A HISTORY OF THE COMMITTEE ON SOUTH AFRICAN WAR RESISTANCE (COSAWR)

(1978-1990)

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Thesis submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the M. A. degree in History at the University of Cape Town.

1995

This thesis is dedicated to my parents, Helen and the late Raymond Collins.

I would like to thank my two supervisors. Firstly, Associate Professor Christopher C. Saunders and then Dr Patrick Harries who took over from Associate Professor Saunders after he went on sabbatical.

Other people who helped along the way in various capacities, such as reading drafts, helping with constructive comments, or providing information are Carol Conerly, Roland Cox, Alan Crawford, Heine du Toit and Paul Eden.

I would like to thank Lynn Botha for translating an Afrikaans article, as well as Dr M. Jakubowski and his daughter Magda for translating a series of Finnish newspaper clippings.

Sources of funding which need to be acknowledged are the University Research Fund and the Harry Oppenheimer Institute of the University of Cape Town, the Mayibuye Centre at the University of the Western Cape and the South African Institute of Race Relations in Cape Town.

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Acronyms

AABN	Dutch Anti-Apartheid Movement
AAM	Anti-Apartheid Movement
AFSAC	Advice for South African Conscripts
ANC	African National Congress
ARM	African Resistance Movement
ARM	Alliance of Radical Methodists
ARMSCOR	Armaments Development and Manufacturing Development Corporation of South Africa
AWOL	Absent Without Leave
BOA	Boycott Outspan Aktie
BBC	British Broadcasting Corporation
BCM	Black Consciousness Movement
BOSS	Bureau of State Security
CF	Citizen Force
CIIR	Catholic Institute for International Relations
COD	Congress of Democrats
COs	Conscientious Objectors
COSAW	Congress of South African Writers
COSAWR	Committee on South African War Resistance
COSAWR (NL)	COSAWR Netherlands
COSAWR (UK)	COSAWR United Kingdom
COSG	Conscientious Objector Support Group
CP	Communist Party
CRAW	Conscripts Resisting Apartheid War

CSIR	Council for Scientific and Industrial Research
CZA	Comite Zuid Afrika
DB	Detention Barracks
DONS	Department of National Security
DP	Democratic Party
ECC	End Conscription Campaign
EEC	European Economic Community
ELUs	English Language Universities
EPG	Eminent Persons Group
FLS	Front Line States
HIR	Huddleston International Register of South African War Resisters
HNP	Herstigte Nasionale Party
HQ	Headquarters
IDAF	International Defence and Aid Fund
IDASA	Institute for a Democratic Alternative for South Africa
IRA	Irish Republican Army
ITN	Independent Television Network – London
ISAK	Isolate South Africa Kommitte (Sweden)
IUEF	International University Exchange Fund
KGB	Komit Gosudarstvennoi Bezopasnosti (The Committee for State Security)
KLM	Koninklijke Luchtvaart Maatschappij or Royal Dutch Airlines
KZA	Komite Zuid-Afrika
MCSA	Methodist Church of South Africa
MCW	Military and Combat Work

MEP	Member of European Parliament
MI	Military Intelligence
MILCOM	Committee of Investigation into Service in the SADF, Youth Preparedness Programmes and Alternative National Service
MK	Umkhonto we Sizwe
MNR	Mozambique National Resistance
MP	Member of Parliament
MPLA	Popular Movement for the Liberation of Angola
MWT	Marxist Worker Tendency
NCFS	National Catholic Federation of Students
NCO	Noncommissioned Officer
NEC	National Executive Committee
NEHAWU	National Education, Health and Allied Workers Union
NFA	Natal Field Artillery
NIS	National Intelligence Service
NP	National Party
NUSAS	National Union of South African Students
OAU	Organisation of African Unity
PAC	Pan Africanist Congress
PFP	Progressive Federal Party
PLO	Palestine Liberation Organisation
PMB	Pietermaritzburg
POW	Prisoner of War
RaRa	Revolutionary Anti-Racism Action
RDM	Rand Daily Mail
RSA	Republic of South Africa

SA	South Africa
SAANETS	South African Army Non-Effective Troops Section
SACC	South African Council of Churches
SACCC	South African Community Cultural Centre
SACP	South African Communist Party
SADF	South African Defence Force
SAIC	South African Indian Council
SALSCOM	South African Liberation Support Committee
SAMRAF	South African Military Refugee Aid Fund
SAP	South African Police
SASO	South African Students Organisation
SAWR	South African War Resisters
SAWRA	South African War Resisters – Australia
SADCC	Southern African Development Coordination Conference
SUCA	Student Union for Christian Action
SWAPO	South West Africa People's Organisation
SWATF	South West Africa Territorial Force
UCT	University of Cape Town
UDF	Union Defence Force
UDF	United Democratic Front
UKIAS	United Kingdom Immigrant Advice Service
UN	United Nations
UNITA	National Union for the Total Independence of Angola
UP	United Party
US	United States

USA	United States of America
VVDM	Dutch Soldiers' Union
VVN	Association of Dutch Refugee Workers
WCC	World Council of Churches
WHO	World Health Organisation
ZADP	Zuid Afrikanse Dienstweigeraars Project
ZANU	Zimbabwe African National Union
ZAPU	Zimbabwe African Peoples Union

ABSTRACT

Title

A History of the Committee on South African War Resistance (COSAWR) (1978-1990)

Subject Matter

COSAWR consisted mainly of white male South Africans who avoided whites-only conscription into the South African Defence Force (SADF) by going into exile in Britain and the Netherlands. COSAWR was founded in 1978 with the assistance of the African National Congress (ANC) and the British Anti-Apartheid Movement. Its goals were to advance war resistance both within South Africa and overseas, research the militarisation of Southern Africa, influence the ANC's opinion on war resistance, bring Western European peace groups and soldiers' unions into the fold of the anti-apartheid movement, and involve white South Africans in the anti-apartheid movement and the ANC.

The thesis puts COSAWR in the context of South African history in the 1970s and 1980s. The dissertation evaluates COSAWR in relation to the personal and political dynamics of the individual members who shaped the organisation, the development of the South African war resistance movement, its association with the ANC and the

broad international anti-apartheid movement, its antagonistic relationship with the South African government and the militarisation of South Africa. The discourse explores the exiles' personal and political motives for avoiding military service. These reasons helped to determine the extent to which the organisation was successful. It is a general history, because the security consciousness of interviewees and the lack of access to certain COSAWR and South African government records inhibited the writing of a detailed study.

Sources

Data includes COSAWR's journal Resister, its Annual Reports and press clips from mostly British and South African newspapers. Close to thirty subjects were interviewed, including members of COSAWR, the End Conscription Campaign (ECC), the anti-apartheid movement, journalists, academics and military officials. Interviews, from which much of the thesis is derived, were complemented by secondary sources on South African history and politics. The psychological and/or personal aspects of exile invariably surfaced in interviews and influenced the conclusions in the study.

Those interviewees associated with COSAWR responded to some standard questions which related to level of education, military service (if any), motives for leaving the country and political activity before and during exile. The interviews were wide-ranging as there was little background information on which to base specific questions. Questions to non-COSAWR members depended on their field of expertise or relationship with COSAWR.

Conclusion

The outcome of COSAWR's efforts to get conscripts to resist was minimal. The difficulties it faced, in terms of pressure from the South African state, its distance from the country and especially, the constraints imposed by exile itself, prevented COSAWR from realising its stated objectives. However, COSAWR did successfully publicise the issue of war resistance and non-racialism and the organisation constituted a functional, albeit small, cog in the overall struggle against apartheid.

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INTRODUCTION AND NOTE ON SOURCES

The donation of the COSAWR[1] archives to the Manuscripts and Archives section of the University of Cape Town Libraries, and the return to South Africa of former COSAWR members, provided the impetus for this study. COSAWR member Gerald Kraak explained that those involved with COSAWR did not write its history because they were 'too close to it'.[2] An associate of Kraak's, Janine Rauch, stated that COSAWR personnel might not want to recollect the '...difficult times, COSAWR rifts, infiltration, and spies which do not make a pretty story'.[3] So, perhaps it is better that an "outsider" records COSAWR's history.

COSAWR has been described by Philip Frankel as the 'most radical reaction to militarisation' in South Africa.[4] It was founded by South African war resisters (all white due to the racial exclusivity of South African conscription), with the assistance of the African National Congress (ANC) and the British Anti-Apartheid Movement (AAM), in London in 1978. A Netherlands branch was established in 1979.[5] COSAWR helped resisters avoid a period of conscription that was amongst the

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1 The COSAWR acronym should not be confused with the similarly pronounced acronym of COSAW – The Congress of South African Writers.

2 Gerald Kraak, interviewed by the author, Johannesburg, 14 October 1993.

3 Janine Rauch, interviewed by the author, Johannesburg, 13 October 1993.

4 P. Frankel, Pretoria's Praetorians: Civil-Military Relations in South Africa (Cambridge, 1984), p.125.

5 The Netherlands branch was called COSAWR (NL) whereas the United Kingdom section was named COSAWR (UK). When specification is needed either COSAWR (NL) or COSAWR (UK) will be used. Otherwise COSAWR will be an all-encompassing term.

world's longest, and whose penalties for avoidance were amongst the world's most severe.[6]

COSAWR had the following functions. Firstly, to organise cultural events and public meetings related to war resistance. Secondly, to run campaigns in support of conscientious objectors. Thirdly, to research issues related to the militarisation of Southern Africa. Fourthly, to sway the ANC's opinion on war resistance. Fifthly, to help draw Western European peace groups and soldiers' unions into the fold of the anti-apartheid movement. Sixthly, to influence the war resistance issue through the complex flow of ideas between the internal and external components of the Anti-Apartheid Movement.[7] And finally, to get white South Africans involved in anti-apartheid and ANC work.

This study is important for several reasons. Firstly, the few studies on resistance to conscription that exist focus almost exclusively on domestic opposition. These include the work of Laurie Nathan, former National Chairperson of the ECC, and that of the Catholic Institute of International Relations.[8] These works offer an analysis of the militarisation of South Africa, and resistance to it, but are heavily biased towards the ECC and were written, in part, to inform the public of the plight of that organisation. Stephen Anderson's Honours dissertation is more critical but it covers only the ECC's

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6 J. Cock, "Conscription in South Africa: A study in the Politics of Coercion", South African Sociological Review Vol.12, No.1., October 1989, p.1.

7 Resister 65, Second Quarter 1990, p.23.

8 L. Nathan, "Force of Arms, Force of Conscience: A Study of Militarisation, the Military and the Anti-Apartheid War Resistance Movement in South Africa, 1970-1988" (M.Phil, University of Bradford, 1990). Nathan also wrote extensively for the Catholic Institute of International Relations' book entitled Out of Step: War Resistance in South Africa (London, 1989).

Cape Town branch. Anderson did his research while the organisation was banned so it was not possible to gain extensive critical input from his interviewees.[9]

Secondly, the history of whites in the anti-apartheid struggle, whether internally or externally based, is not fully documented. Also their participation is often questioned in subtle ways. For instance, the word "exile" was placed in inverted commas in an article in the Financial Mail of 17 July 1992 concerning Philip Dexter, thereby implying a peculiarity about a white living in exile.[10]

Thirdly, there is a dearth of information on the experiences of up to 60,000 South African exiles.[11] Hilda Bernstein's book did not include a bibliography because she 'found very little of relevance to the SA experience in books about exile'.[12] Only recently have books referring to the exile experience been published.[13] This thesis hopes to make a significant contribution to this body of research on exile.

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[9] S. Anderson, "The End Conscription Campaign in Cape Town, 1983-1989" (BA Honours, University of Cape Town, 1990).

[10] Dexter was then general-secretary of the National Education, Health and Allied Workers Union (NEHAWU) and had been a member of COSAWR.

[11] H. Bernstein, "Discovering Exiles", Southern Africa Review of Books Vol.5, No.4, July/August 1993, p.10.

[12] H. Bernstein, The Rift: The Exile Experience of South Africans (London 1994); H. Bernstein, letter to the author, Kidlington, Oxfordshire, 6 November 1993.

[13] These include Bernstein's The Rift (op. cit.), which offers comprehensive interviews with primarily political exiles, but most of her interviews were done before 1990, thus inhibiting a critical analysis. Ronnie Kasril's Armed and Dangerous: My Undercover Struggle Against Apartheid (Johannesburg, 1993), is a popular history of Kasril's involvement in the struggle. But it is designed for the layman and lacks in-depth background material. Gavin Cawthra et al., War and Resistance: Southern African Reports: The Struggle for Southern Africa as Documented by Resister Magazine (London, 1994) is COSAWR's account of the war resistance issue. It offers a comprehensive history of the issues surrounding war resistance. Although it was written by former COSAWR members, there is a limited focus on COSAWR itself.

Finally, the study attempts to recognise war resisters, whom the ANC considered a significant aspect of the struggle against apartheid:

> The campaign to resist conscription into the army of oppression and aggression remains one of the outstanding tributes to the humanity of the white youth of our country [the National Executive Council of the ANC announced in January 1988] ... We would like these brave and noble compatriots to know that long after the apartheid regime has become a thing of the past, the people of this country will honour them for their courage and principled opposition to racial tyranny.[14]

At present there is no indication that such 'compatriots' will be commemorated. Yet, according to Gavin Cawthra, COSAWR administrator from 1979-85, 'there were more war resister exiles in the UK than any other group of South Africans'.[15] However, there is an alternative to the 'brave and noble' interpretation. Former conscript and Sunday Times business journalist Bonny Schoonakker described exiled war resisters as:

> [t]he unfortunate [who] typically landed up in a London or Amsterdam squat smelling of dead bodies beneath the floorboards, dealing in dagga and/or the Anti-Apartheid Movement ... [and who] were saved from starvation by the dole, which attracted them there in the first place'.[16]

Gann and Duignan argued that whites leaving the country merely 'remove[d] the discontented from white society'.[17] Retired Brigadier W.P. Sass, of the South African Defence Force (SADF) Department of Strategic Planning, stated that COSAWR's endeavour was relatively insignificant:

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[14]Statement released by the ANC National Executive Committee. Cited in Resister 54, February/ March 1988, p.17.

[15] Gavin Cawthra, Postal Interview, London, 6 February 1994. In this study, a postal interview is defined differently from regular written correspondence. A postal interview consisted of a series of questions sent to the interviewee.

[16] Sunday Times 5 September 1993.

[17] L.H. Gann and P. Duignan, Why South Africa Will Survive (Cape Town, 1981), p.186.

> The efforts of COSAWR were associated with that of the End Conscription Campaign as part of the efforts of a small radical minority, whose only importance stemmed from their combination with the Anti-Apartheid Movement. Measured against the yearly intake of almost 20,000 plus conscripts the efforts of these small radical political groups were mostly viewed with humour [by the SADF]. By and large the entire campaigning against conscription may have attracted media coverage but it never made much impression.[18]

Similarly, Hilda Bernstein's editor asserted that those sections of The Rift that deal with war resisters are of 'less interest today than other sections'.[19] Even COSAWR claims that its history 'may be no more than a footnote' in the account of the fight against apartheid.[20]

In 1990, former ECC national organiser Roddy Payne declared that COSAWR's 'significance lies in the fact that it represents a hidden section of the exiled community'.[21] COSAWR had a public and a private persona. Founding member Kevin Laue described it as 'a South African organisation with exceptionally close links to the ANC'.[22] However, its links with the ANC, on both an administrative and individual level, needed to be hidden, and this hampered the development of COSAWR's public profile. Contact with COSAWR 'in the early years, would have led to detention and interrogation of anyone returning to South Africa'.[23]

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[18] W.P. Sass, Postal Interview, Midrand, 24 April 1994.

[19] Hilda Bernstein, letter to the author, Kidlington Oxfordshire, 6 November 1993.

[20] Resister 67, Fourth Quarter 1990, p.30.

[21] The Weekly Mail 16-22 November 1990.

[22] Kevin Laue, Postal Interview, Harare, 14 March 1994. Emphasis in original.

[23] G. Cawthra et al., op. cit., p.230.

COSAWR's role must be seen in the context of its involvement in the broad international anti-apartheid movement which isolated South Africa militarily, politically, economically, and culturally. According to James Barber, small goal-oriented organisations like COSAWR abetted the AAM because they 'concentrate[d] on specific issues and [gave] a greater number of people the opportunity to feel commitment, to take initiatives and to avoid being lost in a large organisation'.[24]

Sources as varied as South African Communist Party (SACP) veteran Hilda Bernstein, conservative American academics Gann and Duignan and moderate James Barber agree on the unique dynamic of South African exiles. Bernstein claims that the exiles built the ANC and the AAM into organisations 'that fundamentally influenced international affairs'.[25] Barber contends that exiles were 'highly politicised and ... their impact far outweigh[ed] their numbers'.[26] Gann and Duignan maintain that exiles made up for their small number with 'their ability, drive and connections with the publishing industry, the world of politics, the bureaucracy and with leading journals such as the New Statesman, the Guardian and the BBC'.[27]

This study's objective is to interpret the diverse reasons – political, personal and economic – why "draft dodgers" left South Africa. The thesis argues that when COSAWR set out its goals, it over-estimated its potential. COSAWR did not anticipate the effect that government infiltration, operating in a 'shadowy world' of exile, and the

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[24] J. Barber, The Uneasy Relationship: Britain and South Africa (London, 1983), p.63.

[25] Hilda Bernstein in the Weekly Mail 31 March to 7 April 1994.

[26] Barber, op. cit., p.5.

[27] Gann and Duignan, op. cit., p.224.

geographical distance from South Africa would have in preventing it from fulfilling its stated aims.

The thesis is divided into two parts. The first, consisting of the initial three chapters, is chronological and offers a broad overview of both South African and COSAWR's history, covering the period 1948-1990. The second section is thematic and allows a focus on specific topics considered relevant to the development of COSAWR.

Chapter I documents the militarisation of South Africa from 1948 to 1976, and the limited resistance to it due to the absence of warfare, internal civil strife, and the relative passivity of both the established opposition parties and the mainly English-speaking National Union of South African Students (NUSAS). Chapter I, through its depiction of politically passive white society, shows the challenge COSAWR would take in spreading its philosophy to its target audience.

Chapter II explains the diverse political origins of the war resistance groups prior to COSAWR. This chapter includes the use of individual biographies of certain COSAWR members. It demonstrates that war resisters were initially a varied group who overcame political differences in order to form an alliance with the ANC.

Chapter III indicates that, because of its location, COSAWR eventually lost touch with the internal war resistance developments. Chapter III explores COSAWR's transformation from a non-prescriptive to a hard-line war resistance platform by 1985. Following the State of Emergency COSAWR apparently tried to direct the war resistance movement from London and, as a result, came into conflict with the ECC.

In 1988 COSAWR, after assessing both its own policies and the ECC's, promoted a war resistance policy more in line with that of the ECC.

Chapter IV explores how the administrative details associated with the two-year asylum application process, and the personal trials and tribulations of COSAWR members, detracted from COSAWR's agenda. This chapter questions the view that exile was an easy option for whites, especially for those who became politically active. A sub-theme in this chapter is the issue of recruiting whites into the ANC.

Chapter V examines the Netherlands branch, COSAWR (NL), which was unable to adequately assist COSAWR (UK) in the fulfilment of its goals. This inability was due to the apolitical background of many of its members, the lack of sound ANC and AAM structures and the political and personal disharmony between COSAWR (NL) and the Dutch Anti-Apartheid Movement (AABN). This chapter demonstrates the necessity for organisational structure, something which COSAWR (NL) neglected to fully recognise.

Chapter VI analyses COSAWR's bulletin Resister,[28] which warrants special attention, because it was COSAWR's strongest component. Resister helped keep COSAWR together as it required consistent work and gave COSAWR members much needed cohesion. In addition, Resister fitted in with COSAWR's goals of publicising the war resistance issue. It spelled out COSAWR's philosophy and provided the international anti-apartheid audience and ANC camps with extensive coverage on the militarisation of South Africa. Resister helped to establish COSAWR, and the necessity of publishing it on a regular basis helped to maintain the organisation.

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[28] Resister was published from 1979–1990.

Chapter VII focuses on Pretoria's persistent monitoring of COSAWR which, though disproportionate to it's capability, certainly inhibited the organisation from carrying out its mandate to the fullest.

The first section of the conclusion evaluates COSAWR's response to the unbanning of the ANC, the halving of conscription and COSAWR's relationship with the ECC. In order to keep the study compact, the individual actions of COSAWR members, after their return to South Africa, are not examined. The conclusion determines whether COSAWR met the objectives listed at the start of this section. The second segment evaluates the reasons for COSAWR's failure to fulfil its goals, and its position within the context of contemporary South African history.

Note on Sources

The COSAWR archives proved to be a rich source of information, as did oral and written communication with a wide range of people connected with the organisation and the issues dealt with in this study. The COSAWR collection, from which this study derives much of its information, consists of two parts. The first includes press clippings pertaining to COSAWR, some of COSAWR's correspondence, its annual reports and the full set of sixty-seven volumes of Resister. The second part consists of news accounts, legislation and church reports applicable to the militarisation of South Africa. Specific themes include corruption and crime within the SADF, and illegal arms sales to and from South Africa.

Close on half of the thesis is derived from interviews. There are problems with verifying some of the oral testimony on which certain chapters rely heavily. These issues are (1) assuming what the interviewee is saying is true, thereby treating memory as an infallible source, (2) interviewing people still working within a sensitive political environment, and (3) a reluctance by the interviewer to criticise interviews which are sometimes intimate and moving. In regards to the emotional aspect of interviewing Henige states '... In part this results from the sympathy which an interviewer has for an informant who is relaying, often with great feeling, his own experiences.[29] This is best avoided by the interviewer staying emotionally distant from the interviewee.

Some of the information discussed is close to twenty years old, so the interviewee's memory was sometimes hazy. Henige offers prudent advice here. He cautions that it is assumed that 'eyewitness testimony is ... reliable ... because seeing something happen impresses a kind of indelible image on the memory'. Henige supports cross-referencing with other interviews when he says that 'no two people have had the same blend of training and experience, no two people will ever see a complex event ... in quite the same way'.[30]

According to Gavin Cawthra, COSAWR Administrator from 1978 to 1985, information on those groups which preceded and influenced COSAWR – the University Christian Movement (UCM) and the South African Military Refugee Aid Fund (SAMRAF) – is

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[29] D. Henige, Oral Historiography (London, 1982), p.109.

[30] ibid., p.111.

'missing', as is 'the very early material setting out COSAWR's thinking'. According to Cawthra I was not given access to the minutes of the COSAWR Committee because:

> ... the main problem is one of personal confidentiality, in that they reflect the views, etc, of individuals involved in COSAWR, and the understanding of those who participated was that the committee's minutes were not public. I've ... consulted with some of my colleagues ... and I've come to the conclusion that I can't at this stage release them. I certainly would not feel happy sending them to South Africa.

Cawthra explained why additional chronicles are missing:

> Most of the correspondence was destroyed in 1986 when we moved office, for security reasons or because it was no longer relevant and dealt with purely administrative matters (e.g. funding). Records of individual war resisters were destroyed when COSAWR closed down, to protect the confidentiality of our 'clients'.[31]

Confidentiality and access to individuals were issues important to the four former COSAWR committee members' recent book, War and Resistance.[32] They pointed out that some of the people associated with Resister, 'still prefer to remain nameless, and many are no longer in contact with us'.[33]

The records of the COSAWR (NL) branch are especially sparse. They commence in 1983 and consist mostly of fleeting annual reports and correspondence. Attempts to procure those records still in the Netherlands were unsuccessful.

Only two people declined to be interviewed. Roger Field, COSAWR Administrator from 1985 to 1989, wanted to put his exile experience behind him (a common theme amongst exiles). And Breyten Breytenbach, through an intermediary, indicated that

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[31] Gavin Cawthra, personal correspondence, London, 6 January 1993; Gavin Cawthra, Postal Interview, London, 6 February 1994.

[32] See n. 13.

[33] Cawthra, et al., op. cit., p.1.

he was not available. Others who did not respond included certain COSAWR activists and security police personnel.[34] Unforseen circumstances prevented an interview with current Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs Aziz Pahad, who was instrumental in setting up COSAWR and was the link between it and the ANC. A second interview with Mr. Pahad was cancelled at his request as he had to attend to matters outside South Africa. This necessarily limited my analysis of COSAWR's relationship with the ANC. It should be pointed out that I met Ronnie Kasrils and asked him for an interview, but he referred me to Mr Pahad saying he was the key man in the ANC's link with COSAWR. This illustrates the difficulty in finding another suitable ANC source other than Mr. Pahad.

I interviewed just two female members of COSAWR, which limited an evaluation of the role of women. COSAWR's overall Afrikaans-speaking membership was 10-15 percent but I found just two Afrikaans participants, one of whom was associated with a war resistance group which preceded COSAWR.

Another problem is the that interviews of COSAWR members are limited to those who served on its Committee. Non-committee members invariably referred me to committee representatives like Gavin Cawthra or Bill Anderson. This is indicative of the top-down nature of the organisation. Interviews with the parents of war resisters would have been useful, but were impractical due to time constraints, lack of access to their addresses and the fact that family relations are still a sensitive issue.

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[34] Amongst COSAWR activists, no replies were forthcoming from Hugh Lugg (who turned state witness in the Broederstroom Trial) and Paul Annegarn (who allegedly deserted from the Broederstroom Cell). Other non-respondents include the Rev. Don Morton, a founder of SAMRAF, and Mike Morgan, a coordinator of SAMRAF, former security police major Craig Williamson, security police lieutenant Olivia Forsyth, Mike Terry (secretary-general of the British Anti-Apartheid Movement), Ethel de Kuyser, of the British Defence and Aid Fund, and Howard Clarke of War Resister's International.

A few subjects were reluctant to converse, first wanting to chat informally in order to verify my credentials. Because I am American some queried whether I worked for the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) and, for that matter, the Security Police. A common question was my source of funding. This may have been triggered by the existence of a large number of student spies whose fees were paid by the state. This "suspicion" might have prevented certain members from being open with their comments. But given the history of South African spies, they probably would also have been suspicious of a South African. Interviewees were reluctant to discuss personality clashes within COSAWR or its relationship with the ANC. A few did not wish a recorded interview and others wanted to examine their comments in the thesis before its submission.

Thus interviewing persons still involved in ANC/liberation structures or with the SADF during these politically sensitive times was a dilemma. Howells and Jones point out that interviewees sometimes 'are not only commenting *on* a situation, they are also, more often than not, *in* that situation'.[35] This helps to explain some interviewees reluctance to talk personally about people in positions of influence, nor wanting to discuss some politically sensitive issue. Some interviewees comments were politically scathing and could have had repercussions if they were published. Other remarks could have been interpreted as character attacks.

The government perspective on COSAWR is primarily derived from Paratus, Armed Forces, Militaria, newspaper clippings, and government documents, although a postal

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[35] K. Howells and M. Jones, "Oral history and Contemporary History", Oral History: The Journal of the Oral History Society Vol.11, No.2, Autumn 1983, p.16. Emphasis in original.

interview was conducted with Brigadier Sass.[36] I met a few retired military officials but they spoke off the record. My lack of Afrikaans prevented reading certain articles in Paratus and other publications. The Documentation Service of the SADF provided press clippings on COSAWR, the South African Liberation Support Committee (SALSCOM), and SAMRAF. Military Intelligence (MI) apparently deemed COSAWR a sensitive subject and denied my request to evaluate their COSAWR files saying that they have 'no information which could be of value'.[37] Two queries by a retired MI official on my behalf proved unsuccessful. A call to the Goldstone Commission revealed they did not have information on overseas MI operations.

This thesis was researched and written at a sensitive period during South Africa's transformation to democracy and much of the uncertainty of the period is reflected in its pages. Interviews were held with members of the previous mentioned organisations; they are cross-referenced and wherever possible supported by written evidence. This has allowed for a reasonable degree of verification and has, I hope, counter-balanced some of the major problems associated with the analysis of oral evidence.

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[36] See n.15 above for the definition of a postal interview.

[37] Brigadier G.M. du Preez, Chief of the SADF (Intelligence Division), letter to the author, Pretoria, 4 March 1993.

Chapter I

THE BACKGROUND TO MILITARISATION, CONSCRIPTION AND RESISTANCE (1948-1977)

The Nationalists Come to Power

The 1948 election of the all-Afrikaner National Party (NP), which had opposed South Africa's involvement in World War II, brought fundamental changes to the social and political structure of South Africa. One aspect of this transformation was the breaking of the country's former ties of reliance on Commonwealth association. Immigration rights enjoyed by British subjects were almost eradicated and the NP halted the United Party's (UP) plan to recruit British and European citizens.

In order to establish Afrikaner hegemony, the NP restructured South Africa's laws. The Prohibition of Mixed Marriages Act of 1949 forbade inter-marriage between whites and non-whites. The Population Registration Act of 1950 assigned each individual to a racial group, while the Group Areas Bill of 1950 allowed for the confinement of race groups to separate business and residential areas. With the ethnic and racial legislation reconstructed, the next move was to preclude organised, multi-racial political dissent. The 1950 Suppression of Communism Act outlawed the Communist Party and furnished the government with the means to ban any organisation which furthered the aims of Communism.[1]

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[1] T.R.H. Davenport, South Africa: A Modern History (London, 1991), pp.327-8, 333.

Afrikanerisation of the Military

In order for the army to mirror the NP political establishment, a more specifically South-African character needed to be nurtured.[2] In 1953 a committee of the Union Defence Force (UDF) recommended the conversion or amalgamation of certain English-medium units with Afrikaans-medium units. Despite representations made by some English-speakers, by 1956 the UDF re-organisation was underway so that the vestiges of the imperial mentality and English-speaking dominance in high ranks were essentially eliminated. Some of those Afrikaans-speaking officers who replaced English-speakers had resisted or sabotaged the war effort during World War II.[3]

Additional features of the British military heritage were eliminated through the passage of the Defence Act, No. 44 of 1957, which provided for:

> the changing of the designation Union Defence Force to South African Defence Force (SADF); ... the establishment of South African Decorations; and the introduction of new uniforms and badges for the Army, Air Force and Navy.[4]

In 1957, the British naval base at Simonstown was handed over to the Union of South Africa, seemingly ending a prominent imperial connection. It was agreed that the South African Navy would develop under British guidance (original emphasis), that the British Navy would have access to Simonstown in time of war and that South African

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[2] W.A. Dorning, "A Concise History of the South African Defence Force", Militaria Vol.17, No.2, 1987, p.18.

[3] K.W. Grundy, The Militarisation of South African Politics (Oxford, 1986), p.8.

[4] Dorning, op. cit., p.18.

ships would fall under its command. Essentially this would mean South Africa 'was an active ally in war'.[5]

There was little opposition to Afrikanerisation. English-speaking politicians were reluctant to protest in the context of perceived threats against South Africa[6] and were pleased by the terms of the Simonstown agreement. Until 1964, when Britain started to adhere to the optional United Nations (UN) arms embargo, many of South Africa's military supplies continued to be imported from Britain, thereby preserving a bond between the two countries.

The Introduction of Ballot Conscription – 1957

On 29 July 1952, in response to the NP's repressive policies, the African National Congress (ANC), the South African Indian Council (SAIC), and the Franchise Action Council (a coloured group) instituted a campaign of peaceful resistance, targeting the pass laws, the Group Areas Act and other aspects of apartheid legislation. The Defiance Campaign, as it came to be known, resulted in thousands of people breaking the Group Areas Act. Some whites provoked arrest by entering the townships and defying "European only" notices at railway stations. Despite this, Congress leaders'

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5 P.J. Henshaw, "The Transfer of Simonstown: Afrikaner Nationalism, South African Strategic Dependence and British Global Power", The Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History Vol.20, No.3, 1992, p.436.

6 See following pages.

hopes that the drive would 'stir the conscience of white South Africans' were not realised.[7]

The Defiance Campaign, however, remained notable for two reasons. Firstly, the government passed supplementary draconian legislation; the 1953 Public Safety Bill 'which empowered it to declare a state of emergency over all or parts of South Africa' was accompanied by the 1953 Criminal Law Amendment Bill which imposed heavy sentences of fines, imprisonment and corporal punishment for breaches of the peace, or incitement.[8] The opposition UP, not wanting to appear soft on security issues, declined to challenge these bills because of 'the imminence of a general election'.[9] The government used the Defiance Campaign to advance propaganda based on media headlines of discord in Kenya. The Nationalist mouthpiece, Die Burger, referred to the killing of a white nun by demonstrators in East London as not the 'spirit of the Mahatma [Gandhi] which was at hand but that of the Mau Mau'.[10]

Secondly, the government crackdown against the Defiance Campaign established the rationale for confrontational politics and extra-parliamentary struggle. Nelson Mandela, influenced by the actions of liberation movements in Algeria and Malaya and 'powerful revolutionary eruptions' in the Gold Coast, Nigeria, Tunisia and the Rhodesias,

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7 L. Kuper, Passive Resistance in South Africa (New Haven, 1957), p.144.

8 Davenport, op. cit., p.336.

9 ibid., p.336.

10 Kuper, op.cit., p.156.

remarked 'gone are the days where harsh and wicked laws provided the oppressors with years of peace and quiet ... Action has become the language of the day'.[11]

Meli claims the campaign increased ANC membership and prompted the creation of the white ANC-supporting Congress of Democrats (COD).[12] However, many members of the COD were from the banned South African Communist Party. According to Joe Matthews, ANC Youth League founder member, the COD's formation was therefore an 'ambiguous victory' because 'If this made COD members outcasts from white society, then COD would be unable to provide the entrée the ANC sought to the liberal community'.[13]

In 'an attempt to promote the unity of the politically deprived', the ANC, SAIC, COD and the South African Coloured People's Organisation organised the Congress of the People at Kliptown near Johannesburg on 26 and 27 June 1955.[14] The Congress of the People advanced non-racialism by adopting the Freedom Charter which proclaimed '[t]hat South Africa belongs to all who live in it, black and white'.

The Congress of the People showed the government how successfully black and white could organise politically. The government's strategy of outlawing any signs of multi-racial activity appeared to be under threat. It responded rapidly; on 5 December

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[11] See F. Meli, A History of the ANC: South Africa Belongs to Us (Harare, 1988), p.121 and N. Mandela, No Easy Walk to Freedom (London, 1965), pp.24-27.

[12] Meli, op. cit., p.122.

[13] Quoted in J. Lazerson, "White Democrats, African Nationalists and the Question of Identity" (South African and Contemporary History Seminar No.4, Northwestern University, Illinois, 1993), p.137.

[14] Davenport, op. cit., p.351.

1956, 156 people of all races were arrested and accused of treason. In 1961, after a lengthy trial, all were acquitted. While the state could not prove the treason charges, the trial might have been an opportunity to decapitate the Congress Alliance and to allow the police to compile a file on white activists.

As the climate of internal confrontation grew, the South African government instituted a nine month selective ballot conscription for whites.[15] Section (3)(1)(b) of the Defence Act, no. 44 of 1957 stated:

> [E]very citizen between his 17th and 65th year, both included, shall be liable to render service in the South African Defence Force ... Section 63 of the Act requires every male citizen to register during his sixteenth year. Persons liable to serve may apply to an Exemption board for deferment from service.[16]

The following year, the NP passed legislation that lowered the voting age from twenty-one to eighteen years of age, the reasoning being that anyone old enough to fight for his country was old enough to vote.[17] This move showed foresight as the twenty-one years age voting requirement in America provided the Vietnam anti-war movement with one of its rallying points.

However, the introduction of ballot conscription did not drastically augment SADF personnel, nor was it accompanied by an increase in the SADF budget:

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[15] Previous legislation had introduced conscription. The Union Defence Act of 1912 allowed for the conscription of white males between the ages of 17 and 60. However, due to Afrikaner opposition in World War I, conscription for local defense only occurred. Volunteers were used outside South Africa's borders. In World War II, conscription was not implemented due to Afrikaner objection. See S. Anderson, "The End Conscription Campaign in Cape Town, 1983-89" (BA Hons, University of Cape Town, 1990), pp.1-3.

[16] J. Cock, "Conscription in South Africa: A Study in the Politics of Coercion", South African Sociological Review Vol.12, No.1., October 1989, p.3.

[17] Cape Times 10 September 1993.

> Until 1960 the SADF was a relatively small force. It consisted of about 10 000 volunteers, and expenditure in 1959/60 was only R 44 million (less than 7% of total government expenditure).[18]

Background to Nine Month Compulsory Conscription: the 1960s

In January of 1960 confrontation escalated as nine policemen were killed in disturbances following a police raid on liquor establishments in Cato Manor, an African township near Durban. Anti-pass law campaigns led by the Pan Africanist Congress (PAC) and the ANC were marked by the Sharpeville massacre on 21 March 1960.

On 30 March 1960, the government declared a State of Emergency in 122 of 265 magisterial districts. On the same day, thirty thousand people from the townships of Langa and Nyanga marched into Cape Town. Later that evening troops were used to seal off the townships. Parliament was also protected by troops.[19] The implications of the use of the military to quell civil unrest was not lost on the President-General of the ANC, Chief Albert Luthuli, who remarked:

> The army has a new role, not the defence of our borders, but internal security. It is clear that when we press our claims to the rights of citizenship and human dignity, this newly organised force will be turned against us as a last resort.[20]

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[18] ECC, "Conscription Into the SADF – 25 Years of Resistance", South African Outlook Vol.116, No.16, April 1985, p.53.

[19] G. Cawthra, Brutal Force: The Apartheid War Machine (London, 1986), p.14.

[20] Quoted in The Catholic Institute of International Relations (CIIR), Out of Step: War Resistance in South Africa (London, 1989), p.13.

The government stifled further protest on 8 April 1960 by banning the PAC and the ANC. These two groups responded by establishing offices in Algeria, Tanzania and the United Kingdom and by launching armed attacks within South Africa. The PAC's military formation, Poqo, concentrated on black constables and informers whereas the ANC's better coordinated armed wing, Umkhonto We Sizwe (MK), under Nelson Mandela's leadership directed its actions against electric pylons, post offices, Bantu Administration premises, and railway installations.[21]

In response to these strikes the government introduced new legislation; the 1962 Sabotage Act provided for the death penalty, and the 1963 General Law Amendment Act allowed for ninety day detention. These laws assisted in the arrest and conviction of Nelson Mandela and other MK and Poqo members and the exposure of the internal structures of the ANC and SACP.

Further attacks included those of a small white group, the African Resistance Movement (ARM). ARM comprised mainly of middle-class whites drawn from Liberal Party members 'radicalised by the events of the late 1950s and early 1960s and known for their antagonism to the Congress Alliance because of its communist influence'. On 24 July 1964, a bomb planted by ARM member John Harris, (apparently acting without ARM authority) at Johannesburg's railway station killed an elderly white women. Subsequent arrests crushed the organisation.[22]

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[21] Davenport, op. cit., pp. 364-5. Poqo translates into English as 'We go it alone'. Umkonto We Sizwe means 'Spear of the Nation'.

[22] A. du Toit, "The National Committee for Liberation (ARM): Sabotage and the Question of the Ideological Subject" (MA dissertation, University of Cape Town, 1990), p.7.

