LONDON SCHOOL OF ECONOMICS AND POLITICAL SCIENCE

‘THE BOYS UP NORTH’:

A History of South Africa’s Cape Corps and the Indian and Malay Corps in the Second World War

1940-1946

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A thesis submitted to the Department of International History
of the London School of Economics and Political Science
for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy, July 2022

DECLARATION

I certify that the thesis I have presented for examination for the MPhil/PhD degree of the London School of Economics and Political Science is solely my own work other than where I have clearly indicated that it is the work of others (in which case the extent of any work carried out jointly by me and any other person is clearly identified in it).

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THESIS ABSTRACT

This thesis reconstructs the histories of 40,000 non-White soldiers from the Union of South Africa who served in the Cape Corps (CC) and the Indian and Malay Corps (IMC) during the Second World War. CC and IMC were non-White, non-combatant, auxiliary units of the UDF that were in service from 1940-1946. They were deployed in the North African, East African, Madagascar, Middle East, and Italian campaigns. This thesis offers the first in-depth history of these soldiers. It uses a range of disparate primary sources to reconstruct, as far as is possible, their service history and the non-White soldiers' voices. The study has applied innovative methodologies from the discipline of military history, widening out the institutional and war experience with an inclusion of the outer (social) and inner life (emotional). This dissertation highlights the distinctive impact of the Empire and the Union's racial policies and politics on the service of these units, on the 'lived experiences' of the rank-and-file, their perceptions and responses to their service, treatment of soldiers post-war, impact of their service on their communities, and remembrance. It is based on the premise that a subaltern approach reveals the dynamic and challenging experiences of colonial soldiers that are often cloaked in the umbrella narrative of wars.

This research argues that being non-White uniquely, and sometimes dramatically, impacted their military experiences, pre, during and post conflict, often in detrimental ways. However, a second central argument of this thesis is that these soldiers were not simply victims of the Empire and the Union. While they were subjected to a series of segregationist regulations, worsened by prejudices of White officers and other ranks, they also asserted agency over their own experience of the war. Within the limits of their racialised military service, they acted as professional soldiers do. Despite being confined to pioneer capacities and relegated to the bottom of military hierarchies, they performed essential wartime tasks and were commended for the same; they (re)acted against perceived institutional injustices with varying degrees of success; and they retained authority over their own unique narratives despite institutional manipulation. Nevertheless, this research also underscores the ways in which military institutions and culture, rather than being insular were influenced by society and politics, non-White soldiers being repeatedly constrained and having to accommodate both.

These soldiers have traditionally not been part of World War II histories. However, their narratives contribute to a fuller understanding of this conflict. They demonstrate the mutation of racial politics and policy in wartime, the agency of rank-and-file in practicing soldiering, the permeability of modern militaries, and the impact and influence of civil society. The investigation into their non-combatant service underscores the contribution and legacies of military labour in the sub-continent, and indeed military labour in the British Empire. Additionally, this case study has significance for our understanding of race and empire in the mid-twentieth century.

In memory of

Professor Kripal Chandra Yadav

my teacher, my mentor, my grandfather

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A historian without archivists is like a kite without a string. For my dust-filled scavenging, I visited, in the UK, the National Archives at Kew, the Imperial War Museum, SOAS, and LSE's own collections. In South Africa, I spent time at the Department of Defence Archives in Pretoria, the Ditsong National Museum of Military History in Johannesburg, the Historical Research Papers Archives at the University of Witwatersrand, and the Special Collections Archive at the University of Cape Town. At all of these places, no exceptions, I received thoughtful help from the staff and archivists, who, in many instances, opened a much wider door for exploration, beyond the limits of catalogue-scrounging. In particular, I would like to thank Estevao Neto De Agrela and Gerald Prinsloo at DOD, Phindile Madida and Nomsa Masilela at NMMH, Gabriel Mohale and Elizabeth Marima at HPRA, and Clive Kirkwood at UCT. In South Africa I was also generously welcomed into a tight-knit community of military researchers and veterans. In particular I would like to acknowledge Vinesh Selvan and Leon Subban of the South African Indian Legion for introducing me to the Legionnaire community, and Dr Evert Klehynnas and Prof Ian van der Waag with whom I have shared virtual, nevertheless fruitful, correspondences.

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Woking, UK.

ABBREVIATIONS

ARCHIVES & FILES

BNA	British Newspaper Archives
CGS	Chief of General Staff, DOD
DNEAS	Directorate of Non-European Army Services
DISA	Digital Innovation South Africa
DOD	Department of Defence Archives, Pretoria
HPRA	Historical Papers Research Archive, University of the Witwatersrand
IWGC	Imperial War Graves Commission
IWM	Imperial War Museum
MI9	British Directorate of Military Intelligence Section 9
NMMH	Ditsong: National Museum of Military History
PDS	Parliamentary Digital Service, UK
SAHO	South Africa History Online Archive
TNA	The National Archives, Kew
UCTSC	University of Cape Town Special Collections
UWH	Union War Histories, DOD
WCARS	Western Cape Archives and Records Service, Cape Town
WD	War Diaries, DOD
WO	War Office, TNA
WR	War Records, DOD

ORGANISATIONS

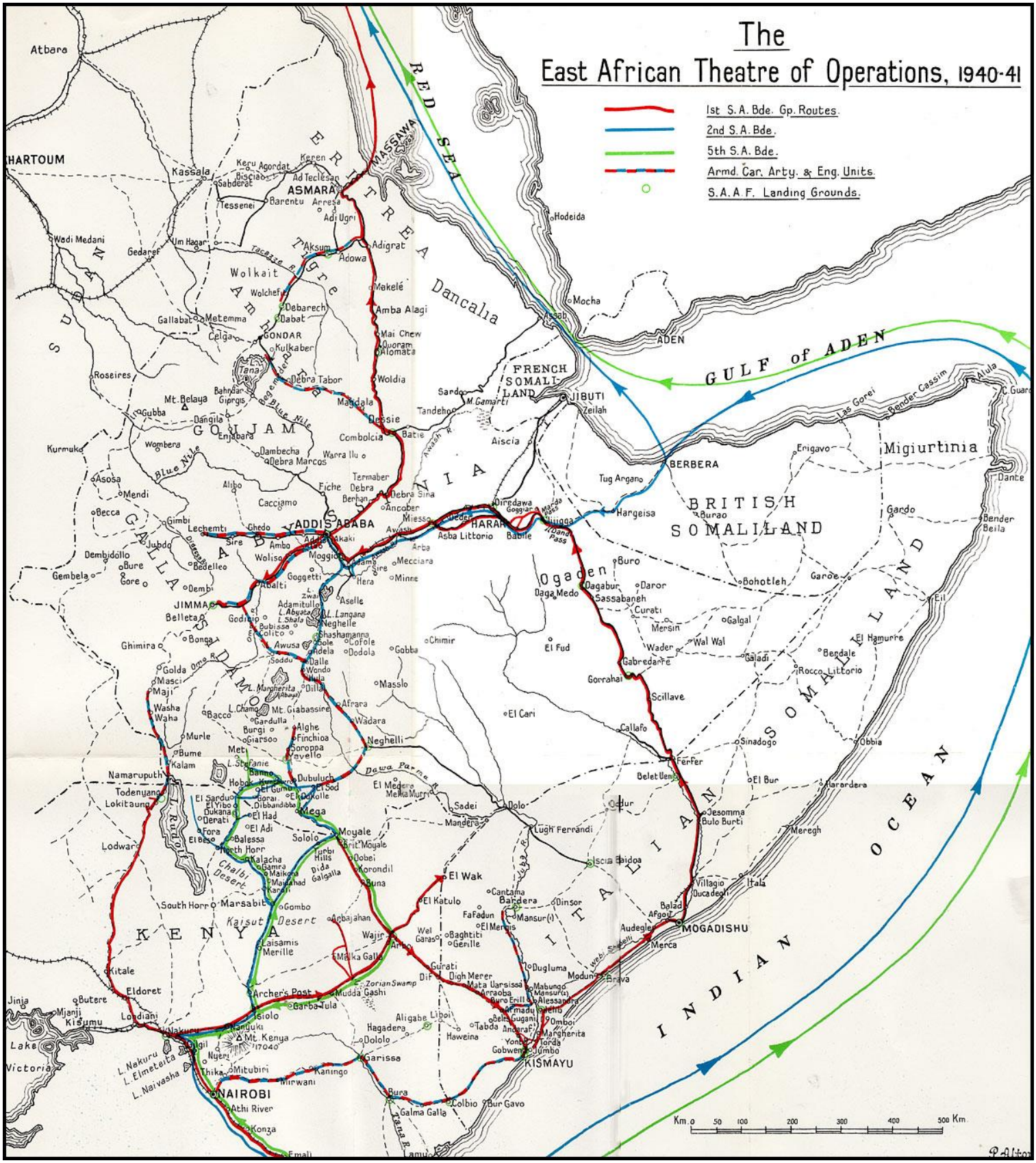
ANC	African National Congress
APO	African Political Organisation
BCESL	British Commonwealth Ex-Servicemen League
CCA	Cape Corps Association
CAD	Coloured Affairs Department
CGC(s)	Comforts and Gifts Committee(s)
DDNEAS	Deputy Director NEAS
DSDC	Discharged Soldiers and Demobilisation Committee
GGWF	Governor General's War Fund
GWEA	Griqualand West Ex-Servicemen's Association
NEAS	Non-European Army Services
RAF	Royal Air Force
SAAF	South African Air Force
SABC	South African Broadcasting Corporation
SADF	South African Defence Force (1957/61-1994)
SAIRR	South African Institute of Race Relations
SAMHS	South African Military History Society
SANDF	South African National Defence Forces (1994-)
SANNC	South African Native National Congress
SAOEF	South African Overseas Expeditionary Force (1915-1919)
UDF	Union Defence Forces (1912-1957)

R E G I M E N T S

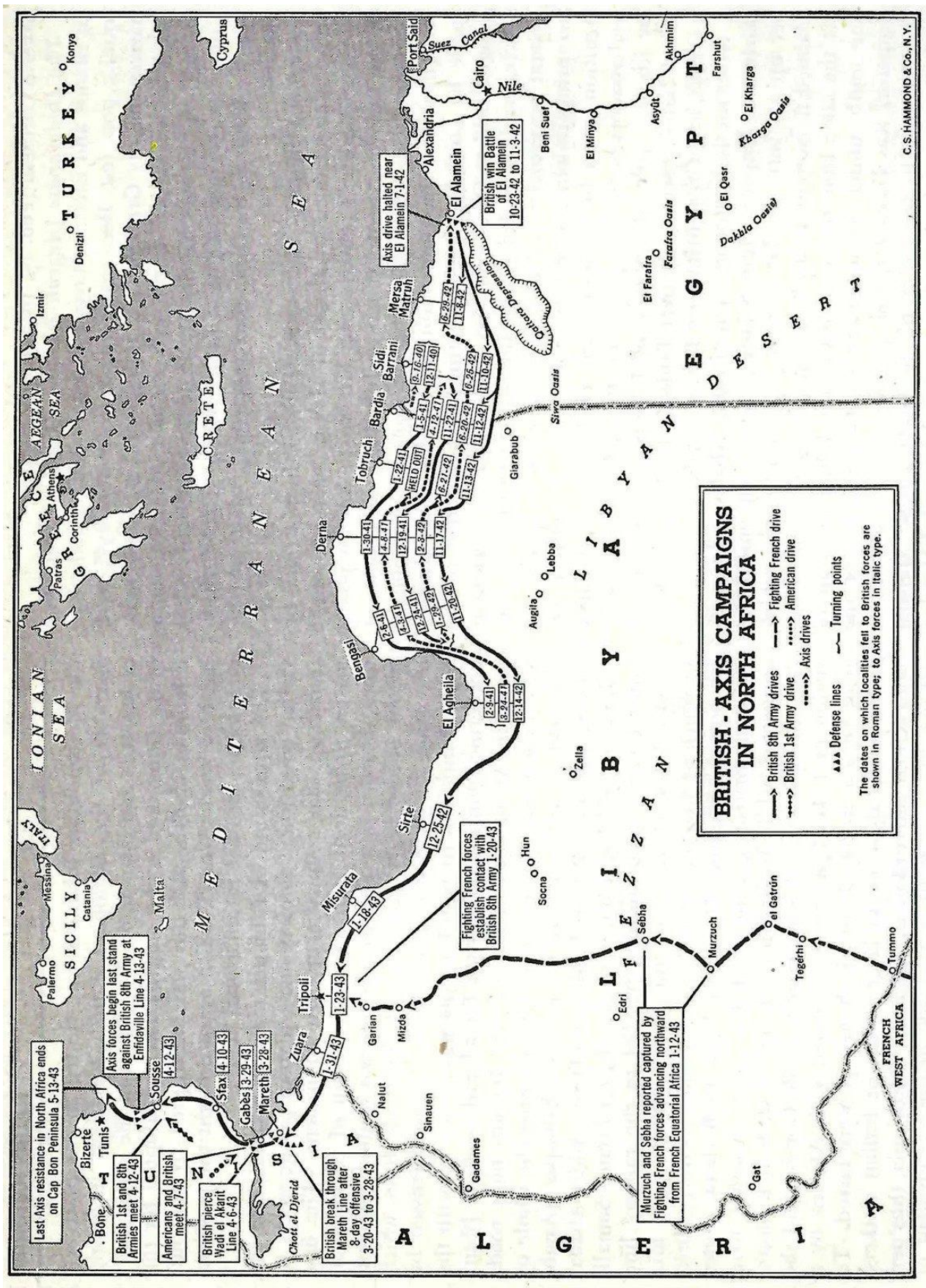
BB	Bushmanland Borderers
CC	Cape Corps (UDF)
CMR	Cape Mounted Riflemen
IMC	Indian and Malay Corps (UDF)
KAR	Kings African Rifles
NBS	Namaqualand Border Scouts
NMC	Native Military Corps (UDF)
PF	Permanent Force (UDF)
SAEC	South African Engineer Corps
SAMC	South African Medical Corps
SANLC	South African Native Labour Contingent
SARMT	South African Reserve Motor Transport
SAVC	South African Veterinary Corps
WAAF	Women's Auxiliary Air Force
WAAS	Women's Auxiliary Army Services

O T H E R S

BEM	British Empire Medal
DCM	Distinguished Conduct Medal
MEF	Middle East Forces
MM	Military Medal
MP	Member of Parliament
MT	Motor Transport
POW(s)	Prisoner(s) of War
TO	Transport Officer



Map 1. 'East African Theatre of Operations', In Orpen, N.(1968). East African and Abyssinian Campaigns. Prunell.



Map 2. 'North African Campaigns', Encyclopaedia Britannica

TIMELINE

1652-1806	Dutch control over the Cape Colony The Dutch East India Company maintained control over the colony. Exiled political prisoners from the Dutch East Indies were enslaved, sent to the Cape of Good Hope. Their descendants came to be known as the 'Cape Malay'.
1806	Netherlands cedes Cape Colony to Britain British re-occupied the colony after the Battle of Blaauwberg in 1806, and British possession was affirmed in the Anglo-Dutch Treaty of 1814
1806	The Cape Regiment was formed, the first regiment in the British colony to comprise of 'Coloured' soldiers
1835-1840	The Great Trek Afrikaner settlers, seeking to remove themselves from British administration, leave the Cape Colony and march eastwards. They found the Orange Free State and Transvaal Republics (the Boer Republics), and take control of Natal, renaming it the Natalia Republic.
1860-1911	Arrival of thousands of labourers and traders from India, forebears of the majority of South Africa's current Indian population.
1867	Diamonds discovered at Kimberley
1877	Britain annexes the Transvaal
1880-1881	First Anglo-Boer War Fought between the Transvaal Republic (also known as the South African Republic) and the British government over suzerainty of Transvaal. Resulted in a peace settlement in 1881 wherein Transvaal was given limited self-government and brought under the nominal control of the Crown. Britain maintained control over foreign relations and 'Native' Affairs.
Mid-1880s	Gold Rush in Transvaal with the discovery of gold mines
1897	The Immigration Restriction Act (Natal), amended in 1900, 1903, 1906. Through restrictions, the act stops all immigration of 'free' (not indentured) Indians to the colony.
1899-1902	The South African War (alternatively, the Second Anglo-Boer War) Fought between the British Empire and the Boer Republics of Transvaal and the Orange Free State over the Empire's control of the Afrikaner Republics. South Africa's non-White populations were involved in both combatant and non-combatant capacities.
1902	Treaty of Vereeniging Marked the formal end of hostilities. The British government assured self-governance to the Boer Republics so long as they accepted the monarchy.
1910	Union of South Africa The unification of Cape Colony, Natal, Transvaal and the Orange Free Colony to form the dominion of the Union of South Africa.

1913	The Natives Land Act The Act enforced land dispossession of African populations and spatially separated and formalised segregation of spaces based on racial hierarchy.
1914-1918	First World War The Union automatically enters the war with Whitehall's declaration. Louis Botha (then PM) and Jan Smuts (then Defence Minister), despite previous hostility, pledge support and become prominent voices in the Imperial War Cabinet.
September 1918	Battle of Square Hill Serving under General Allenby in Palestine, the 1st Battalion Cape Corps fought a 12-hour long battle and captured Square Hill from the Turkish forces.
1927	The Immorality Act Prohibited sexual relations between 'White' and 'Black' people. It was amended in 1950 to include all non-White people.
1927	The Native Administration Act Legalised the 'banishing' of tribes by the Governor-General in the 'general interest' of the 'public'. The Act formalised separation of administration of the African populations.
1934	Unveiling of the Kimberley Gun War Memorial In remembrance of the victory of the Battle of Square Hill and the men who lost their lives.
1935	Invasion of Ethiopia by Italian Forces
1936	The Asiatic Land Tenure Amendment Act The heavily contested Act accepted segregation in principle and policy and confines South African Indian communities to separate areas.
1937	The Industrial Conciliation Act Formalised segregation in trade unions.
1939-1945	Second World War The Union did not automatically enter the war as the parliament had to pass a declaration. However, there was a sizable opposition against participation by the Afrikaner nationalist camp. After heated debate, the proclamation for war was made by a majority of thirteen votes.
1940	Formation of the Cape Corps and the Indian and Malay Corps
June 1940	German occupation of France
June 1940 – Nov 1941	The East African Campaign Fought over control of East Africa, Somaliland, and the Red Sea Ports.
Jan 1941	Allied forces capture the fortress of Tobruk
Feb- March 1941	Battle of Keren Allied forces capture the Italian East Africa town of Keren, crucial to maintaining supply lines in East Africa and the Red Sea ports.
May 1941	Battle of Amba Alagi The end of Italian control in East Africa.

