

the Objector

FEBRUARY / MARCH 1991

They're Home!



Ensuring A Safe Return

Early on the morning of Saturday 1 December a large group of COs, supporters, family and friends gathered at Jan Smuts Airport near Johannesburg to welcome back the first exiled COs to return as a group. A large number of armed riot- and security-police were also there: showing that, despite many welcome changes, completely free political activity was not yet possible. When the exiles appeared, they

were greeted by TV cameras and much cheering. Once they had greeted family and friends they were ushered into a room where a press conference was held.

That evening they were guests at a welcome home party. The next day some left Johannesburg by plane to return to their home cities. Everyone was relieved to hear that they arrived home safely and that none had been arrested.

The first stage of testing the waters had been successfully completed!

However, the SADF seems to believe that they can be coerced into conscription. Some of them have received call-up papers but they have refused to comply with conscription. They have made many sacrifices to avoid going into the SADF and, if necessary, they are prepared to do so again.

Alan Storey

The True Reality

Sermon Preached at Prayer Vigil for Alan Storey
by Bishop Peter Storey

ALAN WALKER TELLS THE STORY of a young Conscientious Objector standing before a tribunal in Russia. After hearing his Christian testimony to non-violence the Magistrate said to him: "What you say would be more acceptable if the Kingdom of God had come already". The young man answered simply: "For me the Kingdom of God has come".

In the parable of the Velvet-teen Rabbit and the Skin Horse - which should be in the Bible, but is in a book of children's tales instead - it was the Velvet-teen Rabbit who asked the Skin Horse (who was so old that his brown coat was bald in patches and showed the seams underneath, and most of the hairs of his tail had been pulled out): "What is real?" - and the Skin Horse replied: "Real isn't how you are made. It's a thing that happens to you. When a child loves you for a long time, not just to play with, but really loves you, then you become real".

"Does it hurt?" asked the Rabbit.

"Sometimes," said the Skin Horse, for he was always truthful. "When you are real you don't mind being hurt."

This prayer vigil is all about what it means to be real and what is true reality. Many will say that the stand being taken by Alan Storey is an unrealistic one. They will say that because we live in a fallen and imperfect world there will be times when it is necessary to use imperfect methods like violence to defend the good and defeat the bad. That's one view of what is real. Its starting point is the reality of evil and it builds from that point.

But others will say that our starting point must be, not the reality of evil but the greater reality of God. We must build our thinking from that place where Jesus met evil and overcame it - at the Cross.

We know that the majority of

people look at Christ on the Cross and they see something foolish and something weak, but for us it is there that we see true reality - God's way of confronting evil with radical love. That is the reality that Alan lives by and that is why he cannot lend his support to the unrealistic and outworn way of violence.

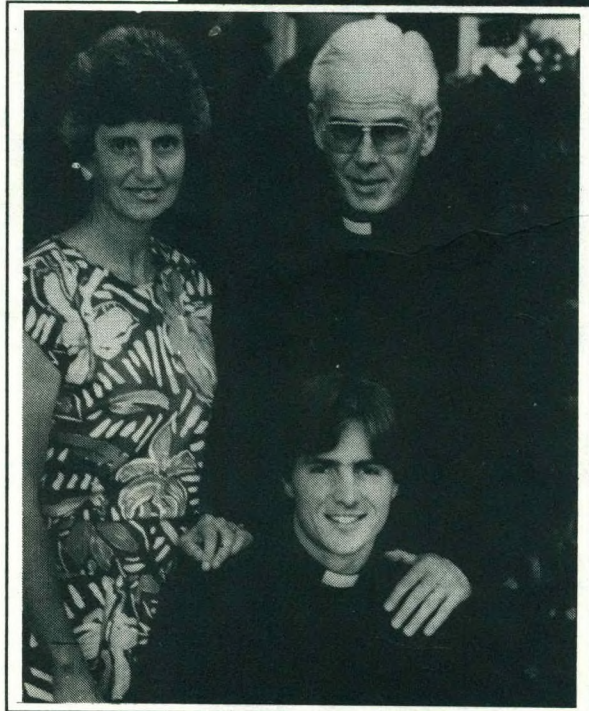
His witness is specially important to South Africa at this time because we are living in a land which has surrendered itself to violence. South Africa is learning that if you justify violence for any reason, no matter how good and noble, you legitimise it for every reason, no matter how unworthy. This is what has happened and we are reaping the bitter fruit of that justification. Weapons once dedicated to liberty are now used for thuggery and those who use them don't know the difference - if there is a difference in the end. I believe that the only way for our land to be set free from this terrible cycle is for more and more people to discover the tragic betrayal that comes from their trust in force and to find the new reality that Alan stands for.

