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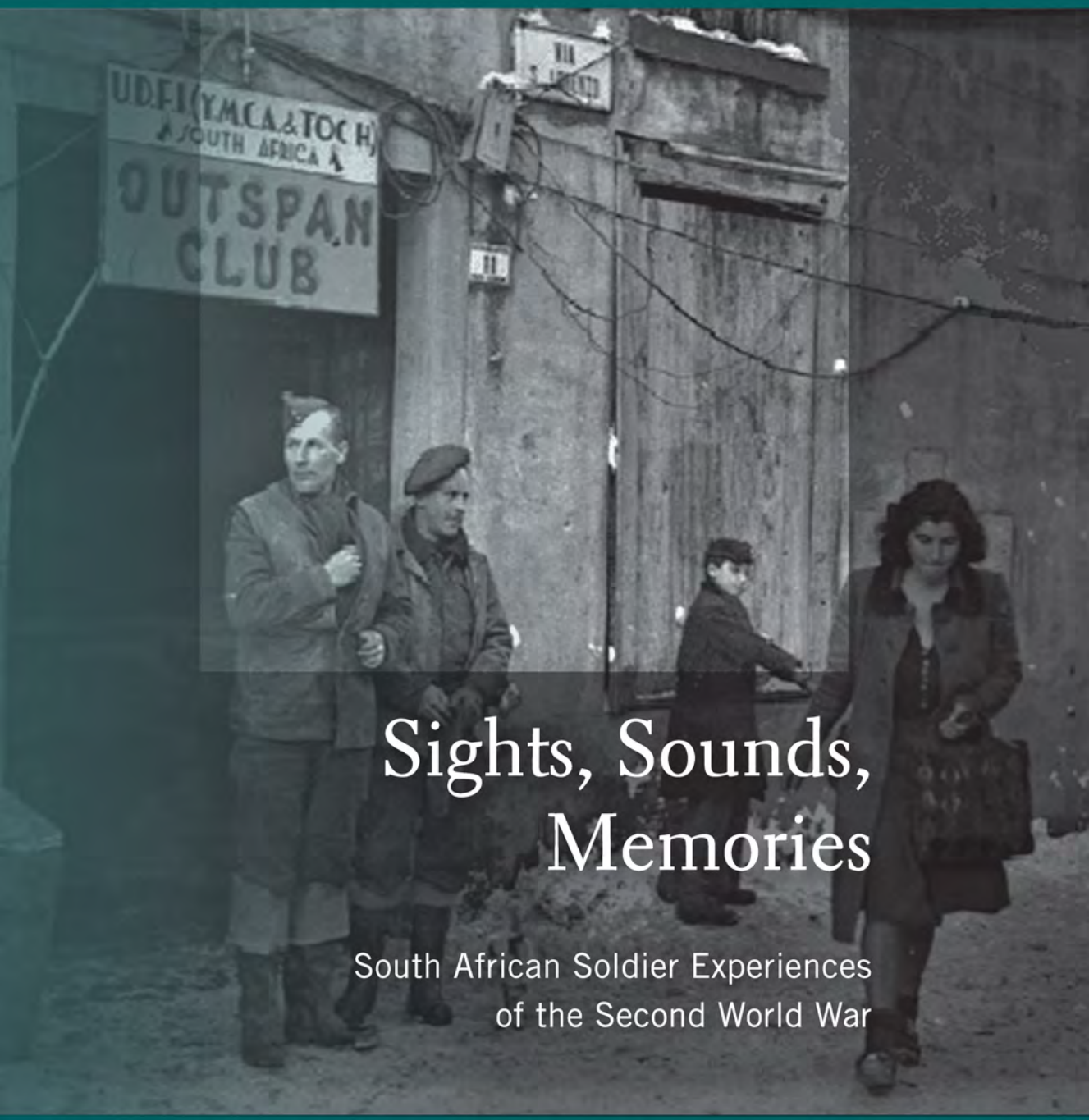

Sights, Sounds, Memories

South African Soldier Experiences of the Second World War

Ian van der Waag
Editor

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Shifta shooting with closed eyes,
Rats and rain and fleas and flies.

Abyssinia! Of these
Sights and sounds and memories
I recall with greatest ease,
Rats and rain and flies and fleas.

"Abyssinia Memories", by a Corporal in the 1st Division

Anon. [Norman Clothier], *Libyan Winter: Poems by a Corporal in the First Division* (Central News Agency, Cape Town, 1943).

Series Foreword

African Military Studies

Series Editor
Ian van der Waag, Stellenbosch University

African Military Studies is an exciting, new series of books on war, conflict and armed forces in Africa. Covering the whole span of African history – and the full conflict continuum – the series seeks to encourage works on the drivers of armed conflict, the ways in which societies and armed forces prepare for and conduct war, the development of technologies, strategy, tactics, and logistics in the African battlespace, and the impact of warfare on African societies. *African Military Studies* presents the latest research and accepts high-quality monographs, collections of essays, conference proceedings, and annotated military and historical texts. It is a library for the academic specialist, for the policymaker, and for the practitioner with "boots on the ground".

Acronyms & Abbreviations

ACF	Active Citizen Force
ADMS	Assistant Director Medical Services
ADS	Advanced Dressing Station
AES	Army Education Services
ANC	African National Congress
ARM	African Resistance Movement
Armd	Armoured
AWOL	Absent Without Leave
Bde	Brigade
BOI	Bureau of Information
CC	Cape Corps
CCS	Casualty Clearing Station
CGS	Chief of the General Staff
CICR	Comité International Croix Rouge / International Committee of the Red Cross
CPSA	Communist Party of South Africa
CTH	Cape Town Highlanders
DADMS	Deputy Assistant Director Medical Services
DDMI	Deputy Director Military Intelligence
Div	Division
DMI	Director of Military Intelligence
DNEAS	Director of Non-European Army Service
DOD	Department of Defence
ENSA	Entertainments National Service Association (British)
FDS	Field Dressing Station

FSS	Field Security Section
GHQ	General Headquarters
GNP	Gesuiwerde Nasionale Party (Purified National Party)
GOC	General Officer Commanding
HNP	Herenigde Nasionale Party (Reunited National Party)
IMC	Indian and Malay Corps
IO	Information Officer
KAR	King's African Rifles
LST	Landing Ship Tank
MDC	Military Discipline Code
MFF	Mobile Field Force
MK	Umkhonto we Sizwe
MP	Member of Parliament (House of Assembly)
MPC	Member of Provincial Council
NAAFI	Navy Army Air Force Institutes (British)
NAD	Department of Native Affairs
NCL	National Committee for Liberation
NCO / NCOs	Non-Commissioned Officer / s
NE	Non-European
NEAS	Non-European Army Service
NMC	Native Military Corps
NP	National Party
OB	Ossewabrandwag
OC	Officer Commanding
OFS	Orange Free State
PAG	Prince Alfred's Guard
PF	Permanent Force
PG	Campo Prigonieri di Guerra

LP	Labour Party
POW / POWs	Prisoner of War / Prisoners of War
PR	Public Relations
RAF	Royal Air Force (British)
RAMC	Royal Army Medical Corps (British)
RAP	Regimental Aid Post
RLI	Rand Light Infantry
SA	South Africa / South African
SAA	South African Artillery
SAAF	South African Air Force
SABC	South African Broadcasting Corporation
SACOD	South African Congress of Democrats
SADF	South African Defence Force (1957-94)
SAEC	South African Engineer Corps
SAIRR	South African Institute of Race Relations
SALA	South African Liberal Association
SAMC	South African Medical Corps
SANDF	South African National Defence Force (1994-)
SAMNS	South African Military Nursing Service
SAP	South African Police
SAWAS	South African Women's Auxiliary Services
SSO	Senior Staff Officer
SWAMPS	South African Women's Auxiliary Military Police Service
SWANS	South African Women's Auxiliary Naval Service
UDF	Union Defence Force (1912-57)
UDFI	Union Defence Force Institute
UFP	Union Federal Party
UMR	Umvoti Mounted Rifles

UP	United Party
UUTS	Union Unity Truth Service
UWH	Union War Histories
VAD	Voluntary Aid Detachment
VD	Venereal disease
WAAF	Women's Auxiliary Air Force
WAAS	Women's Auxiliary Army Service
WADC	Women's Army Defence Corps
WAFF	West African Frontier Force

Military Ranks

Pte / Gnr	Private / Gunner
LCpl / LBdr	Lance Corporal / Lance Bombardier
Cpl / Bdr	Corporal / Bombardier
Sgt	Sergeant
SSgt	Staff Sergeant
WO2 / Sgt Maj	Warrant Officer, Second Class / Sergeant Major
WO1 / Sgt Maj	Warrant Officer, First Class / Sergeant Major
RSM	Regimental Sergeant Major
2Lt	Second Lieutenant
Lt	First Lieutenant
Capt	Captain
Maj	Major
Lt Col	Lieutenant Colonel
Col	Colonel
Brig	Brigadier
Maj Gen	Major General
Lt Gen	Lieutenant General
Gen	General
FM	Field Marshal

Introduction

WARS ARE FOUGHT, AND LIVED, BY REAL PEOPLE

Ian van der Waag

The literature on the Second World War has mushroomed since the firing of the first shots and will increase in volume and complexity as the centennial clock ticks down steadily.[1] That this growth has been multifaceted comes as no surprise as the war – global, modern, and total – left roughly 24 million soldiers killed and some 73 million civilians dead, and fundamentally changed the lives of its survivors. For a long time historians have focused on such numbers, and on grand politics and military campaigns, which, while important, tend to be fact based, hail meticulous archival work as the only grail, and often reduces events to cold, impersonal accounts in which the pulsating qualities and the vitality of human endeavour are lost. Such accounts, which 'forget the human point of view', Tancredi Artico has recently argued, are 'incomplete narrations'.[2] As may have been expected, historians are now attempting to recover the human dimensions of the larger war story. Wars are, after all, fought, and lived, by real people.

This is not to say that the notion of a 'human history', or of a 'bottom-up' view of the war, is new. Writing in July 1944, Private S Falkson of the 1st Battalion of the Rand Light Infantry expressed his desire to 'convey in print' the 'experiences, trials and triumphs' of ordinary South African soldiers. He saw himself as 'merely a representative' of these men and he wanted to convey to his readers 'just what our men have had to go through' – the discomforts, the sorrows, their endeavours – and give 'the folk back home in South Africa … an impression of what desert fighting is really like'. In doing so, Falkson asserts that his story was not just his own, but that of the 'many thousands of South Africans' who had fought in North Africa and had 'so nobly added to South Africa's glorious past'.[3] Yet, in South Africa, negating any such present glories, these voices were often silenced – first by wartime censorship, and then by an increasingly self-assured and inward-looking nationalist government, and the wider international marginalisation of South Africa's war effort.[4]

Political controversy and military complexity marked South Africa's war effort. The Union Defence Force (UDF), small and languishing at the hands of a sequence of interwar defence officials, was expanded dramatically and, in response to pressure from the opposition National Party, was reorganised on an entirely voluntary basis. Three divisions were raised and orange tabs were worn by all who took the oath to serve anywhere in Africa. Numerous other combat and support units were formed, including twenty-eight specialist companies of the South African Engineer Corps. The air force expanded rapidly and Smuts, winning an early diplomatic victory, wrested control over the naval assets of the Union away from the Admiralty.[5] Concurrently, the command structure expanded and a new-look Defence Headquarters emerged from where the war effort was administrated. Two divisions left the Union's shores in the first two years: the 1st SA Division (1, 2 and 5 Brigades) was sent to East Africa and then, following the defeat of the Italian armies in Abyssinia and Somalia, was ordered to Egypt, where it was joined by the 2nd SA Division (3, 4 and 6 Brigades).

In North Africa they suffered the disasters at Sidi Rezegh (November 1941) and Tobruk (June 1942). Practically the whole of the 2nd Division went 'in the bag', leaving the 1st Division to engage in the battles around Alamein before returning to the Union in early 1943. In the meantime, during the second half of 1942, 7th SA Brigade, part of the reserve 3rd Division, took part in the invasion and conquest of Vichy-governed Madagascar. The 6th SA Armoured Division was formed on 1 February 1943 to serve in Italy and it drew servicemen from the former 1st Division, all taking the general service oath to serve anywhere in the world until the war's end. These operations – in Africa and Europe – were supported by a rapidly expanding South African Air Force and South African Naval Force.[6] On campaign in Africa and Italy, the South African soldier, the Springbok, 'evolved as a type'. The average Springbok was physically large, tanned and accustomed to large quantities of sunshine, and quick to assess a tactical situation yet unwilling to suffer needless losses. According to Major G Tylden, the well-known military antiquarian, they were also 'inclined to think themselves as good as their officers',[7] something they inherited from the old commando system. However, if well handled – especially by the higher command, which for this war was mostly British – they were also excellent fighting men. The typical South African soldier was, according to one British officer, 'tough, outgoing, friendly'.[8]

Gratifyingly, the writing of the history of the South African military has grown exponentially, and particularly so over the past decades. While the two world wars have featured prominently in this endeavour, the campaign experience and combat behaviour of the ordinary South African soldier remains a much neglected area of study. There are significant exceptions. Jonathan Fennell, for one, examined and enhanced our understanding of morale, unit cohesion, and combat performance in the British and Commonwealth armies of the Second World War,[9] while Gustav Bentz has followed a single South African infantry company from their initial enlistment in 1939 through to demobilisation in 1946.[10] These aspects, which now enjoy increased recognition, are important. 'The literature', as Edward Coss explains albeit in terms of Wellington's army, 'has shown that a unit's combat efficiency is largely dependent upon how well its members adapt to and are shaped by small groups whose norms demand active battlefield participation'.[11] Much exciting work, shaping a more sophisticated understanding of these dynamics in the South African armed forces, and on a wide front, remains to be done.

This book, which focuses specifically on South African uniformed personnel, seeks to contribute to this discussion. It emanates from a one-day seminar held on 6 September, 2019, at the Saldanha Campus of Stellenbosch University, to mark the eightieth anniversary of South Africa's entry into the Second World War. While the call for papers advertised a broad theme (*Africa and the Second World War: The Soldiers' Experience*), the papers submitted, and those selected for presentation on the day, had a specific South African focus and form the substance of Chapters 3 (Karen Horn),

4 (Evert Kleynhans), 5 (Ian van der Waag), 6 (Fankie Monama) and 8 (Surya Chetty). The remaining chapters were headhunted after the event to address specific aspects. Even though this collection focuses on military personnel, it in no way negates the roles played by civilians during the war or diminishes the dislocation and suffering experienced by non-combatants. South African civilians, at home and abroad, warrant their own study.

Broadly stated, this book aims to convey insights into the experience of the Springbok soldier during the Second World War. It is divided into three parts and comprised of ten chapters, each opening specific avenues of inquiry, and an appendix. Chapter 1 addresses the genre of soldier narratives. These are sometimes generated alongside, sometimes in reaction to, the official histories, which can be very 'patriotic', and the regimental histories, which tend to be 'memorials'. Soldiers and service personnel of course expressed their individual experiences in different ways. These are as diverse as Gunner Keith Ford (who was prepared for 'more death and gore and hell on earth than flags and glory'), Miss Sampie de Wet ('I have never been more proud of being a South African and an Afrikaner'), and Private Arthur Bintliff (for whom Madagascar was 'a protracted picnic'), which raises the notion that there were perhaps *different wars*. For some the war was hard and crudely brutal. For others it was softer, an experience that produced opportunities rather than scars. For David Brokensha, no matter how hard, the war gave him time and space to find himself. While each soldier's story is unique, each military life, as Falkson noted, also embodied something of the common experience, which, when distilled, reveals insights into officer-man relations, the interrelationships between the men and women in uniform, interactions with local populations, morale and combat efficiency, and so much more. Sam Hynes, whose influence is clearly discernible throughout this book, has shown the utility of these narratives in terms of what soldiers say (and what they don't say) about themselves, about the war, and about how the war changed them and their societies at home.[12] Moreover, as Gustavo Corni has argued more recently, when studied together these personal narratives also provide a more sophisticated understanding of a complex sequence of world events.[13]

Part II consists of four chapters, each of which is a window into the lives of a few individual soldiers, or smaller groups of service personnel, who were deployed abroad and whose experiences reveal stories that are, in the words of Hynes and Corni, interesting and informative. Soldier testimony, of course, cannot stand alone as a source of evidence. The historian must draw evidence from a variety of sources, which are marshalled, organised, analysed and interpreted in an endeavour to produce a credible rendition of an always elusive truth. In this way, the personal narrative might usefully supplement other, more formal evidence, which invariably provides the larger context – the political, economic and institutional developments – in relation to the lives of

ordinary soldiers. In this way, historical sources reinforce each other and give meaning to each other, and so explain the hidden significances in each other.[14]

Carl Punt, drawing on a variety of evidence in Chapter 2, examines the story of four Natal brothers. The four Lugg boys were born into a family with a tradition of service to their country. Their father, Harry Lugg, had been Chief Native Commissioner for Natal and was a veteran of past colonial wars. The brothers' war story is reminiscent of the storyline in *Saving Private Ryan*. Lugg Senior appealed in February 1945 for his youngest son to be posted 'to some base job': his oldest son had been reported missing in early 1944 during a night bombing raid on Plovdiv, the second had been killed in a flying accident in the Sudan, and, in January 1945, the third was reported missing in Palestine, while the youngest was a private in Prince Alfred's Guard. Two of Lugg's four sons survived the war. Yet, in his own memoirs, Lugg Senior makes no reference to the wartime service of his sons.[15] This loss and the trauma, as Punt suggests, was perhaps too painful and too private to share. Lugg Senior was fighting his own inner war at home.

South Africa suffered a total of 38 208 casualties. Of these, 4 084 had been killed in action or died of wounds, while a further 8 137 had recovered from battle-inflicted wounds.[16] These men passed through the military medical system in a variety of theatres of war. Karen Horn, in Chapter 3, discusses the medical arrangements in North Africa and the Middle East, where the South African Medical Corps ran an efficient organisation comprised of dressing stations, casualty clearing posts, field ambulances and general hospitals. A praiseworthy medical service was rendered despite the demanding operational environment. Focusing on the hospitals in the Middle East, Horn provides us with a better understanding of the daily routines, exceptional cases, and the challenges both staff and patients faced. Although her focus falls on the hospitals in Egypt, she does refer to the smaller medical units and sections as well as military hospitals in other theatres of the war. She conveys the human experience all the way through, particularly for the medical personnel for whom the work in the Middle East was 'a test of endurance which required huge doses of initiative and good humour'.

Chapter 4 follows a small contingent of South African troops to Madagascar in 1942. In this chapter Evert Kleynhans recovers a lost voice in a campaign for which there are few papers, no campaign history and little regimental history.[17] However, the fortuitous survival of the letters written by Private Arthur Bintliff whilst he was serving with the Pretoria Highlanders provides a unique window through which to view the South African operations on this tropical island between July and November 1942. Kleynhans supplements these letters with a range of official material, and gives us insights into the tedium of guard and garrison duty. Despite the bugs and other discomforts, for these men, far away from hard warfighting, the campaign in Madagascar was little more than a 'protracted picnic'. Notwithstanding, there are

interesting insights in terms of morale and the experience of active combat. He shows how a 'missing narrative' might be reassembled or supplemented by the official record and the materials gathered by the War Records Section at Defence Headquarters.

Early on in the war Smuts had recognised the importance of creating an historical record. He saw, as Canadian historian Tim Cook has noted, that 'the true experience of war could not always be uncovered by an examination of the War Diary or an interview with a senior officer'.[18] A section called War Records, later War Histories, was created at Defence Headquarters in Pretoria and placed under the watchful eye of John Agar-Hamilton. Historical recording officers were attached to each South African formation and it was in this role that Eric Axelson found himself in Italy, in 1944, attached to the 6th SA Armoured Division. Recording officers had to ensure that each unit and formation completed and submitted a credible war diary; they had to supplement this record with interviews after important events, and they had to 'rake in' historical material relating to the campaign, including pertinent snippets from local newspapers and propaganda pamphlets dropped by the enemy, and they had to take photographs. At the end of the war they had the additional task of assisting the various South African units and formations with the compilation of their respective unit and formation histories of the war years. Chapter 5 introduces the work they did and, using Axelson and his small recording section in Italy as a vehicle, investigates the environmental and organisational constraints imposed upon historians in the field and the mixed responses to the narratives they wrote.

The stories told here are mostly told by men and, more specifically, mostly by white men. This of course does not imply that the experiences of black people or of women are any less important. Their perspectives reveal different dimensions of the South African military experience, including, for example, nursing and social work, and black views on military service in the racially-divided armed forces of a segregated country, which are likely to contrast with the evidence of white men. The difficulties of investigating such experiences and perspectives should not be underestimated. Patriarchy and paternalism remain major obstacles. Black people and women were in general often not supposed to view the world through their own lenses. Kept in the background while white male soldiers were interviewed or wrote their memoirs, black and female voices are mostly silent. They had little agency in the context of the time and they make almost casual appearances, as second- or third-tier actors, in the published narratives. Yet, in practice, armed forces are structured and layered, and – for the sake of the completeness of the narration – it is important for different ranks, different services, representative of all peoples in the forces, to be studied.[19]

Part III consists of a further five chapters and, focusing on largely marginalised groups and revealing wider social experiences and forces, deals with what might be called the common experience. Fankie Monama, in Chapter 6, examines Lt Col EG Malherbe's

propaganda campaign that was aimed at the Springbok soldier. The Army Education Services (AES) had been designed to combat subversion and troop apathy, and boost morale and the mental and emotional state of Springbok troops. The programmes focused on ordinary Springboks, their affinity for a sense of 'national unity', and awareness of the longer-term challenges facing South Africa. Unsurprisingly, as Monama argues, these programmes had a mixed reception. The reading materials, 'mini parliaments', and the steps taken to alleviate boredom and influence the minds of the soldiers to reject fascism and extremism, and adopt more liberal values, were severely criticised from all sides. This highlighted the severe limitations of Malherbe's programme which, as he later conceded, had perhaps only a limited influence on the consciousness of the troops and then during the war only. The AES was perhaps little more than a short-term, storm-weather programme.

The departure of the fighting battalions created a manpower crisis after 1940, forcing the government to adopt measures to recruit black, Coloured and Indian South Africans, as well as women and foreign nationals. These are the themes for the next three chapters. Some 79 258 men served in the Native Military Corps (NMC) and a further 46 412 in the Cape Corps (CC) and Indian and Malay Corps (IMC). (Such terms and unit names, including the Non-European Army Service, have been kept in their historical context.) In Chapter 7 Rishika Yadav addresses the experience of South African prisoners-of-war (POWs), and specifically the 1 032 Cape Corps soldiers captured by Italian and German forces during the course of the war. Although deployed in fighting roles during the First World War, the CC was used almost exclusively in auxiliary roles during the Second, and served in all of the theatres of war in which South Africans played a role. The majority of CC prisoners were taken at South Africa's twin disasters at Sidi Rezegh (November 1941) and Tobruk (June 1942). Some of these men were kept by their captors as labour details in North Africa, perpetuating menial roles, while a smaller number were transported to Italy and interned in Europe. In examining the POW experience of the CC men interned in Italy and then Germany, their story as marginalised soldiers and men in a racially divided society is being told for the first time. The story of these men, she argues, is shaped by three features: their community, which had a proud tradition of military service; the fact that they had all volunteered (there were no enlistees); and, being 'neither white nor commissioned', they had nevertheless done so. Their experiences as POWs, often harsher than that of their white compatriots, are carefully reconstructed and the impact of their long internment is examined.

Suryakanthie Chetty draws our attention to the role of white women in Chapter 8. Thousands responded to the national call to fill vacancies in industry, or volunteer in one of the five auxiliary services of the Women's Army Defence Corps (WADC). They undertook clerical, cooking, mechanical and transport duties in the Women's Auxiliary Army Services (WAAS), the Women's Auxiliary Air Force (WAAF), the

South African Women's Auxiliary Military Police Service (SWAMPS), and the South African Women's Auxiliary Naval Service (SWANS), while hundreds more served as nurses in the South African Military Nursing Service (SAMNS). Over and above the WADC organisation, some 65 000 are estimated to have served in the South African Women's Auxiliary Services (SAWAS), all volunteers, serving in uniform, and arranging leisure and social activities for the men serving in the Union and abroad. As Chetty argues, enlistment and service in these organisations had its own dynamic and complexities. Moreover, *The Women's Auxiliary*, the official monthly periodical of the WADC, 'portrayed a particular vision for women's war work'. Her analysis of the 58 issues of *The Women's Auxiliary*, supplemented by personal testimony and autobiography, suggests three phases in the editorial pitch (onset and recruitment, war weariness, demobilisation), while addressing the roles women might play in each of these phases of the war.

Fankie Monama turns our attention to a third marginalised group in Chapter 9. Foreign nationals and 'enemy aliens', were in an invidious position. Enemy aliens were interned or effectively placed under house arrest, while other foreign nationals were initially prevented from volunteering to serve in the UDF. However, as Monama shows, once the country was confronted with the shortages of manpower and the scarcity of skills, foreign volunteers were accepted, especially in technical fields such as medicine and aviation. The Smuts government, forever wary of political ramifications, spread the foreign volunteers across the Defence Force in order to maintain visible 'unity' and avoid the formation of an exclusive 'alien grouping'. Fewer than one thousand foreign nationals volunteered and they did so for a variety of reasons: there was first-generation patriotism, and economic and politico-ideological motives, while some hoped that permanent residence and citizenship might be a consequence. As Monama shows, the motives were as complex and as varied as the personal circumstances of the Palestinian, Greek, French, Danish and Dutch men who stepped forward at the recruiting booths.

Historically, military veterans have been largely marginalised in South African society. Graeme Plint and Anri Delport investigate the roles they played in post-war South African politics in Chapter 10. Adopting a prosopographical approach, they examine a group of South African politicians and parliamentarians with wartime service. Their path, from the large-scale demobilisation at the end of the war through to 1960, 'when most of the loose threads of the Second World War seems to have been resolved or were superseded by other events', forms the core of this chapter. The sample therefore includes members of official political parties as well as extra-parliamentary movements, such as the Torch Commando and the banned South African Communist Party. Plint and Delport use the aggregate biographical data – garnered from war-service records, election results and biographical data – to gauge the impact of war service on post-war politics.

Of course, care must be taken in using personal narratives. They were not written with a common purpose and their perspectives and rationales differ vastly. Some are long, considered pieces of writing, others hastily scribbled letters or diaries. Letters and diaries have a spontaneity or, as Samuel Hynes puts it, 'the virtues of immediacy and directness'. They may be empty and rambling, but they are also intensely personal. Memoirs and autobiographies, on the other hand, are premeditated, planned, deliberate, and may be calculated to 'set the record straight'. Memoirs are written for posterity, although perhaps more so in the case of officers, who may have a greater need to enhance, rationalise and protect their reputations. Ordinary soldiers, on the other hand, had fewer axes to grind and mostly recorded what they saw and experienced. Sometimes there may be boasting. Yet, despite their drawbacks, personal narratives remain important. Comparative evaluations emerge when the historian considers the words of not one but many men, all of whom experienced the same campaigns, the same battles, the same hardships and challenges, and the same emotions and horrors. Triangulating their perspectives not only deepens our understanding through the widened context, but also provides verification.[20]

If used alongside official material, personal narratives provide the historian with a deeper understanding of the Springbok soldier. Such narratives, which catch the essential human perspective, number literally in the hundreds if not thousands. Often partial in nature, they provide a corpus of first-hand information on life in the Union Defence Force. Most of course remain unpublished and survive only in archives rather than in formal published form. The appendix to this collection takes the form of a select guide to the published South African soldier narratives. These sometimes take the form of published journals, diaries and letters; more often they are the memoirs and reminiscences left by volunteers. But taken together with the official and regimental histories, this body of literature represents an almost forgotten dimension of English-speaking historiography in South Africa, which is typically cast in the usual liberal terms. Here then is a body of writing that followed its own logic, quite independently from other literature.[21] Yet, unlike Australia, Canada and New Zealand, this literature was never considered important in South Africa's wider, national narrative.

Any book racks up a number of debts – and they are usually substantial. In the first instance, I would like to thank my colleagues in the Department of Military History. We are few, but we are a fine team, we enjoy working together, and we love our discipline. The general bonhomie in the department, on the road to teach at the SANDF Colleges in Pretoria or embedded behind mountains of files at an archives repository, is much appreciated. I must also thank our colleagues who have worked on this book with us as well as the frontline workers in the archives and repositories cited in our references. In particular, we must mention Steve de Agrela and the reading room personnel at the Department of Defence Archives in Pretoria, and Gerald

Prinsloo, the manager of the photograph collections there, as well as Michal Singer and her staff at the UCT Libraries, Dr Mark Coghlan of the Natal Carbineers Archives, and the staff at the South African Museum of Military History. I would then like to thank Professors Albert Grundlingh and Christopher Saunders for reading portions of the manuscript, Evert Kleynhans for the map, and Andries Fokkens for some of the paperwork. The team at African SunMedia have again been fantastic. Last, and not least, a big thank you to Sam Tshehla, the Dean of Military Science at Stellenbosch University, for his valued and continued support.

The Second World War involved most of the countries of the world and left so many millions dead and maimed, disorganised and devastated through personal and communal loss. This book recovers some of South Africa's soldiers' experiences from the physical and mental debris. Using memoirs and diaries, the vitality of their endeavours is reasserted, their successes and failures, victories and indecencies are re-examined, and their magnanimity and the general triumph of the human spirit is celebrated. Individuals are important. Their voices 'give us the feel and texture of the past and the descriptions and stories of its people'.[22]

Endnotes

1 On the writing of South Africa's Second World War, see Jeffrey Grey, '"Standing humbly in the ante-chambers of Clio": the rise and fall of Union War Histories', *Scientia Militaria*, vol. 30, no. 2 (2000), pp 253-66; and Ian van der Waag, 'Contested histories: official history and the South African military in the 20th century', in J Grey, ed., *The Last Word? Essays on Official History in the United States and British Commonwealth* (Westport, Connecticut and London: Praeger, 2003), pp 27-52.

2 Tancredi Artico, 'Re-thinking War: A History of Voices', in Tancredi Artico, ed., *From the Front; Zibaldone della Grande Guerra* (Canterano: Aracne, 2017), p 19.

3 Private S Falkson, "Of Sand and Shells: A True Story of South African Infantry (1st R.L.I.)", UWH, box 164, Department of Defence Archives, Pretoria (DOD).

4 Albert Grundlingh. 'The King's Afrikaners? Enlistment and Ethnic Identity in the Union of South Africa's Defence Force during the Second World War, 1939-1945', *Journal of African History*, vol. 40 (1999), p 351.

5 Ian van der Waag, '"The thin edge of the wedge": Anglo-South African relations, dominion nationalism and the formation of the Seaward Defence Force in 1939-40', *Contemporary British History*, vol. 24, no. 4 (Dec 2010), pp 427-449.

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11 Edward J. Coss, *All For The King's Shilling; The British Soldier Under Wellington, 1808-1814* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2010), p 4.

12 Samuel Hynes, *The Soldiers' Tale; Bearing Witness to Modern War* (London: Pimlico, 1998), pp xii-xiii.

13 Gustavo Corni, 'Preface', in Tancredi Artico, ed., *From the Front*, p 17.

14 Tim Keegan, *Facing the Storm: Portraits of Black Lives in Rural South* Africa (Cape Town: David Philip, 1988), pp 160 – 161.

15 HC Lugg, *A Natal Family Looks back* (Durban: T.W. Griggs & Co., 1970).

16 Van der Waag, *A Military History of Modern South Africa*, p 212.

17 Two of the main South African regiments in Madagascar – the Pretoria Regiment and the Pretoria Highlanders – have no published regimental histories, while the third (The First City Regiment) doesn't have much. The Cape and Natal regiments stand more strongly in the historiography.

18 Chris Cook, *Clio's Warriors; Canadian Historians and the Writing of the World Wars* (Vancouver and Toronto: University of British Columbia Press, 2006), p 103.

19 Keegan, *Facing the Storm*, pp 160 – 161.

20 Coss, *All For The King's Shilling*, pp 4-10. Margaret Macmillan, *History's People; Personalities and the Past* (London: Profile, 2016), pp 2-3. Mehmet Beşikçi, 'How to use memoirs and diaries in historiography?: A methodological analysis based on the ego documents of Ottoman soldiers served in World War I', *Toplum ve Bilim*, vol. 144 (2018), p 292.

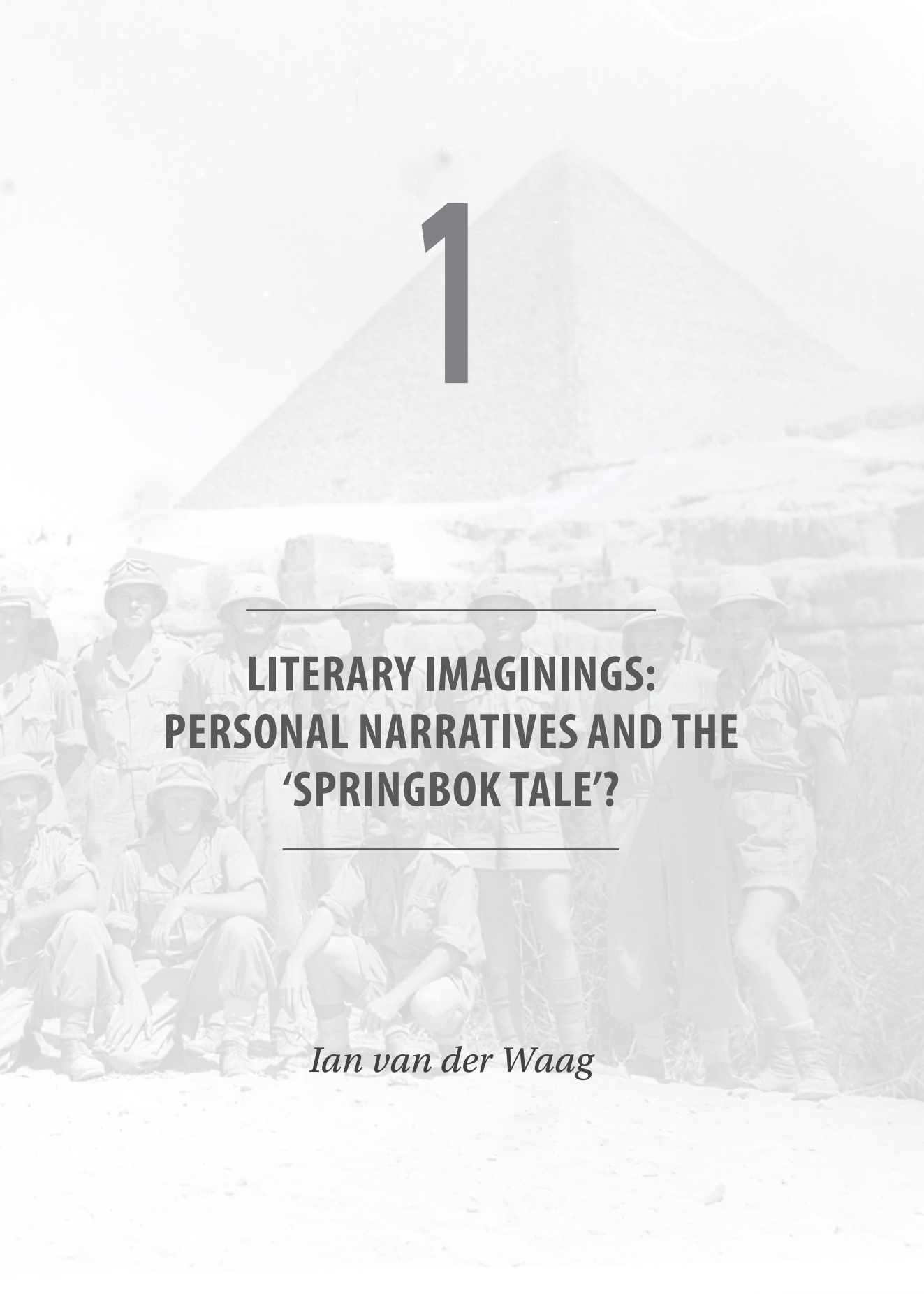
21 I am grateful to Prof. Albert Grundlingh, who read the chapter on Axelson, for these insights.

22 Macmillan, History's People, p 189.

SNOW WHITE
PRINCE CHARMING

Part ONE

WRITING THE SOLDIERS' EXPERIENCE



1

LITERARY IMAGININGS: PERSONAL NARRATIVES AND THE 'SPRINGBOK TALE'?

Ian van der Waag

BACKGROUND

> If I had been more interested in the style of this book than in its content I would have written it in my own language – Afrikaans. But this is a book which I had on my conscience – on my conscience as a human being and not as a literary craftsman – and which, I felt strongly, should be written in English so that documentary evidence as to exactly what happened in Italy after the 8th September, 1943, should be accessible to the peoples of the two counties at present most concerned with Italy – namely, the British Commonwealth and America.[1]

These words are from the Foreword to Uys Krige's personal war narrative. It tells the story of a man, captured at Sidi Rezegh and held captive in Libya and then Italy, of his escape from Campo Prigionieri di Guerra No. 78, and of his 'way out' – 'out' of the camp, from the encircling German troops, out from the infolding mountains, and eventually back to Allied lines.[2] But for Krige, a well-known poet and writer, this is no ordinary story. Its importance lay in its distinctive content, a story that weighed on his conscience. He warns his reader that this is no imaginary tale, but a true story, one that had to be told, that had to be recorded, 'as documentary evidence as to exactly what happened'. Reading between the lines, it is evident that Krige had no particular faith in the official records or in the press reports of the Bureau of Information. Nobody, other than those who actually shared the experience, could tell it, and it had to be told properly and told in a way that would be accessible to as many readers as possible.

Krige's *Way Out* was one of the first South African personal narratives to come out of the Second World War. But other servicemen, whose accounts followed in growing numbers, shared Krige's view. Alan Flederman, who was captured at Gazala, tells us that he decided to write his own story when he 'read accounts of escapees written by daughters-in-law to ensure that their children would be able to understand what their grandfathers had experienced'.[3] Flederman's task, as with other veterans, was to give 'an accurate record', one based on written records generated during the war. Only in this way, he argued, could 'the real and complete account' be written. Those who were not there, who had not experienced the war first-hand, simply could not understand. In this vein, Stephane Audoin-Rouzeau and Annette Becker, working on the first-person testimony of combatants of the Great War, argue that 'the soldiers set themselves up as historians of their own experience, reacting against and wanting to correct the distortions and misperceptions in the home front's view of them'. In this way the 'veterans, who obviously had the incontestable status of witness to the war experience, also gave themselves the status of historians with the exclusive right to talk about the experience'.[4]

This phenomenon of course crosses all borders and infuses the veterans' tales of all armies. However, when viewed as 'repositories of vital information about the ways in which former servicemen remembered, understood, and mediated their war', personal narratives become richly-veined resources for the social and cultural historian of warfare.[5] Using these arguments, this chapter seeks to gain a deeper understanding of South Africans' *experience* of the Second World War. The personal narratives (mostly published) of a range of South African service personnel were surveyed, their essential features examined, and conclusions regarding the presence of a 'Springbok Tale' are drawn. In other words, an attempt has been made to identify what it was like for South African service personnel who served in this war and whether there is a distinct South African voice in the 'soldier's tale'.

THE NATURE OF PERSONAL NARRATIVES AND MILITARY MEMOIRS

But first we need to take a step back and define what is meant by a personal narrative. The words of soldiers are preserved in so-called 'ego documents', which range from the diaries, journals and letters kept or written at the time of the events they record, to reminiscences, memoirs and autobiographies constructed by soldiers retrospectively. Perhaps thousands of such accounts, often partial in nature, were left by men of all ranks who served in South Africa's Union Defence Force (UDF). This body of material is important for it provides first-hand information on life in the UDF and offers insights into the very essence of the human perspective on war and, more specifically, of warfighting. However, several problems arise. Not only are these accounts written with very different intentions, but the definitions themselves are problematic. For Harari, military memoirs 'are synthetic narrative texts, … written retrospectively, … written to a considerable extent on the basis of personal memory, deal with a considerable time-span, have their authors appear as protagonists, and devote considerable attention to martial affairs in which their authors participated as combatants'.[6] This definition, like any other, is permeable and some doubts around it remain. Harari notes, for example, that it is 'impossible to determine … how many times a history should mention its author as a protagonist in order to become a memoir, or when a diary is rewritten by its author after several years qualifies as a memoir'.[7] This problem, of differentiating between 'history' and 'memoir', will be addressed later in this chapter. For the moment, for our purposes, a personal narrative might be a memoir or an autobiography.

Building on a long tradition in the British world of telling and receiving veterans' stories, South African service personnel produced a range of such personal accounts during and after the Second World War.[8] A selection of these published accounts is presented in the appendix to this book. Some were written by men who were, or would later become, established professional writers[9] – men like Guy Butler, Uys

Krige, and Eric Axelson. Far more were one-book men, like Major Lionel Murray, who having qualified before the war as an attorney, and picked up a military cross and bar for bravery, wrote his regiment's history and then started a Cape Town-based high-street law firm.[10] Or Captain WL Fielding, the 6th Division's intelligence office, who having written *With the 6th Div*, returned to Barberton to resume his career in the cotton and sugar industry in the Eastern Transvaal.[11] Fielding's replacement as 'I' Officer was Laurence Gandar, later editor of the *Rand Daily Mail*.[12] But most were not such luminaries. The test, and Hynes unwittingly invokes Krige, should not be how 'literary' a book is (and the term 'literary' is itself problematic), 'but whether the book speaks with a voice that is stubbornly distinct, telling us what it was like, for *this* man, in *his* war'.[13]

Hynes argues that war narratives are a distinct literary type. The warfighting and the nature of the battlefields may change over time. But, he argues, the personal recollections of the soldiers taken as a corpus tell a single, coherent story. The whole of this tale cannot be told, of course. Men die in battle without leaving their record. Others may have survived, but the facts of their lives meant that their wars would remain unrecorded. Then some men told their individual stories, which are useful lenses through which to examine and understand what soldiers say (or don't say) about war, and of how those wars changed them as men and changed their societies.[14] Hynes sees this 'Soldier's Tale' as fundamentally *one* tale, the telling of which traverses several genres: travel writing, autobiography and, of course, history. These facets are addressed in the following three subsections.

A little like travel writing: 'What a wonderful war it was'

Men enlist and 'go to war' for a variety of reasons.[15] This was no different for the Springboks who volunteered to serve in the Union Defence Force after September 1939. For some, patriotism and the idea of 'South Africanism', with its apparent inclusivity, was important, stressing as it did the country's new independence and English-Afrikaner unity. Mike Sadler, then a young student and something of a pacifist, 'could not help being affected by the strong emotions of patriotism that were sweeping through the country'.[16] For many, the war also brought the promise of fun and enjoyment, and an opportunity to relish comradeship. 'War was in the air' and some university students, no matter how interesting their classes, found 'it very difficult to study'.[17] In groups, men joined the colours, often of local, district-based units and regiments. Later in the war recruits volunteered to serve in specific units, where they may have had friends or relatives. The authorities recognized the value in this 'regimental family' incentive and attempted, where possible, to post volunteers for service with units of their choice.[18] While serving with friends or people from the same region, soldiers might enjoy the strangely wonderful sights of a foreign campaign. This is what Albert Grundlingh referred to as 'the touristic potential of the war'.[19]

During the Second World War Springbok volunteers served in campaigns fought somewhere else. This somewhere else was firstly in East Africa and Abyssinia, then in North Africa and Palestine, and finally Italy, before repatriation for some through the United Kingdom, for others through the Middle East, and for a few through Odessa and the Black Sea. Some served on the high seas; others with British forces in the Far East. These places were thought of exotic and unfamiliar, and very different to what an infantryman from the rural Highveld or a gunner from one of the coastal cities knew at home. As Rishika Yadav argues in Chapter 7, this may have been even more so for the members of the Cape Corps and the Native Military Corps.

Many narrators note the strangeness of the countryside and the excitement of the physical environment. Major 'Chooks' Blamey, of the Natal Mounted Rifles, for example, records his approach to Lake Elmenteita through the Great Rift Valley:

> I was tingling with excitement with the thrill of having all this wild life around us. We were tensed and keyed up with rifles at the ready, expecting every second to be confronted by some wild animal. The picture of the forest and the glades was magnificent. We stumbled out of the under-growth to find the lake before us and on the water were hundreds of flamingos. This was an amazing sight. … The sun came up slowly and the flamingos on the water below began to stir, displaying the gorgeous colour of their plumage. This spread a shimmering mass of pink on the water, broken now and then only when a fluttering bird rose above the others. A scene of transcendent beauty I shall probably never have the good fortune to see again.[20]

This reads like the best of travelogues, expressing delight and enchantment at an experience the narrator presumes might never again return. But there is another side to it. This is the strangeness of the human environment, and especially so of their enemy's world. Keith Ford, a gunner deployed in East Africa, recorded condescendingly of their Italian opponents:

> The Italians seem to be a peace-loving people – not very warlike at all. They build fine roads, beautiful houses and lovely towns. However, they do not seem to be very clean nor care much about hygiene and, by and large, the soldiers are a dirty lot. Maybe that is because they have been out here for some time and have picked up indigenous habits and women.[21]

The racial slurs sometimes extend further. Ford again:

> The Abbos (our name for the indigenous Africans) were far dirtier and smellier than the Africans in South Africa. An Abyssinian village could be smelt miles away.[22]

And at least one guard commander apparently warned his piquet:

> Watch out carefully for these buggers – they're as silent as ghosts, will cut your throat without your knowledge, and then chop your prick and balls off for barter.[23]

The terms changed when the troops moved further north. Whereas East Africa, green, fertile, and stocked with wildlife, had been a paradise, Egypt was described in opposite terms. Now narrators describe their shock and disbelief. For Sergeant Douglas Scott, of the Transvaal Scottish, 'arrival in Egypt was a shock'. He goes on: 'The filth, flies and heat certainly made us sit up and wonder what had happened'.[24] The same story is told by Wolhuter (the flies and dust were the 'two plagues of modern Egypt'[25]), and Hobbs (the troops were exposed to 'the unpleasant experience of a desert storm; dust and sand entered almost every part of our clothing and kit and, of course, ears, eyes and hair'[26]), while Sir De Villiers Graaff recounts:

> My most vivid memory of this camp [El Amariya] is that of the flies. By the time you had drawn your food from the cookhouse it was covered with flies. You got a suitable morsel on the fork, cleared the flies away and made a dive for your mouth. If you were lucky, you managed to get it into your mouth without taking flies with it.[27]

Sidi Omar, where a young Paul de Villiers was based, 'was desert. Just sand and more sand and still more sand'.[28] Battalions arriving in Egypt went into the desert for training in desert warfare. They moved out for periods of three to five days, navigating by oil compass and the sun, and closing into laagers for each night. Sometimes training manoeuvres, involving attack and consolidation, made a welcome change from the digging of defences.[29] But the climate, and the vastness and emptiness of the terrain affected all. Die Middellandse Regiment was stationed at Tel-el-Kebir, which Wolhuter thought looked rather like 'a lonely siding in the Karoo' and that 'even out-of-the-way Draghoender and Putsonderwater in the North Western Cape looked more attractive'.[30] But then Tel-el-Kebir did at least have some historical significance; a battle had been fought here in Victorian times, although this made little difference to Van Deventer, Wolhuter's companion, who 'was not interested in the history of the place and was scornful of everything, including the Gyppos, the filth and the general backwardness of the country'.[31]

Karen Horn addresses the medical aspects of the North African campaign in Chapter 3. Many were struck with what became known as 'Gyppo guts',[32] 'which was 'agonizing and debilitating' [and] made our lives a misery'.[33] For the most part, the training camps and forward positions were situated in isolated, often barren and inhospitable, parts. Helwan, the South African training base in Egypt, was situated on dry desert sand. When deployed at the front in Egypt, the men were never far from the coast and often swam in the Mediterranean, where some of the Natalians taught 'upcountry boys how to swim'. David Brokensha narrates that 'We were not over-busy; I remember halcyon

days on the beaches, swimming, wrestling, talking, dreaming, playing jukskei.'[34] All was not bad. Arnold Colenbrander even expresses their pleasure and surprise: 'Everything we saw was new, different and interesting to us. The Nile with the feluccas sailing on it, the delta with its lush green fields in contrast to the arid desert right next to them. The city of Cairo with its pyramids, and the city of Alexandria held our attention'.[35]

Springboks used their all-too-brief periods of leave for travel. They did tourist things. They saw the sites, took photographs, and enjoyed cold drinks and hot baths. Photographs were of course subject to censorship, but had become increasingly difficult to control. Troops bought relatively inexpensive pocket cameras and, eager to capture their travels and make a pictorial record of their war, took photographs as they went. Photographs had their shortcomings – film was fragile and photos were easily overexposed – but they also had their dangers from a military viewpoint. The case of Corporal NG Nilsen, who was attached to 3 SA Reconnaissance Battalion in 1942, illustrates this point. Nilsen had had his photographs developed in Cairo, but the envelope he used for sending them to his home in South Africa was intercepted by the postal censors. Nilsen had entrusted his films to Cine Photo of Kasr el Nil in Cairo. But H Nassibian, the proprietor of Cine Photo, had been blacklisted since November 1941. The intelligence market was lucrative and some Egyptian businessmen, realising the potential value of the images they were developing, were happy to earn the secondary income they might bring. Steps were taken and all troops were instructed to develop their films only from a list of approved photographers in the Cairo area. As things transpired, Nilsen's photographs proved to be quite harmless.[36]

All troops were briefed before going on leave. They were briefed on information security. They were given some travelling advice, information on the main tourist attractions and the need to make the most of the trip ('See all you can while you can', the pamphlet advised), and on generally keeping safe. Notwithstanding, there are many references to men 'taken in one way or the other [and] a number lost their wristwatches without realising it'.[37] The war was for most South African troops their first 'travel experience' and in this sense they were naïve. And 'the fleshpots of Alexandria and Cairo [also] beckoned.' Here were 'hot baths, cold beer, good food and a bed' and it all seemed so far 'away from the guns, the bombing, and the hellish Khamsin and bitter cold!'[38] They visited Luxor, the museums of Cairo and the bazaars of the Mousky, the pyramids of Giza, where they haggled with traders, watched snake charmers, and tucked into the local cuisine, which was a welcome change to army fare.[39] Alexandria, Fielding tells us, 'was a favourite coastal resort, where the women were beautiful and the bathing refreshing.'[40]

Sergeant Ike Rosmarin tells the same tale. With the supply corps, he and his officer, a Lt Shaprio, would complete their 'purchase in record time and [use] the opportunity to explore [Alexandria] ... with its excellent beach and beautiful girls.'[41] Some travelled

further afield: to ancient sites in Palestine and to Syria. Most, it seems, included in their itinerary a visit to the famous Shepheard's Hotel in Cairo, where they might have been seen quaffing something cold on the hotel's expansive verandas. While some later regretted not having done more 'to explore sites of cultural and historical interest, and to meet local people',[42] they certainly wrote about what they saw and experienced. The divisional newspapers and magazines – like the *Sable* of the 6th Division – contain many of these impressions, albeit in brief. Some, like Guy Butler, the 12th Brigade's Information Officer, published one or two of their wartime poems in it.[43] Others, like the anonymous corporal in the First Division, produced anthologies.[44] Wolhuter, writing long after the war, reminisced about the few visits he had made to Alexandria and Cairo before his capture at Tobruk. These cities, and the things he saw, 'made [him] realize what a wonderful war it was to give me the opportunity of seeing such strange and fascinating places'.[45] Axelson, writing when historical recording officer in Italy, sums this up nicely: the men went on sight-seeing visits to Siena for three things: 'It gives them a break, it makes it possible for them to see pretty faces again, and it is for many of them their first contact with medieval fortifications'.[46]

Foreign campaigns, of course, held other attractions for healthy young men removed from female company and the restrictions of home surroundings. The opportunity for pleasure-seeking, casual sex and intemperance was always there, with appetites fuelled by the horror of war and contemplations on the possible brevity of life. This was the concern of more than one mother.[47] On leave from the front, troops chased one or two 'skirts', a word adopted in the war theatre from American troops or, in Cairo, visited the notorious Sharia el Berker. Taking a 'packet', or catching a dose of VD, was considered to be a serious infringement of military discipline.[48] There is no mention, in the published narratives, of the consequent visits to the prophylactic stations to which they had to report for venereal treatment when returning from pass. The VD infection rate in Egypt among Allied troops was around 30 per 1 000 troops per year.

Some, however, did note their sexual conquests, before embarkation for "the North", as well as the opportunities embraced in Egypt, Palestine and Italy.[49] Keith Ford, who is particularly free with his details, records the young Italian assistant of the photographer in Addis, who gave him 'a lesson in Latin love, on the studio couch.'[50] Then, a year later, the Italian matron in Cairo, whose imbibing had not 'impaired her sexual capacity or detracted from her performance'.[51] And then in 1944 there was Angela in Rome, whose husband had been killed in the Western Desert in 1941. After spending several days together, they had a 'sad, sweet parting' and Ford thought 'of how many other young men had had the same bittersweet experience in that blasted wartime period.' He returned to his billet in Bozzano and, before he could think twice, he was 'back in the shit'.[52]

Springbok troops, whether visiting the cities and towns or remaining at the battle fronts in Africa and Europe, were assaulted by a battery of sights and sounds and smells.[53] They experienced near full immersion in these exotic environments. And they revelled in it.

Largely autobiographical

Secondly, personal narratives are also largely autobiographical. Told by the fighting men themselves, they tend to be direct and undecorated, told in a soldierly, matter-of-fact fashion and, being about one man or a few men, they tend to be tales of particulars. They provide details of one man and his mates, on a frontline in Abyssinia, on a beach in Egypt, in a plane over the North Sea or on a ship in Mediterranean. In this way these largely autobiographical accounts, telling of larger events and describing exotic localities, are at once a little like travel writing and also something like history. And all claim the authority of the ordinary soldier's witness for what is written. After all, war cannot be properly understood second-hand – it is something that *has to be* experienced.[54]

Uys Krige certainly did not stand alone. The drive, perhaps even the duty, to record is evident. Claiming the authority of the ordinary soldier's witness, taking as its premise that war cannot be understood second-hand, soldiers felt the need to document and record. This may have started with ephemera: snapshots and letters home. Several memoirists – including Major 'Chooks' Blamey of the UMR and Gunner Ford – recorded the passage of troops to the studios to have their photographs taken soon after entering Addis Ababa.[55] Most, possibly even all, troops wrote letters in which some communicated instructions to keep the letters and other artefacts as keepsakes for after the war. Others kept diaries and journals. This 'record making' culminated after the war with the production of an interesting run of personal narratives. As we shall see in the next section, some narrators resorted to jotting down notes, and keeping diaries, and consulting the regimental histories as credible sources to furnish specific details.[56]

Some personal narratives are full autobiographies in the sense that they narrate a continuous life. Guy Butler was the most loquacious; his war narrative forms a substantial part of the second volume of his autobiographical trilogy. David Brokensha, in *Brokie's Way*, which spans a strapping 566 pages, covers the full span of his life from boyhood and his war experiences, through his post-war student life, and onto his career as a social anthropologist on three continents. His wartime experiences form slightly more than 10 percent of the full book. *Coley's Odyssey* takes a similar form. In it Arnold Colenbrander's wartime experiences form an interesting and exciting break in the otherwise rather mundane career of a government official. For Charles Scott Shaw the Second World War, which interrupted his theological studies in Edinburgh, forms an even briefer part of his

memoirs, which focus heavily on his service as a chaplain with the squadron in Korea.[57] *And the Doctor Recovered* is the witty autobiographical sketch of the life of a medical doctor from young intern to near retirement. Consisting of twenty-four short chapters, Dr Dingle's wartime experiences in three war theatres are recounted very entertainingly in eight of them. [58] Others include Frank Solomon, whose *And The Years Roll By* details his aviation career and the growth of aviation in South Africa. The Second World War intervenes, almost as a hiatus, towards the end of his book.[59]

For some servicemen the war years were a kind of exile from a real life. Dr Mark Cole-Rous, posted to the 6th Casualty Clearing Station in Mombasa in 1940, was bored and frustrated. He had little to do, apart from leading an enjoyable social life, and felt that his talent as a surgeon was being wasted.[60] He was certainly not alone in feeling that his life path had been interrupted. Guy Butler, who was about to launch an academic career in 1940, tells us:

> … one of the worst aspects of my years in the army was the paucity of contact with other poets and writers. Writing verse was a sort of private vice. The contacts one made with the editorial staff of the Div. magazine the *Sable*, while better than nothing, simply made one realise the lack.[61]

The sense of social dislocation, and for Butler the intellectual isolation, could be offset through comradeship. Butler tried to find genial companionship in the company of other information officers. One Saturday night, he records, a function was held to entertain Major Leo Marquard, to say goodbyes to Mike Comay, and to welcome his replacement as the new Divisional Information Officer, Major MacMillan. 'Never in the history of the South Africa army', Butler tells us jokingly, 'had so much brainpower been gathered in one tent, and with no purpose other than to drink beer, and sing, and behave as though there wasn't a war on. It was disgraceful'.[62] He later linked up with Tony Delius and Uys Krige in Florence, where he records that they:

> spent the night … in a sort of poetical drink-up. It was the first time in years that I had been with men who were just a little mad about writing, and about poetry in particular. I realised how much I was missing this talk of books, writers, artists. My war, which on the face of it should have put me in the way of at least *some* literary souls, had failed me dismally.[63]

Butler felt let down. The war had introduced a disagreeable caesura into his literary career. Stuck in his tent near the frontline, he was at times envious of Delius and of Krige, who worked with writers, and 'with getting writers into print, or on to the air.' Some servicemen had an unexciting, or perhaps rather an unstimulating, war. For them the war was a rude interruption in an otherwise fulfilling life.

However, the majority of the Springbok personal narratives do not narrate a continuous life. They often start in 1939 or 1940, with the outbreak of war or with the story of their personal enlistment, and end in 1945 with their return to the Union. This is the pattern for Paul de Villiers, Ike Rosmarin, Keith Ford, Glynn Hobbs, Chooks Blamey, Carey Heydenrych, Mike Sadler and others.[64] They express the mix of excitement – most servicemen were excited about the prospects offered by the war – and then of frustration as they seemingly languished in training camps as they awaited deployment. For this reason perhaps, Wolhuter's narrative starts with his deployment to Egypt and the Western Desert, where there was a small amount of action before capture at Tobruk. But prisoner-of-war narratives are different in many ways. They mostly start with their capture. This is true for Aussie Hammond (Sidi Rezegh), Alan Flederman (Gazala), and Laurie du Preez and Douglas Scott (Tobruk). But in two cases, the POW narratives tell a different story. As their titles indicate, for Uys Krige (*The Way Out*) and Harry Rose-Innes (*The Po Valley Break*), their narratives start with their escape from POW internment. For all of them the end of the war, and personal survival amidst indescribable carnage, is the happy ending.

Uys Krige, and the literary legacy he left of the War, demands separate attention. Published by Unie-Volkspers in 1946, *The Way Out* seems to have enjoyed a longer life than most of its counterparts. It certainly went through several editions and Krige received congratulatory letters for many years. There may be several reasons for this. His was a household name. He was a celebrated author and poet, and his wife, Lydia Lindeque, was a renowned actress. Moreover, as a war correspondent, his voice was known. His 'radiopraatjies' had been a key element in the government information programme, bringing news directly from the battlefront in North Africa to the families huddled around wireless sets in the Union. In most quarters he may have been a trusted, familiar source for this information. His account of *his* escape and evasion through the Italian countryside enjoyed broad appeal. It was an adventure story, and a true one, told by the public-figure-turned-hero. Krige later found that a substantial number of his readers were young boys and for this reason toned down and removed certain passages from the original edition. Moreover, the quality of the writing, and the story's 'incorrigible optimism and [the] staggering kindness' of the Italian people to escapees gripped many.[65] William Tawse of Aberdeen, Scotland, writing soon after the war (January 1947), felt that *The Way Out* was 'one of the finest books this war has produced.'[66]

Yet *The Way Out* had another particular readership. This was the community of ex-prisoners of war, many of whom had experienced similar ordeals and adventures, and whose families hungered for insight into what their relatives had faced at a time when they all had to deal with such great uncertainty.[67] Several former POWs wrote to Krige after reading *The Way Out*. Denis Fielder, KE Gisburne, George Read, and Charles Gifford had been part of the escape from Campo 78, but all four had been recaptured:

Fielder the following day, Gisburne two days after, Gifford the day after he and Krige had parted ways, and Read some months later in March 1944.[68] For these men Krige had had success; he had 'found the way out'. They and other former POWs were therefore excited to read Krige's account. For Fielder it awoke 'such vivid memories and stirred up such a nostalgic wave of "escape-itis"'.[69] And here the memoir could play other roles. Former servicemen, and perhaps even more so ex-POWs, sought to link up after the war, recount their adventures and share their stories. After all, this was *their history*. However, the geography of post-war demobilisation seemed to thwart this. Fielder lamented: 'If civilisation throws up wars in order for us to meet, it should arrange its peace to enable us to remain within reach'.[70] *The Way Out* and books like it were such pathways of contact.

Glynn Hobbs, a trooper with the PAG, produced a very different account. Hobbs put pen to paper late in life and 'due largely to the exhortations of [his] wife Anne who, being so interested in family genealogy, suggested that a memoir of [his] war years be written which would be of interest to [their] family in the years to come'.[71] His memoir is a collection of vignettes, scenes of memory, and is limited to his war years. Hobbs had no record, other than memory, from which to work. Moreover, some fifty-two years had lapsed, experiences had faded, and for some months in his account there is almost a blank, although as he notes, 'perhaps nothing of special interest was happening'. This is a collection of his vivid memories, of the striking experiences, of what remains. His memoir, he notes, is therefore not a 'continuous record of events but rather a collection of, hopefully, interesting stories' arranged in roughly chronological sequence.[72]

Ian Mackenzie, the Honorary Colonel of the 1st Battalion of the Transvaal Scottish, could rightly say of the war: 'To some it was drudgery, boredom, frustration and futility, to others exhilaration, fascination and opportunity'.[73] It was their different experiences, along with the life facts of the narrators, that shaped the story each man told.

Also something like history

The idea that there could be a single, coherent soldier's tale is also undermined by several other factors. Rudyard Kipling, in his inspirational history of the Irish Guards in the First World War, reminded us that 'A battalion's field is bounded by its own vision'.[74] This is obviously even more the case when events are viewed at an individual, personal level. Writing in 1915, Lt Cyril Newton-Thompson noted the extent to which his 'outlook on life [was] apt to be clouded … by the skyline of [his] hundred yards of trench'.[75] But not all realised that the man on the frontline was much less able to give an opinion on the general trend of the war than somebody sitting in London and able to process news from various sources. Inevitably the personal narrative is

confined in view, tainted with personal bias, packed with unintended errors, and often affected by raw emotion. It cannot be otherwise.[76]

In several ways, personal narratives take the shape of 'history'. The time is ordered and often linear, moving within a chronology of actual world events, which have their historical contexts and locations. These narratives have causality, indicating how the individual's experiences had their origins in the actual decisions taken by historical leaders. And, importantly, many narrators make reference to research done. Reference to credible resources no doubt increased the perception of validity. Chooks Blamey referred to the regimental histories for credible source material and especially to furnish specific details.[77] In some cases authors resorted to their own jottings and diaries.

The war had given numerous ordinary men and women the opportunity to connect with larger events and possibly even brush shoulders with important people. For these ordinary citizens the war was an adventure, an opportunity to be seized, and one that had to be recorded. The more literate kept journals and some wrote memoirs after their return home. Diaries, letters and other eyewitness accounts, written in the midst of the war or shortly after, and the packets of photographs and film developed while on leave, constitute Jay Winter's vectors of memory.[78] Sir De Villiers Graaff, who was himself taken at Tobruk, could claim, in his foreword to Schalk Wolhuter's account of their internment at Stalag IVB, that 'his work is accurate because he had the tenacity to keep a diary'.[79] Wolhuter's mother had kept all the souvenirs he had sent home from Egypt.[80] Douglas Scott, of the Transvaal Scottish, quoted at some length from the letters he wrote as a POW to his father, in order 'to gain some colour and background' in his short narrative of his years of imprisonment.[81] Even so, writing to his father from Sulmona on 18 December 1943, he felt that his letters, while containing many words, said very little and that, if he wanted to convey what he was thinking, he would have to write a book.[82]

Yet, in many ways, these narratives seem ahistorical, and perhaps even anti-historical, when read against the big stories that historians tell. There are several contradictions. Some narrators are almost indifferent to the exact location of events in time and space. These details, in terms of the story told, are unimportant to the soldier-narrator, who is not so much concerned with *why*, but rather with *who*. The accounts are invariably on a small scale, of a narrow span, and they contain ephemeral details. For all, their personal survival in the face of so much killing and devastation is what matters most. Moreover, as Hynes notes, the story told by the soldier-narrator, who asserts his authority as the only true witness of his war, is compromised by 'the very nature of memory and language [and] the cloud of witnesses, each telling his own relative truth of events'.[83]

Brigadier Frederick Cooper's *The Police Brigade* is an example of an account that lies in the grey borderland between personal narrative and history. It is presented as history. It carries the name of Cooper's former command – the 6th Infantry Brigade – as its subtitle. Cooper writes as the former commander, stating so in his Author's Note, and he uses his rank and post-nominal titles on the cover. Sir Pierre van Ryneveld, the wartime Chief of the General Staff, wrote the Foreword. And the book has a number of appendices, including cartoons of many of the officers, the honours and awards earned by members of the brigade, and a list of all of the officers of the units that formed the brigade. Yet, while packed with detail, it is written in an easy style, Cooper is the protagonist and much of the account is written in the first person. Cooper himself notes his two roles – of recording *the* history of the Police Brigade and of telling his *own* personal story. For him the history of the Brigade ends with their capture at Tobruk.[84] The internment of the men of the brigade, including their subsequent wartime experience as prisoners, is something quite different. In captivity they were individuals.

Majors Sholto Douglas and Lionel Murray, two senior officers of the Cape Town Highlanders (CTH), illustrate a different point. Douglas wrote the first wartime account of this regiment, which was published in Cairo in 1944, covering the period from enlistment in late 1939 to the end of the North African campaign. It is titled concisely *Regimental History* and includes the customary statistics of prisoners taken, casualties sustained, a roll of honour of those killed, and a list of honours and awards received. Douglas candidly explains its origins:

> [It started] on mobilisation as an Adjutant's personal diary. With the passage of time material accumulated and eventually the author found himself in possession of a mass of historical records. Realising how soon such material can be scattered and lost and how difficult it would be for historians who follow to correlate the scraps that remain, an authentic history was begun.[85]

He invokes Hynes's notion of authenticity. Yet, sadly, for want of space and time, for the CTH were moving to Italy for the next campaign, Douglas's narrative is brief and devoid 'of the telling of all the little human stories and adventures that make up the lighter side of a soldier's life'.[86] He calls his narrative a history, and specifically a regimental history. However, he often speaks in the first person. This should be compared to Lionel Murray's history, which takes the story of the CTH from 1943, through the Italian campaign, to the end of the war. Murray wrote his narrative, which he states he has 'audaciously called a "History"', to serve as 'a handbook to refresh the memories of the men who are serving, or who have served in the past, in the Battalion'.[87] This narrative, written again specifically for the Highlanders, has more of the feel of a 'history'. It is written in the third person. The writing is heavier. And few men are mentioned by name. But, most importantly, the main protagonist

is the regiment. Here one sees the grey borderland between personal narrative and regimental history. Douglas is still the first, while Murray is already the second.[88]

THE FEATURES OF THE PERSONAL NARRATIVE: INTERPOLATED THEMES

Personal narratives, by their nature, might indeed be a little like travel writing, largely autobiographical and something like history, and, as we have seen, they are often all of these things at once. For this reason, personal narratives are also quite unlike regimental history, even when these regimental histories are written by active participants.[89] We now turn to the many interpolated themes that personal narratives share, features which seem to transcend period, nation and the means of warfighting.

The first of these themes relates to what Hynes has called the ***strangeness*** of war. As already noted, this strangeness was perhaps first evident in the exotic nature of the locations. However, on closer reading, and particularly for the Italian campaign, where the fighting took place among the populace, it is very evident in terms of the obvious physical destruction of the landscape and the social dislocation of the people. 'After the emptiness of the desert', Axelson notes, 'it was odd to see civilians living only a few yards from the guns'.[90] The devastation, loss of work and income, the forced change in plans and lifestyles, the misery of the civilians, made Sampie de Wet 'unhappy and homesick'.[91] Several Springbok troops recorded their upset when approached by 'young Italian girls of fourteen or fifteen [who] would offer to spend the night with them for a tin of bully beef.'[92] De Wet described the Florence she saw in 1944:

> I had half anticipated the look of the debris that lined the river banks and the area around the Ponte Vecchio; but I had not imagined the coiled springs which were all that was left of armchairs and sofas. I had not expected the old women and children poking about among the rubble for bits of firewood or salvage. And above all, I had not anticipated the smell. It was a smell probably due partly to unwashed humanity and the street latrine, but also to very old houses and their furniture, now pulverised to dust.[93]

And Livorno:

> Leghorn [Livorno] was much more badly smashed than Pisa. We saw only skeletons of buildings, not a single house or shop that was intact. Everywhere were shutters bulging out, and seen from the sides or through their broken slats piles of debris with bits of wood and broken china protruding. I had seen something similar in the demolition area around the Ponte Vecchio when I first arrived in Florence, but here it was universal.[94]

This scale is hard to imagine. It has to be seen, actually witnessed. And it is shocking. Similar destruction was wrought on social and marital relationships. Active service,

the foreign deployments, the accompanying long separations, placed a great strain on many marriages. Regular mail from home boosted morale: it brought news of the outside world, providing a larger picture as well as connection with family and loved ones.[95] This was massively important and especially so in the POW camps, where mail was never plentiful and subjected to Abwehr censorship. The 'dumping' or cuckolding of POWs by their girlfriends and wives was particularly hard. In such cases they might receive a 'messpot', a toast to the man and the appropriate destruction of the offending letter.[96] Many sad tales about broken relationships were shared in army bases and POW camps. In some cases, however, the betrayal had been unwitting. As Carey Heydenrych recounts:

> In our camp we had two fellows who were married to the same wife. When the first chap was shot down, he was posted as 'missing believed killed'. She remarried. As Fate would have it, her second husband was also shot down and sent to our camp. They became good friends and only discovered the awful tangle when a letter came for the second husband, enclosing a photo of the wife. These fellows remained friends but they never told us how they intended resolving the matter after the war.'[97]

Another theme relates to what Hynes called the ***grotesqueness*** of war and of war-related death. The war landscape, with its desolation or the very visible presence of war-related death, brought a surreal feeling. Sometimes the narrator felt he or she didn't know the place. A place that had been familiar was now unfamiliar. As Hynes argues, this was perhaps now an *anti*-landscape, where the war's human scenes are as grotesque as its natural ones.

Poet Guy Butler found the landscape in Italy to be surreal and difficult to capture. When with the Rear Brigade HQ in the neighbourhood of Prato, he pitched his tent 'in a stubble field between two olive trees'.[98] This might have been a surreal abode for a writer, but when he returned to the brigade headquarters after a day out, he struggled to write about what he had seen: 'of mountains; men, mud, death, madness, courage, skill, command, and cold; and a range of earth colours, from golden chestnut through to black soil and back again to brick and blood colour, and the glint of wet metal'.[99] Capturing the war, the human action, the majestic but despoiled landscape, seemed an insurmountable difficulty. Butler almost envied his compatriots who faced 'more sharply defined tasks', such as the officer in charge of the burial parties after the Battle of Stanco, who had to take a compass-bearing on Mecca before burying the Moslem dead of the French Foreign Legion.[100] Their work was straightforward and no questions were asked.

And then there was the presence of death, and the ways that it presented itself, that was strange. A patrol of the WR/DLR rested in a small glade near Colonia:

> One man gratefully sat down on a 'log' of wood, which let out a ghastly groan as his weight sank onto it, and he let out a yell of fear as he leapt up. He had sat down on the body of a German soldier still with greatcoat on and well-preserved by the freezing cold and all the air in the corpse was forced out in a hair-raising groan! At a later date the body was removed and given a proper burial.[101]

Major FJ Reitz tells us he saw two Messerschmitts downed. He went to examine 'the after-effects' of the second. A gruesome scene presented itself:

> A lucky burst from a Bren gun at a low-level Messerschmitt 'straffer' must have registered a shot somewhere, as the plane ploughed into the ground, leaving a gigantic crater, and its debris cartwheeled and disintegrated over some 200 yards. The sickly smell of a pulverised human body still clung to the air, belts of tracer ammunition were scattered along the route but the only visible relic of the pilot was pathetic and incongruous – namely a blonde head of hair, neatly scalped.[102]

Several authors juxtapose this grotesqueness of the war against the beauty and peacefulness of the surroundings. In June 1944 Eric Axelson cadged a lift with some signallers during the Rapido River operations:

> Not a sound broke the morning, apart from more vociferous birds. In places the road ran through a plantation, and the air was sweet with the scent of pines. Immediately beyond the trees lay a Sherman tank, with a track and its turret blown off, and from it came the not so pleasant scent of putrefying bodies. Peaceful though the surroundings were the descent was more exciting than any switchback at a fair: there was extra zest and zip – and constant expectation.[103]

The decay of torn human flesh, and the sudden reminder that the occupants of the jeep were in a warzone, was enough for Axelson and his companions to forget the surroundings and make for safer ground.

Yet for some their apparent ***enjoyment*** of combat is a further feature. Historian Martin van Creveld has explained this as follows:

> At all times and places, most men have probably hated war for the discomfort and the hardship it involves, the violence, the havoc, and the bloodshed it causes, and the grief and desolation it leaves in its wake. At all times and places, very often this hatred did not prevent men – even the same men – from enjoying it. They eagerly looked forward to it, revelled in it, and looked back on it with pride and satisfaction when it was over.[104]

This is seen in some of the war narratives. Soldiers are recruited and they are prepared and equipped to 'go to war'. Their primary aim, once deployed, is to dominate, quite probably kill, the enemy on the battlefield. In order to achieve this, military organisations condition soldiers to think differently, behave differently and react differently. According to Joanna Bourke, the blunting of the humanity of soldiers,

through the numbing of their human consciousness and their training in the cold application of technology, enabled 'violent acts in modern warfare'.[105] Their civilian lives and attitudes are set aside and an entirely different way of life is embraced. This is certainly the case for enlistees in full-time forces. Volunteers are in a different position. They are civilians taken into the armed forces, for a short period, and with the intention of returning to their peacetime occupations once an emergency has ended. This was the case of the Springbok army during this war.

Every South African serviceman was a volunteer and the overwhelming majority of them probably retained at least something of their civilian orientation. As a 'people's army' the majority were possibly a little short on discipline and regimentation. Their values probably explain their astonishment at the strangeness and the grotesqueness of war, as much as they do the relative absence of any enjoyment in the killing. For most of them war remained an ugly thing. Possibly for this reason most of their personal narratives are devoid of descriptions of actual battle, although there are one or two notable exceptions. Some no doubt enjoyed the opportunity to prove themselves, as men, and as soldiers, and to 'test' themselves in battle. It is possible that some of these scenes, where they existed in draft, were excised from the final, published versions. One must therefore turn to the rough-work journals and diaries to ascertain if some more graphic instances are to be found. While these documents fall outside the ambit of this chapter, the case of Benjamin Fainsinger might be cited by way of example.[106] Fainsinger (1929-1997), a trooper in the Royal Natal Carbineers, longed to find 'action' as quickly as possible. He not only kept a diary in the hope that 'it [would] prove interesting one of these days', but confided in it: 'I just have to shoot a Jerry sometime'.[107] His first opportunity came in 1944, in Italy, when his battalion encountered elements of the Hermann Goering Division. A marksman seemingly of some ability, Fainsinger killed two Germans and he looted at least one of the bodies, taking the man's family photographs. These images he stuck into his own diary as a kind of trophy from the hunt. (The images are in the photograph section of this book.) For Fainsinger, the killing was close and personal and, while he could immediately visualise the killing, there was no remorse. Exposure to the war, to its elements, and to its violence sometimes induces a craving for power. But this condition does not permeate the South African narratives of the war.

A further constant theme is what Hynes called the ***astonishment*** at seeing wounds or of being wounded. Arnold Colenbander, of the UMR:

> At this time Jardine's tank was hit. It burst into flames and started brewing. Guessing that this would draw the attention of the enemy off of me and on to the crew escaping from the tank, I rose and ran back as fast as my legs and condition would allow towards our tanks in the rear. My recollections now become very hazy. I can remember becoming very weak and taking cover in a shallow ditch near our tanks. I was in great pain and was burned about the face and hands. My

> overalls had saved the rest of my body. I seemed to have difficulty in controlling my head which wobbled about in a disconcerting fashion so that I had to steady it with my hands. All tank commanders carried a small tube of morphia in their top left pockets. I broke off the seal and injected the full dose into my arm. I saw nothing of my crew again. I heard later that du Pavillon died in the tank and that Vincent and Dickason died of wounds.[108]

The ***confusion*** of battle is a closely related theme. Reitz was aboard an American LST as he watched a labour battalion of Swazis marshalled into column of route. He tells us:

> As they marched past a large dockyard building a gigantic German shell made a direct hit on the building. Bricks and masonry flew. I dodged behind the deckhouse to escape the debris pattering down. A cloud of red dust obscured where the Labour Corps had been. When this lifted, bodies bestrewed the pavement. Naturally I feared the worst. Can you imagine, that as apparent corpse after corpse arose, there were peals of that happy African laughter, which is quite distinctive, as they derided one another for showing fear? Magnificent people![109]

Being taken prisoner had a similar, initially numbing effect. According to Douglas Scott, most of the men captured at Tobruk 'seemed to be in a coma, their attitude being one of resignation and relief'.[110] Medical orderly NI Robinson recounts that 'Somewhere in the middle of this confusion I discern myself, in very much the same way as a man sometimes stands outside himself in nightmare, and looks on with helpless horror at what is happening to him'.[111] Pieter van Niekerk and Gordon Henderson had escaped from the Modena Camp and, having covered 700 kilometres in twenty days, were recaptured near Casino. They had felt 'very exposed, almost naked', and when called on to 'Halt!', sat on a snow-covered stump and waited 'dumbly for the approaching soldier.'

> Our minds had gone blank. It had happened too suddenly – too unexpectedly. Our world was a void. With the shock our hopes had been brutally crushed. Our thoughts cried out in deep despair, 'Dear God, what have we done to deserve this?'[112]

Van Niekerk and Henderson later recognised their foolishness and carelessness, and, forced back into captivity, a measure of self-contempt followed. Hunted by German troops following his own escape, Uys Krige tells us: 'Although everything that was happening to me was very real and concrete – not only forceful but brutal in its impact – mine, now, was a strangely blurred state of mind and feeling. The outstanding impression I retain of it was of its confusion, its tumult'.[113] In these circumstances, while some men may have been numbed, others were desperate enough to risk all rather than face fresh incarceration.

