

OBJECTOR



Newsletter of the Conscientious Objector Support Group (W. Cape)

Vol. 2 No. 1

'End Conscription' is the Call!

Throughout South Africa the call has been made: End compulsory conscription for military service! Committees have so far been established in Cape Town, Durban, and Johannesburg, to give coherence to the growing opposition to the militarisation of our country.

The call for an end to conscription was first made at the Black Sash's 1983 National Conference. This call was endorsed at both the National Conference of the CO Support Groups (COSG's), and at the NUSAS 1983 Congress.

The 'End Conscription' committees are not an attempt to merge organisations or to build a new organisation, but a cooperative effort of organisations covering a wide spread of opinion. Involved in the committees so far are a range of church and ecumenical bodies student and womens' organisations, and the CO Support Groups.

The call for an end to conscription must be situated in the context of escalating conflict in Southern Africa. Further, the SA state is becoming increasingly militarised. We see that the SADF is involved in all aspects of society, from the level of the State Security Council to that of education.

The SADF is also being challenged both internally and internationally for its aggressive stance towards neighbouring states, and its continued occupation of Namibia.

A campaign to end conscription should also be viewed in the context of the immanent extension of conscription to coloureds and indians, and the 1983 Defence Amendment Act. This is a punitive measure which aims to divide CO's by criminalising those objectors who do not qualify for religious pacifist status.

The 1983 Defence Amendment Act offers no meaningful alternative to conscription. Therefore, we say: No to conscription! Forward with the End Conscription Campaign !!

EDITORIAL

1984 has begun with a rapid succession of confusing events surrounding the war situation in Southern Africa. OBJECTOR hopes to continue to provide comment and news of interest to all those concerned about the fate of objectors to military service, and opposed to the militaristic policies of the South African government.

The Board for Religious Objection to military service, created by the 1983 Defence Amendment Act, has begun to hear cases. In this issue we hope to begin a debate on how religious pacifists and others who may be effected by the board should respond to it. While utilising such scope as the Board allows, it is vital to continue the campaign for a wider recognition of the fundamental right of conscientious objection to war.

Also in this issue a summary of the latest invasion of Angola is given, and the reasons behind South Africa's troop "disengagement" offer probed. Any move towards a cessation of hostilities is to be welcomed. However for this to be more than a passing phase, it is necessary for a clear commitment to be made by the South African government to proceed without delay in implementing the Independence plan for Namibia. Such a commitment has yet to be made as part of the "disengagement" process, and all those concerned for peace in Southern Africa should join in a united call for the withdrawal of South Africa from Namibia.

In South Africa today there is a growing conviction that the illegal occupation of Namibia, and the consequent war against SWAPO cannot be justified on strategic or moral and political grounds.

The belief exists that the reluctance of the Botha government to withdraw from Namibia stems from the political embarrassment that it might face in the eyes of some of its supporters, not least in the SADF, as a result of an early settlement. Are hundreds more to die, and thousands be faced with the total disruption of their lives because of the 'border war' to save the Botha government some political embarrassment?

A report on the End Conscription Committee draws attention to the mounting call for the abolition of compulsory military conscription. If Namibian independence were achieved, the fig leaf of the border war with which the continual extension of conscription since 1973 has been justified, would be removed. What reasons would then be given for the expenditure of so large a portion of the country's resources in money and manpower on the military?

Board for Religious Objection:

Co-operation or rejection ?

The Board of Religious Objection is not a court martial. It does not sentence objectors to prison. It can only decide whether an objector falls into some category of religious objection or not. Those who apply to the Board to be classified as religious objectors, do not have to report for military service pending the decision of the Board, provided that a written receipt of his application has been given. Presumably, if the Board rejects an application, a further call-up will be issued if the date of the call-up is already past. Refusal to report for service will then make the objector liable for a prison sentence.

Who may be classified as religious objectors?

The law uses the words "religious objector" without giving any definition of the terms. So the Board has discretion to classify anyone as "religious" if they want to. However, the intention is probably to limit it to active members of religious groups. This is illustrated by the fact that a member of the Board is to be co-opted if the other members are not of the objectors "denomination".

Thus the law does not specifically prohibit anyone from claiming to have a religious objection to military service, even if not a member of a religious group, but the Board may well incline towards a fairly conservative view of who is religious and who is not.

Three Categories

Being "religious", however, is not enough. There are three categories of religious objection mentioned in the Act, all of which refer to "a religious objector with whose convictions it is in conflict to render service . . . in any armed force." In other words, it seems that all three categories (non-combatant, non-uniformed non-combatant, and non-militarist) are only available to universal pacifists.

