

THE USE OF BLACKS IN THE SOUTH AFRICAN ARMED FORCES*

by

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Force is essential to maintain South Africa's inequitable racist system. The dominant White group has been able to sustain itself in power because it has consciously monopolized control of the coercive instruments of the state. For White South Africans, the raw nerve of the "colour question" - who dominates in inter-group terms - is exposed by the emotional spectre of well trained and well armed Black soldiers in the country. Through the years has emerged an implicit doctrine that Blacks should not be armed. In reality, this doctrine is as much myth as it is reality.

Before and since the establishment of Union government, selected Blacks have been variously employed in armed defence of the status quo. Yet prejudices against arming Blacks varied in intensity with time and with the situation. In the end, the use of Blacks was contingent upon the experiences of the Government in question, the perceived gravity of the security threat, and upon the opportunities Whites saw to exploit prevailing political/military divisions among and within population groups.

The present situation is a classic policy dilemma. Whites want to maintain and defend their material advantages and political/social privileges. But the demographic realities of a rapidly growing Black population, coupled with mounting Black restiveness and undeniable isolation of the White government, require that larger costs be borne to defend the order. Continually inflating defence budgets, national compulsory military training for all White males between 18 and 25, plus post-service Citizen Force and reserve obligations, cause much resentment and economic dislocation.

By the early 1970s there was hardly a White politician of national stature who had not fallen in with the prevailing viewpoint that the defence of South Africa should involve all population groups, and that larger numbers of Blacks would have to be brought into the armed forces. White resistance to a deeper defence involvement of other population groups has broken down, partly because of government's cautious phasing in of Black fighting forces in the diverse units and formations devised for

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those purposes. Experiences in Namibia, Portuguese Africa, and Zimbabwe must have had their effects, too. The sum total of arguments in favour of the government's proposed course weighs heavily in the debate. It might be helpful to review them here.

First have been a battery of manpower considerations, particularly as they affect the economy and the defensive capacity of the regime, but also in terms of evolving domestic race relations. Look at population growth trends by race. Look at the shortages in skilled and experienced personnel in industry and on the mines. Add to this the threat of internal unrest and the possibility of external invasion, and the manpower bow is drawn all the more taut. Yet the manpower recipe is not so simple. As long as Blacks continue to serve in "traditional" (i.e. menial) military roles, control is easy. But there is a qualitative difference between Blacks performing quasi-economic roles in the defence establishment and Blacks assuming combat, and even supervisory and command, responsibilities. Control may still be possible, depending on structure, deployment and dozens of other variables, but is no longer automatic. Important tactical and combative skills that heretofore had been the legal monopoly of the dominant group are being transmitted (on a small scale) to individual Blacks. It takes a leap of faith, an act of desperation, or an exercise in arrogance for the South African power structure to move in these directions.

Manpower concerns alone did not carry debate. So far, the use of Blacks in defence has been more symbolic than numerically significant. Other arguments must be explored. Perhaps as popular has been what can be labelled the domestic political argument. It holds that maintaining order in a racially heterogeneous society demands that all groups must stand together. Superficially, how better to convince people that their defence and security are bound up with yours, and that you have confidence in their commitment, than to bring them into the defensive arm of the state.

This links up with another theme - the need for South Africa to erase the image of a "White regime" excluding the Black majority. We are told that the struggle in southern Africa is not a race war, but a battle between Western civilization and the forces of destructive communism. What must be created is a defence force that is "truly representative of the whole population". What is particularly naive in this type of thinking is that South African officials assume that the West will applaud the greater use of Blacks without looking deeper into the underlying purposes for which those steps are being taken. South African Blacks are not so credulous. In so far as the enlistment of Blacks is designed to deflect Western criticism and thereby reduce pressures for genuine shifts in the power structure, the West should not be fooled. Plenty of politicians and some military men regard Black military units chiefly as public relations gestures. For both domestic and foreign policy purposes, a multi-racial armed force is favoured, not, and this should be emphasized, as a first choice, but because it is seen to have become a political, military and/or economic necessity.

