

Decline and Fall: Why The South African Civilian Defence Secretariat Was Dissolved In 1966

Deon Fourie •

Abstract

Briefly, between 1912 and 1966 there was an independent Secretary for Defence, described in the Acts and the Permanent Force Regulations as the “Permanent Head of the Department”. Not only was this not true in practice after the establishment in 1918 of the office of Chief of the General Staff (later at various times General Officer Commanding the UDF, Commandant-General and Chief of the SADF) but the meaning of the characterisation was never clearly defined. A minefield of prerogatives and consequent overlapping developed between the two office holders and their staffs. Those attempts at solution all ignored the fundamental constitutional principles behind the establishment of the Secretariat as well as the principles of organizational theory, ambiguity about authority, ministerial failures, the personalities involved and ill-considered appointments and also the failure to exploit the benefits of a Secretariat. After years of conflict, worsened by the demands of the Second World War and recommendations by several committees of enquiries and the Public Service Commission, the Secretariat was taken into the SADF, in a civilian capacity under the Comptroller. Between 1966 and 1968 it was absorbed into the various Staff

-
- Deon Fourie taught Strategic Studies at the University of SA and was a part-time soldier retiring in 1995 as Director Citizen Force Liaison on the Staff of the Chief of the Army. A member of the ministerial Civic Education Evaluation and Advisory Board he participated in drafting tutorial material and the SANDF's Code of Conduct and taught Civil Military Relations at the SA Naval Staff College. Email: dfsfourie@lantic.net

Sections at DHQ. The results were perhaps a mixed blessing. In some areas it was very successful. But many of the defects remained.

Key Words: Accounting Officer, Chief of the General Staff, Executive Commanders, Ministerial policy, Permanent Head, Secretariat, Union Defence Forces.

Introduction

The demand for the reinstatement of a civilian Secretariat of Defence as part of the greater Department of Defence in South Africa after 1994 rested on two assumptions. The first was that during the 1980s, the SADF carried out actions of its own, independently of any control by the civilian political authority in South Africa. The second was that there was no longer any civilian control over the South African Defence Force after the Secretariat was absorbed by the SADF in 1966.¹ The presumed freebooting behaviour was partly blamed on the erroneous supposition that in the absence of a civilian secretariat there could not have been civilian control.² This was not a time for theoretical analysis but for sustaining preconceived arguments.

Various contradictions are implicit in the assumptions. No explanation has been offered as to why the SADF should have needed to act without the authority of the authoritarian National Party government. Journalists, academics and politicians who engaged in the accusations never appeared to be interested in explaining why the National Party's innocence, as the political authority, has been so readily assumed. No one seems ever to have ever questioned why the government remained silent whenever the accusations were levelled against the SADF. It remains to be explained why the National Party government that was responsible for so many reprehensible actions from 1948 onward, should be seen as innocent of responsibility for military attacks across frontiers or other actions blamed on the military commanders. Nor has it ever been explained how there could have been a "palace revolution" against the National Party with no reaction from the Party that otherwise dominated the country from 1948 – least of all when PW Botha ruled. Indeed, it required his suffering a cerebral stroke before there was courage enough in the Cabinet to unseat him. No one has ever explained to what extent the officers' policies and actions diverged

from those of the governing National Party.³

The second assumption relied on the quite erroneous suppositions that civilian control meant control by the civil servants in the Secretariat and that without a civilian department no one could exercise effective control over the armed forces. This assumption seems to be derived from the presence of civilians in armed forces ministries in other countries. It is argued in this article that these suppositions rested on misunderstandings about the relations of the legislature to armed forces and about the roles of civilians in the ministries. In countries such as the United Kingdom, the concept of civilian control has always been that of parliamentary control. The role of civil servants has been to perform particular supervisory duties, especially fiscal control, on behalf of the legislature. Control in Britain, where the concept originated, derives not from control by civilian officials but from the fact that, after the Great Revolution in 1689, the *Army Act* was passed annually by Parliament to permit the continued existence of the once-feared Army.⁴ In Britain, control is now exercised by civil servants only in the sense that the latter hold the purse strings to prevent what they may consider to be the soldiers' extravagant spending. If any civil servants really do control the forces, it would be the Treasury who release monies authorised by the budget approved by Parliament. This was very much the approach of the South African Secretariat established in 1912.

What actually developed in the United Kingdom was the general acceptance by the squirearchy (i.e. the upper middle class and the nobility from which officers used to be recruited mainly) of rule by their fellows who sat in the House of Commons. Accepting rule by the politicians meant that the fiction of control by politicians over the Services – and by their appointed officials – was accepted because that was what the electors and the officers wanted as Britain developed constitutionally. Complete civilian control is not universal in armed forces' administrative departments. Indeed, where it exists it has differing historical roots or else differing contemporary aims. In contrast, in Chile, for example, monies for the armed forces have come from copper mining subsidies and not from Congress – much as it used to flow from the king and not Parliament in seventeenth-century England. According to the *Military Ministers to be Serving Officers Law* of 1900, the post of Minister of the Army in Imperial Japan was

occupied by a serving general to prevent political parties from having any control over the army. Although the law was cancelled in 1913, it was adopted again in 1936 when the Navy Minister was also made a serving officer. These steps were the main influences in ending democratic representative parliamentary rule. From 1955 until 1991, the Soviet Minister of Defence was a professional soldier. In France, the Ministry is still largely manned by uniformed personnel.

The composition and structure of the Bundesministerium in Germany exists because of their particular rejection of ministerial control as it was in the past. Under the German Empire and the early period of the Third Reich, the Ministers of War and the Ministers of the Navy in civilian governments were always generals and admirals.⁵ Adolf Hitler, the source of Germany's more recent militarisation, was a civilian politician who was an infantry corporal in the First World War. The uniforms in which he and his party cohorts postured were those of the National Socialist German Workers' Party (i.e. the NSDAP or Nazi party); not official military uniforms. In spite of the establishment of the *Waffen SS* as a military force of the *Algemeine Schutzstaffel* (General SS) during the Second World War, it remained a party organ. Though Hitler liked to think of himself as equal to – indeed better than – his generals and after the defeat of France in 1940, his admiring Chief of the Supreme Command of the Armed Forces, General Wilhelm Keitel, called him “*der Größter Feldherr aller Zeiten*” (the greatest commander of all times) he was never anything but a civilian politician. Indeed, Field Marshal Von Rundstedt used to call him “*der Bömsche Gefreiter*” (the Bohemian corporal) – scornfully referring to his pretensions to being an artist and an architect and hence a civilian. Despite Hitler's copying the Italian Fascist dictator, Benito Mussolini, who had put his party members into uniform, the Fascists and the Nazis remained nothing more than civilian political parties.⁶

The objects of this article are to describe the relationships between the Defence Force and the civilian Secretariat of Defence that formerly existed in South Africa; give an account of the failures that led to the decision in 1966 to absorb the Secretariat into the South African Defence Force; and draw conclusions from past experience.

Heading for Trouble: Potentials for Conflict

Having a civilian official responsible for the less military function of administering the military forces was not without precedent in South Africa when the Union Defence Force (UDF) was established in 1912.⁷ From the beginning of the second British occupation of the Cape in 1806, there was a civilian Military Secretary attached to military headquarters in the Castle. Reflecting structures in England, he was responsible *inter alia* for various administrative duties such as the control of the commissariat, pensions and the issuing of passes to discharged soldiers. Initially, the “civilian” secretary was a military officer who also acted as Commandant of Cape Town. During the nineteenth century, the powers and duties attached to the post altered in various ways. The most significant change was that in 1896 the designation became that of Secretary for Defence. Thus it remained until 1904 when the designation was changed to Colonial Military Secretary.⁸ This meant simply that a model for an authoritative civilian official with particular non-military functions had been established. One might guess that the organisation chosen in 1912 could have been based on two considerations – although it is doubted that the underlying principles and application enjoyed any profound consideration. The considerations were likely to have been that the system had been used in the Colonies; and that the system was used in Britain, albeit in a somewhat more developed form.

