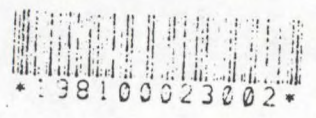


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A BLACK FOREIGN LEGION IN SOUTH AFRICA?

KENNETH W. GRUNDY

SINCE THE REINTRODUCTION of 'Blacks' into the combat structure of the South African Defence Force in 1963, the National Party government in the Republic of South Africa has experimented with a variety of roles, responsibilities and organizational formats for their use in the armed forces. With 'Coloureds' and 'Indians', these experiments were relatively straightforward. They were not confused or hampered by the sorts of questions that arise with the mobilization of black African troops. Given the government's professed commitment to the eventual implementation of the Homelands/Bantustan scheme whereby all black South Africans must be associated in an as yet unclear fashion with some 'homeland', in various stages of elaboration, there seems to be a logical dilemma built into the creation of black units. This article will concentrate on the black (that is, indigenous African) units and the political/legal issues that their recruitment and deployment raise. Because quite naturally so little has been made public about their employment, a premium will be placed on an accurate and fairly complete description of these units, their structure, composition, preparation, utility and general place in the SADF scheme of things.

By the time the Chief of the Army, Lieutenant General Magnus Malan, granted permission to establish the South African Army Bantu Training Centre in November 1973, the SADF had acquired some limited experience with black fighting men. The Cape Corps (Coloured) had been in existence for almost ten years and its Special Service Battalion for nearly a year. Blacks had served in large numbers in the South African Police and had been both involved in military duties in Rhodesia and in patrolling South Africa's borders, and the SADF had employed on an individual basis indigenous blacks in Namibia. In addition, most white opposition to the military use of blacks had been won over to this more flexible approach. It was no longer an issue of whether to use blacks, but how many, in what roles, and in what organizational format. For the Republic of South Africa, the land of the 'white man's war' and the last bastion of 'white Christian nationalism', the time had arrived to defend the regime by any and all means. Caliban clearly had to be issued with an automatic weapon.

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Structure

On 21 January 1974, the Army Bantu Training Centre was officially established, and three months later the first 16 black recruits reported for basic training. Establishment of the unit had been a bit unexpected. Only in 1970, the Minister of Defence had stated that black Africans would be employed by his Department only as common labourers. The idea of a black military unit then seemed inconsistent with the government policy of eventual 'independence' for each black nation or ethnic group. 'If the Bantu wants to build up a defence force,' Mr. Botha had asserted, 'he should do it in his own eventually independent homeland.'¹ Initially, however, the new unit did not appear to differ radically from the pre-existing arrangements, except, that is, for its theoretical incompatibility with the homelands scheme. The first recruits reportedly came over from the Bantu Labour Service, and the first advertisements in black newspapers touted the unit as a special guard formation, designed to train men for armed duty at military installations.² Ancillary skills as drivers, clerks, storemen, and dog handlers would be acquired as well as education in first aid and hygiene. In August 1974 another 33 men joined the unit, and at that time it was decided that the first intake of 16 should be trained as regimental instructors.³

The public image of the new unit was fuzzy. In December 1974, Major General J. R. Dutton, then Acting Chief of the Army, announced that the Army would recruit African soldiers who would, he said, be allowed to carry arms and enjoy the same pay and conditions of service as white soldiers. Of course, this would all take place 'within the framework of Government policy', and no integrated units were contemplated. No fear, as well, of blacks with rank (the highest theoretically possible then was sergeant-major) giving orders to whites of lower rank. Major General Dutton saw this new unit taking a form similar to the Cape Corps, yet he went on to talk of training which, with the exception of the security guards, covered the same 'traditional', menial assignments.⁴

Into 1975 the Minister of Defence continued to refer to 'Bantu' being used for 'guard duties and other auxiliary duties', hardly the character of the Cape Corps at this time.⁵ What he identified as the 'present casual utilization of Bantu', he went on, 'will take shape more clearly within the support service corps,' which he promised to establish. Meanwhile, he announced it as Cabinet-approved policy that 'Bantu sections' were to be added 'to certain commandos . . . with the help of those commandos'. But announcement is not fulfilment, and this policy

1. Republic of South Africa, House of Assembly, *Debates* (Hansard), hereinafter cited as *H of A Debs*, 31 August 1970, col. 2941.

2. *The Star* (Johannesburg), weekly air edition (WAE), 15 June 1974, pp. 1 & 11; and *Sunday Express* (Johannesburg), 16 June 1974.

3. *South African Digest*, 20 December 1974; and *Rand Daily Mail* (Johannesburg), 5 December 1974.

4. *The Star*, WAE, 14 December 1974; *Rand Daily Mail*, 10 December 1974; *New York Times*, 10 December 1974.