Although ARM was a small group, its implications were far-reaching. ARM's actions gave the Minister of Justice, B.J. Vorster, the excuse to demean and intimidate progressive whites in general, and the Liberal Party in particular, despite the latter having disavowed ARM. Alan Paton wrote that ARM 'justified the minister's famous remark that the communists killed people, but the liberals led people to the ambush so that they might be killed ...'[23]

Notwithstanding the feebleness of the internal armed struggle, the South African government sensed the development of a new type of warfare. With the nascent, but potentially threatening, Eastern-Bloc supported guerrilla warfare in Angola (1961), Mozambique (1964), and Rhodesia (1967), the SADF decided to 'drastically increase its size, and improve [its] readiness and efficiency'.[24] It prepared for unconventional warfare with emphasis on counter-insurgency training. In 1967 a police contingent was sent into Rhodesia and Van der Waals reports in that same year South African Air Force personnel had been based in Angola to conduct joint operations with Portuguese forces against [the South West Africa People's Organisation] SWAPO.[25]

The SADF faced personnel shortages because the ballot system was insufficient to maintain appropriate troop levels in the context of burgeoning armed conflict. The Groenewoud Committee, instituted by the SADF in 1965, reported that:

> the ballot system was in a sense unfair as it was one of fortuitous discrimination. Practice has shown that except through mobilisation it was not

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[23] Sunday Times 31 May 1992, citing Alan Paton.

[24] Dorning, op. cit., p.19.

[25] W.S. van der Waals, Portugal's War in Angola 1961-1974 (Rivonia, 1993), p.208.

> possible under the ballot system to build up the existing CF units to their full approved strength.[26]

The government accordingly extended conscription to nine months for all white males in 1967.

As the government embarked on a new strategy the exiled ANC concentrated on setting up offices in Africa and Europe. The ANC endeavoured to rally world opinion against the South African regime as well as to seek funds and gain international legitimacy for a conflict which 'involve[d] many powerful external interests'.[27] Throughout the 1960s, as an alternative to its domestic stagnation, the ANC built up a strong following at the United Nations. In 1962 the Special Committee Against Apartheid was mandated by the UN General Assembly '(a) To keep the racial policies of the Government of the Republic of South Africa under review when the United Nations General Assembly is not in session and (b) To report to the General Assembly or to the Security Council or both as may be appropriate from time to time.'[28]

In 1964 the UN General Assembly adopted its first sanction against South Africa by calling on member states to deny harbour facilities to ships flying the South African flag and to refuse landing and passenger facilities to South African aircraft. In that same year the UN instituted a non-binding arms embargo against South Africa. South

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[26] Dorning, op. cit., p.19.

[27] T. Lodge, "State of Exile: The ANC of South Africa, 1976-86" in P. Frankel et al. (eds), State Resistance and Change in South Africa (London, 1988), p.241.

[28] Resolution 1761 (XVII) of 6 November 1962 in GAOR, 17th Session, Resolutions, Supplement No.17 (A/5217), p.9. From R.E. Bissell, Apartheid and International Organisations (Boulder, Colorado, 1977), p.56.

Africa was forced to withdraw from UN affiliated organisations, such as the Food and Agriculture Organisation in 1964, and from the World Health Organisation in 1966.

This UN-sponsored legislation had diplomatic repercussions for South Africa. In 1948, when the UN had fifty-eight members, South Africa had eighteen diplomatic and consular missions, whereas in 1966 with UN membership at 122, South Africa had just forty-nine missions.[29] These UN-sponsored rulings situated South Africa in what Bissell calls 'the international equivalent of exile'.[30]

P.W. Botha, who became Defence Minister in 1965, countered the growing military isolation by guaranteeing a stable arms supply. To circumvent the arms ban, the South African government founded the weapons manufacturing company Armscor in 1968. By 1970, according to Spence, South Africa had achieved a degree of self-sufficiency and boasted a well-equipped army. Military spending jumped from R44.8 million in 1960 to R271.6 million in 1969.[31]

Resurgence of Black Political Activity

Throughout the militarisation process and the armed struggle, NUSAS, representing the English-speaking and some black universities, was relatively dormant. Nevertheless, its more militant actions created 'a widening gap between the liberal

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[29] D.Geldenhuys, The Diplomacy of Isolation: South African Foreign Policy Making (Johannesburg, 1984), p.14.

[30] Bissell, op. cit., pp.32-3.

[31] J.E. Spence, The Strategic Significance of South Africa (London, 1970), pp.22-3.

leadership and the mass of white students' who were largely unconcerned with politics.[32] When NUSAS subsequently 'moderated its more extreme policies', black members claimed that such change 'was the result of liberal training which causes them to shiver in their boots when attacked by members of their own class'.[33]

In 1967 the University Christian Movement (UCM) was founded by a group of Cape Town churchmen in part to 'promote the unity of races ... as well as look at contemporary social and political issues'.[34] The UCM functioned strongly on black universities; its church background allowed it to achieve political respectability in the eyes of the authorities. But the UCM had an ambiguous history in promoting non-racialism. Racial cleavages formed within it as blacks moulded their own political identity and 'white membership ... tended to fall off with the growth of black participation'.[35]

The schisms within the UCM, coupled with the virtual non-existence of the ANC highlighted the black students' lack of political expression. This allowed for the development of the Black Consciousness Movement (BCM). In NUSAS, whites outnumbered blacks by nine to one, a situation that prevented black students from playing a viable role in the organisation. Steve Biko observed:

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[32] B. Kline, "The National Union of South African Students: A Case Study in the Plight of Liberalism, 1924-1977", The Journal of Modern African Studies Vol.23, No.1, 1985, p.143.

[33] ibid., p.143, from M. Legassick, "The National Union of South African Students" (unpublished paper, African Studies Center, University of California, Los Angeles, 1967)., p.46.

[34] A. Egan, "The Politics of a South African Catholic Student Movement" (The Centre for African Studies, University of Cape Town, 1991), p.35.

[35] Archbishop D.E. Hurley, "The Churches and Race Relations" in N.J. Rhoodie (ed), South African Dialogue: Contrasts in South African Thinking on Basic Race Issues (Johannesburg, 1972), p.473.

> What we want is not black visibility but real black participation. In other words it does not help us to see several quiet black faces in a multi-racial student gathering which ultimately concentrates on what the white students believe are the needs for black students.[36]

At NUSAS's 1967 conference in Grahamstown, blacks were lodged separately from whites, reinforcing disillusionment with NUSAS. In 1968 black students, including UCM members, broke away from NUSAS and formed the Black Consciousness-inspired South African Students Organisation (SASO), under the leadership of Biko. NUSAS initially did not accept SASO because the 'ideology of liberalism could not relinquish its grip'.[37] SASO was finally recognised by NUSAS in 1970 when it 'reintroduced the tolerance of the realization that many different goals could be right for different people in different circumstances'.[38]

The 1970s

In spite of the international isolation, the South African government at the dawn of the 1970s was relatively content. Afrikaner domination of the military was such that by 1974, '85 percent of the army (Permanent Force) PF was Afrikaans-speaking, compared to 75 percent in the air force and 50 percent in the navy.'[39] White

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[36] S. Biko, I Write What I Like (Oxford, 1978), p.5.

[37] N. Curtis and C. Keegan, "The Aspiration to a Just Society" in H. van der Merwe and D. Welsh (eds), Student Perspectives on South Africa (Cape Town, 1972), p.115.

[38] ibid., p.22.

[39] A. Seegers, "Apartheid's Military: Its Origins and Development" in W. James (ed), The State of Apartheid (Boulder Colorado, 1987), p.148.

opposition was docile or, in the case of student politics, fragmented. The draconian legislation and Rivonia trial of the early 1960s had driven the ANC into an underground that was 'shattered' with 'no effective communication links' with the exiled ANC.[40] In 1968 ANC president Oliver Tambo acknowledged the dominance of the South African government:

> '... the bonds of bondage that bound millions of black people in South Africa twenty years ago have since been tightened ... Basic freedoms, few and far between in 1948 have been ruthlessly whittled away ... This ... is an ... achievement for the doctrines of "baaskap", superiority of the white skin and colonial domination.[41]

Despite international pressure, the only militaristic danger to South Africa was essentially hypothetical, as the Former Chief of the Defence Force, Lt Gen. J.J. Geldenhuys implied; 'Until the mid 1970s South Africa had neighbours that were generally friendly. The only possible military threat was from a long way off, [if] for example, the UN or the Organisation of African Unity had launched expeditionary forces'.[42]

Throughout the 1960s the South African government countered its isolation, by uniting most English and Afrikaans-speakers through 'its use of anti-communism as an ideological weapon'. South Africa's withdrawal from the Commonwealth in 1961 encouraged a 'sense of embattled kinship between English and Afrikaner' resulting in

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[40] T. Lodge, Black Politics in South Africa Since 1945 (Braamfontein, 1985), p.300.

[41] O. Tambo, "Paper presented at the request of the Special Committee Against Apartheid, June 1968" in E.S. Reddy (ed), Oliver Tambo: Apartheid and the International Community-Addresses to United Nations Committees and Conferences (London, 1991), p.17.

[42] Quoted in S. Stander, Like the Wind: The Story of the South African Army (Cape Town, 1985), p.138.

the belief that 'unity on the paramount issue of white survival [was] crucial'.[43] This developed into what former State President F.W. de Klerk called 'a strong sense of nationalism: We will not allow the world to tell us what to do'.[44]

However, in 1973 white domination was soon tested when strikes broke out at the Durban docks over low wages and poor working conditions. These strikes added a new political dimension to black politics as they marked the start of demands for black collective bargaining. The strikes' success led the BCM to take an interest in the workers for the first time.[45] The BCM widened its clout by forming a political front, the Black Peoples' Convention, and by providing health and welfare assistance through its Black Community Programs. The government took critical notice and banned several BCM leaders, including Biko in 1973.[46]

Externally, South Africa's military commitment deepened in 1971 when the SADF was sent into Namibia to assist the police with anti-strike action. In 1972, amidst rising agitation and political organisation, the government extended conscription to one year's service. In 1973 the SADF took over operations from the police in Northern Namibia.[47]

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[43] Spence, op. cit., p.25.

[44] Time 3 January 1994, p.36.

[45] S. Marks and S. Trapido, "South Africa Since 1976" in S. Johnson (ed), South Africa: No Turning Back (London, 1988), p.19.

[46] Davenport, op. cit, p.378-9.

[47] Cawthra, op. cit., p.19.

Church Response To Conscription

The Durban and Namibian strikes and the SADF's expanding external function served to awaken the churches. Their passivity throughout the 1950s and 1960s was attributed to Protestant reluctance to become involved in matters 'political and white South African's inability to see the connection between the maintenance of apartheid and a strong military'.[48]

The 1961 Defence Act had conferred conscientious objection status on members of pacifist churches such as the Jehovah's Witnesses or Seventh Day Adventists. In 1967 the first objectors appeared, following the introduction of universal conscription. By 1971, sixty eight objectors were in detention barracks, most from the Jehovah's Witnesses and the other peace churches.[49] The SADF was unable to co-opt the Jehovah's Witnesses. They refused military service in any capacity and were sentenced to repeated three month periods in military detention barracks.[50]

On 3 August 1974, due to the growing internal resistance and the expanding liberation wars in Rhodesia, Angola and Mozambique, the South African Council of Churches (SACC) passed a resolution which stated that the SADF defended a 'fundamentally unjust and discriminatory society' and that the SACC should:

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[48] H. Winkler and L. Nathan, "Waging Peace: Church Resistance to Militarisation" in J. Cock and L. Nathan (eds), War and Society: The Militarisation of South Africa (Cape Town, 1989), p.325.

[49] Dome (Student Newspaper of the University of Natal) Vol.4, p.10. Undated.

[50] Winkler and Nathan, op. cit., p.325.

> challenge all [its] members to consider ... whether Christ's call to take up the cross and follow him in identifying with the oppressed does not, in our situation, involve becoming conscientious objectors.[51]

However, this declaration did not result in many cases of conscientious objection for three reasons. Firstly, the government immediately responded to this resolution by passing an amendment to the Defence Act which 'made it an offence, punishable by a R6 000 fine or six years' imprisonment, to encourage or assist any person to refuse or fail to render military service'.[52] Secondly, the decree did not provoke lengthy discussion in churches dominated by a conservative white laity who voiced considerable 'reluctance ... to follow the lead of their bishops'.[53] Thirdly, debate in Parliament was insignificant, as the liberal parties expressed their usual reluctance to support issues which gave them a "soft" image. The Progressive Party condemned the SACC for 'spread[ing] a defeatist spirit toward peaceful change' and the UP accused it of 'giving terrorism a cloak of sacrilegious respectability'.[54] Nonetheless, there were palpable benefits from the resolution. The church now took an active public role in promoting conscientious objection and the question of maintaining apartheid through military service was debated.

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[51] ECC, op. cit., p.54.

[52] CIIR, op. cit., p.80.

[53] Winkler and Nathan, op. cit., p.326 and J.W. de Gruchy, The Church Struggle in South Africa (Cape Town, 1979), p.99.

[54] CIIR, op. cit., p.80.

NUSAS Suppressed

The 1970s commenced with the potential for student activity:

> The end of the Sixties coincided with the rise of a new wave of students at the English Language Universities (ELUs). These were individuals who matched their political radicalism with a culturally radical lifestyle which rejected the old-fashioned, formal liberalism of previous generations of students in favour of the political militancy of the seventies with its scorn for formal structures and total commitment to change.[55]

NUSAS, like COSAWR struggled to attract Afrikaners who maintained a tangible group ideology.[56] Accommodating the English-speaking students was a dilemma too:

> they (English-speaking students and possibly the English-speaking population) are not and have not formed themselves as a group ... The interaction they have sought has always been on the basis of the individual, and while they may be objectively defined as a group, they have never been able to act as one.[57]

As a result, commitment to change was made by just 'a handful of white students', working primarily for NUSAS's Wages and Economics Commission which was set up in 1971 'to give evidence to the industrial councils ... on black wages and their relationship to profits'.[58] The Wages Commission would serve as an introduction to political activism for COSAWR members Gavin Cawthra and Ian Robertson.

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[55] J. Daniel, "NUSAS 1963-73: Ten Years of Conflict", South African Outlook Vol.104, No.1232, January 1974, p.13.

[56] J.C. Fick said that the ideal of the Afrikaans student was to have his own flag and language (J.C. Fick, "Afrikaner Student Politics -- Past and Present" in and H. van der Merwe and D. Welsh (eds), op. cit., p.85). M. Le Roux wrote that Afrikaner students 'will not yield power to a group that will take away its rights and privileges'. Afrikaner students considered NUSAS to be virtually powerless and as was the case with their English-speaking counterparts, most were not politically minded (M. Le Roux, "The New Afrikaners: Views on the Ideals and Policies of the Moderate Afrikaans Students" in van der Merwe and Welsh (eds), op. cit., pp.90, 93 and 94).

[57] Curtis and Keegan, op. cit., p.118.

[58] Marks and Trapido, op. cit., p.18.

The government, distressed as usual by white dissent, counteracted white student "radicalism". In 1972 Prime Minister John Vorster, who, in 1963 had called NUSAS 'a cancer in the life of South Africa that must be cut out',[59] formed a Select Committee under the chairmanship of A.L. Schlebusch to investigate NUSAS, the UCM, the Christian Institute and the South African Institute of Race Relations. The commission recommended that sixteen NUSAS and SASO leaders be served with banning orders.[60]

The government then passed the 1974 Affected Organisations Bill which allowed the State President to declare any organisation "affected" if he considered it a threat to the State. The Bill specifically prohibited such organisations from receiving overseas funds. This drastically impaired NUSAS's activities because it received seventy per cent of its funding from foreign sources.[61] Protest from liberal parliamentary parties was not forthcoming because the UP had participated in the Schlebusch Commission out of its 'concern for public security' and thus 'endorsed procedures which ignored normal judicial safeguards'.[62]

NUSAS supported the 1974 SACC resolution, but the Defence Further Amendment Act:

> appear[ed] to have stifled any open debate on the issue. This despite the fact that the student community is one of the groups most affected by military call-

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59 Kline, op. cit., p.142.

60 ibid., p.144.

61 ibid., p.144., quoting South African Institute of Race Relations, A Survey of Race Relations, 1974 (Johannesburg, 1975), p.32-3.

62 Davenport, op. cit., p.387.

> ups, and it is well known that many people become students in order to get temporary deferment from military service.[63]

Until the mid 1970s, student activism against conscription was modest due to the low level of SADF activity, minimal South African casualties, the relatively short length of service and government controls. Ian Robertson's comment indicates the extent to which the government's actions intimidated NUSAS:

> I seem to recollect in either 1973 or 1974 there were some kind of ... seminars on the study of war resistance, held by some of the student leaders of the time, including Craig Williamson. The issue of militarisation was very sensitive ... NUSAS was trying to feel the waters ... A whole bunch of NUSAS officials both in the upper and middle echelons could have been arrested. They got cold feet so they pulled out.[64]

Angola and Soweto - Two year conscription

Amidst this political restraint two events provoked a sustained reaction by many black and some white South Africans. Firstly, on 23 October 1975, South Africa invaded Angola 'in response to the threat of a Soviet-backed government taking over Angola'.[65] Secondly, from 16 June 1976, the Soweto uprisings, provoked by the compulsory use of Afrikaans as a medium of instruction in black Transvaal schools, sparked widespread anger and protests which spread throughout the country.

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[63] COSAWR (UK), The White Student Bodies and the Military (undated pamphlet), p.1.

[64] Ian Robertson, interviewed by the author, Cape Town, 29 December 1993.

[65] Davenport, op. cit., p.456.

These events had two significant ramifications. Firstly, the legitimacy of the government was forcefully challenged as resistance politics became more militant and organised. During the year that followed the Soweto insurrection at least 3 000 young South Africans left the country – many to do guerrilla training. Also, an increase in sabotage was reported during 1976 and 1977.[66]

Secondly, the "securocrats" under the guidance of Defence Minister PW Botha, who 'had a powerful constituency in the senior ranks of the military establishment',[67] started to take over the maintenance of law and order from the police who were criticised for their inability to predict and rapidly quell the outbreak. By September 1978, with P.W. Botha's ascendency to Prime Minister, the military had effectively taken control of the political establishment.

The UN responded to Soweto and the invasion of Angola with a mandatory arms embargo. The Angolan invasion illustrated the SADF's need for stable supply lines and it noted a deficiency in weaponry; especially its artillery which had been outranged by a Cuban-supplied model.[68] The SADF was suitably refurbished so that it could efficiently conduct 'large-scale pre-emptive and punitive raids ... in neighbouring countries'.[69]

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[66] Cawthra, op. cit., p.25.

[67] Spence, op. cit., p.242.

[68] Dorning, op. cit., p.21.

[69] Spence, op. cit., p.241.

These developments illuminated the 'critical need for additional manpower in the SADF' as existing conscripts were reluctant to voluntarily extend their period of service.[70] By 1977, the escalating threat, augmented by the independence of Angola and Mozambique and the deteriorating security situation in Rhodesia, provoked the government to increase National Service to two years and lengthen annual Citizen Force camps to 30 days each year over an eight year period.[71]

The government further responded by banning both the BCM, which had successfully mobilised black opinion, and the Christian Institute, which was allied with the UCM and the World Council of Churches (WCC). In the general election of October 1977, the NP, playing on the themes of the 'break-up of the United Party' and their party's 'tough handling of events in Soweto', was returned to Parliament with a record number of seats (134 out of 164).[72]

Angola and Soweto sparked the first resistance, albeit unorganised, against military service. As large numbers of troops entered the townships, some whites faced a moral dilemma over their involvement in both an external and a civil war. On 30 May 1976, two weeks before the Soweto uprising, it had been reported that hundreds of deserters and military dodgers were being sought by the SADF.[73] The SADF publicly attributed resistance not to religious or political grounds, but to 'fear', and

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[70] Dorning, op. cit., pp.22.

[71] ibid., p.22.

[72] Davenport, op. cit., p.393.

[73] Sunday Times 30 May 1976.

claimed that conscripts were encouraged by 'mom and dad to buck the system'.[74] However, at this point, the military down-played "draft dodging". Brigadier Frikkie Els, the SADF registering officer, said, 'but it is not always as bad as that, before 1965 it was worse'.[75] When asked if this meant that there was extensive "draft dodging" before 1965, Willem Steenkamp, former military correspondent of the *Cape Times*, said that Brigadier Els might have been quoted out of context. Steenkamp recalled "draft dodging" as having started around 1977 with the advent of two year conscription.[76]

However, a little over six months after Soweto, the Rev. Alan Maker of Johannesburg observed a growing noncompliance to serve in the SADF from non-peace church members based on religious grounds:

> Young men in my congregation have told me they are not prepared to fight in Soweto, where they have friends with whom they have shared meaningful Christian experiences.[77]

From 1975 to 1978 an average of 1,750 conscripts, constituting approximately ten per cent of each intake, failed to report for the twice-yearly National Service call-ups.[78] Some stayed within the country, avoiding the military by constantly changing address. For those without funds to study overseas, global family connections or a job skill in demand abroad, the only possibility was the untested alternative of exile. COSAWR was to provide the assistance for this option.

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[74] ibid.

[75] ibid.

[76] Willem Steenkamp, interviewed by the author, Cape Town, 22 November 1994.

[77] Star (Weekly Airmail Edition) 19 February 1977.

[78] CIIR, op. cit., p.61.

Chapter II

THE ORIGINS OF COSAWR

1976 - The first war resisters go overseas

In March 1976 Ian Bruce,[1] and two other South Africans travelled to the Netherlands where they became the first to apply for political asylum.[2] As with several war resisters Bruce remembers a childhood incident, the witnessing of a group of whites assaulting a black, which made him doubt aspects of South African society. However, he was not particularly politicised, having grown up in what he refers to as the political "dark ages" of the 1960s. Indicative of his cloistered upbringing, Bruce had never heard of the Sharpeville Massacre until he attended university.[3]

In 1969 Bruce entered the SADF thinking it maintained the British traditions of the UDF in which his father had served in World War II. But he found it a very racist institution as evidenced by the shooting drills which he claims were geared toward 'killing blacks'. Bruce's decision to avoid further duty in the SADF was not encouraged by 'mom and dad' but was provoked by the South African invasion of Angola. Bruce indicates that his military service was relatively uneventful, his exile decision was influenced by his academic experience, though he was not directly involved in student politics:

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1 Bruce was a former SADF conscript, aged 23.

2 Ian Bruce, Postal Interview, Port Nolloth, 27 June 1994.

3 ibid.

> I served in 1970 from January through November. I spent six weeks on the border; guarding and patrolling on the Namibian side. Conscripts never crossed the border in those days, and we made no contact with SWAPO troops.
>
> By 1976 I had been to university and understood a lot more about what was happening. The government's use of the idea of a communist threat to justify a solution of Total Onslaught was obviously intended to further the cause of white domination, a cause I could no longer support. I made the personal choice to refuse the call-up to participate as a soldier.
>
> I was not aware of any [exile] support services. We went first to England because we were all ... from families with British origins. We were drawn there I suppose by the relative familiarity we expected. We were overawed by the sheer weight of Whitehall officialdom, however, and without even approaching the Home Office, decided to take our chances elsewhere. Holland, also because of some sense of language and custom familiarity, became our second choice.[4]

Dutch Policy Toward SA Asylum Seekers

When Bruce arrived, the Dutch government was under domestic criticism for allowing in too many refugees from its former colony Surinam to an already overcrowded Holland.[5] Bruce remarks that Dutch officials believed white South Africans 'had it easy' and were surprised at their asylum request; they subsequently worried about 'lots of South Africans coming too'. Bruce continues his account:

> We ended up in Utrecht and were taken under the legal wing of the IUF (I don't know what it stands for any more), an associate organisation of Amnesty International.
> Steps:
> - Application to Foreigners' Police for asylum
> - During asylum process, granted the right to reside but not work in the Netherlands – (We had the right to receive financial assistance, but decided to work instead, with the unofficial knowledge of Foreigners' Police).
> - Write up life history, including accounts of family's political awareness and attitudes, of significant moments of change in awareness, and so on.

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[4] ibid.

[5] G. Newton, The Netherlands: an Historical and Cultural Survey, 1795-1977 (London, 1978), pp.4-5.

- Initial interview with Ministry of Justice official. (Many months later) Interview with a panel of officials at the ministry in Den Haag.
- Decision: C status – may reside in the Netherlands as long as employed full time as a labourer.
- Almost three years later I challenged this status successfully, and my lawyer won for myself and those who came after me the right to a B status – the same rights as people from the EEC countries.[6]

By early 1977 the number of asylum seekers in the Netherlands had increased to twenty.[7] They claimed that because the Dutch government supported the UN rulings, below, on Namibia's independence it was obligated to assist South Africans who refused military service on political grounds.

In 1971 The World Court ruled that South Africa's application of apartheid to Namibia violated its Mandate over the Territory, making its continued presence there illegal.[8] In October 1971, the Security council adopted Resolution 301 which buttressed the decision of the World Court. In 1973 the International Convention on the Suppression and Punishment of Apartheid declared the system of apartheid a crime against humanity. In another move which strengthened the United Nation's commitment to bringing independence to Namibia, it passed Security Council Resolution 385 (1976) which called for 'free and fair elections under the supervision and control of the UN [including] the withdrawal of South African troops'.[9]

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6 Ian Bruce, Postal Interview, 27 June 1994.

7 Sunday Times (South Africa) 13 March 1977.

8 R. Jaster, South Africa in Namibia: the Botha Strategy (Harvard, 1985), p.6.

9 See J.H.P. Serfontein, Namibia? (Randburg, 1976), p.55; D. Soggot, Namibia: The Violent Heritage (London, 1986), p.177.

The South African government responded in a relaxed manner to increased draft dodging; numbers were 'low',[10] and an unnamed SADF spokesman replied with only a blustery warning:

> ... if such people leave the country they had better stay away for good and settle elsewhere- because even if they were to stay away for 10 years they will still have to complete their military obligations on their return to South Africa.[11]

The government had unwittingly aided those who wanted to depart when it lifted passport restrictions on those males awaiting military training or liable for service in the reserves. Previously, in order to obtain a passport a male eligible for conscription needed to have completed his national service or have notified the military that he was leaving the country.[12] Steenkamp surmises the government did this because the Home Office or Foreign Affairs felt the restriction was too tight.[13]

1977 - The Kevin Laue and Lawrence Bartlett UK Asylum Case

On 1 August 1976, Bill Anderson, who had served in the SADF the previous year, travelled to London and, with the aid of SWAPO and Martin Walker of the Guardian, publicised allegations of SADF torture in Namibia and Angola.[14] Anderson

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[10] Daily Telegraph 13 November 1976.

[11] Cape Times 12 January 1977.

[12] Cape Times 29 January 1977.

[13] Willem Steenkamp, interviewed by the author, Cape Town, 22 November 1994.

[14] Guardian 5 September 1976. At the time of Anderson's arrival, there was no organised South African group available to help war resisters.

professed that captured troops from the Popular Movement for the Liberation of Angola (MPLA) and SWAPO were beaten with rifles, kicked and burnt with cigarettes, and the bodies of dead guerrillas were mutilated. Anderson explained that his decision to go into exile was based:

> Directly [on] the experiences I had in the army ... I consciously had not wanted to leave the country but I was so frustrated and confused by particularly the experience of torture [witnessed] in Namibia.[15]

He then testified to the UN about these allegations and publicised the names of officers involved.

Despite this seminal publicity, in October 1976, Lord Harrison, the junior Home Office Minister of the ruling Labour Party stated the official government position toward asylum seekers, which, similar to the Netherlands, indicated a lack of cognisance of events in South Africa:

> We are not prepared to indicate that we will admit anyone who wants to come here simply because they do not wish to serve in the Rhodesian armed forces.[16]

Six months after this statement, two SADF conscripts, Kevin Laue and Lawrence Bartlett, fought a well-publicised test case under the auspices of the British Anti-Apartheid Movement (AAM) to determine if South Africans had a right to seek political

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[15] Bill Anderson, interviewed by the author, Johannesburg, 10 October 1993.

[16] Guardian 10 May 1977. Kevin Laue, a COSAWR founding member, commented on the non-existent role of Rhodesian war resisters: 'Firstly, being a British colony the many thousands of young men who left that country to avoid the war found it quite easy to relocate in the UK and get on with their lives as accepted "returning Brits" even if they or their parents had been born in bred in Rhodesia. Secondly, the white liberal/left in Rhodesia never numbered more than few hundred or so and their role there had always been limited. Whereas in SA there had/has been a small but firmly established tradition of whites against apartheid going back for generations and reaching to the very top of the ANC itself'. (Kevin Laue, Postal Interview, Harare, 5 April 1994). A survey of literature related to Rhodesia did not mention Rhodesian war resisters. See J. Frederikse, None But Ourselves: Masses vs. Media in the Making of Zimbabwe (Johannesburg, 1982); P. Godwin and I. Hancock, 'Rhodesians Never Die': The Impact of War and Change on White Rhodesia (Oxford, 1993) and I. Hancock, White Liberals, Moderates and Radicals in Rhodesia 1953-1980 (Kent, 1984).

asylum in Britain. Previously South African "draft dodgers" had entered Britain legally through the partiality clause of the 1971 Immigration Act which gave them right of settlement through a parent or grandparent. Others arrived on student or tourist visas and then went underground.[17]

Laue's comments on his military and university experiences indicate that the development of his convictions took place over a period of time:

> Before I went in [1966] my attitude to the SADF was very simplistic: it had to be done/one had no choice; almost all my mates were in the same boat; my brother had done his 9 months ... it was a rite of passage.
>
> In the army ... my impression was also fairly normal ... [like] the majority ... in any conscript army since time began who disliked the discipline/stupidity of the officers/NCOs, avoided doing anything one didn't have to do, hated the boredom of it, counted the days ... In the specific South African context the experience reinforced my prejudice against Afrikaners who ... made up the vast majority of the Permanent Force, but ... this was a normal response for a youth from English-speaking Natal.
>
> Subsequently I had to do fairly regular parades at the Drill Hall in Pietermaritzburg (PMB) which was the HQ of the Natal Field Artillery (NFA) [Laue's unit] and as I was a PMB lad and at University in that city there was no way to avoid these. I also had to do a three week camp at the end of 1968 when I had finished university and had to do another. During the years 1968-1973 my attitude toward the SADF crystallised to a large extent.
>
> I was indirectly involved in NUSAS at a local campus level ... During the period 1968-1973 as my liberal consciousness was developing the army parades became growlingly irksome ... More troublesome were the camps. In 1968 I was called up for a three-week ... camp ... I hated it as only the year before I had done my nine months.
>
> [In 1973 Laue attended his first camp since 1968 after having received university deferments] ... I couldn't avoid but noticing that the vast majority of my fellow Natal gunners were resigned to the fact that it was only a matter of time before those ... camps were going to change to the real thing. The NFA was/is very English and I realised that the SADF whether in Afrikaans or English garb was not my scene.[18]

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[17] Guardian 10 May 1977.

[18] Kevin Laue, Postal Interview, Harare, 14 March 1994.

Laue's subsequent decision to leave for Britain in February 1975 involved reasons more personal than political:

> When I left I didn't think of myself as going into exile and I had no intention of promoting my case or anything else with the AAM ... It was not only the prospect of war which made me decide to leave ... I had never travelled outside SA before. The liberals were a pretty pessimistic crowd ... Also while studying the law the gigantic fiasco of the apartheid system revealed itself and I saw no sense in becoming a lawyer in such a system ... and I was pretty hedonistic at this stage as well ... although I did have a strong conscience (white guilt, certainly) about what was going on.[19]

Laue hinted at taking the easy way out by marrying a British woman; 'but the woman I was living with was already married and in any event the idea didn't appeal to me'. He then recalls three diverse incidents which prompted his asylum decision

> First, June 16 jolted me into feeling I couldn't run away from South Africa although I couldn't go back either; second, my friend Lawrence Bartlett arrived in about July 1976 having ignored a call-up for Namibia/Angola ... Third, I was given another 6 months [visa], it was made very clear this would be my last.[20]

Laue's resolution to seek asylum showed a degree of political maturity. He maintains it was 'a deliberate political move to create maximum publicity on the issue in South Africa to let others know that they could and should refuse to fight for apartheid'. He approached the ANC in a composed manner, 'I just walked into the ANC office, told them who I was, what I wanted to do and why'. He was referred to the AAM.[21]

The war resistance issue was novel to both the ANC and the AAM. A revaluation of guerilla warfare dominated strategic planning on the part of the ANC. The newly

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[19] ibid.

[20] ibid.

[21] ibid.

independent countries of Angola and Mozambique allowed the ANC to launch operations against South Africa. On an organisational level the ANC was overwhelmed by the events of 1976 which prompted an exodus of young blacks from South Africa. The ANC at both its international bases and offices had to contend with blacks who were BCM aligned and unfamiliar with the history of the ANC, including some who had never heard of the Defiance Campaign.[22]

For the aforementioned reasons, the ANC played a minor role in the war resistance issue, leaving the AAM to guide developments. Advocating war resistance was indicative of the AAM's new agenda which differed from the successful 1969-70 mass demonstrations against touring South African sport teams. The AAM shifted towards a policy that 'exercised more political pressure'.[23] The AAM, with its support base drawn from centrist elements of the Labour and Liberal parties, plus the universities, churches and trade unions, had good access to the Labour government, especially while David Owen was Foreign Secretary.[24] Owen advocated change in southern Africa through peaceful means, and, indicative of a "conservatism" in the Labour Party, he was concerned that '(d)elays allow communist ideology to flourish' in South Africa.[25]

The AAM underpinned their new campaign on Britain's support for the UN Resolution 301 which declared South Africa's occupation of Namibia illegal, and it hoped to

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[22] See R. Kasrils, Armed and Dangerous: My Undercover Struggle Against Apartheid (Johannesburg, 1993), pp.156-7.

[23] J. Barber, The Uneasy Relationship: Britain and South Africa (London, 1983), p.60.

[24] Owen was Foreign Secretary for the years 1977-79.

[25] ibid., p.44.

capitalise on the popular anti-apartheid stance of the Labour government. Laue used Bill Anderson's allegations in the initial applications as evidence:

> of the regime's aggressiveness and illegal activity towards the black majority in Namibia and independent Africa but equally important as clear evidence of how white conscripts were ... supporting the growing list of crimes in defiance of the whole world.[26]

Laue and Bartlett's first application was refused by the Home Secretary, who concluded that they faced prosecution rather than persecution in South Africa. The Home Secretary cited:

> Article One of the UN convention relating to the status of refugees [which] says the criterion for asylum should be the prospect of persecution in the home country.[27]

South African law provided only for conscientious objectors from peace churches, Laue and Bartlett, as political objectors, had no recourse in South Africa and thus would have faced serious charges:

> In terms of the South African Defence Act, any person called up who fails to report for active service, "may be apprehended as a deserter and may be tried and convicted under the Military Discipline Code for the offence of desertion committed while on service".[28]

Nevertheless the Home Office ordered them to leave by 2 April 1977. Laue mentions that he and Bartlett expected to be turned down. Therefore they criticised the government's response as deporting 'two white South Africans who had applied to stay as refugees rather than go back and fight for apartheid'.[29] Mr. Bob Hughes,

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[26] Kevin Laue, Postal Interview, 5 April 1994.

[27] Daily News (South Africa) 19 March 1977.

[28] Anti-Apartheid News April 1977.

[29] Kevin Laue, Postal Interview, Harare, 14 March 1994.

chairman of the AAM and an influential Labour MP claimed that the Home Secretary's ruling was in effect assisting the 'white minority regime'.[30]

Laue and Bartlett appealed against the ruling. Reports from South Africa discredited Laue whose elder brother referred to Kevin's case as 'a ruse to stay in Britain and get a work permit'.[31] But this "ruse" precipitated apprehension in a Labour government dominated by its 'leading right wingers'.[32] It was concerned that 'a steady trickle of South African and Rhodesian Army deserters ... could become a flood'.[33] Many Britons, like some Dutch, felt their nation was too overcrowded. The high rate of unemployment would increase with more immigrants arriving. Despite Labour's anti-apartheid policy, it was anxious to avoid diplomatic rows which could harm British economic investments in South Africa. Politically it had to consider those interests which viewed South Africa as a strategic ally in the Cold War.

On 9 May 1977, the Home Secretary, Mr Merlyn Rees, after meeting with a delegation from the AAM, and Labour and Liberal Parties, said that war resisters from South Africa and Rhodesia would receive 'sympathetic treatment' but not 'automatic right of entry'.[34] It was agreed that under the 1951 UN Convention on Refugees Britain could not expel anyone liable to face persecution in South Africa, nor would it allow

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30 Natal Witness 19 March 1977.

31 Rand Daily Mail 20 April 1977.

32 G. Smith, "The British Scene", Foreign Affairs Vol.64, No.5, Summer 1986, p.925.

33 Rand Daily Mail 20 April 1977.

34 Guardian 10 May 1977.

deserters to be extradited. Decisions on deserters would be taken at ministerial level. Mr Hughes explained:

> We have been given a statement on the principle of men who refuse to take up arms for apartheid. War resisters who arrive here can now be confident they will not be put on the next plane back.[35]

Laue and Bartlett were given permission to stay, received work permits and were granted twelve months' residence, renewable annually. After five years they could claim British citizenship. Although they did not receive full political asylum, Laue remarks that their case generated publicity:

> The London bureau of the Rand Daily Mail [RDM] ... had certain individuals in it close to the ANC. Thus the RDM later carried as its front page lead the story when we were granted the right to stay – this was a major coup as it carried the message directly home in the widest possible fashion. This story was clearly written (and published) by those sympathetic to the AAM in the broad sense.[36]

Despite the attention Laue and Bartlett's case attracted, Dr Connie Mulder, the Minister of the Interior, continued to wield the big stick:

> There is an exodus of professional people – even South African citizens – who are going to other countries. Let me say in plain language that we are taking notice of the date of your departure from South Africa. We are taking notice of the fact that you are deserting the ship when we need you. We will take into account when you want to return in two or three years and we will decide, then, if South Africa is prepared to take you back'.[37]

At the same time South African activists abroad planned for an extended campaign against conscription.

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35 Rand Daily Mail 10 May 1977.

36 Kevin Laue, Postal Interview, 14 March 1994.

37 Cape Times 29 October 1977.

War Resistance Groups Before COSAWR[38]

OKHELA[39] while not a war resistance group, warrants attention for two reasons. Firstly, two of its members, the Rev. Don Morton and Bill Anderson subsequently became involved in the war resistance movement. Secondly, another South African member, Barend Schuitema (a founding member and former secretary of the AABN) subsequently offered his services to the Security Branch.[40] Due partly to Schuitema's action the AABN became suspicious of South Africans, thus damaging its relationship with the COSAWR (NL) branch.[41]

OKHELA was founded by the Afrikaans poet Breyten Breytenbach after his previous organisation ATLAS disbanded in 1973. ATLAS had consisted of South African, Dutch and French intellectuals. It was 'established to support white political activists' whereas OKHELA was:

> a militant organisation which attempted to find ways for white South Africans to contribute toward the transformation of South Africa.[42]

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[38] See Appendix A for Diagram.

[39] This is a Zulu word meaning 'spark'.

[40] 'I admit that I passed on information to the South African Police, but that was only from 1978 onwards' (Barend Schuitema in the Sunday Times (South Africa) 3 February 1980). The type of information was not revealed in the article. The author was unable to locate Schuitema. Conny Braam, President of the AABN contended, 'I don't know where the nonsense about OKHELA being infiltrated by BOSS [Bureau of State Security] comes from. It is true there were a whole lot of rumours about it, but it was never proved and even Breytenbach later stated he is convinced Schuitema never worked for BOSS' (Conny Braam, Postal Interview, Amsterdam, 2 March 1994).

[41] See Chapter V.

[42] Rand Daily Mail 6 July 1977. The quotation was taken from Breytenbach's trial; he was to be charged under the Terrorism Act, the Riotous Assemblies Act and the Prisons Act.

