

between Total Strategy and the new counter-revolutionary strategy. The former attempted to impose large scale reform from above, and was largely in the hands of the Department of Constitutional Development and Planning. It was premised on the notion that 'there can be no security without reform'. The latter aimed to rebuild the foundations of civil society from below, and was controlled by the security establishment. Its premise was that 'there can be no reform without security' (ibid:144).

The WHAM programme has been implemented most vigorously in places like Alexandra township outside Johannesburg, Bonteheuwel in the Western Cape and Mamelodi township in Pretoria (6). Over R90 million has been allocated to create 'a new Alexandra' by 1990. The money will be spent on road tarring, street lighting, water supply, electricity and water-borne sewerage. Since the imposition of the 1986 State of Emergency Alexandra has received its first post office, public telephones and health clinic (Star 6.3.1987).

There is considerable debate in academic and political circles about the potential of the WHAM programme to achieve its aims. For a number of reasons the programme is seen as unlikely to be as successful as the government hopes: it is inordinately expensive and will place considerable pressure on an already weak economy; it will only provide limited improvements in selected black areas and not fundamentally alter the quality of life for the majority of people; and it is constantly undermined by the high level of repression that accompanies it (Swilling and

Phillips, op cit:147-148).

The counter-revolutionary strategy as a whole will ultimately fail because it does not even attempt to address black political demands. The Minister of Defence has stated categorically:

There is currently a limited section [of the black population] that is really interested in political participation. I think for the masses in South Africa democracy is not a relevant factor. For them it revolves around the satisfaction of their own needs. These needs change with time and are now being exploited by the revolutionaries. (Cape Times 13.9.1986)

Outside of government circles this perspective is regarded as a complete misreading of the historical and contemporary realities. Political demands as much as material grievances have always been at the heart of black resistance. Neither repression nor welfare initiatives are likely to change this, or completely subdue the organisations involved in the liberation struggle.

Far more successful have been the state's attempts to inculcate militarist values in the white community and harness its human and material resources for war.

The militarisation of white education  
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In 1976 Defence Minister PW Botha declared: "If we want to oppose the forces of revolution, anarchy and chaos, we must begin with our young people at school" (ECC, 1987a:1). Since then white education has become increasingly militarised. The SADF has



played a direct role in this process, primarily through the cadet system, Youth Preparedness programme and Veldschools. The central objectives of the process are to prepare white youth for military service and 'arm' them ideologically against the 'total onslaught'.

More than 250 000 white schoolboys currently participate in cadets (Evans, 1989a:285). They are issued with guns and military uniforms and receive instruction in military discipline, intelligence and security, types of warfare and the organisation of the SADF. Their practical training includes drill, shooting, 'concealment', 'tracking' and 'survival'.

According to the SADF publication Paratus, the cadet programme aims to encourage "a love for the fatherland", introduce schoolboys to the use of certain weapons and military equipment, identify leadership qualities, and prepare and motivate the cadets for National Service (Paratus, February 1985).

The cadet system has brought new awareness amongst schoolboys of the nature of the onslaught against South Africa. They recognise and understand the threat and are highly motivated to undergo training and aid in combatting it. (Paratus, July 1979)

Although cadets is not compulsory for white schoolgirls, the majority of girls' and co-ed schools have voluntarily introduced some form of cadet programme. The 'pigtail platoons' undertake uniform drill, band practice and, in some cases, shooting.

The Youth Preparedness (YP) programme is part of the school

curriculum and is integrated with the cadet system. It emphasises 'civic duties', 'patriotism' and 'moral preparedness'. Lectures are given on "the Flag", "the Anthem" and "the danger of Communism". To an increasing extent the programme involves SADF officers addressing pupils, and school excursions to military bases. (Evans, op cit:288-292)

Even before the development of Total Strategy the YP programme sought to maintain 'Western civilised standards' against an 'international conspiracy' to undermine them.

Today there are such calculated forms of treason that it is often difficult to identify it [sic]. But there is something going on in the world today that I would like to identify and to give a name, and that is the treason against youth [by] some intellectuals, writers, thinkers and philosophers... We have to be physically and mentally fit and on the alert to weather the storm... If we fail we can say goodbye to Western Civilisation as we see it today and to all the values that have been characteristic of our civilisation throughout the ages. (Introduction to the 1972 YP programme, in Cock, 1987:14)

Veldschools, week-long outdoor camps, are part of the YP programme in the Transvaal. They aim to bring pupils into contact with nature and prepare them to "withstand the total onslaught" (Evans, op cit:292-3). The extent of indoctrination in the camps, and in the cadet and YP programmes as well, is reflected in this



extract from a Veldschool introductory lecture:

The aim of this course is not simply to impart knowledge but to reinforce the norms, values and mores of our society, to encourage the pupil to be a better South African and to show that a threat to South Africa's existence and stability does exist and what we can do about it. (Quoted in Human Awareness Programme, 1986:B1)

The private sector and the economy

Until the late 1970's the National Party's attitude to big business, dominated by English capital, was fairly antagonistic. With the formulation of Total Strategy however, the private sector's involvement in the 'war effort' became a priority for government. According to one state official, "the National Party [used to] regard private enterprise as part of the onslaught, but under PW Botha it has become part of the strategy" (Cawthra, op cit:34).

