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**WHITE SOUTH AFRICA AND DEFENCE
1960-1968:
MILITARIZATION, THREAT
PERCEPTIONS AND COUNTER
STRATEGIES**

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**Dissertation/thesis submitted in fulfilment of the requirements
for the award of the degree of Doctorate of Philosophy**

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2009

This work has not been previously submitted in whole, or in part, for the award of any degree. It is my own work. Each significant contribution to, and quotation in, this dissertation from the work, or works, or other people has been attributed, and been cited and referenced.

SIGNED

DATE

Contents

Abstract pages 3-4

Preface pages 5-8

List of Illustrations pages 9-10

Introduction pages 11-32

PART ONE: THREAT PERCEPTIONS AND COUNTER STRATEGIES

**Chapter 1: South African defence and political contexts during the early 1960s
pages 33-83**

**Chapter 2: Commandant General Rudolf Hiemstra and senior SADF leadership
pages 84-153**

Chapter 3: SADF threat perceptions: 1960 to 1966 pages 154-229

Chapter 4: SADF counter strategies by 1968 pages 230-286

PART TWO: THE MILITARIZATION OF WHITE SOUTH AFRICA

Chapter 5: The SADF and Afrikaners pages 287-334

Chapter 6: The SADF and English-speakers pages 335-404

Chapter 7: White South African mobilization for the SADF pages 405-443

Conclusion pages 444-468

List of Sources pages 469-494

Illustrations pages 495-506

Abstract

This thesis is concerned with the militarization of white South African society in the 1960s. It argues that the military threat perceptions of the period were crucial in altering white views of the South African Defence Force (SADF) and reinforcing support for the National Party government. The military achieved enhanced public status within civil society as the state's supposed bulwark. A range of purported potential threats, both internal and external and regularly reported in the media, were investigated by the SADF in response to Afro-Asian bloc spokespersons calling for international military intervention against white South Africa to end apartheid. The government tried to persuade voters that such dangers were authentic, so justifying increased military expenditure and support. The SADF planned clandestine counter strategies, most particularly in the defence of Walvis Bay in Namibia, upgrading obsolete air and other defences and connecting threats to potential aggressors, including India because of events in Katanga in the former Belgian Congo and the idea of an "African Army", implausibly advancing on South Africa. The SADF widened conscription from a ballot system to all white male school leavers by 1968.

World War Two issues influenced the attitudes of both the Afrikaans and English white communities to militarization in the 1960s. The SADF was important in bolstering white confidence and through deliberate public displays of military prowess, it helped to assert republican unity and "white nationalism" under Afrikaner leadership, though young males who were balloted applied in significant numbers for exemption on study or

professional grounds. The army also developed a reputation for ill-treating conscripts, something investigated in haste by the Minister of Defence concerned for the SADF's image amongst a community drawn increasingly more to materialism than patriotism. Paradoxically while the white public viewed "communism" or "communist-inspired" activities as its biggest "danger", the SADF only partly organised its conventional warfare capacity, and such "threats" dissipated in favour of General Charles Fraser's theorising on revolutionary war, shifting SADF doctrine. Drawing on previously classified archival documentation, and numerous surviving Permanent Force officers from the era were interviewed, the thesis argues that the assumption of white South Africans in the 1960s that their survival required acquiescence to insipient militarization and government racial policy, with the alternative subjection to possible Congo-type disintegration, shaped the SADF's public profile.

Preface

This doctoral dissertation has been a lengthy project that I first embarked upon by beginning research in earnest during January 2005. Virtually all of the subsequent archival visits, library work and writing, was fitted into school holidays between my history teaching duties at Bishops (Diocesan College) in Rondebosch, Cape Town. After four years, I have attempted to draw together the results of my efforts in discussing chosen aspects of the South African Defence Force and white South African society during the 1960s. As is proper when prefacing such a thesis, I would like to express my gratitude to the numerous people to whom I am in debt for the assistance I received from them in completing this work.

Heading the list must be my supervisor Associate Professor Christopher Saunders of the University of Cape Town (UCT) Historical Studies Department, who has been a most patient and ever available reference for critical advice, expertise, encouragement and practical help. I am most grateful to him. As always, with a work of historical research, there are numerous archival and library staff to thank. I must make special mention of Steve de Argrela and Louisa Jooste of the South African National Defence Force (SANDF) Visagie Street, Pretoria archives, who were always helpful during my visits; particularly in their ensuring documents were declassified speedily for my use. Mrs Esta Jones of the Archive for Contemporary Affairs at the University of Free State, Bloemfontein made timesaving arrangements for my obtaining the Fouché Papers. In London, my old friend Alistair McKechnie, formally of Cape Town, gave his time in

obtaining, copying and dispatching to me documentation from the Kew-based National Archives. Other archivists at the (Pretoria-based) National Archives, United Party archives at UNISA, the staff at the UCT African Studies Library, and the Cape Town branch of National Library of South Africa, all deserve a collective gesture of my sincere thanks. Janis Van Tonder, librarian at the Bishops Molteno Library allowed me the liberty of having out books stretching over extraordinary periods. Paul Mayers of the Bishops information technology staff generously gave of his time to assist in my correctly formatting the final examination draft.

Commander 'Mac' Bisset passed across to me some important secondary source material and along with Major Tony Gordon, assisted in facilitating my interviewing several individuals pertinent to my research. Between 2004 and 2008, the Cape Town branch of the South African Military History Society granted me the opportunity to give three illustrated presentations on aspects of my dissertation. These were also most useful occasions to receive constructive comments and criticism from the Society's members.

I also need to thank the management of my employer Bishops who authorized financial assistance for my student registration at UCT during the past four years. Bishops also assisted in covering some of the costs pertaining to my attendance at academic conferences, specifically the biennial Southern African Historical Society conference held at UCT in June 2005, where I delivered a paper entitled: The South African Military under Verwoerd: SADF Popularisation amongst the White Community, 1960-66. I also received financial assistance from Bishops to attend a military history conference at the

South African Military Academy in Saldanha during September 2006, where I gave a presentation on the “White and Black African Nationalism and the SADF, 1960-66”. The University of Stellenbosch History Department kindly granted me the opportunity in September 2006 to do a presentation on: “The SADF and White South Africa, 1960 to 1966”; allowing my testing some assertions before their history students and staff. Many other individuals assisted with the source gathering process by dispatching relevant material or putting me in touch with people whom I sought to interview. I could never record every deserving name, but I do hope this short summary is accepted as a sincere expression of my gratitude to all.

Over the past four years, I communicated with a significant number of former SADF members. Some were ex-conscripts who had responded to my press appeals. My thanks must be recorded to many that emailed or posted letters detailing their experiences. However particular gratitude should be expressed to those with whom I regularly communicated by telephone or email - former SADF Permanent Force and Citizen Force personnel who had been middle-ranking and junior officers during the 1960s. I must single out Lieutenant Generals Ian Gleeson and Jack Dutton, who not only spent significant time discussing their recollections of the period with me, but also dispatched written accounts. They also assisted in referring me to many of their former colleagues.

Deserving also particular mention is General Magnus Malan; he and his wife invited me to visit at their home and his explanations of the period were most insightful. Rear Admiral Chris Bennett assisted with technical questions concerning the navy, as did

Brigadier General Dick Lord, Lieutenant General Dennis Earp and Colonel Johan Radloff regarding air force issues. Dawid Grobbelaar was kind enough to visit me in December 2006 while he was on holiday at Hermanus. He outlined a most informative discussion of his father, former Commandant General Piet Grobbelaar. A full list of those interviewed appears obviously within the list of sources, but I feel it important to make special mention of the above.

I must extend a word of gratitude to my parents, sisters, brother and extended family of whom I saw less of during the past four years than I could have, being so determined to complete my Ph.D dissertation. Finally, I am most grateful to my father for assisting with the final proof reading.

Rodney Warwick

Constantia, Cape Town,

20 April 2009.

List of illustrations

- ❖ **Commando cover page in May 1960 – three SAAF Dakota aircraft with “Eendheid 50 Years Unity” flying over the Voortrekker Monument in Pretoria.**
- ❖ **The SA Army in 1960 – 1st Mobile Watch in Cape Town during the March 1960 State of Emergency.**
- ❖ **The saluting podium for the SADF march past during the official Republic ceremony in May 1961 with the General Staff surrounding Verwoerd.**
- ❖ **The Indian navy aircraft carrier *Vikrant*. The SADF threat appraisers during the early 1960s were concerned this vessel might spearhead a United Nations or Afro-Asian amphibious military assault on South West Africa/Namibia at Walvis Bay.**
- ❖ **The concrete emplacements upon which the six-inch coastal defence artillery (Namib battery) was mounted in 1962 by the SA Navy, part of clandestine efforts to fortify Walvis Bay against perceived UN military threats.**
- ❖ **Africa as seen by Die Huisgenoot 11 October 1963; map showing “black Africa” facing white South Africa and her “buffer states”.**
- ❖ **The cover of Die Huisgenoot, 11 October 1963 with Commandant General Piet Grobbelaar: “Our Defence Force never sleeps.”**
- ❖ **An article from Die Vaderland 22 October 1964, illustrating the Cold War articles and style so prevalent during the period in the South African press. This headline reads: “Africa today is Red China and Russia’s Chessboard.”**
- ❖ **Die Vaderland (4 October 1964 edition) as it recorded the arrival of the navy’s third new President-class (Type-12) frigate in Cape Town. The caption reads “Another fist for the SA Navy”.**
- ❖ **White South African senior military officialdom at opening of the new Pietersberg air force base in 1964.**
- ❖ **The Devon radar scanner – part of the air defence network established in the early 1960s that took much of the decade to be made fully operational for the SAAF’s new Mirage interceptors.**
- ❖ **From Die Huisgenoot 20 May 1966: A carefully setup photo at Waterkloof Air Force Base outside Pretoria, displaying part of the South African Air Force arsenal: Mirage 111 fighters, Buccaneer maritime strike jets; Canberra light bombers and older Sabre jets.**
- ❖ **Commandant General Piet Grobbelaar a few months before his retirement; on his left, Deputy Commandant General Rudolf Hiemstra and right, Combat General Ben Viljoen Air Force Chief of Staff.**
- ❖ **A page from Commando in the April 1965 edition from an article on the “New SA Army”.**

- ❖ **Commando magazine cover for the July 1966 edition, showing part of the huge SADF parade during festivities on 31 May celebrating the 5th anniversary of the Republic.**
- ❖ **Defence Minister P.W. Botha with some of his most senior SADF commanders. (1967)**
- ❖ **Acknowledgement from the BP oil company of the SA Navy's 21st anniversary: "BP salutes our navy"(1967).**
- ❖ **General Charles Fraser after receiving the Star of South Africa decoration in late 1969 for his work on revolutionary warfare and counter-insurgency.**
- ❖ **Commandant General Hiemstra after a flip in a Mirage with SAAF Major Ken Smith. (1968)**

Introduction

This doctoral dissertation considers selected issues concerning the South African Defence Force (SADF) and its connection to the white South African community between 1960 and 1968. The Afrikaans and English-speaking components of the white population and the SADF are dealt with in separate chapters, principally because these language groupings can be generalised as having had at times different and often conflicting historical links with the military. From the 1960s the 'white' political issues around the republic were significant to the military in several ways, particularly how the organisation came to represent Afrikaner nationalist assertiveness, but also of it supposedly projecting white unity. Also addressed are aspects of the militarization of white South African society and white community responses to this, including controversies relating to the army's ill-preparedness and its difficulties in managing increased trainee numbers from 1962. This issue is placed alongside SADF efforts to popularise itself amongst the white community as a highly visible national entity. An attempt is made to contextualize these issues against the official SADF intelligence appraisals of the time regarding the extent to which military thinking concurred with popular opinion concerning threat perceptions and the organisation's supposed importance.

The central component of the thesis concerns the SADF's perceptions of potential military threats facing the country during our period, particularly regarding those of a conventional warfare nature. This is presented as a causality factor of mobilisation of the

white community regarding the National Party (NP) government working towards attempting to convince them of the ‘necessity’ for supporting the SADF, both in terms of increased defence budgets and widened conscription of its young males. Also examined are the military’s reactions to internal uprisings and guerrilla threats, perceived by the state as being manifest after the Rivonia trial revelations of *Operation Mayibuye*. There is little doubt that of all African decolonisation events, the crisis in the Congo from late 1960, through to the later attempted succession by the Katanga province, had the most profound impact upon white South African society perceiving future threats towards their existence and starting to mobilize for militarization. While most of these supposed threats and certainly those of a conventional warfare nature were highly unlikely if not fanciful, the SADF’s careful appraisal of them and reaction to them, are analysed in depth utilising previously classified documentation. This study indicates that they were taken seriously at the time. Some attempt is also made to gauge the effectiveness of the SADF and its responses to threats, in terms of how it portrayed itself publicly as capable of defending the country. This work closes with the period 1967-68, which represented the beginnings of an unconventional military threat to South West Africa (SWA). These two years witnessed something of a doctrinal change by the SADF to begin favouring preparation for counter-insurgency warfare over conventional warfare and the beginning of compulsory military conscription for all white males from their eighteenth year.

SADF conscription and the organization’s involvement with the SA Police from 1966 in guerrilla warfare, both inside SWA and some neighbouring states is therefore introduced, although these do not form this thesis’s core research areas. Neither are issues explored in

depth involving the Simon's Town Agreement and South Africa's defence relations with other states. Also integrated into this work are relevant details on militant dissident groupings such as Pan Africanist Congress (PAC), African Resistance Movement (ARM) and African National Congress (ANC)/South African Communist Party (SACP). All of these organisations were drawn into SADF military intelligence research on 'threats' and are discussed where relevant to our understanding the South African military's role in the 1960s. However, this work's principal concerns remain the SADF and its relationship with the white community. This population component was informed if not persuaded by government and military that real threats to it existed which needed to be resolutely guarded against. This thesis examines how the Defence Force received some popular white support in contrast to the near disdain or suspicion it was often viewed by some in this community during the 1950s. In short, this work studies why and how the SADF transformed into something of a bigger, probably more effective and certainly a visible instrument of the NP government during the 1960s. During this period, the Defence Force also attempted to foster an Afrikaner led white nationalism and republicanism.

The first part of the thesis commences with a historical and sociological examination of the SADF leadership and defence issues during the 1960s. It also examines the changing status and image of the organisation regarding white South Africans from 1960 and the degree to which it became intrusive in civilian life through conscription. White South Africa faced growing international criticism by the beginning of the decade that increased in intensity after the March 1960 Sharpeville massacre. New defence minister, Jim Fouché appointed at the beginning of that year, had a brief to provide political leadership

whereby the SADF would endorse the coming republic. But Fouché also had to ensure tact regarding already troubled relations between members, besides their morale. His arrival in this portfolio is an obvious point of departure for this thesis. The military under Minister Frans Erasmus during the 1950s was conflict-ridden and this legacy was viewed by government as problematic for their campaign to attain majority white support for republic. The Afrikaner nationalist aspirations of achieving a republic, announced in March 1960 by Verwoerd as being decided by referendum, also meant significant defence uncertainties. Whereas during previous decades the South African military's role had been tied closely to British strategic assumptions, there had been a significant lessening of such during the 1950s. By 1960, outside of maritime obligations under the Simon's Town Agreement, the country's defence priorities were uncertain. The SADF was also unprepared in virtually every respect for the uncertainties of defence isolation and international hostility.

The central component of the thesis relates to the SADF's threat perceptions and strategic responses are discussed regarding what were considered potentially hostile forces posturing or even considering military intervention in South West Africa (SWA) and the Republic. Where practical, this is related to some of the broader developments within the white community, its politics, perceptions and government policy. The government and SADF strategic planning for its expansion and deployment profoundly influenced the country's history; for it built the institutional base for later adventurous use of the military in pursuing goals of further securing control of Namibia and invasions of Angola during the 1970s and 80s. During our period, the SADF was increasingly perceived by its

commanders, white politicians and large components of white society, as fundamental to white South African survival against the context of international hostility. Threatening rhetoric at international forums like the United Nations (UN), Organisation of African Unity (OAU), besides utterances by varied Afro-Asian spokespersons were recorded and discussed at length by SADF military intelligence being appraised as potential threats with military counter strategies drawn up in response. The SADF assessed a UN or 'Afro-Asian' threat as plausible, particularly after UN military intervention in the Congo aimed at preventing the succession of Katanga, with Indian troops in the forefront of action that was also aimed at Belgian settlers.

As the white population began to recover its confidence after being shocked by the international reaction immediately, post the Sharpeville shootings the SADF's public profile also grew, assisted by new arms acquisitions. This dissertation contends that just through noting defence expenditure the military lifted itself away from being the low priority civil service component of the 1950s. Between 1958/59 and 1966/67, the defence budget rose from R36 million to R210 million.¹ What was also occurring but not fully comprehended by the public, nor unearthed by the few researchers on South African defence matters that have touched upon the 1960s (because of the previous unavailability of the relevant classified documentation), was that the SADF were also engaged with continual appraisals regarding potential military threats and these are discussed and analysed at length.

¹ Baynham, S., Military Power and Politics in Black Africa, Croon Helm, London, 1986, p. 293.

In the second part of the thesis, it is contended that during the first half of the 1960s, the SADF became increasingly “popularised” amongst the white community through government strategy, which capitalised upon media generated threat perceptions. Later under P.W. Botha’s early cabinet tenure in 1966-1968, the emphasis was also upon “socialising” conscripts into identifying the “enemy” as communist subversion in military and non-military forms. Much of our focus is with the former period of 1960-1966, where amidst the defence unknowns facing the country, the SADF in response increasingly raised its public profile. Militarization during our period was assisted by white fears being to an extent placated by claims of SADF military prowess. What also occurred was a merging of the military within Afrikaner society; For example through efforts by future Commandant General Hiemstra and his *Afrikaanse Vereeniging Kultuur en Verdediging* (AKVV),² which tried to reinforce a “warrior” or “*krygsman*” component drawn from Afrikaner history, in contrast to British originated military culture that had dominated the South African military post-Union. Both the English and Afrikaans components of the white community had different if not often conflicting histories with the military. The legacy of World War Two influenced the attitudes of both groupings towards militarization and a detailed attempt is made at covering such.

The mobilization of the white community into supporting the SADF was important to the NP government’s attempts to draw overwhelming majority voter support for its political programs. The military had become seriously run-down during the 1950s in terms of its combat effectiveness and public image, which worried Verwoerd particularly as a jittery

² In English literally: “The Afrikaans Union of Culture and Defence”.

white public needed reassurance from 1960. The defence budget substantially increased from the beginning of the decade, with the SADF between 1961 and 1964 particularly, receiving an urgent boost of both equipment and manpower. The period from 1960 to 1968 constitutes that where the government made a concerted effort to draw whites and national defence closer against the backdrop of outside hostility to apartheid.

The dissertation's chapter breakdown

The first chapter explores some of the most important defence issues impacting upon South Africa by 1960. Those examined include the appointment of Fouché against the white public anxiety of the early period and his emphasis upon using the SADF to project white unity and confidence through the military. Fouché straddled between historic divides and suspicions within the white community, seeking to draw English and Afrikaans together in defence issues, while still ensuring and asserting Afrikaner nationalist political symbolism and leadership. Fouché's role was also to build bridges with the politically disempowered 'English', while politically-motivated SADF commanders like Deputy Commandant General, later Commandant General Rudolph Hiemstra, encouraged Afrikaner nationalist fervour around defence. An insular outlook where "enemies" existed without and within was projected across to the rest of the white community through "military threat perceptions". The split role of the Defence Force being perceived as either a supplementary police force or an entity concerned with external defence, was highlighted by the first press speculations of an "African threat" from decolonised states. The chapter examines Fouché and SADF commander's initial public reactions to such 'threats'. Defence preparedness and alliances (or lack of them)

are introduced, including an examination of South Africa's defence arrangements with Britain and the development of local military intelligence which had to be virtually recreated after republic.

Chapter two is specifically concerned with the leadership of the SADF during the 1960s with a particular emphasis upon that of Commandant General Rudolph Hiemstra whose appointment in the highest Defence Force position was clearly long intended given his Afrikaner nationalist political credentials and prior rapid promotion. Hiemstra's clashes with his seniors over national service during the early part of the decade are well documented from archival material. However, an attempt is also made to analyse other senior SADF commanders' roles in the decade, including Commandant General Piet Grobbelaar (1960-65); Admiral Hugo Biermann (SA Navy Chief/Maritime Forces Head (1955 – 1972 and Chief of the SADF from 1972-76) and Lieutenant General Charles Fraser (Chief of the Army from 1966 and Joint Combat Forces Chief from 1967). None of these and other senior officers roles are discussed in depth within any works encountered by this author. Therefore, their careers of those of other SANDF commanders, considered of value in enhancing our understanding of the chosen topic have also been researched where relevant within this thesis.

Chapter three is a core component of this dissertation, namely the SADF's threat perceptions to both the republic and SWA. This chapter focuses partly on threats of a conventional warfare nature, these being more emphasised as existing by the government during the early part of the decade. This was because the SADF understood these as

potentially having the most dire consequences for white rule in a comparatively short space of time. However, internal unrest and guerrilla threats are also analysed as part of the overall SADF strategic appraisals and threat perceptions. Unconventional warfare and its threat to white South Africa was a central feature of classified defence appraisals, although it was viewed as likely to build-up over a lengthy period and its foiling required specialised training and strategies. This chapter is constructed off the supposition, clearly indicated in the evidence utilised, that many white South Africans believed, even if just fleetingly in some cases, that the Cold War had created profound threats to the country. The Soviet Union was understood as an aggressive power, involved in the regular surveillance of the Republic. SADF documentation of the period makes it clear that its intelligence sources perceived that the Soviet Union was directly connected with African nationalist guerrilla organisations via contact along the coastline, facilitation of supplies and the deployment of personnel. With the USSR assumed to be inspiring revolution, some whites drew the conclusion that ‘communism’ represented a greater threat to them than any black political aspirations. If they were not vigilant, the white community believed it risked facing dangers such as what ANC’s armed wing *Umkonto We Sizwe* (MK) had planned or hypothesised; or at least as was understood through seized documentation presented by the state at the Rivonia Trial. The potential of a conventional warfare threat via African countries or the UNO, possibly in the form of an Afro-Asian invasion force, was a feature of newspaper articles during the early 1960s. Through an examination of formally classified SADF documentation, these varied threats are analysed in detail.

Chapter four discusses various SADF counter-responses in terms of air-defences and maritime strategies, particularly regarding the secretly envisaged urgency to ensure the defence of Walvis Bay in Namibia - referred to as South West Africa or SWA for most of this thesis to place the territory in its correct historical context. This chapter also presents a short over-view of shifting SADF doctrinal strategies from 1967-68 up to the changes in conscription policy and various counter-responses to threats not integrated within the previous chapter. It concludes that SADF expansions during the 1960s cannot be separated from the NP government's assumption that besides its role in national defence, the military could also serve as a political socialising agency for the white community. It was also during our period that the SADF would endorse amongst generations of young white conscripts, the government's ideology, policies, and most particularly its identification of the enemy with communist inspired goals. This chapter introduces Lt Gen Charles Fraser's counter-revolutionary theory, as he commended it to P.W. Botha and other SADF commanders. During 1967, the military also began to acquire experience in guerrilla warfare through clandestine involvement in other white ruled Southern African states. By 1968, the threat had shifted, according to the government, onto the terrain of 'communist' propaganda and the SADF emphasised counter-insurgency strongly in training alongside its standard conventional war doctrine.

Chapter five examines the relationship between the SADF and Afrikaans community. The shift in civil service political culture from 1948 towards a broad support of Afrikaner nationalist objectives included the SADF and the majority of its members were drawn from this community. However, the military by 1960 was not necessarily a highly visible

or even popular entity. The government moved with caution to integrate the SADF more closely into the lives of Afrikaners, for reasons outlined by this chapter. We also explore something of how the SADF operated within the context of apartheid, during the Verwoerd years when the racial policy was at its most ideologically dogmatic.

Chapter six discusses English-speaking South Africans and the SADF. It suggests the 'English' as a grouping by 1960 had a more diverse, indeed, deeper historical connection with the formalised military, but being out of political power, carried general resentments towards National Party (NP) appropriation of defence. The chapter investigates how the 'English' in a selective sense were reintegrated into the SADF at a numerically and culturally subordinate level. However, many still responded with enthusiasm. This is verified in different contexts, including our tracking the significant career progress made by some remaining English-speaking senior Permanent Force (PF) officers, to the bolstering of Citizen Force (CF) traditional regiments, besides support from defence press correspondents, newspapers, parliamentary opposition politicians and not least, ex-servicemen in various ways. Also examined, within a military context, is how a barely discernable white 'English' South African identity became more fluid during our period, dissolving within a kind of tentative "white nationalism," which impacted upon the "English" generally favourable reaction to the government's call to arms. Also introduced is some detail are aspects of English-speaking war veterans during the 1960s, where it is contended their attitudes regarding national defence issues played various roles in facilitating government calls for support in promoting the SADF.

Chapter seven attempts an exploration of the extent to which the white community were mobilised behind the SADF through the organisation being “popularised” by defence authorities amongst the white communities. It also refers to the official perceptions within the SADF, by those tasked with assessing the force’s credibility amongst white South Africans and the military’s speculations upon the community’s preparedness regarding perceived threats. The SADF was also concerned with what priority and credibility the white community accorded the military, as it attempted to amend its image. Fouché was anxious to gauge positive public feelings, considering the higher expectations of involvement anticipated by the SADF from both English and Afrikaans groupings. Because the white community were the predominant taxpayers, there was not least a political imperative to illustrate that raised defence spending was being appropriately utilised. This chapter highlights the very considerable white community interest in SADF public displays of various descriptions and occasions, which also served a purpose of making the Defence Force a more visible entity amongst the white community, during a period when they felt increasingly beleaguered. This in contrast to scores of complaints from those balloted for service, which resulted in urgent government investigations. One of this dissertation’s contentions is that the white community felt considerable anxiety regarding long-term physical security, despite racial legislative protection and their fortuitously being able to enjoy the 1960s economic prosperity, from the lowest levels of the white working-class to the exceptionally wealthy. But nevertheless, even where life was prosperous and comfortable, constant reminders of the broader African political changes filled the media and the most politically disinterested could not have been unaware of African nationalism and its sometimes militant

manifestations dedicated to the overthrow of white rule throughout the continent. Similarly, the threat of “communism” and white perceptions of what this meant in terms of security, which was further fuelled by incessant government propaganda via the media. The militarization of white South Africa occurred between these “threat” factors and the SADF’s sometimes clumsy efforts to ensure proper management of increased trainee numbers, alongside its simultaneous implementation of counter-strategies.

Literary review of the period and notes regarding sources

The SADF during the 1960s has received largely superficial attention from historians. While other researchers have covered the 1950s, no extensive archival study of the SADF and its relationship to the broader South African society had yet been undertaken concerning the 1960s, which has been one objective of this dissertation. The transformation of the UDF during the late 1940s and 50s is studied in some depth by Roger Boulter’s 1997 doctoral dissertation: *F.C. Erasmus and the Politics of SA Defence* completed through Rhodes University and an MA completed by Louisa Jooste through UNISA in 1995. Boulter is principally concerned with the SADF from within, its leadership and effectiveness. This thesis to an extent is a continuation through to the end of the 1960s, but deals with several other themes, besides some of those within Boulter’s work. An MA study on South African Air Force (SAAF) pilots departure from the Union Defence Force (UDF)/SADF from 1946-1971 was undertaken in 1978 through UNISA by Willem Van den Bos. Much of it is drawn from a statistical methodological research base and despite the title, provided limited insight concerning issues addressed in this dissertation.

There was one short overview written on 1960s South African defence issues contained within a chapter by James Barber's South African Foreign Policy 1945-73,³ updated briefly within a slightly later publication, South Africa's Foreign Policy - The Search for Status and Security, published in 1990. While Barber's writing summarises a small part of what is written in the chapter dealing with threat perceptions, besides providing some useful statistical data, he did not have access to archival material on perceived threat specifics and the SADF responses. Neither did Barber attempt an analysis of the SADF's effectiveness, nor was he concerned with any attempts at any sociological/historical study of the white community and its relationship to defence issues during the 1960s. This work's analysis of the relationship between the SADF and white community, besides the organisation's threat perceptions and responses is detailed and extracted from a wide range of sources, including archival documentation, interviews, official SADF publications, the press and popular magazines.

Some other secondary sources consulted include: The Making of the Modern South African Military by Annette Seegers, (1996); Philip Frankel's Pretoria's Praetorians, (1984) and Kenneth Grundy's The Militarization of South African Politics, (1986). All three publications are the works of political scientists concerned with understanding civil-military relations in South Africa during the twentieth century. They were particularly interested in the degree to which the military began to influence and even usurp the political functions of constitutional government in South Africa, but with particular

³ Barber, J., South African Foreign Policy 1945-1970, Oxford University Press, Cape Town, 1973.

emphasis upon the late 1970s and 80s. They made little or no use of primary sources from the military archives; it is highly unlikely such material would have been made available at their time of writing. Only to a very limited extent were these three works attempting to understand historically in detail, the changing nature of the SADF during the 1960s, by projecting the military's transformation against threat perceptions and white politics of the period. These writers were not interested in comprehending the military as an integral part of "white social history", nor how the National Party strove to justify SADF expenditure and national service against a range of perceived threats. Seegers to an extent is an exception, for she discusses the Afrikanerisation of the military post-1948⁴ and aspects of the SADF during the 1960s through secondary sources, including comment upon its operational inadequacies after Sharpeville. She includes some historical overview of the SADF's adjustment in terms of the changing international and national circumstances, besides the rationale behind its arms acquisitions during the 1960s. However, she makes very limited comment on SADF conventional threat perceptions or the organisations reaction to these latter issues which comprise a core part of this dissertation. Neither was Seegers interested in how the English and Afrikaans communities perceived defence issues. Commandant Generals Hiemstra and Grobbelaar receive no comment in Seegers book, yet some reference to their and other officers involvement is fundamental to documenting a clear understanding of the SADF during the 1960s.

⁴ Although she is criticized by R.S. Boulter in his doctoral thesis, F.C. Erasmus and the Politics of South African Defence, Rhodes University, 1997, for her book containing a number of errors – this author also located some.

The only published autobiography by an SADF senior commander during the 1960s is Die Wilde Haf written by former Commandant General R. C. Hiemstra.⁵ His book provides some useful source material, particularly in his attempting to link Afrikaner nationalist politics and heritage with the SADF. This is an issue, which this dissertation attempts to bring to the forefront. P.W. Botha's 1997 biography, Stem uit die Wildernis by Daan Prinsloo,⁶ furnishes useful detail about Botha's early defence minister years. Unlike some of the above studies, this dissertation is primarily intended as an historical study and hopefully has benefited not only from greater access and utilisation of archival documentation, but also from new insights into the complexities of white political and social history, in particular The Afrikaners by Hermann Giliomee published in 2003. Also utilised are a range of articles and other recent works, such as those written by Generals Magnus Malan and Jannie Geldenhuys, which provide some personal reflections on the period within their autobiographical studies of their military careers.⁷

Some articles have also made some short introductory comments regarding the relationship between the SADF and the white community during the 1960s. These have included McGill Alexander's: The Militarization of White South African Society, 1948-1990 published in Scientia Militaria, Vol. 30 (2), 2000, besides Leopold Scholtz, Die ontwikkeling van die SA Leër in die Grensoorlog, 1966-1989 and Jacobs, C.J., The forward defence strategy of the SADF 1978-1989, both of which are published in

⁵ Hiemstra, R.C., Die Wilde Haf, Human & Rousseau, Cape Town, 2001.

⁶ Prinsloo, D., Stem uit die Wildernis 'n Biografie oor oud-pres P.W. Botha, Vaandel-Uitgewers, Mossel Bay, 1997.

⁷ Geldenhuys, J., A General's Story from an Era of War and Peace, Jeppesstown, 1995; Malan, M., My Life with the SA Defence Force, Protea Book House, 2006, Pretoria.

Grensoorlog Border War 1966-1989 A Special Edition of the Journal for Contemporary History, Vol. 31, No.3. December 2006. Alexander's article provides some limited coverage of the 1960s in four pages where he makes some relevant remarks, including correctly identifying the role of militant African nationalism as an important fear element within the white community and through which the government exploited English/Afrikaans 'unity'.⁸ Alexander also identifies the 1960s period as being one that "created the required climate for the militarization of white society in South Africa". However, there is little elaboration of these points and his article is drawn primarily from secondary sources.⁹ Leopold Scholtz makes several cursory comments about the SADF during the 1960s.¹⁰ Scholtz also attempts in a few pages, to make some cursory evaluation of the SADF's efficiency during the early 1960s.¹¹ In a separate article, Scholtz makes reference to SWA in terms of the beginnings of South West Africa People's Organisation (SWAPO) insurgency from 1966, including explanation of revolutionary warfare concepts as understood in the late 1960s by the SADF.¹² A range of other articles published in various journals or unpublished, are referred to, as are a wide collection of secondary sources, which provided aspects of contextual background or information. Historian G.D. Scholtz's¹³ works ensured important contextual comprehension of Afrikaner nationalist political assumptions during the 1960s.

⁸ Alexander, M., The Militarization of South African White Society, 1948-1990, Militaria Scientia 30(2) 2000, pp 267-269.

⁹ Ibid., see pp 281-284.

¹⁰ Scholtz, L., Die ontwikkeling van die SA Leër in die Grenoorlog, 1966-1989, Journal for Contemporary History, Volume 31, No.3, December 2006, pp 114-115.

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² Scholtz, L., The Namibian Border War: An Appraisal of South African Strategy, Scientia Militaria, Vol. 34 No. 1 2006.

¹³ Father of Leopold Scholtz

It is hoped that this dissertation's academic credibility and originality is further endorsed by a significant core of its content being drawn from recently declassified archival material, lodged at the Visagie Street, Pretoria, South African National Defence Force (SANDF) Archives. Although various themes concerning the SADF and the white community have been broached within a range of publications over the years, this dissertation was intended to be substantially different, in that it endeavoured to refer and contrast such sources with this archival documentation viewed for the first time regarding research. The SANDF archives contained a large range of different catalogues for the Minister of Defence and Commandant General groups, within which are listed numerous boxes of files. While for this topic many of these could be discarded, there still remained abundant material that immediately drew this author towards exploring the chosen dissertation topic issues, particularly the SADF perceived 1960s military threats to South Africa and SWA. Perhaps sixty to seventy percent of the documentation was written in Afrikaans and where necessary translated by this author, who was also responsible for all translations from utilised Afrikaans secondary source material. There were boxes also containing numerous amounts of correspondence dealing with complaints from trainees or their parents, often addressed through their constituency members of parliament or provincial legislature members. The same pattern was evident amongst the United Party (UP) archival material, which also contained many letters addressed to and by MPs expressing grievances regarding military trainees in terms of mostly alleged abuses, along with scores of applications for deferment of service.

The Fouché collection in the University of the Free State's Archive for Contemporary Affairs provided a useful collection of speeches by the former defence minister, often annotated by Fouché. The material obtained from the United Kingdom's National Archives in Kew, London was particularly informative regarding correspondence and British documentation alluding to Anglo-South African relations concerning arms negotiations and sales, besides British defence thinking over the Simon's Town Agreement. The National Archives in Pretoria produced little during this author's visit, except some cabinet notes of limited value. It appears that much of the ministerial documentation found its way back to the SANDF archives where at least some of it was viewed and utilized amongst the swaths of material available.

An important source for this thesis came in the form of numerous interviews conducted with former middle-ranking or junior Permanent Force (PF) officers from the 1960s. Their evidence played a critical role in penetrating some of the complexities about the SADF and the attitudes prevalent within the institution during a period increasingly now so distant. While it is self-evident that historical projects are mostly undertaken where significant participants have long passed on; it was useful to hear of details that could still be described by individuals who were 'present'. Therefore considering most of those interviewed are aged at best in their late sixties, this author worked carefully to ensure their opinions or recollections were heard, recorded and integrated where appropriate. As part of the gathering of sources, a press letter was published in several English and Afrikaans newspapers during August 2007, inviting ex-SADF members who served

during the early 1960s to state their views on several questions. A significant response resulted; a few have been quoted from in this thesis.

Graeme Callistair completed an MA in 2007 through Stellenbosch University, dealing with SADF conscription between 1952-1992, where he cited from this author's paper delivered at the 2005 SA Historical Society Conference: *The South African Military Under Verwoerd: SADF Popularisation amongst the White Community, 1960-66*, as well as a seminar given to the Stellenbosch University History Department in 2006 on "The SADF and White South Africa." This thesis also refers here and there to some of his remarks on conscription. Another recent thesis which makes some reference to SA defence issues during the 1960s and provided most useful verification for one of this dissertation's contentions was P. Correia's "Political Relations between Portugal and South Africa from the end of the Second World War until 1974". This was a D.Lit dissertation completed in 2007 through the University of Johannesburg. The contention referred to above was that India was perceived by the SADF as a military threat during the 1960s.

There was also literature produced during the 1960s and 70s which dealt very generally with perceived military threats facing South Africa at the time in the form of "terrorism" on the "border", or international communism and its military implications for South Africa. Some writers who published on these topics during the period were Al J. Venter, Michael Morris and Chris Vermaak. Activities by "communist inspired forces" on South Africa's borders later became the subject of popular magazines and even comics playing

some role in shaping popular white male culture.¹⁴ As a range of threats identified during the early 1960s by the SADF were disseminated through the media, any number of newspaper reports from both the English and Afrikaans press are utilised extensively throughout this dissertation. The Afrikaans popular magazine *Huisgenoot* provided insight into what its readership were interested in reading during the 1960s. *Huisgenoot* served as a valuable source regarding how the SADF was presented to the Afrikaans community as “their own” and supposedly markedly important to their future security.

This dissertation made extensive use and analysis of SADF publications: Most particularly *Commando* (later *Paratus*). Such also distinguishes this work from others on the SADF where no close examination has been attempted on these publications. *Commando* is a valuable source whose editors during the 1960s closely followed government policies regarding how these were promoted within the SADF. *Commando* also made considerable efforts to endorse both Afrikaans and English South African military history during the first half of the 1960s, with repetitive emphasis upon the two groups supposedly working together within the military for the good of the Republic. Afrikaner nationalist symbolism in the military was a marked feature of the publication alongside articles stressing “Afrikaans/English reconciliation”. The latter feature which was so obvious during the first decade of the 1960s became more muted by the 1970s. As the ‘English’ identity of the pre-Republic period diminished and UP support shrank amongst conservative English white opinion, so it appears the government perceived that

¹⁴ A personal recollection from the early 1970s was “Kaptein Caprivi”, which involved a para-military white South African hero fighting the country’s enemies with the ‘Caprivi’ name having its military strategic positioning in Namibia first highlighted during the 1960s.

it was no longer necessary to constantly publicise an inclusive approach regarding the military regarding the two white language groupings. Other “official” material utilised for this work, included parliamentary reports, various “inhouse” official booklets and films, amongst which was “Vesting van die Suide”/Bastion of the South, referring to the SADF and released by the Department of information around 1964.

Notes on terminology

For the sake of accurately reflecting the sources utilised within this dissertation, the abbreviation SWA (South West Africa) is repeatedly used for describing the contemporary Republic of Namibia; just as ‘Rhodesia’ is utilized in referring to Zimbabwe and other pre-independence titles of various African counties. One of the changes brought in by the 1957 Defence Act, was that the term Union Defence Force (UDF) was replaced by South African Defence Force (SADF); part of Erasmus’s drive to “republicanise” the South African military. From 1994, the South African National Defence Force (SANDF) is the correct description. Both UDF and SADF are used in the pages that follow, depending upon the historical context at that point. Regarding ‘South Africa’, sometimes that term is used, but also ‘Republic’ or ‘RSA’, depending upon what appeared appropriate to avoid continual repetition. Likewise other South African place names such as Pietersberg (today Polokwane) and the titles of the pre-1994 four provinces have been retained to fit the historical authenticity of this work.

PART ONE: THREAT PERCEPTIONS AND COUNTER STRATEGIES

Chapter 1: South African defence and political contexts during the early 1960s

Introduction

This chapter serves as an introduction regarding varied SADF strategic and other issues from 1960 to 1968, whereby the central components of white South African society's militarization and threat perceptions during this period can be understood. During the 1950s, numerous SADF symbolic changes affirmed the NP's political goal of a republic, but defence remained a fairly low government priority. Frans Erasmus's portfolio was not a particularly prized cabinet position and defence issues were not central to the NP race-based legislation passed in the 1950s. The SADF just obediently reflected where appropriate, the decisions made within other departments, whether these concerned apartheid legislation or foreign policy. The SADF was responsible for the protection of the white community as one national entity, regarding its privileges and security, and it therefore operated closely within government racial policy.

By the end of 1959, many whites perceived the SADF as almost a sheltered employment institution, although there still remained within its ranks some highly competent professional officers, in whom resided significant war experience, despite those who had left during the Erasmus purges. Both the arrival of the Republic and emerging African nationalism placed a public spotlight on the Defence Force; not least because during 1960, the first press reports appeared suggesting a vague 'African threat' emerging

alongside decolonisation. This chapter begins with a short over view of 'white military heritage,' besides events concerning defence during the 1950s. It also deals with Anglo-South African defence relations, which were a significant issue by 1960, particularly concerning the Simon's Town Agreement, besides arms purchases and intelligence sources. Thereafter, it introduces Jim Fouché's appointment as defence minister from the beginning of 1960; his policy emphasis upon 'white nation-building' and the use of the SADF to encourage this. The National Party's (NP) attainment of the Republic fulfilled perhaps the most important Afrikaner nationalist historical aspiration, but the entire white community, which the government wanted to draw behind the SADF was sharply divided on the issue. This thesis attempts a clearer understanding of the white Afrikaans and English communities respective connections with the military and these are dealt with in chapters five and six. The new republican constitutional status and South Africa's termination of her Commonwealth membership a few months later had further implications for defence. So too, did the aftermath of divisive World War Two developments amongst the white community impact upon South African defence issues during the 1960s. These are addressed in detail particularly in chapters two, five and six. The early 1960s saw the SADF increasingly being viewed by Afrikaner leaders, alongside grand apartheid (the Verwoerdian homelands policy), as another prime guarantor of white security. Therefore, we also examine the relationship between the SADF and government racial policy.

White South African “military heritage”

“White South African military heritage,” although usually projected differently amongst the English and Afrikaans communities, consisted broadly of two origins. Firstly, a colonial military mentality lingered in components of the English speaking white community, largely because of their cumulative experience in response to historical racial conflict over land and resources. This mindset remained therefore an omnipresent feature with English-speaking white male culture. The military ethos amongst colonials had been further emphasised by their involvement in the South African War and during the following years, when additional volunteer regiments were raised intending to fill a perceived need for local defence. During the first three decades of the twentieth century, Citizen Force (CF) regiments catered for part-time soldiering within British South African society and maintained something of a military aspect within the collective psyche of this community. All male citizens were eligible for some military training in terms of the 1912 Defence Act. The professional and middle classes gained some social credibility by serving in an established CF regimental unit, which was an approved and often fashionable manifestation of patriotism and manhood during 1912-39. Cadets had been part of English South African boys schools since the late nineteenth century.

The rural Afrikaner commando that was a unique South African military organisation since the seventeenth century and the foundation of Boer military activities against both British Imperialism and pre-industrial black communities were resurrected by the 1912 Defence Act and operated as Rifle Associations. During the First World War, these commandos provided significant troops to Union Defence Force (UDF) campaigns in

Africa and were an important addition to the Permanent Force (PF) in crushing white worker unrest during 1922. Afrikaner historical associations with defending home, wagon-laager and their nineteenth century republics against British Imperialism, besides clashes with blacks over land resources, were deeply ingrained within Afrikaner collective cultural memory. As is described in chapter two and five, Afrikaners had in general an historical ambivalence towards uniformed standing armies. Remnants of this attitude even lingered into the early 1960s. But a significant proportion of the pre-World War Two UDF PF members were Afrikaners and the heritage of the Afrikaner commando had long been integrated into formal SADF structures.

During the 1920s, the Pact Government and 1930s Depression years, with contemporary white political issues being such as coalition and fusion of parties, defence issues occupied a comparatively low priority. In 1939, the UDF was poorly prepared for war, while serious conflict occurred within the white community over South Africa's entry into hostilities, ensuring some polarisation amongst Defence Force members.¹⁵ Many publications detail and analyse how South African forces with thousands of volunteers, representing both white and black communities, drew significant praise for their war efforts, despite national political and economic difficulties. Three recent academic works analysing South African troops in World War Two as language or class groupings

¹⁵ There are scores of publications on this topic. A small sample includes: Martin, H.J. & Orpen, N., South Africa at War, Purnell, 1979, J Crwys-Williams, A country at war, 1939-1945: the mood of a nation, Rivonia, Ashanti, 1992; two papers presented comparatively recently which infer to lack of SA military preparation in 1939 are Visser, D., Anglo-South African Relations and the Erebus Scheme, 1936-1939 and Van der Waag, I., 'The thin edge of the wedge': Anglo-South African relations and the formation of the Seaward Defence Force in 1939-40; both read at the 5th War and Society in Africa Conference held at the South African Military Academy during 13-15 September 2006.

include: John Lambert's paper on white English South Africans and the war, comprising a kind of social analysis of this community's military involvement. Albert Grundlingh has investigated the experiences of the Afrikaner soldier, while Neil Roos has written about South Africa volunteer servicemen and their experiences as soldiers, veterans and predominantly working-class men, in relation to their efforts to establish various interpretations of social justice during 1939-61.¹⁶

Therefore, by 1945 although the country as a whole was exhausted by the recent war; experiences amongst returning volunteers and those of the PF UDF, had produced an arguably more united South African military heritage regarding the two white language groups. However, during the 1950s, the Defence Force underwent considerable internal turmoil and change. The challenge facing Fouché and the NP government during the early 1960s, was as part of a political project to re-invoke some of the South African military memories and culture and drawing the politically averse white communities behind both Republic and SADF. Such is one central concern of this dissertation.

Defence had not constituted a priority NP issue post-1948 and very few government members had acquired any particular expertise or interest in the subject. The NP had simply preferred to use Erasmus's 'Afrikanerisation' of the Defence Force as another manifestation of NP republic preparations. There was some rearming during the 1950s, in

¹⁶ Lambert, J., 'Their finest hour' English-speaking South Africans and World War II, unpublished article 2006; Grundlingh, A., The King's Afrikaners? Enlistment and Ethnic Identity in the Union of South Africa's Defence Force During the Second World War, 1939-45, *Journal of African History*, 40 (1999); Roos, N., *Ordinary Springboks White Servicemen and Social Justice, 1939-1961*, Ashgate, Aldershot, 2005.

liaison with Britain over plans for the Union to assist in Middle East defence and the obligations of the Simon's Town Agreement. With the republican constitutional goal in mind, Erasmus and his protégées such as future Commandant General R. C. Hiemstra had busied themselves with symbolic changes to titles, insignia and uniforms, besides advancing Afrikaner control and numerical preponderance within the UDF/SADF.

South African military relations with Britain

During the mid-1950s, the UDF/SADF purchased considerable conventional warfare equipment from Britain and Canada, including tanks, armoured personnel carriers and jet fighters (Vampires and Sabres - both aircraft types were obsolete by 1960). Most of this was intended to equip an armoured division and air component earmarked to assist Britain in defending the Middle East during global war, but after interminable bilateral discussions, neither South Africa nor Britain ratified this arrangement.¹⁷ By the end of the 1950s, the SA military's role remained nebulous regarding its "traditional allies". The British government who had been the Union's long-time defence partner, preferred to retain increasingly muted defence arrangements with South Africa. In a rapidly changing world of African decolonisation, the British response to Verwoerd's intensification of apartheid was to attempt a balance between continued Anglo-South African defence cooperation and with the reality of a growing Afro-Asian numerical dominance in international affairs.

¹⁷ See Hyam, R., and Henshaw, P., The Lion and the Springbok: Britain and South Africa since the Boer War, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 2003, pp 231, 246-250.

The establishment in 1961 of the Republic accompanied increased political, diplomatic and trading isolation for South Africa, resulting in the SADF commanders and Fouché attempting a “dual process” in defence. Where possible, they tried to maintain traditional arrangements with Western powers, while often in public, NP politicians or senior figures in the military establishment would adopt the contradictory rhetoric of putting “South Africa First” in terms of defence priorities. The South Africans continually hammered on the country’s supposed strategic importance and the dangers of communism for the continent; stressing that it was willing to play a significant role in “containing communism in the continent”. British documentation of the period shows that during the early 1960s, the United Kingdom government and military continued to value links with South Africa. The Simon’s Town Agreement existing between South Africa and Britain in 1960, as set out in an Exchange of Letters of June 1955, contains the following illustrative statement from once classified British records:

The (Simon's Town) Agreements are bilateral and are ‘to remain in force until such time as the two Governments decide otherwise by mutual agreement’....The facilities we enjoy might, however, be endangered by a worsening of relations that might follow from a change of status in the Union....It does not necessarily follow that because she left the Commonwealth South Africa would also withdraw from naval defence planning with us, but if she did it would be difficult to find a satisfactory alternative to existing plans.¹⁸

British concerns were listed as the potential loss of stores, radio communications, shore facilities, air reconnaissance provided by the SAAF and significant complications if the South Africans withdrew entirely from naval cooperation, although it was correctly

¹⁸ UK National Archives, DEFE 7/1526 South Africa, political, military and economic affairs: the republican issue, 1960, Section IV - Defence.

anticipated that this need not happen just because of the Republic.¹⁹ The Agreement resulted in the SA Navy undertaking a kind of “para-NATO role” in terms of its assisting in defending western interests in the South Atlantic.²⁰ However, the Agreement terms, were particularly generous to British interests. For example, they allowed the Royal Navy (RN) Commander-in-Chief, South Atlantic to have immediate access to the South African defence minister and in a war situation; the RN Commander would take operational command of all forces within his zone from a headquarters provided in the Cape outside of Simon’s Town.

However, the degree to which the Simon’s Town Agreement slanted to the British government’s advantage was never apparent in public discourse; being rather presented in public as a mutually beneficial arrangement between two anti-communist allies in protecting the Cape Sea Route. The British government also now had a stake in the efficiency of the SA Navy. By signing the Agreement, it also quietly ensured the South Africa fleet was protected from any overt NP political interference that could restrict its capacity to operate properly or impair its role in helping safeguard the Cape Sea Route alongside other Western navies.²¹ Also by consenting to assist with the expansion of the SA Navy, the British pushed the South African government to ensure their fleet’s enlargement, besides the modernisation of naval facilities that could come under British

¹⁹ UK National Archives, DEFE 7/1526 South Africa, political, military and economic affairs: the republican issue, 1960, Section IV - Defence. For a detailed discussion concentrating of the details of the Simon’s Town agreement’s history and issues, see Hyam and Henshaw, The Lion and the Springbok Britain and South Africa since the Boer War, pp 230-253.

²⁰ Potgieter, T.D., *Corvette Projects of the South African Navy and the Printed Media: Different Government, Different Debate*. Base upon a paper delivered at the XXIXth International Congress of Military History, ‘War and the Media’, Bucharest, Romania, 10-16 August 2003, p.6.

²¹ See Seegers, A., The Military in the Making of Modern South Africa , Tauris Academic Studies, I.B. Tauris & co. Ltd, London, 1996, pp 109-110.

command and utilisation.²² Major General Dunbar Moodie, who worked at Pretoria Defence Headquarters during the early 1960s, remarked that Admiral Hugo Biermann, then SA Navy Chief of Staff, who was well respected within the RN, had a considerable influence in convincing Erasmus towards accepting the strongly pro-British terms of the Simon's Town Agreement.²³

From a British perspective, however, these links necessitated balancing against the diplomatic disadvantages of African-Asian anger at perceptions that Britain was condoning South Africa's racial policies. The British government also had to ensure strategic ties with potential Cold War allies in the emerging Third World. The SADF also had to manage in isolation, other perceived military threats, including defending SWA or the Republic against possible UN or Afro-Asian military intervention intended to force termination of South African control over SWA, or changing the Republic's racial policies. These latter themes are expanded upon considerably in chapters three and four.

During 1963, the UN passed its mandatory embargo upon member states selling arms to South Africa. Besides the provisions of the Simon's Town Agreement whereby existing contracts would be honoured by the British government, the UK Defence Ministry continued to receive and consider South African arms requests. This was of course in terms of establishing whether British interests would not be compromised, if they

²² UK National Archives, DEFE 7/1526 South Africa, political, military and economic affairs: the republican issue, 1960, Section IV – Defence, Annex B. This point is covered in further detail within chapters three and four.

²³ Interview with Maj Gen D. Moodie, 2 January 2007. Also, see chapter two on leadership within the SADF during the 1960s where the career and role of Adm Hugo Biermann is further elaborated upon

continued supplying the SADF with weapons. Approximately eighty percent of South African Army equipment in 1960 was British as also all of its naval materials and ships. While the South African Air Force's (SAAF) front line jet fighters from 1961 included French Mirage IIICs, a large number of other British aircraft types were in use and important South African orders were pending, including Canberra light bombers and Buccaneer maritime strike aircraft. The British government also anticipated some important future South African orders, including ground to air missiles, new field artillery and submarines.²⁴

Increased South Africa defence isolation by 1960

During the 1950s, the NP government failed to secure any military alliance with European countries regarding the Africa continent. As Barber explains, there was less conviction by western countries by 1960 that Soviet penetration was an issue in Africa. Unlike the South African government who remained convinced of the contrary,²⁵ with Commando, the SADF's "in-house" magazine, widely available to both members and the public, increasingly publishing articles during the 1950s dealing with communism 'spreading in Africa'. Besides the Simon's Town Agreement, there continued other less high profile military contacts between South Africa, regarding Britain and the United States, such as officers attending various courses, but in the medium-term, defence isolation loomed for the SADF.

²⁴ UK National Archives, DEFE 11/237 South Africa: Strategic Planning (1962-3) Appendix 'A' to BDLS/207/3 dated 10th April 1963.

²⁵ Barber, J., South African Foreign Policy 1945-1970, Oxford University Press, Cape Town, 1973, pp 83-87.

During 1960 and 1961 there were international crises with military dimensions within both Europe and Asia, most particularly in Berlin, besides the escalating nuclear arms race that significantly heightened Cold War tensions. Within this underlying global ideological conflict, the South African government and SADF chiefs cautiously concluded their defence would not be, indeed could not be abandoned by the West; even outside of existing Anglo-South African maritime arrangements. South Africa becoming a republic did not necessarily mean that the country would leave the Commonwealth, as predicted by opposition newspapers and critics. The Cape Argus, for example, cautioned in March 1960 that the financial cost of defence in isolation would be “colossal”. But (rather hopefully) it added that if South Africa remained part of the Commonwealth, her “fellow members... would come to her assistance...if there was a grave military threat”. The newspaper warned of further risks facing a country with extensive sea and land frontiers; material support loss; the risk of being isolated in terms of intelligence sharing, or where lost diplomatic support might possibly have assisted in negotiating with a potential belligerent. By early 1960, the dominant local media defence perception was of a growing danger emanating from Africa, from which white South Africans were:

separated from the kindred nations of Europe, America and Australasia by wide oceans, and on her land frontier she is within easy reach of emergent African countries. Her relations with some of these are not, at present, reassuring.

African nationalism and decolonisation contained a range of uncertainties for white South Africans. After British Prime Minister Macmillan’s Wind of Change speech had made it clear white South Africans could no longer count upon British support in security issues

and most certainly, when these were related to African hostility to apartheid, defence issues started moving foremost into the white political domain. If isolation was inevitable, a distinct possibility as the government had quietly conceded, then increased defence expenditure was necessary for modernising and strengthening air, land and sea defences from potential military aggressors. After the NP republican referendum success, the SADF General Staff began emphasising “national defence” as opposed to traditional international cooperation, as part of the government consolidating its constitutional “achievement.” A more insular defence policy was developing, although the government remained concerned to retain traditional Western allies and continually stressed South Africa’s supposed strategic importance. For a while, the public tone emanating from SADF commanders reflected the political message of white South Africa asserting sovereignty in defence. *Die Burger*, reporting upon the newly appointed Commandant General Piet Grobbelaar’s address at the Military Academy’s December 1960 passing-out parade, trumpeted the headline: “National Defence Now Comes First”. *The Cape Times* reported Grobbelaar stating: “South Africa, which was today part of a defence pattern involving other countries, was building up its forces for the time when it could stand alone to prevent any enemy from setting foot on its soil.”²⁶ Grobbelaar was even more stridently republican, stating: “South Africa will no longer make a contribution to Allied war efforts”. Grobbelaar substantiated this argument by saying that equipment, planning and training, had to be regularly revised, because unlike in the past, where South Africa had the opportunity after the war declaration to prepare its defences, now the Defence

²⁶ *Cape Times*, 9 December 1960, p.15.

Force would need to ensure constant readiness.²⁷ Despite the pro-republican bravado, South Africa in 1960 was a long way from arms self-sufficiency and the SADF was only just emerging from the demoralisation and conflicts of the Erasmus era.

Ignoring the implications and realities regarding decolonisation for white rule in Africa, older mindsets persisted amongst some defence commentators, that colonial powers or white settler dominated African alliances would emerge. In 1962 the United Party (UP) official parliamentary opposition warned the government, “that at a most dangerous time,” the country was without any allies. While Fouché pointed to Britain and the Simon’s Town Agreement, Senator Z. Berman (UP) challenged him as to what these meant, if Britain was not supporting the Republic over the UN hostility regarding SWA. Although the NP simply dismissed the UP of being destructive regarding defence issues,²⁸ in reality the country was indeed being isolated, while the SADF were making new external military threat appraisals independent of traditional allies.

South African Military Intelligence during the early 1960s

This chapter also requires a brief reference to the intelligence structures existing within or available to the SADF during the early 1960s. While Erasmus had purged Smuts’s highly pro-active UDF military intelligence that had spied upon pro-German NP members; during the 1950s, the SADF was still largely reliant upon Britain passing across whatever information her military intelligence authorities were willing to share. The new South

²⁷ Die Burger, 10 December 1960, p.18.

²⁸ Cape Times, 13 March 1962, pp 1-2.

African republican status effectively closed much of the SADF's traditional information links, therefore required the local development of military intelligence skills. The history of South African military intelligence is difficult to accurately verify because of the current strict classification of archival documentation. Louisa Jooste of the SADF Military Archives has produced one account of the history of Post-1961 South African military intelligence, but this remains classified from most researchers. The only insight this author has into the publication is that revealed to him by Ian Van der Waag,²⁹ who wrote the section dealing with the history of South African military intelligence pre-1961. His opinion was that the second half of the book was principally concerned with explaining the evolution of intelligence structures during this period, rather than being an explicit account of clandestine operations.³⁰ It seems clear that SADF military intelligence structures in 1960 were also rather basic and required rebuilding after skilled staff also departed here after 1948.

This author's examination of previously classified threat appraisal documentation, relating to SADF perceptions of the South African security situation during the early 1960s, suggested little evidence of information obtained by channels other than local. Maj Gen Phil Pretorius who was sent on course to the USA during the early 1960s, returning to South Africa to lecture at the Army College on Nuclear, Biological and Chemical warfare, was also involved in military intelligence during the early 1960s. Pretorius explained that after the Republic change, intelligence capacity had to be re-

²⁹ Military historian on the staff of the South African Military Academy in Saldanha

³⁰ Discussion with Ian Van der Waag, February 2005.

developed. There were a number of unknowns facing the future of local defence, including possibilities of internal and external threats, which the SADF appraised and tried to plan towards and re-equip in response.³¹ In short, SADF military intelligence capability was rudimentary in 1960, which obviously complicated Fouché's task and increased the possibility of inaccuracies within defence threat appraisals, besides the political responses and military counter-strategies.

In his work Apartheid's Friends, James Sanders referred to the Potgieter Commission reporting that for several years after the Second World War, no military intelligence component existed within the South African military. Only from 1960, anticipating a break with the Commonwealth, did the SADF re-constitute a military intelligence section falling under Combat Gen Nic Bierman, then the deputy Inspector General. According to Sanders, from 1962 the Directorate of Military Intelligence (DMI) became a sub-section of the Chief of Defence Staff's department.³² A central intelligence and security organisation "answerable directly to the Prime Minister," was established in August 1962 under Brig P. M. Retief and DMI documentation signed by him is used at length within this thesis. After Republic, the British Ambassador in South Africa quietly instructed its diplomats to make "discreet contacts" with black leaders in case of a change of government.³³ Less intelligence information was passed across from British sources to the South Africans after 1961 who were left to their own devices in conceiving the threat appraisal documents utilised within this dissertation.

³¹ Interview with Maj Gen Phil Pretorius, 26 June 2007.

³² Sanders, J., Apartheid's Friends, John Murray (Publishers), London, 2006, p.20

³³ *Ibid.*, pp 14-15.

Local intelligence agency rivalries

Hilton Hamman in his book, Days of the Generals, gives some useful insight into the 1960s and 1970s inter-service tensions over intelligence, as they later existed between the Bureau of State Security (BOSS) and its head Hendrik Van den Berg, the SAP security police branch, military intelligence and senior SADF commanders.³⁴ Using interviews with several key surviving personnel as his source material, Hamman sketches a short account of personality clashes and conflicts of interest. His work came long after Kenneth Grundy's, who provides a short description of the creation of Republican Intelligence (RI) which preceded BOSS, in the wake of the sabotage committed by extra-parliamentary African nationalist organisations in the early 1960s. RI was also under the leadership of Hendrik Van den Berg and worked initially as a secret structure alongside the security police, engaging itself in both external and internal activities on behalf of the government. It was effectively a competing structure to DMI, with rivalries and competition between military intelligence and BOSS are also described in Grundy's work.³⁵ Five years after Grundy's writing, Annette Seegers published The Military in the Making of Modern South Africa, where she commented upon intelligence based upon parliamentary records and the abridged published version of the *1971 Report by the*

³⁴ Hamman, H., Days of the Generals, Zebra Press, Cape Town, 2001, pp 4-10.

³⁵ Grundy, K.W., The Militarisation of South African Politics, Indiana University Press, Bloomington, 1986, pp 42-45.

*Commission of Inquiry into Matters relating to the Security of the State.*³⁶ Hamman's book, Days of the Generals has no references to either Grundy or Seegers's work.

The appointment of Jim Fouché as Minister of Defence in January 1960:

In January 1960, Jim Fouché replaced Erasmus as defence minister. Aware of the numerous controversies existing in the SADF, dating particularly from the internal conflict of the previous decade, Verwoerd had partly made the adjustment with an eye on attaining some English political support. But Verwoerd also held against Erasmus his lack of support during the 1958 NP premiership contest.³⁷ After Sharpeville, the Langa march and other early 1960 manifestations of black resistance resulting in SADF call-up during the State of Emergency, Verwoerd and his cabinet urgently reconsidered the military's organisation. Particularly its capacity to assist the police in maintaining civil order with internal rebellion, now perceived as the immediate threat. Despite public assurances to the contrary, significant mobilisation and operational problems had occurred during the military's emergency activation.³⁸ The SADF's priority within government would accentuate further during the decade.

³⁶ Seegers, The Military in the Making of Modern South Africa, pp 130-132.

³⁷ Boulter, R., F. C. Erasmus and the Politics of SA Defence 1948-59, Ph.D thesis, Rhodes University, 1997, pp 208-209.

³⁸ *Ibid*, pp 86-88, where Boulter outlines a range of SADF deficiencies, which do not need lengthy repeating here. Two additional examples of SADF disarray in 1960 drawn from more recent sources are worth relating: A former OC of the Cape Field Artillery, Col. Lionel Crook who had been involved in the mobilisation as a young CFA officer, confirmed there had been problems. He recalled there being such a vehicle shortage that additional transport had to be taken off auction floors. Telephonic interview, 11 February 2007. Magnus Malan wrote that he was instructed to safeguard Parliament during the Langa March with a platoon of troops comprised of storemen, whom in Malan's own words: "knew next to nothing of weapons or riot control...it is very fortunate that the march never spiralled out of control and was calmed before it posed any threat to Parliament". Malan, M., My Life with the SA Defence Force, Protea Books, Pretoria, 2006, p.39.

While replacing Erasmus, Verwoerd still faced the dilemma that within senior Afrikaner nationalist political ranks, there was almost a complete dearth of military experience. Neither did anybody within the government possess any academic insight into military affairs.³⁹ In 1964 amongst NP MPs, there was only one member who had undergone military training, G.H. Van Wyk who used details of his war service to bolster parliamentary arguments that the wartime UDF had been anti-Afrikaans.⁴⁰ Fouché knew as little about his portfolio as Erasmus had, who had infuriated many senior officers by both his ignorance of military affairs and his ignoring of sound professional advice. Fouché was heavily dependent upon the SADF General Staff, but unlike Erasmus, the new minister was both a listener and a diplomat, using these skills in an attempt to repair some of the distrusts between the SADF and government, besides trying to smooth English/Afrikaans conflicts within the organisation that were attributed to Erasmus's legacy.

Fouché's approach of facilitating a selective re-inclusion of the politically alienated white English-speaking community into the Defence Force was a consistent theme heard by this author, when interviewing English-speaking former PF members from the period, who recalled the "new attitude" during the minister's tenure. It seems clear that Fouché was following the instructions of Verwoerd in using his defence portfolio as one of the government's most important tools in building a 'united white republic'. This "public

³⁹ Discussion with Mrs A. Coetzee of the UP Archives UNISA, April 2006.

⁴⁰ See Union of South Africa House of Assembly Debates, Third Session – Twelfth Parliament 10 March 1960, pp 3153-3158.

relations drive” within the SADF by Fouché was spearheaded by the Defence Force magazine Commando, which paid special attention to reporting successful ‘cooperation’ between the two language groups in the SADF, while also perfunctorily recorded statistics of English and Afrikaans recruits within articles on the new intakes. For example at the beginning of 1960, at the army, air force and navy gymnasiums, a break down of percentages were supplied according to the recruits language, education, province and religious denomination, the purpose being: “To illustrate how the gymnasium trainees are representative of the different white population and language groups.”⁴¹ Official SADF emphasis was now upon projecting a white nation commonly involved in defence, demonstrating how the SADF was utilised as an instrument for the indirect promotion of a common “white nationalism”.

From 1960, the SADF was deployed periodically, ostensibly for entertainment but clearly to also bolster white confidence. A significant example was a massive public display reported upon in Commando as: “The Defence Force sets the example”. After black unrest had swept the country a few months earlier, the SADF on 28 May 1960, as part of pre-Union Day festivities, demonstrated some of its weaponry for an enormous white crowd outside Bloemfontein. This military show comprised a spectacular display of firepower in front of 70 000 spectators, who had travelled to the site in 20 000 motor vehicles. The SADF utilised tanks, field artillery, jet fighters and Shackleton maritime reconnaissance aircraft, “attacking” targets in the veld, while an infantry battalion stormed a koppie occupied by “guerrillas”. Afterwards the huge crowd remained to light

⁴¹ Commando, March 1960, p.32.

braaivleis fires and watch a display of “searchlight aerobatics”.⁴² The gathering reinforced white national celebration and camaraderie with the SADF showing its supposed capacity to ensure white security.

The importance attached by the government to this spectacle of military prowess was emphasised by the presence of Verwoerd, making his first public appearance after an assassination attempt, accompanied by Governor-General C.R. Swart and nearly the entire cabinet.⁴³ Public military displays had been popular even before the UDF recruited via its ‘Steel Commando’ and ‘Air Commando’ shows during the Second World War,⁴⁴ but such SADF ‘entertainment’ for the white community became even more prominent during the early 1960s. (See chapter seven) As this dissertation attempts to show, the SADF and white community were drawn closer by government design. This was also intended to nullify the degree of white public disdain had clearly existed towards the organisation. Commando within its March 1960 editorial quoted Fouché appealing within his first ministerial speech for the SADF not to be ridiculed. The inference was clear: For even within an official publication expected to ensure the military a confident monthly face, it was being tacitly acknowledged that the SADF had battled against a poor public image during the Erasmus years:

⁴² Commando, July 1960, pp 4 & 6.

⁴³ Hiemstra, R.C. Die Wilde Haf, Human & Rousseau, Cape Town, 2001, p.281.

⁴⁴ Grundlingh, A., The King’s Afrikaners? Enlistment and Ethnic Identity in the Union of South Africa’s Defence Force During the Second World War, 1939-45, Journal of African History, 40 1999.
Roos, Ordinary Springboks, pp 31-32.

we can depend upon our armed forces. We need not to refer to them in a sneering manner...I regard it as my duty to build up the fighting strength of our armed forces⁴⁵

Besides the morale boosting value, there were other contexts behind the huge white public interest in SADF 'shows'; namely the uncertainties connected to the possible consequences of the coming republic and emerging independent 'Black Africa'. Amongst the Afrikaner community, republican fervour was strong, but white South Africans still felt insecurities in the wake of the Sharpeville shootings and related disturbances. With Verwoerd's white 'nation-building' approach, the NP intended the SADF to symbolise part of the republican future, supporting the government's regular reinforcement of its appeal that English and Afrikaans communities should draw closer together. The NP also inferred that the potential future enemies were the continent's anti-colonial black majority. A few days before the Free State mass military display, the staunchly anti-republican Natal Mercury quoted Fouché stating: "South Africa is no longer safely isolated" (the) "Defence Force must be ready for any attack." The newspaper went on to quote from the "Union Festival Brochure of the Defence Force":

At the time of Union, ...the possibility of participation in a world conflict was merely an ideological issue....Today, however, Africa presents itself in a totally different form. The possibility must be borne in mind that a colossus of states could develop on the continent of Africa.⁴⁶

Such reports a year prior to the Republic gives a clear indication of how the government, intended to use the SADF to politically bolster its position, by presenting perceptions of

⁴⁵ Commando, March 1960, p.3, quoting from Hansard, Vol. 1, Third Sitting, Twelfth Parliament, 15 to 22 January 1960, p. 227.

⁴⁶ The Natal Mercury, 17 May 1960, p.11.

military threats from African nationalism emanating out of newly independent states to the north.

1960-61: The first “African invasion” political/press reports

The image of a soaring common black nationalism emerging during African decolonisation, transforming itself into a conventional military force with the object of attacking the white republic and ending white rule, served as a useful, but powerful political gimmick to alarm a defiant and insecure white community becoming more conscious of international objections to NP apartheid policy. Amidst media reports of violence perpetrated against whites in other parts of Africa, uncertainty amongst white South Africans became even more pronounced. Settler communities in particularly Congo and Angola, had by mid-1961, suffered horrific violence through militant African nationalism. Therefore, perhaps unsurprisingly and vigorously prompted by politicians, the press and SADF figures alike, an unsubstantiated scenario of an “African invasion” started to become a feature of South African public debate. This also invoked discussion as to how the SADF was equipped for the new decade. The Cape Argus in March 1961 called for the establishment of a “new modern army” “geared for the missile age – not an auxiliary police force that belongs to the ox-wagon days”. Under a sub-heading of “More potential enemies,” the writer demonstrated the hysteria of the time regarding supposed military dangers from the north.⁴⁷

⁴⁷ See The Cape Argus, 9 March 1961 “Is there a War Plan”, p.14.

By this date, most African states closest to South Africa were still a year or two away from independence, let alone building up a substantial military capability. But numerous press and political speculation about the “Africa threat” reflects a paranoia and sensationalism, providing some insight to the extremity of white insecurities, that racial war from ‘black Africa’ could somehow descend upon them. Already from MacMillan’s February 1960 address to the South African Parliament and the violent events shortly afterwards in the Congo, the Verwoerd government were announcing their intention to construct the SADF as a counter-force against any military threat the decolonisation of Africa might precipitate towards the Republic, or any other aggressor challenging South African control over SWA. However inaccurate and logistically impossible these scenarios were, an external “African invasion” constituted a central South African defence issue during the first half of the 1960s. This theme is discussed further within chapters three and four.

Fouché: Attempts during 1960 to plot a new SA defence policy course

‘Showcasing’ the SADF’s fighting capacity also endorsed the military’s identification with republican nationhood and it was assumed, helped to alleviate white anxieties about their security. From the beginning of Fouché’s ministerial tenure, the SADF was “re-introduced” to white South Africans as fully deserving their support. Commando correspondents had little comment to make on the political implications of the internal unrest, but much to report upon decolonisation, the Cold War and “communism” in Africa. The publication also reported with enthusiasm how “successfully” Defence Force units had mobilised after Sharpeville and the commendable cooperation between English

and Afrikaans CF members. Fouché was the government's front man for this SADF inter-white relations amelioration "project" and persistently reinforced the 'common white cause'. During the 1960 Union Festival Celebrations, while addressing the predominantly Afrikaans crowd in Bloemfontein, he commented in English upon the SADF's mobilisation after Sharpeville:

During the period of emergency it was to me an extremely hopeful and gladdening sign to see how in all the Provinces the various English and Afrikaans medium Citizen Force units rallied to the cause of national security...show(ing) a praiseworthy spirit of unity for a common cause, namely that of self-preservation. I therefore believe that the armed services set a fine example for our population as a whole and it will be a good day for all of us if our entire nation could emulate (sic) (emulate?) the example set by the SA Defence Force in working for our country without ever doubting the good national cause⁴⁸

Commando reiterated the notion of the military 'belonging' to both language groups; of it being an entity whereby national white unity could be publicly promoted and displayed amongst young white males. Addressing packed crowds at the conclusion of a national schools cadet competition, Fouché reflected symbolically upon examples of the respective white language groups' heritages regarding young white South African male historical heroes:

Let the Dick Kings and Dirkie Uys's during this festival in Bloemfontein offer each other a brotherly hand on the road to a great future. When you return to your different schools remember that you coexisted here as future Afrikaans and English citizens of this country, played together and competed against one another in a spirit of unity. Make the effort to build upon this.⁴⁹

⁴⁸ Commando, July 1960, p.3.

⁴⁹ Ibid., p.43.

Perhaps not without coincidence, Fouché chose an early Natal settler hero, for this province's white English-speaking community expressed the most cohesive virulent anti-republican feelings (See chapter six). Earlier that year, Fouché had already made the first political moves to work towards a more conciliatory government stance regarding Afrikaans-English relations within the military. The Natal Mercury reported with satisfaction that Fouché had rescinded the proposed disbandment by his predecessor of traditional English CF regiments, the Imperial Light Horse and Umvoti Mounted Rifles.

The editorial commented guardedly:

Since the announcement of the republican referendum Natal might be excused for regarding any Nationalist manifestations of 'sweet reasonableness' with suspicion, but for the present it would be both charitable and wise to take Mr Fouché's announcement at face value.⁵⁰

Fouché continued to shift the SADF away from other Erasmus changes that had caused anger and disdain amongst members, for example, "in the interests of administration and morale"⁵¹ the historic Boer inspired rank titles of Field-Cornet, Air-Cornet and Sea Cornet were abandoned. This amendment was even supported by the Inspector-General, Brig Hiemstra, a staunch Afrikaner nationalist whose career is covered in chapter two.⁵² The UP MP for Simon's Town, F.C. Gay, one of the parliamentary opposition's prominent defence spokespersons, stated with perhaps naive optimism:

By making this decision on ranks and by retaining the ... regiments that Mr Erasmus had decided must go, Mr Fouché has shown he is prepared to put defence matters on a national

⁵⁰ Natal Mercury, 4 February 1960, p.12.

⁵¹ Ibid, 6 February 1960, p.1.

⁵² Hiemstra, Die Wilde Haf, p. 278.

basis...Having taken over defence he has dropped the party political outlook that Mr Erasmus always adopted.⁵³

But Fouché was still a committed Afrikaner nationalist and a few weeks later, he rejected any SADF participation in the 60th anniversary celebrations of the Ladysmith Relief during the South African War.⁵⁴ Fouché compounded this by justifying his decision, in terms of having also disallowed official military involvement in a recent 60th anniversary of the Battle of Paardeberg (which he described as a British defeat - it had been the opposite).⁵⁵ Later he explained that he could not allow the SADF to participate at Ladysmith, as it commemorated a British victory and risked bedevilling attempts to work towards white reconciliation. Fouché asked in parliament whether it would be acceptable for Afrikaners to call upon the SADF to celebrate the Majuba or Magersfontein Boer victories.⁵⁶ Fouché's attempts to be all things to all (white) men meant his politically manoeuvring between distrusts and resentments within both language communities. Addressing the conservative rural Afrikaans community of the Hennenman district of the northern Free State, Fouché emphasised both the theme of unity and necessity of conciliation with the South African English, besides assurances that existing defence alliances would not disappear.

If South Africa became a republic, the defence agreement with Britain would still remain and the West would still cooperate with South Africa. Anyone who said that the British Government

⁵³ The Natal Mercury, 6 February 1960, p.1. Also see The Cape Argus, 8 February 1960, editorial, "Harmony without cornets".

⁵⁴ It had been proposed by the organizers of the Ladysmith Relief commemorations that the Royal Natal Carbineers, Natal's oldest regiment participate in the events, but permission for this was declined by Fouché.

⁵⁵ *Ibid*, 1 March 1960, p.11.

⁵⁶ Hansard, Union of South Africa House of Assembly Debates. Third Session – Twelfth Parliament, Vol. 103, 15 Jan to 4 March 1960, 2705.

had no faith in a National Party Government was not conversant with the true facts. South Africa was a vital link in the defence of the West... We must build a republic with the strongest possible unity; we must be reasonable to the English-speaking section.⁵⁷

It was significant that Fouché felt the need to state to a *platteland*⁵⁸ Free State community, his confidence and support for the British government's defence outlook. He was responding to parliamentary criticism of the coming republic being likely to isolate South Africa in defence. However, within the context of conciliation with the local white English community, as is shown later, there were also Afrikaner detractors who rejected Fouché's efforts to be more inclusive.

Fouché attempted to pacify the UP opposition who had furiously challenged Erasmus's changes and also despised Hiemstra; particularly as he was now the third highest ranking officer on the SADF General Staff and apparently moving rapidly towards the top. Fouché worked with diplomatic care and not always successfully to reinforce the perception that fair-mindedness regarding both language groups in the SADF was an important part of his approach towards setting defence policy. Although it was all part of government republican strategy to draw more English-speaking political support, it still created a quandary for the opposition UP, who during the months prior and post the republic referendum were anxious to retain their voting support. The UP demonstrated a particular interest in defence affairs and often endorsed NP decisions, although usually with criticism regarding details.

⁵⁷ The Natal Mercury, 23 July 1960, p.2.

⁵⁸ Rural

The other focus of Fouché's ministerial efforts concerned the securing of the state against perceived threats and trying to reinforce a new SADF vitality and purpose. Speaking in August 1960 to a Voortrekkerhoogte gathering of CF and Commando officers, Fouché reiterated that the army's current most important tasks were ensuring internal law and order and consolidating the country's external defence, in accordance with western perceptions of purported communist techniques:

in a western-orientated country such as South Africa (internal security) is no less than securing against Communist infiltration and subversive actions that head towards revolution. Planning and training will keep pace with this thinking. Not excluded from training methods is conventional warfare, all service weaponry techniques and aspects of modern warfare.⁵⁹

With the republican referendum held in October 1960, the newspapers continued reporting alarmist government announcements, which also fulfilled political purposes by the NP, trying to rally more pro-republican whites. At a meeting in Cornelia, Fouché equated such support as equivalent to ensuring white survival through military strength, embracing SADF strengthening as part of the republican rationale:

three aspirations of the nation had to be considered when voting for or against a republic... Will we be able to maintain ourselves as Europeans? Will we be able to survive economically? And will our military defences be strong enough? The military forces of the country were strong and were still growing, he said. New regiments had been established and commandos were being strengthened. The country would now have to manufacture most of its own weapons, as the countries now supplying South Africa with these could easily be involved in war.⁶⁰

⁵⁹ University of the Free State, Archive for Contemporary Affairs, PV 467: J.J. Fouché Collection, File no. 3/13/1/1/1, Speeches 1957, April 20 – 1961, Dec. 8, Officersvergadering (Burgermag en Kommandos), Voortrekkerhoogte, Donderdag, 4 Augustus 1960, pp 3-4.

⁶⁰ The Natal Mercury, 6 August 1960, p.2.

Fouché had to deal with criticism suggesting the SADF, if increasingly orientated towards policing, would lose its external defence capacity. Concern was expressed whether dealing with unrest would become the SADF's primary function, with the force's training and equipment thus adjusted. The Cape Argus military correspondent attributed this to the government's confusion over the military's main function, allowing it to be:

conver(ted) from a potential expeditionary force into an auxiliary police for keeping order...The past record of South African troops has been superb. Is this splendid tradition to collapse because timorous ideological politicians, none with practical knowledge of war, can see no further than their own internal fears?⁶¹

This quotation is drawn from a lengthy newspaper analysis of the SADF at the end of 1960 and reflects the World War Two outlook of UDF troops fighting abroad, while NP supporters of neutrality (or the Germans) had remained at home. Twenty years later, some former Smuts government supporters were critical of the NP government now using the SADF as police; ignoring the UDF's legacy of campaigning in other parts of the world during the World Wars. The military was a regular feature of discussion in the English-language newspapers of the 1960s, reflecting the strong interest that many English South Africans maintained regarding defence. Military matters constituted significantly newsworthy interest from many English press readers. This point underscores one of this dissertation's contentions: That many English South Africans, particularly the World War Two generation, were highly committed to both the military and defending the Republic. Despite the virtual complete exclusion of the English

⁶¹ The Cape Argus, 7 December 1960, p.16.

community from political power since 1948 and notwithstanding Afrikaner nationalist assaults during the 1950s upon all forms of South Africa British symbolism, the military still interestingly evoked a strongly supportive ‘English’ response. The Cape Argus reporter registered his dismay that South Africa might no longer be able to assist “in the event of an attack on her neighbours”. Such an operation required the right training and equipment. The reporter thought it relevant that the SADF had still not invested in helicopters to any meaningful extent, although in reality, the utilization of such aircraft in combat had still not been fully tested by 1960.

The Minister of Defence and service chiefs...find that their time and energy, and their men, weapons and finances (are) diverted to matters which are the responsibility of the police and Minister of Justice.⁶²

As a consequence of the problems experienced during the emergency call-ups, besides responding to criticism from the parliamentary opposition that the SADF was being turned into a “home guard”, Fouché had announced in Parliament that the mobility of the Defence Force was to be improved and that they were being equipped with the “most modern weapons South Africa could afford”.⁶³ Further criticism levelled against the government during this period was along familiar “language-group” conflict lines and accusations of incompetence. UP defence spokespersons like F.C. Gay and Brig H. F. Bronkhorst demonstrated white South African solidarity on defence. But this was of course, mixed with their political motives to expose the government in terms of previous neglect of the military. These and other UP members supposedly helpful overtures to

⁶² Ibid.

⁶³ The Cape Times, 4 May 1960, p.7.

Fouché, offering their party's assistance and venturing that he had now the opportunity to act decisively regarding problems created during Erasmus's ministerial term.⁶⁴

Defence Budget considerations

The early 1960s witnessed dramatic increases in defence spending. Whereas there had actually been a decline between 1955 and 1960, there were substantial increases thereafter to 1968, with defence receiving an annually increasing amount of total government expenditure. The rise in government spending on the armed forces during this period, was partly to cover large amounts of new conventional warfare equipment intended for strategic deterrence (as explained by the government) and also the facilitation of a remarkable expansion of the country's own weapons industry, with scores of licenses being obtained for the manufacture of a various arms. By 1965, Fouché announced the country was self-sufficient in small-arms ammunition. Other successes included within the aircraft industry, where a licence was obtained to manufacture Impala jet trainers, while French-designed armoured cars were also now locally manufactured (the French Panhard to be known in the SADF as the Eland⁶⁵). However, other fundamental military hardware, including tanks, anti-aircraft and field artillery, missiles and most importantly, sophisticated military aircraft and naval vessels, besides scores of different types of munitions still had to be imported.⁶⁶ It was against the impending UN arms embargo of 1963 that the government frantically rearmed the SAAF in particular,

⁶⁴ Die Burger, 30 April 1960.

⁶⁵ Seegers, The Military in the Making of Modern South Africa, p.145;

⁶⁶ Barber, South African Foreign Policy 1945-1970, pp 87 and 192-194.

considering that air superiority was long established as vital in ensuring success in any modern defensive war.

The press followed the increases in military spending with avid interest. For example, by mid-1963, the Cape Argus under the headline “Defence Cost Soars,” noted that the defence budget of R157 million included an increase of R35 million, which exceeded the extra R6.5 million put aside for ‘Bantu Development. The newspaper reminded its readers that this was the “cornerstone of Government policy”. Finance minister Eben Donges explained that the increase constituted the “formidable price of protection against foreign aggression”. The actual budget details demonstrated where the increase applied regarding the actual material additions. A good proportion covered air defence (See chapter five); there was an eighty-fold rise in aircraft bombs and ammunition, suggesting the SADF was stocking up on munitions for its new Mirage fighters (delivered 1961) and Canberra light bombers (delivered 1962), besides the Buccaneer maritime strike aircraft (delivered 1965) already on order from the United Kingdom. Overall the budget’s defence allocations had shifted from R40 million in 1959-60, to big jumps in 1961-62 (R71.5 million), 1962/63 (R120 million) to 1963/64 (R157 million).⁶⁷ Of the 1959-60 defence expenditure, this was seven percent of the total government spending, rising to seventeen percent (R216.3 million) by 1966-67.⁶⁸

⁶⁷ The Cape Argus, 21 March 1963, p.1.

⁶⁸ Barber, South African Foreign Policy 1945-1970, p. 192.

The SADF and apartheid during the early 1960s: National Party projections of how “race” connected to defence issues

During the 1960s, the SADF operated within government racial policy and endorsed it where practical. Already from the middle of the 1950s, the future Commandant General Hiemstra was in the forefront of promoting government racial policy in various guises at public occasions and even more enthusiastically as the concept of grand apartheid generated excitement in NP ranks.⁶⁹ In mid-1959, there had even been press speculation as to whether Hiemstra was not going to take over as Minister of Defence from the ill Erasmus.⁷⁰ During the Day of the Covenant commemorations at Hoërskool Kensington (in Johannesburg) in December 1959, Hiemstra endorsed the concept of independent homelands.⁷¹ Fouché’s first public address as defence minister (Vegkop on 16 December 1959), included his remarking that “the person in South Africa who has not realised that further negotiations in the area of race relations in South Africa are necessary, has acquired no insight...into the circumstances of both the country and the world.”⁷²

In the SADF by 1960, there were no ‘non-white’ uniformed staff, but this was to change the following year, when Fouché announced the reactivation of the Cape Coloured Corps.⁷³ The SA Navy started recruited coloured members for selected positions to alleviate its manpower problems and from 1963, the first navy recruitment

⁶⁹ See pp 78-82 of this chapter.

⁷⁰ Hiemstra, *Die Wilde Haf*, p.276.

⁷¹ *Ibid*, p. 278.

⁷² *Ibid*. By this Fouché was referring to the endorsement of the grand apartheid homelands policy.

⁷³ *The Cape Argus*, 22 May 1961, “The Cape Corps to be revived”, p.1.

advertisements begin to appear in Commando offering various non-combatant roles. The re-establishment was announced of the Cape Corps (army) as a training unit, reversing the situation created by Erasmus, whereby no person other than a white was allowed to serve in military uniform. Commando provided editorial ‘approval’ for the change in government policy, praising past coloured military contributions, although ‘cautioning’ against the “Coloured man’s” “partial(ity) to drink.”⁷⁴ But despite such racial stereotyping, such tiny cracks in the breakdown of apartheid rigidity occurred, significantly, within the SADF, at an earlier date compared to other state departments. This is in itself a remarkable detail during this ideologically dogmatic Verwoerdian era. Coloured recruitment had occurred for almost the identical reasons for which the Smuts government had promoted it some twenty years earlier, namely the shortage of military personnel. Grobbelaar envisaged a tenth of the PF total personnel being ultimately coloured, serving in a supportive but not combatant role.⁷⁵ By the 1960s, the need for additional military manpower was also connected to the SADF having to develop its capacity to respond towards perceived threats. Coloured navy and army components were included within the SADF’s contribution to the Republic’s 1966 fifth anniversary celebrations at Cape Town’s Goodwood Showgrounds.⁷⁶

Rear Admiral H. Biermann, then Chief of Navy Staff, outlined navy personnel shortages in response to the Commandant General’s instructions for reports regarding mobilisation plans. By a few months into 1963, Coloureds already in navy service were

⁷⁴ Commando, May 1963, p.36.

⁷⁵ Die Burger, 21 March 1962, p.1.

⁷⁶ Cape Times, Weekend Magazine, 11 June 1966, p.12.

occupying 163 PF posts, including 24 on the boom defence vessel, SAS *Somerset* (comprising most of the crew). Biermann outlined other positions that coloured sailors could fill: ‘writers’ (effectively administrative clerks), store men, waiters and cooks. Although he did not envisage coloureds manning naval combat ships. Biermann anticipated white crew on other navy ships reacting unfavourably to living and working alongside coloured sailors:

but it must be stated here that even the extended harnessing of the Cape Corps is not going to solve the navy’s manpower problems, particularly, because of the circumstances of living together when at sea.⁷⁷

Rear Adm Chris Bennett believed that Biermann realised that it would have been impractical to provide separate work and facilities for coloured and white sailors aboard the navy’s small ships,⁷⁸ although later, the survey ship SAS *Natal* also included coloured crew. With considerable difficulty, the navy authorities ensured that there were separate facilities on the ‘*Natal*’ in accordance with government racial policy. Its replacement, SAS *Protea* ordered from Yarrow shipyard in Scotland during the early 1960s, was deliberately designed so that white and coloured crew could sleep and mess separately. This would have been a decision endorsed by the Department of Defence with the knowledge and therefore approval of the minister and certainly known to the Navy Chief.⁷⁹ Yet the earlier part of the decade, witnessed South African

⁷⁷ KG, GP 5, Box 325, KG/GPW/1/5/15, Plan Eland, 11 April 1963, Cover Page, Verslag: Funksioneering van die SA Vloot in Geval van Mobiliseering Teen die Eind van 1963, Department of Defence Documentation Centre, Pretoria, p. 5.

⁷⁸ Telephone interview with Rear Adm Chris Bennett: 4 July 2006. As a junior officer in the early 1960s, Bennett felt that Biermann’s statement was reflective of how difficult it was to implement complete racial segregation onboard the SA Navy’s ships.

⁷⁹ Telephone interview with Rear Adm Chris Bennett: 4 July 2006.

military personnel attended various courses in the United Kingdom, where they met and established good personal relations with African and Asian counterparts. The “professional racial separation” which these SADF members returned to at home, resulted in them working between two entirely different worlds.⁸⁰ Blacks were entirely absent from projected SADF uniformed roles except as potential adversaries. Fears of a threat from the decolonising north ‘Black Africa’ became a rallying cry utilised by NP politicians even before republic. The Orange Free State Administrator J.W.J.C. Du Plessis, referred to such at a farewell parade for CF members at the Tempe military base in June 1960:

The hostility of this solid black mass to the north of the Union and Federation has not been sought for, nor occasioned, and not deserved, taking into account the opportunities South Africa has created for her own Bantu.⁸¹

Du Plessis made implicit reference here to the “opportunities” of grand apartheid. After MacMillan’s visit to South Africa, Commando made a particular point of recording how Fouché had elaborated upon grand apartheid also containing a security dimension, whereby he argued that the futures of white and black were interlinked. Blacks were supposedly dependent upon white government efforts for their “advancement”. According to Fouché, South African blacks needed therefore to appreciate how whites also had to feel certain of their own security. Whites in return needed to prove their “bona fides” to the “black man”, namely that the white community desired “his

⁸⁰ Rear Adm Chris Bennett referred me to some of his own experiences on courses in Britain during the early 1960s; also see Geldenhuys, J., A General’s Story, Jonathan Ball, Johannesburg, 1995, pp 31-32.

⁸¹ Die Burger, 28 June 1960, p.3.

(blacks)” security and “full opportunities” too.⁸² As NP republican intentions also envisaged closer cooperation of the two white language groups, Fouché imagined a Defence Force that institutionally mirrored the government’s plan to assimilate English and Afrikaans whites into one entity under Afrikaner leadership. Assumed by NP leadership was that most SADF members would also support the ideal of the larger political vision concerning the racial ‘self-determination’ of black and white.