The ***courage*** to brave great hardship, harbour great uncertainty, and endure great change is another interpolated feature in these narratives. They tell stories of

hardship and suffering, but also of bravery and endurance that combine in aiding our understanding of the phenomenon of warfighting, of the performance of men in battle, and of the experience of men held in captivity. Many of the accounts, and perhaps the POW accounts more than others, reflect a profound inner change in the narrator. Young boys (some barely ready to shave) go to war, and return as men. There is the forging of the self. The satisfaction of having been part of something of great meaning. This was finely caught in Smuts's exhortation to the departing men of the 1st Brigade in June 1940: 'Go forth as crusaders, as children of the Cross, to fight for freedom itself. You are volunteers of your own choice … you are going forth to meet danger, hardship and sacrifice'.[114] And with this came the satisfaction of eventually succeeding, as South Africans, in a shared endeavour. But it was also about recognising the courage and endurance of others. Towards the end of the war this switched to the German people, and especially the German women, and the abuses they faced following the Soviet invasion. Springboks viewed this with abhorrence and expressed surprise at the cold, matter-of-fact way in which such crimes were accepted by Americans troops. No doubt, most of these stories remain unwritten and have died with the passing of this generation.

'The circumstance of war', a trooper in the PAG recounted in 1996, placed men in the unexpected position of 'having to endure great mental and physical stress'.[115] Many stories of such stress emerge. The surreal imagery of the war, the maiming of friends, and the ever-present possibility of one's own death brought forth many different reactions. In combat units, such as fighter squadrons, the men were often highly-strung. Adrenalin ran high. Sometimes this resulted in dining-room brawls and other forms of indiscipline. For the pilots of 40 Squadron SAAF the ritual of 'Burning the Hyena' became their outlet. Whilst in East Africa, they strung a hyena over a campfire and, buck naked, the pilots would dance around ceremoniously as the carcass sizzled over the flames. These men, Ambrose Brown reminds us, lived 'on the edge of their nerves in the peculiarly dangerous, quick-death circumstances of the air war in a territory that was more forbidding and cruel than the enemy'.[116] But in the words of Newman Robinson, 'even great hardships are tolerable if you can see an end to them'.[117] The war had undoubtedly created a space for ordinary men to achieve extraordinary things.[118]

Morale, including attitude to the enemy, is another important feature. As Fankie Monama indicates in Chapter 6, information officers had been placed with the South African forces to play a number of roles. Their reports contain information on the mental and emotional state of Springbok troops. They found in July 1942, for instance, that, while South African soldiers had complete confidence regarding the ultimate victory of the Allies in the war, they had much less confidence in the superiority of the Allied forces and little faith in the high command. This disregard was general and thought not to be focused on any particular general officer. Rommel,

on the other hand, 'was held in awe'. The information officers concluded that this was an outcome of active propaganda, whereas little was done to make Auckinleck and other British generals 'imposing … familiar or impressive'. Even more peculiar, they thought, was the South African attitude to the enemy. Some South Africans, when questions of the post-war settlement were discussed within the AES context, expressed 'bloodthirsty sentiments about what they want done to the Germans; but there seems to be hardly any personal dislike of the Germans forces to the west of us. They are still known as Jerries rather than Huns: when one of our men is killed, it is an aeroplane or a tank or a shell that killed him, not a German. Modern war of this highly scientific kind is so impersonal that there is little scope for hatred'.[119] This is certainly borne out in the majority of personal narratives.

A final theme to note here is one of human change, the way in which the war changed the *attitudes and outlooks* of the men and women plunged for, perhaps, five years into service abroad in multi-national and multi-racial armies, fighting world fascism and authoritarianism. Some may have had several years of reflection in a POW cage. In other words, did these men and women return changed people? For some the change was palpable. For the Brokenshas, a middle-class, English-speaking family from Natal, their three sons made new friends in the armed forces, several of whom were Afrikaners. For many, this may have been the first attempt to reach across the language divide in 'white society'. David Brokensha later wrote: 'I cringe now when I think how superior, with no justification, we English-speaking Natalians felt, regarding Afrikaners'.[120] And as Major JF Reitz recounts, far from being a divisive factor, Afrikaans came to play an interesting role during the war, as a kind of cement for all South Africans serving with various formations overseas: 'it proved in all cases to be the "Open Sesame" when fellow South Africans encountered one another,' even when they possessed only rudimentary knowledge of the language.[121]

But, of course, for South Africans there was the submersion in a far larger sea of human otherness.[122] A kind of submersion that was not possible in the South Africa of the day. This related to the ways in which South Africans viewed each other, but also how South Africans viewed others. Higher authorities instructed Allied troops based in Egypt and elsewhere to respect local customs and to desist from provoking the local population. Wolhuter recounts how, after the cinema shows in Cairo, troops would rise with the singing of the Egyptian national anthem and thereafter, believing Farouk to be anti-British and pro-German, mockingly chant: 'King Farouk, King Farouk / We'll hang your bollocks on a hook!'[123] Decades later he could 'appreciate what resentment our over-bearing attitude must have caused, but at the time we looked upon Egypt as a British possession and thought we had every right to be there and behave as we did'.[124] The first detectible change is evinced in Italy, where Allied troops, generally, praised the Italian people for the unselfish support given to escaped POWs, in particular, and often at great personal risk. And many may have

agreed that the poverty they found in 'the hovels of the Abruzzi [was] an indictment of the present World Social System'.[125] Writing in September 1944, Alf Burns, who had been with Krige in PG 78, expressed the general sense of hopelessness and helplessness, and the fear that the post-war world would still be divided and unequal. How many, like Burns and Butler, felt that *their* war had failed them?

Many veterans returned to North Africa and Europe, to visit the places where they had fought, where they had lost friends and compatriots, or had been imprisoned. Major BG Simpkins, of the Rand Light Infantry, returned to Egypt and Libya in September 1958. The world had, of course, changed again. But Simpkins did so for two particular reasons. He was compiling a history of his regiment and he wished to re-visit the battlefields and take photographs. His book was published in 1965.[126] But there was a second, deeper reason. Not only had Simpkins left friends behind in the desert, but he had come to realise that a part of him had been left there too. His visit was almost a pilgrimage, a journey of remembrance and, through his book, a memorialisation of what he and his mates had gone through. On returning home in 1958 he felt that, after breathing the Western Desert air anew, he had left behind an even greater part of himself than before.[127]

CONCLUSION

Soldiers narrate their stories for a variety of reasons. Many narrate as a way of expressing their 'emotions and feelings in words', while for others the sharing of stories can be an effective form of coming to terms with a violent, perhaps traumatic past.[128] Narration, with a strong emphasis on the sharing of common stories, enables veterans to form literary communities bonded by nostalgia and wistfulness, a kind of homesickness for an unrecoverable past. Some, like Simpkins of the RLI, juxtaposed their younger selves as wartime volunteers with their present selves as veterans and historians. For such men, their writings often took the form of a life story, one tracing their personal development as narrator and sometimes as regimental historian. The war experience shaped their views and their approaches to their writings on the war, while the war itself, and their writing about it, came to fashion their identities as individuals, as veterans, and as soldier-historians. For them, theirs was the only authentic voice.

The South African personal narratives of the Second World War, like those from any other country, are a mixed bag. Much depends on the narrator, his or her willingness and ability to tell the 'true' story, and their ability to place the narration within the context of wider events. Some perhaps inevitably wrote narrowly focused accounts. Others like Hobbs produced vignettes, the residue of memory. Yet others produced accounts than remain fine literary works. The praise bestowed

by Aubrey Burns on Uys Krige's *The Way Out* touches on the elements that make the best of these narratives:

> I found this book excellent beyond my expectation … *The Way Out* has all the earmarks of an honest story – neither dramatically sensationalized nor protectively reticent. It is not merely an absorbing adventure story; nor is it merely a remarkably balanced blend of the objective and subjective elements of a personal experience, translated into effective narrative. Even more than a story about war, or a story about the author, it is a story about the Italian people, about humanity and human neighbourliness at the basic practical level – a story of group heroism not in organized mass action or purpose, but in independent individual unanimity.[129]

Endnotes

1 Uys Krige, *The Way Out; Italian Intermezzo* (Cape Town and Port Elizabeth: Unie-Volkspers, 1946), Foreword.

2 Uys Krige, 'Difficulties the 8th Army have to face', radio broadcast c1944, 225.RW.10, Uys Krige Collection, JS Gericke Library, Stellenbosch University (SU). The notion of finding 'the way out' or of 'seeing no way out' is found in the narratives of others. See, for example, Alan Flederman, *And Direction was Given* (Cape Town: Pretext, 2000), p 1.

3 Flederman, *And Direction was Given*, p xiii.

4 Stephane Audoin-Rouzeau and Annette Becker, *1914-1918: Understanding the Great War* (London: Profile Books, 2000), p 38.

5 Frances Houghton, *The Veterans' Tale: British Military Memoirs of the Second World War* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2019), pp 1-26.

6 Yuval Noah Harari, 'Military memoirs: A historical Overview of the Genre from the Middle Ages to the Late Modern Era', *War in History*, vol. 14, no. 3 (2007), p 290.

7 Harari, 'Military memoirs', p 290.

8 Houghton, *The Veterans' Tale*, pp 1-26. See also Harari, 'Military Memoirs', pp 289-309.

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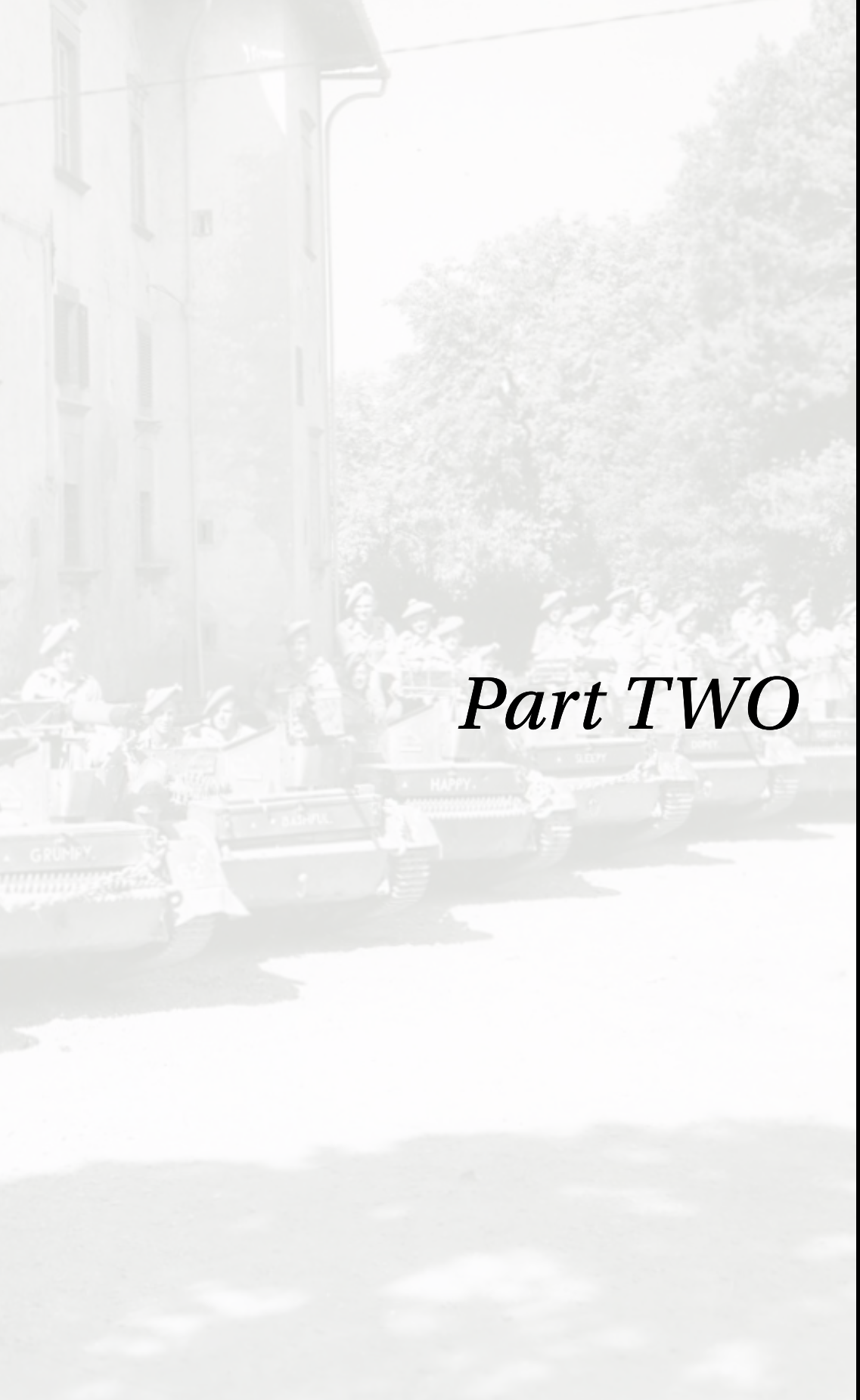
SNOW WHITE
PRINCE CHARMING



Part TWO

TO FOREIGN FIELDS

2

SAVING PRIVATE LUGG

Carl Punt

INTRODUCTION

One of the most popular and successful Hollywood war movies of all time, *Saving Private Ryan*, was released in 1998. It opens with James Ryan visiting a war cemetery many years after the war. He breaks down in tears at the sight of a gravestone while his family stands near him. He is overcome with grief. The narrative then goes back in time to the D-day invasion of Normandy on 6 June 1944. Captain Miller, who commanded a stick of the 2nd US Ranger Battalion, of the 29th Infantry Division, was tasked to find Private James Francis Ryan and bring him back home safely. Ryan, a paratrooper in the 101st Airborne Division, was presumably somewhere in German-occupied France after their unit had missed their planned drop zone. Ryan was the youngest of four brothers who were all in the United States armed forces and had been fighting somewhere on a warfront. However, as things transpired, all three of James's brothers had been killed in action and their mother was to receive near concurrent notification of their deaths. The United States Army Chief of Staff, George C Marshall, decided that the grief would be too much for the mother to bear and authorised a rescue mission to bring James Francis Ryan home safely.[1] Although much of the story is fictional, the mission led by Miller is based on a true set of events. The fictional Ryans were in fact the Niland brothers: Edward, Preston, Robert and Frederick.[2] The movie portrays the horrors and reality of war in a very vivid way, allowing the audience to experience the war from a bottom-up perspective. In this way they could relate to the 'ordinary' soldier.

Saving Private Ryan is the inspiration for this chapter. There are striking similarities between the wartime experiences of the fictional James Ryan and the real-life main character here, Private John Beresford Lugg. Both men fought the Germans in Europe and at the same time, one in France, the other in Italy. Both had three brothers who were (presumed) killed in the war. Both were ordered back home because of these dramatic losses and the suffering of their families. And both 'made it home' to tell their story. In a wider sense, the chapter uses the Prince Alfred's Guard (PAG), the regiment in which Lugg served, as a lens through which to study the experiences of the 'ordinary' soldier in the Italian campaign. The reasons for enlistment, their military training, morale, the experiences of war and the war's impact on families are examined.

HARRY LUGG AND HIS FOUR SONS

On 22 February 1945 the Adjutant General, who was responsible for releases at the Union Defence Force (UDF) Administrative Headquarters in Pretoria, received the following heart-rending letter from a very concerned father:[3]

> I had four sons in the Army.
>
> My eldest joined the S.A.A.F. at the outbreak of the war. Early last year he was reported missing during a night bombing attack on Plovdiv in Bulgaria. After being kept in suspense for four months he was reported as a prisoner of war in Germany, and as far as I know he is still there, but we have not yet heard from him since October.
>
> In December 1942 my second son was killed while serving as an air pilot in the S.A.A.F. as the result of a flying accident in the Sudan.
>
> On the 15th of last month my third son who had also joined the S.A.A.F. as an air gunner, was reported missing whilst engaged on a cross-country flight during the night somewhere in Palestine, and we have had no further news of him.
>
> My fourth and youngest son is a private in the Prince Alfred Guards at the present with the 6th Arm. Div. in Italy. His no. is 310599.
>
> I am undergoing a serious operation on Monday, and my wife is far from well. I have written to the O.C. Prince Alfred Guards asking him to transfer my son to some base job, but I have since been advised to address you on the matter also. I accordingly do so in the hope that you will be [in] a position to relieve in some measure our present state of worry and anxiety.
>
> I was formerly Chief Native Commissioner for Natal.
>
> Yours faithfully,
>
> (Sgt). H.C. Lugg.[4]

A clearly overwhelmed and anxious father begged the UDF to somehow assist in keeping his (perhaps last living) son safe from danger. He and his wife experienced what all parents who have children fighting in a war fear the most: death and uncertainty. One can only imagine how the Luggs must have felt when they heard that their eldest son had been taken prisoner at the hands of the Germans. Not knowing how he is treated, and how the Germans would behave as the tides of defeat were slowly rising over the German empire. Has his 'strong' personality been causing trouble for him? Eric, who matriculated from Maritzburg College in 1934, was described by his headmaster: 'He has individuality and can hold firmly to his opinion; he is not easily led or persuaded but is entirely honest and straight-forward'.[5] Eric was 24, single and working as a clerk when he joined the Active Citizen Force on 28 June 1938.[6] Little did he know that South Africa would be dragged into a war little more than a year later. He joined the South African Air Force (SAAF) and started his Pupil Pilot Training Course at Baragwanath in July 1938.[7] The Officer Commanding the Air Training School reported on Eric's progress:

> This pupil progressed slowly at first but improved during the latter part of the course. He is a safe pilot but his flying is not polished. Should make a good service pilot with more practice. A good type but a bit slow in the uptake.[8]

Another report reads:

> Average pilot. Works hard and good type.[9]

One can only wonder if his 'unpolished flying skills' and 'average skills' would account for the accident that would later lead to his capture. Eric qualified as a pilot at the bottom of his class ('B' section) and was commissioned as a Warrant Officer Class II, while the 'A' candidates were commissioned as second lieutenants.[10] His training was limited. At the time of his appointment he had flown only 71 hours dual and 54 hours solo.[11] He was trained as a bomber pilot on Junkers (JU 52) aircraft.[12] The UDF had bought the Junkers with the intention of converting them into bombers. But, after converting them, they realised that the British bombs they would be using could not be used in German-style bomb bays. All the aircrafts had to be re-fitted to be used as bombers.[13] This oversight brought the quality of the training of the bomber pilots, and the bay loaders, into question, as they were unable to practise their loading skills, targeting skills or perform coastal patrols. After his training he was posted to 13 Squadron at Waterkloof Air Station[14] on 8 January 1941 and promoted to second lieutenant. As the UDF embarked on the East Africa Campaign, he was posted to Nairobi the following month where he would serve for almost a year. He made a few more transfers, to 3 Squadron in May 1941, 6 Squadron in July 1942, and finally to 178 Squadron in October 1942. During this time he was promoted to lieutenant. He received five medals during this service: the 1939-1945 Star, the Africa Star, the Italy Star, the War Medal 1939-1945, and the Africa Service Medal. Eric served in three campaigns: East Africa (February to December 1941), North Africa (September to December 1943) and Italy (January to March 1944).[15] He was reported missing on 19 March 1944 when his airplane was shot down during a night bombing mission over Bulgaria.[16] His parents were notified only on 25 March.[17] He was confirmed a prisoner of war (POW) on 14 June 1944.[18] It is not clear exactly when his parents received news that Eric was prisoner, but one can only imagine the relief, mixed with anxiety and helplessness, that they must have felt when they did. At the time of writing the letter, Mr Lugg Senior did not know the whereabouts of his son, nor indeed if Eric would survive the war. Luckily he did, and was released from duty on 23 November 1945[19] after being promoted to captain.[20]

The second son, Cyril Trevor Lugg, followed in his brother's footsteps by joining the SAAF at the age of 24. Before enlisting, he had worked, like their father, for the Department of Native Affairs. He started his journey in the SAAF by being posted as a pilot to 75 Air School in October 1942. He was moved to 23 Air School in June 1942. Unlike his brother, he was commissioned immediately as a second lieutenant, which suggests that he was a better pupil pilot. He was posted to the SAAF Base Depot, which suggests that he flew cargo planes. Cyril died on 11 December 1942 in a flying accident while serving in the Sudan. His aircraft burst into flames leaving no possibility of survival. The cause of the accident remains unclear, possibly leaving his

parents with more questions than they had answers. During his service he received two medals: The War Medal 1939-1945 and the Africa Services Medal.[21]

Harry Durnford Lugg, the third son, enlisted on 29 June 1942 at the age of 23, but was discharged on 15 July 1942, only two months later. It is not clear why exactly he was discharged after such a short period. One possible reason is that he got married, as he initially indicated his next of kin as his father with his address in Durban. He re-enlisted on 9 June 1944[22], but on this occasion he indicated his next to kin to be his wife, Dorothy Lister Lugg.[23] Dorothy stayed behind on their farm in Ladysmith, Natal, where Harry was a farmer. Interestingly, Harry also changed jobs between enlistments, as he went from being a miner to a farmer, perhaps indicating that the farm had come through his wife. Like his brothers, Harry joined the SAAF, but unlike them, both pilots, he became an air gunner.[24]

The South African Defence Act (Act 13 of 1912 as amended)[25] only allowed for Union troops to be deployed in defence of the Union. Very early in the war, the need for Union troops to be deployed to East Africa and further afield increased. Soldiers could thus at first only be deployed within Southern Africa, since technically service outside the political borders was not necessarily seen as being for the direct defence of the country. Therefore there was confusion as to the interpretation of the Defence Act. According to Major General Brink, there was no law that could force civilians to fight overseas. All civilians could only be forced to defend the Union and serve the country up to the Equator.[26] The Office of the Commandant-in-Chief at Defence Headquarters in Pretoria clarified the Defence Act to all Commandants in a letter:

> Subject to the provisions of this Act, every citizen shall be liable between his seventeenth and sixtieth year (both included) to render in time of war personal service in the defence of the Union in any part of South Africa whether within or outside the Union.[27]

The Prime Minister, Jan Smuts, realised that he needed to deploy troops outside the specified boundaries, but he could not, and would not, force them. Politically, South Africa's white society was deeply divided and Smuts could not afford to antagonize the anti-war camp further by enforcing conscription. He had to rely on volunteers to make up the required numbers.[28] Smuts told the Senate:

> If you want to defend this country, you will have to proceed a great distance to beyond it, and the question then arises how far beyond it.[29]

Smuts advocated for service anywhere in Africa.[30] On 29 March 1940 a new service oath, known as the Africa or 'Red Oath', was introduced. All volunteers were required to take the oath of their free will. Union soldiers could then be deployed anywhere in Africa for

the duration of hostilities.[31] An orange flash was worn on the volunteers' shoulders in order to identify them. These flashes were commonly known as 'Red Tabs'.[32]

Harry re-enlisted on 10 June 1944.[33] He signed the General Service Oath eleven days later,[34] acknowledging that he was required to serve 'anywhere' for the duration of the war, with an additional service period of six months after the war had ended.[35] Harry never got to serve that long as the airplane on which he was flying went down somewhere over the Mediterranean Sea,[36] near the coast of Palestine, during a night flight on 15 January 1945. His airplane never returned and it is presumed to have crashed accidentally, as being dark it was unlikely that they were shot down over the ocean. The crew was never recovered and presumed dead.[37]

John Beresford Lugg was the fourth and youngest son. Following in his brothers' footsteps, he joined the UDF. He was then 21 years old. His personnel file tells us that he had blue eyes and brown hair and was of average build, measuring five foot ten inches (1,77 meters) and weighing 160 pounds (72,5 kilograms). After school John had worked in the building trade, before deciding to enlist. Unlike his brothers, not wanting to fly, John joined the Army and started his war journey as a gunner in the 4th Heavy Battery of the South African Artillery (SAA) on 21 April 1942. He signed the General Service Oath on 29 June 1942[38], only a week after the fall of Tobruk in which South Africa suffered terrible losses. The fortress had fallen in a battle that lasted little over 24 hours. Some 32 000 Allied soldiers, including 12 722 men of the 2nd South African Infantry Division (2 Div), became Axis prisoners of war. Tobruk was the single largest military catastrophe suffered by the UDF.[39] The reasons for the defeat at Tobruk are wide-ranging and complex. But, did the defeat and the drive for vengeance, perhaps motivate John to sign the General Service Oath? Less than a year later John would be transferred to the PAG, 6th SA Armoured Division (6 Div) and eventually find his way into Italy.

THE POLITICS OF VOLUNTEERING

It is not clear why John or his brothers enlisted. What could possibly have motivated him to join a war that had been going on for nearly three years, and one in which South Africa just had 'mixed' successes? At the time of his enlistment, all three older brothers were still alive and well, flying all over Africa. Did his brothers influence his decision? Then why wait three years? Would he have changed his mind if he had waited another six months – when Cyril had died? One can surmise what made him and his brothers enlist. The list of possible reasons why men are willing to fight in war is nearly endless. Individual beliefs differ, which makes it difficult to determine baseline motivations. Like all other wars, the Second World War also provided its own specific motivating factors. According to Grundlingh, there are mainly three factors that can account for men to have volunteered: ideological, economical and personal.[40]

Two main ideological views stand out as main motivational reasons: 'South Africanism' and 'anti-Hitlerism'. Jan Smuts advocated that white South Africans should stand together in defence of a notion of 'South Africanism'. It emphasized voluntarism, co-operation, and consensus and harmony for the greater good of all. The National Party, the main opposition to Smuts's United Party, on the other hand, believed that Afrikaners should stand together, apart from English-speaking whites. There were many whites, including among the Afrikaners, who bought into this idea of 'South Africanism'. They wanted an inclusive South Africa. They also realised the importance of having strong political and economic ties with Britain.[41] On 19 August 1940 Smuts had urged his supporters to work together in unity:

> What worries me is not what is going to happen during this war, but what will happen after the war when we have to live together in this country. We must build up a spirit of peace.[42]

This call of duty to serve your country and fight against the evil of Nazi Germany would account for the enlistment of many men. According to Van der Waag, English-speaking white South Africans fought largely for 'King and country', an intermingling of family tradition, loyalty and patriotism.[43] Overy is of opinion that 'hatred of Hitler and "Hitlerism" was the moral cement of the Allied war effort'.[44] According to *The Star* (Johannesburg) of 12 August 1940:

> The recruiting figures for this Province (Natal) have soared far above our expectations, particularly from last May. For this Herr Hitler was partly responsible. Whenever he did anything spectacular, recruits literally poured in.[45]

Could it be that the Lugg brothers, being white and English, were motivated by these notions? The Lugg family also had a history of war service dating back to the Anglo-Zulu wars in the last decades of the nineteenth century. Moreover, according to Harry Lugg's autobiography, two of his brothers, Colonel AJ Lugg and Captain GE Lugg served during the Second World War. They were tasked to recruit a thousand Zulus for the Native Military Corps at the outbreak of the war in 1939. His other two brothers, CE Lugg and BK Lugg, had served in the Great War and in the Bambatha Rebellion of 1906. Although Harry Lugg never served in the military, he did have 41 years of service as a government official.[46] Harry had joined the Natal Civil Service as a clerk on 5 December 1899, only three weeks after the Anglo-Boer War had broken out, and was transferred to the Native Affairs Office in 1902.[47] Quite possibly Harry Lugg's sons enlisted from a strong sense of family tradition of service. It is equally possible that the oldest three joined the SAAF because of the recruitment campaign that appeared constantly in the local newspapers. One such news article reads: 'Air Power: The Key to Victory … Let the SAAF train you … The SAAF needs you'.[48]

Perhaps the Luggs were motivated by financial reasons? Military pay has a strong influence on first-term enlistment decisions.[49] The socio-economic situation in South Africa was not great as the country was still experiencing a 'poor white problem' at the time.[50] The Great Depression of the 1930s had left many men, especially Afrikaners, in a terrible financial situation. The farming industry was hit hard by low international prices. Demand for South African goods fell, which compelled companies to cut wages in order to avoid bankruptcy. Unemployment soared. A severe drought between 1931 and 1932 added to severe economic pressure. Many farmers went bankrupt[51] and were forced to seek work in the cities.[52] Did these factors perhaps influence Harry Junior's decision to quit farming and enlist? Furthermore, uneducated whites competed with the Coloured and African workforces for unskilled jobs. The general working wages were too low to support a quality lifestyle and there was no foreseeable end in sight.[53] Perhaps John Lugg felt there was no future in the building industry and looked to the UDF as a prospect?

Personal reasons are difficult to determine as each soldier would, at some level, have a personal conviction about the war. According to Grundlingh, 'a sense of adventure, curiosity, and the opportunity of male camaraderie offered by war service, often coupled with a desire to escape domestic strife, were all reasons that prompted individuals to join.'[54] Roos is of opinion that some white volunteers enlisted because of 'pecuniary need, patriotism or peer pressure'.[55] Some men may have enlisted because of their religious convictions. All four Lugg brothers had indicated on their enlistment forms that they were members of the Church of England.[56] Although this does not prove that they were motivated to enlist because of their religious convictions, it highlights the idea that the Luggs were 'ordinary' men fighting for 'ordinary' reasons.

PRIVATE JOHN LUGG IN EGYPT AND ITALY

The story continues when John was transferred to the PAG on 18 February 1943.[57] The PAG had a total strength of 876 officers and men in Italy. John was one of 59 men who were from Durban and Pietermaritzburg.[58] He was placed into B Squadron,[59] most likely as a gunner, drawing on his experience and training in the South African Artillery. The PAG became one of the armoured regiments of the 11th Armoured Brigade (11 Armd Bde), one of the brigades forming the 6th South African Armoured Division (6 Div). The 6 Div was formed on 1 February 1943,[60] shortly after the North African campaign had come to an end, and the focus had shifted to Europe. The 1 Div was disbanded and, taking fresh volunteers, reformed into 6 Div. The 6 Div would be an armoured division since it would require fewer men. The initial idea was to form two divisions but, because of manpower shortages, the plans had changed.[61] The division consisted of only two brigades (11 Armd

and the 12th Motorised Infantry) instead of the usual three.[62] A British brigade, the Guards Brigade, was added in Italy. Major General Evered Poole was appointed as the general officer commanding the division.

After 25 days of embarkation leave,[63] the PAG was shipped from Durban on 19 April and arrived at Tewkif Bay, Egypt, on 30 April 1943. The eleven-day journey was uneventful. They were moved into Khatatba Camp, which was located midway between Alexandria and Cairo.[64] Strict censorship rules applied at the camp and the men were not allowed to take photos of their journey.[65] This may have been frustrating for the men, as it was also probably their first overseas trip and they were not allowed to photograph their adventure. Khatatba was their home for the next eight months, and the place where they received extensive training. Instructors, who were withdrawn from 1 SA Infantry Division while the latter was still in the line, awaited them so that training could start right away.[66]

According to official training guidelines, once the men were moved to the concentration area, the following programme had to be followed: during the first week men were settled in and units were organised. Non-Commissioned Officers (NCOs) and men were graded. Drilling took up much of the time. The training became more intensive during the second week. Night route marches were introduced. Weapons training started in the second week, with special reference given to visual training. The third week's programme focused on light machine gun training and elementary tactical training. During the fourth week, elementary tactical training continued. The goal was to achieve a reasonable standard of efficiency within the first month of training.[67]

The training also focused on various aspects of armoured warfare.[68] It covered three broad aspects: basic training, unit training and formation training.[69] Training first focused on individual skills and later progressed to combined armoured warfare. The armoured and motorised brigades were trained to operate in support of one another. Emphasis was laid on manoeuvre warfare. According to feedback given on a training exercise: 'It was emphasised that mobility and elasticity were necessary for proper functioning'.[70] The co-operation between the armour and the infantry was emphasised. The tanks' main goal was to flank and envelop the enemy, while the infantry and artillery had to destroy enemy positions.[71] Armour and infantry should fight as a combined arm in order to maximise their power and effectiveness.[72] Manoeuvrability was essential to achieve victory, as echoed by German General Heinz Guderian: 'Only movement brings victory …'[73]

As a gunner John Lugg had received somewhat limited practical experience on the rifle range. During a typical shooting exercise on 4 March 1943 each troop received the following ammunition: eight rounds anti-personnel, ten rounds high explosive (HE), only twenty-five rounds of .50 calibre Browning, and only four rounds of .30 calibre

(which hardly even qualifies as a short burst with a machine gun!). To practise attacking, each troop received four rounds of anti-personnel ammunition, while the anti-tank guns got four rounds of HE and one smoke-generating round. Troop withdrawals were practised under the cover of smoke and two 2-inch mortars provided cover. Simulated Infantry was engaged with co-axle guns (two belts of .30 calibre Browning). To practise engaging enemy tanks on the move, four 75 mm rounds were provided. The commanding officer emphasised that this might have been the last chance to shoot on the rifle range,[74] an indication that ammunition was very limited. In a progress report for June 1943, 12 Mot Bde HQ highlighted a lack of certain equipment. It lacked Vickers machine guns, mortars, general training equipment, attack guns, sufficient targets, even blackboards. The shortage of these materials delayed progress made on especially range work.[75]

A few months later a series of combined training exercises were held to put the division's skills to the test. These included exercises at Zonderwater, Cape Town, Durban, Pretoria, Florida, Tussle and Standerton.[76] 11 Armd Bde had a central role to play in Exercise Zonderwater, which took place from 28 to 31 December. The general idea was to simulate an anticipated attack by the enemy, whose intention was to breach certain key points and to advance all the way to Cairo. 6 Div would anticipate this move by attacking the enemy's left flank and cut its communications between Alexandria and Cairo.[77] Some of the key objectives for 11 Armd Bde were to control night movement; maintain wireless silence; maintain traffic control through mine fields; deliberate attack by the whole brigade; mopping up the ground that they have dominated, but not to overrun it; the rapid occupation of battle positions; the distribution of anti-personnel and 105 mm fire; the protection of the nearby harbours; applying anti-gas measures; the withdrawal and protection of echelons from an armoured attack; crossing a defile in contact; to do reconnaissance in order to plan a counter-attack; and to practise a deliberate counter-attack.[78] Each unit within 11 Mot Bde had its own umpire. Lieutenant Colonel NP Comrie acted as the umpire for PAG. The umpires had to indicate targets such as attack guns, machine guns, infantry and tanks. These targets were indicated by using different colour flags. Certain safety precautions were put in place to ensure no accidents happened. Tanks and artillery were given limited time-slots to practise range work, and live firing was limited to an area called Gebel Mreir. The umpire had to wear white armbands, for what it was worth.[79] Unfortunately, an accident did occur during an exercise when an artillery shell fell short of its intended target and killed Sergeant PA Woodward (SA Medical Corps) and Private W Worral (FC/CTH) on 6 December.[80] Such accidents would surely have left the men with emotions of fear, regret, anger and resentment, and a sense of the reality of what they were doing and preparing for.

On 29 December 11 Armd Bde simulated an attack on Gebel Mreir using live ammunition. Their task was to attack the position and dominate it until reinforcements from 12 Mot Bde could arrive. The enemy position was simulated as being held by

a force equivalent to a battalion group. They also had protective minefields, attack guns, machine guns and infantry. There were no simulated enemy tanks,[81] giving an armoured unit such as PAG limited training experience. Exercises such as Zonderwater provided the men with valuable training. It did not, however, prepare them for the action that awaited them in Italy.[82] Unlike Italy, the desert is flat and had very few built-up areas. The topography of the desert favoured mechanized warfare based on a war of manoeuvrability.[83] The topography of Italy differed very much from that of the desert. German Field-Marshal Erwin Rommel once noted:

> It is only in war in the desert that the principles of armoured warfare as they were taught in theory before the war could be fully applied and thoroughly develop. It was only in the desert that real tank battles were fought by large-scale formations.[84]

Due to the extremely mountainous nature of the terrain in Italy, manoeuvre warfare could not be implemented. The hills, mountains and rivers made it impossible to execute flanking manoeuvres. The terrain also favoured the Germans in defence.[85] British Field Marshal Sir Harold Alexander described the geographical situation in Italy as follows:

> The Allied armies were to be faced with a seemingly unending succession of difficulties of terrain – as Winston Churchill remarked, there was 'always something else'; they were to be called upon to fight with resources always inadequate to their tasks; and they were to experience a 'savage versatility' of climate without any parallel in northwest Europe. The axis of any advance northward invariably lay across natural obstacles of rivers or mountains; and, because German demolitions were so efficient and effective, a small rear-guard could always put up a fierce battle while the main body went back at its leisure.[86]

Between 21 and 22 January 1944 the Division was moved to a new training area at Helwan in Egypt. The focus of the training changed. More focus was placed on training in close country and river crossings. Unfortunately, the terrain in Egypt made realistic training impossible. 6 Div HQ received a disturbing report from British forces in Italy. The report indicated that the trained armoured movements of 'encounter and deliberate battles' were useless in Italy as the broken terrain prevented such movements. Visibility caused another headache as the Germans were well camouflaged.[87] Although the tank crews of 11 Armd Bde were trained to engage fortified positions, they were also trained how not to be tied down and become vulnerable to enemy fire. Armour assaults against well-developed defensive positions are often suicidal and should be avoided.[88] The average engagement in Italy occurred at 70 metres. Concealed anti-tank guns destroyed British tanks before they were spotted. The only way to take on the well-developed German defences was to plan attacks well in advance and to do proper reconnaissance. The British emphasised the importance of good infantry-tank cooperation. The training 6 Div received lacked practical infantry-tank co-operation. Captain JC Brand, PAG, shared his experience:

> Our training was basically technical … we learned not much more than how to use our weapons and equipment … how a tank operates in a troop, how a troop operates in a squadron and the basic rules of tactics which apply in tank operations (and for that matter in infantry operations as well) … We were introduced to infantry co-operation, especially as it was appreciated that the large-scale tank battles, as much, in a theatre like Italy, were likely to be the exception rather than the rule. But to be proficient in that department would have required considerably more training, practice and experience that we took into Italy in 1944. I remember, for example, being bothered by the question of when would an operation be tanks with infantry support under tank command or infantry with tank support under infantry command and who would make those decisions.[89]

Special lectures were given on German army organisation, weapons and tactics,[90] but these were academic in nature, and were of limited value since the practical training that 6 Div had received to this point did not fully prepare them for what awaited them in Italy.

The Division was finally sent to Italy and embarked from Alexandria between 14 and 16 April 1944.[91] PAG arrived in Italy on 20 April at the port of Taranto. The sight of the Italian countryside was a novel experience to the men. The beautiful mountainous scenery was in great contrast to the flat and featureless desert that the men had become used to. They had finally reached a theatre of war after months of training.[92] Lieutenant Armstrong described the disembarkation as:

> A hectic period of preparation, concentration, and the final journey towards the battle line.[93]

The mountainous country was ideally suited for defensive warfare. The positions were manned by a skilful and stubborn enemy who would have to be driven out by hard fighting.[94] Major fighting for the South Africans began at Cassino, where the Germans under the leadership of Field-Marshal Kesselring had constructed the formidable Gustav Line. Allied soldiers eventually took the town of Cassino, while the Germans held the high ground and an ancient abbey on the heights of Monte Cassino. The abbey was bombed under orders of General Mark Clark and ironically made the breaching of the Gustav Line more difficult as the Germans used the debris as cover. Lieutenant AB Colenbrander, troop commander of A Squadron PAG, describes the scene as follows:

> The whole Abbey was in ruins. At the bottom of the crater a priest was conducting a service in Latin. The ruins were still smouldering and there was an all-pervading smell of explosives and burning ... Everyone was caught in the awesomeness of the moment, each with his own thoughts on the senselessness of war – humble before God.[95]

Eventually the Line was broken through and the advance to Rome could continue.[96] Rome was reached on 6 June. At this time 6 Div fell under command of the 8th Army. 11 Armd Bde formed the spearhead of the Division as it passed though Rome. Field Marshall Alexander remarked:

> South Africans are the spearhead of the advance, and will remain the spearhead.

PAG and Special Service Battalion (SSB) fought its way forward to Celleno. During the Battle for Celleno PAG was deployed without infantry support and lost five tanks to German anti-tank guns. Three of the five tanks belonged to Lieutenant AB Colenbrander's A Squadron. Captain Brand reports:

> I remember witnessing the destruction of three of Colenbrander's tanks … We came under anti-tank fire and had to do very hasty retreat in reverse gear … I believe that it was during this time, i.e. while we were still moving eastwards, that I watched helplessly as Collenbrander's three tanks were hit one after the other … by 88 mm fire…

Captain Brand blamed the losses on the lack of infantry support:

> We (PAG) should certainly have had infantry ... as the S.S.B. had had … Why the Scots Guards were not committed with the PAG on the day I cannot say…[97]

Three days later PAG experienced more losses to anti-tank fire. Sergeant LA Green, C Squadron, recalls:

> We were on a dirt road and came to a corner when the road collapsed and the track was pulled off. Cpl Foote managed to pass me and about 25 yds further on the same thing happened to him. No. 1 troop (under command of Lieutenant JG Venter) … was told to take over from us (No. 2 troop) and didn't get very far before an 88 mm shot killed him and his gunner. That shot would have been for me if my track didn't pull off![98]

Despite heavy rain, the division pushed forward to the Trasimeno Line. Here, at Chiusi, the Division came up against a battalion of the Hermann Goering Division, one of Germany's most formidable armoured units. First City/Cape Town Highlanders (FC/CTH), an infantry regiment within 12 Mot Bde, took a heavy beating and failed to take Chiusi. The town eventually fell and the push forward continued. The next strong point they had to face was the Hilde Line. Heavy fighting for the mountains and the ridges overlooking Florence followed. Florence was entered by 11 Armd Bde on 4 August. To that date the division had suffered a total of 2 100 casualties. After a few days of rest, the division pushed forward to the Gothic Line, a vast defensive line in the Apennines. The division was put under the command of General Clark's 5th Army. Fierce fighting took place at Mt Alto and Mt Porro del Bagno. The enemy had been

enforced and was determined to oppose the Allied advance. The weather did not play along as cold rains and piercing winds added to the misery.[99] A South African Press Association (SAPA) correspondent commented:

> More rain, sloshing mud, cold and mist have not deterred the South Africans and the Guardsmen from making further progress along their hardly-hewn path which aims down the backdrop of the Apennines toward Bologna.[100]

The road to Bologna had formidable ridges on both sides. It was there that the Division encountered the fanatical 16 SS Division. 11 Armd Bde pushed up the slopes of Mt Vigese and occupied it on 6 October. The South Africans fought hard, even in those terrible conditions:

> In foul conditions – heavy rain and thick mud – the Natal infantrymen drove back German SS troops who resisted the advance. A good number of prisoners were taken.[101]
>
> For days the South African forward troops have been living on exposed hill slopes, in slime-choked slit trenches, from which they have to bail water during drenching mountain downpours. In these conditions they have been subjected to a volume of artillery and mortar fire the like of which they have seldom encountered before."[102]

Mt Stanco became the next objective. The Germans were well entrenched and covered by artillery. Because of the steep slopes 11 Armd Bde could not engage the enemy in an armoured assault. A Squadron PAG, together with A Squadron SSB, had to leave their tanks to be used as infantry.[103] General Poole brought 12 Mot Bde to secure the position. The second largest set-piece attack by South African troops in the war (second to only Alamein) commenced and they succeeded in taking Mt Stanco. The battle for Mt Salvaro was an infantry affair. 11 Armd Bde provided support in the form of carrying supplies and casualty evacuation. B Squadron PAG also gave close artillery support.[104] After taking the Salvaro feature, General Clark ordered the 5th Army to consolidate along the line gained. Heavy snowfall and bitter cold made life miserable.[105] Some restructuring took place and a third brigade, 13 Mot Bde, was added to 6 Div. 12 Mot Bde was ordered to take Mt Sole and Mt Caprara with the support of A Squadron PAG. Although successful, FC/CTH and Witwatersrand Rifles/ De La Rey Regiment (WR/DLR), also part of 12 Mot Bde, suffered 49 and 124 casualties respectively.[106] A Squadron PAG lost ten of their thirteen Sherman tanks to mines. [107] On 11 April Field-Marshall Alexander motivated his troops:

> Final victory is near … The moment has come for us to take field for the last battle which will end the war in Europe …[108]

On 15 April the 15th Air Force made its greatest effort of the Italian Campaign by dropping 1 500 tons of bombs on targets ahead of the 5th Army.[109] A massive battle

awaited the 5th Army. It is important to note that John Lugg was removed from the front line on 16 April at a crucial point in the war when fighting was far from over.[110]

Although John's war was over, PAG still had a massive task ahead. After the enemy withdrew from Collina, 11 Armd Bde exploited the success. The enemy had been driven through the mountains onto the plains of the Po. PAG's tanks were ordered to secure an important bridge over the Panaro River. The enemy resistance was crumbling as Allied forces moved into the Po Valley. The armoured units reached Treviso by 30 April. The final push to Milan began. On route they heard news of the surrender of the German forces in Italy.[111]

Although fighting is the most dangerous part of a war, there are other dangers as well. Some of them were most unexpected. In a routine order in July 1944 Lieutenant Colonel Olsen warned PAG about the apparent dangers of Italian wine. Two interesting warnings were issued. The first stressed the high alcohol percentage of the average Italian wine: a litre of wine contained nearly as much alcohol as a pint (0,56 litre) of whiskey. Olsen also warned that drunkenness was the most common contributing factor to crime, and that drunkenness would not be accepted as an excuse for an offence. Perhaps more alarming, a member of the Div had died after purchasing wine from a private house. Soldiers were therefore ordered not to buy wine from unauthorised sources. The second warning was about the dangers of contracting malaria: 'more stringent anti-malarial precautions than ever before will be taken by all ranks, as the incidence of malaria in the Arno Valley is the highest in the world!'[112] In a Routine Order by General Poole, soldiers were ordered not to bath in the Arno River as a number of cases of a severe form of infectious jaundice was reported after bathing in the river.[113] If the Germans, Italian home-made wine or the mosquitoes did not kill you, bathing would! After more cases of wine and water poisoning occurred, soldiers were prohibited from visiting Italian bars, wine shops and restaurants. Soldiers were also not allowed to drink water from public wells and all water had to be chlorinated daily.[114] Since John's hospital record in his personnel file is clean, we can accept that none of these 'dangers' got the better of him.[115]

A personal story about a war experience would not be complete without looking into the behaviour of the specific person. John Lugg is no different. Although the conduct assessment on his Record of Service indicates 'very good', John was not always 'well-behaved'. The first minor offence that John was punished for occurred on 25 September 1942. He was stationed in the Bluff, Durban as a gunner in the South African Artillery. John was punished for neglecting 'good order and military discipline' as his 'rifle was dirty'. The punishment was recorded as 'administered', perhaps indicating physical punishment of some kind. A month later John was punished for 'neglecting to obey standing orders during a state of emergency', for which he was 'confined to barracks for three days'. Spending Christmas in the military was not something John looked forward to. He went absent without leave (AWOL) on Friday

25 December 1942. Unfortunately for him, he was apprehended the next day and was 'confined to barracks' for seven days as a result. On 9 February 1943 he was caught sleeping on duty and was 'confined to barracks' for three days. But being 'confined to barracks' did not discourage him from repeating this behaviour. He went AWOL again on 2 January 1944, this time in Egypt where he was receiving training as a member of PAG. He had to forfeit one day's pay as punishment. On 28 February 1944 he was given seven day's field punishment for breaking section 6(2)(4) of the Military Disciple Code (MDC). It is not clear what John did wrong, but the offence was severe enough that Lieutenant Colonel Olsen, CO of PAG, imposed the punishment in person, possibly suggesting that John's behaviour had to be made an example of. On 3 April 1944 John broke section 40 of the MDC ('conduct to the prejudice of good order to military discipline') for which he had to forfeit a week's pay.[116] John embarked for Italy ten days later, on 13 April 1944.[117] The 6 Div was shipped from Alexandria and Port Said between 12 and 16 April 1944. [118] It seems that he pulled his act together, because there is no record of poor discipline after he was deployed to Italy.

In December 1944 Colonel Olsen, commanding officer of PAG, wrote to General Mark Clark, commanding officer of the 5th US Army, under which 6 Div was deployed, a Christmas greeting letter. General Clark wrote back to Colonel Olsen on 24 December 1944. The problem with the letter was that he twice got the name of PAG wrong, calling it 'Prince Albert's Guard' instead of 'Prince Alfred's Guard'. This might be considered a honest mistake, but one can only imagine how Olsen, and the men of PAG, including John, must have felt when their commanding general did not even know their regiment's name![119]

John received the following recommendations during his service: the 1939-1945 Star, the Africa Star, the Italy Star, the British Defence Medal, the War Medal 1939-1945, and the Africa Service Medal.[120]

If John's morale was low after spending his third consecutive Christmas in the army, it would soon improve. Unknown to him at the time, his father was about to write the transfer request. It is not clear if Lugg senior's request was acknowledged, as no official answer could be found. There are, however, a few clues that indicate that this might have been the case. The letter had made it all the way to the Adjutant General for Releases' office in Pretoria on 18 February 1945. This indicates that the officer commanding PAG had forwarded it to Pretoria for consideration and therefore had given the request his blessing. This office forwarded the request to UDF Admin HQ on 22 February, but no final outcome is on record. The original letter was found in the archives in a file marked 'Releases – Closed'. This file consists mainly of positive feedback granting releases, the granting of discharges and compassionate leave. There are many other files in the military archives that contain applications for compassionate leave. In one such file, for example, a total of 899 cases for release were applied for. Almost all the request were denied.[121] We can assume that the correct steps were

taken when applying for leave. In a detailed letter stipulating all the requirements for compassionate leave and releases, the Adjutant General instructed:

> Applications for the release or discharge of UDF personnel usually originates in the Union. Such applications will ordinarily be dealt with by one of the tribunals depending on whether it is made by agriculture, commercial or industrial interests. The tribunal in such cases may make a recommendation in accordance with the application, or such other recommendation in variation thereof as they may think fit, not excluding a recommendation that the member be not discharged or released.
>
> The normal procedure in cases where the members are serving up North will be to submit such applications for release etc. with the recommendation of the tribunal concerned, to you for consideration by the OC Formation concerned.
>
> The above is the normal procedure which will be followed as a matter of routine but this should be noted that this HQ may in exceptional circumstances order the return to the Union of any member serving in the field without reference to any other authority.[122]

John was sent back to the Union on 16 April and was discharged from the army on 14 July 1945.[123] The last time John's name appears on the regimental nominal roll is on 31 March.[124] The German Army in Italy surrendered only on 2 May, about two weeks after John had been sent home. PAG fought until 9 May, when Germany surrendered. Small groups of PAG were leaving for South Africa for demobilisation only on 25 May.[125] This indicates that not only was Lugg Senior's request to keep John safe acknowledged, but that it was decided to release John from service at a time when the war was still in full swing.

CONCLUSION

The UDF casualties in Italy totalled 5 176, of whom 753 were killed.[126] PAG suffered a loss of 25 killed, 283 wounded and 7 missing.[127] Although it is a small number compared to the 4 124 South Africans who were killed during the entire war,[128] it is a great loss in its own right.

The Lugg family suffered greatly after the loss of Cyril and Harry. When John made it through the war, his parents must have been ecstatic. Little did they know at the time that six months later they would also be reunited with Eric. The war had left a permanent mark on this family. In his autobiography, *A Natal Family Looks back*, Harry Lugg makes no reference to his sons' war experiences and sacrifices. Perhaps the memory was too painful to share. He ends the book with:

> Our Family has witnessed, from small beginnings, the phenomenal development of this country during the last hundred years, and has been privileged to

> contribute in a small way to this achievement. May the experiences recorded here help a later generation to understand the significance of the past.[129]

The Luggs have made their contribution to this country. Harry Lugg passed away in 1978 at the age of 95.[130] He would not suffer the pain of losing another child. Apart from his four sons, Harry also had two daughters. The eldest, Phyllis Sheila, passed away in 2000 at the age of 75.[131] The youngest, Eva Nancy, passed away in 2017 at the age of 89.[132] Both Eric and John returned home and reached an old age. Eric passed away in 2005 at the age of 89,[133] John in 2007 at the age of 87.[134]

Endnotes

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3

'GUPPY TUMMY AND SANDFLY FEVER':[1] SOUTH AFRICAN MILITARY HOSPITALS IN THE MIDDLE EAST, 1941–1945

Karen Horn

INTRODUCTION

For the Italian dictator Benito Mussolini, his colonies in Africa represented a link between the ancient Roman Empire and his Fascist Empire.[2] During the war his hold on the East African colonies acquired a more practical use as retaining the region would give Italy a hold on the Suez Canal. The presence of British colonial territories in Africa, however, complicated matters during the Second World War. By the end of 1941 the Italian East African Empire was no more and the British hold on the Middle East had strengthened.[3] South African forces played a significant role in defeating the Italians in East Africa, but their real test would come on the battlefields of North Africa.[4] Following the disasters of the Sidi Rezegh battle and the fall of Tobruk, the Union Defence Force (UDF) showed its resolve at the Battle of El Alamein at the end of 1942. With the victory there, the South African forces were granted home leave, while the last of the Axis forces were expelled from Tunisia by May 1943.

It was also in the Middle East that the South African Medical Corps (SAMC) made its most significant contribution towards the health and wellbeing of the country's troops. During the East African campaign, and later in the Italian campaign, the SAMC had to relocate their units each time the battlefield moved, but the Middle East, and especially Cairo and the surrounding areas, became a more permanent location for SAMC military hospitals. As Allied forces were pulled out of North Africa for the campaign in Greece, the South African hospitals in the North African desert came under more pressure to meet the needs of patients.[5] As the British forces looked towards Greece, so the British Royal Army Medical Corps (RAMC) focused their attention on the same campaign, and the role of the South African hospitals in Egypt became increasingly important.[6] It is through an investigation into the hospitals there that one gains some insight into the daily work and challenges of the staff and patients of the South African hospitals. The central focus of this chapter, therefore, falls on the military hospitals in Egypt, with occasional references to smaller medical units and hospitals elsewhere. Furthermore, this chapter is not concerned so much with medical science as it is with human experience.

ADAPTING TO THE DESERT

When the UDF forces arrived in Egypt in April 1941, the medical services consisted of a Deputy Assistant Director of Medical Services (DADMS), Headquarters Company (HQ Coy) of the 14th South Africa Field Ambulance and one detachment of a Field Hygiene Station.[7] Under Brigadier AJ Orenstein, the UDF medical services soon

expanded to cope with the demanding and ever-changing circumstances of the desert war. By the time that war started in 1939, Orenstein was already 60 years old; he was a veteran of the First World War and had established himself as hygiene expert with the Rand Mines Group. His reputation as a 'respected tyrant' no doubt helped to raise the standard of the medical care that UDF forces and others received during the Second World War.[8] He was assisted by Senior Staff Officers (SSO), one Medical and one Hygiene, as well as a Senior Dental Officer and the Principal Matron. Below them in the hierarchy were the Assistant Directors Medical Service (ADMS), one for the 1st SA Division at Mersa Matruh, one for the 2nd SA Division at El Alamein, one for Helwan, and one for the Amiriya district.[9]

The SAMC had to set up hospitals in a relatively short time, but establishing military hospitals in desert conditions was not an easy task. Regular interruptions by air raid sirens, dust storms and flies made the work very challenging. While the staff of some of the hospitals arrived directly from East Africa and could bring their equipment and experience with them, others arrived fresh from the Union, and in some cases their equipment reached them only weeks later, sometimes in pieces. For all personnel, the desert conditions were vastly different from those they knew, and innovation was the order of the day. Even so, by December 1941 Orenstein would not compromise on standards and rejected an offer from the Greek community in Alexandria for the use of a small infectious diseases annexe at a Greek hospital there. The Greeks did not expect payment for the use of the annexe, but Orenstein wanted a hospital with a capacity of at least 800 beds and for this, 'considerable charges were proposed', something which the Australians had also already rejected.[10]

No. 4 South Africa (SA) General Hospital arrived in the Middle East from Abyssinia in August 1941, but after working near the Gazala line, it was disbanded in August 1942. No. 5 SA General Hospital, which was established in July 1941, was the first long-term hospital in the Middle East. It arrived in Helwan in July 1941, only to be moved to Helmieh soon after. Initially it was equipped with 680 beds, but by December 1941 it had expanded to 1 200 beds. The wards were mainly located in tents, and in time the hospital acquired four operating theatres, one x-ray department, a dental unit, a dispensary and stores. A neuro-psychiatric department and an ophthalmic section were also added.[11]

In Britain and the United States alike the press played an important role in spreading propaganda and affecting morale, and if medical services were seen to be not adequate, soldiers and citizens were likely to voice their dissatisfaction during elections.[12] With the many divisions in South African society and the small majority with which the new Prime Minister, Jan Smuts, entered the war, the newspaper reassurances that the volunteers were in good hands were very important.[13] Claiming that the medical staff

took a delight in their work, *The Star* reported on the imminent arrival of No. 5 SA General Hospital in Cairo, stating that 'as yet there are no patients apart from a few soldiers suffering from illness, but elaborate provision has been made to see that the South Africans receive every care and attention should they suffer casualties'.[14] The staff were placed with British hospitals until No. 5 was ready and were 'fraternising with great cordiality with their colleagues from the other Dominions'. The nurses were singled out as creating especially positive impressions. Casualties from the November 1941 offensive and from the battles around Tobruk in June 1942 were admitted to this hospital. It remained in Egypt after the invasion of Italy and took in patients from Tripolitania, Tunisia, Sicily and Italy.[15]

The No. 1 Convalescent Depot arrived in the Middle East from the East African Campaign in August 1941. As was the case with most hospitals, the work of this unit was dictated by the changing circumstances of the war, but by July 1942 it began to function as a hospital dealing with less severe cases in Buseilli, where it worked alongside an Australian Casualty Clearing Station that took in wounded from the Battle of El Alamein.[16]

By that time the first South African hospital for 'Non-European' servicemen had also been established. An erstwhile colleague of Orenstein, Dr AO Dreosti, the Senior Medical Officer of the Central Native Mine Hospital at City Deep, Johannesburg, was appointed head of this hospital.[17] The hospital Dreosti was asked to establish became known as the No. 101 Non-European (NE) SA General Hospital and its remit was to take in Non-European patients of all Allied forces serving in the Middle East.[18] However, in mid-December 1941 Orenstein confirmed in the War Diary that 'Union Hospitals for Natives in the Middle East would prioritise Union men', as he estimated that patients from East Africa would take up only 5% of the available space in the hospital.[19] However, No. 101 hospital was later described as a 'truly pan-African hospital [with patients including] UDF Natives, UDF Cape Coloureds, East Africans, Belgian Congo natives, West Africans, Sudanese, Palestinian Arabs and others'.[20] Despite the assortment of nationalities in its patient population, the hospital displayed its loyalty to the Union with a life-size statue of a Springbok at the entrance.[21]

At first the hospital was to accommodate 1 000 patients, but on the basis of a 600-bed hospital for Europeans. In October 1941 the complete contingent of 269 doctors, nurses, orderlies and other staff, together with their equipment, left … on the *Llandovery Castle* for the Middle East.[22] By 23 November, however, the hospital staff had dropped to a total of 227, and the number would continue to fluctuate as the war conditions demanded.[23] Once it was established, specialists from neighbouring hospitals visited No. 101 on a regular basis.[24] Before this could happen, however, the personnel had to cope with very difficult circumstances to get the hospital in working order. Upon arrival at the designated site, the staff was met with bare desert, four

huts and five water taps. Three weeks later they had managed to build toilets, erect tented wards for 400 patients and sleeping quarters for the staff. This was done while they were waiting for their equipment to arrive by train from Suez, Port Said and Alexandria. Within six weeks of arriving in the Middle East, the hospital had 1 000 beds, but the work at the hospital was made difficult by the fact that the tents had to be at least 50 feet apart from each other as a precaution against air raids. Moving from tent to tent was challenging as there were no paths between them, and staff had to traipse through dense desert sands. Concrete paths and tarred roads were added later as it was recognised that general improvements to the hospital benefitted both the staff and the patients. The hospital evolved into twelve self-contained sections each able to take in 100 patients. Sanitary facilities, equipped kitchens, bathrooms and linen rooms were purpose-built for each section. Hot water and electricity was also available to all the wards and staff buildings, as were fans and heaters. The main kitchen had its own butchery and even a separate room for bread cutting and another for a 'beer department'.[25] Two tents functioned as churches for the patients, who also had access to two recreation huts, each with its own 'soft' canteen.[26]

No. 6 SA General Hospital was an amalgamation of the 5th and 6th Casualty Clearing Stations from the East African campaign. To avoid confusion with a nearby British hospital, it soon became known as No. 106. At first this hospital could not be allocated a specific site, 'owing to the unsettled conditions in the Western Desert', and as such had to make do with a partially constructed British hospital in Qassasin, more or less half way between Port Said and Cairo. The hospital began its work in January 1942, but the first weeks at this site were very trying, as the staff had to make do without electricity or hot water, as well as a sanitation system that did not work properly. To make things worse, there was no transport available and staff had to remain in the camp with very little to do.[27] The staff received another shock when they were informed on the last day of February 1942 that they were to open a hospital 'on the spot' with capacity for 800 patients. In their haste to carry out the order, medical equipment was damaged, something which, given the slow arrival of equipment in the Middle East, could be ill afforded. To their relief the deadline was extended to the end of March, but the bustle in the camp must have been extraordinary, especially as the most basic of materials were not available. Nevertheless, an air of optimism and innovation prevailed and by the end of March the War Diary proudly stated that 'owing to a shortage of wood, all the Dispensary shelves and counters were built of concrete, giving a very satisfactory final result.'[28] Other innovations included a 'stool destructor' for the sake of good hygiene in the dysentery annexe, fly-proofing for the kitchens, and 'food carriers [with] heating apparatus' that provided hot food to patients despite the long distances between the kitchens and the wards. One aspect that this hospital had difficulty dealing with in its early months was the high incidence of theft from its stores. The 'acquisitive habits of the neighbouring population' were blamed for this as it was seen that 'the long flowing outer garment of the local population

[was] very useful from an appropriating point of view!'[29] With the end of the desert war, the hospital became the No. 106 Combined Hospital, meaning that it took in patients of all races. It arrived in Italy early in May 1944.[30]

No. 102 NE SA General Hospital started its work in Amiriya in May 1942, and like No. 106, also became a 'Combined' hospital when the Italian campaign started. While still in North Africa, however, the hospital was constantly being relocated as the front line moved. The staff of No. 102 did not have an easy start and on 6 May 1942, the second day of the hospital's existence, a tent with equipment was destroyed by fire, prompting the formation of a fire-fighting squad under Lieutenant Fresen later on the same day. At this time equipment was still arriving from Port Said. Despite the difficulties of the first month, time was found to invite some of the staff to lunch at the Springbok Club in Cairo, in honour of 'Isie' Smuts, the president of the Gifts and Comforts Fund and wife of the Prime Minister.[31] By the end of May 1942 the hospital managed to equip an x-ray room and an operating theatre, as well as four wards that were able to accommodate 200 patients. With only 24 nurses, most of whom were detached from No. 106 hospital, each nurse had fewer than 10 patients in her care. The hospital, although not yet functioning at full capacity, also survived a visit from the Principal Matron in its first month.[32]

The Matron in Chief of the SAMC was CA Nothard, who started her full-time service in May 1940. Her duties and responsibilities were considerable and her place on the military hierarchy was one step below that of Brigadier Orenstein. She was responsible for the nursing service in the Union as well as in the theatres of battle where the SAMC had a presence, including hospital ships, aircrafts and trains that transported patients. Training and discipline, matters relating to salaries, allocation to hospitals as well as staff reinforcements and leave of absence fell within her remit and, with this heavy burden of duties, Matron Nothard set high standards for herself and for others. As such, she made it clear from the start that nurses deserved military rank, not only to bring the South African Military Nursing Service (SAMNS) in line with British and other Commonwealth medical services' practice, but also because the SAMNS was the oldest female military service. Her success in this respect, however, did not mean that she held the view that nurses deserved special treatment and when nurses asked for a 'danger allowance' after the Battle of El Alamein, Matron Nothard did not react kindly and reminded the stunned nurses that they were privileged as they were seeing the world at the government's expense.[33]

The war posed a constant threat to the hospitals and precautions had to be put in place to keep staff and patients as safe as was possible in a war situation. No. 106 Hospital, for instance, made provisions for air raids and specific instructions were issued as each person needed to know exactly what was expected of them if and when the enemy struck. In the event of a raid the administrative centre of the hospital would become

the command post, and as a precautionary measure, the tent in which it was located was sunken and provided with slit trenches. The tented wards were also sunk to provide protection against a direct blast, while wards located in huts were protected by 'anti-blast wall[s]'. Trenches throughout the camp were deemed sufficient to provide protection for all the patients and staff. Not knowing if the enemy would employ poison gas, as was the case in the First World War, a 'gas cleansing centre' was placed near the command post and a 'permanent chemical warfare Sergeant' put in command. The double-canvassed tents were believed to be 'impervious to the heaviest spraying by war gases', but as an extra precaution respirators, eye-shields and capes were also available.[34] A prevailing image of the First World War is that of helpless soldiers unable to defend themselves against poison gas attacks. The shock of its effect on the soldiers, and the added shock of the realisation that humanity would stoop to using this weapon, led to the recognition that gas was a 'barbarous method of waging war'.[35] The use of gas was banned with the Geneva Protocol of 1925, yet despite universal aversion, some signatories reserved the right retaliate 'in kind to a chemical attack'.[36]

Another legacy of the First World War was the concept of black-outs as protection against bombing raids, which meant that all lights were either switched off or made invisible from the outside. In the case of an air raid warning, a complete black-out was maintained throughout hospital camps. If an air raid warning was given during the day, the work of the hospital was expected to carry on as usual, with the exception that any parades, church services or gatherings around entertainments were to end immediately and staff and patients were to return to their barracks or wards.[37]

HEALING IN BATTLE

Medical services on the battlefield were arranged in such a way as to get wounded away from the frontline as fast as possible to preserve medical manpower.[38] Wounded men from the frontline would go to a Regimental Aid Post (RAP) and from there to the Advanced Dressing Station (ADS), where they would be classified according to the triage system which would determine their next destination. Those whose lives were in danger (level 1) were sent to the Field Dressing Station (FDS), those with injuries or wounds that required surgery but whose lives were not in immediate danger (level 2) went to the Advanced Surgical Centre (ASC) and from there to a General Military Hospital. The least severe cases (level 3) went to a Casualty Clearing Station (CCS). Once treated, the men who initially went to the FDS or ASC also ended up at the CCS where everyone was again assessed.[39] Here the casualties were divided into four groups, depending on the severity of their wounds, for example 'dying', if death was imminent, 'desperate', if it was deemed that the man's life was in significant danger, 'serious', which meant that the man's life was in danger but death was not

imminent, and lastly 'satisfactory', in other words 'there seemed a reasonable chance of survival'. During battles that took place between 25 October and 1 November 1942, for example, 133 men were divided into these four categories, with four dying cases, 23 desperate, 25 serious and 81 satisfactory.[40] Those who were well enough were returned to the frontline, while the rest were sent to a hospital that fell within the evacuation zone.[41] Getting casualties to a hospital was no easy task, as the desert sand made transport very difficult and, in response, Mobile Surgical Units were created.[42] If it was necessary, patients were sent from the evacuation zone to hospitals outside the war area, or by hospital ship to hospitals overseas.[43]

In the desert, however, units moved around continually, and the Medical Corps was rearranged from lightest, known as A Section, to heaviest, known as HQ Section.[44] As casualties passed from one section to the next, they were assessed and if their condition allowed it, the men were returned to their units. The more serious cases were sent onwards to the hospitals in Allied territory. The main areas in which the medical services were located in the Middle East were Mersa Matruh, 440 kilometres North East of Cairo, El Alamein, 280 kilometres from Cairo, Helwan, which fell within the Cairo city bounds, and Amiriya[45] near Alexandria.[46] In Tripoli a hospital staffed with volunteers from the hospitals in Cairo was set up to alleviate the difficulties of the long journey which patients had to make from Benghazi to Alexandria.[47]

The chaos caused by the sudden surrender of the Tobruk garrison in June 1942 also meant that those Field Ambulances and CCS which had not been captured had to be evacuated with the rest of the units that were in retreat. As No. 4 and No. 102 Hospitals were near the battlefront at that time, both were evacuated and their staff and patients allocated to No. 5, 106 and 101. The wellbeing of the nurses was of specific concern, but in the end it was decided not to separate the nurses from the patients in view of the belief that the 'nurses would resent being ordered away and leaving patients without attendance.' Probationer nurses, however, were ordered to evacuate. Others, in their eagerness to return to relative safety, abandoned their duties and were severely reprimanded, as was the case with Colonel Verster, who apparently returned to Alexandria without any knowledge of the whereabouts of the CCS of which he was in charge.[48] It was not only posts of duty that were abandoned, but standards of hygiene fell as the different units retreated. Diseases spread easily in unhygienic conditions were many men are congregated, and at El Alamein the situation could easily have had a negative effect on the outcome of the battle that was to come. Writing in 1944, Lieutenant-Colonel HS Gear, Assistant Director of Hygiene in the South Africa Medical Corps, identified a number of factors that contributed to the unhygienic circumstances at El Alamein. In his view, the evacuation of troops resulted in a lessening of supervision by hygiene officers, and understandably, personal hygiene was neglected in favour of basic survival. The large number of local inhabitants who retreated alongside the Eight Army and who settled near the El Alamein line also

created unhealthy living conditions. To protect the troops, these people were removed to an area further away. The season during which the retreat took place also added to Gear's woes, as this was the time of the year when flies and dust were most prevalent in the extreme heat. Ironically, troop reinforcements added to the hygiene problem, as these new men were 'unsalted' and especially susceptible to 'guppy tummy and sandfly fever.'[49] As the hygiene section was ultimately responsible for preventing the outbreak of disease, this situation also had an effect on morale, but the low admission rate of men suffering from diseases showed that hygiene matters were quickly rectified and the result, in Gear's proud words, was 'the excellent health of the Eight Army in the prelude [to] and in the actual battle [of El Alamein]'.[50]

The battles in Libya from November 1941 to August 1943, especially those of Sidi Rezegh and Tobruk, kept medical personnel in Cairo very busy and in most cases the capacities of the hospitals all expanded. No. 5 Hospital, for instance, grew from an initial 680-bed hospital to one of 1 500 beds following the fall of Tobruk, while No. 102 expanded to 1 100 beds, at the same time also increasing its staff with 10 medical officers and 75 nurses. On the home front the press continued to champion the work of the medical corps, as this was seen as a way to motivate more medical staff to volunteer. As the men volunteered to serve in the UDF, so did trained nurses volunteer to serve in the SAMNS. Other medical volunteers included those in the Voluntary Aid Detachments (VAD), who served as untrained nurses with the Red Cross Society or St John's Ambulance. Following the Sidi Rezegh battles, *The Star* reported on the 'need for more nurses' and for those at home to collect money for the Gifts and Comforts Fund, which provided essentials to the wounded. However, it was also made clear that it was 'time that our young women of service age realised their duty to their country and joined the nursing staff'. The article also quoted Orenstein, who stressed the importance of 'the essential oneness of mankind, and to break down the fear and distrust of foreigners to which so many are prone', no doubt hoping to invoke in the citizens of the Union a sense of duty that would dispel fears of the unknown.[51]

The SAMC learnt many lessons from their experience in East Africa where disease caused most of the casualties. By the time the 2nd Division arrived in the Middle East, the Hygiene Section was better equipped than the 1st Division, which arrived directly from East Africa.[52] Perhaps as a result of their experience in East Africa, where diseases were prevalent, the SAMC held a somewhat condescending view of the hygiene standards of other Allied nations in the Middle East, and it was felt that 'some of the Allied Forces were devoid of any sense of Hygiene or Sanitation and if they did have any knowledge of it, they certainly did not practice it'.[53] The South Africans often noted the how other Allied troops would swim in water supply tanks, destroy toilet seats and then using the seats to carve models, and 'all the propaganda, orders and appeals to their better feelings made little difference'.[54] Whenever UDF Divisions moved into an area previously occupied by another Allied force, they were confronted

with unhygienic conditions and felt compelled to spend valuable time on improving the situation. At Mersa Matruh, for example, the South Africans worked from mid-1941 to December of that year to improve hygiene conditions.[55] It was during such times that enteritis flared up amongst the men, only to decrease again once hygiene had been brought up to standard. It was commonly believed that the awareness of the importance of hygiene among UDF troops and UDF medical services kept the number of diseases among UDF troops to a minimum.[56]

DAY-TO-DAY WORK OF THE SAMC HOSPITALS

With thousands of UDF volunteers arriving from the Union, and with others already active in the various battle arenas in the desert, the hospitals' preparedness to receive patients had to be arranged as fast as possible. Hospitals put measures in place to deal quickly and effectively with high admission rates, categorising patients and allocating them to specific wards. Once patients had received initial treatment, they were categorised again, this time determining their future in the UDF. Category B patients were 'fit for Garrison, Base or Special Duties abroad', in other words, they would return to their regiments, although some would be sent to a convalescent home or depot before reporting for duty again. Category C patients were deemed 'fit for sedentary or other selected employment in the Union only', and such men may have been utilised in the Union at prisoner-of-war camps. In all such cases a medical board was required to make the final decision. Category D patients were the most serious medical cases and they were evacuated to the Union as 'sitting case[s]'.[57]

Once admitted to hospital, patients were still subject to military discipline, and a long list of rules constrained their behaviour. If a patient held a senior rank, he was responsible for the discipline in his ward, but medical staff were expected to report any instances of waywardness to officers. Every aspect of life was controlled to maintain order and to help the medical staff perform their work as efficiently as possible. Lights were to be turned out between 9 at night to 6 in the morning, the same period when smoking and talking were not permitted. Patients' freedom of movement was also curtailed and 'out of bounds' areas included any places that sold alcohol, living quarters of staff, and the venereal diseases (VD) and infectious diseases wards. 'Up patients' had to make their own beds and clean their eating utensils; they were also expected to shave and wash before breakfast every day. If inspections took place, these men were also instructed to 'come to attention (at the foot of the bed if up patients) except in such cases in which, for physical or other reasons, it is not possible'. Those patients who were well enough, also had to 'assist in such light duties in the hospital as the Matron or the Nursing Staff may direct.'[58]

While the staff dealt with battle casualties, they also admitted patients who suffered from illnesses, some of which were common and some of which were more specific to the desert conditions. Each hospital had to complete an admission form for every 24-hour period, indicating the unit the patient belonged to, his name and number, the nature of the disease or injury, how the patient was 'disposed' of, which could include being returned to duty or being transferred to another medical unit. Other means of disposal included 'sick, died, discharged, etc.'[59] In the case of No. 101 the most prevalent diseases for the period of July to the end of September 1942 were diarrhoea and dysentery with 758 cases, 599 cases of VD and 159 patients admitted with malaria. Pneumonia, bilharzia, pulmonary tuberculosis and leprosy made up the last four places of the top seven illnesses.[60] September was the height of the malaria season in Egypt and staff were frequently reminded to be 'mosquito-minded' to prevent the spread of the disease.[61] At the time medication was not seen as an ideal measure against malaria, and it was thought that prevention was better than cure, especially as quinine was believed to have many adverse side-effects. Amongst some soldiers, rumours of impotence as a result of quinine also added to the resistance against the medication.[62] Some of the less common reasons for hospital admissions included ingrown toe nails, mumps and scabies.

Venereal disease among volunteers remained a challenge for the medical personnel and in December 1943, when No. 6 Hospital returned to its original site at Qassasin and became known as No. 106, the hospital's first 62 patients were men suffering from VD. Along with these patients came the instruction that No. 106 was to function as the VD centre for the area. A week later the hospital was equipped with more beds and the total number of patients increased to 742. During that time outbreak of influenza among the nurses also kept the staff busy, as did administering typhus vaccines to Egyptian labourers at the outpatients department.[63]

Another aspect of desert life, and one that seemed to follow large groups of men, was lice infestations, which could lead to typhus. To control the spread of the disease, the extermination of lice and fleas was of great importance. In one instance, in an effort to rid the UDF of the pest, the Hygiene Section decided to delouse the entire Polish Independent Brigade, 'freshly captured POWs', POWs in camps and civilian refugees. Members of the Non-European Army Service (NEAS) and the Cape Corps were inspected for lice when they returned from casual leave, and if found to be 'lousy', would be disinfected immediately. In addition, the UDF used lectures, films and demonstrations to warn Non-European members about the dangers of lice and flea-borne diseases. By 1944 the Armed Forces in the Middle East had the additional protection of an anti-typhus vaccine.[64]

A condition directly related to battle casualties, but which carried a stigma, was known by medical personnel as NYD. This was a less frequently listed reason for admission and was an acronym for Not Yet Diagnosed. NYD N indicated 'Nervous', while in

other cases the patient's condition was described as 'NYD Fits'.[65] The use of the term NYD Functional was decided on by the American 1st Armoured Division in June 1944 during the Italian campaign, when it became clear that tanks, previously thought of as relatively safe, resulted in their occupants suffering from severe psychiatric conditions, especially if they were survivors of burning tanks or tanks hit by explosives.[66] These men were psychiatric casualties and during the First World War the condition became known as shell shock. With no physical wounds, these men were sometimes seen as 'malingerers' during the First World War, but medical staff quickly realised that treating soldiers with this condition close to the front and as soon as possible resulted in the best outcomes. By the time the Second World War started, this lesson had to be learnt all over again and initially soldiers were sent to hospitals away from the front for treatment. The stigmatisation of the condition also extended into the Second World War and was not taken seriously by, among others, the British Prime Minister, Winston Churchill, who regarded psychiatrists and psychologists as 'gentlemen [who asked] odd questions'.[67] Treatment of soldiers suffering from combat stress presented a genuine conundrum for the medical services, as it was only after the Second World War that studies revealed that stress levels among soldiers increased as they anticipated battle, not when they participated in battle. Fear of the unknown was for many the main factor that damaged their sanity.[68]

In the SAMNS there were eight probationary nurses who had completed psychology courses during their training and they were deemed proficient to deal with 'nervous' cases who had been evacuated from the Middle East to the Union hospital at Potchefstroom. Towards the end of 1942 one of these nurses joined the staff of No. 101 Hospital to start an occupational therapy unit for psychiatric patients.[69] In No. 106 Hospital, a 'large number' of patients were admitted suffering from what the medical personnel viewed as mild anxiety in April 1942. As this was not a time of much activity on the battle front, the explanation was given that the men felt aggrieved that their home leave had not materialised. Clearer communication with rank and file, as well as carpentry for the patients in the occupational therapy room, was prescribed. The personnel of No. 106 discussed the approach they would take regarding 'neurosis' and training for medical officers in this regard was also deliberated.[70] However, no further such cases were recorded in the records of No. 106 and it was only in March 1944 when the matter of psychiatric cases was mentioned again, if only in the form of Brigadier RF Barbour, a consulting psychiatrist, discussing 'minor matters' with No. 106's physician, Lieutenant Colonel Brink. The precise topic of the discussion is not mentioned in the War Diary, but at this stage the hospital received no battle casualties from Italy and dealt mainly with diseases.[71]

Although health threats came mainly in the form of battle wounds and disease, the UDF authorities were also very careful to warn their medical staff of the dangers posed by the local residents. Hawkers viewed the Allied troops as a source of income and

established a lively trade. Ever vigilant to the need for cleanliness, hygiene officers saw health risks in the local wares and in June 1943 Colonel AD McKenzie, Commanding Officer of No. 5 Hospital, warned that troops who bought drinks from hawkers were putting their health in danger as, according to a bacteriological report, the home made drinks were contaminated with sewage water, which could spread typhoid fever and cholera. Evidently, the hawkers were aware of the notice and used old corks from bottles which were originally sold by the Navy, Army and Air Force Institutes (NAAFI) in an effort to make their drinks look safe. McKenzie ordered that all corks were to be collected and returned to the depots, where they were done away with.[72]

While the main purpose of military hospitals was to provide medical treatment for soldiers, medical personnel also required care from time to time. One facility for this was the *El Amiriya*, a houseboat on the Nile next to Gezhira Island in Cairo for women in the UDF, including nurses, and members of the Women's Auxiliary Army Services (WAAS) and Women's Auxiliary Air Force (WAAF). Here the women received medical attention or recuperated after an illness. A medical officer from No. 5 SA General Hospital visited patients twice a week, but when there were emergencies the staff of No. 15 Scottish General Hospital attended to the cases.[73]

REST AND RELAXATION

When the campaign in North Africa came to an end and the battle front moved to Italy, most South African hospitals remained in Egypt, receiving patients by air from the European mainland.[74] For the staff of No. 106 and No. 102, new challenges lay ahead as they were relocated to Italy. For those remaining behind in Cairo, life now became less stressful as the threat of German invasion of Egypt had dissipated. It was especially the staff who were now able to adopt a routine that would make their lives more bearable while they were away from the Union. A somewhat lighter work load, however, did not mean that less emphasis was placed on morale-boosting activities. The importance of maintaining morale went hand in hand with discipline, and with less work to do, staff morale became more important. For the military, and perhaps more so for military hospitals, the terms 'discipline' and 'morale' conveyed similar meanings. Morale was seen as the 'state of confidence and respect in which men hold their cause, their leaders, their unit and themselves'. In addition, discipline was the 'essential and acquired habit of obedience to orders [and] discipline and morale inevitably improve or deteriorate together'.[75]

While the North African campaign was still in progress, maintaining high morale among the patients and the staff meant that battles could ultimately be conducted more efficiently. In short, if the medical staff performed their duties conscientiously,

soldiers received better care and were sooner able to return to active duty. It was here that hygiene and discipline intersected with morale. Medical Officers observed men's health, which in turn affected morale. Discipline was linked to high standards of hygiene, which ultimately also influenced morale and the willingness to do battle.[76] For the medical staff, however, the expectation that they needed to return the wounded to the battleground often represented a conflict. On the one the one hand, they had to mend broken bodies, but on the other hand, they had to send those bodies back to the battleground.[77] As such, the pursuit of non-medical pastimes to maintain good morale was crucial, although it was a fine balancing act, as military hospitals presented the authorities with unique challenges. Hospital populations were diverse, consisting of casualties traumatised to greater or lesser degrees, and staffed by mostly male medical doctors and mostly female nurses. Hospital personnel often also worked in close cooperation with the staff and patients of military hospitals that belonged to other Allied or Commonwealth countries, each with its own national idiosyncrasies. Added to this mix was the local population that, depending on prevailing attitudes, were seen to help or hinder the work of the hospital.

