

THE CHAPLAIN-GENERAL

Mrs L. Brits*

The adoption of the Union Defence Act No 13 of 1912 led to the creation of the Union Defence Force. In this regard article 28 Sub-article 5 of the Act also made provision for the appointment of military chaplains: 'Citizens may be appointed to commissioned rank as Chaplains ...')

The years of formation 1902–1938

Very seldom in the history of South Africa did the military function without spiritual workers. The future would not prove different.

In the years following the South African War (1899–1902) a few part-time chaplains still served in military bases. Although these chaplains were South Africans, they were not regarded as South African chaplains because they did religious work among British colonial troops. At the time of the First World War there were 155 chaplains in military camps and in the front lines of South West Africa, the Middle East and France. With the accession of the Union to the war, the church sought information as to the probability of appointing chaplains in the Union Defence Force. On 16 August 1914 the first four part-time chaplains were appointed. These chaplains resorted under the Minister of Defence.

In due course more chaplains were appointed. On 18 May 1915 Reverend James Davies was appointed as Chief Chaplain, a post in which he acted as co-ordinator with regard to the chaplains. He was promoted to the rank of major.

All chaplains were appointed on the strength of the Active Citizen Force. They were appointed with the rank of captain. Until 1938 there was no question of an appointment in the Permanent Force. The period of appointment was limited to the duration of hostilities. The chaplains were totally subject to the military Disciplinary Code. The chaplains were not addressed by rank, but by their clerical titles. The Afrikaans chaplains were addressed as 'veldprediker'; a term used since the Anglo Boer War.

It proved difficult to get Afrikaans preachers to serve as chaplains, political factors providing many problems. A further factor was the fact that



Major General J.A. van Zyl, SSAS, SM. Chaplain General of the SADF since 1973

the minister was appointed on an official basis only. Participation required an official appointment and a prompt acceptance.²

On 9 October 1920 two full-time chaplains, still serving as Citizen Force Chaplains after World War One, were appointed to Roberts Heights (now Voortrekkerhoogte), one to serve the English speaking churches and one to serve the Dutch speaking churches. Accordingly Reverend A. Roberts and Reverend J.N. Murray became the first two full-time (not Permanent Force) chaplains of the Union.

The church became an integral part of the Union Defence Force when in 1935 Reverend A.G.O. Coertse and Reverend R.F. Strathern were ap-

pointed as the first two chaplains in a permanent capacity on a short term basis. Reverend A.G.O. Coertse did his best to accomplish better service conditions for the chaplains. In 1938 only these two posts were established as permanent posts in the Defence Force. With the appointment of Reverend G.R. van Rooyen in the same year there was the first expansion in the number of chaplains. With this step the chaplain was linked with the church, inducted in the church and shared in the privileges as joined minister.

The inter-war years served as a time of formation, and in which the permanence of the chaplain in the Defence Force would be assured.³

World War Two

The outbreak of the Second World War in 1939 marked a period of expansion in the Service. On 17 May 1940 the Minister Of Defence approved the appointment of 12 full-time chaplains (not Permanent Force). Six served in military bases in the Union and six served at the front. During the conflict 517 chaplains of various denominations served both in full-time and part-time capacities in the Union, East and North Africa, the Middle East, France, Italy, Germany and England.⁴ The Permanent Force posts remained three only to become two posts again in the middle of the war after the resignation of Reverend van Rooyen.

The period after the war

With the cessation of hostilities the Union Defence Force was much larger than prior to the conflict. The process of demobilization that followed affected the Corps of Chaplains in the same way.

A milestone was achieved on 1 October 1946 with the establishment of the South African Corps of Chaplains as a unit in the Defence Force with its three arms of service – Army, Air Force and Navy. On that day the South African Corps of Chaplains also became part of the Active Citizen Force. With the retirement of the first two chaplains in the Permanent Force the link with the full-time Active Citizen Force Chaplains was broken. During this period much attention was given to the organization of the Corps of Chaplains.

In 1946 the following chaplains were appointed as members of the Permanent Force: Reverend

S.W. Burger, Reverend C.W. de Kock, Reverend W.A.F. Celliers, Reverend K.L. Hall, Reverend W.A. Buckley, Reverend J.A. Curney, Reverend C.S. Shaw and Reverend G.L. Williams. The following year Reverend M.D.V. Cloete, Reverend B.H. Marshall and Reverend E.D. Brown were appointed.