As the SADF operated explicitly within separate development policy; when utilised as labourers, blacks received a kind of paternalistic acknowledgement regarding their culture, besides a distant concern for their welfare. For example, a white correspondent received a curt response on behalf of the Commandant General, when he complained that some black workers were given excessive privileges. The correspondent complained about the workers being flown home for leave from a site where an air base was being constructed. The SADF answer was that the work on the base was urgent; therefore, experienced SAAF labour was required and for humanitarian reasons, workers were given aircraft seats to Pretoria when these were available, for one long weekend a month at home.⁸³ Nevertheless, strict apartheid racial separation remained explicit policy, even during operational conditions. During a 1963 SADF troop deployment exercise, intended to train for responding to any envisaged threat from across the Republic’s border, the Commandant General’s office were adamant that racial division would be implemented amongst captured (black) enemy troops.

⁸² Commando, March 1960, p.23.

⁸³ KG, GP 5, Box 420, KG/ADM/20 (B), letter dated 3 August 1965 on behalf of Commandant General to Wynand Boshof of White River.

The national policy of segregation of whites and non-whites is an accepted part of our planning and it is clear that separate facilities will have to be provided to handle, cage and provide medical attention for white and non-white prisoners of war.⁸⁴

Prominent visitors from other countries who gave any credence to government racial policies, received red-carpet treatment, particularly if they also concurred with NP political imperatives of “*rapprochement*”, in soothing previous World War Two white divisions and sensitivities. The government obviously hoped such visits would promote more international sympathy for white South Africans. A prominent ‘military example’ was British war legend Field Marshal Lord Montgomery, who arrived in his private capacity during 1962, accompanied by Maj Gen Sir Francis de Guingand, his wartime Chief of Staff and now President of the South African Foundation.

Montgomery was a most useful political ally, for he constituted such a significant figure to thousands of South African ex-servicemen. The high governmental level that received Montgomery, demonstrated how important the Afrikaner establishment viewed his visit, anticipating his supportive opinions on South African politics and defence concerns. Montgomery dined with Verwoerd and nine cabinet members at Groote Schuur besides being received enthusiastically by the Afrikaner academic and business establishments. Montgomery met with Professor H.B. Thom, the Principal of Stellenbosch University; leading Afrikaans businessman Anton Rupert and members of the *Afrikaanse Sakekamer*. He also visited schools and addressed war veterans.⁸⁵ Besides being feted with official

⁸⁴ KG, GP 5, Box 325, KG/GPW/1/5/15, Plan Eland, letter dated 10 September 1963 from Commandant General to the Surgeon General, Department of Defence Documentation Centre, Pretoria.

⁸⁵ *Cape Argus*, 25 January 1962, p.6.

SADF receptions, Montgomery was flown by the government to the Transkei for a three day visit to this first Bantustan intended for independence and was quoted as supporting Verwoerd and white South African unity, concluding on his return to the UK, that “separate development” “was a plan worthy of the most sincere examination and study”:

In South Africa there was ‘complete peace and quiet’, very different from the rest of the continent, where we see chaos and unrest and nobody seems able to unscramble the racial omelette in a peaceful atmosphere.’⁸⁶

By 1962, much of the parliamentary political debate centred directly upon Verwoerd’s setting out a stark choice before the white electorate: Either apartheid or the UP policy of a “multi-racial state,” where franchised rights would be granted, whether on a federal basis, or according to a “civilisation test”. Either of which ‘UP criteria possibilities’ the NP rejected, because such “would lead inevitably to Bantu domination because in the end numbers would count”.⁸⁷ Within the same parliamentary debate, Verwoerd directly referred to the demands of the white Republic’s opponents by outlining his views upon the motives for Third and communist world hostility to South Africa:

Afro-Asian nations and the communistic nations who had their own explicitly political reasons for trying to apply pressure...that political rights must be given to all. In the case of the Communistic Bloc this policy was being pressed for, to enable them to apply the pincers on Africa.⁸⁸

The identification of the “Afro-Asian states” and “communistic nations” as being those that threatened the white republic, was directly connected to their rejection of the South

⁸⁶ Cape Times, 14 March 1962, p.2.

⁸⁷ Cape Times, 24 January 1962, p.15.

⁸⁸ Verwoerd as quoted in the Cape Times, 24 January 1962, p.15.

African government's race policy. The NP dismissed UP and Progressive Party policies as naïve, while Verwoerd polarised political discussion around whites needing to either "segregate or die". In Commando and official defence documentation, the SADF was projected as a supportive arm of government thinking. This linkage between South African defence issues and white survival received prominence in the press and popular Afrikaans publications. Clearly understood in the government and SADF position was that behind external perceived military threats, lay an undertone of black determination to "ethnically cleanse" Africa of whites. Therefore, grand apartheid was postulated as a legitimate security response for white South African survival.

Portuguese colonial culture had not applied such rigid legal racial stratification and was viewed with concern by SADF strategists. Within an April 1963 appraisal of possible developments, impacting "upon the safety of the RSA", military intelligence director, Brig P.M. Retief commented unfavourably upon the "official Portuguese policy" of "racial integration and economic development". He emphasised that the Portuguese approach to race was:

endeavouring to pacify and impress the UN and indigenous people and in view of the fact that the policy of race integration is in direct contrast to the RSA policy of separate development, the only common interest that the RSA has with the Portuguese Administration is that both countries want to remain in Africa and economically develop their respective areas, and that they are anti-communist.⁸⁹

⁸⁹ Adjudant Generaal (AG), Gp 4, Box 4, File No. AG 672/2, Memorandum oor Inligtingswaardering Opgestel Deur Die Direkteur Van Militêre Inligting, 1 April 1963, p.3, Department of Defence Documentation Centre, Pretoria.

This document commented pessimistically: “neither of these (above) policy directions is acceptable for world opinion or the black leaders of Angola and Mozambique.”⁹⁰ Such endorses our understanding that by the early 1960s, official SADF thinking had already dovetailed with broad NP racial policy, where the government outlook on decolonisation, was that it threateningly impacting upon the beleaguered white republic. There had long been South African government concerns about Portuguese military durability in Africa, dating back from the slow Portuguese army response to the 1961 Angolan insurrections.⁹¹ Already by late 1962, there also existed doubts that Mozambique would remain under Portuguese control, with the Commandant General urging Fouché to ratify various SADF plans to improve defence on the eastern border.⁹²

The threat perceptions of the early 1960s invoked some popular responses envisaging the entire South African population repelling any invader. Amidst the speculation, Progressive Party MP Harry Lawrence, confirmed that Smuts had during World War Two considered arming blacks and coloureds if the Japanese had seized Madagascar.⁹³ UP parliamentarians also touted the image of a unified defence across colour lines, a view which usually distinguished them from typical NP public statements when defence and race were discussed. One NP retort to calls for the SADF to employ black

⁹⁰ Ibid.

⁹¹ See Correia, P.E.S.L.D., *Political Relations between Portugal and South Africa from the end of the Second World War until 1974*, D.Lit dissertation, University of Johannesburg, 2007, pp 86-89.

⁹² AG Group 4, Box 3, file AG 650/7, letter dated 7 September 1962 from Commandant General Grobbelaar to Fouché.

Also see Van der Waals, W.S., *Portugal's War in Angola, 1961-1974*, Ashanti Publishing, First Edition, Rivonia, 1993.

⁹³ *Cape Times*, 19 May 1961, p.7. Also Wessels, A., *Die Stryd teen Nippon: Suid-Afrika en Japan, 1941-1945*, *Journal for Contemporary History*, Vol. 30, No. 3, December 2005, p. 231- 277.

troops, was that British, French and Rhodesians recruiting “non-whites” (in their African colonial military forces) had not reduced the “anti-colonial” pressure on them by Africa nationalists.⁹⁴ However, the picture of all races defending South Africa was not completely excluded from the Afrikaner popular vision. In 1964, *Huisgenoot* featured an article by the UP MP Piet Van der Byl, who revived war-time images of all racial groupings as part of the UDF facing a common enemy. When referring to the “possibility” of an “Afro-Asian military invasion, Van der Byl was quoted:⁹⁵

We shall be supported by hundreds of thousands of non-whites, particularly our coloured people, who despite their grievances have always proved they are great South African patriots. No Sir, the time for sitting silently while gall and venom is disgorged over us is over.⁹⁶

Significantly, Van der Byl’s views were published in a mass-distributed Afrikaans publication that had also started running articles “rehabilitating” South African participation in World War Two.⁹⁷ As representative of Afrikaner popular opinion, if not actually even playing no small role in creating such opinion, *Huisgenoot* was endorsing an alternative view to the Afrikaner nationalists of the 1940s, regarding those South Africans that had accepted the “Red Oath”, volunteering to fight anywhere in Africa and later Europe. The irony is striking, in that such was the stance of virtually all 1960s NP MPs, not forgetting that position also taken by the SADF’s (1963) Deputy Commandant General Hiemstra and future Chief. *Huisgenoot* described how South Africa had

⁹⁴ *Die Burger*, 21 March 1962, Editorial, p. 10.

⁹⁵ *Die Huisgenoot*, 20 March 1964, p.15.

⁹⁶ *Ibid.*

⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, 11 December 1964, pp 18-22, in where the last of a series of articles dealing with South African participation in World War Two is published. Descriptions of Afrikaner divisions over the war are restricted to two short paragraphs, while the UDF contribution to the Allied war effort was particularly praised without any reference to the serious intra-white South African conflict during 1939-45.

historically producing resourceful and brave soldiers who had demonstrated their mettle in battle twenty years before. From an NP government perspective, such “rehabilitation” of World War Two also assisted facilitation of the “white republican nationalism” promoted by the NP.

SADF military intelligence (DMI) did not share Van der Byl’s optimism of a loyal multi-racial defence of South Africa. DMI studied the black opposition, which in terms of “armed struggle,” had after state counter-measures largely waned by the beginning of 1963. But DMI still held that the “subversion” amongst blacks (by ‘revolutionary forces’) remained and could not be underestimated; maintaining that it was intended to ultimately eliminate “key persons”, “communications” and “key positions,” besides being better organised and more prevalent than the possibilities of either further direct sabotage or terrorism. The most important subversive organisation was identified as the Pan-Africanist Congress (PAC), besides external communist and Afro-Asian groups that purportedly synchronised their activities with internal anti-government organisations. The fear expressed by DMI was that both internal and external propaganda, intended to firm up subversive elements, was more successful than generally believed amongst whites. In contrast to the kind of views propagated by Van der Byl, DMI recommended that to restrict subversion, it needed to be understood that too much value was attached to a white South African belief, that the “larger portion of the Bantu were ‘loyally-inclined’”. The SADF took the position that even “small-scale successes (by African nationalists)

could hurry the loyalist (black) element into the subversive kraal”.⁹⁸ The implication was that military intelligence were engrossed within a racial defence paradigm, postulating that the “enemy within” constituted a demographically huge fifth column. As fears of external conventional threats receded by the mid-1960s, the military shifted doctrine and strategy towards counter-insurgency, whereby it was taught that successful combating of guerrilla forces, depended upon the state gaining support of the “hearts and minds” of the aggrieved population component on whose behalf the dissidents waged war.

Commando magazine articles during 1962 and 1963 by segregationist theorist, Prof. H.J.J.M. Van der Merwe

As the government explicitly believed white South African survival meant ensuring racial territorial segregation, the SADF did its best to propagate this to its members. Commando provided one important communication vehicle to SADF members for Verwoerdian rationales of African decolonisation and its potential impact upon the Republic’s security. Between January 1962 and March 1963 Commando published regular extracts from *Segregeer of Sterf* (Segregate or Die) by Professor H.J.J.M Van der Merwe, Head of the Department of Afrikaans-Nederlands at the University of South Africa. The articles alluded to the negative implications of African decolonisation for white communities and administrations throughout Africa. Van der Merwe was introduced as a “convinced segregationist” who after “undertaking a lengthy journey through Africa, Israel and

⁹⁸ Adjudant Generaal (AG), Gp 4, Box 4, File No. AG 672/2, Memorandum Oor Inligtingswaardering Opgestel Deur Die Direkteur Van Militêre Inligting, 1 April 1963, p.5, Department of Defence Documentation Centre, Pretoria.

Europe, gave particular attention to contacts between languages and races within the same national borders”.

Reflecting upon South African white and black cultural diversities, Van der Merwe identified the former Belgian Congo as necessitating a particular examination, because there had been “identical circumstances of two disunited white groups (French and Flemish) existing amongst millions of blacks”. There is little surprise in his choice, considering the impact Congo post-independence events had in playing havoc upon white South Africa’s sense of security. Simultaneously to this article, South African newspapers were filled with stories of atrocities perpetrated against white settlers in Katanga, both by UN troops (particularly Indian Army) and black Congolese. Refugees were reported arriving in Cape Town, desperately grateful for support from South African authorities.⁹⁹ As a language expert and linguist, Van der Merwe maintained he was bound to also study people and their social/cultural milieu:

social establishments cannot always be separated from the affairs of statecraft. It must be remembered that social groups usually use language as a binding factor. Unfortunately this exceptionally important ethnic-social-linguistic facet is not always viewed with its full implications for interpretations of developments in the cauldron (*kookpot*) of Africa.¹⁰⁰

Van der Merwe’s articles contained the implications of Africa as a potential foe of white South Africa. His opening article stressed that at Pan-Africanist congresses since 1960,

⁹⁹ See the Cape Times, 1 January 1962, p.2. for one of many examples where during this period the South African press carried continual stories on events in Congo.

¹⁰⁰ Commando, January 1962, p.7.

there had been repeated calls for African states to organise a centralised military force.¹⁰¹ His articles were published in Commando every two or three months during 1962-1963, keeping SADF readers abreast with African developments through his interpretations which endorsed racial segregation as the only logical route to white survival. Such writings appeared directly in an SADF official publication without any alternate views, even those of the conservative UP. In reality, however much it may have galled some English-speakers to openly concur with the nationalist viewpoint, very few during this period would have differed broadly from the kind of opinions Van der Merwe espoused.

The SADF and grand apartheid

From the defence ministerial position and a senior SADF capacity, Fouché and Hiemstra respectively, virtually worked in tandem regarding publicly expounding upon the NP's future political vision. UP criticism was that the NP's racial policy actually created defence weaknesses, for example, "handing over the Union's entire eastern coastline to Bantu states".¹⁰² There were also occasional calls by individual NP politicians to utilise blacks in the military; for example, MP J.F. Schoonbee suggested that consideration be given to "Bantu" involvement in defence.¹⁰³ But Fouché continually rebuffed this line by suggesting the SADF would also protect "the Black man who wished to live in peace in his own area,"¹⁰⁴ besides that the 'independent states' (Bantustans) would not necessarily

¹⁰¹ Ibid, pp 7-8.

¹⁰² Cape Times, 28 July 1960, "Readjustment of S. Africa's Defence Policy urged by UP," p.8.

¹⁰³ Natal Mercury, 8 June 1961, p.12.

¹⁰⁴ Cape Times, 31 May 1963, "Fouché on Black, White Unity, We'll Stand Together if Attacked", p.3.

be hostile in the future to the Republic and their independence might even accentuate goodwill by other African states.¹⁰⁵

As was shown earlier, the SADF regularly exhibited its equipment for public interest through popular exhibitions, which included mock battles using live ammunition. These occasions also provided Hiemstra with the ideal opportunities for political speeches. A performance during the 1964 Republic Day celebrations in Mafeking, had the unusual dimension of also being witnessed by an audience of blacks almost equal to the white numbers. Commando reported figures of 3000 and 4000 respectively. As the guest speaker, Hiemstra performed the role of political soothsayer, explaining the SADF's purpose as inclusive defence for all:

I am particularly pleased to see such a large number of the Tswana nation here. It is not often that they get the opportunity to see our Defence Force in action – a Defence Force that is built up from the money and contributions from all the people in our country, for the protection of all the people in our country, against the threats from certain outsiders that might attempt to destroy what is vested as our own to love and to keep¹⁰⁶

Referring to the struggle to achieve a Republic and the technological progress thus far achieved in the country, Hiemstra gave an optimistic projection of the country's future, as it was intended to develop within the paradigm of separate development.

The development of Bantu areas must of necessity raise contingent questions regarding ensuring power supplies, building materials, rail and road links, provision of water and many other needs. We shall aim at realising a higher and higher living standard for all our people. This means that not only the whites

¹⁰⁵ *Ibid.*, 25 June 1963, "Fouché urges co-operation with black states," p. 7.

¹⁰⁶ Commando, July 1964, p.24.

but also the non-whites' productivity will have to increase to justify a higher gauging of wages.¹⁰⁷

It is difficult not to imagine that alongside this political rhetoric, such military displays were also intended to at least awe rural blacks with the state's military power, at best serving a barely disguised intimidating purpose of reinforcing racial social relations. After a display of air power during the opening of the new Pietersberg air force base in late 1964, the Commando correspondent let this ulterior motive slip through:

There were many highlights. What was the climax? Some would have said the first public appearance of the Canberra bomber, and for others the formation flying of the Sabres, for young boys it was surely how the Mirage broke the sound barrier twice. For the Bantus, and there were thousands of them, it was the terrifying power of the air force.¹⁰⁸

The SADF also played its role in allowing government-recognised black leaders to honour its commanders. In a draft reply written in May 1964, by the Commandant General's office, in response to allegations made by the 'UNO Committee of Experts on the RSA' it was proudly pointed out that:

It is a fact that the Head of the SA Armed Forces was elected an honorary Chief of one of the Northern Bantu tribes as an indication of their respect for the SA Defence Force and the support they expect from it when required. This is a striking example of the mutual confidence prevailing between the White man and the Black man in South Africa.¹⁰⁹

After August 1966, SADF intelligence structures also postulated that grand apartheid could complicate the country's defence, as UP spokespersons had earlier suggested.

¹⁰⁷ Ibid., July 1964, p.25.

¹⁰⁸ Ibid., December 1964, p.14.

¹⁰⁹ KG GP 5, Box 549, VVO, Draft Reply by the KG dated 14 May 1964, to the allegations made by the 'UN Committee of Experts on the RSA' in so far as it concerns the SA Defence Force, Department of Defence Documentation Centre, Pretoria.

From a military-strategic viewpoint, homeland locations within the republic, SWA and British High Commission territories ideally needed integration into defence planning. The SADF were now viewing the Bantustans positioning as strategic problems from where potential guerrilla threats had closer proximity to both communication links, as well as their own possible 'safe' bases in Swaziland, Bechuanaland, Basutoland or the wilderness of the Kruger Park. It was predicted that any development of an unconventional military threat on the country would not necessarily follow the same pattern as Angola or Mozambique. But DMI analysis concurred within apartheid assumption paradigms, believing the Republic's black population was "less vulnerable" to being politically influenced because the "traditional (South Africa) race policy" had been "accepted" by different race groups over centuries. There was a "much higher social and development standard (compared with other Southern African states) amongst all population groups in the RSA." It was thought defence issues would be more easily managed by the fact that "different race-groups were located...with the intention of separate development".

However, it was also acknowledged that because of limited infrastructural development and the dependency upon "non-white labour," the country was vulnerable to any interference with this labour or sabotage against key points, despite a relatively larger white population compared with its neighbours.¹¹⁰ Afrikaner nationalism during the 1960s presented grand apartheid as a necessity for white South African survival, but the SADF, supposedly the final bulwark against threats, through DMI demonstrated some

¹¹⁰ HSI AMI, GP3, Box 430, Hoof van Verdegigingsstaf, Aanvulende Militêre Inligtingsrapport, Waardering van die Vyandelike Militêre Dreigment Teen die RSA soos op 13 September 1966, pp 14-15.

ambivalence to the obvious flaws in apartheid compromising long-term military security. Compared to the 1950s, when defence had largely been towards the back of the queue regarding NP priorities, the SADF of the 1960s was starting to influence government policy.

Conclusion

NP ministers and SADF senior staff officers followed post-republic government public initiatives to promote a united white republic, where the Defence Force was projected as illustrative of such inclusiveness. New defence minister Fouché particularly emphasised Afrikaans and English cooperation on defence issues. After Sharpeville, the international condemnation of South African was severe, although objectively not necessarily militarily hostile, if just for the lack of Afro-Asian capacity to intervene in the Republic by force. Along with future potential internal unrest, post-republic defence uncertainties and looming international isolation, Fouché was appointed by Verwoerd to politically manage the reversal of inter-white antipathies within the SADF, a legacy from the previous Erasmus decade where Afrikanerisation had been the higher priority than operational effectiveness.

The SADF's morale and fighting capacity required restoration and Fouché approached this task by demonstrating markedly better skills than his predecessor. It was during Fouché's ministerial tenure that the SADF was re-organised to face perceived potential military threats, with its arms and personnel significantly supplemented. The SADF

retained its traditional maritime naval links with Britain, although these were shaped to the UK's advantage. However, intelligence structures utilised by the SADF had to largely be rebuilt from a previous heavy dependence upon Britain. As the South African government secured its republican constitutional status, so its isolation in defence became more apparent. The simultaneous implementation of Verwoerdian grand apartheid during the 1960s created its own defence complications, although the government, despite allowing very limited coloured recruitment, steadfastly stuck to its segregationist principles. Within both official and popular publications, a dual process occurred whereby World War Two was kind of "rehabilitated" for the promotion of white unity, while Afrikaner nationalist leadership and political policy were reinforced as applying to all white South African interests and most particularly within the SADF.

Chapter 2: Commandant General Rudolf Hiemstra and senior SADF leadership

This chapter concerns Commandant General Rudolf C. Hiemstra's contributions and role in reshaping the SADF from 1960 to 1968, but also it attempts to describe aspects of other senior officers' involvement, along with selected short biographies. Hiemstra aspired to create a kind of *volksweermag* that was intended to enhance a common white South African identity, while remaining predominated by Afrikaner nationalist interests and under Afrikaner leadership. Ostensibly, it was meant for the SADF to serve as a unifying agent within a white society that still exhibited political, historical, cultural, educational and social divisions.

Hiemstra's career deserves special attention, not least because it was fraught with political controversy, due to his regular imbuing of official duties with Afrikaner nationalist rhetoric, most particularly from around the mid-1950s, when he publicly started projecting a profile as a strongly politically orientated soldier. In the 1950s and 1960s, Hiemstra was an almost unique military civil servant at the disposal of the NP government. He had made the Defence Force his vocation before World War Two and during a career spanning over forty years, never wavered from espousing the most dogmatic Afrikaner nationalist vision. As a top SAAF pilot in the late 1930s, with considerable professional prospects, Hiemstra had suspended his career by declining on political grounds, to take the Africa Oath (or 'Red Oath'), whereby UDF members consented to war service in Africa. Hiemstra was following the NP position that South Africa should remain neutral in the war between Germany and Britain. In 1941, under pressure from fellow UDF officers who disagreed with him, Hiemstra finally resigned

from the military. After the NP election victory in 1948, Hiemstra regained his commission and bolstered with political patronage through new defence minister Frans Erasmus, renewed his career ambitions, accompanied with a triumphant zeal to ‘Afrikanerise’ the UDF.¹¹¹ Within little more than a decade, Hiemstra had risen to the highest ranks, serving as SADF Deputy Commandant General from December 1960 and thereafter as Commandant General: October 1965 to March 1972. Hiemstra was assured of a well-oiled career path as a pre-war serving officer of some ability and strong Afrikaner nationalist feelings. But it was only after the 1953 general election that he began to embark on making regular public political utterances; a practice in which Hiemstra indulged himself until his retirement in March 1972,¹¹² without ever any open censure from the government.

By 1960, with the possible exception of Erasmus, Hiemstra undoubtedly had contributed more than any other individual towards imbuing the SADF with Afrikaner cultural trappings. Hiemstra’s meteoric promotion through the 1950s and appointment as Deputy Commandant General, illustrated the government’s determination to advance him rapidly towards the country’s top military position. Hiemstra’s career history and political loyalties also ensured that he was a regularly and critically reported upon figure by the

¹¹¹ Col Jan Breytenbach, one of the SADF’s best known soldiers during the 1970s, left the UDF in 1953 to join the British armed forces, principally because of political interference by Afrikaner nationalists in the Force. He rejoined the SADF in 1961. Breytenbach discussed his recollections of the early 1950s UDF atmosphere, where some members spoke of attaining “revenge” against those who had served enthusiastically in World War Two. Telephonic interview: 26 June 2008.

¹¹² See *Paratus*, October 1971, pp 58-59 for a typical example; in this case Hiemstra’s address to a gathering at Benoni on Kruger Day that year.

English-language press and parliamentary Opposition UP, particularly during increased white public interest in defence issues in the early 1960s after the Sharpeville and Congo violence.

Hiemstra spent a significant part of his middle career years ensuring the SADF a higher profile in the white and particularly Afrikaner community. Part of the underlying government rationale for making the Defence Force more “public” was to pave the way for broad white acquiescence regarding compulsory military training for all white male school-leavers. Hiemstra had long championed full conscription and its eventual realisation in 1968 was arguably his most important career achievement. During the first half of the 1960s, the shift towards a broadened balloted national service also constituted an important SADF response to its perceptions of military threats. Besides examining Hiemstra’s career, this chapter focuses upon the roles, leadership styles and career circumstances of other senior SADF commanders during 1960 to 1968. Further detailed reference to SADF leadership is contained within chapter six on selected English-speaking senior and middle-ranking officers. Other analyses on SADF leadership is made within particularly chapter four, concerning Lieutenant General C.A. Fraser’s shifting of SADF strategic thinking towards counter-insurgency warfare by 1968.

Hiemstra's background

As one of just five SAAF regular officers who had declined on political grounds to volunteer for combat in 1939, Hiemstra was ostracised and according to his own account eventually arrested on vaguely construed charges of subversion and improper conduct. Under duress, he agreed to transfer to the Department of Transport.¹¹³ Almost directly after the 1948 elections, an embittered Hiemstra was appointed as Erasmus's adviser on conceptualising appointments and vetting promotions.¹¹⁴ This "second phase" of his military career had a dramatic beginning, through his contribution in facilitating Erasmus's firing of military intelligence chief, Lt Col C.B. Powell and the transfer of the Deputy Chief of General Staff, Maj Gen Evered Poole to a military attaché post in Germany.¹¹⁵ This effectively ended the military career of this distinguished South African World War Two veteran; Poole who was expected to become the next Chief of General Staff, was the most senior English-speaking victim of Erasmus's Afrikanerisation campaign.

In the early 1950s, Hiemstra spent several years working as a military attaché in Sweden during which he had the opportunity to observe continental European armed forces systems as potential alternatives to the South African British-inherited military culture.

On returning home, he was appointed from May 1953 into the key position of Adjutant-

¹¹³ Hiemstra, *Die Wilde Haf*, pp 195-206.

¹¹⁴ *Ibid*, p. 229

Boulter, F. C. Erasmus and the Politics of SA Defence, p. 48.

¹¹⁵ See Hiemstra, *Die Wilde Haf*, pp 230-232 and Jooste L., F.C. Erasmus as Minister van Verdediging 1948-1959, MA thesis, UNISA, 1995, pp 17-19 for Afrikaner nationalist explanations and details of these controversial events.

See Boulter, F. C. Erasmus and the Politics and SA Defence, pp 46-49 for an alternative view.

General, responsible for the enforcement of Defence Force discipline and conformity to policy. The official UDF mouth-piece Commando, which had made its debut from 1949 as one of Erasmus's many politically motivated creations, recorded Hiemstra's and other new appointments within an article entitled "Defence Personalities". Commando's Afrikaans correspondents lauded the 'republican-orientated' changes that swept through the post-1948 UDF. It was the first of numerous occasions over three decades where Hiemstra's activities were covered in obsequious detail by this publication. His photograph and short curriculum vitae was published together with those of Brig Piet H. Grobbelaar and Maj Gen H.B. Klopper, assigned to the positions of Chief of Army Staff and Inspector General respectively.¹¹⁶ These three important appointments followed within two months of the NP's 1953 general election victory and regarding Hiemstra and Grobbelaar ensured 'safe' nationalists now being located in two of the most important UDF positions.

Hiemstra made little effort to hide his obsession and loathing for "*Saps*" (UP supporters) within the UDF, ensuring that he was hugely unpopular with many war veterans, while some other Defence Force officers now projected themselves as NP supporters. Given his Adjutant General position, this antipathy amongst the UDF officer corps in no small way accelerated the serious conflict within the military during the early 1950s. Hiemstra was perceived by his detractors as Erasmus's lackey and it was the Adjutant General, now secure under Erasmus's patronage, that personally prepared the letters through which twelve "politically unreliable" officers were summarily discharged from service, during

¹¹⁶ Commando, June 1953, pp 26-27.

the infamous “Midnight Ride” of 30 November 1953.¹¹⁷ This purge occurred in the wake of the general election where the NP had succeeded in increasing their parliamentary majority, despite a vigorous campaign by the UP and their determined Torch Commando allies. Now as most remaining ‘*Sappe*’ Afrikaners deserted the UP, the NP leadership no longer perceived any future electoral threat from the parliamentary opposition, resulting in Erasmus becoming even more aggressive in his efforts to drive out remaining military personnel he believed were hostile to his policies, with Hiemstra dutifully performing the role of hit man. The UDF Afrikanerisation process could not obviously distinguish between war veterans and non-war veterans, but rather between those who openly supported the new government, or at least did not resist its decisions; and those whose dispositions, Hiemstra and others suspected suggested defiance towards Erasmus and the NP.

Military transformation under Frans Erasmus from 1948

While this chapter is not concerned with a detailed description of the changes under Erasmus, but for the purpose of further understanding SADF shifts during the early 1960s, some reference to the previous decade is obligatory. Contrary to some popular perceptions, the public policy focus of the NP during the 1950s was not so much upon that of implementing apartheid, but rather consolidating Afrikaner unity, promoting Afrikaner nationalist cultural pride and awareness and most of all, protecting the largely

¹¹⁷ Boulter, F. C. Erasmus and the Politics of SA Defence, p.64.

Hiemstra, *Die Wilde Haf*, p.260.

Also, see Hartshorne, K., *Avenge Tobruk*, Purnell & Sons, Cape Town, 1960, pp 215-217, for one account of this incident written from the perspective of a prominent World War Two UDF veteran.

poor white Afrikaner community with state-sponsored employment and other securities. The NP elevated blue-collar and rural Afrikaner interests, as well as ensuring the prosperity of middle-class professional Afrikaners. This political alliance between the Afrikaner intelligentsia, middle class and the white workers was to be maintained.¹¹⁸ The military was a state institution that could be manipulated; and as the NP had always promised full employment for Afrikaners, there had to be a place in the SADF for both the blue-collar and the professional.

Therefore, the culture of the Defence Force was reshaped to make it congenial for both the Afrikaner nationalist career officer and the man of more humble background who might work his entire service career in the quartermaster stores. Determined to implement his party's mandate, this was the kind of "transformation" that Erasmus set out to achieve in the UDF, introducing it to the public as reshaping the UDF into something more 'national' and equitable regarding Afrikaner representation. Numerous changes at a symbolic level would complete the pattern of preparing the Defence Force as 'republican' in appearance. Political intervention and favouritism by promoting available Afrikaner nationalists into important positions was intended to adjust UDF culture away from its British-roots to one more acceptable to Afrikaner nationalists.

Outside of the small PF, the South African World War Two servicemen were all volunteers who had returned to civilian life after demobilisation. Although CF members were affected by Erasmus's policies, his decisions impacted more obviously upon the PF

¹¹⁸ Giliomee, H., The Afrikaners, Tafelberg Publishers Limited, 2003, p. 490.

personnel, particularly those with promotion aspirations but whose politics or home language rendered them out of favour. Defence spending was low during the 1950s and the military was allowed to rundown, most specifically in terms of its combat capacity.¹¹⁹ “Transformation” within the UDF/SADF during the 1950s¹²⁰ was not only a result of low budgets and political interference, as destructive and significant as these were. The institutional upheavals also resulted from inevitable changes occurring within a swelled wartime military organisation, whose over-riding purpose had been assisting the Allies towards victory. South Africa’s diminished role in international defence obligations after 1945 meant that the UDF had to shrink therefore some conflict for promotions was probably inevitable. While containing much valid research regarding the Erasmus changes, the dissertations written by Boulter and Jooste¹²¹ do not give adequate stress to the UDF/SADF grappling in the 1950s with multiple issues resulting from changing defence priorities during peace. Both rather fixate upon Erasmus, either vilifying him (Boulter) or defending him (Jooste).

In mid-1948, Erasmus had established that less than half of UDF members were Afrikaans-speaking and that just twenty-one percent of the PF members between the ranks of captain and brigadier had Afrikaans surnames.¹²² It is not clear whether the former details also included the CF, where ‘English’ regiments for historical reasons, were more numerous than their Afrikaans equivalents. ‘English’ regiments often dated

¹¹⁹ See Boulter, F.C. Erasmus and the Politics of SA Defence, pp 71-90.

¹²⁰ “Union Defence Force” was formally changed to “South African Defence Force” in terms of the 1957 Defence Act.

¹²¹ Boulter, F. C. Erasmus and the Politics of SA Defence and Jooste L., F.C. Erasmus as Minister van Verdediging 1948-1959, MA thesis, UNISA, 1995.

¹²² Jooste L., F.C. Erasmus as Minister van Verdediging, p.100.

their origins to the mid/late nineteenth century, during which colonials in Natal and the Cape, established volunteer regiments along British models. The Boer commando system had been essentially informal within both the Republics and colonies, although the Union government after 1912 had implemented structures to formalise them, but they had almost fallen away under Smuts's defence policies during World War Two.

Afrikaner 'transformation' of the UDF was Erasmus's chief concern and therefore with the exception of the navy, PF personnel during his ministerial tenure shifted to being predominantly Afrikaners, displaying themselves as either nationalist supporters or apolitical. Yet despite aggressive recruitment of Afrikaners during the 1950s, numerous war veterans from both language groups remained in the force. For those who fell foul of the new order, there were particularly within the army and air force, summary firings, sideways appointments and bizarre delays in promotion, instigated by Erasmus, his minions and sycophants against UDF members labelled as 'anti-nationalist' or 'too British' or too obviously 'pro-*Sappe*'. These unfortunates were often English-speaking, but also included many Afrikaners, who had challenged the new government's management of defence. Gen Jannie Geldenhuys was one of the new recruits during the early 1950s and the son of a PF war time UDF officer who had taken the "Red Oath". Geldenhuys alludes in his autobiography to the intensity of political strife in the Defence Force during the 1950s, with its 'English' verses Afrikaans character:

Party Politics was on everyone's lips. The red-tab days were not quite forgotten....elections were held in 1953 and 1958. And at the (Military) College, reading the newspapers at breakfast was no simple matter. If you read the Rand Daily Mail you were a

Sap; if you read the Transvaaler, you were a Nat- despite the fact that officers were meant to be non-political.¹²³

However, the cost for the UDF/SADF was the loss of considerable professional expertise, although it still retained by the 1960s, significant numbers of war veterans. During the 1950s, recognition of 1939-45 service was not entirely reduced simply to details within a PF member's SADF records. Through regular articles, Commando during this decade, acknowledged South Africa's World War Two contributions as well as veterans individual exploits.¹²⁴ But war service had to still compete with Erasmus's strident transformation imperatives, euphemistically described as ensuring the UDF embraced a: "a decidedly South African character."¹²⁵ This policy led to a number of 'political' appointments of officers who professionally kow-towed to government concerns. Partly to contrive a new culture, the UDF increasingly used Afrikaner historical symbolism and the importation of continental European military uniform styles. Commando published regular articles instructing 'correct' Afrikaans military language usage, adding to efforts by Erasmus to elevate Afrikaans as a military language and Afrikaner nationalist culture

¹²³ Geldenhuys, A General's Story from an Era of War and Peace, p.23.

¹²⁴ This author worked through all the Commando editions from 1949 to 1959 in the Cape Town branch of the National Library of South Africa and can confirm the above footnoted assertion.

¹²⁵ Erasmus in a speech to Parliament during 4 April 1946, quoted in Jooste L., F.C. Erasmus as Minister van Verdediging, p.28.

In 1978-79 when this author completed two years military national service, South African involvement in World War Two was non-existent as a means by which the SADF military legacy might have been mentioned as a heritage component during training. Within his training in an infantry battalion there was absolutely no reflection at all upon the country's military past being employed as a 'socializing' training feature. By that stage, hardly any World War Two veterans were still serving and very rarely would these come into contact with the junior levels. For example, Lt Gen Bob Rogers was Chief of the SAAF by 1978-79. He had an outstanding World War Two record, although he was also a temporary 'promotion victim' of the Erasmus era.

within the UDF/SADF.¹²⁶ By 1953, an English/Afrikaans dictionary on military terminology was available.

Afrikaans-speaking career soldiers who had served the Smuts government during 1939-45, in most cases fell in with the new political order with greater ease than their English-speaking compatriots, not least because as one important professional emphasis was bilingualism, their promotion prospects were better advantaged.¹²⁷ Afrikaner officers also more easily embraced the military's 'national' cultural adaptation.¹²⁸ According to Jooste, in 1948, despite a standardisation of Afrikaans military terminology, many PF officers were unable to communicate in Afrikaans. CF training was therefore largely conducted in English,¹²⁹ a pattern that Erasmus was determined to change. When "Exercise *Oranje*," the first large scale UDF field exercise since World War Two was held during May 1956 at the Free State *De Brug* training ground, Commando triumphantly proclaimed:

Exercise *Oranje* proved the practicability of bilingualism in the Union Defence Force . The troops taking part in the exercise consisted of both Afrikaans- and English-speaking units, with Afrikaans predominating. The language of the exercise was Afrikaans.¹³⁰

Erasmus specifically targeted the air force and army, in terms of discouraging English-speaking officers through political ploys or lack of promotion, while the small English-dominated navy received less intense attention.¹³¹ Those English-speaking officers

¹²⁶ See copies of Commando, 1949–1959 in terms of how the tone of articles and choice of topics obsequiously supported Erasmus's program.

¹²⁷ Afrikaans-speaking officers tended to be far more proficient in English than the other way around.

¹²⁸ For some of the more bizarre examples see Boulter, Erasmus and the Politics of SA Defence, pp 66-67.

¹²⁹ Jooste L., F.C. Erasmus as Minister van Verdediging, pp 48-49.

¹³⁰ Commando, June 1956, p. 58.

¹³¹ See Boulter, F. C. Erasmus and the Politics of SA Defence, pp 56-71.

determined to pursue their careers, needed to be professionally respected by their Afrikaans peers, but they would also have rather avoided political discussion critical of the government. Some ingratiated themselves with influential individuals like Hiemstra, who was ruthlessly driving the political aspirations on behalf of Afrikaner nationalists within the Defence Force. According to Boulter, S.A. Melville, Commandant General from 1958 to 1960 apparently fell into this latter category, having immediately associated himself with Hiemstra after 1948, assisting him in identifying those officers perceived as anti-government, particularly with the SAAF at the beginning of the decade.¹³²

The early 1950s witnessed Afrikaner political party support shifting almost in entirety towards the NP as part of the *volksbeweging*¹³³ described by Giliomee.¹³⁴ Just as there was a marked swing of Afrikaner voters away from the UP, the same pattern would have been discernable amongst PF Afrikaner members, who would also have perceived the career advantages in shifting towards openly backing the NP. The war had presented them an opportunity for professional growth and unlike Hiemstra, most Afrikaner UDF members took advantage of this, even if they had not necessarily been Smuts supporters. During the 1950s, promotion could be markedly accentuated by demonstrating their consent with the government's vision of a UDF 'national character' and thus some officers responded accordingly.

¹³² Boulter, F. C. Erasmus and the Politics of SA Defence, p. 62. See pp 57-64 regarding Erasmus's campaign in removing non-nationalist officers from the SAAF in particular.

¹³³ Literally "nation movement" or "national mobilization."

¹³⁴ Giliomee, The Afrikaners, pp 491-492.

Hiemstra and Grobbelaar: Career rivalries and antipathies from the 1940s

During the 1950s and 1960s, public reminders of Hiemstra's lack of war service exacerbated old tensions between himself and Piet Grobbelaar, Commandant General from 1961 to 1965. Their mutual antipathy had a history of deep suspicions, jealousies and resentments. In the tiny PF of 1939, the two men were already well acquainted with one another. Hiemstra recalled that he had not expected Grobbelaar, then a captain in the Special Service Battalion, to sign the 'Red Oath' (or 'Africa Oath'), initiated by the Smuts government for all PF members to either endorse or decline. Prompted by a small group of other objectors, Hiemstra had telephoned Grobbelaar to canvass his opinion and in a tense conversation, the latter confirmed that he had signed the oath as a professional soldier, because it provided him with a chance to fight. Hiemstra believed that charges later brought against him for "speaking with contempt regarding the Africa Oath," were a consequence of Grobbelaar reporting their conversation. Hiemstra confirmed that in the decades long afterwards, the conversation's aftermath, which he believed was directly connected to his arrest, profoundly disturbed his relationship with Grobbelaar.¹³⁵

Dawid Grobbelaar maintained that his father always had nationalist leanings, but as a professional soldier was discrete in not projecting overt political opinions. While serving as a young PF member in the pre-war years, Pieter Grobbelaar had insisted in trying to emphasise Afrikaans military terminology and been drummed out the UDF by his immediate superior Evered Poole. During Oswald Pirow's tenure as defence minister in

¹³⁵ Hiemstra, Die Wilde Haf, pp199-200, p.203.

the 1930s, Grobbelaar rejoined the military via a CF unit and with the politician's further support attained re-admission to the PF with a commission. By 1941, Grobbelaar was a lieutenant colonel and commanded 7 SA Reconnaissance Battalion during the desert campaign,¹³⁶ enhancing his reputation by being awarded the Distinguished Service Order for leading a daring armoured car raid against German and Italian troops¹³⁷. Grobbelaar had a soldiering record against which Hiemstra had no comparison. Two decades later, Hiemstra displayed his bitter fury at the "English press" for referring to Grobbelaar's "gallant war record," when the latter's service was recalled by the Sunday Times in April 1962, on the occasion of Hiemstra being promoted to Lieutenant General, with speculation that he was next in line for the Commandant General position.¹³⁸

According to Dawid Grobbelaar, his father during the war years was approached by the *Ossewabrandwag* (OB) leader Hans Van Rensburg, who advised Pieter Grobbelaar to remain in the Defence Force, because the "future Afrikaner-run state would require trained soldiers". Dawid Grobbelaar's mother had apparently felt slighted by the predominantly English-speaking military community of Robert's Heights (later Voortrekkerhoogte) during the late 1930s and had quietly worked for the NP during the 1948 election.¹³⁹ Despite Piet Grobbelaar's impressive war record, he was under regular observation by UDF intelligence officers upon his return to South Africa from the north. Dawid Grobbelaar was adamant that regardless of his father's soldiering

¹³⁶ See Orpen, N., War in the Desert South African Forces World War II Vol. III, Cape Town, 1971, p.69, 157.

¹³⁷ See Klein, H., Springboks in Armour, Purnell & Sons (S.A.) Pty. Ltd., Cape Town, 1965, pp 196-209.

¹³⁸ See Hiemstra, Die Wilde Haf, p. 286.

¹³⁹ Telephonic interview with Dawid Grobbelaar, 13 July 2006.

accomplishments on behalf of the Union and British Commonwealth, he remained an Afrikaner nationalist patriot who chose to pursue his career as a professional.¹⁴⁰ During the Second World War, the Smuts government instructed UDF Military Intelligence to spy upon Afrikaner nationalist political opponents. It is conceivable that because of his past record and alleged meetings with the *OB*, Grobbelaar was identified as potentially subversive and such would certainly have bolstered his career prospects after 1948.

Grobbelaar had attempted to mend his relationship with Hiemstra and denied betraying him; but Hiemstra effectively rejected this overture. Hiemstra's autobiography clearly infers he was fully aware the changing political order had strengthened his own career prospects. A mutual antipathy followed both men to the highest SADF ranks during the early 1960s;¹⁴¹ Hiemstra's eldest son, Professor Louis Hiemstra of Free State University confirmed that his father and Grobbelaar did not have a happy professional relationship and had clashed over issues of seniority.¹⁴² Grobbelaar still worked hard at serving the post-1948 government and according to Boulter, projected himself immediately as an NP supporter, after having been known as a Smuts man.¹⁴³ During the initial part of his post-war career, Grobbelaar was involved in the Free State Command and circulated amongst the commando units performing inspections and appraisals. His son believed that during this period his father was noticed by well-connected NP members, who identified him as

¹⁴⁰ Ibid.

¹⁴¹ See Hiemstra, *Die Wilde Haf*, p.234.

¹⁴² Such were derived from Louis Hiemstra's recollections as a teenager of overhearing his father and mother speaking in private. Telephone interview with Louis Hiemstra, December 2005.

¹⁴³ Boulter, F. C. Erasmus and the Politics of SA Defence, p.61.

a potential future senior military leader.¹⁴⁴ By 1953, Grobbelaar was promoted to brigadier and appointed Land Forces Chief and with his extensive combat experience as an obvious recommendation, was appointed to the Commandant General position from December 1960.

Hiemstra the “politician-general” during the 1950s.

Hiemstra who held Afrikaner *Broederbond* membership,¹⁴⁵ moved into military seniority from the early-1950s through his Adjutant General appointment.¹⁴⁶ Hiemstra’s first significant public political foray came at a Day of the Covenant gathering at Silverton, Pretoria during 1956, when invited to make a public address after an invitation was extended from the local *Geloftefeeskomitee*,¹⁴⁷ who had gained access to him through the Broederbond. Hiemstra followed the ‘anti-communist’ tempo so prominent amongst Afrikaner leadership at this point, comparing the “new barbarism” of communism with the Zulu attacks on the Voortrekkers in Natal in February 1838.¹⁴⁸ From his senior SADF position, Hiemstra elaborated to assembled crowds of his own people, contemporary Afrikaner nationalist intellectual understandings of perceived threats.

¹⁴⁴ Interview with Dawid Grobbelaar, 21 December 2006.

¹⁴⁵ See membership lists at back of Wilkins, I. & Strydom, H., *The Super-Afrikaners*, Jonathan Ball, Johannesburg, 1978.

¹⁴⁶ Working through editions of *Commando* from the publication’s inception in 1949, Hiemstra makes his first appearance within the June 1952 edition, pp 26-27, when he was appointed to the position of Adjutant-General in an article entitled “Defence Personalities, together with Brig P.H. Grobbelaar and Maj Gen H.B. Klopper. By 1964/65 Hiemstra was a member of the Broederbond’s *Uitvoerende Komitee* (Executive Committee); see Wilkens, I. and Strydom, H., *The Super-Afrikaners*, Jonathan Ball, Johannesburg, 1978, P. A105.

¹⁴⁷ “Day of the Covenant Committee” : Established to arrange commemorations of the Voortrekker victory over the Zulus at the Blood River battle on 16 December 1838.

¹⁴⁸ Hiemstra, *Die Wilde Haf*, pp 272.

Historian G.D.Scholtz whose influence upon SADF threat perceptions is referred to later, (see chapter 3, pp 163-170) had already by 1954 published, *Het Die Afrikaanse Volk 'n Toekoms*, emphasising to Afrikaner leadership that they (Afrikaners) may have to fight Russian communism in order to preserve 'Western civilisation' in Africa. Four years earlier, future SABC Chairman Piet Meyer had published a pamphlet detailing 'communist activities in South Africa',¹⁴⁹ while D.F. Malan had secretly confided to British intelligence representatives that he hated and feared communism.¹⁵⁰ Hiemstra's speeches regularly referred to defining points in Afrikaner history, juxtaposing them alongside the contemporary political context, reminding Afrikaner audiences of their duty to remain true to their heritage of struggle, along with their destiny of being a politically united Christian nation in Africa.

From August 1958, Hiemstra strengthened the direct involvement of Afrikaner political influence and ethos within the SADF by initiating the creation of a "cultural organisation," the *Afrikaanse Kultuurvereniging Volk en Verdediging (AKVV)*, accepting the position of its first Chairman.¹⁵¹ As the relationship of patronage between Hiemstra and Erasmus continued to thrive, this organisation became a vehicle through which Afrikaner nationalist commemorations were regularly endorsed with a military presence. Louisa Jooste's 1995 MA thesis on Erasmus provides an explanation of the AKVV, which might even have found approval with Afrikaner nationalists during the 1950s, but

¹⁴⁹ See Visser, W., The Production of Literature on the "Red Peril" and "Total Onslaught" in Twentieth-Century South African, *Historia*, 49, 2, November 2004, pp 113-116.

¹⁵⁰ Sanders, J., *Apartheid's Friends The Rise and Fall of South Africa's Secret Services*, p. 9.

¹⁵¹ Hiemstra, *Die Wilde Haf*, pp 274-275.

8 May 1958 according to Louisa Jooste, F.C. Erasmus as Minister van Verdediging, p. 57.

perhaps this also demonstrated a lingering Afrikaner rationale regarding their insistence in re-stamping a new identity upon the UDF.

The organisation's objectives were to promote Afrikaans as a military language, to enhance the Afrikaans military culture and to facilitate a healthy relationship between the Union Defence Force and the "volk". By "volk" is specifically meant the Afrikaner volk. ...During the following years the AKVV made an important contribution to establishing the Afrikaans language and culture within the UDF as well as creating attachment and respect for the Defence Force amongst Afrikaners.¹⁵²

Ian Van der Waag who categorizes Jooste as belonging to the genre of "Official Historian" remarks on her dissertation: "A recent biographical of Erasmus is a case in point (of 'Official Historians') "being mesmerized by the official memoranda..." with the writer going out of her way to 'correct' and 'improve' the image of the controversial defence minister."¹⁵³ Such is relevant because we are concerned with the extent to which the SADF by 1960 had become entirely compliant to NP political designs, besides Hiemstra's contribution in facilitating this. The AKVV's activities displayed the extent to which Afrikaner nationalist cultural occasions received SADF support, compared to those whose purpose or orientation was interpreted as 'English' or 'Sappe'. For example, Boulter refers to the Secretary of the (Louis) Botha Day Committee in 1959 being refused any SADF participation by Commandant General Melville, while during the same year, Hiemstra's AKVV received assistance in the form of bands and supporting personnel for a

¹⁵² Jooste, Erasmus as Minister van Verdediging, pp 57-58.

¹⁵³ Van der Waag, I., Contested Histories: Official History and the South African Military in the Twentieth Century, Grey, J., (Ed) The Last Word? Essays on Official History in the United States and British Commonwealth, p.46.

concert concerning the Louis Trichardt Memorial Fund, Kruger Day ceremonies and the re-interment of General Kemp.¹⁵⁴

By the end of the 1950s, Hiemstra disengaged himself from Erasmus, who had long been the target of jokes and vitriol directed by English-language press defence commentators. Being the defence political boss, Erasmus had been the more obvious focus of hostility. However, Hiemstra had long fallen out with Erasmus over several issues of mutual contention. Within Jooste's dissertation introductory notes, she comments that her attempts to secure an interview with Hiemstra during the early 1990s failed. Jooste described the reason given by Hiemstra as being because "he had differed too much with Erasmus" (Hiemstra's own words).¹⁵⁵ Jooste related her own understanding that Hiemstra, after effectively being Erasmus's prodigy, still retained grievances over the service conditions by which he had been reinstated.¹⁵⁶ However, as was demonstrated earlier, Hiemstra also disliked the minister's intrusiveness in the Defence Force at an organizational level.

UDF/SADF leadership during the 1950s

C. L. De Wet Du Toit, the Commandant General from 1950 to 1956 (described incorrectly by Seegers as "not a volunteer in World War II"¹⁵⁷) had been a brigade

¹⁵⁴ Boulter, F. C. Erasmus and the Politics of SA Defence, p.244.

¹⁵⁵ Jooste, Erasmus as Minister van Verdediging, 1995, p. 1.

¹⁵⁶ Telephonic discussion with Louisa Jooste, May 2006.

¹⁵⁷ See Seegers, The Military in the Making of Modern South Africa, p. 109.

Du Toit's service in the Union Defence Force during the desert campaign is documented in Orpen, N., War in the Desert South African Forces World War II Vol. III, Cape Town, 1971.

commander in the western desert under Maj Gen Dan Pienaar¹⁵⁸ although not without controversy.¹⁵⁹ Maj Gen Dunbar Moodie, remarked that Du Toit “had made a spectacle of himself” shortly after the fall of Tobruk” and was in his (Moodie’s) opinion one of Erasmus’s worst appointments.¹⁶⁰ After the 1948 election, Du Toit apparently had already made it clear to Erasmus that he supported the NP¹⁶¹ and was alleged to have particularly ingratiated himself with the minister. Du Toit was appointed Chief of General Staff in 1950. This after a series of serious disagreements between Erasmus and his first Defence Force Chief, General Len Beyers (appointed from 1949), an NP supporting former UDF Adjutant General, whom the minister had brought out of retirement.¹⁶² Du Toit was identified by British military authorities as collaborating with Erasmus in denuding the SAAF of top English-speaking pilots and “good fighting Afrikaners as well”.¹⁶³ Boulter also singled Du Toit out for apparently behaving with indiscretion and foolishness during official duty as UDF Chief, citing that during his tenure from 1950 to 1956, Du Toit allegedly indulged in discussions on current affairs with foreign military attaches, purportedly making outrageous and implausible comments that were reported back to various governments.¹⁶⁴ A few years after his retirement, Du Toit was severely criticised in Parliament by Brigadier H. F. Bronkhorst of the UP, who

¹⁵⁸ See excellent photograph of Pienaar and his brigade commanders, which included both Du Toit and Edwin Poole in Orpen, N., War in the Desert. SA Forces World War II, between pp 468-469.

¹⁵⁹ See the controversial events around “Matie” column in Orpen, N., War in the Desert. SA Forces World War II (Vol.III), pp 368-369.

¹⁶⁰ Interview: Maj Gen D. Moodie, 2 January 2007.

¹⁶¹ Boulter, Erasmus and the Politics of SA Defence, p.53.

¹⁶² See Jooste, Erasmus as Minister van Verdediging, pp 24-26, and Boulter, F. C. Erasmus and the Politics of SA Defence, pp 49-54.

¹⁶³ Hyam and Henshaw, The Lion and the Springbok Britain and South Africa since the Boer War, p. 242.

¹⁶⁴ See Boulter, Erasmus and the Politics of SA Defence, p. 54.

ridiculed him as being of low intellectual quality and a blatantly politically favoured appointment.¹⁶⁵

There is no evidence encountered by this author of widespread pre-1948 ill-feeling amongst Afrikaner career officers and non-commissioned officers, regarding either their English-speaking colleagues or the South African British-orientated military culture. Grundlingh has written about grievances amongst World War Two Afrikaner volunteers, as opposed to PF members.¹⁶⁶ The weight of evidence suggests that Hiemstra and Erasmus's political interference instigated discontent and divisions in the military, mainly because political affiliation and opinion were perceived as explicit pre-requisites for career advancement. The consequence was political rifts within the UDF professional ranks around 'transformation' on language and party political grounds. In a further reference in his autobiography to officers reading newspapers, Geldenhuys provides another brief insight into how irreconcilable these divisions were.

During the stormy late 1940s and early 1950s, even the newspaper you read, as I experienced at the Military College, was a serious matter. It could be an indication of whether you were a patriot or a jingo – or something close to it.¹⁶⁷

Some officers politically hostile to Erasmus resigned, including a few who thereafter, entered politics as UP members, while others continued with their careers. Some officers openly supported the minister's intentions to bring Afrikaner personnel numbers, culture and language to predominate in the military, while others continued their duties with no

¹⁶⁵ Natal Mercury, 11 March 1960, p.1.

¹⁶⁶ See Grundlingh, *The King's Afrikaners?* Particularly pp 362-365.

¹⁶⁷ Geldenhuys, *A General's Story From an Era of War and Peace*, p.71.

reference to politics. In the mid and late 1950s an officer suspected of discontent with the government and with Erasmus in particular, could be harassed to resign. But the men whom Erasmus had authorised to lead the UDF/SADF in the 1950s, were those for whom the adjustment to the NP control was less difficult or not difficult at all and if they played their cards correctly, their career prospects were promising. Lt Gen Ian Gleeson who joined the UDF in 1953 and served as a young officer during part of the Erasmus period, believes that Erasmus's negative tenure was exacerbated by the fact that the first post-war Commandant Generals (Du Toit, Klopper and Melville)

did not particularly impress or excel in the field of leadership qualities and therefore probably allowed Erasmus to fool around at levels that should have been out of bounds for political ministers.¹⁶⁸

Brig Gen McGill Alexander, whose army career began during the latter part of the 1960s, suggested that the mediocre line of 1950s SADF Chiefs, occupying the top position during a period of peace, preferred to complete their careers quietly before retiring on pension. This also ensured the minister was virtually unopposed when instigating changes that often lowered Defence Force morale.¹⁶⁹ But there were prominent senior officers who derived career benefits from the Erasmus period, including some who held significant appointments during the 1960s and early 1970s. Some examples included Generals Grobbelaar, Du Toit and Sybrandt Engelbrecht in the army; S.A. Melville and Hiemstra in the air force; while navy Admirals Hugo H. Biermann and his brother S.C. Biermann were also recipients of Erasmus largesse. S.C. Biermann was an educationist

¹⁶⁸ Correspondence from Lt Gen Ian Gleeson, 28 October 2007.

¹⁶⁹ Telephone discussion with Brig Gen M. Alexander, 20 December 2007.

who post-1948 translated English naval terms and training manuals into Afrikaans and wrote regular articles for Commando advocating that the Afrikaner had an important role in the navy. S.C. Biermann also periodically endorsed a kind of Afrikaner 'naval tradition' dating from Dutch mariners during the seventeenth century. According to Rear Adm Max Kramer, S.C. Biermann had served in World War Two as an able seaman, but advanced quickly through the ranks to Rear Admiral assisted, in Kramer's opinion, partly due to his elder brother's position.¹⁷⁰

General H. B. Klopper who followed Du Toit as Commandant General (1957) for a short spell, saw significant active service during World War Two, including his being the Tobruk garrison commander that in June 1942 had surrendered the town and 25 000 Commonwealth troops to the German *Afrika Korps*. (Although his decision was later supported and accepted by an official inquiry).¹⁷¹ In contrast to some other senior officers approved by Erasmus, Klopper had apparently remained friendly towards British defence interests.¹⁷² Melville (SADF Chief 1958-60) had a modest war record and allegedly was not highly regarded while serving as Commandant General.¹⁷³ Grobbelaar who had been decorated in the war, proved himself a more respected Commandant General during his December 1960 to September 1965 tenure.

¹⁷⁰ Interview with Rear Adm Max Kramer, 5 July 2007.

¹⁷¹ Hartshorne, K., Avenge Tobruk, Purnell & Sons, Cape Town, 1960, pp 124-135.

¹⁷² Boulter, F. C. Erasmus and the Politics of SA Defence, p.69.

¹⁷³ See Boulter, F. C. Erasmus and the Politics of SA Defence, p. 69 where it was alleged that by 1959, Melville had misled Erasmus over the combat capacity of the SADF. Lt Gen Ian Gleeson confirmed that Melville was not highly regarded by junior officer ranks, or at least in terms of what he recalled overhearing as a young officer during the 1950s. Interview, 9 July 2006.

Adm Hugo Biermann who had served with distinction in the South African Naval Forces during 1939 to 1945 was one of only eight Afrikaans-speaking navy officers in 1948. He then experienced an astonishing promotion run through Erasmus.¹⁷⁴ After being despatched to a course at the Royal Naval College and performing subsequent service as naval attaché in London,¹⁷⁵ Biermann was appointed Chief of SA Navy Staff in 1952, with simultaneous promotion to Commodore from a Commander rank, without ever being a Captain. Rear Adm Kramer acknowledged that this appointment was initially a shock. More favoured candidates were officers like the SA Naval Forces incumbent Chief, Commodore H. E. Fougstedt, besides Captains Dryden-Drummond and Rice. Feeling marginalized, some English-speaking naval officers started to look for other careers, but Biermann encouraged many to stay, assuring them that their prospects would improve.¹⁷⁶ Biermann's appointment also played some role in facilitating the growth of the navy through his good relations with both Erasmus and the Royal Navy. As mentioned earlier, Biermann had a considerable influence in pushing the minister towards accepting the strongly pro-British terms of the Simon's Town Agreement.¹⁷⁷

Biermann was also politically a less overbearing officer compared to some other appointments of the 1950s. However, he was still a "political" appointee of a sort and

¹⁷⁴ Boulter, F. C. *Erasmus and the Politics of SA Defence*, p.59.

During an interview that I had in February 2005 with an Admittedly very forgetful Adm Hugo Biermann, he remarked that for some PF members, service in World War Two, had "very important" implications in terms of inter-personal relationships in the post-war SADF; but that he personally had been far less emotional over the issue. His contributions to Commando, later Paratus suggest that when his opinions were called for, he fully endorsed government policy in terms of military planning and assessments, besides also supporting the successful attempts to encourage more Afrikaners to serve in the SA Navy.

¹⁷⁵ Boulter, F. C. *Erasmus and the Politics of SA Defence*, p.59.

¹⁷⁶ Interview with Rear Adm M. Kramer, 5 July 2007.

¹⁷⁷ Interview: Maj Gen D. Moodie, 2 January 2007.

initially proved his worth to Erasmus in August 1953, when serving together with Melville on a court-martial committee constituted to hear a case containing strong political under-tones. The military court successfully prosecuted Col Jan Pretorius on apparently spurious grounds for theft, dismissing him from the service. Pretorius was known for his hostility to the NP while he had vehemently criticised Hiemstra's appointment to the position of Adjutant General. The court-martial occurred against a background of perceptions held amongst government opponents that it was explicitly politically motivated and part of the process to intimidate officers who were not government supporters.¹⁷⁸

Although respected by English-speaking officers for his diplomacy, fair managerial style, professionalism and inter-relationship skills, Biermann must have been conscious of his Afrikaans-background ensuring him a career advantage,¹⁷⁹ although he certainly impressed all former officers interviewed as a highly competent naval commander. Over fifty years later Biermann felt that Erasmus "had done a lot of good for the navy" and he acknowledged that he got well with the minister.¹⁸⁰ During the next two decades, Biermann was also highly regarded by the NP government; he became Chief of the SADF after Hiemstra's retirement in 1972 and worked closely with P.W. Botha.

¹⁷⁸ Boulter, F. C. Erasmus and the politics of SA Defence, pp 61-62.

¹⁷⁹ Interview with Rear Adm Chris Bennett, 25 January 2005. Bennett began his naval career in the late 1950s and later worked closely with Adm H. Biermann.

¹⁸⁰ Interview with Adm H. Biermann, 2 February 2005.

UP criticisms in 1960 of SADF officer appointments

Although Verwoerd had effectively dismissed Erasmus by the beginning of 1960 by shifting him to the Justice portfolio at the end of the previous year, the ex-defence minister's impact on the Defence Force continued to induce angry parliamentary exchanges. One of Erasmus's 'victims', Brig H. H. Bronkhorst, in March 1960 lambasted the former minister, accusing him of "appointing unqualified generals", "excluding English-speaking officers from promotion", "falsifying examinations", "refusing to allow wartime army and air force officers to go on special courses" and "appointing top ranking officers of low intelligence and little ability to do his political work for him in the Defence Force. Others ...had reached senior rank through favour and not merit. Morale in the Defence Force had deteriorated and discipline had been destroyed mainly because of the open backdoor and undermining encouraged by Mr Erasmus." Bronkhorst continued:

Today (The General Staff who consisted of eight men many of whom)...were outspoken politicians – people who spoke politics on every possible occasion. A sad position of the Defence Force today was that there was not the necessary cooperation among the senior officers...(Erasmus) had opened the back doorso that people could come through that door and carry tales. Through these tales those men had got to the top. Those who were accused were never promoted. The position now was that those men in the top ranks knew that they were not there on merit but through favours and they were now jealous of each other.

Bronkhorst intimated how by this time, there had been a broad backlash against Erasmus within the SADF, which had no doubt also forced Verwoerd's arm in removing the minister.

The same gentlemen whom the former Minister helped in this way to get where they are today, are the people who have undermined the Minister in recent months and have made his position in the force impossible. That may be his due reward, but it is an unhealthy state of affairs.¹⁸¹

Bronkhorst claimed there had always been more Afrikaans-speaking officers in the force, but that by 1960 there were only Afrikaans Generals and Brigadiers.

There were English-speaking officers with the highest qualifications and excellent records who were today sitting in lower positions. There was also the case of an English-speaking colonel who had not done a single stroke of work for three years.¹⁸²

Not all top-ranking Afrikaans SADF officers were necessarily ardent nationalists. However, many also clearly never felt any strongly principled objection against NP policies regarding curtailing links with Britain, nationalist non-participation in World War Two, marginalising of English-speakers in the civil service, or for that matter the government's racial policy. By late 1960, the PF was overwhelmingly Afrikaans, including virtually the entire General Staff, with the exception of Commandant General Melville. This was in contrast to 1948 when the entire General Staff was English-speaking although General Sir Pierre Van Ryneveld could have been termed an anglicised Afrikaner.¹⁸³

¹⁸¹ Hansard, Union of South Africa House of Assembly Debates Third Session – Twelfth Parliament, Vol. 103, 10 March 1960.

¹⁸² Natal Mercury, 11 March 1960, p.1.

¹⁸³ See Jooste, F.C. Erasmus as Minister van Verdediging, p. 101, where the General Staff in 1948 is not quite accurately described as being entirely comprised of English-speakers and in 1959, of entirely Afrikaners.

As the intensity of the NP's campaign to attract English-speaker's votes for the 1960 republican referendum increased, the UP tried to trip up the government up by referring in parliament to alleged "anti-English" bias in the SADF over the previous twelve years. However, new perceived defence threat circumstances were to prompt changes in the SADF from 1960 - namely, events both in Africa and internally, regarding the rise of aggressive and potentially militant African nationalism. In response, the government focussed upon promoting a white republican ideal underpinned by a notion of bringing the two white language groups together in 'one nation' under Afrikaner nationalist control. The SADF was intended as one standard-bearer of this political strategy, requiring in consequence, some changes in its leadership. Therefore, 1959 and 1960 witnessed the exiting of Erasmus and Melville respectively and the appointments of Fouché and Grobbelaar. Such was the political legacy of the SADF bequeathed by Frans Erasmus during the 1950s that impacted upon the central ethos of the PF by the start of the 1960s, which Fouché had to tentatively remarket to a broader white community. A larger Afrikaner demographic and cultural identity for the SADF was achieved through Frans Erasmus's policies, while Hiemstra had played a central role as the minister's military political commissar.

Church support for Hiemstra for the Commandant General position in 1960

Hiemstra's rapid advancement continued; by June 1959, he had been promoted to the temporary rank of Major General and appointed to replace, until further notice, the then ill Grobbelaar, the incumbent Inspector General of the SADF. Hiemstra's new rank and position was confirmed in October. Once recovered, Grobbelaar was appointed to the

newly created position of Deputy Commandant General,¹⁸⁴ meaning that he and Hiemstra were effectively the second and third ranking SADF officers respectively under Melville. With his regular speeches and high political profile, Hiemstra had long made an impact upon broader Afrikaner nationalist civil society. In a letter addressed directly to Verwoerd, A. J. G. Oosthuizen, the Chairman of the General Commission of the *Nederduitsch Hervormde Kerk* must have spoken for a larger groundswell of Afrikaners in early 1960 when he remarked:

On behalf of the Nederduitsch Hervormde Church, I wish in all humility to bring an issue to your attention. We are aware this is a very delicate matter, where perhaps we as a church should not be involved.

But, with an eye upon the critical times in which we live and in the face of us becoming a Republic, we cannot feel as ease unless the Commandant General of the Defence Force is a man that in so far as it concerns his national conviction, stands above any doubts. We understand that the current Commandant General is retiring in haste. Therefore, (we) are taking the liberty of bringing to your attention the name of General Hiemstra. He is somebody who has sacrificed much in terms of his nationalist principles. He is no opportunist nationalist, but one who remained a nationalist when it was dangerous to be one. There can be others of the same sort – we do not know. We have submitted his name because we know that he has proved his reliability. Our humble request is that our government will give specific attention regarding the appointment, to persons who like (Hiemstra) have demonstrated that they can be depended upon. May we also note that General Hiemstra belongs to the Dutch Reformed Church and not to the Reformed Church. Thus, we are not writing to you because of any Church considerations, but entirely with regards to our concern for the safety of our Nation (*Volk*) and Republic.¹⁸⁵

¹⁸⁴ Hiemstra, *Die Wilde Haf*, p.276.

¹⁸⁵ Ds. Oosthuizen to Verwoerd: letter dated 25 February 1960, Box 119, MV 72, Department of Defence Documentation Centre, Pretoria.

The fact that Hiemstra received significant support from this particular Afrikaner church was indicative of some success in his attempts at making “*volk*” and military one in spirit. Oosthuizen’s letter is clear evidence of the extent to which Hiemstra’s politicking had entered the consciousness of the church, an important pillar of Afrikanerdom. It also illustrates this church denomination leadership’s anxiety and stress upon perceiving the SADF’s as having a critical role in securing the Republic. Oosthuizen’s reference to “opportunistic nationalists” is also a useful yardstick showing that Afrikaner nationalist leaders and civil society were not oblivious to those whom they perceived as politically expedient within their own ranks, including inside the SADF. Oosthuizen was also probably making a barely veiled negative comment about Grobbelaar, who was not yet at retirement age but in terms of seniority would have been Melville’s obvious successor. Grobbelaar and other Afrikaner’s acceptance of the ‘Red Oath’ in 1940 could also well have been what Oosthuizen was implying by “opportunistic nationalists”.

Although Verwoerd did not respond personally to Oosthuizen, his private secretary assured him that the letter would be brought to the attention of Fouché and that “General Hiemstra and his deservedness are naturally well known.”¹⁸⁶ By 1960, Hiemstra had achieved an image amongst Afrikaners of a military man and politician, who also made significant use of the Calvinistic concept of predestination to bolster his speeches. Being puritanical in outlook, Hiemstra seemed to intimate some kind of merger of Afrikaner nationalist history, Calvinist spirituality, national duty and national defence. An ideal substantiation and illustration can be observed through extracts of a public speech

¹⁸⁶ Letter from Verwoerd’s private secretary to Ds. Oosthuizen, 1 March 1960, Box 119, MV 72, Department of Defence Documentation Centre, Pretoria.

Hiemstra delivered during the 1959 Day of the Covenant commemorations, held at the site of the South African War Nooitgedacht battle near Krugersdorp. The particular significance of this site was that according to Afrikaner nationalist historical belief, it was understood to be where Boer generals Beyers and De Le Rey, after beating back Imperial troops on 15 December 1900, had reconfirmed the Vow of Blood River in the presence of two thousand burgers and their families. Hiemstra utilised all the historical mythology and symbolism to state:

I believe that the Day of the Covenant is the greatest single factor that can make us as a nation (*volk*) aware of our calling...How strongly will our (Christian) faith be confirmed if we do not reflect back on our own history? Even the bitter end of 1902 we can see today in another light. It is a consequence of regular reflection upon the path behind us that we come to the understanding, consciously or unconsciously, of our whole nation's existence thus far fulfilling its task...If we now want to determine a course forward, we must understand that we cannot detach ourselves from our past. This is our accumulated experience and the course along which a Higher Hand has led us. If we detach ourselves from this we would do likewise with the entire past three hundred years (rendering it) devoid of content and meaning.¹⁸⁷

Giliomee speaks about the Afrikaner ideological commitment to apartheid being a kind of “fusion between religion and nationalism.”¹⁸⁸ What Hiemstra seemed to be attempting to achieve was an extension of this, in the form of a fusion between religion, nationalism and militarism. This is what he regularly disseminated through his speeches and official SADF publications during the 1960s. Hiemstra had the capacity to project the kind of theologically reasoned sense of mission, which endorsed Afrikaner nationalism during this decade. After the Cottesloe resolutions, Dutch Reformed Churchmen had been

¹⁸⁷ Commando, January 1959, p. 25.

¹⁸⁸ Giliomee, The Afrikaners, p.534.

cautioned via the *Broederbond* not to stray from the Afrikaners divine mission of survival; as a *Bond* member, Hiemstra's speeches placed him on the most favourable political ground.

Hiemstra as a Republic campaigner

With church and other Afrikaner civil society support behind him, Hiemstra embarked upon his own political campaign trail, whipping up support for Verwoerd's intention to ensure a republic. At the 1960 Union Day celebrations at Ladysmith, Hiemstra described the future drawing together of the two white communities within a republic;¹⁸⁹ Commando published his speech in entirety under a heading quoting directly from it: "Truth can be postponed never conquered". Hiemstra chided English-speakers about their past 'conduct' that he believed could have marred the possibility of their happy 'union' with Afrikaners.

the Afrikaans speaking partner was determined to develop and maintain their own personality, their own identity, and (only) after they had achieved this through establishing their own republics and their own gallery of great men and national heroes were they ready to enter into a Union with the English-language group. This fact can only be ignored at the price of great unhappiness. It might for instance have been kinder, and wiser to accept the Afrikaner's assertion of his language rights and his striving for a greater share in the nation's wealth as a perfectly natural and harmless assertion of his national identity, rather than a kind of hostility called racialism.¹⁹⁰

As Chairman of the AKVV, Hiemstra moved around the country during the early 1960s, addressing civilian audiences and ensuring a military presence during occasions

¹⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 525, quoting Pelzer, *Verwoerd Speaks*, p.427.

¹⁹⁰ Commando, July 1960, p.31.

commemorating various Afrikaner nationalist events. On Kruger Day in 1960 (10 October) at Krokodildrif near Komatipoort, five days after the narrow white referendum poll in favour of a republic, Hiemstra presented a triumphant and lengthy history lesson on the Afrikaner struggle for self-determination. This was followed by an AKVV re-enactment in period costume of the De Kuiper expedition of 1725, commemorating the first white exploration of the Lowveld. Thirty-one SADF volunteers and AKVV members dramatised part of the expedition, while Hiemstra presided over a ceremony renaming the drift De Kuiperdrif. Commando relayed Hiemstra's speech under bold-lettering in Afrikaans: "Delivered at the beginning of a new era in the history of South Africa, these thoughts by Combat-General Hiemstra deserve scrupulous study by Defence Force members".¹⁹¹ Sweeping through three centuries of Afrikaner nationalist history, Hiemstra concluded with a direct reference to the NP's vision of all whites drawing behind the republican ideal, underpinned by the following 'compromise':

The Afrikaner has sacrificed his ideal of a homogenous 'boerestaat' with a homogenous nation and one language while on the English-speaking side a large number have accepted the symbols of our nationhood...¹⁹²

However, the Afrikaner triumph of achieving the republic and its varied celebrations and accompanied speeches, while receiving the support of the SADF at a public level, gave no clue to the disputes within the organisation's General Staff. The Hiemstra/Grobbelaar feud, with its origins drawn from the historical context of intra-Afrikaner conflict over South Africa's entry into the war twenty years earlier, remained as the two men managed

¹⁹¹ Commando, November 1960, p.6.

¹⁹² Ibid., p.8.

the SADF, during its heightened role to protect the white republic during the first half of the 1960s.

Hiemstra's clashes with Melville and Grobbelaar in 1960 over conscription.

The following details of the Hiemstra/Melville/Grobbelaar differences over conscription, demonstrate the tensions amongst the SADF General Staff during 1960, as they urgently attempted to implement defence improvement strategies, faced as they were with renewed perceptions of increasing military threats against the country. As repeatedly stressed, these were partly a consequence of the markedly changing international, African and internal security situations, but the General Staff were also concerned with apparent white South African public apathy regarding defence issues.

Early during June 1960, just several days after his Ladysmith republican address, Hiemstra by his own admission, had intended to test white public opinion as to the possible implementation of one year's continuous military national service for all white males in their eighteenth year. This would contrast with the then four months of balloted service spread over four years. Hiemstra mooted this proposal before a gathering of the Pretoria branch of the *Afrikaanse Calvinistiese Bond*, without seeking either the prior opinion or permission of Commandant General Melville, nor his deputy Grobbelaar. Hiemstra substantiated his opinions by explaining how during the March 1960 CF mobilisation after Sharpeville, men had been called up from important economic roles, including distantly placed farmers, contrasted with "young men walking around in our towns and cities without any military obligations." Hiemstra severely criticised the ballot

system as “expensive”, “useless”, incapable of “creating a proper, battle-ready Defence Force.” He concluded by explaining that because in any event, between R20 to R25 million had to be found for defence, it would be foolish to cling to an obsolete system that used the available manpower uneconomically. As far as he was concerned, the ballot system failed to create a properly battle-ready Defence Force concerning its size, fighting capacity and “spiritual preparation”. That for approximately the same price, it would be possible to ensure a meaningful improvement in the SADF’s fighting capacity, besides and significantly, Hiemstra believed it is his calling to explicitly link the SADF to Afrikaner nationalist history and heritage and emphasised that “the idea of national service was not strange to our military traditions of the past”.

Although stressing that he had spoken in his personal capacity, Hiemstra was summoned by a furious Melville and Grobbelaar and threatened with court-martial. The very strong reaction of his superiors suggests that they were particularly angry at the perceived snub towards their seniority, but other documentation suggested they had noted with acute unease, Hiemstra’s stepping into delicate political terrain. Hiemstra described the tense encounter below:

With this speech I intended to test the general opinion. And it thus transpired both negative and positive. Within the Defence Force, as I expected, it caused an explosion at the highest level. General Melville, the Commandant General, called me to his office. His deputy, General Grobbelaar was also in the office. He was actually red in the face with anger. They were both incensed that I could have delivered such a speech without first obtaining their approval. Secondly they felt it (compulsory conscription for all white males) was a totally impossible scheme and completely unnecessary. Melville told me that if I had not been a friend of

his, he would not have hesitated to place me before a court-martial.¹⁹³

But Hiemstra's speech had also successfully courted the press who recorded tentative approval for his plan from elements within both English and Afrikaans business.¹⁹⁴ Hiemstra endorsed his proposal by explaining that currently more than half of the Union's young white men received no military training and that if cost was a consideration, it was not necessary to call all men up in one year. However, if just ten thousand men were trained, within ten years the country would possess an army of approximately one hundred thousand.¹⁹⁵ *Die Burger* pointed out that the recent mobilisation after the Sharpeville crisis had demonstrated the Defence Force authorities had much to learn. The inefficiencies of the SADF during the 1960 call-ups had not gone unnoticed, nor unchallenged by a leading NP supporting newspaper:

it was possibly on the grounds of what transpired that General Hiemstra desires better training for a larger section of the youth. In any event South Africa will also in a military sense have to adjust to the wind of change in Africa.¹⁹⁶

Hiemstra received some unqualified support from the English press too, indicative of the impact on all whites of unsettling recent events both domestically and in Africa. The *Natal Mercury* reported: "In these turbulent times no one is going to question the wisdom of strengthening forces responsible for maintaining law and order should there be any

¹⁹³ Hiemstra, *Die Wilde Haf*, pp 282-283.

¹⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, p.283.

¹⁹⁵ *Die Burger*, 11 June 1960, p. 1.

¹⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, 14 June 1960, p.8.

further disturbances in South Africa".¹⁹⁷ In his autobiography, Hiemstra quotes the Pretoria News as stating:

When the Inspector-General of the nation's armed forces expresses the view that the existing system is inadequate for the protection of the country, there are justifiable reasons for public concern.¹⁹⁸

The parliamentary opposition supporting newspapers also used Hiemstra's concerns over training and manpower to criticise the government over defence. However, Hiemstra's call to arms through the SADF ensuring better prepared and more soldiers, appeared in step with the growing concerns of many white South Africans during 1960. It is therefore curious to observe just how Hiemstra's strategically presented popular appeals succeeded in invoked such strong responses from his superiors.

Neither Melville nor Grobbelaar could have harboured any illusions about Hiemstra's ambitions. In a letter addressed to Melville, with a copy despatched to Grobbelaar, Hiemstra expressed regret that his thoughts on a system of one year's national service had been rejected without any analysis of its plausibility. He reiterated that Melville was aware of Hiemstra mooted the idea of full white male conscription since his return from overseas in 1951 and objections to it had always revolved around two aspects: Firstly, the financial cost entailed and secondly, the required manpower to implement it. Hiemstra had remained adamant and re-emphasised a point that must have particularly antagonised

¹⁹⁷ The Natal Mercury, 26 July 1960, p. 10.

¹⁹⁸ Hiemstra, Die Wilde Haf, p.283.

Melville and Grobbelaar. Namely that “the financial implications are not so frightening, and that the manpower aspects were not so unacceptable”¹⁹⁹

Melville responded with a angry letter, copied to Fouché, which detailed some of the concerns Hiemstra had felt over a long period with the top management of the SADF. Hiemstra’s criticism, which he set out so candidly, were according to Melville, no less than a condemnation of how South African defence had been reorganised for some years. Ironically, Hiemstra was endorsing much of what the NP’s opponents had been saying throughout the 1950s, regarding the management of the SADF through Erasmus - the period during which Hiemstra had climbed the SADF corporate ladder, facilitated by his political connections. Melville stated that the memorandum that Hiemstra had used contained details from his *Calvinistiese Bond* address, which dated from 1955, but were subsequently amended in a form that the Commandant General had not seen before. It now included Hiemstra’s opinion that within the SADF by 1960:

there was a lack of authoritative policy, a lack of goal-directed planning and a lack of rationalisation, which in turn had contributed to hesitation, contradictions and postponements so that circumstances were now bordering upon chaos.²⁰⁰

Hiemstra had added provocatively: “The Commando organisation were currently not much more than subsidised shooting clubs – a subsidised sport.” Melville had furiously concluded that “these sorts of remarks were nothing more than blatant insults hurled at ministers, his own predecessors (Generals Du Toit and Klopper), and the entire General

¹⁹⁹ Letter dated 22 June 1960 from Hiemstra to Melville, KG Gp 5, Box 326. KG/GPW/2/1/2, Verdigingsprobleem en Oplossing: Waardeuring deur Veggenl. R. C. Hiemstra, Department of Defence Documentation Centre, Pretoria.

²⁰⁰ Ibid.

Staff” (A concept Hiemstra ridiculed in his autobiography²⁰¹ and subsequently changed during his own re-organisation of the SADF hierarchy after 1965.).

Significantly, Hiemstra’s letter was a barely disguised rejection of changes that Erasmus had instituted since 1948, one being the extra planning and finances spent on the *Skietkommandos*. Melville protested that the “Defence Force’s conduct from the Korean War to the current unrest do not corroborate these wild allegations” and rejected Hiemstra’s protests that his ideas had never been properly investigated. Melville explained that the Deputy Commandant General, Army Head of Staff, Quartermaster General and the Secretary for Defence all supported his views. His closing paragraph gives an indication of just how much dislike and antagonism existed between himself and Hiemstra, besides how far apart they were in thinking:

The irregularity of this conduct by the third most senior officer of the Defence Force, the insulting insinuations against those who are responsible for legislation, defence policy and execution thereof is reprehensible to say the least. It has been with a great deal of restraint that I have still not reacted in a disciplinary manner, politely believing that the matter will now be dropped.²⁰²

However, Hiemstra chose not to drop the issue and after a weekend despatched yet another analysis to Melville arguing for one year compulsory service. Melville wrote another angry letter to Fouché, referring again to his having the full support of

²⁰¹ See Hiemstra, *Die Wilde Haf*, pp 277-278.

²⁰² Letter dated 22 June 1960 from Melville to the Minister of Defence, KG Gp 5, Box 326, File No. KG/GPW/2/1/2, Verdigigingsprobleem en Oplossing: Waardeuring deur Veggenl. R. C. Hiemstra, Department of Defence Documentation Centre, Pretoria.

Grobbelaar. Melville elaborated in detail upon why he rejected Hiemstra's plan, stating that further reorganisation at this stage would create chaos:

not least because the CF and commandos were currently reorganising to comply with our revised security needs. Steps have already been put in place in order to upgrade to the best of our potential the mobility and fighting capacity of units. I would also like to reveal that as a consequence of the recent press reports resulting from General Hiemstra's speech, several senior officers of the above mentioned organisations have recently requested from me an assurance that the current reorganisation will be followed by a period of consolidation and stability so that they can take on the task with determination and complete it. Any sign of further insecurity will derail our plans. In my opinion there is no justification in the current circumstances to meddle with approved plans, chiefly because it could lead to the disintegration of our volunteer officer corps.²⁰³

Melville concluded by warning that considering the “destructive happenings” in Africa, the Defence Force needed to move forward, “determined and unrestricted” with the object of building up a healthy team spirit that would support to the country at a time of its need for protection. Melville requesting Fouché to make a decision on the matter of conscription; Hiemstra signed Melville's letter as viewed and it was marked as personally handed across to the minister on 17 August 1960.

The correspondence suggests that Fouché did not fully concur with Melville and Grobbelaar's explanations, nor did the minister share the outraged emotions behind Melville's writings. Melville was due to be retired as Commandant General at the end of the year. He was an English-speaking SAAF officer married to the sister of former Prime Minister J.G. Strijdom and had been a careful supporter of Frans Erasmus's

²⁰³ Letter dated sometime in July 1960 from Melville to the Minister of Defence, KG Gp 5, Box 326, File No. KG/GPW/2/1/2, Verdigingsprobleem en Oplossing: Waardeuring deur Veggel. R. C. Hiemstra, Department of Defence Documentation Centre, Pretoria.

Afrikanerisation policies during the 1950s. By the time the above correspondence was exchanged the decision on Melville's retirement was already made. His son Clifford Melville explained that his father's attitude has always been that he would "serve the government of the day,"²⁰⁴ but by 1960, however well his career had thrived under Erasmus, Melville had neither the Afrikaner nationalist political credentials nor the military experience for the defence challenges facing white South Africa. More importantly, Melville had apparently misinformed Erasmus towards the end of his ministerial tenure over the combat-worthiness of the Defence Force and was later told bluntly by Fouché that blatant political favouritism in the appointment of officers was over.²⁰⁵ Ds. Oosthuizen's letter quoted earlier suggests that Melville was packed off into early retirement and Hiemstra quite conceivably did not feel intimidated by the Commandant General.

Hiemstra's autobiography notes that Fouché's release of the details concerning Grobbelaar's appointment was "a very early announcement, probably to end the constant speculation and squabbling".²⁰⁶ Although Hiemstra was severely reprimanded by his military superiors, Fouché did not give any supportive signals to Melville or Grobbelaar. Within his autobiography, Hiemstra triumphantly declared that once the row had subsided, the minister displayed no signs of being unsettled by it, nor did Fouché ever summon Hiemstra to explain himself.²⁰⁷

²⁰⁴ Telephonic interview with Clifford Melville, July 2006.

²⁰⁵ Boulter, F. C. Erasmus and the Politics of the SA Defence, pp 69-70.

²⁰⁶ Hiemstra, *Die Wilde Haf*, p.280.

²⁰⁷ *Ibid*, p.283.

Grobbelaar and Hiemstra: Appointments in December 1960 as Commandant General and Deputy Commandant General.

Hiemstra's influence within the SADF during the 1960s was in accordance with what the NP expected of such a senior civil servant in an important government department, hence Fouché's implicit support of Hiemstra in policy clashes with Melville and Grobbelaar over the issue of conscription. However, Hiemstra only ascended to the top SADF position from October 1965, serving as Grobbelaar's deputy for nearly five years. The SADF was understood to be the government's ultimate instrument ensuring both white survival and privilege against threats identified as emanating from communism and decolonised Africa. Afrikaner nationalist confidence in the force needed bolstering and it was in this role that Hiemstra was clearly a vital man for the NPs defence plans. The government anticipated that he would continue to influence SADF planning into the future and in time head the organisation. But Fouché was also aware of the white community divisions that were exacerbated during the 1950s around defence and was unwilling to risk worsening these, while the government were appealing for both language groups to jointly support the republic. Given that Hiemstra also received regular scathing criticism from the English-language press, besides leadership considerations for the time, requiring an experienced soldier for the top SADF job, besides Grobbelaar's seniority in age, Fouché supported the latter being appointed Commandant General.

When *Huisgenoot* magazine in 1963 ran an extensive series of articles on the SADF, Grobbelaar received significant mention (Hiemstra none at all) and appeared in a colour photo on the front of the 11 October issue, (see illustration) being described as a soldier

“to the bone” and “held in the highest confidence by officers and men”.²⁰⁸ However, Grobbelaar as loyal as he was to the government never possessed Hiemstra’s political connections. Grobbelaar was never invited to join the *Broederbond*, but he also never served under Hiemstra. His son remarked that his father’s attitude was that “he had got to the top without such assistance” and suggested that much of the pushing from various individuals and institutions to promote Hiemstra as Commandant General in the wake of Melville’s retirement was *Broederbond*-inspired. In one discussion with Hiemstra, when the latter explained that if Grobbelaar was appointed Commandant General, then he (Hiemstra) would serve under him, as he would expect Grobbelaar to serve under himself, if the roles were reversed. Grobbelaar had apparently replied that he would not be willing to serve under Hiemstra.²⁰⁹

War experience would also have played the deciding role in Fouché’s appointment of Grobbelaar over Hiemstra. According to Dawid Grobbelaar, his father had privately related how Verwoerd was markedly unsettled by events at Sharpeville, Langa and other manifestations of black internal rebellion and had therefore wanted assurances of appointing the ‘right’ SADF commander.²¹⁰ Fouché had found Melville unsatisfactory during the State of Emergency;²¹¹ he was in any event an air force officer with limited combat experience, while the most likely future threats to the Republic must be landward in the form of either or both, conventional and counter-insurgency, besides potential

²⁰⁸ *Die Huisgenoot*, 11 and 18 October 1963, p. 31.

²⁰⁹ Interview with Dawid Grobbelaar, 21 December 2006.

²¹⁰ *Ibid.*

²¹¹ Boulter, F. C. Erasmus and the Politics of the SA Defence, pp 69-70.

internal rebellion. Grobbelaar also carried credibility amongst his peers. Lieutenant General Jack Dutton remarked about him: “Grobbelaar was an officer with an extensive World War Two record and was well known as such by many and duly respected”.²¹² Therefore, acting upon Fouché’s advice, Verwoerd appointed Grobbelaar in view of his wartime experience, despite *Broederbond* pressure favouring Hiemstra,²¹³ but there was still a clear indication of Hiemstra’s perceived value to the government and his assured position as the future SADF commander.

Therefore, during the early 1960s, in the midst of white South African military fears and uncertainties there existed in the highest levels of the SADF deep inter-personnel antagonisms. The extent of this was of course unknown to the public and the parliamentary opposition who would have exploited it to the full. But however antagonistic Grobbelaar and Hiemstra felt towards one another, as nationalists they kept their disputes private, out of the hands of political opponents, which would have risked further uncertainties within the Afrikaans community. Although Ds. Oosthuizen’s letter intimates that SADF internal wrangling in the General Staff level had not been kept entirely secret, suppressed internal political strife was also rife amongst NP politicians at this time, although equally masked from public view.²¹⁴

²¹² Short account by Lt Gen J. Dutton regarding his military career, emailed to this author on 1 June 2006.

²¹³ Telephonic interview with Dawid Grobbelaar, 13 July 2006 and interview, 21 December 2006.

²¹⁴ See Giliomee, *The Afrikaners*, pp 522-533.

The SADF General Staff and senior appointments during the 1960s

The SADF senior staff by 1960 reflected a compromise amongst career soldiers with war experience who remained during the Erasmus 1950s era and others whose careers had prospered with “political” assistance. Some had acquiesced to the new political order and survived by a mixture of attention to professionalism merged with political expedience, while other individuals occupied directly politically favoured appointments, regardless of their suitability for the posts. Several of these senior officers were remarked upon, both positively and negatively by those individuals alive and interviewed for this thesis, who were also reasonably positioned professionally during the 1960s to venture judgements. Grobbelaar’s appointment was welcomed by the UP’s Brigadier Bronkhorst, who still reserved his venom for Hiemstra, long the Afrikaner nationalist military bogymen of the English-language press, UP politicians, many ex-servicemen and SADF members who had resigned during the 1950s.

all knew (the Commandant General designate) was a good soldier and a man who would give his men a fair deal. But what would happen when his successor took over, no one knew. If the person at present designated to succeed him should be appointed, he believed the morale of the force would reach its lowest ebb.²¹⁵

From his appointment in December 1960, Grobbelaar tended to lead the defence initiatives announced by government. He was the driving force behind the significantly increased defence budgets of the early 1960s, which partly resulted from defence appraisals Grobbelaar commissioned, prompting the purchase of new conventional warfare weaponry. Hence, he effectively prompted these important decisions rather than

²¹⁵ Natal Mercury, 11 March 1960, p.1.