For female staff, especially the VAD nurses who were unfamiliar with the military modus operandi, and who were outnumbered by male colleagues and working almost exclusively with male patients, the experience must have been astonishingly enlightening. The extent to which men and women worked together during the Second World War is seen as the most important agent of the disruption of gender stereotypes, and while the war may have contributed towards gender equality, the nurses and other female staff at the time initially bore the brunt of the onslaught against age-old prejudices. Among the American personnel, for example, it was widely rumoured that nurses were there merely to 'fulfil morale purposes', and that nursing was a minor part of their work. Consequently, many men believed that the women were required to carry contraceptives whenever they left their barracks.[78] An assumption of supposed immorality among nurses was not confined to the American forces, and it would seem that South African nurses also had to deal with their fair share of roguish ideas. One serviceman noted in his diary that the men in his unit had

> an argument this morning about South African women in Cairo. So many fellows say they don't want to know us and plumb for pips on Imperials. [We] discussed this with South African girls (nurses) and they indignantly denied it. We get priority, and I believe it.[79]

Ironically, patients in military hospitals were instructed to regard nurses as 'officers, and must be treated as such'. Patients were also under orders not to be 'violent, insolent or disrespectful … especially to or in the presence of members of the Nursing staff'.[80] These orders may stem from the notion that, historically, morality and the idea of wholesomeness were the sought-after characteristics when it came to nurses who

adopted a motherly or sisterly role when working with patients. Bringing comfort to wounded men was therefore regarded as more important than their medical skills, and as such the nurses were to be protected against the sometimes unscrupulous behaviour of soldiers.[81]

Recreation was important for morale as well as a stress release. In some instances recreational activities were the result of the authorities' efforts, while in other cases the staff took the initiative. Initially, however, it would seem that nurses were ignored or simply left out of the official records, as was the case with No. 6 Hospital when it was still at Qassasin. Its staff were confined to the camp because of lack of transport, and the 93 female staff, including the matron, nursing sisters and nurses, were left to their own devices. The hospital diary asserted that 'quite attractive pictures are shown to the men [and] regular lectures have also been given to the male personnel'.[82] It was only towards the end of 1942 that the war diaries reflected nurses' inclusion in recreational activities. Remarkably, most nurses took this state of affairs in their stride and performed their duties, arranged social gatherings and contributed towards maintaining good morale amongst the patients. For example, in December 1943 the nurses' Christmas Cheer Fund collected £40. The nurses also helped their patients discover new hobbies, and needlework became very popular in No. 106 Hospital.[83]

Notwithstanding the dust and the flies, the desert seemed to hold a sense of romance for a number of the staff, and in some cases relationships developed between UDF personnel which led to marriages. With efficiency and productivity in mind, the Cairo HQ issued an order in 1942 stipulating that if two members of a unit were to get married, one of them should be transferred to another unit. However, in June of the same year, the *Rand Daily Mail* published an order of the military authorities which stated that women serving in the Middle East, WAAS, WAAF and nurses of the SAMNS, were not allowed to get married while in service. This was apparently to prevent hasty marriages in foreign countries and was something which the Canadian and American authorities also proscribed.[84] One of the last weddings to take place in Egypt must have been between Captain du Toit and Ms Brink, who were both stationed at the General Headquarters. Apparently Orenstein made a 'witty' speech at the reception, perhaps because the wedding cake was decorated with a SAMC badge.[85]

The ban on marriages did not deter the staff and most of them were determined to make the best of their time in Egypt. Military personnel in Cairo could attend 'concert parties' organised by Britain's Entertainments National Service Association (ENSA), but the UDF's Major Myles Bourke and Captain Sybil Gaiger decided to offer entertainment with a South African flavour to their own troops. The *Crazy Gang* was the first to arrive from the Union late in 1941, followed by the *South Easters, Africa Star* and *Jabulani* for Non-European personnel. The *Ballyhoos* and the *Amuseliers* followed with the *Swingboks* the last of the entertainment units to arrive in the Middle East.[86]

One show performed at Tel-el-Kebir, 'George and Margaret', was so popular that it made it into the war diary of No. 106 Hospital. Staff and patients of this hospital were allowed to attend the show in a week that also experienced air raid warnings, bombings and anti-aircraft fire seen in the distance.[87]

In many cases the staff of the hospital also took it upon themselves to arrange entertainments or to arrange activities to benefit the patients. At No. 101 the families of the white staff set up a fund to meet the needs of patients and staff, while the staff themselves devised a plan to raise money for the entertainment requirements of the black staff. Beer was brewed and sold to the staff, and the money was then used to buy musical instruments for a jazz band in which staff members played. For those who did not want to spend money on the hospital beer, *Marewu* was available free and on a daily basis.[88] From the outset the NAAFI provided canteens for hospitals and at No. 6 five canteens were established as early as March 1942, each carefully segregated from the other, although the nurses and the officers shared one.[89]

Up patients were permitted to attend recreational activities which had been organised by the hospital administration, although their movements were strictly controlled. If a concert or lecture took place at the hospital, the patients only had 15 minutes to get back to bed after the curtain call. In cases where the entertainments were held away from the hospital, a member of the hospital personnel would accompany them, taking responsibility for the group.[90] In some cases concerts were open to personnel only, like the one held at the Helmieh Garden Theatre on 21 June 1943, where the RA Base Depot Band played.[91]

Sport was hugely popular among staff and patients alike, and the different hospitals would often compete against one another in cricket, rugby, tennis and soccer. On 12 June 1943, for example, No. 5 played cricket against the Ambulance Train Depot on the No. 102 Hospital grounds, and on 13 June No. 5 played cricket against No. 101 at the Kenya grounds in Cairo.[92] Later that year No. 102 Hospital hosted a NEAS Athletic Meeting, with the programme indicating that it was held on 16 December 1943, 'Dingaan's Day', a public holiday in South Africa. Teams from No. 5 Hospital, No. 101 and an NEAS team participated in events such as a 100-yards race, cricket, long jump, high jump, shot putt and a mile race.[93]

Each Christmas also presented an opportunity for all hospitals to boost morale with concerts, church services, special food and visits from dignitaries. In December 1943, despite an outbreak of bubonic plague in Suez, Port Tewfik and amongst British Military personnel in the Canal Area, No. 101 Hospital went to great lengths to decorate the tented wards and to distribute 'gifts and comforts' to the patients. With the hospital's Bugle Band playing and staff and patients marching and dancing along, the kitchen prepared the special Christmas lunch, which included '2 pints of *Tywala*' for each man. In the afternoon the '101 Yellows' took on a team from the 8th CCS, with the hospital

team emerging victorious.[94] In the meantime, precautions against the plague were put in place at the hospital. Dead rats were to be reported to the Company Commander and the rodents were destroyed. Where necessary, personnel were disinfested and anti-flea measures, including the airing of clothing and bedding, were put in place.[95]

Although the physical activities distracted staff and patients from the bleaker side of life in the desert, reading was also popular and, when controlled by the authorities, served a dual purpose. No. 101 Hospital published the *Sandy Times* newsletter, which although very basic in its design and layout, was able to inform and also measure morale through the contributions from staff and patients. The first edition appeared in July 1943, and the editorial placed a great focus on unity and the successful carrying out of duties. In the editor's opinion, 'here at 101 we may truly say that perfect Unit Unity has reigned from the very beginning. As South Africans we may be proud of that fact, for we happy band of brothers – and sisters! – have actually brought to life and illustrated in unmistakable fashion the power and truth of our country's motto – *eendrag maak mag* [strength in unity]'. He also asked everyone to contribute, even if those contributions were 'grim, gay, prose, verse … even controversial provided it is not offensive'. However, it would seem that most of the contributions were from the authorities, posing either as 'Spiky', 'Sakkie' or 'Bessie', representing the English, Afrikaans and nursing contingents respectively. The articles were often thinly disguised pieces of information and subtle warnings, such as a 'letter to the editor' from 'Spink', who related the story of how he replaced a lost button with a pin so that he would not violate instructions with regard to malaria precautions.[96] For the sake of humour, jokes were also included, an example of which was one entitled 'Of Hearts and Flowers' about a military wedding: 'the groom only recently back from the Middle East, had hardly glimpsed his bride before the ceremony. Therefore, when the time came for the kiss, it was a long one, lasting on and on until a child's voice rang out in the silence of the church: "Mummy, is he spreading the pollen on her now?"'[97] For the more discerning personnel at No. 101, an amateur dramatics society and a book club were created.[98]

In a similar effort, but only in 1945, No. 106 Hospital, by then in Italy for more than a year, published *The Shuftiscope*. Compared to the *Sandy Times,* it was a much more professional-looking newspaper, but most of its contributions were also conceived by the authorities in an attempt to inform and steer thoughts in a desired direction. In some cases, no effort was made to hide the fact that the writers were fake, as was the case with 'Mad Typhoid', who wrote regularly for the '*Mein Mamph*' column.[99]

The most impressive example of adventurous diversion came from the officers at No. 5 Hospital, who went as far as publishing a book on their desert endeavours. The publication, *Now There's a Thing! A manual of liar dice and Taurocoprology,* must have been the result of many hours of nonsensical brainstorming which resulted in a humorous but bizarre collection of essays; all of which were obviously utterly devoid of factual information. The fictional science of 'taurocoprology' was satirically put

into practice with 'Liar Dice', a game on the skill of deceit and a metaphor for 'the art of carrying conviction to sceptics by subtle mannerisms or by apparently logical processes of own self-glorification', with the title of 'Sacred Bull' conferred on the master taurocoprologist.[100]

CONCLUSION

The war came to an end in May 1945, but it was months before the hospitals returned to the Union. Patients were still arriving for treatment and others were still in the process of recovery. In most cases staff had to be evacuated systematically so as not to disrupt the normal hospital routine.[101] No. 101, for instance, disbanded on 31 August, but the closing down of the hospital could not be completed until the end of September.[102] No. 106 Hospital arrived in the Middle East from Italy in September on their way back to the Union, with all the personnel demobilised on 24 September.[103] In the Union, Brigadier Orenstein said his goodbyes to his staff at the end of August 1945 and at the farewell it was acknowledged that there had been a 'certain amount of floundering' as far as the Medical Services were concerned at the beginning of the war, but that Orenstein's appointment had been a wise decision.[104] Smuts also wrote to his 'old comrade' to thank him for his work during the war.[105] Five years after the war the SAMNS became part of the Permanent Force and the nurses were at last eligible for pensions.[106] The Matron in Chief, CA Nothard, remained in her post until 1946.[107]

The work of the medical personnel in the Middle East was a test of endurance which required huge doses of initiative and good humour. In both environments, medical and military, discipline and morale are crucial components to success, and in the case of the military hospitals in the Middle East, the staff performed remarkably well in difficult circumstances. Faced with changing circumstances, adapting to unfamiliar climates and confronted with new diseases, the staff remained committed to their duties.

Endnotes

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21 The statue was constructed by Italian prisoners of war. SA Medical Services in the Middle East, pp 18-19, Scheepers Collection, Box 3, DODA.

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4

'A PROTRACTED PICNIC'? THE WARTIME EXPERIENCE OF ARTHUR BINTLIFF IN MADAGASCAR, 1942

Evert Kleynhans

A drastic shift was observed in the academic study of war during the twentieth century. As a result, the traditional field of military history was broadened to include several new approaches to the historical study of warfare. The recording of the personal experience of war, especially as a key component of the broader framework of war and society, proved particularly popular. Traditionally, the South African deployments to East Africa, North Africa and Italy during the Second World War have received the bulk of local historical attention. Unfortunately, the deployment of the 7th South African Infantry Brigade (SA Inf Bde) to Madagascar remains largely ignored. The chance discovery of a series of wartime letters, written by Arthur Bintliff, offers a rare glimpse into the personal experience of a South African soldier during one of the forgotten campaigns of the war. The Bintliff correspondence provides an unprecedented account of the thrill of combat, the monotony of daily military routine, the leisure-time of soldiers, and the experience of wartime Madagascar in general. By analysing the Bintliff correspondence this chapter offers a rare in-depth, discussion on the South African military experience during the Madagascar campaign.

INTRODUCTION

Samuel Hynes argued that war narratives are a distinctive literary kind. In *The Soldier's Tale* Hynes argued that mankind generally displays a curiosity about war. He contends that it is often easier to respond to one man and his 'war' rather than to try and comprehend the overwhelming statistics associated with modern warfare – especially in terms of the vast numbers of soldiers, battles and casualties. For Hynes it was important to 'understand what war was like, and how it *feels* … [and to] seek the reality in the personal witness of the men who were there'.[1] In order to construct the so-called soldier's narrative, however, the wartime experiences of individuals first need to have been recorded. Hynes clearly distinguishes between two broad categories of the soldier's narrative. To him, the distinction is underpinned by differing needs – first to report, and second to remember. Accounts that fall into the reporting category consist of letters, diaries and journals that were kept by soldiers as the war unfolded. These are naturally extremely valuable historical sources, particularly since they offer a sense of immediacy and frankness in the recording of the personal experience of war. The second category is comprised of memoirs, which are compiled from the wartime letters, diaries and journals that soldiers kept. They are generally far more reflective in nature, since they are written years after the actual experience of war. Moreover, memoirs give a selective overview of 'what the young self did, what happened to him, what changed him'.[2]

In South Africa the soldiers' narratives of the Second World War consist mainly of memoirs written by white servicemen, who saw action with the Union Defence

Force (UDF) in East Africa, North Africa and Italy. These published memoirs provide an unrivalled account of life in the UDF during the war and they touch on several key aspects such a social interaction, morale, discipline, combat and leisure time. The works are largely autobiographical in nature and written from a decidedly bottom-up perspective that focuses on the experience of the individual soldier. As a mnemonic community, the authors were mainly rank and file soldiers, with some accounts written by non-commissioned officers and officers. These works stand in stark contrast to the traditional autobiographies written by senior and general officers, which are marked by a distinct top-down approach in terms of analysis. In these latter accounts the voice of the ordinary servicemen is largely unheard.[3] Unfortunately, the voices of South African servicewomen, along with the UDF's black, Indian and Coloured volunteers, however, remain unrecorded despite the ground-breaking work of historians such as Louis Grundlingh.[4]

The South African historians writing more broadly on the Second World War have also not really engaged with the whole notion of the soldier's narrative as proposed by Hynes. While the works of Albert Grundlingh, Neil Roos, Karen Horn, James Bourhill, Gustav Bentz and Kevin Greenbank[5] to some extent may be exceptions, this trend unfortunately continues to prevail. A possible reason for this may indeed be the paucity of relevant personal correspondence, diaries and journals available at South African archival depots. The fact that South Africa also does not have a central repository where relevant material may be deposited adds to the woes. Neither the Department of Defence (DOD) Archive in Pretoria nor the Ditsong National Museum of Military History in Johannesburg are suitable repositories for various reasons. Moreover, both of these institutions preserve little to no relevant material documenting the individual experiences of South African soldiers during the Second World War.

Historians interested in writing on the individual South African soldier's experience thus face something of a conundrum when trying to locate relevant source material. While it is possible to obtain access to private collections, these are generally hard to come by.[6] The lesser-known archives maintained by South African regimental associations, such as that of the Natal Carbineers in Pietermaritzburg for instance, may also contain relevant source material. The private correspondence, diaries and journals of former soldiers are often deposited at these archival depositories for preservation. Gaining access to these collections, however, may prove problematic at times, with bureaucratic red tape often hindering access for researchers.

The historiography on South African participation in the Second World War remains problematic, as the major focus is still on the three big deployments of the UDF to East Africa, North Africa and Italy. The deployment of the 7th SA Inf Bde to Madagascar remains understudied, despite the wealth of primary material housed at the DOD Archives. Internationally, the campaign has also not received much attention, particularly since it was considered as somewhat of a sideshow of the major campaigns.

The most noteworthy publications on the campaign are those of Martin Thomas[7] and John Grehan,[8] while South African sources on the campaign are decidedly scant. The works of the Union War Histories Section, André Wessels, Deon Fourie and Jackie Grobler are also worth noting.[9] Their publications, for the most part, fall into the category of traditional military histories, but they do serve as a point of departure for an investigation of a much understudied aspect of South African military history.

To date there has been no detailed study of the personal experience of the South African troops deployed to Madagascar. The chance discovery of a series of wartime letters in the DOD Archives, however, offers a rare glimpse into the personal experience of a South African soldier during one of the forgotten campaigns of the war. The letters in question were written by Arthur Bintliff between July and November 1942, while he was deployed to the theatre as a Private serving with the Pretoria Highlanders. The Bintliff correspondence indeed fits into Hynes's framework for war narratives. It is decidedly autobiographical in nature, set within a historical context, and presented as something akin to travel writing.[10] Moreover, the Bintliff correspondence also provides a rare lens for an analysis, mainly because the personal experiences of the South African troops deployed to Madagascar have never truly been recorded. Consequently, the Bintliff correspondence to some degree acts to provide the 'missing voice' on the South African soldier's experience of the campaign. The Bintliff correspondence is therefore a useful tool through which to investigate key aspects of the soldiers' experience, such as the military operating environment, leisure time utilisation, morale, discipline and the thrill of combat. By analysing the Bintliff correspondence, this chapter offers a rare, in-depth discussion on the wartime experience of a South African infantryman during the Madagascar campaign. In doing so, it addresses an evident gap in the broader historiography on South African participation in the war.

BINTLIFF - AN ORDINARY SOUTH AFRICAN INFANTRYMAN?

Any good war story has its main protagonist. In the case of this chapter, it is Arthur Thomas Bintliff – a somewhat ordinary South African of English decent. Little is known about his background, apart from scraps of information that could be gleaned from his personnel file housed at the DOD Archives in Pretoria. Generally speaking, such personnel files contain a wealth of information of both a personal and military-administrative nature. At a casual glance, however, an individual personnel file is riddled with military jargon and acronyms that, to the untrained eye, may essentially render the file 'impenetrable'. Fortunately, when these obstacles are surmounted, either through help from archival staff or through sheer persistence, the proverbial treasure trove of information on an individual's wartime service is revealed.

Each personnel file contains valuable genealogical data as well as key information detailing an individual's military service. From a genealogical point of view, some of the most important information in a personnel file is contained in the attestation papers. Attestation papers generally provide key insights into dates of birth, places of birth, next of kin, physical addresses, information on dependants, and so forth. More importantly, personnel files contain vital information that can be used to extrapolate an individual's military service. A host of documents, from attestation and discharge forms, to record cards and charge sheets, can be used to reconstruct a soldier's wartime journey. Moreover, when the information in the personnel files is substantiated with supplemental archival material, such as unit war diaries, for instance, a fairly complete picture can be constructed of an individual's wartime experience. This approach was adopted in the case of Bintliff in a determined attempt to reconstruct the soldier's missing narrative.

Born in Johannesburg on 26 March 1908, Bintliff in all likelihood grew up in the former Transvaal, where he completed peacetime training in the UDF. We know that he was of average height and build, with dark hair, brown eyes and a somewhat dark complexion. His personnel file states that he was part of the Active Citizen Force during the latter half of the 1930s. In this capacity he served as a trooper with the Imperial Light Horse based in Johannesburg. Prior to the outbreak of the war, Bintliff worked as a printer for *The Natal Witness*, a Pietermaritzburg newspaper. His experience in the print industry would prove extremely beneficial during the South African deployment to Madagascar. We also know that Bintliff was married and that his wife resided at Tweespruit in the Orange Free State, before later on moving back to Johannesburg during the war. All told, he had the makings of an ordinary, white, working-class South African of the time.[11]

After South Africa declared war on Germany on 6 September 1939, thousands of young men volunteered for military service in the UDF. The reasons for joining were varied, with some men being driven by patriotism, a sense of moral duty, a desire for adventure, and, above all, a yearning to play an active role in the broader war effort to defeat fascism. Others, however, saw military service merely as a means to secure somewhat steady employment and social mobility, with the added benefits of regular pay, a roof over their heads, medical care and the promise of three square meals a day.[12] Bintliff, however, only attested into the UDF on 15 July 1940, nearly a month after the Italian entry into the war. His reasons for enlisting remain unclear, though it is safe to assume that he answered the general call to arms like so many other ordinary white South Africans – be it for King and Country, or simply duty, honour and the promise of adventure. After reporting at the Police Depot in Pretoria, Bintliff underwent a period of intensive military training. By December he was posted to the 1st Battalion Pretoria Highlanders, where he was assigned to a platoon of A Company – his regimental home for the next two years.[13]

Throughout 1941, and for the first few months of 1942, the Pretoria Highlanders had the mundane duty of guarding one of the wartime internment camps in the Union, at Jagersfontein in the Orange Free State, while some troops were also deployed to South West Africa on garrison duty. This period proved rather uneventful for Bintliff – the only noteworthy incidents being a disciplinary issue relating to disregarding unit standing orders that cost him 14 days in the detention barracks, and his hospitalisation due to a severe bout of haemorrhoids.[14]

In June 1942, however, Bintliff's wartime journey suddenly changed. The Pretoria Highlanders, which formed part of the 7th SA Inf Bde of the 3rd South African Infantry Division (3 SA Div), were earmarked to deploy to Madagascar as part of the larger Allied operation to subjugate the island. On 12 June the Pretoria Highlanders, along with the rest of the brigade, embarked on the *SS Empire Trooper* in Durban destined for Madagascar. After a rather unexciting seaward journey, they disembarked at Diego Suarez, on the northern tip of Madagascar, on 28 June. For the next four months or so Bintliff and his compatriots would call Madagascar their temporary home, yearning for the opportunity to prove their metal in actual combat. The majority of the South African troops, save for a select few, were not involved in any ground combat operations during the deployment, however, and for the most part settled into the somewhat leisurely role of wartime occupation. Bintliff was fortunate enough to be a part of two separate ground combat operations and wrote rather extensively about his experiences. By 12 November, with the subjugation of Madagascar all but complete, the Pretoria Highlanders embarked on the SS *Nieuw Amsterdam* from Diego Suarez destined for the Middle East.[15]

After disembarking at Suez on 21 November, the 7th SA Inf Bde were deployed on garrison duties in Egypt until such time as the brigade was amalgamated with the 1st SA Inf Bde. The establishment of the 6th South African Armoured Division (6 SA Armd Div) in 1943 meant that the mainstay of the former infantry divisions would be repurposed to form the nucleus of the new armoured division.[16] By January 1943 Bintliff was taken off strength from the Pretoria Highlanders, and posted to the general infantry pool of the South African Armoured Corps. For the next year or so Bintliff would call Egypt home, and once more the only noteworthy incidents during this period appear to be a similar disciplinary issue as before that cost him 25 days in the detention barracks, and another stint in hospital with a recurring case of haemorrhoids.[17]

By July Bintliff was taken on strength with the First City Regiment, a unit that had also seen service in Madagascar. That October the First City Regiment was married up with the Cape Town Highlanders to form the First City/Cape Town Highlanders (FC/CTH). The FC/CTH was one of a host of amalgamated units of the newly established 6 SA Armd Div. After an intense period of training and conversion at Khatatba in the Egyptian desert, 6 SA Armd Div deployed to Italy during March 1944.[18] Little is, however, known of Bintliff's deployment to Italy.

Apart from a brief stint in hospital in May 1945, we know that he was repatriated in September, and earmarked for demobilisation after some well-deserved leave. In February 1946 Bintliff was finally discharged from the UDF, after a total of five years and 192 days of wartime service. With a host of campaign medals to his name, Bintliff returned to civilian street to once more take up employment as a printer – this time with the *Goldfields Press* in Johannesburg.[19]

At face value Bintliff's wartime service appears to fit the pattern of an ordinary South African infantryman. His military service was indeed regular enough for him to disappear amongst the thousands of faceless South African soldiers who served in the UDF during the war. When the focus is narrowed down to his deployment to Madagascar with the 7th SA Inf Bde, however, Bintliff is no longer just an ordinary South African infantryman. He is in fact extraordinary, mainly because he is one of a select few servicemen who in one way or another recorded their wartime experiences in Madagascar. Using Hynes's framework, and employing Bintliff as a lens, the South African experience of the Madagascar Campaign can be better understood.

THE SOUTH AFRICAN DEPLOYMENT – BRIEF HISTORICAL CONTEXT

The possibility of the Japanese occupation of Madagascar prompted the British defence planners to take action against the Vichy-controlled island in 1942. The Allies contended that if the Japanese occupied Madagascar, they would have ready access to the strategic harbour of Diego Suarez - situated roughly halfway along the strategic sea route between the Indian subcontinent and the Cape of Good Hope. This would have a detrimental effect on Allied shipping in the Indian Ocean, as Japanese naval forces would then have a free hand to attack Allied naval and merchant shipping along the entire east coast of Africa.[20]

Winston Churchill, the British Prime Minister, was of the opinion that 'a Japanese air, submarine, and/or cruiser base at Diego Suarez would paralyse our whole convoy route both to the Middle and Far East',[21] Jan Smuts, the South African prime minister, also considered Madagascar to be the key to safety in the Indian Ocean, especially regarding merchant shipping. He felt that a strategic decision about Madagascar's occupation was required sooner rather than later, and that the mere capture of Diego Suarez alone would not deter possible Japanese aggression. In his opinion, the entire island, including the ports of Majunga and Tamatave, needed to be taken over. Churchill subsequently decided to carry out the occupation of Madagascar.[22]

On 5 May 1942 the British Force 121 landed in Vichy-controlled Madagascar and successfully seized Diego Suarez two days later. The primary task of Force 121 was initially only to capture and hold the strategic naval base of Diego Suarez in the extreme north of the island in the hope of reducing the risk of a Japanese invasion.

From the outset Smuts argued that the mere occupation of Diego Suarez would not suffice and that the entire island needed to be liberated from Vichy control. Smuts, who always advocated for the active deployment of South African troops, offered the 7th SA Inf Bde to the British defence planners for the purpose. After some hesitation, and being ever wary of Smuts' sub-imperialism in the region, the British agreed to the deployment of South African troops.[23]

On 25 June the first wave of troops of the 7th SA Inf Bde disembarked at Diego Suarez. Commanded by Brig G.T. Senescall, the Brigade comprised the First City Regiment, Pretoria Regiment and Pretoria Highlanders, and was supported by a squadron of armoured cars, an artillery field regiment, as well as a field company of sappers and other ancillary units. The Brigade's headquarters was established at Sakaramy near Antsirane in the vicinity of Diego Suarez. After settling down in their new billets, the soldiers soon started preparing defensive positions. They had the important task of defending the general area around Diego Suarez against a possible Japanese invasion and a Vichy French counterattack. In due course the South African infantry battalions were deployed further inland around the area of Ambilobe, thereby extending the defensive perimeter around Diego Suarez further south. The South African troops generally settled into a peaceful occupation task, despite the fact that Smuts continued to lobby for the full-scale occupation of the island. Fortunately for Smuts, the unexpected Japanese submarine attacks on shipping in the harbour of Diego Suarez worked in his favour.[24]

By the beginning of August, after a considerable amount of discussion and consultation, the British Chiefs of Staff finally decided to move ahead and occupy the entire island. The General Officer Commanding East Africa Command, Lt Gen Sir William Platt, assumed overall command of a series of complicated operations aimed at conquering the island. The ensuing offensive operations could hardly be regarded as serious warfare, since Vichy resistance proved only nominal. That being said, the operational conditions in Madagascar proved arduous, particularly because of the unforgiving climate, difficult terrain and a taxing disease ecology. The major offensive operations were conducted by the 29th British Inf Bde and 22nd East African Bde, who after advancing on and capturing Majunga, conducted a major overland advance towards the capital Tananarive.[25]

Unfortunately, the mainstay of the South African troops played no major part in the final offensive operations that were launched during September. Apart from the armoured cars that led the advance towards the capital and took part in the only serious fighting of the campaign, the combat experience of the majority of South African troops was extremely limited. The First City Regiment successfully advanced from Sakaramy to Maromandia, despite a number of road blocks and broken bridges that hampered their movements. Elements of the Pretoria Regiment, backed up by some armoured cars, took part in the bloodless occupation of Vohemar, Sahambava and

Antalaha on the east coast. An under-strength company of the Pretoria Highlanders took part in the occupation of the isle of Nossi Bé, after which they supported the operations against Maromandia. By the end of September Tananarive was successfully occupied, after which two companies from the Pretoria Regiment took part in an operation in the extreme south after landing at Tulear. On 4 November the Vichy Governor, Armand Annet, surrendered, with an armistice signed the next day. By the beginning of December all South African troops had been withdrawn from Madagascar, bringing to an end their brief deployment.[26]

ADVENTURE, ROUTINE AND MORALE

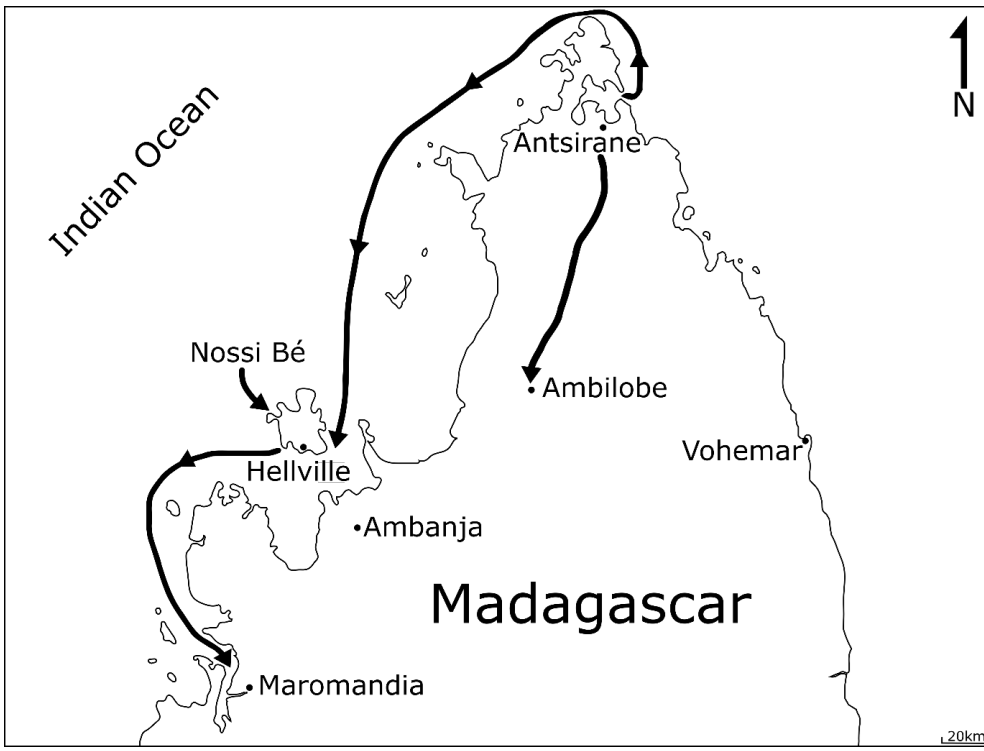
Arthur Bintliff arrived in Madagascar towards the end of June. After settling into their new billets at Sakaramy, elements of the Pretoria Highlanders were posted south to reinforce the Allied position at Ambilobe. Fortunately for Bintliff, his company was allocated to take part in this operation, and by the beginning of July the men arrived in the vicinity of Ambilobe. Bintliff and his comrades had no choice but to make peace with the monotony of daily military routine in a forward position. They were to occupy this position until the beginning of August, when they were called back to the battalion that was headquartered at Concession Grignon near Antsirane (see Map 1).[27]

The month or so that Bintliff was deployed to the proverbial 'frontline', including his experience of soldiering in general, was succinctly captured in the first letter that he wrote home on 31 July. One immediately gathers that by the end of July the South African troops had not received any mail, which had a direct impact on their morale. The troops indeed longed for any bit of news from the Union.[28] Unknown to the rank and file, the postal dilemma affected all Allied troops on the island – a matter that was dictated by the availability for shipping and return cargoes more than anything else. In fact, the South African authorities could do little to alleviate the matter.[29] Nevertheless, for Bintliff and his comrades the situation proved rather dire:

> Still not a word from you! I hope my letters are reaching you sometimes, but oh, how we long for news of home. They talk about morale, and let the chief ingredient therein go to blazes, with never a word of explanation.[30]

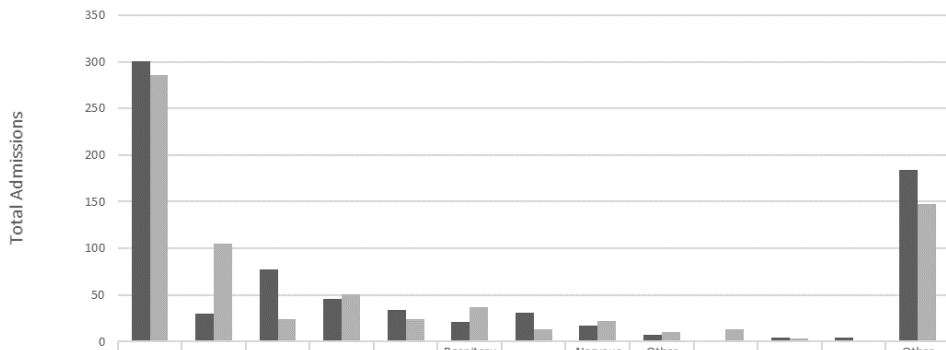
It is evident that the novelty of deployment to the frontline soon wore off. Bintliff reported that his section undertook active patrols only on every second or third day, but maintains that it was still far better than doing guard duty at Jagersfontein. Patrolling proved to be a rather monotonous affair, however, as the enemy was ever elusive. Intermingled with their patrol and guard duties, the men also undertook regular training exercises, firing of their defensive plans, and compulsory weapon maintenance.

The South Africans soon realised that patrol duty afforded them the ability to explore the local countryside and mingle with the local civilians around Ambilobe.[31]



MAP 1: Principal Movements Of Arthur Bintliff During The Madagascar Campaign

During their adventures the men soon became aware of the fact that there seemed to be almost no animals and very few birds around the Madagascar countryside. They did, however, encounter a large number of snakes, and Bintliff also makes mention of the numerous crocodiles in the Mahavavy River. According to Bintliff, the crocodiles were quite stubborn, so much so 'that you have to use an anti-tank rifle to move them.'[32] Bintliff remarked that Madagascar would have been a marvellous paradise had it not been for the over-supply of mosquitoes. The high amount of rainfall that Madagascar received annually naturally compounded the issue and led to a drastic increase in the number of mosquitoes. Bintliff described the mosquitoes as being fearful creatures, and that even the utmost precautions they took did not help, as they still found their way into your clothes by the hundreds. Fortunately, up to then there had not been a single case of malaria amongst the Pretoria Highlanders. The troops were, however, required to take quinine twice a day as a precautionary measure against malaria.[33]



	Malaria	Ven Diseases	Influenza	Accidental Injuries	I.A.T.	Respitory Conditions	Dysentry & Enteritis	Nervous Conditions	Other Infectious Diseases	Pulmonary TB	Scabies	Bilharzia	Other Conditions
Europeans	301	30	77	46	34	21	31	17	7	0	4	4	184
Non-Europeans	286	105	24	51	24	37	13	22	10	13	3	0	147

GRAPH 1: Hospital admissions of South African troops during the Madagascar campaign, June to November 1942.

Source: **DOD Archives, UWH (Civil), Box 344, File Campaign in Madagascar, Medical Aspects of the Campaign in Madagascar.**

In the following months, however, malaria would take an increasing toll amongst the South African troops. At least 13% of all Union Defence Force troops on the island contracted malaria whilst deployed to Madagascar, despite the fact that the deployment took place outside of the usually accepted epidemic period of January to July (see Graph 1). The majority of the infections occurred during the active operational period, with a total of 222 cases of malaria reported during the major offensive operations undertaken throughout September and October. Nevertheless, infections continued at a steady rate throughout the campaign, with at least 21 cases of malaria reported per week. Despite stringent anti-malarial measures, as well as the provision of suppressive quinine, malaria infections amongst the troops remained rather high. In an effort to address the matter, the Director of Medical Services dispatched an expert malariologist to the 7th SA Inf Bde. This officer had to provide advice on the placement of camps and basic personal hygiene, as well as sensitise combat officers regarding the care of their men while deployed. Despite the high incidence of malaria amongst the troops, the Madagascar campaign was heralded as a relative victory for the medical and hygiene service. They were particularly lauded since, through their concerted efforts, a large body of troops was kept healthy in a tropical area riddled with diseases over a period of four and a half months. This is illustrated by the fact that of the 4 570 South African troops deployed to Madagascar, only 1 491 medical cases were admitted to 19 South African Field Ambulance over the period June to November 1942 (see Graph 1).[34]

As with all deployed soldiers over the ages, Bintliff had a lot to say about food. Luckily, the deployed troops were able to supplement their rations by buying extra foodstuffs, especially fresh produce, from the local population. In fact, for 'frontline' soldiers,

Bintliff contended, they were being fed magnificently – far better than what they were used back at the battalion headquarters. The system of 'buying in' local supplies led to one rather comical event when some of the cooks went to a local village to source fresh produce:

> Piet Bierman introduced him as the 'chef', under the impression that this was French for cook, whereas it is only the English. They came back with terrific stories of how the *Malgasch* got a move on wherever they went, bowing and scraping and fixing the whole village up for inspection, etc. I laughed till I cried, because they were dumbfounded at the respect paid to cooks – till I told them he had been impersonating the G.O.C. himself. Not only is 'Chef' the word for 'Chief', but the French have spent years teaching the locals to respect 'le chef', which they properly did! Anyway, they got hundreds of eggs and vegetables, etc., practically for nothing.[35]

As their time on the frontline drew to an end, Bintliff and his comrades were rather hesitant to return back to the battalion headquarters – where 'everyone is being led a devil of a life'.[36] The apparent freedom of life on the frontlines naturally held a certain amount of appeal for the troops, especially since it was far removed from the humdrum of regimental life under the watchful gaze of the Adjutant and the Regimental Sergeant Major. As Bintliff and his compatriots readied themselves to leave Ambilobe, he could not help but question if they would ever have the opportunity to engage in actual combat and fire their weapons in anger. As his company got ready to leave their forward area, Bintliff summed up their brief deployment and their initial experience of Madagascar: 'all we have to describe is the protracted picnic, with plenty of discomforts and annoyances, in a hot country … and that sums up our activities in this part of Madagascar.'[37]

By the time Bintliff wrote his second letter home on 11 August, his company had returned to Concession Grignon near Antsirane. The return back to battalion had been a rather rude awakening for the men of A Company. Their new daily routine proved extremely unpopular, especially the mandatory stand-to before dawn and the regular firing of their defensive fire-plan. It took Bintliff some days to complete writing his second letter home. He complained that after returning from firing their defences, he seldom had any energy left to continue his correspondence. The fact that he had to stand duty every second night added to his woes, particularly since it disturbed his sleep. To Bintliff it seemed that all they ever did was 'wash, shave, breakfast, clean rifle and boots for an inspection at 07:30, march out, dig all day, march home, wash and prepare for duty. Same thing the next day. You sleep the next night if there are no alarms.'[38]

Unsurprisingly, the deteriorating food and washing situation, and the ever-present howling wind, soon led to Bintliff describing his new billet as a rather horrible place. It is thus somewhat evident that when soldiers undergo a period of apparent

discomfort, they often develop a new appreciation of home and all the comforts that come with it. Bintliff was no different:

> You can imagine how I long for home and proper grub and a bit of comfort! And what joy our parcels bring. The eats never can be made to last more than a couple of days, but taste like the food of the gods. Yes, we have very many totally unnecessary annoyances, and no comforts – and no water! However, if we manage to survive all this, plus what war itself may bring, it certainly will have taught us to appreciate our homes and people![39]

Whilst Bintliff and his company were deployed to Ambilobe, he wrote an article for a popular South African newspaper column at the time called *Stoep Talk*. In the article he described their deployment to the forward areas. Bintliff's pre-war employment with *The Natal Witness*, though not as a reporter, must have stood him in good stead. The result of the publication of the article was an instant boost to the morale of his company. Bintliff was appreciative that his relatives back home had submitted the article for publication, and basked in his instant fame:

> I'm frightfully glad you sent it in – officers, sergeants-major and half the Company had the cutting within an hour or so … and my stock seems to have risen a point or two. Funny how the power of the Press sticks. A good many things in the cutting were quite a good reflection, others were very funny to read![40]

In his third letter home, written on 16 August, it is evident that Bintliff's morale had once more started to wane. He complained of the iniquities and vicissitudes that he and his comrades had to endure since arriving back at battalion – especially the unforgiving wind, lack of water, sweltering heat, occasional rain, and their rudimentary living conditions. He was, however, wary of not divulging too much information, for fear of his letters being censored: 'I could tell you some amazing stories of chaos, disorganisation on a grand scale, anecdotes of our officers, and things about military life … that would sure shock you … the whole ruddy outfit is appalling - and that's praising it!'[41]

One particular incident involving the Quartermaster, a certain Captain Baard, is noteworthy. The incident highlights the level of frustration amongst Bintliff and his comrades, especially with regards to over-zealous officers. To them, Baard signified everything that was wrong at battalion, and he at once became the subject of some unwelcome attention from the men:

> … [he is] under the impression that a quartermasters' job is to prevent anyone, even officers, in the Regiment from getting any kit, or if, by some accident, someone gets something, to see that it does not fit him. Last night the fellow on duty at Quarter Stores saw Baards' canvas bath outside his tent – so he put his

> bayonet through it! Last week Baard had a British battle dress outfit made for him by a tailor in Antsirane – it was pinched within an hour of delivery! Now he does not know whether to have a guard or not! Up to now our objectives have been mainly stores but now Baard is the object. Some time ago somebody threw a bucket of water over his bed at scoff-time![42]

Fortunately for Bintliff and his comrades, life back at battalion also brought with it some perks. On a number of occasions the South Africans were allowed a town pass, and were free to explore Diego Suarez and it surroundings. They were very impressed by the sheer size and beauty of the bay, but less impressed by the town of Antsirane. To them it was 'just a little too stinky for real romanticism'.[43]

Their journeys into Antsirane once more brought the South African troops into close contact with the local population.[44] In his fourth letter home, written on 20 August, Bintliff hints at the fact that despite being used to racial segregation back in the Union, he and his comrades relished at the opportunity to interact with the local population. Their interaction with the local women proved most interesting, particularly since they yearned for female company. Racial segregation and their own inherent conservatism rather conveniently disappeared: 'we had dusky tropic beauties, childish prattle and all, usually to do with our washing, but sometimes just making friendly calls!'[45] Moreover, despite the fact that their interactions with the local population seemed to have been very cordial, Bintliff described them as being very friendly, quite dirty, rather unsanitary, and being completely without any military spirit. He was also convinced that the Vichy French had wasted a lot of time, money and trouble in trying to turn their locally raised recruits into an efficient fighting force.[46]

By the beginning of September, when Bintliff wrote his next letter home, his prospects had somewhat changed. Fortunately, his pre-war employment now paid dividends. During the Allied occupation of the greater Diego Suarez area, the need arose to establish a local newspaper for propaganda purposes. The *Evening Pioneer* was thus born, with Bintliff assigned as its sub-editor. It is hardly surprising that he appreciated his new posting, as it meant a welcome break from the monotony and boredom of life back at battalion. Moreover, his new posting also meant new billets, a far cry from his previous digs. When on occasion Bintliff visited his compatriots back at battalion, he was reminded of his good fortune:

> When I do go out there, am I pleased with my nice job, and my fine billet. I have been organising things and am now possessed of a marble-topped table, a bed stuffed with a sackful of the softest kapok, a feather pillow … and wouldn't exchange my corner of the room for a dozen fine tents.[47]

The change in scenery and daily routine, had a profound impact on Bintliff's apparent morale. This is evident in the general tone of his writing and the positive way in which he describes his new surroundings. Also, it is almost the first time in which Bintliff commented on the beauty of Madagascar in his letters home as well as some indication that he started appreciating his new surroundings:

> One amazing thing we have here are the lovely evenings. Most of the little dorp, soldiers and all, gather [at] about four o'clock … to watch [the sunset]. The whole sky, the mighty bay and the sea to the horizon are a blazing vivid mass of hue and tone and solid colour. You can almost feel it. I defy the hardest heart to stand there and fail to thrill a little at the warmth of the spectacle, the magnificent sweeps of the brush of the Master, and the size and beauty incredible of the far-sweeping background. So dies the Diego Suarez day.[48]

COMBAT – THE MEASURE OF A MAN?

> At long last we've done it! We have been in action - successful action - twice since I wrote last. And many and many a thing has happened: thrilling, nerve-wracking, splendid things. Our years of inglorious life have been justified by our recent crowded hours - hours crowded with unforgettable experience, with many moving sights and sounds, with so much beauty, and thrill and excitement, that it will remain engraved in my mind for a mighty long time.[49]

Bintliff started his penultimate letter home, with these words. His excitement at finally having had the opportunity to deploy on an actual combat mission is difficult to hide. After nearly three months of inactivity, monotony and fluctuations in morale, Bintliff and his company were selected to take part in the series of final Allied operations aimed at subjugating the entire island. They were, however, extremely fortunate, being the only company from the Pretoria Highlanders to take part in a combat operation during the campaign. The target for their first operation, Operation Esme B, was a small island off the west coast of Madagascar called Nossi Bé, which was still under the control of Vichy forces (see Map 1). This, however, meant that the South Africans would have the dubious honour of being the first known group of their countrymen to be involved in an amphibious assault operation. Up to this stage of the war the South African soldiers had been used to fighting across bush, desert and jungle terrain. It was never envisaged that Union soldiers would ever storm a beach as part of a larger amphibious assault. Fortunately the South Africans were accompanied by a group of experienced Royal Marines.[50]

The prospect of going into actual combat, however, proved extremely daunting for Bintliff and his comrades. They were acutely aware of the fact that the Nossi Bé operation would provide the long-sought opportunity to prove their worth under fire.

It would also, to some extent, vindicate the years they spent away from the frontlines. Bintliff describes both the general excitement and nervousness amongst the men:

> We had never been in action, or even seen action before. We had spent inglorious years guarding the prisoners which more fortunate fellows had captured. We had marched around and about the barbed wire of internment and prisoner-of-war camps till the barbs had stuck into the very beings of us and thoroughly embittered us.
>
> But now – now we were to justify the kilt in which we had swaggered so often. Swaggered until some less fancily-dressed soldier asked us where we'd been. Sometimes they asked us if it were a war or a costume-ball we intended to grace [with our presence]. These remarks cut deep. But now the game was on.
>
> Can any ordinary man, going to his first scrap, fail to feel a certain plumbing of the depths – a buoyancy and poise, plus a tingling of the scalp, a braced eagerness, a singing in his veins, a combination of joy and sadness, of high delight and zest, tempered with a little fear, a little sorrow – a kaleidoscopic surge of emotion excitable only in the rarest of mortals by any other motive? Certainly, none of our little band had a soul so dead.[51]

Once the South Africans boarded their troop transport, the HMS *Manxman*, their nerves tightened and excitement intensified. After receiving the orders for the assault, Bintliff and his comrades readied themselves for their short trip towards Nossi Bé. Under the cover of darkness, the naval force approached the island. Before the landing craft were lowered from the boat, the guns of the HMS *Manxman* engaged a number of predetermined military targets on the island:

> Suddenly, dramatically, like hell let loose, a mighty tongue of devilish, vivid, ethereal flame tore at the satin folds of the night. A murderous, splitting stab of thunder roared its way through the silence. Two big guns had reared, barked their warning, and set back on their haunches.
>
> What letters, in what language, can convey the tremulous, vibrant glory of a naval barrage at night? For ten long ages, ten minutes by the clock, the guns spat and stabbed at the dark … their missiles hurtled to a shore only 400 yards from us, blasting suspected gun positions, carefully avoiding the direction of the town. Our object was to capture the place intact and undamaged. We sought no civilian life or property.
>
> Then came the thrill of an answer from the shore. We were under enemy fire! A short-lived, stuttering answer it was, damned immediately by our light armament.[52]

After the naval guns had opened up and silenced the enemy positions, the landing party readied themselves for the final assault. In the eerie silence the South Africans readied themselves for the next stage of the operation – the final beach assault. In his description of the ensuing events, Bintliff captures both the harrowing and comical nature of the enterprise:

> Is there any transport operation more uncomfortable, more disturbing to one's peace of mind … than clambering 30 feet or so from the deck of a tall warship to a bobbing lifeboat, by a crazy-acting Jacob's ladder, enshrouded the while by night as black as Egypt's, and laden like a prize pack mule?
>
> After your first enterprise herein you might swear by the beards of all the Prophets that there is not. But you would be wrong. It would soon enough be revealed to you that the reverse operation … was infinitely more threatening, more soul-destroying.
>
> The accomplishment may not look so awkward, its successful outcome may not be in such immediate doubt, when you watch the Royal Marine going up ahead of you. But, believe me, this is a manoeuvre definitely in the category of things that must be experienced to be appreciated. Definitely.
>
> We were the first Springbok troops to be used in an assault-landing party, and, for the soul's repose of all other Springboks, may we be the only ones.[53]

After a successful beach landing, the combined force of Royal Marines and Pretoria Highlanders headed for their respective objectives. The final opposition encountered, however, proved negligible, and by daybreak all objectives had been accounted for. According to Bintliff, it only took '[a] few grenades thrown wildly, some automatic fire, here and there a ticklish place, and by daylight the town was ours'.[54] Once the action had died down, the occupiers could take stock of the town. Bintliff, whose morale was still extremely high, once again noted the sheer beauty of his new surroundings. The fact that the town had been spared from destruction, and coupled with the fact that their combat experience and had been all but negligible, with no casualties sustained, may have influenced his appreciation: 'The town is miscalled Hellville - it should have been Paradiseville. The whole island is beautiful, but this little place is a tropical dream.'[55]

The sojourn in Hellville was extremely brief. Two nights later, the combined force of Royal Marines and Pretoria Highlanders embarked on a further offensive operation. The force was earmarked to execute a further amphibious operation along the west coast of the Madagascar, this time in support of the overland operation by the First City Regiment against Maromandia. It was envisaged that the amphibious force would envelop Maromandia from the south, thereby forcing the enemy to either stand and fight or simply surrender (see Map 1). After having to go through the arduous process of re-embarkation, Bintliff and his compatriots were once more transported south by HMS *Manxman*. After the naval force arrived in the vicinity of their designated landing area, the assault force was transported upstream through the mouth of a mighty river.[56]

The amphibious assault force, however, was constantly aware of their exposed position in the naval landing craft while they travelled up the river. As a result, the troops constantly scanned the river banks for any signs of the enemy. After an uneventful journey, the combined assault force was disembarked nearly 24 miles from their final objective. In order to close the distance between themselves and the objective, the assault

force proceeded with a forced march of French Foreign Legion proportions – at least according to Bintliff:

> What happened was simply this: we marched. And how we marched! We marched till we were dead from the neck down, till our bodies were nothing but a big floating pain compounded of all the small pains we had first felt from the various tortured points of our anatomy, till our heads were all the physique we were conscious of - our heads, carried along on a big horrible grinding pain.
>
> First, after a mile or two of cross-country, it is only the soles of your feet beginning to feel a bit warmish, then they get hotter, and you find yourself wishing you had worn your other boots after all. Then your calves, or maybe your instep, bring you some sharp reminder of its presence. Then the utility pouches start to knock hell out of your thighs. Then your back starts - haversack, water bottle, bayonet, every 'accoutrement' combines with webbing, rifle, Bren pouches to make an arsenal of torture to rack you, squeeze you, stab you and burn you.
>
> Your mind is in purgatory. The inferno produces a train of visions, all on the same theme: foaming quarts of cold lager in frosty glasses. You can hear the ice tinkle. Cups of tea, gallons of tea - real tea, mind you, not Army tea. The beach at Durban in your scrappy abbreviated trunks. The cold drink stalls in Pritchard Street. But on you plod, your water bottle long ago empty of its sultry fluid.[57]

By dusk Bintliff and his weary comrades reached their objective. Stragglers, however, continued to arrive throughout the night and well into the next morning. The Royal Marines, it seems, were not too hindered by the overland march, with most of them completing it in running shoes. The spirit and rivalry with the Royal Marines were also crucial in lifting the spirits of the South Africans. It is, however, very interesting to note that the South African troops had weapon bearers attached to them for a part of the march. Perhaps they had grown somewhat complacent and accustomed to the peaceful occupation duties of the previous few months – so much so that they were completely unprepared for the physical rigours of actual offensive operations. Nevertheless, no time could be wasted, and the assault force immediately began to prepare defensive positions. After an uneventful night, the assault force spent the next morning consolidating their positions and readying themselves for an impending attack. This attack, however, never materialised. The Allied pincer movement had caught the Vichy French force near Maromandia completely off-guard, forcing them to surrender. This brought to an end Bintliff's second combat operation – though in hindsight it was combat only in the broadest of definitions.[58]

Upon their return from the Maromandia operation, Bintliff and the rest of his company returned to Hellville, where they assumed garrison duties. In his final letter home, written on 20 October, one senses that Bintliff's morale had once more started to wane. After the excitement of the Nossi Bé and Maromandia operations had passed, and the monotony of daily routine and camp life returned, the South Africans soon found themselves with little to do to while away the time. Apart from another stint

at newspaper work – this time establishing a paper on Nossi Bé – Bintliff's general mood dropped again. In his letter home he once more complains about the climate, food and mosquitoes. One sense too that Bintliff tries to defend their recent combat deployment, as he was unhappy with what had appeared in the newspapers in the Union. In a definite attempt to vindicate their experience of combat, he provides some rather stern criticism on the 'nonsense' being reported in the Union:

> We are not 'living like fighting cocks' … nor are we having wonderful times on the beaches with tons of comforts, etc., some people may be having such luck – I hope they are. The 7th Brigade is camped in a barren area where a continuous gale blows, with 0.5 gallon of water a day, or flat ration and we've never seen a home comfort, except once a month with luck from our own homes. Also though there was little bloodshed, there was fighting and we are not 'playing at war'. We took the Island, but are not lying back yet. Half of us are sick. There is no leave and no amusement. We are not grousing more than usual, but I wish the writers in the Union knew the difference between a war and a picnic ... Thank heaven I was in the thick of it and know it all first-hand.[59]

As October was drawing towards an end, the South African troops started picking up rumours that they would next deploy to the Middle East. In due course the men started undergoing desert warfare training. Bintliff, however, realised how fortunate he had been to be part of the only combat deployments of the Pretoria Highlanders during the campaign. By early November the remaining Vichy French forces had formally surrendered, and over the course of the next month the South African troops were withdrawn and redeployed to Egypt. Bintliff's correspondence ends rather abruptly at this point. He does, however, offer some final thoughts that speak to the soldiers' experience of war:

> What have the lords of war next on the list for us? And will there always be the same joyful endings, the smiling faces of all one's comrades? May God defend the right.
>
> I would urge every man who can to try these experiences for himself. If not for his convictions, then for his education. If he has innards, if he calls himself a man, then the ordeal of fire, the risks of war in our cause will lend his character a grandeur that will walk with him all his days.
>
> Only in the theatre of war are these ennobling tragedies played, and you must be one of the actors.
>
> And now that we have Tananarive, and their country and capital are ours, I hope we collect together all the Quislings, fifth columnists, gossip columnists, table-water mongers (of a certain brand) and especially those pro-Nazi French pigs of the foulest motives who would sacrifice their country and their soul even to the yellow-bellied swine - because they think the Axis will win and hope to escape punishment in the punitive massacre which would follow.
>
> Collect them, and march them all to the coast, before the rains, carrying all their kit![60]

CONCLUSION

The Bintliff correspondence provides a unique insight into a South African soldier's personal experience of the Madagascar campaign. For the most part the South African troops were deployed on guard and garrison duties while in Madagascar. For Bintliff and his comrades, these period of inactivity – marked by many discomforts and annoyances – were nothing more than a 'protracted picnic'. Unsurprisingly, the morale of the South African troops waned considerably during these periods, especially because of the irregularity of mail arriving from the Union. During the time that Bintliff deployed to the frontline and on active combat operations, the rise in his morale was evident in the letters that he wrote home. With the rising morale, there was also a renewed appreciation of the natural beauty of Madagascar. When the combat operations ceased, however, the morale amongst the troops once more dropped – and the feeling of being on a 'protracted picnic' once more sank in.

Endnotes

1 S Hynes, *The Soldier's Tale: Bearing Witness to Modern War* (London: Pimlico, 1997), p xii.

2 Hynes, *The Soldier's Tale*, p xiv.

3 J Black, *Rethinking Military History* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2004), pp 35-36.

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10 Hynes, *The Soldier's Tale*, 4-5.

11 Military Service Record Cards and Attestation Forms, Personnel Archive (PA), Personnel Service File 76076V A.T. Bintliff, Department of Defence Archives (DODA).

12 See for instance I van der Waag, 'South African Manpower and the Second World War'. In: Douglas E Delaney, Mark Frost, and Andrew L. Brown, eds. *Manpower and the Armies of the British Empire in Two World Wars* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2020), pp 299-320.

13 Military Service Record Cards and Attestation Forms, PA, Personnel Service File 76076V Bintliff, DODA.

14 Military Service Record Cards and Attestation Forms, PA, Personnel Service File 76076V Bintliff, DODA. Bintliff was found guilty of conduct to the prejudice of good order and military discipline, as defined by Section 40 of the Military Disciplinary Code (MDC).

15 Military Service Record Cards and Attestation Forms, PA, Personnel Service File 76076V Bintliff, DODA.

16 EP Kleynhans, 'The First South African Armoured Battle in Italy during the Second World War: The Battle of Celleno – 10 June 1944', *Scientia* Militaria, vol. 40, no. 3 (2012), p 251.

17 Military Service Record Cards and Attestation Forms, PA, Personnel Service File 76076V Bintliff, DODA. Bintliff was found guilty of neglecting to obey standing orders, a contravention of Section 11 of the MDC.

18 Kleynhans, 'The First South African Armoured Battle in Italy', p 257.

19 Military Service Record Cards and Attestation Forms, PA, Personnel Service File 76076V Bintliff, DODA. Bintliff was awarded the 1939-1945 Star, Africa Star, Italy Star, Defence Medal (British), The War Medal 1939-1945, as well as the Africa Service Medal for his wartime service.

20 I van der Waag, *A Military History of Modern South Africa*, (Johannesburg and Cape Town: Jonathan Ball, 2015), p 202.

21 WS Churchill, *The Second World War, Vol. IV: The Hinge of Fate* (London: Cassell & Co, 1950), pp 197-198.

22 Turner et al, *War in the Southern Oceans*, pp 131-135, 142-143.

23 SADF Documentation Service, *SA Forces in the Second World War* (Pretoria: Directorate Public Relations, n.d.), pp 26-27.

24 SADF Documentation Service, *SA Forces in the Second World War*, pp 26-27.

25 SADF Archives, 'SA Forces in the Second World War', *Militaria*, vol. 19, no. 3 (1989), pp 33-34.

26 SADF Archives, 'SA Forces in the Second World War', pp 33-34.

27 War diaries for July and August 1942, World War II War Diaries (WD), Box 303, File MAD 3/WD, Pretoria Highlanders War Diaries, DODA.

28 Pte A.T. Bintliff to the Union, 31 July 1942, WD, Box 307, File MAD 9/E9, DODA.

29 For a detailed discussion on the postal problem in general see war diary, October 1942 – Appendix 10, WD, Box 303, File MAD 3/WD, Pretoria Highlanders, DODA.

30 Bintliff to the Union, 31 July 1942, WD, Box 307, File MAD 9/E9, DODA.

31 Bintliff to the Union, 31 July 1942, WD, Box 307, File MAD 9/E9, DODA.

32 Bintliff to the Union, 31 July 1942, WD, Box 307, File MAD 9/E9, DODA.

33 Bintliff to the Union, 31 July 1942, WD, Box 307, File MAD 9/E9, DODA.

34 War diary, June 1942 – Appendix 10, WD, Box 303, File MAD 3/WD, Pretoria Highlanders, DODA; Medical Aspects of the Campaign in Madagascar, Union War Histories (UWH) (Civil), Box 344, File Campaign in Madagascar, DODA.

35 Bintliff to the Union, 31 July 1942, WD, Box 307, File MAD 9/E9, DODA.

36 Bintliff to the Union, 31 July 1942, WD, Box 307, File MAD 9/E9, DODA.

37 Bintliff to the Union, 31 July 1942, WD, Box 307, File MAD 9/E9, DODA.

38 Bintliff to the Union, 11 Aug 1942, WD, Box 307, File MAD 9/E9, DODA.

39 Bintliff to the Union, 11 Aug 1942, WD, Box 307, File MAD 9/E9, DODA.
40 Bintliff to the Union, 11 Aug 1942, WD, Box 307, File MAD 9/E9, DODA.
41 Bintliff to the Union, 16 Aug 1942, WD, Box 307, File MAD 9/E9, DODA.
42 Bintliff to the Union, 16 Aug 1942, WD, Box 307, File MAD 9/E9, DODA.
43 Bintliff to the Union, 16 Aug 1942, WD, Box 307, File MAD 9/E9, DODA.
44 Bintliff to the Union, 16 Aug 1942, WD, Box 307, File MAD 9/E9, DODA.
45 Bintliff to the Union, 20 Aug 1942, WD, Box 307, File MAD 9/E9, DODA.
46 Bintliff to the Union, 20 Aug 1942, WD, Box 307, File MAD 9/E9, DODA.
47 Bintliff to the Union, 3 Sep 1942, WD, Box 307, File MAD 9/E9, DODA.
48 Bintliff to the Union, 3 Sep 1942, WD, Box 307, File MAD 9/E9, DODA.
49 Bintliff to the Union, 25 Sep 1942, WD, Box 307, File MAD 9/E9, DODA.
50 It is of interest to note that Deon Fourie maintained that it was in fact the Pretoria Regiment that was the only South African unit to be involved in an amphibious landing during the war. He erroneously argues that the South African troops involved in the operations against Tulear, which occurred towards the end of September 1942, claims this honour. See Fourie, *Operation Rose* for his detailed argument in this regard. A detachment from A Company of the Pretoria Highlanders, however, had the honour of being the first South African forces to be involved in an amphibious operation during the war. These troops were involved in successful occupation of Nossi Bé as part of Operation Esme B on 9 September 1942 – some weeks before the Pretoria Regiment. For confirmation refer to war diary, Sep 1942, WD, Box 303, File MAD 3/WD, Pretoria Highlanders, DODA.
51 "Nossi Be: The attack and after- recollections and impressions by Pte AT Bintliff", WD, Box 307, File MAD 9/E10 Operations, DODA.
52 Bintliff, "Nossi Be: The attack and after- recollections and impressions".
53 Bintliff, "Nossi Be: The attack and after- recollections and impressions".
54 Bintliff, "Nossi Be: The attack and after- recollections and impressions".
55 Bintliff to the Union, 25 Sep 1942, WD, Box 307, File MAD 9/E9, DODA.
56 Bintliff to the Union, 25 Sep 1942, WD, Box 307, File MAD 9/E9, DODA.
57 Bintliff, "Nossi Be: The attack and after- recollections and impressions".
58 Bintliff to the Union, 25 Sep 1942, WD, Box 307, File MAD 9/E9, DODA.
59 Bintliff to the Union, 20 Oct 1942, WD, Box 307, File MAD 9/E9, DODA.
60 Bintliff, "Nossi Be: The attack and after- recollections and impressions".

5

ERIC AXELSON AND THE HISTORY OF THE SIXTH SA ARMOURED DIVISION IN ITALY, 1943–1945

Ian van der Waag

INTRODUCTION

> One day in December 1943 Lt Col EG Malherbe, Director of Military Intelligence, asked me, 'Would you like to go to the Mediterranean?' The 6 SA Armoured Division was finishing training in Egypt; it would soon be in combat, and it was felt by some senior officers at Defence Headquarters in Pretoria that somebody who knew something about history should go with it, to record its activities. My answer was a quick 'Yes'.[1]

Eric Axelson (1913-1998), known already in 1943 as an historian of Portuguese Africa, was born in London, the son of an English mother and a Swedish father. He came to South Africa with his parents in 1921. After studies at the Natal University College, he obtained a doctorate at the University of the Witwatersrand in 1939 under the supervision of Prof. Leo Fouché.[2] This was published as *South-East Africa 1488-1530* in 1940, the year Axelson took up a junior lectureship at Wits.[3] But the war intervened. Following the path of other South African academics – including men like Leo Marquard and Guy Butler – Axelson became an information officer in the Union Defence Force (UDF).[4] In this capacity he served first in the 3rd South African Infantry Brigade, then at the Air School in Kimberley, and then as an education officer in the Middle East.[5]

In December 1943, following Malherbe's prompt, Axelson answered a notice in the newspapers advertising the position at Historical Records. Captain John Agar-Hamilton, head of War History, replied with an offer. The duties were threefold: 'to "encourage" units to prepare proper War Diaries and to see that they are duly sent back each month; to collect as much back history and historical material as you can and, of course, to "make history" for the Div'.[6] Axelson's staff would comprise a photographer (sergeant) and a clerk (corporal) and he would have a vehicle on his establishment, although, as Agar-Hamilton explained, he was 'not altogether sanguine about [his] getting it'.[7] Agreeing to these conditions, Axelson joined the 6th SA Armoured Division, then still in Egypt, as its recording officer.

Very little detailed work has appeared on the War History Section, or the later Union War Histories. The article 'How the story of the South African experience in the Italian campaign was recorded – and distorted", which mentions Axelson specially, is a recent exception.[8] In the wider literature, there are also several charming vignettes of Axelson and his attempts to do his work. In later years, for example, he told colleagues at the University of Cape Town how he had to dart ahead to try to secure any maps the Germans might have left behind.[9] Guy Butler, later professor of English in Grahamstown, recounts that he met Axelson when Axelson made his first visit to the 12th Brigade Headquarters. He tells us how heavily burdened Axelson was, climbing down a hill, along a slippery path, 'and his pack so heavy, weighted with

camera and war diaries'.[10] Agar-Hamilton, tongue in cheek, congratulated Axelson for the way he 'got about', while reminding him that historians were scarce and that there were no 'reserves' for his position: 'you are quite irreplaceable … I don't want any urgent signals calling for a new Recording Officer!'[11] While these images may seem quaint, perhaps even delightful, they say little of the duties of an historical recording officer and the attempts to construct narratives, albeit mostly of an official nature, of the 'real' war. This chapter aims to do just this.

The chapter introduces the War History Section and places the work of the historical recording officers within this context; it analyses the work done by Axelson, as the historical recording officer of the 6th SA Armoured Division, against the background of the environmental and organisational constraints imposed upon him; and thirdly, it examines the response to Axelson's work. In this way, Axelson is used as a lens through which to understand the work of historical recording officers more widely.

Axelson was a prolific writer. He not only drafted several manuscript histories of the Division, but also kept an activity log for his section, which was later reworked into a memoir, and he maintained a lively and informative correspondence with Agar-Hamilton and fellow recording officers which extended well into the post-war years. Their wartime letters, numbering many dozens, cover the years from 1943 through to 1945. They were sent via the Army Post Office, going up and down by Lodestar, and so they dodged 'both censorship and flying-boat delays.'[12] For this reason, perhaps, the correspondence is detailed and enjoyed a relatively rapid turnaround. His log, together with extracts from twenty-two letters received chiefly from Agar-Hamilton, was published for the SA Legion in 2001 as *A Year in Italy*.[13] The original material is in the custody of the Jagger Library at the University of Cape Town and forms the basis of the research for this chapter, supplemented by material from the Department of Defence Archives in Pretoria.

THE WAR HISTORY SECTION

The War History Section had a surprisingly complex organisation. It fell under Agar-Hamilton, who reported directly to Malherbe, the Director of Military Intelligence (DMI) and comprised Historical Records in Pretoria as well as a range of historical recording officers deployed around the world with the fighting services (Figure 1).[14] The recording officers made up an interesting group; several had had university training, and most were already acquaintances, some friends. When Axelson joined them in February 1944, their hub was in Cairo, at Maj Gen Frank Theron's headquarters, where 'Robbie' Robinson occupied the position of Senior Recording Officer, UDF, Middle East and Central Mediterranean Forces. The Cairo staff were

Robinson, who had been the SAAF Recording Officer in Malta, Drummond, who joined the outfit in April 1944, Dennis Etheredge, and two WAAF shorthand typists. After the fall of Rome, they moved with Theron to Italy.[15] Other recording officers, stationed with dispersed formations, included Capt Tony Delius, Lt JC Pieterse, and Lt AE Trollip, whose main responsibility was the non-divisional units, while Reg Davis joined the section in July 1944. Davis had joined the gunners after graduating; he was captured at Tobruk, escaped from Italy, and, like Axelson, responded to an advertisement for a job with Agar-Hamilton. He had been one of Axelson's students.[16]

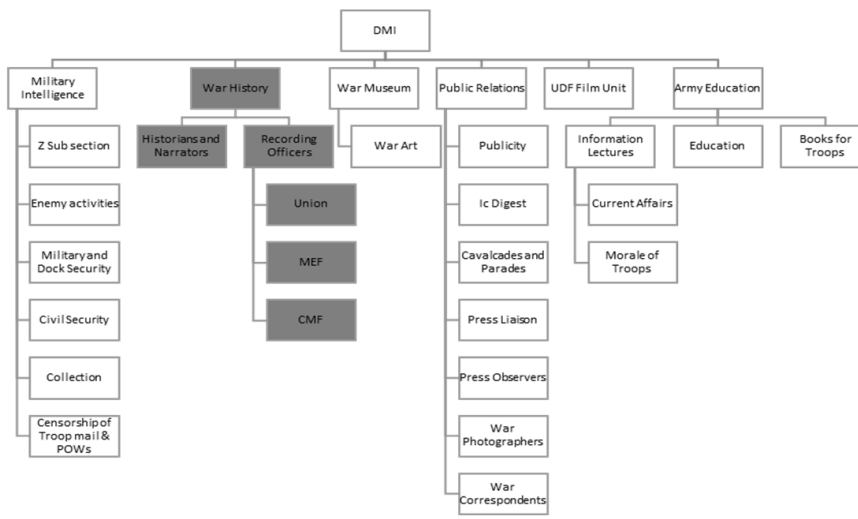


FIGURE 1: The Military Intelligence Directorate on 1 April 1945. The War History Section is shaded.

The Pretoria office housed a number of historians, narrators and archivists. Here, working under the broad supervision of a War Histories Advisory Committee, Agar-Hamilton and his team marshalled the war diaries and other records sent in by the recording officers in the field, wrote narratives, and kept the material for later work by historians. Agar-Hamilton envisaged a dual approach: 'a popular single-volume treatment aimed at a general readership [what he termed a 'people's history'] and a collection of more technical monographs written by and for those with expertise in various fields [which he termed 'military college' histories]'.[17] In 1943, wanting to advance the process for the writing of a 'people's history', Smuts offered the job of editor-in-chief for a 'War History of South Africa' to Professor Eric Walker, a well-known South African historian, who was then Vere Harmsworth Professor of Imperial and Naval History at Cambridge University. Walker, however, was only prepared to return to South Africa for a six-month period during which time he would 'map out the history and speak authoritatively on such things as lay-out, staff and so on, and get us over the chief of our hurdles.'[18] His illness delayed matters further.

The War History Section lay within the DMI structure alongside the Military Intelligence Section (under Maj Charles Powell as DDMI), the War Museum, the Public Relations Section, the UDF Film Unit, and the Army Education Section (Maj Leo Marquard). There was a close relationship between these sections. Several of the information officers of the Army Education Section, Axelson included, had become recording officers, while the intelligence officers were the first-level clients for the war diaries and other documents the recording officers sent in from the theatres of war. But the relationship between War History, on the one hand, and Public Relations (PR) and the UDF Film Unit, on the other, was one of competition – for the limelight and scarce resources – and of personal dislike and even animosity between key individuals. These links and strains – explored further by Fankie Monama in Chapter 6 – would either assist or hinder Axelson in fulfilling his duties over the following eighteen months.

WITH THE SIXTH DIVISION: PERSONALITIES, PROBLEMS

Axelson joined the Division in February 1944 when it was still in Egypt. Commanded by Maj Gen WHE Poole, it proved to be something of a homecoming, because Axelson knew many of the people from his previous work as an education officer. To help him, he had a staff of two. He was, he tells us, fortunate to have Ivor Language, a journalist from Durban, as his driver/clerk. Agar-Hamilton, in a letter written in July 1944, summarised what appeared to him to be Language's qualifications:

> His versatility amazes me, and I wonder whether he has ever the time to shave. He takes his meals, I assume, while walking, and sleeps for no more than four hours a day, standing up. I gather that he drives the truck, converts it into a dark room when required, and prints photographs, takes prisoners, marches them off to the cage, checks, packs and routes War Diaries, and occasionally does a little shorthand and typing – say 10 000 words or so – by way of variety. Altogether he seems a most remarkable person.[19]

Axelson certainly agreed.

He also had a photographer to take 16 mm and 35 mm shots of Divisional activities. The man originally posted in this role was a Sergeant Boast. Cryptically, and rather kindly, Axelson noted that Boast left after he 'met with an accident on his first night in Italy'.[20] There was, however, a more complex story. Boast had been something of a nuisance and was eventually returned to the Union when he injured himself. But the troubles had started before Axelson's arrival. Boast had not only removed photographic equipment to his digs, which had now to be returned, but had also run up debts in Pretoria before leaving for Egypt. Axelson had the unpleasant task of deducting £3 per month from Boast's pay until the debts were settled. However, it did not stop there.

The DMI and his principals at General Headquarters (GHQ) were unhappy with Boast's work and denied requests for further supplies of 16 mm film. The photographs taken were not only useless, but Boast had had a habit of wasting film, both still and movie.[21] His replacement was Roger Madden. Handpicked by Agar-Hamilton, he joined Axelson in June 1944 and proved to be an excellent photographer. He not only had a gift for sniffing out and reaching the action, and for taking 'real' shots, but also proved to be a good companion.[22]

The Division's Recording Section seems to have been a happy outfit. The three men – Axelson, Madden, Language – got on well together. Axelson allowed a large degree of flexibility, affording his subordinates the freedom to get on with their work. On one occasion only does there appear to have been a brush, which involved 'the security people'. This concerned a leak of information to John Baird, a journalist with *The Star*. The matter came to official attention when, on 4 March 1944, there appeared in 'Stoep Talk', a column in *The Star*, a detailed account headed 'History while you Wait'. This not only described the work of the Recording Section in remarkable detail, but included the full names and previous careers of those involved. The Intelligence Branch (Ic) pointed out that Baird and Language had been old colleagues on *The Daily News*, and suggested that Language had been the source of the information. This had serious implications. This was not only unprofessional ('historians, like doctors, leave their works to speak for themselves', Agar-Hamilton admonished) and contrary to good discipline, but also prejudicial to the work as it raised suspicions that the section was in league with the press.[23] Moreover, as Agar-Hamilton stressed, they could not risk a clash with the security people, on whom they depended in large part for the freedom to do their work. Language, if guilty, certainly made up for this early misdemeanour.