5. *H of A Debs*, 22 April 1975, cols. 4583-84.

has proved difficult to implement. It was an awkward time, when black African recruits were neither fish nor fowl, neither labourer nor soldier. One thing, however, was certain at that time. Blacks were not to function in a fully operational combat formation—the old vestiges of 'tradition' hung heavily as the Minister, the SADF, and the politicians grappled with the unit's configuration. At this time the numbers were so small as to permit a shift if necessary from the guard duty/auxiliary support service model to something more active.

Three important changes were brought about in 1975. First, blacks were for the first time enabled to join the Permanent Force. Before then, these men were grouped into a special South African Support Service Corps outside the Permanent Force structure. Second, on 1 December, the South African Army Bantu Training Centre was moved to Lenz, its current base, and was deemed then to be self-sufficient. Third, the unit's name was changed to 21 Battalion, since it had been established on the twenty-first anniversary of the Infantry Corps.

The 21 Battalion continued in an anomalous position. To begin with, the 21 Battalion is still a 'training school' for the South African Support Services Corps. All blacks in the SADF had first been brought into the SASSC. It is not an operational battalion *per se*, like most other infantry battalions in the Defence Force, even though an operational company was formed in 1977. Overall, 21 Battalion is organized for training and, by and large, for training in non-combatant services. Even into 1977 the press releases and propaganda associated with it tended to stress that black soldiers at Lenz were not being trained for combat duty.⁶

Until 1978, the 21 Battalion thus existed on an *ad hoc* basis. In that year, the Chief of the Army convened a Board of Officers to plan for the unit's future. It decided to build the 21 Battalion into a fully fledged training school for black soldiers from diverse ethnic groups. The Board also agreed to set up a number of regional units, perhaps at first of company size although capable of growth.⁷ However, since each would be identified with a regional command, each would take on a particular ethnic composition. At present, there is a battalion of around 300 Zulu (called 121 Battalion and affiliated to the Natal Command and based at Jozini), and companies of Swazi (111 Battalion, attached to the Northern Transvaal Command and based at Amsterdam), Venda (112 Battalion at Madimbo), and Shangaan (113 Battalion at Impala near Phalaborwa in the Eastern Transvaal). Already the 121 Battalion has been on operational duty patrolling the northern Natal border.⁸ There are immediate plans to form similar units in the Cape and the Free State. It is believed that in around 8 years

6. *South African Digest*, 18 February 1977, p. 24. In contrast, the same report was accompanied by photos, all posed and illustrating men in combat scenes.

7. See the statement by the Deputy Minister of Defence, *H of A Debs*, 2 March 1979, cols. 1748-49.

8. *Sunday Express*, 2 March 1980. The formation of these units was not publicised until late May, 1980. See *South African Digest*, 30 May 1980, pp. 1, 3 & 22-23. See also *South African Digest*, 4 July 1980, pp. 14-15.

there will be about 18 similar black battalions. Each is to be an operational unit, decentralized, and attached to a regional command—Northern Transvaal, Eastern Province, Free State, Natal, and so forth. At first it was thought that each black man would be trained originally at Lenz and then, upon completing his year's training, would be assigned to a regional unit, or to Lenz as an instructor (after further specialized training). The Lenz men would retain their Permanent Force status. Lenz would become, in other words, an elite enterprise among black formations. The regional units, however, have now started to do their own training and are now Permanent Force formations. Their members are recruited locally, and lower qualifications seem to apply than for 21 Battalion members. This would appear to be the new mechanism for the expanded use of blacks in the SADF.

It is difficult, without being privy to classified data, to discern the social backgrounds of 21 Battalion recruits. Conflicting reports make it necessary to be wary of 'authoritative' data. In contrast to the Cape Corps, where all accounts agree that recruits tend to come largely from rural areas beyond the Western Cape, there is little agreement regarding the backgrounds of 21 Battalion members. One personnel officer indicated that around 70 per cent of the members are from rural districts, with no clear cut pattern of ethnic composition. The unit's Commandant, in contrast, claims that most of the battalion was recruited from urban areas, particularly from the boom towns of the northern Orange Free State. He noted that the largest single ethnic group was South Sotho. Being from the Free State, South Sotho are most likely to speak Afrikaans as their first European language; and since this is the functional command language of the unit, as it is in the Army, they are more likely to fit into the system. Zulu is also widely spoken in 21 Battalion. Others have said that urban, even Rand township men, are numerous in the battalion. Still others have denied this.

The SADF has begun a series of two-week courses on various African languages, but presumably this has made little impact on white personnel. Of the 77 white men in the battalion in mid-1979, not one could speak a single African language. Yet whites assigned to black units do an orientation course, taught at one time by the Ethnology Unit attached to the Witwatersrand Command. Instructors are often graduates in anthropology and African languages.⁹ It would appear that the current thinking at 21 Battalion is that the cultural gap between white and black is so great that integration within units ought to be avoided. Instead, they seek to evade what they see as potentially explosive consequences of social mixing and to encourage ethnic differences. The ultimate strategy for the SADF is not clear. At present, all blacks at Lenz are trained together. And there is no formal separation of black soldiers into tribal or ethnic groups. In the longer run, however, a great deal depends on the

resolution of the homelands/citizenship issue and the growth and success of regional cum ethnic companies and battalions.