Narrow Definition

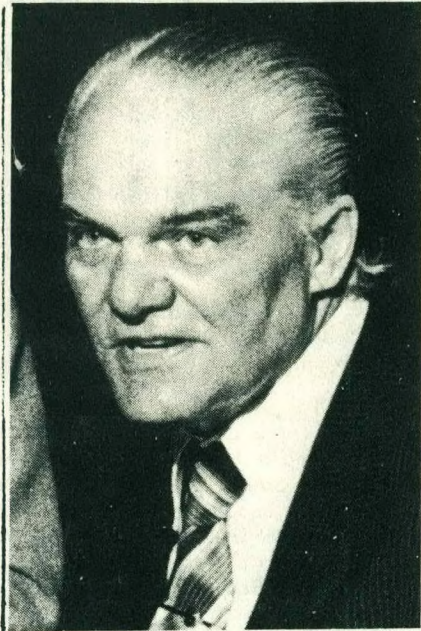
The SADF has succeeded in enshrining in legislation a very narrow concept of what constitutes a "religious objector" and what is meant by "universal pacifism". There are many people who hold strong moral objections to all wars, but will not say that all people who are forced to take up arms are always morally wrong. Indeed, dogmatic pacifists who declare that it is indefensible to take up arms under any circumstances form a minority of those with conscientious objections to war.

Not only does the legislation have a very narrow view of conscientious objection, but it has a very narrow view of religion. It fails to recognise that many people who have fundamental

moral and ethical objections to war, cannot be radically separated from those that have "religious" objections. The moral content of their viewpoints may be the same in most respects as that of a "religious" objector. What may differ is the context in which those views are placed. To discriminate in this way is itself completely without moral justification.

Selective Objectors

The list of categories of permitted "religious objectors" in the Act is deliberately limited to exclude all selective objectors, that is one who



Justice M T Steyn, Chairman of Board - Objective and Impartial?

objects to a particular war without necessarily objecting to all war. Such objectors may be as "religious" as any universal pacifist, and indeed the Just War Theory, on which many selective objectors base their stand, is the official theological position of almost all churches.

Board may classify some selective objectors as "religious objectors" while choosing to ignore their arguments on the injustice of the war in Southern Africa.

The Board may well find itself forced into widening its interpretation of the law because of the obvious contradiction in rejecting the application of religious objectors who are not universal pacifists.

What should objectors do?

Reject the Board

One possible course of action is to refuse to have anything to do with the Board, since its composition makes it prejudiced, its terms are essentially discriminatory, and it does not fulfill the demands made by conscientious objectors, churches and progressive groups.

Non-religious selective objectors will almost certainly not be allowed to be regarded as religious objectors, instead their position will be dismissed as "political". This is perhaps the major argument in favour of the refusal to participate in the Board application. Especially if conscription is extended to coloured and Indian people, the vast majority of objectors will fall into a "political" category. Should others accept the relative privilege of community service?

Widen interpretation

Another possibility is to try to test the Board, to give it ambiguous cases, and to see if the rather narrow interpretation which may be given to the legislation may be considerably widened.

In the USA, some chose the latter course, and managed through appeals to the Supreme Court, to widen the definition of religious from "belief in a Supreme Being" to anyone whose moral position on war arose from their fundamental beliefs. In other words, moral and not just religious beliefs became recognised. However, they did not manage to alter the fairly stringent demand that objectors had to be universal pacifists, not just opposed to the war in Vietnam.

In South Africa, the Board's decision is final, and no such appeal to the Supreme Court is possible. Nevertheless, the Board may be persuaded to accept moral pacifism if a case similar to that in the USA is used.

For selective objectors, it may also be worthwhile seeing how widely the Board interprets the legislation. The continuum which exists between pacifism and selective objection can be used to challenge the simple statements in the legislation. For example, a Just War theorist who does not know whether he would use violence in an exceptional case is not clearly within the definition in the legislation. But he is also not all that clearly outside the definition either.

Editorial Note:

In the article above, two possible positions were outlined: To encourage as many people as possible to utilise the Board in an attempt to widen the scope for permissible "religious" objectors, and implicitly, for all objectors. Alternatively, to encourage a rejection of the Board, especially by religious objectors for whom it is supposed to be catering, in the interests of maintaining the unity of the conscientious objector and anti-war movement in South Africa. The OBJECTOR would welcome all responses on all questions relating to the new legislation and hopes to encourage a wide debate around the issue.

UDF protest against 'Askari' invasion

"Get out of Angola. Get out of Namibia. Release Mr Tiovo ja Tiovo. Release all political prisoners and detainees. End conscription. Abolish the Terrorism Act and all AG proclamations relating to 'security' in Namibia. Work for justice and reconciliation and, above all, WAGE PEACE."

These sentiments, spelt out by Mary Burton of the Black Sash, were echoed by the 300 people who recently attended a protest meeting in the Rondebosch Congregational Church. The meeting was called by the United Democratic Front's Observatory Area Committee, as a protest against the SADF's latest invasion into Angola. (See feature article on Askari.)