Alan is going further than saying: "I won't use violence to defend apartheid." He is saying: I could not even use violence to destroy it." His stand is a challenge not only to apartheid's conscription system, but also to that other, equally evil practice which forces people into violent

Alan Storey is a probationer minister in the Methodist Church and works in Rustenburg. After he matriculated at Greenside High School he went to Australia where he worked for a year as a labourer. When he returned he joined the staff at Central Methodist Church in Johannesburg where he remained for two years. He is a member of the Methodist Order of Peacemakers, a pacifist movement in the Church. Alan believes that his rejection of violence and war is based on the teachings of Jesus. Although he would probably be accepted for community service by the Board for Religious Objection he will not appear before the Board because the law discriminates against people who are not religious. He rejects the notion that religious people have a monopoly on integrity and conscience.

Write to: P.O. Box 10376, Johannesburg, 2000.

STOP PRESS: Alan Storey will appear in the Johannesburg Magistrate's Court on April 15.



Alan Storey and his parents,
Peter and Elizabeth Storey

action in our townships in the name of liberation, or ideological purity, or party loyalty. His stand is a radical break with the use of violence as a means of dealing with any

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Francois Krige

My Return from Exile

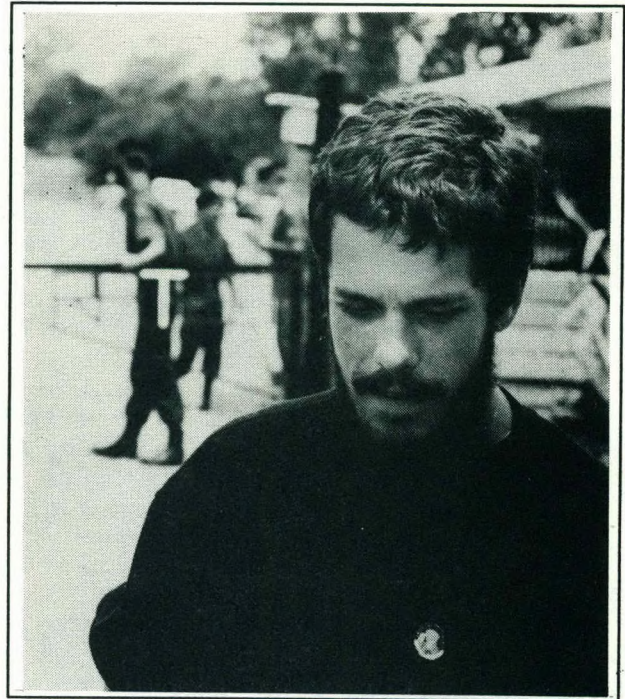
IN MID 1987 I WAS HITCH-HIKING NORTH on the N1 freeway when a column of casspirs and buffels (armoured personnel carriers) drove past, carrying young conscripts into the townships to fight against their fellow countrymen.

I was on my way to Botswana, avoiding military service. The process was familiar, I had just spent six months outside the country avoiding call-ups, and felt that it was pointless returning to an apartheid South Africa. I travelled that year, until I reached Europe.

Life in exile was always tainted with bitterness and frustration, knowing that much was happening at home in which we were unable to fully participate. In late 1989, in London, COSAWR considered the idea of a return group. Even after the 2 February speech from Parliament, we realized that our return would be without indemnity or amnesty, and that we would be liable for prosecution. The aim of the return was not to seek for a personal solution to our problems with conscription, but to confront the government on the issue of compulsory conscription as it affects all South Africans.

We arrived in Johannesburg on 1 December 1990, to an amazing welcome, and I returned home to Cape Town shortly afterwards. About 3 weeks later I received a call-up for 7 January 1991 in Potchefstroom. Two other returnees, Fritz Joubert and Gerald O'Sullivan received July call-ups shortly afterwards. On 8 January I flew to Potchefstroom and spoke to a Colonel Muller. I informed him of my refusal to serve, and was told that I would be charged at a later stage.

