208. NTS Box 9126 File 68/363/23, DNEAS to DAG (O), 1/7/1941 and AG (3)154/X/132 Box 19, DNEAS to DAG (O), 10/2/1942.

209. AG (3)154/X/132 Box 19, Secretary Public Service Commission to Secretary for Defence, 24/3/1942; AG (3)154/X/132 Box 19 and CGS 32/5 Vol. II, AG to various Sections, 3/6/1942 and SADF Archives Box 14 Pamphlet 265, Handbook and Regulations for the NEAS, p. 29.

210. AG (3)154/X/132 Box 19, SNA to AG, 25/9/1944, Secretary for Defence to AG, 11/10/1944 and DNEAS to DAG (O), 14/9/1944.

211. NTS Box 9126 File 68/363/23, DNEAS to DAG (O), 4/7/1941, SNA to DNEAS, 2/7/1941 and C.H. Blaine to D.L. Smit, 4/9/1941 and AG (3)154/331/15 Box 431, AG to Secretary for Defence, 25/6/1941.

212. NMC NAS 3/41/1/2 A 9 Box 43, Visiting officer NEAS to DNEAS, 9/11/1942; AG (3)154/X/132 Box 19, DNEAS to DAG (O), 19/11/1942 and AG (3)154/189/17 Box 285, AG to GOC: Inland Area, 9/7/1943.


216. NTS Box 9673 File 609/400(1), R. Phillips, Director, YMCA Services in Non-European Camps to D.L. Smit, 11/8/1941.

217. NMC NAS 3/4/1 A 2 Box 2, Material for broadcast re. NMC, undated.


219. DNEAS NAS 3/16/4 Box 11, Report on Activities and returns by welfare officers, propaganda section, undated; UWH Box 158, Memorandum on the UDPI and Non-European Boys Up North, by A.S. Ramailane, 13/10/1942; NMC NAS 3/40 A 2 40, Inland Inspectorate
reports, 1943; NMC NAS 3/21 A 3 Box 14, Typescript memorandum titled "Out in the Blue". Touring far and near places in the Union. Excellent work of the DNEAS film vans", undated; AG (W)168/3/3/3 Box 19, Memorandum for DAG (P) of functions and methods of operation of DNEAS Mobile Units, 2/9/1943 and NTS Box 9673 File 609/400(1), Confidential report on YMCA work in Native Military Camps, 1/1/1941 - 30/6/1941.

220. UWH Box 158, Memorandum on the UDFPI and Non-European Boys up North by A.S. Ramailane, 13/10/1942; NMC NAS 3/21/A A 5 Box 14, Letter no. 24 by Ndabaizabantu titled "Sight-seeing in the Holy Land", 5/8/1942 and DNEAS NAS 3/4/4 Box 5, Camp Commandant Orange Street HQ Camp Cape Town to DNEAS, 30/6/1945.


222. DNEAS NAS 3/28/1 Box 17, Inspection report of Staff Officer NEAS Northern Command, undated.

223. DNEAS NAS 3/1/10-A Box 2, DNEAS to DAG(O), 5/8/1944; NMC NAS BTS/PERT/1 B 10 Box 56, DNEAS to AG, 7/5/1943; Stubbs and Mockford, "A plan for the development of manpower", p. 30 and National Film Archive, African Mirror no. 214.

224. DNEAS NAS 3/8/4 Box 10, OC no. 7 Air School to QMG, 23/2/1944; NMC NAS 3/41/4 A 3 Box 43, Welfare Officer NMC Personnel attached to MT Pompsmoo Section to D.G. Hartman, Cape Fortress, 7/1/1943; NMC NAS 3/41/13 A 2 Box 45, Visiting officer NEAS to DNEAS, 26/4/1943; NMC Mid-East Report A 6 Box 42, DNEAS to AG, 12/1/1945; NTS Box 9673 File 609/400(1), Confidential report on YMCA Work in Native Military Camps, 1/1/1941 to 30/6/1941 and NTS Box 9689 File 585/400, Grants made to units of NMC by Native Affairs Department, 16/9/1942.

225. DC 15/16/2 Box 3629, R.E. Phillips to D.L. Sait, 18/8/1941; NMC NAS 3/42 B 6 Box 52, NEAS Administrative and Welfare Officer TSC to DNEAS, 5/1/1944; SAIRR Papers J.D.R. Jones Collection G. World War II AD 843 Box 105, National Appeal Organiser YMCA Toc H South African War Work Council to Secretary SAIRR, 1/9/1943; NTS Box 9673 File 609/400(1), Confidential report on YMCA Work in Native Military Camps, 1/1/1941-30/6/1941.

226. DNEAS NAS 3/43 Box 24, Extracts from inspectorate reports, April to November 1943; DNEAS NAS 3/5/2 Box 6, Report on a visit to 41 Air School East London, 2/11/1943 and NMC NAS 3/40 A 10 Box 4, Memorandum by Lt. Col. E.B. Foxon and Maj. D.G. Hartman of tour of inspection of all NEAS formations, units and detachments.
in the Coastal Area, 28/12/1942.

227. NMC NAS 3/21/L A 6 Box N 19, DNEAS to Controller of Paper, 16/2/1943.

228. The name of the paper is comprised of the two vernacular words for "elephant" - "Indlovu" being the Xhosa and "Tlou" the Sesotho. (NMC NAS 3/21/K A 4 Box 19, Memorandum in Indhlovu Tlou, undated).

229. For example NMC NAS 3/21/KB B 6 Box 18, OC 4th Battery 8th AAS/C Pinelands to DNEAS, 14/5/1943 and NMC NAS 3/21/K B 6 Box 18, R.N. Lindsay to DCS, 27/2/1943.

230. NMC NAS 3/21/L A 6 Box 19, DNEAS to SNA, 23/3/1943; NMC NAS 3/21/K B 6 Box 18, S. Horwitz to Staff Captain, 13/2/1943; DC 2025 Box 3273 and NMC NAS 3/21/K B 6 Box 18, DNEAS to DDNEAS UDF Administrative HQ MEF, 13/2/1943; NMC NAS 3/21/K B 6 Box 18, DNEAS to DCS (DMI), undated.

231. NMC NAS 3/21/K B 6 Box 18, G. Mhlauli to Editor Indhlovu Tlou, 6/12/1942.

232. NMC NAS 3/21/K A 2 Box 19, J.R. Mohlamme to Editor Indhlovu Tlou, August 1943; NMC NAS 3/21/K B 6 Box 18, NMC NAS 3/21/K A 1 Box 19 and DC 2025 Box 3273, Notes by P. Rodseth and B. Olivier on discussion re ndhlolvu Tlou held at Garawi, 23/1/1943.

233. NMC NAS 3/21/K A 4 Box 19, Note on Indhlovu Tlou, undated and NTS Box 9669 File 585/400/1, DNEAS to SNA, 29/11/1943.

234. NMC NAS 3/42/1 B 14 Box 9, DNEAS to DGAF, 7/12/1943. See also NMC NAS 3/42/1 B 14 Box 9, Extract from Indhlovu Tlou, "An opportunity for all NMC soldiers", undated; NMC NAS 3/42/1 B 13 Box 9, Memorandum on Education Scheme by S. Horwitz, 11/5/1943; NMC NAS 3/42/1 B 13 Box 9, Memorandum on Non-European Army Education, undated; NMC NAS 3/42/1 B 14 Box 9, DNEAS to Secretary, "Books for Troops" Committee, 2/3/1944; Hallack, "Record of the NEAS", pp. 51 and 190 and Rodseth, Ntabazabantu, p. 92.

235. NMC NAS 3/42/1 B 13 Box 9, DNEAS to DCS, 2/11/1942; NMCNAS 3/42/1 B 14 Box 9, Note on Educational Propaganda Courses for qualified teachers to be held at Rietfontein XI, undated; NMC NAS 3/42/1 A 4 Box 10, DNEAS to DCS, 16/6/1945 and NMC NAS 3/42/1 A 3 Box 10, DNEAS to ADMIS Northern Command, 25/1/1945.


239. DNEAS NAS 683/L Box 52, I. Moletse to OC Prinshof Camp, 16/4/1945; DNEAS NAS 343/L Box 46, Statement by D. Nhloho, 26/3/1945; DNEAS NAS 683/L Box 5, Statements by S. Matalane, 7/6/1945 and M. Kumafo, 25/5/1945.


241. See further Chapter 7.
CHAPTER 5

TRAINING AND MANPOWER UTILIZATION

TRAINING

The authorities were faced with the daunting task of training the black recruits both militarily and for specialised services. Considering that they had to deal mostly with recruits totally unfamiliar with westernised, let alone military, ways and with sometimes extreme prejudice on the part of the whites, this task was indeed challenging.

In some white circles there was open scepticism about the ability of the black recruits to learn new skills. (1) This notion that blacks were generally inferior to whites in learning skills was in vogue shortly before and during the war. In 1938, this false idea was even academically proved by a certain J.A. Jansen van Rensburg of the University of Stellenbosch who had been asked by the South African Council for Education and Social Research to do a study on occupational aptitude. His conclusion was that the South African black

"has not the learning ability to be able to compete with the average European in tasks of an extremely simple nature... and that the difference is partly innate." (2)

This finding not only justified the colour bar but also relegated blacks to menial, dull and repetitive jobs. Military exigencies as well as the dire need for manpower, however, forced the authorities to waive these prejudices, give the black recruits skilled and semi-skilled training and, albeit more by default than by design, prove that the opposite of these suppositions was also true.

TRAINING ORGANIZATION

Through the good offices of the Chamber of Mines, a large number of mine compounds and barracks on the East Rand were placed at the disposal of the NMC and a Training Area Command was formed. The Training Area was divided into various depots, each one responsible for a certain section of the training programme. At the Driefontein Reception Depot the recruits were finally examined medically, attested and clothed. From there they proceeded either to the Welgedacht or the Palmietkuil North Recruits Training Depots where they underwent a six weeks' basic training course for infantry recruits. After completion of the six weeks, some were posted to various units; others who were drafted for specialised training were sent to Palmietkuil South to be trained as hygiene and stretcher-bearer personnel and medical orderlies and to Holfontein, Spearwater and West Vlakfontein for motor transport training. At Rietfontein XI a Native Military Corps School was established for the training of white and of black instructors. (3)
TRAINING SUBJECTS

The subjects in which the recruits were trained can broadly be divided into two categories: some subjects aimed at moulding them militarily and others were geared to teach them specialised tasks.

The OC of the Non-European Wing, at Lenz, thus spelled out the army's objective about the first category:

"Every step should be taken to disconnect his mind from thinking himself as a civilian and taught that the uniform he wears indicates an assumption of responsibility far in excess of his former civilian responsibility." (4)

To this end they had to undergo various aspects of military training of which the following were the most important: squad drill instruction, rifle and musketry training, vocational training and motor transport training.

Some soldiers apparently excelled in squad drill. Major Frank Brownlee graphically described the soldiers first experience in parade work thus:

"The Native soldier...with some timidity lines up on parade, striving to obey orders he does not, as yet, understand, and above all trying to avoid that ridicule which is gall to any self-respecting person. There is no ridicule. If a mistake is made, it is pointed out... So the recruit gains confidence and in the course of a few weeks he becomes as efficient at drill as the old soldier." (5)

The recruits also received rifle and musketry training but progress, in certain instances, was seriously handicapped by the defective Italian rifles with which they had been issued. Fairly strict requirements were laid down for both recruits and instructors who had been drafted to be trained in artillery. The former should have had some schooling while the latter had to be free from any bias against the blacks, be able to speak an African language and handle them sympathetically. Again the authorities assumed that the Zulus would be the most suitable ethnic group to receive artillery training but again they proved to be wrong. Others were simply not selected carefully enough for artillery work and therefore showed little interest; they were subsequently transferred to other units. (6) In addition, they went on night compass marches, learned map reading and were instructed in physical training and field work training, a euphemism for digging trenches.

Furthermore, special propaganda courses lasting three weeks were run to counter subversive activities in the camps and to prepare the soldiers going on leave to be in a position to counter subversive talk within the townships and reserves. It was considered that blacks would be able to make a far better appeal to their own people than whites. It was also thought that if the recruit were provided with knowledge of the war he would take more interest in his training and at least be not more afraid of the orderly officer than of the enemy as was the case of many in
battalions on security guard. On completion of the course, the entrants who had been mainly teachers in civilian life, were then returned to their camps where they held small discussion groups during the evenings. The themes for these discussions included, inter alia, the reasons for the war, the importance of the army and military training as well as the treatment of the conquered by the Axis powers. A definite attempt was made to steer clear of political discussions, especially those relating to the political status of the blacks in South Africa. The instructors quite frequently complained that the commanding officers did not send the right type of recruit on these courses. Some of them were unable to read and attended the course against their will. Consequently, they could neither appreciate nor understand the subjects of study and reaped little benefit. One reason why the commanding officers did this, was that the more educated recruits usually became the orderly room clerks or parade ground instructors. As these men were so valuable in these positions the commanding officers often held them back. (7)

Side by side with the militarisation of the recruits, at least 70% of them were also given specialised vocational training. This included typing and clerical work, carpentry, tailoring, bootmaking, horse training and even snake-catching to provide serum. It seems that the training of cooks, stretcher-bearers, medical aids and orderlies as well as motor transport drivers was strongly emphasised.

In January 1941 a Non-European School of Cookery was established at Milner Park, Johannesburg, to train cooks for unit and field cookery. Not only were they taught how to cook but also how to improvise simple stoves and ovens from old tins and iron barrels and how to make the best use of available food in emergency situations far away from towns and stores. As was the case in other courses, the recruits selected to attend the cookery courses were sometimes of a good quality whilst a weaker class also enrolled for these courses at other times. (8) Often the instruction left much to be desired as the following statements by two brothers, Thabe and Sekate Nkadiment, who attended a cookery course, vouched: Thabe Nkadiment pointed out that

"There were many people at Milner Park and I stood and watched the cooking a lot. I did not do much work as they pushed me around a lot. Now and then somebody pointed something out to me but most times I did not understand and let things just drift along. I know no more than before I went there as I could not learn anything with so many people about."

Sekate Nkadiment stated that

"I spent most of my time scrubbing floors and peeling vegetables. I only worked for about a week at the stove all the time. I think I can make three stews. I can't make puddings. I don't call myself a cook as nobody taught me... Two days ago I was told I was going to Kimberley as a cook." (9)

Training of medical personnel took place at the 131 NMC Military
Hospital Palmietkuil South. The prospective nursing orderlies followed a simple preliminary course in anatomy, physiology and first aid lasting three weeks. Those trainees that showed promise at the end of this period were then allowed to follow a more advanced preliminary course for another three weeks. The course was wrapped up by an advanced nursing course for another six weeks and an examination, after which, if passed successfully, the trainees received certificates. (10) While most of the trainees served in hospitals, some were posted to units and detachments and some were also sent to North Africa where they performed duty as stretcher-bearers. However, apparently most of the training for stretcher-bearers was in service training in the different battalions and in the field. There they learned how to lift, handle and evacuate of casualties, carry patients over various distances and obstacles, simple first aid particularly the control of haemorrhage and the treatment of fractures as well as the improvisation of available materials for use in an emergency and the essentials of protection against gas. (11) It seems that the training of so-called hygiene personnel who were responsible for the maintenance of hygienic conditions in camp areas was neglected; no training facilities were provided and the educational standard of those who enrolled for the courses was exceptionally low. (12) As a consequence, most of them had no thorough knowledge of hygiene but ended up cleaning toilets.

MOTOR TRANSPORT TRAINING

The training of motor transport drivers was probably one of the most comprehensive enterprises the NEAS undertook. Therefore, orders were given that great care should be exercised in the selection of the trainees. They had to be physically fit with good eyesight, a minimum height of five feet two inches and a fair degree of intelligence and road sense, even if it had been acquired on a bicycle or a cart. (13)

The training course included motor transport signals, driving lessons, convoy discipline, town driving and maintenance of vehicles. If a trainee showed no signs of becoming a good driver after three days at a training school, he was rejected and drafted back to an Infantry Depot. Those who showed promise were posted for advanced training to the Advanced Training Depot at West Vlakfontein.

The instructors used hand signals and illustrations to convey their instructions but sometimes also resorted to quite ingenious methods. They drew a plan on the ground, representing a truck and planted a driving seat, made of box wood, gears, clutches, brakes and a driving wheel in the ground. On this improvised simulator the trainee learned driving movements. The instructors used simple language to which they thought the trainees could relate. In order that they might grasp the idea of speed, they were taught that

"The elephant is first gear and then comes the ox and then the donkey, and the top gear is the racehorse."

The operation of a motor engine was compared to a man's body:
"The switch is the heart. Petrol for the engine is like bread for man. A loaf of bread and a tin of petrol are illustrated...the gas in the cylinder gives energy like the food in the stomach. The self-starter turns the engine which then breathes like a man's lungs...and the wheels are shown as the 'legs' of the truck."(14)

After the trainee had completed this part of the course, he was taught how to drive a real truck, sometimes in hazardous conditions. Those who had been drafted to serve in North Africa had to undergo a further course in training there as the conditions were vastly different from those in the Union. For instance, they had to learn to drive on the right hand side of the road and across the hot loose sands of the desert.(15) However, everything was not always plain sailing. Sometimes the instructors became impatient and shouted at the trainees, making them extremely nervous. The order to inspect the vehicle before driving frequently amounted to nothing more than simply wandering aimlessly around the vehicle. (16)

Nevertheless, various favourable reports on the efficient and capable way the black drivers acquitted themselves were submitted. The opinion was expressed that these drivers could, with the necessary instruction, easily replace the white drivers. (17) Some of the drivers were extremely pleased with the training course and conveyed their gratitude to their instructors. (18)

On the other hand, there were also instances where the drivers were far from properly trained. For instance, after several weeks of bitter experience, it was found that the black drivers attached to 20 Field Ambulance SAMC on arrival from the training depot, were totally unfit to drive a vehicle. They had to be withdrawn and given intensive training from scratch. (19)

A similar situation cropped up in North Africa. In September 1941 General G.E. Brink, OC of 1 SA Division, complained bitterly that he was saddled with a draft of drivers sent to North Africa who were utterly inefficient. Only 83 of the 551 blacks in the draft could drive at all. They were unable to explain their poor state of training or even why they had been sent up North. The officer accompanying them could only say that

"as far as I am able to judge they have had very little training indeed and are just a lot of mamparas." (20)

In January he had to report that the blacks were useless, at least until they had received a much sounder basic training. He continued that the black drivers

"panicked easily under air or armoured attack; there were numerous incidents witnessed personally and by other officers of Bantu drivers driving off in their trucks in a panic and leaving their officer-passerger or companions stranded." (21)

Likewise Brigadier D.H. Pienaar, OC of 1 SA Infantry Brigade, reported that only 405 of the 815 black drivers allotted to his brigade could drive and then only in convoy under very strict white control. He ascribed this unsatisfactory state of affairs to a lack of appreciation of the requirements in North Africa on
the part of the responsible instructors in the Union. (22)

However, due to the serious shortage in manpower, some of the units became impatient waiting for trained drivers to reach a satisfactory standard of training. They consequently declared that, although training conditions were more difficult than in the Union, they would be prepared to accept semi-trained drivers and complete their training themselves; this was the case with 2 SA Division in the Mid-East. (23)

Moreover, the large number of accidents in which black drivers were involved enforces the argument that the training was indeed not at all efficient. Although it was often very difficult to determine the exact cause of the accidents, the authorities refused to ascribe it to a lack of training. To them it was mainly due to careless and reckless driving. The following comment by the DNEAS who tried to dismiss any idea that the drivers were poorly trained, somehow also does not explain the accidents and the evidence of incompetence convincingly because it denies the reality of the event:

"The drivers... are drafted out to other people who commence with a natural prejudice against the natives and therefore if there is anything that they can find fault with regarding their training or their equipment they waste no time in finding fault and offering criticisms in regard to the type of material Non-European Army Services is turning out." (24)

There were more down-to-earth reasons for both the accidents and the inefficiency of some drivers. For one, there was an acute and chronic shortage of training vehicles which naturally hampered the training. (25) A court of inquiry specially convened to examine the cause of the large number of major accidents found that the tuition time was far too short (26) and that the men chosen for training as motor transport drivers were too raw and did not meet the requirements. (27) There were cases where the driver was simply undersized and thus unable to reach the control panels whilst Major G.R. Stocks, GC NMTT Depot Spaarwater, somewhat condescendingly wrote to Lt. Col. H.S. Mockford that

"The whole trouble with the present system is that DOT [Director of Training] has the idea that you can make a native come up to the standard of the European mentality. This as you are aware is impossible; they get up to a certain pitch or degree of efficiency and beyond that all the teaching only makes them more and more stupid, whereas practical experience on the job will do more to develop them than anything else." (28)

Other sources indeed corroborated this view that lack of experience seriously militated against the efficiency of the drivers. (29) According to Lt. Col. Mockford it was no use teaching them to drive and then interrupting the whole process by the long journey to North Africa and "seeing many confusing sights on the way to Helwan", the base camp. By this time most of their driving ability had been lost. Only experience could alter this. (30) Another reason was that the urgency of the work necessitated abnormally long hours of driving, some drivers
started driving at daybreak and rarely returned before 18h30 only to proceed on to guard duty. It was therefore no surprise that accidents occurred due to sheer exhaustion. (31)

TRAINING STANDARDS

This leads to a general evaluation of the training black recruits underwent. As was the case with motor transport training where a microcosmic view was taken of one particular training area, the macrocosmic view of all the training activities also reveals that in some instances, the training was satisfactory but in other instances poor.

One of the welfare officers of the NMC, P. Valenti, was quite convinced after his experience with black soldiers, that the argument that blacks could not be trained within a reasonable short time owing to the primitive environment they had come from, was utterly fallacious. According to him, they fairly quickly succeeded in mastering the westernised and military ways of the army. (32) Likewise, although he might have had ulterior political motives, G.K. Hemming, Member of Parliament, reported that he was so struck by the aptitude the blacks had shown for military training, that the next logical step to him was to train them fully for actual combatant service:

"I...know the 'pros and cons', but I am convinced that the 'pros' outweigh the 'cons' and that the time must come when we will have to draw on this human asset." (33)

This opinion was echoed by Councillor J. Moshesh of the UTTGC when he stated that military training had proved that blacks could do everything just as well as whites and that South Africa was therefore "penalising herself by keeping back the Native who is just as competent to perform the duties in connection with the war." (34). Even high-ranking officers such as General P.H. Theron, Brigadier-General W.E. Tanner and Lt. Col. B.W. Martin were impressed by the high level of training. (35) In a somewhat exaggerated way and clearly with an eye to propaganda, D.J. Darlow graphically described the transition:

"From their kraals and their simple home lives they have been moulded into an efficient army force. Where last year they drove the ox-waggon, today they drive motor-lorries, conveying food, clothing and ammunition for our men in the field. Where a few months back they ran to their witch-doctors for medical assistance they are now trained as first aid workers and stretcher bearers; and where in their homes before the war they lived in dirty surroundings they are now experts in hygiene and sanitation." (36)

The black soldiers themselves were pleased with the training they had received and commented favourably on the change that had taken place in themselves and their comrades since their enlistment. (37)

In stark contrast to these eulogies on the effectiveness of the training, there is also evidence of the poor standard of training and monotony in certain instances. (38) The main reasons for this
state of affairs appear to be the unsuitability of the trainees, the incompetency of the instructors, the lack of communication due to the language difficulties and the disruptive effect of the war demands.