Statements

Statements condemning the SADF's actions were made by the Black Sash, the Conscientious Objectors Support Group, the United Women's Organisation and the Cape Youth Congress. The statements stressed the need to condemn not only the illegal and abhorrent occupation of Angola, but also the violence perpetuated against millions of South Africans within our borders.

Systematic Destabilisation

Professor Mike Savage, for the UCT Sociology Department, focussed on the militarisation of South African society and on South Africa's attempts to destabilise its neighbours. Said Savage:

"The civilian death toll in these (neighbouring states) as a result of South African actions, or South African sponsored actions, far exceeds the total deaths attributed to any actions by the military-wing of the ANC, and it is patent nonsense for the South African state to issue claims that it is not following a systematic destabilisation programme. It is purveying death and



destruction on a wide scale in Southern Africa and engaging in the very terrorism it so vocally decries."

Speaker Detained

Filling in at the last minute for UDF Publicity Secretary, Terror Lekota (who had been detained by the Free State police), Mike Evans from the Observatory Area Committee, spoke about Operation Askari, the reasons for the invasion, and on the SADF's attempts to conceal the truth. He explained the trends which Askari indicates: the increasing use of conventional military tactics; the decision to engage Angolan and Cuban forces, rather than SWAPO; and the increasing public dissatisfaction with the SADF's action in Angola, as reflected in both the English and Afrikaans press.

SWAPO Statement

A high point of the meeting was a statement of support from SWAPO. In condemning the invasion and supporting the protest meeting, SWAPO called on all freedom-loving South Africans to continue the struggle for peace and democracy in Southern Africa. The statement was greeted by a two-minute standing ovation by the entire audience — an audience whose relatives and friends are regularly called up to fight against SWAPO.

The meeting unanimously passed a motion condemning South Africa's attacks on Angola and supporting the people of Angola in their opposition to the SADF and Unita. The motion further resolved to support the call for an end to compulsory military conscription and to support the UDF and all people striving to build a free and peaceful Southern Africa.

Archbishop queries SA's motives

The president of the Southern African Catholic Bishops' Conference, Archbishop Denis Hurley, questioned South Africa's true motives in Namibia and Angola "in view of all that is said about destabilisation".

In his report to the annual plenary session of the SACBC, held in Pretoria in late January, Archbishop Hurley noted that the "tragedy" of the Namibian war dragged on, involving SADF troops in never-ending operations in Angola.



These operations were ostensibly aimed at SWAPO, but in view of all that is said about destabilisation, one could only wonder whether this was the whole story.

"The question arises: How much military action does this imply and what are the precise goals South Africa hopes to achieve?" he said.

"Destabilisation is aimed principally at forcing South Africa's neighbours to deny assistance and facilities to the African National Congress.

"The conclusion that springs to mind is that a hard line will be taken in Namibia and Angola until South Africa has achieved its objectives in both these countries," Archbishop Hurley said.

Operation Askari: the History of a Secret War

Operation Askari, the code name given to the latest South African invasion of Angola, was different from all the previous raids. In the light of the current negotiations between South Africa and Angola it is necessary to try and piece together from the fragmentary evidence available what actually happened and what the objectives were.

Operation Askari started on about December 15 last year when South Africa offered to withdraw its troops from southern Angola for a trial period of 30 days, starting from January 31, 1984. The strange thing about this offer was that up to that moment South Africa had vehemently denied that it was maintaining an occupation force in parts of southern Angola.

Major Thrust

Swapo and the Angolan government saw this merely as a ploy, covering up the fact that at the very moment of the South African offer, the SADF was in fact involved in a major thrust into Angola. On December 19 an Angolan statement claimed that SADF planes had bombed the town of Caiundo in Kuando Kubango province. Dozens of people were killed, it was claimed, as a result of hits on a school, a hospital and some houses.

SA Denial

Confronted with this statement the SADF denied any presence in Angola except for what they called "hot pursuit" or "search and destroy" operations against Swapo "terrorists". At this point, the Angolan government officially rejected the South African "disengagement" offer, denouncing it as nothing more than an attempt to blunt Angola's protests about the current invasion.

In the United Nations, the South African permanent representative, Kurt von Schindring, denied that South Africa was in fact occupying any Angolan territory. Jean Kirkpatrick, the American representative at the UN, welcomed South Africa's "pull-back" offer as "a major new step". She said, "We do not intend to let the opportunity for a settlement pass by." An interesting sentiment to express at the beginning of a major invasion.