When the Union Defence Force was established from the military forces of the four former colonies on 1 July 1912, its organisation immediately and dangerously⁹ obscured the clear demarcation of command and lines of responsibility.

Instead of being subordinated to a single military command, the Union Defence Forces were divided into two separate Executive Commands and a Cadet Command.¹⁰ The first Executive Command was that of the Inspector-General, Permanent Force, who commanded the five regiments of the SA Mounted Riflemen, their reserves and the Permanent Force staff assigned to SAMR Headquarters. The SAMR inherited a rural frontier police role from the Cape Mounted Riflemen as well as that of a military force. The second was that of the Commandant-General, Citizen Force, who commanded the

part-time Active Citizen Force, the Coast Garrison Force, their reserves and the Permanent Force staffs serving in the Military District, Instructional and Administrative Staffs. The Cadet Command had authority over the countrywide systems of school cadet units. The Commandant of Cadets was a colonel while the other two commanders were brigadier generals.

The *Regulations for the Permanent Force (Staff)*, Regulation 2, specified that the responsibilities of these executive commanders were “subject to the direction of the Minister” without indicating whether or not this meant that the ultimate authority lay with the Minister of Defence.

An additional constituent of the Department of Defence was a Ministerial Division (called Defence Headquarters) divided into a military part and a civilian part.

- The military part consisted of the General Staff Section to deal with all matters related to military operations, an Administrative Section to deal with equipment, accommodation and other military administrative matters and a Medical Services Section.
- The civilian part was a Secretarial Section subordinate to the Under-Secretary for Defence (entitled Secretary as from 1914). The *Regulations for the Permanent Force (Staff)* described his duties broadly as concerning “all questions affecting finance and expenditure and the carrying out of Government’s policy in the administration of the Defence Act and the regulations framed thereunder and orders and instructions issued by the Minister.” What “the administration of the Defence Act implied” was not explained and indeed nothing was ever done to elucidate this expression in the lifetime of the Secretariat.

Despite the formulation, the first annual report by the Under-Secretary stated very clearly in paragraph 18,

Our organization is such that the Executive Commanders can be and are consulted by the Minister not only in the framing of the regulations dealing with administrative detail, but also in their actual operation. ... the Minister can and does immediately consult the Executive Commander concerned, or, if

all are concerned, the Military Board which consists of all Executive Commanders, the officers in charge of the four sections of Defence Headquarters, with the Minister as President.¹¹

Apart from this direct contact between minister and executive commanders, the report explains further that to avoid time wasting and duplication “Defence Headquarters ... deals on all *routine matters* of pay, expenditure, stores, clothing, supplies, transport medical services, etc., *direct with the local officers in charge*, viz., District Staff Officers ... regimental and even Squadron Commanders ...” One can only guess at the chaos that could have followed on this uncoordinated approach to command and control.

Four preliminary conclusions emerge from these observations.

- Contrary to modern principles of command and control, direct access to the Minister of Defence was granted personally to each of the executive commanders, individually as well as through their membership of the Military Board. The *Regulations* gave the same access to the heads of the DHQ Sections.
- The Secretary, as accounting officer of the Department, was in an unusual position in relation to the two Commands since for routine administrative matters they were not required to act as channels between him and their subordinate units unless problems arose – again in contradiction of modern principles of command and control.
- Other than the Minister, there was no formal central coordinating or commanding authority and the commands and DHQ Sections seemed to exist independently and parallel to one another.
- Despite the broad formulation of the Secretariat's role mentioned in the Permanent Force Regulations, the Secretariat was referred to in the Secretary's report as though it was merely a staff section and not a superior authority.

Brig. Gen. JJ Collyer asserts in his account of the campaign in

German South West Africa (Namibia) that, despite the supposed existence of the Military Board,

sections ... were watertight, their heads never met in conference, there was no provision for coordinating of staff work, and, in practice, the staff officers dealt solely with the civilian Secretary, who gave them instructions or referred their submissions to the Minister entirely at his own discretion.¹²

Collyer goes on to say that, although Smuts had experience of active service “the obvious unsoundness of such an arrangement, from a military point of view, needs no emphasis.”¹³

Thus, the Minister was the effective commander-in-chief and as there was no military chief of staff the latter role was played by the Secretary when he saw fit although in peace and in the subsequent war, “... was throughout without military status, rank or disciplinary power.”¹⁴

In the light of interpretations made during later disputes, Collyer’s remarks are significant. There were some other strange anomalies. Although the South African Division of the Royal Naval Volunteer Reserve (established under the *Defence Act, 1912*) at first glance might have seemed to be an Active Citizen Force unit, it did not have any relationship with the Citizen Force Command.¹⁵ It was a South African appendage of the Royal Navy. Yet, strangely, it was referred to in the Secretary’s first report as though it belonged to him. In addition, in 1913, the Commandant General, Citizen Force, established an aviation corps in the Active Citizen Force and whereas there was no permanent force equivalent, its members had to enlist for full-time training.

The Secretary at War: 1914–1918

The failure to construct a coherent system of command and a staff at Defence Headquarters for overall direction and coordination from the top magnified confusion during the Rebellion and the campaign in German South West Africa (GSWA) that followed the outbreak of the First World War. The Commandant General, Citizen Force, resigned and was not replaced, while the other two executive commanders, as well as other superior officers all took to the field to participate in operations as formation

commanders.

Worse was to follow when the Prime Minister as well as the Minister of Defence, having quelled the Rebellion, both took up commands in GSWA.¹⁶ The Prime Minister, General Louis Botha, was designated commander-in-chief. However, owing to the absence of effective communications over long distances, he was able to exercise command only over his own Northern Force operating along a line of advance from Swakopmund with some contact with Brigadier General Duncan McKenzie's Central Force further south. Smuts in the southeast was virtually isolated from the commander-in-chief.¹⁷ The Prime Minister and the Minister of Defence were commissioned in October 1914 the first as a lieutenant general and the second as a major general.¹⁸

As there was no competent military supervision and coordination in Pretoria, the Secretary, by force of circumstances, had to play a dominant role during the campaign. It was fortunate that Roland Bourne, who had been educated at Oxford, was a former British army major. Having both ministers participating in operations left Defence Headquarters (DHQ) in no position to give orders on its own responsibility to the forces in the field. Yet, obviously only at a central position such as DHQ could information be collated so that a general and continuous survey of operations could be conducted.¹⁹ Major disasters were avoided but the defeat at Sandfontein on 7 October 1914 can be attributed partly to the absence of a directing staff at Defence Headquarters.²⁰

The subsequent campaigns in German East Africa, France and Belgium took place with South Africans organised in specially established British Army war service units in the SA Overseas Expeditionary Force subject to the *Army Act* and under the control of the War Office in London.²¹ Defence Headquarters in Pretoria was responsible only for recruiting and certain administrative matters and so the problems experienced with the campaign in German South West Africa did not recur. However, the lessons had been learnt, and Collyer himself pressed for the establishment of a general staff in the Union Defence Forces.

