

Chapter 3: Extreme Measures Used by the SADF to Cure Gay Soldiers in the 1970s and Unofficial Glimpses of Gay Acceptance in the Army in the 1980s.

Introduction

The impetus for this chapter came from a new research project ‘The Aversion Project’ done in conjunction with GALA.¹ Many veins of thought came from primary sources, the transcripts of interviewees of the project, the TRC transcripts, and newspaper articles.² They posed the questions and problems I wanted to analyse, that of the secrecy of the SADF in the militarised context of the 1970s and 80s. Just how powerful was the SADF during this time and what was its treatment of white, homosexual soldiers?

Mention must be made at the outset of my contradictions to ‘The Aversion Project’. It seems this project aimed to discover the extent of ill-treatment of white, gay soldiers suffered at the hands of the SADF. Without fail the project has done this. Through interviewing ex-soldiers, psychologists, and parents of ex-soldiers ‘The Aversion Project’ has established just how traumatised some of these young men were. Hence the project was successful in what it set out to do. Therefore there are no references to tolerance or acceptance of white, gay soldiers in the 1970s and especially the 1980s, as this was not within the scope of the project. This does, however, create a potential gap in the perception of exactly how the SADF treated its gay soldiers and how these soldiers perceived their army experience. Through questionnaires and interviews with white ex-soldiers I came to realise that there are amusing and endearing stories regarding the white, gay SADF experience. Certainly not every white, gay soldier in the SADF in the

¹ Van Zyl et al, ‘The Aversion Project’. Another valuable piece of writing with similar thinking to mine is D. Conway, ‘The End Conscriptio Campaign, Sexuality, Citizenship and Military Conscriptio in Apartheid South Africa’.

² Another source I found interesting was Allan Bérubé’s Coming Out Under Fire. This book is on World War II treatment of American gay and lesbian soldiers and it is as though it is the blue print for the SADF treatment of gay men from psychiatric treatment to unofficial acceptance. During WWII there was a dramatic change in the treatment of gay men and lesbians in that psychiatrists had increased authority in the army. The jargon of degeneracy was replaced by the jargon of psychoanalysis. Bérubé tells us the army was basically all male, theoretically heterosexual but full of homosexual tensions. Every day men saw each other naked and had no privacy. To cope men created their own sexual culture with posters of women and sex jokes. This heterosexualised their activities. He also concurs that national survival depended on aggressive masculinity and that in the navy hormone treatments for gay sailors were conducted, which proved to be ineffective. Anti-gay prejudices were put on hold until the fighting was

1970s and 1980s suffered to the degree, or suffered at all, that those in 'The Aversion Project' did.

Consequently the conundrum is therefore how could such a homophobic institution as the 1970 and 1980s SADF pose a threat yet also be supportive of white, gay soldiers, concurrently? I think in attempting to resolve this it must be borne in mind that the white, gay soldiers obviously formed a minority, and so too were those commanders or units that were considered gay-friendly. There is the possibility that such minorities, when considered within the context of the entire SADF, posed very little, real threat to the firmly entrenched SADF hegemonic masculinity and were therefore quietly reprimanded or ignored. If white, gay soldiers did not threaten power and there was no real challenge to the hegemonic masculinity there was no need to draw attention to them. White, gay men were not challenging authority; my understanding is that many enjoyed their army days, hence unless an army commander had a personal agenda or was adamant something was to be done some white, gay soldiers were left alone. It made far more sense to leave the situation as was and the status quo would silently remain, unchallenged, almost as if white, gay soldiers did not exist, which of course, through my questionnaires, becomes obvious they did.

According to Trudie Grobler, a psychologist doing her one-year internship in 1971/2 in the SADF, most white, gay men had a hard time in the army,³ especially in the 1970s. Undoubtedly, the SADF and the NP government's understanding of homosexuality in the 1970s and 80s was homo-ignorant and the SADF was a state institution that reinforced hegemonic masculinity, although less so, it seems, in the 1980s. But in order to understand local masculinities one must think in global terms.⁴ There is a global dimension of gender relations and sexuality so one has to consider how global forces constructed masculinities and how men are situated in a global society.⁵ Constructions of masculinities elsewhere would have impacted on other countries. The

over.

³ Transcript of Interview 8. Interview with Trudie Grobler for 'The Aversion Project', (AM 2757, C. Interviews, GALA), p IV8-3 (Translated).

⁴ Connell, The Men and the Boys, p 40.

‘remasculinisation’ of America occurred after the Vietnam War through film and novels.⁶ In the late-1970s in America there was less tolerance and anti-gay sentiment was revived in conservative politics. The reason for this was parallel sexual liberalisation because of economic recession, Watergate, Iran, disturbances from civil rights protests, and social crisis. This resulted in purity crusades. This is how many people respond to social danger and try to regain control.⁷ Elements within the SADF, too, were intent on control.

Some in the SADF regarded white homosexuality a disease in the 1970s⁸ but this perception was not as strong in the 1980s.⁹ The extent of the threat of white homosexuality had shifted and was not as great in the 1980s, although there was by no means blanket acceptance of white, gay soldiers in the SADF. The army was by no means giving into what it saw as the threat of white homosexuality, but still defending its powerful position, although there was definitely a greater acceptance of some gay men in some platoons. It seems as though some gay soldiers were not so secretive about being gay and felt they had enough support to no longer hide their sexual orientation to varying degrees. Some white, gay soldiers were openly gay in their platoons but acted straight in the face of their commanders while others were completely out of the closet. This, of course, was unofficial. On paper and in practice there were differing views regarding homosexuality in the SADF, officially the SADF denounced homosexuality whereas in reality some members of the SADF were tolerant of it.

During the 1970s aversion shock therapy was conducted in 1 Mil. by Dr Levine. SAHA was unable to find documentation to confirm that the actual creation of the psychiatric units themselves could be accredited to Dr Levine.¹⁰ But while working at 1 Mil. hospital Levine apparently believed homosexual men could be cured. This resulted in

⁵ Ibid, p 33.

⁶ Ibid, p 43.

⁷ S. Seidman, ‘AIDS and the Discursive Construction of Homosexuality’ in Phillips, Reay (eds), *Sexualities in History*, p 376.

⁸ Questionnaire filled in by A. Dempsey, (Nov. 2001) and J.J., (Oct. 2001). Anton Dempsey is a heterosexual man who did his National Service in 1975 at Youngsfield and J.J. is a gay man who was stationed in Ladysmith from 1977 to 1980.

⁹ Questionnaire filled in by Joubert, (13 Oct. 2003); Lt. Col. Ungerer, who was in the SADF 1986 to 2003 (13 Oct. 2003); D. Belo, corporal, 1978 to 1980 (20 Oct. 2003).

¹⁰ A Project of GALA and SAHA, ‘Gays in the Apartheid Military’, Sept. 2003, p 14.

extreme measures being used at 1 Mil. Dr Levine used aversion shock therapy to try to reprogramme white, gay soldiers.¹¹ Levine conducted aversion shock therapy in a context he controlled, that is, the SADF's medical unit, the South African Medical Services (the SAMS).

But before delving into what was going on in the psychiatric units of the SADF in the 1970s it is necessary to have a theoretical understanding of aggressive masculinity, to contextualise Levine's power. One also needs to be aware of the political climate and the clout the army had when it came to the running of the country and the shaping of policies. It is necessary to gain an understanding of Vorster as Prime Minister and more tellingly, P.W. Botha, as Minister of Defence under Vorster, from 1966 and then as Prime Minister in 1978. This gives an understanding of how the country and its politics were militarised and how the SADF played a key role in decision-making. It is officially unconfirmed whether the NP government knew what the army was doing in its psychiatric units. Even the TRC tried to establish this fact.

I believe the NP government knew to some or other degree, or maybe had a vague understanding as to what was going on in the psychiatric units of the SADF but it is difficult to verify because the authorities do not want to admit to what went on. Like Eugene de Kock, involved in third force activities in the 1980s concerning the police, I am of the opinion that "there can be little doubt that the very senior men of the Nationalist regime knew about the secret activities of its various security forces."¹² Undeniably, de Kock was not referring to the treatment of gay soldiers by the SADF but rather police and third force activity sanctioned by, but not orchestrated by, the NP government. I think the same situation played itself out in the extreme measures used by Levine. Ironically, the motivating factor for de Kock's bitter anti-NP government stance was the fact that the NP government abandoned him when the truth was told.¹³ This bitterness perhaps resulted in reckless abandonment and he revealed just how he

¹¹ Owing to white conscription, black homosexual men were relatively unavailable to Levine.

¹² E. de Kock (as told to J. Gordon), A Long Night's Damage. Working for the Apartheid State, (Contra Press, South Africa, 1998), p 16.

¹³ Weekly Mail & Guardian, (2 Aug. 1996) and P. Gobodo-Madikizela, 'Remorse and Morality in

understood the NP government to have functioned in the 1970s and 1980s. I concede that one may question whether de Kock's testimony was due to remorse or emotional relief and fear.¹⁴ Nonetheless, as a resource, he was part of the context that can contribute to an understanding of the mentality of the NP government in the 1970s and 80s and what it probably knew its employees were doing, even if it did not know *exactly* what they were doing. De Kock's testimony gives insight into the mentality of the NP government, and for the most part the same mentality the SADF, an institution of the state, was a proponent of.

Aggressive Masculinity

Masculinity is constructed in specific settings and particular patterns and behaviours are found in specific locales. In armies the definitive masculinity is aggressive.¹⁵ Homosexuality in an army is, officially, not tolerated¹⁶ because it is different and therefore a "military norm violation."¹⁷ Homosexuality does not contribute to the unity necessary in any army¹⁸ where cohesion creates the discipline to win wars.

There are certain catchphrases or words that are synonymous with any army, including the SADF: power, protection, cohesion, unity, elimination of the enemy, and most importantly, masculinity. Supposedly an army is the epitome of masculinity. Most soldiers are expected to personify hegemonic masculinity and are 'manly', tough, and aggressive and also heterosexual. Homosexuality erodes the image of a particular kind of masculinity in the army. "Homosexuality is, from the military standpoint, antithetical to assertiveness, leadership, toughness, and virility, all qualities deemed desirable if not

Apartheid Crusader', (Cape Town, 1998), p 4.

¹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵ Connell, The Men and the Boys, p 9.

¹⁶ C. Bryant, Khaki-Collar Crime. Deviant Behaviour in the Military Context, (The Free Press, New York, London, 1979), p 153.

¹⁷ Ibid, p 351.

¹⁸ E. de Kock, A Long Night's Damage, K. Vernon, 'Troopie Tells of Gay 'Torture Horror'', Sunday Times, (22 June 1997), The Star, (17 June 1997), L. Ensor, 'SA Army Psychiatrist 'Shocked, Tortured Gay Men'', Business Day, (17 June 1997), G. Thiel, 'Doctor Shock: I Gave them Drugs', Mail & Guardian, (20-26 June 1997), M. van Zyl et al, 'The Aversion Project', Resister, (Dec. 1986-Jan. 1987), 'The Aversion Project', (all pages), P. Kirk, 'Mutilation by the Military', Mail & Guardian, (28 July-3 Aug. 2000), and H. Barrell, 'Levine Used Drugs and Electric Shocks to 'Cure' Gay Men', Mail & Guardian, (28 July-3 Aug. 2000).

essential to the military role.”¹⁹ Conversely, femininity is expressed as nurturing and emotional, which are proven through empathy and creativity.²⁰ A man supposedly showing feminine qualities is not considered masculine. Many social scientists have investigated the formation of military units and factors affecting combat motivation and performance²¹ and according to some soldiers themselves “manly honour” and “quality and quantity of ‘hard core’ leaders in combat groups” are important.²² These are qualities, which gay men can also easily possess.

Anne Fausto-Sterling questions how one becomes a man and concludes that it is through social construction: men are made, not born.²³ This view contrasts with biological essentialism, which led us to believe men’s bodies determined their masculinity. However, studying the formation of masculinity in the SADF, it seems as if the latter is not the case. Soldiers in the SADF were taught that national service made you a man.²⁴ “They turned boys into men”²⁵ through physical training.²⁶ “There was a lot of emphasis on military training as affirming one’s masculinity. The norm was always of the virile, heterosexual male. It was quite a homophobic culture.”²⁷ Most in the SADF explained to the soldiers that homosexuality was not conducive to the army because gay men could not keep up physically.²⁸ Gay men were seen as women because they had sex with other men and could therefore not fight for their country.²⁹ According to Christine Heward the masculinity/femininity polarisation is not enough for understanding the construction of gender identities.³⁰ This polarisation, however, was sufficient for most in the SADF.

¹⁹ Bryant, Khaki-Collar Crime, p 153.

²⁰ J. Cock, Colonels and Cadres, p 30.

²¹ Janowitz and Little (1965), Dicks, Shils and Dinerstein (1951), Lang (1965), Mendlebaum (1952), Coates and Pellegrin (1965), George (1967), and Moscos (1968).

²² A. George, ‘Primary Groups, Organization and Military Performance’ in R. Little (ed), A Survey of Military Institutions, vol.I, (The Inter-University Seminar on Armed Forces and Society, Inc, 1969), p 88.

²³ A. Fausto-Sterling, ‘How to Build a Man’, in Berger et al (eds), Constructing Masculinity, p 127.

²⁴ Questionnaire filled in by Dempsey.

²⁵ Questionnaire filled in by T. Loë, a private in the SADF from 1985/6 (13 Oct. 2003).

²⁶ Questionnaires filled in by Dempsey, J. Greyling, Dec. 2001, and J.J. Johan Greyling is a heterosexual man who did his National Service in 1988/89 at Oudtshoorn and Ondangwa.

²⁷ Informant 68 in Cock, Colonels and Cadres, p 61.

²⁸ Questionnaire filled in by Dempsey.

²⁹ Questionnaire filled in by J.J.

Because of causation of patriarchal constructions of gender and sexuality,³¹ homosexual behaviour was viewed as violating “the idealized role conception and expectations of the soldier.”³² The military is a primary institution for the construction of hegemonic masculinity.³³ Homosexuality in the SADF, for some, flew in the face of sex role theory and hegemonic masculinity. Therefore “in the name of ‘state security’ it (the army) reproduces and maintains a system of gender inequality, and if necessary resorts to repressive force if its hegemony becomes threatened.”³⁴ Most in the SADF, a state institution, did exactly what the NP government did when its power was threatened. Consequently white, homosexual men were sent to the SADF psychiatric units to be ‘made’ into men – the SADF’s concept of men.³⁵ Some masculinities dominate over others and boundaries of appropriate maleness are created. If boundaries are transgressed normalisation is challenged, the result of which is violence, both verbal and physical.³⁶ Hence, the solution to homosexuality in the SADF for most was simple: “the ruling culture (that is either society or the army), which perceives non-conformity as threatening, attempts to diffuse the conflict by eradicating the fringe culture, by either extinction or assimilation.”³⁷ Most elements in the SADF opted for extinction because surely a bunch of ‘moffies’ could never protect the country.³⁸

According to Jacklyn Cock aggressive masculinity in a military environment is predominantly exhibited by means of vulgarity, a lack of courtesy, male bonding, and aggression.³⁹ The SADF exhibited this kind of masculinity through gross brutality, human rights abuses, and the commission of crimes:⁴⁰ “We kicked his head in, and then

³⁰ C. Heward, ‘Masculinities and Families’, Mac an Ghaill, Understanding Masculinities, p 47.

³¹ Van Zyl, et al, ‘The Aversion Project’, p 19.

