

NON-WHITE PERSONNEL IN THE SA ARTILLERY : 1939-1945, AND TODAY¹

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It was soon realised, after the outbreak of war in 1939, that in a country with only a limited white population, the number of volunteer brigades and units envisaged for the war effort could not possibly be maintained without the use of non-white personnel. It was militarily self evident that the lower ranks would have to be swelled with recruits from among the non-white majority and it was accepted that, even if they were enrolled only as non-combatants, the maximum use would have to be made of a revived Cape Corps as drivers and in Pioneer Battalions or other capacities. The Indians, Malays and Black men would also have to be drawn into the forces for the thousand and one tasks they were fully capable of performing.

On 8 May 1940 the Cape Corps, whose record of service had been broken more than once by disbandment, was reformed under Col. C.N. Hoy, who had commanded one of its battalions which had fought with distinction in World War I.

A Native Labour Corps was established on 1 June 1940 to provide officers' servants, mess waiters, hygiene personnel and specially trained personnel for use in the SAAF and in Engineer units. The Corps was soon re-designated, Native Military Guards Brigade, under Lt-Col. B.W. Martin, and still later, the Native Military Corps, as one of the components of the Non-European Army Services, of which Senator E.C. Stubbs was appointed Director on 29 July.²

By the end of June 1940 no fewer than 3400 white recruits had passed through the Artillery Recruit Training Depot at Potchefstroom and the flow was beginning to ease up.³ The order had already been given by the Chief of the General Staff (CGS) to recruit 1000 Zulu to serve as guards at vital military installations and on 16 August he issued instructions that recruiting was to proceed without limit for the Cape Corps for motor transport (MT) and pioneer duties, for the Indian Services Corps for

MT drivers, cooks and waiters duties and for 4000 Native Military Police and 4000 Native Military "levies" as batmen, MT drivers, cooks, waiters and guards.⁴

Many of these were to replace white men who could thus be released to serve as combatants. A complete reorganisation of the Field Artillery took place in January 1941, when regiments came into being to replace the former artillery brigades, thus reducing the number of units in existence, but nevertheless by March 1941 the Union Defence Force was beginning to scrape the barrel for personnel. All battalions of 3rd S A Division and all unbrigaded battalions were reduced to two rifle companies⁵ and intensified recruiting efforts were made. No amount of encouragement nor exhortations, however, could produce non-existent volunteers.

On 14 April 1941 a conference was held in Pretoria, to which Maj-Gen. George Brink had returned from Kenya on the eve of 1st S A Division's departure from Abyssinia to the Middle East. With realistic insight he felt that the existing rate of recruiting in South Africa was insufficient to maintain two divisions in the field. The CGS disagreed, and stated that units would have to be "diluted" as far as possible with non-white personnel and, in the last resort

¹ All archival material referred to in the following notes refer to material in the custody of Directorate Documentation Service, SANDF.

² H.J. Martin and N. Orpen : *South Africa at War* (Cape Town 1979), pp.59-60.

³ N. Orpen : *East African and Abyssinian Campaigns* (Cape Town 1968), p.13.

⁴ *South Africa at War*, p.73.

⁵ *Ibid*, p.98.

one division would be broken up to keep the other up to strength.⁶ It was decided that priority would be given to the South African Air Force and to the SA Engineer Corps - although the Air Force had on their own initiative recruited 27 black Permanent Force personnel before the war had commenced⁷ followed by the SA Artillery and thence "T" Services.

In the first half of 1941 only 363 men had been recruited into the SA Artillery. A steady drain on the existing manpower resources was caused by exemptions, transfers and discharges and this shortage was not made good by the new recruits.⁸

As far back as October 1940 a board of officers had sat in Potchefstroom to consider the possible use of coloured and black personnel in artillery units. The board included the two officers - Lt-Col. H.McA. Richards, MC, (President of the Board) and Lt-Col. C.L. de Wet Du Toit (Officer Commanding Artillery School) - who were afterwards to be appointed CRA's of 1st and 2nd South African Divisions in the Middle East and their views on the subject, therefore, held more than ordinary interest. It was agreed that while Cape Corps or black personnel could be used for driving non-fighting vehicles in the Field units, including ammunition vehicles, and could be utilised for driving all vehicles - except staff cars and ammunition vehicles - in Medium units, they were not considered suitable as drivers in anti-tank units. Moreover, the Board felt that Cape Corps personnel were unsuitable for training as gunners as "they lacked the moral fibre and education necessary for the specialised nature of artillery work".

The President of the Board "had had considerable experience of the training of native troops in India and he considered that it would be more reasonable to train tribal natives as infantrymen, thus releasing infantry personnel for transfer to the artillery". In India, he pointed out, "two years was the allotted time for the training of a native as a gunner".⁹

The DFAA stressed this point to the Deputy Chief of the General Staff but owing to the acute shortage of white manpower, the latter

instructed DFAA on 27 January 1941 to prepare Establishment Tables on a diluted basis. Two Tables were prepared, No 1 for existing regiments, but using black or coloured drivers and No 2 for "diluted" regiments where non-white personnel would fill all possible posts except those of officers, WO's or NCO's. A "diluted" regiment would require only 260 white personnel, excluding officers and attached troops but the advantage of such a unit, together with the use of coloured or black soldiers as drivers in existing units, was the release of white men for other combatant posts.¹⁰

The CGS's staff officer, Col. C.G. Ross, in writing to Brig-Gen. Theron in Cairo on 24 February 1941 on the reorganisation of South African field artillery units on to the British regimental basis noted that some 1000 other ranks were needed for the 1st and 2nd Division's field artillery brigades - without any 10 per cent reserve. There were available in South Africa only 1st Heavy Battery SAHA, the Mortar Pack Battery and the remnants of the field brigades at Potchefstroom and at the Reservists Depot - about 730 men in all. The Artillery Reinforcement Depot in East Africa was already about 130 men short.¹¹

Notwithstanding that the principle of "dilution" of artillery units with non-white personnel had been accepted, the serious shortage of manpower in South Africa made it impossible to supplement the artillery units of 1st S A Division after arrival in Egypt from East Africa by more than two Troops,¹² of white personnel and non-white drivers, and the consequence was that 1st Medium Brigade, SAA (SAHA), which was originally destined to become 1 Medium Regiment SAA (SAHA), had to be sacrificed to provide reinforcements for the three field regiments, - 3rd, 4th and 7th Field Regiments - which had fought as brigades in Abyssinia and were then being re-organised in Egypt.¹³ 1st Field Battery SAA (CFA) which had fought as an independent battery in East Africa did not rejoin its parent regiment as promised but was included in 7th Field Regiment.

As did 3rd and 7th Field Brigades, 4th Field Brigade converted to the new regimental estab-

⁶ *Ibid.*, p.100.

⁷ Union War History Committee manuscripts (hereafter UWH Civil), Box 159, Narep Unfo 13, p.126.

⁸ Archives of the Field Artillery Gp 1, Box 57, Historical Record Field Army Artillery, Enc 8910.

⁹ Major E.Millin : *Gunning Through Africa* (unpublished manuscript), pp.137-8; and Historical Record Field Army Artillery, Enc 8888.

¹⁰ Historical Record Field Army Artillery, Enc 8887.