OKHELA, as Lodge has surmised, was an anti-communist faction within the ANC.[43] Anderson asserts OKHELA based its reasoning on:

> this very sophisticated argument [that] the ANC was controlled by the Communist Party (CP), the CP was controlled by whites, this was not the role for whites in the struggle, whites needed to respect the African liberation struggle.[44]

Anderson joined OKHELA in New York during the autumn of 1976. He explains the spontaneity of his decision:

> I met Don Morton who at the time was a very charismatic character ... I was ... available to the first person to come and recruit me ... my politics were not very developed [Anderson attended just one year of university] ... I bought Morton's anti-communist kind of line ... he painted quite a romantic picture of the life of a revolutionary and he recruited me within four hours ... OKHELA at this stage was a very small outfit, Breytenbach had already been arrested ... and in fact at that stage OKHELA consisted of Barend Schuitema, Don Morton and myself ... during my time OKHELA was mostly raising money in the USA from the whole post-Vietnam, liberal wealthy community and the National Council of Churches ... and doing ... guerilla training in the Arizona desert ...
>
> We were preparing a whole new kind of operation which would have involved setting up a printing press in Botswana ... which would produce literature aimed at whites ... posted from within South Africa to try to create an impression of an internal presence.[45]

OKHELA had planned to set up an extensive underground network which would ultimately lead to the seizure of power.[46] However it was "demoralised" by Breytenbach's arrest in South Africa in 1975 and started to "collapse".[47] In December 1977 OKHELA dissolved itself because of its inertia, the lack of personnel,

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[43] T. Lodge, Black Politics in South Africa (Braamfontein, 1985), p.302.

[44] Bill Anderson, interviewed by the author, Johannesburg, 10 October 1993.

[45] ibid.

[46] Eastern Province Herald 30 June 1977. Information taken from the OKHELA manifesto presented at Breytenbach's trial.

[47] Argus 17 November 1977.

and the suspicion that it had been infiltrated by BOSS. Anderson, Morton and Terry Shott (a former SADF conscript) founded a new BCM sympathetic organisation – the South African Liberation Support Committee (SALSCOM).

Anderson recounts that SALSCOM viewed war resistance as 'the most important issue to look at' because it 'spelt the whole issue of alienation of whites facing conscription ... it claimed a broader agenda to mobilise whites'.[48] SALSCOM's goal was:

> undermining the morale of South African troops ... and sowing discord in the SADF. No successful revolution has taken place in this century without there having been a significant level of disloyalty amongst the defending troops.[49]

SALSCOM, a group of no more than 10 people, proposed an overly ambitious five point program aimed at undermining the SADF. Firstly, finding countries that would offer asylum for deserters and getting support from various liberation and solidarity groups; secondly, disseminating information to soldiers, for example, via radio broadcasts from outside South Africa or using an underground; thirdly, setting up a support base for deserters via financial and legal support; fourthly, creating agitation amongst the troops themselves by approaching South African males while on overseas holiday and convincing them to work against the regime when they reported for camps or national service; and fifthly, getting information about SADF operational strength and capabilities from the soldiers themselves.[50] There was no mention of

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[48] ibid.

[49] This was taken from the Rabie Commission: The Report of the Commission of Inquiry into Security Legislation (Republic of South Africa, 1981), p.71, quoting SALSCOM's Toward an Understanding of Whites in the Struggle. [Author's Note – The author was unable to find a copy of this publication.]

[50] To the Point 17 March 1978, p.18, quoting SALSCOM's "Towards an Understanding of Whites in the Struggle". To the Point was published by the discredited Department of Information. To the Point claimed it did not alter SALSCOM's publication.

instituting any psychological or counselling support services, something that COSAWR also would neglect to plan for.

Anderson recollects SALSCOM's political convictions were considered:

> a serious attack on the ANC ... particularly in ... seeing the ANC as the leading organisation in the liberation struggle ... [SALSCOM believed] the ANC is there but the Black Consciousness Movement is ... more important ... Before it was published the document was shown to the ANC who claimed that it was potentially scandalous.[51]

The ANC understandably was reluctant to support SALSCOM. SALSCOM consequently set up a fund raising wing – the South African Military Refugee Aid Fund (SAMRAF) in order to circumvent the ANC[52]:

> it [SAMRAF] was seen as an ambitious way to undermine the International Defence and Aid Fund [IDAF], the view being the only way you could get money through IDAF, the main provider of funds at the time, was if you were approved by the ANC. SAMRAF set up a board consisting of, in part, respectable individuals and church groups.[53]

Yet even finding alternative sources of finance was not enough to maintain SALSCOM. 'As we started to work with the war resisters,' recalls Anderson, 'we saw the need to not fight openly with the ANC, so the whole SALSCOM-OKHELA thing was a problem.'[54] SALSCOM's attempt to mend relations with the ANC was symbolised its adoption of a new name – South African War Resisters (SAWR). Anderson

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[51] Bill Anderson, Interview, 10 October 1993.

[52] SAMRAF also set up an office in the USA under the guidance of the Rev. Don Morton.

[53] Bill Anderson, Interview, 10 October 1993.

[54] ibid.

described this name change and the alphabet soup collection of war resistance groups as 'always confusing'.[55]

SAWR promoted an internal campaign against the SADF encompassing all classes and races within South Africa and not just middle class exiles. Anderson explains:

> One criticism of the organisation is that it's mainly helping middle class students ... the movement [Vietnam] really took off when the blacks, who were given a much harder time, [than whites], started organising. After that it spread to the people actually serving and they started deserting. That's what we would like to see happening in South Africa.[56]

This strategy was announced in Omkeer[57] a journal directed towards the serving military. In a respectful manner it published an "in Memorium" column which listed thirteen SADF soldiers killed in action. Omkeer included personal accounts of why resisters left South Africa plus articles written by resisters which described in a satirical manner the seeming perpetuity of military service, the viciousness of the corporals and the monotony of the parades. Another article cited an interview on British television with captured SADF sapper Johan van der Mescht who proclaimed, 'I didn't come to the border because I wanted to, I came because I had to be there ... The army will never see me again'.[58] The articles did not include crude character attacks on the character of the SADF or crass drawings as did some issues of Resister.[59]

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55 ibid.

56 Time Out 30 June 1978.

57 This is an Afrikaans word meaning 'About Face'.

58 Omkeer: The Paper for Call-up Age South Africans No. 2, August 1978.

59 See Chapter VI.

Anderson, reflecting on the influence of his military service, said this procedure was due to SAWR 'not trying to be the enemy [of the SADF] that COSAWR became'.[60]

In June 1978 SAWR attempted to attract a more diversified membership by advertising in the London-based Time Out magazine and 'within a couple of months we had fifteen to twenty people'.[61] On 6 July 1978, SAWR organised a well-publicised picket around the London Royal Premiere of the mercenary movie The Wild Geese which was filmed in the Transvaal with SADF assistance. Terry Shott of SAWR describes the rationale for the picket:

> We've chosen this film because of the way it glorifies the life of the mercenary in Angola and we hope that it will help us contact other draft resisters here who do not know about the organisation.[62]

Anderson regarded the demonstration as a catalyst in prompting the AAM to even more publicly support the war resistance issue. 'We got directly involved with the production people ... the Anti-Apartheid Movement was forced ... to mobilise itself very quickly ... they saw this was going to be a very successful picket and they could not be seen not to be involved.'[63]

The picket was attended by about 100 people representing SAWR, the AAM, Equity, the Namibia Support Committee, the Westminster Trades Council and Christians against Racism and Apartheid. Leaflets appealed to people to boycott the film and advertised SAWR as a collective of South African military refugees offering a support

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60 Bill Anderson, Interview, 10 October 1993.

61 ibid.

62 Terry Shott, quoted in Time Out 30 June 1978.

63 Bill Anderson, Interview, 10 October 1993.

base for the growing number of South African war resisters. The demonstrators jeered the Duchess of Kent and the film's two black South African co-stars, John Kani and Winston Ntshona were greeted with cries of 'stooge'.[64] Despite the above-mentioned efforts the war resistance movement was divided, with political differences stifling further development.

The Formation of COSAWR

In December 1978 COSAWR was formed when SAWR merged with the AAM/ANC-aligned Advice for South African Conscripts (AFSAC).[65] Anderson concedes SAWR 'needed the legitimacy, [yet] the ANC saw us growing fast and wanted to get a finger on it ... mutual interest brought us together, SAWR soon realised 'it could not exist without at least the tacit blessing of the ANC'.[66] The ANC was the largest and most effective of the South African liberation organisations.[67] Throughout the 1960s and into the 1970s the ANC had 'retain[ed] a degree of continued and bedrock political activity'. Its External Mission accommodated many of those who left South Africa in the 1970s. Even exiles unsympathetic to the ANC realised it offered the only available sanctuary.[68]

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[64] Rand Daily Mail 7 July 1978; Johannesburg Star 7 July 1978.

[65] COSAWR (UK), Chronology of War Resistance in South Africa 1970-1980. AFSAC was another small group of South African war resisters consisting of 5-10 members.

[66] Bill Anderson, Interview, 10 October 1993.

[67] ibid.

[68] H. Barrell, "The Outlawed South African Liberation Movements" in S. Johnson (ed), South Africa: Time Running Out (London, 1988), p.55; H. Holland, The Struggle: A History of the African National Congress (Glasgow, 1989), pp.194-5.

Laue offers the AFSAC point of view:

> [AFSAC] looked to the ANC/AAM for guidance and had no problems in seeing the ANC as the only genuine liberation movement ... Bill [Anderson] came to the issue from somewhat of a different perspective in that he was a few years younger and had been directly involved in the Namibian/Angolan war ... 1978 was taken up in meetings of AFSAC and the ANC/AAM ... working out what the whole war-resisters issue was about ... An important development was the arrival of Gavin Cawthra [who] virtually immediately realised we in AFSAC had a broader understanding of the issue and he "worked" on Bill [Anderson] and others.[69]

In contrast to Anderson, Cawthra's activist background and his departure, due, in part, to the lack of a political support system explains his stressing war resistance from an organisational perspective:

> At school I got involved with the Institute of Race Relations and this introduced me to politicised young blacks for the first time, and I went on to NUSAS activities at university. I'd also become peripherally involved with the trade union movement that was just starting in Durban after the 1973 strikes.
>
> Like many whites of my generation we were radicalised by the Soweto uprising and sought to find an appropriate white response to black consciousness ... We experimented at one stage with "Africanism" which stressed our identity as part of the history and culture of the continent. But in general, I regarded myself as a Marxist-Socialist – albeit of vague provenance ... we criticised black consciousness for its 'bourgeois' or 'idealist' content ... while acknowledging that it was necessary at that stage of the struggle for blacks to organise separately. Most of us viewed the ANC as a largely spent force – it had little apparent presence in the country ... the Black Consciousness organisations were dominant.[70]

Cawthra continues his narrative:

> I left in December 1977 – it was just after the banning of the Black Consciousness movements and after the death of Steve Biko. I'd been called up to the army and I saw no option other than leaving; or making a stand against the army, which meant imprisonment, but when I came out of prison I would have been called up to the army again. I decided to leave.

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69 Kevin Laue, Postal Interview, 5 April 1994.

70 Gavin Cawthra, Postal Interview, London, 6 February 1994.

> I suppose I did not have the personal strength to face indefinite periods of prison. The whole war resistance movement ... was just starting. There was no network that could have created political support for the stand of an individual.

Cawthra then explains his progression to the ANC in London:

> I remember saying to Aziz Pahad, 'I'm very interested in hearing your perspectives, your views as the ANC'. And he said to me, 'It's not my views its the views of the South African people'. Which I thought was enormously arrogant. [Laughs] But at the same time it was very educational for me.
>
> I came to realise that the tradition of the ANC was a very important one and that the ANC still existed inside the country. So my political views moved ... from the sort of Black Consciousness views to pro ANC views.[71]

Cawthra's explanation for the unification of the war resistance groups reflected the urgent need for solidarity regardless of political persuasion:

> The ANC was deeply suspicious of SALSCOM[72] and did not want it to run separate underground or solidarity activities ... [N]ew war resisters were arriving all the time who cared little for these distinctions and after some discussions it was eventually agreed that SALSCOM would dissolve itself and that a new war resisters group would be established – COSAWR – which would liaise with the AAM for its solidarity activities, and with the ANC for issues related to internal work (although COSAWR's formal brief was not to carry out internal work other than the distribution of Resister). Throughout its history COSAWR maintained close links with the AAM, but regarded itself as an ANC structure.[73]

The ANC's UN office pressed for international efforts to assist war resistance. The August 1977 World Conference Against Apartheid urged all UN member states to grant 'immediate political asylum to *bona fide* war resisters and deserters from the apartheid armed forces'.[74] In March 1978, the UN Centre Against Apartheid issued

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[71] Cited in H. Bernstein, The Rift: The Exile Experience of South Africans (London, 1994), p.316.

[72] As previously indicated Anderson told this writer that the constant name changing of war resistance groups was 'always confusing'. One can assume SAWR is synonymous with SALSCOM.

[73] Gavin Cawthra, Postal Interview, 6 February 1994.

[74] Appeal to South African Youth not to Participate in the Armed Forces Information note NO. 35/78, (Centre Against Apartheid, Department of Political and Security Council Affairs, 15 March 1978).

an appeal for white South Africans to refuse to participate in the armed forces, calling on UN member states to grant full refugee status to 'bona fide war resisters and deserters'.[75]

COSAWR's role in providing assistance to war resisters was facilitated on 20 December 1978 when UN Resolution 33/165 was passed. This called:

> on all its member states to 'grant asylum or safe transit to another state' to persons compelled to leave South Africa 'because of conscientious objection to assisting in the enforcement of apartheid through service in military or police forces'. However, the resolution did not call for 'full political asylum'.[76]

The UN motion built on previous declarations:

> Mindful that the Charter of the United Nations sets forth, as one of the purposes of the Organisation, the achievement of international co-operation in promoting and encouraging respect for human rights and for fundamental freedoms for all without distinction as to race, sex, language or religion,
>
> Recalling article 18 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, which states that everyone has the right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion,
>
> Conscious of the Proclamation of Teheran, the Lagos Declaration for Action Against Apartheid, and other United Nations declarations, conventions and resolutions have condemned apartheid as a crime against the conscience and dignity of mankind,
>
> Having regard to section II, paragraph 11, of the Lagos Declaration, which proclaims that the United Nations and the international community have a special responsibility towards those imprisoned, restricted or exiled for their struggle against apartheid.
>
> Recognizes the right of all persons to refuse service in the military or police forces which are used to enforce apartheid.[77]

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[75] ibid. Emphasis in original.

[76] New African March 1979.

[77] "United Nations General Assembly Resolution of December 1978, Resolution 33/165 – Status of Persons Refusing Service in Military or Police Forces used to Enforce Apartheid" Official Records of the General Assembly, Thirty-Third Session, Supplement No.22.

Cawthra explains the rationale for COSAWR's decision to form a 'tight committee of self appointed members' [ordinarily eight in total] rather than a membership organisation:

> we were reluctant to build a mass movement of war resisters in exile because that would have been seen as a political threat by the AAM and ANC ... COSAWR was run by people who supported the revolutionary mission of the ANC and we did not wish to allow the resistance issue to be taken over by other political interests, eg. pacifists ... This undermined our ability to build a constituency. We were also concerned about infiltration. However, our aim was not so much to build a cadre of 'professional' war resisters, but to channel resisters into solidarity and ANC work – in my view COSAWR, was not, and should not have been, a permanent home for war resisters.[78]

From its inception COSAWR employed a full-time administrator and a part-time researcher. Cawthra relates that he was COSAWR's first administrator because 'No one else was prepared to work so much for so little!' Anderson offers more pragmatic reasons for Cawthra's appointment:

> I started doing research in the States in 1977 ... by 1978-79 I knew a lot more than anyone else ... I wrote a book for IDAF, The Apartheid War Machine. Gavin was ... available for the work, he was good at it, he was a very good administrator and a very good journalist.[79]

Cawthra and Anderson's descriptions of COSAWR's budget stress the financial constraints which consistently hindered the movement's development. Due to political reasons the ANC could not provide funding:[80]

> COSAWR ran on a shoestring. I think by the end its total annual budget was about seventy thousand pounds but it ran on a lot less in the earlier years. It only got an office in 1986. The workers were paid appallingly low, usually on a par with the ANC office workers' 'allowance'...The funding came almost entirely from church (especially Catholic) agencies, mostly in the Netherlands

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[78] Gavin Cawthra, Postal Interview, London, 6 February 1994.

[79] Gavin Cawthra, Postal Interview, 6 February 1994; Bill Anderson, Interview, 10 October 1993.

[80] COSAWR could not be seen as a branch of the ANC because British Conservative Party politicians tried to discredit ANC sympathetic organisations. See Chapter IV.

> and other European countries – very little came from the UK itself. Funding was a constant problem and took up much time. No funds were received from the ANC. Anderson estimates in the beginning the budget was ten thousand pounds and he received twenty pounds per week salary.[81]

Despite COSAWR's limited funding, the organisation operated subcommittees such as Resister, Reception, Media, Campaigns and Religious. Resister and Reception functioned throughout COSAWR's tenure. The others worked depending on the personnel available, and/or whether a particular war resistance issue warranted their service.

COSAWR originated from a few small politically diverse groups who surmounted their philosophical differences. COSAWR, assisted by the AAM, the ANC and the UN secured the necessary recognition and international backing required for its political legitimacy. After COSAWR established its internal structure it attempted to develop policy pertinent to circumstances inside South Africa. The following chapter examines COSAWR's role in guiding war resistance.

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[81] Gavin Cawthra, Postal Interview, 6 February 1994; Bill Anderson, Interview, 10 October 1993.

Chapter III

COSAWR AND THE WAR RESISTANCE ISSUE

The Debate Around COSAWR's Direction 1978-1979

The contention over whether to situate war resistance within the SADF or to concentrate on middle class students and Conscientious Objectors (COs), was evident in the split between those resisters who were conscripts and those with backgrounds in student politics. Anderson explains the conscript view:

> There was a natural affinity between those of us who had served in the SADF. Those who had been in the military ... thought that the moral arguments and the political atmosphere that was being created around COSAWR was a bit rarefied ... it was appealing to a kind of people who were going to resist anyway.
>
> We [conscripts] started to argue that the ANC should be taking a more active role in promoting war resistance ... [This involved] Military and Combat Work [MCW, a Soviet model] ... there are two elements to this, one is ... how to organise your armed forces, the other is military work ... within the [opposition's] armed forces.[1]

Anderson observed that conscripts complained about poor food, inadequate pay and incompetent officers.[2] Former conscript and MK Intelligence operative Rockland Williams noted that:

> [f]ormal resistance is relatively easy to mobilise ... It is a certain intellectual calibre of person ... white, English-speaking middle class who say there are moral arguments against military service. Your real resistance ... in the armed forces was informal ... non-political ... people just did not want to serve ... they were frustrated ... scared of dying and no ... groups ever addressed that.[3]

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1 Bill Anderson, Interview, Johannesburg, 10 October, 1993.

2 ibid.

3 Rockland Williams, interviewed by the author, Johannesburg, 18 October 1993.

Cawthra explains the conviction that war resistance was a moral/political issue (this view would dominate COSAWR's thinking):

> While I certainly agreed that we needed to work around concrete issues and grievances, I did not believe that that could be done very effectively from London and ... it would not square very well with our position in the solidarity movement to be campaigning for the rights of South African soldiers! I also thought it would take time to develop structures to work within the SADF and ... that needed to be done within the country.
>
> I thought that our immediate strategic objective, which could be done successfully from our base in the UK, was to create conditions which provided reluctant conscripts with an escape route and to establish the moral, political and ideological arguments in support of 'draft resistance'.
>
> The aim would be to create a climate for a movement of mass resistance to conscription, like that of the Vietnam War period in the US, with the aim of undermining white morale and cohesion and weakening the manpower base of the SADF. This was not counterpoised against the work within the SADF ... but this was better done from within the country and through the ANC's internal underground. Our public message had to be that it was illegitimate to serve in the SADF.[4]

According to Anderson, the ANC indifferently discussed the formation of a full-time war resistance office in Lusaka.[5] Williams states that the ANC did not address the issue of war resistance due to lack of structures and an undefined policy:

> The weaknesses were a question of strategy and a question of organisational presence ... something like that is a very specialised mode of operation and if that fell under MK it would not have received first treatment ... MK's first priority was to establish itself within the country.[6]

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4 Gavin Cawthra, Postal Interview, London, 6 February 1994.

5 Bill Anderson, Interview, 10 October 1993.

6 Rockland Williams, Interview, 18 October 1993.

COSAWR Addresses the War Resistance Issue

While COSAWR debated its direction with the ANC, it presented a resolute image at its first public meeting in London on 24 January 1979. COSAWR set two practical objectives. Firstly, 'to place the war resistance issue, and to involve individual war resisters, in the overall Southern African campaign and liberation struggle'. Secondly, 'to assist and publicise war resistance in whatever way it effectively could do so'.[7]

COSAWR's first test in aiding war resisters came in the wake of the April 1979 electoral victory of Margaret Thatcher's Conservative Party. The Tory triumph was 'warmly welcomed' by the South African government which had viewed the Labour administration as 'punitive minded'.[8] Labour had incorporated human rights into its foreign policy, whereas the Conservatives' external affairs were 'determined by commercial considerations, not by the character of the government of those countries'.[9] Of pressing concern to COSAWR, however, was Thatcher's campaign pronouncement that Britain was feeling 'swamped' by immigrants.[10]

COSAWR's first asylum case under Thatcher involved Hugh Lugg.[11] Lugg's case was significant for two reasons; firstly, the political implications, and secondly, the

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[7] Resister 1, March 1979, pp.8-9.

[8] D. Geldenhuys, The Diplomacy of Isolation: South African Foreign Policy Making (Johannesburg, 1984), p.228.

[9] J. Barber, The Uneasy Relationship: Britain and South Africa (London, 1983), pp.54-55, and, quoting Cecil Parkinson (the Conservative minister of state at the Department of Trade), May 1979, p.86.

[10] The Guardian Weekly 19-25 February 1993, p.7.

[11] Lugg eventually joined MK, but later turned state witness in the 1988 Broederstroom Trial. See Chapter VII.

clarification it brought to asylum procedure. According to COSAWR, the Home Office obstructed Lugg's asylum claim when it allegedly advised him 'not to get in touch with any organisations because this could prejudice his case'.[12] COSAWR advocated that South African war resisters had the right to obtain advice from any organisation assisting asylum-seekers.[13]

In a decision similar to the Labour government's ruling on Laue and Bartlett, the Home Office decided to deport Lugg, claiming that his fear of persecution was not well founded.[14] Lugg appealed, and on 10 February was granted 'full refugee status'.[15] This was significant as South African war resisters had previously been given "special" annually-renewable residence/work permits.[16]

This ruling set a precedent. A COSAWR representative noted that the British government was continuing to grant bona fide war resisters permission to remain in the country, but that pressure needed to be maintained.[17] While contesting the Lugg case, COSAWR also advanced and publicised the war resistance question at anti-apartheid conferences in France and Belgium. In 1979 COSAWR started bi-annual protests outside the South African embassy against the call-up. A COSAWR representative testified before a sub-committee of the UN Human Rights Commission on Conscientious Objectors in South Africa. This appearance bore fruit when the UN

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[12] Resister 4, September 1979, p.4.

[13] ibid., p.4.

[14] Guardian 30 July 1979.

[15] Resister 7, February/March 1980, p.27.

[16] ibid., p.27.

[17] Resister 9, July/August 1980, p.5.

Special Committee Against Apartheid issued a press statement encouraging COSAWR to provide it with more information about COs.[18] These contacts with the UN allowed COSAWR to publicise the bond between the external war resistance movement and the burgeoning one inside South Africa.

South African War Resisters Outside the UK and Holland

On 4 November 1979, SAMRAF organised a conference in Chicago attended by 40 Vietnam War activists. SAMRAF outlined its goals which included; providing material support and counselling for war resisters and building a nationwide support campaign. On 12 January 1980, SAMRAF's first demonstrations against the call-up, outside the South African consulates in New York, Chicago and San Francisco, coincided with COSAWR's protests in London and Amsterdam.

SAMRAF regularly held pickets until at least the mid-1980s. A few South African war resisters did receive asylum in America,[19] and through SAMRAF's efforts cities such as Berkeley, Oakland, Santa Cruz and San Francisco passed resolutions permitting South African war resisters refuge.[20] However, the United States government never adopted a formal policy toward South African war resisters. SAMRAF never generated the financial, legal, and lobbying support that COSAWR did in the UK. Lodge reports that the ANC presence in the USA was confined mainly to black students; and that the

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[18] United Nations Press Release- Special Committee Against Apartheid, 22 August 1979.

[19] In 1978, Christopher Dunne was the first South African war resister to be given permission to remain in the USA. (COSAWR UK) Chronology of War Resistance in South Africa (1981).

[20] The Star 13 April 1982.

ANC had a detached relationship with the Reagan administration[21] thereby inhibiting any intensive lobbing efforts. Moreover, most Americans viewed South Africa from the perspective of the Civil Rights movement rather than as a parallel with Vietnam.

SAMRAF member Larry Shore, explains the reasons for SAMRAF's stagnancy:

> [B]y the time ... SAMRAF got going in the late 70's the Vietnam War was long since over and people had turned their attention to other things.
>
> More attention and interest was paid to helping black South African exiles. Although, if you explained it, people understood that the more draft resisters the fewer soldiers to fight for apartheid, they just didn't seem to be that interested in the issues surrounding white resisters to apartheid.
>
> Another reason was that in all honesty I don't think that Don Morton...had particularly good relations with the ANC, so the ANC offices in the USA never really promoted issues that mattered to SAMRAF.[22]

In the early 1980s fleeting relations continued with war resistance movements overseas. COSAWR mentions it contacted a group called South African War Resisters – Australia (SAWRA).[23] In 1982 The Star and Rand Daily Mail reported a dozen South Africans had received asylum in Australia.[24] But there is no mention of SAWRA nor other asylum-seekers in Australia thereafter. Informal South African war resistance groups founded around the world, never seemed to establish themselves due to inadequate ANC/AAM structures and indifference from host countries.

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[21] T. Lodge, "State of Exile: The African National Congress of South Africa, 1976-86" in P. Frankel et al. (eds), State Resistance and Change in South Africa (Kent, 1988), p.243.

[22] Larry Shore, Postal Interview, Connecticut, USA, 21 September 1994.

[23] COSAWR (UK), Annual Report of Activities September 1981-September 1982, p.8.

[24] The Star 7 January 1982 and Rand Daily Mail 12 November 1982.

War Resistance Inside South Africa – 1979

During the years after the invasion of Angola and the Soweto uprising, organised war resistance was still dormant. Only in December 1978 did NUSAS actively approach the conscription issue when it passed two motions at its annual conference. The first motion proposed establishing a dialogue with the government regarding alternative methods of national service. The second set up the Committee of Investigation into Service in the SADF, Youth Preparedness Programmes and Alternatives to National Service or (MILCOM). Its goal was to research alternative national service models in the fields of education, medical and community services and to assess the effect of South African militarisation on the youth.[25]

These resolutions did not aim to challenge the government's authority directly. They were rather seen as a way of stemming the tide of those students leaving the country in order to avoid military service. Furthermore, aware of the conservatism of many South African students, and concerned about government intervention, NUSAS specified that the motions did not support terrorism.[26]

COSAWR, perhaps reflecting on its NUSAS influence, took a flexible view on the resolutions. The organisation concentrated on abiding by its directive of being 'an external support group for war resisters in exile'.[27] COSAWR maintained that it would be 'retrogressive' if whites left the country en masse as progressive whites had

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[25] Nux February 1979.

[26] Daily Dispatch 2 December 1978.

[27] COSAWR (UK), Motivating Document (1980-81), p.9.

a role in South Africa, and even within the SADF. While COSAWR suggested desertion as an alternative, it acknowledged that it was easier for those who had money or job skills to leave the country .[28] COSAWR claimed that the dilemma over whether or not to serve in the SADF was an 'issue which can only be answered by those facing conscription inside South Africa'.[29] The ANC, influenced by COSAWR, took a similarly moderate position by stating that the NUSAS resolution(s) were 'valuable in countering the enemy's attempt to confuse young people into shedding their own blood' for apartheid.[30]

The resolutions encouraged confrontation on English-speaking campuses. When NUSAS's official journal, National Student, broadcast on its front page that 'War is a good business! Invest your son!'[31] it was banned for publishing articles, 'calculated to discourage South Africans from doing military service'.[32]

Resister was banned too, thus suffocating any purposeful debate or news on the war resistance issue. In further disconcerting news for NUSAS, sociologist Henry Lever reported that 'compulsory military service was a potent factor in reinforcing the conservatism of white youth'.[33] MILCOM, designed in part to accommodate moderate students, claimed to be 'developing into an important service on each campus'. Yet there were 'serious financial problems'. Committee activities were halted

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28 Resister 2, May 1979, p.2.

29 Resister 3, July 1979, pp.2-4.

30 Mayibuye No.2, February 1979.

31 Rand Daily Mail 9 June 1979.

32 Observer 15 July 1979.

33 ibid.

on two campuses due to 'disillusionment, lack of discipline and personality clashes'.[34]

Despite NUSAS's difficulties, and COSAWR's preoccupation with establishing itself, 1979 was a 'watershed year' because of an enlarged number of overseas resisters. By October 1979 COSAWR knew of 100 resisters in Britain, and estimated two to three times that number had negotiated their own way to that country.[35] In that same month discontent within the SADF over material conditions was evidenced by the sixty to seventy conscripts deserting the Upington army base over poor food, accommodation and disputes with officers.[36] Also significant were the rumblings coming from churches and English-speaking students, calling for alternative systems of non-military service.[37]

The Peter Moll Campaign

In the late 1970s the Catholic, Anglican, Baptist, Methodist, Presbyterian and Congregational churches all came out in public support of a person's right to object to military service on the grounds of conscience. This new attitude, encouraged by progressive whites and the mostly black membership of the churches, was in

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[34] Committee of Investigation into Service in the SADF, Youth Preparedness Programmes and Alternative National Service (MILCOM), Minutes of the National Committee Held at Rhodes University on 23 September 1979. Taken from the COSAWR files.

[35] Rand Daily Mail 25 October 1979.

[36] Argus 26 October 1979.

[37] Resister 6, January/February 1980, pp.12-13.

response to the escalating conflict as evidenced by Operation Reindeer, the SADF's excursion into southern Angola in May 1978. Unlike peace church objectors who had a narrow support base, the new group of objectors had the backing of mainstream churches.[38]

The first of these new objectors was Peter Moll, a Baptist and former conscript. Moll was influenced by:

> John Howard Yoder's writings on pacifism, Luther and Calvin's writing on church and state relations, SACC publications, UCT SRC-organised meetings, PFP publications ... discussions with Rev. Douglas Bax (Congregationalist), David Russell (now an Anglican bishop) [and] Prof. Francis Wilson.[39]

Moll was imprisoned in November 1979 for refusal to do camps. He spent a year in military Detention Barracks (DB), including 118 days in solitary confinement for declining to wear military dress. His stand echoed the 1974 SACC resolution:

> Selective conscientious objection is the refusal to engage in a particular war, while making no necessary statement about war in general ... in terms of Christian moral standards, South African society is fundamentally unjust.[40]

COSAWR saw the Moll case as a means of gaining international support for the war resistance issue.[41] COSAWR facilitated a climate of protest by organising pickets outside Trafalgar House, lobbying church groups and Amnesty International which

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[38] H. Winkler and L. Nathan, "Waging Peace: Church Resistance to Militarisation" in J. Cock and L. Nathan (eds), War and Society: The Militarisation of South Africa (Cape Town, 1989), pp.327-8.

[39] Peter Moll, Postal Interview, Illinois, USA, 15 April 1994.

[40] Resister 6, January/February 1980, p.6. Text taken from a letter Peter Moll sent to his commanding officer. "Non-selective" conscientious objectors are pacifists and members of religious sects such as Jehovah's Witnesses which oppose participation in all military services.

[41] Resister 5, November/December 1979, p.5.

made Moll a Prisoner of Conscience.[42] Heather Garner, the Coordinator of COSAWR's Religious sub-committee said that Moll 'had a straightforward appeal, the churches ... supported him'.[43] COSAWR also enlisted the support of British Labour MPs Tony Benn and Frank Allaun, who petitioned the South African government to free Moll. The MPs sent him personal letters of support indicating that they had heard of his case through COSAWR.[44]

In mid-1980 Moll and Richard Steele, who had joined the protest later, became the first members of a mainstream church to be recognised as a conscientious objectors by the military. However, Moll points out that this was an administrative move, and not one guaranteed by law. He and Steele were obliged to serve out their remaining military commitment, but like the Jehovah's Witnesses, were given blue overalls and were exempt from military drills.[45]

It is difficult to judge the extent to which COSAWR's campaign swayed international opinion. Moll says COSAWR's drive was personally supportive, 'it was beneficial when I was in jail because it strengthened my conviction that there were more people who thought and reasoned as I did'.[46]

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[42] Resister 9, July/August 1980, p.4.

[43] Heather Garner, interviewed by the author, Cape Town, 17 February 1994.

[44] Resister 7, February/March 1980, p.9.

[45] Peter Moll, Postal Interview, Illinois, USA, 15 April 1993.

[46] ibid.

In South Africa there was a mixed reaction to Moll and Steele's case. No future objectors from outside the peace churches were granted CO status, yet many whites were forced to question their as yet unconsidered position.[47] A military spokesperson made clear that Moll and Steele's case was unique:

> [Nobody can] pose as a conscientious objector and after a few days in solitary confinement get official recognition. There is no such thing as political objection ... in a democratic country such as ours is.[48]

COSAWR Lobbies British Churches To Support COs

COSAWR publicised Moll's case in part to provoke British churches into taking a stance similar to that of mainstream South African churches.[49] In 1981 COSAWR lobbied the Anglican and Methodist churches to pass resolutions supporting COs and alternative methods of national service, as well as urging that the churches support asylum seekers from South Africa. COSAWR worked largely with the Alliance of Radical Methodists (ARM); their sympathy for South African COs was apparent after they agreed to table COSAWR's motion at the June 1982 Methodist Synod.

Passing the motions required sensitive procedural and political considerations. Objections were made to the wording of the first paragraph which read 'an unjust South African government'.[50] COSAWR was advised by ARM to rephrase the

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[47] ECC, "Conscription Into the SADF – 25 Years of Resistance", South African Outlook Vol.116, No. 1366, 1985, p.55.

[48] Resister 10, September/October 1980, p.3.

[49] COSAWR (UK), Motivating Document (1980-81), p.9.

[50] COSAWR Minutes of Churches Sub-Committee Meeting 16.7.1982.

statement in two ways. Firstly, by indicating support for the Methodist Church of South Africa (MCSA), and secondly, by stressing the difficulties confronting South African war resisters faced by a hostile British government. On the second reading the 'unjust SA government clause' caused debate but passed through 'playing on the support for the MCSA'.[51]

The CO issue was a contentious issue for the Anglican Church because its chaplains, served in the SADF, wore military uniforms, underwent military training and were paid by the state.[52] At the Anglican Synod of August 1982 COSAWR was advised 'not to try and push the issue too hard'.[53] Nevertheless, the Synod passed the motion and also called for trade sanctions and support for the ANC. The resolutions, non-binding in South Africa, were more of an attempt by the Anglican and Methodist Synods to challenge churches rather than bring about concrete action or change.

Coupled with these resolutions was an attempt to broaden the knowledge of the war resistance issue by producing a booklet in conjunction with the CIIR and IDAF.[54] This book provided background on the debate between church and state, conscientious objection and apartheid militarisation. COSAWR's churches sub-committee made suggestions for the final text and assisted with distribution through COSAWR's mailing list within South Africa.[55] The book was published in January

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[51] ibid. The result was announced in such publications as Resister, Anti-Apartheid News, and the Methodist Recorder (UK).

[52] Winkler and Nathan, op. cit., pp.335-6.

[53] COSAWR, Minutes of Churches Sub-Committee Meeting 27 May 1982.

[54] CIIR and Pax Christi War and Conscience: The Churches and Conscientious Objection in South Africa (London, 1982).

[55] COSAWR Minutes of Churches Sub-Committee Meeting 16 February 1983.

1983. By March 1983 it was selling 'reasonably well' and reviews appeared in such diverse journals as Sechaba and the Methodist Register.[56] However, the book was banned in South Africa and few copies entered the country.

1980-1983 The Formation of the ECC

In the early 1980s the military conflict in southern Africa escalated. Externally, South Africa commenced a particularly savage destabilisation campaign which involved supporting the destructive policies of the Mozambique National Resistance (MNR), the National Union for the Total Independence of Angola (UNITA) and attacking alleged ANC operations centres in the Front Line States.[57] SADF operations such as Operation Protea in 1981 involved 5 000 SADF troops and initiated 'a state of permanent war in southern Angola'. P.W. Botha's policy in Angola centred on three points; to discourage western investment, to divert a substantial part of the Angolan budget to defence and to weaken the MPLA's resolve to back SWAPO.[58] South Africa's intervention was helped by the USA's 'constructive engagement' policy which linked Namibian independence with Cuban withdrawal from Angola.[59]

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[56] COSAWR Minutes of Churches Sub-Committee Meeting 22 February 1983.

[57] Destabilisation is referred to as a policy of 'economic destruction' in Mozambique and military occupation in Angola. See Southern African Development Coordination Conference, SADCC 1985: The Proceedings of the Annual Southern African Development Coordination Conference (Harare, 1985), p.14. During the first five years of SADCC's existence, South Africa's destabilisation and aggression policy cost its neighbouring states $US10 billion, or more than all the foreign aid they received, or one third of all exports. See S. Amin (et al.), "SADCC Prospects for Disengagement and Development in Southern Africa" in The United Nations University/Third World Forum Studies in African Political Economy (London, 1987).

[58] Jeremy Grest, "The South African Defence Force in Angola" in J. Cock and L. Nathan, War and Society: The Militarisation of South Africa (Cape Town, 1989), p.118.

[59] ibid., p.125.

Internally, MK showed its increased capabilities by attacking the Sasolburg oil refinery in June 1980 and bombing the Koeberg nuclear power station in December 1982.[60] The military claimed that these actions signalled the start of a 'second front' inside South Africa. On the other front SWAPO would attempt to tie down the SADF in Namibia 'in a prolonged struggle'.[61] General Constand Viljoen, then Chief of the SADF, said 'the ANC apparently do not have a border war in mind. They are going to fight an area war ... we are going to deal with it by using Area Defence ... people living in an area must be organised to defend themselves ... Our full-time force must be a reaction force'.[62]

To accommodate these increased military demands the Defence Act was amended in 1983 so that:

> The time that conscripts were to spend doing citizen force camps was lengthened from 240 days over 8 years to 720 days over 12 years. The SADF also made provision for all white males to serve 12 days a year in the commando force, up to the age of 55.[63]

Conscription now was virtually a lifetime commitment, and the one issue that affected all whites. A key ramification of this legislation was that it brought white Christian and political groupings together. The order awoke a 'strangely subdued'[64] NUSAS, still suffering the effects of government intervention and concentrating on its "Strategic

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[60] T.R.H. Davenport, South Africa: A Modern History (London, 1991), pp.427-8.

[61] Paratus July 1982, pp.20-21.

[62] Quoted in G. Cawthra, Brutal Force: The Apartheid War Machine (London, 1986), p.229, from the Financial Mail 15 January 1982.

[63] ECC, op. cit., p.55.