Reports from various sections to which recruits had been sent for training such as the SAMC, the SAA and the NMC Training Area, indicated that, in the opinion of the training officers, the type of recruit was of a low mental and intellectual standard. This as well as illiteracy were major factors making it extremely difficult to train them up to that standard which was considered essential for the purposes for which they were required. Col. Stubbs was well aware of this but it seems that he had already reconciled himself to the inevitability of the situation and could thus only recommend to Col. MacKenzie that

"although the material sent you, may not always be all that you could desire, you must make the best of it." (39)

In addition, it was also very difficult to eradicate, within only a few months' training, a definite fear complex amongst some of the black trainees of the destructive effects of modern weapons. (40)

The standard of training of white officers and NCO's themselves was generally low; naturally this seriously hampered the training of the black recruits. Although it was realised that, ideally, carefully selected whites should be used as instructors because "the natives have no respect for European NCO's who do not know their jobs", (41) many of the whites were selected on their linguistic qualifications and their "ability to handle Non-Europeans". The result was that they had neither any military qualifications nor had they attended any military courses. Moreover, the lack of manpower made it impossible for the DNEAS to spare these men so that they could attend courses. So serious was the situation that the DNEAS was compelled to employ even category C 3 NCO's, some of whom had neither the mental nor physical attributes to win the respect of the trainees. Numerous white instructors thus turned out to be completely unsuitable for the training of black troops. They were not able to give anything more than the most elementary instructions, such as marching the men up and down the parade ground - which was, of course, totally inadequate training. (42)

The variety of languages spoken by the black recruits and the inability of many instructors to speak one of these languages and of many recruits to speak English or Afrikaans sometimes made it very difficult either to understand or to convey instructions. The result was that training was often carried out very superficially and, as the use of an interpreter for all instructions was frequently necessary, very slowly. (43) In one case the language difficulty caused embarrassment to the black drivers. Five of them were sent for duty to the 8th POW Camp. As the whites in charge of these drivers could not speak an African language and the drivers themselves were unable to communicate in English or Afrikaans, the whites told them outright they were stupid. (44)
Some of the blacks were so busy performing their duties that there was very little time left for any training at all, in some cases only two and a half hours a week. For example, for several months members of the NMC who stood guard at Tempe, Bloemfontein, had to do so nine nights out of ten and occasionally it was even necessary to put men on guard again immediately after they had come off a 24 hour beat. In certain hospitals they had to work from 06h00 to 20h00 which, of course, made training absolutely impossible. (45) The situation was aggravated by the urgent and persistent demands for black soldiers who had to be withdrawn from the training areas for service in units and formations before the completion of their training programme. This meant that the already precious little training time had to be cut and it ruled out adherence to any specified training programme. (46) The officer in charge of training admitted that he had to send away black troops who did not know the first rudiments of discipline or even the difference between an officer and a NCO. He conceded that "To send such personnel forward, which it was incumbent... to do, was indeed a necessity to be regretted." (47)

Moreover, the inefficiency of some of the black troops can be ascribed to the simple fact that they had not received any training whatsoever. The visiting officer of the NEAS thus described the dilemma it caused these troops:

"No training is done. There is no time. Some of the N/E's are merely N/E's in uniform and are quite untrained yet if they contravene the discipline code their ignorance does not save them... [They] came from the Training Area with the knowledge of how to fall in and march away in threes and nothing beyond!" (48)

The result was that training was left to be done, in North Africa at least, on the battle front where the difficulties of training were manifold: the combatant units had neither the time nor facilities to undertake this task. (49) Complaints that the soldiers were untrained and ineffective must therefore ultimately be judged against the background of military exigencies which frequently made it well-nigh impossible for proper training and thereby robbed the black recruits of a fair chance really to prove their skills.

Finally, in contrast to the First World War, it seems that military considerations outweighed racial ones and that the latter did not inhibit training of blacks. Nevertheless, the Government ordered that a very low profile of this fact should be maintained. The less it was brought to the notice of the white population, the better. (50) In some white circles there was indeed vehement opposition to the training of blacks during and after the war. In February 1948 P.C. Erasmus, Nationalist member of the Opposition lashed out against the military training of blacks because it "will endanger the maintenance of European civilization in South Africa." (51) In May he was a minister.
B. MANPOWER UTILISATION

One of the questions that will be considered in this section is how effectively these trained (and for that matter, untrained) troops were employed militarily. But, first of all, two other major aspects regarding manpower have to be dealt with: one was the position of the unattested blacks in military camps and the other the so-called policy of dilution.

UNATTESTED BLACKS

So far attention has only been given to those blacks in military service who had attested. However, there were also a large number of unattested blacks (by January 1943 approximately between 15 000 and 22 500) in military bases and also another category of workers, so-called "casual labourers". The former were employed in various capacities such as scullions, cooks, waiters and general labour duties whilst the latter were usually hired for short specific tasks, for example the loading and offloading of bulk supplies, grass-cutting on emergency landing grounds remote from camps and military establishments, malaria control duties and construction work, especially at aerodromes. (52)

The military authorities were not at all pleased with this large number of unattested personnel in military bases. The question of the militarisation of all blacks employed in the UDF was already raised in September 1941. It was, however, more than a year later, in November 1942, that a definite instruction was issued that, with effect from 31 December 1942, all unattested labourers employed in military camps were to be either attested or replaced by attested members of the NEAS. Owing to difficulties in the execution of this instruction (which will be elaborated upon below), the final date was postponed to 31 January 1943. Those who attested would continue their various military occupations but those who chose not to attest would be discharged. The process was to be carried out gradually, starting with the Air Force as it employed the largest number of unattested blacks.

REASONS FOR THE MILITARISATION OF UNATTESTED EMPLOYEES

The farmers experienced a serious shortage of labourers in certain areas, partly because of the higher wages paid by the army. This instruction apparently originated in a desire to placate the farmers by indicating the desire of the Defence Department to free blacks for agricultural employment. The CGS admitted this and warned that

"the continued employment of non-attested natives at high wages was working up to a crisis of the first order as far as the Government was concerned. The platteland was being drained of natives who were working for wages they had never heard of before." (53)

Furthermore, it had become general practice for unattested blacks to be accommodated within the precincts of military camps or within the perimeter fences of such camps. It so happened that
unattested blacks had better accommodation and other privileges such as higher rates of pay, which were not enjoyed by the members of the NMC. The latter's knowledge of these facts brought about considerable dissatisfaction. To the authorities this was highly irregular as it was difficult to foster and maintain discipline among the attested NMC members whilst nearby, the unattested labourers who were under little control could do as they pleased, such as introducing drink, intoxicants and women into the camps. It was therefore feared that the hygiene, discipline and soldierly bearing which the attested blacks had learned, would be seriously undermined if they were continually in contact with undisciplined and untrained blacks. (54)

In addition, as it was easier to control and discipline attested personnel, it was especially desirable to employ them where their duties involved the handling of food. By compulsory periodical medical examinations carriers of disease and infected personnel could be eliminated from coming into contact with foodstuffs and the risk of food contamination thus reduced. It would have been very difficult to do this with unattested blacks who continually changed jobs and did not fall under military discipline. (55)

Not only would the above-mentioned disciplinary problems be solved by utilising only enlisted personnel, but such personnel would also be more readily available for work every day at all hours. This was not the case with the casual labourer who, according to the military authorities, had restricted daily working hours and was inclined to stay away or cease work at whim or when it suited his convenience. (56) Capt. N.M. Mackay of No. 42 Air School Port Elizabeth thus described the urgency to employ only reliable militarily trained and disciplined personnel:

"The defence of Singapore broke down because essential labour which was usually done by natives ceased when trouble came near them. Should an attack of any nature be made along this coast we should be placed in exactly the same position, for no native boys who live out would turn up for work in an area which would most certainly become a target." (57)

**OPPOSITION TO ATTESTATION**

This instruction, however, met with considerable opposition. It was argued that the black soldiers who had enlisted as such, and not as labourers, would be highly dissatisfied because they would now be obliged to do the work of labourers previously performed by the unattested blacks. (58) To the unattested blacks it meant unemployment and also a substantial loss of income because in certain metropolitan areas, such as the Cape Peninsula, Durban and Johannesburg higher wages than the military pay was given to "free-lance" unattested black labourers. (59) Some of them were also afraid of attesting because then there was no guarantee that they would remain in their present jobs. It could then be required of them to serve anywhere and even be sent to North Africa to fight. (60) The important point to bear in mind was that most of the unattested personnel formed an urbanised and detribalised group. Their homes and families were in the vicinity
of the units where they were employed. Had they desired to become
soldiers they would have done so before. It was therefore no
surprise that the vast majority of unattested labourers refused
to attest. (61)

The refusal to enlist was only one of the problems which plagued
the change-over to attested personnel. From various quarters
serious objections were lodged against this policy of employing
only attested staff. Many of the unattested blacks had been
thoroughly trained in their work and carried it out splendidly
and satisfactorily. Not only would their loss present great and
far-reaching difficulties, but a severe dislocation would also
occur until the attested blacks could be trained to fill these
posts. Inevitably, work done by casual labourers, such as loading
and offloading of stores, would automatically come to a
standstill. As a consequence, the normal supply of food and
stores to the troops would also be interrupted. The DGMS thus
telegraphed his grave concern about the replacement of unattested
labour:

"[I] desire to place on record my inability to accept
responsibility...for any breakdown in medical and
hygiene services resulting from an order which means
depriving medical services overnight of over 4,000
essential units necessary for the efficient conduct of
medical services particularly since some institutions
cannot accommodate NMC and will therefore receive no
replacements and more so since it appears that in any case
any replacements will be both untrained and loathe to
perform usual sanitary duties and other menial tasks in
hospitals." (62)

Furthermore, it was felt that unattested labourers worked harder
because of the fear of immediate dismissal while absence due to
illness seldom occurred, because of loss of pay. This did not
apply to the attested blacks, some of whom shirked their duty via
the Medical Officer, feigning illness. Others did not bother to
do a full day's work as there was no fear of dismissal. To apply
the ordinary disciplinary measures under the Military Discipline
Code to these men, was not always so effective as confinement to
barracks, extra drill and fatigues and even detention presented
no special hardship to them. Stoppages of pay consequent on
serving a period of detention merely encouraged theft. (63)

Another important objection was that there was not enough
accommodation available for all the personnel who now had to be
attested. This was particularly true of remote areas where the
supply of accommodation and rations would have been most
difficult. In actual fact, the Air Force faced the total collapse
of aerodrome maintenance because the QMG was unable to provide
sufficient tents. (64)

PRACTICAL IMPLEMENTATION OF THE ATTESTATION POLICY

The endeavours to carry out this instruction with immediate
effect also ran into difficulties. The DNEAS was unable to supply
sufficient attested personnel to replace the unattested blacks within the limited time. (65) As far as the Air Force was concerned, this instruction appeared particularly illogical. After all, the Air Force, with its units spread throughout the Union, was the largest and most suitably constituted Force to absorb local labour which was frequently readily available. It seemed therefore somewhat unnecessary to requisition for a draft of black soldiers from Welgedacht whilst the supply was on the doorstep. (66) Moreover, in implementing the policy of attested labour, the Commanding Officers found that they were faced with soldiers of a type whose customs and languages were totally unfamiliar to them. Consequently, great difficulties were encountered to supervise and control the duties to be performed by these men. The situation was further aggravated by the necessity of allowing the newly attested civilian employees to remain on their jobs without having received any military training whatsoever. (67) Despite all these problems, the authorities remained uncompromising and adamant that the there should be no procrastination in implementing this policy; all unattested black personnel should be discharged and substituted by attested blacks. (68)

However, two exceptions were made: one, due to expediency and the other perhaps for humanitarian reasons. Firstly, unattested labour could still be employed for special defence works. Secondly, there were numerous unattested blacks who had been continuously and regularly employed by the Defence Department before the war for long periods, some even as far back as the end of the First World War. Many of them were valuable, loyal and trustworthy workers who were qualified to do their jobs well. It was thought a disgrace to dismiss these men as some were too old or unfit to attest. Representations to exempt them from this instruction were considered sympathetically and granted. These exceptions were, however, not to be publicised as it was feared that every unit might grasp this loop-hole to retain unattested labourers. (69)

The evidence suggests that the replacement of unattested with attested personnel was not so successful and caused great confusion and disruption in the military organisation. Not only were the newly attested labourers, for the most part, untrained and undisciplined but their work output was also inferior to that of the unattested labourers as the former, contrary to expectations, flatly refused to work after 16h30. The detrimental effect was particularly felt in the various Air Force stations and medical services, as Brigadier A.J. Orenstein, Director General of Medical Services vouched:

"This change has resulted in a vast increase of worry and trouble for all departments. NMC are inefficient, disinterested, require a great increase in disciplinary action, and are unsuitable for hospital work." (70)

Eventually, the game was not worth the candle.

The irony was that the whole process was reversed after two years. In May 1945 instructions were issued to replace all
attested personnel with unattested labour. This decision was, of course, prompted by the considerable financial saving that could be effected as it was not necessary to provide accommodation or rations any longer as well as by the decline in the demand for manpower at the end of the war. Many of the NMC members were eager to be discharged. There was a marked laxity in the way they performed their duties so that "the need for firmer handling is becoming manifest day by day." (71)

DILUTION POLICY

Probably the most important feature of manpower utilisation was the policy of dilution whereby all non-combatant duties in every unit would be carried out by men of the NMC or Cape Corps. In the First World War the Cape Corps and the SANLC participated as a unit and remained an entity throughout the war. In the Second World War, however, the role of the blacks was strictly seen as a supportive one; the unity of the unit could therefore be forfeited. The NMC had to be split up into small sections and they were assigned to all the units of the UDF where their services could be used. Thus there were guards, scullions, batmen, cooks, stretcher-bearers, telephone operators, clerks, typists, bootmakers, tailors, interpreters, hygiene personnel and drivers attached to every "white" unit. In many instances members of the NMC also replaced members of the Cape Corps. (72) This policy was carried out swiftly and extensively. By August 1942 11 981 members of the NMC had been attached to "white" units and in January 1943 the figure was 19 310. (73)

The main reason why this dilution policy was adopted lies in the fact that the Government seriously began to fall short in its commitments as far as white combatant manpower was concerned. It struggled, for instance, to maintain the strength of the two infantry divisions attached to the 8th Army in the field. At the end of 1941 the situation deteriorated dramatically after the 5th Brigade had disintegrated in the battle at Sidi Rezegh. In order to release white soldiers for combatant duties, black soldiers had to replace whites serving in non-combatant capacities. (74)

One of the implications of this policy was that the DNEAS could no longer exercise sole control over the members of the NMC. They were also subject to the orders of the commanding officer to whose unit they had been attached. Divided control was thus inevitable. Nevertheless, the DNEAS deemed it important that the black soldiers should, ostensibly at least, retain their cohesion as a unit. To minimise any degree of confusion amongst the soldiers and to make them realise that they were not summarily discarded, there were attempts to instill a sense of unity into the members of the NMC dispersed among the various army units. Special care was taken to emphasise that these soldiers remained members of the NMC and that they were not transferred to other units, but simply attached. Furthermore, to reinforce this idea in the soldiers themselves, they continued wearing the badges and flashes of the NMC despite their being attached to other units. (75)
E.T. Stubbs who had grave reservations about this policy since its inception, mainly because it was very difficult for him to exercise control, pointed out another implication. Black soldiers, particularly those performing duties as stretcher-bearers and medical aids, would work in close contact with whites and even wear the same clothes. This would give them the status of whites in the units placing the country's segregation policy in jeopardy. Later, in 1943, he reiterated his views thus:

"It is accepted that the settled policy of this country as between European and NE is one of "differentiation". Defence has unwittingly or unwittingly subscribed to a policy of 'assimilation' by its introduction of dilution." (76)

However, military exigencies in this case overruled any racial prejudices.

In order to maintain some sort of control and to avoid the anticipated friction between the white and the black soldiers administrative and welfare officers and NCO's of the NEAS with whom the black soldiers were familiar, were appointed to units to which considerable numbers of blacks were attached. They had to ensure that the treatment to which black troops had become accustomed during their training period, continued, assist in controlling them and that a system of NEAS representation to which the soldiers could turn with their problems and queries, be maintained. In addition, the presence of the NEAS personnel afforded the Commanding Officers of the units to which the black troops were attached the opportunity of availing themselves of advice and assistance from NEAS personnel in matters pertaining to the troops. In the eyes of the DNEAS the success or failure of the dilution policy largely depended upon the manner in which these officers performed their welfare duties and upon the co-operation which they gave to and received from the units to which they were attached. (77) However, everyone did not agree with this view. As a result, there were units such as the 6th Division with over 6 000 members of the NEAS which proceeded to North Africa with only one NEAS officer. (78)

Despite these arrangements, discipline and morale deteriorated in certain units to which blacks had been attached. This was particularly apparent with regard to the purely NEAS MT and Works Company which operated in East Africa. The standard of discipline was very high but when it disintegrated in the Middle East to implement the initial large scale dilution of UDF units in 1942, lack of discipline and an alarming increase in crime occurred. (79) Some of the officers of the NEAS ascribed this to the loss of esprit-de-corps following on the surmised disappointment of the blacks when the NMC broke up. (80) However, as the incidence of desertion and crime in the diluted units was far higher than in the other units and some of the black soldiers claimed that everyone in the diluted units called them "bloody kaffirs!" and treated them as labourers and not soldiers, (81) the reasons for this unsatisfactory state of affairs should perhaps be sought elsewhere as well. It would appear that it was not so much a
feeling of disappointment that contributed to the deterioration; they were rather disillusioned by, dissatisfied and unhappy with the unsympathetic and sometimes rude treatment they received from some white personnel of the units to which they had been attached. (82) And, because there was less control, crime naturally tended to flourish.

The following instance proves that the increasing number of complaints about bad treatment meted out to blacks attached to diluted units, were by no means far fetched. The OC of the Remount Depot at Vaalhartz to which 81 blacks were attached complained that they were "a 'scruffy' lot - undisciplined and untrained". However, it was pointed out that when the blacks had arrived at the Depot twelve months previously, they were properly trained. Therefore, the alleged unsatisfactory state into which they had deteriorated had to be attributed to the treatment meted out to them. (83) There was indeed fierce opposition to and criticism of the policy of dilution amongst certain personnel of the UDF. The tradition-bound whites saw dilution as a serious repudiation of the policy of segregation to which they subscribed. The way they treated the blacks should therefore, not really cause surprise. (84)

OTHER PROBLEMS IN IMPLEMENTING THE POLICY OF DILUTION

The prejudice of so many white South African soldiers against the blacks was not the only problem experienced. Other problems were the untrained and sometimes recalcitrant black soldiers and in some instances, the lack of co-operation from the units to which the soldiers were attached. Furthermore, the original lay-out of many camps did not make provision for the possibility of dilution. This was a serious shortcoming as the blacks were now regarded as an integral part of the diluted units and for the purpose of training, discipline and control, had to be accommodated in the lines or adjacent to them. Although instructions were issued to modify the camps, there were still some instances of overcrowding. (85) The same, and additional, problems were a feature during the early stages of dilution in North Africa. Transit, training, leave, recreational and convalescent facilities had to be erected within a short time. But it seems that the untrained state of black reinforcements (86) caused the worst headaches; they had virtually to be trained from scratch. This implied that while they were being trained, they were ineffective for at least two months. (87)

EFFECTIVENESS OF MANPOWER UTILIZATION

Despite the endeavours to fit the black soldier into occupations for which he was trained or for which he expressed a preference, (88) the actual practical implementation seems to have left much to be desired. The problems of the effective use of manpower were aggravated and complicated by the white racial and political prejudices as K.W. Grundy has pointed out:

"South Africa's peculiar racial mixture and racist structure made crucial and by and large simple manpower
calculations almost impossible. Invariably, excuses could be found for reversing decisions or for following unexpected or militarily illogical courses. The variety of criteria for assignment and deployment must have baffled Allied planners and commanders as well as professional South African soldiers." (89)

Moreover, the racially inspired policy to limit blacks only to non-combatant roles, of course, caused perhaps the most extraordinary waste of black manpower. In some ways the dilution policy itself contributed to the ineffective use of manpower. It had a major disruptive effect and, because the DNEAS lost his direct control, mismanagement tended to crop up. Moreover, the change-over from unattested to attested personnel in the NMC had the same disruptive effect and manifested itself in the misappropriation of labour.

The DNEAS frequently received reports that the black soldiers, after they had been specially trained at considerable cost for a particular duty, were, on being attached to a white unit, regarded as ordinary labourers and not as soldiers. Furthermore, they were utilised for all and sundry duties, regardless of their specialised training. The DGMS noted, for instance, "that the word hygiene had become so elastic that the hygiene section was cleaning barracks, roads and camps instead of being confined strictly to their medical aspect." (90)

In another case 32 blacks were on loan to the military hospital at Baragwanath from the Driefontein Depot to plant grass. (91) In fact, it seems as if many black soldiers became "uniformed labourers". (92) Clearly the prejudiced view that blacks could and should do only menial jobs was still patently in vogue in certain sections of the army. All this happened despite the DNEAS's insistence that the NMC was not a labour corps, that its members were soldiers, subject to military discipline, rights, privileges and obligations and should not be used in other capacities than in those for which they had been trained. The DNEAS's definition of menial jobs, labourers and soldiers was, however, almost all-inclusive so that, when it came to the crunch, a "soldier" was very well obliged to do any job:

"In regard... to menial duties... only a portion of the duties performed by NMC personnel can be regarded as menial in the civilian sense. In the military sense all duties within the army should be performed by soldiers and a soldier is expected to accept the smooth with the rough, and does not in the army, where the exigencies warrant it, consider any military duty unsoldierly, however unpleasant he might feel it to be in civilian life."

He continued that in the Imperial and in other Dominion Forces the duties performed by the blacks were carried out by white soldiers and that "any European member of the UDF may be called upon to perform these duties." (93) But, somehow, this was in the South African context, just not on the cards while blacks were readily available to do the menial work.

Apparently, this instruction was waived not only inside the Union
but also with regard to the black soldiers outside the Union. (94) The scarcity and unsuitability of East African labour prompted requests for the supply of up to four labour battalions of Union blacks. (95) As these requests were contrary to the DNEAS's policy, they could, of course, not be met. However, as in the Union, the dilution policy presented the loop-hole for divided control so that black soldiers were in any case used in capacities where, according to their immediate superiors, they were needed most, irrespective whether it was specifically a job for a trained soldier or not.

For the members of the NMC it was a disconcerting time, when they were neither fish nor foul nor good red herring, neither labourer nor soldier. They resented this practice and the DNEAS agreed that,

"It cannot be expected that these details should comport themselves as soldiers and carry out their duties willingly and contentedly unless efforts are made to treat them as soldiers and not as labourers." (96)

They were particularly disgruntled because they were not employed in the jobs for which they had been trained. Private William Peni, for example, stated that after he had completed the driver's course at the NMTT Centre, Sparrwater, he was sent to the 9th Casualty Clearing Station at Pienaarpoort. Before he left Sparrwater he was informed that he would drive the vehicles at his new station. This, however, did not happen. On arrival at Pienaarpoort, they had to erect tents, weed the parade ground, pack cases of stock on top of one another in the quarter stores, sweep the camp and do various other fatigue duties. He found the situation totally unbearable and deserted back to Sparrwater where he reported to the Commanding Officer. The DNEAS was somewhat sceptical about the truth of these complaints "owing to the fact that it has been a black man's word against that of a European". (97) Nevertheless, he regarded it as serious enough to order a court of inquiry into the matter so that light might be thrown on the use that was being made of trained blacks in diluted units. During the court of inquiry privates David Seabi, Amos Mabuja, Moropeti Masiane and James Malelekwa corroborated William Peni's statement. Although they were also trained as motor drivers, they were washing dishes, stood guard, cleaned the vehicles or performed batman's duties. All were dissatisfied about the state of affairs. The OC, C.G.S. van Heyningen, explained that there were only three 3 ton trucks, three panel vans, one ambulance and two cars in the station. It was therefore impossible to employ all twenty drivers sent to Pienaarpoort on transport work. The court found that the dilution policy had not been observed sufficiently as there was no occasion for convoy work but drivers for convoy duties might be required in the then near future. In the meantime the drivers were reasonably employed on general duties. (98) The fact that the wasting of manpower could have been prevented by not sending them to Pienaarpoort prematurely, was, however, not mentioned.