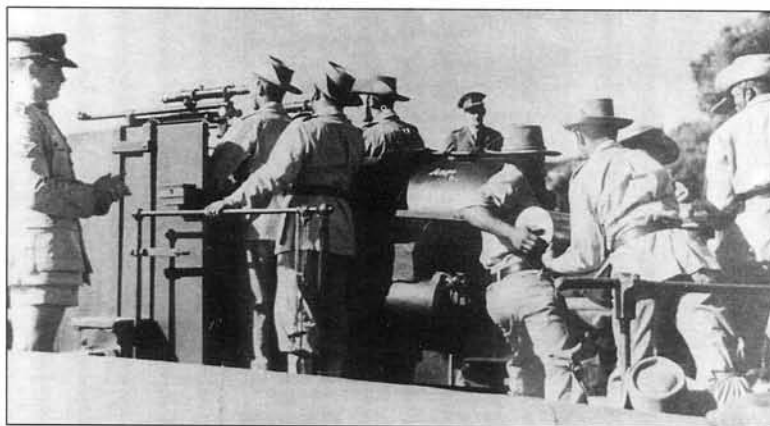
¹¹ *South Africa at War*, p.105.

¹² These two troops were formed by disbanding the Mortar Pack Battery then in the Union and transferring the personnel to 4th Field Regiment.

¹³ *Gunning Through Africa*, p.134.

ishment in the desert, also on the basis of only two batteries, and the unit moved up to Mersa Matruh on 31 July 1941 where it continued training and equipping.

A new establishment for field regiments was, however, adopted on 9 October which involved a total of 813 personnel, including non-white members and on its two-battery basis 4th Field Regiment was at this stage 47 white and 12 coloured drivers below strength. The other two units were also under strength.



The Cape Corps manned the coastal defences of South Africa, after White gunners had been withdrawn for service in the field artillery in North Africa. (SADF Archives 811000396)

The CGS, Col. Ross also noted in his letter, had ordered that all men under 35 years of age in Coast Artillery units should be transferred immediately to field artillery - although this would not happen for months because of the problem of their replacement.

The maximum possible dilution with non-whites was to be effected, he said, and an experiment was to be tried with a detachment of women manning lighter equipments, such as the 18-pounder coast defence gun. Little did the airman CGS realise it but this weapon had the most ear-splitting report of all those in South Africa's mixed arsenal. In any event the two armoured trains, which carried such guns, had already been organised on an ACF basis and moved to Mapleton as part of the Railways and Harbours Brigade.¹⁴

To alleviate the problem of manpower, Gen. Smuts had during February decided to make the fullest use of Cape Corps personnel in the Coast Artillery organisation. In Examination Batteries, in particular, gun crews and observation post staff spent all their time - day and night - together, and special accommodation would be required as a result of these "dilution" arrangements.¹⁵

Col. A.H.K. Jopp, Director of Coast and A A Artillery, was instructed to accept Cape Corps men for training as coast gunners and soon a unique unit was in being on Robben Island.

Specially selected men, the pick of the coloured community were recruited from country

towns and sent to Robben Island, where they were accommodated in a tented camp not far from Murray Harbour, and soon 2000 coloured gunners began training at what became, on 2 May 1941, the Anti-Aircraft Training and Reserve Depot - a source of manpower for both coast and anti-aircraft units.¹⁶

Insofar as the field artillery was concerned the CGS had decided in January that the establishment of diluted regiments should be commenced immediately. DFAAT was told of this decision on 29 January 1941.

As a result an instruction was sent by the Adjutant-General on 25 February 1941 to Director General Training and Organisation, to OC's Natal, and Voortrekkerhoogte and Transvaal Commands and Director NEAS asking them to "kindly note that steps are being taken to establish, with effect from 1 February 1941, the undermentioned Regiments as volunteer units of the Active Citizen Force ...".

21st Field Regiment (V) SAA
22nd Field Regiment (V) SAA
23rd Field Regiment (V) SAA

The secret instruction further notified the recipients that the regiments would "be composed mainly of natives", with white NCO's and specialists.¹⁷ Early in February Director General Training and Organisation notified DNEAS that there would be accommodation at Potchefstroom for two diluted regiments, once 2nd Division artillery regiments had departed for Egypt.¹⁸ Three days later, on 7 February,

¹⁴ South Africa at War, p.105.

¹⁵ Ibid, p.105.

¹⁶ Ibid, p.107.

¹⁷ Archives of the Deputy Chief of Staff (hereafter DCS/DCGS), Box 78, files O(M)17 and O(M)5, enc 50.

¹⁸ UH Civil, Box 159, Narep Unfo 13, p.92.

DFAA wrote to OC Artillery Training Centre and to OC Artillery School advising them that it was intended to make an immediate start with the recruitment and training of 21st Field Regiment and that DNEAS was detailing 40 attested Zulus in the NMC who had already received sufficient recruit training, for transfer to the SAA to form the nucleus of the new regiment.

OC ATC and OC Artillery School were instructed to select from the units under their command, 5 suitable NCO's - preferably one WO and 4 NCO's - with a good knowledge of Zulu to train the group in gun drill.¹⁹

Major G.M. Franklin, a Staff Officer at Artillery Training Centre, had been selected to go into the question of using black men as gunners and in consultation with others it was felt that the Zulu would provide the best material "because of their warlike history". The CGS, however, did not insist on Zulu personnel being recruited. He seemed to feel that the Basuto would be more suitable.²⁰

Gerald Franklin and Col. H.B. Kloppers (Director Intelligence and Armoured Fighting Vehicle Training) flew to Natal where a meeting was held at Eshowe on 5 February attended by OC Natal Command, Brig. J. Daniel, Col. E.T. Stubbs (D NEAS), Major Babor (ADW), Major E.B. Foxon (SO, NEAS), Mr Rawlinson (Native Commissioner) and Messrs Wichart and Simmonds, Town Clerk and Town Engineer respectively.

At the meeting Col. Stubbs mentioned that "the Transvaal native had made a tremendous response (to recruiting) and had volunteered in their thousands", but the response from the Zulu had been most disappointing, despite a recruiting drive by a Zulu Platoon.

It was felt that if a camp was established at Eshowe the response would improve but Mr Rawlinson stated that the Zulu, through their Paramount Chief, Msheyni Ka Kinizulu, had said that they would not offer themselves for service unless they were armed. They had been armed before and they wanted to be armed again. Other responsible Zulu had said that it was a white man's war and they wanted nothing to do with it. Rawlinson with his long

experience of the Zulu people, was baffled by their attitude.

It was, however, recommended that a tented camp be established and if recruiting was successful more permanent arrangements be considered.²¹

A few days after the meeting Major Franklin, who spoke Zulu, was sent by air to East Africa to study "the Native Artillery Regiments and Organisation there,"²² - presumably the artillery units of 11th and 12th African Divisions - and on the same day the Chief Native Commissioner, in detailing certain difficulties in recruiting Zulu's recommended that if a nucleus of 50 serving Zulu be drafted to Eshowe, with the two minor chiefs presently serving, others would soon follow. He also suggested that a demonstration of artillery fire be given to the Zulu in the Eshowe and Melmont area by a diluted section.

Director General Training and Organisation at this stage began to seek trained gunners who were suitable for promotion to NCO rank in the diluted regiments and who could also speak one or more of the native languages.²³

Prior to the establishment of the camp, Major Franklin, who had been appointed Officer Commanding the new unit, visited various training centres together with Major Foxon, and selected 81 partly trained Zulu who were concentrated at the Training School, Rietfontein No 2, on 27 February 1941, where they commenced intensive training in gun drill - under the Sergeant Major and four NCO's who had earlier volunteered for such temporary duty - on four 13-pounder guns and portés sent from Potchefstroom, pending the establishment of the camp at Eshowe.²⁴ Arrangements were made with the Director of Non-European Army Services to promote further recruiting of Zulus but the response was not good and it was, therefore, decided to move the unit to Zululand. Forty NCO's were required for permanent posts in the diluted regiments and it is evident from a letter written by Director Field Army Artillery on 9 April 1941 that efforts to obtain this number had resulted in 40 Staff Sergeants from NEAS volunteering to transfer to the Artillery. DFAA was faced with a dilemma as he needed all forty but did not have sufficient S/

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, p.93.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, p.92.