Thus the ultimate organizational dilemma is clear. If the homelands scheme envisages all South African blacks eventually achieving citizenship in an ethnic homeland, even those blacks resident in white group areas—what becomes of blacks in the SADF? Presumably, they too will all become citizens of other countries. Technically, blacks will lose all present supposed rights and claims attending South African citizenship and will become 'foreigners', many in the land of their birth. Will the 21 Battalion and other black units then become 'foreign legions'? Logically, that is the dilemma, and politicians and SADF personnel officers are aware of the delicacy of the issue. Chief Gatsha Buthelezi of Kwa-Zulu complained sarcastically: 'They expect us to be "patriotic" foreigners. We are called upon to offer our lives in defence of the borders of a country in which we will now be foreigners... I have never seen such insensitivity in my whole life.'¹⁰ Chief Buthelezi has refused SADF invitations to visit the 121 (Zulu) Battalion and the offer of an honorary colonelship in that battalion. Certainly those blacks serving in 21 Battalion consider themselves to be South African citizens and expect to continue as citizens into the future. Otherwise, the recruitment problems would be enormous. When asked if he was willing to defend South Africa, one resident of Soweto wryly dodged the question by saying, 'I'm a Bantu homeland citizen, so I'd be indulging myself in foreign politics—South Africa.'¹¹ Officially, when a homeland becomes independent, each 'citizen' of the new state is supposed to be released by 21 Battalion (or presumably by the new regional units) and then re-employed by that homeland's new army. Even more likely is his involvement before independence in preparation of the homeland's guard. Yet 21 Battalion still has Tswana members, and probably some Xhosa and Venda in its ranks. It has been said that some two-thirds of the Venda members of the SADF declined to transfer to the Venda National Army upon that homeland's 'independence'. There are also Venda in the 112 Battalion. Until such time as comprehensive strategic planning between SADF and various homeland national guards and armies is evolved, is it likely that black personnel will be moved easily from formation to formation or army to army without some considerable dissatisfaction and dislocation?

Finally, there arises the issue of what becomes of black men who leave the SADF for civilian life. Unlike some Coloured veterans who have moved into commandos, few commando units have welcomed black soldiers.¹² General Malan, early in 1978, appealed to all-white commando units to accept blacks into their ranks. But when asked what roles blacks would play in the all-white units, whether any had already joined and whether all facilities would be

10. As quoted in the *Washington Post*, 10 April 1979.

11. As quoted in *The Star*, WAE, 13 March 1976, p. 5.

12. See the Minister's instructions in *H of A Debs*, 22 April 1977, col. 5904.

9. SADF continues to advertise for ethnologists 'to help maintain good relations between various ethnic groups employed in the services.' *Argus* (Cape Town), 30 January 1979.

integrated, General Malan, through his Press Liaison Officer in Pretoria, declined to answer such questions.¹³ A policy spelled out by the Minister of Defence over two-and-a-half years earlier had apparently achieved little worth crowing about.

South African Government policy has been particularly ambiguous on the roles to be performed by blacks in commando units. Certainly, they are not to be treated the same as white members. For example, the Minister has emphatically pointed out that the SADF 'cannot distribute arms on a very large scale to blacks without the necessary control measures. I do not want to be misunderstood on this point. The distribution must be under the strictest regulations prescribed by the head of the Army.'¹⁴ Despite being pushed by various members of Parliament on the commando issue, the Prime Minister has not been able to open up the commando option too widely at this point.

Rank and Status

The normal white Permanent Force recruit must have a Standard 8 education (Junior Certificate, 'O' Levels). For blacks, expected qualifications have gone as low as Standard 5 or 6 if the Selection Board thought, on testing the applicant, that he had promise. Indeed, conceivably even with no formal education a man could be accepted into the Auxiliary Service.

Lenz is expected to train up to the rank of sergeant-major. The first batch of corporals were promoted in 1977 (after serving two years in the unit) and the first 21 sergeants two years later, early in 1979.¹⁵ Significantly, the two highest ranking blacks in the SADF are outside the ordinary line of command. Both were lateral entry appointments, a public relations officer (captain) for the SWA Command, and the first black chaplain (colonel) in the SADF.¹⁶ Plans are being studied which would train and promote blacks into regular commissioned ranks. According to Defence Force press releases, 'nothing will stand in their way of promotion to any suitable rank for which they qualify.'¹⁷ Most of their assignments will be in administration and maintenance, although platoon leaders have done courses in section leading, driving and maintenance, medical duties, radio operation, and an advanced instructors course. By and large, the Defence Force hierarchy conceives of black units being relatively self-contained. Although it has happened, it is not easy for the men of 21 Battalion to be transferred to other units.

