

# Examining support of South African Defence Force conscription by the mainstream Afrikaans sister churches (1968–1991)

Will Gordon<sup>266</sup> 

*Department of History, University of Zululand*

---

## Abstract

From the 1950s to the 1990s, white men were conscripted to serve in the South African Defence Force (SADF). Although it varied in its application and duration, conscription was an undeniable, and often unavoidable, part of life for white South Africa. While it was not universally accepted, and certainly not universally popular, resistance was largely confined to English-speaking citizens. Objection was often seen as cowardly or treacherous. Conscription had an influence on the psyche of white South Africa and was viewed in a serious light by various religious denominations. Ecclesiastical positions varied and often changed over the course of time. In the main, Afrikaans churches were sympathetic towards conscription, while English churches were likely to oppose it. The latter position has been extensively documented, but the former remains neglected. This article analyses the role that mainstream Afrikaans sister churches played in supporting the National Party policies of conscription and ensuring their congregants' compliance. It also presents a discussion on the relationship between those churches and the SADF, *inter alia* by referring to changes in conscription legislation and the reaction of the churches to those changes.

**Keywords:** conscription, national service, South African Defence Force, Reformed Church, End Conscription Campaign, Defence Act, Chaplain Service.

## Introduction

While much has been written about the role of South African (SA) churches in opposing apartheid and the attendant policy of conscription instituted by the South African Defence Force (SADF), few authors have examined the role of churches in supporting conscription. This article first reflected on the socio-ecclesiastical characteristics and effect of conscription in South Africa and briefly reviewed the opposition to conscription by churches. Secondly, the study drew on primary sources from the archives of the three mainstream Afrikaans sister churches – the Nederduitse Gereformeerde Kerk (NGK) (Dutch Reformed Church), the Nederduitsch Hervormde Kerk van Afrika (NHKA) (Dutch Reformed Church of Africa) and the Gereformeerde Kerke in Suid-Afrika (GKSA) (Reformed Churches in South Africa) – to analyse the relationship between the church and the military in apartheid South Africa. Reference is often made to changes in legislation regarding conscription. This not only places ecclesiastical events in their politico-military

context, but also serves as a yardstick to judge the support by churches for increasingly demanding conscription policies.

While voices were certainly raised against the policies of conscription from within the Afrikaans sister churches, these were a minority, and a discussion of these voices fell outside the scope of the current study. The internal tension between supporters and detractors, however, is a topic that deserves further research and could draw on ecclesiastical documents, such as the Cottesloe Declaration,<sup>267</sup> *Ras, volk en nasie*<sup>268</sup> (Race, people and nation), *Kerk en samelewing*<sup>269</sup> (Church and society), *Geloof en protes*<sup>270</sup> (Faith and protest), *Stormkompas*<sup>271</sup> (Storm compass), and the Belhar Confession.<sup>272</sup>

It should firstly be noted that, although the three Afrikaans sister churches are discussed individually, they formed a largely united front in their support of the SADF. The comparative lengths of the subsections in this article are not necessarily indicative of the level of support, but rather of the availability and accessibility of information from the archives of the different churches. Secondly, this article does not attempt to criticise the position that any church took, whether in support of or in opposition to conscription or, more importantly, to detract from the present-day validity of the churches (although certain statements and/or assertions may be questioned in historical reflection). The article merely provides a historical perspective on the less-discussed side of the ecclesiastical–military relationship in the SADF. It should also be noted that support of conscription did not necessarily equate to support of apartheid, since different theological considerations were at play. The theological underpinning of the support by churches of conscription is discussed in the next section.

### **Conscription in apartheid South Africa**

Conscription was influenced and exerted its own influence on different spheres of South African society.

#### *The socio-political sphere*

Although conscription, by means of a ballot system (similar to that used at the beginning of the United States–Vietnam war) was introduced in South Africa in the early 1950s,<sup>273</sup> resistance was largely limited to criticism of the ballot system itself, rather than the concept of conscription,<sup>274</sup> although churches, such as the Jehovah’s Witnesses, rejected conscription from the start. The fact that balloting was predominantly done by Afrikaans-speaking, National Party (NP) supporters irked the general public as well as some leading politicians. The perceived reluctance of Afrikaners to join the Allied war effort during World War II led Sir De Villiers Graaff, leader of the Opposition at the time, to comment that the people who were responsible for the balloting of conscripts “refused to fight during World War II. Now they are apparently listing the young South Africans who are to fight during World War III”.<sup>275</sup> Although the idea that South Africans fighting in World War II were almost exclusively from the English-speaking communities of the country has been debunked largely by researchers, such as Albert Grundlingh,<sup>276</sup> a historian at Stellenbosch University, this is, nonetheless, indicative of the concerns of South Africans during the 1950s and 1960s. In practice, however, early conscription did not prove as disastrous as

some had predicted. Despite the NP overseeing balloting, the Defence Force continued to be viewed as a predominantly English-speaking force until the 1960s,<sup>277</sup> to the extent that a committee, chaired by World War II Veteran Brig. HB Klopper, was established in 1953 to “create a more even geographical and language distribution in relation to the manpower made available by the introduction of the ballot system”.<sup>278</sup> The net result was that there was little or no actual resistance to the policy of conscription during the 1950s and 1960s along language lines.

In a trend that was to continue until the 1990s, early resistance to conscription came mainly from religious objectors. In the Union Defence Force (UDF), conscientious objection was allowed under the King’s (later Queen’s) Regulations, but the South African Military Code of 1957 effectively eliminated the possibility of conscientious objection.<sup>279</sup> The only exception was that members of pacifist churches, notably Jehovah’s Witnesses, could request to be assigned non-combat roles in the SADF.<sup>280</sup> In 1967, conscription became universal for all white men in South Africa. Previously, conscription had taken place through a ballot system. The new, universal conscription policy continued the original provision for objection in the Defence Act (No. 44 of 1957).<sup>281</sup> Without being bogged down in the complicated legalities of the Defence Amendment Act (No. 85 of 1967),<sup>282</sup> a few factors are worth discussing. The latter act allowed for two courses of action. The first possibility, a new introduction referred to as “allotment”, allowed the “registering officer” to assign a recruit to non-combatant duties, provided he *knew* that the recruit belonged to a “recognised religious denomination by the tenets whereof its members may not participate in war”.<sup>283</sup> Significantly, the authority to grant this concession lay with the registering officer, i.e. one person, at his own discretion, who had the power to decide whether to indulge a conscript’s objection or not. The second possibility, “exemption”, did not, as might be assumed, exempt a conscript from national service. In effect, the outcome of exemption was exactly the same as that of allotment: military service in a non-combatant role, again based on belonging to a denomination that forbade participation in war.<sup>284</sup> The major differences between allotment and exemption were that exemption was considered by an exemption board (jointly appointed by the Ministry of Manpower and the Ministry of Defence), rather than a single officer, and that the exemption board did not have to *know* that the conscript belonged to the denomination in question; they just had to be convinced of it. Exemption was essentially carried over from the original act (No. 44 of 1957) with few changes. Significantly, both these routes comprised, in reality, religious objection rather than conscientious objection. The Defence Act (No. 44 of 1957) made no provision whatsoever for objections that were not based on adherence to a specific denomination. Additionally, the church had no input into the decision of whether objections had to be considered or not.