³² Bryant, Khaki-Collar Crime, p 156.

³³ D. Conway, ‘Masculinity, Citizenship and Political Objection to Compulsory Military Service in the South African Defence Force’, p 4.

³⁴ Bryant, Khaki-Collar Crime, p 29.

³⁵ ‘The Aversion Project’, D. General Information, (Untitled, n.d, AM 2757, GALA), n.p.

³⁶ Haywood, Mac an Ghaill, ‘Schooling Masculinities’, p 55.

³⁷ M. Bronski, Culture Clash – The Making of Gay Sensibility, in Isaacs and McKendrick, Male Homosexuality in South Africa, p 69.

³⁸ Cock, Colonels and Cadres.

³⁹ Ibid.

⁴⁰ ‘The Conscript’s Tale: In the Beginning, I Had Nightmares’ in Resister Magazine in Journal of the Committee on South African War Resistance No. 57, (Aug/Sept. 1988) as quoted in van Zyl et al, ‘The Aversion Project’, p 31.

we went round and we smashed up this old guy and beat him up – we laid into him with a bat and a stick. We smashed up a woman too.”⁴¹ It was not only civilians who were targeted. “On the pretext of ‘making a man’ out of you, beatings were standard currency in the so-called disciplinary routine of the army.”⁴²

Specific groups of soldiers in the army were thought to be effeminate. A soldier who, for medical reasons, had a lower classification was considered weak: “I was branded by superiors and at times fellow national servicemen as a ‘moffie’ or ‘pansie’.”⁴³ Male social workers in the army were also considered effeminate and therefore gay.⁴⁴ Conscientious objectors were also insulted with homosexual innuendoes: “they were useless, slagat moffies.”⁴⁵

J.J, a gay ex-conscript who filled in my questionnaire, agreed that the SADF was very masculine, although he used this to his advantage: “all those lovely men around us! We were called the duvet girls because we drooled every night.”⁴⁶

The Militarisation of South Africa

The need to reinforce and support apartheid eventually created a highly effective defence force by the 1970s, the SADF becoming, in the eyes of one analyst, the “mightiest military machine on the continent.”⁴⁷ The ANC resorted to the ungovernability thesis, that is, they had to try to make South Africa ungovernable and make the NP government’s job of maintaining law and order as difficult as possible because the state was too strong to be overthrown by violence.⁴⁸ The militarisation of South African

⁴¹ Ibid.

⁴² Van Zyl et al, ‘The Aversion Project’, p 60.

⁴³ Informant 65 in Cock, *Colonels and Cadres*, p 59.

⁴⁴ A female Brigadier of the SADF in Cock, *Colonels and Cadres*, p 101.

⁴⁵ Interview with Marius Robinson, (24 March 2004, Johannesburg, 8:30pm). Marius was in the army in 1969/1970.

⁴⁶ Questionnaire filled in by J.J.

⁴⁷ P. Moorcraft, *African Nemesis, War and Revolution in Southern Africa*, (Brassey’s, London, Oxford, Washington, New York, Beijing, Frankfurt, São Paulo, Sydney, Tokyo, Toronto, 1990), p 25.

⁴⁸ P. Powell, ‘The Study of the Theoretical Aspects of ANC Mobilization Methods in the Eastern Cape Townships of Cradock and Port Alfred, 1980-1988’, (MA Thesis, 1991), p 51.

politics occurred in the 1970s and consequently the SADF began to play a greater role in policy-making than Parliament.⁴⁹

During the 1960s Verwoerd was totally in control of the country and Cabinet was the policy-making body of the NP. Verwoerd was an authoritarian so there was I believe little chance of the army doing anything without him knowing. Vorster, who took personal delight in the incarceration and humiliation of those who dared challenge the 'master' race, was known for his vindictiveness towards enemies of Afrikaner nationalism.⁵⁰ Initially, under Vorster it would have perhaps been easier for the army to institute policies without his knowledge,⁵¹ but I think with Botha as Minister of Defence there was little chance of this happening. Botha had complete control of the army while he assumed this portfolio and consequently the NP government knew what the army was doing. Botha had also formulated the policy of Total Strategy (total control of the state's resources). For the most part the church contributed by supporting Botha in this; preaching it from the pulpit.⁵² This militarised the state and politicised the military and the police.⁵³ Someone else who could have potentially known about the SADF's aversion therapy was General Hendrik van den Bergh, head of the Bureau of State Security (BOSS). He was Vorster's confidante, his advisor and possibly the real power behind Vorster.⁵⁴ He had been in the C.I.D and was transferred to the Security Police in 1960. He created his own fiefdom and was answerable to Vorster only. "Van den Bergh personified the most paranoid and most vicious tendencies in Afrikaner nationalism."⁵⁵

⁴⁹ See K. Grundy, P. Moorcraft, J. Barber, S. Stander, B. Spies, W. Beinart, and D. O'Meara.

⁵⁰ D. O'Meara, Forty Lost Years, (Ravan Press, South Africa, 1996).

⁵¹ During WWII Vorster was a leading member of the Ossewabrandwag (Dan O'Meara constantly referred to Vorster as the former Nazi) and was later considered to be a ruthless Minister of Justice who suppressed black resistance. However, as Prime Minister he was more flexible, relaxed, and was initially weak compared to Verwoerd's control of the government and the NP. (J. Barber, South Africa's Foreign Policy 1945-1970). However, further on in his presidency Vorster introduced the most repressive regime in South African history. (O'Meara, Forty Lost Years, 1996).

⁵² Rev. du Plooy in the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, 'Special Hearing: Compulsory Military Service (Conscription)', vol. 4, Truth and Reconciliation of South Africa Report, (CTP Book Printers (Pty), Ltd, Cape Town, 1998, Government Publications Division of the William Cullen Library, University of the Witwatersrand), p 227.

⁵³ De Kock, A Long Night's Damage, p 91.

⁵⁴ Erasmus Commission, 1978/9, in O'Meara, Forty Lost Years, p 211.

⁵⁵ O'Meara, Forty Lost Years, p 211.

By his own admission nothing happened in South Africa without him knowing.⁵⁶ “Gen. Van den Bergh had his tentacles (in) the darkest recesses of the state, controlling its secrets ...”⁵⁷

During Vorster’s reign the NP government began to build up and modernise a large defence force that was committed to internal security, owing to increasing hostilities towards South Africa from the international community. The army was enlarged and the PF was increased from nine thousand in 1960 to fifteen thousand in 1964. Botha became Minister of Defence in 1966 and conscription was instituted in 1967. “The yoking of masculinity with violence and specifically military service, as a method for achieving hegemonic masculinity, was a central tenet of apartheid society.”⁵⁸ By 1969 South Africa had two hundred thousand armed and trained men.⁵⁹ The defence budget increased from R44 million in 1960/1 (0,9% of the GNP) to R272 million in 1969/70 (2,4% of the GNP).⁶⁰ In 1972 compulsory military service was raised from nine to twelve months and further increased in 1977 to twenty-four months. This showed the higher priority of military preparedness by the NP government and the importance of the SADF. The SADF created an image that identified with apartheid policies of the government and the NP.⁶¹

In fact the SADF began to assume more power than the NP in Parliament and therefore contributed to the construction of masculinity in the country. Vorster and Botha, with Parliament playing little role, dominated policy-making regarding South Africa’s role in the civil war in Angola. Cabinet only met after decisions had been made and Foreign

⁵⁶ Ibid.

⁵⁷ Ibid, p 215.

⁵⁸ Conway, ‘Masculinity, Citizenship and Political Objection to Compulsory Military Service in the South African Defence Force’, P 2.

⁵⁹ Moorcraft, African Nemesis, p 45.

⁶⁰ S. Stander, Like the Wind, The Story of the South African Army, (Saayman & Weber (Pty) Ltd., Cape Town, 1985), p 138.

⁶¹ K. Grundy, The Militarization of South African Politics, (I.B. Tauris & Co. Ltd., London, 1968), p 47. According to social scientists this was a world-wide phenomenon during the 1960s in which there was a trend of fusion of military and political goals. (M. Janowitz, ‘Military Organization’ in R. Little (ed), A Survey of Military Institutions, vol.I.)

Affairs was excluded. Vorster and Botha had an obsession with secrecy in the 70s.⁶² The public was only told about the war after it was decided the troops would be withdrawn in December 1975. In 1974 the expectation of South African intervention in Mozambique was considered unfounded, but Botha had apparently instructed the SADF to assemble a force on the Mozambique border. In Rhodesia Vorster withdrew the troops but five hundred paratroopers and a secret unit were assembled to assist Rhodesia. I think this pattern of secrecy without apology, and no need for transparency, suggests that it is possible that Vorster and Botha could, and possibly would have, protected Dr Levine if needs be.

Once Prime Minister, Botha centralised power and increased militarisation. Botha increased SADF spending from R272 million in 1969/70 to R4.2 billion in 1984/5⁶³ to R4.7 billion in 1985/6.⁶⁴ This shows his military influence. The power of the NP government declined and real political power was in the hands of a civil-military elite.⁶⁵ Botha included his generals in central decision-making through the State Security Council (the SSC) who, for the most part, determined and co-ordinated the implementation of security policy. The SSC had always been shrouded in secrecy and its full membership was never publicly disclosed. It comprised the highest leaders of the NP. Historians agree that the security forces or security establishment was at the centre of power.⁶⁶ The SSC ended up running South Africa and became more important than Cabinet. The military therefore shaped the nature of government⁶⁷ and parliament was a façade.⁶⁸ The potential for authoritarian executive leadership was great; there was little the SADF would have been able to do without the knowledge and permission of Botha.⁶⁹

⁶² B.J. Spies, 'Part 5: 1966-1991 – Apartheid at the Crossroads' in B. Liebenberg and B. Spies (eds), South Africa in the Twentieth Century, (J.L. van Schaik Academic, Pretoria, 1993), p 453.

⁶³ ECC, Stop the Call Up, 'ECC's Path to Peace', (ECC 1985), (D6 ECC, AM 2623, GALA).

⁶⁴ Grundy, The Militarization of South African Politics, p 19.

⁶⁵ Moorcraft, African Nemesis, p 396.

⁶⁶ Grundy, The Militarization of South African Politics, p 1.

⁶⁷ W. Beinart, 'Afrikaner Power and the Rise of Mass Oppression, 1948-1994' in W. Beinart, Twentieth Century South Africa, new edition, (Oxford University Press, Oxford, 2001, p 23.

⁶⁸ Moorcraft, African Nemesis, p 35.

⁶⁹ Grundy, The Militarization of South African Politics, p 40.

According to Helen Suzman this era was ““a sort of creeping coup d’état by consent, in which accountable politicians (had) abrogated their power to non-accountable members of the security forces.”⁷⁰ Thus military apparatus made decisions about many policies that had nothing to do with defence or security, for example foreign policy, economic decisions, justice, and constitutional questions. This, according to social scientists, is what militarism is – “it presents a vast array of customs, interests, prestige, actions and thought associated with armies and wars and yet transcends true military purposes.”⁷¹

Acknowledging the power the SADF was assuming, as well as how Botha felt about the army, chances were he knew exactly what the SADF was up to.

The whole lot of them out there [Afrikaner leaders] are compulsive liars all the time, or [PW] Botha doesn’t know what the boys are up to (which makes him an idiot, especially as he used to run Defence), or he does know and secretly lets them get on with it (which means you can never believe another word he says), or he knows about it, genuinely doesn’t like it, but is powerless to stop it.⁷²

In the light of the aforementioned, Botha being powerless was highly unlikely.

Sam Sole, a conscript in the townships in the 1970s told of the enormous gulf between the official instructions given and the daily and nightly behaviour of the white troops and the police in the townships. The troops were officially told that “as members of a disciplined, effective and respectful securing force each individual’s conduct must at all times be responsible and courteous.”⁷³ However, according to Sole, this was not the behaviour that was expected of the troops. Possibly then, I believe what Levine was told and what he did could have been worlds apart, yet sanctioned. Therefore it was perhaps not incidental that Levine was doing what he was doing and getting away with it.

⁷⁰ Helen Suzman in de Kock (as told to J. Gordon), *A Long Night’s Damage*, p 98.

⁷¹ Janowitz, ‘Military Organization,’ p 28.

⁷² ‘Of Bullies and Banana Republics’, *Financial Mail*, (30 Aug. 1985), reprinted from *Spectator*, in Moorcraft, *African Nemesis*, p 418.

⁷³ Brig. Van der Westhuizen’s personal message to each soldier, in TRC, ‘Special Hearing’, p 234.

A Means to an End: How the SADF Entrenched Homophobia

All modern armies subject their soldiers to indoctrination and resocialisation.⁷⁴ This is to create discipline and morale, which supposedly wins wars.⁷⁵ In the 1960s social scientists felt the term morale was too limited and it was supplanted by a theory of organisational behaviour. To achieve organised behaviour an army must remain a patriarchal domain based on the foundations of conformity, conservatism, and masculinity.⁷⁶ For it to be successful it needs certain tools or means to mould and control its soldiers.

The mission of the military is of such a nature, and the role responsibilities of individual members so demanding, that the socialization process must be extraordinarily intense, totally comprehensive, and effectively convert the civilian into a non-civilian in terms of values, beliefs and perspectives, as well as behaviour.⁷⁷

Through military socialisation behaviour becomes redefined and military training will create new interpretations of morality.⁷⁸ It is the role of the army, through discipline and mental as well as physical control of its soldiers, to achieve military indoctrination and socialisation.⁷⁹

The SADF was predominantly Afrikaner-dominated; Afrikaans was the dominant language and culture.⁸⁰ Much of the army's conditioning was therefore founded on the two belief systems that were the cornerstones of apartheid ideology: white Afrikaner nationalism and Christianity. Both had a conservative view of gender and sex roles. Through nationalism and religion the NP government declared that God had chosen the NP to rule, and the army was its weapon. Hence it was every white South African's duty to support the NP government, and therefore the army. According to Afrikaner religion,

⁷⁴ George, 'Primary Groups, Organization and Military Performance', p 72.

⁷⁵ Col. A du Picq, Battle Studies: Ancient and Modern, (Translated by Col. Greeley, and Maj. Cotton), in George, 'Primary Groups, Organization and Military Performance', p 72.

⁷⁶ George, 'Primary Groups, Organization and Military Performance', p 72.

⁷⁷ Bryant, Khaki-Collar Crime, p 55.

⁷⁸ Ibid, p 56.

⁷⁹ Ibid, p 60.

homosexuality was a sin. Therefore, to be gay, especially in the army, was a sin against God and the NP government. J.J. and other gay soldiers were sent to an NG Kerk minister who prayed for the men, explaining to them that they were living in sin. The minister insisted on having sessions with them to explain that their choice of sexual orientation was wrong.⁸¹ The Bible gave white, heterosexual soldiers permission to inform on and punish homosexual soldiers and made the latter question their sexual orientation. Therefore “the Christian national framework within which the armed forces operated set the tone for widespread homophobia”⁸² in the 1970s.

There was thus an “unholy marriage between the church and the state ... especially as far as the mainstream Afrikaner churches were concerned.”⁸³ The church co-operated fully with the SADF concerning the military and national service and accepted the advice of the government and the Defence Council when it came to defence matters.

