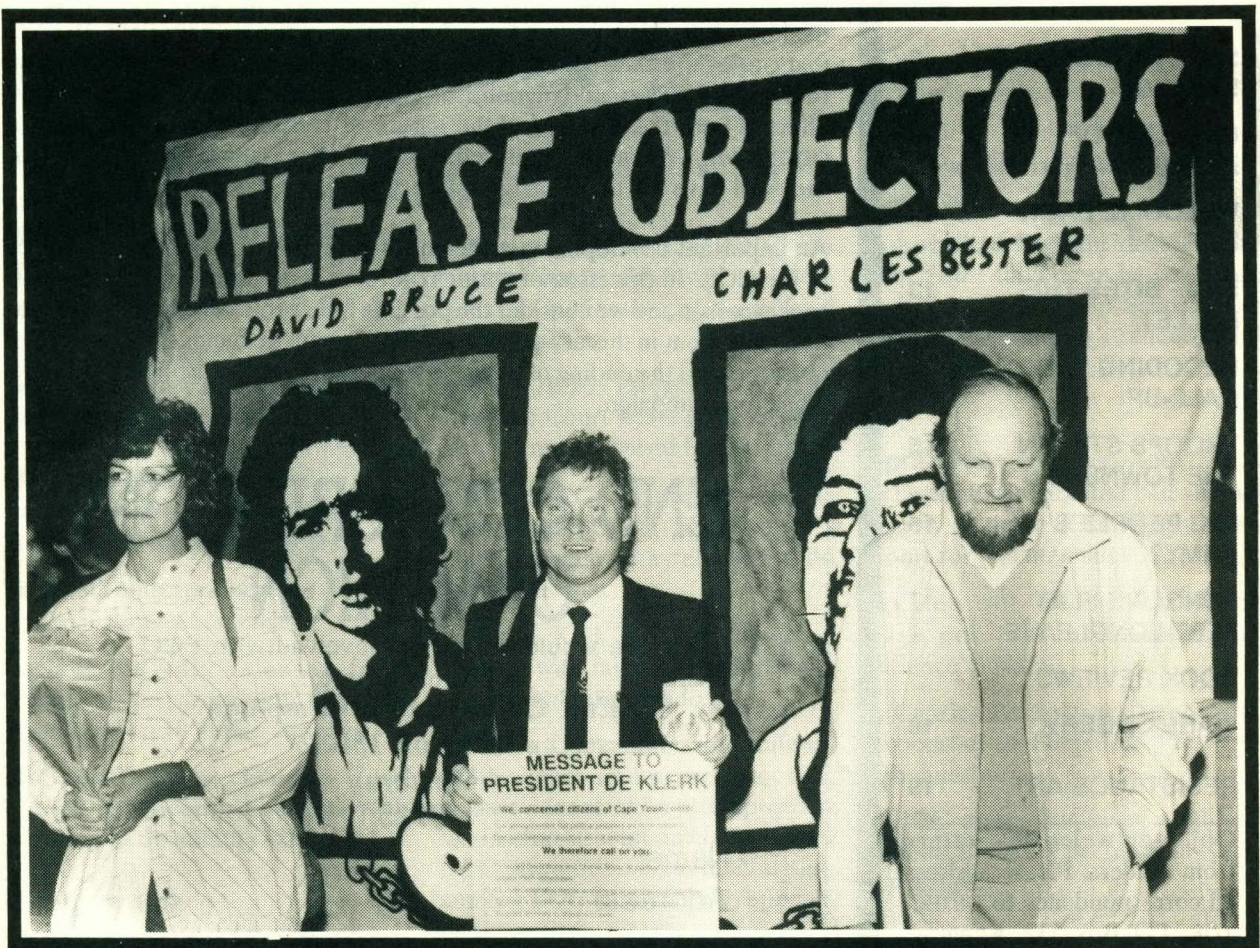


# OBJECTOR

NEWSLETTER OF THE CONSCIENTIOUS OBJECTORS SUPPORT GROUP  
APRIL/MAY 1990



picture: Eric Miller

## VICTORY FOR OBJECTORS

The sharp end of Cape Town ECC's Release Objectors march



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## EDITORIAL

In this, the first issue of the year, OBJECTOR celebrates the victory of objectors Ivan Toms and David Bruce, whose joint application against their sentences was upheld in the Appeal Court recently. While Ivan was effectively freed, David has to reappear in court in May for resentencing. We assess the implications of the court's finding that magistrates have a discretion when sentencing objectors.

OBJECTOR is a newspaper published by the Conscientious Objectors Support Group. Our primary area of concern is objection and conscription, but we also deal with other military-related issues.

The military has always been an area clouded by secrecy- as the recent investigation into the CCB has revealed- and there has always been a great deal of uncertainty about what is happening in the military field. We feel that OBJECTOR, as a newspaper focusing on this area, has a very important role to play. The sudden political changes that have taken place have affected both the SADF and the nature of conscription. In this issue of OBJECTOR, we examine these changes and discuss the implications that they will have for those facing military service.

An important development in the anti-military arena is the re-emergence of the ECC. In this issue of OBJECTOR there is an interview with an ECC spokesperson and we consider the possible future role of the anti-militarisation movement in this article. One of ECC's main demands is the release of objectors and the ending of objector trials and we cover the ECC's Release Objectors campaign.

## END CONSCRIPTION CAMPAIGN

If you would like to get involved with ECC  
send this form to:

End Conscription Campaign  
P.O. Box 13032

Mowbray  
7725

Name: .....

Address: .....

Phone .....

Put me on the ECC mailing list

I want to do ECC work occasionally

I want to devote a lot of time to ECC





ANC UNBANNED...ECC RESTRICTIONS LIFTED...SAUL BATZOFIN RELEASED...APPEAL COURT JUDGEMENT FAVOURS IVAN TOMS AND DAVID BRUCE...DAVID BRUCE OUT ON BAIL...EXILED OBJECTORS RETURNING...RELEASE OF ALL POLITICAL PRISONERS BEING NEGOTIATED...NAMIBIA INDEPENDENT...