Axelson was also close to Agar-Hamilton, his principal at GHQ. They had known each other when in Pretoria and were on first name terms, as they sometimes were in unofficial correspondence with other officers, sometimes of different rank. Agar-Hamilton told Axelson in February 1944 that this

> serve[d] to emphasize the fact that in our job rank is nothing. A man either knows his job and gets on with it, or he doesn't know, and no one, least of all a crowned mortal, can teach him.'[24]

A Crown was officers' insignia: a major wore a crown on his epaulette, and the next three ranks combinations of crowns and pips. These 'crowned mortals' were therefore their immediate seniors in the line of command, many of whom, including Poole, a career soldier with an impeccable military record, would have opposed such informality. Some, perhaps not understanding prior professional and university connections, may have viewed this as a break in military discipline. And then some of these officers had to be convinced of the importance of recording work. The 'History while you Wait' article in *The Star* seemed to confirm the notion, perhaps

widely held, that 'History' might be produced quickly and by people untrained in the historical method. Writing along these lines in February 1944, Agar-Hamilton expressed his frustration:

> That is what makes me despair when people ring me up and say 'I'm sending Sapper so & so or Sgt Blank to do our history. Just show him what you want done and he will do it.' Give me so & so or Blank for three years and I might do something – provided, of course, he has the natural aptitude.[25]

The men of the Division, focused on warfighting, did not always understand the nature and often strategic implications of Axelson's duties. These they thought superfluous, a soft job, and his was a constant battle to obtain material of historical value. But, as we shall see, it did not stop there. He also faced bureaucratic obstacles and tribal jealousies. These emanated from Pretoria, sometimes in Italy, and manifested in different ways: in the difficulties faced in scrounging equipment, transport, cameras and reels of film, and in securing billets. The UDF Press section in Italy, on the other hand, seemed to have everything, or at least access to anything. While Axelson knew several of them, this created some unhappiness. They sometimes shared billets but there was a competitive undercurrent, the frequent brushes highlighting the differences between their occupations.[26] For Axelson the equation was a simple one:

> If I had transport – a jeep – I should be able to go over the battlefield with the company commander, and get the full story, illustrated with photographs, but no jeep, no story. No story, no history.[27]

WORK AS HISTORICAL RECORDING OFFICER OF THE 6TH SA ARMOURED DIVISION

Axelson's responsibilities were threefold: (1) he had to ensure that every unit in the Division kept a war diary, as fully as possible, and that these were submitted to Divisional Headquarters every month; (2) he had to collect historical information and supplement the war diaries whenever possible with interviews; and (3) he had to 'make history for the Division'.[28] These tasks might be captured as the raking in of historical material, and the working up of this material into a first history of the Division. However, as Jeffrey Grey has noted, 'collecting records was one thing; the quality of what was collected was quite another'.[29]

Raking in historical material: war diaries, photographs, interviews, surveys

War Diaries

Each unit in the Division had to maintain a war diary. This was essentially a current monthly report made by the respective commander and was comprised of a cover,

a narrative and appendices.[30] War diaries were submitted in duplicate to the recording officer, who forwarded them to Pretoria: one copy for analysis by military intelligence, for whom observations on the enemy, on health, and on morale were of immediate concern; the other for safekeeping by the War History Section. For this reason, strict instructions regarding their completion were issued and these were also printed on the inside cover of the War Diary folder. War diaries had to be 'accurate and complete' and include 'as much important information as possible'. The Narrative, supposedly written up daily, was to contain specific information, including the exact hour of occurrences, and was to be supplemented by, and be linked to, the appendices.[31] The appendices were to 'add interest to the Diary' from an intelligence viewpoint and, at the same time, enrich 'the historical records of the UDF'. This enrichment of the record included photographs of unit activities, cuttings from local civilian newspapers, and unit magazines and newspapers.[32]

These war diaries, which in practice might be a couple of pages of hurried scribble, or a bulky folder, were Axelson's first concern. They presented several difficulties. Perhaps most were sent back regularly to the Divisional Headquarters, as per the instruction, but there were many instances where Axelson had to travel to regiments and battalions to find 'missing months'. This inevitably delayed onward transmission to Pretoria, which negated their effective, immediate utility. Moreover, possibly most diaries were incomplete. This may have been due to the exigencies of the war. For example, Lt-Col PCA Francis of the Carbineers explained that sitreps could not be included as 'everything [was] passed verbally over the phone'.[33] The same story is told by the intelligence officer with the SSB ('most of their orders are verbal, that they are acted on immediately, and that no record of them is or can be kept'[34]). Ignorance, or lack of awareness (for example, the intelligence officer of the SSB did not include an existing operational account of the battle at Celleno 'because he was not sure that we would be interested'[35]), and personality (for example, Captain Ross, the acting Intelligence Officer at the Main Division, was 'not very enthusiastic about letting me have copies of the log'[36]) no doubt played their roles too. But Axelson had recourse to higher authority, in Pretoria and within the Division, and, at his request, the Division's G1 authorised the inclusion of 'O' and 'I' log sheets in the Division's war diary.[37] This was a step forward.

Much of course depended on individual commanding officers. Axelson visited the Royal Natal Carbineers on one of his chivvying tours in late January 1945. The previous commanding officer had suffered severe strain and, having 'sought to dull the pain of losing so many of his men with alcohol'[38], had (amongst other things) fallen horribly behind with his war diary before he was relieved of his duties at the end of October 1944. This left his successor, Colonel Francis, with the onerous task of 'building' these diaries, which were then many months in arrears. To his credit Francis not only brought the arrears smartly up to date, but also took steps to make

them more readable, referring for example to places rather than to map references.[39] The Non-Divisional units presented difficulties of a different nature. They were diverse and dispersed and many of these units did not render war diaries at all. This became evident when Trollip was tasked to write a narrative on the activities of these units, and special instructions were issued in January 1945 to chivvy them.[40]

Yet despite these problems, Axelson appears to have had good success. The relatively complete collection of war diaries, at least for the fighting units in the Italian campaign, at the Department of Defence Archives in Pretoria is testimony to the diligence of his little section.

Photographs and the 'Public Relations' people

Secondly, Axelson and his small team had to build a collection of photographs to supplement the war diaries and official record. Photographs are important to the military for a number of reasons. They are essential for the preparation of maps (46 Survey Company SAEC undertook this work for Operation Husky),[41] they have their intelligence uses, and are indispensable for propaganda or public relations purposes.[42] Additionally, photographs have historical value (they could be used as a visual diary that might be used later to recall events) and it was to this end that Axelson had been assigned a photographer. But all photographers shared the same difficulties on campaign. Photographic equipment and film were scarce. The cameras were relatively basic, they 'shook' easily and were difficult to focus. Some films, when developed, were completely blank. If developed in the field, the negatives were easily scratched. Sometimes film was sent to Cairo, later Rome, for development, and sometimes Axelson sent reels back to Pretoria. Film sent to Pretoria sometimes disappeared, forcing Axelson to use the DDMI as a postbox.[43] Moreover, photographers had to travel, sometimes to 'unsafe places' to get the shots and, of course, due to the restrictions, not everything could be photographed.[44]

Some of these problems vexed Axelson little. Armed with his brief, he and Madden had easy access to the frontline. Moreover, Madden was a seasoned photographer, able to sniff out the action, cover the shots, and then develop the photographs in an improvised darkroom, sometimes on the back of their truck. Movement presented greater challenges. They were held up on packed roads, made worse in winter, forcing them to go off the beaten track in search of specific objectives, where possible. These varied from the Division's crossing of the Tiber, to the scouring of Kesselring's headquarters, where they found some maps that were sent to Historical Records.[45] As a courtesy, when possible, the permission of the local South African commander was sought. At the end of June, for example, they found Lt Col Johnstone of the Pretoria Regiment, who 'replied that he most certainly had no objection to our watching his tanks and taking photographs.'[46]

There are numerous references in Axelson's log to his moving about with a variety of people in tow. There were war correspondents, 'broadcast people' and 'PR people', as members of the Bureau of Information and the Public Relations Section were derisively known. Axelson had been in three theatres of war, with some continuity of role and purpose. He had also built up his connections and solidified earlier friendships, and he was thought to know where best to go and what to do. The war correspondents and bureau men, on the other hand, came and went, and some of them had been working on a high street only weeks before.[47] Not unnaturally perhaps, they gravitated towards Axelson to pick up on stories or get a convenient glimpse of what was happening.[48] But a number of difficulties would soon arise.

In the first instance, there was a vast difference in their work. In a sense, they were all there to document the war. However, the pressmen often flew in to cover a specific story, write a column with the right angle, add some sensation, and get the story into print. To illustrate, on 8 July the news came that the Division was unhappy with the write-up the war correspondents gave of Smuts's visit, with 'enemy tanks lurking a mile or so away'.[49] This was manifestly untrue and the civilian press, it seems, generally disappointed. O'Connor, a SAPA correspondent in Italy in June 1944, for example, wrote a confused article on the action at Bagnoregio, ending with a sentence paraphrased by Agar-Hamilton: 'I'm blest if I know what it was all about, but anyhow it was a hell of a party.'[50] This was very different to what a recording officer had to do. Agar-Hamilton was blunt and to the point. In March 1944 he warned Axelson that if he went 'hobnobbing with correspondents' it might seem as if they were in league with the press, which would undermine the position and work of the recording officers.[51] The lines were clearly drawn. No doubt the office politics in Pretoria had also played a role.

Axelson got on well at first with the press corps. Being trailed by pressmen was initially amusing rather than irritating. He and Madden would have a quiet laugh, shared in correspondence with Agar-Hamilton, about their foibles and apparent fear of being so close to the front. There are several amusing vignettes in the log. One morning Madden had to turn back because a Bureau cinematographer, who had cadged a lift, insisted they turn around ('After going a while the Bureau man remarked that it would be selfish if they went too far and got the vehicle hit, and so deprive the other war correspondents of transport; so they returned'[52]). That same week the press corps packed up their camp and moved further south as 'some of the correspondents found it impossible to work amidst the noise of our mediums and the single telling enemy shell'.[53] While, a week later, instead of covering the battle just ahead, 'the newly-arrived PR photographers preferred … to fake action shots with a borrowed tank and phosphorous bombs'. The tank was set alight, and the fire extinguished, but two of the crew were badly burned.[54]

Although Axelson found some satisfaction in reporting such incidents (and he knew his log was circulated among the brass at General Headquarters), he explained somewhat smugly that he mentioned them 'not out of unkindness, but to emphasise the difference that exists between photographic side of Historical Recording, on the one hand, and, on the other, photography as visualised and practised by set-ups not concerned with historical truth'.[55] The PR Unit – they produced about a thousand images per month – were criticised quite severely.[56] Their photographs, of endless staff officers standing at saluting bases and units marching past, left Agar-Hamilton 'feeling a little bored, not to say satiated … One would assume that 6 Division has done nothing else since it has been in the desert'.[57] Sensitive to the South African public having 'no desire to be told that war is a nasty thing', the PR people fabricated and posed shots, which were largely confined 'to cooks and girls from the UDF Entertainment Units'.[58] They were interested in publicity and in images that had a reasonable chance of being released for publication. Herein lay the essential difference. Axelson wanted to place his photographer at the front to capture the action and images of the terrain over which the battles were fought. As Agar-Hamilton explained, 'we want "record" photographs, with insistence on terrain and other technical details, with the specific instruction that they must be <u>un</u>posed'.[59] They wanted photographs of the grimmer side of war, including shots of enemy equipment. Egged on by Agar-Hamilton, Axelson wished to capture something of the war as it was. Yet he always had to proceed carefully. 'The PR set-up', as Agar-Hamilton cautioned, 'is the apple of DMI's eye, and any criticism is apt to be resented'.[60] Publicity was critical in a country in which the war was a contentious subject and 'positive images' were imperative.[61]

Cooperation was important, however. Since 1943, the UDF Film Unit controlled all photographic stores for the UDF. But being short on skills and seasoned staff, Madden and Language could assist bureau photographers with the development of still photographs, sometimes providing the darkroom facilities and developer.[62] Pooling resources was sometimes possible. The PR billets were mostly sited in prime locations: set against scenic slopes and alongside streams that offered leisure swimming.[63] They had better transport (four new jeeps arrived for them on 9 July), which could be shared, and access to seemingly limitless resources, although, to Axelson's frustration, they also seemed to travel in Italy without darkroom materials. But things did not improve over the ensuing weeks and months.

Two things brought the matter periodically to the fore. First was the ongoing competition with the Public Relations Unit for scarce film and photographic equipment. Second, was criticism of PR work, which Agar-Hamilton at times succeeded in using to secure film and stores for his recording officers. Invariably, Madden did not disappoint. His sequences sent to Pretoria 'caused considerable interest' and Agar-Hamilton's praise was lavish: the captions 'were much more illuminating even in matters which were not censorable' and the quality of the photographs themselves was outstanding.[64]

While the DMI was happy too, the scarcity remained and Axelson was forced to scrounge. In this he had some success. His 'initiative, pertinacity, discretion, and all the rest'[65] resulted in more than 4 000 ft of film in April, with the promise in May of two Contax cameras and 1 500 ft of 16 mm film per month.[66] The promises invariably fell through, leaving Agar-Hamilton to advise that Axelson 'keep on as long as you can'.[67] On 12 July the Bureau raised the stakes. They wanted Madden to be seconded to the Bureau. In the end, a middle way was found. Madden would remain with Axelson, but would be available to the Bureau and fully supplied by them with all the photographic material he needed.[68] This was perhaps the best Axelson might have hoped for. Clayton, the head of the PR photographic unit in Italy, explained matters in no uncertain terms: he was under no obligation to cooperate with Axelson as he was there 'for propaganda purposes only'. He was not interested in photographing 'forward stuff' and, as the public did not want to see the ugly side of the war, he would focus on 'reconstructing'.[69]

It is indeed unfortunate that there was no proper photographic unit to serve the War History Section. There is no doubt that the Division's Recording Section might have achieved much more had they had adequate equipment, transport and more staff. But the war meant other priorities were in place. Notwithstanding, the 'action shots' and the collection of photographs Axelson took of 'the classic air journey up Italy' proved to be a great boon to modern researchers.[70]

Personal narratives

Thirdly, Axelson had to supplement the war diaries, where this was possible, with interviews, which often took the form of a personal narrative, or they were later developed into personal narratives. This aspect of Axelson's work had a different rhythm. Whereas the war diaries were to be submitted on a monthly basis and Madden's camera followed the action, the interviews followed as soon as possible after the end of battles and actions. In early 1944, as Axelson arrived in Italy, a bundle of thirty-four narratives, dealing with the campaigns in North Africa and Madagascar, arrived in Pretoria. These were mostly personal narratives. Their value was acknowledged by the Deputy Chief of Staff, Brig Gen HS Wakefield, in a letter to Poole and the advice given the commander of the 6th Armoured Division is worth quoting at length:

> Documents of this sort are of exceptional value as amplifying and interpreting the official records, and it is hoped that as many as possible will be secured and forwarded to the Union. Personal narratives embodying, as far as possible, the language and ideas of the narrator would be welcomed, particularly in respect of units which were detached from the South African higher formations and came under command of British formations, or of smaller detachments which were attached to British units.[71]

Agar-Hamilton probably wrote this letter for Wakefield's signature. Axelson saw it – the original is among his personal papers – and from it he took his prompt. The argument regarding the importance of such narratives, and that 'as many as possible will be secured and forwarded to the Union', strengthened his arm. With the folding of the Gustav Line and the German retreat, Agar-Hamilton advised that his chief task was now 'to see that things are wound up neatly, and that all the promised stories and narratives duly come in'.[72] In June they found Lt Col 'Papa' Brits, who, in one of their first interviews, gave a statement on the action at Celleno to supplement the SSB war diary.[73] Other interviews followed. Sometimes interviewees were surprised to see Axelson and his team there: in late June 1944, on the road to Chiusi, Lt Col Jack Bester (Regiment De la Rey) 'expressed a certain amount of surprise at seeing us. He said that this area had not yet been cleared'.[74] On occasion Axelson and Madden joined a forward patrol. The following extract from 30 June, for example, illustrates his proximity to the front. Axelson narrates:

> There ambled up the road past us a yellow-shirted, maroon-trousered blonde and bespectacled Italian youth. Madden remarked 'It is surely dangerous to let these people wander about like this? They may be carrying information to the enemy.' It certainly did seem dangerous. It turned out to be so, but for him, not for us. Over on the left, through the trees, I could just make out the hunch of harvesters. After the first shot they had continued unconcernedly on, but now they were really flustered, and the women ran first this way, then that. They dropped their sickles and scythes, and herded together under a tree, looking anxiously up towards us. … there was a burst of Spandau fire … Ten yards from us, in the roadway, the youth lay groaning.[75]

These experiences were important for Axelson and his shaping as a person and military historian. The war in Italy was being fought amongst the people.[76] He not only came to appreciate the method of clearing areas of enemy rear-guard troops, but gained a special appreciation for the fighting spirit of the men and for the invaluable contribution made by Italian partisans. He also came to appreciate the difficulty of writing notes later. He and Madden, when comparing their accounts later, found that they 'were confused as to the details and sequences and times' and could now 'appreciate the difficulty experienced by members of the Division when they make statements to the Historical Recording Section'.[77] Memory is certainly a highly subjective construction of experience.

But working as close to the battlefront as possible and holding the first interviews could take them only so far. Axelson also had to write up these narrations in the vernacular, the language of the ordinary soldier, and embody 'the ideas of the narrator'. The narratives had to be genuine, unadulterated and recorded without embellishment. For this reason, Agar-Hamilton advised, that while the Press may offer ease of transport, Axelson should not visit units 'in their train, or as one of their

hangers-on, so to speak.' While 'men like … to talk about themselves … most of them shut up when the Press appears on the scene, partly because they have been trained in security, and partly because they don't want to be made to look fools in the columns of a newspaper'. For this reason, Axelson was advised to conduct interviews on his own and, if present while a journalist was gathering material, to keep 'keep tactfully to one side'. Clarifying to all the essential difference between the work of historians and propagandists would ease any disquiet among the men and assuage security concerns among higher-ranking officers, including Colonel Hartshorn, the officer responsible for security on Theron's staff.[78]

The 'gap' in this material was perhaps most obvious where no South African formations were engaged, but only individual South African units. This might result in little to no coverage in the South African press and no war diaries which could be forwarded to the higher headquarters of other Commonwealth or American formations. The Rhodesian troops serving in South African units and formations suffered similar invisibility. This Axelson could address more readily: he kept in mind matters likely to have a Rhodesian interest, arranged to have photographs taken, and recorded the personal narratives. This he did as well as pick up back material.[79]

These short personal wartime narratives, hunted down and captured by Axelson, may have been the germ for a number of published accounts that would appear after the war. Such accounts have a particular value. They may be unvarnished and personal and, not having passed through censorship, they may also be more critical of senior officers and politicians. As discussed in Chapter 1, they may also sometimes address taboo or off-limits subjects such as morale, fear, discipline, combat fatigue, desertion, expressions of sexuality, use of alcohol, rape, looting, atrocities. The historical surveys, or regimental histories, written at unit level were quite different.

Historical Surveys and Regimental History

One has to understand regimental history for what it is. Frequently dismissed as being sanitised, parochial and concerned with ephemeral minutiae, they nevertheless have a specific place. Regularly compiled after wars, regimental histories are memorials to fallen comrades, for those of the battalion that did not return. For this reason, such histories often include lists of fallen and details of casualties. Equally important, regimental history is written by the survivors as an explanation to the families of the regiment, of what their men had endured and suffered. This touches on the notion that one cannot write the history if one was *not there*.[80] For this reason, while regimental histories steer away from distasteful events – of drunkenness, prostitution, looting – they are equally a response to other histories.[81]

As a stimulus in this process, GHQ instructed the Historical Section to coordinate the writing of historical surveys covering the work of the South African forces in the

Mediterranean theatre. Commanding officers and heads of branches were asked to submit a survey covering the history of their units and sections. Detailed directions were thought to be impracticable and undesirable: each unit would be allowed to 'tackle the job' given only a broad remit. The object was 'historical' as well as 'utilitarian':

> It is necessary to know 'what happened' for the administrative aspect of the official history of the UDF; it is also necessary to know 'what happened' and 'why', because the future organisation and administration of the UDF will, to a large extent, be determined by the experience of this war. The sources at present available, War Diaries and office files, are not, by themselves, adequate to meet these requirements.[82]

The instruction continued:

> The Survey should, then, explain the work of the Section: the purpose for which it was formed, how it was proposed to realise that purpose, and how, in fact, it functioned. In a phrase, Policy, Organisation and Administration. Special attention should be paid to changes and alterations: were these the result of altered circumstances, or did experience indicate that though conditions remained the same, the original set-up was unsatisfactory and in need of modification? Where relevant, relations with other Headquarters (British or American), GHQ Pretoria and field formations and units should be discussed. Constructive criticism and suggestions for improvement, with reasons and examples, will be very valuable.[83]

This was operational research, with a focus on 'lessons learned'. Officers best qualified to do so had to be identified and instructed to write these surveys, and their names sent to the Historical Section by 10 June 1945. They would have full access to information held by the Historical Section at the UDF Administrative Headquarters. The instruction was issued on 7 June 1945 and, it was hoped, all units would complete their reports and submit them to the Historical Section by 15 July 1945. The target date was, of course, entirely unrealistic and the results was varied: some units in a frenzied scramble produced judicious accounts; others acted only in measured bureaucratic compliance.

The historical survey of 1(SA) L of C Field Security Section (FSS) might be used as an example.[84] This survey is a tightly-typed, 80-page, 4 200-word narrative, with appendices, covering the war from when the first field security section was created in 1940. The move to Italy had brought a number of changes, including a focus on civilian rather than military security, and their investigations covered sabotage, illicit arms trafficking, black marketeering, and the detention and interrogation of Italians denounced as having exposed escaped Allied POWs after the capitulation of Italy. As a non-divisional unit attached to a British headquarters, the FSS was isolated and ran the risk of becoming invisible. But fate would intervene. Axelson and his Historical Recording Section shared billets with an FSS post in Castelnuovo in July 1944.[85]

In the evenings the officers spoke of their work and Axelson gained access to the weekly field security reports, including some details of the robberies, rapes and murders committed along the Divisional axis.[86] He also interviewed other officials he met regarding the relations between South African troops and the local inhabitants.[87] Importantly for this unit, however, the serendipitous friendship of the recording officer may have resulted in a complete set of detailed war diaries and a reasonable historical survey.

Axelson influenced the writing of corps and regimental history in other ways too. He became a sounding board for several unit commanders, who either sought to 'correct' the history that was being projected, or gain advice on the writing of a post-war history. Two instances will suffice. On 6 September 1944 Axelson visited the tactical headquarters of the Imperial light Horse. Lt Col R Reeves-Moore, who was 'very anxious that the history of his battalion should be written properly', wanted to see him. The Army Commander had recently 'congratulated the South Africans on their advance from Rome to Florence, but added that the South Africans' eventual entrance into Florence was very largely due to New Zealanders.' Reeves-Moore strongly disagreed and, explaining at great length the course of events as he saw them, wanted the history of the battalion written 'to prove that view wrong'. He seemingly wanted Axelson for the job, but added that he was 'prepared to write it himself'.[88] Some weeks later Axelson, constantly in need of transport, cadged a lift with Colonel CCP Anning, the Assistant Director Medical Services (ADMS) attached to the Division. Anning ran a tight organisation and the relatively light losses suffered by the Division speak to the diligence and efficiency of his field ambulances, dressing stations and casualty clearing posts despite the taxing operational environment. The Italian campaign created a new disease environment and methods had to be adapted.[89] Anning took the divisional recording officer on a tour that included the advanced dressing station of 10 Field Ambulance, and several casualty clearing posts. The men and women of the SAMC were building up a proud record and Anning wanted 'the medical history of the UDF' written up.[90] This Anning seemingly did himself in the immediate post-war years.

Importantly, however, the short historical surveys, written under pressure in June and July 1945, may have been the germ for a number of regimental, unit and squadron histories published after 1945.[91] Several of these are brief and unvarnished, and carry the hallmarks of official history. Jeffrey's *The 8th Field Squadron*, for example, appeared in 1946. It includes a route map, a roll of honour, lists of honours and awards, a number of personal photographs, and cartoons by a fellow sapper, who died tragically at the end of the war. One cannot say with any certainty exactly how important the June 7 instruction was in giving impetus to this spate of post-war history writing, or to what extent these books were expansions of these historical surveys. However, it would seem as if a hurried official process gave impetus to some of the regimental histories that followed.

Writing the first history of the Division

Axelson also personally contributed a substantial amount of writing on the history of the Division. He did this at three levels: his draft narrative of the division's history, his log of the activities of his recording section, and his vast correspondence, which may be assembled by the historian from material lying primarily in Cape Town and Pretoria. The last, his regular letters, were detailed, arrived punctually, and were often circulated at GHQ. They were, Agar-Hamilton extolled, 'interesting and useful' as the war diaries invariably arrived late and even Axelson's reports and papers, 'after being pored over by various authorities at Division and Base', were also 'apt to be considerably delayed'.[92] His letter written from Acquafondata, for example, created considerable interest and Malherbe sent it to Wakefield: 'It was the first real news about the Div which had reached DHQ (GHQ) and went down well'.[93]

First drafts: a 'Divisional' history

In 'making history for the Division', Axelson wrote the first drafts that might be used as a guide for later historians. He was a professional historian, but recognised that military history was its own distinctive field and so sought the counsel of seasoned counterparts. In particular Major Eric Linklater, the British official historian, became something of a mentor. Linklater visited the Division on several occasions and imparted much wisdom. He had written *The Defence of Calais* (1941) and was contracted to write a history of the British Army in Italy, of which the South African Division was then part. As Axelson later noted, 'it was natural for me to seek his advice'.[94] When writing *Defence of Calais*, Linklater's greatest problem had been a lack of material. As he explained:

> There were a few odd survivors only. I had to interview them and get information from them. I had to start with a point at a particular time, and build up information about a widening area about that point, through an increasing span of time.[95]

Axelson he advised that would have the opposite problem, the difficulties associated with ample material. On this, Linklater gave all kinds of advice. In writing the division's historical narrative, he advised that Axelson:

> write a preliminary narrative, then examine war diaries and re-write your narrative. Examine 'I' reports, sitreps, etc., and re-write again. Embody such personal narratives as may be of use, and re-write finally.[96]

This phased approach, of adding material in successive steps from the war diaries, the intelligence and other reports, and personal narratives, might assist in dealing with the amount of material that would become available. However, it was equally important that, while writing, care should be taken to avoid bias, perhaps towards units with

which the Historical Officer was staying. For this reason Linklater counselled that there was a need for 'as broad as possible a picture is necessary, but a little local colour and atmosphere are admittedly indispensable.[97]

Linklater also spoke to Axelson about the use of interviews. These were deemed to be essential. But while interviews might be used to provide the local colour and atmosphere, he advised, it was 'usually useless to ask anybody after an action for a general account of what he has done'. Instead the recording officer should 'ask him questions about what he was doing at a particular place at a particular time'.[98] Only such targeted questioning would produce useful information. Likewise, the interviews had to cut across all ranks. Generals were important but, Linklater reasoned, 'a general cannot get out of his head his intentions'.[99] Conversely, great reliance could not be placed on the ordinary soldier at the other end of the rank spectrum, for his view was necessarily narrow and often equally exaggerated. Here Axelson and Linklater agreed.

However, where they possibly disagreed was in terms of purpose. For some historical officers, accuracy was not the holy grail. Good publicity was the primary objective: the raising of the profile of the formation, and so of morale at the front and at home. The historian of 13 Corps, a Lt Col Kittoe, who was working on a short history of the Allied advance from Sicily to the Alps, told Axelson in September 1944 that he planned 'this history to be accurate and truthful.' He was after all, Axelson reasoned, a professional historian, but then Kittoe also did 'not intend … to blacken characters.' He would 'slur over the bad, play up the good'.[100] That, for Kittoe, was the task of the official historian. These were wartime narratives, having a specific purpose, and a more critical history could be written after the war. The South African recording officer could not fully subscribe to this view.

Axelson's monthly reports are in the custody of the Department of Defence Archives in Pretoria. These provide a window onto him personally and his small team, and their work. Axelson wrote the divisional history at an enviable rate of 30 000 words per month.[101] Taking Linklater's cue, he used official documents, trawled the war diaries as they came in, and incorporated material from interviews and personal narratives where he could, and, finally, there were his own observations as an embedded historian. The result is a lively narrative of remarkable context and depth. It was essential, he noted in his log on 12 July 1944, 'to view the whole Italian battlefront from sea to sea [in order] to view the South African contribution in correct perspective'.[102]

The narrative was of exceptional quality, despite being typed up sometimes on the bonnet of Axelson's truck. It also stood in sharp contrast to the official Bureau news, which, as Agar-Hamilton lamented in May 1944, 'was an incredibly dull affair: with the exception of one point – the local nickname for British troops – anyone of us might have written it sitting comfortably at GHQ'. 'There wasn't', he continued,

'a scrap of human interest, let alone a single "significant" fact, or picturesque one for that matter'.[103] But this is not to say that Axelson's endeavours were praised by all. When he returned to camp on 21 July 1944, he found Linklater waiting for him. Linklater had just received the 'most disturbing news' of Axelson's recording work. There were complaints at higher headquarters that Axelson was 'looking at the war from the wrong end of the telescope'. The complainants, probably 'crowned mortals' on Poole's staff, argued that 'they wanted to see it from forward patrols', instead of, as Linklater affirmed, 'from a proper perspective'.[104] Collyer had encountered the same difficulties when writing his history of the German South West campaign in 1936, of the strategy of the campaign versus the work of the different units.[105] However, to be fair, the complaint seems somewhat unwarranted for that May; Axelson had in fact written a narrative of a night patrol, which he had penned in granulated detail.[106] Notwithstanding, it was enough to cause him considerable humiliation and this seemingly depressed him.[107]

The first instalment of his running record covered the division's history from concentration and preparation (Chapter 1) to the fall of Florence (Chapter 9). He sent this to Agar-Hamilton on 30 August 1944, some weeks after receiving the first complaints. Unrepentant he wrote: 'Here is a brief account intending to act as a kind of a sort of a guide to the swill that is now deluging in on you'.[108] He praised Language for the clerical work he had done and promised to bring amendments and make additions later, after the staff at divisional headquarters had seen it. Having adopted Linklater's incremental approach, he noted in the introduction that:

> The account is based on incomplete and inadequate sources. Numbers of war diaries for Jun and Jul are still outstanding, and there are no operational reports yet available for examination. The account is accordingly only a preliminary, provisional sketch. It contains opinions, not judgements, and it is more a chronology than a history. It is intended as a guide only for members of the Historical Recording Section.[109]

Axelson may have been self-effacing and certainly placed the normal caveats in terms of the provisional nature of the manuscript, the need to do further research, and that the circulation should be restricted. The word 'provisional' was even included in the subtitle. As far as the military history of the period goes, the manuscript is readable, the military terms and abbreviations are explained, and the focus moves down at times to the tactical level. But, at the same time, the necessary context, width and depth – to allude to Michael Howard – are provided. He explains the 'bewilderingly different' situation that the South Africans faced in Italy, the nature and impact of the terrain, and the supply problems that were experienced. He did not shy away from irksome matters. Although it remained perhaps, in the minds of some, a distant anonymous view, with relatively few names mentioned, Agar-Hamilton was again lavish in his praises. It was he said, 'a thoroughly good piece of work', one written under 'very great

difficulties and impossible conditions'. It did Axelson credit and required no apology. Moreover, as he noted, the Operations Section made a copy for their use, despite Agar-Hamilton impressing upon them that it was 'one of our private documents and in no way a final verdict'.[110]

This first instalment numbered 93 typed pages and included a number of 'factors [that] had contributed to the success of the Division's advance'. These factors almost speak to military-style 'lessons': the importance of training; the building of experience and troop resilience; the role of armour, reconnaissance and artillery; the importance of cooperation between infantry and armour, and air support. He praised especially the junior leadership, but criticised the staff at divisional headquarters saying few were battle-hardened at the start of the campaign. He also highlighted the role played by the two external factors. These were the Italian partisans and the flanking formations. In the first case, the assistance 'was unseen and indirect, but by their raids on the enemy L of C and supply dumps they kept, according to captured enemy documents, a considerable enemy force in the rear which would otherwise have been used against the Allies in the line'. The second, the flanking formations, 'time after time … extricated [the Division] from awkward predicaments'.[111] Such praise for the British, French and New Zealanders was sometimes a bitter pill.

The second instalment was submitted in March 1945. It comprised a further 146 pages, in addition to a chronology and index of place names and units, and covered the division's history from joining the US Fifth Army in August 1944 (Chapter 1) to the end of the winter in February 1945 (Chapter 16). Based primarily on war diaries, intelligence summaries and sitreps, it too was intended to be 'an interim guide for use by historical sections only' until Axelson could supplement it with personal narratives and other source material. As he explained in the preface, he had not had full access to all of the documentation necessary for its compilation, resulting in significant gaps and possible errors. In particular, he required more information concerning 'higher policy, flanking formations, and non-South African units under command of 6 SA Armd Div.' For this reason it was only provisional.[112] But, as we shall see, notwithstanding these caveats his narrative created an immediate controversy.

The 'log': Axelson's own 'personal narrative'

Alongside this Axelson produced his 'log' of the activities of his Recording Section. As he noted in the preface to *Taranto to the Alps*, this was a true diary. Each evening, after reaching camp, he noted the foremost events of the day and the impressions he had gained. Approximately every fortnight, as the situation allowed, he had dictated extracts to Language, who, 'armed with a typewriter', hammered out the copy. Comments made by Madden, who was invariably nearby, and Language, as he looked up from his machine, were included on occasion. Two copies were produced: one for Axelson,

the other for despatch to GHQ, Pretoria.[113] This document is a fine supplement to his 'running record of the activities of the Division'.

The 'log', written without affectation, was an immediate success. It not only provided entertainment at GHQ – 'its usual quota of official delight' – but was also the first real news of the division.[114] Interpolated with charming vignettes, it provides a lively image that captures the life of the Division and presents a window through which to study a range of conditions, from tensions at the 'sharp end', and allied rivalry, to the more comfortable living conditions in the rear and the interactions with the Italian people. Axelson drove around the countryside, sometimes drawing fire. He spoke to men in all allied uniforms, co-operated with the historical officers of other formations and picnicked with the local nobility. Its value was seen immediately. Extracts were sent to the SA Military College for officer tuition in late 1944. Agar-Hamilton described the log as 'all first-rate stuff'. His only regret was 'that for the present … its circulation must be limited by security considerations'.[115] Months later, the log was still thought to be 'the only authentic account of the Division which reach[ed] GHQ'.[116]

After the war Axelson produced his own personal narrative – *Taranto to the Alps* – which was essentially the log recrafted, his own story written in memoir form. Comprising eight chapters and a few hundred typed pages, it includes extracts from a number of letters he received whilst in Italy. This may be seen in some ways as a presentation of evidence and a vindication of what he had accomplished. Leycester Walton, who had served in Italy and had known Axelson, made the commendable decision to publish this in 2001 as *A Year in Italy*.

THE RESPONSE TO AXELSON'S WORK

There are essentially three audiences for military history. In the first instance there is the general public that reads largely for pleasure. This readership wants a good story, one of bravery, persistence in adversity, and resilience in overcoming seemingly insurmountable odds. Such narratives might earn support and respect for the armed forces and, more widely, meet goals in nation-building. The story, if written by an official war historian, is often sanitised. The second is the academic audience, which is comprised of scholars, most of whom are university-trained and possibly university-based. This readership is critical and engages with the past in order to gain a better understanding of its complexity and significance in a wider context. The third is the military audience. Uncritical in the scholarly sense, this readership focuses on professional military development. Battle-oriented, theirs is the quest for objective knowledge and the distillation of easily-understood 'lessons', which might be objectively used to improve performance. For them there are definite, hard, military outcomes. If not, the effort in writing history is in vain.[117]

The responses to Axelson's work illustrates nicely aspects of these three readerships. Axelson had been handpicked. Agar-Hamilton first met him when on a field trip to Kwaaihoek and the site of a Diaz Cross. Axelson was there to give the lecture. He gave, Agar-Hamilton recounted years later, 'a graphic account of the detective work which led up to the identification of the site and the appalling labour of the search for the fragments of the monument itself'.[118] The older man was clearly impressed and, when the opportunity presented itself, he had opened the position at War History. Axelson was in every sense an official historian. He volunteered for wartime service, worked in uniform and reported to military lines of command. But he was also university-trained, had joined the UDF from a full-time university positon, enjoyed the cut-and-thrust of intellectual banter, and he had brought with him a critical eye and an air of informality. While in official employ, such professional historians can be useful. They might be used to document the war and build, if not subscribe to, an official narrative. Linklater and Starr wrote and had published their respective official histories of the Italian campaign. Axelson wrote and redrafted his history several times, but this was never published.

Axelson's draft history was not well received by the division's senior officers. The troubles seem to have started soon after he joined the Division. The work of the recording officers, and of the war historians in the field, had grown steadily in standing and importance. Some may have become emboldened in terms of raking in the material and also in drafting the first narratives. Agar-Hamilton had encouraged this. He wrote to Axelson in May 1944 stating that 'the historian may now step out of his obscurity and begin to pass judgement'.[119] Moreover, Axelson's 'log' of the Division's activities came to provide an alternative narrative, albeit at first to the very limited circle at GHQ, to the Bureau of Information's rose-coloured coverage of the war.[120] Steadily, through the course of 1944 and 1945, Axelson would gain a reputation as narrator and historian.

But the frontline soldiers did not always see things this way. Writing on behalf of Poole in June 1945, Colonel Maggs wrote to Wakefield that Axelson's 'report' (the word itself is significant) was written by somebody 'lacking in military background [and therefore it] had no military value'.[121] He indicated that Poole had realised this too late in the campaign to make a change. Poole wanted an old-style, official history with hard, practical value. Moreover, he disapproved of Axelson's gathering interviews and statements from all ranks. At least two senior officers complained that the narrative was not authoritative and demanded that it be rewritten. Various senior officers argued that the names of commanders and other senior officers be included wherever possible, 'to give more colour to the narrative'.[122] But there were others issues. Fighting soldiers do not respect men in uniform filling 'soft jobs'. The men of the Division had trained together for a year before moving to Italy, while Axelson joined them shortly before that deployment. He was still, in this sense at least, an outsider.

And then there was the notion that the soldiers did the fighting, and the dying, but one of these 'soft jobs' would sound off on the meaning of their sacrifice. As one Canadian veteran of the Great War noted to another: 'Soldiers make wars, but historians make the history of them'.[123] The post-war historian, from the viewpoint of at least some of these officers, was in a position to ruminate at leisure and write of success and failure, and quite possibly apportion blame. Reputation was undoubtedly a major animus. In short, Poole, like his senior staffers, did not like Axelson's academic brand and he would not have him write *his* division's history.

Other steps would be taken. In June 1945 Poole set up a committee, chaired by a staff officer, to 'guide and assist' a Lt Davis 'in the compilation of the Division's history'.[124] Some of his regimental commanders seemingly followed suit for their regimental histories. Some years later, after an initial probe, Axelson was excluded from writing a history of the Pretoria Regiment and its role in the Second World War. Enquiring on his behalf, Agar-Hamilton was 'told, most politely [by Colonel Johnstone] to mind [his] own business'.[125] Put in his place, Agar-Hamilton rang off, leaving the regimental history to Johnstone and a committee of 'various officers'. Needless to say, as is so often the case with committee-directed history, no history of the 6th SA Armoured Division appeared and neither has a history of the Pretoria Regiment.

This was a blow to Axelson and his sense of self as historian. After the war he joined Agar-Hamilton, and a number of fellow recording officers, in the Union War Histories Section in the Office of the Prime Minister. There he served briefly as Assistant Editor (Military) and then Chief Narrator. But, perhaps feeling the reputational blow, he left for Salisbury, Rhodesia, where archival work brought him back to his pursuit of the Portuguese in Africa. Nonetheless he returned to War Histories in November 1951. Malherbe, the former DMI and then Rector of the University of Natal, wrote a warm letter saying he had 'felt it was a pity that [Axelson] should have left that set-up at all, as [he] was probably the most experienced war historian we had in the field'.[126] Agar-Hamilton welcomed him back too. He had not only missed an old friend, but wanted a sound colleague to work on a history of the SAAF in North Africa: the Australians, Agar-Hamilton told Axelson, had been treating the South African war effort 'with lordly disdain' and were asking for narratives of the Desert air war.[127] Axelson produced a number of narrative histories over the following years, including one on 'The German Submarine offensive in South African waters'.[128] But change was afoot. The Union War Histories, for so long under attack by the Nationalist government, would close in 1961 and its staff disperse to history departments, research institutes and archives repositories.[129] Ahead of the wave, Axelson returned to his original interest in the history of Portugal in Africa and, in 1955, accepted a position in the Ernest Oppenheimer Institute for Portuguese Studies at the University of the Witwatersrand. He moved down to the University of Cape Town in 1962 as the King George V chair and head

of the History Department there.[130] A number of publications – all on Portuguese explorers and the role of Portugal in Africa – appeared.[131]

Axelson was certainly prolific. More than anyone else, he shaped the 'memory regime' – the historical record and history writing – of South Africa's campaign in Italy. Bourhill and Pretorius agree that 'to a large extent, the history of this campaign originates from the work of the historical recording section of the 6th South African Armoured Division'.[132] His contribution has almost no equal in South Africa, not for any war or any campaign. Even if unacknowledged in some military circles, Axelson had built a strong professional reputation as an historian working in the broad field of military history. He not only attracted postgraduates working on military topics to the University of Cape Town, but his MA students included a director of the Military Historical and Archival Service (the forerunner of the present Department of Defence Archives) as well as a dean of the Faculty of Military Sciences at the Military Academy, Saldanha.[133] As far as can be ascertained, no student of his worked on the Italian campaign. This was left perhaps respectfully to Axelson himself, who, during his later years, recrafted a campaign history. This too was never published.

A history of the 6th Division and of the Italian campaign finally appeared in 1975. This was the fifth volume in Purnell's South African Forces in World War II series. Its author, Colonel Neil Orpen, was a journalist by profession, but one with the requisite *military* credentials.[134] The history of the war had become increasingly problematic after the closure of the Union War Histories. However, Agar-Hamilton's advice, that a university be approached to sponsor the project and that Axelson be involved, was ignored. The University of the Witwatersrand, where Axelson was at the time, was willing to 'release' him for the work but, unable to move Lt Gen George Brink on the matter, Agar-Hamilton refused to join a reconstituted advisory committee. Although Brink managed to 'shore up' an advisory committee, and sponsorships were secured, 'the twin tasks of research and writing' remained problematic.[135] Veterans were approached, none of whom had had the benefit of an historical education, and their writing is without exception uncritical, event-oriented and fact-packed. While Orpen quite clearly used tranches of Union War History documentation, including the material generated by Axelson, he acknowledges neither Axelson's narratives nor the work of the historical recording section in building the historical record for the Italian campaign.[136]

Finally, reference must be made to the three works on the Division that have appeared since 1975. The first is the doctoral dissertation delivered by Johannes Bruwer at the Rand Afrikaans University (University of Johannesburg) in November 1989. Adopting a very traditional approach, this is based on an extensive reading of the war diaries, supplemented by the Divisional Documents and the manuscripts in the Union War Histories collection. Bruwer seemingly went to some trouble to interview men who had served with the Division. However, while use was made of Axelson's materials,

there is no mention of him or the ground-breaking work he had done.[137] The second, Jack Kros's *War in Italy*, adds little to the historiography. However, while Axelson is not mentioned at all, the title of his memoir – *Taranto to the Alps* – is used as the subtitle for this book.[138] Of course, this may be entirely coincidental. Importantly, James Bourhill brought a number of exciting developments in *Come back to Portofino*.[139] Developed as a doctoral dissertation at the University of Pretoria, he used his own father and one or two other Springboks, who had left documentary legacies, as lenses through which to study the everyday life of the more than ten thousand men of the Division. The result is a good introduction to the division and to the wider South African campaign in Italy. Axelson, and his role as divisional recording officer, is referenced throughout and his spirit is felt: Bourhill addresses divisional successes and setbacks, victories and indecencies, and the cruelty of a total war, but also magnanimity and the triumph of human spirit. Still, surprisingly, Bourhill did not use the Axelson Papers, but depended solely in this instance on the material in the Department of Defence Archives.

CONCLUSION

The South African supreme command, breaking the pattern of the Great War, deployed military historians with the operational forces during the Second World War. Eric Axelson joined the 6th SA Armoured Division in February 1944, as its Historical Recording Officer. Allotted a small staff, he had to ensure that each unit in the Division maintain, and submit to Divisional Headquarters on a monthly basis, a credible war diary. This Axelson supplemented with 'a running record of the activities of the Division', including, wherever possible, interviews with participants. He also kept a log of activities of his Recording Section, which, as he noted in the preface, was a true diary, containing his daily jottings and the casual comments of his driver as well as those of his photographer.

But several high-ranking officers did not like Axelson's brand of history. Axelson wrote his history as he saw it. In many respects, his history was the opposite of the more traditional, institutionalised type: his truth was his and not sanitised, his approach was broad rather than parochial, and, tending to avoid individual and regimental ephemera, he told a larger story that also touched on the war's impact on the Italian people. His was not a memorial to fallen comrades, for those who did not return – this he left to the regimental historians – but a broader sweep, telling the story with width and context. Much military history is produced by soldiers. By the men *who were there*. Axelson was there. But he was not a *fighting* soldier and, for an officer, he seemingly did unorthodox things. He did not steer away from distasteful details, he did not laud high-ranking officers, and he interviewed men and women regardless of role or rank. For these military moguls, Axelson did not speak with an *authentic* voice.

Today the wealth of material, both paper and photographic, on the 6th Division in the custody of the military archives in Pretoria, records exactly how much Axelson and his small, yet very capable, staff achieved. Their work is important at several levels. Not only did Axelson oversee and encourage the keeping of war diaries for the full duration of the Italian campaign, but he fostered an interest in others in the writing of personal narratives and regimental history, while he and his team gathered much other historical material for dispatch to Pretoria for later use. His 'running record' of the Division's activities was essentially the first-generation, divisional history written in the field, while his 'log' was his own personal narrative of the campaign. Axelson, therefore, both gathered the source material for future historians of the Division and the campaign in Italy, and contributed substantially to the writing on this campaign as well. In the immediate post-war years, he assisted some units in bringing their war narratives to publication. No other South African achieved this for this war. He was no doubt 'the most experienced war historian [South Africa] had in the field'. [140] And yet his work, like that of his colleagues, remains almost unacknowledged to this day.

Endnotes

1 Most of the extant material on Italy generated by Axelson, while in Italy and after, is at the Jagger Library of the University of Cape Town. This includes his unpublished manuscripts as well as a reasonable amount of correspondence, which I supplemented with material from the Department of Defence Archives in Pretoria. While there is a considerable overlap, of special importance in Pretoria is the other side of the correspondence with the Department of Defence. For this chapter, where there is such an overlap, I have referred to the material at the Jagger.

Axelson, 'Taranto to the Alps', chap 1, p 1, BC1263 Eric Axelson Papers, C2 Diary of 6 SA Armoured Division, Jagger Library, University of Cape Town Libraries (UCT).

2 Patrick Harries and Christopher Saunders, 'Eric Axelson and the history of Portugal in Africa', *South African Historical Journal*, vol 39 (Nov 1998), pp 167-175. See also FA Mouton, 'Professor Leo Fouché, the History Department and the Afrikanerization of the University of Pretoria', Collected Seminar Papers, Institute of Commonwealth Studies, vol. 48, pp 92-101.

3 Eric Axelson, *South-East Africa 1488-1530* (London: Longmans, 1940).

4 On the role of the information / education officers, see Michael Cardo, 'Fighting a Worse Imperialism': White South African Loyalism and the Army Education Services (AES) during the Second World War', *South African Historical Journal*, vol 46 (2002), pp 141-174.

5 Personnel file, 45005 Major Eric Victor Axelson, SAIC, Department of Defence (DOD) Archives, Pretoria.

6 John Agar-Hamilton to Axelson, 14 Feb 1944, BC1263 Axelson Papers, C4 Letters from Defence Headquarters to Axelson, UCT.

7 John Agar-Hamilton to Axelson, 14 Feb 1944, BC1263 Axelson Papers, C4, UCT.

8 James Bourhill and Fransjohan Pretorius, 'How the story of the South African experience in the Italian campaign was recorded – and distorted', *Historia*, vol 57, no 2, Nov 2012, pp 350-77. No use is made of the Axelson Papers.

9 Harries and Saunders, 'Eric Axelson and the history of Portugal in Africa', pp 167-175.

10 Guy Butler, *Bursting World: An Autobiography 1936-45* (Cape Town and Johannesburg: David Philip, 1983), pp 209-10.

11 John Agar-Hamilton to Axelson, 3 June 1944, BC1263 Axelson Papers, C4, UCT.

12 Agar-Hamilton to Axelson, 24 Mar 1944, BC1263 Axelson Papers, C4, UCT.

13 Eric Axelson, *A Year in Italy: An account of a year as military historian with the South African 6th Armoured Division in Italy, 1944*-1945, transcribed by Leycester Walton (Port Elizabeth: EH Walton Packaging Pty (Ltd), no date [2001]).

14 On Agar-Hamilton's life and career see Nicholas Southey and FA Mouton, 'A Volksvreemde historian: JAI Agar-Hamilton and the production of history in an alien environment', *South African Historical Journal*, vol. 44 (2001), pp 72-98. FA Mouton, *History, Historians and Afrikaner Nationalism: Essays on the History Department of the University of Pretoria, 1909-1985* (Vanderbijlpark: Kleio, 2007).

15 Dennis Etheredge to Axelson, 20 June 1944, BC1263 Axelson Papers, C4, UCT.

16 Agar-Hamilton to Axelson, 3 July 1944, BC1263 Axelson Papers, C4, UCT.

17 Jeffrey Grey, '"Standing humbly in the ante-chambers of Clio": the rise and fall of Union War Histories', *Scientia Militaria*, vol. 30, no. 2 (2000), pp 256-57.

18 Agar-Hamilton to Axelson, 21 June 1944, BC1263 Axelson Papers, C4, UCT. See also Jean Walker, *Skin Deep; The Autobiography of a woman doctor* (Kommetjie: Midgley, 1977), p 93. BC618 Eric Anderson Walker Papers, UCT. On the role and place of Walker in South African history writing, see Christopher Saunders, *The Making of the South African Past; Major historians on race and class* (Cape Town and Johannesburg: David Philip, 1988), pp 112-15; and Ken Smith, *The Changing Past; Trends in South African historical writing* (Johannesburg: Southern, 1988), pp 121-31.

19 Agar-Hamilton to Axelson, 28 Jul 1944, BC1263 Axelson Papers, C4, UCT; and quoted in Axelson, 'Preface', Taranto to the Alps, BC1263 Axelson Papers, C2, UCT.

20 Axelson, 'Preface', Taranto to the Alps, BC1263 Axelson Papers, C2, UCT.

21 Agar-Hamilton to Axelson, 14 Feb 1944, BC1263 Axelson Papers, C4, UCT.

22 Axelson, 'Preface', Taranto to the Alps, BC1263 Axelson Papers, C2, UCT.

23 Agar-Hamilton to Axelson, 24 Mar 1944, BC1263 Axelson Papers, C4, UCT.

24 Agar-Hamilton to Axelson, 18 Feb 1944, BC1263 Axelson Papers, C4, UCT.

25 Agar-Hamilton to Axelson, 18 Feb 1944, BC1263 Axelson Papers, C4, UCT.

26 Daily log, 1 June 1944, BC1263 Axelson Papers, C2, UCT.

27 Daily log, 9 Jul 1944, and 4 Oct 1944, BC1263 Axelson Papers, C2, UCT.

28 Axelson, 'Preface', Taranto to the Alps, BC1263 Axelson Papers, C2, UCT.

29 Grey, '"Standing humbly in the ante-chambers of Clio": the rise and fall of Union War Histories', p 262.

30 There were a number of officials that had to keep a war diary: each branch of the staff in the headquarters of a formation, a subordinate command and area or sub-area on the lines of communication; all unit commanders; commanders of detachments of a headquarters or unit; all base, auxiliary, and advanced commanders; and the heads of services and their representatives. In the case of headquarters, sections of the various branches were permitted to keep separate war diaries or one combined war diary, as they found to be convenient.

31 Information that might be contained in the Narrative of a war diary: 'Account of operations with notes of topographical and climatic factors affecting them; Notes of how orders were carried out; Nature and description of filed engineering works constructed; Note of any administrative difficulties encountered and action taken to overcome them; Note of how time not accounted for above was spent. The type of training, etc., should be specified; Brief notes of the times of receipt and issue of orders and important messages, and a reference to the appendix letter and folio number; and, only if necessary, a very brief note of the contents; Intermediate movements of unit or formation; and Notes of any important visits paid and received by Commanders and Senior Staff Officers. It is equally important to make a note of the reason for the visit and decisions taken.'

32 Instruction UDF/930/6 dated 25 Jan 1945 on War Diaries, Historical Survey of 1 (SA) L of C Field Security Section, SA Intelligence Corps, War Diaries, box 724, DOD Archives.

33 Daily log, 31 Jan 1945, BC1263 Axelson Papers, C2 Diary of the historical recording officer, 6 SA Armoured Division, 1944-1945, UCT.

34 Daily log, 20 Jul 1944, BC1263 Axelson Papers, C2, UCT.

35 Daily log, 20 Jul 1944, BC1263 Axelson Papers, C2, UCT.

36 Daily log, 14 Jul 1944, BC1263 Axelson Papers, C2, UCT.

37 Daily log, 9 Jul 1944, BC1263 Axelson Papers, C2, UCT.

38 Gustav Bentz, 'Fighting Springboks: C Company, Royal Natal Carbineers from Premier Mine to the Po Valley, 1939-1945' (Stellenbosch University: MMil thesis, 2013), p 131.

39 Daily log, 31 Jan 1945, BC1263 Axelson Papers, C2, UCT.

40 Dennis Etheredge to Axelson, 20 June 1944, BC1263 Axelson Papers, C4, UCT. Instruction UDF/930/6 dated 25 Jan 1945 on War Diaries, Historical Survey of 1 (SA) L of C Field Security Section, SA Intelligence Corps, War Diaries, box 724, DOD Archives.

41 Neil Orpen, *Victory in Italy* (Cape Town and Johannesburg: Purnell, 1975), p 8.

42 PR Anderson, 'On Photographs at War: Images of the South African 6th Armoured Division in Italy 1944–1945', *Safundi: The Journal of South African and American Studies*, vol. 15, no. 2-3 (2014), 197-225.

43 Dennis Etheredge to Axelson, 20 June 1944, Deputy Chief of Staff to GOC 6 SA Armd Div, 21 June 1944, Agar-Hamilton to Axelson, 21 June 1944 and 3 July 1944, BC1263 Axelson Papers, C4, UCT.

44 Ray Ryan, *Memories of Italy World War II* (Cape Town: McKerrow Atkins, 1982), p vi.

45 Daily log, 7 June 1944, BC1263 Axelson Papers, C2, UCT.

46 Daily log, 30 June 1944, BC1263 Axelson Papers, C2, UCT.

47 See for example, Bob Connolly, *The Bob Connolly Story* (Cape Town: Howard Timmins, undated).

48 In June 1944, for example, he was 'accompanied by a flush of war correspondents', believing that Axelson would find the best 'vantage point' from which to view the coming action. Axelson, 'Taranto to the Alps', chap 2, p 6, BC1263 Axelson Papers, C2, UCT.

49 Daily log, 8 - 9 Jul 1944, BC1263 Axelson Papers, C2, UCT.

50 Agar-Hamilton to Axelson, 21 June 1944, BC1263 Axelson Papers, C4, UCT.

51 Agar-Hamilton to Axelson, 24 Mar 1944, BC1263 Axelson Papers, C4, UCT.

52 Daily log, 6 Jul 1944, BC1263 Axelson Papers, C2, UCT.

53 Daily log, 8 - 9 Jul 1944, BC1263 Axelson Papers, C2, UCT.

54 Daily log, 16 Jul 1944, BC1263 Axelson Papers, C2, UCT.

55 Daily log, 16 Jul 1944, BC1263 Axelson Papers, C2, UCT.

56 Fankie Monama, 'Wartime Propaganda in the Union of South Africa 1939-1945' (Stellenbosch University: PhD dissertation, 2014), pp 92-97.

57 Agar-Hamilton to Axelson, 14 Feb 1944, BC1263 Axelson Papers, C4, UCT.

58 Agar-Hamilton to Axelson, 28 July 1944, quoted in Axelson, *A Year in Italy*, p 233.

59 Agar-Hamilton to Axelson, 26 May 1944, BC1263 Axelson Papers, C4, UCT. The emphasis is Agar-Hamilton's.

60 Axelson, *A Year in Italy*, p 235.

61 On the governmental publicity programmes see Fankie Monama, 'Wartime Propaganda in the Union of South Africa 1939-1945' (Stellenbosch University: PhD dissertation, 2014).

62 Daily log, 9 - 10 Jul 1944, BC1263 Axelson Papers, C2, UCT.

63 Daily log, 19 Jul 1944, BC1263 Axelson Papers, C2, UCT.

64 Agar-Hamilton to Axelson, 14 Feb 1944 and 15 May 1944, BC1263 Axelson Papers, C4, UCT.

65 Agar-Hamilton to Axelson, 19 Apr 1944, BC1263 Axelson Papers, C4, UCT.

66 Maj HC Weaver, OC Film Unit, to Agar-Hamilton, 4 May 1944, and Agar-Hamilton to Axelson, 9 May 1944, BC1263 Axelson Papers, C4, UCT.

67 John Agar-Hamilton to Axelson, 3 June 1944, BC1263 Axelson Papers, C4, UCT.

68 Daily log, 12 Jul 1944, BC1263 Axelson Papers, C2, UCT.

69 Daily log, 16 Jul 1944, BC1263 Axelson Papers, C2, UCT.

70 Agar-Hamilton to Axelson, 20 Jan 1961, BC1263 Axelson Papers, B1(A), UCT.

71 Deputy Chief of Staff to GOC 6 SA Armd Div, 8 Mar 1944, BC1263 Axelson Papers, C4, UCT.

72 Agar-Hamilton to Axelson, 30 May 1944, BC1263 Axelson Papers, C4, UCT.

73 Daily log, 11 June 1944, BC1263 Axelson Papers, C2, UCT. This was sent to Historical Records and the original may be found in the Narratives and Reports (Nareps) collection of the Union War Histories archive, box 142. I am grateful to Evert Kleynhans for this reference.

74 Daily log, 26 June 1944, BC1263 Axelson Papers, C2, UCT.

75 Daily log, 30 June 1944, BC1263 Axelson Papers, C2, UCT.

76 Axelson, 'The Sixth South African Armoured Division in Italy up to the fall of Florence', Aug 1944, Narep CMF 2, UWH, box 141, DOD Archives, Pretoria.

77 Daily log, 30 June 1944, BC1263 Axelson Papers, C2, UCT.

78 Agar-Hamilton to Axelson, 3 July 1944, BC1263 Axelson Papers, C4, UCT. Brig E.P. Hartshorn, *Avenge Tobruk* (Cape and Johannesburg: Purnell, 1960), p 179.

79 Deputy Chief of Staff to GOC 6 SA Armd Div, 8 Mar 1944, and Agar-Hamilton to Axelson, 24 Mar 1944, BC1263 Axelson Papers, C4, UCT.

80 Samuel Hynes, *The Soldiers' Tale; Bearing Witness to Modern War* (London: Pimlico, 1998), p 25.

81 For an alternate view see Bourhill and Pretorius, 'How the story of the South African experience', p 354.

82 Instruction UDF/930/18 dated 7 Jun 1945 on War Diaries, Historical Survey of 1 (SA) L of C Field Security Section, SA Intelligence Corps, War Diaries, box 724, DOD Archives.

83 Instruction UDF/930/18 dated 7 Jun 1945 on War Diaries, Historical Survey of 1 (SA) L of C Field Security Section, SA Intelligence Corps, War Diaries, box 724, DOD Archives.

84 Historical Survey of 1 (SA) L of C Field Security Section, SA Intelligence Corps, WD, box 724, DOD Archives.

85 Diary, 9 Jul 1944, BC1263 Axelson Papers, C2, UCT.

86 South African troops were reported to have done 'a considerable amount of looting in Chiusi. There was also a particularly bad case, where three people had been murdered and a woman raped.' Daily log, 27 – 28 June 1944, BC1263 Axelson Papers, C2, UCT.

87 Diary, 10 – 15 Jul 1944, BC1263 Axelson Papers, C2, UCT.

88 Axelson, *A Year in Italy*, p 109.

89 Orpen, *Victory in Italy*, p 169.

90 Axelson, *A Year in Italy*, p 133.

91 See, for example, DV Jeffrey, *The 8th Field Squadron* (Johannesburg: Rostra Printers, c. 1946); LG Murray, *First City / Cape Town Highlanders in the Italian Campaign, 1943-1945* (Cape Town: Cape Times, 1946); TR Ponsford, *War Record of Union Defence Force Institutes (YMCA – Toc H)* (Cape Town: Hortor's, c. 1946); RW Tungay, *The Fighting Third* (Cape Town: 1947); JN Cowin, *The Story of the Ninth; A Record of the 9th Field Company, South African Engineer Corps, July 1939 to July 1943* (Johannesburg: 1948); and SE van Broembsen, *The story of men; A brief history of the Regiment De la Rey and the Witwatersrand Rifles and their association* (Potchefstroom: The Potchefstroom Herald, 1948).

92 John Agar-Hamilton to Axelson, 3 June 1944, BC1263 Axelson Papers, C4, UCT.

93 Agar-Hamilton to Axelson, 21 June 1944, BC1263 Axelson Papers, C4, UCT.

94 Axelson, 'Taranto to the Alps', p 2-11, BC1263 Axelson Papers, C2, UCT.

95 Daily log, 1 June 1944, BC1263 Axelson Papers, C2, UCT.

96 Daily log, 1 June 1944, BC1263 Axelson Papers, C2, UCT.

97 Daily log, 1 June 1944, BC1263 Axelson Papers, C2, UCT.

98 Daily log, 1 June 1944, BC1263 Axelson Papers, C2, UCT.

99 Axelson, *A Year in Italy*, p 17.

100 Axelson, *A Year in Italy*, p 121.

101 Report of Historical Recording Officer for month ended 31 Aug 1944, War Diaries, box 599, DOD Archives, Pretoria.

102 Daily log, 12 Jul 1944, BC1263 Axelson Papers, C2, UCT.

103 Agar-Hamilton to Axelson, 15 May 1944, BC1263 Axelson Papers, C4, UCT.

104 Daily log, 21 Jul 1944, BC1263 Axelson Papers, C2, UCT.

105 Collyer to Secretary for Defence, 4 Jul 1936, file 101 SWA Campaign Preparation of Military Textbook by Gen Collyer, GOC UDF, box 18, DOD Archives.

106 Italian Campaigns: a patrol-night 18/19 May 1944 as seen by Division Recording Officer, BC1263 Axelson Papers, C3, UCT.

107 Agar-Hamilton to Axelson, 24 Aug 1944, BC1263 Axelson Papers, C4, UCT.

108 Axelson to Agar-Hamilton, 30 Aug 1944, Narep CMF 2, UWH, box 141, DOD Archives.

109 Eric Axelson, 'The Sixth South African Armoured Division in Italy; A provisional outline account for use by Historical Recording Section only, Aug 1944', Narep CMF 2, UWH, box 141, DOD Archives.

110 Agar-Hamilton to Axelson, 26 Sep 1944, BC1263 Axelson Papers, C4, UCT.

111 'The Sixth South African Armoured Division in Italy, A provisional outline account', pp 92-93, War Diaries, box 598, DOD Archives, Pretoria.

112 'The Sixth South African Armoured Division in Italy, Part II: 22 Aug 44 – 24 Feb 45', War Diaries, box 598, DOD Archives, Pretoria.

113 Axelson, 'Preface', Taranto to the Alps, BC1263 Axelson Papers, C2, UCT.

114 Axelson, *A Year in Italy*, p 233.

115 Axelson, *A Year in Italy*, p 234.

116 Axelson, *A Year in Italy*, p 237.

117 Morrilo and Pavkovic.

118 Agar-Hamilton to Axelson, 26 Dec 1960, BC1263 Axelson Papers, B1(A), UCT.

119 Agar-Hamilton to Axelson, 30 May 1944, BC1263 Axelson Papers, C4, UCT.

120 On the Bureau of Information, its activities, and the government information campaign, see Fankie Monama, 'Wartime Propaganda in the Union of South Africa 1939-1945' (Stellenbosch University: PhD dissertation, 2014).

121 Colonel EO Maggs to DCS, with a copy to Axelson, 8 Jun 1945, War Diaries, box 598, DOD Archives, Pretoria.

122 Interview with Maj I Moore, Brigade Major, 12th SA Mot Bde, undated, UWH, box 142, DOD Archives, Pretoria.

123 Sir Andrew Macphail quoted by Tim Cook, 'Literary Memorials: The Great War Regimental Histories, 1919-1939', *Journal of the Canadian Historical Association*, vol. 13 (2002), p 167.

124 Colonel EO Maggs to DCS, with a copy to Axelson, 8 Jun 1945, War Diaries, box 598, DOD Archives, Pretoria.

125 Agar-Hamilton to Axelson, 5 Apr 1950, BC1263 Axelson Papers, B8, UCT.

126 Prof EG Malherbe to Axelson, 23 Oct 1951, BC1263 Axelson Papers, B13, UCT.

127 Agar-Hamilton to Axelson, 17 Nov 1951, BC1263 Axelson Papers, B1(A), UCT.

128 "The German Submarine offensive in South African waters", BC1263 Axelson Papers, C6, UCT.

129 Turner left for a university position in Australia in 1947 and Betzler died of a heart attack in 1960, while Michael Roberts 'went on to a distinguished career as Professor of History at Rhodes followed by twenty years at Queen's University, Belfast as the foremost scholar of early modern Sweden and the age of Gustavus Adolphus'. Agar-Hamilton left when the doors closed in 1961 to take up a position at Rhodes University. Grey, '"Standing humbly in the ante-chambers of Clio"', pp 253-66. Ian van der Waag, 'Contested histories: official history and the South African military in the 20th century', in J Grey, ed., *The Last Word? Essays on Official History in the United States and British Commonwealth* (Westport, Connecticut and London: Praeger, 2003), pp 27-52.

130 Harries and Saunders, 'Eric Axelson and the history of Portugal in Africa', pp 167-175. Agar-Hamilton to Axelson, 26 Feb 1962, BC1263 Axelson Papers, B1(A), UCT.

131 See for example Axelson, *Portuguese in South-East Africa, 1600-1700* (Johannesburg: Witwatersrand University Press, 1960); Axelson, *Portugal and the Scramble for Africa, 1875-1891* (Johannesburg: Witwatersrand University Press, 1967); Axelson, *Congo to Cape: Early Portuguese Explorers* (Barnes & Noble, 1973); Axelson, *Vasco da Gama: The Diary of His Travels Through African Waters, 1497-1499* (Cape Town: Stephan Phillips, 1998). Most of these enjoyed several editions.

132 Bourhill and Pretorius, 'How the story of the South African experience', p 354.

133 They were Commodore Jean de Villiers and Commodore Hennie Nel. In both cases the theses were published in the Archives Year Book for South African History: Charl Jean de Villiers, 'Die Britse vloot aan die Kaap, 1795 – 1803' (UCT: MA thesis, 1967), vol. 32, part I, 1969; and HF Nel, 'Die Britse verowering van die Kaap in 1795' (UCT: MA thesis, 1967), vol. 35, part II, 1972.

134 Neil Orpen, *Victory in Italy* (Cape Town and Johannesburg: Purnell, 1975). Gerald Shaw, *The Cape Times; An Informal History* (Cape Town: David Philip, 1999), p 129.

135 Agar-Hamilton to Axelson, 26 Dec 1960, B1(A), BC1263 Axelson Papers, UCT.

136 In his list of sources, Orpen mentions the Union War Histories documents as a single class on one line; no details are given and Axelson's name does not appear in the book. The authorities Orpen cites are also almost entirely restricted to published books, including regimental histories and personal accounts. Orpen, *Victory in Italy*, p 311.

137 JJ Bruwer, 'Die Rol van die Sesde Suid-Afrikaanse Pantserdivisie in Italië, 27 May tot 4 Augustus 1944' (Randse Afrikaanse Universiteit: PhD thesis, Nov 1989).

138 Jack Kros, *War in Italy; With the South Africans from Taranto to the Alps* (Rivonia: Ashanti, 1992).

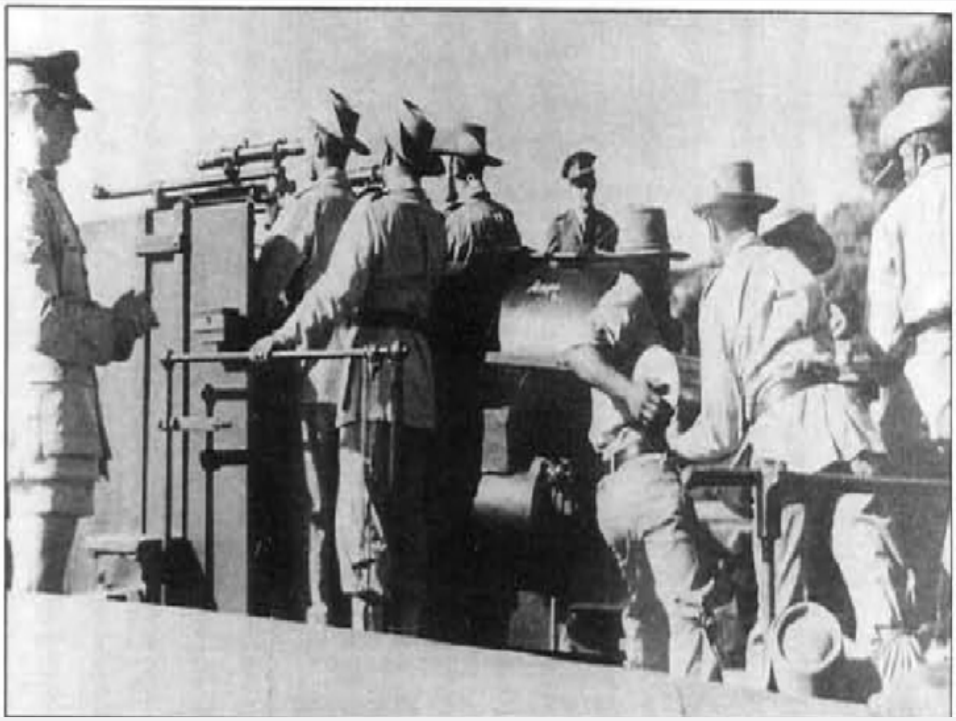
139 James Bourhill, *Come back to Portofino; Through Italy with the 6th South African Armoured Division* (Johannesburg: 30 Degrees South, 2011).

140 Prof EG Malherbe to Axelson, 23 Oct 1951, BC1263 Axelson Papers, B13, UCT.

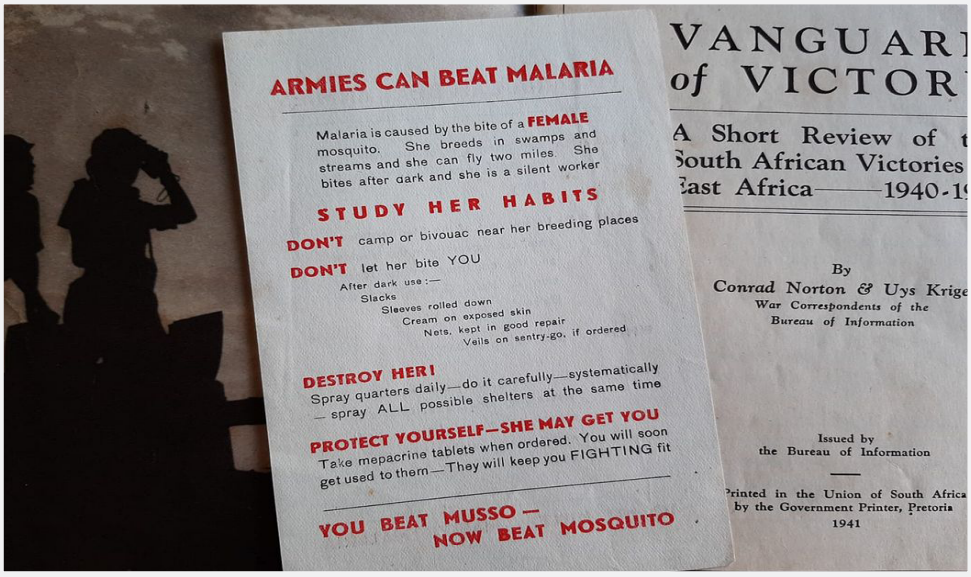
'Trek Saam!' A government propaganda poster calling for South Africans to work together.

Cigarette card; women attesting for war service.

'Join the Women's Auxiliary Service Corps'.



The Cape Corps manned South Africa's coastal defences after the white gunners had been sent North with the field artillery.



ARMIES CAN BEAT MALARIA

Malaria is caused by the bite of a **FEMALE** mosquito. She breeds in swamps and streams and she can fly two miles. She bites after dark and she is a silent worker

STUDY HER HABITS

DON'T camp or bivouac near her breeding places

DON'T let her bite YOU

After dark use:—
Slacks
Sleeves rolled down
Cream on exposed skin
Nets, kept in good repair
Veils on sentry-go, if ordered

DESTROY HER!
Spray quarters daily—do it carefully—systematically — spray ALL possible shelters at the same time

PROTECT YOURSELF—SHE MAY GET YOU
Take mepacrine tablets when ordered. You will soon get used to them—They will keep you FIGHTING fit

YOU BEAT MUSSO — NOW BEAT MOSQUITO

VANGUARD of VICTORY

A Short Review of the South African Victories East Africa——1940-19

By
Conrad Norton & Uys Krige
War Correspondents of the Bureau of Information

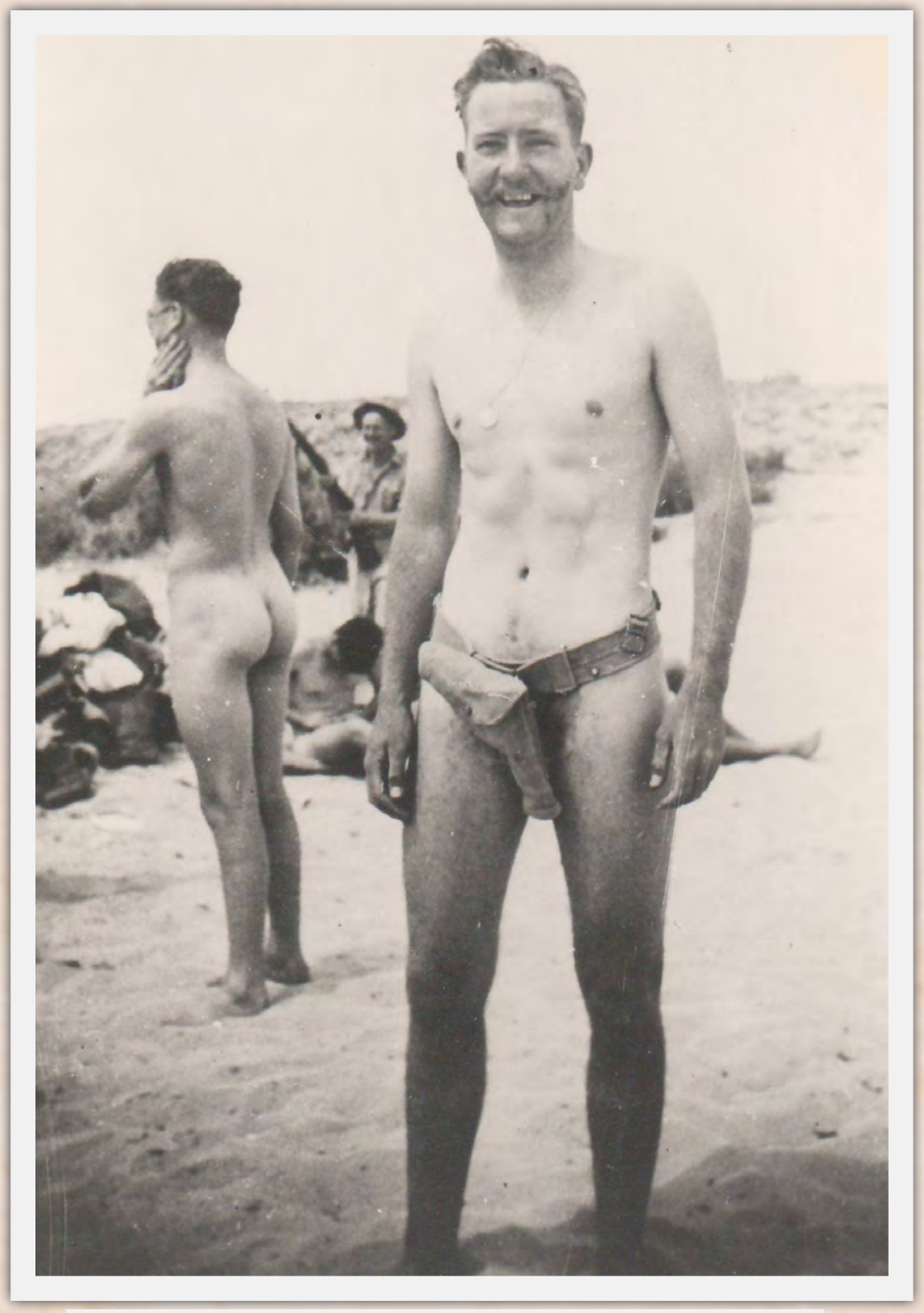
Issued by the Bureau of Information

Printed in the Union of South Africa by the Government Printer, Pretoria
1941

The anti-malaria info sheet kept as a souvenir in the war correspondents' review of the campaign in East Africa.

The desert battlespace was harsh and unforgiving: the German outpost at the top of the Halfaya Pass.

The YMCA mobile canteens, operating under the UDFI, traversed the desert and sold small luxury items – sweets, cigarettes, toiletries – to the men at the front.



'Burning the Hyena': pilots of 2 Squadron SAAF relieve combat stress in the Western Desert.

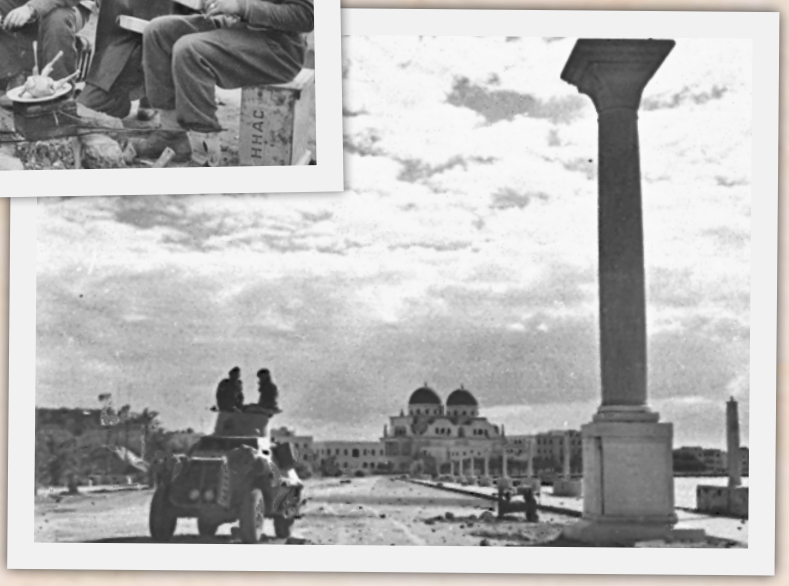
South African graves at Sidi Rezegh; 'the men fell defending their transport'.

A group of Springboks, who had taken part in the battle at Sidi Rezegh, illustrate a "Toast to Victory" at Christmas in 1941.

Entertainment in the Western Desert. The line-up for the start of the Desert Derby: 'run over two furloughs, entry free, prize 20 Piastres, owners' unknown.'

The Royal Natal Carbineers in the Western Desert, with a captured German flag.

The terrain in North Africa was foreign, exciting, and gave opportunity for tourism.



SUGGESTIONS FOR LEAVE

EGYPT is a land of fascinating history and ancient monuments. People journey from all over the world to visit this interesting country.

See all you can while you can.

Use time and money wisely.

Arrange accommodation before you begin sightseeing.

Use Clubs and Hostels specially provided for H.M. Forces.

Friendly strangers may not be really friends.

Write or Cable Home.

Attend your Church on Sunday.

Sightseeing suggestions :

Pyramids and Sphinx
Mosques
Zoological Gardens
Tombs of Mameluke
Old Cairo Churches
Cairo
Mouski
Citadel
Barrages
Heliopolis
Sakkara and Memphis
Museums.

Y.M.C.A.

INFORMATION FOR H.M. FORCES

With the compliments of
Y.M.C.A. INFORMATION AND CABLE BUREAU
CONTINENTAL-SAVOY BUILDINGS
MIDAN IBRAHIM PASHA.
CAIRO.

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Y.M.C.A. INFORMATION BUREAU
Continental-Savoy Buildings
Midan Ibrahim Pasha

Special Rate Cables may be sent to any where in the British Commonwealth, via Marconi—2.P.T. per word, (minimum 6 words) address free.

INFORMATION FREE

Upon Railways, Trams, Buses, Shopping, Hall, Cables, Telegrams, Churches, Tours, Banks, Lodging, Cinemas, Sports, Amusements.

