

Enloe in Does khaki become you? states that : "Men are taught to have a stake in the military's essence - combat; it is supposedly a validation of their own male 'essence'. This is matched by the military's own institutional investment in being represented as society's bastion of male identity. That mutuality of interest between men and the military is a resource that few other institutions enjoy, even in a thoroughly patriarchal society". (1983; pg 15). However, only two out of ten i.e. 20% of respondents who had done national military service felt that national service was related to their masculinity before they entered the military.

"I saw it as an experience to prove myself as a man i.e. to be tough and disciplined".
(Respondent No. 13)

"Before I went into the military I did believe the army would make a man out of me. However, once in the military, the only relation to masculinity that doing national service bore was that I had to do it because I was a male."
(Respondent No. 18)

Another three respondents became aware of the linkage between masculinity (or patriarchy) and the military through the period of basic training.

"I became aware of the linkage in basic training especially through the emphasis of the military of the relations between the gun and masculinity. Also, being only with men and separated from society and exposed to vulgar masculinity made me feel aware of my manhood. On the one hand the process of "breaking us down" affected me in that I did become more macho. I resented this on another level because it contradicted my socialisation in terms of what being a male meant".
(Respondent No. 1)

For Eisenhart in "You can't hack it little girl", "the psychological experiences of basic training may be understood as having three interlocking components: the acceptance of psychological control, the equation of masculine with military performance, and the equation of the entire military mission with raw aggression". (1975; pg 14). Men in basic training experience three interrelated processes according to Eisenhart i.e. i) authorisation i.e. not being able to challenge authority; ii) Routinisation i.e. conditioning and structuring of activities and; iii) dehumanisation i.e. degrading and shaping the individual's self-image.

All respondents who had done military service appear to have experienced these three interlocking components and the three related psychological processes of basic training. In turn, basic training appears to have had a major effect on these respondents. It served as a basis generally for respondents to develop a more critical and negative outlook

towards military service in general.

Respondent No. 13 stated that despite his own mental correlation between "manhood" and national service, in basics he began to see the military as a hard and brutal place.

"It was much tougher than I thought it would be. I noticed that people who do not conform suffered enormously. Also, I became aware of the hierarchical structure of the military".
(Respondent No. 13).

"I found basic training very disturbing. A few phrases stand out i.e. the idea of becoming killing machines and statements that this was a war for white survival".
(Respondent No. 18)

"I began to resent the military. I began to resent it because I was exposed to a wide variety of young South African males and what being a man was supposed to mean. Basic training was very cruel and harsh and alienating and did not seem to have a point to it."
(Respondent No. 1).

However, quite differently, the one respondent who had served in the townships and had originally wilfully joined the military as he believed it to be a peace force stated:

"I enjoyed basics and it convinced me to join permanent force. In essence, I felt slotted into the military environment."
(Respondent No. 6)

It would appear from the responses given that those members of the 143 who have undergone military service were deeply affected by this experience both through the process of basic training and through having served (for the most part) on the borders, in neighbouring states and in the townships. These experiences appear to have contradicted with prior beliefs and values of human dignity; respect for life and human equality - possibly the liberal values of many of the objectors' family socialisation and for some, their educational experiences. For those members of the 143 who have served in the military, this experience certainly appears to have been a major factor in their deciding never to serve in the SADF again.

Those respondents who had not yet done military service had managed to avoid this through study deferment.

CHAPTER VI

POLITICAL IDEOLOGY AND CONSCIOUSNESS

For all the respondents, apartheid as a political ideology and structure was seen to be a discriminatory structure meant to maintain minority white rule and privilege at the expense of the social and economic detriment of the majority of South Africa's population. Most respondents felt moral outrage at a "structure that leads to the crushing of potential which eventuates when people are subjected to inequality" (Respondent No. 12) and were hence committed to bringing about the downfall of the apartheid system.

"Apartheid is colonialism of a special type. It is a system of super exploitation with race as a basis. I see apartheid as abhorrent and I reject it completely. It primarily limits peoples' choices and possibilities. The system reproduces prejudice and privilege".
(Respondent No. 5)

For those respondents who based much of their life and morality on religion, apartheid was seen to be against the basic tenets of their faith.

"I see apartheid as very much being against the values that are taught by my faith. I see it as something wrong to be changed. It is system which divides people and teaches individualism and competition. A lot of hurt is done in the name of this system. This system does not liberate people, it enslaves them."
(Respondent No. 19)

All respondents believed blacks to be equal to whites and deserving of equal rights.

When asked when respondents first interacted with black people, 77,2% responded that this had been at home with domestic workers. For the remaining five respondents, three had grown up on farms and had hence interacted with black children on a day to day basis. Respondent No. 10 had grown up in a rural area in England where there were very few blacks and only really came into contact with black people once in South Africa at a multiracial high school. Respondent No. 13 stated that he first interacted with black people at university and during vacation jobs. For the majority of respondents who had first interacted with black people as servants in the home, this experience appeared to be one of contradiction where a black person who they loved very much was "mothering" them and yet they were aware that in some way this person was "inferior" to them.

"Even in those relatively uncomplicated relations there was always the boss/employee relationship".
(Respondent No. 5).