[64] ibid., p.55.

Participation" policy.[65] At this time the only group which had a direct focus on conscription was the Conscientious Objector Support Group (COSG), founded in 1980 to support the Moll and Steele case and to promote alternatives to military service.[66]

The government attempted to placate the religious community with the Defence Further Amendment Act (1983). The Act announced that religious pacifists waiting to gain status as conscientious objectors would have to provide their bona fides before a committee of military, religious and government officials. Objectors could apply to do either non-combatant service in the SADF or non-military service in government departments for one and a half times the length of military service. Those not accepted as both religious and universal pacifist would face a six year prison term equal to one and a half times their military duty.[67]

In a subsequent change in the political climate, PW Botha's government initiated the tri-cameral parliament in order to 'incorporate them [Coloured and Indians] into a 'consociational' central government structure without threatening the autonomy of the white parliamentary system'.[68] According to COSAWR there was another motive, as parliament endeavoured 'to levy a political commitment [of support for the National Party's reforms] from these communities (Indian, Coloured) ... Part of the price to be paid will be military conscription'.[69] On 2 November, 1983, the white electorate

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[65] NUSAS argued a view that students should strategically participate in the military. In other words, they could later use the skills learned in the military for the benefit of the liberation movement.

[66] ECC, op. cit., p.55.

[67] Catholic Institute for International Relations (CIIR), Out of Step: War Resistance in South Africa (London, 1989), p.82.

[68] M. Swilling, Introduction to Frankel et al., op. cit., p.6.

[69] Resister 27, August/September 1983, p.2.

approved the tri-cameral plan. COSAWR claimed this fuelled the conflict and 'strengthened the hands of the military planners behind Botha' who felt they could 'make internal political adjustments and still permit ... destabilisation'.[70]

Paradoxically, these government overtures inspired a renaissance for resistance politics. On 23 January 1983, Allan Boesak called for a 'united front' against PW Botha's constitutional reforms. In August 1983, the United Democratic Front (UDF) was formed. The UDF, consisting of student, civic, professional, worker and community groups was a non-racial organisation sympathetic to the aims of the Freedom Charter.[71]

Other groupings were similarly aroused. The Black Sash,[72] according to Kathryn Spink, responded to events which constituted the 'last straw' for uninvolved whites. In 1983 Black Sash, in response to the Defence Further Amendment Act, became the first organisation to call for a united campaign against conscription. It believed that South Africa was violating the UN mandate and that civil war was conceivable:

> South Africa is illegally occupying Namibia and this is a cause in many's conscience to refuse military service. When South Africa withdraws from Namibia there would be no need for a massive military establishment unless there has been a political failure to respond to the desires of the citizens, and that army will be engaged in a civil war, which is good cause for many to refuse military service. In such a civil war, if the state has to rely on conscription to man its army, the war is largely lost[73]

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[70] Resister 29, December 1983/January 1984, p.2.

[71] Davenport, op. cit., p.428.

[72] This was the advocacy group predominately consisting of white, English-speaking middle class women.

[73] K. Spink, Black Sash: The Beginning of a Bridge in South Africa (London, 1991), pp.218-20.

Black Sash founding member Noel Robb recollects that the organisation was unsure what to do with its motion, as telling young men not to enter the army invited severe penalties.[74] The Black Sash found a supporter in COSG, who championed the proposal at their 1983 annual conference from which developed the End Conscription Campaign [ECC]. Mandy Taylor, COSG activist and ECC National Secretary from 1989-90, reasoned that one purpose of the Defence Further Amendment Act:

> was to separate out religious objection and Christian objection and support for it and that is what introduced the six year jail sentence. I think ECC's formation was quite largely a response to that, it was deciding we can not be separated ... we need to form a broad coalition.[75]

The ECC promoted a number of goals. Firstly, to pressure the government to end conscription. Secondly, to raise awareness and opposition to the militarisation and the role of the SADF in South Africa, Namibia and southern Africa. Thirdly, to win support for non-military and non-governmental forms of alternative service for all conscientious objectors, whilst working for peace and justice in South Africa. Due to the Defence Act the ECC did not tell white males to avoid military service because that would have alienated many potential supporters who were not prepared for jail, exile or going underground.[76]

The ECC broadened the internal war resistance movement. Laurie Nathan, its National organiser from 1985-86, claims that 'many white anti-apartheid organisations [were] vanguardist, attracting a narrow class base, and that their close allegiance with

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[74] ibid., p.220.

[75] Mandy Taylor, interviewed by the author, Cape Town, 17 February 1994.

[76] L. Nathan, "Force of Arms, Force of Conscience: A Study of Militarisation, the Military and the Anti-Apartheid War Resistance Movement in South Africa, 1970-1988" (Unpublished M. Phil. dissertation, University of Bradford, 1990), p.126.

black political organisations alienated many likely adherents'.[77] However, the ECC was not ultimately entirely successful in attracting a diverse following because like COSAWR, it attracted a 'somewhat narrow class base'[78] from mostly English-speaking, university educated middle class backgrounds. Nevertheless, the ECC was able to attain an active membership of close to one thousand, many of whom had been politicised in church groups. Half its membership was female.[79]

The formation of the ECC and the UDF meant increased government repression against those organisations. COSAWR now determined it could not focusing solely on war resistance:

> With the increase of militarisation, external aggression and destabilisation and harassment of internal organisations COSAWR can expect a greater number of war resisters to leave South Africa. Simultaneously it will need to broaden the basis of its campaign work from support for war resisters in South Africa to campaigns of all victims of the state's attacks on the anti-conscription movement as a whole.[80]

COSAWR concentrated on research in such fields as South African media support for the apartheid war effort, unmasking South African attempts to circumvent the arms boycott, and the deployment of mercenaries in the SADF in Namibia.[81] The

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[77] ibid., p.178.

[78] J. Cock, "Conscription into the SADF: A Study in the Politics of Coercion", South African Sociological Review Vol.12, No.1, October 1989, p.17.

[79] CIIR, op cit., p.89.

[80] COSAWR, Annual Report of Activities July 1984-July 1985, p.5.

[81] COSAWR, Annual Report of Activities July 1983-July 1984, p.11.

culmination of some of this research was a COSAWR/IDAF publication[82] which the South African government promptly declared undesirable.[83]

COSAWR internationalised the war resistance issue through its appearance on British television. In March 1984 a row broke out between the BBC and the South African government when a COSAWR production entitled "Rocking the Botha" was broadcast by the BBC. COSAWR members Philip Dexter, David Gardener, and Terry Fannin called for economic sanctions and the cultural isolation of South Africa. In response, the South African embassy claimed the BBC was, 'acting as an agent for anti-apartheid groups in Britain' and for a brief period the South African embassy refused visas to BBC personnel.[84]

1985 - 1989 State of Emergency

The precursors to the 1985 State of Emergency were the demonstrations and unrest provoked by the September 1984 opening of the tri-cameral parliament. Tactics included work stoppages, stayaways, as well as rent and school boycotts. These protests, better organised (possibly with UDF or ANC assistance) than any of those in the past ten years, began spreading rapidly throughout the country.[85] The South African government responded by implementing the first continued introduction of

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82 State of War: Apartheid South Africa's Decade of Militarisation (1984).

83 Government Gazette 27 July 1984.

84 Rand Daily Mail 23 March 1984; Guardian 23 March 1984.

85 Davenport, op. cit., p.440.

troops in the townships, provoking what Evans and Phillips term 'a watershed' because of the increased conflict between the South African state and the liberation forces.[86] From this point onward, the military took a more direct role in administering the country, marking the beginning of combined SADF-SAP operations 'on a continuous and countrywide basis'.[87]

P.W. Botha's diplomatic overtures, such as the signing of the Nkomati Accord with Mozambique in 1984, and reforms, like the abolition of pass laws in 1986, were overshadowed by the introduction of a State of Emergency on 20 July 1985. The State of Emergency:

> [E]mpowered police commissioners [inter alia] ... to restrict the movements and access of people, or confine or remove them, and to control services, protect installations, distribute or withhold information.[88]

Except for a short break between 7 March and 12 June 1986, a State of Emergency would be the norm throughout most of the country until 1990. The State of Emergency in 1985 would irrevocably change the role of the SADF within South Africa.

The SADF's new functions are best described by Nathan's four stages of intensified troop deployment. From late 1984 to middle of 1985 the army played a back-up role to the SAP.[89] However, the 1985 State of Emergency gave the SADF new powers and their activities became virtually indistinguishable from the police. The Government Gazette of 21 July 1985 declared that SAP and SADF officers were allowed 'to apply

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[86] M. Evans and M. Phillips, "Intensifying Civil War: The Role of the South African Defence Force" in Frankel et al., op. cit., pp.117-8.

[87] ibid, p.128.

[88] Davenport, op cit., p.439.

[89] L. Nathan, "Troops in the Townships, 1984-1987" in Cock and Nathan, op. cit., p.67.

or order the application of such force as [they] under the circumstances may deem necessary in order to ward off or prevent ... suspected danger'.[90] In mid-December 1985 regulations were extended to soldiers who were allowed 'to man roadblocks, search buildings and cars without police assistance, prevent prohibited meetings, disperse unlawful gatherings, and arrest or detain any person'.[91] During the 1986 State of Emergency the combined security forces intensified efforts to crush the insurrection. By 1987 the state largely achieved its aim and began to use conservative blacks to consolidate control over black communities.[92]

In June 1985, in response to these domestic events, the ANC held its second consultative conference at Kabwe, Tanzania. The ANC called for a widening of the armed struggle, changing from its 'armed propaganda' campaign to a 'people's war'[93] in which MK cadres would infiltrate South Africa and train people locally. MK would no longer be an 'exile army'.[94] Also, an underground was recommended which for the first time would infiltrate the SADF, the Bantustan armies and the police force.[95] This new ANC strategy was tied in with the ungovernability of the townships theory, largely put forth by Ronnie Kasrils. 'Revolutionary movements' declared Kasrils:

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[90] ibid., p.69.

[91] ibid., p.69.

[92] ibid., p.76.

[93] The 'People's War' can be defined as "the full protracted engagement of the widest possible spread of resistance and revolutionary forces in all political, economic, military and ideological modes of struggle for national liberation" (H. Barrel, "The Outlawed South African Liberation Movements" in S. Johnson (ed), South Africa: No Turning Back (London, 1988), p.59).

[94] T. Lodge, "Guerrilla Warfare and Exile Diplomacy: The African National Congress and the Pan Africanist Congress" in T. Lodge and B. Nasson (eds), All Here and Now: Black Resistance in South Africa in the 1980s (Cape Town, 1991), p.181. and T. Lodge in Frankel et al., op. cit., p.236.

[95] H. Adam, "Exile and Resistance: The African National Congress, the South African Communist Party, and the Pan Africanist Conference" in P. Berger and B. Godsell (eds), The Future of South Africa (Cape Town, 1988), p.98.

> seldom achieve their objectives unless they can convert the soldier whose duty it is to uphold the existing regime or weaken their spirit ... While we do not expect to convert large numbers of soldiers we can succeed in weakening the spirit and morale of a good proportion. The SADF is no monolith and during a revolutionary crisis its fabric will be placed under tremendous strain.[96]

COSAWR declared its support for the peoples's war by calling for defections from the army, coupled with militant involvement in the struggle:

> Never have the battle lines in South Africa been so closely drawn and the choices facing potential conscripts been so stark. At a meeting called by ... war resisters in London in July a call was made for conscripts to desert the apartheid army. It was also stressed that in the climate of a sharpening struggle for liberation it was not sufficient to resist conscription or to leave the country. Non-participation in the apartheid army should be the basis on which to build active participation in the struggle to free South Africa and Namibia from racism and apartheid repression.[97]

Though promoting a hard-line, COSAWR held a Peace Fast on 6-7 October 1985 in London and Amsterdam in support of ECC detainees and Ivan Toms' well publicised twenty-one day fast in protest over troops in the townships. Toms' fast ended with a 'Troops Out of the Townships' campaign which drew 4 000 people in Cape Town City Hall in October 1985. COSAWR viewed the fast a success as '[t]he ... reportage [in the South African press][98] provided a public link between the campaigns of the ECC and COSAWR and thereby widened the knowledge of many people in South Africa of the struggle against apartheid conscription'.[99]

The widening conflict yielded COSAWR increased international coverage. In 1986 the American-based Columbia Broadcasting System (CBS) covered a protest in London

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96 Resister 47, December 1986/January 1987, p.3 citing R. Kasrils from Sechaba May 1986.

97 Resister 39, August/September 1985, p.3.

98 Star 4 October 1985 and Weekly Mail 17 October 1985.

99 COSAWR (UK) and COSAWR (NL), Interim Report August-November 1985, p.2.

over the January call-up.[100] Newly arrived war resisters were featured on British Independent Television Network (ITN). In October 1986 a COSAWR administrator was interviewed on a BBC World Service broadcast, thereby reaching an enormous audience.[101]

The departure of white males from South Africa stimulated debate between the SADF and those opposed to it. Although a SADF spokesman claimed there was 'very little' draft dodging,[102] Business Day published two stories attributed to COSAWR claiming the opposite. The first, under the headline 'Droves flee overseas to dodge SA draft' stated that:

> The London office of COSAWR is seeing an unprecedented number of conscripts ... opposing conscription and seeking help or asylum. An even greater number are seeking help through the COSAWR offices in the Netherlands.[103]

The second of the Business Day articles was based partly on a BBC interview with COSAWR which stated that 'thousands' of South Africans were avoiding the call-up.[104] COSAWR claimed that the 'over seven thousand conscripts [who] failed to turn up for military service in January' constituted resistance to the South African "Death Force".[105]

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[100] COSAWR (UK), July 1985-86, cbm/c/ p.9.

[101] COSAWR (UK), Annual Report June 1986-July 1987, p.19.

[102] Citizen 28 August 1985.

[103] COSAWR cited in Business Day 12 September 1985.

[104] Business Day 19 November 1985.

[105] Resister 37, April/May 1985, pp.2-3.

These figures were disputed by Willem Steenkamp, who claimed 'COSAWR can't seem to count' because COSAWR's figures included those who left South Africa for non-political reasons.[106] This would include those who left because they felt that South Africa was heading toward chaos, or those who desired professional and/or financial opportunity overseas.[107]

According to Jakkie Cilliers, who reflects SADF opinion, the South African authorities were concerned about the increasing momentum of the anti-conscription campaign.[108] The second State of Emergency imposed on 16 June 1986 struck the ECC 'a blow from which it never recovered'.[109] The new regulation declared that 'a statement which contains anything which is calculated to have the effect or is likely to have the effect of inciting the public or any person or category of persons to discredit or undermine the system of compulsory military' was prohibited as subversive. The penalty for transgressing the law was a maximum of ten years' imprisonment or a fine of R20 0000 or both.[110] The ECC was singled out by the state for its "subversive statements" which 'discredited ... the system of compulsory military conscription'.[111] The state subsequently detained at least twenty ECC activists without trial and those not arrested went into hiding.

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[106] Cape Times 20 November 1985.

[107] ibid.

[108] J. Cilliers, "The Role and Development of the SADF" (Paper Presented at the IDASA Conference "The Future of the Military and Defence in South Africa", Lusaka, 24 May 1990), p.6.

[109] S. Anderson, "The End Conscription Campaign in Cape Town, 1983-89" (BA Hons, University of Cape Town, 1990), p.54.

[110] From ibid., quoting E. Cameron, Legal Opinion on Emergency Regulations June 1986, for End Conscription Campaign (Centre for Applied Legal Studies, July 1986). University of the Witwatersrand Archives, 341f, A17.1, pp.1-14.

[111] Resister 45, August/September 1986, p.3.

COSAWR'S Intervention in the War Resistance Debate

Just prior to the second State of Emergency, Resister published a series of discussion articles around the alliances and direction of the war resistance movement. The first article, aware of the ECC's close relationship with the Young Progressives, the youth wing of the Progressive Federal Party (PFP) claimed that the PFP viewed the SADF as a shield of peace, but COSAWR maintained the SADF was responsible for atrocities.[112]

The following issue of Resister highlighted the importance of the ANC's armed struggle. Resister wrote, '[i]n a time of war, calls for peace should not undermine the ANC's armed struggle which was directed towards achieving peace'. Resister further stated, 'the slogan of peace has to be used carefully so as not to undermine ANC strategy even indirectly' while 'white democratic organisations have to be subordinated to the needs of the struggle as a whole'.[113]

These articles were too assertive for the ECC which was trying to attract a broad audience. The ECC was in a difficult situation with regard to forming joint policy with COSAWR because it 'felt obliged to avoid formal contact with [COSAWR] ... because the organisation openly support[ed] the armed struggle of the ANC and encourage[d] conscripts to refuse service in the SADF'.[114] While the discussion articles caused consternation amongst some sectors within the ECC, Nathan said:

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[112] Resister 42, February/March 1986, pp.21-22.

[113] Resister 43, April/May 1986, pp.20-23.

[114] Nathan, "Force of Arms", p.155.

> I wouldn't overestimate it, I had no problem with COSAWR stimulating debate, but the ECC's reaction must be looked at in the constraints of its alliance. We had liberals, moderates and pacifists. We were also under intense pressure from the state at that time'.[115]

COSAWR subsequently published a response in Resister which stated the previous articles had interpreted ANC policy in a narrow sense. COSAWR recognised the independence of white organisations, stating that they were not a 'creation of the movement'. COSAWR conceded that previous NUSAS campaigns were 'introverted' and the ECC's 'imaginative' campaigns had developed new areas of support; in order to be broad based it had to use phraseology its varied audience could embrace. Rather than promoting a hard line the article declared that, 'Generalised opposition to apartheid or aspects of it must be the bottom line ... organisations should be layered but in an overriding progressive direction and under guidance of the mass democratic movement'.[116]

COSAWR members placed the discussion articles in the context of addressing splits or differences of opinion in the ECC.[117] Anderson says COSAWR's retraction was indicative of its discretion:

> Rather than saying this debate is going on, COSAWR apologised to the particular faction ... that was unhappy. We should have been coming in more generally and saying you can move in this direction. Gavin's [Cawthra] view, and there is some validity to it, was that anything that appears in Resister, those people inside are going to view as ANC policy ... Resister could not say things the ANC had not approved ... Rather than being far more open ... there was this kind of caution.[118]

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[115] Laurie Nathan, telephonic interview with the author, Cape Town, 5 September 1994.

[116] Resister 44, June/July 1986, pp.22-23.

[117] Interviews by the author with Bill Anderson, Johannesburg, 10 October 1993 and with Heather Garner, Cape Town, 17 February 1994.

[118] Bill Anderson, Interview, 10 October 1993.

It was plausible for COSAWR to inaugurate a general debate. However, COSAWR was too far away to clearly assess the specific parameters that the ECC was working within. Anderson admits that COSAWR was 'out of touch with the details on a week by week basis' and Kraak mentions the 'artificial separation between ourselves and the internal war resistance movement'.[119] COSAWR's pronouncements were likely to be inconsistent with ECC thinking. Though Nathan advises not to 'overestimate' COSAWR's intervention, it was not thoroughly appreciated by some ECC members. Mandy Taylor remembers that, 'There were different understandings. We felt it was a problem when COSAWR tied to influence or determine ECC's strategy when they were so removed from that situation'.[120]

The comments in Resister were not completely endorsed by the ANC. Gavin Evans claims that a COSAWR member[121] 'took it upon himself to criticise ...[the] ECC ... [the] ECC then secured the intervention of senior ANC members who put the fellow in his place'.[122] Garner indicates that organisations such as the CIIR took an interest in ECC-COSAWR contact. But the CIIR was ambivalent about supporting COSAWR's view on the armed struggle:

> The struggle was to get them [ECC] to engage with us clandestinely ... we tried to do quite a lot of work via the CIIR ... the CIIR was not very helpful ... We were strategising about how to get a hold of people ... how to hold serious meetings. They [ECC] had a position but we knew everyone would not take that kind of position. COSAWR was trying to find people to lead on about the armed struggle.[123]

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[119] Interviews, Bill Anderson, Johannesburg, 10 October 1993 and Gerald Kraak, Johannesburg, 14 October 1993.

[120] Interview, Mandy Taylor, 17 February, 1994.

[121] This person's identity is unknown.

[122] Gavin Evans in The Weekly Mail and Guardian 26 August to 1 September 1994.

[123] Heather Garner, Interview, 17 February 1994.

COSAWR subsequently toned down its comments toward the ECC but amplified its criticism of the South African government. In the autumn of 1986 COSAWR accused the government of creating 'civil war policies' and wanting to 'wipe out' South Africa's 'democratic movement' as evidenced by the yearly deployment of an estimated 35 000 troops backed up by police in the townships.[124] By 1986 the manpower of the SADF had increased to 43 000 Permanent Force, 265 000 part timers and 67 000 national serviceman.[125] Grundy states that when these figures are looked at in relation to the whole population they are moderate. But if just the white population is considered they are 'remarkable' as close to 9% of white South Africa was mobilised for war.[126]

But evidence was surfacing that at least some white South African youth were not ready to pay the price imposed on them by the state. The SADF did not release figures of those who missed the January 1986 call-up following the adverse publicity that 7 000 conscripts had failed to report for the preceding year's intake.[127] The SADF launched a public relations campaign to reverse the tide of those conscripts not reporting for duty. In early 1987 General A.J. Liebenberg, Chief of the Army, sent a letter to all those eligible for national service assuring them that the army 'is one of the most enjoyable experiences in any young man's life' guaranteeing parents that sons

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[124] Resister 45, August/September 1986, p.3; Evans and Phillips, op. cit., p.129.

[125] This compares with the 1960 figures of 11 500 Permanent Force, 56 000 part time men and women, plus 10 000 National Servicemen.

[126] K. Grundy, The Militarisation of South African Politics (Oxford, 1986), pp.21-22.

[127] Resister 43, April/May 1986, p.15.

would return 'stronger ... than before'.[128] The 1988 intake was reminded of their role in 'preserv[ing] South African democratic ideals'.[129]

The SADF's problems with attracting conscripts led to some gains for the anti-war movement. COSAWR member David Bellamy argued that the State of Emergency had attracted 'more politicised war resisters ... much more committed and prepared to take up political action against apartheid'.[130] And, of equal importance, the ECC began attracting Afrikaners;[131] this posed a threat to the government which had always emphasised [Afrikaner] unity and a united front against opposition.[132] There were some further cracks in the edifice of Afrikanerdom; even the Nationalist mouthpiece Die Burger complained that:

> It does not make sense that foreign news media ... can give publicity to our involvement in Angola while the people for whom it is most important – the parents of the sons who are fighting there and the public who finance and morally support it – cannot be satisfactorily informed by their own local news media.[133]

The official newspaper of the Dutch Reformed Church, Die Kerkbode also questioned the burgeoning military conflict. It argued, 'The death of twelve young men in the

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[128] Resister 49, April/May 1987, p.11.

[129] SADF, Information Bulletin: 1988 Intake. Bulletin provided by former conscript, Heine du Toit.

[130] The Independent 6 February 1987.

[131] ibid.

[132] W. Saayman, "Rebels and Prophets: Afrikaners against the System" in C. Villa-Vicencio and J. de Gruchy (eds), Resistance and Hope: South African Essays in Honour of Beyers Naude (Cape Town, 1985), pp.52-3.

[133] Die Burger, quoted by ECC speaker at a public meeting 10 December 1987, in CIIR, op cit., p.120.

south of Angola last week ... brings a frequently repeated question under fresh scrutiny. Is it right that South African troops are in Angola?'[134]

These public apprehensions of the war in Angola coincided with a major change in anti-conscription strategy. On 5 August 1987 twenty-three English and Afrikaans-speaking South Africans, of whom nearly half were conscripts, publicly stated that they would not serve in the SADF. Their collective stance contrasted with previous ones which were 'isolated and courageous acts of individual conscience'.[135] Mandy Taylor explains that the action of the twenty-three 'was very significant in taking forward war resistance, building a whole movement of people who weren't going. It was a group of Stellenbosch and Cape Town conscripts who organised outside of ECC' [which was under severe restriction at the time].[136]

At the end of 1987 the ECC changed strategy in order to reach a larger, more non-politicised audience. The ECC acknowledged that the resistance to conscription was based more on opposition to 'the authoritarianism, physical hardship and boredom of army life'[137] than a political or moral position. But there was bitter debate over this new strategy. By supporting the conscripts the ECC could alienate its township supporters. Blacks and white left-wing followers maintained that the conscript focus would succeed with only the 'reluctant conscript' and not those who were willing to

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[134] Die Kerkbode 8 June 1988. Translated from the Afrikaans. Taken from CIIR, op. cit., p.120.

[135] Resister 52, October/November 1987, p.3.

[136] Mandy Taylor, Interview, 17 February 1994.

[137] Nathan in Cock and Nathan, op. cit., p.308.

serve.[138] This approach created divisions within the ECC as Janine Rauch[139] explains:

> It was a controversial strategy ... because ... people saw it as a watering down of the anti-military position ... that to start to address conscripts needs, rights ... meant acceptance of the system of conscription.[140]

The ECC duly produced a book for conscripts[141] which spelled out a conscript's military obligations and legal rights under the Defence Act. The guidebook 'provided a real service to young men and their families and gave the lie to the government claim that the ECC was anti-conscript'.[142] The booklet certainly caused debate within the SADF; Steenkamp relates that some SADF officers wanted it banned, while others said it was perfectly legal and something the SADF should have produced.[143] But any long-term effect of Know Your Rights is difficult to asses as it was distributed for just one year.

COSAWR then began to modify its policy as it too addressed conscripts' issues. Kraak explains the change in policy:

> Our thinking was influenced by the End Conscription Campaign decision to work with people in the military. Up until then the military was the enemy ... so the army was not a logical constituency.[144]

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[138] Anderson, op. cit., pp.66-75.

[139] Rauch was a member of ECC (1986-88) and COSAWR (1989-90).

[140] Janine Rauch, interviewed by the author, Johannesburg, 14 October 1993.

[141] Know Your Rights

[142] CIIR, op. cit., p.102.

[143] Willem Steenkamp, interviewed by the author, Cape Town, 22 November 1994.

[144] Gerald Kraak, interviewed by the author, Johannesburg, 14 October 1993.

In late 1987, COSAWR made its last call to conscripts to 'desert'.[145] COSAWR then publicised its new direction in pamphlets inserted in Resister during 1988 and 1989. These tracts questioned the integrity of the SADF, accusing it of covering up casualties in Angola by listing soldiers killed in action as victims of accidents. They further criticised the poor pay, inadequate accommodation and limited pass time. The circulars did not call for refusal of service, but rather that if conscripted, one should 'think long and hard about going'.[146]

By the late 1980s the ANC too re-evaluated strategy away from the "People's War". It perceived it did not have the military, political and organisational methods to a force a 'revolutionary outcome in South Africa'.[147] The 1988 Namibia-Angola peace accords required the ANC to move its bases out of Angola thereby pushing back MK's channels of communication and infiltration. In 1990 the then Secretary-General of the ANC Alfred Nzo, bluntly stated, 'We do not have the capacity within our country to intensify the armed struggle in any meaningful way.'[148]

The Decline of the War Resistance Movement

During the first half of 1988 COSAWR focused support campaigns on CO protest in South Africa. COSAWR highlighted former SADF medical officer Ivan Toms who in

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[145] Resister 53, December 1987/January 1988, p.2.

[146] Resister 56, June/July 1988, 59, December/January 1988-89.

[147] Barrell in Johnson, op. cit., p.85.

[148] From the New York Times 9 February 1990; in Lodge and Nasson, op. cit., p.184.

March 1988 was the first objector sentenced under the 'harsh terms' of the 1983 Defence Amendment Act.[149] In comparison with the picket and lobbying orientation of the Peter Moll campaign, COSAWR embarked on a media campaign. It produced a video production called 'Stand By Ivan Toms' which appeared on the BBC in September 1988. One critic described it as 'a clear, authentic look at one of the major figures of white South African opposition'.[150] In July 1988 David Bruce became the first person to be sentenced to a full six years for refusal to serve in the SADF, while in September 1988 Charles Bester was to be the youngest, at eighteen years of age, to be sentenced.

The ECC now faced its most severe test. The South African government's perception of ECC activities was of increasing concern. In August 1988, 143 young men, one-third of whom were SADF veterans, declared their refusal to serve. Due to restrictions imposed by the 1986 State of Emergency the ECC was not officially part of the mass objection. According to Laurie Nathan, 'there was a distinction between those formally involved and those not. What the 143 said was a blatant contravention of the law'.[151] The ECC was promptly banned on 22 August 1988 despite its low profile. Minister of Law and Order Adriaan Vlok claimed that:

> The dangers posed by the activities and acts of the End Conscription Campaign to the safety of the public, the maintenance of public order and the termination of the State of Emergency, leave no other choice than to act against the ECC and to prohibit the organisation from continuing any activities or acts.[152]

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[149] COSAWR (UK), Annual Report June 1987-December 1988, p.18.

[150] City Limits 25 August – 1 September 1988.

[151] Laurie Nathan, Telephonic Interview, 5 September 1994.

[152] CIIR, op. cit., p.128, quoting Minister Vlok in the Eastern Province Herald 23 August 1988.

As a result of the banning COSAWR claimed the internal anti-conscription movement 'lost much of its driving force'.[153] The ECC, essentially a white middle class organisation, did not have experience in setting up underground structures.[154] This might help explain why, even after the ECC 'unbanned' itself in 1989, it was unable to 'provide a coherent response to apartheid militarisation and conscription', thereby thwarting the ' re-establishment of a centralised national campaign'.[155]

COSAWR considered revising its tactics in order to stimulate both the internal resistance campaign, and its own organisation. Matthew Temple[156] explains:

> The issue of going home had been discussed ... as a possible strategy. If we can get five people together who are prepared to go back and refuse to serve, to spend 6 years in jail how would the state respond. It was soul seeking ... in terms of how do we raise the stakes. We've been campaigning since 1979 ... we have been putting propaganda into South Africa, how can we make a point. It was never discussed on an official level.[157]

COSAWR's re-evaluation coincided with its difficulties sustaining consistent membership. Ironically, the diversity of the war resistance movement was attracting a new type of resister which an unnamed COSAWR worker labelled as "yuppie draft dodgers" 'who [found] it easier to avoid the hassle of conscription by coming to Britain and setting up work here'.[158] Temple explains COSAWR's need to sustain its political character:

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[153] COSAWR (UK), Annual Report October 1988 – October 1989, p.13.

[154] Mandy Taylor, Interview, 17 February 1994.

[155] COSAWR (UK), Annual Report October 1988 – October 1989, p.18.

[156] Temple was COSAWR Administrator, 1989-90.

[157] Matthew Temple, interviewed by the author, Johannesburg, 13 October 1993.

[158] The Guardian 26 July 1988.

> COSAWR always had a political strategy ... politically supporting, for example, the ANC's armed campaign ... COSAWR is not simply an organisation looking after the interests of upper class white guys.[159]

The changing background of draft dodgers highlighted the reality that COSAWR, like the ECC, was in a state of decline. COSAWR noted in 1989 that Committees such as Reception, Welfare and Education were 'not ... that active' Religious was 'relatively inactive' and Campaigns had 'not done anything ... since late 1986'.[160]

Despite the shortcomings of the ECC and COSAWR at this time, there were successes. The war resistance issue had been placed on the domestic and international arena with the ANC taking interest. However, due to restrictions on the ECC, and those on COSAWR,[161] plus geographical distances and the philosophical differences indicated in this chapter, the ECC and COSAWR were unable to effectively develop a joint war resistance policy.

The chronological and political history of COSAWR needs to be complemented with its personal dimension. The next chapter, the first of the subject themes, first depicts the mechanisms in place in South African society which compelled a white male to serve in the SADF. Subsequent pages show that the characteristic of exile shaped COSAWR's organisational and political growth.

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[159] Matthew Temple, Interview, 13 October 1993.

[160] COSAWR (UK) Information Sheet 22 May 1989.

[161] See Chapter VII.

Chapter IV

THE EXILE EXPERIENCE OF COSAWR (UK)

Exiles are those who leave with the intention of returning. They have not chosen to emigrate.[1] Unlike other South African emigrants who were labelled 'the most privileged and affluent group ever to come to Britain'[2] many war resisters did not go overseas with financial resources or a marketable job skill. Bernstein, a South African exile herself, explains both the similarity of her exile experience with other refugees and the originality of the specific South African episode:

> The South African experience of exile was both universal and unique. It was universal in the disruption, the loss and loneliness, the alienation, the restlessness and the sense of lives fractured. It was unique in that we were not, like many others, exiles from war or famine or religious persecution, but exiles from apartheid. The politics of apartheid are the essential core of the South African exiles' experience, something they could not leave behind.[3]

Various factors inhibited the decision to avoid the military. Cock identified three forms of coercion used by the government to get white males to serve in the militarily willingly; legal, ideological and social.[4] Legal forms of coercion were expressed through the stringent parameters of the Defence Act which muffled and stifled opposition to conscription. Ideological coercion on the other hand, involved preparing young and impressionable white youths for military service through, for example, the

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1 H. Bernstein, The Rift: The Exile Experience of South Africans, (London, 1994), p.xii.

2 Guardian 9 January 1988.

3 H. Bernstein, "Discovering Exiles", Southern African Review of Books Vol. 5, No.4, July/August 1993, p.10.

4 J. Cock, "Conscription in South Africa: A Study in Politics of Coercion", South African Sociological Review Vol.12, No.1., October 1989, p.3.

school system. The SADF instituted a mandatory cadet program for boys in state schools for three main reasons. Firstly, the idea was that a cadet program would help the youth develop a sense of responsibility and love for their country and the National Party. Secondly, to instill 'correct' ideas about civil defence in young men. Lastly, to train these young men in what the SADF considered good citizenship as a forerunner to national service.[5] The cadet system aimed to ensure that white youth would accept their military commitments without question.[6]

Evans estimates that in 1976, 56 000 schoolboys were enrolled as cadets; by 1987 this number had risen to 250 000, while the figure could reach 300 000 if school girls and private schools were included. He acknowledges that Afrikaans-medium schools adopted the cadet scheme more enthusiastically than English-speaking ones. Since this study focuses primarily on English-speakers it is interesting that two prominent English-speaking schools enthusiastically incorporated cadets; Bishops, boasted an 'advanced' cadet programme including an air and naval wing and St. Andrews in Grahamstown, a 'vigorous' one. Private schools considered cadet training with 'a sense of traditional military pride'[7] along British traditions.

The SADF accommodated discharged servicemen so that they would return for camps. It addressed the need to help with continuing education, employment post-national service and adjustment to community and family life.[8] In the early 1980s the

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5 Paratus September 1980.

6 G. Evans, "Classrooms of War: The Militarisation of White South African Schooling" in J. Cock and L. Nathan (eds), War and Society: The Militarisation of South Africa (Cape Town, 1989), p.284.

7 Evans, op. cit., pp.285 and 287-8.

8 See for example, Paratus May 1977, May 1978 and April 1982.

SADF instituted University Military Units on Afrikaans and dual-medium campuses. Afrikaans Universities, especially, put emphasis on military research programmes and think tanks. Despite the English-speaking universities opposition to apartheid they too played a role in welcoming the ex-serviceman. For example, UCT advertised in Paratus that 'UCT welcomes ex-servicemen'[9] and during the 1980s it maintained Rosebank residence for former national servicemen.

The third factor identified by Cock, social coercion, involved protecting woman, appeasing family pressure and the doing the 'manly' thing by entering the army.[10] The Deputy Minister of Defence, Kobie Coetsee, publicly questioned the character and convictions of resisters when he said 'young men and soldiers hid behind theological and political principles' and he labelled resisters as 'cowards who evade ... responsibility'.[11] In a similar vein Defence Minister Magnus Malan referred to ECC members as 'mommy's little boys'.[12] These attacks had resonance in COSAWR circles; Jan Bart Gewald said, that in some respects, he was a 'coward ... dressing it [exile] up as being political', while Temple remembers that COSAWR helped some 'upper class white guys ... too scared to go and do the military'.[13]

White South Africans complied with the demands of conscription. However, Cock acknowledges 'compliance' as a crude categorisation, not covering informal resistance

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9 Paratus December 1979.

10 Cock, op. cit., pp.3-9.

11 Cape Times 2 October 1979.

12 Cock, op. cit., p.8.

13 COSAWR member Jan Bart Gewald, interviewed by the author, Cape Town, 11 April 1993, and Matthew Temple, interviewed by the author, Johannesburg, 13 October 1993.

such as drug abuse, malingering, sabotage, etc.[14] Cock determined that few whites she interviewed 'failed to define the conflict as war is partly a reflection of how little they were affected by it'. Cock attributes this in part to the state censorship of the media which obscured much of the violence from whites.[15] Her findings are acknowledged by two visitors to South Africa; Howard Clark of War Resister's International, commenting in 1989 said that 'I've never met an educated elite so ignorant as white South Africans, and this in the context of having travelled to over 20 countries, many in Eastern Europe'. Similarly, American writer William Finnegan referred to the 'suffocating complacency of white society'.[16]

Thus for those few who resisted it was a way of rejecting the status quo.[17] Resisters were all ages – some were teenagers, but most were in their twenties or thirties. They left for various reasons; some were 'hardened political activists' determined to fight the struggle from overseas, others wanted to escape what they perceived to be a 'looming conflagration'.[18] Ian Robertson explained why other young men resisted:

> They saw they did not like the political set up [in South Africa], They were "gatvol" [fed up]. Others [felt] their own personal lives could be enriched by going into exile ... some were ... gays [they felt] a combination of being gay and the fact of a war resister ... was a hell of a problem in South Africa.[19]

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[14] Cock, op. cit., p.9.

[15] J. Cock, Colonels and Cadres: War and Gender in South Africa (Cape Town, 1991), pp.9 and 21.

[16] Howard Clark, quoted in Resister 62, June/July 1989, p.10 and William Finnegan from dust jacket of Crossing the Line: A Year in the Land of Apartheid (London, 1986).

[17] Gerald Kraak, interviewed by the author, Johannesburg, 14 October 1993.

[18] Resister 67, Fourth Quarter 1990, p.30.

[19] Ian Robertson, interviewed by the author, Johannesburg, 18 October 1993.

The consequences of exile also affected a resister's relations. The families of high profile resisters faced pressures from an unfriendly white society. Bill Anderson describes his family's predicament:

> They had a couple of quite hard years of social ostracism. My parents had just moved to Stellenbosch, this was 1976. They lost a lot of their friends. When my mother went shopping people who recognised her would cross to the other side of the street. My father worked for CSIR. He lost the chance of promotion. He was given early retirement. Except for the odd visit by the police they weren't harassed.[20]

The Arrival in London

War resisters arrived in London uncertain of the future. Though Gavin Cawthra left before COSAWR's formation, his account is representative of many war resisters' anxieties about leaving South Africa and the difficulty of adapting to a new environment:

> My parents accepted my decision [to leave] and they also accepted my brother's decision to go into the army ... They let us make up our own minds and sort of sat on the fence about it ... It was the first time I'd ever left South Africa ... I couldn't discuss it with anyone ... the question of avoiding military service wasn't discussed openly. I'd mentioned it to a few of my best friends, but there was no question of discussing it in a sort of comradely atmosphere. And the people I did mention it to, I think, didn't really believe that I wasn't coming back.
>
> I had no idea what I'd do when I got there ... I actually hadn't prepared myself at all. I knew absolutely nothing about London ... I spent the first few weeks just being miserable in Earls Court, staying in a very cheap bed and breakfast place, and finding that the cold virtually froze my brain. I was incapable of even thinking.
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> It was very hard to make a living ... We weren't allowed to work while we were waiting for asylum; one could go on the dole. So I ended up squatting in a very run-down old house in the East End in conditions of poverty, which I wasn't

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[20] Bill Anderson, interviewed by the author, Johannesburg, 10 October 1993.