Other politicians speak of the inequities of having only Whites bearing the burden of defence. Other economic and social considerations (besides manpower), such as unemployment, job training and social reform, also are injected in the debate. The Nationalist government does not want to take the public position that the SADF is trying to bring about back-door social reform. They perceive that their own constituents will not buy such a policy. There is a body of opinion, entrenched in higher levels of Defence Headquarters, that perceives of the SADF as the vanguard of social reform in South Africa, a catalyst for South African society. They encourage the regime to abandon rigid apartheid and to make the transition to some institutions predicated on merit. For the Defence hierarchy, it is a self-assured plea for meritocracy. They know that the transition would be slow and the advantage will always lie with those who establish the standards and judge performance. They also realize that it cannot run its logical course without jeopardizing the regime.

What resistance there is to these views in Parliament comes largely from the Nationalist right wing. Such spokesmen pose not so much a challenge but more like a restraining hand, a counsel of hesitation, of prudence. If there is one characteristic of the Government's move to the military use of Blacks it has been caution. Nothing

has been rushed. At each stage the ground has been carefully prepared.

In a way, the movement to Black forces began in two units peripheral to the central issue. The first preliminary use of Blacks was strictly not a SADF matter, but none the less contributed to a willingness to train Blacks for war. I refer to the South African Police (SAP), which for years has had large numbers of Blacks in the ranks, almost 50 per cent. The police are a national organization with para-military structure and preparation. SAP is regarded as "the first line of defence in the event of internal unrest". Its members are trained in infantry drill and combat and in riot control, as well as in the conventional police skills. Some undergo counter-insurgency training. There has been a close security collaboration between the SAP and the SADF. Defence Department White Papers repeatedly refer to the responsibility "to give immediate support to the SA Police in the maintenance of internal law and order". (1) Likewise, SAP is prepared to support and has supported SADF in protecting the territory from external incursion, both in South Africa and in Namibia and Zimbabwe. The line between police and military duties is fuzzy in South Africa. The extensive use of armed Black police has, in effect, made foolish earlier protestations that Blacks ought not to be armed for defence purposes. They already had been armed, to an extent, albeit under obviously controlled conditions.

The second step towards the military use of Blacks began in 1963. In April that year, the Cape Corps Auxiliary Service was replaced by a new unit named The Coloured Corps, to be an integral part of the Permanent Force. At first Corps personnel were unarmed non-combatants, serving in roles similar to those of the Corps in World War II. The "dilution" policy of dispersing Coloured Corps personnel to White units of the Permanent Force was resurrected. Two years later, Coloured recruits were accepted into the Navy.

To assuage anticipated White opposition, the Minister specified that Corps members would neither be trained in nor used for combat. But they were given firearms instruction, confined to single-shot small arms for self-defence and guard duty. In addition, the Military Discipline Code enacted in 1957 was amended so that a Coloured soldier would always be junior to a White soldier, even if he should outrank his White colleague. (2) At that time, however, the highest rank to which a Corps man could aspire was Warrant Officer I in the Navy and Staff Sergeant (1st class) in the Army.

A significant shift in structure was instituted in 1972. It had become apparent that young Coloured men with the requisite educational standards were not being attracted in sufficient numbers. The approved establishment as of 1 April 1965 was to be 527. Fewer than 100 were attested. Economic inducements were not appealing. Status was marginal. The SACC was unable to maintain itself at approved force levels. The SACC tended to attract "up-country people". By 1971 only 430 of the 627 posts were filled (68 per cent) and only 50 per cent of the 248 Permanent Force posts for the SACC in the Navy were filled. Two changes sought to rectify these problems.

First, the name of the Corps was changed to the SA Cape Corps, the respected name of the Coloured units serving in the World Wars. Continuity had officially been sanctioned. Second, in July 1972 Minister P. W. Botha announced the formation of a Special Service Battalion for Coloureds associated with the Cape Corps. The SSB (now called the SACCB) is also voluntary, but with a difference. It was established as a form of national service for Coloureds. At the end of their training members of the SSB are given the choice of re-entering civilian life without any further military obligation, or of joining the Permanent Force. The SACC now consists of the SACCB for the volunteers (an infantry battalion), a logistics unit (SACC Maintenance Unit), and the Cape Corps School. (3) The latter unit represents the first Black officers training facility. Other Permanent Force members of the SACC might go on for specialist training (paratroop, military police, etc.) and find themselves in various White units. There are also several post-service options for Coloureds within the SADF.