From the outset, the propaganda war turned on whether South Africa was attacking Swapo or the Angolan and Cuban forces. In a radio broadcast, the Angolans claimed that the South African forces were operating up to 300 km inside the country and were trying to relieve pressure on Unita forces being attacked by the Angolans. Then on December 22, Angola claimed that Fapla forces had beaten back an SADF attack on the town of Caiundo, killing six soldiers and capturing a quantity of arms.

After this, it was no longer possible for the SADF to continue denying the invasion. Accordingly, Constand Viljoen, Chief of the SADF, held his first press conference on the latest invasion. Describing the attack as a "limited search and destroy operation", he warned that "the operations would continue as long as necessary until our objective is achieved". Further details on the nature of the "objective" of operation Askari were not given.

"Hot Pursuit"?

At the same time General Viljoen admitted that five SADF soldiers had been killed at Caiundo in a "Fapla ambush". However, he claimed that the SADF had not intended attacking Fapla or the Cubans and were in "hot-pursuit" of Swapo. A glance at the map reveals that Caiundo is at least 200 km from the Namibian border with Angola. This is made even more unlikely by General Viljoen's own evidence that Swapo forces were gathered at the town of Jamba and that when faced with the SADF presence in the area, many of them had moved to behind Fapla and Cuban bases at Cahama. Cahama is more than 400 km from Caiundo. From the evidence it appears that South Africa made an unsuccessful attack on the Fapla forces at Caiundo.

"Climate of Terror"

After the attack on Caiundo, the Angolan government also began wondering what the real objective or the invasion was. The Angolan Ministry of Foreign Affairs claimed the objective of the attack was "to create a climate of terror and panic among the population". And this indeed seems to have been a large part of what operation Askari was all about. It was intended as an aggressive stroke against primarily the Fapla and Cuban forces to soften up the MPLA government to make military and political concessions to South Africa.

Major Clash

General Viljoen continued to claim that the operation was being conducted mainly against Swapo insurgents who he said were moving south in seven companies of between 120 and 140 men each. The SADF troops were deployed over a wide area of southern Angola to stop them, he said. However, in the media it was claimed that a major clash was looming between the SADF and Fapla and Cuban forces. "Swapo, Cuban and Fapla forces appear to be deeply integrated in southern Angola," General Viljoen maintained.

There is evidence to dispute Gen. Viljoen's claim that the attacks were directed mainly against Swapo. The next serious engagement was an SADF air raid on Lubango. The bombing of Lubango was aimed primarily at Angolan forces which were, however, close



SAAF Puma dropping Parabats

enough to a Swapo rear base to support the SADF's stance that the operation was aimed at Swapo. How, it may be asked, can hitting a Swapo rear base over 300 km from the Namibian border significantly effect the actions of insurgents, who on the SADF's own evidence, had been placed near the front for several weeks? After the Lubango attack, the Angolan authorities perceived more accurately that Swapo's operational strength did not appear to be the objective of the South African attacks.

SADF Objective?

In a statement, the Angolans claimed that the mission of the South African forces was aimed at "weakening the combat strength of Angolan forces and that only Angolan and South African troops were involved in the fighting which has been going on since December 12." After the raid on Lubango, SADF planes repeatedly flew overhead causing people to scatter for fear of renewed bombardment. In a statement on the war situation, the Angolan Defence Ministry repeated its claim that "the incursion was directed solely against Angolan army positions" and rejected earlier denials of the South African claim that the operation was directed against Swapo.

Given the wide ranging presence of South African troops in the area, it is strange that they do not appear to have engaged a single one of the seven companies of Swapo insurgents that Gen. Viljoen maintained were heading south towards Ovambo. Instead the next and

decisive encounter of the operation occurred at another Fapla base town called Cuvelai. On January 3, a Cuban and Fapla force attempted to counter-attack the SADF presence in the area, resulting in the deaths of 324 members of the Angolan force.

Before the news of the clash at Cuvelai was made public, the Angolan government announced the day after the disaster at Cuvelai, that it was prepared to accept South Africa's "truce" offer, but still linked this firmly to an early start to the implementation of the Namibian Independence process. Swapo simultaneously announced its readiness for a ceasefire tied to the same condition.

The primary objective of the invasion had now been achieved. That this might well have been the primary objective of the whole invasion plan is suggested from an unexpected exchange that occurred between General Viljoen and the US State Department. Justifying the pattern of the attacks, General Viljoen drew a parallel with the recent American invasion of the Caribbean island of Grenada. It was the wrong thing to have said. The State Department in Washington issued a statement repudiating the general's analogy. They were, the spokesperson said, "deeply concerned that the US would be seen to have sanctioned the latest Angolan adventure as a precursor to Pretoria's promised January 31 disengagement". Surely an unnecessary concern, unless it happened to be true!