Adding the CGS: Reorganisation and Duality

Collyer's proposal was accepted and in 1916 the head of the General Staff Section was designated chief staff officer, General Staff and Adjutant General. In 1918, after his return from East Africa, Collyer became the first Chief of the General Staff.²² His responsibility as defined in 1919 was "the coordination of all military staff work" at DHQ and control of the General Staff Section. He was the channel for all "military questions requiring approval or consideration by the Minister" but he would "refer to the Secretary for Defence any matters having a financial or administrative bearing before they are submitted to the Minister ..."²³ This suggests a very limited relationship to the Secretary. However, the 1919 instructions, as quoted in the *Eerste Verslag*, stated that the Chief of the General Staff "... is directly responsible to the Minister for the performance of his duties and will take ... instructions ... directly from the Minister".

When Collyer and Bourne retired in 1922, the post of Chief of the General Staff was filled by Brig. Gen. A.J.E. Brink, DTD, DSO, who was then also appointed Secretary for Defence.²⁴ Additionally, he took over the duties of the Commandant of Cadets and the post itself was abolished.²⁵ Bourne and Collyer may have recognised the potential for problems in the tandem system in the short time they served together. If so, the problems were swept under the carpet by Brink's dual appointment since no provision was made for amalgamating the posts. In the South African Police (SAP) in 1913, the Commissioner was treated as the accounting officer of his department although the SAP fell under the Minister of Justice and there was a civilian Department of Justice with its own Secretary. However, in the UDF they were only unified in the person of the CGS and not by a formal definition of roles.

One consequence of the failure to recognise the problems and to reorganise and redefine authority accordingly, was that in 1933 when Sir Pierre van Ryneveld became Chief of the General Staff (CGS), Brink retained the appointment of Secretary.²⁶ The Ministerial instruction now opened the door for ambiguity, since it read that "the permanent head of the Department shall be the Secretary for Defence who shall be the channel of communication for the instructions of the Minister ..." while the CGS

“... shall be exclusively responsible for the organisation, training, discipline and efficiency of the Military forces ...”.²⁷ There was no definition of the term “the Department”.²⁸ However, there was an attempt to clarify functions by providing a list of matters about which sections were autonomous. When Brink finally retired in 1937, a new set of instructions described the CGS as the “Chief Military Executive Officer ... responsible for the carrying out of the Government’s Military Policy ...” Nevertheless, according to the *Eerste Verslag*, the Secretary was still described as “the *permanent head* of the Department ... responsible to the Minister for the carrying out of Ministerial policy”. The term “Ministerial policy” remained undefined.

The new secretary, A.H. Broeksma, KC, was 42 years old, devoid of military experience, with a career in various government legal posts. He came to the Department of Defence after a five-year sojourn as professional legal adviser to the Department of the Prime Minister and External Affairs. Twelve days after the Second World War began in 1939, he became attorney general of the Cape and was replaced by the former Secretary for Justice, C.H. Blaine, ED.²⁹ Blaine was 56 and a veteran of the Anglo-Boer War and the campaigns in South West Africa and France. He had spent most of his career as a magistrate. He was the author of four standard books on legal practice and was not one to be easily overawed. Unwisely, the Minister gave him the rank of brigadier despite his office as Secretary. The stage was set for conflict between the Chief of the General Staff and the Secretary, especially since the CGS had proved himself to be strong-willed and unwilling to compromise or even to accept advice readily.

Who, indeed, was the Enemy? ³⁰

Much of the evidence of conflict and disagreement between the Secretary and the Chief of the General Staff is anecdotal. However, there are significant indications of continual difficulties mentioned in Birkby’s biography of Lt. Gen. George Brink, Deputy CGS, in the administrative history of the war, *South Africa at War* by Lt. Gen. H.J. Martin and N. Orpen and in various memoranda submitted to the 1966 enquiry into the Secretariat.³¹ During the War, ambiguities abounded, such as the establishment under the Secretary’s authority of the uniformed Essential

Services Protection Corps and the Reserve Volunteer Brigade (a commando home defence brigade) akin to the British Home Guard, instead of under the authority of the CGS. In 1943, when the need for a home guard force diminished, the Adjutant General ordered their recruiting to cease – without referring the question first to the Secretary. When Blaine told his officers to continue recruiting, the Adjutant General forbade him to do so. The Secretary had to point out that he was authorised by a proclamation issued by the Governor General in 1939, not by the CGS. He also felt constrained to complain to the Chief of the General Staff about the impertinent tone of the Adjutant General's (AG) letter.

In 1943, a dispute arose when the Secretary complained about the question of “normal” channels of communication outside the Department of Defence.³² In the correspondence, the CGS called the dual designation of his predecessor a “deception” and he accused A.J.E. Brink of having used a subterfuge to attempt to bolster his post as Secretary prior to his retirement in 1933 from the appointment as CGS.

Van Ryneveld also disposed of the undefined term “ministerial policy” by alleging that it had been used for any matter which could not be called “military policy” and that the minister at the time had given the policy of increased official use of Afrikaans as an example. The CGS denied vehemently that the Secretary was more than the accounting officer with any prerogative at all regarding military policy, functions or matters or for acting as a “post office for the Military Organization”.

The hapless Blaine responded, “It is my responsibility as the permanent Head of the Department to control not only financial matters but also to carry out Ministerial policy, as distinct from Government Military Policy ...”

Again, terms remained undefined. Who was to know what the concepts really meant? When the Minister was asked for his adjudication, he considered wartime conditions unsuitable for a demarcation and asked that the matter be left in abeyance. Mistakenly he added “... postponed consideration will create no prejudice either way”.³³

The War Rages On

In 1948, Herbert Cuff, Secretary from 1946, felt himself compelled to determine a definition of roles and responsibilities. Accordingly, he asked the Minister for a decision in the light of the wording of Chapter II of the *Regulations for the SA Permanent Force*, which described the Secretary for Defence explicitly as –

...the permanent Head of the Department ... who shall *also be the Accounting Officer and be responsible to the Minister for the carrying out of ministerial policy* and that the Chief of the General Staff shall be the Chief Military Executive Officer and *shall be responsible for carrying out the Government's military policy ...*³⁴

He explained, “for some years the relations between the civil and military sides of the Department were rather strained ... and the position still exists that the CGS considers my responsibilities are restricted to matters which have financial implications.” He referred the Minister to the wider implications of *Public Service Regulation No.5*, which read, “The Head of the Department shall be responsible for the discipline efficiency and economic administration of the Department ...” This could leave no doubt why Mr Cuff was sure that the CGS was his subordinate.

However, in 1949 the new Minister, F.C. Erasmus, replied that it was not possible to be exact and he left it to “... senior officers on both sides to bring about working arrangements ...” and cited *Regulation No.5*, the *Exchequer and Audit Act, 1911* and Chapter II of the *Regulations for the SA Permanent Force*.³⁵

The Minister then referred to the creation of a General Staff Board, which could serve as the main channel of communication although not the only one. He provided a list of various functions belonging to the Secretary, some of which obviously would not be acceptable to the CGS.

General Van Ryneveld's response was to write that a full examination revealed no statutory provision that the Union Defence Force was a part of the Department of Defence – and this he insisted upon in spite of the wording of the *Regulations for the SA Permanent Force* and the *Regulations*

for the Coast Garrison and Active Citizen Forces. Moreover, he added, despite their being subordinate to the Minister of Justice, the South African Police were independent of the Department of Justice.

