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AN EXPLORATORY PHENOMENOLOGICAL STUDY OF
CONSCRIPT'S ATTITUDES TOWARDS, AND PERCEPTIONS
OF, THE SADF.

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ABSTRACT

Unfortunately, the increasing militarization of South African society has not been accompanied by a similar increase in critical academic research into the area of militarization. Despite the fact that at present approximately one million "White" South Africans are eligible for some form of military service, little research has been conducted with regard to the attitudes and convictions of these people.

The present study is an exploratory investigation into this area. Based on the common maxim that the South African war is 80% a psychological one, this research aimed at uncovering some of the techniques used by the SADF in maintaining their advantage in this aspect of the war. 20 subjects, sampled through the accidental, non-probability approach, were interviewed using an in-depth, informal but semi-structured format. The interviews were recorded and transcribed; they were then analysed according to the six sub-phases of the Scientific Phase of Explication in the phenomenological research approach, which is essentially qualitative in nature. This explication revealed that not all subjects were aware of indoctrination attempts in the SADF, but that those who were aware of them generally tended to reject such attempts. Two groups of attitudes emerged, one more liberal and the other quite conservative. It was found that subjects' attitudes to the SADF were not ostensibly related to their attitudes to war in general. In the case of the conservative group these attitudes were not related to their attitudes to the government either.

Major limitations of the study and proposals for further research are discussed.

This study explores some of the attitudes and opinions held by subjects who have completed their initial two-year period of military service. It aims to elicit the meaning invoked by their conscription into the SADF, as well as their awareness and perceptions of defence force indoctrination attempts. Finally, it aims to arrive at a basic conceptualization of the various means employed by the defence force in attempting to indoctrinate conscripts. The effectiveness, or otherwise, of the different techniques will as far as is possible be assessed in terms of the subjects' attitudes on the defence force and related political issues. The aims of this study are essentially based on two assumptions. The first is that this country's defence force should not be viewed in isolation from the political system as a whole; the second is that the defence force does attempt political indoctrination of its conscripts.

In seeking to fulfill its aims this study will explore the meaning which mainstream SADF ideology possesses for the subjects. For example, to what extent have the subjects incorporated the propagated image of "South Africa's enemies" into their own system? or has this image been rejected? Also, how do the subjects perceive their own role within the defence force? and, how is this related to their perception of the role of SADF as a whole? In addition, what mechanisms do the subjects appear to utilize in coming to accept being conscripted against their wishes? and how are these mechanisms related to defence force indoctrination techniques, if at all? Finally, in what ways do the experiences and background of subjects who appear to have incorporated SADF ideology differ from those of subjects who have rejected it? These are some of the broad questions for which this study seeks to provide tentative answers.

It is an unfortunate fact that the vast and growing militarization of South African society has been accompanied by only a small trickle of critical academic literature on the subject. The increasing militarization is plainly visible on an objective level. Frederickse (1986) describes it this way: "The South African police state of the 1960s and 1970s - etched into international consciousness through photographs of police shootings at Sharpeville and Soweto - has become the military state of the 1980s. The military is everywhere: at school, at work, at the movies, on TV, in advertisements, in comic books. The country is led by a former Minister of Defence. Parliament is no longer the most influential decision-making body; it has been replaced by the State Security Council, which is dominated by top military personnel". (1986, 68) What is less plainly visible is the effect which this growth may have upon the country and its inhabitants. In this regard the writings which have appeared concerning militarization are important for paving the way towards a fuller understanding of the implications of militarization. Where these writings are psychology-oriented their importance is emphasized by the predominant view within the Defence Force itself that the battle for South Africa today is only twenty per cent military. Eighty per cent of the struggle is aimed at winning over the "hearts and minds of the people."

Since compulsory conscription into the SADF was introduced in 1967, the period of obligatory service has gradually increased from its original 9 months total to its present 2 years preliminary service plus 720 days of camps. There are approximately one million "white" males at present eligible for one form or another of national service. It is the hearts and minds of these people in particular that the SADF needs to influence if it is to maintain a fighting force which is sufficient to meet the government's perceived needs. Thus it seems inaccurate of Nash (1979) to assume that because the government has chosen to impose totalitarian control over South Africa's blacks, it has in effect given up on eighty per cent of the struggle. It would appear

rather that the priority of this aspect of the struggle is the gaining and maintaining of support from the "whites". This support is seen as essential from a security point of view. In 1982, following increased guerilla activity within the country, General Constant Viljoen spoke of the need to increase the "defensibility of the people": "In manpower terms, this means that we must be able to call on sufficient manpower such that no area within South Africa will be vulnerable to attack" (Frederickse, 1986, 81).