CHARLES BESTER STILL IN PRISON ON A SIX YEAR JAIL SENTENCE...DAVID BRUCE TO BE RESENTENCED ON 18 MAY...ECC MEMBERS ON MILITARY HIT SQUAD LIST...TROOPS BEING USED IN CISKEI, BOPHUTATSWANA, NATAL, KATLEHONG...TRIALS PENDING FOR GARY RATHBONE, REV DOUGLAS TORR, MICHAEL GRAAF, RICHARD CLACEY, ANDRE CROUCAMP, GAVIN KIRK...

# UPDATE ON SOUTH AFRICAN WAR RESISTANCE ISSUES

## MAY 1990

*What follows is a brief chronology of some of the events that have happened in the last few months vis-a-vis war resistance.*

### **December 1989**

- Initial military service halved to a one year period.

### **January 1990**

- Community servers liability halved from 6 years to 3 years.
- Jailed objectors become eligible for remission of sentence.
- Saul Batzofin released from Zonderwater prison after serving 9 months of an 18 month sentence.
- Gary Rathbone, Douglas Torr, Andre Croucamp charged with refusing to do military service.

### **February 1990**

- ECC unbanned by State President F.W. de Klerk.
- Brendan Moran from Durban reports for his initial call up and refuses to render service.
- ECC launches a Release Objectors Campaign and re-establishes branches in Johannesburg, Cape Town, Durban, Pietermaritzburg,

East London, Grahamstown and Stellenbosch.

- Chris Hani of the ANC announces that the ANC will not advocate conscription in a post-apartheid South Africa.

● Appellate Division of the Supreme Court hears appeal by Dr Ivan Toms and David Bruce.

- Michael Graaf appears in the Pietermaritzburg Magistrate's Court charged with refusing to do military service.

● Gavin Kirk appears in court charged with failure to report for a one day military parade.

- Harms Commission into military death squads set up, and inter alia, hears evidence of an attempted assassination attempt on Gavin Evans, ECC member. Laurie Nathan, another ECC member, also appears on the military hit list.

### **March 1990**

● Candlelight marches calling for the release of objectors happen nation-wide.

- Namibia becomes independent. Right of conscientious objection enshrined in their bill of rights.

- International register of objectors launched.

● Appellate Division decides that Ivan Toms should not be sent back to jail, and sets David Bruce's sentence aside pending a rehearing by the Magistrate's Court.

### **April 1990**

- David Bruce granted bail and his case is set down in the Magistrate's Court for resentencing.

● Camp call ups extended to 60 days per year because of the violence in Natal.

- Charles Bester transferred from Kroonstad to Diepkloof Prison in Johannesburg.

● ECC statement gives qualified support to SADF presence in Natal townships.

### **May 1990**

● Hiemstra Commission into Johannesburg City Council spy operations hears evidence linking the council's security department to state security organs, including Military Intelligence. One council employee admits to having spied on ECC.



# OBJECTORS VINDICATED

*Doctor Ivan Toms is free, David Bruce is out pending resentencing, and the objector movement has been vindicated by a landmark judgement in the Appeal Court in Bloemfontein.*

On 30 March, the court halved Toms' 18-month sentence, and referred the case of fellow objector David Bruce back to the trial court to 'reconsider an appropriate sentence'. Toms completed two days less than 9 months of his sentence in Pollsmoor Prison before being released on bail in December 1988. Bruce, whose appeal was heard jointly with Toms, was released on 2 April and warned to appear in court on 18 May for resentencing. He has been in prison for over a quarter of his six-year sentence for refusing to serve in the SADF.

For Toms, Bruce and potentially many others, the issue was decided over the Appeal Court's interpretation of the legal phrase 'liable to a sentence of one and a half times the length of military service owed'. In a majority decision in which they accepted the argument of Toms' two counsel, "Lang" David de Villiers, QC, and Edwin Cameron, judges Smalberger, Nicholas and Corbett (Chief Justice) found that the Defence Act did not make mandatory a possible six-year maximum sentence for objectors, nor did it prescribe an 18-month minimum sentence. Instead, the trial magistrate had full discretion in deciding on both the nature and the length of sentence. Judges Botha and Kumleben dissented.



Pic: Mike Hutchings

The judgement sets aside Ivan Toms' 18-month sentence, which had been imposed by the Cape Town Supreme Court in November 1988, and which had been substituted for the original 630-day sentence (21 months) handed down by a Wynberg regional magistrate in March 1988. At the time of going to press it remained unclear as to whether Toms would be compelled to serve out the remaining two days of his new sentence. According to Ivan, his attorney Mike Evans has sent an urgent fax to the Commissioner of Prisons, asking for clarity in what Ivan describes as a 'bizarre' situation.

Meanwhile, confusion also surrounds the fate of objector Charles

Bester, 19, sentenced to six years' imprisonment in December 1988. Bester, who has subsequently been transferred to Diepkloof Prison in Johannesburg, is to have his appeal heard in Bloemfontein on 13 August. With the fate of David Bruce still in the balance, Bester has refrained from applying for an interim interdict to secure his release. Instead, he is "doing time" in the hope of increasing his chances of freedom by the time his appeal comes round. Even with a 50% remission of sentence in the offing at the discretion of the Commissioner of Prisons, he may have three more months to endure.

What are the implications of the Appeal Court ruling? Ivan feels the



## CHARLES BESTER

by Judy Bester

judgement is a vindication of much of what ECC and COSG stand for. It represents a victory (albeit a limited one) for objectors, who should not be regarded as criminals and who don't belong in jail. Also, the rights of individuals acting in conscience have been upheld over against state power: this testifies to a degree of liberalisation in the judiciary within a more open political terrain.