After an in-depth investigation into the organization of the Active Citizen Force Advocate F.C. Erasmus decided to appoint a chaplain who could serve as a link between the Chief of the General Staff and the different denominations. A former full-time chaplain, Reverend C.F. Miles-Cadman was appointed in this post in December 1949 as Deputy Chaplain-General with the status of Colonel. Placed in the Corps of Administrative Staff, he did not resort under the Adjutant General,⁵ but directly under the Chief of General Staff. He was also given access to all chiefs of staff.

All matters concerning the chaplains were managed by him. The Deputy Chaplain-General also acted as a liaison between the chaplains in the Defence Force, and between the chaplains, the Defence Force and the different churches. With the retirement of Colonel Miles-Cadman in May 1954 no successor was appointed in the post of Deputy Chaplain-General, and would only be activated in 1966.⁶

With the consent of Commandant-General H.B. Klopper in 1957 it was decided to abolish the rank structure for the chaplains. The chaplains would have the status of a Colonel and wear a revised uniform.⁷

During the period 1960 to 1966 most of the chaplains who joined just after the war retired, leaving Reverend C.S. Shaw and Reverend I.A. Gurney only. In July 1965 Reverend S.W. Burger became the first chaplain in the history of the Corps to be promoted to the rank of colonel. The service rendered by these chaplains proved indispensable to the growth of the Corps of Chaplains.

The creation of the draft and national service entailed numerical expansion for the SADF. This also influenced the Corps of Chaplains. The growth of the Defence Force not only necessitated more spiritual workers and new posts, but also brought about a review of the organization of the Corps of Chaplains. In the period 1966 to 1970 the ranks of the spiritual workers among the militarised youth of South Africa were swollen to 60.

In 1966 a chaplain was appointed as Senior Staff Officer Chaplains and Welfare. A director Brigadier J. Claassen was appointed. Colonel J.A. van Zyl, who joined the Corps of Chaplains in 1961, was held responsible for the organization of the Corps of Chaplains and welfare activities.

The following year the Afrikaans title 'veldprediker' was replaced by 'Kapelaan'.

During 1966 to 1973 the foundation was laid for an independent Chaplain Service. In 1966 Col J.A. Van Zyl was appointed as SSO Chaplains and Welfare. In 1968 the Corps of Chaplains became an independent directorate under the Chief of the Defence Force Administration, with a Director of Chaplains who held the rank of Brigadier. Accordingly Colonel J.A. van Zyl, the SSO C & W, became the first Director of Chaplains. The designation, Director of Chaplains, was changed in 1970 to Chaplain General, SADF, with the rank of Brigadier.

This change was the reward for the years in which the chaplains endeavoured to gain a rightful place for the Church and the chaplain in the structure of the Defence Force.

This new relationship between the church and the State, in which the State protected the Church and the Church obeyed the State was founded on biblical dogma in Romans 13.

Another milestone was reached on 1 April 1973 when the Corps of Chaplains was changed into an autonomous unit of the SADF, namely the Chaplains Service, SADF, with its own headquarters. Like the Medical Services it is a fully-fledged supporting service, liaising directly with the Chief of the Defence Force. The Chaplain General's post was then upgraded to that of Major General.

This organizational expansion kept pace with the increase in number of chaplains. In 1946 there were 10 permanent force chaplains, in 1957 22, in 1967 42 and in 1977 there were 99 posts, of which 88 were filled, one of them by a coloured chaplain in the South African Cape Corps.

In 1977 it was decided to apply theological students in their professional capacity for the duration of their military service. They are allotted to the Chaplains Service and serve as religious workers on the border, in barracks and in hospitals. They work with the youth, preach, are connected with social life and do pastoral duty.

One hundred and seven different religions are represented in the Chaplains Service and every person in the South African Defence Force is served according to his own religion. The following seventeen churches have permanent force chaplains: The Roman Catholic Church, The Church of the Province of South Africa (Anglican), the 'Free Churches' (Presbyterian, Baptist and Congregational), the Methodist Church, the Ned Geref Kerk, the Ned Herv Kerk van Afrika, The Gereformeerde Kerk van SA and the Apostolic Faith Mission of SA, the Pentecostal Churches (seven churches).

Presently there are 208 Commando, 203 Citizen Force, (Citizen Force Element 273), 241 part-time, 120 Permanent Force and 254 National Service Chaplains attached to the Chaplains Service, a total of 1 299 ministers. The number of commando and citizen force chaplains will increase in accordance with the expansion of the SADF, and the posts will be filled. The number of national service chaplains will vary in accordance with the number of theological students having completed their studies, and who have not yet done nor completed their national service training.

At present there are five categories of chaplains: The Permanent Force Chaplains, the Citizen Force Chaplains, the Commando Chaplains, the Part-time Chaplains and National Service Chaplains.