Fouché.²¹⁶ Gen Magnus Malan recalled having a very high respect for Grobbelaar, whom he described as broadly aware of international trends and conscious of the growing hostility against the republic. Grobbelaar had often called for his subordinates to seek out relevant articles that he could peruse.²¹⁷ With “military threats” rumoured, the SADF required more experienced soldiers in leadership and Grobbelaar made a number of personnel changes. He brought in CF members including several English-speakers and Afrikaners, whose careers Erasmus had apparently stalled during the 1950s. Although often Grobbelaar would have had to trade off using Afrikaner nationalists and Broederbond members to maintain political balances, so as not to ruffle any Afrikaner nationalist sensitivities.²¹⁸

During the 31 May 1961 Republic celebrations in Pretoria’s Church Square, Huisgenoot published colour photographs of the military parade and saluting podium, where Verwoerd was flanked by his most senior SADF and SA Police officers.²¹⁹ Amongst the SADF members standing directly behind Verwoerd were Grobbelaar and Hiemstra, besides Combat Gen Nic Bierman, the Chief of Army Staff, Combat Gen Sybrand Engelbrecht, Chief of Air Force Staff, Combat Gen Ben Viljoen and Chief of Naval Staff, Rear Adm Hugo Biermann. Nic Bierman was “recalled” after apparently being professionally relegated during the 1950s; having been a brigadier during the war but losing a rank after 1945, reverting to colonel. A 1937 rugby Springbok with extensive

²¹⁶ Interview with Dawid Grobbelaar, 20 December 2006.

²¹⁷ Interview with Gen Magnus Malan, 7 August 2007.

²¹⁸ Interview with Dawid Grobbelaar, 21 December 2006.

²¹⁹ Die Huisgenoot, 14 July 1961, p.41.

World War Two experience as the 6th SA Armoured Division's artillery commander in Italy,²²⁰ Bierman attended courses at the Imperial Defence College and served as a Military Attaché in London during the 1950s; but with his commendable war service and a British wife, Bierman was allegedly out of political favour during this period. Bierman was appointed Deputy Inspector-General from November 1959, before he was assigned to organise military intelligence and later take over command of the newly formed Directorate of Planning and Operations (DPO) during the early 1960s. This SADF component was tasked with identifying and appraising potential military threats and from 31 December 1960 replaced the Inspector General position.²²¹ Bierman's career had now re-advanced significantly; and in 1963, he was introduced within *Huisgenoot* as the head of the DPO, "one of the most important functions within the 'Brain-centre' of the Defence Force in Pretoria".²²² However, he did not particularly impress Capt (later Gen) Magnus Malan, a future Defence Force Chief and Minister of Defence who also worked in the DPO at this early stage of his career and personally liked Bierman, but did not rate him particularly highly in his profession.²²³

One of the last politically-motivated 'Erasmus' appointments was that of Maj Gen Sybrand Engelbrecht as Chief of Army Staff from November 1959, when he was promoted from colonel to "temporary major-general" (missing brigadier). Engelbrecht's

²²⁰ See references to Nic Bierman in Orpen, N., *Victory in Italy, South African Forces World War II* (Vol.5), Purnell, Cape Town, 1975.

²²¹ *Militaria*, 12/2, 1982, 1912 – 1982 Commemorative Issue, p.47.

²²² *Die Huisgenoot*, 11 October 1963, p. 5.

²²³ Telephonic interview with Lt Gen Nic Bierman's daughter, Mrs Dylas Smith, 7 July 2007. Interview with Gen Magnus Malan, 7 August 2007.

appointment had even surprised Hiemstra, who described it as “shocking”,²²⁴ while Maj Gen Moodie related that Engelbrecht’s appointment was bizarre, for Engelbrecht was apparently well known as “weak and incompetent”.²²⁵ Engelbrecht’s war service received no notable reference in works consulted, although as a major, he had taken over command of engineering training at Potchefstroom during 1948 and had previously been Quartermaster of an Engineer Stores Base Depot.²²⁶ Jannie Geldenhuys recalled Engelbrecht as being primarily an academic and mathematician.²²⁷ Maj Gen Daan Hamman, Bierman’s former DPO personal assistant, stated that Engelbrecht’s appointment temporarily side-tracked Brig Piet Jacobs, a highly regarded soldier and war veteran, who later became Army Chief of Staff from 1963 to 1967, with Engelbrecht shifted sideways in what was effectively a demotion.²²⁸

The SAAF Chief in the early 1960s was Combat (Maj) Gen Ben Viljoen, who had been the Senior administrative Officer for the SAAF in the Middle East during the war and continued to spend much of his post-war career in administration, rather than acquiring the technical benefits of flying as long as possible.²²⁹ Viljoen apparently had no

²²⁴ Hiemstra, *Die Wilde Haf*, p.276.

²²⁵ Interview with Maj Gen Dunbar Moodie, 2 January 2007.

²²⁶ Orpen, N., and Martin, H.F., *Salute the Sappers, South African Forces: World War II, Vol 8 – Part 2*, Sapper’s Association, Johannesburg, 2000, p.367.

²²⁷ Telephonic interview with Gen Jannie Geldenhuys, 14 November 2006.

²²⁸ Telephonic interview with Maj Gen Daan Hamman, July 2007.

²²⁹ Such are my deductions after lengthy conversations with Lt Gen D. Earp, Col J. Radloff and Brig Gen R.S. Lord; that Generals Hiemstra, S.A. Melville, Ben Viljoen and J.P. Verster (Chief of the SAAF from December 1967 to December 1974), all pursued senior SAAF careers post-1945 that took them out of flying. None served in Korea and in Verster and Viljoen’s cases, some colleagues felt that their technical knowledge was lacking by the 1960s. Additional biographical details from *Militaria*, 12/2, 1982, 1912 – 1982 Commemorative Issue, p. 98.

significant political connections²³⁰ but he had not served in Korea. Viljoen who was Air Force Chief of Staff from 1956 to April 1965, was followed by Lt Gen H.C. (Kalfie) Martin as SAAF Chief from 1965 to 1968. Martin was an experienced pilot and a highly regarded World War Two combat veteran. Amongst the serving top SAAF pilots in the 1960s were the highly regarded Comdt Bob Rogers who led the delivery flight of Buccaneers from the UK to the republic during late 1964 and Maj Dennis Earp, who worked on the acquisition of the Canberra light bombers (delivered in 1962). Both became lieutenant generals and SAAF Chiefs during the late 1970s and early 1980s. Gen Magnus Malan, identified early as a highly promising soldier of sound Afrikaner nationalist pedigree as a captain assisted in the DPO. He was one of the officers who in 1960, compiled the first local military appreciation. Thereafter, it was used by amongst others, Malan, Maj Gen Piet Jacobs and Brig Jan Burger²³¹ to help ascertain future defence needs.²³² Five years later when Malan was heading SWA Command, he so impressed Hiemstra and P.W. Botha with his briefing on the security situation in SWA that they transferred him to what Hiemstra described as a “more difficult” command in Cape Town, before appointing him as to command the Military Academy.²³³

Available evidence suggests that had the SADF been involved in a conventional war during this decade, Brigadier (later Maj Gen) Bill Barends stands out amongst senior officers as one who would have been the most promising of the potential combat

²³⁰ Telephonic interview with Col J. Radloff, 8 January 2008.

²³¹ Burger was highly commended as a soldier during World War Two where he had served on then Brig Nic Bierman’s artillery staff in Italy and earlier during the desert campaign. See Orpen, N., Victory in Italy South African Forces World War II (Vol. 5), p. 169.

²³² See Malan, M., My Life with the SA Defence Force, pp 40-41.

²³³ Hiemstra, Die Wilde Haf, p. 314.

formation commanders.²³⁴ Barends had been heavily involved with the 6th SA Armoured Division's fighting during the Italian campaign less than twenty years earlier²³⁵ and by the late 1960s, was second in command to Lt Gen C.A. (Pops) Fraser of the SADF's Joint Combat Forces (JCF) component. During the 1960s, the SADF was still dependent upon brigadiers and colonels with World War Two experience and a number of them, like Barends were English speaking and had been disadvantaged in terms of their professional prospects during the 1950s. Fraser who during the 1966-67 was Chief of the Army and as mentioned above was also Joint Combat Forces Chief was undoubtedly one of the most intelligent and effective SADF commanders;²³⁶ Fraser's career is further discussed within chapters four and six.

One officer whose career catapulted during the 1960s was Lt Gen Willem P. Louw. Maj Gen Hamman described him as a "political plant"²³⁷ and Geldenhuys considered Louw very much a "Hiemstra man".²³⁸ Louw was earmarked early, almost definitely by Hiemstra, as possessing the right attributes as both a soldier and nationalist. Louw enjoyed a meteoric career rise to Chief of the Army by 1968; indeed, notwithstanding his war service – he had been an infantry junior officer in Italy, he was invited to join the *Broederbond* in 1962.²³⁹ Louw was a tough physical soldier who established and

²³⁴ Such was related to me in interviews with Maj Gen D. Moodie, 2 January 2007; General J. Geldenhuys, 14 November 2007 and Col Jan Breytenbach, 26 June 2008.

²³⁵ See Orpen, *Victory in Italy South African Forces World War II (Vol. 5)*, p. 57, 226, 236.

²³⁶ As related to me by Col Breytenbach, but an opinion also shared to varying degrees by Generals J. Geldenhuys, D. Earp and M. Malan.

²³⁷ Interview Maj Gen D. Hamman, July 2007.

²³⁸ Interview, Gen J. Geldenhuys, 14 November 2007.

²³⁹ See Wilkens, I. & Strydom, H., *The Super-Afrikaners*, Jonathan Ball Publishers, Johannesburg, 1968, p.A69.

commanded the Parachute Battalion at a comparatively late age (early 40s). However, he appears to have been disliked by many of his subordinates for aggressive and confrontational management and was also not highly regarded for his capacity as a thinking soldier. Col Crook, a former CF artillery officer, described Louw's manner in the most unfavourable terms,²⁴⁰ while Gen Magnus Malan refers to him bluntly, when relating how Louw informed him of his (Malan's) transfer as Army Deputy Chief in 1972.²⁴¹ Lt Gen Ian Gleeson was candid in referring to Louw as:

very abrupt and a person who would bully rather than discuss and debate. People were pretty fearful of him and got out of his way, rather than look for confrontation. On his visits to the unit in Walvis I do not remember gaining much in the form of inspiration or learning from him. I would rather have had more time with some of his other senior staff than him... I am not sure how he made such rapid progress. I remember him being the first OC of the paras. We were told that the Brits were impressed with their tough approach to their course and naturally Louw must have gained a good reputation as the first OC.²⁴²

Assessing the capability of the SADF General Staff of the early 1960s is partly speculative. Moodie was highly critical and thought with the exception of Adm Biermann, most of the senior commanders were rather mediocre. Moodie believed that in event of war, some General Staff members would have had to be replaced by highly regarded soldiers like Brig Bill Barends.²⁴³ General Malan was not sure how well a conventional threat would have been countered during the early 1960s. One of his concerns was that there was too little delegation of authority to middle-ranking officers from the highest

²⁴⁰ Telephonic discussion with Col Lionel Crook, 11 February 2007.

²⁴¹ Malan, M., *My Life with the SA Defence Force*, p. 63.

²⁴² Email correspondence from Lt Gen I. Gleeson, 31 October 2007.

²⁴³ Interview with Maj Gen D. Moodie, 2 January 2007.

defence positions on the General Staff. As an example, Malan referred to an incident during 1963 when troops were being emplaned during an operation involving a civil disturbance in Damaraland. An army brigadier was actually checking each detail of equipment loaded into the aircraft. Malan considered this authoritarian ‘habit’ in the long run was likely to have been too debilitating at operational level. For both big and small decisions would be decided at a level that during wartime, would exhaust commanders and hamper operational efficiency.²⁴⁴

Hiemstra as a “politician general” during the early 1960s.

Hiemstra’s overt Afrikaner nationalist public and internal politicking within the SADF, presented a difficult challenge to Fouché. For example in August 1960, UP Senator R. Pilkington-Jordan, within private correspondence to Fouché, complained that Hiemstra was misusing his position for party political speeches. Fouché’s carefully worded response was typical political double-talk, remarking that “speechmaking on matters of policy is the function of the responsible Minister and I have taken my stand on this”,²⁴⁵ but also waved an olive branch, while encouraging Pilkington-Jordan to be more discreet with such matters by avoiding the formality of correspondence.

My attitude has always been that I do not think it is correct to discuss such matters through the medium of writing. I am always ready to discuss matters of this nature with any responsible person and you are certainly one with whom I will be only too prepared to have a conversation- you know it.²⁴⁶

²⁴⁴ Interview with Gen M. Malan, 10 August 2007.

²⁴⁵ Ibid.

²⁴⁶ Pilkington-Jordan to Fouché dated 1 August 1960, Box 119, MV 72, Department of Defence, Documentation Centre, Pretoria.

In mid-1962, Commando explained the AKVV's objectives as assisting Afrikaans-speakers in the Defence Force to promote Afrikaans military terms and military culture, besides "strive towards a healthy relationship between the Defence Force and "volk" including "the building up of our own military tradition and good citizenship". Despite Fouché's intentions of Afrikaans-English 'military rapprochement,' Hiemstra tactlessly suggested that SADF English-speaking members should create their own such cultural organisation.²⁴⁷ His zeal for pushing Afrikaner nationalist symbolism within the SADF at every opportunity remained unabated, despite the official Verwoerdian line of 'building a common white nation'.

Close reading of Hiemstra's autobiography reveals numerous references of hostility towards those English-speakers he had perceived as contemptuous of his decisions, with particular loathing reserved for those who had criticised his refusal to volunteer during the war. By the 1960s, Hiemstra had also demonstrated a capacity to stifle such feelings and besides the occasional lapse, he played the role of a loyal civil servant, embracing the expedient common white nationhood of the beleaguered Republic. When Verwoerd announced to Parliament in January 1960 that there would be a referendum amongst the white community to decide whether South Africa would become a republic, Hiemstra wrote that, "a senior English-speaking officer came into his office and began speaking about Dr Verwoerd's announcement." This unknown officer made it clear to Hiemstra that if the Governor General was to be replaced by a State President, he would vote for a

²⁴⁷ Commando, June 1962, p.31.

republic.”²⁴⁸ The full context of this discussion is impossible to resurrect, however, it does suggest that this English-speaking officer was fully conscious of the possible political implications of the republic regarding his own career, besides awareness of Hiemstra’s own stance as an ardent republican, Verwoerd supporter and a politically influential SADF member.²⁴⁹ Hiemstra’s diplomatic ability was confirmed by Lt Gen Jack Dutton, who wrote briefly on his own recollections of Hiemstra:

He was an easy conversationalist with a pleasing manner and could adapt to any situation. When I was OC EP Command I even had him invited to open the Port Alfred Show! He did a fine job and was well accepted by all the descendants of the 1820 Settlers!²⁵⁰

Maj Gen Phil Pretorius who in the 1960s was one of the SADF’s top prospects in terms of intelligence work and the academic study of military affairs, also commented that he experienced Hiemstra as entirely approachable, helpful and diplomatic.²⁵¹ But Hiemstra’s strong emphasis upon promoting Afrikaner nationalist causes within the SADF of the 1960s was not necessarily appreciated by all English-speaking officers, although they may have been cautious at the time about sharing such views. For example, Lt Gen Ian Gleeson remarked that Hiemstra’s non-service during World War Two was a well-known detail amongst officers and did not promote respect.²⁵² Maj Gen Moodie suggested that he experienced Hiemstra as increasingly more “political” over the years and not particularly impressive as a soldier. Moodie also related that Hiemstra had personally

²⁴⁸ Hiemstra, *Die Wilde Haf*, p.279.

²⁴⁹ Although trying at length during June 2005, through his son Louis, to establish from the very elderly Hiemstra the identity of this English-speaking officer, while the general recalled the context he could not place a name to this individual.

²⁵⁰ Short account of Lt Gen J. Dutton’s military career as emailed to this author: 1 June 2006.

²⁵¹ Interview with Maj Gen P. Pretorius, 26 June 2007.

²⁵² Email correspondence from Lt Gen I. Gleeson dated 28 and 31 October 2007.

disadvantaged him by revoking a decision made by Grobbelaar to despatch him (Moodie) as a military attaché to Australia, sending a friend (of Hiemstra's) instead.²⁵³ Most of the retired officers interviewed acknowledged that Hiemstra was perceived as having a political style with which he conducted his professional work.

As shown earlier, shortly after Verwoerd shifted Erasmus to the justice portfolio in early 1960, Hiemstra had severely criticized the former minister's management of the SADF at cabinet level. Hiemstra also amplified his strident calls for full white male conscription. Hiemstra clearly interpreted Fouché's appointment against the backdrop of the coming republic, as a moment to push for his own defence vision. As already demonstrated, Hiemstra's public utterances over conscription intensely angered both Commandant General Melville and his deputy Grobbelaar²⁵⁴, but also testified to Hiemstra's barely disguised contempt for some of the Erasmus's decisions. Hiemstra clearly felt confident that he had political backing at the highest level, more so than Erasmus, or the previous Commandant Generals, or even Grobbelaar, to whom he was responsible as his deputy.²⁵⁵

²⁵³ Interview with Maj Gen D. Moodie, 2 January 2007.

²⁵⁴ See letter dated 22 June 1960 from Hiemstra to Melville, KG Gp 5, Box 326, File No. KG/GPW/2/1/2, *Verdigingsprobleem en Oplossing: Waardeuring deur Veggenl. R. C. Hiemstra*, Department of Defence Documentation Centre, Pretoria.

²⁵⁵ The chapters in Hiemstra's *Die Wilde Haf* named "In Die Pylvak" and "Die Nuwe Kommandant Generaal", pp 271-311 contain numerous reference to Hiemstra addressing a wide range of gatherings with overt political contents.

Hiemstra as Commandant General

In anticipation of his being appointed Commandant General upon Grobbelaar's retirement, Hiemstra during 1964 embarked upon a tour of Europe, ostensibly in search of new ideas on defence. He was declined entry into the USA, but cordially received in the United Kingdom, Portugal and France. Hiemstra made a particular point of inquiring about air-defence systems during the British leg of his tour,²⁵⁶ this being at the time a specific SADF concern. In May 1965, Fouché announced Hiemstra's appointment as the new Commandant General to succeed Grobbelaar. The minister emphasised his view that Hiemstra was held in high regard by SADF officers of both language groups and despite his lack of a war record, possessed all the requirements for the post. Although the English-language press continued referring unfavourably Hiemstra's non-war service,²⁵⁷ Fouché deftly stepped around their outrage. Hiemstra came under predictable attack from the UP MPs Gay and Bronkhorst who called upon the government to reconsider the appointment, not least because it would cause friction amongst the senior officers. Hiemstra later swept this criticism aside by saying that Bronkhorst was still living in another era²⁵⁸ and in a sense, he was now correct. Although riled by UP MPs like Bronkhorst, Hiemstra believed that history and contemporary political issues were on the side of Afrikaner nationalists in drawing 'English' support at the expense of the UP. Although many English South Africans still despised Hiemstra for his refusal to serve in the war, much had also changed by the mid-1960s in terms of the political context. The

²⁵⁶ Hiemstra, *Die Wilde Haf*, pp 295-298.

²⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, pp 301-302.

²⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 303.

white community and the white English component in particular were also enjoying prosperity. Amidst such new circumstances and imperatives, issues like Hiemstra's non-participation, during a war twenty years earlier were fading in importance; not least because of growing political apathy markedly discernable within in the English community, itself partly a consequence of affluence. But there was also an omnipresent awareness amongst whites that new national defence issues now existed far removed from those 1939-1945. By the mid-1960s some English whites were even starting to vote NP, while the UP's support continued to decline, as many middle aged war veterans focussed upon work, families and the ex-servicemen's Memorable Organisation of Tin Hats (MOTHS). The latter organisation was not a front for the parliamentary opposition, nor did it display any strong party political component.²⁵⁹ Even in Natal, the war veterans' anti-republic marches of 1960 were never to be repeated again during the rest of the decade or thereafter in the same anti-nationalist form.

Hiemstra's appointment and his publicly known perceptions on South Africa's "enemies", accentuated the contemporary climate on communism being perceived as a particularly dangerous threat to the country. The Afrikaner-nationalist right had to an extent adjusted its focus from "external communist dangers" and its "traditional enemies", namely British Imperialism or African nationalism, to the possibility of sedition and betrayal from within.²⁶⁰ Schalk Pienaar, the newly appointed editor of the

²⁵⁹ See Roos, Ordinary Springboks White Servicemen and Social Justice, 1939-1961, p.193.

²⁶⁰ See for example, within an article on an address delivered on behalf of the AKVV and reported upon in Commando, July 1965, p.43: "There is even a more subtle attack against us. There are those, even within Afrikaner ranks, who want to break down our *volk* on the cultural front and deliver us to those who seek

new Afrikaans Sunday newspaper *Rapport*, was one voice within the Afrikaner establishment who challenged the idea that military means would be adequate to deal with black South African discontents.²⁶¹

Hiemstra was also now being invited to address predominantly white English-speaking audiences. Speaking at a huge air show in Durban during June 1965, he was not only accompanied by an impressive SAAF contingent that participated with its latest aircraft, but he also used the occasion to warn against communist subversion. He spoke about the SAAF being now modernised to hit back hard at any aggressor, considering the “open threats” made by communists.²⁶² In his 1965 *Commando* Christmas message, Hiemstra referred to there being “destructive forces afoot, who would deprive us of the way of life we cherish so dearly for something of their choosing.”²⁶³ He was speaking within the context of ultra-conservative white political thinking, whereby although African militant nationalism within the republic’s borders had been crushed, a belief persisted within the NP’s right-wing that communist subversion remaining embedded within all extra-parliamentary opposition to government policy. Such was the line of the *verkrampes*²⁶⁴ within the NP, whom as Giliomee explains, were by the mid-1960s, starting to jostle with *verligtes*²⁶⁵ over the “soul of Afrikaner nationalism,” by “engaging in witch hunts against

our demise. In our literature, in our churches, and at every cultural level they fleetingly raise their heads.” (author’s translation).

²⁶¹ See Giliomee, *The Afrikaners*, pp 548-549.

²⁶² Hiemstra, *Die Wilde Haf*, p.304.

²⁶³ *Commando*, December 1965, p.10.

²⁶⁴ Literally, the narrow-minded or extremely conservative.

²⁶⁵ Literally, the more “enlightened”.

everything that was not traditional”.²⁶⁶ Out of this tension within Afrikaner politics, accelerated an hysterical and uncritical over-reaction to a “communist threat” purportedly manifesting itself within and without, with the symptoms being discerned particularly strongly at SADF leadership level. Hiemstra’s outlook was clearly in line with the *verkrampes*.

Structural changes within the SADF command under Hiemstra

Grobbelaar retired in September 1965 during the height of the Verwoerd years after having concentrated particularly upon the new conventional warfare armaments purchases. Grobbelaar and Fouché were congratulated by the UP defence spokesperson Gay for “repairi(ng) the damage done” (to the SADF) “or for everything they could do”....(and) were permitted to do”. Gay also called upon Grobbelaar’s services to be retained rather than appoint Hiemstra as SADF Chief; supported by Bronkhorst, who maintained the same position as he had from the 1950s, suggesting that it was unfair for war veterans to serve under a man who chose not to fight.²⁶⁷ UP objections were of no consequence as Hiemstra assumed his new position on 1 October 1965. His political influence had also accentuated by this time; he is listed as being on the Broederbond Executive Council from 1964-65.²⁶⁸ Hiemstra emphasised that the time had arrived for SADF reorganisation, pointing that it had been five years, since the command and control structures had been shaken up and this now required review. He noted that there

²⁶⁶ Giliomee, The Afrikaners, p.549.

²⁶⁷ Hansard, 17 Feb 1965, pp 8528-8529.

²⁶⁸ See Wilkins, I. & Strydom, H., The Super-Afrikaners, p.A50.

remained deficiencies in the quantity and quality of SADF equipment, stressing his belief that the SADF needed to move towards full white male conscription and that increasing the SADF's manpower resources was the main task for the immediate future.²⁶⁹ Hiemstra was concerned in general about training standards that were already under investigation via the Groenewoud committee (see chapter seven, p. 415). But one of Hiemstra's most important concerns was to ensure the creation of a "coordinated staff group".²⁷⁰

Despite the considerable threat appraisals completed between 1960 and 1965 and used as references in this dissertation, Hiemstra on assuming the top SADF job, effectively rebutted his predecessor's work immediately. Hiemstra refers in his autobiography to a statement he gave to a journalist from *Die Transvaaler*, almost the very day which he became Commandant General, wherein he intimated that little had been done to evaluate what threats existed and how the SADF needed to be restructured in order to deal with them.

from (the SADF's) inception, (it) was never properly scrutinised to establish how large it should be or how it should be structured for its role. All changes which occurred in the past were haphazard attempts by those in command, often just to satisfy one or other personal whim. There was also no in depth study made of possible threats, on which to base our country's defence requirements...I believe that our chief task, from now on and as we advance, to ensure that the equipment made available to us, will be utilised to its maximum efficiency. I intend improving and changing the entire command and command structure, so that it can operate at any time both effectively and without (further) change. In my opinion the heads of Defence Force components must be capable of rendering command functions and not be simply staff officers, as has been the case. We have

²⁶⁹ *Commando*, October 1965, p.9.

²⁷⁰ *Die Transvaaler*, 1 October 1965, p.9.

also never possessed a properly coordinated staff group or general staff. What my predecessors referred to as a ‘General Staff’ was not that. It was rather a sort of “senior command group”.²⁷¹

Hiemstra maintained his projection of the Republic having to militarily be able to fend for itself. That historically the country during the last world war and in Korea had participated as part of Allied forces that had also provided logistic support and equipment, but never was it envisaged that South Africa may have to fight alone. However, “the rapid acquisition of independence by the African states and world reaction to a ‘minor’ incident like Sharpeville changed this”.²⁷² Hiemstra went on to speak about his belief in a national service system, whereby the SADF’s manpower problems might be resolved by the best training and use of the troops during the period they were available.²⁷³

Besides the oncoming national service the other most important changes which Hiemstra brought in were the creation of two separate commands, namely Joint Combat Forces (JCF) and Maritime Command under Maj Gen Nic Bierman and Vice Adm Hugo Biermann respectively. It was envisaged that these would be the command structures by which any land, air or sea threat could be countered, with these two commanders selecting what forces they required to meet any particular type of threat. These two commands along with the three services Chiefs and the Commandant General formed the now termed “Supreme Command” or “*Opperbevel*” of the SADF. With the Directorate

²⁷¹ Hiemstra, *Die Wilde Haf*, pp 305-306.

²⁷² *Ibid.*

²⁷³ *Die Transvaaler*, 1 October 1965, p.9.

of Planning and Operations (DPO) being dissolved, which had effectively formed part of the second tier of command below the Commandant General, the short-lived Deputy Commandant General post was also scrapped.²⁷⁴ Former SAAF Chief Lt Gen Earp felt negatively regarding Hiemstra's changes, contending firstly Hiemstra was significantly disadvantaged by the fact that he had never been Chief of the Air Force and had not flown operationally after the early 1940s. Earp maintained that Hiemstra's philosophy of command and control contained fundamental errors. For example, if the SADF were to have taken some military action in SWA, a "force-multiplying" capacity was critical, where there would be an urgent need to move personnel. But professionally, according to Earp, it would have created problems where the SAAF Chief could not actually move his own men and equipment, effectively a "subversion of his power". Army and air force Chiefs could not command their forces committed to action, for this was the sole responsibility of the JCF or Maritime Command Chiefs. Earp believed that Hiemstra's thinking was coloured by contemporary Canadian military philosophy that all soldiers are the same, fighting the same war – hence Hiemstra's early 1970s eccentric ideas on a common SADF uniform, where even the navy would be dressed in khaki.²⁷⁵

Lt Gen Dutton also considered the concept unsatisfactory, citing the same reasons as Earp of it creating confusion of seniority and command prerogatives. The JCF Chief held the

²⁷⁴ See Cape Times, 7 December 1965, p.1 as an indication of how the press reported the changes.

²⁷⁵ Telephonic interview with Lt Gen Earp, 6 January 2008. A number of other former SADF members interviewed commented with negative recollections regarding Hiemstra's failed efforts in 1970 to 1971 to ensure one uniform for all services of the Defence Force, as part of his notion of one uniform emphasising "one force". Rear Adm Chris Bennett related how at formal dinner for navy officers in honour of the State President, the plan was finally scrapped when Jim Fouché, now State President and former defence minister, publicly rejected the idea effectively humiliating Hiemstra, who was also present in his Commandant General capacity. Interview with Rear Adm C. Bennett, 25 January 2005. See Hiemstra's version of the uniform controversy in Die Wilde Haf, pp 333-336.

equivalent rank level as the Army and Air Force Chiefs, setting up the potential for professional clashes and jealousies impeding operations, while the same possibilities existed with the Chief of Maritime Forces (Biermann) who was also Naval Chief of Staff, but held the same level rank (Vice Admiral) as the SAAF Chief (Lieutenant General).²⁷⁶ Hiemstra's mid-1960s re-organisation of command and control received considerable criticism from former SADF members interviewed.

Hiemstra and a “charge” of being “too political” (1966)

Early in 1966, rumours had circulated that Hiemstra would be willing to instigate a coup, described, “at the snap of a finger” based upon a source (who according to Hiemstra) was “a certain highly placed person” that he declined to identify. Also alleged was that Hiemstra was a member of the *Republikeinse Party*, a tiny shadowy Afrikaner movement of the period that apparently aligned itself to the political right of Verwoerd.²⁷⁷ Both military intelligence and the Security Police Chief, Brigadier Hendrik Van den Berg investigated an English-speaking Dr Du Toit of Wakkerstroom who had apparently made the allegations. The records available indicate the results to be inconclusive and the rumours appeared to amount to little more than gossip.²⁷⁸ However, Hiemstra's apparent

²⁷⁶ Interview with Lt Gen J. Dutton, December 2006.

²⁷⁷ Letter by Hiemstra dated 25 January 1966, apparently to Military Intelligence Head. Chief of Staff Intelligence (Gp 5), Box 257, Z/10/1/6/4, Aantuigings teen Gen. R.C. Hiemstra, (25/5/66-13/10/67). DDDC. The existence and description of the *Republikeinse Party* was confirmed and explained in a brief communication with Professor Hermann Giliomee, 17 June 2005.

²⁷⁸ Document entitled “Ondersoek: Dr Du Toit: Wakkerstroom”, signed on 11 February 1966 by a Major Van Rooy of Defence Military Intelligence. Chief of Staff Intelligence (Gp 5), Box 257, Z/10/1/6/4, Aantuigings teen Gen. R.C. Hiemstra, (25/5/66-13/10/67), DDDC.

secrecy over his source seemed to hamper the clandestine investigation by the police.²⁷⁹ On concluding such, the police suggested a certain Mr Gillespie, as a consequence of a personal dispute with Dr Du Toit, had deliberately starting spreading damaging rumours to discredit his opponent. It endorsed a view held by some that Hiemstra's regularly voiced opinions upon Afrikaner political, cultural and national issues greyed over into his professional work. Indeed the question must have been asked in some circles as to whether the Hiemstra was harbouring political ambitions, although such was rejected by his son Professor Louis Hiemstra.²⁸⁰

However, during his ascent to the top SADF position, Hiemstra's emphatic stated belief that the traditionally understood Afrikaner nationalist historical mission was a divine calling placed him in an entirely different category from other senior officers on the General Staff (later Supreme Command). Hiemstra's own admiration for Verwoerd is an obvious theme throughout his autobiography, referring for example, to the Prime Minister's rebuttal of MacMillan's Wind of Change speech as a 'brilliant performance',²⁸¹ besides many other issues where he reflects upon national politics. Hiemstra's unquestioning support and faith in Verwoerd might have ensured him the future position of Defence Minister had the Prime Minister not been assassinated in 1966.

²⁷⁹ Document entitled "Ondersoek: Dr Du Toit: Wakkerstroom", signed on 11 February 1966 by a Major Van Rooy of Defence Military Intelligence where he stated "It wouldassist the investigations if he could know who the CG SADF source was". (Author's translation) Chief of Staff Intelligence (Gp 5), Box 257, Z/10/1/6/4, Aantuigings teen Gen. R.C. Hiemstra, (25/5/66-13/10/67), DDDC.

²⁸⁰ Telephonic discussion with Professor Louis Hiemstra during December 2005.

²⁸¹ Hiemstra, Die Wilde Haf, p.279.

The abolition of the position of Defence Secretary

Also in line with Hiemstra's determination to centralize control of the SADF to professional officers only, was his abolition of the position of Defence Secretary, the last incumbent being one Vladimir Steyn. According to Hiemstra, tensions had heightened when the Defence Secretary warned new Defence Minister P. W. Botha that military personnel were in general irresponsible regarding financial affairs.²⁸² The Defence Secretary position, which had been part of the South African defence structure since Union, effectively meant that civilian civil servants had significant control in military business. This was a situation that Hiemstra had long been hostile towards and was supported by Fouché who two years earlier was quoted as stating that complaints concerning the Secretariat were a "delicate matter" and that he "became annoyed when the military side had to wait for approval by the administrative side".²⁸³ The tensions were compounded during mid-1963, when a Secretariat official, John Deacon, was arrested together with several SADF officers in connection with bribery charges connected to the purchasing of military equipment.²⁸⁴ *Die Burger* and *Die Transvaaler's* report of the officers all being Afrikaners,²⁸⁵ further angered Fouché as damaging to his attempts at revitalizing the SADF's public standing. Qualms were expressed via *Die Burger* who welcomed a judicial inquiry, fearing that gossip and rumours were politically damaging to the Defence Department and responsible minister.²⁸⁶

²⁸² Ibid., p.312.

²⁸³ *Cape Times*, 5 June 1964, p.7.

²⁸⁴ Ibid, 8 July 1963, p.9.

²⁸⁵ Ibid., 1 August 1963, "Arms Fraud being investigated Fouché's Sharp Reply to 'Burger'".

²⁸⁶ *Die Burger*, 6 April 1964, Editorial, p.6.

The resultant details of the trials regarding several Department of Defence officers were kept secret as was the Commission appointed to investigate.²⁸⁷ The situation embarrassed Fouché as there had also been implications of breaches in state security regarding weapon types under order. According to Seegers, secrecy within civilian involvement regarding defence spending in the 1960s eventually degenerated into corruption²⁸⁸ and such was already grasped by the UP defence spokespersons. They urged Fouché to move away from “unnecessary secrecy,” because defence was vulnerable to black-marketeering and irregularities in arms-purchases, which would “lower national morale”.²⁸⁹

Undoubtedly, for the Defence Secretariat, the alleged irregularities hardly promoted its value or supported sustaining the role it played in authorizing arms purchases. Hiemstra further claimed that as a consequence of the Secretariat’s operation, the SADF had in the past been disadvantaged by the Civil Service Commission and Treasury. Hiemstra used the first opportunity of bringing the disputes to new defence minister P.W. Botha’s attention, citing his complete disagreement with the SADF “two-headed structure” of the Commandant General and Secretary for Defence. Botha appointed a committee of senior civil servants to investigate and they recommended the Secretariat’s disbandment.²⁹⁰ Budgetary responsibility was transferred to a Comptroller of Finance Service who reported directly to the SADF Chief. This was part of a new series of Directorate-

²⁸⁷ See Seegers, The Military in the Making of Modern South Africa, p.143 and also, Hansard 11 Feb 1965, pp 915-918.

²⁸⁸ Seegers, The Military in the Making of Modern South Africa, pp 142-143.

²⁸⁹ See Cape Times, 7 February 1964, p.7, article ‘No Mercy for Arms Cheats, Fouché tells House’ and 6 February 1964, p.6, “Warning on morale of nation”.

²⁹⁰ Hiemstra, Die Wilde Haf, pp 312-313.

Generals, created according to Seegers, to ensure more specialization.²⁹¹ With cabinet approval, Hiemstra was appointed Secretary for Defence from 17 October 1966 in addition to his Commandant General office. With Botha's assistance, Hiemstra was accentuating the prerogative of the SADF to operate more independently from any civil control, besides that of the defence minister.²⁹² Maj Gen Phil Pretorius explained that the Defence Secretary had actually ranked above the Commandant General, and Hiemstra wanted a direct line to the minister, not be forced to work across a civilian.²⁹³ Pretorius's opinion was shared by Gen Magnus Malan, who pointed out that the Secretary for Defence effectively held the purse strings when it came to budgets and arms purchases. Malan believed that it was a humiliating situation for senior SADF officers to have to operate through a civilian civil servant.²⁹⁴ By 1968, Hiemstra was instrumental in finally achieving his long-held aim of full compulsory military national service for all white males from age eighteen.

Conclusion

Erasmus and Hiemstra were jointly largely successful in repositioning the Defence Force to a significant extent within the Afrikaner nationalist domain by the time of Erasmus's departure at the end of 1959, this applying particularly regarding the army. With his unswerving commitment to Afrikaner nationalist principles, and notwithstanding his abilities as a manager and organiser, Hiemstra's most enduring legacy as a professional

²⁹¹ Seegers, *The Military in the Making of Modern South Africa*, pp 142-143.

²⁹² Stratford, D.O. (Cmdt.), The Office of Secretary for Defence, *Military History Journal*, Vol. 1, No. 3. Hiemstra, *Die Wilde Haf*, pp 312-313, p.316.

²⁹³ Interview with Maj Gen P. Pretorius, 25 June 2007.

²⁹⁴ Interview with Gen M. Malan, 10 August 2007.

soldier for nearly four decades was that of a political apparatchik serving the SADF on behalf of the NP. After a meteoric rise from 1948, he was appointed Deputy Commandant General by January 1961 and Commandant General by October 1965, without even having been Chief of the Air Force. Hiemstra had not flown operationally after 1941 neither had he held any large-scale command involving significant management of armed forces in a potential war situation. His career post-1948 was effectively in administration duties, which as shown in this chapter, he often discharged with a particular political agenda.

As an often controversial figure during press discussions on South African defence issues during the 1960s, amongst the SADF's senior officers, Hiemstra was the most obviously committed Afrikaner nationalist and politically influential through his Broederbond membership. Hiemstra's career was decisive in politicising the SADF and promoting it as a cornerstone of defending apartheid and white South Africa. Yet he receives virtually no attention by Seegers, Frankel and other writers who have referred to the SADF during the 1960s; a gap which this thesis attempts to correct. Throughout the early 1960s, Hiemstra endorsed his reputation as a military man prepared to court controversy with politically loaded speeches, including cavalier challenges to his seniors over conscription. Paradoxically, this was a markedly outspoken approach to follow, within a contemporary social culture of extreme conformity, for the assumptions of hierarchy were explicitly part of Afrikaner nationalist state structures. The interpretation proposed here of Hiemstra, based largely upon interviews, archival documentation and Hiemstra's autobiography, suggests that Fouché acknowledged Hiemstra's political profile and his

history of Afrikaner “political martyrdom”. Hiemstra had no equal amongst other senior SADF officers during the period and this explicitly enhanced his influence with the Afrikaner nationalist establishment.

Hiemstra’s promotion of the *AKVV* was a vivid example of superimposing Afrikaner traditionalism onto SADF culture. This political role was also government sanctioned, initially through Erasmus and later more tacitly by Fouché, who trod warily, not to unduly further alienate other constituencies associated with the SADF. Particularly the white English members, many of whose larger community intensely disliked Hiemstra. However, Hiemstra enjoyed significant support in the Afrikaner section, a situation that no NP politician could ignore, especially during a period when Afrikaner nationalist hegemony and triumph were slowly waning with affluence and urbanisation. Therefore, government clamours about outside threats were also about retaining NP support besides shoring up Afrikaner and a broader white nationalism. These were strategies to which Hiemstra projected his political rhetoric to further draw white public consent and support for the SADF and military service.

Fouché could also not risk further division and conflict amongst his officers by appointing Hiemstra over Grobbelaar in 1960. Neither could Fouché ignore an officer of Grobbelaar’s experience regarding the potential military threats supposedly facing the country. Hiemstra had already disagreed in private with Grobbelaar over conscription and there had been significant acrimony over contestation for the top position. Yet despite their mutual professional jealousy and antipathy, Hiemstra and Grobbelaar complimented

one another: The decorated army officer with World War Two experience, yet a loyal Afrikaner nationalist, alongside a kind of political commissar in military uniform. In leading a political party so markedly devoid of military experience, Verwoerd was extraordinarily lucky to have both Grobbelaar and Hiemstra, while Fouché's dependence upon the former was largely a consequence of the NP's dearth of defence expertise. After 1965, Hiemstra worked closely with new defence minister P.W. Botha, who was younger and more assertive than his predecessor besides determined to learn quickly about his portfolio.

The SADF General Staff of 1960-68 included a mixture of the experienced, the well respected and the very average. Anglicised Afrikaner and English-speaking senior/middle ranking officers, some with considerable World War Two experience were placed strategically into important leadership positions, as Fouché tried to restore efficiency and morale. Fouché had to play a delicate political game of balancing 'merit' appointments with political demands. His legacy amongst surviving SADF members of the period interviewed is almost consistently that of the man who supposedly ended political favouritism in appointments. Although such appears to be only partially true, for Fouché operated as a member of a cabinet determined to maintain Afrikaner control and unity during the uncertain republican future of the early 1960s.

CHAPTER 3: SADF threat perceptions: 1960 to 1966

Introduction

This chapter concerns how the South African military during 1960-66 perceived military threats. African nationalist organisations are discussed so far as they are relevant to the military's own perceptions and operation. Previously classified SADF documentation is used to explain the Defence Force's appraisals of the security situation from 1960, particularly threats of a conventional warfare nature. The SADF informed itself of the supposed links between the South African dissidents training in Africa and elsewhere and of political changes resulting from decolonising and newly independent African countries, besides Cold War developments in the broader international scene. All these were also studied by the SADF as to how they might impact upon national security.

At the beginning of the decade, Deputy Commandant General Hiemstra reflected that if global war broke out, it was possible that South Africa might face an "attack from Africa" (referring to bellicose utterances from African and Indian spokesmen).²⁹⁵ "Invasion talk" and threats of "action" appeared regularly in the South African press during particularly 1961 to 1963 and after the Angolan uprisings by black nationalists during late 1961.²⁹⁶ Afrikaner nationalist historian, C. J. F. Muller described the period as follows:

²⁹⁵ See Hiemstra, *Die Wilde Haf*, pp 271-272.

²⁹⁶ For further reading see: Van der Waals, W.S., *Portugal's War in Angola, 1961-1974*, Ashanti Publishing, First Edition, Rivonia, 1993.

A gulf separated the new Africa from the Republic....and the prospect of bridging it seemed remote. South Africa's former careless isolation on the African continent threatened to become real isolation that was not without menace. South of the Zambezi 'western civilization was on the defensive. The menace came not from the closing of comparatively insignificant markets or from the military strength of the black African states, but from forces in the world, at the UN and elsewhere, whose support the African states sought to obtain. The Republic responded to this widespread animosity by tightening the bonds amongst her White population, encouraging immigration from Europe and maintaining an armed vigilance. She was fortunate she was enjoying an economic boom.²⁹⁷

Muller gave a predictable description of white South Africa facing and withstanding threats during the early 1960s, but this quote is devoid of the detail and ideological obsessions that dominated the government and SADF intelligence at the time, when confronted with such an unpredictable future. Muller refers readers to three of G.D. Scholtz's works. This nationalist historian and political analyst published prolifically and his work constituted one significant basis by which the SADF leaders attempted to comprehend global security trends potentially affecting the Republic in a military/strategic sense; such is outlined further at various points in this chapter.

SADF perceptions of internal African nationalism as military threats

Of the early 1960s conventional warfare threats, which the SADF appraised and armed against, official documentation testifies to considerable intelligence gathering detailing PAC and other South African dissident activities. Against this atmosphere of uncertainty, the government and SADF believed external international military intervention could

²⁹⁷ Muller C.F. J., Five Hundred Years A History of South Africa, Academica, Pretoria, 1969, 3rd Revised Edition, 1981, p.564.

occur; either to support the revolutionaries; end apartheid to 'preserve world peace' or wrest Republican control away from SWA. The PAC connection to a number of high profile national incidents during 1960 to 1962: Sharpeville; Pondoland unrest; the *Poqo* violence against white citizens; ensured this organisation received particular scrutiny.²⁹⁸ The Pondoland disturbances of 1960 to 1961 were a kind of 'peasant's revolt' against government attempts to force new settlement patterns and leaders upon communities. The uprising received a determined response by SADF contingents.²⁹⁹ But particularly after the *Poqo* Paarl and Bashee River murders of whites in late 1962 and early 1963, a range of horror press stories were constantly fed anew by government announcements, magnifying the impact upon the white community, already conscious of the ongoing racial violence in the Congo and attacks the previous year on Angolan settler communities. Such details postulated myriad dread possibilities of violent revolution in South Africa, supposedly sponsored by communist inspired intrigue. Newspapers continually published articles on incidents involving, according to the government, subversion and violence implemented by *Poqo*.³⁰⁰

Important backdrops to SADF perceptions of threats and the white community's general concurrence thereof, included: *Umkhonto we Sizwe* (MK) sabotage activities and later

²⁹⁸ In an interview (10 August 2007) with Gen M. Malan who was involved in the SADF's Directorate of Planning and Operations (DPO), he recalled how Brig Jannie Burger, a World War Two veteran (Considered by Malan and Col Jan Breytenbach (interview 26 June 2008) as one of the SADF's top soldiers) had been instrumental in viewing the *Poqo* activities as potential harbingers of guerrilla warfare against the Republic. Burger was active during the early 1960s within Eastern Province command.

²⁹⁹ See brief comments by Alexander, M., *The Militarization of White South African Society, 1948-1990*, *Scientia Militaria*, Vol. 30 (2), 2000, p. 282.

³⁰⁰ See recent article on fear being a significant factor within white South African politics during the early 1960s: Du Bruyn, D., and Wessels, A., Vrees as factor in die regse blanke politiek in Suid-Afrika tydens die tweede decade van die apartheidera, 1958-69, *Journal for Contemporary History*, Vol.33, No.1, June 2008.

that of the largely white African Resistance Movement (ARM); the Rivonia trial and revelations of *Operation Mayibuye* which particularly influenced SADF operations; besides the 1964 Johannesburg Station bomb and the arrest of Braam Fisher. From 1961 and during the months following Rivonia in 1963 to 1964, white South Africans had felt beleaguered and shaken. International condemnations; actions by dissident movements; and the often violent manifestations of African nationalism were linked in popular perceptions to ‘communism,’ which the SADF viewed during the 1960s as the most important threat, “motivated by Red China and the Soviet Union”. An SADF military intelligence (“DMI report listing potential threats facing the RSA in the period July 1965 to June 1966”) phrased it simply:

In spite of communism today being a world threat, it is a huge threat to the RSA because of the considerable advances it has already made in Africa³⁰¹

Tanganyika/Tanzania was a particular SADF focus of concern regarding the military training of South African dissidents and even more significantly after the January/February 1964 Zanzibar Revolution. DMI viewed the Chinese influence as potentially more dangerous than the Soviets, understanding the peasant based revolution as more appropriate to a continent still many decades short of meaningful industrialisation. The Chinese presence in Dar-Es-Salam was a regular focus of DMI operatives and reports.³⁰² At a popular level, *Die Huisgenoot* in 1964 reported on Chinese activities in Tanzania, noting “one huge advantage (over the Soviets): they are not

³⁰¹ HSI AMI GP3, Box 429, DMI Speciale Politieke Verslag Die Politieke Aanslag op die RSA, Jul 65-Jun 66), p. 12, Department of Defence Documentation Centre, Pretoria.

³⁰² HSI AMI GP3, Box 429, DMI Speciale Politieke Verslag Die Politieke Aanslag op die RSA, Jul 65-Jun 66, pp 13-14, Department of Defence Documentation Centre, Pretoria. Here the reference particularly refers to Tanzania and concerns of Chinese arming and influencing the politics of the state along revolutionary lines or “re-orientating”.

white”,³⁰³ thereby playing upon readers racial paranoia that in Africa, “non-whites” would find anti-white South African commonality even more effectively than white Russians. Vladimer Shubin, a previous Soviet historian who has written extensively and recently on the relations between the Soviet Union and ANC, insists that despite Soviet financial assistance from 1960 for the SACP and MK, the USSR did not initiate any military option against the white South African government. Shubin confirms that the Russians agreed to assist with arms and training, but pushed rather for the latter to be conducted within African countries.³⁰⁴ Nevertheless, some MK training occurred within the Soviet Union,³⁰⁵ further accentuating SADF perceptions of communism being the main motivator behind the ANC.

The SADF had noted that from mid-1963, the Liberation Committee (LC) was established by the Organisation of African Unity (OAU), intended to if necessary liberate South Africa by armed force.³⁰⁶ In a report from the Director of Military Intelligence ending 15 December 1964 concerning the “Unconventional Military Threat”, the view was that “subversive organisations” remained a concern, in the sense that they were “underground” while “planning and organising were being continued on an increasing scale outside the RSA.” The ‘LC’ was reported to be investigating the defence plans of the governments in South Africa, Rhodesia, Angola and Mozambique, ascertaining the

³⁰³ Die Huisgenoot, 17 March 1964, p.16.

³⁰⁴ Shubin V., ANC A view from Moscow, Mayibuye Books, UWC, Bellville, p. 43.

³⁰⁵ Besides Shubin’s work mentioned above, see also recent accounts by amongst others, Bopela, T, Daluxolo, Umkhonto we Sizwe Fighting for a Divided People, Galago Publishing, Alberton, 1999; Kasrils, R., Armed and Dangerous From Undercover Struggle to Freedom, Jonathan Ball Publishers, Cape Town, 2004 edition.

³⁰⁶ Davenport, T.R.H., South Africa A Modern History, Third Edition, McMillan Publishers, Johannesburg, 1987, p. 403.

strengths of the government security forces and that of black guerrilla movements for possible military support.³⁰⁷ The SADF were well informed on anti-South African guerrilla activities in Tanzania,³⁰⁸ although the military capacity of these opponents was puny and of little real threat. However, SADF commanders were concerned that in the long term guerrillas may succeed in creating conditions conducive to UN or Afro-Asian military invasion. The ANC and SACP also took seriously Afro-Asian rhetoric of militarily threatening the white south and *Operation Mayibuye* had assumed military assistance from African countries.³⁰⁹

Operation *Mayibuye*

It is not within the scope of this thesis to outline *Mayibuye* in detail: Suffice to say that it included the intended procurement of explosives to be used against a range of targets, while “internal guerrillas,” would be supported by 7000 externally trained fighters covertly landed by sea.³¹⁰ Justice Minister Vorster believed in 1961 the country was facing a revolution, a situation, as Seegers acknowledges, not entirely imaginary.³¹¹ Although SADF installations were the targets of some of these actions,³¹² besides the 1960 troop call-ups and post-Sharpeville deployment, the military was not involved in

³⁰⁷ KG GP 5 BOX 472, KG/OPS/4/6, Guerilla Oorlogvoering, Director of Military Intelligence, Supplementary Military Intelligence Report, RSA – The Unconventional Military Threat, Period Ending 15 December 64, pp 2-3.

³⁰⁸ The extent of South African government capacity to inform themselves of the MK guerilla training activities is clear from Shubin, V., ANC A view from Moscow, p. 31.

³⁰⁹ Shubin V., ANC A view from Moscow, p. 55.

³¹⁰ Details available in a wide range of secondary sources and documents; for example see Seegers, A., The Military in the Making of Modern South Africa, p.126; Shubin V., ANC A view from Moscow, pp 54-59.

³¹¹ See Seegers, The Military in the Making of Modern South Africa , p. 125.

³¹² Slovo, The Unfinished Autobiography, pp 153-154.

any high-profile action against African nationalist guerrillas. Unknown to the public, the SADF deployed according to perceptions of an “internal threat,” where such appeared to conform to “*Mayibuye*” patterns. By 1964, SADF military documentation reported in detail regarding dissidents from South African located in Tanganyika/Tanzania, with detailed and carefully compiling descriptions of their military training and anticipated strategies.³¹³

Although this dissertation is not specifically focussed upon the histories of resistance movements, nevertheless, it is worthwhile referring briefly to some details of *Mayibuye* that influenced the SADF’s planning. Several white SACP members and MK military instructors also had some wartime military experience. Amongst others, Arthur Goldreich fought in Jewish military units in Palestine, while Jack Hodgson and Joe Slovo served in World War Two.³¹⁴ They and a handful of like-minded veterans constituted a miniscule group who participated in attempted armed uprising against the South African government during the 1960s.³¹⁵ One consequence of this was that the SADF and South African Police (SAP) particularly demonized and tailed white communists during the early 1960s. Hence, the intense government and media focus Fisher during 1964-65 upon

³¹³ KG GP 5 BOX 472, KG/OPS/4/6, Guerilla Oorlogvoering, Director of Military Intelligence, Supplementary Military Intelligence Report, RSA – The Unconventional Military Threat, Period Ending 15 December 64. Die Huisgenoot, followed the South African exiles in Tanzania, see 20 March 1964 edition, showing that the government allowed enough information for the public domain to reinforce the polarization between whites and “black communists”.

³¹⁴ Shubin, *ANC A View from Moscow*, pp 24-25.

³¹⁵ See Roos, N., *Ordinary Springboks*, 2005, pp 175-176 and Slovo, J., *The Unfinished Autobiography*, Hodder and Stoughton, London, 1995, p.153.

Kasrils, R., *Armed and Dangerous From Undercover Struggle to Freedom*, Jonathan Ball Publishers, Cape Town, 2004 edition, p. 31.

Williams, R., The other armies: A brief historical overview of Umkhonte We Sizwe (MK), 1961-1994, *Military History Journal* Vol. 11 No. 5 June 2000, pp 174-175.

Braam, whose political and legal profile, with his historic Afrikaner family connections, ensured that he was perceived by the South African security establishment as the most significant SACP member.³¹⁶

In January 1963, Goldreich visited the Soviet Union for military assistance and discussed the *Mayibuye* plan with officialdom whom he met. According to Shubin the Soviet response was “cautious”; particularly as they were reluctant to transport arms by sea, discovery of which could compromise bilateral relations by exposing the clandestine operation.³¹⁷ In April 1963, Oliver Tambo in discussions with Soviet officials emphasised that the South African government’s dismissal of the MK sabotage campaign meant guerrilla war needed to commence, alongside politically isolating South Africa and disseminating anti-government propaganda amongst the black population. Strategy envisaged was based upon Chinese revolutionary warfare of peasant revolts surrounding cities, but such idealism was thwarted by “rigid security measures introduced by the South African government seriously limited the mobility of Umkhonto cadres.”³¹⁸

ANC plans for MK required money, transportation, training and maintenance of the movement’s members, with facilities and arms requested from “friendly countries, including the USSR”. Initially small arms and explosives were requested, but later there were expectations of “heavy machine-guns, anti-tank and recoilless guns, anti-aircraft guns, etc.”, together with “ambitious” transport plans involving “fishing boats and ships”

³¹⁶ See the comparatively recent biography of Fisher: Clingman, S., Braam Fisher Afrikaner Revolutionary, National Book Printers, Cape Town, 1998.

³¹⁷ Shubin, ANC A view from Moscow, pp 45-46.

³¹⁸ *Ibid.*, pp 51-52.

“bringing goods directly to South Africa or neighbouring states.”³¹⁹ According to Shubin, Boris Ponomarev³²⁰ and other Soviet representatives had political considerations too, for example, how influential was the ANC and its armed struggle concept amongst the population and what was the attitude of the African states to the ANC, especially those geographically close to South Africa?

Once the SAP seized the *Mayibuye* plans there was intense government focus on the apparent military objectives of MK. Slovo claimed the plan was prepared by the High Command³²¹ and discussed within both ANC and SACP, acknowledging in hindsight a “euphoric expectation” that African states would provide planes to transport MK members.³²² It was further assumed that political isolation and hostility from African countries and the socialist world “may result in such massive assistance in various forms that the state structures will collapse far sooner than we can at the moment envisage.”³²³ Significantly *Mayibuye* assumed not only “direct (foreign) military involvement in South West Africa” (SWA) and an “effective economic and military boycott”, but even the possibility of “armed international action at some more advanced stage of the struggle,” although “units from ‘communist countries’ were not mentioned in the plan.”³²⁴

³¹⁹ Ibid., p.52.

³²⁰ Boris Ponomarev co-headed the International Department of the Central Committee with Yuri Andropov. He had initially received the SACP delegation.

³²¹ Consisting of Slovo and Nelson Mandela; see Slovo, *The Unfinished Biography*, p. 148.

³²² Shubin, *ANC A view from Moscow*, p. 55.

³²³ Ibid.

³²⁴ Ibid., pp 55-56, quoting Karis T. and Carter G. *Challenge and Violence. 1953-1964*, Hoover Institution Press, Stanford, 1977, p. 762. Also Shubin, *ANC A view from Moscow*, p.58.

As the Algerian revolution pattern was considered significant by Slovo, the ANC hoped to create a “political authority” in a friendly territory that would actually air-lift new guerrilla recruits regularly from South Africa and even ensure a “Provisional Revolutionary Government” (an idea borrowed from the Algerian experience).³²⁵ Shubin refers to the context against which *Mayibuye* was planned, including several African leaders at the OAU inaugural congress in May 1963 pledging “full support for our brother Africans”. For example, “Sekou Toure of Guinea...suggested fixing a date when any remaining white minority governments would have to face a joint African military force.”³²⁶ After the revelation of *Mayibuye* details during the Rivonia trial, information dealing with the possibilities of MK/SACP guerrilla landings and military planning were distributed across to all South African security services, including the SADF, thereafter being integrated into the defence force’s threat appraisals and operational responses.

G. D. Scholtz – An Afrikaner nationalist intellectual underpinning for 1960s military threat appraisals.

The scenario of an international military invasion deposing an autocratic white government in South Africa was not entirely new. Just before the NP’s 1948 election victory, historian Arthur Keppel-Jones had penned such a possibility in a prophetic grim futuristic fiction of the country.³²⁷ As an Afrikaner nationalist intellectual, historian and journalist, Scholtz wrote prolifically during the 1950s and 1960s on communism, besides

³²⁵ Ibid., p. 55, drawing on Karis T. and Carter G. Challenge and Violence. 1953-1964, p. 764.

³²⁶ Ibid., p. 56.

³²⁷ See Keppel-Jones, A., When Smuts Goes, Shuter and Shooter, Pietermaritzburg, 1947.

hypotheses on factors potentially impacting upon the Afrikaner's future security and continued white South African political independence in Africa. His books included: *Het die Afrikaner Volk 'n Toekoms?* (1954);³²⁸ *Die Stryd om die Wêreld* (1962); *Die Republiek van Suid-Afrika en die Wêreld* (1964); *'N Swart Suid-Afrika?* (1964), and *Die Bedreiging van die Liberalisme* (1965). These publications were widely read amongst SADF senior officers, for not only were they directly marketed through *Commando*, but Scholtz was also a personal friend of Hiemstra. During the 1960s, the two men met and corresponded regularly and according to Leopold Scholtz (G.D. Scholtz's son), Hiemstra took Scholtz's views seriously. During the same period, Scholtz also held a very powerful Afrikaans media position as the editor of *Die Transvaaler*.³²⁹

Die Republiek van Suid Afrika en die Wêreld integrated strategic assessments on where the Republic stood militarily in relation to emergent independent Africa and potential global scenarios. Scholtz intended *Die Republiek* to inform Afrikaners of global realities and the need to avoid isolation and possible punitive sanction. *Die Bedreiging van die Liberalisme*, published in 1965, presented the view, followed by SADF intelligence, that proponents of 'liberalism' hoped to achieve "race equality" by ensuring that excessive pressure be placed on the Republic, which could bring direct UN intervention.³³⁰ In *Die Stryd Om Die Wêreld* Scholtz made an analogy of a "civilisation belt" amidst a larger

³²⁸ Scholtz, G.D., *Het die Afrikaner Volk 'n Toekoms?* Voortrekker Pers, Johannesburg, 1954; Scholtz, G.D., *Die Stryd om die Wêreld*, Voortrekker Pers, Johannesburg, 1962; Scholtz, *Die Republiek van Suid-Afrika en die Wêreld*, Voortrekkerpers, Johannesburg, 1962; *'N Swart Suid-Afrika?* Nasionaleboekhandel, Cape Town, (1964); *Die Bedreiging van die Liberalisme*, Voortrekkerpers, 1965, Johannesburg.

³²⁹ Discussion with Leopold Scholtz, 11 April 2007, where he confirmed the friendship between his father and Hiemstra, along with Hiemstra's regular visits to their home.

³³⁰ Scholtz, *Die Bedreiging van die Liberalisme* Voortrekkerpers, Johannesburg, 1965, p.67.

space occupied by “uncivilised” nations, which characterised the clash between the Western and Communist blocs by 1961. Scholtz superimposed this paradigm upon South Africa regarding ‘civilised’ whites surrounded by blacks, with the fate of Afrikaners being directly tied to the broader clash between East and West.³³¹ *Die Stryd Om Die Wêreld* and *Die Republiek van Suid-Afrika* were comprehensively reviewed within *Commando*’s February and June 1963 editions. Verwoerd also took careful note of Scholtz’s views,³³² being himself a director of the company that owned *Die Transvaaler* and other large-circulation Afrikaans newspapers. The other large circulation Afrikaans newspapers were owned by the Cape-based *Nasionale Pers*; including the influential *Die Burger*.³³³ A perusal of SADF documentation is strongly indicative of how Scholtz’s thinking permeated through into official appraisals that conjectured on the Republic’s preparedness, in terms of international hostility transforming into direct military threats.

Scholtz’s books were reference works during a time of vigorous Afrikaner nationalist hopes and beliefs concerning the implementation of grand apartheid, coinciding with emphatic rejection of this segregation vision in international forums such as the OAU and UN. Condemnations were sometimes accompanied by utterances of military intervention, expressed by individual representatives at the UN and more collectively in the OAU. Writers like Scholtz seized upon this aggressive posturing and amplified it. He was particularly engrossed with the Soviet Union and viewed its global ambitions in terms of

³³¹ I am indebted for this comprehension of Scholtz’s 1960s works to F.A. Van Jaarsveld’s article: G.D. Scholtz se Oordeel oor die Toekoms van die Afrikaner teen die Agtergrond van Wêreldgebure, *Historia*, Vol. 38, No. 1, May 1993, pp 8-9.

³³² Also confirmed to me by Professor Hermann Giliomee, September 2006.

³³³ Literally, “National Press” – The Cape-based Afrikaans media company.

orthodox contemporary pro-Western Cold War interpretations. He assessed Russia as aggressively expansionistic on a global scale and emphasised that Africa was a communist target, with Afrikaners and white South Africa forming an outpost of Western civilisation.³³⁴

Scholtz vilified the UN as a potent military threat to the Republic and that it had from 1946 demonstrated growing hostility to the South African government. Scholtz quotes Jan Smuts responding to the initial UN criticism, directed mostly from the Indian government, delivered in the General Assembly against the UP government's racial policies shortly after World War Two. Smuts had launched a counter-attack on "equality" as advocated within post-war UN forums, where assertive Asian and African nationalists anticipated a weakening of European control of overseas colonies. Smuts was stung particularly by accusations that South Africa was fascist, discriminatory, and disdainful of "all the new slogans on which the new world was being built."³³⁵ Smuts scathingly describing "UN equality" as leading to disastrous 'integration consequences' during the second half of the 1940s, citing the pre-independence inter-cultural violence in Palestine and the Indian sub-continent occurring at the very time; reflecting areas that were historical ethnically/culturally divided.

Smuts lamented that decisions were being made in the UN according to "equal votes" and a "new equality", which he understood as marking the end of traditional assumptions

³³⁴ See Visser, W., The Production of Literature on the "Red Peril" and "Total Onslaught" in Twentieth-Century South African, *Historia*, 49, 2, November 2004, pp 115-116.

³³⁵ Scholtz, *The Republiek van Suid-Afrika en die Wêreld*, p. 205.

regarding global racial dominance by whites. Smuts was really reflecting upon the future of South African whites and how they might be affected by the still unknown consequences, resulting from post-World War Two indigenous resistance to European rule in Africa and Asia. Smuts grappled with this global shift that incorporated these new assertive nationalisms by explaining that:

the majority of mankind are not Europeans. They are different people – black, yellow, coloured....A fundamental change has occurred. Those who through the ages have been the underdog in human history are now in a very different position. A situation has been created which needs very careful handling. That is the situation we blundered against at UNO.³³⁶

Smuts's bewilderment was used by Scholtz to bolster his own position that by the 1960s, the UN represented a profound threat to the white Republic. Explaining that the year 1962 had witnessed the acceleration of the "process of equalisation", now "infinitely stronger than in 1946", with "the United Nations (becoming) browner and blacker". Almost precisely the same thinking can be discerned regularly in SADF threat appraisal documentation. For example, a 1966 military intelligence assessment asserted: "There can be no doubt that the equalisation process, already given a strong impetus by the First World War, even more rapidly since the Second World War, is now manifesting upon terrain (in other parts of the world) (that was) previously untouched".³³⁷ Scholtz quoted Foreign Minister Louw outlining to the South African parliament that by 1970, "Afro-Asian" and "Communist" countries would overwhelmingly outnumber "White Western countries". Louw had also stated in November 1960: "The Afro-Asian countries are now

³³⁶ Ibid.

³³⁷ HSI AMI Group 3 Box 429, DMI Spesiale Politieke Verslag, Die Politieke Aanslag Op die RSA (Jul-Jun 66), (dated 23 August 1965) p.53.

in control of the United Nations. And they know it. That is abundantly clear from their attitude, not only in debates, but in the lobbies of the United Nations.”³³⁸ In November 1960, Professor Nic Olivier, vice-chairman of Sabra and Professor of Bantu Studies and Administration at the University of Stellenbosch echoed the above views on ‘equality’ at the UN:

The atrocities carried out by Nazi Germany have instilled in the world an aversion of any type of discrimination, superiority or inferiority. The world has developed a completely over-rated romantic view of the black people. It has come to ignore differences between White and White or Black and Black, but will immediately sit up and take notice as soon as these are White against Black in any way. The same does not seem to be held for the case of Black against White, as in the Congo. The United Nations has become a dominant ‘force to be reckoned with’ in the future of South Africa, because of the growing domination of non-White representatives.³³⁹

Such assessments of a hostile UN by the 1960s were transformed into official SADF appraisals postulating the international organisation becoming a potential military threat. Scholtz’s perceptions of UN Afro-Asian preponderance and purported menace were then projected onto white South Africa’s reality of being a demographic minority within their country. UN ‘equality’ therefore foreboded loss of white political power to the black majority and unknown future consequences for the Afrikaners and other white South Africans. The anti-Portuguese settler uprisings in Angola in 1960-61 and the concurrent violence against Congo settlers, implied in the popular white South African view terrifying possibilities for them if they acceded to majority rule. Like other Afrikaner nationalist political theorists of the period, Scholtz perceived segregation as a survivalist

³³⁸Scholtz, *Die Republiek van Suid-Afrika en die Wêreld*, p. 206, quoting *The Star*, 17 November 1960.

³³⁹*Natal Mercury*, 24 November 1960, p.6.

option. But he feared the UN because it epitomised an overwhelming global rejection of segregationist principles and therefore potentially threatened white South Africa,³⁴⁰ because it also had access to a military interventionist capability, which had already been used against the Katanga secession.

The Republic was treated as a pariah by most UN members because as Scholtz believed, it actively challenged this “equalization process.” He also asserted that international rejection at the General Assembly could transform into South Africa becoming a potential target of UN/ Afro-Asian military action. Scholtz referred to bellicose utterances from Third World representatives; militant rhetoric that was fairly common to the early 1960s and regularly quoted in South African government statements. For example, Scholtz cited the Ceylonese representative, one A.B. Perera speaking to the UN on 27 October 1961, who referred to South African racial policies being a menace to world peace and advocated the possibility of “such action by air, sea or land forces as may be necessary to maintain or restore international peace and security” - adding:

This assembly is pledged to defend human rights and the dignity of men, and cannot ignore present events in South Africa. The cry of the non-white population – which is living in slavery whatever name you call it – demands concrete action. This virulent form of colonialism must be eradicated.³⁴¹

Scholtz identified SWA’s strategic position as critical to South Africa, indeed equivalent to Canada’s location regarding the United States; “a pistol that can be pressed against the Republic’s heart”. A hostile power in possession of Walvis Bay could threaten South

³⁴⁰ Scholtz, *Die Republiek van Suid-Afrika en die Wêreld*, pp 205-206.

³⁴¹ *Ibid.*, p. 207.

African sea links. Enemy bombers, guided missiles and troop concentrations (according to Scholtz) could be located within the territory. Therefore “efforts by the UN (to challenge South African authority) must be rejected”, for “to place SWA under the authority of a capricious and hostile organisation” was “to play with the safety and freedom” (Of the Republic).³⁴² We need to take a closer look at what the SADF comprehended as threatening to SWA.

The UN and South West Africa: Early SADF concerns of internal insurrection and invasion

Early 1960s press reports show that the spectre of a UN invasion of SWA or the Republic was a subject of newspaper speculation, while debate of such scenarios continued amongst military analysts till late in the decade.³⁴³ The UN was also viewed as a hostile entity, because it was popularly believed amongst some in South Africa to be advancing communism alongside militant African nationalism. Professor Olivier, (see above) spoke in 1960 of communist subversion and “agitators” provoking the “possibility of active intervention” by the UN, “start(ing)” in South West Africa.³⁴⁴ Press reports on the ‘UN invasion theme’ increased in their intensity six months later; The Natal Mercury carried a dramatic headline: “Louw (The South African Foreign Minister) Asked: Do We Fight If

³⁴² Ibid., pp 111-112.

³⁴³ See Orpen, N., Total Defence, Nationaleboekhandel, Cape Town, 1967, pp 54-55 where he speculated about international intervention and how the SADF might react to it.

³⁴⁴ Natal Mercury, 24 November 1960, p.6.

Also, for example the Cape Argus, 9 August 1960, p.10; “We need a Southern Africa Treaty now” where the newspaper’s military correspondent remarked: “During the past decade, the influence of the USSR has spread to many corners of Africa. It is strong in the United Arab Republic, Ethiopia and Guinea, and there is clear evidence of its impact elsewhere, particularly in the new Republics of the Congo and Cameroon’s.”

UN Troops Land?” State President Swart announced “that the Government would fight interference from outside... with all the means at its disposal,” The shifting of SADF units followed these statements, including air and sea components to maintain a watching brief on SWA.³⁴⁵ UP Senator Conradie asked if “trouble started in South Africa similar to that in the Congo, and the United Nations decided to send in armed forces”, (would) such forces be met by force? “Or would the government give its assistance to the United Nations forces?”³⁴⁶

As these supposed possibilities of external military threats became a heated press topic, conflict also ensued along language/political lines. When the Cape Town English-language newspapers suggested government plans for increased military preparedness, amounted to arming the whites against the other four-fifths of the population, *Die Burger* responded by referring to African decolonisation violence, citing potential linkage between anti-white bloodshed in Congo and Angola and that such could also envelope SWA. *Die Burger* acknowledged that South Africa without allies would struggle against a significant external military threat. Although convinced the West would not allow Soviet aggression, the newspaper warned that a “weaken(ing) of the internal race relations” might create a situation whereby the UN might militarily intervene in either SWA or South Africa. In which case the editorial concluded only a diplomatic averting of armed UN involvement was realistic.

³⁴⁵ *Natal Mercury*, 7 June 1961, p.1.

³⁴⁶ *Ibid.* 8 June 1961, p.1.

This would be the ultimate military horror which could only be countered with political measures; and our foreign policy (and), as far as possible, our internal actions should have this in view.³⁴⁷

But opposing a UN invasion was a possibility the government seriously considered. Such is confirmed by the build up by the SADF from mid-1961³⁴⁸ in response to threat appraisals, eliciting various counter-strategies and new equipment purchases discussed later in this and the following chapters. With the concurrent Angolan uprising against Portuguese settlers,³⁴⁹ internal SWA insurrection possibilities also featured prominent in SADF thinking. Media perceptions already existed that the Angola situation was connected to anti-white incitement by shadowy communist provocateurs. The Cape Argus reported on “disturbances...in ...Angola, where the ring-leaders are said to be foreigners armed with weapons of Czechoslovakian origin...Mr Khrushchev works on the principle: ‘Hit first, hit hard, hit anywhere.’”³⁵⁰ The Natal Mercury supported Fouché moving the SADF into SWA, but urged him “in view of the strained relationships” existing between the UN and South Africa, to keep the organisation informed of his actions.³⁵¹

³⁴⁷ Die Burger, Editorial, 28 April 1961.

³⁴⁸ See Barber, South African Foreign Policy 1945-1970, pp 190-191.

³⁴⁹ See Van der Waals, Portugal’s War in Angola, 1961-1974, pp 55-89 for a reasonably comprehensive overview of the 1961 Angolan violence.

³⁵⁰ The Cape Argus, 9 March 1961, p. 14.

On 6 January 1961 Chairman Khrushchev had announced in a widely reported speech that “victory for communism will come, not through nuclear or conventional war, but through wars of national liberation in Africa, Asia and Latin America. This was interpreted by South African analysts as meaning direct Soviet intentions, to subvert and support African nationalist movements against western-orientated, white controlled African states. See Bell, P. M. H., The World Since 1945 An International History, Hodder Arnold, 2001, p.136, for one reference of the speech’s international context.

³⁵¹ Natal Mercury, 8 June 1961, p.12.

SWA came under particular SADF interest with the Angola uprisings directly determining the nature of intelligence information sought. A memorandum for Commandant General Grobbelaar from SAP Commissioner, H.J. Du Plooy dated 25 March 1961, reported that “Bantus from Ovamboland had bought a large number of pangas in Angola”. Further information that “agitators from Ovamboland” had crossed into Angola, was passed by the South African Ambassador in Luanda to the Prime Minister’s Office in Pretoria. The local (SWA) Bantu Commissioner was immediately instructed to work with the SAP’s investigator, who reported that all (white) woman and children in the south of Angola had been moved to Luanda because of the alleged mass purchasing of pangas³⁵² by members of the Ukuanjama tribe in Ovamboland. Although it was added that it was not certain if there were subversive reasons for the purchases, or even that the people came from SWA, as the Ukuanjamas dwelt on either side of the border.

This report demonstrates how the SADF was already being drawn into speculation of the consequences of militant African nationalism in SWA. The future South West Africa Peoples Organisation (SWAPO) leader Toivo Ya Toivo, described as a “well-known agitator,” was reported as collaborating with Angolan Ovambo dissident Tobiaas Zacheus in attempting to facilitate resistance in Angola. Toivo purportedly declared “the whole country (SWA) would rise up, the day individuals were charged with public violence resulting from their arrests in the Windhoek unrests of 10 December 1959”. Alleged Soviet subversion was also suspected: Grobbelaar was informed that photographs of

³⁵² A long African grass cutting knife which was used against Portuguese settlers during the 1961 Angolan uprisings.

Russian sailors and woman were being circulated amongst SWAPO members in Ovamboland and its members spoke “openly of the Russians as their friends”. That in the past two months, non-Portuguese whites from Angola, speaking only broken English, had crossed over the border several times informing locals that they “must wait and be ready because one of these days they will be supplied with weapons”. The memorandum closed by stating that the Cape Town SAP Commissioner had instructed a senior security police officer to conduct further investigations and report.³⁵³

Telegrams exchanged during 30 May and 2 June 1961 between the South African Consul in Luanda and the Secretary for Foreign Affairs in Cape Town, show further SADF concern over possible Soviet involvement in facilitating African nationalist insurrection, besides the Pretoria government’s concerns that SWA territory might be drawn into Portuguese military operations. The Consul noted the Portuguese Angolan military commander had received information that Russian trawlers were caching arms on an island twelve miles up the Cunene River.

It appears activities of trawlers have been watched by a British and a South African frigate and that observations have been made from the air. South West Police, however, have not been able to verify the presence of a cache of arms on island as it is very inaccessible from their side. It is not known whether arms are destined for operations north or south of the border. Portuguese Naval Commander proposes to send small party to raid the island...Frontier coincides with Cunene River...some doubt exists as to whether island is in Portuguese or South African territory or whether it can be reached without touching on frontier at various points in the stream. In circumstances and as possibility of resistance cannot be ruled out, (Portuguese)

³⁵³ KG GP 5, Box 329, File KG/GPW/2/1, Memorandum marked: Suidwes-Afrika Angola Grens dated 25 March 1961, Department of Defence Documentation Centre, Pretoria.

Commander has asked me to obtain consent of Union authorities to proposed raids.³⁵⁴

The Secretary for Foreign Affairs declined the Portuguese permission, preferring an SADF investigation. Due to SWA's disputed status military activity involving another country could have had international ramifications.³⁵⁵ It did not take long, for what were meant to be secret military matters, reaching the South African press and feeding back into white community anxieties, already heightened by the uncertainties of the new Republic being launched in an increasingly hostile global environment.³⁵⁶ Fouché announced that the government was duty bound "to protect SWA from external aggression", that troops were being dispatched to Walvis Bay; the navy would patrol the coast and SAAF conduct flights on the coast and Angolan border, while investigations were also being undertaken regarding unrest issues across the SWA border. Fouché explained that the SADF would be based at Walvis Bay because mandate conditions forbade military bases in the territory.³⁵⁷ The town and a small surrounding enclave were historically South African territory inherited by the Union after its administration by the Cape Colony during the late nineteenth century. Although by the end of the year, much to the UN SWA Committee's chagrin, there was an SADF presence in Windhoek, which

³⁵⁴ KG GP 5, Box 324, File KG/GPW/1/5/6, Operation Hurdle, telegram dated 30 May 1961 from SA Consul-General, Luanda to Secretary of Foreign Affairs, Cape Town, Department of Defence Documentation Centre, Pretoria.

³⁵⁵ KG GP 5, Box 324, File KG/GPW/1/5/6, Operation Hurdle, telegram dated 2 June 1961 Secretary of Foreign Affairs, Cape Town to SA Consul-General, Luanda, Department of Defence Documentation Centre, Pretoria.

³⁵⁶ A few months later, Die Huisgenoot which throughout the 1960s catered for its readership's fascination regarding "South African enemies", published an article whereby its journalists visited Russian trawlers in Walvis Bay. See 20 November 1961 edition, pp 14-17.

³⁵⁷ Natal Mercury, 7 June 1961, p.1.

Foreign Minister Louw loudly defended by referring to the June incidents of alleged arms infiltration.³⁵⁸

In June 1961, Fouché announced that Portuguese and SADF chiefs had met in Cape Town and Luanda to discuss the Angolan uprisings.³⁵⁹ In fact, the South African Consul-General in Luanda had already in secret correspondence, dated 5 April 1961, addressed to the Secretary for External Affairs in Pretoria, expressed doubt about the Portuguese military capacity to contain the rebellion. South African concerns over potential threats to both SWA and the RSA, were further exacerbated by Portugal's loss of Goa to Indian military action that December (see below), alongside fears expressed through the Republic's Consul in Lourenco Marques, that Portugal's grip on Mozambique was tenuous.³⁶⁰ A further report received by Grobbelaar detailed the need for the SADF's urgent involvement in SWA, premising that the recent violence in Angola could result a Portuguese collapse, placing the northern parts of SWA at risk to the same kind of uprisings. Without military control over SWA and assuming the "loss" of Bechuanaland as well, "a potential enemy would now be 200 miles from Pretoria to build up for an attack, instead of between 750 to 1000 miles". Also of concern was that there were neither military outposts, nor any police in northern SWA, therefore no independent

³⁵⁸ Ibid., 27 October 1961, p.1 and 22 November 1961, p.1

³⁵⁹ Ibid., 7 June 1961, p.1.

³⁶⁰ Correia, P.E.S.L.D., Political Relations between Portugal and South Africa from the end of the Second World War until 1974, D.Lit dissertation, University of Johannesburg, 2007, pp 86-89.

information was easily obtainable about the movement of the Ovambos who lived on both sides of the border.³⁶¹

SADF commanders believed it was important to finalise plans to defend SWA, if the government decided this was necessary, but that a military reconnaissance of the territory was urgently required to assess required infrastructure, the building of strategic roads and airstrips and their defence, erection of buildings for supply dumps and the extension of civil communication. The Commandant General was urged to despatch a reconnaissance team under Combat Gen Nic Bierman to conduct an investigation by helicopter. A “strategic garrison” needed to be established at Walvis Bay to defend the harbour against potential hostile military landings and provide a physical location and closer availability of troops for the territory’s defensive needs.³⁶² Such details constitute clear indications that the SADF, as early as March 1961, were prepared to resist or at least hoped to deter an external military intervention. Grobbelaar forwarded the recommendations immediately to Fouché, if necessary for Verwoerd’s approval,³⁶³ implying that the Angolan uprisings and mounting UN hostility had taken the SADF by surprise.

Two months later, a council of officers appointed to construct an “evaluation in connection with the defence of the northern area of South West Africa”, concluded gloomily that the tribal system amongst the Ovambo on the northern border was

³⁶¹ KG GP 5, Box 329, File KG/GPW/2/1, Document marked “Verkenning in Suidwes-Afrika”, dated 27 March 1961, Department of Defence Documentation Centre, Pretoria.

³⁶² KG GP 5, Box 329, File KG/GPW/2/1, Memorandum marked: “Verkenning in Suidwes-Afrika”, dated 27 March 1961, Department of Defence Documentation Centre, Pretoria.

³⁶³ Ibid.

“anachronistic” and “unlikely to remain intact against the flood waves of Black Nationalism from the whole continent”. Subversion was identified as being directly connected with SWAPO activities; for example, through contact with “individual Bantus from SWA in New York” and the Anglican Church’s schools which produced “educated Bantu”, more likely to be “agitators”; the number of radios in the territory, “enabling educated Bantu to keep abreast of world events and happenings at the UN”.³⁶⁴ The evaluation also reported upon the “grievances of the Bantu” and suggested that employees of the South West Africa Labour Association, who regulated the movement of Ovambo migrant workers, could possibly become the first white victims of terrorism.

The SADF viewed SWA and Angolan unrest threatening white South African interests from a wider African decolonisation context. The SADF evaluation suggested that troops from the Congo’s white-officered *Force Publique* had been directly involved in the Angolan violence.³⁶⁵ The 25 000 strong *Force Publique* had mutinied eleven months earlier against their conditions of service and the continued authority of white Belgian personnel in the newly independent country’s armed forces. Such developments were to reinforce SADF beliefs of UN connivance with the anti-white violence that was occurring there. The following year, Afrikaner academic Prof. H.J.J.M. Van der Merwe also alleged in Commando, that Angolan rebels had obtained weapons through the *Force Publique* and Katanga-based UN troops.³⁶⁶ The Congo military mutiny resulted in extreme violence against white settlers in the country, further exacerbated with the declaration of

³⁶⁴ KG GP 5, Box 329, File KG/GPW/2/1, Waardering TOV Die Beveiliging Van Die Noordelike Gebied Van Suidwes-Afrika dated 25 May 1961, pp 2-3, Department of Defence Documentation Centre, Pretoria.

³⁶⁵ Ibid.

³⁶⁶ Commando, September 1962, p.23.

Katanga as an independent state and Soviet arms being lifted into Congo for Lumumba's forces, culminating in the latter's subsequent assassination by forces allied to Mobutu.³⁶⁷

These Congo events played a significant role in swinging white South Africans behind Verwoerd and grand apartheid, verified by a majority, albeit slender, voting support for the Republic during the October 1960 referendum. The SADF evaluation also made an interesting observation as to the origins and course of the Angolan violence, assuming white South African relations with blacks were better than those between the Portuguese and their indigenous communities. Thereby, it was assumed possibly forestalling events like those in Angola occurring in South Africa:

The susceptibility of the indigenous people (of Angola) for subversive propaganda and the astonishing speed the movement (of violence) spread can be ascribed to the bad relations that exist between the indigenous people and the Portuguese. Over a period of years the Portuguese ruthlessly suppressed and exploited them. Owing to our better relations with the Bantu it is not expected this evil will spread (here) as quickly as in Angola.³⁶⁸

South African press reports by the end of 1961 increasingly registered alarm over SWA and possible UN intervention. For example, a Cape Times headline read: "Warning of Racial War in S.W.A. – Situation going from Bad to Worse". The article explained that South Africa had been denounced in a report issued by the United Nations Committee on

³⁶⁷ See Meredith, M., The State of Africa A History of Fifty Years of Independence, Jonathan Ball, Jeppestown, 2005, pp 101-115 for a short very recent account of the violence in the Congo after independence. For older and different accounts of the succession conflict, see Hempstone, Smith, Katanga Report, Faber & Faber, London, 1962 and O' Brien, C.C., To Katanga and Back A UN Case History, Hutchison & Co., London, 1962 A much more recent book focusing on the role of Irish troops is Doyle, R., Heroes of Jadotville The Soldier's Story, New Island, Dublin, 2006.

³⁶⁸ KG GP 5, Box 329, File KG/GPW/2/1, Waardering TOV Die Beveiliging Van Die Noordelike Gebied Van Suidwes-Afrika dated 25 May 1961, p. 6, Department of Defence Documentation Centre, Pretoria.

SWA, “written on the basis of complaints made in the territory, and called for an end to the enforcement of apartheid measures in SWA” ...that only intervention by the UN ‘could prevent armed racial conflict’”.³⁶⁹ The Natal Mercury reported under headlines, “Send in U.N. invasion now, African petitioner says,” which:

should provide a military force, effectively equipped to land in South-West Africa, and able to withstand any armed opposition from South Africa, a petitioner who appeared before the Trusteeship Committee yesterday (Monday) said. ...The petitioner was Mr Mburumba Karina, a former student in South-West Africa and now a member of the Liberian permanent mission to the United Nations.³⁷⁰

SADF concerns of India leading “UN intervention” in SWA

The invasion of Portuguese Goa in December 1961 by Indian military forces increased South African perceptions that the UN through Afro-Asian countries, were prepared to forcibly challenge remaining vestiges of colonialism such as SWA, particularly as no resolute UN reaction had occurred to the Indian Goa operation.³⁷¹ While Verwoerd issued a statement strongly condemning “Indian aggression” in Goa,³⁷² after they received Security Council clearance, a UN military force was dispatched to Congo including a significant Indian troop component. These had entered Katanga by November 1960 and under UN aegis, started terminating Katanga’s succession. H.L.T Taswell, the South African diplomatic representative in the Rhodesian/Nyasaland Federation, had already

³⁶⁹ Cape Times, 15 November 1961, p.1.

³⁷⁰ Natal Mercury, 22 November 1961, p.2.

³⁷¹ Besides newspaper reports, there are relatively few accounts encountered by this author describing the Goa invasion in detail. From an Indian military perspective there is a short history of the events on the Indian armed forces websites. There is also a short narrative on the Portuguese’s failed defence of Goa in Morris, M., Armed Conflict in Southern Africa, Jeremy Spence, Cape Town, 1974, pp 190-192.

³⁷² Cape Times, 19 December 1961, p.1.

warned that Indian troops in Congo could be transferred across to SWA.³⁷³ Not only was India historically an arch-foe of white South African racial policies, it also possessed one of the largest militaries amongst Afro-Asian states and therefore began to feature in SADF appraisals concerning the possible defence of SWA.

By April 1963, the Director of SADF military intelligence, Brig P.M. Retief outlined similar scenarios as Scholtz, when referring to “possible developments in Southern Africa which could impact upon the safety of the RSA during the coming twelve months”. Because non-military attempts by the UN had failed to shift the RSA from its racial policies or its position on the SWA mandate, concern was expressed that “under Afro-Asian or Communist pressure, attempts could shift across to (UN) military action.”³⁷⁴ SADF documentation reflected the government’s firm belief that there was collusion between its foes. That MK sabotage and *Poqo* violence against white civilians, was planned and supported by the ‘Afro-Asians’ and ‘Communists’ bent upon creating internal chaos whereby:

Repeats of bloody incidents such as Sharpeville, could contribute to allowing an attempt by the Afro-Asian bloc towards military action by the UN, or by a particular country assigned as ‘UN agent’.³⁷⁵

Retief commented hopefully that the UN was in a difficult financial position because “various important members were currently refusing to contribute towards special

³⁷³ Correia, P.E.S.L.D., Political Relations between Portugal and South Africa from the end of the Second World War until 1974, D.Lit dissertation, University of Johannesburg, 2007, p. 85.

³⁷⁴ AG 4, Gp 4, File No. AG 672/2 Inligting, Memorandum Oor ‘n Inligting’s Waardering Opgestel Deur Die Direkteur van Militêre Inligting op 1 April 1963, p.6.

³⁷⁵ Ibid.

operations”. Retief surmised that, “unless they change their stance the UN will definitely not be in a state to undertake large-scale operations against South Africa or South West Africa. (unless the USA or Britain do it).” Written upon the actual document (possibly by the Adjutant General)³⁷⁶ next to this comment is - “What about Russia or India or Communist China?” This authentic addition of a contemporary reader’s remarks is a useful indication of SADF thinking at that time. Not only is India mentioned as a potential “UN agent” but the hand-written insert demonstrates the author’s lack of understanding, regarding the military capacity and objectives of the Soviet Union and China in 1963.³⁷⁷ He also misunderstood that in those Cold War years, there would have occurred certain Western veto of any such military intervention spearheaded by communist powers. Retief also suggested that the “race-composition” of any UN force attacking SWA would be significant, implying that white South Africans would oppose a ‘black-dominated’ UN force far more effectively than a white one.³⁷⁸ A ‘UN invasion’ by white soldiers might confuse any white South African sense of racial solidarity, besides possibly pitching the SADF up against what would be expected to be better trained and equipped forces.

It is no co-incidence that SADF’s secret plans for the defence of SWA in April 1963 were written contiguous to Indian troops being accused by the Rhodesian Federal government

³⁷⁶ It was from the Adjutant General group that this document was obtained, meaning he was one of the senior SADF officers viewing it and therefore could plausibly have written the comment.

³⁷⁷ Besides political complications regarding the West, neither communist states had the sea-lift capacity in 1963 to conduct such an operation. Soviet military priorities remained focused upon Europe, while Chinese military concerns in the early 1960s were restricted to its Asian environment.

³⁷⁸ AG 4, Gp 4, File No. AG 672/2 Inligting, Memorandum Oor ‘n Inligting’s Waardering Opgestel Deur Die Direkteur van Militêre Inligting op 1 April 1963, p.6.

of atrocities in Katanga against white and black civilians.³⁷⁹ Indian Air Force Canberra bombers had attacked Kolwezi in December 1961 and US Air Force troop transportation aircraft were at the UN force's disposal.³⁸⁰ Such tactical extensions were not unnoticed by the SADF, for Retief highlighted the UN's lengthening military capacity from Congo by emphasising that its forces were "now were in possession of excellent bases from where military operations could be launched against so-called colonial areas in Southern Africa."³⁸¹ Throughout 1960 to 1964, horrific reports from Congo and Katanga continued to be features in the South African press. A vivid example of Indian army attacks on white civilians was publicised in January 1963 within the mass-selling *Huisgenoot*. A series of photographs showing how a young Belgian man's wife and friend were shot dead by Indian troops for attempting to leave the Katanga town of Jadotstad by vehicle.³⁸² Such events reinforced white South African perceptions of potential nightmare scenarios if they were to shift to a unitary democratic state; or of the possible consequences of an "Afro-African/UN invasion" of SWA.

³⁷⁹ See Welensky Sir Roy, Welensky's 4000 Days The Life and Death of the Federation of Rhodesia and Nyasaland, Collins, London, 1964, pp 209-266 for a contemporary view for the Katanga succession, albeit very hostile to the UN's role; specifically, pp 244-246, regarding accusations of atrocities. Also see Wood, J.R.T., The Welensky Papers A History of the Federation of Rhodesia and Nyasaland, Graham publishing, Durban, 1983, pp 982-992. A book referred to earlier: Doyle, R., Heroes of Jadotville The Soldier's Story, New Island, Dublin, 2006, demonstrates from the Irish UNO troops perspective, the sheer chaos of the Katanga fighting.

³⁸⁰ Welensky, 4000 days, pp 244-246.

³⁸¹ AG 4, Gp 4, File No. AG 672/2 Inligting, Memorandum Oor 'n Inligting's Waardering Opgestel Deur Die Direkteur van Militêre Inligting op 1 April 1963, pp 6-7.