Furthermore, the judgement will probably lead to an increasing number of objector trials, as war resisters now face the possibility of reduced or suspended sentences, or even provisions for community service. Already, at least 5 more objectors are facing trial in coming weeks. Since the Defence Amendment Act of 1983, objectors have been in a legislative wasteland, denied the rights and privileges of sentenced common criminals, yet also the status of political (or "security") prisoners. The Act was an attempt by the state to crush the objector movement by imposing harsh prison terms on objectors, and to divide the remainder by granting alternative service only to religious pacifists.

This "big stick" approach has demonstrably failed to deter objectors. Indeed, numbers of those refusing to serve in the SADF have increased dramatically in recent years. This includes many who have been driven into exile.

It is quite possible that the judgement could bring a better deal for objectors. The Van Loggenberg Commission investigating the SADF's manpower needs cannot afford to ignore the prospect of more and more objector trials, with a concomitant embarrassment for the state in the era of glasnost. The struggle for a viable, non-punitive form of alternative service available to all objectors is bound to continue for as long as conscription exists in an undemocratic state.

The events of the past four months have altered the whole objector scenario to such an extent that all those involved are reeling. In January 1990 Charles and David were still facing the prospect of serving the remainder of their six-year sentences; Saul was still in Zonderwater and Ivan was set to return to Pollsmoor to complete his term. At the end of January, the Minister of Defence granted the objectors the right to remission and Saul was immediately released. In April, to our delight, David was once more out in the "real world" awaiting his resentencing, and Ivan was "free", after the landmark decision of the Appellate Division of the Supreme Court.

All the exciting developments have implications for Charlie too, and in April he was moved from Kroonstad Prison to Diepkloof, outside Johannesburg, so that a bail application could be made on his behalf. Resisting the temptation of temporary freedom, after much agonising, Charlie decided to delay bail until after David's retrial, when there will be more clarity on the kind of sentence to be imposed, now that the

courts can use their discretion. Charlie, having served 4 months less of his original sentence than David, felt that there was a greater likelihood of his having to return to prison, so is continuing to do time to make up those months. An appeal has been lodged with the Rand Supreme Court and will be heard on the 13th August 1990.

Life in Diepkloof is far less congenial than it was in Kroonstad. There is no "work" available there and Charlie is locked up on his own for 22 hours out of 24 each day. He is not looking as well as he did, and has lost weight. Nevertheless he manages to maintain his cheerfulness when we visit him. He is missing his sport and is finding it hard to study, so has been concentrating on reading his set-books, rather than tackling written assignments. We still don't know whether he will be transferred back to Kroonstad or not.

On the 18th May Charlie will turn 20, and our birthday wish for him is that the prison doors will be unlocked and he will be set free, long before he officially receives "the key of the door" on his 21st birthday.

### MILITARY LIABILITY HALVED

In December it was announced that the initial period of military service would be halved from a two year period to a one year period. Those already doing their national service had a proportion of their outstanding time deducted. The announcement was not made applicable to religious objectors performing community service, nor was it made applicable to those objectors serving jail sentences. However in January 1990 it was announced that community servers would only be liable for a maximum of 3 years community service, and that jailed objectors would now qualify for a proportion of their service to be deducted on good behaviour.



## DAVID BRUCE WRITES

David Bruce was recently released from prison after a successful appeal against his six-year sentence for refusing to do military service. Having served 19 months behind bars, he now faces the uncertainty of a resentencing. OBJECTOR asked him how it felt to be outside again. Here is his response.

# 'RELIEVED AND HAPPY... THOUGH ANXIOUS'

On Friday the 30th of March I was glad to hear the news that our appeal had succeeded. Having my sentence set aside meant that I was immediately transferred to the awaiting trial section in Pretoria Central, which is where I spent the

weekend, wearing "civvies" once again and relieved and happy though a bit anxious about facing the outside world.

So that's my status at the moment. I am now a convicted criminal who

has been found guilty of the crime of refusing to serve in the SADF and who, rather than awaiting trial, has been tried and convicted and has spent 20 months in jail but has not as yet been properly sentenced.

On the following Monday (2nd April), after I'd spent a bit of time pacing the "ONTVANGS/RECEPTION" yard, the Military Police collected me from the jail, drove me to Johannesburg Magistrate's Court where, soon after arriving, I was standing in the dock being told by the Magistrate to appear in court again on the 27th of April, and discharged.

So it's back on the streets. I've been staying back in Berea, which is where I used to stay before the end of July '88 when I was sentenced. I've been spending a bit of time with my parents, visiting some people that I know who stay round here, realising again that food is something that one is supposed to enjoy. Spent two fairly quiet weeks in Cape Town and five incredible days in the Cedarberg mountains. Also swimming at Hillbrow pool and spending one or two too many hours down in Rocky Street.

On the 27th I appeared in court and my case was remanded to the 18th of May. It appears that on the 18th it will be remanded again perhaps to a date in the first half of June. Hopefully then the matter of sentencing will be dealt with.

This question of sentencing conscientious objectors is really involved. I try not to think about it too much because then I get really confused. It seems there's a possibility of some kind of community service order, perhaps to make up the difference between the time I've already served, and 2 or 3 years. There's also a possibility, perhaps not too great a possibility, that they'll send me back to jail. We'll just have to see.



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# A NEW WAVE

## PROFILE OF OBJECTORS AWAITING TRIAL

*The stand of 771 objectors in September 1989, and a number of pending objector trials reinforce the view that, while there is movement higher up, conditions on the ground have thus far changed little for those who refuse to serve in the SADF. There are currently six objectors who have been charged under the Defence Act, and a number of others who are awaiting prosecution.*

### **1. The Reverend Douglas Torr**

On 30 July 1990, Douglas Torr, an Anglican priest, was called up for his initial period of service. He informed the SADF that he would be refusing to serve. Douglas was kept on tenterhooks for the next five months hearing nothing further from the military until January of this year, when he was informed that he would be prosecuted for refusing to serve. He appeared in the Johannesburg Magistrate's Court on 15 January and his case has been postponed until 14 May, for trial.