His interpretation of the regulations was that the offices held by the Secretary could simply be accorded by the Minister to any official of his choosing. He asked whether the circumstances of the time and especially the close consultation needed in order to prepare the defence budget, did not justify the transfer of the responsibility for financial control to the officer responsible for carrying out the government's military policy. If not, then a very clear demarcation of responsibilities was essential.

Finally, and triumphantly, Sir Pierre van Ryneveld rebutted any attempt to give the CGS and the Secretary equal status by referring to the official order of precedence accorded to the CGS in relation to that of Secretaries of Departments. The argument was erroneous, of course. The precedence of the head of the armed forces and the Secretary for External Affairs in certain ceremonies was and is quite unrelated to their precedence by virtue of the offices they hold or to individual personalities. Their relative positions were determined because for particular occasions they were seen as representing the two external arms of the state in support of an image of the head of state – the Governor General in Sir Pierre's time – to the symbolic outside world. The symbolic role accounted for the presence of the CGS but not by the Secretary for Defence. It also explained why the Commissioner of Police was not included since he was considered to be among the heads of civilian departments.

A committee of enquiry into economic measures and coordination reported to the Minister in December 1949 that the dual organisation, although justified by the war, was no longer necessary, and they referred to the former arrangements under General Brink and to the precedent of the Police's financial independence. The Committee's view was that the arrangement would, *inter alia*, end the voluminous intra-departmental correspondence, the duplication of effort and inherent delays, overstaffing and excess accommodation. Accordingly, the absorption of the Secretariat was recommended.³⁶

Needless to say, the Secretary was mortified, especially as a middle-ranking member of his staff had signed the report – which had never been discussed with him. He hastened to point out that in 1933 the joint appointment had been ended exactly because it had been impracticable, and that, as CGS as well as Secretary, A.J.E. Brink, had appointed an under-secretary to serve as accounting officer. Without giving evidence for his reasoning, the Secretary scornfully dismissed the comparison with the South African Police as well as the suggestion of the need for one organisation for peace that would differ from one for war. He concluded that the committee had not grasped the functions of a permanent head of a department as required by law and that it would "... be fatal to allow the military authorities to exercise the functions for which the Secretariat primarily exists".³⁷

Reference was made neither to the origins of the practice in the United Kingdom nor to the principles involved. Perhaps this was not surprising. The writer's experience in teaching Public Administration taught him that even in the 1960s, there was seldom an intellectual approach to problem solving and decision-making in the South African Public Service. The Minister decided against the recommendations of the Committee, and in 1950 sanctioned the amendment of Regulation 6 to define the functions of the Secretary.

In 1955, new attempts were made to resolve the problems when the Minister wrote to the CGS and the Secretary to tell them of his intention to obviate conflicting advice on policy by establishing a Defence Staff Council to advise the Minister and the Governor General. He would also concentrate administration, civil and military, under one head, the Adjutant General. The Secretary would be the secretary of the Council. The CGS, the Secretary and the Military Secretary were to work out how this should be effected. Their recommendations were for a coordinating committee, but for no organisational changes. However, for reasons not revealed by the documents nothing came of the move. In 1953, the Public Service Inspectors recommended a full-scale examination of the department's functioning, and in 1961, the Public Service Inspectorate reported on the unhealthy functioning of the Department.³⁸

A Final Solution?

Finally, in April 1966, the interminable disputes were brought to the attention of the newly appointed minister, P.W. Botha. With a view to rationalisation and the achievement of optimum efficiency, Botha appointed a committee to examine the degree of duplication between the two establishments and to consider which changes were called for.

The Committee concluded that clear definition of the roles of the Commandant General and the Secretary as heads of the department were not feasible. Moreover, it was their opinion that the Secretary could not function effectively as head of the department nor as accounting officer because of the nature of the two structures and the remoteness of his department from the Defence Force. It was clear to them that his functions were no more than auxiliary functions and that he was making no direct contribution to the Defence Force's executive functions. There was no justification for the Secretariat to act as a channel of communication with other departments, not even with the Treasury as it did little, if anything, to improve documents written in the SADF. Indeed, the department did nothing to advance the principle of unity of command and responsibility. This evaluation, of course, is a mixture of truths and errors and it was based less on analysis than on the vested interests of the Commandant General and perhaps a reading of what was inevitable in the circumstances.³⁹

The recommendation was thus that the Secretary's post should be absorbed into that of the Commandant General who would then become the accounting officer for the SADF. Nothing was said by the committee nor apparently by any of the persons who gave evidence before it about the principle of civilian parliamentary control.⁴⁰ This was an illustration of ignorance and frustration with the continuing tangle rather than looming dictatorship. However authoritarian the National Party was, and however draconian its legislation might have been, generally it paid close attention to Parliamentary niceties.

Sources of Failure in the Secretariat

Why was the Secretariat a failure? The reasons for the failure of the

secretariat to answer to the needs of the SADF did not all emerge from the study on which this article reports, but they included the following:

- *Ambiguity about authority.* The *Defence Acts* of 1912 and 1957 were both completely ambiguous about the relationship of the CGS to the Secretary. The Secretary was described as the “Permanent Head of the Department” without any definition of terms or an explanation of the concepts involved. Although the problems had already been recognised, the drafters of the 1957 Act either neglected to rectify the anomaly or else they were told not to, either by the Minister or by the Secretary or by the CGS.
- *Absence of principles.* In principle, the initial organisation of DHQ in 1912 was lacking in clear foundations. There was no clear understanding of lines of command and control and there was no unity of command. The Secretary’s status and roles were not really understood as being quite distinct from those of Executive Commanders and the Staff. Clearly, the principles of organisation were not taken into consideration. Moreover, the dual system was not modernised to accommodate change and expansion so that it became cumbersome, stultified and a burden to the entire Department of Defence.
- *Ministerial inadequacies.* The various ministers who were approached to adjudicate apparently were themselves too inadequately informed to be able to solve the problems and kept on postponing the decisions necessary to resolve the problems. They all appeared to lack the capacity to deal with organisational problems.⁴¹ Perhaps in Smuts’s case it was impatience with what seemed to be trivial that resulted in his not bringing his undoubted intelligence and education to bear. Perhaps he was disinclined to affront the CGS, Lt. Gen. Sir Pierre van Ryneveld, upon whom he relied heavily and perhaps admired excessively.⁴²
- *Inadequate comprehension.* The South African system, with the UDF based entirely on army organisation, was a transposition to the UDF of features of the Cape and Natal colonial systems

together with features of the British system as they were perceived to be after 1904 when, for the first time in the UK, the Chief of the Imperial General Staff and the Army Council replaced the age-old Commander-in-Chief. However, there was no clear understanding and adaptation of its mechanisms to different circumstances. Besides, the system was still developing in the United Kingdom and was far from offering a transposable model. In the UK, separate ministries for each Service remained until 1964.⁴³

- *Efficiency versus parliamentary control.* It appears that after the first CGS and Secretary had retired, the origins and principles of the system as a means of exerting democratic parliamentary control over the armed forces were forgotten or not understood by their successor, Andries Brink. As the years passed the efficient administration of the UDF and the SADF became a paramount consideration at the expense of parliamentary control. Besides, the Department as a whole was very careful always to respect the Opposition in Parliament and was most particular about full and considerate replies to parliamentary questions from the Opposition.
- *Personalities.* Bourne and Collyer seemed to have worked well together, but once they had retired the dual system suffered from the personalities imposed on it, from their own lack of advanced general staff training, and from the retention of senior officers in their posts for far too long.⁴⁴ Andries Brink held his dual position from 1920 until 1933 and then that of Secretary until 1937, i.e. for 17 years in total. Van Ryneveld held his post from 1933 until 1949, a total of 16 years. Both were obstinate, arbitrary and opinionated and disliked delegation.⁴⁵ Neither ever took the time to immerse himself in modern training in command and control. During the Second World War, out of frustration, Maj. Gen. Frank Theron wrote to the Prime Minister and Minister of Defence Field Marshall Jan Smuts proposing Van Ryneveld's replacement. In a semblance of tact, he suggested a command in a war theatre. Smuts, however, ignored the suggestion. Van Ryneveld had commanded an air force wing in France and the small SAAF in