²¹ *Ibid.*, p.94.

²² *Ibid.*, p.95.

²³ *Ibid.*

²⁴ *Ibid.*, p.96.

Sgt posts in 21st Field Regiment. Following representations to Deputy Chief of Staff, however, the latter agreed that some could be held against the WO's and S/Sgt's posts in 22nd and 23rd Field Regiments, which had been established, but not yet formed.

As it turned out 7 of the 43 prospective gunners - 3 were from 3rd SA Division - who commenced the six weeks course at the Artillery School on 3 March, only 23 qualified, insufficient for even one regiment!²⁵

Every attempt was thereafter made to obtain sufficient persons suitable for NCO rank in the diluted regiments, to no avail. Even 1st and 2nd Divisions were approached and Director of War Recruiting was asked to specially recruit such men for a second special 8 week course at the Artillery School, commencing on 5 May 1941.

Not one single suitable recruit had been obtained by end April and the continuing acute shortage of white personnel led to a modification in the policy in regard to the employment of Cape Corps personnel in artillery units.²⁶ On 16 May 1941 instructions were issued for them to be trained as gunners. Accommodation was provided in one of the tented camps at Potchefstroom and 22nd Field Regiment came into being as a training regiment for Cape Corps personnel with a certain number of officers and non-commissioned officers from other units being posted to it. Training actually began at the end of May, 1941, under Lt-Col. W.M.P. Johnston, DSO, VD, with Major R.H.E. Murray, DSO, as Second-in-Command. The Cape Corps personnel showed remarkable aptitude in their training as gunners and some became proficient in laying and signalling with a few later specialising as Observation Post Assistants.

This success led to an extension of the policy to use Cape Corps personnel as gunners and 6th Field Regiment, then stationed at Carolina, was augmented by 100 members of the Cape Corps, for training in this role.

23rd Field Regiment was eventually formed from European personnel specially released for the purpose by the Witwatersrand Mines, and this unit, together with 6th and 22nd Field Regiments, - the latter with entirely new "white" per-

sonnel - eventually furnished the field artillery for 6th South African Armoured Division.²⁷

Meanwhile, 500 members of the NMC had been concentrated at Potchefstroom on 20 January, 1941, to be trained as drivers where a training depot, known as Artillery Native Drivers Training Depot, was formed under Capt. C.O. Howes. Twenty percent of these men were found to be unsuitable and were returned to DNEAS. Nor were the balance able to cope with the tests laid down for white drivers and on 7 March, 1941, the Quartermaster General agreed to a modified test for non-white drivers. Many qualified and were thereafter drafted to Egypt to bring 3rd, 4th and 7th Field Regiments up to strength.²⁸

The dilution policy resulted in the first 50 black drivers reporting to 6th Field Regiment for duty on 6 May, 1941, and this enabled that unit to release 75 white other ranks for 2nd SA Division artillery units.²⁹

According to a report written by Capt. George Sutter, Adjutant, 21st Field Regiment, to DFAAT³⁰ on 5 August 1941, the camp at Eshowe was opened at the beginning of May with a Zulu complement of 76 men and training proceeded immediately, under white officers, WO's NCO's and technical personnel.

Almost as soon as they arrived at Eshowe Major Franklin and Capt. Handley visited the acting Paramount Chief who agreed to cooperate in the matter of recruiting and their first recruitment meeting was held at Eshowe about mid-June. Eighteen recruits had been attested by that time but the instruction to Capt. Handley on 15 June to engage in recruiting as a detached duty marked the real beginning of efforts to attest Zulu gunners.

Many difficulties arose and it was soon quite obvious that a serious and successful bid had been made to imprint an anti-war perception in the minds of the Zulu by persons or organisations opposed to the war policies of the Government. Missionaries, Civil Servants and farmers were singled out in a report which stated, however, that it was difficult to pin point any single instance or individual.

Bearing in mind, no doubt, the Chief Native Commissioner's suggestion of awakening inter-

²⁵ Ibid, pp.96-97.

²⁶ Ibid, pp.97-98.

²⁷ Gunning Through Africa, pp.138-9.

²⁸ Ibid, p.138.

²⁹ Ibid, p.264.

³⁰ The title "Director Field Army Artillery" was altered with effect 3.5.1941 to "Director Field Army Artillery Training".

est among the Zulu people, 21st Field Regiment gave a demonstration shoot on 7 June at Eshowe and a week later a further demonstration of "field firing" using blank ammunition was given at Pietermaritzburg.

"It was hoped," so a report said, "that by treating the population to the thrilling spectacle of gun-fire some of them will be imbued with the spirit required to serve the guns".³¹

Early in July Lt-Col. Lugg of the NMC also started recruiting in Zululand and between he, Capt. Handley and Lt. Bang (assistant to Lt-Col. Lugg) some seventy meetings were addressed. Questions, which in the opinion of those closely and intimately acquainted with the Zulu over many years, could never emanate from the Zulu mind, were asked everywhere, and in order to combat the obvious subversion which had taken place no opportunity was missed to talk to the people, Capt. Handley and NCO's of 21st Field Regiment attending tax collecting, cattle dipping and sundry other meetings.

By 5 August 225 men had been enlisted and exactly one month later the unit was overstrength in non-white personnel on No 2 establishment with 443 attested Zulu gunners.

On Robben Island, the hand-picked Cape Corps men for coast and anti-aircraft artillery had received a very thorough basic training with officers under whom they would eventually serve, and they were inspired with a keenness which showed itself in September 1941 when the first draft of so-called gunners (who had never handled a rifle, nor seen a Bofors gun as there were none in South Africa) were ferried to the mainland to entrain for Durban and take ship for the Middle East. Accompanying them were three officers and half a dozen White NCO's, all routed to 1st Light Anti-Aircraft Regiment, which was re-equipping with Bofors at Garawi outside Cairo at the time. The main speculation at Cape Town was whether the OC Draft, would even get as far as Durban with a full 400 men of the Cape Corps. Yet when the first roll call was taken on board ship after hurried embarkation, it was found that in fact he had not got 400 men, but 401!

Within a few weeks of reporting to 1st Light Anti-Aircraft Regiment a number of these eager coloured men had been killed or taken prisoner at Sidi Rezeg where, with captured Italian ri-

files, they had had to face Afrika Korps tanks.

Not all the draft could be absorbed by 1st Light Anti-Aircraft Regiment and understandable discontent immediately arose. The men, who considered themselves gunners, were simply separated from their own officers by SA Base authorities and marched into the Non-European Army Services camp, where they felt lost and angered among a crowd of others whom they regarded as total strangers. Luckily, with the arrival of batteries from 2nd Light Anti-Aircraft Regiment to re-equip, the problem was resolved before it grew too serious.