Almost every synod of the Dutch Reformed Church during this time supported the military effort in their prayers and by way of resolutions of thanks. They acknowledged the fact that the SADF helped to constitute a safer living environment for the people of South Africa and serving church members in the SADF ...⁸⁴

Religious instruction was compulsory in the SADF and used as a tool for NP government indoctrination. It was religion and morals that entrenched the idea that homosexuality was unacceptable.⁸⁵ Each soldier was issued with a special edition of the New Testament and Psalms bound to which was a message from P.W. Botha: “this Bible is the most important part of your military equipment...”⁸⁶ Religion was therefore used to justify army action. “The Bible and the gun (were) both part of the tradition of expansion and survival for the *volk*. Afrikaner values thereby infuse(d) the armed forces.”⁸⁷

⁸⁰ Moorcraft, *African Nemesis*, p 56.

⁸¹ Questionnaire filled in by J.J.

⁸² Van Zyl et al, ‘The Aversion Project’, p 52.

⁸³ Rev. du Plooy in TRC, ‘Special Hearing’, p 226.

⁸⁴ Ibid, p 227.

⁸⁵ Questionnaire filled in by Belo.

⁸⁶ Rev. du Plooy in TRC, ‘Special Hearing’, p 227.

⁸⁷ Grundy, *The Militarization of South African Politics*, p 70.

To entrench this particular Afrikaner ideology the SADF used conscription and language. Conscription gave the army a pool of white men while the homophobic language used by the army attempted to ensure that these young men would not be gay, and also that soldiers did not accept gay men.

“Conscription is a corner-stone in the militarisation of South Africa.”⁸⁸ In 1967, because of threats allegedly emanating from Namibia, Zimbabwe, Angola, and Mozambique, the NP government insisted on universal conscription for white males over sixteen years of age. On average, from 1972 to 1977 there were twenty-two thousand white conscripts per annual intake. Until conscription was terminated in 1991, 428 774 men had reported for compulsory military service.⁸⁹ The majority of young, white males, both English and Afrikaans-speaking, did national service with little choice left open to them.⁹⁰ There were, of course, conscientious objectors on religious grounds or those who opposed the policy of apartheid but a six-year gaol sentence or voluntary exile often eliminated this ‘problem’.

Conscription was a means of control that was even encouraged at secondary school level, which meant most white boys would be conditioned to behave in a socially constructed masculine manner.⁹¹ Many white, male soldiers were simply the products of the Christian, Nationalist public school system and once they were conscripted they were taught to be homophobic, amongst other things.⁹² Many white parents accepted the army as a part of a young man’s life and some boys saw national service as a good enough reason to drop out of school. White boys who had problems at home or school were encouraged to go to the army for discipline.⁹³ Consequently the army had a strong influence on most white, young South African males because the church, schools, and

⁸⁸ ECC, Stop the Call Up, ‘ECC’s Path to Peace’.

⁸⁹ ‘Additional submission with regard to the former SADF’ compiled by the SANDF Nodal Point in co-operation with former chiefs and members of the SADF in the TRC, ‘Special Hearing’, p 224.

⁹⁰ Testimony of Rev. N. du Plooy, in the TRC ‘Special Hearing’.

⁹¹ R. Delgado, J. Stefancic, ‘Minority Men, Misery, and the Marketplace of Ideas’ in Berger, et al (eds), Constructing Masculinity, p 211.

⁹² Michael Smith, who was treated at 1 Mil., in K. Vernon, ‘Troopie Tells of Gay ‘Torture Horror,’’ in The Sunday Times, (22 June 1997), (AM 2757, E. Articles, GALA), n.p.

⁹³ From testimony of Rev. du Plooy, in TRC, ‘Special Hearing’, p 224.

parents encouraged them to go to the army and be proud to serve their country. Many of these young, white, men were just out of school and became, I think, puppets of the state, prepared to believe what they were told.

Conscription was therefore a means to an end. It aimed to create the largest possible military, but at the same time inadvertently gave the state access to many young minds that were taught, amongst other things, that homosexuality was wrong.

“Power’s hold on sex is maintained through language.”⁹⁴ Language constructs the meanings of masculinities. This polices male behaviour.⁹⁵ Those who have power over language also have power over meaning. If the army controlled the language used concerning white, homosexual men it would tend to retain and entrench the state’s definition of hegemonic masculinity. Language therefore entrenched homophobia. For the most part, as long as homosexual men were described and termed in negative connotations there would be no acceptance of them. The language of the military was polarised into masculine and feminine, as well as being Afrikaans-dominated.⁹⁶ It was another tool of Afrikaner ideology. It was the notion of the “strong, Afrikaans man” who was the epitome of masculinity.⁹⁷ *Troopie taal* was used by some in the SADF to encourage strength and point out those who would let the side down. Anyone who could not physically keep up was a *moffie*.

During basics, the humiliation of gay men was very, very common. They were called awful names like *holnaaier*, *poefter*, *moffie* ... They were often made the scapegoat. [D]uring the initial period the whole troop, everybody was called *julle slegte moffies/trassies*, all sorts of demeaning words that were not good for the gay person out of the closet, or in the closet.⁹⁸

⁹⁴ Foucault, *The History of Sexuality*, vol. 1, p 83.

⁹⁵ Haywood, Mac an Ghaill, ‘Schooling Masculinities’, p 55.

⁹⁶ Van Zyl et al, ‘The Aversion Project’, p 14.

⁹⁷ Interview with Craig, (5 January 2002, Johannesburg, 9:00pm). Craig is a heterosexual man who did his National Service in 1987 Johannesburg.

⁹⁸ Interview with Karel, IV14:2 in van Zyl et al, ‘The Aversion Project’, p 53.

Gay soldiers were also referred to as mamma's boys, bum chums, *hol soldate*,⁹⁹ *poepol* pirates,¹⁰⁰ *moffies*, *rugruiters*,¹⁰¹ shit shaggers,¹⁰² asshole creepers,¹⁰³ and "a lot of swear words mostly beginning with F."¹⁰⁴ Many gay soldiers were intentionally humiliated by some authority figures in the SADF through insulting references to homosexuality.¹⁰⁵

Many of the men considered weak, effeminate or inferior were labelled through derogatory terms for gay people and women, because femininity was a weakness and gay men were considered feminine. "The platoon was often ... told that the SADF was not for 'girls' or 'queers'."¹⁰⁶ This is a discourse of oppression. Language was used to discriminate. "For instance everyone was supposed to work in the garden and if someone tried to hide away they would say 'Haai you bloody queer can't you bloody-well take the spade and go and work. Go and take a bubble bath or something.'"¹⁰⁷ As well as using specific homosexual terms to insult military men, some superiors would demean through references to homosex. "The instructors make a lot of jokes about sex. They'd say things like 'Don't bend over in the shower'"¹⁰⁸ and "'don't drop the soap when he is around'."¹⁰⁹

Many SADF soldiers:

are people who have been socialized into conformity; into unthinking obedience to authority, and into the belief that some human beings (Jews, 'moffies', 'kaffirs' or communists) are non-human and outside the boundaries which define humane treatment ... (they) are the products of a conditioning process.¹¹⁰

⁹⁹ Directly translated: arse soldiers. Questionnaire filled in by Dempsey.

¹⁰⁰ Questionnaire filled in by J.J.

¹⁰¹ Questionnaire filled in by Joubert.

¹⁰² Questionnaire filled in by Loë.

¹⁰³ Interview with Col. Ungerer, (13 Oct. 2003, Johannesburg, 2:30pm).

¹⁰⁴ Ibid.

¹⁰⁵ Questionnaire filled in by J.J.

¹⁰⁶ Cock, *Colonels and Cadres*, p 61.

¹⁰⁷ Transcript of interview 10 with Karel Hough, in van Zyl et al, 'The Aversion Project', p 6.

¹⁰⁸ Informant 82 in Cock, *Colonels and Cadres*, p 60.

¹⁰⁹ Interview with Ungerer.

¹¹⁰ Cock, *Colonels and Cadres*, p 56.

Ultimately the entrenchment of homophobia through language aimed to condition the soldiers that homosexuality, or any other behaviour deemed different, was wrong. It was conformity that was right. The soldiers first had to be conditioned in order to conform. White, SADF soldiers tended to be conditioned through the ideology of apartheid. This defensive or siege mentality kept the army strong.

The treatment of white, homosexual men in the army was established by conditioning. This also occurred in civilian life through sex roles – patterns of social expectation and norms for behaviour of men and women from youth through socialisation – which, entrench conformity.¹¹¹ Based on conditioning and reinforcement people perform sex-typed behaviour through imitation and indoctrination. Boys are taught to be masculine.¹¹² Conditioning allowed for white, heterosexual soldiers to inform on homosexual men and some homosexual men even informed on other gay soldiers in order to hide their own sexual orientation. “Sometimes gay men who were in the closet joined in the beatings on the exposed gay man – or the person accused of being gay – and later suffered rather lots of guilt (sic) as a result thereof.”¹¹³ Some gay men were blackmailed by the army to inform on other gay soldiers in order to protect their positions: “he ...said to me that if I told him who was gay in the Defence Force then I could stay on, otherwise I would be dishonourably discharged.”¹¹⁴ Not all white, homosexual men were threatened by the SADF though. One white, gay man used his homosexuality against the army. Because he was openly gay he was not vulnerable to blackmail so the army asked him for a list of soldiers who were gay. This man gave the SADF a list of names of white, heterosexual men he disliked and the army spent years chasing after these supposed gay men.¹¹⁵

¹¹¹ Connell, *The Men and the Boys*, p 7. Connell does say, however, that the theory of sex roles is incorrect. Role theory looks at social expectations that define accepted/expected behaviour for men and women. But this theory does not take power, violence, and material inequality into account, only expectations. Instead of role theory one should consider post-structuralism which looks at complexity, ambiguity, and fluidity (p 19).

¹¹² Edley, Wetherall, ‘Masculinity, Power and Identity’, p 101.

¹¹³ IV14:2 primary oral source in van Zyl et al, ‘The Aversion Project’, p 60.

¹¹⁴ Ibid.

¹¹⁵ Ibid.

Ward 22 was set up at 1 Mil. to cater for the needs of conscripts and PF soldiers with psychological problems. Because the duration of compulsory service had been extended and the size of the armed forces expanded, the SADF ventured into psychiatry to combat the new psychological problems the conscripts were experiencing.¹¹⁶ The justification was based on the experiences of soldiers who had fought in the two World Wars and Vietnam. Many of these overseas soldiers had needed psychiatric care and with South Africa fighting in SWA against the South West African People's Organisation (SWAPO) the same sort of attention for army personnel was necessary. The diagnoses of psychological problems were at the discretion of the military psychiatrists, who, I think, were a world unto their own.

Many white, gay military personnel were sent to Ward 22 (which later became Ward 24), the notorious psychiatric unit where aversion therapy was conducted. The psychiatric unit "appears to have become a dumping ground for conscripts who dissented with apartheid ideology and traditional views of masculinity."¹¹⁷ The unit also dealt with conscientious objectors and treated soldiers with drug and alcohol addiction.¹¹⁸ It is highly unlikely that in civilian life any of these classifications, including homosexuality, "would find themselves in psychiatric care and their presence in the wards is solely a reflection of the SADF's attitudes"¹¹⁹

SADF psychologists were military psychologists as opposed to the civilian psychologists and psychiatrists who argued before the 1968 Select Committee. These psychologists contributed to the entrenchment of homophobia in the army by carrying out the SADF's homophobic policy. These army psychologists' loyalty was to the military first and foremost. Most had the interests of the army and country at heart, not necessarily the

¹¹⁶ Such as post-traumatic stress syndrome.

¹¹⁷ Van Zyl et al, 'The Aversion Project', p v.

¹¹⁸ 50% to 55% of the patients were mentally disturbed soldiers with combat-related problems, clinical disorders, those who disrespected army orders, and alcoholics. 30% to 40% of the patients were drug users, mainly dagga smokers, and 10% to 15% were gay.

¹¹⁹ The Abuse of Psychiatry in the SADF, 'I am First a Soldier and Then a Psychiatrist' in Resister as quoted in Journal of the Committee on South African War Resistance No. 47, (Dec. 1986 – Jan. 1987) in van Zyl et al, 'The Aversion Project', p 40.

individual patient.¹²⁰ From 1971 “it became clear that the practice of psychiatry in the SADF (had) been closely wedded to the preoccupation of the military authorities to eliminate patterns of behaviour which (did) not conform to SADF discipline and the apartheid war effort.”¹²¹ The practice of psychiatry in the army helped entrench homophobia in that it did not encourage tolerance of white homosexuality, more so it encouraged singling out of white, gay soldiers and the so-called curing of this sexual orientation.

Such psychiatry occurred under the auspices of the South African Medical Services (the SAMS), which was responsible for all medicine in the military and for conforming the non-conformists. The SAMS was represented by the South African Medical and Dental Council (the SAMDC) which “turned a blind eye to human rights abuses.”¹²² The SAMDC was very politicised and predisposed towards the NP government.¹²³ This was something that was clear to the TRC in its hearings into the medical profession:

¹²⁰ ‘The Aversion Project’, (D. General Information, Untitled, n.d.).

¹²¹ The Abuse of Psychiatry in the SADF, ‘I am First a Soldier and Then a Psychiatrist’, p 65.

¹²² Van Zyl et al, ‘The Aversion Project’, p 41. Dr Len Bekker, of the now defunct SAMDC, said the SAMDC had failed to campaign against social injustice because of the apartheid society in which it functioned. (‘TRC Slams Army Medical Services Evidence’, The Citizen, (18 June 1997) (AM 2757, E. Articles, GALA), p 2.

¹²³ A Project of GALA and SAHA, ‘Gays in the Apartheid Military’, p 8. Presenting the SAMS submission to the TRC, Surgeon-General from March 1988, Gen. Neil Knobel, denied any knowledge of human rights abuses in which military medics were involved and said that the SAMS’ only concern was to provide medical support. Gen. Knobel amused the TRC when he insisted that there were no ‘special projects’ carried out by the SAMS except Project Harmonia which was the SAMS’ annual singing competition. The TRC said the SAMS had failed to acknowledge its role in past conflicts and had had a year to compile its submission. The TRC was worried that the SAMS submission did not once mention human rights. Consequently the Health and Human Rights Project suggested the TRC propose a Commission of Enquiry into the legal, ethical, and professional position of the health personnel in the military. Dr Ramashala, a TRC Commissioner, wanted the SAMS to answer more questions in writing on its involvement in psychological operations and the use of shock treatment on patients, among other issues, as the TRC had already heard that health workers in state hospitals as well as private practitioners had worked with the police during apartheid. Dr Wendy Orr of the TRC wanted the following questions answered: what was the SADF’s policy regarding sexual orientation, specifically homosexual men; did the SAMS play any role in the implementation of this policy; and did it argue against or support this policy? Was the SAMS’ Director of Psychology involved in the treatment of homosexual men, and was aversion therapy used? The SAMS refused to say anything until a full investigation had been conducted as to whether or not Levine had acted under order – therefore either no one really knows or extreme measures of cover up were being carried out. Business Day (17 June 1997) said “professional organizations and individual health workers were suffering from a selective amnesia about past human rights abuses.” (‘TRC Slams Army Medical Services Evidence’, The Citizen, p 2 and Truth and Reconciliation Commission, Human Rights Violations Health Sector Hearings, (17 June 1997), (AM 2757, The Aversion Project, B. General Information, GALA,). Because

submissions from individuals and organizations gave testimony to the allegiance of the health professionals to apartheid ideology and ways in which the medical profession effectively concealed the reality of apartheid medicine behind a veneer of professionalism. The submissions highlighted the failure of statutory institutions and professional organizations to hold members accountable for subjugating their professional, moral, and ethical responsibilities to an abusive state.¹²⁴

Health professionals in the SAMS were PF soldiers and conscripts, comprised of doctors, nurses, psychologists, and psychiatrists. “The orderlies were seconded from military units as part of their duties. Their attitudes varied – many were hostile, shouting orders at and verbally abusing patients.”¹²⁵ These health workers were ranked by the SADF and “medical personnel could not disobey a ‘lawful’ command.”¹²⁶ The SAMS fell outside the network of accountability of the formal health sector, that is, the Medical Association or the Department of Health. “Being a department within a state security institution itself, many doctors in the SAMS were able to put themselves outside the reach of the country’s professional body,” that is, the SAMDC.¹²⁷ I believe it was relatively easy for the doctors of the SAMS to protect themselves because complaints about them were directed at the Department of Defence. If a soldier threatened to report a doctor he would be discharged from the army. Rory was discharged, diagnosed with Anxiety Neurosis, because his parents told Dr Levine they would report him to the Jewish Board of Deputies. Trudie Grobler worked under Dr Levine and was banned from the wards where psychiatric patients were kept because she did not agree with one of the doctor’s means of conformity.¹²⁸ These might have been isolated incidents concentrated on by ‘The Aversion Project’ but I maintain they still show the extent the psychiatric unit would go to, to protect itself.

of the trauma he had suffered, a gay conscript, Neil considered litigation. However, all records of his treatment had been destroyed and the doctor who treated him said he (the doctor) had amnesia therefore there was no court case.

