

THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE COMPTROLLER'S SECTION, SADF, 1966-1971

Introduction: the Secretariat

The Comptroller's Section of the SA Defence Force as it exists today is the inheritor of many of the functions of the civilian Defence Secretariat which was abolished in 1966.

In 1912 the Union Defence Department was established and organized into three Sections — a civilian Secretariat, a General Staff Section, and an Administrative Section. The Secretariat dealt with all questions affecting finance and expenditure, the General Staff Section dealt with matters of military organization, and the Administrative Section was responsible for ordnance, equipment, supplies, transport, and similar affairs.

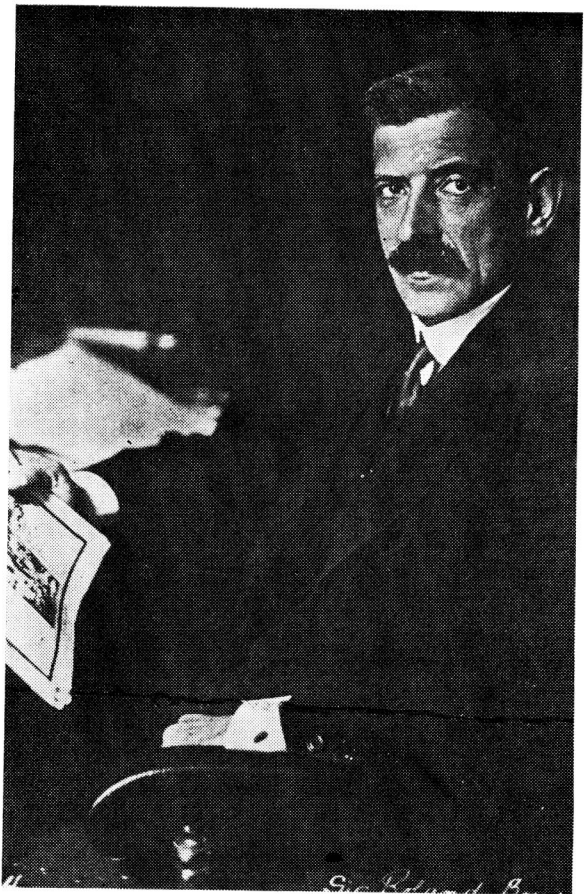
As time passed, the section structure of the Department was expanded. Notable amongst the changes was the creation in 1918 of the post of Chief of the General Staff (CGS), for with the creation of this post the distinction between the powers and authority of senior military staff and of the Secretary began to blur. In 1922 Sir Roland Bourne, who had served as Secretary since 1912, retired. He was succeeded by Brig Genl A. J. E. Brink, who was designated 'Chief of the General Staff and Secretary for Defence'. A Financial Under Secretary became the Departmental Accounting Officer.

In 1933 the posts 'Chief of the General Staff' and 'Secretary for Defence and Accounting Officer' were separated. Brink remained Secretary and the vacant post of CGS was occupied by Brig Genl H. A. van Ryneveld. In 1938 Brink retired and the Secretaryship passed again into civilian hands with the appointment of A. H. Broeksma.

Under the strains of wartime this arrangement became unacceptable to van Ryneveld, and in 1943 a dispute arose between him and the Secretary. The dispute was referred to the Minister of Defence (General J. C. Smuts) but nothing further transpired.

After the change of government in 1948 the matter of Departmental control came up again when the Secretary, Mr. H. F. Cuff, referred

it to the Minister of Defence for examination. Early in 1949 the Minister wrote that 'It is seemingly not possible to define the respective responsibilities of the Secretariat and the Military Authorities with exactitude', but he went on to list a number of matters as 'the especial responsibility of the Secretary'. However, the CGS (Lt Genl L. Beyers) could not accept this, and he made certain recommendations to the Minister which the Secretary in turn could not accept. A committee of two military officers and one civilian was appointed to investigate the matter. In December 1949 it reported that 'the need for the dual organization as at present constituted, no longer exists'. It recommended that the Secretariat be integrated with the military organization by appointing the CGS as Chief of



Sir Roland Bourne, Secretary of Defence 1912-22.

the General Staff and Secretary for Defence. These recommendations were not accepted, and the system continued to operate until 1966, when the Verster Committee was appointed to examine the entire functioning of the Department of Defence.

1966: Reorganization

At the beginning of the 1960's an extensive re-evaluation was made of the military situation and requirements of South Africa. As a result, considerable modernization and expansion of the country's armed forces was commenced. Thereby the responsibilities of the military authorities were increased, and the supreme military commander (the CGS) was redesignated the Commandant-General and given the rank of General. The effect of this was to give the Defence Department two horizontal chiefs (the Secretary and the Commandant-General). Now new organizational problems appeared, including duplication of work and unsatisfactory usage of manpower. On 23 April 1966 the Minister of Defence appointed the Verster Committee to investigate the division of functions in the Department.

