

**THE SOCIAL ROLE OF MILITARISM IN NAMIBIA WITH  
SPECIFIC REFERENCE TO EDUCATION , HEALTH AND FAMILY  
LIFE 1978 - 1988**

**BY**

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**SHORT DISSERTATION SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILMENT  
OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF**

 UNIVERSITY  
OF  
**MASTER OF ARTS** JOHANNESBURG

**IN**

**HISTORY**

**IN THE**

**FACULTY OF ARTS**

**AT THE**

**RAND AFRIKAANS UNIVERSITY**

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15 February 1999

## DEDICATION

This dissertation is dedicated to my beloved mother Mutshekwa Constance who struggled hard for my education and to my loving wife Namadzavho who together with our beloved children gave me the required support.



## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to thank Professor H.J. van Aswegen , my supervisor , who has performed a sterling task in guiding me through every stage of this challenging task. I gained much courage from his patience , motivation and valuable suggestions.

Word of thanks also goes to my friends Mr. R. I. Ramabulana and Mr. J. L. Nengovhela who gave me remarkable support. Not forgetting Dr. A.E. Nesamvuni from the University of Venda who not only gave me encouragement but also assisted me in searching for the relevant information.

I also extend my gratitude to library staff members of the Africa Institute in Pretoria , RAU and Wits University who provided me with research material I requested from time to time. A special acknowledgement to Mrs. Ferreira of RAU library who always went out of her way to afford me access to relevant research material.

This tribute will be incomplete without a word of acknowledgement to Mr. T.A. Maumela who tirelessly edited my work at the most critical moment as well as Mr. A.N. Manenzhe my co-worker at Kolokoshani Secondary school who typed the rough and final drafts of this dissertation.

Finally, this work does not claim to be immune from errors of judgement, and I shoulder the sole responsibility for whatever error that could have been committed in this study.

**ABBREVIATIONS**

<b>NANSO</b>	<b>: Namibian National Students Organization</b>
<b>NUNW</b>	<b>: National Union of Namibian Workers</b>
<b>OAU</b>	<b>: Organization of African Unity</b>
<b>PLAN</b>	<b>: Peoples Liberation Army of Namibia</b>
<b>SA</b>	<b>: South Africa</b>
<b>SACC</b>	<b>: South African Council of Churches</b>
<b>SADF</b>	<b>: South African Defence Force</b>
<b>SWA</b>	<b>: South West Africa</b>
<b>SWAPO</b>	<b>: South West Africa Peoples Organization</b>
<b>SWATF</b>	<b>: South African Territorial Organization</b>
<b>UCT</b>	<b>: University of Cape Town</b>
<b>UN</b>	<b>: United Nations</b>
<b>WHAM</b>	<b>: Winning Hearts and Minds</b>

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## Summary

There are various opposing versions about what went on in Namibia during the years preceding its liberation from the South African 'colonialist' rule. Clarity in this regard is blurred by the reality that the various accounts about what happened are influenced by the political inclination of those who tell them.

Two viewpoints are however clear. Firstly, to those who were supportive of the South African colonialist rule over Namibia, it represented the last resistance point before South Africa itself in terms of fending off the influence of communism and the chaos that African governance is associated with, could bring peace and stability in this region.

Secondly to those who were supportive of the struggle by the Namibian African majority for, it represented one of the last two black spots in the continent where Africans were shamed by the yoke of colonialism and where their values as Africans and their self determination had to give way to the will and whims of a tiny minority with neo-facist inclinations.

In this thesis the aim is to look at the effect of militarism on the Namibian population especially in the fields of education, health and family life. It is not a detailed account of South Africa's military involvement, but a general view with the focus on certain crucial areas.

Militarism was the main method used by the apartheid government to suppress the struggle for freedom. During the years of warfare the education system partially collapsed because of pressures put on the teachers and scholars by the South African military authorities as well as by the disruption caused by the movement of troops and battles between SWAPO soldiers and the SADF. In many areas the SADF took over the educational system in the place of local teachers.



As in the case of the schools the South African authorities also occupied the health centres (Clinics and hospitals) in Namibia. Certain mission hospitals and clinics were closed to stop them from aiding SWAPO. This led to deteriorating health service in those areas. The Namibians looked upon this actions as the further extention of South African colonialism in their country.

Family life was also influenced strongly by the war in Namibia. The indigenous economy was disrupted family in the war zones were resettled , people were killed, tortured , arrested and jailed when suspected of aiding SWAPO cadres . In general family life suffered under the harsh conditions brought about by the war.



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## Chapter One

### Introduction

#### 1. OBJECTIVES AND JUSTIFICATION OF THE STUDY

This mini - dissertation is a product of much research for a seminar course on "The growth of African Nationalism in Namibia ." During this course an extensive study was done on African Nationalism in Namibia . An essay on the Reaction of South African government on the growth of African Nationalism in Namibia arouse my deep-rooted interest in finding out as to what extent did the militarization of Namibia affect the lives of civilian population in war zone areas ?

The militarization of Namibia by the South African government around 1977 became the focus of both domestic and international communities . This became eminent when the South African authority began to deploy its troops in Namibia . The exact figure of troops deployed became a bone of contention as the South African government refused to give the exact figure of forces but press reports estimated that they were about 25 000. However this figure has been disputed by Swapo which estimated it at 100 000 .

If this statistics is anything to go by , one would question as to whether the real motive behind the process of militarization was purely defensive as claimed by the South African government or whether it had political undertones .

It is clear from all available evidence that South African 's military onslaught has inflicted profound damage on the socio - economic structures of Namibia 's society . The cost of the damage inflicted by this armed occupation appeared to be enormous in both human and material terms .

Although much damage has been done on socio - economic structures by the presence of South African troops , noticeable contributions were also made by these forces in education , health and family life .

A variety of works have been written on the militarization of Namibia . The main focus , however , is on why and how the process was done . Less research work has been done on the social effects of militarism .

In this thesis the aim is to look at the social role played by the South African military structures in the fields of health , education and family life . Of utmost importance will be to portray how the presence of the South African troops affected the lives of civilians on the mentioned spheres of life . It is not a detailed account of South Africa 's involvement , but a general view with the focus on certain crucial areas .

The South African government argued that by militarizing Namibia , the security forces wanted to protect civilians against acts of terrorism masterminded by Swapo . Contrary to these claims , the Namibian civilian population perceived South African troops as army of terror and occupation . Swapo as a protagonist lashed out at the process of militarization and consider that as a move by the South African authorities to consolidate its hold on Namibia .

These contradictory viewpoints make the issue of militarism in Namibia to be a case study on its own as many questions remain with no answer .

A variety of sources have been used for this study . Much use was made of books , published documents , journal articles , academic works (theses) , official policy documents of government and organizations as well as South African and international newspapers . Africa Report , Country Profile , Africa Research Bulletins and Keesing Contemporary Archives are some of research bulletins which have been used .

The historian focusing on the social role of militarism is confronted by a number of problems , some being quite enormous . Most of the works written on Namibian history , particularly on militarization , are apologetic to the process of militarization by South African government.

They even go to the extent of glorifying the actions of SADF in Namibia without considering effects of the armed struggle on the people of Namibia . For example , Peter Hammond in his work , South West Africa / Namibia Special Report portrays the South African Defense Force as fighters with a history of stubborn resistance against all odds . They are all heroes and the enemy ( Swapo ) are all villains ( terrorists )

The largest shortcoming of these sources is that they focus mainly on the defensive role of the South African military structures and neglect to show how this armed conflict affected the Namibian civilian population's way of life .

Because of strict security legislation in Namibia historians and journalists were not given free access to the war zone areas to do research work and this made it extremely difficult to get valuable and correct information .

A few works which attempted to look at the social role of the South African Defense force in Namibia are , however , in the South African National Defence Force Documentation Centre . An attempt to have access to them was marred by bureaucratic red tape .