¹²⁴ A Project of GALA and SAHA, ‘Gays in the Apartheid Military’, p 8.

¹²⁵ The Abuse of Psychiatry in the SADF, ‘I am First a Soldier and Then a Psychiatrist,’ p 63.

¹²⁶ Van Zyl et al, ‘The Aversion Project’, p 39.

¹²⁷ Ibid, p 41.

¹²⁸ Transcript of Interview 8. Interview with Grobler for ‘The Aversion Project’.

Most health workers were loyal to the Department of Defence and apartheid ideology rather than professionalism, medical ethics, and their patients. This created the potential for a contradiction between medical ethics and the military. Consequently the SAMS personnel were able (and allowed) to abuse their power.¹²⁹ “Various reports attest to the fact that in practice, the SADF respected none of the official documents or treaties regarding the medical treatment of human beings, nor the ethics of medical personnel.”¹³⁰ It seems many in the SADF did not expect its doctors to abide by the Hippocratic Oath or the Tokyo Declaration, which South Africa had signed, banning doctors from performing acts of torture. Consequently “the conscripts ... suffered ‘treatment’ which had long been outdated, and went totally unchecked by any system of accountability, and with no hint of reference to basic medical ethics.”¹³¹ Some of the SAMS personnel have also been implicated in murders of servicemen, which they have successfully concealed.¹³²

However, not all the SAMS personnel subscribed to the SADF’s insistence on conformity.¹³³ One of the SAMS psychologists stated: “I never tried to change people who were gay. On the contrary, one tried to support them, to help them to come to terms with themselves. But I really think they had a hard time in the army – truly.”¹³⁴ J.J. and his friends, however, did not seem to have it all bad. They even stole ambulances from 1 Mil. to get to drag shows on time.¹³⁵ Therefore, there were components, units, and people in the SADF who were not anti-gay, thereby creating, for some in the army, the perception of tolerance and maybe even acceptance of white, gay soldiers. It cannot be stated, as ‘The Aversion Project’ assumes, that the SADF was wholly homophobic, mistreating all white, gay soldiers. There was some army experiences that contradicted the idea that all white, gay soldiers were tormented by the SADF.

¹²⁹ Van Zyl et al, ‘The Aversion Project’, p 39.

¹³⁰ Ibid.

¹³¹ Ibid, p 41.

¹³² Ibid.

¹³³ Questionnaire filled in by Dempsey.

¹³⁴ IV8:3, primary oral source in van Zyl et al, ‘The Aversion Project’, p 67.

¹³⁵ Questionnaire filled in by J.J.

The extreme, and final, measure used by the SADF to control its soldiers who refused to conform was the use of a form of conversion therapy called aversion therapy which was used predominantly on white, gay soldiers and those perceived to be drug addicts. Many theorists had attempted various kinds of conversion therapy in the twentieth century,¹³⁶ but evidence exists to suggest that these theories enjoyed no success in practice.¹³⁷ In the SADF two types of conversion therapy were utilised: aversion shock therapy and hormone therapy conducted by Dr Levine. “Conversion therapies took a variety of forms, but all were based on the premise that to have a homosexual orientation was somehow wrong.”¹³⁸

Aversion therapy, used in Britain in the 1950s and 60s, was divided into three categories: chemical (injections and drugs), electric shocks, and noxious sensitisation. These involved a negative impulse such as an electric shock or a nausea-inducing drug to be administered while a same-sex visual stimulus was presented. Then affirmation of opposite-sex experience was accompanied by positive opposite-sex visual stimuli. Such methods were considered by some as torture. In fact Britain used aversion shock therapy in its military training programmes to train specialised military units to resist torture. In the rest of the Western world aversion shock therapy was no longer used. Since the Sexual Offences Act in 1967, shock therapy was not utilised in Britain and the American Psychiatric Association declassified homosexuality as a mental disorder in 1973. But until 1978 “the doctors (PFs) in charge of the psychiatric units were allowed to proceed with such treatment in contempt of contemporary medical practices at the time.”¹³⁹ They did not seem to realise that homosexual men are “not just a bundle of circus animals that can be re-programmed like that.”¹⁴⁰ According to ‘The Aversion Project’ none of their informants who were given aversion treatment changed their sexual orientation.

¹³⁶ From 1916 to 1921 attempts had been made at transplanting testicular tissue from heterosexual men into castrated homosexual men. (Despite my efforts to substantiate this, I did not find this possible).

¹³⁷ Select Committee submissions discussed that homosexuality could not be cured. (See Chapter 2).

¹³⁸ Van Zyl et al, ‘The Aversion Project’, p 27.

¹³⁹ Ibid, p 67.

¹⁴⁰ IV1:3, primary oral source in Van Zyl et al, ‘The Aversion Project’, p 95.

However, many did have to go for subsequent therapy to repair the damage done to their self-esteem.¹⁴¹

SADF Policy on Homosexuality in the 1970s

The beginning of the 1970s saw an economic boom in South Africa. Business was expanding, the black population was cowered into submission, the living standards of whites increased, and the United Nations (UN) challenge to South Africa's control of SWA was silent. Although initially not problematic, there was, however, nagging inflation and an international sport boycott. Hence, by the mid-1970s the economic, political, and social conditions underlying apartheid began to cause setbacks. Vorster and Botha could not stop the economic downswing that had begun in 1973 or create social peace. By 1976 South Africa was experiencing a total recession, the security apparatus was impinging on the civil state, and after three decades of power the Nationalists were starting to show signs of vulnerability owing to the growth of political opposition.¹⁴²

The NP was losing power and I think quite possibly retaliated through the SADF, which tolerated no opposition. "When oppressed people rise up and protest the system's injustice, the oppressors squash the protest and maintain the status quo. If the oppressors want to instil fear, they use violence. Dissidents are jailed, tortured, and murdered."¹⁴³ This is exactly what the SADF did to white, homosexual men because they went against everything the army stood for. They posed a threat to hegemonic masculinity.

The earliest document regarding official treatment of homosexual men in the SADF located by SAHA was dated 5 March 1979. It was termed confidential and stated disciplinary action must be taken against offenders and that such a matter should be handled internally rather than handing it over to civil courts. The policy was concerned with how homosexual soldiers, or those even suspected of homosexuality, should be dealt with upon enlistment: recruiting officers were to discourage these men from PF service.

¹⁴¹ Van Zyl et al, 'The Aversion Project', p 72.

¹⁴² Beinart, Twentieth Century South Africa.

¹⁴³ J. Livingston, 'Individual Action and Political Strategies: Creating a Future Free of Heterosexism' in E. Rothblum and L. Bond (eds), Preventing Heterosexism and Homophobia, (Sage Publications, Thousand

Men who were already in the SADF were also to be discouraged and if under suspicion they were to be under constant supervision.¹⁴⁴

According to Dempsey, white homosexuality in the SADF was completely unacceptable to everybody and it was openly discouraged.¹⁴⁵ The SADF used punishments such as torture, aversion therapy, assault by peers, and telling the gay soldier's parents of their son's sexual orientation.¹⁴⁶ "Within the SADF, homosexuality (was) a chargeable offence and anti-gay discrimination (was) encouraged."¹⁴⁷

I think the nagging fear of potential political vulnerability, which threatened the SADF, caused it work towards being as strong as it could possibly be. One of the results of this was the SADF creating its own policy on homosexuality and dealing with the issue, even though there was nothing in the Defence Act of 1957 to prevent white, gay men from serving in the army. The Defence Act did, however, contain a secrecy clause¹⁴⁸ that prevented conscripts from talking about their experiences in the army. This put some soldiers in an indefensible position if the army believed they were gay. "People who were labelled gay who actually weren't gay, suffered equally. The army decided who was gay. Your own insistence that you were not gay was not sufficient. Your own definition did not count."¹⁴⁹ Sichma's parents' story highlights this decision-making by the SADF. Sichma was in the psychiatric ward in 1973 at 1 Mil. under Levine. He was given drugs and underwent shock treatment, yet he was not gay. Sichma's parents believe that because Sichma's friend, Rory, was gay it was deduced by the psychiatrists at 1 Mil. that Sichma was also gay.¹⁵⁰

Oaks, London, New Delhi, 1996), p 258.

¹⁴⁴ HSWA/1/13/82 in A Project of GALA and SAHA, 'Gays in the Apartheid Military', p 9.

¹⁴⁵ Questionnaire filled in by Dempsey.

¹⁴⁶ Van Zyl et al, 'The Aversion Project', p 59.

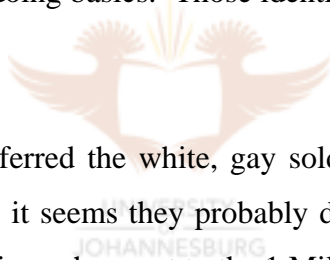
¹⁴⁷ M. Krouse, 'The Arista Sisters – September 1984: An Account of Army Drag' in Gevisser and Cameron (eds), *Defiant Desire*, as quoted in van Zyl et al, 'The Aversion Project', p 52.

¹⁴⁸ See further detail on p 160.

¹⁴⁹ PC5:2, primary oral source in van Zyl et al, 'The Aversion Project', p 58.

¹⁵⁰ Interview with Sichma's parents in van Zyl et al, 'The Aversion Project'.

Even though most elements of the SADF, like the NP government, considered homosexuality a *gedragsafwyking*, a behavioural disorder,¹⁵¹ those young, white, gay men who were conscripted could not be exempted from the SADF just because they were gay. Instead, research suggests some were experimented on, without their consent, through aversion therapy by Dr Levine to prove that gay men could be ‘cured’. At the same time the army would be rid of its so-called deviants.¹⁵² “In what was a top-secret project during the apartheid years, psychiatrists assisted by chaplains scoured each intake of national servicemen, hunting for suspected homosexuals.”¹⁵³ Commanding officers, social workers, chaplains, and camp doctors referred gay conscripts to the psychiatric unit because all SADF employees were conditioned that homosexuality was not conducive to the army. The white, gay soldier appeared before a panel of seven to ten psychologists who assessed his case.¹⁵⁴ Soldiers said this part of the procedure was more like an interrogation because the military authorities believed many men tried to get admitted to the psychiatric wards to avoid doing basics. Those identified as homosexual were sent to Ward 22 for rehabilitation.



In all fairness to those who referred the white, gay soldiers to the psychologists, from reading ‘The Aversion Project’ it seems they probably did not know what was going to happen to many of the gay soldiers who went to the 1 Mil. psychiatric wards; they did not know their patients were going to suffer aversion therapy at the hands of Dr Levine. However, once the reputation of 1 Mil. was recognised and the rumours about the unit were tangible some SADF authorities chose not to send gay men there¹⁵⁵ because they did not approve of such treatment being used to enforce conformity and retain power over the soldiers. Considering some of the stories in ‘The Aversion Project’ of what some white, gay soldiers went through at 1 Mil. by not referring these white, gay soldiers to the

¹⁵¹ Van Zyl et al, ‘The Aversion Project’.

¹⁵² By deviants the SADF would have targeted alcoholics, drug abusers, those who disagreed with the policy of apartheid, and homosexual men. That is, anyone who did not conform to NP definitions of normal.

¹⁵³ Kirk, ‘Mutilation by the Military’, *Mail & Guardian*, p 4.

¹⁵⁴ Van Zyl et al, ‘The Aversion Project’. SAHA interviewed Dr Marius Mathy of the Association of Psychiatrists of South Africa who was in the SADF in the 1980s. He says he does not recall any records being kept by this panel. Also, if there were records 1 Mil. kept them on microfiche, but only for five years. (A Project of GALA and SAHA, ‘Gays in the Apartheid Military’, p 6).

¹⁵⁵ Kirk, ‘Mutilation by the Military’, *Mail & Guardian*, p 4.

psychiatric wards I think some in authority began to recognise the means did not justify the ends. That is, perhaps some of the authorities did not want to be responsible for further verifying some of the truths about aversion therapy at 1 Mil. There were stories about “gay guys being shock treated and locked in rooms”¹⁵⁶ that some in authority did not want to be a part of.

Homosexuality was treated differently in the National Service to that in the PF. I think because white soldiers doing national service were there for a limited period and they had access to less information they possibly did not pose as great a threat to the army as gay PF soldiers did. They were less of a security risk. Gay men in the PF were not given rank because men in positions of authority had to set an example to the conscripts, which meant they had to be heterosexual.¹⁵⁷ For many who wanted to be in the PF they had no choice but to hide their homosexuality because their careers and promotion relied on the fact that they were imagined to be heterosexual. Many in the SADF clung to the homophobic belief that homosexual men were a security risk and consequently, homosexuality was a reason for discharge from the PF.¹⁵⁸

During the 1970s many elements in the SADF seemed to have been more vigilant regarding white homosexuality than in the 1960s. For example George was conscripted in 1965 and felt white homosexuality was not a priority for most in the SADF. Another soldier said:

We were given lectures, one of the six or seven capital offences for which you could be executed in the army, by court martial, was homosexuality ... Officially it was against the law and that was it. They certainly didn't go to any trouble to find out what your orientation was.¹⁵⁹

¹⁵⁶ Questionnaire filled in by J.J.

¹⁵⁷ Ibid.

¹⁵⁸ One of the men interviewed by SAHA, although in the navy, had been a PF member for 15 years and then suddenly had his security clearance revoked. He believes this was because of his homosexuality. (A Project of GALA and SAHA, 'Gays in the Apartheid Military', p 9).

¹⁵⁹ IV3:2, primary oral source in van Zyl et al, 'The Aversion Project', p 46.

“There was never any action taken as far as I know. Things went on, and there was never any action taken about homosexuality.”¹⁶⁰ But this changed. George’s lover, Nick, was in the army in 1970 and was subjected to aversion shock therapy. J.J., however, says gay men were not always treated badly: “we were hard workers and some officers just wanted the job done no matter who you were.”¹⁶¹ He even considered his platoon to be gay-friendly because they treated the gay soldiers like normal people.¹⁶² Hence not all gay soldiers felt they were ill-treated while in the SADF in the 1970s.