13. *Rand Daily Mail*, 25 January 1978. The statement a few days earlier by General Malan and the press comment on it, all favourable, appear in *South African Digest*, 27 January 1978, pp. 7 & 26-28.

14. *H of A Debs*, 22 April 1977, col. 5904.

15. 'Medals for 100 of our Black defenders', *HIT* (March-April, 1979), pp. 14-17; and *Paratus*, Supplement, April 1979, p. vii.

16. *South African Digest*, 3 November 1978, p. 7; and 1 December 1978, p. 12.

17. *Sunday Times* (Johannesburg), 26 September 1976.

Force Levels

There is no aggressive recruiting campaign for the 21 Battalion, at least not in terms of trying to sell young blacks on the idea of the military as a career. The reason a more vigorous recruiting program has not been undertaken is because it has, in the eyes of the personnel staff, not been necessary. Something like three times more candidates apply than can be enlisted. The current waiting list reportedly contains 600 names.¹⁸ The existence of a waiting list contributes to an element of false security. Moreover, during the first ten-week orientation period of each intake, there seems to be a high drop out rate, indicating either flaws in the selection process or a low overall level of aptitude for military service. A more vigorous recruitment campaign and a more rigorous selection process to choose just the right candidates might be, in the long run, more cost effective. There has been some recent evidence that recruitment of blacks has not been going as well as we have been led to believe.

In 1976, when Harry Schwarz of the Progressive Reform Party called for a campaign to recruit 10,000 blacks into the Army on a full-time professional basis,¹⁹ his views were rejected by Government out of hand. It is an annual ritual during debate on the Defence Vote for Schwarz to develop this refrain, and usually for W. Vause Raw of the UP/NRP to make it a duct. Just as reliably, Nats accuse Schwarz of wanting 'to swamp' the Defence Force with 'non-whites'. They belittle the idea of a Defence Force composed of 'a speckled White elite officers' corps and the rest consisting almost entirely of non-Whites'.²⁰ The 'big solution' was not necessary or wise. The Defence Minister, as late as 1977, maintained that Africans, Indians and Coloureds would *not* be given a bigger role in the defence of South Africa. He did not intend creating larger units manned by 'pebble of colour'.²¹

What exactly are the facts about the use of black Africans in the SADF? Certainly, Defence Minister Botha (now also Prime Minister) has been fundamentally correct in his statements. Compared to the Portuguese or the Rhodesian use of Africans as a proportion of total security forces, the SADF has indeed been wary of 'swamping'. Although precise figures that are comparable over time are difficult if not impossible for an outsider to come by, it is clear that the force levels of black units are low. Intakes have been small; for example, 82 recruits out of 217 applicants in January 1977. The January 1979 intake numbered some 260 men 'after the pre-selection phase', which involved interviewing over 600 applicants.²² The size of 21 Battalion, then, has remained quite small and has grown gradually, from 35 in 1975 to an 'enrolment' of 350 'at

18. Yet there is also conflicting evidence that blacks picked up for infringements of the law are sometimes given the choice between 'volunteering' and jail: *Observer* (London), 6 July 1980, p. 10. It is difficult to confirm such rumours.

19. *H of A Debs*, 6 May 1976, col. 6177.

20. E.g., *ibid.*, 21 April 1977, col. 5903.

21. *Ibid.*, 22 April 1977, col. 5871; and *Rand Daily Mail*, 23 April 1977.

22. Interview, Lenz, 25 July 1979; and *The Post* (Johannesburg), July 1978.

Lenz' in June 1978, and published estimates of between 400 and 515 in 1979.²¹ The January 1980 number of black Permanent Force members in the Army is around 490, representing less than two per cent of the total Permanent Force complement.²⁴ Yet each intake is larger than its predecessors; and it looks increasingly as if larger numbers are being retained in the service, so one might expect force levels to be approaching 900 with the 1981 intake, especially if one includes regional black formations.

P. W. Botha's statement that blacks would not be given a larger role in the SADF was rather the exception to this. Far more frequent have been announcements to the opposite effect. A panel to examine defence needs appointed by the Prime Minister has urged a gradual expansion in the recruitment of blacks, as has a joint conference of SADF officers and the National Development and Management Foundation, and the Chief of Staff Personnel.²⁵ The pattern for the future appears set.

Training Programme and Combat Duties

After the pre-selection phase of recruitment, the intake is put through a ten-week orientation programme, followed by a mutual culling out. Those who do not like the discipline or hard work can drop out. Those who are 'too aggressive', or who have had a record of absenteeism or drinking too much or are resistant to the military life, are also dropped. At this point, only around half the intake is left. At this stage as well, there is a 'security clearance' on each man selected, and discussion begins with the recruit and his instructors as to placement and speciality training options.