Nonetheless , works by authors such as Andre' Du Pisani , Barbara Konig , Richard Leonard and C. Cawthra give some material on the social role of militarism in Namibia . Their publications are of great value in the rewriting of Namibian history . It is for this reason that I felt urged to shed more light on the history of Namibia .

Academic sources were also used in this research . They provided useful information and often give a balanced point of view . However , they failed to give a chronological sequence of the effects of militarism in Namibia .

Official sources such as the Hansards of both the South African government and Swapo were also used . They proved to be good sources of information but often give one side of the story of Namibia .

## 2. Historiographical Analysis

The story of Namibia as part of global history was researched by different historians who subscribe to different schools of thought. According to J. Barzun and H. F. Graff, The Modern Researcher, the researcher must naturally strive to be objective. After a thorough analysis, three different schools of thought have been identified in the sources used.

The first group of authors are those who are apologetic to the "South African colonialism" in Namibia. They justified the militarization of Namibia by South African troops. For example, Stewart Menaul in his work, The border Wars : South Africa's Response argues that the pre-occupation of Namibia by South African forces was the initiative to prevent a black Marxist government from establishing itself by any means in Namibia.

Most of these authors tend to be sympathetic to the South African government and fail to indicate how the whole idea of militarization affected the civilian population.

Other authors who belong to this school of thought include, M. Morris : Armed Conflict in South Africa, S. W. Steenkamp : South Africa's Border Wars, P. Hammond : South West Africa / Namibia, W. Louw : Owambo and Peter Stiff : Nine Days of War.

The pro-South African perspective is also best seen in sources issued by the Department of Foreign Affairs such as South West Africa Survey 1967 and South Africa's Basic Documents. They give an official version of the militarization of Namibia.

The second group of authors identified in this work are those who take the pro-Swapo stance in their presentation. Swapo as the main opponent of South Africa's "illegal" occupation of Namibia argued that by militarizing Namibia, the South African government

wanted to consolidate its grip on Namibia at the same time eliminating Swapo's influence in the area. For example, Peter Katjavivi in his book : A History of Resistance in Namibia argues that as a result of militarism local people had to bear the brunt of the war and consequently experienced military terrorism manned by SADF .

These sources concentrate on lambasting the South African security forces . They blamed the SADF for violating Human Rights . However , to a large extent they portray a Swapo incapable of error and free of all shortcomings . Other authors who echo same sentiments include , Barbara Konig : Namibia : The Ravages of War , D. Herbstein and J. Evenson : The devils are Among us , C. Cawthra : Brutal Force : The Apartheid War Machine and Swapo to be born a nation The Liberation Struggle for Namibia

Swapo as well established opponent of the apartheid government in Namibia also issued documents which were of value in the research. This was done particularly by its department of foreign affairs . However , these sources are pro - Swapo in their approach .

The third group of sources identified in this study are those who are quite academic in their approach . They give a more balanced version of the Namibian story without including personal prejudices . To a large extent , these authors tend to be realistic in their approach and present historical facts as they are . They are more consistent in their views . For example Lionel Cliff in his book : The Transition to Independence in Namibia argues that the militarization of Namibia was an attempt by the South African government to track down the guerillas from the villages and at the same time attempting to win the hearts and minds of the Namibians through the delivery of some good services .

Most notable authors include , Brian Wood , Namibia 1884 - 1984 , M. Clough : Changing Realities in Southern Africa , P. Johnson and D. Martin : Destructive Engagement at War , J. Dugard : The South West Africa / Namibia Dispute , A. Du Pisanl : SWA / Namibia the politics of continuity and change and R. Green : Namibia The Last Colony .

This study will try to give , as far as possible , a balanced perspective of the social effects of militarism in Namibia . It will also explain how civilians became victims of the two belligerent forces namely the SADF and SWAPO which were at loggerheads .

For these objectives to be realised the following questions will be addressed .

1. Why did the South African government decide to militarize Namibia?
2. What were the factors that forced the South African government to militarize educational centres such as schools ?
3. How did the closure of mission hospitals and clinics by South African military authorities affected the social welfare of Namibian civilian population ?
4. What role did the South African military structures play in education and health ?
5. To what extent did the militarization of Namibia affect families in the operational area ?

For the sake of clarity , the following concepts have been defined . South African authorities , regime , Pretoria and colonial government means the South African government . The word territory means Namibia . Security forces refers to South African troops which were stationed in Namibia . Gorillas were trained cadres of Swapo's military wing ( PLAN ) . Militarism means the process whereby the South African government deployed its troops in Namibia .

### 3. STRUCTURE OF THE STUDY

This study has been constructed along the following lines .

Chapter one is an introduction which gives a brief outline of the objectives of the study and a historiographical analysis of sources .

Chapter two gives brief background information on how Namibia was militarized . It also gives the reasons for the militarization of educational sectors . The response of populist formations against the process of militarization has also been considered . Contributions made by the South African Defence Force structures have been highlighted . The long term effects of militarism have also been accorded attention .

Chapter three deals with the militarization of health centres such as hospitals and clinics . The effects of military curfews on health has been described . The reason given by the South African government on the closure of mission hospitals and clinics has been discussed .

Chapter four gives a brief background on war related factors that contributed to the disintegration of families . Questions such as how the process of militarization affected civilian way of life has been addressed .

The last chapter gives an evaluation of the study as a whole and answers questions raised in the introduction and discussed in the study .



## Chapter Two

### THE EFFECTS OF MILITARIZATION ON EDUCATION

#### 2.1 Background Information

This chapter essentially seeks to explore the social effects of militarism on education. Before an extensive analysis can be done it will be proper to briefly highlight the conditions and circumstances which resulted in the militarization of Namibian educational sectors by the apartheid colonial forces.

Africans in Namibia had wanted a fully fledged independence. However, as a result of South African Apartheid colonialism they were denied this opportunity. To articulate political grievances liberation movements such as Swapo were formed. On the other hand, the South African government wanted to declare Namibia as a fifth province to her territory. <sup>1)</sup> Swapo registered its feeling against apartheid colonialism by intensifying political mobilisation and radicalisation. <sup>2)</sup>

Between 1978 and 1989 African Nationalism in Namibia manifested itself through boycotts, strikes, stayaways, self imposed exile, armed struggle and massive protests against apartheid colonialism in Namibia. <sup>3)</sup> The South African government perceived the growth of African Nationalism in Namibia as a threat to the existence of apartheid colonialism. <sup>4)</sup> However, despite both domestic and international pressure the colonial authority was not prepared to bow down. As an endeavour to consolidate its stronghold, the colonial authority wanted to establish such an internal government that would be politically palatable to Pretoria. It was only after its failure during the early 1980 's that the South African government began to speed up its Africanization of the military forces in Namibia. <sup>5)</sup>

This chapter will also explain as to whether the africanization of the military forces in Namibia was a step towards self government as claimed by the South African government or whether it was a political ploy to pit Namibians against each other.

Nevertheless, the process of militarization affected education in a variety of ways. The distances between the military bases and learning centres

was such that the environment remained not conducive for learning and teaching. 6) Students became victims of military circumstances when the South African government introduced military conscription to all young Namibian males. Swapo as a liberation movement perceived military conscription as an attempt to get Namibians to kill each other. 7)

Nevertheless, this effort provoked a united opposition on the part of students which further brought education in a state of disarray. Militarism in the education sphere was severely criticized by nationalistic structures such as Swapo, The Parents Action Committee, churches and trade unions.

The militarization of Namibia had long term effects on education, such as an anti - soldier teacher stance, the politicisation of the youth and a high rate of drop outs which escalated over time . Most of the youth eventually went into exile.

However, on a positive note, the militarization process saved education from total collapse in the sense that military personnel were used in schools after qualified teachers fled in fear of military persecution. 9) Hence, this chapter will identify the profound damages left by militarism in Namibia.

