

TROOPS STILL IN THE TOWNSHIPS

'Magnus Malan said in parliament that the SADF had erected 14 temporary military bases near "unrest areas" in black residential areas at a cost of 5,7 million rands.'

The Harare Declaration of the ANC names the withdrawal of SADF troops from the townships as one of the preconditions for negotiations. On 19 January General Kat Liebenberg announced that all SADF personnel would be out by the end of the year.

According to Jannie Geldenhuys between 500 and 800 troops were present in the townships from 1987 to 1988. Magnus Malan said in parliament that the SADF had erected 14 temporary military bases near 'unrest areas' in black residential areas at a cost of 5,7 million rands.

SADF presence in the townships decreased in 1989, but the Emergency Regulations curbed media coverage. Vrye Weekblad editor, Max du Preez, was charged under the Emergency regulations with subverting the role of the SADF, following an article published in late 1988. Though the Emergency restrictions on the Media have been lifted, the Defence Act still limits publication of data relating to the SADF.

Seven official complaints, on charges ranging from attempted murder, and rape to assault and harassment, were made in early 1989 against SADF members acting in the townships. In two separate cases against the Ministers of Defence and Justice, courts awarded substantial amounts to claimants, related to incidents in Orlando and the Eastern Transvaal in 1986. The most publicised interventions of the SADF go back to their occupation

of Turfloop campus in 1988/9, and the Dad's army raid on Kaya Mandi near Stellenbosch.

Unconfirmed reports suggest that only 800 troops did duty in townships last year. It was claimed that national servicemen only acted in supportive capacities. Various events around the Education crisis on the Cape Flats in 1989, as well as during the Defiance Campaign, suggest otherwise. It seems that the SADF was active in at least Bonteheuwel, Athlone, Mitchells Plain, Guguletu, and Mamelodi last year. If the South African intervention into the Bophutatswana coup is taken into account as well, the army remained integrally involved in the South African civil war.

The Trojan Horse murder trial last year implicated SADF personnel in police activities, and the Death Squads allegations published in the press over past weeks further implicates senior SADF personnel.

Developments around the education crisis have involved SADF troops in the townships. In New Brighton troops monitored a peaceful march in mid February. The SADF was also present in Paarl and Cape Town during Nelson Mandela's release - a conscript was in command of the troops who fired on the looters.

The SADF's intervention in Ciskei - to restore law and order after the coup which toppled Sebe, as well as being on standby to intervene yet again in Bophutatswana, clearly il-

lustrates De Klerk's willingness to use the SADF in a civil war scenario. Calls have also been made from various quarters for the SADF to intervene in the conflict in Natal.

The use of national servicemen in the South African security situation took a new turn in 1990 when a police spokesman confirmed in October last year that 3000 national servicemen, ie conscriptees, had been allocated to the SAP for their national service. Conflicting reports mention that 2500 national servicemen were to do service in the SAP.

Given the situation in past years that conscripts could choose to do their national service in the SAP, but would join the SAP for three years, the situation implies that more than 3000 conscriptees are presently active in the SAP. If one examines police activity in South Africa, this implies that conscriptees are yet again involved on one side of the civil war. The withdrawal of the SADF from the townships appears meaningless in this regard. A change of uniform hardly represents the withdrawal of conscriptees from active service in townships.

The ECC's derestriction comes at a time when black and white volunteer soldiers, kitskonstabels and regular police, some of whom are conscriptees, act in the violent maintenance of apartheid. In a context where 9+ policemen are leaving the SAP per day, and where there is an immense 'shortage' of police anyway, conscripts may increasingly be called to fill the gap.