Before 1941 had ended almost all the rest of the draft had joined 2nd SA Division's light anti-aircraft regiment in time for the battle of Bardia, and another 300 had left Robben Island to swell the numbers of Cape Corps men in the two anti-aircraft regiments, both of which saw action against the Luftwaffe and Regia Aeronautica in the North African desert. Not only in capacities indicated on the official establishment tables, but also as twin Lewis gunners, in Bofors detachments and even in manning captured German '88's, these carefully selected Cape Corps men proved their ability and courage many times over during succeeding months.³² In all, a total of 732 Non-European gunners served on the establishment of these two units.³³

At the very time when these men, kept together in significant numbers in fighting units, were proving their mettle, the Adjutant-General on 8 October 1941 told a Staff Conference at DHQ that Col. Hoy was complaining at the loss of identity by members of the Cape Corps. His charter from Gen. Smuts, he contended, was to recruit a Cape Corps, but it was now being broken up, with consequent loss of pride and esprit de corps. Perhaps justifiably in cases such as the light anti-aircraft regiments, at least one of the anti-tank regiments and some other units. Col. Hoy's objections were overruled, as DHQ considered that the men concerned would welcome the idea of calling themselves members of the SAA, SAEC and SAAF. In fact, of course, they were seldom afforded the opportunity, for no matter with what unit they might be serving - and even after death on the battlefield - members of the Cape Corps, the Indian and Malay Corps and the Native Military Corps were distinguished by their badges, their separate lists and by what Lt-Col. Morris in July 1941 termed the "great

³¹ Historical Record FAA, Enc 8890.

³² South Africa at War, pp.122-3.

³³ Major E. Millin : History of AA Organisation UDF 1939-1944 (unpublished manuscript), p.55.

disparity between their emoluments and those paid to Europeans".³⁴

That success could also be achieved with the Native Military Corps under the right leadership was clear from a report submitted by the OC, 21st Field Regiment, to the Director, Field Army Artillery Training, Col. Adler, during August. Recruiting and training Zulu for artillery regiments, the OC claimed, was a success. If the experiment were to be continued, authority was sought to recruit 200 Zulu over the regiment's establishment, and to declare the camp at Eshowe, a semi-permanent station, so that essential works could be undertaken.

The Zulu gunners had considerably impressed 4th Heavy Battery spectators from The Bluff when 21st Field Regiment - known to the Zulu as "m 'pumalanga" - provided a Troop to fire the Royal Salute on the arrival of the King of the Hellenes at Durban. When Chiefs and a number of the Native Military Corps attended a proof shoot of the first 9.2-inch guns at Da Gama Battery, loud cries of "This is man's work!" signalled the Black men's enthusiasm. Soon 100 or more of them were in training on The Bluff under Zulu-speaking white NCO's in a further experiment, in which the Zulu's fine physique showed them to be well fitted for the heavy work of manning hand-loaded 6-inch guns.³⁵

In 6th Field Regiment the fifty original NMC drivers were transferred to Potchefstroom on 1 August 1941 and were replaced by 150 other ranks from the Cape Corps, 50 of whom were selected as motor transport drivers and 100 of whom commenced training as gunners. This permitted the release from 6th Field Regiment of 41 artisans for the SAEC, and on 27 August 1941 two officers and 48 other ranks were also drafted to Sonderwater for transfer as reinforcements to 1st S A Division artillery units in Egypt.

On 4 September 1941 "B" Battery received four 25-pounder guns and these were used in manoeuvres at Barberton when "B" and "C" Batteries combined in exercises with 7th South African Infantry Brigade. On 21 September 1941 the white establishment was further reduced when five officers and 62 other ranks were sent to Sonderwater for transfer to the Middle East, but to an extent these were replaced by 41 other ranks from Potchefstroom.

In mid-September DFAAT reported that it was too early to indicate when non-white gunners would be available as reinforcements but he was able to say that the Cape Corps men would take far less time to train than was anticipated. By the middle of the following month, however, arrangements were being made for 200 Cape Corps details to be despatched to artillery regiments in the Middle East.

So well had the matter of recruiting Zulu for the "diluted" regiments progressed by this time that the Deputy Chief of Staff in mid-October gave authority for the establishment of the "Non-European Artillery Training Depot (NMC) at Eshowe with tentage sufficient for four officers, a Warrant Officer, 14 NCO's, 8 white other ranks and 200 black gunners.³⁶

At about the same time it was decided by the CGS as a matter of policy that Cape Corps drivers would be posted to 1st S A Division, whilst NMC drivers, who were to be provided by the Eshowe Depot, would be allocated to 2nd S A Division. Earlier, the CGS had ruled that field artillery units of 1st and 2nd Divisions were to be diluted with Cape Corps personnel and the three field regiments of 3rd Division with Zulu. Both 6th and 22nd Field Regiments were at that time training Cape Corps gunners and the plan was to eventually replace them with black gunners.³⁷

When 6th Field Regiment was formally placed on No 2 War Establishment, ie with four Cape Corps gun numbers on each gun, further white personnel were transferred to 21st Field Regiment at Eshowe, and 140 Cape Corps personnel were taken on strength by 6th Field Regiment, from 22nd Field Regiment. This was early in November, 1941, and training was accelerated with a view to getting the regiment ready for a move at short notice. But training was again dislocated when, on 15 November 1941, orders were received for four officers and 60 other ranks to be transferred to Potchefstroom to make up a draft for service in the Middle East. Shortage in personnel was made up a few days later by the arrival of 36 additional Cape Corps drivers from the M T Depot, Voortrekkerhoogte, and 72 from the Cape Corps Depot, Kimberley.³⁸

Despite every effort made by DFAAT to ensure that the dilution policy was successful the

³⁴ South Africa at War, p.123.

³⁵ Ibid, pp.123-4.

³⁶ UWH Civil, Box 159, Narep Unfo 13, pp.101-2.

³⁷ Ibid, p.102.

³⁸ Gunning Through Africa, p.265.

standard of recruits from the ranks of the Cape Corps and the NMC was not as good as required and he admitted in a letter to DCS in December 1941 that he thought the dilution policy a mistake. One of the problems was the longer training period required and what was considered more important - Cape Corps and NMC could not be mixed in the same unit.³⁹

Normal training in 6th Field Regiment was, in fact, dislocated on 6 December 1941 by a riot at the Carolina Location between Cape Corps and NMC personnel and the next day 200 Cape Corps personnel broke camp to avenge themselves on blacks in the location. The arrival of Provost staff from Piet Retief established order and training was resumed. But because of the unrest among the Cape Corps men, none of the batteries was sent out on extensive manoeuvres for the rest of the month, it being felt that these men could be better controlled in camp.⁴⁰

There appears from available records to have been some animosity in the matter of recruiting coloured and black personnel as Director. Non-European Army Services seems to have considered it entirely his preserve.

DFAAT, apparently exasperated at the fact that while he had been ordered to dilute regiments, DNEAS was unable to supply the right kind of recruit, commenced his own recruitment campaign which unfortunately further exacerbated the situation, to the extent that DNEAS again demanded that one of his officers be attached to each diluted unit to act as a "liaison" officer. DFAAT strongly objected to what he termed divided command and eventually a procedure was agreed whereby a recruit was medically examined, enrolled, equipped and absorbed by an artillery unit, as an attached member of the Cape Corps or NMC, with a force number allotted from a block given by the Cape Corps or NMC to the Gunners for that purpose.⁴¹ This system had worked well for over a year with the Zulu members being recruited at Eshowe.

Recruiting problems with Cape Corps personnel continued, however, and in January 1942 DFAAT asked OC Cape Corps for 200 Cape Corps details for training as artillerymen at the "Cape Coloured Artillery Training Depot, Potchefstroom" and later said that "as you are unable to supply these details, the Recruiting Offices at Port Elizabeth and Cape Town have

been requested to issue an appeal for Cape Coloured recruits who wish to be trained as Artillerymen". Although 200 were required, 400 would be accepted, said DFAAT.