But for some gay soldiers who experienced condemnation their treatment was anything but the proverbial ‘normal’. If a soldier was caught having sex with another soldier he was given a choice: either the SADF would deal with him or his case could be handed over to the SAP. According to the 1969 Immorality Amendment Act, soldiers could be reported to the police for homosexual acts and then prosecuted in a criminal court with the potential of a two-year gaol sentence. This meant a permanent criminal record. It was likely that the soldier would opt for the SADF’s handling of his case. If the SADF dealt with a gay soldier it meant one of three things; torture in Detention Barracks (DB), assault by peers, or aversion therapy at 1 Mil. In DB the gay soldier would suffer “intense psychological and physical torture,”¹⁶³ where “anal sexual assault was frequently used as a form of torture.”¹⁶⁴ Mark was subjected to both DB and 1 Mil.:

Mark did not want to serve in the SADF, so he consistently went AWOL. After a torrid time of being sexually assaulted (‘raped’) and beaten up in DB, Mark tried to commit suicide. A lieutenant offered him a rifle to blow his brains out. He was transferred to the psychiatric unit at one military hospital, where he was chained to the bed and subjected to shock treatment ... He was transferred to another military hospital and suffered further abuse. He was told by an orderly: ‘Your kind should be locked and chained for the rest of your life’.¹⁶⁵

¹⁶⁰ Transcript of interview 3 with George in van Zyl et al, ‘The Aversion Project’, p 2.

¹⁶¹ Questionnaire filled in by J.J.

¹⁶² Ibid.

¹⁶³ PC5:4, primary oral source in van Zyl et al, ‘The Aversion Project’, p 54.

¹⁶⁴ Van Zyl et al, ‘The Aversion Project’, p 59.

¹⁶⁵ Ibid, p 61. (Brackets are not mine).

If a white, gay soldier was handed over to other soldiers “the system turned a blind eye to the harsh punishments meted out by fellow service personnel and rank alike, and offered them no protection.”¹⁶⁶ For example soldiers put a white, gay man in a truck and repeatedly burnt him with cigarettes. According to them, gay soldiers had to be “sorted out” because homosexuality was against Christian values.¹⁶⁷ Many gay soldiers were either treated as if they did not exist or “any suspected gay was bashed in various ways; verbally, mentally and physically” with no avenues of complaint.¹⁶⁸ This is bullying which is a means of constructing and reinforcing a masculinity through institutionally managed terror.¹⁶⁹ Violent masculinities are collectively defined and/or institutionally supported. Constructing masculinity is often violent; men are violent to prove and defend their masculinity, and challenge others.¹⁷⁰

From my questionnaires it seems as though most white, straight soldiers had not heard of aversion shock therapy in the SADF. Dempsey had, but believes this information was rumour.¹⁷¹ The responses from the white, gay ex-soldiers were the opposite. J.J., who had never personally experienced such treatment, knew that if he were caught he would be sent to for treatment to 1 Mil.¹⁷² He was told this in no uncertain terms.¹⁷³

Numerous laws protected the SADF’s in its actions against gay soldiers. Section 18 of the Defence Act of 1957 prohibited statements about military activity that would prejudice or embarrass the NP government or alarm the public. All reports about the military had to be passed by the military authorities before publication. The Prisons Act, the Internal Security Act, and the Publications Act also protected the SADF. No reports were allowed to be published that showed the SADF in a negative light. Even affiliated correspondents who had close relationships with the military had a hard time reporting on

¹⁶⁶ Ibid, p 58.

¹⁶⁷ Ibid.

¹⁶⁸ Questionnaire filled in by Dempsey.

¹⁶⁹ Connell, *The Men and the Boys*, p 95.

¹⁷⁰ Ibid, p 218.

¹⁷¹ Questionnaire filled in by Dempsey.

¹⁷² Questionnaire filled in by J.J.

¹⁷³ Informal interview with J.J., (25 Nov. 2002, Johannesburg, 1:00pm, 13 Oct. 2003, Johannesburg, 1:00pm).

the activities of some in the SADF.¹⁷⁴ If newspapers reported in detail on South African security matters they had to play Russian roulette with the censorship laws.¹⁷⁵ Such censorship made it difficult to report on South African security and this in turn ensured the isolation and protection of the actions of the SADF. Therefore the army managed to keep shock therapy and sex changes secret.

In the 1960s legislation was passed allowing for detention without trial. This mainly pertained to the police and according to Eugene de Kock, made some in the SAP feel like supermen because the state had basically legitimised torture.¹⁷⁶ “Torture by servants of the state was tacitly sanctioned. The principle of public accountability had almost completely evaporated.”¹⁷⁷ Although this is a reference to the SAP death squads one can assume the principle is applicable to the army – I do not think there is any reason to presume that state policy would be any different for the various security forces. Also, elements within the SADF were not opposed to using acts of terror to suppress resistance in and out of South Africa, which meant the same tactics could be utilised to suppress resistance to conformity within the SADF itself. When the army felt that existing legislation was inadequate to suppress opposition it thought up its own devices to do so.¹⁷⁸ The extreme measure to create uniformity in the SADF was aversion therapy.

Dr Aubrey Levine

Levine obtained his medical degree and then joined the army where he studied psychiatry on military bursaries. He worked under the supervision of Lieutenant General Cockcroft, the surgeon General from 1969 to 1977.¹⁷⁹ Dr Levine practised aversion therapy in the SADF from 1968 to 1974. In 1970 he was promoted to Colonel and was the chief military psychiatrist, co-ordinating psychiatric work in the army, navy, and air force.

¹⁷⁴ For example A. Venter and W. Steenkamp of The Cape Times, and H. Heitman of Jane’s Defence Weekly.

¹⁷⁵ Moorcraft, African Nemesis, p 405.

¹⁷⁶ De Kock, A Long Night’s Damage, p 97.

¹⁷⁷ Ibid, p 98.

¹⁷⁸ Ibid.

¹⁷⁹ Once Lt (no initial given) Cockcroft had retired he was active in ultra-right organizations. (Resister, Dec. 1986-Jan. 1987), Dr Levine was an active member of the NP (A Project of GALA and SAHA, ‘Gays in the Apartheid Military’, p 8) and also proud of his right-wing views. (Mail & Guardian, 28 July to 3 Aug. 2000).

Dr Levine was the mastermind behind electric shock therapy in Ward 22 at 1 Mil.¹⁸⁰ He “was a key figure in the ‘torture’ of gay men in the military,” as well as the treatment of other soldiers.¹⁸¹ The staff at Ward 22 under Levine was small, perhaps conveniently so. Only one part-time psychologist assisted him. Everyday supervision was carried out by medical students or interns doing national service, and by medically untrained military orderlies. Levine was never accountable to a wider reference group of qualified personnel.¹⁸²

Levine did not give ‘traditional’ therapy. He did not discuss his patients’ situation with them or spend hours on therapy, like clinical psychologists do. Perhaps at the most five or six gay men received therapy from him but no one knew what went on in his office.¹⁸³ According to Trudie Grobler therapy in the army consisted of the matron of psychiatry, the psychiatrists, and psychologists sitting around a table discussing patients’ cases. Each patient was brought in individually and asked a couple of disinterested questions about his medication. The patients would answer simply and leave. There was no diagnosis.¹⁸⁴ Therapy was possibly conducted in this manner because Levine wanted no one to have access to the patients.¹⁸⁵ Even most of the social workers had more freedom and interaction with the patients than the psychologists did, probably because they were less of a threat.¹⁸⁶ Furthermore the psychologists were not allowed to do rounds and therefore

¹⁸⁰ There is the suggestion that Levine took his ideas from the comic writer Tom Sharpe who wrote Indecent Exposure in the 1970s. The book was a parody of South Africa’s white policemen in the fictional town of Piemburg who were subjected to shock therapy while looking at pictures of naked, black women, in order to deter them from having sexual relations with black women. In the book the police become homosexual after receiving aversion therapy. However, it is likely that Dr Levine had started using electric shock therapy before the book was published.

¹⁸¹ ‘Commission to Hear of Electric Shock Therapy for Gay Conscripts’, The Star, (17 June 1997) (AM 2757, E. Articles, GALA), n.p.

¹⁸² ‘The Abuse of Psychiatry in the SADF. ‘I am First a Soldier and then a Psychiatrist’,’ p 11.

¹⁸³ Transcript of Interview 8. Interview with Trudie Grobler for ‘Aversion Project.’

¹⁸⁴ Trudie felt that her training in the army did not prepare her to work as a private psychiatrist because she did not experience a variety of cases and would consequently not know what to do in private practice.

¹⁸⁵ Transcript of Interview 8. Interview with Trudie Grobler for ‘Aversion Project.’

¹⁸⁶ Ibid.

knew nothing about the patients. It was as if Levine was against medical practitioners.¹⁸⁷ That is, “there was a total lack of anything approaching positive counselling.”¹⁸⁸

Once admitted to the ward the ‘patient’s’ clothes were confiscated and he was given pyjamas and a dressing gown, to prevent him from escaping. Security at Ward 22 was tight and consequently few secrets emerged.¹⁸⁹ The Ward appeared to function completely independently.¹⁹⁰ The opinion of many people who worked with Levine was that he felt absolutely nothing for other people, including his patients. He was apparently especially non-sympathetic to the plight of white, gay men in the army. When some people spoke about him they said that he was a psychopath. For some that tried to get close to him there was no emotional attachment from his side.¹⁹¹

My perception is that Levine was a very strong-willed, powerful personality and people did what he commanded. “If Dr V had to be called to something like a TRC hearing, he could walk all over them (like Craig Williamson). He is not a stupid man.”¹⁹² Although conscripts, or their parents, had to ‘consent’ to treatment; it was almost impossible for them to refuse the powerful colonel.¹⁹³ It was Levine’s regime¹⁹⁴ and there are no positive connotations regarding his treatment of gay soldiers, either by the media or interviewees.¹⁹⁵ Dr Levine defends his use of aversion therapy, which was an acceptable therapy according to the thinking of the time,¹⁹⁶ but denies that any shock treatment was given while he was in charge because, he says, that would be Russian communist-style torture.¹⁹⁷ What he practised, he explains, was aversion therapy, which caused a “slight – very slight – discomfort in the arm by contracting the muscles using an electronic device

¹⁸⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸⁸ The Abuse of Psychiatry in the SADF, ‘I am First a Soldier and then a Psychiatrist’, p 15.

¹⁸⁹ Kirk, ‘Mutilation by the Military’, p 4.

¹⁹⁰ A psychologist from 1 Mil. in Barrell, ‘Levine Used Drugs and Electric Shocks to ‘Cure’ Gay Men’, p 5.

¹⁹¹ Transcript of Interview 8. Interview with Trudie Grobler for ‘The Aversion Project.’

¹⁹² Transcript of interview 13 with psychologist Harry Donald in van Zyl et al, ‘The Aversion Project’, p 2.

¹⁹³ According to one of Levine’s medical orderlies in Vernon, ‘Troopie Tells of Gay ‘Torture Horror’’, n.p.

¹⁹⁴ The Abuse of Psychiatry in the SADF, ‘I am First a Soldier and then a Psychiatrist’, p 14.

¹⁹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁹⁶ Prof. Gillis in A Project of GALA and SAHA, ‘Gays in the Apartheid Military’, p 6.

¹⁹⁷ Kirk, ‘Mutilation by the Military’, p 5. Dr Levine says he has no regrets and the allegations against him are preposterous. (Vernon, ‘Troopie Tells of Gay Torture Horror’, n.p).

... Nobody was hurt.”¹⁹⁸ He says he did not use electric shocks; he gave his patients adomorphine, a pain-reducing substance, with the aid of a battery-operated device. Levine says he used reciprocal inhibition aversion therapy: verbally describing women in positive terms and flashing pornographic pictures at soldiers to treat them. He says he did not use white, homosexual men like human guinea pigs. The only homosexual men he worked with were patients who wanted to be ‘cured’ and had ‘volunteered’ for therapy.¹⁹⁹

Many white, gay conscripts describe what they went through at the hands of Levine differently:

Electrodes were strapped to the arms of the subject, and wires leading from these were in turn connected to a machine operated by a dial calibrated from one to ten. The subject was then shown black and white pictures of a naked man and encouraged to fantasize.

The increase in the current would cause the muscles of the forearm to contract – an intensely painful sensation. When the subject was either screaming with pain or verbally requested that the dial be turned off, the current would be stopped and a colour *Playboy* centerfold substituted for the previous pictures ...

[The doctor] would then verbally describe the woman portrayed in glowing and positive terms. This process would be repeated three times in a single session. Sessions were held twice daily for three to four days. People subjected to this therapy experienced long periods of disorientation afterwards.²⁰⁰

Rory also experienced Dr Levine’s treatment first hand. Rory was sent to Ward 22 in the early 1970s but he did not know why he was there and remembers very little of his five to six weeks stay, except that he was drugged.²⁰¹ He feels it was more convenient for the

¹⁹⁸ Vernon, ‘Troopie Tells of Gay Torture Horror’, n.p.

¹⁹⁹ Kirk, ‘Mutilation by the Military’, p 5.

²⁰⁰ The Abuse of Psychiatry in the SADF, ‘I am First a Soldier and Then a Psychiatrist’ p 73. Although most of the oral accounts describe how horrific it was being in the hands of Levine and his therapy one soldier did not seem to view his shock therapy as abuse: “it happened only once and was not so bad that I lost my teeth or a limb at all.” (IV16:1, primary oral source in van Zyl et al, ‘The Aversion Project’, p 74.)

²⁰¹ Transcript of interview 6 with Rory in van Zyl et al, ‘The Aversion Project’, p 2.

staff to drug the patients than counsel them. Rory does not remember what treatment he was given but does not believe he underwent aversion therapy. However, Trudie Grobler thought he had. “His overwhelming recollections of the ward were ‘it was a very oppressive milieu’, ‘one thing I know, it was a Hórrrible, Hórrrible (sic) time’ ... I cannot remember a time when I felt so vulnerable.”²⁰² Rory’s parents tried to find out more information from Dr Levine but their

encounter with (Levine) was very brief, and very very unpleasant. We could get no information from anyone, there was never any medical report, and nobody was available to talk to us ... We saw (Levine) for no more than 3 minutes. All he said, and I remember his words as clear as daylight ‘While your son is in the army, he is the property of the state.’ When we tried to get information, he said ‘I owe you nothing ...’ We felt totally helpless and powerless.²⁰³

Sichma also went to the psychiatric ward at 1 Mil. where he too, was heavily sedated. “Within a few days he had broken down to nothing.”²⁰⁴ Sichma’s parents also spoke to Dr Levine but got nowhere:

We spoke to Dr (Levine) on a few occasions, on the phone and the one time I got to see him, I remember him standing there and he was shaking his head and all he was saying was ‘What’s happening to our boys?’ I felt like he was belittling me, telling me that I was treating my child like a baby. But I could see S(ichma) was going under.²⁰⁵

According to Sichma’s parents

the chaps in the ward were in such a daze, they were in a complete dwaal. Our son’s friend said afterwards: ‘Mrs R, we were so drugged, that we didn’t know half the time where we were or how many days had passed’. All we know is that [our son] was so drugged his eyes were glazed, his skin was dull and his speech was slurred.²⁰⁶

²⁰² Ibid.

²⁰³ Transcript of interview 7 with Rory (snr) in van Zyl et al, ‘The Aversion Project’, p 1.

²⁰⁴ Transcript of interview 9 with parents of Sichma in van Zyl et al, ‘The Aversion Project’, p 2.