June 1940 – Feb 1943	The Western Desert Campaign Fought for control of North African ports and the Mediterranean Sea.
Nov-Dec 1941	Battle of Sidi Rezegh A costly battle with heavy losses on both sides. Crucial to relieve the Siege of Tobruk.
February 1942	Fall of Singapore and South East Asia The loss of Singapore left the British Raj in India vulnerable.
1942	Cape Corps absorbs the Indian and Malay Corps
June 1942	Fall of Tobruk Gen Rommel's Axis forces capture the fortress. Beginning of American aid to the Allied forces in the desert.
July 1942	The First Battle of El Alamein
November 1942	The Second Battle of El Alamein Beginning of the end of the Western Desert Campaign as the Axis threat to Suez is eliminated.
July 1943 – May 1945	The Liberation of the Italian Peninsula Part of the Mediterranean Campaign, the invasion of Italy was hard fought.
June 1944	Rome falls to the Allied forces
April 1945	The Battles for Monte Caprara, Monte Sole and Monte Abelle The 6th South African Division is deployed alongside American forces in pursuit of the retreating German army. The battles had heavy casualties on both sides.
May 1945	End of Hostilities in Europe
1947	Cape Corps is re-instated as part of UDF's Permanent Force
1948	With the election of the Nationalist Party, apartheid is formalised
1949	Cape Corps is demobilised and disbanded

Introduction

In December 2019, the Commonwealth Graves Commission appointed a special committee to examine the commemoration of non-White soldiers by the Imperial War Graves Commission (IWGC). Its brief was 'to identify inequalities in the way the organisation commemorated the dead of the British Empire from the two world wars'. The committee's report concluded that the IWGC, influenced by 'imperial ideology', had diverged from its principle of 'equality in death':

> It is estimated that between 45,000 and 54,000 casualties (predominantly Indian, East African, West African, Egyptian and Somali personnel) were commemorated unequally. […] potentially as many as 350,000 – were not commemorated by name or possibly not commemorated at all. […] While we should not lose sight of the inclusive and successful work of the Commission in Europe […] [we] should not overlook the mistakes in the organisation's early history – many of which have been forgotten or reimagined over the century of its existence.[1]

Indeed, whether influenced by contemporary politics, propaganda, ideologies, and self-interest – academic histories as well as public memorialisation of the World Wars have played a long, continuous and interlinked role in 'reimagining' the history of the non-White non-West soldier.

In the aftermath of World War II, for most of the next fifty years, three broad historiographical clusters emerged. First, the diplomatic histories concerned with the failure of foreign relations in Europe and America which led to the conflict dominated the discourse. Initial publications were centred around Hitler's fanaticism for power, Chamberlain's appeasement and, British,

[1] Hay & Burke. (2021). *Report of the Special Committee to Review Historical Inequalities in Commemoration.* Great Britain: The Commonwealth Graves Commission, pp.6-7.

French and German foreign policies in the inter-war period.[2] From this school emerged A J P Taylor's 'The Origins of the Second World War' (1961), subsequently regarded as the first work in revisionist history. The discourse, however, largely remained euro-centric. Next to emerge were studies on the 'totalitarian' nature of the war and its impact on post-war society. These histories focused on the war in terms of the totality of military operations, exploitation of technology for creation of chemical weapons, violence against civilian populations, and re-direction of imperial economies to power the war machinery.[3] The third cluster comprised of regional and national histories of ex-colonial states and their perception of participation in the conflict.[4] These histories originated alongside the emergence of national histories and retained the perception of the World Warss as 'White man's war'. However, from the 1970s onwards, a fourth cluster emerged that pushed against these neo-colonial euro-centric undertones and analysed the violence of empire(s). These re-centred studies focused on the participation of colonial subjects, the expanse and impact of the war on the colonies and challenge the myths of nationhood and Empires – in step with the growing subaltern trends within military histories and conflict studies. As Ashley Jackson argued that 'The war ought to be recognised as a global struggle, and particularly as an *imperial* one.'[5]

This thesis falls within the purview of this fourth cluster. It aims to reconstruct the histories of the 'Cape Corps' (CC) and the 'Indian and Malay Corps' (IMC), non-White units from the Union of South Africa that were deployed in the campaigns in North Africa, East Africa, Italy, Madagascar and the Middle East from 1940-46. Formation of CC and IMC and indeed the participation of the Union itself was a politically contested episode. The South African War,

[2] *See* Hugh Trevor-Roper's *The Last Days of Hitler* (1946), Andreas Hillgruber's *Germany and the two World Wars* (1981), Klaus Hildebrand's *The Third Reich* (1984), Alan Bullock *Hitler and Stalin: Parallel Lives* (1992)
[3] *See* G Wright's *The Ordeal of Total War, 1939–1945* (1968), G Wint's *Total War: Causes and Courses* (1979), Forster & Nagler's *On the Road to Total War* (1997), Chickering, Forster & Greiner's *A World at Total War* (2005).
[4] *See* Section 1 and '*Africa and World War II*' (2015).
[5] Jackson, A. (2006). *The British Empire and the Second World War*. Hambledon Continuum, p.1

diminishing control of the Empire, and the rise of Afrikaner nationalism, marked the early decades of the twentieth century and influenced the mutation of race-based politics in the Union. White Nationalism in the Union was formidable and against participation and the militarisation of non-White communities. Consequently, in the 1939 South African parliamentary debate on involvement, Smuts assured his colleagues that the Union's forces would not participate in battles beyond the continent and would be utilised solely to ensure South Africa's territorial sovereignty.[6] However, the needs of the Empire triumphed over regional considerations. Three major events accelerated war mobilisation in the Union: (i) Italy's entry on the side of the Axis powers meant that war had spilled into North Africa and East Africa, i.e. closer to home, (ii) Japan's 1941 offensive in the Pacific threatened the South African coastline, (iii) Germany's South Atlantic submarine campaign threatened South African shipping.[7] In turn, these events impacted participation of non-White[8] communities and dictated the evolution of their role in the campaigns they fought, albeit their service was significantly marred by the amplifying racial narrative in the Union.

CC/IMC recruits were meant to *be exclusively used in unarmed non-combatant capacities* and their recruitment was to be restricted to their communities ('Coloured' for CC, and South African Indians and Malay for the IMC).[9] In addition to segregation in policy, there was institutional prejudice from within the military, and individual racism to which non-White

[6] Nasson, B. (2012*). History of South Africa at War 1939-45*. Jacana Media. p.56

[7] Stapleton, T. (2013). *A Military History of Africa Volume Two: The Colonial Period.* Praeger. p.228

[8] The terms 'White' and 'non-White' have been used to denote the political demarcations in the Union that translated into military regulations. Although these were derived from and justified by racial prejudice and White supremacy in political and civil society, by limiting it to a simple distinction of race undermines the complex mutating political and policy discourse in the Union that all South Africans participated in. 'Non-White' does not mean that those falling under this category have been defined in relation to 'Whiteness'. In fact, in the South African spectrum 'White' itself is a reductive category as it does not recognise the diverse ethnic, cultural, ideological, economic and, indeed, gender, identities that the 'White' South African populace negotiated with. 'Non-White' simply refers to the South African communities who were legally limited in exercising their political, civil and economic rights and were not full 'citizens' but 'subjects' of the Union.

[9] The term 'Coloured' has been used strictly in its historical context to identify soldiers of 'mixed-race' lineage. *See* footnote 37.

soldiers were subjected. Yet despite these limitations, as this thesis will demonstrate, soldiers of these regiments served valiantly, earning commendations and the admiration of their superiors. This dissertation seeks to analyse the impact of the Empire's and the Union's racial policies and politics on the service of these units, the 'lived experiences' of its soldiers, the treatment of veterans post-war and, the impact of their service on their communities. It aims to reconstruct a narrative that will view the rank-and-file as complex participants in the war and return agency to the soldier.

The histories of these soldiers are ignored experiences of World War II and there is little literature on their service. Yet, this thesis is informed by and aims to contribute to three historiographies: (i) to the larger narrative of World War II, (ii) to the research on South Africa's participation in the war, (iii) to the discourse on the impact of racism and identity politics on the service of non-White soldiers. This thesis argues that military institutions are not isolated organisations, removed from political and social influence. By re-centring the armed forces into the circumambient politics of the day, to be seen are new understandings of Empire and of the impact of race on imperial militaries. When viewed through the subaltern lens, the agency of rank-and-file, their role in the functioning of militaries, and their perceptions on soldiering (and what it means to be a 'soldier') are expounded. Finally, the history of the non-White soldier cannot be reconstructed without contextualising these men in the narratives of the wars and campaigns, of civilian and military policy and rhetoric, of communal response and participation, of popular memory, and indeed locating them in the collective experience of their own regiments. As Richard Grayson and Erica Wald posit, 'military history is a history of society, of culture and of politics, among many other things.'[10]

[10] Grayson, R., & Wald, E. (2020). 'Editorial'. *British Journal of Military History*. p.1

1. Literature Review

1.1. An African History of World War II

Decolonisation from the mid-twentieth century ushered in an era of regional histories. Academics from the ex-colonies penned nationalist histories with an unequivocal focus on reclaiming a common past and identity of their countrymen, and their struggle for freedom from an oppressive European regime.[11] These histories neglected the role of non-White soldiers as they did not 'fit in' with the freedom struggle narrative and viewed both World Wars as the 'White man's war' (therefore, of less concern to the history of their nation). When these histories do include colonial soldiers, it is either as an example of hypocrisy of the European struggle for democracy fought on the labour of subjugated populations[12], or to accuse certain communities for their perceived 'disloyalty'. As Timothy Stapleton summarised, 'nationalist historians portrayed […] response to colonial subjugation in terms of either heroic resistance or traitorous collaboration.'[13]

The discourse on 'loyalty' and 'disloyalty' of colonial soldiers was built on an existing imperial tradition. Evidence of the legitimacy of colonial rule relied on the belief that loyal indigenous populations *wanted* an 'enlightened' European rule – as demonstrated by the commitment of

[11] In the postcolonial states of Africa and the Indian sub-continent, 'nationalist' historians focused on pre-colonial narratives that shunned racial legacies and established historical and cultural continuities with a past free of European rule, as well as built cult narratives around leaders such as Khwame Nkrumah, Edward Muteesa II, Patrice Lumumba in Africa, and Gandhi, Jawaharlal Nehru, Muhammad Ali Jinnah in the Indian sub-continent. As Jonathan Earle posits, 'National political histories were created and adapted to animate anticolonial nationalisms and postcolonial state building.' Earle, J. (2018). 'African Intellectual History and Historiography'. *Oxford Research Encyclopaedia of African History*. p.2

[12] For example, Maghraoui, on colonial troops from Morocco, observed that 'Up to the Second World War the experiences of these [colonial] soldiers did not symbolize, at least in the eyes of Moroccan official history, any national commitment or heroic affirmation of national dignity. However, the colonial soldier became an appropriate and useable national symbol once the sultan Mohammed V gave his "*idn*" (permission) for the support of the allied forces in the Second World War. It is now often said that Moroccans fought in Europe for the independence of Morocco.' Magharaoui, D. (2000). *Moroccan Colonial Troops: History, Memory and Culture of French Colonialism.* (unpublished doctoral dissertation) University of California Santa Cruz. p. 221

[13] Stapleton, T. (2011). *African Police and Soldiers in Colonial Zimbabwe, 1923-80.* University of Rochester Press. p.1

indigenous soldiers. A prime example of this is the myth of the 'martial race'[14] evidenced by narratives of loyalty, such as the 'loyal' Sikh contingents from Punjab in India that fought against the mutinous Bengal Army in the Revolt of 1857. However, as K. C. Yadav demonstrated (using official sources), the 'Sikhs' in these regiments were not Sikhs but mercenaries hastily recruited from the North-West Frontier Provinces.[15] A similar legacy befell the 'good Berber'[16] who served in French Morocco and the Gourmier who fought in the Italian campaign. Driss Maghraoui posits that 'the legacy of the Goumiers is a troubled one: when their contribution is in fact acknowledged, it is often absorbed into a narrative that glorifies the 'French nation'.'[17]

Since the 1970s, in what one may argue was the beginning of a post-nationalist-history era, a revisionist trend has been steadily on the rise led by Africanists producing critical contributions to the continent's participation in global conflicts. These researchers interacted in academic conferences that pioneered war studies in Africa. In 1984 Richard Rathbone and David Killingray organised the first of a series of such conferences, hosted by SOAS. The expansive three-day symposium culminated in an edited volume.[18] Of the 40 papers presented at the conference, ten were published in this volume, authored by eminent Africanists such as John Londsdale and Louis Grundlingh. The chapters discussed the socio-economic and political consequences of the war in Sierra Leone, Tanzania, Kenya, Botswana, Algeria, and more. Killlingray was also the editor of the volume *Guardians of Empire: The Armed Forces of the*

[14] Across the British Empire the 'martial race' theory deemed certain ethnicities fit for warfare. Ample has been written on the subject by historians specialising in regional imperial spaces. For example, Mylse Osbourne on Kenya, Haya Al-Noaimi on the Gulf, Kate Imy, Kim Wagner, Gavin Rand on the Indian sub-continent.

[15] Yadav, K. C. (2016). 'Army Recruitment in Punjab, 1846-1913: An Evolutionary Study'. *Journal of the United Service Institution of India*.

[16] Gershovich, M. (1995). *French Military Policy in Morocco and the Origins of an Arab Army.* (Unpublished thesis) Harvard University. p.381

[17] Magharaoui, D. (2014). 'The goumiers in the Second World War: history and colonial representation'. *The Journal of North African Studies*. p.585

[18] Killingray & Rathbone (Eds.). (1986). *Africa and the Second World War*. London: Palgrave Macmillan.

Colonial Powers c. 1700-1964 (1999) alongside David Omissi. Killingray's article in the book 'Gender issues and African colonial armies' brought to light the hidden histories of households in camps in British and French African colonies. Several regional histories of note also emerged that engaged with different discourse and methodologies to understand the war in the continent and the participation of Africans in the war.[19] More recently, in *Violent Intermediaries* (2014), Michelle Moyd develops these domestic histories in the case of Askari soldiers deployed in German East Africa.

Moyd self-classifies her book as part of the body of work on 'everyday colonialism' – i.e. colonialism as a lived experience for the soldiers and the communities that developed in and around camps. She presents them as participants in the process of colonisation, exploring questions of identity and masculinity among Askari soldiers. Although her study ends at World War I, Moyd's methodology has wider application. It places the colonial soldier as an active agent at the centre of the colonial state-making process (as opposed to perceiving them as complacent mercenaries). In the World War II context, Joanna Lewis' *Empire State-building: War & Welfare in Kenya, 1925-52* (2000), discusses the plight of demobilised Askari soldiers in British Kenya after World War II. Although not a military history, Lewis places African soldiering within the larger context of the colonial 'welfare state' and elaborates on the post-

[19] Jackson, A. (1999). *Botswana 1939-1945 An African Country at War*. Clarendon Press. Muhammad A. (1988). 'The Sudan Defence Force: Origin and Role, 1925–1955'. *Institute of African and Asian Studies*; Clayton, A. (1988). *France, Soldiers and Africa.* Brassey's Defence Publishers; Liebau, H., Bromber, K., Lange, K., Hamzah, D., & Ahuja, R. (Eds.). (2010). *The World in World Wars: Experiences, Perceptions and Perspectives from Asia and Africa*. BRILL.; Echenberg, M. (1991). *Colonial Conscripts: The Tirailleurs Senegalais in French West Africa, 1857–1960*. Heinemann; Korieh, C. J. (2020). *Nigeria and World War II: Colonialism, Empire, and Global Conflict*. CUP; Simelane, H. S. (1998) 'Veterans, politics and poverty: The case of Swazi veterans in the Second World War'. *South African Historical Journal*.; Mann, G. (2006). *Native Sons: West African Veterans and France in the Twentieth Century*. Duke University Press; Tembo, A. (2021). *War and Society in Colonial Zambia, 1939–1953*. Ohio University Press.

war socio-economic 'welfare' policies for veterans cultivated by colonial administrators for, what John Lonsdale called, the 'second colonial occupation'.

Meanwhile, the centenary of World War I (2014-2018) has boosted the evolving academic debate in imperial military histories that seek to be 'inclusive' and address gaps within the existing literature. A consequence of this has been the renewed and vigorous interest in colonial soldiers in the World Wars, as can be seen with the convening of numerous conferences across the globe.[20] In 2008, yet another pivotal confluence of Africanists occurred at a workshop organised at Rutgers University. Many of the participants of this workshop further presented their work at 2009 conference at Cornell University and in the 2010 American Historical Association meeting. The lengthy interaction resulted in the publication of *Africa and World War II* edited by Judith Byfield, Carolyn Brown, Timothy Parsons, and Ahmad Sikainga. With contributions from 22 scholars, the comprehensive work analyses Africa's participation through three major trajectories: (i) impact of critical events on Africa's role (invasion of Ethiopia, fall of Tobruk, occupation of Singapore); (ii) impact of the War on colonial policies and administration; (iii) impact of the War on individuals and communities. Authors in the volume collectively argue Africa's critical contributions for Allied victory and evidence this through a plethora of case studies. They also present novel insights in gender studies, cultural studies, environmental history, and spatial analysis. Significant to this research are two papers by Suryakanthie Chetty and Louis Grundlingh. Their inclusion signalled the beginning of the mainstreaming of the Union's military contributions within the larger narrative of Africa and World War II, and the narrative of the War itself, to which this research also seeks to contribute to.

[20] 'Revisiting Africa and the Second World War' at the University of Cape Coast (Ghana), 'India and World War One: A Centennial Commemoration to Remember Indian Soldiers' at the Nehru Memorial Museum and Library (India), 'New Directions in Second World War Studies Workshop' at the University of Edinburgh (Scotland), 'Africa and World War II' organised at QMUL (UK) etc.

1.2. South Africa: History and Historiography

Despite the expanding focus on African studies, South Africa has, since 1948 (formalisation of apartheid), remained to a large extent invisible in the World War II narrative. For the Dominion, allegiance to the Empire had caused internal turmoil at home. The Nationalist Party opposed participation, citing British defeat of the Boer Republics during the South African War. Militant elements of the Afrikaner community began to organise themselves and throughout the war, engaged in terrorism and acts of sabotage against the State. Victory of the pro-Afrikaner Nationalist Party in the 1948 general elections sounded the knell on imperial collaboration. Participation in the World Wars was relegated to the shadows. Further detailing this, Bill Nasson identifies five causes for South Africa's 'shrinking history' of World War II in academia and public imagination: (i) frontier wars and rebellions, and not World Wars, are usually the subject matter of local historical dramas; (ii) academia's preoccupation with interpretations of segregation and apartheid; (iii) rising international condemnation of apartheid in the post-war years resulted in the marginalisation of South Africa from commemorative events; (iv) within SA, remembrance of wars has indubitably been linked to politics and the World Wars were not politically 'usable'; (v) South Africa's role in international histories was first reduced to Smuts' role as Field Marshal in the War Council, and then entirely neglected, save for some scant references.[21]

In addition to academic indifference, there was also an active campaign within South Africa against the memory of World War II led by the apartheid government. Major David Katz in his article 'A Case of Arrested Development' (2012) demonstrates this. In 1943, to commemorate the Union's contribution, then PM Smuts established the Union War Histories Section which was charged with collecting data and producing authoritative official accounts of the war.