After extensive deliberations the Committee reported in favour of abolition of the civilian Secretariat, but did not thereby indicate a move towards total militarization. Instead, it envisaged the creation of a civilian organization within a unified Department of Defence which would handle most of the functions of the defunct Secretariat. These recommendations were approved in principle by the Cabinet.



Mr L. Rive.

On 17 October 1966 the civilian Secretary of Defence was transferred to another Department. The Commandant-General became the accounting officer of the Department of Defence with the designation 'Commandant-General, SADF and Secretary for Defence' and the Secretariat was replaced by a Financial Control Section under a Comptroller. Mr J. L. S. Fourie (who had been a Member of the Verster Committee) was appointed Comptroller, SADF on the same day with immediate responsibility for most Secretariat functions. Mr L. Rive, who had been the Deputy Secretary of Defence, was appointed Deputy Comptroller, but Mr Fourie declined the appointment as Comptroller and Mr Rive was appointed in his stead. Mr C. W. C. van Heerden of the staff of the abolished Secretariat became Deputy Comptroller.

Developments after 1966

Thus at the outset, the new Comptroller's Section was staffed by civilian personnel. The change to military control of Secretariat functions had been sudden and largely unexpected, and was only the start of a long process of alteration in the functioning of the SADF. The responsibilities of the new Section were therefore not fully defined, neither was its establishment determined nor its internal operation satisfactory. Only in 1972 would a lasting solution (total militarization) to many of the problems be attained. In the meantime the Comptroller was responsible for matters relating to finances, personnel, stores, property, and general administration.

First moves towards reorganization involved decentralization of certain functions, as envisaged in the Report of the Verster Committee. With the assistance of the Public Service Inspectorate, the administrative functional field was surveyed and it was found possible to decentralize certain aspects of the work of the Chief Accountant's Office. This was done by delegating certain responsibilities and duties to the Army, Air Force, Navy, Chief of Logistic Services², and Surgeon General. The required accounting personnel were attached to these organizations.

Land and building matters were integrated with the functions of the Chief of Logistic Services. By 1968 the benefits of the abolition of the Secretariat were evident.

The greatest change so far came toward the end of 1968, when a start was made with militarizing the civilian Comptroller section. This resulted from a decision by the Commandant-General at the end of 1967 that the whole matter of integration of functions and satisfactory employment of civilians in their several musterings should be settled. To speed matters an internal inspection was carried-out by the Defence Force Inspectorate. The intention was that the Comptroller would continue to be responsible for financial control, that his Section would deal with contracts, and that the Chief Paymaster would become part of the Comptroller organization.

Introduction of a data-processing function to the Comptroller's Section was intimately linked to the adoption of programme budgeting by the Defence Force. This was one of the major reforms made practicable by the abolition of the Secretariat. Integration of the Defence organization made it possible to base financial planning on an assessment of main objectives and not in terms of particular items. Considerable sums of money were saved by implementation of the new system, which became the responsibility of a Directorate of Programming and Budgeting, which was established in 1967 under the control of the Chief of Defence Staff.

The Defence Force Inspectorate reported on 11 October 1968 that there would not be any difficulty in transferring the Directorate of Programming and Budgeting from the Chief of Defence Staff to the Comptroller, and that the step was indeed advisable. The Inspectorate also recommended militarization of certain sections of the Comptroller's organization.

Militarization was a subject which had caused a good deal of dissension since 1966. The Commandant-General was in favour of it, on the ground that it was the only way in which to ensure an efficient and fully integrated Defence Force. By 1968 militarization of the Comptroller's Section was approved.

From the point of view of morale, as well as organizational efficiency, this was probably a good thing, for ever since 1966 the civilian staff had been uncertain of their futures and their career prospects. Militarization would eliminate such problems.

During 1968 Mr Rive was transferred to the

Department of Posts and Telegraphs to become Postmaster-General. On 1 November 1968 Major General E. Pienaar was appointed Comptroller, the Directorate of Programming and Budgeting was transferred to his Section, and militarization of the Section was initiated as official policy. The whole Section militarized with the exception of the sub-section Finances (Chief Accountant) and the Defence Stores Inspectorate. Personnel of the sub-section dealing with contracts and claims also militarized, but at this stage were still mustered under the Chief of Personnel in the sub-section of the Judge-Advocate General. On 13 May 1969 this sub-section was placed under control of the Comptroller.

The reorganization of 1 November 1968 was the climax to the dissolution of the organization of the old Secretariat. Five Defence Force Sections were involved in the reorganization, each of them taking-over specific old Secretariat functions. They were the Chief of Defence Staff, the Comptroller, the Quartermaster-General, the Chief of Personnel, and the Chief of Naval Staff. Thus it was possible at last to abolish the official designation 'Secretary for Defence', and the Commandant-General became permanent head of the Department of Defence and Departmental accounting officer as well as the chief military executive officer. Combination of the military and civilian elements of the Department as an integrated unit under a single head became a reality, although development of an efficient Defence Force organization would continue for some years yet.

