

APPENDIX 40

SELECTIVE
CONSCIENTIOUS
OBJECTION -

THE NON-COMBATANCY OPTION

and

THE DISOBEDIENCE OPTION

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"We must obey God rather than men"

Peter, Apostle

"The honour and duty to defend one's country should not be made subservient to one's religious convictions"

P.W. Botha, Minister of Defence

"We are subject to the men who rule over us, but subject only in the Lord. If they command anything against Him let us not pay the least regard to it"

John Calvin, Reformer

"The clerical authority must obey the secular authority"

Louis le Grange

"The church honours the state also when it does not come up to her expectations. She then defends the state against the state. By rendering to God what belongs to him and by being more obedient to him than to man, the church, in her intercession, opens the way to the only possibility of restoring the state and saving it from ruin"

Karl Barth, Theologian

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In this paper I shall try to explain my reasons for being a selective conscientious objector of the type who refuses to enter the military at all, i.e. who does not accept the position of a non-combatant but who goes the further step of refusing to obey his call-up.

I define selective conscientious objection as the refusal to participate in a particular war while making no assertion about war in general. I shall assume that the reader is familiar with the reasons for selective conscientious objection - that he has understood the arguments about the moral indefensibility of apartheid. He has satisfied himself, perhaps by using some variant of the "just war argument", that participation in the present war would be unacceptable to him. Perhaps he has formulated an argument along the lines of my previous work, Why I am a Selective Conscientious Objector (December 1978).

The question then faces him: Having decided to be a selective conscientious objector, does he obey his military call-up by joining the medical corps, or does he refuse outright to obey the call-up? In other words, does he become a non-combatant or a disobedient?

THE RATIONALE FOR THE NON-COMBATANCY OPTION

Four reasons are usually given to justify the action of a non-combatant. In the first place, he recognizes that it is illegal to disobey a military call-up. His friends and family may consider such disobedience as a type of treason; indeed, they may quote Romans 13:1-7 ("The powers that exist are ordained by God..." etc) and insist that disobedience to the authorities is disobedience to God. He notes furthermore that the authorities have made adequate provision for those who feel bound in conscience to be non-combatants. He can be a 'medic' with the full support of the authorities, and, because such a task is just as dangerous as that of an infantry troop, he is spared the feeling of disloyalty - he is not "letting the side down". He is playing his part.

Second, he notes that as a non-combatant he will not be making a direct contribution to the war effort. He is at one remove from the actual fighting. In fact he is helping people who have been injured in the fighting, and these people may be either members of the South African Defence Force, or guerillas, or innocent people caught in cross-fire. Further, he is not in a line position, he is not taking decisions about how the fighting is to be conducted, and he is therefore not responsible for what happens.

Third, he is aware of the enormous price of disobedience. The psychological strain of prison or detention barracks; the stigma attaching to being a criminal; the ostracism by friends, and perhaps even family; the lost time and money; the possible loss of job opportunities (e.g. he could not become a schoolteacher after a long prison sentence); all of these factors loom large

in his mind and make him wonder whether he would have the moral strength to be a civil disobedient.

Finally, other areas of witness have been brought to his attention. He counts his Christian presence to be important. He could be a kind of chaplain while going about his workaday duties. He could protest possible atrocities; he could protest the possible showing of 'blue films'; he could protest the use of bad language, if only by his own good example; and he could protest the use that the SADF makes of religion and chaplains to bolster and legitimise the military operation. For instance, he could take the recent (January 1979) statement of the Gereformeerde Kerk on this subject and urge that its recommendations be applied in his own unit. All these alternative forms of witness give him reason for believing that God has led him there.

His conclusion is that unless there is a convincing case for doing otherwise, he is prepared to enter the military as a non-combatant.

Assessment

What assessment are we to make of the non-combatant's stand? Most important, in my opinion, is that we recognize his sincerity and accept that that could be God's calling for him. It is, after all, not given to us to dictate what God's calling will be.

THE RATIONALE FOR THE DISOBEDIENCE OPTION

I shall now try to show that there is also a convincing case for the objector who refuses to obey his call-up; and why it is necessary for the pastor to accept his sincerity and recognize that to be a disobedient could be God's calling for him.

The possibility of disobedience as a form of witness

Truth and justice are among the greatest of the virtues mentioned in the Bible. Sometimes the claims of truth and justice conflict with the will of the group, and in that case the Scriptures leave the individual in no doubt about what to do. "Do not follow the crowd in wrongdoing, nor, when witnessing in a lawsuit, lean toward the majority to thwart justice; neither be partial to the poor man in his lawsuit", we read in Exodus 23:2. Resistance, on the firm ground of truth and justice, may be the right and duty of the Christian.

Biblical and church tradition are replete with examples of disobedience to authority. Moses' parents hid him for three months because he was a beautiful child and "they were not afraid of the king's order" which was to have all Hebrew children of that age killed. Daniel and his three friends refused the king's instruction to worship his image. We read in Acts about Peter and John refusing to obey instructions to stop preaching, with the words, "We must obey God rather than men". Mark records how

Jesus disobeys the laws regarding the Sabbath by picking heads of wheat. Jesus breaks the law for the sake of a higher law.

The Early Church was almost universally pacifist. There is a long roll of martyrs from this period who refused to join the Roman legions. The Emperor-worship which was part of the military service of those days was the most common reason for their refusal, but it was not the only one. Many also believed that they simply should not kill. One Maximilian said, before his martyrdom, "I cannot be a soldier, I cannot do evil because I am a Christian".