## 2.2 Militarization of Education

Despite pressures from Western powers, the South African government continued with the militarization of its occupation areas in Namibia. This plan was first conceived in 1976 and put into full operation after mid - 1977 when the Western sponsored negotiations began. 10) According to Richard Dale : Armed Forces and Society , the number of soldiers in what the SADF called the " operational area " increased from about 15, 000 in 1974 to about 45, 000 in 1976 . 11) However, this figure has been disputed by the South African government arguing that only 15, 000 military personnel were stationed . 12)

It is clear that the motive behind militarization was the attempt to check Swapo as this organisation was perceived as a political threat and consequently students were targeted as they were accused of being militant and pro - Swapo.

### 2.2.1 The nature of Conscription

The plan for a "national army" in Namibia paved the way to the formation of the so called South West African Territorial Forces (SWATF). The creation of this force led to attempts to conscript Africans. According to V.C. Knights all males over 18 years of age were to register for military service. However, during the first draft Ovambos, were excluded for reasons not known. <sup>13)</sup>

Nonetheless, this initiative strengthened Pretoria's argument that the entire population of South West Africa was handling its own affairs. It was however questionable as to what type of national army it was since a particular section of the community was sidelined. It seemed that by militarizing Namibia, the South African "colonial" government wanted to reduce its direct role in the military conflict by shifting responsibility to armed forces and other units recruited from amongst Namibians. <sup>14)</sup>

The creation of SWAFT cemented the argument that it was a politically motivated gesture and a creation of the South African Apartheid government. This was clearly shown when it was formally placed under the control of the so called interim government, although its military command structures remained integrated with those of the South African Defence Force (SADF). <sup>16)</sup>

This process proved to have gained momentum in 1981 when black Namibians were called up for military service for the first time. In 1984 provision was made for extending conscription to males of all races between 17 and 55 years of age. <sup>17)</sup>

Despite a national outcry as a result of the militarisation process, Peter Stiff in his book Nine Days of War argues that it was an endeavour to contain the situation in Ovamboland as civilians were to be protected from landmine explosion. <sup>18)</sup> His views were shared by South African military authorities.

### 2.2.2 Militarisation in Schools

The militarisation of Namibia also directly affected students as result of the introduction in 1980 of military conscription for all young Namibian men. This policy was part of a political strategy of internalizing the conflict in Namibia. Nonetheless, the South African government argued that this initiative indicated that Africans in Namibia were empowered towards self determination. To consolidate this effort, circulars were sent to school principals instructing them to register all boys of the age of 16 or over for military service. In November 1980 call up orders were posted to selected young men including students. <sup>19)</sup>

## 2.3 Nationalist responses

The militarisation of Namibia met with widespread opposition particularly from populist groups. <sup>20)</sup> Faced with massive resistance to conscription, the military authorities resorted to some press gangling tactics. <sup>21)</sup> The proliferation of pressure groups against militarism was a clear indication of the fact that Africans in Namibia perceived military conscription of students as nothing else but a means to consolidate the South African government grip in Namibia.

### 2.3.1 Students Uprising

Between 1978 - 1980 there were clear indications that Swapo was enjoying overwhelming support from pressure groups including the

civilian population . To counteract this effort , the South African government emerged with what was regarded as the doctrine of Winning the Hearts and Minds of Namibian civilian population (WHAM) . 22) The SADF portrayed itself as a development agency offering assistance in health , agriculture and administration of schools . Through this scheme the South African government wanted to create dependency in military structures . 23)

To a large extent militarism affected students in a specific way . This became evident in military bases which were near the schools in the war zone as they threatened the physical safety of students . 24) For example , in 1989 three students at one of the schools in a war zone were killed and others injured during an exchange of fire between South African Security Forces and Swapo insurgents . 25)

The rationale behind the proximity of bases in education centres brought some mixed reaction . The South African military authorities justified the close proximity of bases to schools by arguing that this ensured protection for the pupils as they could be abducted by Swapo insurgents . 26)

This argument has been disputed by students themselves . They regarded Swapo cadres as 'freedom fighters' the real force behind the abduction they believed were members of Koevoet . On the other hand , according to The Combatants , The Journal for Swapo Armed Wing , the South African army's intention was to train such students so that they could be used as a 'shield' in the event of 'guerrilla' attacks on military bases thereby creating favourable conditions under which to accuse Swapo of killing civilians . 27)

### 2.3.2 Boycotts and protests

Military conscription gave rise to active resistance on the part of

students . This became evident when the coloured tribal authorities announced in early 1981 that pupils at coloured secondary schools throughout the country would be trained as school cadets . 28) Within the same period boarding schools were constructed at South African military bases to accommodate school students and thereby preventing them from evading conscription or leaving the country to join Swapo . 29)

The measures taken by the South African colonial government in an endeavour to facilitate its military recruitment shows that the government was aware that students were being recruited against their will and wishes and therefore means were to be devised to pressure them and if needs be , hold them as hostages.

If the objective of militarism in Namibia was to protect students from the so called possible abduction by Swapo then an explanation must be given as to why measures of this nature had to be taken . Nevertheless , all these measures notwithstanding , many students joined the growing protest movement inside Namibia calling for an end to conscription and the illegal occupation of Namibia by the South African forces . 30)

To register their concern students began to boycott classes . This initiative was taken by students at the Pontiff Secondary School in the war zone and Ovamboland High School . They vowed not to attend classes until the military bases adjacent to their school were removed . Two month later adjacent schools and five colleges joined the boycott in solidarity with their fellow students . 31)

In response the South African colonial government deployed the police in schools . Students who were perceived as being behind political radicalisation were subjected to detention and intimidation . 32) It became evident that the militarisation of schools brought about some negative effects on the education of Africans.

Many students left schools prematurely as a result of possible fear of military conscription . Furthermore , the periodic protests and boycotts provided nationalist forces with ample opportunity to exploit the state of affairs to promote their own political direction . Although these actions frustrated the colonial forces , the education of the Africans was handicapped.

### 2.3.3 Parents Action

The militarisation of schools also drove parents into a collective unity. The deterioration of education as a result of militarism became a bone of contention to parents . When the parents of the young men heard of the plight of their children , they organised themselves into a People's Action Committee . This culminated in a public meeting in Katutura which was held on June 1984 . <sup>33)</sup>

The attention of those campaigning against conscription was also directed at an official announcement that a training system would be introduced into schools to prepare pupils for national service . <sup>34)</sup>

It was in this gathering where parents voiced their support for the actions of the students . They refused to allow their children to go back to school until the military bases were removed . <sup>35)</sup> The stance taken by parents highlighted that militarisation in schools made the environment not to be conducive for effective learning as it instilled fear and insecurity in students . Although their response was welcomed by student structures , the whole exercise brought about chaos into the educational system .

### 2.3.4 Trade Unionism

African workers have always been at the fore - front of resistance to apartheid colonialism in Namibia . Although the South African

government tried to stamp out the growth of trade unions by applying security legislation which declared strikes to be illegal, the number of registered trade unions mushroomed. 36)

Trade unions in Namibia not only addressed workplace disputes but matters of national concern were also accorded the immediate attention they deserved. This viewpoint is shared by C. Leys and S. John, Namibia's Liberation Struggle. They argued that school boycotts against the presence of SADF military bases in schools received sympathy from trade unions. 37) In support of the students plight the National Union of Mineworkers (NUNW) a confederation of the country's largest union called for a workers stay away in 1988. 38) This was in support of the strike action by the pupils to which some 50,000 workers reportedly responded. 39)



#### 2.4 The consequences of Militarism in Education

Militarism in schools led to considerable shortcomings which handicapped the education of Africans in different ways. It is, however, interesting to note that the South African government holds the view that militarisation of Namibia was a measure to protect the local inhabitants against acts of terrorism. 40)

Further than that, the South African authorities argued that the SADF risked their lives protecting the people and clearing the roads of mines planted by Swapo so that the local inhabitants could go about their daily routines in safety. 41)

According to the South African government these mines were not planted on the roads used by the military but mostly planted on civilian roads. As a consequence the education machinery would come to a halt had trained soldiers not assisted in this respect. In view of the massive damage dealt on the education system it came as no surprise when the SADF came to be the most feared machinery by the local population. 42)



#### 2.4.1 Shortage of qualified teachers

Schools in the operational areas in Northern Namibia experienced a shortage of qualified teachers between 1980 - 1988 . Although there were different factors which may have contributed to this , the escalation of war is the main factor that brought about this shortage . 43)

White teachers were among those who left the country for fear of the war. Black teachers also fled the war zone in the North . Their departure was sparked mainly by the harassment from the South African army stationed in the North and the general dissatisfaction with the system . Black teachers particularly , became victims of harassment by the army . They were either accused of supporting Swapo cadres or teaching communism at school . It was as result of circumstances such as these that many qualified teachers gave up teaching and joined the liberation movements such as Plan.