[21] Nasson, *History of South Africa at War*. pp.20-22

However, the committee could only publish a part of its research before it was prematurely disbanded by the Nationalist Party as it had little purpose in the party's Afrikaner state-building mission.[22] Casualties of this mission included the histories of non-White South African soldiers. Katz further stresses that a revival of the Committee's work by the government occurred only to serve temporary political aims. For example, shortly before the end of apartheid, it was used to propagandise South Africa's contributions to the rest of the world. However, it was not just the non-White group that was axed. Albert Grundlingh, observing the lack of South African scholarship on Afrikaner soldiers in World War II, remarked that the gap was 'the result of historiographical traditions which, although divergent in many ways, have a common denominator in that their various compelling imperatives have despatched the Second World War to the periphery of their respective scholarly discourses.'[23]

Thus, there was also the problem of the historian. With much of the international scholarship excluding South Africa as a topic until 1994, the burden of historical production remained local. The unintended result of this, as Brig-Gen Deon Fourie explains, was the dereliction of military studies:

> It seemed that for the Afrikaner historians, the World Wars and the Union Defence Force were 'English' with only the Anglo-Boer War worthy of attention. The Anglophone historians, for their part, seemed to think that to show an interest in the armed forces would be to align themselves with Afrikaner nationalism and with apartheid.[24]

[22] Seven volumes were planned of which only three were published: *Crisis in the Desert, The Sidi Rezeg Battle, 1941* and *War in the Southern Oceans*. The remaining four volumes were to cover the history of the SAAF, the Abyssinian, NA, and Italian campaigns. In 1961, on the private initiative of serving officers, veterans, and ex-servicemen organisations the projects were subsequently revived. As a result, Neil Orpen's *Hyper-War: East African and Abyssinian Campaigns* was published in 1968.

[23] Grundlingh, A. (1999). 'The King's Afrikaners? Enlistment and Ethnic Identity in the Union of South Africa's Defence Force during the Second World War, 1939-45'. *The Journal of African History*, p.351

[24] Fourie, D. (2015). 'Review of A Military History of South Africa by Ian van der Waag'. *Scientia Militaria*. p.199

For decades, the production of war histories was initiated and sustained by veterans. Commemoration within military societies, non-academic works authored by ex-servicemen, oral traditions memorialising the war – all contributed towards the remembered history of the War(s).[25]

The tradition of veteran narratives remains formidable in modern-day South Africa. Post-apartheid, however, there has been a slow revival of academic interest on the subject that has catalysed the inclusion of South Africa's war in the larger World War II historiography. The newer work within the field is going beyond the traditional campaign histories and is instead examining the war in the Union through new lenses such as histories of identity, migration, gender studies etc. Some notable mentions include works by Albert Grundlingh, Neil Roos, J. Lambert, David Katz, Karen Horn, Jean Smith, P. John Keene, Jennifer Crwys-Williams and Evert Kleynhans.[26]

Each work within this historiography has contributed towards filling a definite gap in literature that, when combined, creates an overview of the impact of South African society's conflicting ideologies on its participation as a belligerent dominion. Suryakanthie Chetty's article '"Our victory was our defeat": Race, Gender and Liberalism in the Union Defence Force, 1939-45' (2016) expanded this discussion by questioning not only the impact of segregation on South Africa's war against fascism, but also by examining the impact of South Africa's participation

[25] *See* Section 1.4

[26] Grundlingh, A. (1999). 'The King's Afrikaners? Enlistment and Ethnic Identity in the Union of South Africa's Defence Force during the Second World War, 1939-45'. *The Journal of African History*; Roos, N. (2005). *No ordinary Springboks: White servicemen and social justice in South Africa, 1939-61*. Aldershot and Burlington.; Lambert, J. (2008). ''Their Finest Hour?' English-speaking South Africans and World War II.' *South African Historical Journal*.; Katz, D. (2019). *South Africans Versus Rommel: The Untold Story of the Desert War in World War II*. Johannesburg: Delta Books.; Horn, K. (2015). *In Enemy Hands: South Africa's POWs in World War II*. Jonathan Ball Publishing.; Smith, J. (2017). ''Young blood' and 'the blackout': Love, Sex and Marriage on the South African Home Front'. In M. Crowley, & S. Dawson, *Home Fronts - Britain and the Empire at War, 1939-45*. Boydell Press.; Keene, J. (1995) *South Africa in World War II: A Pictorial History*. Human and Rousseau.; Crwys-Williams, J. (1992). *A Country at War, 1939-45: The Mood of a Nation*. Ashanti Publishing.; Klehynnas, E. (2021). *Hitler's Spies: Secret Agents and the Intelligence War in South Africa*. African Sun Media.

on apartheid. Extremely useful to this study is the way Chetty argues that the rise of the apartheid state in 1948 was not an aberration, but a continuation of wartime policies broken only by the 1942 period of 'weariness' when constant military defeats (Tobruk in particular) and the possibility of an attack on the Union was depressing political and public morale. She contends that service in the armed forces was inextricably linked to the racially exclusive concept of citizenship i.e. only full citizens could serve in combatant capacities and expect compensations from the government for the same. Non-Whites were viewed as 'subjects' and not 'citizens' and thus served in auxiliary capacities, mirroring their position in South Africa's politics. Chetty analysed military propaganda and the way war services were portrayed to support her argument and extends it to not only African and Coloured soldiers, but also to White women who served in the UDF.

In 2019, yet another impactful World War II conference (hosted by Stellenbosch University, SA) produced a compendium dedicated to the study of the South African soldier, *Sights, Sounds, Memories: South African Soldier Experiences of the Second World War* (2020). Edited and compiled under the tutelage of Ian van der Waag, the book 'aims to convey insights into the experience of the Springbok soldier'.[27] Although most of the chapters in the volume are focused on the White soldier's experience, they shed much needed light on previously neglected histories – medical service, the Madagascar campaign, foreign volunteers in the UDF, politicisation of veterans. Van der Waag's own insightful discussion on what it means to write a military history has provided abundant food for thought for this thesis. Two chapters in the volume redirect attention to, what van der Waag calls, the 'invisible soldier': Chetty's piece on White women in the UDF, and my own chapter on Coloured POWs interned in Europe.[28]

[27] Van der Waag, I. (Ed.). (2020). *Sights, Sounds, Memories*. African Sun Media. p.5

[28] Chetty, 'This Great Adventure', and Yadav, 'A Hapless Post of Hungry Men' In *Sights, Sounds, Memories* (2020).

In summary, the reconstruction of South Africa's participation in World War II has not been strenuously pursued by regional or international academia. Where it has been analysed, this has been unusually segregated. Nasson's *Pocket History* being the only exception. Works on South Africa's military contributions have separately examined White and non-White troops. Perhaps one reason for this is the segregation within official sources itself. The next sub-section focuses on non-White South African soldiers.

1.3. Scholarship on South Africa's Non-White Troops

South African academic scholarship remained uniformly silent on non-White combatants and labour regiments until the 1970s. In 1974, B. P. Wilan published a pioneering article on the African labour contingents that were sent to France during World War I. Wilan's piece covered an impressive array of issues concerning their history.[29] This was followed by Albert Grundlingh's works on 'Black' South African participants in World War I, the most important of which was *Fighting their Own War* (1987).[30] In 1983, K. W. Grundy published the first and only academic book on non-White soldiers in the Union forces, *Soldiers Without Politics: Blacks in the South African Armed Forces*. Defending the book's caustic title, Grundy argued that non-White recruits who joined UDF over the years were apolitical on two accounts: (i) they had no sentimental affiliation with the White minority governments that they served; (ii) nor did they identify with the revolutionaries fighting back this minority rule. 'In short, in most instances political considerations do not play a significant part in their decision to fight: their purpose in serving in the armed forces is personal rather than political'.[31] For Grundy, these

[29] Wilan, B. (1978) 'The South African Native Labour Contingent, 1916-1918'. *The Journal of African History*.
[30] Grundlingh, A. (1982). 'Black Men in a White Man's War: The Impact of the First World War on South African Blacks'. *African Studies Seminar Paper*. University of Witwatersrand; Grundlingh, A. (2011) 'Mutating Memories and the Making of a Myth: Remembering the SS Mendi Disaster, 1917–2007'. *South African Historical Journal*.
[31] Grundy, K. (1983). *Soldiers without Politics: Blacks in the South African Armed Forces.* University of California Press. p.x

soldiers enlisted because of their poor socio-economic situation. Their lack of education made them indifferent to South Africa's non-White struggle for independence.

Soldiers Without Politics was published when the anti-apartheid movement and the South African Border War (1966-1989) were both at their peak. There was an active campaign by anti-apartheid organisations such as the Umkhonto we Sizwe[32] to discourage non-White men from enlisting. The movement gained considerable momentum as non-White soldiers were being deployed to fight Namibian and Angolan forces. Grundy's work is noticeably influenced by these events. His reconstruction of the history of non-White regiments is shaped by the political climate in which he wrote. Nevertheless, being the only academic book dedicated to non-White soldiers, it is worth examining the history he reconstructed.

Essentially an examination of the evolution of the Union's racial policies, Grundy uses 'Black' soldiers as a case study for this. While he does discuss the histories of the soldiers, the account is fragmented and led by the Union's politics and not by the experiences of the recruits themselves. One chapter is dedicated to the service of non-White troops in World War II. Within this framework, Grundy argues that incoherent policies on utilisation of non-White troops were the result of an incoherent leadership – he blames the CGS, Gen Sir Pierre van Reyneveld, who dominated the administrative concerns of the war effort.[33] Grundy also tackles the question of citizenship and military service which, in his time (1980s), was an evolving debate. He questions how the government could reconcile compulsory military service for selected groups of 'Blacks' with the absence of full citizenship rights for these same groups. 'Does one achieve rights by denying service first until full citizenship is accorded, or should one serve first and thereby use such a demonstration of loyalty as a political lever to win full

[32] ANC's militant wing. Simpson, T. (2016). *Umkhonto We Sizwe*. Cape Town: Penguin.
[33] Grundy, *Soldiers Without Politics*, p.88

political rights?'[34] Herein lies the shortfall of Grundy's book – it is entirely predisposed to tell a history that paints the Union and the UDF as unjust patrons of apolitical 'Black' soldiers who enlisted for money. Although he recounts the achievements and sacrifices of these soldiers and criticises the government and the army for abandoning them post-war, Grundy essentially presents these men as uneducated, poverty-stricken mercenaries who fought the wrong war. This research challenges such a reconstruction of South Africa's non-White troops.

Mirjana Roth's article '"If you give us rights we will fight": Black Involvement in the Second World War' draws similar conclusions on the apolitical attitudes of African participation. Published in 1983, she elaborates on the rhetoric of organisations such as the ANC, Native Representatives Council, and the government, and argues that African populations were apathetic towards the war. Roth concludes that it is doubtful if the promise of greater political rights would have made Africans 'willing' participants. While Roth provides compelling arguments, they are evidenced from 'White' sources alone – Margaret Ballinger's papers, and documents from the SAIRR. The voices of the men in question are absent from the investigation.

Roth and Grundy both wrote in a period when the use of non-White troops by the UDF in the on-going Border War was being severely condemned. The Coloured and African soldiers enlisting in the army presented an awkward challenge for the anti-apartheid political movements. Within this political climate, what Roth and Grundy produced were accounts that were predisposed to proving that the apathy of non-White soldiers was not just in the on-going war, but also in both World Wars *and* the Anglo-Boer Wars. Thus, in both accounts, the soldiers have no agency. Furthermore, while Grundy makes distinctions between the various non-White communities (the Coloured, Indian, Malay and various African tribes), he ultimately clubs

[34] *Op. cit.*, p.142

them together as ‘Black’ soldiers and populations. This lumping together of non-White communities itself is problematic as it assumes that all non-White soldiers came from similar socio-economic experiences that prompted them to enlist and were, therefore, similarly non-political.

Nevertheless, Roth and Grundy tackled the uncomfortable narrative of non-White soldiers ‘head-on’. Other academic works adopted a variety of methods to discuss the awkward subject. One way was to simply bypass the discussion. Roy H du Pré, in his work *Separate but Unequal: The Coloured People of South Africa – A Political History* (1994), manages to forego any mention of CC in World War I. On World War II, he dedicates but a page to the humiliation suffered by Coloured soldiers in the UDF. However, despite his passionate words, du Pré does not categorically list what exactly this humiliation entailed. Ian Goldin’s *Making Race: The Politics and Economics of Coloured Identity in South Africa* (1987) briefly discusses the plight of demobilised Coloured servicemen in the context of non-White trade unions and the loss of employment to unskilled African labour. However, Goldin only spares a short paragraph for this. Non-White soldiers are also mentioned in passing in E. Roux’s *Time Longer than Rope: The Black Man’s Struggle for Freedom* (1964). Roux alludes to them in order to highlight the ANC’s opposition to the non-combatant status of Black participants. Roux and Goldin reference the troops in their works only as part of their larger arguments.

A common criticism of all the above works is their complete reliance on official sources, removing agency from the subjects of their research. Luli Callinicos, who reviewed Roux’s *Time Longer than Rope,* aptly summarised this critique as ‘although it is sub-titled ‘a history

of the Black man's struggle for freedom', it is neither altogether a history nor was it written from a Black man's point of view.' [sic][35]

1.4. New Approaches

Towards the end of apartheid, less ideologically-biased studies on non-White recruits began emerging. Published in 1992, Louis Grundlingh's 'Prejudices, Promises and Poverty: The Experiences of Discharged Demobilized Black South African Soldiers after World War II' examined the conditions of discharge, post-war benefits, provision of employment, and expectations of soldiers in the context of 'Black' (African) soldiers. Another important work by Grundlingh is 'Military, Race, Resistance: Conundrums of Recruiting Black South African Men during the Second World War' (2015) in which he discusses the Union's botched recruitment policies, the propaganda that was employed, reasons for poor turnout at recruitment centres, and why 74,679 Africans 'joined the army *despite* the recruitment campaign'.[36] Grundlingh's articles are highly analytical and perceptive. He has attempted a narrative that centres the African soldiers within their own history. My research seeks to build on this literature by re-centring the study on the soldier and the regiment instead of the state/institution and the community that the recruits were emerging from. Such a re-centring allows for an exploration of the dynamic identities and agency of recruits that influenced participation.

Another relevant work for this thesis is Suryakanthie Chetty's 'All the News That's Fit to Print' (2009). Here, Chetty presents intriguing insights into the creation of gendered and racial identities during the war. As part of the study, Chetty analyses newspapers and magazines produced by and for the South African Indian community to examine the differences in the

[35] The review was originally published in the *South African Labour Bulletin* (Vol. 2, Issue 2) in 1975. The Bulletin, aimed at promoting social justice for all workers, had also begun examining labour history through reviews. Callinicos' scathing review of Roux's work was ultimately banned in the apartheid state.

[36] Grundlingh, L. (2015). 'Military, Race, Resistance: Conundrums of Recruiting Black South African Men during the Second World War'. In *Africa and World War II.* CUP. p.88

government and the Indian community's perceptions of their role in the war. She argues that, despite serving as unarmed non-combatants, the recruits and the community asserted their 'masculinity'. They did this by highlighting combat stories of Indian regiments in the imperial force, and even emphasising Japanese imperialism – i.e. a 'Coloured' race defeating 'White' powers. By re-centring non-White soldiers in gender studies, Chetty has provided unique insights into how a colonial soldier viewed himself vis-à-vis an emasculating institution. Crucially, Chetty also highlights the importance of separating the experiences of different non-White communities and analysing them in their own unique socio-economic and cultural circumstance (as opposed to lumping them together under the category of 'Black' soldiers who are seen in contrast with 'White' soldiers)[37].

Bill Nasson, the leading authority on the military history of South Africa, has contributed significantly to the literature on African participation in the Second Anglo-Boer war and World War I.[38] His work *World War One and the People of South Africa* (2014) synthesizes White and non-White participation in World War I into a single narrative, analysing their attitudes and experiences, the causes that informed their participation, and the impact of the war in shaping South African society. Preceding this publication, Nasson had also penned a 'brief but

[37] The South African 'Coloured' community are of 'mixed' descendant i.e. they have lineages from European settlers and indigenous African Hottenot tribes. Indians were shipped from British Indian as indentured labourers from the mid-1800s. However, with discovery of precious minerals and stones in SA, economic opportunities rose and more Indians from the sub-continent willingly migrated. South Africa's Cape Malay population finds its roots in S.E. Asia. The Dutch East Indian Company shipped political prisoners from the Dutch East Indies to the Cape for exile as slaves. The African community of South Africa itself is made up of numerous indigenous groups. All these populations have their own distinct identities, cultures, religious beliefs and histories. They also had varying socio-economic realities that were different from not only each other, but also varied across regions (i.e. whether they were living in British occupied territories or the Afrikaner Republics). It is important to be mindful of these differences as they determined the unique experiences of the soldiers that hailed from them.

[38] Nasson, B. (1999) *Uyadela Wen'osulapho: Black Participation in the Anglo-Boer War - Battles of the Anglo-Boer War*. Ravan Press; Nasson, B. (2007) *Springboks on the Somme: South Africa in the Great War, 1914-1918*. Penguin; Nasson, B. (1995) 'War opinion in South Africa 1914'. *The Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History*; Nasson, B. (2004) 'Why they fought: Black Cape colonists and imperial wars, 1899-1918'. *The International Journal of African Historical Studies*.

lively introduction' titled *South Africa at War, 1939-45* (2012) to offer, as he stated, 'a brief portrayal of the country's role in the greatest wartime struggle of the past century, and of the impact of that conflict on its society'.[39] Although concise, Nasson's short history is inclusive, insightful and explores an array of themes including policy and politics, military campaigns, composition of UDF, public opinion, wartime administration, and Smuts' leadership. Despite not having citations, Nasson's work provides a foundation for further enquiry.

In 2016, an edited volume *A Cultural History of Firearms in the Age of Empire* was published that examined the impact of firearms on colonial cultural encounters and social processes that caused the evolution of Empires. Here Nasson contributed a chapter titled 'Give him a gun, NOW': soldiers but not quite soldiers in South Africa's Second World War, 1939-1945'. Instead of examining the role of guns in the Union, Nasson examined the impact of disarmament of non-White soldiers (which this research will also develop). His essay argued that by denying non-White men firearms, it was not just their 'espirit de corps' that was being undermined but also their 'espirit de citoyenneté'. As Nasson illustrated, the gun in South Africa did not represent heroic service in the armed forces, but the right to serve the Union as equal citizens.

In recent years, curiosity about these histories has also inspired research for Masters' theses: *Remembering and Recollecting World War II: South African Perspectives* (2014) by Sarah-Jane Walton, *The Cape Corps: South Africa's Coloured Soldiers in the First World War* (2017) by Kyle Harmse, and my own *An Account of South Africa's Non-White Troops in World War I: The impact of racial prejudice and Imperial policy, 1914-1919* (2016). Although these works have attempted to fill gaps, as is common with post-graduate research, they all suffer from time

[39] Nasson, *History of South Africa at War*. p.7

constraints and geographic limitations as primary sources remain spread between archives in UK and South Africa.

Thus, despite the revival of interest in this subject, large gaps remain in the historiography. Furthermore, the handful studies available seldom refer to or critique each other, thus there is a lack of discussion within scholarship. Moreover, while 'Black' and 'Coloured' soldiers are mentioned in some of the literature, Indian soldiers are almost absent and Malay recruits are completely missing. Nevertheless, the limitations of professional scholarship have not stumped production of non-academic literature. Armed forces have a propensity to develop their own cultures of commemoration. They take great pride in the histories of their service and South Africa's Coloured, Indian, and Malay soldiers were not wholly excluded from this tradition.[40] The following sub-section is dedicated to reviewing, what is often termed as 'amateur' literature.