Overall, the 1972 changes had marked effects on Coloured military service. As options widened, recruitment picked up. Larger and larger intakes were enrolled.

The Corps advanced from a 32 per cent vacancy rate in April 1972 to a waiting list of several hundred in the late 1970s. The January 1980 intake numbered about 1,400. Greater selectivity is now possible and "elite" status is ballyhooed. The 1980 force levels can be put at, at least, 3,100 in all services, with around 1,600 in the Permanent Force and around 1,500 in preparatory national service.

In the last few years the idea of compulsory military service for Blacks, and especially for Coloureds and Indians, has been mooted, and by elements closer and closer to Government. (4) But certain practical problems make such a programme difficult. First, how would government reconcile compulsory military service for selected groups of Blacks with the absence of full citizenship rights for these same groups. Does one achieve rights by denying service first until full citizenship is accorded, or should one serve first and thereby use such a demonstration of loyalty as a political lever to win full political rights? The more common Coloured view has been the former position, no service without rights first. Outside the Coloured Representative Council the more tenacious view is that the position of Coloureds and Indians cannot be divorced from that of Black Africans. All must achieve rights first, before any serve militarily. Government claims that their surveys show that Coloureds are willing to serve, even compulsorily, as long as rights and benefits within the SADF are equalized. (5) Suffice to say that opinion within the Coloured community varies according to age, income, place of residence (i.e. rural or urban), religion and language.

So far, all Coloureds in the SADF have been volunteers. A few hundred, or even a few thousand, out of an economically insecure population of around 2,800,000 presents few burdens. But it is a far leap from an "elite" and selective unit to a compulsory and more inclusive military body. In short, the absorptive capacity of the SADF would be tested.

Voluntary service so far has implied some degree of agreement with or acquiescence in the political and economic status quo, or at least a more evolutionary approach to changing it. Could an indoctrination programme deal with recruits unconvinced or hostile to the system? Attempts to establish a high-school para-military cadet programme have so far received little sympathy in the Coloured community or among educators. So the technique used in the White schools to indoctrinate future national servicemen will not easily be transferable to the Coloured schools.

Not until the first intakes of the SACSSB in 1973 were modern Coloured servicemen trained for combat - in counter-insurgency operations and in the use of automatic weapons. The step-like employment of Cape Corpsmen in Namibia also characterizes the empirical style of SADF. It began with Coloureds in "traditional" roles - cooks and drivers in the late 1960s and early 1970s assigned as individuals "diluted" to White formations. The first Coloured soldiers to see active duty as a combat unit since World War I were sent "up north" in September 1976. Every year since at least one contingent has been sent for a 3-month stint of operational duty. The government is keen to get effective political mileage out of these troops.

Efforts were also made to tap Coloured leadership and supervisory potential. Today, most of the instructors in the SACC are Coloured. When first initiated, the highest rank to which a Coloured Corpsman could aspire was Warrant Officer Class I. Two company sergeant-majors attained this rank in June 1970. In May 1973 the Minister of Defence disclosed the Government's intention to allow Cape Corpsmen to become commissioned officers. Henceforth, he contended, advancement in the force would be based entirely on merit. In this important speech he also revealed that it was his thinking that eventually the SACC would be run entirely by Coloured officers, that Government intended that SSB trainees who had completed their training would be organized into Citizen Force units of the Corps, and that there would be no objection in principle to the employment of Coloured persons in any of the three arms of the SADF. (6)

Eleven officer candidates were selected and 18½ months later seven emerged with commissions. (7) Three years later five of these seven gained promotion from lieutenant to captain. Three became majors in 1979. Despite these highly publicized examples, there has been a dearth of qualified officer candidates. Despite the 1975 amendment to the Military Discipline Code redefining the term "superior officer" to equalize the legal status of all army commissions and ranks, few really qualified Coloured officer candidates have applied.