In order to understand the means through which the SADF fights this 'silent' aspect of the war, it is necessary to examine the government's 'total' strategy. According to Tomaselli (1984), "The aim of the 'total strategy' is to prepare South Africa militarily, economically, politically and psychologically to fight what is seen as a 'total war' against the 'total onslaught' waged on South Africa ..." (1984, p8) Seen as having a paramilitary posture, this strategy has infiltrated many areas of life in its attempt to predispose South Africans - in particular the whites - towards accepting and supporting the 'total' war. For this purpose the strategy needs to encompass education and the media. Christian National Education follows the doctrine of an Afrikaner, Calvinist-inspired syllabus and, combined with weekly sessions of Youth Preparedness, aims to nurture South Africans who will be ready to play their role in the 'total' strategy (Frederickse, 1986). Weekly cadet training for males is thought to imprint itself upon their intellect, a process which is given the final touch by military training. Thus the aim of such education is to have the country's white youth emerge from school with strong views in support of government policy and a deep mistrust of its opponents. This line of thought becomes more interesting if seen in conjunction with a study by Bailes and Guller (1970) surveying the attitudes of American students towards the Vietnam war. It was found that subjects with strong pro-Vietnam war beliefs showed a significantly greater tendency towards closed-mindedness than did moderates or those with strong anti-Vietnam war beliefs. Thus the pro-war subjects displayed less of an understanding of opposing viewpoints than

Tomaselli (1984) outlines the role which the media has assumed in propagating SADF ideology. Its co-option into the psychological warfare has not been entirely coercive since, as Tomaselli explains, defence force policy is to a large extent aligned with that of big business which controls the commercial press. Television is seen as playing a particularly important role in the SADF's attempts to stem the growing tide of conscription evaders. It has been reported that between 3 000 and 4 000 conscripts failed to report for national service each from 1975 to 1978 (Moulder, 1985). In 1978, according to Tomaselli, the English Documentaries Department of SABC-TV was instructed to terminate all current work and begin compiling documentaries which would stress South Africa's military preparedness in the face of the threat from the north. All seven producers reportedly refused and were moved shortly afterwards into non-contentious departments such as Variety and Sport. Private producers were contracted and over the period from 1979 to 1980 the SABC broadcast at least eight documentaries on various aspects of the SADF. Whether these documentaries actually succeeded is difficult to gauge, since resistance to conscription has continued to rise.

This rise brought about the formation of the End Conscription Campaign in 1983. The ECC was formed initially in response to a motion emerging from a Black Sash conference, which called on the government to "abolish all conscription for military service" (South African Outlook, 1985). The campaign aimed to bring unity to the growing body of South African war resisters, and other opponents of the system of conscription. The ECC's support appeared to grow considerably when, in October 1984, the SADF ostensibly dropped all pretense of political "neutrality" and deployed 7 000 troops in three Transvaal townships (Frederickse, 1986). The number of conscripts failing to report for duty rose dramatically from 1 576 in January 1984 to 7 589 in January 1985 (S A Outlook, 1985). This latter figure was later claimed by the SADF to be incorrect on the grounds that it included some conscripts who were at

that time students or scholars (Feinstein et al, 1986). No revised figure has been forthcoming, however, and in January 1986 Defence Minister Malan declined to reveal to parliament the number of conscripts who failed to report. It seems that such information is now being viewed as counter-productive to the SADF's efforts at maintaining their advantage in the internal ideological battle.

In 1983 a law was passed increasing the penalty for conscientious objection from two to six years imprisonment. The alternative for religious objectors is six years community service, on the condition that the objector proves that his motivation is based on 'universal pacifism' and is therefore not of a political nature. Thus the government is willing to impose harsh punitive measures to prevent conscientious objection by causing national service to appear as the lesser of two forms of hardship. At the same time, in order to bring about a decrease in the number of conscripts choosing exile before national service, the SADF launched a campaign to discredit the overseas-based Committee of South African War Resisters (COSAWR). COSAWR is a movement comprised mainly of exiled South Africans, who attempt to provide various forms of support for those conscripts who emigrate rather than serve in the SADF. An example of the material which emerged in this campaign is an article that appeared in the official SADF magazine, Paratus, in 1982. The article was headed "The Harsh Reality of Draft Dodging". This headline is in itself a cleverly worded sentence, designed, through its associations with American anti-Vietnam war activity (dodging the draft), to distance most South African youths from the choice of refusing to be conscripted. The article is subheaded "Kremlin's guide to poverty, loneliness and heartbreak ..." and describes COSAWR as "a puppet of the true enemies of all the peoples of the RSA" (1982, 35). Finally, the article makes the claim that "... to date not a single South African draft dodger has been granted refuge status in Western Europe or the United States." This claim conflicts quite

strongly with that of Feinstein et al which states that 1 000 objectors were granted political asylum in Britain between 1977 and 1981 (1986, 67).

Whatever the case may be, it is clear that the government is using every means at its disposal to ensure that all conscripts, regardless of their possible opposition to the SADF, do carry out their two years national service. The logic in this policy becomes clearer in view of another American study, this one involving U.S. Marine draftees. It was found, during the Vietnam war, that marines who had misgivings about the draft system and about their involvement in the war, received combat ratings which were often superior to those of the marines who had accepted their draft unquestioningly and without misgivings. It was thought that the high combat performer had more realistic perceptions of the recruit training experience and sought to do well in order to obtain maximum personal gain from the experience. For this reason, this group of recruits usually joined the infantry or special forces which were highly regarded within the Marine Corps (Clum et al, 1971). These findings conflict with the views expressed in the Progressive Federal Party's submission to the Geldenhuys Committee of Inquiry into Defence Matters, set up in 1985. The PFP claimed that a volunteer army would be far more effective in terms of commitment, enthusiasm and dedication, because recruits would have joined willingly (Official PFP Submission, 1985). American study would seem to indicate that an effective fighting force can be formed from groups of initially unwilling conscripts.