1.5. Military Accounts

The first war histories on South African participation in World War II were semi-official accounts authored by men who had marched with the regiments that were the subjects of their research. These histories, primarily for the veterans, were written to 'place on record the good service rendered by Officers and men […] for King and Empire.'[41] In true military fashion, they detailed the various campaigns of regiments, focusing on victories and failures, casualties, and the more mundane logistics of battalions. These are neither academic nor critical accounts. They are less concerned with the anonymous soldier, his identity, his motivation to fight, his experience of the war, the impact of the war on him and his community. For these histories, a soldier is simply a recruit following orders. He is no different than the next man.

[40] *See* Chapter 7, Section 4.
[41] Difford, I. (1920). *The Story of the 1st Battalion Cape Corps.* Hortors Limited. p.Foreword

Nevertheless, important works have emerged from this tradition that detail the history of the Coloured, Indian and Malay troops. Captain I. Difford's *The Story of the 1st Battalion Cape Corps* (1920) and A. J. B. Desmore's *With the 2nd Cape Corps thro*' *Central Africa* (1920) are dedicated accounts of the CC battalions in World War I. *East African and Abyssinian Campaigns* (1968) by Commandant Neil Orpen identifies the auxiliary role played by CC, IMC and the Native Military Corps (NMC), in the East Africa Campaign. Orpen reproduced this information in subsequent works *Salute the Sappers: South Africa at War* (1981) and 'S. A. Coloured and Indian Soldiers in World War II – A Comment' (1981). 'The History of Cape Corps in Brief' by Major J. S. C. Cupido is an unpublished four-page summary detailing the chronology of the Coloured regiments and the major political decisions that caused their establishment and disbandment from 1774 to 1980. Commandant C. J. Nothling briefly chronicled the role of non-Whites in the Army and Navy with a dedicated paragraph for CC.[42] Colonel L. A. Crook's article 'Non-White Personnel in the SA Artillery: 1939-45 and Today' (1994) is an account of non-White personnel attached as gunners to White artillery units. Despite their narrow focus, these histories are important contemporary sources on which academic histories rely.

This tradition of war histories was furthered by the *South African Military History Society* (SAMHS), founded in 1967 in Johannesburg for the study and promotion of military history.[43] Its bi-annual publication, the *Military History Journal* has since printed 19 volumes of articles (both academic and non-academic). It has also given space to the histories of the Coloured soldiers of the World Wars. 'A brief account of the 1st Cape Corps' fight at Square Hill, 18 to 21 September 1918' (2008) is a first-person (albeit extremely short) account by ex-Lance-

[42] Nothling & Steyn. (1986). 'The Role of Non-Whites in the South African Defence Force'. *Scientia Militaria*.
[43] Prior to the founding of the society, there was an active, albeit informal, dialogue among senior officers and veterans of SADF to establish such an organisation. However, it was on the initiative of Neville Gomm (who had served six years in SADF) that such an organisation was founded. Gomm was a military enthusiast and had a vast military, veteran and collectors network to tap into.

Corporal Moses Jordan. In their June 2007 newsletter, SAMHS' Secretary detailed Colonel Lionel Crook's lecture that recounted the 12-day battle at El Alamein. He recounted the military strategies adopted, the role played by the many imperial troops, and CC and NMC's responsibilities as auxiliary units. Several articles mention these troops as auxiliary units in passing, each crediting them for their performance. 'South Africa and the War against Japan 1941-1945' (1996) by Andre Wessels very briefly discusses the appointment of members of CC as gunners in Coast Artillery in 1941. J. S. Mohlamme's 'Soldiers without Reward: Africans in South Africa's Wars' (1995) is an academic article on African participation in the World Wars. He mentions CC to compare the financial assistance given to White, Coloured, and African soldiers post-World War II.

In 1974, Al Venter, a South African ex-serviceman and journalist, authored a mammoth historical study *Coloured: A Profile of Two Million South Africans*. A highly progressive account for its time, Venter dedicated a chapter 'The Cape Corps – A Fine Tradition' to the military service of Coloured soldiers from their origins in 1795 to 1948 when they were demobilised by the Nationalist Party. An animated retelling, he focuses on the stories of the soldiers during their service and the men who led them. At the end of the chapter he remarks that 'It is strange that Dr Malan and his Opposition should have objected so strongly to Coloureds in uniform.'

Emerging from this tradition of war histories is Lieutenant-General Ian Gleeson's book *The Unknown Force: Black, Indian and Coloured soldiers through two World Wars*, published in 1994. Although focused more on African troops, Gleeson's work remains the first and only work to award substantial space to Coloured, Indian and Malay soldiers in both World Wars. Gleeson discusses at length the role of non-White personnel in the many campaigns over the course of the two wars. He highlights their achievements and resilience under tough conditions,

making known his admiration for them. Although lacking in analysis, Gleeson's work pays homage to the ex-servicemen of these regiments and has been very useful for this study.

In 2013, Brigadier-General Deon Fourie, a retired Professor of Strategic Studies from the University of South Africa, and Captain Marius Whittle attempted to understand this military tradition of war histories in SA. Pitting them against professional historians, they analysed the impact of these amateur histories on not only the way South Africa's wars are remembered, but also sought to understand if these works could be classified as histories at all. At the end of their thoroughly critical essay, Fourie and Whittle conclude that with the lack of interest of professional scholarship in the Union's roles in wars other than the Anglo-Boer wars, amateur historians have played a pivotal role in recording and publishing war histories. 'Far from being mere dabblers, as a body they have made significant contributions to saving institutional memory, even though their defects may test the professional's patience. […] Dare we compare them to the pioneers in Physics and Chemistry in eighteenth and nineteenth centuries such as Émilie du Châtelet, Voltaire or Humphrey Davey – self -taught, unqualified scientists but scientific pioneers none the less?'[44]

In summary, this literature review has identified many mutating trends in the historiographies of World War II. From policy and politics to the institutional perspective to the human, social and geographic cost of war – an expansive foundation exists on which newer revisionist histories are approaching the war with diverse methodologies. Race and Empire, the soldering perspectives, studies on food and nourishment, emotional histories, memory studies, literary explorations, environmental discourses, gender studies are some of the new diversifications in World War II literature, and indeed in war studies in general. However, the South African case remains an incomplete jig-saw puzzle. While a skeletal framework of the Union in war can be

[44] Fourie & Whittle. (2013). 'Where fact and memory meet: The amateur historian's contribution to military history'. *Historia*. p.165

pieced together via secondary sources, significant historical gaps remain primarily in the subaltern, civilian, non-White, and women's perspectives and experiences of the war, as well as in socio-economic and environmental histories that analyse the impact of war on the Union at large. Nevertheless, despite low academic interest, military traditions have prevented the obscuring of the public memory of World War II. This thesis acknowledges the major contributions of previous scholars, academic and non-academic, and intends to reconstruct a critical history of the service of the Cape Corps and the Indian and Malay Corps, piecing together another section of the puzzle.

2. Methodology and Sources

The sparsity of scholarship on CC/IMC, especially on their participation in World War II, has been elaborated upon in the previous sections. Moreover, there are some false assumptions about the units that have been sustained and perhaps even strengthened by this negligence. The most prominent of these is the assumption around the racial 'integrity' of regiments – i.e. the CC soldier was 'Coloured', even after the assimilation of IMC into CC in 1942. Contrary to popular belief, while the official intention was to maintain racial exclusivity during recruitment, the 'colour' of a volunteer was ultimately determined by the recruiting officer – i.e. it was not the ethnicity of the volunteer, but the officer-in-charge's perception that determined racial eligibility. This fallacy of racial exclusivity also extends into the archives. Because the official policy was to maintain discrimination in enlistment, government archives present two challenges of segregation: (i) the imposition of identities (and the stereotypes that go along with them) on non-White soldiers, (ii) the presentation of information primarily through the White (male) lens. Furthermore, the subsequent politicisation of the service of non-White soldiers has also meant that official archives must be examined in a thoroughly critical, perhaps even sceptical, space – one must question the motivation of authors, sources, and

institution(s). There is also the problem of exclusion – what is not being said? What is missing? And why is it missing?

In addition to the bias in official archives, there is the challenge of paucity of sizeable first-person accounts. Unlike White soldiers in World Wars, non-White colonial soldiers seldom left written records, autobiographies and memoirs. Reasons for this can be speculated upon. Non-White soldiers tended to be illiterate and limited to rank-and-file (thus having lower stationary allowances).[45] Of course, there is certainly an underlying racialised element here of the assumed unimportance of non-White narratives. Whereas all White soldiers within Allied forces were at least afforded the opportunity to record their stories, it seems the assumption was that non-White stories did not merit a similar recognition. As for correspondence, while it is highly plausible that letters and postcards certainly made it back home, it is almost futile to attempt to trace these as, unlike in the UK and the USA[46], no organised efforts were launched in South Africa to collect and document such sources. There were also no attempts to record stories for archival collections. Swift demobilisation in South Africa meant that the non-White voice was by and large dispersed and subdued. The few oral accounts that have survived are, once more, burdened with empirical challenges.

Another shortcoming of preceding literature is its disregard of the subsidiary bodies attached to these units. Soldiers in both units were cared for by CC/IMC Comforts and Gifts Committees (CGC). These were attached civilian bodies funded by the non-White communities to provide basic amenities such as soaps, cigarettes, stationary, dried fruit and goods for recreation on the front. Also attached were the CC and IMC regimental bands. The CC band was originally

[45] While they certainly received stationary for postcards and letters, it is unclear whether they were issued journals, notebooks, diaries, logs. Moreover, other scholars on non-White Allied histories also majorly source their first-person narratives from letters, postcards, second-hand accounts, and oral testimonies.

[46] For example, BBC's 'WW2 People's War' and the 'Oral History Program' by the National World War II Museum in New Orleans.

formed in World War I and gained popularity in military and civilian circles. It was part of the reserve forces in the inter-war period and remained active post-1948 despite CC's demobilisation. Inclusion of these bodies in the analysis contextualises CC/IMC service in the intersection of the civilian and military collectives.

A more unique obstacle in reconstructing CC/IMC history in World War II is that their service is often in the shadows. CC/IMC were formed to perform strictly auxiliary duties. They were to relieve White South African soldiers from these roles for combat. Part of this strategy was the 'policy of dilution' under which NEAS soldiers were attached to White regiments. This meant that many of these non-White men did not 'formally' serve with their own regiments and therefore the usual paperwork that follows individual regiments and battalions is lacking for diluted non-White soldiers. Because they served in 'support' roles, their work was often pushed to the background and their experiences not recognised. In addition to the disempowering impact of racism in military service, the policy of dilution was the final nail in the coffin that made these men 'invisible'.

2.1. Methodology

Despite these challenges, there are innovative methodological precedents that this thesis derives inspiration from. To cope with the lack of first-person accounts from Askari soldiers, Michelle Moyd centred her study on the battalion instead, allowing her to develop a narrative that, (i) did not remove agency from the non-White soldier, (ii) situated them within the larger institutional narrative of war in East Africa.[47] Her work, therefore, was successfully able to dissect the mutating identities of Askari troops in the face of the homogeneity imposed on them by their colonial masters. The methodologies of Joanna Lewis, David Killingray and Timothy

[47] Moyd, M. (2014). *Violent Intermediaries: African Soldiers, Conquest, and Everyday Colonialism in German East Africa*. Ohio University Press.

Parsons re-imagine the colonial soldier/veteran within the colonial state.[48] Lewis' examination of non-White veterans within the British Kenyan 'welfare' State, Killingray's criticism of the supposed politicisation of Ghanaian veterans, and Parsons reconstruction of the systemic injustice and neglect faced by disabled demobilised East Africa soldiers – all provide blue-prints for examining institutional interactions between soldiers/veterans and colonial administrations, and the impact of imperial intention(s) on this interplay. Meanwhile, within the South African context, Horn and Chetty contextualise World War II within South Africa's unique socio-political circumstance using the subaltern perspective.[49] Horn's examination of the experience of White South African POWs, and Chetty's reconstruction of the service of White South African women are perceptive histories that diverge from and challenge the imagined image of the masculine, White 'Springbok' soldier. Furthermore, Chetty's and Nasson's works also overcome the challenge of segregated archives, assimilating the histories of White and non-White service into a single, cohesive narrative of the War.[50] The aim then of the proposed thesis is to reconstruct a history of CC/IMC in line with this tradition of scholarship and expand the scope of post-colonial research in war histories.

Other notable contributions, Clare Makepeace's *Captives of War*, an emotional history on British POWs interned in Europe, Tessa Stone's innovative gender and military methodologies for her study on WAAF, Frances Houghton's studies on memorialisation of war and post-

[48] Lewis, J. (2000). *Empire State-Building: War and Welfare in Kenya, 1925–52*. Ohio University Press.; Killingray, D. (1983). 'Soldiers, Ex-Servicemen, and Politics in the Gold Coast, 1939-50'. *The Journal of Modern African Studies*.; Parsons, T. (2015). 'No Country for Heroes: The Plight of Disabled Kenyan Veterans'. In *Africa and World War II*. CUP

[49] Horn, K. (2015). *In Enemy Hands: South Africa's POWs in World War II*. Jonathan Ball Publishing.; Chetty, S. (2020). ''This Great Adventure': White Women in the Union Defence Force, 1939-1945'. In Van der. Waag. (Ed.) *Sights, Sounds, Memories*. African Sun Media.

[50] Chetty, S. (2005). 'All the News that's Fit to Print: The Print Media of the Second World War and its Portrayal of the Gendered and Racial Identities of the War's Participants'. *South African Historical Journal*; Nasson, *History of South Africa at War*.

memory.[51] This thesis has also taken inspiration from disparate studies across academia – the works of Radhika Singha (on military labour), Ricardo José (on national histories of war), Akira Iriye (on remembrance), Laura Rice (on African gender studies and war histories), Marc Baer (on minority histories), Suhi Choi (on memorialisation), Ali Haggett (on alcoholism in veterans), Maurice Halbwachs (on collective memory).[52] Additionally, Ashley Jackson's *The British Empire and the Second World* and the edited volume *Africa and World War II* have been crucial in contextualising the narrative of South Africa's non-White regiments in the imperial and World War II context and in the continent respectively.

Non-White colonial histories across the field have their own unique challenges. Seldom can a one-size-fits-all approach be applied while reconstructing these narratives. Historians construct and employ customised frameworks to fit their subjects. This dissertation too constructs its own blue-print. The methodology proposed seeks to assimilate the politics of the Union that determined recruitment, service and demobilisation of these troops with the subaltern narratives of the rank-and-file. This thesis argues against the homogenisation of non-White service and presents the CC/IMC non-White recruits as complex agents in war and the armed forces with a spectrum of motivations, perceptions and experiences. Additionally, while it is crucial to underline the study of non-White soldiers with investigations into prejudice and discrimination, it is also important to not let such an investigation undermine the integrity of

[51] Houghton, F. (2014). ''To the Kwai and Back': Myth, Memory and Memoirs of the 'Death Railway' 1942–1943'. *Journal of War and Culture Studies*; Stone, T. (1999). 'Creating a (gendered?) military identity: The Women's Auxiliary Air Force in Great Britain in the Second World War'. *Women's History Review*.

[52] Singha, R. (2020). *The Coolie's Great War: Indian Labour in a Global Conflict*, 1914–1921. Hurst Publishers.; José, R. T. (2001). 'War and Violence, History and Memory: The Philippine Experience of the Second World War'. *Asian Journal of Social Science*.; Rice, L. (2000). 'African Conscripts/European Conflicts: Race, Memory, and the Lessons of War'. *Cultural Critique*.; Baer, M. D. (2020) *Sultanic Saviors and Tolerant Turks: Writing Ottoman Jewish History, Denying the Armenian Genocide*. Indiana University Press.; Choi, S. (2019). *Right to Mourn: Trauma, Empathy, and Korean War Memorials*. OUP; Haggett, A. (2015). 'Gender, Stress and Alcohol Abuse in Post-War Britain'. In M. Jackson (Ed.), *Stress in Post-War Britain*, 1945–85. Routledge.; Halbwachs, M. (1950). *The Collective Memory*. Harper & Row.; Coates, O. (2018) 'Between Image and Erasure: Photographs of West African Soldiers in India, 1944–1946'. *Radical History Review*.

the ‘soldiering’ experience. Much like White soldiers, non-White soldiers had sophisticated military identities that influenced their performance in war and the outcome of battles and campaigns. Additionally, the investigation of prejudice itself cannot be approached through a linear narrative of coercion and victimisation. Both individual and institutional racism was responsive to the exigences of war. It mutated according to circumstance in policies and politics, on the front, in documentation and archives and, subsequently, in commemoration and memory.

2.2. Sources

Previous literature on non-White soldiers from South Africa has relied heavily on ‘official’ sources. However, reports produced by the top-levels of bureaucracy are filtered accounts that only consist information that is considered ‘important’. These accounts are ‘politically-cohesive’ versions of the on-ground realities. This thesis proposes to level this imbalance by utilising a variety of ‘non-official’ sources such as newspaper articles, memoirs, poems, photographs, letters, interviews, and military sources such as War Diaries, reports from unit officers-in-charge, recommendation of awards documents, POW accounts, disciplinary reports, intelligence reports, etc. These sources are, within this framework, further categorised into three blocks: (i) archival evidence that can be directly linked to the soldier (memoirs, interviews, letters), (ii) information produced in mediums that relay narratives from the soldiers (newspapers articles, photographs, war reports, war diaries), (iii) institutional sources (government and military archives). Such a categorisation aids in discerning embedded information within each source – who is the author; who is the intended audience; what is the motivation behind its production; what is being divulged and what is being withheld. However, the lynch-pin of any rank-and-file history remains the first-person subaltern narrative.

The Cape Standard

In the search for non-White voices, an important source unique to this study has been utilised, a non-White newspaper, *The Cape Standard* (CS). The weekly paper was founded in Cape Town. Backed by an Indian company, Prudential, the publication was operational between 1936 to 1947. It had an approximate readership of 45,000, primarily among the Coloured, Indian and Malay communities.[53] The newspaper was sympathetic to anti-segregation causes, critical of the ruling United Party, and frequently highlighted the contributions of non-White South Africans to civil society. It also gave space to Communist groups within these communities and regularly published non-White protest poetry. Facing financial set-backs, the weekly was forced to reduce its production in its final years (with only two issues per month and an over-load of advertisements) and ultimately closed shop. However, its short life coincided with World War II and resulted in a robust coverage of the war.[54] One of the most unique aspects of the weekly's reporting was its emphasis on representing the non-White voice. They regularly interviewed soldiers and ex-servicemen, published 'letters to the editors' (and excerpts of personal letters) from deployed and captured soldiers, meticulous lists of men who had been recruited, caught, killed, and those who had been awarded, and photographs. Under then Editor, George Manuel, the weekly coordinated with the DNEAS for recruitment and press campaigns, sourcing several articles and photographs from the Directorate. Despite its occasional (yet lengthy) Communist-leaning articles, its issues were circulated among soldiers who sometimes received them from the army, at reduced rates, and sometimes as parcels from relatives.

[53] Lewis, G. (1987). *Between the wire and the wall: a history of South African 'Coloured' politics.* David Philip. p.184.