²⁰⁵ Ibid, p 3.

²⁰⁶ Ibid.

Clive did his military training from July 1973 to April 1974.²⁰⁷ He was confused about his sexual orientation so the army doctor suggested he see Dr Levine. Clive also described his experience of shock therapy:

I think I was there for four to five weeks. I was sent back, and I had to come back once or twice a month until I 'klaared' out, which was in April. And these sessions would last for about an hour. And he'd show you pictures from *Boy* magazines or something like that, and then you talk about it, tell him what you thought. And while you were talking the electric stuff and the sensation on your arms would start and then it would become very painful. It kind of like twisted the muscle. I don't know whether it ... how the mechanics of that works. But it was just like when you were kids you used to do those donkey bites where you twist the muscle in opposite directions – well it's like that. And when you kind of reached the maximum point and then you'd say 'No, no, no, I couldn't stand it any more' then he (usually Levin) would say, 'Now you must think about your girlfriend' and all that sort of (sic) off the wall statements.²⁰⁸

Clive called his experience experimentation.²⁰⁹

According to Levine the therapy he used was given to all his four hundred and fifty patients, of whom only nine were gay.²¹⁰ However, research disputes this. Interviews conducted by the 'The Aversion Project', South African newspapers, Resister, and the TRC suggest that Levine treated more than nine gay soldiers.

Levine also used narco-analysis-treatment in Ward 11 at 1 Mil. In spy novels this is called the truth drug. This type of treatment was supposed to be used on people in severe catatonic or mute states. A slow injection of a drug was administered to the patient so he could be questioned while on the borderline between consciousness and unconsciousness. However, Levine did not use narco-analysis on catatonic people only. Harold, who experienced this treatment had 1 Mil., was subjected to narco-analysis treatment even though he had absolutely no difficulty with expressing his feelings. He said Levine was

²⁰⁷ He later defected to Holland where he was involved in the anti-apartheid struggle.

²⁰⁸ IV1:2, primary oral source in van Zyl et al, 'The Aversion Project', p 76.

²⁰⁹ Ibid.

²¹⁰ Thiel, 'Doctor Shock: I Gave them Drugs', n.p.

trying to drive him crazy and this treatment was the rule, rather than the exception.²¹¹ J.J. has also heard of gay men in the early 1970s being given medication or drugs to cure them.²¹²

Some white, gay SADF patients who had been in the military psychiatric wards described their stay as: “the worst time of my life” and “a period I want to put behind me.”²¹³ Clive said he “was actually just completely freaked out ... and confused.”²¹⁴ Shock therapy had long-term physical effects. Some became depressed, others developed a sense of self-loathing. One patient “suffered from migraines, photosensitivity, and an endocrinological condition.”²¹⁵ Sichma was diagnosed with epilepsy after being treated at 1 Mil. and could not stand the glare of light. “The boy who went away to the army was a very damaged person when he came back.”²¹⁶ Rory said that after he was discharged it took him months to get off the medication he received because he had become addicted. Another consequence of being in the psychiatric ward was the hopelessness. Every day, he said, you felt a little worse about yourself.²¹⁷

Dr Levine said while he was at 1 Mil. the hospital had a good reputation, but once he left this was not the case “and there certainly were soldiers who were abused after I left.”²¹⁸

²¹¹ H. Barrell, ‘Levine used Drugs and Electric Shocks to ‘Cure’ Gay Men, Mail & Guardian, (28 July to 3 Aug. 2000), p 5.

²¹² Questionnaire filled in by J.J.

²¹³ The Abuse of Psychiatry in the SADF, ‘I am First a Soldier and Then a Psychiatrist’ p 80.

²¹⁴ Transcript of interview 1 with Clive in van Zyl et al, ‘The Aversion Project’, p 2.

²¹⁵ IV6:1, primary oral source in van Zyl et al, ‘The Aversion Project’, p 80.

²¹⁶ Transcript of interview 9 with Mr and Mrs Roberts (not their real name), parents of Sichma in van Zyl et al, ‘The Aversion Project’, p 4.

²¹⁷ Transcript of interview 6 with Rory in M. van Zyl et al, ‘The Aversion Project’, p 2. Another consequence of homophobia in the SADF, but not necessarily directly related to treatment in the psychiatric wards, was suicide. Suicide was often the answer for some who could not handle being in the SADF. Suicides and attempted suicides were an embarrassment for the army. In 1981 suicide became a notifiable disease in the SADF and an average of 14 military suicides were officially reported by the army per year. However, official SADF records and South African newspapers counted higher numbers than that. In 1986 there were 429 suicide attempts and 24 successful suicides. In 1985, 260 soldiers attempted suicide and 16 succeeded. In 1988 there were 344 suicide attempts and 21 deaths. (Cock, Colonels and Cadres, p 80). Of course not all suicide victims were homosexual, but some were: “I knew a guy who committed suicide in the army. He hanged himself while we were at supper. I think he was a ‘moffie’. Everybody picked on him and made him their scapegoat.” (Informant 104 in Cock, Colonels and Cadres, p 80). Many of the SAMS personnel were gay and they knew of suicides that were gay-related.

²¹⁸ Thiel, ‘Doctor Shock: I Gave them Drugs’, n.p.

But aversion therapy seems to have stopped when Dr Levine left 1 Mil. Ward 22 closed down, instead it was used as a physiotherapy unit for soldiers suffering from limb injuries. Evidence therefore suggests that aversion shock therapy was purely Levine's project.

Dr Levine was able to employ aversion therapy because he was working for the Department of Defence, or more specifically the SAMS, and was therefore bound by SADF policy on homosexuality. Both the homophobia of some in the SADF and the confines of the SAMS aided him in his electric shock therapy, as well as the 1960s and 1970s legislation supporting the SADF.

Levine has a history of suspicious behaviour, which continued even after he left the SADF. After leaving the army Dr Levine was the head of psychiatry at the University of the Orange Free State where he also treated conscripts and other military personnel. He then became the clinical head of the psychiatric ward of Fort England Psychiatric Hospital in Grahamstown. Harry Donald, a psychologist who worked with Dr Levine at Fort England, said Levine made no secret of his activities in the SADF and often boasted about them.²¹⁹ Rumours circulated that Dr Levine had "taught guys to masturbate" and he would watch the soldiers masturbate over the Hustler magazine.²²⁰ There was also talk that he had sexually molested patients at Fort England. Some patients said they thought they had been undressed and molested after they had been drugged.²²¹

Following the Fort England post Levine became the NP government head of mental health for the whole of South Africa. In the late 1970s he was transferred to Addington Hospital in Durban which he later left because of allegations that he had molested children. According to the SAHA project, while Levine was at Addington Hospital a complaint by a young man was lodged against him, accusing him of committing "indecent acts"²²² on him and another man. One complainant's father said it was obvious

²¹⁹ Transcript of interview 13 with psychologist Donald in van Zyl et al, 'The Aversion Project', p 1.

²²⁰ Van Zyl et al, 'The Aversion Project'.

²²¹ A Project of GALA and SAHA, 'Gays in the Apartheid Military'.

²²² Ref. A1.18, 3 April 1979 in A GALA and SAHA Project, 'Gays in the Military', p 7.

the “consultation had degenerated into an overt homosexual advance.”²²³ SAHA edited this information about the accusation against Levine, and quite thoroughly so. The following detail I include is from the original SAHA work, which is not included in the final copy found on their website. Levine fought the accusation. One of the complainants said a Dr Cheetham and a Dr Edwards coerced him into making the original complaint against Levine. SAHA took this documentation to Mr Michael Simpson, a retired professor and human rights activist whose specialisation includes psychiatry and family practice. He believes what Levine says is “deeply suspect” and the nurse Levine quotes is hard to believe.²²⁴ He also says that although Dr Cheetham did not like Levine, he doubts Cheetham would have encouraged an unstable patient to concoct a false story.²²⁵ He is also suspicious of the SAMDC’s responses: they are “inexplicable.”²²⁶ The SAMDC apparently overlooked the complaint that Cheetham and Edwards had encouraged perjury to damage Levine. Regarding other details of the accusation Simpson says it is very odd that Levine was carrying a tube of antiseptic cream and not only did he offer to apply it to the complainant’s penis (it was sore from too much masturbating), he actually did so.²²⁷

Other Unofficial Extreme SADF Practices

According to ‘The Aversion Project’, Dr Levine as well as other doctors could not be classified as simply a few bad apples in an otherwise reputable system. Rather, they were part of a health system, all of which disrespected human rights.²²⁸ This is perhaps not an altogether accurate statement by ‘The Aversion Project’ in that there was personnel at 1 Mil. and members of the SAMS who were thought to be gay-friendly. Although there does seem to be a consensus that Dr Levine was the extremist of extreme practices.

²²³ Ibid.

²²⁴ SAHA e-mail correspondence with Simpson, 15 May 2003 in A Project of GALA and SAHA, ‘Gays in the Apartheid Military’, 27 June 2003, (unedited version), p 8.

²²⁵ Ibid.

²²⁶ Ibid.

²²⁷ Ibid. In the mid-1990s Levine immigrated to Canada where he now works in the forensic department at the University of Calgary.

²²⁸ ‘The Aversion Project’ in L. Ensor, ‘SA Army Psychiatrist ‘Shocked, Tortured Gay Men,’ n.p.

Another project of Dr Levine's was Greefswald, a farm in the Northern Transvaal. "Certainly in the Greefswald file, his name comes up repeatedly as the person Greefswald staff perceived as being in charge."²²⁹ Although Greefswald is seen by some as Levine's creation,²³⁰ the SAHA project confirmed that Levine was central to Greefswald, but not its creator.²³¹ Levine's visits to Greefswald are only recorded from November 1971 but there is one report that mentions him prior to that so he must have been visiting, or communicating, with Greefswald earlier.²³² One conscript who was sent by Levine from 1 Mil. to Greefswald said Levine's visits were fleeting. In fact he did not think Levine was aware of what was going on; this conscripts perception was that Levine was more of a visitor. However, here Levine initiated a drug treatment programme. Inmates were isolated from their family and friends for three months made to do hard labour to keep their minds off drugs, mainly dagga. Strenuous physical exercise exhausted the patients and prevented them from thinking about drugs. Even the buildings and facilities at Greefswald were built by the inmates. Conditions at Greefswald were brutal and there was no resident psychiatrist.²³³ During interviews Levine "talked about sex and everything else but there was no treatment."²³⁴ Greefswald carried the stigma of being a punishment camp rather than one of rehabilitation.²³⁵

Greefswald also catered for SADF gay men. One gay soldier said he felt out of place at Greefswald because he did not need psychiatric help, unlike some of the patients there. "One had the feeling that you were really in with the dregs, the freak show."²³⁶ One patient continuously walked up and down the same strip of corridor and received shock therapy for his behaviour. Some gay men also received shock therapy at Greefswald. Nick had originally gone to Greefswald for drug use but ended up being treated for homosexuality.

²²⁹ A Project of GALA and SAHA, 'Gays in the Apartheid Military', p 11.

²³⁰ Ibid, p 10.

²³¹ Ibid, p 14.

²³² Ibid, p 11.

²³³ The Abuse of Psychiatry in the SADF, 'I am First a Soldier and then a Psychiatrist,' p 14.

²³⁴ A Project of GALA and SAHA, 'Gays in the Apartheid Military', p 12.

²³⁵ Ibid, p 13.

²³⁶ IV1:5, primary oral source in van Zyl et al, 'The Aversion Project', p 69.

There was a doctor there (at Greefswald) who they were all pretty scared of. The guys were all trapped inside this camp, and there was no leave or anything. They were really prisoners in the camp. And what the doctor used to do, was to show ... pornographic pictures of men, and if he (the soldier) got an erection, then he used to give him an electric shock.²³⁷

Greefswald also utilised heavy sedation. Dr Levine was known to have given patients drug doses of up to 60mg Valium intravenously.²³⁸

It seems Greefswald was a scare tactic and the psychiatrists at 1 Mil. were prepared to use it: "if you didn't co-operate, there was always that unstated, but nonetheless very real threat that you would be dispatched to *Greefswald*. So you'd better just co-operate with this guy because he could make your life REALLY miserable."²³⁹

Other SADF doctors and district surgeons elsewhere also tortured detainees, mental patients, and drug addicts. "There were also many suspicious deaths covered up by the army. It is well-nigh impossible to say how many victims were gay."²⁴⁰ Neil, however, felt that many of these SADF murder victims were gay: "I am quite convinced that quite a few murders of gay people took place which we will never know of, and it was covered up. That, and that when people got trigger happy, gay men was (sic) often the brunt of the bullet."²⁴¹ District surgeons allegedly covered up the torture of detainees and refused adequate health care to political prisoners. Some forensic pathologists supposedly covered up deaths of soldiers in police custody, and the role of military doctors in their treatment of civilians and captured guerrillas during the Namibian and Angolan wars leaves much to be desired.²⁴² It was therefore not only Dr Levine who seemed to have *carte blanche* in the medical unit of the SADF. There were countless serious injustices,

²³⁷ IV3:1, primary oral source in van Zyl et al, 'The Aversion Project', p 68.

²³⁸ Ibid, p 69.

²³⁹ IV1:2, primary oral source in van Zyl et al, 'The Aversion Project', p 76.

²⁴⁰ Van Zyl et al, 'The Aversion Project', p 58.

²⁴¹ Transcript of interview 14 with Neil in van Zyl et al, 'The Aversion Project', p 3. This is not an obscure notion. One of the heterosexual respondents of my questionnaire, Mr Ivan Bailey, knew of men (not gay men) who had been killed by the army because they were non-conformist or weak. This information never left the army base.

²⁴² Ensor, 'SA Army Psychiatrist 'Shocked, Tortured Gay Men,' n.p. and 'Health Sector's Role Under

which the system made possible.²⁴³ There were very few checks and balances when it came to the medical organs of the SADF.

Another extreme measure used by the SADF to cure white, homosexual men was sex-change surgery. According to surgeons about fifty sex change operations were carried out each year from 1971 to 1989.²⁴⁴ “Former apartheid army surgeons estimate that as many as 900 forced sex reassignment operations may have been performed.”²⁴⁵ However, not all were successful, many were partial or failed, and a number of patients died during their operations. Such operations were performed at many military hospitals, including 1 Mil, and Tempe military hospital. At 1 Mil. Levine and his team referred conscripts to army surgeons, who performed the operations.²⁴⁶ One conscript, Jonathan, accepted this SADF offer of a sex change and the operation was completed. Mary, however, is stranded half way between sexes. She was born female and began the sex-change surgery but was discharged from the army before the procedure was completed.²⁴⁷

Antithetical Attitude Regarding the SADF in the 1980s.

The patterning of relations within an institution creates a gender regime. The patterning of gender regimes in turn creates a gender order of society. Both are historical products and subject to change.²⁴⁸ During the 1980s there was a change in the treatment of white, gay men in the SADF. Shock therapy no longer existed²⁴⁹ and Levine had left. By 1982 Ward 22's paint on the corrugated roof was peeling, windowpanes were broken, and the doors were nailed shut.²⁵⁰ But this did not mean the SADF tolerated homosexuality.

Apartheid to be Examined', The Star, (17 June 1997), (AM 2757, E. Aricles, GALA), n.p.

²⁴³ Ensor, 'SA Army Psychiatrist 'Shocked, Tortured Gay Men'', n.p.

²⁴⁴ Kirk, '“Freeks’ Offered a Chance to Change’, p 4.