After his experience of justification by faith Luther nailed his Ninety-Five Theses to the church door of Wittenburg Castle, which drew public and ecclesiastical attention immediately. Later on he is said to have stated "My conscience I have from God, I cannot give it to Caesar". His polemics against Eck and the papal authorities are enough to convince anyone that unquestioning submission to the ruling powers can never be the permanent attitude of either the Christian or the Church. The contrary may often be true, as in Luther's fine example of publishing the glaring errors of the authorities of his time. Who knows how long mediaeval corruption would have persisted had he not acted so?

That fine Christian, Martin Luther King, was always in the forefront of the civil rights movement of the United States. A well-known photograph has King and his friends, Bibles in hand, kneeling and praying on a tarred road while armed policemen stop dead in their tracks before them.

Karl Barth, Martin Niemöller and Dietrich Bonhoeffer resisted the Nazi regime with its self-regarding nationalism. They even helped form the "Confessing Church" of those who refused to join the so-called "German Christians" - churchmen who held to the Nazi Führerprinzip or leadership principle. Later Bonhoeffer was martyred. He once wrote that to make one's "duty" to one's superiors the supreme principle in the end places one in the position where you have to fulfil your duty to the Devil himself.

The classic instance of civil disobedience in South Africa occurred when in 1957 the government introduced the "Native Law Amendment Bill" under which it was "proposed that a permit from the Minister (of Native Affairs) should be required to hold multiracial services". Several churches issued strongly-worded statements to the Prime Minister to the effect that that law would certainly be disobeyed if it were passed. Needless to say, the Bill was soon withdrawn. Again we see the importance, in the interests of truth, of a public declaration of the perceived wrong.

Franz Jägerstätter, a humble Catholic layman from the German countryside, refused to obey his military call-up in 1943. He believed as a matter of faith that such killing would be wrong. He knew full well that his arrest would be swift and his sentence heavy - in fact he paid for his crime with his life seven months later, leaving a wife and children. With the benefit of hindsight we now know that his example was a worthy one, even though his

own priest did not think so.

The stand of Archbishop Luwum, the Ugandan martyr, against President Amin's excesses, is highly respected in this country, and so is the perseverance of the persecuted Church of the USSR.

The above is just an impressionistic survey of the vast number of respected Christian leaders who have not been afraid to speak the truth about governments that have been unnecessarily unjust or oppressive. Any cursory reading of church history is sufficient to show that civil disobedience is in the finest church tradition. My point is not that the Christian should set about to be disobedient, should be permanently set in an attitude of resistance. My point is that there are particular times and particular places when it is the right and duty of the Christian to speak against evil, and, when he does this, it is his privilege to know that he is by no means the first Christian to have done so. It may well be the conscientious objector's high calling to be such a witness in contemporary South Africa.

Disobedience as witness: (a) The truth at stake

The selective conscientious objector is one who has become acutely aware of the evil in the economic, political and social structures of the country. If violence is the "destructive imposition of power", then the situation may be described as one of structural violence, which Prof J J Degenaar defines as "n metaforiese of figuurlike toepassing van die woord "geweld" in sy letterlike betekenis van 'n ekstreme fisieke beweging wat gerig word teen die liggaam van 'n mens. Met fisieke geweld forseer ek jou liggaam met my hande in 'n hoek. In die geval van strukturele geweld forseer ek jou liggaam met my wette en reëls en gebruike in 'n hoek" - i.e. "a metaphorical or figurative use of the word "violence" which means literally, physical action directed against a person's body. With physical violence I force your body into a corner with my hands. In the case of structural violence I force your body into a corner with my laws, rules and customs" (Die Burger 19/1/79).

He is aware, too, that the military is inseparable from the structural violence of the country. The threat of military action has often been used to forestall moves for change. Military might is seen by many as "the only way" to protect white privilege. The aggressive marketing of Defence Bonds adds to the growing mood of militarism and brings the danger of civil war ever closer. Radio and television programmes and extensive newspaper coverage of "our boys on the border" encourage the sense of paranoia, as do the frequent prayers for protection for our soldiers from "the enemy" -- often done, alas, with a concern more ideological than pastoral.

It is this glorification of war to which the objector says "No". He is convinced that the ultimate solution cannot be a military one, and that it must be a political, social and economic one. In the absence of any evident determination on the government's part to examine the problem as a political, social and economic one, he suspends his military involvement until there is a significant alteration in official attitudes. This reasoning explains

why the selective conscientious objector, even though he would fight in the Second World War against Nazi Germany, refuses to be part of the military structures of South Africa.

When we remember that blacks are fast wearying of endless talk with those many white Christians who seem unable to extricate themselves from their group interests, the importance of such a witness is seen more clearly. Blacks have grown tired of whites who have a great deal to say but who are not really prepared to sacrifice to better the blacks' position. They feel that the whites have declared war on them. Otherwise it is difficult to explain why trained police had to shoot school children; why so many people die in detention; why three hundred police are needed for a "routine crime prevention exercise" at 2 a.m. at Crossroads squatter camp.

Disobedience as witness: (b) Truth demands visibility

Therefore the time has come for the church to dramatise its rejection of apartheid. It is the task of the church continually to witness against injustice at all levels in society. And conscientious objection is a highly effective witness because it can easily be understood. It is a testimony that the conscientious objector will not participate in civil war, in a war of brother against brother. It is an exposé of the myth that the war we are fighting is a defensive war, that we are protecting Christianity, that we are guarding this our bastion of democracy; when in fact we are fighting to retain our interests, to dictate our terms, and to keep control.

All this has nothing to do with "seeking publicity" for any selfish motive. The point is that anyone called to witness to the truth in some way should seek to make that witness as effective as possible. It is for love of the truth that he will want to communicate his conviction to as wide a group as possible, in a way which highlights and clarifies the realities. A witness for truth is not only concerned for his own personal moral integrity - he will want to challenge others in the way of truth and integrity. Hence the responsibility for making a stand visibly.