By the end of the 1980 's Namibia experienced a serious shortage of teachers . This has been confirmed by the official Human Resource Survey which was held in 1988 which revealed that out of a total of 468 listed vacancies in the educational sector at least 355 , which formed about 76 percent , were registered among teachers . 45)

Nonetheless , this led to the employment of under qualified teachers with a mere standard seven and two to three years teachers training . 46) Furthermore soldier - teachers were also deployed at schools. Unfortunately , this triggered resistance from learners . One would conclude that militarism in Namibia ultimately resulted in the shortage of capable teachers as they gave up teaching subsequent to war related pressures .

#### 2.4.2 Anti Soldier - teacher system

In an attempt to win the hearts and minds of the South West Africans , the SADF portrayed itself as a development agency offering

assistance and taking over the administration of schools . It was through this process that teachers eventually saw their schools being taken over by South African soldiers who were there to promote the image of the army as a social benefactor and to act as informers . 47)

Teachers known to oppose Bantu Education or suspected of affiliating or sympathising with Swapo faced arrest , detention and dismissal from their jobs . They were replaced by national service men who were deployed at schools as teachers . 48)

This move brought into question the quality of their professional integrity raising questions about whether they were capable as educators . It was therefore questioned as to whether they were not in the classroom with a hidden agenda.

This view is shared by Grotperter who argued that the national service men were deployed at schools to use classrooms as arena for war propaganda . 49)

It was clear that the deployment of soldier - teachers in the local schools was an attempt to familiarise the population with the army and to facilitate for purpose of information gathering . Certain schools had staff entirely composed of national servicemen . 50) The appointment of soldiers at schools as teachers was an endeavour to intensify military rule rather than to nourish and nurture African students with some competent education knowledge .

In Ovamboland the widespread use of soldier - teachers resulted in sporadic protests . By 1978 there were 90 national servicemen seconded to the so called ' Ovambo government ' in the Oshakati area alone . Most of them were working as teachers . For example in August 1978 seven hundred pupils at the Petrus Koreb Secondary School went on strike to back a demand for the withdrawal of SADF teachers . 51) The fact that this military servicemen even carried their guns in classroom was quite intimidating . It made students to feel insecure . These conditions worsened when the colonial authority closed about 19 schools around 1981 . 52) In view of these , the number of drop - outs increased drastically.

### 2.4.3. Politicisation of Youth

South African authorities in Namibia from the Administrator - General down were fond of quoting the dictum that 80 % of successful counter - insurgency consisted of winning support from the people and only 20 % consisted of military activity . 53) The South African government acknowledged that success in counter - insurgency required a delicate balance between physical force and the introduction of measures designed to eradicate the root causes of disaffection . 54)

This view led to the formation of what was regarded as a ' Civic Action ' headed by the military structures . Its objectives , as argued by military authorities , were to improve the quality of life of the civilians they were defending . 55)

However , it seem that this was a justification for the military takeover of what remained in health , education , transport and administrative structures in the war zones . 56)

Students found themselves being victims of circumstances . However , this drove them into some political eye - opening . Secondary schools which were in operational areas such as Caprivi , Kaokoland and Ovamboland began to organise themselves into forums which were responsible for addressing educational issues . They perceived the prefect system as being shortsighted and a pro - colonial system . 57)

It came as no suprise when around 1984 the so called Namibian National Student Organisation ( NANSO ) came into being . The idea of forming this organisation emanated from Namibian students who were studying at the University of Fort Hare . This organisation articulated educational issues . Amongst others , they demanded an end to military conscription and the dismissal of soldier - teachers . The formation of student structures marked the intensification of the politicisation of the youth as they began to align themselves with pressure groups such as churches , trade unions and liberation forces . 58)

Namibian students found it hard to believe that a force that perpetrated so many atrocities, ruthlessly enforced the martial law and rounded up people for interrogation and torture could possibly be their protectors. 59)

Furthermore, they also viewed the take over of social institutions by foreign soldiers as a hindrance to their own employment opportunities. This became all the more obvious when students began with widespread protests and classroom boycotts in protest against the deployment of white national servicemen. 60) They also protested against the ill treatment of civilians by Koevoet forces in townships and rural areas and the intimidation of school children by the security forces. At certain instances, school children assisted Plan guerrillas in attacking the soldiers deployed in their schools. For example, a pupil from the Kandymi Murenga Secondary School in the Kavango was arrested after an attack on the residence of South African soldiers serving as teachers at the school. 61)

The degree of the politicisation of the youth was highlighted when students refused to be drafted into the apartheid army. Those who were bold enough were able to make known their political stance. 62)

Subsequent to this situation, the Namibian student movement came into being as result of a determination to address the inferior education offered to Blacks which was linked to the system of racial oppression, repression and militarism masterminded by the South African colonial administration. The writing of slogans such as 'bloodsuckers' on pavement, walls, public places in schools and colleges also indicated the degree of politicisation. 63)

#### 2.4.4. Refugees and exile

In an endeavour to root out the spirit of resistance on the part of students, the South African colonial government began to clamp down

on those who were associated with Swapo . 64) Despite all the pressures used by the security forces , the students made it clear that they shall boycott classes until military bases were removed from their respective schools .

Nevertheless , the colonial authority continued pursuing its political objectives arrogantly. It was clear that the government was not prepared to bow down to whatever pressure . To consolidate its stand point , the government placed into operation stringent conditions such as that students be accompanied by their parents or guardian who should give an undertaking to the effect that they shall not take part in politics . 65)

As students were expected to attend school under these conditions , those who were not willing to receive colonial education under harsh conditions went into exile . 66)

Around 1981 a flood of people fled the country into exile after the South African authorities introduced compulsory military service for all African boys in Namibia . They fled from the constant surveillance of South African security forces being subjected to repression , attacks on their property and the ever present threat of torture and death . 67)

A mass exodus began in late 1980 as direct result of the introduction of compulsory military service in Namibia . By July 1981 , an additional 20 ,000 Namibians , were reported to have arrived in Angola . 68)

However , the South African government argued that Swapo guerrillas had abducted school children by forcibly transporting them across the border to Angola . Nevertheless , this claims were rejected by the Catholic priest who argued that he received letters from some of the pupils stating that they had arranged to be fetched by Swapo querrillas from their schools in Ovambo . 69)

Being abroad , they were left with the two options , either to join national liberation armies such as Plan or to further their studies . For example H. Geingob , who was an ex teacher , argued that most of the African teachers after teaching realised that they had grave shortcomings and had not had enough training . 70)

In was in view of this situation that students gave up schooling and went abroad . Those who were fortunate received funds from the United Nations Special Training Programme . They went as far as Cuba , Zambia , Ghana , Germany and Uganda . Hundreds of Namibians went to western colleges and universities after receiving scholarships from non - government Organisations .

Furthermore , they campaigned against the presence of apartheid colonialism in Namibia and earned the sympathy of the international community . 71)

An objective analysis of the effects of militarism on education can tempt one to conclude that the implementation of counter - insurgency measures such as the winning of hearts and minds campaign , contributed significantly to the collapse of education in operation zones . However , on a positive note , the use of soldier - teacher at schools saved education from total collapse as some of those teachers were good.