Rev Torr is 25 years old and works at an Anglican church in Coronationville, Johannesburg. His time is divided between parish work and work at a local children's home.

Douglas' stand is based on his Christian beliefs and on his need, as a priest, to be obedient to his church. For him this means refusing to serve in the SADF.

### **2. Andre Croucamp**

Andre Croucamp refused a camp call up on 18 December 1989. He appeared in the Johannesburg Magistrate's Court on 15 January 1990 and again on 26 March, charged with refusing to serve in the SADF. Andre is a theologian by training, and his case has now been postponed until June 1990, pending

his appearance before the Board for Religious Objection.

### **3. Michael Graaf**

Michael Graaf is a Durban ECC member. He refused a camp call up on Friday 15 December 1989, and his matter has been set down for trial on 26 April 1990.

Michael completed his initial service 10 years ago, spending 16 months of his service in Namibia.

### **4. Richard Clacey**

Richard has spent the last four years working in Pietermaritzburg as a rural development field worker. He has expressed his willingness to do community service, even in a government department like the Department of Agriculture or the Department of the Environment. However he is now being charged with refusing to do military service. His trial is scheduled for 28 May 1990.

### **5. Gary Rathbone**

Gary Rathbone's trial has also been set down for the 28 May, 1990. It will be heard in the Johannesburg Magistrate's Court. Gary spent 4 years in the Permanent Force, from 1979 - 1982. He is now objecting to a camp on the basis that the SADF is a political organisation that is directly involved in upholding apart-

heid. He is registered for a masters degree in African Literature; he is the lead guitarist of the music group The Spectres and a freelance artist and journalist.

### **6. Brendan Moran**

Brendan Moran, 24, returned from London in August 1989 to confront the issue of military service. He spent three years overseas before making the decision. Brendan teaches crafts at a school for deaf children, in the Valley of a Thousand Hills, which is a rural area between Durban and Pietermaritzburg.

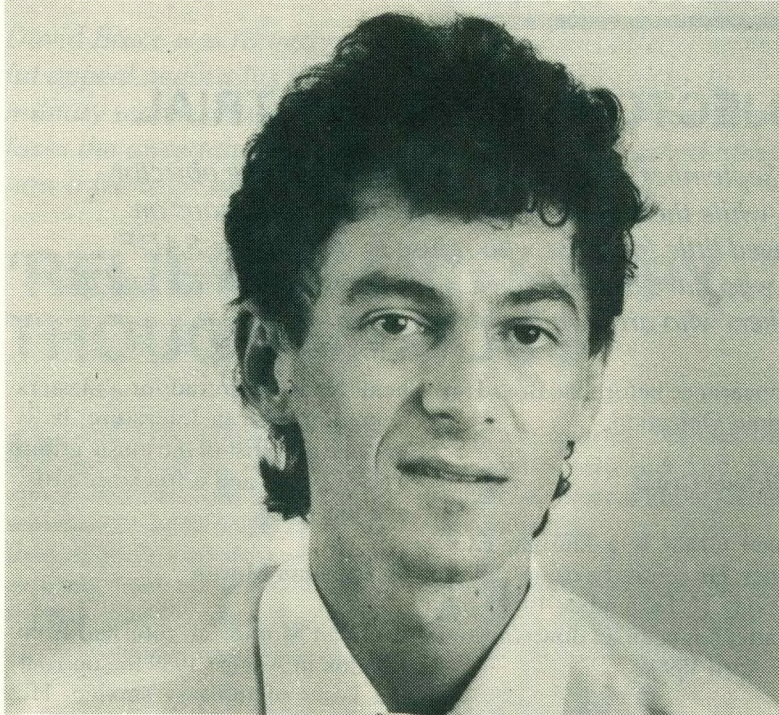
Brendan was due to begin his military service on 30 January 1990. He reported and informed the military personnel of his decision not to render service. He has heard nothing further from the military, so does not know if and when he will be charged with refusing to do military service.

### **7. Gavin Kirk**

Gavin is currently studying theology at the Baptist Theological College in Johannesburg. He is being charged for failing to report for a one morning parade. He has already appeared in court four times with regard to this charge, and the case has now been postponed until 16 May 1990.



## INTERVIEW



### SAUL BATZOFIN SPEAKS

*Saul Batzofin is 29, has a B.Comm, and is doing his Honours in Human Resources, was a Career Development Officer at Liberty Life, and served nine months of an eighteen month sentence for conscientious objection in Diepkloof and Zonderwater prisons.*

**Q:** Saul, did you feel well supported while you were inside?

**Saul:** My personal Support group was very good. They handled all my needs like money and letters. Political support though, was invisible in the first months. Only when I was upgraded and had more prison privileges, with access to the media, did I see evidence of support like the objector march in Cape Town. At first I only had the Citizen and the Sunday Times; later I got the Weekly Mail and sometimes the Star - I was lucky they weren't censored. Political activities by the movement were good for my morale. People, like visitors, must tell jailed objectors

what's going on. I found people were slack about news - you need only say what Branch already know, of course, and you have to balance political visitors with non-political people like family. But people forget that prisoners are isolated, especially early in the term. I felt cut off from the other jailed objectors because of that.

**Q:** What things struck you most in prison? What was it like?

**Saul:** Zonderwater is a long-term prison. I was the first short-timer they'd seen. It's scary, the violence, the knifings, threat of rape, are on the surface. The first months were terrifying. But these long-termers

fought the authorities - they won fruit, braais, TV sets - that was how I heard about the remission by which I was released eventually - it was OK once you knew the ropes. I was in a communal cell with 15/16 other prisoners. I worked on postbags and got the afternoon shift off to study in my bungalow. But two weeks before my exams study privileges were revoked. I complained to outside people and a week later I got the privileges back, essentially. This was just because of a new CO tightening things up.