Disobedience as witness: (c) Inadequacy of a non-combatant role

The army, like most armies, is probably aware that questions about its role would tend to weaken it. Hence dissidents must at all costs be silenced. This is done by allotting them to a special section, which renders their voice ineffective. The dissident is labelled a non-combatant and is placed in some part of the military system where his labour is needed but which allows no criticism. His message, as it relates to the wider operations of the military, is emasculated; his witness could be deprived of its strength. Therefore the objector may feel that, if his stand is to acquire its true worth, it must be a stand outside the military system.

Everyone in South Africa shares some measure of moral responsibility for the present sinful situation (who can say they have at all times witnessed and acted as they should have?) Nevertheless there are clearly degrees of such responsibility, and many would argue that there is a clear and definite divide between becoming part of the

military machine and the refusal to do so.

It is important to point out that the role of the non-combatant member is integral to the role of the army as a whole. An army cannot function without its non-combatant personnel (e.g. medical, engineering, communications). And yet the army is a war machine primarily engaged in the aggressive defence of the apartheid system.

Thus for a selective conscientious objector the non-combatant role is profoundly unacceptable, since, as pointed out, the tasks of non-combatant military personnel are also crucial to the effectiveness of the army as a whole. "If a member of a band of bank-robbers were assigned the job of carrying the first-aid kit, while others did the shooting and lifting, the first-aid man would be considered guilty before the law with the entire band. It is membership of the organization that counts, not so much the particular task to which one is assigned ... The higher officers in the army are also 'non-combatant' in the sense that they seldom do any personal killing, yet one would not excuse them of the responsibility for the killing under their command" (Quoted from Herschberger, in Military Service and the Christian, R.S.III thesis, by Cherry Spurr, 1978).

The non-combatant personnel cannot therefore disclaim responsibility for contributing directly to the goals and functions of the SADF. They enable the army to do its work. This is why many selective conscientious objectors cannot in all conscience accept non-combatant military tasks and are deeply serious about their request for alternatives to military service.

Refusal to obey a call-up is contrary to the law. This theological problem has been dealt with at great length in my previous paper, and so I summarize: the Christian's intention is to render obedience to the government, because there is no authority except from God, because magistrates are not dread to the person who does right but to the wrongdoer, and because the government is God's agency for our welfare, as we read in Romans 13. But what happens when the government perpetrates such injustice as to relinquish its claim to divine authority? What happens when magistrates are dread to the person who does right? What happens when the government ceases to be God's agency for our welfare? Then, by Paul's own implication, obedience cannot always be required of the Christian. The objector would also like to cite the case of the Roman soldiers who were instructed to kill Christ. Surely we would not demand unquestioning submission to authority in this case?

Assessment

What assessment are we to make of the stand of the disobedient? Most important, in my opinion, is that we recognize his sincerity and willingly accept that that is God's calling for him. It is, after all, not given to us to dictate what God's calling will be.

(Weekly Mail, March 7, 1986)

The butcher who'd rather go to jail than the army

Butcher Phillip Wilkinson's life changed the day he entered a black township for the first time and discovered what lay behind the concrete walls. Today he's a conscientious objector, willing to go to jail rather than fight. JO-ANN BEKKER reports

LIKE many of society's underdogs, Phillip Wilkinson has perfected an impenetrable blank stare.

He used it to neutralise the taunts of his Port Elizabeth schoolmates who came from better-off, more secure homes; the boorishness and racism of his colleagues in the Defence Force, and the exasperation of his employers when he refused to lord it over his fellow black workers who were older and more experienced than he.

But there is another face to this 22-year-old butcher who was last week refused religious objector status by the Board for Religious Objection and who is now preparing for the possibility of going to jail for more than two years rather than attend compulsory army camps.

And this second face is an open, friendly and confident one.

Wilkinson, whose father deserted the family when he was a child, knew a life of poverty and hardship.

Among the first people he related to were the black workers at a hotel where he was employed as a trainee chef earning R150 a month after completing Standard Eight.

"For the first time I found myself being able to express myself and relate my thoughts outside of my home," he recalled, explaining that he had spent most of his senior school years and absorbed in collecting stamps and reading about the persecution of Jews in German concentration camps.

He began spending mealtimes with the workers and a few years later, while working as a storeman, he developed a deep friendship with one of them, Xolisi.

With Xolisi, he entered Port Elizabeth's black townships for the first time, an event which he recalls as a turning point in his life.

"I used to wonder as I travelled past by train or bus just what was the purpose of the fences and concrete walls which surrounded the townships. I was stunned when I found out. It was just what I had read about



Peter Wilkinson ... 'the friendliness surprised and even embarrassed me'

Picture: DAVE HARTMAN, Afrapix

in all those books about the Nazis suppressing the Jews. Those townships looked like a massive camp or compound."

The year was 1983, the time of the formation of the UDF, and soon Wilkinson's thin, bearded, face was often seen amidst the sea of black faces at public rallies.

"The overwhelming friendliness I experienced in the townships surprised and even embarrassed me," he recalls. "From what you hear and read in the papers you imagine them to be places of crime where you can expect a knife in the back. I found just the opposite."

One of his most memorable experiences was when he attended the mass funeral for 20 people shot dead by police at Langa last year.

"I was on crutches, recovering from a foot operation. When the small group of white friends I was with began moving towards the graveyard, there was no way I could go with them and suddenly I was hemmed in by thousands of people.