²⁴⁵ D. Betteridge, 'Sexual Orientation and Law Reform: Where are the Transsexuals?', (IASSCS Sex and Secrecy Conference, July 2003), p 6.

²⁴⁶ Kirk, '“Freeks’ Offered a Chance to Change’, p 4. Levine denied that sex-change operations had ever been performed at 1 Mil. He said that the political climate in the 1970s and 80s would not have allowed such surgery. (Mail & Guardian, 18 July to 3 Aug. 2000).

²⁴⁷ Ibid.

²⁴⁸ Connell, The Men and the Boys, p 29.

²⁴⁹ The shock machine was in the stores in 1985. ('The Aversion Project', p 77).

²⁵⁰ K. Prinsloo, 'Border Story' in M. Krouse (ed), The Invisible Ghetto, (Cosaw Publishing, Johannesburg, 1993), p 136.

Most soldiers still considered homosexuality a disease,²⁵¹ gay soldiers were “non human (sic),”²⁵² and some believed the army was still very homophobic in the 1980s: “hating moffies was part of our value system.”²⁵³ The NP government passed a directive in 1982, which aimed to eliminate homosexuality in the army.²⁵⁴ However, at ground level there were unofficial whisperings of dissatisfaction and non-conformity by white, gay soldiers while, as can be seen by some of the responses to my questionnaires, some white, heterosexual soldiers supported them.

Aversion therapy had been discontinued at 1 Mil, but the ‘treatment’ of homosexuality appears to have continued elsewhere. Kobus Joubert, who filled in my questionnaire, was very uncomfortable answering this question. He says he knows of white, gay men who were given medication by the SADF to ‘cure’ them but he refused to elaborate on the subject.²⁵⁵ He had top secret clearance while he was in the army so he was privy to information my other respondents were not. According to ‘The Aversion Project’ one patient was given tablets – possibly sex hormones – at another military hospital. In effect this caused his chemical castration.²⁵⁶ This was the project of Dr Reynders who, according to J.J., was known to degrade gay men and make straight soldiers think gay men were sick.²⁵⁷ That, however, was all J.J. knew about Dr Reynders and no one else who answered my questionnaire had heard of him.²⁵⁸ Newspapers commenting on the TRC investigation into the abuses of soldiers did not mention him either. Perhaps the use of aversion shock therapy was perceived to be far more detrimental than chemical castration. Nonetheless aversion therapy continued.

Neil, a gay SADF soldier, was subjected to hormonal experimentation. He completed his degree in psychology in 1979 but was rejected for an honours degree because he was gay.

²⁵¹ Interview with Craig, (5 June 2002).

²⁵² Questionnaire filled in by Loë.

²⁵³ Questionnaire filled in by Ungerer.

²⁵⁴ Policy Directive No HSAW/1/13/82 (28 April 1982), ‘HSAW Beleidsdirektief: Dissipline: Homoseksualisme/Lesbieïsme’. See p 138.

²⁵⁵ Interview with K. (Joubert, 13 Oct. 2003, Johannesburg, 3:30pm).

²⁵⁶ Van Zyl et al, ‘The Aversion Project’, p vi.

²⁵⁷ Questionnaire filled in by J.J.

²⁵⁸ Informal interview with J.J.

He then approached the counselling bureau at his university and they, as well as some of his non-homophobic lecturers, as he describes them, referred him to Dr Reynders for evaluation, to decide whether or not he could go to the army. Neil was accepted into the army where Dr Reynders gave him tablets. He believes what was started by Dr Levine was carried on in worse form by Dr Reynders.²⁵⁹ He was subjected to hormonal tampering about which he was given no information and for which he did not give consent. “I was given tablets to drink which had no name or substance on it ... I do not know what the substance was that he gave, all I know is that it changed my life forever.”²⁶⁰

Neil wanted to leave the army and had to plead to get a letter that would allow him to see an army social worker. Finally the army sent Neil home because “they were too scared to carry on with that ... By that time I was psychologically and hormonally and physiologically damaged.”²⁶¹ He looked like a woman.²⁶²

Contrary to ‘The Aversion Project’ many white, ex-soldiers I spoke to did not believe that any elements in the SADF carried out any questionable practices in the 1980s.²⁶³ Craig was adamant there was no such thing as gay men being drugged or being given medication to cure them.²⁶⁴ However, the reality is that the SAMS at 1 Mil. continued with unethical medical practices late into the 1980s. Greefswald was replaced with another treatment centre at Magaliesoord, which was considered a concentration camp²⁶⁵

²⁵⁹ Transcript of interview 5 with Neil in van Zyl et al, ‘The Aversion Project’, p 3.

²⁶⁰ Ibid, p 2.

²⁶¹ IV5:1, primary oral source in van Zyl et al, ‘The Aversion Project’, p 82.

²⁶² PC5:5, primary oral source in van Zyl et al, ‘The Aversion Project’, p 83.

²⁶³ Some soldiers did not like me defiling their army experience. One gay ex-conscript said I was talking rubbish and was quite angry with me for insisting that such activities had occurred, because the army had treated him very well. However, he was later prepared to answer my questionnaire. All the questionnaire recipients and interviewees responded “no” to the question “do you know of any human rights abuses against gay men by health personnel in the SADF?” I don’t think they considered the forcing of gay men to go for therapy in the 1980s as a human rights abuse. It was possibly just a norm. Willie asked me not to ask him what happened when gay soldiers went to the psychologists. Typical Willie, however, avoided therapy by pretending to be “straight whenever it was necessary.” (Interview with Willie Bronkhorst, 5 Jan. 2002). Willie did his National Service from 1984 to 1986 at Klipdrift, where he was a medical Corporal in the SAMS.

²⁶⁴ Interview with Craig.

²⁶⁵ Ibid.

and “a funny place where nobody sees you or hears about you and there’s no way out.”²⁶⁶ Both military and civilian drug users worked in the fields. Magaliesoord was closed in the mid-1980s and replaced by the Klipdrift Personal Recovery Centre near Potchesfroom. Such work camps were failures because the drug abuse continued; at both Greefswald and Magaliesoord the inmates grew their own dagga in the surrounding fields and hills.²⁶⁷

Masculinity “must be proved, and no sooner is it proved that it is again questioned and must be proved again – constant, relentless, unachievable.”²⁶⁸ This also seems to be the basis of approach of some in the SADF. Supposedly the SADF policy on homosexuality became a lot clearer in 1982. The army issued a restricted policy directive, which outlined SADF policy towards homosexuality: all possible steps were to be taken to combat the phenomenon of homosexuality in the army. During the recruitment process care was to be taken that persons with such behavioural disorders were not admitted to the PF.²⁶⁹ “Conscripts would have (had) much greater leeway whereas PF would (have been) scrutinised and picked out if they were suspected homosexuals – I’m sure there were exceptions though.”²⁷⁰ The Directive stated that the phenomenon of homosexuality in the SADF was becoming more evident. This defiled the SADF’s image, undermined discipline, and encouraged blackmail, which was imagined to be a security risk. Hence such behavioural ‘deviations’ in a military environment were totally unacceptable, according to the Directive. Although the SADF did not want a witch-hunt, which would embarrass the army, it did want everything possible to be done to combat the ‘problem’. When a potential PF soldier was interviewed if the interviewing officer believed the applicant to be gay the matter was referred to a clinical psychologist at one of the military hospitals. If a gay man was already a member of the PF an officer informed the soldier

²⁶⁶ Interview with Willie, (5 Jan. 2002, Johannesburg, 11:00pm).

²⁶⁷ The Abuse of Psychiatry in the SADF, ‘I am First a Soldier and Then a Psychiatrist’.

²⁶⁸ M. Kimmel, ‘Masculinity as Homophobia: Fear, Shame, and Silence in the Construction of Gender Identity’ in H. Brod, M. Kaufman (eds), *Theorizing Masculinities*, (Sage, Thousand Oaks, London, 1994), p 122.

²⁶⁹ SADF: Viljoen, C.L. (General – Head of the Army). Restricted circulation paper. Policy Directive No HSAW/1/13/82 (28 April 1982), ‘HSAW Beleidsdirektief: Dissipline: Homoseksualisme/Lesbieïsme’ in M. van Zyl et al, ‘The Aversion Project’, p 46.

²⁷⁰ E-mail from Conway.

he was under suspicion. The SAMS and the army chaplains then dealt with the case. The surgeon general also provided counselling to the gay soldier and advice to commanding officers on how to fight the 'evil'.²⁷¹ The PF soldier was warned and given guidance and his security clearance reassessed. If the gay soldier insisted on continuing with this behaviour the Directive instructed he was to be charged and dismissed.²⁷² For national servicemen if there was suspicion of homosexuality the soldier was warned. He could not be dismissed but disciplinary action would be taken and such men were posted where there was little chance of them practising their deviance or influencing or giving offence. I believe this policy directive gave many in the SADF's psychiatric unit a large amount of freedom with almost no control over them.

This Directive seems to have been unsuccessful: none of my questionnaire respondents or those I interviewed about their army life in the 1980s had heard of it, except for Joubert, who had seen it.²⁷³ Col. Ungerer had not heard of the Directive and felt there could not have been a strict policy of eliminating white, homosexual men from the army because there was never any publicity on the issue, at least not by the army itself. However, some white soldiers in their personal capacities had heard rumours about what happened to gay men or stories of what their peers (or they themselves) had done to white, gay soldiers.²⁷⁴ Some straight soldiers felt such a directive was moot; it was unnecessary to have official policy discriminating against gay soldiers because they did not fit in the army anyway.²⁷⁵ With or without such a policy these straight soldiers felt they or the army would root out gay men. Yet Willie was called back to camps in the late 1980s so the army had still not recognised him as gay. Greyling believed "the system worked the way it was designed to. The system sorted them out."²⁷⁶ Willie beat the system.

²⁷¹ A Project of GALA and SAHA, 'Gays in the Apartheid Military', p 32

²⁷² Ibid. Lesbians, however, could also

be asked to resign as opposed to automatically being dismissed.

²⁷³ Interview with Joubert.

²⁷⁴ Interview with Ungerer.

²⁷⁵ Questionnaire filled in by Greyling. Tongue-in-cheek, Craig felt that gay men should not be eliminated from the SADF because they could be utilised by falling in love with the enemy and extracting information: "don't shoot me – you're cute!"

²⁷⁶ Questionnaire filled in by Greyling.

Many in the SADF felt white homosexuality was on the increase; in civilian life and in the army, and it undermined discipline.²⁷⁷ Hence the Directive. Many of my respondents who had been in the army in the 1980s did not agree with the latter:²⁷⁸ gay men “are the same as any other person,”²⁷⁹ “being gay is not so strange.”²⁸⁰ Elements in the SADF, however, were trying to maintain the definition of the hegemonic masculinity. It also felt white homosexuality led to security risks, therefore the 1982 Directive was issued. Again some of my respondents also disagreed.²⁸¹ But those interviewed in ‘The Aversion Therapy’ had experienced the SADF’s fear. Karel Hough, a SAMS worker in 1986, told of a lieutenant who wanted to become an intelligence officer. During this officer’s interview his superiors asked him if he had had sex with men. He confirmed this and said he was involved with a man. He was turned down for intelligence, because he could be blackmailed. He was also stripped of his rank. I argue that the reasoning of some in the SADF was ignorant. It is the gay man who is out of the closet who cannot be blackmailed and therefore poses no security risk. As long as many within the SADF insisted white, gay men were not welcome they would be a potential security risk. They had to hide their sexual orientation and could therefore become victims of intimidation.²⁸² Charles, interviewed in ‘The Aversion Project’ said he knew men who were married with children and ambassadors who were having homosexual relations in the SADF. Those were the people who were the security risk. The issue, however, was not only security but also the fact that white homosexuality threatened the masculine, heterosexist ideology of the army.²⁸³ Blackmail was the ‘other’ some in the SADF feared, not security leaks. Elements within the SADF could not accept that someone it had to rely on regarding army intelligence did not conform to its definition of a typical white man.

²⁷⁷ SADF: Viljoen, Restricted circulation paper. Policy Directive No HSAW/1/13/82 (28 April 1982), ‘HSAW Beleidsdirektief: Disipline: Homoseksualisme/Lesbieïsme’ in M. van Zyl et al, ‘The Aversion Project’, p 46.

²⁷⁸ Questionnaires filled in by Joubert, Belo, Loë, and Ungerer.

²⁷⁹ Questionnaire filled in by Belo.

²⁸⁰ Questionnaire filled in by Joubert.

²⁸¹ Interview with Willie and Craig.

²⁸² Questionnaire filled in by Dempsey.

²⁸³ Van Zyl et al, ‘The Aversion Project’.

In the 1980s there seems to have been very little knowledge of what had happened in the army in the 1970s. The only activity Col. Ungerer knew of regarding 1 Mil. was that “the nurses were cheap and the NCO’s females as well.”²⁸⁴ None of the soldiers in Ward 24 during the 1980s had witnessed or heard of aversion therapy and neither had the respondents to my questionnaire. It was, however, rumoured that shock treatment was used on soldiers who had gone AWOL, “but not against gay men.”²⁸⁵ The chief psychologist for the SADF in Bloemfontein in the early 1980s knew nothing of the practice of aversion therapy. According to him, apparently the SADF had never had a policy that regarded homosexuality as a disease, and no gay men had been sent for psychological treatment. Neither had he any knowledge of human rights abuses perpetrated against gay men by health personnel in the Defence Force.²⁸⁶ This is perhaps testimony to the shift in mentality towards gay soldiers by some in the army, including those in positions of authority, in that such treatment was neither conducted as obviously as it had been in the 1970s and neither was the past spoken about.

There seems to have been little uniformity in the 1980s regarding the treatment of white, gay soldiers. “There is no one view or one policy because there were so many different command structures – so many different experiences.”²⁸⁷ White, straight soldiers told me that some soldiers in the SADF were not homophobic²⁸⁸ and some gay soldiers said it was.²⁸⁹ Hough said that although white, gay men were not supposed to be officers some were, “so those rules were there, but they were transgressed.”²⁹⁰ Each man’s army experience was dependent of where he was stationed. It was often left up to individual commanders and soldiers to deal with white homosexuality in whichever way they saw fit. Different commanders did treat white, gay soldiers differently “depending what

²⁸⁴ Questionnaire filled in by Ungerer.

²⁸⁵ Interview with Craig. Surprisingly Willie had heard nothing about Levine or shock therapy in the SADF, yet he had worked at 1 Mil. in the SAMS.

²⁸⁶ Van Zyl et al, ‘The Aversion Project’.

²⁸⁷ IV10:4, Hough in van Zyl et al, ‘The Aversion Project’, p 52.

²⁸⁸ Questionnaire filled in by Greyling, interview with Craig. Craig felt that because straight soldiers were comfortable enough to compare their ‘bazookas’ in the shower this was proof enough that there was no homophobia in the SADF.

²⁸⁹ Questionnaire filled in by J.J. and interview with Willie.