As for pay and benefits, by 1977 salary scales had been brought more into line although they are not equal. (8) The same is true of dependents' allowances and daily pay for national servicemen. Fringe benefits have been equalized while on operational duty. So far, it would appear that salaries and benefits are not a significant disincentive to enlisting at the lower levels. The present Prime Minister has expressed his intention to bring SADF benefits and salaries more in line among the races. Allowances under SADF jurisdiction alone are the same for all races serving in the operational area. But with salaries, Parliamentary approval and approval by the Public Service Commission are necessary.

While the SADF may, at the top, be verbally committed to ending the most niggling forms of racial discrimination in the organization, the basic ones, segregated formations and an all-White command structure at the top, still apply. Inequalities and inequities are still part and parcel of the system. Racist attitudes are an everyday part of the social regime and the military as well. Official efforts to underplay, suppress and transcend them, even in a disciplined military hierarchy, cannot eliminate racism altogether or hope to shield Black soldiers from their ubiquity. The Defence Force is part of the regime it defends. A piecemeal assault on deeply engrained attitudes and beliefs is bound to end in frustration.

In many regards, things done with, to and by the SACC are examined carefully at SADF headquarters to determine their applicability to other Black formations and groups. The SACC is regarded as an organizational guinea pig. The product, they think, is a saleable commodity - to that part of White South Africa skittish about arming and training Blacks for combat; somewhat less so to the Coloured citizenry itself, even less to the rest of the Black community, watching to see how Coloureds fare as a result of their identification with defending the regime; and to the outside world.

Another policy contributing to the acceptance of armed Black defence forces was to establish and train national guards and eventually the armies for the ethnic "homelands". Such schemes can be rationalized as preparations for self-government and then foreign military assistance to neighbouring states. The same might be said of the formation of various ethnic military units in Namibia. From the beginning of such ideas, the homeland armies were regarded as part of a larger multinational defence force operating in the interests of a "wider South African" defence plan. (9) South Africa, having lost its ring of buffer states on its border, may well see the homelands as an inner ring of buffer states to provide added response time given an incursion from the north, east or west. All the homelands occupy potentially strategic positions close to South Africa's borders. Their citizens also have kinsmen across the borders. Thus a total strategy involving the homelands in South Africa's defence is quite within the thinking of Pretoria. Yet military planners regard the homelands as a strategic nightmare.

In 1975 the SADF began to train Black soldiers and instructors for the embryonic homeland governments. The United Party defence spokesman, W. V. Raw, in welcoming the April 1975 announcement of the formation of a Transkeian battalion, none the less asked the Prime Minister what agreement had been reached with the Transkeian Government regarding this force. He suggested a "NATO-type treaty" of mutual self-defence by which South Africa retained the right of access to Transkeian territory, and which organized the two forces under the single command of the SADF. (10) Others have argued for a multilateral Monroe Doctrine not unlike the Organization of American States' Charter to enable the Republic to move legally into homelands' territory for defence purposes. (11) Still others hint at a Brezhnev doctrine of sorts.

Transkei troops have been trained at Eerste Rivier in the Cape, beginning in August 1975, and at Lenz, near Johannesburg. (12) By the end of 1976 force strength numbered 254 soldiers and trainees, led by 30 officers, warrant officers and men seconded by the SADF. (13) Their Commanding Officer also served as Secretary of Defence to the Transkeian Government. (14) Despite the Transkeian severance of diplomatic and military relations with South Africa in 1978, the South African Government presses on with its policy, confident that Transkeian opposition is the annoyance of a flea which will have to learn the lesson dearly that it has a symbiotic, if not dependent, existence on the South African hound.