South Africa but had never commanded an army formation, not even in a military exercise.⁴⁶

- *Ill-considered appointments.* During the Second World War, the system suffered from the appointment of the Secretary (the permanent head of the department) to the rank of brigadier when his roles included having to exert control over a lieutenant general. It also suffered at times from the appointment of people in whom there was a lack of confidence because their education and experience were entirely civilian, with no military experience or military education which might have schooled them to deal with officers' problems.⁴⁷ No member of the Secretariat ever attended staff or similar courses at any of the Defence Force's staff colleges or at the Imperial Defence College (IDC) – now the Royal College of Defence Studies – or anywhere else. The IDC in particular, was designed to provide advanced military education and to bring civil servants and officers together in the study of common problems. In contrast, military officers were sent abroad for advanced training at least to British, French and American staff colleges and to the IDC until the institution of the United Nations embargo, which included a ban on training South Africans.
- *Failure to exploit benefits of a secretariat.* The Secretariat remained a department of financial and accounting specialists instead of one which could provide, in particular, political advice, or participate in intelligence interpretation, develop management and administration, guide military education and extensively develop scientific advice and armaments acquisition. This was partly the result of unimaginative leadership and partly the result of the approaches in the public service, which opposed the development of a fully-fledged direct-entry administrative class of university-educated officials similar to direct entry of officers. Almost without exception, public servants also insisted that civil servants could not be trained or educated but had to learn "on the job". In 1954, the writer submitted an article on the British Administrative Class system to *The Public Servant*, the journal of the Public Service Association. It was rejected by the editor

because “this is of no interest to readers”.⁴⁸ Similarly, when cadets in the Department of Foreign Affairs asked for a training course to be instituted in 1956 they were told that “on the job training” was all that could work for civil servants.⁴⁹ Degrees were only recognised for purposes of increased pay in the Public Service in 1955. All this has changed in the meantime but at that time, the attitude was extremely influential.

Conclusions

The decline of the Secretariat reflected badly on the chiefs of the Defence Force and equally badly on the ministers who continually shelved the problems instead of giving leadership in a search for solutions. There can be little doubt that Smuts, a lawyer with superior intelligence and experience of affairs, could himself have done much to understand the problem and to promote a search for solutions. However, the others who were asked for help could have shown some guidance if not leadership.

Could there have been ideal solutions or an approach to finding solutions? Perhaps there could at least have been a gradual development as there was in the United Kingdom before 1985.

As the studies conducted in later years showed, time could have been devoted to what today are called “workshops” in which the nature of the problems, the reasons for their existence and the requirements of a workable system could have been sought and approaches to solving the questions of the uncertain allocation of authority determined.

The differences could certainly not have been worked out by personalities such as Van Ryneveld or Hiemstra themselves. Both tended to be uncompromising and obstinate.⁵⁰ However, there were experienced, intelligent and militarily educated senior officers available to tackle the problems before, during and after the Second World War, such as Frank Theron, George Brink, Pieter de Waal, W.H. Evered Poole, H.B. Klopper and others. Major General Collyer who appeared to have worked reasonably comfortably within the system from 1912 to 1919 was also still available to have been used to help solve the problems.⁵¹ As interim

measures at least the ministers could have tried to clarify the division of the relationship between Secretary and chief in directives as guidelines for the chiefs. More drastically, the ministers could have considered the personalities and taken steps to change them.

In discussions about the subsequent organisation with former members of the Secretariat who moved to the Defence Force and became members of the staff branch subordinate to the Chief of Staff for Finance under the Chief of the Defence Force, or to one of the service Chiefs of Staff, Finance, it was found that the changes were very well accepted. The process did not end simply with amalgamation. Those civilians who desired to remain and who met with all the requirements for a military career were absorbed thoroughly. As they progressed along the career paths, they attended promotion and staff courses, including the Joint Staff Course. Many progressed to appointments as generals. The Chief of Staff for Finance was a lieutenant general. Certain of them were enabled to improve their educational qualifications, including attending senior management courses at various universities' business schools. The shortcomings of the civil service culture were overcome to a very gratifying extent long before the civil service itself turned to advanced training for officials. The fact that business qualifications had little to do with the administration of a government department involved entirely in public administration was, of course, unfortunate and ultimately it has not been to the advantage of the Department of Defence.⁵² Nevertheless, the department was better off than it had been with the Secretariat as it had operated before 1967.

More important for the system, however, budgeting and financial management were delegated downwards even to commanding officers at unit level, including those in the Citizen Force and Commandos. Thus, a far greater degree of financial accountability was instituted in the Defence Force in the years after 1966. In previous years, when the civilians were responsible, little was expected of the officers who actually spent the appropriations. Indeed, before 1966, budgeting was a process completely unknown below Defence Headquarters level. In the 1990s, the prospects of changing back to civilian administration caused a great deal of doubt among senior officers as to the value of returning to the civilian Secretariat. The expectation was that the good that flowed from the changes would be lost.

Accountability in financial and logistic terms had come to be seen as a priority by 1993. Since 1966, it had been the Chief of the Defence Force who had to appear before the Public Accounts Committee to account for discrepancies, overspending, carelessness and of course, for inflated budgets. It is clear from discussions as well as from the products of the planning during 1994 that this was regarded as the principal responsibility of the Secretariat for the future as it was in the past.

However, the changes after 1966 magnified a defect of the past, i.e. the absence of a centre, which could give expert advice on foreign policies to the minister and the chiefs of the Defence Force and their staffs. Since the old Secretariat had no provision for this, there was nothing to take over after incorporation. That there was a need for such machinery was always clear both from the discussions by the staffs and from the consequences of actions taken by the Defence Force.

One reason for the establishment and growth of the State Security Council was the need for professional policy analyses and guidance that was not forthcoming from government. Policies there were indeed, although they might not have been called that – in fact, they were often wrongly called “strategies”. Sometimes, policies were devised sometimes by ministers; mostly by staff officers. However, there was no expert advice from specialist officials owing no obligations to particular service chiefs or to the chief of the Defence Force. Political and economic advice, such as it was, came from the Division of Military Intelligence. However, the knowledge available there was not comparable to the advice that could have come from officials on loan from the Departments of Foreign Affairs and Economic Affairs and elsewhere and the Division's officers lacked sophisticated political and economic expertise and comprehension.

Moreover, there was no division of the staff equal to the divisions dealing with international questions such as those found in the present Ministry of Defence in Britain or in the equivalent departments in the United States or France. The consequences were that the SA Defence Force only obtained ad hoc advice from the civilian departments. In those departments, there were no pools of officials who had spent time in the Department of Defence acquiring essential specialised knowledge, learning

the culture and the particular needs and shortcomings of the military department. At best, when advice was forthcoming through the State Security Council, it tended to arouse the hostility of the specialists on the civilian and military sides. Advice from inside the Defence Force is inevitably coloured by questions of service loyalty, discipline and relative rank as well as by questions of military knowledge and priorities.