By 1980 President Botha was able to state confidently: "I want to unite the business leaders of South Africa ...behind the SA Defence Force. ...I think I have succeeded in doing so" (Cock, op cit:12). Since then co-operation between the military and the private sector has been strengthened considerably at a number of levels.

Leading industrialists participate in several important state bodies such as the Manpower Liason Committee and the defence, economic and scientific advisory councils. Through these committees business and military leaders are able to discuss issues of

mutual interest and engage in broader policy formation. According to Paratus, the committees allow the SADF to give intelligence briefings and "place controversial subjects into the correct perspectives" (Cawthra, op cit:85).

A second area of co-operation developed with the introduction of the National Key Points Act in 1980. The Act empowered the Minister of Defence to declare any industrial plant or area deemed to have a strategic value a Key Point and prescribe the security measures to be taken by its owner. Although the private sector was initially resistant to the legislation because of the costs involved, its enthusiasm has grown with the rise in popular resistance and incidence of industrial sabotage. (Ibid:85-87)

The third and most important area of co-operation is through the private sector's incorporation into the burgeoning arms industry. After the imposition of the United Nations arms embargo against South Africa in 1963, the government established the Armaments Development and Production Corporation (Armcor) to co-ordinate the development of a domestic arms manufacturing capacity.

Today Armcor is the third largest industrial concern in South Africa and the tenth largest arms manufacturer in the world. About 60% of its production is contracted out to the private sector, involving more than 2 000 companies and over 100 000 workers (ibid:99). Top industrialists and financiers sit on the Armcor board of directors.

A further manifestation of the militarisation of the economy has been the growth in military expenditure over the past decade. The



SADF maintains that the annual increases in its budget have kept pace with inflation, but this claim is strongly contested. The Stockholm International Peace Research Institute, for example, estimated that military spending increased 500% between 1975 and 1985, compared with a 380% increase in prices (ibid:81).

The official Defence Budget has remained steady at around 15% of total government spending. It does not accurately reflect real military spending however. For example it does not include expenditure on the SWA Territory Force, the bantustan armies, the housing of SADF personnel and the construction of military bases. These items are paid out of other accounts. Nor does the Defence Budget reflect the secret Special Defence Account or revenues acquired from Armscor. Real expenditure on the security forces, including allocations to the police and secret services, is estimated to be at least 25% of the national budget (Evans, in Cock, op cit:11-12).

South Africa's nuclear capacity  
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Little public information is available about South Africa's relatively advanced nuclear industry. The legislative restrictions on publishing such information are amongst the most severe of the country's censorship laws. Pretoria has also consistently refused to sign the nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty, designed to inhibit the diversion of nuclear material from peaceful to military purposes, which would open its plants to international inspection.

The high level of secrecy has reinforced a widely held belief



among international experts that South Africa has developed nuclear weapons. This belief is based on three factors.

First, South Africa undoubtedly has the capacity to produce the weapons. It has sufficient enriched uranium, its weapons experts have the technical skills and the SADF has delivery systems capable of launching nuclear missiles. South African scientists have confirmed that fissionable material produced at Velindaba, a uranium enrichment plant in the Transvaal, could be used to build two atomic bombs a year. New Scientist puts the potential figure at between 40 and 100 (Sunday Iribune 12.10.1986).

Second, there is evidence that South Africa has actually tested nuclear weapons. On 22 September 1979 a US satellite detected a bright double flash off the South African coast. According to the US State Department the explosion was similar in intensity and pattern to the detonation of a 2.5 to 3 kiloton bomb. The US Defence Intelligence Agency and CIA concluded that South Africa had set off a nuclear device (ibid).

Third, although the government's official position is that it does not have nuclear weapons, cabinet ministers have occasionally intimated to the contrary. In 1979, just three days after the 'double flash' explosion, Prime Minister Botha announced that South Africa was in possession of "military weapons they [the world] do not know about" (Cawthra, op cit:109). Deputy Defence Minister Coetsee went further, suggesting the possible deployment of these weapons: "As a country with a nuclear capacity, it would be very stupid not to use it if nuclear weapons were needed as a



last resort to defend oneself" (ibid).