A partial solution to the problems experienced with DNEAS appears to have been reached the following month when DFAAT wrote to OC 22nd Field Regiment instructing him that in future "all requisitions for N.E. personnel" were to be submitted to his office and not to DNEAS. It was also agreed with DNEAS, on instructions from the Deputy Chief of the General Staff, that units would thereafter only carry a 10% surplus of personnel and that the Cape Corps and NMC wings of the Artillery Training Depot would carry all other surplus personnel.

Only two days later, on 18 February 1942, the newly instituted arrangements were again thrown into discord when OC Cape Corps revealed that the Gunners had by some means received special permission to seek coloured recruits from the Potchefstroom area.⁴² Colonel Hoy was astounded and wrote to Major Block, OC FAAD (V) SAA informing him that he would protest strongly to his Directorate - ie DNEAS - against Major Block's actions. The Major was unrepentant and replied to the effect that he was acting under orders.

Once again the troubled NEAS Directorate had patiently to explain that if coloured and black personnel were not attested through their Depot the men, "through the incompetency of the recruiting done there", (Potchefstroom), would not be paid and their allottees would receive no allotment because their attestation forms had to be "fixed up as they are required by the A.G. (W.R.) and Paymaster General before they could be taken on strength".⁴³

It was almost as though DNEAS was running his own private army!

Apparently OC's Units were not trusted by DNEAS to be able to look after Cape Corps men and at the end of February 1942 NEAS Administrative Officers were attached to certain artillery units so that "they could ensure the continuation, as far as changed circumstances permitted, of the treatment to which NEAS troops had become accustomed during their period of training," and to give OC's Units "the opportunity of availing themselves of the advice of NEAS Officers and of their assistance

³⁹ UWH Civil, Box 159, Narep Unfo 13, p.104.

⁴⁰ *Gunning Through Africa*, p.265.

⁴¹ UWH Civil, Box 159, Narep Unfo 13, p.105.

⁴² *Ibid*, pp.109-110.

⁴³ *Ibid*, p.110.

in matters appertaining to their Non-European Troops”.

The NEAS officers were also there to maintain “a system of NEAS representation throughout the service whereby policy may be co-ordinated and standardised and the welfare of Non-European troops be furthered by an exchange of problems and experience gained ...” They looked after leave, pay, allowances, advances, entertainment interpretations, translations and general welfare but were also required to undertake any regimental duties that OC's Units desired.

These officers did apparently perform good work but one wonders why DNEAS had to hold onto troops that were transferred from his Corps to the S A Artillery and other units, when it had been decided by the Prime Minister and Minister of Defence, General J.C. Smuts, as the result of a staff conference held on 15 October 1941, that Cape Corps personnel “transferred to the Air Force, Engineers and Artillery should become members of those units and wear the appropriate badges”.⁴⁴

One other problem concerned DFAAT at about this time. He pointed out to DCS in mid-January that the names of certain “Gunners” appearing in casualty lists, were those of “Non-Europeans”, and that as no member of a gun crew could be considered a non-combatant he repeated an earlier request for small arms training of Cape Corps and NMC members posted to artillery units.⁴⁵ The previous November DFAAT had written to DCS pointing out that gunner units in the North African desert had to be prepared for all-round defence and that Gunners had to be trained in minor infantry tactics to a far greater extent than previously.

If Cape Corps and NMC gunners, he said, were not to be armed - as was government policy - additional white infantry units had to be allocated for the defence of the dispersed artillery wagon lines which were vulnerable to attack, taking up as they normally did, about a half square mile with 37 vehicles and “only 37 (armed) whites and 37 (unarmed) NE's ...” to defend it.

There was much argument but Col. Adler stuck to his guns and eventually DCS agreed in late November that Cape Corps and NMC person-

nel could receive musketry training - but that they would NOT be armed in the Union, and finally, DCS agreed in April 1942 that DFAAT could train black troops in LMG.⁴⁶

By 3 March 1942, 6th Field Regiment had 286 white personnel - including officers - on strength and 457 coloured gunners, but despite this apparent healthy situation the requirement for non-white personnel in the S.A. Artillery was so great that DCS on 20 March 1942 altered his early instruction and gave the artillery “priority over its competitors in obtaining Non-European personnel”.⁴⁷

Not only DFAAT, but OC's Units, tried repeatedly to secure proficiency or specialist pay for the non-white men under their command where they filled posts which, when normally held by white Gunners, would entitle them to such pay, or alternatively for extra duty pay for the specialists as well as for those non-white men for whom there was no scope for promotion, ie “hygiene personnel, trumpeters and limber gunners”.

GOC 3 Armoured Division Group added his voice to the requests for such pay as did the OC's of the Cape Corps and NMC Wings of the Field Army Artillery Depot (V) SAA at Potchefstroom and Eshowe, to no avail. All that was being asked for was a matter of four pence to six pence (about 3 to 5 cents), per day, lower than the “white” scale of nine pence to one shilling (7½ to 10 cents) per day according to the post occupied, but proficiency pay was never granted to non-whites serving in artillery units.⁴⁸

Inevitably, there was some objection on the part of those white Gunners - who had strong views on segregation - to serve alongside Cape Corps or NMC men, especially as gun detachments were mixed, but happily these instances were very few and the Adjutant General's views were firm, those who objected would stay where they were - after all, there was a war to fight!⁴⁹

The Anti-Aircraft Training and Reserve Depot on Robben Island - later at Ottery near Wynberg, Cape - had originally been formed to provide non-white personnel for Coast Artillery and for units in the field but policy had been somewhat changed. While non-White gun

⁴⁴ *Ibid*, p.89.

⁴⁵ *Ibid*, pp.106-7.

⁴⁶ *Ibid*, p.104.

⁴⁷ *Ibid*, p.112.

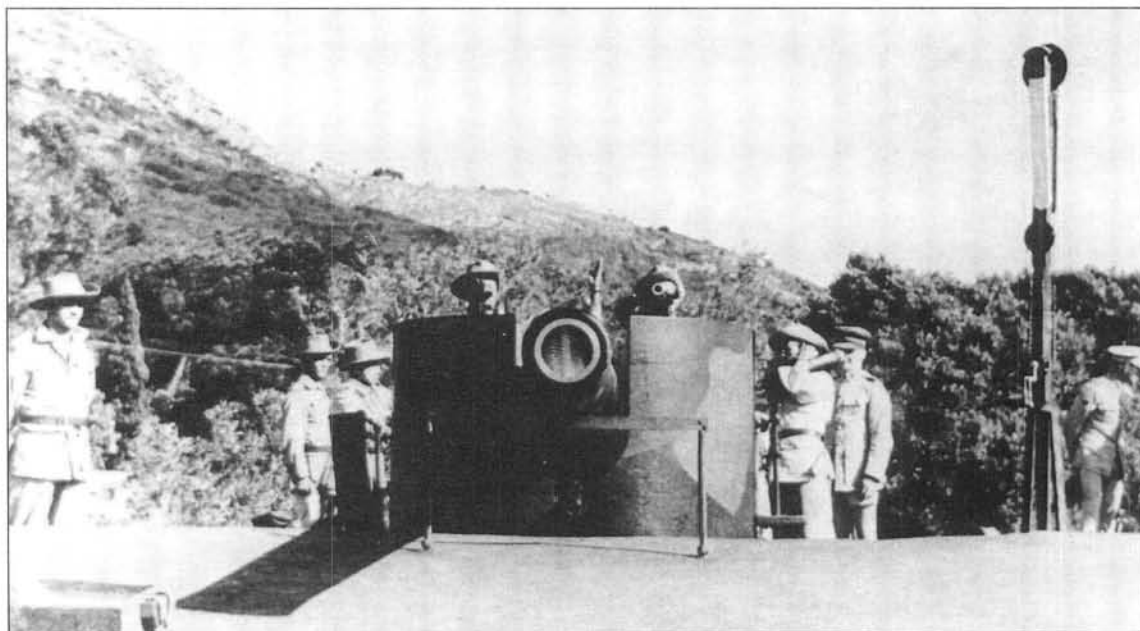
⁴⁸ *Ibid*, pp.114-6.