"Maids were caring and they looked after you. I was very dependent on and loved her however, the maid was not my equal".
(Respondent No. 17)

These responses appear to correlate with what Cock concludes in Maids and Madams in looking at relationships between domestic workers and their employers. "... Most relationships were highly personalised and showed a degree of 'paternalism' with a sense of superiority on the employer's part, and a sense of dependence on the side of the workers". (1980; pg 88)

Those respondents who grew up in what could be defined as a liberal or liberal-progressive home were taught not to be discriminating towards blacks or domestic workers generally. For those respondents who grew up on farms and interacted with black children on a day-to-day basis, this experience was viewed as "perfectly natural".

When asking respondents when they felt they interacted with black people as equal human beings, 41% stated that this had occurred at university; 4,5% felt they were still learning to do so; another 4,5% believed this had first occurred in the workplace with black people; 13,6% felt this had always been the case and a further 4,5% believed this had occurred at school, either by virtue of having attended a multiracial school or through being involved as a school student. Finally, the remaining respondents stated that they had learned to relate to black people as equals through a variety of experiences, e.g. going to church with black people; acting in plays with black people as children and through hearing black people speak of their own experiences.

All respondents interviewed stated that they were anti-apartheid and believed the SADF to be upholding an apartheid state. They generally believed that without the security forces, apartheid would have been dismantled long ago. The state, they believed, had lost its hegemony in the white community and had never been hegemonic with regards to the black majority. The ideological state apparatus (as defined by Althusser) including schools; church; media etc., was not adequate in maintaining the system and hence the state's need for and dependence upon large repressive state apparatuses i.e. the SAP and the SADF. Most respondents made reference to the role of the SADF both within South Africa and in the destabilisation of other Southern African states, in maintaining the apartheid state. However, respondents also made reference to the Praetorian nature of the South African state and the ideological role that the SADF plays in the militarisation of South African society especially through its role in the white schools and through conscription. As Frankel has stated, it is clear that the SADF has a "partisan nature" despite its partial British military tradition.

"The SADF upholds an apartheid state through external and internal aggression. Internally it crushes the mass based opposition and acts as part of the NSMS. The SADF is part of a growing military industrial complex. As an external aggressor, it serves to destabilise newly developed liberated states and to destroy the ANC."

(Respondent No. 8)

"I think the SADF upholds the apartheid state directly by being used to crush opposition to apartheid e.g. in the townships. I believe the SADF is part of a broader security structure that determines policy in South Africa and has a vested interest in white minority domination. From what I can gather, it is also used as a powerful force to indoctrinate whites into believing that blacks are the enemy and perpetuates a racist ideology in doing so."

(Respondent No. 11).

All respondents had been involved in anti-apartheid organisations. The majority of respondents had been involved in NUSAS and E.C.C. though a number had been involved in numerous other organisations too i.e. N.E.C.C., UDF local structures ; the trade union movement; Y.C.S.; anti-apartheid church organisations and structures; JODAC, F.F.F.; and JOYCO.

When asked how this organisational involvement influenced respondents' decision not to serve in the SADF, respondents believed that they had come to their decision on their own accord but their organisational experience had both facilitated and reinforced their decision. This was allowed for because being involved in organisation:

- 1) Exposed respondents to like minded people.
- 2) Could not be reconciled with being a part of the SADF
- 3) Refined an understanding of apartheid and the role of the SADF
- 4) Brought respondents into contact with black people and their township experiences.
- 5) Allowed for a forum to challenge and develop alternatives.
- 6) Helped to develop political awareness and identity as an activist and hence the importance of a public stand and one's own participation therein.
- 7) Gave respondents support in their decision to make a stand.
- 8) For those people who had done military service, it allowed for a forum to articulate experiences in the SADF and work through frustrations.

"My organisational involvement exposed me to like minded people and reinforced my view not to serve in a system I had come to oppose so strongly. There was also the element of being informed - the organisation uncovered information and gave purpose since you were part of the broader democratic movement."

(Respondent No. 16).

"Organisational involvement reinforced my decision and probably developed it to the extent that I could make a statement not to serve with absolute confidence."
(Respondent No. 2)

"My organisational involvement allowed me to object because it showed me that there was a supportative community that would support me in my objection. It was important to me that I would not feel isolated during my objection. It also gave me the political education to understand why I had to object."
(Respondent No. 14)]

When respondents were asked what they felt was the major influence that allowed their political views to develop, responses were quite diverse. They ranged from organisational involvement; to friendship networks with activists and black friends; to teachers who had encouraged critical thinking; to reading (books, pamphlets, newspapers, etc.); academic experiences; religious beliefs and liberation theology; life experiences such as the 1976 Soweto uprisings and going into the townships especially during the 1984 to 1986 period and finally, military service.

Most respondents had never given much thought as to what the major influences in the development of their political beliefs were and hence could not pinpoint any one specific influence. Instead, they made reference to a number that came to mind.

"The media and viewpoints at university made me question things. When friends came back from the military and got involved in organisations, this affected me. Also, doing sociology and politics at Wits affected me."
(Respondent No. 3)

"I had a Muslim girlfriend; participation in student politics; studying in Holland; getting to know UDF activists; politics in the Eastern Cape; taking a stand on military service and reading certain good books".
(Respondent No. 15)

"My family with a concentration on their humanitarian principles; one movie i.e. Ghandi had a deep influence on my life and one book i.e. The Bible".
(Respondent No. 21)

The different influences leading to respondents' decision to take the stand as well as their overall anti-apartheid stance had an affect on how they perceived change as coming about in South Africa; their views on pacifism and their vision of a future South Africa.