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## Chapter Three

### The Social Effects of militarism on health Services

Faced with mounting military pressure from Swapo and increasingly hostility from the Namibian population, the occupational forces in Namibia emerged with a mechanism aimed at winning the confidence of the Namibian civilian population. A particular section of Namibians who were in war zones were accused by South African military authorities of aiding Swapo cadres with food and shelter. 1) Furthermore, mission hospitals and clinics were also accused of providing Swapo cadres with medical treatment. Consequently they became victims of army harassment.

On the other hand, the South African authorities in Namibia claimed that 80 percent of counter-insurgency consisted of winning support from the civilian population and only 20 percent consisted of military activity. 2) However, this was perceived by Swapo as the justification for the military takeover of what remained of health, education, transport and administrative structures in the war zones. South African military personnel were to be portrayed as being 'helpful' to the population. 3)

#### 3.1 Military take over of health services

As part of the military build up the South African colonial government ordered its forces to occupy health centres such as clinics and hospitals. The reasons for doing so were questionable. This trend gained momentum particularly after the collapse of the puppet Turnhale government. Although Namibians gained limited services from the South African Defence force personnel, much damage had been done which necessitated an objective analysis. 4)

The presence of South African colonial forces in health centres was perceived by the Namibian civilian population as nothing else but the extension of South African colonialism in the country. By occupying health centres the South African colonial forces extended their responsibilities far beyond military engagement to affect and even control wide areas of civilian life. 5)

Nevertheless, the SADF took over direct control of the administration particularly in the war zone. This gesture remained questionable. It was questioned why only war zone areas were militarized. The move was perceived as an attempt to clamp down the movement of Swapo cadres in war torn areas.

It is again interesting to note that the South African colonial government justified the military take over of health facilities by SADF forces as an attempt to prevent the total collapse of health facilities which were in a chaotic condition. 6)

However, this argument has been disputed by Brian Wood, Namibia 1884 - 1984. He argues that the colonial forces wanted to prevent Swapo members from obtaining medical treatment. This opposing view highlighted that the taking over of health centres by SADF to a large extent had political undertones.

Similar sentiments were echoed by Sparks who argued that through militarization the South African government wanted to seal off and be able to systematically search any part of the war zone at will. To facilitate this objective, the South African Defence force portrayed itself as a development agency offering assistance and taking over hospitals in the war zones. 8)

### 3.2. Closure of Mission hospitals and Clinics

Despite a high number of war casualties and occurrences of endemic diseases such as bubonic plague, the South African colonial

government decided to close mission hospitals and clinics . The managers of these institutions were accused by military authorities of being too liberal and sympathetic to the plight of the Namibian civilian population . 9)

Contrary to this view , the South African colonial government argued that mission hospitals and clinics were being used by Swapo cadres and consequently became the targets of police harassment and army brutality . 10) One wonders as to whether the welfare of the community was taken into consideration when mission hospitals and clinics were closed . The decline in service delivery , particularly in the health field , was the result of the deliberate destruction of facilities by the SADF . Amongst the hospitals which experienced army brutality and harassment included the Lutheran Hospital the St. Mary 's Anglican Mission at Odiba and the Lutheran hospitals at Ondjokwa . 11)

As a measure to create the so called dependence of military structures , health centres were manned by SADF personnel such as doctors and nurses as a way of familiarising the population with the army and facilitating for intelligence gathering activities . 12)

The closure of mission hospitals and clinics coincided with the spreading of chronic diseases such as tuberculosis , malaria and typhoid . Most of the health centres closed were in war zone areas and consequently the civilian population were left in a state of uncertainty concerning service delivery within the health sphere . 13)

### 3.3. Factors which influenced health services .

The South African colonial government regarded the military take over of health facilities as a move to avoid a total collapse of health services . Although the Namibian civilian population managed to receive limited treatment from health centres manned by the South African

Defence Force much damage was done which handicapped health services . Nonetheless , factors such as the appointment of SADF personnel , military curfew and military repression contributed to the deterioration of health services . 14)

### 3.3.1 Appointment of SADF personnel

It is , however , interesting to note that the appointment of SADF personnel provoked a mixed reaction from the people which needs to be scrutinized . Despite the claims that the SADF personnel saved health centres from total collapse , the South African government claimed that the military take over of the health service was appreciated by the local population . 15) This claim was disputed by B. Cawthra who argued that uniformed health personnel were feared and distrusted . Although there was conflict between the military and the Ovambo administration on the issue of the provision of health services , civilian services in both major war zones were almost completely taken over by the SADF personnel . 16)

Health community and social workers not allied to the military mainly employed by the various churches often bore the brunt in terms of detentions. This resulted in an inevitable mistrust among the civilian population of military doctors who were national servicemen doing their best under difficult circumstances. However , they were stigmatized by the fact that they wore the brown SADF uniform . 17)

Nevertheless , one cannot deny the fact that SADF personnel provided the Namibian civilian population with some form of medical care . However , on the overall their appointment contributed effectively to the deterioration of health services . Their presence instilled fear and insecurity to fellow Namibian citizenry . 18) This viewpoint is shared by A . Du Pisani who argued that civilians , particularly those who were seeking treatment had to expect help from the very people they saw

as occupying and destroying their land . To the Namibians , the presence of uniformed health personnel in hospitals and clinics was a symbol of colonial oppression and domination . 19)

Consequently , many Namibians avoided the clinics manned by SADF personnel , complaining of racism and maltreatment practiced in these institutions . 20)

Furthermore , the appointment of SADF personnel also sparked resistance from Namibian nurses . This became eminent when they learnt that they were going to be replaced by SADF personnel particularly in Ovambo and Kaokoland . They found it hard to understand the motive behind the closure of mission hospitals as they had for so long played a role in providing medical services to civilians . 21)

The take over of health services by the military was glorified by the Director of Government Liaison for Administration arguing that the army was the only body capable of operating medical services in Ovambo . This argument was disputed by nurses themselves. Mrs Parkhouse, the Matron of the state hospital who was unfortunately sacked because she was considered to be politically inappropriate and too liberal argued that the take over of hospitals by the army instilled a sense of fear and insecurity on nurses . 22)

### 3.3.2 Military Curfew

The introduction of military curfew by the South African colonial authorities in Namibia , was in line with the argument that the colonial forces were in Namibia to protect the civilian population from possible abduction by Swapo cadres . 23) Its introduction , however , was another nail in the coffin of the ailing condition of health facilities .

As a result of a dusk to dawn curfew imposed, anybody moving about after dark was shot. It was even difficult for a person even to go and help of sick neighbour or a woman in childbirth. 24) According to the dusk to dawn curfew no movement was allowed between sunset and sunrise. This meant that should a civilian become seriously ill, be injured or go into labour during the night, they would have to wait until sunrise before they could seek treatment. It was well known that anything that moved after 8 pm, was likely to be shot without warning. 25)

Other examples of South African control over the area were numerous checkpoints along all paved roads and the patrolling of rural areas by casspirs and armed personnel vehicles used by the SADF. 26)

The SADF goal was to allow no entry into or exit from Ovambo without permit. 27) This procedure made it difficult for Namibians to visit clinics and hospitals. As a result, health services in Ovamboland continued to deteriorate as they were being wrecked by the war.

Furthermore, people were too scared to undertake trips to health clinics and many services collapsed. The inhabitants had to rely on SADF doctors, but there was resentment towards them in uniform. 28)

Health service was curtailed by the war as preventative medicine programmes became none - existence in the more remote areas because of the dangers of travel routes. Health workers were also restricted in their movements by the dusk to dawn curfew and by the ever - present danger of being ambushed or the possibility of their vehicles detonating a landmine. 29)

### 3.3.3 Military Repression

Health conditions in war zones also deteriorated as result of military repression. Army brutality in Namibia was exposed by Lutheran,



Catholic and Anglican church leaders who submitted a memorandum to the then United State Secretary of State Henry Kissinger . The South African regime regarded the churches in Namibia as being communist aligned .<sup>30)</sup>

One wonders as to whether these churches were labelled as being communists by exposing army brutality or whether it was a propaganda strategy by South African authorities to soil the image of these churches..