"I was a bit scared. Some of their community had been gunned down by police and I wouldn't have blamed them for turning on a white person, but all I got was friendliness."

Phillip paid for his unusual beliefs in the market place. Once he was forced to resign and another time he was fired after repeated warnings to distance himself from his black colleagues.

"One boss, a re-born Christian, asked me to stop spending my tea-time

with the workers. The reasons he gave were very prejudiced and riddled with superiority.

"Another time he said he expected me to be more individualistic in my ambitions, when I told him I felt I had no right to speak down to or be bossy to workers who were much older and had more knowledge and experience than me."

Another employer asked him to watch the workers and report to him anything "irregular".

From the age of 16, when Wilkinson had to register as a conscript, his relationship with his mother became strained.

"I was not at all keen to register, in fact I was anti," he said. "I had many arguments with my mother in which she always ended up telling me how I would go to jail if I did not do army training."

His instinctive resistance as a teenager deepened through his contact with black workers, but after he'd been sacked, his mother threatened to disown him if he did not complete his national service. So, at the age of 20, he reported for army training,

In the army he turned his blank stare to the discrimination against English-speakers by Afrikaans-speakers, and the racist attitude of both groups to blacks.

His problems did not end after his compulsory two years were up. Within a short time, he was called up for a camp. This time he felt the experience even more, being by this time "a staunch supporter of the UDF,

knowing rightly or wrongly that the majority of people in the townships believed and identified the security forces as a threat, furthering and maintaining the interest of the apartheid system. And as a non-violent person I felt I could not go into an institution which was based on violence."

But by this time Phillip and his mother had reached a compromise. He would obey her wishes until he was 21, then he would be free to do as he pleased. He completed his last camp three days before his 21st birthday.

When he was called up last June, he appealed for exemption.

"By now I knew exactly what these camps were. They meant I was being called upon by the SADF to fight in the townships against people who I had grown to know and trust."

Last week the board accepted that he was a universal pacifist, but rejected that this was on religious grounds.

"They cross-examined me on the Bible," he explained. "The Catholic Church, unlike some others, does not require you to have an in-depth knowledge of the Bible."

After the intervention of a lawyer, Wilkinson was exempted from the camp he was called up for last week. But next time, if he is not so lucky, he faces a jail sentence of up to two years, nine months

Asked if he feels he is prepared to serve a jail sentence, he replies, laughing:

"My mother's been preparing me for jail since I was 16."

Detainee joins 21 day fast for peace

WEEKLY MAIL
20/10/85

DETAINEE Richard Steele has pledged to fast as part of the "Troops out of the townships campaign", despite being held by the Security Police.

He will be one of three people around the country who are holding a three-week "fast for peace". Others — including Bishop Desmond Tutu, Dr Beyers Naude and Sheena Duncan — will be fasting for 24 hours at a time in solidarity.

And the organisers, the End Conscription Campaign, have called on the public to join them in the fast for stretches of 24 hours or more.

The campaign, which includes a full programme of meetings and events, was centred on the three-week fasters. However, one of them, Steele, was among the ECC leadership detained last week in terms of Section 29 of the Internal Security Act.

Friends and family say that when he was held he pledged to continue with the fast in prison.

In Johannesburg, 21-year-old student Harald Winkler has based himself in the chapel at the SA Council of Churches headquarters and will drink only water and herbal tea for three weeks.

Winkler is facing a January call-up for his military service and he has applied to be registered as a conscientious objector on theological grounds.

He said this week that his fast was in support of the ECC call for troops to be removed from the townships and, in the interim, for national servicemen to be given the right to refuse to serve in the townships.

The ECC said in a statement this week that it believed the use of the army would not break the cycle of violence in South Africa and was creating an "acute crisis of conscience" among many conscripts.

Also in Johannesburg, members of the St Antony's United Church in Pageview are fasting in solidarity with Steele in shifts of 24 hours each.

And in solidarity with a member of their congregation, Anita Kromberg, who is also detained, they will be releasing a balloon every midday in the city centre.

Spearheading the Cape Town "fast for peace" is Crossroads squatter camp doctor, Ivan Toms, a conscientious objector who has received non-combatant status.

Toms was this week installed in St George's Cathedral, where he will remain for the duration of the fast. He has called on people to join him in fasting for 24 hour stretches, "in

ECC arrests on eve of campaign

BY WEEKLY MAIL
REPORTER

THE Security Police clampdown on the End Conscription Campaign (ECC) this week came on the eve of a three-week campaign calling for troops to be removed from the townships.

Four ECC leaders were detained under Section 29 of the Internal Security Act early on Monday morning in raids across the country.

Security Police also visited the homes of about 20 ECC members in Durban, Pietermaritzburg, Cape Town, Johannesburg and Port Elizabeth. Several ECC members were questioned and various documents were confiscated.

The ECC's "troops out of the township" campaign will be launched on Monday despite the crackdown, said a spokesman for the organisation. An aspect of the campaign will be a three-week fast in support of the

demand for individual soldiers to have the right to refuse to serve in the townships until the troops are withdrawn. ECC members from Johannesburg, Cape Town and Durban have committed themselves to fasting for the entire three weeks, while others, including several prominent church and opposition leaders, will be fasting for shorter periods, ending in a national one-day fast on October 7.

The campaign, which will take place in seven centres, will also involve public meetings, panel discussions, cultural activities and church services. According to the ECC, over 100 international peace groups are supporting the call.

One of the three-week fasters, Richard Steele, was detained on Monday. Steele, 30, spent 12 months in detention barracks and prison for conscientious objection in 1979 and 1980, and was curator of the Gandhi settlement.