It seems to me that the government can ill afford to enforce minority conscription into its military machine during a time of supposed "reconciliation". I therefore call on all South Africans eligible for conscription to



Francois Krige, at the Danie Theron Combat School where he announced his refusal to do national service in January 1991.

Sorry! - Deleted on legal advice

Gerald O'Sullivan on the Decision to Return

WHEN I LEFT SOUTH AFRICA IN 1984 to avoid being called-up, I was convinced that apartheid would last another couple of decades, and that in all probability I would spend the bulk of my adult life abroad. While I was overseas, PW Botha declared the State of Emergency, conscripts marched into the townships, South African troops occupied the southern provinces of Angola, and several exiled activists were assassinated in the front-line states. All this convinced me that I had made the right decision to have nothing to do with the SADF, however difficult that decision had been in the beginning.

Then, out of the blue, came de Klerk's unbanning of the ANC and related organisations. Suddenly,

the old certainties were no longer there. South Africa had embarked on the road to democracy. A month after the unbannings, the Committee on South African War Resistance (COSAWR) convened a meeting of war resisters in London to discuss the new situation. We felt that this change of tack on the part of the state was genuine and that it logically followed that conscription would fall away soon afterwards.

After this and other meetings, a group of us decided to come home, even though we were all still eligible for National Service. We hoped that our return would force the issue of conscription, and that if the state took no action against us, other exiled war resist-

ers would be encouraged to return. The rest of the year passed in a whirl, and on 1 December I arrived at Jan Smuts Airport with ten other war resisters, excited and slightly apprehensive. After a tumultuous welcome at the airport and a braai in the evening, I knew for sure that we had done the right thing.

In the year that has passed, great strides have been made towards a normal society in South Africa, and the coming year will no doubt bring even greater changes. The pain of apartheid will be with us for a long time to come, but I am proud to be here, participating in the birth of a new, just and democratic South Africa.

News of Natal Objectors

MICHAEL GRAAF WAS SENTENCED to 2 400 hours of community service at his third court appearance in Pietermaritzburg on November the 28th last year. The community sentence is to be completed within four years of sentencing.

He has started his court ordered community service as a hospital porter at Durban's King Edward VIII hospital. He has to perform this service unpaid in his 'spare' time. He now has a job teaching children at the street children's shelter.

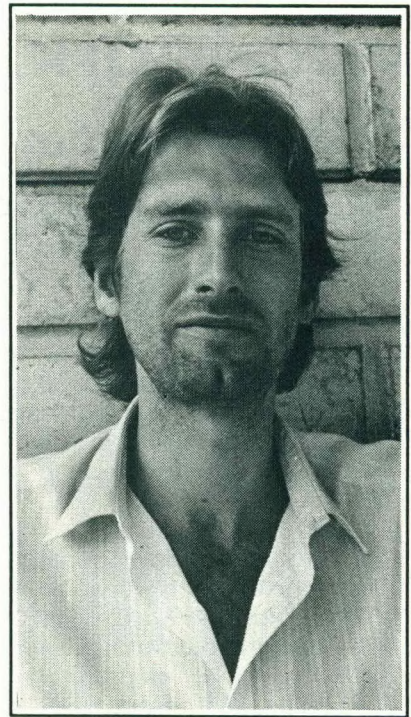
Michael has appealed against the severity of his sentence.

Koos de Kock and Brendan Moran are still waiting for the SADF to lay charges against them.

A new type of call-up has come

to the notice of the Durban Conscriptio Advice Service. The conscript is told that he may be called up during a certain two month's period and that he has to be prepared to report for service at 72 hour's notice.

Paragraph 10 of this "Warning Order" reads: "Once again a fair number of members simply failed to report for the last call-up. A consequence of this has been that a number of them have been prosecuted in the Magistrate's Court and to date have all been found guilty. This process will continue until all of them have appeared before a magistrate." (Signed by the Officer Commanding the unit issuing the Order.)



Michael Graaf

Chris de Villiers, chairperson of the Johannesburg branch of ECC, comments on the outcome of Michael Graaf's trial:

ON 28 NOVEMBER 1990, Michael Graaf was sentenced to one year in prison, suspended for four years, for refusing to serve in the SADF. Michael had done two years initial service in 1980 and 1981, but had refused to do a camp in 1990. The condition of suspension of Michael's sentence was that he performed 2400 hours of community service, at a rate of 72 hours per month, in the casualty section of Durban's King Edward VIII hospital.