The findings of the Geldenhuys Committee were presented in the White Paper on Defence and Armaments Supply (1986). The views expressed by the PFP were apparently accepted in principle, but rejected in practise. The reason given for this rejection was the fact that such a Full-time Force would not be able to "guarantee force levels" (1986, 6). Thus, if the perceived threat to South Africa were to materialise in the form of a large scale military attack,

there would not be sufficient part-time servicemen available for immediate call-up. Other findings which have particular relevance for the present study were:

- (i) That seven church groupings had recently changed their policies to accept objection against military service as part of their dogma, and that tolerance of these policies would "result in the Defence Force being reduced to inefficiency" (1986, 7).
- (ii) That the present policy on religious and conscientious objection be maintained, while "increased efforts should be made to counter the anti-national service campaign (1986, 10).

If this latter recommendation is a reference to non-religious objection, it is the only one; this is despite the fact that the ECC testified before the committee.

Seegers (1986) produced a review of the major military-related literature which has appeared since 1960. She finds that the research is inevitably guided by the academic discipline of the author. For this reason a lot of literature has appeared on the subjects of the defence budget, the military's relationship to the state centre of political power, problems related to women and the military's handling of alcohol and drug abuse. The most important issues to arise from the body of literature reviewed are firstly the military involvement in the State Security Council, which is seen as "first among equals", in its power to make decisions; the second issue is that of the increasing militarization of society, possibly as a result of the first issue. The general conclusion is, however, that because of resistance from English-speakers as well as certain conservative Afrikaans groups, an eventual military coup does not seem likely. In fact, if one looks to pre-1960 South African history and examines the ebb and flow of civil-military relations, it becomes questionable to say that the present increase in militarization is exceptional. Seegers feels that research on the military should be

aiming to develop more along more internally consistent theoretical lines as "the informed layman will reject stereotyped and simplified images of South Africa's past, inconsistent argumentation, generalisations made without supportive evidence, and carelessly selected or controversial concepts" (1986, 199).

Seegers' review is wide-ranging and detailed. In her criticism of military-related research for its internal inconsistencies, however, she neglects to make mention of one important factor, the difficulties facing social researchers in South Africa. Restrictions on the free flow of information, censorship, fears for the safety of researchers' informants and fears of legal reprisals are all major obstacles facing researchers who wish to study the South African Defence Force or any other controversial issues in South Africa. Savage (1983) sees this as being the case particularly in social research where issues are often contentious:

"Many of the critical issues that such a social science deals with are controversial, and are ones upon which there is little agreement, academically or politically, although there is usually a 'dominant' view on them. The social science that probes into and behind these controversial issues and questions the dominant view on them almost inevitably attracts hostility from the groups whose viewpoints and organization are being examined and called into question by such probing" (1983, 63).

The result of such hostility is certainly a limiting of critical research and a tendency to resort to dramatic counterpropaganda in order to question the dominant view. Such counterpropaganda plays an essential role when research is restricted. For example a number of articles appeared during the UCT Militarization Focus of 1982. These articles appeared in a limited publication and many would be considered "weak" by Seegers' standards. For example Hulley (1982) makes generalised statements such as: "... the effect

of this incident has been to put South African policy-making under the direct control of the military with immense consequences in the future for the whole of South Africa." (1982, 2). At the same time articles such as this one play an important role in exposing and publicising the tangible increase in South Africa's militarization. Such literature is essential for making South Africans more aware of their country's military activity, and cannot be rejected solely on the grounds that it makes use of dramatic statements ("War spread across the country like cancer") in a counter-propaganda mould. Another relevant article to emerge during the Militarization Focus was "Total War in South Africa". In this article, Evans (1982) discusses the growth of the military in terms of the questions "Who are we fighting for" and "Who are we fighting against?" The role of the SADF as a politically neutral body is questioned in the light of General Malan's 1979 statement:

"The Defence Force supports government policy and is responsible for peace, law and order in this country. This policy is the same as that laid down by Dr H F Verwoed, namely multinationalism and self-determination of nations."

Thus, Evans implies, we are fighting for apartheid and against the forces seeking to end it.

Evans' view is, of course, not shared by the SADF and their media supporters. The Defence White Paper, for example, devotes two pages to a description of the enemy in all its different forms. It makes the distinction between the external and internal situations. Externally it names the Soviet Union as "chief planner and executor" (1986, 12). The USSR is said to guide its revolutionary onslaught towards South Africa through firstly the United Nations (UN) and the Organization for African Unity (OAU) and ultimately through SWAPO and the African National Congress. In this way the governments of most of South Africa's neighbouring states have apparently been drawn

into the Soviet cause. Internally the "onslaught is spearheaded" by the Charterists, ie. those who propagate the aims of the Freedom Charter. Here the United Democratic Front (UDF) are named as "chief exponent". Also mentioned in this respect are the South African Communist Party (SACP), the ANC once more, the Pan-African Congress (PAC) and the Azanian Peoples Organization (AZAPO). All these organizations are said to be involved in mobilizing the people to make the country "ungovernable". For this purpose "real, but especially imagined political, social and economic grievances are exploited to incite the population to participate in resistance activities" (1986, 13).