At the end of 1968 the Comptroller Section comprised four subsections: the Directorate of Programming and Budgeting; Finances (Chief Accountant); Stores Administration; and Stores Control (Stores Inspectorate). Attention now turned to three subsections: that of the Chief Paymaster, that dealing with contracts and claims, and that of Finances. The first two were under control of the Chief of Personnel, where they did not functionally fit, and the subsection Finances was due for militarization.

On 13 May 1969 the subsection Contracts and Claims was transferred to the Comptroller's Section. Although it was decided that the Chief Paymaster was to be placed under the Comptroller's authority in order to resolve a long-standing difficulty about placement of

the Chief Paymaster (which had arisen because of the close liaison between that subsection and the Chief of Personnel Section which it served, and the equally close liaison between it and the chief financial authorities), this decision was not implemented. As far as the subsection Finances was concerned, its posts were converted to military posts at the end of 1969 and militarization took place early in 1970, which meant that the accountants were now in uniform.

Further changes were envisaged. After a Public Service Commission inspection during 1969, which recommended the militarization of the accounting branch, the post of Comptroller was upgraded in order to give its holder authority consonant with his status as chief finance officer of the Department. Thus on 1 June 1970, Maj Genl Pienaar was promoted to Lieutenant-General, and Mr W. J. J. Scholtz, then chief accountant of the Department, was appointed Deputy Comptroller in his civilian capacity.

By August 1970, therefore, the Comptroller's section comprised three Directorates — Fi-



Lt Genl E. Pienaar as Major General shortly after taking over as Comptroller, SADF.

nances, Programming and Budgeting, Stores and General Administration — and the Stores Inspectorate. This meant that with the exception of certain functions of the disbanded Secretariat, and the addition of the Directorate of Programming and Budgeting, the functions of the Comptroller comprised the compilation and programming of the Defence Force budget, control and administration of funds voted by Parliament for defence purposes, and stores inspection and administration connected therewith.

But various problems of organization remained. The Defence Force was growing at a speed without precedent, and it was proving impossible to determine personnel strengths and section functions with accuracy. In March 1970 Maj Genl Pienaar noted that the transfer of Secretariat functions to new military sections was causing duplication of work within the Comptroller organization and that the section was not keeping-up with all the new functions for which it was responsible.

Part of the solution lay in total militarization. In July 1970 the Chief Inspector of Defence Stores and Accounts recommended militarization of the stores inspectorate, noting also that this would complete militarization of the Comptroller section, but his proposal could not be acted on immediately. Subsequently the post of Deputy Comptroller also passed to a military man when Mr Scholtz retired on 1 April 1972, to be succeeded by Maj Genl J. E. Viljoen.

On 1 June 1972 the Stores Inspectorate was militarized, and redesignated the Directorate of Internal Audit. This involved extension of the scope of the duties of the personnel concerned, for they were now full-fledged auditors and not simply stores inspectors. It was also an historic action marking the conclusion of the militarization of the old Secretariat. Furthermore, on 1 July 1972 the Comptroller officers were remustered into a new corps, the Finance Service Corps,³ distinguishing them from general administrative service personnel.

On 1 April 1974 internal financial administration was improved when a Directorate of Expenditure Control was established, mainly as a result of the amendment of the Act in respect of the Defence Special Equipment Account.

The Chief Paymaster was eventually transferred to the Comptroller's section on 1 January 1975.

Toward the end of 1975 the overall responsibilities of the Section were substantially extended when two other Defence Force Sections were disbanded and most of their functions transferred to the Comptroller.

The Sections concerned were the Director-General, General Administration and the Director-General Management Systems. A new standardized staff structure for the entire Defence Force had been in operation for some time and it had become increasingly apparent that the Comptroller was in fact the departmental director of the Defence Force. This meant that the existence of two other separate management organizations was not justified.

Organization inspections were carried out and on 28 October 1975 the Minister of Defence approved the reports on the disbandment of the two Sections.

On 1 November 1975 the new organization became effective. Three Directorates were transferred from the Director-General Management Systems: the Documentation Service, Language Service, and Directorate of Elec-

tronic Data Processing. From the Director-General, General Administration came the Directorate of Military Museums.

To deal with the enlarged work load, the top administrative structure of the Comptroller's Section was reorganized. Since November 1975 it has again undergone change, and at present⁴ there are three General Officers — a Comptroller (Lieutenant-General), a Director-General Management (Major-General), and a Director-General Finances (Major-General). The two Directorates of Electronic Data Processing and Programming and Budgeting are directly responsible to the Comptroller.

Over the space of ten years great development has occurred within the SA Defence Force. A wheel has turned full circle. Reorganization of the Defence structure is complete in its major details.

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1. Research for this article was carried-out in official South African Defence Force records. In terms of South African archive regulations, files less than 50 years old may not be quoted in footnotes.
 2. This is the designation by which the Quartermaster-General was known for a short period.
 3. Redesignated the SA Military Finance Service on 1 January 1975.
 4. July 1976.