> accustomed to being a white South African. The weather and the dreariness became very psychologically oppressive.[21]

Regardless of their circumstances, all war resisters without a British or other European Community passport faced the same tedious, two-year asylum application process.

The Asylum Procedure

War resisters learned of COSAWR in a few ways; some such as Matthew Temple and Jan Bart Gewald first heard of COSAWR through Resister, others from COSG, the ECC or through South African press reports. COSAWR also had an agreement with the United Kingdom Immigrants Advice Service (UKIAS),[22] (the first port of call for asylum seekers) that they would pass on resisters to COSAWR for an initial assessment.[23]

COSAWR offered advice to anyone who sought it. COSAWR assessed the validity of an applicant's claims, and made referrals to social security agencies. Gavin Cawthra

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[21] Bernstein, op. cit., pp.315-17.

[22] The UKIAS is a project funded 75% by the UN High Commission For Refugees and 25% by the Home Office. Among the UKIAS's responsibilities are providing free legal advice to anyone seeking asylum in the United Kingdom. The UKIAS acts as 'legal representative of anyone who is a refugee as defined by the 1951 Convention and the 1967 Protocol relating to the status of refugees. A refugee is defined as a person who has a well founded fear of persecution for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion.' From Terms of Reference, UKIAS Refugee Unit, London, May 1988.

[23] Gavin Cawthra, Postal Interview, London, 6 February 1994.

estimated that the proceedings occupied a quarter of his time while working as administrator.[24]

If COSAWR and the UKIAS determined the applicant had a strong asylum case, it was then presented to the Home Office. The application included a two page statement explaining the motivation for avoiding military service. COSAWR helped the applicant prepare the statement, but generally let the person do it himself so that all applications did not appear too similar. The statement, after being evaluated by the UKIAS, was submitted to the Home Office along with the applicant's passport, call-up papers and any other relevant material, such as church and UN resolutions supporting South African asylum-seekers and COs, and condemning apartheid.

The Home Office then queried the applicant about personal and family political history, particularly reasons for claiming political asylum. Race, religion, arrests or detention related to political activities, and harassment or assault officially sanctioned by the South African government or police were all important factors. Prior National Service made one's case more difficult because the Home Office was less likely to believe a change in motivations. Criminal offences committed in South Africa should not have jeopardised the application but the Home Office, possibly wanting to limit the number of asylum seekers, would 'harp on it, trying to look for motivation'.[25]

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[24] ibid.

[25] COSAWR, Notes from Meeting with Maureen Connolley of UKIAS (September, 1979).

The discussion with the Home Office was important because the applicant needed to prove that he complied with the particulars of UN Resolution 33/165. COSAWR pointed out that the petitioner must:

> show that to serve, or to continue serving in the SADF, and consequently be held responsible for all the actions of the SADF, is contrary to well motivated political, moral or conscientious objections ... Fear or dislike of combat, military service or fear of prosecution for refusing to serve do not on their own constitute "well founded fear of persecution", neither does being in disagreement with the government constitute adequate political justification for claiming asylum.[26]

Certain technicalities could result in rejection of the application. For example, an applicant who asked for his passport while his application was being reviewed waived his application for asylum.[27]

Official government policy added to the uncertainty of exile. Most delays in processing asylum applications were during the first few years of Thatcher's government.[28] Until 1983, the Home Office was awaiting the verdict in a test case which would determine if the SADF enforced apartheid, and if war resisters faced persecution. Laue explains COSAWR's perspective on this litigation:

> its [the SADF] raison d'etre was force through the police/military machine and apartheid had been declared a crime against humanity, and the SADF was engaged in an aggressive war outside its borders ... significantly in Namibia in defiance of the UN the Hague Court etc. To resist such a military by avoiding conscription was in itself a political act, just as to remain in the SADF was a political act of support of apartheid. We were very clear on this.[29]

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[26] COSAWR (UK), South African War Resisters Guide to Asylum in the United Kingdom (undated pamphlet). Emphasis in original.

[27] Resister 4, September 1979, p.14.

[28] Resister 67, Fourth Quarter 1990, p.30.

[29] Kevin Laue, Postal Interview, 5 April 1994.

COSAWR and UKIAS won the case by petitioning the appeals tribunal on the premise that the conditions war resisters faced in Detention Barracks and prisons in South Africa amounted to persecution. The appeals tribunal declared that:

> the [South African] army is crucial to the maintenance of apartheid, which itself is a violation of human rights ... it has been sufficiently established that the appellant has a well-founded fear of persecution.[30]

This judgment was important. Prior to the ruling, Cawthra recalls instances where asylum seekers were 'simply refused entry into the UK and sent back to South Africa and they would then have to apply in another country, or do the army, or get involved in activist politics in South Africa'.[31].

After the review by the Home Office the applicant received one of three classifications:

(1) Asylum with refugee status – An asylum seeker would initially be allowed to remain for a year. After this, a three year extension period [was] normally granted, and then permanent residence. The applicant then had to apply for a UN Convention Travel Document [issued by the Home Office] in order to travel. The applicant was then eligible for all the education and welfare rights of a British citizen and allowed to work without restriction.

(2) Exceptional leave to remain – This was granted at the Home Office's discretion if it deemed the applicant to be outside both the Immigration Act and the UN Convention. The applicant's South African passport was returned with a stamp giving him permission to remain and work for a year. The stamp had to be renewed every year and the South African passport renewed when it expired. If renewal of the South African passport was denied then the applicant could apply for a Home Office Travel Document. The applicant was eligible for most welfare rights but not education rights. But after three years one could apply for all the benefits. In five years one could apply for citizenship

    Refugee status gave the applicant firmer guarantees against being returned to South Africa, but in practice exceptional leave could not be withdrawn unless there was a drastic change of circumstance in South Africa or the applicant was found guilty of a serious crime.

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[30] COSAWR (UK), Confidential Memorandum – The Home Office Ruling on SA War Resisters 25 February, 1983.

[31] Gavin Cawthra, telephonic interview with the author, Johannesburg, 8 March 1994.

(3) Refusal of application – This meant deportation, but one could appeal and remain in the country for the duration of the appeal – often a year.[32]

Applicants who received 'exceptional leave to remain' could apply for refugee status but most did not because they were so relieved to be granted 'exceptional leave to remain' after two or three years of uncertainty.[33]

The Settling in Process

COSAWR's reception sub-committee played a key role in helping resisters manage the problems inherent in exile. Temple indicates that newly arrived war resisters needed attention:

> I ... was interviewing people who needed someone to tell them that, wonderful, you have a done a great thing by leaving the country, yet, at the same time I knew from my own experiences that the next two years of your lives were probably going to be the worst.[34]

Resisters sometimes perceived themselves to be an onus on British society. At a COSAWR sponsored public meeting in 1980 Monsignor Bruce Kent, Secretary-General of the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament and director of the London-based Conscientious Objector Advisory Team, assured resisters that they:

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[32] COSAWR (UK), Applying for Asylum in Britain (undated), pp.1-3.

[33] COSAWR, Annual Report June 1987-December 1988, p.15.

[34] Matthew Temple, Interview, 13 October 1993.

> should not look upon themselves negatively and as a burden to their host counties, but rather as messengers carrying a personal message to the people of the world about conditions under apartheid.[35]

Unfortunately, COSAWR's own characteristics contributed to the newly arrived resister's feeling of apprehension as COSAWR had a reputation as an 'unfriendly organisation'.[36] This was ascribed to the aloof personalities of some of its members, and until the late 1980s, to its operating in an environment of what Cawthra calls a 'paranoia in a colloquial sense' because of:

> ...infiltration, and as the struggle intensified in the mid-1980s we became very worried about our personal safety etc ... It was a real threat, and over the years we detected a number of agents, who we dealt with by simply freezing them out.[37]

Political dynamics from South Africa permeated COSAWR. One resister said there was 'a suspicion amongst resisters which is inhibiting ... a carry over from South Africa where there are political suspicions'.[38] The infiltration of student politics by the South African intelligence services had instilled a degree of 'paranoia'. There is a claim that NUSAS was 'the breeding ground for spies',[39] – witness the continuity of university based spies.[40] This 'paranoia' stifled resister's participation in COSAWR. For example, Fritz Joubert said he did not want to seem eager to get

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[35] COSAWR quoting Monsignor Bruce Kent in Resister 6, January/February 1980, p.3.

[36] Matthew Temple, Interview, 13 October 1993.

[37] Gavin Cawthra, Postal Interview, 6 February 1994.

[38] From Liz Fish, Too Far Apart BBC-TV Training Video, 1988.

[39] Weekly Mail 28 June 1991, p.10.

[40] The 1974 University of the Witwatersrand student executive had four spies on it, including Craig Williamson. Other well-known South African government agents were Olivia Forsyth at Rhodes University in the mid-1980s and Danie Pretorius at the University of Cape Town in 1987. Ibid.

involved in COSAWR activities because some COSAWR members might think he was a spy.[41]

Another said that exiled war resisters were often concerned about their own issues rather than helping those who followed them.[42] Another problem was uncertainty, the regret and seeming eternity of exile. As one exile explained:

> I think I handled exile very badly because when I left in 1983 I was far less mature politically than most people. My reasons for refusing to serve in the SADF were unsophisticated. For the first couple of years I thought I had made a mistake. [Another agreed, commenting that] I think lots of us felt we'd made a mistake, especially when ECC was formed and we began to get reports of what they were doing. [Those views were reinforced by a third resister who said] When I first got here we always talked about freedom in South Africa within a five-year time span. Now, after the second five years...[43]

An additional factor which made exile difficult was the lack of long-term housing. COSAWR recognised that insufficient housing created 'amongst war resisters, as with other refugee groups ... an incidence of social and mental breakdown, unemployment, alcoholism and homelessness'.[44] London's housing shortage was 'something that young newly arrived war resisters feel particularly acutely'.[45] A rent subsidy was available from the British government but the problem of finding decent, secure housing remained. Until 1988 COSAWR's attempts to acquire suitable housing were relatively unsuccessful.

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[41] Fritz Joubert, interviewed by the author, Cape Town, 22 February 1994.

[42] From Liz Fish, op. cit.

[43] Resister 67, Fourth Quarter 1990, p.28.

[44] Kliptown Housing Co-op, Description (London, 1988).

[45] COSAWR, Annual Report June 1986 to July 1987, p.15.

In that year a group of South Africans, largely COSAWR members, started a process of negotiation with a local council to secure a housing co-operative. The Kliptown Co-op,[46] named after the town where the Freedom Charter was adopted, accommodated bona fide South Africans of all races and both sexes which:

> enabled people to take control of a central part of their lives – housing, it is also a vehicle through which people can develop community skills, can involve themselves in community struggles in Britain, and can pursue co-operative ways of living. Kliptown can also provide a social focus for South Africans coming from widely different experiences in South Africa.[47]

Coupled with the housing problem were personal issues such as relationship difficulties. Few woman were in exile. Forming relationships with South African women was difficult because women could go home at any stage.[48] Relationships with British women were difficult given the context of exile; insecurities regarding a stable income, accommodation, and housing.

A few women, such as girlfriends or wives worked with COSAWR. Janine Rauch's involvement with COSAWR started while completing a post-graduate degree at Cambridge:

> I was connected to some people who were connected to the COSAWR network. I wanted to do something politically ... The issue of conscription had been close to my heart.

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[46] 'Kliptown ... registered as a housing Co-op of the Industrial and Provident Societies Act, 1965 ... This registration came into effect on 1 March 1988' (From COSAWR, Kliptown housing Co-op, op. cit.).

[47] Kliptown Housing Co-op, op. cit.

[48] Matthew Temple, quoted in Liz Fish, op. cit.

Rauch did not notice a strong female presence

> I did not meet that many other women in COSAWR ... women started to come to meetings ... to participate in discussions about returning to South Africa ... that is when I felt the presence of women in COSAWR. My impression was that women did not play a big role, something completely different from the ECC. Close to the end we [COSAWR] set up an informal woman's group ... it did not last very long, a couple of months.[49]

All these issues contributed to experiencing an exile-induced 'schizophrenia out of depression'.[50] Self-help groups and monthly meetings were instituted to discuss problems. COSAWR administrators counselled and professional help was available. Temple explains:

> people had my number, they could phone me. Many of the problems resisters had to face and solve themselves. But the support was there. I'm aware of once or twice where ... one or two war resisters were in need of professional assistance. We had access to psychologists who would help us.[51]

Despite the historical bonds of culture and language between Britain and South Africa, British society did not always accommodate politicised South Africans. One resister claimed that as soon as some Britons heard you were South African they would want to tell you how bad the blacks in Britain are.[52] Cawthra states 'in general there was very little support from the British people I met, and little understanding'.[53]

COSAWR also faced parliamentary scrutiny as some British MPs inquired about groups associated with the AAM or the ANC. On 24 July 1984, a month after P.W. Botha's visit to Britain and two month's after COSAWR's second appearance on the

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[49] Janine Rauch, interviewed by the author, Johannesburg, 13 October 1993.

[50] Bill Anderson, Interview, 10 October 1993.

[51] Matthew Temple, Interview, 13 October 1993.

[52] Time Out 10-16 September 1986, p.8.

[53] Quoted in H. Bernstein, op. cit., p.316.

BBC, a Tory MP posed two questions to the Secretary of State for the Home Office: The first asked how many asylum applicants belonged to COSAWR, the second concerned whether there was evidence that war resisters were encouraged to join anti-apartheid groups to satisfy criteria for asylum.

To the first question the Secretary of State replied that the 'information requested is not readily available and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost; and to the second question, 'none'.[54] Previously the Secretary of State had indicated that:

> Separate figures are not available in respect of applicants expressing a conscientious objection to military service. The figures available were in respect of South African nationals seeking political asylum (including those expressing an objection to military service).[55]

From COSAWR's point of view the questions helped generate needed publicity.

However exile was not all despondency. A resister's own personality and asylum motives often determined how he adapted to exile. Some resisters received financial support from their families and could have returned to South Africa on holiday but did not do so for moral reasons.[56] Some took advantage of the education benefits offered and completed degrees. Others enjoyed London's stimulating lifestyle, liberal television and newspapers, the theatre and access to publications unavailable in South Africa.

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[54] Written Answers, Hansard, 24 July 1984, p.581.

[55] Written Answers Hansard, 30 July 1982, p.778.

[56] Fritz Joubert, Interview, 22 February 1994.

COSAWR's Politicisation Program

COSAWR involved resisters in the liberation movement but it did not do so in a coercive manner. It would have been detrimental to have politically unmotivated people involved in the struggle. COSAWR did not regard its role simply as a 'welfare task'.[57] COSAWR argued that 'deserters should be welcomed and made to understand that they have an ongoing role to play in the world-wide campaign to end South African tyranny'.[58]

The political education offered by COSAWR encouraged resisters to embrace the ANC. Newly arrived resisters were offered seminars and provided with a book list which offered a chronicle of the ANC and the liberation struggle. These teachings were offered on the premise that South Africa's censorship laws had cut off white (and black) South Africans from 'the true history of their country'.[59] As a result of its efforts COSAWR believed that war resisters gained 'an understanding of what apartheid means for black South Africans'.[60]

In 1980 COSAWR indicated it was working in all aspects of the struggle, including armed,[61] so it is not surprising that it helped channel people to MK. The one-fifth of resisters who had military experience were of crucial importance to the ANC,

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[57] COSAWR (UK), Information Booklet for South African War Resisters (undated), p.1.

[58] Resister 2, May 1979, p.2.

[59] COSAWR (UK), Information Booklet of South African War Resisters in Britain (undated), p.6.

[60] ibid., p.6.

[61] Resister 9, July/August 1980, p.7.

bringing both their organisational knowledge of the SADF and their military skills to the ANC.[62] Those resisters not inclined to the armed struggle were advised to find a sector of the liberation struggle they might be interested in such as the AAM, the Namibia Support Committee or IDAF.

One COSAWR associate who recruited for MK was Ian Robertson. He remembers that:

> If they were [politically] conscious ... I would try to meet them in pubs, have a meal ... try to explore the possibility ... if they were interested in liberation ... we used a cliche – if whites are not part of the problem they are not part of the solution.

In retrospect, he concludes that it was unrealistic to expect many whites to join the armed struggle:

> I came to the realisation by and large that they were not prepared to take that ultimate step [of joining MK]. It meant giving up their life of privilege that they were used to.
> I think maybe we set our sights too high, we expected a lot of whites to come and join the ANC ... there was kind of schizophrenia ... whites ... wanted to be a part of [the liberation movement] but at the same time they did not really identify with the ANC's armed struggle.[63]

A gay exile's reluctance to join the ANC could have been due to the organisation's attitude toward homosexuality. In 1987, ANC National Executive Member, Ruth Mompati said 'I cannot even begin to understand why people want lesbian and gay rights'.[64] Gevisser reports that many European anti-apartheid organisations, including COSAWR, responded 'negatively and swiftly' to her comments and were

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[62] Bill Anderson, Interview, 10 October 1993.

[63] Ian Robertson, Interview, 18 October 1993.

[64] Quoted in Capital Gay (London) 18 September 1987, from M. Gevisser and E. Cameron, Defiant Desire (Braamfontein, 1994), p.270.

amongst the 'most vocal' in the critique of her remarks.[65] This indicated just how seriously COSAWR took such a sensitive issue, and suggests the influence of gays within the organisation.

COSAWR also referred war resisters to the ANC through a secret group within the COSAWR Committee – Conscripts Resisting Apartheid War (CRAW). Anderson emphasises that CRAW was clandestine because COSAWR needed to maintain the image of 'a respectable ... organisation whose existence to a large extent was dependent on its relationship with the Home Office ... COSAWR had to be seen as an exile, draft resistance agency'.[66] COSAWR was also cautious about the prying of Conservative Party politicians. Anderson states that there were always people such as Tory MP Andrew Hunter[67] 'looking for stuff like this [recruitment into ANC] going on in London'. Anderson continues:

> It was agreed that COSAWR should not be seen to be linked directly to the ANC, that it should be broader ... CRAW was regarded as part of the ANC's underground machinery, that was the idea of it, so that all those coming through London ... including the ECC ... would maybe touch base with COSAWR ... Gavin [Cawthra] would see them as COSAWR but he would then in his CRAW capacity talk to them under instruction from Aziz Pahad about doing whatever.

Anderson explains that he maintained that CRAW should secure personnel for underground work:

> Anyone of interest to the ANC who passed through should [have been] passed on to the ANC ... through Aziz [Pahad]. In practice though when people were passed on they were either sucked for information and if they were asked for anything they were asked to come back here [South Africa]. I know at times I argued strongly if we found someone who had just arrived on a holiday visa

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65 ibid., p.270.

66 Bill Anderson, Interview, 10 October 1993.

67 See Chapter VII.

> who was particularly committed we should actually persuade them not to claim asylum and go back into the country and go back into the army.[68]

Temple infers that CRAW tapered away by the time he became COSAWR administrator in December 1989:

> I never knew it as CRAW. It was just an informal meeting once a month. At these informal meetings it would be discussed as to whether or not, to put it bluntly, if there were "useful people" -was there someone very much from the intelligence and military point of view. I was never involved in recruiting for MK, I never perceived myself as playing that role.[69]

MK intelligence apparently felt COSAWR had drifted from its military debriefing function. Resisters with military experience like Bill Anderson had moved on to other ANC structures. Rockland Williams, who met asylum-seekers in 1989 explained:

> Here was a structure like COSAWR that was receiving draft dodgers, or former SADF soldiers who did not want to do their camps and I wondered whether they were debriefing them properly ... I mixed with the COSAWR people, I would debrief them [privately] ... [in my] capacity as an intelligence officer ... with a mandate from MK intelligence ... I subsequently discovered that COSAWR was not doing it, it was not COSAWR's role. After Bill [Anderson] left [debriefing was done] in a rudimentary fashion ... not in the manner that Bill was doing it.[70]

Since many resisters had left South Africa to avoid service in the SADF, it is unlikely they would have joined MK. Overall, COSAWR had limited success in attracting people into the liberation struggle. Those who came over in the late 1980s also left for more economic motives COSAWR had direct contact with only several hundred war resisters over a twelve year period. As has been explained, some had left South Africa for various motives, not necessarily politically inspired, and were therefore less

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68 Bill Anderson, Interview, 10 October 1993.

69 Matthew Temple, Interview, 13 October 1993.

70 Rockland Williams, interviewed by the author, Johannesburg, 18 October 1993.

likely to be interested in joining the other organisations associated with the liberation movement.

Cawthra concedes that COSAWR's politics were not amenable to most of those avoiding conscription:

> We always had difficulty with our political profile. On the one hand, we were a solidarity organisation accepted by the international anti-apartheid movement on the basis that we supported the ANC and the international campaign to isolate SA. But this did not really reflect our constituency which was in general of more "liberal" persuasion. [71]

Those who could fit into COSAWR's agenda found a place. The services COSAWR (UK) offered to resisters were limited by its funding and time available and political constraints. The personal exile experience of COSAWR members shaped that organisation. As an ANC structure it adhered to ANC policy and operated in a strict security environment. COSAWR's unwitting alienation of newly arrived asylum-seekers, who were already anxious about leaving South Africa and whose politics differed from the ANC's and who were not necessarily inclined to adapt to a political and socially tense organisation like COSAWR could only have dampened the vitality of the organisation. This security environment resulted in an organisation that continually got stuck. Exile was a difficult choice, fraught with danger, both physical and emotional. While many resisters thought they were making the right decision, entry into their new lives was not easy. However, not all asylum-seekers had a negative experience.

Alternatively COSAWR Netherlands (NL) attracted a different clientele and accommodated more apolitical asylum-seekers. Also, COSAWR (NL) did not offer the

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[71] Gavin Cawthra, Postal Interview, 6 February 1994.

direct entry into the political arena as COSAWR (UK) did. The next chapter looks at the diversity of COSAWR (NL), and how it developed distinct from COSAWR (UK).

Chapter V

SURVEY OF COSAWR (NL)

'I tell you there is nothing quite so pathetic as a misplaced South African'.[1]

The COSAWR (NL) experience was not entirely a forlorn existence, but, the above quotation from a play about South African exiles in Holland does highlight the alienation that some resisters felt in that country.

The Netherlands seemed the ideal place for war resisters to find solidarity as it boasted more anti-apartheid activists per head than any other country.[2] In 1980, as a result of increased anti-apartheid pressure the Dutch coalition government almost collapsed over its refusal to institute mandatory oil sanctions against South Africa, something unheard of in any other Western country.[3] Conny Braam, president of the AABN, remarked that 'because of the Dutch historical link with South Africa there is an awareness about the country, and of course, just about everybody is anti-apartheid'.[4] The Rand Daily Mail referred to the Dutch press as 'unanimous[ly] anti-apartheid'.[5] Anti-apartheid activity reached such a fervour that South African

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1 From A. Akerman, "A Man Out of the Country" (International Drama Agency, Amsterdam, 1985), p.18.

2 D. Colbourne, "Dutch Afrikaner Relations: A Case Study in Foreign Perceptions of South Africa", South Africa International Vol.18, No.1, 1987, p.49.

3 ibid., p.51.

4 Conny Braam, President of the AABN, in the Weekly Mail 6-12 November 1992, p.14.

5 Rand Daily Mail 10 June 1983.

diplomats posted to the Netherlands received a 'tremendous emotional hammering'.[6] Yet despite this fervour, COSAWR (NL) was unable to work together toward a common goal with the Dutch anti-apartheid community.

Dutch-South African Relations

Relations between South Africa and Holland after World War II were ambivalent. This was due, in part, to South Africa's insensitive political gestures. For example, the Dutch government (with memories of the German occupation fresh in mind) rejected the credentials of the National Party's first ambassador, Dr Otto du Plessis as he had been a Nazi sympathizer. However, Dutch-South African relations improved by the early 1950s. In 1951 the two countries signed a cultural agreement (to be annulled thirty years later). In 1952 the Netherlands participated in the tri-centenary of Jan Van Riebeeck's arrival in South Africa. In 1953 Holland's socialist prime minister, Dr Willem Dries, paid a state visit to South Africa. Indicative of Dutch vacillation, Prince Bernhard visited South Africa in 1954 while his wife, Queen Juliana, refused to enter South Africa as long as apartheid was enforced.[7]

The Sharpeville Massacre in March 1960 was the turning point in Dutch-South African relations. Following it, in May 1960 the first anti-apartheid group, the Comite Zuid-Afrika (CZA), founded exclusively by Hollanders and consisting of theologians, liberal

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[6] D. Geldenhuys, The Diplomacy of Isolation: South African Foreign Policy Making (Johannesburg, 1984), p.136.

[7] Roskam, op. cit., pp.6-7.

academics and clergymen, made its first public appearance. Sharpeville prompted debate in the Dutch Parliament which compared South Africa's apartheid policy to that of Nazi Germany.[8] It provoked an anti-Afrikaner sentiment amongst some Dutch, many of whom had previously had a sentimental view of Afrikaners as a result of their struggle during the South African War. Post-Sharpeville, Afrikaners were 'no longer the heroes of yesterday – they became the villains of today'.[9]

In 1971 the Anti-Apartheids Beweging Nederland (AABN) was established. It was a national movement aligned with the Dutch Communist Party, and took a more radical stand against Dutch cooperation with South Africa. The AABN's major thrust was the withdrawal of both Dutch firms and investment from South Africa.

In the early 1970s a South African, Esau du Plessis, founded the Boycot Outspan Aktie (BOA), which called for a boycott of South African citrus products. This strategy went against the prevailing AABN emphasis on the withdrawal of Dutch investment from South Africa but the AABN supported the program.[10] Overall the BOA rarely worked with other anti-apartheid groups and Akerman noted that there was bitterness between it and the AABN.[11] Roskam attributes this to du Plessis's 'sectarianism ... [he was] not democratically inclined, he knew what was right'.[12] Without an interview with du Plessis it is difficult to verify this, but Roskam's comments indicate

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8 Colbourne, op. cit., p.51.

9 Roskam, op. cit., p.8. Emphasis in original.

10 K.W. Grundy, "'We're Against Apartheid, But ...', Dutch Policy Toward South Africa" (Centre on International Race Relations Graduate School of International Studies, University of Denver, 1974), p.23.

11 Anthony Akerman, interviewed by the author, Cape Town, 27 December 1993.

12 Dr. Karel Roskam, interviewed by the author, Cape Town, 12 April 1994.

that this discord between South Africans and Hollanders was a harbinger of things to come. By the late 1970s the AABN (which had merged with CZA in 1972) and the BOA were working separately.

Throughout the 1960s and 1970s the Dutch government continued with its paradoxical policy toward South Africa. In 1965 it donated 100 000 guilders to IDAF.[13] After both the South African government and Dutch immigrants residing in South Africa protested, the donation was rescinded. Instead the money was given to a UN Trust Fund for South Africa. Yet at the same time the state airline (KLM) acceded to Pretoria's wishes and used "whites only" crews on flights to South Africa.[14] In 1975 the Dutch dispensed humanitarian aid to the ANC for first time.[15]

The Origins of COSAWR (NL)

An organisation called the Assistance Group on South African Draft Evaders (ZADP),[16] founded by Trotskyites Darcy du Toit and Nigel Bloch, seemed to be isolated from the above groups and events. Du Toit served in the SADF in 1966-67

[13] This was an organisation banned in South Africa in 1966 for allegedly aiding "terrorists".

[14] Roskam, op. cit., p.12.

[15] Paratus December 1987 contains a photograph of 'Cuba and Holland' foodstuffs captured from Angolans. This can be interpreted as a criticism at both Dutch aid for the ANC and/or the ANC possibly not staying within the humanitarian guidelines laid down by the Dutch.

[16] In Dutch this translates as the Zuid Afrikanse Dienstweigeraars Project (ZADP).

'when it was not an issue to do it'.[17] He was not a war resister per se, having left South Africa in 1975 to study labour issues at Leiden University.

Du Toit, reflecting his background, saw the war resistance issue in the context of 'apartheid is essentially a labour system, that is ultimately what one is giving support to ... I saw war resistance as a very viable basis of mobilisation'.[18] At its formation the ZADP was primarily working with the BOA, 'Initially there was nothing to go on, [we were] meeting people developing a political philosophy; there was no aid from the ANC or the AABN.[19]

The Sunday Times reported that the ZADP considered setting up an underground pipeline to help draft dodgers escape South Africa.[20] Du Toit says the Sunday Times article was a:

> garbled version, there was a fairly worked out plan working with the Dutch Union of Military Conscripts[21] ... to launch a propaganda blitz, a massive mailing from Holland ... an appeal to all people called up to military service not to leave the country but to resist the draft and wage the struggle from inside the country ... this was vetoed by the ANC.[22]

Gerald Kraak, a war resister who arrived in Amsterdam in 1979 and joined ZADP, described it as 'very small, three or four people, its activities [were] limited to

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17 Darcy du Toit, interviewed by the author, Cape Town, 13 April 1994.

18 ibid.

19 ibid.

20 Sunday Times (South Africa) 15 May 1977.

21 In Dutch this translates as the Vereeniging van Diensplichtige Militairen or VVDM.

22 Darcy du Toit, Interview, 13 April 1994.

discussions, and meeting each other socially'.[23] Another war resister who also arrived in 1979 believed that ZADP showed signs of exile strain and uncertainty. He described ZADP as 'a depressing bunch of guys, [who] did not know where to get material and money'.[24] However, du Toit counters this observation; he says 'those politically involved were quite vibrant people, [though] people did have problems'.[25]

Kraak and most of those following him were ANC aligned. The dominance of COSAWR (UK) and the need to organise a united war resistance group brought ZADP over to the philosophy of COSAWR (UK) and the ANC. Kraak explains the purpose:

> There were people who came from the workers tradition ... They were very suspicious of the ANC which they saw as a multi-class organisation. A couple of people were members of the Marxist Workers' Tendency (MWT), that caused quite a lot of division, it was actually a recurring conflict ... We made contact with the British group which at that stage had become COSAWR ... We took our lead from what was happening in Britain ... We had a whole series of discussions with the British group and decided to become a formal branch ... there was still a battle to be fought to win people over to the ANC ... also to win young dissenting whites over to the ANC ... I think some people were worried, given the whole history of the OKHELA project ... There was some concern of some groups going off on their own, setting their own agenda. We wanted to bring the war resistance movement into the national liberation movement.[26]

The merger was formalised in December 1979. The next step was the establishment of a firm asylum policy for war resisters.

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[23] Gerald Kraak, interviewed by the author, Johannesburg, 14 October 1993.

[24] Confidential Source A, interviewed by the author.

[25] Darcy du Toit, Interview, 13 April 1994.

[26] Gerald Kraak, Interview, 14 October 1993.

The Asylum Process in the Netherlands

The Dutch maintained three asylum categories – A, B and C. "A" status conferred full refugee standing, meaning the applicant left his country of origin for fear of persecution. The "B" grade signified the postulant had justifiable moral reasons for receiving asylum and most resisters received B status. "C" status was waived after 1979.[27] The practical differences between A and B were negligible, "A" status extended a UN refugee passport, "B" status proffered a Dutch travel document.[28] The process averaged between eight and eighteen months.

The early resisters were assisted by Amnesty International as the AABN's focus on trade issues precluded it from a direct role. Two particulars that most Netherlands-based war resisters agree on was the relative ease (despite the waiting period) of attaining asylum and the accommodating manner of the Dutch officials. This was due to the generosity of the Dutch social welfare system and the Netherlands' history of tolerance. One resister who applied for asylum in 1979 said that 'as soon as the application went in I got a lump sum, a furniture allowance and housing in a new duplex; the Dutch bureaucrats were not difficult'.[29] Another, who petitioned in 1985, describes the asylum procedure as 'incredibly simple, translators were present. All you had to do was take your papers along saying you've been called up. Inside those papers it tells you the penalties you might face if you did not turn up'.[30] In

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[27] See Ian Bruce's account in Chapter II.

[28] Confidential Source A, interviewed by the author.

[29] Confidential Source A, Interview.

[30] Confidential Source B, interviewed by the author.

1985 Ian Kerkhof of COSAWR (NL) made known the ease of securing asylum when he stated 'a war resister with a fairly good story actually gets asylum'.[31]

In July 1979 the Dutch government announced that it would treat South African war resisters in terms of the United Nations General Assembly Resolution 33/165 .[32] This pronouncement itself did not immediately make the application process effortless as precedents needed to be established. In August 1979 a war resister's asylum application was declared 'ungrounded' by the Dutch authorities. The applicant violated asylum application regulations by stopping off in another country before arriving in the Netherlands (his chosen country of asylum). Nevertheless, his lawyers successfully appealed the case on the argument that there was not a 'translator present at the first interview, written notes were not taken and the necessary forms were not filled in'.[33] A judge ruled that the resister could stay indefinitely (though he was not granted political asylum). The case signified the Dutch government's commitment 'to accepting SA war resisters' and 'the UN resolution ha[d] the weight of precedence in Dutch law'.[34]

COSAWR's confidence was premature. A major campaign in 1980 concerned the asylum case of Mark Wolffe. He was threatened with deportation because he travelled via Botswana.[35] His case was raised in the Dutch Parliament by the Radical

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31 Business Day 19 November 1985.

32 Resister 4, September 1979, pp.13-14. See Chapter II for the details of this resolution.

33 Resister 6, January/February 1980, p.18.

34 ibid., p.19.

35 Resister 9, July/August 1980, p.5.

Party.[36] The Secretary of Justice, while responding that war resister cases would be treated individually, admitted knowing little of the punishment facing war resisters in South Africa. COSAWR found it shocking that, five years after the Netherlands granted its first war resister asylum, its Justice Minister did not know whether or not South African war resisters faced repression.[37]

COSAWR (UK) and (NL) publicised Wolffe's case by circulating pamphlets and sending an open letter of protest to the Secretary of Justice which called for 'a reversal of the decision – and for a policy consistent with the United Nations resolution'.[38] This petition was signed by over 150 Dutch church organisations, political parties, student groups and the VVDM. In 1981 Wolffe was granted "B" status. COSAWR regarded the decision as a victory, though it did not set a precedent for future resisters because it was treated as an individual matter.[39] COSAWR (NL) and the anti-apartheid movements, with the help of the influential Dutch Labour Party continued with a successful campaign to grant resisters "B" status.

Concurrent with COSAWR (NL) asylum campaigns was its effort to further publicise war resistance. In November 1979, it attended the 2nd European Conference of Conscript Organisations. This conference attempted to develop international understanding and coordination amongst these soldier organisations. COSAWR (NL) and the VVDM jointly demonstrated in Amsterdam against the January 1980 call-up

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[36] This is a progressive, pro-environmental, anti-nuclear party which co-operates with socialist groups. From C. Cook and J. Paxton, European Political Facts: 1918-1984 (Oxford, 1986), p.208.

[37] Resister 10, September/October 1980, pp.6-7.

[38] ibid., p.7.

[39] Resister 13, April/May 1981, p.4.

in South Africa.[40] This was the 'first manifestation of [public] solidarity by European soldiers with South African war resisters'.[41] The VVDM seemed a logical organisation for COSAWR (NL) to work with. But it was COSAWR (UK) which liaised with the VVDM; primarily toward the end of the 1980s when COSAWR (UK) started to address conscripts issues in the SADF. The VVDM possibly did not view South African war resisters as an issue that would give its movement a catalyst. Jan Bart Gewald states that 'the issue of Cruise Missiles particularly gave impetus to the VVDM'.[42]

The Exile Experience of COSAWR (NL)

COSAWR (NL)'s location in Amsterdam, a city much smaller in size and population than London, allowed newly arrived resisters to meet the local population easily.[43] There is a 'freewheeling' sense to Amsterdam, a city famous for its red light district, easy availability of drugs and organised sub-cultures which accommodated

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[40] The VVDM was set up in 1966 to address material issues in the Dutch Army. Throughout the 1960s and 1970s, it won cases which abolished saluting outside of bases, as well as the short hair code. A VVDM case prompted the European Court of Human Rights to rule that detention in military barracks by officers or military courts was a form of deprivation of freedom which should be the preserve of an independent judge. The Dutch government was compelled to scrap military courts and military regulations allowing for arrest, and bringing military discipline within the sphere of the regular courts of the day. (Resister 66, Third Quarter 1990, pp.8-13).

[41] Resister 6, January/February 1980, p.23.

[42] Jan Bart Gewald, Interview, 19 April 1993. The issue of the Cruise Missiles was a major political concern. In the early 1980s, the Dutch Peace Movement witnessed 'spectacular growth'. By 1985, the Peace Movement had collected 3,75 million signatures, of a total population of 14 million, in opposition to situating of Cruise Missiles in Holland. However, in November 1985 the Dutch Parliament agreed to their installation. From B. ter Veer, "The Struggle Against the Deployment of Cruise Missiles: The Learning Process of the Dutch Peace Movement", Bulletin of Peace Proposals Vol.19, No.2, 1988, pp.213 and 216.

[43] In 1980 Amsterdam's population is 866 000 while that of London is 8 000 000.

Amsterdam's 'dope and dole refugees'.[44] Amsterdam's attractions could offer newly arrived resisters, sometimes young and immature, unique diversions from politics.

Kraak[45] remembers England as more politically homogeneous:

> The exile community [in London] was much larger and less varied...There were a lot of divisions in Amsterdam, a lot of PAC exiles had gone there in the 1960s, a lot of coloured people went to Holland ... England had cohesion of the ANC structures.

Kraak recollects in the Netherlands contact with the ANC was limited:

> Initially we liaised with the London branch of the ANC, then an office of the ANC was set up in Amsterdam, but I do not think there was any very cohesive policy toward ... exiles.[46]

The lack of sound ANC structures in the Netherlands helped to prevent the institution of a reconciliation process between black and white South Africans as had happened in Britain. The consequences were noted by Ebrahim Saley:

> South African exiles are often confronted with the residual effects of the profound racial separation imposed through the culture of apartheid. Consequently, within the South African exile community in Amsterdam a great deal of distrust and polarisation was evident between black and white members.[47]

This 'distrust and polarisation' was further reinforced by the different asylum conditions for black and white exiles. Whereas COSAWR members had a UN resolution supporting them, and they used their call-up papers as evidence of the penalty facing them for refusing service in the SADF, one resister said:

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[44] Anthony Akerman, interviewed by the author, Cape Town, 27 December 1993; The Weekly Mail and Guardian 13-19 August 1993.

[45] Kraak was also with COSAWR UK from 1985-1990.

[46] Gerald Kraak, Interview, 14 October 1993.

[47] E. Saley, "The Self in Exile: Encounter Group Experiences Before and After Political Changes in South Africa" (Ph.D thesis, Vrije Universiteit, Amsterdam, 1992), p.15.

> [Blacks] couldn't really show proof of harassment ... it was far more difficult for black South Africans, that was a little bit of a tension, members of the liberation movement were seen as guests ... they were more temporary.[48]

The following comments stress the limited organisational relationship the two branches enjoyed with one another. Contact between the two branches was described as 'warm between individuals'[49] but Temple, on the other hand, describes the connection as rudimentary:

> We used to phone them ... it was not as organised. [They liaised about] finances, its relationship with the anti-apartheid movement or other groups in terms of invites to speak ... intelligence and security information on how many resisters were coming through ... To me it was an administrative relationship.[50]

Another reason for the difficulty in establishing COSAWR (NL) was that many of its members lacked organisational skills which were normally learned in the student movement. While Kraak and Gewald had a NUSAS background, most others were less politicised and therefore less likely to be used to operating in established structures. As Kraak explains:

> People in Amsterdam tended to be a bit younger, a lot of them came from Afrikaans backgrounds, most people who went to Amsterdam were gay. The people who went to England tended to come from more political backgrounds. [They were] English-speaking, a lot of them were university educated.[51]

COSAWR (NL) did not have a defined committee nor a full-time worker that could have helped provide political direction. Gewald states 'we all had these titles but they

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48 Confidential Source B, Interview.