When asked whether they thought South Africa's solution would have to be a violent one, 31,8% stated that they did not think so. Their reasoning was based on a belief in passive resistance as a method for change as well as a belief in the inherent goodwill of people as a motive for change.

"Violence perpetuates itself. It is possible through non-violent means to achieve things as the defiance campaign has shown and the pressure of sanctions."
(Respondent No. 22).

"I believe there is enough goodwill so that if efforts are made in dismantling apartheid we could reach a negotiated settlement."
(Respondent No. 14)

The understanding of the other 68,2% of the respondents was that the struggle in South Africa involves violence and that armed struggle is a necessary component of a overall strategy for change. Many respondents appear to have an understanding of the "spiral of violence" in South Africa. It is, however, important to note that of all of those respondents who believed that violence would be a part of the solution in South Africa, none believed that change in South Africa would be brought about through a violent overthrow of the existing state powers i.e. through violent insurrection such as was the case in Nicaragua. Violence was generally perceived as a means of pressure for bringing the state to the negotiating table on the conditions laid down by the democratic movement. Violence as a strategy, however, was seen to be likely to increase the longer and more forcefully whites held onto minority rule.

"The longer the Government takes to recognise the validity of black people sharing on a equal footing in the country the more likely a violent solution becomes ...".
(Respondent No. 22)

"I think the South African state is inherently violent and the strategy of armed struggle adopted by the ANC is a realistic one. However, I think that the question of other tactics is just as important e.g. organising sanctions".
(Respondent No. 1).

"I believe violence will contribute to a political solution. It is an essential pressure to end apartheid. I don't believe there will be a violent overthrow."
(Respondent No. 17)

When asking respondents whether they believed themselves to be pacifists or not, 13,6% stated that they were unsure; 31,7% (all of which take active part in Christian religious activity) felt they definitely were pacifists; and the remaining 54,7% stated categorically that they were not pacifists.

Those respondents who were uncertain as to whether or not they themselves were pacifists, believed that they had never been placed in a situation that would test this.

"I have been living as a pacifist but put into certain situations I don't know if I would act as a pacifist. I have never been tested."
(Respondent No. 10).

Those who believed themselves to be pacifists stated that pacifism is a "way of life". They acknowledged, however, the difficulty in maintaining such an ideal in situations of self defence.

"I totally reject the taking up of arms in situations other than in pure self defence. I reject the use of violence for others. I see that my lifestyle lives on this rejection of the use of force. I do support non-violent strategies."
(Respondent No. 20)

"I see pacifism as a way of life. This reaches into every area of my life. This even includes non-violent use of authority and discipline of children as well as mega issues in terms of military, nuclear war, apartheid and methods of self defence."
(Respondent No. 18)

For those respondents who did not believe themselves to be pacifists, this was based on three main justifications:

- 1) A belief in a "just war".
- 2) A belief that they would defend themselves if attacked with any means available.
- 3) The acknowledgement of living in a violent society and hence the use of violence as a solution i.e. that the conditions that surround you dictate whether you can be a pacifist or not.

"I believe there is a just war. The forms of waging struggle and overthrowing an oppressive monster, can be justified by both what that monster is and by the ends one creates."
(Respondent No. 5)

(It is interesting to note that none of the primarily religious based objectors proposed a belief in the notion of a "just war".).

"Although I think it is necessary to seek non-violent solutions, there are times when violence becomes a realistic, pragmatic approach e.g. WWII".
(Respondent No. 6)

"I am not against violence as a matter of principle. I think people have the right to demand certain things as to work towards achieving them. If they are denied forcibly, I believe violence can be justified."
(Respondent No. 13)

Finally, when asked what their vision of a future South Africa is, 54,5% foresaw an extremely difficult period leading to liberation i.e. one of violence, poverty and unemployment followed by a period of state-building post-liberation which too was envisaged as a struggle. These respondents appeared to be optimistic though not romantic about the prospect of a future South Africa and appeared to base much of their understanding on the history of other anti

colonial struggle and post colonial societies.

"In the short term I perceive poverty, unemployment and deprivation of the majority will continue and that we are heading for a future more violent than in the past. In the long term, I foresee a society that has got all the characteristics of a post colonial society where people would enjoy basic human rights but the question of more fundamental rights is by no means guaranteed. I would however, be optimistic at the same time".
(Respondent No. 7).

"In the near future there will be intensified violence and struggle. I do perceive a situation of majority democratic, multi party state. There will be an incredible amount of violence and a hell of a lot of state-building necessary and a poor economy for a long time."
(Respondent No. 17)

"I think that conflict will intensify but that this will lead to a more serious addressing of issues. I believe firmly that a non-racial, democratic South Africa will be established but that it will be a long, difficult process. The past history of the country i.e. of division, means that it will be a long process i.e. prejudice and interest run deep."
(Respondent No. 5)

A further 31,7% of respondents appeared to have a rather romanticised and uncritical view of what the future of South Africa would be like.