⁴⁹ *Ibid*, pp.116-7.

numbers were not then being used in field artillery units they were being increasingly used in Coast Artillery units.⁵⁰

Alarms of Japanese action against harbour in-

Island - was received from Lt-Col. C.T. Howie, who had commanded 2nd Light Anti-Aircraft Regiment in the desert and who was later taken prisoner of war at Tobruk in June 1942, together with most of his regiment. Lt-Col.



The Cape Corps manning a six inch coastal gun at Noah's Ark Battery, Simonstown, c.1944. (SADF Archives 831000179)

stallations in the Union added urgency to moves to protect the ports and six anti-aircraft units were formed for this purpose in mid-July 1942 and placed under a Commander Fortress Air Defences, at each port. The 21st⁵¹ was to be at Saldanha Bay, the 22nd at Cape Town, 23rd at Simonstown, 24th at Port Elizabeth, 25th at East London and the 26th Anti-Aircraft Regiment at Durban, each regiment consisting of one heavy battery, a light battery and a searchlight battery - except at Saldanha. Originally, the heavy guns were to be manned by the artillery, the instruments and searchlights by the WAAF and the light guns (Bofors) by men of the SAAF, with non-Whites constituting a quarter of the gun detachments as well as serving as drivers, batmen and orderlies,⁵² but later, SAA personnel were used as instructors only.

Some weeks after they were formed the anti-aircraft units were renumbered 50 to 55 instead of 21 to 26, to avoid confusion with similarly numbered SAAF squadrons.⁵³

Meanwhile, like a voice from the grave, tribute to the excellent work done by the Cape Corps - who had been trained as gunners on Robben

C.L. Parking, OC, 2nd Anti-Tank Regiment also placed on record the excellent work, behaviour and conduct of the non-white personnel who had served in his regiment before being posted to the NEAS Wing at Garawi in August 1942.

Brig. Kenneth Ray - who was soon to become Chief Engineer, 8th Army - in a letter to Maj-Gen. Theron agreed that in the desert non-whites were first class, but he pointed out how seriously their behaviour deteriorated when they came in contact with alcohol and the type of woman found in places like Bengazi, Tripoli, Zuara and Gabes. He felt that the UDF should reconsider the advisability of using non-whites outside Africa. This was a most important point now that the end was in sight in Tunisia. Whether it was the Cape Corps or the Native Military Corps which DHQ had in mind, their decision as to who should be called upon to serve outside Africa would inevitably affect the size of any force South Africa could make available for the further prosecution of the war in an active role.

Training was pushed ahead and a month after the Tobruk disaster - when the South African

⁵⁰ History of AA Organisation UDF 1939-1944, p.24.

⁵¹ This unit was never formed.

⁵² South Africa at War, p.186.

⁵³ Ibid, p.187.

Artillery lost the greater part of two field regiments, in addition to 2nd Light Anti-Aircraft Regiment, - the manpower situation insofar as the SA Artillery was concerned was in an even more serious plight.

DFAAT noted in a memo to DSD that the only fully trained non-white personnel then available on the field regiment No 2 Establishment were:

Gun Detachments (and spare)	144
MT Drivers (plus 20% spare)	158
Orderlies	24
Administration	4
Trumpeters	6
Cooks	17
Batmen	44
Storemen	4

He further noted that the Establishment Table allowed any "white" post under the rank of S/ Sgt to be filled with a non-white, and that approximately 100 coloured gunners had been fully trained as layers. Only a negligible number of Zulu had up till then "proved themselves capable of being so trained." Seventeen coloured gunners had been trained as signallers up to six words per minute⁵⁴ and a few others were being trained as telephonists. Efforts had been made to train Zulu signallers but progress was very slow.⁵⁵

It was in August 1942 that the war establishment of a field regiment was reorganised to include a Regimental Headquarters and three batteries and an anti-tank battery and this was applicable to 21st and 22nd Field Regiments as well.⁵⁶ Although the following month the instruction to include an anti-tank battery in each field regiment was withdrawn a certain number of coloured gunners nevertheless received anti-tank training, as had those who had served in 2nd Anti-Tank Regiment in the Desert.

At a staff conference in July 1942, General George Brink, GOC Inland Area stated that he was not happy about the type of black gunner seen in artillery units and questioned "the value of the experiment". He appreciated, nevertheless that the artillery units then being formed could not be fully manned "because of the lack of Cape Coloured personnel".

The CGS gave a brief resumé of the demands being made on Cape Corps personnel - they were being used to guard prisoners-of-war and

internees and in anti-aircraft and coast artillery units. It was furthermore proposed that a Cape Corps brigade group be formed and he concluded by saying that the SAEC had a surplus of Cape Corps personnel and suggested that assistance be obtained from that source.⁵⁷

Perhaps as a result of the conference the Deputy Chief of Staff on 14 August 1942 issued an instruction to GOC Inland Area and to the Adjutant General stressing that the policy regarding the dilution of 21st Field Regiment (V) SAA with NMC personnel (Zulus) would continue but that the Zulu in 1st Medium Battery were to be withdrawn and substituted by Cape Corps personnel.⁵⁸

However, at a manpower conference in the CGS's office on 9 November 1942 this decision was reversed and the Deputy Chief of Staff was instructed to revise Coastal AA Establishment Tables and cut them down to the lowest possible limits. Layout and general organisation was to continue on the full authorised Coastal Programme but recruiting was to be restricted to equipment becoming available, plus 20 percent reserves, to meet short notice expansion. Part-time SAAF and WAAS were to be recruited for Coastal AA and Coast Artillery respectively.

The DCS was instructed to consult GOC, Inland Area, regarding employment of second line Coast Defence Corps personnel on Coastal AA to complete the manning of equipment and to release A1 category men. SAAF personnel who were "A" Medical Category were to be withdrawn in due course from Coastal AA and posted to 12 LAA Regt, SAAF and the Adjutant General was instructed to ensure that SAAF Coastal AA was placed on first priority for "B" Category personnel.

The Mobile Field Force⁵⁹ the CGS said, was to have two field regiments only, and the Zulu gunners of 21st Field Regiment, SAA, were to be transferred to Coastal AA and employed in the Durban Fortress Area. The Adjutant General was further to provide NMC for Coastal AA on first priority.

As a result of these decisions the shortfall in NMC for coast units was thus made up in part by personnel released by the Field Army Artillery from 21st Field Regiment (400 partly

⁵⁴ Obviously in Morse Code.

⁵⁵ UWH Civil, Box 159, Narep Unfo 13, p.118.

⁵⁶ DCS/DCGS, Box 119, file O(M)17/13/1 Enc 58.

⁵⁷ *Ibid*, enc 62.

⁵⁸ *Ibid*, enc 63.