49 Confidential Source A, Interview.

50 Matthew Temple, interviewed by the author, Johannesburg, 13 October 1993.

51 Gerald Kraak, Interview, 14 October 1993.

meant nothing'. Gewald further insists that one pivotal member of COSAWR (NL) 'did not know a thing about anything, there should [have been] a way for South Africans to move up in the ANC or SACP properly'.[52] COSAWR (NL) erratically produced its own version of Resister – COSAWR Nieuws – but it was not an integral component that could serve to keep COSAWR (NL) together as Resister had for COSAWR (UK).

Despite the relative financial security of the Netherlands social security system, some resisters still found 'it difficult to adjust to the Dutch way of life'.[53] The 'dope and dole' lifestyle sapped the energy of some; Gewald remembers that he was thankful that he was advised by a COSAWR member to first get a job as 'twenty-four hours of non-structure becomes terrible'.[54] Other new experiences that had to be faced and overcome were the climate, food, and the search for suitable housing and gainful employment. Even with the similarity between the Afrikaans and Dutch languages, a resister needed to speak fluent Dutch in order to find secure employment. Routine tasks such as buying a train ticket, securing a rent adjustment, or applying for university were difficult without adequate Dutch language skills. Roskam recollects that some COSAWR (NL) personnel had difficulty with the Dutch language which limited their participation in cultural and political activities as well as media appearances. COSAWR (NL) eventually took note of this as Gewald was appointed its chairperson in 1987 in part because of his fluency in Dutch.[55]

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[52] Jan Bart Gewald, Interview, 11 April 1993.

[53] Resister 16, October/November 1981, p.20.

[54] Jan Bart Gewald, Interview, 11 April 1993.

[55] Interviews by the author with Dr. Karel Roskam, Cape Town, 12 April 1994 and with Jan Bart Gewald, Cape Town, 11 April 1993.

Within this exacting context some resisters were unable or unwilling to help those who came after them. Gewald recollects that 'some people were scared to allow other people to make use of them; you get settled in then it is difficult to see those behind you'.[56] This attitude occasionally alienated those resisters having difficulty settling in. Sometimes this led to despondent measures, such as Mr. Gewald being phoned at 3 a.m. by a resister wanting to kill himself.[57] However this form of despair was rare.

From the early to mid-1980s, COSAWR (NL) involved itself in matters such as raising funds for the ANC's Lusaka-based Radio Freedom, or working on a campaign to prevent UN cultural boycott-breakers, such as Cliff Richard and Nana Mouskouri, from performing in the Netherlands.[58] After 1985 the number of asylum applications increased as a result of the State of Emergency, and the Netherlands granting asylum more readily than the United Kingdom. COSAWR (NL) anticipated it would play an increased role in the struggle as repression increased inside South Africa.[59] This prediction came true when, in 1986, COSAWR (NL) became involved in a structured campaign based on changes in South African law.

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[56] Jan Bart Gewald, Interview, 11 April 1993.

[57] ibid.

[58] This emphasis on culture was due to the arts orientation of Netherlands-based resisters. Ian Bruce (not formally associated with COSAWR NL) became involved in theatre; together with Anthony Akerman and Joe Mosikili, he founded the South African theatre group Thekwini Theatre; he served on the committee of the South African Cultural Community Centre (SACCC), and wrote three plays dealing with the theme of the war in Angola. Ian Kerkhof, COSAWR (NL) chair in the mid-1980s, who still resides in the Netherlands, is an accomplished film maker, and Simon Dunckley (active in COSAWR (NL) in the late 1980s) is an artist.

[59] COSAWR (NL), Report for the Period June 1984 to June 1985, p.2.

The Dutch Nationals in the SADF Campaign

Until 1982 immigrants to South Africa were not eligible for conscription but were expected to serve voluntarily in the commandos. In order to accommodate manpower needs for the "Area War"[60] the government increased conscription. The 1982 Defence Amendment Act extended conscription into the commandos and affected some 800 000 white men (including European citizens resident in South Africa) who had avoided the call-up in the 1950s and 1960s. This law doubled the numbers available for conscription.[61]

The South African Citizen Amendment Act of 1984 decreed that:

> All immigrants between the ages of 15 years and six months and 25 years who have lived in South Africa for more than five years automatically become South African citizens and are forced to do military service. If they sign a statement of refusal their residence permits are withdrawn and they face deportation.[62]

In January 1985 Eric van Hoekelen, a Dutch national residing in South Africa, was conscripted into the SADF. He served six months and then deserted 'when he realised the brutal and repressive nature of the SADF'.[63] Van Hoekelen then annulled his South African citizenship. He refused continued service in the SADF and after much legal difficulty was allowed to leave South Africa for the Netherlands.[64]

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[60] See Chapter III.

[61] A. Metten and P. Goodison, Fighting for Apartheid: A Job for Life. European Citizens in the South African Defence Force (Amsterdam, 1988), pp. 16-17.

[62] Resister 42, February/March 1986, p.7.

[63] Resister 43, April/May 1986, p.6.

[64] ibid., p.6.

His case, which attracted considerable attention in the Dutch media, cannot be underestimated:

> [It] provided an impetus for Dutch anti-apartheid activists campaigning on the issue of collaboration with the regime. Despite its claims to be in the front rank of western countries opposed to apartheid the Netherlands [was] slow in taking active steps to discourage its nationals from serving in the apartheid armed forces.[65]

Initially the AABN and COSAWR capitalised on an 1892 Dutch law which prohibited Dutch nationals from serving in the armies of other countries without permission of the Dutch government.[66] However, this approach was limited as the law applied to those who volunteer only. What further troubled the AABN and COSAWR was that Hollanders who served in the SADF thereby fulfilled their obligations to the Dutch military.[67]

In March 1986 the AABN and COSAWR (NL) held a conference entitled 'Dutch Youth Out of the South African Army'. Those in attendance included Dutch Labour MPs, representatives from the VVDM, the Dutch Council of Churches and the ANC. The conference delegates were opposed to the Dutch government's policy of critical dialogue 'through which it tried to act as an intermediary between the regime and the forces of popular resistance'.[68] The centre-right coalition government of Christian Democrats and Liberals (which held office from 1982-89) was a 'no nonsense' government, and indicative of its detached stance toward the South Africa

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65 Resister 43, April/May 1986, p.6.

66 Resister 30, February/March 1980, p.21.

67 Metton and Goodison, op. cit., p.55.

68 Resister 43, April/May 1986, pp.6-7.

government, was 'opposed to a unilateral oil boycott' of South Africa which had been passed by the Second Chamber of the Dutch Parliament.[69]

The conference resolved:

> to increase political pressure on the Dutch government; to prevent Dutch citizens entering the SADF and SAP; to work for a specific law ensuring that the Dutch nationals serving in the SADF or SAP lose either their Dutch nationality or rights associated with that nationality.[70]

COSAWR's high-profile participation warranted it 'unprecedented' attention.[71] Through AABN representation it appeared on Dutch television and gave numerous radio and print interviews. War resisters were 'shuffled around the country by the anti-apartheid movement as direct evidence, here we are'.[72] One participant was Gewald, a Dutch national from Namibia who refused conscription into the South West African Territorial Force (SWATF). Gewald, deemed a 'patriot'[73] by SWAPO, said it was 'very satisfying to be involved in something as structured' as the AABN sponsored campaign. He gave numerous talks showing his call-up papers on television and presenting 'a human face to something that is far away'.[74] Not all Dutch were responsive. From his participation Gewald perceived a contradictory view of Dutch attitudes toward South Africa; 'strange thing about the Dutch – condemn

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69 J. Heldring, Changes in Dutch Society and Their Implications for Netherlands-South African Relations (Cape Town, 1984), pp.10-11.

70 Resister 43, April/May 1986, pp.6-7.

71 COSAWR (NL), Concise Report of Activities August to December 1985 – January 1986, p.1.

72 Confidential Source B, Interview.

73 SWAPO, Information Bulletin (Luanda, January 1986), p.15.

74 Jan Bart Gewald, Interview, 11 April 1993.

South Africa, but at the same time be "chuffed" about their cousin or nephew in the [South African] army'.[75]

The issue of foreign nationals in the SADF was debated in the Dutch, British and European Parliaments. The British, supporting the South African government, made no representation. Thatcher considered the alternative, the ANC, as a 'typical terrorist organisation' and furthermore, according to then Minister of State in the Foreign and Commonwealth Office Lynda Chalker, the 1984 South African Citizen Amendment Law (1984) 'did not affect, and could not have affected, a British citizen's status as such'.[76] The European Parliament called for the end to conscription of European nationals, but as its mandate was advisory it had little weight in South Africa. In December 1988 the UN General Assembly also passed non-binding Resolution 43/50C which urged member states to 'prevent through appropriate measures, their citizens from serving in South Africa's armed forces and other sensitive sectors'.[77] However, in the Netherlands, this issue caused much consternation where it was described as an 'emotionally-loaded question'.[78]

In 1989 the Dutch Labour Party presented an in-depth AABN designed bill to Parliament which contained strict guidelines:

> Punitive measures, including the removal of Dutch citizenship rights, should be taken against those serving in armies 'which are used to support systematic racial discrimination'. The Dutch government

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[75] ibid.

[76] Thatcher, quoted in The Weekly Mail and Guardian 6-12 May 1994. Chalker quoted in "Written Reply to Michael Meadowcroft (Leeds West), No. W166, 30 June 1986", in Metten and Goodison, op. cit., p.62.

[77] Resister 63, August/October 1989, p.19.

[78] The Citizen 26 June 1989.

> should establish a financial and sociological support system in the Netherlands – including the provision of homes, pensions, financial support and free education – for all Dutch citizens refusing military service in the SADF. The Dutch embassy and consulate in South Africa must more actively assist any Dutch citizens refusing military service.[79]

These proposals never became law. The Dutch government remained reluctant to take a firm stand and by the time serious debate started, the reform process in South Africa had commenced.

The campaign also produced a book, published in October 1988, which promoted the issue internationally.[80] Part of the credit for the book went to Fons Geerlings, Secretary of the AABN, and part to COSAWR (UK). COSAWR (NL) was neglected because 'when the book came out, COSAWR in Holland had become a very small organisation; all the research capacity was in England'.[81]

The COSAWR/AABN Relationship

The Dutch nationals' campaign signalled the end of the working relationship between COSAWR (NL) and the AABN. The conflict started around 1988, although the seeds might have been sown earlier. One COSAWR source claims that there was very little

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[79] Pretoria News 27 June 1989.

[80] A Metton and P.Goodison, Fighting for Apartheid: A Job for Life. European Citizens in the South African Defence Force (Amsterdam, 1989).

[81] Gerald Kraak, Interview, 14 October 1993.

friction when he was involved with COSAWR (NL).[82] In 1983 relations with the AABN were described as 'good', the AABN had granted COSAWR (NL) permission to 'use their office space for administrative tasks'.[83] While this seems a limited amount of assistance considering both groups were fighting to end apartheid, Geerlings states that 'for us [AABN] it was an uncommon type of arrangement, we did not want people sharing offices'.[84] This must be understood in the context of the AABN's security concerns. Geerlings recounts that during the late 1980s the AABN was concerned about threats to personal safety allegedly coming from the South African security services.[85]

When Gewald arrived in the Netherlands in 1986, he first went to the AABN offices where he used Olivia Forsyth's name as a reference. He recounts 'It was Olivia Forsyth who trained me in Grahamstown as an ECC member'. The subsequent revelation that she had been a spy 'created suspicion [about COSAWR] on the part of the AABN'.[86] For many the Barend Schuitema episode also compounded suspicion. Anthony Akerman who worked with the AABN in the mid 1970s opines that 'the AABN didn't like South Africans being involved in the show. I think they [AABN] were badly burned by Barend Schuitema. They really didn't know if they could trust South Africans'.[87] However, Conny Braam rebuts the view that Schuitema was a spy, remembering a cordial association with South Africans:

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[82] Confidential Source A, involved with COSAWR (NL) 1979-84.

[83] COSAWR (NL), Report on Activities June 1983 to June 1984, pp.1-2.

[84] Fons Geerlings, telephonic interview with the author, Johannesburg, 11 May 1994.

[85] Fons Geerlings, Telephonic Interview, 11 May 1994.

[86] Jan Bart Gewald, Interview, 11 April 1993.

[87] Anthony Akerman, Interview, 27 December 1994.

> As far as I remember there was for a long time quite a good relationship between COSAWR and the AABN. We were never suspicious of South Africans not more than for example the ANC and IDAF were. We worked with hundreds of South Africans also war resisters.[88]

Perhaps this division is best understood by looking at COSAWR (UK)'s relationship with the British AAM. COSAWR (UK) and the AAM were linked from the beginning. COSAWR (UK) liaised with the AAM on policy matters, conducted research for it, and maintained observer status at its Annual General Meetings. The AAM was staffed in part by exiled or expatriate South Africans, thus offering COSAWR (UK) and the AAM a natural bond. The AABN consisted of almost exclusively Hollanders which, from the point of view of lobbying, was ideal. It was less suitable for good relations with war resisters. The AABN was staffed by salaried Dutch nationals, some of whom, according to Gewald viewed the AABN as a 'job or business, the AABN would knock off at five o'clock, we ... worked until sunrise the next morning ... the struggle was your life. I was horrified that one of these guys was going off to America for his holiday'.[89]

One source provides two reasons for the tension that developed between COSAWR (NL) and the AABN. Firstly, COSAWR (NL) was asked to leave the anti-apartheid movement offices due to:

> the possibility that the anti-apartheid movement offices were being cleaned out to make room for a very covert operation [Operation Vula].[90] Secondly, we

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[88] Conny Braam, Postal Interview, Amsterdam, 2 March 1994.

[89] Jan Bart Gewald, Interview, 11 April 1993.

[90] The aim of Operation Vula was to set up underground ANC structures and allow the then imprisoned Nelson Mandela to communicate directly with Lusaka (see Ronnie Kasrils, Armed and Dangerous: My Undercover Struggle Against Apartheid (Johannesburg, 1993), p.301).

> actually were told once that South Africans were close to the problem, therefore were too emotional about the anti-apartheid struggle.[91]

But the first assertion might not be valid as Operation Vula was planned separate from the AABN. Gavin Evans writes that Conny Braam, who helped organise Operation Vula, 'could not risk drawing in the regular activists from the firmly pro-ANC Dutch AAM' in order to maintain secrecy.[92] The second reason is also questionable because war resisters were an integral part of the Dutch nationals' campaign. And there is no evidence in the research material that suggests COSAWR (NL) members were 'too emotional' about apartheid.

Geerlings, without offering details, speculates that the conflict started over 'financial problems that developed, with money given to COSAWR by the AABN. And there were problems with some resisters, including some, who were mixed-up on a personal level, in the context of being away from home and some were against the ANC'.[93]

According to Gewald, COSAWR (NL) was overshadowed by the AABN which had a 'high profile ... people knew about it ... COSAWR (NL) was small ... when people would think of war resisters ... [they would] think of the AABN'. Since COSAWR (NL) could not find a political home in the Netherlands it had to assert its South African identity. Gewald states 'COSAWR (NL) ... at stages actively sought confrontation with

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91 Confidential Source B, Interview.

92 Gavin Evans, from his review of Conny Braam's Operation Vula-South Africans and Dutch in the Struggle Against Apartheid (Amsterdam, 1992), Weekly Mail 6-12 November 1992.

93 Fons Geerlings, Telephonic Interview, 11 May 1994.

the anti-apartheid movement in a nationalist sense – we're South African, fuck you Dutchmen'.[94]

This state of affairs did not go unnoticed by COSAWR (UK). Gavin Cawthra states the situation was 'viewed with alarm. We tried to sort it out with the AABN to get them [COSAWR NL] to toe the line, to follow a mainstream position'.[95] However, by 1989, as COSAWR (NL) splintered, Gewald relates, that the AABN deemed it a 'security liability'. He says the AABN told him to 'get some control over the rest of his people'. The AABN also was not 'content that COSAWR had a group of people who were charting their own direction ... with relationship to the squatter movement'.[96] By the close of 1989 COSAWR indicated it only 'remained in contact with the AABN' and 'exchange(d) information whenever necessary'.[97]

The Deterioration of Cosawr (NL)

The conflict with the AABN contributed to COSAWR (NL)'s deepening relationship with the squatter movement which gave 'unreserved support to South Africans'.[98] The squatter movement assisted some resisters with accommodation; something the movement was well-equipped to do as The Economist states:

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94 Jan Bart Gewald, Interview, 11 April 1993.

95 Gavin Cawthra, telephonic interview with the author, Johannesburg, 3 August 1994.

96 Jan Bart Gewald, Interview, 11 April 1993.

97 COSAWR (NL), Annual Report for the Period December '88 to December '89, p.3.

98 Jan Bart Gewald, Interview, 11 April 1993.

> More than 10 000 Amsterdammers are squatting in some 5 000 dwellings. In typical Dutch fashion, they are well organised; they have a pirate radio station and walkie talkies to summon up support in case of an eviction, and scores of teach-yourself books and magazines on squatting – how to break in, how to make the place comfy and how to phone-a-crowd if the police turn up.[99]

National squatting days were organised. Squatters were well organised politically; controlling many of the sub-councils of Amsterdam and other cities, while in some places they set up alternative government structures to those of the municipal authorities. Squatters consisted of many groups with different agendas, such as exposing business speculation or promoting the rights of minorities.[100]

The squat movement offered COSAWR (NL) a comradeship and a social atmosphere not forthcoming from other Dutch organisations. This evoked a warm memory for one COSAWR (NL) member:

> Throughout my involvement in the Netherlands [1985-1990] I found the squat movement a friendly place ... they had a great network, they put on incredible festivals, [and they provided] cheap eating houses and bars.

He explains that the squat movement, like COSAWR (NL), was estranged from the broader anti-apartheid movements:

> It was finding itself undermined by the establishment anti-apartheid groups' because it was still implementing the Boycott Shell campaign while the mainstream groups were moving away from it. This obstruction allowed us [COSAWR (NL)] to identify with it.[101]

Between 1985 and 1988 a squatter-based, splinter anti-apartheid group called RaRa – Revolutionary Anti-Racism Action – caused R150 million worth of damage in attacks

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[99] From The Economist, "Survey – Holland", 30 January 1982.

[100] W. Shetter, The Netherlands in Perspective: The Organisations of Society and Environment, (Leiden, 1987), pp.84 and 242.

[101] Confidential Source B, Interview.

on Shell petrol stations and Makro stores.[102] Roskam says RaRa was 'a highly intelligent, but small group'.[103] No South Africans were involved with it.[104] The Dutch police were required to set up a special unit to apprehend RaRa activists after regular investigations proved fruitless. Those arrested were drawn from outside 'traditional' anti-apartheid circles.[105]

Another organisation which catered to the needs of war resisters was the South African Community Cultural Centre (SACCC). It was founded in 1987 by non-COSAWR exiles (both black and white) but subsequently some COSAWR (NL) members were involved with it. The SACCC was not a political movement. As its name suggests, it was a social, cultural and bridge-building structure, designed to address the estrangement between South Africans and Hollanders. Specifically the SACCC aimed to 'cultivate a spirit of equality and self-confidence amongst South Africans in the Netherlands' and 'to foster a spirit of unity and constructive communication among the South Africans and the Dutch'.[106] It ran cultural and music events, offering a forum for all South African exiles to communicate with one another.

The SACCC apparently could not break away from the shadow of the AABN. Confidential source B explained that South Africans organised an exhibition around

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[102] From Argus 12 April 1988. These actions were condemned by the broader anti-apartheid movement. Makro was a Dutch based company which withdrew from South Africa because Dutch insurance companies would not offer further fire coverage.

[103] Dr. Karel Roskam, Interview, 12 April 1994.

[104] Fons Geerlings, Telephonic Interview, 11 May 1994.

[105] Sunday Times 17 April 1988.

[106] SACCC, Help Stop Apartheid (Amsterdam, undated pamphlet).

environmental issues in South Africa. A few weeks later the AABN did not invite South Africans when it organised a similar display. This helped instill a rivalry between South Africans and the AABN with South Africans on the losing end. He further claims:

> in fact it almost seemed to be competitive at times in terms of taking on issues. South Africans weren't that particularly well organised. Culture was the one area where we could organise and present a face. It was not an area the anti-apartheid movements could quickly take away from us, thereby once again leaving us powerless.

He believes that the SACCC provided an alternative to COSAWR (NL)'s inertia:

> The SACCC started coming up at the time COSAWR (NL) was going down ... there were members from COSAWR (NL) who worked within the SACCC and vice-versa ... they didn't, if I recall correctly, run any campaigns together at one time.[107]

However, Gewald claims the SACCC developed its own cliquish culture:

> The SACCC was a very "in" crowd. A lot of South Africans got happy ... started a new life and settled in. They accepted some of the norms of the new society. The SACCC catered for the South Africans who were so critical of everything ... they could have their own jorl and vibe.[108]

Geerlings says the SACCC was 'pretentious – they claimed to represent all South Africans and to be more important than the ANC office'. However, he does acknowledge that the SACCC brought together many exiles.[109] It seems then that the SACCC too experienced tension with the AABN. The SACCC disbanded soon after De Klerk's 2 February 1990 speech.

In the month's before De Klerk's speech COSAWR (NL) reported a decline in refugee applications.[110] Firstly this was due to the 'growing war resistance movement in

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[107] Confidential Source, B, Interview.

[108] Jan Bart Gewald, Interview, 11 April 1993.

[109] Fons Geerlings, Telephonic Interview, 11 May 1994.

[110] COSAWR (NL), Annual Report for the Period December 1988 to December 1989, pp.24-25.

South Africa ... [which] gave resisters there room to work'. Secondly, 'the Dutch government's hard line on refugees in general'[111] under the guise of a common European refugee policy for 1992.[112] Thirdly, the Dutch government assumed P.W. Botha's departure from office in August 1989 would soften the South African government's position toward conscription. Dutch officials were thus more likely to question the necessity of granting South Africans asylum.[113]

Despite the tempering of the asylum issue, and its own internal difficulties COSAWR (NL) attempted to revive itself. It published a flyer which described COSAWR (NL) 'as helping new and more established SA war resisters here in whatever way possible, although we do try and stress the self-help ethic'.[114] By stressing its self-help ethos COSAWR (NL) acknowledged that it did not have sufficient support services to offer.

In 1989, within the milieu of the Carelse episode[115] discord with the AABN, the formation of the SACCC and the gravitation toward the squat movement, COSAWR (NL) split into various factions. COSAWR (NL)'s working committee declined to three members. Speaking engagements were cancelled due to the shortage of suitable

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[111] 'Active political involvement in SA' was the new criterion for asylum.

[112] COSAWR (NL), Newsletter Issue 1, June 1989, p.1.

[113] Jan Bart Gewald, Interview, 11 April 1993.

[114] COSAWR (NL), Newsletter Issue 1, June 1989, p.2.

[115] See Chapter VII.

speakers.[116] It was clear that COSAWR (NL) was in a state of collapse. As Gewald remembers 'toward the end COSAWR (NL) was just a post box'.[117]

The Coming Home Process

De Klerk's speech on 2 February 1990 and Mandela's release two weeks later reminded COSAWR (NL) members of their obscure position in Dutch society. Dutch media interviews focused on Conny Braam and the Mayor of Amsterdam, unlike the case in Britain where COSAWR (UK) members were questioned.[118] COSAWR (UK) organised the coming home process and instructed COSAWR (NL) about the procedures. But by 1990 there was no fixed structure in the Netherlands with which to assist in facilitating a joint return. Only one resister from the Netherlands returned to South Africa with the main group on 30 November 1990.[119]

Despite its erratic history COSAWR (NL) had its accomplishments. COSAWR (NL) offered the Dutch an awareness of the nuances of apartheid; through media appearances and public talks it raised the issue of South Africa's militarisation. It assisted resisters, although more so in an advisory position and not in as structured a manner as COSAWR (UK) had. COSAWR (NL)'s lack of political direction is reflected in the make-up of its resisters. Some had a non-university background,

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[116] COSAWR (NL), Annual Report for the Period December '88 to December '89, p.1.

[117] Jan Bart Gewald, Interview, 11 April 1993.

[118] See the Conclusion.

[119] See the Conclusion.

which meant COSAWR (NL) lacked seasoned political activists which led to a lack of political suavity by some of its key personnel. This precluded the development of as firm a committee as that which guided COSAWR (UK). Unfortunately COSAWR (NL) was unable or unprepared to funnel those not amenable to its policies to other solidarity structures; either these structures were not as well established as those found in the UK; or the Netherlands did not offer the variety found in the UK, hence the drift by resisters to cultural activities. Only the formation of the SACCC, not in itself a solidarity organisation, offered a stable structure for some resisters. COSAWR (NL) did not have a steady publication like COSAWR (UK)'s Resister,[120] which helped give the members of that organisation a monthly focus which kept them occupied and helped keep the organisation together.

Certain members of the AABN, unlike the British AAM, were involved in covert operations such as Operation Vula, so it necessitated a guarded environment. This sensitive political atmosphere in the Netherlands, compounded by distinct cultural differences between the Dutch and South Africans did not allow for a unaffected rapprochement between the two organisations. The ANC, loosely established in the Netherlands, could not offer resisters a tangible link for entry into itself, the AAM or other solidarity organisations. COSAWR (NL) was arguably the movement's least successful component. In the next chapter I examine the movement's most fruitful aspect; the publication of COSAWR (UK)'s Resister magazine.

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[120] See Chapter 6.

Chapter VI

RESISTER

Rationale for Resister

When COSAWR was formed in 1978 war resistance was a novel issue. Resister aimed:

> [firstly] to raise international support about the militarisation of the apartheid regime, [secondly] to gain worldwide support for the ... war resistance movement and [thirdly] to spread COSAWR's ideas in South Africa.[1]

Former conscript and ECC/COSG activist, Michael Graaf, claims that Resister had more than just a promotional/informational function – it helped COSAWR members on a psychological level in two ways:

> firstly, the producers' need to rationalise and make sense of the grief of separation and the longing for contact; and secondly, their strong sense of injustice and consequent urge to validate and reclaim from European organisations such as anti-apartheid movements, their active commitment to the South African struggle – the very cause of their present estrangement.[2]

The first goal was achieved, as Resister certainly permitted COSAWR to justify its existence and allowed war resisters at least a tenuous connection with South Africa. There is no evidence to support the view that COSAWR, (certainly the UK branch), needed to 'validate or reclaim' anything from the anti-apartheid movements. Through Resister COSAWR contributed to research for anti-apartheid initiatives such as the

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[1] Resister 67, Fourth Quarter 1990, p.2.

[2] M. Graaf (ed), Hawks and Doves – The Pro- and Anti- Conscription Press in South Africa (Durban, 1988), p.45.

Campaign to Isolate South Africa Militarily. Resister effectively strengthened COSAWR's bonds with the international anti-apartheid movement.

Internally, Resister countered legal restrictions within South Africa. The 1974 Defence Act had made it an offence to encourage resistance to military call-ups. The Act's provisions meant, for example, that South African newspapers could not report the 1975 South African invasion of Angola. It was illegal to quote members of the liberation groups, and to report on police and government activity against them.[3]

Resister's Sources

Resister's sources included mainstream South African and western media reports as well as information 'unavailable to both anti-conscription organisations and the press within South Africa'.[4] Other contacts consisted of; 'debriefings of deserters, and information provided by the liberation movement from its own sources, plus data gleaned from conscripts who made contact with COSAWR while visiting Britain or other counties before returning for further SADF service'.[5]

Despite these myriad sources Resister had limitations. In the beginning its reliance on the stifled South African press 'frustrated' its news-gathering.[6] Its other main

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[3] J. Rauch, introduction to Gavin Cawthra et al., War and Resistance: Southern African Reports: the Struggle for Southern Africa as Documented by Resister Magazine (London, 1994), p.15.

[4] COSAWR (UK), Project Description – Activities 1986-1987, p.7.

[5] Rauch, op. cit., pp.16.

[6] Resister 5, November/December 1979, p.11.

source, MILCOM, was a fledgling organisation, and even Church statements were monitored by the government. Liberation movement information was subject to distortion or hearsay and was not always verifiable. In reference to a planned Resister article on the Nkomati Accord, one COSAWR member stresses this point: 'We are by no means clear on a whole lot of issues ... I think we should wait and review developments when some trends, rather than left-wing gossip, have begun to materialise'.[7]

Development of Resister

Between 1979-1990 sixty-seven editions, averaging twenty-four pages, were published. Resister was produced by a COSAWR sub-committee. During its first five years Bill Anderson did most of the research, while Gavin Cawthra edited. After 1985, when Anderson and Cawthra curtailed their COSAWR activities, others assumed their responsibilities.

The first issue printed in March 1979, was a twelve-page typewritten newsletter with a circulation of 200. It was nearly lost – the two resisters who picked it up from the printers left it behind at a pub in Brixton after a few celebratory pints![8] But despite this inauspicious beginning Resister grew steadily. By 1982 Resister had a circulation of 3 000 and was deemed a 'crucial aspect' of COSAWR's work.[9] The increased

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[7] Letter dated 16 May 1984 from Gerald to Steve, Ian and Johnny. No surnames are listed. Taken from the COSAWR files.

[8] Resister 67, Fourth Quarter 1990, p.2.

[9] COSAWR, Annual Report of Activities September 1981 to September 1982, p.9.

distribution was partly generated by a more professional image of a typeset publication. More importantly the decision to reference Resister increased its importance as a source text, widening its international acceptance.[10]

Resister was primarily subsidised by COSAWR's budget, plus a small amount coming from subscriptions. As with many alternative organisations, funding, worker expertise and input was inconsistent. Cawthra remarked on Resister's trial and error approach:

> Resister was run on a shoe string: the early issues were typewritten and stuck down with Cow Gum in my back room. We learned as we went along. There was a constant stream of new war resisters arriving, some of whom had writing, research, graphic or other skills, so we had a pool of people to draw on, although often people would only contribute to one or two issues.[11]

Distribution of Resister

Resister targeted three main audiences; 'Western anti-apartheid, anti-militarist and peace groups, members of the liberation movement (especially those in training camps in Angola and Tanzania) and potential resisters inside the country'.[12] COSAWR sent each group about 1 000 copies. Distribution in Europe was relatively uncomplicated because of the geographical proximity. Bookshops distributed Resister or COSAWR mailed it to paying subscribers, anti-apartheid groups and non-paying sympathetic parties. The ANC also distributed it in their camps and diplomatic posts.

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[10] COSAWR, Annual Report of Activities July 1984-July 1985, p.11.

[11] Gavin Cawthra, Postal Interview, London, 6 February 1994.

[12] Rauch, in Cawthra, op. cit., p.21.

COSAWR claimed that it 'developed extensive internal mailing lists',[13] inside South Africa but dissemination there was arbitrary. Resister was often mailed with a false or no return address to sympathetic people and organisations. Academics, journalists and politicians expert in military affairs, regardless of their political affiliation, received it too. Janine Rauch comments on the incompleteness of the mailing list:

> It was about people's personal connections. It was not like, lets send it to every army base, every church, every university. It would arrive at UCT addressed to people or organisations often with out of date addresses. There was not any systematic distribution in my experience.[14]

Occasionally, COSAWR acquired SADF postal records. In 1980 Brigadier Johann Coetzee, then Chief of the Security Police, acknowledged that COSAWR had obtained a partial list of 'youths about to qualify for training'.[15] One such method of procuring lists was through infiltration. Rockland Williams, who worked for the ANC underground while serving in the SADF, remarks on his role:

> I used to send out ... a lot of SADF personnel lists and MK intelligence used those address lists on postal blitzes ... with publications like Resister. I think it was erratic. COSAWR would get lists of youths in a particular area.[16]

The ANC underground distributed Resister inconsistently. Its clandestine parcels were not picked up for weeks or months at a time; periodically underground members were arrested or government agents compromised distribution. For example, the New Nation reports that Olivia Forsyth 'always had lots of banned literature. Getting hold

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[13] ibid., p.22.

[14] Janine Rauch, Interview, 13 October 1993.

[15] Rand Daily Mail 13 October 1980.

[16] Rockland Williams, interviewed by the author, Johannesburg, 18 October 1993. In 1986 he was arrested and spent one year in jail for allegedly passing information to the ANC.

of ANC, SACP and Congress of SA War Resisters [sic] stuff was never a problem' for Forsyth.[17]

Analysis of Resister

Resister's regular features included highlighting COSAWR and AAM activities. Readers were kept informed about demonstrations, political seminars, and the latest information on such topics as South Africa's arms production and SADF casualties. Resister's back cover normally included an explanation of COSAWR objectives plus an updated synopsis of the asylum procedure.

It is evident that Resister changed a great deal over the eleven years it existed. For the first three years Resister trumpeted the propaganda of the liberation struggle while simultaneously establishing its solidarity with the ANC. During the years between 1983 and 1987 it changed to a more detailed journal used for referencing. From 1988 to 1990 it focused more specifically on the domestic South African war resistance scene.

Section I 1979-1982 Resister as a Propaganda Journal

Resister's first foray into publicising war resistance outside South Africa consisted of articles about Rhodesian war resisters. Resister claimed that a group of dissident

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[17] New Nation 16 February 1989.

Rhodesian conscripts called the Zimbabwe Democrats published literature that was read by 60% of the Rhodesian troops.[18] However, due to Zimbabwe's independence soon after the first publication of Resister and the virtual non-existence of the Rhodesian war resistance movement, these items created little coverage. Today these accounts are dismissed as 'largely just ZAPU propaganda'.[19]

Cawthra (et al.) claim that Resister was the first journal to publicise South Africa's CO issue internationally. Resister, while acknowledging the validity of religious reasons for objection, maintained that conscripts had both a moral and political obligation to oppose conscription. In retrospect Cawthra (et al.) now acknowledge that some resisters and COs exhibited selfish reasons or were not inclined to life in the army.[20] But such perspectives could not have been published in the context of the propaganda politics of the struggle.

Resister challenged the popular notion that Namibia was

> "the border" where communism had to be met head on. The journal argued that South Africans had no right to be in Namibia, no purpose was served by fighting there, and, far from being protected from communism the population was suffering at the hands of the SADF and wanted the freedom to choose their future ... Resister did this in part by reflecting the views of SWAPO, which spoke for the majority of Namibians.[21]

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[18] Resister 3, July 1979, p.11.

[19] Kevin Laue, Postal Interview, Harare, 5 April 1994.

[20] Cawthra et al., op. cit., p.27.

[21] ibid., pp.29-30.

Cawthra states that Resister used SWAPO's 'upbeat rhetorical style' to promote claims of SWAPO victory.[22] Resister used such headings as 'The Enemy Has Lost Control'[23] even though few military analysts would have agreed. Kraak remembers the importance of propaganda in COSAWR strategy and the probability of believing one's own propaganda:

> I think we saw ourselves as propaganda, choosing sides, we made the same claim as the ANC ... for the internal constituency we wanted to get across the idea that the SADF was not invincible, that SWAPO was being successful. I'm sure we believed they were being successful ... it would be a matter of time.[24]

Resister promoted non-racialism by proclaiming COSAWR's close relationship with the ANC and its support for the armed struggle. It emphasised that blacks, politicised by the Soweto uprising, had joined MK and that the ANC's embarkation on its armed struggle was a last resort. However Resister's white internal readership by and large did not approve of, or at best was ambivalent toward the armed struggle.

Resister was published in the context of South Africa in a state of war. In a 1979 cover story Resister compared executed MK cadre Solomon Mahlangu, who was allegedly 'brutally tortured' by the security police, to captured SADF soldier Johan van der Mescht who, it claimed, was accorded full Prisoner of War (POW) status by SWAPO under the Geneva Convention. It displayed white solidarity with the overwhelming black MK by calling on the South African government to adhere to the Geneva Convention.

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[22] ibid., p.30.

[23] Resister 6, January/February 1980 (interview with the late SWAPO Defence Secretary Peter Nanyemba), pp.14-15.

[24] Gerald Kraak, interviewed by the author, Johannesburg, 14 October 1993.

While Resister promoted the liberation movement's claims it also saw fit to highlight the weaknesses of the SADF. Resister articulated conscripts' experiences such as officer brutality, low wages, and poor food in the framework that '[t]he SADF reflected the authoritarian, innately violent character of all military forces, overlaid by the social prejudices engendered by apartheid'.[25] In a candid manner Resister emphasised the brutality of the SADF, the beatings in detention barracks and how an individual with a conscience had to deal with the daily hostility of the SADF hierarchy. These narratives, written by former conscripts and often told in military jargon graphically described serviceman's disenchantment with the SADF. This was evidenced by entitling deserter's stories as 'I Don't Want to Fight for Apartheid' or 'How Can I be Part of This Machine'.[26]

Coupled with these explicit, first person accounts, were smears on the character and attitude of the military, often crudely illustrated which might have alienated the broad-minded domestic reader. For example, one Resister cover portrays a razor toothed, devil tongued, SADF soldier, standing on a mound of skulls machine gun blazing the word 'Kill'.[27] There is reference to 'thick-skinned generals in Pretoria' and a crude drawing of a SADF officer eating soldiers and defecating them.[28] Further illustrations portrayed SADF soldiers as Nazis, and stories compared the Veldskool and the Voortrekker youth movement to the Hitler Youth.[29]

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[25] Cawthra et al., op. cit., p.160.

[26] See Resister 2, May 1979, pp.8-10 and Resister 5, November/December 1979, pp.12-16.

[27] Resister 3, July 1979.

[28] Resister 7, February/March 1980, p.7, and Resister 18, February/March 1982, p.4.

[29] Resister 18, February/March 1982, p.2.

Section II 1983-1987 Resister as Resource/Information

In the mid-1980s, Resister changed from 'propaganda' to a more analytical and referenced style. Resister, according to Graaf, used 'expository journalism to reveal process in contrast to the itemised reportage of the event-orientated daily press'.[30] This investigative form was first highlighted in 1983 story on South Africa's chemical weapons research. A Permanent Force informant alleged that the SADF was extensively using drugs in interrogations in Namibia, and Armscor was developing advanced nerve gas artillery shells and biological weapons to which blacks would be more susceptible than whites. From its own investigation, COSAWR had discovered that racially based scientific research was carried out during the Vietnam War, and it cited an SADF publication announcing that it too was engaged in this type of planning for biological warfare.[31]

Another disclosure entitled 'Disorder in the Ranks: The Abuse of Psychiatry in the SADF' was published in 1986. It included interviews with former national servicemen resident in psychiatric wards between 1971 and 1985. The names of allegedly unethical psychiatrists and the location of specific wards and hospitals were revealed. The article claimed that controversial methods including aversion therapy, which encompassed the use of electric shocks, were used 'to eliminate patterns of behaviour (such as homosexuality) which did not conform to SADF discipline and the apartheid

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[30] Graaf, op. cit., p.43.