Challenges do remain. As the present Secretariat develops, the question of relatively independent and sufficiently expert advice in political and economic matters continues to be an important feature that cannot be ignored. It will be fatal again, however, if a struggle develops between the services and the civilians as to who is to devise policy. Despite the expert role that must be played by the civilians, they should not consider themselves as the sole policy makers, since their expertise will of necessity be restricted. The absolute necessity must be understood for policy making to be a joint undertaking involving the Secretarial Department and the Defence Force, each operating within the limits of their particular scope. The influence for good that the Secretariat failed to exert in the past cannot be lost again in the future.

It is important for the Secretary and his successors to develop a culture of mutual support with the Defence Force. There is a tendency among some commentators on the question of the civilian role to speak of "civilian control" as though this were the role of the civil servants vis-à-vis the Services. That misapprehension can easily once again become the source of disaster. The officials will have to realise that they act for Parliament. They will never take control of the chief of the Defence Force. Their essential role should be to relieve him (or her) of the weight of decision-making about administrative and supporting functions to free him/her for the substantive military problem. They must oversee budgeting and expenditure and financial management within the services but should not assume that they are able to make policy about substantive military problems nor to attempt to do more than guide the services with advice. Careful, painstaking attention to the mistakes of the past might produce a workable Secretariat in the future. Ministers will also have to realise that they have continual mediating dual roles in representing Parliament to the SANDF and the SANDF to Parliament.

Epilogue

Anecdotal information indicates that the Secretariat established in 1994 has not been very successful so far and the Secretariat has still to serve the way it should have. The provisional recommendations made by the Defence Review Committee in paragraphs 60 to 64 of the first draft of the *Defence Review* appear to be an attempt to rectify the problems encountered.⁵³ They included recommendations that the Secretary for Defence and the chief of the SANDF “... consult with each other on any substantive advice emanating from their areas of competence, or on any other substantive matter of defence policy, intended to be given to the Minister or other Ministers”. However well intentioned this requirement, the question remains as to how, exactly, the relationship between the Secretary and the Chief will be clarified so that the sources of conflict are finally removed. The paragraphs remind one of how ministers in the past shrugged off the problem. If clarity is again avoided as in past generations, the injunction in paragraph 60 will amount to no more than re-ordering the field of battle rather than the resolution of serious differences. It remains to be seen whether any Minister of Defence has the will and capability to demonstrate responsible leadership.

¹ See for example R Williams. “Is there life after conscription”. *SA Defence Review*. 1993 and “Military control over the Armed Forces during the transition”. *SA Defence Review*. 9/11 and the earlier PH Frankel. *Pretoria’s Praetorians*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984, 104–107. The present article is an expansion of a report on research undertaken for the Joint Military Command Council in March 1994, concerning the establishment of a civilian secretariat. In the course of the research in official files and documents, a comparative study was also made of similar institutions in Asia, Europe, the USA, Australia and New Zealand. The author also accompanied two groups taken by the Institute for Security Studies and the IDASA on visits to Germany and Denmark in 1993 and 1994 to examine the German and Danish systems of policy-making and civilian control of the armed forces.

² The primary role of the Minister and Parliament as the civilian controllers of the armed forces – even after the 1966 demise of the Secretariat – was not understood by the new government. This was very clear during discussions by the Joint Military Command Council and in the subsequent process of writing the Defence White Paper. Indeed, during discussions about the Defence Review in 2011 and 2012, it was apparent that the view is still widespread that civilian control is the principal role of officials rather than of the Minister and

Parliament. The present author's frequent attempts to explain that the view is wrong have proved to be fruitless.

In 1992, a very senior South African diplomat remarked to this author that when the history of recent decades was written, it could be seen to what extent the SADF had callously been made a scapegoat for the NP's actions. Considering that little love was lost between the diplomats and the soldiers, no more significant remark could be made by anyone who had been at the centre of events. The diplomat is still alive and I do not have his permission to identify him.

In fact, although the initial fear was of the Army, three separate Service discipline acts (the last were the Army Act of 1955, the Air Force Act of 1955 and the Naval Discipline Act of 1957) were passed annually to ensure the renewal of civilian (i.e. parliamentary) control over the British armed forces. In 2006, a single act was passed to replace the three and it was made effective by the Armed Forces Act of 2006 (Commencement No. 2) Order 2007.

Even during the Weimar Republic, three Defence ministers were recently retired generals.

For various reasons, Mussolini and Hitler put their party members and the parties' armed wings into uniform, making them confusingly similar to the armed forces. Although in both countries the armed wings futilely hoped to displace the military forces, rule by the Italian Fascists and the Nazis was always that of civilian politicians and not the result of military *coups d'état*.

The secretaries from 1912 were Sir Roland Bourne, KBE, CMG, 1 April 1914 – 30 September 1922; Lt. Gen. AJE Brink, CBE, DTD, DSO, 1 October 1922 – 31 August 1937; Mr AH Broeksma, KC, 1 September 1937 – 13 September 1939; Brig. CH Blaine, CBE, ED, 14 September 1939 – 31 December 1945; Mr HC Cuff, 1946–1955; Mr JP de Villiers, 1955 – 25 September 1965; and Mr Vladimir Petrov Steyn, 26 September 1965 – 16 October 1966.

For example, in 1903 the *Cape Ordinance* provided for the Cape Colonial Military Secretary and the Commandant-General of the Cape Colonial Forces.

Union Government. *Annual reports: Department of Defence and Executive Commands for year ending 30th June 1913*, U.G.61-13. Cape Town: Cape Times & Government Printers, 1913. The first Secretary, Sir Roland Bourne, left the British army to be the Transvaal's Under-Secretary in the Colonial Secretary's Office from 1906 and from 1910 was Under-Secretary for the Interior. *Who's who in Southern Africa*, 1927.

"Regulation 3 of the Regulations for Permanent Force (Staff)". *Government Gazette Extraordinary* 308. 24 December, 1912.

"Report of the Under-Secretary for Defence". *Annual reports op. cit.*

JJ Collyer. *The campaign in German South West Africa 1914–1915*. Pretoria: Government Printer, 1937, 19. JJ Collyer served in the Cape Mounted Rifles, then as first head of the General Staff Section in the UDF. He held that post under its various designations until 1917, when he became Chief of the General Staff, effectively the commander of the UDF. In spite of his responsibilities in Pretoria from 1914 until 1917, he served in the field as Chief of Staff to Gen. Louis Botha in GSWA and to Smuts and Van Deventer

in Tanganyika German East Africa. He retired in 1920, but served as Military Secretary in WW2. He also wrote a second book – on the campaign in GEA.

13 Collyer *op. cit.*

14 *Ibid.*

15 The ACF (since 1994 the Reserve Force) was equivalent to the Swiss Militia or the US National Guard.

16 In 1914, many Afrikaners could not stomach engaging in an imperialist war on behalf of their recent enemy, the British Empire, against a power that had given them moral support, the German Empire, and either withheld their services or joined in a rebellion against the government.

17 Collyer *op. cit.*, p. 156.

18 Force Orders, October 1914.

19 Collyer *op. cit.* p. 157.

20 According to Collyer *op. cit.*, intelligence of German forces moving toward a contact near Sandfontein was sent from Pretoria by ordinary letter post to the field commander. The letter arrived in GSWA two weeks after the South African force had been surprised and defeated by the Germans at Sandfontein. Although not the sole reason for the defeat, this was a significant factor.

21 UDF General Order 672 of 1915 provided that “The South African Overseas Expeditionary Force will be Imperial and have the status of British Regular Troops”. Personnel attested to “engage and agree to serve as an Imperial soldier under the Army Act in the Union East Africa Expeditionary Force” and not as UDF soldiers subject to the SA Defence Act of 1912.