The Permanent Force Chaplains are attached to congregations consisting entirely or predominantly of members of the SADF and their families. They are called or nominated by their respective churches and then appointed by the State as officers with the rank of 'Chaplain'.

Citizen Force Chaplains are attached to the various citizen force units with the approval and written permission of their church authority. They serve with their regiments on a part-time basis, attending parades, training camps or serving with their units in the operational area. They are appointed as officers with the rank of Chaplain, and wear uniform.

Like Citizen Force Chaplains, Commando Chaplains are attached to the various Commandos with the approval and written permission of their church authority. They too serve on a part-time basis with their commando, are appointed as officers with the rank of Chaplain, and wear uniform.

The work of Citizen Force and Commando Chaplains serving with their regiments or commandos remains a pastoral ministry except that it is exercised in the milieu of the SADF. From time to time it is necessary for them to act in a liaison capacity in arranging for the services of priests and ministers for members of their regiment commando who belong to different denominations, and who are entitled wherever possible to the ministry of their own denomination.

Part-Time Chaplains are priests/ministers of civilian congregations in or near whose parish boundaries SADF units or training centres are situated. They are responsible not only for members of their parishes, but also for members of their denomination in these SADF units and training centres. Part-Time Chaplains do not wear uniform unless they also happen to be appointed as Citizen Force or Commando Chaplains.

National Service Chaplains do the following duties during their initial year of national service: three months basic military training and one month orientation course at the Chaplains Service Training Centre and three months duty in the operational area. For the remaining eighteen months they are attached to a unit in which national servicemen are trained. There they work under the supervision of a Permanent Force or Part-time Chaplain of their own denomination. After completion of their initial period of national service they are then attached to either a citizen force or commando unit. Otherwise they are placed with the Chaplains Service CF Element.

All chaplains are attached to a church, including those holding administrative or training posts at Headquarters or with the different arms of service. The church connection and authority varies according to the respective denominations.

As a supporting service of the SADF, the aim of the Chaplains Service is to preach the Word of God to all members of the Defence Force and their dependents. Beyond this objective the following is aimed at:

1. The formation of a Chaplains Service to strengthen the members of the Defence Force spiritually.
2. The extension of the organization.
3. Improvement of relations between the churches and among the racial groups in and outside the Defence Force.

4. Motivation, organization and equipping of the Chaplain's women which came into being as an organization in February 1976 to assist the Chaplains Service
5. Improving the co-operation between the SADF and other organizations.
6. Improvement of the social climate in the RSA.

The organization of the Chaplains Service

The headquarters consist of the Chaplain-General with three directorates, each of which is headed by a director who is responsible to him: Director of Personnel with the rank of Brigadier; Director of Chaplains Ministry with the rank of Brigadier and the Director of Logistics and Finance with the rank of Colonel.

The Chaplains Service in the Combat Services

The Chaplain-General is responsible for the short and long-term planning of the Chaplains Service and for the execution of the approved policy in respect of religious and church affairs in the South African Defence Force. To execute this policy a director of Chaplains Service was appointed to the Army, the Air Force, Navy and the South African Medical Services. (The director replaced the previous denomination of Assistant Chaplains General).