Considering the extent of the SADF's perceived threat, and taking into account the view that 80% of the battle is psychological, the lack of psychology-oriented research on the SADF becomes re-emphasized. What does the average conscript feel when, faced with a barrage of conflicting propaganda, and pressurized by school, media and laws, he has to make a decision about entering the defence force? An article, "Mind and Military" (Psyche, 1984) mentions some of the psychological aspects of conscription. Joining the defence force is seen as a "crisis situation" in which conscripts face a number of psychological losses; these include loss of personal control, loss of support networks, loss of individuality and loss of political identity.

Another psychology-oriented study was conducted by Feinstein et al (1986). In two separate surveys, student attitudes to their own conscription and mothers' attitudes to their sons' conscription were investigated. In the first survey, subjects were divided into three groups. The first group was opposed to conscription, the second were uncertain of their views and the last group was in favour of conscription. Due to the small scale of the study only tentative conclusions could be drawn. Based on in-depth interviews it was found, interestingly enough, that school and media influences turned most

members of the first two groups against the military, while exerting a positive influence on the third group's attitude to the military. This third group's attitude to the military was found to correspond to their general world view. In addition it was provisionally suggested that the members of this group showed signs of authoritarian personality traits. Finally the subjects' intention to obey their call-up instructions was analysed. It was felt that the attitudes of those in the first group were inner-directed and they would not, as they had stated, do their national service. Those in the second group would to a large extent be guided by their reference group. The third group, whose attitudes corresponded to the mainstream ideology, would carry out their intentions and comply with their call-ups.

In the second survey eight women each between 40 and 45 years of age, with at least one son over the age of 15 and eligible for national service, were interviewed. All the women were opposed to both apartheid and conscription into the SADF. They were questioned on their attitudes to conscription and their sons' attitudes to the same issue. The main issue to arise from the interviews was the women's conflict between opposing conscription and supporting their sons, whatever their decisions. In this most women chose the traditional mother role, as a result of which conscription was discussed very little in their homes. In both of the above studies, institutions of socialization were discussed. These included the family, the school and cadet systems, the peer group and the media. These issues are all of some relevance to the present study in that they are often thought to be the agencies used by the defence force in preparing conscripts for military service. The present study does not deal directly with these agencies in that its area of focus is rather the agencies of indoctrination that exist within the defence force itself. It should be emphasized that the chosen focus of this study does not imply that these pre-military agencies are viewed as unimportant. The present area of focus is seen as a different aspect of

the same overall strategy, possibly the rounding-off phase of militaristic indoctrination.

METHOD

A phenomenological framework of research was seen as appropriate to this study for two main reasons. Firstly the present study was limited in terms of the number of subjects that could be investigated. Secondly the study was exploratory in the nature of its focus as no clearcut hypotheses could be formulated on the basis of prior research into this area. Thus it was felt that a qualitative study, which would elicit the subjective experience of military service and the individual meaning of that experience, would be most suitable. The phenomenological framework seemed best suited to achieving these aims. The participant-reciprocal approach to phenomenological research was selected because in-depth interviews seemed more likely to elicit subjective meaning than questionnaire-type surveying. This particular approach is based on the assumption that the subjects are better able to describe their lived-situations fully and faithfully than a non-participant 'outsider'. This is certainly the case in critical research into the defence force where direct observation would be impossible and where little is known by outsiders of the internal workings of that institution. This latter situation is emphasized by Lawrence (1968) when he writes: "The full details of the extensive political indoctrination of Citizen Force draftees are not known (and may never be as the passing on of such information carries the death penalty)" (1968,67).

The Sample

20 subjects were selected using the "accidental" form of non-probability sampling.¹ Interviews were only conducted once it was established that the subject met all of the following criteria:

According to the specific area of research it was necessary that each subject had been conscripted into the SADF against his will. That is to say, each subject only did his military service because he was compelled to by law and

1. More details on the sampling method are available on request.
Such information is presently withheld for reasons of confidentiality.

would not have volunteered for the SADF if such a law did not exist. In addition the subjects must have completed their preliminary period of two years military service; in the case of two subjects this criterion was not met, but since both of these subjects were in their last few months of preliminary service and had experienced all its major phases, it was decided that they were suitable for the study.

According to the phenomenological framework of research it was necessary that three further criteria be met. Thus each subject had to express willingness to discuss their experiences, perceptions and opinions of military service and related issues. Secondly, the interviewer needed to be fluent in the subjects' home language, which meant that all subjects had to be English-speaking. Finally, the subjects had to be naive with respect to psychological theory. It was discovered during one interview that the subject was quite knowledgeable on psychological theory, but this did not prove to hinder the elicitation of that subject's experiences and the interview was thus included in the study.

