

We salute...

The English War [or "Second War of Liberation", Ed.] 1899 - 1902

The Italian Legion

The Boer nation went through hell during the war of 1899 – 1902 when Great Britain wanted to destroy our people. The uneven struggle of a small group of Boers against the mighty bully of that time, grasp the imagination of the civilized white people all over the world and made them take part in this struggle.

Same as the rebels of the Cape rebellion against her Majesty had pay with their life's, many of the "foreign Legion", as they were called, came to fight till death for the Boer's cause. I don't know if we paid enough respect towards these white nobleman.

They came from all world. Part of these were the Italian corps. This is their story as taken from the The Boer Officers of the Second War of Liberation, 1899 - 1902 - a monograph form of the National Culture Historical Museum in Pretoria, compiled by Jacques Malan.

Col. C. Ricchiardi

Camillo Ricchiardi was born on 5th June 1865 in Alba, on the Western Italian Alps, and died on 21st January 1940 in Casablanca, Morocco, where he was buried.

He studied at the military academies of Modena, Udine and Pinerolo and in 1887 became lieutenant of the 4th Cavalry Regiment of Genoa where after he went to Saluzzi and became captain of the Royal Piedmontese Cavalry. He left the garrison in 1891 and became the military adviser for the king of Siam.

During the First Sino-Japanese war of 1895, he worked as correspondent for USA newspapers. In 1896, during the Italian- Abyssinian war, he was in Abyssinia. He was also a correspondent for a Turkish paper in Shangai. In 1898 he fought in a volunteer corps in the Philippines against the U.S..

In 1899 he came to ZAR [Zuid Afrikaanse Republiek, literally: "South African Republic", the Boer republic in the Transvaal region. Ed.] via Lourenço Marques [former name of Mozambique's capital. Ed] with other Italians. On 5th November 1899 he received a horse and a Mauser with the command to join the Krugersdorp Commando. He went there on 6th December and received permission on 6 January 1900 to form the Italian Volunteer Legion.

With his corps participated to the Natal-offensive and, after Gen. De Villebois Mareuil wounded, he became colonel and commander of the unified Foreign Legions. With a handful of men he helped generals Lukas Meyer and Christiaan Botha to escape from Natal. A £ 2,000 reward was placed on his head by the English.

During the battle of Colenso, he along with 20 others was seriously wounded and was sent to the hospital in Pretoria. Here he met Hannah Myra Francyska Guttman, a sister of Frikkie Eloff's wife, Magdalena. Frikkie was a son of Gert Eloff and Annie Kruger, the president's daughter. She was also a familiar of Bertha Guttman, the wife of Sammy Marks.

After his recovery, he went to Paris, in France, and visited president Kruger in Menton. The Eloffs and Myra were part of the presidents' entourage. He and Myra got married on 5th June 1901.

He later moved to Argentina where he became the land administrator of the Boer colony in Chubut. He later moved to Buenos Aires where he was welcomed by students with big ovation.

In 1913 he returned to Italy where he suffered the first a few stroke attacks. This prohibited him to take part in the World War One.

With the outbreak of the World War Two, he moved to Morocco where he died.

He was an attractive, tall, aristocratic, gentleman, well-read, six languages speaker, generous, active, committed, hardworking, aggressively-brave, religious, a great Italian patriot and a champion of the Boers' cause in France, Italy, Argentina and the USA.

He left many writings, but only his Diario (in manuscript form) is about the Second War of Liberation. Mario Lupini wrote a book about him in 1989: "Camillo Ricchiardi: Boer War Hero".

Dedicated to my Italian "Boer" – Massimiliano Maccini of Fontevivo, Parma, northern Italy, who, if he was alive during 1899-1902, would have fight here with us! I salute you, comrade.

Visit his Boer website:

http://www.volkstaat.it/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=297:2609201003&catid=56:latest&Itemid=82

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van Godegg.