* By 1962, the SAAF had also obtained a squadron of Canberra bombers from Britain; their first acquisition since World War Two of an aircraft type capable of delivering large bomb loads at considerable distances.

³⁸² Die Huisgenoot, 3 January 1963, pp 10-14.

There is no doubt that the Indian military capability played significantly upon those SADF minds responsible for its threat appraisals. The Goa invasion reinforced perceptions of India being a rising Third-World military power shifting from Gandhi passive resistance to armed action against a colonial power. China's brief territorial clash with India in 1962, demonstrated the latter's military limitations, but India remained a leader within the Afro-Asian political bloc and its UN representatives amongst the most vocal critics of white rule in South Africa. And its soldiers were perceived in the white south as serving in operations supporting militant African nationalism.

The implications of the Goa invasion were not lost upon African nationalists. As the SWA mandate controversy dragged on, Goa was mentioned by Afro-Asian leaders in public statements, for example, in July 1963, the Cape Times headlined Tanganyikan leader Julius Nyerere, after talks with British Prime Minister, claiming: "We (Africans) will Fight S.A. 'Like Goa'"... if a peaceful solution is not found in South Africa".³⁸³ The Goa invasion occurred at the same time as a UN Trusteeship Committee meeting was called, to discuss a South African proposal for a three man UN investigation group to be sent to SWA. This was in the face of a proposal by thirty-seven Afro-Asian countries to establish a committee intended to arrange the territory's prompt transition to independence. Afro-Asians were determined to bring the SWA matter to the attention of the Security Council,³⁸⁴ a scenario which the South African government believed had the potential of developing into a Katanga-type UN intervention. The South African press

³⁸³ Cape Times, 25 July 1963, p.3.

³⁸⁴ Cape Times, 13 December 1961, p.1.

presented the potential ‘threat’ to SWA as a military one and linked it to UN armed involvement in Congo. The Cape Times reported on local white defiance and their expectations of SADF assistance: “Whites in South Africa will Fight,” that “Most of the 70 000 Whites in South West Africa are determined to remain in the disputed territory whatever the future holds and will fight if it comes to armed intervention from outside”:

Mr Behrson, a prominent businessman...hoped the United Nations had realised through its Katanga operation the futility of starting hostilities in the name of peace...the Whites had no alternative but to fight it out. They had sunk everything into the country...In general the view is that United Nations discredited in Katanga (sic), will not resort to force in South West but if it did it would be defeated. The Whites look to South Africa to back them up...Mr S.J.J. Spies Mayor of Windhoek bluntly stated the tough attitude of Whites in the event of an outbreak of hostilities. ‘We will fight. No South-Wester will return to the Republic. This is our home.’³⁸⁵

SADF military preparations were also hurried along by the 1960 Liberian/Ethiopian charge pending with the International Court of Justice, that South Africa’s administration of SWA had violated the League of Nations mandate. The prospect of South Africa losing in any decision made by the court, meant that the Security Council would be obligated to compel the Republic’s compliance in relinquishing the mandate.³⁸⁶ This Pretoria envisaged could mean military intervention as a final resort, as such was sanctioned within the UN’s Charter. Any such drastic action would have assumed the Western countries voting in favour and therefore contributing military forces. Although

³⁸⁵ Ibid., 18 December 1961, p.13.

³⁸⁶ Such was outlined in an extract from the New York Times, 8 December 1963, sent to the Commandant General on 27 December 1963 by the Secretary for Defence, who had in turn received it from the Secretary for Foreign Affairs. KG, GP 5, Box 549, VVO, Department of Defence Documentation Centre, Pretoria. SADF planning and operations to defend Walvis Bay and SWA continued throughout the first half of the 1960s.

this was an unlikely scenario, the SADF did not preclude the possibility of Afro-Asian states acting alone. SADF threat appraisals concurred that an aircraft carrier was a prerequisite for such military action,³⁸⁷ while staff tasked with preparing SWA's defence were specifically concerned about the *Vikrant*, the Indian Navy's sole aircraft carrier.³⁸⁸ This vessel carried a squadron or more of British-built Seahawk strike jets, which in terms of performance, were on par with the Sabre,³⁸⁹ still the SAAF's frontline air defence fighter.³⁹⁰

Perceived military threats to the Republic via invasion by an "African Army".

As the SADF began rearming and reorganising during the early 1960s, its commanders were making contact with their counterparts in other white-ruled Southern African states with the intention to assist and learn where possible. In December 1963, the SADF allowed two SAAF Alouette helicopters to participate in a military tattoo held by the Portuguese armed forces in Lourenco Marques. The SAAF Chief of Staff, Combat Gen B.G. Viljoen remarked in a letter to Commandant General Grobbelaar, after consulting with the SA Vice-Consul, Mr J. Lamb, that the Portuguese authorities had considered the

³⁸⁷ AG GP 4, Box 3, Military Operations, Operation Olympus, File AG/585/3/5, Operasie Plan Impala, Letter from KG dated 30 April 1963, Aanhangsel A, AG's copy, Department of Defence Documentation Centre, Pretoria.

³⁸⁸ This was confirmed in correspondence dated 30 January 2007 by a retired SADF officer who was directly involved in the planning to defend Walvis Bay during the early 1960s and requested that he remain anonymous regarding this information. Details of the *Vikrant* obtained through *Jane's Fighting Ships*, 1962-1963 edition, compiled and edited by Raymond V.B. Blackman, Jane's Fighting Ships Publishing Co. Ltd, London, Sampson Low, Marston & Co. pp 119-120.

³⁸⁹ The compatibility of the Seahawk with the Sabre in terms of performance was confirmed by Brig Gen Dick Lord, who had experience in flying Seahawks with the Royal Navy during the 1960s: Interview 3 February 2007.

³⁹⁰ At this stage the SAAF were also flying more modern French Mirages but they were not fully operational yet, because the air defence radar networks in the Republic were still under construction. (see chapter four) SADF documentation for defending Walvis Bay in the early 1960s refers only to Sabres.

SAAF helicopters participation as important because the Portuguese Air Force were to receive their own Alouettes the following year. They had used the display to enhance public confidence in their military forces and the future of Mozambique. Viljoen emphasised the strategic importance of Mozambique to the RSA.³⁹¹ By this time, the SAAF were training Royal Rhodesian Air Force personnel within the Republic on the operation of the same helicopter type which the Rhodesian government had also acquired.³⁹²

This apparently mundane correspondence underlined the fact that in terms of any “threat from the north”, the SADF’s commanders looked with some sense of concern at the strategic importance of their “buffer” consisting of white ruled colonies north of the Republic, all of which by the early 1960s were facing African nationalist guerrillas trying to force black majority rule. The SADF believed that both Portuguese territories could be the targets of large-scale unrest and even “invasion” during 1963, particularly if assisted by other countries or advantageous “situations,” which undermined Portuguese colonial rule. If the Salazar regime fell and both colonies received their independence, there could be direct threats to both South Africa and SWA. Regarding Angola, “a subversive (base) and invasion (point) would be created on the northern border of South West Africa”, while the situation concerning Mozambique would be even more serious with the “RSA’s right flank being left open”. “Sea and air landing facilities offered to an enemy invasion force” would be more favourably located, for a military force to advance towards the

³⁹¹ KG GP 5, Box 547, File KG/SER/10, Department of Defence Documentation Centre, Pretoria.

³⁹² Petter-Bowyer, P.J.H.. Winds of Destruction The Autobiography of a Rhodesian Combat Pilot, 30 degrees South Publishers (Pty) Ltd, Newlands, Johannesburg, p.92.

economically and politically strategic Johannesburg/Pretoria complex.³⁹³ This appraisal was speculating upon an implausible military threat scenario, which the SADF had investigated, namely an “African army” marching upon white South Africa from the north, determined to terminate white rule. Although this was a virtual logistical and political impossibility during the 1960s, the scenario still regularly entered the pages of South African newspapers, political speeches and periodic announcements by senior SADF commanders, all of whom implicitly equated decolonisation and African independence as constituting a military threat to white-ruled South Africa.

The scenario of a ‘united African Army’ threatening South Africa had already begun to make the newspaper headlines from mid-1960 during Union Day celebrations, as a Republic was increasingly anticipated amongst NP supporters. In May 1960, the Natal Mercury had quoted from the Union Festival Brochure of the Defence Force, which mentioned a “colossus of (African) states” developing; that South Africa’s “distant and safe isolation” was over. This marked, in the press anyway, the beginnings of an “African Army invasion” alarmism, clearly for the white public’s pre-Republican referendum consumption.³⁹⁴ Thereafter, NP politicians followed the precedents set by the defence minister: In June 1960, the Administrator of the Orange Free State, J.W.J.C. Du Plessis, used the occasion of a farewell parade for CF members at Tempe military base to extend Fouché’s ‘warning’ to South Africa (and the West) facing threats from an Afro-Asian bloc:

³⁹³ AG 4, Gp 4, File No. AG 672/2 Inligting, Memorandum Oor ‘n Inligting’s Waardering Opgestel Deur Die Direkteur van Militêre Inligting op 1 April 1963, pp 3-4.

³⁹⁴ Natal Mercury, 17 May 1960, p.11.

The emerging black leaders are busy developing a black and Asian pressure group in the international arena that holds the seed of destruction not just for South Africa, but also for the West.³⁹⁵

In 1961, Grobbelaar informed naval trainees that the “latest developments in Africa” meant the SADF needed to attain “a state of preparedness and efficiency that would discourage military aggression”.³⁹⁶ Both government and the official parliamentary opposition used the terms “African” and “African-Asian” “threats” interchangeably during numerous debates, which intensified press speculation of such intervention. During March 1962, Fouché informed Parliament that “military action was being openly advocated and secretly planned by some Afro-Asian states” and - “There existed in Africa and among other members of the Asian African group, the potential for establishing an “army of liberation”... each country could make a contribution which in its entirety could form a formidable army.”³⁹⁷ Fouché repeated his assertions on a range of occasions, for example, when addressing commando officers at the Witwatersrand Command in August 1962, he added that the state’s policy was to continue the acquisition of modern conventional weapons and reorganise the SADF’s field formations, with appropriate training intended and provision of adequate manpower.³⁹⁸

Both the English and Afrikaans press reported upon this ‘African threat’ in detail. The Cape Times had earlier commented that: “Although it is not easy to believe that there is

³⁹⁵ Die Burger, 28 June 1960, p.3.

³⁹⁶ The Cape Times, “Intensified Defence Training Essential says Defence Chief”. 7 December 1961.

³⁹⁷ Ibid, 13 March 1962, p. 10.

³⁹⁸ J.J. Fouché Collection, UFS, PV 467, File no. 3/13/1/1/2, Speeches 9 July 1962-9 December 1962, p.1.

any imminent threat of armed invasion, it is an obvious commonplace that we live in a dangerous world and must have an efficient Defence Force.”³⁹⁹ *Die Burger* emphasised that a “New Phase in Defence” had arrived, but that “the revolution of independence in Black Africa and retreat of Western control from our continent” had shifted South Africa’s “front-line” “south from Egypt to Rhodesia”.⁴⁰⁰ This referred the planned early 1950s Anglo-South African defence arrangement mentioned in chapter one.⁴⁰¹

The Cape Times interviewed former Commandant General H.B. Klopper who had retired in 1958. As a veteran of the North African campaign, Klopper would have retained some credibility amongst 1939-45 UDF veterans and some must have noted his response to the “invasion story” during an interview in March 1962, which echoed government views.

South African defence planners can never exclude the possibility of invasion, while the prevailing volume of hostility and hatred is directed at the Republic by other African territories... ‘In defence the seemingly improbable is always the greatest danger. No matter how unlikely invasion may look at present, because of logistic difficulties, we must not relax.’ Defence planners should not regard the Limpopo as the country’s northern military frontier. An efficient early-warning intelligence service should be developed to ensure that any plot to invade South Africa could be detected and countered immediately.⁴⁰²

Scholtz had also referred to the ‘African threat’ scenario during 1962. He had extended it by commenting upon how the three British Southern African protectorates of Basutoland,

³⁹⁹ Cape Times, 13 March 1962, Editorial, p.10.

⁴⁰⁰ Die Burger, 15 March 1962, Editorial, p.10.

⁴⁰¹ See Barber, South African Foreign Policy 1945-1970, pp 81-83 and Hyam, R., and Henshaw, P., The Lion and the Springbok Britain and South Africa since the Boer War, p. 232.

⁴⁰² Cape Times, 17 March 1962, p. 9.

Swaziland and Bechuanaland constituted hindrances in South African defence planning.

He quoted SADF Brigadier H.J. Zinn writing in 1954 about how:

the three areas constituted “ separate and unknown factors in our internal defence plans”...(because of) “this control from a distance (by Britain)...South Africa is neither territorially, nor economically and certainly not militarily sound.”⁴⁰³

Scholtz stated that at some future point, “the biggest military threat for the Republic could possibly one day come from Africa” and (South Africa) would face the strategic dilemma of having no chance of control over the three British Protectorates.⁴⁰⁴ Scholtz appeared entirely blind to the logistical and military capability limitations of independent African states that made such a threat inconceivable. Just six years after the publishing of *Die Republiek van Suid-Afrika en die Wêreld*, Deon Fourie (1968) produced a comprehensive debunking of an African army scenario threatening the Republic.⁴⁰⁵ However, political parties, press and popular publications dwelt upon the subject, ensuring that it remained part of white South African public discussion. Barber who did not consult Fourie’s work, commented in 1973 that: “the picture of black armies marching on Pretoria was not inconceivable at the time. So much was changing in Africa that virtually anything seemed possible.”⁴⁰⁶ It is also possible that there was inadequate research by political parties to empirically examine the ‘Africa threat’ assertions. UP defence spokesperson, J.R Bowring wrote to the party leadership in July 1964, encouraging study that would clarify South Africa’s future relations with African states

⁴⁰³ Scholtz, *Die Republiek van Suid-Afrika en die Wêreld*, pp 108-109.

⁴⁰⁴ Ibid., pp 109-111.

⁴⁰⁵ Fourie, D.F.S., *War Potential of African States South of the Sahara*, Institute for International Affairs, Johannesburg, 1968.

⁴⁰⁶ Barber, *South African Foreign Policy 1945-1970*, p. 191.

and their military development; thereby perhaps also establishing whereby threatening utterances by African leaders might be transformed into action.⁴⁰⁷

But not all politicians were anyway convinced by the ‘Africa threat’. Progressive Party MPs saw it for what it was, in the sense of whites being scared into adopting a siege mentality against a hostile continent, further bolstering support for NP racial policy. Progressive Party leader Jan Steytler appealed to South Africans, that even if this ‘African invasion’ threat was plausible and he believed not, it would constitute a “truly desperate” situation. Steytler’s suggested that the government lessen outside hostility by ditching offensive internal measures towards segregation and rather build pragmatic bridges into Africa.⁴⁰⁸ Another Progressive member, John Cope, ridiculed Fouché’s invasion statement as “operation white laager”:

There is nothing subtle or obscure about the strategic objective of this propaganda move. Its aim is to consolidate the European electorate behind the Nationalist Party’s philosophy of White *baaskap*. From a coldly military point of view the story of a pending attack is, of course, quite preposterous. But the story is not meant for military men. Such machinations by sinister elements are meant for an electorate that would seem to be in a mood to fly from reality.⁴⁰⁹

However, although Cope identified what the NP government hoped to achieve politically, he was wrong in assuming the SADF had no interest in also evaluating the changing situation in the north. Brigadier Retief of military intelligence recorded confidentially in 1963, that once Northern Rhodesia received independence, it would result in South

⁴⁰⁷ UP Archives, Sir De Villiers Graaff Collection, 37, Defence, Correspondence 1951-77, document entitled “Thought on Defence Studies” dated 27 July 1964, p.4.

⁴⁰⁸ Cape Times, 15 March 1962, p.9.

⁴⁰⁹ Ibid., 20 March 1962, p.10.

Africa having “hostile-inclined black states on the border of the Caprivi region.” He also remarked that there were “already indications that the RSA’s “Bantus in this region were being aggressively spurred on by their Northern neighbours”.⁴¹⁰ Military intelligence also anticipated Southern Rhodesia’s future, that if it received independence under the current constitution, which limited the franchise to relatively few of its black citizens, there would be widespread unrest from “extremist black leaders”, resulting in intensified pressure upon the UN, by Asian-African and communists blocs to intervene militarily. The SADF speculated that Southern Rhodesia might unilaterally declare itself independent, if its government were pressured to accept a “one man, one vote” based constitution, viewing this as conceivably strengthening the RSA’s position, with Rhodesia cooperating independently in military and economic arrangements.⁴¹¹

In mid-1963, the Liberation Committee in the OAU confirmed its intention to “liberate” South Africa by armed force if necessary.⁴¹² Even Progressive Party spokesmen could not ignore aggressive black African posturing, although their liberal philosophy incurred accusations of disloyalty from the government; representing as it did, the most progressive of white South African views (or at least where there was a parliamentary representative⁴¹³). A member of the party’s National Executive, Dr. P.V. Pistorius was quoted as stating:

⁴¹⁰ AG 4, Gp 4, File No. AG 672/2 Inligting, Memorandum Oor ‘n Inligting’s Waardering Opgestel Deur Die Direkteur van Militêre Inligting op 1 April 1963, p.2.

⁴¹¹ Ibid.

⁴¹² Davenport, T.R.H., South Africa A Modern History, Third Edition, McMillan Publishers, Johannesburg, 1987, p. 403.

⁴¹³ Recently deceased Helen Suzman, MP for Houghton.

The vast majority of non-whites would resent interference by foreign African dictators in South Africa's affairs, as much as the whites would...In the face of the challenge of Addis Ababa and of the United Nations, it was the duty of every South African to place the safety of the State above all other considerations...we must resist the attempts of African countries, many of which are governed by political thugs, to impose their will on South Africa.⁴¹⁴

Decolonisation and threats in international forums promoted uncertainty amongst the white community, therefore the SADF planners speculated accordingly in terms of how any military action against the Republic would manifest itself, besides how the situation had currently developed. Tanzania was viewed as transforming rapidly into: "An operational base for subversive and military operations against South Africa", with: "All the most important communist powers being well-represented regarding diplomatic missions". The three British Protectorates of Botswana, Swaziland and Basutoland were considered as presenting the "greatest subversive danger to the RSA," on account of there being "very strong links with the militant Pan-Africanist Congress" amongst their pro-independence political parties, although these states were "economically dependent upon the RSA and therefore extremely vulnerable".⁴¹⁵

Clearly, it suited neither the military nor the government to spell out with absolute clarity that a conventional African military threat was unlikely, because it was one of several factors whereby support for the government and its military forces enlargement could be justified. In the racial stereo-typing typical of the period, exacerbated by African leaders irrational outbursts in the OAU and UN, white South Africans were easily led to

⁴¹⁴ Cape Times, 28 May 1963.

⁴¹⁵ AG 4, Gp 4, File No. AG 672/2 Inligting, Memorandum Oor 'n Inligting's Waardering Opgestel Deur Die Direkteur van Militêre Inligting op 1 April 1963, p.4.

uncritically perceive 'Black Africa' as a threat. Against such a background of well-publicised anti-white South Africa hostility emanating from African and Asian forums, the Verwoerd government increased defence spending and during 1962, extended the balloted military service call-up of white males from three to nine months.

The official SADF line also linked the "Africa threat" to "international communist" intentions. In May 1963, Grobbelaar explained the SADF's role, in terms of allegations by the "UN's 'Committee of Experts' on the RSA" that it could be used against the country's black population. Grobbelaar's response outlined that the possibility of mutual nuclear destruction by both Superpowers, meant that, "the methods of subversion from within, sabotage and guerrilla action" were becoming important tools of "exploitation by world communism", because the dread possibility of nuclear war curbed conflict escalation possibilities. Armed forces world-wide, particularly since 1945, had been engaged in a range of operations against both communist-backed guerrillas and internal unrest. Grobbelaar substantiating this with examples from the Malayan, Algerian and Vietnamese experiences, besides troops being deployed internally earlier that year during violent racial civil clashes within the United States.

Grobbelaar proposed the same case for the Republic, as existed in America and elsewhere, regarding the SADF being sharpened up in terms of preparedness. He rejected allegations that the South African military was being primed to participate in an internal "race war." He made the predictable justifications that the SADF was there to protect the Cape Sea Route, of "utmost strategic value to the West" against dual threats of external

aggression and internal subversion “continually being made against us by militant external black leaders actively encouraged by the Communists”. Grobbelaar cited Kenyan Minister Oginga Odinga appealing in Peking “recently...for Red Chinese aid in a war against South Africa”.⁴¹⁶

Such was the official SADF line during the early 1960s. Except the broader reasons for the hostility to South African government policies are comprehended against the global post-war emphatic rejection of racially discriminatory legislation, besides the jostling for Cold War allies by East and West during the decolonisation process. Such had gained further momentum as newly independent African states emerged and the Civil Rights Struggle successes emerged within American society. These movements occurred to the extent that the South African white community effectively stood alone in any attempt to justify apartheid or any other legislated racial segregation. No amount of rationale by the Commandant General of the SADF would change general international perceptions about South African racial policies.

Barber suggests that the government gained more confidence by June 1963, regarding the unlikelihood of conventional military threats. By early the following year, Fouché was dismissive of an “Africa invasion”.⁴¹⁷ However, reports on African decolonisation in popular publications still reinforced white insecurities and provided opportunities to market the SADF for the white public’s reassurance. A series of articles on the Defence

⁴¹⁶ KG GP 5, Box 549, File KG/ORG/1, VVO, Draft Report to the Allegations Made by the “UN Committee of Experts on the RSA” in so far as it concerns the SA Defence Force, Department of Defence Documentation Centre, Pretoria.

⁴¹⁷ Barber, South African Foreign Policy 1945-1970, p 196.

Force were published by *Die Huisgenoot* in October 1963, including a map of Africa map (see illustrations) depicting the continent coloured entirely black north of the Angolan, Mozambique and southern Rhodesian borders. The map's caption read as follows:

This map partially displays the problem which South Africa must consider. Collectively 32 free African countries are planning aggression against South Africa. Before they can advance against our borders, the "speckled areas" (on the map – the white-ruled states) must first be 'liberated'. The text concentrated specifically on "African threats" referring "recently in Addis Ababa where Nassar, Nkrumah, Ben Bella, Obutu...Kenyatta are conceiving aggressive plans against South Africa."⁴¹⁸

Yet despite the media and politicians, DMI's detailed assessments of a potential conventional military threat from African countries indicated that such an African military capacity was indeed significantly lacking and that geographical-strategic-logistical circumstances made such an 'invasion' highly implausible. The SADF were also informed by an African Resistance Movement (ARM) member's speculation of how an invasion might ultimately be the only way in which African nationalists would actually succeed to "wresting political control from Afrikaners". By October 1964, the SADF had obtained intelligence reports on remaining ARM members who had either escaped conviction or evaded arrest. Alexander Cox was one, and his personal views would have strengthened SADF perception that an African conventional military threat was unlikely in the near future, although perhaps not a long-term impossibility. Cox had explained himself in supposed confidence at Lusaka (But his views were documented and passed back to SADF intelligence and thereafter integrated into a report on "The

⁴¹⁸ *Die Huisgenoot*, 11 October 1963, p.5.

Unconventional Military Threat up to 15 December 1964”).⁴¹⁹ DMI had an open line to much of what was happening amongst South Africa dissidents. Cox’s assessment noted that military invasion was “the only course which offers the opportunity of capturing South Africa as a unit,” idealistically suggesting such would be enhanced if:

one country such as Zambia should call for volunteers to fight South Africa relying on the rivalries of Chinese and Russians and Americans to supply the troops, equipment and money to carry out such an operation. It is certainly an impossibility for Africa to defeat South Africa militarily.⁴²⁰

Cox had suggested that “invasion” would also do less damage to the country than other political solutions, such as equitable racial partition or extensive guerrilla warfare accompanied by economic sanctions. He envisaged any “underground movements”...“carrying out no operations until the invasion was ready, to avoid dissipating their men”.⁴²¹

By August 1966, SADF analysts maintained that: “It is clear from their militant attitude that the Afro-Asiatic countries’ chief goal, namely the obliteration of white authority in the RSA, is to be achieved by force of arms”.⁴²² But this report cautioned that although most African armies’ leadership and fighting capabilities were still doubtful, they could still be a factor necessary to consider for the future. Besides Algeria, the United Arab

⁴¹⁹ KG Gp 5, Box 472, KG/OPS/4/6, Guerilla Oorlogvoering Supplementary Military Intelligence Report, Subject: RSA – The Unconventional Military Threat, Period ending: 15 Dec 1964, Department of Defence Documentation Centre, Pretoria.

⁴²⁰ KG Gp 5, Box 472, KG/OPS/4/6, Guerilla Oorlogvoering, document entitled “Zambia, Political Intelligence, African Resistance Movement, Department of Defence Documentation Centre, Pretoria.

⁴²¹ Ibid.

⁴²² HSI AMI, GP3, Box 430, Hoof van Verdegigingsstaf, Aanvulende Militêre Inligtingsrapport, Waardering van die Vyandelike Militêre Dreigment Teen die RSA soos op 13 September 1966, p. 41.

Republic, Ethiopia and Somalia, African air forces had neither offensive aircraft, nor properly trained pilots. There were no naval forces with an air-sea capacity, nor were there any African countries with significant logistical capacity. There had never been any known occasion of combined maritime exercises by African states and it was doubtful whether they could establish any significant maritime task force for long distance operations without outside assistance. The report further outlined its view that most African states were politically unstable and/or involved in “border activities,” where their available forces were already committed. An important factor to the disadvantage of Afro-Asian states, regarding any invasion they launched on the RSA, was their lack of being assured of air supremacy and their incapacity to establish strategic bases or assure the destruction of strategic targets. They would also not be in any position to secretly build up or move their forces, or in any way mislead the South African authorities.⁴²³

Yet despite what was clear to both the SADF’s military intelligence and commanders, let alone any reasonably intelligent amateur analyst, namely that African states completely lacked the capacity to invade South Africa and terminate white government rule by military means, the idea still persisted within media, political and public discourse during the early 1960s, until thoroughly rebutted by Fourie’s study.⁴²⁴

⁴²³ Ibid., pp 41-43.

⁴²⁴ See Fourie, War Potential of African States South of the Sahara.

SADF perceptions of the significance of “Operation *Mayibuye*” during the early 1960s

Shubin comments that during the early 1960s, South African black militants drew inspiration from African countries where arms had been taken up against colonialists. The Algerian uprising was viewed by the SACP as a significant model. For by late 1961, French forces were battling to contain nationalists and the South African communists considered the SADF resources markedly inferior to those of France.⁴²⁵ So inspired, MK began their sabotage campaign on 16 December 1961, it being anticipated by Nelson Mandela and Joe Slovo, that full-scale guerrilla war would materialise if the government failed to heed demands for a negotiated political dispensation.⁴²⁶ In the wake of the state’s defeat of MK’s efforts, Operation *Mayibuye* was conceived by the ANC/SACP MK “High Command”⁴²⁷ and as mentioned earlier, was also assumed to include military assistance and foreign intervention. When presented to Soviet officials, it received cautious support but nothing materially substantial.⁴²⁸ After the 1963 to 1964 Rivonia arrests and trial, the SADF took particular interest in the military aspects of the *Mayibuye* plans, details of which significantly impacted upon the Defence Force’s threat appraisals and operational responses. Documentation confirming such is utilised within this dissertation and no other writings have been encountered by this author where such

⁴²⁵ See Shubin, ANC A view from Moscow, pp 19-20.

⁴²⁶ See Nelson Mandela’s comments on this (a few days before his arrest) being described in Kasrils, Armed and Dangerous, p. 39.

Also see Roos, Ordinary Springboks, pp 173-174.

⁴²⁷ Shubin, ANC A view from Moscow, p.55.

⁴²⁸ Ibid., pp 45-46.

archival evidence is analysed in terms of either the histories of the ANC or that of the SADF.

Zanzibar revolution, January 1964: SADF assessments

During the Zanzibar Revolution, black African nationalists displaced the historic Arab island rule. This event was carefully studied and reported upon within SADF appraisals, heightening the military's concern of external threats developing along the *Mayibuye* lines. Fouché announced in Parliament that “for the first time in our history the communists have a base in the Indian Ocean along the East Coast,” further describing this as “a dangerous breakthrough”.⁴²⁹ Occurring in the aftermath of the Rivonia trial and *Mayibuye* revelations, the Zanzibar developments accentuated speculation of new “communist bases” being established from where seaborne guerrilla landings might be launched upon the Republic. Such a line of thinking intensified when the South African press reported on American and British citizens observing “Cubans” collaborating with those over-throwing the island's Arab government.⁴³⁰ The SADF's intelligence appraisals also referred to the Zanzibar events occurring almost simultaneously to the January 1964 East African armed forces mutinies, which it was assumed occurred because of the continued presence in these forces of white officers.⁴³¹ In correspondence four years later between author A.J. Venter and an unknown spokesman for the British Ministry of Defence, it was denied by the latter that there was any evidence of Chinese or

⁴²⁹ Cape Times, 7 February 1964, p.7.

⁴³⁰ Ibid., 15 January 1964, p.1.

⁴³¹ An older short account of the mutinies can be found in Venter, A.J., War in Africa, Human & Rousseau, Cape Town, 1973, pp 147-159

Russian involvement.⁴³² But SADF assessments viewed the East African events as evidence of “increased grip of communism to the detriment of Western influence... the attempt (by communists to incite a similar revolution) on Mozambique can be planned and prepared without restraint”.⁴³³

A document dated 18 February 1964 referring to Zanzibar, was forwarded from the Acting Chief of Army Staff to the Commandant General.⁴³⁴ It contained an assessment describing the new regime as being at one with those African states hostile towards colonialism and “especially the White government and population of the RSA”. The revolution and mutinies were understood as Chinese “inspired”, because premier Chou En Lai had simultaneously been touring Africa. The mutinies in Kenya had occurred simultaneously with clashes along the Kenya-Somalia border, the Chinese having, it was alleged, “a strong influence in Somalia.” Besides local grievances and demands for Africanisation in the military, there were other potential explanations for the Tanzanian government courting Chinese assistance.⁴³⁵ Open Chinese military aggression towards

⁴³² Venter, *War in Africa*, p. 157.

⁴³³ KG, Gp5, Box 471, KG/OPS/2/1, Operasionele Beleid, document entitled “Effects of the recent events in Zanzibar and East Africa on the security of the Republic”, p.6, Department of Defence Documentation Centre, Pretoria.

⁴³⁴ KG, Gp5, Box 471, KG/OPS/2/1, Operasionele Beleid, document entitled “Effects of the recent events in Zanzibar and East Africa on the security of the Republic”, p. 2, Department of Defence Documentation Centre, Pretoria.

⁴³⁵ Gutteridge, W.F., *The Military in African Politics*, Muthuen & Co Ltd., London, 1968, pp 31-32, points out that President Nyerere, who actually so deeply concerned the mutiny would spread to the police, reluctantly followed the examples of the Ugandan and Kenyan Prime Ministers who faced with the same chaos in their armed forces and resorted to calling in British military assistance. Gutteridge’s opinion was that the mutiny was about domestic grievances. Temporarily, the Tanzanian army ceased to exist during the mutinies and in the country’s southern provinces, the government had bases for training South African ‘freedom fighters’ by “experienced irregular soldiers from Algeria, Cuba, and elsewhere.” In the circumstances, a reliable Tanzanian military force was clearly recommended.” When a small contingent from Peking arrived in Tanzania, Nyerere hoped the Chinese might completely retrain a loyal national army.

South Africa was discounted because of clashes with Western interests and Peking's lack of affordability/capacity for such an armed venture. It was suggested, however, that the Chinese could "exploit African nationalism" through assistance in arms and funds to the Tanzanian-based "Africa Liberation Army", purportedly to "gain control over the RSA".⁴³⁶

The SADF military intelligence also speculated on the possibility of Madagascar becoming the next target for a "communist" revolution: "A communist Madagascar with the RSA and Mozambique still under white control will compare with the present role of Cuba", assuming obviously that Castro's regime was the main instigator of revolution in South and Central America. Military intelligence suggested that a "communist Madagascar" could perform the same role in Southern Africa. A parallel was drawn between the Arab/African conflict in Zanzibar and tensions between minorities regarding the black African majority within the Republic, most particularly in southern Natal.

Leading Indians in Durban are convinced that the next target for a revolution, similar to the Zanzibar coup will be Malgassy" (Madagascar). The subversion which lead (sic) to the revolution in Zanzibar was that of clever exploitation of race differences... The incitement of the Black races against their former exploiters, the Asians. The same setting exists along the whole East coast, including the RSA and especially Natal. This type of propaganda and agitation is already visible in Natal; Indians are now currying (sic) the favour of the Bantu.... The cosmopolitan community of Durban lends itself to subversion. This is already being exploited. European, Indian and Bantu agitators are active....It is remarkable to note the many sabotage attempts in Natal

⁴³⁶ KG, Gp5, Box 471, KG/OPS/2/1, Operasionele Beleid, document entitled "Effects of the recent events in Zanzibar and East Africa on the security of the Republic", pp 2-5, Department of Defence Documentation Centre, Pretoria.

organised by Umkhonto We Sizwe. Goldreich the ‘master brain’ is completely pro-Peking.⁴³⁷

Significantly, Arthur Goldreich a white SACP and MK operative besides a *Mayibuye* proponent⁴³⁸ was mentioned in this report. However alarmist their intelligence assessments were, the SADF were making links between Soviet-Sino attempts to draw newly independent countries into their sphere of influence alongside the activities of South African dissidents. The rest of the document continued to speculate as to the extent of Chinese assistance in training the Africa Liberation Army, defined as “composed of guerrilla-soldiers provided by various African states”.

The report’s recommendations were that South African political leaders “exploit the military situation on diplomatic level” by convincing their Western counterparts to reassess their cold-shouldering of the RSA in terms of defence agreements relating to Indian Ocean. That further SADF military co-operation was desirable with both the Southern Rhodesian and the Portuguese governments. It was recommended that the navy and aerial patrols focus on the east coast for intelligence gathering purposes,⁴³⁹ while local defence arrangements such as the commandos should be trained in intelligence gathering, particularly as it was believed that subversive activities could occur along the

⁴³⁷ KG, Gp5, Box 471, KG/OPS/2/1, Operasionele Beleid, document entitled “Effects of the recent events in Zanzibar and East Africa on the security of the Republic”, pp 5-7, Department of Defence Documentation Centre, Pretoria.

Also see Kasrils, Armed and Dangerous, pp 47-63, regarding some of the “cosmopolitan” guerrillas activities in Natal during 1961-63.

⁴³⁸ Shubin, ANC A view from Moscow, pp 45-46.

⁴³⁹ KG, Gp5, Box 471, KG/OPS/2/1, Operasionele Beleid, document entitled “Effects of the recent events in Zanzibar and East Africa on the security of the Republic”, p. 7. Department of Defence Documentation Centre, Pretoria.

coastline by contacts with “unauthorised ships”.⁴⁴⁰ The existence of South African dissident camps in Tanzania and the Zanzibar revolution, along with alleged communist involvement, prompted increased SADF concerns regarding assumed threat possibilities along the South African coast.

Threat perceptions manifested by ‘enemy maritime activity’

One of the more highly publicised ‘threat’ phenomena during the 1960s was the widespread belief that hostile submarines were operating off the coast. Archival documentation includes numerous investigations of alleged sightings, while newspaper reports confirmed the public interest. These ‘sightings’ and SADF responses became even more pronounced once the Rivonia trial’s *Operation Mayibuye* evidence was available of purported plans to ‘land guerrilla forces by sea, for these details were now integrated into SADF operational planning. ‘Submarine sightings’ and SADF search and responses dated from the 1950s, but intensified from 1960, with regular reports in newspapers during a period of growing white South African uncertainties.

A typical example occurred in late October 1960 when a submarine was supposedly spotted at the entrance of False Bay. The Cape Argus reported “a SAAF Shackleton ... investigated...and found nothing,” commenting further that such reports averaged at least three a week received and investigated by the military over recent years. The newspaper’s shipping correspondent compared the sightings as “false fire alarms...to the

⁴⁴⁰ KG, Gp5, Box 471, KG/OPS/2/1, Operasionele Beleid, document entitled “Effects of the recent events in Zanzibar and East Africa on the security of the Republic”, pp7-9, Department of Defence Documentation Centre, Pretoria.

fire brigade.”⁴⁴¹ But this kind of sober rationale did not stem public ‘observations’ of ‘submarines’ receiving increased serious SADF consideration. The assumption was inevitably that Russian or other communist forces had the country under specific watch,⁴⁴² but secret official documentation also speculated that the ‘submarines’ might be part of a broader revolutionary plan.

Brig Gen Theo De Munnik who flew maritime reconnaissance operations during the early 1960s, confirmed that instructions were given to investigate official suspicions of Soviet attempts to spy or land saboteurs. The Pondoland coast came under particular attention in 1960 to 1961, partly because of the discontent there regarding government-appointed tribal leaders, which some SADF planners believed was linked to communist instigations directed through clandestine contacts. De Munnik described the SADF imperatives on these missions:

In the latter half of 1960, it was surmised that a threat of landing saboteurs, terrorists and arms along our coast was becoming a real cause for concern. Shipping patrol flights were stepped up to keep track of what vessels and, more importantly, whose vessels were passing through our waters...Small fishing vessels close to the coast also came under the spotlight. .. Towards the end of 1960, the need for night time surveillance along the East Coast (Pondoland/Transkei) was considered necessary in order to detect or deter night landings from submarines, small fishing vessels or other ships of saboteurs, arms, etc. .. At the height of the calculated threat towards the end of 1960, these patrols were

⁴⁴¹ Cape Argus, 24 October 1960, p.3.

⁴⁴² For example, see Die Burger 24 October 1960, p.1, on the same ‘submarine’ reporting on the same incident under the headline, ‘Red Submarine in False Bay’. The newspaper made it clear the sighting was connected to the SA Navy/Royal Navy annual Capex exercise taking place. The ‘submarine’ had been “observed for a considerable period, inside or near the entrance to False Bay by a reliable person that knows submarines.”

carried out almost every night and a naval presence was also maintained in the area.⁴⁴³

De Munnik's recollections endorse how seriously the SADF from 1960 took the idea of these supposed threats. Opposition politicians exacerbated the hysteria by 'exposing' their parliamentary rivals 'failures' in foreign and domestic policy. One absurd example, was provided by MP Japie Basson in 1961, who referred to "beacons" which Russian ships were supposed to be planting in the sea off the SWA coast, purportedly capable of transmitting radio signals which would cause a rocket to change its course. He quoted Fouché claiming possession of documentary evidence that Russia planned an attack on South Africa, using certain African States as jumping-off points.⁴⁴⁴ The unknown Russian ships were photographed lurking off the SWA coast during the past six months. Basson lamented: "What hope have we in this dangerous world without allies? Nobody will help us if we get into trouble". Describing the (NP) Government as the "grave-digger of the White man," Basson concluded: "If the White man wanted to stay in control there would have to be, first and foremost, white unity. The government had failed to achieve this."⁴⁴⁵

Notwithstanding the sensationalist press value, the SADF never achieved any definite verification of a submarine sighting.⁴⁴⁶ The military also reacted with caution in terms of

⁴⁴³ Email correspondence from Brig Gen Theo de Munnik, 7 January 2007.

⁴⁴⁴ Such "evidence" was not located during my visits to the archives, although Fouché's claims sound similar to aspects of the "air-threats" from Africa described in chapter four.

⁴⁴⁵ The Natal Mercury, 6 October 1961, p.2.

⁴⁴⁶ KG, Gp 5, Box 480, file entitled "An appreciation on the numerous reports of possible enemy submarine activities off the coast of the RSA" (Contained within the box in a separate unnumbered file.) pp 2-6, Department of Defence Documentation Centre, Pretoria.

challenging any such vessels. In February 1960, Air Chief of Staff, Combat Gen Ben Viljoen wrote to Commandant General Melville for policy clarification. Viljoen commented:

As you are aware, there is reliable evidence that foreign submarines have been active in South African territorial waters over a long period. The nature of their activity is unknown, but it would seem obvious that if it were entirely innocent, the power concerned would adopt the normal diplomatic procedures before operating naval craft in our waters...The question arises, however, as to whether we would be justified in taking...drastic steps in the event of locating a submerged or 'snorting' submarine in close proximity to our coast. I would suggest that if depth charges were dropped in the vicinity of such a submarine, a foreign power would be deterred from carrying out clandestine operations in our waters. Even though, however, depth charges were not aimed to hit the target directly, the possibility of destruction or serious damage to the submarine could not be discounted.⁴⁴⁷

Melville's response was to write briefly upon the letter that there was to be "no offensive action" but only observation and reporting as in the past.⁴⁴⁸ Rear Adm Chris Bennett, who served in the navy's anti-submarine frigates during this period, believes that some sightings were definitely submarines, but not necessarily Russian, for it could not be guaranteed that Western countries would relay to the SA government, all details of their navies operations off the Republic's coast. Therefore, SADF use of anti-submarine weaponry could have had any number of unpredictable consequences.⁴⁴⁹

⁴⁴⁷ KG, Gp5, Box 338, KG/GPW/2/4/3, Beveiliging van Seeroetes: Letter dated 25 February 1960 from Combat General B.G. Viljoen to the Commandant General, Department of Defence Documentation Centre, Pretoria.

⁴⁴⁸ Ibid.

⁴⁴⁹ Telephonic interview with Rear Adm Chris Bennett, 24 December 2007.

The SADF and white public assumption was always that the ‘submarines’ were Russian. In a 1965 SADF assessment of the ‘sightings’, it was explained that the only Afro-Asian navies operating submarines were Pakistan (one vessel) and Indonesia, neither of which, the SADF assumed were likely to risk them in such operation. Russia possessed a “large and active submarine fleet of all Communist countries” (sic) and had refuelling facilities in Dar Es Salaam and Zanzibar, while other Russian vessels, (possibly including from February 1965, a replenishing tanker) had long been present off the South African coast.⁴⁵⁰ The writer of this document, Maj Gen Nic Bierman discounted “Western powers and friendly nations” allowing their submarines to lurk clandestinely off the South African coast. The World War Two ethos of a war veteran like Bierman still assumed the mindset of South Africa being accepted as part of a western military fraternity.

However, white public interest continued to be occasionally consumed with repeated reports of ‘Russians’ spying off the coast, ‘landing supplies’ or ‘agitators to instigate revolution or other menacing activities’. Sensationalism and paranoia was inevitable, just as unlikely situations were also sometimes investigated; a notable example occurring in October 1964: *Die Burger* under the headline, “Velddrif threatened by the Russians,” published a lengthy article about a “highly suspicious object” discovered by Velddrif fishermen, amongst whom there was now “unease and wild rumours”. Claimed was that Russians were setting up underwater beacons for the control of guided projectiles – “as had already been discovered off the American coast”. The local fishing company

⁴⁵⁰ KG, Gp 5, Box 480, file entitled “An appreciation on the numerous reports of possible enemy submarine activities off the coast of the RSA” (Contained within the box in a separate unnumbered file.) pp 5-6, Department of Defence Documentation Centre, Pretoria.

manager Mr P.J. Steyl reported that the object was located at the precise spot where the Russian ship Krasnodar had anchored regularly since December 1962.”⁴⁵¹ A report on this mystery object found its way to Fouché, who gave instructions for an examination to be undertaken by the navy, while attempts were made to trace the origins of the press reports.⁴⁵² SA Navy Chief Rear Adm Hugo Biermann was determined to ensure clarity on the matter, “in view of the wild rumours circulating amongst the fishermen.”⁴⁵³ Divers discovered nothing but rock formations, although by then the Foreign Affairs Department and even Verwoerd had taken an interest.⁴⁵⁴ The incident serves as a useful mirror of the *rooigevaar*⁴⁵⁵ mindsets amongst the white community; in this instance within a fishing community off coastal areas where Russians trawlers were regular visitors. In his book My Traitor’s Heart, Riaan Malan spoke of visiting an uncle’s West Coast farm during the early 1960s, where he sardonically recollects his relative’s understanding’s of the Red activity off the coast:

At day’s end, we drove over the sand dunes to watch the grey-green Atlantic breakers rolling onto a lonely, windswept beach... Sometimes a defence-force Shackleton flew past at roof-top height, patrolling against the Russians. (Uncle) Ben knew they were out there, lurking, because a Russian life-jacket had once washed ashore on the beach. The Russians were the enemy. That was already known.⁴⁵⁶

⁴⁵¹ Die Burger, 14 October 1964.

⁴⁵² KG, Gp5, Box 480, KG/OPS/8/6, Soektogte en Ondersoeke: SA Vloot: Letter dated 26 October 1964 from Commandant General to the Minister of Defence, Department of Defence Documentation Centre, Pretoria.

⁴⁵³ KG, Gp5, Box 480, KG/OPS/8/6, Soektogte en Ondersoeke: SA Vloot: Letter dated 3 November 1964 from Commandant General to the Secretary for Foreign Affairs, quoting a report from the Chief of Naval Staff, Department of Defence Documentation Centre, Pretoria.

⁴⁵⁴ KG, Gp5, Box 480, KG/OPS/8/6, Soektogte en Ondersoeke: SA Vloot: Letter dated 19 November 1964 from the Secretary of Foreign Affairs to the Commandant General, Department of Defence Documentation Centre, Pretoria.

⁴⁵⁵ Literally: “Red Peril”.

⁴⁵⁶ Malan, R., My Traitor’s Heart, Vintage International, New York, 1990, p. 38.

In early October 1962, a classified memorandum by Viljoen to the Commandant General reiterated earlier 'submarine warnings'. Conceivably, the tense international context at the time, concerning the plausibility of potential global war, underscored the earnestness behind this and other SADF correspondence. October 1962 was a period of significant Cold War tensions regarding issues around Berlin and particularly Cuba.

It is suspected that unfriendly submarines are already active, along our coast, and that their aim is to land arms or subversive persons or both to foster internal disturbance. Such activity is likely to be intensified in time of internal or external trouble. The best counter to such a threat is frequent air patrols at irregular intervals by day and night and in all weather conditions. The most important stretches of coastline are those on the East Coast and South West Africa coast.⁴⁵⁷

As mentioned above, *Operation Mayibuye* referred to plans of guerrillas landing on the coast and therefore the spectre of Soviet submarines off the Republic's coast received renewed attention after the Rivonia Trial. In June 1964 SAN Flag Officer, Rear Adm H. E. Fougstedt despatched orders to navy ship commanding officers, the SAAF maritime group and Walvis Bay Command that patrols would continue to:

locate and identify unfriendly forces that may be engaged in clandestine operations against the RSA or SWA." Such was based upon: "Intelligence indicate(ing) the strong possibility of clandestine operations being carried out along the West coast of the RSA and SWA by submarines and surface craft...The nationality of these vessels cannot be specifically identified and may be various including South African; It is thought that the vessels are engaged in the landing of subversive agents, literature and arms, at remote places on the coast, and in gathering intelligence."⁴⁵⁸

⁴⁵⁷ KG, Gp5, Box 337, KG/GPW/2/3/6, letter dated 1 October 1962 from Combat-General B.G. Viljoen to the Commandant General, Department of Defence Documentation Centre, Pretoria.

⁴⁵⁸ KG, Gp5, Box 478, KG/OPS/8/3/1: Beweging van SA Vloot Skepe: Operasioneel, Operational Order No. 3/64, Department of Defence Documentation Centre, Pretoria.

The above happened just before Justice Minister Vorster had told parliament that the “Communist Party had given orders from outside the country that violence and sabotage should be limited pending the outcome of the (Rivonia) trial” and “he was ready for anything”.⁴⁵⁹ SADF military intelligence (DMI) reported in late December 1964 about ANC guerrillas being possibly landed the following year via Soviet submarine. Reports were despatched to the Commandant General, besides all SADF Chiefs of Staff and the SA Police, about anticipated guerrilla operations involving submarines. The details are revealing regarding the clear uncertainties amongst the SADF’s command and intelligence.

It was stated that the ANC had currently spread across Africa, five hundred trained fighters with Algerian and Cuban officers and several hundred other in training, with monthly replenishments of new recruits from South Africa. Some of these guerrillas were to be landed on the South African coast from a Soviet submarine early in 1965. The submarine would refuel and take on additional guerrillas at Zanzibar, which as demonstrated earlier, remained an area of high SADF concern. The Soviets had already completed a survey of the South African coast and identified the most likely landing areas, consisting of twenty-three points along the Transkei and Pondoland coasts. DMI strongly recommended that air and naval patrols were to be a priority for several months to come.⁴⁶⁰ The involvement of Russian submarines was also documented by DMI in a December 1964 appraisal, claiming detailed PAC plans existed to launch attacks upon the

⁴⁵⁹ Cape Times, 11 June 1964, p.8.

⁴⁶⁰ KG, Gp5, Box 472, KG/OPS/4/6, Guerilla Oorlogsvoering, letter dated 18 December 1964 from the Head of Defence Military Intelligence, Department of Defence Documentation Centre, Pretoria.

RSA, “at some stage soon in the future” with PAC guerrillas also supposedly to be landed by submarine.⁴⁶¹

Early the following year (5 January 1965), the SA Police National Commissioner gave urgent instructions regarding “Activities of Submarines: RSA Coastline” to the Regional Commissioners in all coastal sections from the Western Cape to Natal. The National Commissioner, R.J. Van den Bergh noted the same information described above regarding ‘ANC guerrillas’. Police stationed near the coast, were instructed to be particularly alert and to make use of the loyal local (black) population for information. It was also emphasised that this information was under no circumstances to be relayed back to any member of the (white) public, because of the possibility that such would result in panic. Police Regional Commissioners were instructed to investigate possible landing sites, particularly in remote areas and to report anything irregular to the National Commissioner’s Office or the nearest SADF unit, besides consult with the local security police regarding any steps that were to be taken.⁴⁶²

SADF Directorate of Planning and Operations (DPO) Head, Maj Gen Nic Bierman, within correspondence to the Commandant General in March 1965, even suggested that “a Communist Foreign power” might attempt to evacuate the SACP fugitive Braam Fischer by submarine. Bierman referred to the increased frequency of submarine

⁴⁶¹ KG Gp5, Box 472, KG/OPS/4/6, Guerilla Oorlogvoering Supplementary Military Intelligence Report, Subject: RSA – The Unconventional Military Threat, Period ending: 15 Dec 1964, p. 60, Department of Defence Documentation Centre, Pretoria.

⁴⁶² KG, Gp5, Box 472, KG/OPS/4/6, Guerilla Oorlogsvoering, letter dated 5 January 1965 from the SA Police Commissioner, Department of Defence Documentation Centre, Pretoria.

sightings since February and reiterated that intelligence reports indicated “a strong possibility of arms, equipment, and trained personnel being clandestinely landed...at points along the East Coast of the RSA.” The document speculated upon the advantage of a hostile power doing such an operation by submarine, “in aid of an uprising” “directly into the Bantu areas” off the Transkei coast to minimise detection by security forces.⁴⁶³ Submarine sightings continued during 1965 with the SADF usually responding immediately. The Cape Times reported a determined search off Quoin Point west of Cape Agulhas that winter, where the SADF tried to elicit local assistance while attempting to keep the ever-inquisitive press at bay:⁴⁶⁴

The “Submarine sightings” – some closing remarks

The SA Police and DMI completely misunderstood the extent of Soviet interest and most particularly any assistance rendered by them to the ANC.⁴⁶⁵ SADF documentation permits us to draw some important conclusions regarding the white security establishment’s threat perceptions. Firstly, the ‘Russian submarine menace’ was taken exceptionally seriously at the highest levels, because there persisted an extravagant SADF belief in ANC and SACP influence within the USSR. There were assumptions of ANC/PAC military capacities that were completely unrealistic; namely ANC/PAC or any other dissident armed wing’s military capability to significantly confront the South

⁴⁶³ KG, Gp 5, Box 480, file entitled “An appreciation on the numerous reports of possible enemy submarine activities off the coast of the RSA” (Contained within the box in a separate unnumbered file.) pp 1-3, Department of Defence Documentation Centre, Pretoria.

⁴⁶⁴ Cape Times, 3 May 1966, p.11.

⁴⁶⁵ Shubin makes this clear in ANC A view from Moscow, pp 45-46 and pp 52-53, that the Soviets would never have provided such support.

African state. The discovery of the *Mayibuye* plans had confirmed to the SADF that local African nationalist militant forces had contemplated such a challenge. Documentation also reveals the South African security establishment as jittery, markedly different from its confident public face. The Commissioner's comments about the vulnerability of the white population to panic, if informed of the prospect of an 'ANC invasion of armed guerrillas', is indicative of the white public mood, which at the time was susceptible to stories of impending disaster through black revolution 'linked to communism' or 'Russia'.

In August 1964, Fouché had referred to the SADF commandos being critical for guarding key points and essential services, emphasising the earlier sabotage campaign as being viewed by the Defence Force just a "practice run".⁴⁶⁶ The SADF worked within a community that although largely prosperous and privileged, often anticipated the worst in terms of 'enemies' bent of their destruction and seizure of property. Like with the planning to defend SWA, (see following chapter) the security establishment were working secretly against perceived 'threats,' on the understanding that any revelation of such could have political and economic consequences, particularly if there were serious white 'panics,' as had occurred after Sharpeville. The 'submarine sighting' phenomena of the 1960s were symptoms of a barely repressed white fear of enemies determined to invoke violent political change.

⁴⁶⁶ J.J. Fouché Collection, UFS, PV 467, File no. 3/13/1/1/2, Speeches 9 July 1962-9 December 1962, pp 5-7.

SADF fears at potential American intransigence

One significant assessment drawn from this research has been establishing the suspicion and fear the SADF establishment sometimes held during the 1960s towards the USA. Verwoerd commented in parliament during February 1962 regarding local perceptions of America as a potential “threat”. Although he dismissed this as highly unlikely, as Barber notes, it was significant that such public speculation existed at all which Verwoerd had felt compelled to respond to.⁴⁶⁷ A 1963 intelligence appraisal briefly outlined the methods by which a UN attack on the RSA could take: Paratroopers along with air transported and naval components implementing attacks simultaneously against strategic points, both inland and along the coast. It was emphasised that given the UN’s financial position, the assistance of a big power such as the USA was required and this was considered unlikely.⁴⁶⁸ There remained SADF speculation, still persisting in 1966, that under certain circumstances, the American government might assist in such an intervention. The possibility was considered of the Afro-Asians seeking USA assistance for a UN military force, operating under the auspices of the world body to ensure ‘global peace’; such was clearly outlined in a SADF intelligence report:

the African and Asiatic states are currently not capable of overthrowing white control in South Africa, and because the Communist bloc are restricted from directly intervening by the possibility that this would result in American military opposition, a tactic is being pursued to influence those states which could possibly ensure such a change, to act against the Republic. These

⁴⁶⁷ Barber, *South African Foreign Policy 1945-1970*, p.191.

⁴⁶⁸ AG 4, Gp 4, File No. AG 672/2 Inligting, Memorandum Oor ‘n Inligting’s Waardering Opgestel Deur Die Direkteur van Militêre Inligting op 1 April 1963, p. 7.

potential aggressors, whether at economic or military level are the big Western powers led by the United States of America.⁴⁶⁹

Another report dated 22 August 1966, forming part of: “An Evaluation of the Military Threat against South Africa as at 13 September 1966,” gives a clear picture of the presumptions held by the SADF at this time regarding its foes:

The enemy assault against the RSA forms part of the designed ‘liberation’ of white South Africa through subversive elements, the Afro-Asian and communist countries, and certain liberal western organisations. Although the OAU endeavours to set out priorities in its ‘master plan’, it has since the beginning of hostilities in Angola (1961) had to adjust its plan in order to adjust with changing circumstances.⁴⁷⁰

The “enemy” was elaborated as being: “Afro-Asian countries with their slogan ‘Africa for the African’”; “communist countries with their hankering for world-domination”; “Western countries with their anti-colonial policy followed by an enthusiastic taking up of the “equalising process” (*gelykmakingsproses*)”.⁴⁷¹ Regarding the latter ‘process’, it was understood that because since World War Two, (this “process”) had moved onto new terrain (Africa) and called for all discrimination on the grounds of colour being swept aside. Obviously, South Africa’s policy of “separate development” was portrayed as a hindrance to the realisation of this. Therefore, “the actual objective of the enemy assault was the removal of whites from their position of political power and establishment of a multi-racial and ultimately a non-white regime in the RSA”. Nevertheless, it was felt that

⁴⁶⁹ Aanhangsel A By RSA/Ward/22/8/66, HSI AMI, GP3, Box 430, Hoof van Verdegigingsstaf, Aanvulende Militêre Inligtingsrapport, Waardering van die Vyandelike Militêre Dreigment Teen die RSA soos op 13 September 1966, p. 57.

⁴⁷⁰ HSI AMI, GP3, Box 430, Hoof van Verdegigingsstaf, Aanvulende Militêre Inligtingsrapport, Waardering van die Vyandelike Militêre Dreigment Teen die RSA soos op 13 September 1966, p. 2.

⁴⁷¹ *Ibid*, p.4. See Scholtz’s writings earlier in this chapter where the terminology and understanding of the “*gelykmakingsproses*” is identical.

in the event of a “possible third world war,” Western countries would have to come to terms with the Republic’s “economic and military-strategic benefits”. The report commented that regardless of the recent decision by the World Court in favour of South Africa regarding SWA, UN military action could still occur to terminate the Republic’s mandate, particularly if “internal unrest or racial unrest was considered a threat to world peace”.⁴⁷²

Although it was not anticipated that Western countries would support military action, there remained throughout this lengthy document a suspicion regarding America. Ironically, the mid-1960s was also a period during which the white South African community were becoming increasingly drawn for cultural imitations to American popular culture.⁴⁷³ Specific American interest regarding Southern Africa is confirmed by the US State Department having deployed a spy ship in Cape Town during the early part of the decade, which was to maintain a watching brief on the newly emerging nations of Africa besides the internal struggles within remaining colonies.”⁴⁷⁴ SADF documentation by 1966 laid an emphasis upon the USA as not necessarily ‘reliable’. The SADF believed the American government would always explicitly cover its own interests first, even regarding the possibility of it supporting military action against South Africa:

The USA might under changing circumstances be persuaded towards such a step (to supporting armed intervention in South African affairs). It is also expected that the USA in the Cold War

⁴⁷² Ibid, pp 4-5. DMI rationale followed exactly the same kind of reasoning of G.D. Scholtz, as alluded to earlier in this chapter.

⁴⁷³ Seminar paper entitled: “Afrikaners during the 1960s,” read by Prof. Albert Grundlingh at Stellenbosch University’s History Department, 22 August 2007.

⁴⁷⁴ Sanders, J., Apartheid’s Friends, pp 31-32.

would in its own interests side against the RSA and act (accordingly).⁴⁷⁵

Although the American threat was a remote possibility, what seemed particularly to perturb SADF appraisers, was that the United States certainly possessed the capacity for military intervention in South Africa and was “the most easily persuadable to taking such a step”.⁴⁷⁶ (compared it was believed to other Western countries) The report reasoned as follows regarding potential scenarios that deserved consideration:

If the war in Vietnam and police actions in other parts of the world, because of changing circumstances place a lighter demand upon the USA, while the pressure increases both within and outside that country to act against the RSA, there could still in the future be military action taken against South Africa..⁴⁷⁷

DMI set out the possible threats to the Republic under three categories: “Unconventional forces comprising subversive groups; conventional forces comprised out of a country or a group of countries; and the UN”.⁴⁷⁸ Regarding the UN, it was assumed that any military action on its part would have to be backed by one of the “Great Powers”. Such intervention depended on economic and political factors that varied according to changing global circumstances. An analysis was set out upon each of the most important Western countries and the Soviet Union. The French were considered highly unlikely to participate in any armed action against South Africa; such an appraisal was based upon

⁴⁷⁵ HSI AMI, GP3, Box 430, Hoof van Verdegigingsstaf, Aanvulende Militêre Inligtingsrapport, Waardering van die Vyandelike Militêre Dreigment Teen die RSA soos op 13 September 1966, p. 3.

⁴⁷⁷ Ibid, p.12.

⁴⁷⁸ Ibid, p.5.

the extent of their recent military collaboration with South Africa⁴⁷⁹ and their refusal to support several UN resolutions against the country. The British government intervening with armed force was also discounted, on the grounds their economy could not be risked regarding the “loss of South African gold”, investments, and “thriving trade”. The USA as the most powerful Western country was viewed in a less predictable light. It was assumed that because of the USA armed force’s international commitments, including covering NATO, Vietnam, Cuba and standing in to replace Britain’s withdrawal from the Middle East, it would not in addition be able to support “reckless actions demanded by the Afro-Asian countries in the UN”, nor would it consent to general economic sanctions. However, it was felt that the USA was vulnerable to criticism from Afro-Asian countries, regarding its actions in Vietnam and in consequence, might attempt to soothe this by supporting a full or partial oil boycott against South Africa.

The DMI report however, emphasised it could not be discounted that the USA under changing circumstances might support military action again the Republic. The Soviet Union, it was thought unlikely to permit the inclusion of their military forces under any UN authority invading South Africa and their involvement would not be accepted by Western powers.⁴⁸⁰ Concerns were also expressed that the USA might by a stronger attitude and actions towards South Africa attempt to draw adverse attention away from its “negro problems” and Vietnam policy, through American endorsement of “liberalism”

⁴⁷⁹ By 1966, the SADF had purchased a significant range of arms from France, who had ignored the UN 1963 mandatory arms boycott against the Republic.

⁴⁸⁰ Ibid., pp 33-35.

and the “equalisation process.”⁴⁸¹ Maj Gen Phil Pretorius, who served in intelligence during the early 1960s, recalled that amongst opinions expressed at the time was that an American aircraft carrier could be a significant part of such an international military threat to South Africa.⁴⁸² In an analysis regarding US armed forces capacity in 1966, DMI established that at that stage, one US military division could be drawn for intervention, without calling upon reserves and if tensions in Europe and the Far East reduced, other reinforcements could be made available.⁴⁸³

However, DMI reassured the SADF, that circumstances whereby Western powers might militarily intervene in South Africa by 1966 still seemed unlikely. However, it was recommended that it was imperative to establish what kind of issue the Republic’s ‘enemies’ might use to provoke the willingness of the USA to act militarily. Stressed was that the government needed to respond in some way to the possibility of military intervention, because there remained both internal and external pressure on the West to do so. Therefore, the recommendations were that a “strong and experienced Defence Force could reinforce the perception that overthrowing the RSA would require a full-scale and expensive military campaign, while more subtle emphasise (needed to be placed) upon our value to the West in strategy and preparedness.” In his 1967 book, Total

⁴⁸¹ Aanhangsel A By RSA/Ward/22/8/66, HSI AMI, GP3, Box 430, Hoof van Verdegigingsstaf, Aanvulende Militêre Inligtingsrapport, Waardering van die Vyandelike Militêre Dreigment Teen die RSA soos op 13 September 1966, pp 66-67.

⁴⁸² Interview with Maj Gen P. Pretorius, 25 June 2007.

⁴⁸³ HSI AMI, GP3, Box 430, Hoof van Verdegigingsstaf, Aanvulende Militêre Inligtingsrapport, Waardering van die Vyandelike Militêre Dreigment Teen die RSA soos op 13 September 1966, pp 36-37.

Defence, Neil Orpen was still exploring the possibility of the USA backing a conventional military attack on South Africa.⁴⁸⁴

SADF threat perceptions: Closing comments

By mid-1965, Fouché told parliament that in contrast to 1960, when training principally concerned internal security, this had long changed with perceptions of a possible external threat, hence the need to retain for periods significant numbers of conscripts under arms. Fouché also assured that improvements and additions had been made to the SADF, including transport and stockpiling of ammunition. He claimed the SADF had reached a stage where everything required for mobilization was now available.⁴⁸⁵ Addressing an official opening of an SADF new air defence system component on 15 November 1965, Fouché referred to the perceived threats:

We are living in times of war and rumours of war...in times when threats are also being made against our fatherland. If these threats are to become a reality, nobody can predict. We are not a great power and have absolutely no ambitions but to be left in peace, thereby we can also guarantee peace.⁴⁸⁶

Fouché continued playing the role of projecting for white South Africans, the necessity of ensuring a military deterrent. The government view, increasingly shared by this community, was that the country was innocent of wrong and its white inhabitants

⁴⁸⁴ Orpen, N., Total Defence, Nationaleboekhandel, Cape Town, 1967, pp 54-55.

⁴⁸⁴ Commando, April 1968, pp 9-11.

⁴⁸⁵ Hansard, 11 Feb 1965, 4th Session – Second Parliament RSA 22 Jan to 18 June 1965, pp 919-920.

⁴⁸⁶ University of the Free State, Archive for Contemporary Affairs, PV 467: J.J. Fouché Collection, File no. 3/13/1/1/2, Speeches 1962, July 9 – 1965, Dec 9.

misunderstood and maligned by the rest of the world. Therefore, military deterrent provision was appropriate and just. Fouché continued:

(We wish)...to give our full attention to our...own unrestricted possibilities regarding ourselves, but also... to (assist) everybody in Africa that so desires. But it is just because we desire to be left in peace...we are also...militarily prepared....it would be the height of foolishness to ...participate or precipitate a war in Africa, (which is) currently at its formative stage and experiencing an unsettled period. (Such) would be expensive for generations and could only entrain devastation. The Republic of South Africa has no such sinister....plans...such would be bring self-destruction or at best ensure an incalculable economic setback.⁴⁸⁷

It is significant that Fouché referred to the question of war bringing an economic disaster for South Africa. For during these prosperous years, it would have made political sense to state clearly, that the government was not in any way pursuing a “military policy” threatening white community material comfort. Fouché’s rhetoric obfuscated other issues that arguably threatened the economic stability of the country, such as increased political isolation and international hostility to apartheid.

Although there was no evidence, nor purpose regarding any SADF “preparation” to “attack Africa”, the South African government remained concerned about aggressive Afro-Asian posturing at the UN, ultimately transforming into a military situation. In 1965, speaking to trainees passing out from the Army Gymnasium at Voortrekkerhoogte, Fouché continued to warn of, “threats...made against the RSA, both from within and beyond our boundaries. These ...cannot be disregarded and none of us may assume an

⁴⁸⁷ Ibid.

attitude of indifference in matters concerning the defence and security of our country.”⁴⁸⁸ Fouché was also of course, assisting in facilitating the process by which full white male conscription was soon to become a reality. By September 1966, DMI were more confident, predicting that the Republic’s economic potential and “military-strategic” value would ensure Western powers limiting “communist influence on South Africa”, or precluding them from threatening South Africa’s economic and strategic value. In a global conflict situation, Western powers would, according to the circumstances, be compelled to adjust their policies of distancing themselves from the Republic; a situation advantageous to the Republic provided the South African government was “still sustaining itself”.⁴⁸⁹

Although DMI continued to stress that communist countries would not attempt unilateral military action because of likely Western rejection and the possibility of global war,⁴⁹⁰ they remained concerned at the fluidity of the international situation. There were still various options open to the UN according to its Charter, which included displays of military force, naval and air blockades and ultimately direct military action. Concern was expressed that an economic blockade could lead to war through unforeseen incidents and the country would be dependent upon its limited “maritime (naval) capacity to offer resistance.” In anticipation of a physical blockade of South African harbours intended to prevent the importation of crude oil, the appraisal envisaged that a naval task force would

⁴⁸⁸ University of the Free State, Archive for Contemporary Affairs, PV 467: J.J. Fouché Collection, File no. 3/13/1/1/2, Speeches 1962, July 9 – 1965, Dec 9.

⁴⁸⁹ HSI AMI, GP3, Box 430, Hoof van Verdegigingsstaf, Aanvulende Militêre Inligtingsrapport, Waardering van die Vyandelike Militêre Dreigment Teen die RSA soos op 13 September 1966, p. 5.

⁴⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 16.

have to be stationed outside each of Cape Town and Durban. While if the blockade was intended to also cover refined petroleum products and other commodities, then Walvis Bay, Port Elizabeth, East London and Mossel Bay's usage would also be restricted.⁴⁹¹ It was thought the operational area of UN ships would remain outside the offensive range of the SAN or the SAAF. However, revealing again SADF suspicion of United States intentions, it was also noted that: "Military personnel of the American Embassy in the RSA have recently become very active in trying to locate information regarding SAAF bases and oil stock-pile locations in the important harbours."⁴⁹²

White community interest in the concept of a "blockade threat," was demonstrated by *Die Huisgenoot* where a lengthy article was published scorning the likely effectiveness of sanctions; indicative of how topical the issue was considered by its readers. Certainly the magazine's owners (Afrikaans press group *Nationalepers*) assumed *Huisgenoot's* audience would appreciate the publication's patriotic dismissal of boycott threats being the posturing by South Africa's 'enemies'. The article was written by H. de G. Laurie, a "well-known Afrikaans businessman," who in explaining the different levels of sanctions, focussed particularly on the concept of a complete economic blockade. This meant sanctions in their "severest kind which coupled with military action, meant a blockade...to prevent any commerce (occurring) with the (relevant) country, or as he put it: "a genuine war without shooting".⁴⁹³

⁴⁹¹ HSI AMI, GP3, Box 430, Hoof van Verdegigingsstaf, Aanvulende Militêre Inligtingsrapport, Waardering van die Vyandelike Militêre Dreigment Teen die RSA soos op 13 September 1966, pp 6-8.

⁴⁹² *Ibid.*, p. 8.

⁴⁹³ *Die Huisgenoot*, 29 May 1964, pp 14-17.

Laurie dismissed total sanctions as being impractical to implement, but acknowledged that a full blockade would be plausible, although it would need to be enforced by a strong naval presence. A blockade could present certain problems, for example, internal pressure to “give in” and the possibility of internal unrest being “difficult to control.” Laurie quoted the conventional white South African rebuttals of the time. That a blockade would ultimately be unsuccessful because of South Africa’s “self-sufficiency” in food, the success of Sasol in converting oil from petrol, adequate coal-reserves for electricity and rail transport which remained the main internal form of goods conveyance. Laurie believed that the costs of maintaining a naval blockade presence would be huge, particularly if maintained over a lengthy period.⁴⁹⁴

DMI held that any UN military intervention was unlikely and that if it happened, it would be a consequence of incidents occurring during enforcement of the blockade. However, such an attack would come from the air and sea, with its objective the destruction of the SADF and civilian authority. It was speculated that the success of such a UN military task force attack would also be dependent upon the “resoluteness, steadfastness and loyalty of whites to the government.” Of additional concern was the “attitude of the non-whites towards the government” and “their capacity to successfully rise up and direct a struggle against state authority”. The degree to which the SADF was perceived as an effective military deterrent, would be a “very important factor (which could be) decisive if military intervention was ever considered against South Africa.”⁴⁹⁵ Finally it was held

⁴⁹⁴ Ibid.

⁴⁹⁵ HSI AMI, GP3, Box 430, Hoof van Verdegigingsstaf, Aanvulende Militêre Inligtingsrapport, Waardering van die Vyandelike Militêre Dreigment Teen die RSA soos op 13 September 1966, pp 9-10.

that the UN would be cautious in terms of militarily acting against the country, because of the danger that a full-scale war would destroy the country's economy and create chaos".⁴⁹⁶

By the end of 1966, the SADF's fear of a conventional military attack had not completely waned, but it had considerably diminished since 1961 to 1963. The threat being envisaged more clearly by 1967 to 1968, namely "sporadic guerrilla war," was assumed "at worst would accentuate in the near future."⁴⁹⁷ It towards this kind of threat the SADF began to increasingly reshape its fighting philosophy and doctrines that had been more focussed towards the possibility of defending against a conventional warfare, or during the first years of the decade, an internal insurrection.

Conclusion

It is a central contention of this dissertation that the SADF's role in collecting information on military threats during the 1960s and responding to them, has in this author's evaluation been neglected in previous writings and no comprehensive research during this period has been completed. While the white population within South Africa, after being shocked by the international reaction immediately post the Sharpeville shootings, by the mid-1960s began to recover its confidence as the economy started to boom,. But the SADF's public profile also began to rise, while government defence expenditure increased with new arms acquisitions and increases in balloted service.

⁴⁹⁶ Ibid, p. 39.

⁴⁹⁷ Ibid., pp 72-73.

Also occurring, unbeknown to the public were the extent of SADF perceptions of threats during the period. The military, as demonstrated in the next chapter, attempted to respond to these threats, often in haste with various counter-strategies. While politicians made the most of the unsubstantiated ‘African threat’, the SADF still took seriously possible conventional threats, besides suspected guerrilla insurrection, as outlined through the evidence provided at the Rivonia trial on *Operation Mayibuye*. Hence, the close watch kept upon the coast and SADF responses to “submarine sightings”. A period of particular white anxieties stretched from Sharpeville, through the March 1961 Angolan uprisings and Republic declaration, until the mid-1960s. These violent events in the Portuguese colony further ensured SWA being an SADF priority, with concerns that the UN or “Afro-Asians” may try to wrest away South African control. Simultaneous events in Congo during 1960 to 1963, not only prompted further defensiveness by South African whites to rally behind government rationales of apartheid, but also induced the SADF to secretly conclude that UN action spearheaded by Indian forces could be imminent. This deduction was made partly because of the Indian armed forces leading role in forcibly stemming the Katanga succession.

SADF suspicions of American intransigence were partly rooted in realisation that of all potential “invaders”, United States participation would be decisive. The SADF never completely ignored the possibility of such threats, while politicians, military men and others, made full use of such a scenario as a method of whipping white South Africans together. The SADF commanders and government therefore reacted by creating what was

at least projected to be an effective military capability to serve as an effective deterrent to potential military threats. Against the background of comparative prosperity and privilege amongst white South Africans, there remained anxieties that ensured a steadily growing defence budget, a waning of white political opposition and a process which by 1968, legislated that all white male school-leavers would be doing compulsory military service. The white South African community had also been socialised during the first part of the 1960s to give their consent for such a national service system. (See part two of this thesis).

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Chapter 4: SADF counter strategies by 1968

Introduction

Already after the republic declaration, from June 1961 Fouché insisted in parliament that it had to be ensured that the SADF could defend the country against an external military threat,⁴⁹⁸ but where this threat would emanate from was vaguely postulated. This chapter introduces some important SADF responses to potential conventional military attack, thereafter explains the Defence Force's doctrinal shift by 1968 towards counter-insurgency warfare; a change which occurred alongside the implementation of legislative changes compelling conscription for all white male school-leavers into a nine month stretch of military national service.

Fouché, Verwoerd and Grobbelaar: Attempts to discern the role of the SADF (from 1960)

In the first months of his appointment, Fouché had reacted to defence needs as being primarily concerned with preventing a potential internal uprising by black South Africans while conventional warfare planning, was largely ignored. Half the Centurion tanks purchased during the 1950s (one hundred out of two hundred) were sold in September 1960 to Switzerland, ensuring funds for other equipment (British documentation suggests

⁴⁹⁸ Barber, South African Foreign Policy 1945-1970, pp 190-191.

that most of these tanks were never even used by the SADF).⁴⁹⁹ Although Fouché made it clear at this early stage that it was intended, where possible, for South Africa to manufacture her own arms,⁵⁰⁰ as has been demonstrated in the previous chapter, during 1960 to 1966 it was increasingly more conventional threats that SADF equipment purchases and appraisals would be directed towards. Thereafter during 1967 to 1968, counter-insurgency warfare received closer attention. However, the earlier conventional warfare emphasis in our period is virtually undocumented by Seegers and other writers,⁵⁰¹ although she does discern the apparent Defence Force confusion in initially trying to decide which arms and training required greater emphasis; whether orientated towards conventional warfare or counter-insurgency.⁵⁰²

There were also occasions when Grobbelaar had to persuade Verwoerd not to interfere in defence matters. When called on one occasion to the Prime Minister's office over the Commandant General's reluctance to support the selling off of the army's remaining one hundred Centurion tanks, in a tense discussion, Grobbelaar told Verwoerd that he and not the SADF Chief would have to make it public that it was his (the Prime Minister's) decision to dispense with the vehicles.⁵⁰³ This confirmed that Grobbelaar was not prepared to take any risks regarding the possibility of a landward conventional threat

⁴⁹⁹ UK National Archives, letter dated 15 February 1967 from UK Ministry of Defence from O.J.Porter to D.A. Marston of the Foreign Office Defence Supply Section, where referral is made regarding the condition of the Centurion tanks sold in September 1960 to Switzerland.

⁵⁰⁰ See Boulter, F. C. Erasmus and SA Defence, p.89 and Seegers, The Military in the Making of Modern South Africa, pp 144-145.

⁵⁰¹ See Seegers, The Military in the Making of Modern South Africa, pp 119- 149 where there is no focus on SADF conventional warfare capacity or perceived conventional warfare threats.

⁵⁰² *Ibid.*, pp 143-145.

⁵⁰³ Interview with Dawid Grobbelaar, 21 December 2006.

developing. As further shown below, defence planning in the early 1960s was intended to both ensure a dispersion of forces to cover potential internal uprisings or guerrilla activities and enable the placement of infrastructure to guard borders and SWA at Walvis Bay - regarding conventional warfare threats.

Establishment of additional army and air force bases for internal and external defence

One of the earliest SADF counter-responses during 1961 was to establish sixteen “Combat Groups,” each superimposed upon regional/territorial commands, splitting the country geographically up into a number of administrative military areas: For example, Northern Transvaal Command, Witwatersrand Command, Western Province Command... The first four Combat Groups were established from 1 January 1961 (11-14 CGs), while 15 and 16 Combat Groups were set up from 1 April 1963.⁵⁰⁴ These Combat Groups were effectively “paper plans,” covering component parts of the Republic and SWA in the event of a conventional warfare attack,⁵⁰⁵ besides also facilitating the responses to unconventional warfare in their respective areas.⁵⁰⁶ The latter role was more in the public domain, while the government were far more secretive about counter strategies concerning conventional threats. At an administrative level, the Combat Groups comprised a commander, a general staff officer as second in command and an administrative/logistics officer. For example, 16 Combat Group in SWA was tasked with

⁵⁰⁴ *Militaria*, 12/2, 1982, 1912 – 1982 Commemorative Issue, p.15.

⁵⁰⁵ Correspondence from Lt Gen J. Dutton dated 30 January 2007.

⁵⁰⁶ *Militaria*, 12/2, 1982, 1912 – 1982 Commemorative Issue, p.15.

the role of facing the possibility of an amphibious enemy landing at Swakopmund or Walvis Bay.⁵⁰⁷

As mentioned, the first part of the decade was also interspersed with the SADF being alerted to possible internal insurrections.⁵⁰⁸ Considering white South African fears of such, the SADF also made provision to spread bases, equipment and men around to cover black population concentrations within both the republic and SWA. New bases were strategically placed where internal and external ‘threats’ might manifest. From approximately 1962, the Combat Groups were supplemented by the creation of “Full Time Force Units,” which were strategically placed units made up of already trained balloted troops. These were located near the Bantustans and densely black populated areas across both the Republic and SWA, besides near border zones, including that of SWA. For example: 5 SAI Bn (Infantry Battalion) – Ladysmith; 6 SAI Bn - Grahamstown, 7 SAI Bn - Bourkes Luck (Eastern Transvaal) were all contiguous to one of Transkei, Ciskei, Kwazulu and Pedi areas. 2 SAI Bn with armour and artillery support was located at Walvis Bay, while 8 SAI Bn was based at Upington, along with an armoured car regiment and squadrons of the same were stationed at Zeerust and Jankempdorp, close to Tswana areas and national border.

Training for infantry and armour was conducted respectively at 1SAI Bn and 1 Special Service Battalion in Bloemfontein, with artillery training at 4 Field Regiment in

⁵⁰⁷ Correspondence from Lt Gen J. Dutton dated 30 January 2007.

⁵⁰⁸ KG Group 5, Box 325, file KG/GPW/1/5/16, Operasie Spantou – describing a Pretoria and Witwatersrand SADF exercise targeting *Pogo* insurrection against whites.

Potchefstroom. Establishment of new SAAF bases followed same pattern: Rooikop at Walvis Bay, Pietersberg, Louis Trichardt, and Elliot 69, a sophisticated airfield intended to be right on the Transkei northern border. Hoedspruit was set up in the Lowveld so that jet fighters could take off at low altitude above sea-level; ensuring they could carry a heavier weapon-load.⁵⁰⁹

In 1964, the government published the Odendaal report, which confirmed Verwoerd's cabinet was envisaging the imposition of grand apartheid style homeland planning upon SWA.⁵¹⁰ From an SADF perspective, the report included an analysis of the territory's demography and other details pertinent to military strategic assessments. Each Combat Group was instructed to create a similar report relevant to their location. At the Army College during early 1964, a 'paper exercise' was conducted for the benefit of unit commanders as to how the Combat Groups would function if called upon to repel a real threat.⁵¹¹ By 1 April 1965, a conventional warfare organisational shape was apparent within the SADF with the establishment of 7 SA Division, plus 17, 18 and 19 Brigades, as well as a headquarters communication zone.⁵¹²

Fouche had thundered out in early 1962 that "his holy duty (was) to ensure the security of South Africa against 'the ruthless rapists of democracy...those countries which are the fools of Communism'". In the same article, the Cape Argus headlined: "Plan for 33 SA

⁵⁰⁹ Correspondence from Lt Gen J. Dutton dated 30 January 2007.

⁵¹⁰ See Davenport, T.R.H., South Africa A Modern History, 3rd edition, pp 482-483.

⁵¹¹ Correspondence from Lt Gen J. Dutton dated 30 January 2007.

⁵¹² Militaria, 12/2, 1982, 1912 – 1982 Commemorative Issue, pp 15-16.

Battalions in four years.”⁵¹³ The press by early 1963 reported large increases in defence spending,⁵¹⁴ the SADF already late the previous year, also made new defence appraisals. Grobbelaar presented Fouché with recommendations concerning infrastructural improvements on the east coast to bolster defence if the Portuguese lost control of Mozambique. This included declaring an exclusively white area, five miles wide, from St Lucia Bay to the Mozambique border, making it easier to detect landing by black guerrillas.⁵¹⁵ At a General Staff Conference held at Cape Town on the 2nd to 4th April 1963, Grobbelaar instructed the Chiefs of Staff to give detailed reports on preparations within each of their responsibility areas. If it became necessary to mobilise by the end of that year, the Commandant General wanted to specifically ensure that within the remaining time a minimum number of units could be activated. Grobbelaar confirmed that the preparations purpose was “to meet a possible threat from outside the borders of the Republic (that) was not defined and...could not be defined.”⁵¹⁶ The SADF was attempting to confirm that it could respond effectively to any threat perceptions of the time, in a country where the white population was continually experiencing some degree of tension and uncertainty, both internally and regarding African decolonisation.

These preparations existed alongside press and opposition parliamentary reports that the SADF was not actually in good shape. UP MP Bronkhorst alleged in mid-1964 that Defence Force arms and ammunition had been “lost” in the Western Transvaal, besides

⁵¹³ Cape Argus, 9 April 1962, p.1.

⁵¹⁴ See Cape Times, 21 March 1963, p.1, “Defence Costs Soar”.

⁵¹⁵ AG Group 4, Box 3, file AG 650/7, letter dated 7 September 1962 from Commandant General Grobbelaar to Fouché.

⁵¹⁶ KG, GP 5, Box 325, KG/GPW/1/5/15, Plan Eland, letter dated 30 September 1963 from Commandant General to Air Chief of Staff, Department of Defence Documentation Centre, Pretoria.

cases of the same being “smuggled” across the Bechuanaland border. While Fouché boasted in parliament that the country’s arms industry could cover all internal needs,⁵¹⁷ the parliamentary opposition pointed to Fouché’s appointment of a Commission of Inquiry into aspects of the Defence Force. A report of the Select Committee on Public Accounts released information that “contained shocking disclosures of neglect and... emphasised the scarcity of manpower (in the SADF)”. There persisted an array of press criticism of the Defence Force; for example, the Commando system had long been attacked as lackadaisical, whereby members were allegedly able to attend parades as they chose, compared to ballotees who were compelled to be present for all relevant duties during their compulsory commitment periods of training. Fouché acknowledged that the PF housing and pay was inadequate and that his department were hurrying along steps to improve both.⁵¹⁸

There were also more serious concerns at the highest SADF command level, that vital sections of the organisation were not actually ready for war. As further outlined later in this chapter, the Mirage jet fighters were not yet fully functional with the radar networks. But there were issues of concern with other aircraft too; the proper operation of the new SAAF combat acquisitions between 1961 to 1965 of interceptors, light bombers and maritime strike aircraft were critical in giving the SADF its most important conventional warfare capacity. General Magnus Malan related that during 1965, shortly before

⁵¹⁷ Barber, *South African Foreign Policy 1945-1970*, p.192.

⁵¹⁸ *Cape Times*, 5 June 1964, p.7.

Grobbelaar retired, he accompanied the Commandant General on a tour of bases and units.

He (Grobbelaar) wanted to make sure that units of the Defence Force to which sufficient time and funds had been allocated, were combat-ready. I had to accompany him during his personal tours of inspection to act as minuting secretary. This gave me a good grasp of the combat-readiness and morale of those units. Neither he nor I were impressed with the state of affairs, as many deficiencies were brought to light by the inspections.⁵¹⁹

Malan revealed that Grobbelaar had been anxious to ensure that the instructed upgrading of SADF capability and its re-armament been effectively carried out, for apparently, he was not convinced of his successor's (Hiemstra) capacity to ensure the correct standards of combat preparedness. This specific incident, from which the above quote was drawn, involved the SAAF's Buccaneer and Canberra squadrons, where (according to Malan) there were still deficiencies hindering their full operation.⁵²⁰ The SAAF 1960s expansion was a critical boosting of the SADF's conventional warfare combat capacity, but it does seem that appearances notwithstanding, there were other barely concealed operational problems during the early 1960s. In addition, there were also concerns about the navy's complete ability to train and operate (see below). By 1966 the SAAF were operating 28 Sabres jet fighters (with 10-15 in reserve); 20-25 Mirage IIIC and IIIEs, a squadron of Canberra light bombers, a squadron of Buccaneers maritime strike aircraft, 8 Shackleton maritime reconnaissance aircraft, 40 helicopters, a range of about thirty or forty transport aircraft and very large numbers of Harvard training aircraft (around 250). SAAF

⁵¹⁹ Malan, M., My Life with the SA Defence Force, Protea Book House, Pretoria, 2006, p. 46. Interview with General Magnus Malan, 10 August 2007.

⁵²⁰ Interview with Gen M. Malan, 10 August 2007 – He was guarded on this point and chose not to elaborate further.

personnel were about 3000. The SA Navy with about 2500 personnel operated 2 destroyers and 6 frigates, 12 minesweepers, a survey ship and several smaller vessels (although not all at the same time – at least half the vessels were “mothballed” in reserve at any one time). The SA Army had around 71 200 personnel, including 51 500 commando members. It had about 100 Centurion tanks and other armoured vehicles, although these figures for 1966 were not available.⁵²¹ As reiterated above, the biggest shifts had come in the SAAF’s growth and to a lesser extent the number of men available for call-up.

However, the reality of SADF preparedness during the early 1960s was that although reorganisation took place and much new equipment was hastily purchased; in some important respects, the organisation struggled to bring itself up to a standard required to resolutely face the conventional warfare threats envisaged. As we note in the second part of this dissertation, the balloted conscript system and the treatment of trainees also received significant criticism across a cross-section of the white population. However, SWA was one specific zone regarding defence, where actual SADF threat perceptions, resulted in more than just “paper plans” like the Combat Groups.

SADF counter-strategies for the defence of SWA

The SADF countered UN hostility over SWA with secret plans that mixed paranoia and military logic. As demonstrated in the previous chapter, the SADF appraisal writers also

⁵²¹ Fourie, D., War Potentials of African States South of the Sahara, SA Institute of International Affairs, Johannesburg, 1968, pp 22-23, p. 26.

closely mirrored the theorising of nationalist intellectuals like Scholtz, who took seriously the bellicose anti-white South African utterances of Afro-Asian politicians.⁵²² Hiemstra believed that the UN would eventually lose credibility if it did not succeed in enforcing its decisions on SWA. And such could ultimately be in the form of military force. Furthermore, Hiemstra held that if internal revolution occurred within South Africa, there was an even greater chance of the international body attempting an invasion.⁵²³ SADF planners concluded that the possibility did exist of an attack on SWA by the UN or Afro-Asian states. Both strategically and logistically, the most obvious point of penetration from the sea was at Walvis Bay, being the only deep-water harbour along the SWA coast. From the SADF perspective, the port obviously required particular defence arrangements.⁵²⁴

The establishment of the Walvis Bay military base made provision for it to contain components including infantry, armour and artillery, besides a base from where SAAF air support would be closely available. Grobbelaar visited the new establishment in February 1962 and ordered that two six inch coastal defence batteries also be installed, to be known as “Namib battery,” with guns dating from World War Two that had been stored at Windhoek,⁵²⁵ that such obsolete weaponry might at least assist in serving as a visible

⁵²² See earlier analysis in the previous chapter of Scholtz’s writings, with access to his books facilitated through Commando to SADF members, besides also, the historian’s close relationship with Hiemstra.

⁵²³ Hiemstra, Die Wilde Haf, p.292.

⁵²⁴ Potgieter, T.D., The Geographical Role of the South African Navy in the South African Sphere of Influence after the Second World War, p.7, unpublished paper resented at the XXIX International Congress of Military History, ‘War and the Media’, Bucharest, Romania, 10-16 August 2003.

⁵²⁵ KG, GP 5, Box 324, KG/GPW/1/5/9, Operation Olympus, letter dated 7 March 1962 from Rear Adm Biermann to the Director of Planning and Operations, Department of Defence Documentation Centre, Pretoria.

deterrent for any potential aggressor.⁵²⁶ Invasion threats were also taken seriously enough by Grobbelaar for him to issue orders for the secret surveying by navy divers of the coastline between Cape Cross and Sandwich Harbour, in order to locate the most obvious landing grounds. The report noted numerous potential sites for a successful amphibious operation⁵²⁷ and the navy made plans to if required, mine both Walvis Bay and Swakopmund harbours.⁵²⁸

An operation plan termed Impala was produced in February 1962 under Director of Planning and Operations (DPO) Chief, Combat Gen Nic Bierman, for the defence of the South African territory in the Walvis Bay-Rooikop enclave against any coastal invasion force that might be landed along that coast.⁵²⁹ The assumed enemy was an “international force”, probably, but not necessarily, legitimised by the UN. Within the planning scenario, the enemy was described as forces drawn from hostile Afro-Asian nations attempting an invasion of SWA, who possibly would also have the support of “certain

Correspondence (14 June 2007) with Hein Altmann a resident of Walvis Bay and personal friend, who recalled the guns both in Windhoek and Walvis Bay. (See illustrations of original gun emplacements.) Former Chief of the Navy Vice Adm Simpson-Anderson who participated in the joint navy/army exercise, confirmed that the installation of the guns was highly classified at the time. Telephone interview, 2 July 2007.

⁵²⁶ Such was suggested by Gen J. Geldenhuys: Interview 8 January 2007; this was merely his educated opinion for he was not in any way involved in the Walvis Bay defence planning during the early 1960s.

⁵²⁷ KG, GP 5, Box 324, KG/GPW/1/5/9, Operation Olympus, report dated 28 May 1963, from Chief of Naval Staff to the Commandant General, Department of Defence Documentation Centre, Pretoria.

⁵²⁸ KG, GP 5, Box 325, KG/GPW/2/4/2, SAN Mobilisation Plans, Report headed SAN Planning Staff, Report No.11 dated 16 March 1963, pp 4-5, Department of Defence Documentation Centre, Pretoria.

⁵²⁹ KG, GP 5, Box 325, KG/GPW/1/5/9, Operation Olympus, Minutes of Meeting held at Air Force Headquarters at 0900 hours on 5th September 1963 to discuss Plan Impala, Department of Defence Documentation Centre, Pretoria.

great powers”.⁵³⁰ From June 1962, an exercise was planned for that August, where during nine days the army practiced conventional war tactics in the desert with air and naval support.⁵³¹ A later report noted that by early 1963 it was also expected that if Afro-Asian states “act(ed) in concert,” then the “great powers” would limit any war.⁵³²

Although SADF officers were broadly made aware of government concerns regarding SWA,⁵³³ very few were privy to the Walvis Bay defence details, revealed within previously classified early 1960s documentation utilized here. For example, in August 1962, Fouché while addressing Commando officers of Witwatersrand Command, referred to the “increasing threats” against the Republic. He referred to the “Councils of the World” arguing that force be used to end the South African mandate over SWA. But such information was readily available anyway in the press. However, Lt Gen Dutton who was involved in the planning acknowledged that at the time, the actual SADF planning to defend Walvis Bay and SWA was exceptionally sensitive and confidential.⁵³⁴ Confidentiality was vital from both a military and political viewpoint, the latter obviously because of the alarm it would have raised amongst white South Africans. A full-scale military defence of SWA from an invading force could have resulted in potential defeat and/or very high casualties among the defenders, who would have been white members

⁵³⁰ AG GP 4, Box 3, Military Operations, Operation Olympus, File AG/585/3/5, Operasie Plan Impala, Letter from KG dated 30 April 1963, Aanhangsel A, AG’s copy, Department of Defence Documentation Centre, Pretoria.