22 From 1961, the designation was Commandant-General and from 1970 Chief of the SA Defence Force.

23 *Eerste Verslag*, 1949, par. 11. This was a report of a committee of enquiry appointed by the Minister of Defence to go into measures and coordination in the DOD.

24 SANDF Archives Box 134, File DC/17609, March 1922, *Abolition of post of Secretary for Defence as separate post: Dual appointment of CGS and Secretary – Appointment of Accounting Officer.*

25 Lt. Gen. AJE Brink, CBE, DTD, DSO, Croix de Guerre (1877–1947), a transport rider for George Heys’s coaching service before the Anglo-Boer War – and inadvertently involved in the Jameson Raid and a Field Cornet’s clerk from 1897. In 1898 he went on commando against Mphephu. In the Anglo-Boer War he served in the Heidelberg Commando until May 1902, at Ladysmith Siege and the battles of Dundee, Modderspruit, Paardeberg and Dalmanutha. He was wounded twice and promoted to Field Cornet. He was appointed Adjutant of No. 6 Military District at Standerton in 1913, and in 1914, as a major, he became the District Staff Officer of District No. 6. He also served in the German SWA as Brigade Major for 1st Mounted Brigade under Col. Cmdt. CJ Brits. Promoted to Brevet Lt. Col. in 1915. He returned to District No. 6, but in 1916 joined 2nd Mounted Brigade in German East Africa as Chief Staff Officer. He was then promoted to Colonel and was then the principal General Staff Officer of the 3rd East African Division. In 1917, he became Acting Adjutant General, UDF. Promoted to Brigadier General in

1920, he succeeded Collyer as Chief of the General Staff, and Bourne as Secretary for Defence and directed military operations during the 1922 Rand Revolt. He remained Secretary after his retirement as CGS and was Chief Commandant, Commandos, from the beginning of WW2 until 1946 and was appointed as CBE in 1943. Although he had fairly wide experience in the field, his military education was exceptionally limited. The short special staff course for the UDF that he and others passed in 1913 was simply an introduction to the organisation and administration of the UDF. His grasp of the organisational features of higher command did not appear to have been very profound.

²⁶ Sir Pierre van Ryneveld, KBE, CB, DSO, MC (1891–1972), Brink’s successor, was a WW1 pilot who had graduated from the University of Cape Town (BA) and the Imperial College, London (BSc in Engineering) before being commissioned in the British infantry and then the Royal Flying Corps in WW1. He earned fame for his pioneering 1920 flight from London to Cape Town, for which he and his fellow-pilot, Quentin Brand, were knighted. He was invited by Smuts in 1920 to join the UDF to establish the SAAF. In 1936 he became CGS, retiring in 1949. Though Commandant of the Military College in 1929, he did not qualify on a staff course.

²⁷ *First Report*, 1949, Conclusions and Secretary’s Reply, para. graph 13.

²⁸ Since 1995, the title ‘Department of Defence’ has consisted of the SANDF, the Secretariat and the Ministry, and this was confirmed by the Defence Act of 2002.

²⁹ ‘KC’ is the abbreviation for King’s Counsel, a legal status for senior barristers, who are now called Senior Counsel in South Africa. ‘ED’ stood for Efficiency Decoration awarded to ACF officers after 20 years of efficient service.

³⁰ “We have met the enemy and he is us!” was an announcement by Pogo Possum, the American cartoon character who lives in the Okefenokee Swamps in Georgia. W Kelly. *Pogo: We have met the enemy and he is us*, 1972. Walt Kelly was remarkable for his subtle political commentary through the mouths of his cartoon characters and was no less relevant in South Africa than in the USA.

³¹ Lt. Gen. GE Brink, CB, CBE, DSO, KStJ (1889–1971) joined the UDF in 1913, and was captain 1914 of staff in GSWA and a Brigade Major in GEA. He earned the DSO and the French *Croix de Guerre*. He qualified at the Staff College, Camberley, UK, in 1920. In 1937 he was sent to study organisation, equipment and training of armies of the UK, Germany, France, Italy and Denmark. He attended manoeuvres in France and Germany and was attached to a Wehrmacht regiment (i.e. a brigade) for a month. From 1940 he was General Officer Commanding, 1st SA Division in East Africa and the Western Desert. After an injury in 1942, he returned to South Africa and became GOC, Inland Area, and then Director-General of Demobilisation. C Birkby. *Uncle George: The Boer boyhood, letters and battles of Lt. Gen. George Edwin Brink*. Johannesburg: Jonathan Ball, 1987, pp. 1, 71, 76, 78, 95, 249, 250, 251–252, 269, *passim*. Lt. Gen. HJ Martin, SM, CBE, DFC commanded 12th Squadron, 3rd Wing and 4th Group, SAAF, during the Second World War and

after the War was QMG before becoming Chief of the SA Air Force and then Chief of Defence Staff until his retirement in 1968. He qualified on the RAF Staff Course. I Uys. *SA Military who's who 1452–1992*. Germiston: Fortress, 1992, p. 148.

32 *Eerste Verslag op. cit.*, par. 6.

33 *Ibid.*, p. 7.

34 *Ibid.*, “Gevolgtrekkings en Sekretaris se antwoord”.

35 *Ibid.*

36 *Ibid.*, p. 15.

37 *Ibid.*, “Gevolgtrekkings en Sekretaris se antwoord”.

38 Box 182, File DC/17926/103, Separation of post of Commandant General (SADF) and the Secretary for Defence. Re-organisation and redistribution of duties as between Secretary for Defence and Commandant General (SADF), 31/07/55–02/11/60

39 Box 106, MV/55/19, Komitee insake indeling/afbakening van funksies in die Departement van Verdediging – Tweede Verslag van die Komitee van Ondersoek, 21/09/66–26/10/66; Box 422, Afbakening/indeling van funksies vir die Departement van Verdediging – Tweede Verslag van die Komitee van Ondersoek, 18/11/66, *passim*.

40 The amalgamation was effected by Government Notice No. 1749, dated 4 November 1966, in the Government Gazette of that date.

41 The ministerial weaknesses lay in the fact that even those who had been soldiers had been on the fringe and never fully trained or experienced professionals. Smuts was the first Minister of Defence in 1912. When he became Prime Minister in 1920, he appointed Col. Hendrik Mentz, DTD, as Minister of Defence. An attorney, Mentz served in the Anglo-Boer War in the Natal Campaign and in the Northern Transvaal as Chief of Staff to Asst. Cmdt. Gen. CF Beyers and was wounded three times. An MP from 1910, he was a Colonel-Commandant in German South West Africa in 1914–1915 as Second-in-Command of 3rd Mounted Brigade and then as Military Governor of Windhoek. He was Minister from 1920 until 1924. When the NP–Labour Coalition took over, Col. FHP Creswell, DSO, Croix de Guerre, became Minister. A British mining engineer, he was a lieutenant in the Imperial Light Horse during the Anglo-Boer War and in WW1 served in GSWA and GEA and commanded the 8th SAI. He was a Labour Party MP. His successor in 1933 was Oswald Pirow, KC, a barrister with no military experience. After attending the Olympics in Germany in 1936, Pirow began the belated modernisation of the UDF, but resigned when South Africa declared war in 1939. After Smuts’s government fell in 1948, Dr DF Malan appointed FC Erasmus, who had interested himself in defence as an MP but also lacked the knowledge and experience requisite for ending the conflict between the Secretary and the CGS. Erasmus was replaced in 1959 by the former Administrator of the OFS, JJ Fouché, who made up for his lack of military knowledge with his personality, but who was also unable to resolve the conflict. Uys *op. cit.*, pp. 153, 52, 75, 81, 182–193, 220–221.