At Darling 220 NMC members were attached to the 48 Bitumen and Road Construction Company. They were filthy and in a pitiful
condition with no clothes, boots or overalls except the rags in which they worked. This was understandable as they had to work in a stone quarry from 07h15 to 17h00 daily. They certainly did not join the army to perform this kind of work. (99)

To some of the black soldiers, it was a cruel disillusionment when it dawned on them that they were not soldiers but actually in an inferior position, that of labourer. They therefore remained dissatisfied, refused to do menial duties, disobeyed orders to clean up military camps for example, and even deserted. Temporary Corporal G. Makabela, a qualified teacher and talented musician, thus expressed his frustration at not being utilised in a more productive occupation than that of doing guard duty:
"There is nothing besides guard duties that we are doing presently. I'm going to try and get out of this hole as soon as I can." (100)

When they enlisted they had been told that they would be soldiers and after their training they were also informed that they would do duties for which they had been trained; their being employed as ordinary labourers, meant a breach of contract to them. Thus they felt perfectly justified in shirking their responsibilities. (101)

In evaluating the dilution policy, contradictory comments were made by the authorities, some even revising their earlier statements. It seems that there was satisfaction with the policy following the fairly successful strengthening of the depleted forces after the Tobruk debacle and after the war had ended. (102) In May 1943, however, when the problems brought about by this policy manifested themselves, they whistled a different tune:

"It is clear... that the dilution policy has not been the unqualified success that everyone concerned has tried to make it and as all hoped it would be." (103)

It compelled some of the black soldiers who, of course, had no say in the matter, to leave the relatively familiar and safe parent unit and rub shoulders with whites who frequently regarded them as inferior and therefore also demanded that they perform ordinary manual labour. This left many of them indignant and disillusioned. Furthermore, as K.W. Grundy has stated, the dilution policy also "prevented the development of black group solidarity and unit pride." (104) Although this might have been true, contrary to what he implies, it came about more by default than by design.
FOOTNOTES


2. J.A. Jansen van Rensburg, The Learning ability of the South African Native compared with that of the European, p. 49.

3. Narep Unfo 23, Historical Record of the NMC, p. 14191; AG (3)154/X/935 File 99, DNEAS to DAG (O), 13/7/1943 and NMC NAS 3/1/1 A 4 Box 39 and NMC NAS 3/20/1C A 4 Box 31, DNEAS to AG, 18/2/1943.

4. DNEAS NAS 3/6 Box 7, OC Non-European Wing, Lenz to DNEAS, 31/3/1942.

5. NMC NAS 3/21A 2 Box 15, Note on NMC by F. Browne, undated.

6. NMC NAS 3/41/1/3 A 7 Box 43, Visiting officer NEAS to DNEAS, 25/1/1943; CGS (War) 32/7 and CGS Gp 2 137/1 Vol. 4 Box 69, Extract from Staff Conference, 22/7/1942; NMC NAS 3/20/1 A 2 Box 47, Notes for GOA's address on Non-Europeans in the UDF, undated and Hallack, "Record of the NEAS", p. 118.


8. AG (3)154/262/3 Box 384, QMC to AG, 9/5/1941 and NMC NAS 3/26/8 A 7 Box 47, OC Messing and Cookery Services to AG, 10/4/1941.


10. NMC NAS 3/4/1-A 3 Box 1, OC 131 NMC Military Hospital to DDMS, 20/10/1944; NMC NAS 3/21 A 3 Box 14, Memorandum titled "Members of the NMC are being trained as medical attendants", accompanying letter DNEAS to European and Non-European papers, 1/2/1945 and NEAS Paper Clippings Libertas, February 1944.
11. NMC NAS 3/26/13/11 A 17 Box 40, OC 11th Battalion NMC to DNEAS, 13/2/1943; NMC NAS 3/21 A 1 Box 14, letter from I. MacGregor, Medical Officer 3rd Transvaal Scottish, 9/12/1941.

12. CGS Gp 2 G 1019/79 A Box 645, Hygiene Training Officer SAMC Training Centre to OC SAMC Training Centre, 6/1/1942.

13. NMC NAS 3/16/6 A 12 Box 40, Notes of a meeting held in the office of the Area Commandant, 7/6/1941 and NMC NAS 3/20/1 A 1 Box 47, Memorandum titled "Observations, recommendations and correction of driving faults", 22/3/1941.


15. NMC NAS 3/21/A A 5 Box 141, News of the War Statement No. 120 for week ending 6/6/1942.

16. NMC NAS 3/20/1 A 1 Box 47, Memorandum titled "Observations, recommendations and corrections of driving faults", 22/3/1941.

17. NMC NAS 3/26/12 A 12 Box 41 and DNEAS NAS 3/20/1 Box 13, OC NE Rand Battalion MEF (SAEC) to OC MT Depot Welgedacht, 13/4/1942; AG (3)154/X/286 Box 30 and DNEAS NAS 3/20/1 Box 13, DAG (O) to DNEAS, 1/10/1942; NEAS Paper Clippings, Umteteli Wa Bantu, 22/9/1945; NMC NAS 3/20/1 A 1 Box 47, DNEAS to Area Commandant, 5/4/1941; NMC NAS 3/20/1 A 1 Box 47, H.M. Hulett, examining officer MT School Zonderwater to Director of Transport, 17/11/1941; and CGS 32/5 Vol. II, Extract from Staff Conference no. 51, 9/9/1942.

18. NMC NAS 3/20/1C, A 4 Box 31 and DNEAS NAS 3/20/1 Box 13, Cpl. L. Masilela to OC NMTTC Spaarwater, 10/3/1941.

19. NMC NAS 3/20/1 A 1 Box 47, AG to DNEAS, 1/7/1941.


22. NMC NAS 3/20/1 A 2 Box 47, D.H. Pienaar to OC 1 SA Division, 17/10/1941. Capt Naude's report that 80% of the blacks on arrival in the North were capable of handling transport for the Army anywhere, must have applied only to an earlier batch of trainees. (NMC NAS 3/20/1 A 1 Box 47, DNEAS to Area Commandant, 5/4/1941).

23. NMC NAS 3/20/1 A 2 Box 47, DNEAS to DAG (O), 29/12/1941; NMC NAS G 1149/3 A 11 Box 22, OC NMTTC Spaarwater to DNET, 16/2/1942 and NMC NAS 3/20/1 A 1 Box 47, DNEAS to QMG (DOT), 2/6/1941.
24. NMC NAS 3/20/1 A 1 Box 47, H.S. Mockford to D.G. Stocks, 8/4/1941.

25. NMC NAS G 1222/21 A 9 Box 44, OC Training to Command SA Base UDF MEF, 28/8/1941; NMC NAS 3/40 A 1 Box 45, Inspectorate Report on NMC MT Training Depot Holfsfontein, 24/11/1941; DNBAES NAS 3/20/6 Box 13, DNBAES to QMG (DOT), 10/7/1941 and NMC NAS 3/20/1 A 1 Box 47, H.S. Mockford to F. Rodseth, 9/12/1941.

26. DNBAES NAS 3/20/10 Box 13, Proceedings of Court of Inquiry NMTTC West Vlakfontein, 15/4/1941. See also NMC NAS G 1149/3 A 11 Box 22, D. van Riet to E.B. Foxon, 16/2/1942.

27. DNBAES 3/20/10 Box 13, Proceedings of Court of Inquiry NMTTC West Vlakfontein, 16/4/1941.

28. NMC NAS 3/20/1 A 1 Box 47, G.R. Stocks to H.S. Mockford, 4/4/1941. See also NMC NAS 3/20/1 A 1 Box 47, Memorandum titled "Observations, recommendations and corrections of driving faults," 22/3/1941.

29. NMC NAS 3/20/1 A 1 Box 47, DNBAES to Col. H.G. Newman, DMO and I, 6/3/1941 and NMC NAS 3/20/1 A 1 Box 47, DGTO to DNBAES, 6/3/1941.

30. NMC NAS 3/20/1 A 2 Box 47, H.S. Mockford to F. Rodseth, 5/1/1942 and NMC NAS 3/20/1 A 1 Box 47, H.S. Mockford to F. Rodseth, 9/12/1941.

31. NMC NAS 3/36/1 A 3 Box 27, CC 202 Res. MT Coy. to Commander Durban Fortress, 18/5/1943; NMC NAS 3/36/1, A 4 Box 27, OC NMTTC Spaarwater to Area Commandant NMC Training Areas, 19/3/1943 and NMC NAS 3/20/1 A 1 Box 47, DNBAES to OC NMTT Depot Spaarwater, 27/2/1941.

32. NEA Paper Clippings, Trek, 17/12/1943.

33. E.T. Stubbs Collection A 954 B 6, G.K. Hemming to E.L. Smit. See also J.D.R. Jones' favourable comments (NTS Box 9114 File 68/363, J.D.R. Jones to D. Reitz, 4/10/1941.)

34. NMC NAS 3/21/C A 4 Box 15, Minute no. 97 of the UTTGC, accompanying letter, SNA to DNBAES, 25/9/1943.

35. F.H. Theron Collection Box 38, Liaison letter no. 75, Gen. Theron to P. van Ryneveld, 12/9/1942 and Narep Unfo 12, History of the 4th Battalion NMC, pp. 6-7. See also quotations by DNBAES of favourable comments by Chief Inspector of Training GOC CA, AG, Chief Disciplinary Officer DHQ and OC 1st Battalion NMC (CGS 32/3 Vol. I), DNBAES to AG, 7/5/1943); Dimoline papers VIII/2, account of capture of Mayotto Island, Madagascar, July 1942; E.T. Stubbs Collection A 954 B 6, B Nicholson to E.T. Stubbs, 16/12/1940; National Film Archive, African Mirror, 174 and Hallack, "Record of the NEAS", p. 65.
36. NMC NAS 3/21 A 7 Box 12, Typescript by D.J. Darlow titled "The South African Native Soldier in the March of Time".

37. NTS Box 9124 File 68/363/12, letter from S. Lubisi, 1/10/1940 and NMC NAS 3/42/1 B 16 Box 9, letter form S. Sebitheane, undated.


41. NMC NAS 3/40 A 1 Box 45, DCS to DNEAS and DDNET, 18/2/1942.


43. NMC NAS 3/40 A 6 Box 44, Inland Area Inspectorate Report by Capt. C.G. Rathbone of 6th Battalion NMC, 26/10/1942 - 29/10/1942; NMC NAS 3/26/12 A 12 Box 41, OC NMC School to TAC, 2/3/1942; NMC NAS 3/20/1 A 2 Box 47, D.H. Pienaar to 1 SA Division, 17/10/1941; NMC NAS 3/40 A 10 Box 44, Memorandum by Lt. Col. E.B. Foxon and Maj. D.G. Hartmann arising out of recent tour of inspection of all NEAS formations, units and detachments in Coastal Area, 28/12/1942; NMC NAS 3/42 B 6 Box 52, NMC Welfare Officer to OC 51 SAAF Regiment, 8/4/1943 and CGS (2) G 137/1 Vol. IV Box 69, Report by Maj. Gen. H.N.W. Botha on suitability of
Zulus for employment as Gunners, 7/8/1942.

44. NMC NAS 3/21 A 4 Box 12, D. van Riet to H.S. Mockford, 4/1/1942.

45. NMC NAS 3/40 A 6 Box 44, OC 7th Battalion NMC to DNEAS, 2/11/1942; NMC NAS 3/26/12 A 12 Box 41, Fortnightly report of 7th Battalion NMC, 11/2/1942; and NMC NAS 3/26/13/5 A 1 Box 41, NEAS Internal Unit Inspection, 5th Battalion NMC, 1/7/1942 - 18/7/1942.


47. NMC G/222/21 A 9 Box 44, OC Training to Commander SA Base UDF MEF, 1/11/1941.


49. NMC NAS 3/26/17 A 4 Box 48, A.E. Browne, Staff Captan, Native Administration, 5th SA Infantry Brigade to DDNEAS, 18/9/1941.

50. CGS Gp 2 G2/1/9/1 Vol. II Box 1, DNEAS to DMT, 26/6/1941 and NMC NAS 3/P/2/4/1 Vol. II B 6 Box 1, DNEAS to AG, 1/11/1941. See also Grundlingh, "Suid-Afrikaanse Gekleurde", p. 241.


52. AG (3)154/796 Vol. I Box 506, OC Troops Premier Mine to Secretary for Defence, 21/1/1943; AG (3)154/796 Vol. I Box 506, QMG to Secretary for Defence, 16/1/1943 and AG (3)154/796 Vol. I Box 506, QMG to Secretary for Defence, 30/11/1942.

53. CGS 32/18, DC 1749/3 Box 3000, Extract from Staff Conference no. 61, 2/12/1942. See also NTS Box 2227 File 440/280, H.S. Cooke to D.L. Smit, 12/1/1943 and DC 1749/3 Box 3200, Secretary for Defence to Under Secretary, 8/10/1942.

54. CGS 32/18, AG to Heads of all sections, 28/3/1942; AG (3)154/796 Vol. I Box 506, Minutes of a conference held at DHQ, 20/3/1942 and AG (3)154/253 Box 383, H.S. Mockford to Deputy Director of Air Force, 7/6/1941.

55. DC 1749/3 Box 3200, QMG to Secretary for Defence, 5/11/1941.

56. AG (9)168/11/17 Box 8, GOC Inland Area to AG, 21/9/1942.

57. AG (3)154/203/3/0 Box 342, N.M. Mackay to Air Officer
Commanding No. 25 Group, Port Elizabeth, 9/3/1942.

58. NTS Box 2223 File 440/280, H.S. Cooke to D.L. Smit, 12/1/1943.

59. DGD Box 248 File 414/3/1 and AG (3)154/203/3/0 Box 342, Secretary for Defence to QMG, 21/5/1941; NTS Box 9130 File 69/3/63, Capt. J. Kaplan to ADMN Natal Command, 24/6/1941; and AG (3)154/203/3/0 Box 342, OC Oribi Military Hospital Pietermaritzburg to OC Pietermaritzburg, 16/4/1942.

60. NTS Box 2223 File 440/280, G. Ballenden, Manager of Municipal Native Affairs Department, City of Johannesburg and Honorary Director Non-European Civilian Protection Services to SNA, 5/3/1943.

61. NMC NAS 3/41/1/3 A 7 Box 43, NAS 3rd Battalion NMC to DNEAS, 23/1/1943; AG (3)154/796 Vol. I Box 506 and DC 1749/3 Box 3200, T.S. Smith WO I I/c Hygiene, Hygiene Office OC Troops Pietermaritzburg to OC Troops Pietermaritzburg, 7/12/1942; AG (3)154/796 Vol. II Box 506, OC SA Military Hospital to Assistant Director of Medical Services, Northern Command, Roberts Heights, 9/1/1941; and Hallack, "Record of the NEAS", p. 130.

62. CGS 32/18, DGMS to Dechief, 28/1/1943. See also AG (3)154/203/3/0 Box 342, SMO Military Hospital Middelburg to DGMS, undated; CGS 32/18, QMG to CGS, 28/1/1943; AG (3)154/796 Vol. I Box 506, DGTS to Secretary for Defence, 7/12/1942; AG (3)154/796 Vol. II, Acting OC SA Military Hospital to OC Northern Command, 30/12/1942 and DNEAS NAS 3/4/12 (2) Box 5, Memorandum titled "Attested Natives", 19/6/1941.

63. AG (3)154/796 Vol. I Box 506, DGMS to GOC Inland Area and GOC Coastal Area, 4/12/1942; AG (3)154/796 Vol. I Box 506, DGTS to AG, 18/1/1943; AG (9)168/11/17 Box 8, Schedule showing units in Coastal Area employing unattested natives and their consolidated replies for or against replacement by attested NEAS, accompanying letter, GOC to AG, 5/11/1942 and DNEAS NAS 3/4/12(2) Box 5, Memorandum titled "Attested Natives", 19/6/1941.

64. CGS 32/18 Destaf to Dechief, 27/1/1943.

65. CGS 32/18, L. Venter to P. van Ryneveld, 28/1/1943; AG (3)154/796 Vol. I Box 506, QMG to AG, 8/1/1943; AG (3)154/79. I Box 506, DNEAS to DAG (0), 2/12/1942 and Hallack, "Record of the NEAS", p. 129.

66. AG (3)154/253 Box 383, DGAF to AG, 22/10/1941.


68. CGS 32/18, CGS to AG 22/1/1943; CGS 32/18, AG to CGS, 23/1/1943; AG (3)154/796 Vol. II Box 506, OC Central Command to
all units, 29/1/1943 and AG (3)154/796 Vol. II Box 506, Under Secretary for Defence to AG, 6/2/1943.

69. AG (3)154/796 Vol. I Box 506, ADMS to OC Cape Fortress, 8/12/1942; AG (3)154/796 Vol. I Box 506, AG to Secretary for Defence, 9/12/1942; AG (3)154/796 Vol. I Box 506, Secretary for Defence to AG, 14/12/1942; AG (3)154/796 Vol. II Box 506, Under Secretary for Defence to AG, 6/2/1943 and AG (3)154/253 Box 383, DGAF to AG, 30/6/1941.

70. AG (3)154/33/0 Box 154, A.J. Orenstein to AG, 13/9/1943. See also CGS 32/18, Extract from Staff Conference no. 86, 4/8/1943 and AG (3)154/X/875 Box 87, OC 100th Aerodrome Maintenance Company SAEC to CRE (Aerodrome and Roads), 20/5/1943.

71. DGD Box 248 File 414/3/1, OC Dispersal Depot Pretoria to DGD, 14/7/1945. See also CGS 32/18, Extract from Staff Conference no. 135, 19/4/1945 and AG (3)154/X/1097 Box 121, QMG to AG, 13/4/1945.

72. AG (9)213/T/3 Box 20 and AG (3)154/X/286 Box 30, DCS to AG, 21/8/1942; Narep Unfo 23, Historical Record of the NMC, p. 14192; Horwitz, "The NEAS War Record in South Africa", p. 539; Hallack, "Record of the NEAS", p. 45 and Grundy, Soldiers without politics, pp. 4, 76 and 77. The dilution policy was also implemented in British and other dominion units. (CO 820/48 File 3445l, Extracts of proceedings of manpower conference held in Nairobi, 30/9/1942 - 1/10/1942).

73. AG (W)168/3/3/3 Box 19, F.P. Davis to Deputy AG (P), 18/8/1942 and CGS 32/18 Vol. I, AG to CGS, 26/1/1943.

74. G.E. Brink Collection Box 52, DAG to 1 SA Division and 2 SA Division, 7/9/1941; G.E. Brink Collection Box 47, Memorandum on matters affecting the fighting efficiency of 1 SA Division by G.E. Brink, 23/1/1941; NMC NAS 3/21J B 4 Box 18, "Non-Europeans War Effort" by E.T. Stubbs, undated and Hallack, "Record of the NEAS", p. 89.

75. NTS Box 9114 File 67/363, Note of interview at the High Commissioner's Office, 15/11/1940; DNEAS NAS 3/4/12(2) Box 5, Instructions issued by AG on "Native Military Corps personnel 'attached' to other units", undated and AG (3)154/X/442 Box 45, E.T. Stubbs to DGMS, 12/9/1942.

76. CGS 32/3 Vol. I and NMC NAS ETS/PERS/1 B 10 Box 56, E.T. Stubbs to AG, 7/5/1943. See also UWH MS 50 Box 90 and AG (3)154/51/655/0 Box 224, E.T. Stubbs to QMG, 22/10/1940.

77. WO 106/4948, Dominion Office to South Africa (BBS), 2/12/1942; AG (3)154/330/0 Box 154, DNEAS to DAG(0), 25/4/1942; AG (3)154/X/286 Box 30, Extract from Staff Conference, "Dilution scheme in the MEF - progress to 10 July 1942, 15/7/1942; NMC Mid-East Report A 6 Box 42, H.S. Mockford to E.T. Stubbs, 6/1/1945 and Knoetze, "Historical Survey", p. 49. The scale of
supervisory NEAS personnel was as follows:
Up to 30 NE's: NE NCO's only
Between 30 and 60 NE's: White S/Sgt or WO I, depending on the nature of the work
Over 60 NE's: An officer (Lt. or Capt.) and one or more white NCO's depending on the nature of the work and number of personnel. (Hallack, "Record of the NEAS", p. 65).

78. NMC NAS 3/1/1 A 4 Box 39, DNEAS to AG, 10/6/1943. See also NMC NAS 3/20/1 A 2 Box 47, G. de Swardt, APM 2 SA Division HQ Mideast to H.S. Mockford, 17/10/1941.


80. NMC NAS 3/1/1 A 4 Box 39, DNEAS to AG, 10/6/1943; NMC NAS 3/1/7 A 3 Box 28, J.W. Orr, Kimberley Defence Liaison Committee to Director of information, 17/7/1942 and NMC NAS 3/41/1/3 A 7 Box 43, OC 3rd Battalion NMC to DNEAS, 23/1/1943.


82. AG (3)154/33/0 Box 154, DNEAS to DAG(O), 25/4/1942; AG (9)213/2/6 Box 20, E.J. de Wet, AAG UDF MEF for GOA to AG, 26/2/1942 and NMC NAS 1623 A 3 Box 62, OC Witwatersrand Command to various sections, 2/2/1942. See further discussion on the relationship between whites and blacks, chapter 7.

83. AG (W)168/3/3/3 Box 19, P.P. Davis to DAG(P), 18/8/1942.


85. NMC NAS 3/1/2 A 1 Box 31, Chief Inspector DDMT to DMT, 15/8/1941; NMC NAS QT 60/28/100 A 100 Box 47, CGS to F.C. Sturrock, 9/1/1941 and NMC NAS 3/36/1 A 3 Box 25, GOC Inland Area to AG, 20/4/1943 and Knoetze, "Historical Survey", p. 4.

86. Supra, p. 178.


88. NMC NAS 3/21 A 1 Box 14, Memorandum titled "Non-Europeans in the Army", undated.

89. Grundy, Soldiers without politics, p. 79. See also NTS Box 2066 File 132/280, Paper Clipping, Die Burger, 23/12/1942 and AB Xuma Papers ABX 420304a, Report by A.B. Xuma on the ANC
deputation negotiating with the Government, 4/3/1942 where A.B. Xuma also complained that "We cannot see why other human beings should prevent others from using their God-given powers and ability merely on a basis of race or colour."

90. CGS 32/3 Vol. I, Extract from Staff Conference no. 72, 26/3/1943.

91. NMC NAS 3/41/13 A 2 Box 45, Visiting officer NEAS to DNEAS, 12/5/1943.

92. The term is used by D. Killingray. See Killingray, "The Colonial Army in the Gold Coast", p. 49. See also the following for reports that NMC members were used as ordinary labourers: NMC NAS 3/1/7 A 3 Box 28, Statement by Cpl. B. Legudi, 11/11/1942; NTS Box 9114 File 60/363, J.D.R. Jones to D. Reitz, 4/10/1940; AG (W) 116/3/3/3 Box 19, AG to DAG(P), 29/12/1941 and NMC NAS 3/21/D A 3 Box 16, Questions to "Bantu Soldiers’ Friend" column, Indhlovu Tlou by Mgwenyobomvu, 28/8/1944.


94. NMC G 1222/21 A 9 Box 44, OC Training to OC SA Base UDF MEF, No. 3 Training Report, 1/12/1941.

95. G.E. Brink Collection, Box 47, Memorandum on matters affecting the fighting efficiency of 1 SA Division by G.E. Brink, 23/1/1941 and AG (3) 154/51/658/2 Box 224, DGS to AG, 24/2/1941.