Semi-structured, in-depth interviews were conducted with each subject. Before any feelings or opinions were elicited, factual biographical data was obtained. All subjects have matric or higher educational qualifications. Fifteen subjects commenced their military service immediately upon completing their schooling. Of these thirteen have commenced further studying since the conclusion of their preliminary military service. Five subjects attended university before commencing military service. Seventeen of the subjects had taken part in cadet training at school, while the other three had been at schools where no such training took place. In the SADF itself, seventeen of the subjects had received army call-ups, while the other three were posted to the navy. Eight of the subjects received rank in the defence force; this figure includes two lieutenants, four corporals and two lance-corporals. A complete description of the biographical data is included in Appendix A.

Each subject chose the time and venue of his interview. The aim was to keep the structure of the interviews as open as possible. An interview schedule was, however, drawn up with the aid of two pilot interviews. This schedule was to be kept in reserve in case any of the subjects requested specific questions. All twenty subjects did request direct questioning at various stages of the interviews and the schedule served as a guide for ensuring that diverse areas of experience were discussed. The interviews were recorded with the subjects' permission on condition that the recordings be destroyed once transcribed. All subjects insisted on remaining anonymous. The transcribed interviews were later analysed according to the six subphases of the Scientific Phase of Explication (Kruger, 1979, 127-131), used in the phenomenological research procedure. The interview schedule is included as Appendix B.

Results.

It was found that despite all subjects being unfavourably disposed towards their own conscription, a number of quite diverse opinions were expressed on issues relating to conscription in general and the role of the SADF. In fact two distinct groups of subjects began to emerge. The first, Group A, were generally opposed to the SADF's role in southern Africa and particularly inside South Africa's townships. On the whole these subjects were aware of the defence force's indoctrination attempts and rejected the propagated image of "the enemy". The second group, Group B, tended to accept the role of the defence force inside and outside the country and were largely unaware of indoctrination as such in the defence force. A number of this group's subjects became more tolerant of SADF ideology while doing their military service and have retained this ideology since that period. On the whole this group tended to experience less confusion with regard to their own beliefs than did those in Group A. An interesting finding was that acceptance of SADF ideology does not imply acceptance of government policy as a whole since most of the subjects felt themselves to be opposed to the government. A more complete description and comparison of the two groups and their biographical backgrounds will be provided after the description of findings.

Since the interviews had no rigid structure the content of the responses differed from person to person in terms of areas of focus. What follows is a description of generally recurring themes which emerged from the interviews. There were no inflexible criteria for selecting the themes described beneath. Two general rules-of-thumb were applied. Firstly, the theme should be of possible relevance to the focus of the research; and secondly, the theme should have occurred in at least half of the interviews. Cases in which a described theme does not meet one of the above criteria will be pointed out. The possible significance of the various themes and responses contained therein will be discussed at the end of the descriptions. The headings given

to the different themes were formulated during the analysis phase of research and thus do not necessarily bear any relation to the questions which were asked in the interviews. The themes were divided into three categories: those which express the meaning that the defence force has for subjects before they commence national service; those which express their experience of national service itself; and, thirdly, those which reveal their present attitudes to issues surrounding the SADF.

A. BEFORE COMMENCING MILITARY SERVICE

1. Expectations

All subjects emphasized that they did not want to do their military service. They had accepted that the law gave them no viable alternatives and that they would be joining the SADF. Most subjects recollected experiencing fear during the months leading up to the commencement of their service. This fear was related to three issues. The first and most common of these was the immediate fear of the physical hardships of basic training. In addition many subjects recollected a fear of the loneliness which they expected to result from their separation from family and friends. Thirdly, subjects spoke of the fear of experiencing guilt and self-doubt. This latter fear resulted from the moral reservations which a number of subjects had experienced in relation to the army. All the subjects claimed that their fears were based largely on stories which they had heard from former conscripts.

2. Ostensible reason for joining SADF before studying

Although all subjects had access, both financially and academically, to tertiary education only five had decided to study before joining the defence force. The remainder were questioned on this issue. The overwhelming response was that these subjects had been unsure of what to study and had joined the SADF first to remove what they saw as an obstacle to their future careers: "I wanted to get it over with and then decide what to study" was

a common response. Those who had received navy call-ups saw this factor as an important influence in their decisions to complete their military service before studying. They feared that if they chose to study first they might receive army call-ups in future years; they all saw navy call-ups as a far easier prospect than army call-ups. Several subjects also mentioned the fact that many of their friends were going into the defence force at the same time; they saw this as being influential in that they expected to receive comfort in the knowledge that friends would be undergoing similar hardships at the same time as themselves.

B. DURING MILITARY SERVICE

1. Coping with basic training

All subjects experienced basic training as an extremely difficult period of military service. This issue, however, elucidated two distinct types of experience. A more or less equal number of subjects recollected each of the two types of experience. The first group, to whom I shall refer as group X, emphasized the physical difficulties of basic training. They felt that 'basics' were not as bad as they had expected: "The stories make it out to be far worse than it actually is." On the whole this group found that once the physical hardship had been transcended, basic training became much easier. "Once you're fit they can't touch you" is the kind of comment which sums up this attitude. The second group, group Y, saw mental difficulties as being at least as important, if not more important, than physical ones. Group Y emphasized psychological factors such as isolation, their own emotional responses to the defence force's disciplinary measures, the erosion of their self-confidence and inner turmoil.