South Africa moved increasingly towards a security state from the mid-1970s,<sup>285</sup> and conscientious objection came to be viewed as dissent against the government. Daniel Conway from Loughborough University holds, “[a] key tenet of the state’s claim to legitimacy is the right to organise for war and define the terms and content of the national security discourse.”<sup>286</sup> He also describes the relationship between the state and conscription, as well as the way in which conscription influences social identity. Before stating –

Conscription as a performative concept is premised on republican norms of citizenship as a practice where political status and agency are earned and acknowledged rather than automatically conferred<sup>287</sup>

he claims –

Citizenship's central role in defining an individual's relationship with the state connects it with other politicised forms of identity, such as race and gender, which are constructed to mark boundaries and to include or exclude, empower or disempower.<sup>288</sup>

Conway's interpretation of conscription is particularly reminiscent of apartheid South Africa, where the state certainly did their utmost to distinguish between those who were included and those who were excluded, and between those who were empowered and those who were disempowered.<sup>289</sup> This process started at an early age, with the government setting great store by the cadet system, in which boys were compelled – and girls encouraged – to participate in drill teams.<sup>290</sup> Civil disobedience and unrest within the borders of South Africa were challenging the efficacy of the government,<sup>291</sup> pushing the state towards the precipice of increasingly severe retaliation. Pretoria had exhibited the practical implications of the national security discourse at Sharpeville in 1960, which resulted in a widespread international crisis of legitimacy of the internal policies of government, underlined by the doctrine of apartheid.<sup>292</sup> In reaction, Afrikaner society – with the support of their churches – emphasised the importance of obedience to the state through good citizenship, even if it meant standing alone against the perceived “total onslaught” of communism.<sup>293</sup>

The theory, perpetrated by the NP government, that South Africa faced a “multi-dimensional threat [read: ‘total onslaught’] in the sense that the Republic's enemies attack the constitutional, the economic, the social and the security bases in accordance with a co-ordinated plan or strategy”<sup>294</sup> lay not only at the heart of conscription, but also at the heart of white SA citizenship, or even identity. Failure to render military service when it was needed not only carried the stigma of being a ‘bad’ citizen, but also detracted from the very being of the young, white SA male. Although the concept of a “multi-dimensional threat”, as well as Pretoria's “Total National Strategy”<sup>295</sup> to combat it, was only verbalised in the 1970s, the reasoning that underpinned it had been present in SA thinking for much longer. James Roherty, from the Department of Political Science at the University of South Carolina, contends that SA Prime Minister PW Botha was “basically of a managerial bent”<sup>296</sup> and that his natural inclination was to think from a managerial perspective, trying to find ways in which to manage the status quo, rather than ways to implement new ideas. This may have been the reason why the Total National Strategy was only implemented in the 1970s, but former Regimental Sergeant Major of the Rand Light Infantry, John Keene, illustrates that, in the mind of the average, white South African, the road to a Total National Strategy might have started in World War II:

I was born in 1946 [...] At school [...] most of our fathers had served in the Second World War [...] And the mindset that we had developed at that stage

was that our fathers had fought a war for the liberation of the human race and that the world offered a lot. The big problem that seemed to be on the minds of our parents was the threat of Communism.<sup>297</sup>

Additionally, by the mid-1980s, South Africans were increasingly becoming aware that 'The Border' was as much an ideological construct as it was a reference to the boundary dividing Angola and Namibia.<sup>298</sup> In popular Afrikaans discourse, the ideological 'Border' had expanded to encompass the perceived greater communist threat, both in Southern and South Africa. The recollections of an English-speaking national serviceman, called up in 1982, are indicative of the dichotomy between Afrikaans- and English-speaking South Africans and might reflect why the NP government felt that it had become necessary to formalise their approach to protect South Africa:

I didn't really believe in this whole Communistic [sic] onslaught and all of that. I sort of believed that [...] affectively [sic] we were in Angola because of a buffer, and affectively [sic] it was to keep space between us and whatever. I didn't really believe in this, that there was a Red under every bed and under every tree. That was propaganda [...] The Afrikaners believed that they were going to swarm over us.<sup>299</sup>

The Soweto uprising in 1976, now commemorated in South Africa as Youth Day on 16 June, sensitised the broader SA public to the role of the SADF in suppressing unrest. At the time, the war in Angola and Namibia had not yet reached anything resembling a climax and, for the most part, conscripts were still keen, if somewhat uncertain, to do their national service. When it became apparent, even before the events of 1976, that their duty might not be to protect the South African borders against the ever-maligned 'Red Danger', but rather against internal unrest, questions started to be raised.

In 1974, the Defence Act was amended twice, by the Defence Amendment Act (No. 8 of 1974) and the Defence Further Amendment Act (No. 83 of 1974). Together, these acts had a significant influence on objection to conscription. While the provisions for religious objection in previous iterations of the Defence Act were still in place, the government was taking increasing measures to curb the rise of conscientious objection. To this end, the Defence Further Amendment Act (No. 83 of 1974) made it a criminal offence to incite, or even suggest, conscientious objection.<sup>300</sup>

Political commentator Laurie Nathan holds that it was primarily the English-speaking universities and churches that were the initial catalysts for resistance to conscription, and claims that an average of 1 750 conscripts failed to report for national service from 1975–1978 and that 12 conscientious objectors were imprisoned between 1978 and 1982.<sup>301</sup> Nathan's contention is supported by an SADF Intelligence report from 1978, which claimed that the Youth Christian Workers (YCW), a religious organisation supported both financially and ideologically by the Roman Catholic Church in South Africa, not only had great influence among the black population in South Africa, but was also "reactivating" the conscientious objection movement to influence the (white) SA youth against conscription.<sup>302</sup> Gavin Cawthra of the University of the Witwatersrand adds to this

debate by maintaining that white South Africans who chose exile over national service in the 1970s and 1980s were sympathetic to the plight of black South Africans, but found it difficult to gain acceptance within black consciousness (BC) movements. Many of the anti-apartheid, anti-conscription movements and organisations that were established by exiled conscripts were “driven by the exigencies of their exclusion from the liberation struggle by BC activists”.<sup>303</sup>

Dissent from within, in the form of conscientious objection, from one of the pillars of the SA security state, became an increasingly vexing problem to Pretoria. The Conscientious Objector Support Group (COSG) and the National Union of South African Students (NUSAS) became increasingly vociferous in their support of conscientious objection and their opposition to militarisation. Although the majority of white South Africa still supported the NP policy of conscription and were largely uncritical of the way in which the SADF was deployed, the government was sufficiently concerned about the activities of organisations, such as COSG and NUSAS, to introduce the Defence Amendment Act in 1983. Probably in an attempt to garner the support of the SA clergy, this act provided the opportunity for *religious* objectors (as opposed to *conscientious* objectors), who refused to serve in any armed force, to perform their national service in government departments other than the SADF, albeit at one and a half times the length of military service.<sup>304</sup> On the other hand, the sentence for *conscientious* objectors, or those who specifically refused to serve in the SADF, was increased from a maximum of two to six years.<sup>305</sup> The “carrot-and-stick” approach that American political scientist Richard Dale believes permeated Pretoria’s foreign policy in Africa<sup>306</sup> also seems to have found its way into domestic policy regarding conscription.

The contention that garnering support from the clergy was a contributing factor in Pretoria’s decision to change the attitude towards religious objection is reflected in the way in which the Exemption Board, deciding on applications for exemption from national service on religious grounds, was constituted. According to the stipulations of the Defence Amendment Act (No. 34 of 1983), the chairman of the board had to be a judge or retired judge of the Supreme Court of South Africa. The other five compulsory members of the board had to be three theologians (the wording of the act does not make it clear whether ‘theologians’ had to be interpreted in the academic sense of the word, or whether ordinary clergy would have sufficed) of different denominations and two members of the SADF, one of which had to be a chaplain.<sup>307</sup> A board that had to make decisions about religious objection was bound to contain a high percentage of theologians, but the excessive weighting in favour of men of the cloth over men of the law would also have given churches a sense of having a hand in their own destiny. If the SADF was prepared to rely so heavily on expertise from outside its own ranks, surely, the church must have reasoned, the SADF were making a genuine attempt to accommodate religious objectors.