The other detainees were Michael Evans, 27, Cape Town ECC chair, Anita Kromberg and Sue Britton, both from the Durban ECC.

According to an ECC spokesman, the latest detentions bring to seven the number of ECC members detained in the last month.

In a statement, an ECC spokesman condemned the detentions as part of an attempt "to crush a campaign whose call is for a just peace in our land". The statement stressed the ECC was a legal organisation working for a change in the law relating to conscription in South Africa.



Harald Winkler

solidarity with those who are suffering at the hands of the SADF in the townships".

After serving his two years' initial training in the SADF, Toms decided he was "unable to reconcile the Christian injunction to love my enemy and the demand of the SADF to shoot him".

As a doctor at the Empilisweni SACLA clinic — a Christian primary health care clinic for about 100 000 squatters — Toms said, "I have learnt first hand of the viciousness of apartheid and the extreme oppression of the blacks".

In Port Elizabeth, 16 white activists, based in the St Augustine's Cathedral, are to refuse to eat for up to 48 hours at a time.

At a press conference to launch the campaign, ECC local leader Janet Cherry said all 16 were white and privileged, but had become critical of conscription to protect white advantage.

"Many of us do not want privileges based on the colour of our skin. We want an equal and non-racial society ... We are not willing to defend and kill for this system of apartheid we abhor."

During the build-up to the campaign over the last week, Cherry has been the victim of a dangerous act of vandalism, while police searched two houses and ECC media and minutes were confiscated.

While in Grahamstown, Cherry made a routine check at a filling station to discover that one tyre of her car had been overinflated to almost five times the normal pressure. Another had been deflated by nearly a third.

"The attendant came over to me with an incredulous look on his face and asked me, 'Who pumped up your tyre?'"

"We have been confronted with heightened Security Police surveillance, but this has not held us back," she said.

Winkler appeal rejected

By CLARE HARPER

University student Harald Winkler, who fasted for three weeks this year to protest the presence of SADF troops in the townships, was yesterday refused an appeal as a religious objector.

At a hearing in Pretoria, the Religious Objections Board offered Winkler, 21, the chance to apply for non-combatant status with

the SADF, but the offer was rejected.

Board chairman Mr Justice Willem Ederling said Winkler did not create the impression of opposition to all forms of violence.

"Even if it is so, the question remains whether his religious beliefs, including his socio-political beliefs, force him to object to all wars and all military service."

Ederling said it appeared Winkler's religion allowed him to participate in a just war, but this did not comply with all the elements of the Act.

The Board, set up in 1983, only grants religious objector status to universal pacifists objecting on religious grounds.

In a statement before the hearing, Winkler said participation in the SADF was inconsistent with his religious and political beliefs, and that he could not separate the two.

He faces a January 14 call-up but says he is not prepared to fight because of the presence of the army in the townships and its role in upholding apartheid. If he does not report in January, he faces a court martial.

The ECC's only aim is to end conscription

THE STAR
SEPT 28

Three weeks ago four leaders of the End Conscription Campaign were detained in raids across the country — shortly before the launch of the ECC's "troops out of the township" campaign.

Richard Steele, Michael Evans, Anita Kromberg and Sue Britton were all held incommunicado under section 29 of the Internal Security Act. They were released after 15 days without being charged.

As supporters and members of groups active in the ECC we condemn these detentions. We believe they are part of an attempt to crush a campaign whose call is for a just peace in our land.

The ECC is a legal organisation working for a change in the law relating to conscription in South Africa. It is premised on the belief that individuals should have the freedom to choose whether to participate in the SADF.

The "troops out" campaign will focus on the demand for individual soldiers to have the right to refuse to serve in the townships until the troops are withdrawn. Richard Steele, a former conscientious objector, and Michael Evans, of the ECC Western Cape chair, recently gave evidence to the SADF's Geldenhuys Commission to this effect.

Contrary to government propaganda the ECC is not a radical grouping trying to destroy order in South Africa.

Increasingly young white men are facing a crisis of conscience through being forced to participate in the occupation of the townships and of Namibia.

The detention of ECC leaders will not stop the growing opposition to the

READERS' VIEWS

role the SADF is playing in the conflict in our country.

We believe that detentions, the banning of organisations and the state of emergency will only serve to harm the prospects of ending the violence that is tearing our country apart.

On October 7 hundreds of peace-loving South Africans will join together in fasting for 24 hours to show concern about the continuing implementation of the state of emergency and the presence of troops in the townships.

Bishop Simeon Nkoane
Anglican suffragan bishop of Johannesburg

Sheena Duncan
National President of the Black Sash
Bishop Desmond Tutu
Anglican bishop of Johannesburg

Professor John Dugard
Tom Waspe
Johannesburg Democratic Action
Committee Chair

Dr David Webster, Detainees' Parents Support Committee.

Clair Wright, Wits SRC President.
Dan Vaughan, South African Council of Churches Director of Administration.

Dr Beyers Naude, SACC General Secretary.

Shawn Kopel, Progressive Federal Party Transvaal Youth Chair.
Johannesburg

Student probes the psychology of militarism

*Weekly Mail
8/11/85*

OPPOSITION to military conscription is motivated by an "inner directedness" and a deep sense of moral outrage. It is conditioned by strong opposition to the presence of troops in the townships and a belief that the SADF is waging an "unjust war".

In sharp contrast, those in favour of military conscription display typically authoritarian personalities. They believe military service "instils discipline" and "makes a man" out of a youth.

These are some of the chief findings of a University of Cape Town study into student attitudes towards military conscription.

Psychology honours student Andrew Feinstein found in his research that all those in favour of military service identified their father as the single most important influence on their positive attitude.