"The army don't motivate people, they think using a stick is good enough. This was totally alien to me and I felt a great need to act against it ... I followed all commands unquestioningly, but it all seemed so purposeless to me ... They break down your individuality ...

I found it an extremely emotional experience."

Statements such as these sum up this point of view. Group Y also experienced a transcending of the physical strain, but for the most part they did not see their difficulties as ending there. "I found myself obeying orders just because everyone else was and even though I found most commands totally futile ... I asked myself time and again what I was doing there and what I had let myself in for." Most subjects in Group Y found 'basics' much worse than they had expected it to be. Once they had overcome the physical hardships, the psychological ones became more prominent: "During the first few weeks I was too tired to give any thought to the social consequences of my actions (joining the defence force). Later on I began to renew my self-questioning."

Group X made little reference to psychological factors; when they did make such references it was usually in terms of how officer-soldier relations influenced their comfort/discomfort:

"I couldn't stand the raw, uneducated non-commissioned officers, but commissioned officers were far more reasonable ... I feared officers at first, but once I came to respect them life was far more bearable ... I was mentally prepared for it and I was sure that if I disciplined myself instead of letting them discipline me I would have a relatively easy time of it. I was right".

Group X also tended to acknowledge a purpose underlying basic training:

"Without basics the army would be undisciplined ... Basics is important, because it puts people in the right frame of mind to get through their two years."

2. Relaxation of discipline

Nearly all subjects were aware of a relaxation of discipline. In some cases this occurred immediately after basic training, in others only after second phase training, and in still others only once the time drew near to their

departure from the border. This relaxation of discipline entailed a decrease in "petty commands to enforce discipline" and smoother relationships between officers and recruits. Some subjects experienced this change in attitude as a tactic employed by the authorities in order to unify companies in preparation for possible fighting in the operational area: "

"The closer border-time comes the nicer they are to you ... they have to go with you (to the border) and they need to become one of your group rather than an outsider ... they stop trying to break you because they want to lift your morale."

In general, however, the different treatment by officers was viewed without too much suspicion and brought with it better perceptions of these officers on the part of the subjects:

"I became quite good buddies with my corporal ... You learn to trust in your officers ... I related better to officers outside the training context ... You respect an officer for his rank and what he has done."

These quotations represent the general trend of the sample.

Three subjects, however, experienced no such relaxation in discipline. I mention these three in particular, because they also differed distinctly in attitude from the sample as a whole. Two of them rebelled constantly against authority figures and were frequently absent without leave (AWOL). Their perceptions of the officers reflected their attitudes:

"I found it hard to respect people merely because they had special markings on their shoulders and hats. I have vivid memories of my drunk sergeant-major vomiting on my shoes and instructing me to clean it up ... I remember a colonel praying to God for victory and getting smashed out of his mind in the pub a few hours later."

The third subject applied for non-combatant status on the grounds that he was

a pacifist. In such ways these subjects were clearly different from the rest of the sample. Their experiences were also quite different. Apart from the fact that the first two received a total of three months extra days for AWOL and the third underwent frequent psychiatric examinations, all these subjects felt themselves to have been victimized by officers in general:

"I was always being picked on even when it seemed that there was no particular reason for it ... One sergeant-major would start screaming every time he laid eyes on me, no matter where I was or what I was doing ... I seemed to get in trouble with every corporal in the camp for the pettiest of things."

3. Deviant and illegal activities

The experiences of the three subjects mentioned above provide an extreme example of the types of deviances or illegal activities referred to by the sample as a whole. Various types of such activities came to light in the interviews. These can be divided into two broad categories. The first category consists of those deviant activities that are socially sanctioned. This category includes "gippo-ing" (getting out of doing work), getting drunk and short-term AWOL. In this case a deviant activity is some action taken by a defence force member, whereby that action is officially illegal but is never actually punished. Nearly every single subject had experienced AWOL to the extent of a few hours in town one night; certainly every subject had experienced both "gippo-ing" and getting drunk. The subjects held no strong attitudes on these activities and did not perceive them as serious offences. The general feeling was that they represent the norm:

"Everyone gippo's in the army ... The first thing I learnt was how to gippo... You can manipulate the system so easily ... I revelled in small ways to show I wasn't submitting passively to a harsh authority ... most PF's are drunkards ... Gippo-ing is actually quite a status symbol ... Even while I was an MP I used to rave

in town with guys who were on AWOL for the night (MP: military
police) ... All the officers in one camp used to AWOL."