It was worrying in my first cell. I managed to organise being moved up to a better, more secure one. The thing is, there is no trust in prison. People do favours for others because they want something back - that's how they get wives- they manipulate each other. I did have some friends by the end though.

Prison is totally punitive. For instance, I earned R1 a month, and the maximum is R16 a month. So you come to jail with nothing, you've got to steal to eat even if you get a job. Prison prepares you for more prison and often long-termers prefer it in jail. I'd like to work with NICRO when I get the chance, on prison work.

Sensory deprivation wasn't so bad in Zonderwater, its a farm prison with a soccer field. You aren't locked in all the time. But there's no human contact. You come from the progressive movement which is quite caring, you're not prepared for prison life. And what happened with my study leave showed how powerless a prisoner is - I had to get others to act for me. The only power you have is to go on a hunger-strike.

I had to be careful to manage problems. I was lucky in escaping



that first bungalow, or I might have been raped. This whole sexual thing showed me the importance of the feminist struggle. I wouldn't have called myself a feminist before. But people who harass women sexually should do time in jail. I was approached by 15 different men in my first few weeks in Zonderwater. It really clarified my ideas on this. They showed that film the Accused once and the prisoners were really sick and cheered the rapists on.

**Q: What message would you have for people contemplating prison?**

**Saul:** You can't really prepare for prison. You should try, but in the end you're on your own. You must be aware of your fears about prison - should do therapy. You should prepare physically - yoga is a good idea, because you can't really exercise properly in a cell. And it's good for your head; lack of exercise was bad for me. I talked to Ivan and Richard Steele, they were very helpful - I didn't have enough time to talk to David and Charles properly, but that did reaffirm my decision to object. Talking to ex-criminals would probably be no good, but I'd have liked to talk to ex-political prisoners. That would be important. I think an objector can handle jail if he's acting in good faith from strong beliefs. The movement should look at whether it's right for an individual to go ahead though. And numbers are important. More campers should go. You have to be very strong to go on long-term - you tend to lose touch with your belief if you aren't careful.

**Q: How do you feel about political-prisoner status for objectors?**

**Saul:** I wanted political status - we have to decriminalise objection.

We've got to fight for it. But we have to clarify what it means. At first it looked like losing all chance of remission, which is bad for long-termers. But now it could mean immediate release with the others.

**Q: What are your impressions of the war resistance movement right now?**

**Saul:** I think we've lost initiative a bit. The changes are due to our pressure, but now we've lost direction. We're in a transitional period from COSG's support role to ECC's campaign role. But maybe the conscription issue isn't alive. The SADF look reasonable and the ECC look like extremists. We're going to have to win back sympathy. Charles Bester's six years looked far more extreme than my nine months, it loses fervor. It's becoming an issue of principle rather than morality. Conscription is still an issue, but it'll be harder to take up. Maybe alternative national service is the way to go - taking a hard line could lose us support, I don't know. Anyway, the anti-conscription movement has given me a lot, it's good. I want to return what it's given. I'm certainly getting involved in it. And I think its goals should be to get the objectors out soon. It's ridiculous to have them inside while other political prisoners are released.

**Q: Lastly, Saul, how do you feel about the recent military reforms? Have they had any effect on your stand as an objector?**

**Saul:** The military reforms were a big surprise to me. In a way they were a victory for all of us. But they don't solve any of the basic problems. The same objectors will still go to jail. There's still no reason why anybody should be expected to fight for apartheid.

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*You can't really prepare for prison. You should try, but in the end you're on your own. You must be aware of your fears...*

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*UCT protest against August '89 call-up.*



In the early 1980's the SADF quietly declared war on South Africa. They started using the taxpayer's money to secretly kill South Africans and destroy their property. The State Security Council supported this.

There was lowlevel civil war in the country and the SADF supported rightwing terrorism throughout the subcontinent. Official military doctrine was that the 'onslaught' against white power and privilege justified any force in response. By this time the 'Special Forces'- the Recces - had a group called D40, or Barnacle, tasked with attacking the ANC. (It may have killed people in neighbouring states in this period.) In 1985 the SSC approved an SADF plan to expand D40 into a battalion, '3 Reconnaissance Regiment'. In 1985 it was decided that a more innocuous name would improve secrecy and the Orwellian title 'Civil Cooperation Bureau' was chosen.

By 1989 the CCB was far outside laws of decency, blowing up community centres and murdering leftwing activists. But their task had been anti-democratic and lawless from the start, since it included covertly killing civilians. What did the CCB do before 1989, with its sixteen known cells of operatives?

We may never know. The Harms Commission is concerned mainly with people murdered by police hit-squads, like Sicelo Dhlomo, and people killed by guerilla bombs. Such

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## CCB

# OUT OF HARMS' WAY



actions can easily be blamed on individuals. What about huge operations like the bombing of Khotso and Cosatu House, which would have needed high approval? (the CCB had a special unit, the 'ENLC', supplying it with explosives.) It must be no accident that these haven't been mentioned. The stage is set for blaming everything on General Malan and sending a few small fry to jail. It will be like the result of the Information Scandal, with the main structures of authoritarianism in South Africa unharmed, or even further entrenched.

Most senior SADF officers must have known of the CCB. They kept silent although it ran counter to any Western notion of military honour. The SSC knew, and took no action, although the CCB was fundamentally tyrannous. There is a network of politicians and generals who are opposed to any decent government in this country.

If the outcome of the Harms Commission is not a change in the system by which the CCB and the SAP death-squads were created, it will be disastrous. In Argentina, Brazil and Uruguay it was the death-squad leaders who led bloody coups to force their paranoid fantasies on suffering nations. We cannot control these people in South Africa if we let them keep their positions and their secret operations. South Africans must join the fight to expose these criminals and bring their actions to light. No South African must ever get the chance to do anything like this again.



