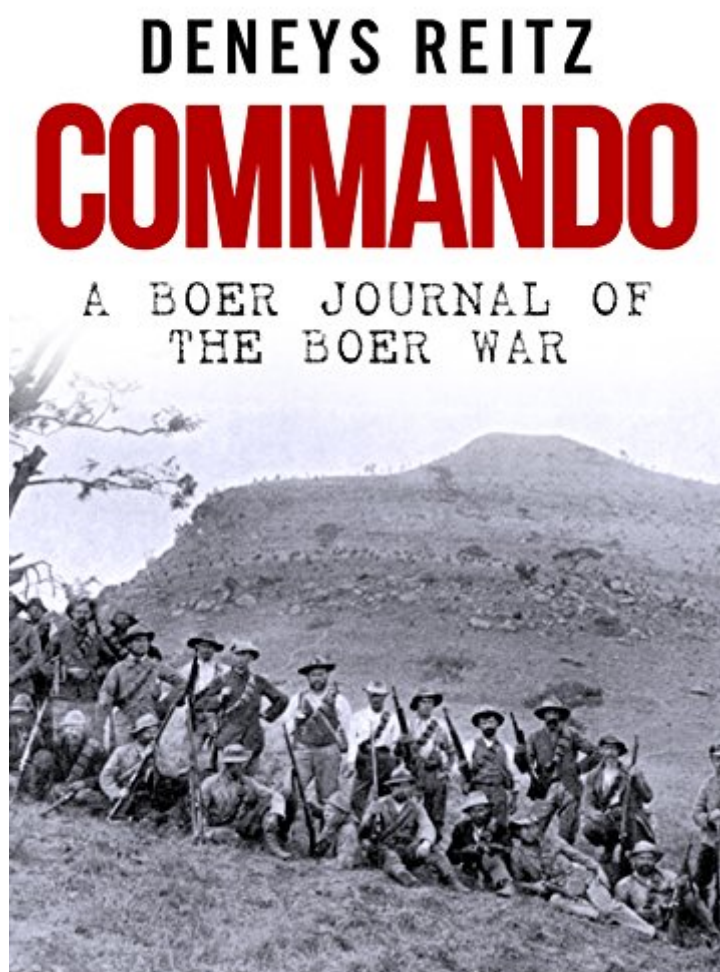


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# Commando: A Boer Journal Of The Boer War



## Synopsis

Today the word "commando" conjures a picture of daring special forces raids, but originally it was the Boer word for a mobile column of fighting men. This is the account of one such fighting man. Aged just seventeen Deneys Reitz, son of the ex-President of the Orange Free State and then State Secretary of the South African Republic, took up his rifle and joined the Boer Army. It was 1899, and tensions between Great Britain and the Transvaal Republic and Orange Free State had reached boiling point. From their initial strikes into Natal to the surge of British troops and the transition to bloody guerrilla warfare, through luck and family ties Reitz was present at most of the major events. Not published until 1929, "Commando" remains one of the most unique and important pieces of literature about the conflict. J. C. Smuts summed it up best in his preface: "Wars pass, but the human soul endures; the interest is not so much in the war as in the human experience behind it. This book tells the simple straightforward story of what the Boer War meant to one participant in it." Deneys Reitz (1882-1944) was a Boer soldier, lawyer, author and politician. In the aftermath of the Second Boer War, he went into exile alongside his father and brothers, spending time in Madagascar before returning to South Africa and studying law. When WWI swept across the globe he fought alongside the British against the Germans, first in Africa and then on the Western Front, rising to command a battalion. Albion Press is an imprint of Endeavour Press, the UK's leading independent digital publisher. For more information on our titles please sign up to our newsletter at [www.endeavourpress.com](http://www.endeavourpress.com). Each week you will receive updates on free and discounted ebooks. Follow us on Twitter: @EndeavourPress and on Facebook via <http://on.fb.me/1HweQV7>. We are always interested in hearing from our readers. Endeavour Press believes that the future is now.