By January 9, less than a week after the battle at Cuvelai, the SADF began to withdraw its forces. At the same time as announcing the "scaling down" of the invasion force, the South African Minister of Foreign Affairs said that South Africa would not object to direct talks between Swapo and the Administrator General of South West Africa. This was a major new concession. Swapo responded to Botha's statement saying that they were ready to have direct talks, "something which Pretoria has consistently refused to do hitherto".

At the same time, there was a noticeable softening of America's stance on the so-called "linkage" issue, whereby America and South Africa have insisted that the Cuban forces must be withdrawn from Angola prior to any implementation of the Namibian Independence plan.

It was reported from Washington that a US State Department spokesperson had told newspaper people that, "It was ludicrous to say that all Cuban troops should leave Angola before anything else happens." The possibility cannot be excluded that America is moving away from its stance on the "linkage" of the withdrawal of Cuban troops and the implementation of Namibian Independence. If South Africa had prior knowledge of this, it might have prompted the government to make the disengagement offer as an alternative tactic, and used the raid to force Angola to accept it. Subsequent diplomatic developments support this interpretation.

Almost as soon as operation Askari began to be "scaled down", secret negotiations on implementing the South African disengagement offer began. The Americans have offered official recognition to the Angolan government, with all the substantial trade and other advantages that this must bring, in return for Angolan co-operation on implementation of the ceasefire and the phased withdrawal of at least some of the Cuban forces. Chester Crocker, himself, flew to Cape Town, probably to get P W Botha's consent to only partial linkage on the Cuban issue and to discuss the place of the Namibian settlement in the "disengagement".

The Angolans stand to gain US recognition and a drastic reduction in the scale of hostilities in southern Angola. What does P W Botha and the South African government stand to gain? Primarily a large saving in the cost of maintaining an occupation force in southern Angola and Namibia. South Africa is spending over R1 700 million a year in Namibia, most of which is being swallowed up by the SADF.

Increased military commitment, which must inevitably come from the failure to settle can only drive up this cost to astronomical levels. The South African government is already considerably overspent. It is in the process of implementing its constitutional "New Deal" which is in itself going to cost many millions of rands, and is faced with a variety of pressures on the home front.

There is increasing resentment at the continual round of government sponsored price increases. Many people are beginning to feel that it is South Africa's bloated military budget that has put the country's finances into their current mess. Further military spending could be financed by increased taxation, but Botha cannot be sure that his government will retain support if he chooses this path. The "linkage issue" has become a millstone around the government's neck, limiting its room for manoeuvre. It is now expedient to jettison it, just as it had originally been expedient to create it, when South Africa desired to sink the independence negotiations in 1981.



Namibia today could be poised on the brink of achieving independence, which will inevitably bring to power a Swapo government. Operation Askari, the necessity of which was described by General Viljoen as "not even debatable", could well prove to be the final face-saving gesture on the part of the South African government, as it tries to extract itself from a war which it cannot win decisively, and a political arena in which it has already lost.

In South Africa the political will to continue a war under these conditions is rapidly beginning to fade. As a correspondent of Die Vaderland wrote: "It would be foolish to deny that the border war had degenerated into a full scale Vietnam, in which we were becoming more and more deeply entangled. It had become a one-sided struggle in which apparently, only sacrifices were demanded and offered, but where no prize was to be won... Every day our troops spent in SWA would serve only to make their inevitable eventual departure more humiliating." It is time for all South Africans to demand an end to the war in Namibia and withdrawal of all South African troops, NOW!

Film Review

Nicaragua-'Under Fire'

Directed by Roger Spottiswoode
Orion/Lions Gate Films

"Under Fire" has recently appeared on the film circuit - but it is a commercial movie with a difference.

It is set against the background of the last years of the struggle in Nicaragua, culminating in the victory of the Sandinista National Liberation Front (FSLN) over the Somoza dictatorship in mid-1979.