Once these issues are resolved, remaining recruits begin the Basic Training, Phase Two of their programme. For white national servicemen, this lasts 12 weeks. For blacks it is a 17-week haul. So this 17 weeks, plus the ten weeks of orientation, 27 weeks in all, compares to the 12 weeks for white entrants. Only when one arrives at the corporals' training for promotion to sergeant, is black and white training the same. There are black instructors at this Basic Training level. The higher up the ranks instruction is conducted, the more whites dominate. During Basic Training, the 21 Battalion units are not trained in the skills of conventional warfare—rather the emphasis is on counter-insurgency fighting (COIN). Afterwards, the men undergo another battery of psychological and intelligence tests and then are moved along into Phase Three, specialization courses, including personnel and ordinance clerks and storemen, tradesmen, vehicle mechanics, chefs, drivers, and similar non-combatant roles.

At this level there are few black instructors, and the normal promotion courses

beyond the first qualification courses have no black instructors. Black platoon and section leaders are also scarce. This was, to some extent, an artificial shortage. When the 21 Battalion was ordered in 1977 to prepare a company for service in Namibia, there was confusion.²⁶ It meant pulling all the qualified black instructors out of the training wing and giving them operational responsibility. The result was that training was set back by months. Nowadays, it is easier to avoid this, for there are increasing numbers of black platoon leaders, corporals and sergeants. In addition, 21 Battalion assisted in the training at Lenz of the 1 Transkei Battalion, the first 48 members of the 1 Ovambo Battalion from Namibia, and the first 100 members of the 121 Battalion.²⁷

In mid-1977, the 21 Battalion began preparing a company for operational duty; and in late March 1978, it went off to the Eastern Caprivi Strip for three months of what was officially called 'advanced training'. The company, consisting of around 140 men, was organized into three platoons and two project patrols. The patrols were expected to liaise with the local populace, to serve an intelligence function by gaining its confidence, and thereby to exploit their racial commonality.²⁸ In 1979 a second operational company of 21 Battalion served in the border area.

There are wide political ramifications in using black soldiers, and the SADF are not unaware of many of them. The 21 Battalion has evolved from an auxiliary support unit producing instructors with administrative and artisan skills to a formation with a triple purpose—primarily for training, but also for operational combat, with an emphasis on COIN and riot control, and for maintenance. The propaganda utility of 21 Battalion has begun to be realized, and, in some respects, so has its practical utility.

Pay, Benefits, and Conditions of Service

'Black Permanent Force members of 21 Battalion enjoy the same career benefits as their White colleagues'. So says a 1977 piece of SADF puffery.²⁹ In a *Post* account of the 21 Battalion, it is stated that 'Officers of the Defence Force have agreed that in the army there are no race bars. All racial groups... are treated alike. They use the same barracks, eat the same food and go through the same conditions of service.'³⁰ These are unambiguous assertions; but what of reality?

Regarding pay scales in force at the time these statements were printed, base

26. This is not arrived at from an 'official' account of the preparations ('This is How 21 (Black) Battalion Prepared for Border Duty', *Paratus*, v. 29, no. 4 (April, 1978), pp. 4-7), but rather emerges from conversations with various SADF officers.

27. A. Leon, '1 Transkei Battalion and 21 Battalion: object lesson in togetherness at Lenz', *Paratus*, v. 27, no. 3 (March, 1976), pp. 19-21; and, *The Star*, WAE, 7 February 1976, p. 14.

28. *Daily Dispatch* (Port Elizabeth), 24 November 1978; and *The Citizen* (Johannesburg), 10 July 1978, pp. 1 & 11 of 'Force News'.

29. *South African Digest*, 18 February 1977, p. 24.

30. *The Post*, 18 June 1978, p. CA.

23. *H of A Debs*, 29 April 1975, cols. Q852-54; *The Post*, 18 June 1978, p. C4; *Washington Post*, 10 April 1979; and *New York Times*, 16 September 1979, pp. 1 & 16 (elsewhere in this article a figure of 1000 blacks in the SADF is mentioned).

24. Diverse personal interviews.

25. *New York Times*, 16 September 1979, pp. 1 & 16; and *The Star*, WAE, 8 February 1978, p. 2.

compensation for blacks in 1977 averaged between 54 and 63 per cent of white salaries at comparable ranks.³¹ In July 1976, Permanent Force salaries were supplemented with pensionable allowances. Although these may have improved the remuneration picture slightly, they hardly represent parity.