Nonetheless , military repression was consolidated by the passing and extension of Martial Law in May 1979 . Army officers could mount roadblocks and identify checks in the reserves ; farms and towns of the whole northern and central Namibia .<sup>31)</sup> This created the impression that army officers were above the law as few were brought to the court of law . They could even whisk away any one they please into detention for interrogation and torture and sometimes victims of such atrocities were never to be seen again .<sup>32)</sup>

Patients in certain instances became victims of army harassment in hospitals . In one case a counter - insurgency unit was accused of abducting a patient from a hospital bed who was being treated for gunshot wounds .<sup>33)</sup> Although this action was criticised by the Director of Health in the Ovambo Administration as being totally against the law , this action spoke volumes on its own as it demonstrated that the security forces were above the law to such an extent that patients and hospital authorities were not respected and secured . The army as such was seen as the law unto itself .

Health workers were not immune from these atrocities . Doctors , nurses , patients and even the directors of the institution were detained under security legislation . Those accused of collaborating with Swapo cadres by providing them with information on the movements of security forces became vulnerable as victims of army brutality and repression .<sup>34)</sup>

There were a number of reports of raids by the South African Security forces on hospitals and of arrests of medical personnel. For example, the superintendent of the Lutheran Hospital at Onandjokwe, Dr. Nafta Hamata, was arrested at the hospital in 1980 and detained in solitary confinement in Windhoek for two months. 35)

It was even claimed that landmines were planted in hospital grounds and on some occasions buildings were blown up. Barbara Konig states clearly that by planting landmines, the South African colonial government wanted to put into effect their divide and rule tactics as the Namibian civilian population would begin to blame Swapo for atrocities. 36)

This seems to have been a systematic process to sow fear and orchestrate a provocative strategy of manipulating the goodwill of the Namibians against the liberation movements.

The circumstances and conditions under which civilian medical personnel were obliged to work seem to have contributed to the steady deterioration of health conditions among the black population of Namibia.

Contrary to this view, the South African government boasted of being the finest military health service ever provided by any modern army. 37) Credit must be given to SADF medical personnel who under this difficult environment were able to provide civilians with the minimal medical care. Let alone their willingness to venture into a war situation in a quest to provide health services at all costs. Some stuck to their oaths as health providers and services from them made a world of a difference as compared to a situation where no service could have been provided at all.

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## Chapter Four

### The effects of militarism on family life

#### 4.1 Background

The "illegal" South African occupation of Namibia was challenged by a sustained armed struggle waged by Swapo as liberation movement. Swapo was perceived by the South African colonial forces as a "Marxist" structure which sought to introduce communism in Namibia. To eliminate Swapo's influence, the South African government emerged with what was regarded as a counter revolutionary strategy which included the deployment of South African troops particularly in the northern part of Namibia. This included areas such as Ovamboland, Caprivi and Kaokoland. 2)

Although the exact number of South African troops in war zone areas became a bone of contention General Meiring argued that there were about 40,000 SADF and SWATF troops in the operational area. However, this figures excluded troops outside the war zone areas. Nevertheless, Swapo estimated 100,000 troops to be under the South African government. 3) If these statistics are anything to go by one can come to the conclusion that the clashes between South African troops and Swapo cadres was one of high intensity although this argument has been disputed by the South African government. The Namibian civilian population particularly in the war zone area became victims of armed conflict between the South African troops and Swapo cadres for many years. 4)

It is clear from all available evidence that the South African military onslaught inflicted a profound damage on the socio-economic structures of the Namibian society. Africans in Namibia were exploited as cheap labour by the white minority and deprived of political and economic power by the apartheid rule. They also experienced a "virtual destruction" of their way of life. The result of the damage inflicted by this armed occupation was enormous in both human and material terms. 5)

The pervasive military presence, the brutal behaviour of the security forces and the deliberate assault on the deeply held beliefs and convention of the local population penetrated deeply into the fabric of Namibian society. 6) Families broke up as a result of military operations, children and elderly people were left completely alone after their relatives had been killed. Many arrived in the refugee settlements in a state of psychological shock and trauma. 7)

By 1981 there were estimated to be more than 50,000 Namibians driven into exile largely as a result of the war and persecution by the police and military service.

Furthermore, in the north, the indigenous economy had been all but destroyed. Areas along the border were defoliated, entire villages removed forcefully or destroyed and vast areas were made impassable due to the hazards of landmines. Much of the previously inadequate socio-economic infrastructure had been either crippled further or converted for military use. 8)

The introduction of a military curfew was another nail in the already ailing conditions of the indigenous economy as it brought about various restrictions. This ultimately affected production in different farmlands as the people were compelled to return to their homelands at a time that complied with the curfew.

Families in the war zone were also devastated by an enforced resettlement. In the Caprivi and the Okavango about 20 000 - 50 000 civilian Africans were moved from traditional residential areas into strategic hamlets that were under army guard. This resulted in homelessness which evoked a feeling of insecurity among the villagers. 10)

Force was the primary vehicle used by South Africa to perpetuate its domination over Namibia. This became evident when certain sections of the Namibian civilian population were accused of aiding and providing shelter to Swapo cadres. In an attempt to consolidate its hold over the war zone, the South African troops adopted a counter-insurgency strategy whereby soldiers conducted summary executions, arbitrary arrests and torture of those suspected of aiding Swapo cadres. 11)

The plight of the Namibian civilian population in the war zone received sympathy from concerned church leaders such as Bishop Desmond Tutu. After a visit to Namibia, he described the South African occupation as a reign of terror in which the only form of law was that of gunman and torture. 12) However, the South African government disputed these findings as being partisan in nature.

According to Reginald Green, Namibia the Last Colony, about 80 percent of atrocities committed in the war zone were spearheaded by Koevoet. 13)

Allegations of the abuse of women including rapes were also labelled against these forces. This serves as testimony of the extent of trauma suffered by Namibian families in the war zone.

Nevertheless, the war provided the Namibians with employment opportunities. In a country where few people were in salaried employment, military recruitment was not a difficult task although it sowed seeds of disunity. Those employed became the new economic elite. They were however seen as traitors by their fellow countrymen. 14) For example, the indigenous Ovambo members of Koevoet were given R 2000 for every member they killed. 15) This sparked military terrorism on civilians.

The South African military onslaught inflicted a profound damage on the socio-economic structures of the Namibian society. 16) The most significant of these was the destruction of the indigenous economy and traditional way of life as results of war related developments such as military curfew, military conscription, terrorism and torture, arbitrary arrests, rapes and disappearance of civilians, war casualties and unnatural death as well as forced resettlement. 17)

#### 4.2 The destruction of indigenous economy and lifestyle

As a direct consequence of the war, societies in war zone areas began to experience hardships which affected their traditional way of life. Traditionally, the homestead was the smallest family unit. It was composed of women, children and men particularly as breadwinners. The function of women included planting, weeding, harvesting, cleaning the house and cooking. Young boys were responsible for herding cattle and girls spent most of their time in the milled fields. 18)

Men did not rely on farming only for survival. They sought employment in mines and on farms as sources of cheap labour. The little cash they brought home as migrant labourers enabled them to survive as they relayed it towards a subsistence system of economy. In their traditional farmlands, the Namibians planted mainly millet (Mahungu) as the main agricultural product. 21)

After 1976 the northern part of Namibia, particularly the Okavango and Ovamboland areas, became the scene of armed conflict between South African troops and Swapo cadres. In view of these circumstances the South African colonial authorities began to militarize the northern part of Namibia arguing that the main objective was to protect civilians from terrorism. 22) The South African authorities also argued that certain sections of the Namibian civilian population were colluding with Swapo cadres providing them with food and shelter. This situation posed a serious threat to the continued dominance over Namibia by the South African authorities. As the colonial government was not prepared to bow down to pressures of all forms, it resorted to using a campaign known as the "hearts and minds campaign." The objective of the campaign was to win the confidence of the Namibian civilian population by way of providing good services. The SADF was depicted as the one taking all initiatives to help the communities. 23)

The intensification of militarism in the northern part of Namibia brought mixed fortunes to civilians as a result of pressures brought



by the war. The hardest hit were the peasant farmers in the Ovambo and Kavango region. For example, thousands of peasants were forced off the land by military pressures from both sides of the conflict when the so called "fire clear zones" were declared. 24)

In the Ovambo region, this resulted in close to 250,000 (a quarter of the total population of Namibia) being forced to move off their land.