Not one of those favouring military conscription saw the church as having any influence on their lives.

But almost all of them identified schools — in particular the cadet system — and the media, including radio, television and newspapers, as influencing their attitudes.

Not one member of this group expressed any objection to the presence of troops in the townships, and the majority believed the SADF should be used to quell the present township unrest.

"This illustrates the extent to which they accept the government view of the situation, *ie* the necessity to restore 'law and order' to the townships.

"It is also felt that not only are the group's attitudes towards conscription not founded on a moral or spiritual base, but they are also characterised by support for the present status quo in South Africa, support for change only if it does not endanger the white minority, and a conviction that the racial, cultural and class differences in South Africa are natural and acceptable.

By MOIRA LEVY,
Cape Town

"In analysing the attitudes of this group, it is interesting to note that they seem very similar to the picture of the military that the SADF attempts to paint," Feinstein writes.

All members of the group described their politics as "moderate", and said the rest of the world should either be "more positive" towards South Africa or should "leave us alone".

In contrast, those adamantly opposed to conscription called themselves "non-racial democrats" and most aligned themselves with the United Democratic Front.

All members of this group described South Africa as an "immoral" society that is divided unnaturally along racial, class and cultural lines and characterised by political, racial and economic discrimination.

"They feel that the cause of discrimination is white selfishness, and claim that the longer whites are in power, the more harmful the situation will become.

"Prominent among their hopes for the future are a system of one person, one vote, redistribution of wealth, and the removal of all discrimination and injustices.

"It can be concluded that those who hold attitudes strongly opposed to military conscription in South Africa are socio-politically liberal, have favourable attitudes towards Africans, and are not ethnocentric."

A third group identified by Feinstein, all of whom described themselves as "liberal" and aligned themselves with the Progressive Federal Party, had no strong views either for or against conscription.

"All members of this group," writes Feinstein, "admit to having doubts and uncertainties as regard their attitude towards military service."

This group called for the gradual introduction of one man-one vote.

Statement by National Serviceman

I am a National Serviceman who has been involved with the SADF in the unrest for the past four months. I am taking a chance in writing this, a report of some of my experiences, but unfortunately it is all true; a reality that has been concealed by the stranglehold on the press and our own self-serving blindness. It bears little resemblance to the flat reports of incidents supplied by the police, but this contradiction between what is said and what happens occurs within the security forces as well. From time to time we have been issued with cards like this: (see cards).

It must be remembered that orders are often given less to be obeyed than to protect those giving the orders, but there is still a staggering gulf between these instructions and the actual behaviour of the security forces in the townships, so I feel that perhaps I will be doing the military as well as the public a service by exposing a portion of the truth.

When we first deployed for the unrest, it was something of a joy-ride, despite the atmosphere of anticipation amongst the troops (hooray, we're off to kill the kaffirs). We were used to protect a white suburb for the duration of a large (black) funeral procession, but it was mostly a release from army camp, and an opportunity to chat up the neighbours' daughters. Everything changed the next time we were called out and began doing patrols with the police in the black townships. I will not forget my first patrol in a Casspir. The Casspir is the police vehicle of choice in the townships; huge brutish machines loaded with a plethora of weapons and equipment, invincible and inhuman in scale. They are the broncos of the cowboys in blue who drive them.

We entered one of the sprawling Port Elizabeth townships and began our run, as in a bad dream, through the maze of streets, buildings, shacks and people. The policemen express contempt at the rubbish and dirt around, but they kept their litter to dump in the township, throwing refuse out of the vehicle at pedestrians minding their own business. The streets are full of activity: there is a funeral of one of the persons shot by the police, and vehicles overloaded with blacks roar back and forth. The policemen respond to the chants and clenched fists with shouts of abuse and of "white power". We move on to a less crowded area. The cops keep a watch for members of the media, especially cameras. We come upon a bakkie loaded with children and youths who show us the clenched fist salute. The cops go into action; the bakkie is overtaken and forced to stop, the pile of black bodies spill off in all directions as the cops tumble out of the back of the Casspir in pursuit. Shortly they return in triumph with their catch; a boy of about ten who they are hitting and slapping as they drag him into the vehicle where they continue to slap and punch him

BRIG. JOFFEL VAN DER WESTHUIZEN
Officer Commanding Eastern Province Command

The time has come to re-establish law and order. As members of a disciplined, effective and respected security force, each individuals' conduct must at all times be responsible and courteous.

We are confident that we shall win.

Our cause is just.

- Always act honourably.*
- Be a soldier that commands respect.*
- Have confidence in your training.*

Remember: Respect human dignity.



J. Joffel van der Westhuizen Brig

CARDS

1. Lt. Col. G. van Rooyen, SAP, is responsible for all media enquiries.
2. Be courteous at all times.
3. Respect property and ownership.
4. Your image is part of the operation. Conduct yourself militarily correct.
5. Avoid conflict.
6. Do not react aggressively in the face of provocation.
7. Follow orders explicitly and ensure that your conduct is always respectful.
8. Co-operation with all security personnel will ensure the success of the operation.

BRIG. JOFFEL VAN DER WESTHUIZEN

while he recites the littyany: "Weet niks baas, weet niks baas". The pneumatic steel doors shut, the vehicle moves off. They force him to slap himself, eventually with both hands, while telling us "He won't show a black power sign again in a hurry". And this, for me, is the central image of this time: the small black boy with wild frightened eyes (but no tears) slapping himself, and the sudden stream of bright, bright blood appearing from his nose and dropping from his chin on the carpeted floor of the caspdr. Drip, drip, drip. Slap, slap, slap.