# WELCOME BACK ECC

*In a recent interview with OBJECTOR, ECC National Facilitator Dave Schmidt talks of ECC's re-emergence.*

**What made the ECC decide to start up again?**

After the banning of ECC, the war resistance movement dissolved into small disparate organisations that weren't very effectual. Towards the end of '89, there was a strong national sense that we required a unifying initiative to bring these organisations into something with political clout. It was felt that ECC's restriction order rendered effective organisation impossible and in October 1989 at a national conference, it was decided that a new anti-conscription organisation should be launched. However, there was a great deal of vagueness about the nature of the new organisation and consultation around the new organisation didn't make much progress. In January 1990, there was a burst of ECC revivalism because it became apparent that the imminent derestriction of ECC was highly likely and furthermore, it didn't seem that restriction orders were being enforced. The fact that ECC also had a profile that would take any new anti-conscription organisation a great deal of time to achieve was another important factor. So, by late January, ECC had formally reconstituted itself.

**In the light of recent political developments, do you think conscription is still an issue worth mobilising around?**

Conscription still exists. The dilemma of the reluctant conscript remains unresolved; objectors are still in jail or facing trial and people

who have left the country in order to avoid serving in the SADF still remain in exile. The SADF is still an instrument of the National Party and it certainly doesn't represent the interests of the majority of South Africans.

However, major political changes have taken place. Whereas in the 80's, the government placed huge importance on the army, and deliberately sought to retain political power and maintain itself by military means, De Klerk has sought to demilitarise our society. The influence of the military on state policy has been reduced and conscription is not the issue it was in the minds of South Africans. ECC thus has to adapt or become peripheral. The challenge facing ECC is to define its role and position meaningfully in order to fit into the new South Africa. This is a task ECC will have to address both regionally and nationally.

**What do you think are the most important issues for ECC right now?**

Obviously the old issues - conscription and the trial and imprisonment of objectors are important. Malan remains an old-style total onslaught warrior and the SADF remains an undemocratic, subversive, secret clique with its own agenda - as we can see from the CCB revelations - and it needs to be exposed and opposed.

On the other hand, we're moving on to a new era, with new issues on the agenda. Debates will be hap-

pening with regard to the issue of conscription, the role of the armed forces and the position of objectors, and ECC will need to engage in these debates.

**ECC has been viewed as an organisation targetting primarily the white constituency. Is this going to change?**

The great challenge of the time is to build organisations across the constituencies defined by apartheid. The question every organisation needs to ask itself is: how do we become truly non-racial? Conscription is an issue primarily facing whites and therefore the ECC operated in white areas, but now apartheid is gradually ending and it is becoming increasingly unacceptable to have race-specific organisations. This is a situation that can't easily be resolved, but it is something we need to work towards.

**Why is ECC taking over many of the functions of COSG?**

At a recent national meeting of representatives from COSG and the 771 objectors, it was felt that ECC needed to be re-established as the campaigning and co-ordinating forum of the war resistance movement and thus objector campaigns need to be conducted by ECC. This would also be part of ECC's role as a unifying initiative and objection is obviously only one of the military-related issues that the ECC will be taking up.

If ECC campaigns around objectors, it will free COSG to play its role as a support group for objectors more effectively. COSG will of course continue to campaign around objectors, but in a more low-profile way. When ECC campaigns around other issues, we will certainly need COSG to keep the issue of objection on the agenda.



But we do hope that in the future there will be no need for an objector support group!

**Why did ECC decide to relaunch itself with a Release Objectors Campaign?**

David, Charles, Ivan and Saul and the other objectors are completely part of us and raising the issue of objection and letting their stands resonate in the community and getting them out of jail is fundamental to our own existence and integrity. We didn't do enough last year to raise the political stakes in this regard.

In addition, political changes have made the imprisonment of objectors rather anomalous. The government has said that it will release political prisoners, but it hasn't said anything about objectors. Military service has been reduced and community service has been halved, but the government has failed to reduce the sentences of jailed objectors.

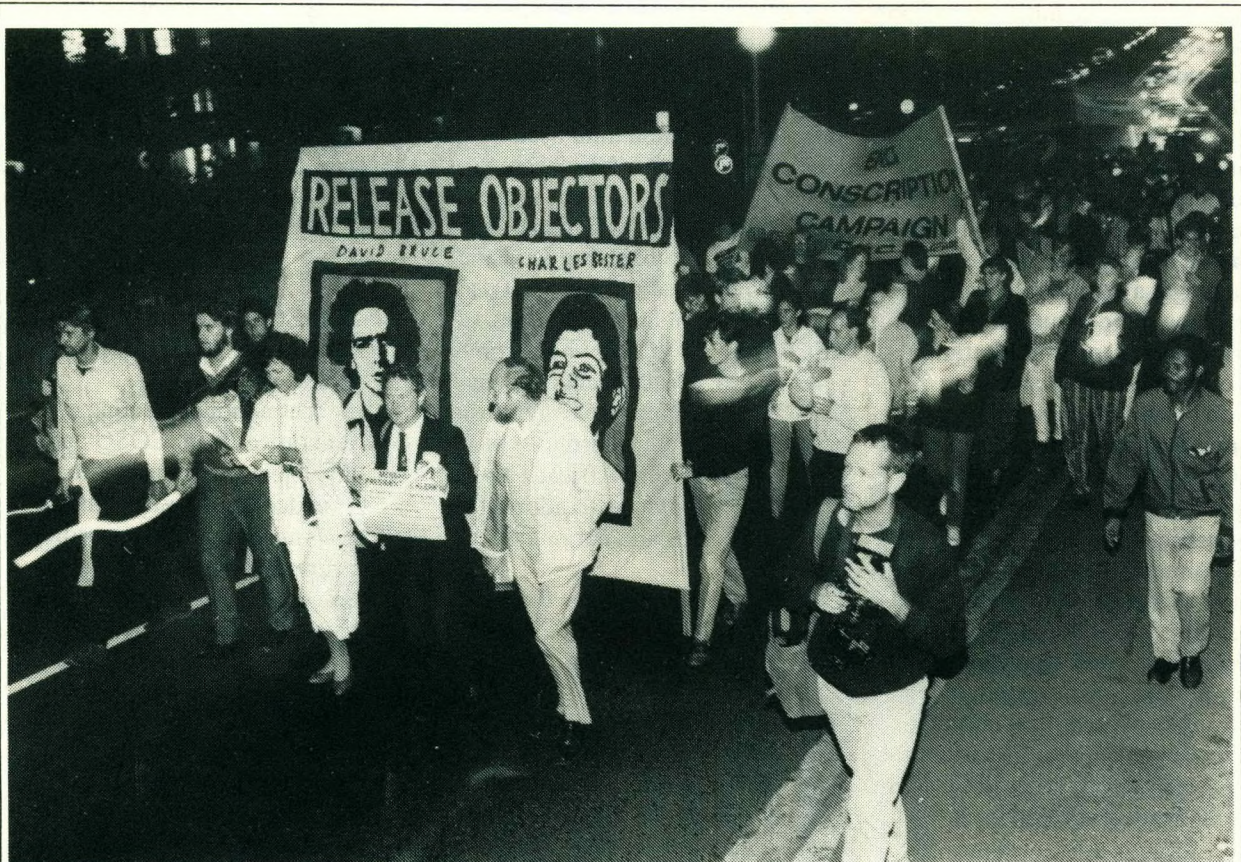
**What centres is ECC being set up in?**