Hostels and Clubs in Alexandria, Palestine and other leave centres.

SERVICES CLUBS IN CAIRO

Provide Canteens, Restaurants, Snack-bars, Sightseeing tours, Hospitality, Sports, Reading & Writing facilities, Lounges, Dances, Music, Concerts, Friendship, Sport, Telegram Services, Advice upon anything.

WITH H.M. FORCES

In Camp or City there is "Welcome" at Y.M.C.A. Services' Centres.

SECURITY

You are going on leave to CAIRO, where many ears will want to hear where you and your Unit have been, and what you have been doing.

Do not let them hear.

The only way to do this is NOT to talk about these things anywhere.

TRAINS, TRAMS, CAFES, BARS and CINEMA QUEUES are full of people who want to hear what you say in order to give information to the enemy.

Enjoy your leave in the knowledge that no word of yours has helped the enemy.

Springboks on leave in Cairo; information security, some travelling advice, information on the main tourist attractions ('See all you can while you can'), and generally keeping safe (the STD infection rate was still around 30 per thousand troops per year). The war was for most South African troops their first "travel experience".

Top: Soldiers visit the monuments of Ancient Egypt.
Bottom: "Springdoes" – members of the SAWAAS – haggle with a trader: bangles, brooches, and beads were popular souvenirs.

South African troops stationed in Egypt during the second world war travelled when they took even a few days of leave. They visited Luxor, the museums of Cairo, the pyramids of Giza. Some travelled further: to biblical sites in Palestine and to Syria. Most it seems included in their itinerary a visit to the famous Shepheard's Hotel in Cairo, where they might been seen quaffing something cold on the hotel's expansive verandas.

Leisure time in a military hospital; nurses and patients do needlework and make puzzles.

Mrs Smuts and Lady Lampson – wife of the British ambassador to Egypt – chat to South African soldiers at the Springbok Club in Cairo.

Time for some socializing; the SA Irish chat to servicewomen of the WAAF. The typical South African soldier was, according to British counterparts, 'tough, outgoing, friendly' and physically large.

The war brought people together. On Saturday, 24 April 1943, Capt H. Hutchinson married Staff Nurse Miss Jeanne Stark. Both, members of the South African Medical Services, worked at the SA Base Hospital.

"Springdoes" in Egypt. As Agar-Hamilton decried, the PR people fabricated and posed shots, which were largely confined 'to cooks and girls from the UDF Entertainment Units'.

Another PR photograph showing the happy side of the war.

NEAS troops were prolific letter writers.

NMC servicemen in Cairo reading copies of Ndlovu-Tlou, the newspaper printed along with Springbok for the troops in Egypt.

Private Springkaan Masemula receives the Military Medal. He and two other NMC servicemen escaped from Tobruk on 22 July and, following a gruelling trek across the desert, reach Allied lines on 18 August 1942. They had covered 300 miles and could give information on conditions in Tobruk.

The Army Education Scheme information officers became the butt of jokes back in the South African press.

The Italian campaign was fought in close proximity to the Italian people. The battlespace provided remarkable contrasts to the experience of the African campaigns.

A South African Sherman tank rumbles up an Italian street.

Pack mules work with armour: a modern war sometimes depended on the oldest form of transport.

"Prince Charming", "Snow White" and the Seven Dwarfs — a reconnaissance platoon of FC/CTH in Italy. "Sneezy" is called "Sneezy II": "Sneezy I" had struck a mine during a patrol on the advance from Rome to Florence.

A camouflaged Sherman and its NMR crew prepare a brew in Italy in 1944. This was probably taken by Sgt Roger Madden, the photographer attached to Axelson's small Historical Recording Section.

Cape Corps stretcher-bearers evacuate a wounded soldier during the battle for Monte Sole.

The May 1944 issue of The Sable. The war, besides everything else, had brought travel opportunities well beyond the reach of the average South African and what they saw and experienced filled the pages of the divisional and regimental newspapers and magazines, making them wonderful windows into the life of the 6th Armoured Division. They contain travel information, their own brief impressions of the local sights, write-ups on the visiting entertainment units, photographs of WAASies, and, sometimes, men like Guy Butler, the 12th Brigade's Information Officer, published one or two of their wartime poems in them.

Taking in the sights: D Squadron, NMR, pose for a photograph in Italy, June 1944.

Diary of Death

It belonged to a soldier whose regiment was part of the Allied armies in Italy

just like you

In this diary he used to record the various things which were of importance to him. He wrote down when he was last on guard and when the last parcel of cigarettes arrived. He made a record of the letters he wrote and also of the ones he received from his mother and father and from his sweetheart Joyce. – Because, you see, that sort of things mattered to him

just like you

Then, one day, he took his appointed place in the platoon and they went into action. – Went to fight a war promoted by a few Jews and moneygrabbers, who, at that very time, were living a life of luxury in peaceful surroundings far away from any danger.

Hoaxed by them he went forward

just like you

As he marched onward there came a sudden swish, followed by a nerve-shattering roar and a piece of hot, jagged steel tore through his coat, his diary, – and his heart!

With his life blood he wrote his last record and simultaneously were dashed a Mothers fond love and a sweethearts dreams.

And dont forget, he was a soldier –

just like you

397 / 12 44

"Diary of Death": a German propaganda leaflet, hitting at diary keeping, aims to undermine the resolve of Allied troops.

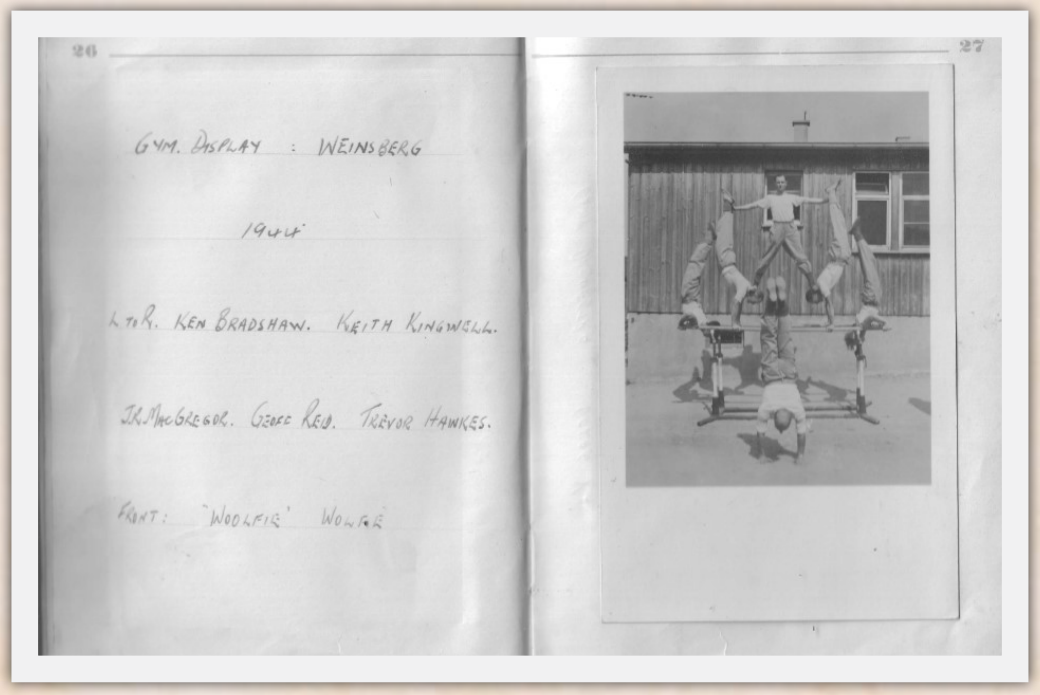
'She won't be seeing him again': Ben Fainsinger's diary with the photographs taken from the body of the German soldier he had just shot (see chapter one).

An air letter from Italy, Christmas 1945. The war is over. The writer, who had served with 61 Tunnelling Company, complains of the cold, of the poor rations ('altho the cook makes a good job of the "bully"') and for having to spend yet another Christmas away from Sunny South Africa.

A wartime souvenir – an autographed 50 lire AMC note. T Wilson (WR / DLR), A Thomson (FC / CTH), Cloete (FC / CTH), MG van Schalkwyk (FC / CTH), and others.

The UDFI provided club facilities, warm beds, and hot food during short breaks away from the frontline: here a South African soldier is caught on camera noticing some of the passing talent in Florence. The figure of the woman on the right was cropped off of the photograph when released by the Bureau of Information.

And the men played rugby: Maj Gen Frank Theron meets the UDF rugby team that beat a New Zealand base side 8-3 at Foro d'Italia, in Rome.



The Canadian and US armies issued a wartime log, seemingly to all of their deployed troops. The War Prisoners Aid of the YMCA adapted this and produced a booklet of 112 mostly blank pages. They were issued by the YMCA through the International Red Cross to POWs, who filled these mini-scrapbooks with jottings, photographs taken in camp, and photographs of sweethearts and loved ones. This particular book belonged to Lieut G.A. Gold, RNC, when held at Oflag VA, Weinsberg.

SNOW WHITE
PRINCE CHARMING

Part THREE

COLLECTIVE EXPERIENCES AND COMMONALTIES

6

'DIE PROPAGANDA KOLONEL': ERNST MALHERBE AND THE BATTLE FOR MORALE OF ORDINARY SOUTH AFRICAN SOLDIERS, 1939-1945

Fankie L. Monama

This chapter investigates the role of Lieutenant Colonel (Dr) Ernst Malherbe, the previous Director of Census and Statistics in South Africa, as the Director of Military Intelligence (DMI) during the Second World War (1939-1945), and chiefly as the head of the Army Education Services (AES). The AES was designed to combat troop apathy, disaffection, subversion and the influence of Nazism amongst ordinary South African soldiers. Dr Malherbe played a principal role in coordinating intelligence and facilitating propaganda within the Union Defence Force (UDF) to secure loyalty and to sustain the morale of the troops. His role is examined within the context of the growing Nazi-inspired political activism, subversive activities and other factors which undermined troop morale. Drawing on the Department of Defence Archives, Malherbe Papers, Smuts Papers, Marquard Papers and Lawrence Papers, my intention is to examine Malherbe's efforts to develop the consciousness of ordinary soldiers with regard to the imperative of the government's war policy. Broadly, the chapter analyses the dynamics of the morale-building efforts among the ordinary South African troops by examining the aims, objectives, methods and techniques of Malherbe's AES programme. and its effectiveness and limitations in the context of the country's difficult internal political conditions during the war.

INTRODUCTION

'Morale', argues Black, 'remains the single most important factor in combat and conflict'.[1] Many scholars, military professionals and theorists such as Xenophon, Machiavelli, Napoleon, Clausewitz, Liddell Hart and more recently Rupert Smith have emphasised that, from antiquity to modern wars, 'morale' was a vital ingredient in combat and military effectiveness.[2] With the emergence of 'total war', as experienced during the Great War (1914-1918), morale was recognised as a key resource in a nation-state at war. It produced cohesion and propelled action, thus requiring 'harnessing and protection', especially under difficult (war) circumstances.[3] Soldiers could no longer be regarded as obedient 'automatons' capable of only acting instinctively and devoid of intelligence and a capacity for rationale thinking. During the course of the Great War military authorities realised the futility of controlling mass armies, comprised mostly of conscripted civilians, through strict verbal and physical punitive actions to induce compliance and discipline. Instances of grousing, desertion, faking ill-health or self-inflicted injuries and intentionally committing offences to force discharges and even mutinies were all expressions of the soldiers' 'resistance' and also reflected their poor morale.[4] As war dragged on and reports of restlessness and negativity among troops increased, the authorities became alarmed. Soldiers became recognised as 'moral beings' and there was 'new sensitivity' towards their mental and emotional state.[5] National governments and military authorities undertook concerted efforts to ascertain sentiment within the armed forces and to control opinion. Various measures, mostly information services and propaganda

programmes, or 'morale programmes', were implemented to influence opinions, mobilise consent and preserve morale.[6]

Similar 'morale programmes' were instituted during the Second World War (1939-1945), when mass citizen armies were enlisted. It was understood that in modern war the scope of military activities was broader and that 'whole nations were pitted against other nations, requiring the cooperation of entire populations, both militarily and psychologically'.[7] In that sense, stimulating and preserving civilian and military morale was vital for success. As Pope, an academic and chairman of the Committee for National Morale in the United States during the Second World War, argued: 'an army fights as the people think'.[8] Another author, Brigadier General Ulio of the United States Army, also emphasised the importance of military morale as 'inseparable from civilian morale'. In the age of total war, argued Ulio, 'there are no non-combatants' and there was a special bond between civilian and military morale, because 'teamwork reaches all the way forward [to the battlefront] and all the way back [to the home front]'.[9] Essentially, civilian and military morale were 'welded inseparably' and that, 'a break in morale at any point will weaken the whole effort'.[10] It was also recognised that morale could be influenced by various factors such as environmental conditions, material conditions, health and socio-economic conditions, ideology, information and propaganda, as witnessed during the Great War.[11] Hence, it was deemed imperative to nurture and preserve morale on all fronts. Accordingly, the authorities established agencies and employed various experts such as scientists, psychologists and psychiatrists to address the issue of morale.[12]

The question of morale was at the heart of Lieutenant Colonel (Dr) Ernst Gideon Malherbe's mission, as the Director of Military Intelligence in the Union of South Africa during the Second World War. When war erupted in September 1939, South Africa experienced political turmoil. Within white society many Afrikaans speakers rejected the government's war policy and some even adopted violent means to wage anti-war campaigns.[13] Furthermore, during the mid-1930s South Africa was inundated with Nazi propaganda via the German-based Zeesen Radio broadcast service in the Afrikaans language. The country also endured subversive activities conducted by secret Nazi agents such as Bruno Stiller and Dr Luitpoldt Werz.[14] Nazi propagandists and secret agents courted extra-parliamentary movements like the *Ossewabrandwag* (OB), the Greyshirts and the Blackshirts[15] to intensify anti-government opposition against General JC Smuts's war policy.[16] They encouraged an exclusive Afrikaner nationalism, fostered pro-German sympathies and promoted anti-British attitudes within the white society.[17] Thus, anti-war opinions and attitudes developed and also permeated the South African security structures, including the police and the Union Defence Force, creating apathy and undermining morale.[18] Dr Malherbe, a liberal intellectual and supporter of Smuts, was perturbed by such developments, particularly the impact of Nazi-inspired subversive propaganda which

affected the morale and loyalty of the troops.[19] As a result, he enlisted for military service in November 1939 and facilitated the institution of the Army Education Services as a mechanism to combat apathy and to foster pro-government and pro-war sentiment within the UDF and to sustain troop morale.

Although there is literature on Dr EG Malherbe and his role in the AES during the Second World War in South Africa available, it is limited with regard to examining the context of morale within the UDF. Apart from Malherbe's autobiography,[20] which deals anecdotally with wide-ranging aspects of his life, there are few academic works specifically focusing on the question of morale among the South African troops. Fleisch[21] focuses on the development of the South Africa National Bureau for Educational and Social Research and the role of Malherbe in that regard. Dubow[22] analyses Malherbe's liberal perspectives within the framework of 'South Africanism' – a notion about the construction of white nationhood based on cooperation between English and Afrikaans speakers. Similarly, Cardo[23] has engaged exclusively with Malherbe's AES within the UDF and its broader focus on driving the agenda of fostering *'rapprochement'* between the English and Afrikaans speakers and to counter the appeals of Afrikaner political and cultural exclusivism. Roos,[24] drawing largely from Cardo, dealt with the AES as an alternative method of 'disciplining' poor white men through education in order to maintain the 'colonial social order'. At the time white intellectuals perceived that the 'racialised social structure' of South Africa was undermined by white poverty, which threatened to 'equalise' whites and blacks in terms of their relatively similar socio-economic status. Hence the imperative of instituting mechanisms such as the AES to 'enlighten' white servicemen about 'responsible citizenship and social justice' within the bounds of the prevailing racially segregated social framework.[25]

This chapter examines Malherbe's attempts to preserve the morale of the UDF troops during the Second World War. It analyses the development and implementation of his AES as a 'morale programme', not only in terms of providing information services and propaganda, but also in terms of coordinating efforts to improve the welfare of the troops and to foster their loyalty. The chapter briefly describes Malherbe's background as a social scientist and his beliefs about the purpose of education in driving social change. It then examines his military service and his mission to assist the troops in sustaining their morale. The chapter also highlights the morale crisis within the UDF and the factors which produced apathy and disaffection, followed by an explanation of the conceptualisation and institution of the AES as a mechanism to counter dissatisfaction and to secure morale. It broadly analyses the dynamics of the 'morale-building' efforts among ordinary South African soldiers by examining the aims, objectives, methods and techniques of the AES and other welfare efforts, and their effectiveness and limitations in the context of the country's difficult internal political conditions during the war.

MALHERBE: SOCIAL SCIENTIST AND SOLDIER

Lt Col (Dr) Ernst Gideon Malherbe (1895-1982) is an intriguing figure, or a 'controversial political figure' in South Africa, according to Dubow.[26] A proud Afrikaner nationalist who became a 'public intellectual' fighting for social justice for poor and unskilled whites, Malherbe also advocated 'racial harmony', especially cooperation between English and Afrikaans speakers. Malherbe was also often assailed by ultra-nationalist Afrikaners opposed to his 'liberal views', and particularly for his apparent role of propagandist during the Second World War.[27] He emerged in the 1920s as an up-coming academic, armed with a PhD in Education obtained at Columbia University in the United States in 1924 and appointed senior lecturer in the same discipline at the University of Cape Town.[28] He came from a religious family; his father was a pastor at the Dutch Reformed Church at Luckoff, in the Orange Free State (OFS), and his mother was a Dutch Reformed Church minister's daughter. Malherbe was educated at Stellenbosch University, where he graduated with a Master's degree in 1918.[29] After his return from the United States, Malherbe became influential in education matters. He was dissatisfied with the way social policy was designed in South Africa through political committees, working groups and commissions of inquiries which, after some years, produced dense reports which were difficult to understand, let alone be translated into practical policies which facilitated social changes. He advocated action-oriented research and 'social policy-making' to address social problems.[30]

In 1929 Malherbe's ideas, originally published in 1921[31], found resonance with the Minister of Education, Dr DF Malan, in the pre-war cabinet of the Union's prime-minister, General JBM Hertzog. He was invited by Dr Malan to establish the National Bureau for Educational and Social Research. The Bureau was an information-gathering and research division resorting under the Department of Education, with Dr Malherbe as its founder and director.[32] Through the Bureau, Malherbe was able to enhance his profile by applying his educational expertise, especially statistical surveys and analysis to advance social policy processes. This was demonstrated when he headed a Carnegie-funded Poor White Commission in South Africa, employing an interdisciplinary approach to tackle a social science research project aimed at scientifically uncovering the underlying causes of poverty, to determine practical solutions to the problem, and to drive social change in the country.[33] The Carnegie Report, which came out in 1932,[34] became a reference point for ultra-nationalistic Afrikaners who exploited its findings to agitate for an ethno-exclusivist agenda in the 1930s, to the annoyance of Malherbe.[35] Davie claims that in the Carnegie Report Malherbe argued for inclusive economic growth and development to the benefit of all South Africans, black and white, in order to create a foundation for racial harmony.[36]

However, Dubow argues that Malherbe was attempting to be apolitical and his racial stance was never really explicit.[37] Malherbe left the Bureau in 1938 and became the Director of the Department of Census and Statistics.[38] He had not settled properly into his position when war erupted in September 1939.

When the Union of South Africa entered the Second World War, Malherbe enlisted for military service on 6 November 1939, and became head of the Army Education Services within the Union Defence Force.[39] He also served as the Director of Military Intelligence throughout the war.[40] Malherbe was disturbed by the prevailing Nazi influence within Afrikaner politics in South Africa and its impact on the UDF. He was alarmed by the manner in which some Afrikaners exhibited extreme nationalistic tendencies.[41] When the motion of non-belligerence submitted by the Union's Prime Minister, Gen JBM Hertzog, was narrowly defeated (80 to 67) by the motion of his deputy, Gen JC Smuts, to join the British-led Allied forces in the war against Germany, some Afrikaners objected to another 'imperial war' or 'British war'.[42] Hertzog resigned and Smuts assumed office as Prime Minister. South Africa declared war on Germany. Thereafter, Smuts was consistently attacked for his war policy. Negative propaganda and anti-war activism from sections of the white Afrikaans speakers became prevalent.[43] Malherbe was bothered by this dissension, especially the impact it had on the morale of ordinary soldiers within the UDF. In his view, South Africa was 'fighting war on two fronts': one on the battlefield in the North, and one on the home-front against the subversive and sabotage activities of the anti-war forces.[44] Effective measures were urgently required as an antidote against the anti-government resistance and negative propaganda within the UDF.

Malherbe's prime intention was to assist the troops in sustaining their morale and educating them on the reasons for participation in the war.[45] Through his efforts, an information services system was instituted within the UDF, which was overtly propagandistic in its approach.[46] This earned Malherbe a reputation as '*Die Propaganda Kolonel*' by the Afrikaans press,[47] which viewed him as a traitor to the Afrikaners.[48] However, being a prominent intellectual, he remained steadfast in his commitment to the army education programme designed to assist ordinary soldiers in understanding the dangers of Nazism, and in appreciating South Africa's cultural, political and economic assets which deserved to be preserved.[49] Malherbe, together with his colleague, Major Leo Marquard as his deputy,[50] became instrumental in sustaining the education project for UDF members as a means to fight what he described as Hitler's worst form imperialism.[51] It was on this basis that he embarked on a wartime campaign for 'democratic citizenship' and to develop a sense of economic and social justice among troops through information services and propaganda.

MORALE CRISIS: SUBVERSION, APATHY AND DISQUIETS WITHIN THE UDF

The prevailing political dissension in South Africa, mostly as a result of the different right-oriented Afrikaner nationalistic movements' opposition to the government's war policy, correspondingly produced antagonisms within the military forces. The intelligence reports reflected a sense of apathy and disgruntlement amongst the white Afrikaans-speaking troops in the UDF. This was attributed to the anti-war activism and hyper-nationalistic tendencies associated with Dr DF Malan's 'Purified' National Party in the opposition ranks, and the extra-parliamentary movements such as the militant *Ossewabrandwag*.[52] Brig Gen CH Blaine, South Africa's defence secretary, indicated that the UDF was riddled with the 'Ossewabrandwag organisation which was deliberately attempting to undermine the morale of the army'.[53] Military intelligence stressed that the OB had been successful in permeating the government institutions, including some units of the UDF to encourage alienation and disloyalty.[54] From April to August 1940, the military security branch reported that 127 troops were discharged from the UDF in connection with their subversive activities and for endangering the forces.[55]

However, it was not only external forces which undermined the morale of the UDF. Some of the problems related to military policies and their implementation, for example, delays in processing requests, leave, limited accommodation, overcrowding and diseases.[56] Other problems were associated with military life, service conditions and concerns about the post-war situation.[57] It was particularly the government and military policies which had a profoundly negative impact regarding the conditions of service for UDF volunteers of lower ranks. Among troops, frustration set in as a result of inactivity because of an 'astronomical shortage of kit and equipment',[58] monotony of camp life,[59] as well as the performance of repetitive dull routines by men who had completed their training but were kept 'indefinitely' in base camps.[60] It was inevitable that inactive troops would be bored and frustrated, resulting in a decline of morale. Another point of frustration related to camp life. Ordinary soldiers in base camps, mainly in the Union, were dissatisfied with remaining in camps for longer periods when they had actually enlisted for active service. They felt that they were 'either forgotten' or, sarcastically suggested that their immediate superiors refused to 'let go of their services' because they were 'too competent'.[61]

Discipline among troops declined and petty offences such as drunkenness, selling military equipment and leaving camps without passes became a problem.[62] By 1942 UDF military courts were handling approximately 1 500 cases every month at Premier Mine military base alone, creating congestion in the military judicial system and immobilising officers and men for protracted periods of time.[63] Likewise, there was anxiety regarding the increasing number of desertions and discharges, which was "exceedingly high', about '500 monthly' according to the records of the dispersal depots.[64]

Those discharges were attributed to the dissatisfaction among ordinary soldiers. Captain Janie Malherbe, Dr Malherbe's wife, who also served as a propaganda officer within the DMI, cautioned that the 'dissatisfied soldiers had nothing good to say about the army, and consciously or unconsciously assist in slandering it'.[65] It was thus critical that their distress and legitimate concerns be resolved expeditiously or risk losing them to the anti-war factions which exploited the conditions of military service to wage anti-government propaganda.[66]

For several months after the outbreak of the war, censorship reports revealed details of ordinary soldiers' feelings of despondency. Morale on the home-front (among civilians) also impacted on the morale of the UDF volunteers. Some women often told their menfolk 'to get out of the damned army'.[67] Criticism about the inefficiency of military administration became increasingly rampant. Relatives of soldiers advised them to deliberately injure themselves to force discharges. For example, one relative said, 'I think it would be a good idea to get your little toe shot off and see what can be done'. Another one encouraged a soldier to exaggerate existing ailments or to create ailments in order to get special leave by suggesting that 'your kidneys will work the stomach trouble'.[68] Demoralising statements were made about OB activities, sabotage in the Union and the futility of the promises on 'things being different after the war'. Doubts were also expressed about the Allied forces' ability to win the war.[69] Military censorship staff were concerned about despondent letters which often encouraged pessimism and defeatism among the UDF troops. In the final analysis, authorities determined that bewilderment, distrust and anxiety among troops would be detrimental to the Union's war effort. Hence the imperative to implement propaganda and 'morale programmes' within the UDF to 'hearten the determination' of the soldiers.[70]

MALHERBE'S ANTIDOTE: DEVELOPING 'CONSTRUCTIVE PROPAGANDA'

The government and military authorities were not oblivious to the distress and restlessness amongst the troops. The question of the troops debating social and economic conditions, and the nature of post-war society, in a volatile political environment of Nazi-influenced extremism, created anxieties among Union officials.[71] These concerns pertained to the potential subversion of the UDF, excessive demands made by the soldiers, and the Nazi-inspired political extremism which could possibly result in the creation of an alternative 'post-war fascist or Soldiers' Party'.[72] The support, commitment and loyalty of the largely nationalist-oriented Afrikaner members of the UDF needed to be secured. As a result, within the Union military forces, authorities instituted various measures such as education and propaganda throughout the war to combat subversive influences, to eliminate camp monotony and to sustain the morale of the troops stationed in the Union and also those in the field.

However, there was an initial reluctance to introduce propaganda measures directed at the UDF troops owing to the fear of undermining troop discipline.[73] In the early stages of the war Major DAW Ruck, the head of the DMI's publicity and propaganda branch referred to as Ic[74], submitted a proposal to the military authorities emphasising the need to institute 'constructive propaganda' within the UDF because of censorship reports which revealed disaffection among some of the Afrikaans-speaking troops.[75] The proposed propaganda was intended to 'build troop morale, the keenness of men and to instil a strong sense of comradeship and devotion to duty in the early stages of the war'.[76] It was deemed critical to introduce counter-measures against subversive activities within the military and to inculcate an appreciation of 'liberal democracy' among UDF troops.[77]

Liberal supporters of Smuts, such as TC Robertson, the director of the Union Unity Truth Service (UUTS), a semi-official pro-government propaganda organisation, implored the military authorities and the Minister of Interior in charge internal security and propaganda, HG Lawrence, to introduce specialist propaganda within the UDF to preserve troop morale.[78] Because of the 'alarming' censorship reports on the restlessness of the troops, the necessity of instituting propaganda within the UDF became urgent. In January 1941 the DMI (Ic) made a submission to the Deputy Director of Military Intelligence (DDMI), Lieutenant Colonel HT Newman, who was responsible for censorship, military security and propaganda when the UDF was on active service, with an urgent request to give effect to the propaganda requirement in the UDF by appointing welfare (propaganda) officers at military units.[79] Closer co-operation between the propaganda officer and the unit intelligence officer was fundamental in expediting the passing of useful information on the views and feelings of the troops, thus maintaining alertness and facilitating the implementation of the relevant antidote measures in cases of disaffection. The propaganda officer would liaise with the DDMI for the submission of weekly reports to the DHQ (DDMI) and to receive special instructional and propaganda material for distribution in the units.[80] These proposals were clearly intended to inspire and encourage the loyalty of the UDF troops.

While the military authorities were still contemplating the DMI (Ic) proposals, Dr Malherbe, together with Alfred Hoernlé, an influential professor of philosophy at the University of the Witwatersrand (Wits) and liberal supporter of Smuts,[81] submitted proposals for instituting educational services to the South African soldiers.[82] The rationale was to ensure that the UDF members 'opened their minds' to appreciate what they were *fighting for*, not only what they were *fighting against*, and to explain the reasons why South Africa was engaged in a war. It would develop the political consciousness of the UDF troops with regard to the cause of country's participation in the war and boost their morale.[83] In addition, it was also aimed at stimulating thinking, sustaining the intellectual interest of the soldiers in social and political life,

and affording opportunities for ordinary soldiers to engage in discussions, to debate problematic issues of relevance and interest, to be assisted with education if their studies were interrupted, and also to combat boredom.[84]

Leo Marquard, who was an instructor at the SA Military College, proposed a political education scheme for soldiers to create awareness regarding the importance of their sacrifices. Malherbe revised Marquard's scheme and included elements drawn from Hoernlé, then submitted it to the military authorities for approval. The Malherbe-Marquard scheme emphasised that its aim was to strengthen troop morale and to 'improve the fighting force against Nazism'.[85] Malherbe emphasised that the scheme, which would be known as the Army Education Services, 'should not be looked upon by the military authorities as some new-fangled idea (born of civilian cranks), but must be backed as an integral part of training a democratic army to fight Fascism'. He further indicated that 'we want an army not of mercenaries but of soldiers – soldiers who are imbued with a powerful ideal'. It was deemed vital to integrate political education with military training to enhance the prospects of winning the war 'in anything but purely military sense'.[86]

The intention of the Malherbe-Marquard scheme was to utilise military personnel to conduct political education. Young men had to be 'hand-picked' for the special information services training of two to three months.[87] The selection of candidates for the course was based on their educational background and ability, and they had to be 'in sympathy with the Government's war policy'.[88] After undergoing information services training, these officers were to provide the 'main diet' of the educational programme to a group of at least twenty troops in camps and on active service, and they were to live among the troops. They were not supposed to arrive occasionally for an 'odd lecture'.[89] The main objectives of Malherbe's 'political education' scheme were twofold: 'to equip ordinary soldiers to defend democracy and to equip citizen-soldiers to build a better democracy once the threat of Fascism has been removed'. 'Democracy' was regarded as the core value which South African troops had to fight for. It was desired that after the war the 'politically-educated' officers and ordinary men would 'act as a powerful and salutary leaven amongst their own folks in the different parts of South Africa'.[90] Malherbe, ever-conscious of the prevailing political sensitivities in the country, emphasised that 'special attention should be paid to the needs of the Afrikaans-speaking troops' and most of the education officers needed to be proficient in the Afrikaans language.[91] It was imperative for Malherbe to assuage the political sensitivities of the Afrikaans-speakers to eliminate the risk of what Cardo refers to as 'volkish Afrikaner nationalism', which could jeopardise English-Afrikaans relations and impact negatively on troop morale.[92]

On 11 February 1941 the Malherbe-Marquard scheme was approved by the UDF's Chief of General Staff (CGS), Lieutenant General (Sir) Pierre Van Ryneveld, for adoption within the UDF's intelligence section (as IM - for 'information and morale').[93]

Malherbe was officially appointed as an 'officer commanding, education officers'.[94] The scheme was formalised as the Army Education Services for the military. The Hoernlé scheme, which was organised and presented by a panel of civilian lecturers, was then instituted in the Active Citizen Force (ACF) on the home front. It was presented in the Transvaal, Orange Free State, Natal, Eastern and Western Cape.[95] The AES served to give shape and expression to the ideals and beliefs espoused by Malherbe, with regard to what the war was *fought for*, which was a democratic way of life as opposed to Nazism.[96] Focusing attention on the 'cause to fight for' was a way of developing a moral and psychological commitment among the South African military volunteers.

SUSTAINING MORALE: MALHERBE'S ARMY EDUCATION SERVICES (AES) AND TROOP WELFARE

Malherbe undertook a difficult task of sustaining troop morale with vigour and enthusiasm. He commenced with the first propaganda training course for the 38 hand-picked men in Pretoria on 18 March 1941.[97] The civilian experts in their respective fields were selected to provide lectures to the selected nucleus of political instructors and to inspire interest in those specialised educational areas.[98] The plight of blacks also gained prominence by employing black lecturers to teach at those training courses, and through AES bulletins, booklets and articles in the various journals.[99] It was hoped that through raising consciousness among ordinary white soldiers with regard to the plight of black people in South Africa, they would in turn propagate the ideals of transforming the conditions in black communities.[100] After instituting the AES within the UDF, Smuts requested Malherbe to become the Director of Military Intelligence, within the SA Intelligence Corps (SAIC), with a military rank of lieutenant colonel. Under him, the military intelligence directorate expanded to include intelligence, security, censorship, publicity and propaganda (for morale).[101]

The AES course for females was introduced in 1942 as a combination welfare and information course. After training, the general purpose of the education officers was to provide systematic instruction to the troops and officers on topics dealing with the issues of the war and post-war reconstruction and adjustment, and to organise educational facilities to be utilised by troops during their spare time. The troops needed to be assisted in sustaining their interests and hobbies to enhance mental stimulation and to combat boredom. Classes were voluntary and included instruction in a variety of subjects such as languages, geography, law, accountancy and commercial subjects. The first group of qualified education officers sailed to North Africa in June 1941.[102] Divided into two groups, the education officers were attached to the 1st South African Division in Egypt, and to the 2nd South African Division which went to Egypt after a few weeks.[103] Ever conscious of troop sensitivities, the original term 'education officers'

was replaced with 'information officers' (IOs) in July 1941, as it was feared that troops might not like the term 'education' because it would 'remind them of school', and thus they would refuse to attend the 'information sessions'.[104] While in the field, lectures and talks were held regularly. This was a welcome distraction from the rigours of military activity. IOs did not wait passively in the rear areas for troops to come over for lectures. They actively 'scrounged' for educational material and followed the troops 'in trenches, manning gun sites, or digging'.[105] The IOs also coordinated discussion clubs as facilitators and organised information and reading rooms for the troops.[106]

Malherbe's IOs experienced some challenges. Attendance of lectures was sporadic, owing to the demands of active service. The officers commanding (OCs), who doubted the value of education within the military, raised concerns about the potential decline in troop discipline. However, because Malherbe's AES enjoyed official backing from the highest political levels in the Union, notably Smuts as Prime Minister, those OCs cooperated out of loyalty. Effective coordination of information services occurred during quieter periods in the North. Some senior military officers bought into the AES scheme. When the Sidi Rezegh campaign in North Africa began in November 1941, Major General GE Brink (1st SA Division) and Major General IP de Villiers (2nd SA Division) requested all IOs to move forward with the troops to 'make themselves useful'.[107]

The content of the IOs' lectures included political, social and economic issues, with an emphasis on the post-war adjustments, debates about troops as citizens not as soldiers, family issues, and information sessions about leisure-time utilisation.[108] Typical of Malherbe's emphasis on the importance of factual data, the IOs were provided with facts and statistics from the AES headquarters in Pretoria. From 1942 they were supplied with a 'Bulletin' as a communication channel and also as a platform for news, information and material for instruction.[109] A consolidated *Army Education Handbook*, which also incorporated the various bulletins, was provided and updated from 1942.[110] The IOs were required to remain impartial and objective, to encourage objective thinking and critical evaluation of the facts among the troops to combat groundless suspicions, rumours and subversive propaganda, to cultivate tolerance of opposing views, and to avoid advocacy of institutions and public criticism of official government policy. Rather, they were required to provide facts to the troops and leave the evaluations to the audience.[111] The main aim was 'to train troops for an attitude of the mind that bases action on thought'.[112] The emphasis of the lecturers was on pursuing 'truth' as the 'best propaganda', and enhancing the capacity of the troops to recognise and discredit the propaganda of lies.[113] A further development of the AES included the rise of voluntary discussion clubs where soldiers debated issues and expressed their opinions on issues pertinent to the war, or political or social conditions. These were called 'soldiers' parliaments', which represented fictitious 'democratic institutions' allowing for 'opposing political parties', thus providing an

outlet for projecting the soldiers' perspectives.[114] It was a welcome distraction and the soldiers 'up North' felt that to some extent they had access to some form of 'direct democratic participation afforded by the parliament'.[115]

The IOs also organised exercises which included simulations of 'commissions of enquiry' to investigate social or economic problems, or special interest groups such as farmers who concentrated on farming-related challenges and developments.[116] These activities ensured that every opportunity was utilised to enhance the educational development of the soldiers, to create awareness about civic obligations, and to sustain their political, social and economic consciousness, thus adding value to their experience during their military service. When other military officials attempted to object, Smuts intervened as he understood that it was 'good for the morale of his boys.[117]

Through access to censored letters and also as peers of the troops, the IOs also assisted in estimating the morale of the troops and in keeping the authorities 'informed of the feelings and opinions in the Army',[118] and, if possible, lessening their frustrations by explaining why something was happening. It was often difficult for IOs to provide remedies if the problems were associated with policy grievances and sometimes their suggestions were misconstrued as criticisms of state departments or sections.[119] However, the AES, through Malherbe, had direct access to the higher echelons of power. While he had to contend with military security in the Union, he was also obligated to ensure the maintenance of troop morale in the field and in the Union.[120] Hence at times Smuts needed to intervene in support of Malherbe and the AES activities, which were considered 'progressive and innovative'.[121]

Officially, the AES was never extended to black soldiers. The Director of the Non-European Army Services (DNEAS),[122] Colonel ET Stubbs, rejected such a scheme, preferring to organise activities such as training and propaganda for blacks from his office or to work through the Department of Native Affairs (NAD).[123] From 1942 to 1945, however, the IOs were utilised for the Cape Corps (CC) – a military unit for the South African coloured volunteers.[124] In June 1942 DNEAS arranged propaganda course for black troops at Palmietkuil North Training Depot, Welgedacht and at Rietfontein, Springs. The objectives of DNEAS were mainly to combat subversive activities (such as communist-oriented discussions) among black soldiers and to warn them to stay away from politics.[125] Malherbe was not satisfied with this, as it was felt that the needs of black soldiers were not being catered for.[126] The IOs were then instructed to provide informal instruction, for example, literacy classes, especially up North, to black soldiers.[127] The AES was useful in organising lessons to teach black troops how to read and write as well as to improve their general education. In some units, a number of black soldiers who had enlisted for service without any knowledge of reading and writing could now do both, and even sign their names.

Within the Union several libraries, books, stationery materials and even teachers trained in adult education were provided in various military camps for black soldiers.[128]

The AES collaborated with the various other agencies and organisations dedicated to the welfare, comfort and educational needs of the South African soldiers such as the Union Defence Force Institute (UDFI), the Red Cross, Ic Digest, UUTS, Gifts and Comforts, Springbok Newspaper and the UDF Film Unit. These organisations, together with Malherbe's AES, were fighting the war by facilitating the provision of entertainment services, sports equipment, recreational facilities and reading material as well as coordinating other distress-relief efforts to sustain troop morale.[129] However, the AES's relationship with the civilian propaganda agency, the Bureau of Information (BOI) under Arthur Wilson, was problematic. The BOI was distrusted by the UDF troops because it was run by civilians without any military experience and also ineffective in communicating the soldiers' experiences. Conflict between the BOI and the AES persisted throughout the war.[130] With other organisations, the AES facilitated a comprehensive information programme for the troops, generating publications, procuring and distributing books, bulletins, magazines, news sheets and newspapers.[131]

While the UDF propaganda programme was conducted to ensure 'victory in the struggle for the minds of men', it was also organised to promote the 'enlightenment' of the troops 'through education and information for civilian life ahead'.[132] Yet the AES came under public criticism for various reasons. Mainly the Nationalist press called Malherbe *'Die Propaganda Kolonel'* (The Propaganda Colonel), accusing him of arranging 'compulsory political lectures' for ordinary soldiers.[133] Nevertheless the AES grew steadily, both in terms of the number of IOs trained and in programme content. It took up other issues of national significance, such as the promotion of mutual cooperation between English and Afrikaans speakers and reflecting on the socio-economic and political problems confronting black South Africans. Ordinary troops were required to debate the issues and express opinions on their attitude regarding socio-economic opportunities for black peoples.[134] Roos argues that, although the AES was conceptualised in terms of the liberal-democratic vision, it was still hamstrung by the 'racialized practices and social assumptions of segregated colonial society'.[135] However, Cardo claims that in some way Malherbe's AES contributed to the development of a more liberal perspective with regard to the 'role and status of blacks in South Africa'.[136] It highlighted a need for a gradual extension of 'rights to non-Europeans' and a just social order after the war.[137]

EVALUATION OF MORALE: DISILLUSIONMENT

Between 1942 and 1943 an attempt was made to assess the feelings and opinions of the UDF troops and to ascertain their morale. The reports were disappointing.

The first report in August 1942 exposed a number of military policy-related factors negatively impacting on troop morale. Dissatisfaction arose as a result of the stagnation in camps, inappropriate troop utilisation, denial or delays of leave applications, delays in pay allowances or approval of requests, monotonous military life, discriminatory service conditions and concerns about the post-war situation.[138] In 1943 a second report regarding morale was produced. It highlighted widespread unhappiness within the ranks of the UDF. Discontent was attributed to the dull and unrealistic training routines, lack of promotions, service conditions, salaries and allowances, leave, transfers and movements, and the uncertain future of the UDF.[139] Therefore, the ideals and expectations espoused by Malherbe could not be effectively realised.

It was realised how difficult it was for the IOs to lift the morale of the troops when the problems lay with military policies and administrative inefficiency. Malherbe was sensitive to troop problems, hence the AES was initiated to mitigate the challenges and assist in preserving morale. However, he was mostly powerless to make any significant changes. He could mainly highlight them to the higher authorities. Hence, upon receiving those morale reports, Malherbe issued instructions that they should be highly classified and be 'kept under lock and key, in suitable custody or destroyed by fire if not required for records'.[140] It was a reflection of the high level of disillusionment and the fear that, if the morale reports landed in the hands of the anti-war faction, it could spell political disaster for the government.

CONCLUDING PERSPECTIVES

When war broke out, it was not only sufficient for the government and military authorities to swell the ranks of the UDF with volunteers for military service. An important consideration was to keep the volunteers motivated, loyal and committed to the Union's war policy. It was also critical to take into account the mental and emotional state of the troops, and to combat subversive activities in order to preserve their morale. Thus, Malherbe, through the AES, initiated a concerted 'morale building' effort to rationalise the basis of the Allied war effort, to develop the consciousness of the ordinary UDF troops regarding 'national unity' and to create awareness of the political, economic and social assets as well as challenges in South Africa.

The AES also became a valuable platform for critical reflection among soldiers. Ordinary UDF troops had an opportunity to read, discuss, debate and reflect on official and unofficial publications and reports, and also engage with issues of national importance during their simulated 'mini-parliaments'. The AES, by collaborating with other welfare agencies, also facilitated information programmes to stimulate the minds of ordinary troops and to combat boredom. It organised additional recreational resources

and entertainment programmes such as the radio services for troops, to create more variety and to ensure that the troops were kept informed, occupied and disciplined.[141] In addition, as the main propaganda project in the UDF, the AES was designed to systematically shape the political perspectives of troops in order for them to reject the tenetsof fascism, Nazism and even communism, and to embrace a more liberal outlook.

However, Malherbe's 'morale building' programme had limitations. Because of the large number of the troops, the reach of the AES was limited. The programme could not cater effectively for the 250 000 UDF members. On average, soldiers actually attended one lecture per month rather than one lecture per week as was originally intended for every soldier in a group of forty.[142] Malherbe would later concede that the AES had minimal influence on the consciousness of the army during the war.[143] The AES's liberal orientation failed to materialise after the war in South Africa.[144] It worked for a short duration (within the military) as it was dictated by war circumstances which created a 'ready audience' hoping for a new social order after the war. Malherbe's AES was a short-term measure. It mainly assisted in the rationalisation of the war effort and in the development of the socio-political and economic consciousness of the UDF troops. However, it was constrained by its poor ratio of IOs to number of troops, and its failure to extend its influence beyond the military and the war. Malherbe noted to his friend, Professor Jac Rousseau of the University of Rhodesia, in January 1974 that the AES was a '"flea-bite" on the Army as a whole', the main impact being on the IOs *themselves*, who developed 'a sense of involvement, a realisation of a responsibility'.[145] The reports on the low morale within the UDF was an indictment of his efforts. The AES programme to educate and lift the morale of the UDF troops was undermined by policy constraints and military administrative inefficiencies.

In 1944 Malherbe would get a sense of the deficiency of military policies. He found out on the military structure that his position had been 'degraded' to the military rank of Lieutenant Colonel, instead of Colonel, which he claimed to have been promised by the CGS (Lt Gen van Ryneveld) in February 1941.[146] He requested the 'mistake' to be corrected by 're-grading' the post to Colonel (or serve in an acting capacity because of his additional responsibilities). However, his request was rejected by the authorities on the grounds that no promise was ever made to him and his desired rank never existed.[147] Disillusioned, Malherbe conferred with Smuts and left the UDF to assume the position of the principal of the Natal University College on 1 April 1945,[148] where he remained until 1965.[149] The AES failed to produce the desired effect as servicemen expressed dissatisfaction with the government. For example, early in 1945 troops lost their 'discipline' and went on a rampage in Egypt when the South African authorities could not expedite their repatriation back home.[150] It was a demonstration of the government's failure to honour its promises. However, it must be acknowledged that repatriation-related protests were not unique to South African troops. Delayed repatriation often created frustrations and led to strikes and

riots by the anxious and home-sick Allied troops in the Middle East, Southeast Asia and North Africa.[151] Nonetheless, the propaganda rhetoric of the AES was inadequate and could not assist when practical problems arose. There was a sense that the Smuts government would never be able to provide the satisfactory basis for improving the socio-economic conditions.[152] The National Party of Dr Malan, which opposed the war effort, exploited the dissatisfaction, apathy and low morale to gain support, which helped to propel it to political power in 1948. Malan's National Party concentrated on the implementation the apartheid policies and discounted South Africa's efforts during the Second World War.

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48 Dubow, 'Scientism, Social Research and the Limits of 'South Africanism', p 116.

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7

‘A HAPLESS POST OF HUNGRY MEN’: INTERNED SOUTH AFRICAN COLOURED SOLDIERS IN EUROPE

Rishika Yadav

INTRODUCTION

The Cape Corps, a non-combatant military unit, was part of South Africa's defence forces that were deployed during the Second World War. While initially it was only recruited from the 'Coloured' or 'mixed-race' community, this was later expanded to include the Indian and Malay Corps for logistical purposes.[1] First established during the Great War as a combat unit, they were restricted to an auxiliary status in the Second World War and were subjected to a series of segregationist regulations. Despite these limitations, soldiers of the Cape Corps gave highly commendable service and were deployed in the North African, East African, Madagascar, the Middle East and Italian campaigns.

By 1941, the Cape Corps (CC), the Indian and Malay Corps (IMC), and the Native Military Corps (NMC) had been deployed in substantial numbers to North Africa. Inevitably, they were part of the South African forces (and Imperial forces) captured at Sidi Rezegh (1941) and during the fall of Tobruk (1942).[2] While a considerable number of non-white POWs were kept in labour camps in North Africa to work on docks, a smaller portion of these soldiers were shipped across the Mediterranean to European camps where they served anywhere between two to four years in internment. This chapter examines the experience of the Cape Corps soldiers as prisoners of war in Europe.

Studies on POWs in the Second World War have seldom taken account of the experiences of non-white captives. One prominent example of this is the limited number of works on Japanese prisoners in internment camps.[3] Most histories have detailed the plight of white Allied captives in Axis camps in Europe and beyond the continent, although this trend is now being reversed by recent scholarship. Still, the plight of South African soldiers and captives (including white servicemen) has been excluded from the overarching narratives on the Second World War. This 'shrinking history', as Bill Nasson notes, is a consequence of preoccupation of scholarship with the Anglo-Boer wars (or the South African wars), histories of apartheid, apartheid itself causing the scholarly seclusion of South Africa's role in the World Wars by academia in the West, and the lack of 'political capital' of South African participation resulting in these histories being cast aside in public memory.[4] However, a small but assertive group of regional scholars has produced works of note on South Africa's role in the Second World War, but the story of its non-white captives remains wanting.[5]

This chapter focuses on a niche narrative within histories of war and captivity and asserts that the history of Coloured South African prisoners of war is unique and multifaceted.[6] For the study of this history, it is important to understand three basic features from the outset. Firstly, CC soldiers were neither white nor commissioned.

This fundamental difference in ethnicity and rank alone resulted in the creation of dissimilar experiences for CC POWs. Secondly, unlike a large proportion of non-white soldiers from the Empire who had been coerced into joining its defence,[7] the non-white soldiers of South Africa had volunteered their services.[8] Despite the demotion to disarmament, many chose to join the war for a range of reasons including a sense of duty to King and Empire, to carry on familial and communal legacies of service, for sustainable employment, and even for adventure.[9] Finally, the men of CC carried with them a powerful legacy of long-standing armed service to the Empire. Coloured soldiers had been enlisted by the British during the frontier wars, the South African War, and, finally, in the Great War. During this war, battalions of CC had performed exemplary service and received commendations and medals for the same, including the battle honour of *Palestine 1918*. As will be elaborated, this legacy of service impacted upon the self-perception of Coloured soldiers (and prisoners) in the Second World War. This chapter builds on the above stated premises and examines the experiences of CC captives by reconstructing the three dramatic phases of their ordeal: capture, period of internment and, release and repatriation.

A total of 1,032 CC soldiers were captured by German and Italian forces through the course of the war.[10] During this period they endured a great amount of physical and mental exhaustion. They were made to march through the desert, called 'thirst marches', sometimes for weeks on end.[11] They were starved, dehydrated and forced to work on military assignments. Treatment by German and Italian guards, as will be discussed, was racially motivated and harsh. Added to this, the prisoners in Europe also faced the challenge of being interned in lands that were completely foreign to them. The following chapter will reconstruct the experiences of these POWs and examine the impact of internment on them.

INVESTIGATING CAPTIVITY

The uniqueness of the Coloured experience of internment requires an involuted approach to this history. By analysing the external circumstance of recruitment, capture and internment, it is possible to derive and reconstruct the experiences of the CC prisoner and how they perceived and processed the trauma of war and captivity. Such an approach is inspired by Clare Makepeace's work on British POWs in Europe titled *Captives of War*. Makepeace's study is the first cultural history on the subject (and a critical contribution to emotional histories) that explores how POWs made sense of their experience, and the impact of captivity on their psychology and perceptions of masculinity. Despite fundamental differences between *Captives of War* and this chapter, Makepeace's study provides a sound methodology in its examination of embedded histories in seemingly linear narratives of war captives.

She dissects the first-person narratives of the prisoners (in the form of diaries, letters, drawings and cartoons) by contextualising them within the circumstance of their production – that is she examines when they were written, why they were written and for whom. She further examines these narratives in conjunction to derive overarching themes of emasculation, humiliation, depression, and resistance.

The research for this chapter does not have the benefit of sizeable first-person accounts comparable to *Captives of War*, but by applying an analogous approach, it does attempt to reconstruct a comprehensive history of Coloured captivity in the Second World War. To further these analyses of external considerations, Karen Horn's seminal body of work on white South African POWs and Raffael Schek's compendium of studies on French African soldiers and prisoners have been used for comparison.[12] The primary sources of this study are first-hand accounts of CC captives and escapees obtained from British intelligence reports and, interviews and articles published in *The Cape Standard*.[13] These narratives have been substantiated with 'official' documents from the Department of Defence Archives in Pretoria.

The British Directorate of Military Intelligence Section 9 (MI9) was tasked with using the European Resistance networks to facilitate the return of Allied pilots and their crews shot down in Europe. The objective of the intelligence reports furnished by MI9 was to collect information on these networks. These include accounts of escapees from Italian and German POW camps and therefore contain reports of CC escapees who had been captured at Tobruk. Eleven surviving accounts are discussed here. The *Cape Standard* newspaper had an approximate readership of 45,000 among the Coloured, Indian and Malay communities.[14] The newspaper was sympathetic to anti-segregation causes, critical of the United Party, and frequently highlighted the contributions of non-white South Africans to civil society. Therefore, it ran a robust coverage of the War that ranged from news from the front to the participation of non-white soldiers.[15]

A glaring shortcoming for the historian in the accounts of MI9 reports and *The Cape Standard* is their *raison d'être*. The MI9 reports were produced for the sole purpose of collection of intelligence on conditions of camps and Resistance networks. They had little concern for the experience of the individual, focusing purely on the circumstantial aspect of captivity. Similarly, *The Cape Standard* was concerned with the story of the "soldier" (and not the person). Their reporting focused on the collective experiences of the troops, intending to translate these experiences into a singular narrative for the front page. For the weekly publication, these were *men of the Cape Corps*. Thus, these first-hand accounts are incomplete as the information they narrate has been coaxed by external actors and this took away agency from the soldier who recounts it.

However, *The Cape Standard* articles and the MI9 reports when analysed together, reveal alternate embedded histories. For example, the most pronounced identification

of a soldier is the insignia on the shoulder patch of the uniform. It demarcates the corps, rank and years of service of the soldier. During the Great War, the CC earned their badges in the Battle of Square Hill. Three companies of the corps participated in Allenby's Palestine Push (1917-18). Despite the limitations imposed on them by the Union, they trained and fought as one unit. However, during the Second World War, although the re-formed corps inherited the emblem, they no longer fought as one unit because of the policy of dilution. So, while Coloured soldiers replaced white non-combatants in infantry and artillery regiments, they were never formally recognised as soldiers of those regiments. This was protested on both ends. Colonel Hoy, Commander of Cape Corps, complained that the break-up of the units was causing a loss of identity and pride among CC soldiers. The Colonel's objections were overruled by the Defence Headquarters, the argument being that CC men would be proud to adopt and serve in the other regiments. However, this was never officially sanctioned. Moreover, the casualty list of non-white diluted soldiers remained separate from the casualty list of the regiments they were serving with.[16]

It is interesting to then note the discrepancy between this policy of dilution and the MI9 reports that systematized intelligence. While the National Archives at Kew meticulously retraced and recorded the actual unit of the Coloured soldiers (i.e. Cape Corps), the original MI9 reports identified them by the regiments they were serving with (such as the Scottish Regiment, the Border Regiment, Field regiments, and artillery divisions of the South African Corps) before their capture. This discrepancy was likely the result of the need for factual intelligence as, despite being of a different unit, they were posted and serving with the stated UDF regiments.

This discrepancy in the MI9 reports is reflective of the wartime experience of CC soldiers. Segregationist policies from the parliament and cabinet certainly outlined the terms of their service but wartime needs dictated their experience within these limits. The Union was against sending its troops beyond Africa, against arming non-whites, and intent on maintaining racial divisions on the front. In the course of the war, however, none of these policies were ever wholly or neatly executed. The experiences of Coloured soldiers from South Africa were greatly impacted by the disarray of war. By centring this study on first-hand accounts, it is possible to reconstruct a bottom-up history through the lens of the interned soldier in a chaotic circumstance.

SURVIVING CAPTIVITY

From Africa to Europe

All nine MI9 reports of the escapees have some commonalities. After their capture the soldiers were searched and stripped of all valuable and personal items including money.

Following this they faced the first of a series of long marches. Being captured in North Africa the prisoners were forced to walk through the desert towards the Mediterranean. Newman Robinson, a white prisoner on one such thirst march, recounted how non-white POWs were queued last for a cup of water and half a biscuit and if the supply finished before they could receive any, the non-white POWs were simply turned away.[17] This is substantiated by Private (Pte) Daniel Alexander's account who described how the POWs marched for five days to Benghazi, only being able to drink water when it rained. They had to survive on a single large biscuit shared between two men.[18] They were then camped at Benghazi for two weeks. Food here was just as meagre as in the desert. A daily ration consisted of a loaf of bread between two men and a small tin of bully beef between six men. 'Pte W' [sic], who was injured when Tobruk fell, described his ordeal as a wounded captive. Along with his comrades, he was transported to Derna (a port in Libya) where he was admitted to an Italian tent hospital. "My arm was in a plaster of Paris cast. An inhuman Italian doctor simply wretched [sic] the cast off my arm; the agony was indescribable."[19] Like Benghazi, the camp conditions in Derna were abysmal, "Many of us suffered from dysentery, there were flies and lice galore, we had little food, and water was scarce."[20]

Next, the captives were shipped from North African ports to POW camps in Italy, Greece and the German *Stalags*. The journeys across the Mediterranean were treacherous as a result of intense naval warfare.[21] Pte Alexander, Pte Arthur Daniels and Pte Daniel Dorman, had all been aboard Italian ships that were torpedoed. Depending on the port of disembarkation in Europe, the POWs either faced more long marches or suffocating transportations to the European camps. Pte Alexander along with thousands of marooned soldiers ended up on Greek shores. Under the vigilance of Italian guards, they walked in rain and snow, wearing only their North African desert uniforms that were grossly insufficient for the cold conditions.[22] "On the first night […] about a thousand men for shelter had about a hundred bales of straw."[23] Meanwhile, Arthur Daniels and Daniel Dorman, both of whom were wounded in a different torpedo attack, were rescued by an Italian Red Cross ship and brought to Naples. They were one of the first CC men to arrive in Italy – even before the deployment of CC soldiers to the peninsula.

The non-commissioned South African POWs were divided between various transit and labour camps. There was no clear policy of segregation based on race in the camps, an aspect of captivity that CC prisoners were quick to notice, understandably so. Pte W, who had been moved by a Red Cross ship from Derna to Naples, described his experience in a hospital at Gizerta where 'nice' English POW medical staff were managing the ward. "There was no segregation in the two hospitals, white and coloured lay side by side." That the Private felt the need to single out the hospital suggests that he had previously been facing segregation.

After his release, 'W' was transferred to Camp Lucca, where the prisoners occupied tents. Here, he described, "The cold was terrific and the mud and slush most annoying. I occupied a tent with some English-speaking and Afrikaans-speaking Springboks who were always very nice and chummy with me." Once more, by separating the identity of his white tent-mates, W indicates the uniqueness of this experience in Europe. Another consideration in W's narration is his referring to his white South African comrades as 'Springboks'[24] (there are no accounts of non-white South African soldiers identifying themselves or each-other).

This clear need to define racial identities and highlight instances of momentary social equality (for readers of the *Cape Standard*[25]) points to the climacteric circumstances in the Union concerning the rights of its non-white populations.[26] While, on the one hand, the POWs from Europe were acknowledging the existing social and legal separation of ethnicities within South African communities, on the other hand, they were also pointing to the possibility of coexistence under the auspices of a unifying cause (of which captivity had been a consequence).

Life in Camps

While in camps the prisoners worked in a variety of details with negligible pay. They worked as manual labourers performing jobs such as chopping wood, harvesting potatoes, digging gun emplacements, carrying munitions and bombs, and unloading supplies. They would work for as long as 10-11 hours. While prisoners in camps were, for the most part, divided on the basis of language for ease of administration, non-white soldiers, especially African soldiers, were also penned into 'non-European' camps. Here they were forced to work on aerodromes and airfields, ammunition wagons, petrol dumps and other military projects. This was perhaps the most gross violation of the Geneva Convention.[27] An anonymous ex-POW of CC described his experience at one such camp,

> "Only Non-Europeans were sent to Camp 85 in Italy to work on the aerodromes which continually came under Allied bombing. The camp was controlled by Germans with Italian guards. At this 'arbeitslager',[28] i.e. work camp, we were forced to work. It was a case of 'Nochts arbeiten, nichts essen' [sic] i.e. no work no food. Hunger compelled several of us to do the work. A German Sargent-Major used to overturn our homemade beds if we were a minute late getting up for work."[29]

While several stipulations concerning health, safety and possessions of POWs (especially non-commissioned prisoners) were regularly violated, significantly white POWs *were not forced* to work on military projects. Moreover, while all prisoners could be employed for non-military work assignments, they had to volunteer for such work. However non-white South African captives were forced into labour as

neither Germans nor Italians considered 'Black' POWs as regular force, and therefore the Geneva Convention was not applicable to them.[30] It is also possible that 'Black' or 'African' POWs were used as they were not as actively protected by Allied commands as their white counterparts were. This was especially true for non-white South Africans as the administration of these soldiers fell entirely under the Directorate of Non-European Army Services (DNEAS) - an office which was not even formally part of the UDF. Such an analysis becomes more credible when compared with the situation of the French African prisoners who were also forced into dangerous war-related assignments as the Vichy government was limited in its role as a protecting power. There are also cases of white French prisoners being pushed into military assignments because of this incapability.[31] As Horn's book informs, this was not the case for white South African POWs.

Of course, this is not to presume that the non-white South African POWs simply succumbed to their fate. It is possible that those who were educated or had had some form of instruction in military regulations were aware of their rights as POWs. Pte Alexander, for example, refused to work on a military labour assignment. He was punished with ten days of solitary confinement.[32] In another incident, Gunner Duickers, in his account to MI9, related that he had been injured at an Italian camp during an air raid while working on an aerodrome. In retaliation, his supervisor Sgt John Colbert, a Non-Commissioned Officer of CC who was also a POW, organised a strike for ten days protesting the military nature of the work. Colbert was gaoled and work resumed. The following year, as Duickers recalled, Colbert once more complained to two Red Cross officials about the military work details being assigned to non-white South African POWs at Beauvais. While the officials agreed it was against the Geneva convention, subsequent reports of continued work at the aerodrome suggests no action was taken against it.[33]

However, vast number of CC POWs found themselves captive in countries they were hopelessly unfamiliar with and had no higher authorities to advocate for them. That the Red Cross officials did not press German authorities to correct such violations suggests that they may have shared their prejudice and possibly prioritised complaints of white captives. For these reasons, the Axis captors may have considered these non-white captives from Africa as less likely to sabotage military assignments.

In the case of CC soldiers, this theory is supported by accounts of a camp at Beauvais (a town in northern France). Several official reports and first-hand accounts from Coloured POWs pointed to the existence of a non-European camp at Beauvais that mostly held non-white South African soldiers. This POW camp, *Stalag* 133, was a 'Frontstalag' – one of 57 Nazi POW camps established in occupied France, originally, to imprison African soldiers of the French colonial armies. Additionally, Beauvais also had a major *Luftwaffe* aerodrome from where air raids were carried out by Germany during the Battle of Britain. It was therefore frequently bombed by the RAF.

According to *The Cape Standard*, the Beauvais camp held nearly 400 POWs from CC and NMC units working on the aerodrome.[34] Conditions here seemed more lenient as the captors allowed and provided for rugby and soccer tournaments and permitted internally-organised concerts for the amusement of the POWs. This also implies that the captives were healthy enough to engage in social activities. Indeed, "All prisoners who had been at Beauvais agreed that it was the best camp they had "[35] It is then reasonable to presume that the camp's proximity to the Allied lines on the western front and its strategic importance in aerial warfare would have incentivised the camp captors to maintain morale of their prisoners to prevent acts of sabotage and escape.

Life in most camps, however, was not as 'pleasant' as that in Beauvais. In the early days of captivity, the Red Cross, YMCA and Toc H were still establishing their presence. In a post-war report, South African Red Cross officials described how the organisation had been overwhelmed by the 'Tragedy of Tobruk'. It took months for the POW department to simply confirm the identities of the thousands of captured soldiers. This meant that little to no aid could be provided in the absence of reliable information on the prisoners. The situation of non-white POWs was particularly vulnerable as a substantial number of them were uneducated. Additionally, the organisation had to take on the responsibility of the actual correspondence between non-white prisoners and their families where relatives were illiterate.[36]

In the early months of internment Red Cross was not yet supplying parcels at Camp 66 in Capua (Italy) where some of the first CC prisoners were detained. Here food was so scarce the men were reduced to eating 'old bones and even grass'.[37] Once conditions improved, Pte W noted, the Italian rations consisted of a 'sourish' bread that they referred to as 'catspaw', some macaroni, boiled cabbage leaves, and, on alternate days, one square inch of hard cheese. He also noted that all prisoners, irrespective of race, received the same food and treatment from the Italian guards. He further described an incident where a group of guards dumped a POW in a lavatory pit full of human excrement as punishment for attempting to steal a Red Cross parcel.[38] Conditions in the *Stalags* were no better. Pte Dixon, who was interned at Jakobathsal (German camp near Dresden), described his time there,

> "It was in the heart of winter with two feet of snow on the ground. Some of us had to sleep in draughty stables without doors and we were given two blankets each by the Germans. We managed to scrounge some grass, which we made do for a mattress. Others were not so lucky, they had to sleep outside in the bitter cold as best as they could. Six of us had to share a small loaf of stale bread about 8 inches long. We received potatoes boiled in water, but I never saw a whole potato because they were always boiled to pieces. On rare occasions we received about ½ cubic inch of butter. The meat was blueish, and we suspected that it must have been either donkey or horse meat. It tasted neither like beef nor mutton. We Non-Europeans had an exceptionally bad time in this camp."[39]

While in the POW camps, CC soldiers unanimously attribute their survival to the Red Cross parcels they received. Despite the hardships of forced labour, Daniels and Dorman described Grotalia (camp in Italy) as the 'best camp' simply because they received food parcels from the Red Cross.[40] In the Italian camps, it seems, even the captors relied on these parcels. Brown noted that the prisoners would receive only a quarter of the cigarettes assigned to them and that the Italian guards would warn them not to complain about the amount. It is reasonable to presume that the guards were responsible for the shortfall.

However, the Red Cross initiatives did have their limitations. A South African POW representative (who was himself in German captivity) described the condition of South African captives in general in an intelligence report sent to the Red Cross. He reported that the men in Italy had not received any mail for over two months, that '90% of parcels of cigarettes from the South African Red Cross had not arrived', that there was a severe shortage of warm clothes and boots, and that South African POWs in Italy had, on average, lost 20 kilograms in 12 months of captivity. Overall, the Allied representatives who authored the report complained that "…the British Red Cross published details about life in the *Stalag* which in no way correspond with the truth."[41] While the Red Cross did not explicitly make any distinctions based on race while providing aid, the aid they did provide was in most cases, just enough to allow prisoners to scrape by.

Violence

In the MI9 reports, the soldiers continually describe the violence they were subjected to at the hands of both Italians and Germans, "…the Italians treated us very badly; not much food. In Germany we were treated badly, no food." In a collective interview Pte John April, Pte Marugoe Kgapula and Pte Aron Zvani recalled how on asking for more food the Germans would call them 'dirty English dogs' and beat them.[42] Pte Hermenes Daniels further described the violence he and his comrades faced from their captors, "We were all badly mistreated and beaten with rifle butts and kicked and slapped on the face … We worked all the time..."[43] In an Italian POW camp at Pollus (Greece) Pte Joe David Brown recounted how there was no food for five days sometimes, "Many of the prisoners were ill with dysentery, and nothing was done for them." Brown was later shifted to another camp at Capua where the conditions of work were brutal. The prisoners were mercilessly beaten, especially if they became sick and could not work.[44]

As the war progressed, the tide began turning against the Axis powers and the treatment in camps got worse. In 1944, Pte Brown was shifted to a German *Stalag* in Moosburg which was, in his words, 'fit for pigs'. He was later moved to the front at Chartres (France), which was frequently under attack by American forces.

"Whenever allied planes came over, the Germans seemed to go mad and would beat us with rifle butts for no apparent reason."[45] In May of the same year, Jim McKenzie was shot and killed at the camp for complaining of being ill.[46] W Harris was another CC soldier who was shot at the camp for, as the Germans claimed, being drunk. It is curious how a POW could get hold of alcohol under confinement, with little pay and even less time to spare. But even if the POW did manage to bribe someone or steal alcohol, to shoot a prisoner for drunkenness is an excess and shows how little the lives of non-white captives mattered.

These were not the only incidents of cold-blooded killings. In August 1944 the wife of Pte William Harris received a cable informing her that her husband, who had been captured at Tobruk in 1941, had been shot dead in a German camp for 'insubordination'. The Defence Department in Pretoria implied that they were investigating the circumstance of this 'insubordination' to warrant the Private's death.[47] Meanwhile, at Camp 85 (Italy) Red Cross parcels of boots were being issued to the non-white prisoners when a 'native' was hit by a guard with a rifle-butt for cutting the line. The 'native' retaliated by head-butting the guard and knocked him off his heels. Fearing retribution, the captive fled and hid in the camp. After a futile attempt to find the prisoner, the infuriated guards fired at random killing an 'innocent South African prisoner'.[48]

The violence of their captors certainly brings to fore the speculation of whether this aggression was the result of racism. In the absence of more definitive information, one way to analyse this mistreatment is to juxtapose it with the treatment of white soldiers. Brutality by German and Italian soldiers against white Allied soldiers was not uncommon. However, even a cursory reading of white POW accounts reveals that this brutality was not without 'reason'. Captors threatened their prisoners with violence as an interrogation technique, or because they (or their fellow prisoners) had attempted to escape their imprisonment, or an offending remark had been made against Germany or the German Führer. Of course, there were also those captors who were simply sociopathic and cruel, and flexed this aggression on their prisoners. Still, white POW accounts present a 'narrative' of the brutality they endured.

As a further comparison, seven soldiers of the British Parachute regiment were captured by the Germans in 1945. To interrogate the POWs, the German captors at first threatened to shoot the men, and then fed them soup doused with salt. The prisoners were then kept in the sun for seven hours without water. One of the captives, Pte Strong, was told by the Germans that the war was 'over for him' to which Strong promptly responded that the war was over for the Germans as well – following this he was severely beaten.[49] A similar account was narrated by Capt. Richard Powell of the 1st Battalion of Welsh Guards. Captured in August 1944 the Captain attempted three escapes from his prison guards. Following his second escape, he was re-captured

in a field and severely beaten. He was then called an 'English swine' and punished with three days in a pig sty.[50]

For a more 'contemporary' analysis – Horn, in her book, reconstructed the experiences of white SA POWs captured in Tobruk relayed from interviews that she conducted. While Horn's interviewees do mention instances of violence, these are few and sporadic. In one instance Fred van Alphen Stahl recalled how, while on a thirst march in the desert he pointed at a jeering Italian guard and said 'two *gelati* tingelingling'. The furious guard was then about to shoot at the prisoners but was stopped by a soldier. In another instance, David Brokensha described how he was slapped by a guard for 'offending' him. "The slap didn't really hurt, what hurt was our youthful pride" [51] These accounts plainly reflect that, despite being goaded, captors exercised restraint as acts of violence against white captives assiduously protected by the Geneva Convention would, in all likelihood, have consequences.

Nevertheless, stories of brutality in the Second World War are endless. But it is the context of this brutality that allows for an analysis of the nuances of racialised violence. Certainly, the accounts of the seven soldiers from the British Parachute regiment are more intense than those of the Coloured soldiers captured in Tobruk. But violence on the white soldiers was carried out when it was 'provoked', whereas all Coloured POWs recount multiple instances of 'unprovoked' beatings. This treatment, of course, was not unique to CC men. In a subsequent report commissioned by DNEAS in 1947, the treatment of non-white POWs captured in North Africa and the Middle East was described as 'the worst treatment imaginable'.[52] According to this damming assessment, non-European soldiers captured in North Africa were forced to work as labourers on docks, munitions, and mine clearing for long hours. They were not allowed to take shelter during bombing raids. The impact of this was most severe in Tobruk where Allied bombing was relentless post-1942. They received a packet of British army biscuits a day, little water and were kept in 'wire cages' where they were vulnerable to bombing. "Tired and weary, they are beaten and kicked by both Germans and Italians."[53]

It can thus be assumed that the captors were asserting their authority over the captives, and that they did not see these captive as deserving the same treatment as their white counterparts. A more intriguing argument can then be made when this senseless cruelty is juxtaposed with the violence experienced by non-white soldiers of the French Empire. Scheck in his studies discusses the brutality of the treatment meted out to French 'colonial' soldiers who were viewed as animalistic, sub-human and violent. There are several recorded instances of 'Black massacres' wherein captured French African soldiers were indiscriminately murdered by German soldiers to exact 'vengeance'.[54] However, Scheck notes that the frequency and intensity of this violence decreased as the Vichy government assumed a more active role as a Protecting Power to shield its captured non-white soldiers in Nazi camps.

Finally, in another relevant incident, Pte April noticed an American prisoner reach into their compound for a cigarette and was unfortunately seen by a German officer. The officer stabbed the American prisoner's hand as punishment.[55] This was not the only incident of brutality against Americans that CC soldiers singled out. Daniels informed that, although he and his comrades 'had it rough', the American prisoners were treated particularly badly, "…the Germans would not allow us to give them cigarettes or food from our Red Cross parcels."[56] Perhaps this targeted brutality was consequence of the American advance against the Axis powers.

The violence experienced by Coloured POWs was not limited to the brutality they were forced to bear, but also the instances of cruelty that they witnessed being perpetrated on fellow captives, white and non-white. However, for the non-white prisoners this violence, although seemingly senseless, was systematically cruel. Their white captors considered non-white lives to be expendable *without consequence*. It can be argued that the difference in treatment meted out to white and non-white South African captives is symptomatic of the difference in protection afforded to both groups by Allied commands and neutral organisations such as Red Cross. Although the Geneva Convention of 1929 does not discriminate against soldiers based on ethnicity, the underlying assumption that non-white soldiers were not part of the 'regular forces' is not just a prejudice that the Axis captors carried, but also one that was cultivated by Allied governments and commands. After all, non-white soldiers were not paid at par with their white counterparts, could not be commissioned as officers, and, in the case of South Africans, could not bear arms. It is then fair to conclude that, on both sides of the war, non-white soldiers received the short end of the segregation stick. Despite serving the causes of liberty and democracy, these non-white prisoners were not protected by their own governments, and severely assaulted by their captors.

ESCAPING CAPTIVITY

'Escape' is perhaps one of the most dominant themes in public memory of the World Wars. Biographies of Allied POWs detailing their experiences that were subsequently converted into films constructed glamorous stories of captivity and escape.[57] "The stories of these brave men provided a popular myth of escape, being alone in enemy territory with very limited resources, living on one's wits and returning to the arms of a loving family at home."[58] As Makepeace put it, within this myth of internment, "captivity was a game for POWs, dominated by their schemes to outwit, evade and escape from their captors."[59] In South Africa the most celebrated escape of a non-white recruit was that of Job Maseko.[60] He was a stretcher-bearer from the Native Military Corps, who, with the help of his comrades Andrew Mohudi, Sam Police of NMC and Koos Williams of CC, blew up a docked German cargo boat while detained in Tobruk. Despite his extraordinary bravery, Maseko was robbed of the Victoria Cross

as he was 'African' and was instead awarded the Military Medal. His valiant feat was subsequently counted and recounted by several historians, journalists, and even in a feature documentary by Vincent Moloi titled *A Pair of Boots and a Bicycle*. In 1997, the South African Navy renamed a Warrior-class strike craft after him. Maseko's exploits are perhaps the most celebrated public history of participation of non-white South African soldiers.

Similarly, a most incredible feat was achieved by Pte Alexander while he was in captivity in Camp 60 in Lucca, Italy. Captured in November 1941 at Sidi Rezegh, Alexander had been a POW for almost two years when he successfully escaped from his camp. He observed the movements of the guards and sentries and carefully planned his escape by cutting the wires. Following this he proceeded to walk to Rocacastrala, a journey that took eight days. He spent the winter hiding in Rocacastrala and was joined by fifteen Americans and an Italian partisan group that was a hundred strong. Alexander served with them till they reached Allied forces.[61]

Gunner William Loubser successfully carried out a similar escape. Loubser had been in internment for over two years when he, like Alexander, managed to escape his camp by observing the guard shift and cutting the wires. He was near Rome at the time and was helped by civilians for a week before he was recaptured. On his second attempt, during the Italian invasion, Loubser simply 'walked out' of his camp unchallenged by the sentries. He was recaptured by the Germans in April 1944, this time Loubser was imprisoned. On his third attempt, he eluded the guards by hiding behind a pillar as the camp was being evacuated by the retreating German forces. He evaded capture and joined an Italian partisan group, serving with them until he reached a British unit at San Justina.[62]

However, such a linear approach of 'braving the odds' undermines the physical and psychological complexity of escape for a POW, especially a non-white captive. Prisoners, as has been explored, lived in trying conditions, suffering from malnourishment, starvation, dehydration, fatigue, untreated injuries, and diseases such as lice, fever, and dysentery. The position of CC captives was further complicated because they had not been prepared for European internment. NEAS troops were not meant to serve beyond the continent and were therefore not briefed on survival on European soil. Even a cursory reading of MI9 accounts and newspaper interviews reveals that CC soldiers had little information on their captors or surroundings and were unaware of their rights as POWs. They worked long hours in foreign lands with little to no information on Allied positions and were, therefore, also susceptible to demoralising rumours and Axis propaganda of Allied defeat. Harsh weather conditions further limited the 'seasons' of escape. Those who did not speak English had the additional handicap of communication.

For CC prisoners, escaping European camps without the support of intelligence networks, little aid and a language barrier meant that a lot depended on the captive's wit and luck, and on timing. Most prisoners carried out their escape in France, presumably, because of their proximity to the front. They were all uniformly helped by French civilians who hid them, fed them, gave them civilian clothes, and aided their return to the American line. Gunner Duickers and Pte J Swartz stayed with a French family on the outskirts of Beauvais for nearly two months. Pte William Magabe, Pte Hermanes Daniels and Pte Johnny van Heerden were all hidden by civilians for twelve days before being helped to the American lines. With the threat of evacuation to German camps, several CC soldiers managed to escape from Beauvais as it was close to the American line at Chartres.[63]

Naturally, receiving French assistance was not an experience unique to CC soldiers. The European resistance aided Allied soldiers caught across enemy lines and hid targeted minorities like the Jewish population. What is significant is that while seeking help, these CC soldiers identified themselves as English, and not South African. While crossing the desert, Maseko and his comrades had also identified themselves as 'English' when they encountered civilian 'Arabs'.[64] Perhaps they called themselves English simply to identify themselves as soldiers of the Allied forces, having answered the call to serve 'King and Empire'. Or perhaps, having spent months in captivity alongside soldiers from all corners of the Empire, they now collectively saw themselves as English soldiers of the imperial army.

There are several aspects of evasion that are unique to the men of this study. Escape and evasion amongst white Allied POWs was more organised. Soldiers often received briefings on captivity, were made aware of available help should they manage to escape, and organised 'escape committees' while imprisoned. Escape itself was more organised with studies of patrolling, bribing guards for information, digging tunnels, acquiring tools and money – and finally, executing the plan. With the exception of Alexander, Loubser and Duickers – CC escapees, more often than not, chanced on opportunities of evasion, usually while being transported or evacuated. Theirs was a more 'spontaneous' and unsupported escape.