A few blocks later we pause and he is dumped. For the first time I look at the other army guys and only one shows any discomfort. On the faces of the rest I see only a leer. The police sergeant commanding the vehicle (he is English speaking) says, "It's that age, the kids that cause a lot of trouble and throw the stones". He went to the police instead of the army. Next year he wants to study to be an architect. It's just as well to deal with a misconception at this stage. Well meaning people (I recall an article in a parish magazine) have imagined the young police and army members sitting in their vehicles as fearful, confused: somehow as deserving of pity and understanding as the angry mobs outside. This is not so. Even I have never been afraid, sitting in this huge, powerful vehicle behind thick glass and steel. The majority of my peers are not afraid or confused. They are in turn bored and excited, they want action, they are callous, they are enormously arrogant.

So we trundle on. The cops are talking about white politicians interfering on behalf of blacks and Helen Suzman, Molly Blackburn are mentioned. One constable says "Ek sou graag n rubber (from the 37mm stopper gun) in haar doos op skiet." There is a loud dong as a large stone hits the armour and bounced in through the roof opening. The sergeant reacts immediately sending a 37mm gas cannister in the direction the stone came from. It lands on a house and the residents pour out coughing, their eyes streaming. We go and watch briefly, the cops laughing loudly, pointedly. A neighbour, an old, old man, wags his finger at us and the cops bawl at him threateningly before we move on.

The funeral is over. We head towards the returning crowd which seems to be starting to break up. Knots of people form on street corners singing and shouting their defiance. The sergeant radios his commander asking permission to disperse a small crowd. The lieutenant wants to keep things cool. "vokken bang gat" responds a cop. "Gooi julle bliksems, kommaan, gooi!" A sudden hail of stones is just what they've been waiting for. "yahoo, let's go!" and we launch into a hurtling, lurching circuit, past streams of panicking,

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running people, pumping gas and rubber bullets. It's over in a couple of minutes: the cops have reached for their shot guns for the second round but the crowd has dispersed. The whole thing had the atmosphere of sport; kaffir baiting, beating and hunting.

We eventually return to the police station. While we waited there the police brought in a man (ostensibly a stone-thrower) and derived much sport from beating and poking him with their sjamboks and truncheons, both on the ground in front of the station and in the back of a van. After half an hour he was released.

The sjambok is perhaps the truest symbol of the police in South Africa; for herding humans, baiting and punishing them - the tool of a base and perverted shepherd. Bright orange government stock, mass produced (the boere are great technologists now) - I have seen policemen wielding them on trapped or cowering offenders with all their might, while a wrist flick is enough to produce a yelp of pain from any one of my fellow soldiers.

This is a fairly detailed account of one day - the days stretched out. Almost throughout these four months, the army has been mixed in with the police, with a couple of policemen in each Buffel and usually a few more SADF members in the police vehicles. So, for the black population, there has never been an opportunity to differentiate between the two forces, and the SADF almost immediately inherited the lack of credibility and bad reputation of the police. Not that there is always that much to choose between the forces. Discipline and things like communication control are greatly superior in the Army, but the separation of troops into small allocated units has often allowed SADF members to get into the spirit of being a law unto themselves, and mirror the behaviour of the police, not merely their attitudes. It is not so much that the acts of violence that are shocking as the exposure of a general level of racism that allows them to flourish; so many people who are normally fair and reasonable but who simply 'hate kaffirs'. For some, there is no other description but 'white trash'; they have an attitude of hatred, boasting and contempt for blacks and a complete lack of human feeling and compassion towards them. Blacks ('Kaffirs') are a base subhuman plasm, a parody of man, whose pain is merely sport. And there is an awful lot of white trash in the infantry and the police. The level of violence within this group itself is high; indeed a broad mass of whites seem to have sunk into a state of moral bankruptcy - their main concerns sex (or rather some distortion of it), drink, material possessions and violence, into which is mixed a twisted self-serving christianity and an ironically 'kaffir-like' reasoning based on...

"We've always called them kaffirs - that's their name - why should we change it?" or "When there's shit we should just go through from one end (of the location) to the other with gas so they'll identify the guilty ones they'll all get it."

Action, especially for the young serviceman, is often a thrill, an ego trip. There is a tremendous sense of power in beating up someone: even if you're the most put-upon, dumb son-of-a-bitch, you are still better than a kaffir and can beat him up to prove it. In one of the small Eastern Cape towns involved, the boys in brown ~~XXXX~~ evolved quite sophisticated techniques for catching stone-throwers. During their night patrols the location became a giant playground for a serious game of cops and robbers, the occasional injury (someone running into a barbed wire fence) only adding to the excitement. To start with the captives were handed over to the police who beat them up and let them go. So eventually the cops were cut out of the equation, though sometimes kids were taken home to their parents for punishment of . . . much the same kind.

Having given you some idea of the insane situation I found myself in, it is more difficult to describe my reaction to it. My own guilt at my inaction in the face of this brutality, as well as the sheer physical impact of it, created an enormous tension and conflict of behaviour. My response was enough to get me labelled a 'kaffir-boetie' and a 'kommunis', and the experience undid much of the effect of nine months of infantry training (which is aimed at making you part of a unit which is basically a . . . function, a machine, without a mind or direction of its own.) Yet it is almost impossible to isolate yourself completely - you've been living 'fart to fart' with these people for nine months (they have humanity, though they abuse it in others) and you have to continue to live with them - so you are forced to compromise yourself, and, treacherously, you lose that sense of outrage. Until the next time.