[54] The newspaper's cooperation with DNEAS' press campaigns, as well as the paper's popularity, enabled their access to returning soldiers.

At first glance, *The Cape Standard* appears to be a treasure trove of neglected non-White accounts, particularly from the interviews. However, closer inspection reveals the layers of filtration that the accounts were sieved through before being published. These layers can be discerned by analysing the motives of both, the interviewer and the interviewee, the motive of the newspaper to publish the piece, its intended audience, the prevailing socio-political circumstance, and even the structure and format of the piece. As with print journalism, the weekly was promoting an agenda – that of the valorous, competent, and sacrificial service of non-White communities to the cause of the Empire and the Union. Military service was projected as part of the non-White communities' struggle to gain first-class citizenship. This in turn meant that the narratives of soldiers were presented through a politicised lens. To this end, *The Cape Standard* was concerned with the story of the soldier (and not the person). Their reporting focused on the collective experiences of the troops, intending to translate these experiences into a singular narrative for the front page.

Despite these constraints, newspaper archives remain important sources for scouting histories as-they-happened. They allow a glimpse into the day-to-day experiences of the soldiers. In the case of *The Cape Standard*, despite being 'led' and curated accounts, these are still idiomatic accounts of soldiers. However, by employing a diversity of primary material to corroborate and revise, newspapers can be used as a foundation to explore the subaltern histories of non-White service. Wartime reporting, especially of first-person accounts, allows the historian propinquity to the soldier's life. It allows one to assume the role of a wartime reader – one who was not just interested in news from the front, but also awaited news of the men from one's own community, seeking stories of 'adventures', valour and honour. It allows the historian to consume news of the war as it came, to imagine participation with the community as they perceived the conflict, and to have a sense of the soldier's space in war and society.

Poetry

This thesis has also uniquely used poetry as a source to analyse soldiering. War poetry as a canon has been studied by cultural and literary historians, usually within the context of remembrance. Poems by participants and observers alike help in the memorialisation of the dead who often lay buried in foreign lands and an investigation into them enables a cultural analysis of the war. However, as a historical source, Julia Ribeiro argues that 'the use of poetry….goes beyond the unveiling of personal experience, which can be more or less generalised, and must account for the act of choosing to enunciate in poetic form.'[55] She adds that 'poetic gestures' must be viewed as an attempt to 'transcend the ineffable and to communicate the experience of war.'[56] Most of the poems sourced here were published in *The Cape Standard*, however some have been uncovered in the official archives. These poems, as Ribeiro argues, express the intentionality of the soldering poets. Although not always the theme, death and trauma underline the poems uncovered and can be used to hypothesise on the emotional condition of the soldiers and the impact of war on their mental health. Additionally, like interviews and letters, the 'public' nature of the poems published in the newspaper indicate the desire of the soldiers to include their communities back home in the war experience.

The Soldier's Voice

In addition to reporting in *The Cape Standard*, first-person accounts have also been sourced from the South African defence archives in the form of war reports and letters and from the only memoir published by a CC veteran, A S Mopeli-Paulus' *The World and the Cattle*. Oral interviews with NEAS veterans were also conducted for three public history projects, (i) Bernard Rundle's 1996 documentary *Forgotten Soldiers* produced by SABC, (ii) Vincent

[55] Ribeiro, J. (2018). 'Knowing you will understand'. *Allicante Journal of English Studies*. p.119
[56] *Ibid*.

Moloi's 2007 documentary *A Pair of Boots and a Bicycle*, (iii) Christopher Sommerville's book *Our War: How the British Commonwealth Fought the Second World War* (1998).[57]

Pointing the lens of critical inquiry at these sources, the usual challenges of such interviews become apparent. These interviews were not recorded purely as an exercise in historical collection. The projects were led by 'noble' aims of including the non-White voice in the umbrella history of World War II and the British armed forces, and of highlighting the unequal, segregated experiences of these communities. However, such an approach victimises the subaltern voice, leaving little room for non-White expression outside of White perpetration. Additionally, the veterans themselves were quite aged, the decades of apartheid colouring their memory of the war. Because the process was led by the interviewers and not interviewees, the interviewers dictated what part of the experience of the veterans was recalled and recorded. However, as Niels Boender elucidates:

> Where a written archival source is frozen in time, interviews conducted at different points in an interviewee's life may get an entirely different response, based on the questions asked, and the environment in which the interview is conducted. The interviews themselves, therefore, are products of the passage of history itself.[58]

Nevertheless, as van der Waag posits, 'Soldier testimony […] cannot stand alone as a source of evidence. The historian must draw evidence from a variety of sources […] in an endeavour to produce a credible rendition of an always elusive truth'[59] Thus, these first-person narratives will be corroborated using a spectrum of 'official' archives which will also not be spared the historian's spyglass.[60] Methodologies will be borrowed from a variety of sub-fields (emotional histories, race and violence, gendered analysis, imperial studies etc) to tease out the embedded nuances.

[57] Sommerville generously donated the audio recordings of his interviews to IWM.
[58] Boender, N. (2021). 'Colonial voices: Mau Mau and the IWM's Sound Archive'. Retrieved from IWM Blog.
[59] Van der Waag, *Sights, Sounds, Memories*, p.5
[60] DOD, HPRA, TNA, NMMH.

Just as a categorisation of sources assists in discerning hidden narratives, a categorisation of service can enable in distinguishing the experience of war. Service of these men can be classified via campaign, intensity of violence, type of work, intensity of work, duration of service, morale and war stress, captors and captivity, socio-economic and socio-cultural backgrounds of the soldiers, political leanings and affiliations, domestic circumstance, literacy and education. An inquest into these factors impacting service will dispel the homogenous narrative imposed on the non-White recruit. It will expose the diversity and complexity of the CC/IMC soldiers' experience and contribute towards distinguishing the agency of a non-White colonial soldier in conflict.

3. Structure

This thesis is split into seven chapters that explore four main aspects of soldiering: (i) the politics and propaganda of recruitment, why men enlisted, and training, (ii) soldiering during the war, (iii) internment as POWs, (iv) the politics of demobilisation and the (military) culture of memory. The first chapter examines the political climate in the Union at the outbreak of the War and the subsequent racialisation of military service. It brings to light the continuities between the policies of the British Empire and the Union on non-White troops, contextualises the terms and politics of CC/IMC service, and the communal support that soldiers had that enabled their enlistment and impacted their experience. The second chapter examines the volunteers themselves: what motivated them to enlist, were they driven by the call to arms for King and Country, or was enlistment because of the economic benefits of service? Alternatively, did notions of masculinity impact recruitment? It also reconstructs and analyses the making of the CC/IMC soldier, and examines the self-identity, expectations and competence of soldiers at the eve of their first deployment.

CC/IMC units served in the East Africa, North Africa, Middle East, Italian and Madagascar campaigns, and in the Union. Chapter 3 focuses on the East Africa campaign during which

CC/IMC soldiers served with their own regiments, while Chapter 4 examines service after the assimilation of the two units and the implementation of the policy of dilution. The objective of these chapters is to reconstruct the day-to-day experiences of soldiering and to theorise on the mutating military identities of CC/IMC soldiers. It argues against the homogenisation of non-White soldiers as passive, unseen victims coerced into service. The fifth chapter examines the gaps between the action, investigating what soldiers did when they were not on the clock. It reconstructs recreation on the front, the maintenance of discipline and troop morale during the lulls in the campaigns, and how soldiers coped with prolonged foreign service. The chapter postulates on the effects of battle-weariness and the mutation of motivation, i.e. why and how soldiers continued to soldier. The sixth chapter analyses internment of CC/IMC soldiers. It reconstructs the experiences of surrender and captivity, and escape and repatriation. It investigates the racism of Axis *and* Allied commands and hypothesises on the impact of captivity on non-White POWs.

The final chapter of this thesis reconstructs the experience of CC/IMC soldiers outside the purview of active service. It elaborates on the practical matters of remunerations, honourable and dishonourable discharges, pensions, compensations to disabled soldiers. It also investigates the culture of commemoration, both civilian and military, and attempts to analyse the impact of service on the families of soldiers and their local communities. Following the success of the policy of dilution, CC was re-instated as a regiment of the Permanent Force in 1947, but demobilised in 1949 by the newly-established apartheid State. An analysis of this complex and compact period reveals the politicisation and mythicization of CC/IMC service and theorises on military cultures of commemoration.

Conclusion

As the literature review has elaborated, there exists a considerable gap in historiography concerning these regiments. There is little to no literature on their experience of war and the impact of service. Instead, troops of both corps have been either discussed as comparatives for African and White soldiers or have been unceremoniously clubbed under a common identity of 'Black' soldiers. However, the experience of CC/IMC soldiers was unlike that of African and White troops. Several factors contributed to this uniqueness: (i) CC/IMC recruits came from disparate, usually urban, socio-economic communities that shaped their self-identity, (ii) their experience of segregationist policies was significantly different from that of the African populace (especially the African communities in reserve areas), (iii) specifically, the Coloured community had strong *remembered* legacies of service in the armed forces of the Empire and Union. In addition to the soldiers' own distinct identities are the institutional identities imposed on them. This thesis will explore the war experience of CC/IMC soldiers within these socio-economic circumstances and examine the mutation of their identities as soldiers, as 'men', and as members of their own communities. Within the South African historiographical tradition, there is a tendency to view both World Wars as disruptive events that significantly impacted South African society and politics. However, as this thesis will demonstrate, despite the 'disruption', the White leadership of the Union exerted all efforts to maintain the racial status-quo and, in fact, even strengthened segregation during the war years. The first chapter of this thesis then contextualises the military service of the Coloured, Indian and Malay communities within the longer legacies of both, imperial and colonial, White military policies in the sub-continent.

CHAPTER 1

Politics and Propaganda: The Case for Non-White Soldiers

In February 1940, a short article sourced from Reuters was published by several British daily newspapers with the headline: 'Coloured Men in War: They are anxious to serve as combatants'.[61] The article reported that while 2,000 men had enlisted for auxiliary services, the zeal was low. Quoting a CC World War I veteran, P H Heeger, readers were told that enthusiasm among the Coloured people would rise if they were allowed to bear arms. Allegedly 'the Cape Peninsula would have seen 10,000 Coloured men on the register within a month.'[62] It is unlikely that the veteran was exaggerating. In World War I, 13,000 men had expressed their enthusiasm to enlist when APO had made the offer to the government.[63] Similar assurances were now being made to Smuts by the Cape Corps Association (CCA).[64] On closer inspection, the particularities of the politics of enlistments can be identified. Firstly, the article can be viewed through a historical lens – despite the ruling minority's repeated impositions on non-White zeal and service, the Coloured community was sentient of its lengthy military legacy and was asserting their right to bear arms. Secondly, it demonstrates the inter-section of the political and social streams within the public rhetoric on African participation in the war.

[61] BNA. 'Coloured Men in War: They are Anxious to Serve as Combatants', *Hartlepool Northern Daily Mail*, 27 February 1940.
[62] *Ibid*.
[63] Platjee, S. (1916). *Native Life in South Africa*. London: Wetherby. p.212
[64] BNA. 'Fund for Purchase of Spitfires', *The Evening Telegraph*, 13 June 1940.

This chapter presents this intersection as the backdrop for the formation of the CC/IMC regiments and examines how discrepancies between segregationist policies and the demands of war impacted the policies of recruitment and service of CC/IMC. The long history of non-White service in the Union and the history of evolution of segregation in the 1930s-1940s on the eve of apartheid are reconstructed to contextualise the formation of the non-White units. This contextualisation then reveals the axioms underpinning the service of CC/IMC recruits and helps deduce their expectations from the UDF and the government and, the soldiers' and the communities' motivations for participation. The chapter further argues against generalisation of non-White service and informs on the nuances of the recruitment campaign. It demonstrates the spectrum of sensibilities of the potential non-White recruit that were being appealed to. CC/IMC recruits were not just soldiers of the UDF but were also members of their own communities, residents of the Union and subjects of the Empire. These multi-faceted identities impacted and defined their motivations, expectations and experience of soldiering and participation in World War II.

1. The Right to Arm: A History of Omissions

The question of non-White participation in World War II was not an isolated conundrum but was part of a longer legacy of African military service in a segregated society. White South African civil society until twentieth century equated the right to armed service with primary citizenship to the state. For a South African man to be an equal participant in civil society (including the right to stand for political office, right to vote, right to economic freedom), they were required to fulfil their duty of service and 'protect' the freedoms so bestowed. This conception of citizenship was a historical legacy, inherited from the Frontier Wars and the South African war.[65] In segregated South Africa, the 1912 Union Defence Act exclusively

[65] Dubow, S. (2011). 'South Africa and South Africans: Nationality, Belonging, Citizenship'. In Ross, Mager, & Nasson (Eds.) *The Cambridge History of South Africa: Volume 2.* CUP. pp.30, 47-48.

reserved the right to service to eligible White men. The underlying rationale driving this policy was one of racial anxiety, fear of arming a Black man against a White, anxiety of equating an armed Black soldier with a White soldier, anxiety over the political consequences of arming a subjugated majority.[66] There was also a longer legacy of Africans being the 'enemy' as a result of the numerous wars, rebellions and local skirmishes fought between White 'settlers' and the indigenous populations of the sub-continent. Indeed, the purpose of the UDF, as then Prime Minister of South Africa, Louis Botha described it, was to be 'a real Army, not only capable of coping with a little Kaffir war, but also able to defend South Africa against any odds.'[67] Thus, the exclusion of non-White soldiers from combatant capacities was a 'fighting tradition' of the White UDF.[68] 'Armed masculinity' was 'White masculinity'.[69]

1.1. White Anxiety and the 'Half-Caste' Soldier

The use of armed non-White soldiers in Southern Africa has a long albeit broken history and can be traced back to the Frontier wars. Specifically, Coloured or 'mixed-race' soldiers with some 'European' ancestry can be traced as far back as the early nineteenth century. The British Empire recruited non-White troops across its territories for policing and protection of imperial sovereignty. However, unlike British India or British East Africa, no coherent recruitment policy was in place in British South Africa. The colonial government shared the burden of security with the Afrikaner settlers, brokering arrangements as the need arose. This resulted in non-White men being attached to White fighting regiments in various capacities – porters, combatants, batmen etc. In 1806 the Cape Regiment was formed as an armed unit, the first regiment in the British colony to comprise of 'Coloured' soldiers. They were subsequently

[66] Nasson, *Springboks on the Somme*, p.4
[67] *Quoted in* Swart, S. (1998). 'A Boer and His Gun and His Wife Are Three Things Always Together' Republican Masculinity and the 1914 Rebellion. *Journal of Southern African Studies*. p.746.
[68] Chetty, '"Our Victory Was Our Defeat"', p.35
[69] Nasson, 'Give him a gun NOW!', p.209

reformed as the Cape Mounted Riflemen (CMR) and served under the British imperial forces until their disbandment in 1870.[70]

The largest number of non-White soldiers was during the South African War. Saul Dubow describes the conflict as 'a cathartic civil war involving all the inhabitants of the country'.[71] He further posits that the war 'established the parameters for the emergence of a modern unitary state and cleared the terrain on which South African citizenship would be contested during and after the reconstruction era.'[72] However, at the time the war was viewed as a 'White conflict' between the Afrikaners who sought independence, and the British Empire that sought to assert its dominance over the mineral-rich Republic.[73] Both sides aimed for swift victories – the British relied on their numerical strength and resources while the Afrikaners on the ill-preparedness of the colonial army at the beginning of the conflict.

As the war dragged on, it ceased to be exclusively 'White'. Despite denying the use of Africans for military service 'at least 10,00 and as many as 30,000 Blacks' fought in the British Army in non-enlisted capacities, serving as armed scouts, stretcher bearers, in transport, and more.[74] Furthermore, by their own admission, the British deployed four 'Black contingents' at the Siege of Mafeking.[75] The British Army also formally organised 360 mixed-race men into the Namaqualand Border Scouts (NBS) (est. 1902) and over 600 in the Bushmanland Borderers

[70] Although there are claims that the present-day CC has descended from CMR, thus one of the oldest regiment in modern SANDF, it is difficult to establish a direct connection between them. Compared to CC, CMR had a different uniform, regiment badge and, notably, despite their service record, CMR was not re-formed during the South African War. Furthermore, they were an armed cavalry unit, not an infantry. CMR was also not the only 'Coloured' regiment under British South African rule. The Namaqualand Border Scouts and the Bushmanaland Borderers were 'mixed-race' South African British regiments.

[71] Dubow, 'South Africa and South Africans', p.32

[72] *Op. cit.*, p.33

[73] Marks, S. (2011). War and Union 1899-1910. In Ross, Mager, & Nasson (Eds.) *The Cambridge History of South Africa Volume 2.* CUP. p.157

[74] Warwick, P. (1983) *Black People and the South African War*. CUP. pp.4-5

[75] Baillie, F. (1900). *Mafeking: Diary of a Siege.* Archibald Constable Ltd. p. Entry dated 23 January 1900

(BB) (est. 1901) on the initiative of regional military commanders.[76] Captain Monthermer Hume Montague, who led NBS, observed that although the soldiers were 'half-castes' who had been previously employed in mines, said of their service that 'they were an excellent force […] conspicuous for consistently refusing to surrender when surrounded'.[77] Additionally, the Indian and Malay community were used as porters and indentured labourers. Mahatma Gandhi himself had founded a stretcher-bearer unit, the Natal Indian Volunteer Ambulance Corps in 1900, which was funded by the local Indian community. More significantly, British India sent over 18,534 troops to the colony. Over 17,950 of these were non-White Indian men whose service was limited to pioneer and auxiliary capacities (despite being part of the regular British army).[78] Scholars such as E. S. Reddy, Goolam Vahed, Ashwin Desai, Eric Itzkin have further pointed to the continued neglect of the history of Indian troops in the war by the post-apartheid revisionist scholarship.[79]

Despite their recognised contribution to British victory, the decision to arm Coloured and African men came under scrutiny. In 1902, Smuts, then a Boer General, proclaimed in a letter to the pro-Boer British journalist W. T. Stead, 'Dark indeed is that shadow! When armed Natives and Coloured boys, trained and commanded by English officers […] pursue the fugitive Boer and try to pay off old scores, a wound is given to South Africa which time itself will not heal.'[80] The arming of BB was questioned in the parliaments of Cape Town and London.[81] St. John Brodrick, then British Secretary of State for War, responded that the

[76] Stapleton, *A Military History of South Africa*, p.130

[77] The *Scouts* were at the Siege of O'okiep and their steadfast attack received praise from Kitchner, then Commander-in-Chief of British South African Forces. The *Borderers* successfully defended Totenlbosch Kolk and received multiple mentions from Kitchner. Stirling, J.(1907). *The Colonials in South Africa, 1899-1902: Their Record, based on the Despatches.* William Blackwood and Sons. pp.253-5

[78] Itzkin, E. (2009). The Indian War Memorial: National Memory and Selective Forgetting. *Historia*. p.151

[79] Itzkin's *The Indian War Memorial* (2009), Vahed and Desai's *Inside Indian Indenture* (2010), Reddy's *India And The Anglo-Boer War* (1999)

[80] *Quoted in*. Poel, J. (Ed.). (1973). *Selections from the Smuts Papers Volume I.* CUP. p.494

[81] PDS. Corrie Grant (MP, Warwickshire, Rugby), HC Deb 02 March 1903.

regiment was ‘not enrolled for general service’ and that ‘the expression ‘coloured men’ is commonly used in South Africa to mean half-castes, not natives, and many of such half-castes are on the electorate roll of Cape Colony.’[82]

Brodrick’s succinct answer highlights three axioms of service in the colony, and subsequently, the dominion of South Africa. Firstly, that only citizens with established political rights could be enlisted. Secondly, that, although imperial armies recruited non-White soldiers, regional political concerns in Britain dictated Whitehall’s approach to fighting the conflict. Thirdly, while Brodrick referred to Coloured soldiers as ‘half-castes’, the emphasis was on the ‘White’ part of their dual identity. The European genealogy of their ‘mixed-race’ ethnicity was highlighted to qualify them for combatant service in armed forces for ‘White conflicts’. Alternatively, their ‘African’ ancestry prevented them from being promoted to positions of command within these regiments.