⁵³¹ KG, GP 5, Box 302, KG/GPT/1/5 (Walvis), Maneuvers and Exercises Land Forces, Instructions from Commandant General dated 26 June 1962, Department of Defence Documentation Centre, Pretoria.

⁵³² KG, GP 5, Box 325, KG/GPW/2/4/2, SAN Mobilisation Plans, Report headed SAN Planning Staff, Report No.11 dated 16 March 1963, pp 4-5, Department of Defence Documentation Centre, Pretoria.

⁵³³ J.J. Fouché Collection, UFS, PV 467, File no. 3/13/1/1/2, Speeches 9 July 1962-9 December 1962, p.1.

⁵³⁴ Telephonic interview with Lt Gen J. Dutton, 2 July 2006.

of the SADF and mostly balloted trainees. The SADF continued to evaluate and update their appraisals throughout the first half of the 1960s, conducting training around Walvis Bay, without ever publicly stating its actual purpose. Detailed plans were set out for the Staff Chiefs of the three SADF services; it was anticipated that any invaders would have to follow the same steps, which UDF troops had in 1915, namely capture Swakopmund and Walvis Bay, secure harbour facilities (and airfields) and thereafter advance rapidly inland to occupy Windhoek. It was expected that an amphibious operation might be bolstered by air-transported troops operating from a neighbouring state. It was in this role that the SADF surmised Indian intervention might occur from Congo. The SADF planners assumed that Portuguese control of their Southern African territories was not guaranteed nor that former British colonies in the region would assist any SWA defence plan.

The SADF anticipated the sea attack would coordinate with troops airlifted to occupy Windhoek and other SWA territory of tactical importance. The amphibious invasion force would be at least of brigade strength, but expanded, if required, to division strength and supported by at least one aircraft carrier, as the operation would be impractical without air cover. Hence, the SADF concern about the Indian navy aircraft carrier *Vikrant* (see previous chapter) The SADF worked on the basis that the invasion would occur according to an operational pattern, whereby enemy aircraft would attack airfields and shore gun batteries, inhibiting the movement of the Walvis Bay garrison. There could be decoy landings to mislead and split the SADF defenders, while one or two invading battalions would establish an independent beachhead, supported by air and naval

bombardment. The beachhead would be extended - the objective being the seizure of Walvis Bay, bringing the harbour facilities into operation for the benefit of the invaders. The rest of the invading force would then begin an advance in the direction of Windhoek.⁵³⁵ The plan as envisaged above, followed typical Western military doctrine of a World War Two-type operation.

SADF plans to repel the “invaders”

The documents outlining the SADF strategy to “defeat” the “invaders” are marked “top secret” and filed under the name “Operation Olympus”, the Defence Force’s overall plan to defend SWA. The Navy Chief of Staff received instructions to ensure a hydrographical investigation to establish likely landing areas between Cape Cross and Sandwich Bay. The Army Chief of Staff’s orders were to halt and destroy any invasion immediately, by which 2 SA Infantry Battalion were to trap the enemy on their beachhead, or if this failed, to withdraw back into prepared positions to defend the Republican territory around Walvis Bay. Harassing operations would be conducted against enemy troops attempting to march on Windhoek, besides destroying invaders’ communication lines to their beachhead. Reconnaissance of all roads leading east from possible landing grounds was required, with the intention to deny an enemy their usage, with such scouting done in secrecy regarding the public.

⁵³⁵ AG GP 4, Box 3, Military Operations, Operation Olympus, File AG/585/3/5, Operasie Plan Impala, Letter from KG dated 30 April 1963, Aanhangsel A, AG’s copy, Department of Defence Documentation Centre, Pretoria. The pattern of a “multinational force” landing in Walvis Bay then advancing to occupy Windhoek, with the object of seizing the airfield, was confirmed by a retired SADF officer in correspondence to this author dated 30 January 2007. He was directly involved in the planning to defend Walvis Bay during the early 1960s, but requested that he remain anonymous regarding this particular information.

The SADF operational plan indicated that its forces available immediately for repelling any amphibious force, consisted of a motorised infantry battalion and the local commando; supported by a squadron each of Centurion tanks and armoured cars; one battery each of medium artillery and anti-aircraft artillery, besides various forms of logistical support. The intended air support was a fighter squadron, a flight of maritime reconnaissance aircraft and a flight of helicopters.⁵³⁶ Additional air force preparations included ensuring the Rooikop airfield could receive SA Airways aircraft with troop reinforcements; the stockpiling of aircraft fuel tanks; building protective walls at the base against air attacks and the ensuring of enough aircraft weaponry ammunition for three sorties per day over seven days. Shackleton maritime reconnaissance aircraft were to be moved to Rooikop, while preparations were made for Sabre jet fighters also to be stationed there.⁵³⁷ An additional air base was later planned inland at Karibib to ensure that the Sabres could be available from this point in the event of an UN attack.⁵³⁸ While the Air Force Chief of Staff was instructed to continue discussions with the airlines regarding the acquisition of aircraft for troop transportation, his navy counterpart was ordered to ensure arrangements were made for the switching off, if necessary, of

⁵³⁶ AG GP 4, Box 3, Military Operations, Operation Olympus, File AG/585/3/5, Operasie Plan Impala, Letter from KG dated 30 April 1963, Aanhangsel A, AG's copy, Department of Defence Documentation Centre, Pretoria.

⁵³⁷ KG, GP 5, KG/GPW/1/5/9, Box 324, Operation Olympus, Aanhangsel A by KG/GPW/1/5/9, Department of Defence Documentation Centre, Pretoria.

⁵³⁸ Interview with Gen M. Malan (Officer Commanding SWA Command in 1966), 7 August 2007. He recalled that the Rooikop air base was not suitable for Sabre aircraft.

navigational lights and aids along the SWA coast.⁵³⁹ The operational plan closed with the following stress upon the secrecy of any arrangements.

All of the above courses of action must occur under the strictest secrecy. Any reconnaissance, planning, discussion or actions that are considered necessary, must be restricted to the minimum number of people, and conducted in complete secrecy.⁵⁴⁰

By early 1965, a navy committee received the task of devising a “common organisation, doctrine and procedure for conducting naval gunfire support operations directed against land targets and controlled by ground or air observation.” The rationale behind this instruction was explained: “The SA Army may be called upon to carry out land operations against enemy rebel, insurgent and/or invasionary forces in the coastal area of the Republic of South Africa or South West Africa.”⁵⁴¹

Verwoerd demonstrated something of the contemporary government fears by his response to some public correspondence. Verwoerd had no experience in the military, let alone in issues concerning possible guerrilla infiltration or military invasion of the Republic. In 1963, he took serious note of an implausible suggestion by a German-speaking South West African, P.G. Berens of Swakopmund, that the French Foreign Legion be invited to assist with any internal uprising, thereby preventing the cost and work loss of local men being called up for such service. Behrens referred Verwoerd to a press cutting from the *Windhoek Zeitung* newspaper, speculating upon infiltrators from

⁵³⁹ AG GP 4, Box 3, Military Operations, Operation Olympus, File AG/585/3/5, Operasie Plan Impala, Letter from KG dated 30 April 1963, AG’s copy, Department of Defence Documentation Centre, Pretoria.

⁵⁴⁰ Ibid.

⁵⁴¹ KG, GP 5, KG/OPS/4/5/3, Box 472, Lug/Land/See Operasies, letter dated 23 January 1965 by Comdt. J.B. Van der Merwe headed “The Organisation and Conduct of Naval Gunfire Support Operations”, Department of Defence Documentation Centre, Pretoria.

Angola coming to cause armed uprisings in South Africa. Verwoerd's response to Fouché was to ask him to refer Berens's letter to Justice Minister Vorster, and that: "We must be on our toes against such saboteurs from Middle-Africa"⁵⁴²

Operation Olympus planning continued in June 1965, with a detailed analysis of perceived "Bantu uprising" in the north spreading south to white areas, linked to the possibility of it even heightening the supposed external military threat by a UN or Afro-Asians force. An amphibious attack scenario on SWA was once again mooted, although an overland assault from the north was dismissed as unlikely. There was an additional concern that such an uprising might occur simultaneously with unrest within the Republic, which would impact upon possible SADF troop numbers available for commitment to SWA. This detailed documentation confirms that the SADF persisted with plans to defend the territory to the mid-1960s.⁵⁴³ It was believed that UN intervention would be more likely occur within SWA than the Republic itself.⁵⁴⁴

The Air Defence of the RSA: 1960s Threat perceptions and responses.

Considering the critical decisiveness of air power in warfare, it is important that some detailed assessment is attempted in this work regarding SADF perceptions of air defence issues and counter strategies applied. Historically the closest South Africa came to an air

⁵⁴² KG GP 5, Box 419, File KG/ADMLL/20(B), Navrae, Voorstelle en Klagtes deur die Publiek, letter dated 1 November 1963 from Verwoerd to Fouché, Department of Defence Documentation Centre, Pretoria.

⁵⁴³ KG, GP 5, Box 475, KG/OPS/6/P, SAW Op Plan Olympus, Department of Defence Documentation Centre, Pretoria.

⁵⁴⁴ Ibid, p. 39.

threat occurred in World War Two when Japanese naval air units probed the Union's east coastline during mid-1942. The UDF in Durban had struggled to organise adequate air defences at short notice against potentially serious threats to the harbour and shipping. The Japanese conquests of European Asian colonies prompted the UDF to seize Madagascar and Col S.A. Melville, later SADF Commandant General from 1958 to 1960, was given charge of the SAAF component of this operation. The Japanese threat receded from July 1942, but the UDF remained on Madagascar.⁵⁴⁵ A similar pattern of viewing Madagascar as the key to protecting the South African east coast would re-emerge in SADF assessments of potential threats during the early 1960s.

South Africa's air defence during the early 1960s.

The SADF needed to ensure the protection of the Republic's Witwatersrand and Pretoria industrial heartland. It acquired from 1961 and in haste, Mirage IIIC interceptors, linked to a sophisticated radar network, but it was several years before the entire air defence outlay was fully operational.⁵⁴⁶ Grobbelaar reported to Fouché in June 1962 about continuing air defence deficiencies. Earlier that year, Fouché had spoken in Parliament about South Africa being threatened by Afro-Asian countries, noting that some had "received long-range bombers".⁵⁴⁷ The only African country that actually had any was Egypt and these only from 1963; but obviously part of the Arab's states arming against

⁵⁴⁵ See Brown, J.A. Eagles Strike The Campaigns of the South African Air Force in Egypt, Cyrenica, Libya, Tunisia, Tripolitania and Madagascar 1941-1943, Purnall & Sons (S.A.) PTY., Ltd., Cape Town, pp 383-400. Also see Wessels A., Die Stryd teen Nippon: Suid-Afrika en Japan, 1941-1945, Journal for Contemporary History, Vol.30, No. 3, December 2005, UFS, for a comprehensive introduction regarding issues around South Africa and Japan being at war during 1941-45.

⁵⁴⁶ Telephonic interviews with Lt Gen D. Earp (6 January 2008) and Col J. Radloff (7 January 2008).

⁵⁴⁷ Cape Times, June 1962, p.10.

Israel. Despite the unlikelihood of these aircraft being employed against South Africa, besides the government's politicking by emphasising threats, local air defences were indeed inadequate. By mid-1962, its reactive capacity comprised the semi-operational squadron of Mirages, about three squadrons of obsolete Sabres and the army's World War Two vintage anti-aircraft artillery. New modern light anti-aircraft guns were on order, but this delivery would only be completed by the end of 1964 and in any event, would be effective at best against low-flying aircraft.⁵⁴⁸ Grobbelaar acknowledged that modernising air defences was expensive and difficult to maintain; but following contemporary UK patterns, it would mean the SADF investigating surface to air missiles (SAMs). A British study team was despatched to work with the SAAF in establishing how and which SAMs would be viable in terms of defending South African cities.⁵⁴⁹

The purchase of the Mirage IIIs and initial operating difficulties

As stressed, the enlargement of the SAAF's combat capacity during the 1960s was the most important SADF response in upgrading its conventional warfare capacity. A significant air force expansion occurred involving 26 different aircraft types and continued through into the mid-1970s.⁵⁵⁰ The first Mirage order went off urgently in 1961 with the aircraft arriving shortly afterwards, indicative of SADF anxieties that year

⁵⁴⁸ KG, Gp5, Box 336, KG/GPW/2/3/3, Beknopte Oorsig van Lugverdedigingsprobleem, Department of Defence Documentation Centre, Pretoria.

⁵⁴⁹ KG, Gp5, Box 336, KG/GPW/2/3/3, Air Defence, letter dated 27 November 1962 from Commandant General to Minister headed "Beskerming van ons Stede teen 'n Lugbedreiging," Department of Defence Documentation Centre, Pretoria.

⁵⁵⁰ These included four versions of Mirages fighters, Canberra light bombers, Buccaneer maritime strike aircraft, Albatross maritime patrol aircraft, Allouette, Wasp and Super Frelon helicopters, C130 Hercules and C160 Transall air transporters and the locally produced Impala jet trainer. See Romer-Heitman, H., South Africa's Armed Forces, Buffalo Publications, Cape Town, 1990, p.58.

regarding threats. However, operating Mirage interceptors required expensive infrastructure. Former SAAF fighter-pilot, Col Johan Radloff and former SAAF Chief, Lt Gen Dennis Earp, explained that an essential part of the whole Mirage project was its radar back-up, without which intruding aircraft could not be intercepted. The Mirage acquisition was intended as a response to high-flying bombers and the aircraft were fitted with an additional rocket motor to boost them up beyond 50 000 feet. The Devon radar station was built as integral to an air defence system for detecting intrusion and guiding interception. Unlike the Sabres that were comparatively antiquated in operation, Mirage ground radar would get aircraft into position for pilots to make the final attack.

The air defence modernisation process radar component was called Operation “Nassau,” and implemented from 1962, with surveys conducted for locating the right spots to place radar stations. Mariepskop, Ellisras, and Mafeking across the Transvaal Highveld were chosen, with Devon (in the middle of Highveld) producing the combined radar picture. The radar network was assembled in stages and the entire infrastructure only finally fully completed by 1971. The first phase was operational from 1964 and in keeping with Cold War worst-case scenarios the Devon complex was built to withstand a nuclear attack.⁵⁵¹ Both Earp and Radloff confirmed that the Mirages were not fully operational until the late 1960s. The radar equipment came from the British Marconi company, which evaded the arms embargo through the legal interpretation of the equipment’s role as “civilian” or

⁵⁵¹ Telephonic interviews: Lt Gen D. Earp, 6 January 2008 & Col J. Radloff, 7 January 2008; Cockbain, T., Sweeping Circles in the Sky- Tom Cockbain His personal story and experiences in the development of South Africa’s post-war Radar System, Africa Aviation Series, No. 14, Freeworld Publication, 2004, pp 49-61.

“dual purpose”.⁵⁵² The publicity of the radar installation and Mirage acquisition was presented as evidence that the country air defences were operational, but the white South African public, bedazzled by the new Mirages at air shows, did not comprehend that the old Sabres continued to be the SAAF frontline interceptor until the radar network was completely operational.⁵⁵³ In parliament, UP MP Bronkhorst revealed, “the absence of radar stations on the ground” and “trained technicians,” alleging that the Mirages were therefore “useless”.⁵⁵⁴ When the new radar system first phase was officially opened in November 1964, Fouché explained it was part of a deterrent against military aggression by any “irresponsible power”, but in reality this was more of a political public relations show, than how well the system might actually have functioned then.

Responding to the specific brief by the SADF regarding perceived air threats, a report compiled by three Royal Air Force officers was completed in May 1963,⁵⁵⁵ with the threats they envisaged, fitting SADF appraisals that had already outlined concerns regarding potential UN/Afro-Asian military intervention:

(Air threats) on the Transvaal complex by up to twenty bomber aircraft...using conventional weapons...with the possibility of nuclear weapons later. Attack against the Durban harbour zone and the Cape Town/Simonstown complex by up to 20 carrier-borne aircraft...Attack against any other point on the South African coast with forces as for Durban.⁵⁵⁶

⁵⁵² Johnson, P. & Martin, D. (Eds), Frontline Southern Africa, Ryan Publishing, Peterborough, 1989, p.253.

⁵⁵³ Telephonic interviews: Lt Gen D. Earp, 6 January 2008 and Col J. Radloff, 7 January 2008.

⁵⁵⁴ Cape Times, 5 June 1964, p.1.

⁵⁵⁵ KG, Gp5, Box 336, KG/GPW/2/3/3, Air Defence, Report on the Air Defence of the Republic of South Africa: 1963 – 1968 by Air Commodore E.J. Morris (Leader) 3rd to 14 May 1963, Department of Defence Documentation Centre, Pretoria.

⁵⁵⁶ *Ibid.*

SADF commanders believed an “air threat” could be also used as a means of forcing internal political change. Although it was acknowledged that no African state, besides Egypt, could threaten South Africa from the air, documentation pointed to SADF concerns persisting with an “African threat”. This was “based” upon the existence of airfields in independent states by 1963 and “hostile intent on the part of the great majority of the Afro-Asian and communist nations”.⁵⁵⁷ Indian Air Force operations in Katanga with Canberra bombers using 1000lb bombs during late 1961, had demonstrated UN readiness to use air power for intervention operations.⁵⁵⁸ SADF concerns also were that air personnel and equipment might be assembled within a shorter time than the SADF could purchase and implement adequate defences. As the USSR had phased the IL-28 ‘Badger’ and other 1950s bombers out of its armoury, the SADF feared these might be passed onto Afro-Asian countries and “volunteers” found to crew them, while aircraft in the Indonesian, Indian and Egyptian military service “could be rapidly re-deployed in Central Africa.” It was surmised that conventional weapons would initially be employed, but that nuclear weapons, if obtained, could also become a factor in a prolonged conflict. Strategic targets within the Transvaal industrial complex would be the most obvious. In terms of “logistical problems under African conditions,” about twenty aircraft at most, operating at a very high altitude, would comprise the attacking bomber force’s

⁵⁵⁷ KG, Gp5, Box 336, KG/GPW/2/3/3, Air Defence, Assessment of Potential Air Threat to South African Ports and Transvaal Industrial, Administrative and Military Complex, pp 2-3, Department of Defence Documentation Centre, Pretoria.

⁵⁵⁸ See Welensky Sir Roy, Welensky’s 4000 Days The Life and Death of the Federation of Rhodesia and Nyasaland, pp 245-248.

strength.⁵⁵⁹ Such were the official SADF confidential threat perceptions of possible air attack in 1963.

Earp and Radloff both confirmed that the envisaged threat was indeed Russian-built bombers coming in high (70 000 feet) and fast (Mach Two – twice the speed of sound) and that until the Mirage and radar systems were fully functional, the SAAF did not have the means to intercept these.⁵⁶⁰ Although SADF air threat perceptions appear highly unlikely, if not paranoid, they were reacting to external unknowns, increasing international hostility to the South African government and the UN's Katanga intervention. These factors heightened SADF urgency in responding to what they assumed as plausible threats. Documentation utilised is indicative of how isolated and threatened the SADF perceived the country to be; the 'air threat' was understood as real, because of intense Afro-Asian hostility to South Africa's racial policies. The RAF team also recommended the establishment of an air defence operations centre which would have immediate access to higher authority, because of the possible political implications of emergency decisions.

Air threats to the South African ports and coastline

It was acknowledged within SADF threat appraisals that the "postulation of a potential threat from the sea" was unlikely, given African countries incapacity for any significant

⁵⁵⁹ KG, Gp5, Box 336, KG/GPW/2/3/3, Air Defence, Assessment of Potential Air Threat to South African Ports and Transvaal Industrial, Administrative and Military Complex, pp 2-3, Department of Defence Documentation Centre, Pretoria.

⁵⁶⁰ Telephonic interviews: Lt Gen D. Earp, 6 January 2008 & Col J. Radloff, 7 January 2008.

naval operations. However, references were still made to this being “not beyond the bounds of possibility from certain Asian and Communist countries” and that a lack of air defences on the coastline:

may provide the incentive for certain groups to indulge in such an adventure. The probability of diplomatic and military blackmail, including the use of token or ‘prestige’ hit-and-run attacks on strategic coastal targets cannot be discounted. While the military importance of such raids may be small the political effect could be serious.⁵⁶¹

The report outlined concerns for the defences of the Durban and Cape Town, assuming deployment of an attacking aircraft carrier with at least twenty aircraft to establish air superiority over a landing area for troops.⁵⁶² If the Mirages were also to cover the ports, the acquisition of a second squadron was recommended, because the Witwatersrand was assumed to constitute the most important area requiring defence by both aircraft and SAMS. It was accepted that Durban, Cape Town and Simon’s Town also justified permanent SAM deployment reinforced by Transvaal based jets. Anti-aircraft artillery would also be utilised for the ports defences, although the guns effectiveness was diminished by the speeds attained by attacking jet fighters.⁵⁶³

⁵⁶¹ KG, Gp5, Box 336, KG/GPW/2/3/3, Air Defence, Assessment of Potential Air Threat to South African Ports and Transvaal Industrial, Administrative and Military Complex, p. 3, Department of Defence Documentation Centre, Pretoria.

⁵⁶² KG, Gp5, Box 336, KG/GPW/2/3/3, Air Defence, Assessment of Potential Air Threat to South African Ports and Transvaal Industrial, Administrative and Military Complex, pp 3-5, Department of Defence Documentation Centre, Pretoria.

⁵⁶³ KG, Gp5, Box 336, KG/GPW/2/3/3, Air Defence, Report on the Air Defence of the Republic of South Africa: 1963 – 1968 by Air Commodore E.J. Morris (Leader) 3rd to 14 May 1963, p.1, Department of Defence Documentation Centre, Pretoria.

By April 1963, the British Military Attaché, Air Commodore F.J. Rump was keeping the British Embassy, British Chief of Defence Staff and the Ministry of Defence informed as to likely future SADF requirements regarding British arms. The British Labour Party's parliamentary opposition leader Harold Wilson had questioned continued British arms sales to South Africa. After the Labour Party's election victory in 1964, the new British government, only with the greatest reluctance allowed the final delivery of already purchased Buccaneer maritime strike aircraft to the SAAF. After Rump's discussions with Grobbelaar and "various members of the SA Defence Department", ground to air guided missile systems (of the British Bloodhound or Thunderbird type) were anticipated as future likely orders, besides replacements for the Shackleton maritime patrol aircraft.⁵⁶⁴

The initial SADF response accepted the RAF recommendations. The Witwatersrand complex required, besides the protection of the Mirage squadron, a SAM system of sixty-four missiles with guiding radar. Durban and Cape Town necessitated the same with thirty-three missiles each and an additional Mirage squadron. Because of the excessive costs of the missiles, which were also quickly rendered obsolete by rapidly changing technology, it seemed logical that steps were needed whereby South Africa developed self-sufficiency in its own SAM development.⁵⁶⁵ Nevertheless, the government ordered

⁵⁶⁴ Letter dated 10 April 1963, UK National Archives, DEFE 11/237 South Africa: Strategic Planning (1962-3).

⁵⁶⁵ KG, Gp5, Box 336, KG/GPW/2/3/3, Beknopte Oorsig van Lugverdedigingsprobleem, Department of Defence Documentation Centre, Pretoria.

the Bloodhound system, while beginning its own missile program in 1964,⁵⁶⁶ only to predictably have its British order refused in January 1965 as the arms embargo and isolation tightened.⁵⁶⁷ In December 1965, the outgoing Defence Minister Fouché fumed during a speech to the Heidelberg *Rapportryers*:

South Africa could not continue to make itself a war target if the West was not prepared to supply ground to air missiles to defend South Africa's harbours and industries.⁵⁶⁸

To some extent, this was all just purely political posturing, for local missile research in collaboration with the French was progressing towards the development of the local Cactus SAM system unveiled six years later. The SADF had part eluded the UN arms embargo, although it was recognised by SAAF experts that the older Bloodhound was technically better,⁵⁶⁹ demonstrating that the 1960s arms sanctions was not simply “inconvenient,” as Barber suggests,⁵⁷⁰ for the SADF did not always attain its first arms preference. In the same breath, despite occasional anti-western rhetoric by South African government politicians and threats of the Republic “going it alone”, there was no question that the NP wanted to break defence links with traditional allies and suffer total isolation in military affairs.

⁵⁶⁶ Cockbain, T., Sweeping Circles in the Sky- Tom Cockbain His personal story and experiences in the development of South Africa's post-war Radar System, Africa Aviation Series, No. 14, Freeworld Publication, 2004, p. 110.

⁵⁶⁷ See Cape Argus, 20 January 1965, “SA Order of Bloodhound Missiles Refused”, p.1.

⁵⁶⁸ Cape Times, 8 December 1965, p.1.

⁵⁶⁹ Cockbain, T., Sweeping Circles in the Sky- Tom Ccckbain His personal story and experiences in the development of South Africa's post-war Radar System, p. 112.

⁵⁷⁰ Barber, J., South African Foreign Policy 1945-1970, p.194.

Another significant response to any potential air threat from the north at the end of 1964 was the opening of a new SAAF base in Pietersberg, intended as a location where fighter interceptors would be located. Couched typically within the “white unity-speak” of the time, State President Swart explained the base’s purpose:

Pietersberg has acquired an enhanced status today through it becoming here in the north a very strategic bastion (*vesting*), ensuring greater strike power in the event of an attack on our Republic. We are a strong country and a bilingual country; I can state this morning: Do not panic!⁵⁷¹ (*Moenie panic nie!*) (sic)

The new base inauguration was also significant in that for the first time, some of the SADF’s newly acquired weaponry was displayed alongside older equipment. New armaments now included British built Canberra light bombers; Mirages; Sabre jets; paratroopers dropping from American built C130 ‘Hercules’ transport aircraft (the SAAF’s latest in air lift capacity); besides demonstrations of artillery and air-transportation of light armour, including the newly acquired French Panhard armoured cars.⁵⁷² According to a DMI report from August 1965, air-defence concerns remained part of SADF threat perceptions. It was reiterated that since 1960 as a consequence of political developments in Africa, potential enemy airfields had moved closer to the RSA’s borders. Modern transport planes had also been supplied to some African states, including Nigeria and Tanzania. DMI surmised that although there was no immediate danger, potential enemy capability still meant consideration was needed, that (African) air forces could be shifted into northern airfields and present a threat. The article referred to the recent acquisition of Mirage jets as deterrents and made recommendations

⁵⁷¹ Commando, December 1964, p.15.

⁵⁷² Ibid., pp 14-15.

regarding further strengthening air defences, including looking at the financial implications of the Cactus SAM system.⁵⁷³

By 1965, the UN “Unit on Apartheid” for the UN’s Department of Political and Security Council Affairs, detailed in a report the strengths and expenditures of the SA military. It noted that early warning detection radar supplied by the British Marconi company had been erected in the Transvaal. Also recorded (incorrectly) was that by 1966, a large SAAF base was opened at Pietersburg with a squadron of Sabre jets and three new radar units.⁵⁷⁴ (indicated above the base was already operational by late 1964.⁵⁷⁵) Significantly, this UN report mentioned the establishment of a SAAF base at Mpacha in the eastern Caprivi Strip of Namibia, described by President Kaunda as a ‘threat’.⁵⁷⁶ The “Unit on Apartheid” had been established by the Secretariat of the UN to assist the General Assembly resolution 2144 A (XXI) of 26 October 1966, which intended to ensure “maximum publicity” of apartheid via “special studies on the policy”.⁵⁷⁷

⁵⁷³ Box 430, KG Gp5. KG/BEL/1/2, Special Political Report Nr 3/65 of August 1965, Documentation Services Directorate, Pretoria.

⁵⁷⁴ Military and Police Forces in the Republic of South Africa, Unit on Apartheid, Department of Political and Security Council Affairs, United Nations, New York, 1967, p.7. (Obtained at National Library of South Africa, Cape Town)

⁵⁷⁵ See Commando, December 1964, pp 14-15.

⁵⁷⁶ Ibid.

⁵⁷⁷ Military and Police Forces in the Republic of South Africa, Unit on Apartheid, p.ii.

The SA Navy's envisaged role in global war: National defence versus international commitments

Post-Republic SADF threat perceptions and responses were also reconsidered in terms of the Simon's Town Agreement, with its emphasis upon the SA Navy cooperating with the West. Fouché reiterated at the end of 1962 that the navy would work with the SAAF in combating any submarine threat off the coast, besides repelling any amphibious invasion force.⁵⁷⁸ By March 1963, the navy's commanders were attempting to find a balance between attending to both national defence needs and commitments to allies during a global war. The assumption was 'enemy' action would be "based upon the African Continent" and "Madagascar." But particularly feared scenarios were the possibility of a South African harbour falling into enemy hands and/or losing their control of RSA territorial waters, which would require "offensive mining". In terms of planning between the British and South Africans, NATO merchant ships were to be diverted to 'safe areas' after any nuclear exchange in the Northern Hemisphere; South Africa was one such designated 'safe area.' It was anticipated that as many as a thousand commercial vessels could congregate around the ports. The SADF expected that a conventional submarine threat could also develop, meaning the emergency anchorages would require protection from this. No plan existed, according to the SA Navy, on the part of Britain or other NATO countries to assist in mining or other protection of open merchant shipping anchorages, outside of those in the anticipated European war theatre.⁵⁷⁹

⁵⁷⁸ J.J. Fouché Collection, UFS, PV 467, File no. 3/13/1/1/2, Speeches 9 July 1962-9 December 1962, p.3.

⁵⁷⁹ KG, GP 5, Box 325, KG/GPW/2/4/2, SAN Mobilisation Plans, Report headed SAN Planning Staff, Report No.11 dated 16 March 1963, pp 4-5, Department of Defence Documentation Centre, Pretoria.

In terms of the Simon's Town Agreement, the SADF in 1963 was still an integral part of Allied defence planning to ensure Western shipping security off the Republic's coast. The protection of Table Bay would require over six thousand mines and it would take thirty days to lay them using one large ship, for the Republic's ports during war could not be devoid of such elementary defences. The document utilized here, for example, cited the appalling consequences if a loaded tanker in the middle of Table Bay was attacked and exploded. The recommendation was that the navy acquired as soon as possible a specialised mining vessel, that mines were to be stockpiled and a specialised navy mining and mine-countermeasures school be established.⁵⁸⁰

British documentation confirms that war plans existed which the SA Navy had prepared in conjunction with the Royal Navy (RN), referring to co-ordinated control of shipping during war, "in an area which includes the South African Strategic Zone". Since World War Two, the SA Navy remained integrated into British global strategy as "custodians of the Cape Sea Route". The South African fleet, "in accordance with British strategy... was an anti-submarine and convoy force that operated ships designed for the imperial role of Britain, rather than for the maritime requirements of a small developing country".⁵⁸¹ As part of the "world-wide dispersal plan," specifically intended for RN use, were 2000 tons of armament stores and equipment for merchant ships located at the SADF Ganspan

⁵⁸⁰ KG, GP 5, Box 325, KG/GPW/1/5/15, Plan Eland, 11 April 1963, Cover Page, Verslag: Funksioneerend van die SA Vloot in Geval van Mobiliseering Teen die Eind van 1963, pp 5-6, 9, Department of Defence Documentation Centre, Pretoria.

⁵⁸¹ Potgieter, T.D., The Geographical Role of the South African Navy in the South African Sphere of Influence after the Second World War. Based upon a paper delivered at the XXVIIth International Congress of Military History, 'Military Conflicts and 20th Century Geopolitics', Athens, Greece, 19-25 August 2001.

magazine and 500 tons at Simon's Town. The Shell depot in Cape Town had large stocks of fuel oil for the RN, while naval radio stations in the Cape Peninsula and the Cape east coast were vital for control and communication with shipping and warships in the South Atlantic.⁵⁸²

SADF documentation further expands upon the naval scenarios anticipated for the Republic during a global war. When Grobbelaar instructed SADF General Staff in 1963 to prepare mobilisation plans, Rear Adm H. Biermann drew his report within the context long collaborated upon with the British. These envisaged virtually all the SA Navy's ships being seaworthy and battle-ready within ten weeks.⁵⁸³ In reality, however, such rapid naval mobilisation would have been unlikely, unless a deteriorating international situation had already long prompted prior action.⁵⁸⁴ The navy's biggest problem was an acute shortage of manpower. Biermann felt it necessary to raise this detail in the report, because it was understood that world conflict would provide little chance for the orderly calling-up and training of reserves. Because of merchant ships off the sub-continent during war racing for South African ports, "the navy's most important contribution in (the) first stage of a nuclear war would be...protection (and)...fleet control over these ships."

⁵⁸² UK National Archives, DEFE 7/1526 South Africa, political, military and economic affairs: the Republican issue, 1960, Section IV - Defence.

⁵⁸³ KG, GP 5, Box 325, KG/GPW/1/5/15, Plan Eland, 11 April 1963, Cover Page, Verslag: Funksioneering van die SA Vloot in Geval van Mobiliseering Teen die Eind van 1963, Department of Defence Documentation Centre, Pretoria.

⁵⁸⁴ For example, maintenance having long needed to start on retuning mothballed vessels to service and ensuring that adequate reserve personnel were already available. Interview with Rear Adm C. Bennett, 2 July 2006.

Biermann referred to other SA Navy roles being the “detection and destruction of enemy warships; the interception of enemy commercial vessels”; “strong control enforced upon all (commercial) ships to prevent sneak attacks, mutinies and unauthorised landing and movements.” He reiterated that navy personnel deficiencies were “dangerous” in terms of envisaged requirements⁵⁸⁵ and insisted this would necessitate the vigorous recruitment of women.⁵⁸⁶ Biermann also emphasised to Grobbelaar that national defence be considered as equally important to any assistance rendered to South Africa’s allies and that these two components would have to be balanced during a war situation where the Suez Canal would be potentially closed. During a global conflict, the SA Navy would have responsibility for the routing (including convoys) and protection of all shipping in the South Africa maritime area. Defensive minefields would also therefore be needed at Durban and minesweepers deployed there too.⁵⁸⁷

Biermann’s navy mobilisation scenarios are also indicative of the SADF’s global strategic uncertainties in the Cold War era and evidence that the Defence Force was still strongly drawn and orientated towards working within western defence planning. Yet as has been shown, the navy and rest of the SADF also completed entirely separate preparation for their solo defence of SWA and Republic against possible international threats. Therefore SADF planning bizarrely straddled two entirely separate possibilities

⁵⁸⁵ KG, GP 5, Box 325, KG/GPW/1/5/15, Plan Eland, 11 April 1963, Cover Page, Verslag: Funksioneering van die SA Vloot in Geval van Mobiliseering Teen die Eind van 1963, Department of Defence Documentation Centre, Pretoria, p. 5.

⁵⁸⁶ Ibid, p. 7.

⁵⁸⁷ KG, GP 5, Box 338, KG/GPW/2/4/2, SA Naval Mobilisation Plans, report dated 17 June 1963, from Rear Adm Biermann to the Commandant General, pp 1-2, Department of Defence Documentation Centre, Pretoria.

of being both part of western defence in global war and as an isolated pariah, defending the Republic or SWA against possible international intervention.

However the reality of how prepared the navy was during the early 1960s, suggested that some of their planning occurred within limitations already existing through political isolation. There was already the issue of the SAN's personnel shortages, but there were also intimations that the navy might not be able to perform its war role properly. After Capex exercises during mid- 1964, UP MP Bronkhorst alleged that navy ships would be incapable of defending themselves from air attacks; that there were inadequate trained personnel to handle its sophisticated equipment; not enough ammunition for the exercises and too few training programs. Bronkhorst's colleague, MP Vause Raw inquired how many of the men instructed in Britain to use the "electronics on South Africa's new ships were still in the navy?"⁵⁸⁸ While naval ammunition continued to be supplied from Britain after the 1963 arms embargo, the SADF was forced to stockpile in anticipation of this source being closed. Shortages verified by British documentation confirm that sales of larger calibre shells to the SA Navy were terminated from July 1965,⁵⁸⁹ but the UK embargo was also extended to lighter gun types as well as anti-submarine mortar projectiles for the new frigates.⁵⁹⁰ By December 1966, ammunition deficiencies were

⁵⁸⁸ Cape Times, 5 June 1964, p.7. Raw was referring to the recently acquired President-class (Type-12) frigates bought for the SA Navy from the UK.

⁵⁸⁹ UK National Archives, DEFE 24/256, Defence equipment refused for supply to South Africa, November 1964 to September 1966, Annex B.

⁵⁹⁰ Telephonic discussion with Rear Adm C. Bennett, 28 December 2007.

even more critical, with navy gun-crew training not being adequately completed.⁵⁹¹ Official reports on the quality of training and objectives achieved during the “Capex 64” exercises were less condemnatory than suggested above; but SA Navy/RN links were clearly loosening⁵⁹² and disgruntled SADF members were making private report-backs to the parliamentary opposition. Fouché referred in parliament to Biermann’s plans regarding replenishment of personnel shortages during war, but Bronkhorst had sensed significant government uncertainties regarding defence, remarking that the country’s war capacity was not as demonstrably strong as the NP liked to project. Bronkhorst accused Fouché of being reluctant to involve the parliamentary opposition appropriately in defence matters, by refusing to establish a “special Parliamentary Select Committee on defence matters,” meaning, as he put it, “South Africa couldface an emergency as unprepared as she had been at the start of World War II”.⁵⁹³

While the navy struggled with its manpower problems⁵⁹⁴ there remained a determination by the SADF to ensure the maximum peacetime fleet capacity,⁵⁹⁵ despite the financial cost, arms boycotts and increased international isolation. By September 1964, there were as many as five frigates and destroyers jointly operational, the most in the SA Navy’s

⁵⁹¹ UK National Archives, DEFE 24/256, Note of Meeting with Brig. Verster, South African Military, Naval and Air Attaché, on 6th December, 1966 – Sales of Defence Equipment to South Africa – written by O.J. Porter of UK Defence Ministry.

⁵⁹² See Bennett, C., Three Frigates The South African Navy Comes of Age, Just Done Productions Publishing, Durban, 2006, pp 109-115.

⁵⁹³ See Cape Times, 5 June 1964, p.1.

⁵⁹⁴ Wessels A., Snelstomers: Torpedojaers in Suid-Afrikaanse Vlootdiens, 1950-1975, Journal of Contemporary History, Volume 29, No.2, September 2004, p.38.

Also pp 7-8 within KG, GP 5, Box 325, KG/GPW/1/5/15, Plan Eland, 11 April 1963, Cover Page, Verslag: Funkioneering van die SA Vloot in Geval van Mobiliseering Teen die Eind van 1963, Department of Defence Documentation Centre, Pretoria, where Rear Adm H. Biermann clearly outlined the SAN’s acute manpower shortages.

⁵⁹⁵ Wessels A., Snelstomers: Torpedojaers in Suid-Afrikaanse Vlootdiens, pp. 36-37.

history, reflective of the uncertainties facing the Verwoerd government and possible demands on its armed forces.⁵⁹⁶ But the SADF were looking with concern at their ability to ensure the kind of reconnaissance and maritime combat capability that future circumstances might dictate. In a document entitled supplementation to the Navy Chief of Staff's Memorandum 1, read at a General Staff meeting on 15/16 January 1964, the complexities of the Navy's maritime air support needs, revealed something of senior military officers thinking regarding possible threats.⁵⁹⁷ It was acknowledged that the navy stood at a crossroads between its responsibilities regarding the defence of the Republic and its wider obligations in terms of the Simon's Town Agreement, concerning the protection of the sea-route around Southern Africa. The navy's operational capacity largely comprised it being equipped for counteracting enemy submarines and mines. The concern was that in the event of a global nuclear war, even if the RSA was not a combatant, there was the expected armada of commercial ships entering South African waters. Since the 1961 Republic declaration and South Africa's departure from the Commonwealth, the SADF General Staff were now considering other military threats besides contradictions with existing defence arrangements. The document under reference suggested that the defence of the sea routes during a global war did not warrant a higher priority than national defence, which more narrowly encompassed the protection of the coastline and escorting essential South African bound cargo through territorial waters.⁵⁹⁸

⁵⁹⁶ Ibid., pp 37-38.

⁵⁹⁷ KG, Gp5, Box 471, KG/OPS/4/5/2, document entitled "GS vergadering: 15/16 Januarie 1964 Aanvulling by Vlootstafhoof se Memorandum 1: Die Vloot se Maritieme Lugsteunbenodighede", Department of Defence Documentation Centre, Pretoria.

⁵⁹⁸ Ibid.

Nevertheless, despite some navy officers calling for South African maritime interests first, the navy continued exercising alongside the RN throughout the 1960s and into the early 1970s. The government were determined to maintain its one international defence alliance and therefore accepted an enlarged role in sea defence, hoping the formal revision of the Simon's Town Agreement by 1967, would also mean the British at least re-supplying naval equipment. British documentation shows that the SADF approached the UK Ministry of Defence with negotiations regarding the replacement of their five World War Two vintage frigates and destroyers, besides their two fleet minesweepers. The possibility of a South African subsidiary of Yarrow ship-builders was mooted to build vessels locally. Negotiations also began for the supplying of the SAAF with twenty maritime patrol aircraft, besides sixteen anti-submarine helicopters, ship-launched guided missiles and tank spares. This document confirmed that the United States government was supplying Mk 44 anti-submarine torpedoes to the SADF as late as February 1965.⁵⁹⁹

But the British government balanced the political disadvantages of selling the South Africans any military equipment against the likely diplomatic clashes with African states. In the British government's opinion, their relations with the Commonwealth and other Third World states outweighed any strategic considerations of further assisting the SADF. Such was the British decision, despite bluster in February 1968 by defence

⁵⁹⁹ UK National Archives, DEFE 24/256, letter dated 15 February 1967, from O.J. Porter of Ministry of Defence to D.A. Marston, Foreign Office, Defence Supply Section.

minister P.W. Botha, that in time of war, the South African government would only make her facilities available to the UK, if deemed in the Republic's interest.⁶⁰⁰

Maritime air strike capability

Further ensuring deterrence against any conventional military attack on the republic from the UN or any other power, regarding South Africa's race policies or its control of SWA, the SADF tried to prepare itself in accordance with its own threat appraisals that postulated an amphibious task force assault. Referring to the necessity of maritime air defence requirements for supporting the navy regarding national defence, the recommendation from the Navy Chief of Staff's Memorandum at a General Staff meeting on 15/16 January 1964, listed the following conditions envisaged as necessary for a large-scale amphibious landing by Afro-Asian forces. Assuming that such an attack had to have the occupation of a harbour as a critical objective, it would also require adequate air support. An aircraft carrier was therefore essential and Durban was considered the most likely target. Another worst-case scenario was the possibility of Mozambique falling into 'enemy hands' with Lourenco Marques only three hundred miles from Durban,⁶⁰¹ while attacks might also be directed at the destruction of naval bases at Simon's Town or Durban. Such an "invasion" would require a brigade strength landing force, transported by a task force of some twenty seven to thirty seven ships, including an aircraft carrier, a cruiser, six to eight frigates and destroyers, two to three submarines, escorting troop

⁶⁰⁰ Barber, *South African Foreign Policy 1945-1970*, pp 287-289.

⁶⁰¹ KG, Gp5, Box 471, KG/OPS/4/5/2, document entitled "GS vergadering: 15/16 Januarie 1964 Aanvulling by Vlootstafhoof se Memorandum 1: Die Vloot se Maritieme Lugsteunbenodighede", pp 4-5, Department of Defence Documentation Centre, Pretoria.

transport ships and provisioning tankers. It was reasoned that the assembly of such a force was within the capability of Afro-Asian countries,⁶⁰² but could not happen secretly therefore adequate time should be available for the SADF to plan interception and neutralisation.⁶⁰³

The documentation utilized stressed that the SA Navy did not possess the capacity to intercept such a force, but would be entirely dependent upon maritime air support. Working on a warning period of three days, with the enemy progressing at a rate of fifteen knots a day, the task force would need to be brought to battle within a line a thousand sea miles from the coast.⁶⁰⁴ A memorandum dated 17 April 1964 and signed by Col. J.G. Willers, General Staff Officer (Air), was forwarded onto Grobbelaar concerning: “A maritime air support policy for the SAAF and SAN”, in response to the document referred to above. The assessment on successfully responding to the task force scenario was accepted as:

Maritime strike aircraft are required to bring the enemy to battle whilst at sea in order to defeat the invasion before landing in order to retain the initiative.⁶⁰⁵

⁶⁰² More specifically at the time, Asian navies including India and Indonesia included cruisers while the Indian Navy had an aircraft carrier. Of African countries of the period, only Egypt possessed a navy of any significant potential. See Blackman, R.V.B., *Jane's Fighting Ships*, Jane's Fighting Ships Publishing Co. Ltd, London, Sampson Law, Marston & Co. 1961-63 editions; see under sections dealing with the Indian and Indonesian navies.

⁶⁰³ KG, Gp5, Box 471, KG/OPS/4/5/2, document entitled “GS vergadering: 15/16 Januarie 1964 Aanvulling by Vlootstafhoof se Memorandum 1: Die Vloot se Maritieme Lugsteunbenodighede”, pp 4-5, Department of Defence Documentation Centre, Pretoria.

⁶⁰⁴ KG, Gp5, Box 471, KG/OPS/4/5/2, document entitled “GS vergadering: 15/16 Januarie 1964 Aanvulling by Vlootstafhoof se Memorandum 1: Die Vloot se Maritieme Lugsteunbenodighede”, p.5, Department of Defence Documentation Centre, Pretoria.

⁶⁰⁵ KG, Gp5, Box 471, KG/OPS/4/5/2, document entitled concerning “A Maritime Air Support policy for the SAAF and SAN”, p.5, Department of Defence Documentation Centre, Pretoria.

Maj Gen Phil Pretorius reiterated that the possibilities of a Soviet threat were also discussed amongst the SADF defence community and that “paper exercises” were arranged around this perception. It was also considered feasible that Africa could be some kind of “stand-off” point for a landward invasion. Therefore the Soviet “Order of Battle”; namely, how their military were organized when on the offensive was studied by SADF military intelligence. Pretorius explained in detail that SADF planning he was involved in during the early 1960s had also taken into account the scenario of a task force attacking the country. If it had involved an aircraft carrier, it would have to be neutralized through weaponry that could punch well above its weight.⁶⁰⁶ There is little doubt that the decision to purchase of submarines (1963) and the Buccaneer strike aircraft (arriving in late 1965) was partly motivated by the SADF wanting to ensure it possessed a deterrent to any amphibious assault upon SWA or the Republic.

In assessing how seriously the government responded to these perceived threats, by mid-1964, the expensive contract signed with the British government for the supply of thirty-two Buccaneer jets was itself under threat. The Buccaneer was the best low level maritime strike aircraft available at the time to western countries and their allies. Its remarkable capacity for shipping strikes was well known and the Royal Fleet Air Arm had already worked on scenarios of attacking the Soviet-built Indonesian Navy cruisers.⁶⁰⁷ In May 1963, Fouché referred to the purchase of Buccaneers as an additional

⁶⁰⁶ Interview with Maj Gen P. Pretorius, 25 June 2007.

⁶⁰⁷ Communication with Brig Gen R. S. (Dick) Lord, 28 March 2005. Lord served in the Royal Fleet Air Arm during the 1960s, where he had considerable experience in flying and instructing on Buccaneers. Lord returned home to South Africa during the early 1970s to serve in the SAAF until late 1980s. There were

means of repelling any ship attempting to land troops on the South African coastline.⁶⁰⁸ The British Labour Party government elected in mid-November 1964 determined to enforce all aspects of the UN arms embargo. After tense discussions with the Verwoerd government over the already existing Buccaneer contract and delivery,⁶⁰⁹ the first (and only) fifteen aircraft, finally arrived in Pretoria under World War Two veteran Comdt Bob Rogers,⁶¹⁰ while the additional sixteen aircraft delivery was cancelled by the UK government in their stricter compliance with the UN's decision.

Research has suggested that the SAAF Buccaneers were also purchased because of their versatility to operate equally against land and sea targets.⁶¹¹ Rear Adm Chris Bennett thought that the Buccaneers order might have been planned as early as the late 1950s due to pressure by the British government on the SADF to include some kind of affordable maritime surface strike capability.⁶¹² Former Buccaneer pilot Brig Gen Theo de Munnik considered the fact that the squadron was based at Waterkloof, Pretoria, a “mid-way point between coast and northern borders,” might be viewed as an indication that the aircraft were intended to serve both land and sea strike roles.⁶¹³

prolonged tensions between Britain and Indonesia during the early 1960s regarding post-decolonisation disputes in south-east Asia.

⁶⁰⁸ Cape Argus, 27 May 1963, p.1.

⁶⁰⁹ 28 March 2005 communication with Brig Gen Lord.

Cockram, G., Vorster's Foreign Policy, Academica, Pretoria, 1970. pp 66-67.

⁶¹⁰ Sixteen aircraft left for South Africa, but one was lost off West Africa during the long flight. Rogers became SAAF Chief during the late 1970s.

⁶¹¹ Such was Lt Gen Earp's opinion. Telephonic interview, 6 January 2008.

⁶¹² Telephonic interview with Rear Adm Bennett, 27 April 2005.

⁶¹³ Telephonic interview with Brig Gen Theo de Munnink, 7 January 2007.

The decision to purchase submarines for the SA Navy

A significant maritime weapon acquisition where its conventional warfare intention was indisputable for both deterrence and aggressive actions was the SA Navy acquiring a submarine capability. According to Wessels, South African cabinet approval for a submarine purchase was granted in 1964, after Biermann and Grobbelaar motivated for the vessels as a fundamental part of the navy's operational needs. Wessels deduces that the decision to purchase the submarines was based upon them constituting a strategic deterrent at a time of growing political isolation for the Republic.⁶¹⁴ British documentation demonstrates clearly that the SADF were contemplating a submarine purchase as early as April 1963 for acquisition from UK sources.⁶¹⁵ The SA Navy reasons for acquiring submarines would therefore be directly connected to SADF threat perceptions of the period, concerning possible task force attacks, although no specific document was obtained detailing any appraisal calling for a submarine fleet to be added to the navy. However, there appears little doubt that the decision to acquire submarines would have been motivated through Biermann and his staff officers.⁶¹⁶

⁶¹⁴ Wessels, A., Duikbote in die Suid-Afrikaanse Vloot: Die Eerste Fase, 1970-2003. 'n Kort Historiese Evalueer (1): Agtergrond, Journal for Contemporary History, UFS, Vol.30, No.2, September 2006, pp 181-188.

⁶¹⁵ Letter dated 10 April 1963 from British Military Representative in South Africa, Air-Commodore F.J. Rump to Ministry of Defence and British Embassy detailing 'Future Requirement' by the SADF after meetings with SA 'Defence Department members', UK National Archives, DEFE 11/237 South Africa: Strategic Planning (1962-3).

⁶¹⁶ Telephonic interview with Rear Adm C. Bennett, 24 December 2007. Also see Du Toit, A., South Africa's Fighting Ships Past and Present, Ashanti Publishing, Rivonia, 1992, p.175, where it is inferred that the submarine acquisition was an early 1960s government decision to ensure a credible maritime deterrent against an external threat.

Less than twenty years before the 1960s, German submarines had created havoc amongst Allied shipping off the Cape and Natal coasts, reinforcing within both public mindsets and SADF thinking, as to how strategic and vulnerable the Cape Sea Route appeared. The SA Navy's submarine purchase can also be explained as a further extension of the navy's fleet expansion under the Simon's Town Agreement. Fouché had formally announced the submarine acquisition plans in May 1965 without giving further details.⁶¹⁷ Cabinet minutes dated 26 February 1964, included notes detailing that the government had already decided to sound out the US military over their willingness to sell the RSA three submarines.⁶¹⁸ Submarines provided a very powerful striking capacity in relation to their size and cost. Within the context of the Cold War, they were a very significant weapon indispensable to any balanced naval fleet arsenal. Their presence also ensured that the requisite nation could, if deemed necessary, use their submarines to impose their will in defence issues on own terms, by possession of a powerful deterrent against large ship borne forces.⁶¹⁹

Comdr (later Rear Adm) Martin Kramer was the senior officer in the submarine project of the 1960s. He recalled that a US diplomat or envoy once remarked aside to him once, that the SA Navy's submarine capacity had prevented immediate American consideration of extreme action by the USA against the Republic, regarding international community pressure of apartheid being considered a 'threat to world peace'. Kramer felt it was not entirely clear whether the submarine acquisition was intended as a potential deterrent

⁶¹⁷ Wessels, pp 181-188.

⁶¹⁸ National Archives Pretoria, Cabinet Minutes, Notule Kabinet 14/1/63 to 24/8/64.

⁶¹⁹ Wessels, also telephonic interview with Rear Adm C. Bennett, 24 December 2007.

against a possible amphibious invasion force (he mentioned India in this regard), or whether the submarines constituted part of a ‘balanced fleet,’ which the SA Navy had lacked in the 1950s and 60s. Before Republic, the assumption was that the RN would perform any role required by submarines and the possibility that naval links with the British would diminish, might remove any ready ‘friendly’ submarine capability.⁶²⁰

However, it is clear that more urgent threat deterrent concerns were in the minds of Biermann and Grobbelaar when they persuaded Fouché to confirm the submarine purchases. However unlikely they may have been in reality, threats of an UN/Afro-Asian amphibious force to SWA or the Republic, required a deterrent that the SA Navy could not provide with its lightly armed surface ships. SADF investigations of British submarine designs were confounded by the 1963 UN Mandatory Arms Embargo and the Labour Party’s election victory; the SA Navy representatives therefore decided upon the French ‘Daphne’ class submarines recently brought into service with the French Navy. These vessels were well-developed for locating and destroying surface vessels, but also were adapted for reconnaissance, information gathering, mine-laying and clandestine landing of special forces;⁶²¹ it was in the latter role that the submarines would be used increasingly from 1972.⁶²² Agreement reached during April and June 1967, between the South African government and the French Dubigeon-Normandie shipyard at Nantes,

⁶²⁰ Interview with Rear Adm M. Kramer, 5 July 2007.

⁶²¹ Wessels, pp 188-189.

⁶²² See Stiff, P., *The Silent War South African Recce Operations 1969-1994*, Galago Publishing, Alberton, 1999, pp 46-52 describing the SADF long classified sabotage operation to Dar-es-Salam in August 1972. This unique first combat action ever by SA Navy submarines was surprisingly absent from Wessels’s two part article.

which ensured the construction of three submarines ordered.⁶²³ In a South Africa where ‘militarization’ amongst the white community had shifted considerably since the early 1960s, the submarine announcement received significant publicity.

Unconventional warfare threats to SWA and RSA by 1966-68: Counter-strategies implemented

By 1966, reports of potential South West Africa People’s Organisation (SWAPO) insurgency was viewed by the SADF as forerunners of guerrilla activity and likely to lead towards an unconventional warfare penetration of SWA, along the similar lines as occurring in the sub-continent’s other white ruled states. Army Chief Maj Gen C. A. Fraser identified Col Magnus Malan as the candidate best suited for the important appointment of SWA Command head and requested Commandant General Hiemstra to release Malan from his work as Commandant General Secretary. Malan was undoubtedly being groomed towards moving up the SADF senior ranks, for from 1967, he was invited to join the Broederbond.⁶²⁴ Malan occupied the SWA post during 1966 to 1968; he explained that because the Defence Force had long anticipated revolutionary guerrilla activities by SWAPO, there was time to prepare a response. Courses on revolutionary warfare, as expounded by Mao Zedong were taught at SWA Command, while counter-insurgency warfare was also stressed in local training. Malan considered his years of command in SWA particularly significant in the training of counter-insurgency techniques to officers residing in the territory. This resulted, according to Malan, by the

⁶²³ Wessels, p. 190.

⁶²⁴ See Wilkins. & Strydom, The Super-Afrikaners, 1978, p. A70.

end of this command period there being more anti-guerrilla expertise within SWA military formations than those in the Republic.⁶²⁵

By September 1966, unconventional warfare via infiltration by SWAPO, PAC or ANC guerrillas was perceived as the most 'likely threat', but this kind of "revolutionary warfare," where insurgents attempted to ignite a "people's war" amongst the population had completely failed by that time. State security clampdowns; white South African refusal to hand over political power; the lack of politicisation amongst the black population; but perhaps most important of all, the Republic's "buffer zone" of white controlled states, rendered effective infiltration virtually impossible.⁶²⁶ Contemporary intelligence reports affirmed the latter whereby 'enemy bases' could not be established in neighbouring territories. It was considered unclear what the reaction of the "indigenous population" would be in the event of "large-scale terrorism", but without any bases, guerrilla attacks were severely hindered.⁶²⁷ Military intelligence speculated that some geographical factors possibly favoured insurgents (the proximity of homelands and neighbouring states) while others might advantage state security forces (larger white population and terrain not entirely suitable for guerrilla warfare). The report utilised here referred to the need for a full interdepartmental appreciation of the internal situation

⁶²⁵ Malan, M., *My Life with the South African Defence Force*, pp 46-49.

⁶²⁶ As briefly summarized by Jacobs, C.J. (Dr), *The Forward Defence Strategy of the South African Defence Force*, a paper distributed at the 5th War and Society in Africa Conference, "The Second World War, Armed Forces and Southern Africa from 1939 to the Present, SA Military Academy, Saldanha, 12-15 September 2006, pp 1-2. (Published in *Border War 1966-1989 A Special Edition of the Journal for Contemporary History*, Vol. 31, No.3. December 2006).

⁶²⁷ HSI AMI, GP3, Box 430, Hoof van Verdegigingsstaf, Aanvulende Militêre Inligtingsrapport, Waardering van die Vyandelike Militêre Dreigment Teen die RSA soos op 13 September 1966, pp 43-44.

where all the country's vulnerabilities could be identified.⁶²⁸ Overall, the security situation concerning potential guerrilla intrusions registered little alarm, with short reference to "limited infiltration of trained terrorists and saboteurs from Zambia through to Caprivi/Bechuanaland," besides, "recently a well-armed group infiltrated through South-Angola to SWA".⁶²⁹ The latter referred to a SWAPO base established clandestinely at Ongulumbashi in Ovamboland that the SA Police, with covert SADF support, had attacked and destroyed it on 28 August 1966⁶³⁰ and already during that year, the SADF had moved into the Caprivi Strip conducting exercises.⁶³¹ Part of the military strategy was to close down the Kazangula Zambezi River crossing to guerrillas; this being one of the very few routes that ANC operatives had to re-infiltrate back to South Africa.⁶³²

The appointment of P.W. Botha as Minister of Defence

Magnus Malan suggested that Verwoerd had appointed Botha to the defence portfolio from May 1966, possibly because of the latter's proven organization skills. Although no documentary evidence was found as to exactly why Fouché was moved to another cabinet position, it was probably a variety of reasons. Hiemstra remarked that Fouché's shifting across to the agricultural portfolio better suited his "nature and knowledge" and

⁶²⁸ Ibid , p. 44.

⁶²⁹ Ibid , p. 45.

⁶³⁰ See Scholtz, L., The Namibian Border War: An Appraisal of South African Strategy, *Scientia Militaria*, Vol. 34 No. 1 2006, p.26, where he footnotes Stiff, P., *The Silent War South African Recce Operations 1969-1994*, Alberton, 1999, pp 31-32, where these details of SADF involvement were first related in public.

⁶³¹ Interview Brig Gen M. Alexander, 20 December 2007.

⁶³² See Shubin, *ANC A view from Moscow*, pp 66-67.

“his advanced years were a disadvantage”.⁶³³ The intimations are there existed both political and portfolio demand considerations that were beyond Fouché, in addition, because defence needs were constantly changing, significant SADF re-organisation was envisaged. Malan thought that Botha’s appointment might have also been Verwoerd’s strategy to bolster his Cape NP support. Malan recalled that Botha had on his accession to the defence portfolio, remarked to him that Vorster as Justice Minister was very concerned about defence issues.⁶³⁴ Botha who before Defence had occupied the Coloured Affairs portfolio was a politician on the rise. After first arriving in Parliament in 1948, he had been elected unopposed in the George constituency during the March 1966 elections. Verwoerd’s first choice had been the veteran politician Ben Schoeman, who declined and suggested Botha as a better alternative. A few days after the election, Verwoerd pressed the position on Botha, who according to his biographer accepted it with some reluctance, due to his complete lack of military experience.⁶³⁵

General Fraser’s concept of “Revolutionary War”

From the mid-1960s, there was increased interest within the SADF regarding counter-insurgency operations and concepts of revolutionary warfare. As early as March 1965, Grobbelaar requested that a set of textbooks, forwarded to him personally by the Portuguese military Chief of Staff, be translated into Afrikaans as a matter of priority. Grobbelaar was assured by the Portuguese Military Attaché, Lt Col Gravito that the

⁶³³ Hiemstra, *Die Wilde Haf*, p. 311.

⁶³⁴ Interview with Gen M. Malan, 7 August 2007.

⁶³⁵ Prinsloo, D., *Stem uit die Wildernis ‘n Biografie oor oud-pres P.W. Botha*, Vaandel-Uitgewers, Mossel Bay, 1997, pp 45-46.

material (entitled “*O Exército na Guerra Subversiva*”) was based on Portuguese African military experience.⁶³⁶ Counter-insurgency and combating guerrilla warfare had been integral to SADF training for some years. However, it was Lt Gen C.A. (Pops) Fraser, the Commander of Joint Combat Forces (JCF) from 1967, who promoted an influential study of guerrilla warfare entitled: Lessons learnt from Past Revolutionary Wars, later revised as Revolutionary Warfare: Basic Principle’s of Counter Insurgency.⁶³⁷ Fraser was concerned as to how the subject pertained to South African defence in terms of threat appraisals.

This change in doctrinal approach slowly phased out some of the confusion that had arisen amongst SADF commanders during the 1960s, over differences in opinion whether they were preparing specifically for conventional war or for combating guerrillas.⁶³⁸ As late as 1966, the overall combat doctrine taught in the South African Army’s staff college was still British in origin.⁶³⁹ Fraser was instrumental in beginning a process, whereby the SADF started developing its own doctrines for South African circumstances. Although military exercises encompassed both “types” of warfare, based principally upon French and British experiences, Fraser gave a more detailed strategic outline, concerning what he

⁶³⁶ See KG GP5, Box 472, letter from CG to the Army Chief of Staff, dated 4/3/65, also file (File KG/OPS/4/6) marked Top Secret, Documentation Services Directorate, Pretoria.

⁶³⁷ A copy of this book obtained by this author from the Pretoria SANDF Documentation Services Directorate was Fraser, C.A., Revolutionary Warfare: Basic Principle’s of Counter Insurgency, (this was an internal restricted SADF publication printed by the SADF’s Survey and Printing Regiment.) It contains no date but all other information suggests this would be late 1967 or 1968. According to General Jannie Geldenhuys, this was a summary of a longer publication, entitled Lessons learnt from Past Revolutionary Warfare, SADF, 1958. However, the influence of Fraser’s work on the SADF’s thinking only really started to become apparent in the late 1960s.

⁶³⁸ Such academic differences had been a feature amongst SADF commanders according to General M. Malan: Interview, 10 August 2007.

⁶³⁹ Du Plessis, L., Hough, M., Protecting Sub-Saharan Africa: The Military Challenge, HSR Publishers, Pretoria, 1999, p.8.

believed were the effective means in dealing with insurgency. Fraser's work was translated into Portuguese, being confidentially passed across for their use; his acknowledgments at the publication's start noting the translator wanted to keep his name anonymous.⁶⁴⁰

Before Fraser's involvement directed Botha towards contemporary military studies, the prolific publishing military historian, Neil Orpen⁶⁴¹ had already published a number of articles concerning contemporary South African defence issues in both Commando and the press. Botha's biography mentions Orpen's book, Total Defence being referred to the minister, where Orpen explained that South Africans were overestimating their conventional military strength and any invading force with "great power backing" would have vast air power and numerical superiority over the SADF. Orpen therefore postulated the idea of a "Nation-in-Arms" and "Total Defence" in which the Boer Commando tradition would be extended into organized and specially trained commando units, conducting irregular warfare in support of the SADF's conventional units.⁶⁴²

However, it was Fraser's work that made the bigger impact on Botha. By 1968, Fraser had successfully started to disseminate his writings on revolutionary warfare and counter-insurgency within the SADF. Already in December 1967, Fraser had broadcast two talks on Springbok radio on the topic and transcripts of these were published a few months

⁶⁴⁰ Fraser, C.A., Revolutionary Warfare: Basic Principles of Counter Insurgency.

⁶⁴¹ See chapter six, pp 360-361 for biographical some information regarding Neil Orpen.

⁶⁴² Orpen, N., Total Defence, Nationaleboekhandel, Cape Town, 1967.

later in Commando.⁶⁴³ Fraser had spent time in France as a military attaché, where he studied French strategist André Beaufre's concepts that conflated the interests of state and nation, implying that combating an internal enemy required full mobilisation of all the state's governmental resources. Fraser organised lectures on Strategic Studies at the SADF Staff College in 1968, the first time such had ever occurred; introducing officers including then Brig Magnus Malan to Beaufrean thinking. He was assisted in these talks by Deon Fourie, who in his book dealing with African states military capabilities, also drew attention to Beaufre's 1965 writings, Introduction to Strategy.⁶⁴⁴ Fraser's work was studied by P.W. Botha and senior SADF officers and his theories would significantly influence the Defence Force thinking. Young PF officers like McGill Alexander received copies of his book for study⁶⁴⁵ and ambitious members like Malan embraced Fraser's concepts with enthusiasm. At a time when the most senior SADF commanders were still wedded to military doctrines based on World War Two experience and lessons, Fraser influenced the beginnings of a markedly different approach. Fraser demonstrated an intellectual approach to military affairs that at the time was rare amongst senior SADF officers and was decorated in 1969 for his contribution to defence.⁶⁴⁶ (See illustrations) Seegers outlines the aspects of Beaufrean thinking that interested Fraser, but is less concerned with the contributions of different SADF personnel, or the extent to which

⁶⁴³ Commando, April 1968, pp 9-11.

⁶⁴⁴ Seegers, A., The Military in the Making of Modern South Africa, pp 133-134.

Fourie, D., War Potentials of the African States South of the Sahara, p. 81. (see

⁶⁴⁵ Telephonic interview with Brig Gen M. Alexander, 20 December 2007.

⁶⁴⁶ Discussion with Gen Jannie Geldenhuys on 5 April 2008, where he concurred with this description of Fraser. See Commando, December 1969, p. 39 regarding Fraser's decoration.

Fraser changed the SADF commanders' mindset away from World War Two orientated doctrine.

1967: The SADF begins to attain clandestine battle experience

From 1967, the SADF had secretly taking steps to ensure that select groups of troops were being battle-hardened in other southern African conflicts. According to Peter Stiff, the Army Chief, Lt Gen Willem Louw, despite Hiemstra's disinterest in the creation of special forces, permitted Jan Breytenbach taking twelve 1 Parachute Battalion members to attend a Rhodesian Special Air Services course. Already the South African Police (SAP) was operating in Rhodesia, after the first ANC MK detachments had accompanied ZAPU guerrillas in August 1967 across the Zambezi. The ANC guerrillas had intended to infiltrate through Botswana and move towards the Transvaal. This South African assistance was accepted by the Rhodesian government for potential political advantages, but reluctantly so by their security force chiefs,⁶⁴⁷ with the SAP units sometimes being derided by their allies for inexperience.⁶⁴⁸ The SAP used SA Army paratroopers for 'shadowing' their patrols, with these SADF members accompanying to add military expertise. This arrangement, however, only occurred with the first contingent of police due to professional tensions between police and army. SADF paratroopers also shadowed the police in the Caprivi Strip during the same year and were occasionally seconded to

⁶⁴⁷ Moorcroft, P.L. & McLaughlin, P., Chimurenga! The War in Rhodesia 1965-1980, Sygma Books, Marshalltown, 1982, p. 21.

⁶⁴⁸ Informal discussions over the years with Paul Naish (personal friend) who served in the British South Africa Police anti-terrorist unit during from the early 1960s to 1980 and had significant contact with South African Police in Rhodesia. Also, see comments by Ian Smith in, The Great Betrayal. The Memoirs of Ian Douglas Smith, Blake Publishing, London, 1997, p.166.

Portuguese units and Rhodesian SAS during the mid to late 1960s.⁶⁴⁹ SAP involvement in military counter-insurgency operations in both SWA and Rhodesia was partly a consequence of security police chief Hendrik Van den Bergh's long-standing friendship and influence with Prime Minister Vorster. Other assistance to Rhodesian security forces included the use of SAAF helicopters, along with the pilots and ground crew.⁶⁵⁰ Other SADF entities were involved too in Rhodesia at this early stage: correspondent Willem van der Berg, who was a conscript from 1967 and served in the Signal Corps as a junior officer found himself with the SADF in Rhodesia during this period, in support of other South African security forces.⁶⁵¹

During 1968, Lt Gen Dennis Earp, later the SAAF Chief, as a was major appointed to the air force component at Rundu, working with Fraser on the air side of operations. Earp was interested in Fraser's philosophy of counter-insurgency/revolutionary warfare which he viewed as an entirely different approach from the Portuguese, who used conventional warfare-type logic in their campaigns against guerrillas. Earp commented that the Portuguese officers were often of high quality, but conscripts had long tours of duty and were not trained to operate in small groups, unlike the South African and Rhodesian forces. Therefore, the Portuguese sometimes avoided large areas, with their 1960s anti-guerrilla strategy being based upon the principle that if 'adequate' military forces were committed, then such would ensure success. Fraser was committed to his ideas of counter-insurgency, but Earp believed that in terms of spreading Fraser's Beaufrian

⁶⁴⁹ Telephonic interview with Brig Gen M. Alexander, 20 December 2007.

⁶⁵⁰ See Stiff, P., *The Silent War*, p. 21.

⁶⁵¹ Email correspondence with Willem Van den Berg; 8 August 2007.

approaches to countering revolutionary warfare, it was difficult at the time to coordinate military activities with other government departments.

From 1968, the SAAF were directly involved in also assisting the Portuguese in Angola through helicopter support, this being entirely clandestine regarding the South African public. During October that year, Earp witnessed indiscriminate Portuguese attacks on local population groupings viewed as having harboured guerrillas, which he objected to and succeeded in getting his views heard by higher authority. Such Portuguese “tactics” were entirely opposite to the “win the peoples’ hearts and minds” strategies of successfully countering revolutionary warfare. Earp believed that Fraser’s ideas were not always appreciated, but he agreed that Fraser had considerable influence upon P.W. Botha and others in government. Fraser’s counter revolutionary strategy was to become dominant during the 1970s and 80s.⁶⁵²

Conscription by the end of 1967

The first intake of white trainees under the new conscription came in during 1968; an important counter strategy in itself was this boosting of SADF manpower. Criticism of the previous ballot system was outlined in Commando earlier that year, along the lines that Hiemstra had attacked it eight years earlier. The tone of conservatism as espoused by the SADF is vividly evident in this Commando report on a Transvaal Scottish parade of

⁶⁵² Telephonic interview with Lt Gen D. Earp, 6 January 2008.

Gen J. Geldenhuys referred to recalling Fraser having “ethical concerns” regarding the Portuguese shooting guerillas from helicopters. Possibly Geldenhuys was recalling the same details as Earp discussed with this author. Interview with General Geldenhuys, 6 April 2008.

members that would have been part of the final balloted draft at the end of 1967. Accompanied by senior PF members Maj Gen Van der Riet and Brig P. L. De Lange, Hiemstra presented new colours to the regiment.

it was satisfying to see how keenly their traditions are being preserved by the young men who are on parade. Beyond all doubt these constitute a fine body of men and, as a Citizen Force unit, the battalion must rank among the best. The public enjoy military parades and should be given more tattoos, trooping colours, beating retreats and demonstrations of their efficiency and skill. Not only would they stimulate national pride but they would also counter the despondency that has grown over the beatniks, hippies and other human oddities that prowl our city streets and haunt coffee bars.⁶⁵³

It is no coincidence that the tone of this Commando article represented such a marked disdain regarding manifestations of western youth cultures, which were now also evident amongst some young white English South Africans. 1968 was globally a tumultuous year of often violent student protests, while the SADF were being projected by Commando as providing an alternative socialising experience, namely that of national service, which asserted a white South Africa military traditionalism. This could be ensured just as efficiently within the milieu of a traditional 'English' regiment like the Transvaal Scottish, as within the Afrikaner dominated army, which now managed the majority of the increased trainee numbers. Establishing the state's role in drawing all components of society into the defence of the nation was part of the kind of counter-insurgency theorising, which Fraser's writings had stressed. This pattern would greatly accentuate in the future with P.W. Botha and Gen Magnus Malan's concepts of 'Total Strategy'.

⁶⁵³ Commando, November 1967, pp 31-33.

Conclusion

The SADF retained a perspective of its possible role in a global war, based largely upon naval defence according to pre-arranged planning with the British government. By the mid-1960s, the expanded SA Navy were suffering deficiencies in both men and equipment, but it did not find the British government forthcoming in any reneging upon their decision to support the 1963 UN mandatory arms embargo. Despite protestations by the South African government and their threats to abandon the Simon's Town Agreement, this never occurred during the 1960s. The final parting of the ways between Royal and South African navies lingered until 1975, as international isolation tightened further on the Republic. Despite significant operational delays, new air defences were implemented by the SADF as an important counter-strategy, while the Defence Force also during the first half of the decade, made some hurried plans, along with military exercises, to defend SWA from an amphibious assault on Walvis Bay.

While the SAAF invested in maritime strike aircraft, the SA Navy significantly increased its maritime deterrent capability through its submarine acquisition, constituting its only plausible response to any determined invasion plan, in the unlikely occasion of such ever being attempted by the UN and/or the Afro-Asian bloc. By 1968, in terms of military counter strategies, the SADF as an entity was working entirely as part of the government's determination to maintain the white rule fortress in South Africa against external enemies. By 1968, more markedly than earlier perceived conventional warfare threats, were the SADF's expectations of being called to embark upon a counter-insurgency strategic course against black nationalist guerrillas. The ANC's MK had

already shown determination to attempt this course; although their ill-fated forays to filter guerrillas through Rhodesia in 1967 were far from constituting any serious threat to the Republic. The SADF anticipated further SWAPO incursions into the north of SWA after the organisations military defeat in 1966. It was also expected by SADF military intelligence that there would be renewed attempts by MK to try and penetrate the Republic with armed guerrillas.

While responsibility for combating these first armed contacts between the South African state and its own black dissidents had fallen on the SAP, the SADF was also clandestinely involved with Rhodesia and the Portuguese colonies. Lt Gen Fraser's influence on the SADF to train and operate more towards counter-insurgency as a specific doctrine, had also ensured a significant mind-set shift both at political level, through Defence Minister Botha and within the Defence Force's Supreme Command. In terms of counter strategies, the SADF had from 1960, moved away from being something of an "internal police force" to an organisation urgently rebuilding its conventional warfare capability and designing responses to perceived external threats. When it became clearer that no such conventional threat was imminent from international or regional political blocs, the SADF combined this preparation with an enlarged stress upon counter-insurgency. It was here that Fraser played a decisive role. The assumed "buffer states" of Rhodesia and the Portuguese territories were being drawn deeper into internal conflict with their own black nationalists, while white South Africa and the SADF by 1968, with some misplaced confidence, faced the inevitable continuation of the decolonisation process finding its way to challenging the constitutional foundations of the

South African state. The final and important SADF counter strategy, attempting to draw the white community closer towards accepting the Defence Force as inevitable and essential for their safety, was the instituting of national military service for all white male school leavers from 1968.

PART TWO: THE MILITARIZATION OF WHITE SOUTH AFRICA

Chapter 5: The SADF and Afrikaners

Introduction

This chapter introduces the Afrikaans community's change in perceptions of the SADF by the 1960s, compared to those of 1948 and during World War Two. It also discusses the infusion of Afrikaner nationalist politics, viewpoints and culture into the Defence Force, particularly during the 1950s, through Hiemstra and the *Afrikaanse Kultuurvereniging Volk en Verdediging*⁶⁵⁴ (AKVV). Hiemstra's view that compulsory white male military service was necessary took time to disseminate and even receive full consent from across all levels of Afrikaner society. With their historical antipathies towards the military lingering even in the early 1960s, some Afrikaners still needed reassuring that the Defence Force was now 'their own'.

Although there was virtually full conformity to military service, the growing Afrikaner middle-class also applied in large numbers for exemptions on study and professional grounds. This trend manifested itself as growing 1960s affluence promoted more attractive career and professional routes for young men of ambition and any enforced time spent in the Defence Force could be viewed as a hindrance. Historically Afrikaners had an unsettled relationship with the military, most specifically during the 1960s, those in middle-age or older who experienced the intra-Afrikaner disputes during World War

⁶⁵⁴ Literally: The Afrikaans Cultural Union of Nation and Defence

Two. But that legacy slowly faded during the 1960s where political divisions within this community became less relevant regarding their collective attitude to the SADF. An attempt is made to analyse this changing relationship between Afrikaners and the military, with particular emphasis upon the decades just before and following the NP's attainment of the republic.

Afrikaner UDF volunteers during World War Two

Grundlingh has shown how Afrikaners who served in the UDF during the Second World War had markedly mixed motives for doing so, ranging from economic need to their identification with the Smuts government's white reconciliation policies.⁶⁵⁵ It is conventionally accepted that the NP's 1948 election victory was partly a consequence of disgruntled ex-soldiers of overwhelmingly Afrikaans background expressing their discontent at the UP government's tardiness over demobilisation, rationing, shortages and other issues that raised grievances amongst UDF volunteers directly after the war. Government failure to speedily facilitate the troops prompt return from the Helwan transit camp in Egypt led to soldier riots there in August 1945 and the UDF's attempts to suppress damaging press coverage for the UP government. It has been argued this resulted in many ex-servicemen being influenced to either abstain from voting in 1948 or to support the NP.⁶⁵⁶

⁶⁵⁵ Grundlingh, A., *The King's Afrikaners?* pp 359-362.

⁶⁵⁶ Webster, S., *The Helwan Riots August 1945*, *Military History Journal*, Vol. 12, No. 3, June 2002, South African National Museum of Military History, p. 88.

At a broader social historical level, Afrikaner urban working-class members who voted NP during 1948 were expressing their disillusion regarding perceptions of their poor employment prospects considering the rising black population on the Witwatersrand. This was a recurring theme of earlier twentieth century South African industrial history; the white worker fear that blacks were being legitimised by the state in competing for ‘white jobs’ at lower pay. This was one core dynamic of white political party issues during the 1920s and 1930s, alongside other issues concerning English/Afrikaner feuds over national symbolism, the British constitutional connection and the two white community’s ‘language rights’, all of which became points of contestation within the SADF during the 1950s. The ‘soldier’s vote’ factor was but one of a number of long-standing political grievances amongst the insecure white and predominantly Afrikaner white working-class. P.G. du Plessis’s 1971 play “*Siener in die Suburbs*” captures a perhaps literary essence of poor white Afrikaners still struggling with post-war poverty. A sub-plot involves an absent father from a dysfunctional family who was reported missing ‘somewhere in the North’ in 1945. This ensures his wife a war pension, which is squabbled over amongst the extended family and others.⁶⁵⁷ Du Plessis could well have chosen this setting for his fictitious tragedy as representative of a number of poor post-war Afrikaans families.

Neil Roos contends that between 50 to 70 percent of UDF white volunteers at the end of 1941 were Afrikaners and that a good proportion of these were poor, unskilled and from a rural background. But he does not necessarily provide conclusive evidence that the

⁶⁵⁷ Du Plessis, P.G., *Siener in die Suburbs*, Tafelberg-Uitgewers, Cape Town, 1971.

majority of the Afrikaner soldiers were “working-class”.⁶⁵⁸ Roos bases his figures partly upon E.G. Malherbe’s (the wartime Director of Intelligence) estimates as outlined in the Official Yearbook of 1946. Roos’s ‘percentages’ which already have a significant range from 50-70 percent have limited methodological certainty, as they were extracted without any official statistics.⁶⁵⁹ In the spirit of English-Afrikaner unity such differences of recruitment regarding home-language were not researched by the UP government.⁶⁶⁰ Roos’s contention of overwhelming Afrikaner numerical dominance can possibly be challenged by the fact that a large proportion of the UDF units sent north were traditional ‘English’ regiments, drawn from English-speaking urban areas. His methodology of utilising interviews with forty-two individuals, mostly elderly mostly English-speaking World War Two veterans, is not without value, but it could not allow him to accurately postulate language breakdown percentages. Of course, competing figures of Afrikaner versus ‘English’ South Africans serving are further complicated by the large numbers of white ‘English’ who had already volunteered for service in British forces.⁶⁶¹

Lambert concurs with Roos that a larger proportion of the UDF volunteers during the North African campaign were Afrikaners⁶⁶² with many captured at Tobruk while others were permanently demobilised before the Italian campaign. After 1945, this grouping formed part of the insecure urban white working-class proletariat. During the initial stages of the war, volunteering occurred in both white language groups to secure

⁶⁵⁸ Correspondence with John Lambert, 15 August 2007.

⁶⁵⁹ Grundlingh suggests at least fifty percent of South Africans who served during 1939-45 were Afrikaners. *The King’s Afrikaners? Enlistment and Ethnic Identity in the Union of South Africa’s Defence Force during the Second World War, 1939-45*, p.354.

⁶⁶⁰ See Roos, Ordinary Springboks White Servicemen and Social Justice, 1939-1961, 2005, pp 30-36.

⁶⁶¹ Lambert, J., ‘Their Finest Hour’ English-speaking South Africans and World War II, unpublished paper, 2007, pp 7-8.

⁶⁶² *Ibid.*, p. 9.

employment.⁶⁶³ Lambert concludes that although many middle-class English believed that serving South African soldiers would one day help to consolidate a united post-war country,⁶⁶⁴ “neither the government” nor ex-servicemen’s organisations “were prepared to accommodate the more radical social demands of the Springbok Legion.” But the consequences of government failures in managing demobilisation to the satisfaction of the UDF volunteers, meant as Roos puts it: “many returned soldiers believed that the UP and English South Africa generally were insensitive to their needs,”⁶⁶⁵ a perception that contributed to the UP being voted out.”⁶⁶⁶

But we have no way of accurately quantifying how many Afrikaner ex-servicemen voted nationalist in 1948, nor the assumed increases in their support for the NP during the 1953 and 1958 general elections. Neither can we determine the extent to which these veterans contributed to the ‘yes’ and ‘no’ totals of the 1960 republican referendum. It clear that the majority of Afrikaner war veterans after 1945, never collectively honoured their war service in predominantly Afrikaner forums, along the same lines as, for example, the English dominated Memorable Order of Tin Hats (MOTHS).⁶⁶⁷ Neither did Afrikaner

⁶⁶³ See Roos, *Ordinary Springboks White Servicemen and Social Justice, 1939-1961*, 2005, p. 31, cited in Lambert, J., ‘Their Finest Hour’ English-speaking South Africans and World War II, unpublished paper, 2007, p. 11. A personal reference on this point is that of an old school friend’s now deceased father, David Cohen of Bergvliet, who served right through 1939 to 1945 in the UDF during both the North Africa and Italian campaigns. David Cohen related to me during the early 1980s, that after growing up amidst poverty in Observatory, Cape Town during the 1920s and 1930s, the outbreak of war had probably “saved him from jail”. David Cohen was a founder member of the MOTHS ‘Dawn Patrol’ ‘Shellhole’ in Bergvliet during the mid 1950s.

⁶⁶⁴ Lambert, J., ‘Their Finest Hour’ English-speaking South Africans and World War II, p. 26 citing from the Pretoria News’s , editorial in the 16 June 1941 edition.

⁶⁶⁵ Roos, *Ordinary Springboks*, pp 11, 81-2.

⁶⁶⁶ Lambert, J., ‘Their Finest Hour’ English-speaking South Africans and World War II, p. 26.

⁶⁶⁷ An NGK Dominee who was former neighbour of mine grew up during the 1960s in Ermelo, Transvaal. His father had served in the army during the entire war, from North Africa to Italy. The Dominee described

veterans as an ‘ethnic grouping,’ commemorate either war service or their fallen comrades within a range of other ex-servicemen associations. Certainly some Afrikaner veterans joined the MOTHS, Sappers Association or Gunner’s Association – to name just three South African veterans ‘collectives’; but these remained either English-dominated or at best, reflective of Smuts’s ‘South Africanism.’ As Afrikaners swung en masse to support the NP, so some veterans would have shifted their politics and civic association memberships accordingly.

One of the comparatively few post-war reflections (encountered by this author) written by an Afrikaans-speaking veteran on the eve of the 1960s, appears within Commando’s June 1959 edition. Capt P.A. Van Zyl, who served as a non commissioned officer within the Special Service Battalion during the Italian campaign, presented a different perspective of the Afrikaans veteran, claiming that the Afrikaans language and culture were sidelined within the UDF by the practicalities and stress of war. In contrast to English-speaking comrades whose war-reflections often included the theme of camaraderie transcending fear, Van Zyl in contrast described disillusionment and cultural alienation. He suggested that the war had a damaging effect on the collective psyche of those Afrikaners who participated, because they were not only traumatised them from a combat perspective, but also culturally marginalised and virtually rejected their own identity.⁶⁶⁸ Of course, Van Zyl’s article also needs to be seen within the political context

the small MOTH club in this town being largely utilised by the small English-speaking community. His father had voted UP but had spoken comparatively little of the war, although this was probably motivated, my former neighbour explained, by trauma from combat rather than the fear of being ‘ostracised’ by the Afrikaner nationalist political attitudes of the time.

⁶⁶⁸ Commando, June 1959, pp 7-8.

of the SADF in 1959 and the Erasmus/Hiemstra SADF “Afrikanerisation” endeavours. He wrote enthusiastically over the ‘progress’ made by Afrikaans as a military language since the war and expressed obsequious approval at the infusion of Afrikaner culture into the SADF by Hiemstra’s AKVV. While Van Zyl was clearly striving to be seen as professionally embracing the Erasmus’s policies, he was also attempting to transcend the political sensitivities between being a committed Afrikaner nationalist in 1960 and a volunteer during the war. Van Zyl’s article suggests he welcomed 1950s NP transformation within the SADF, besides describing his war service markedly differently compared to other veterans, who might have still felt a frustrated sentiment for the ‘South Africanism’ purportedly engendered by their UDF war experiences.

The Afrikaner community and their World War Two veterans

Therefore, despite the thousands of Afrikaner ex-servicemen these veterans received very little in terms of honour and remembrances from within their own communities. Such was in stark contrast to the English South African community, within their schools particularly, where the former pupils amongst the Second World War fallen were prominently commemorated within buildings, structure and inscribed plaques.⁶⁶⁹ Virtually nothing of a similar feature exists at Afrikaans schools existent during 1939 to 1945. Within the PF army and air force personnel, where Afrikaners started to predominate from the mid-1950s, the staffing at senior and middle ranking levels

⁶⁶⁹ See Lambert, J., ‘Their Finest Hour’ English-speaking South Africans and World War II, unpublished paper, 2007, pp 15-16 for reactions of ‘English’ schools regarding boys volunteering.

included many World War Two veterans;⁶⁷⁰ but unlike those within the English-speaking community, their Afrikaans counterparts were ignored within Afrikaner nationalist controlled institutions. Precisely the same pattern was evident at Afrikaans universities, where there is little evidence of any monuments or commemorative structures compared to what exists at the 'traditional' English language universities.

Such is the legacy of the two white South African language groupings participation in the global conflict of 1939 to 1945; where for some, the war represented honourable participation for a struggle against totalitarianism, besides the sacrifices of volunteers that engendered these veterans with honour and respect. For others the war connected to highly emotional political accusations of lending support to a perceived former oppressor, besides that of the UP government, allegedly ignoring the will of an Afrikaner majority who supported NP calls for South African neutrality. Dwelling upon war service could cause a muted embarrassment in Afrikaner circles and a potential source of division amongst Afrikaner political efforts to unify the *volk* under NP political programs.

As a consequence, both the war and the Afrikaans veterans' experiences were, as far as Afrikaner nationalist politicians and historians were concerned, considered at best simply forgotten. Afrikaner nationalists and their historians assumed that the motives and political attitudes of Afrikaner World War Two veterans equated those of the English South African troops.⁶⁷¹ Therefore, these veterans were ignored within the triumphal

⁶⁷⁰ Geldenhuys, A General's Story from an Era of War and Peace, 1995, pp 25-26 where he refers to being mentored and trained from 1953 by Afrikaans-speaking World War Two veterans.

⁶⁷¹ Grundlingh, The King's Afrikaners? p.362.

accounts of 1948 and the creation of the republic⁶⁷². Such Afrikaner nationalist historical accounts of the *volk's* triumph became the basis of the historical mythology taught throughout educational institutions and cultural societies and this formed part of the socialisation and mass mobilisation of Afrikaners behind the NP. It might also form part of the explanation why Afrikaner senior officers, like De Wet Du Toit, Grobbelaar and Biermann, to varying degrees ingratiated themselves with Erasmus during the 1950s, not only to further their professional ambitions, but also to 'prove' that despite their war loyalties to Smuts they were still Afrikaner patriots (like Hiemstra).⁶⁷³ Col Jan Breytenbach recalled Afrikaner recruits during the early 1950s viewing war veterans with contempt⁶⁷⁴ and of course the majority of both prominent and ordinary SADF PF members in the early 1960s, were Afrikaners and/or war veterans of whom many were now in senior ranks and accepted in terms of their political credentials.⁶⁷⁵ The latter also occurred because of Fouché's determination to pursue "white unity".

Inevitably, World War Two Afrikaner veterans' sons who joined the SADF also went through the process of being socialised in culturally closed Afrikaner institutions where there was no positive endorsement of war service. Maj Gen Chris Thirion, who served in the Defence Force from 1962 to 1992, described a personal history that may well mirror how other Afrikaner veterans' families reacted to war service. Thirion described his

⁶⁷² Ibid., pp 362-363.

⁶⁷³ As discussed in chapter two, pp

⁶⁷⁴ Telephonic interview with Col Jan Breytenbach, 26 June 2008. During an interview (10 August 2007) with Magus Malan, he mentioned that while standing in uniform at cinema queues in Pretoria during the 1950s, young civilians of his age peer group jeered at him and fellow soldiers as "*karkies*", one of the derogatory terms used by Afrikaner nationalists for UDF soldiers during World War Two.

⁶⁷⁵ See chapter two, particularly concerning senior officers like Comdt Gen Grobbelaar, Maj Gen Sybrand Engelbrecht, Lt Gen Willem Louw, Maj Gen Piet Jacobs, Adm Hugo Biermann and many others.

father as follows: “for some or other reason, the things that I remember about him was that he was a very staunch United Party supporter...when Smuts called people to go to war he went.⁶⁷⁶ In 1962, Thirion joined the Parachute Battalion and had already at Stellenbosch University during 1958 to 1961, shifted his political support from the UP to the NP.

During my university days I became sort of Nationalist orientated and I voted for the Nats, whereas...in the beginning I voted for the United Party. And then I made that switch, and I started to become, not a party member, but I voted for the Nationalists, so to speak. And in that process of having gone to university, becoming a Nat and then joining the military, my father’s perception and reaction to that was that I’ve joined the army of the Nats⁶⁷⁷

Most family units would have conformed to the new political realities. The post-1948 dispensation included securing through patronage and favouritism, a privileged place for Afrikaner nationalists within what became for them, a culturally congenial and supportive civil service. However, the NP still had to ensure the political ground was prepared amongst its supporters for the implementation of compulsory military service. Hiemstra’s controversial call during 1960 for the government to replace the ballot system, with nine months to a year’s continuous national service was politically premature.⁶⁷⁸ For some amongst the Afrikaans community, there still lingered resentments regarding formal military service and alleged UP pressure during the 1940s for Afrikaners to volunteer.⁶⁷⁹

⁶⁷⁶ Foster, D., Haupt, P., De Beer, M., The Theatre of Violence Narratives of Protagonists in the South African Conflict, HSRC Press, Cape Town, 2005, p.152.