"I foresee a non-racial democratic South Africa with a Bill of Rights: a South Africa that is totally non-racial and concerned with world peace and environmental stability based on justice and one that would seek to be an equal partner with surrounding countries and not be too hooked on nationalism."
(Respondent No. 20)

"South Africa will be a society free from all forms of adverse discrimination which would allow for full and equal development of all people".
(Respondent No. 10)

Three respondents i.e. 13,5% had a rather negative conception of a future South Africa. They believed firstly that the Government was holding onto its grip of power and has the repressive forces to do so. Respondent No. 6 was also concerned about:

"... the autocratic tendencies within the MDM. I am scared that the challenge to capitalism will be realised in much the same way as other African countries ... I am also dubious of the MDM's ability to control owing to the conservative right".

Perhaps the most sceptical response was:

"The more serious the struggle for sharing resources becomes, the more resistant the power holders will become. I see the rich growing richer and the poor, poorer with an ever increasing development of the black middle class who will act as a power block. I see an increase in formal and informal crime moving to a state of greater anarchy as more and more people become desperate to survive ... I see the church losing its former organisational status and becoming endangered. I see the education crisis deepening and medical services becoming obsolete and completely inefficient. I see a generation of deeply disturbed children with personality disorders seizing power. I see the problem of homelessness as completely irresolvable and more people dying of starvation and completely anonymous. I see family life in both black and white society destroy itself due to enormous pressure for survival".
(Respondent No. 21)

(It should be remembered that all the interviews were executed between April and August 1989 and that the political climate of this period needs to be accounted for in attempting to understand these responses.)

From the responses given it would appear that members of the 143, for the most part, had been involved in anti-apartheid organisations (mostly progressive) prior to taking the stand. This organisational experience appears to have given the 143 the space, understanding and support needed in taking the stand. The 143 certainly are not an homogenous group with regards to their political ideology or consciousness, however. As has become evident in the process of the interviews, for example, some respondents are confirmed pacifists while others certainly are not. All hope for a non-racial democratic society although, they have varying perceptions with regard to the future of South Africa. What binds the 143 is a common belief that the SADF (through its many roles and activities) is an apartheid tool and a key state structure which ensures the maintenance of apartheid. It is this common perception of the SADF and their opposition to apartheid in all its forms that makes them all members of the 143.

CHAPTER VII

DECISION TO BECOME A CONSCIENTIOUS OBJECTOR

A majority of the respondents i.e. 77,2% had decided not to serve in the SADF some time before the 143 public stand - some at school; others through organisational experience; yet others through their experience in the SADF. Only five respondents i.e. 22,5% decided to take the stand with the formation of the 143 as a supportative group whose numbers and publicity will allow for this stand to be "heard" and hence serve as a recognised political act. All respondents were aware of the consequences of not serving when they took the stand.

Why take the stand?

Respondents reason for not wanting to serve were politically, morally and for some religiously grounded. Politically, respondents were against the role the SADF was playing both within and outside of South Africa. Morally, the SADF was seen as an aggressive and repressive structure. Moreover, respondents refused to serve in a civil war. In short, objectors viewed the SADF as politically and morally corrupt as it served to uphold an apartheid state. For those religious objectors, apartheid and hence the SADF stood for inequality, denial of human dignity and rights and in some cases as a propagator of force and violence, opposed to peace and harmonious co-existence.

In-all, the stand of the 143 was a protest. Moreover, the stand of the 143 with the relatively broad range of people represented was effective in showing that it was not only radical students making irrational statements of intent. (The members are representative of a number of different reference groups though they are for the most part students and professionals). For many of the respondents, fighting for a non-racial democratic South Africa was perceived to be in direct contradiction with serving in the SADF.

"I supported the other side. Joining the SADF would have been tantamount to joining the side in the civil war which was in opposition to the side on which my convictions lay."
(Respondent No. 9)

"I don't want to do anything that reinforces the status quo in this country. As an attorney in human rights doing labour work there is a fundamental contradiction between serving my clients and serving the defence force. To serve in the SADF would be too much of a conflict."
(Respondent No. 13)

"I see the army as supporting a system that I see as evil in terms of the type of people that it is recreating and the relationships it is recreating between them. This is not the type of society that God would want for us. We have to change the system and not support it. The violence of the army is in no way justified. By serving in the SADF I would be betraying the people of South Africa."
(Respondent No. 19)

"It is a question of principle based on being very opposed to the state and the apartheid system. I could not associate myself with doing national service. Secondly, taking the stand not to serve was a protest and the strongest one I could make in my particular position as a professional."
(Respondent No. 16)

The influence of peers and travel with regard to the decision to become a conscientious objector

When asked whether their peer group in any way influenced their decision to to serve, 55,4% stated that they certainly had. This was generally the case since their peers were also involved in organisations and were opposed to the role of the military in South Africa.

"A large number of my peer group share the same values as me. This is where I got my support."
(Respondent No. 19)

22,6% of respondents stated that their peer group had affected their decision not to serve in a very limited way. A final 22% believed their peer group had in no way altered their decision not to serve.

"I stood out and lost quite a few friends. It was a very lonely struggle in those days."
(Respondent No. 18)

It would appear that those respondents who took the decision not to serve a while before the stand of the 143 or owing to experiences of military service, made this decision largely on their own and without much support or positive reinforcement from peers.

Although 72,7% of respondents had travelled abroad, only 25% of these respondents felt that this experience had had any effect on their perception of military service in the SADF.