²⁹⁰ Transcript of interview 10 with Hough, van Zyl et al, ‘The Aversion Project’, p 6.

section you joined.”²⁹¹ Willie says: “I had a terrible sergeant-major, he was terrible, and he made me sweep his fucking office with a broom – and I don’t sweep, not at all!”²⁹² Willie was also beaten and given blue eyes when other soldiers found out he was gay: “they bliksemed me, my sister.”²⁹³ When he was caught with another man on guard duty “... they fucked us up.”²⁹⁴ Willie said when the other soldiers knew he had fallen in love with another soldier they “bliksemed” him and called him a “moffie” until he went to the border to get away.²⁹⁵ Charles was called up for national service in 1984/5 and found some in the SADF to be extremely homophobic: “at Oudtshoorn it was very hard. You know I am not the army type. Gay men were very suppressed there. You kept quiet about it. It was a torrid time. I can’t begin to tell you what we went through there.”²⁹⁶ J.J. on the other hand felt this homophobic behaviour was the norm in the early 1970s but not so in the late 1970s and 80s.²⁹⁷ Therefore

not every gay is arrested and tried, or insulted and assaulted. But there is an ever-present threat ... it is an open discouragement of any form of queer behaviour ... a form of hidden terrorism against gay men prevails which permeates every echelon of the military environment.²⁹⁸

But possibly in the SADF in the 1980s there was no hidden form of terrorism, rather open discouragement of any form of homosexual behaviour.²⁹⁹ It was made clear to white, gay soldiers by their peers through verbal warnings³⁰⁰ that they were not accepted.³⁰¹ Some were teased, insulted, and beaten up³⁰² but my respondents would not go so far as to say there was a vigilant “terrorist” attack on white, gay soldiers in the 1980s because the “the topic was never overtly discussed in open forums.”³⁰³ It was just their own personal

²⁹¹ Questionnaire filled in by Belo.

²⁹² Interview with Willie.

²⁹³ Ibid.

²⁹⁴ Ibid.

²⁹⁵ Ibid.

²⁹⁶ Transcript of interview 12 with Charles, van Zyl et al, ‘The Aversion Project’, p 2.

²⁹⁷ Questionnaire filled in by J. J.

²⁹⁸ Krouse, ‘The Arista Sisters – September 1984’, p 52.

²⁹⁹ Interview with Willie and Craig, questionnaire filled in by Greyling, Belo, Joubert, Loë.

³⁰⁰ Questionnaire filled in by Ungerer.

³⁰¹ Questionnaire filled in by Belo.

³⁰² Questionnaire filled in by Loë.

³⁰³ Interview with Ungerer and Questionnaire filled in by Belo.

value systems soldiers used to gauge whether or not white homosexuality should be tolerated.³⁰⁴

During the 1980s there was some obvious white, gay acceptance in some units of the SADF. When Willie was in Potchefstroom all the gay soldiers were called into the hall and addressed by gay men who encouraged gay soldiers to stay in the army.³⁰⁵ This is again evidence that treatment differed in terms of where one was stationed. Some heterosexual troops protected the very weak soldiers who were known to be gay.³⁰⁶ When the gay soldiers were punished the straight soldiers stood by them.³⁰⁷ This was, of course, unofficial. Officially homosexuality was not accepted by most in the SADF, and homophobia continued to be openly practised. From Belo's questionnaire I noticed that what I perceived as homophobic he saw as acceptance of white, gay soldiers: the army allocating gay soldiers specific jobs such as in administration and office units, light duty jobs, and in the kitchen. These jobs that supposedly only suited gay men were construed by many in the SADF as acceptance.³⁰⁸ The perceived lesser status jobs, those with feminine connotations, were acceptable jobs for gay men because they too were seen as women by some in the SADF.

According to 'The Aversion Project' some white, heterosexual soldiers even supported their gay colleagues as a means of resistance against the military. I asked Willie and J.J. about this and they were somewhat amused by this statement. They both agreed that their straight colleagues in the army definitely supported gay soldiers, but not in the politically correct way I perceived it. According to Willie the straight soldiers did support him: "very much so ... I gave them blowjobs"³⁰⁹ and now that he looks back he can only call himself a "whore" in the army.³¹⁰ J.J. also felt supported by the straight soldiers because he had a 'straight' corporal lover, but did not want to "talk about all the blowjobs (he)

³⁰⁴ Interview with Ungerer.

³⁰⁵ Willie ended up showering with them!

³⁰⁶ Interview with Craig.

³⁰⁷ Questionnaire filled in by J. J.

³⁰⁸ Questionnaire filled in by Belo.

³⁰⁹ Interview with Willie.

³¹⁰ Ibid.

gave out to frustrated men.”³¹¹ Greyling, however, said he would never have supported a gay soldier, instead he ignored them.³¹²

The Wits gay library houses a very enlightening documentary, ‘Sando to Samantha’, about Sando Willemse, a coloured cross dresser and prostitute, also known as Samantha Fox, who was accepted by his platoon.³¹³ He saw serving in the SADF as a challenge and according to Sando, he was treated like a real lady, troops even carried his equipment for him. He was accepted as gay. Sando says the most vociferously anti-gay soldiers even slept with him. Sando refused to be a clerk, a storeman, work in the kitchen or administration because there were too many gay soldiers there. He wanted to be where the men were.³¹⁴ Sando loved being in the SADF but the army tested him without his permission and announced his HIV positive status to his squad. This resulted in him being dismissed.

There were even all-gay platoons in the SADF in the 1980s. According to Matthew Krouse some in the SADF sniffed out queers.³¹⁵ Gay soldiers were sifted from the heterosexual men and a queer platoon would be left behind and then posted to a border town.³¹⁶

There were two platoons in the SADF that were known to be entirely gay, one in Upington, and the other in Grahamstown. The Upington platoon outperformed other platoons and was eventually disbanded because its power became too much of a threat. There were about twenty-five gay men in this platoon who, J. J. says, “gave the army hell”³¹⁷ in the sense that they were openly gay. “They walked in saying, ‘oh what lovely boys for us, what lovely arses you’ve got.’” Some of these men were consequently

³¹¹ Questionnaire filled in by J.J.

³¹² Questionnaire filled in by Greyling.

³¹³ Video: “Sando to Samantha”, directed by Jack Lewis and Thulani Phungula, (South Africa, 1997, Wits Gay Library).

³¹⁴ Sando in video: “Sando to Samantha”.

³¹⁵ M. Krouse, ‘The Barracks are Crying’ in M. Krouse (ed), *The Invisible Ghetto*, (Cosaw Publishing, Johannesburg, 1993), p 126.

³¹⁶ Ibid, p 128.

³¹⁷ Questionnaire filled in by J. J.

exempted from the army. I think this Upington platoon was a potential threat to the SADF and it was easier to send these gay men home than force them to remain in the SADF. I got the impression from talking to J.J. that gay men knew the Upington platoon was predominantly gay and they played to this, creating an administrative nightmare for the army.³¹⁸ The Grahamstown gay platoon was also powerful. “The army didn’t know what to do with us and so we got away with an awful lot that the military would not really want to admit to.”³¹⁹ Knowledge of such gay platoons, however, seems to be reserved for gay troops only. Greyling, Craig, Ungerer, Joubert, Loë, and Belo, straight ex-soldiers, had not heard of this platoon, and I was told “that’s a stupid question.”³²⁰

Some platoons were simply gay-friendly: “we accepted them. We had a job to do and we did it regardless of race or gender.”³²¹ Charles was in one such platoon and he believed the commander was gay because he looked after the gay soldiers. When the platoon was supposed to stay in a tent the commander took all the straight soldiers out of the bungalow, put them in the tent, and put the gay troops in the bungalow. Willie also considered his platoon to be gay-friendly because he had sex with another man, which the rest of the platoon witnessed and there were no repercussions.³²² Craig also felt that his platoon was gay-friendly: “there was no one with attitude, everyone accepted everyone.”³²³ Greyling, Ungerer, and Loë disagreed. Greyling said his platoon was not gay-friendly because they did not see gay men as real men.³²⁴

Another gay-friendly aspect of the army was The SAMS. It was still common belief that in the 1980s the SAMS was run by gay men:³²⁵ “they were good and did their job, there

³¹⁸ Interview with J.J., 25 Feb. 2004

³¹⁹ IV17:1 van Zyl et al, ‘The Aversion Project’, p 50. Willie had heard of this platoon, “obviously,” because one of his friends, “a common queen” from the platoon had left the army and gotten married. Willie was ready for me to take down this friend’s life story, verbatim, when he leant over my pad of paper and said: “Oh, you’ve only got three lines.” Once, during the interview, I was told by him, “I wasn’t finished with that question.” At times it was difficult for both of us to stay on the topic at hand.

³²⁰ Interview with Craig.

³²¹ Questionnaire filled in by Joubert.

³²² Interview with Willie.

³²³ Interview with Craig.

³²⁴ Questionnaire filled in by Greyling.

³²⁵ Questionnaire filled in by J.J.

were also gay people in the SAMS.”³²⁶ Col. Ungerer explained that some male SAMS personnel “were called tampon tiffies; normally softer men who did not have the guts to serve in the red line.”³²⁷ Major Brian Rainey worked at the SAMS, who, Hough says,

was probably one of the biggest queens that I’ve ever met, and openly introduced himself as such. He had absolutely no qualms about being gay and he was a major in the unit. Also he would prefer it if gay guys worked in his unit ... it’s almost as if he was a broker for gay people in our unit.³²⁸

Major Rainey negotiated for gay soldiers to work for him. Consequently gay men felt comfortable in this unit, so much so they shared beds and had pictures of naked men on their walls. Hough, himself heterosexual, said most of the straight SAMS soldiers accepted these gay men.

Dressing in drag was also sometimes accepted in the army and was justified as traditional entertainment. There was even a group of drag queens that had their own platoon.³²⁹ In the SADF “everything was very butchified, though there were pockets of great queens who was (sic) accepted and got the sewing and the cooking.”³³⁰

Some commanders did not necessarily accept white homosexuality but advocated homosex between the men under their command. In some instances homosexual acts were insisted upon. “At Maritzkop camp ... an NCO ... forced [servicemen] to drop their trousers and ‘commit indecent sexual acts’ with each other.”³³¹ In another situation an officer told a soldier to get undressed and made another soldier get into bed with him. “He wanted to joke around with male-to-male sex. There was a complaint but nothing came of it.”³³² The rationale behind this was bonding and camaraderie.

³²⁶ Questionnaire filled in by Belo.

³²⁷ Interview with Ungerer.

³²⁸ IV10:4, primary oral source in van Zyl et al, ‘The Aversion Project’, p 52.

³²⁹ Interview with Willie. Willie knows they existed because he had showered with them. (He seems to have showered with everyone).

³³⁰ Transcript of interview 14 with Neil in van Zyl et al, ‘The Aversion Project’, p 4.

³³¹ Resister in van Zyl et al, ‘The Aversion Project’, p 53.

Bonding between troops was encouraged for certain cohesion, and things like circle jerk-offs happened ... and more happened on a one-to-one basis. [T]heir theory was that a man would more easily ... in a problem situation salvage or try to help such a comrade.”³³³

None of the respondents of my questionnaires had heard of such bonding behaviour.

From my respondents it does not seem as though compulsory religious instruction was still used in the army in the 80s to justify and explain that homosexuality was wrong.³³⁴ In the units of Belo, Joubert, Loë, and Ungerer there was never any religious instruction regarding homosexuality. If there was such instruction it was done predominantly by the NG Kerk.³³⁵ But even in this rigid sphere of army life there were the beginnings of non-conformity. Hough recalls an incident in the late 1980s where the soldiers did not accept the Church’s teachings on homosexuality:

I remember once there was some religious people (sic)... this is the most explicitly anti-gay thing I can remember in the military ... Religious instruction is compulsory and there is no way of getting away from it. Either they were from the Dutch Reformed Church or Gereformeerde Kerk. They came to speak to us about the Bible and gayness. What the guy said was, basically if you’re a gay guy, it is contrary to the scriptures, and that you should not practice your sexuality, but remain celibate. Afterwards there was a helluva row ... people saying he’s got no right to tell anyone to be celibate. He’s got no right to judge people’s sexuality, and the Bible is not there to condemn people.³³⁶

Willie felt the same way. After being herded into a hall and asked questions by three psychologists and an NG Kerk dominee, he had had enough. He told them he was gay and walked out.³³⁷

³³² IV10:6, primary oral source in van Zyl et al, ‘The Aversion Project’, p 54.

³³³ IV14:3, primary oral source in van Zyl et al, ‘The Aversion Project’, p 53.

³³⁴ Although Hough in ‘The Aversion Project’ said religious instruction was compulsory.

³³⁵ Questionnaire filled in by J.J. and Greyling, and Interview with Willie.

³³⁶ IV8:3, primary oral source in van Zyl et al, ‘The Aversion Project’, p 56.

³³⁷ Interview with Willie.

Masculinity is constructed and the particular construction depends on social, political, and cultural developments.³³⁸ There was perhaps greater unofficial acceptance because hegemonic masculinities were being challenged. By 1984 the racial conflict in South Africa was increasing; the army had to maintain the status quo. More troops had to be deployed and consequently the psychiatric units had other priorities; they had to treat soldiers suffering from the war instead of curing gay men. Greefswald was closed as a rehabilitation camp and in 1985 it became a launching pad for special forces operations against Zimbabwe.

But there were still outstanding questions that needed answering. “The Surgeon General convened a formal board of inquiry into allegations by civilian doctors of widespread and gross negligence and incompetence at Voortrekkerhoogte’s 1 Military Hospital in March 1987...”³³⁹ The findings were not published.

Conclusion

The policy of the South African army regarding white, gay soldiers was based on the maintenance of power, a fear of the ‘other’, and the enforcement of aggressive masculinity. This led to human rights abuses against white, gay men by way of electro-shock therapy and hormone treatment. Although Dr Levine left the country it became official TRC testimony that many in the SADF allowed the abuse of white, gay soldiers in Ward 22 at 1 Mil.

Psychiatry was used by the military as a form of ideological control. Neither the patients, their parents, nor the medical personnel in the psychiatric wards were given information about the treatment white, gay soldiers received, or the consequences thereof. There was no informed consent when white, gay soldiers were admitted to these psychiatric wards, rather coercion. Doctors in the SADF were accountable to the Department of Defence

³³⁸ S. Westwood, ‘Feckless Fathers: Masculinities and the British State’ in Mac an Ghaill, Understanding Masculinities, p 25.

³³⁹ Van Zyl et al, ‘The Aversion Project’, p 40.

and not the Department of Health, which meant, “their allegiances were with a system that was based on an ideology of conflict and war, and not healing.”³⁴⁰

Through various means the SADF maintained masculine hegemony till the 1990s, although by the 1980s there were already incidences where homosexuality was either questioned or outright supported, by both gay and straight soldiers. The hypothesis that because an army rests on aggressive masculinity it is wholly homophobic is most certainly questionable. The level of tolerance of homosexuality, although unofficial, in the SADF by the 1980s existed and many in the army did not view homosexuality in the same light as official policy.

There are those who still maintain “there were no faggots in the army”³⁴¹ but “there was so much macho attitude that maybe they went into hiding.”³⁴² This notion of aggressive masculinity brings this chapter full circle.

By 1996 things had changed, however. The South African National Defence Force (SANDF) published a white paper on national defence, stating that the Constitution provides the framework for democratic civil-military relations, which the SANDF must uphold. Defence policy was in harmony with all other ANC government policy; it is non-discriminatory and respects human rights. Therefore “in accordance with the Constitution, the SANDF shall not discriminate against any of its members on the grounds of sexual orientation.”³⁴³

³⁴⁰ Ibid, p 90.

³⁴¹ Interview with Craig.

³⁴² Ibid.

³⁴³ ‘Defence in a Democracy White Paper on National Defence for the Republic of South Africa’, chapter 3: ‘Civil-Military Relations, Rights and Duties of Military Personnel’, (May 1996), www.mil.za/Articles&Papers/WhitePaperonDef/white.htm, p 15.