Moreover, for white Allied POWs, the challenge was to evade the secret police and military police on their tails. However, escapees generally had knowledge of Allied outposts to determine the direction of their travel to either Allied lines or neutral states. While in camp they would also be able to acquire information on trains, ports, and details of civilians helping escapees. Similarly, non-white South African POWs who carried out successful escapes from North African POW camps had already served in the region and thus had a fair amount of information on the geography and movement of troops. Thus, despite facing daunting marches through the desert that could last from five days to a month, numerous daring attempts to escape, especially during air raids, were made.[65] CC escapees in Europe, contrarily, had little information

on Allied lines and relied heavily on the goodwill of civilians to hide, help and guide them to American and British posts. This lack of information would have discouraged many from attempting to escape – the dilemma remained, escape and go where? One example of this comes from Pte W,

> "After the capitulation of Italy the Jerries [Germans] came with six truck-loads of men armed with machine- and tommy-guns. The colonel and the captain of Luca Camp were shot at the camp gates. We prisoners who thought that we would receive the same treatment jumped over the barbed wires. The Germans did not open fire on us but called us back and took us to a German camp near Dresden."[66]

Despite having the opportunity to escape, the prisoners chose to 'return' to captivity as a way of survival. Another example is Pte William Magabe's 'failed' escape. Magabe's first escape was from an Italian camp. He evaded capture for three months, hiding in the countryside with the aid of Italian civilians, until he was caught. Even though Magabe eluded his captors for a prolonged period, that he was unable to make it out of enemy territory suggests the lack of information he had. Nevertheless, his second (and successful) attempt was in France where he managed to cross over to American lines.

REPATRIATION

The road to liberation was long for CC captives. Their first experience of Axis defeat was the invasion of the Italian peninsula. As Allied forces made gains, Germans began evacuating POW camps in the region. Prisoners were transported by train, trucks and on foot. Pte D who, along with his comrades, was transported from Lucca to Germany, described the abhorrent journey,

> "We were issued with rations for seven days, put in cattle trucks which were nailed shut and covered with many strands of barbed wire. There was no chance of escaping. Two pails were given to us to be used as lavatories and by the time we reached the Brenner Pass, the stench was so awful and flies and fleas covered our bodies."[67]

Several Coloured POWs were eventually transferred from Germany to labour camps in France such as Beauvais. As the American line began pressing on the French front, CC prisoners became part of the long taxing marches to the heart of the Third Reich. As has been discussed, some POWs managed to escape during these evacuations and reported to American lines. The existing sources are silent on how the POWs reacted to Germany's unconditional surrender. One can imagine it must have made homecoming a sweet reality.

As the Allied advance progressed rapidly in 1945, they liberated several labour and POW camps. Freed South African POWs were moved from the continent to ports in England where they were received by UK authorities and subsequently transferred to UDF reception camps being managed by the *South Africa House* in London. The reception camps were divided between 'European' and 'non-European' soldiers. At the reception camps, the former POWs received medical attention, were issued new clothes and pay-books with pay, and transferred to *segregated* rest camps. All 'European' ex-POWs were granted 30 days of leave for recuperation; 'Non-European' ex-POWs were allowed no leave during their stay (possibly to prevent them from mixing with the local populace) and instead 'outings, picnics and tours' were arranged for them.[68]

Subsequently, soldiers were shipped across the Atlantic and down to the ports of Cape Town and Durban where they were welcomed by cheering crowds. On 13th February 1945, few months before the end of hostilities, 700 released CC and NMC prisoners on liners accompanied by two battleships were bought into Durban. There they were welcomed by Col Stubbs, head of the DNEAS. The Colonel greeted his men with a short speech that he repeated in English, Afrikaans, Sesotho and Xhosa, "I thank God that you have all been spared and that you have had a safe journey across the seas. Your capture and the welfare of your families have been a great concern to me but with the help of the Almighty you have all returned, and I hope that you will all be fully restored to health, ready to take up your positions where you left off when you were captured."[69] The soldiers were then given refreshments and transported by train to Pretoria where 'plans were elaborate'. They were served with buns, minerals, ginger beer, cigarettes, and music was provided by Directorate Film Vans.[70]

It is difficult to imagine how these soldiers would have perceived their return, carrying the burdens of their traumatic captivity while being reunited with family and friends who they had probably lost hope of seeing again. They must have been relieved yet traumatised and scarred, mentally and physically, from their experience of captivity. AS Mopeli-Paulus, son of a Mosotho Chief who had joined CC 'by accident', would later describe his return to South Africa from a successful campaign at El Alamein, "At last we landed. In the midst of our welcome we remembered, this was a country of thorns for us."[71]

THE TRAUMA OF INTERNMENT

White Allied POWs, as Makepeace notes, documented their experience in three forms of records: (i) correspondence, (ii) log books issued by the YMCA, (iii) diaries. Through these narratives Makepeace was able to reconstruct a history of how prisoners experienced captivity as it occurred. "Diaries, letters and logbooks were written as the experience unfolded, at a series of moments, over a period of time, whilst these men

were in the midst of both a shifting war situation and changing personal relationships, without an awareness of how the war would finally end."[72] For the men of this study, it is unclear whether they received logbooks or diaries to record their experiences. If they did, these sources have certainly not survived in archives. However, it is likely they were not issued any writing material except stationery for letters and postcards. This was perhaps because most of the non-white Allied soldiers were illiterate as well as working exhaustive gruelling hours. Furthermore, scholarly works on other non-white Allied histories also majorly source their first-person narratives from letters, postcards, second-hand accounts, and oral testimonies. There is certainly an underlying racialised element here of the assumed unimportance of non-white narratives. Where all white soldiers within Allied forces were at least afforded the opportunity to record their stories, it seems the assumption was that non-white stories did not merit a similar recognition. As for correspondence, while it is highly plausible that letters and postcards did make it across the Atlantic to the relatives of POWs[73], it is almost futile to attempt to trace these as, unlike in Britain and USA[74], no organised efforts were launched in South Africa to collect and document such sources. Thus, for soldiers of CC, to imagine 'an insight into how prisoners of war experienced captivity', one must rely on the deductive and embedded histories in existing sources.

A key point of inquiry for Makepeace was perceptions of masculinity among POWs. She examined the impact of surrender, disarmament, propaganda and mistreatment by camp officials on the psyche of a POW and how they did (or did not) cope with this 'emasculation' during and after the war. A crucial component of coping with this emasculation, as Makepeace and Horn observed in their works, was their perception of the Italian and German guards. By viewing the Italian soldiers as less than themselves, and the Germans as fighting for a 'losing' side, the POWs were able to cope with the 'shame' of disarmament and their inability to fight on the front as their non-captured comrades were doing. As Horn described, the position of Afrikaner prisoners was more complicated than that of their English counterparts. However, uniformly, escape formed a key part of their defiance of captivity, as did attempts at sabotage, and provocation of guards and sentries against the propaganda of Allied defeat.

Horn expounded these emotions of betrayal and defeat amongst the white South African forces in Tobruk. In an interview with Horn, Fred van Alphen Stahl, who had been taken prisoner, described his experience as, " 'this is the end', because while the thought of losing one's life was a valorous undertaking , the thought of being a prisoner of war was simply not 'imagined'."[75] Furthermore, the shock of the fall of Tobruk stemmed heavily from the lack of a confrontation as seasoned fighting men did not receive orders to defend their posts. "I had not for a moment thought we would surrender," recounted Lieutenant Goldman, "It seemed fantastic. We had not fired a shot."[76]

For CC prisoners, disarmament was not related to emasculation or the feeling of 'shame'. As the soldiers had already been disarmed by their own government, for them the right to bear arms was more closely related to their political rights as 'first-class' citizens of the Union of South Africa. The Coloured community, as the Cape Corps Association assured General Smuts, had already proven their fighting worth in previous wars and were prepared to provide young men *en masse* of the same calibre for this war.[77] It was not the ability of the men but the politics of the Union that was obstructing them. It is thus reasonable to deduce that 'surrender' and 'disarmament' for the Cape Corps men did not necessarily 'tarnish' their 'sense of honour'.[78]

This argument is further supported through an examination of the articles on POWs published in *The Cape Standard*. There are certain characteristics of the interviews conducted by the weekly. For one, there was no rule of thumb on the identity of soldiers. While some ex-prisoners were forthcoming with their name and addresses (perhaps allowing other members of the community to contact them), others preferred to refer themselves simply with their initials (such as 'Pte W', 'Pte A'). This could be a result of their desire to protect the privacy of their experience. Considering that within the article there was a variation in the format of names, and that the accounts of the ex-POWs were extensive – it is unlikely that the lack of details about the interviewees was a consequence of negligence by the journalist. Each interview in the article varied in size and this suggests that the writer eliminated the commonalities between them and chose to instead focus on the 'unique' aspects of the stories. The interviews also seem to have been led by questions on life in European campaigns, questions about segregation, treatment at the hands of Germans, and perhaps even their experiences with other white nationalities. In compiling these stories, the published piece presents a narrative of loyalty, of physical and mental capability, of service, and of hardships suffered by the Coloured soldier for King and Empire. The section on the Beauvais camp is perhaps the most intriguing addition amongst the interviews. This was likely due to the number of Coloured POWs in Beauvais (and therefore this was a common topic for discussion), or perhaps an ode to the spirit of the soldiers who had spent long years in captivity.

Nevertheless, the focus on internment in Europe (and not in other theatres of war such as North and East Africa, and the Middle East) also demonstrates the importance of 'Coloured' soldiers having participated, even in the capacity of a captive, in the 'white man's war' on the white man's land. The true extent of the violence of the Nazi camps was perhaps felt most acutely by the POWs in their sensitivity to the plight of European civilians in labour camps. Despite having faced trying conditions himself, Pte A recounted, "It nearly broke my heart at Compiègne to see French civilians including many cripples being sent to the labour camps in Germany." For Pte Dixon, his worst experience was in a German camp where he resided with "thousands of Russian male

and female prisoners of war." No account in the articles reiterates such empathy for other non-white nationalities. The singling out of these experiences suggests that while the Coloured prisoners did not expect fair treatment from their white captives, the violence they witnessed against white civilians certainly affected them.

In the introduction to the seminal work *Africa in World War Two*, Timothy Parsons observed, "The circumstances under which a man becomes a particular kind of colonial soldier were usually the primary factor in determining how he viewed the nature of his service and behaved in combat."[79] Perhaps this definition can be furthered for CC prisoners – the circumstances under which colonial soldiers were interned were the primary factor in determining their survival and impact of captivity on the soldiers.

As discussed above, the physical strain of being a non-white captive of war was enormous. Thus, it is difficult to fathom the mental strain it would have had on the POWs. The surviving sources do not allow for an insight into the psychology of Coloured prisoners or the extent of PTSD among them. However, it can be deduced that prolonged captivity in foreign lands, exhaustive hours of work, unfavourable weather , appalling food and living conditions, must have depressed and demoralised the POWs to a point of defeatism and hopelessness. An anonymous CC captive described how susceptible he and his comrades had become to Axis propaganda, "When the Italians told us of the Italian armistice we did not believe them, because they had so often told us lies e.g. they told us Alexandria had fallen."[80] As a comparison, the white captives in Makepeace and Horn's studies actively resisted accepting any form of 'news' given by their captors on Allied defeat.

The same anonymous soldier (most likely suffering from severe PTSD), further detailed the anxiety he felt,

> "The camp was surrounded by petrol and ammunition dumps and the psychological effect on us was nerve-wracking. Sometimes Yank 'Lightnings'[81] machine-gunned us by mistake. I will remember one day a Mr Nel, of Cape Town, being mortally wounded. […] Once we marched through a dead city. Bodies were lying about in a state of decay, the stench was awful and we were compelled to close our noses with handkerchiefs."[82]

The anonymous ex-POW would not have been alone in his trauma. The inability to further expound the mental anguish of these POWs is the most glaring and regrettable limitation of this piece. However, the following is a poem sent to the *Cape Standard* written by a CC captive in the Middle East. This will, perhaps, more effectively illuminate the psychological ordeals of war and captivity,

Barren wastes of scrub and sand,
Dry unfertile desert land,
Spiked wire on every hand,
A hapless post of hungry men,
Crowded like rats in cage and pen,
Shut off it seems from human ken,
Ill clad unkempt and underfed,
Trading your watches, rings for bread,
A chilly concrete floor for bed,
Queuing long hours in the blistering heat,
Receiving a morsel of bread and meat,
Glad if even scraps to eat,
Striving to keep alive your hope,
Feeling at times its beyond your scope,
Drugging yourself with rumours as dope,
Setting new values on trivial things,
The smell of a flower, a bird that sings,
The beauty and grace of a butterfly's wings,
Bullied and driven like flocks of sheep,
Treated as dirt from dawn to sleep,
Hearts being filled with a hatred deep,
Cut off from news of the outside world,
Sifting the truth in the taunts that are hurled,
Silently keeping the flag unfurled.[83]

CONCLUSION

War is ugly, and captivity is brutal. Stories of captured Cape Corps soldiers underscore this grim reality. But they also bring to fore the additional tragedy of internment as a non-white prisoner. 'Coloured' soldiers were subjected to unprovoked violence, worked long gruelling hours, were not protected *de facto* by the Geneva Convention or the Allied commands and governments, were unfairly uninformed about their circumstance and had no prospects of returning home. This further pronounced the mental and physical trauma of starvation, exhaustion, and despondence. One can only speculate the will of the CC captives to survive this unsparing internment. However, this disarray of captivity in Europe also allowed for discordant experiences as captives witnessed the dreadful treatment suffered by persecuted white civilians, the aid escaped ex-prisoners received from European civilians, and other noted incidents. It is curious to think how these experiences must have impacted them. Did these encounters influence them as their homeland entered its most brutal phase of segregation? How severe was their mental trauma? Did they survive it? No sources have yet been uncovered that can shed light on the war CC ex-prisoners carried home with them.

In the introduction of *Captives of War*, Makespace identified a quandary in the interpretation of narratives of war. Makepeace's grandfather, himself a veteran of the Second World War and an ex-POW, read and commented on drafts of her book.

His observations ranged from shock on the number of parcels other POWs received to his ignorance about entertainments in captivity. More importantly, the act of commenting itself added an analytical depth to her understanding of the research she had conducted. "…His [Makepeace's grandfather] response[s] made me acutely aware from early on, that this history of captivity could never presume to be representative of the experiences of all prisoners of war. Nor would I claim it be representative of those prisoners of war, whose narratives I have read."[84]

Unlike Makepeace's thorough book, this is but a short chapter in a large compendium and it has been built on even briefer accounts spread between time and space to provide a coherent portrait of this shadowed history of POWs. This study does not claim to represent the histories of all captive Coloured soldiers. However, by piecing these sources spread unfavourably between dispersed archives, it is hoped that a window, if limited in view, into the story of the Coloured POW has been opened.

Endnotes

1 The term "Coloured" has been used strictly in its historical context to characterise soldiers from "mixed-race" communities who also self-identified with the nomenclature.

2 The battles for Sidi Rezegh and Tobruk were part of a larger campaign in North Africa between General Erwin Rommel's German and Italian troops and the British Imperial forces with the objective taking control of the Suez Canal. Although Sidi Rezegh was not a key battle in the overall campaign, South African bravery in the battle resulted in heavy losses of tanks for the Germans despite their victory. Tobruk, on the other hand, was a key fortress that held large supplies for the Allied forces, including arms and ammunitions, and the Eight Army was deployed there in substantial numbers. The loss of the fortress was a major military and political setback for then Prime Ministers Winston Churchill and Jan Smuts. During the campaign, the Allied forces suffered 35,000 casualties at Tobruk alone.

3 While Japanese POWs have been included in larger narratives of the war, there are very few dedicated studies detailing their fate. These include chapters and journal articles by Arnold Krammer, Clifford Kinvig, Kent Fedorowich, Charlotte Carr-Greg, SI Kuznetsov, and a gripping first-person account by Mitsugu Sakihara. Over half million Japanese POWs were held by the Red Army alone. The mistreatment of Japanese captives was racially motivated, and their Allied captors were slow to repatriate them at the end of the war. Despite the important contributions by the listed scholars, several large gaps remain in the histories of Japanese POWs.

4 B Nasson, *A Jacana Pocket History of South Africa at War 1939-45* (Johannesburg: Jacana, 2012), pp 20-22.

5 BP Willan, Albert Grundlingh, Bill Nasson, John Keene, Louis Grundlingh, Suryakanthie Chetty, Neil Orpen, K.W. Grundy, Mirjana Roth, Ian Gleeson, Neil Roos, and Jennifer Crwys-Williams have all filled niche gaps in the literature. And while Nasson, Keene, Horn, Orpen, and Gleeson have referenced non-white South African POWs in their studies, these histories are brief and subordinated to larger narratives of the war.

6 This chapter is part of my doctoral project (under Dr Joanna Lewis at LSE) on the service of Cape Corps and Indian and Malay Corps during the Second World War. My dissertation seeks to analyse the impact of the Empire and the South African Union's racial policies and politics on the service of these units, the 'lived experiences' of soldiers in these units, treatment of soldiers post-war, impact of their service on their communities, and commemoration of their service.

7 The official policy from London on recruitment was for the creation of a 'voluntary' force. This idea of the British rallying the largest voluntary force continued post-war. However, several historians have since debunked this myth by examining the unofficial practices by local governments in the colonies to increase the number of recruits and meet the demands of Whitehall. From press-ganging young men in Kenya to the lack of government intervention as mass exports created record-high inflation and dire food scarcity in India, forcing many to enlist to support their families; various tactics were employed off-the-record to create this largest 'voluntary' force. See T Parsons, 'The Military Experiences of Ordinary Africans in World War II'. In: JA Byfield, CA Brown, T Parsons & AA Sikainga, eds., *Africa and World War II* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2015); Y. Khan, *The Raj At War: A People's History Of India's Second World War* (London: Vintage Publishing, 2015); KC Yadav, 'Army Recruitment in Punjab, 1846-1913: An Evolutionary Study', *Journal of the United Service Institution of India*, vol. CXLVI, no. 605 (2016); J. Lewis, *Empire State-Building: War and Welfare in Kenya, 1925–52* (Ohio: Ohio University Press, 2000).

8 When war broke out in 1939, South Africa, despite being a dominion of the British Empire, did not immediately declare its loyalty to the Crown. The parliament only narrowly approved participation in the war on Smut's assurance that there would be no conscription of anyone, officially and unofficially. Thus, handicapped by their own divided prejudiced politics, they could only enlist volunteers.

9 Primary sources collected for my doctoral thesis highlight the many motivations of young men from Coloured, Indian and Malay communities who enlisted. These sources present an alternate history that opposes the notion of enlistment born out of economic need. For example, in 1942, an article published in *The Scotsman*, a liberal daily, critiqued the Union government for wasting the potential of young, educated non-white men who were enlisting in the South African forces despite being forced to work in auxiliary capacities. These men had better economic opportunities outside of the defence forces but were responding to the call of loyalty to King and Empire. British Newspaper Archives (BNA): 'War Effort in South Africa: Magnificent Within Limits Colour Bar a Weakness', *The Scotsman*, 24 October 1942.

10 JE Loraine-Grews, 'Union Defence Forces: Statistics of the Wounded and Prisoners of War during the Second World War 1939-1945', *Militaria*, vol. 15, no. 1 (1985), p 62.

11 IB Greeff, 'South African Prisoners of War in the Long Marches 1944-1945', *Military History Journal*, vol. 8, no. 6 (1991).

12 K Horn, '"Stalag Happy": South African Prisoners of War during World War Two (1939-1945) and their Experience and Use of Humour', *South African Historical Journal*, vol. 63 (2011), pp 537-552. Horn, *In Enemy Hands: South Africa's POWs in World War II* (Jeppestown: Jonathan Ball, 2015). Horn, '"A sudden sickening sensation": South African prisoner-of-war experience on board the San Sebastian, December 1941', *Historia*, vol. 63, no. 1 (2018), pp 112-129. R Scheck, 'French African Soldiers in German POW Camps, 1940-1945' In: JA Byfield, CA Brown, T Parsons & AA Sikainga, eds., *Africa and World War II* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2015); Scheck, *French Colonial Soldiers in German Captivity During World War II* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2014)

13 A commercial weekly newspaper published in Cape Town by an Indian firm, Prudential.

14 G Lewis, *Between the wire and the wall: a history of South African 'Coloured' politics* (Cape Town: David Philip, 1987), p 184.

15 Under then Editor, George Manuel, the weekly also coordinated with the Directorate of Non-European Army Services (DNEAS) for recruitment and press campaigns, sourcing several articles and photographs from the Directorate. These were also distributed amongst soldiers in transit camps within the Union. It is reasonable to assume that the Standard's cooperation and aid in the press campaigns, as well as the popularity of their war reporting would have enabled their access to returning soldiers (those on leave and repatriated ex-POWs) for interviews. DNEAS, Box 36, 8/21, Cape Corps: Propaganda and Press Matters, Department of Defence (DOD) Archives, Pretoria.

16 LA Crook, 'Non-White Personnel in the SA Artillery: 1939-45, and Today', *Militaria*, vol. 24, no. 2 (1994), p 20.

17 Horn, *In Enemy Hands*, p 51

18 'Many Ex-Prisoners Return', *The Cape Standard*, 19 Jun 1945, Microfilm BZA 89/8397, University of Cape Town Special Collections (UCT).

19 'Nerve-Racking Experience', *The Cape Standard*, 15 May 1945, Microfilm BZA 89/8397, UCT.

20 'Nerve-Racking Experience', *The Cape Standard*, 15 May 1945, Microfilm BZA 89/8397, UCT.

21 The Italian *Regina Marina* lost a total of 83 warships and 83 submarines in the Mediterranean and the Red Sea between 1940-43.

22 Horn, "A sudden sickening sensation", p 124.

23 'Many Ex-Prisoners Return', *The Cape Standard*, 19 Jun 1945, Microfilm BZA 89/8397, UCT.

24 War propaganda directed at young white South African men focused on enlistment by tapping into aspects of masculinity and settler identity, and was intricately related to sports and physical activity, i.e. 'Springbok Army of Sportsmen'. However, these concepts were based on exclusion of non-white men relating that the fighting feature was a tradition of white regiments. S Chetty, 'All the News that's Fit to Print: The Print Media of the Second World War and its Portrayal of the Gendered and Racial Identities of the War's Participants', *South African Historical Journal*, vol. 54, no. 1 (2005), pp 30-53. S Chetty, 'Imagining National Unity: South African Propaganda Efforts during Second World War', *Kronos: South African Histories*, 38 Special Issue (2012), pp 106-130.

25 For whom "W", Alexander, Arthur Daniels and others were recounting their experiences briefly.

26 By 1945, the Union was experiencing a steep rise in segregationist politics. A consequence of this was the creation of a 'Coloured Advisory Council' that aimed to separate the "affairs" of the Coloured population from that of the White population. This was to function on a similar tangent as the Native Affairs Department.

27 Article 31 of the 1929 Geneva Convention states, 'Work done by prisoners of war shall have no direct connection with the operations of the war. In particular, *it is forbidden to employ prisoners in the manufacture or transport of arms or munitions of any kind, or on the transport of material destined for combatant units* [emphasis added].'

28 These were forced labour camps run by Nazis for the war industry.

29 'Nerve-Racking Experience', *The Cape Standard*, 15 May 1945, Microfilm BZA 89/8397, UCT.

30 Horn, *In Enemy Hands*, p 57.

31 Scheck, *French Colonial Soldiers*, p 182 - 192.

32 'Many Ex-Prisoners Return', *The Cape Standard*, 19 Jun 1945, Microfilm BZA 89/8397, UCT.

33 WO 373/63/177, The National Archives of the United Kingdom, Kew (TNA).

34 As has been previously seen in the case of Sgt Colbert, it was unlikely that there would be any intervention on behalf of these POWs to prevent them from working on the aerodrome, making them the ideal labour force.

35 'Many Ex-Prisoners Return', *The Cape Standard*, 19 Jun 1945, Microfilm BZA 89/8397, UCT.

36 J Hasted, "The South African Red Cross in War 1939 – 1945", pp 91-96, UWH, Box 25, DOD Archives.

37 'Many Ex-Prisoners Return', *The Cape Standard*, 19 Jun 1945, Microfilm BZA 89/8397, UCT.

38 As Makepeace noted, this was a common punishment for theft and insubordination: the objective being to humiliate and dehumanise the captive.

39 'Nerve-Racking Experience', *The Cape Standard*, 15 May 1945, Microfilm BZA 89/8397, UCT.

40 Provided by the International Committee of the Red Cross, the Red Cross parcels consisted of food, tobacco and items of personal hygiene for POWs during the World Wars. Distribution of this was in accordance with the Geneva convention and helped POWs survive.

41 Reports on Visits POWs and Internees, 30 Oct 1943, CGS, Box 189, file 40/28, DOD Archives.

42 Natives were also recognised as 'English' by Arabs in the desert (historical survey of NE), WO 208/3349/550, TNA.

43 WO 208/3349/547, TNA.

44 WO 208/3350/1181, TNA.

45 WO 208/3350/1181, TNA.

46 WO 208/3350/1181, TNA.

47 'Prisoner of War', *The Cape Standard*, 1 Aug 1944, Microfilm BZA 89/8397, UCT.

48 'Nerve-Racking Experience', *The Cape Standard*, 15 May 1945, Microfilm BZA 89/8397, UCT.

49 WO 208/3350/1084, TNA.

50 WO 208/3350/1045, TNA.

51 Horn, *In Enemy Hands*, pp 51, 56.

52 Capt JC Knoetze, "Historical Survey of Non-European Army Services", UWH, Box 158, Narep Unfo 12, O(1) 21/47, DOD Archives.

53 Axis cruelty to native prisoners, 11 Sep 1942, UWH, Box 130, Narep ME 4, DOD Archives.

54 Scheck, *French Colonial Soldiers*, pp 32-40, 104-108.

55 WO 208/3349/550, TNA.

56 WO 208/3349/547, TNA.

57 Some cult classics based on true accounts of escape include *The Great Escape* (1963), *The Wooden Horse* (1950), *Stalag 17* (1953), *Escape from Sobibor* (1987), *The Elusive Corporal* (1962), *The One that Got Away* (1957).

58 S Tyas, 'Escapes of Allied Prisoners of War and Forced Labourers from German Captivity'. In: MN Soleim, ed., *Prisoners of War and Forced Labour: Histories of War and Occupation* (Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2010), p 180.

59 C Makepeace, *Captives of War: British Prisoners of War in Europe in the Second World War* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017), p 6.

60 Also spelled 'Masego'.

61 WO 373/64/862, TNA.

62 WO 373/64/616, TNA.

63 WO 373/63/177, TNA.

64 Historical Record of Non-European Army Services, UWH, Box 158, Narep Unfo 12, DOD Archives.

65 Historical Record of Non-European Army Services, UWH, Box 158, Narep Unfo 12, DOD Archives.

66 'Nerve-Racking Experience', *The Cape Standard*, 15 May 1945, Microfilm BZA 89/8397, UCT.

67 'Nerve-Racking Experience', *The Cape Standard*, 15 May 1945, Microfilm BZA 89/8397, UCT.

68 DOD: CGS WAR, Box 189, 40/31, POW Welfare Committee.

69 'Prisoners of War Return', *The Cape Standard*, 13 Feb 1945, Microfilm BZA 89/8397, UCT.

70 'Prisoners of War Return', *The Cape Standard*, 13 Feb 1945, Microfilm BZA 89/8397, UCT.

71 AS Mopeli-Paulus, *The World and the Cattle* (Johannesburg: Penguin, 2008), p 98.

72 Makepeace, *Captives of War*, p 22.

73 Alongside lists of captives published in *The Cape Standard*, information was also provided for next-of-kin to contact Red Cross Society offices. 'Prisoners of War, *The Cape Standard*, 2 Mar 1944, Microfilm BZA 89/8397, UCT.

74 'WW2 People's War' project by BBC histories to document oral histories, the War Memories project archived by the British Library, projects by the National World War II Museum in New Orleans.

75 Horn, *In Enemy* Hands, p 39.

76 Horn, *In Enemy Hands*, p 40.

77 'Fund for Purchase of Spitfires', *The Evening Telegraph*, 13 Jun 1940, BL_0000563_19400613_081_0009, BNA.

78 Horn, *In Enemy Hands*, p 42.

79 Parsons, 'The Military Experiences of Ordinary Africans in World War II', p 12.

80 'Nerve-Racking Experience', *The Cape Standard*, 15 May 1945, Microfilm BZA 89/8397, UCT.

81 The American fighter aircraft 'Lockheed P-38 Lightning'.

82 'Nerve-Racking Experience', *The Cape Standard*, 15 May 1945, Microfilm BZA 89/8397, UCT.

83 Poem, *The Cape Standard*, 19 Jun 1945, Microfilm BZA 89/8397, UCT.

84 Makepeace, *Captives of War*, p 28.

8

'THIS GREAT ADVENTURE': WHITE WOMEN IN THE UNION DEFENCE FORCE, 1939–1945

Suryakanthie Chetty

The outbreak of war in September 1939 created the need for white women to take up positions in the auxiliary services. The exodus of white men to the frontlines – the only group allowed into combat – meant that women were expected to fill certain positions in industry and in the military. They played support roles as clerical workers, transport drivers, cooks, nurses and mechanics. There were five auxiliary services for these women under the Women's Army Defence Corps.[1] These were the Women's Auxiliary Army Services (WAAS), the Women's Auxiliary Air Force (WAAF), the South African Military Nursing Service (SAMNS), the South African Women's Auxiliary Police Force (SWAMPS) and the South African Women's Auxiliary Naval Service (SWANS). Those women not enlisted in these services often worked in the South African Women's Auxiliary Services (SAWAS), which was a voluntary organization that set up leisure and social activities and aided in conscription campaigns. It consisted of up to 65 000 women.[2]

White women in South Africa had many complexities underlying both their enlistment in the military as well as the character of their military service. This paper uses both official and personal sources to gain a perspective on the participation of these women in the war – the reasons for their enlistment, their experiences and their expectations of military service. Official sources such as *The Women's Auxiliary* allow for an understanding of the way in which the military portrayed a particular vision for women's war work and these sources provide the framework for this paper. These sources are complemented by the personal testimonies of women in the form of interviews that were conducted with Beth Anderson, Jill Boucher, Mary Kent and Edith Kimble.[3] Included too are autobiographies by women who went on to become prominent activists, such as Helen Joseph and Mary Benson, as well as by women serving during the War, Sampie de Wet and Lucy Bean, a leading figure and founding member of SAWAS.[4]

The official magazine of the SAWAS, *The Women's Auxiliary,* was published monthly for the duration of the war, with its first issue in September 1940 and its final issue in June 1945, making a total of approximately 58 issues. Articles ranged from the purely domestic such as recipes, to fashion and hairstyles, as well as addressing deeper concerns regarding the new roles of women in war society as well as their post-war expectations. Its regular publication means that the contemporary reader can trace the changing perceptions and portrayal of women in military service in South Africa. For the duration of the War three broad trends were clearly apparent in the magazine, dividing the war into three phases – the onset of the war and recruitment, the malaise of 'war weariness', and preparations for the end of the war. These phases were indicated by the clear differences in the way in which the magazine portrayed the roles of women in the auxiliary services as well as the expectations placed upon them.

THE ONSET OF WAR, 1939–1942

The first phase of the war lasted roughly until May 1942. This phase marked the transition from peace to war and was characterised by an ambiguity around the changing roles of women brought about by the exigencies of war. Ideas of the 'proper' roles for women that had their origins in the nineteenth century were used in the official war discourse and attempts were made by *The Women's Auxiliary* in this first phase to fit the war work of women within this already existing framework. This was played out in the magazine through depictions of women in mothering/nurturing roles, which had historically been viewed as being inextricably linked to their biology, and concerns with the control of single women living in barracks. In South Africa before 1939 women had both challenged and worked within these roles of 'proper' femininity. This was evident in the way in which Afrikaner women participated in the South African War as well as the role played by the suffragette movement in South Africa, where the demonstration of white unity remained paramount. Prior to the outbreak of the war, Lucy Bean and a number of like-minded women established the South African Women's National Service Legion that provided women with skills in nursing and the repair of automobiles – and knitting socks. By April, five months before war would break out, they claimed a membership of 4 000 women. This Cape Town organisation and other similar groups around the country would form the core of SAWAS.[5] There was thus clearly an early interest in war service – albeit of a voluntary nature. The emphasis was initially on domestic duties, but performed within an atmosphere of female camaraderie which also served the additional function of keeping these women distracted from the plight of their husbands and sons on the distant frontlines.[6] When the war broke out and various troop ships stopped at the South African ports, SAWAS members took on the role of 'hostesses', providing entertainment in the form of dances and setting up canteens for Allied sailors and soldiers.[7]

Women's war service was initially based on existing preconceptions and this is evident in the inaugural issue of *The Women's Auxiliary*, which contained an article titled 'They are Carrying on the War Work of Men'. The title suggested that the work of women in auxiliary organisations was a continuation of the earlier 'pioneering' role played by them, supporting men as they took part in the conflicts which shaped the country's history, as well as being a product of an 'innate characteristic of women – service to others'.[8] The motivation of women was claimed to be a selfless spirit of sacrifice for their children:

> Spurred on by that great ideal of wanting to prepare a better world for their children, no obstacle has proved insurmountable, no sacrifice too great.[9]

Here the women of the auxiliary services remained inextricably linked to their family and home – to their role in the domestic sphere as the nurturers of their children. The impetus for their service was believed to have come from the desire to create a 'better world', a safe haven for their children. This is a strong theme that forms the backbone of the inaugural issue of the magazine. Another article describing the traffic control duties of female auxiliaries who had recently replaced men emphasised their duties in school districts states: 'What an excellent idea to have women controlling the children … I wonder why someone didn't think of it before'.[10] A few months later this connection between women and their nurturing duties, especially as these related to children, was made even more explicit with the description of the activities of the Auckland Park Canteen. Here SAWAS women voluntarily served refreshments to troops, helped in providing entertainment and special mention was made of them taking care of the children of troops. Despite this activity being given only a short paragraph in the article, it became part of the title itself, 'They Prepare Babies' Bottles as well as Feed the Troops', making it more integral to their duties than it actually was.[11]

This depiction of women as being linked to the mothering/nurturing role had its origins much earlier in South Africa, as well as Britain and the United States and 'Auckland Park Canteen – They Prepare Babies' Bottles as well as Feed the Troops' draws upon this image in its portrayal of women in the Auxiliary Services. The ubiquitous notion of women as mothers and nurturers had taken on a new impetus in the nineteenth century, working as it did with women's role in the reform movement. This period was one where the suffragette movement reached its height, largely as a product of the adverse conditions brought about by the industrial revolution. The conjunction of poor living conditions for the working class, societal ills such as alcoholism and prostitution, as well as the rise of the suffragette movement, led to a proliferation of reform movements in which these early feminists played key roles. [12]

This wave of feminism used the Victorian middle-class ideals of morality, purity and the role of women as the guardians of these of these values, but it extended their role from the private to the public sphere.[13] Yet the ideology behind this remained constant and these middle-class women were still perceived to be the custodians of society's morality, forming a counterpoint to the ills of industrial capitalist society. As well as being played out on the societal level, a similar process was evident in the home.[14]

As evident in *The Women's Auxiliary*, then, the portrayal of women's war service was to initially create a continuum between women's roles in the home, taking care of men and raising children, with their new roles in the South African Women's Auxiliary Services, lessening the disruption to the gendered order.

However, for the women auxiliaries of the Union Defence Force, military service meant living not in the home but in the barracks. Historically, army barracks were considered the least appropriate place for young women and were subject to intervention under Victorian ideas of morality and control of sexuality. In Michel Foucault's analysis of the history of sexuality, he traces a development in attitudes towards sex and sexuality in Europe from the seventeenth to the nineteenth centuries, where the earlier period was marked by a degree of openness which narrowed, becoming more rigid in the Victorian era. The nineteenth century created clear norms of sexuality. It was seen solely as the domain of the married couple for the sole purpose of procreation and its opposite was all other forms of sexuality, which were considered 'deviant'.[15] In this atmosphere of a narrowly defined sexuality and an emphasis on domesticity, the military came to be seen as a site for intervention because of the unsettled lifestyle of soldiers, the high preponderance of single men in the barracks, with its connotations of 'illicit' sexuality in the form of prostitution and homosexuality, as well as the accommodation of married soldiers and their families with the single men.[16]

Thus it was somewhat ironic that the various branches of the auxiliary services utilised barracks for women serving in the military; however, these were extremely tightly regulated, taking on the characteristics of boarding schools. Even within this space of military regulation, domesticity reared its head, as evident in a description of the barracks of the Women's Auxiliary Army Services:

> Despite its air of military efficiency and smartness there is a delightfully homely atmosphere at the barracks … flowers are sent every week from the Government House gardens … A committee of Pretoria women is busily engaged making curtains and supplying comforts of various kinds.[17]

Despite the attempts to create a sense of continuity between the perceived conventions of women's pre-war lives and their new roles for the duration of the war, there was nevertheless the necessity to adapt to an extent to a military way of life as well. The article 'An Airwoman on Full-Time Duty – Impressions of a "Rookie"' details the transition from civilian to military life with the young recruit adjusting to life at the barracks. It describes the minutiae of drill, the adoption of the proper attire and the many facets of daily life which distinguished the military world from the civilian:

> The intricacies of folding blankets as they are done in the Air Force and the spit and polish required to give one's shoes that extra shine were among the many things demonstrated in the business of becoming a soldier; while mastering the mysteries of 'Leave' books … the mental arithmetic needed to turn one minute to twelve into 23.59 hours and acquiring that self-confidence that enables one to walk up the street and salute a superior officer.[18]

Yet, by the end of it, according to the article, the recruit was left feeling herself a soldier, establishing a camaraderie with those with whom she trained, accustomed to the daily routine and enthusiastically embracing the esprit de corps of the WAAF.[19]

Life in the barracks allowed for this formation of female camaraderie. For young single women such as Beth Anderson, living in barracks and not tied down by the accoutrements of their gender, it became possible to maintain close ties with other women which lasted long after the war. These ties were based on their shared experiences, even if these experiences were not as intense as those of men on the frontlines:

> You got to know people better somehow or other, but you see I'd been at boarding school so I know, I know what it's like, but those girls who had never lived away from home must have got to know people in a much closer way than they, you do in the ordinary course of life, you know, what I mean, 'cos you work with them all day, on shift with them and then off duty with them, in fact, you know, you spend your life with them in fact.[20]

The equation of life in the barracks to that of a boarding school was a strong theme particularly in the use of propaganda to create a vision of the auxiliary services as being akin to a 'finishing school'. Yet the metaphor of boarding school also implied restrictions over the movement of women who were no longer under familial control. Much of the free time of the women was occupied with organised recreational activities in the camp such as working the library, attending lectures and putting on plays. [21]

In the case of women who were not yet wives or mothers, an important societal concern was their supervision. Many of these women found themselves away from home facing new living conditions in these barracks, where the emphasis was on military discipline. Janie Malherbe recounts the living conditions and supervision of female recruits in the barracks in her letters. In a letter sent to the *Die Transvaler* in 1942, she addressed the concerns of young women living on their own in barracks by emphasising military supervision and control over their movements, in a similar fashion to the way in which their parents or spouses would do at home:

> Girls in the services are **not** sent to troop camps … except in connection with daily clerical and other services. In the evening they return to efficiently run and supervised women's barracks. In such barracks the girls are far more strictly supervised than the thousands of working girls who stay in boarding establishments in the cities and towns, and whose coming and going is questioned by no-one. No member of the W.A.A.S. or W.A.A.F. may stay out of barracks unless she is married, or has permission from her parents and guardians to do so.[22]

Those women, fraternising with male officers and going out, were subject to stringent controls and curfews, which meant that women who returned after 10 pm would be disciplined and 'confined to barracks'. [23] Mary Kent perceived this to be for the benefit of these women, the authority exercised by the military standing in for the patriarchal authority of the family, ensuring the virtue of these young women and preventing abusive treatment and sexual violence from their male companions:

> A lot of it was for the protection of the girls you see because, you know, they used to go out and when I worked … in the DWAF which was the Directorate of the Women's Air Force and the reports that used to come in from there, from the air stations of these girls that used to be, you know, go out with these chaps and they would be molested and raped and they would have a dreadful time, and you see this was more or less a protection. If they didn't come in, then we had to find out where they'd gone and what happened to them and so on, it was a sort of a protection for us while we were there. They looked after us very well, I must say, it was very well.[24]

This introduces the idea of the kinds of interaction between men and women in the military – perhaps the most conventional of which is the role of women as being the pretext or the reason behind men fighting and sacrificing themselves in war. The allocation of white men to the key combatant roles where they were subject to the worst ravages of war and considered to be making the greater sacrifice evoked in women a sense of guilt. This guilt was used by official publications such as *The Women's Auxiliary* towards the end of the war to contain the empowerment experienced by many women because of their independence for the duration of the war. Simultaneously there was the stereotypical image of men going off to fight in defence of the home, of women and children. This was a theme propagated by men themselves, who subordinated service to the nation to the protection of the family and of women. [25]

This was in no small part responsible for the guilt felt by women and these repercussions were particularly acute near the front lines of battle. In Mary Benson's description of her experiences as a 'Waasie' in Egypt, she related the role played by women, who served as a kind of haven for men, providing a welcome distraction from the experiences of war and of combat:

> Whenever the fighting halted, exhausted, strained, sweating men poured into Cairo, wanting to forget what they'd just left, forget that they must soon return. Bathed and shaved, they turned up, boldly or timidly, at our barracks. When we arrived back from work in the evenings we found them waiting there, eager for female company. Even the least attractive among us was invited out night after night.[26]

For many women this was the opportunity to experience an exciting social life free from the restraints of the home front, being close to the action in an exotic location

and the subject of admiration by young men.[27] However, it was the sacrifices made by these men which provoked women into feeling that they had a sense of obligation to provide this distraction to the war: 'In face of all they were enduring, it seemed unpardonable to frustrate their desire for sex'.[28] Benson's reluctance to meet the insistent demands of men led to her being described as 'fit for a frigid clergyman'.[29]

Generally, life in the auxiliary services and the limited independence it implied for women in uniform, evoked a new-found camaraderie with men based on service to the nation. This served to alienate these women from those who had not enlisted, prompting the latter's resentment. However, serving in the auxiliary units also took on a more negative note, with the perception of these women as being 'loose'. This is evident in Kent's account: 'We had been in the WAAFS – they just thought ah, these two have been in the WAAFS, good, they are free and free for all, you know, and this is…what they thought we were'.[30]

Men, too, were influenced in their perception of women by this association of women in the military with loose morals and a freedom from restraint. This was evident in relatively mild incidents viewed in a light-hearted manner such as soldiers following women around singing 'Kiss Me Goodnight Sergeant Major'[31] to the perception of these women as being sexually promiscuous, as evident in George Henry's description of the WAVES as 'We are Virgins Except Saturday', even as he reiterated the respect with which men were expected to treat women.[32] For women in military service, then, the notions of independence and a life of excitement and glamour perpetuated by propaganda and the sense of adventure and taking part in a great historical moment, were offset by men using their war experiences and the understanding that they were making the greater sacrifice to exert pressure on these women. The ambivalent attitude of these men towards women in uniform was an uneasy balance between respect for women as moral guardians, wives, sisters and mothers, but associating this same freedom and independence with promiscuity that also led, in some instances, to physical molestation and rape.[33]

The perception of promiscuity on the part of these women was a significant concern addressed in recruiting drives carried out by Janie Malherbe. Married to EG Malherbe, who would become the Director of Military Intelligence during the war, and working as a freelance journalist, Janie Malherbe and her husband volunteered immediately after the declaration of war and she was heavily involved in recruitment, travelling the country in order to recruit Afrikaner women in particular.[34]

To garner Afrikaner support for the War – which was ambiguous at best – these recruiting efforts made use of seminal events in Afrikaner nationalism such as the re-enactment of the Great Trek in 1938 – itself a commemoration of the Great Trek of 1838.[35] The use of descriptors such as 'Steel Commando' and 'Air Commando' also

drew upon an existing 'martial and social tradition'.[36] Janie Malherbe also addressed civilian concerns regarding living conditions in the military and, in particular, the potential pitfalls that awaited young women sans parental supervision, pointing out that, while these moral lapses were likely to occur in most social groups, they were so uncommon in the military that undue attention was paid to them when they did occur.[37] Her address occurred within the context of the perception of the molestation and 'promiscuity' of women in uniform.

Once the women enlisted, war work provided the opportunity for them to acquire skill and competence in waged labour and acquire some measure of financial independence. Yet this suggestion of change was still placed within a conservative and ambiguous framework regarding the position of women in the military. In May 1942 a male drill instructor, responsible for training SAWAS women in Durban, pointed out that drilling enhanced rather than detracted from women's femininity, making these women more appealing to the opposite sex:

> Mr Storey thinks that a course of parade drill gives a girl more 'sex appeal'. 'There is one thing I have noticed,' he says, 'and that is the drill has improved the girls tremendously physically. And it has given every one of them a very much improved carriage. The result is that they are women now who command attention by their fine bearing and physique.[38]

The message was clear – it was no longer the army that made a man out of you but, for a woman, too, military service could only make her more of a woman. This served as a means of allaying the fears of those who believed military service would lead to women aping the masculinity of men. It was a fear that periodically resurfaced in *The Women's Auxiliary,* hence the ambiguity present in the first phase of the war.

For Janie Malherbe in an article appearing in *The Outspan*, the war work done by women was a temporary aberration, a simple extension of their roles as wives, mothers and supporters of men and, as such, any payment at all was simply the 'generosity' of the state. She could not envision a scenario where women received equal pay to their white male combatants who, after all, were making the far greater sacrifice.[39] From the perspective of a woman who played a significant role in female recruitment, then, any sense of the long-term independence or empowerment of these women was curtailed from the outset.

But to read recruitment attempts solely within a conservative framework is to do an injustice to what could possibly be considered genuine, albeit limited, steps forward regarding the perception of women's roles in the public sphere. From the outset the war was perceived as the opportunity for women to prove themselves. In an editorial penned by Brigadier General FH Theron in October 1940, he refers to the auxiliary bodies, giving more significant roles to women who were employed to take

on positions previously held by men, releasing the latter for combat, than the largely voluntary and social activities of SAWAS. The women here in organisations such as the WAAS were, according to Theron, 'anxious to prove that they are in no way second to the men whose places they are taking', ultimately believing that 'their sex [was] "on trial"', a view which he strongly espoused.[40] He concluded with a strongly optimistic view of women as having undergone a permanent change:

> The time when women were regarded as fragile beings unable to do a day's work is long past. The women themselves have given it its death-blow. You will stand shoulder to shoulder with us – our worthy comrades and equals – in this prelude to the victory that is coming.[41]

The comment demonstrated a significant lack of acknowledgement and of the value of women's pre-war roles, suggesting that all women had previously embodied the middle-class, idealised vision of women at leisure, while many women who engaged in war work were not actually engaged in waged labour for the first time. There was nevertheless an intimation that women had themselves changed the public perceptions of them by answering the call to war, redefining themselves as equal citizens in a post-war society.

Yet the mobilisation of women for the Second World War was based upon women's existing societal roles.[42] For Afrikaner women this was in the area of social work – the work of women in the home was extended to the public sphere, which became an extended home, and was the means by which Afrikaner women entered politics:

> Women from varied political persuasions all 'exhalted [sic] women's capacity to mother and extended to society as a whole the values of care, nurturance and morality'. Maternalist politics 'extolled the virtues of domesticity while simultaneously legitimating women's public relationships to politics and the state, to community, workplace, marketplace…'[43]

There was a notion that women could bring their brand of morality into the public sphere and play this role in politics in a way that men could not – as it was in the arena of the moral that women were understood to hold the higher ground.[44]

The interwar period also saw an opening of various opportunities for waged labour for women in secondary industries and as white-collar workers. However, these job opportunities did not challenge the perception of women as nurturers – they were very much in line with the characteristics attributed to women:

> Women workers became clustered in particular areas of employment, which could be seen as extensions of their domestic roles and did not conflict with established views about their 'natural' abilities. Thus in the professions, they were concentrated in the 'nurturing' realms of teaching and nursing; in business, in

> service and supportive roles as secretaries and sales women; in industry, in food processing and textile concerns, and, of course, in domestic service.[45]

The mobilisation of women during the war included them participating in new activities in industry and the Auxiliary Services, which had previously been the domain of men. Yet the rationale behind it remained the same. The new activities of women in war were linked to their 'natural' qualities as caregivers, which was evident in military nursing, as well as supporting men by carrying out non-combative duties on the home front. This was the way in which they were expected to contribute to victory and the speedy return of the men to the front lines. Even in the realm of the suffragette movement, white South African women were not radicalised. Enfranchising women was not seen as an important issue in the South African Parliament in the 1920s – even men like Smuts, who favoured extending the vote to white women, was not passionate about it: 'If it [the Bill to extend the franchise to white women] does not win this session, it may win the next session, or the session after'.[46] For Parliament it was infinitely preferable to extend the franchise to white women over black men and, in 1929, extending the vote to white women formed the basis of Hertzog's re-election campaign, which returned him to power. The enfranchising of white South African women, coming a decade later than the enfranchisement of women around much of the world, was not because of any particular commitment on the part of Parliament to women's rights, but to allay the threat of enfranchising an overwhelming African majority. For Hertzog it was merely a means of achieving an end and he did not believe that the enfranchisement of white women would cause any major social upheaval in gender roles.[47] It is within the context of the conservatism of the South African suffragette movement that women were mobilised for the Second World War. It is thus safe to assume that Parliament believed that allowing women new forms of work in the Auxiliary Services and in industry for the duration of the war – as was being done all over the world – would be unlikely to have lasting repercussions or create social upheaval.

For the women who volunteered for the auxiliary services, they did so for a number of reasons from the platitudinous 'For King and Country'[48] to following the example set by other female family members and friends.[49] Motivations were based on a combination of the personal and the patriotic, the individual and the social, epitomised by a sense of guilt over the sacrifice made by men and the accompanying need to provide support:

> You know why I joined, because I used to get so depressed and so worried when the troop ships came in and the men were going up north. And I just couldn't take it and I thought, no, I'm going to get away from this … we used to go and we'd meet up with the chaps and we'd bring them home … while they were in port, and they'd come and have supper with us and our parents … And then they'd go off and then the next thing you hear that their ship had been

> torpedoed or that they … were in Dunkirk or they were in Tobruk and all these places, and it just got on top of me.[50]

Yet, individual motivation remained a strong factor – the desire 'to take part in this great adventure'.[51] Along with this desire was the knowledge that the war was a moment that would come to define their generation and one from which they did not want to be excluded:

> …my generation were all in the war and I didn't want to be out of things, I mean – not because I was being brave or anything, I certainly didn't ever think I'd be sent up north or anything but, I mean, most of our generation were – all over the world almost all were involved and you were missing something if you didn't go into it and I've certainly never regretted it.[52]

This desire to participate in the 'great adventure' of the Second World War predisposed many women to volunteer for service in North Africa where the war was actually being fought and Mary Kent and Jill Boucher were disappointed at having to serve within the Union:

> Closer to the operational areas, you know, you felt you needed that to really feel that you were benefiting the whole country. But just to be and to feel more part of the whole thing was what we fancied…I mean there was still fighting in the Western Desert when she [her sister Kate] was up there – you know that was going through Egypt and through Tobruk and all those areas which was very close to Cairo and we felt, you know, we could have been sitting in Durban typing our own little invoices out here – where we were in Pretoria.[53]
>
> Well, that was … where the war was. I mean we were there to fight a war, not to sit in a base camp and must, you know, play around. You know to us, what we were doing here was mundane…We were not close enough to the actual action of what was going on and we wanted to get closer and they [Kate] were closer.[54]

This personal desire to play a more significant role in the war corresponded with changes in propaganda – evident in the second phase – where emphasis was placed on the glamorous nature of military service for women, catering for their individual needs of excitement and adventure, making them little different from their male counterparts. This sentiment would be echoed a few years later by SAWAS member Sampie de Wet who, while part of a contingent of SAWAS members sailing to Italy as a 'hostess' for an officers' club, was faced with the possibility of encountering hostile Japanese submarines in the Gulf of Aden. Her response was that 'It was exciting to know that we were in real danger' and she and a companion subsequently kept watch.[55]

The initial phase of the war from September 1939 to May 1942 as dealt with in *The Women's Auxiliary* conveyed some indecision about the new roles for women in the

auxiliary services and in industry where women had taken positions previously held by men. The demands of the war in terms of labour power came into conflict with pre-existing societal assumptions about the appropriate positions for women. This was highlighted by their service in the military – discipline, the donning of uniforms and life in barracks – and brought to the fore concerns about the crossing of gendered boundaries, blurring masculine and feminine roles. Visions of newly empowered women existed uneasily alongside feminine stereotypes, marking the transition from peacetime to war. However, within two years the expectations of a long-term war rather than a short-term conflict pointed towards a new approach in official attempts to construct an appropriate identity for women.

WAR WEARINESS, 1942-1944

June 1942 heralded the first mention in *The Women's Auxiliary* of what was described as 'war weariness'. The year marked a turning point in support for the war. The confluence of a lessening of the initial enthusiasm about a war with no endpoint in sight and the less than ideal conditions on the home front brought about by the high state of alert of a country wracked by dissent, rationing and many women's new and pressurised roles as sole bread-winners led to a drastic decline in the support for the war. This manifested itself in a recruiting shortfall.[56] On the war front the fall of Tobruk was a major setback, initiating a new propaganda campaign and negatively affecting many women who had had male relations either killed or taken prisoner, bringing with it uncertainty and pessimism.

In June 1942 Colonel GCG Werdmuller, the Director of Recruiting, made a statement in the magazine appealing to women already enlisted in the Auxiliary Services to address the recruiting shortfall by actively attempting to get more recruits and, more significantly, not to speak ill of their military service, but to represent it in a positive and optimistic light:

> Every woman who is now playing an effective part in the W.A.A.S. is a shareholder in her country's security. As such she is an active partner in one of the greatest organisations this country has ever known. Every word she speaks in praise of that vast organisation heightens its good reputation among those who as yet have not joined it. Every time she airs her grouses and grumbles in public she damages that reputation and, consciously or unconsciously, discourages some other woman from joining it and contributing towards its further success.[57]

By 1942 it had become necessary to put a positive spin on military service for women. Werdmuller went on to liken the military to a vast organisation where each member had an equal stake in its representation and was thus responsible for giving it their

wholehearted support, sacrificing their personal considerations for the greater good, which was the ultimate victory that would ensure South Africa's safety.[58] Werdmuller also made mention of what were presumably women's complaints regarding military service – the lack of domestic pleasantries, a far cry from the domestic-themed picture painted of life in the barracks – and weighed this up against the positive benefits, 'the companionship, the sense of achievements, the knowledge that you are doing a good job,' with, needless to say, the latter taking pride of place.[59] What this article does suggest was that, by 1942, women were not embracing military service as wholeheartedly as had been portrayed by official sources from the onset of war and, to address this drop in morale and enthusiasm, other strategies, some subtle and others less so, were employed in *The Women's Auxiliary*.

Women too were apparently demanding greater roles. A piece appearing in the same issue is titled 'Johannesburg Women Want to Shoot' and described the efforts of the SAWAS women of Command 14 in Johannesburg, who wished to be allowed to be given weapons training. The article itself, while not acknowledging any authorship, conveyed the perspective of these women and used historical precedent to give their claims validity, arguing that, 'It is a tradition of South African women to know how to load a gun for a man, as they did in the days of the *laager* when war was fought against the native hordes'.[60] Their argument constructed a specific kind of identity in two ways – the first was that it was an Afrikaner one as it made reference to the pioneer past, evident in the use of *laager,* from which English women were generally excluded; significantly it was also a specifically white identity defining itself against 'the native hordes', still confining the latter to an adversarial category. Ultimately the outcome of the article was indecisive; there was no subsequent mention of arming these women and the request apparently petered out, at least on the part of the magazine. Yet there was a clear shift in the way in which women's war work was portrayed. Greater emphasis was placed on larger roles for women in combat-related activities. Articles were written detailing the work of their British counterparts who, in response to the more direct effects of war in that country, were involved in expanded roles. Detailed descriptions were made of the WAAF mechanics who worked and flew alongside regular male RAF pilots. The young woman mechanic flying with a male pilot instructor was portrayed as intently dedicated to her work, refusing to be distracted by the view in front of her. Her reward was a job perfectly performed and the brief praise from the pilot, 'Good job,' leaving her, 'eager, happy, proud of her work and proud of her instructor'.[61]

The Women's Auxiliary published features on female pilots who could possibly soon have been taking on the role of bomber pilots. It also focused on the British women of the Auxiliary Territorial Services who worked alongside men in assisting with the firing of the anti-aircraft guns. They did all the tasks including aiming, but were not

allowed to engage in the actual firing, which was the line on which the state and conventional perceptions of gender stood firm:

> Well, our job has been to release men to do that. Killing – as that must be – is the man's job. We've tried to keep a balance. Giving life is the woman's job. She is the creator. It is dangerous to play with her fundamental role in life. We have to protect that vital role as much, and for as long, as we can. We have to think about after the war.[62]

The interviewee in the article was herself in charge of the ATS and her position gives her voice authority regarding the appropriate roles for women in the war. Although the branch was the one which allowed most combat-like roles to women as well as the opportunity to work alongside men, building a close camaraderie, there was still a strong conservatism regarding the appropriate roles for women. This reflected the convention that they were the bearers of life and hinting at a similar role at the end of the war. Yet the appearance of these articles in this issue catered to an audience of women who were not necessarily content to simply engage in clerical work or as volunteers structuring social events for male troops.

Although the war was portrayed – in many instances by propaganda as well as those involved – as a united effort where all were equal in the fight against fascism, other distinctions nonetheless arose, particularly in the different branches of the auxiliary services. In a similar vein to the expressed desire of many women to work as close as possible to the front, work in the Special Signals Services allowed women to take a more active role in the war. This went beyond the mere clerical work and allowed these women to work in closer proximity to men. Moreover, the expertise required in Signals necessitated recruiting women who were highly educated. There were social class connotations implied as well and all these factors were seen as making Special Signals an elite branch of the service:

> I would not have joined the W.A.A.S. nor the W.A.A.F. Signals was a select unit, a specialised course. It had a sort of 'snob' value – 'nice' girls joined it – or that was our impression at that time. The entry qualification for the South African Corps of Signals was fairly high – originally one had to be a University graduate but later this was lowered to Matric. I had my Matric. We were very proud not to be attached to the W.A.A.S. or the W.A.A.F.s, Signals was the only women's unit attached to a men's unit.[63]

The post-war era was also imagined as offering women the opportunity to utilise the training and education that they had received during the war, giving them an equal role to play in peace time, and one which made the most of their abilities in a way that pre-war society had not:

> Here, as well as in England, girls have equal education facilities with boys, and show equal aptitude for intelligent subjects. Must the average South African woman's adult life be a continual repression of those faculties which she has begun to develop at school, or will she continue to use her brain and intelligence to help the men organise the peace?[64]

Yet, along with the carrot attempting to increase recruitment by emphasising the new opportunities available to women, came the stick – the not-so-subtle threat of the repercussions of their lack of support, in this case Nazi domination, which would be a major setback for equal rights for women. A German victory would have, in fact, greater repercussions for women than for men, hence making women's role in defending the country seem even more vital:

> Psychologically, women know that by the victory of the Nazis they would lose everything. They would become once more – perhaps for a thousand years, hard-driven chattels and despised playthings. This is their war, in a stronger and even deeper sense than it is a man's.[65]

When this failed to adequately address the problem, from 1943 a new tack was initiated to increase the shortfall in recruitment. Begun by Werdmuller, the emphasis was on a glamorisation of women's war work when sacrifice and duty were insufficient incentives. In an article penned by a female recruiting officer and aptly titled 'The Recruit is Precious', women who decided to enter military service were, from the outset, portrayed as being at the centre of attention, particularly at parties. They would be subject to the constant, kind, paternal, caring and rapt attention of men assisting the somewhat helpless female by carrying her bag and even helping to find her luggage – an attention that was contrasted with the lack thereof that she experienced at home.[66]

Military training would serve as a 'finishing school', transforming the young, awkward girl from the *platteland* into a mature woman, ready to assume 'a sane, happy and respected life' in post-war South Africa.[67] Even SAWAS leader, Lucy Bean, was not immune to 'war weariness' and welcomed a break in the 'monotony' when she was given an opportunity to serve in Italy.[68] Yet women's war service was not simply motivated by superficial concerns. While stationed in Italy in 1944, Sampie de Wet was unhappy at not having a clear purpose or sense of making a contribution to the war effort. This was compounded by encountering the aftermath of the depredations of war. The opportunities for socialising and fraternising were little compensation: 'we were gay all the time, and I have never been able to stand an overdose of gaiety'.[69] Their experiences near the frontlines would also belie the notion of glamour. De Wet encountered a sixteen-year-old South African soldier suffering from a serious head wound at a British hospital in Arezzo. Asked to write a letter on his behalf to his mother, she found the task especially difficult as there was little she could do to allay the fears of the distant parent.[70]

'DON'T ROCK THE BOAT', 1944-1945

While there was no clear-cut boundary between the periods, the issues of the magazine in the latter part of 1944 and early 1945 marked the initiation of the third phase of the war, at least on the part of women. This was the stage that required them to prepare for the return of the men. It was quite clearly a return to conservatism. With the end of war in sight, there was a desire to restore the status quo and 'normality' after the temporary aberration of war. By 1945, in a speech by Jan Smuts to the SAWAS in Pretoria, it was clear that post-war South African society would return to its pre-war state in terms of gender roles. Men were ideally 'politically and business minded', the hallmarks of participation in the public sphere. Women, on the other hand, were idealised as having 'noble' qualities suiting them for 'the spiritual uplift of South Africa'.[71] Women were once again envisaged as the spiritual and moral guardians of society, a return to both their pre-war status and the earlier images of womanhood of the nineteenth century. It became a means of curtailing their potential empowerment during war service.

The article 'When Husbands Return' appearing soon after Smuts's speech addressed the issue of men returning home from the frontlines. While acknowledging women's need to adjust to a changing domestic situation and a possible loss of independence, the article emphasised the new role of women in creating a safe haven for their traumatised spouses as well as the importance of their reproductive duty to redress the impact of the war.[72] The desires of the individual would be subsumed to meet the needs of society:

> For a few months, perhaps even for a few years it will be necessary to sacrifice financial, mental and social independence in order to contribute to the welfare not only of the returned soldier, but also, ultimately, to the community.[73]

The article suggests a concern on the part of the military and the state that the initiation of some form of empowerment and independence for women during the war would not be so easy to rein in once the conflict had ended, and hence more conventional and conservative gender roles would be advocated by officialdom. A similar dilemma arose in other Allied countries such as Britain, where 'Their [women's] accomplishments in their jobs or their participation in the services … provoked continuing challenges to the idea that after the war women and family life would go on as though the war had not happened'.[74] Not only would men benefit from the safe haven created by their wives, but women would also be relieved of the financial responsibilities and associated anxieties of maintaining a home and family.[75] Ironically, in a post-war world, women would once again be relegated to auxiliary roles – for

which they seemed ideally suited, 'At heart most women are "yes women" and this is the one occasion when wives can fulfil the role of comforter. Their own worries must wait till he is at peace'.[76]

The psychological condition of the returning soldier was a dominant theme in this period, particularly as it dealt with the appropriate behaviour for women. After the euphemisms and silences which had hitherto characterised men's experiences of war for the benefit of the home front, this was the first time that women were given an inkling of what men had gone through:

> Probably you think of war in terms of Ouma's Gifts and Comforts and of the enviable treat he had during 10 days of leave in Rome when his letters were full of the pleasure of staying in a first-class hotel … These and many pleasant little inconsequential things of service and the thoughts of you at home were what he usually wrote about. He never mentioned the dirt and terror of the front line, trying to sleep in the sleet and the snow, nor the time his platoon was isolated for two days and nights by a curtain of heavy fire, unable to withdraw or get rations up.[77]

Yet *The Women's Auxiliary* too had colluded in representing the war in a manner which was designed to promote recruitment, so for the women who had believed this representation, the articles that appeared as the war neared its end must have been a major shock. And this ultimately was the aim – to shock women into returning to a conservative and pre-war mindset. The article used the guilt inspired by the knowledge of men's experiences to call on women not to 'rock the boat' by making individual and 'selfish' demands on those who had made far greater sacrifices. The article went on to describe in detail the everyday discomforts of a soldier's life, drawing comparisons with the perceived pampered domestic existence of women, making light of, or in some cases rendering invisible, their own struggles to come to terms with the changes wrought by war on the home front. Another theme was the possibility of post-traumatic stress syndrome, or as it was described in the article 'the shock of war [which] has left scars on his mind', experienced by many men in combat and the antidote was deemed to be the patient nurturing care of their spouses engaging in what was now termed their 'great war job'.[78] These revelations worked in concert to attempt to subdue the desire among women to preserve the independence afforded them by war in a post-war society.

In the light of this, for some of these women the war was understood as a temporary deviation. It was life-changing in terms of the experiences they had had, but did not mean that their lives in the post-war era were transformed in any way that would have been different had they not been in military service. When asked about the nature of her own experiences of the Second World War, Beth Anderson's response was to foreground instead the experiences of her husband Paul:

> Not at all for me. It must have been terrible for Paul … he kept things to himself very much … you know he was in a camp of an airfield … in Lincolnshire. He said one night they had this hut with four pilots sleeping in it. They went out on a raid one night … and he was the only one to come back. The other three had all crashed, probably been killed … they had terrible losses … he must have been very terrified every time he took off I should think.[79]

Despite her husband's silence about his emotions during the battle, Beth surmised his fear and later blamed the onset of Parkinson's disease on the tension to which he had been subjected during the war. At the end of her war service they were married and, while she worked for a while after that, once her children were born, she did not take employment until they were older and had gone off to boarding school. Then she returned to her tertiary studies which she had abandoned in 1939, eventually obtaining a postgraduate degree. Throughout this period, however, family obligations and her role as mother and care-giver predominated: 'my mother was ill and when the children came home, I stopped working'.[80] Her war work itself – the independent life she had led away from family, the camaraderie she had experienced and the skills she had learned – was still portrayed within a framework of patriarchal control. She emphasised that their roles were limited in comparison to those of the men and that these women were not as 'aggressive' as women tended to be at present:

> [N]one of the girls were among the qualified officers who looked after the radar sets and was in touch with the powers that be and so on. No, we were all humble people, all of us, even the officers. I mean we [were] really only officers over our own sex if you know what I mean. That's how things were. It's very different now. In fact I think women have become a bit too aggressive now, they've gone to the other extreme which is typical of human nature of course.[81]

For Beth Anderson the work done by white women in the military during the Second World War was thus necessary in the spirit of patriotism and to prevent the spread of the evil of Nazism. It was not, however, necessarily seen as a stepping stone towards greater independence and a change in gendered roles for women. Even for women like Mary Kent and Jill Boucher, who did not have the benefit of a tertiary education and had to take up waged labour at the end of the war prior to getting married, waged labour was seen as a temporary situation until they took up their rightful positions as mothers:

> [Y]ou went from one job to another in those days, it wasn't like today. No, you only left when you had babies … You got married and then you just kept on working then you fell pregnant, you resigned, you know.[82]

However, at the end of the war both women were involved with the Torch Commando, attending meetings and supporting the ideals of democracy:

> [W]e joined up and we went to listen to the talks and the reasons they were holding the torch parade … and they against the apartheid era … and the sanctions, of the way the Nats were doing. And maybe like the Ossewabrandwag, this was the way they felt that they could fight the Nats and just through blocking the odd thing and strengthening the things which they thought was right and seeing that those things got through … they had seen what real war was like and they had seen what the Nats were doing was not right and they were trying to make them see things in a different light.[83]

This involvement with the Torch Commando was the extent of their participation in political activism in the post-war era and, for many of that organisation's members, this participation ended with the failure of the Torch Commando to successfully thwart the path taken by the apartheid state. The immediate post-war era in South Africa was thus characterised by a failure to implement the ideals for which the war had been fought. This failure was based in part upon the disillusionment felt by white and black soldiers because of the unfulfilled promises of Smuts's government and the lack of a united and effective front to oppose the rise of the apartheid state. Meeting the material needs of the returning ex-servicemen took precedence over strengthening democratic ideals. Permanent social change was thus not apparent in terms of ending racial discrimination or leading to a shift in the status of white women. These women, in most instances, returned to a pre-war way of life.

Yet for a minority the war served as a means of radicalizing them. White women found their conventional understanding of the status quo in South Africa challenged by their war-time experiences. In the case of women such as the activist Helen Joseph there was the sense that her life had little meaning prior to her signing up and was characterised by ambiguity.[84] It was the war and her participation in it gave her a sense of purpose and it also helped resolve a contradiction. During her time as an information officer she gave lectures to other women on liberal issues:

> Our first official mandate was 'to inculcate a liberal and tolerant attitude of mind' … I lectured on a wide range of subjects: local and parliamentary institutions, Nazism, democracy. I studied all sorts of subjects: the franchise, division of land, housing, malnutrition, education – and the discrepancy between what was being spent on White and non-White education. How could I help but come at last to the realisation of the inequalities of this land?[85]

Her work during the war influenced her activism for equal rights in which she was to engage after the war. It helped resolve the contradiction between the white middle-class woman and the campaigner for equality. At the same time there was a sense that the mobilisation initiated by the government was not solely within the government's control. Her lectures on democracy led to her questioning the situation in her own country. At the end of the war she did not return to her pre-war existence, but began a new life as a result of this mobilisation. She divorced her husband and embarked

on a life of political activism.[86] The opportunities afforded her by the war created a permanent change in her life and her empowerment did not simply cease in 1945.

Simultaneously, however, military service for women did not necessarily play a major role in their later decision to engage in political activism. Following the end of the war, Mary Benson joined a unit in Germany responsible for overseeing refugees, those whose lives had been uprooted by the war such as concentration camp survivors as well as those children whose parents had been killed during the conflict.[87] Coming into contact with the worst repercussions of the Second World War had a tremendous impact on her, and she was unable to continue her work, feeling herself to be 'inadequate [and] ineffectual'.[88] Yet, despite this, it did not dawn on her to draw parallels between the repercussions of the Nazis' notion of the 'superior race' and the situation in South Africa where blacks were discriminated against on the same basis. This came only with hindsight:

> While working for the UNRRA it never occurred to me that millions of my fellow-citizens were treated like Displaced Persons in the country of their birth. When it came to racial prejudice I remained a typical white South African, little changed from my nineteen-year-old self travelling by Greyhound bus from Kansas City to Albuquerque and furious when a Negro had the 'cheek' to sit beside me. Or the twenty-year-old in Cape Town disgusted by the sight of Maori officers dancing with white girls.[89]

Benson's radicalization came from a different source, largely through her friendship with Alan Paton and, through him, the anti-apartheid activist and Anglican priest, Michael Scott.[90]

CONCLUSION

Official and often societal beliefs about the idealised woman auxiliary underwent tension and revision during the course of the war. In *The Women's Auxiliary* it was apparent that the expectations of women in the military varied according to the constraints of war. In the initial period appeals to women to throw their support behind the war effort displayed an ambivalence about the conservatism of women's pre-war roles and the new demands made upon them in the public sphere, with an uneasy line drawn between the two. The middle period of the war, initiated by setbacks such as the fall of Tobruk, suggested that older appeals to duty and sacrifice were no longer sufficient and this period marked the most interesting one in the depiction of women. Along with a glamorisation of military service was an indicator of more prominent and challenging roles for women in the military, acknowledging greater equality. The experiences of these women in war were thus defined by a conjunction of a sense duty and the requirements of the war effort with their own

individual needs and desires. That these women were not simply passive participants in officially defined experiences of the war is evident in the changes in the official portrayal of military service, particularly during the period of 'war weariness'. However, as the war neared its end, there was a gradual but almost inexorable closing down of opportunities for women. To be good citizens, wives and mothers they were required to put aside these individual needs for the sake of the 'greater good', ushering in an era of conservatism where the potential for change created by 'this great adventure' ultimately came to little and was largely relegated to the realm of memory.

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9

ALIEN SPRINGBOKS: FOREIGN VOLUNTEERS IN SOUTH AFRICA'S UNION DEFENCE FORCE, 1940–1945

Fankie L. Monama

Conventional analysis of military mobilisation usually focuses on the organisation and structure of armed forces composed of the citizens of nation-states. With the rise of contemporary insurgencies and the proliferation of Islamist movements such as the Islamic State in Iraq and Syria (ISIS) or Al Qaeda in Islamic Maghreb (AQIM), which includes military service by foreign nationals, there has been a growing focus on the phenomenon of transnational fighters. However, the phenomenon of transnational volunteers for military service in foreign conflicts has a long history. This was particularly evident in large-scale conflicts such as the First and Second World Wars. This chapter explores the phenomenon of volunteering for foreign wars by focusing on the dynamics of the enlistment of foreign nationals in the Union of South Africa during the Second World War (1940–1945). It seeks to establish why and how South African authorities enlisted foreign nationals in the country's Union Defence Force (UDF), and why foreign nationals decided to volunteer for military service in the Union's armed forces. The chapter broadly analyses the Union's defence policy, military mobilisation challenges, recruitment and rationale for enlistment of foreign nationals. This analysis is framed within the context of South Africa's internal political divisions at the time and anti-war resistance which impacted on the country's war effort during the Second World War.

INTRODUCTION

With the rise of contemporary insurgencies around the world, notably in Syria, Afghanistan, Iraq and parts on Africa, as well as the proliferation of Islamist movements such as al-Shabaab, Islamic State in Iraq and Syria or Al Qaeda in Islamic Maghreb, there has been a growing interest in the phenomenon of transnational fighters.[1] In an attempt to bring academic insights to bear on national security policies, policymakers and political analysts have promoted research on transnational or foreign military volunteers and the threat they posed to 'international peace and security' and the potential 'blowback'.[2] Recent studies have investigated the increasing numbers of *foreign fighters* – non-citizens who volunteer their services for insurgent activities in foreign conflicts.[3] In a recent publication Fritz and Young[4] analysed American citizens who joined anti-ISIS military ventures in Iraq and Syria. The main question was why would non-citizens be inclined to join foreign military conflicts? In their analysis they found a variety of reasons, ranging from sympathy and affinity with perceived victims of injustice to a desire for adventure, which often drove Americans to engage in foreign military service.[5] However, as Malet[6] explains, the phenomenon of foreign fighters in civil conflicts is not new. Of the 331 civil conflicts surveyed from the end of the Napoleonic wars to the early twenty-first century, some 67 attracted foreign fighters.[7] The main thrust of scholarship on the enlistment of foreign nationals by modern states is examining their participation in civil conflicts and insurgencies.[8]

Not only was the phenomenon of foreign fighters a common feature in civil conflicts, modern states have also recruited non-citizens to serve in various capacities in their national armies throughout history.[9]

During the American War of Independence, the French revolutionary wars, the Anglo-Boer War and the Spanish Civil War, individuals served in foreign militaries as collaborators, as prisoner-of-war turned as recruits and as volunteers.[10] Colonial Africa also commonly featured European-officered military units such as the King's African Rifles (KAR), West African Frontier Force (WAFF), the Force Publique (Belgian King Leopold II's private army which occupied the Congo) and the Rhodesian African Rifles (RAR), which were used to conquer and control African states and also participated in the two world wars.[11] These colonial African armies were multi-ethnic and comprised of what Stapleton[12] describes as 'alien natives' because they were recruited from other African states. In the age of 'total war', where warfare was conducted on a larger scale, such as the Great War (1914-1918), the employment of foreign volunteers was prevalent.[13] Similarly, thousands of foreign volunteers served with the Allies or Axis belligerents during the Second World War (1939-1945).[14] South Africa was likewise no exception. In August 1940 the South African government authorised the enlistment of foreign nationals in the Union Defence Force. However, foreign nationals from enemy countries had to be subjected to a vetting process.

The number of foreign nationals who served in the UDF during the war is not certain. South African authorities integrated foreign nationals across the UDF units and kept few individual records. Based on the available records, it could be estimated that fewer than 1 000 foreign nationals served in the UDF. As a result of internal domestic political divisions, infiltration of the country by secret agents and the anti-war resistance, the enlistment of foreign nationals in South Africa's armed forces was crucial because of the inherent risks of subversion and sabotage. Hence the interest in investigating this particular dimension of the country's history during the Second World War. Historians in other countries have embarked on research to analyse the long history of the phenomenon of transnational war volunteering in order to gain insights into its development, evolution and impact on the national armed forces and their warfare.

Krüger and Levsen[15] highlighted the historical development of mass war volunteering in a collaborative publication dedicated to foreign volunteers. Arielli and Collins[16] also edited a historical narrative of transnational war volunteering in the modern age. They posit that since the eighteenth century individuals have demonstrated an increasing willingness to engage in foreign military service, even today.[17] Arielli also examined the same phenomenon of transnational volunteers, in particular, the political and military value of the *Machal* in Israel's armed forces during the late 1940s.[18] Marco[19] also examined the usefulness of foreign soldiers, with a particular focus on how former volunteers in the Spanish Civil War (1936-1939) used their

expertise to serve in the guerrilla warfare units of the Allied forces during the Second World War. Tames and Romijn[20] and Smith, Poulson and Christensen[21] have examined the negative consequences of volunteering for foreign wars. They investigated the Dutch and the Danish volunteers respectively who served in the German Waffen-SS. These volunteers were not fully welcomed into the German forces, then struggled with their self-identities and ultimately also failed to integrate back into their national communities after the war.[22]

In a special issue of the *Review of European History*[23] O'Conner and Piketty[24] point out that the articles 'showcase new historical research on foreign military labour'. In particular, they emphasise the significance of 'transnational history', which unpacks the perspectives of both the foreign volunteers and the host countries, in order to provide insights into current debates on foreign fighters.[25] Scholarship on this aspect of military mobilisation is increasing. However, with the exception of the Anglo-Boer War (1899-1902),[26] the phenomenon of volunteering for foreign wars is largely under-studied in South Africa. Few publications can be mentioned. Jooste[27] provided a historical overview of foreign nationals who volunteered their services in 'defence of South Africa', but hardly mentioned anything about the two world wars. This is not uncommon. Grundlingh explains that in the South African historiography, the two world wars were often relegated to the periphery of scholarship, usually by Afrikaner historians who concentrated on 'wars on their own soil', such as the Anglo-Boer War.[28] As indicated above, Stapleton produced an interesting study on the 'extra-territorial forces' of Southern Rhodesia (Zimbabwe) and how they were utilised as the 'coercive power' to control the British colony. Bolliger[29] also recently examined an interesting case of black Namibians who served on the side of apartheid South Africa during the Namibian struggle for independence. Bolliger argues that those Namibians volunteered to serve in a foreign (South African) military force against other Namibian nationalist movements fighting for liberation, thus contributing to the 'transnational dynamics which shaped southern Africa's political history'.[30] However, before 1989, Namibia (formerly South West Africa) was not necessarily an independent country. The country and its armed forces had been under the administration and control of South Africa from 1919. Therefore, in the context of this study, black Namibians who served in the South African armed forces cannot be regarded as foreign nationals or 'alien natives' per se. Besides the above publications and excluding studies dealing with colonial African military service, any scholarship focusing on transnational military volunteering in any significant detail is largely non-existent.

Within the framework of transnational military service, this chapter investigates the dimension of foreign nationals volunteering to serve in South Africa's Union Defence Force during the Second World War. It reflects on the dynamics of transnational military enlistment amidst the political challenges in the country at the time. The South African state experienced highly-charged political dissension and resistance to

its war policy. In that context this chapter examines three broad questions: What was the rationale of the South African authorities in recruiting foreign nationals? What influenced foreign nationals to enlist for military service in the UDF? How were they perceived and treated? The study is also guided by the work of Hanson and Lin-Greenberg,[31] who argue that modern nation-states enlist foreign nationals for three broad purposes: to import expertise, to import an 'expendable' labour force, and to forge international bonds. Based on archival sources and supplemented by secondary literature, this chapter explores these three aspects, starting with an examination of South Africa's defence policy, and the politics around it, which impacted on the nature and operations of the UDF. This is followed by reflections on the Union's military position and challenges of mobilisation at the outbreak of the war. After that the chapter will deal with the enlistment of foreign nationals, focusing on the recruitment context, rationale and motivation for volunteering in the UDF. The chapter seeks to explore why and how foreign nationals enlisted in the UDF, particularly given the context of the South Africa's internal political differences and tensions, which impacted on the country's politics and its war effort.