42 Smuts was exceptional for his interest in and knowledge of military affairs. He

is believed to have served in the Victoria College Rifle Volunteers while a student at Stellenbosch – as did other Boer leaders. As State Attorney of the ZAR, he paid visits to the Natal front in 1899. After the end of the conventional phase of the Anglo-Boer War, he joined Asst. Cmdt. Gen. JH de la Rey as Administrative Commissioner for the Western Transvaal and also wrote articles for publication in Europe that condemned the British conduct of the war. De la Rey was his military mentor and employed him as his Chief of Staff, after which he was appointed as *vecht-generaal*. During the irregular campaign, he led a raid into the Cape as far as the west coast. He remained in the field until the end of the Boer demobilisation in July 1902. During the First World War he served in the field in GSWA, although he was Minister of Defence, and again in German East Africa, where he was the GOC of British Forces. In 1917 he became a Minister without Portfolio in the British War Cabinet. In this post he was instrumental in establishing the Royal Air Force as an independent service. From 1920 to 1924 he was Prime Minister and again from 1939 and also Minister of Defence. From 1940 until 1948 he was also nominally General Officer Commanding-in-Chief of South African Forces in the Field. WK Hancock. *Smuts: The sanguine years*, Vol. 2. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1962, 120–145.

⁴³ In 1964, after many battles were fought to retain independence, the functions of the three independent British Service departments and those of the Ministry of Aviation and the rudimentary Ministry of Defence were transferred to a single superior Ministry of Defence. A reorganisation in 1985 came closest to settling problems similar to those experienced in South Africa. See www.mod.uk for the present structures.

⁴⁴ The chiefs of the General Staff and of the Defence Force during the period under considerations were Brig. Gen. JJ Collyer, CB, CMG, DSO, 1917–1919; Brig. Gen. Andries Brink, CBE, DTD, DSO, 1920–1933; Lt. Gen. HP van Ryneveld, KCB, DSO, MC 1936–1949; Lt. Gen. Leonard Beyers, 1949–1950; Lt. Gen. CL de W du Toit, DSO 1950–1956; Cmdt Gen. HB Klopper, DSO, 1956–1958; Cmdt Gen. SA Melville, SSA, OBE, 1958–1960; Cmdt Gen. PH Grobbelaar, SSA, DSO, 1960–1965; and Gen. RC Hiemstra, SSA, SM 1965–1972. Beyers, who was highly thought of as a military administrator, was AG and occasionally acting CGS during the War. In 1949 Beyers was appointed by Erasmus, who saw him as ‘politically reliable’. He might have had the capacity to resolve the questions of divided authority. However, he remained as CGS for only 10 months, resigning because of the interference by the Minister in military matters and political appointments of staff. See Personnel File, DC 1075/19, File 2822; AG1 367/17, File 78; 76R1029P151 and “Leonard Beyers” in *Dictionary of South African biography*, Vol. 5. Pretoria: HSRC, 1987, 50–51.

⁴⁵ This appeared in several conversations the author had with Lt. Gen. HJ Martin in 1980, from Martin and Orpen’s work (HJ Martin & ND Orpen. *South Africa at war: Military and industrial organization and operations, 1939–1945*. Cape Town: Purnell, 1979) and from Lt. Gen. George Brink’s biography by Birkby *op. cit.*

⁴⁶ Birkby *op. cit.*, pp. 251–252.

⁴⁷ In 1969, Maj. Gen. IS Guilford related to the author how the Secretary, JP de Villiers, had asked why binoculars had to be purchased in peacetime and could not be bought after war had commenced. This indicates how the civilians had learnt nothing from the UDF's experience in 1939 when it had 15 Bren light machine guns and 12 anti-aircraft guns. Isolated from the forces as they were, their lack of military comprehension is understandable.

⁴⁸ Letter of rejection received by present author from the editor, *The Public Servant*, in 1955.

⁴⁹ A draft formal training scheme for cadets in the Department of Foreign Affairs in June 1957, requested by several cadets and based on Citizen Force officers' training, was rejected. The present author was instructed to drop the subject, as the concept was irrelevant. The proposal was not placed in the official files. Training was not instituted until the 1970s. E Wheeler (ed). *History of the South African Department of Foreign Affairs, 1927–1993*. Johannesburg: SAIIA, 2005, 527–528.

⁵⁰ Without general staff training, both Van Ryneveld and AJE Brink probably felt threatened by their lack of military education before achieving high office. Mention of Van Ryneveld in books about the Second World War and also conversations the author has had with his subordinates suggested that he was not temperamentally suited to the appointment he held for so long. His decisions were apparently frequently arbitrary and ill-judged. In the middle of the war, the Adjutant General, Leonard Beyers, resigned as AG in protest against van Ryneveld's arbitrary manner of dealing with the organisation of the women's Naval Service. The CGS withdrew his orders and apologised. Birkby *op. cit.*, *passim*. Hiemstra's autobiography and his reputation during his period as Chief of the Defence Force show that despite his training (Swedish Staff Course and the Imperial Defence College Course) he was much like Van Ryneveld. He bore grievances throughout his career and is known to have engaged in vendettas with heads of other security-related departments. R Hiemstra. *Die wilde haf*. Cape Town: Human & Rousseau, 2001, *passim*.

⁵¹ The records of the following officers, among others, indicate their possible capacities: Brig. Gen. JJ Collyer, CB, CMG, DSO, Order of the Légion d'Honneur (France), Order of the Knight of St Anne (Russia). He served as a staff officer from 1913 through WW1 in German South West Africa and German East Africa. His posts from 1913 were equivalent to those of Chief of the General Staff and in 1917 he was the first CGS appointed to the UDF. Maj. Gen. FH Theron, CB, CBE, served in WW1 in GSWA and France and passed the staff course at Camberley in the UK in 1921. From 1937 to 1939 he was Quartermaster General and Adjutant General. His liaison in the role General Officer Administration, UDF Middle East Forces (1941–1945), showed a ready ability to get on with others in difficult circumstances. Brig. Pieter de Waal, CB, CBE, was an artillery officer in the UDF and passed the staff course at Camberley, UK. From 1934 to 1940, he was Director of Operations and Training at Defence Headquarters. He served as Deputy Chief

of the General Staff from 1940 until 1944, when he was seconded to the staff of Gen. Dwight Eisenhower at Supreme Headquarters Allied Expeditionary Forces as a major general until the end of WW II. After the war, he was QMG and Naval and Marine Chief of Staff.

⁵² Views expressed by officials of the present DOD. In the 1960s, the Chief of the Army, Maj. Gen. Magnus Malan, imported the USA Secretary for Defence's (Robert McNamara) management ideas into the SADF. Their basis was the Planning, Programming and Budgeting System (PPBS) to put "consideration of military needs and costs together ... a plan combining both forces and costs which projected into the future the foreseeable implications of current decisions". In practice, the data produced by the analysis were extensive and complex so that most decision-makers could not challenge conclusions. In an obituary in July 2009, *The Economist* said "Quantification was a word Robert McNamara loved. Numbers could express almost any human activity. But as he admitted later, in penitent memoirs and interviews, he had not understood the variables of war itself".

⁵³ "Cooperation between the Secretary for Defence and the Chief of the Defence Force" in the draft *South African Defence Review 2012*, par. 60–64, p. 258.