[31] Resister 23, December/January 1983, pp.9-15.

war effort'.[32] It also claimed conscripts were sent to these wards for refusing to carry arms or serve in an operational area.[33]

Section III 1988-1990 Resister's Focus on the Internal Scene

Starting in the late 1980s Resister adopted the more moderate views of the ECC and focused on the CO campaigns of Bruce, Bester and Toms which dovetailed with stories on soldiers' movements in other countries including Israel, Portugal, and Greece. Resister viewed the intensification of war in Angola as a tool to implement a new strategy:

> [I]f the reality of the Angolan war could be brought home to white South Africans, a political backlash against the shedding of blood in a 'foreign war' would cripple the SADF, just as the USA's campaign in Vietnam had been undermined by popular opinion at home. In a series of supplements distributed clandestinely in South Africa, Resister agitated against the war.[34]

The first circular appeared at the end of 1987, coinciding with COSAWR ceasing to call for desertion. Perhaps in order to present a more moderate face Resister shied away from using exclusively liberation sources, preferring to summarise diverse mainstream media sources.[35] The pamphlets used two primary arguments. Firstly, South Africans had a right to know the extent of the debacle in Angola given that the army was fighting a war it could not win. Secondly, by placing Angola in the international

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[32] Resister 47, December 1986/January 1987, p.11.

[33] ibid., p.11.

[34] Cawthra et al., op. cit., pp.64-65.

[35] Examples include the Citizen, the Star, the Independent and the Daily Telegraph.

context, Resister claimed that the SADF's continued involvement in Angola and Namibia was increasing pressure for sanctions and adding to South Africa's isolation.[36]

Resister printed reports contradicting South African government statements that SADF troops had withdrawn from Angola. Resister claimed that the SADF had suffered defeat at the hands of the Cubans and Angolans at Cuito Cuanavale in Angola during 1987-1988. Resister maintained the South African government was thereby forced to sue for peace and to participate in talks, which allowed its trapped troops to withdraw.[37] Former US Assistant Secretary of State, Chester Crocker, disputed the view that the heavy fighting was a Cuban/Angolan victory, while the former South African Defence Minister, Magnus Malan, claimed that South Africa won the battle 'hands down'.[38] The truth of these claims may not be known until Cuba, Angola, and South Africa normalise relations.

Resister's new strategy was ineffectual. The ECC was banned in August 1988, so any assistance and informational feedback was negligible. Activists did not take the initiative to distribute a pamphlet from a banned journal that in itself was not readily circulated. Furthermore Kraak remembers COSAWR never received a response to

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[36] Resister 53, December 1987 – January 1988.

[37] This was taken from a pamphlet entitled Angola: What Really Happened?, from Resister 58, October/November 1988.

[38] See C.Crocker, High Noon in Southern Africa: Making Peace in a Rough Neighbourhood (London, 1992), pp.270-1, and M. Malan, quoted in the Argus 11 February 1993.

these pamphlets; 'I never heard an assessment of how those went down, or whether they were copied and distributed.[39]

Resister's Impact Internationally

Resister's international audience assisted COSAWR in two ways. Not only did it provide a source of funding for COSAWR, it helped to spawn COSAWR's tours to other countries.[40] Anderson explains the importance of the funding aspect:

> Those that I always heard the most positive feedback from were those in the centre of the solidarity movement, hard-liners in the solidarity movement saw it as ... soft stuff ... It had a good reputation amongst funders, the kind of people who were sympathetic but were not the heavy politicos ... One of the biggest supporters of Resister was Ethel de Kuyser [of British Defence and Aid Fund]. She use to say it was the only journal written in a language that one could understand. In other countries other than Britain it was seen as a useful source of information by the solidarity groups. In Britain ... where the anti-apartheid movement had access to all of IDAF's research, it was less the case.[41]

Resister's 50th issue drew messages of support from various sources such as the American Committee on Africa which praised Resister's 'courageous voice'. War Resister's International called it an 'invaluable source of information'. While the South African and Namibian War Resisters Support Group (West Germany) called Resister 'necessary and useful' in telling the world about apartheid.[42]

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39 Gerald Kraak, Interview, 14 October 1993.

40 Countries visited included Finland, France, Sweden, and the USA.

41 Bill Anderson, interviewed by the author, Johannesburg, 10 October 1993.

42 Resister 50, June/July 1987, p.24.

Matthew Temple, who toured Finland and France in 1988 states, 'it is impossible to assess the impact' of the tours. It is unrealistic to think a three-week tour would dramatically sway public opinion. However, the tours did serve to promote COSAWR's message, which was:

> not pacifism ... [but] war resistance as it happens in South Africa. We spread the word wherever we found the opportunity. The goal was to publicise the fact that there were white people, part of the anti-apartheid struggle, through the fact that they were refusing to serve in an army that was involved in a civil war -- [that was] the bottom line.[43]

Temple, and Elle-Kari Hojeberg of Swedish Radio Broadcasting agree on the interest sparked by Resister. Temple indicates that Resister provided the broad anti-apartheid movement with 'an interesting angle on the struggle ... these are people [COSAWR] who have got information about the actual military conflict'.[44] Hojeberg said she produced two stories on COSAWR. She used Resister as source material and regarded COSAWR as an example of 'white resistance' but she points out it was 'not a major news story ever, it was one piece in a big picture'.[45]

The Stockholm-based South African writer Madi Gray used Resister for her research on the South African military and confirms that the Swedish Peace and Justice Committee utilised it as a research tool.[46] She accompanied COSAWR member Roger Field as his guide and translator on his 1989 tour of Sweden that was sponsored by the pro-ANC Isolate South Africa Komite (ISAK). As in the Netherlands,

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[43] Matthew Temple, interviewed by the author, Johannesburg, 13 October 1993.

[44] ibid.

[45] Elle-Kari Hojeberg, interviewed by the author, Cape Town, 19 April 1994.

[46] Madi Gray, interviewed by the author, Cape Town, 20 April 1994.

not speaking the native tongue might have diluted the message. Field spoke at many venues including day care centres, high schools, churches and pacifist groups.

Resister in the Camps

Resister had two primary goals in the camps. Firstly, it aimed to promote non-racialism 'by providing tangible evidence to the mostly black members of MK of the involvement of young whites in the anti-apartheid struggle'.[47] Its second goal was to provide accessible information:

> It was distributed as part of the packages ... distribution was sometimes good, sometimes bad ... It was also read for the ... information it gave on what the SADF was doing. It was quite an informative journal. There was no concerted attempt to plant Resister ... [it was not used as] a compulsory part of political education it was used more as a reference. Sechaba was the journal of the ANC, it was viewed as such ... It [Resister] was never on the same level as Sechaba.[48]

Despite Resister's secondary status, Anderson noticed how important its circulation was in the camps:

> There always had been a dearth of information about the military. It was the major source of information about how people learned about the SADF. There was a very good awareness in the camps of the war resistance issue ... There was more of a sympathy than we [war resisters] deserved ... I can remember going to Angola in 1980 and being very warmly received, having meetings with various camp commissars, discussing our work.[49]

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47 Rauch, op. cit., p.22.

48 Rockland Williams, interviewed by the author, Johannesburg, 18 October 1993.

49 Bill Anderson, Interview, 10 October 1993.

Robertson also detected an excessive empathy amongst black camp cadres who contemplated what prompted whites to 'give up their privileged positions in society'. Robertson says black MK soldiers conferred on him 'an admiration, that to some extent for me, was disproportionate to one's participation in the struggle'.[50]

Resister's Impact within South Africa

Resister's internal readership was '... namely the converted (progressive) intellectuals and particularly the conscientised recipients of army call-up papers.'[51] Resister's audience can be considered to have grown smaller when its 'more analytical style clashed with an internal war resistance movement steeped in youth culture'.[52] This disparity happened:

> when conscripts were deployed in black townships in the mid-1980s. It involved alternative and mainstream artists and performers. And it employed forms of expression new to the campaign including art, cabaret, rock music and prose fiction.
>
> While this work commented on apartheid and militarisation, it was essentially about the feelings and experiences of young whites of their struggle to come to terms with life in a racially-divided society, increasingly repressive and revolutionary. It reflected their anger, guilt and alienation.[53]

Despite Resister's difference from the ECC's convictions, Cawthra concludes that Resister was essential to that organisation's development:

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[50] Ian Robertson, interviewed by the author, Johannesburg, 18 October, 1993.

[51] Graaf, op. cit., p.45.

[52] Rauch, op. cit., p.22.

[53] Catholic Institute for International Relations (CIIR), Out of Step: War Resistance Inside South Africa (London, 1989), p.98.

> Until 1984, when the ECC was formed, COSAWR was the only organised formation of war resisters. Inside the country the realities of repression meant that resistance to conscription and to militarisation consisted of isolated, often individual acts: the public stands and subsequent imprisonment of individual resisters, the campaigns of support for them, the debates within the churches over the morality of service and the critiques developed by the student movement.
>
> In this period Resister drew together the different strands, gave them the semblance of a coherent position and brought war resistance to international attention through campaigns and representations to the United Nations and international anti-apartheid groups. In doing so COSAWR and Resister helped prepare the ground for an internal war resistance movement.[54]

These are contentious points. Peter Moll and Mandy Taylor allow Resister minimal influence on the development of war resistance. As Moll stated earlier he derived a supportive influence from COSAWR and:

> Regarding Resister I received only a few copies of this before my imprisonment ... It did not influence my thinking because by 1980 I was already at the point of agreeing with most of the things it said. I also had access to most of the information it said ... Resister may have had more of an influence on other participants in the internal war resistance movement, but I'm afraid its difficult to judge because the materials had to be distributed discreetly.[55]

Taylor does not remember hearing about COSAWR or Resister while involved with COSG. Only through the ECC did she became aware of COSAWR. However, Taylor's comments indicate that Resister had little leverage on the formation of the ECC:

> The main forerunners of the ECC were objectors who went to jail ... [and] the work of various church groups ... [and] NUSAS ... those early COs brought together people of different political positions. You then started saying how do we take part in this issue, and it was more of those discussions, how do we strategise around the issue of conscientious objection that led to ECC. I'm speaking as someone involved in the country, so I didn't know what their [COSAWR] influence was.[56]

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[54] Rauch, in Cawthra et al., op. cit., pp.17.

[55] Peter Moll, Postal Interview, Illinois USA, 15 March 1994.

[56] Mandy Taylor, interviewed by the author, Cape Town, 17 February 1994.

These observations suggest serious implications for Resister's impact; if prominent COs and activists at grass roots level minimize it how would non-activists even know of it? As mentioned earlier only with the ECC's formation was Resister more widely circulated, yet its content remained controversial. Nathan comments that the ECC used Resister for research[57] so its more analytical articles had purpose.

Furthermore, coupled with Resister's restricted distribution, it was not the priority publication within the ANC underground. According to Indres Naidoo[58] Sechaba, Sabenza and the African Communist were given preference, though underground members always requested Resister.[59] Resister's secondary status was most likely due to its narrow client base; white, English-speaking student activists.

However, Resister was used by at least one mainstream political party. Western Cape Senator James Selfe[60] said:

> I received Resister because I knew Roger Field at school. I received most editions. Resister influenced the way we [PFP] looked at conscription. But I would not describe it as authoritative as opposed to an academic article. But it was as representative a sample as one could get in those days of the other side's thinking. It was accepted in the manner of being one-half propaganda.[61]

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[57] Laurie Nathan, telephonic interview with the author, Cape Town, 9 May 1994.

[58] SACP member Naidoo assisted with the ANC's covert operations.

[59] Indres Naidoo, interviewed by the author, Johannesburg, 14 October 1993.

[60] Selfe was a former Senior Research Assistant with the PFP specialising in Defence and Security matters.

[61] James Selfe, telephonic interview with the author, Cape Town, 7 June 1994.

Resister as an Authoritative Source

Cawthra claims that Resister had a 'marked impact' on the western anti-apartheid movement where it was regarded as an unrivalled source on South African militarisation.[62] A problem was that it had a limited reference base; Resister was primarily used by left-wing publications[63] and left-wing academics such as Rob Davies and Dan O'Meara.[64] O'Meara says it was part of his 'enormous data base' at Eduardo Mondlane University in Maputo but that he 'didn't read it consistently' because in part, it did not address 'the issues I was working on'. He stopped reading it after he left Mozambique but noted that it was circulated in North American anti-apartheid circles.[65]

Military establishments such as the Pentagon and right-wing magazines like Soldier of Fortune subscribed to Resister. The Pentagon most likely desired access to the liberation movements' perspective because it keeps a data base on all military related publications. Soldier of Fortune probably subscribed on account of Resister's articles concerning mercenaries in the SADF, including reference to Soldier of Fortune advertisement for them. Or it may wanted Resister's sources of information.[66]

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[62] Rauch, in Cawthra et al., op. cit., p.22.

[63] Examples include Anti-Apartheid News, the Guardian, Windhoek Observer, Pacifist, Asia and Africa Today, Human Rights Reporter, and the Southern African Literature Society.

[64] R.Davies and D. O' Meara, "Total Strategy in Southern Africa: An Analysis of South African Regional Policy since 1978", Journal of Southern African Studies Vol.11, No.2, April 1985.

[65] Dan O' Meara, interviewed by the author, Cape Town, 5 January 1994.

[66] Queries to the Pentagon and Soldier of Fortune went unanswered.

COSAWR reported that results from Resister were 'not always tangible'.[67] It was not always possible to get feedback from its clandestine sources inside South Africa. Moreover, as South Africa has been a heavily researched country, so Resister was one of a myriad of sources promoting an agenda. But Anderson comments that the lack of results was a shortcoming of COSAWR:

> COSAWR was never very good at selling itself in the media. In the latter years there was more of an attempt to do that ... My own opinion, in terms of academics, is that it was not taken seriously at the time[1979-85] ... I was sort of reading everything in terms of the literature on the security forces ... and I was always surprised that they were not using Resister ... I do not think it was seen to be an authoritative academic source.
>
> [Anderson's own article on Biological and Chemical Weapons] ... was not taken as a serious allegation. Resister was not viewed as a place of investigative journalism ... We were responsible for a number of fairly big press stories but we could never use Resister as a breaking point for those stories. For example ... at the time of the Zimbabwe elections the ... 81 Armoured Brigade was mobilised – that went straight to the Guardian. [Published on 1 March 1980][68]

One COSAWR committee member stated that the constrictions of Resister meant that:

> It was simply not feasible for us to aim for a mass readership. The publication was aimed at people who had already been converted to the cause and who were receptive to our arguments about strategy. We know that the magazine was read, sometimes sporadically, by activists, in the student movement and in the churches – and there is some evidence that it reached a wider audience. Some serving national servicemen, for example, claimed to have read it. We made our mark because we always received responses to our more controversial interventions.[69]

'Some serving national servicemen' means just a few. Brigadier WP Sass (Ret.) believes that Resister had a virtually negligible impact within the SADF:

> The journal Resister did not achieve a dramatic effect among the thousands of conscripts. This was because (a) Its circulation was very restricted. (b) It did

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67 COSAWR, Annual Report of Activities July 1985 to July 1986, p.11.

68 Bill Anderson, Interview, 10 October 1993.

69 Rauch, op. cit., p.30.

> not publish in Afrikaans and (c) It featured mostly international issues ... which few South Africans could associate with or even knew about.[70]

Sass' pointing to global affairs illustrates the SADF perceived Resister as addressing the overseas audience; hence Resister was not deemed an immediate threat to the military.

Overall, Resister's effect is varied. Resister achieved its goal of publicising the South African war resistance movement but mostly within the context of the international left community. In the camps it increased awareness of South Africa's militarisation and promoted non-racialism in the struggle. However, Resister had less influence inside South Africa. The few copies sent in made it impossible to reach a wide audience, and as it changed its style and content it did not acquire a regular audience.

The author agrees with the following selections from Philip Dexter's and Christopher Merrett's review of War and Resistance by Cawthra et al.[71] Dexter describes the personal accounts of war resisters as 'particularly uplifting, testifying to the capacity of people to choose the morally correct path' and Merrett states that the 'strength' of the book is made up of the 'personal accounts which burst ... vividly from the page'. He further states that the section comparing South Africa's denial of POW rights to MK cadre Solomon Mahlangu and captured SADF soldier Johan van der Mescht, to whom SWAPO accorded the rules of the Geneva Convention, as 'the most memorable'.

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[70] W.P. Sass, Postal Interview, Midrand, 25 April 1994.

[71] see Philip Dexter in The African Communist, Second Quarter 1994, p.72 and Christopher Merrett in the Weekly Mail and Guardian, 5-11 August 1994, p.36.

The paradox of Resister lay in its approach to its audience. The personal accounts in the early issues were the most accessible to an 18 year old, but the sometimes unrefined format tended to rebuff many of these young readers. The earlier issues contained also considerable propaganda. Whereas the latter issues included more balanced and well-researched articles, they were too bland, lacking a personal touch with which South African could identify. But Resister had to be analytical in order to accommodate its international audience. It could not consistently address itself in-depth to a constituency that was ten thousand kilometres away. Its editors were ANC-aligned yet its domestic target audience was white and liberal. It could not 'reflect' the alienated white youth's anger in print, nor compete with the ECC's use of vivid media like cabaret or art which the ECC used so resourcefully in mobilising public opinion.

COSAWR's existence was threatened by continued crises, such as, the issues relating to the psychological adjustment to exile, and the lack of adequate finances. Yet Resister demanded a consistency of intellectual input and labour from COSAWR personnel. Regularly publishing Resister was a realistic goal that COSAWR could consistently aspire to.

If Resister's influence on its target audience is debatable, there is almost no question of its primary importance for COSAWR. Anderson and Garner portray Resister as the engine and glue of COSAWR. Anderson remembers 'there was this drive that under all circumstances we would always be producing Resister'. Garner agreed; saying that producing Resister 'was a task that kept people meeting, producing ... everybody

had a role related to Resister ... we had to make decisions about the content, that was the dynamic'.[72]

Resister was not widely circulated in South Africa because of the restrictions imposed on it. The following chapter examines why the state took such exception to COSAWR and its publications.

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[72] Interviews by the author with Bill Anderson, Johannesburg, 10 October 1993, and with Heather Garner, Cape Town, 17 February 1994.

Chapter VII

THE SOUTH AFRICAN STATE AND COSAWR

The South African government waged a continuous infiltration/propaganda campaign against COSAWR based on the premise that it was a 'tool of Moscow' and a 'white wing of the ANC'.[1] It climaxed on two occasions – in 1980-82, when the government spoke of a 'SACP/ANC/COSAWR alliance', and in 1985, when the state attempted to prove that COSAWR was the link between the ECC and the ANC. These allegations 'obsessed' Pretoria.[2] South African media such as The Citizen and Sunday Times echoed the government line and also scrutinised COSAWR.

Motivation For Subverting Exile Organisations

There were various reasons for the government's penetration of groups like COSAWR. Geldenhuys indicates that anti-apartheid organisations were 'a constant thorn in the South African government's flesh'.[3] Operating in Europe, a relatively open environment allowed exiles a degree of freedom. London was the centre of many anti-apartheid organisations and an important international communications centre in the

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1 Cited in Resister 67, Fourth Quarter 1990, p.33.

2 ibid., p.34.

3 D. Geldenhuys, The Diplomacy of Isolation: South African Foreign Policy Making, Johannesburg, 1984), p.180.

propaganda war for 'hearts and minds'.[4] Because of the international anti-apartheid movements' links with supportive European political parties, South African intelligence considered 'foreign politics as its theatre of operation'.[5] And finally, monitoring an organisation overseas was also a form of intimidation which sent a message to activists based in South Africa. People who visited COSAWR members were questioned on their return to South Africa in a manner aimed at stifling further contact with the organisation.

The South African Intelligence Community

Current research material on Military Intelligence (MI) gathered by Pauw[6] and Trewhela focuses predominately on activities in southern Africa. MI is described as a 'shadowy organisation skilled at keeping its true role and reach out of the public eye'.[7] Steenkamp has candidly observed that 'MI has not been accountable to anyone'.[8]

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[4] James Barber, "BOSS in Britain", in African Affairs: The Journal of the Royal African Society Vol.82, No.328, July 1983, p.311.

[5] Paul Trewhela, "Within the Secret State: the Directorate of Military Intelligence", Searchlight Southern Africa Vol.2, No.4 1992, p.9.

[6] Jaques Pauw, In the Heart of the Whore: The Story of Apartheid's Death Squads, (Halfway House, 1993).

[7] Weekly Mail March 31 to April 7, 1994, *Elections A to Z, The Major Organisations, Special Supplement, p.7.*

[8] ECC, "Armed Forces in Transition" Disclosure and Intelligence Organisations ECC Peace Festival '93, Johannesburg.

Only now is information on South Africa's diverse covert overseas activities coming to light. The Weekly Mail reported recently that in 1986 Johan Niemoller, a former South African Special Forces member, planned to kidnap four top ANC members in London.[9] The Weekend Argus revealed that a SAP division called Stratkom possessed a secret fund of millions of Rands administered by 'propaganda specialists'.[10] Stratkom discredited the ANC both nationally and internationally by, in part, spreading rumours of ANC links with the Irish Republican Army (IRA). This allegation had implications for COSAWR in 1988.[11]

South African intelligence started operating in Britain around 1960, at the time the ANC established an office there and the AAM was founded. Under Prime Minister Vorster, BOSS was the dominant intelligence unit. When P.W. Botha assumed office BOSS was replaced by the National Intelligence Service (NIS), 'a sort of ivory tower think-tank ... never directly involved in the "dirty war" against the African National Congress'.[12] Its operatives, based at South African embassies, monitored anti-apartheid activists. Under P.W. Botha MI assumed the capacity of undermining the liberation movement. This was indicative of Botha's close relationship with the SADF. Former Deputy Director of Military Intelligence, Major-General Chris Thirion, indicates the direct link between the SADF and MI when he stated that '[m]ilitary intelligence is

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9 Weekly Mail and Guardian June 17 to 23 1994.

10 Weekend Argus May 7/8, 1994.

11 See Section on the Broederstroom Cell in this chapter.

12 Weekly Mail March 31 to April 7, 1994, 'Elections A to Z, The Major Organisations', Special Supplement, p.7.

first and foremost an integral part of the SADF' and that 'intelligence is the key to stable government ... It is the first line of defence'.[13]

Former Secretary for Information Dr Eschel Rhoodie, stated (without offering extensive detail) 'disinformation and disruptive' operations had been used against the anti-apartheid movements in the Netherlands and Britain in the guise of mailing fake petitions and newspapers to activists in order to sow confusion.[14] Coupled with this, South African intelligence allocated a considerable amount of personnel and funding for overseas covert actions. In 1971 a British newspaper report estimated that 10 of the 34 officials at the South African Embassy in London were trained intelligence officers.[15] In 1982, evidence given in court indicated that one proxy had drawn almost 60 000 pounds in one year for covert work; and there was speculation that the South African Embassy in London had become the centre for a European-wide operation.[16] South African intelligence was suspected of involvement in the 1982 and 1986 bombings of the ANC offices in London and Stockholm respectively, as well as the 1988 assassination of ANC Paris representative Dulcie September.[17]

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[13] Chris Thirion "Military Intelligence in a Post Settlement South Africa: The Inevitable Requirement" in South African Defence Review: A Working Paper Series 12, 1993, p.15 and p.18 quoting G.R.Copley in Defence and Foreign Affairs Magazine.

[14] Mervyn Rees and Chris Day, Muldergate: The Story of the Info Scandal (Johannesburg, 1980), p.xv. and p.188.

[15] Observer 12 December 1971, from James Barber, "BOSS in Britain", p. 313.

[16] The Daily Telegraph 18 December 1982 from James Barber op. cit. "BOSS in Britain" 1983, p.313.

[17] Barber, op. cit., The Uneasy Relationship 1983, p.32, Interview, Madi Grey, Cape Town 20.4.1994, and Pauw, op. cit., pp.207-8.

According to Arthur McGiven, a former BOSS agent, resistance to the military represented two points of concern for the SADF:

> First, many members of the Citizen Forces were not entirely behind the Government. Second it was possible and apparently easy to use criticism of the defence force by stripping its activities of their moral justification. To add to the latter problem an increasing number of Afrikaans-speaking students, academics, churchmen, journalists and businessmen were expressing guarded criticism, spurred on by the Muldergate scandal and television pictures of the squatter camps at Cape Town. What was needed was to win "the hearts and minds" of everyone in South Africa.[18]

War resistance was a threat to the monolithic pretence of Afrikanerdom because 'leading Afrikaner politicians themselves set such a high store on [Afrikaner] unity [which] has always been threatened from within'.[19] The government could not allow such thinking to germinate in Afrikaner religious communities because 'opposition in the Afrikaner Churches is more significant than English-speaking ones because Afrikaner churches demand one to be uncritical'.[20]

The SADF and the pre-COSAWR War Resistance Movement

The SADF drew parallels between it and America's experience in Vietnam. In 1977 Armed Forces documented the perceived threat. The publication claimed that the KGB, through its International Section, had targeted the SADF. This would lead to

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[18] Observer 13 January 1980.

[19] Willem Saayman, "Rebels and Prophets: Afrikaners Against the System" in C. Villa-Vicencio and J. de Gruchy (eds) Resistance and Hope: South African Essays in Honour of Beyers Naude (Cape Town, 1985), p.53.

[20] David Bosch, "The Fragmentation of Afrikaner and the Afrikaner Churches" in C. Villa-Vicencio and J. de Gruchy, op. cit. p.72.

'degeneration of the man in uniform'[21] as had happened in America during the Vietnam War.

In late 1977 the SADF anticipated a propaganda campaign aimed at university students through SALSCOM's magazine Omkeer. To The Point, a journal which 'echoed the Government view of world affairs',[22] labelled SALSCOM's tactic, 'subversion wholesale'. The 'subversion' would be aided by Cuba, Russia and Algeria and based on the manner used by Portuguese army officers to subvert their own armed forces in the overthrow of the Salazar regime in 1974.[23]

Armed Forces spelled out SALSCOM's goals, one of which was to 'get him [the conscript] to evade military service or to indoctrinate him to undermine the Defence Organisations once he is undergoing military service'. It suggested that the South African media and the SADF play an important role in countering SALSCOM by the use of 'psychological counter measures ... at the drop of a hat, or even before the event'.[24]

Armed Forces then critiqued SALSCOM, emphasising the 'Red Threat' by purveying an inflated view of SALSCOM's capabilities and its political clout; it claimed its 'web [was] very wide indeed' and that it was connected to a 'Brussels-based Fourth

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[21] Armed Forces June 1977, p.10.

[22] Gerald Sparrow, spokesman for the Club of Ten, a South African government front organisation, from Rees and Day op. cit. p.36.

[23] To the Point March 1978, p.5.

[24] Armed Forces October 1978, pp.14-15.

International that master-minded the Portuguese collapse in Africa'.[25] But at this time SALSCOM was a fledgling organisation, in disagreement with the SACP/ANC and sympathetic to BCM. Armed Forces also erroneously claimed that it 'is doubtful that Omkeer will be directed at the man currently undergoing national service.[26]

In June 1978 in Parliament, P.W. Botha specifically identified Omkeer as a threat; 'Any attack on the Defence Force is an attack on the stability of the country. We have to fight it with all the power in our possession. This is a communistic attack'. Harry Schwarz, PFP Defence spokesman, on the other hand argued that Omkeer's impact on national servicemen was 'almost nil'.[27] Botha's excitable comments gave SALSCOM publicity, something the SADF wanted to prevent. Botha's comments even warranted recognition on BBC radio.[28] A few months later when SALSCOM merged with COSAWR, the government proceeded to focus on that organisation.

The Campaign Against COSAWR

COSAWR's prominence came at a time when the SADF was receiving negative publicity, both nationally and internationally. It was reported that the SADF was experiencing a rising casualty rate and internal dissension. In the first six months of 1980 the SADF suffered eighty-one dead and nearly 250 wounded, making this the

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[25] ibid,. p.14.

[26] In Chapter II it was pointed out that Omkeer was directed at the serviceman.

[27] Argus 5 June 1978.

[28] BBC Radio (Transcripts) 6 June 1978.

heaviest toll of the fighting in the fourteen year old Namibian border war.[29] A walkout of between sixty and seventy soldiers at an army base at Upington in October 1979 received widespread publicity.[30]

A study of the infiltration of COSAWR first necessitates an evaluation of the 'notorious'[31] South African spy, Major Craig Williamson. He was deputy director of the Geneva-based International University Exchange Fund (IUEF) which he rightfully claimed 'was the biggest contributor to COSAWR'.[32] Initially, Williamson was not suspected. He was appointed Deputy Director of the IUEF due to his 'long standing experience with the IUEF and his knowledge of and involvement in southern African affairs'.[33] The IUEF provided education scholarships for needy African and Latin American students. However, it also channelled support to political groups like the Black Consciousness Movement, SWAPO and the Zimbabwe African National Union (ZANU).[34] Its position was clearly stated; 'one of the main priorities of the IUEF has been assistance to the victims of white minority rule and support for the liberation movements and other groups working for change in southern Africa'.[35]

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[29] Observer 6 June 1980.

[30] See Argus 26 October 1979.

[31] Resister 66, Third Quarter 1990, p.24.

[32] Cape Times 8 February 1980.

[33] Statement on the Appointment of the Deputy director of the IUEF signed Lars-Gunnar Eriksson, Geneva June 30th 1978. Taken from the COSAWR files.

[34] James Barber (op. cit.) The Uneasy Relationship (1983) p.318.

[35] Letter to: All categories on the IUEF Mailing List from Lars-Gunnar Eriksson, Director, 4 July 1978. Taken from the COSAWR files.

The impact of Williamson's activities is debatable; most literature cited on Williamson focuses more on his infiltration of the IUEF. Nevertheless, Barber indicates that Williamson attended COSAWR meetings.[36] Perhaps he wanted to obtain a membership list and/or establish its members' links with the ANC. Interestingly, Anderson explains that South African War Resisters (SAWR), a war resistance group which preceded COSAWR, viewed Williamson in the context of the negotiations between SAWR and AFSAC:[37]

> we said you are in cahoots with the AFSAC people, you are not being sympathetic with us at all. He thought he could deliver us to the ANC ... He obviously had information, our documents. We were talking to him at a certain level ... We did not trust him, but not because we thought he was an agent, but because of his political manoeuvring, and the fact that we saw him as an opportunist, trying to curry favour with the ANC.[38]

Cawthra presumes that Williamson scrutinized senior COSAWR members:

> For some reason the Security Police were very interested in me. People who visited me in London were often interrogated when they got back to South Africa. In fact, one person who was questioned when she got back was shown photographs of herself meeting me outside a pub in Charing Cross Road. So they obviously had been monitoring me. I think some of this had to do with Craig Williamson – he'd left shortly before me, and saw me at an ANC meeting in London soon after I arrived.[39]

Williamson infiltrated COSAWR at a time when it was a fledgling organisation. If the important material on COSAWR was revealed in the following Sunday Times story then Williamson had learned little. In October 1980 the Sunday Times, in a front page article, written by Ken Owen, accused COSAWR of being a 'Red Net'. The story was

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[36] Barber, op. cit., "Boss in Britain" p.318.

[37] See Chapter II.

[38] Interview, Bill Anderson, Johannesburg, 10 October 1993.

[39] Hilda Bernstein, The Rift: The Exile Experience of South Africans, (London, 1994), p.317.

based on a COSAWR report taken from the files of the IUEF and given to the Sunday Times by Craig Williamson and Brigadier Johan Coetzee.[40] Through the report COSAWR was 'apparently intend[ing] to justify its clandestine financing by [using] IUEF funds donated to assist refugee students from Africa and Latin America'.[41]

The article utilised strong, emotive language such as 'Red Net Traps', indicating COSAWR 'indoctrinate[d]' draft dodgers as a 'front organisation' set up by the SACP and its allies. It did not offer conclusive evidence, merely pointing out that SACP members, such as Brian Bunting, gave talks to COSAWR.[42]

COSAWR challenged the article through an unnamed spokesman (which might have given COSAWR a shadowy image). He dismissed the claim that COSAWR was communist controlled as 'laughable'.[43] In order to minimise the impact of the story the spokesman criticised the integrity and claims of Williamson:

> In fact, I believe that war resisters helped to force him out of his job and expose him for what he was – a pretty nasty type who is now trying to hard to justify himself.
>
> We are not a political party and our members represent a wide range of political views, some of them are pretty conservative. If we fell under Communist control we would not be able to function as a group helping draft dodgers. But our functions and activities are quite open. All they – DONS – could do is try and intimidate individual members.
>
> We did receive a small amount of aid from IUEF, but there is nothing strange about that. Many of our members are students establishing themselves abroad and it is the function of the fund to help people like them ... But anyone could

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[40] In a letter to the author Ken Owen stated the Sunday Times is no longer in possession of the files. Letter dated 16 June 1993.

[41] Sunday Times 12 October 1980.

[42] In an interview with the author Mr. Bunting stated he gave just one talk to COSAWR on the Springbok Legion (a left-wing servicemen's organisation which existed in South Africa after the Second World War).

[43] Rand Daily Mail 13 October 1980.

> have found that out, so it doesn't exactly make Williamson look like a spy in the [James] Bond class. A few of our people had contact with Williamson in his job with the IUEF but the warning that he was a suspect character had already been put out internationally and he did not learn much, if anything, of consequence.[44]

In retrospect however, Anderson said that 'We did get money from IUEF ... in the first few years, quite a lot'.[45] In the context of the early 1980s COSAWR could not reveal its close ties with the ANC. Given the complex international struggle semi-covert operations were the norm. The allegations of 'communist controlled' is too strong a word. While Cawthra acknowledged that COSAWR 'supported the revolutionary mission of the ANC' this does not mean COSAWR was communist regulated. Church groups would not have supported COSAWR if they felt it was a 'communist front'. Resister publicised that COSAWR worked in all aspects of the struggle, including the armed struggle. And not all of the COSAWR Committee were members of the SACP.

Based on new information, Williamson could have been trying to establish a long-term intelligence structure. According to an ANC 'cabinet insider', 'Craig Williams [sic] left a network behind inside the ANC. Some might now be in politics and positions of influence'.[46] Whether this includes former COSAWR members is debatable. Alternatively, Williamson might have attempted to gain information on exiles in order to determine COSAWR's links with the ANC.

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[44] ibid.

[45] Interview, Bill Anderson, Johannesburg, 10 October 1993.

[46] Weekly Mail and Guardian June 17 to 23 1994.

Soon after the Williamson story broke, it was revealed that the South African intelligence services had also infiltrated SAMRAF. A SAMRAF member named Clifton Westraad, who had been associated with the organisation for a year, stole confidential files from its office and gave them to South African security officials.[47] The contents are not known, but the theft had a psychological impact on SAMRAF. According to SAMRAF member Larry Shore this episode 'was pretty devastating to SAMRAF; certainly morale wise'.[48]

South African agents consequently had a satisfactory knowledge of the workings of the broad South Africa war resistance movement. Damaging the confidence of SAMRAF and COSAWR and thus inhibiting their operation was a goal of South African intelligence. Barber reports that South African intelligence realised that 'the known facts of past penetration must be a constant source of worry for the parties and groups and a source of internal suspicion and friction'.[49]

1980-82 The Identification of the War Resistance Threat by the Steyn and Rabie Commissions

Starting in 1980 the state incorporated its knowledge of war resistance groups into its review of the security apparatus. The 1980 Steyn Commission was established in the

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[47] Sunday Times 6 September 1981; The Star 11 September 1981.

[48] Postal Interview, Larry Shore, Connecticut, USA, 21 September 1994.

[49] Barber op. cit. "BOSS in Britain" 1983, p.320.

context of 'evaluating the prevailing and expected conflict situation'.[50] The Steyn Commission listed COSAWR under the heading of a 'terrorist organisation controlled by the ANC and the SACP, which encourages our young people not to perform national service'. The 1981 Rabie Commission further claimed the ANC 'gave orders that fully-trained white National Servicemen should be recruited in South Africa as members of the ANC'.[51]

The Steyn Commission addressed the broad issue of 'resistance to military service' acknowledging that students, churches, church bodies and MILCOM were involved. The Commission spelled out the direct threat war resistance posed to the stability of South Africa:

> In the current South African situation, the entire question of resistance to national service is closely connected with ... the morale of the population and the possibilities this presents to the RSA's enemies, e.g. terrorist organisations. Especially those cases where deliberate and organised attempts are made to undermine the Defence Force and National Service, must be regarded as an integral part of the total onslaught against the RSA. The National Serviceman is thus seen as an easy target to initiate the effective breaking down of the RSA.[52]

It next indicated that organisations established to help draft dodgers escape to the USA could create the same sort of discord that the American Army had experienced during the Vietnam War. To counter this threat the Steyn Commission said, 'in the South African context this places a heavy responsibility on the media to ensure they

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[50] Steyn Commission Report of the Commission of Inquiry into Reporting On Security Matters Regarding The South African Defence Force And The South African Police Force (Pretoria, 1980), p.7.

[51] Rabie Commission The Report of the Commission of Inquiry Into Security Legalisation (Pretoria, 1981) p.58.

[52] Steyn Commission (1980) p.62.

do not promote terror and revolution by the methods of coverage and prominence they afford such occurrences'.[53]

The sentiments of the Steyn Commission were expressed by the Minister of Police, Louis Le Grange, who emphasised that COSAWR was the primary threat: '[T]here are other organisations that also have close ties with the ANC and the SACP but I consider them too insignificant to mention'.[54] The government's concern with COSAWR reached such a point that Minister Le Grange appealed to the South African press not to publicise 'nameless or secret committees or organisations'.[55]

The Rabie Commission confirmed that the ANC was carrying out a policy of attracting whites to its ranks. It also referred to the importance of the exile community, by citing the August 1976 SACP organ Inkululeko-Freedom which stated that the ANC intended 'to integrate Coloured, Indian, and White revolutionaries into the external mission of the ANC'. Furthermore 'branches were to be formed in those areas with a big concentration of South African exiled revolutionaries'.[56]

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53 ibid., p.61.

54 Rand Daily Mail 11 February 1980.

55 Morning Star 14 August 1980.

56 Rabie Commission (1981) p.56.

Army Propaganda After the Steyn and Rabie Commission

The government's identification of COSAWR allowed the SADF, through Paratus, to publish its most detailed commentary on COSAWR in April 1982.[57] The article professed many draft dodgers bitterly regretted their decision to leave home because of the alienation of exile. It asserted that COSAWR, a 'shoddy and subversive' front for Moscow, waged a 'carefully orchestrated but largely unsuccessful campaign to persuade young men to evade military service'. It claimed that draft dodgers were only welcomed by 'radical anti-RSA elements which are plotting against everyone, including their own families'.[58] The implication was that COSAWR members would betray their own families.

COSAWR replied through Resister, declaring the article was an example of the SADF's 'psychological warfare', complete with lies and distortion. One illustration is the article's claim that the only people draft dodgers would identify with were 'fellow dodgers and/or radicals'.[59] This was partially true, though people who did not agree with COSAWR's philosophy were encouraged to join other sympathetic organisations. COSAWR never hid the fact that exile was not an easy option. Previous issues of Resister had acknowledged that asylum, especially in the Netherlands and Sweden, was a difficult process.

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[57] The article was titled 'The Kremlin's guide to poverty, loneliness and heartbreak...The Harsh Reality of Draft Dodging'. The subtitle indicated army sentiment very clearly: 'COSAWR: A puppet of the true enemies of all the peoples of the RSA'.

[58] Paratus April 1982, pp.34-35.

[59] Resister 20, June/July 1982, p.7.

In 1985 the SADF tried to prove that a firm relationship existed between the ECC and COSAWR. This attempt was made around the time the ECC began its high profile 'Troops Out of the Township' campaign, and Ivan Toms embarked on a three week fast. These happenings coincided with solidarity fasts sponsored by COSAWR which added an international dimension to the war resistance issue.