There are branches of ECC being set up in Cape Town, Stellenbosch, Johannesburg, Pretoria,

Grahamstown, East London and Durban.

**What sort of political role do you think ECC will play in the future?**

With this legacy of apartheid, how do we build a non-racial nation? An important symbol of a new, non-racial South Africa could be a system of voluntary, civilian, non-racial national service. Obviously this is not ECC's project alone, but ECC could play an important role in developing ideas around this concept.



*ECC marching on to Westbrooke to present a petition to FW de Klerk (calling for the release of objectors, a moratorium on objector trials, and a just system of alternative service for all).*



## THE SADF BITES THE BULLET



*A policeman tries to block photographer Eric Miller's view of troops in townships.*

In February 1989 the SADF was the most powerful force in South Africa. In February 1990 it's a political basket case. What happened? It's easy to say "De Klerk happened". But it's certainly more complex. In the first instance the SADF failed to secure Namibia. It was clear by August 1989 that they hadn't even squashed internal resistance, which they'd been trying to do since May 1986.

Maybe it was this last failure which led De Klerk to make his power-play which forced Botha out. Certainly this instantly cut the props out from underneath the SADF. Around this time their tame propagandists, and all of their generals suddenly began speaking with one voice. Every article they wrote, every speech they made, cranked out praise for the 'victory' of Angola and Namibia, coupled with the threat from India, which was being built up as an excuse for enlarging the SADF after the war had ended!

One major item of propaganda was anti-SWAPO publicity. By October this was eclipsing even the threat from India as propagandists fell over each other to predict that PLAN was going to come swarming to the gates of Pretoria. Undoubtedly this was a facet of the SADF's avowed campaign to keep SWAPO from getting over 40% of the vote. Alas, SWAPO garnered 56%, blowing all of the SADF's publicists out of the water again - and meanwhile the SADF had shattered all its own credibility by picking a fight with the Department of Foreign Affairs through its false 'Untag radio signals'.

Thereupon disaster followed disaster for the SADF. Camps had already been cut to 30 days in November. In December the roof fell in, with the revelation that basic service was to be halved. And in January, a punchdrunk SADF probably hardly felt the pain as all nonessential military services - including the Marine Corps and the new Defence Headquarters complex - were gutted or scrapped.

Obviously this couldn't have happened had Botha not been eliminated. But it would also have been impossible but for the SADF's failure to achieve any of its missions. And the SADF's overweening arrogance, and its links with the widely-resented dictatorial style of Botha's government, probably contributed to its alienation from the bureaucracy and the National Party. Once the supremely powerful president decided to strike, he had any number of spearbearers ready to help him.

The meaning is not simply that the SADF has lost political influence, but that it has been laid open to further attacks. At the moment the SADF is at least ten times more powerful than South Africa needs for defence. Its equipment is far too sophisticated to fight the internal-security struggles which the future might demand. Its racial composition makes it a perfect vehicle for anti-reformist subversion while it is still ill-prepared to co-operate with democratic organisations outside the white community. It has been exposed as a dinosaur - a vulnerable one. Almost nobody likes it in its present form.

Yet it mustn't be forgotten that the SADF leadership is undoubtedly deeply resentful of its calamity. The fall has been enormous and the failure hard to swallow. If the SADF is to be pruned of its more than unnecessary strength (and budget), and if it is to be purged of its politically unacceptable elements (like its covert death squads and its links with right-wing violent organisations at home and abroad), it would be wise to proceed with some caution. The SADF is still the strongest military force south of the Sahara. There are many ways in which firepower can be turned into political power. All South Africans interested in peace and freedom must beware of this.



# DECODING THE CALLUP

*In the last few months the system of conscription seems to have changed beyond recognition. Except that when you look closely you can see that it's still conscription and it hasn't changed as much as it seems. OBJECTOR answers some questions.*

## **AM I ONLY SERVING A YEAR NOW?**

That depends on when you're called up. August 1989 people serve 21 months. Feb '90 serve 15 months. August '90 or after get 12 months. Of course this can be changed at any time if there's any need for you as far as the army's concerned.

## **IF I'M CALLED UP IN FEBRUARY, WILL I GET HOME FOR CHRISTMAS?**

No. Under the two-year system this was possible, but not any more unless they change the call-up to January, which isn't planned at the moment.