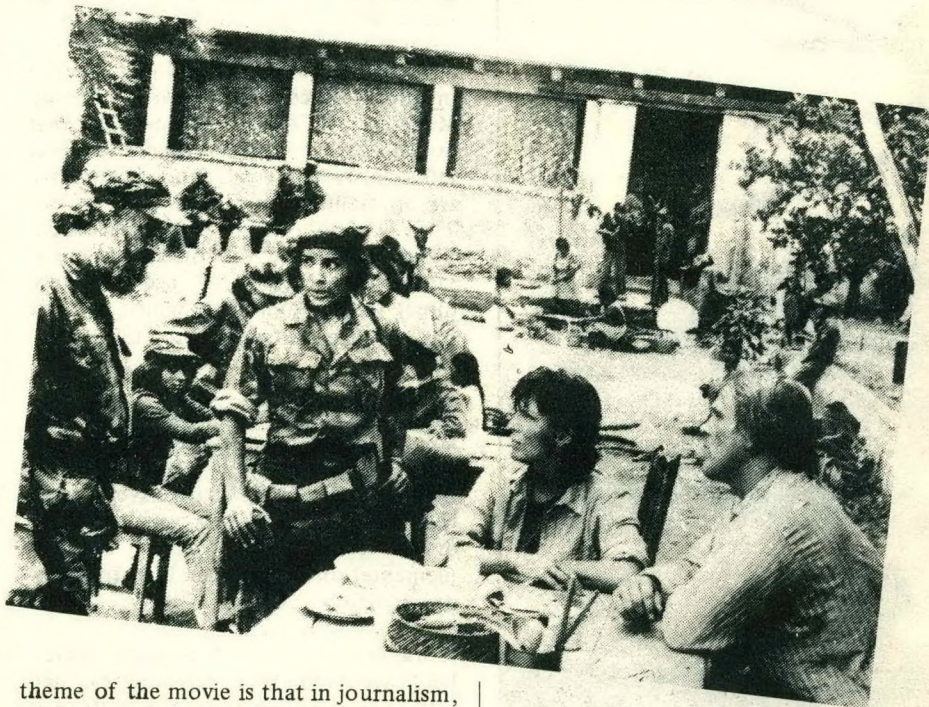
Prior to the FSLN victory, Nicaragua was one of the most backward countries in the world. A tiny minority owned all the land while more than 60 percent of the people were unemployed. 60 percent of the people had no education and health services catered only for the rich. The people were forced to accept the situation through the terror of the National Guard, who brutally murdered thousands of opponents of the regime. The National Guard was commanded by Somoza, who also owned 60 percent of the economy. For 40 years he had been backed-up militarily and financially, and in public forums, by the USA.

Broad Opposition

During the 1960's and 1970's opposition to Somoza grew in all sectors of the population: unemployed people, the landless peasants, workers, large sections of the middle-class who rejected the violence and tyranny of the dictatorship and even some capitalists who felt threatened by Somoza. The FSLN, formed in 1961, tried to unite the broadest possible opposition to Somoza. They formed organisations which brought people together from many sectors of Nicaraguan society in a programme of united action. At the same time as building mass organisation, the Sandinistas waged armed struggle against the dictatorship, realising that, on its own, the mass movement would be crushed.

"Under Fire" shows clearly and accurately the extent to which the Nicaraguan people actively supported the FSLN. It shows, too, the leading role which women played in the struggle, both as militants in people's organisation and as soldiers in the People's Army. And the support which much of the Catholic Church gave to the FSLN is evident in the movie.

The central characters in "Under Fire" are a photographer (played by Nick Nolte) and two American journalists (Joanna Cassidy and Gene Hackman). When they're not caught up in their own love triangle, then they are recording the struggle. And a constant



theme of the movie is that in journalism, there is no neutrality. Even a photographer is forced to take sides.

Reconstruction

What "Under Fire" does not show is the reconstruction which followed the Sandinista victory. Land was immediately redistributed to the peasants, jobs created and wages were raised. 100 000 Sandinista youth were sent into the countryside to teach peasants to read and write, and within a year the illiteracy rate had dropped from 60 percent to 14 percent. New organisations were

established to enable the Nicaraguan people to participate in the decisions that govern their lives.

US Destabilisation

All this has not pleased the USA, which through the CIA, has assembled the remnants of the National Guard, trained and equipped them and sent them back to destabilise the new government. US troops have been stationed in neighbouring Honduras and warships posted on the Nicaraguan coastline. Yet the people remain determined to protect their independence.

Did you hear?

... that during 1983 guerillas of the Front for the National Liberation of El Salvador (FMLN) killed about 73 000 government troops. (*Economist* 3/2/84)

... that in their 18 month occupation of parts of Lebanon 260 US Marines died, about 130 were wounded.

... that right-wing "death squads" in El Salvador have killed over 47 000 non-combatants since 1979. The figure of such deaths for 1983 is about 5 500. (*Economist* 3/2/84)

... that Sergeant Stephen Trijillo, recipient of the United States Silver Star for his part in the US invasion of Grenada, described the combat in Grenada as: "It's terrible. It's horrible. It's pointless." (*Time* 6/2/84)

... that in the United States a small but growing number of people are refusing to pay taxes used for military expenditure? They are estimated to number about 20 000, and in one instance have established a War Tax Alternative Fund, using the money for social programmes. (*Christian Science Monitor* 27.1.84)

... that there are now 26 000 nuclear weapons in the United States arsenal, with 8 more being produced each day? (*Christain Science Monitor* 3.2.84)

... that there are currently 432 political prisoners in El Salvadorean jails. (*Newsweek* 13/2/84)

... that United States military aid to El Salvador is to double to \$400 million during 1984 - 85. This is in addition to \$674 million "non-lethal" aid over the same period. (*Economist* 3/2/84)

Church view on



BISHOP ON "MILITARISM MENTALITY"

The Anglican Archbishop of Cape Town the Most Rev Philip Russell, attacked the "militarism mentality" affecting South Africans in his February Diocesan letter.