Michael's sentence is significant for a number of reasons. Firstly, Michael is the first convicted conscientious objector who has been given a suspended sentence. The possibility of conscientious objectors being given suspended sentences or non-jail sentences arises from a decision of the Appellate Division of the Supreme Court in 1990, which heard the appeal of David Bruce and Ivan Toms against their sentences for refusing to serve in the SADF. The Appellate Division reversed previous decisions of the Magistrates' Courts and the Supreme Courts and held that a trial court has discretion in passing sentence on a conscientious objector, and that a jail sentence is not mandatory. The implication of this decision was that the Magistrate

hearing a conscientious objector's case can decide on an appropriate sentence, taking the circumstances of the objector himself into account, as well as the interest of the State.

Douglas Torr

Notwithstanding the Appellate Division decision, the Rev. Douglas Torr was subsequently sentenced to one year in jail in the Johannesburg Magistrates Court on 31 July 1990 for refusing to serve in the SADF. This disappointing decision was seen as retrogressive, and suggested a policy of continuing to impose harsh sentences on objectors.

It was thus pleasantly surprising when the Magistrate hearing Michael's case made it clear that he did not consider imprisonment an appropriate sentence for a conscientious objector like Michael, and he imposed a suspended sentence together with community service. This decision is to be welcomed, in so far as it recognises conscientious objectors as people of integrity who are prepared to stand up for their principles. However it must not be forgotten that a prison sentence has

in fact been imposed, and that it has been suspended on condition that Michael complies with the terms of his community service. To perform 2 400 hours of community service at 72 hours per month will take 33 months, nearly three years. Assuming that Michael performs the community service only on week days, this will amount to over 3 hours per day, 5 days per week, which is clearly a very heavy load on top of a normal job. Thus, it is clear that the conditions of the suspended sentence are harsh and punitive in themselves, and give no cause for celebration.

It would appear that Michael's sentence, although significant in conceding the undesirability of sentencing conscientious objectors to imprisonment, nevertheless continues to reflect a state policy to punish conscientious objectors severely. By imposing punitive conditions of community service, the state avoids the adverse publicity which is generated when a person of high principles and obvious integrity is sent to jail, while nevertheless exacting retribution against those who dare to challenge it.

COSG Policy Statement

As discussed and agreed upon at the National Conference of the Conscientious Objector Support Group, in Johannesburg on 22 September 1990.

We believe that in a post-apartheid South Africa:

1. The right not to be conscripted into an armed force should be entrenched in a Bill of Rights guaranteed by the constitution.

2. If there is conscription into military service, a non-military national service should also be available. It should:

2.1. Be available on application to anyone unwilling to do military service.

2.2. Be independent of the defence force.

2.3. Be of the same length as actual military service.

2.4. Allow participants to serve in State or semi-State or in non-governmental (welfare) organisations.

2.5. Those who choose non-military service should not be penalised in any way: this would include pay and service conditions.

3. Opting for non-military service should be a matter of simple choice; there should be no enquiry into the motivation of anyone who chooses non-military service.

Storey:

The True Reality

— continued from page 2

dispute. He really believes that "When anyone is in Christ, there is a new world. The old order has gone and a new order has already begun." (2 Cor 4 v 17).

That is why, although we feel much pain at what might happen to him, tonight is a celebration of God's new reality — the Kingdom of justice and peace which Jesus said we must seek before everything else. We can be joyful because Alan has discovered what it is to be real — to be loved and to love, and to refuse not to love — even though it might hurt sometimes. When you are real you don't mind being hurt. And, as the Skin Horse said to the Velveteen Rabbit: "Once you are real you cannot become unreal again." I pray that many others will find the strength to stand where Alan stands. Only then will the truly new South Africa become possible.

Update on South African War Resistance Issues

December 1990

Ten exiled COs returned to South Africa as part of the ECC/COSAWR "Safe Return Campaign". A press conference was held at Jan Smuts Airport and a large group of friends and supporters were there to welcome the returning group and their partners home. Very good publicity was given to the return, especially in the Afrikaans press.