⁵⁹ It would today be called the Conventional Force.

trained) and Eshowe Depot (432 untrained).⁶⁰ Of these numbers many went to the Durban fortress area but 127 black former gunners from Piet Retief reported for duty with 51st Anti-Aircraft Regiment at Cape Town in December, others being sent to 52nd Anti-Aircraft Regiment at Simonstown.

Col. E.G. Stubbs, Director NEAS, later stated that he thought the Zulu a failure in artillery, but this was an opinion not shared by all gunner officers, especially if the men were placed under competent and sympathetic command.⁶¹ The true explanation was probably their unfortunate lack of formal education.

The establishment for the five regiments totalled 252 officers, 28 WAAF Officers, 3048 other ranks, 1959 WAAF's and 2635 NMC⁶² and despite the transfers, as at 2 January 1943, the five SAAF AA Regts were under strength to the extent of 119 officers, 24 WAAF officers, 1129 other ranks, 1522 WAAF's and 1414 NMC.

There were initial problems with the ration scale of the black gunners posted to Cape Town and Simonstown as no-one had allowed for the fact that night manning took place, necessitating an additional tea and coffee issue but this was sorted out in due course and in a report written by the DNEAS Welfare Officer on 23 January 1943 on 52nd AA Regiment, Simonstown, he reported that the gun drill of the NMC details was better than that of the white personnel and that "Manning Parade" was "always excellently done".

It is interesting to note from his report that he considered the NMC men transferred from the Security Detachments in Pretoria and Voortrekkerhoogte outclassed the former field artillery men and subscribed it to "superior training on the parade ground in foot drill".

In a report on 51st AA Regiment, Cape Town written on the same date, the same officer noted that the NMC strength was:⁶³

Sergeants	7
Corporals	21
Lance Corporals	128
Privates	555
TOTAL	761

By the end of 1942 the tide of warfare had definitely turned and Allied forces were on the offensive. South Africa's fighting formations were at home or on their way back. Only the SAAF and the SDF's "little ships" were for the time being really engaging the enemy. On the ground, though Engineer, Signals and a handful of other units remained in the field, the infantry, artillery and armour were given a long breathing space in which to reorganize and train.

Sixteen months were to pass before a South African brigade again went into action.⁶⁴

In pursuance of the policy of forming the second of two armoured divisions 6th SA Armoured Division was established on 1 February 1943 under Maj-Gen. W.H.E. Poole with both 11th Armoured Brigade and 12th Motorised Brigade headquarters opening on 8 February.⁶⁵

It had been decided that no NMC troops would be used outside Africa and black personnel in units allocated to the division were to be replaced by men of the Cape Corps. Furthermore, Cape Corps men would not be used as combatants.

Despite the fact that the five SAAF Coastal AA units were understrength Maj-Gen. L.P. de Villiers of Coastal Area agreed on 11 February to release 60 officers and 500 other ranks to the newly formed Division, replacing them in the Coast Artillery with Cape Corps men. The Deputy Chief of Staff had already asked the Adjutant-General to post 250 Cape Corps men to the Coast Artillery Training Centre.⁶⁶

The manpower situation was, however, more serious than the CGS appreciated and by the following month it had been decided that there was to be only one armoured division.⁶⁷

Earlier policy was changed and four artillery units were instead selected for the new division. They were 6th Field Regiment - which had returned from Madagascar in December 1942, 22nd Field Regiment under the command of Lt-Col. W.M.P. Johnston, DSO, VD, and consisting almost exclusively of Cape Corps personnel with white officers and a

⁶⁰ History of AA Organisation UDF 1939-1944, p.39.

⁶¹ South Africa at War, p.211.

⁶² History of AA Organisation UDF 1939-1944, p.39.

⁶³ UWH Civil, Box 159, Narep Unfo 13, p.124.

⁶⁴ South Africa at War, pp.165-6.

⁶⁵ *Ibid*, pp.223-4.

⁶⁶ *Ibid*, p.225.

⁶⁷ *Ibid*, p.228.

sprinkling of white NCO's, 23rd Field Regiment (V) SAA (MEB) formed from personnel recruited from the Witwatersrand mines, and 11th Anti-Tank Regiment, newly formed at Carolina and incorporating a Rhodesian battery.⁶⁸

Because of the decision that non-whites would not serve as combatants outside Africa the Coloured personnel of 22nd Field Regiment were replaced by white volunteers from 1st SA Division, then resting and undergoing light training in the Eastern Transvaal.⁶⁹ They were all required to sign the new General Service Oath, agreeing to serve anywhere in the world.

21st Field Regiment (V) SAA was converted with effect 15 May 1943 to an anti-aircraft unit and redesignated 42nd Light Anti-Aircraft Regiment, SAA. On 1 January 1944 it became part of the S A Air Force anti-aircraft organization and was allocated to the Nile Delta defences⁷⁰ where 294 Cape Corps men later joined the unit on transfer from 6th S A Armoured Division.⁷¹

On 19 April 1943, 6th SA Armoured Division sailed from Durban for the Middle East, greatly under strength and destined to face almost a year of training and waiting before it reached Italy to begin operations.⁷²

As a result of the need to bring the division's artillery units up to strength with white personnel, and because of the large numbers of men who refused to sign the new GS Oath, 1st, 4th and 7th Field Regiments, greatly reduced in strength, were routed back to the Middle East to amalgamate with the under strength 6th, 22nd and 23rd Field Regiments respectively, with 1st Anti-Tank Regiment likewise amalgamating with 11th Anti-Tank Regiment. 1st Light Anti-Aircraft Regiment returned to Egypt to join 12th Light Anti-Aircraft Regiment,⁷³ the "marriage" of the units taking place at the beginning of October 1943.

It would appear that the Zulu were eventually withdrawn from 1st Medium Battery as DCS wrote to the Adjutant-General and GOC Inland

Area on 25 May 1943 and informed them that it had been decided that the officers and WO's posts in 1st Medium Regiment would be held by White personnel and that all other posts in the unit were to be filled by Cape Corps men. He said further that to allow time for the coloured personnel to be trained in specialists posts white NCO's would be retained in the regiment until GOC Inland Area had considered that the specialist personnel has reached a sufficiently high state of efficiency.⁷⁴

The continuing demand for white General Service personnel for combatant units finally lead to the second disbandment of 1st Medium Regiment on 1 January 1944 - it had been reformed in December 1942 after being sacrificed in the desert in June 1941 to bring 3rd and 7th Field Regiments up to strength. Disbanded at the same time were 3rd Heavy Anti-Aircraft Regiment, 8th Anti-Aircraft Searchlight Regiment and 18th Light Anti-Aircraft Regiment.⁷⁵

South Africa thus re-entered the war, this time in Italy, with few non-whites in its combat forces.

In 1/6th Field Regiment (V) South African Artillery (PAOCFA) for instance, the War Establishment Table (now called a Personnel Table) in June 1944 provided for 45 officers, 700 other ranks and only 25 non-whites. Most of the latter were officers servants or "batmen", but it is known that there was one Cape Corps driver in 1/16th Field Battery and he shared the driving of the kitchen truck with the battery cook and acted as assistant cook.⁷⁶

As at 13 December 1944, 100 NEAS personnel had been killed-in- action, 1671 had died in service, with 254 missing and presumed dead, and 2286 were prisoners-of-war while 768 had been wounded in battle.⁷⁷ A number had received awards for gallantry and they included one Distinguished Conduct Medal and one King's Medal for Bravery, while 29 men received the Military Medal. Most of the 123131 Coloured and black men who had volunteered for full-time service in the land forces had served in army units.⁷⁸

⁶⁸ Gunning Through Africa, p.267.

