“Shooting an Elephant“

Summary

Back in 1936, famous British author George Orwell was a sub-divisional police officer in Moulmein, Burma and he wrote about that in the short essay “Shooting an Elephant”. Orwell hated his job in Burma because of the disrespect he received from the natives. Orwell sympathized with the natives; he felt that imperialism from his nation, Britain, caused the natives hostility towards him. Orwell’s life changed when a worker elephant broke its chains and had gotten loose due to raging hormones. When its trainer got lost on the way to handle the elephant. Orwell had been on duty and had to go receive the elephant since he was in that area of the incident. Orwell asked around the natives to find the elephant’s current location. As Orwell got closer to tracking the elephant, he became cautious; he felt this way because he thought about an Indian man who got crushed to death from its earlier rampage. Orwell, with elephant gun in hand, he found the elephant eating in a rice patty. As Orwell got closer to the elephant he began to notice the growing crowd of Burmese who were looking for a “show”. At first Orwell did not want to shoot the elephant, but “A white man mustn't be frightened in front of natives” Orwell thought. As Orwell came close enough to the elephant to get a better aim he fired several times with the elephant gun and several with the rifle. It took Orwell dozens of times with the rifle to finally kill the elephant. After he successfully killed the elephant, the natives stripped it of its meat down to the bone. After the incident, there was an endless discussion about the shooting of the elephant on how it could have been avoided. Since the elephant killed someone, the Indian, Orwell was legally in the right for killing the elephant. However, Orwell couldn’t help but to feel that the only reason he killed the elephant was to avoid embarrassment.

 Works Cited

Orwell, George *“Shooting an Elephant."* 1903-1950. Web. 21 Apr. 2015. <<http://www.k-1.com/Orwell/site/work/essays/elephant.html>>