These axioms underlined the requirements of recruitment, including and excluding non-White aspirants as South African politics transformed with the dialogue on segregation. While the imperial government accepted deploying Coloured soldiers in the South African War, they denied the use of enlisted African soldiers, thus debarring them from any recognition of their service. Military medals were not issued to non-White soldiers despite their eligibility. Moreover, to placate the Boer generals, the imperial government not only disarmed and demobilised non-White soldiers post-war, but their fate was left in the hands of succeeding White supremacist governments. According to the Treaty of Vereeniging which marked the end of the South African War – ‘The question of granting the Franchise to Natives will not be decided until after the introduction of self-government.’[83] The treaty, problematically, remained silent on the status of Coloured and ‘Asian’ communities and the issue of franchise

[82] PDS. William Brodrick, HC Deb 02 March 1903.
[83] Treaty of Vereeniging 1902, p.2

for them remained contested till 1948. White anxiety of 'Black' soldiers, thus, historically dictated the terms of service of non-White soldiers in the continent. Their participation had always been impacted by White political priorities and despite wartime exigencies, White leadership consistently made efforts to maintain control over the non-White populations of the region. In the case of the 'Coloured' and 'Asian' communities, this power dynamic was more complex as they were considered neither fully 'White' (i.e. civilised), nor fully 'Black' (i.e. to whom civilisation must be taught). Thus, segregation and armed service in, first, British Southern Africa, and later, the Union, had been an evolving discourse centred on White control. It is this political attitude that dictated the formation and functioning of CC/IMC during World War II. Thus, their limiting to non-combatant unarmed service was not indicative of hardening segregation in the Union but was in fact in tandem with long-standing imperial White military policies in the region.

1.2. The World Wars and the Politics of Memory

Attitudes to non-White soldiers in 1939 have to be understood in relation to the First World War. World War I was fought in the living memory of most of the Union's populations as the legacy of the war and its veterans impacted the conversation on and campaign for participation in World War II. The maintenance of White supremacy defined the Union's war policy in 1914. While the South African parliament was obliged to participate as a dominion, the 'top brass' was mindful of the latent Afrikaner nationalism which was resentful of fighting for an Empire only thirteen years after the South African War. Several senior members, including ministers in the cabinet and then Commander of the Active Citizen Force protested the invasion of German South West Africa and, subsequently, rebelled against the government. Although the rebellion was supressed, the government had to assure its dissenting populace that only volunteers would be sent to fight the Germans. Echoes of this policy would reverberate on the eve of World War II. Additionally, the then combatant CC and the pioneer regiment, the South

African Native Labour Contingent (SANLC), were recruited as part of the South African Overseas Expeditionary Forces (SAOEF) that was under the command of (and financed by) the British army (and not the UDF). CC served in the East Africa campaign, in the Rufiji campaign and were, most notably, part of General Allenby's 'Palestine Push' where they earned the Battle Honour 'Palestine 1918'. SANLC, meanwhile, served in France, on the Western Front's lines-of-communication.

Despite the record of military service within living public memory of the Union, a collective White effort to 'excise the African presence from politics' unfolded during the inter-war period, formalised with the creation of the Native Affairs Department.[84] Simultaneously, the Coloured, Malay, Indian and Jewish leaderships entered into political negotiations for citizenship. Both Jewish and Indian communities faced exclusion because of their 'alien' status and while Jewish organisations were able to successfully court assimilation, the Indian community, like the Coloured and the Malay, was relegated to a second-class status. Subsequently, the dimensions of citizenships were diverged as social welfare was separated from political rights with the White government, granting concessions in the former to exclude non-White communities from the later.[85] Thus, military achievements of non-White communities were being separated from political dialogue to undercut claims of full citizenship.

On the eve of World War II, J. S. Marais, a contemporary historian, published the first comprehensive history of the Cape Coloured population.[86] In the Foreword, Marais explained that he was prompted to pen the work in response to the increased separation of the Coloured community from its *parent* European population. He viewed the populace as an 'adjunct of European society, a sort of poor relation', arguing that it was imperative to protect their political

[84] Dubow, 'South Africa and South Africans', p.43
[85] *Op. cit.*, p.50
[86] Marais, J. (1939). *The Cape Coloured people, 1652-1937.*Longmans, Green and Co.

rights as they 'belong to us'. To make his case he discussed the favourable racial origins of the community, their education and compliance with White leadership, and their 'civilised lifestyle'. However, Marais did not include the community's military contributions. He made no mention of Coloured regiments in World War I and, of the South African War, he stated that 'The feelings of the more advanced Coloured folk throughout South Africa were stirred, and during the war of 1899-1902 they gave the British cause enthusiastic support, *though they took no part in armed conflict* [emphasis added]'[87]. Marais' amnesia of Coloured combatants was an act of political convenience. It advocated a White patriarchal 'liberal' narrative tradition that appealed to the 'benevolence' of the Union's White government. His observations are an accurate representation of the government's amnesia at the outbreak of World War II. The Coloured community were of course not alone in this erasure.

Furthermore, prior to the war, the government proposed the creation of a 'Coloured Affairs Department' (CAD), along the lines of the Native Affairs Department, that sought to separate the legislation of the Coloured community from the White populace – effectively capping upward political mobility. Additionally, versions of the so-called 'Pegging' Act were being introduced in 1940 to stop the 'Indian penetration' and curtail the economic freedom and property ownership of the 'Asiatic' populace in exchange for limited representation in the parliament.[88] Such legislation signalled the dawn of apartheid, limiting the political and economic rights of non-White communities and preventing them permanently from acquiring primary citizenship. It is within this pre-apartheid state that the Union government endorsed an enlistment campaign to fulfil the demands of a war being fought against the 'threat' of fascism. However, once these needs were met, they were quick to demobilise the troops and dismiss the

[87] *Op. cit.,* pp.275-281

[88] Laws in the Union defined 'Asiatic' as any populace originating from 'Asia'. This group primarily included South Asian communities (and a minority of East Asian groups such as Chinese indentured labourers). However, it excluded the Cape Malay, who were instead sub-categorised as 'Coloured'. Landis, E. (1961). 'South African apartheid Legislation'. *The Yale Law Journal*. p.4

government's obligations towards these communities and veterans. From the 'top-down' perspective, the service of CC/IMC was defined by this politics of convenience.

When war broke out in 1939, despite being a dominion of the British Empire, South Africa did not immediately declare its loyalty to the Crown. There was considerable opposition from the Afrikaner population to remain neutral. Only after due parliamentary procedure was war declared. Hitler is said to have laughed on hearing of the Union's proclamation, unthreatened by the deeply divided and ill-equipped Cape government.[89] However, just as the Union declared war on its own terms, so it fought on its own terms. Thus, although non-White soldiers served in the British and French imperial armies, the Union, in line with its segregation policies, chose to not arm its non-White communities. In 1940, the Directorate for Non-European Army Services (DNEAS), was established as the parent body of CC, IMC (initially the Indian Service Corps), NMC, and the Native Military Police. A total of 120,000 NEAS ranks served in the NEAS, 40,000 of whom served in CC/IMC.[90] Soldiers in all these corps were volunteers enlisted in non-combatant capacities – as truck drivers, porters, stretcher bearers etc. The only 'official' exception being the 2000 CC soldiers who were deployed as armed guards at home and abroad.[91] The Union government was adamant on restricting these units to a non-combatant status, likely because of the perceived political capital that non-White leaders would have gained (particularly Coloured leaders) as a result of the community providing a protectoral service (compatible to that of the 'European' members of society). This would have allowed them to strongly contest the creation of CAD and other exclusionary legislations.

[89] Krauss, *Old Master*, p.347
[90] Gleeson, *The Unknown Force*, p.112; UCTSC. 'Cape Corps Souvenir', 15 May 1945.
[91] Stapleton, *A Military History of South Africa*, p.138

2. The Politics of Disarmament

Non-White disarmament, as a policy, was rationalised and advocated for by a number of influential White figures within and outside the military institutions. In 1938, Major G Tylden published an article in the *Society for Army Historical Research* on the combatant service of Coloured units. Tylden's short uncritical historical survey of Coloured regiments, although accepting of their military merit, seems to have been primarily written as a warning against arming them. Tylden focused solely on instances of indiscipline (which he did not fully elaborate on), implying that the 'Coloured' man was not fit to be a regular soldier, never was and never would be. On CMR, he explained that although the formation of a mounted Coloured unit was a 'most ambitious experiment', it ultimately failed:

> it was found impossible to keep the Coloureds true to their salt in the face of constant temptation to join the Kaffir tribes, against whom the regiment was constantly employed. Any or no reason was enough to make the unstable, excitable and irrational crossbreeds mutiny or desert.[92] [sic]

Tylden then listed these mutinies although no explanation was provided as to why the troops mutinied. He also mentioned that in the early 1850s the Coloured riflemen apparently 'behaved disgracefully' against the Basuto tribe as 'there were not enough white men to stiffen them'.[93] He praised the bravery and discipline of the White officers and added that after the disbandment of the unit, these officers constantly recurred 'in South African history, either as soldiers or officials, and always with credit.'[94] Tylden's account stops at the South African War and, intentionally, omitted any mention of CC in World War I. Once more, this targeted omission is in the same vein as Marais' work, and part of the larger racially-motivated political amnesia. Tylden's article was likely aimed at justifying the contemporary demotion of a decorated combat unit. By account of their race, Coloured soldiers were then deemed *historically*

[92] Tylden, G.(1938) The Cape Mounted Riflemen. *Journal of the Society for Army Historical Research*. p.227
[93] *Op. cit.*, p.228
[94] *Ibid*.

incompetent, mutinous, infantile and severely lacking in discipline. Racial prejudice against their potential as soldiers, thus, came from within military ranks.

This narrative of supposed indiscipline remained associated with CC all through their service. In 1943, 500 CC soldiers were being transferred from Cape Town to Pretoria by train. The soldiers boarded the train in a state of intoxication which got worse as the journey progressed. They were rowdy and violent and de-boarded several times to get liquor from bars near the stations. To control the situation the police was called in at Laingsburg where the detachment was made to disembark. Unable to manage the men, the police fired, wounding three soldiers, one of whom died.[95] The following week, Dr D. F. Malan, then Leader of the Opposition, moved the adjournment of the House of Assembly to debate the incident which, in his words, concerned the safety of life and property. The motion was allowed, and Malan proceeded to detail his version of events where he repeatedly highlighted not only the disorderly conduct of the soldiers but also their blatant insubordination of their officers. Then Prime Minister, Smuts, too went against his own fervour of 1942 (when he pledged to arm all 'non-Europeans' in South Africa) and assured the parliament that a thorough military inquiry would be conducted, and if there was any doubt over its transparency, a civil inquiry presided over by the House would be launched. He announced that 'This is something of first-class importance to the country'.[96] However, a key piece of information that was eliminated from all White public narratives (and falsified by Malan) was revealed in a letter by Lord Harlech (then High Commissioner of Southern Africa) to Clement Attlee (then Deputy Prime Minister of Great Britain). Harlech informed Attlee that of the 19 officers who were supposed to accompany the troop, 17 'European' officers opted for a more comfortable train journey at a later hour, leaving the group

[95] TNA. DO 35/1119/31, 'Coloured Troop Train Disorder', *Cape Times*, 24 March 1943.
[96] *Ibid*.

of 500 with two junior 'subaltern' officers (he most likely meant NCOs).[97] Publicly, no mention was ever made of the absentee White officers-in-charge.

It is curious that an inconsequential incident of drunkenness by CC soldiers that caused no civilian casualties and was no more rowdy than a bar brawl was declared of 'first-class importance' to the parliament. The incident itself was not that important compared to the severity with which it was dealt with. The issue at hand was not the disorderly conduct of CC soldiers, but that of non-White soldiers themselves. Non-White recruits presented an uncomfortable reality, one which was a necessity but not in conformity with the existing power structure. Significantly, as a result of this episode, proponents for the CAD reaffirmed the need for special legislation for Coloured communities. For a brief moment, the case for enfranchising Coloured soldiers was being made – this too was receded. There was little concern for the report of the investigation that was so passionately demanded once these political objectives were achieved. The *Cape Times* aptly concluded its coverage of the proceedings with – 'The matter then dropped.'

Despite this rhetoric, as mentioned above, the policy of disarmament did come under threat after the fall of Singapore in 1942.[98] With Japan in control of the South-East archipelago and much of the Indian Ocean, an invasion of South Africa became a possibility. In the face of this threat, Smuts summarily declared in the Union's parliament that:

> before Japan, before the enemy, take this country, I shall see to it that every native and every coloured man who can be armed will be armed…I will train and arm any non-European prepared to defend South Africa.[99]

[97] TNA. DO 35/1119/31, Lord Harlech to C. R. Attlee, 29 March 1943, p.6
[98] Stapleton, *A Military History of South Africa*, p.137
[99] *Quoted in* Krauss, *Old Master*, pp.420-21, Hancock, *Fields of Force*, p.370.

He further asseverated that non-White men had volunteered themselves in substantial numbers for military service despite the restrictions that had been placed upon them. 'They do not want to be regarded as inferiors, but as citizens.'[100]

Grundy posited three reasons for Smuts' forceful testimony: (i) his genuine appreciation of the non-White military service, (ii) strategic assessment of a threatening situation, (iii) his political desire to silence and shame his uncooperative critics.[101] Grundy concluded that the immediate strategic concerns of the war enabled the Prime Minister to challenge the disarmament of non-White soldiers. However, Smuts' speech was little more than political opportunism evidenced by the notable omissions. Despite his passionate words, Smuts also made no mention of the previous combatant service of non-White troops as an example of their militaristic capabilities and loyalty. Instead, in his negation, he labelled the non-combatant non-White troops as 'inferiors', a stereotype that was being perpetuated by the White community at large. Once more the right to bear arms was a privilege afforded only to 'citizens', and Smuts' 'plea' to the White law-makers was to 'allow' these men the right to be, albeit temporarily, citizens. This erasure of history is part of a larger framework to support the White claim to power, political rights, and citizenship, treating non-White populations as secondary subjects of the Union that required White leadership and protection.

In 1944, the need to officially arm non-White soldiers arose once more. Faced by a shortage of manpower in Italy and considering the battle honours won by CC in WW1, Smuts was pressured by the War Office in London to agree in principle to raise a Coloured Fighting Brigade.[102] He referred the proposal back to his cabinet which strongly and unanimously

[100] *Quoted in* Krauss, *Old Master*, p.422. In his speech Smuts further compared and criticized the oppositions' neutrality with the voluntarily service of non-White soldiers in defence of SA.
[101] Grundy, *Soldiers Without Politics*, p.71
[102] *Quoted in* Poel, J. (Ed.). (1973). *Selections from the Smuts Papers Volume VI.* CUP. p.634

rejected it. J. H. Hofmeyr, Smuts' closest advisor and acting Prime Minister in his absence, informed him 'we feel that long-range consequences of Coloured men being asked to do a fighting job for which we have been unable to find white men will be considerable…[and cause] ultimate harm to the Union.'[103] Hofmeyr was not only echoing the persisting fear of equating non-White men with White men, but also of non-White soldiers 'making up' for the shortfalls of the White defence forces.

Both imperial and Union governments were careful to maintain segregation in principle even during times of crisis and manage narratives post-war to dissuade non-White leaders from leveraging military service for civil rights. Non-White soldiers themselves were branded as being ineffective soldiers if without White commanders. CC's World War I battle honour was awarded, notably, for their effective performance under the command of non-White NCOs. However, the dismissal of this and other military legacies was intended to limit professional opportunities of non-White, especially Coloured, soldiers in the armed forces. Additionally, these political efforts can also be seen as attempts to completely sequester the 'half-caste' Coloured community from the 'parent' White populace of the Union. Furthermore, the relative political silence on the service of Malay and Indian communities can be posited as the hardening of racial borders in the politics of South Africa. However, the White government's opinion of non-White service was not necessarily mirrored by non-White soldiers' perceptions of their own service. In fact, as the next section elaborates, the multifariousness of the recruitment campaign is reflective of the diversity of sensibilities and experiences of non-White volunteers. The non-White community continued to view itself as citizens, albeit unrecognized – embracing both, their right as citizens to struggle against South Africa's prejudiced government for political rights, and their right as citizens to enlist in UDF.

[103] *Ibid.*

3. *'DO YOUR SHARE'*: The Campaign for Enlistment

Propaganda in the Union concerning the service of CC/IMC was multi-faceted. It mutated with the political rhetoric and in response to the needs of the frontline. In addition to the DNEAS, factions within the Coloured, Indian and Malay communities competed for the potential volunteer's attention. Political leaders and veterans of World War I were divided in their support of the war effort and in protesting participation. Some argued that participation should be unconditional as it concerned the defence of the nation while others argued that it should only be endorsed if the communities' political demands were met and civil rights extended. When the announcement for the pioneer units was made, although across the board there was condemnation of disarmament, the political split on participation itself intensified. This war of words can be followed in the pages of the *Standard*. Speeches were made in community halls on both sides, pamphlets with varieties of motives were distributed, fundraising events were organised, and arrests were courted. Regardless of where one stood on the debate, the war certainly had garnered much interest.