96. DNEAS NAS 6/22/7 Box 35, DNEAS to OC Northern Command, 30/11/1943. See also NMC NAS 3/40 A 1 Box 45, Training Inspectorate Report on "F" Coy. 3 NMC Security, 5/5/1941 for a similar comment of dissatisfaction amongst blacks that they were not utilised properly in the persecution of the war.

97. AG (3) 154/33/0 Box 154 and NMC NAS 3/36/1 A 3 Box 25, DNEAS to DAG(O), 27/4/1942.

98. AG (2) 196/3857 Box 73, S.O. "A" Voortrekkerhoogte and Transvaal Command to P.J. Skaed, president of the court of inquiry, 20/5/1942; AG (3) 154/33/0 Box 154, AG to GOC, 3 Armoured Division, 6/5/1942 and AG (3) 154/33/0 Box 154, DNEAS to DAG(O), 27/4/1942.

99. NMC NAS 3/40 A 10 Box 44, Memorandum by Lt. Col. E.B. Foxon and Maj. D.G. Hartmann arising out of a recent tour of inspection of all NEAS formations, units and detachments in the Coastal Area, 22/12/1942. See further discussion on misuse of manpower Chapter 6.

100. NMC NAS 3/42/1 A 4 Box 10, T/Cpl. G. Makabela to David, 20/2/1945. See also the following complaints of soldiers trained
in civilian life for certain occupations and whom the army could
have used in those occupations but failed to do so: DNEAS NAS
3/21/D Box 14, J. Hlatshwayo to Editor, Bantu World, 7/9/1943 and
DNEAS NAS 739/28/T Box 52, Statement by F.W. Ntsieng, 28/4/1944.

101. NMC NAS 3/41/1/3 A 7 Box 43, Visiting officer NEAS to DNEAS,
6/12/1942; NMC NAS 3/36/1 A 4 Box 27, NEAS Officer attached to 25
Air School Standerton to OC 25 Air School, 1/3/1943; AG
(3)154/796 Vol. I Box 506, DNEAS to OC Troops Ladysmith,
23/1/1943; NMC NAS 3/11/4 A 2 Box 56, Chief Magistrate of the
Transkeian Territories to SNA, 23/3/1943 and CGS (War) 32/10,
Extract from Staff Conference no. 123, 18/10/1944.

102. CGS 32/5 Vol. II and AG (3)154/X/286 Box 30, Extract from
Staff Conference no. 51, 9/9/1942 and DNEAS NAS B/Misc. Box 26,
H.S. Mockford to Capt. Colson, 9/10/1945.

103. J.C. Smuts Papers A 1 Box 260 no. 108, J.C. Smuts to F.H.
Theron, 7/6/1943; NMC NAS 3/1/1 A 4 Box 39, DNEAS to AG,
10/6/1943 and DNEAS NAS 3/1/1 Box 1, DNEAS to AG, 28/5/1943.

104. Grundy, Soldiers without politics, p. 80.
CHAPTER 6

ACTIVITIES AND EXPERIENCES INSIDE AND OUTSIDE SOUTH AFRICA

Cursory references have so far been made to the activities of the black soldiers in the army. In this chapter these activities and experiences will be highlighted in a more complete account. The aim, however, is not to provide a full description of the army operations in which they were involved. Attention will rather be given to their duties and day-to-day army life; difficult circumstances they had to face and cope with such as heavy bombardment and fighting, adverse climatic conditions and being captured by the enemy - in short, war circumstances most soldiers experienced. The important issue to what extent they were indeed utilised as soldiers or whether they were in actual fact mere labourers, again crops up.

A. ACTIVITIES AND EXPERIENCES INSIDE SOUTH AFRICA

MILITARY DUTIES

As pointed out in chapter 5, the soldiers on the home front were diluted to almost all Defence Force units. There they performed the following diverse duties, proving that they were adaptable and competent to execute all kinds of assignments; these were in keeping with the traditional South African labour pattern restricting blacks to unskilled and semi-skilled work: hospital orderlies, batmen (army officers' assigned soldier-servants), (1) motor transport drivers and mechanics, refuellers, cooks and waiters, scullions, interpreters, telephone operators, clerks, typists, boot repairers, tailors, carpenters, builders, horse tenders at the Vaalhartz Remount Grazing Farm and doing semi-skilled work in the litho section of the Mobile Map Printing and Printing Company. Just as it was believed that the Zulus were ideally suited to perform infantry and artillery work, the Ama Baca were supposedly the only ones who were prepared to undertake "special sanitary duties" in the SAMC, which entailed, of course, the more unpleasant work in the hospitals. (2)

The most important duty assigned to the soldiers was guarding vital military installations such as aerodromes and strategic points in the Union like the dynamite and chemical factories at Klipfontein. For this purpose 30 battalions were formed. A company was even recruited and trained in the Eastern Caprivi Zipfel to guard this strip of land and particularly the Victoria Falls bridge. These men lived under very trying conditions. In March 1943, to prevent leakage of shipping information, the Government declared a narrow strip of the Eastern and Northern Transvaal bordering on Mocambique, a prohibited area and NMC guards were posted all along the border.

Probably, in order not to make more bad blood between the already antagonised anti-war Afrikaners and the Government, strict orders were promulgated that under no circumstances were black troops to
be used for guard duties at local internment camps. (3) However, they did guard duties in Prisoner of War camps. They were not to replace white guards or be exploited by them. The idea was that they should supplement the white guards, especially after nightfall, "when the aboriginal ear and eye is probably more acute than the European". (4)

Neither were they equipped with arms of precision but with assegais with which most of them were not in the least accustomed and which they regarded with contempt. The fact that they were not effectively armed, made it almost impossible to impress them with the serious nature of guard duties.

Moreover, the guards, often being unable to speak either English or Afrikaans, were frequently treated with contempt by whites who tried to bluff their way past them and succeeded. (5) As far as possible clashes and even contact between black guards and whites were to be avoided. Therefore the guards were further handicapped by strict instructions that, if they were approached offensively by any unauthorised whites, they should only warn, but not resist by using their assegais or by a display of force. They could only retreat ignominiously, call their white orderly officer and remain in the background in the event of any trouble. (6) The following, somewhat humorous incident also proves that the guards were not always well trained:

"An orderly officer on his rounds was halted by an NMC sentry. On intimating that he was the orderly officer, the sentry said, 'Orderly officer, advance and be recognised.' The orderly officer duly marched forward, stood to attention a few paces from the sentry who looked at him not knowing what to do next. After some time had elapsed the Orderly Officer, irritated, said, 'Well, what are you going to do with me. You cannot keep me standing to attention like this the whole time.' A smile of enlightenment then crossed the sentry's face and he then ordered: 'Orderly Officer, stand at ease'!!!" (7)

But there were also instances where the black guards stood their ground and held up white intruders at the point of their assegais. (8)

Monotony, intrinsic of carrying out guard duties night after night, as well as boredom inevitably also set in and tended to lower the morale. It is therefore no surprise that some of the guards not only went on duty intoxicated but also became intoxicated whilst on duty. Others, obviously bored stiff, brandished about their assegais. (9) In order to relieve the blacks of the tedium of guard duties, a policy of withdrawing them after six months and then training them to proceed North or to perform other duties before they took up their guard duties again, was regularly followed. (10)

Whilst some black guards felt that they were mere watchmen and, strictly speaking, not really soldiers, others were satisfied with their work. (11) Likewise, the authorities were generally pleased and praised the efficient way they performed their duties. (12)
NON-MILITARY DUTIES

Although it was argued that all the activities of the black soldiers, however menial, ultimately contributed to the war effort, certain duties assigned to them could have been performed by anyone; they can therefore not strictly be regarded as military duties which could only be carried out by soldiers.

After August 1944 a company of 275 NMC soldiers was, for instance, seconded to and placed under the command of the South African Police as special constables to carry out patrol duty from 20h30 to 04h30 daily in Cape Town and in Johannesburg. According to reports a remarkable decrease in crime occurred in the areas which they patrolled. (13) Amidst extreme climatic conditions and fierce dust storms No. 16 "Q" Maintenance Company was used to lift salt at Swakopmund, Namibia, during the acute salt shortage in the Union. They lifted close on 21 000 tons of salt and covered a grand total mileage of 705 240 in the process. (14) NMC transport drivers were also attached to the Land and Exploration Company to help relieve the shortage of rubber. They extracted and cabled rubber in the malaria plagued heart of Zululand. (15) Likewise No. 13 "Q" Maintenance Company and No. 14 "Q" Maintenance Company were utilised in carting maize in the Bethlehem and Klerksdorp districts respectively to relieve the transport and labour shortage problems. (16) Moreover, in 1943 members of the NMC were made available to assist the maize and wheat farmers in reaping their crops. (17) The labour of the black soldiers was furthermore utilised in erecting fences, in road construction and in erecting new buildings and aerodromes or extending existing ones for military purposes. In this way, according to the authorities, construction work was carried out far more cheaply than would have been the case if it had to be done by the Public Works Department. (18) In a sense this can, of course, be construed as labour exploitation; it also highlights the moot point whether the blacks employed in all the above-mentioned activities could still be regarded as soldiers or whether they were not merely ordinary labourers.

The NMC soldiers were also employed in certain emergency situations. They rescued survivors and recovered bodies from air crashes in the Union and from wrecked or torpedoed ships. In addition, they made a significant contribution in salvaging flotsam from lost vessels. (19) They furthermore excelled themselves when they had been called upon to fight fires threatening property and lives. (20) It was therefore no surprise that some of these soldiers who acted so bravely in emergency situations ranging from stopping a runaway horse-drawn trolley to rescuing people trapped after an explosion and thus risking their lives to save others, were awarded medals for bravery. (21)

In January 1944 the black workers employed at the power stations controlled by the Victoria Falls and Transvaal Power Company went on strike. About 500 members of the NMC were called in to render assistance because, in the opinion of the Government, if something drastic had not been done, serious consequences would have eventuated:
"The strike on the V.F.P. works was an illegal one and a clear breach of the law. If it had proved effective, it would have struck a blow at the industrial and economic life of the Witwatersrand. When it suddenly and unexpectedly eventuated, in spite of official efforts to prevent it, nothing was left to the Government, as an emergency step, to prevent a threat to the community, but to resort to public authority for the purpose. The action was a purely emergency step and was ended as soon as the workers agreed to return to work." (22)

Another non-military avenue in which the soldiers were employed was that of entertainment. After much doubt and many serious reservations in official circles about the feasibility of establishing NMC concert parties, authority was eventually granted to proceed with the formation and training of personnel for two concert parties. Although discipline in the parties sometimes failed, (23) favourable reports on their lively and entertaining performances, their versatility and their popularity were submitted. To some whites it was even a surprising eye-opener. The Commanding officer of the NMC Barracks, Voortrekkerhoogte (formerly Roberts' Heights) commented:

"A fine show, really well put on, from the European point of view, one might say outstanding, as one does not credit Natives as possessing much talent." (24)

NMC members were also involved on the technical side of entertainment. They assisted in operating the mobile film vans which toured the country to visit various NMC units. (25) These entertainment facilities were one way of combating the boredom which inevitably sets in amongst some of the soldiers who performed monotonous duties.

Not only were the duties sometimes monotonous but the soldiers often had to perform strenuous work for long hours. Some white personnel in charge of the black soldiers held the opinion that these soldiers could work all day and all night in and year out. (26) For many their working day started at 07h00 and ended at 17h00. Some, depending on the nature of their work and the location of their military base, had to leave before sunrise and returned after sunset. Due to these hours they had no time off except half a day on Saturday. Consequently their clothes were not always very clean and ironed. The names of those unfortunates were taken and were punished. In one instance the soldiers were doing double shifts guard duties, night and day. They became so fatigued, as they had been given no rest, that they requested to be excused from duty until 12h30 on a particular day. The request was refused. They felt too unfit to assume duty, were placed under close arrest, tried for mutiny and sentenced up to 2 years detention. They were neither allowed to give evidence in their own defence nor to state that they had no intention of mutiny. Obviously, they lodged complaints about the severity of the sentence. (27)
B ACTIVITIES AND EXPERIENCES OUTSIDE SOUTH AFRICA

When the issue whether the South African black soldiers should serve outside the Union was broached, serious reservations about the wisdom of such a move were forthcoming. The Director-General of Medical Services anticipated that the soldiers would be highly susceptible to tropical diseases, particularly malaria. To guard them against the incidence of such diseases would necessitate the establishment of a separate medical organisation. In the light of the shortage of material and accommodation for hospitalisation such a venture would be impossible. Moreover, if these soldiers should develop malaria, many of them would also become carriers thereby creating the possibility of spreading the disease even to endemic proportions on their return to the Union. Probably the most important consideration was that it would be very difficult to exercise control over a large number of black soldiers in an area vastly different to that of South Africa. The possible anticipated trouble would be clashes between the local population and the Union blacks arising from disputes over women. (28) But, of course, although not explicitly mentioned, the authorities were also afraid that the blacks would become acquainted with the different social structures in these foreign countries in which the absence of any colour bar would be the most obvious observation. On their return to the Union they might demand similar political and social changes. Thus by June 1940 definite instructions were issued that no blacks were to be sent out of the Union. (29)

DUTIES

Nevertheless, again the exigencies of war decided otherwise. These instructions were rescinded to release whites serving in non-combatant capacities for combatant duties. These vacancies were then filled by blacks. It seems as if the soldiers were not given any choice whether they wanted to go to North Africa but nevertheless some stoically accepted the fact. (30) For others, such as P. Sexwale, the realisation of what lay ahead was quite traumatic:

"I cried a lot when the train left for Durban. The realities of the situation dawned on my now. I was full of spirit when I joined but... especially when I read how long we would be in the army - for the duration of the war - I said, 'For God's sake, when is this thing going to end?' I found I was really trapped. There was no way out of it. I did not realise this initially. I only thought I was going for a year or two. And it is a world wide war. If we had choice I would not have gone." (31)

Thus the first NMC troops arrived in East Africa to join the 5th Infantry Brigade as early as November 1940. There, in North Africa, the Middle East, Madagascar and eventually in Italy, they were employed in various non-combatant skilled, semi-skilled and unskilled work. Generally, they served as drivers helping to maintain the lines of communication and delivering essential food and ammunition supplies to the front line or other outposts; some served as mechanics servicing motor trucks as well as aeroplanes; others maintained supportive functions such as cooks, scullions, clerks, typists, telephone operators, interpreters, stretcher-bearers, medical orderlies, security guards and batmen. Many were
also employed on menial duties of which burying the dead, road and aerodrome construction, repairs and trench-digging were the most important. For some of the soldiers this was not at all what they had expected. Sergeant R. Moloi who was in command of men digging trenches related how
"my people kept complaining that there is no war. They were told that they are joining the war - that they are going to see the front line. We do not see the front line - we are only digging these holes for the Arabs. But I told them they have to do what they are told and then we did that. I understood it was a good help during the war - that is why they stopped the Germans." (32)
The demands made upon these men were sometimes exhausting in the extreme. Not only were there instances where they had to complete construction works within a very short time necessitating long, uninterrupted work for days and nights but they also had to contend with severe duststorms and exceptionally high temperatures. (33)

The construction work done by the blacks of the 61st Tunnelling Company, Mines Engineering Brigade, SAEC needs further elaboration as it was not only an unique endeavour but also a lasting one. There was a distinct possibility that Turkey might be invaded by the Germans in order to attack the Allies in the Middle East. Turkey could not be assisted effectively unless supplies and men could reach her quickly overland from the Egyptian base. A good railway line was the solution. The railway line running north from Egypt to Palestine stopped at Acre, just north of Haifa and the one from Turkey southwards came no further than Tripoli. To utilise the line effectively the 160 kilometers gap had to be closed. In November 1941 the COC Middle East made an urgent appeal to the South African Government for a special mining company to be established for the purpose of assisting in the construction of a railway tunnel through the mountains in Syria for this important railway line, linking Haifa, Beirut and Tripoli. The total number of labourers required for the work was 715 of whom 420 were required to be trained mine workers. By arrangement with the Transvaal Chamber of Mines and the Native Recruiting Corporation these were drawn from the five main mining groups as volunteers for one year's service with the unit. The remainder of the labour force was drawn from the NMC as an attached labour company with a total strength of 313 men. These included motor transport drivers and medical and hygiene personnel. The unit sailed from East London on 22 December 1941 and arrived in Syria on 12 January 1942.

It was hard work which was aggravated by the cold Syrian winter and high winds. Two tunnels had to be excavated. The trickiest part of the whole undertaking was the construction of a sea wall about 100 meters in length, 33 meters from the sea-shore and in 2 meters of water. The blacks distinguished themselves in completing the work (which was called the Chekka Tunnel) in seven months, well ahead of schedule. The unit was then requested to construct a second railway tunnel, the Bayada Tunnel, of 1 400 meters. (34) Just before this tunnel was holed through the mine blacks were returned to the Union in keeping with their contract period of one year.
This was, however, not the end of the services of the 61st Tunnelling Company in the Middle East. After the completion of the Bayada Tunnel, they were asked to remain for a further four months in order to construct a series of irrigation tunnels involving approximately five kilometers of tunnelling. The previous year 600 000 tons of shipping had to be used to bring cereals into the Middle East area much of which could have been grown in the area itself. This scheme would remedy the situation. It would irrigate some 8 000 acres along the coastal strip between Tyre and Saida on which food could be grown thereby saving shipping space. It would also be of great political significance by winning the favour of the Lebanese Government. The South African Government agreed that volunteers could be used and within four months the Tunnelling Company had constructed another lasting monument. (35) Maj. L.D. Browne, OC of the 61st Tunnelling Company paid the following tribute to their contribution:

"There can be no doubt that any results achieved by this unit are as much due to the hard work of these men as to any other factor. Their enthusiasm and aptitude has lightened many difficult and dangerous tasks, and is coupled with a team spirit which runs through from officers and European NCOs to all NE ranks... Especial mention must be made of the excellent work done by the 28 Non-European MT drivers who have handled their vehicles over a total of more than a million miles and are worthy of the highest possible praise." (36)

APPRECIATION AND RECOGNITION OF BLACKS' CONTRIBUTION

Eulogies like these were not only forthcoming for the work done by the blacks in the 61st Tunnelling Company but unstinting praise was also given to members of the NMC who performed commendable work and proved themselves in other units of the UDF. The initial scepticism with regard to the employment of black soldiers outside the Union and white reservations as regards the abilities of blacks gave way to admiration. (37)

This was particularly true of the work performed by stretcher-bearers and motor transport drivers. Of the former who frequently went out in the front line with the advancing infantry, Captain Zietsman, Non-European Liaison Officer 1 SADF Division, reported thus:

"Reports coming in prove that they fought like tigers - the words of a senior officer - Natives as well as Coloureds. I myself have spoken to Europeans who owe their lives to the heroism of our Natives. The stretcher bearers by all accounts were magnificent. Immediately one went down another stepped in to take his place. For one moment they were all South Africans regardless of race colour or creed and they stood or fell together." (38)

It was emphasised that the success of the black stretcher-bearers was an object lesson of what the blacks could do "given correct handling, suitable leadership and adequate training." (39)
Apart from the black drivers who were diluted to the two South African Divisions and non-divisional units it was also decided to train NMC members who had become redundant, for ten specially formed motor transport companies from 1 April 1942. The urgent need for motor transport drivers, especially after the fall of Tobruk in June 1942, was one reason which necessitated this step. The other was that morale and discipline of the blacks was at its lowest ebb at this stage; the training of some of these blacks as motor transport drivers was seen as a way to boost morale and instil discipline. (40) It is therefore no surprise that when these motor transport companies were first mooted, there was indeed some doubt whether they would be successful.

Initially, and until approximately the beginning of 1942, as their standard of driving left much to be desired, it was thought that these doubts were to be realised. Various reports, however, testified that the motor transport drivers soon acquitted themselves splendidly of their jobs. They achieved this in sometimes very hazardous and unfamiliar circumstances. For one, they had to adapt driving on the right hand side of the road and on many occasions on very bad, congested and sometimes non-existent roads made even more difficult and dangerous by demolitions, mines and booby traps. In addition they had to cope with unfavourable weather conditions and driving for long hours. Moreover, amidst the shell-fire and confusion encountered during attacks and withdrawals, they continued driving seemingly unperturbed, thereby succeeding in maintaining vital supply lines and, as ambulance drivers, in evacuating the wounded. With such an excellent record, Major F. Rodseth, Assistant Deputy Director NEAS, expressed the hope

"to retrieve the prestige that has been lost in some quarters and to prove once and for all that the Natives are, on the whole, courageous and suitable for military duty." (41)

As was the case with British officers who claimed that the efficiency of the African troops under their command was solely dependant on the quality of white leadership, (42) the white South African officers also ascribed the success of the motor transport drivers to their contribution, namely thorough initial training, strict supervision, the maintenance of squad drill and "sympathetic and efficient handling". (43) The blacks' contribution was relegated to the stereotyped view of their "capacity to stand physically and mentally the monotony and long hours of driving..."(44)

Amongst some of the officers there were serious reservations about the way the black soldiers would react in the thick of battle. It had been argued that they would not be able to stand up to the conditions of modern warfare. (45) However, high commendations of their bravery and cool courage under bombing and machine gun fire quickly dispelled any doubts on this score. Gen. G.E. Brink, OC 2nd S.A. Division was one of the officers who had to review his opinion:
"I would like to state that our initial misgivings have largely proved to be unfounded. Well trained and well led they responded beyond all hopes." (46)

HEROIC DEEDS

The accounts of heroic deeds performed by the black soldiers and the list of decorations awarded to them corroborate the above-mentioned reports on their bravery and courage.

During a fierce attack on Bardia, Libya, on 16 December 1941 it became very urgent to remove the wounded from the battle field. A volunteer was asked for to go forward with the Red Cross Flag to the enemy lines and to deliver a note to the enemy. Corporal Berry Gazi volunteered and thus described his subsequent experiences:

"I proceeded towards the enemy under very heavy fire, shells were bursting around me and bullets were whining over my head. I cannot say what my feelings were at that moment. I somehow felt an inner urge to go forward and perform my task even though I might have been killed. I managed to reach the enemy without being wounded and delivered the message. I returned safely to our lines." (47)

The fighting continued and increased in severity. Despite his being wounded in the leg and instructed to retire to the hospital, Gazi showed complete disregard for his personal safety and carried on evacuating the wounded. He was awarded the Military Medal for Bravery.