The other "independent" homelands, Bophuthatswana and Venda, have also accepted South African guidance for military purposes. After frequent remarks by Bophuthatswana's now Prime Minister, Chief Lucas Mangope, that Whites can expect Tswanas to help defend South Africa, in 1976 his Government asked the SADF to train Tswanas for military service. By "independence" in December 1977, some 221 men (including eight commissioned officers) had been trained by 30 South African officers. (15)

The Namibia puzzle is more complicated. When it became apparent that some version of independence would have to be conferred upon Namibia, the South African Government, in search of a neo-colonial solution, first decided to structure that independence along ethnic lines. A part of this divide and dominate policy had been to follow the installation of homeland governments with homeland police and defence forces. Ostensibly at the request of homeland leaders, homeland battalions were created and trained by the SADF, much along the lines devised for the Transkei. The first Ovambos were recruited in 1974. A Bushman Unit was formed that year. By the end of January 1976, Minister of Defence P. W. Botha disclosed that Black soldiers fighting in the northern border of Namibia were, in fact, "members of the border area authorities". All were members of the auxiliary services rather than the SADF Permanent Force. These presumably included Bushmen, Ovambo and Kavango battalions which by the end of 1976 numbered about 500 men. Although the homeland battalions began by being organized strictly on tribal lines, all trainees wear identical SADF uniforms and Afrikaans is used as the medium of instruction and command. The SADF command structure applies, in contrast to the homeland police forces, which officially are under the direct control of the homeland authorities. (16) The tribal units are totally under SADF control. In addition, the SADF organized in 1976 a battalion composed of Angolan refugees and including some Portuguese. This secret unit, 32 Battalion, is specifically designed for "cross border" operations. It is armed with captured Russian weapons and includes some Portuguese company commanders as well as SADF officers.

The ethnic principle was moved southward later in 1976 and 1977, with training for Nama, Hereros, Damara and Coloured units. (17) Such a device, however, is an old ploy by occupying forces - to claim that local leaders (especially those dependent on the occupying force) invited them either to defend them or to set up indigenous forces that the outsiders controlled. As SADF units became unpopular in the fighting areas of Namibia, the onus of occupation had to be passed along to the homeland leaders. (18) But the shift to homeland forces was chiefly symbolic. The initial intake from each ethnic group was only 160, hardly sufficient to alter the drift of a deteriorating and widening liberation war. This does not prevent them from serving political purposes - as symbols of "acceptable" traditional authority, to protect tribal chiefs, to maintain order at political rallies, and to harass SWAPO organizers and otherwise lend assistance to the Democratic Turnhalle Alliance and other anti-revolutionary parties. (19)

It became evident before long, even to Pretoria, that the Turnhalle formula would not be acceptable to SWAPO, the Western powers, and even to a majority of Namibians. So the line was developed that, although the different ethnic groups were being trained separately, eventually they would form part of an integrated, Namibia-wide defence force. Certainly in the way they were being deployed, i.e. anywhere in the territory, it was obvious that recruits were not being trained solely to bolster regional homeland governments. In fact, they have been completely under the SADF command and have been deployed as if they were a part of the Defence Force itself. (20)

At first, official thinking involved retaining ethnic units and merely integrating them at command and strategic planning levels. Officially, the ethnic designations were eliminated in late 1978, but composition is unchanged. The "non-ethnic" ethnic units, four of which are stationed in the operational area, became a part of a new South West African defence force in 1979, but the SADF remained in the driver's seat.

In August 1977, an "indigenous" force, 41 Battalion, was organized for the entire territory. (21) A few Black commandos were also established that year. This was followed in February 1978 by the suspension of recruitment into the tribal armies. It is claimed that the tribal units are now up to full strength. The five companies of 41 Battalion (between 400 and 600 in total) are composed of men from diverse ethnic groups, although a large number of them are Bastards. In that the transitional role of the contending armed forces is one of the most important and contentious issues in any future negotiations. It is easy to see this move to a territory-wide defence force as an important bargaining gambit in anticipation of demands that the SADF be withdrawn or reduced in numbers, or confined to base or to specified regions of the country, before independence.

By a series of indirect steps, at first limited in scope but significant in symbolic impact, the South African Government has moved into the use of Black soldiers. The police, the homeland armies, and in Namibia the homeland battalions followed by a multi-ethnic territorial battalion, have served to break down White resistance and reticence to Black fighting men. These steps have also served to neutralize some external criticism and opposition. The South African government thinks it can manage.