They were moved to a triangular section of land which was 30 km long and about 20 km wide between Ondangwa and Oshakati. The area was not suitable for purposes of agricultural produce as it was sandy and therefore tended to be waterlogged during rainy season. 25)

It would seem that a combination of war related factors contributed to the destruction of the indigenous economy. The production of millet or mahungu was labour intensive. It has been estimated that about 50 000 civilians fled Namibia as result of the war. They either joined Plan or moved to South to escape poverty and became migrant labourers. 26) This had a negative effect on peasant farming.

The introduction of a military curfew also brought insurmountable pressures on agricultural activities. It has been indicated that peasant families spent most of their time in farmlands, sometimes the entire kraal would work in their farm fields until after dark particularly during sowing and harvesting. 27) Doing so of course amounted to a contravention of curfew regulations. Furthermore, the heavy traffic of military vehicles in particular, casspirs, buffels and eland armoured cars also took its toll. 28)

Koevoet members were accused of burning entire millet (mahungu) fields in retaliation against a homesteads due to allegations of either failing to report the presence of guerrillas, aiding Swapo cadres or living in areas where guerrillas were known to be active. 29)

Certain traditional values, norms and lifestyles were eroded as a result of the military curfew. For example, young girls from neighbouring villages used to meet in forests claiming to do traditional dances in the moonlight. Gatherings of this nature came to an end and this was a blow to an African tradition. Military pressures effected a change on the status of women. <sup>30)</sup> Traditionally women were inferior and subservient to males. After the fleeing of the menfolk the women enjoyed the privilege of making household decisions concerning cattle, crop planting, children schooling as well as social and political organisation. <sup>31)</sup>

Families in the operational areas also became victims of the armed conflict between South African troops and Swapo cadres as a result of landmine explosions. Others were caught in the crossfire. The issue of landmines became a bone of contention as both forces pointed fingers at each other. The South African colonial forces in an endeavour to justify their militarization process argued that it was a matter of urgency to increase their military capabilities to prevent terrorist incursions and to protect the local inhabitants against acts of terrorism. <sup>32)</sup> Nevertheless, Peter Stiff in his book Nine Days of War argued that the black civilian population remained the prime target of landmine explosions planted by Swapo. <sup>33)</sup>

Swapo on the other hand denied the claims made by the South African government arguing that their cadres could not terrorise fellow countrymen who were equally disadvantaged by the war. Furthermore, Swapo argued that the South African troops planted landmines in order to soil the image of Swapo as a credible organisation. For example, the South African troops were criticised by Swapo for planting landmines and explosives in the hospital compound and then blaming Swapo. <sup>34)</sup>

The excessive loss of human life in the operation zone also triggered the United Nations Organisation to pass resolution 447 (1979). It was aggrieved by the mounting loss of human life including that of civilians and the wanton destruction of property caused by the South African troops. 35)

Although these two forces denied the responsibility for the micing of the civilian population, the armed conflict they waged brutalized civilians. Affected families became increasingly exposed to extremely harsh economic hardships and abject penury.

#### 4.3. Factors which caused the disintegration of families

Families which were in the operation zone disintergrated as result of war related factors such as military conscription, forced removal, military terrorisms, allegations of rape, disappearance of people and exle. In the views of various authors these factors inflicted damages which left scars which were not easily erased in the minds of Namibian civilians.

##### 4.3.1 Military conscription

To a large extent military conscription in Namibia contributed to the disintegration of families. This became evident when compulsory military service was introduced in 1981 and was extended to include black Namibian males between the ages of 16 and 25. However, men from the Kaokoland, Ovambo, Caprivi and Kavango were exempted from the first call up. 36)

It is interesting to note that the introduction of military conscription brought a mixed reaction. The South African colonial government argued that the entire process reflected that the Namibian civilian population were handling their own affairs without foreign intervention. <sup>37)</sup> However, this argument was disputed by Swapo which argued that it was an attempt to pit Namibians against each other. <sup>38)</sup> This viewpoint was echoed by P. Johnson and D. Martin, Destructive Engagement: Southern Africa At War, who argued that by creating SWATF, the South African government wanted to defend Pretoria's illegal occupation of the territory. <sup>39)</sup>

However, in an environment where few Namibians were in any salaried position, it was hard to resist such offer although force was used at certain instances. Nonetheless, those who were reluctant to serve under apartheid structures perceived SWATF as nothing else but an extension of apartheid colonialism in Namibia.

There was considerable confusion as to whether exemption applied only to those residing in the northern region or to all members of the population group. As a result, large numbers of contract workers were reported to have left the workers hostel in Katutura outside Windhoek to return to their homes in the north for fear of being conscripted against their will and wishes. <sup>40)</sup> Being in the southern part of Namibia where they earned a living they were easily exposed to the apartheid military structures and consequently it was easy for them to be conscripted.

These circumstances plunged blacks into a state of uncertainty. By remaining in a 'white' urban area, black workers faced not only police harassment and unemployment, but possible conscription into the army. They were thus presented with the problem of whether to take these risks or to return to the north where the chances of working were eroded by the war. <sup>41)</sup>

It is quite clear that the pressures brought to bear by the war forced removals an increasing number of people into a permanent state of uncertainty .

#### 4.3.2 Forced Removal

Northern Namibia was also subjected to enforced resettlement schemes. In Caprivi and Okavango , according to various estimates , some 20 000 - 50 000 civilian Africans were moved from traditional living areas into strategic hamlets guarded by the army . 43) The South African government argued that through enforced resettlement Namibian civilian population could be saved from acts of terrorism by Swapo cadres .

It is important to note that civilians were resettled against their will and wishes . This became evident when many villagers opposed the order to move . Yet to their dismay they were forced to do so . Houses and crops were burnt and hundreds of villagers were arrested . In several cases people were reported to have been killed by security forces . 44) The enforced resettlement masterminded by South African forces contributed to the disintegration of families in the operational zones . Many were left homeless and those who were not prepared to move to prescribed areas fled . All this traumatised families . This matter has been highlighted by Richard Synge who describes forced resettlement as a draconian measure which influenced the wide strip along the entire border which was a 'free fire zone' where all unauthorized people were to be shot on sight . 45)

Although enforcement resettlement scheme saved civilians from landmine explosions from both camps , the trauma left by the whole exercise was great in the sense that they were moved to an area which was not conducive to agricultural production . Families in

affected areas became targets of army brutality and harassment in an effort to impose resettlement. 46)

### 4.3.3 Military terrorism and torture

The progressive failure of the 'hearts and minds' campaign in Namibia coincided with an increase in police and army atrocities. 47) Through this campaign the South African colonial government hoped that they would capture the confidence of the Namibian civilian population. It was learnt that the population aided guerrillas with shelter and food. This state of affairs posed a serious threat to the continued existence of apartheid colonialism in Namibia.