The various Defence Amendment Acts had two consequences for the relationship between the state (and its armed forces) and the church. Firstly, Pretoria prevented SA churches from joining forces against conscription (and other political policies). The Afrikaans-speaking churches had always been more sympathetic towards the NP than the English-speaking ones, but the mollification provided by the act soothed many a conscience

among Afrikaans theologians. The largest Afrikaans denomination, the NGK, remained a stalwart supporter of the NP for another decade and never actively entered the debate about the validity or morality of conscription. Other Afrikaans churches largely followed suit, and the English churches remained the spiritual voice of caution. This is exemplified by the number of successful applications granted in 1984 in terms of the 1983 Amendment Act: 101 Jehovah's Witnesses, two from the Worldwide Church of God, three Anglicans, two Methodists, one Baptist, one Seventh Day Adventist, and five Christadelphians.<sup>308</sup> Secondly, by creating a clear dichotomy between *religious* objection and *conscientious* objection, Pretoria maintained the aforementioned "right to organise for war and define the terms and content of the national security discourse"<sup>309</sup> and the right to protect its own political legitimacy. Religious objectors were now no longer a noteworthy threat to the perceived sovereign rights of the state, as their protest was now diverted to spiritual rather than political spheres. At the same time, government had provided itself with a mandate to act decisively against those who opposed them politically. This is echoed by the marked increase in successful petitions for religious objection. By 1988, Jehovah's Witnesses alone accounted for 787 successful petitions, with 70 Plymouth Brethren, 57 Anglicans, 51 congregants from the Worldwide Church of God, 46 Methodists, and 30 Romans Catholics comprising the top six. However, the appearance of comparatively unknown denominations, such as the Victory Faith Centre, the Midnight Awakening Call Association, the Greytown Christian Centre and the Suppliant Faithist – albeit in modest numbers – indicated that the new law might have left a loophole that could be exploited in favourable circumstances.<sup>310</sup> Nonetheless, the almost complete absence of Afrikaans-speaking objectors highlights the dichotomy that existed between English and Afrikaans churches in their views on conscription. While it should be kept in mind that many men simply did their national service because it was required by law, rather than spending much time reflecting on its legitimacy,<sup>311</sup> a reflection on the theology underpinning the absence of objectors from Afrikaans sister churches further illuminates the dichotomy between the English and Afrikaans sections of the SA society.

### *The theological sphere*

While the emphasis of this article is on the historiography, it is useful to reflect briefly on the hermeneutical considerations of the sister churches in their support of conscription. As mentioned in the introduction, the hermeneutics and exegesis that permeated the discussion by churches about conscription were different to those used in discussions about apartheid. Support of conscription and support of apartheid should therefore not be seen as two sides of the same coin, although there might have been overlaps at times.

The sister churches mainly used the hermeneutical lens of Augustine's Just War theory, including later developments on the theory by theologians such as Thomas Aquinas, Desiderius Erasmus, Martin Luther and John Calvin.<sup>312</sup> While a comprehensive discussion of this theory fell outside the scope of this study, some key points can be highlighted. Augustine held the view that war is an inherent part of humankind and, given the prevalence of war in human history, part of God's plan for humankind. Since God created *ex nihilo* (from nothing), war forms part of creation.<sup>313</sup> Going further, Augustine asked the rhetorical question, "[w]hen war is undertaken in obedience to God, who would

rebuke, or humble, or crush the pride of man, it must be allowed to be a righteous war?"<sup>314</sup> In a striking parallel to the views of the NP government in South Africa, Augustine was concerned with guarding the Pax Romana and its attendant orderliness – divine orderliness, since the Roman Empire of his time was nominally a Christian state – against the chaos that would follow a “barbarian” invasion.<sup>315</sup> As indicated in the previous section, Pretoria was keen to position South Africa as a bastion against communism, a position that many churches (Afrikaans and English) accepted. Against this backdrop, the Afrikaans sister churches viewed pacifism as an untenable position although, like Augustine, they had certain requirements that had to be met. These included waging war (and conscripting) only under the authority of a legal authority, minimising the impact of war on civilians, and waging war humanely.<sup>316</sup> Irrespective of the political policies of government, the sister churches therefore felt theologically compelled to oppose the spread of communism<sup>317</sup> – a social ideology inextricably linked to the concept of ‘total onslaught’ – and the logical way to do so was by supporting SADF efforts in Namibia and Angola and the associated policy of conscription. While a comprehensive theological criticism of their position fell outside the scope of this study, it deserves attention in future research. Gary Baines from Rhodes University claims that several “universal war themes” – inter alia dehumanising the enemy and gratuitous violence – could be found in the SADF.<sup>318</sup> These will provide ideal lenses to compare the socio-military realities of war with the theological debates about supporting it.

### **The South African Chaplains’ Service**

Although the Chaplains’ Service went through several name changes – in 1973, the GKSA referred to it as the “Corps of Chaplains”<sup>319</sup> and the “Chaplains Section in 1976”<sup>320</sup> – this article uses the term ‘Chaplains’ Service’ throughout for the sake of clarity. The Chaplains’ Service published a document titled *Jy en militêre diensplig* (You and military service) – unfortunately undated, but it refers to Gen. Magnus Malan as Chief of the SADF, placing the date between 1976 and 1980<sup>321</sup> – to prepare young Christian men for national service. In the document, the Chaplains’ Service emphasised that national service is the duty of every citizen and, significantly, the contribution of national service would turn the SADF into a defence force “uit die volk vir die volk [from the people for the people]”. However, drawing on Christian tradition, they emphasised that Christians’ “Godgegewe [God-given]” duty was to defend their country, thereby fulfilling their calling of bringing the gospel to heathen Africa.<sup>322</sup> Interestingly, they also drew on young men’s emotions by claiming that they would not only serve God by completing their national service, but also protect their “mamma” and “meisie [girlfriend]”.<sup>323</sup> Ian Liebenberg indicates an insightful relationship between ideology and crisis, which can be seen echoed in the Chaplains’ Service. He claims that crises challenge the legitimacy of regimes, and that establishing or reinforcing certain ideologies is an effective method of combating such challenges.<sup>324</sup> The emotional appeal of the Chaplains’ Service not only enforced the notion of protection against the perceived “total onslaught” against South Africa, but also reinforced the notion that national service was tied to masculinity. By contrast, the SADF tried to present objection as effeminate.<sup>325</sup>

This appeal is also found in a document published by the Algemene Jeugkommissie (General Youth Commission) of the NGK, which made the rather nationalistic claim that it is the duty of every national serviceman to ensure that the “land wat die Here aan ons gegee het [country which the Lord gave us]” is defended “vir onself en ons kinders [for ourselves and our children]”.<sup>326</sup> While this was an oft-repeated phrase in apartheid South Africa, its inclusion in a document issued by the NGK seems to indicate that the leadership of the church (at least those closely involved with the SADF, i.e. serving in the Chaplains’ Service) realised that simply calling on their members for commitment to their religion was likely to be insufficient. They therefore included a more personal appeal in an attempt to convince more people to embrace military service. Taking this argument further, it can be argued that the NGK, by doing so, was going to all possible lengths to support not only its own agenda, but also that of government. Of course, it is a long-held Christian belief that the church should function within the parameters set by – and, indeed, in support of – the state.<sup>327</sup> Nevertheless, falling back on emotional appeals seems out of character for a religious organisation supposedly serving the state.