His criticism was sparked off by an SATV programme which consisted of the singing of Christmas carols against military backgrounds.

The church's opposition to militarism was "nothing new", Archbishop Russell wrote, but added that the church had to face two problems in its rejection of militarism.

"Firstly - who are the militarism-ists? In our South African situation; Who? Mr P W Botha? Mr R F Botha? General M Malan? The State Security Council? The Cabinet? The echoing SABC and SABC-TV?" asks the Archbishop, qualifying his question by saying that militarism is a "global problem".

He said the recent Sixth Assembly of the World Council of Churches had reiterated its Central Committee's appeal to churches to "challenge military and militaristic policies that lead to disastrous distortions of foreign policy, sapping the capacity of nations to deal with pressing economic and social problems which have become paramount political issues of our time".

He said that "ordinary nice people" were the human agents, "the tools of the principalities and powers" advocating militarism.

BOESAK ON ENGLISH-SPEAKING CHURCHES

A crisis was developing in English-speaking churches in South Africa because people were ignoring what their churches were saying, Dr Allan Boesak, President of the World Alliance of Reformed Churches said last month.

He was inaugurating the Campbell Sermon Series at St Mary's Church, Cambridge, England.

"There is a crisis developing in English-speaking churches because people have decided to ignore what their churches are saying on such a fundamental issue" as the November 2 referendum.

The second problem was that "the moment the church - or one of its leaders - starts to challenge militarism, the attack is subtly shifted so as to make it appear an attack on 'our boys on the border' which of course, it is not".

He said the 'boys on the border' were also "tools" in the hands of the powers.

A solution to the militarism mentality was through the church, Archbishop Russell wrote, adding that this would need "much speaking of the word of truth in love to each other.

"Here in South Africa, this will require that we should listen, if nothing else, to what our fellow Christians in Namibia are saying".

Quoting from an "open letter to the Prime Minister", Archbishop Russell says the Executive Committee of the Namibian Council of Churches "representing 81 per cent of Namibian Christians" said they remained resolved that United Nations Resolution 435 was the "only just and concrete solution to our country's plight".

In their letter, the committee says: "Further suffering and death are caused by curfews, conscription for military service, and unprovoked attacks on innocent people".

The church's role in confronting "the principalities and powers which thrive on divisions, on half truths, on propaganda and so on "is to talk, listen and reach out to be guided into truth.

He said the decisions being taken at the church synods, which are dominated by enlightened black opinion, no longer reflected what the white rank-and-file in the churches were thinking.

There were also elements in the black community who had decided that their interests were best served by being co-opted by the ruling class.

"The lines are being drawn on the basis of what kind of commitment and obedience we have towards justice.

"I predict that these tensions will come to a head this decade," Dr Boesak said.

STATEMENT IN RESPONSE TO THE DEFENCE AMENDMENT ACT, 1983, TO BE IMPLEMENTED JANUARY '84

We wish to make known our rejection of the new legislation on conscientious objectors as embodied in the Defence Amendment Act, 1983.

We believe that this legislation has been designed, not so much to give recognition to genuine conscientious objectors, as to ruthlessly crush all democratic expression of conscientious objection.

We reject this legislation because the period of service which religious pacifists are required to serve (6 years continuous) is more than twice the longest period of alternative service demanded by any democratic state in the world.

This legislation not only discriminates against objectors in the severity of its period, but also removes the most productive years of a person's life and gives no guarantee that the 6 years will be spent constructively in activities relevant to the objector's qualifications or experience. It effectively makes objection, even for a religious pacifist, a crime.

We reject this legislation because it places those doing alternate service under a virtual banning order, with its prohibitions and severe penalties relating to the publication of the objector's writings and his political activities. This serves to further reinforce our view that the legislation views all objectors, including religious pacifists, as criminals.

We reject this legislation because it seeks to distinguish between 'religious' and other objectors, both of whose opposition to war is based on equally genuine ethical and moral foundations.

We reject this legislation because it imposes penalties on moral, humanist and political objectors that are in excess of those applied in any other country, including the Soviet Union. These men of integrity will be imprisoned for a period longer than many sentences for manslaughter, drug dealing, common assault, car theft and hijacking.

The new legislation is in our opinion characterised by unreasonable punitiveness, gross discrimination and downright unfairness. It is a retrogressive step and represents on paper harsher treatment of conscientious objectors than the old legislation in practice.

We believe our country is capable of better than this and therefore call on the government to withdraw this legislation and enter into consultation with objectors and concerned religious and secular bodies in order to formulate more practical, more reasonable and more just legislation.