Consumer militarism

The militarisation of South African society has inevitably led to the increased marketing of consumer products that reflect and reinforce militarist values. This is particularly noticeable in the proliferation of war games and military toys. In 1985 the SAP sold 25 000 toy replicas of the Casspir, the vehicle it uses in black townships (Eastern Province Herald 12.9.1986).

War games are advertised as "the family game of the future". In simulated combat situations opposing teams stalk and 'kill' each other with guns that shoot pellets or marbles. According to one player: "We've found that we are far more relaxed after a day's fighting in the bush. It gets rid of a lot of pent-up tension and aggression" (Jochelson and Buntman, 1989:302).

Images of soldiers and weapons are frequently used to advertise consumer goods. Locally produced feature films and photo-comics play out Cold War scenarios in Southern Africa. There are regular SADF exhibitions at fairs, army tatoos at cultural events and mass displays of armed strength in the city streets.

Through these different activities and products violence is projected as an appropriate solution to social conflict, and war and killing are 'normalised' and romanticised. The white soldier is portrayed as a hero, and 'the enemy' as less than human.

Militarisation under the State of Emergency  
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The process of militarisation introduced by Total Strategy was to some extent planned and gradual. In the mid-1980's it became rapid and urgent as black South Africans mounted the most concerted challenge to apartheid in its history. The state had two broad priorities in meeting this challenge. The first was to suppress the national uprising. The second was to maintain the morale and unity of the white community and raise the level of its preparedness for civil war.

As part of this second task, and to justify its use of force in the townships, the state stepped up its propaganda about the 'revolutionary onslaught'.

The terrorists who are waging war against the people of South Africa... commit their cowardly acts of terror indiscriminantly against Black and White civilians. They are revolutionaries; they shun democracy; and they seek political power via the hand grenade and the limpet mine. Moreover they are heavily committed to Communism. (SA Broadcasting Corporation, "Comment", 15.4.1987)

The propaganda was so intense that one newspaper remarked: "the 'onslaught' [is] not so much by terrorists on the lives and property of innocent South Africans- but by government on their emotions" (Star editorial, 7.1.1987).

In addition to the apocalyptic rhetoric, a special effort was made to tighten 'security precautions' in white schools. In early



1987 the Transvaal Education Department sent a secret "Emergency Plan" to all principals. The plan outlined elaborate procedures to be employed by teachers and pupils in the event of "guerilla attacks" and "the abduction of members of staff". It stated that "training in the use of rifles is essential and will be given to teachers by commandos" (Weekly Mail 10.4.1987; 16.4.1987).

The SADF visited primary and secondary schools for officially approved "orientation days".irate parents said that the visits included 'pleasure rides' on military vehicles, familiarisation with combat weapons and instruction on the divisions of the SADF (Natal Witness 28.11.1986).

A Civil Defence unit (7) even conducted exercises with nursery school children: "As the siren sounded the children stopped playing in the garden and lay flat on the grass. They remained there until a whistle was blown and then ran to their teacher and formed up in a line. The teachers took a roll call to ensure all were present" (Citizen 3.3.1986).

The national uprising and the imposition of the 1986 State of Emergency also led to closer co-operation between business and the security establishment. In the initial stages of the uprising the private sector attempted to distance itself from government, and assumed an unprecedented anti-apartheid stance. However as the rebellion intensified and international pressure for sanctions and disinvestment mounted, its position shifted to one of support for the imperative of 'law and order' (Philip, 1989:202-205).

Major corporations and employer associations were drawn into the National Security Management System. Through the Defence Manpower Liason Committees and the Joint Management Centre's community liason forums, they participated in security force strategising around industrial 'unrest' and the state's upgrading schemes in black communities (ibid:205-216).

War psychosis  
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State propaganda about the 'revolutionary onslaught', combined with the real increase in political violence in the mid-1980's, dramatically heightened the war psychosis already endemic in the white community.

After the 1985 State of Emergency was declared many whites rushed to arm themselves. A retailer who used to sell 5 handguns a day reported that he was now selling 30 (Human Awareness Programme, op cit:B4). The Security Academy announced that industrial companies were not meeting their normal arms requirements because supplies had been snapped up by the public (Out of Step, ECC, May 1987). By 1987 one in every two white households owned a firearm (Cape Times 28.7.1987).

In a recessionary economic climate the commercial security industry announced growth of around 1 000% (ibid). Security firms offered riot shields, bullet proof vests and professional guards to business companies. A 50 man "rent a force" was available to deal with "ugly strike situations and bomb threats" (Out of Step, op cit). White families bought sophisticated alarm systems and guard dogs, and office blocks and shopping centres stepped up



their security precautions.