⁶⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, pp 154-155.

⁶⁷⁸ See chapter two, pp 117-124.

⁶⁷⁹ See Grundlingh, The King’s Afrikaners?; p. 361, on evidence related to Afrikaners joining up in World War Two out of economic need and pp 362-365, where it is suggested that many Afrikaner servicemen found their war

Clearly speaking on behalf of such hesitancy within components of the community, the NP Cape mouthpiece, *Die Burger* approached Hiemstra's suggestion with caution:

For a non-militaristic nation such as South Africans, General R. C. Hiemstra's thoughts regarding instituting a year's national service can sound disagreeable. In the light of what we have been doing thus far (in terms of existing military service arrangement) it is indeed a drastic proposal. If something of this sort is decided upon, it will need to be quietly instituted to avoid unease.⁶⁸⁰

Changing perceptions amongst Afrikaners regarding the SADF in the early 1960s

From even before the 1940s, NP historical antipathy towards the military dated from their hostility to the UDF in 1914 and the decision by the Union government to invade German South West Africa. Afrikaner nationalist negativity for the UDF was exacerbated by the defeat of the white (Afrikaner) proletariat during the Rand Revolt, culminating in the Smuts government's decision to enter the war in 1939, followed by physical attacks upon UDF members and sabotage of state infrastructure by the *Ossewabrandwag Stormjaers*.⁶⁸¹ Hiemstra alluded to such remaining Afrikaner feelings in the terms below, describing how the ballot system first introduced from 1953, had also been intended to transform the CF away from it being 'English' by implementing the lottery system and creating "single-language" regiments.

For myself a Defence Force must be a personification of a nation's (*volk*) highest ideals and spiritual values. In the past, as well as the last war, the Afrikaner group kept to one side regarding the country's Defence Force, because it was so

experience in the English-orientated UDF an alienating experience in terms of their considering political support for the UP.

⁶⁸⁰ *Die Burger*, editorial, 14 June 1960, p. 8.

⁶⁸¹ See Strydom, H., *For Volk and Führer*, Jonathan Ball, 1982 for one reference on OB activities during World War Two.

strongly British-orientated. The creation of single-medium regiments now made it possible for both language groups to preserve that which was meaningful to them without giving offence to one another.⁶⁸²

One could argue that Hiemstra was misrepresenting Afrikaner war veterans, stressing his own experiences while assisting in creating myths about non-Afrikaner war participation, almost reducing these veterans to invisibility, including scores of serving Afrikaner members of the SADF. During the 1950s, the part-time force component of “*skietkommandos*” had received generous funding and publicity, an example of state-sponsored assistance to Afrikaner cultural promotion in the SADF, also supposedly intended to bolster the part-time forces. Such were manifestations by the government’s drive for Afrikaner unity during a period marked by a confident surge within Afrikaner nationalism. Thousands of Afrikaners who had not volunteered for war service now discovered their own “culturally congenial” type of military camaraderie within these rural “*skietkommando*” contexts, or even SADF careers for others who later joined the PF. During the 1950s and 60s, Commando devoted numerous pages for articles and reports concerning the regularly held commando “bivouacs”, shooting competitions and general “*skietkommando*” news.

As SADF commanders by the second half of the 1950s contemplated potential threats emanating from African decolonisation and Cold War tensions, some Afrikaner nationalist military men and intellectuals had already started reshaping historical interpretations, projecting Afrikaners as possessing an explicitly military heritage

⁶⁸² Hiemstra, Die Wilde Haf, pp 273-274.

component. Through the creation of the AKVV in August 1958 Hiemstra had further bolstered Afrikaner nationalist dominance within the SADF, with the explicit aim of raising the Afrikaner's historical and cultural profile. This was to assist, in nullifying lingering antipathy amongst some Afrikaners for the military, by rationalising how such distrust grew during the Afrikaner's historical experiences of soldiers and formal armies.

At the AKVV's first united congress in May 1959, Hiemstra stated:

I wish to leave the political factors aside and would just like to illustrate that for Afrikaners, the concepts citizen and soldier/warrior (*krygsman*) became synonymous with one another, and words like soldier, sailor and militarist took up uncomfortable connotations. The proud figure of the citizen-soldier (*burgerkrygsman*) could simply not be associated with the soldier in uniform who had alienated Afrikaners. This feeling remains strong even today amongst our people...It is the task of the current generation of Afrikaner militarists who involve themselves in the study and practice of modern military science to continue the search of how current military requirements can be reconciled with a defence system that matches the Afrikaner's national character and the notion of the (Boer) citizen-soldier, formed during the course of the (past) 250 years. Only then will volk and defence be one again amongst us...There are deep prejudices and significant misunderstandings that must be cleared.⁶⁸³

Hiemstra's views underscored the Afrikaner nationalist priority of *volk* unity, which was a critical feature of NP strategy post-1948, with no space permitted for any other Afrikaner political participation than via the NP's agenda. Neither did Hiemstra appear to place much emphasis upon standard democratic government/civil authority over state departments, including that within the military. His calls for a synthesis of the Afrikaner citizenship with a partly contrived modern military culture and obligations had almost

⁶⁸³ Commando, July 1959, p.32.

fascist undertones. As white South Africa moved towards republic, English-speakers and Afrikaner non-nationalists, along with their own cultural mores and viewpoints were marginal in Hiemstra's vision. His view was that the SADF's transformation was to continue, to ensure that: "those things that still remind the Afrikaner of his deepest humiliations must go...our military leaders themselves will need to adjust to the requirements set for them by Afrikanerdom".⁶⁸⁴ Hiemstra believed the country's white citizens would "need a more sympathetic conception of the particular conditions and demands of the military life, particularly where our problems are exacerbated by the fact that we are not a homogeneous nation".⁶⁸⁵ Conceivably, Hiemstra was referring to English-speakers, also needing to both accept and be part of the future Afrikaner controlled republic and its defence. He was also, or so it appears, calling upon those Afrikaners who still harboured historical antipathies towards the Defence Force to dispense with such. Hiemstra's speech demonstrates his role as "NP politician-soldier" attempting to remould South African military culture to resembling an Afrikaner nationalist shape, although this was an ideological zeal which Fouché needed to both utilise and play down during the 1960s, to also maintain the NP's stress upon "white nation-building."

Afrikaans historian G.D. Scholtz's (His 1950s and 60s works were introduced in chapter three) encouraged Afrikaners to seek deeper insight into their position regarding communism, Africa, potential military threats and strategic issues. Some of his books

⁶⁸⁴ Commando, July 1959, p.32.

⁶⁸⁵ Ibid.

were marketed through Commando like, Het die Afrikaner Volk 'n Toekoms (1954) which was introduced as (understanding) “the emergence of the struggle for the world in our mother language, Afrikaans”.⁶⁸⁶ Scholtz also referred to the lingering antipathy amongst some Afrikaners towards the military, as a kind of remnant of their collective negative historical experiences. Scholtz argued that this had alienated many Afrikaners from the UDF during the post-Union years and this feeling had lingered amongst some until even after the establishment of the Republic. As Scholtz put it within Die Republiek Van Suid Afrika en die Wêreld (1962):

the (negative) relationship that a considerable section of the Afrikaans-speakers have maintained towards the Defence Force...is not belied when the range of historical reasons are viewed, (causing) many Afrikaners to stand apart regarding the Defence Force ...between the South African Defence Force and the majority of Afrikaners...intimate bonds did not exist...Comdt J.J. Theron declared on an occasion: ‘The Afrikaner always had an aversion for the military uniform...because for him it was the symbol of oppression, because it reminded him of hardships in the past and the feelings of injustice had always remained with him.’⁶⁸⁷

Scholtz acknowledged that some Afrikaner “aversion” towards the SADF remained and this dissertation argues that it is one key to comprehending why the government and SADF were so cautious regarding extending the balloted military call-up at the beginning of the 1960s. Although during the 1950s, thousands of Afrikaners involved themselves in ‘*skietkommandos*’ or the newly formed Afrikaans CF units, it would be safe to assume most did so as a community common experience, rather than out of Afrikaner society collectively consenting in any profoundly intrusive formal

⁶⁸⁶ See copies of Commando during 1962 for the cut-out and post away coupon for the magazine’s readers to purchase Scholtz’s book.

⁶⁸⁷ Scholtz, The Republiek van Suid-Afrika en die Wêreld, pp 62-63.

militarization. The *skietkommando* popularity amongst Afrikaners during the 1950s and 1960s was also not any kind of ‘nostalgia seeking’ from war veterans, for World War Two South African military heritage was not included at all in the activities. On the contrary, it was explicitly an Afrikaner male community experience, although some training occurred under the direction of war veteran PF members. The Afrikaans press expressed caution on the issue of extended conscription, but as the early 1960s events drew Afrikaners towards accepting SADF perceptions of external threats, Hiemstra persisted with using his position to subtly prepare the way via his public political rhetoric for white male military national service.

The Afrikaans press were also starting to urge their readers to accept new national defence needs and be part of them. By early 1962, the government had postulated that military preparation was then a corner stone of its responsibility, whereby its supporters could judge the NP. *Die Burger's* 28 February editorial headlined: “The Pressure from the North”, stressing that certain inevitabilities existed. That there was nothing the government could do about the “southward advance” of decolonisation, but it undeniably “affected South Africa’s vital economic, political and military interests. The editorial appealed that the white community needed to accept that defence planning meant increased public spending and participation. It concluded pessimistically that “barring happy miracles, we have little time to put our political, economic and military houses in order,” with “our buffer territories which extended up to the equator five years ago”

having “shrunk to our immediate neighbours.....those who believe that we are in all respects prepared ... possess an optimism that we cannot share.”⁶⁸⁸

Giliomee explains that after republic in 1961, Afrikaans newspapers became less penetrating in their questioning of the government, while some leaders of “nationalist cultural organisations” were more strident in their calling for Afrikaner exclusivity and stressing ideological rigidity. The Cold War context increasingly manifested itself amongst the extreme right-wing of Afrikanerdom, through vivid warnings of communist threats, becoming more apparent as links were forged with like-minded individuals, both local and foreign. Ferociously supportive voices came from amongst others, the NG Kerk’s official journal *Kerkbode* edited by Andries Treurnicht, the *South African Observer* and cabinet minister Albert Hertzog.⁶⁸⁹ An analysis of Hiemstra’s speeches, particularly at AKVV events, suggests that his mindset lay squarely within this kind of rigid ultra-right thinking. He scorned predictions by the UP and others that leaving the Commonwealth would lead to the country’s economic collapse.⁶⁹⁰ As discussed earlier, Hiemstra was a popular guest at important Afrikaner gatherings, including that of the ASB (*Afrikaanse Studentebond*) dinners at Pretoria University in August and September 1962,⁶⁹¹ indicative of the students perceiving his opinions as bolstering their own. The ASB embraced an extremist and defensive emphasis upon “Afrikaner survival”, encouraging discussion about threats from “liberalism, Communism, jingoism and

⁶⁸⁸ *Die Burger*, 28 February 1962. editorial, p12.

⁶⁸⁹ See Giliomee, *The Afrikaners*, pp 547-548.

⁶⁹⁰ Hiemstra, *Die Wilde Haf*, pp 284-285.

⁶⁹¹ *Ibid*, p. 287.

Roman Catholicism” with students strongly cautioned to resist undermining influences to Christian-National principles.⁶⁹² When invited to the university on Republic Day in 1964, Hiemstra also spoke of the need to build prosperity amidst a world of revolution and dramatic change, but that the concurrent demands for development would be very significant for South Africans.⁶⁹³

As shown in chapter two, Hiemstra used his public speaking opportunities to implore white audiences to see grand apartheid as part of their defence. This in the sense that separate black states in his opinion would economically uplift black South Africans within their ‘homelands’, thereby reducing the internal threat of rebellion and external hostility. Such was the message of his Day of the Covenant address delivered at Delmas in December 1963,⁶⁹⁴ while during Kruger Day (10 October) in 1964, he repeated the common white South African belief at the time, that the country’s mineral wealth could ensure it developing into one of the world’s most significant industrial lands.⁶⁹⁵ Hiemstra also laid emphasis by reflecting upon changes within the life-style of the 1960s white community, showing marked differences with many of his own generation’s more Spartan formative years. During a speech given to young graduating officers at the Saldanha Military Academy in December 1962, he reminded them, many of whom were now products of newly urbanised and increasingly prosperous white South Africa, that they were to respect and seek advice from older officers and non-commissioned officers

⁶⁹² Giliomee, *The Afrikaners*, p. 547.

⁶⁹³ Hiemstra, *Die Wilde Haf*, pp 293-294.

⁶⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, p.292.

⁶⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, p.293.

who had been less privileged.⁶⁹⁶ Addressing the *Rapportryers* at Volksrust in October 1962, Hiemstra invoked his theme of promoting national military service for all white males, linking it with Afrikaner nationalist historical interpretations and the building of the country's future.⁶⁹⁷

When addressing largely Afrikaans audiences, Hiemstra often shifted to historical overviews aimed at NP politicking and Afrikaner cultural issues, as he continued his efforts to inculcate within this community a nostalgic image of their ancestors as 'soldiers'. Propagation of this 'Afrikaner military heritage' was treated with some urgency by Hiemstra, as the 1960s *volk* was 'city-socialised'; more individualistic and competitive, besides less politicised, while extreme past nationalistic fervour was slowly dimming. Hiemstra reminded his audiences how the Afrikaner's forefathers had 'willingly served' to ensure the current generation their existence. He referred to the first Free Burgers declaring themselves 'ready to defend house and home and not leaving this duty to others. Hiemstra propagated a concept of the "Afrikaner warrior" developing by the end of the nineteenth century into the most outstanding citizen-soldier of his time.⁶⁹⁸ But images of Afrikaners as historically 'citizen-soldiers', while perhaps being accepted to an extent within Afrikaner school and university history classes, were not necessarily formalised and integrated amongst the priorities of growing numbers of Afrikaner suburban families, who were enjoying the economic boom and the pleasures of consumerism.

⁶⁹⁶ Ibid, p. 291.

⁶⁹⁷ Ibid, pp 289-290.

⁶⁹⁸ Ibid.

By December 1963, with a range of perceived internal and external military threats facing the country, the government's policy stress for voters continued to be upon white unity. The SADF was now supposed to reflect white-nation building and at a passing out parade held at the Military Academy, Professor Thom, Rector of Stellenbosch University, directly addressed issues concerning recognition and promotion of an Afrikaans military culture alongside that manifested by South African whites of British descent:⁶⁹⁹

We see in our land two language groups alongside one another, each with a military past and energetic military tradition. The combined potential of these two groupings military capacity must be without doubt impressive.⁷⁰⁰

Under the title: "A New Image of Our Defence Forces", Thom followed the contemporary NP political line of endorsing a supposedly successful 'union' of the two language groups, being the core of this "New Image" after more than half a century of differences that 'hindered' this process.

after lengthy and cautious negotiations, the Union of South Africa came into existence, and it appeared as far as the military was concerned, English-speakers and Afrikaans-speakers would move closer to one another and build up one solidly united South Africa Defence Force. But once again unfortunate circumstances intervened ensuring that this healed closure never happened. Two World Wars occurred where there were serious differences of opinion between English-speakers and a large proportion of Afrikaners. In spite of the fact that Afrikaners accepted the reality of history, and they accepted that South Africa participated (in this war). But (this) did not ensure that English-

⁶⁹⁹ Thom did not deliver the speech himself. It was read out in his name by Professor G.G. Cillié, the Dean of the Arts Faculty at Stellenbosch. See booklet with Thom's 11 December 1963 speech at the Military Academy Passing-out Parade, Saldanha, published by the Department of Development, University of Stellenbosch, p. 4. A copy of this booklet was kindly passed across to me in September 2006 by Prof. Albert Grundlingh of the Stellenbosch University History Department.

⁷⁰⁰ Ibid., p.7.

speakers and Afrikaans-speakers moved closer to one another in the military terrain ...there were Afrikaners that felt in their hearts the country's Defence Force (manifested itself) as something (belonging to) the English-speakers, and that Afrikaners could not with pride also claim it for themselves as their own.⁷⁰¹

Like Hiemstra, Thom ignored the large number of Afrikaners who actually had volunteered for war service, some of whom remained in significant numbers within the ranks of the SADF's personnel. Thom glossed over the most controversial issues from the prior twenty years, including the violent opposition to war participation by some Afrikaners, the most extreme being effectively pro-Nazi. But it was also the reality of impending isolation, including the recently ratified mandatory United Nations arms embargo, that from the government's perspective, motivated 'official' need to endorse a perspective of the two white language groups 'fortuitously finding one another' in defence issues. Referring again to this "New Image" of the Defence Force, Thom remarked:

With significant gratitude we have taken note that this (old) image of our Defence Force has rapidly changed in recent times. Afrikaners have begun to take a far more active share in the business of our Defence Force. Afrikaners also now accept the Defence Force as their property and pride;and together found and appreciated one another...in cordial cooperation and healthy mutual respect. Our Defence Force and its new image, has become a powerful factor in the merger of the strengths of English-speakers and Afrikaans-speakers. For the first time in our history we see now the possibility that, if our country is forced to defend itself against an aggressor, that aggressor will have to reckon with the full, combined potential of both the English-speaker and Afrikaans-speaker's military traditions...it is reassuring to know that should our Defence Force need to act, it will not be just the members of one language group...this

⁷⁰¹ Ibid., pp 8-9.

(new) image is not only reassuring, it is also truly inspiring for the future.⁷⁰²

The reality was that the Afrikanerisation of the SADF under Erasmus and “New Image” under Fouché had shifted the military away from the English-orientated “South Africanism” of the United Party era of some years previously. This in the sense of supposedly sincere equal collaboration with the two language groups eventually assumed to assimilate. The Republican Afrikaner nationalist inspired building of a ‘white nation’ manifested as a kind of Hertzogite ‘two-stream policy’, with explicit Afrikaner nationalist leadership and possibly eventual assimilation of the English within Afrikaner culture. When NP politicians or senior civil servants like Hiemstra addressed audiences including both language groups, the reality of Afrikaner leadership was played down and the ‘white nationhood’ aspect strongly endorsed. When Hiemstra addressed Afrikaner audiences related to the AKVV’s activities or events significant to Afrikaner history, he often did so, seemingly quite contrary to the supposed ‘white nation-building’ ideal of the early 1960s.

Afrikaans Churches endorse the political call of the imminent threat to the *volk*’s survival

A key factor in garnering Afrikaner enthusiasm for the SADF was the increased role of Afrikaans churches in supporting compulsory military service. Church leaders as custodians of perhaps most influential of Afrikaner organisations, expressed fears for the future survival of an Afrikaner republic within a rapidly changing and hostile Africa.

⁷⁰² Ibid., pp 9-10.

Their influence played a vital role in impressing upon the Afrikaans community, the supposed importance of the SADF for *volk* survival, just as commando service had been viewed during previous centuries. This approach was largely absent amongst church denominations where the white English-speaking community worshipped: Anglican, Catholic, Methodist, etc. In these churches, increasing scripturally reinforced criticism was voiced regarding government racial policies, but all leading Christian denominations still maintained active chaplaincies within the SADF during the 1960s.

The official Afrikaans church endorsements of the military repelling dangers to the republic were also fundamental to acceptance of progressive SADF intrusion into community and private lives. As verified earlier, during 1960 the *Hervormde Kerk* (Reformed Church) leaders had even corresponded with Verwoerd to influence his appointing Hiemstra to the Commandant General position.⁷⁰³ The same fears for Afrikaner survival were displayed by the larger and more influential Dutch Reformed Church (DRC). During the Cottesloe conference of December 1960 organised by the World Council of Churches, senior DRC and *Hervormde* ministers together with theological professors tried to formulate a stance regarding the implications of NP homeland policy. DRC delegations accepted resolutions resoundingly challenging the grand apartheid cornerstone of government racial policy. But pressure from both Verwoerd and the *Broederbond* ensured that by October 1961, the Synods of the Transvaal and Cape DRC had emphatically rejected the Cottesloe resolutions. This repudiation outlined by both Church and *Broederbond* contained a vital central message,

⁷⁰³ See chapter two, pp 111-113.

namely that South Africa and Afrikaners in particular were under attack from outside forces. A *Broederbond* circular defined this “national struggle for survival” as a “cause” which required “an unconditional commitment”, and “our God-given national calling”. As Giliomee describes it: “Church, NP and government” (and the latter would have included all its civil service entities such as the SADF) were being expected to “stand as one in combating the challenge from without”. With very few exceptions, Afrikaner congregations accepted this rationale.⁷⁰⁴ The “national struggle for survival,” meant defence of a white nation was underpinned by church leadership alongside Afrikaner intellectuals and this ensured that SADF elements would also be influenced to view defence as part of this supposedly divine mission of white survival.

Synthesis of Afrikaner society and the SADF during the 1960s

Within the Afrikaans community there were mixed responses to Hiemstra’s efforts in promoting Afrikaner culture and history within the SADF and Fouché’s efforts and to build “white nationhood” within the same. Amongst some Afrikaans members of the CF and “*Skietkommandos*,” there was recognition that support for Hiemstra could be advantageous channel for individuals to further both their own ambitions and advantage their CF units, by prominently coupling both to support for the Afrikaner nationalist cause within a military context.

⁷⁰⁴ Giliomee, *The Afrikaners*, pp 527-529.

The Pretoria University military unit provides one interesting case study where Hiemstra's direct patronage was solicited by its commander. Pretoria University during the early 1960s contained amongst the most conformist Afrikaner education institutional culture subservient to the political order. For example, within the university's history department, only a narrow *volksgeskiedenis*⁷⁰⁵ was taught in South African history classes. The department was headed by the ultra-conservative A.N. Peltzer, whom historian F.A. Mouton has described as playing "a crucial role in undermining the collective ability of Afrikaners to think for themselves...(his) contribution (was to promote) the stifling spirit of conformity which characterised Afrikanerdom (during his tenure as Professor of History during 1947 to 1970)."⁷⁰⁶ It was Pretoria University students, dressed in university jackets and ties that were amongst those who physically attacked the civil rights protesters who regularly demonstrated during the early 1960s on the Johannesburg City Hall steps.⁷⁰⁷ As already shown, significantly it was Hiemstra, as the leading Afrikaner nationalist military figure, who was invited to a university campus to address students overwhelmingly nationalist with many inclined towards the right-wing extremes of party thinking.

However, even at Pretoria University, despite the ASB's invitations to Hiemstra, political support for the NP was not necessarily translating into a mass enthusiasm amongst

⁷⁰⁵ National history

⁷⁰⁶ Mouton, F.A. (Ed.), *History, Historians & Afrikaner Nationalism: Essays on the History Department of the University of Pretoria, 1909-1985*, *Kleio*, VanderBijlpark, 2007, p.307. Reviewed in *Historia*, Vol. 52, No, 2, November 2007, pp 305-307.

⁷⁰⁷ See film footage from BBC Apartheid TV series produced in 1987, showing scenes around Johannesburg City Hall steps in the 1960s, where the young men attacking civil rights demonstrators are clearly wearing Pretoria University blazers.

Afrikaans youth for the military. Upon his Commandant General appointment in October 1965, Hiemstra received a letter of congratulations from the Regiment Pretoria University's Commanding Officer, Comdt J. A. Vorster, who emphasised how from its inception in 1949, the regiment had endeavoured to preserve Afrikaans traditions in the army against initial "arduous struggle" against the "overwhelming English-speaking" PF artillery personnel. A core part of Forester's communication concerned the perennial historical white language group conflict in the military. Vorster referred to the courses and training camps during earlier years as being places where Afrikaners were initially discriminated against, but that subsequently the unit: "had built a tradition and esprit de corps which Afrikaners could be proud of." After references to the 'white nation-building' theme, Vorster revealed that out of a university of ten thousand students and eight hundred lecturers, the unit had the support of just three hundred and fifteen members, of whom by 1964, only about thirty percent were actually lecturers, students, or even past students. Vorster's main concern was that: "the purely university character of the unit had already disappeared because of involuntary incorporations" of its personnel by the Army Headquarters. Vorster concluded obsequiously:

For seventeen years this regiment has looked forward to the day when the SA Defence Force would be led by a full-blooded South African son. Now this ideal has been accomplished. A regiment that has stood firmly by these ideals and convinced of its right of existence in the Defence Force, through its achievements, loyalty and particular character, now requires security regarding its future.⁷⁰⁸

⁷⁰⁸ Letter dated 30 July 1965 from Comdt J.H. Vorster to Hiemstra, KG Group 5 Box 419, File KG/ADMLL/16, Gelukwensing, Simpatiseering, Department of Defence Documentation Centre, Pretoria.

Two issues can be deduced from Vorster's correspondence. Firstly, it demonstrates that in 1965 there was no overwhelming interest by students in the Pretoria University military unit. As discussed later, there was also limited interest by young educated Afrikaners for an SADF career, as it provided scant motivation to shift away from other potential plans to secure high paying occupations. Secondly, there existed within the Defence Force Afrikaners of strong political orientation, who viewed Hiemstra's ascendancy to Commandant General as an opportunity where their own positions and interests might be secured, demonstrating that despite "white nation-building", political favours were certainly still anticipated by some.

Early in 1962, twenty-five English language commando units were established, because as Fouché explained, urbanisation from country to town had created the need.⁷⁰⁹ Whether this shift had specifically occurred in recent years amongst the white English community is debatable, however, the concept of both communities being included in the commando structure, fitted the NP idea of drawing the English community closer to the Afrikaner nationalist mindset of defence; in this case within the heritage of Afrikaner military symbolism. In May 1965, the Ventersdorp Commando's Commanding Officer, Comdt Frans Cronje enlisted his own MP, one J.C. Greyling to intercede over a change introduced to the 'skietkommandos' beret badge. The single word "*Kommando*" had been replaced by the word "*Unitas*", angering Cronje and apparently others who resented this supposed diffusion of commando identity, they assumed to incorporate in the 'English'. Cronje's complaint provides an interesting insight into how a conservative Afrikaner in

⁷⁰⁹ *Commando*, March 1962, p.1.

the military during 1962 could refer to his English fellow citizens doing the same part-time military activity. According to Cronje, the reason why defence authorities had changed the badge was to ensure:

we (Afrikaners) do not offend our dear (*liewe*) English friends. Commandos remind them of the English war, and how the Boer Commandos mowed them down.⁷¹⁰

Cronje insisted that at a Commandos commanding officers' 1964 conference, that the attending officers "had in unison supported that representations be made to restore the honour of the term "Commandos" with the current badge being retained with the name 'Kommando' inscribed underneath." Cronje pointedly reminded his MP that he (Cronje) was the grandson of a Boer War general and then slated English speakers for their reluctance in accepting symbolic changes accommodating the country's new republican constitutional status.

what can our own South African troops flaunt? Only with the Commandos; all the other wars were not for South Africa but for King and Country. We have to deliver up our own traditions and then the English-speakers are allowed to boast about the VCs (Victoria Crosses) they won by shooting Boers...The Imperial Light Horse Regiment received four VCs during the English war in the siege of Ladysmith. Their badge consists out of crossed flags of which one is a Union Jack. I recall the huge battle to get them to change their name to the Light Horse Regiment, but what about their badge?... We Afrikaners have to throw away all our traditions to win the goodwill of the English-speakers. Where is our national pride?⁷¹¹

⁷¹⁰ Letter dated 1 May 1965 from Comdt Frans Cronje to Mr J.C. Greyling MP, KG Group 5, Box 420, KG/ADM/20 [c] Navrae Voorstelle en Klagtes Deur die Publiek, Vol II, Department of Defence Documentation Centre, Pretoria.

⁷¹¹ Ibid

Cronje concluded by explaining that conventional Defence Force channels of communication had brought no resolution to his complaint and that somewhere within the SADF, there was “violent opposition that was putting this ‘thing’ aside”.⁷¹² Greyling’s representations elicited an official SADF response that it was not cost-effective to have a bilingual *Commando/Kommando* badge, hence the ‘bilingual motto’ addition of “Unitas”. The response also alluded to negative white community perceptions of the “*skietkommando*” system, which Fouché, acting upon Hiemstra’s advice, was endeavouring to improve, based upon their perception that the “*skietkommando*” term had been stigmatised amongst many in the white community and the insignia change constituted one way of correcting this.

The SADF’s explanations on behalf of the Commandant General dismissed Cronje’s claims of a general resentment for the new badge and claimed the opposite was true.⁷¹³ A year earlier, Cronje had written a letter in English to Commando on the same topic, lecturing an English-speaking correspondent to accept “there is only one European nation in this country no matter how many language groups we are all South Africans (sic).”⁷¹⁴ The above correspondence places another perspective upon how the NP’s program of white unity within the SADF was viewed askance by some Afrikaners. Not all old “anti-English” antipathies by the 1960s had been smoothed by NP calls for greater white unity. It seems reasonable to postulate that some Afrikaners in the SADF tried to persist with a

⁷¹² Ibid.

⁷¹³ Letter dated 1 June 1965 from G. Markgraaff on behalf of the Commandant General, Letter dated 1 June 1965, KG Group 5, Box 420, KG/ADM/20 [c] Navrae Voorstelle en Klagtes Deur die Publiek, Vol II, Department of Defence Documentation Centre, Pretoria.

⁷¹⁴ Commando, August 1964, p.13.

continuation of Erasmus's policies of political favouritism, but found this less favourably received by Fouché, who made it clear that English-Afrikaans cooperation in the SADF was part of his policy emphasis.⁷¹⁵ If the 'English' were perceived by some Afrikaners as being appeased by government, then others also still bristled with the issues dating six decades back and earlier. One zealous attempt to suggest that the British Crown engraved into the gun barrels of SAN warships should be ground-off invoked a warning by Commandant General Grobbelaar that nobody could grind on the gun steel for the obvious reason that such could weaken the equipment.⁷¹⁶ Occasionally provocative sectionalism slipped into official publication: An anonymous letter in Commando from the wife of an Afrikaner SADF member suggested that it would be preferable if two separate Defence Force wives organisations existed for English and Afrikaans members, with a possible future single organisation uniting both under the embracement of Afrikaner culture. This received a sharply critical response from another correspondent two months later; the writer identifying herself as English-speaking by birth, Afrikaner by marriage and a member of the AKVV and NG Church.⁷¹⁷

Amongst some Afrikaners in the SADF during the 1960s, the strongest felt of these old grudges were expressed in private or hidden. Fouché also had to compromise for while he had made it clear at the beginning of his appointment to former Commandant General S. A. Melville that political favouritism in appointments was past,⁷¹⁸ the minister also had to

⁷¹⁵ Telephonic discussion with Brig Gen M. Alexander, 20 December 2007.

⁷¹⁶ Interview with Dawid Grobbelaar, 21 December 2006.

⁷¹⁷ See Commando March 1962, p.2 and May 1962, p.3.

⁷¹⁸ See Boulter, F.C. Erasmus and the Politics of the SA Defence, pp 69-70.

play quid pro quo by continuing with some political appointments to counter-balance those made on merit.⁷¹⁹ Some of the extreme political posturing in the SADF had diminished by the end of the decade. By 1968, Commando was providing less space to AKVV activities, which clearly began to lose impetus after Hiemstra's resignation from the organisation's chairmanship. In his autobiography, Hiemstra described the AKVV's demise as one of his regrets,⁷²⁰ but his promotion of Afrikaner nationalism within the military remained unrelenting during the decade. Concurrently, other components of the SADF worked to conform to some extent with republican ideal of promoting a common 'white nationhood.' Therefore, ultra-nationalistic appeals for the exclusive promotion of Afrikaner nationalist symbolism within the SADF were officially toned down or rejected and inevitably, this tension regarding "white cooperation" also existed within the NP, for insulting white English-speaking South Africans constituted one of the given reasons for Prime Minister Vorster's expulsion of Albert Hertzog from the NP in 1969.⁷²¹

Afrikaners within the SA Navy: Attempts in the early 1960s to 'balance' the language groups.

As a consequence of earlier historical circumstances the navy retained a high proportion of English members and this continued, despite political interference regarding uniforms and traditions. The navy also never underwent any radical cultural shift; partly because the NP were anxious to maintain membership of the only official international defence

⁷¹⁹ Interview with Dawid Grobbelaar, 21 December 2006.

⁷²⁰ Hiemstra, Die Wilde Haf, p. 307. Hiemstra resigned the chairmanship explaining that he could no longer be involved in the position in terms of his October 1965 appointment as Commandant General.

⁷²¹ Giliomee, The Afrikaners, p. 558.

arrangement which South Africa was part of. The 1957 Simon's Town Agreement's conditions included the South African government purchasing additional ships and ensuring the development of various maritime activities. These involved technical skills and capabilities that meant specialised careers were available with a greater range of options than most conventional army positions. These possibilities remained attractive to some English and Afrikaans-speaking school-leavers who viewed the navy as potentially an interesting and varied career. Because of a strong adherence to professionalism and the navy's more diverse representation of the two white language groups, it was the least "nationalistic" of the three service arms and the most "English", despite attempts during the 1950s and 60s to alter this. In an article on the navy's recruitment of trainees during mid-1961, Biermann explained that his command was collaborative of NP military social engineering:

It is perhaps to be completely expected that the majority of South Africans who involved themselves in the early days with our sea traditions, came out of the English-speaking section of our population. Since 1946 there is a growing awareness amongst the Afrikaans-speaking youth of the importance of the navy. We in the South African Navy are proud that our portion of the Defence Force is a true reflection of our land's population groupings. About sixty percent of the personnel are Afrikaans-speaking and forty percent English-speaking. The teamwork amongst us is outstanding because the expression "Brotherhood of the Sea" is not a hollow slogan.⁷²²

As would be anticipated from any policy drive instructing personnel being appointed into an organisation because of a perceived political need to ensure some kind of 'ethnic balance', some individuals were inevitably found unsuitable. Rear Adm Chris Bennett

⁷²² Commando, September 1961, p.5.

who attested in the navy during the mid-1950s, related that a number of young Afrikaners were deliberately recruited to ‘de-anglicise’ the navy. Rear Adm Max Kramer recalled a discussion with Hiemstra in the 1960s over the Commandant General’s aggressive efforts to ensure a white demographic ‘representivity’ in the navy, Hiemstra insisted on working towards a goal of sixty percent Afrikaans and forty percent English, which we can only assume had not quite been achieved by Biermann’s efforts described above. When Kramer explained the navy had traditionally always been very ‘English’, this invoked a retort from Hiemstra that such was all the more reason to change it.⁷²³ But Afrikanerisation had mixed success with an organisation where its roots were deep regarding the RN, its parent navy. Roland Suhr who served in the navy gymnasium from January 1967, remarked that the all-pervasive influence of the RN was a feature of the SA Navy and its PF members:

It seems that many of the customs and traditions of the Royal Navy...were instilled in us. It was also noticeable that many of the non-commissioned officers, such as our instructors, had in fact attended courses at various Royal Navy institutions...and were inordinately proud of having done so. It was quite interesting to see Afrikaans-speaking NCOs going off duty dressed in tweed jackets and carrying Royal Navy duffel bags looking, I should imagine, very much like their counterparts in the United Kingdom... (the breakdown of trainees home languages at the gym) was approximately 50% English and 50% Afrikaans. Nevertheless, although there was some Afrikaans spoken on the parade ground, the language of instruction was very much English, (and)...most of the literature seemed to be in English.⁷²⁴

⁷²³ Interview with Rear Adm M. Kramer, 5 July 2007.

⁷²⁴ Email correspondence from Roland Suhr of Durban – August 2007.

By the 1970s, even some junior officers of Afrikaans background were voicing their discontent at the limitations of colleagues from their own language group, who they claimed lacked adequate ability although were senior in rank.⁷²⁵ These included individuals who would have been jostling for promotion during the Fouché years of the 1960s. But ‘white unity’ in the SADF was not however evident in the decisions regarding the naming of new SA Navy warships. While the NP spent the decade after 1948 consolidating their electoral victory, Erasmus endorsed a naval expansion program where Afrikaner historical figures and symbolism would be reflected in ships names.⁷²⁶ Three frigates delivered from UK shipyards in the early 1960s all received the names of nineteenth century Boer Republic presidents, specifically Presidents’ Pretorius, Steyn and Kruger. The decision by the cabinet to name the frigates had been made during the late 1950s, with strict instructions that the first one launched be named after republican icon Paul Kruger.⁷²⁷ The frigates were delivered between 1962 and 1964 accompanied by significant media attention.⁷²⁸ The trend of Afrikaner historical names for ships continued when the navy’s three submarines were ordered from France in 1967, with all were named after Afrikaner nationalist historical heroines, specifically Maria Van Riebeeck

⁷²⁵ Interview with Rear Adm C. Bennett, 25 January 2005.

⁷²⁶ An identical process occurred during the first part of the twenty-first century with the African National Congress government insisting that African battles/mythical figures/cultural symbolism be accorded to the SA Navy’s new corvettes and submarines and the aging strike-craft. The one exception is the third corvette, SAS Spion Kop – the name of a battle during the South African War. This “Africanisation” occurred in an organization which effectively contains little that is authentically ‘African’ and still remains dependent upon the skills and experience of its white personnel. The pattern is identical with the SA Navy during the 1950s and 60s being predominantly ‘English’ in terms of traditions and experienced officers, but in the service of the Afrikaner nationalist government of the day were like Erasmus determined to stamp their own identity upon an ‘alien’ institution.

⁷²⁷ Interview with Rear Adm C. Bennett, 27 April 2005.

Bennett, *Three Frigates: The South African Navy comes of age*, Just Done Productions Publishing, Durban, 2006, pp 20-21.

⁷²⁸ See chapter seven, regarding the SAS President Pretorius arrival in Cape Town; she was the last of the three UK built Type-12 frigates ordered in the late 1950s to be delivered to South Africa by 1964.

and Johanna Van der Merwe, while the third, Emily Hobhouse was an Englishwoman who occupied a highly honoured place in Afrikaner historiography.

Afrikaner reactions during the early 1960s to compulsory military service

Although young Afrikaner males were entering an establishment that by the 1960s was generally more culturally familiar compared to English-speaking conscripts, there remained some disenchantment with compulsory balloted military service, extended and lengthened in 1962, thereafter by 1968, becoming compulsory for all white males at age eighteen. Objections to being 'called up' were not strictly 'political,' but usually based upon concerns related to tertiary study and professional ambitions. There were also more serious comments, elaborated upon further in chapter seven of poor treatment and training by PF instructors, resulting in some Afrikaner young men expressing their contempt for the SADF.

There were numerous attempts by those balloted, assisted by their parents, to obtain exemption from military training because of post-school study plans. The SADF responded to such requests with lecturing letters explaining the impracticality of making exceptions; how critical the country's defence was and that the military were dealing with scores of such applications. Also at the basis of such appeals was that urbanised Afrikaners were enjoying the 1960s economic upswing and resultant prosperity. Besides as already discussed, this had begun to dilute Afrikaners nationalist fervour and help

facilitate individualism,⁷²⁹ some prosperous Afrikaner citizens viewing their own personal interests as superseding state obligations, particularly those as demanding as military national service. There was no widespread public objection, let alone any actual opposition, for the social conformity norms amongst the entire white population was far too powerful. In any event, Afrikaners and whites in general during this period to a greater or lesser extent accepted the NP's rationale of bolstering the country's security. However, there were definite signs that the nationalist excitement of achieving the republic was waning; a point not lost on Hiemstra in terms of the implications for the SADF and conscription.

Hiemstra had noted the subtle changes within the Afrikaans community and used them to drive his calls for broadened military service. He referred to current young men no longer being "children of the veld" with little practice or experience in "*skietkuns*" (musketry). However, they were also not "children of the street", by which Hiemstra concluded they would also require training in the art of urban-warfare.⁷³⁰ He was effectively saying that the new urbanised Afrikaners were somewhere between country and town and that for the purposes of training them as soldiers, they required particular attention, for they fitted neither the stereo-type of the nineteenth century rural Boer citizen-soldier, nor the street-wise mindset of the urban proletariat struggling to survive in city ghettos.

⁷²⁹ Giliomee, *The Afrikaners*, pp 542-544.

⁷³⁰ *Die Burger*, 11 June 1960, p.1.

With ample job prospects either in the state sector or amongst the opportunities created by the professional and business prosperity of the burgeoning Afrikaner middle-class, in Hiemstra's view young men would develop in ways unlikely to fit his 'warrior' profile, unless compelled into military training. In addition, potential military service problems were likely to increase amidst heightened professional ambitions and increased numbers of Afrikaner males applying for university Admission. Such explanations illustrate how during a period when the NP was concerned at ensuring *volkseenheid*⁷³¹ a component of the Afrikaner community were beginning to waver regarding SADF demands. Hiemstra and those who agreed with him hoped compulsory service for all white males at eighteen rather than the much criticised ballot system might head off more numerous objections; for the ballot was applied at random, resulting in many citizens completely exempt from service, while others could be significantly inconvenienced. This was a marked difference regarding earlier Afrikaner antipathies to the military, based upon historical issues of the UDF being too 'English'. The effects of prosperity upon the Afrikaners attitudes to compulsory military was not something that Hiemstra's generation anticipated, but it was to become a regular theme within his public addresses through the 1960s to the early 1970s.⁷³²

Within the Defence Archives are lodged numerous trainee exemption applications for study, employment, or other grounds related to applicants being concerned at their professional disadvantage resulting from military training. One case study serves as a

⁷³¹ National (Afrikaner) unity.

⁷³² For a clear example, see *Paratus*, October 1971, pp 58-59.

useful example, illustrating the type of resentments experienced by some middle-class Afrikaners (and the white community in general) towards compulsory military service. J. F. Du Plessis's mother made several attempts during 1963 to intercede for her son being balloted for military service. 'J.F.' was an academic achiever and his mother the wife of an SADF major. She enlisted her local Member of the Provincial Council (MPC) to make representations to the Exemption Board. After her request was denied, she felt so strongly that she attempted to communicate directly with Verwoerd; an extract from her letter to the Prime Minister reading as follows :

We have applied for exemption (for our son J.F. Du Plessis) for the reason that the child desires to study further in science...is one scientist not worth more than one trained soldier? It is commonplace to hear about the shortage of scientists; presented here is somebody who wants to attain proficiency as a chemical engineer and is rejected by authority...I also have proof that boys are obtaining exemption if studying teaching. Is this more important than studying science? ...Just like any other parent, I have my son's interests at heart and it hurts me to think that he must slacken off for a year and what guarantee does a person have that he will thereafter still diligently continue with his studies? ... I would greatly appreciate it if you can enlighten me as to how the Selection Committee of our Defence operates in so far as exemptions.⁷³³

She added angrily that "notwithstanding our representations, we received a 'rolled off' answer that (exemption) could not be permitted."⁷³⁴ Her accusations regarding the SADF's lack of sensitivity and discernment concerning military service exemptions prompted her letter being forwarded from Verwoerd's office to the highest defence authorities. Mrs Du Plessis received a lengthy reply from Verwoerd's private secretary,

⁷³³ Letter dated 16 November 1963 by Mrs J. Du Plessis addressed to H.F. Verwoerd. ⁷³³ KG Group 5 Box 421, File KG/ADML/20(D), Navrae, Voorstelle en Klagte deur Publiek, Department of Defence Documentation Centre, Pretoria.

⁷³⁴ Ibid.

pleading the Prime Minister being involved in a program “over lading with state business and international problems” and explaining that policy did not allow ministers dabbling in each others portfolios. The complaint was referred to Fouché, although the response came via Defence Secretary Badenhorst, who in a detailed and personalised answer, provides some insight into the SADF military ballotees exemption possibilities during the 1960s. Du Plessis was informed that the Exemption Board was:

having to consider weekly thousands of applications and that she could be assured that her son’s situation was not an isolated one; that scores of citizens have found themselves in the same circumstances. The Exemption Board felt that making an exception of your son will create a dangerous precedent clashing with its policy that students were balloted for compulsory military training before beginning university training (sic).⁷³⁵

The rest of Badenhorst’s letter consists of a patronising lecture on patriotism, appealing for Mrs Du Plessis to consider country before family, with the underlying rationale that *volk*, property, past struggles and nation stood to be lost, indeed even expropriated by some enemy. It was an appeal couched in language intended to ring a chord with Afrikaner nationalists. English-speaking and Jewish parents from the identical vantage point, might not necessarily been able to identify with all of what Badenhorst wrote to Du Plessis:

What would all the splendid endeavours possessions and endeavours of the South African nation mean if the fatherland were not protected? What would all the praiseworthy achievements of its scientists mean if their work’s fruit does not remain their own property? Consequently there can be no doubt that the defence of the Republic of South Africa must enjoy the highest priority. There are many parents who feel about their sons just as you feel about your own son, and where should the

⁷³⁵ Ibid.

line be drawn? Would it not be an injustice to remove from a young man the privilege of giving up one year for ensuring the continuance of his nation and country?⁷³⁶

Mrs Du Plessis was reminded that an attempt to attain military exemption, even through the intervention of the Defence Minister or any “respected person,” was futile unless the application was supported by appropriate facts. In short, she was left with no doubt that the SADF alone made the decisions regarding ballotees’ exemptions and that traditional civil representation by parliamentary representatives was futile. Badenhorst reported to Commandant General Grobbelaar that there had been during the beginning of 1963, lobbying through the press for university students to be relieved of their military call-ups or have them deferred. No mention was made in this documentation of the strong resentments against the ballot system that compelled service from some with legitimate study reasons for exemption; this while others with no such ambitions were by random chance entirely freed of all military obligations. Badenhorst made reference to how the Rector of Pretoria University Professor Rautenbach, during 1963 had apparently expressed serious misgivings about military training occurring between school and university. The sensitivities of the ballot system as a political issue are clearly illustrated by the fact that once Fouché had immediately challenged Rautenbach on his assertion, the university administrator quickly backtracked and claimed that the original newspaper report had misquoted him. To ensure there was no room for misunderstanding, Rautenbach later despatched a telegram to Fouché, stating: “Already three hundred ballotees from last year have been registered (at the university); above what was

⁷³⁶ Letter dated 20 November 1963 by Secretary of Defence, J. H. Badenhorst to Mrs J. Du Plessis of Bloemfontein, KG Group 5 Box 421, File KG/ADMLL/20(D), Navrae, Voorstelle en Klage deur Publik, Department of Defence Documentation Centre, Pretoria.

anticipated and expected.⁷³⁷ It would be difficult to conceive of the Rector of such an important Afrikaner institution, working within the culturally sealed, ultra-conformist Afrikaner establishment of the 1960s, doing much else than agree with a NP cabinet minister. However, non-political dissension with military service amongst some of the white Afrikaner middle class and other socio-economic groups during the early 1960s was a reality Fouché and his officials had to come to terms with.

Besides ambitious young urban Afrikaners whose parents attempted intervention on their behalf, the farmer could also be disadvantaged by military service; a useful example featuring an Afrikaner from a rural background, demonstrates how family loyalties created objections to compulsory military training. After beginning his military service on 4 April 1963, M.J. de Kock defied his unit's (5 SA Infantry Battalion at Ladysmith) commander by deserting six months later. De Kock explained that his action had been necessary in order to assist his ill father on their Northern Free State farm during the planting and ploughing season and before his desertion, De Kock was denied leave by both his unit and regional commanders. The matter was considered important enough, for the Adjutant General to keep the Commandant General informed, emphasising that the father's condition of health was being investigated together with any other mitigating circumstances. De Kock was not placed in detention barracks, but continued with normal training after three weeks absence without leave.⁷³⁸ The official documentation utilised here suggests a sensitivity and fairness towards De Kock's case, also indicating caution

⁷³⁷ Ibid.

⁷³⁸ Letter dated 15 December 1963 by the Adjutant-General to the Commandant General, KG Group 5 Box 421, File KG/ADM/20(D), Navrae, Voorstelle en Klage deur Publiek, Department of Defence Documentation Centre, Pretoria.

regarding the traditional Afrikaner farming constituency, where military service could conflict with their agricultural priorities.

As shown at several earlier points, the SADF also attempted to endorse components of Afrikaner traditionalism, like displaying respect and awareness of the cultural place regarding the ‘boer’ within the *volk* or Afrikaner nationalist historical symbolism. A Department of Information film on the SADF, released in 1964, had numerous scenes specifically intended as such. These included a farmer on a tractor staring upwards in appreciation at SAAF Sabre jets flying low overhead and closing scenes of a soldier standing on guard at the Voortrekker Monument, filmed against the backdrop of the setting sun.⁷³⁹ Significant SADF involvement occurred at Afrikaner commemorative ceremonies, such as the annual Day of the Covenant Commemoration of the Battle of Blood River. In December 1965 where the SADF provided troops for the event, Commando remarked upon the soldiers being moved from their Ladysmith base to the actual battle site:

5 SA Infantry Battalion transported the guard of honour easily within fast-moving troop carriers...to the historic terrain. This modern unit possesses the same inspiration...as the

⁷³⁹ The film “Vesting van die Suide” or “Bastion of the South” was conceived and produced between June 1962, with correspondence in the relevant SADF file only closed in July 1964. The film was viewed by this author in March 2006 at the provincial film library in Cape Town. It was part of a trilogy of propaganda films promoting a “multi-national” South Africa. The Commandant General ordered urgent assistance for the film makers which the SADF provided to a significant extent with numerous scenes involving ships, aircraft and soldiers with armoured vehicles. Besides concerns about security regarding some of the military equipment and installations being filmed; according to correspondence the SADF envisaged fitting the filming into training programs. See letters: 17 July 1962 from Commandant General to Secretary of Defence and from Secretary of Defence to Secretary of Information and 1 August 1962, from the Commandant General’s office to the Director of Military Intelligence. File KG/GC/5/1, “Rolprentvervaardiging Vesting in Die Suide”, KG Gp 5, Box 200, Department of Defence Documentation Centre, Pretoria.

wenkommando of Pretorius, which shall echo if the call ever comes again.⁷⁴⁰

The Afrikaner middle-class emerged agreeable, but not always overwhelmingly enthusiastic about military duty, while in contrast, approximately around 1964 there appeared simultaneously ultra-hawkish elements of ‘anti-communism’ within the Afrikaner right, including from within the SADF’s AKVV. At the beginning of his Defence Minister tenure, Fouché had made it clear that NP’s defence policies were entirely in line with the kind of sentiments espoused by Scholtz: That the ‘threat’ of communism was an external and internal danger. In the November 1960 edition of Commando, Fouché was quoted in the editorial from a speech that he had delivered a month earlier at Lichtenberg:

It will now be up to us to prove that our fight against Communist infiltration in Southern Africa is a basic part of our whole set-up. We must prove to the Western World that the Republic of South Africa, in its strategic position, is developing into a Western stronghold against communist world aggression.⁷⁴¹

Hiemstra’s AKVV seemed to view itself as being in the vanguard of a McCarthy-like search for ‘internal enemies’, supposedly complementing Fouché’s ‘identification’ of the broader trend regarding the global dangers of ‘communism’. By mid-1965, the AKVV had made some telling references as to how threatened this ultra right-wing part of Afrikanerdom assumed itself to be, despite the crushing of most internal political extra-

⁷⁴⁰ Commando, April 1966, p.41. Andries Pretorius with his “*wenkommando*” (victory commando) was summoned from the Cape, to reinforce the beleaguered Voortrekkers facing the Zulus and defeat them in the Battle of Blood River on 16 December 1838.

⁷⁴¹ Commando, November 1960, p.1. 20 July 1962. Document: From Secretary of Defence to Secretary of Information and 1 August 1962, from the Commandant General’s office to the Director of Military Intelligence. File KG/GC/5/1, “Rolprentvervaardiging Vesting in Die Suide”, KG Gp 5, Box 200, Department of Defence Documentation Centre, Pretoria.

parliamentary resistance. In a virtually hysterical address that year to the *Afrikaanse Taal en Kulture Vereeniging (ATKV)*, an older and larger, but civilian-based fellow Afrikaner cultural organisation, the *AKVV* paranoia was almost manic in its perceptions of “enemies” within and without.

The struggle around us is fierce. Attack after attack is being launched upon ... our free and lovely land. There are those who seek our demise with violence and economic pressure. In the chambers of the world, they scream for our blood. Regarding them, we do not hesitate to state: We stand strong and immovable. There is even a more subtle attack against us. There are those, even within Afrikaner ranks, who want to break down our *volk* on the cultural front and deliver us to those who seek our demise. In our literature, in our churches, and at every cultural level they fleetingly raise their heads. They gnaw at our soul, because a *volk's* soul is its CULTURE! A *VOLK'S* CULTURE is its POWER! Its POWER and CULTURE are born out of its love for those things that are its own – Its GOD, its LAND, its LANGUAGE, its TRADITIONS, and its MORAL VALUES. The Afrikaner culture was always a ray of light for the advancement of the South African nation. The Afrikaner culture was always the salvation of the white national element in South Africa... Guard and keep what has already been built, but without pause and with great power and careful consideration, let more be built upon Afrikaner culture.⁷⁴² (Capitalised words as in original)

This quote is worth repeating at length for it demonstrates the *AKVV* was lying well to the right of *verligte/verkrampte*⁷⁴³ struggles within the NP, a trend that manifested itself more particularly after 1966; also bearing in mind that the *AKVV* remained a significant political entity within the SADF during the first half of the 1960s.

⁷⁴² *Commando*, July 1965, p.43.

⁷⁴³ Literally “enlightened and “very conservative”.

Verwoerd's assassination and SADF honours for the *Ossewabrandwag*

Verwoerd's assassination in September 1966 occurred in a national security context that had to some extent stabilised after the battery of security legislation was enacted under the direction of the Justice Minister John Vorster, soon to become the new Prime Minister. Commando covered Verwoerd's death with undisguised Admiration for him, referring to the slain Premier being always remembered as the "Father of the Republic" and headlining the photos of the funeral procession: Dr H.F. Verwoerd – A Giant Amongst our Heroes is Laid to Rest." Commando subscribers were encouraged to purchase copies, available in both English and Afrikaans of an illustrated study of Verwoerd's life: "A Pictorial Biography - Hendrik Frensch Verwoerd 1901-1966 published by Voortrekkerpers". The marketing of this work continued within all the further Commando editions of that year. The SADF contributed significantly to the State Funeral pageantry, including Harvard aircraft over flying Pretoria's Church Square in the shape of the letters 'HV'.⁷⁴⁴ Amidst the shock of the assassination, some friction between the language groups flared briefly at the Langebaan Air Base and made the press. A young English-speaking SAAF officer named Lamb, in the company of other officers, allegedly expressed his satisfaction at Verwoerd's assassination;⁷⁴⁵ charges laid against Lamb were later quashed and he went on to experience a successful career in the SAAF.

⁷⁴⁴ Commando, October 1966, pp 7-10.

⁷⁴⁵ United Party Archives: UNISA , CAP 72, Ref No 126-127 Defence. Lamb was the father of cricketer Alan Lamb who used his British ancestry to play for England during the 1970s when sports isolation terminated South African international cricket participation.

Amongst Afrikaner politicians, controversial issues of the 1940s still re-emerged, where the SADF were drawn in as representative of the state. During 1967, defence authorities assisted in the acknowledgement of issues connected to extreme past white (and Afrikaner) divisions, when in October 1966, Hans Van Rensburg the former *Ossewabrandwag (OB)* Commandant General was buried. Flags in Pretoria were flown at half-mast and a military guard of honour was provided with SADF officers acted as pall bearers, while both Vorster and his Security Police chief, Gen Hendrik Van den Berg paid their last respects, although duties prevented the Prime Minister from attending personally.⁷⁴⁶

Conclusion

Afrikaner nationalists that felt alienated by the British-orientated military culture in the UDF of 1914-18 and 1939-45, with their hostility to South African participation, shared with the 'English' aspects of viewing the Cold War as having similar dynamics to World War Two; namely the West opposing a totalitarian expansionist power. Achieving republican status affected the Afrikaner outlook in defence matters, with increased concerns related to the perceived need for the protection of whites against "communism" or African nationalism. The SADF were an integral part of ensuring this, therefore it came to occupy a higher profile within the Afrikaans community.

⁷⁴⁶ D'Oliveira, J., *Vorster-The Man*, Ernest Stanton, Johannesburg. 1977, pp 207-208. Both Vorster and Van den Berg had been members of the OB and were interned by the Smuts government during the war. Their friendship later grew out of these experiences.

Afrikaners war veterans of 1939-45 adjusted into their post-war roles within the UDF/SADF, despite the lack of recognition from within their own community. The writings of Afrikaner intellectuals like Scholtz, demonstrated a still lingering historical antipathy amongst some towards the military. While Hiemstra played a significant role during the 1960s, often through the AKVV, in influencing SADF military culture, the Defence Force and military training also did not necessarily find universal acceptance amongst the Afrikaans community in the 1960s. It was clear that despite *volkseenheid* and external military threat perceptions, significant numbers of Afrikaners also considered SADF obligations a burden. Du Plessis and De Kock's cases are two examples out of scores, demonstrating that the Afrikaans white community did not as one sheep-like entity, immediately and enthusiastically embrace extended military service during the early 1960s. There was no militaristic, national demonstration when Hiemstra in 1960 lobbied in public for compulsory service regarding all white males, or when the balloting was extended during 1962 in terms of increased numbers of youths being called up, while their duration of service was extended. There was a steady number of ballottees from Afrikaans backgrounds requesting exemption for a variety of reasons, mostly connected to work and study issues. The government was cautious not to rush into compulsory conscription, conscious that the balloting system was already received a lukewarm response. This was partly because its random operation was perceived as unfair; but the government and SADF were faced with some challenges in creating a white society more accepting of the military and compulsory training for citizens; although most Afrikaners during the 1960s generally acquiesced to the Defence Force's demands with dutiful enthusiasm or in some cases just muted obedience. Others served in

the military with the political zeal, displayed at its extreme end by organisations like the *AKVV* and there remained those who assumed Erasmus's political favouritism would continue.

This chapter contends that the NP, Fouché and the SADF employed political caution by allowed the extended ballot of 1962 to 'adjust' Afrikaners and the rest of the white community into 'consenting' to a full conscription by 1968 of all white males at eighteen years of age. However, as SADF military strategy was changing during 1967-68 towards the doctrine of counter-insurgency, a more penetrating political response was required by the state to ensure some sustained subtle militarization of white society and such was more easily disseminated amongst the Afrikaans community, within institutions that closely inter-linked political party, culture and church with the state.

Chapter 6: The SADF and English-speakers

Introduction:

One of the most important conclusions derived from recent research was that white English South Africans (sometimes referred to below simply as the ‘English’) played a larger role in the SADF during the 1960s than might have been implied by Boulter, although this author does not entirely disagree with Boulter concluding:

Erasmus had created such a legacy of disillusionment that English-speakers generally from that era (1950s) onwards viewed the defence force as yet another sphere of state activity in which they were not fully welcome.⁷⁴⁷

As noted throughout this thesis thus far, during this decade something of a loose compromise within historically divided white South Africa occurred, which represented an almost tentative and defensive ‘common’ white nationalism. This trend was more discernable within the strongly conformist defence structures when compared to other public or civic social components. The 1950s conflict in the SADF had left a legacy whereby a perception persisted amongst many English-speakers, particularly those of the World War Two generation, that within the Defence Force they were still unwelcome or viewed as ‘unpatriotic’. This outlook adjusted to some extent during the 1960s, although it did not completely disappear, notwithstanding English South Africa largely accepting and some even supporting military service.

⁷⁴⁷ Boulter, F.C. Erasmus and the Politics of SA Defence, p. 246.

This dissertation suggests that in fact, English-speaking PF senior officers played a prominent part in the SADF during 1960 to 1968 out of proportion of their numbers, even within the Afrikaner-dominated army. Furthermore, compulsory military training re-invigorated 'traditional' CF regiments through the manpower additions it provided and this helped to ensure further 'English participation' in the Defence Force. During 1960 to 1968, English South Africans were nevertheless a minority within the SADF, whether as PF or CF members, ballotees or part of Commando units; but overall they were not 'rare' within the PF, despite the Erasmus period producing a significant number of resignations. Research has intimated that during the 1960s there remained reasonable numbers of SADF 'English' members still pursuing careers, including particularly war veterans and to a lesser extent some post-war recruits. It was from amongst this 'English' and 'anglicised Afrikaners' war veteran 'grouping', often disadvantaged during the 1950s, that individuals were shifted during the 1960s into important positions within the SADF command structures.

White English South African "identity" during the 1960s

The severance of the British connection performed symbolically by both the republic and Macmillan's Wind of Change speech, helped dissolve any remaining possibility of a popular "English South African" sense of identity developing comparable to that of their historical kin in Australia or New Zealand. Constant nationalist sniping at all that was British had also facilitated English South Africans slowly relinquishing their British past as a defining component of identity. In early 1962, a member of the English South Africa intelligentsia, historian Dr A. K. Fryer before immigrating to Australia, lashed out

publicly at the nationalists, referring specifically to the press speculation of foreign military intervention in ending apartheid. This was one of the reasons for the government's deliberate pulling together of English and Afrikaans:

Nationalists,...had attempted to draw English-speaking South Africans into their *laager* by controlling education and information sources. They did so because of foreign and internal policies which might ultimately lead to a foreign attack and internal strife.⁷⁴⁸

Neil Garson intimated that by the latter date, English-speaking South Africans, quietly but pervasively, were being persuaded that for the achievement of white unity they must sacrifice some distinctive cultural attributes. Amongst these was a tradition of dissent and a capacity for self-criticism.⁷⁴⁹ The amorphous, uncertain South African 'English' identity dissolved further and strong differing with government became even less apparent within some 'English' institutions and private entities, as the political isolation of the 1960s set in alongside the crushing of internal black political resistance. This occurred particularly in establishments like schools, private clubs/sports establishments and business; less so at universities and churches. While English-language newspapers criticised government racial policy, they also gave considerable favourable commentary to SADF and general defence issues. But the republic also experienced remarkable economic growth, where 'English' business thrived as English South African identity lost its tentative cohesion, even in Natal, where during the strident Afrikaner nationalist assaults in the 1950s on British South African symbolism and traditions, the 'English' had discovered some solidarity in defiance.

⁷⁴⁸ Cape Times, 16 January 1962, p.3.

⁷⁴⁹ Garson, N. G., *English-Speaking South Africans and the Imperial Connection: 1820-1961*, within De Villiers, A., (ed.) English-Speaking South Africa Today. Proceedings of the National Conference July 1974, Oxford University Press, Cape Town, 1976, p.37.

The African Resistance Movement (ARM) as a 1960s “English South African dissent grouping”

The most extreme version of the ‘dissent tradition’ mentioned above by Garson was manifested by the largely white English-speaking ARM’s sabotage attempts in response to the government and its racial policies. This ultimately futile attempt at confronting the state was launched almost exclusively by young English South African whites, several of whom were originally members of the Liberal Party. But white reaction to ARM activity demonstrated that such activities would never draw the white English community’s support. As with their response to white war veterans who participated in the ANC MK sabotage campaign, English South Africans recoiled with horror, if not embarrassment from any suggestion of an ‘English’ ‘counter-militancy’ to the Afrikaner government. Even after the state had effectively destroyed the organisation, the SADF through military intelligence reports allocated significant attention to former ARM members. Military documentation from early 1965 reported closely upon the movements of former ARM members and quoted from their writings, which described the English/Afrikaans division in the white community as potentially useful in terms of future strategy to overthrow the government.⁷⁵⁰

⁷⁵⁰ Document dated 17 November 1964 headed “Zambia Political Intelligence African Resistance Movement, Guerilla Oorlogvoering, Director of Military Intelligence, Supplementary Military Intelligence Report, RSA – The Unconventional Military Threat, Period Ending 15 December 64, KG GP 5 BOX 472, KG/OPS/4/6, Documentation Services Directorate, Pretoria.

Liberals such as Randolph Vigne who participated in the creation of the National Liberation Committee (NLC), which later became the ARM, believed the white English community had undergone some kind of “moral collapse” during the early 1960s. The ARM members who were products of English South Africa, had their militancy vehemently rejected by other English South Africans, who had already to an extent viewed the Liberal Party as an “embarrassment or a source of shame”.⁷⁵¹ Alan Paton had caustically referred to English South Africans as “half-willing, half-wry prisoners, moved by self-interest and the desire for security rather than by that quaint relic known as British fair play”.⁷⁵² ARM member Alexander Cox who had not been convicted along with other members, suggested that by making the white English and Jewish communities future targets of guerrilla attacks, more effective pressure would be placed upon the Afrikaner government.⁷⁵³

No Afrikaner Government in South Africa can ever concede common roll rights to Africans. Whereas the English-speaking element in South Africa, if suffering enough, could be made to accept this, the Afrikaner electorate is, if anything, more right-wing than its Government. It is fully prepared to suffer to maintain control because of their history⁷⁵⁴The Afrikaners are only in position to use the economic wealth of South Africa because they tax the initiative, wealth and skills of the non-

⁷⁵¹ Vigne, R., Liberals Against Apartheid A History of the Liberal Party in South Africa, 1953-68, McMillan Press, London, 1997, p.213.

⁷⁵² Alan Paton in *Liberal Opinion*, ‘The Quinquennium’, June 1966; Sunday Tribune, 29 May 1966, quoted in Vigne Randolph, Liberals Against Apartheid A History of the Liberal Party in South Africa, 1953-68, McMillan Press, London, 1997, p.213.

⁷⁵³ Document dated 17 November 1964 headed “Zambia Political Intelligence African Resistance Movement, KG GP 5 BOX 472, KG/OPS/4/6, Guerilla Oorlogvoering, Director of Military Intelligence, Supplementary Military Intelligence Report, RSA – The Unconventional Military Threat, Period Ending 15 December 64.

⁷⁵⁴ Document dated 17 November 1964 headed “Zambia Political Intelligence African Resistance Movement, Appendix A described as: “the personal views expressed by Cox on the downfall and the future re-organization of the ARM” p.2. KG GP 5 BOX 472, KG/OPS/4/6, Guerilla Oorlogvoering, Director of Military Intelligence, Supplementary Military Intelligence Report, RSA – The Unconventional Military Threat, Period Ending 15 December 64.

Afrikaner population. This group must be weakened by attraction elsewhere and direct attack...⁷⁵⁵

However, Paton and Vigne were not really accurate in their allegations of the English community being simply craven or motivated by self-interest, for there was also determined 'English' participation (and acceptance) in the SADF during the 1960s. The ARM's tactics and politics were rejected by the white English community as at best naïve and unrealistic. While the 'English' were powerless in the face of Afrikaner nationalist authoritarianism, there was not much disagreement with Afrikaners on security issues. In fact, most of the English community probably needed little persuasion that measures contrary to the Rule of Law were justified to crush sabotage and African nationalist resistance.⁷⁵⁶ The ARM had very few white followers and consisted mostly of university students and young intellectuals, whose marginalisation by the English community also highlighted the gap in political outlook that had opened between 'English' intelligentsia, particularly in the humanities faculties of universities and the white 'English' population grouping which these academic establishments served. The conservative English South African political scientist Dennis Worrell, who later became a member of the NP even suggested that those arrested had been misled by their university teachers:

Although South African liberalism has always been firmly wedded to constitutional means of change, when its facile optimism began to wear thin in the early sixties, young English-South African men and woman, whose expectations it had

⁷⁵⁵ Ibid.

⁷⁵⁶ See Seegers, *The Military in the Making of Modern South Africa*, pp 129-131, where she concurs that the state spent a great deal of effort on the ARM's activities and that the security police implicitly assumed public outrage against particularly John Harris, the Johannesburg station bomber, through their physical assaults upon detainees that brought no protests from the white community.

determined, took the unconstitutional course with generally tragic consequences.⁷⁵⁷

‘English’ universities allowed an academic depth and freedom that equated most western universities, unlike the more repressed atmosphere of Afrikaans universities such as Pretoria. However, English South African schools and the broader community were more conservative and respect for the military was reinforced to the advantage of both government and SADF. It was these local high schools, which provided most of English-language universities with their students.

English ‘loyalty’ to the ‘Afrikaner state’ with reference to the SADF

While broadly acquiescing to white privilege during the early 1960s, English-speaking whites were never seriously drawn into the Afrikaner *volk* structures, neither was there any particular interest for such from either grouping. ‘Republican white unity’ was largely a racial solidarity compromise. There was some ‘temporary assimilation’ for ‘English’ SADF ballotees in the army, where in contrast to the navy and a lesser extent the air force, they entered a largely Afrikaans-dominated world. But the NP by 1960 were determined to draw more of the ‘English’ vote, just as the entire white community was reminded through the press of the mass racial violence in the Congo and resultant panic stricken white exodus. The perception was also growing amongst English-speaking South Africans that Britain was betraying white Rhodesians, for whom as John Lambert puts it, “whiteness had become more important to them” than their “Britishness”. English South

⁷⁵⁷ De Villiers, A., (ed.) De Villiers, A., (ed.) English-Speaking South Africa Today, Proceedings of the National Conference July 1974, pp 208-209.

Africans now increasingly “sought to preserve their position as part of a privileged white minority by accepting an implicitly racist consensus with Afrikaner nationalism,”⁷⁵⁸ although their national loyalty was strong enough for the NP to count upon their support or at least acquiescence in defence. These subtle shifts amongst English-speakers political priorities was not unnoticed by Afrikaner political leaders, who continued to exult their nationalism, but concurrently stressed the importance of white unity. Hiemstra recalled how Verwoerd during a speech at the 1960 Republic Day celebrations in Bloemfontein had directly addressed “our English-speaking fellow citizens to assist Afrikaners in bringing about the Republic...Even the Cape Argus associated itself with him”.⁷⁵⁹

However, besides it working towards attaining more ‘English’ support for the republic besides canvassing them as potential future NP voters, the government never seriously adjusted civil service bureaucracy and ethos to make English South Africans feel the state sector was culturally more accepting of them.⁷⁶⁰ English South Africans seeking a military career in the 1960s also had the option of following scores of PF UDF members that during the previous decade pursued careers in the Rhodesian Federation forces.⁷⁶¹ In August 1960, the Southern Rhodesian government sent recruiting teams to South Africa to entice volunteers to join new regular all white army units formed in the wake of the Congo events.⁷⁶² The South African government gave permission for limited recruitment

⁷⁵⁸ Lambert, J., From British to South Africans: the evolution of a white English-speaking identity in South Africa until 1961, unpublished article, 2004, p.18.

⁷⁵⁹ Hiemstra, Die Wilde Haf, p.280.

⁷⁶⁰ Also see Philip, D. and Prior A., South African Politics, David Phillip, Cape Town, 1983, pp 133-136. politics of SA Defence, pp 67-68.

⁷⁶¹ See Boulter, F. C. Erasmus and the Politics of SA Defence, pp 67-68.

⁷⁶² See advertisement in the The Natal Mercury, 17 August 1960, p.3.

of its white male citizens aged between 17 and 27 and the Rhodesian Army conducted its business in Cape Town, Johannesburg and Durban, securing its largest number of applicants in the latter city. The officer in charge of the recruitment reported that the pay had been an important incentive, being higher than offered by the SADF.⁷⁶³ One ex-Rhodesian Light Infantry (RLI) member suggested that English South African considerations to join the unit were also Afrikaner dominance in the SA Army hence also the large numbers of recruits drawn from Natal.⁷⁶⁴ South Africans initially formed the largest number of troops in the RLI Regiment during the early 1960s; Moorcroft and McLaughlin reported how Rhodesian military intelligence had surmised that the (mainly) South African troops of the RLI were prepared to resist a post-UDI invasion by the British armed forces.⁷⁶⁵ While the SADF was not assumed by all English South Africans as the obvious place to seek a military career; a soldiering impulse had clearly not dimmed within young males within the community and some were quite content to pursue this in another Southern African context.⁷⁶⁶

Within the *Broederbond*, an organisation that by the 1960s was reputed to have held significant power over a range of political decision-making, there remained a wariness

⁷⁶³ Ibid, 9 November 1960, p.10.

⁷⁶⁴ Email from 'Hobo' Hobson of Durban dated 14 January 2007. He was an RLI member during the 1960s and in answer to my questions shared some of his recollections. Also see Alexander, M., *The Militarisation of White South African Society, 1948-1990*, *Scientia Militaria*, Vol. 30 (2), 2000, pp 283-284 where he mentions South Africans did not have to change their citizenship upon joining the Rhodesian forces and they were also granted exemption from service in the SADF.

⁷⁶⁵ Moorcroft, P.L. & McLaughlin, P., *Chimurenga! The War in Rhodesia 1965-1980*, Sygma Books, Marshalltown, 1982, p. 16; also see Binda, A., *The Saints The Rhodesian Light Infantry*, 30 ° South Publishers, Johannesburg, 2007, p. 20.

⁷⁶⁶ Many South Africans also found their way into the mercenary forces recruited by the Katanga government by 1960-61, besides other individuals choosing to serve in the British Armed Forces.

that equal cooperation always held the possibility of Afrikaners being anglicised.⁷⁶⁷ Broederbond hopes for English-Afrikaans relations were that over a long period of re-socialisation, particularly at a formal educational level, English South Africans might eventually become 'Afrikanerised' in their outlook and even embrace Afrikaner nationalist historical struggles and symbolism as their own.⁷⁶⁸

Afrikaner industrialist Anton Rupert saw 'English settler culture' in South Africa as inherently weakened by its historical dependency on previous Imperial interests. Writing in the mid-1960s, Rupert asserted that decolonisation meant "settlers" were "mercilessly liquidated" because they had not developed an independent national identity bond with a land. Rupert acknowledged that external threats had contributed to consolidating white South Africans, "but in themselves had not united a population where deep historical and political fractures exist". He pointed out that the worst civil wars can occur in times of siege. Rupert referred to the 1950s when the NP and UP had blamed one another for the rising external hostility to the country, with accusations and counter-accusations of "bad government" versus "anti-South African propaganda". Rupert believed therefore that Afrikaners had the responsibility to set the pace and course of "nationhood", by the "activation of the younger and significantly divergent elements of the population with an already active and integrated nation."⁷⁶⁹ "Younger members" meant the new generation of 'English' and Afrikaans males being drawn into the SADF through conscription.

⁷⁶⁷ Wilkins, I. & Strydom, H., *The Super-Afrikaners*, Jonathan Ball, Johannesburg, 1978, pp 144-145.

⁷⁶⁸ Randall, P. *Little Englands on the Veld The English Private School System in South Africa*, Raven Press, Johannesburg, 1982, referring to both Malhebe, E.G., *Education in South Africa*, Vol 2, (1923-75), Juta, Cape Town, 1977 p.679 and Serfontein, J.H.P., *Brotherhood of Power*, Rex Colling, London, 1979, pp 160-161.

⁷⁶⁹ *Die Huisgenoot*, 27 May 1966, p.17.

Therefore beneath the apparent 1960s “white unity” whether in defence of another context, the over-riding Afrikaner nationalist assumption was that it had the right and duty to lead greater white South Africa, even more so, because Afrikaners he asserted, had a purported indigenous historical component which rooted them to the land. Such was the opinion of the leading Afrikaner businessman of the decade, whose opinions were taken seriously with government circles.⁷⁷⁰

It was primarily within school sports, cadet competitions and compulsory military service where young English and Afrikaans males encountered one other to a significant extent. The communities had historically lived cheek by jowl within numerous urban and rural areas nationwide and many members of both had interacted at the deepest social levels, but undoubtedly, this situation occurred less so than the opposite, where the two language groupings maintained largely separate lives. Such were the realities of urban social geographical patterns where historically ‘English’ towns had developed, while with later Afrikaner urbanisation, predominantly white Afrikaans areas had followed. Politically disempowered by the 1960s English-speaking whites might have arguably been more resentful than most Afrikaners of the obligations imposed by military service. Hyslop comments that as a cultural entity, the loyalty of English South Africans to the Afrikaner dominated state was never particularly strong, or at least it was weaker than Afrikaner loyalty.⁷⁷¹

⁷⁷⁰ See Giliomee, *The Afrikaners*, p.499. Rupert’s involvement in government circles during the 1960s is also confirmed in chapter seven of this thesis where he was amongst leading Afrikaners who met Montgomery during his visit to South Africa in 1962.

⁷⁷¹ Hyslop, J., Shopping during a Revolution, *Entrepreneurs, Retailers and “White” Identity in the Democratic Transition*, *Historia*, Vol. 50, No.1, May 2005, pp 175-177.

However, 'English' commitment to loyal citizenship still manifested itself, indicated by their compliance to military obligations and in some cases, a strong interest in local military affairs. For example, this was demonstrated in several ways; for example, there remained a considerable involvement by the 'English' community regarding their part-time soldiering in the 'traditional' CF regiments. Indeed, it was within these culturally familiar army units that the broader 'English' community during the 1960s maintained its pre-1948 military enthusiasm, despite the overwhelmingly Afrikaans-dominated PF army. Most of the 'English' CF regiments were located within the appropriate white demographic enclaves around the coastal cities, Witwatersrand and the 'English' rural communities within the Eastern Cape and Natal. However, their awareness of the military was also maintained through a range of commentators, including the prolific writing of English-language press defence correspondents. Defence concerns were also voiced through the opinions of the thousands of ex-servicemen from the World Wars, many of whom now held significant positions in public life, with some remaining active in the CF or ex-servicemen organisations.

Changing/splintering political outlooks amongst 'English' war veterans

Although after 1948 when English South Africans lost political power and thereafter became increasingly marginalised in most state structures, most still voted against the NP during 1960 to 1968. However, by the latter date, clearly some 'English' war veterans

were supporting the NP in elections, as the government had picked up significant numbers of non-Afrikaner votes in the republican referendum and later still in the 1966 general election.⁷⁷² Neil Roos maintains that by the 1960s, considerable splits existed amongst war veterans' political views: Some remaining loyal members/supporters of the UP whose leader De Villiers Graaff was viewed by veterans as personifying honourable war service.⁷⁷³ Within the prosperous white English business community, there were scores of veterans of whom Harry Oppenheimer was one of the most prominent.⁷⁷⁴ Others remained involved in the white political party arena, but like Oppenheimer became supporters of the Progressive Party, rejecting the UP as incapable of promoting appropriate political change. Roos argues that the MOTHS, as the biggest ex-serviceman organisation, served as an alternative means of camaraderie and mutual support for veterans disillusioned by both the UP and the government. Many veterans still had grievances that dated back to the war years and subsequently had shifted away from any formal political involvement, particularly after the mid-1950s Torch Commando break up created more disappointment when the NP won the 1953 election with an increased majority. Within the remnants of the socialist Springbok Legion, by 1960, political

⁷⁷² Giliomee, *The Afrikaners*, p.525; Muller, *Five Hundred Years A History of South Africa*, , pp 510-511.

⁷⁷³ See Sir De Villiers Graaff's autobiography, *Div Looks Back The Memoirs of Sir De Villiers Graaff*, Human & Rousseau, Cape Town, 1993, which devotes a significant portion to his World War Two experiences. Graaff was captured at Tobruk in 1942 and a prisoner of war till 1945 where he fell into leadership roles amongst other Commonwealth military captives. Graaff's POW leadership is covered in more detail within Leigh, M., *Captives Couragous South African Prisoners of War during World War Two*, Ashanti Publishing, Johannesburg, 1992, pp 92-96. War-time camaraderie between UP members formed one basis by which often tenuous links held together during the 1950s and 60s as political differences and other factors caused the party to splinter and lose support.

⁷⁷⁴ See Hocking, A., *Oppenheimer and Son*, McGraw-Hill Book Company, Johannesburg, 1973, which devotes a chapter to Oppenheimer's war service and makes subsequent reference to his connection with ex-servicemen, particularly during the 1950s regarding the Torch Commando.

fervour remained intense amongst a handful of white SACP ex-servicemen, who involved themselves actively in extra-parliamentary activism and the MK sabotage campaign.⁷⁷⁵

Therefore English-speaking World War Two veterans did not form any effective or cohesive anti-NP political pressure group in the 1960s, except briefly in Natal where there were some Torch Commando-style flashbacks during the Republican referendum campaign.⁷⁷⁶ Veteran divisions were obvious in late 1960, when Brig Eric Hartshorne, the war-time Transvaal Scottish Commanding Officer published Avenge Tobruk, which covered the course of South African troops 1939 mobilisation besides their involvement during North Africa and Italian campaigns. The book's final chapter lambasted the NP Afrikanerisation transformations in the Defence Force during the 1950s.⁷⁷⁷ Hartshorne explained his purpose in writing his account of the wartime UDF, as he hoped, helping to restore the honour of South African troops maligned for their surrender of the Tobruk desert garrison in June 1942. Hartshorne attacked alleged British duplicity that had forced Maj Gen H. B. Klopper and his Commonwealth command to continue with remaining in a hopeless situation, (rather than allowing them to break-out in time) besides failing to make public the findings of the official Court of Inquiry which cleared Klopper and his troops of responsibility.⁷⁷⁸

⁷⁷⁵ See Roos, Ordinary Springboks, 2005, particularly pp 172-177 and pp 192-193.

⁷⁷⁶ Report in The Cape Argus, 29 February 1960, p.3 where it is detailed how hundreds of ex-servicemen converged on Ladysmith at short notice to protest against the banning of the Union Jack and 'God Save the Queen' during the Diamond Jubilee Celebration of the Anglo-Boer War Relief of the town.

⁷⁷⁷ Hartshorne, K., Avenge Tobruk, Purnell & Sons, Cape Town, 1960.

⁷⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, pp 103-145.

Hartshorne's book drew severe criticism from Major General George Brink, one of the most senior wartime UDF commanders and a former Torch Commando leader. Brink condemned the work as based upon hearsay and likely to be rejected by South African ex-servicemen. Brink further denied allegations of severe antagonisms between South African and British field commanders, remarking: "This sort of story may go down well with some people who delight in belittling everything British, but it will not go down well with South Africans of all ranks who know and respect men of the calibre of...(British generals during the desert campaign)⁷⁷⁹."

Brink's response clearly suggests the following points: By 1960, there were English-speaking veterans like Hartshorne who to a greater or lesser degree were antagonistic towards Britain, not least because of subsequent British foreign policy consequences for whites in Southern Africa. This trend was according to Lambert already discernable during the 1950s, when Britain's chang(ing) world status meant they (English South Africans) could no longer expect her leadership and support. In 1955, Natal Administrator Denis Shepstone had summed this attitude up by stating bitterly: "Britain had consistently and invariably sold the English-speaking South African down the river."⁷⁸⁰ But veterans like Brink were determined to dismiss Hartshorne's account on account of it being allegedly Anglophobic, although it is well documented that some senior South African officers like Major General Dan Pienaar clashed severely with

⁷⁷⁹ The Cape Argus, (Newspaper review of Hartshorne's in possession of this author from the Cape Argus which reports upon the "recently" published book – although it was very difficult to trace it to a precise date, it would have been published after November 1960 when the book was first printed - in other words after the republican referendum.)

⁷⁸⁰ See Lambert, J., *From British to South Africans: the evolution of a white English-speaking identity in South Africa until 1961*, p.17.

British commanders during the war,⁷⁸¹ although this was not necessarily the general experience of the UDF.

But political cracks had long occurred amongst war veterans between the socialist Springbok Legion and MOTHS after the war, then in the wake of the Torch Commando/UP alliance failing to prevent a 1953 NP election victory. War veterans had splintering into various, sometimes over-lapping viewpoints: Those who retained some loyalty to the British/Commonwealth connection and heritage; others that were entirely disinterested in politics; and some who supported a kind of local ‘Rhodesian UDI mind-set’, projecting themselves increasingly as first and foremost South African, often with antipathy towards Britain perceived as ‘selling out the white man’. As the NP called for increased white solidarity, it was far easier to market this appeal towards the latter grouping.

The collapse of the Rhodesian Federation in 1963 and the wrangling between the Southern Rhodesian and British governments prompted the Afrikaans press to appeal to prosperous middle-class English-speakers to shift their voting support behind the NP, just as their “kinsmen” white Rhodesians of similar social class were regarding Ian Smith’s conservative Rhodesian Front political party.⁷⁸² Certainly, there was some shift amongst middle-aged veterans from their wartime hostility towards the NP because of the party’s neutralist stance. Military historian and commentator Neil Orpen, who was also a war

⁷⁸¹ See Brown, J.A., Retreat to Victory A Springboks Diary in North Africa: Gazala to El Alamein 1942, Ashanti Publishing, Johannesburg, 1991, p.41.

⁷⁸² Die Vaderland, 26 October 1964, Rhodesië se les vir SA se Engelstaliges, p.12.

veteran and CF member, openly concurred with the need to assist Afrikaners in defending the country against African nationalism and communism. Numerous regimental histories written during the 1960s, record the enthusiasm with which wartime UDF members in the ‘English’ CF regiments performed their duties with competence and pride, as well as amongst ‘English’ PF members.⁷⁸³

English South African acquiescence to military training during the 1960s

The NP government’s determination after 1948 to ensure preferential treatment for Afrikaners in state employment created work environments, often culturally uncongenial to *bloedsappe* Afrikaners or ‘English’ alike.⁷⁸⁴ By 1960, many English-speakers perceived the military to be likewise and particularly the army, outside of traditional ‘English’ regiments. During the 1950s, there were still English-speaking new recruits seeking careers for the navy and some for the air force,⁷⁸⁵ but comparatively few entered the army, which received the bulk of the compulsory trainees after the ballot system

⁷⁸³ This point is endorsed by a cursory glance at relevant chapters with regimental histories that cover the 1960s, or the World War Two histories dealing with specific corps where their content was continued into the 1960s, 1970s or 1980s; depending upon when the book was published. For example, Martin, H.J. and Orpen, N., *Salute the Sappers South African Forces: World War II*, Vol.8, Part 2, Sappers Association, Johannesburg, 1982, p.369- see comments about Major C. Balantine MC taking command of 17 Field Squadron (Engineers) in Potchefstroom. This work also referred to the Engineering Corps involvement in the 1970s Border War and Angolan War. English-speakers within the PF of the SADF is dealt with at length in this thesis chapter.

⁷⁸⁴ This still lingered even in the 1980s. While working as a clerk in the Cape Provincial Administration in 1980, one of my very few English-speaking colleagues had been a civil servant before 1948. He spoke to me about his experiences subsequently under the NP government. He was close to retirement, experienced and competent, but had never moved beyond the rank of a signing clerk. Another younger colleague was an Afrikaner from *bloedsappe* background whose father had been in post office management during 1948. This colleague remained resentful on behalf of his father and disparaging to the NP. He explained how after the NP electoral victory, his father together with and other UP supporters had to carefully keep their political opinions to themselves while at work.

⁷⁸⁵ Some English-speakers like Brig Gen R. S. (Dick) Lord joined the Royal Air Force in the early 1950s because they perceived themselves as likely to be disadvantaged in the SAAF. After leaving his service in the RAF, Lord returned to South Africa during the early 1970s and resumed his flying career in the SAAF.

introduction in 1953. While amongst many English-speakers, there were undoubtedly strong political and cultural antipathies towards Afrikaners in general, there were various other strong social norms that ensured English-speaking young men conformed in complying with their military service duties. English South African youths called up for military training during the 1960s were often the sons of those who had served in the UDF during 1939-45 and the grandsons of those who had served in 1914-18.

Hence, there existed a long-standing cultural construct within this community whereby military service was accepted as forming a masculine rite of passage. The white English South African community boasted a long-standing history of military service for Empire, King and the Union government, where for generations its members had served in colonial forces and the UDF. During the 1960s, this service remained well recognised and respected within community entities, whether within schools, sports clubs, universities, churches, businesses or families. The prospect of a young man undergoing that socially understood male milestone of being a soldier, would have been comprehended if not even explicitly supported by their senior male family members. Such an “initiation” would also be understood as capable of separation from a political component, because the male physical and leadership challenges of serving in the military, comprised the core of that “greater” concept of “serving one’s country”. As is demonstrated later, there was even enthusiastic interest and support from English-language newspapers for the rigors and ‘pure’ masculinity of military service, despite this press’s general hostility towards the NP government.

In short, the white English South African community endorsed military service and acknowledged its necessity according to the rationale given by government, parliamentary official opposition and the SADF. However, the English South African community's re-invigorated support for the military during the 1960s was also partly a consequence of government strategy. Despite regular parliamentary wrangles over defence between the NP and 'English' dominated opposition, or the criticism of defence policy by the English-language press; in accordance with NP republican political strategy, the SADF formally endorsed and encouraged English support. With the exception of the navy, the SADF retained the strong Afrikaner cultural and demographic dominance achieved during the 1950s, but traditional "English" regiments received their share of ballottee intakes and budget. Through the CF, English South African military involvement received a new lease of life, while there was significant community support through voluntary participation in CF activities. Although as stated earlier, comparatively few English-speakers chose the SADF as a career during the 1960s and particularly regarding the army.

But although white English-speakers were in general compliant and accepting regarding NP interpretations of defence issues, SADF military intelligence reports from the early 1960s, expressed concern that non-Afrikaners drawn into the organisation through the ballot system could include subversive elements. A confidential report from April 1963 noted that because all groups in the white community served in the Defence Force, it could now also include those who would welcome "UN interference" and might be active

in the spreading of subversive propaganda.⁷⁸⁶ The clear implication is that this deduction referred specifically to English-speakers, or possibly Jewish South Africans, given their comparative prominence at the time amongst white members of the ANC and SACP.

By the early 1960s, the population shift of white Afrikaners over the first half of the century meant they were now overwhelmingly urban, which would inevitably result in their beginning to lose aspects of the cultural isolation characteristic of their rural past. The NP had attempted to “quarantine” their *volk* from other cultural groups through separate schools, cultural and commercial organisations.⁷⁸⁷ However, compulsory military service not only presented special challenges for reinforcing government thinking at a political and cultural level, but it also allowed the possibility of introducing the nationalist outlook to ‘English’ male youths. SADF conscription drew into its control a full spectrum of white South Africans with significant cultural and social class differences. Regarding the ‘English’ community, this meant the reality of different schools, including private church schools, different church denominations and religions, (specifically Jewish servicemen)⁷⁸⁸ besides any number of different family socialising experiences. All these cultural variables were temporarily drawn into one state entity during military service. While extreme conformity is a central ethos of any armed forces,

⁷⁸⁶ Adjutant Generaal (AG), Gp 4, Box 4, File No. AG 672/2, Memorandum Oor Inligtingswaardering Opgestel Deur Die Direkteur Van Militere Inligting, 1 April 1963, pp.5-6, Department of Defence Documentation Centre, Pretoria.

⁷⁸⁷ Grundlingh, A. and Sapire, H., From Feverish Festival to Repetitive Ritual? The Changing Fortunes of Great Trek Mythology in an Industrialising South Africa, 1938-1988, South African Historical Journal, No. 21, 1989, pp 33-34.

⁷⁸⁸ A correspondent (Gerhard Vermaak of Nylstroom) who was balloted to do service in 1962 at Walvis Bay, mentioned in what appears to be a carefully considered letter (August 2007), that he re-called widespread resentments from other troops about Jewish trainees being specially flown back to the republic for ten days during religious holidays. The SADF made considerable effort to cover religious/cultural diversity, although such was not always comprehended as fair by others.

the SADF also worked as an instrument of government vision and policy, reinforcing amongst young servicemen the enemy's identity as communist-inspired; a trend that became more apparent from 1968 during P.W. Botha's ministerial tenure.

In the more closed, authoritarian and patriarchal Afrikaner social structures there was less of the openly conflict-filled generation gap amongst attitudes, discernable during the 1960s within the western world. Afrikaner national servicemen, most particularly in the army, entered a military environment better tailored for them through a largely Afrikaner PF officer and non-commissioned officer corps. While English-speaking servicemen may have felt at times culturally alienated, their perceptions of threats were also moulded by what was disseminated during their upbringings and within the media. Most of the correspondents from both language groups who related their experiences of being balloted for military service recalling their having conventional understandings of the threats faced by the country as communist inspired. Most (bar one) of them also related that relations between English and Afrikaans trainees were good.⁷⁸⁹ It is unlikely that many of the English-speaking national servicemen felt as desperate as the acclaimed writer J.M. Coetzee recollected, when he referred to his anxiety of military service during 1960 (which he avoided by emigrating to the United Kingdom directly after completing a degree at UCT).

⁷⁸⁹ A large part of the correspondence elicited from former ballotees and national servicemen was purely anecdotal. Except for one correspondent who was insultingly belittling of all language/population groupings besides Afrikaners, the other contributions in virtual unison confirmed their recollections of good relations between English and Afrikaans troops. I personally recall many tensions between the language groups during my own national service, but this could have been related to the management (or lack of) regarding that specific camp.