In something resembling delegation of authority from the spiritual to the secular, *Jy en militêre diensplig* informed people on the verge of starting their national service that, even though they might not understand the reasoning behind the training methodology, “[d]aar mag geen vrae gevra word nie! Onvoorraardelik! [No questions may be asked, under no circumstances!]”. Once again, they explain this by drawing on the established Christian tradition of supporting the state authority, by indicating that God wants society to be well organised and structured, and that the authorities achieve this by maintaining a defence force through national service.<sup>328</sup> The first indication of reciprocity by the SADF (and, by extension, government) is found in the section on chaplains and worship services. The document made it very clear that new recruits would meet a chaplain soon after reporting (possibly even before receiving all of their equipment). It provided quite a detailed description of the process to follow if the resident chaplain is from a different denomination. It also affirmed that Gen. Magnus Malan, Chief of the SADF at the time, personally desired every national serviceman to attend a religious service at least once a week.<sup>329</sup> Clearly, in exchange for encouraging potential national servicemen to embrace national service, the church expected a degree of influence from the SADF, and received it. Rather naively, the document attempted to extend this influence to the use of foul language during training, and claimed that the SADF had very strong regulations prohibiting members of the permanent force from using foul language, and promised that any complaints would be dealt with decisively. While it is apparent that the Chaplains’ Service was trying to discourage the use of foul language among its national servicemen members, the ambiguous phrasing of the sentence is interesting: “[w]anneer daar klagtes kom oor onwelvoeglike taal of vloekery, word daar onverbiddelik opgetree [when complaints are received about foul language or swearing, decisive action is taken]”.<sup>330</sup> It is unlikely that any such complaints would have been well received by the SADF. In the same vein, while *Jy en militêre diensplig* promised decisive action, it did not indicate at whom such action would be directed. Whether this was deliberate is open to debate, but it certainly seems to have covered all bases: on religious grounds, it could claim to have acted correctly by discouraging bad language, but on secular grounds, it fulfilled its duty to the SADF by encouraging potential national servicemen to embrace their national service.

Apparently, the Chaplains' Service realised that the guidelines provided in the late 1970s were unlikely to be successful, because they issued an amended publication in 1983, titled *Beheersing van die tong* (Controlling the tongue).<sup>331</sup> In this document, the Chaplains' Service drew much more heavily on scripture to guide the actions of national servicemen regarding reaction to foul language. Rather than suggesting that national servicemen lodge a complaint right away, it drew on the gospel of Matthew to suggest that they try to address the issue directly first, then take someone with them, and only after that, complain to the relevant military structures.<sup>332</sup> This change of stance had two outcomes: firstly, it was more realistic advice for recruits, and, secondly, it placed greater emphasis on the religious aspect of the conduct of a national serviceman in the army.

These examples are microcosms of the difficult situation in which any chaplaincy finds itself: on the one hand, it has a religious responsibility (arguably to a higher power), but on the other hand, the chaplaincy is in service of the defence force. The gravitation of the Chaplains' Service increasingly towards the religious aspects rather than the military is indicative of the growing influence of the church on the SADF.

### **Nederduitse Gereformeerde Kerk (NGK) (Dutch Reformed Church)**

In a report to the executive committee of the General Youth Commission, the NGK noted that the church could play a role in preparing the youth for national service.<sup>333</sup> The NGK clearly took its role within the SADF seriously, as evidenced by a decision taken during negotiations between chaplains (presumably from the NGK, serving in the SADF) and the executive committee of the General Youth Commission. During these negotiations, the committee indicated that a process had to be established whereby reporting on the ministry of the church to national servicemen could be done officially. These reports not only served at local level, but were also consolidated up to the General Synod, the highest authority of the church.<sup>334</sup> At the same meeting, attendees provided extensive motivation in favour of suspending the requirement that congregants had to undergo a full year of catechism before they were allowed to confess their faith before the congregation and consequently be confirmed by the church. The attendees justified this decision by indicating that the SADF allowed the church up to 30 hours during basic training to minister to new national servicemen, which compared favourably to the approximately 20 hours of 'normal' catechism through the course of a year.<sup>335</sup>

The concessions that both parties (the SADF and the NGK) were willing to make in this agreement are significant. From the side of the SADF, sacrificing 30 hours of training time during an already brief training period was indicative of the lengths to which they were willing to go in order to keep the support of the NGK (and other churches, as this concession would not have applied exclusively to the NGK). On the other hand, confirmation is a central tenet of the NGK. Although confirmation is not considered a sacrament, it does serve to confirm the sacrament of baptism; members are expected to affirm that they, as adults, accept the commitments that their parents made at their baptism as children. It also allows confirmands to participate in the sacrament of communion. At the time, they were not allowed to do so before confirmation. The fact that the NGK even considered compromising on this central component of their ministry

indicates a very close bond between the church and the defence force. Another example of this relationship is clear from the 1982 General Synod, where the NGK prepared an extensive document outlining historical resistance to military service (and, by extension, conscription). The intention was to indicate that the historical examples dated back to circumstances different to those in South Africa at the time, and that a blanket acceptance of objection to conscription could not be considered by the NGK.<sup>336</sup> This coincided with the removal of Johan Heyns – one of the more vociferous critics of the position of the NGK towards apartheid and conscription – from an authoritative position in the church. He was reinstated and elected as moderator of the church in 1986 and was expected to be instrumental in shaping the rejection of apartheid by the church,<sup>337</sup> although this did not extend to rejecting conscription.

The relationship between the Chaplains' Service of the SADF and the NGK was clearly indicated in communication between the General Youth Commission and the Chaplain General on 21 January 1986. The Youth Commission expressed a desire to employ a national serviceman in a full-time capacity to develop literature for the Chaplains' Service. However, the Commission did not have funds to remunerate someone in such a position. In a clear indication of the spirit of cooperation between the NGK and the Chaplains' Service, the Chaplain General – while indicating that no official channels existed for the remuneration of such a position by the SADF – offered to include a sum, equal to the remuneration for the position, in the budget for the next year. It would still not be paid as a salary, but the amount would be paid to the Youth Commission who, in turn, could then remunerate the national serviceman.<sup>338</sup> The SADF was notoriously reluctant to make any concessions to national service. Although this concession was only for one national serviceman, the fact that the Chaplain General was willing to bend the rules to find ways to accommodate the Youth Commission is indicative of a strong relationship between the two organisations. The strong influence of the NGK in the Chaplains' Service is apparent from the fact that the Chaplain General made this offer despite the NGK admitting in a presentation to the Chaplain General on 18 November 1985 that having only one person (from the NGK) developing literature for the SADF limited the exposure of all national servicemen recruits to literature developed by the NGK.<sup>339</sup> This was contrary to the SADF policy that all soldiers could worship in their own denomination.