More ominous was the rise in popularity of the AWB, the Afrikaner Weerstandsbeweging (Afrikaner Resistance Movement). In 1986 the white supremacist para-military organisation emerged from the outer fringes of national politics to become a major threat to both the National Party and the anti-apartheid movement. (8)

White aggression and fear also manifest themselves in self-destructive behaviour. Afrikaner men were reported to be committing more family murders than people in any other country, and the predominantly Afrikaner city of Pretoria recorded the second highest suicide rate in the world. Psychologists believed that the escalating cycle of violence had raised stress levels in white families, and the government's reliance on force had resulted in a tendency to resolve personal conflict by violent means. (Star 17.11.1987 and 22.11.1986)

White children too were reported to be experiencing psychological problems. Clinical psychologists treated many young people suffering from "'school phobia' exacerbated by bomb drills and the fear that something might happen to them at school". One little girl was afraid to go to the toilet alone "because of the State of Emergency" (Star 13.10.1986).

Notwithstanding these alarming trends, from the perspective of the state the war psychosis that grips the white community has a functional value. It strengthens the community's acceptance of the necessity of military conscription and motivates conscripts

to undergo training. The higher their level of fear and aggression, the more willing conscripts will be to sacrifice up to four years, and possibly their lives, in the SADF.

The system of compulsory military service is a further indicator of the extent to which South African society is militarised. The system involves virtually every young white man directly, and every white family indirectly, in the physical defence of minority rule.



CHAPTER 5  
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THE SYSTEM OF CONSCRIPTION  
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One of the most striking manifestations of militarisation in South Africa has been the increasing incorporation of white men into the armed forces and the consequent growth in SADF manpower. South Africa, or more accurately the white community, can today be regarded as a 'nation in arms'.

While the possibility of imposing conscription on Coloureds and Indians has been mooted by government, the system is currently applied only to whites. Every white male between the ages of 16 and 55 is liable, or potentially liable, for military service. There is only limited recognition of conscientious objection.

Historical background to conscription (1)  
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Whether a country has a predominantly conscripted or professional army depends on a complex interplay of factors specific to the history of that country. These factors include political, social and economic developments; geographical features; relations with other countries; popular attitudes to particular conflicts; the level of internal conflict; perceived military manpower requirements; the nature of warfare; and the level of military technology. (Heinonen, 1986:17-22 and Joenniemi, 1986:8-14)

The current system of compulsory military service in South Africa has its historical roots in the Afrikaner civilian militias, or kommandos, of the 18th and 19th centuries.

The kommandos were small, lightly armed and highly mobile units that formed the basis of the armies of the Boer Republics of the Transvaal and Free State. These independent territories were situated in the northern interior of the country beyond the control of the British colonial administration in the Cape and Natal.

Civilian-militias were an appropriate military system for the Republics. They were ideally suited to the irregular guerilla warfare required to meet the defensive and aggressive needs of small and isolated communities in a hostile and alien environment. These communities in any case lacked the human and material resources to sustain professional permanent armies. The commandos were essentially comprised of farmers, defending and extending their property at their own cost and with their own weapons.

At a military level the kommandos played a critical role in the Great Trek into the interior, the hunting expeditions of the Boers and the two major wars against British imperialism during the 19th century. They were also instrumental in the consolidation of Afrikaner power against black resistance, suppressing tribal uprisings and compelling black chiefs to recognise the authority of the Republics.

The commando network was more than a military system however. It developed into a powerful socio-cultural institution with a formative impact on Afrikaner society. Central not only to the defence of the frontier communities but also to their government



and administration, it "stood at the centre of the mesh of social relations extending from the military to the deepest realms of Afrikaner politics and culture" (Frankel, 1984:22).

The kommando tradition has consequently had a profound influence on contemporary civil-military relations, the militarisation of society and the role of the armed forces (Frankel, op cit:25-28). It has also strongly influenced the current system of conscription. It cultivated in Afrikaner politics the notion of a 'nation-in-arms' and established the 'sacred principle' of every able bodied male being responsible for the defence of the community (Saayman, 1980:1).

Unlike conscription in Europe, the South African system is not simply an historical legacy, increasingly inappropriate to changing military manpower requirements. Whereas social and political developments in the advanced industrial countries have contributed to a decline in the mass army (Joenniemi, op cit:11-16), the trend in South Africa has been in the opposite direction.

Increasingly since World War II the apartheid state has been confronted by concerted challenges from inside and outside the country to its policies of racial discrimination and domination. Its primary response - coercion and military force - has required large numbers of men under arms. The racially exclusive nature of the state has compelled it rely almost exclusively on white men to meet this need.

The current system of conscription  
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The introduction of the current system of conscription, and each subsequent extension of the length of military service, followed directly an intensification of the struggles against apartheid and colonialism.

In 1957, in the wake of a defiance campaign organised by the African National Congress (ANC), the National Party government passed legislation enabling the conscription of white men on a ballot basis. In 1967, after armed struggles were launched in the Frontline States, a 9 month period of military service was made compulsory for all young white men.