## **THEN WHAT CAMPS WILL I DO?**

Previously you did 6 cycles of two years, serving 60 days a year. Now you're supposed to serve 30 days a year and get credited with 30 more, so you end up doing 12 camps totalling 360 days. Of course, this can be changed at any time. Theoretically you can be called up for the full 720 days if they want you. On the other hand, sometimes camps get cancelled because there's an oversupply of troops.

## **IF I APPLY FOR RELIGIOUS ALTERNATIVE SERVICE, WHAT WILL I SERVE?**

This isn't clear. It looks as if it'll be three or four years rather than six of alternative service. Again this could

be changed at any time, and otherwise it's the same as before - universal religious pacifists only, in government departments at private's pay.

## **SUPPOSE I STILL DECIDE TO GO TO JAIL?**

You'll still be sentenced to the same term - 1 1/2 times the time the Army thinks you owe them. But you're now entitled to remission of sentence of up to half your time. Judging by the experience of Saul Batzofin there will be no question of conditions or parole, you'll just be released. But there's no guarantee that you'll be released; they could keep you for the full term if they wanted to. It's likely that this would be used against jailed CO's as a form of psychological pressure.

## **WHAT ABOUT GETTING CONSCRIPTED INTO THE SAP?**

This is a possibility. They can send anyone they like into the SAP under Section 16(2) of the Defence Act. About 3-4000 people (out of about 60 000) are liable for this. You'd be notified in your call-up, since you'd go straight into police training rather than doing any military Basics. Probably if you wrote to your local military and police commanders you'd be able to get transferred back to the SADF if you wanted to - it's unlikely they'd want strongly disaffected people in the



*The time is cut, but the call-up continues.*

SAP. (There's also a possibility that you might be transferred from the SADF to the SAP during service. Here your best bet would be to complain directly to your commanding officer in the SADF.)

## **WILL I HAVE TO SERVE IN THE TOWNSHIPS OR ON THE BORDER?**

Official policy is to keep the SADF out of the townships, but in practice there are a lot of troops deployed in townships. Sometimes people are transferred temporarily to the SAP for township service. The SADF patrols the Botswana, Zimbabwe and Mocambiquan borders along with the SAP, so service there is a possibility. The only way to get out of border duty is to stay in units which don't serve there, such as some supply and maintenance units. It may be possible to get out of township duty through your commanding officer.



# TROOPS STILL IN THE TOWNSHIPS

*'Magnus Malan said in parliament that the SADF had erected 14 temporary military bases near "unrest areas" in black residential areas at a cost of 5,7 million rands.'*

The Harare Declaration of the ANC names the withdrawal of SADF troops from the townships as one of the preconditions for negotiations. On 19 January General Kat Liebenberg announced that all SADF personnel would be out by the end of the year.

According to Jannie Geldenhuis between 500 and 800 troops were present in the townships from 1987 to 1988. Magnus Malan said in parliament that the SADF had erected 14 temporary military bases near 'unrest areas' in black residential areas at a cost of 5,7 million rands.

SADF presence in the townships decreased in 1989, but the Emergency Regulations curbed media coverage. Vrye Weekblad editor, Max du Preez, was charged under the Emergency regulations with subverting the role of the SADF, following an article published in late 1988. Though the Emergency restrictions on the Media have been lifted, the Defence Act still limits publication of data relating to the SADF.

Seven official complaints, on charges ranging from attempted murder, and rape to assault and harassment, were made in early 1989 against SADF members acting in the townships. In two separate cases against the Ministers of Defence and Justice, courts awarded substantial amounts to claimants, related to incidents in Orlando and the Eastern Transvaal in 1986. The most publicised interventions of the SADF go back to their occupation

of Turfloop campus in 1988/9, and the Dad's army raid on Kaya Mandi near Stellenbosch.

Unconfirmed reports suggest that only 800 troops did duty in townships last year. It was claimed that national servicemen only acted in supportive capacities. Various events around the Education crisis on the Cape Flats in 1989, as well as during the Defiance Campaign, suggest otherwise. It seems that the SADF was active in at least Bonteheuwel, Athlone, Mitchells Plain, Guguletu, and Mamelodi last year. If the South African intervention into the Bophutatswana coup is taken into account as well, the army remained integrally involved in the South African civil war.

The Trojan Horse murder trial last year implicated SADF personnel in police activities, and the Death Squads allegations published in the press over past weeks further implicates senior SADF personnel.

Developments around the education crisis have involved SADF troops in the townships. In New Brighton troops monitored a peaceful march in mid February. The SADF was also present in Paarl and Cape Town during Nelson Mandela's release - a conscript was in command of the troops who fired on the looters.

The SADF's intervention in Ciskei - to restore law and order after the coup which toppled Sebe, as well as being on standby to intervene yet again in Bophutatswana, clearly il-

lustrates De Klerk's willingness to use the SADF in a civil war scenario. Calls have also been made from various quarters for the SADF to intervene in the conflict in Natal.

The use of national servicemen in the South African security situation took a new turn in 1990 when a police spokesman confirmed in October last year that 3000 national servicemen, ie conscriptees, had been allocated to the SAP for their national service. Conflicting reports mention that 2500 national servicemen were to do service in the SAP.

Given the situation in past years that conscripts could choose to do their national service in the SAP, but would join the SAP for three years, the situation implies that more than 3000 conscriptees are presently active in the SAP. If one examines police activity in South Africa, this implies that conscriptees are yet again involved on one side of the civil war. The withdrawal of the SADF from the townships appears meaningless in this regard. A change of uniform hardly represents the withdrawal of conscriptees from active service in townships.

The ECC's derestriction comes at a time when black and white volunteer soldiers, kitskonstabels and regular police, some of whom are conscriptees, act in the violent maintenance of apartheid. In a context where 9 + policemen are leaving the SAP per day, and where there is an immense 'shortage' of police anyway, conscripts may increasingly be called to fill the gap.



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