Durban Conscientious Objector
Support Group

Objector's Voice

PAUL DOBSON who objected from within the Defence Force, and was sentenced in September 1983 to one-year in Durban Central Prison, has at last been granted study rights. He will be working on his MA in Sociology, looking at Indian Labour. This will relieve his most pressing problem which has been boredom as he seems to have spent most of his time up till now, serving out food.

If anyone would like to write to them they could write c/o Mrs Melly, 1/ Edinborough Crescent. Westville 3630.

PETE HATHORN

On the 21st of March 1983, Pete was sentenced to two years imprisonment for refusing to comply with his call-up. One and a half months later this was reduced to a one year sentence on review. Pete based his stand on three major factors:

- 1) South Africa is engaged in a civil not an external war; there is considerable support for guerillas within the country; the military is often called upon to act against South African civilians (eg: resettlement, strike control, searches and road blocks);
- 2) There is a long history of peaceful resistance to apartheid – a decision to employ violence was taken only after all peaceful means were frustrated by bannings of political organisations;
- 3) The SADF's activities are regarded widely as being those of a foreign aggressor both in Namibia where South Africa's presence is illegal and in other neighbouring states where South Africa is alleged to play a destabilising role.

Pete felt to serve in the SADF would be to go against all the values he had held throughout his life.

20 DAYS LEFT TO SERVE...

Pete Hathorn has finally allowed himself to count the days left to him in prison and says, "I have been spending a lot of time making plans for after March (can now do it without incurring guilt feelings about not facing up to reality)".

He had an "ordinary" Christmas Day but says the "lunch is the highlight of the prison year and deservedly so; we had a very good meal (with knives and forks and real plates nogal – normally it's spoons and dixies)".

He has been kept busy with "Rock and Roll" – part of the unskilled prison labour force building a rugby field! "It is not heavy work and I enjoy being out in the open and getting a bit of sun."

For his close friends and family and the 100's who have been vigilant in sending letters, cards and messages of good will, Pete's nearing release is an event of happiness and excitement.

The courage and cheer with which he has served his sentence stands as an inspiration to all of us who seek peace and justice in South Africa.

After the 21st March, anyone can write to Pete at 2 Alfred Street, Observatory.



... that the civil war in South Africa is intensifying? According to the Terrorism (sic) Research Centre, "political violence and sabotage incidents" have increased from 59 in 1980 to 114 in 1981, to 230 in 1982 and to 395 in 1983.

In 1983 there were 84 "riot and/or mob situations and/or serious stoning attacks", compared to 31 in 1982.

(Cape Times 11.1.84)

... that compulsory conscription was introduced in Iraq in January this year, 40 months after the start of the Gulf War between Iraq and Iran. (Cape Times 18/1/84)

ADJUSTING TO CIVILIAN LIFE...

Billy Paddock who was released from prison months ago after serving in Pretoria Central says he is settling down very well. He is working as a free-lance journalist in Natal. It has been something of a struggle to adjust to the "rat race" of South African life again, but he is "surviving". Billy has stated that if he was faced with the same choice, he would without question serve his sentence rather than go against his principles and serve in the SADF.

Namibian Objector

With heightened conflict in Namibia and Angola, it should not come as a surprise that Erick Binga, a 21-year old Namibian, objected to his call-up.

He was called-up in November 1982 to train with the 2nd SA Infantry Battalion at Walvis Bay (which is South African territory).

Binga is a member of SWAPO and believes that its war against SA is legitimate. His brother joined SWAPO's military wing in 1978. It is because of this that Binga will not serve in the SADF or the SWA territorial force. He believes that neither represent the people of Namibia.

Mr Ian Farlam, senior counsel for Mr Binga, argued that any military conscription designed to support the illegal government in Namibia was invalid.

The Supreme Court has adjourned for consideration of judgement, which is not expected for several weeks.

Did you hear?

... that according to the 1984 Military Balance published by the International Institute of Strategic Studies, SADF personnel number 82 400 – of which 53 100 (66 percent) are conscriptees. Of the total, the Army accounts for 67 400, or 82 percent. The SADF's "total mobilisable force" is reckoned at 404 500 (excluding troops of the SWA Territory Force). (Financial Mail 3/2/84)

... that in the German Democratic Republic (or East Germany) the organisation Women for Peace is seeking a right of conscientious objection for women newly subject to conscription?

Legislation extending conscription to women was passed in 1982, and selective registration began in late 1983.

(Christian Science Monitor 20.1.84)

... that an Israeli entrepreneur is planning to import women from South East Asia as wives for injured Israeli war veterans who cannot be married under rabbinical law. (Cape Times 18/1/84)

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END CONSCRIPTION CAMPAIGN (ECC)

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