Two other stretcher-bearers likewise received the Military Medal for attending to the wounded despite intense heavy machine gun and artillery fire. Private George Kalamuri distinguished himself throughout the action on 22 to 23 November 1941 at the battle of Sidi Rezegh. As team leader he took his team up to forward positions, crawled to wounded men and from a lying position placed these men on stretchers. He then crawled back with the stretchers to such cover as could be found. Private Jan Makgothlo similarly persevered in his duty although wounded by shell fire during the attack on Bardia on 31 December 1941 and 1 January 1942. (48)

Another stretcher-bearer, Private Lucas Majazi, from the Zastron township was the first black soldier to receive the Distinguished Conduct Medal. On the night of 23 October 1942, at the beginning of the Battle of El Alamein, he was wounded in the leg, hip, buttock and neck by shrapnel but unceasingly evacuating the wounded men. After his co-bearers had become casualties, he did not waver but incessantly carried men on his back all the night until he collapsed the next morning through sheer exhaustion, stiffness and loss of blood. Through his efforts he undoubtedly saved many wounded men. (49)

Likewise, other soldiers did not hesitate to act in emergency situations, thus proving their courage. Corporal Herbert Parkies
and Private Alfred Sibeko gallantly rescued the pilot of a crashed flaming plane while Sergeant Enoch Mhlangu dived from a troopship to rescue a fellow-sergeant who had fallen overboard. (50) Acts of bravery were also performed by escapees after the fall of Tobruk. (51)

The laudable way in which some of the black soldiers performed their duties and others even risked their lives, need more explanation. Firstly, the favourable reports submitted on the blacks' behaviour can not simply be taken at face value. These reports were usually compiled by officers who had a vested interest in the success of the NMC and who had to prove that their endeavours, for instance in training these men, were not fruitless. Moreover, it is not uncommon to relate the brave deeds of soldiers in exaggerated terms, especially when it is a recommendation for an award or medal. However, it is not the intention of this observation to discount or underestimate the blacks' contribution and deeds of courage. The significance of their occurrence still remains important. Many of them took pride in their work and in their being soldiers; they stoically and commendably carried out the tasks at hand and did not hesitate to act in emergencies. But many also had to be aware that they were under strict discipline so that the chances of loitering were rather slim. (52)

UN SOLDIERLY CONDUCT

These accounts of bravery, courage and heroism were only one side of the coin. For some black soldiers it was a traumatic and frightful experience to be confronted with the rigours of war in the front line. On the explosion of the first shell fire, many ran away and could not be persuaded to return. It must, however, be borne in mind that this was a perfectly natural human reaction and trying to even the best of troops.

Fear could, of course, seriously impair the fighting efficiency and pose a very serious threat to the safety of other soldiers in the heat of battle as the following description of Sapper J.F. Swanepeol of events at Sidi Rezegh illustrates:

"Nobody seemed to know what was happening... When we asked NCO's and Officers what was to be done, they only told us to get back as the enemy were breaking through. If it had not been for the natives, things would have been better organised and the men would not have been put in a state of panic; as the natives were grabbing trucks, racing away with them, waiting or stopping for no one. In most cases there was only one native in the vehicle, that being the driver." (53)

Brigade and battalion commanders confirmed that they could not possibly go into action with black drivers because they panicked easily under air or armoured attack. Maj.-Gen. Dan Pienaar frankly stated that

"The native was Public Danger No. 1 in any battle formation. He would not face the ordeal... Until natives had had years of training with Europeans they would not be able to face
the conditions of modern European warfare...They were just raw natives put into a suit of uniform." (54) General George Brink agreed that whites would have to replace blacks as drivers in mobile operations, despite the serious drain it would entail for the fighting strength. To him the alternative would have been serious trouble or perhaps even disaster. (55) Again, it is a highly debatable point whether the colour of the soldiers' skin or their cultural background could have been any indication of their courage. There is surely no guarantee that whites would act any differently from blacks when faced with the perils of war. But apparently the racist opinions shaped by the structure of society in South Africa in the 1940's were not only indiscriminately applied but also uncritically accepted in North Africa.

The black soldiers, many of whom lived in a state of terror and apprehension, defended themselves. They emphasised the fact that they did not sign on as first line drivers and were given definite assurances in the Union that they would not be sent into the fighting areas. (56) However, the demands of war veiled Union promises.

ACTIVITIES IN MADAGASCAR, THE MIDDLE EAST AND ITALY

In the middle of 1942 the world's attention was momentarily switched from the Middle East to Madagascar. After the loss of Singapore the British naval forces in the Indian Ocean had their forward bases in Ceylon. The importance of Mombasa as an additional port for patrolling the Indian Ocean should Ceylon be overrun was now greatly increased. To the south of this ocean route and dominating the Mozambique Channel, through which the British convoys to East Africa and the Middle East were constantly passing, lay the Vichy-controlled island of Madagascar with the great natural harbour of Diego Suarez at its northern tip. Signs were not lacking that the Japanese might have little difficulty in occupying it if they chose and even that some measure of co-operation between Japanese submarine commanders and the French in Madagascar had already taken place. The British Government, therefore, having found negotiation fruitless, sent a force from England in May 1942 to occupy Diego Suarez, partly as a preventive measure and partly to obtain the use of the port for naval and air patrols. The 7th South African Infantry Brigade which was amongst the Allied Forces sent out to complete the operation included black drivers, stretcher-bearers, cooks and medical orderlies. In addition the black soldiers in No. 1 Pack Transport Company of the South African Veterinary Corps carried out transport work with horses whilst those in No. 1 Docks Operating Company S&EC loaded and off-loaded military cargo and operated the winches on the ships and cranes. No serious battles occurred as the French resistance was very weak. The real hazards were the tropical climate and malaria. The Vichy Governor surrendered on 2 November 1942, and the South African troops returned to the Union on 7 December. (57)

The maintenance of lines of communication from Suez to Aleppo in
Syria and Tripoli in Libya was no mean task. The Middle East, even after the Axis forces had been driven out of Africa, remained of vital strategic importance both for the prosecution of the war in the Pacific as well as for supporting the advance in Italy. It was the main arsenal, workshop, rest, training and reinforcement centre of all the Allied Forces operating in the Mediterranean area. Vast quantities of war material, troops and foodstuffs had to be guarded and transported by motor transport to units in the area and to the ports for shipping to Italy, Greece and the Pacific. To this enormous task in an area stretching from the Nile Delta for 1 600 kilometers North East to the Turkish border and for nearly 3 000 kilometers West to Tripoli and beyond, the 7th NMC and Cape Corps Motor Transport Companies in particular also contributed their fair share.

When the question of the invasion of Europe arose, there were divergent views whether the blacks should be employed in this operation or not. On the one hand the officers who had commanded the blacks in North Africa were in favour of their participation but on the other hand people like Col. W.P.F. McLaren, Senior Engineer Staff Officer, vehemently opposed such a move. However, in spite of this opposition the necessities of war again dictated policy: blacks had to form part of the personnel of the invasion units as insufficient number of whites were available to maintain the commitments undertaken. (58)

To this end the blacks could voluntarily sign the new Oath of Service whereby they agreed to serve anywhere for the duration of the war and for a period of six months thereafter unless otherwise legally discharged. To some black soldiers like Sergeant Robert Lunenge, the signing of the new oath did not make much sense because the pay remained the same. (59) It seems, however, that most of the soldiers were willing to sign the new oath provided their chiefs approved. Others simply stated:

"'Don't ask us to sign any more papers - we shall go where we are sent.'" (60)

The first members of the NMC who arrived in Italy in September 1943 were attached to the South African Army Signals. By February 1944 521 members of the NMC served with UDP units in Italy. This number quickly increased so that, by the winter of 1944, there were over 2 000 black soldiers in Italy most of whom were attached to the SAAF Squadrons. These soldiers performed their various duties satisfactorily as the following graphically describes:

"When pilots had to go on raids at dawn they were woken by NMC batmen and served by NMC cooks and waiters. Quite likely they would also be driven to the landing strip by NMC drivers, and coming in to land after a raid NMC fire fighters and crash crews would be on watch and standby in case a damaged aircraft came to grief on landing. The NMC felt that they had become an integral part of the SAAF Squadrons and responded splendidly as a result of the confidence they enjoyed from the European airmen." (61)
To these soldiers it was of course again a new environment to which they had to adapt. The enthusiasm and fascination with the first snow, for instance, gradually turned into a feeling of revulsion at the very sight as the cold grew more intense.

Due to the increasing demands (especially for cooks and drivers) the initial selective policy could no longer be strictly adhered to anymore with the result that many "dubtful characters" arrived in Italy. Moreover, the battle in Italy died down at the beginning of the winter of 1943. The SAAF units to which the NMC was attached settled down in the Poggia plains. To prevent the resultant idleness, to boost morale and to deal with recidivists, a leave and transit camp was established at Torre-a-Mare, 12 kilometers south of Sari on the sea. (62)

Generally speaking, it appears that these soldiers, although relatively small in number, made a substantial contribution to the successful conclusion of the Italian campaign. Shortly after the end of the war in Europe instructions were issued that they return to the Middle East and Italian labour employed in their stead. (63)

DEATHS, PHYSICAL AND MENTAL ILLNESSES

Serving outside the Union in unfamiliar circumstances and situations, presented its own dangers; naturally a price had to be paid. Some soldiers died of natural causes. The deaths of others can directly be attributed to the war - they were either killed by bullets, bombing or air raids. Fatal accidents also occurred; for example, a soldier was burnt to death whilst filling a car with petrol. Others died because of sheer foolishness. One of them tried to smoke petrol for lack of tobacco with obviously disastrous results. (64) Apart from these losses, disaster also struck in other ways claiming lives. A sad loss of life occurred on 3 March 1943 when the "S.S. Nipura" whilst transporting mules to India, was sunk. Forty members of the NMC succumbed in this incident. (65) In February 1949 the CC War Records estimated that there were 577 deaths (including presumptions) of NMC members outside the Union. (66)

Tuberculosis was the most common illness amongst the soldiers. As could be expected, the tensions of war also affected some of the soldiers mentally. For example, the striking feature of the diagnoses of the patients from North Africa who disembarked from the "Amra" on 22 January 1943 was the number of mental cases ranging from schizophrenia, hysterical tremor, anxiety neurosis to hypertension. (67)

Those who participated in the Second World War outside South Africa, saw and experienced a whole new world in which they had to cope with strange customs, languages and people. Many ate unfamiliar food, smoked various brands of cigarettes and had to deal with foreign currency of which some soldiers remained extremely suspicious. As quickly as they could they changed it for the familiar Union currency. In this kaleidoscopic world
which must have been baffling to some, there were sometimes perfectly sincere albeit naive attempts to recognise something familiar. One of the soldiers related how they

"arrived at a great city called Kei Road [Cairo]. It is very much bigger than the place in this country that has that name. It stands beside a river much wider than the Kei." (68)

The relative social and political freedoms of the foreign countries also did not pass unnoticed but the authorities quickly dispelled any ideas the soldiers might have had of propagating them in South Africa. (69)

PRISONERS OF WAR

The black soldiers' war experiences not only included seeing a whole new world but also one of the darker sides of war — being captured and taken as prisoners-of-war (henceforth P.O.W.). By far the greatest number of soldiers was captured after the fall of Tobruk in June 1942. Some of them were kept in P.O.W. camps in the Western Desert but others transported to P.O.W. camps in Italy, France, Germany, Poland and Russia. The total number of P.O.W. on the Continent averaged about 1 500. (70)

TREATMENT BY THE ITALIANS AND GERMANS

There is substantial evidence that the Italians and Germans not only treated the black P.O.W. cruelly but also seriously contravened many of the articles of the Geneva Convention. In bomb-battered Tobruk they were not allowed to enter shelters when the R.A.F. and U.S. Air Squadrons bombed the town. Moreover, they received only one packet of biscuits a day and very little water and for the rest were locked up in cages. Furthermore, the Italians regularly kicked the blacks or struck and butted them with their rifles. (71) It seems as if the colour of the blacks' skin also influenced the Italians and Germans in their treatment of blacks. After the white P.O.W. refused to undertake certain jobs at Benghazi, the black P.O.W. were physically compelled to do so. In reply to representations by a senior British Officer objecting to this treatment, the Italian officer in charge merely stated that he considered them "irregular troops" and therefore unprotected by the terms of the Geneva Convention. (72)

Blacks were treated no better in German and Italian P.O.W. camps on the Continent. Lance Corporal Nzama Nogaga related the lack of a subsistence diet which probably caused the greatest hardship in these camps:

"Personally the only dead meat I did not eat was dog's flesh. I ate horse, donkey, cat; anything to keep life in me... Food was all we thought about, day and night." (73)

Whilst some inevitably died of starvation, others were shot in cold blood. At Stalag 8c, for example, the prisoners were prohibited from leaving their rooms after 20h00. At 21h30 Lance Corporal Piet Lihatlho had to go to the toilet which was
approximately 50 meters from their rooms. On his way he was shot dead by the sentry. (74)

In another case a black P.O.W. was shot, not necessarily because of cruelty on the part of the Germans but merely for being in the wrong place at the wrong time. Corporal James Magqirana and Private Petrus Moloi related how they and Private Essau Mtambo were captured at Tobruk, sent to Italy and transferred to France to work at the Pieness Iron Mines west of the Meuse River. In September 1944 they were evacuated to Germany but on their way Allied infantry attacked them and the marching column split up, hiding in the forest. Suddenly Germans appeared and fired several shots, killing Private Mtambo. (75)

Many of the P.O.W. were forced to unload arms, ammunition, petrol and other supplies at the Tobruk docks or work on new railway lines in North Africa. They were made to work from 06h00 to 21h00 daily and on many occasions even later. In Europe they were also employed on railway and road maintenance and construction work as well as demolishing bombed buildings and burying the victims of air raids. Others worked on several mines all over Europe. In France they worked in labour battalions on Nazi defences and installations. Some had to work in stables, sleeping with the horses. A few were even employed making bioscope films. They had to perform the stunts but did not particularly like this, as they "were made to go naked all the time." (76)

Apart from the treatment meted out by the Germans and Italians, the mere physical conditions in many of the P.O.W. camps aggravated the prisoners' hardship. Discomfort, as well as a hazard to prisoners' health, was caused by bugs, fleas and lice in various camps. Overcrowding, bad hygiene and sanitation, poor quality and insufficiency of blankets, lack of heating facilities and proper ventilation as well as bureaucratic red tape which prevented supplies from reaching the P.O.W. camps were only some of the conditions which contributed to a miserable life for many. (77) It is therefore not surprising that numerous blacks died through sickness in these camps. (78)

On the other hand, the situation varied. In some camps there were sufficient food, good accommodation, an availability of commodities such as cigarettes and satisfactory hygienic conditions. Many Italians tried their best to treat the prisoners well but could hardly do so when their own circumstances left much to be desired. (79)

Probably the worst experience of a group of black South African P.O.W. occurred during a 1 000 kilometer forced route march from Sagan in East Germany to Babenhauen at the beginning of 1945. The Germans were unconcerned about them and many took ill or died of exposure, dysentery and starvation along the way. The Germans did not bother to bury these unfortunates. A few were even shot and left lying along the road. (80)

The war operations of the Allies in Europe also caused,
unintentionally of course, hardship to black South African P.O.W. The worst incident of this nature occurred on 28 January 1944 when the Americans launched an air raid on a P.O.W. train containing about 1 000 P.O.W., including black South Africans, near Orvieto in France. When the planes came over, the train was halted on a bridge which, during the bombing, was destroyed and left burning. Many black South Africans were amongst the approximate 400 killed; some of the injured later died in hospital. A priest, with the help of the local townsfolk, buried the bodies in a common grave beside the bridge. After that, however, the bridge was bombed many times so that later there was no trace of the grave or any of the bodies it had contained. (81)

ATTEMPTS AT CHANGING THEIR CIRCUMSTANCES

Many of the black P.O.W. had neither the inclination nor the courage nor the opportunity of bringing about any change to their P.O.W. status and circumstances. Some, however, did try to bring about a change to their situation, either by attempts at escape or even by collaborating with the enemy.

As most of the attempted escapes occurred from the P.O.W. camp in Tobruk, it follows that circumstances to escape from that camp were more favourable than escapes from camps in Europe. The South African authorities apparently did not take the different circumstances such as the level of security at the various camps for instance, into consideration when they made the following generalised observation:

"Members of the Cape Corps and IMC by virtue of a higher mental standard managed to effect a proportionately higher number of actual escapes than did the NMC. NMC escapes, with few exceptions, were very straightforward, and the greater majority were released by Allied troops from their PW Camps." (82)

The evidence of the blacks' tenacity, endurance, ingenuity and sheer determination not only to escape but also to survive after they had escaped, refutes the attitude expressed above.

Many of the escapees from Tobruk had more or less similar experiences. The following montage compiled from their narratives, attempts to provide a general picture of their adventures.

When the idea of escape was first broached amongst the P.O.W. there was initially a feeling of reluctance for such a daunting undertaking. They were well aware of the dangers involved such as the possibility of being caught and shot as well as the perils of the desert. Some of them therefore decided to endure the bad conditions of which the constant bombing was the worst and wait until the Allied forces might free them. Others felt that they might wait in vain or be killed during the bombing raids and with one or two companions risked the escape.

To escape from the camp did not seem to have been very difficult, except to negotiate the mine fields surrounding the camps. There
is evidence of one escapee, Eward B. Malefani, being killed by such a mine. But it was indeed the desert which proved to have been the biggest menace. Keeping direction in totally unfamiliar terrain and surviving not only the adverse climatic conditions but also the constant hunger and thirst was a tremendous challenge. Most of them lived on water and food found in abandoned vehicles. Some of the escapees were, however, not so lucky to find any provisions. They consequently became so weak that they had to part company, mostly never to be seen again. The rest were sometimes fortunate to meet friendly Arabs who cared for them thus ensuring their survival. But all the Arabs were not so friendly. One, after promising to show the escapees the way to the British lines in exchange for all the money between them, held them up with his rifle, took the money and made off.

Eventually, a few were recaptured but there were also those who succeeded in reaching the Allied lines. The latter divulged valuable information of the exact positions of the supplies at Tobruk which could then be destroyed by Allied bombers. Some of these escapees such as Reuben Moloi, Frank Malale, Jack Mohlala, Alfred Masia, Hermanus Chaka and Springkaan Masemula received Military Medals for their endurance, resourcefulness and bravery and for conveying this valuable information. (83)

Likewise, special mention must be made of deeds of sabotage carried out by the P.O.W. when the opportunity arose. Inter alia, they sacrificed their sugar and put it into the petrol tanks of German cars. When the sugar ran out, they used sand and water. Others would "accidentally" slip when they were unloading supplies from ships in the harbour and allow tons of supplies and sometimes pieces of artillery, to fall into the sea. The best-known case of sabotage is that performed by Job Masogo, a P.O.W. at Tobruk, who received the Military Medal for sabotaging and sinking an enemy ship in Tobruk harbour. The bad treatment and poor food inspired him to take revenge. He had worked on a South African mine and knew how to use the empty tins as well as the bits of fuses and ammunition which were lying about to make a bomb. His chance came when they were ordered to load a ship in the harbour with ammunition. His own account of events continues thus:

"I told my pals not to watch me too closely but to keep the soldier who was guarding us amused. He was quite a friendly type. As my pals were jumping about, I collected some dry grass and other inflammable material and put them in a small pile among some drums of petrol. I put one end of the fuse I was carrying into the pile, led this up to the hatch and closed it... When we got back to our camp which was out of sight of the harbour... I heard the explosions emanating from the harbour area... The next day we were again taken to the harbour. There was an empty space where my ship had lain and planks with the markings I had seen, were floating about... Whatever conclusions they [the Germans] came to, they did not take us to the harbour for loading duties again. But they spoke a lot about the ship that had disappeared." (84)
In carrying out this deliberately planned action, he displayed ingenuity, initiative, determination and a complete disregard of possible punishment by the enemy if he should have been caught.

It seems as if civilians usually (even at the risk of their own personal safety) cared well for the black soldiers who had escaped from German and Italian P.O.W. camps as well as the prisoners still in captivity. In Italy, for example, Corporal J. Ggesse wandered about the mountains of Naples in the hope of meeting Allied troops although he did not know where the Allies were. Later he simply went in any direction in search of food. Throughout his ordeal the Italian peasants always provided him with food if they themselves had any. (85)

In the south of France a certain Miss Mary Rae and a Protestant pastor, Monsieur Anglade looked after the South African "Non-European" soldiers. Among his many acts of mercy the latter saw to the burials and paid the expenses out of his own pocket of five soldiers who had died. (86)

Only one incident could be found where a P.O.W. opted for the other alternative to an escape, namely active collaboration with the enemy. In Tobruk Private L. Dhlamini who had lived in South West Africa and could talk German informed the Germans that he was in charge of the P.O.W. and was subsequently made foreman over them. He received his own detention cell and powers of administering punishment which he used most arbitrarily and in a cruel way. The British Medical Officer placed in charge of the black P.O.W. encouraged them to feign illness rather than to assist the Germans by working for them. Private Dhlamini thereupon reported to the Germans that this Medical Officer unnecessarily excused the prisoners from duty. Dhlamini was later sentenced to 7 years imprisonment and discharged with ignominy. (87)

OFFICIAL CONCERN ABOUT THE WELFARE OF P.O.W.

Apart from the above-mentioned civilians who cared for the P.O.W., there were also official efforts under the auspices of the South African Red Cross Society to look after their welfare. A complete record was kept by this organisation of every South African P.O.W. irrespective of race from the time he was reported missing. Through the Native Commissioners, his next-of-kin were kept fully up to date regarding his whereabouts and well-being. In addition, every attempt was made to see to it that each P.O.W. received a supply of ten pounds of food a week, the contents of which were selected to make up deficiencies in diet. Because of delays in Italy and Germany in the issuing of clothing and foot-wear according to the Prisoners-of-War Convention, arrangements were made for large quantities of clothing and foot-wear to be forwarded to the International Red Cross for distribution. The soldiers also received additional comforts such as cigarettes and tobacco as a gift from the S.A. Red Cross Society. The Society claimed that these parcels indeed reached their destinations. (88)
The UDF also delegated Col. H.O. Sayer, Maj. J.P. Knudsen and Maj. F. Rodseth as well as Lt. Fernesy respectively to locate and evacuate members of the NMC who were either reported missing or held in P.O.W. camps in North Africa and on the Continent. The first three officers mentioned reached Tobruk on 14 November 1942, a day after it had been recaptured by the Allies. They found the conditions deplorable and the prisoners in a state of bewilderment. During the interval between the evacuation by the Germans and the occupation by Allied forces, some of the black P.O.W. drank liquor and aviation spirit. Consequently, they were thoroughly intoxicated and out of hand when the UDF party arrived. Order was soon restored, however, and rations, water and medical services brought relief. Likewise, Mersa Matruh, Derna and Benghazi were also visited and the captured soldiers released. (90)

By November 1944 approximately 800 black P.O.W. had been recovered in Europe, most of whom being in P.O.W. camps in Southern France. However, this still left about 600 unaccounted for. It was quite a formidable task to locate these men as circumstances in Europe at that stage of the war were extremely volatile and confusing. More often than not the P.O.W. were only discovered by chance. (90) There were almost 100 ex-P.O.W. in the Marseilles, Bordeaux and Bayonne area who, after their release from captivity, joined the Free French Forces or worked as civilians. Some of them were apparently quite content with their situation and expressed no intention of returning to the Union. (91)

REPATRIATION

The process of repatriation took place along racial lines. All so-called "Non-European" ex-P.O.W. evacuated from the Continent were stationed in hutted camps at Slinfold, Sussex awaiting shipment to the Union. The whites' were accommodated in hotels and houses in the pleasant seaside resorts of Brighton, Hove and Worthing.

On arrival at the Slinfold camp the soldiers were medically examined, interrogated if necessary, refitted with clothing and issued with paybooks and pay. In addition they received a Red Cross and Comforts Fund parcel. Moreover, amenities such as a library, a billiard room, concert hall, outdoor games and cinema shows were provided. They were also escorted on conducted sight-seeing tours to London and other places but, in contrast to the privilege of 30 days recuperative leave granted to the whites, not allowed to go on leave. Some of them were extremely dissatisfied and disgusted with this arrangement. (92)

In the larger South African towns receptions with refreshments were organised for the parties of ex-P.O.W. who arrived there by train. In the areas where there were inadequate transport facilities special transport was laid on to convey them to their homes. Certain townships like the one near Pipsburg, also felt that they wanted to arrange a special welcome party for the
returned ex-P.O.W. The Department of Native Affairs contributed funds for the purchase of an ox which, of course, was a very welcome addition to the festivities. (93)

Some of the ex-P.O.W. were under the misapprehension that they would enjoy special privileges after their arrival in South Africa. One was that they would be granted leave on their arrival and be allowed to draw some money from their accumulated pay to use during that leave. Another was the impression that cash drawn over and above daily rates of pay was a gift or a reward while in actual fact it was considered a debit against their pay which had accumulated whilst they were prisoners. (94) One can imagine their disillusionment when they received the news that they had merely been under a misapprehension.