In 1972 this period was raised to 12 months after a national strike and peasant revolt occurred in Namibia. After Angolan independence in 1975 and the 1976/7 Soweto uprising the length of service was extended to two years, followed by 8 years of annual 30 day 'camps'.

Currently, white schoolboys register with the SADF at 16 years old. After school or university they are obliged to serve two years as full-time National Servicemen. National Service is followed by annual 30, 60 or 90 day Citizen Force camps spread over 12 years. The conscript is liable for a statutory maximum of 720 days of camps. He is then transferred to the Active Citizen Force Reserve for 5 years and after that to the Controlled National Reserve. (2)

Older men who have not done National Service may be conscripted



into the Commando system, known colloquially as 'Dads' Army'. This involves an initial one month's training followed by annual periods of service for 12 days, or longer in times of 'emergency'. The Commandos are based mainly in rural areas and form part of the SADF's Area Defence system.

The introduction of conscription into the Commando system in 1982 and the repeated extensions of the length of military service since 1957 substantially increased the size of the SADF. In 1960 the Defence Force had 11 500 Permanent Force, 56 500 part-time Citizen Force, and 10 000 National Service members. The standing operational force was 21 500. By 1986 these numbers had risen to 43 000 Permanent Force, 265 000 Citizen Force, 200 000 Commando, and 67 000 National Service members. The SADF's standing operational force was now 160 000 and its total mobilisable strength was around 600 000. (3)

Expressed as a proportion of the white community, Defence Force manpower increased from 3.1% in 1970 to 8.6% in 1983 (Grundy, 1988:22). Although whites constitute less than 15% of the total population they make up fully 90% of SADF personnel (Phillips, 1989:19). The remaining 10% is comprised of Coloured, Indian and African volunteers (4).

#### Conscientious objection and alternative service

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From 1960 to 1980 the government responded to pressure from conscientious objectors and the war resistance movement by amending the Defence Act on a number of occasions. The amendments provided members of 'peace churches' (5) with the option of non-

combatant status in the SADF and imposed penalties of imprisonment on other objectors (Chapter 7).

The prevailing legislation on conscientious objection is the Defence Amendment Act of 1983. The Act introduced a system of alternative service in government bodies for a limited category of objectors and substantially increased the jail sentence for others who refused to obey their call-ups.

The legislation draws a distinction between 'religious' and other objectors. The former are defined narrowly: their objection to military service must be based on 'religious' (as opposed to moral or political) convictions, and it must be universal in the sense that it would apply to 'any armed force'.

'Religious objectors' may apply to a Board for Religious Objection for one of three alternatives to fulfilling their military obligations:

- non-combatant service in the SADF for the same period as the objector's outstanding military service;
- non-combatant service in a non-military uniform in the SADF for one-and-a-half times the length of the objector's outstanding military service; or
- 'community service' in a central, regional or local government department for one-and-a-half times the length of the objector's outstanding military service (a maximum of six years).

These options are not available to secular objectors or to religious objectors opposed specifically to serving in the SADF. The



Act provides that on refusing to render military service they will be liable to imprisonment for one-and-a-half times the length of their outstanding service, a maximum of six years.

A relatively small number of conscripts have applied to the Board for Religious Objection since its inception. From February 1984 to September 1989 there were 1 890 applications. The annual number of applications ranged from 203 to 346. This constituted less than 1% of the total number of men called-up each year. (6)

1 722 (or 90%) of the applications were successful, 124 were withdrawn by the applicants and 44 were rejected by the Board on the grounds that the applicant's religious views were not bona fide or did not conform to the criteria laid down in the Act. Of the successful applicants, 80% were granted alternative service and 20% were given non-combatant status in the SADF.

The statistics relating to the religious breakdown of the applicants are significant: 90% were Jehovah's Witnesses or members of other peace churches and 10% were from the mainstream Christian denominations. These figures reflect the fact that the legislation's definition of 'religious objector' excludes the vast majority of religious objectors, whose refusal to do military service is selective rather than universal. (7)

The war resistance movement has strongly condemned the inadequate and punitive provisions of the Defence Amendment Act (Chapter 7) and has consistently campaigned for the introduction of a non-military and non-governmental system of alternative service for all conscientious objectors (Chapters 8 and 10). The movement has



also expressed its criticism of the functioning of the Board for Religious Objection and the nature of 'community service' (Chapter 6).

Like its system of conscription, South Africa's recognition and treatment of conscientious objectors and conditions of alternative service are among the harshest in the world (Appendix 2).

The extension of conscription to Coloureds and Indians  
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In 1977 the government decided in principle to extend conscription to Coloured and Indian men. Faced with the increasing threat of internal resistance and the recent independence of Angola and Mozambique, the SADF was concerned that white youth alone would not meet its future manpower requirements.

