

Next day there was a heated debate in The House as to whether the Union should enter the war or stay out. This was Monday evening the 4th September when all the Kaffrarian Officers were attending their usual Monday Night meeting. At about 9 p.m. Colonel Hamman, Eastern Province Commanding Officer, announced, amid cheers, that he had just been advised that Parliament had decided that South Africa would enter the war, boots and all. General Hertzog, on being defeated, resigned, and General Smuts took over as Prime Minister.

According to the Defence Act the Defence Force and other troops were only to be used in the defence of the country and not be sent out of the Union. In the S.W. Africa case, the troops were sent into the German territory as it was in the defence of the country as I have mentioned earlier. The Units could, however, fight beyond the Union boundaries provided the personnel consisted of men who had volunteered. For this reason all the men of The Kaffrarian Rifles and other Units got their men to sign forms volunteering, so that we had a Regiment of 1,200 volunteers. Of these 1,000 went up North and the remainder were sent to transit camps to await replacements. We had a very fine lot of chaps: cosmopolitan; Lawyers; Magistrates; Clerks; Businessmen etc. There was strict discipline on parade and on duty but off one could talk to your friends and this helped to make a very happy Unit. Italy had also come into the war like a Jackal after the kill when Germany was on the up. What happened to them in the end? As soon as Italy came in, the Kaffrarian Rifles had to immediately supply troops on the tunnels being dug between Stutterheim and Queenstown, which work was being done by Italians, to prevent sabotage.

The actual Calling Up Order for the Regiment came in the form of a coded telegram. I phoned Colonel Page, the O.C. in King Williams Town and he came down right away. Everyone was full of joy for we were at last off to do our duty. Certain officers were immediately put on full time duty, the C.O., the second in Command, myself (Nettelton), the Adj. Captain Rice and the Administrative staff.

I am afraid I have wondered a bit but the above is all of interest.

Well, as we were now on the eve of departure we let our house in St. David's Road to the Magistrate or rather ex-Magistrate who was chairman of the rent board, at £9 a month. Sounds ridiculous but we thought that there would be a dearth of houses to let. Later Lorna tried to increase the rent but this Chairman said "No". What times I have been through, I think men and women of my generation have lived through a remarkable age in human affairs. The bicycle was to us a novelty in my young days and heavy transport relied on steam, today it is diesel and electricity. The aircraft was a flimsy structure, now developed into machines of all sizes and speeds. When in the R.F.C. in 1916 I flew at 80 miles an hour flat out, today they can fly faster than sound.

In medicine too, see what advances have been made. I remember when King Edward was to have his appendix out the Empire was asked to pray for him. Today it is an operation performed in a few minutes and you are up and about in two days. Wars are an abhorrence but through wars Science, Medicine and Transport have advanced faster than would have been the case had there been no wars.

Well to get on with the story. The Regiment was mobilised on the 19th June with a strength of 1,250 all ranks of whom 1,000 went with the Unit to Maritzburg and the remaining 250 to the Infantry Training Depot at Sonderwater, Pretoria, from where they could be drawn as replacements where required. I might mention that after camping at Maritzburg certain key men, Post Office, Railway etc. were transferred to a branch of the army serving their departments, so we soon had to draw on a few men.

The Kaffrarian /