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## Customer Reviews

This is a very well written combat memoir, written shortly after the end of the Boer War (1899-1902) by one of its youngest participants. Deneys Reitz was 17 when the war began and he immediately joined up. He was Boer but educated in English and his father was an official in the Boer government. He fought in nearly all of the most well-known battles of the war and stuck it out all the way to the bitter end. This is one of the best combat memoirs ever written about any war at any time or place. The Boer War was the preview to WWI in many ways, seeing the first use of barbed wire and the first use of smokeless powder, both of which changed warfare in fundamental ways. It was also the first war in which the British Army lost more men to combat than disease. Early in the war, while he was on a brief leave, Reitz accompanied his father to a POW camp where they met Winston Churchill. Reitz' account should be compared to Churchill's own, which is included in his own history of the war. Was Churchill carrying a Mauser pistol when captured or not? You decide. The best overall history of the war is by Thomas Pakenham, which is also a classic of military history. Reading these two books together will take you into the heart of a little-known conflict that began the 20th century and foreshadowed much of the bloody decades that followed. Deneys Reitz later fought on the British side in France during WWI and left a memoir of that experience that is also very much worth reading. He was a very intelligent, very observant man, with a rare ability to write in English, which was one of five languages he spoke.

I decided to read this book because of my overall ignorance of the Boer War and the fact that much of what I do know has come from the British side. However, being that the writer was just another average guy on a horse, it's hard to get any sort of overview of what was going on during the time he was fighting the British. There is no big picture, but there is a lot of riding through beautiful country and sometimes harsh weather with companions who come and go, a lot of bravery and

privation and, in the end, defeat. However, Mr. Reitz is an engaging writer, and while I'm not certain I want to read his account of his exile from his homeland following the end of this war, I will probably at some point take on his third volume, which regards his service in World War I with -- ironically -- the British.

An excellent book of the exploits of a Denys Reitz, who at 17 joined the Boer Army for the fight for their freedom. The journal follows Mr. Reitz from his initial battle at Ladysmith to the final surrender of the Boer forces several years later. The information in his journal is a detailed account of his "commando" or unit (regiment) during the war with death, sickness and treachery of the British forces. The book will interest those who would want to know about the second Boer War, the life of a private in the army and how the British finally prevailed.

This book is a memoir of a young man, a Boer of south Africa and his fellowmen who battled against the colonial rule of the British in the second Boer war - they lost and became vassals of Britain. In many ways their battles against the British army parallel our USA revolution of 1776 except their fight for freedom ended in 1902. The Boers were not skillful tacticians. They used hit and run tactics that only pecked away at the British. The British had some 50,000 trained soldiers from the British Empire, Australian, Canada, Newfoundland, British India, New Zealand and South Africa sympathizers like the Tories of our revolution. A good history of the common soldier, their deprivation, starvation, discouragement and death.

This is quite a book, and it was written by a KID !!! I read an average of about three-four history books each month, and this one is remarkable. After his side lost the war, and he was exiled, he just sat down and wrote this book in his spare time while trying to make a living as a day-laborer in Madagascar. All while he was a teenager. He wrote a page-turner in his very understated style. He suffered unbelievable hardships for almost three years, and saw his entire squads killed, twice. Of course, he ended up as a leader of South Africa during both World Wars. Quite a guy.

I loved every minute reading this book. Reitz had a truly remarkable life, one that reads like something out of an old school Hollywood epic. And yet Reitz leads you along his journey so completely without ego that at times I had to remind myself that his was a real life still only a few generations old. I've since moved on to his next work, 'Trekking on', and it too is a great reminder that some lives are so crammed with daring and adventure that surviving them for as long as Reitz

did is impossibly rare. Anyone interested in a raw immersive experience from the front lines of the Boer war cannot miss this book.

Memoir had some interesting aspects from the Boer point of view especially how they were organized or not organized. But book consisted largely of the various Commando's suffering privations and being chased by the British. The Boers were certainly motivated as they were not paid or otherwise compensated. Their efforts to constantly avoid the British, especially when Reitz's small commando penetrated into South Africa seemed pointless and accomplished nothing noteworthy. Endless references to towns and geographic features but without maps it was impossible to keep track of the Commando's wanderings.

An excellent war time journal recording Deneys Reitz's extraordinary experiences. I read it while travelling in South Africa, and was very happy to have selected it. Here is a point - not a criticism but just to let a prospective reader know - Deneys provides very little information on the causes and events leading to the war. He was just a 16 or 17 year old kid living at a time that the war broke out, so he joined up. This presents day to day experience, but with a surprisingly mature voice (even though written when Deneys was in his early 20s, shortly after the war). Also, get yourself a map to get an idea of where Deneys travelled.

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