By the time Chief of the Army Lt General Magnus Malan granted permission to establish the South African Army Bantu Training Centre in November 1973, the SADF had accumulated some experience with Black fighting men. Initially, however, the new unit did not veer radically from past experience. First recruits came over from the Bantu Labour Service, and the first advertisement touted the unit as a special guard formation. Through 1974 and 1975 the status of the unit was unclear - neither fish nor fowl - neither labourer nor soldier. Certainly, they were not to function as an operational combat force.

Three important changes were brought about in 1975. First, Black Africans were for the first time eligible to join the Permanent Force. Second, the Bantu Training Centre was moved to Lenz, its current base, and was deemed then to be self-sufficient. Third, the unit's name was changed to the 21 Battalion. It was still not an operational battalion *per se*, like most other infantry battalions in the Defence Force, even though an operational company was formed in 1977. Rather, it was a "training school", by and large, for non-combatant services.

Until 1978 the 21 Battalion existed on an *ad hoc* basis. In that year, a Board of Officers decided to build the 21 Battalion into a full-fledged training school for Black soldiers and to involve all ethnic groups. The board also agreed to set up a number of regional units, perhaps at first of company size although capable of growth. Each would be an operational unit, decentralized and attached to a regional command, and thereby taking on a particular ethnic composition. In regional units, members are recruited locally, and somewhat lower qualifications apply than for 21 Battalion members. They are clearly envisioned to be the fighting element of the SADF. So far, there is the 121 Battalion, attached to the Natal Command and composed of Zulu, and the 111 Battalion, made up of Swazi and Shangaan and based in the eastern Transvaal.

At Lenz, the first batch of corporals were promoted in 1977 and the first 16 sergeants two years later. Significantly, the highest ranking Blacks in the SADF are outside the regular line of command. With regard to training at 21 Battalion, the emphasis is on counter-insurgency fighting and then on specialization courses. In mid-1977, the 21 Battalion began preparing a company of 140 for operational duty and in late March 1978 it went off to the eastern Caprivi for 3 months. In 1979, a

second operational company served there as well.

In the past 6 years the 21 Battalion has evolved from a largely auxiliary support unit producing instructors in administrative and artisan skills to a formation with a dual purpose - primarily for training, but also with an operational combat unit. The propaganda utility of 21 Battalion has begun to be realized, and in some respects so has its practical utility. Today the unit numbers perhaps 700 men, with prospects now for a much more rapid expansion in the use of Blacks, mostly through the growth and addition of regional, ethnic-based operational formations.

As the professionalization of the 21 Battalion occurs it comes directly into conflict with the homelands scheme. The regionalization of Black units does little to solve the issue. Logically, as each ethnic group achieves "independence" soldiers attached to 21 Battalion or any other Black African fighting unit from that particular ethnic group should be demobilized from the SADF, or reattested to the army of the new state. Presumably Blacks are to have citizenship in their "own" homeland. South African Black units would be increasingly composed of non-South African nationals, constituting mercenaries or a foreign legion within the Republic. There is a choice offered in Black contracts. Members of an ethnic group gaining "independence" may be attested to their "own" homeland's forces when their homeland attains "independence". Among the Venda members of the SADF, however, few exercised that option.

SADF headquarters is aware of the possibility of non-citizen soldiers and they do not like it. None the less, they plow on, assuming that no future conflict need occur, or that a controllable force made up of "expatriates" can be structurally integrated into the SADF. The Byzantine emperors recognized that mercenary armies must not be allowed to become ethnically homogeneous, lest they constitute a greater danger to their employers. They kept mercenaries divided on ethnic lines to prevent them from combining against government. The existence of separate racial formations and the regional decentralization of Black Africans (a form of group "dilution policy") could be seen as preventative measures facilitating White control. But organization (specifically Balkanization) is only one way to control the Black forces. South Africa has used it, but it has also sought to control by careful recruitment and selection. Indoctrination is a third technique.