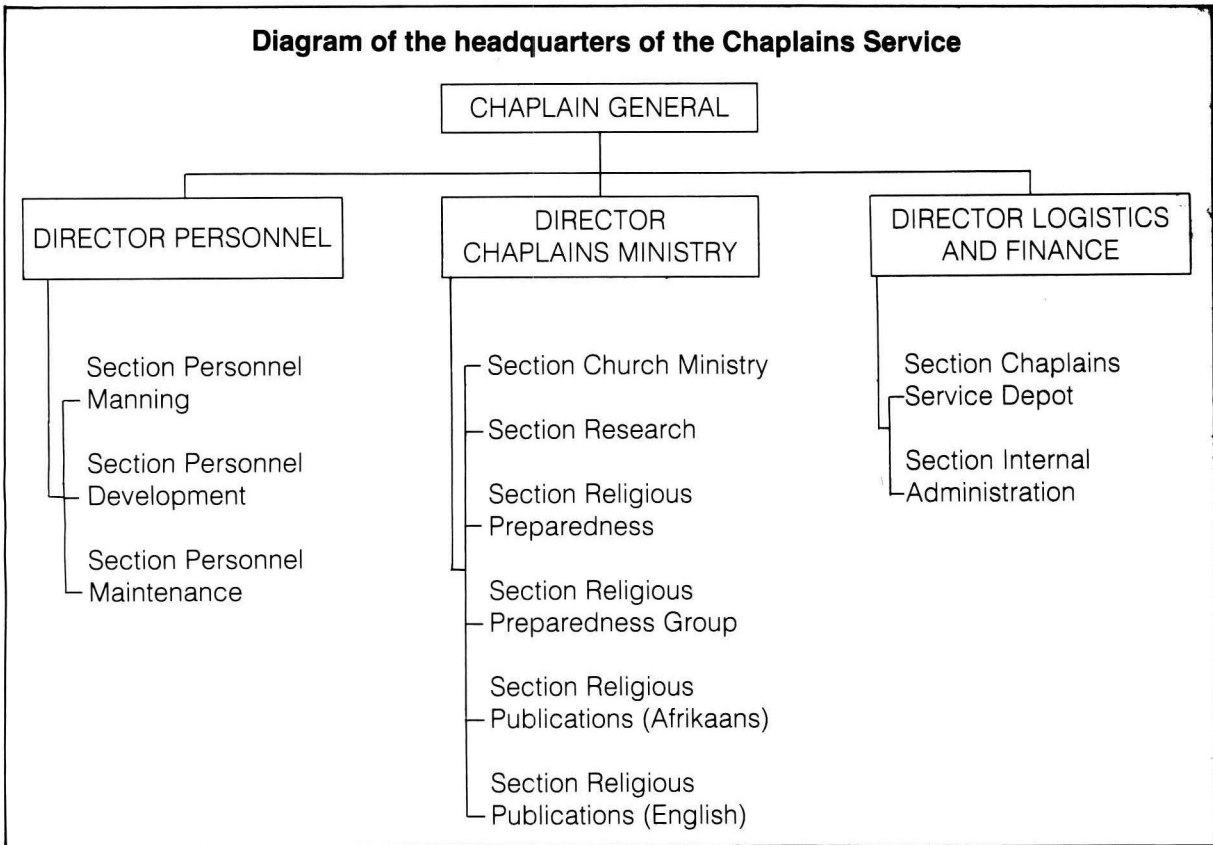
Director of Chaplains Service

The office of directors of chaplains service is the senior Chaplains post in the four arms of service. They serve as direct advisers to the Chief of the specific Service and are directly responsible to the Chaplain-General. He holds the rank of Colonel (Captain in the South African Navy).

Formation Chaplain

Every Arm of Service is divided into smaller units throughout the country. In order to be more effective Formation Chaplains have also been appointed. They can be regarded as the chief chaplain in the area. They are responsible for the needs of smaller churches within the formation. Except for his normal duties he also has a number of additional tasks:

Diagram of the headquarters of the Chaplains Service



Specialists advice to his commander
 Co-ordination of military activities of the chaplains
 Guidance to chaplains
 Assignment of chaplains to operational service and nomination of chaplains for courses

glory of God and the expansion of His Kingdom on earth. The Chaplains Service is thus merely the working platform from which the church serves the religious needs of its members in the South African Defence Force.¹⁰

Unit Chaplains

The sizes of units differ and it is not unusual for some units to have up to five Chaplains serving the different churches. Therefore every unit acquires a unit chaplain. The following duties are allotted to him:

Normal duties as chaplain
 Supervision of the activities in the unit
 Liaison between the commander and other chaplains in the unit and between the unit and the formation.⁹

'The aim of the Chaplains Service is not to supersede the church and not to be a church within the church, but solely to put the church in a position whereby it can fulfill its vocation in the milieu of the South African Defence Force to the

With an efficient organized Chaplains Service, a motivated youth and devoted clergymen, the future of South Africa will be assured.

Mrs L. Brits, BA, BA Hons is attached to the Military Information Bureau of the SADF.

Footnotes

1. Regulations for the South African Permanent Force made under the provisions of the South African Defence Act, 1912, Cape Times Ltd. Cape Town, 1940, chapter 3.
2. Ibid, pp. 181-194.
3. Ibid, pp. 194-211.
4. Ibid, pp. 211-114.
5. The Adjutant-General was appointed in October 1919.
6. J.F. Potgieter: Die Militêre Kapelaan, Thesis, University of Pretoria, 1971, pp. 228-229.
7. Ibid, pp. 228-230; 234-236.
8. Eers Nasionale Diensplig en dan beroepe, is voortaan die prosedure, (*Paratus*, Vol 27 No 3, March 1976, p. 23).
9. Kapelane vir 92 gelowe, (*Paratus*, Vol 29 No 7, July 1978, p. 52).
10. P. Rousseau: *Die Organisasie van die Kapelaansdiens en Kapelaansvroue*, pp. 1-33.
10. Information Brochure on the Chaplains Service, SADF.