The same magnitude of discrepancy is applied to Special Camp Allowances paid daily in the 'operational area'. The Special Camp Allowance was equalized by the Minister of Defence effective April 1, 1978.³² The same applies to other allowances, including danger pay, for all members of the SADF in the operational area. Yet the Minister announced at that time that 'other emoluments payable to non-whites are not yet equal to those of whites but the gap is being narrowed as and when circumstances permit'.³³

Military pay rates are regulated by the Public Service Commission and are not subject to unilateral SADF administrative action. Those allowances and perquisites under direct SADF control reportedly have been equalized. Pay changes also necessitate legislative approval, and Government is continually being pressed by the PFP and the NRP as they were by their predecessor parties and factions to accept the principle of 'equal pay for equal work' within the Defence Force or at least to take steps to close the salary gap.³⁴ When queried to estimate the cost of introducing equal pay for all races in the SADF in the first year, the Deputy Minister of Defence replied that it would amount to R7.5 million.³⁵ Given the windfall revenues from inflated gold prices, this would hardly batter governmental finances. Yet for political reasons, Government resists implementing a policy they seem to have accepted in principle. Even in the matter of pensions, no equality prevails. Across the board, pensions and benefits had conformed to an overall ratio of 4:2:1, white: Coloured and Indian: African. Efforts have been made since 1976 to bring proportions more in line, but by no means have they approached, nor has Government committed itself to parity.

According to a classified study prepared by the SADF and approved by General Malan and the Minister of Defence, all legal vestiges of segregation based on sex and race were to be eliminated with effect from 1 April 1978.³⁶ Just how difficult it has been to carry through this sweeping decree is apparent. The sorts of things that can easily be changed (for example, common uniforms and symbols of rank and serial numbers without suffixes denoting race of the member) were instituted promptly. Ostensibly, recruitment and promotion standards are supposed to be identical, but this has proven difficult to implement. It would appear that recruitment standards for blacks have been

lower than those for whites, but those for promotion have been higher. In addition, a common seniority list for officers is supposed to enable any officer from any formation in the Permanent Force to be eligible for any position for which his rank qualifies him. Structurally, as well as in terms of policy, this has been meaningless in actual practice.

It would appear that more efforts have been made by the SADF to integrate and equalize service conditions in the operational area than on posts and in camps in the Republic. The basic form of segregation, the existence of separate units and formations, the continuation of auxiliary service designations for larger numbers of black troops, all compounded by the reality of rank patterns, mean that at the highest levels where presumably it should be easier to equalize conditions, and it is here that the most progress has been made. At lower ranks, where the greatest cultural differentiation exists and the least desire to break down segregation prevails among white soldiers, the problem is most intractable. A small-scale experiment to integrate Defence Force members on post, failed totally and nearly led to violent opposition by white national servicemen.

Officially, the men mess together in garrison as in the field. They stand in the same lines and they may sit together if they wish. In barracks they are free to use the same toilet facilities and there are supposedly integrated dormitory areas. But as in all fundamentally segregated societies, a high measure of self-segregation occurs, out of 'choice', but a choice bounded by the insecurities of the environment and an unwillingness to precipitate tension or displeasure. Whites assigned to the 21 Battalion invariably are there as instructors or in some specialist or command capacity. It is unlikely that they would be quartered with men of lower rank. So only at instructor level is mixing likely.

With regard to family housing, regulations prescribe a standard square footage based on rank. Thus housing standards are supposed to be identical. The same applies to NCO housing. But houses are still grouped by race, thereby conforming to the same 'group areas' model that is in force in the civilian world. Schooling for children of Defence Force personnel is racially segregated. In short, despite an increase in inter-racial contact compared with previous patterns of behaviour, and despite the undeniable fact that there is less racism in the SADF than in most other South African institutions (particularly state institutions), opportunities for socializing between races, and for social relations among friends and colleagues as equals, remain well nigh impossible.

21 Battalion as a Public Relations Exercise

Government and the SADF have devoted great energy to trying to sell black South Africans on the Defence Force, and on the necessity to stick with the established order, subject to marginal reforms, as preferable to a revolutionary order fraught with instability, insecurity, and, for whites, of course, the loss of control. One of their prize exhibits in this sales campaign is the black soldier. In the exaggerated words of the 21 Battalion's Commandant: 'The main field

31. *H of A Debs*, 4 May 1977, cols. Q1015-1020.

32. *Ibid.*, 2 May 1977, cols. Q992-93; and *The Citizen*, 8 April 1978.

33. *H of A Debs*, 7 April 1978, col. Q573.

34. E.g., Schwarz in *ibid.*, 2 March 1979, col. 1705; and Raw, 17 April 1978, col. 4833. See also *Rand Daily Mail*, 28 September 1976.

35. *H of A Debs*, 14 May 1979, col. Q412.