Another example of the tacit support that the SADF received from members of many churches (in this case, the NGK) can be found in a response to a Youth Commission memorandum on ministry to national servicemen returning from performing their military service. The memorandum suggested that ministers pay particular attention to returning national servicemen in their congregations, establishing whether these national servicemen had problems reverting to civilian life. The memorandum included examples, such as looking for work and re-adapting to civilian society.<sup>340</sup> While this memorandum in no way implied criticism of the influence of national service on congregants, it at least appeared to be cognisant of the possibility of national servicemen struggling to reintegrate into civilian society and attempts to take steps to address the problem. However, when asked for comment on the memorandum, a presumably senior member of the NGK made a statement that reflected the sentiment of at least a part of the NGK membership:

Laat ons nie te veel maak van die tema van ‘aanpassing’ nie. Dit is wel waar dat aanpassing in minder of meerder mate nodig sal wees (soos ons almal maar het na ’n vakansie of ’n vreemde roetine) [Let us not make too much of the theme of ‘adapting’. It is true that adapting will be necessary to an extent (like we all have to do after a holiday or an unfamiliar routine)].<sup>341</sup>

While the effects of national service on the recruits have only been studied fairly recently,<sup>342</sup> comparing national service to a holiday borders on the ridiculous. The episode seems to indicate something of a disagreement within the leadership structures of the NGK. Certain members, such as those serving on the Youth Commission, while not necessarily critical of national service, at least acknowledged that it had social (and, by extension, religious) consequences, and they tried to put measures in place to mitigate these. By contrast, however, there was a group in the church who would not brook any challenge to the legitimacy of national service, even to the extent of comparing participation in a war to taking a holiday, thereby downplaying the need for religious leaders to intervene and, potentially, implicitly criticising the SADF policy of conscription.

The synod of the Western and Southern Cape, drafted a fascinating document at their 2015 meeting. In this document, while falling short of explicitly admitting that the NGK had supported the policy of conscription during apartheid, delegates admitted that national service “radikale gevolge gehad [het] vir individue en families op emosionele, ekonomiese en geestelike vlak [had radical consequences for individuals and families at emotional, economic and spiritual level]”.<sup>343</sup>

### **Nederduitsch Hervormde Kerk van Afrika (NHKA) (Dutch Reformed Church of Africa)**

The Nederduitsch Hervormde Kerk van Afrika (NHKA) should not be confused with the Nederduitse Gereformeerde Kerk in Afrika (NGKA). The former is a sister church to the NGK, while the latter can be seen as a daughter church to the NGK, established in 1963 for black congregants of the NGK family.

The NHKA only addressed the matter of conscription officially at the highest level – i.e. their General Church Meeting – three times, namely in 1977, 1983 and 1993 – although, like the NGK, they made extensive use of literature provided by the Chaplains’ Service, which would have had to be approved at some level. The two formal discussions coincided with quite dramatic changes in legislation regarding conscription: in 1977, the period of conscription<sup>344</sup> was changed, and in 1982, the guidelines for dealing with objection were amended.<sup>345</sup> In 1977, the NHKA entered into correspondence with the Methodist Church (which did not wholeheartedly support the NP government and its policies the way the Afrikaans churches did). The Methodist Church emphasised the multiracial nature of its congregants, and bemoaned the fact that its chaplains were only allowed to minister to its white congregants in the SADF. While their letter refrained from explicitly stating it, there was a strong hint that they felt that the same ministry should be extended to black members serving in the armed wings of liberation movements outside of South Africa. Since this was unlikely, they desired to negotiate with the SADF to establish a clear

distinction between the clerical and the military duties of their chaplains. They were in favour of the former but wanted to distance themselves from the latter. Perhaps somewhat naively, the Methodist Church enquired whether the NHKA shared their position, and wanted to join them in their negotiations, pointing out that they were supported by the Roman Catholic Church, the Church of the Province of SA, the Baptist Union of SA, the United Congregational Church of SA and the Presbyterian Church of SA.<sup>346</sup>

While the position of the English churches is not surprising, the reaction of the NHKA is insightful, as they –

- categorically denounced the position of the Methodist Church, systematically pointing out that the SADF did not interfere with the ministry of chaplains;
- noted that the growing conflict in South Africa was not between black and white citizens;
- argued that the SADF did not serve white South Africans only;
- questioned the liberation theology tenets of the Methodist Church;
- questioned whether the Methodist Church had a mandate to minister to its congregants outside the borders of the country;
- labelled the Methodists that joined armed wings of liberation movements as terrorists; and
- concluded by not only rejecting the invitation by the Methodist Church to join them in negotiations with the SADF, then and in future, but also by suggesting that a meeting between the Methodist Church and the NHKA might serve as an opportunity to educate the Methodists on the true nature of the SADF.<sup>347</sup>

While most of the points raised by the NHKA could be questioned, perhaps the most significant was the suggestion that the Methodists did not quite understand what the SADF stood for and what it was doing. This clearly implies ties between the SADF and the NHKA (read: NGK family) that simply did not exist between the SADF and the Methodists (read: English churches).

At their general church meeting in May 1983, the NHKA reiterated their support to the SADF by affirming the Chaplains' Service as the "amptelike diensweg waarlangs die (Nederduitsch Hervormde) kerk (van Afrika) sy lidmate in die Weermag bereik en versorg [official service route by which the (Dutch Reformed) church (of Africa) may reach and care for its congregants]";<sup>348</sup> allowing the NHKA to do its "werk [...] in die kader van die Weermag deur sy eie predikante [work ... in the cadre of the Defence Force through its own ministers]";<sup>349</sup> This quid pro quo arrangement (not unusual in the relationship between mainstream Afrikaans churches and the SADF, as this article shows) is emphasised by the official recording of the appreciation the NHKA had for the way in which the SADF was willing to accommodate national servicemen chaplains from their denominations by allowing them to also serve in NHKA congregations while they were doing their national service.<sup>350</sup> While this concession only applied after national servicemen had completed the initial phase of their national service (basic training),<sup>351</sup> it was still a meaningful concession when compared to the restrictions to which other national servicemen had

to adhere. Nonetheless, again in an apparent reciprocal step, the NHKA indicated that, at least in theory, national servicemen chaplains should not be treated differently to any other national servicemen,<sup>352</sup> although in practice, the extraordinary measures put in place to accommodate national servicemen chaplains belied the official stance.

As far as official, overt support for government and the SADF went, delegates from the NHKA met with the Chaplain General in January 1983 (probably in preparation for the general meeting) to discuss the matter of “nie-militêre diens vir godsdienstige beswaardes [non-military service for religious objectors]”.<sup>353</sup> While the proceedings of the meeting were not recorded, the outcome was that the NHKA took the decision to “ten volle vereenselwig met die voorgestelde wetgewing [fully support the proposed legislation]”,<sup>354</sup> presumably relating to the Defence Amendment Act (No. 103 of 1982), which not only extended the period of conscription, but also changed the guidelines for objection.<sup>355</sup> No further mention is made of how the NHKA would treat religious objectors, regardless of their circumstances. It appears that the NHKA was quite willing to abide by whatever decision the SADF took regarding religious objectors, irrespective of denomination. While it might be understandable that the NHKA did not want to get involved in cases of objection from other religions and denominations, their wholesale acceptance of the SADF guidelines, without even the possibility of considering cases from within their own ranks, highlights the symbiotic relationship between church, state and military.