January 1991

The new year started off with a bang as three COs publicly refused to serve in the SADF by not reporting for military service. The COs are Alan Storey, Francois Krige and Warren van Rooyen. All of them have officially notified the SADF of their refusal to serve and are now waiting to be charged. Francois Krige was one of the ten COs who returned from exile at the end of 1990. Two other members of the return group, Fritz Joubert and Gerald O'Sullivan, also face call-

ups in July. Several other COs that COSG and ECC have heard of have also refused to do either initial military service or camps.

February 1991

State President FW de Klerk announced that in the following parliamentary session the Population Registration Act as well as other pieces of apartheid legislation would be repealed.

This statement led to speculation as to how long the system of military conscription is to last, as the **eligibility for conscription** is defined in terms of the Population Registration Act.

Following the speech of the State President, Deputy Minister of Defence Breytenbach outlined some of the changes that will affect the SADF. He stated that in the interim the system of "whites only" conscription would remain. However, Minister of Defence Malan several days later stated in Parliament that the system of conscrip-

tion is being seriously reviewed. It is expected that some clear statement on the future of conscription is to be announced in this session of Parliament.

The date for the appeal of Douglas Torr against his sentence of one year in jail was set for 20 May 1991.

John Pearce, the leader and coordinator of the Johannesburg City Council was found guilty of misconduct and dismissed from the service of the City Council. Pearce had spearheaded the campaign to spy on organisations in Johannesburg through council-paid spies. ECC was able to testify at Pearce's hearing giving details on the activities of Tony Bennet, the city council employee paid to spy on ECC.

Revelations in Parliament of irregularities in payments made to the SADF's Civil Co-operation Bureau (CCB) led to renewed calls for the resignation of the Minister of Defence, Magnus Malan.

Druze Objectors in Israel

FOR MEMBERS OF THE DRUZE community, unlike other Arab citizens, military service is compulsory in Israel. In recent years, this policy has been encountering growing resistance by young Druze, hundreds of whom fill the Israeli military prisons. The Druze are likely to receive exceptionally harsh prison terms for their wholesale refusal to serve in the IDF (Israeli Defence Forces), or for desertion.

The case of 17-year old Adi Nafa'a recently received considerable press attention. After he was detained because of his refusal to appear for the army's medical examinations, the police found out about his being the son of (Communist) KM Muhammad Nafa'a. The following day he was released! Subsequently, newspapers published interviews with KM Nafa'a who, in his youth, was also a refuser, and with members of the Druze Initiative Committee which defends the imprisoned soldiers and calls for an end to Druze conscription.

**Address for correspondence:
Druze Initiative Committee,
c/o Jamal Muadi,
Yarka Village 24967,
Israel**

*From the World Peace Council's Peace News Bulletin, no 14 of 1990
(The source of this information: The Other Israel, July-August 1990)*

THE USSR IS EXPERIENCING an epidemic of objection - including widespread desertion. Official figures show that the number of people failing to report increased sixfold from 1988 to 1989, and this trend probably continued during 1990. Conscientious objection in the USSR used to be confined to members of religious sects and a few pacifists. However in the last two years about 90% of objectors have been from groups which regard conscription into the Soviet military as violating their national sovereignty. In April 1990, Chief of Staff General Moiseyev told *Pravda* newspaper that 1044 men evaded conscription in 1988 and 6647 in 1989. The 1990 figures are vastly greater. In Georgia only 28% of those conscripted reported for the Spring call-up, while in Armenia only 7.5% did. In Siberia 143 soldiers were sentenced for desertion in 1990. There are an estimated 800 Lithuanian and 200 Estonian deserters.

The USSR assented to the 1989 UN Commission on Human Rights resolution accepting conscientious

International News

Soviet Military Strained by Objection

objection "for religious or similar motives" as a legitimate exercise of freedom of conscience. However COs remain the largest group of political prisoners in the USSR. Several groups are campaigning for the right to object. Among them is the militant Soldiers' Mothers Committee. At one of their conferences in Moscow, 300 mothers whose sons had been killed in the military surrounded the Soviet Union Generals' House - a kind of generals' club - and chanted: "Come out, we want to judge you!"

The Baltic governments now encourage those called up to do civilian service in their home republic instead. Unfortunately the central government does not recognise this alternative service. Nevertheless conscription seems to be increasingly unviable. Some military parades marking the anniversary of the revolution were cancelled and in Tbilisi, Georgia, the parade was *inside* the barracks.

Source: Peace News - December 1990

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END CONSCRIPTION CAMPAIGN (ECC)

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