36. The legal authority on which General Malan's decree is based can be found in *Government Gazette*, No. 5888, 24 February 1978 (No. R. 341), p. 29.

application of black soldiers is in influencing the local populations.' 'Influencing', in terms of intimidation, perhaps. But as likely he meant that the rock band, for example, because of its visibility, becomes as politically vital as an operational company. Parades, award and promotion ceremonies, parents' days, off-base fairs and festivals became convenient excuses for showing off black units. Visits to Lenz from black officials, sporting personalities, the media, and others assume all the vitality of field manoeuvres.

When 21 Battalion trains in the field, local chiefs and indunas tour the camp, pose for photographs, and make appropriate statements to the press. The SADF goes on about how soldiers are there to protect the local population and how 'progress' can take place only in an 'atmosphere of peace'.³⁷ Then they are sent back home to sing the virtues of the SADF, its black troops, and the need to cooperate with the authorities. Meanwhile, the SADF public relations arm busies itself broadcasting the happenings and endorsements to those who may not have shared the experience first or second hand. If the effects can be magnified by the press and by media coverage or, at least, by reportage in the SADF and governmental publications, so much the better.³⁸ Prominent black visitors are also taken to white Defence Force units to be suitably impressed. The SADF knows how to use the visitors as one's name and prestige of office becomes associated with the regime. Public relations officers are attached to each regional command. They are often people with professional experience in the media and public relations. The basic question is, how successful have they been?

The fact is that virtually everywhere but in official government publications and others backed by government front organizations, black people have rejected the regime, the Defence Force, and black collaboration with them. Considering the criminal sanctions attending those counselling against military training, black opposition to SADF service is widespread and vocal.

Those blacks most inclined to support the regime or at least to favour cooperating with the SADF against 'Marxism and communism' if not in defence of apartheid, are often officials in 'acceptable' organizations. This invariably means those councils and bodies created by the South African state to facilitate the governance of black peoples. For example, the Chief Minister of Lebowa, Dr C. N. Phathudi, has said that his peoples were genuinely grateful to the SADF for the sacrifices in defending all the people of South Africa. 'I'm only sorry', he went on, that 'our people of Lebowa cannot participate fully in the defence of South Africa. We have a country worth defending and worth dying for. What we have is rich and worth possessing for ever.'³⁹ Professor Hudson

37. *Paratus*, v. 29, no. 4 (April, 1978), p. 5.

38. See, e.g., 'Broadcasters told about the real threats', *Paratus*, v. 29, no. 11 (November, 1978), p. 7; the entire issue of *Informa*, XXVI, No. 3 (March, 1979), a publication of the Information Service; 'Blacks join border battle', *South African Digest*, 19 May 1978, pp. 16-18; 'Medals for 100 of our Black defenders', *HIT* (March-April, 1979), pp. 14-17; and dozens of newspaper features, many sounding like they were printed, unedited, from SADF press releases.

39. *The Star*, WAE, 30 November 1974, p. 4.

Ntsanwisi, Chief Minister of Gazankulu, concurs: 'As far as the Black South African soldiers are concerned, it was quite clear to me that if the South African Black man is given a chance, he will be only too ready and willing to take his rightful place in the defence of the country.'⁴⁰ A parade of black community councillors, tribal council members, representatives of regional authorities, and employees of diverse governmental departments are trotted across the pages of *Paratus*, the *South African Digest*, and the various organs of the South African press, to echo similar views. But their willingness to collaborate can easily be explained and need not trouble us here.

More impressive are those black public figures who, despite their vulnerability to regime pressures, continue to call into question the Government's motives and methods. Many must speak in circuitous and aesopian terms. Chief Gatsha Buthelezi has, for example, told the Prime Minister that blacks could not at this stage be expected to assist in the military defence of South Africa as this would amount to defending apartheid.⁴¹ Much earlier, he had said that his people did not create terrorism and were not moved to resist it.⁴²

An alliance of generally moderate black political parties (chiefly the Coloured Labour Party and Buthelezi's *Inkhata* movement) declared in July 1978: 'While blacks do not enjoy citizenship nor share political power, it [the alliance] will not urge the black community to participate in the military defence of the apartheid regime.'⁴³ These are testy statements given South Africa's repressive legal fabric, specifically the laws making it a crime to discourage participation in the SADF, and the arsenal of informal sanctions the regime can bring to bear on its known critics.

Steve Biko was even more outspoken, and, of course, he paid for it dearly. When discussing black policemen, he did not mince words:

... there is no such thing as a Black policeman. Any Black man who props the system up actively has lost the right to being considered part of the Black world: he has sold his soul for thirty pieces of silver and finds that he is in fact not acceptable to the White society he sought to join. These are colourless White lackeys who live in a marginal world of unhappiness. They are extensions of the enemy into our ranks.⁴⁴

Presumably, the same sentiments would apply to blacks in the SADF. Biko's views have wide appeal in the black community, especially among younger people, many of whom see black enlistment as betrayal. During the 1976 Soweto uprising, the families of members of 21 Battalion were moved out of Soweto and into the camp for their own protection—protection from their own

40. *Informa*, XXVI, No. 3 (March, 1979), p. 2.