This is further emphasised in an article in the NHKA newspaper, *Die Hervormer*, which justified the SADF policy of conscription by, inter alia, pointing out that South Africa was enjoying a time of peace and prosperity and that, at least in part, it had the SADF to thank for that. *Die Hervormer* therefore claimed that the NHKA (and, implicitly, its congregants) could not object to doing their part to maintain the situation in the country.<sup>356</sup> In return, it could promise national servicemen from the NHKA that the SADF would provide “koffiekamers [coffee rooms]” in the operational area where national servicemen would have the opportunity to see a chaplain and/or have time for their own religious reflection.<sup>357</sup> In an article in the *Jong Hervormer* (an addendum to *Die Hervormer*, aimed at the youth), the editor took an openly political stance in support of conscription, echoing the government refrain of opposing terrorism and communism. In fact, the article contained precious little religious or theological content other than suggesting that good Christians also make good soldiers.<sup>358</sup>

By the 1990s, when it was clear that the political status quo in South Africa could not be maintained, the tables had turned, and the Chaplains’ Service itself was under threat. Understandably, given the close ties that the service had with the mainstream Afrikaans churches, the African National Congress (ANC) was not favourably disposed towards the Chaplains’ Service, and the prevailing opinion was that it would be disbanded or diminished under an ANC government. The leadership of the NHKA mentioned that they would have to act proactively in the interest of preserving the Chaplains’ Service. However, they would not do this at all costs: if a restructured Chaplains’ Service under the ANC embraced the concept of religious freedom, they would distance themselves from it, as “godsdienstgelykheid [...] is vir die Christen en vir die Nederduitsch Hervormde Kerk onaanvaarbaar omdat dit strydig is met die evangelie [religious equality ... is unacceptable

to the Christian and the NHKA because it is contrary to the gospel]”.<sup>359</sup> Without getting entangled in the theology underpinning this statement (or, indeed, that underpinning the liberation theology opposed by the NHKA), it is clear that the mutually beneficial relationship had run its course and, in the build-up to a democratic South Africa, each party was starting to look after its own interests.

### **Gereformeerde Kerke in Suid-Afrika (GKSA) (Reformed Churches in South Africa)**

Out of the three Afrikaans sister churches, the GKSA discussed the issue of chaplains and conscription at their highest meeting – the National Synod – most often (in fact, they did so at every synod from 1973 to 1988). However, with the exception of the 1982 synod, these discussions tended to be administrative rather than theological. In 1973, the GKSA extensively discussed the processes involved in appointing chaplains to the SADF. They pointed out that ministers would have to volunteer to serve as chaplains, since the Defence Act in force at the time (i.e. the Defence Amendment Act No. 66 of 1972) indicated that ministers of religion could not be compelled to do military service. However, the GKSA implicitly encouraged volunteering, to the point where they provided guidelines on selecting a chaplain from multiple volunteers.<sup>360</sup> No explicit mention is made of conscription, but the measures put in place to assure that national servicemen belonging to the GKSA would have access to a chaplain from their own denomination, imply acceptance of the policy.

At the next synod meeting, in 1976, the GKSA mentioned that the law made provision for chaplains to be “opgeroep [called up]” during times of war. They took no issue with the matter, indicating a more general acceptance of conscription. However, they did point out that the chaplain was, first and foremost, subject to the discipline of the church and only thereafter to the discipline of the defence force, provided it did not interfere with the chaplain discharging his duties.<sup>361</sup> While not exactly a critical position towards the SADF, this statement by the GKSA shows a clear hierarchical understanding of the nature of the relationship between the church and the military, with the former taking precedence in 1976. However, the GKSA did not object when the law changed again to include ministers of religion in the pool of potential conscripts, merely indicating that they would communicate the change to their congregations in 1979. Interestingly, at the same meeting, they discussed the possibility of providing congregants with communion “te velde [in the field]” and concluded that it would be out of order to do so.<sup>362</sup> The fact remains that more time was spent on discussing matters of protocol than on the inclusion of ministers in national service points, once again, an implicit acceptance and support of the policy, even though it raised practical ecclesiastical issues, which were considered in a serious light.

The strongest challenge to the SADF by the GKSA occurred at the 1982 meeting of the synod, where several matters were discussed, mostly relating to the tension between the calling and divinely ordained duties of a minister and the decidedly secular requirements of the SADF. Among these, the question whether an ordained minister should be allowed to do other work is particularly interesting. The GKSA decided that, should the SADF require “werk van kapelane [...] wat nie tot die normale kerkordelike diens van ’n

predikant behoort nie [work by chaplains that does not, according to church laws, belong to the usual service of a minister]”, guidance had to be sought from the chaplain’s congregation before such work could be undertaken.<sup>363</sup> Unfortunately, it is not clear what they considered ‘normal’ work for a minister, but it can legitimately be assumed that much of the work of a chaplain would, indeed, fall outside of the scope of the ‘normal’ duties of a minister of religion. Theoretically, then, the SADF would have to consult with the individual congregation to get permission for their chaplains to discharge these non-clerical duties. In an additional challenge to the SADF, the GKSA decided, in principle, to reject the rank structures of the SADF. It can be inferred that they were referring to ranks in the Chaplains’ Service, since these ranks resulted in a hierarchical society that did not align with their understanding of the nature of the Christian community.<sup>364</sup> It appears as though the GKSA, at the time, entertained the notion that the SADF might be willing to make concessions specifically for their denomination. In a concept agreement between the SADF and the GKSA, presented to and approved by the synod, they also demanded that the Chaplains’ Service act, at all times and in all circumstances, according to the Scriptures, church laws and confessions of the GKSA.<sup>365</sup> This requirement implies either a very close relationship between the GKSA and the Chaplains’ Service (if they had anticipated that it would be accepted by the SADF), or a relatively direct challenge to the SADF, since it would have been difficult for the SADF to accept the requirements of the GKSA to the exclusion of other denominations (who had their own church laws, if not the Scriptures and confessions).

By 1985, the issue of national service had diminished in importance, and the relationship between the GKSA and the SADF seemed to have stabilised. The only pertinent decision taken by the synod was that congregations had to limit their interaction with the Chaplain General, particularly if they did not support serving chaplains.<sup>366</sup> This decision presumably came about as a result of either a direct or an indirect request from the Chaplain General. While not a particularly important decision, it nonetheless points to a degree of cooperation, since at the highest level, the GKSA saw fit to intervene with their congregations on behalf of the Chaplain General. This stands in stark contrast to the 1982 decision about chaplains’ duties, which required increased communication between the Chaplains’ Service and congregations.

In 1988, the discussion at the meeting of the synod revolved around the commitments of newly qualified ministers during their national service. It appears that a practice had started to develop where national servicemen were appointed in congregations and then appealed to the SADF to spend time in their congregations, rather than in service of the SADF. This practice was denounced in fairly strong terms by the GKSA, stating that all eligible South Africans had to complete the same national service, and that their own newly qualified ministers were no different.<sup>367</sup> Again, this is essentially the opposite of the position that the GKSA took in 1982, when they discussed the duties that chaplains were allowed to fulfil in service of the SADF, and those they were not allowed to undertake. Additionally, the implied subservience of the needs of the church to the needs of the SADF could be questioned.

## Conclusion

While it certainly cannot be said that the mainstream Afrikaans churches agreed with all the policies of the SADF, it is clear that, at worst, a cordial relationship existed between the two groups. Similarly, it would be unreasonable to argue that the churches had an influence on the policies and legislation of the NP government regarding conscription and objection thereto. This article demonstrated that there was an undeniable quid pro quo character to the interactions between the church, the state and the defence force. The three sister churches often held discussions at various levels about their interaction with and support of the SADF and the Chaplains' Service. While there were instances of comparatively minor discontent, the churches overall encouraged their congregants to embrace national service. Through their members in the Chaplains' Service, the churches provided guidance to current and prospective national servicemen, indicating that they were aware of the social and emotional challenges associated with conscription. However, none of the churches took an absolute position against the policy at any point, although they might have challenged the legitimacy of certain aspects. In return, the SADF was prepared to make concessions to the churches, including providing opportunities for ministry and pastoral care, as well as covering the salaries of chaplains. Legislation also changed to be orientated towards religious objection rather than towards conscientious objection. Religious objection was, of course, discouraged from the pulpits of the sister churches, although the influence of sermons encouraging national service seems to have diminished as society came to view conscription ever more as a measure to protect the political position of the NP rather than to defend South Africa against external threats.