When he left school they were conscripting only one white boy in three for military training. He was lucky not to be balloted. Now all that is changing there are new rules. Anytime he can find a call-up notice in his letter box: *You are required to present yourself at the Castle at 9am on such-and-such date. Bring only toilet items.* Voortrekkerhoogte, somewhere in the Transvaal, is the training camp he has heard the most noise about. It is where they send conscripts from the Cape, far from home, to break them. In a week he could find himself behind barbed wire in Voortrekkerhoogte, sharing a tent with thuggish Afrikaners, eating bully-beef out of cans, listening to Johnnie Ray on Springbok Radio. He would not be able to endure it; he would slash his wrists. There is only one course open: to flee.⁷⁹⁰

Coetzee's recollections would certainly have been partly formed by contemporary perceptions of what the SADF was rumoured to hold in store for English-speakers, being drawn largely from conversations heard amongst those of his age group and social class: young white English-speaking males from Cape Town's southern suburbs schools now studying for degrees at UCT. However while the prejudices and anxieties he espoused may have been fairly common amongst his peers, Coetzee's complete revulsion and acute fear at the prospect of being in the military were not likely to have been the norm.⁷⁹¹

English South Africans also accepted the NPs explanation for compulsory military service because no spokespersons or alternate views considered credible emerged amongst this largely conservative community. The 'English' constituted no obvious

⁷⁹⁰ Coetzee, J.M. *Youth*, Random House, London, 2002, pp 39-40.

⁷⁹¹ It is difficult to verify such a point scientifically through the range of correspondence received and interviews undertaken; but my overwhelming impression is that during the early 1960s, English-speaking ballotees were not hostile or intimidated to any significant extent by their being part of the largely Afrikaans-dominated army environment. Several also related to me that they noted English-speakers (usually World War Two veterans) in command positions – particularly in Bloemfontein and Potchefstroom (armour and artillery). Some of the men who held senior posts are mentioned later in this chapter.

future political threat to Afrikaner nationalist hegemony, nor did they demonstrate some kind of collective political consciousness likely in the near future to prompt mass opposition to military service. On the contrary judging from letters in the press, journalistic comment and the opinions of opposition members of parliament, it is clear that the white English community were committed like Afrikaners to understanding the Cold War as being explicitly Soviet expansionist driven; that South Africa was a central target of communist designs in Africa. They also shared the early 1960s white anxieties of violent internal revolution, further spurred by racial violence during decolonisation. Such uncertainties tended to also mute any loud objections that may have been felt against the government increasing its conscription demands in 1962 and again by 1968. English South Africans were still overall more prosperous than Afrikaners during the 1960s⁷⁹² but continued to involve themselves voluntarily in military or semi-military organisations like the CF units, MOTHS, Sappers Association, SA Legion⁷⁹³ and many others, besides participation in regular war commemorations. Part of 'English' military service legacy from two World Wars and that of ancestors in the SA War and frontier wars were the constant reminders of cenotaphs and war memorials scattered throughout schools, universities, city or town public places and churches. Rather than any collective opposition by English-speaking whites against military service during the 1960s, there was rather acquiescence.

⁷⁹² See Giliomee, *The Afrikaners*, pp 542-543 where figures appear concerning education, income and aggregate share in the economy regarding white English-speakers and Afrikaners during the 1960s.

⁷⁹³ The SA Legion publication, *Springbok* during the 1960s referred regularly in a positive way to current SADF activities as did other ex-servicemen organizations publications.

For example, the forced republican change of military titles and insignia did not dull enthusiasm in CF ‘English’ units like the Cape Town Highlanders, one of the oldest CF regiments, where the constitutional alterations demanded new loyalties as opposed to those traditionally given to the British monarch. Orpen remarked upon the Cape Town Highlanders experience in 1961:

The declaration of the Republic...brought with it the severance of some ties, which had been cherished for many years, but the inevitability of such developments had to be accepted⁷⁹⁴

The Highlanders discovered, contrary to rumours, that together with other ‘English’ CF units, Fouché had no intention to interfere with their British originated traditions.⁷⁹⁵ And the regiment continued its vigorous participation within the SADF programmes of training manoeuvres and parades, while its ranks were swelled by recruits called up via the ballot system.⁷⁹⁶ This pattern was repeated throughout ‘traditional’ ‘English’ regiments as some of the historical antipathies slowly receded. In March 1966, the Highlanders received their new colours from Commandant General Hiemstra,⁷⁹⁷ whom two decades earlier, its wartime members would have openly despised. Lt Gen Ian Gleeson recalled of this period;

during (the) time (when) the Union became a Republic and the royal titles and insignia of the former UDF were removed. This

⁷⁹⁴ Orpen, N., The Cape Town Highlanders 1885-1970, The Cape Town Highlanders History Committee, Cape Town, 1970, p.343.

⁷⁹⁵ Ibid., p.343.

⁷⁹⁶ Ibid., pp 344-349.

⁷⁹⁷ Ibid., p.346.

upset a certain group of officers...but on the whole the main group of senior officers got on with the job at hand.”⁷⁹⁸

This actually meant the continuance, indeed promotion of English South Africa’s military traditions within a republican context, directly assisted by SADF call-ups and support for CF regiments. The Second World War generation still occupied the senior ranks in these ‘traditional ‘ regiments, which grew as the broader English community implicitly identified its prosperity and ‘whiteness’ as being protected and included through government defence policies.

Support for the SADF through the (white) English press and prominent military writer: Neil Orpen

Interest in the English-language press during the 1960s towards local military affairs, reflects to an extent the broader interests of this community and journalists, but it also demonstrated a different tone to that which had been severely critical of the 1950s Defence Force’s ‘Afrikanerisation’. After initial English press hesitations about the republic, the growing national prosperity during the decade, which occurred alongside rumours of external threats, seemed to motivate journalistic support from Argus and South African Associated Press newspapers⁷⁹⁹ support of the SADF’s aim for “white defence unity”. For example, at the beginning of 1962, the Cape Times reporting on the first of 10 000 men balloted as part of the extended training for nine months, covering the

⁷⁹⁸ Lt Gen I. Gleeson, email correspondence, 28 October 2007. Gleeson was a senior SA Army officer by the 1980s; he had first attested in the SADF in 1953.

⁷⁹⁹ These comprised the two principal English-language press companies in the 1960s, which owned most of the local papers.

local trainees' experiences with a gushingly enthusiastic article promoting the 'unification' of the white language groups in this military context.

There are boys from Bishopscourt and boys from Woodstock; English-speaking youths from the cities and Afrikaans-speaking from the *platteland*, working and living together in the rugged, healthy atmosphere of the army camp.⁸⁰⁰

Regarding further extending military service to compulsory training for all white males of school-leaving age, the press projected the 'English' community as not unsupportive of government intentions. In October 1966 when the debate on increasing conscription was a topical discussion point, the Cape Times reported:

High-school youths of call-up age who were interviewed by the *Cape Times* yesterday endorsed the general agreement among industrialists, business men, school principals and defence experts that the proposed '100-per-cent call-up' was preferable to the present ballot system for the CF.⁸⁰¹

The newspaper quoted several prospective national servicemen, all of whom endorsed the new system with enthusiasm. Like most of the English papers, the Cape Times took a generally conservative view on defence matters, reflecting the political views of their middle-aged white readers and wary of differing with the government on defence issues.⁸⁰² At the end of 1965, the Cape Times ran two lengthy articles by the military historian Neil Orpen, who was also an influential 1960s military analyst read in government and SADF circles.⁸⁰³ Orpen was a professional journalist, educated at St

⁸⁰⁰ Cape Times, 20 January 1962, p.13.

⁸⁰¹ Cape Times, 1 October 1966, p.9.

⁸⁰² Telephonic discussion with Gerald Shaw, 6 April 2008, author of The Cape Times An Informal History, David Philip, Cape Town, 1999.

⁸⁰³ See Prinsloo, D., Stem uit die Wildernis 'n Biografie oor oud-pres P.W. Botha, p.63. Also in Commando for example, Orpen's book, Total Defence referred to later in this dissertation was reviewed in

John's College, Johannesburg and held an MA from Canterbury University. During more than forty years, Orpen published numerous books on South African military history, serving himself with the UDF in World War Two and being captured at Tobruk. After the war, Orpen pursued journalistic and CF careers, eventually commanding the Cape Field Artillery.⁸⁰⁴ He remained an active CF member till 1964, then turned his writing attention to republican military concerns. Orpen exemplified an English South African ex-serviceman who put World War Two white divisions aside and embraced the “white nationalism” of the 1960s.

The first of the long article referred to appeared under the heading: “If the Afro-Asians ever tried to invade South Africa”, where Orpen took a stridently anti-British tone in the wake of Rhodesian UDI two weeks earlier.⁸⁰⁵ Contemptuous of Britain's “molly-coddled young men in the increasingly effete atmosphere of so-called ‘affluent society’” (where military national service had recently ended), Orpen warned that the UK would be powerless to prevent black African nationalism turning militant against white Rhodesia and speculated that a ‘African military invasion’ of Rhodesia would inevitably draw in South African involvement, as it could be:

the prelude to the adoption of similar means against South Africa on the pretext of placing a United Nations ‘presence’ in South West Africa or, less hypocritically, for the cold-blooded smashing of White Government in the Republic.⁸⁰⁶

the October 1968 edition, while a short article covering the ideas therein was published in the September 1968 edition, p.15.

⁸⁰⁴ Orpen, N., and Martin, H.F., *Salute the Sappers, South African Forces: World War II*, Vol 8 – Part 2, p.367. (Biographical notes referring to Orpen on inside dust cover).

⁸⁰⁵ *Cape Times Weekend Magazine*, 27 November 1965, p. 2.

⁸⁰⁶ *Ibid.*

Orpen's article was a detailed continuation of a familiar contemporary theme: Perceived military threats against the republic. However, his article displayed a significant anti-British sentiment, alongside identification and empathy with the Boer struggle against British Imperialism, being compared with white South Africa, Rhodesia and the Portuguese territories, facing current African and world hostility. Such embracement of the defensive "white nationalism" of the republic endorsed Afrikaner nationalist perceptions of contemporary common white defence interests. As a war veteran and highly regarded military writer, Orpen's views were published at length in a newspaper well known for historically expressing even jingoistic sentiments and hostility towards NP racial policies. Orpen's opinions may not have represented all 'English' war veterans or CF members, but by 1965, he would most certainly have spoken on behalf of a good portion.

The second article was entitled: "S.A.'s Power to Resist," with the sub-heading: "It is safe to say that 2 million men would be required to occupy South Africa effectively. Even then determined resistance would make their job impossible."⁸⁰⁷ Orpen sketched his perceptions of the envisaged African invaders intentions. His emphasis was that (a common) white South African identity faced potential destruction.

Any military threat to South Africa will go far beyond 'one man, one vote'. It will be the prelude to an attempt to exterminate the South Africans as a distinctive nation determined to maintain civilised standards that are higher than anywhere else in Africa.⁸⁰⁸

⁸⁰⁷ Cape Times Weekend Magazine, 4 December 1965, p. 2.

⁸⁰⁸ Ibid.

Orpen's views of defence, prominently placed within the Cape Time, reflected white uncertainties and reinforced the government's 'backs to the wall' philosophy, demonstrating whites were aware of the military's growing prominence. As the SADF's role in 'white survival' permeated gradually into the white South African consciousness, it was also assisting in acclimatising whites towards consenting with government and Defence Force thinking. Thus, there occurred alongside the general reorganisation and rearming of the SADF, a growing white community acceptance of the military adopting an enlarged role in their lives on Afrikaner nationalist terms. Referring to defence priorities, Orpen could easily have been speaking directly on behalf of Hiemstra and Verwoerd:

South Africa's main danger lies in the possibility – that Britain has already lost control of events in Africa, with the initiative passing into the hands of irresponsible advocates of force, which itself will create the chaos (that can only be controlled by the application of an even greater force) sweeping southwards like a tidal wave to engulf the Republic. To prevent this, we need to prepare ourselves spiritually as much as physically. Determination is the key to our security.⁸⁰⁹

In 1967, Orpen collated articles he had written concerning his envisaged role of the SADF commandos within a book called Total Defence.⁸¹⁰ Here he described, rather implausibly, commando units forming a kind of irregular force fighting behind enemy lines. His historical inspiration was that of Boer guerrilla forces in 1900-02, supporting

⁸⁰⁹ Ibid.

⁸¹⁰ Orpen, N., Total Defence, Nationaleboekhandel, Cape Town, 1967.

conventional forces in the front-line in the event of an invasion by possibly UN and African military forces.

White English South African schools and the military

Some white English boys' schools had cadet detachments with origins dating back nearly a century and many of these, both private and public, existed in Cape Town, Johannesburg, Natal and the Eastern Cape; this was in contrast to there being relatively fewer Afrikaans-medium single sex schools. These older South African English educational institutions, still containing a lingering legacy of an original ethos, namely preparing young men to serve the British Empire. This educational cultural heritage component ensured that these schools were ideal training grounds for imbuing respect regarding strict military conformity and discipline, whether manifested in the classroom, sports field or cadets training sessions. John Lambert has written of white South African elite boys schools serving as "munitions factories" for providing young men for the forces during the First World War, being inculcated by their schools with patriotism for the British Empire. But it could certainly be argued that thirty to forty years later, despite the disappearance of the Empire, much of the same masculine educational dynamics remained in white English schools, which indirectly also served the culture of the republican SADF.⁸¹¹

⁸¹¹ See Lambert, J., 'Munitions Factories ... Turning Out a Constant Supply of Living Material': White South African Elite Boys' Schools and the First World War, South African Historical Journal 51 (2004).

South African boys' schools placed a high emphasis upon physical prowess, prefect leadership and traditions that reinforced a hierarchical pecking order based upon seniority, sporting feats and physical dominance. 1960s type school discipline for relatively minor issues was even inflicted upon recruits who fell foul of the criminal justice system. During the 1960 State of Emergency call-up, three CF soldiers, Edgar Sven Christensen (21), David John Cheek (20), and Gerald Edmund Gouvaras (18) were sentenced to whippings by a Durban Magistrate for smoking dagga, who remarked that they had made themselves "incapable of carrying out their duties during a serious situation in the country."⁸¹² Traditional male educational culture still co-existed with classroom teaching styles; that some private schools permitted broader thinking than what generally existed in state schools, particularly regarding subjects like History and English. Certainly there was significantly more chance of educational open-mindedness in English schools compared their Afrikaans equivalents. Such was the educational milieu from which numerous English-speaking boys emerged during the 1960s to begin their military training, where they also consciously or unconsciously anticipated formal military service from a long historical perspective. Their inevitable role of spending some time in the armed forces was part of a broader community's collective memory through fraternal association. War service had often constituted memorable milestones for fathers and grandfathers and more often than not occupied a respected place in family histories. While political controversies had raged within the Afrikaner community over service during both World Wars, many English South African families reflected back on

⁸¹² Natal Mercury, 24 May 1960.

members war service as time and sacrifices honourably spent.⁸¹³ It would have been common to see medals mounted on display in homes together with photographs of family members in uniform.

Therefore, boys in a conformist and conservative society would have been socialised to view military service to one's country as at least obligatory and often approved of. As significant numbers of 'English' during the 1960s were conscious of the military being part of family memory and folklore, they would have anticipated such a digression in their own lives, because military experiences had been significantly influential in the lives of their parents and grandparents. And it appeared to reinforce much of the traditional masculine norms that their schools reinforced. The 1960s white South African generation did not experience the same awareness of black organisations strongly opposing apartheid injustices. Young white soldiers in this period would therefore have been more likely to have accepted government explanations for military service: For example, understanding their call-ups during the 1960s because of 'black riots' threatening the white community or being trained to repel other external or internal 'threats' linked to 'communism'. The English-language press reinforced these views, for example, the Cape Argus in one post-Sharpeville article, implied that the men were favourably comprehending and accepting of their role. The newspaper quoted the Duke

⁸¹³ Certainly, such is the case in my own family where my maternal grandfather and paternal great-uncle were UDF veterans from the First World War. As a teacher at a prominent boys' school, I have long noted that my students are very conscious of their grandfathers' participation in the Second World War. No doubt, because their parents transmitted across this part of their families' history, ensuring it still being perceived as both significant and honourable. For such was how it had been relayed to the parents decades earlier by their own parents or family members and in many cases during the 1960s, given the chronology of my school students' ages.

of Edinburgh's Rifles⁸¹⁴ Commanding Officer stating that (within this 'English' regiment, whose members were hastily summoned for duty): "The morale of the men is very high indeed"⁸¹⁵

The UP and the SADF: The Official Opposition begins to lose 'English' political support

During 1960 to 1968, the UP made every effort to assure the government and white public that the parliamentary opposition was supportive of government initiatives to secure the country's defence. The UP attempted to challenge the government where its members perceived political advantages in highlighting strategic errors regarding the country becoming more isolated, or the government's apparent lack of foresight in planning for new equipment acquisitions. The reality by 1960 was that Verwoerd's political vision for South Africa, in terms of separate black and white states, was acquiring increasingly more ideological conviction amongst whites. Therefore local defence matters, set in the white public minds against a turbulent continent and perceived as linked to the Cold War ideological struggle, made it more difficult for the UP to always convince the white electorate that NP's management of defence was wanting. Rather than successfully use defence issues to chip away at the government's support, the UP found the converse happening, in that political debate on national security and threats, reduced its space to be critical. With the Erasmus controversies still fresh, the UP attempted through its MP war veterans to demonstrate government defence

⁸¹⁴ After the 1961 Republic, the regiment was renamed: "Cape Town Rifles".

⁸¹⁵ Cape Argus, 25 April 1960, p.1.

mismanagement. During one particularly heated debate in March 1960 there were UP accusations of favouritism in the SADF that resulted in the furious trading of insults, including accusations levelled of cowardice and fraud.⁸¹⁶ But in the changing African and international circumstances the UP faced a dilemma of opposing the NP on defence, without wanting to appear unrealistic regarding security to conservative and nervous white voters.

After the Sharpeville emergency and the SADF call-up, UP defence spokesman P. Moore mentioned during the debate on the Defence Vote that ballotee training was too short, while Progressive Party MP J. P. Cope displayed an extraordinary lack of grasp on South African defence realities in 1960, suggesting the government buy the navy an aircraft carrier.⁸¹⁷ By the mid-1960s, the UP had moved their defence focus to challenging the government on the SADF's efficiency, criticising alleged bad treatment of conscripts and challenging the military's cost-effectiveness. Fouché's appointment was watched closely by the UP and English-language press, who were still generally supportive of the parliamentary Official Opposition and both entities responded mostly positively to Fouché's white "rapprochement".

Press reports also demonstrate that journalists were hardly ignorant of the NP's intentions of using defence issues as political campaign material. The UP tried to counter this, by

⁸¹⁶ See debates on defence on 10 March 1960 involving particularly Brig H.B. Bronkhorst (UP) and G.H. Van Wyk (NP), Hansard, Union of South Africa House of Assembly Debates Third Session – Twelfth Parliament, Vol. 103 15 Jan to 4 March 1960, 3153-3158.

⁸¹⁷ The Cape Argus, 4 May 1960. p.7.

for example challenging the government over the country's lack of military alliances.⁸¹⁸ Opposition newspapers and the UP certainly agreed with government views that potential military threats must be counted with appropriate defence preparations. Verwoerd, Fouché and the Afrikaans press concurred with UP MP Sydney Waterson's views on "threats" to the Republic by March 1962, which included black states with 'communist' assistance "threatening invasion"; potential global war involving South Africa and international military intervention to end apartheid.⁸¹⁹ *Die Burger* remarked that Waterson's approach was in contrast to UP "progressive defeatism," which the NP elaborated as being not resolutely accepting that South Africa's 'enemies' wanted no less than black rule.⁸²⁰ Early 1962 was a period in which Afro-Asian or the UN 'invasion scenarios' prompted a range of articles and editorials. A *Cape Times* editorial urged Fouché to use defence in a racially inclusive way, thereby destroying any propaganda case created outside the country.⁸²¹ When the UN arms embargo was implemented from 1963, the UP fully supported the government and its leader Graaff used the same arguments as the NP, accusing the international organisation of hypocrisy.⁸²²

UP confusion between criticising the government, but also generally supporting them in defence issues was typified by their most senior member, Maj Piet Van der Byl, who had been an officer at the Defence Force's 1912 inception. In 1964, when the *Huisgenoot* ran an article by Van der Byl, an Afrikaner royalist and Smutsman, where he lamented how

⁸¹⁸ *Cape Times*, 13 March 1962, p.1.

⁸¹⁹ Barber, *South African Foreign Policy 1945-1970*, pp 190-191.

⁸²⁰ *Die Burger*, 27 March 1962, Editorial, "Eenheid in Verdediging", p.10.

⁸²¹ *Cape Times*, 20 March 1962, p. 10.

⁸²² *Die Burger*, 10 August 1963, "Graaff keur wapenboikot teen S.A. sterk af."

he was now harbouring doubts about his anti-republican stance a few years earlier. Van der Byl expressed outrage for British ‘ingratitude’ to the South African military contributions during 1939 to 1945 and in the Korean War, expressing confidence that the entire country would unite to defend itself against any future military attacks.⁸²³ Such would have perfectly suited NP propaganda goals aimed at rallying white unity across political party lines. Van der Byl’s frustration essentially personified the dilemma facing traditionally UP-supporting English-speaking whites feeling abandoned by the Britain and the Commonwealth, whose links to South Africa they had tried to justify and defend only a few years earlier. The article’s context was the British Labour Party anticipating not completing arms deliveries to South Africa:

Let me put it plainly: I am a strong opponent of the current government. I am foremost a South African and then a politician. In the Referendum I voted against South Africa becoming a republic, concerned that we would lose our bonds with the Commonwealth and everything associated with these. But I am now beginning to wonder if I was not indeed wrong, particularly when viewing the possibility that the leader of the British Labour Party, Harold Wilson could quite possibly become Prime Minister of Britain this year, and has already stated that he will not deliver any weapons to South Africa- (that we require) to protect our woman and children.⁸²⁴

Van der Byl concluded with a popularist tirade that reflected white South African beliefs that counter-belligerence was a justifiable response against the bellicose tones emanating from African leaders in the UN. Van der Byl rationale demonstrated how the UP’s defence perspective, like the government’s, would reinforce the white South African

⁸²³ Die Huisgenoot, 20 March 1964, p.15.

⁸²⁴ Ibid.

Also see Van der Byl, P., As the Shadows Lengthen, Howard Timmens, Cape Town, 1973, pp 131-132.

sense of injustice being perpetrated against their country, whom they protested had been historically loyal to worthy international causes:

South Africa was one of the few members of the UNO who kept to her commitments and despatched one of its best Air Force squadrons to Korea. And what of the Black states of Africa? They do not even pay their member contributions at the UNO, but are allowed and encouraged to single out and insult South Africa, a founder member (and who always promptly paid her membership contributions and gratuities.) Let us bring the political tin men of the world to their senses, if South Africa is attacked, every man and woman (except the few that sell themselves to the enemy), will stand together and fight—regardless of which government is in power.⁸²⁵

In the white political contest for votes, the UP had long shed the vast majority of its Afrikaans voters and when considering national defence issues, the NP had begun to draw conservative white support from both language groups. The UP sometimes differed in terms of strategies to bolster defences against perceived enemies, but *Die Burger* in March 1962, made the point that it was unlikely a post-1948 UP government would have made any difference regarding Afro-Asian hostility – a point that may well have reflected what UP supporters already knew.⁸²⁶ English South Africans interested in defence affairs maintained an outlook on international relations akin to the war against fascism, viewing the Cold War along similar lines as World War Two with ‘Western Civilisation’ facing a global totalitarian threat. This kind of paradigm could be adjusted with ease to fit the official government interpretation of understanding Soviet and Chinese communism directing the main military threats to the Republic. Such is what Orpen and other commentators proceeded to do during the 1960s.

⁸²⁵ *Die Huisgenoot*, 20 March 1964, p. 15.

⁸²⁶ *Die Burger*, 27 March 1962, Editorial. P.10.

Several newspaper correspondents wrote lengthy opinion pieces along these lines, but some were also distinctly critical of the UP Defence correspondents. T. Scott of the Cape Argus remarked in August 1964 that “The (recent) Parliamentary debate on the Defence Vote was pathetic and no UP speaker showed a real grasp of South Africa’s strategic and defence problems.”⁸²⁷ Such opinions, however subjective, also suggested that by the 1960s, in terms of conservative South Africa opinion, the UP had started to struggle to retain credibility as the political party with the best outlook for defence. The party assumed it could contribute informed debate on defence issues, partly because of the high number of its MPs with war experience. Even with its numbers of MPs reduced from 49 to 39 seats during the 1966 elections, the UP still boasted 26 parliamentarian ex-servicemen.⁸²⁸ They included a group who were not only war veterans, but also victims of the Erasmus’s political purging, including former SAAF Brigadiers Jimmy Durrant and Bronkhorst, Col de Vos and ex-army officers, Comdt Kingwell, Col J. D. Pretorius and Col Gideon Jacobs.⁸²⁹ This apparent wealth of military expertise was markedly lacking amongst government parliamentarians, resulting sometimes in both the UP and English-language press assuming the voters would respond favourably to the opposition barracking the government on defence issues.

⁸²⁷ UP Archives, Sir De Villiers Graaff Collection, 37, Defence, Correspondence 1951-77, document entitled “Thought on Defence Studies” dated 4 August 1964, p.1.

⁸²⁸ Information supplied telephonically, April 2006 by Ms Marie Coetzee, Curator of the UP archive at UNISA.

⁸²⁹ Boulter, F. C. Erasmus and the Politics of SA Defence, p. 224 and pp 228-229.

But defence issues and controversies of the 1940s and 1950s were not necessarily foremost in the voters' minds during the 1960s. Despite some individual misgivings, the UP had supported government security legislation in the 1960s in the wake of *Pogo* attacks at Paarl and Bashee River (1962-63), besides the earlier MK and ARM sabotage attacks and the Johannesburg station bomb of mid-1964. Issues related to potential "external invasions" mentioned in the press, blended into the general perceptions of white insecurity, which was further enhanced by the grim accounts from Congo of inter-racial violence. UP spokespersons acknowledged the unsettled times and were supportive of the hard-line justice minister Vorster, who during April 1963 defended the new security bill in the Senate. It including legislation allowing for anybody suspected of sabotage or any offence under the Suppression of Communism or Unlawful Organisations Acts to be summarily detained by the state for up to ninety days at a time. MP Pilkington-Jordan, who was also a prominent UP defence spokesman, described how Vorster had remained courteous, patient and objective throughout the debate and despite wielding enormous powers had abused none of them. "This is a proud claim that I do not only concede unhesitatingly, but gladly".⁸³⁰ However accurate this description may have been regarding Vorster's parliamentary demeanour, detainee accounts starkly refute the latter point in terms of physical violence meted out to those held by security police.⁸³¹ Pilkington-Jordan's urbane and complimentary assessment of Vorster demonstrated just how close the NP and UP had drawn on white security issues; within twenty years a former senior UDF member who had fought against Nazism, referred so complementarily

⁸³⁰ D'Oliveira, J., *Vorster-The Man*, 1977, p. 143.

⁸³¹ See Sachs, A., *The Jail Diary of Albie Sachs*, Paladin Books, particularly his postscript on the Ninety Day Acts.

to a former *Ossewabrandwag* general. The Cape Times while acknowledging that Fouché was apparently trying to move away from the (white) political polarisation over defence affairs that had characterised the Erasmus period, the newspaper still accused the government of ignoring the opposition's 'expertise'.⁸³² In the spirit of drawing both language groups behind the Republic, *Die Burger* affirmed that the "Opposition men should be more closely involved in confidential discussions and planning (on defence)".⁸³³ But NP suspicions and their distancing of the party from the UP remained and they continued often to be not forthcoming to their parliamentary opponents regarding defence matters. UP defence analyst, J.R. Bowring makes this clear in a document dated 27 July 1964:

On the assumption that some information is better than none the White Paper reluctantly issued on Defence by the Defence Minister in consequence of United Party pressure may be regarded as a step forward.⁸³⁴

As a shrewd 'politician' Hiemstra perceived that the UP were gradually losing voter loyalties, in contrast to the 1950s when it still gained some limited mileage within its English supporters over NP wartime neutrality and Erasmus's SADF transformation.⁸³⁵ Afrikaner nationalist historian C.F.J. Muller explains that one of the hidden political purposes of establishing a Republic was the consolidation amongst white South Africans of pro-republicans and anti-republicans into pro-Apartheid and anti-apartheid groupings.

⁸³² Cape Times, 13 March 1962, Editorial, p.10.

⁸³³ Die Burger, 15 March 1962, Editorial, p. 12.

⁸³⁴ "Thoughts on Defence Studies" written by J.R. Bowring, 37, Defence, Sir De Villiers Graaff Collection, UP Archives, UNISA.

⁸³⁵ See Hiemstra's comments about UP MP Brig Bronkhurst in Die Wilde Haf, p. 303.

This ensured what Verwoerd assumed would be an enhancement of white security⁸³⁶ and by the 1966 general election, the NP started to draw part of the white English vote.⁸³⁷ This not only marked the UP's failure to retain all its most dependable voters, but it was also a clear rejection of the opposition's attempts during the 1960s to outbid the NP in defence issues. The 1966 election results demonstrated that the end was in sight for the UP by their winning only 39 out of 166 seats and barely forty percent of the votes, compared with the slender majority just achieved by the republicans in the referendum six years previously. Despite the impressive military background of many UP MPs, even the white English electorate with its scores of war veterans were no longer a guaranteed voter support bloc for the party, despite the UP taking defence issues exceptionally seriously and its attempted cooperation with Fouché.

White English-speaking Natal 1960-61: Last public manifestations of an English South African identity coupled to historic military experience

During the early 1960s significant portions of the white Natal English community demonstrated something of a separate identity in terms of protest against both the republic and Afrikaner government, echoing something of the idealism and enthusiasm of the Torch Commando activities a few years previously. But an even more discernable feature was how quickly this final 'white English protest' containing a military symbolic form dissipated after republic, never to re-emerge in the same form.

⁸³⁶ Muller, C.F.J. Five Hundred Years A History of South Africa, Academica, Pretoria, 1969, Third Revised Edition, First Impression, 1981, p. 508.

⁸³⁷ Giliomee, The Afrikaners, p. 536.

Afrikaner perceptions of English-speaking whites shortly after the republican referendum contribute to our insight into how previous military service and patriotism remained an integral part of English South African culture. During February and March 1961, the Afrikaans magazine *Huisgenoot* ran a three part article on a journalist's (P.C. Du Plessis) study entitled "Who or what is a Natalian?"⁸³⁸ There is no doubt that *Huisgenoot's* large circulation would have been influential in contributing to moulding some Afrikaner opinions. This detailed and well-illustrated series opened with a large photograph of Natal ex-servicemen, including one holding a large Union Jack, attending an 11 November 1960 Armistice Day commemoration, accompanied by other banner-wielding MOTHS 'Shellhole' members, recalling battle names and jargon that reflected World War experiences:

Special cheering came in turn for this group with the Union Jack. The Union Jack has recently become, like many times in the past, a symbol of some Natalians resistance against possible Afrikaner domination.⁸³⁹

This involvement by Natal MOTHS in political campaigns is a component that Neil Roos's study misses, with his contention that the organisation by the early 1960s was only acquiescent and apathetic regarding the political order. In fact amongst English South Africans in Natal, there were strident, albeit brief, mass objections to the Republic, directly involving the MOTHS and their ex-servicemen. Besides the tiny handful of war veterans who assisted the MK sabotage campaign⁸⁴⁰ there were also MOTHS that continued their wartime idealism, albeit in this final sectional secessionist manner, This

⁸³⁸ *Die Huisgenoot*, 17 February, 24 February and 3 March 1961.

⁸³⁹ *Ibid.*, 17 February 1961, p.6.

⁸⁴⁰ Roos, *Ordinary Springboks*, pp 173-177.

detail negates Roos's assertion: "the Order kept its distance from party politics and vigorously affirmed the 'apolitical' service identity of white veterans".⁸⁴¹ The mass involvement of Natal ex-servicemen was also related to the remaining afterglow from the extent to which English-speaking Natal had experienced the imperial connection during World War II.⁸⁴²

Natal war veterans displayed even more extreme 'jingoistic' fervour by turning out in their hundreds during the February 1960 Ladysmith Relief 50th anniversary commemorations, specifically because Fouché denied the inclusion of SADF participation.⁸⁴³ At certain points of friction, English/ Afrikaner divisions became public, particularly when sectional passions were aroused within a military context. British Empire symbolism in 1960 retained some lingering meaning amongst some Natal white English ex-servicemen. Although the full implications of the Wind of Change Speech for Natal and English South Africa were not yet fully comprehended by nearly a thousand ex-servicemen and women, who in defiance of the Town Council decision not to either fly the Union Jack nor play the British National Anthem during the commemorations, marched through the streets of Ladysmith, Natal waving Union Jacks and singing 'God Save the Queen',⁸⁴⁴

⁸⁴¹ Ibid., p. 188.

⁸⁴² Lambert, J., 'Their Finest Hour' English-speaking South Africans and World War II, unpublished paper, 2007, p. 17, citing from P. Thompson, The British Civic Culture of Natal South Africa 1902-1961, (Howick, Brevitas, 1999), p 64.

⁸⁴³ See Natal Mercury, 1 March 1960, p.11.

⁸⁴⁴ Cape Argus, 29 February 1960, p.3, commented: "War veterans arrived from different parts of Natal, "some at only one hour's notice" to express their displeasure at the government refusing at the last minute to allow SADF participation in the commemorations". Also see Thompson, P.S., The British Civic Culture of Natal South Africa, Howick, Brevitas, 1999, pp 73-74.

Huisgenoot acknowledged the powerful antipathy felt by English-speaking white Natalians for the coming republic, as this attitude was presented by Natal politicians, newspapers, public meetings, separatist organisations and military symbolism. Another photograph shows a crowd of Natal ex-servicemen and Natal Succession supporters around the Durban City Hall with a man carried shoulder-high holding a placard bearing a swastika, under which is boldly written ‘Natal Says No’.⁸⁴⁵ Some of the other examples of paramilitary jingoism in Natal during this period suggest extraordinary eccentricity, but help us to comprehend the depth of community opinions. The *Natal Mercury* reported:

A Durban ex-soldier, Mr Leslie Roberts,is looking for men with pluck and initiative who are interested in restoring British pageantry to the life of Natal and who are prepared to undertake ceremonial duties at the weekends and on special occasions.....the Legion of Frontiersmen....is a Commonwealth organization with between 50 000 and 60 000 members in Britain, Canada, Australia and New Zealand”. (uniformed with a dark blue tunic, khaki riding breeches, riding boots and scout-type hat- intended to preserve British traditions).⁸⁴⁶

English Natal emphatically rejected the republic at the ballot box and during the May 1961 celebrations,⁸⁴⁷ but *Huisgenoot* debunked any conception that this community was still really ‘British’ in loyalty and identity. The publication’s study is not without some pertinent insights explaining English Natalians’ attitudes opposing republic and their grappling with a multiple sense of identity as being South African, Natalian, ‘English’

⁸⁴⁵ *Die Huisgenoot*, 17 February 1961, p.7.

⁸⁴⁶ *Natal Mercury*, 5 March 1960, p. 1.

⁸⁴⁷ See Thompson, P.S., *The British Civic Culture of Natal South Africa*, (Howick, Brevitas, 1999), pp 76-78.

and white. The second and third articles focused upon white Natalian fears of overwhelming Zulu demographics, their general hostility towards Indians and the long-standing political conservatism of the province's British-descended inhabitants.⁸⁴⁸

Huisgenoot specifically mentioned the January 1960 violence at Cato Manor, where nine white policemen had been murdered. This located the Natal 'English' directly in the contemporary national political context of racial uncertainty and violence, a consequence according to the writer, of Cato Manor being the "breeding ground of mischief since the streaming in of natives to Durban during the war years". Because white Natalians were "surrounded by Bantus and Indians" they were "perhaps more aware of the tensions between races than their fellow citizens in other cities of the Union."⁸⁴⁹

By integrating the common white fears of racial conflict and domination, the article implicitly called for some understanding by Afrikaners of the Natal 'English' 'eccentricity' regarding their 'war-orientated' political posturing. Afrikaner readers were introduced to the connection between English South Africans' strong consciousness of their war service, so earnestly annually commemorated as 'honourably performed'. The Huisgenoot analysis encouraged their readers to focus upon common white political concerns touching both Afrikaner and English.

It was the big day of the year for them-'The day of the march' when they gather from all quarters of Durban to bring homage to their fallen comrades at the Cenotaph in front of the City Hall. A day when medals and decorations are brought out of storage and displayed proudly on the chest...in their hearts they are once again soldiers, and years of training in the war has left its impact

⁸⁴⁸ Die Huisgenoot, 24 February and 3 March 1961; pp 14-19 and pp 14-17.

⁸⁴⁹ Ibid, 24 February 1961, p.16.

upon them. This is another aspect of Natal that people need to understand...this emotional sense of bond by virtually the entire province to the things that so many of its inhabitants fought for in two World Wars...nowhere have I been made more aware of the estrangement that the Second World War brought between the two white nationalisms (sic) as in Natal. In other provinces there are signs that the estrangement is being bridged. But in Natal, the most unilingual province in the country, fed by newspapers that all follow nearly the same political direction, the Englishman still thinks on Afrikaners as ‘Hitler-supporters’, Quislings, Nazis. The idiom of a war twenty years ago has become the idiom whereby the Natalian- in a greater degree than his kindred spirits in the rest of the Union- continues today his political struggle.⁸⁵⁰

The magazine was also trying to influence its readers in understanding their white English countrymen’s motives and fears. Namely that like Afrikaners, the Natal English were also insecure, beleaguered and outnumbered South African whites facing the long-term political realities of a black demographic majority. Within the province during 1960, there had on occasion been violent political exchanges between the two white communities. Republican feelings ran equally high amongst Afrikaners, as a reminiscing letter quoted below vividly shows and such violent hostility towards the ‘English’ amongst nationalist crowds at public meetings needed tempering in order for the government to achieve long-term political objectives:

When a meeting was held in Vryheid, the sparks really began to fly. Avid Afrikaner republicans refused to allow the meeting to start and, armed with bicycle chains and knuckle-dusters, laid into the English home-rulers with a vengeance.⁸⁵¹

One Durban grouping calling itself the “Horticultural Society” spoke of armed resistance after “Natal succession”; “holding the line of the Drakensberg against republican troops”,

⁸⁵⁰ Die Huisgenoot, 17 February 1961, p.7, 3 March 1961, p.17.

⁸⁵¹ Letter by D.M.R. Lewis of Lidgetton published in The Witness, 29 November 2005, p.11.

while ex-servicemen were being publicly called upon to “march again”. The Natal UP leader Douglas Mitchell was swept along with the hysteria, much to party national leader De Villiers Graaff’s embarrassment. Mitchell went as far as approaching Verwoerd, the British High Commissioner and Sir Roy Welensky to discuss possibilities of Natal joining the Federation of Rhodesia and Nyasaland.⁸⁵² But the post-republic period also saw a rapid waning of such emotions and the referendum issues, with some English South Africans shifted their political positions more quickly than they might have ever imagined. An illustration of this is provided by the actions of a schoolmaster at Kearsney College in Durban. After South Africa’s departure from the British Commonwealth, he reacted by wearing his World War Two uniform during an emotional address to the school boys on their ‘English heritage’ and the ‘betrayal’ of the republican declaration. Several years later, the same individual went on to serve the government in various capacities, including as Vice-Chairman on the SABC.⁸⁵³

White English-Speaking South Africans and war veterans within the SA Army Permanent Force

Since the beginning of his cabinet tenure, Fouché had tried to reassure the ‘English’ that his explicit policy would be promoting English/Afrikaans cooperation in defence issues. Fouché was sometimes caught between two political constituencies, but an important test of his determination in achieving the above goal was whether there would be a discernible reversal of favouritism in PF promotions and appointments. The considerably

⁸⁵² Graaff, D., Div Looks Back The Memoirs of Sir De Villiers Graaff, pp 173-174.

⁸⁵³ Randall, P. Little Englands on the Veld, p.111.

smaller navy and air force were different in their PF composition regarding the language groups, when compared to the army, with both the former services still containing significant numbers of English-speaking members. Yet despite overwhelming Afrikaner numerical dominance, there were English-speaking army members who also pursued successful senior careers during the 1960s. When recalling English-speaking colleagues from the era, Lt Gen Ian Gleeson, provided numerous names who had held significant ranks and important responsibilities;⁸⁵⁴ a response that was endorsed by Lt Gen Jack Dutton.⁸⁵⁵

No statistical documentation was located to precisely quantify English-speaking PF army members. It appears that within the PF, the navy were roughly fifty-fifty by the end of the 1960s; the army overwhelming Afrikaans, but with scattered English-speaking members in some key positions, while one study has shown there was increased English-speaking air force recruitment during the second part of the 1960s.⁸⁵⁶ There is no doubt that during the 1960s a core of professional soldiers, sailors and airmen remained in the SADF despite the divisions from the Erasmus years, many of whom were World War Two veterans. Such a deduction is also reasonably well verified by promotion lists, when studied according to surnames and brief descriptions of individual service records. It is contended here, that these men also played a significant role in the SADF's reinvigoration. Gleeson who joined the army in 1953, was a captain by 1960 and

⁸⁵⁴ Lt Gen I. Gleeson, correspondence - 18 July 2006; 28 & 31 October 2007

⁸⁵⁵ Lt Gen J. Dutton, correspondence – 29 January 2007. Something of Lieutenant-General Jack Dutton's career is outlined further within this chapter.

⁸⁵⁶ See Van den Bos, W.H., Investigation into resignations of officers from the South African Air Force (Perm. Force) during the period 1946-71, Master of Arts dissertation, UNISA, 1978, p.57. Van den Bos asserts by 1966 Afrikaans officers in the SAAF outnumbered their English counter-parts by three to one.

promoted to major in 1962, related that between the mid-1950s into the 1960s, “a strong group of World War Two veterans” in both the PF and CF, from both English and Afrikaans backgrounds, made up a high percentage of the command and training structure of the UDF/SADF. Despite the significant numbers of personnel who left because of the Erasmus’s interferences, Gleeson believed the majority of those who remained should receive credit for “helping to lay the foundation for a professional Defence Force that emerged in the Fouché era and thereafter.”⁸⁵⁷

Brig Gen McGill Alexander concurred that scores of World War Two veterans, including many English-speakers, were in the army during our period, although he described them as “scattered”.⁸⁵⁸ Gleeson recalled that North Africa and Italian campaign veterans were employed as officer instructors at the Artillery and Armour School, besides the other main training units at Potchefstroom and Bloemfontein and the higher training establishments such as the Military College. He remarked that: “Their knowledge and professional approach was of great value to us as young officers”⁸⁵⁹ An examination of articles in 1960s Commando editions also suggests that ‘English’ members of the PF were a fairly significant SADF minority and that World War Two veterans were comparatively common. Commando regularly published accounts describing SADF members war service. A typical example being when a prominent veteran, Col P.S. De Lange MC, was introduced within the January 1961 edition as being on the SA Military College staff. His Military Cross had been awarded after participation in the Sidi Rezegh

⁸⁵⁷ Lt Gen I. Gleeson: Email correspondence 28 October 2007.

⁸⁵⁸ Telephonic discussion with Brig Gen M. Alexander, 20 December 2007 and 15 July 2008.

⁸⁵⁹ Lt Gen I. Gleeson: Email correspondence 28 and 31 October 2007.

battle.⁸⁶⁰ The same edition lists within the “Annual Promotions” article, significant numbers of officers with English-surnames besides those from both language backgrounds holding British Commonwealth war decorations, particularly MCs, DSOs, DFCs and OBEs.⁸⁶¹

Fouché had publicly insisted that he would only ratify promotions considered without political favouritism and just after the ‘invasion scare’ stories of March 1962, the Cape Times reported the minister approving one hundred and thirty SADF promotions, citing these were: “warmly received in the Defence Force. Many English-speaking officers are involved”.⁸⁶² In line with the declarations made by Fouché, the Cape Argus editorial remarked: “the reason given is the expansion of the Defence Force and the basis for selecting individuals for promotion is the new policy of merit and service”.⁸⁶³ This quotation endorses the point made that the English-language press responded to its white readers’ interest in the involvement of their community in the SADF. There is also no doubt that Fouché was anxious to maintain the momentum of this change in perception. At a regimental dinner in Bloemfontein during September 1962, he implicitly criticised his predecessor for allowing political opinion to influence SADF appointments and reiterated that this practice had been discontinued.

⁸⁶⁰ One of the most famous engagements involving the 5th South African Brigade’s gallant stand against the German Afrika Korps on 23 November 1941. See Brown, J.A., Retreat to Victory A Springboks Diary in North Africa: Gazala to El Alamein 1942, Ashanti Publishing, Johannesburg, 1991, pp 34-38 for a short account.

⁸⁶¹ Commando, January 1961, pp 37-39 and 50-58.

⁸⁶² The Cape Times, 5 April 1962, “9 Colonels amongst Defence Force’s 130 promotions.” A range of names and photographs were provided by the article, p.1.

⁸⁶³ The Cape Argus, 9 April 1962, editorial, p.10.

I am a nationalist and I am a minister in the national government. But I will consider my officers in the Defence Force only on merit. This is my firm policy. I have the greatest faith in the South African army. There will be difference of opinion amongst my officers, naturally on policies and the way they are carried out. But we have built mutual trust which has led to higher morale in the army than ever before.⁸⁶⁴

Concerning World War Two veterans and English-speakers being prominent in SADF training during the early 1960s, Gleeson further elaborated upon prominent appointments. At the SA Military College, two prominent soldiers Majors Doug Campbell and Bill Barends, who both held MCs from the Italian campaign,⁸⁶⁵ taught tactics to students on promotion courses. Gleeson also recalled Comdt Ronnie McWilliam who held an OBE and commanded 4 Field Training Regiment of the SA Artillery in Potchefstroom, while Comdt Robbertse held a DSO and was a senior staff instructor on the staff duties course, while Col Jannie Burger⁸⁶⁶ (OBE) was later commander of the College.⁸⁶⁷ Orpen refers specifically to Burger as “one of the most outstanding young professional artillery officers in the UDF, who had already received the MBE for his services in the desert fighting in 1942”. Many other names were deduced from a number of sources, referring to English-speaking army officers at ranks from major upwards. Magnus Malan who was identified in late the 1950s as a soldier of both promise and sound nationalist background, progressed meteorically through the 1960s, attaining positions clearly significant at the time, but alongside both war veterans and other aspiring officers who had joined the PF

⁸⁶⁴ Boulter, F. C. Erasmus and the Politics SA Defence, p.210, quoting from the UK Public Record Office. “British Defence Liaison Staff Report for the Period – 1 July to 30 September 1962”, FO 371/161923.

⁸⁶⁵ Orpen, N., Victory in Italy, South African Forces World War II (Vol. 5) Purnell And Sons (S.A.) PTY. LTD., Cape Town, 1975, p.226, 236. 280.

⁸⁶⁶ Orpen, N., Victory in Italy, See p. 169, (Commando reports Burger held an MBE).

⁸⁶⁷ Lt Gen I. Gleeson: Email correspondence 28 and 31 October 2007.

in the post-war years. After a sort stint as second in command of the Military Academy, Malan during August 1960 attended the Army's Command and Staff Course in Pretoria along with Constand Viljoen who was a future SADF Chief and Bob Rogers a future SAAF Chief. By late 1961, Malan worked at the Directorate of Planning and Operations alongside Jannie Burger who impressed Malan immensely,⁸⁶⁸ besides Combat Gen Piet Jacobs and later Combat Gen Nic Bierman. All of these officers barring Malan and Viljoen were war veterans. Brig Jannie Burger, whom Malan suggested would have been a future Army Chief, died suddenly, aged 47, from a heart attack during the SADF's massive 31 May 1966 parade celebrating the Republic's 5th Anniversary.⁸⁶⁹

The appointments at army training establishments of war veterans, many of whom were English-speaking, shows this grouping were valued and utilized in terms of their professionalism and experiences. Gleeson remarked that when he arrived at the College in 1960, he felt the senior officers' demonstrated professionalism:

(Within) that important military institution (it was) very encouraging. They left me with the positive impression of getting on with the job rather than allowing a bad political period to unduly frustrate the important task of training a new post-war Defence Force⁸⁷⁰

Gleeson referred to how the appointment of a civil servant from another department in 1960 as officer commanding the prestigious Military College, turned out to be a passing phase, where shortly afterwards a professional officer replaced him. Gleeson recalled this

⁸⁶⁸ Malan, M., My Life with the SA Defence Force, Protea Book House, 2006, Pretoria, 38-40 and

⁸⁶⁹ Interview with Gen M. Malan, 10 August 2007. See Cape Times, 1 June 1966, p.3, "Vast crowd mourns death of Brigadier".

⁸⁷⁰ Lt Gen I. Gleeson: Email correspondence 28 and 31 October 2007.

clearly political appointment being a “civil servant” commander, who had been a part time soldier from the CF or Commandos but transferred from a civilian department. The new appointee apparently had neither the military background nor knowledge for such a prestigious post as Military College Head: “A futile attempt on the part of somebody higher up to make a political move which did not work”.⁸⁷¹ By late 1963, another Italian campaign veteran, the English-speaking Brigadier W.R. Van der Riet MC was the commander of the College.⁸⁷² Dawid Grobbelaar explained that his Commandant General father made a number of personnel changes where he brought in CF and English-speakers, although he would have had to trade off using Afrikaner nationalists and Broederbond members in order to allow Fouché, the politician, to balance “merit” appointments with those still politically inspired.⁸⁷³

Gleeson’s and others accounts indicate that neither the World War Two veterans nor English-speakers were pointedly marginalized within the SADF during the 1960s and that there was not quite as complete a purge in the Defence Force during the 1950s as Boulter and others have intimated. During the Fouché period, the SADF became a higher priority government department because of 1960s government security needs perceptions. The Defence Force remained another means by which NP aspirations of promoting white unity could be advanced, but there was no intention or likelihood of Afrikaner nationalist control over the armed forces being relinquished. Hiemstra’s path to the top remained assured, as were those of some of his “own men” like Lt Gen Willem Louw (See pp 133-

⁸⁷¹ Lt Gen I. Gleeson: Email correspondence 28 and 31 October 2007.

⁸⁷² See photograph in Die Huisgenoot, 11 October 1963, p.8. Also see a number of references to Van der Riet in Orpen, N., Victory in Italy, South African Forces World War II (Vol. 5), Cape Town, 1975.

⁸⁷³ Interview with Dawid Grobbelaar, 21 December 2006.

134 of chapter two). However, a few other senior Afrikaner officers who had been appointed purely on political considerations were replaced, like for example Maj Gen Sybrand Engelbrecht who in 1963 was removed as Chief of the Army, to be replaced by Maj Gen Piet Jacobs.

The Afrikaans language and culture still received regular affirmation in a military context through Commando. Although never mentioning the NP by name, the publication also ensured slavish adherence to party political opinions on defence issues, where readers were exposed to a purely republican viewpoint. English-speaking SADF members could not have commented publicly upon such issues without compromising their own careers. While in the British military tradition it was expected that politics were not discussed by officers in uniform, a kind of converse applied in the SADF, whereby it was implicitly understood that the NP government was ‘speaking’ for both language groups. “Republicanism” represented a de facto supposedly inclusive South African patriotism, representing a form of ‘political correctness’ which underpinned 1960s SADF culture and its official stance regarding its role. White English-speakers serving in the military and particularly those with career ambitions in the PF, would have ensured a wide distance from controversial political discussion.⁸⁷⁴ SADF members who were ‘English’ and those with World War Two experience, did not challenge Afrikaner nationalism because of these issues in themselves. Rather their expertise was required and utilized, in contrast to some events during the 1950s, provided there was no shifting away from an official

⁸⁷⁴ Such is what clearly transpired from my interviews with English-speaking SADF officers who during the early 1960s were building their military careers.

‘professional’ stance whereby they did or said nothing that might be perceived as challenging government viewpoints.

‘English’ mavericks within the PF were watched, for example, as a middle-ranking navy officer during the early 1960s, Rear Adm Max Kramer found himself the object of bizarre political observation. Sometime during 1965 Kramer was summoned by Hiemstra who stated that he wanted to be sure that he (Kramer) was “loyal”. Somebody, Kramer suspected one of the warrant-officers who also lived in the Da Gama Park naval suburb in the south Cape Peninsula had reported that Kramer as being an associate of a ‘Mrs Knight’. She was apparently a known ‘liberal’, where in fact Kramer only knew of her through their jointly serving on the Fish Hoek Primary School PTA. Another inference of state paranoia was evidenced by the presence of an American diplomat’s vehicle outside Kramer’s house. This resulted in some vaguely construed official concern that Kramer was consorting with potentially seditious foreigners, when he was actually trying to build diplomatic bridges.⁸⁷⁵

Afrikaner *Broederbond* recruitment continued steadily within the SADF during the 1960s, mostly at middle ranking level.⁸⁷⁶ According to Col Jan Breytenbach, lower and middle ranking officer members of the Broederbond would be canvassed regarding SADF senior appointments, before such were ratified by the defence minister. This process would exclude the nomination of individuals for promotion, whose opinions,

⁸⁷⁵ Interview with Rear Adm M. Kramer, 5 July 2007.

⁸⁷⁶ Such is confirmed by an examination of the list of members in Wilkins, I. & Strydom, *The Super-Afrikaners*, 1978, where the authors acknowledge their list containing around sixty percent of the Broederbond’s members, but not those recruited before 1962.

according to *Broederbond* members, clashed with Afrikaner nationalist interests.⁸⁷⁷ Lt Gen Gleeson related that during 1967 when Willem Louw was making rapid career progress under Hiemstra towards Chief of the Army, the government were still looking for *Broederbond* members for senior appointments, which for “us at the lower levels this was something to be seen as a negative”.⁸⁷⁸ Under P.W. Botha the Fouché ‘equality policy’ in officer appointments continued, although by the end of the 1960s to the mid-1970s, the remaining war veterans retired or according to Brig Gen McGill Alexander, were eased out in favor of a new generation of officers trained in the late 1950s and early 60s.⁸⁷⁹

Lieutenant General C. A. (“Pops”) Fraser

One of the most senior English-speaking SADF soldiers was Charles A. (Pops) Fraser who retired in the 1970s as a Lieutenant General and as mentioned earlier, from 1967 held the senior position of Joint Combat Forces Chief (JCF) and before that Chief of the Army.⁸⁸⁰ Fraser served in the artillery during World War Two in both the North African and Italian campaigns. Along with that of Lt Gen W. R Van der Riet, Fraser’s career reached the most senior level of any English-speaking army officers after 1948. Fraser’s appointment JCF Chief (with English-speaker Brig Bill Barends as his second in command) in 1967 was significant for this was the SADF central organisational combat

⁸⁷⁷ Telephonic interview with Col. J. Breytenbach, 24 June 2008.

⁸⁷⁸ Email correspondence with Lt Gen I. Gleeson, 31 October 2007.

⁸⁷⁹ Telephonic interview, Brig Gen M. Alexander, 15 July 2008.

⁸⁸⁰ General Fraser passed away many years ago. I have been unable to trace any family.

component, drawn from different corps in the event of a conventional threat.⁸⁸¹ Fraser was considered an expert on revolutionary warfare and became particularly influential within the SADF in this regard during 1967-68.⁸⁸²

Maj Gen Phil Pretorius thought defence ministers Fouché and P.W. Botha had both viewed Fraser as ‘representative’ of the ‘English fraternity’ and they took his views carefully into consideration: For example, Fraser often passed books on topical defence issues across to them for study. Pretorius experienced Fraser as a skilled diplomat, although concurred with Lt Gen Jack Dutton that the JCF concept as a sort of task force to deal with a conventional threat, was too unwieldy from a command point of view.⁸⁸³

Gen Magnus Malan recalled Fraser as highly competent and he believed that it was his writing that during the late 1960s that shifted SADF senior officers’ mindsets away from conventional warfare towards revolutionary/counter-insurgency warfare.⁸⁸⁴ Maj Gen Dunbar Moodie also considered Fraser an outstanding diplomat, but thought him a rather mediocre soldier whose accession to the highest ranks Moodie considered a mystery.⁸⁸⁵

⁸⁸¹ Telephone interview with Lt Gen J. Dutton, 1 July 2006.

⁸⁸² See Geldenhuys, *A General’s Story*, Jeppestown, 1995, p.82. Gen Geldenhuy’s contemporary Lt Gen Gleeson also confirmed the importance of Fraser’s publication in its day: Telephonic interview with Lt Gen I. Gleeson, 2 July 2006.

⁸⁸³ Interview with Maj Gen P. Pretorius, 25 June 2007 and telephone interview with Lt Gen J. Dutton, 28 January 2007.

⁸⁸⁴ Interview with Gen M. Malan, 10 August 2007. Also note Annette Seegers brief comments on Fraser in *The Military in the Making of Modern South Africa*, p. 133, where she comments upon Fraser organising a lecture series on Strategic Studies at the SADF Staff College in 1968 after spending time as a military attaché in France. Fraser introduced SADF officers including then Brig Magus Malan to French strategist André Beaufre’s concepts which conflated the state and national interests. Besides this exception, Seegers who used few primary sources in her study makes almost no mention of individual SADF officers during the 1960s.

⁸⁸⁵ Interview with Maj Gen D. Moodie, 2 January 2007.

Brig Gen Alexander disagreed with such an assessment and suggested that Fraser as JCF Chief would have done meticulous planning for operations during the 1960s. He concurred that Fraser's theoretical contribution was decisive regarding to changes to SADF strategy towards counter-insurgency planning and training.⁸⁸⁶ Vice Adm Martin Trainor⁸⁸⁷ felt that Fraser was a highly competent officer whose writings had a significant impression upon Botha and other senior SADF officers. Col Jan Breytenbach had a high regard for Fraser, saying that he would have been the ideal Commandant General and may well have introduced black SADF combat troops earlier than Breytenbach did himself in 1976. But the Commandant General's position was one of significant political importance during the mid-1960s and Hiemstra was the long intended incumbent.⁸⁸⁸

Lieutenant General Jack Dutton

Dutton who retired as Chief of Army Staff in the early 1980s had been seconded to the British army during the Korean War, making him one of the very few SADF PF army officers gaining combat experience during the 1950s. Dutton was a determined professional who despite 1950s political controversies in the UDF/SADF had clearly decided to make a success of his military career. Dutton confirmed that the years post-1955 were particularly difficult, in that he remained a captain for a long period. Fearing his chances of advancement were prejudiced, he had considered leaving the military during the 1950s but decided against it. However, Fouché's arrival as defence minister in

⁸⁸⁶ Telephonic interview, Brig Gen M. Alexander, 20 December 2007.

⁸⁸⁷ Telephonic interview, Vice Adm M. Trainor, 2 July 2007.

⁸⁸⁸ Telephonic interview, Col Jan Breytenbach, 26 June 2008.

1960 resulted in what he in retrospect perceived as entirely fair treatment between English and Afrikaans officers in terms of their prospects and opportunities. During the 1960s Dutton commanded various units. He acknowledged that he always adopted an explicitly apolitical stance and concentrated entirely upon his work, recalling Hiemstra and Grobbelaar as “straight up and down” men who were personally supportive of him. Dutton was clearly the ideal kind of soldier that the government and Hiemstra wanted of English-speakers – namely competent and entirely professional. Dutton recalled the AKVV activities but stated that he never had any interest in such things.⁸⁸⁹ Although a minority in the army, the presence and success of English-speaking officers bolstered government and Defence Force statements that members of the two language groups in the SADF worked well together.

Aspects of English-speaking South African military heritage revived by the SADF

Commando editions from 1960-66 demonstrated a revival of something akin to Herzog’s pre-World War Two “*Two-Stream Policy*”⁸⁹⁰ approach regarding English-Afrikaans relations in the SADF. There were regular articles included in virtually every edition exulting 1899-1902 Afrikaner military exploits and heroes, but these were published alongside those addressing the history of the pro-South African Party/UP UDF during the two World Wars.⁸⁹¹ World War Two has been described by John Lambert as “English

⁸⁸⁹ Telephonic interview with Lt Gen J. Dutton, 23 April 2006.

⁸⁹⁰ Fouché had been MP for Smithfield in the Free State, a political constituency whose Afrikaner voters were loyal supporters of Hertzog’s policies during the 1930s.

⁸⁹¹ Besides Grundlingh’s Kings Afrikaners referred to above, regarding the UP/South African Party and its close association with the UDF in 1914, also see Warwick, R.C. Reconsideration of the Battle of

South Africa's Finest Hour"⁸⁹², but it was also a period of intense white South African conflict. The war received something of an Afrikaner "rehabilitation" within a 1964 edition of *Huisgenoot*, where the inter-Afrikaner conflict of the period was ignored, while the magazine published a lengthy illustrated article on South African Forces contribution during World War Two under the title: "The War of Extermination". The article contained particular emphasis upon the involvement of South Africans in North Africa.⁸⁹³ Such direct reference within a popular Afrikaans publication to such a controversial period suggested some softening of hardened wartime nationalist attitudes, which also fitted the 1960s context of white unity by de-emphasising both the wartime Afrikaans divisions and English/Afrikaans conflict during the period. *Huisgenoot* had adjusted its content to fit the republican precedent for white unity. However, the official writing of the South African involvement during the Second World War was a more complex issue, the details of which demonstrate there remained some tensions concerning 'English' and Afrikaner perceptions of the war history. This is demonstrated by briefly examining the historical background behind the official South African World War Two histories completed during the 1960s. While popular publications made the "part-rehabilitation" for the war, it appears that official recording of South African involvement demonstrated there persisted frictions between government representatives and most English-speaking custodians of the old UDF's war heritage.

Sandfontein: The First Phase of the German South West Africa Campaign, August to September 1914, Master of Arts Thesis, University of Cape Town, February 2003.

⁸⁹² Lambert, J., 'Their finest hour' English-speaking South Africans and World War II, unpublished article, 2006.

⁸⁹³ See *Die Huisgenoot*, 11 December 1964, pp 18-22.

The 1960s South African Second World War histories

According to the South African War Histories Advisory Committee Chairman, C.G. Kerr, Hiemstra as Commandant General had provided SADF “encouragement and support” to facilitate the collection of donations and complete the history of South African forces during the Second World War.⁸⁹⁴ After tepid support from the government during the 1950s, the closure of Union War Histories section had been announced from June 1960; however, various connected military associations facilitated by retired Lt Gen George Brink had succeeded in delaying this termination until July 1961. Even efforts that year by Commandant General Grobbelaar requesting the transfer of all war documentation to his authority and permission to complete the work were officially rebuffed.⁸⁹⁵ It was advised that relevant documentation would be transferred across to the National Archives for usage by researchers. Grey concludes that Afrikaner nationalist divisions and bitterness over the war ensured that NP politicians obstructed and hindered the completion of an official South African war history and he notes that the histories were significantly, never translated into Afrikaans.⁸⁹⁶ However, this dissertation contends that during the early 1960s the government and SADF also cautiously re-appraised World War Two as potentially positive regarding the promotion of white unity. South African war participation and the acknowledgement of UDF war heroes appeared in Commando,

⁸⁹⁴ Orpen, N., East Africa and Abyssinian Campaigns, South African Forces World War II (Vol.1), Purnell & Sons, Cape Town, 1968, p. iii.

⁸⁹⁵ See Grey, J., ‘Standing Humbly in the ante-chambers of Clío’: the rise and fall of Union War Histories, Militaria Scientia 30(2) 2000, pp 259-266.

⁸⁹⁶ Ibid., p. 265.

while the same approach was also picked up by publications like Huisgenoot, as shown earlier.

SA Military Academy historian Lt Col Ian Van der Waag suggests the closing of the Union War Histories section was the consequence of Erasmus's failed policy to try and control it. The historians that Erasmus appointed to his own military archives creation in 1950 began two new series in the 1960s, namely a journal Militaria and the "Black Publication Series"; both of which, as Van der Waag puts it, were a "watershed in terms of military historiography in South Africa," whereby the "practice of academic, scientifically responsible military history was now increasingly institutionalised within the SADF."⁸⁹⁷ Van der Waag explains how only by the tenth issue of Militaria (in 1970) did the first article on World War Two appear. However, as stated above, in the far more widely distributed Commando there were scores of articles published lauding South African participation in World War Two. This demonstrates that the SADF had officially "part-rehabilitated" the 1939-45 conflict earlier than 1970 and for the same reasons that Van der Waag suggests were applicable for the 1970s,⁸⁹⁸ namely to help counter the Republic's increased political isolation. This thesis argues that "rehabilitating" South African war participation in an official SADF publication was also aimed at facilitating post-republic white rapprochement. But Van der Waag is correct in suggesting that it was the commencement of the South African Forces World War II series in the early 1960s

⁸⁹⁷ Van der Waag, I., *Contested Histories: Official History and the South African Military in the Twentieth Century*, The Last Word?: Essays on official history in the United States and British Commonwealth, (J. Grey Ed.), Contributions to the Study of World History, No. 106, Praeger Publishes, Westport, 2003, p. 41.

⁸⁹⁸ *Ibid.* p. 42.

and that is was the establishment of the South African National Museum of Military History, which really “buoyed” further official South African study of World War Two.

The South African War Histories Advisory Committee eventually raised further funds while Verwoerd advised Brink to approach the Education Department’s Arts and Culture section for a research grant. Kerr wrote that a “generous grant through the National Council for Social Research has made it possible to continue with the story of the North African Campaign”.⁸⁹⁹ Clearly as a political quid pro quo, Hiemstra ensured that SADF historians Commandant J. Ploeger and Captain E. Jonker sat on the Committee. Van der Waag describes Ploeger as an extreme Anglophobe, despite this Hiemstra nominee serving in World War Two.⁹⁰⁰ Besides these two official SADF Military Historical representatives (and Archival Services representatives, Brink and Professor D.W. Kruger), the Committee was comprised of English-speaking members, most of whom were war veterans. Ploeger’s influence and conceivably that of others too on the Committee was undoubtedly a contributing factor in Orpen being instructed that he was to leave out that not applicable to the “ambit of military history”, including “all reference to conflict between English and Afrikaans South Africans” or “any incident that might cause political embarrassment to the South African government”.⁹⁰¹

In the 1968 publication of the history dealing with South African forces in the East African and Abyssinian campaigns, Kerr expressed his gratitude to both Hiemstra and

⁸⁹⁹ Orpen, N., East Africa and Abyssinian Campaigns, p. iii.

⁹⁰⁰ Van der Waag, I., Contested Histories, p. 42.

⁹⁰¹ *Ibid*, p. 41.

Verwoerd,⁹⁰² both prominent Afrikaner nationalists who had objected vehemently to the country's participation in the war. Of course, it could be expected that in terms of protocol, official thanks would be obligatory regarding prominent government and SADF figures. But it still remains ironic that twenty years after the cessation of hostilities, leading English-speaking war veterans were recording how accommodating and helpful their political opponents of 1939-45 were in assisting the writing of the history of South Africa's war involvement. Van der Waag states that during the 1950s and 60s: "The writing of South Africa's Second World War history, in fact, burgeoned not because but in spite of the NP coming to power in 1948".⁹⁰³ One could concur with this explicitly regarding serious academic research. However, this work's contention is reiterated that the government and SADF during the 1960s, through both official and popular publications, made use of South African participation in World War Two to help facilitate the political ends of white unity.

Some examples published in Commando where World War Two received this politically inspired new lease of life included a feature entitled "South Africa Fighter Aces of the Second World War". This article contained photographs of Group Captain Sailor Malan, the vehemently anti-nationalist fighter pilot and an early 1950s Torch Commando leader.⁹⁰⁴ Commando later reported on Malan's old Royal Air Force squadron raising a subscription for a ceremonial sword, honouring him for the role he played during the

⁹⁰² Orpen, East Africa and Abyssinian Campaigns, pp iii-v.

⁹⁰³ Van der Waag, Contested Histories, p. 46.

⁹⁰⁴ Commando, October 1964, p.29.

Battle of Britain⁹⁰⁵. This was a significant shift from the NP's previous attitude towards Malan, who as a Torch Commando leader had gone as far as contemplating the plausibility of an "armed struggle" against Malan's government.⁹⁰⁶ In the September 1966 Commando edition, an article written in both English and Afrikaans reported upon a recent commemorative ceremony at Delville Wood which had included a senior SADF presence accompanying twenty-five South African veterans. Amongst the SADF officers present were the Chief of the Army, Lt General Fraser and future Chief of the Army Brig Willem Louw.⁹⁰⁷

Commando's 'mission' towards the "inclusiveness" of aspects concerning both white language groups' respective military histories, even extended to coverage of the redcoats' heroism at Rorke's Drift in 1879. The April 1963 Commando included an article on Lieutenant John Chard during this Anglo-Zulu war battle and also commented upon a early 1950s SADF decoration created and named after him.⁹⁰⁸ A report dealt with coverage of the film "Zulu" being produced where SADF personnel had been utilised as extras. It concluded:

But for the bestowal by the SADF in 1952 of the singular honour of naming one each of the new medals and decorations after the hero of Rorke's Drift, his very name, like others who won that most cherished decoration during the turbulent days of our

⁹⁰⁵ Commando, June 1966, p. 57.

⁹⁰⁶ See Boulter, F. C. Erasmus and the Politics of SA Defence, p.242, where 'Sailor' Malan had secretly asked Major Keith Coster, a serving army officer in 1953 whether as the commander of an ammunition depot at Ganspan in the Northern Cape, Coster would be willing to facilitate the supply of stored military weapons to Torch Commando members, in the event of a "national crisis". Unsurprisingly Malan's request was rebuffed.

⁹⁰⁷ Commando, September 1966, pp 33-39. According to Gen Jannie Geldenhuys, Louw was of one of Hiemstra's confidants (Telephone interview, 14 November 2007.)

⁹⁰⁸ Commando, April 1963, pp 33-35.

country's history, would be known to very few South Africans. The time is not long passed when practically every serviceman was asking: 'What is the claim to fame?' There were only a few who could give but a hazy answer. This will be further remedied (sic) with the film 'Zulu'.⁹⁰⁹

SADF assistance in the filming of 'Zulu' is recorded via a "Memorandum Regarding Military Assistance in the Production of films, penned by Major Steyn Van Rooyan during November 1962 for the attention of Deputy Commandant General Hiemstra. Concerning the purported relevance of the film to English-speaking South Africans the report read:

The Battle of Rorkes Drift during 22/23 January 1879 is of course one of the most illustrious of all the British conquering struggles in their colonial territories – and is viewed by the English-speaking component of the Republic, particularly in Natal, as a positive breakthrough for Western Civilisation in Africa and often linked to the Battle of Blood River supported by two elements, the Voortrekkers and British who were jointly responsible for white civilisation in South Africa. The Battle of Rorkes Drift is for the English-speaker in the Republic what the Blood River is for Afrikaners (Sentence underlined). Seen in this light it is my modest opinion that considerable internal and external propaganda value can be assisted, if indeed possible, through the production of the film Zulu.⁹¹⁰

These attempts to acknowledge something of the "English" white heritage within SADF culture and official publications was undoubtedly part of an official drive to draw white-English speakers into part of a defensive common "white nationalism". The link between the Blood River battle's centrality in Afrikaner nationalist historical mythology is well known. However, it was extraordinary that SADF Afrikaans officers were expressing

⁹⁰⁹ Commando, April 1963, pp 33-35.

⁹¹⁰ KG Group 5 Box 200, File KG/GC/5/1, Rolprent Vervaardiging Zulu, Memorandum oor Militere Hulp vir die Vervaardiging van Rolprente addressed to the Deputy Commandant General, dated 23 November 1962, Department of Defence Documentation Centre, Pretoria.

opinions that a similar nationalist history existed, or might even be contrived for English South Africans in Natal. Therefore the SADF assisting a British company in the commercial venture of filming 'Zulu' was another means of endorsing white English South African "nationalism" for the government's political gain.⁹¹¹

During the early 1960s, the government were anxious to demonstrate that ex-officers of the World War Two era who had been or felt marginalised during the Erasmus era, were included where appropriate at SADF functions. The SAAF had been a particularly marked target for Afrikanerisation during the 1950s,⁹¹² where Erasmus, Hiemstra and Melville had effectively fired some of the most prominent officers, including Brigadiers Durrant and Bronkhorst.⁹¹³ Durrant had resigned after being offered an inappropriate diplomatic posting in 1953 and Bronkhorst, a UP MP from 1960 was the most senior victim of the notorious Erasmus/Hiemstra "Midnight Ride" of November 1953.⁹¹⁴ Bronkhorst and Durrant, both of whom had reason to be angry at their treatment from the government, appeared within a group photograph of serving and retired SAAF officers within the October 1963 edition of Commando standing alongside former Commandant General Melville who had retired three years earlier.⁹¹⁵

⁹¹¹ SADF assistance included provision of national servicemen from the Ladysmith-based 5 SA Infantry Battalion as extra actors for British soldiers, besides significant amounts of other equipment and logistical help.

⁹¹² See Van de Bos, W.H., An investigation into Resignation of Officers From the South African Air Force (PF) During the Period 1946-1971, MA thesis, UNISA, 1978, cited in Seegers, The Military in the Making of Modern South Africa, London, 1996, p. 95.

⁹¹³ See chapter two, pp.

⁹¹⁴ Boulter, F. C. Erasmus and the Politics of SA Defence, pp 57-58 and pp 62-65.

⁹¹⁵ Commando, October 1963, p.37.

An even more interesting photograph arranged during the opening of a new SAAF base in Pietersberg during late 1964, appeared in the December 1964 Commando; it included several of the most prominent anti-nationalist officers from the old UDF, along with several previous and current SADF generals. The photograph makes an implicit point that any antipathies remaining from the 1950s purging of anti-nationalist officers would not prevent political opponents being present where the Republic's new air defences were on display. Between State President 'Blackie' Swart and Hiemstra sat General Sir Pierre Van Ryneveld, the former UDF Chief of Staff under Smuts. In the front row between former SADF Chiefs Grobbelaar and Melville, sat Lt Gen George Brink one of the most senior UDF World War Two officers and Torch Commando leaders, who had severely criticised Erasmus and his 1950s Chief of Staff, General De Wet Du Toit. Smuts's wartime right-hand man, Maj Gen Frank Theron is at the back with current senior SADF officers, together with former Brig Durrant, another Torch Commando member who might well have been SAAF Chief by the early 1960s, had it not been for NP purges.⁹¹⁶ (See illustrations p.)

Conclusion

It appears that writers like Hartshorne and Boulter decades later might have overstated their cases regarding white English-speakers leaving the SADF in such droves during the 1950s. English-speakers remained a contributing minority in the PF, while 'English' regiments received financial support and recruits that re-invigorated their operation

⁹¹⁶ Commando, December 1964, p.15. Also see the background on some of these officers in Boulter, *The Politics of SA Defence*, pp 239-240.

during the 1960s. At every practical occasion Minister Fouché spoke about defence being an important component of white nation-building and this chapter has also demonstrated that white English speakers were integral to NP and SADF defence programs, often with marked enthusiasm from them as Defence Force members, writers and citizens.

Boulter is to an extent correct that during the 1950s Erasmus and the NP had “eroded much of the sense of identity many English-speaking officers had with the Defence Force.”⁹¹⁷ However, there still remained a powerful military legacy that stretched deep into the memory and consciousness of white English South Africans that continued during the 1960s and beyond. Fouché worked to restore some sense of even-handedness between treatment of the two language groups and the CF, in particular, no longer felt threatened by previous ministerial hostility to their regimental traditions. However, Fouché also maintained Afrikaner nationalist control over SADF culture, personnel and policy, while ‘English South African military consciousness’ was a useful historical phenomena which the NP could to its advantage draw upon, both for defence needs and drawing the whites closer together during the 1960s. Afrikaner nationalist symbolism remained prominent in the SADF, but some limited attempts were made to persuade English-speakers their heritage was not being ignored. In reality, the latter had to accept a subordinate position, but also as any English South African sense of identity was likewise becoming more fluid. Fouché and Hiemstra both clearly understood the potential political and military gain of ditching the tactless and alienating Erasmus approach to English/Afrikaans relations in the SADF.

⁹¹⁷ Boulter, F. C. Erasmus and the Politics of SA Defence, p.71.

The support of the English-language press, schools and business for SADF programs was generally reflective of community feelings. There remained a large grouping of English South Africans who were explicitly hostile to the 'Afrikaner republic' of 1961, particularly in Natal where opposition was expressed at military commemorative occasions. But this final 'jingoism' surge petered out comparatively quickly amidst perceived military threats to the republic and the prosperity enjoyed by the white community during the 1960s. At the same time there was an SADF and government attempt to re-endorse South Africa's involvement in the World Wars. By 1967-68, the English South African community were very largely acquiescent regarding Afrikaner nationalist security planning. There was a discernable 1960s shift in English-community identity from 'British' South African during the late 1940s and 50s, to one tentatively supportive of broader white South African interests of maintaining political control. The strong 'English' involvement in the SADF at a range of levels, not least in the CF regiments endorses this contention.

As the CF English units prospered, the participation of English-speakers at PF level in the army slowly diminished as the World War Two generation retired. Fewer English-speakers joined the SADF during the 1960s compared to previous decades and particularly regarding the army, which became more identified with an Afrikaner cultural environment than the SAAF and SA Navy. Consumerism and prosperity also weakened any significant white career commitment to the PF and certainly more with the English-speakers than the Afrikaans community.

Chapter 7: White South African mobilization for the SADF

Introduction

From the French Revolution's imperative for citizens being obligated to perform military service, armies during modern historical processes of nationalism have been assumed as ideal mediums whereby a population can be infused with common patriotism and national identity. Afrikaner nationalists during the 1960s likened their historical struggle for self-determination as compatible with that of Jewish Zionist aspirations to protect Israeli independence during the twentieth century. The Israeli Defence Force is viewed by its government and citizens as a melting pot whereby new immigrants from the Diaspora would develop a common Israeli identity, a heightened sense of citizenship and a willingness to defend the national homeland. Barber remarks that the government, particularly after the 1967 Six Day War, began to regularly draw comparisons between South Africa and Israel, in the sense that small determined states with a "dedicated citizen army" and "economic and technical strength" can survive against "overwhelming odds". Articles on the Israeli armed forces also became more prominent in Commando after 1967. Die Burger had already made comparative references to Israel as early as 1962 regarding 'Africa threats'.⁹¹⁸

During much of the 1960s, the SADF operated against an economic backdrop where the republic experienced considerable prosperity from a growth rate of six percent and an

⁹¹⁸ See Barber, South African Foreign Policy 1945-1970, pp 214-215 and p.147.

inflation rate of only two percent, while disposable income amongst whites had risen significantly.⁹¹⁹ Job opportunities and the material benefits of a consumer society also meant the SADF had competition getting whites to view the military as a career. During a period when the NP racial policies were at their most stridently domineering, Verwoerd was determined to make apartheid and the homelands policy in particular a ‘competitive alternative’ to a multi-racial democracy.⁹²⁰ The SADF’s primary focus in planning was towards threats from any potential enemies of the white state. This chapter broaches the issue of to what extent were commonalities of white South African identity and state loyalty engendered by the SADF projecting itself as an important and highly visible part of the white community during the 1960s. It also touches upon the manner in which white South African society was initially mobilised through the beginnings of a kind of social militarization against the perceived armed threats to it. Increased conscription also started to ensure the SADF as being a more specific focus of “white nationalism”, besides also becoming an increased intrusion into white citizens’ lives.

Hyslop suggests that military conscription constituted one component whereby the state exerted some control over Afrikaner political and cultural uniformity.⁹²¹ This thesis contends that both resentment and enthusiasm for military service from elements within both white language-groups, illustrate that a uniformity of reaction from either cannot be simplistically generalised. But the dominant reaction was conformity to the law and more particularly amongst Afrikaners where military service also received clear church

⁹¹⁹ Giliomee, *The Afrikaners*, pp 539-540.

⁹²⁰ *Ibid*, p.531.

⁹²¹ Hyslop, *Shopping during a Revolution*, pp 175.

endorsement. ‘English’ churches fully maintained their chaplaincies within military structures through the 1960s; only much later did they start becoming highly critical of the implications of national service being connected to allegedly defending government racial policies. The divergence of different denominations within the 1960s SADF had obvious implications for any project attempting to mould a common “white-nation” mindset.⁹²²

The SADF was not properly prepared for conscription in terms of infrastructure or training programs, partly because of the assumed urgency to fulfil the counter-strategy needs endorsed by its own threat appraisals. After 1966 particularly, a majority of white South Africans voted for the NP and thereby also directly consented to its racial policies while indirectly acknowledging the government view of the ‘vital’ role of the SADF in ‘ensuring white survival’. The media and official publications presented the image of a confident SADF, but this masked deeper insecurities within Afrikaner political concerns for preserving their unity and control. The latter according to Hyslop was partly achieved, particularly within the Afrikaans community, through informal and formal surveillance plus censorship, creating what he refers to as a kind of “cultural autarky”.⁹²³ But Giliomee and others show the political divisions existent between Verwoerd and his

⁹²² In the 1960s, the SADF did appear to try and cover all Christian denominations and the Jewish faith in terms of worship facilities and time. For example, Lt Gen Jack Dutton who commanded 1 Special Service Battalion (Armour) training regiment from 1964-66 and dealt with thousands of balloted trainees, recalled : “I had 3 PF Chaplains, NG Kerk, Anglican and Free Churches so the men were spiritually well cared for! On a Friday afternoon a group from the local Jewish community would arrive and take those men to their homes for supper etc. I also had a special room with the necessary facilities and equipment in the Men’s Mess for the more orthodox members to ensure their meals were kosher.” Email from Lt Gen J. Dutton, 1 June 2006. Only towards the late 1970s were there louder objections from some ‘English’ denominations – Anglican and Catholic and others towards the political controversies surrounding national service.

⁹²³ Hyslop, *Shopping during a Revolution*, pp 175-177.

supporters and other NP members, including prominent leadership figures within Afrikaner politics, press, church and business.⁹²⁴ This gap between what came to be referred in political parlance as being between *verligtes* and *verkramptes* appeared to play itself to an extent within military opinions too, when some official statements from the decade, both classified and public, are placed under analysis.

Official SADF perceptions of the white community: Early 1960s

Military Intelligence (DMI) attempted to assess the capacity of the white population to respond effectively to military threats whether conventional or guerrilla. Some appraisals reported that it was not entirely certain if whites were ready to face potential enemy subversion of the country. A senior intelligence officer commented in 1963: “There are indications that the *volk’s* (whites) will to succeed and willingness to accept necessary suffering is not as strong as is generally presumed. This aspect should be further investigated.”⁹²⁵ Implied was that because all attempts to combat subversion were essentially defensive and only occurred when such subversive acts actually ensued, this could result in a sense of frustration amongst whites and even a defeatist attitude.⁹²⁶ The report also speculated that a conservative component of the *volk* might not see possible assistance from neighbouring states (Portuguese or Rhodesia) as necessary and such

⁹²⁴ See Giliomee, *The Afrikaners*, pp 522-541; also Van Wyk, A.H., Die Andersdenkende Afrikaners in die Nasionale Party as die Voorlopers in the Aftaking van Apartheid, 1949-66, *Journal for Contemporary History*, Vol. 30, December 2005.

⁹²⁵ Adjudant Generaal (AG), Gp 4, Box 4, File No. AG 672/2, Memorandum Oor Inligtingswaardering Opgestel Deur Die Direkteur Van Militêre Inligting, 1 April 1963, p.5, Department of Defence Documentation Centre, Pretoria.

⁹²⁶ *Ibid.*, p.6.

might have far-reaching political consequences.⁹²⁷ This was suggestive that some Afrikaners lacked insight, despite regular press coverage of local military threats possibly requiring cooperation with the republic's "buffer states". The SADF's threat perceptions, by the organisation's own evaluations received mixed responses from the white community by 1963. DMI postulated that measures taken against subversive elements could often only be reactive rather than proactive, risking frustrations predominating and ultimately creating an outlook (amongst whites) that "at some or other stage they (the 'revolutionary forces') will get what they want."⁹²⁸

How the intelligence reporter came to such conclusions is not explained within the document; however, its underlying fears are clear: *Volkseenheid*⁹²⁹ and nationalism were perceived as waning. Within Afrikaner society during the 1960s, the socio-economic diversity of the volk had changed from 1948 with the further urbanisation and continued growth of a prosperous Afrikaner middle-class. Afrikaners were still behind the white English community in terms of education levels, university graduates and incomes,⁹³⁰ however as Giliomee points out, NP politicians by the 1960s were less inclined to try to gain political capital from highlighting Afrikaner political power against the considerable number of its supporters still just struggling out of "poor whiteness".⁹³¹

⁹²⁷ Ibid. The intimation in the document was not entirely clear, except it appeared the writer was concerned at right-wing Afrikaners rejecting their own government's attempts to collaborate in defence with countries or other 'national' (ie. Black) groupings.

⁹²⁸ Ibid.

⁹²⁹ Afrikaner national unity.

⁹³⁰ Giliomee, *The Afrikaners*, p. 542

⁹³¹ Ibid, pp 542-543.

As Afrikaners increased consolidated around an urban identity, new ‘dangers’ ‘lurking’ in this environment and foreseen by the NP, were no longer issues of “exploitation by English capitalists” as during earlier in the century. Rather it was varied phenomena perceived as disseminated readily from within the city environment: “atheism, internationalism, liberalism, materialism”.⁹³² Issues such as ‘communism’ and ‘liberalism’ were also connected directly to forces understood by the NP as behind potential military threats. With more Afrikaner conscripts coming into the SADF from the same cities as their English-speaking counterparts, the military wanted to reinforce the message by highlighting the corrupting influences of the urban environment. ‘Defeatism’, understood as a shrinking of both ‘national pride’ and ‘patriotism,’ was identified by military intelligence as amongst symptoms negatively affecting white youth. ‘Materialism’ had for some years not escaped the concerns of military chiefs: In May 1961 the SA Navy Chief-of-Staff, Rear Adm Hugo Biermann referred to his own perceptions of young white South Africans’ priorities:

In my opinion concentrated training in the armed forces could only be of benefit to the people of South Africa. Modern youth in South Africa has too many bioscopes, too many Elvis Presleys and too much money, and I think longer training will not do them any harm.⁹³³

Hiemstra also reflected upon a marked distance between the experiences of his own generation of Afrikaners, many whom had struggled out of poverty, compared to elements amongst the increasingly materialistic *volk* of the 1960s. At a 1959 Day of the

⁹³² Grundlingh, A. and Sapire, H., From Feverish Festival to Repetitive Ritual? The Changing Fortunes of Great Trek Mythology in an Industrialising South Africa, 1938-1988, South African Historical Journal, No. 21, 1989, p. 33, quoting from the Du Toit Commission report from a Commission of Inquiry into European Occupancy of Rural Areas (Pretoria, 1959/60).

⁹³³ Cape Times, 15 May 1961.

Covenant commemorative speech Hiemstra had lashed out at parents who assumed military service was the panacea for difficult sons in an era of new fashions and antisocial trends such as the ‘ducktail’ cult amongst white youths:

The lost young people of today are the responsibility of their parents and it is misdirected to think that the Defence Force or some other establishment can correct what these parents spoil (*verbrou*) for seventeen years.⁹³⁴

Military call-ups during the 1960 State of Emergency did not occur to Fouché’s satisfaction, while balloted conscription for continuous training had in response to perceived defence needs been extended during 1962. This duration of continuous service was increased from three to nine months, with training occurring often under the direction of war veteran officers who used young PF instructors. One popular assumption was that military life straightened out anti-social behaviour. When interviewing an instructor staff sergeant, the Cape Times reporter wrote the following of the expectations of the military regarding Oudtshoorn trainees in 1962:

I (the reporter) was assured that ‘ducktails’ and ‘milkbar cowboys’* presented no problems in camp. ‘They arrive here sure enough but they soon have the nonsense knocked out of them – usually by the trainees themselves,’For the whole nine months they may not have liquor. For them it is a period of abstinence and rigid discipline. What mother and the coloured servant did for them before, they now have to do themselves.⁹³⁵ :

However, the SADF had its own problems with objectionable conduct amongst its own junior instructor ranks and the organisation did not always officially appreciate taking on

⁹³⁴ Commando, January 1959, p. 25.

* “Milk-bars were popular urban white youth “hang-out” locations in 1960s South Africa. A milk-bar Cowboy would have been contemporary slang for aggressively demonstrative young men who asserted themselves in this manner amongst their peers in such a public spot.

⁹³⁵ Cape Times, 20 January 1962, p.13.

a 'rehabilitative' role. For example, J. von Moltke, a NP SWA MP went to considerable trouble to intervene on behalf of Josef Davids, a nineteen year old, rejected during 1963 for PF service on the grounds of his civilian court convictions for petty theft. SADF correspondence pointedly informed von Moltke that it did not want impressionable young conscripts mixed alongside PF members with dubious reputations.⁹³⁶ A correspondent balloted for service in Walvis Bay during 1962, remarked on his being disillusioned by some non-commissioned officers boasting about their smoking dagga to trainees.⁹³⁷ Some further examples of complaints to MPs by parents over junior instructors are detailed below, to emphasise how the conscription was also questioned and criticised by white citizens, not on grounds of political objections, but on grievances regarding poor treatment during training besides objections to its inconvenience to studies and the erratic application of exemption.

The SADF and white citizens during the early 1960s

The Exemption Board to whom those called up for military training could apply for exemption or deferment, did not grant such a status readily. The Board's policy of insisting that those who wished to study at university had to first complete military obligations caused consternation amongst some parents ambitious for sons not to break the continuity of study after matric. Officially, the Exemption Board was the only body that could either postpone or exempt a citizen from military service. Even a ministerial

⁹³⁶ Letter dated 26 March 1964 from the Adjutant General to the Commandant General; Letter dated 22 November 1963 from J. von Moltke MP to the Commandant General, , KG Group 5 Box 421, File KG/ADMLL/20(D), Navrae, Voorstelle en Klage deur Publiek, Department of Defence Documentation Centre, Pretoria.

⁹³⁷ Email correspondence from Gerhard Vermaak of Nylstroom, August 2007.

recommendation had to be supported by “relevant facts”.⁹³⁸ Future teachers balloted for service however, received special exemption if willing to undergo a course for cadet officers.⁹³⁹ Cadets was a long established activity in both white English and Afrikaans schools and its facilitation required large numbers of instructors, who were drawn from school staffs.

Yet despite the SADF drawing in thousands of young men to experience the organisation through compulsory call-ups, the military was not a popular career choice. Even Commando, the SADF’s official mouthpiece allowed correspondents to question the perceived apathy manifest in the Defence Force failing to market itself effectively. In mid-1964 at the height of the press reported military threats, a young officer severely criticised a planned military tattoo in Pretoria being based around an unimaginative theme of “Physical Education through the Ages”. He remarked: “With recruiting for the PF at the extraordinary low ebb that it is at the moment” such a display was “scarcely likely to arouse much enthusiasm for a career!”⁹⁴⁰ The navy in particular struggled with technical manpower shortages during the 1960s, but recruitment was also low in the army and by the middle of the decade, this fact was severely criticised in parliament. UP defence spokesman Gay attributed poor recruitment to low salaries and alleged poor management, pointing out that provision existed for 20 000 officers, yet as Fouché had acknowledged a few days earlier, the air force were short by 1755 officers; the navy of

⁹³⁸ Letter dated 20 November 1963 by Secretary of Defence, J. H. Badenhorst to Mrs J. Du Plessis of Bloemfontein, KG Group 5 Box 421, File KG/ADMLL/20(D), Navrae, Voorstelle en Klagte deur Publiek, Department of Defence Documentation Centre, Pretoria.

⁹³⁹ Ibid.

⁹⁴⁰ Commando, June 1964, p.5.

1537 and the army of 2492 officers; in total constituting 25 percent of the strength approved by parliament.⁹⁴¹ It is not difficult to see that the state's eventual decision for full white male conscription at eighteen was also motivated simply by acute manpower needs, just as Hiemstra had always claimed.