The military also hoped that the large-scale incorporation of Coloureds and Indians into the army would give it a multi-racial character, improving its image internationally and among blacks internally. According to one senior officer: "With blacks in South African army uniforms you can say 'Heck, this proves that this is not a white man's struggle anymore'" (Nusas, 1984:42).

The SADF accepted though that this move was politically unfeasible while Coloureds and Indians remained excluded from parliament, and put considerable pressure on the government to extend the franchise (Evans, 1983b:33). When the National Party announced its intention to do this with the introduction of a new constitution in 1983, it made clear that the extension of conscription was the logical next step (Cawthra, 1986:69).



The new constitution was emphatically rejected by the black community, primarily because it entrenched white control of parliament and the exclusion of Africans from the franchise. The United Democratic Front (UDF), later to become the largest anti-apartheid organisation in the country, was formed to campaign against it. The proposed extension of conscription was a major issue in the campaign. UDF Anti-Conscription Committees argued that blacks "are not prepared to participate in our own oppression by becoming junior partners in the apartheid army" (UDF pamphlet, 1984).

In 1984 the UDF and other groups called for a boycott of the first elections for the newly established Coloured and Indian houses of parliament. So effective was the boycott- less than 20% of the eligible voters participated- that the elected Coloured and Indian parties prevailed on the Minister of Defence to postpone extending conscription (Cape Times 15.4.1987).

The proposal has nevertheless remained on the SADF's agenda. It was strongly motivated in the 1986 Defence White Paper and by the Minister of Defence in the 1987 white parliamentary elections (Business Day 15.4.1987). However the government seems unlikely to go ahead with its implementation for fear of provoking massive black resistance. In the light of the widespread deployment of troops in the townships in 1984-6, there is no doubt that the resistance would be even greater than in 1984.

Motivating military service  
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South Africans are exposed to pro-conscription propaganda on a



daily basis. Numerous TV and radio news reports, documentaries and dramatic programmes portray military service as a worthwhile personal experience and as essential for 'the defence of the country'. SADF publications are sold through news agencies, the army sends glossy promotional pamphlets to conscripts with their call-up papers and the Chief of the Defence Force writes open letters in the press to incoming National Servicemen. Serving soldiers and school pupils are subjected to even more thorough indoctrination.

In addition, many support groups exist to bolster troop morale and promote conscription. The largest of these is the Southern Cross Fund, an organisation of white women which has 250 branches throughout the country. The Fund has raised over R14m for the army and sent thousands of gift packages to "our boys on the border" (Citizen 31.5.1986).

Six themes can be identified in the propaganda that emanates from these official and support activities:

- The army as a 'peace-keeping force'. According to the government the SADF is entrusted with the vital tasks of 'safeguarding South Africa from a revolutionary onslaught' and 'protecting its people from intimidation and terrorism'. The army's primary role is to 'defend the country's borders against external aggression' and its secondary role is to 'support the police in maintaining internal law and order'.

In fulfilling these roles the Defence Force "helps create a climate of peace and stability under which evolutionary solu-



tions may be sought for the political challenges of our country" ("The SADF in riot-stricken areas", SADF pamphlet, 1986).

- The 'revolutionary onslaught'. The Soviet Union is presented as the 'ultimate source' of all internal and external pressure on South Africa. Its campaigns against the country amount to a 'total' or 'revolutionary onslaught' that, if successful, will lead to the destruction of 'Western civilised norms'.

Inside the country the ANC and its allies are bent on winning power through 'indiscriminant terrorism' against 'black and white alike'.

The revolutionary groups strive towards a long term objective directed at the violent overthrow of the present RSA system and replacing it with a so-called (Black) majority within a unitary state in which a dictatorial elite will rule over the masses. (White Paper on Defence and Armament Supply, 1986:13)

- War resistance as part of the 'onslaught'. Those who oppose conscription are portrayed as 'unpatriotic', 'cowards' and 'criminals'. Their aim is to 'contribute to the overthrow of the government by undermining the SADF'. They are part of the 'onslaught against South Africa', consciously or unconsciously 'manipulated by Moscow'.

It is a question to be asked to those who defend the right of conscientious objection, if they are not playing into the hands of the Marxist powers by way of

indirect support. (SADF Chaplain General, in CIIR, 1982:60)

The soldier as 'hero'. The white soldier is a figure of almost mythic proportions. He is the symbol of the country's 'resolve' and 'courage' in the face of 'the enemy', the 'defender of the nation, its women, children and values'. He is all that stands between 'Christian civilisation' and 'godless communism'.

The experiences of military training and operational duty are presented as the 'rites of manhood' that will confer on conscripts an elevated status in society.