---

# Endnotes

---

- <sup>266</sup> Will Gordon is a lecturer in history at the University of Zululand in South Africa. He specialises in twentieth century southern African military history, but also has a keen interest in regional history, ecclesiology and the philosophy of history. His research often focusses on race relations. He has extensive experience of archival research and gaining access to classified documents. He has several peer-reviewed publications to his credit and has presented research papers at national and international conferences. Convinced of the value of academic collaboration, he enjoys working with both local and international scholars. He wishes to thank the following people for their invaluable assistance in gaining access to documentation from various church archives: Ms Karen Minnaar and Ms Susan Frank (Nederduitse Gereformeerde Kerk Archive), Mr Nándor Sarkady (Nederduitsch Hervormde Kerk van Afrika Archive) and Dr Wymie du Plessis (Gereformeerde Kerke in Suid-Afrika Archive).
- <sup>267</sup> Nederduitse Gereformeerde Kerk (NGK) & Nederduitsch Hervormde Kerk van Afrika. “Cottesloe Declaration”. 1960. <[https://kerkargief.co.za/doks/bely/DF\\_Cottesloe.pdf](https://kerkargief.co.za/doks/bely/DF_Cottesloe.pdf)> Accessed on 7 September 2022.
- <sup>268</sup> NGK. *Ras, volk en nasie: Dokument van die Ned Geref Kerk oor rasse- en volkereverhoudinge*. 1974. <[https://kerkargief.co.za/doks/bely/GD\\_RVN.pdf](https://kerkargief.co.za/doks/bely/GD_RVN.pdf)> Accessed on 7 September 2022.
- <sup>269</sup> NGK. *Kerk en samelewing: 'n Getuienis van die Ned Geref Kerk*. Bloemfontein: NG Sendingspers, 1986.
- <sup>270</sup> WJG Lubbe. “Faith and protest”. NGK. 1987. <[https://kerkargief.co.za/doks/bely/DF\\_Protest.pdf](https://kerkargief.co.za/doks/bely/DF_Protest.pdf)> Accessed on 7 September 2022.
- <sup>271</sup> NGK. “Stormkompas”. 1981. <[https://kerkargief.co.za/doks/bely/DF\\_Stormkompas.pdf](https://kerkargief.co.za/doks/bely/DF_Stormkompas.pdf)> Accessed on 7 September 2022.
- <sup>272</sup> NGK. “The Confession of Belhar”. 1986. <[https://kerkargief.co.za/doks/bely/CF\\_Belhar.pdf](https://kerkargief.co.za/doks/bely/CF_Belhar.pdf)> Accessed on 7 September 2022.
- <sup>273</sup> M Alexander. “The militarisation of South African white society, 1948–1990”. *Scientia Militaria* 30/2. 2000. 274.
- <sup>274</sup> G Callister. “Patriotic duty or resented imposition? Public reactions to military conscription in white South Africa, 1952–1972”. *Scientia Militaria* 35/1. 2007. 53.
- <sup>275</sup> Graaf, as cited by Callister *op. cit.*, p. 53.
- <sup>276</sup> A Grundlingh. “The King’s Afrikaners? Enlistment and ethnic identity in the Union of South Africa’s defence force during the Second World War, 1939–1945”. *Journal of African History* 40. 1999. 354.
- <sup>277</sup> Callister *op. cit.*, p. 53.
- <sup>278</sup> I van der Waag. *A military history of modern South Africa*. Cape Town: Jonathan Ball, 2015, 237.
- <sup>279</sup> Callister *op. cit.*, p. 57.
- <sup>280</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>281</sup> Defence Act, No. 44 of 1957, section 97.
- <sup>282</sup> For an excellent exposition of the legal implications of various amendments to the Defence Act, cf. L Berat. “Conscientious objection in South Africa: Governmental paranoia and the law of conscription”. *Vanderbilt Journal of Transnational Law* 22. 1989. 127-186.
- <sup>283</sup> Defence Amendment Act, No. 85 of 1967, section 40.
- <sup>284</sup> *Ibid.*, section 53.
- <sup>285</sup> C Alden. *Apartheid’s last stand: The rise and fall of the South African security state*. London: Macmillan, 1996, 70–71.

- <sup>286</sup> D Conway. *Stop the call-up: Masculinities, militarisation and the end conscription campaign; war resistance in apartheid South Africa*. Johannesburg: University of the Witwatersrand, 2012, 26.
- <sup>287</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 20.
- <sup>288</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>289</sup> Cf. PH Frankel. *Pretoria's Praetorians: Civil-military relations in South Africa*. Cambridge: University Press, 1984.
- <sup>290</sup> Alexander *op. cit.*, p. 286.
- <sup>291</sup> T Simpson. *Umkhonto we Sizwe: The ANC's armed struggle*. Cape Town: Penguin, 2016, 3–20.
- <sup>292</sup> United Nations Security Council. Resolution S/RES/134, Question relating to the situation in the Union of South Africa, 1 April 1960.
- <sup>293</sup> I Liebenberg. “Religious struggles, ethics, praxis and fundamental social transformation: A case study with implications”. In M Eckhardt (ed), *Mission Afrika: Geschichtsschreibung über Grenzen hinweg. Festschrift für Ulrich van der Heyden*. Stuttgart: Verlag Franz Steiner, 2019, 12–13.
- <sup>294</sup> Van Deventer, as cited by Alden *op. cit.*, p. 68.
- <sup>295</sup> Cf. Alden *op. cit.*, p. 51.
- <sup>296</sup> JM Roherty. *State security in South Africa: Civil-military relations under PW Botha*. New York, NY: ME Sharpe, 1992, 38.
- <sup>297</sup> Historical Papers. Missing voices, A3079-D4-001, John Keene interviewed by Mike Cadman, 19-09-07.
- <sup>298</sup> M Drewett. “Battling over borders: Narratives of resistance to the South African Border War voiced through popular music”. *Social Dynamics* 29/1. 2003. 84.
- <sup>299</sup> Historical Papers. Missing voices, A3079-D6-001, National serviceman (name withheld), 10-09-07.
- <sup>300</sup> Defence Further Amendment Act, No. 83 of 1974, section 10.
- <sup>301</sup> L Nathan. “Marching to a different beat: The history of the End Conscription Campaign”. In J Cock & L Nathan (eds), *War and society: The militarisation of South Africa*. Cape Town: David Philip, 1989, 309.
- <sup>302</sup> Department of Defence Documentation Centre. 32 Bn, Box 12, 205/4, Insam – Intsum, Insum 9/78 + Briefing Report.
- <sup>303</sup> G Cawthra. “The South African War Resistance Movement 1974–1994”. *Scientia Militaria* 43/2. 2015. 115.
- <sup>304</sup> K Satchwell. “The power to defend: An analysis of various aspects of the Defence Act”. In Cock & Nathan *op. cit.*, p. 42.
- <sup>305</sup> Nathan *op. cit.*, p. 309.
- <sup>306</sup> R Dale. “Melding war and politics in Namibia: South Africa’s counterinsurgency campaign, 1966–1989”. *Armed Forces & Society* 20/1. 1993. 13–15.
- <sup>307</sup> Satchwell *op. cit.*, p. 42.
- <sup>308</sup> Editor. “Wet erken godsdienbeswaar teen diensplig”. *Die Hervormer*. September 1984. 4.
- <sup>309</sup> Conway *op. cit.*, p. 26.
- <sup>310</sup> Editor. “Godsdienbeswaar teen diensplig: Wat statistieke daaroor sê”. *Die Hervormer*. April 1988. 5.
- <sup>311</sup> G van der Westhuizen. “’n Oorlog wat te voet geveg is: Diensplig-infanteriesoldate in die Grensoorlog, 1973–1989”. *Journal for Contemporary History* 34/1. 2009. 169.
- <sup>312</sup> NGK. *Geloofsbesware teen diensplig*. Pretoria: NG Kerkboekhandel, 1980, 11–16.
- <sup>313</sup> JM Mattox. *Saint Augustine and the theory of just war*. London: Continuum, 2008, 32.
- <sup>314</sup> A Augustine. “Reply to Faustus the Manichean (Contra Faustum Manichaeum)”. R Stothert (trans). In P Schaff & H Wace (eds), *The Nicene and post-Nicene fathers (Vol IV)*. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1956, 301.
- <sup>315</sup> Mattox *op. cit.*, p. 52.

