

**AD6**



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# FACTSHEET

## UDF(W.Cape) Conscription Commission

### A HISTORY

The story of conscription is the story of how the oppressors have responded to the resistance of the oppressed to apartheid and exploitation.

In 1961 there were 10 000 whites in the SADF with 9 months military service required. By 1980 60 000 national service men and 2000 women with 2 years military service required and 30 day camps for 8 days.

In 1965 the Cape Corps was established. It had been disbanded in 1949 by the Nationalist gov. From 1965 the main role of CC was auxiliary. From 1975 its role began to change. It became full member of SADF's fighting units 1983. 1500 "coloureds" serving in CC.

Over 90percent of these are drawn from from the rural areas.

In 1975 the first group of indians began training.

In 1975 recruitment of African began. 1975-SADF began with training of Bantustan armies -Transkei, Ciskei, Venda and Bophutatswana.

1980 - various ethnic units were formed - Battalions 111, 112, 113, 121.

Since 1961 because of the demands of the military, resistance has increased.

1974 SACC adopts resolution recognising right of conscientious objection.

1977 Bishop Coull supports this.

1978 110 persons sentenced to 3 years for refusing to fight.

1979 3 - 4 thousand conscripts fail to report for military service.

1982 By 1982 thousands of white males have gone into exile.

1983 400 in detention barracks for refusing to fight. In this period a number of conscripts have objected on political, moral and religious grounds.

### AMERICA

Because of the increasing demands the Vietnamese war made on the American people and their resources, a strong anti-war movement grew.

Huge demos were held. Many American especially Black, refused to fight, a notable example being Mohamed Ali, (Cassius Clay), the then heavy weight boxing champion of the world.

In Portugal too, because of the suffering the wars Portugal was fighting in Angola, Mozambique and Guinea was causing the people in Portugal, strong resistance within Portugal grew. It grew to such proportions that it led to the army staging a coup, setting up a new govt which signed peace with Frelimo.

On 20 December 1978 the General Assembly of the UNO adopted a resolution recognising the right of conscientious objection to military and police service used to enforce apartheid.

### ROLE OF THE SADF

Among the internal roles of the SADF are:-

- Border protection commandos.
- Anti - insurgency units.
- Increasing use of SADF personnel in Township roadblocks: as well as removals.
- Training of bantustan armies.
- Ideological role of attempting to win the hearts and minds of the people through Civic Action programmes.

### NAMIBIA

In Namibia the SADF is an occupying army illegally present in that territory.

Its hearts and minds campaign has been a hopeless failure according even to the SADF. This is especially the case in the north where the majority of the people live; and the majority of whom support SWAPO.

### DESTABILISATION

Since 1977, the SADF has been in control of a large part of Southern Angola with the result that no infrastructure exists in that part of the country.

It also makes regular "pre-emptive" raids into Mozambique, Angola, Swaziland etc..

The destabilising role also extends to giving aid to UNITA and MNR.

The destabilisation of the frontline

states ensures that those countries' economies remain weak and as a result dependent on South Africa.

### THE SADF'S PLACE IN THE STATE AND THE ECONOMY

SADF officers are members of the State Security Council which has great power within the state. It was the military who was one of the prime motivators for reform. Within the 'new deal' the SADF will have representation on all parliamentary committees.

There are close links between big business and the SADF. Armscor is the 3rd biggest company in South Africa.

The recent increase in GST is mainly to provide for defence.

### PRESENT CONSCRIPTION

\*Although the Defence Act provides for the mobilization of a National Reserve, for all men under 55, irrespective of race, only white men are presently liable for registration and conscription.

\*In order for members of other national groups to be liable to register for military service, and to be conscripted, an act needs to be passed to amend the present legislation.

\*There has been a system of registration for coloured youth in the past.

\*In 1967 the registration of men between 18 and 24 for cadet training was made compulsory. It was never strictly enforced.

\*Those that were to be recruited were those who were unemployed or not undergoing education.

\*The system of registration was abolished in 1981.

Call-ups were based on a selective basis, with a committee deciding on who to recruit.

### NAMIBIA

\*In January 1981 conscription was extended to all men between 18 and 24.

\* it did not apply to men in Ovambo, Kavango, Kaokoland and Caprivi - the official reason given for this is that suitable facilities did not exist for people from these areas. It is, however,

more likely that this was due to the strong support for SWAPO in these areas and that an extension would have met with strong resistance.

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"At present there is a trial in Namibia of a man, Eric Binga, who refused to serve because he supports SWAPO and because his brother is a fighter for SWAPO.

