-49. For this reason, there is no country, no nation that could have felt so deeply and so truly for the Boer, who defended their freedom to the last drop of blood, as the Hungarian." (Luzsénszky, 1900, p. 461)

In some cases competition emerged between the Hungarian veterans, who constructed their war memories according to the pro-Boer standpoint that was dominant at the time to

[3] Szigethy bluntly rejects the idea that the two peoples have a similar national character.

make them more acceptable and marketable. The competing Luzsénszky and Péchy were not the only Hungarians who gave presentations on the Anglo-Boer War, Dr. Jolán Angyal also toured Hungary with her adventures as a nurse in the Boer camp, whose husband was killed by the British (SzH, 1902a; SzFÚ, 1902; SzH, 1902b; SzV, 1902; VH, 1903a; VH, 1903b; Szamos, 1903). The truth is, she had never been to South Africa. As a columnist of the journal Szatmár és Vidéke remarked, she was "neither an angel nor a doctor" ('angyal' means angel in Hungarian) (SzV, 1903). Dr. Angyal was a fraudster, but her case shows that there was a demand for Boer war stories, and there was a market for stories and texts related to the region.

Conclusions

"The literature on South Africa has grown to extraordinary proportions since the two small Boer republics went to war with the British Empire. For six months now we have not been able to pick up a newspaper or a magazine without longer or shorter articles on the land and inhabitants of the Transvaal, or more or less authentic illustrations of all the sights of that country. One might almost believe that there is no detail of South African geography and ethnography of which the newspaper-reading public is not thoroughly informed." (Kumlik, 1899, p. 883) These lines, published in the weekly magazine Vasárnapi Ujság, demonstrate several aspects of the Hungarian reception of the Anglo-Boer War. First of all, it illustrates vividly the boom of articles related to Southern Africa in the contemporary Hungarian press. However, the lines demonstrate the dominant position of the Transvaal against the Orange Free State in Hungarian pro-Boer journalism. These are features common both to general pro-Boer journalism and Hungarian reporting. Similarly to the other countries on the continent, the pro-Boer sentiment was dominant in the contemporary Hungarian press compared to the British approach of the war. This was also reflected in the interest shown in the participants, who played a special role in how the Hungarian public interpreted the Anglo-Boer War. Three of the Hungarian volunteers published books on their South African experience, all supporting the Boer. Features of the pro-Boer interpretation of the war spread by agents of the republics in Europe left their marks on the materials written by the Hungarian veterans. The "good against evil" view of the Anglo-Boer War, the intense desire of the British for gold, and pointing to greed as one of their key national characteristics are obvious elements in which the recollections of the Hungarian volunteers are very similar to the pro-Boer narrative of other European countries and the messages spread by the Boer propaganda. Nevertheless, some elements of the interpretation of the war were typical for the Hungarians, for example, overemphasising the freedom-loving characteristic of the Boer in the context of drawing parallels between the recent histories of the two nations impacted the ways the British and their armed forces, military strategy, and tactics are presented in the studied texts. However, the implicit and in some cases open criticism indicates that the relationship between the Boer and the Hungarian volunteers supporting them was far from harmonic.

Conflict of Interest

The authors hereby declare that no competing financial interest exists for this manuscript.

Notes on Contributor

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