The anti-participation faction was primarily led by a young generation of left-leaning activists and a section of CC veterans. In 1937, the New Era Fellowship (NEF), an anti-colonial socialist debating society, was formed. NEF frequently held community debates on the war, the proceedings of which were published in *The Cape Standard* in long-form pieces. In a meeting on 13th May 1939, the NEF declared the upcoming war 'imperialist' and cited the poor treatment of veterans of World War I as primary evidence for boycotting participation.[104] Anti-war declarations were also made by the Non-European Unity Movement (NEUM) and Non-European United Front (NEUF). In September of 1940, Dr Yusuf Dadoo, then Secretary of NEUF Transvaal, was charged and found guilty for breaching emergency regulations by

[104] UCTSC. 'Coloured and the Future War', *The Cape Standard*, 16 May 1939.

publishing a leaflet that highlighted the discrepancies in pay between White and non-White soldiers and for demanding equal rights for the non-White populace. In his statement to the court, Dadoo argued that the government had not included the non-White population of the Union in the decision to declare war and had been vague in defining the defence of 'freedom and democracy'.[105] Cassim Amra, founder of the Liberal Studies Group (a Marxist debating society) who, in response to a resolution passed in support of participation in the war by moderate Indian politicians in Durban, wrote in *The Call* in 1940, 'what "conscience" calls upon you to lick the boot that kicks you?'[106] Amra, along with Dadoo and Dawood Seedat (who published a leaflet 'Don't Support the War') were again imprisoned in June 1941 for their 'incendiary' speeches at a meeting in Durban where a young Indira Nehru was the guest of honour. Nehru was visiting South Africa on her way to Britain and met the non-White leadership, encouraging the anti-war stance and propagating Jawaharlal Nehru's *September Manifesto* that demanded unconditional Indian independence from the British in exchange for participation in the war.[107] The arrests garnered much attention and membership of anti-participation societies rose.[108] The Communist Party of South Africa (CPSA) was also involved in the anti-war campaign in the beginning. However, like many left-leaning parties within the Empire, a radical change in stance had to be instituted once the Soviet Union was attacked.[109]

Despite the appreciable opposition, there was no sizeable boycott of participation in the war by the Union's non-White populace. Reporting in the *Standard* suggests that in the early days of 1939, while the government indicated its unwillingness to involve the non-White communities, opposition to any form of service was vocal and dominant. However, public opinion seems to

[105] SAHO. Statement of Dr Y. M. Dadoo, Secretary, Non-European United Front (Transvaal), before the Court, 6 September 1940.
[106] Vahed, G. (2012). *Muslim Portraits*. Madiba Publishers. p.24
[107] SAHO. Meer, I. (2006). *I Remember*. p.140
[108] UWC/Robben Island Mayibuye Archive. Ruth First Papers Project. RF/6/20: Don Pinnock interview with Hilda Watts and Rusty Bernstein (1992), p.18
[109] *Op. cit.*, p.10

have tipped in favour of the pro-service faction once there was clear indication that a 'Coloured' pioneer corps was to be formed. The propaganda for participation can be divided into two phases, (i) 1939 – 1940, spearheaded by the pro-participation faction, this period relied purely on the resistance of moderate leaders within non-White communities in ensuring continued loyalty to 'King and Country' through speeches, parades, articles, and social events, and aiding the first wave of recruitment once the formation of CC/IMC was approved; (ii) 1940 – 1945, the 'official' recruitment campaign managed primarily by DNEAS.

3.1. Communal Support

The pro-participation faction comprised of the moderate politics of the old guard led by leaders such as Dr Abdullah Abdurahman (then President of APO), Dr F. H. Gow (Head of the Bethel AME Church in District Six and a World War I veteran), A. J. B. Desmore (CC veteran and author of *With the 2nd Cape Corps*). The view of this faction was that it was only through service to the nation that political rights could be demanded and achieved. Additionally, a threat to the nation was considered an extraordinary situation that warranted the 'coming together' of all its people despite segregation. To this end, this political leadership gave speeches, organised meetings, penned articles etc. More effectively, they had maintained a constructive relationship with CC veterans' associations and actively participated in veterans' events.

In particular, on the second-last Sunday of September, the CC veterans' associations in Kimberley, Johannesburg and Cape Town organised annual memorial services to commemorate the 1918 Battle of Square Hill.[110] These services were often attended by civil and political dignitaries and were communal events. In 1939, the event was reportedly attended

[110] The memorial service is still organised annually in Cape Town, Johannesburg and Kimberley and reflects the long-standing efforts of veterans' organisations in preserving historical legacy and memory. Yadav, R. (2019, November 25). 'The Second-Last Sunday Every September: Remembering South Africa's Fallen Soldiers'. *LSE International History Blog*.

by ‘thousands’.[111] Preceding the march-past, an event at City Hall was held where Dr Gow, the keynote speaker, gave a lengthy address in which he used the occasion to encourage solidarity and reproach those with ‘attitudes subversive to the common good’. He emphasised the participation of CC and the communal effort at large in World War I. Gow reminded his audience that the volunteers of that time had limited political rights and no ‘selfish motives’, that their judgement was not ‘clouded by racial hatred’. Even though the veterans’ hope for a better future had not yet been realised, Gow emphasised that the progress that had been made was a consequence of their ‘supreme sacrifice’. He insisted that the community must offer their service in the belief that things will get better and that ‘it is ours to keep the faith and sanctify the heritage handed to us from Square Hill.’ He concluded that ‘This is not a white man’s war […] [rather] a war for Right[s], for Liberty of Action, for Freedom of Development, for Universal Contentment and for the Perpetuation of International and Inter-Racial understanding.’[112]

Gow’s speech is an apt summary of the pro-participation rhetoric. Three characteristics of this discourse stand out. Firstly, unlike the anti-war group, this rhetoric was not centred on the White government, policy or politics. The emphasis instead was on the self-perception of the community, their own ideologies governing judgement and action. By centring the cause on ideals of liberty and equality, the narrative shifted from one of injustice to one of perceived equality – that is, they viewed themselves as equal bearers of the burden of war, regardless of their political and civil status in the Union. Secondly, the legacy of Square Hill created an imagined responsibility towards the fallen, the veterans, and towards maintaining the community’s historical distinction in the face of suppression. Finally, it is interesting to note that despite the rampant rumours of disarmament that were reaffirmed by government officials

[111] UCTSC. ‘Thousands Commemorate Heroes of the Great War’, *The Cape Standard*, 19 September 1939
[112] *Ibid.*

and White politicians, Gow made no mention of this demotion in his speech. The spotlight instead was on the 'common good' – it was implied that, armed or unarmed, soldier or civilian, service for the common good was paramount. An attendee of the ceremony wrote an emotive piece titled 'Lest We Forget' for *The Cape Standard* in response to the memorial service and mused:

> it is on such occasion that all bitterness and feelings of resentment is absent, and if there has been disappointment and grievance during the space of twenty years, Sunday's service should act as an example of how quickly venomous thoughts can be obliterated.[113]

Apart from Gow's speech, the public nature of the memorial service is also notable. After the speeches and prayer in City Hall, a military-style parade of 380 ex-servicemen marched down Adderley street to lay wreaths at the Cenotaph. Unveiled in 1924, the Cenotaph commemorated 'the immortal honour of the South Africans who made the supreme sacrifice in the Great War' – that is, it honoured both White and non-White 'regular' soldiers.[114] An image accompanying the article on the front page showed a substantial crowd around the monument as the wreaths were laid. *The Cape Standard* reported that this service had been more spectacular than the ones organised in the inter-war years.

It is also notable that an event of this scale would have required official consent and logistical support. Despite the concerted efforts to undermine non-White military legacies, the CC war-dead were commemorated in Cape Town without racial prejudice. In remembrance, it seems, non-White soldiers were equal. The scale of the event and the coverage it received highlights the duality in the Union's policy. Although the White government courted the fear of an armed non-White soldier, by allowing events such as the memorial parade for a non-White combatant unit, they simultaneously courted public enthusiasm within the more 'progressive' minorities

[113] UCTSC. 'Lest We Forget', *The Cape Standard*, 19 September 1939.
[114] The Cenotaph also commemorates soldiers of World War II and the Korean War. The monument was relocated twice and is currently at Heerengracht Street, CT.

of the Union. This is most prominently exampled in the 1939 Union Day parade held in Cape Town. A grand event commemorating the formalisation of the Union's parliament in 1910 had been annually organised and in 1939, the CC Veterans Association and the CC Regimental Band were invited to participate in the event.[115] The illusion of equality, as non-White regiments marched in the same parade as White regiments, representing a common cause and legacy, would have also created a sense of racial oneness – that a South Africa without segregation and with equitable opportunities was not only possible, but was being reflected in a procession of courage and prowess. An attendee of the parade remarked:

> It is strange that there is no segregation as far as the military parade is concerned, just as there was no segregation when these Coloured men fought for a common cause side by side with their white brother during the War.[116]

3.2. Veteran Support

Military-style parades themselves were great attractions. Whether an older generation of decorated veterans or a younger squadron of enlistees, the display of soldierly prowess and masculine imagery would have been attractive to on-lookers, perhaps inspiring for potential recruits and normalising for families unwilling to allow their male members to enlist. In the issue succeeding the memorial article, a half page spread of the parade was published. The images focused on the marching ex-servicemen, on representatives laying wreaths, and the marching nurses of the St John Ambulance Brigade.[117] The spread creates an impression of solidarity, of an honorific remembrance that perhaps was aimed at reminding its audience (and even assuring them) of the careful preservation of this illustrious non-White legacy. Although these images were most likely taken by the Staff Correspondent, their dominant placements in the newspaper would have certainly left a longer impression, perhaps emotional and/or

[115] UCTSC. 'Twenty Years After', *The Cape Standard,* 6 July 1939.
[116] *Ibid.*
[117] UCTSC. 'Great War Heroes Honoured', *The Cape Standard,* 26 September 1939.

nostalgic, in the minds of the readers and would have prolonged the impact of the event beyond the day.

The grandeur of the annual CC services held in September certainly grew during the war years. In 1942, the service was attended and addressed by Colonel Hoy (OC of CC in World War I), in 1943 by Colonel Morris (OC of IMC). Soldiers in training camps were also organised for parades to commemorate Square Hill.[118] Soldiers being deployed 'Up North' frequently marched to the station and were greeted by crowds. In later years, returning soldiers received a welcome similar to the farewell they had been given on departure. Images and reports of these goings and comings were reported extensively in the *Standard* and, on occasion, in *The Sun*.[119]

The memorial services were not the only activities that veterans participated in. The 1st Cape Corps and other Coloured Units Regimental Association, formed post-World War I to support non-White ex-soldiers (of any regiment) and their dependants, remained active during the inter-war period and was one of the main institutions amassing support for World War II. The Association frequently organised talks, meetings, fundraising events, memorial services, social events etc. These events were regularly attended by White and non-White personages. The 1939 memorial service and parade in Cape Town was also spear-headed by the association. They also organised a 'Bully Beef Supper' in November of the same year to raise funds for ex-servicemen. The dinner was attended by ex-officers of CC and Dr Abdurahman delivered a speech honouring the CC legacy and expressing hope for the future. The association was also the first to pledge loyalty to King and Empire and offered their services to the Governor-General of the Union (who forwarded the expression of loyalty to the King) and to the re-elected Prime Minister, General Smuts. Then Secretary of the association, L. W. Swarts, wrote to Smuts:

[118] DOD. DNEAS, Box 36, 8/21, Memo, 8 September 1942.
[119] A non-White newspaper

> It is the desire and the wish of the Coloured Ex-Servicemen that I should convey to you, your Honour, their congratulations for the noble way you have stood your ground for unity of the British Empire in this hour. We further wish to express our loyalty and our assurance of readiness to respond once again to the call of our King and Empire.[120]

On 14th November, a short piece in the *Standard* announced the King's 'sincere thanks' to the association 'for their message of loyal assurances'.[121] At the association's meeting in Worcester, similar pledges were reaffirmed as a new committee was appointed, with Colonel Smedley-Williams serving as the new President, and Smuts as a patron.[122] A more recently formed 'Cape Corps Association', having been in operation for two years, followed a similar trajectory. They organised a memorial service in September 1939 in Cape Town, another memorial service in Worcester in October, and a Carnival Dance in December to raise funds for ex-servicemen. Their annual dinner, presided by Desmore, was attended by the Deputy Mayor, E. G. Nyman, and Captain C A Hillary, the would-be recruiting officer for CC. At the dinner, Desmore announced:

> We would like the Government to know that the Coloured people, as in the past, are ready to do their duty to King, country and the British Commonwealth of Nations… If the Cape Corps is re-formed, the new generation will repeat what the old generation has done.[123]

Desmore's declaration was printed on the front page of *The Cape Standard*. At the Worcester memorial service, mentioned earlier, attended by Gow, the CCA also adopted a resolution pledging loyalty to King.[124] Both associations had the support of officers of the World War I non-White units who were also involved in their activities, specifically concerning the welfare of ex-servicemen and their dependents. The CC Regimental Band was another celebrated unit that frequently performed in concerts and participated in (often headlined) fundraising events.

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[120] UCTSC. 'Non-European Ex-Servicemen Ready', *The Cape Standard*, 12 September 1939.
[121] UCTSC. 'King Thanks Cape Corps', *The Cape Standard*, 14 November 1939.
[122] UCTSC. 'Possible Resuscitation of Cape Corps', *The Cape Standard*, 14 November 1939.
[123] UCTSC. 'Traditional Loyalty of Coloureds', *The Cape Standard*, 26 September 1939.
[124] *Ibid*.

Their formation was also annually marked. At their 21st anniversary in July 1939, speeches were made by Abdurahman and Desmore who urged the attendees to not focus on broken promises but unite for a noble cause.[125]

There are several nuances to note about the non-White veterans' war effort. What primarily differentiates the veterans from other pro-war factions is their age, memory and experience of service. These were men who had participated in World War I only twenty years ago and had continued to be part of their regimental communities long after demobilisation. By attending parades and maintaining military traditions, they maintained a continuity with the past and were not disengaged from service as the civilian elements were. For them, echoes of the past war were as audible as the sound of the bugle in the upcoming one. Repeatedly they emphasised their loyalty to King, Country and Empire – making no comments on the civil or political statuses of the non-White communities. Through parades and memorials, especially by donning their uniforms, medals and other mementos, they reasserted their identities as *soldiers first*. For them military service was not synonymous with political rights. Furthermore, by re-pledging their service to the King, the veterans seemed to indicate loyalty to a larger cause, beyond the political confines of the Union – as though they were not soldiers of the Union, but soldiers of the Empire.

It is difficult to ascertain precisely what inspired this loyalty and solidarity – perhaps the memory of a war in foreign lands, of prolonged service alongside imperial troops, of being in the wider fold of organisations (e.g. BESL), and the quite support of the Governor-General, left an imprint on their self-perception. Notably, in almost every memorial service, mention was made of General Allenby praising the CC for their fine service in Palestine and for reportedly having informed the King of the corps 'covering themselves in glory'.[126] Of course

[125] UCTSC. 'A Proud Record', *The Cape Standard*, 13 June 1939.
[126] UCTSC. 'Thousands Commemorate Heroes of the Great War', *The Cape Standard*, 19 September 1939.

these associations were not representative of all veterans. There were those who criticised the government for its failure to protect veteran rights and welfare. An anonymous ex-Sergeant who served in CC and SAMC wrote to *The Cape Standard* in response to a registration drive:

> I served up to 1921 in an advisory capacity and I know that it would be nothing short of sacrilege to ask any son to give his life for a country where [before] long he will be further denied the rights of a citizen.[127]

Regardless, such public critiques by veterans were infrequent. By and large it seems there was support for participation within the ex-servicemen community.

4. DNEAS' Campaign

In 1940, with the revival of non-White regiments and the formation of the DNEAS, the first systematised recruitment campaigns were organised. As has been discussed, many of the would-be officers of DNEAS were closely attached to veterans' organisations prior to the formation of non-White units. Thus, when recruiting was first initiated, the Directorate already had a network of local leaders, organisations and veterans' associations to tap into to drive enlistment. And it did so throughout the war by participating in veterans' activities and public events. Significantly, the CC and IMC Regimental Bands frequently toured the Union as part of the fundraising and recruitment campaigns and, later, to provide recreation on the front.[128] However, the Directorate also applied a range of other tactics to appeal to non-White men – films, posters, exhibitions, press campaigns, sports' meets between NEAS regiments. The DNEAS propaganda aimed to appeal to a range of sensibilities. Contrary to Roth and Grundy's observations, the wide appeal of the campaign demonstrates that the Directorate did not view its potential recruits as mercenaries.

[127] UCTSC. 'Coloureds and War Service', *The Cape Standard*, 12 December 1939.
[128] *See* Chapter 4, Section 5.3

4.1. The Cape Standard

One of the main mediums for attracting recruits was *The Cape Standard*. Popularity of the newspaper among the Coloured, Indian and Malay communities in Cape Town (and in other parts of the Union) made it practicable to advertise recruitment centres and promote pieces that would encourage communal support for the war. Then Editor of *The Cape Standard*, George Manual, seems to have had an amicable relation with the Directorate as evidenced by correspondence exchanges between him and senior officers. In fact, he and Colonel Horwitz (who was stationed at DNEAS HQ) had telephonic conversations. In 1943, Manuel wrote to the Colonel:

> We are quite prepared to cooperate with you in the Cape Corps recruiting campaign and will give as much space as possible to articles and photographs sent to us by your office.[129]

Manuel's agreement is not out-of-line for the tone of the *Standard*. The newspaper seems to have been a uniquely balanced publication for its time. While it regularly printed articles with scathing critiques of the government, protest poetry, and a steady stream of left-leaning view-points, it also gave ample space to the 'moderate' voice. It published information on registrations, pieces on the history of CC, news of the young men and veterans enlisting, general news about the war, appeals for funds without 'official' poking. Thus, it is unsurprising that the Directorate turned to this newspaper to catalyse momentum within the non-White community. DNEAS' press office supplied the *Standard* with a steady stream of articles on the history of CC, news of the soldiers and their experiences 'up North', information on awards and 'mention-in-despatches', articles on sporting events, Christmas messages, and photographs. The extensive access that *The Cape Standard* had to soldiers on the front and those returning from deployment is reflective of their privileged status within the press circle

[129] DOD. DNEAS, Box 36, 8/21, Manuel to DNEAS, 4 February 1943.

of the Directorate – so much so that the newspaper was even distributed to CC soldiers in camps in the Union at reduced rates.[130] However, this is curious because of the contents of the paper, especially the frequent publication of left-leaning (sometimes Communist) pieces. Perhaps the higher authorities at the Directorate were not seriously paying attention to its contents. The only indication of the Directorate having concerns is a small note by Lieutenant-Colonel Mockford, then OC of Propaganda and Press, expressing concern over some of the articles including those critical of the welfare schemes for soldiers, and a piece presenting the Japanese army as liberators of the 'non-Europeans'.[131]

4.2. The Sudden Appeal for Legacy

Fascinatingly, one of the main pieces commissioned by the Directorate was a four-part series on the 'history' of the Cape Corps – 'Part I: A Brief History of the Cape Corps', 'Part II: The Great War, 1914 – 1918', 'Part III: The Present War', 'Part III (concluded): The Present War' – published in the September and November issues of 1943.[132] The articles were specifically directed at the Coloured community. They presented a long-standing legacy of military service dating back to 1795, one that was upheld during World War I and was now being preserved and upheld by the re-formed regiments. In the early days, the article explained, the Coloured community had an essential role to play in the building and protection of the Cape Colony. Coloured soldiers of these early regiments were presented as uniformed, valorous, regular soldiers, and not as porters or mercenaries. There is no mention of the mutinies that Tylden had highlighted and no reason is provided for the disbandment of the Coloured units despite their

[130] Monama, F. (2014). *Wartime Propaganda in the Union of South Africa, 1939-1945*. (unpublished thesis) Stellenbosch University. p.255
[131] DOD. DNEAS, Box 36, 8/21, DNEAS HQ to CT Recruiting Office. 23 March 1942.
[132] *Op. cit.*, Mockford to Manuel, 11 September 1943.

decorated service.[133] The opening lines of the World War I piece explicitly stated that Coloured soldiers of CC served 'with pensions and gratuities' – once more punctuating the 'regular' nature of their service and also pushing against the narrative of neglect by the military.