Respondent No. 15 however stated that his travels abroad had altered him since he had met conscientious objectors in Holland. Another respondent stated:

"I came into contact with people in exile who supported my stand and who supported the same political ideas as I did and gave their own negative perception of the SADF".
(Respondent No. 1)

The importance of making a public group stand as the 143

When asked why respondents felt it was important for conscientious objectors to make a public stand as a group and not individually, various reasons were given that were generally shared by all respondents.:

- (i) "The stand caused people to think about why their sons did not want to serve.
- (ii) It was a stand for non-racialism.
- (iii) It was a tactic for getting a movement going i.e. as a means to undermine the state. Conscription is the most effective political weapon we have in terms of the white community"
(Respondent No. 15)
- (iv) "It allowed people from different groups to stand together and make a public stand.
- (v) It showed that political and religious objectors are one body".
(Respondent No. 22)
- (vi) As a public group stand, the state, SADF and society, would have to take notice of it.
- (vii) The stand would show other conscripts that there are alternatives to simply doing national service and hence make the issue of alternative service known.
- (viii) "Having a large group of people makes it easier for people to join at a later stage"
(Respondent No. 10)
- (ix) A public group stand would make a statement to the international community.
- (x) A group stand would serve as a support base for the conscientious objectors themselves.
- (xi) "A collective stand lessened the possibility of state intervention".
(Respondent No. 7)

One respondent appears to have "summed" these responses quite adequately:

"A public group stand highlighted the plight of conscientious objectors so that pressure could be brought to bear on the SADF and the Government to bring about alternative service. As a group, we had more impact and could offer support to each other and incorporate other people."
(Respondent No. 11)

There is no doubt that respondents felt that there was a qualitative difference in making a collective stand as opposed to an individual one and that having a wide variety of participants meant that this could provide for a wide variety of reference groups in the white (largely middle class) community and simultaneously show that conscientious objectors are not simply "mavericks" or "free lance" people of the 1960's early 1970's "breed".

Was the stand effective?

90.9% of respondents believed, that the 143 stand had been an effective strategy in terms of its goals.

"The stand was effective especially in terms of making a statement about non-racialism. It also brought the issue into the open. It also set the ball rolling for people to come forward."
(Respondent No. 10)

"It certainly had an impact on two key issues:

1. The state was challenged and responded. It banned E.C.C.
2. The white public was very aware of it due to extensive publicity.

It also had an international impact and a path breaking effect in terms of civil disobedience."
(Respondent No. 17)

"I think the two things that came out of it were : 1) a commission to the SADF that camps are shortened
2) The D.P. has a much more clear perspective on alternative service and conscientious objection."
(Respondent No. 8)

Only 3 respondents i.e 8,1% appeared sceptical about the effectiveness of the stand.

"Nothing has changed. The general white perception appears still to support the SADF".
(Respondent No. 3)

"I doubt it will change much. This does not mean I don't think the campaign is not worthwhile".
(Respondent No. 13)

(Once more, it should be recalled that these interviews were done before September 1989 i.e. before the stand of the 771 and De Klerk's "demilitarisation" of South African society especially with regards to the reduction of the period of conscription. It is my belief that these two "developments" need to be seen as having been brought about to a large extent because of the struggle and foreground waged by the 143).

Responses of close associates of respondents to their decision

When attempting to assess how families, close friends and girlfriends and wives responded to the stand, it would appear that people close to the respondents were often supportive but ultimately concerned about the welfare and future of the 143. This was especially so with regards to respondents' families while lovers and close friends (probably since they shared most of respondents values and perceptions) were more supportive of the stand in general. The most diverse responses that respondents received were from their families who in some cases were totally opposed to the stand.

50% of respondents stated that their parents had been supportive with regards the stand but more concerned about their sons' future and wished they could have taken "easier paths" e.g. going overseas.

"My parents were supportive but think I have chosen a difficult rather than easy path. They see it as an obstacle to my settling down."
(Respondent No. 8)

A further 31,9% reported that their families were either totally opposed to the stand, unhappy about it; shocked and according to respondent No. 22 "traumatised".

For the remaining respondents i.e. 16; 12; and 7, their mothers and fathers had responded differently from one another. In all three cases, mothers were supportive while for respondent No. 16 his father was amazed and did not want to understand. Respondent No. 12's father disowned him and in fact had stated to the press:

"I totally disassociate myself from his action; it was uncalled for and not the slightest bit patriotic. I'm very disappointed in him and ashamed of his action. What is wrong is wrong ... Military service many not be pleasant but it's a duty and the law of the land. What would happen if everybody did what he did? We'd be in a real mess". (Sunday Star : 30/10/88)

Respondent No. 7 states that his father was "very angry". According to these three respondents, the different responses of their parents had lead to a degree of conflict within their families. Once more, it is apparent that mothers appear to have been more supportive and empathetic toward the decisions and actions of their sons.

When asked how respondents families had responded to thier decision to make a public stand, most replied that the response was similar to the one of that of the basic decision not to serve. Respondent 15, however whose parents had supported the stand as such, stated:

"They were quite proud to see my photo in the paper".

And respondent No. 8 states that his parents

"had responded well and agreed that a public stand would heighten the chance of alternative service". However, Respondent 14 states that his family "questioned whether (he) could not just do military service and the public stand would cause the SADF to look for him".