It is generally said that the Defence Force makes a man of you. Despite loved one's occasional tears, National Servicemen are nevertheless admired. Each one who has already completed his National Service enjoys the respect of his family circle and of broader society. There is also a certain "aura of mystery" surrounding someone who has done National Service- especially regarding members of the opposite sex. ("National Service and I", SADF pamphlet, 1986)

Military service as a 'growth experience'. According to the SADF there are several "personal benefits" to be gained from military service. The conscript acquires "self-knowledge by experiencing extreme circumstances", comes to appreciate "the importance of teamwork", develops "a thorough understanding of human nature", gains "a level of self-discipline that will stand him in good stead for the rest of his life", and develops



"pride in himself, his uniform and his country" (ibid).

The 'responsibility' of white women. The SADF makes a specific appeal to white women as the wives, girlfriends and mothers of conscripts. They are told that the success of the troops on the ground depends on their 'loyalty, support and love'.

Its not just the man who has to vasbyt [stand firm], but also the wife, mother and girlfriend... A woman can do a lot to influence her husband, son or boyfriend. She must understand the implications of his duties and she must be prepared herself to pay the highest toll. A man whose wife overwhelms him with household problems cannot work effectively. The woman whose man is in the operational area must make him feel he's doing something for her and for his country. (SADF colonel, in Cock, 1987:30)

The propaganda disseminated around these themes indicates the importance that the state attaches to the system of compulsory military service. Yet the propaganda is so intense and pervasive as to suggest as well a high level of government concern about draft evasion and opposition to conscription in the white community.

CHAPTER 6  
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THE DILEMMA OF CONSCRIPTION  
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The government presents the system of compulsory military service as being in the interests of the country as a whole and of the white community in particular. It argues that there is little dissatisfaction with the system other than that 'provoked' by the war resistance movement.

There is in fact a considerable degree of grassroots opposition to conscription. It is evident in the incidence of draft evasion, the level of resistance within the SADF itself, and the increase in emigration in recent years.

The opposition is based on the dilemma that conscription poses for individual conscripts and their families. The reasons for the dilemma include material and psychological considerations, but relate primarily to political and moral concerns over the role of the SADF. It is these concerns that have given rise to, rather than been caused by, the war resistance movement.

The conscript's plight is exacerbated by the fact that alternatives to military service are few and harsh. The alternatives include exile or emigration, conscientious objection and imprisonment, evasion and a life on the run, and 'community service' in a government department for up to six years.



Draft evasion  
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Since the introduction of conscription in 1957 there have been three significant phases of draft evasion. Each phase followed directly the SADF playing a new or more prominent coercive role in response to an intensification of struggle inside or outside the country.

Draft evasion first became apparent in the mid-1970's. The army had assumed an increasingly aggressive role in Namibia and Southern Africa after the independence of Angola and Mozambique in 1975, and had been mobilised during the 1976 Soweto uprising.

From 1975 to 1978 an average of 1 750 men failed to report for their National Service call-ups. This constituted approximately 10% of each intake and a total of 3 500 a year (CIIR, 1982:38). By 1983 the government was sufficiently concerned about the problem to establish the South African Army Non-Effective Troops Section to track down draft dodgers and monitor conscripts whose military service had been deferred for study purposes.

The second major phase of draft evasion occurred in the mid-1980's, the most intense period of black resistance in South Africa's history. Conscripts were extensively deployed in townships around the country to suppress the rebellion.

According to the Minister of Defence in 1985, 7 589 men failed to report for the first major call-up after the internal deployment of troops (Cape Times 13.3.1985). This constituted 50% of the intake and an increase of 500% over previous years. When the ECC

made extensive use of these facts to back up its arguments, the SADF announced several months later that the figure was incorrect and that most of the men "had been accounted for" (Citizen 4.9.1985).

The Minister of Defence refused to disclose the figures for subsequent call-ups. His reason was that they "are misused by a certain organisation which campaigns for the discontinuation of national service" (Cape Times 13.2.1986 and 24.2.1987; Weekly Mail 4.3.1988).

The clampdown on information was regarded as an indication of the high incidence of evasion in the mid-1980's. There were several other indications:

- In 1984 the South African Citizenship Amendment Act was passed, requiring foreign passport holders to adopt South African citizenship or be denied permanent resident's status. By April the following year 600 male immigrants had refused to take out citizenship to avoid being conscripted (Star 10.4.1985).
- In 1986 the commanding officers of several military units in the Witwatersrand revealed in court that one in four conscripts was failing to report for army camps (Out of Step, ECC, May 1987).
- South Africa experienced a net emigration rate for the first time in 1986. Since then more than 10 000 people have left the country each year. Academics and business leaders attributed the exodus largely to the pressure of conscription and to the deployment of troops in the townships (see below).



- In 1985 the Committee on South African War Resistance, based in London and Amsterdam, announced that an "unprecedented number" of conscripts were going into exile to avoid the call-up (Business Day 12.9.1985).