It must not be forgotten that South Africa's use of Blacks is a pragmatic response rather than a reflection of harmonious, non-racial attitudes and relationships. It has never been a question of whether to oppose insurgents, but how. The use of Black soldiers is regarded as serving both political and military ends. It serves the dual purpose of steeling the community in adversity and also liberalizing that society, while keeping the institution being liberalized remote, so they think, from the larger policy. A moral climate has been created approving of the use of Black soldiers and the expansion of the SADF. It is, in short, an institution that is a product of historical and material circumstances, which White power would like to keep divorced from those circumstances. The talk about a "people's army" or a "people's defence force", terms making the rounds of the National Party and the SADF (22), is self-delusion, but it can lead to unexpected spin-offs, at least in so far as it leads to an acceptance of armed Blacks and admits of the relationship between military service and citizenship.

In so far as the armed forces leadership are arbiters of politics, that is, they are one of the main pillars of authority since government hardly rests on the loyalty of its Black subjects, their voice cannot be ignored. Magnus Malan occupies a position extremely close to P. W. Botha. The SADF is higher in policy-making councils than at any time in its history. The White populace sees the professional armed forces as an indispensable institution. And, once having achieved this exalted position, it may well have an effect on the polity greater than the polity's effect on it. In a way, the military has been raised to the level of a good in itself. At present the SADF seems to play the role as a trendsetter. That will not necessarily last. One can envision the SADF in the future becoming alarmed about too large a proportion of the armed forces being Black, talk of "people's army" notwithstanding.

The small numbers of Blacks in the Permanent Force (around 9.5 per cent) signifies the experimental nature of the Government's approach. Except for the Namibian and homeland forces, less than one per cent of the service are Black. Caution is not a substitute for careful thought and planning. Many of the decisions regarding Black units were arrived at post facto and were crisis oriented. The success of 21 Battalion, the outcome of the Transkeian dispute, and the sheer command and organizational confusion inherent in separate homeland armies and different racial and ethnic units may well prompt government to reconsider its earlier approach to control by subdivision along territorial and ethnic lines. They may come to feel that there are other ways to accomplish the same ends.

It is almost inevitable that, as the threat mounts, the Government will have to rely on Blacks to fill Defence Force manpower needs. It could be that if Namibia should gain an independence acceptable to the outside world and to SWAPO, and a measure of stability should be achieved there, a temporary break in the defence needs of South Africa might lead to declining usage of Black troops - a sort of last-hired-first-fired principle. This, however, would merely be a temporary interruption in an otherwise upward spiral of military confrontation in the region. The Defence Force hierarchy and opposition White parties are pushing a wary Government into greater use of Blacks and a liberalization in the terms of their service and remuneration. Step by step this is being done. In April 1978 the SADF, without fanfare, quietly eliminated all legal regulations relating to racial and sexual discrimination in the SADF. Yet, in practice, such "liberalization" is by no means complete, or even marginally a reality. At this point one need hardly be concerned about the role of fraternization of the races at rank and file levels. Except in the operational area, structures do not admit of much mixing except in traditional super and subordinate roles. But such changes must be low-key: some politicians accuse the SADF of breaking racial laws and violating social customs. Although reforms are noteworthy, especially in the social context of South Africa, they will not change the distribution of power and control within the armed forces, and certainly not within the society as a whole. Extensive use of Black soldiers in Zimbabwe, Mozambique and Angola did little to alter the constellation of power there - indeed, it did much to prolong the lives of those White regimes.

Greater use of Blacks in the SADF should not surprise us. In its general outlines it is in keeping with past South African practice. But there remains the potential for consequences which may not be foreseen. Many Blacks see enlistment as nothing more than an economic opportunity where few others exist. In South Africa and Namibia Blacks do not function on a free labour market. Inducements can be provided to fill expanded recruitment quotas. To say this is not to imply that a majority of Blacks support the state and are willing to defend it. On the contrary, unscientific surveys indicate that most Blacks are unwilling to fight in defence of the Republic, with its current power structure and policies. (23) The long-range picture looks bleak for the regime.

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Notes

- (1) Republic of South Africa, Department of Defence, White Paper on Defence, 1977 (Simonstown: SA Navy, 1977), p. 9; also, White Paper on Defence and Armament Production, 1973 (Pretoria: Government Printer, 1973), pp. 5 & 8-9; or the Minister of Defence in Senate Debates, 26 April 1961, cols. 3669-70; and House of Assembly Debates, 24 June 1967, col. 8627.
- (2) Quoted in Dr Barakat Ahmad, "South Africa's Military Establishment", UN, Department of Political and Security Council Affairs, Unit on Apartheid, Notes and Documents, No. 25/72 (December 1972), p. 9.