Their being in a totally strange environment and circumstances with their own charm and temptations, made the already difficult (but to the authorities imperative) task of social control much more exacting and demanding. Attention will be given to this important aspect in the next chapter.
FOOTNOTES

1. See Annexure "H" for daily duties of batmen.

2. NTS Box 9115 File 68/363, DNEAS to SNA, 20/8/1943.

3. CGS (War) 32/4 CGS to AG, 25/2/1941.

4. CGS Group 2 G 2/1/9/1 Box 1, Deputy Director of Military Intelligence (Security) to OC's of various sections, 19/6/1940.


6. NMC NAS 3/40 A 6 Box 44, Visiting officer NEAS to DNEAS, 24/5/1943; NMC NAS 3/41/1 A 11 Box 43, DNEAS to OC 8th Bn. NMC Port Elizabeth, 28/8/1942 and AG (3)154/207/0 Box 363, DMO and I to AG, 6/3/1941.

7. UWH Unfo 12 Box 158, p. 11314.


10. NMC NAS 3/40 A 1 Box 45, Training Inspectorate report 3rd Bn. NMC "C" Coy., undated; NMC NAS 3/1/1 A 11 Box 37, DNEAS to TAC, 8/8/1941 and AG (3)154/X/262 Box 29, DNEAS to DAG (O), 16/10/1942.


13. NEAS Paper Clippings, Umteteli Wa Bantu, 21/4/1945; NEAS Paper Clippings, Sunday Times, 8/10/1944; AG (3)154/X/1041 Box 110, DNEAS to Secretary for Defence, 29/8/1944; DNEAS NAS 3/21 Box 13, draft article to be distributed to newspapers titled "First Class soldier police men. Fine work of NMC seconded to SA Police Force, 10/4/1945 and Hallack, "Record of the NEAS", p. 53.

14. AG (3)154/179/6 Box 255 and DNEAS NAS 3/1/10/A Box 2, DNEAS

16. AG (3) 154/179/6 Box 255 and DNEAS NAS 3/1/10/A Box 2, DNEAS to DAG (O), 31/8/1944 and Stubbs and Mockford, "A plan for the development of manpower" p. 36.

17. NTS Box 2095 File 222/280, DNEAS to SNA, 8/6/1943.

18. NTS Box 9324 File 81/378, Report of a visit of SNA to Caprivi Zipfel, 11/9/1941; Narep Unfo 21, p. 13926, Record of activities of 183 Works Coy. NMC (V) SAEC in South Africa; and DNEAS NAS 3/36/4 Box 24, Report on general duties performed by sixty N.E. details at the Simmerpan Station, 24/1/1944.


20. NEAS Paper Clippings, Imvo Zabantsundu, 9/1/1943; NMC NAS 3/21 A 3 Box 14, Commendation of NMC soldier, titled "Valiant action during a fire", accompanying letter DNEAS to European and Non-European papers, 22/2/1945 and NMC NAS 3/18/5 A 2 Box 24, NMC Honours and Awards, accompanying letter AG to DNEAS, 22/6/1945.

21. NMC NAS 3/18/5 A 2 Box 24, NMC Honours and Awards, accompanying letter AG to DNEAS, 22/6/1945; NMC NAS 3/18/5 A 2 Box 24, DDNEAS to Col. Stubbs, 10/4/1945; NMC NAS 3/18/5 A 5 Box 24 and NTS Box 9126 File 68/363/22, DNEAS to SNA, 29/11/1945.

22. AB Xuma Papers ABX 440125, Private Secretary, Minister of Native Affairs to A.B. Xuma, 25/11/1944.

23. See further discussion Chapter 7.


25. AG (W) 168/3/3/3 Box 19, Memorandum for DAG (P) on functions and methods of operation of DNEAS mobile units, 2/9/1943.


27. NMC NAS 3/36/1 A 4 Box 25, J. Albasini, Detention Barracks, Spaarwater to Area Commandant, Welgedacht, 25/9/1942. See also NMC NAS 3/36/1 A 1 Box 27, OC Animal Embarkation Depot to DDV and RS, 29/7/1943; NMC NAS 3/41/1/3 A 7 Box 43, Note on detachment to 48th Bitumen Coy., undated; AG (3) 154/X/977 Box 101, NEAS Welfare Officer TSC to OC 81 TS Depot (V) TSC, Cullinan, 8/7/1943 and NMC NAS 3/41/1 A 10 Box 43, Inspecting Officer NEAS to DNEAS, 8/7/1942.
28. CGS 32/10 Vol. I, DGMS to CGS, 156/1940.

29. CGS (War) 32/10, QMG to various sections, 14/6/1940 and CGS (War) 32/5, Dechief to Unidef, 27/8/1940.


34. See Chapter 7 for a discussion on the resistance of the blacks to be involved with the construction of this second tunnel.


36. NMC NAS 3/28/1/5 A 15 Box 40, L.D. Browne to DDNEAS, UDF MEF, 15/9/1943. See also Hallack, "Record of the NEAS", p. 162.


38. J.C. Smuts Papers A 1 Box 138 no 169, Unidef to Dechief, 7/12/1941. See also Gen F.H. Theron Collection Box 38 Liaison letter no. 49, Gen. Theron to Gen. P. van Ryneveld, 18/12/1944; UWH Box 132 Narep ME 6 Box 53, Western Desert Campaign 1st SA Division 13/11/1941- 2/12/1941, Detailed account of Sidi Rezegh, p. 3390; Gen. G.E. Brink Collection Box 49, 1st S.A. Division, Special Order of the day, by Gen. G.E. Brink, 16/12/1941; NMC NAS

39. NMC NAS 3/4/1 Box 2, Material for broadcasts re NMC, undated.


42. CO 820/48 File 34504, Most secret telegram from East Africa to War Office, 2/7/1941.

43. CGS 32/15 Vol. I, ADDNEAS to GOA UDF Admin. HQ, 13/1/1942. See also NTS Box 9115 File 68/363, S.L. Goldman, OC SAVRP (UDF) Sub Park Sub Area 65 MEF to OC SAVRP MEF, report on NMC personnel as MT drivers, 24/8/1942.

44. Narep Unfo 12, p. 1125.

45. CGS 32/5 Vol. II and AG (3)154/X/286 Box 30, Extract from Staff Conference No. 51 of 9/9/1942.


47. NMC NAS 3/21 A 1 Box 14, Memorandum titled "Experience of
Corporal Berry Gazi MM", undated.


49. UWH Box 300 B I:45 Paper Clipping The Star, 15/8/1945: NMC NAS 3/18/5 A 1 Box 24, Commendation for L. Majazi, 12/1/1943; Horwitz, "The Non-European War Record in South Africa", p. 545 and Knoetze, "Historical Survey", p. 45. See also NMC NAS 3/21/A A 1 Box 15, Letter no. 29 by Ndabazabantu, 5/12/1942 for citation on another stretcher-bearer, Private Aamiel Moage, who also won the Military Medal for bravery.

50. NMC NAS 3/18/5 A 5 Box 24, D/GOA (Land) UDF to Cpl. H.M. Parkies, 2/9/1945 and NTS Box 9126 File 68/363/22, Citation titled "Acts of Gallantry", accompanying letter DNEAS to SNA, 1/4/1946.

51. See discussion infra, pp. 218-220.

52. See further Chapter 7.

53. Narep Middle East Vol. X, p. 3313. See also NTS Box 9115 File 68/363, F. Rodseth to D.L. Smit, 9/7/1942; NTS Box 9115 File 68/363, CGS Gp 2/1/9/1 Box 1, DGMS to DNEAS, 17/3/1941.


55. Gen. G.E. Brink Collection Box 52, G.E. Brink to P. van Ryneveld, 8/7/1941.

56. Gen. G.E. Brink Collection Box 52, G.E. Brink to P. van Ryneveld, 8/7/1941.


58. DC 1887 Box 3250, Memorandum for Authorities Committee by DCS, 21/10/1943; Hallack, "Record of the NEAS", pp. 81 and 152 and Knoetze, "Historical Survey", pp. 9-11.

59. NMC NAS 3/21/D A 2 Box 16, Questions to "Bantu Soldiers'
Friend" column, Indhlovu Tlou by Sgt. R. Lunenge, 15/12/1943.


62. The following sources were consulted for this exposition: AG (3)154/X/1014/14 Box 104, Dechief to AG, 15/2/1944; War Diary 25 Squadron SAAC Box 126 no. 120, January 1945; Knoetze, "Historical Survey", pp. 11-13 and Hallack, "Record of the NEAS", pp. 83-84. See further discussion Chapter 7.

63. CGS (War) 32/5, Extract from Staff Conference no. 137, 22/5/1945.

64. NMC NAS 3/1/16 A 2 Box 30, ADCS to OC Native War Records, 22/5/1945.


66. WR 123 Box 242, OC War Records to Acting AG, 5/2/1949.

67. DNEAS NAS 3/21/M Box 14, Nominal role of NMC patients disembarking from the H.S. "Amra", 22/1/1943.

68. UWH Box 263, News of the War Statement No. 288 for week ending 22/9/1945 and interview with S. Ndungwa, 6/2/1986.

69. See Chapters 7 and 9.

70. NTS Box 9127 File 68/363/29, General Secretary SA Red Cross Society to SNA, 20/4/1942; SADF Archives Miscellaneous group, S11/2/2 Box 55, Nominal role of Native "other ranks" POW of UDF in camps situated in Italy as at 20/5/1943 and NMC NAS 3/1/16 A 1 Box 30, OC Native War Records to DNEAS, 21/8/1944; WR 123 Box 242 Dechief to AG War Records, 18/1/1943 and interviews with D. Masuku and R. Moloi, 6/2/1986.


72. FO 916/687 KW 24/23, Memorandum by Foreign Office, 14/1/1943.
73. NEAS Paper Clippings, Territorial News, 5/7/1945.


75. DNEAS NAS 3/1/16 Box 4 and WR 65/63 Box 124, OC Native War Records to Brigadier in Charge Administration UDF Admin. HQ (U.K.), 19/12/1945.


77. Narep Middle East Vol. VI. pp. 2585-2589; PO 916/828 KW 2/2, Director of Ps.O.W. to Foreign Office, 21/12/1944; PO 916/674 KW 2/4, Memorandum on treatment of Ps.O.W. in Italian Hands, August to October 1942 and PO 916/518 KW 2/4, War Office (Directorate of Prisoners of War) to Foreign Office (Prisoners of War Department), 16/6/1943.


79. NTS Box 9127 File 68/363/29, Copy of a telegram from Geneva for Secretary for External Affairs, SA Red Cross Society, 26/1/1943; PO 916/160 File KW 16/29, reports on Ps.O.W. camps in Italy, undated; PO 916/392, M.A. Berne to MI 9, 4/5/1942 and PO 916/518 KW 2/4, M.A. Berne to Foreign Office, 19/11/1943.


82. AG (3)54/X/1082 Box 119 and NMC NAS 3/18/5 A2 Box 24, DCS to AG, 22/2/1945.


86. NEAS Paper Clippings, Springbok, 12/4/1945.

87. Hallack, "Record of the NEAS", p. 79.


89. NMC NAS 3/1/16 A 1 Box 30, F. Rodseth, ADDNEAS UDF MEF to DDNEAS, Report on release of Non-European Ps.O.W. from Mersa Matruh, Derna and Benghazi, 7/12/1942; Gen. F.H. Theron Collection, Liaison letter no. 84, 1/1/1943 and Rodseth, Ndabazabantu, p. 102.

Depot Slinfold Manor, Horsham, Sussex to OC NEAS Reception Depot, undated and NTS Box 9128 File 68/363/29, Notes on a letter from D.L. Smit to W. Parker, 8/11/1944.

91. NMC NAS 3/1/6 A 2 Box 30, Statement by Capt. C.N. Grieve, UDF Representative no. 7 Detachment, Allied PW Repatriation Unit CMF, 14/12/1944 and AG (3)154/179/6 Box 255, Contact Letter no. 10, 19/2/1945.

92. Ballinger Papers A 410 D. Press Cuttings, Umteleli Wa Bantu, 2/6/1945; NMC AS 3/1/16 A 1 Box 30, OC NEAS Reception Camp UDF Repatriation Unit (XPW) Slinfold Manor Camp Sussex to Staff Officer UDF Admin. Staff, London, 30/10/1944; DNEAS NAS 3/22/3 Box 15, Progress Report from Lt.Col. T.R. Ponsford, OC UDFI (YMCA Toc H), June and July 1945; CAB 65/44/163(44)5, War Cabinet meeting conclusions no. 163(44) paragraph 5 p. 299, 11/12/1944; CO 820/56 File 36021/3, Minutes of a meeting held by DDQ (B), 20/4/1944; WO 32/11134 File 118/Gen/5602, Memorandum by the Secretary of State for War to War Cabinet. WP (44)706, 4/12/1944 and NMC NAS 3/1/16 A 1 Box 30, AG to heads of sections, Memorandum on Reception and accommodation of UDF PW in the United Kingdom, 12/7/1944.

93. NMC NAS 3/1/16 A 1 Box 30, Report on arrival of NMC released Prisoners of War, 2/1/1945; DNEAS NAS 3/1/16 Box 4, R.M. Hemming, Native Commissioner Ficksburg to SNA, 19/6/1945; DNEAS NAS 3/1/16 Box 4, Report on Reception to returned Ps.O.W. and members of the NMC and CC of Ficksburg, 24/10/1945.

94. NMC NAS 3/1/16 A 1 Box 30 and DNEAS NAS 3/8/1 Box 9, AG to OC NEAS Reception Camp UDF Repatriation Unit (XPW), 24/11/1944.
SOCIAL CONTROL, DISCIPLINE AND INTERGROUP RELATIONS.

The military is probably by far the organisation in society which, by virtue of its structure and operation, has the most control over those who are militarily involved. This in itself is not unusual but in the context of a racially divided South Africa, it immediately acquires an important additional significance. As there were already so many social control measures inherent in the army, it was not difficult to adapt and, in some instances expand, these measures in order to enforce the South African race policy. It is accepted practice that every soldier needs a pass to leave his military base. However, when the granting of passes is withheld on racial grounds, they lose their purely military function and become a method to implement and maintain the social structures of South Africa. This distinction, between accepted formal military measures to exercise military discipline and the application of these measures for non-military purposes is, of course, not an easy one to make. On the other hand, it is easier to identify the completely non-military measures adopted over and above standard military practices to ensure that the racial policy remains intact in the army.

A similar problem of distinction manifests itself in the exercise of discipline. It is difficult to determine when a soldier's breaking of the Military Disciplinary Code can be interpreted as an expression of protest or whether he is not simply a bad character who will act similarly in any other milieu. The matter becomes even more problematical when the different perceptions of whites and blacks on what exactly constitutes undisciplinary behaviour are brought into play.

It was indeed the relationship between these two groups, white and black, which in no small way influenced the reasons for and methods of social control and discipline. In many ways it was a meeting of two very different worlds. Daily white officers and NCO's had to rub shoulders with black soldiers of whose customs, habits and languages they knew virtually nothing. Misunderstandings and even conflicts were therefore, especially against the background of racial prejudices, almost inevitable. Other intergroup relationships, such as those between officers and men, black soldiers and civilians, as well as soldiers amongst themselves, further complicate relations. These are some of the aspects, the operation and manifestation of which will be elaborated upon in this chapter.

AIMS OF SOCIAL CONTROL

Although there are points of difference between army and civilian life, the army in some ways also reflects the society of which it is a part. Hence, the reasons for social control cannot only be traced to the nature and needs of the UDF but must be sought in the racial values and policies prevalent in the South African society of the 1940's.
The military authorities were extremely sensitive that this exercise should in no way be a threat to the social structure of South Africa. There were a few special areas where this concern was most acutely felt. The utilisation of black troops in areas outside South Africa such as North Africa, the Middle East and Europe was a source of grave social concern. Their contact in these areas with social and political conditions vastly different from those in South Africa was seen as dangerous because it might militate against the acceptance of their inferior status and position in the South African society. Lt. Col. H.S. Mockford expressed his anxiety thus:

"You are aware of my opinion that all South Africans would view with distaste any suggestion that N.E. troops be utilised in Europe. Will you bear in mind that N.E.'s must eventually be re-integrated in the Union, and since in the M.E. the colour prejudice is largely non-existent the longer they operate in that area the graver will be the problem of fitting them back into our social structure." (1)

Another concern was the absolute necessity of preventing control from slipping from white hands. It was of paramount importance that whites should maintain their dominant position and that blacks should continue to regard them as superior. (2) In short, the sanctity of white "baasskap" should not be violated in any way. To this end white officers and NCO's were expected never to show any sign of weakness - even any illness should be concealed. (3) It was also deemed highly undesirable that blacks should drive Military Police vehicles which frequently had to transport whites under sordid and disgraceful circumstances. (4) In addition, it was considered important to limit the number of black troops under the command of whites so that proper control could be exercised. (5)

The propaganda machine of the Army likewise contributed to boost the strong, brave and invincible image of the whites in order to leave no doubt in the blacks' mind about their superiority:

"The Natives are also learning something new about the Europeans. Many Natives were beginning to think that Europeans are no longer strong, hardy and brave like the early settlers and the Voortrekkers. They thought Europeans were now people who could only sit in the shade of cool offices, or ride about the farm on a horse or be a boss in a mine. Now they see Europeans clad only in a pair of shorts working in the sun, digging trenches... working day after day until their hands are rough and hard and until their bodies are one mass of moving muscle. But more than this, the Natives see the Europeans...climb into aeroplanes to fight the enemy far above the clouds, see them eagerly moving into areas where they know the enemy will attempt to bomb them, see them rushing into battle to face cannon and machine-guns." (6)

Closely linked to this but nevertheless distinct, was the following area of concern: the fear that blacks, through their army experiences, would start to regard themselves as equals to
the whites. For instance, when posters of unknown origin
"directed against master race theories and containing
such scientific facts as that the chemical blood composition
of white, black and yellow peoples were [sic]
identical - the difference in colour being due to skin
pigmentation and not to blood" (7)
were distributed amongst the Union troops in Italy, there were
immediate enquiries from higher authorities. They were
unanimously against any hint of social equality and assumed that
the blacks themselves did not aspire to such equality. (8)
Moreover, the white authorities considered that a possible
development in this direction was not too far fetched. According
to the white authorities, the blacks were after all treated with
a greater measure of equality with the whites in the army than in
civilian life. They not only received the same clothes,
accommodation and food but also had practically the same
facilities for amusement and entertainment. The blacks were
astute enough to realise these equalities and to conclude that
they had attained a similar status in all respects with the
whites. Such an attitude was viewed with extreme anxiety by the
whites. (9)

These fears were not completely unfounded. An anonymous soldier
had already noticed that war is a great leveller:
"Do we differ in blood and nerves [sic] ? we dont.
One gun kills black and white and it shows that we do not
differ." (10)
The same idea was echoed in the United Transkeian Territories
General Council by Chief J. Moshesh when he stated that:
"Many books have been written about the Natives. But not
one of those books has shown the true colours of the Natives
as this war has done. It has shown that there is not the
least difference between white and black. The difference
that does exist is due to education...Native soldiers
who have returned from the war tell us that there is no
difference between them and the others... All white people,
whether they be from England, America or Australia say
they cannot understand why our people are always pushed
into the background..." (11)

Another concern of the authorities was that friction and even
clashes between the black soldiers and civilians (particularly
white civilians) might possibly occur. This would only be grist
to the mill of that section of the white community which
vehemently opposed the utilisation of blacks in the UDF. (12) It
was therefore of the utmost importance to the authorities that
these whites should not find any additional stones to throw at
them. The Government had already antagonised a section of the
white population by declaring war; it did not want to antagonise
them further by being unduly lenient towards the blacks. It was
not surprising that the military authorities were extremely
cautious and enforced very strict measures to control the
activities and movements of black troops, particularly outside
South Africa. (13) These measures thus had to fulfill a threefold
function: they had to reduce to the minimum so-called "untoward
incidents" and unanticipated developments; they had to placate and defuse white misgivings and opposition and, by their very nature, many of these measures also contributed to the exercise of discipline. (14)

SOCIAL CONTROL MEASURES

As will be gathered in this section, the social control measures left almost no part of the blacks' lives untouched. It is important to realise that these measures were by no means always overt. Thus neither the authorities nor the blacks recognised some of these measures for what they really were. However, the utilisation of the white personnel attached to the NMC did not fall within this category. As probably the most important control measure adopted, the authorities were quite frank about its purpose.

From the beginning, Col. E.T. Stubbs aimed at attracting competent white personnel. According to him, if discipline and morale were to be maintained, the greatest care had to be exercised in the choice of men to lead the blacks. It was not advisable to trust any South African with this assignment. It was required of these men to have some social standing, good character, intelligence, tact as well as sympathy for and understanding of the blacks. (15) In addition, they ought to have a thorough knowledge and experience of military matters, have a good command of one or more of the black languages, be acquainted with their customs and mentality and, last but not least, possess the vital skill and ability to "handle" blacks. (16) After a while it was realised that the latter requirement as well as military qualifications, understanding and tact were even more important than proficiency in a black language. (17) Lt. Knoetze commented:

"It was unwise to commission or appoint to Senior NCO rank in the NEAS Europeans who professed to 'know' the NMC because they could speak their language or came from Native Territories..." (18)

while Sergeant H.S. Mboyiya was also of the opinion that white personnel should not necessarily know black languages and customs. They should rather be individuals "who have the welfare of the Bantu at heart". (19)

Col. Stubbs was confident that he would be able to secure the "right type" of white personnel (20). Eventually many of those appointed were officials of the Native Affairs Department. It was claimed that they and the other whites who joined the NMC were specially chosen on the grounds that they met the above-mentioned requirements. (21) From the authorities' point of view it must have been perfectly logical to appoint men who were au fait with the blacks. But their appointment had an additional dimension. It meant that the blacks would be under the constant surveillance of men who were closely involved in the implementation of the Government's race policy; they could be trusted to prevent the blacks from acquiring ideas not commensurate with white South African interests.
Some of the reports on these men from both white and black sources seem to suggest that a good selection was made. However, there is also overwhelming evidence that the ability of a high percentage of these men was not above reproach - the choice was not always a happy one. Although good quality officers and NCO's were initially drafted to black units, a pattern soon developed whereby men who were not of the best leadership material were appointed. As early as December 1940, Col. B.W. Martin already noticed that the practice of using the NEAS units as a "dumping ground" for officers from elsewhere was becoming prevalent. It does not appear that the situation had in any way improved three years later when Col. H.O. Sayer lodged more or less the same complaint:

"A clearance of A 1 personnel was made from the Base and posted to the 1st Div.; to replace these, unsuitable, medically regraded personnel were thrust on us and accepted. In some cases these were neurotics who have since proved a menace. It is strange that the NEAS should be regarded as the 'dumping ground' for officers and NCO's who cannot be otherwise placed when we should, of course, have the very best available." (24)

Col. Sayer's complaints were not without foundation. Apparently whites were deliberately transferred to the NEAS as a result of their low medical categories. Because these transfers were done indiscriminately, a number of temperamentally unsuited men landed in the NMC. Many of the officers and NCO's were of a poor type, incompetent and misfits. Col. Stubbs was deeply upset by this state of affairs, pointing out that it was purposeless to maintain efficiency and morale as long as the black soldier was daily in contact with the undisciplined example of the white personnel. According to him the black troops looked upon these men "who are disloyal, undisciplined, disinterested and in some cases even drunkards and evil livers" with contempt. The general quality of the whites was further lowered by men who were unable to speak a black language or were physically unfit. Lt. Col. Wood reported that it does seem apparent that European WO's and NCO's, attached to the NEAS, are not always selected for their knowledge of the native. Also, a large sprinkling of the present personnel comprises men medically reclassified (even to C 3 category), who have neither the mental nor physical attributes to win the natives' respect." (27)

By November 1942 a decision was taken at a Staff Conference that the white personnel in the Union under the age of 40 in the NEAS should be cut down to an absolute minimum. Although it does not seem that this instruction was carried out fully, the fact remains that some officers and NCO's were nevertheless far too old and decrepit to carry out their work properly. (29)

To aggravate the matter further many of the white personnel were insufficiently trained or even completely untrained and had had no previous experience with blacks. A greater source of concern, though, was the fact that many of these men had had no previous
military experience either. They too were new to the army. (30) In addition, although the racial attitude of the whites varied, some of them suffered from a so-called "colour complex" which militated strongly against the sympathetic treatment of the black men under their command. (31) This is corroborated by the evidence that some of these men were not at all interested in the black soldiers and actually, because they thought they were being side-tracked, resented their being sometimes arbitrarily and compulsorily posted to the NMC. (32) It was therefore no surprise that there were frequent requests by the white officers and NCO's to be transferred. Some of the applications were based on the fact that when they took the African oath, no mention was made about diluted regiments and that these men held strong views on the colour bar and segregation - in short, they were not prepared to fight alongside blacks; others merely used the NEAS as a stepping stone for rapid advancement and did not hesitate to abandon it when it was to their advantage. (33) It is evident therefore, that certain whites did not meet the requirements which the DNEAS set as a prerequisite to run the NMC efficiently.