The second category appears to consist of those activities which are neither legal nor socially sanctioned. This includes stealing, smoking dagga and long periods of AWOL. No subjects admitted any stealing except small quantities of food from the kitchens. In general stealing of one another's possessions was perceived to be widespread, uncontrollable and irritating: "You have to lock your clothing to the washing line ... One person has no bush jackets and the next person has four, and there's no proof unless you catch the person red-handed ... any large bureaucracy experiences stealing." Three subjects admitted to smoking dagga and experienced it as an important, but secretive form of rebellion as well as an escape from boredom: "Smoking dope reminded me that I was different from the whole system ... quite a few people start smoking dope because there's so little else to do." Only two subjects admitted experience of long term AWOL (as mentioned in the previous section). All the other subjects who referred to this activity perceived it as too large a risk: "If they catch you AWOL you get thrown in the 'kas' (cell) with the dope-smokers and other rubbish ... AWOL is more noticeable and treated more seriously than gippo-ing ... the army can't afford to be soft on deserters."

4. Position in the SADF

One clear trend which emerged from the study was the pride with which subjects perceived their position in the SADF. Of the ten subjects who referred to their specific jobs, nine displayed feelings of importance:

"Chef has the highest rank in the army ... I work in a store, supplying the army with goods; it's like running the whole army ... I had a heavy job; it shouldn't be given to a CF (civilian force member) ... as a corporal I gained more authority

and people looked up to me ... I worked directly with a kommandant and had a lot of authority vested in me."

A number of subjects also referred to the broader hierarchical structures present in the defence force. It was generally felt that permanent force members (PF's) and "ou-manne" (servicemen of at least one year's active duty) have greater status than inexperienced civilian force members. These soldiers appear to take advantage of their extra status and also appear to exploit inexperienced newcomers: "I saw PF's and 'ou-manne" as my biggest enemies ... I hated "ou-manne" most of all ... "ou-manne" treat the "rowe" (newcomers) like shit ... you respect "ou-manne" out of fear." There is, however, a tendency for this hierarchical structure to perpetuate itself and a number of interviewees mentioned that they also took advantage of this system: "When my turn came I also treated the "rowe" like shit ... you can mess the newcomer around, because they're scared of you ... I expected respect from the newcomers."

The antagonism which occurs between newcomers and "ou-manne" and between PF's and CF's appears to have a third source - the division between English and Afrikaans. As this study includes only English conscripts it is difficult to elicit the complete situation, but the general feeling among the sample is that English national servicemen receive unfair treatment and that the language division is a definite source of conflict: "There is a natural sorting process, mainly according to language ... my Anti-Afrikaner prejudice was reinforced ... the mainly Afrikaans PF's picked on English national servicemen ... drilling was meant to alternate daily between English and Afrikaans commands, but never does ... the Afrikaans officers were the worst of all." It was also generally felt that all conflicts, such as this one were ignored when co-operation was required, and that such co-operation was often necessary, especially during basic training: "The group is singled out in the army ... You don't do anything to jeopardize your platoon even if there is conflict ... Teamwork is vital for survival".

5. Overt indoctrination in the SADF

Each subject was aware that the focus of the research was their experience of indoctrination attempts by the defence force. Thus each subject mentioned the issue in one way or another during the interviews and the general feeling which emerged was that the SADF spends a lot of effort on propagating their policies onto both the conscripts and the civilian population at large. When the topic arose during the interviews, subjects were asked to comment in particular upon their experiences of an enemy-image as propagated by the defence force; they were usually asked further questions which will be discussed under sections following. According to their experiences and attitudes surrounding this and the following issues, the subjects can again be divided into two almost-equivalent groups. These groups I will refer to as Group A and Group B in order to emphasize their distinction from the two groups referred to earlier. Group A consisted of 9 subjects and Group B 11.

On the whole Group A experienced indoctrination as a force, of which they were aware and by which they did not allow themselves to be moved. These indoctrination attempts included the propagation of an enemy-image which was for the most part identical with that of official policy, as mentioned in the Defence White Paper (1986). Thus this group were aware that the SADF wants its conscripts to perceive SWAPO and the ANC as the enemy in the short term; and the SADF also wants Russia to be seen as the power behind these enemies and thus as the long term enemy. The more abstract "enemy", communism, is also widely propagated by the defence force. In addition this group tended to view the lectures and film-shows on these issues to be largely propaganda techniques:

"The army sees SWAPO and the ANC as fronts for the Soviets ... They do try to indoctrinate you ... They drum the threat of SWAPO into you ... Lectures always include mention of the Soviet Union ... SADF uses videos and lectures to justify itself ... Even the

internal uprising is seen as Soviet-induced ... I was never indoctrinated ... The Afrikaans soldiers accept this standard propaganda, but the English guys want more proof ... I had a pre-conceived rejection of SADF propaganda."

Amongst this group, however, there was a slight tendency to view some indoctrination attempts as being effective, even if one was aware of, and rejected these attempts as 'propaganda' in the first place. These subjects were concerned with the idea that indoctrination occurs very gradually and subtly, through continual exposure to only one point of view. They felt that those who held different points of view were in an extreme minority and were afraid to express such viewpoints:

"I'm sure their indoctrination is effective in the long term ... Their ideas slowly become ingrained in you ... They break your confidence and all your diverse views down, and then feed you their ideology while gradually raising your confidence ... I felt totally alienated because of my viewpoints ... I never openly questioned their point of view; I would have been called a communist ... The blatant propaganda was laughable, but I feared the more subtle forms."