- (3) Cape Times, 24 December 1979, p. 2.
- (4) Rand Daily Mail (Johannesburg), 18 August 1977.
- (5) Cited in House of Assembly Debates, 26 May 1978, col. 7999.
- (6) Cape Times, 12 May 1973.
- (7) Ibid., 15 & 16 May 1975. And also: Presentation of Acts of Commission to the First Cape Corps Officers in the SADF (Simonstown: SA Navy Printing Press, 15 May 1975).
- (8) See: House of Assembly Debates, 4 May 1977, Q1015-20.
- (9) See: M. C. Botha, Minister of Bantu Administration, in The Star (Johannesburg), Weekly Air Edition, 11 August 1973, p. 15.
- (10) House of Assembly Debates, 17 April 1975, cols. 4360-61; and 21 April 1975, col. 4495.
- (11) G. E. J. Stephens and H. Buoyson, "The Angolan Conflict: its relevance for South Africa in her relations with future independent Bantustans and the need for a Monroe Doctrine", South African Yearbook of International Law, Vol. I (Pretoria: University of South Africa, 1976), pp. 103-14. Thinking of the current Prime Minister is reflected in House of Assembly Debates, 22 April 1975, cols. 4583-84.
- (12) Cmdt. P. Coetzee, "Transkei Army Takes Shape", Paratus, v. 26, no. 7 (July 1975), pp. 2-3; "Transkei Army Volunteers Get Cracking", Paratus, v. 26, no. 9 (September 1975), pp. 8-9; The Star, WAE, 7 February 1976, p. 14, and 24 April 1976, p. 12; and A. Leon, "1 Transkei Battalion and 21 Battalion: object lessons in togetherness at Lenz", Paratus, v. 27, no. 3 (March 1976), pp. 19-21.
- (13) "Transkeian Defence Force", Paratus, v. 27, no. 10 (October 1976), pp. 6-8; and South Africa Digest, 1 October 1976, p. 4.
- (14) Paratus Supplement, January 1978, p. iii; and Paratus, v. 29, no. 2 (February 1978), pp. 6-7.
- (15) "Historic Occasion for Bophuthatswana as homeland decides on its own Defence Force", Paratus, v. 28, no. 2 (February 1977), p. 15; and "Bophuthatswana's National Guard", Paratus, v. 28, no. 6 (June 1977), p. 18.
- (16) "All Options and None: the Constitutional Talks in Namibia", Fact Paper on South Africa (International Defence and Aid Fund), No. 3 (August 1976), pp. 11-12; and "In Kavango Werk Hulle Kliphard kan 'n eie leer", Paratus, v. 27, no. 3, (March 1976), p. 7.
- (17) Focus, No. 12 (September 1977), p. 7; "The Namas Get Their Own Army", Paratus, v. 28, no. 9 (September 1977), pp. 2-4.
- (18) On SADF treatment of the Namibian civilian population, see: The Star, WAE, 20 August 1977, p. 3; House of Assembly Debates, 24 June 1977, Q1408; and, "Moet net nie soldaat se wapen wegvat", Paratus Supplement, May 1978, p. ix. These views are, of course, filtered through the lenses of South African regime supporters and publicists.
- (19) Focus, No. 15 (March 1978), p. 15.
- (20) The Star, WAE, 17 September 1977, p. 7; and 24 September 1977, p. 16.
- (21) "41 Bn - SWA's Own Army", Paratus Supplement, April 1978, p. iii.
- (22) E.g., see: House of Assembly Debates, 2 March 1979, cols. 1720, 1730 & 1752; and Maj. Gen E. A. C. Pienaar, in Rand Daily Mail, 28 January 1979.
- (23) See: "End Passes and We'll Fight", The Star, WAE, 13 March 1976, p. 5; The Star, Daily edition, 19 September 1978; and the letter to the editor in The Star, WAE, 12 March 1977, p. 9.