ECC activist Michael Evans, claimed that during his detention the Security Police wanted to prove 'that COSAWR was the link between ECC and the ANC, and that ECC was a front for the ANC'. Evans stated, 'I denied it, which it was not [a front for the ECC].' According to Evans, the Security Police's interrogation was based on information which was 'naive ... based on a Paratus article about COSAWR'. Evans says the importance of the Security Police interrogation was that 'if they could have established an ECC-ANC link that would have given them wider scope to undermine the ECC'.[60] The Security Police use of Resister illustrates their lack of knowledge of the political and philosophical differences between the two organisations, indicating little coordination between the Security Police and Military Intelligence.

The Broederstroom Cell

After a three year hiatus COSAWR again entered the headlines in May 1988 when a white MK cell was arrested at Broederstroom near Pretoria. Three of the five members of the unit, Ian Robertson, Paul Annegarn, and Hugh Lugg were associated with

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[60] Telephonic Interview, Michael Evans, Cape Town, 2 February 1994.

COSAWR.[61] A press statement by the then Minister of Law and Order Adriaan Vlok did not mention COSAWR directly but stated that two of the cell members 'dodged their national service' and declared:

> Here is further palpable evidence of the ANC's true nature and character – a violent terrorist organisation, exactly like the PLO and the IRA. Its goal is just one thing – the death and maiming of innocent people, regardless of race or colour.[62]

The Citizen was more direct. It carried an editorial entitled 'Two terros [sic] members of SACP front group'. The paper claimed the arrests were the first 'direct evidence that has been obtained of COSAWR members being drafted into ANC terrorist squads'.[63]

Although it was known that whites were involved in important ANC positions, Broederstroom caused consternation for the government. It indicated and publicised increased white involvement in MK, especially as active soldiers. The advantages to MK of recruiting whites were multiple. Some, like Robertson and Annegarn, had previous military training. A MI officer said that white, ANC activists:

> are evidence of the ANC's non-racialism, and are important to the ANC objective of dividing the white community against itself. They were more able to move freely in the country and were thus good for reconnaissance; they were better educated, thus able to handle sophisticated weaponry.[64]

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[61] Lugg led the police to the Broederstroom Cell and was State Witness during the trial. The other two members were Damien de Lange and Susan Westcott.

[62] Argus 12 May 1988.

[63] The Citizen 13 May 1988.

[64] Star 17 May 1988.

But using prominent whites highlighted limitations in the ANC's strategy. As Lodge observed, following the arrest of the Broederstroom cell, 'The use of known people suggests the ANC are having to draw from a fairly narrow pool.'[65]

British Conservative Party MP Andrew Hunter, who had made previous claims of ANC-IRA links, presented a case (partly based on Broederstroom) to urge the expulsion from Britain of Ronnie Kasrils, his wife Eleanor and Timothy Jenkin[66]. Hunter claimed they had recruited operatives for MK in London, plus, the IRA assisted them with bomb building expertise. Kasrils denied Hunter's accusations. A Scotland Yard spokesman dismissed Hunter's allegations stating, 'Obviously we keep tabs on people like the ANC but we do not believe there is any truth in [the] allegations.'[67] A survey of the limited literature available on the IRA did not indicate any concrete ANC-IRA military or recruitment links.[68]

In a letter to the author Hunter indicates that he hopes to publish more information on ANC-IRA links. However the contents must be peculiarly controversial if both the ANC and the National Party do not desire his information published:

> In May 1988 I met Westcott and Robertson while they were being held in custody prior to trial. I found talking them with them such an unpleasant

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[65] Newsweek May 23, 1988. Robertson was a student activist and his late mother a prominent Black Sash member. Lugg's asylum case was prominently reported in the South African press and Annegarn's arrest in 1984 for throwing red paint at the South African embassy in London was publicised in the South African press. Annegarn also appeared on a CBS TV report about South African draft dodgers. Annegarn and Lugg were photographed together for the Labour Weekly of 25 October 1985 and, interestingly, Lugg is the only COSAWR member to be identified by name and photo - in Resister 4, September 1979.

[66] An escapee from Pretoria Central.

[67] Evening Standard 11 March 1988, in Ronnie Kasrils op. cit. pp.292-93.

[68] see Tim Pat Coogan The I.R.A. (Glasgow, 1980) and Patrick Bishop and Eamonn Mallie The Provisional I.R.A. (London, 1988).

> experience that I could not bring myself to go through my arranged interview with de Lange. I spent a much greater length of time with Hugh Lugg.
>
> I am not at the moment in a position to let you have further details. I hope that my work will be published within the next few months. I have had very great difficulty in finding a publisher. On three or four occasions a potential publisher has withdrawn almost at the last minute before publication. The ANC and the old Nationalist government both intervened.
>
> [Hunter describes the upcoming book] I deal with what I term "political support" [and] I also deal with what I term "operational contact". Under this heading, I consider secondary source references and the personal testimony which I have received from ANC and Irish Republican activists.[69]

Margaret Thatcher was given a SAP video about the Broederstroom Cell. This was coupled with a volume entitled Partners in Terror which allegedly documented 'public expressions of support and the exchange of expertise between the IRA, the ANC and SWAPO'.[70] Despite the COSAWR connection with the Broederstroom Cell Cawthra maintains no pressure was brought on COSAWR by the Home Office.[71]

Ian Robertson believes the South African security police were interested in broad COSAWR-ANC links and viewed COSAWR as an information gathering organisation:

> Whites had access to information and resources ... that black people did not ... whites... had been in the military ... and some had information ... although that information was dated ... all that information put together you come up with a composite ... that can be used as a basis ... [when interrogated by the security police he was asked] how did you manage to get all this information about the SADF while you were in the country.

Robertson explains what the Security Police were interested on a specific level:

> They were interested where Resister was distributed, who read it. They were interested in COSAWR, to what extent COSAWR members had links with the ANC, who was more active in COSAWR, to what extent whites were involved in

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69 Letter to author from Andrew Hunter MP, London, 25 June 1994.

70 Star 6.11.1988.

71 Telephonic Interview, Gavin Cawthra, Johannesburg, 3 August 1994.

> intelligence gathering within the ANC. I was shown photos and asked did I know that person ... I said no ... At some level they were a bit perturbed.[72]

Robertson states the Broederstroom Affair raises the issue of the questionable selection process for whites into MK:

> Some of the leadership in the ANC who were dealing with [war resisters]...did not fully understand the dynamics of what the war resisters were about and were keen on bringing people over before they had really shown their worth and their solidness in other [AAM] structures. They should have made sure a person can carry through tasks from start to end.[73]

Annegarn had served in the SADF and spent some time in solitary confinement and then in an SADF psychiatric hospital. In 1985 he stated that he objected to 'the [SADF] indoctrination which was not so subtle'.[74] His desertion from the SADF raises questions about how he would adapt to the discipline of another army (MK). Kasrils's said of Annegarn, 'in military training he excelled himself, but once he went into the country his behaviour became very bad ... [he] became very moody, undisciplined and uncooperative'.[75] Annegarn says he quit the Broederstroom unit and the ANC 'because their methods were unethical and I realised that individuals were wholly incompetent'.[76]

News reports of the time claim that what led Lugg to turn in his comrades was that a lovers triangle developed between Lugg, Westcott and De Lange, or that Lugg

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[72] Interview, Ian Robertson, Johannesburg, 18 October 1993 and Cape Town, 29 December 1993.

[73] Interview, Ian Robertson, Johannesburg, 18 10 1993.

[74] Labour Weekly 25 October 1985.

[75] Ronnie Kasrils quoted in the Sunday Times 28 June 1992.

[76] Paul Annegarn quoted in the Sunday Times 28 June 1992.

became disillusioned with the ANC's use of violence.[77] Anderson, who was involved with the planning of Broederstroom, disagrees:

> I debriefed Lugg post-Broederstroom ... he broke under psychological pressure, I've never seen such a broken person ... I do not think he sold out. He played a very important role in COSAWR.[78]

Cawthra and Anderson both indicated that despite the actions of Lugg and Annegarn COSAWR's reputation within the liberation movement was not harmed.[79]

The Carelse Affair

Following Broederstroom, COSAWR again entered the news. In February 1989, Robert Carelse, brother-in-law of COSAWR (NL) member Keith Raper, confessed to Raper that he had spied for MI.[80] Carelse, who had applied for asylum in the Netherlands in July 1988, had limited access to the COSAWR (NL) office. Raper did not immediately inform COSAWR of Carelse's admission because he feared negative publicity might affect his wife and child who had just returned to South Africa. Raper himself was subsequently approached by MI to spy on COSAWR though he refused.[81] Controversy surrounded this case.

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[77] Star 13 May 1988, Argus 12 May 1988 and 14 May 1988.

[78] Interview, Bill Anderson, Johannesburg, 10 October 1993.

[79] Gavin Cawthra, Telephonic Interview, Johannesburg, 3 August 1994, Bill Anderson, Interview, Johannesburg, 10 October 1993.

[80] Resister 65, Second Quarter 1990, p.19.

[81] ibid., p.19.

Carelse had several possible reasons for spying. Gewald claims Carelse was looking for names and addresses of COSAWR members and those it had aided. Gewald also speculates that Carelse, like Williamson, was attempting to set up an intelligence network.[82] Temple offers another explanation:

> I have only got suspicions on this, and this does not relate to any knowledge that I have about the workings of South African Intelligence ... I think it was Military Intelligence who sent most of the agents to COSAWR. They could see that COSAWR Netherlands was a weak link ... COSAWR London was a lot tighter or they already had their people in place higher up ... so they had no need to throw people at COSAWR London or the ANC London ... I do not know to what extent MI had any information about Operation Vula. If they did, the attempt to infiltrate COSAWR Netherlands makes sense.[83]

However, this view is rebutted by Conny Braam:

> I don't know much about [Carelse] infiltrating COSAWR but the idea that he might have done so to get access to the AABN and through that to Operation Vula is utter nonsense. In the first place the Dutch involvement in Operation Vula [was] unknown to AABN-people and to the SA security service until I wrote a book about it. In the second place we would never involve South Africans in our work, especially when it was more sensitive. We felt strongly that South Africans should work with South African organisations like the ANC. We never made a secret of that.[84]

If MI penetrated COSAWR (NL), then it must have known that COSAWR (NL) and the AABN were antagonistic; Temple's reasons probably do not hold weight.

On his return to South Africa, Carelse was arrested for desertion. According to COSAWR, MI removed him from the public eye in order to prevent more disclosures about its activities abroad.[85] COSAWR's assertion about the arrest of Carelse was unable to be verified but he certainly wanted to keep the story quiet. When Carelse (then studying at technikon) was informed by the Vrye Weekblad that they were to

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[82] Interview, Jan Bart Gewald, Cape Town, 19 April 1993.

[83] Interview, Matthew Temple, Johannesburg, 13 October 1993.

[84] Postal Interview, Conny Braam, Amsterdam, 2 March 1994.

[85] Resister 65, Second Quarter 1990, p.19.

publish an account of this episode, he said, 'you are destroying my career, it is my career, it is what I chose to do. I did it because I chose so to do it'.[86]

Effect of Spying and Media Campaign on COSAWR

COSAWR believed that 'there were more personnel in Pretoria earmarked to counter us than were involved in COSAWR itself'.[87] COSAWR did not have substantial financial and technological resources available to counter the South African espionage and propaganda. COSAWR, for example, used rudimentary techniques to ferret out potential spies; asylum-seekers' bona fides were verified with NUSAS, itself a spy-ridden organisation; thus COSAWR's could have been jeopardized if its NUSAS source was not legitimate.

Kevin Laue relates that MI's penetration of COSAWR helped to prevent the latter's establishment of an office in countries such as Zimbabwe:

> A large amorphous type of structure would have been too easy to infiltrate and things of course did develop to the stage where boer hit-squads were on the rampage [in Zimbabwe] so it was safer to keep things underground in the war resistance field. The option of setting up a more open organisation was considered from the point of view of whether it would be the most effective means of forwarding the programme as a whole, but rejected for the reasons given.[88]

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[86] Vrye Weekblad 8 December 1989, p.2. Translated from the Afrikaans by Lynn Botha.

[87] Resister 67, Fourth Quarter, 1990 p.34.

[88] Second Postal Interview, Kevin Laue, Harare, 5 April 1994.

Unsympathetic media coverage prevented COSAWR from effectively spreading its message within South Africa. The liberal press occasionally cited COSAWR as a source, but this positive publicity was offset on other occasions when it highlighted COSAWR as part of the "Red Threat". COSAWR needed to exercise caution about how it refuted communist control allegations. For example the revelation of church funding sources might have muted these charges. However, the liberal clergy who supported COSAWR would have had to face criticism from conservative theologians if such financing was revealed.[89]

The infiltration intimidated COSAWR, caused it to be insular, and created an aura of suspicion which restrained COSAWR's organisational development. COSAWR, on a few occasions, was put on the defensive. COSAWR's image within the broad anti-apartheid movement could also have been tarnished. COSAWR could possibly have been perceived as a security risk by the liberation movement.

An intelligence service monitors its opposition no matter how strong or weak that group is perceived to be. As a white liberation organisation COSAWR provided one of the few access routes for whites to the ANC. It was also an intelligence gathering organ for the ANC. Scrutinizing COSAWR assisted military intelligence to draw a more complete picture of the ANC. In the final chapter I evaluate just how effective COSAWR was in achieving its aims and objectives.

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[89] Interview, Heather Garner, 17 February 1994.

CONCLUSION

SECTION I

The Huddleston International Register

COSAWR's final accomplishment before its closure in 1990 was the launch of the Huddleston International Register of South African War Resisters (HIR). Its theme was that those who left South Africa to avoid conscription should 'make clear their stand'.[1] The HIR with its 209 signatories, complemented the 771 signatories to the South African National Register of Conscientious Objectors. The two registers demonstrated the unity of international and national war resistance groups, effectively challenging attempts to label COSAWR, the ECC, and COs 'a small dissident minority'.[2] The HIR signatories declared that:

> We who are eligible for conscription into the South African Defence Force, refuse to serve in the SADF because of its role in upholding the apartheid system. We who now live outside South Africa support those that have taken a stand against conscription inside South Africa, especially those who have been imprisoned for their opposition to the call-up.[3]

COSAWR gathered signatories through publicity in the anti-apartheid movement, the ANC, War Resister's International, and advertisements in the Weekly Mail. At the time

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1 Weekly Mail 8 December 1989. Quoting Archbishop Trevor Huddleston.

2 Resister 64, First Quarter 1990, p.7.

3 ibid,. p.7.

of the July 1990 call-up the Huddleston Register was published in the Weekly Mail and the Vrye Weekblad. *

Cosawr's Return to South Africa

COSAWR's return to South Africa was determined in part by the pronouncements of former State President F.W. De Klerk. In December 1989 he announcement that the initiai National Service period would be halved to one year starting in 1990. This decision was made in the context that 'the impressive victories of our Defence Force in Angola [had] created the climate for political and diplomatic initiatives'.[4] On 2 February 1990 De Klerk announced the unbanning of the ANC, SACP, PAC and the ECC.

De Klerk's address had three major implications for COSAWR. Firstly, it paved the way for COSAWR's return, even though it mentioned neither COSAWR nor war resisters as a group. Secondly, the speech allowed for an open political climate, thus making asylum applications less likely to be accepted. Thirdly, the new political climate affected the viability of anti-apartheid organisations as both personnel and funding were now sparse.[5]

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[4] Speech of F.W. de Klerk, 7 December 1989, quoted in Paratus March 1990, p.11.

[5] The *Sunday Times* of 26 May 1991 reported IDAF was planning to close its London office, and the City of London Anti-Apartheid Group had lost half its membership since De Klerk's speech.

* Weekly Mail 23 March 1990 and Vrye Weekblad 23 March 1990.

The decision to close COSAWR was not taken lightly. Some members thought closing down represented abandoning its mission as there were:

> two issues ... whether that was the correct political decision ... quite a lot of debate ... [around whether it was] appropriate to both close COSAWR down and returning before the system of conscription had ended ... and personal safety issues ... The decision to close COSAWR down came from the ... COSAWR committee ... At the end it was more practical concerns than anything else.[6]

Temple explains the rationale behind the closure of COSAWR:

> COSAWR called a meeting [March 1990] to look at our role in the context of the unbanning of the ANC ... it was probably the largest attendance of war resisters at any one time ... about seventy attended from England, the Netherlands, Germany, Sweden.
>
> After the ANC was unbanned we got to the point where we could ... no longer say to people you have a good chance of getting asylum ... We aways had quite a difficult time motivating for funding. So some of the major reasons that supported the stability of COSAWR throughout the 1980s were disappearing. The perception was either we close it down and maybe it is premature ... or if we do not close it now we are going to just drag on and it is never going to end.[7]

However, three concerns needed to be addressed before the return commenced. Firstly, people had to check with family and decide if it was safe to return. Secondly, legal opinions had to be sought in order to determine if the returnees could still be arrested. The "Safe Return Campaign" coordinated by COSAWR and ECC declared war resisters should not be prosecuted. It was finally assumed that only deserters or those who refused a call-up after their return home could be apprehended. Thirdly, funding had to be arranged. Ultimately the return was partially funded by COSAWR. The UN repatriation plan came in effect after COSAWR had returned.[8]

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6 Interview, Janine Rauch, Johannesburg, 13 October 1993.

7 Interview, Matthew Temple, Johannesburg, 13 October 1993.

8 ibid.

The rationale for an organised group return were multifold. COSAWR member Philip Dexter explained that it would provide a sense of security.[9] Other reasons included paving the way for other exiles, and forcing the government's hand on conscription by making the return into a major publicity stunt. However, Temple's comments indicate that he overestimated the potential of the returning group:

> The problem for the government is that, if we get indemnity, in a sense that will mean the end of conscription. I think it will take this group going back and refusing another call-up to force action by the government.[10]

Cawthra defined the political reason for returning:

> It was generally agreed that any returnees would strengthen the democratic movement, and would refuse to be conscripted into the SADF under any circumstances. COSAWR also endorsed the ECC's demand for the safe return of exiles, the release of imprisoned war resisters and an end to trials of war resisters.[11]

COSAWR member Gerald O'Sullivan saw their return in the context of reversing the "brain drain" and thereby assisting in the reconstruction of South Africa. His statements, which were addressed to a broad audience, were far more conciliatory than Cawthra's views

> We want to tap into the white South African community in general. We want to make people aware of the changing climate here. Many of these people have tremendous skills, and it is time we reversed the brain drain.[12]
>
> We want to return home because we do feel that State President F. W. de Klerk is serious about a radical transformation in this country. And we feel if the State President is absolutely serious about his reform programmes, it is logical that the South African Defence Force must become non-racial and fall under

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9 Weekly Mail November 16 to November 22 1990.

10 Quoted in St. Louis Post-Dispatch 22 October 1990.

11 Work in Progress April 1990, p.4.

12 Weekly Mail 25 May 1990.

> democratic control. It is illogical that conscription continues in the current climate.[13]

The potential numbers of returnees varied; at one time there was talk of twenty-five to thirty.[14] Taylor explains the ECC optimistically expected 'the possibility of many, many, people coming back, a whole plane load, but the practicalities did not allow for it'.[15] Just ten[16] resisters arrived at Jan Smuts Airport on 1 December 1990 yet they sparked a great deal of attention. Fritz Joubert was especially prominent because he is an Afrikaner[17] and was married to a black woman. There was a heavy police presence but no anticipated arrests were made. At an ECC-arranged press conference COSAWR reiterated its previous stand. Temple said, 'We may be prosecuted, but the chances are slight. We are testing the waters for the thousands of conscientious objectors wanting to come home'.[18]

There was joy mixed with apprehension as some had not seen their families in years. The 'tearful' father of resister Greg Murray said, 'I've never seen my 18-month old grandson who was named after me'.[19] Joubert's wife expressed the reservations

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[13] Star 26 May 1990.

[14] COSAWR (UK), Annual Report 1990, p.3.

[15] Interview, Mandy Taylor, Cape Town, 17 February 1994.

[16] Gavin Cawthra estimates that 'about half' of the several hundred people COSAWR helped with asylum applications eventually returned. Telephonic Interview, Johannesburg 3 August 1994.

[17] Joubert is also son of the Deputy Editor of Die Burger. He and his wife were featured in the Weekend Guardian 17-18 November 1990.

[18] Sunday Times (South Africa) 2 December 1990.

[19] ibid.

of many in the group when she said, 'I am not sure what troubles lie ahead but Fritz really wanted to return.'[20]

ANC representative Kgalema Mothlanthe acknowledged the ANC's support for the returnees when he said, 'Men and women should join the army of their own free will. An army that conscripts can only be an army of coercion.'[21] The ECC affirmed the benefits the return group would bring to South Africa when its National Organiser, Roddy Payne, said the return was 'a challenge to the Government to prove its commitment to a new South Africa and facilitate a reversal of the brain drain by the ending of the system of military conscription'.[22] Joubert and another resister, Francois Krige, pressed the conscription issue, but neither they nor any of the other returnees were called up in the months that followed.

De Klerk's historic speech and the reduction of conscription undermined the basis for much of ECC's work, just it had for the international anti-apartheid movement. Rauch says there was 'a lot of welcome ... meetings, jorls ... but the organisation [ECC] had withered away post February 1990 ... individuals wanted a quiet life ... they did not want to be involved in ECC'.[23] Post-1990 the ECC no longer ran high profile, multi-media, activist based campaigns, it rather concentrated on operations requiring just a few people with specific skills. For example, the ECC petitioned the Supreme Court to end conscription, citing the 1991 repeal of the Population Registration Act.

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[20] ibid.

[21] Sowetan 3 December 1990.

[22] Sunday Star 12 December 1990.

[23] Interview, Janine Rauch, Johannesburg, 13 October 1993.

The euphoria of returning was short-lived as people settled into the reality of finding work. Temple spent seven months before finding a job. Some, like Joubert, needed time to become reconciled with their families.

SECTION II

I have tried to determine COSAWR's place in contemporary South African history. COSAWR's impact must be seen in the context of it being a small group opposed to the propaganda of the South African state, its institutions and restraining laws. It was in this context that COSAWR launched its campaign against the conscription of whites into the SADF.

Whites responded to conscription in various ways. Those described as 'discontented' by Gann and Duignan considered themselves more as emigrants than war resisters. Many 'discontented' had European passports so they did not solicit COSAWR's services. They left South Africa to avoid the perceived impending chaos or because of their fear of black majority rule. Some of those 'discontented', who approached COSAWR were the 'yuppie draft dodgers', just seeking a better life and they did not commit themselves to the movement.

Other exiles aspired to become politically involved but could not take conclusive steps to join the liberation struggle. Anthony Egan's thesis on the South African-based white, middle class National Catholic Federation of Students (NCFS), implies that even

those with a sensitivity to the injustices of apartheid were rarely able to openly confront that system:

> Total identification with the struggle against a set of economic, political and racial inequalities which most NCFS members had never personally experienced was well-nigh impossible. Throughout its history the noble-minded anti-apartheid "spirit" was ever willing; all too often however, the white middle class "flesh" was weak.[24]

COSAWR also attracted them – the liberal or pacifist resister. He was typically channelled into less militant solidarity areas like the churches. However, those who joined COSAWR and committed themselves to the struggle showed their flesh was not 'weak'. This is where the validity of Frankel's labelling of COSAWR as a 'radical reaction' to conscription is verified.

COSAWR's ambitions were to publicise the war resistance movement both within South Africa and overseas, research the militarisation of Southern Africa, and influence the ANC's opinion on opposition to military service. COSAWR sought to bring Western European peace groups and soldiers' unions into the fold of the anti-apartheid movement, influence the war resistance issue inside and outside South Africa, and involve whites in anti-apartheid and ANC work.

COSAWR achieved some of its goals. It continually advertised the plight of COs and the ECC through its support campaigns, and television and radio appearances. Reportage of COSAWR on British and Dutch television attests to its legitimacy as a source of information. The periodic reference to COSAWR in South African

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[24] A. Egan, "The Politics of a South African Catholic Student Movement" (The Centre for South African Studies, University of Cape Town, 1991), p.122.

newspapers showed that the movement's position held significance amongst the liberal sectors of the country's media.

COSAWR's publicity arm, Resister, which could have widened COSAWR's support was banned in South Africa – and with good reason, from the previous government's point of view. What it concealed Resister revealed. Examples are Resister's documentation of South Africa's nuclear capabilities, it's exposing of the myth of South Africa's arms self-sufficiency and it's analysis of injustices within the SADF.[25] A minor problem which inhibited COSAWR becoming part of the public conscience was its drawn out title which unlike that of the End Conscription Campaign, failed to indicate its objective clearly. Interestingly, COSAWR's name was often incorrectly spelled out.[26]

COSAWR achieved limited success in its attempts to influence peace movements and Western European soldiers' unions. COSAWR's support for the ANC's armed struggle alienated it from, for example, the Quakers. COSAWR's relations with soldiers' unions were sporadic because South African war resistance was not a pertinent issue for those organisations. For example, COSAWR's work with the VVDM was overshadowed by the Cruise Missile issue.

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[25] See for example, Resister 31, April/May 1984, "The Nuclear Threat: Apartheid's Ultimate Deterrent" pp.12-19, Resister 40 October/November 1985, "If Botha Can Build His Own Why Does Britain Break the Embargo" pp.22-23, and Resister 5, November/December, 1979 "Soldiers in Mass A.W.O.L. Protest" pp.2-3.

[26] See for example, James Barber, The Uneasy Relationship: Britain and South Africa (London, 1993), p.62. or Stephen Davis, Apartheid's Rebels: Inside South Africa Hidden War (Craighall, 1988), p.187.

COSAWR accomplished a limited degree of success by influencing the flow of ideas between the internal and external components of the Anti-Apartheid Movement. Conflict with the AABN, and an especially difficult exile experience prevented COSAWR (NL) from developing war resistance in the Netherlands. The ANC issued consistent statements of support but war resistance was never formal ANC policy or strategy. With hindsight COSAWR members, such as Anderson, conclude that COSAWR could have accomplished more:

> One must bear in mind it is easy to look back post-peristroika. You were on a different planet then. It [COSAWR], including myself, could have argued more with the ANC. It could have played a far more critical role in the struggle than it actually did. And the issue of war resistance in the military. I really believe that was possible. The ANC didn't take it seriously.[27]

Yet Willem Steenkamp says the ANC, [through presumably COSAWR], in the 1970s and 1980s 'missed a golden opportunity by not addressing the war resistance in the Citizen Force, this in the context of soldiers being taken away from their families and jobs for extended periods of time'.[28] In retrospect COSAWR's overseas location was not the ideal position from which to coordinate an extensive domestic war resistance movement. An internally based group would have been best placed to handle this. However, Mandy Taylor says that an internal infiltration strategy was completely separate from that of the ECC. Infiltrating the military was:

> a completely unfeasible option for affecting resistance ... The people would just get lost [in the military] and we would never get the numbers to do it. Also if someone were to be involved in something illicit like sabotage or stealing it wasn't something the organisation [ECC] needed to be involved with.[29]

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[27] Interview, Bill Anderson, Johannesburg, 10 October 1993.

[28] Interview, Willem Steenkamp, Cape Town, 22 November 1994.

[29] Interview, Mandy Taylor, Cape Town, 17 February 1994.

There is little documentation to support the idea that the ANC's underground could have coordinated such a venture. Kasrils claims that Mac Maharaj and Sipiwe Nyanda 'had successfully built up underground ANC structures and were at last providing the kind of leadership that had been absent for many years'.[30] The ANC had its personnel within the SADF who were involved in gathering intelligence rather than setting up an anti-war movement.[31] Anderson, an associate of Kasril's says 'the fact of the matter is that the ANC did not have that political underground'[32] with which to build a successful internal war resistance movement.

COSAWR was one of the few access routes available for whites to join the ANC. COSAWR members Gavin Cawthra, Heather Garner and Fritz Joubert claim that this was one of the positive feature of COSAWR's activities.[33] A criticism of COSAWR is that its largely English-speaking, middle class membership brought a narrow, albeit dedicated group into the ANC and AAM. COSAWR was too radical for most English and Afrikaans-speakers. As well as rarely publishing in Afrikaans, COSAWR's support for the armed struggle alienated those Afrikaners seeking an alternative to conscription. Louw-Potgieter (who did her research before Afrikaans-speakers publicly questioned the war in Angola) contends Afrikaner dissidents saw the PFP as 'the only alternative' because they opposed the black nationalist movements' 'use of violence

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[30] R. Kasrils, Armed and Dangerous: My Undercover Struggle Against Apartheid (Johannesburg, 1993), p.301.

[31] Weekly Mail and Guardian October 8 to 14 1993.

[32] Interview, Bill Anderson, Johannesburg, 10 October 1993.

[33] Interviews, Gavin Cawthra (Telephonic) Johannesburg, 3 August 1994, Heather Garner, Cape Town, 17 February 1994, and Fritz Joubert, Cape Town, 22 February 1994.

and ideological dogmatism'.[34] And two COSAWR members recollect that the motives for most Afrikaner war resisters, that they knew, related to their being gay.[35]

Nevertheless, COSAWR's activities both promoted and helped to project non-racialism within the ANC. On the other hand, COSAWR's exceptional security consciousness contributed to an aura of suspicion which inhibited the movement from attracting more adherents.

An analysis of COSAWR's influence must include its relationship with the ECC. COSAWR's proposals were not always in touch with ECC thinking, but oral evidence shows that COSAWR did have some significance on debate within the internal war resistance movement. Because of differences in strategic perspectives and the physical distance between the organisations, COSAWR was not always able to be sensitive to the policies of the ECC. This, therefore, was a factor impeding the development of a consolidated international/national front which might more successfully have challenged the issue of conscription into the SADF. However, Resister was certainly used as a reference tool by the ECC.

Steve Anderson asserts that in terms of its stated aims[36] the ECC did poorly; at the time of his research (1988-89) conscription was still in progress and COs were still

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[34] J. Louw-Potgieter, Afrikaner Dissidents: A Social and Psychological Study of Identity and Dissident (Avon, England 1988), p.102.

[35] Interviews, Cape Town, Jan Bart Gewald, 11 April 1993 and Gerald Kraak, Johannesburg, 14 October 1993.

[36] See Chapter III.

imprisoned. Though he argued that ECC helped create an 'anti-military youth culture' and 'the issue of conscription became an integral part of South African politics'. He surmised the ECC can claim some credit for the halving of the length of conscription and the reduction of CO sentences.[37]

ECC publicity officer Gavin Evans claims that the organisation:

> influenced the ANC in its attitude toward military service, drew thousands of young white people into the realm of resistance politics and diverted the energies and resources of the apartheid security and intelligence services away from more violent designs ... It was, in most areas, a sexy organisation-green friendly, gay friendly and a watering hole for a generation of artists, musicians and actors who were alienated from the rest of the left.[38]

In a rebuttal to the above comment, which indicates the need for objective research on the ECC, M. Blatchford[39] labels Evans' view as 'foolishly optimistic and biased toward what the self-defined bosses of the ECC dreamed of'. Blatchford acknowledges that the ECC had mobilised whites disenchanted with the white Left, but, he professes these achievements were short-lived because government restrictions nullified the ECC's advances:

> '[w]hat killed the ECC was the State of Emergency. It was no fun to be detained and harassed. Casual membership dwindled ... The organisation became more centralised and less activist friendly.[40]

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[37] Stephen Anderson, "The End Conscription Campaign in Cape Town 1983-1989" (BA Hons, University of Cape Town, 1990), pp. 90 and 95.

[38] The Weekly Mail and Guardian August 26 to September 1 1994.

[39] Blatchford was a member of the ECC's Military Research Group.

[40] The Weekly Mail and Guardian September 9 to 15 1994.

The ECC attracted a few mainstream groups such as the PFP youth wing, but neither the PFP nor its successor, the Democratic Party (DP), ever officially opposed conscription. Mainstream white political parties displayed "weak flesh" as evidenced by their consistent inability to take a firm stand against conscription, for fear of looking weak in the eyes of the (white) electorate. Even in the 1989 election, in the context of the Namibian peace process and the expectation of concrete reform following the resignation of State President P.W. Botha, the DP put forward several prominent military figures as candidates to counter the image that it was soft on security.[41]

In retrospect Cawthra says that overall twenty percent of conscripts failed to report for duty.[42] However, he does not differentiate between political and non-political resistance. Nevertheless, Brigadier W.P. Sass' comments that the war resistance campaign was viewed with 'humour'[43] by the military can be considered misleading. This is evidenced by the restrictions, the propaganda and the infiltration campaigns directed by the state against COSAWR. The use of the word 'humour' is propaganda in itself which downplays any call-up losses the SADF clearly took very seriously. If the SADF did view anti-conscription activity with 'humour' it is because it stifled most dissent.

The South African war resistance movement might not have achieved the same degree of support as the Vietnam anti-war movement. White South Africa viewed itself as fighting for its survival, plus, the restrictions on the South African anti-war movement

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[41] T.R.H. Davenport, South Africa: A Modern History (London, 1991), p.444.

[42] Cawthra (et al.) War and Resistance: Southern African Reports: The Struggle for Southern Africa as Documented by Resister Magazine, (London, 1994), p.207.

[43] See Introduction.

were far greater. At the inception of the organisation members did not anticipate the time required to understand, and address, the psychological aspects of exile. Asylum cases, treated individually, consumed a considerable amount of COSAWR's time and limited resources. COSAWR's difficulties were compounded by inadequate funding. The above factors help to explain in part why resistance never occurred on a greater scale.

Nevertheless, COSAWR took on an active commitment to struggle against apartheid. In this thesis I have attempted to provide a greater understanding of who was involved in war resistance, why they were involved, how they became involved and what they accomplished. Despite COSAWR's limited achievements, its tenacity in staying together for twelve trying years epitomised its drive and commitment.

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F. Interviews

1. COSAWR Personnel

Bill Anderson, founder member of COSAWR.

Gavin Cawthra, COSAWR (UK) administrator (1978-1986).

Jan Bart Gewald, COSAWR (NL) administrator (1986-1989).

Fritz Joubert, COSAWR Committee member.

Gerald Kraak, COSAWR Committee member.

Kevin Laue, founder member of COSAWR.

Janine Rauch, COSAWR Committee member.

Ian Robertson, COSAWR member.

Matthew Temple, COSAWR (UK) administrator (1989-90).

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2. Exiles indirectly associated with COSAWR

Ian Bruce, first South African to receive asylum status in the Netherlands based on avoidance of the military.

Darcy du Toit, founder member of the Zuid Afrikanse Deinstweigeraars Project (ZADP) in the Netherlands.

Anthony Akerman, South African Playwright.

3. ECC Personnel

Michael Evans, ECC activist in the Western Cape.

Laurie Nathan, Former National Chairperson of the ECC.

Mandy Taylor, Former National Secretary of the ECC.

4. Anti-Apartheid Movement Personnel

Conny Braam, President of the Dutch Anti-Apartheid Movement.

Fons Geerlings, Secretary of the Dutch Anti-Apartheid Movement.

5. Other Interviewees

Brian Bunting, Member of the Central Committee of the South African Communist Party.

Madi Grey, Sweden-based South African journalist.

Elle-Kari Hojeberg, Journalist with Swedish Radio Broadcasting.

Peter Moll, Prominent conscientious objector/subject of major COSAWR support campaign.

Indres Naidoo, South African Communist Party.

Dan O'Meara, Formerly associated with Eduardo Mondlane University in Maputo.

Karel Roskam, Dutch journalist and founding member of the Comite Zuid Afrika (CZA).

Brigadier WP Sass (Ret.) Former Director of Strategic Planning (SADF).

James Selfe, Former Senior Research Assistant with the Progressive Federal Party (PFP) with speciality on Defence and Security.

Larry Shore, Member of the South African Military Refugee Assistance Fund (SAMRAF).

Willem Steenkamp, Former military corespondent for the Cape Times.

Rockland Williams, Former Officer in Umkhonto we Sizwe (MK) Intelligence.

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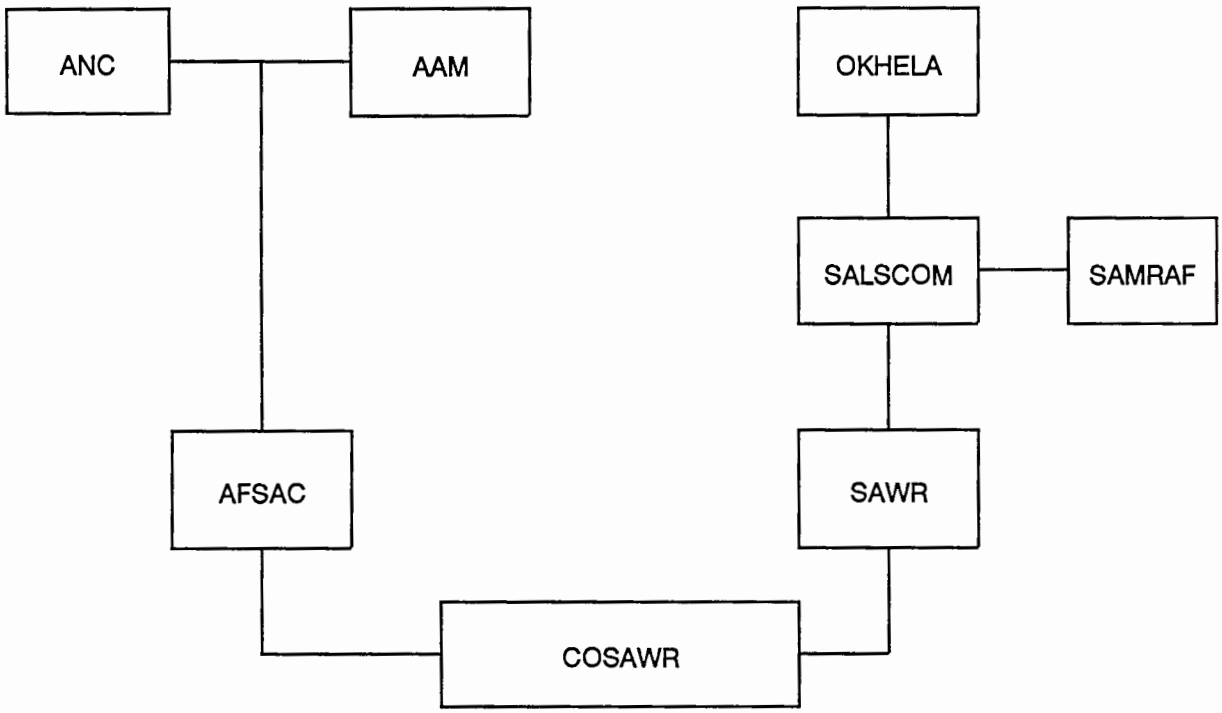
APPENDIX A



The progression of the war resistance groups until the founding of COSAWR.

In 1973 OKHELA was founded by the Afrikaans poet Breyten Breytenbach. A couple of its members, the Rev. Don Morton and Bill Anderson, would become prominent in the war resistance movement.

In July 1977 the ANC-sympathetic Advice for South African Conscripts (AFSAC) was founded by the AAM, the ANC and Kevin Laue.

In December 1977 the South African Liberation Support Committee (SALSCOM) was founded by Black Consciousness sympathizers Bill Anderson and Don Morton.

In June 1978 SALSCOM changed its name to South African War Resisters (SAWR) and it set up a fund raising wing called the South African Military Refugee Assistance Fund (SAMRAF).

In December 1978 SAWR and AFSAC merged into the Committee on South African War Resistance (COSAWR). SAMRAF continued to exist in the USA until the early 1980s.