The second group of subjects, Group B, tended to respond to the SADF's propagation of their policies not so much as indoctrination attempts, but rather as an education. To a large extent this 'education' is seen as being necessary to the army's functioning. Some of these subjects claimed to have had little or no understanding of the SADF's role before they received this 'education'. Thus such an education provided them with clarity and understanding:

"They do inform you about SWAPO and the ANC ... They didn't try to indoctrinate me; Lectures on the enemy are necessary for any military force ... First-hand experience gave me more understanding of the army's ideology ... I had access to information on an officer's level which made me more receptive to

what the army was doing ... I came to identify with their view of the enemy ... It gave me more insight into why we were fighting ... I don't know anything about politics."

Some of the subjects in group B had come to the army with a very negative view of the SADF's role in southern Africa, and began to develop a more positive stance. Thus these subjects also saw their SADF 'education' as providing them with a broader understanding of the situation and tended to perceive their previous viewpoints as simplistic by comparison;

"I was quite a leftist student when I went in; I came to realise that there are two sides to every story ... The army was my enemy when I had to join it, but I became aware of the complexity of the South African situation ... I came to realise that both sides are capable of putting out propaganda and one mustn't take either side too seriously ... I had heard so many bad stories about the SADF and I wanted to know what it was like on the inside; I gained a far more complete conception of their role and realised that those stories were largely exaggeration."

One subject, whom I have included in Group A, has a particularly interesting perspective on SADF 'education'. I have singled this subject out because he taught at an adult education course in the operational area. His students were members of the local population and SWAPO prisoners-of-war, and his job was to promote the SADF, christianity and national pride while disparaging SWAPO, the Soviet Union and communism in general. This subject had no complaints with SADF policy when he joined the army, but his beliefs began to change through his involvement in the education course:

"At first I was vehemently anti-SWAPO, seeing them as no better than vicious killers. I became involved in the indoctrination process myself and came to realise that SADF policy is promoted at the expense of repressing all other ideologies. Thus no ideological alternatives are permitted to be presented to South Africans

and Namibians. We (at the education centre) all had to run around shouting: "Ons veg vir vryheid! Ons veg vir vryheid! This made me aware of the farcical nature of SADF ideology."

C. AFTER MILITARY SERVICE

Having expressed their feelings about the indoctrination (or 'educational') mechanisms within the SADF, the subjects were all questioned further in order to elicit some of their present attitudes concerning the defence force. The specific areas of focus were attitudes to war in general, present conception of an 'enemy', perceived functions of the SADF (in general and in the townships), and attitudes to the South African government.

1. War in General:

Perceived from a personal point of view, most subjects expressed opposition to war. Reasons for this opposition varied from religious, pacifist ideals through to a criticism of the discrepancy between who is responsible for the wars and who suffers in the war:

"I am totally opposed to war ... I am anti-military as a result of my christianity ... War is mostly wrong ... Things should be sorted out in better ways than fighting ... Fucked-up politicians make the decisions and young people face the reality ... Governments exploit the masses ... Peace is bliss ... There are very few causes for which I am willing to kill and certainly none for which I am willing to die."

A lot of these comments were made in quite a cynical manner and for the most part subjects seemed to perceive their own feelings as idealistic and unrealistic. The general feeling appeared to be that although subjects opposed war on a personal level, human conflict on a large scale is almost inevitable: "It's shit that people have to kill each other, but quite idealistic to expect them to break such an old habit ... War has no constructive purpose, but people have aggressive tendencies and countries defend themselves for

this reason." This leads to the concept of a "just war" which was put forward by a number of subjects. The feeling among these subjects was that a country is justified in using violence to protect itself against the threat of violence from other countries: "I can see the logic behind war ... Any country needs to defend itself ... War is often necessary for survival ... I believe in a just war as the lesser of two evils."

2. Personal conceptions of an "enemy!"

On this issue the elicited responses can also be divided into Group A and Group B. These groups are identical in terms of subjects to those groups mentioned in section 5 of experiences during military service. In this case the division is quite straightforward. The subjects in Group A could not align themselves with the mainstream SADF conception of an 'enemy': "My own moral convictions told me that SWAPO was less unjust than the SADF ... I don't really see SWAPO as the enemy ... I don't agree with SADF perceptions of the enemy ... I have no real conceptions of an enemy." What does emerge from the quotations is that these subjects are uncertain as to whom they do visualize as the enemy. When questioned further on this issue, subjects admitted to being confused, but most of them claimed to perceive the SADF and its right wing supporters as far greater threats to themselves than any of the 'enemies' propagated by the defence force: "I saw the army as my enemy for forcing me to become part of them ... I would rather fight against the HNP and other right wing groups like the AWB ... I see the SADF as my enemy for political reasons."

Group B's responses to this issue were far more simple. These basically agree with SADF policy on the "external threat":

"The enemy was undoubtedly SWAPO and the ANC ... They are backed by totalitarian powers such as USSR and Uganda ... I see SWAPO and the ANC as vicious and dangerous, and even unjustified ... ANC might have an acceptable cause, but they're going about it

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