Finding suitable officers was difficult. With the rapid expansion of the NEAS from nil to 1130 white officers and 2150 NCO's within 18 months, the supply of those thought specially capable of commanding blacks was quickly exhausted. Moreover, there were no ranks from which to select the best men as was the case with white units; many of these men had to be taken on at face value from other units or recruited from civilians. The practice of moving the first-rate officers and NCO's to combatant units in the North on the grounds of medical fitness and replacing them by lower medical categories personnel, also lowered the general standard in the Union. (34)

The authorities were constantly under the impression that "the natives have no respect for European NCO's who do not know their jobs". (35) Therefore, in order to remedy the situation, they endeavoured to have the unsuitable and unsatisfactory personnel removed and to send others on training courses. From the following remark by Col. Stubbs it is clear that he himself had more or less given up hope about the rather desperate position:

"I have and am suffering from having men who do not and never will fit in and I think they should be moved whenever it is found that they are misfits." (36)

As a matter of fact, the latter avenue, sending men on special Cadet Battalion courses at the Military College, was supposed to apply to all officers to ensure that the NMC could start on a high standard of discipline. The extensive duties in their units and the chronic shortage of men, however, effectively thwarted this ideal. (37) At the end of the day, only a few white personnel were thoroughly competent to give sympathetic leadership to the black troops. These few were certainly highly motivated, and wanted to work in black units. However, it is a moot point whether men of average calibre were successful in performing their primary function - that of social control and discipline. As will be pointed out below, (38) the blacks' morale suffered tremendously when they realised that they were treated
(and frequently ill-treated) by men who were not of the best leadership material.

Apart from the white personnel, chaplains were appointed with a dual function in mind. Besides their ostensibly obvious duty to minister to the spiritual welfare of the soldiers, by the very nature of these duties, they also "built up and maintained morale" - the official jargon for social control and discipline. It appears that the latter was an expected side effect:

"Their work should go far in helping to keep Non-Europeans in camps and away from the temptations of towns and villages." (39)

Apparently, they were also successful in exercising discipline. For instance, after unrest which had already continued for six weeks in the 1st Battalion NMC, the OC called a compulsory church parade and he

"got the... Padre to talk on 'snakes in the grass'. He did this very well and it appears to have had a beneficial result... The Padre this Sunday will work on the same lines..." (40)

Sometimes the chaplains indeed succeeded in killing two birds with one stone!

Physical provisions were a further means of social control. The black soldiers were specifically accommodated in camps which not only separated them from the white soldiers and civilians, but also from black civilians in nearby townships or from miners who were thought of as "undesirable characters" with whom the soldiers should avoid contact but who were in the same vicinity as the concentration of black soldiers in the NMC Training Areas on the East Rand. (41)

In the war zones outside South Africa it was not always easy to implement the same policy of separation, partly due to lack of facilities but mostly because war circumstances and exigencies sometimes made it totally impossible. Some wounded black soldiers, for instance, found their way into other than UDF hospitals, placed alongside whites and in all respects received similar treatment. The authorities viewed this as a thoroughly unwholesome situation which, albeit very difficult, should be limited to the minimum as it led to undue and unwanted fraternisation. (42) On the other hand, the black patients held quite the opposite view:

"I was in the British Hospital. I have enjoyed the best time which has never [sic] been enjoyed by any person in South Africa. We were dining on one table, getting the same type of food, sleeping in one ward, one cinema, same showers and same 'equality' of opportunity without slightest distinction. You must always come in touch with the Tommies and Anzacs, they have no animosity for other people." (43)

Apparently it was also possible to mix freely with soldiers from Britain, America, New Zealand and France. (44) The authorities succeeded, however, in keeping the white and the black ex-P.O.W. apart, accommodating the former in the pleasant seaside resorts of Brighton and Hove and the latter in the interior at Slingsfold. (45)
Erecting perimeter fences around military camps is not an uncommon practice for the proper maintenance of discipline but in South Africa fences were not only placed around the camps but also within the camps where NMC members were accommodated so that they could be completely segregated from the rest of the camp. In a rather crude way the OC NMC Wing FAAD (V) SAA Bhowe, described this arrangement:

"The fence...has been completed and now the Europeans are safely housed within the perimeter while the N/E's remain in the tents outside." (46)

It thus had the additional purpose of reinforcing the control measures of separate accommodation for blacks. Furthermore, it prohibited them from breaking camp to frequent shebeens and brothels which were sometimes near the precincts of military camps. It also prevented them from purchasing liquor illegally and of selling army clothing. (47)

Likewise, in the military context, it is not extraordinary to restrict the freedom of movement of the soldiers. This can be done by several methods. Placing certain areas out of bounds and the withholding or granting of passes and leave are perhaps the most commonly used to exercise control over the movement of soldiers. These measures, however, again acquire a strong dimension of social control when they are not applied for purely military purposes but only to the NMC, to force the black soldiers to adhere to the social structures of South Africa, also outside the Union. (48) In the allocation of passes, the authorities furthermore tried to ensure that soldiers from different units did not visit the "white" towns and townships simultaneously as it "invariably leads to a fight in the location." (49) This was a particularly irksome restriction on the black soldiers. Of course, being so strictly limited to and cooped up in the camps with relatively few other avenues to spend their leisure time, was ironically bound to create trouble and friction within the camps in some way or other - a contingency which the pass system was supposed to avoid. (50) Some officers, for example the OC of the 7th Battalion NMC Tempe, realised this. In terms of the Municipal Regulations, however, no one who did not reside in the Bloemfontein townships was permitted to enter these townships without a permit from the Superintendent of Locations. All attempts to secure these permits for the black soldiers failed. This appeared to be grossly unfair as it would seem to be the equivalent to ordering a white not to visit a town. The OC was convinced that the fact that they were not allowed into the townships, would lead to trouble. On the other hand,

"if this ban was [sic] removed, and the men allowed to visit the locations they would behave themselves there, be happier and create less trouble." (51)

To certain soldiers such as Sgt. Hamilton Mboyiya, the military pass system was confusing. Apparently he confused the country's pass laws applicable to black South Africans with the pass system of the army and thus could not understand why he had to carry a military pass because he was exempted from pass laws and, of
course, why "the police in the camps are not interested to know that." (52) Others, again, like J. Kekana, found the restriction of not being given passes to leave the camp and visit the towns too severe. (53)

Because the authorities were extremely sensitive that contact of the black soldiers with the different values and lifestyles in Europe and North Africa should be limited to the absolute minimum, most places which were accessible to whites, were placed out of bounds to blacks.

"In the absence of an official 'Colour Bar' in England, entertainments of the NE at clubs, such as the Donoughmore Club, will disturb the perspective of such personnel making it difficult for them to readjust themselves to South African conditions when they return to the Union." (54)

For the same reasons it was deemed undesirable to allow leave (as was granted to whites) to places such as Cairo and Alexandria or for the P.O.W. in Britain. They could only stay at authorised leave and P.O.W. transit camps. (55) But it seems that this regulation was not (and could not) always be strictly enforced. Some soldiers indeed visited Cairo and Alexandria on their own, entered bars, casino's and clubs unescorted, mixed freely and even danced with white women. (56) Within South Africa, the current regulations governing the movements of blacks such as curfews, were also, of course, applicable to the black soldiers. But in certain places such as Potchefstroom, even the town was in addition placed out of bounds to them. (57)

The control measures which had to be adopted with regard to the visits of the soldiers to shebeens and so-called "vice-dens", particularly in the Cape Town area, caused the authorities endless headaches. It seems that initially the blacks and coloureds did not mix. The latter, however, mainly for their own financial benefit, succeeded in breaking down the prejudice and started mixing freely with members of the NMC. As other places were out of bounds to these soldiers, the shebeens and "vice-dens" became their main source of amusement with the inevitable increase in drunkenness and in venereal diseases. The Native Commissioner of Salt River complained about the behaviour of the black drivers at the Transit Camp on the Kenilworth Race Course:

"The Native Soldiers at the above camp are provided with excellent quarters, complete with hot and cold showers, Kaffir Beer canteen and a cinema, but they will consort with the disreputable type of coloured women who hang about Military Camps and sell European liquor... The District Commandant, South African Police, Wynberg, has recently had to detail special patrols around Kenilworth Race-course to prevent 'sand rats' from supplying Natives with liquor over the fence. The Native soldiers now in Camp are all kraal Natives, mostly from the Transvaal, and I need hardly point out the danger of these Natives mixing with low-class coloured women, rotten with disease." (58)

The Officer Commanding of the Cape Fortress who obviously had to
defend his position, denied that the conduct of the black soldiers left much to be desired. He pointed out that the security regulations at the camp were strictly applied and that there had been only 18 cases of venereal diseases, 22 of drunkenness and 12 of AWOL amongst the 600 black soldiers in the camp during the previous three months. To him this was ample proof of the good behaviour amongst these soldiers. (59) It has to be borne in mind, however, that these were only the known cases of misconduct and that there were also additional unreported cases of venereal diseases, for instance. In the light of this and the other evidence of the soldiers mixing freely with "low-class coloured women", it is evident that the complaints of the Native Commissioner were not totally unfounded.

Marriages between the NNC and coloured women also took place but it was clear that many of these marriages were marriages of convenience with the object of obtaining allotments. The authorities strongly disapproved of the black soldiers frequenting these places and mixing with the coloureds not only because many wasted their money, sold their kit, became drunk or were assaulted or robbed but also because it threatened the social structure as

"the effect these Natives and their Coloured wives will have on Natives in the Transvaal and Free State when they return home"

was viewed with great alarm. (60)

This was indeed the experience of Elias Minnaar. When he served in Cape Town, he mixed freely with the coloureds and had a baby with his coloured girl friend. After he had been posted to Johannesburg, she followed him but

"I did not marry her as my mother did not approve as she was a 'coloured' girl. So I left the girl and the child and sent them back to Cape Town." (61)

To place these areas out of bounds and enforce such a regulation was considered too daunting a task due to the large numbers involved and the large size of these areas. Although they frequently continued to voice their disapproval, the only measure for which they eventually settled was to lecture the soldiers on the undesirability of visiting these places. (62)

The control of the black soldiers, especially in the North African and European war zones as well as in places where shebeens and brothels were near the precincts of the military camps was already considered a very difficult task. In order to contain this exceedingly difficult problem the authorities placed a ban on the acquisition of all liquor except that allowed with their rations. (63)

Apparently the authorities were well aware of and concerned about the detrimental effect all these restrictions might have on the soldiers. Sport, recreation and entertainment were seen as ways in which inevitable boredom could be combated and in which their leisure time could be spent usefully and pleasantly under white supervision but, more important, these ways would ensure
contentment, reduce offences, keep them from the temptations of towns and villages such as liquor, gambling and prostitution, maintain morale and to avoid possible trouble. Some of these aims were spelled out in a radio broadcast:

"It is necessary as with Europeans - perhaps even more so - to provide for the moral uplift and entertainment of the Natives. This is even more important in Mid East than in the Union for in the former area they are cut off from their own associations... In addition they are subjected to insistent temptations by an impecunious people to whom the presence of our simple-minded and well-meaning Natives are a God-send."

(64)

Activities were therefore introduced, not as ends in themselves but as means of controlling the soldiers.

Soccer was popular while cinema and entertainment shows by the various concert parties were usually well attended. Facilities for indoor games and for music and singing were provided. Leave was granted but the policy outside the Union was that the black soldiers were only allowed to visit leave camps or go on sightseeing tours to places of interest escorted by their officers. Whereas the leave camps for whites were usually in or within walking distance of towns, leave camps for the black soldiers were established a good distance from big centres to obtain better control and to avoid fraternisation with the local population. The idea behind these leave and rest camps had a strong paternalistic flavour:

"Because of the temptations which the Natives have to suffer, the Union Government...is arranging camps for the Natives where they can stay without being worried and where they can play football, meet their friends and generally have a rest from their work." (65)

It appears that the provision of these alternative attractions achieved their aim, namely of exercising social control, maintaining morale, preventing drunkenness, controlling venereal diseases, improving discipline and "from getting into mischief in the larger towns." (66)

Not all the black soldiers were enthusiastic supporters of these organised activities. Many worked long hours during the week and were therefore, due to sheer exhaustion, reluctant to devote any time to organised sport. They would have been more contented if they had been left to their own devices or granted leave during week-ends. (67) Others who were able to visit the towns, found the attractions there much more enticing than that which the leave and rest camps and nefs could offer. (68)

Apparently the UDF authorities subscribed to the dictum of the British Army with regard to Army education as expressed by T.H. Hawkins and L.J.P. Brimble in P. Summerfields' article on British Army education during the Second World War:

"The education of men in training was said to make them easier to train, and education of men on active service was said to reduce boredom and apathy." (69)
Apart from the obvious benefits of understanding instructions more readily and thus becoming a better soldier, educational classes where the black soldiers could learn to read and write were also seen as excellent means of controlling the soldiers and keeping up their morale. (70) Although some of the soldiers were appreciative of the opportunity to learn to read and write, the authorities' aim was clearly not primarily one of providing a service but of cultivating subservience.

Yet a further way of exercising social control and maintaining morale was, on the one hand to withhold from all soldiers publications which criticised the army or the Government and on the other hand to buttress the official policy by its own publications.

When the Non-European Soldiers' Dependants League issued a circular criticising the way in which allotments were paid to dependants, the authorities immediately and vigorously clamped down:

"From a military point of view it is most objectionable that a circular of the type issued should be permitted... A complaining communication such as the one under reference must have disturbing affects upon morale, particularly in the field. If, therefore, anything can be done to prevent the dissemination of such circulars it is felt it should be done." (71)

Likewise all the material published in the official publications aimed at the black soldiers, were first referred to the Secretary for Native Affairs and the DNEAS for formal approval. Anything faintly controversial was summarily dismissed. (72) Those publications over which the authorities had no control, such as the London Picture Post which showed pictures of American Negro soldiers enjoying the hospitality of the British people in a London social club were banned because they were regarded as a threat to the social system in South Africa. (73) In addition, the authorities regarded the censoring of the black soldiers' letters as a matter of urgency "to prevent unrest in the Units to which these Details are attached." (74)

On the other hand, in the opinion of the authorities the publication of official material in order to reach the same goal and to counteract "pernicious literature which is on open sale" in North Africa as well as suppressing "the present unrest amongst NE's, and to give a conservative lead to NE problems" was an urgent matter. (75) Therefore the publication of the official material continued unabated despite the general shortage of paper and the fact that many blacks did not read these publications as the official Government stamp of the Native Affairs Department to which they were not favourably disposed, appeared on the front page. (76)

Another aspect of social control was the prevention of black soldiers from developing any political awareness or participating in any organisation which was undesirable in the eyes of the authorities. As the servicemen's organisation, the Springbock
Legion, was allegedly communistically inspired, soldiers actively involved in the Legion were viewed with extreme suspicion and instructed to discontinue their membership of the Springbok Legion; meetings of this organisation were also banned in the camps. (77)

The area, about which the authorities were probably the most concerned and sensitive, was black soldiers' relations and contact with women. In the South African context social mixing between persons of European origin and any other group was totally taboo as it could lead to the ultimate racial sin, namely sexual intercourse across the colour bar. The relationship between these two groups had to be strictly controlled and preferably prevented. Therefore the authorities had to see to it that so-called "places of vice" such as shebaens and brothels should not be frequented. Contact with white women should only take place when it was essential for the execution of their duties. For example, in the Union white women of the WAAS received strict instructions to discontinue the educational classes which they voluntarily conducted for the black soldiers:

"No women personnel would be permitted to have any contact with NMC personnel other than is required by normal military duty." (78)

There was no objection to blacks being conveyed in the body of a truck driven by a woman, but when lonely or thinly populated areas were traversed, however, it was obligatory that the woman driver should be accompanied by a white male or another female. In no circumstances was a black soldier to sit in the cab of a vehicle beside a woman driver. (79) Furthermore, when Lt-Col. Foxon and Maj. Hartmann inspected the units in the Durban Fortress area and learned that women attached to the SAAP were accommodated in the same camp as the blacks they objected to this arrangement:

"[The women] employed there go about in very brief shorts with skirts and come in close contact with native details day and night. So far, there has been no untoward incident but it is wrong to have native men with European women in one camp and it should not be allowed." (80)

Outside South Africa Gen. P.H. Theron was much upset about pornographic photographs which were being sold to all soldiers including the black South African soldiers; these photographs showed Negroes having sexual relations with white women. He suggested that Col. Stubbs should be sent to investigate and report,

"as most of these matters are likely to have difficult repercussions." (81)

Furthermore, extreme caution was exercised to prohibit black soldiers from visiting brothels in which there were white women. The police in places such as Alexandria and Cairo were requested to enforce this restriction and no passes were granted to remain in these cities after 18h00. (82)

The black soldiers were also duly warned that strict control was to be maintained to prevent contact with white women. Union laws and customs still applied and were to be observed even though the
forces were outside the Union. They would be severely punished if they were found guilty of any misconduct towards these women. In Italy for instance, some of the women knew and observed no colour bar. They were only too willing to barter wine or ply their trade for foodstuffs, soaps or cigarettes. (83) If, by chance, the black soldiers did consort with white women outside South Africa, they were told in no uncertain terms that it was expected that it should not diminish their respect for white South African womanhood. If necessary, upon their return to the Union, this respect would be forced upon them. (84) For the same reason the black troops were not allowed to watch the white UDF Concert Parties which included white women. There was actually a riot when the white Concert Party performed at the base camp and the blacks attempted to enter the concert area. (85)

Not only did social control measures prohibit contact between black soldiers and white women, but it was also considered a "very dangerous thing" to attach young native women to the army or to allow black civilian females to visit the members of the NNC within the precincts of their camps. (86) Likewise, it was highly undesirable that white troops or seamen visiting South Africa should have any contact with the black women of the Union. To this end it was expected of the masters of all ships visiting South African ports to display a notice in red letters which warned that intercourse with black women was a criminal offence according to the Immorality Act of 1927 and punishable by four years imprisonment. (87) In addition, lectures were organised for all overseas transit troops on the necessity of maintaining the colour bar. (88) Despite these efforts, it was still difficult for the visiting man to realise that intercourse with any woman which was a matter of common occurrence everywhere, was prohibited by a law of which the main aim was to regulate the conduct of South Africans. Thus it was actually no surprise that cases occurred where visiting soldiers were charged, found guilty and sentenced for contravening the above-mentioned act. (89)

To some of the black soldiers these control measures were unfair and incomprehensible. They could not understand why they should be arrested if they accompanied women. If this were not allowed they expected that women should be sent to them or, alternatively, that they should be relieved of their army service and sent back home. (90)

The very strict measures adopted to prevent any contact between blacks and whites, despite their severity, do not seem to have provided an absolute guarantee that no contact between black soldiers and white women would take place; some of the black soldiers still managed to establish contact with white women. Controlling the ways of man is indeed not an easy matter.
The colonial British and French armies had abandoned the tribal segregation policy and the South African authorities followed suit in the NMC despite the fact that it might have led to friction. Some blacks objected, expecting that recruits from one tribe and district would have been kept in the same companies. (91) However, such an arrangement was deemed unfeasible and unpracticable in wartime. (92)

Whilst the authorities did not resort to tribal segregation as a social control measure, in a capricious sort of way they initially did find it necessary to separate men of colour from one another, namely members of the Cape Corps and the NMC. Again, however, military exigencies prevailed. The dilution policy necessitated the mixing of members of the Cape Corps and NMC in the same units and camps, thereby also rendering this social control measure null and void.

Many white officers gravely doubted the wisdom of this change in policy. They believed that the two groups were innately antagonistic to each other, that they do not mix and that they would therefore become involved in fights which could be aggravated by, inter alia, the different scales for pay and rations. Col. Stubbs was one of these doubting Thomases:

"Since the earliest days of the NEAS this Directorate has consistently opposed the mixture of Natives and Coloured troops... The antagonism which exists between these two sections of the community is well known and is, of course, of long standing. It is therefore too much to expect that army training and army discipline can in a short space of time dispel the mutual feeling of dislike and contempt which has existed for so long... There are a number of lesser objections but the one of foremost importance to my mind is the decision not only to mix these troops but to assign the duties in such a manner as to place the Coloureds in a position of being able to lord it over the Natives, who are to perform the more menial duties in these 'mixed' units. This will inevitably lead to increased dissatisfaction and friction." (93)

In addition, it was thought highly undesirable that black soldiers employed as Military Police should arrest members of the Cape Corps and vice versa. (94) The evidence suggests that although there were incidental cases of dissatisfaction, (95) these doubts were unfounded. They were more imagined than real. On the whole, members of the Cape Corps and the NMC worked together harmoniously. (96) It seems that in this case a social control measure was redundant.

Despite the fact that they did not implement measures to separate blacks and coloureds, the degree of anxiety amongst the white authorities to preserve the South African laws and customs, nevertheless demanded that an elaborate system of social control measures was built like a wall around the black soldiers. In the process it was inevitable that measures were adopted which necessarily deprived these soldiers from privileges enjoyed by their white counterparts. Although it is very difficult to
determine their effectiveness, they certainly contributed in no small degree to the feeling of dissatisfaction amongst a large number of black soldiers.

DISCIPLINE

"When one comes to Pretoria, one sees military police at every corner; on investigation one finds that these police are hunting for Africans only. We are sick and tired of colour distinction. We want good understanding between the races." (97)

In discussing indiscipline and disciplinary problems, it is clear from these remarks that it is absolutely essential to bear in mind the different perceptions and attitudes of the authorities on the one hand and those of the black soldiers on the other. The Military Police could have been doing their ordinary duty and not have been out specifically "hunting for Africans" but in Muttane's perception that was not the case. The following incident is likewise pertinent. According to Private Sixpence Swamki and other witnesses, he was driving a troop carrier safely and within the speed limits when he was stopped by Sgt. C.J. Roestoff of the Military Police who, after a quarrel struck Private Swamki in the face. Sgt. Roestoff's version of the incident was that Swamki exceeded the speed limit, drove recklessly and after being stopped, was insolent and used rude language towards him. He did not mention anything about striking Swamki in the face. (98)

In addition, as the Visiting Officer of the NEAS, Capt. A.S. Mehan, pointed out, indisciplinary behaviour could be further complicated by soldiers being discontented about a certain matter which

"then simmers in their minds and when eventually it comes to the surface and boils over in some act of indiscipline, with or without violence, it is generally some other quite different matter that serves to cause the explosion, and a matter about which ordinarily they would not have any grievance." (99)

These incidents and Captain Mehan's remarks raise a few issues: the official reasons and the blacks' reasons for indiscipline - of course, the one does not necessarily invalidate the other - as well as the difference between the two; the different views of what constituted indisciplinary behaviour; the lack of communication and, lastly, why there was a feeling amongst the black soldiers that they were not fairly and justly treated in matters relating to discipline.