- <sup>316</sup> NGK, *Geloofsbesware op. cit.*, p. 15.
- <sup>317</sup> J Cock. "Conscription in South Africa: A study in the politics of coercion". *South African Sociological Review* 2/1. 1989. 8.
- <sup>318</sup> G Baines. "'South Africa's Vietnam'?" Literary history and the cultural memory of the Border War". *South African Historical Journal* 49/1. 2003. 178–184.
- <sup>319</sup> GKSA Archive. Notule van die Algemene Sinode, 1973, 336.
- <sup>320</sup> GKSA Archive. Notule van die Algemene Sinode, 1976, 487.
- <sup>321</sup> South African Chaplains' Service (SACS). *Jy en militêre diensplig*. Pretoria: 1 Militêre Drukeenhed, n.d., 4.
- <sup>322</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 1.
- <sup>323</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>324</sup> I Liebenberg. *Ideologie in konflik*. Bramley: Taurus, 1990, 17–19.
- <sup>325</sup> D Conway, "'Every coward's choice'?" Political objection to military service in apartheid South Africa as sexual citizenship". *Citizenship Studies* 8/1. 2004. 25-45.
- <sup>326</sup> J Krige. *Voorwaarts mars! Jou diensplig – 'n voorreg*. Bloemfontein: Algemene Jeugkommissie van die Ned. Geref. Kerk, n.d.
- <sup>327</sup> PS Dreyer, SE Young, JDH Smit, AB van N Herbst & PM Smith (eds). *Almanak en Bybelse dagboek: Nederduitsch Hervormde Kerk van Afrika*. Pretoria: Gutenberg, 1982, 35.
- <sup>328</sup> SACS *op. cit.* p. 3.
- <sup>329</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 3–4.
- <sup>330</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 5.
- <sup>331</sup> SACS. *Beheersing van die tong*. Pretoria, 1983.
- <sup>332</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 7.
- <sup>333</sup> NGK Archive. Algemene Sinode, AJK, Box AS659, File JBC – Nasionale diensplig, Verslag van besoek aan die kapelane te Buffelspoort, 26 Augustus 1981, 2.
- <sup>334</sup> NGK Archive. Algemene Sinode, AJK, Box AS659, File JBC – Nasionale diensplig, Verslag: Samespreking lede van die UK-AJK en Kapelane, 16 Februarie 1982, 1.
- <sup>335</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 2.
- <sup>336</sup> NGK Archive. Agenda vir die sesde vergadering van die Algemene Sinode van die Nederduitse Gereformeerde Kerk, 1982, 589. This is a brief summary of quite an extensive document, the content of which may be analysed in further research, such as that suggested in the introduction of this article.
- <sup>337</sup> TD Moodie. "Confessing responsibility for the evils of apartheid: The Dutch Reformed Church in the 1980s". *South African Historical Journal* 72/4. 2020. 627–628.
- <sup>338</sup> NGK Archive. Algemene Sinode, AJK, Box AS659, File JBC – Nasionale diensplig, Kapelaan by Bybelkor, 2.
- <sup>339</sup> NGK Archive. Algemene Sinode, AJK, Box AS659, File JBC – Nasionale diensplig, Samesprekings tussen Bybelkor en die Weermag op lektuurgebied, 18 November 1985.
- <sup>340</sup> NGK Archive. Algemene Sinode, AJK, Box AS659, File JBC – Nasionale diensplig, Memorandum: Kerklike aandag aan die voornemende, diensdoenende en terugkerende dienspligtiges, 6.
- <sup>341</sup> NGK Archive. Algemene Sinode, AJK, Box AS659, File JBC – Nasionale diensplig, Reply to Memorandum: Kerklike aandag aan die voornemende, diensdoenende en terugkerende dienspligtiges, 16 April 1979, 2. Quotation marks and parenthesis original.

- <sup>342</sup> For examples of the problems experienced during and after national service, cf., inter alia, A Feinstein. *Battle scarred: Hidden costs of the Border War*. Cape Town: Tafelberg, 2011; C Blake. *From soldier to civvy: Reflections on national service*. Cape Town: Zebra, 2010; D Lamprecht. *Die brug: Na die hel en terug in Angola*. Johannesburg: Delta, 2020; R Ferreira & I Liebenberg. “The impact of war on Angola and South Africa: Two southern African case studies”. *Journal for Contemporary History* 31/3. 2006. 42-73.
- <sup>343</sup> NGK Archive. Nederduitse Gereformeerde Kerk in Suid-Afrika (Wes-en-Suid-Kaapland), Agenda vir die sewe en veertigste vergadering van die Sinode, 2015, A48.
- <sup>344</sup> Defence Amendment Act, No. 35 of 1977, sections 22 & 44; Second Defence Amendment Act, No. 68 of 1977, sections 22, 44 & 51.
- <sup>345</sup> Defence Amendment Act, No. 103 of 1982, sections 68–70.
- <sup>346</sup> NHKA Archive. Book 88, Agenda & Notule, Algemene Kommissie, September 1977, 30–34.
- <sup>347</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 32–34.
- <sup>348</sup> NHKA Archive. Agenda met bylae vir die sestigste Algemene Kerkvergadering, 72.
- <sup>349</sup> NHKA Archive. Book 112, Handeling van die kommissie van die Algemene Kerkvergadering, January–February 1983, 11.
- <sup>350</sup> NHKA Archive. Agenda met bylae vir die sestigste Algemene Kerkvergadering *op. cit.*, p. 74.
- <sup>351</sup> NHKA Archive, Book 112 *op. cit.*, p. 8.
- <sup>352</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 12.
- <sup>353</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>354</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 13.
- <sup>355</sup> Defence Amendment Act, No. 103 of 1982, sections 4–5, 68–70.
- <sup>356</sup> JH Koekemoer. “Mag ons besware teen diensplig hê?” *Die Hervormer*. July 1981. 5.
- <sup>357</sup> J Bosman (ed). “Die dienspligtige en grensdiens”. *Jong Hervormer*. October 1982. 3.
- <sup>358</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 1.
- <sup>359</sup> NHKA Archive. Book 162, Algemene Kommissie, March 1993, 25–26.
- <sup>360</sup> GKSA Archive. Notule van die Algemene Sindode, 1973, 335–336.
- <sup>361</sup> GKSA Archive. Notule van die Algemene Sindode, 1976, 485–486.
- <sup>362</sup> GKSA Archive. Notule van die Algemene Sindode, 1979, 375.
- <sup>363</sup> GKSA Archive. Notule van die Algemene Sindode, 1982, 478.
- <sup>364</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 479.
- <sup>365</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 483.
- <sup>366</sup> GKSA Archive. Notule van die Algemene Sindode, 1985, 779.
- <sup>367</sup> GKSA Archive. Notule van die Algemene Sindode, 1988, 452–459.