SOUTH AFRICA'S DEFENCE POLICY AND ITS IMPLICATIONS

Before war broke out in September 1939, South African political authorities could not agree on the strategic question of the Union's defence policy. When the country achieved political unity in 1910, the post-Union military institution was established. In April 1912 the South African Defence Act (No. 13) of 1912[32] became law, and provided for the establishment of the Union Defence Force. This Act obliged 'European citizens' of military age (17-60) 'to render in time of war, personal service in defence of the Union in any part of South Africa whether within or outside the Union'.[33] In the Act 'European citizens' referred to white men, not blacks,[34] thus effectively defining South Africa's majority population out of the 'citizenship' category and the military institution. This was amongst many grievances held by blacks, apart from racial and socio-economic inequality, which created alienation between black society and the Union government.[35] During wartime the government would thus deprive itself of a larger pool of manpower to shore up its defence force as a result of black indifference.[36]

The second issue relates to the interpretation of the Act. Its principal author, General JC Smuts, veteran Boer general and first Defence Minister of the Union, envisioned the Act's application to include the rest of Africa 'south of the equator'. English-speaking South Africans accepted it because of the 'imperial defence' element in the Act.[37] However, Smuts's adversaries, the leading Afrikaner nationalist and also former Boer generals, General JBM Hertzog and General CF Beyers, vehemently opposed the Act. Its 'imperial connection' with their erstwhile nemesis, Britain, was

unacceptable to them, as the Union's white citizens would be 'militarily bound to the Crown'.[38] In addition, the silence of the Act on the definition of 'South Africa' created opportunities for Afrikaner nationalists to interpret its scope narrowly, restricting the defence objectives to the immediate borders of South Africa, not further afield.[39] Hence, some ardent Afrikaner nationalists launched an abortive rebellion against the Union government precisely on the question of supporting Britain and the deployment of the UDF outside South Africa.[40]

Thirdly, the organisation of the UDF also elicited controversy. The UDF amalgamated disparate military units, systems and cultures, predominantly the Boer commando system and the British colonial military system. To mitigate potential conflict, authorities maintained a linguistic and cultural balance between English and Afrikaner elements within the UDF.[41] Still, there were inherent sectorial interests. The English-speaking faction sought to maintain 'imperial connections' with Britain, and the Afrikaner nationalists craved to retain 'Boer political and military traditions'.[42] These tendencies permeated political debates and created policy uncertainty. After the Great War South Africa remained divided with regard to strategic defence priorities. In the 1924 elections, Hertzog's National Party (NP) coalition with the Labour Party defeated Smuts's South African Party (SAP). During his regime (1924–1939), Hertzog and his Afrikaner nationalist supporters pursued a constrained defence policy, advocated frugal economic policies and minimal military expenditure. Their discourse on defence policy focused on limiting South Africa's defence objectives to the country's borders, preparing to deal with internal unrest (mainly industrial disturbances) or a Pan-African anti-colonial rebellion in southern and central Africa, not foreign ventures.[43] Hertzog's supporters insisted that South African citizens should not be expected to engage in war service outside the perceived parameters of the Defence Act.[44]

However, Smuts became critical of Hertzog's narrow focus. He advocated for a modernised UDF capable of deployment at least 'anywhere in Africa', and for maintaining links with Britain, which was considered essential to the security of South Africa.[45] The Hertzog-Smuts Fusion government in power from 1934 still failed to reconcile their differences on defence policy. Dr DF Malan, leader of the Purified National Party (PNP), claimed to represent the 'true Afrikaners' in the opposition,[46] and continued the rhetoric of disparaging the UDF. Malan's followers claimed that the UDF did not reflect 'a truly people's national character', and therefore did not warrant support.[47] Hertzog's Minister of Defence, Oswald Pirow, who attempted a five-year military improvement programme,[48] was not effective. His actions were affected by the strict military economy, limited defence objectives and a belief that most white Afrikaans-speakers did not support the UDF because it was designed to fight for Britain. In September 1938 Pirow, echoing the prevailing Afrikaner nationalist attitude, indicated that white South Africans were not 'prepared to support a defence policy

aimed exclusively at making soldiers out of the youth of the country'.[49] Because of persistent political divergences and policy uncertainty, the UDF's most senior officer, Lieutenant General George Brink, would proclaim that the General Staff was still unaware of the Union's defence policy in 1937.[50] The Union's pre-war political disagreements impacted on the development of a clear defence policy to shape the nature and purpose of the UDF. As a result, at the outbreak of the war in September 1939, a volunteer-based expeditionary force considered more reliable and deployable had to be developed from scratch.

OUTBREAK OF THE WAR, MILITARY POSITION AND MOBILISATION CONUNDRUM

The outbreak of the Second World War created complications for South Africa. At a political level the Union's parliament voted with a narrow majority of 80 to 67 for participation in the war. The Hertzog-Smuts Pact government ended and Hertzog, whose pro-neutrality motion was defeated, resigned. His erstwhile pro-war deputy, Smuts, assumed power. Hertzog joined Malan and formed the Herenigde Nasionale Party of Volksparty (Re-united Nationalist Party or People's Party) (HNP), as an opposition against Smuts's government.[51] In addition to the HNP, other extra-parliamentary organisations such as the *Ossewabrandwag* (OB), Oswald Pirow's *Nuwe Orde* (New Order) and the 'Shirt movements',[52] which appealed to the Afrikaners to oppose the Union's participation in what was regarded as a 'British war',[53] proliferated. These opposition movements epitomised what Grundlingh refers to as an 'anti-war Afrikaner opinion'.[54]

South Africa's internal politics were further complicated by Nazi influence. Throughout the 1930s Nazi agents such as Bruno Stiller and Dr Luitpoldt Werz courted extra-parliamentary organisations such as the OB to promote exclusive Afrikaner nationalism and anti-war activism in the Union.[55] South African society became polarised into pro-war and anti-war (or neutral) camps.[56] Subversive propaganda permeated South African political and security structures. It generated disloyalty within the UDF and undermined effective defence planning.[57] As Van der Waag explains, 'it was not clear how, when and where the UDF would be deployed'.[58] The UDF was also under-strength, inadequately trained, ill-equipped and unprepared for any kind of war.[59] Moreover, the military position was complicated by discontent and disloyalty within the UDF, where some members rejected the war policy and resigned, while others were discharged for the threat they posed to military cohesion.[60] As a result, Smuts found himself without broad-based national support and was, therefore, confronted with military mobilisation challenges.

RECRUITMENT CONTEXT

The challenge of obtaining manpower for the UDF emerged. Military experience and expertise were key considerations for recruitment. So was race and citizenship as per the defence policy. To place the Union on a proper war footing, the government 'was forced into mental gymnastics', as Grundlingh puts it.[61] Authorities wanted to secure sufficient white men who had the right to carry precision arms for military service.[62] Smuts proceeded cautiously to avoid alienating and aggravating the anti-war Afrikaner opinion. He discarded the option of conscription and adopted a volunteer military policy.

Personnel estimates were drawn from the census of 1936 to determine the availability of white manpower. These estimates included allowance for deaths from 1936 to 1939 and the possible unavailability of personnel in the police, prison services, civil servants, mining and other personnel occupying crucial positions.[63] Then it was determined that white males of military age (18 and 44) would be drawn from 452 369 men, and those between 45 and 60 years from 160 604.[64] The projected personnel requirement was 143 000 white men (139 000 for the field force and 3 900 for home defence). The government estimated that, because of the political tensions, only 112 000 white males of military age would actually volunteer. Thus there would be a shortfall of over 30 500 men.[65] Black South Africans were initially not considered for recruitment. But authorities factored them into the defence calculations as military labour.[66] Over one million blacks were employed in the agricultural and mining sectors. About 600 000 others who were scattered in other sectors or unemployed could provide military labour.[67] Foreign nationals over the age of 21 in South Africa were estimated to number 16 680.[68] However, for the moment, there was no provision for recruitment of foreign nationals residing in South Africa.

The mobilisation of both whites and blacks would become a real challenge. Anti-war resistance, opposition propaganda, racial policies and service conditions would impact on enlistment. Authorities had to make intensified efforts to stimulate public support for the war policy. From the onset a massive propaganda campaign for recruitment and to combat subversive propaganda was launched. As discussed in Chapter 6, official and semi-official agencies such as the Bureau of Information (BOI), Directorate of Military Intelligence (DMI), South African Broadcasting Corporation (SABC), Union Unity Truth Service (UUTS), newspaper editors and private advertising companies played a role to garner support for the war.[69] The government also adopted an internment policy against foreign suspects, particularly Germans, and some Union nationals suspected of subversive activities.[70] By early 1940 over 1 000 suspects were already interned, of whom 162 were Union nationals.[71] Internal security measures were consolidated under the War Measures Act (No. 4 of 1941), referred to as the National Security Code, to maintain internal security.[72] Given these considerations, the recruitment of foreigner

nationals into the UDF was low on the list of government priorities. However, with the development and expansion of the war, Union authorities had to reconsider their original stance and enlist foreign nationals.

ENLISTMENT AND RATIONALE

Hanson and Lin-Greenberg argue that foreign nationals have historically been recruited to secure technical experts, such as medical professionals and pilots, to enhance military capabilities. In other cases, recruitment was necessitated by the need to augment manpower or as 'politically expendable labour' to counter domestic criticism regarding 'unpopular' wars or 'risky missions'. Lastly, foreign nationals were recruited for political reasons such as the symbolic reinforcement of international bonds.[73] In South Africa's case, recruitment of foreign nationals seems to have been influenced by the need for manpower and expertise, as well as for political connections. Foreign nationals also had various motivations for seeking enlistment in the UDF, ranging from politico-ideological convictions to the desire for citizenship status.

In October 1939 the Independent Cultural Association, an organisation consisting of refugees and immigrants from Germany and Austria, both Jewish and non-Jewish, asked the South African authorities to permit its members to enlist for military service in the UDF. The Association reasoned that 'they have a claim and duty to fight Hitlerism' and did not want to be blamed for 'standing aloof' when Union nationals were fighting for 'freedom and independence'.[74] This was a clear politico-ideological motivation and indicated a moral necessity to fight against Hitler. The Union authorities, however, invoked the Defence Act and declined the Cultural Association's request because liability for military service was restricted to Union citizens.[75] Another group, the South African Central Committee of German Refugees, submitted an enquiry in April 1940. Their representative, WJ Hayward, inquired about the service conditions of his members who had joined the UDF's Active Citizen Force (ACF) and Permanent Force (PF), with regard to the disability, death in action and pension benefits for non-citizen servicemen or their next of kin.[76] It was a surprise to the Union authorities that foreign nationals from enemy countries had joined the UDF. However, the military authorities responded politely and indicated that once a person is enlisted for military service in the UDF, 'there is no distinction' and all serving members were 'entitled to similar benefits'. But, they continued, 'aliens may not be engaged as members of the S.A. Permanent Force'.[77] The Committee seems to have been driven by strategic political recognition and economic necessity because it represented German refugees. The Union military authorities, in an apparent concern regarding the enlistment of 'enemy aliens' in the UDF, instructed all military commanders to 'arrange for all enemy aliens serving in the units to be discharged forthwith'.

No enemy alien was to be accepted in the UDF; however, other foreign nationals 'legally resident in South Africa' could be accepted for service.[78]

At the time foreign nationals were viewed with suspicion. There were concerns about the impact of Nazi propaganda in South Africa,[79] and the infiltration and potential subversion of the Union's military forces.[80] In the broader public sector, South African authorities were concerned about possible subversion from foreign nationals. In April 1939, a few months before the outbreak of hostilities, the government of Hertzog (who was, ironically, a German sympathiser) issued instructions pertaining to the employment of foreign nationals. The Department of the Interior, which was responsible for domestic security, issued a general circular to immigration officials advising them to adhere to the Aliens Act of 1937, which required special departmental permits for employment of foreign nationals in the Union, particularly in public institutions.[81] In early August 1940 Antoine Segers, who was recommended by the minister plenipotentiary of Belgium to join the UDF, was rejected. The UDF's Adjutant-General pointed out that it was not possible to enlist Segers, but there was consideration being given to establishing a foreign legion to accommodate foreign nationals seeking to do military service for South Africa.[82]

In 1940 several European countries suffered defeats against Nazi Germany, for example, Denmark, the Netherlands, France and Czechoslovakia. People from these countries fled to friendly countries around the world.[83] Troops from these defeated countries were welcomed into the Allied forces. South African authorities became alarmed and waived a number of restrictions. Black South Africans, under the Directorate Non-European Army Services (DNEAS) led by Colonel ET Stubbs, enlisted for military service in the UDF, though in a non-combat capacity.[84] Union authorities also reviewed the restrictive policy on the enlistment of foreign nationals in the UDF. On 17 August 1940 the UDF issued instructions to the recruiting officials and officers commanding:

> It has now been decided that enemy aliens may continue to be accepted for whole-time service with the U.D.F. under conditions that the bona fides of all aliens applying for engagements must be established beyond any doubt before they are accepted for whole-time service. This applies particularly in the case of enemy aliens and in this connection Recruiting Officers and/or Officers Commanding units to which such aliens are desirous of being posted, must satisfy themselves regarding the *bona fides* by personal investigations or by obtaining reports from Command Intelligence Officers or from the local Police Authorities.[85]

No foreign national would be imposed on any military commander. Sir Pierre van Ryneveld, the Union's Chief of General Staff (CGS), stressed that in addition to firmly establishing the *bona fides* and loyalty of the foreign nationals, unit commanders must also be prepared to accept their services. Foreign nationals could also serve in their chosen units and in the mobile field force (MFF).[86] However, foreign nationals on temporary permits were 'under no circumstances to be accepted for service in the UDF'.[87]

Yet the latter section of the policy was not adhered to by the UDF recruiting officials. Foreign nationals on temporary permits were found to be serving in the MFF. For example, P Lederman was enlisted in the UDF and registered as an alien of German origin at Pietermaritzburg on 27 October 1939. His comrades were suspicious, but there was no direct complaint against him. He was retained in the UDF.[88] Military exigencies seem to have held sway in deviating from policy provisions. There was still a general policy prohibiting foreign nationals from enemy countries from serving in public institutions.[89]

The application of restrictions on foreign nationals created further problems for those who desired to enlist. During a staff conference of senior military officials in September 1941 the Union's Secretary for Defence, Brigadier General CH Blaine, raised the difficulties confronting foreign nationals who wished to join the South African forces. In response, Van Ryneveld indicated that no obstacles should be placed before loyal foreign nationals.[90] Subsequently, Blaine, Harry Lawrence (Minister of the Interior) and Smuts met and agreed to relax the Union's policy regarding foreign nationals on temporary resident permits to allow them to join the UDF. Van Ryneveld further instructed that there should be a concerted drive to recruit foreign nationals into the UDF.[91] However, the instruction regarding the establishment of their *bona fides* remained in force. By 1941, within a year of the UDF's movement to East and North Africa, the Union's policy changed from 'no enlistment' to 'a concerted drive' to encourage foreign nationals to volunteer for military service. This could be attributed to the uncertainty created by the Allied military setbacks in Europe, anti-war hostilities and apathy within the UDF,[92] and the slow recruitment process which was inhibited by 'a subtle and undermining influence and campaign against recruiting'.[93] A number of troops were also discharged from the UDF in connection with their subversive activities and endangering the forces.[94] In March 1941 intelligence reports indicated that troop morale was being undermined by anonymous letters containing 'false rumours about sickness, death and infidelity among soldiers and their families', which were being sent to the UDF troops in the field.[95] Hence, as a result of the constant manpower shortage, Union authorities decided to relax their restrictive enlistment policies.[96]

The ways in which foreign nationals volunteered for service in the UDF differed. There was a formal approach. Co-belligerent countries allowed their citizens, who at the outbreak of the war were residing in those countries, to enlist in the armed forces of those countries if they wanted to. This was the case between the United States (USA), the United Kingdom (UK) and other members of the Allied forces. However, those non-citizens could also apply to be transferred in order to serve under their own flags.[97] US citizens were required by the South African authorities to sign a restricted volunteer oath to serve anywhere within the UDF, without losing their US citizenship.[98] There was also no provision in South Africa for such foreign nationals

to obtain citizenship after service.[99] South Africa was also constrained in terms of technical expertise. In March 1941 Union authorities asked the American government to assist with doctors and nurses for medical support to the UDF. The request could not be acceded to because of the 'exigencies of national defence' in the USA.[100] Again, South African authorities requested Americans in vain to make available mechanics for the South African Air Force (SAAF) to maintain US-type aircraft such as the Martin Bomber, Lockheed Lodestar and Mohawks, for which South Africa was expecting shipment.[101] The request was not approved. In 1941 the Union authorities requested help from the Canadian government to assist with the recruitment of trained nurses to serve in the South African Military Nursing Service. Since most nurses could not get employment in Canada, their government agreed and sent 300 nurses for service in the South African military medical facilities in the Union and also in Egypt and Italy throughout the war.[102] The requirement for specialised expertise was also South Africa's motivation for enlisting foreign nationals.

For countries such as Mexico, the policy was that foreign nationals from co-belligerent countries were liable for military service in case of an international conflict. However, Mexican citizens were exempt from military obligations in foreign countries, particularly the UK, USA, India, Burma and other British colonies. South Africa could also not enlist Mexicans in the UDF and the same reciprocal exemption was requested in the case of Allied citizens.[103] Another formal approach was conducted through bilateral agreements between co-belligerent states, where non-citizen troops could serve for either country if there was a special need for such services.[104] In special circumstances, for example, foreign troops in South Africa who came from countries occupied by the enemy, permission was granted for them to serve in Union forces if they wished. This was the case with Danes, Greeks and Norwegians.[105] Danish nationals living in South Africa requested the Union authorities, through the Danish Consulate General in Johannesburg, to allow them to serve in the UDF on political and moral grounds. They intended to fight against a common enemy in Hitler, to eject Nazi forces from Denmark and restore its independence.[106] About 31 Danish nationals would serve in the UDF during the war.[107]

In other cases, South African authorities were approached by co-belligerent states to allow their citizens to serve in the UDF, for economic reasons, the need for joint training or to address political problems. Early in the war there was a request to consider about 80 Palestinian policemen who were sailing from Egypt to the United Kingdom via Durban. Their service contracts had expired and they needed employment. Upon enquiries from the South African authorities, the High Commissioner of Jerusalem indicated that those willing to enlist in the UDF could do so because they were under no military obligations in Palestine or in the United Kingdom, as they were reservists.[108] It seems their primary motivation was economic and also to obtain permanent resident status after military service. Another request would come from Greek authorities,

who needed South Africa's assistance to solve a political problem. About 200-300 Greek officers were condemned for mutiny in Syria because of political differences among the Greek soldiers and interned in Sudan. These officers were of high calibre and were regarded as 'just victims of politics'. The Greek king and their minister of war intervened on their behalf and requested South Africa to help them out of the political quagmire.[109] The CGS, after consulting with Smuts, acceded to the request. However, the Greek officers were to be enlisted individually as privates, and scattered among various UDF units.[110] The Greek royal legation also asked the South African authorities to allow about 25-30 other Greek soldiers, who came from the Middle East and were stationed at Imperial Convalescent depot at Howick, Natal, to stay in the Union.[111] The Union military authorities did not respond favourably to this request. With the expansion of the war, South African authorities were often inundated with requests to support Allied nationals. The SAAF was requested to assist in the training of the Belgian, Greek and Yugoslav personnel in their respective trades.[112] The request was accepted with the proviso that the United Kingdom would bear the costs.[113]

In addition to formal requests, the Union also received individual applications from foreign nationals who wished to enlist in the UDF. Those were dealt with on a case-by-case basis. However, the general rule was that the Union government was opposed to the employment of enemy aliens in state departments, except in very special circumstances and after the authorities were satisfied about the credibility of such persons.[114] Several foreign nationals took advantage of the relaxation of restrictive policies and requested to enlist in the South African armed forces. CT Reynart, president of the Free French Committee in South Africa, made special appeals for French nationals to be allowed to enlist. In particular, a special case was made for Pierre Le Bon, a former French officer and chef, who came to South Africa after the French armistice with Nazi Germany. Le Bon wanted to join the UDF and after the war wished to remain in order to join the hotel trade in the Union.[115] The Union authorities, after establishing his *bona fides*, acceded to the request.[116] Another French national, a 19-year-old young man who, after his father died and the mother remained in France, lived with his uncle in South Africa for 15 years. He enlisted in the SAAF, but recruiting authorities released him because the French authorities did not approve of their nationals joining foreign armed forces.[117] After representations by his uncle, as his legal guardian, the young man was allowed to join the SAAF.[118] Other French nationals, particularly the Legionnaires, who were interned in the Union from requisitioned Vichy French ships, requested to join the UDF, but were rejected by recruiting officers.[119] These French nationals refused to serve in the Fighting French Forces for partisan reasons.[120] Only one Vichy French member, Aubrey Henri, from Middleburg, and at least a few other French nationals had enlisted in the UDF.[121] But they were released after the request by the French Committee of National Liberation, which issued an order that all French volunteers,

of whom 10 to 20 were believed to be in the UDF, were required to serve with the French Fighting Forces and not in other Allied armies.[122]

A general policy of the Union was that if foreign nationals wished to enlist in their own forces, they should apply to be released from the UDF.[123] Sometimes it was problematic for officers commanding to release their foreign nationals because of the quality of the services rendered and the difficulty of obtaining officers of the same calibre. The officer commanding Witwatersrand unit expressed disappointment with the French military service order which required the release of Captain Gross, a Command Pay and Quartermaster Officer, and requested that exceptions be made.[124] His request was not approved. The officer commanding Coastal Area Command in Cape Town refused to release a French National, Corporal A Dejoie, who served as an Intelligence Officer for information.[125] After the French delegation threatened to punish Dejoie for failing to join the French Navy, the Coastal Command headquarters (HQ) was compelled to release him, and attributed the refusal of the officer commanding to comply with the order to 'ignorance of the general policy'.[126] It was a difficult balancing act by the Union authorities to deal with the requirements of the UDF and the complexities of accommodating different foreign nationals.

NATIONALITIES

By the end of the war in 1945, a total of 334 224 volunteers of all racial groups in South Africa had served in the UDF.[127] According to the officer in charge of the war records in Pretoria, the UDF volunteer records were not maintained according to nationality.[128] Thus, the need to present an image of a united defence force was strong in South Africa. It was even more difficult to ascertain a number of English- and Afrikaans-speaking South Africans in the UDF as official returns did not differentiate between the groups.[129] The South African authorities applied the policy of integration (involving white volunteers) in the UDF to avoid split loyalties and to promote group cohesion. Accounts of foreign nationals in the UDF appeared in general correspondence and not in consolidated records. Nonetheless, the information gleaned from the available records indicates that several foreign nationals contributed to South Africa's war effort. Of the estimated 16 680 foreign nationals over the age of 21 in South Africa, at least eight to ten different nationalities could be identified within the UDF during the Second World War (see Table 1 below for total estimates). The majority appear to have been Greek. The Greek authorities requested South Africa's assistance to deal with a difficult politico-military problem. As such, they sent about 200-300 well-trained military officers, who were politically ostracised from their colleagues in Syria, to serve in various capacities in the UDF.[130] A further 25-30 Greek soldiers who came to the Union for medical reasons and also wanted to stay in the country, but they could not be accommodated.

The Palestinian group was also huge. However, not all 80 of them joined the UDF as some were dismissed or discharged on compassionate grounds to be with their families after the UK was bombed.[131] South African authorities were willing to accept about 40 of them who expressed willingness to serve in the SAAF.[132] Canada also contributed personnel to South Africa's war effort. Canadian nurses numbering 300 enlisted in the South African Military Nursing Service and also formed a large group. Each of the Canadian nurses was required to serve a one-year renewable contract. The numbers were kept at 300.[133]

Another group of foreign nationals was the Danes. After the fall of Denmark in 1940, the Danes requested to be enlisted in the Union's armed forces in order to assist in a common effort against Hitler and also for the restoration of the Danish independence.[134] At the end of the war about 31 Danish nationals had served in the UDF. They were to receive the King Christian X Memorial Medal in recognition of the services rendered with the Allied forces in the war.[135] The Danish legation and consular representatives appeared to have been the only ones who were able ascertain the records of their countrymen who served in the UDF.

The Germans were at first refused permission to enlist and some were interned. Records do not reflect how many actually enlisted. Some Germans enlisted as individuals in various units of the UDF, except in the Permanent Force, but others could not. In one case, Halmuth Hurssel, an Austrian medical doctor in bacteriology, serology and tropical diseases, who trained in Vienna, offered his services to the British army, but was turned down. He then approached the Union authorities but could not be accepted, either because of the unavailability of posts in the medical corps, or he was not registered with the South African Medical Council.[136] When approval was finally granted, Hurssel declined because the condition was that he was required to serve only for the duration of the war. He wanted assurances that he would be retained after the war.[137] The number of French nationals who served in the UDF was particularly difficult to ascertain. It was believed that at least 20 French citizens were serving in the UDF, until the military service order compelled them to enlist in the Free French forces from 1943. However, South African authorities could only account for at least five.[138] A few US citizens were acknowledged to have served in the UDF, hence the restricted service oath prepared specifically for them.[139] But authorities on both sides could not give their exact numbers.[140] Other foreign nationals emanated from Norway, Austria, Canada, Belgium and Yugoslavia.[141] Most foreign nationals joined the UDF and mainly through individual applications.[142] South African authorities recruited 15 Yugoslav nationals in the Air Force and 42 from the prisoner-of-war camps in South Africa.[143] The Belgians had 36 pilots and about 60 individuals who trained in various trades at the South African air schools. Upon completion of their training, about 44 left the Union to join various units in Africa, the Middle East and Europe.[144] Foreign nationals enlisted in the UDF for a common political cause and the moral necessity of

fighting against Hitler, but others were driven by economic reasons and the desire to obtain citizenship status after the war.

TABLE 1: Total Union Defence Force and Estimates of Foreign Nationals, 1939-1945

UDF	Greek	Palestinians	French	Danish	Yugoslav	Canadian*	Others**
334 224	200-300	40-80	5-20	31	57	300	50-100

*** Canadians were mainly nurses who volunteered in the South African Military Nursing Service.**

**** Other foreign nationals included an unspecified number of Norwegians, Germans, Austrians, Canadians, Belgians and Americans.**

Sources: *South Africa at War*, **Vol 7; Chief of the General Staff (War), Box 51 and 52; Secretary for Defence, Box 3058.**

The enlistment of foreign nationals served to augment South African forces' troop numbers and enhanced the UDF's fighting capacity. Also, because of the policy of integrating foreign nationals, their presence did not elicit much criticism from the anti-war activists, and they also did not undermine or threaten the cohesion and stability of the South African armed forces.

CONCLUSION

The South African authorities were initially reluctant to enlist foreign nationals in the UDF. This was not only because they needed to comply with the defence policy and the notion of 'citizenship', but also about apprehensions about their loyalty. There were also concerns regarding the political ramifications emanating from the internal anti-war activism in the country. However, the uncertain Allied military prospects, perennial Union manpower shortage, limited expertise, tendencies of disloyalty and apathy within the UDF, and a struggle to fill the ranks of the UDF compelled authorities to change their policies. Subsequently, there was a drive to recruit foreign nationals, especially with the required technical skills, such as medical and air force personnel to enhance the military capabilities of the UDF. This was a complicated task as in some cases, it required the reciprocal consent of co-belligerents. The Union authorities ensured that foreign nationals were integrated and spread across the various UDF units to maintain the vision of a united defence force. This could also have been calculated to prevent the forming of exclusive 'alien groupings' which could undermine cohesion. Although fewer than 1 000 enlisted in the UDF, foreign nationals in South Africa were willing to contribute to the Union's war effort and indeed would become Alien Springboks. Any form of subversion actually came from South African citizens who were subsequently ejected from UDF.

Foreign nationals enlisted individually or as groups for various reasons. The rationale varied from economic motives to politico-ideological reasons and moral necessity. For

others, like the Palestinians and the Greeks, they hoped that they would be granted permanent resident status in the Union. For French nationals, they enlisted for the sake of political and personal freedom, though internees from Vichy France were not accepted. Because of the official policy adopted by the French Committee of National Liberation to request the release of French nationals to serve in the French Fighting Force (against the Axis forces), only a handful served in the UDF. In general, it appears that political ideology was a strong motivation for foreign nationals to volunteer for service in the South African armed forces during the war. Nationalism and the quest for liberty and independence were particularly prevalent among the French, Danish and Greek volunteers. Foreign nationals from enemy countries such as Germany, served for political recognition and security in the post-war world. Though foreign nationals were accepted in the UDF, the principle was that they could serve with their own troops if they so wished. The French and Americans certainly encouraged their citizens to serve under their own flags.

On the other hand, the Union authorities had their own motives for enlisting foreign nationals. The reasons were both strategic and pragmatic. The slow progress of recruitment and the need for volunteers was a major concern. This was compounded by the shortage of skilled manpower especially in the medical and technical fields. As European states continued to fall to the Axis forces, South African authorities had practical concerns. The need to increase their troop levels and to cement strategic political bonds with friendly nations and co-belligerents for recognition of the country's significance and value became imperative. The country also needed to advance trade and commercial interests with neutral and co-belligerent states during the war.[145] Hence, from 1940 Union authorities waived the racial and citizenship restrictions to fill the ranks of the UDF. The Smuts government was influenced by the practical military exigencies and strategic political calculations to eschew internal political risks and consider the enlistment of foreign nationals. In the end, this was both a realistic and strategic approach which was exploited for the sake of expediency at the time. In spite of South Africa's internal political challenges, strategic political considerations and pragmatism were more persuasive. Even after the Second World War, the enlistment of foreign nationals in South Africa formed part of the defence policy and planning within the military establishment.[146] Accepting foreign military volunteers became an entrenched practice in the twentieth century, especially with the rise of the anti-colonial and liberation struggles, and has become a characteristic feature of modern conflicts.[147]

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124 OC Wits Command to Adjutant General, 25 Apr 1944, CGS War, Box 52, file 14/7, DOD Archives.

125 General Staff to Coastal Command HQ, 14 Aug 1944, CGS War, Box 52, file 14/7, DOD Archives.

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127 This total number of the UDF volunteers excludes the 8 468 of the semi-military, anti-sabotage, guard unit called the Essential Services Protection Corps (ESPC). See Martin and Orpen, *South Africa at War,* pp 346-347; Van der Waag, *A Military History of Modern South Africa*, pp 175-176.

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10

FROM THE BATTLEFIELD TO THE BALLOT BOX: WAR VETERANS AND SOUTH AFRICAN POLITICS, 1945–1960

Graeme Plint and Anri Delport

War is the punctuation of history, often marking the closing of old and the opening of new chapters. Although historians have claimed that war has a transformational effect on society, it is often the soldiers and the high ideals for which they fought that are first to be washed away in the ebb and flow of post-conflict politics. In South Africa, which largely escaped the destructive effects of World War II, this was even more so. The tempestuous nature of the post-war white political landscape meant that the veterans were not so much absentmindedly forgotten, as deliberately blotted out of national memory. As the waves of nationalist reaction crashed against the veteran organisations, the Springbok Legion and then the Torch Commando threw veterans into both parliamentary and extra-parliamentary politics. The role that these ex-servicemen's identity played in post-war politics has often been overlooked, even by researchers decades later, due to the dominance of the nationalists in this period Nevertheless, their names persistently resurface in the political narrative, like flotsam on the ocean.

This chapter explores the influence of military experience on those ex-servicemen who played a role in South African politics from 1945 until 1960, with specific reference to the intersection between Second World War service and post-war political leadership. To this end, the chapter will trace the political experiences of selected ex-servicemen from mass demobilisation from 1945 onwards until 1960, by which time most of the loose threads of the Second World War seems to have been resolved, or were superseded in South Africa by other events in that same year or the next. These include the Sharpeville Massacre, the end of the Treason Trial, Harold Wilson's 'Winds of Change' speech and the establishment of the Republic of South Africa.[1] The select group comprises of ex-servicemen who were actively involved in both extra-parliamentary and parliamentary politics. These men were either office-bearers in political parties or movements, or stood in parliamentary elections. The aim of the study is to use the selected servicemen's aggregate biographical data to explore what influence wartime experience had on political participation in the post-war period. To this end, prosopography and a range of source materials, including war service records, election results and biographical data are used to gain a better understanding of the biographical commonalities of and differences between these veterans.

WARTIME EXPERIENCE AND THE VETERANS' ORGANISATIONS

Following a fierce political battle in Parliament in September 1939, two significant changes transformed the political orientation of the Union of South Africa. The first was the decision for South Africa to enter the war alongside the Allies. The second was a political realignment and shift in leadership in white[2] politics as JC Smuts emerged as Prime Minister and leader of the United Party, while for the former Prime Minister, JBM Herzog, it was the beginning of his political downfall.[3]

Pre-existing divisions in white society intensified as strong anti-war sentiments reverberated from certain Afrikaner quarters, while others flocked to take a special oath and to enlist in the Union Defence Force (UDF).[4] It was within this political context that an estimated 217 122 whites, 46 412 Coloured people and Indians, and 79 258 Blacks served in the UDF in various campaigns.[5] The UDF's first destination was East Africa.

The earliest South African troops that arrived in East Africa in July 1940 fought alongside armed black soldiers from India, Nigeria, Kenya, Uganda, Gold Coast (Ghana), Zanzibar, Tanganyika (Tanzania), Somaliland and Northern Rhodesia (Zambia) until November 1941.[6] As the supply of white men ran low, South African fighting units also became increasingly 'diluted' as Coloured and black soldiers were progressively assigned to non-combat roles. On the battlefield racial segregation lessened with the unobtrusive arming of these 'non-combatants' with captured weapons.[7] As racial barriers softened on the battlefront, white South African soldiers also sought sexual favours from the local African women during any lull in the fighting. This further blurring of racial lines increasingly undermined any ideas of white supremacy that the men may have harboured from a previous life.[8] Fighting in unity across racial lines was an unparalleled experience for soldiers who were still acquainted with the quotidian life of segregationist society in the Union. Given such new experiences, some men came to see the South African policy of not arming black South Africans as ludicrous and politically self-serving.[9]

While the East African campaign was still raging on, Nationalist Afrikaner formations wilfully disseminated German propaganda that was tailored for the South African audience. In response, the UDF created the Army Education Scheme (AES) in 1941 to neutralise enemy propaganda and limit the influence of radical agitators among the soldiers being prepared for deployment 'up North'.[10] The design and development of the scheme, headed by Major (Dr) EG Malherbe as the Chief Education Officer, incorporated the inputs of many prominent liberals.[11] The dependence of the UDF on 'citizen volunteers' meant that 'what the soldier was fighting for' was emphasised, with the focus on South Africa's political, cultural and economic situation.[12]

In 1941 soldiers in Abyssinia, Egypt and South Africa formed a 'Soldiers Union', named the Springbok Legion. Some of the founder members were motivated by the belief that officialdom was not responsive to the needs of the ordinary soldier.[13] Others felt that they had 'a special responsibility to carry over into political life … that active belief in democratic principles and practice which animated their wartime services'.[14] Since its founders were inclined to radical thinking, the Springbok Legion was from the outset a political organisation.[15] Surprisingly, the UDF was mostly tolerant of the Legion. Similarly, the AES did not discourage the Legion's leadership

from becoming AES officers. Such circumstances created a juxtaposition of interests between the two initiatives, and an unintentional bridge between the radical soldiers and the liberal community.[16] The tolerance of the Springbok Legion and the creation of the AES provided an element of institutional acceptance for a more liberal agenda in South African politics.

In May 1941, within a few months of the arrival of UDF soldiers in East Africa, most South African troops were re-deployed to the North African theatre. The UDF left behind only a few men to participate in mopping-up operations.[17] Besides, a small group of South African servicemen also served in Madagascar for six months from June 1942.[18] The experience of the desert campaign in North Africa was far different, as the two South African divisions faced a superior opponent compared to what they faced in East Africa. Two significant disasters at Tobruk and later Sidi Rezegh resulted in the loss of most of the 2nd South African Division to enemy capture, as well as severe political repercussions for Smuts on the home front. However, the later Allied success at El Alamein and the recapture of Tobruk finally expelled German forces from Libya. Given this Allied victory and the depletion of the UDF combat strength, the 1st SA Division was recalled to South Africa by early 1943 for reorganisation and domestic utilisation.[19]

Soon after elections in the Union in mid-1943, South African troops had their last taste of battle, this time on the Italian front. For this purpose the Union formed its first armoured division.[20] Men were required to take a new Oath to fight outside of Africa, where they served from April 1943 until the end of the war in May 1945.[21] As the fighting moved into Italian towns and valleys, soldiers saw first-hand not only the destruction of war itself, but also of fascism and authoritarian governments.[22] Furthermore, the engagement with the local partisans in liberated towns exposed soldiers on an emotional level to lessons in the nature of communism and radical ideology.[23] The final European victory in May 1945 left the Springbok soldiers stranded in Italy and the Middle East, while the demobilisation and repatriation process lurched on. Soldiers who exploited the opportunity to travel around war-torn Europe and Israel were influenced by the destruction of war they witnessed and the dangers of extreme ideologies.[24]

It should be noted that those men who were finally repatriated home were not the first to experience the shift in their status from 'servicemen' to 'ex-servicemen'. Demobilisation was not a singular event at the cessation of hostilities, but rather an ongoing process throughout the war period.[25] Some men were already been repatriated and demobilised during the East African campaign for reasons such as ill-health or war injuries. Thus, war experiences varied amongst servicemen not only based on their different campaign experiences but also because of the length or intensity of their exposure to war. One experience shared by these men was their exposure to patterns of successful radical activism and racial tolerance, albeit to different degrees and with diverse implications.

The bulk of repatriated white South African ex-servicemen faced hardened racial attitudes in a society that was held under siege by Afrikaner Nationalists. The Ossewabrandwag (OB), for one, had waged a sabotage campaign, destroying infrastructure and causing the death of innocent people during the war years.[26] Changes, if they had occurred, were in the direction of conservative white dominance and racial separation.[27] Despite shared wartime experiences, a collective post-war political consciousness was mostly absent from the 'ordinary' ranks of ex-servicemen. This stemmed from their varied educational, social and economic background in pre-war civilian life, which resurfaced as men gradually re-integrated into the routines and patterns of domestic, quotidian life. The political views, differences and distinctions of their former civilian lives emerged once again. It was this general indifference amongst 'ordinary' ex-servicemen, despite their shared war experience, that hampered 'soldiers' parties' from becoming a dominant force in politics for political activism.[28]

However, the narrative that on their return from the war South African ex-servicemen were either politically ambivalent towards Afrikaner Nationalism or, on the other extreme, fully committed to a radical racial solution seems too simplistic. Such arguments seem to underplay the nuances of both intra-racial and inter-racial dynamics of the 1950s and ignore the long shadows the war cast on the world and more specifically on South Africa. The available evidence points towards ex-servicemen's involvement in politics being more extensive and more varied. The 'unordinary' soldiers' war experiences broadened their political perspectives and lay the foundation for future political involvement.

VETERAN NARRATIVES

Johnson, focusing on British politics after the First World War, has investigated the idea that war experience may have influenced ex-servicemen to enter into politics.[29] Carr employs a biographical method to pursue a narrow study of the role of veteran MPs in British conservative politics.[30] Recently a study of Australian parliamentarians explored the relationship between military service and political involvement.[31] Within the context of the Second World War and South African politics, Roos explored the nexus between war experience and radical political beliefs.[32] However, Mouton pointed out that ex-servicemen did not restrict their political participation to radical politics, as they were also actively involved in parliamentary politics under the leadership of Sir De Villiers Graaff.[33] The inundation of biographical material from the radical perspective, such as Ivan Schermbrucker,[34] Lionel 'Rusty' Bernstein,[35] Fred Carenson,[36] Joe Slovo[37] and Howard Strachan,[38] may suggest that radical politics was the primary concern of ex-servicemen. However, further biographical evidence suggests that ex-servicemen's

involvement in politics was far broader than just radical politics. These biographical works include Rev. James Chutter,[39] Walter Hain,[40] Peter Brown,[41] Colin Eglin,[42] Sir De Villiers Graaff,[43] Leopold Lovell,[44] Harry Oppenheimer,[45] Gideon Jacobs,[46] JP Marais[47] and Len Lee Warden.[48]

When dealing with veteran politics, Roos[49] and White[50] present the case that the Springbok Legion was a wartime initiative by soldiers to protect their interests. After demobilisation, the organisation was subverted by the radical left and recast as the white face of the Congress movement. The other veteran initiative, the Torch Commando founded in 1951, is portrayed by Fridjhon as a bastard child of the Springbok Legion and UP, which soon collapsed under the pressure of wanting to be all things to all men.[51] Roos is equally dismissive of the movement as an unfortunate accident of white politics.[52] Louis Kane-Berman and his son, John Kane-Berman, are far more sympathetic to the movement, portraying it in terms of an idealistic last stand against an ever more repressive National Party (NP) government.[53] White, however, treats it as an integral part of the UP's 1953 election campaign.[54]

With the demise of the Torch Commando in 1953, academic interest in South African veteran politics also flounders, and ex-servicemen as an identity group soon recede from the narrative. Reid, when tracing the emergence of the Union Federal Party (UFP) as an English-speaking response to growing Afrikaner nationalism, acknowledges the role of the Torch in its formation. However, he does not consider the military experience of the protagonists.[55] Cardo[56] and Vigne[57] give passing acknowledgement of the influence of the AES on the creation of the Liberal Party in 1953. However, they do not investigate the commonality of the military experience of the party's leaders. Similarly, McConnachie[58] seems to ignore the war experience of the Progressive Party's leadership. Despite the general acceptance by most academics that the Second World War had fundamentally influenced many ex-servicemen and contributed to their entry into politics, few academic works have explored this nexus across the post-war political spectrum.

This chapter considers key wartime experiences, such as the involvement in military-political initiatives (AES and Springbok Legion), theatre of operation, rank, military service and POW status against involvement in extra-parliamentary politics, veteran politics and parliamentary politics. An inclusive group of 154 white servicemen and women has been compiled into a dataset, from which aggregate experiences are extracted. A survey of publications, minutes, party records, memoirs and academic works provided evidence of political activism of the selected group. In the case of the Springbok Legion, the *Fighting Talk* Magazine, published from 1948 until 1955, and the Springbok Legion minutes from the University of Witwatersrand Historical Papers Research Archive were used to construct a list of prominent Legionnaires. The UNISA-SANLAM UP Archive provided not only the *curricula vita* of the UP members,

but also records of the Torch Commando, the Union Federal Party and the Progressive Party. Vigne's work on the Liberal Party,[59] Cardo's biography of Peter Brown[60] and online material from the Alan Paton Centre and Struggle Archive at the University of KwaZulu-Natal provided information on the leadership of the Liberal Party. Reid's work[61] on the UFP was sufficient to construct profiles of the UFP leadership. Information from the service records in the Union War Records Collection at the SANDF Archive and the *Who's Who in Southern Africa from 1948 until 1977* further enriched the biographical detail in the dataset. The approach that this chapter will take is to treat each political grouping separately to explore the relationship between military experience and later political involvement. Within each cluster, the ex-servicemen's experiences will be presented in aggregate form.

THE SPRINGBOK LEGION AND THE RETURN TO POLITICS

The NP had emerged from the war as the dominant Afrikaner Nationalist formation. The re-organised NP had marginalised the *Bloed-sappe*[62] in the rural areas and gained control over the Afrikaner trade unions on the Witwatersrand during the war. The Springbok Legion, which was born during the East African Campaign, grew in popularity throughout the war years. By 1945 it boasted a membership of 50 000.[63] The leadership cadre of the Legion reflected the broad military experience of the 'ordinary' soldier. After the war, the Legion aggressively opposed the growth of the NP. In 1945 and 1946 they disrupted the Nationalist Party meetings in Johannesburg.[64] Urban English-speaking ex-servicemen, still rooted in their recent war experience, were also affronted by the NP's treatment of their Afrikaans-speaking comrades when they returned home to the *platteland*.[65] In the 1948 elections the Legion mobilised ex-servicemen to assist the Labour Party (LP) and the United Party (UP), hoping to strengthen the voice of the liberal camp within the UP.[66] Despite the Springbok Legion's efforts and the tacit support of the ex-servicemen community, the UP Alliance lost the 1948 election.

TABLE 10.1 The wartime experience of the Springbok Legion leadership

Rank	Africa Star	Italy Star	Both Stars	POW	AES	Total
NCO	13	7	5	1	-	**19**
Unknown	1	-	-	-	-	**1**
Officers	5	6	3	1	4	**12**
Total	**19**	**13**	**8**	**2**	**4**	**32**

Source: Compiled by the Authors[67]

As indicated in Table 10.1, of the 32 selected leading Legionnaires, the majority held lower ranks during the war. Most were Non-Commissioned Officers (NCO's) with only 12 holding commissions as junior officers. Their war experience can be deduced

from the campaign medals that were awarded to them. Eleven served in the African campaigns, eight served in both Africa and Italy, and only five served in Italy alone. It is not surprising that most of the leadership saw action in the African campaigns, considering the Legion's origins. The main motivations for the forming of the Legion further corroborate this. Men who served in the African campaigns, especially in East Africa, experienced shifts in their perception of race and democratic principles. While in Italy, men were exposed to radical ideologies, communist principles and the dangers that authoritarian governments pose. None of these men served in the Madagascar campaign, which might indicate, if only by pure conjecture, that war experience in this theatre did not significantly motivate men to enter the upper echelons of politics.

Two Legion leaders, both NCOs in the 2nd Battalion Transvaal Scottish, were captured at Tobruk in 1941. As NCOs, David Katzeff and Vance (VCH) Brown were not interned with more senior ranks, such as Graaff. Therefore, their experiences as prisoners of war (POWs) were markedly different. They were exposed to the varying views and opinions of fellow inmates and guards in POW Camps in Tarhuna in Tripoli, Italy and later in Germany as well.[68] V Brown was one of only four Legionnaires who were members of both the AES and the Legion. There was a mutual desire amongst Legionnaires to serve in both organisations. This desire mainly stemmed from the belief that a post in the AES will grant them some official sanction for their politicisation of ex-servicemen. However, few obtained such positions.[69] The challenge for admittance to the AES was threefold. Firstly, Malherbe preferred more liberal-leaning graduates. Secondly, Legion members were often wilfully excluded by senior NCOs and officers.[70] Lastly, the AES only nominally tolerated the men's radical disposition.[71] Arguably, Brown gained a commission in the AES because he was a qualified teacher before the war, assuaging Malherbe's preferences.

TABLE 10.2 Post-war occupation and qualifications of Springbok Legion members

Qualifications	Post-Matric Qualification	None	Unknown	Total
Academic	1	-	-	**1**
Agriculture	-	-	1	**1**
Architect	3	-	-	**3**
Business	1	4	2	**7**
Construction	-	1	-	**1**
Education	1	-	-	**1**
Journalist	1	-	-	**1**
Legal	3	-	-	**3**
Media	1	1	-	**2**
Medical	4	-	-	**4**
Politics	-	1	-	**1**
Publishing	-	1	1	**2**

Trade union	1	2	1	**4**
Unknown	-	1	-	**1**
Total	**16**	**11**	**5**	**32**

Source: Compiled by Authors.[72]

Despite the Legion's working-class agenda and its strong emphasis on the 'ordinary soldier', the organisation's leadership felt a strong affiliation with the middle class, as shown in Table 10.2. Just short of a third attended elite schools and half had obtained a tertiary education by the end of demobilisation.[73] The leaders of the Legion all occupied occupations associated with the middle classes, such as small businessmen, trade unionists, publishers, architects, lawyers, teachers and medical professionals. This also reflects the diversity of the group.

TABLE 10.3 Communist affiliation of Springbok Legion

Rank	Communist Affiliation	Non-Communist Affiliation	Total
Officer	13	6	**19**
Unknown	-	1	**1**
NCO	5	7	**12**
Total	**18**	**14**	**32**

Source: Compiled by Authors[74]

The membership of the Legion peaked during the war. However, these figures dwindled as demobilised soldiers settled into the old routines of civilian life and relied less on the Legion as their mouthpiece.[75] The exodus of non-politicised ex-servicemen allowed the radicals, who had infiltrated the movement during the war years, to exert more influence.[76] However, this simultaneously allowed the political opposition to accuse the Springbok Legion of being a communist front. Although initially denied, the rise of radical ex-servicemen to leadership positions in the Legion made these denials less plausible. Table 10.3 illustrates that of the 32 selected leaders, over half had either been members of the Communist Party of South Africa (CPSA) before it was banned in 1950, or were known to have been sympathetic to the socialist agenda. Thus, by the early 1950s the Legion was a mere shell of its former self and controlled by a highly insular group of radical ex-servicemen.[77] Furthermore, this shift in political agenda alienated the organisation from the broader veteran community, who were less willing to endure political suppression. Such circumstances created a vacuum that another veterans' organisation could fill.

THE TORCH COMMANDO

The NP's consolidation of its political control after the 1948 election resulted in a politically charged environment. Ex-servicemen, already piqued by the military reforms

of the newly appointed Minister of Defence, François (FC) Erasmus, readily responded in kind to the physical disruption of local UP political meetings by NP agitators.[78] The NP's declaration of intent to remove Coloured voters from the common voters' roll in the opening session of the 1951 parliament raised the ante to the national level. Ex-servicemen saw this as an unconstitutional attempt by the NP to undermine the UP's ability to win the 1953 election. Disaffected ex-servicemen initially responded by launching numerous local action committees and holding protest parades in the main centres.[79] The ex-servicemen framed the Coloured franchise issue as a constitutional crisis and a violation of a solemn promise made at Union in 1910. Thus, the memories of the NP's wartime flirtation with authoritarianism were rekindled.[80]

To unite the various ex-servicemen initiatives, the prominent actors in this community pooled their resources into the War Veteran Action Committee (later known as the Torch Commando). The Springbok Legion and the UP were eager to exploit the potential of ex-servicemen's discontent. Both offered their capabilities to the ex-servicemen to consolidate these initiatives into a national movement.[81] Ex-servicemen responded enthusiastically to this, and the Torch attracted over 500 000 members across the country. To appeal to the broadest possible membership, the Torch portrayed its mission as one of 'protecting the constitution', an objective that placed them in opposition to the NP's attempt to change the constitution by devious means. Its broad vision satisfied the various camps of ex-servicemen. It included those aligned to the UP and LP who sought an electoral solution; those who hoped to push white opposition parties towards liberal racial policies; and those that wanted to make a stand against Afrikaner identity politics and the increasing alienation from the British Commonwealth.[82]

The Torch Commando and the Radical Agenda

Confronting the threat posed by the Torch's rising popularity, Cecil Williams and 'Jock' Isacowitz led the Legion into a maze of ex-servicemen action committees. They had hoped that these committees would reinvigorate the Legion's flagging support base and maintain its relevance in white politics.[83] Such concerns were not unfounded. Approximately a third[84] of the Legion's leadership cadre was active in the founding of the Torch Commando.[85] The motivations for these men to find a new veterans' organisation varied. For instance, the ex-legionnaire, Victor Clapham Jnr, left the Legion on bad terms shortly after the war primarily because of his deep suspicion of the Legion's radical leadership. After that, Clapham acted as an intermediary between the constituent parts that formed the Torch Commando.[86] The move allowed the less radical members of the Legion to extricate themselves from the now radicalised Legion. By using the threat of the 1950 Suppression of Communism Act, the Springbok Legion was jettisoned from the Torch Commando before it could infiltrate the organisation or gain control over crucial committees.[87]

By 1952 the Springbok Legion was stripped of its mass support base and thus left in the wilderness of multiracial politics.[88]

The remaining leadership of the Legion now pursued their radical agenda within the sphere of multiracial politics. Before eventually disbanding the Legion, approximately a third of the selected Legionnaires provided the seed membership for the SA Congress of Democrats (SACOD) founded in January 1953.[89] Under the guise of the SACOD, they modelled themselves as the white partner within the Congress Movement.[90]

The African National Congress (ANC) declaration of the Freedom Charter on 25 June 1955 was the Rubicon for the radical ex-servicemen. They were now committed to a multiracial future for South Africa. By December 1955 the government responded by arresting the main protagonists for treason, six of whom were radical Legionnaires. The Treason Trial side-lined the detained activists from the political sphere until 1960.[91] In that year the Sharpeville massacre overshadowed the collapsed trail. The broad government sweep after the Sharpeville massacre netted seven former Legionnaires, who were among many on an outdated list or already under observation or out on bail during the Treason Trial.[92] Arguably, government reaction was amateurish and arrests were made prematurely.[93] After the initial waves caused by the shooting at Sharpeville subsided, fragments of the Legion resurfaced as members of the ANC's armed wing, Umkhonto We Sizwe (MK), and the African Resistance Movement (ARM) in the early 1960s.[94]

Incarceration led Monty Berman, an ex-serviceman who had been ostracised from the Communist fold, to re-evaluate his position on armed struggle. Citing the WWII 'maquis', the Italian partisans and the Jewish Brigade in the new state of Israel, he argued that a sabotage campaign would spark a broader revolution in South Africa.[95] He engaged both communists and non-communists in his discussions.[96] He found common ground with the Liberal John Lange, who had previously been involved with Radio Freedom and the Horticulturalists, a secretive sabotage group active in Natal in 1959. When released, Berman and Lang worked with Lang's legal partner, the former Senator Leslie Rubin, who was lecturing law in Ghana, to establish the National Committee for Liberation (NCL)/African Resistance Movement (ARM). [97]

Although communist ex-servicemen had also toyed with the idea of armed resistance when the party was reconstituted after being banned in 1950, the idea did not take hold.[98] However in the late 1950s increased government oppression and the uncoordinated violent reaction from society pushed both the ANC and the Communists towards organised violence, as both saw it essential to gain control of the already volatile situation.[99] Although the SACP had begun recruitment before the ANC, Nelson Mandela's energetic organisational efforts resulted in the communists being absorbed into MK. The communist ex-servicemen brought both expertise and conceptual support to MK. Jack Hodgson and Arthur Goldreich were seconded to

MK on the basis of their military experience.[100] Jack Hodgson, who drove vehicles during the war, often exaggerated his military experience as a mining engineer and tended to tell embellished tales of his time in the 'Desert Rats'. This created the impression amongst his colleagues that he would serve as a suitable bomb maker for MK in Johannesburg based on his military experience.[101] Howard Strachan, another ex-serviceman, became the MK bomb maker in the Eastern Cape.[102] Kodesh, a communist ex-serviceman and fixer for the ANC, introduced Nelson Mandela to the nineteenth-century military theorist Clausewitz, when hiding him in 1961.

> 'Have you read this Clausewitz?' ... he said, 'No.' I said, 'Well, if you are in MK and so on, you had better read that book. It's like reading Shakespeare for English classics. You have to read Clausewitz for warfare.'[103]

Additionally, white ex-servicemen soon rose into prominent positions in MK. Joe Slovo was appointed as the Communist liaison of MK and Mandela the overall commander.[104] In the Western Cape Fred Carneson accepted the appointment of MK regional co-ordinator.[105]

Membership of the Torch Commando

The Torch appealed to ex-servicemen of all ranks and military experience. Prominent individuals, generals and senior officers who responded to the call to arms by the charismatic leader, Captain Sailor Malan, quickly filled the national positions. This growing membership gave the movement a sense of gravitas and legitimacy among ex-servicemen.[106] Men of lower rank, but with more political knowledge, were left to man the Action Committees and local committees.[107] The rank distribution for 63 selected Torchmen in Table 10.4 confirms that the Torch appealed to all ranks with the officer corps providing the bulk of the Torch's leadership cadre.

TABLE 10.4 Rank composition of the Torch Commando leadership

Officers		WOs and NCOs	
Rank	No of Torchmen	Rank	No of Torchmen
Lt Gen	1	WO	1
Maj Gen	3	Sgt	2
Brig	2	Cpl	2
Col	2	LCpl	1
Cpln	1	Pte	8
Lt Col	5	Unknown	2
Maj	6		
Capt	8		
Lt	16		
2lt	3		

Source: Compiled by Authors.[108]

Springbok Legion members initially attempted to gain access to crucial committees to be able to guide the decisions of the Torch by establishing a voting bloc. Wary liberal ex-servicemen quickly nipped this in the bud.[109] The involvement of the Legion in the Torch was not unique, as the overlap of membership between the Torch and established political parties, the LP and UP, was also substantial. Not only did Clapham secure UP representation at the national level in the Torch, but many UP organisers also found themselves 'double hatting' at the local level. Eglin, who was the UP leader in Pineland, was 'elected chairman of the Pinelands branch of the Torch Commando and made the branch representative of the organisation's Cape executive committee'.[110] As shown in Table 10.5, in the selected group of 63 Torch Commando leaders, 11 were former Legionnaires, 22 were members of the UP, and 2 were LP members. The rank distribution of these members suggests that the Legion provided initial grassroots leadership during the establishment of the Torch. However, it was the UP that leveraged both its established party organisation and the military capital of its members to gain sway over the Torch at National level.

TABLE 10.5 Torch Commando leadership according to rank and political party membership

Rank	Torchmen	UP members	Labour Party Members	Springbok Legionnaires
Lt Gen	1	1	-	-
Maj Gen	3	2	-	-
Brig	2	-	-	-
Col	2	1	-	-
Lt Col	5	1	-	-
Maj	6	5	-	-
Capt	8	2	-	2
Lt	16	8	-	4
2lt	3	1	-	-
WO	1	-	-	1
Sgt	2	-	-	-
Cpln	1	-	-	-
Cpl	2	-	1	-
LCpl	1	1	-	-
Pte	8	-	1	3
unknown	2	-	-	1
Total	**63**	**22**	**2**	**11**

Source: Compiled by authors.[111]

In November 1951 the UP and the Johannesburg Torch Commando formally agreed to work together in the provincial elections.[112] This agreement was reaffirmed nationally in the form of the United Democratic Front between the LP, the UP and the Torch Commando in April 1952.[113] However, even in the early stage in the partnership, the

liberals in the Torch pushed for a broader agenda. Directly after the announcement of the United Democratic Front, Louis Kane-Berman, in an act of independence, threatened a day of protest if the government acted unconstitutionally.[114] The Springbok Legion, with members embroiled in the ANC-led Defiance Campaign against apartheid, further aggravated matters by making a similar call for a day of protest soon afterwards. Frantic to disentangle the opposition from any association with the Defiance Campaign and multiracial politics, JGN Strauss repudiated Kane-Berman's threats and rejected the Springbok Legion's resolution to join the United Democratic Front later in May 1952.[115]

Despite the misgivings of Kane-Berman and Parrott, the Torch committed itself to support its Front allies in the 1953 elections. The Torch provided organisers, canvassers and logistical support to the UP, and even muscle to protect UP meetings and project a presence into the rural areas.[116] The Torch's sense of amateurish gusto soon riled the hardened UP campaigners, who resented their involvement. The Torch leadership inflamed this resentment further when they began formulating positions in conflict with the UP.[117]

At a national level the independently minded Kane-Berman and 'Gillie' Ford worried the UP leadership. The UP's ambiguity on policy matters around race and its reluctance to push back against Afrikaner identity politics left the Torch leadership in a precarious position. For the more left-leaning Torchmen, the UP's efforts to accommodate the more conservative rural constituencies left it compromised.[118] The movement formation was to protect the clauses in the constitution that spoke to these two issues.[119] Without clear direction from the UP on these issues, the Torch soon developed independent positions on both points. Kane-Berman pushed for a liberal view of race relations, while Ford articulated the anti-republican position, thereby initiating the trajectory of white opposition politics after the elections.[120]

The need to present a unified partnership between the UP, LP and the Torch to the electorate in the form of the United Democratic Front kept these tensions from boiling over. However, once the Front lost the 1953 elections, this cohesion quickly unravelled.[121] The UP was able to retain a large part of the ex-servicemen support, mainly through loyalty towards Graaff, the UP's new leader after 1956. Graaff was a baronet who served in both the Middle East and North Africa until his capture at Tobruk in 1942. Graaff's war experience did not change his political perspective, but instead confirmed his social class and status. Thus he often used his social standing to further his not-so-liberal agenda. However, despite Graaff's employment of social capital, the more liberal ex-servicemen chose to strike out in new directions. From the detritus of the Torch, the UFP and the Liberal Party emerged.[122]

Table 10.6 shows the overlap between protagonists of the UFP and the Liberal Party: Louis Kane-Berman was a member of the Ballinger Liberal Group as well as a sponsor

of the UFP. A large part of the national leadership of the Torch opted to sponsor the formation of the UFP. Both parties touted a liberal race policy. However, where the LP considered nonracial membership, the UFP chose to remain solidly in white politics and bound their race policy to an anti-republican stance.

TABLE 10.6 Torch Commando leadership in UFP and Liberal Party

Rank	Torchmen	UFP Supporters	Liberal Party members
Lt Gen	1	-	-
Maj Gen	3	1	-
Brig	2	-	-
Col	2	-	-
Lt Col	5	-	-
Maj	6	1	-
Capt	8	1	1
Lt	16	2	1
2lt	3	2	-
WO	1	-	1
Sgt	2	1	-
Cpln	1	1	-
Cpl	2	1	-
LCpl	1	-	-
Pte	8	1	4
Unknown	2	-	-
Total	**63**	**11**	**7**

Source: Compiled by Authors.[123]

THE UNION FEDERAL PARTY

The UFP was born out of the efforts of Gillie Ford, James Chutter and the Natal branches of the Torch Commando. By carefully incubating the idea of a new political party within the Torch before the 1953 elections, Ford leveraged the Torch leadership into sponsoring the party when the front collapsed.[124] Of the 32 members of the Torch National executive, 19 with an additional three non-executive members agreed to be sponsors. However, sponsorship did not translate into a commitment to join the party. Some acted out of loyalty to Gillie Ford, who like him, were ex-POWs as can be seen in Table 10.7. The leadership of the UFP was primarily drawn from the Natal Torch and were predominantly English middle class.[125] From the available data, it appears that at least to a limited extent familiar political figures with a shared war experience attracted support from ex-servicemen even a decade after the war

had ended. As time went on, it was loyalty, more than disposition that shaped the political actions of 'ordinary' ex-servicemen.

TABLE 10.7 Biographical profile of the UFP leadership

Total UFP	Torchmen	Commissioned Officer	POW	Post Matric (Degree/ Diploma)
12	11	9	6	9

Source: Compiled by Authors.[126]

Despite its genesis in the Torch, the UFP failed to capitalise on its ex-serviceman appeal. The UFP, however, adopted the Torch's position regarding the protection of the constitution and race relations. The party opted to support the concept of the qualified franchise for all races but to protect the white minority, and this would occur only 'over a considerable period of years … [and] … subject to safeguards'.[127] The survey conducted by the South African Institute of Race Relations (SAIRR) between 1953 and 1954 sums up their policy conundrum:

> Its [UFP's] concern over the preservation of the constitution and the entrenched clause dealing with equal language rights for English and Afrikaans … led the Party to consider the other entrenched clause dealing with non-European voting rights, and to formulate a policy to promote racial harmony.[128]

However, the party's electoral stronghold in Natal proved to be illusionary, and the UFP failed to win a seat in the 1954 provincial elections.[129] Its subsequent departure from its liberal racial position, in favour of British Jingoism, resulted in ex-servicemen slowly drifting from the party.[130] Ford and Brickhill migrated to Rhodesia, and William 'Bill' Conradie resigned, claiming that the party was more concerned about protecting English-speaking interests than stopping the NP.[131] In the later by-elections, provincial elections and the 1958 general election the UFP failed to secure any success. The swansong of the Federalists was a campaign headed by Robert Hughes-Mason and Arthur Martin in Natal against the referendum to declare South Africa a republic or not. By 1962 the party ceased to function entirely, with members joining the Progressive Party.[132]

THE LIBERAL PARTY

Liberals in South Africa had always operated within the confines of the UP. The accepted view was that by maintaining a caucus within the UP, the liberals could guide UP policy towards a more progressive position. Furthermore, their loyalty to Jan Hofmeyr, the leading Liberal in the UP and Smuts's heir apparent, suppressed their desire to form a new party.[133] The death of Hofmeyr in 1948 opened the way

for liberals to consider this eventuality. By January 1952 discussions had reached the level of a programme of principles, and a year later the liberal caucus had formalised itself as the South African Liberal Association (SALA).[134] Both the formation of the UFP and the consolidation of the radicalised Springbok Legion, as the preferred white partner within the multiracial Congress movement, threatened to entice support away from the LP.[135]

Participation in the Torch Commando had also provided insight into the political undercurrents in opposition politics. For instance, seven of the ex-servicemen who would form the LP were Torchmen. Growing government oppression had also made the left more insular, which meant that the natural constituencies of the radicals, liberals and UFP often overlapped, causing inevitable entanglement among party membership and support.[136] Furthermore, the liberals were made unwelcome in the UP, with its Cape leader, Graaff, stating that he would 'prefer that his UP was not perceived to be on the left of the South African political spectrum'.[137] Despite this, there remained UP liberals who believed that the reform of the UP could occur internally.[138] In May 1953 SALA met to discuss the possibility of launching a new party. To ensure its launch, Leslie Rubin, vice-chair of SALA, forced the issue by announcing the formation of the party to the media before the meeting.[139]

TABLE 10.8 War experience of ex-servicemen in the Liberal Party

Rank	AES	POW	Africa Star	Italy Star	Total
Lt Col	1	-	1	-	1
Maj	-	-	1	1	1
Capt	1	-	-	-	1
Lt	2	-	2	1	3
WO	-	-	1	-	1
SSgt	-	-	-	-	1
Cpl	-	-	1	1	1
Pte	-	1	3	5	6
Seaman	-	-	1	1	1
Unknown	-	-	1	1	1
Total	**4**	**1**	**11**	**10**	**17**

Source: Compiled by Authors.[140]

Seventeen ex-servicemen in the sample group joined the LP as indicated in Table 10.8. There was a balance in their war experience between Africa and Italy with 11 Africa Stars and 10 Italy Stars. Four were members of the AES and there was one former POW. The virtual parity in experience between African and Italian war experience suggests that a younger group of ex-servicemen were becoming active in politics and that the Liberal Party appealed to their more liberal disposition. The

age distribution is indicated in Table 10.9. The preponderance of NCOs, especially those who had served in the Italian campaign, among the younger liberals suggests that the social dislocation of military service merged with the Italian war experience. Besides, this may have driven these ex-servicemen towards a more leftist orientation. Furthermore, all ex-servicemen who belonged to the LP held university degrees. Their level of education may have had a liberalising effect, according to Malherbe's post-war observations.[141]

TABLE 10.9 Generational cohorts of ex-servicemen in the Liberal Party.

	1893-1897	1898-1902	1903-1907	1908-1912	1913-1917	1918-1922	1923-1927	Total
Number	1			3	6	2	5	17

Source: Compiled by Authors.[142]

The differences in age and rank of the ex-servicemen reflect the cleavage between the two liberal camps: the Cape Liberals and the more radical liberals from Natal and Johannesburg. The four AES officers, which included two academics and two lawyers – Marquard (1897), Leo Kuper (1908), Gerald Gordon (1909), and Leslie Rubin (1909) – were the oldest of the group. Their age and involvement within the AES gave the Liberal Party a continuity that linked it to an earlier liberal tradition. The association of the Dean of the University of Natal and founder of the AES, Malherbe, with the younger University of Natal Academics in the Liberal Party provided a further sense of continuity.[143]

The mutual political goal of opposing apartheid concealed the distinct cleavages within the party in terms of the liberal tradition, their war experience and ages.[144] The most obvious tension was between the older moderate Cape Liberals and the younger radical liberals, who were led by ex-serviceman and former leader of the Springbok Legion, Isacowitz, from the Transvaal. Where the Cape Liberals argued for a qualified franchise which needed to be 'earned', the radical Transvaal group argued that voting was a fundamental right. The Transvaal liberals, in closer contact with the radicals of the Legion, were aware that the qualified franchise position limited the party's appeal to the black population.[145] Situated between these two divergent positions were the Natal liberals.[146]

The LP, like the UFP, did not fare well in parliamentary elections. Apart from maintaining a presence in parliament through the Native Representative seats in the 1958 elections, the party fielded three ex-servicemen candidates – all of whom were unsuccessful. This election failure led to the election of ex-servicemen Peter Brown and Kuper as National Chairman and Vice-Chairman of the party respectively. Hans Meidner assumed chairmanship of the Natal province from Brown. The more radical liberals now had a stronger voice in the policy direction of the party. Under Brown's leadership, the party realised the futility of parliamentary politics and adopted a more active stance towards extra-parliamentary politics.[147] Its departure from parliamentary

politics freed it from being sensitive to the white electorate, and soon it was co-operating with other extra-parliamentary organisations.[148] The party now became more involved in direct protest and calls for boycotts.[149] Furthermore, by 1960 the party had revisited its position on a qualified franchise in favour of a universal franchise. This adoption of this position coincided with many Cape Liberals, such as Stanford and Gerald Gordon, leaving the party.[150]

The Liberal Party, with its non-racial membership, was an anomaly in South African politics at the time.[151] The party's entry into non-racial politics placed it in competition with the radicals, who had positioned themselves as the white representatives of the Council of the People. Furthermore, its members were detained and banned for contesting various apartheid measures. After the Sharpeville Massacre in March 1960, government authorities detained four Liberal Party ex-servicemen, namely Miedner, John Lang, Isacowitz and Brown. Alongside them, another seven ex-servicemen from the Congress of Democrats were held, as the government flailed about wildly to contain the fallout.[152]

PARLIAMENTARY POLITICS

TABLE 10.10 Ex-serviceman Parliamentarians 1948-1960

	10th Parliament 1948-1953	11th Parliament 1953-1958	12th Parliament 1959-1960
Ex -Serviceman MPs	15	19	22
UP	14	15	20 (-6)
Labour Party	1	1	-
Liberal Party	-	1	1
Progressive Party	-	-	6
Radical Left (Communist and Independents)	-	2	1
Ex-Serviceman Candidates	Unknown	20	25

Source: Compiled by Authors.[153]

The political activism of ex-servicemen was not restricted to veteran organisations but extended to parliamentary politics, as indicated in Table 10.10. After the war the UP, in alliance with the LP, attracted many ex-servicemen as supporters and members, both out of wartime loyalty but also because of the UP-LP alliance which provided the main thrust against the rising NP. Many UP ex-servicemen came from a long linage of *bloedsappe*.[154] Furthermore, the UP saw itself as the natural home for ex-servicemen and believed that 'It is traditionally a soldier's privilege to grumble, but equally it is traditional to know where his duty lies'.[155] For those ex-servicemen entering post-war parliamentary politics, their war-service enhanced their social capital and following family politics was a continuation of their duty.

The defeat of the UP in 1948 sent shockwaves through the ex-servicemen's community, who equated the Nationalists with the Nazi movement which they had defeated in 1945.[156] This prompted ex-servicemen to become more involved in politics. The increase in ex-servicemen activism against NP authoritarianism resulted in a corresponding rise in participation in parliamentary politics among ex-servicemen. Table 10.10 shows the increase in both candidates and successful ex-servicemen in the 11th parliamentary elections of 1953.

Graaff's stellar rise in the UP after the 1953 elections allowed him to surround himself with like-minded ex-servicemen. This accounts for the further increase in ex-serviceman participation in the 1958 elections. However, this came at a cost as the more liberally-minded members of the UP parted ways in 1959 to form the Progressive Party.

The UP, as the largest opposition party, was the end result of numerous coalitions since 1910. The party compromised on principles in favour of personality-driven policy formulation.[157] As a result, the UP often failed to provide clear opposition to the NP, causing Afrikaner support for the UP to drift away. The UP was left dependent on the urban-based English-speaking voter for support, and mining and business capital for funding.[158] Over half of the identified ex-servicemen (79 of 153) were members of the UP. As seen in Table 10.11, most had attended elite schools in South Africa and the majority held post-matric qualifications with careers in Law (21), agriculture (20), business (10), medicine (5) and academia (4).[159] The UP reflected the interests of the 'South Africanist' agenda and attracted like-minded ex-servicemen.

TABLE 10.11 Education and sector of ex-servicemen in the UP

Occupation	Degree	None	PSC	Unknown	Total
Academic	4	-	-	-	4
Accountant	1	-	-	1	2
Agriculture	13	4	1	2	20
Business	5	3	2	-	10
Civil servant	-	1	-	-	1
Construction	1	1	-	-	2
Education	2	-	-	-	2
Legal	21	-	-	-	21
Media	-	1	-	-	1
Medical	5	-	-	-	5
Mining	4	-	-	-	4
Pensioner	-	-	1	1	2
Politics	1	-	1	-	2
Public relations	1	-	-	-	1
Publishing	1	-	-	-	1
Unknown	1	-	-	-	1
Total	**60**	**10**	**5**	**4**	**79**

Source: Compiled by Authors.[160]

THE 1948 GENERAL ELECTION AND THE TENTH PARLIAMENT 1948-1953

The UP that fought the 1948 elections depended on their traditional support base. This shows in the background of the ex-servicemen that were sent to parliament. Of the 11 ex-servicemen who became Members of Parliament after the 1948 elections, five were returning to parliament. The six new members included, three were sons of politicians, namely H Oppenheimer, Graaff and Albert Robinson. The other three were hardened UP members with previous experience in provincial politics. This group included Noel MacMillan, Thomas Grey Hughes and Bertram Henwood. Their middle-class credentials were reflected in the elite South African schools which they had attended (H Oppenheimer was educated in England), as well as their tertiary education (see Table 10.12). Three were in the medical profession, four were in the legal profession, two were involved in agriculture, one in education and one was a businessman.[161] The four ex-servicemen who won by-elections[162] came from similar backgrounds, all had received elite schooling and were graduates, with two in the legal profession, one in education and one in business.[163]

TABLE 10.12 Education and sector of ex-serviceman MPs of the Tenth Parliament 1948-1953

Occupation	Schooling				Post-Matric Education			
	Unknown	Elite	Other	Foreign	Degree	Diploma	None	Total
Agriculture	-	1	1	-	2	-	-	2
Business	-	-	-	1	1	-	-	1
Education	-	1	-	1	2	-	-	2
Legal	1	5	-	-	5	1	-	6
Medical	-	3	-	-	3	-	-	3
Publishing	-	1	-	-	1	-	-	1
Total	**1**	**11**	**1**	**2**	**14**	**1**	**-**	**15**

Source: Compiled by Authors.[164]

In terms of war experience, Table 10.13 indicates that eight had served in the African combat theatre, where two (Graaff and Hughes) were POWs, and one had served in Italy. Hughes was the only NCO of the group. The preponderance of officers suggest that these ex-servicemen had amassed substantial social capital and managerial skills during their military service. Furthermore, as the first to volunteer, they escaped the devastating effect of the Italian campaign in Italy.

TABLE 10.13 War experience of MPs of the Tenth Parliament 1948-1953

	Total	Africa Star	Italy Star	AES	POW
NCO	1	1	-	-	1
Unknown	1	1	-	-	-
Officer	13	6	1	-	1
Total	**15**	**8**	**1**	**-**	**2**

Source: Compiled by Authors.[165]

THE 1953 GENERAL ELECTION AND THE ELEVENTH PARLIAMENT 1953-1958

The defeat of the UP in 1948 triggered a new interest in politics among the ex-servicemen, who perceived the NP as authoritarian and fascist. This new interest not only manifested in the Torch Commando, but was also reflected in parliamentary politics, despite Kane-Berman, the national chairman of the Torch, discouraging Torchmen from standing in the 1953 general elections. Eleven prominent Torchmen contested the polls, mainly as UP candidates (Brickhill was nominated on a Labour ticket and Lee Warden stood as an independent).[166]

The 1953 general elections resulted in 17 ex-servicemen becoming members of parliament. Four were new parliamentarians (Prof. Izak Fourie, Brian Bunting, Dr Jan Steytler and Christopher Starke). By-elections returned two additional ex-servicemen to Parliament, Lee Warden (1955) to replace Bunting (Communist), and Walter Stanford (Liberal) became a Native Representative in 1955.[167] Dr Bernard Friedman resigned in 1955 in protest at JGN Strauss's handling of the Coloured franchise issue.[168]

TABLE 10.14 Education and sector of ex-serviceman MPs of the Eleventh Parliament 1953-1958

Occupation	Schooling				Education			
	Unknown	Elite	Other	Foreign	Degree	Diploma	None	Total
Academic	-	1	-	-	1	-	-	1
Agriculture	-	1	1	-	2	-	-	2
Business	-	-	-	1	1	-	-	1
Education	-	1	-	1	2	-	-	2
Legal	1	5	-	-	5	1	-	6
Media	-	1	-	-	1	-	-	1
Medical	-	2	1	-	3	-	-	3
Public relations	-	1	-	-	-	1	-	1
Publishing	-	1	-	1	1	-	1	2
Total	**1**	**13**	**2**	**3**	**16**	**2**	**1**	**19**

Source: Compiled by Authors.[169]

Table 10.14 indicates that the general MP profile remained distinctly middle class in terms of schooling, education and profession. The officer corps still dominated, with only three NCOs in the group. In terms of education, 13 of the 19 had attended elite South African schools, with only one without a tertiary qualification. A third of the group were from the legal profession. English speakers (13) dominated the group, followed by Afrikaans (3) and Jewish (3) members.[170]

TABLE 10.15 War experience of MPs of the Eleventh Parliament 1953-1958

	Africa Star	Italy Star	AES	POW	Total
NCO	2	1	1	1	3
Unknown	1	-	-	-	1
Officer	7	3	2	1	15
Total	**10**	**4**	**3**	**2**	**19**

Source: Compiled by Authors.[171]

Table 10.15 shows the continued dominance of ex-servicemen with African Theatre experience. However, there was an increase in those with Italian war experience. Graaff and Hughes of Die Middlelandse Regiment remained the only POWs of the group. Although the 1953 group was comprised mainly of returning MPs, the new additions signalled a broadening of military experience in both theatre and rank, which may indicate a younger generation of ex-servicemen engaging in parliamentary politics. In terms of class, however, parliament remained the preserve of middle-class ex-servicemen.

TABLE 10.16 Unsuccessful ex-serviceman candidates in the 1953 General Election

Ethnolinguistic Grouping	Africa Star	Italy Star	AES	pow	Torch	Total
Afrikaans-speaking	4	1	2	-	7	12
English-speaking	4	4	-	2	3	8
Jewish	1	-	-	-	-	1
Total	**9**	**5**	**2**	**2**	**10**	**21**

Source: Compiled by Authors.[172]

As can be seen in Table 10.16 the twenty-one candidates who were unsuccessful in the 1953 elections show a similar pattern of military experience, with nine Africa Stars and five Italy stars. Of the twenty-one, ten were Torchmen. The candidates were predominantly Afrikaans speaking (12), then English (8) and Jewish (1). The large number of Afrikaans-speaking candidates meant that group also had greater diversity in schooling, with the elite English-speaking schools being less dominant. (Ficksburg High School was the alma mater of three of the group). The agricultural sector

dominated the career choice of this group (8), followed by the mining sector (3).[173] The lack of success of Afrikaans-speaking and rural candidates confirms that the UP was failing to appeal to that sector of the electorate.