In relation to close friends, responses were generally supportive since ideals were shared with respondents. However, those respondents who had a diversity of close friends received diverse responses.

"Most friends supported me though my friends from school days objected to my decision and some are no longer my friends, as a result".
(Respondent NO. 4)

Respondent No. 14 who was due to be sentenced the following day for refusing to do camps stated that his friends supported his decision not to serve but some were upset at his acceptance of jail as an option.

For those respondents who had wives and girlfriends, 80% were unconditionally supportive with regard to the decision not to serve. The remaining 20% of respondents responded that the predominant response was that of concern, worry and uncertainty.

Finally, when asked whether the decision not to serve was a difficult one or one that did not need much thought since their position was so clear, 59% stated that the decision not to serve and take the stand was an easy one since their position was so clear. The remaining 41% however, stated that the decision not to serve and to make a public stand was a difficult one because: 1) it affected family and friends and : 2) it was not a decision one could go back on and was one that possibly had severe consequences.

"It wasn't any easy decision. A lot of thought was required. It altered my future and the security I enjoyed. I had to contemplate what it would be like spending 6 years in jail, exile etc"

From the responses given, it is apparent that for the 143, the decision to become conscientious objectors is a process developed out of a sincere opposition to apartheid and the SADF based on moral, religious and political grounds. The decision to be a member of the 143 was a "life decision" and the 143 together made a public stand with the common understanding that this was a political act which would alter both black and white people's perceptions within South Africa as well as bring the plight of conscientious objection to the international community. The decision by the 143 to become conscientious objectors and to state this publicly though political, is also extremely personal. For the 143 it would appear that to serve in the SADF would be to live in contradiction with one's values, beliefs and understandings. Moreover, the consequences the 143 face are once again based on an individual decision. The 143 though ultimately deciding to make the stand of their own "choice" and face the subsequent consequences, appear to have a lot of support from friends with whom they share common objectives and ideals. The family responses are more diverse and a number of objectors received little or no support and understanding from family

members. It would appear from respondents of this research, however, that most of the 143 received some support from at least one family member. Once again this was often from the mother.

CHAPTER VIII

ALTERNATIVE SERVICE

For David Shandler, a researcher for the Centre of Policy Studies who has done extensive research on conscription and alternative service (1989), a working concept of alternative national service is a form of national service which is composed of three parts.

1. It is available to all who are currently conscripted for national service and who seek to perform military service in good faith.
2. Of a non-military nature.
3. Performed in the interest of the public as a whole.

Moreover, Shandler states that there have been numerous calls for alternative national service from both the conscripted and non-conscripted sectors of the South African population especially from white English speaking males, as well as in the black community.

E.C.C. in its May 1986 campaign for alternative national service called for three changes to be made to the law on conscientious objectors:

"Firstly, community service should not be limited to religious pacifists, but should be available to all conscripts who in conscience cannot serve in the SADF.

Secondly, objectors should be able to do community service in recognised religious and welfare organisations, and not only in government departments.

Lastly, community service should be the same length as military service, and not one a half times as long" (Nathan in Cock and Nathan (ed); 1989, pg 311).

The 143 in their public stand made the call on the SADF and the state for alternative national service one of their major objectives. (This was not the case with the stand of the 771). In their joint statement of conscience, the 143 state:

"We call on the government to allow the option of alternative service in non-governmental bodies for a period of equal duration to current military service, for all those who object to serving in the SADF on moral, religious and political grounds."

The understanding of the 143 with regards alternative service was hence largely a shared one with that of the E.C.C.

All respondents interviewed firmly maintained that by choosing to be conscientious objectors, they had decided they would not play even a non-combattant role within the SADF. When asked whether they would do an alternative community service in a government department, 63,6% stated that they would consider this though ultimately their decision would be dependent upon the options available. The department concerned could not in any way be related to the security forces. Most medical students interviewed stated that they would probably do alternative service in a provincial hospital.

"This form of service would be conditional. It would depend on the government department. I will not serve an unequivocal government policy promoting institution e.g. I would work in the health sector and education or development bank"
(Respondent NO. 17)

27,2% of respondents stated that they would in no way consider working in a government department under any circumstances.

9,2% of respondents stated categorically that they would be prepared to do alternative service in a government department. Respondent No. 20 who is presently doing community service in a government department states:

"It's a compromise between jail and exile. I work in the department of health service".

For none of the respondents, however, would government department service be an "appropriate" alternative service. An appropriate alternative service for the respondents meant one which was non-punitive, available to all on demand; and not restricted to a government department. An "appropriate" alternative service for respondents also entailed being able to make use of acquired skills for the people of South Africa especially the underprivileged and oppressed communities. 60% of respondents also noted that alternative service should be instrumental in developing a non-racial and democratic South Africa. It was stressed by many respondents that for those people who don't have any particular training, there should be a number of options to choose from that would train them and at the same time, any community work done should be beneficial to and accountable to the community being served.

"I perceive an appropriate community service as a service which benefits a needy community. It should be constructive. I would want it to be non-punitive. The service would also need to be accepted by the community in which I was working."
(Respondent No. 10)

When asked who respondents felt this "alternative" service should benefit 63,7% stated that it should benefit the whole South African society and the objector himself. The remaining 26,3% of respondents stated that an "alternative" community service should benefit the oppressed and marginalised in South African society as well as the person carrying out national service.