⁶⁹ Ibid, p.268.

⁷⁰ History of AA Organisation UDF 1939-1944, p.21.

⁷¹ Ibid, p.130.

⁷² South Africa at War, p.223.

⁷³ Ibid, p.240.

⁷⁴ DCS/DCGS, Box 119, file O(M)71/12/1, enc 115.

⁷⁵ Field Artillery, Box 57, file 2860, enc 5.

⁷⁶ Interview with Lt Col S.A. Harrison, JCD (Retd).

⁷⁷ Field Artillery, Box 57, file FA2861.

⁷⁸ South Africa at War, pp.346-7.

With the campaign in Italy ending after the capitulation of the German forces on 2 May 1945, the gradual demobilization of the Union Defence Forces began, and eventually NMC and the Cape Corps were disbanded, following the fate of the Indian and Malay Corps which had been disestablished on 13 October 1942.

After almost fifty years the wheel has turned full cycle and black gunners are once again serving the guns of the South African Artillery in two batteries presently under training, as part of the Rapid Deployment Force, although black soldiers have been serving in other posts in the S.A. Army since 1974 when 21 Battalion initially came into being.⁷⁹

Volunteers to the last man, one group attested in August 1991 and underwent initial training and a full parabat course before commencing training on the M5 120mm Mortar, six months later at 141 Battery, 14 Artillery Regiment. The battery, known as "P" Battery, underwent their first live shell shoot in mid-April 1992 which was very successful. One Troop is parachute qualified and they did their first jump with their artillery equipment, in mid-May 1992. The balance of the battery is expected to qualify later. "Papa" Battery left Potchefstroom for their attachment to 44 Parachute Brigade on 19 June.

The second battery - "S" Battery - is under training at 43 Battery, 4 Artillery Regiment on G5 155mm equipment and will later form part of 61 Mechanised Battalion Group. They attested voluntarily in October 1991 for 2 years service and after stringent selection phases the volunteers began an intensive 40 week gunnery training phase in January 1992. They had started their army service with 14 weeks basic training, following which a mini-selection board was held to determine who would best fill the various posts of GPO's, Technical Assistants, Gun Numbers One and basic Instructors. The personnel of the battery will also receive COIN instruction. "S" Battery fired live shell for the first time as a battery at the end of April 1992.⁸⁰

WOII "Pottie" Potgieter, BSM of 43 Battery, is on record as saying that members of "Sierra" Battery are proud of the uniform they wear and *their* Battery means everything to them, second only to 4 Artillery Regiment. It was obvious to him that they were proud to be soldiers but regarded it as an honour to be termed "Gunner".⁸¹

A small number of the black volunteer gunners were later specially selected to attend the tough Instructors course at the School of Infantry and four who successfully completed the course were promoted to Bombardier.

Another 27 members of "P" and "S" Batteries and 4 Artillery Regiment were selected to attend the Junior Leaders course at the School of Artillery. Twenty-four qualified as Numbers One and Numbers Three, with nine being promoted to Bombardier and the balance to Lance Bombardier.⁸²

Black volunteer soldiers have also joined the Anti-Aircraft Corps.

The first black anti-aircraft gunners were attested into 44 Parachute Brigade on 3 February 1992. They initially received basic infantry training followed by the successful attendance of the three-day parachute "vasbykursus", after which they were given the choice of joining one of three Corps. A number chose the Anti-Aircraft Corps.

Investigation by SAMS personnel to determine their suitability for Junior Leader training led to promotion for seven black junior leaders on 3 July 1992 when T.M. Mohoase became a Second Lieutenant and Gunners F.L. Isaac, A.L. Fothoane, J.M. Lebetsa, K.A. Modisa, M.G. Setlolela and J.A. Thulo became Bombardiers.

Serving presently with 44 Parachute Brigade are two Second Lieutenants, eight Bombardiers and nine Lance Bombardiers - one of which is an Ops Medic - whilst the anti-aircraft unit in the brigade also has 23 black gunners on strength.

In January 1994 one of the Lieutenants and three Bombardiers were transferred to the Anti-Aircraft School/10 Anti-Aircraft Regiment as instructors and they will train recruits on the 35mm Mk V weapons system and on 23mm guns.

Not only have the black AA gunners undertaken normal AA training at 44 parachute Brigade but they have also been involved in tours of duty in unrest areas. A delighted Brigade Commander was able to report that they did magnificent work, in the course of which they uncovered a total of sixty AK-47s.

⁷⁹ Paratus, August 1985, p.22.

⁸⁰ Interviews, Col C. Roux and Lt Col C. Laubscher, S.A. Artillery.

⁸¹ Ubique No 2, July 1992, p.2.

⁸² Memorandum from Director Artillery, 23 Nov 1993.

During one tour the Ops Medic was shot while attending to someone in an ambulance. Despite three gunshot wounds he fortunately survived.

Anti-Aircraft School/10 Anti-Aircraft Regiment also received their first six black gunners in February 1992 of which two are now Bombardiers. Following the success achieved by the earlier intakes a further 99 men - mostly Coloured - were recruited in the Cape in September 1993 and 103 Battery was reactivated to accommodate them for training as gunners.

In January 1994 they commenced 23mm AA training but of the group about 34 specially selected members begin junior leadership training in February.⁸³

In January 1981, 43 Battery, then a detached sub-unit of 4 Field Regiment, stationed at Rooikop, Walvis Bay, under command of Major Jean Lousberg, commenced training a group of National Servicemen from South West Africa (Namibia). The battery under training consisted of Namas, Damaras, Hereroes, Etc, in fact, each ethnic group in the country was represented, except Owambos, who were at that stage subject to conscription.

After a year at Rooikop they were transferred in late 1981 to SWAFT and posted to 91 Field Regiment (previously known as 27 Field Regiment established on 1 August 1975 with HQ in Windhoek), and were in 1982 employed with a troop of G5 guns at Ondangwa. They also

manned gun positions at Ruancana in the years that followed.⁸⁴

Owambo gunners had been present at Walvis Bay in 1943, manning the 6-inch and 12-pounder coast guns mounted there. Recruited to fill the posts vacated by men who had been withdrawn from the Coast Battery to fill posts in 6th S A Armoured Division, they had been handed over, completely untrained and unable to speak English or Afrikaans to Sergeant I.J. Spangenberg, in later years RSM of AADS/10 A.A. Regiment, who had to turn them into gun numbers, giving all instruction with the aid of an interpreter.⁸⁵

Even men of the Cape Corps have in latter years breathed cordite and experienced the excitement which grips one at the sound of gunfire. Approximately 26 men, trained on gun maintenance, were allocated to the Artillery Wing at the Army Battle School in 1988 and during their two year stint of service, about nine keen members of the group received additional training as Ammunition Numbers and were employed as such on a number of limited two day live shell shoots conducted during courses at the School. Several were eventually trained as No 2's and layers, including two who reattested after two years, one to serve as a storeman and the other on gun maintenance.⁸⁶

Whilst not being SA Artillery personnel they were nevertheless extremely proud to have been permitted to wear the blue beret and Corps Cap badge, as proud as the black field and anti-aircraft gunners today.

⁸³ Memorandum from Director Anti-Aircraft, 17 Nov 1993.

⁸⁴ Interview, Col. J. Lousberg, S.A. Artillery.

⁸⁵ L. Crook : Youngsfield, p.43.

⁸⁶ Telephone conversations with Lt Col A.E. (Arnie) van Rhyen and Lt Col W. van Ryneveld.