It goes without saying that a military tradition had developed through the ages which made "military life" and "discipline" almost synonyms. Of course, the authorities did not only emphasise the importance of discipline for the sake of maintaining this military tradition, but there were also very cogent and practical reasons to do so. The following graphic
description by the OC of 202 Reserve Motor Transport Company for example, illustrates this point:
"May I emphasise the vital importance of good discipline in a Non-European M.T. Company. First and foremost it is essential for safe driving. Most offences ultimately bear on this aspect, i.e. 10(4) 'Breaking out of Camp'. A detail usually goes to a shebeen and suffers from a bad 'hang-over' the following morning. If not detected in time he may, whilst in this condition, take his truck through a congested area with grave risk of an accident. 24A) 'Selling of clothing', usually for the purchase of liquor with results as above. A driver in this condition working in a densely populated area on a shift of from 9 to 12 hours, becomes a potential murderer." (100)

OFFICIAL REASONS FOR DISCIPLINARY TROUBLE

The authorities put forward a variety of explanations as to the causes of disciplinary trouble. Thus it was held, without much evidence, that so-called "agitators", doing "5th column work" spread "subversive propaganda" amongst the soldiers. As it was in vogue to talk about "subversive propaganda" in war time, there were many people who were gullible enough to believe such an explanation. It provided an umbrella under which any word or action not in line with the official policy could arbitrarily be condemned and dealt with, for instance, by discharging these "agitators". For example, when the black soldiers made anti-white statements, expressed the opinion that there should be social and political equality between white and black, discussed the treatment of the black soldiers by the whites, pointed out the discriminatory practices in the army or be in any way critical; it was all construed as "subversive propaganda" perpetrated by "agitators". In addition, responsibility for indisciplinary behaviour could thus easily be shifted to some abstract, shadowy concept. (101)

Certainly, in the opinion of the authorities, there were some soldiers stirring up trouble, but the point is that there was no room for the different nuances of dissent - anyone levelling criticism, or was considered to be a critic, was summarily dismissed as an "agitator" or "bad character". Moses Ratlhogo vouched that they tried to use arbitration similar to those applied when strikes occurred, in order to settle disputes with the army authorities. Clearly the authorities were not conversant with these sophisticated methods. Time and again it ended in the victimisation of those chosen as leaders. They were labelled as "agitators with the intention to incite the soldiers." (102) The following is another case in point. Private Douglas Madolo was discharged with a bad record on the following recommendation by his OC:

"'Agitator, educated and exercises alleged qualifications to incite dissatisfaction... exercises a bad influence.'" (103)

However, during his whole army life, he was only charged for losing his coat which loss he had made good. The authorities,
while acknowledging that this was only a minor offence tried to
dodge the issue by viewing it from quite another angle:
"As you will know as well as anyone it is often the men
who are clever enough to keep out of trouble who are the
greatest danger and cause the most trouble. There was...
a wave of unrest both in the civilian native population
and in the NMC and it was necessary to take steps to
remove the instigators. For this reason a process was
carried out of discharging all those guilty of subversive
activities and Douglas Madoelo was one of those removed on
these grounds." (104)

The ineffectiveness of white control was cited invariably by
senior officers as another reason for poor discipline and
dissatisfaction amongst the black soldiers. Attention has already
been paid to the quality of the white officers and NCO's. (105)
Against that background it is no wonder that the authorities were
of the opinion that inexperience, unsympathetic treatment by the
whites who were handicapped by language difficulties and
insufficient knowledge of the psychology of the black man, lack
of care about or interest in the black soldiers, slackness of
control and laxity in implementing disciplinary measures,
especially in the diluted units, contributed to the undercurrent
of restlessness and defiance of discipline. (106) In April 1943,
for example, 2 000 blacks were sent to North Africa without any
NCO's in charge. (107) The chronic shortage of personnel and the
resultant insufficient contact between the men and their
officers, aggravated the situation. (108)

Furthermore, logistical problems such as detachments of
battalions distributed over a wide area, creating difficulties
with regard to control, administration and training or unfenced
camps established in close proximity to slums and shebeens
surrounded by bush such as "D" Company of the 6th Battalion NMC,
had a strong potential of creating trouble. (109) According to
some officers the policy of dilution not only compounded these
logistical problems but also the above-mentioned difficulty of
white command. Through dilution the black soldiers were divorced
from their officers and were placed under men who treated them as
labourers and took no interest in their welfare. This gave rise
to a deterioration of discipline amongst the black soldiers.
(110)

The authorities were also concerned that any action which ran
contrary to the Government's racial policies, might lead to
indiscipline. Thus, recalling their experiences during the First
World War, they held the view that the social mixing between
white UDF members and overseas troops on the one hand, with
members of the NMC, on the other hand, would confuse and distort
the perspective of the black soldiers' view on the South African
racial situation. This distorted perspective could further be
reinforced by the well-meaning familiarity shown to black
soldiers. It was considered that any fraternisation was abhorrent
to most white South Africans and therefore highly undesirable.
The following observation by an unnamed private in the 1st RCI,
MEP, was quoted by the Director of Military Intelligence to emphasise this point:

"On account of there being no colour bar up here, the Natives are put at a par with us... Also a lot of the English fellows and others don't realise how the Natives are placed as far as we are concerned. They make a fuss of them and mix with them quite freely. This afternoon I saw two RAF fellows having their photos taken with two black niggers. It is very pitiful to see this sort of thing going on. When we return to the Union, I'm afraid there is going to be terrific strife between the blacks and ourselves..." (111)

Consequently strict orders were issued to prevent such incidents as they were also seen as important reasons for disciplinary trouble. This was particularly true of the Durban area and Italy. (112) Maj. A.T. Perry, acting OC, 2nd Battalion NMC, Pietermaritzburg, gave the following description of how fraternisation led to indiscipline:

"Our Non-Europeans are being supplied with liquor by these Imperial soldiers, who fraternize with them, exchange cigarettes with them, induce them to smoke whilst on guard duties, and very sad to relate, use them to secure native women for immoral purposes. These conditions are having a bad effect on our men, with the result that discipline is suffering." (113)

Even the practice of black soldiers driving RAF soldiers was undesirable as

"...there is apt to develop too friendly a relationship between the European details and the Native driver. The outcome of this is that the Native drivers give trouble..." (114)

Likewise, the fact that the social system in North Africa and the Middle East recognised no colour bar and that the black soldiers were consequently free to enter bars, clubs and restaurants "in which he is served and waited upon... and is accepted... in a way which is unthought of in the Union" (115) was seen not only as a great danger to discipline but also as a reason for undisciplinary behaviour. Furthermore, in many ways the members of the NMC received equal treatment with the whites in North Africa and in the Middle East. In the opinion of the authorities, through these experiences, the black soldiers thought that he had attained an equality of status in all respects with the whites and that, therefore, the whites were not on a higher level anymore. The consequences of this loss of recognition were seen in a very grave light. The black soldier lost respect for and resented white authority. This again led to a refusal to obey orders, and to insubordination, lawlessness and crime.

Col. Stubbs expressed the paternalistic view that

"Natives are incapable of sustained effort for any length of time and as the war continues restiveness is bound to increase." (116)
To him this long, uninterrupted service outside the Union was the most important reason for the decline in discipline, at least in the Middle East. Many soldiers deliberately committed offences or broke regulations in the hope that this would bring about their release from the service. (117) The same phenomenon occurred in the Union after VE day. Many soldiers then desired to be discharged. They consequently not only performed their duties half-heartedly, but also kept just within the law so that “the need for firmer handling was becoming manifest day by day” (118)

Inactivity, idleness and boredom aggravated by homesickness and consequent loss of morale also contributed a fair share to disciplinary problems. Guarding army installations and ammunition dumps and scanning the skies for enemy planes which never came, were, to say the least, monotonous and dull tasks. A drop in morale, restlessness and undisciplinary behaviour were therefore the inevitable consequences. (119)

Furthermore, the authorities realised that, in certain instances, the brief basic training of the black soldiers failed in important aspects such as inculcating a sense of military discipline, obedience to all NCO’s and officers, respect for and maintenance of the MDC as well as an adequate safe-guard against the demoralising effects of social conditions in North Africa and the Middle East. (120) A remedy for this was seen in squad drill and parade ground work, which, however, was very difficult to implement on account of the fact that some of the soldiers had various other duties and fatigue to carry out. (121)

Finally, the authorities also ascribed the disciplinary trouble to the fact that blacks were recruited without regard to their criminal records or their suitability for the army. Consequently, criminal elements also enlisted. These men were unsuitable and unreliable recidivists who frequently adopted a recalcitrant attitude. Their mere presence in the NMC seriously undermined discipline. (122)

Having established the official reasons for undisciplinary behaviour, it is also important to take note of what exactly constituted indiscipline. The following discussion therefore deals with the most serious of the common daily contraventions (in the eyes of the authorities) of the MDC. (123)

Drunkenness as such was seen as an important breach of discipline, especially because it was at the bottom of other contraventions of the MDC such as committing crimes, not being on time for roll call, causing accidents with army vehicles, being intoxicated when going on guard duty or becoming intoxicated whilst on duty. In addition, a drunken soldier was not only a disgrace to his unit and the Army but he also became unreliable when intoxicated. Furthermore, drunkenness gave rise to “trouble and unpleasantness”, a lowering of morale and the soldiers being “objectionable” (124) Black soldiers attached to 27 Squadron SAAF in Cape Town, for instance, broke camp on Christmas Day, 1942 and
having consumed a large quantity of liquor, attacked a passing white NCO who, not being connected with their unit, in no way troubled them. (125) After the evacuation of Tobruk by the Germans some of the members of the NMC drank "high octane alcohol and became supercharged and got thoroughly out of hand!"

General Theron wanted to obviate a similar incident at all costs. (126)

According to T.F. Hartnagel, absence without leave (henceforth AWOL) in the United States Army "May exemplify what in civilian criminal codes would be called crimes 'mala prohibita', particularly since AWOL is a strictly military offence having no equivalent in civilian law... The army itself views AWOL offenses as reflecting the overall state of discipline and/or morale in units..." (127)

Likewise, the UDF authorities used the statistics on AWOL as an indication of the state of discipline in a unit. Being AWOL was therefore considered a very serious crime. (128)

Contracting a venereal disease is another example of the differentiation between civilian life and the army of what constituted indiscipline. In civilian life, contracting a venereal disease would be frowned upon but not considered an act of indiscipline. In the army, however, it was, as AWOL, somewhat arbitrarily used as a gauge of the state of discipline. (129)

Dirty dress and loss of kit caused concern as they were likewise seen as symptoms of a decline in discipline and morale. (130) According to army practice, these were dealt with as breaches of discipline and the culprits tried under the MDC. As kit was sometimes extremely difficult to obtain, it was deemed as "one of the most reprehensible of crimes". (131) By 1943, for instance, the authorities were alarmed by a marked increase in the number of clothing and kit deficiencies due to illegal sales on the black market and losses by negligence. (132)

Finally, fraternisation between officers and men was explicitly prohibited. P.D. Freeman noted that "A characteristic feature of the military perhaps most immediately apparent to the cursory observer is the hiatus between the statuses of the enlisted person and officer. Military policy assumes the justification of this hiatus on grounds of the necessity for an undeniable location of authority and the disciplinary exigencies of an army's mission. On purely utilitarian grounds the military leadership assiduously cultivates the cleavage. Maintenance of a degree of social distance is in the interest of discipline and control... A prime tenet of military law and custom is the ban on fraternization." (133)

The same criteria applied to the NMC. There was thus cause for alarm when the DNEAS learned that Sergeants, Corporals and Privates of the 3rd Battalion of the NMC mingled freely, became
intoxicated and fought amongst themselves. (134)

THE BLACK SOLDIERS' PERSPECTIVE ON DISOBEDIENCE AND INDISCIPLINE

It is significant to note that the black soldiers' perspective of what led to undisciplined behaviour in some ways corresponded to that of the officials but in most ways differed from the latter's views. Blacks believed that the authorities construed their complaints as reasons for disobedience and indiscipline.

Coinciding with the official views, the problem of inexperienced and incompetent NCO's and officers was a major cause of undisciplined behaviour. Sergeant H.S. Mboyiya, for instance, observed that NMC personnel were contravening the MDC by deserting by the score because they were handled by people who were unfit to look after them. (135) Moreover, the fact that some of them were badly treated by these men prompted them to resort to indisciplinary behaviour. In the Recruits Training Depot at Welgedacht the dissatisfaction of some of the black soldiers with one of their officers was so pronounced that they did not care if they broke the MDC. They wrote the following letter to the OC:

"We are illtreated in this Depot by men who are supposed to be our seniors in ranks... Captain Fransi [sic] and his tall CSM often kick out our ration of beer out of our hands. And when asking why do they do this answer is collect all these damn kaffers and march them inside.

Final notice that next week we shall stone this Captain Fransi [sic] to death for it is gifted from above that his life and death is in a black manse [sic] hand... If are we [sic] not transferred rather be transferred or if not that they must come away from our beer rations which in other words means there will be blood shed." (136)

Against this background, it is no surprise that certain blacks developed a so-called "anti-European feeling" and refused to obey orders given by whites. Some, such as Sergeant David Forster, in no sense considered his own rank in any way junior to that of a white NCO. (137) Of course, in the South African military command, this was a serious breach of discipline.

Furthermore, the conditions in the army led to dissatisfaction and disciplinary trouble. Like the officials, the soldiers also cited the boring work, the tediousness and monotony of army life itself as important contributory factors. (138) This was aggravated by the slow process of demobilization, especially the delays in repatriating the soldiers from the North to South Africa after the war. (139)

Two shortcomings which are unavoidable in military life were nevertheless also contributory factors: lack of women and lack of leave. The colour bar policy which was also followed outside the Union, officially barred black soldiers from social contact with white women, as well as women in Egypt, Palestine and Syria. This meant that for the whole of their three-year service they were entirely divorced from women's company. For the tribal black who was seldom separated from his women folk for more than 9
months at any one time and the urbanised black who could always find women's company in the townships, it was difficult to accept and adapt to. Thus Private Thaladi Kanyane of No. 4 Squadron SAAF, Italy, complained:

"Our blood is no longer circulating because we have no place were [sic] we can get women, the white people get women every night whenever they feel like having them if we want to go and get some women we are told that black must go to black and white must go to white. We are worried here in Europe, such things are troublesome to the African people..." (140)

This dissatisfaction again led to a decline in morale and efficiency and, ultimately, to trouble. (141) The black soldiers in South Africa experienced the same problem but there were more opportunities to alleviate it. Corporal David Mokgosi, referring to the immorality between black soldiers and women in Pietermaritzburg, reported that:

"The soldiers say they should not be kept like castrated animals to live an unnatural life." (142)

To many black soldiers in North Africa the lack of leave was a serious cause of dissatisfaction. It was aggravated by the fact that a portion of the men would be released without replacements thereby imposing an extra strain on those who remained behind but who were also long overdue for leave. (143) When no leave was granted to the black soldiers during the December 1941 - January 1942 period in South Africa, an anonymous article appeared in Inkululeko, pointing out the discrepancies in the leave privileges between white and black soldiers, now even made worse by the fact that 80 000 white soldiers but no black soldiers were to be granted Christmas leave. (144) Some members of the NMC felt that leave was allegedly withheld from them as they were told that they were "Kaffirs and that no leave is provided for us" (145) As regards leave on compassionate grounds, the men complained bitterly that although many of them had suffered family bereavement since they had left the Union, all applications for leave to the Union had been ignored or refused. (146) Moreover, in certain cases, the soldiers were also dissatisfied that leave had been promised but not implemented. (147)

Not only did the fact that they did not receive leave lead to unrest situations but also that certain places were placed out of bounds and that it was in any case sometimes extremely difficult and costly to travel to the nearest towns. (148)

Complaints about the quality and quantity of the food were viewed by the authorities as "petty grievances". (149) Nevertheless, it was serious enough to the soldiers in some camps to adopt an attitude of insubordination. (150) It must also be borne in mind that food complaints are usually only symptomatic of more serious grievances.

Other factors were the practices of racial discrimination. (151) The whites had more favourable conditions of service than blacks. Whilst the army saw this as a natural privilege to which NCO's
and officers were entitled, black soldiers often saw it in racial
terms. Certainly, as far as the blacks were concerned, race and
not necessarily rank assured a soldier of more privileges and
better treatment. The OC of the NEAS Reception Camp for ex-P.O.W.
in Slingsold, Sussex, for instance, complained about the
discontent amongst these men:

"A few... are very difficult and adopt the attitude that
what they have done and suffered in this War places them as
equal if not a superior, to any white man...; consequently,
they evade fatigues, cavil at and break the few regulations
that control them... [and] attempt to spread their
ingratitude and discontent to others. With many there is
a marked tendency to refer to their distaste of a 'colour
bar', which, they say, 'does not exist in the European
countries they have visited". (152)

Finally, some of the soldiers were simply unhappy with or had
become tired of army life. As they evidently had lost interest,
army rules and discipline were no longer important to them.
Therefore they did not need much inducement to disobey orders or
to disregard the MDC. (153)

OFFICIAL VIEWS ON THE STATE OF DISCIPLINE AMONGST BLACK SOLDIERS

There was a clear duality amongst the authorities on the
disciplinary behaviour of the black soldiers. Satisfaction was
expressed in certain circles but there were also those who were
gravely concerned and perturbed about the disciplinary state
of affairs amongst the soldiers. It appears that the duration of
the war, locality, treatment by and vested interests of the
officers invariably determined these divergent opinions. It must
be borne in mind that some officers would naturally have
submitted favourable reports on the soldiers disciplinary
behaviour lest a finger be pointed at them, implying that they
were unable to control the soldiers properly.

Apparently, according to the perceptions of the white officers,
the period up to 1942 in areas such as Port Elizabeth, Umtata,
Durban, the NMC Training Areas at Welgedacht and on the East
Rand, the Woltemade camp in Cape Town where there were
sympathetic NMC officers presented the least difficulties. (154)
Even after 1942 when there was a marked increase in
undisciplinary behaviour, (155) reports on certain units inside
and outside South Africa commented favourably on disciplinary
behaviour. (156) The DDNEAS's view about the black soldiers in
the MEF was that

"Generally speaking I can safely assure you that the
behaviour of the NEs while not being as exemplary as
might be desired, compares very favourably with the
record of any other troops in the ME." (157)

On the other hand, after 1942, because of the reasons cited
above, (158) official reports from some of the above-mentioned
areas as well as from other areas increasingly mentioned a
decline in, and even lack of morale and discipline. Signs of
insubordination, discontent, passive resistance and unrest grew. (159) It was, however, only in March 1943 that the seriousness of the situation was first mentioned in official correspondence. Col. Stubbs expressed his concern to Gen. Len Beyers thus: 

"I need not...remind you of the increasing incidence of insubordination and crime amongst the N.E. soldiers such as...the passive resistance and refusal to obey orders at both Boschpoort and Quaggapoor, the Wentworth incident of the 202 M.T. Coy., the mutinous behaviour of Native details at King's Park and the riots in Kimberley Barracks. These are just a few of the more recent incidents which are occurring with increasing intensity. I have not...to mention the numerous cases coming to hand of more or less isolated and individual cases of crime perpetrated by N.E. soldiers such as attempted rape of white women inside and outside the Army, insolence, and the increasing tendency to disregard discipline and a rapid falling off in morale, to say nothing of the tremendous increase in the loss of kit, in the most cases due to deliberate "flogging"...All these factors and other evidence...have the cumulative effect of causing me considerable unease and anxiety and unless the situation is firmly and properly handled immediately, Defence must prepare itself for a growing momentum of discontent ultimately resulting in a break-down of discipline by insubordination, mutiny and crime in N.E.A.S." (160)

Despite his urgent plea that drastic measures should be taken to curb the wave of undisciplinary behaviour, the trend seemed to continue undiminished throughout 1943. (161) In June 1943 Major-General Poole, reported that the "Natives...have built up a name that literally 'stinks' in Mid East" (162)

whilst Col. H.O. Sayer complained in November of the same year that

"discipline is the one side of the work which causes me the most head-aches...and gives cause for much concern." (163)

The numerous ways in which the black soldiers lodged their protests, underpin the officials' views that discontent was indeed on the increase.

METHODS OF EXPRESSING PROTEST AND RESISTANCE

The black soldiers adopted various ways to voice their dissatisfaction. (164) On the one hand, these methods were sometimes very covert and subtle, such as complaints about the quality of the food or reporting sick which might only be a smoke-screen for more profound grievances; on the other hand, there were overt actions such as riots and mutiny. About their intentions, there could have been no doubt. The latter were almost invariably interpreted by the authorities as manifestations of undisciplinary behaviour. Thus the important issue of the different perceptions between the authorities and the soldiers on what constituted a breach in discipline and what actions were seen by the soldiers as legitimate means of expressing discontent, again crops up and must be borne in mind
in the following discussion. In broad terms, attention will be
given first to non-violent and then to violent methods of protest
and resistance.

It appears that passive resistance was the most common way of
expressing discontent. This manifested itself in malingering,
non-cooperation, a refusal to answer questions or to do their
work, all of which prompted the authorities such as the OC NMC
Wing FAAD (V) SAA Eshove to complain about the "laziness" of the
soldiers:
"...I have found them utterly worthless, always reporting
sick with trivial complaints...troublesome...with the
attitude of passive resistance, lazy and frequently
visiting latrines leisurely, going for drinking water,
getting out of doing anything. These details are without
a doubt doing harm to the smooth running, discipline and
efficiency of our artillery." (165)

From the black soldiers' point of view the action of Lance
Corporal Saul de Waal is a case in point. He was a member of a
fatigue party cleaning the parade ground when he downed tools.
When he was asked by the Staff Sergeant why he did not continue
his work, he replied that he
"wished the Germans would take over South Africa so that
we could have peace and would not have to work with a pick
and shovel anymore." (166)

The difference in opinion between the soldiers and their white
superiors on discipline becomes clear when one considers the
occurrences at the Boschpoort camp in December 1942. Apparently
15 soldiers reported sick but their white officers thought them
to be simply malingers and forced them to drill. Their fellow
soldiers then became extremely upset and a riot was imminent.
However, it was averted. (167) This, of course, also illustrates
the point that not all actions were necessarily manifestations of
passive resistance. These soldiers were simply ill and had no
ulterior motives when they reported sick.

Another form of passive resistance was the strike. The black
members of the 61st Tunnelling Company (MEB) SADC resorted to
this as the only way to protest against their treatment. They had
to work seven days a week with no break and they were not allowed
to go to the holiday camps in Egypt. The authorities explained
that this was necessary as the single railway line to that area
was too congested. Moreover, they were highly dissatisfied that
they were commanded to start work on another tunnel. According to
them, Col. Stubbs had promised that they would return home after
the completion of the Cheka tunnel. Eventually they downed tools
and disobeyed orders. However, this action was futile. The ring
leaders were arrested and locked up. (168)

Other soldiers adopted a more provocative and aggressive
attitude. They were openly defiant of authority, especially
Military Police authority and some even refused to obey commands.
Sgt. Ben Resimate, for instance was accused of using
insubordinate language to his superior officer when he addressed