

# He won't go

Who is this young conscientious objector from Port Elizabeth, snatched by plainclothed military police on April 29, just minutes before he was about to address an ECC meeting?

Philip Wilkinson applied to the Board for Religious Objection to be allowed to do non-military national service, instead of an army camp in the townships. He was refused religious objector status, and now faces a three year prison sentence for refusing to report for camp duty on April 28.

"When I received a call-up for June 1985, for two months in the Eastern Cape, I decided to object. I knew exactly what these camps mean. They meant I was being called upon by the SADF to fight in the townships against people whom I had grown to know and trust."

It was during Philip's first job as a trainee chef after leaving school in Standard 8, that his deeply-held convictions were formed.

He began spending mealtimes with the workers and a few years later he developed a deep friendship with one, Xolisi.

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

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

After he lost his job, Philip's mother threatened to disown him if he did not



Philip Wilkinson surrounded by security police on the night of his arrest.

complete his national service. So at the age of 20, he reported for army training. By now he was a staunch supporter of the UDF. He saw quite clearly that the majority of the people in the townships saw the security forces as a threat, maintaining the interests of the apartheid system.

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

Philip Wilkinson was called up last June, and so appealed to the Board for Religious Objection for exemption.

In his statement to the Board, he said:

"I am a Christian, brought up in the

beliefs of the Catholic Church. I am committed to peace, and to working for a better future for all South Africans. I abhor all violence and have consciously not used violence myself since childhood. I have been brought up to respect all people, regardless of their colour, sex, religion or status. I believe that all armies legitimise the use of violence and dehumanise the "enemy". The SADF defends apartheid, which in terms of my Christian understanding is a heresy. For me to participate in the SADF would therefore be a betrayal of all that I know to be good and just.

Philip Wilkinson, since his arrest, has been released on bail. He faces trial on May 23 on a charge of failing to report for a military camp.

## PW arrested

Philip Wilkinson was removed from Johannesburg City Hall on April 29 by about ten plainclothes "military police".

A high-ranking SADF official contacted soon after the incident, said that it was unlikely that Philip was arrested by the military police because no identification was provided on request. None of the "removal" squad wore uniform nor were

military vehicles used. Another SADF spokesperson could only confirm the arrest and said that it had been peaceful.

The National Secretary of the ECC, Mr David Shandler, who witnessed the arrest, refuted the claims of a "peaceful" arrest. Mr Shandler said that whoever removed Philip acted in a rough and aggressive manner. They held little, or no respect for Philip's personal dignity.

Philip was first held in detention barracks in Boksburg for a few days after which

he was transported to Port Elizabeth. He appeared in the magistrate's court for failing to comply with call-up instructions, but more specifically, for not attending a camp. He was released on R100,00 bail and his case was postponed until the 23 May. His passport was also seized.

Philip's case highlights the dilemma that all young, white males in South Africa face: to serve in the SADF or accompanying forces; to spend up to six years in jail or to live a life of exile.

# Sweating For a Just Peace

ECC's central concern is that conscripts have the right to choose — the right to decide whether they can participate in the SADF army or not. Compulsory conscription gives most people no choice. The "Working for a Just Peace" campaign was an active protest against compulsory conscription.

The only grounds on which alternative service is available are those of universal pacifism. Other alternatives for those who choose not to serve in the SADF are a life in exile or a six-year prison sentence.

The ECC recommended to the Geldenhuys Commission, that all people who in good conscience found themselves unable to serve in the SADF, should be allowed to do a realistic period of useful national service. The "Working for a Just Peace" campaign tried to demonstrate what a genuine national service could be like.

April could be seen as ECC's most active month ever, with hundreds of volunteers involved in a variety of projects. These projects included refurbishing both a vagrant children's and an old age home; building a trike track for children in the townships and teaching people to drive. Environmental projects, such as weeding out alien vegetation and cleaning up badly littered areas were also included.

In the midst of these projects, several other major activities were held. On 16 March ECC supporters, wearing bright yellow "Working for a Just Peace" t-shirts participated in a Fun Run along the Sea Point beachfront.

The ECC fair was held on 5 April, where 4 000 people packed the Rondebosch Congregational Church grounds. The following evening the moving and powerful photo exhibition, "South Africa in Conflict: Resistance, Protest, Power", was opened at the Baxter Theatre.

The climax was a mass rally at the City Hall on April 30 which was attended by about 3 000 people. The key speakers were Bishop Desmond Tutu, Nic Boraine, the ECC's Cape Town chair, and Di Bishop, the national vice-president of the Black Sash.



Above

CAG'S inspired stall at the ECC fair: "Fish the troops out of the townships".



Above Right

Putting the finishing touches to a mural at Cowley House.

Right

Backstrain at the tricycle track building site in Guguletu.



## The SADF and UCT

Each year hundreds of university students receive their call-up papers for camps in the SADF. The brown envelope neatly marked with a often-reluctant conscript's latest address, CONSCRIPT investigated how easily names and addresses are obtained by outside from the UCT administration.