Although all respondents had common ideas on what an appropriate alternative service should comprise of, not all respondents believed that there should necessarily be conscripted national service of any description. In fact, 27% felt there should be no conscripted national service; 9% were unsure and 64% felt there should be a national service as described by respondents above for a period to be negotiated and dependent on the context and current needs. This 64% of respondents stressed that there should be national service in a post apartheid South Africa. All respondents, however, stated that if there was an appropriate national service, especially in a post apartheid South Africa, that women should have to do national service for an equal period of time with men.

CHAPTER IX

THE FUTURE AHEAD

"... conscription for white men into the SADF brings into sharp relief the system of denial which apartheid involves. The personal cost of those who challenge this system is high". (Cock: ASSA paper; 1989, pg 23). The 143 having publicly stated that they will not serve in the SADF face severe consequences of imprisonment; exile; or constant evasion of the military. Each of these "opinions" has an extremely high price and each one entails enormous sacrifice. It is hence not surprising that the majority of respondents interviewed were unclear about their futures with regard to the stand they had taken as conscientious objectors and chose to delay this decision for as long as possible.

The majority of respondents felt that they wanted to stay and contribute in South Africa and would attempt to prolong their deferments for as long as possible and that they would decide what to do with regards to choosing among the harsh "alternatives" which confronted them at a later date. Respondents, however, were adamant that the stand had committed them to conscientious objection and that the stand meant a "point of no return".

"The only clear thing at the moment is that I won't go to the military. I need time to gain clarity on what I will ultimately do. It is a frightening thing though."
(Respondent No. 19)

"The stand made me more resolved to stay and contribute in South Africa. It rejuvenated the strength I had to oppose apartheid. It made me more steadfast in my resolve. I have resolved to campaign for alternative service and hence will stay in South Africa. I haven't worked out whether I will take the prison option."
(Respondent No. 7)

In fact, the majority of respondents appear to have decided that prison was not an option. Only four respondents i.e. 18% had decided that prison was an option (One of these respondents has since been sentenced to 18 months in prison).

A further four respondents i.e. 18% had decided that they would definitely go into exile. One respondent stated he would go to the Transkei, another stated he would go to a homeland or frontline state; a third to Zimbabwe or Botswana and the fourth was unclear as to where he would go.

The decision to become conscientious objectors and the "choices" they make in this regard are very closely related to how respondents perceive their role as South African citizens. Citizenship was generally perceived by respondents as challenging the unjust structure and system in South African society, and a belief that citizenship does not entail "blind obedience and acquiescence to unjust law". (Respondent No. 20) Being a citizen also meant playing a role in building a non-racial and democratic South Africa. This generally involved using whatever skills one had to contribute to building a more just future.

"My role as a South African citizen is to work toward a democratic, non-racial, non-sexist, non-agist society, and be truly committed to the discovery of the value and potential of every human being."
(Respondent No. 21)

"Being a citizen means playing a positive role as a trained professional willing to work within South Africa for the general community with a healthy, progressive attitude."

(Respondent No. 10)

There was, however, one rather "extraneous" perception of citizenship:

"I would like my society to leave me alone as much as possible. Society should only require from you what you require from it. Where there are defects, you should not object unless you are prepared to do something about it."
(Respondent No. 16)

In continuing to "look into the future", respondents felt that many more white men would refuse to serve in the SADF. However, they felt that many of these men would not make a public stand but rather simply immigrate or go into exile. A significant number of respondents stated that they believed that the number of people who would make a public stand, would not be "an embarrassing number to the state". (Once again, it needs to be stressed that all interviews were carried out before the stand of the 771).

It is of interest to note that while respondents did not foresee huge numbers of men refusing to serve in the near future, one third of respondents did not believe they would experience much harassment from the state on their decision not to serve. One third were unsure as to whether or not they would be harassed and a final third believed they certainly would be especially those who were prepared to go to jail as a consequence of their stand. A few respondents stated that they could not easily differentiate between harassment owing to other political activity and that of the stand.

After "interrogating" respondents for about one and a half hours about various aspects of their lives especially in relation to the stand, it was decided to shift focus and "mood" slightly and ask respondents what they would do if their son decided to serve in the SADF. The responses were numerous. One respondent stated that the question was abstract and refused to comment. Respondent 25 stated:

"I would go for therapy, I suppose."

Two respondents stated that they would not support their sons at all. However, the majority of respondents stated that they would probably try to discourage this but support their sons if they ultimately decided to serve. This perhaps reflects their own liberal, freedom of choice family socialisation.

"I would stand by him and be as supportative as I could. I would encourage him to stand firm on the principles he holds dear. I would always be there for him as my parents have done for me."
(Respondent No. 18).

"I would respect his freedom of choice. It would however, be a major dilemma for me."
(Respondent No. 4)

In all, however, from the responses given it would appear that for the most parts, the future ahead for the 143 with regards to the stand taken remains rather vague. The "alternatives" open to the 143 to not serving are extremely harsh, punitive and involve massive sacrifices. As Chris de Villiers of COSG stated in a letter to The Star (2/10/89) : "It should be clear that it is no exaggeration to say that South Africa currently treats its conscientious objectors more harshly than any other country in the world." It is hence not surprising that the majority of the 143 choose to keep their options open as long as possible while trying to ensure military deferment. The 143 could only hope for the implementation of an "appropriate" alternative national service and ultimately for a new South Africa that is truly non-racial and democratic and where the military would not be instrumental in upholding an exploitative, oppressive, minority ruled society.