- The Conscription Advice Service (Chapter 7) was inundated with requests for assistance from conscripts unwilling to do military service. In 1987 it reported that "the situation has changed quite radically in the last few years. We are now dealing with many people who would not previously have had qualms about the army" (Out of Step, ECC, August 1987).

- In January 1987 the South African Army Non-Effective Members Unit was revived to track down draft dodgers. In July it claimed to have "found 72 000 serving members", - about 80% of whom were "computer adjustments". There was no indication as to the status of the remaining 14 000 (Natal Witness 26.6.1987).

The third important phase of draft evasion took place between mid-1987 and mid-1988 when the SADF became embroiled in its most extensive operation in Angola. As the number of white soldiers killed in action mounted, a new wave of war resistance emerged. Informal sources reported a significant rise in the number of conscripts failing to report for 'border duty'.

In addition, the number of men taking a public stand as conscientious objectors increased dramatically. Whereas between 1978 and 1983 there were fewer than 15 objectors, from August 1987 to August 1988 there were more than 150.



Resistance within the army  
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Grassroots opposition to military service is also evident in the relatively high level of resistance within the army. This resistance is most commonly expressed by soldiers destroying or stealing military equipment, going absent without leave (AWOL) or engaging in self-destructive action like suicide, drug abuse and alcoholism.

In any given period there are several hundred soldiers in military detention barracks (DB). In 1984 for example there were 378, the majority of whom had either gone AWOL or refused to undergo training (Star 22.3.1985). There have also been reported cases of troops deserting their units en masse (Argus 26.10.1979; Star 5.9.1985). The official number of attempted suicides by soldiers was 260 in 1985, 435 in 1986 and 404 in 1987 (ECC, 1988a).

According to the minutes of a Military Intelligence meeting in Windhoek, exposed in the overseas press in 1984, "what is really disturbing is the damaging of military equipment by military personnel which could indicate sabotage, particularly if the negative attitudes of certain conscripts is taken into account". Concern was also expressed about the "increasing use of dagga [marijuana] and drugs, especially amongst conscripts, which makes such people susceptible to manipulation by the enemy" (Observer (London) 9.9.1984; Volkscrant (Amsterdam) 10.9.1984).

The minutes conclude that "democracy, political developments and the national service system create a breeding ground for spying and subversion". This was compounded by the fear that "a number



of soldiers support the African National Congress and Swapo" (ibid).

According to men who have done military service, the internal resistance is generally a spontaneous reaction against conditions in the army. Many soldiers rebel instinctively against the extreme boredom, authoritarianism and physical hardship of military life.

Seldom is the resistance explicitly political. The soldier who expresses even mildly liberal views is likely to be severely victimised by his officers and fellow troops. National Servicemen who are morally opposed to the SADF's role consequently try to get their service 'over and done with' as painlessly as possible. It is the rare soldier, in the most dire of circumstances, who engages in an overtly political act of defiance.

Such acts have nevertheless been committed. In mid-1985 for example there were unconfirmed reports of soldiers being held in DB in Grahamstown for refusing to carry out township duties. In August that year Rifleman Alan Dodson became the first soldier prosecuted for this offence in open court (Objector, Cosg, August 1985). The Minister of Defence declined to reveal how many troops had been similarly charged in closed tribunals, as this would be a "time-consuming process which would not justify the cost in man hours" (Hansard (A) 2q, cols 2-3, 11.2.1986).

In a few, apparently isolated cases, soldiers have been convicted of disclosing classified information to 'hostile forces'. In 1984 Roland Hunter, a conscript working as a clerk in the Department

of Military Intelligence, was sentenced to five years' imprisonment for supplying the ANC with information about secret SADF support for Renamo terrorists in Mozambique.

In 1986 a Permanent Force soldier, Major Andre Pienaar, was arrested on allegations of being an "undercover agent who has been passing on military secrets to a neighboring state". He was sentenced to seven years' imprisonment (Sunday Times 14.12.1986).

In 1988 three National Servicemen based at SADF headquarters in Cape Town were convicted of conspiring to expose clandestine army action against the End Conscription Campaign. They were court martialled and sentenced to 18 months in DB (Sunday Tribune 13.3.1988). Their trial, like that of Hunter and Pienaar, was heard in camera.

The basis of opposition to conscription  
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Military service is regarded as a positive experience by the majority of conscripts (1). They speak about becoming extremely fit and more mature, forming strong friendships and learning new skills. They earn the respect of their families and community and are proud to do their 'patriotic duty'.

However as the incidence of draft evasion and resistance within the SADF indicates, there are also many men for whom military service is a negative experience. The reasons for this include conscripts' moral opposition to the role of the Defence Force, the disruptive effects of conscription on their careers and families, the psychological and physical brutalisation they are



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