What is administration's official policy on this issue? Contradictory reports of people's experiences abound. Someone hanging around in Bremner heard a woman asking for particulars about various students. The secretary at the desk handed over the printout — leaving her to peruse it at her leisure. On the other hand, someone tries to get hold

of their brother: administration refused to give them any details whatsoever.

The official administration policy is the following:

- no names or addresses are given over the telephone;
- if the SADF or SAP want details of students, they have to come to Bremner in uniform with identity documents and state what they need the student's address for.

When this occurs, the student concerned is always contacted and told what to expect. In the case of Special branch wanting information, they have to be referred to a senior administrative person, for example, Dr Saunders or Professor Leatt before they will be supplied with the information.

# Book News

South Africa: A Different Kind of War by Julie Frederikse (Ravan Press) by Michael Briggs

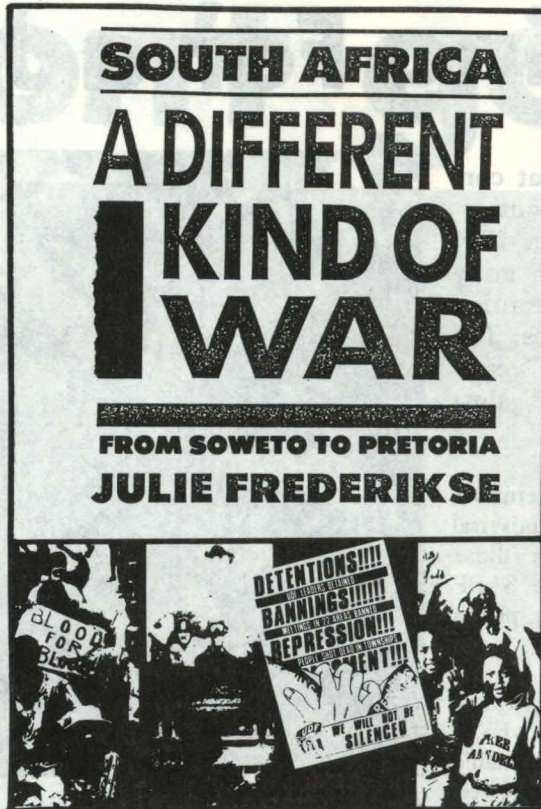
"If the government and its opponents agree on nothing else, it is that South Africa's future will be resolved through war – and more importantly, that it will be a very different kind of war . . ."

Julie Frederikse has allowed the people of South Africa to express the reality of that "different kind of war". This is not a commentary or an intellectual exercise, rather, ordinary South Africans on both sides in the war have been allowed to present what is today, South Africa. At the same time there is a thoroughness and a completeness about this work which makes it valuable.

The personal experiences and perceptions of different people are striking and sad, they show a land of stark contrasts and huge divides. Yet we are presented with a nation of people who are warm and human, confused, frightened and angry.

This book leaves one with the absolute certainty that apartheid is a horror. Powerful photographs and interviews also bringing home the determination and conviction of those who resist. A Different Kind of War presents the

conscript with the terrible reality of the role of the SADF in this war. From the gut and the head I find myself resisting the awful inevitability which seeks to turn me into a fighting machine for this abhorrent system.



JUST the thing for the boys on the border: 19-year-old Vanessa Harris of Marina Heights, Durban, is into ice-skating, surfing and horse-riding and, of course, looking good for the camera. She is the latest entrant in The Daily News Girl of the Month competition which offers a monthly prize of R100. Anyone who wishes to enter should send a black and white or a colour photograph to The Daily News Girl of the Month Competition, P.O. Box 100, Durban.

## DID YOU KNOW?

- that ex-UCT SRC member Gavin Evans recently presented ECC's viewpoint to the United Nations.
- that a Jewish conscript has for the first time been granted non-combatant status by the Board for Religious Objectors.
- that the Defence Budget increased by R850 m this year to the awesome figure of R5.3 billion. Only 6 percent of this figure is spent on black housing.
- that there were 70 attempted suicides during the first fortnight of the SADF's intake this year.
- that since November 1983, 300 people have appeared before the Board for Religious Objectors.

The anti-conscription cultural movement in South Africa is growing from the amateur pamphlets of two years ago to sophisticated undertakings such as the Anti-War Film Festival and the Art and Photographic exhibitions. Clearly, a culture of resistance is taking root in the white community.

At a NUSAS July Festival, Jeremy Cronin defined culture as "everything socially acquired and learned of an ideal kind which affects our outlook, our views, the way in which we think about the world".

CAG's ideal is the End to Conscription. Is CAG's use of cultural actions taking this ideal forward? Remember the Conscription Action Group Orientation Week Roadshow which attracted a full house? Humour, song and drama put the message across clearly without resorting to long speeches.

## culture of resistance

The "Working for a Just Peace" banner was actually stolen twice – an indication of its appeal? CAG even produced a funk-rap song about WJP.

The success of the Forces Favourite tape and live concerts held recently, show that music in South Africa can be used to get across a message on a mass level.

But does this cultural activity reflect the cultural heritage of the passive participant or does CAG try to use an "alternative" culture? We may need to be shocked, and that is not escapism, culture is reality!

# Conscription Action Group

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