In the townships themselves, your behaviour is confused. Normally only a spectator, in something like a cordon and search operation (where the SADF provides the cordon) I was at a loss. You are there to stop people going in or out, and of course they come to you and want to go to work, visit their sick aunt, etc. and one feels one has no right to be friendly and helpful because the situation is so grotesque and mostly they will be subject only to rudeness or abuse. Do I have a right to dent their hate, which is their strength? At the same time I found it impossible to act out an indifference.

contempt.

The uniform one wears does not only hold a certain association for blacks. Particularly in the small towns white people were keen to show their solidarity: "Is jully die ouens wat die kaffirs so lekker moer?" (the local doctor); "Ons is gatvol vir hierdie kak wat die kaffirs maak. Die manne is lus om in the gryp" (the salesman); "We're so happy you're taking care of the blacks - you should shoot them" (the pretty bank-teller).

One's superiors are not much help either. Although they step in when breaches of instructions become obvious, they seem not to want to know what is going on and won't interfere with another security force. Once we reported by radio that the cops were beating up a drunk in full view of the community, and the H.Q. radioed a reply which amounted to "What must we do about it?"

I have made a great number of generalisations seemingly drawn from one day's experience, but they are based on incidents over a period of months. A litany of incidents might become meaningless, but I will try and provide enough to be convincing and yet retain some impact.

P.E. nights, township-style: the 10 p.m. to 6 a.m. shift, haring about in the back of an SAP landrover. Surreal scenes. Smoke darkening the night sky - a school burning - the fire-brigade, a Casspir and us. Flashing lights, flames and smoke but no crowd: they have been told to stay inside, and not report the fire, or have their own homes set alight. The township is huge, sprawling, never sleeps. Throughout the night, there are lights here and there, cars nosing about, scattered figures, shebeens showing a quick blast of warmth and light from a narrow door. A stolen vehicle is spotted - we give chase and, siren going, we career through the alleys. We catch up; others are already there, they haul the man out and start laying into him. As we leave they are smashing his head into his stolen car.

Another night, another fire, we are hanging around while the fire-tanker does its work when individual stones start dropping about us with deceiving harmlessness. Suddenly one smashes the windscreen of an SAP bakkie and two cops with shotguns bound off like dogs let off the leash. They stalk the lone stone-thrower and corner him; he continues his desperate barrage. They shoot him dead. He is about sixteen. He is a kill.

Daytime - a vegetable seller is shot at with teenage

complain: "The police are supposed to help us. What must we do if they abuse us?"

As we arrive to take over from another group at one small town, a policeman is whipping a black man with his sjambok. He is surrounded by a small knot of army spectators. The officer in charge must have known what was going on, as the man's groans were clearly audible. In another town, a couple of army boys took to removing the points from their ammunition and pinching the cartridge closed to make blanks. "Jy moet sien hoe lekker duik n kaffir as jy op hom skiet". Boredom also leads to drinking on duty and, more innocuously, 2 o'clock in the morning braais on the location outskirts. Many of these incidents stem from a lack of discipline: in one town our commanding officer, though a man of right-wing politics, was what we term "paraat" (a stickler for going 'by the book') which made him a better man for the job than many a pseudo liberal would have been. It is ironic that, stringent as our laws are, conditions would be far better if they were strictly adhered to. In practice, those who enforce the law have a contempt for it as an independent entity: they do not grasp the importance of upholding the law as a process rather than as merely a tool (one of a number) for maintaining a certain set of circumstances (such as 'public order'). It is an attitude worthy of the best banana republics.

You may think that I have presented an over-pessimistic picture. After all, there are great changes taking place in our society: the abolition of the mixed marriages act, political interference act etc are quite radical steps and whites are making big concessions. This is true enough, but it has hardly touched the reality of township life for most Africans and the character of the largest black-white meeting point: the police and the administration boards etc. The daily assault on the dignity and self-respect of the black man goes on, if anything made worse by the economic situation and the unrest.

What are we to do (particularly those faced with conscription)? I think the only thing to do is to look honestly at how constructive your personal alternatives for two years national service would be. For me, the flight overseas would have been just that - flight, motivated more by my own fears concerning the army than by political or moral objections. You may also find that the social cauldron that prompted you to leave, suddenly removed, leaves a vacuum that is hard to fill. That very intensity is out of place overseas. National Service can be an opportunity for strengthening your beliefs and ideals by imposing them on an organisation not used to...

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such abstractions. Do so from the start though.

For me the army and my involvement in the unrest has been an education (if a traumatic one) that has situated me more concretely : I can now try to think and act on the basis of experience (rather than intellectual posture). However, others have long ago had that education. History moves both faster and slower than we imagine. Perhaps if we do not take sides now, the decision will be made for us.

TOWARDS A JUST PEACE IN OUR LAND

A Declaration to End Conscription

We live in an unjust society where basic human rights are denied to the majority of the people.

We live in an unequal society where the land and wealth are owned by the minority.

We live in a society in a state of civil war, where brother is called on to fight brother.

We call for an end to conscription.

Young men are conscripted to maintain the illegal occupation of Namibia, and to wage unjust war against foreign countries.

Young men are conscripted to assist in the implementation and defence of apartheid policies.

Young men who refuse to serve are faced with the choice of a life of exile or a possible six years in prison.

We call for an end to conscription.

We believe that the financial cost of the war increases the poverty of our country, and that money should rather be used in the interests of peace.

We believe that the extension of conscription to coloured and Indian citizens will increase conflict and further divide our country.

WE BELIEVE THAT IT IS THE MORAL RIGHT OF SOUTH AFRICANS TO EXERCISE FREEDOM OF CONSCIENCE AND TO CHOOSE NOT TO SERVE IN THE SADF.

WE CALL FOR AN END TO CONSCRIPTION

WE CALL FOR A JUST PEACE IN OUR LAND

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