41. *Nation* (Johannesburg), III, No. 5 (January, 1979), a publication of *Inkhata*.

42. *The Star*, WAE, 15 May 1974, p. 14.

43. Quoted in *Washington Post*, 10 April 1979.

44. From Frank Talk (Stephen Biko), 'I Write What I Like: Fear—an Important Determinant in South African Politics', in M. Lard Arnold (ed.), *Steve Biko: Black Consciousness in South Africa* (New York: Random House, 1978), p. 276.

people. Blacks drawn into the repressive apparatus of the state, their personal property, and official state plant—schools, beer halls, offices—became prime targets for the protesters.

In a *New York Times* account of the 21 Battalion, it was pointed out how a black sergeant, one would assume a loyal and obedient member of the SADF, took off his uniform before setting off for his home on leave. 'My friends don't like it,' he is reported to have said. 'They ask, "How can you join the army as long as the black man is oppressed in this country; how can you go and fight for the white man when it is the white man who is pushing us down?"' Although this sergeant found hostility a problem, he managed to justify to himself his role in the SADF, citing pay and benefits and arguing that now, after fighting, 'we have a right to claim our share in [this country], alongside the white man.'

In informal and some formal surveys conducted by the South African press, opposition is equally evident. *The World*, the Soweto black daily banned in 1977, asked its readers: 'Would you fight for South Africa if we are invaded from Angola?'⁴⁵ Despite the loaded 'we', and disregarding the unrepresentativeness of a postal response, some 244 letters were received, and 203 said they were opposed to fighting in defence of South Africa. The most common reasons expressed were that this would be a 'white man's war' and that most blacks have little to defend. Even so, some who opposed fighting said they would change their minds if Government abolished the pass laws and took steps to improve their lot economically. Some even harked back to World War II and mentioned the bonuses given white veterans and the 'worthless medals' and paltry demobilisation rewards offered blacks then. In 1978 *The Star* did a quick survey of young blacks, and the results were similar. Few showed any enthusiasm for joining the SADF, most displayed bitterness.⁴⁷ The Government cannot expect significant popular acceptance among blacks for the SADF or for black participation in the SADF unless and until major changes are begun in civilian race relations and economic conditions for blacks. The problem for white South Africa is not a problem of propaganda and salesmanship. The 21 Battalion and the SADF may be efficient, even feared and grudgingly respected organizations, but the commodity being marketed is not really these units. It is South Africa itself. The public image of the SADF cannot help but be tainted by the regime structure that embraces it and which it exists to defend. Until white South Africans and their leaders appreciate this, their efforts to involve blacks in defence of the Republic of South Africa are bound to be frustrated.

45. *New York Times*, 16 September 1979, pp. 1 & 16. Similar kinds of hostility are reported in the *Washington Post*, 10 April 1979.

46. As reported in *The Star*, WAE, 13 March 1976, pp. 5 & 10.

47. E.g., *ibid.*, daily edition, 19 September 1978.

NOTES AND NEWS

Editors, Old and New

One of the Joint Editors of *African Affairs* has resigned, and a new one appointed in his place.

Anthony Atmore retires after ten years' editing the journal, to start with in company with Alison Smith, more recently in partnership with Nicola Harris, Michael Twaddle and Margaret Vail. During this time he has helped to raise further the reputation of the journal in Southern African studies, and we are most grateful to him for this. Now that he has been appointed to a research post at the School of Oriental and African Studies following the closure of his Centre of Area and International Studies at London University, we wish him all good fortune in his various future writing plans and welcome him as one of a number of newly appointed members of our Editorial Advisory Board.

To ensure that Southern Africa continues to receive expert editorial attention in *African Affairs*, we are delighted to announce the appointment as new Joint Editor of Richard Hodder-Williams of Bristol University. Richard is presently Chairman of the Bristol Branch of the Royal African Society and is of course a distinguished student of Zimbabwean affairs as well as amongst other things the author of a recent book on the American Supreme Court.

Michael Twaddle of the Institute of Commonwealth Studies at London University continues as the other Joint Editor of *African Affairs*.

A Toronto Branch?

If any Canadian members of the Royal African Society would be interested in coming together in Toronto for meetings on Africa, please would they contact: David N. Fenn, Apt 904, Tower Hill East, 330 Spadina Road, TORONTO Ontario M5R 2V9.

Apologies

The Editors of *African Affairs* regret the lateness of several recent numbers of the journal, which is partly a consequence of the British printing strike last year but hope to be back on target with the next number.

We are also very sorry that the surname of our distinguished contributor, Si Amar Maini, was misspelt at the end of his review of Paulo Kavuma's book in *African Affairs* (April 1980) at page 278.

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