As a counter insurgency strategy, the South African government began to use whatever means at her disposal in order to root out Swapo influence. Members of the civilian population accused of aiding Swapo cadres faced the wrath of the security forces. Terror and torture was used as a result of the activities of the Special Police and Koevoet. Torture was commonly used on Namibian political prisoners and detainees. 48) The South African authorities inflicted cruel, inhuman and degrading treatment on African political prisoners in order to obtain information from them. Koevoet members were accused in the Namibian courts of a number of atrocities over the past years. Victims of assault were often too frightened to report such incidents to the authorities for fear of reprisals. Only an estimated ten to twenty percent of all violent incidents against civilians were brought to the attention of the public. 49)

It would seem that the so called special forces were a law unto themselves. In many cases where police and army members were charged for atrocities, they had the right to invoke section 103 of the Defence Act, which granted immunity from prosecution to members

of the security forces for acts carried out in good faith under operational conditions . 50) For example , the trial of four SADF soldiers on a charge of murdering an Ovambo civilian was halted as result of certificate issued by the interim government arguing that soldiers acted in good faith for the suppression of terrorism in the 'operational area' . 51) The activities of Koevoet were highlighted by its founding member Colonel Eugene De Kock who confessed during a hearing of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission that civilians and freedom fighters were shot and killed . He argued that state terrorism increased as a result of cash incentives which were given to individual members of Koevoet . 52)

Although the exact figure of civilians tortured and killed is not known , a number of them were persecuted by security forces and this was tantamount to a gross violation of human rights . Military terrorism and torture remained as one of the factors which triggered the disintergration of families in the operational zone . Of those who fled Namibia others cited army brutality and persecution of civilians as one of the factors which compelled them to take refuge to Angola . 53)

#### 4.3.4 Rape and Disappearances

The introduction of a military curfew in the operational area rendered women to be more vulnerable as a result of the long hours of the curfew . Many families remained deserted as men fled in fear of persecution and joined liberation forces such as Plan . The absence of menfolk made women to be exposed to abuse by security forces particularly the notorious Koevoet . 54)

Rape became an increasingly common feature of the military occupation. According to the Attorney General , 42 percent of the criminal cases brought before the Windhoek Supreme Court in 1982 involved rape , the majority being from the war zone . Cases brought to the courts represented only a tiny minority of rapes . 55)

For most Namibian women living in remote areas there were minimal opportunities for bringing a court action against a member of the security forces who had the power of arrest and carried the full weight of the administration and armed forces . 56) The civil rights lawyer in Windhoek , David Smuts , told a conference in London in 1988 that every month Oshakati Hospital alone treated 10 cases of rape by members of the armed forces . On the other hand hospital staff reported an increase in the number of new born babies abandoned on the doorstep often fathered by members of the armed forces . 57)

Relatives were told that their folk were abducted by Swapo even though witnesses had seen them being arrested . The issue of ' disappearance ' as claimed by the South African government left many questions unanswered in the minds of the people . This led to much tension and uncertainty . Relatives remained uncertain whether their loved ones were under arrest , killed as a result of torture or killed as they tried to escape as claimed by the colonial authority .

#### 4.4 Response by the Church

The maltreatment of the civilian population sparked considerable concern from several church delegations which visited Namibia and by Amnesty International . Following a 10 day visit to Namibia the leader of the British Council of Churches , the Right Reverend Stanley Boath - Clibborn , confirmed that the Namibian civilian population in the war zone were experiencing " unbearable suffering " as a result of atrocities perpetrated by the security forces . 59)

A delegation from the South African Council of Churches led by its president Rev. Peter Storey and its general secretary Bishop Desmond Tutu also visited Namibia in 1983 . In their findings Mr. Storey declared that the delegation had discovered a " deep distrust of the military among the members of the local population and that the



SADF was dreaded more than Swapo. In conclusion they argued that about 90 % of the atrocities committed in the operational area were committed by the security forces. 60)

The South African government, however, disputed the findings made by the church leaders. The spokesperson of the SADF argued that it was unthinkable that the disciplined South African soldiers would "illtreat the very people, they were supposed to protect." 61)

Although the South African authority disputed allegations of army brutality, former Koevoet members admitted certain killings and the persecution of targeted homesteads. For example, D. Deegan, a former Koevoet member, expressed concern about the atrocities committed by Koevoet and also his desire to contact victims of the South African army's brutality and to try and effect reparation. 62)

An analysis of the role of military forces in the operational area could compels one to conclude that families in the war zone area became victims of both the SADF forces and Swapo cadres and that both human and material losses were experienced.

#### 4.5 Endnotes

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5. B. Konig, Namibia: The Ravages of War, p. 6.
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7. H. M. Prinsloo , Assignment of meaning by children in the distinctive education in the SWA operational area , p. 2 .
8. D. Herbststein and Evenson , The devils are among us , p. 106.
9. B. Konig , Namibia : The Ravages of War , p. 7.
10. R. Green , Namibia the Last Colony , p. 164.
11. Human Rights Watch on Namibia , 4 April 1997 , p. 1.
12. Keesing Contemporary Sources , vol. 24 , March 1983 , p. 31999.
13. R. Green (etal.) , Namibia the Last Colony , p. 164.
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28. Ibid.
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30. D. Herbstein and Evenson , The devils are among us , p. 105.
31. Ibid.
32. Hansard , 21 January 1980 , vol. 1 , p. 4.
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34. B. Konig , Namibia : The Ravages of War , p. 10.
35. Namibia A Direct United Nation Responsibility , p. 110.
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37. Hansard, 23 January 1981 , vol. 2 , p. 64.
38. P. Katjavivi , A History of Resistance in Namibia , p. 79.
39. P. Johnson and D. Martin (eds.) , South Africa at War , p. 125.
40. R. Green (etal.) , Namibia the Last Colony , p. 160.
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42. Ibid.
43. Country Profile Report in Namibia , vol. 1 , p. 17.

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## Chapter Five

### Conclusion

This dissertation has attempted to show how the occupation of the Northern part of Namibia by the South African Forces affected the lives of the civilian population. Particular attention was given to education, health and family life.

The South African "colonial" government in Namibia claimed that the military occupation of Namibian territory was an endeavour to protect civilians against the terrorism of Swapo. It is, however, important to note that the Namibian civilians perceived the South African troops as forces of terror and harassment.

It is clear from all available evidence that South Africa's military has inflicted profound damages on the socio-economic structures of Namibian society. Civilians who were staying in the war zone areas experienced the virtual destruction of their way of life.

Swapo as a protagonist in the Namibian struggle for independence was able to mobilize support. This became possible as a result of the hardships brought by the escalating war. It managed to win support from civilians, students, workers and was also backed by major church organizations such as the United Evangelical Lutheran Church.

Civilians in the operational areas also supplied Swapo cadres with information about the regime's troops movements and also provided them with food and other resources.

In view of these developments, the South African authorities emerged with what was regarded as counter insurgency tactics. This was done in two classical ways. Firstly by distinguishing the guerillas from the villagers and by attempting to win the confidence of civilian population through the so called the hearts and minds campaign.

The use of soldier - teachers at schools saved education from total collapse as black teachers went into exile in fear of military persecution . On a positive note , being abroad , they received good education which is why some of them held high positions in independent Namibia . However , much damage had been done as the country is still lacking highly qualified teachers and technicians .

One cannot underestimate the fact that the South African Defence Force in Namibia had highly sophisticated medical facilities manned by white professionals . However , most of them spent most of their time in southern part of Namibia which was predominately white .

The closure of mission hospitals and clinics had definite political understones as this was done when the country was experiencing the hardships brought by the war and when medical services were needed the most . Although the civilian population received minimal medical care from military personnel , it would seem that the SADF had a limited concern for the health of blacks in Northern Namibia .

One outcome of the militarization of Namibia was the disintegration of families as a result of war related factors such as military curfew , military persecution , forced removals and others . Militarism in Namibia created dependency on military structures which is now a thorny issue in independent Namibia .

This work refutes the argument held by the South African government that the militarization of northern part of Namibia was a measure to protect civilians from Swapo insurgents . The occupation of Namibia by South African troops was an endeavour to hold its grip on the territory . In the process the civilians became victims of the two belligerent forces namely , SADF and Swapo , which had divergent view on the settlement of the Namibian dispute .

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