In the three months following the extension of conscription more than 8000 Namibians joined SWAPO. Demonstrations of support were held throughout the country with one common theme:

"The so-called enemy is your own brother who was forced to leave the country because of oppression. The enemy of the South African army is SWAPO - Who is SWAPO? SWAPO is the people."

#### EXTENSION OF CONSCRIPTION

A year ago the Transvaal leader to the National Party, F W de Klerk, stated: "You can't ask a man to fight for his country if he can't vote. Among the terms of the new constitutional dispensation is the guarantee that coloureds and indians will get full voting rights. It follows that their responsibilities will increase accordingly, which means they will hold obligations to defend these rights."

This points to one of the major reasons for the likely extension of conscription to coloureds and indians. The government is attempting to sell the idea that it is committed to genuine power-sharing. And if power is to be seen to be "genuinely shared", then coloureds and indians must be seen to be defending their newly acquired rights. In some more conservative parts of the country, government spokespersons have even argued that one of the major reasons for introducing the new constitution, was to allow for the conscription of coloureds and indians.

The second reason concerns the nature of the war in South Africa. For the SADF, it is important that the guerilla activity is not perceived by the international community as being directed against the apartheid system, for it then gives the liberation movements a greater legitimacy

Large scale black participation in the SADF reinforces the idea that the guerillas are not inspired by anti-racist sentiments, but by a "Marxist imperialist doctrine"

Thirdly as the civil war intensifies, whites will become too thinly-spread to counter guerilla insurgency. It is already clear that the ANC has moved from a campaign of limited sabotage towards a sustained guerilla war, and that the SADF is preparing to counter this through its area defence system whites already do 2 years national service, 2 years of camp, and then (possibly) a limited period each year in commando units. As the war worsens there will be little or no room for extending the call-up within the white male population, making the call up of coloureds and indians both militarily and politically important.

A fourth aspect should be seen in the state attempting to divide the oppressed by attempting to draw in those it recruits

#### POSSIBLE SCENARIO

During 1982 Magnus Malan said that the government had considered conscripting coloureds and indians through the establishment of a ballot system (ie a certain laid down percentage of conscriptees) but had decided against it in the short term due to lack of finances, facilities and manpower.

These logistical factors are the major problems which the government faces in introducing conscription for coloureds and indians. The SADF could not at the stroke of a pen, force over 30 000 black youth into their training camps.

How, then, is conscription likely to be extended? Last year Magnus Malan suggested that a law extending conscription would be passed at the earliest possible stage in this session of parliament.

This possibility now seems quite remote. There is no indication that such an amendment to the defence act is even on the parliamentary agenda. Even, then, it would have to go through 3 "readings" as well as a select committee stage. It thus seems very unlikely that a law will be passed before parliament goes into recess in June.

This leaves 2 possibilities open to the govt. Either they could amend the Defence Act in a special session of parliament before the new constitutional system comes into operation, or they can bulldoze it through the tri-cameral system, once they've offered cabinet posts to the likes of Hendrikse, Rajbansi and Franklyn Sonn. It should be remembered that the Labour Party Conference passed a resolution opposing an extension of conscription.

Even then, the full implementation of the act will take many years. The SADF will probably begin by enforcing the registration of all coloured and indian youth over the age of 16. At a later stage they will probably introduce ballot conscription. (as happened with whites in 1961), possibly concentrating on the rural areas. An initially small percentage could be called up and drawn into some of the expanded work of the SADF. In the rural areas the commando system could be strengthened, while nationally the Civic Action Programme could take on a new form, with black conscriptees engaging in an extensive "hearts and minds" campaign.

#### IMPLICATIONS OF AN EXTENSION

- intensification of civil war
- expansion of MK
- extensive use by the govt of the new 6 year prison sentence for objectors.
- dramatic increase in the cost of running the SADF (already R8 million per day!)

#### WESTERN CAPE

Factors hampering/influencing conscription campaign in the Western Cape especially.

#### MEDIA

- magazine - CONTACT, distributed at schools.
- Metro Burger - a supplement to the Burger which helps to popularise the SADF.
- Adverts and military fashion.
- Sweaters "Beveg terrorisme" "I kill all terrorists"
- Films - commercial "Hollywood" films which glorify involvement in the military.
- Picture story books for example Saboteur and Grensvegter.

#### SCHOOLS

Guidance Programmes  
Sports - involvement by SADF  
Camps for primary school kids "kom speel saam"

#### UNEMPLOYMENT AND RURAL AREAS

Problems include boredom and adventurism which is made worse by lack of facilities. As a result people see the SADF providing benefits and subsidies Navy - skills training.

#### GENERAL IMAGE OF SADF

Civic Action has its effects. Army is used in resettlement programmes as well as assisting in natural disasters.

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