By the end of the 1960s a kind of white community 'militarization' was achieved, in the sense that the white public were aware of "threats" and the SADF had entered citizens lives by both choice and compulsion. Although in terms of 'compulsion' when aggrieved by the organisation, both English and Afrikaans white citizens demonstrated a confidence in the influence of parliamentary representatives regarding military authority, this being verified by numerous lengthy and diligent attempts at intercessions under-taken by MPs on behalf of their constituents. The usual correspondence channels for raising objections about the SADF were directed to the Commandant General, the Minister of Defence, or even the Prime Minister and inevitably, the letters reached the offices of Grobbelaar or Hiemstra, although hardly necessarily for their personal viewing. The Commandant General Group at the Pretoria Military Archives contains large numbers of boxes dealing with the scores of applications for exemption and details concerning various complaints. MPs attempted to facilitate a wide range of requests, including on behalf of PF members. For examples, NP Senator Tom Naude of Pietersberg wrote directly to Commandant General Grobbelaar in October 1963, appealing on behalf of Sergeant Major J.C. de Klerk, request to be considered for light administrative work for reasons of poor health

⁹⁴¹ Hansard, 11 Feb 1965, 4th Session – Second Parliament RSA 22 Jan to 18 June 1965 Vol. 13, 14, 15, entry 25 May 1965.

and a transfer from Pretoria to Pietersberg where his wife resided. Naude assured Grobbelaar this was a “deserving case”.⁹⁴²

Public and parliamentary representation against and for the SADF

Conscious of growing complaints regarding military training, during 1965 Fouché instituted the Groenewoud Committee to ascertain SADF needs regarding personnel.⁹⁴³ Fouché requested members of parliament to submit complaints to the Secretary of a Commission of Inquiry into Defence Force matters. The Committee reported two years later, with important recommendations supporting Hiemstra’s long established call for extending national service. As more young whites were drawn into military service via the ballot system, so MPs fielded complaints from both trainees and parents about poor treatment, inadequate facilities, boredom and the “waste” of their time in terms of future career development. A score of incidents in military camps involving assaults and brutal treatment of ballotees were reported in the press. The Secretary for Defence invited written public submissions on military training, for the government could not contemplate a national negative attitude towards the SADF amongst whites.

Perhaps the most substantiating letter encountered and which was also not made public came from J.A. Fourie, Headmaster of the prestigious Pretoria Afrikaanse Seuns

⁹⁴² Letter dated 3 October 1963 from Senator Tom Naude to the Commandant-General, KG Group 5 Box 421, File KG/ADMLL/20(D), Navrae, Voorstelle en Klage deur Publiek, Department of Defence Documentation Centre, Pretoria.

⁹⁴³ See Callistair, G., Compliance, Compulsion and Contest; Aspects of Military Conscription in South Africa, 1952-1992, MA thesis, University of Stellenbosch, 2007, p.62 who also comments briefly on this point.

Hoërskool.⁹⁴⁴ Writing to the Secretary for Defence in mid-June 1965 Fourie's stature as Principal of a top school could barely have been overlooked by SADF authority, particularly as his letter included an urgent affirmation of a national need for military service. He based his comments upon encounters and communications with numerous ex-students who had recently completed military service, deducing two issues that as an educationist deeply concerned him.

Almost without exception the boys explain that their time is not properly utilised; and that they waste a great deal of time; that the training could be shorter; that they are often involved for weeks in paltry things like washing dishes for several weeks; standing guard for 6-8 weeks; etc. I get the impression that there is not a proper plan for instruction over the entire period of training, and therefore far too many useless tasks are performed, so as only to utilise the young men's time.

I feel that the training the boys receive is necessary and also that they must get an intensive and full program overseen by work and relaxation. We need to build citizens, not just to carry a rifle, but also to give a sense of belonging, and in addition, to ensure good national citizens and workers; strong characters and purpose-driven, meaning that there must be building, not breaking down.

A second issue that is perhaps more difficult to broach is the complaint over the non-commissioned officers who have to give instruction, and where it is done in such a manner that an undermining of respect and authority occurs as well as widespread disparagement (of the military by the trainees).

I must reiterate that I am not against the training, if some suggest this be my objection. This (letter) is only here because the above allegations are so regularly forthcoming that truth could well be hidden therein, and I feel our Defence Force is developing a reputation that is unworthy, and it cannot.⁹⁴⁵

⁹⁴⁴ Afrikaans Boys High School.

⁹⁴⁵ Letter dated 15 June 1965 from J.A. Fourie, Headmaster of Afrikaanse Seuns Hoërskool to the Secretary, Department of Defence, , KG Group 5 Box 422, File KG/AD/20(F), Navrae, Voorstelle en Klagte deur die Publiek, Department of Defence Documentation Centre, Pretoria.

The Afrikaanse Seuns Hoërskool in 1965 would have drawn its boys from amongst families that included those of senior Afrikaner politicians, professionals and civil servants. Then Minister of Justice and future Prime Minister John Vorster's sons attended the school the eldest becoming head boy in 1967.⁹⁴⁶ Fourie specifically outlined problems regarding poor usage of the trainees time, besides abusive and incompetent instructor conduct. Fourie could have conceivably been hearing the objections from the sons of prosperous urban Afrikaners, who objected at being mistreated by instructors barely the same age, that would often have come from more modest backgrounds. Fourie's letter confirms there were perceptions of some serious problems of organisation and discipline within military training, which he feared threatened to implant a poor view of military training and the SADF's reputation amongst the Afrikaans and white communities. In the long-term such could have assured a serious national problem for the government who were committed to ensuring its voters would contribute willingly to the country's largely citizen-based defence.

UP MPs also immediately responded to the Groenewoud Committee's requests, but were emphatic that they would not assist those perceived as attempting to evade military service. Their MPs also diligently performed their constituency representative roles, drafting letters to the authorities. The implications of these official steps to investigate the SADF were also indicative of concerns reflecting a political intensity and anxiety regarding the long-term prospects of white rule. Such were clearly felt within the NP government, hence their urgency to get the inquiry underway. The Principal of another

⁹⁴⁶ D'Oliveira, J., Vorster-The Man, pp 209-210.

top school, Mr Clarke of Rondebosch Boys High (Cape Town) had already a year earlier conveyed his own feelings about military service to the parliamentary opposition leader, Sir De Villiers Graaff (quoted below) which confirmed Fouché acknowledgement that the later stages of training were being marked by poorly utilised time. This and other evidence suggests the SADF were simply not sufficiently organised to accommodate the trainees:

The general slackness in the latter part of the training period has been raised from many quarters and all we can get from the Minister (off the record) is that while he has not yet adequate facilities for intensive training during the whole period of service, he feels compelled to hold trainees for the full period so as to have a large force under arms for security reasons. This, of course, is not public property and we cannot get him to say it publicly at the moment. The other matter which is worrying us a lot is the calling up of boys going into industries which will be regarded as key industries during wartime, from which they will not be released for service. As a result of which the time, energy and money spent on their training will have been wasted. There again we seem to have struck a blank wall.⁹⁴⁷

Fouché had implicitly acknowledged to Graaff in confidence that the threat perceptions of the period were the justification for retaining large numbers of troops after training. The minister confirmed as such in parliament a year after the above letter was penned, stating that in 1960 training was in place principally to deal with internal security, but this had changed with perceptions that South Africa was also facing a possible external threat.⁹⁴⁸ UP defence spokesmen continued to severely criticise the SADF for poor management. MP Vause Raw accused Fouché of over-conscripting men for instruction by PF personnel who simply could not cope with the numbers and this in consequence

⁹⁴⁷ Letter dated 4 February 1964 by Sir De Villiers Graaff to Mr Clarke, Headmaster of Rondebosch Boys High School, United Party Archives, UNISA, Defence, Correspondence 37.1.

⁹⁴⁸ Hansard, 11 Feb 1965, 4th Session – Second Parliament RSA 22 Jan to 18 June 1965, pp 922-23.

resulted in unsatisfactory training - three months “square-bashing, three months training”, but the last three months according to Raw: “are wasted because of excessive conscript numbers. 16 000 men were drawn out the economy but without proper utilization; companies commanded by lieutenants, during the winter over 1964, men in Bloemfontein were not issued with their winter clothing”.⁹⁴⁹ So the complaints continued.

In response, the military authorities tried to convince the public that training was conducive to producing a citizen of value and that the SADF was a healthy and maturing environment for white youth. As mentioned, a strong perception existed amongst older white South Africans that young (white) men displaying bad behaviour might be rehabilitated through a military experience. In June 1964, J.F. Schoonbee, the NP MP for Pretoria District was quoted as saying that idle youths and gangs should be conscripted into the army, where “scum was eliminated and ducktails were turned into decent people”.⁹⁵⁰ Justice Minister Vorster mooted an old idea of a CF special youth battalion rehabilitating young white male offenders. He emphasised the need for military discipline being enforced upon young white men between ages 18-30 and expressing his concern that in contrast to just 47 white woman prisoners nationally, there were about 60 000 white male prisoners, who could also “sweat out their penalties on the parade ground”.⁹⁵¹ Schoonbee went so far as to draw a non-racial commonality amongst idle young people being susceptible to the inevitable hoodoo ideology:

⁹⁴⁹ Ibid., pp 919-920.

⁹⁵⁰ Cape Times, 5 June 1964, p7.

⁹⁵¹ Die Vaderland, 2 October 1964; “Spesiale bataljon beoog vir jeugdige oortreders”.

Whether black, brown or White, youths should not be allowed to run wild and grow ripe for communism. Even if they were given nothing more than to clean the guns they should be kept off the street.⁹⁵²

The SADF published selected letters in Commando which endorsed the nationalist imperative of drawing the English-speakers closer to accepting the Afrikaner cultural outlook. There was inevitably emphasis upon how English servicemen were integrating successfully and developing a better understanding of the Afrikaans community. As true as this may have been, there were seldom, if ever, suggestion of the reverse occurring and this being likewise publicised. Mrs I. Freese of Durban remarked on her son's 1962 service in the Air Force Gymnasium in Pretoria:

I need to mention here the beneficial results of discipline, physical training, etc., with which you are well acquainted, but I would like to mention that I was particularly happy to find any trace of prejudice against the Afrikaans Section (sic) gone completely. His Afrikaans has improved considerably. He has been hospitably received in the homes of Afrikaans fellow 'roflies'* and has altogether a very high opinion of his hosts. This represents a broadening in outlook which could possibly have been denied him if he had not been able to widen his field.⁹⁵³

Within components of the English South African academic world, there were also affirmations of the 'benefits' of military service. The Secretary of Defence reported to the Commandant General in November 1963 that at the "Cape Town Medical School" (assumedly UCT), a professor had stated that those who had undergone military service turned out to be better students and ultimately better doctors and citizens. The Secretary

⁹⁵² The Cape Times, 5 June 1964, p.7.

* New recruits

⁹⁵³ Commando, November 1962, p.9.

also remarked that the professor relayed to him that during a meeting of “his Medical Association” a proposal was defeated whereby the “Association” were called to approach the government to relieve medical students of military obligations.⁹⁵⁴ But the large numbers of applications attempting to side-step military service for academic study suggests that many of the professionally ambitious were more concerned about their own personal interests.

As introduced above the SADF were increasingly alerted to dysfunctional conduct within their own instructor ranks, this being reinforced by submissions from angry parents and concerned community leaders. UP MP Gay had in June 1965 reported in parliament that parents were “ringing up Defence headquarters...say(ing) they are not prepared to let their sons go ... under conditions such as those exposed in the Press.”⁹⁵⁵ MP Van der Byl, displayed his party’s conservative ambivalence, where like his UP colleagues, he also needed to demonstrate his party’s commitment to defence besides field and pass on complaints from trainees. Van der Byl received a range of correspondence and some examples are worth referring. The Johnsons of Elsie’s River requested assistance with obtaining exemption for their son Claude, whose brother Colin was tragically shot at some earlier date while doing training in Walvis Bay and claimed no official inquest had been held nor any form of compensation granted to the family. Claude had some unexplained foot complaint, but despite being declared unfit by medical doctors had still been informed to report for duty with the Cape Town Highlanders on 29 September 1965,

⁹⁵⁴ Letter dated 18 November 1963 by Secretary of Defence, J. H. Badenhorst to the Commandant-General, KG Group 5 Box 421, File KG/ADM/20(D), Navrae, Voorstelle en Klage deur Publik, Department of Defence Documentation Centre, Pretoria.

⁹⁵⁵ Hansard, 4th Session – Second Parliament RSA, 17 June 1965.

despite his parents sending a medical certificate three months earlier to Pretoria.⁹⁵⁶ In responding to this particular case, Van der Byl had written to the Secretary for the Committee of Inquiry that this was “typical of the slackness by the Defence Force in replying to correspondence”. He endorsed this by pointing out that although Claude eventually received exemption, he had been kept waiting for three months “unable to settle down to anything, whilst the mother was left in anxiety”.⁹⁵⁷

The ballot system’s administrative clumsiness was evident concerning older students. Three future chartered accountants, M. Friedman of Vredehoek, D. Kretzner of Claremont and B. Glass of Parow complained in September 1965 that they had never been balloted while at school, yet now at university had received call-ups, making it difficult for them to complete their accountant internships because the nine months gap would interrupt their required study.⁹⁵⁸ An anonymous complainant, who spent six months at the Technical Service Corps in Pretoria, detailed his spending this entire period living in a tent, unable to study properly with candlelight, enduring poor food, unhygienic toilets, uncurbed stealing, inadequate leave and abusive officers who got drunk on manoeuvres. He also mentioned the training period being too long.⁹⁵⁹ A parent voiced his concern about camp facilities near or at Tempe, Bloemfontein where inadequate water

⁹⁵⁶ Letter dated 20 September 1965, written by Edward Johnson to Major Piet Van der Byl, United Party Archives, UNISA, Defence, Correspondence 37.1.

⁹⁵⁷ Letter dated 29 September 1965 by Major Piet Van der Byl, United Party Archives, UNISA, Defence, Correspondence 37.1.

⁹⁵⁸ Letter dated 23 September 1965 by M. Friedman, D. Kretzmer and B. Glass to Maj Piet Van der Byl, United Party Archives, UNISA, Defence, Correspondence 37.1.

⁹⁵⁹ Letter dated 21 September 1965 by anonymous correspondent to Maj Piet Van der Byl, United Party Archives, UNISA, Defence, Correspondence 37.1.

was available for washing and laundry.⁹⁶⁰ In terms of treatment meted out to trainees, a trainee's father resident in the Northern Cape wrote a particularly strong letter about his son's 1963 experiences at the Air Force Gymnasium where he had been injured during training.

The idea of training is sound but unfortunately it has landed in the wrong hands. The officers may be ok but the instructors i.e. corporals and sergeants are a bunch of sadists. I personally don't think they would have been anything in civilian life but now the army gave them some authority over men perhaps even better educated than what they are... We all know as old soldiers that army language is rough but they are going too far. I say the lowest scum of the earth will use better language. I cannot even quote examples... a Sergeant Major of the military Gym said the easiest way to get out the army is to swear. Well if that is so they just do not know what is going on. I think they would have the shock of their lives if they concealed tape recorders on the boys. As for the training they are sadists. Boys have collapsed and vomited from fatigue. All they do is rub their faces in it. With their exaggerated stamping of feet at the halt etc. they also accounted for several boys having cartilage trouble. My son's legs gave in. I think about 18 of his pals as well. They were all operated on or shall I say butchered as only about 1 in 9 was a success.⁹⁶¹

The father went onto explain that his son's knee had still not recovered two and a half years later and that he could not even play golf. Even taking into account the bitter fury of this parent possibly making him overstate his case, the brutality suggested by ill-suited personalities given instruction duties is corroborated by many other accounts. In a "Memorial Album" for the Air Force Gymnasium published in 1977, some of the 1960s

⁹⁶⁰ Ibid.

⁹⁶¹ Ibid.

photos give a glimpse of the institution's culture. One shows a recruit having to drink a 'doctored' cold drink during 'Boeresport' in 1961.⁹⁶²

Another anonymous parent wrote undated complaints about her son's experiences in the navy. They included lack of supervision when his ship had travelled to Lourenco Marques; trainees visited a brothel and on returning to their ship were informed to visit the dispensary on board for 'VD injections'. The mother remarked: "It seems that for boys of this age – certain places could be Red Light areas – and the boys punished if found there. This is surely not unreasonable as they are not yet permanent force – nor are they adult."⁹⁶³ Other complaints were lack of supervision by officers and non-commissioned officers while on watch duty and cruelty towards the ship's dog (the soles of its feet burnt with matches) in front of an officer. Other parents' complaints again followed the familiar pattern of idleness created through lack of planning for activity:

Every trainee I have spoken to from Army, Navy or Air Force training has been upset by the waste of time that these nine months seem to be, and of the time they spend doing nothing at all. A lot of free time is given- some instruction is found interesting, and the boys get keen – and then they get frustrated as they never get a chance to use their new knowledge in any satisfactory way- and they wonder why they ever had to do their training – they lose all pride in their progress and achievements. Many complaints come from those who go to the yearly three weekly camps – as the feeling of learning nothing new is uppermost. On certain Wednesdays and Saturdays throughout the years following – Trainees meet for parades. They line up, are inspected and fall out. They would like an exercise of some sort, as they are bored by giving up these afternoons (which many

⁹⁶² Air Force Gymnasium Memorial Album, 1952-1977, Edited by Capt. T.F. Prinsloo, Promedia Publikasies (Edms) Bpk. Esmar Drukkers, 1977.

⁹⁶³ Undated letter (1965) by anonymous correspondent to Maj Piet Van der Byl, United Party Archives, UNISA, Defence, Correspondence 37.1.

students can ill-afford) to doing nothing definite or constructive.⁹⁶⁴

It is not too difficult to discern a pattern in this and other correspondence whereby trainees who were enthusiastic to learn, sometimes found this zest stunted by poor management and abusive instructors. This particular young man on board the ship had been trained as a navy diver. Van der Byl added that his mother had also said regarding those charged with training:

His complaint is the general attitude of the instructors, their hopeless handling which can only destroy discipline and the variety of ignorant people making a mess of keen, ready-to-work-and-learn material. He realises that many trainees are uncouth, but feels that a different calibre of man in charge would do away with much of the worst weaknesses.⁹⁶⁵

Interesting enough, these kinds of views are in stark contrast to what Lt Gen Dutton, who in the early 1960s commanded a training regiment in Bloemfontein, expressed when remarking upon his unit programmes at 1 Special Service Battalion which encompassed both infantry and armour training:

In July 1964 I was promoted and appointed OC 2 Armd Car Regt, a Full Time Force unit in Tempe where ballotees spent the last 6 months of their 9 on squadron and regiment training and operations...There were quarterly intakes of new recruits. I spent the rest of 1964 commanding both Regts simultaneously which was not easy but gave me a fair insight of all aspects of what these young men were expected to do in their 9 months. At 1SSB the men had their formative training period which was interesting...From the point of view of discipline I was at all times most satisfied with our standard. I had a large staff of officers, WOs and NCOs all of whom were well trained,

⁹⁶⁴ Undated letter (1965) by anonymous correspondent to Major Piet Van der Byl, United Party Archives, UNISA, Defence, Correspondence 37.1.

⁹⁶⁵ Letter dated 29 September 1965 by Maj Piet Van der Byl to: The Secretary, Committee of Inquiry, United Party Archives, UNISA, Defence, Correspondence 37.1.

experienced and reliable. Of course there was always the feeling amongst ballotees of “Why me when Johnny next door was not called up?” My Regt had a large infantry company and a smaller armour squadron and there was a healthy rivalry between the two. Up until I think 1966 we still worked on Saturday mornings and this was when I carried out my inspections with pleasing results!⁹⁶⁶

The distance between the commander and his men can be considerable in terms of training experiences, but many serious complaints against the SADF by trainees and parents are archived, although they may have been far less of an issue in Dutton’s camp. NP MPs brought their own constituents grievances to Parliament. G.P. van den Berg, the NP MP for Wolmaranstad, commented in mid-1964 that his colleagues received numerous complaints from ballotees about poor treatment, although the only examples he gave were swearing. He emphasised that ballotees should not fear their superiors and demanded that bad language be eradicated in the Defence Force.⁹⁶⁷ This naïve perception of what is plausible within a military establishment also may have suggested a gulf between the ideal of traditional Afrikaner values, facing a rude reality within impersonal state entities such as the military, an institution whose rough dynamics the NP MPs of the 1960s had virtually no experience. Afrikaners whose expectations of a government entity such as the SADF being all that was “decent” and Christian” were clearly disturbed. But the extent of continual complaints was real and suggested that at least some white South African young men during this period were surprised and outraged at aspects of their management by the state.

⁹⁶⁶ Email correspondence dated 4 June 2006 from Lt Gen J. Dutton.

⁹⁶⁷ Cape Times, 5 June 1964, p.7.

Another lengthy set of serious grievances were from the father of a 1964 ballottee, also demonstrates that the trainees were bewildered by attitudes and actions emanating from their instructors. This complainant held a “very senior position in a well-known scholastic institution”⁹⁶⁸ and related through his son a series of events occurring while he was training with his company at Diepkloof.⁹⁶⁹ Allegations included the physical assault by a PF corporal on a trainee, who was also compelled to run along cattle kraal walls with full pack throughout the morning. At the end of the exercise, this man was punished further by being formally “placed under close arrest” and forced to run with sandbags after refusing to get into a hole the corporal had threatened to bury him in. Later when troops were driving through a “coloured reserve,” a corporal ordered them to “arrest” a “coloured bystander” and several children from nearby houses. Divisions had occurred amongst the troops, with some participating in this intimidation and others refusing. Eventually back at the camp, all of the captives were released while being shot at with blank ammunition as they ran away. Later during a night attack exercise, instructors allegedly assaulted one recruit and threw stones at others. The ballottee company did not receive breakfast on three occasions during the exercise as punitive measures for allegedly not cooperating. The report concluded by stating that nothing came out of the above man’s arrest.⁹⁷⁰

⁹⁶⁸ Letter dated 29 September 1965 by Piet Van der Byl to: The Secretary, Committee of Inquiry, United Party Archives, UNISA, Defence, Correspondence 37.1. (It is not clear if this may also have been Mr Clarke of Rondebosch Boys High mentioned above.)

⁹⁶⁹ Outside Johannesburg

⁹⁷⁰ Undated letter by anonymous correspondent to Maj Piet Van der Byl, United Party Archives, UNISA, Defence, Correspondence 37.1.

It is of interest that some trainees were determined to respond to abuse through their MPs in attempts to confront the military and express a sense of injustice. Bearing in mind that white society at this time was largely conformist and conservative, there is outrage expressed in these letters just how the SADF could be an unhealthy place for some young men doing their training, but there was also a willingness to perform military service with expectations of just and appropriate instruction and supervision. While at a political level white society was being informed there were potentially grave future threats to the country's security, the army was under public accusation of failing to curb instructor misbehaviour and disorganisation, thereby hindering government and SADF intentions to bring whites to a more complete sense of acceptance and appreciation of military service.

Official reaction to such complaints is not always easy to determine. The culture in the military of intimidation against anybody officially lodging complaints was undoubtedly high, as is borne out by the majority of Van der Byl's complainants strongly asserting they remain anonymous. Fouché received correspondence in the same year signed by Commandant General Grobbelaar, reporting upon "alleged unauthorised occurrences" at Oudtshoorn involving assaults by instructors on ballotees, besides also complaints from the Private Secretaries to the Ministers of Forestry, Bantu Education and Indian Affairs, that their instructors course candidates had received similar treatment. A board had investigated the allegations and its findings had included that there had indeed been six incidents where ballotees complaints were verified. There was evidence accepted of four incidents concerning swearing and bad language being used against ballotees and eight incidents of assault. One instructor was found guilty of blasphemy; disciplinarily steps

were being taken against an officer, a warrant officer and six non-commissioned officers. Allegations repeated referring to poorly organised training programmes, where demeaning jobs filled in for time were effectively dismissed. Grobbelaar did however, report to the Minister that because of previous complaints he had appointed a senior board of officers to investigate certain aspects of CF training and particularly the issue of time being allegedly wasted.⁹⁷¹

One of the clear problems during the early 1960s was that although the SADF also utilised CF instructors, much of this work was under the control of junior PF members. There was not only a shortage of these men, but a lack of quality too, particularly amongst non-commissioned officers. Former senior SADF officer Vice Adm Martin Trainor recalled Magnus Malan remarking during the early 1970s that: 'If he could not have an army of good permanent force sergeants, then it would be better to have an army of good national service corporals.'⁹⁷² The inference is clear that there were problems, which dated back to the 1960s which were meant to be remedied by national servicemen from the early 1970s taking over much of the junior instructor work.

By mid-1966, new defence minister P.W. Botha was capitalising on the extent to which the SADF had become pervasive within white South Africans lives. Addressing the *Rapportryers Club* in Porterville, Botha made specific references to employers, in that he encouraged them to support their workers obligatory service in the SADF. But more

⁹⁷¹ Letter dated 13 October 1964 from Commandant General Grobbelaar to Fouché, Navra Voorstelle en Klagtes deur die Publiek, KG/ADM/20(A), KG Group 5, Box 419, Documentation Services Directorate, Pretoria.

⁹⁷² Telephonic interview: Vice Adm M. Trainor, 2 July 2007.

specifically Botha laid emphasis upon the white youth viewing military service as a patriotic duty that promoted the “physical and spiritual well-being” of the nation. The view of compulsory military service had subtly shifted since 1960. It was now given a loud nationalistic purpose, as opposed to what had arguably been understood as a legal obligation performed by those balloted to contribute to the country’s defence. Within six years, Botha was making grandiose sweeping statements such as: “South Africa has a right to expect enthusiasm for her Defence Force from every patriotic citizen.”⁹⁷³ This was a considerable change from a previous situation in 1960 where *Die Burger* had advocated that the government approach with great caution the issue of extending the military ballot system to all white male school-leavers. (See chapter 4, p. 297)

The SADF in public during the 1960s

Most police security operations remained largely clandestine, however, the SADF’s activities were more open to public view, as was its growing arsenal purchased or ordered during the 1960s. Some the more high profile acquisitions included French Alouette and Super Frelon helicopters, Mirage III interceptors, British Buccaneer and Canberra bombers, French Panhard armoured cars, American C130 and C160 transport aircraft, new air-defence systems of radar and anti-aircraft artillery from Britain and Switzerland and new anti-submarine frigates from Britain. Ordered in the 1960s and delivered in the early 1970 included the navy’s French supplied submarine fleet, Mirage F1 interceptors and Cactus surface to air missiles. Most of this equipment, obtained both before and after

⁹⁷³ *The Cape Times*, 20 August 1966, p.7.

the 1963 UN mandatory arms embargo had a primarily conventional war deterrent purpose, particularly the air defences and submarines. All purchases were well publicised in the press and the new equipment also had a marked impact upon how effectively the SADF could project itself as a force to be reckoned with.

While some white citizens had their complaints about conditions during compulsory military service, most responded in large numbers, with a mixture of national pride and curiosity, by their attendance at SADF ‘shows’. Such bolstering of patriotism through a public interest in the military occurred simultaneously with the press reporting enthusiastically upon the arrival of a new SAN ship or SAAF aircraft purchase, or often front page-type treatment of SADF participation during national or other events. For example when the third and last of the navy’s new frigates arrived in Cape Town from the UK on 26 September 1964, crowds lined Signal Hill and the surrounding heights. The SAS President Pretorius was met by four other frigates and destroyers, besides formations of Mirages, Sabres and Vampire jet fighters. The Transvaal-based Afrikaans newspaper *Die Vaderland* produced a vivid photographic display of the frigate being welcomed under a banner headline: “Another fist for the SA Navy” and reported that “the air display by the Mirages was the highlight of the biggest demonstration of South Africa’s maritime strike power yet seen in Cape Town.”⁹⁷⁴

The military and public welcome given for the frigate’s arrival can also be understood in the context of white insecurities to the arms embargo enforced by traditional allies Britain

⁹⁷⁴ *Die Vaderland*, 3 October 1964, p.3. Also see Bennett, *Three Frigates The South African Navy comes of Age*, p.57.

and the USA. Also dominating both English and Afrikaans press at the time was the aftermath of the Rivonia trial, besides the arrest and trials of African Resistance Movement (ARM) members and leading South African Communist Party fugitive Braam Fischer. The press had devoted considerable attention to the ARM trials and that of station bomber John Harris. The SADF displayed its maritime strike potential for the white public, for not only did it make interesting public viewing, but the press had long reported upon the perceived conventional military threats to the republic.

In this and other ways, new arms acquisitions were open to inspection by white taxpayers, while the growing pool of future national service recruits also received exposure. The highly publicised weapon additions helped to give the SADF a rejuvenated status it had not enjoyed amongst the white community during the 1950s. There were several naval acquisitions during the 1950s as well as aircraft (Sabres and Vampires) and Centurion tanks. As explained in chapter one these were intended largely to equip a South Africa expeditionary force to assist Britain in the event of war in the Middle East. However, this idea eventually fell away as British strategic policy changed, with much of the equipment either mothballed or sold. As the SADF's public status was low at the time, there was not the same interest as during the 1960s when new equipment arrived, material which was also modern, unlike the aircraft and some of the 1950s ships whose obsolescence was one of the reasons necessitating frantic SADF rearmament during the emerging 'threat perceptions' of the new decade. The 1960s witnessed the SADF receiving significant coverage in the press, while the extensive involvement by the military in public displays was coupled to its identification as an important manifestation

of republican nationhood. SADF public displays of weaponry and ‘live ammunition’ demonstrations had also been exhibited during the 1950s, but definitely increased in frequency after 1960.⁹⁷⁵

There had been a large military display held on 30 May 1955 near Swartkop, Pretoria for Union Day. On this occasion, the UDF Inspector General H. B. Klopper explained how the Defence Force had maintained a *boeregewoonte* – literally “farmer’s habit” of “weapon’s shows”. Klopper announced that the government had decided to conduct such military extravagances every five years, possibly then hence the massive live ammunition public demonstration held outside Bloemfontein on 31 May 1960.⁹⁷⁶ (See chapter one, pp 51-52) These displays had continued regularly during World War Two and particularly for recruiting purposes amongst Afrikaners as Grundlingh has shown.⁹⁷⁷ This dissertation contends that the SADF also provided such public military displays as a tacit reassurance to the white community, besides displaying the force’s efficiency and integrating it with the white public’s collective consciousness. Such displays were far more easily assimilated when ostensibly presented as entertainment just as the World War Two recruiting campaigns had been. But they also played the roles of demonstrating state military power and promoting national pride amongst the white community via the SADF.

⁹⁷⁵ Such can be clearly ascertained when working through all the issues of the official SADF magazine Commando from 1949 to 1969.

⁹⁷⁶ Commando, July 1955, p.35.

⁹⁷⁷ See Grundlingh, The King’s Afrikaners?, pp 355-357.

The military's capacity to stage such spectacular "shows" assisted its "popularization" amongst the white community and this became part a process whereby the white community would be cautiously introduced to viewing military service as an important part of their own duty, protection and lives. Both Afrikaner and 'English' support and interest in the military was demonstrated through various civic organisations calling on the SADF to perform various displays at a range of commemorative and other occasions. This also reinforces the contention that as the SADF became a more visible entity it was also being viewed as 'theirs' by the white public. Regular applications for SADF participation in public events continued throughout the early 1960s, to the point where many requests from organisations and town councils had to be turned down. The most innocuous of occasions sometimes resulted in the SADF receiving a call, like a request from the Harrismith Municipality in June 1964, asking for a display of jet fighters to mark the occasion of the opening of a new tar road from the town to the Rand. The Commandant General's Office rejected it, not only because the occasion failed the criteria laid down for air-displays, but also because the SAAF were already overloaded with such appeals that it was becoming impossible to comply with them all.⁹⁷⁸ Hiemstra personally vetoed a similar request from the Belfast Municipality, celebrating their 75th Anniversary in March 1965, for an air and paratrooper display, citing that the defence minister in August 1963 had already made it clear that only 100 and 150-year commemorations would occasion SADF participation.⁹⁷⁹

⁹⁷⁸ Box 459, KG Gp5, 37, SAW deelname: aerial display: official opening of tarred road from Harrismith to the Rand, Department of Defence Documentation Centre, Pretoria.

⁹⁷⁹ Box 459, KG Gp 5, KG/SER/10 Militêre Deelname: 75 jarige bestaan: Belfast, Department of Defence Documentation Centre, Pretoria..

Afrikaner nationalist occasions that drew large crowds ensured that both Hiemstra and SADF were never far from the newspaper front pages. Hiemstra also found himself invited to address the exclusive Durban “Wings” club in June 1965, which held an air show that included a huge aerial display by SAAF aircraft watched by 180 000 people.⁹⁸⁰ Such occasions also collectively contributed to the “popularisation” of the SADF amongst the white community. The SADF was regularly the prominent, indeed usually dominant, official presence at commemorative and national occasions, while the white “reconciliation” theme was often included within proceedings. The 11 July 1964 unveiling of the Spioenkop Monument to the *burgers* who had fallen in the Boer War battle, epitomised the popularised direction of the Afrikaner-run Republic regarding the broader white community. English and Afrikaner were projected as one, but emphatically under Afrikaner nationalist leadership and its policies. State President C.R. Swart referred to the perceived urgency of a common white nationhood, a point of his speech directly emphasised in the Commando report:

We are no longer Boer and Brit – we are South Africans...we honour the graves on Spioenkop, but we must direct our eyes towards the future.⁹⁸¹

The SADF role in the 1966 Republic Day Festivities

During the fifth anniversary republican celebrations in May 1966, thousands of white citizens in Pretoria watched a military march-past of nearly 20 000 troops, together with columns involving several hundred tanks, armoured cars, trucks and artillery with Hiemstra travelling in the lead vehicle. Overhead the parade hundreds of aircraft

⁹⁸⁰ Hiemstra, Die Wilde Haf, p. 285 and 303.

⁹⁸¹ Commando, August 1964, pp 66-67.

thundered across the sky, including the air force's most modern acquisitions.⁹⁸² It was an impressive military display for white public consumption, pride and their enhanced sense of security, again documenting the remarkably successful 1960s "popularisation" of the SADF. Thousands of white South Africans travelled to view this Republic Day spectacle, which served as the finale of the celebrations centred around the Voortrekker Monument amphitheatre; many camping overnight or travelling through the night to the site by train or vehicle. The Cape Times reported that:

Before sunrise, already thousands of people were huddled around camp fires...the air was thick with smoke and the aroma of coffee. Flags fluttered in the breeze, a carnival atmosphere prevailed and the military organisers worked hard to control the arriving crowds.⁹⁸³

There were scores of celebratory items concerning the Republic Day program, but the military proceedings easily towered over those others held in Pretoria, while the parade was the main reporting focus within the national press. Under an editorial headline of "On parade for peace", the Cape Times attempted a cautiously optimistic assessment of the parade not being intended as a demonstration of military prowess and aggression. This was at odds with the front-page headline: "S.A. Shows World her Might". The editorial intimated that peace was Verwoerd's intention and shared by "all South Africans, "although there are many outside who believe or profess to believe the contrary".⁹⁸⁴ Even taking into account its flourishing propagandistic style, Commando described scenes that demonstrated the power of mass military parades in creating mass nationalist fervour through the spectacular visual impact which military equipment can

⁹⁸² Commando, July 1966, pp 6-11.

⁹⁸³ Cape Times, 1 June 1966, p.1.

⁹⁸⁴ *Ibid*, p.12.

create. And no more so than during this entirely white South African celebration, occurring as it did against white prosperity and illusions of political and military security.

At 10h42, the mechanised column...began rolling past the saluting base. In the lead vehicle was the Commandant-General SADF,...R.C. Hiemstra...Few, if any, of the crowd estimated at 750 000, failed to thrill at the thunder of the tanks of the Armoured Regiment...Marching with measured treads in ranks of nine abreast they came, battalion after battalion and the mighty crowd thrilled and applauded as they glimpsed the shoulder insignia...of famous regiments...At 11h28, on schedule, the fly-past of aircraft of the SAAF began...Special cheers went up...as the new jet trainer, 'Impala' made her public debut, rolling, climbing and twisting in the Transvaal sky...as South African as the veld itself...The Sabre aerobatic team brought gasps of praise as flying in perfect precision they traced a smoke pattern of Orange, White and Blue. A massed fly-past of 201 aircraft was brought to a thrilling climax by a spectacular 'bomb-burst' by the acrobatic team. At noon, a 21-gun salute crashed out above the strains of the National Anthem played by the massed bands.⁹⁸⁵

Verwoerd was reported elsewhere as making it entirely clear that white 'unity', separate development and political conformity were phenomena to be defended, if necessary by force of arms:

Tonight I am not dealing with the wreckers. I am speaking to the builders. Five eventful years have passed and many people who were not prepared for the constitutional development that had taken place were now happy that it had come to pass...What is there to look back for? Let us align ourselves into one nation and let us defend that nation with all that we have...To those who cannot accept South Africa as it is and as it grows, but seek to change it into something wholly new with the resultant chaos, as elsewhere in Africa, I have nothing to say...The Republic was part of the domain of the white man in the world.⁹⁸⁶

⁹⁸⁵ Commando, July 1966, pp 6-7.

⁹⁸⁶ The Cape Times, 1 June 1966, p.3.

The Star was more forthright in celebrating the military grandeur of the parade by headlining it as “South Africa Shows Might in Vast Parade” – with a “massive and spectacular display” of our armed might.⁹⁸⁷ Hiemstra had wanted a parade which he felt would compare to that of the French Armed Forces on Bastille Day, sending a clear message to the “black nations of Africa who had thought possibly they could take us over with their bare hands. Certainly not after that day (of the parade)”.⁹⁸⁸ The SADF was also prominent at other Republic Day Shows – Commando published an article entitled “SA Bastion of the South” referring to the Defence Force display at the Republic Festival Show at Milner Park in Johannesburg.⁹⁸⁹ The term “Bastion of the South” or “Vesting in die Suide” was the title of a propaganda film released two years earlier, promoting the SADF as guarding the country’s “multi-national” community and western interests, as the “world endeavours to counter an alien ideology” (communism).⁹⁹⁰ The Cape Times reported on hundreds of people crowding to board the new navy frigates visiting the city docks for a week as part of the Republic Festival.⁹⁹¹ The paper also gave the SADF prominence in its ‘Festival Supplement’, remarking favourably on the organisations marked growth since 1960-1961. This paper demonstrated continued interest in the SADF that in itself must have reflected increased white public interest.

The five years since the founding of the Republic have seen the most phenomenal growth in its Defence Force’s, potential and

⁹⁸⁷ The Star, 1 June 1966.

⁹⁸⁸ Hiemstra, Die Wilde Haf, pp 310-311.

⁹⁸⁹ Commando, June 1966, p.12.

⁹⁹⁰ Document entitled “Department of Information- Proposed Main Film Program For 1962-63”; File KG/GC/5/1, “Rolprentvervaardiging Vesting in Die Suide”, KG Gp 5, Box 200, Department of Defence Documentation Centre, Pretoria.

⁹⁹¹ Cape Times, 16 May 1966, p.1.

expenditure. The Defence Budget has been increased immensely from R45.8m spent in 1960-61, to more than R232m in 1964-65. Army, Air Force and navy strengths were increased – the Permanent Force grew by 65.5% - new units formed, Citizen Force and Commando strengths boosted and air commandos established. The Republic's forces have been equipped for their role in guarding the country's 3100 miles of frontier and 2500 miles of coastline, while internal security is in the hands of a modern expanded police force.⁹⁹²

The 1966 Republic Day SADF parade and other events reflected an emerging white South African and particularly Afrikaner solidarity within a military context. But it also was a hugely successful public relations exercise that Hiemstra had initiated, just as compulsory military conscription for all white male school-leavers loomed closer. Businesses also associated themselves with the growing SADF public presence. For example, the South African Mutual Life Assurance Company produced a full page advertisement portraying three of the SAAF's new Buccaneers jets, accompanied by a caption:

CONFIDENCE: Five years have passed since the birth of our Republic. They have witnessed an enrichment of our South African way of life, and a firm determination to defend our heritage. The Republic looks confidently towards the future.⁹⁹³

A Commando advertisement in June 1967 from the oil company BP presented a display feature "BP Salutes our Fleet" with a large photo of SA Navy ensign on the stern of one of the new frigates, followed by another warship in the background;⁹⁹⁴ this on occasion of the navy's 21st anniversary of its official inception. (See illustrations)

⁹⁹² Cape Times, 30 May 1966, Festival Supplement.

⁹⁹³ Cape Times, 30 May 1966, p.5.

⁹⁹⁴ Commando, June 1967 – this advertisement was displayed throughout following editions and in the press. (See illustrations).

Merging white community ‘militarization’ and SADF ‘popularisation’

After the successful security police operations against the ANC and the ARM, along with Bram Fischer’s arrest and conviction, Afrikaner right-wing and government obsessions with communism and internal subversives intensified further. Vorster’s appointment as Prime Minister meant that the most conservative elements with the NP had a securocrat in the premier’s office and security legislation became even harsher by 1967, where the police could detain anyone considered a ‘terrorist’ until they were satisfied otherwise.⁹⁹⁵ This is relevant in the SADF context because coupled to the Rule of Law being eroded; white South African males were compelled through legislation to give more of their time to military training.

Callistair has made some interesting deductions in suggesting that by 1967 national service was one under sufferance by some, citing comments from a parliamentary speech the same year, referring to the retiring Chief of the Army, Lt Gen Jacobs complaining that substantial numbers of trainees were entering the military “in a spirit of resistance”.⁹⁹⁶ Callistair’s point that the military by the mid-1960s was perceived as an intrusion amongst at least part of the white community is valid. But there was not only no significant resistance to the imposition of compulsory national service, but to an extent, SADF ‘militarization’ and ‘popularization’ of the white community were merging, even if it was hardly a venerated national institution by all. This is evident by the mass public

⁹⁹⁵ See Giliomee, *The Afrikaners*, pp 550-551.

⁹⁹⁶ Callistair, *Compliance, Compulsion and Contest; Aspects of Military Conscription in South Africa, 1952-1992*, p. 46, quoting Hansard (1967) Vol. 21, Column 7452

enthusiasm for military shows, as described above and the SADF's centrality in being able to invoke demonstrative white patriotism over security issues. By the end of our period, the SADF had certainly announced its presence in ways that were hardly as apparent in 1960. By the conclusion of the decade, the SADF was starting to be given a louder nationalistic purpose by the NP government, who were blending national service obligations with a definition of patriotism that was being defined strictly within their political party terms and objectives.

It is also pertinent to note that by 1967-68, the SADF's perceptions of external intervention or internal black uprising had a less dramatic impact in the white public mind than earlier in the decade, with the waning of the first and the government's crushing of internal black nationalist militant organisations. The SADF was shifting its attention to the first low-key guerrilla infiltration in SWA and clandestine involvement in anti-black nationalist military operations in neighbouring states. The government's stress upon white unity during the post-republic period had also to an extent abated by the late 1960s. The general white view was that a strong Defence Force remained a necessity to deal with potentially communist inspired threats from without or within. However, despite some public objections towards how military service was sometimes conducted, there is no doubt the SADF towards the end of the 1960s had undergone a marked popularisation shift in six years. It had become a more vivid entity in the white public mind, as the Cape Times optimistically asserted by mid-1966:

Another important change...has come into the attitude of the ordinary man in the street towards the armed forces. Previously

he was inclined to look down upon them. This was all changed and now he takes a real interest.⁹⁹⁷

Conclusion

It has been the main purpose of this chapter to show how amidst triumphant Afrikaner republicanism and growing white prosperity there was increased white community interest and participation in the SADF. There has also been an attempt to demonstrate how the SADF projected an assurance to white South Africans that their republic had both an effective guardian and an impressive symbol of state. Military displays were watched and admired by whites and by Afrikaners in particular, many of whom were once estranged from the military, now whose fathers, sons and uncles made up the larger proportion of SADF personnel. The imperative behind republicanism to unite the two white language groups behind Verwoerd's government was endorsed through the operation of the SADF and regularly bulwarked via its official publication Commando. Despite the parliamentary acknowledgement of abuses within the SADF, particularly that by junior instructors, Fouché tried to keep ahead of opposition criticism through the Groenewoud Commission, although this was really intended to investigate a more efficient expansion of compulsory white military service.

The SADF's increasingly high profile amongst the white community would continue to rise during the decades to come. Whether whites during the 1960s would have fought en masse against an invader to maintain political control, as implied by Alexander, is not

⁹⁹⁷ Cape Times, 2 May 1966, p.12.

clear.⁹⁹⁸ But considering the conformism of the time and the interest besides involvement in the military by sections of the community, such a mass resistance was certainly plausible. The mobilization of South African whites during the first part of the 1960s for the SADF was a complex process, prompted by deliberate policy decisions taken at cabinet level and then enacted through SADF command structures. But there is also no doubt that whites were in general receptive and certainly not obstructive to this process and by 1966 there had been considerable additions in military equipment, manpower and strategic thinking, which complemented increased white withdrawal into a defensive mode.

⁹⁹⁸ Alexander, M., The Militarization of South African White Society, 1948-94, *Scientia Militaria*, Vol. 30 (2), 2000, pp 281-282.

Conclusion

As with the Afrikaner republics during 1895-1899 when the South African Republic (SAR) was increasingly at odds with Britain, the Afrikaner-run republic of the 1960s also felt the winds of change and isolation. Like the late nineteenth century Orange Free State and SAR, their 1960s successor responded amidst rumours of war with increased attention to its defence. At the end of World War Two the war-weary white South African community hardly represented a likely grouping conducive to any form of state coercion towards any state directed program involving militarization, yet the start of such a process occurred two decades later. The 1960s SADF military threat perceptions forms the historical context against which this dissertation has attempted to examine aspects of white South Africa and defence. Varied sources have been utilised in combinations not previously encountered in writings on this topic, including formally classified documentation, recollections of SADF members from the period and a wide assortment of secondary sources. The latter include extensive use of the press, biographical writings, official and popular publications, besides film material.

This thesis has contended that despite some operational problems and a significant degree of public objections to both the personal inconveniences or management of conscription, the SADF still transformed during 1960-1968 into becoming a higher priority state institution, a process that accentuated further during the 1970s and 1980s. Understanding how the chosen decade's military threat perceptions impacted upon both the Defence Force and white South African society, assists us in attaining clearer historical insight

into this community's political behaviour. Security concerns became crucial components in promoting a discernable white South African cohesion of conservative political opinion, which also fuelled increased military and national defensiveness. White South African alarm, regarding both external and internal enemies, was endorsed further by the visible SADF counter strategies taken, including both rearming and conscription. These latter two changes were regularly portrayed within the local media for the white community to ingest and speculate over, along with the various SADF threat appraisals. Selected information on military plans, infrastructure and equipment purchased to deter and if necessary repel potential aggressors, was made public knowledge by government to alert (if not alarm) the white public how national security perspectives were changing.

Threat appraisals details placed in public within summarised forms, included the highly implausible "African threat". There seems little doubt that the government used its politicians to deliberately whip the white community together, thereby hoping to increase NP support at the polls. Many examples of government statements illustrate as such, which resulted in the official UP opposition which was conservative on defence issues, often with difficulty having to illustrate it was in no way 'soft' when commenting upon white South African security. Curiously, the government claiming priority for white citizens' loyalty on national defence, reduced the degree to which the opposition could criticise both the NP's appeals for white republican solidarity behind the SADF and even UP criticism of government racial policies. This dissertation has used the terms "tentative white unity" and "white nationalism"; describing phenomena that it contends manifested by deliberate NP government usage of the SADF, during a cautious but steady

mobilization of the white community during the first decade of republic. It suggests further that this creeping militarization was a marked change in the relationship between the SADF and white community, compared with the 1950s, when the SADF was the focus of intra-white political conflict and occupied a lower national profile.

Groundwork was undoubtedly laid by the government during the 1960s that prepared white South Africans to accept, if not also respect and amongst the vast majority, fully collaborate with the SADF. Through politicians, the SADF and the media, the white community were drawn into a defensive but existent solidarity in their reacting to supposedly potential war situations. Both the English and Afrikaans press endorsed security concerns by earnestly and enthusiastically reporting upon defence issues during the 1960s; this point being asserted as one of several verifications of the heightened public interest in the SADF. Considerable referencing within this thesis to formally classified documentation also provides evidence of the extent to which the military interpreted 1960s external threats to the republic and SWA; creating in response various counter strategies.

One of the most important counter strategies and a feature of the incipient militarization of white South Africa during the 1960s, was the advent of white male conscription for all school-leavers by their eighteenth year; a development that is inextricably connected to Commandant General Rudolph Hiemstra's career. From the 1950s, Hiemstra had openly shifted from the serving military officer's traditional (British-originated) public stance of political neutrality, to adopt an overt political image. Bolstered by his Afrikaner

nationalist credentials and his unique position as a leading military figure within his Afrikaner nationalists, Hiemstra's politicking received tacit support from the government. Hiemstra played an important role in championing an SADF that embodied the characteristics of a "*volksweermag*" or a Republican Defence Force, inclusive of both white language groups, but unlike the pre-1948 UDF, under explicit Afrikaner nationalist leadership. The army in particular transformed into being a predominantly Afrikaans organisation in terms of its members and identity. No publication or writings have to this author's knowledge, analysed the role of Hiemstra in the development of a "republican military culture" amongst the South African white community during the 1960s and early 70s. Neither has the SADF and its relationship with the white community during this period been closely examined against the context of the "popularisation" and militarization issues discussed within this thesis. These features during the 1960s, elevated local military affairs amongst white South Africans current affairs perceptions and it is hoped this examination of them constitutes some original contribution towards our understanding of aspects of white South African social history during the first decade of the Republic.

The Second World War and its broader impact upon South Africa was a mere twenty years or less distance from the 1960s. This thesis has also tried to demonstrate that this formed a significant context regarding our understanding the dynamics amongst white South Africans and the SADF during the 1960s. Both English and Afrikaans ex-servicemen and their communities had either participated in, or lived through World War Two, while the trainees of our period were either born during the war or shortly

afterwards. Therefore, the two white communities inevitably used the war, which had such profound political consequences for South Africa, as one important reference point for comprehending the changing circumstances that the SADF found itself in during the 1960s. Echoes of wartime squabbles and white political divisions of twenty years earlier remained and the government tried to temper these to its advantage. Where plausible, some old differences were diverted by endorsing white commonalities of purpose in their supposedly protecting the republic against a range of perceived threats.

English-speaking ex-servicemen, although somewhat fissured in terms of their political opinions, were in the main supportive of the military's outlook of bolstering national defences against "threats". This thesis suggests that the fathers of the first generation of English-speaking conscripts, despite some having perhaps reservations about the Afrikaner-dominated army, still accepted if not even fully supported their sons' conscription into the SADF. There were certainly never any significant public objections to such training. This was partly a consequence of a socialisation 'rite of passage' regarding the 'appropriateness' of young men serving their country as soldiers. It was also plausible that many white South Africans understood the "military threats" to the republic or SWA, as synonymous with those associated with the 1930s and 1940s European dictators. When African and Asian spokespersons uttered threats against the republic through the international media, white South Africans largely perceived them as dictatorial, irrational, aggressive and potentially dangerous to (white) 'civilisation'. Such views were also held in common by most South African whites; therefore, the SADF threat perceptions did not appear entirely implausible, at least in the public mind.

For Afrikaners, the 1960s also marked a curious return to aspects of the World War Two issues, as they had effected this community. During the two world wars, where South Africans had fought alongside the British Empire/Commonwealth, the attendant memories and sacrifices were not remembered or commemorated amongst Afrikaners as a community, as occurred so vividly and regularly within the English-speaking grouping. World War Two remained a sensitive issue amongst white South Africans, but in terms of raising the SADF's profile amongst them to promote the purported white republican unity, there also had to be some government approved view of the South African military's history. Therefore, in the 1960s the NP and its attendant supporting publications like Commando and Huisgenoot played down the historic Afrikaner divisions over participation or non-participation in 1939-1945. As this thesis suggests, the Second World War even underwent a kind of "part-rehabilitation" in the government-supporting media. For the sake of white unity, the government supported attempts to show that the conflict also contained components of which white South Africans could collectively be proud of, in terms of their involvement.

The government had virtually no defence expertise and experience of its own. Prominent Second World War neutralists like Verwoerd, Vorster, Fouché and Botha, leant heavily upon the knowledge of war veterans like Commandant General Piet Grobbelaar, Vice Adm Hugo Biermann, Maj Gen Nic Bierman, Lt Gen Charles Fraser and others, in formulating any military responses to those threats the new republic was assumed to be facing. In any event, many senior SADF officers were either effectively government

supporters by the 1960s, or certainly endorsed its views on defence, which on matters of potential threats, seldom differed substantially from those held by the UP parliamentary opposition. At a more overt political level, some Afrikaner nationalists still stridently demanded priority in the SADF. This thesis argues that the grooming of Hiemstra from 1948 and his appointment as Deputy SADF Chief in 1960, and as SADF Commandant General by late 1965, actually partly completed Erasmus's controversial 1950s republicanisation of the Defence Force. Simultaneously, the new Defence Minister Jim Fouché, while assuring English-speakers particularly, that only merit would count in promotions and appointments, also had to balance these against political realities where Broederbond and NP considerations still pressed for special preferences in the SADF for Afrikaner nationalists.

During the first half of the decade, Hiemstra effectively played the role of a kind of SADF senior political commissar, while Commandant General Grobbelaar and the rest of the General Staff advised Fouché on defence preparedness. Had South Africa been involved in a war, the government would have depended upon the SADF's war veterans as the most experienced potential combat formation commanders. The 1960s defence uncertainties therefore brought the Republican government politicians, once so hostile to South African involvement in World War Two, ironically now heavily reliant upon the very men whose war service the NP had once spurned. The government was comprised of members who had objected so vehemently to South Africa's war participation that were now themselves dependent upon that very experience attained by men whom Erasmus's controversial 1950s changes had attempted to marginalise. The UDF's

acclaimed role in World War Two was shifted by the 1960s into the SADF being perceived in some international political circles as backing a regime akin to that which it had fought in North Africa and Italy. But whatever their politics, most SADF officers responded with detached professionalism to South Africa's national and international political circumstances that had altered so much between 1945 to the 1960s. In general, SADF officers with war experience endorsed the government's strategies to promote a kind of white unity and 'nationalism', whereby political differences amongst South African whites were certainly at a military level, largely subsumed in the official reactions to perceived urgencies in issues concerning national defence. If anything, "white South African nationalism" was probably more evident in the SADF than any other state entity at the time.

Despite those within both white communities, who for differing reasons were still uneasy about the military, after 1960 white South Africans generally started accepting the SADF, even if in some cases tepidly, as a 'necessary' reality in their lives. This occurred regardless of the over-bearing presence of triumphalist Afrikaner nationalism, including its curbing of civil liberties and violation of the rule of law to crush extra-parliamentary political opposition. New defence priorities, like for example the SADF military threat perceptions following strident Afro-Asian objections to republican racial policy, meant the government had to at least partially reverse Erasmus's SADF Afrikanerisation policies, particularly regarding alleged low morale and perceptions of political favouritism. In terms of its fears for white survival and the SADF potential protective role, the government wanted to avoid further complications within the military. Under

Fouché's direction, based clearly upon Verwoerd's broader republican strategy of drawing whites closer, the SADF attempted to appear more inclusive of English-speakers, including incorporating aspects of the military traditions from both white communities. However, Afrikaner nationalist leadership and dominance did not markedly reduce within the organisation. Although Fouché was to appoint several senior English-speaking officers into some significant responsibility positions, there was never intended to occur any sharing of responsibility, to an extent that might dilute Afrikaner nationalist political goals or cohesion. At a party political level, although the 'white English' did not shift in mass across to the NP, they also did not embrace another popular strategy for white survival and neither was any offered in what would have appeared to them as a plausible form by the UP and Progressive Party parliamentary opposition. Neither of the two white communities were historically overwhelmingly military-orientated, but both still retained past military-cultural components; from the English historic associations to CF regiments to the Afrikaner cultural attachment regarding their historic commando heritage. These were factors which the SADF tried to amplify and utilise in reforming its own white republican identity.

Therefore the NP had to work towards some kind of rapprochement with those former SADF members alienated during the 1950s and the thousands of whites who had voted 'No' during the October 1960 republican referendum and still remained suspicious of Afrikaner nationalist intentions. Therefore, the government compromised and through Fouché worked at rebuilding the SADF's combat capability and its public image to appear to be inclusive. The NP retained firm political management of the SADF, but

attempted some pragmatism in affirming English-speaking members where this advanced the organisation's effectiveness and the government's political aims.

International and internal circumstances during the 1960s ensured that the government was galvanised into viewing the military as pivotal in defending both South Africa and NP policies. The SADF was used by the government as an instrument whereby it was hoped, confidence and morale for the republic's future could be built amongst the white populace across historically conflicting political lines and also where a 'white nationalism' and national pride might be bolstered through making the SADF more 'public' and 'popularised'. The 1960s also marked the beginnings of a slow ebbing regarding Afrikaner nationalist community fervour as urbanisation, prosperity and consumerism, ubiquitously competed with NP imperatives of patriotism and *volk* unity. Although not immediately discernable, Afrikaner nationalist political energy had peaked, just as economic prosperity became an attractive diversion to continual political enthusiasm. This also impacted upon the SADF where both amongst Afrikaans and 'English' balloted conscripts, large numbers applied to postpone or avoid military service for career or professional reasons. Neither was the military a particularly popular choice of career for young white males, attributed to it providing salaries and careers that could not compete with those offered in civilian employment. .

Conscription also played a role of asserting a conservative Afrikaner political socialisation, particularly during the latter part of the 1960s, emphasising amongst thousands of young men the 'virtues' of patriotism and warnings against external and

internal enemies, particularly those purportedly ‘communist-inspired’. In this way, the SADF undoubtedly reinforced defensiveness throughout white society and such was also transmitted with varying success to the white English-community. Although there were scores of institutional differences between the Afrikaans and English white South African communities in terms of schools, universities, businesses, newspapers and churches, to list just a few, the ‘English’ remained politically largely conservative. Without any mass enthusiasm, they accepted their role in defence; with the CF regiments in particular and individuals amongst the most senior ranks making significant contributions. After their diminished post-1948 role within the SADF, the ‘English’ in the 1960s received new official ‘approval’ within the SADF, while the government also drew additional political support from this grouping. Fouché worked at soothing past historic frictions and avoided where possible, public dwelling upon previous white political conflict in the military. His approach to defence was often loudly acclaimed by the English press and UP, who commended the minister’s ‘merit only’ policy regarding promotions. This enthusiastic media reaction, also demonstrated how some ‘English’ whites were also drawn to varying degrees into something like a sense of “republican belonging” and an acquiescence regarding the NP’s republican strategy of drawing whites together under Afrikaner nationalist leadership.

Afrikaner nationalist attempts to ‘claim’ the SADF as ‘theirs’ still continued during the 1960s, ironically in parallel to Fouché’s efforts at white unity. The *AKVV* activities often embraced the most defensive of *verkrampte*⁹⁹⁹ impulses regarding perceived potential

⁹⁹⁹ Literally, the most ‘narrow-minded’.

enemies of Afrikaners and most particularly those from ‘within.’ Hiemstra and the *AKVV* remained closely associated during the first half of the decade while the organisation often served as a medium to reinforce his untiring efforts to synthesise Afrikaner nationalist history, theology and militarism as an integral component of broader Afrikaner culture. This entirely sectional activity within SADF structures continued despite it not being in sync with government efforts at ‘white nation building’ for the Republic; perhaps giving an indication of just how significant Hiemstra’s Broederbond influence was within the SADF.

Also significant in understanding aspects of the SADF during the 1960s is Afrikaner nationalist historian and political analyst G. D. Scholtz, considering his indirect involvement in SADF Intelligence rationales. Scholtz also encouraged Afrikaners to view the military as “theirs”; a reversal of a previous historical situation where Afrikaner nationalists claimed feeling alienation from the Defence Force.¹⁰⁰⁰ Scholtz’s writings and how they were studied and distributed within the SADF, endorses this dissertation’s contention that a close study of the period in relation to the Defence Force is significant in terms of our deeper understanding regarding South African civil-military relations. Scholtz who was a confidant of both Verwoerd and Hiemstra was able to write triumphantly in 1962:

¹⁰⁰⁰ This had been the trend since the 1914 Rebellion, through the strikes on the Witwatersrand culminating in the 1922 Rand Rebellion, and of course the two World Wars. There are several references but it is probably best to refer to Jooste L., F.C. Erasmus as Minister van Verdediging 1948-1959, MA thesis, UNISA, 1995, which effectively outlines Afrikaner nationalist grievances against the Union Defence Force as an endorsement of Erasmus’s policies.

The spirit of the Defence Force today is such that the Afrikaner can in all respects feel at home. The most intimate bonds can now be forged between volk and Defence Force.¹⁰⁰¹

Scholtz's work also encouraged Afrikaners to view their own *volk* history within a wider global context. He urged Afrikaners to resist that which he perceived diluted the 'purity' of their nationalism, or that what insidiously 'threatened' Afrikanerdom in the longer term, including his understandings of 'communism' and 'liberalism'. Such were amongst the 'forces' against which the most conservative individuals within Afrikaner institutions rallied during the mid-1960s to 'resist'. Similar elements within the SADF also tried to align the organisation with this *verkrampte* faction and the AKVV became one such vehicle for extreme opinions. But more particularly, this thesis has tried to show that Scholtz's writings clearly influenced SADF threat appraisals rationales, particularly concerning the UN General Assembly hostility to South Africa and his contention that UN military intervention in South Africa was inevitable, given the process he described as "equalisation" being resisted by the South African government. The extent to which the SADF annually appraised a potential UN military threat is evidence of how seriously such was assumed, even though it is clear this "threat" diminished amongst military intelligence priorities by the mid-1960s. As isolation, international marginalisation and hostility still dominated the media throughout the decade the SADF continued to secretly consider the implication of armed international intervention.

¹⁰⁰¹ Scholtz, Die Republiek van Suid Afrika en die Wêreld, p.63.

The narrow voting majority in republican favour by South African whites during the October 1960 republican referendum was undoubtedly facilitated to a significant extent by their shock at concurrent events in the Congo, where white communities were abused and even massacred by African nationalists. This white South African survival nightmare scenario, of their at some future date being treated likewise, also occurred against white alarm as black South Africans expressed their own grievances most vividly during high-profile early 1960s outbreaks of anti-state protests, sabotage campaigns and the violent incidents attributed to *Pogo*. The state's mobilisation of the white community towards some form of militarization was also facilitated by this white fear in reaction to the extremes of violence perpetrated against settlers in other parts of Africa. The Angolan uprisings during 1961 were even more violent than the Congo events in terms of the ghoulish details spread throughout the South African press. These accounts fed further into horrific white South African visions of what the future held for them if they were not properly prepared to defend themselves.

Verwoerd took a particular interest in the December 1960 appointment of Grobbelaar as Commandant General, who in turn ordered defence threat appraisals. Through NP politicians, the press disseminated superficial details thereof, of which for most of white society, lent apparent legitimacy to increased defence budgets and conscription. It was assumed by whites that rearming would ensure a credible military deterrent, regardless of how vaguely construed the conventional warfare threats were. In addition, there were a myriad of other supposedly inter-linked "enemies" and claimed internal subversion connected to black South African nationalist and communist dissenters, which the

government described as further constituting adequate justification for increased defence spending and white South African support for the SADF. The extent of vivid media coverage ensured the SADF taking an increasingly high public profile at a wide-range of public events - the huge 1966 Republic Day parade was a spectacular culmination of such. Other regular displays during various occasions of military prowess, where the SADF participation often dominated the proceedings, also meant that the white community, who were enthusiastic spectators of such events, were drawn into closer proximity with military explanations of the SADF importance in protecting them from danger.

As the 1960s were filled with constant images of the Cold War, with government spokespersons reminding of communist and terrorist 'successes' throughout Africa, such also contributed to white South African observations of such international developments impacting upon their security. There was also the emerging influence of the Third World within international relations, with the much publicised vehement criticism of apartheid, accompanied sometimes by veiled and not so veiled, threatening posturing by African and Asian representatives. Consequently, the SADF received widespread encouragement for improving its effectiveness from a range of white community groupings. Neil Orpen is cited as a particularly strident "republican military spokesman" from within the white 'English' community. This interest and involvement in the military by Afrikaners and English whites alike, along with media speculation of all the 'threats,' to some extent deflected popular thinking away from political disunities within the white community, as well as muting the inevitable failure of government racial policies and most particularly,

grand apartheid. SADF public demonstrations of its supposed prowess helped reinforce white confidence during the first uncertain years of political isolation.

However, the SADF's supposedly confident public face during our period also concealed the intense insecurity prevalent within Afrikaner nationalist politics, where the emphasis remained upon preserving Afrikaner unity and control. The period 1960 to 1968 marked the high point of achievements regarding the Afrikaner nationalist goal of Republic, with the vast majority of Afrikaners, along with a sizable minority of English-speakers voting for the NP. Although an extreme right-wing political party challenge had occurred to the NP from 1966, in the form of the *Herstigste Nasionale Party*, this splinter party was bulldozed by NP supporters during public election meetings that year and it failed to win a seat in parliament. Nevertheless, after the assassination of Verwoerd, *verkrampes* and *verligtes* factions were coming into clear existence within the Afrikaner nationalist political establishment and this also started to impact upon the SADF.

The 1960s also witnessed the implementation of Verwoerdian grand apartheid as the 'pinnacle' of separate development. All cabinet ministers, including Fouché, integrated grand apartheid into their public explanations of their portfolio decisions. Although the homeland policy brought with it particular security concerns; one of the SADF's reorganisation strategies was to concentrate new bases adjoining Bantustans and national borders, evidence of the government's attempts in spreading out resources to pre-empt internal security problems as well as external threats. The efforts to launch grand apartheid as the solution to South Africa racial conflict meant that defence issues were

also subordinated to this political goal. In short, the SADF made its presence felt amongst white South Africans, providing some reassurance for white insecurities in respect to their isolated and beleaguered global status. This is the sense that their military deterrent against threats was projected as superior to any thing which African or domestic opponents may possess. From a white South African perspective this was significant, considering that they were faced with the black majority, that by 1968 were comparatively politically docile, but where every historical guide, let alone common sense suggested that this passivity would never be indefinitely sustained.

Through the existence of a supposedly well-trained and efficient military capable of protecting 'its own', the 'improved' SADF during 1960-68 vividly portrayed itself through politicians and the media as the ultimate guardian of the country. Publicly SADF leaders projected their institution as guarding the country as one united entity. Whites were being tacitly guided to understand that this concerned their interests foremost, whether this was the 'English' community's largely comfortable lifestyle and its institutions; the Afrikaner nationalist (temporary) achievement of *volkseenheid*; Afrikaner political monopoly or the private property and prosperity of both communities. The SADF provided some panacea allowing whites to deny long-term political realities, while also ensuring a deterrent against most potential aggressors or internal black rebellion. This must have raised the confidence of many white South Africans in the government and contributed to increased electoral support for the NP during the 1966 General Election. For those whites who thought little or nothing about politics, the SADF represented a means by which they could get on with their lives, complacent in believing

their futures were protected, without their necessarily needing to take any further interest in either the military or NP policy objectives.

The 1960s defence expansion set the momentum for later military growth. The SADF was re-equipped, reorganised and remarketed for the white public's protection, participation and politically facilitated militarization during 1960 to 1968, which introduced a relationship between military and civilians that accentuated during the following two decades despite organisational problems during the decade that included various public complaints against conscription. However, during the 1960s, the SADF did not necessarily become an entirely effective organisation in terms of its own operational aims. The army in particular could not be properly prepared for any war as was loosely implied within the official classified appraisals. Besides the Walvis Bay garrison's establishment and fortification along with coastal artillery, other significant army organisational responses largely involved boosting troop numbers and the base additions already referred to. Training during the first part of the decade continued largely along conventional World War Two doctrinal lines, integrating equipment of that era with the new, although some anti-guerrilla concepts were introduced. It was clear that with the increased numbers of men balloted after 1962 the army during the next few years struggled to create adequate training programs to cover the full nine months of their service. This probably would help to at least part account for the boredom and frustrations, which transformed into some of the highly publicised cases of trainee abuse by instructors.

Therefore, the 1960s SADF only partly achieved its claimed public profile of ensuring protection for the “Bastion of the South”. Rearming, the re-structuring of the top command and later, re-orientation towards counter-insurgency as opposed to a dominant emphasis upon conventional war also occurred before the ‘Republican Defence Force’ was finally tested in battle during the mid-1970s. The 1960s witnessed the SADF obtaining substantial new conventional warfare and other equipment and there was a particular emphasis upon improving its strategically vital aerial combat capacity. From 1967 came the first clandestine SADF involvement in counter-insurgency operations within SWA, Angola and Rhodesia; but SADF battle capability came under much scrutiny during the Angolan Civil War in 1975. Limitations in artillery were revealed for the arms embargo had precluded any efforts that might have been made to replace the army’s World War Two vintage guns.

The air force and navy appeared clearer with the limits of their respective capacities and roles. The marked expansion of the SAAF from 1960 ensured that by 1968, it overshadowed all other sub-Saharan air forces combined in terms of numbers and aircraft sophistication. The enlarged SAAF provided not only the Republic’s most convincing military deterrent, but also its most impressive visual public display of capability. The SAAF’s actual air defence deficiencies were largely hidden from public view, but they still created anxieties amongst SADF commanders, as it remained very uncertain whether the air force actually could have prevented any highly concentrated aerial bombing on South African cities. The navy’s shortages of trained specialists became a reality during Capex exercises with the Royal Navy, as the SAN pursued its split roles between the

Simon's Town Agreement and national defence obligations. Potential UN military intervention on behalf of African nationalist forces was perceived by SADF planners to have a precedent in the Congo during the attempted Katanga succession. The military intervention by UN forces intended to forestall this attempt at independence by the Katanganese, included a sizable Indian Armed Forces component. This thesis has shown that the SADF were particularly watchful of India as a potentially aggressive military power, as it had already used armed force against a colonial power, namely Portugal regarding Goa. Shortly thereafter, India was sanctioned by the UN to use her military under the international organisation's auspices, to terminate Katanga's attempted break away from independent Congo. This had resulted in clashes between Belgian whites and Indian troops and in some white South Africans minds, these events seemed to presage the same occurring regarding themselves and Afro-Asians hostile to apartheid and the SWA "occupation".

By the late 1960s, pronounced official emphasis upon white unity within the SADF became less of a priority as the republic apparently prospered and internal black opposition was temporarily crushed. There was also a waning of the earlier external military threat paranoia. However, a pattern emerged up to 1968, whereby white South African society exhibited the beginnings of a militarization not evident in 1960. There had been several important changes, including full white male conscription at age eighteen and a new 'threat' identified namely "revolutionary warfare". The latter postulated particularly through (then) Lt Gen Charles Fraser's writings, whose impact upon other senior SADF officers and defence minister P.W. Botha was far reaching.

SADF priorities shifted towards more all-embracing defensive strategies involving counter-insurgency warfare, which also started to draw white South Africans closer towards the government and state objectives being increasingly indivisible. The influence of French strategist Beaufre upon Fraser's work was mentioned; within this framework, state interests were closely related to current military strategy, manifesting a new approach towards the SADF, directly informing trainees of government perceptions around 'communism', besides various other issues that conservatives throughout the western world identified as supposedly undermining society. Against a tumultuous background of student unrest within Europe and North America in the 1960s, culminating during 1968, the SADF with full white male conscription in force from that year lurched towards an enhanced alternative direction, trying to enforce more conservative conformity amongst white youth via military training and political socialisation.

There is no doubt that by the end of 1968, both the SADF and its relationship with the white community had changed from what it had been at the beginning of the decade. Fraser's concept of revolutionary warfare contributed not just to strengthening the foundations of a semi-militarised white South Africa, but also accentuated public beliefs concerning the significance of 'communist threats'. Fraser's writings were the genesis of Botha's later concept of "Total Onslaught". A 1969 survey showed that by this date, the vast majority of whites from both language groups viewed the country's greatest threats as not black political demands, but "Communist influence, Communist-inspired guerrilla

movements and Communism in black Africa”.¹⁰⁰² Unlike his two predecessors, P.W. Botha made it his business to study defence and significantly further elevate the defence ministerial portfolio amongst government priorities. With Hiemstra as SADF Chief from October 1965, an important Afrikaner nationalist leader and *Broederbond* member now occupied this top appointment until the early 1970s. Hiemstra was assisted by a combination of World War Two veterans, besides officers trained in the post-war years, all of whom bore the institutional cultural stamp of the largely Afrikaner-dominated SADF of the 1960s. The government’s original republican goal of a white South African unity around defence issues was less visible by the end of the decade. A new generation of SADF leadership also emerged in the 1960s, most particularly Magnus Malan, whose career moved significantly during this decade, along with those of several other promising younger middle-ranking officers who had joined shortly after World War Two. Being a soldier of ambition and ability, but also with his impeccable Afrikaner nationalist credentials, Malan was earmarked for top SADF leadership. He accelerated through several important intermediate appointments, particularly during the latter part of the 1960s under Botha’s ministerial tenure, being the government and Hiemstra’s “nominee” as a future SADF Chief.

Trying to adjudicate the professional competence of SADF commanders in the 1960s or the organisation’s efficiency is difficult. Arguably the 1960s defence upgrades also enabled the SADF to ascertain its operational capacity, or lack of it, although it took already mentioned deficiencies exposed by the 1975 Angolan Civil War to force further

¹⁰⁰² Giliomee, *The Afrikaners*, p.548.

important modernisation upon the SADF. However, from a military perspective one could also refer favourably to the initial spectacular tactical advances made by SADF troops in Angola during the 1975 conflict, as evidence that 1960s training programs had facilitated confidence and resourcefulness amongst its troops, despite limitations in some of their equipment. Maj Gen Phil Pretorius believed that the SADF was not of the highest quality during the early 1960s, but that money was available and its capacity had improved markedly by the end of the decade.¹⁰⁰³ While addressing the white South African public, the SADF may have exaggerated its fighting capacity in the 1960s, but there is no doubt the government made important use of it to manoeuvre increased commonality in white opinion to support NP perceptions of various military threats, thereby also drawing enlarged political support.

The SADF would demand increasingly more of white citizens during the 1970s, as Botha would take closer political control of the organisation, placing into command some of the men he identified earlier. By 1973, Malan was made Chief of the Army and he has recorded his opinion that much military preparation was still wanting by this stage, for example, that no priority list existed for the acquisition of armaments. Malan believed that equipment had been purchased haphazardly and in consequence, this issue had required further planning.¹⁰⁰⁴ After Hiemstra's 1972 retirement, Admiral Hugo Biermann was made SADF Chief, serving effectively as a stand-in prior to Malan's 1976 appointment. Biermann's term was however to coincide with several important political

¹⁰⁰³ Interview with Maj Gen P. Pretorius, 25 June 2007.

¹⁰⁰⁴ See Malan, My Life with the SA Defence Force, pp 92-93.

developments, all of which impacted significantly upon the SADF. Most of these occurrences were much more serious than what was experienced during the 1960s; including the Portuguese military withdrawal from their African colonies during 1974 and the emergence of these newly independent states; the SADF's intervention in the Angolan conflict of 1975 and the Soweto Uprising of 1976 which irrevocably changed the South African political landscape.

By the end of the 1960s, with enforced compulsory conscription, the government and SADF had completed significant propagandising groundwork that would be built upon further as hostility and threats increased to the white South African state and its racial policies. By the mid-1970s, militarization in the form of further increased conscription durations and the CF operational three month "camps" were well-established features of white South African society. Because the SADF had encountered in Angola clear limitations to its conventional war capacity,¹⁰⁰⁵ it thereafter entered a new phase of command restructuring and equipment acquisition, utilising more of the local arms industry that had its origins in the 1960s.

This work has attempted to show how the 1960s SADF substantially shifted its counter-threat preparedness, compared to its doldrums and internal conflict during the 1950s, halting the military's apparent directionless and apathetic operational purpose, readiness and capacity. It has contended that the period 1960-1968 was little researched; this

¹⁰⁰⁵ See Leopold Scholtz referring to Willem Steenkamp's writings in *Journal for Contemporary History*, Special Edition, Vol. 31, No. 3, Die Ontwikkeling van die SA Leër in die Grensoorlog, 1966-1989, pp 116-117.

despite it being when the SADF connection with the white community changed so significantly. This thesis has also attempted to investigate broader political and social backgrounds amongst the South African white community and provide more historical substance to the chosen components; particularly those detailing SADF appraisals of 1960s military threats and their impact upon the mobilization of white South Africa towards militarization. Having worked through just some of the extensive documentation on the period available in the South African National Defence Force Archives, this author would suggest that more exhaustive archival-based studies into the SADF and its operations during the 1970s still needs to be undertaken; particularly regarding the Defence Force's relationship with the white community.

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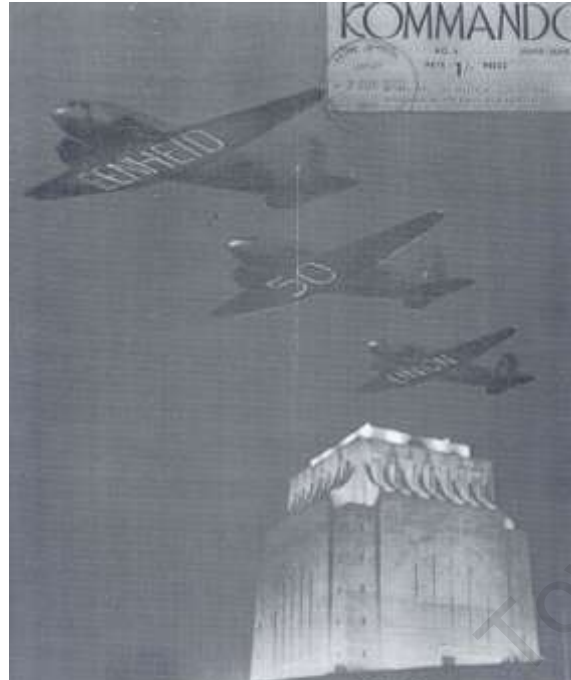
Illustrations



English-speaking South African war veterans demonstrating against the Republic in Durban in 1960. From *Die Huisgenoot*, 17 February 1961, p. 7.



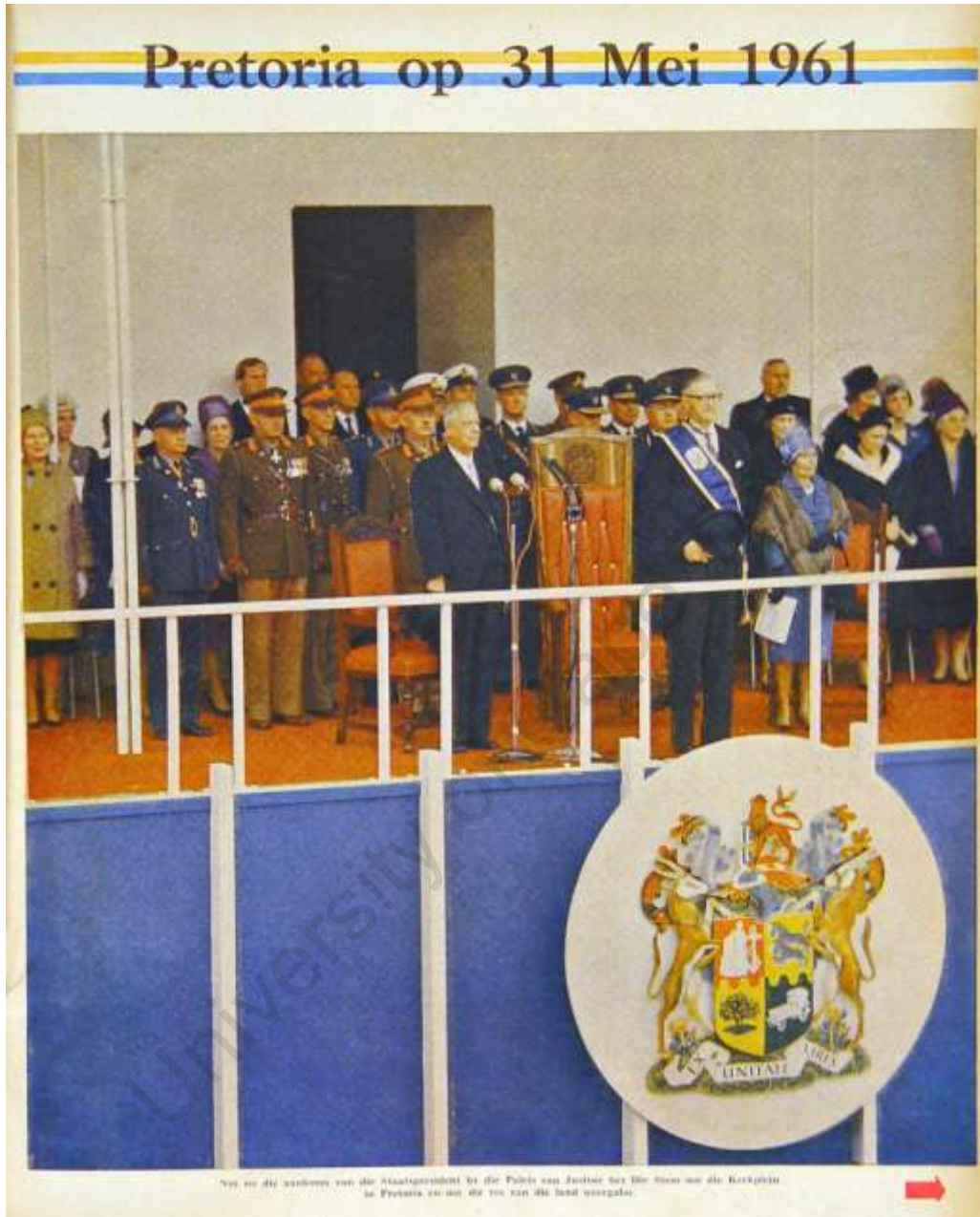
Defence Minister Jim Fouché and Commandant General S.A. Melville in 1960. (From *Commando*, January 1960, p.4.)



Commando May 1960 edition cover page: Three SAAF Dakota aircraft with “Eendheid 50 Years Unity” flying over the Voortrekker Monument in Pretoria.



The SA Army in 1960 – 1st Mobile Watch in Cape Town during the March 1960 State of Emergency; note World War Two battledress and helmets. (From Commando, April 1960, p.8.)



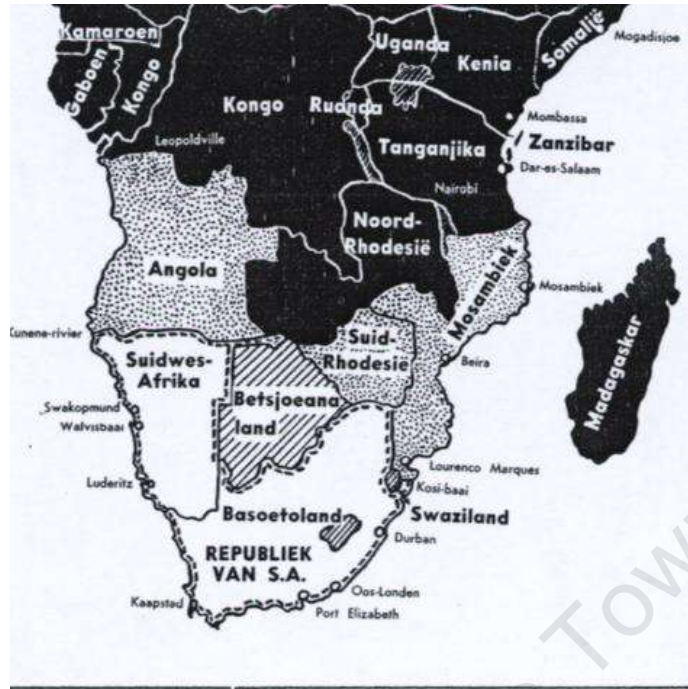
The saluting podium for the SADF march past during the official Republic ceremony in May 1961. H.F. Verwoerd flanked by his military and police officers. SADF officers from left: Deputy Commandant General Rudolf Hiemstra, Combat General Nic Bierman (Inspector General), Combat General Sybrand Engelbrecht (Army Chief of Staff), Combat General Ben Viljoen (Air Force Chief of Staff), Commandant General Piet Grobbelaar, Rear Admiral Hugo Biermann (Navy Chief of Staff) is obscured in picture. (Combat General was equivalent to Major General; one 1950s rank change that later reverted.). From: *Die Huisgenoot*, June 1961, p.41.



The Indian navy aircraft carrier *Vikrant*. Photo taken from Jane's Fighting Ships 1962-63; the SADF threat appraisers during the early 1960s were concerned this vessel might spear-head a United Nations or Afro-Asian amphibious military assault on South West Africa/Namibia through Walvis Bay.



The concrete emplacements upon which the six-inch coastal defence artillery (Namib battery) was mounted in 1962 by the SA Navy, as clandestine efforts to fortify Walvis Bay against perceived UN military threats. The signs upon the emplacements indicate that a hotel was soon to be built upon the site. Photograph taken early in 2007 by Hein Altmann, resident of Walvis Bay.



Africa – As seen by *Die Huisgenoot* 11 October 1963, p.5; map showing “black Africa” facing white South Africa and her “buffer states”.

The cover of *Die Huisgenoot*, 11 October 1963, Commandant-General Piet Grobbelaar – first caption of the topics on the cover reads: “Our Defence Force never sleeps.”





An article from Die Vaderland 22 October 1964, illustrating the Cold War articles and style so prevalent during the period in the South African press. This headline reads: “Africa today is Red China and Russia’s Chessboard.”



Die Vaderland (4 October 1964 edition) as it recorded the arrival of the navy’s third new President-class (Type-12) frigate in Cape Town. The caption reads “Another fist for the SA Navy”. Note also photos of SAAF fly pasts and white South African crowds viewing the ships arrival welcomed by other frigates and destroyers.



White South African senior military officialdom and politicians at opening of the new Pietersberg air force base in 1964. In the front row: Deputy Comdt Gen. Hiemstra; former UDF Chief of Staff Gen Sir Pierre Van Ryneveld; Minister Jim Fouché; State President Swart; Comdt Gen Grobbelaar, Lt Gen George Brink, former Comdt Gen S. A. Melville. The backrow is an assortment of current and former SADF commanders, some of the latter were bluntly marginalised in the 1950s. On extreme right, Combat Gen P. Jacobs (Army); 3rd from right, Combat Gen N. Bierman (DPO Chief); 5th from right, Combat Gen B. Viljoen (SAAF). 2nd from left is Sir Francis de Guingand, on his right, former Cmdt Gen H. Klopper, then Brig J. Durrant. (From Commando, May, 1964, p.15.)



The Devon radar scanner – part of the air defence network established in the early 1960s that took much of the decade to be made operational for the SAAF new Mirage interceptors. From Cockbain, T., Sweeping Circles in the Sky- Tom Ccckbain His personal story and experiences in the development of South Africa's post-war Radar System, Africa Aviation Series, No. 14, Freeworld Publication, 2004.



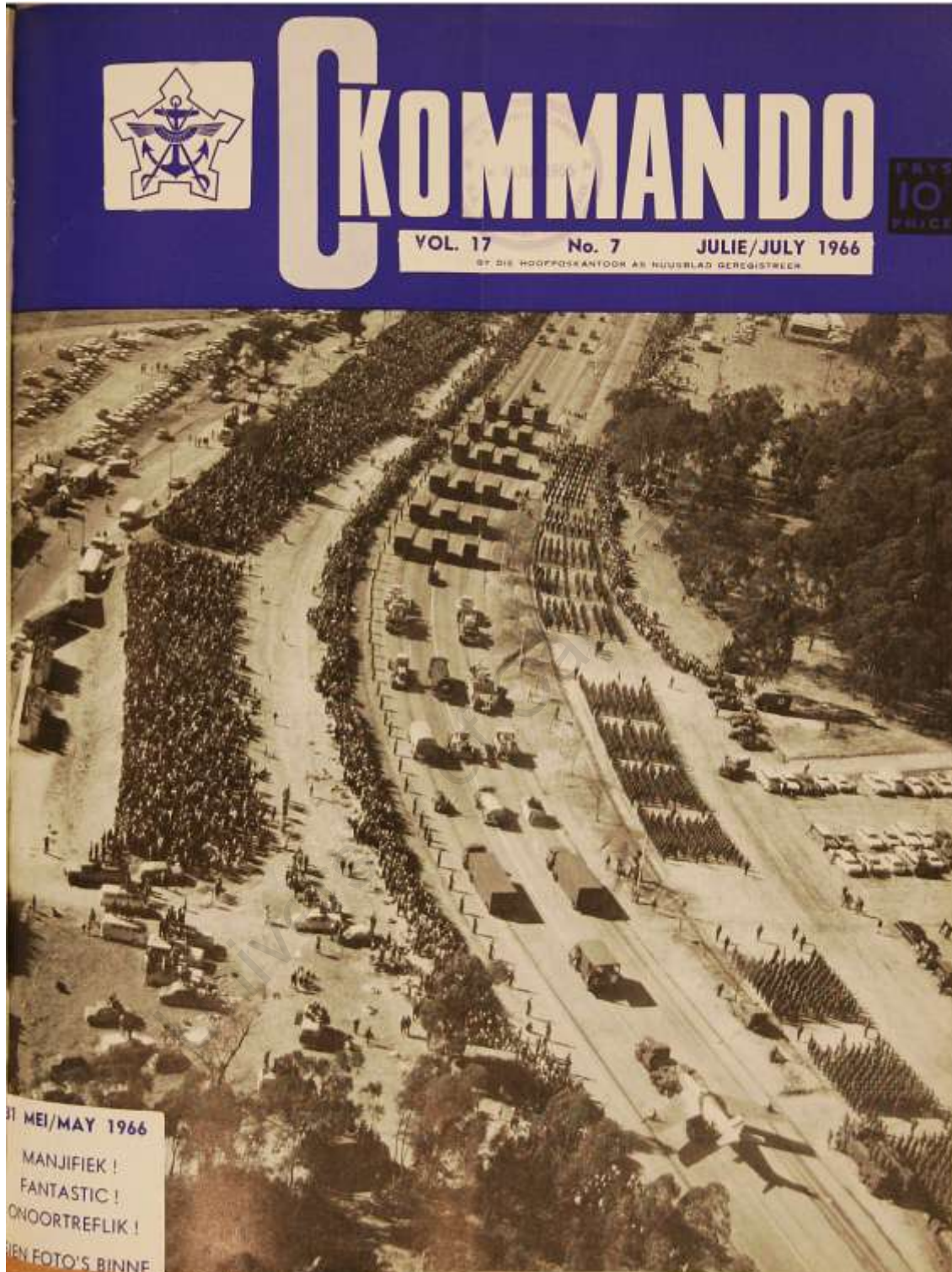
- ❖ From Die Huisgenoot 20 May 1966: A carefully setup photo at Waterkloof Air Force Base outside Pretoria displaying part of the SA Air Force arsenal: Mirage 111s, Buccaneer maritime strike aircraft (dark blue); Canberra light bombers (straight wings) and Sabres. (blue stripes).



From Commando, April 1965, p.21. Commandant General Piet Grobbelaar a few months before his retirement; on his left, Deputy Commandant General Rudolf Hiemstra and right, Major General Ben Viljoen Air Force Chief of Staff.



A page from Commando in the April 1965 edition from an article on the “New SA Army.



Commando magazine cover, July 1966 edition, showing part of the huge SADF parade during festivities on 31 May 1966 celebrating the 5th Republic anniversary; during the early 1960s years of international isolation and economic prosperity for the white community.



From Commando, June 1967, p. 46, Defence Minister P.W. Botha with some of his most senior SADF commanders: Botha in dark suit, from his left, Brig Bill Barends, SAAF Chief, Lt Gen H.J. Martin, Maj Gen Nic Bierman, Joint Combat Forces Commander, Maj Gen C.A. “Pops” Fraser. On Botha’s right is Commandant General R.C. Hiemstra.



Acknowledgement from the BP oil company of the SA Navy’s 21st anniversary: “BP salutes our navy”. From Commando, June 1967.



Lt Gen Charles Fraser after receiving the Star of South Africa decoration in late 1969 for his work on revolutionary warfare and counter-insurgency. From left: State President Jim Fouchê, Defence Minister, P.W. Botha, Lt Gen C.A. Fraser, Commandant General R. C. Hiemstra. From Commando, December 1969, p.39.



From Commando, July 1968. Commandant General R. C. Hiemstra after a flip in a Mirage with SAAF Maj Ken Smith. Hiemstra's accession to the Commandant General position was a foregone conclusion throughout the 1960s.

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