THE 1958 ELECTION AND THE TWELFTH PARLIAMENT 1958-1960

The defeat of the UP in the 1953 election placed its leader, JGN Strauss, under unbearable pressure. Incessant fighting between the conservatives and progressives over the UP's position on race and the Coloured franchise undermined the party's ability to function.[174] By 1956 an ill Strauss was removed by his provincial leadership and replaced with the charismatic but conservative ex-serviceman, Graaff. His family reputation as *bloedsappe*, his farming background and his military service record appealed to the *platteland* voters.[175] Graaff soon surrounded himself with several right-leaning ex-servicemen, with a shared military experience and set his sights on winning back the *platteland* vote.[176] The 1958 general election campaign reflects a reconfiguration of UP dynamics.[177]

The 1958 election saw an increase in the involvement of ex-servicemen in parliamentary politics. A total of 45 ex-servicemen contested the polls. There was a small increase in the number of ex-servicemen in parliament, with the election of 20 as MPs. Pilkington-Jordan resigned to give fellow ex-serviceman Graaff his seat and Leo Kowarsky gave up his position for Marais Steyn, and Brigadier Hendrik Bronkhorst won a by-election in 1960, which increased the overall group to 22. Two, Stanford (Liberal Party) and Lee Warden (independent) were not members of the UP. Although the UP had lost seats in the election, the small increase of ex-servicemen in Parliament expanded the group's overall influence within the UP.[178]

TABLE 10.17 Education of ex-serviceman MPs of the Twelfth Parliament 1958-1961

Occupation	Schooling				Occupation			
	Unknown	Elite	Other	Foreign	Degree	Diploma	None	Total
Academic	-	1	-	-	1	-	-	**1**
Accountant	-	1	-	-	1	-	-	**1**
Agriculture	-	-	3	-	2	1	-	**3**
Business	-	2	-	-	1	-	1	**2**
Construction	-	-	1	-	1	-	-	**1**
Education	-	-	-	1	1	-	-	**1**
Legal	2	7	-	-	7	2	-	**9**
Medical	-	1	1	-	2	-	-	**2**
Publishing	-	1	-	1	1	-	1	**2**
Grand Total	**2**	**13**	**5**	**2**	**17**	**3**	**2**	**22**

Source: Compiled by Authors.[179]

Table 10.17 indicates that the group were still alumni of elite South African schools, with only five not having attended an elite English-medium school. Only Lee Warden and Vance Raw (whose studies at Wits were interrupted by the war) did not have tertiary qualifications. Occupationally, the legal profession accounted for almost half of the group.

TABLE 10.18 War experience of MPs of the Twelfth Parliament 1958-1961

Rank	Africa Star	Italy Star	AES	POW	Total
NCO	2	1		1	**3**
Unknown	1				**1**
Officer	11	4	3	2	**18**
Total	**14**	**5**	**3**	**3**	**22**

Source: Compiled by Authors.[180]

As in previous parliaments, the war experience of the members was primarily gained in Africa (14), with only five with who served in the Italian campaign, as reflected in Table 10.18. Kowarsky, who had escaped from capture at Sidi Rezegh in November 1941, joined Graaff and Hughes as POWs before vacating his seat to Marias Steyn. The officer corps dominated the group, with Hughes, Lee Warden and Eglin being the three NCOs of the group. Three MPs served in the AES, and four were former Torchmen.[181]

Tables 10.17 and 10.18 show the persistent influence of the middle-class ex-servicemen in South African politics. Although there was a marginal increase in less affluent ex-servicemen, the 'old school tie' and 'gentleman's club' types still dominated parliament. Despite the war being over for a decade, middle-class professionals who had served as officers in the African campaigns still dominated parliamentary politics. Added to that was an implicit loyalty to Graaff, which was derived from their collective war experience.

TABLE 10.19 Unsuccessful ex-servicemen candidates in the 1958 General Election

Ethnolinguistic Grouping	Africa Star	Italy Star	AES	POW	Torch	Total
Afrikaans-speaking	10	5	1	1	5	**17**
English-speaking	3	3		1		**6**
Jewish	2		1		1	**2**
Total	**15**	**8**	**2**	**2**	**6**	**25**

Source: Compiled by Authors.[182]

Table 10.19 reveals a new pattern in the war experience of the 25 unsuccessful candidates, with the relative increase in ex-servicemen with Italian campaign experience and Brig Bronkhorst having served in Burma. The entry into politics of Wally Kingwell, the last Officer Commanding of Die Middellandse Regiment, shows Graaff's pull among ex-servicemen, especially fellow POWs.[183] Almost half of the POWs (10 out of 21) of the broader group were UP members.[184] Monty Crook,

Hendric van Hoogenstraten, Denis Fannin and Kingwill underwent internment with Graaff during the war.[185] A small core of Torchmen remained active in formal politics, with four of the six Torchmen among the group standing for the UP. None of the three ex-servicemen candidates fielded by the LP was victorious. The elections marked the end of the LP within the parliamentary system, and Lovell (Labour) lost his Benoni seat to fellow ex-serviceman Donald Ross. Piet Beyleveld was likewise unsuccessful on a radical ticket.[186]

TABLE 10.20 Profile of unsuccessful Afrikaans-speaking ex-servicemen candidate in the 1958 General Election

Occupation	Degree	Diploma	None	PSC	Unknown	Total
Academic	1					1
Agriculture	1	2			2	5
Business			1	1		2
Construction			1			1
Legal	4					4
Mining	1					1
Politics		1				1
Unknown		1				1
Total	**7**	**4**	**2**	**1**	**2**	**16**

Source: Compiled by Authors.[187]

Graaff's decision to appeal to the rural Afrikaner electorate and this constituency's emphatic rejection of UP overtures is apparent when reviewing the demographics of the unsuccessful UP candidates. Of the 25 unsuccessful ex-servicemen candidates, 24 were from the UP. Three-quarters of those were Afrikaans speakers (16 out of 21, Beyleveld was an Afrikaans-speaking radical candidate), none of whom had attended the traditional elite English Schools. As indicated in Table 10.20, however, the Afrikaans-speaking group still had a comparable level of tertiary education to the successful MP group. Occupationally, five of the 16 were employed in the agricultural sector and four in the legal sector. Although Graaff attempted to increase the role of Afrikaans-speaking ex-servicemen in the UP in the run-up to the 1958 elections, the general profile of his chosen Afrikaans-speaking candidates was solidly middle class, representing a caricature of the *bloedsappe* gentry. Despite this overt attempt to court the Afrikaner vote, this constituency remained elusive for the UP.

THE PROGRESSIVE PARTY

Stung by the 1958 election defeat, Graaff squarely blamed the progressive faction of the UP for the calamity.[188] He believed that this faction was over-represented in the parliamentary caucus, as their constituencies were safe urban seats. In his view their progressive ideas on race had startled the more conservative rural voters, making it difficult

for the UP to gain traction in these areas. Since 1956 Graaff had steadily surrounded himself with loyal ex-servicemen, many whom had served with him in the war. They provided him with the ability to manipulate party functioning at the lowest levels.[189] His growing unease with the cohesion of the progressive faction resonated within this inner circle of ex-servicemen. In the 1959 UP Congress in Bloemfontein, Graaff allowed the conservative camp to harass the progressives out of the party. What started as an attempt to 'clear the air' between the two factions, soon degenerated into a bloodletting. The clash led to the resignation of 11 MPs, three of whom were ex-servicemen. A further five MPCs, including ex-servicepersons Leo Kowarsky and Jacqueline Beck (née de Villiers), and four candidates for election, including two ex-servicemen Ralph Parrott and Willem Steytler, also resigned.[190] All those who resigned founded the Progressive Party. Another three ex-servicemen joined the Progressive Party later.[191] The inaugural Congress in November 1959 saw the election of five ex-servicemen onto the executive of the party (Jan Steytler, Eglin, Dr Bernard Friedman, Kowarsky and Parrott).[192] Among the 10 ex-servicemen under consideration, there were five Africa Stars and three Italy Stars, and there were two who had served in the AES. Four were prominent Torchmen: Parrott, the former National Organiser, Kowarsky, the former National Treasurer, Eglin, the Chairman for the Pinelands Torch, and WS Steytler, the chairman of the Burgersdorp Torch.

As indicated in Table 10.21 the Progressives came from a similar middle-class background as the UP, with the majority having attended elite South African Schools, all having tertiary education and careers in Law, medicine, academia and business. Eglin was the only NCO of the group.

TABLE 10.21 Education and occupation of Progressive Party ex-servicemen

Occupation	Unknown	Elite	Other	Degree	Diploma	PSC	Total
Academic	-	1	1	2	-	-	**2**
Accountant	-	1	-	1	-	-	**1**
Agriculture	-	-	1	-	1	-	**1**
Business	-	1	-	-	-	1	**1**
Construction	-	-	1	1	-	-	**1**
Legal	1	1	-	2	-	-	**2**
Medical	-	1	1	2	-	-	**2**
Total	**1**	**5**	**4**	**8**	**1**	**1**	10

Source: Compiled by Authors.[193]

Despite claiming to embrace non-racialism and the 'protection of fundamental human rights and … [to] safeguard … the dignity and worth of the human person, irrespective of race, colour or creed', the racist socio-political system of the time constrained their vision.[194] They therefore advocated for the need to protect 'the values of Western Civilisation' and group identities (i.e. white minority rights), making them unable to promote universal suffrage. Their solution was:

> To enable suitably qualified citizens of a defined degree of civilisation belonging to any population group to participate in the government of the country in accordance to their ability to assume responsibility, through the holding of public office and through registration on a common electoral roll for election of members of the House of Assembly, with special provision for the representation of persons not so qualified.[195]

The split between the PP and the UP in 1959 exposed the differences in political views among the ex-servicemen. Significantly, the liberalising effect of wartime experience was not uniform. It is evident that although the war may have turned the majority of ex-servicemen against the NP because of the NP's association with fascism, it did not uniformly translate into a progressive position on race. Furthermore, any wartime liberalising effects were time-dependent and it is apparent that these views lost currency over time.

AFTER REPUBLIC

Ex-servicemen remained on the centre stage of the politics after the declaration of a Republic in May 1961. Graaff presided over the UP and its gradual decline.[196] Graaff's inability to reconcile or confront the tensions in the UP led to the party splintering in the 1970s. The growing strength of the conservatives had led to ex-serviceman Jack Basson beating Eglin of the PP in the 1969 elections with the racially inappropriate slogan 'Keep Sea Point White'.[197] (In a final irony, Eglin, as leader of the PP, defeated David Graaff, Sir Graaff's son, in the same constituency in 1974 by 839 votes.)[198] Graaff's conservativism had irked the progressive 'Young Turks' in the Transvaal branch of the Party. Harry Schwartz, a lawyer who had served as an Airforce Navigator during the war, first ousted Graaff's lieutenant, Marias Steyn, and then led the charge on Graaff. Graaff's evasion of Schwartz's challenges only acted to further inflame party tensions and undermined Graaff's authority. Eventually in 1975 Graaff expelled Schwartz from the UP. By 1977 the UP parliamentary caucus was comprised mostly of ex-servicemen loyal to Graaff. Haemorrhaging support, Graaff relied on the support of these men to disband the UP on 28 June 1977. With the end of the UP, Graaff led his conservative supporters into the New Republic Party. Eglin and Schwartz consolidated the progressive factions of white politics into the Progressive Federal Party.[199] Ex-servicemen thereby played a defining role in white opposition politics, with those liberalised by the war pushing for continual reform, and the more conservative group finding stability in personal loyalties forged during the war.

AES OFFICERS IN POLITICS

Much was made of the liberalising effect of the AES by Malherbe, and therefore it is essential to trace the political careers of AES officers separately.[200] Table 10.22 shows the distribution of AES ex-servicemen who continued their involvement in opposition politics. Although distributed across the political spectrum, their highest concentration seems to be among the parties with liberal and radical values.

TABLE 10.22 AES Officers in post-war politics

Political Party	Total	AES	Ratio
SACOD	14	1	0,071429
UFP	12	1	0,083333
Torch	64	6	0,09375
UP	79	8	0,101266
Communists	18	2	0,111111
SL	32	4	0,125
Progressives	10	2	0,2
Liberal	17	4	0,235294
Labour	4	1	0,25

Source: Compiled by the Authors.

CONCLUSION

The involvement of ex-servicemen in the full spectrum of post-war opposition politics suggests a nexus between war experience and later political participation. The different campaign experiences of the selected ex-servicemen seem to indicate a relationship between the Italian campaign and more liberal and radical political views. However, the decision of the Communist Party to encourage enlistment only after Germany had attacked Russia in 1941, and the possibility of a generational shift leftward, could be additional contributing factors in this tendency.

POWs seem to have been motivated by personal loyalties developed during captivity rather than a sense of political liberalisation. POWs tended to cluster around the leadership of a fellow POW in the UP (Graaff) and UFP (Ford).

The role of social capital and class affiliation in politics is most evident when considering the markers of social status, such as rank and education. The preponderance of commissioned officers in the parliamentary political parties suggests a strong affinity between the class structure of the military and the established political system. However, the strong representation of NCOs among the liberal and radical

extra-parliamentary parties reveals solidarity between the experience of the 'ordinary soldier' and the class struggle.

TABLE 10.23 Rank and Post-war Political Affiliation

Political Party	Officer	NCO	Unknown	Total
Progressive	9	1	-	10
UP	69	8	2	79
Torch	49	14	1	64
UFP	9	3	-	12
Labour	2	2	-	4
Liberal	7	10	-	17
SL	12	19	1	32
SACOD	6	10	-	16
Communist	5	13	-	18
Total	**109**	**41**	**3**	**153**

Source: Compiled by the Authors.[201]

The influence of education on political affiliation suggests that schooling had the dual function of providing social capital and, in the case of liberal education, engendering a liberal disposition. The extra-parliamentary radical movements, possibly based on their solidary with the workers, had the lowest ratio of tertiary qualifications. The formal political parties which appealed to the socially affluent (and the better-qualified sectors of the population) had higher qualification levels. The LP members were the most highly qualified academically as respectively indicated in Table 10.23 and Table 10.24.

TABLE 10.24 Academic qualifications and political affiliation of ex-servicemen

Political Party	Tertiary Education (Degrees Diplomas and Staff Courses)	None	Ratio
SL	16	11	0,592593
Torch	34	11	0,653846
Communist	11	5	0,6875
SACOD	11	4	0,733333
UP	60	10	0,8
UFP	9	1	0,818182
PP	9	-	0,9
Labour	3	-	1
Liberal	17	-	1
Average	**103**	**25**	**0,757353**

Source: Compiled by the Authors. [202]

The size and diversity of the selected sample group indicate that ex-servicemen did not disengage from politics because of their wartime experience. The evidence

suggests that ex-servicemen played a substantial role in post-war politics, not only in the extra-parliamentary arena but also as a coherent veteran community and within parliamentary politics. The NP's dalliance with fascism during the war, their crude post-war identity politics and their repressive legislation after assuming power in 1948 allowed the ex-servicemen to frame their activism as an extension of the struggle against fascism. The involvement of radical ex-servicemen in the wartime Springbok Legion, SACOD, Congress of the People and MK provided a link between WWII and the later armed struggle, thereby strengthening the narrative of a nexus between war experience and political activism. The rise of the Torch Commando, in response to the increasingly authoritarian NP, supports the argument that wartime experience was politically liberalising, even though the Torch was deliberately vague on its political agenda. This vagueness provided the opportunity for various political agendas to coexist in the same organisation. Once in control of crucial appointments, Liberal ex-servicemen propagated liberal ideas that placed the Torch in conflict with its dominant front partner, the UP. As a result, after the 1953 elections the Torch could no longer sustain the idea of a coherent veteran organisation, which gave rise to the Liberal Party and the UFP as disgruntled liberal ex-servicemen distanced themselves from the UP. Ex-servicemen, stripped of a veteran political umbrella, were left to participate in politics as individuals within formal political parties. The UP-LP Alliance remained the dominant opposition formation until the collapse of the Labour Party, as neither the UFP nor Liberal Party could gain traction among the white electorate.

When Graaff became the leader of the UP in 1956, he attracted ex-servicemen to the party. He also elevated many conservative ex-servicemen into his inner circle. The number of ex-servicemen in the UP increased *vis-à-vis* the diminishing UP parliamentary caucus. Graaff's attempt to appeal to the more conservative rural electorate soon emboldened his inner circle to purge the last remnants of the progressives (some who had been prominent Torchmen) from the party. After the 1959 UP Congress in Bloemfontein, these progressives split from the party to form the Progressive Party. The prominence of ex-servicemen on both side of this split suggests that if WWII had had a liberalising effect on ex-serviceman, then it was fleeting and time-dependent. Unless vested in a strong sense of community, the attitudes and beliefs formed in crisis and youth were vulnerable to change. In this case, politically neutral personal loyalties, social obligations and networks developed in parallel with the formation of political beliefs may have carried more weight over time.

Endnotes

1 Demobilisation of ex-servicemen began before the end of the war, however, the arbitrary date of 1945 was chosen for a simplified periodization to serve the dominant discussion.

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160 Biographies 1951-1976, Division of Information, File 35, UP Archives; General Election 1953 UP Candidates Information, Division of Information, File 65 1 5 (part 2), UP Archives; Sir De Villiers Graaff Papers, File 1.15.1 United Party Papers 1958-1977; *Who is Who in Southern Africa, 1952-1960*.

161 Biographies 1951-1976, Division of Information, File 35, UP Archives; General Election 1953 UP Candidates Information, Division of Information, File 65 1 5 (part 2), UP Archives; Sir De Villiers Graaff Papers, File 1.15.1 United Party Papers 1958-1977.

162 Col Pilkington Jordan (UP-1950), Robert Badenhorst Durrant (UP-1951), PA Moore (UP 1950) and Lovell (Labour 1950)

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180 Personnel Record Cards, DOD Archives; Biographies 1951-1976, Division of Information, File 35, UP Archives; General Election 1953 UP Candidates Information, Division of Information, File 65 1 5 (part 2), UP Archives; Sir De Villiers Graaff Papers, File 1.15.1 United Party Papers 1958-1977. UP CV's; *Who is Who in Southern Africa*, 1952-1960.

181 The AES officers were AID Brown, HL Horak and Prof Fourie. The Torchmen were Kowarsky, Raw, Eglin and Lee Warden.

182 Personnel Record Cards, DOD Archives; Biographies 1951-1976, Division of Information, File 35, UP Archives; General Election 1953 UP Candidates Information, Division of Information, File 65 1 5 (part 2), UP Archives; Sir De Villiers Graaff Papers, File 1.15.1 United Party Papers 1958-1977. UP CV's; *Who is Who in Southern Africa*, 1952-1960.

183 Mouton, 'No Prime Minister Could Want a Better Leader of the Opposition', p 55.

184 Personnel Record Cards, DOD Archives; Biographies 1951-1976, Division of Information, File 35, UP Archives; General Election 1953 UP Candidates Information, Division of Information, File 65 1 5 (part 2), UP Archives; Sir De Villiers Graaff Papers, File 1.15.1 United Party Papers 1958-1977. UP CV's.

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188 FA Mouton, 'No Prime Minister Could Want a Better Leader of the Opposition', pp 48–69; McConnachie, 'The 1961 General Election in the Republic of South Africa.'

189 Graaff, *Div Looks Back*, pp 141, 162; Interview with Sir De Villiers Graaff, A2242 B Hackland Papers, Wits Historical Papers.

190 Interview with Colin Eglin, A2242 B Hackland Papers, Wits Historical Papers; McConnachie, 'The 1961 General Election in the Republic of South Africa', p 135; *The Progressive News*, Oct 1959, Sir De Villers Graaff papers, File 99, UP Archives.

191 Walter Stanford, James Hamilton Russel and Dr Friedman

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193 Personnel Record Cards, DOD Archives; Sir De Villers Graaff papers, File 99 Progressive Party 1959-1975, UP Archives; Biographies 1951-1976, Division of Information, File 35, UP Archives; General Election 1953 UP Candidates Information, Division of Information, File 65 1 5 (part 2), UP Archives; Sir De Villiers Graaff Papers, File 1.15.1 United Party Papers 1958-1977; UP CV's; *Who is Who in Southern Africa*, 1952-1960

194 Progressive Party Main principle and policies, Sir De Villers Graaff papers, File 99, UP Archives.

195 Progressive Party Main principle and policies, Sir De Villers Graaff papers, File 99, UP Archives.

196 Mouton, 'No Prime Minister Could Want a Better Leader of the Opposition', p 65

197 Mouton, 'No Prime Minister Could Want a Better Leader of the Opposition', p 59.

198 Eglin, *Crossing the borders of Power*, p 139

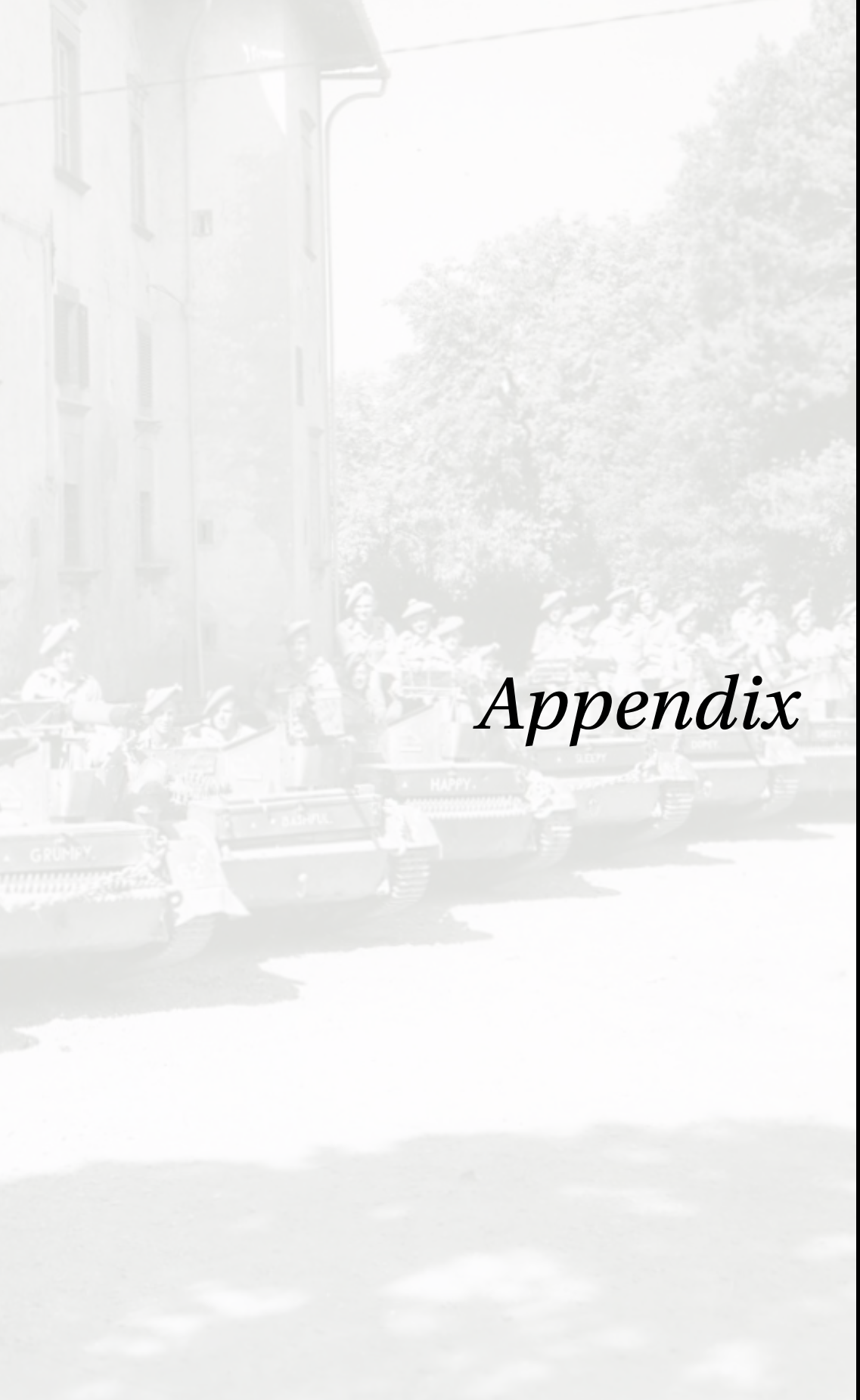
199 Eglin, *Crossing the Borders of Power*, p 163.

200 Malherbe, *Never a Dull Moment*, p 217

201 *Fighting Talk* Magazines 1949-1953, South African History Online; Personnel Record Cards, DOD Archives; A617 Springbok Legion, Wits Historic Papers; UP Transvaal Province File 31.5.3, UP Archives; *Who is Who in Southern Africa*, 1948-1964; War Veteran Torch Commando, Central Head Office File 61 62 (Part 2) UP Archives; War Veteran Torch Commando, Division of Information file 158 (Part 1) and (Part 2), UP Archives; Biographies 1951-1976, Division of Information, File 35, UP Archives; Sir De Villiers Graaff Papers, File 1.15.1 United Party Papers 1958-1977; Slovo, *Unfinished autobiography*; Kirkaldy, "Very Ordinary Communists"; Carneson, *Red in the Rainbow*; Bernstein, *Memory Against Forgetting*; Lazerson, *Against the Tide*; Vigne, *Liberals Against Apartheid* ; Karis, *From Protest to Challenge*; Lovell, *Love of Justice*.

202 See f. 187.

SNOW WHITE
PRINCE CHARMING



Appendix

Appendix

A SELECT GUIDE TO PUBLISHED SOUTH AFRICAN SOLDIER NARRATIVES OF THE SECOND WORLD WAR

Ian van der Waag

It is the task of the historian to tell credible stories that matter. War veterans can be a powerful force in the telling of the military part of that story; their voices form an important part of the materials at the disposal of historians, whose onerous task it is of finding, selecting and filtering the evidence presented by government organs, journalists and veterans, of asking questions, interrogating meanings, of reappraising the positions taken by others, and of constructing a story that will hopefully nudge our understanding closer towards the truth of an ever-elusive past.[1] While South Africa's participation in the Second World War has certainly provided fertile ground for historians, and will continue to do so as the centennial edges closer, the voices of the veterans of this war have been remarkably quiet. There are relatively few published soldier narratives and those secreted away, in special collections and archival repositories, have been largely neglected as historical sources. Their stories are nonetheless an important part of the history of South Africa's Second World War.

Fifty-three personal narratives – written by "ordinary" soldiers and service personnel – were identified. All of the narrators were South African, although some – like Sir Laurens van der Post – served in British uniform. While the numbers are low, the statistics are interesting. Twenty-one are prisoner-of-war (POW) narratives, or contain chapters on the author's POW experience. For ease of reference, these accounts are indicated below with an asterisk (*). Three are narratives written by women, one a war correspondent and two were hostesses with the South African Auxiliary Service (SAWAS). These are indicated with a double asterisk (**). Although all fifty-three narratives were published in English, ten of the narrators were Afrikaans-speaking. Twenty-one of the narratives were written by officers, a further two by chaplains, and four by war correspondents and SAWAS hostesses, who were treated as officers, while twenty-six were written by other ranks. This provides a relatively close rank split, although the officers are overrepresented. There was a bit of a flurry after the war, as the personal narratives and similar texts, regimental and unit history included, appeared in quick succession.

What is striking, however, is the changing venues of publication. The first accounts appeared during the war, sometimes in Cairo, and the role played by publishing houses such as Uni-Volkspers in the 1940s and Howard Timmins of Cape Town, over the longer term, can be noted. However, as Figure 1 indicates, there has been a strong trend away from the more established publishing houses. Increasingly, authors were supported by regimental associations, who acted in several instances as publishers, or resorted to what has been termed vanity or self-publication. Two narratives produced after 2004, namely Ford (2012) and Sadler (2014), were produced by 30 Degrees South, a company that advertised itself as 'one of the top self-publishers in the world'. This trend has no doubt been influenced by a variety of factors, including a steady shrinkage in South Africa's book-reading public, the smaller markets for this literature,

particularly after the Border War as a topic steadily gained ground, and latterly, of course, by the coming of the digital age.

FIGURE 1: **The changing avenues for the publication of South African Second World War personal narratives.**

Many of these narratives are now rare collectors' items. Written mostly for family and former comrades-in-arms, they were not intended for sale to a wider readership. Many had low print runs, sometimes no more than one or two hundred. And, once carelessness, poor storage, bookworm and termite have taken their toll, the surviving titles become even more rare. That there is often little correlation between scarcity (the collectors' value) and the deeper historiographical contribution of some of these works is therefore true. What follows is a select list.

1. Anderson, John, *Escape in the Apennines* (Windhoek: Gamsberg Macmillan, 1992).

   John Anderson was born in Windhoek and joined the SAAF shortly after the outbreak of war in September 1939. After a period of air training, he and others seeking guaranteed, active participation in the war, were seconded to the RAF. In this narrative Anderson touches on his life under training and in the transit camps in the Union, and later in Egypt and Italy, as well as the short breaks enjoyed visiting some of the tourist spots in these countries. Attached to the 145th Squadron RAF (nicknamed the 'Quarter-to-Two's'), he flew with the Desert Air Force in North Africa and, later from Italy, over the northern region of the Central Mediterranean theatre. Shot down twice over enemy-held territory, Anderson managed to escape on both occasions. This is essentially the story of those escapes. It was written to record his gratitude to the Italian people who hid him and gave him succour during his escape and evasion of capture across Italy. After an abortive move to turn the manuscript into a film, the manuscript lay dormant until Anderson was pressed by his family to have it published, which he did in 1992.

2. Anon. *Memories of the Middle East, June 1941 to April 1943* (Pietermaritzburg: The Natal Carbineers Trust, n.d.).

   This is the 122-page, spirited account of an anonymous Carbineer, who clearly loved music. His narrative commences with a prelude set in the Top Hat Cabaret in Alexandria, 'a meeting place for fun-seeking soldiers'.[2] But his story starts in Durban harbour, aboard the *Dilwara*, and ends, perhaps aptly, with a funeral. The narrator is clearly educated, he has an engaging style and a polished turn of phrase. Yet he is also a soldier and tells his story in a clear fashion. He does not shy away from taboo subjects, including most notably the proclivities of soldiers with a few days of leisure on their hands. The narrator's frankness may have induced the need for anonymity. The only shortcoming of this racy narrative is its brevity.

3. Axelson, Eric, *A Year in Italy; An Observer with the South African 6th Armoured Division 1944-1945* (Port Elizabeth: E.H. Walton, 2001).

   Eric Axelson (1913-1998), a university-based historian, volunteered in 1940. He served first as an information officer, as part of the Army Education Section of Leo Marquard, and then from February 1944 as the Historical Recording Officer of the 6th SA Armour Division. He and his small staff worked assiduously to gather historical material (paper, visual, interview) and built a first narrative of the history of the division. Axelson kept a daily log of the activities of his Recording Section, which took the form of a diary. It contained his own daily jottings supplemented with the casual remarks of his driver/clerk and photographer. This log, together with extracts from twenty-two letters (pages 229-243), received chiefly from Capt JAI Agar-Hamilton, of the Union War Histories Section at GHQ, make up the contents of this book. Agar-Hamilton, writing to Axelson in 1944, described the log as 'all first-rate stuff.' His only regret was 'that for the present … its circulation must be limited by security considerations'.[3] These of course no longer apply and the book makes available a truly valuable source, which in 1944 was thought to be 'the only authentic account of the Division which reach[ed] GHQ'.[4]

4. Baker, Douglas M, *War, Wine and Valour: Five Years Fighting the Nazis* (Essendon: private, 2005).

   Douglas Baker (1922-2011) was the son of British immigrants to South Africa. He was sixteen when he volunteered for service in 1939. He enlisted with the Natal Mounted Rifles and served with them in East Africa, North Africa and Italy. His brother Desmond served in the Royal Navy. Douglas was wounded three times: twice in North Africa and then, more seriously, in Italy when his Sherman was hit by German shellfire near Orvieto. Here he confronted his own mortality and the event at Orvieto, a powerful inner experience, drove him to study medicine after the war. His memoir is a fresh and brutally honest view of the everyday life of the

ordinary Springbok soldier. He talks of morale, the sexual and other escapades of his mates ('… men being men, and soldiers being what they are…'), and of the conduct of officers ('At its best alcohol smothers out and makes acceptable the inequalities of rank and authority').[5] His, he argues, is 'the true account' and 'as factual as the ongoing war diaries of the author's personal experiences which thread the work through its six long years'. Baker presents his story as a study in the psychology of men in battle.

5. ★★ Bean, Lucy, *Strangers in Our Midst* (Cape Town: Howard Timmins, 1970).

   Lucy Bean was a cardinal figure behind the founding and running of the South African Women's Auxiliary Service (SAWAS), which brought together under one umbrella many of the women's volunteer organisations established shortly before the outbreak of war. She was a confidante of cabinet ministers and friend of Mrs Smuts. SAWAS branches (commands) were opened around the country to render services and gifts. They were unpaid, civilian staff, although in uniform, and reported for liaison purposes to the Director of Recruiting, later Brigadier GCG Werdmuller. From February 1942 Bean was the provincial commandant of Command 13 in Cape Town. She spent a year, from September 1944 to August 1945, in Italy in charge of a small party of SAWAS delegated to undertake welfare work in the UDF. Bean's book has two parts: the first fifteen chapters relate to SAWAS Command 13; the second, a further twenty chapters, details the 'SAWAS Mission to Italy'. The second part must be read with Miss Sampie de Wet's *Shifty in Italy* (see No. 19), which is more penetrating and more frank. The history of the SAWAS, detailing their work in hospitality, welfare and entertainment, is told by Hewitt.[6]

6. Bernstein, B.L., *The Tide Turned at Alamein; Impressions of the Desert War with the South African Division and the Eighth Army, June, 1941 – January, 1943* (Cape Town: Central News Agency, 1944).

   This is another of the stock standard, war-time accounts written by the ordinary Springbok soldier. Bernstein's story starts on 10 June 1941, with the departure of the Second Division for Egypt. Written as 'a tribute to the men of the Eighth Army and the Springbok Divisions', the publisher punted it in the following terms: 'It is a book of tremendous general interest and certainly should be on the shelf of every home which sent a husband or son to the Desert.'[7] It is written in a bland, "the cat sat on the mat" fashion, but very rich in terms of detail.

7. Birkby, Carel, *Springbok Victory* (Johannesburg: Libertas, 1941); and *It's A Long Way To Addis* (London: Frederick Muller, 1942).

   Carel Birkby's *Springbok Victory* is the first of the published personal accounts of this war. He was the South African Press Association's first war correspondent with the South African forces in East Africa. He states in his author's note that *Springbok Victory* was neither 'a complete objective history of the war in East Africa [nor] a purely personal account of the experiences of one war correspondent'. What Birkby produced has in fact elements of both. As journalists so often do, Birkby wrote the first rough draft of the history of this campaign. Yet he tells the story of the larger campaign through his lens as war correspondent, often writing in the first person. He produced his manuscript for near simultaneous publication in London, as *It's A Long Way To Addis*. The British print, which appeared in 1942, has two additional chapters. The South African edition includes the full text of the address Smuts read to the troops before their departure for 'the North' in July 1940. It is also dedicated to Gerry ('Scoop') Turnbull, a movie-cameraman and the first South African war correspondent to die in the war; he died in a plane crash on the day Birkby started to write the manuscript that would become this book.

8. Blamey, AE 'Chooks', *A Company Commander Remembers: From El Yibo to El Alamein* (Pietermaritzburg: The Natal Witness, 1963).

   Arthur Blamey was a member of a well-known Natal family that had seen service in several wars. His father had written his own personal account of his service with the Natal Mounted Rifles.[8] *A Company Commander Remembers* is an autobiographical account of the younger Blamey, a major in the same regiment. It provides penetrating detail on C Company of the NMR, from mobilisation in June 1940 through to the end of the war in Africa in 1943. His brothers fought in the same outfit, while their cousin, Cardell Blamey, served under 'Chooks' as second lieutenant.[9] This is a detailed, close-to-the-ground account, rich in colour and texture, it is replete with details on his company's movements, on the human and physical environment. It is arguably the best South African personal account of the first half of the war.

9. ★ Brokensha, David, *Brokie's Way: Love and Work in Three Continents* (Fish Hoek: Amani, 2007).

   Some personal narratives are full autobiographies in the sense that they narrate a continuous life. David Brokensha, in *Brokie's Way*, which spans a strapping 566 pages, covers the full span of his life from boyhood and his war experiences, through his post-war student life, and onto his career as a social anthropologist on three continents. His wartime experiences make up two chapters and form

slightly more than 10 percent of the full book. Following in the footsteps of their older brother, Paul and David Brokensha volunteered in 1940 and were posted to the Signal Company of the 2nd Division. They underwent training as dispatch riders in Potchefstroom and were sent to North Africa. They were captured at Tobruk. The POW chapter is particularly interesting.

10. Brokensha, David, *Guy's Story; Recollections of Guy Brokensha's boyhood in Durban, and his career in the Fleet Air Arm during World War II* (Fish Hoek: Amani Press, 2016).

    Guy Brokensha (1918-1942), born in Durban, joined the Royal Navy's Fleet Air Arm in 1937. This is an account of his life told through his letters and the reminiscences of his younger brother David Brokensha (see No. 9). Guy disappeared in August 1942, while serving on the *Ark Royal*. The book is presented as a tribute to a lost brother.

11. Brown, James Ambrose, *One Man's War: A Soldier's Diary* (Cape Town: Howard Timmins, 1980).

    Brown was a commercial artist before the war. The diary he kept in North Africa was his testing-ground as a writer. Its success – parts of it were published during the war in *The Star* (Johannesburg) and the *Saturday Evening Post* (Washington) – confirmed for him his decision to become a writer after the war. This book, which takes the form of a diary, is Brown's account of his wartime experiences. It is based on the diary he kept, in his haversack and pockets, during the war and covers the twelve-month period from the battle at Sidi Rezegh through to November 1942. Brown contributed several volumes to the Purnell series 'South African Forces World War II' and his diary was republished in 1991 as part of the Ashanti 'South Africans at War' series.[10]

12. Butler, Guy, *Bursting World: An Autobiography, 1936-45* (Cape Town and Johannesburg: David Phillip, 1983).

    Guy Butler (1918-2001), later professor and head of the Department of English (1952-1980) at Rhodes University, served as an information officer during the war. *Bursting World*, the second volume of his autobiographical trilogy,[11] covers his four years at Rhodes University, his engagement with the arts, High-Church Anglicanism and alcohol, and his marriage in 1940 to Jean Satchwell. Jean was well connected: Col AF Murray, the officer commanding First City Regiment in Grahamstown, was her uncle, while Leo Marquard, the head of the Army Education Section, was her mother's cousin. Butler was caught up in the intellectual turmoil in Grahamstown as the world edged towards war in 1939. His emphasis throughout is on the people he met, on Jean whom he married, on his fellow students in Grahamstown, including Tony Delius, and on the military

officers he met during the war. Butler served in Egypt and then Italy. His role as an information officer brought him into contact with interesting people, including Marquard, Delius, Eric Axelson, Uys Krige and other intellectuals. Notwithstanding, he complains of not having had a good war. While his story is one of expanding horizons – both geographical and mental – for this young man from Cradock, the war was a rude intrusion. He returned to Rhodes University after the war.

13. ★ Chutter, James B., *Captivity Captive* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1954).

James Chutter was the senior chaplain with the South African 2nd Infantry Division and was captured at Tobruk in June 1942. Held in North Africa and then flown to Italy, Chutter was interned at Bari and then Chieti (PG 21). He gives personal, often amusing, vignettes, of life in these camps, of Italian guards that arrogated respect and privilege, of the suffering of fellow prisoners. Following the Italian Armistice, he was moved to Germany, where he was transferred between camps (Moosburg, Marish Trubau, Brunswick) before eventual liberation in May 1945. Personal narratives by chaplains are rare and Chutter's religious beliefs are, as may be expected, an underlying leitmotif throughout the story he tells. Chutter, with other Torchmen from Natal, established the Union Federal Party after the war.

14. Clothier, Norman, *War Time Diary, 1943-1945* (Pietermaritzburg: The Natal Carbineers Trust, 1989).

Norman Clothier served as an NCO in the Royal Natal Carbineers. His story commences on 10 September 1943, as the regiment readied for departure, and ends with his being wounded and then evacuated. His wounding and then saving by the regimental medical officer (Capt Reznek) is mentioned in a poem by Major Hertzog Biermann:

> Another RNC outpost was down below Salvaro
>
> Where the ground slopes gently down to the banks of the River Reno
>
> That was where Norman Clothier, the SA Legion's head,
>
> Was succoured by 'Koffie' Reznek when he was all but dead.[12]

As things transpired, Clothier had accidentally received a burst of shot from the patrol leader. He gives a vivid account of the whole medical evacuation process. He returned to Italy in 1969 and visited the Casa Creda area, where the incident had happened. There he decided to rewrite his narrative and produce a fuller account. He produced 310 pages. He engaged with his surroundings, questioned what he saw and experienced, and commented on all he did. He comments also

on the process of diary keeping: on the difficulties of making meaningful, daily comments; on how, as a sergeant, he felt 'out of the true life-stream of the unit' and no longer able to keep anything but a prosaic record. Notwithstanding, he produced a lively account, often critical of the officers, and one that provides an almost unique window onto the RNC in Italy. But then he was a writer. He produced an anthology of poetry, titled *Libyan Winter*, relating to his war in the Desert,[13] and many years later a book on the SA Native Labour Contingent and the sinking of the SS *Mendi*.[14]

15. Colenbrander, Arnold, *Coley's Odyssey* (Eshowe: AB Colenbrander, 1994).

    Coley's Odyssey is a full life portrait. In it Arnold Colenbrander's wartime experiences form an interesting and exciting break in the otherwise rather regular career of a government official. He was born on 27 June 1912 in Utrecht and raised in Northern Natal on the Anglo-Boer War stories of the local farmers, many of whom were his father's former comrades. In 1932, following in the footsteps of his uncles – three of whom had been magistrates – he entered the civil service as a clerk in the Magistrate's office at Hlabisa and underwent Active Citizen Force training with the Umvoti Mounted Rifles at Eshowe. He was assistant magistrate and native commissioner at Nqutu before the war. He volunteered in early 1940 and served in North Africa and Italy. His account, typical of the soldier's narrative, is told in plain language and engaging style. His book, a composition of dozens of vignettes, was written at different times, some parts – such as his account of his part in the battle at Celleno – were written almost forty years after the events.[15]

16. ★ Cooper, F.W., *The Police Brigade: 6 S.A. Infantry Brigade, 1939-45* (Cape Town: Constantia, 1972).

    Brigadier FW (Frederick) Cooper commanded of the 6th South African Infantry Brigade. He had been a policeman before the war, as many of his men had been too, and hence the title of his account. *The Police Brigade* lies in the grey borderland between personal narrative and formation history. Cooper presents his narrative as history. His book not only carries the name of his former command, but Cooper writes as the former commander, and Pierre van Ryneveld, the wartime Chief of the General Staff, was invited to write the Foreword. Moreover, the book has a number of appendices, including cartoons of many of the officers, the honours and awards earned by members of the brigade, and a list of all of the officers of the units that formed the brigade. It smacks strongly of the regimental history genre. Yet it is written in easy style; Cooper is the protagonist and much of the account is written in the first person. Cooper himself notes his two roles – of recording *the history* of the Police Brigade and of telling his *own* personal story.[16]

17. ★ Crompton, Cyril and Peter Johnson, *Luck's Favours: Two South African Second World War Memoirs* (Fish Hoek: Echoing Green Press, 2010).

This interesting book is comprised of the personal narratives of two soldiers. The narratives were prepared by relatives and published together privately. Cyril Crompton ('For the Adventure of It') was a Natalian who served with the 1st South African Anti-Aircraft Regiment and was captured at Sidi Rezegh, while Peter Johnson ('On the Run in Wartime Italy') was a signaller attached to the Royal Durban Light Infantry and was captured at Tobruk. Both are essentially POW narratives, although Crompton first provides a broad sweep of the run-up years to the war.

18. ★ De Villiers, Paul, *Memoirs – The Second World War: Just a Small Part!* (n.p.: P de Villiers, 2006).

Paul de Villiers was a 'Bishop's Boy'; he matriculated in 1939, enlisted from UCT in May 1940, and served with the Headquarters of the 4th SA Brigade. He was captured at Tobruk. He was held in North Africa until November 1942, when he was moved to Italy. After spending time in various camps at Bari, Tuturano and Fara Sabina, he successfully escaped and evaded recapture, and spend the Christmas of 1944 at home in South Africa. He returned to Italy in early 1945 and saw the end of the war near Lake Como. The war was a spiritual experience for De Villiers who joined the ministry afterwards.

19. ★★ De Wet, Sampie, *Shifty in Italy* (n.p.: Modern Printers, 1945).

Sampie de Wet was one of the SA Women's Auxiliary Service (SAWAS) hostesses. These women served in uniform, were treated as officers, but were not part of the UDF. Some worked near the frontline, others, like De Wet, at the clubs and canteens in the rear areas. *Shifty in Italy* is one of the true surprises of these war stories. If 'Chooks' Blamey, *A Company Commander Remembers*, is arguably the best South African personal narrative of the first half of the war, then De Wet has probably produced one of the best for the campaign in Italy. As she notes in her introduction, 'The truth has many faces and many facets. I have tried to give a truthful account of what I saw and experienced. I do not pretend to have done more than travel one line drawn through one small corner of a gigantic event'.[17] De Wet certainly delivered on this. Her account is written plainly and clearly, she does not shy away from the darker side of military campaigning, and she travelled a good deal more than this quote suggests. She made the most of her war. She relished going to Italy, she met people from all walks of life, she travelled incessantly, and she had access to men of high rank. She also travelled to the advanced headquarters of some South African regiments, such as the Pretoria Regiment, and to various casualty clearing stations. The South African clubs,

like the Roma and 'Red Tabs', where the SAWAS worked, were also the dens for war artists (like Terence McCaw), entertainers (like Captain Frank Rogal of the South African Entertainment Unit), and a variety of war correspondents and photographers (including Constance Stuart). Going to Italy as a 'semi-civilian' and in the last year of the war, when others were tired and perhaps jaded, probably enabled her to 'see things which others had stopped seeing.'[18] And herein lies the true value of this account.

20. Dimbleby, KG, *Hostilities Only* (Cape Town: Unie-Volkspers, 1944).

Dimbleby took the precaution of stating that 'the description of the various events in this book and the opinions expressed are in no way official. They reflect merely my personal experiences and impressions.' Dimbleby was a journalist seconded by his newspaper, *The Cape Argus*, to the government's Bureau of Information. Although the Bureau was classified as an essential war department, Dimbleby was 'dissatisfied and restless', other men being in uniform and visibly contributing directly to the war effort. Wanting to do the same, and to 'see something of the world', he enlisted in the Royal Navy after a period of training at the Royal Naval Volunteer Reserve Base at Port Elizabeth. He, with some one hundred other South Africans, served on the HMS *Cornwall*, escorting 'more than a dozen convoys over long distances, apart from doing other jobs, and sailed more than 100 000 miles'.[19] After a brief spell in hospital, Dimbleby, then part of the newly-constituted South African Naval Forces, served consecutively as Regulating Officer in Simon's Town, Assistant Naval Press Officer in Durban, and Examination Officer at Saldanha Bay.

21. Dingle, D, *And the Doctor Recovered* (Cape Town: Howard Timmins, 1959).

A search in February 2020 for Captain (Dr) D. Dingle's personnel file at the Department of Defence Archives proved futile, confirming perhaps that the author of this short (165-page) memoir used a pseudonym. More research might reveal his identity. But there are some valuable pointers. He volunteered in 1940, underwent the abbreviated officers course for medical personnel at Zonderwater, where he notes his 'individuality was now forfeit' together with his 'right to criticize superior officers', and, leaving Zonderwater 'with no regrets', was posted to the Artillery School.[20] *And the Doctor Recovered* is this volunteer doctor's witty autobiographical sketch tracing his life from internship to near retirement. Of the twenty-four chapters, eight deal with Dingle's wartime experiences in three theatres of war. He went as the 'Butch' – short for 'Butcher', the affectionate nickname for a doctor posted to an artillery regiment – to East Africa, the Western Desert and then Italy. This book might best be described as a candid account told in a tongue-in-cheek fashion.

22. Douglas, WS, *Regimental History: A Short History of the Cape Town Highlanders, Sept 1939 – Feb 1943* (Cairo: E.R. Schindler, 1944)

Major Sholto Douglas candidly explains the origins of this short 'regimental history' in his preface. He tells us, it 'began on mobilisation as an Adjutant's personal diary', to which, with the passage of time, 'material accumulated and eventually the author found himself in possession of a mass of historical records. Realising how soon such material can be scattered and lost and how difficult it would be for historians who follow to correlate the scraps that remain, an authentic history was begun'.[21] He invokes Hynes's notion of authenticity. Yet, sadly, for want of space, and time – because the CTH were moving to Italy for the next campaign – Douglas's narrative is brief and actually devoid 'of the telling of all the little human stories and adventures that make up the lighter side of a soldier's life'.[22] He also calls his narrative a history, and specifically a regimental history. However, he often speaks in the first person. The reader would have to wait for a fuller history to be written.[23]

23. ★ Du Preez, Laurie, *Inside the Cage* (Cape Town: Struik, 1973).

Laurie du Preez was a member of Cooper's 6th South African (Police) Brigade. His narrative opens in June 1942, in the port town of Tobruk, where he was captured. The book is his account of being a POW in North Africa and Italy. It is written in detail and covers the POW experience from capture, through life in various camps, to the various escape attempts. He was eventually successful and his story ends with his breakfasting with the Swiss *grenzwacht*. Du Preez knew Len van Onselen (see No. 52); they had been station colleagues in the SA police, they had served in the same platoon in the Desert, and they shared accommodation in several POW cages. They mention each other in their narratives.[24] Most of the men of the Police Brigade found themselves at Campo 57 in Italy, but, from there, they were separated for different reasons. Many of them escaped successfully and, evading their pursuers, either reached Switzerland (as Du Preez and some 50 other policemen did) or the Allied lines in southern Italy. Du Preez presents his experience in granular detail, touching also on the relationships between the prisoners, between the prisoners and their guards, and between the prisoners and the local Italian civilians who crossed their paths either on working fatigues or while evading capture. This ranks with Wolhuter (see No. 53) as one of the better South African POW accounts.

24. ★ Flederman, Alan, *And Direction was Given* (Cape Town: Pretext, 2000).

This is another short, 95-page account. Alan Flederman was educated at Kingswood College in Grahamstown. He captained the University of Cape Town boxing team, from where, as a young law student, he volunteered for war service.

He was commissioned into the 1st South African Division Ammunition Company and was captured at Gazala. This is a typical POW narrative. Imprisoned in Campo 47, Flederman's narrative starts with the hatching and then execution of an escape plan, the vicissitudes of evasion, his linking up with a band of Italian partisans, and his eventual arrival, with a Kiwi friend, in neutral Switzerland. Flederman dedicated his book to 'the tens of thousands of magnificent Italian peasants', who, despite the dangers, 'gave shelter, food and assistance' to countless Allied prisoners of war. Whilst in Switzerland, Flederman wrote an account of escape and evasion. This he supplemented with additional material as well as with 'what thoughts went through my mind'. The result is a reasonably detailed, personal account of his experiences. He returned to Italy in 1972.

25. Ford, Keith, *From Addis to the Aosta Valley: A South African in the North African and Italian Campaigns, 1940–1945* (Pinetown: 30 Degrees South, 2012).

    Keith Ford was born in 1921 and was raised in Bethlehem in the Orange Free State. He volunteered in 1940 and trained as a gunner. His war service took him to East Africa and North Africa and then, after a short spell back in the Union, to Egypt and Italy with the 6th Division. *From Addis to the Aosta Valley*, Ford tells us, 'is the story of an ordinary soldier'. He based his memoir on his own diaries, which gives this book its extraordinary detail. His quick turn of phrase and his inclination to share personal information gives this book its immediacy and credibility. This (like No. 2) is in many ways the true voice of Hynes's ordinary soldier. He tells an unvarnished, sometimes crude, story and gives a bottom-up view in raw form.

26. * Graaff, Sir De Villiers, *Div Looks Back: The memoirs of Sir De Villiers Graaff* (Cape Town and Johannesburg: Human & Rousseau, 1994).

    This is a full-length, self-portrait of Sir De Villiers Graaff (1913-1999) from his birth through to the dawn of a new South Africa. He was born into the political elite, and his family was close to the Botha and Smuts families, yet when the war broke out, he volunteered as an ordinary Springbok, at first refusing a commission. He left South Africa aboard the *Mauretania* in June 1941 and, as the adjutant of Die Middellandse Regiment, experienced the frontier battles around Sollum and the Halfaya Pass. He was captured when Tobruk fell in June 1942. The four chapters on the war are rich in detail, despite the loss of his notebooks.[25] Interesting too were the attempts made to recruit him for the British Free Corps.

27. Hain, Walter, *Apennine War Diary; An Artist's Sketch Book, 1944-1945* (Epsom, Surrey: Bretwalda Books, 2015).

    Hain served as a signaller with C Company, Royal Natal Carbineers. He kept a diary and a sketchbook, which he filled during the war years with sketches of what he saw, of the terrain he encountered, and of the men around him. The last

include fellow Carbineers, other South Africans, and German POWs. The story recounted in this little book (it is but 128 pages long) is based on that diary and includes a large number of the sketches as well as some photographs. The original diary is included at the back of the book, but the real value lies in the sketches. The booklet needed a good editor.

28. ★ Hammond, HR, *For You the War is Over: The story of H.R. (Aussie) Hammond*, as told to Joan Chambers (Cape Town: HAUM, 1967).

    This is a classic POW narrative. Told by HR 'Aussie' Hammond, it starts with his capture at Sidi Rezegh and ends with his 'going home' at the end of the war. Hammond was born in Rhodesia, to South African parents, and went with them to Australia at a young age. He volunteered in 1940 and served as a signaller with the 1st Brigade. He was captured at Sidi Rezegh. This is a close, detailed account of his years as a prisoner of war. He was held first in North Africa. He was aboard the *Santiago* when it was torpedoed while conveying POWs to Italy. After spending some time in Greece in a castle, he was held in Italy and Germany, until the place was overrun by US troops.

29. Hartshorn, EP, *Avenge Tobruk* (Cape Town and Johannesburg: Purnell, 1960).

    Eric Ponsonby ('Scrubbs') Hartshorn is one of those larger-than-life, colourful characters, full of bluster. This book carries his thumbprint. Hartshorn was a veteran volunteer soldier. He served with the Manchesters in Egypt and at Gallipoli, where he was commissioned, and later in Palestine and India. He seemed to collect wounds and decorations as he went. He immigrated to South Africa in 1926, joined the Transvaal Scottish, and, at the outbreak of war in 1939, volunteered to serve with them. He ended the war as a brigadier. Hartshorn gives us a closer view of the command of the British Commonwealth armies in East Africa and North Africa, providing often close appreciations of men like Klopper and Poole. He tackles the thorny question of Tobruk and the subsequent court of inquiry with vigour and sought to 'correct' the official narrative. He ended the war as a 'staff wallah' in Italy and the United Kingdom. Yet, unfortunately, he says very little about the roles he played in both wars or of the interrogation of returning allied prisoners of war.

30. ★ Heydenrych, Carey, *Heck! What a life! A story about an ordinary fellow and his extraordinary wartime experiences* (Cape Town: private, 1995).

    This is the story of a South African pilot. Trained in Southern Rhodesia, South Africa, and the United Kingdom, Heydenrych joined the 608 Squadron, of RAF Coastal Command, at Wick in Northern Scotland. He was shot down off the Norwegian coast on 15 May 1942 and captured. Wounded, he was treated at a POW Lazaret in Germany, from where he escaped. Recaptured he was sent

to Stalag Luft III at Sagan, the scene of the Great Escape and of the Wooden Horse escape. His account is vivid, and with a fast pace, and tells of his two forced marches across Germany in the last months of the war.

31. Hobbs, Glynn B, *Recollections of Italy: The memoir of a trooper in Prince Alfred's Guard* (n.p.: private, 1996).

    These are the recollections of a trooper with the Prince Alfred's Guard of his experiences in the Italian campaign. Hobbs, pressed by his wife, put pen to paper late in life.[26] His memoir, written for the interest of his family, is a collection of vignettes, or scenes of memory. He kept no diary and his family seemingly kept no correspondence, and so his record is based wholly on his memory. Some fifty-two years had lapsed between the end of the war and his writing this booklet. His recollection of events had inevitably faded and whole months in his account are practically blank. He notes, however, that 'perhaps nothing of special interest was happening'. This booklet then contains his vivid memories and striking experiences, making his memoir not a 'continuous record of events but rather a collection of, hopefully, interesting stories' arranged roughly in chronological sequence.[27]

32. Hobbs, Glynn B, *From Sicily to the Alps: Personal Accounts and Recollections of World War II* (Claremont: Mallard, 1999).

    This is an anthology of wartime recollections and extracts from personal accounts put together by a veteran. Hobbs (see No. 31) enlisted with the 1st Transvaal Scottish but was later transferred to the Prince Alfred's Guard. The anthology, which again has a strong focus on Italy, is presented in six parts: the prisoners of war; the invasion of Italy; summer 1944 – Cassino to Castiglione; winter 1944/45 and the Gothic Line; spring 1945 – Apennines to the Alps; and Italy revisited. Several of the vignettes are drawn from rare sources, including some foreign accounts, some soldiers' magazines (such as *The Tourri* of the Cape Town Highlanders), as well as unpublished private diaries. And therein lies its value.

33. Hurley, Jerry, *The War Diary of Jerry Hurley, September 1940 – October 1942* (Pietermaritzburg: The Natal Carbineers Trust, n.d.).

    Jerry Hurley (1919–1996) was born in Cape Town to Irish parents. Denis, his older brother, was a Catholic priest and became bishop (1946) and then archbishop (1951) of Durban. Jerry volunteered at the start of the war and served with C Company of the Royal Natal Carbineers. He produced two ego documents: a diary and an autobiography. The diary was written on loose sheets. Braving censorship, he sent these home to Pietermaritzburg at regular intervals. He typed them up after the war and, in 1968, added explanatory notes that are italicised and bracketed in the print version. He did this, he explains, as 'so much was left out'

either through tiredness or 'sheer laziness'. His account starts in Gilgal, Kenya, on 12 September 1940 and runs through to 21 October 1942. His autobiography, titled simply *Memories: 1919-1945*, was published in 1988.

34. Kaplan, Cyril J, *In Three Wars: A Personal and Orthopaedic Perspective* (Bloomington, IN: Xlibris, 2008).

    Cyril Kaplan (1917–2012) was born in Durban and studied medicine at the University of Cape Town. He volunteered in 1939 and joined the Cape Garrison Artillery. Upon graduation with an MBChB, he transferred to the South African Medial Corps (SAMC). He was posted to Egypt, where his exposure to war-related injuries stimulated an interest in orthopaedics. He continued his studies after the war – in Edinburgh, Liverpool and London – and served in the Israeli Army Medical Service during the Arab-Israeli wars of 1948 and 1973. *In Three Wars* is his account of his experiences as a war surgeon. It is a skilful narrative, combining personal anecdote with historical background, and fortified with keen commentary on medical successes and failures under battle conditions.

35. ★ Krige, Uys, *The Way Out: Italian Intermezzo* (Cape Town and Port Elizabeth: Unie-Volkspers, 1946).

    This is an early POW narrative and possibly the most iconic. Krige was a well-known poet and writer. He was related to Mrs Smuts, served in North Africa as a war correspondent, and was captured at Sidi Rezegh. He was held captive in North Africa and then Italy, before escaping from Campo Prigionieri di Guerra No. 78. Published by Unie-Volkspers in 1946, *The Way Out* enjoyed a long life, and went through several editions, more than any of its counterparts. This was a true adventure story told by the public-figure-turned-hero. But, not only devoured by young readers, *The Way Out* also provided a narrative for the community of ex-prisoners of war, many of whom had experienced similar ordeals and adventures, and whose families hungered for insights into what their relatives had faced at a time when they had all had to deal with such great uncertainty.[28] The book has been praised as 'one of the finest books this war has produced'.[29]

36. Lewis, Neville, *Studio Encounters: Some Reminiscences of a Portrait Painter, with a preliminary sketch by Antony R. Delius* (Cape Town: Tafelberg, 1963).

    This book is a self-portrait of one of South Africa's leading portraitists. The preliminary sketch was written by Tony Delius (born 1916), whom Lewis met in late 1940, shortly after both went into uniform. Delius describes Lewis as 'a kind of verbal forager', who could 'talk, wheedle, or simply jolly the bemused inhabitants of Defence Headquarters into giving him practically anything he wanted'. He had a 'genius for talking strong men into doing unaccustomed things'. He left for East

Africa and then the Western Desert and Italy, from where he sent back 'portraits of the brave, the famous, the typical, and the rare.'

37. McNally, Terence J, *Camera in My Kitbag, 1934–1945* (Cape Town: Mills Litho, 1988).

Terence McNally finished his schooling at SACS in 1932 and joined his father as an apprentice photographer. This book traces his soldiering through the Scots Guards, which he joined in 1934. He returned to South Africa shortly before the outbreak of war and 'found' himself photographing The Dukes leaving Cape Town for 'the North'. He joined up. The photographs in this book were taken by McNally while serving in the Scots Guards, then with the Duke of Edinburgh's Own Rifles, and finally with the Army Film and Photo Unit in Italy. As a lieutenant-photographer, McNally was immediately transferred from Cairo to Bari, as the operations in Italy commenced. He was issued with a 2¼ inch square Rolleiflex. This book provides a fascinating look, through the camera lens, at Springbok troops in Kenya, Italian Somaliland, Abyssinia and through to Egypt, Madagascar and Italy.

38. * Morphew, Jeff, *Five Frontiers to Freedom* (Cape Town: Vineyard, 1999).

Jeff Morphew (1918-1993) grew up on the family farm in the Dargle Valley, in Natal. Published posthumously, this book is a typical escape narrative. Captured in Libya when his "Tommy" was shot down by an F109 on 4 June 1942, Morphew spent the ensuing months in enemy hands. He is billed in the book – which is written as his 'frank and uninhibited story' – as 'the only man living to have escaped from an Italian POW camp in World War II while Italy was still at war.' Others had made the attempt, but had died as a result: language and geography seemingly combined to make a secure "cage" until the fall of Mussolini. Sir De Villiers Graaff (see No. 26), who wrote the foreword, extolled the virtues of courage, daring, good planning, and ingenuity, which were the essential components in any escape attempt. As the title indicates, Morphew crossed five international frontiers on his way to freedom: through Italy to Switzerland; then into German-occupied France, where he worked briefly with the Resistance; and then across the Pyrenees and into Spain. He returned to England on a flight out of Gibraltar on 17 January 1944. It is a fascinating story. Newman Robinson assisted with its publication.

39. * Robinson, Newman, *Missing, Believed Prisoner* (Durban: Robinson and Co., 1944).

Newman Robinson was born and raised in Natal. He attended Michaelhouse and then joined the staff at *The Natal Mercury*. He volunteered in 1940 and joined the SAMC. As a lance corporal, he served as a medical orderly with 10th South African Field Ambulance and was captured at Sidi Rezegh on 23 November 1941. He

survived the torpedoing of the ship taking him from Benghazi to Italy. The same story is told by Hammond in *For You the War is Over* (see No. 28). After a short time in Greece, Robinson was held at Prigonieiri Campo 85 (Tuturano) and 65 (Gravina Altamura). As medical personnel were to be returned to their own lines, he was repatriated via Smyrna in April 1943. *In the Bag*, Robinson's book produced with Peter Ogilvie, uses material from this book (No. 40).

40. ★ Robinson, Newman, and Peter Ogilvie, *In the Bag* (Johannesburg: Macmillan, 1975).

This large format book was produced by two men captured at Sidi Rezegh: Newman Robinson (see No. 39) and Peter Ogilvie. The unique element here is Ogilvie's drawings. Raised in the Eastern Cape and educated at Pretoria Boys' High School, Ogilvie volunteered in 1940 and joined the South African Artillery. He rose through the ranks rapidly and was a sergeant-major, with an anti-tank regiment, when he was captured. A graphic artist, Ogilvie kept an illustrated diary during his imprisonment. This may have been the booklet handed out to captives by The War Prisoners Aid of the YMCA. Consisting of 112 mostly blank pages, they were issued by the YMCA through the International Red Cross to British Commonwealth POWs, who filled these mini-scrapbooks with jottings, photographs taken in camp, and photographs of sweethearts and loved ones. Ogilvie drew, providing us with this wonderful window onto POW life. The images are accompanied by text written by Robinson and derived from his *Missing, Believed Prisoner* (1944).

41. ★ Rose-Innes, Harry, *The Po Valley Break* (Sandton: Valiant, 1976).

Rose-Innes was born in Port Elizabeth in 1919, went to St John's College in Johannesburg and St Andrew's College in Grahamstown, and enlisted with the 2nd Anti-Aircraft Regiment in 1940. He served in East Africa and then North Africa, where he was captured at Tobruk. Transferred by sea to Italy, he was imprisoned at Prigonieri Campo 60 (Lucca), where his story in *The Po Valley Break* begins. He and two companions, USAF Captain Frank Huff and Corporal Taffy Thomas of the Transvaal Scottish, escaped and evaded capture for a month before they were recaptured near Florence. His second escape attempt took place from a train in the Po River Valley, but he was soon captured by the local carabinieri and sent to a camp outside Munich. He returned to Lucca in 1972.

42. ★ Rosmarin, Ike, *Inside Story* (Cape Town: WJ Flesch & Partners, 1990).

Sergeant Ike Rosmarin was born in 1915 to Jewish immigrants from Lithuania. He grew up on a farm in the Standerton District of the Eastern Transvaal, in Smuts's constituency, and the Rosmarin family seemingly knew the prime minister personally. Ike, then 25, volunteered early in 1940 and was deployed

to North Africa, where he worked as a quartermaster, securing food, petrol and ammunition. He was captured at Tobruk. In Italy he joined a group of 'racketeers', 'who made the most of POW camp opportunities'.[30] *Inside Story* is a 'thin' account, but then perhaps, as he notes, they were his 'lost years'.[31] He complains about his lot throughout (in a way other POWs don't) and apportions blame, upon the South African officers at Tobruk for the confusion (page 11), upon the Italian camp guards, upon the people at home for the high life Italian POWs enjoyed in South Africa (page 33), and upon 'the authorities' for neglecting to prepare South African soldiers for the possibilities arising from their capture (page 35). Part of this, no doubt, relates to his 'guilt complex', of surrendering without a fight, of disappointing his country and his family. He ends with a short statement on the futility of war, of man's 'lust for money and power', and praise for the International Red Cross.[32]

43. Ryan, Allan, *Thru Times and Places* (Johannesburg: Creaprint, 1977).

Thru Times and Places, with its nondescript title and unassuming cover – and how often isn't this the case, is another of the surprises. The book is in two parts. Part One comprises five chapters and presents 'the Global Scene', the big picture of the wider war; while Part Two, of a further eighteen chapters, focuses on Major Allan Ryan's personal story. Classified as a "key man" at the outbreak of war, he was accepted for service in the British Army and sent to the Middle East. Having passed through 'the "Sandhurst" of the Middle East', at Acre, he was commissioned and posted to General Headquarters in Cairo. Before the war was over, he had also served in Jerusalem, with the PAI Force (in Persia and Iraq), and enjoyed a sojourn in the Lebanon and Cyprus. Ryan had collected snippets, cuttings, and photographs all along the way, and maintained a wartime scrapbook. This material formed part of the basis for his narrative, which is dedicated to Major John Penman of the Argyll and Sutherland Highlanders, who died in the war.

44. Ryan, Ray, *Memories of Italy: World War II* (Cape Town: McKerrow Atkins, 1982).

A small Surveyors and Mobile Map printing unit was attached to the US 5th Army. Shortly before the fall of Cassino, this was transferred to the SAEC. Ray Ryan was a member of this section. His pictorial record, 'a blend of the peaceful serenity of the Italian countryside with the stark realities of war', was conceived in Italy during the war. Ryan was a graphic artist before the war. He specialised in photogravure and eventually made his way to Egypt, after remustering to Aerial Photography, and in early 1944 joined the Mobile Map Unit of the SAEC freshly landed in Salerno. Only large cameras for the reproduction of maps were available. He scrounged around for a more convenient camera and film, and with a truck for a darkroom, 'endeavoured to put on film and paper what [he] saw of the country and its people, the art and architecture, quite often of places where the tourists

never go'. He assumed that the war was covered and recorded by the official war correspondents and photographers, and so he focused on the 'pictorial aspect of the country.' Notwithstanding, he took some shots showing the devastation of the war, which he included in this book to give his readers something of the atmosphere of war-torn Italy.[33]

45. ★ Sadler, Mike, *The War Story of Soldier 124280* (Pinetown: 30 Degrees South, 2014).

    Mike Sadler (1922–2002) was born in Lourenço Marques to South African missionary parents. He was educated at Kingswood in Grahamstown and, in 1939, when still 17 years of age, he volunteered for wartime service. He was posted to the Artillery as a signaller and saw action in North Africa. He was captured at Tobruk and, for the remaining years of the war, was interned in Italy and Austria. After the war, he studied at the University of Natal, taught at the Lovedale Mission in Alice, and worked as an administrator in Northern Rhodesia. He immigrated to the United Kingdom in 1977 and finished this book, which focuses on his wartime yeas, in 1999. This *War Story* is another good example of the POW narrative.

46. ★ Scott, Douglas, *My Luck Still Held* (Cape Town: Unie-Volkspers, 1946).

    Sergeant Douglas Scott had been a commercial traveller before the war. He came from Lyndhurst, Johannesburg.[34] His is an early POW narrative and a rather short one (143 pages), but one with colour and texture. Scott served with the 2nd Battalion, the Transvaal Scottish. His account is rich and made more so by the expansive use of his wartime letters to his father. He was captured at Sollum in early January 1942 and rescued a week later when the Halfaya Pass was taken by the 8th Army. Scott learned later that his entire section had been annihilated in the taking of the pass, his captivity having saved him. But his luck would not last. His unit was moved from the Gazala line to Tobruk and he was captured with the garrison on 20 June 1942. He and three mates escaped, but were captured again a few days later. Once in Italy, he encountered 'that wonderful organisation the Red Cross Society' for the first time.[35] He escaped three more times in Italy, the last being successful.

47. Scott Shaw, Charles, *Looking Back With Laughter: The saga of a South African student, soldier and skypilot in Korea* (Pietermaritzburg: Shuter and Shooter, 1973).

    Charles Scott Shaw was raised in Natal and schooled at Hilton College. He joined Toc H and, through this influence, felt a calling to the ministry. He studied first at the Natal University College in Pietermaritzburg and then, in 1936, proceeded to Edinburgh University, where the Second World War interrupted his theological studies. His war divides neatly into two phases. He joined the Church of Scotland's Huts and Mobile Canteens organisation and found himself 'all dressed

up in officer's uniform' on his way to France in March 1940. He was evacuated from France and spent the next two years in Britain. But, responding to a sense of national nostalgia, he returned to the Union in June 1942. The second half of the war sees him in South Africa, as a permanent force chaplain in Cape Town. This is a longitudinal study with a focus on Scott Shaw's service as a chaplain with 2 Squadron in Korea. Notwithstanding, this small book provides near unique insights into the life of a chaplain on the home front.

48. Solomon, Frank H, *And the Years Roll By* (Cape Town: Howard Timmins, 1953).

    This is the life story of one of South Africa's early pilots. Frank Solomon was born in 1889, grew up in Potchefstroom and Johannesburg, and, with his brother, Shirley, enlisted in 1914. They served in German South West Africa with the 8th Intelligence Unit, before leaving in 1915 for Britain to join the Royal Flying Corps. Involved in many schemes, Solomon became a Cape Town city councillor and, when war erupted in 1939, he, his wife and their two sons volunteered and joined the Union Defence Force. Solomon, then aging, served as an administrative officer at the Coastal Air Defence Headquarters in Cape Town, and then as the adjutant at Wingfield Air Station.

49. Stevens, Steve, *Beaufighter Over the Balkans; From the Balkans Air Force to the Berlin Airlift* (Barnsley: Pen & Sword Aviation, 2006).

    Steve Stevens joined the SAAF in 1939/40. Flying instructor. Then in 1942 posted to the RAF's Balkan Air Force. Flew Beaufighters against enemy shipping, tactical objectives, and in support of the partisans, in low-level surprise rocket attacks.

50. ** Stuart, Constance, *Jeep Trek* (London: Spotlight Magazine, 1946).

    Constance Stuart (1914–2000) was born in Cornwall, England, and moved with her parents to South Africa. Having studied photography in London and Munich during the 1930s, and running her own studio in Pretoria, Lt Col EG Malherbe, the DMI, appointed her to cover the war 'up North' for *Libertas*, a South African magazine. She thus became South Africa's first female war correspondent. Sent initially to Egypt to take shots of South African troops and Egyptian locals, she wanted to see something of the war and of the South African part in it at close quarters. This took her to the front lines in North Africa and later Europe, where she was often the only woman in the area.[36] She stayed sometimes with nurses at a casualty clearing station or a field hospital, or with the public relations set that would hang around the Roma, the 'Red Tabs', and other UDF clubs and hostels, and which included Terence McCaw the war artist, Miss Casson of the South African Public Relations, and Captain Frank Rogal of the South African Entertainment Unit. Sampie de Wet (see No. 19) envied Stuart, whom she felt 'had been further forward and seen more of the war than any other South African

woman'.[37] Stuart's interest was predominantly in the ordinary soldier and what he was doing. Her fellow correspondents were impressed with her work and splashed her on the front page of *The Eight Army News* and the *Union Jack*. A photographic exhibition of her work travelled throughout South Africa in 1945, as a tribute to the 6th Division and the US 5th Army. *Jeep trek*, her war diary, which she illustrated profusely, appeared in 1946.[38]

51. ★Van der Post, Sir Laurens, *The Night of the New Moon* (London: Hogarth Press, 1970).

Laurens van der Post (1906–1996) was born in Philippolis in the then Orange River Colony. He worked first as a reporter, in South Africa and then Britain, where he established links with Leonard and Virginia Woolf and others associated with the Bloomsbury Group. He was in Britain when the war broke out. Commissioned, he served with the British Army in East Africa as an intelligence officer and then, after convalescing in Palestine, he was posted to the Dutch East Indies. After the surrender of Java, in April 1942, Van der Post was interned by the Japanese at Sukabumbi and then Bandung. He recounted his POW experiences in three fictional works. *A Bar of Shadow* (1954) is written in the first person and tells of the relationship between a British officer – John Lawrence – and one of the camp guards. *The Seed and the Sower* (1963), also written as a novel, had three parts: the first is the story told in *A Bar of Shadow*; the second is narrated in the third person from the diary of a Major Celliers, a South African officer serving with the ABDA; and the third is Lawrence's account of his brief liaison with a woman prior to his capture by the Japanese. These three interpolated stories are finished by another novel, *The Night of the New Moon* (1970), which was published by the Woolf's Hogarth Press. 'The Night of the New Moon' was the end of the day on which the first of the atom bombs was dropped.

52. ★Van Onselen, Lennox, *A Rhapsody in Blue* (Cape Town: Howard Timmins, 1960).

Rhapsody in Blue is a fascinating book. The first chapters present in very readable form the early history of the South African Police, viewed from the bottom up, before the author inserts himself into the story as the primary protagonist. This is another example of an organisational history that transforms into a personal account. Van Onselen switches to the first person for the narration of his war experiences. He 'volunteered' when his station commander called him in, handed him a pen and told him to 'sign here'.[39] Detailed first as a bodyguard for Smuts, he was posted in May 1940 to Cooper's 6th SA Infantry Brigade, which was being formed exclusively of policemen. He served in North Africa, where the 6th Brigade formed part of the 2nd Division, and was captured at Tobruk in June 1942. His description of Tobruk after capture and the nature of his internment and experience at the hands of the Italians in North Africa and then Italy is

particularly useful. He escaped and reached Switzerland. This should be read with Cooper (see No. 16) and Du Preez (see No. 23).

53. ★ Wolhuter, SG, *The Melancholy State: The Story of a South African Prisoner-of-War* (Cape Town: Howard Timmins, 1984).

Schalk Georg Wolhuter was born in the Northern Cape, educated at SACS and worked at Barclays Bank in Graaff Reinet. He volunteered in 1939. He was the intelligence sergeant with Die Middellandse Regiment when captured at Tobruk in June 1942 and he spent the remainder of his war in captivity, first in North Africa (Derna, Benghazi), and then in Italy and Germany. His observations on POW life, and his captors, as well as of the other prisoners, particularly the Russians, are revealing. This ranks as one of the better POW narratives.

Endnotes

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2 Anon. *Memories of the Middle East, June 1941 to April 1943* (Pietermaritzburg: The Natal Carbineers Trust, n.d.), p 1.

3 Eric Axelson, *A Year in Italy; An Observer with the South African 6th Armoured Division 1944-1945* (Port Elizabeth: E.H. Walton, 2001), p 234.

4 Axelson, *A Year in Italy*, p 237.

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6 Gwen Hewitt, *Womanhood at War; The Story of the SAWAS* (Hewitt, Johannesburg, 1947).

7 BL Bernstein, *The Tide Turned at Alamein; Impressions of the Desert War with the South African Division and the Eighth Army, June, 1941 – January, 1943* (Cape Town: Central News Agency, 1944), Author's Note and back cover.

8 AHG Blamey, *My Verulam Troop; Being a Short Account of the Verulam Troop of the Natal Mounted Rifles and of their Movements and Engagements when they were Seconded to the Durban Light Infantry in the Zulu Rebellion of 1906* (Port Shepstone, 1954).

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10 James Ambrose Brown, *Retreat to Victory; A Springbok's Diary in North Africa: Gazala to El Alamein, 1942* (Johannesburg: Ashanti, 1991).

11 The first volume is Guy Butler, *Karoo Morning*; An Autobiography, 1918-1935 (David Philip, 1981), while the third volume is *A Local habitation; An Autobiography, 1945-90* (New Africa Books, 1991).

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13 Anon. [Norman Clothier], *Libyan Winter: Poems by a Corporal in the First Division* (Cape Town: Central News Agency, 1943).

14 Norman Clothier, *Black Valour: The South African Native Labour Contingent, 1916-1918 and the Sinking of the Mendi* (Pietermaritzburg: University of Natal Press, 1987).

15 Arnold Colenbrander, *Coley's Odyssey* (Eshowe: A.B. Colenbrander, 1994), pp 139 passim.

16 Brig F.W. Cooper, D.S.O., *The Police Brigade; 6 S.A. Infantry Brigade, 1939-45* (Constantia, Cape Times, 1972), p 106.

17 Sampie de Wet, *Shifty in Italy* (n.p.: Modern Printers, 1945), Introduction.

18 De Wet, *Shifty in Italy*, Introduction.

19 KG Dimbleby, *Hostilities Only* (Cape Town: Unie-Volkspers, 1944), p 51.

20 Dr D Dingle, *And the Doctor Recovered* (Cape Town: Howard Timmins, 1959), pp 17, 19.

21 Major WS Douglas, *Regimental History: A Short History of the Cape Town Highlanders, Sept 1939 – Feb 1943* (ER Schindler, Cairo, 1944), preface.

22 Douglas, *Regimental History*, preface.

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24 See, for example, Laurie du Preez, *Inside the Cage* (Cape Town: Struik, 1973), pp 6 passim, 62 passim.

25 Sir De Villiers Graaff, *Div Looks Back; The memoirs of Sir De Villiers Graaff* (Cape Town and Johannesburg: Human & Rousseau, 1994), p 97.

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