CHAPTER X

CONCLUSION

This paper has attempted to provide some insight as to "who are the 143?", given their significance as the first group of conscientious objectors to nationally make a public stand not to serve in the SADF. The areas of most commonality between the 143 appear to be with regards to their social class which can be categorised broadly as "middle class"; their organisational involvement and hence political consciousness and ideology. The "liberalism" and "life chances" (especially in terms of options available and educational opportunities) open to this group of people appear to follow from their general "middle class" family background. However, as this paper tries to illustrate and demonstrate, the 143 do not have homogenous family socialisation; educational backgrounds; religious convictions nor hopes and fears for the future.

A minority of the 143 appear to have attended private schools, yet all experienced some form of tertiary education. For those who had attended private schools, this experience appears to have been a major factor in objectors' decision not to serve since they were exposed to less authoritarian instruction, liberal teachers, an environment that allowed for critical thinking and questioning, and for some, multi-racial schooling. For those, the majority, who had attended government schools, this had little effect on their decision to become conscientious objectors.

With regards to religion, a high percentage of the 143 appear not to be engaged in religious activity. However, for those who are actively engaged (generally in one of the various Christian churches), religion has served as a basis for their beliefs and moral consciousness which appear to be in contradiction with the values and actions of the SADF and apartheid generally. For these objectors, religion is the primary basis for their refusal to serve in the SADF and to fight for a non racial and democratic South Africa.

The family socialisation of the 143 is too extremely diverse although it would appear, as has already been stated, that a narrow majority (about 55%) come from broadly defined "liberal" families who hold politically liberal ideals i.e. support political parties such as PFP and presently the DP. However, these "liberal" values and ideals extend further to include more broadly freedom of choice; the right to question and often, a more laissez-faire attitude towards gender socialisation and military conscription. Those of the 143 who experienced such a family socialisation, believe this experience to have been a major force in their decision not to serve in the SADF.

A definite minority of the 143 have done national service in the SADF i.e. 25%. However, for these members of the 143, it would appear that this experience which was perceived as being negative on the whole (largely due to the activities and lack of humanity of the SADF) was a primary factor in their deciding never to serve in the SADF again.

All of the 143 hold beliefs that the SADF is a racist defence force upholding apartheid in South Africa through its external and internal activities. For the 143, therefore, probably all whose members had been involved in political organisations before taking the stand, to serve in the SADF would be in total contradiction to the forces, ideals and values with which they align themselves. The 143, however, do not have homogenous political ideologies or consciousness yet hold in common the belief in apartheid as morally and politically corrupt - this corruption being upheld by the security forces - and consequently the need to struggle for a non-racial and democratic South Africa.

Deciding to make a public stand not to serve in the SADF for the 143 is a life decision, resulting in being forced to face severe consequences and ultimately having to make enormous sacrifices. This has left the members of the 143 with a general uncertainty as to their futures ahead and the ultimate decision they will make with regards to the stand. The 143, however, as a group have called on the State and the SADF for appropriate alternative service for all conscientious objectors and national servicemen.

The 143 certainly cannot be claimed to be representative of the broader white South African society. (There is very little representation of the Afrikaans white speaking community and of the white working class generally). However, they remain a divergent group with regards to their past experience and occupational status and this has enhanced their challenge to the state both as a monopoliser of violence and its militarisation generally of South African society.

The 143 also had an impact on the white community, especially conscripts, in bringing to the fore the possibility of potential alternatives to conscription as well as the plight of conscientious objectors at large. For the black community and the liberation movement at large, the 143 certainly enhanced and forwarded the struggle for non-racialism in their denunciation of the SADF and consequently the apartheid state repressive and ideological apparatuses.

Finally, the 143 need to be applauded for their courageous stand against the SADF and apartheid. As the Weekly Mail stated on the 5th of August 1988 : "The 143 have presented the greatest challenge yet to compulsory military service in the SADF."

The State would do well to take cognisance of the 143 as real patriots of South Africa. By using their skills and commitment, the 143 would help to build a more prosperous, stable and democratic society. Moreover the State should continue to learn from the 143 and subsequent conscientious objectors that it can no longer afford to fight a losing apartheid war would thereby end the wasted military and related State expenditure and begin to develop an infrastructure for the people of South Africa who have created its wealth.

ABBREVIATIONS

1. ANC African National Congress.
2. ANS Alternative national service
3. CAS Conscription Advice Service
4. COSG Conscientious Objector Support Group
5. ECC End Conscription Campaign
6. FFF Five Freedoms Forum
7. JCE Johannesburg College of Education
8. JODAC Johannesburg Democratic Action Committee
9. JOYCO Johannesburg Youth Congress
10. NECC National Education Crisis Committee
11. NSMS National Security Management System
12. NUSAS National Union of South African Students
13. SACBC South African Catholic Bishops Conference
14. SACC South African Council of Churches
15. SADF South African Defence Force
16. SAP South African Police
17. UDF United Democratic Front
18. WHAM Winning Hearts and Minds
19. YCS Young Christian Students

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