

## **CHAPTER 7: The Two Anglo-Boer Wars**

### **The Second Anglo-Boer War**

The courage and resilience of women forced to live in concentration camps during the war is quite well documented but perhaps equally remarkable is the story of some 600 Boer families who relocated to Patagonia in Argentina after the war, and had to adapt to yet another way of life. One of the women, Petronella Niemann who moved there with what remained of her family in 1905, describes in her memoirs her life first in the Bethulie concentration camp in what is now the Free State, and then in the Chubut province on the east coast of Patagonia, where she lived for some 34 years. <sup>1</sup>

The land they went to was harsh, unforgiving and unsettled. The Argentine government, under General Julio A Roca, in a bid to attract settlers and believing the Boer farmers would make a go of farming there, offered them this land, after their farms in South Africa had been burned down. Petronella Nieman adapted to her new life with remarkable courage tinged with humour. When she eventually returned to South Africa, some of her family were so used to life in Argentina that they chose to remain there, and still today there is a distinct group of third generation Boers in Patagonia who have never seen South Africa. "Ek verstaan 'n bietjie Afrikaans, maar te praat is nie maklik vir my nie [I understand a bit of Afrikaans, but it's not easy for me to speak it]," a man named Juan Blackie told an interviewer matter-of-factly.

Such stories of the resilience of Boer women, both during the Great Trek and the Anglo-Boer War, were important factors in the later growth of Afrikaner nationalism. <sup>2</sup>

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1: Her remarkable story was edited and translated by Mark Sandham and published in 2011 as *Bethulie and Chubut : domestic memoirs of the Boer War and Argentina*, Piglet Press, Johannesburg. Patagonia is an informal region that straddles Argentina and Chile.

2. Mark Sandham, ed., *Bethulie and Chubut : domestic memoirs of the Boer War and Argentina*. The former DA leader and ambassador to Argentina, Tony Leon, described the story of the Boers in Chubut as a remarkable one, in terms of privation, hardship and loss. See also <https://mg.co.za/article/2011-02-04-the-last-boers-of-patagonia/>