In the final two articles of the series, the emphasis was on the good work of CC/IMC units. Coloured soldiers in particular were commended for keeping alive the legacy of their forefathers through their meritorious conduct. Uniquely, no mention was made of disarmament. Instead emphasis was placed on the training that CC soldiers received in 'infantry drill, musketry, artillery'. Furthermore, the article emphasised that although many of the recruits were unskilled, training had turned them into 'intelligent and inventive' soldiers. These articles, then, without explicitly making an appeal for recruitment, were attempting to 'attract' young men by enumerating the benefits of service and by lionizing the legacy of Coloured military participation.

A booklet similar to the History series was also published in 1943, to celebrate the '150th anniversary' of CC and was distributed free of charge to all CC personnel.[134] It was meant to help maintain morale within regiments and 'establish self-respect'. A broadcast on the history of CC was also organised and special instruction was given to units to ensure attendance.[135] Perhaps the intention of celebrating a '150th' anniversary and the booklet was to create a sense of higher purpose among the CC troops, of an identity beyond wartime participation.[136] Such an approach also removes the discourse on service from the prevailing politics of the day. The narrative then becomes one of honouring the valiance of their ancestors, and not about disarmament or civil rights of non-White citizens.

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[133] In fact, before publishing the booklet, a 'fact-checking' was carried out with a short report on the 'failings' of CC. However, these were not included in the articles or booklet.
Op. cit., Notes for Col Mockford Re-failings of Cape Corps.
[134] This was after the assimilation of CC and IMC, and so IMC's history was merged into CC's.
[135] DOD. DNEAS, Box 36, 8/21, Broadcast on History of Cape Corps, 17 December 1943.
[136] *Op. cit.*, Mockford to Secretary of Defence (Finance), 30 November 1943.

4.3. Non-White Masculinities: Sports, Machines, Adventure

Aside from the articles on the history of CC, news of achievements, medals, distinguished service, and stories of valour were regularly published in *The Cape Standard*. DNEAS-sponsored sports meets were also given substantial coverage. The Directorate organised sporting matches (usually boxing, cricket, football, rugby and athletics) between its own battalions and regiments in the Union. These meets were open to the public.[137] The events served two purposes, (i) they helped raise funds for NEAS and, (ii) without explicitly saying so, they promoted a 'sportsman' identity of the non-White soldier, in line with the sporting identity of White South African soldiers.[138]

The Directorate also maintained a regular supply of photographs of CC/IMC men-in-action. In fact, in January 1943, a reporter for *The Cape Standard* had questioned the officer-in-charge on why the number of photographs were reducing. The officer assured the reporter that this would be corrected and *CS*, in turn, assured its readers that more news from the front was on its way.[139] Some of the photos commissioned by the Directorate for publication include photos of MT drivers (figure 1), of cooking lessons, of despatch riders on impressive motorbikes (captioned 'for men of daring'), of the CC and IMC regimental bands (figure 1), of a staff-sergeant on a camel in Egypt, of soldiers at skilled work such as blacksmithing. The most frequently published were portraits of soldiers who had received military commendations, those who were prominent members of the community (or sons of prominent members), those who were good in sports, and those killed-in-action.

These photographs 'humanised' the faceless war and the faceless corps. It placed the non-White soldier in the midst of the otherwise imagined White war. They showcased the soldier

[137] Long-form articles published in *The Cape Standard* in following issues: 4 March 1941, 2 December 1941, 27 January 1942, 21 September 1943, 9 November 1943, 1 August 1944, 19 June 1945.
[138] Chetty 2005, 2010.
[139] UCTSC. 'Coloured Soldiers Excellent', *The Cape Standard*, 26 January 1943.

as a skilled member of the armed forces, providing valuable and consequential service. Some photographs also promoted a sense of adventure – e.g., images from the front were often titled 'Somewhere in the North', 'Somewhere in Egypt', 'Somewhere in Italy' etc. This was of course to protect military intelligence, but the captions do tend to evoke curiosity about the familiar men in elusive lands. Consequently, DNEAS' press campaign, in collaboration with the newspaper read by '47,500 non-Europeans'[140], created an inspiring narrative of courage and duty. Of the published material, it can be argued that photographs were the most inclusive form of propaganda. Visual imagery of the war broke the barriers of literacy and had the capacity to reach a wider audience.

Figure 1: Images from The Cape Standard, 12 April 1941 (L) and 5 May 1942 (R)

Another visual medium used was war films. Movies on CC/IMC were frequently shown in the 'African Theatres' in Cape Town. Special screenings were held for prominent members of the non-White communities in order to ensure the publicization of the films. Slides depicting CC soldiers were also shown before the screening of other movies to encourage recruitment. The films included reels of training, sports activities, and parades.[141] In a more unique attempt, an exhibition of photographs of CC Artillery gunners was on display outside the 'Old Drill Hall'

[140] *The Cape Standard'* tag-line.
[141] DOD. DNEAS, Box 36, 8/21, Report on Duty – Cape Town, 2 April 1943.

where the CC recruitment office was located (in Cape Town). One spectator noticed his friend, a Corporal, in the photographs. He reportedly said that 'Well I can do as well as him!' and joined the army that very day.[142]

Posters were also regularly used and were, usually, of two types: (i) those that were text-heavy with savvy slogans and information on recruiting centres, targeting an educated (or at least literate) audience, (ii) and the image-heavy posters, usually with slogans in Afrikaans, targeting an illiterate audience. Examples of the first include posters for recruitment for Anti-Aircraft units:

Figure 2: Recruitment Posters from The Cape Standard, 13 May 1941 (L) and 20 May 1941 (R)

At first glance, it is the unique taglines of the posters that stand out. Service is presented as an opportunity for adventure and glory, but also one of a potentially missed opportunity. It is questioning the able civilian man why he has not upheld his duty, why he is not reaching for

[142] UCTSC. 'Smart Pictures of Artillerymen', *The Cape Standard*, 9 September 1941.

honour and glory, and why has he not joined the 'other fellows up North'. The prominence of the rates of pay also seem to be a push back against the perception of insubstantial remuneration, a concern of the educated non-White men, especially those with domestic responsibilities.[143] Overall, the posters are not only projecting a viable employment option for the educated non-White man, but are also highlighting the uniqueness of service, its ability to provide recruits with honour, glory and adventure – advantages that are unavailable in their regular jobs.

A more 'general' poster used for the entirety of the war appealed to Coloured men to 'remember the reputation gained by the 1st Battalion Cape Corps', to 'not let this corps lose its identity for want of recruits' and to 'DO YOUR SHARE' [sic].[144] In line with Directorate's propaganda policy, this appeal emphasised on the duty of able Coloured men to uphold the honour of their forefathers. Neither of these posters had visual imagery and relied purely on changing the size of the font and the position of the text to make the key information stand out.

In contrast, an image-focused poster:

[143] This did not have the desired impact (discussed later).
[144] IWM. Art.IWM PST 123267367 CC Enlistment Poster.

Figure 3: Recruitment poster, 1942. NLSA Digital Collections

With an attractive painting of a sombre, well-dressed soldier looking into the distance, the CC badge visible on his collar and helmet (the chin-strap mistakenly missing), the poster simply asks its viewer to 'Join the Cape Corps' in Afrikaans, the language most commonly spoken by the middle to lower income classes of the community. The intention here is to attract the potential recruit with the image of an elevated non-White man, one who is polished, composed and with purpose – the subtext being 'this could be you'.

Two prominent omissions from the DNEAS' propaganda campaign were the appeal to non-White men in rural areas and the reduced focus on the Indian and Malay community. The Directorate had made a conscious effort to steer clear of the countryside and avoided recruiting non-White farmers (usually agricultural labourers on White farms). Representations had been made directly to the PM to prevent their recruitment to avoid a shortage of labourers, especially during harvesting season. The DNEAS 'ban' on farm labourers included all three corps.[145] The

[145] DOD. UWH, Box 89, 51/7, Copy of letter dated 15 April 1941.

issue was so sensitive that a falsely reported incident of twenty-five farm labourers being recruited in the IMC was raised directly to the Prime Minister's Office. The complainant was later found to be a farmer 'opposed to the military'.[146] Simultaneously, the initial enlistment campaigns within the Indian and Malay communities were routed through community leaders and local organisations.[147] However, for reasons discussed in the next chapter, after the initial recruitment drives there was reportedly low zeal for participation. Following this, the Directorate chose to focus the bulk of its efforts on the Coloured community.[148]

The Directorate was inventive in how it approached recruitment. By including community leaders, they were able to ensure a wider appeal of their campaign. By utilising a range of mediums including films, press, posters, exhibitions, parades, social events, sporting events – they were able to appeal to a diverse audience and a range of sensibilities. The Directorate's recruitment campaign certainly did not treat its potential enlistees as financially-distressed mercenaries. In fact, as will be discussed in the next chapter, the lower rates of pay were inhibiting the campaign and a more organised effort had to be launched that focused on the non-remunerative advantages of military service – the long-standing military tradition of CC, the 'machismo' of young men, the quest for adventure, duty to not just King and Country, but also to a higher purpose of military legacy.

[146] *Op. cit.*, Cape Coloured Recruiting. Office of IMC to Major Danoher, 24 June 1941.
[147] DOD. UWH, Box 158, History of 'B' Company Indian Services by Captain Wallace, p.3
[148] *Op. cit.*, Historical Survey of NEAS, p.1

Conclusion

The Coloured, Indian and Malay communities had an 'interim' racial status in South African society that enabled their inclusion and exclusion from the White political narrative on citizenship and military service, although the state had absolute control on this narrative. Part of a longer history of imperial amnesia, Coloured/Indian/Malay men served in regular and attached capacities in armed forces across decades of White rule under both, British and South African governments. It is this legacy of limited, volatile military service that defined the policy around their participation in World War II. It is also this legacy that inspired and encouraged the Coloured community and veterans' associations to demand armed participation and, equal civil rights and service rights for non-White soldiers. Contextualising the service of CC/IMC soldiers into this intersection of racial politics is crucial to reconstructing the terms of their service. Additionally, situating them into the wider narrative of international and local politics and the progress of the war itself explicates the service and experiences of CC/IMC soldiers. However, it would be reductive to assume that these over-arching themes *defined* the history and service of these men.

When the implementation of these segregationist policies into practice is examined, a more nuanced picture of wartime enlistment and service emerges that deviates from the White patriarchal account of World War II. War propaganda directed at young White South African men focused on enlistment by tapping into the 'Springbok' conceptions of masculinity and settler identity. It was centred on vigorous sports and physical activity ('Springbok Army of Sportsmen') and unrelenting patriarchal fighting traditions. The White soldier was a soldier (a protector) because White women and non-White populations could not be combatants.[149] In this context, the assumption would be that the White authorities of the UDF would view the

[149] Chetty, *All the News That's Fit to Print*.

non-White man as an emasculated, infantile, inept recruit who was incapable of combat. And while this was true in policy-making, it did not translate into practice. Despite the demotion to disarmament, there was no emasculation of CC/IMC soldiers. Instead the discourse around armament was viewed as a political parley by the non-White communities. The 'fighting mettle', particularly of Coloured men, had already been proven in previous wars and it was these military legacies that defined the approach to enlistment for non-White soldiers. Thus, White incertitude was not centred on the non-White soldiers' incapability for combat, but rather on their capability for it.

Contrary to political rhetoric, much like the White soldier, the masculinity of non-White men was appealed to through sporting events, imagery of adventures in the army, by showcasing physical prowess through drilling and training and, in later stages, by spotlighting stories of courage and military achievement. The gap created by disarmament was plugged by gunners in artillery and anti-aircraft units, by 'men' handling heavy machinery such as convoy trucks, motorbikes and engineering works, and by emphasising on the intelligence of CC/IMC soldiers (who performed skilled tasks). To presuppose the CC/IMC recruit (or any non-White recruit of the British Empire) as a mercenary simply because of their political and social status within the imperial system is to diminish the agency of the non-White soldier, ignore the complexity of identities within these histories, and reduce the non-White subaltern to a binary bracket of voiceless, victimised dependant – one to whom the war happens.

CHAPTER 2

‘I’m going to join the army!’: Soldiering in the UDF, 1940-44

Atwell Sidwell Mopeli-Paulus was young, in a loveless marriage, and disenchanted with life when war broke out. He was the son of a Mosotho chief and had, a few months before, moved to Johannesburg to pursue higher education. Although he enjoyed the relative laxity of the colour-bar at the Witwatersrand University, he struggled with course-work in English, a language he was not comfortable with, and longed ‘to write things of my own’. Thus, when war broke out, he recalled that ‘I was half relieved to feel that I should join the army. As soon as possible I enlisted with the Cape Corps’.[150] Despite being ‘African’, his ‘light’ skin colour allowed him to enlist himself in the ‘Coloured’ corps. His father was displeased with his decision as he felt that if Mopeli-Paulus had waited a little longer, he could have joined the NMC where his social standing would have easily earned him the rank of NCO. Mopeli-Paulus himself would eventually regret his decision to join CC (a consequence of homesickness). His service lasted for three years – the memories of which he would go on to record in two memoirs, *Ho Tsamae ke ho bona* and the acclaimed, *The World and the Cattle*.

Mopeli-Paulus’ tale of enlistment challenges the orthodox understating of the identity of CC soldiers. He was not ‘Coloured’ but ‘African’, with skin ‘light enough’ to pass as ‘mixed-race’. He was the son of a Mosotho Chief, well-educated, and in no economic distress. If anything,

[150] Mopeli-Paulus, A. S. (2008). *The World and The Cattle*. Penguin. p.68

he was over-qualified for pioneer work. The contradictions of his enlistment demonstrate that admission to CC/IMC was not predicated on race and ethnicity alone. A range of criteria determined eligibility. Recruitment relied on the perceptions and judgement of the recruiting staff, and the racial regulations enforced on the non-White corps were seldom neatly defined and applied. Loopholes within the system and the objective needs of the war often clashed with and even side-lined the political narratives of segregation. In fact, there was at least one South African Chinese soldier who served in CC.[151] However, this is not to imply that race did not impact armed service. Despite being well-educated, Mopeli-Paulus' African lineage did ultimately disadvantage him as he could not apply for promotion to NCO ranks. Being of non-White ethnicity limited the opportunities available to CC, IMC and NMC recruits. Still, their experiences of the war were complex, varied and unique. It is in this grayscale that the history of the CC/IMC soldier is investigated.

The following chapter reconstructs the formation and administration of CC/IMC. It deciphers the motivations of those volunteering and details the transition of the civilian into the military. It explains the enlistee's agency in becoming a soldier. It argues against a linear top-down approach centred on the military institution to decipher the facets of soldiering. Instead, the participation of civilian communities, operations of the military institution and perceptions of the volunteers themselves intersect to define soldiering. Furthermore, it is argued that CC/IMC recruits were more than participants in the UDF alone. They were also members of their own communities, residents of the Union and, comrades to each other. These multi-faceted identities impacted and defined their motivations, expectations and experience of soldiering in the UDF in World War II. Analysis of these identities demonstrates the preparedness, professionalism, and capabilities of the rank-and-file on their first deployment on the frontlines.

[151] DOD. UWH, Box 159, NAREP UNFO:13, Record of Non-European Army Services, p.29

1. Assembling the Corps

The year-long gap between the declaration of war and the formation of the first CC/IMC units was because of the initial lack of need of troops by the Empire, but is indicative of the prejudice and suspicion that non-White soldiers were subjected to in the Union. However, despite the political back-and-forth in this duration, behind-the-scenes the general expectation was that CC, at least, would be instituted. By October 1939, announcements were made for interested non-White men to register themselves in the Coloured National Reserve. Primarily formed to recruit men for policing services, the reserve lists were also meant to serve as a pool for potential enlistees for the UDF:

> If enough enrol for National Service, among the signatories whose abilities, age and health fit them for more active service will no doubt soon have an opportunity for service of a more vigorous forceful sort.[152]

The opening of registrations for non-combatant services was officially announced by the Director-General of Reserves, with the Department of Defence in-charge. The eligibility was broad. Men 'between the ages of 18 and 50 and physically fit to serve under active service conditions.'[153] Public appeals were made for the same by White officers of CC units from World War I, including Colonel Hoy who would later be given charge of DNEAS.[154] In November of the same year, at the (previously mentioned) 'Bully Beef Dinner', a 'Mr V Meager' announced that he had it in 'good authority' that CC would be resuscitated.[155] This certainty in the re-formation of CC was credited to the change in government as Smuts extended his control over the parliament to mobilise the Union for the war effort. In April 1940,

[152] UCTSC. 'Coloured National Reserve', *The Cape Standard*, 31 October 1939. Consequently, thousands of volunteers registered for the service, thus making it difficult for the recruiting office to logistically use this 'pool' for enlistment.
[153] UCTSC. 'Coloured Registration Announced', *The Cape Standard*, 7 November 1939.
[154] UCTSC. 'Registration for National Non-Combatant Service, *The Cape Standard*, 19 December 1939.
[155] UCTSC. 'Possible Resuscitation of Cape Corps', *The Cape Standard*, 14 November 1939.

Louis D. Gilson, then member of the House of Assembly of Griqualand, offered to raise a CC pioneer corps from Griqualand.[156] Subsequently, Gilson himself received a letter from an ex-soldier, W. D. Burgers, representing CC veterans who had put together a list of volunteers.[157] Burgers further pointed that the 'colour bar had been lifted' in the British army and that he and his companions were eager to serve, restating their loyalty to Empire. In another instance, Desmore informed Brigadier-General J. D. Callyer, then Military Secretary, that members of the 1st CC and other Coloured Units Association had boycotted a meeting over the alleged secrecy of the correspondence(s) between Demosre and Collyre concerning CC's formation. In response, Collyre urged the Adjutant-General to resolve the matter as, he warned, it would negatively impact recruitment.[158] Thus, separate from the public rhetoric, the wheels for formation were already set in motion.

From the outset some fundamental differences existed between this version of CC and the historic regiment of World War I. Firstly, there was more obviously a heightened sensitivity towards separating units along racial and communal lines. This had not been the case in the previous war when Cape Malay and South African Indians had served in CC alongside Coloured soldiers. This was of course part of the expansion of segregation practices in the Union. It was not enough to separate the White from the non-White, these were regulated attempts to isolate all ethnic communities from one another. Additionally, CC had been an imperial unit in World War I, paid for and under the regulations of the British imperial forces.[159] In World War II however, non-White units were re-formed under the UDF banner, although

[156] DOD. UWH, Box 89, 51/1, Gilson to Smuts, 12 April 1940.
[157] *Op. cit.*, Burgers to Gilson, 15 April 1940.
[158] *Op. cit.*, Desmore to Colleyer, 29 April 1940.
[159] This also enabled arming of non-White soldiers. The Defence Act of 1912 barred combatant non-White service. But because CC was an imperial unit, they could serve as combatants.

separated as a 'Non-European' division. Reflective of the power shift from London to Pretoria, the CC/IMC soldier was now officially a Union soldier.

1.1. Administrating Recruitment

As early as March 1940, CGS approved the formation of non-combatant units of CC that would include a Pioneer Corps, a battalion for transport units, and a labour corps. This was in compliance with Section 7 of the South African Defence Act that limited non-White service to non-combatant capacity. [160] The uniforms of CC were to be the same as that of White soldiers. Specifically, they were to be issued slouch hats with chin-straps, shorts, and sleeves with CC 'straps'. The CC badge was also re-issued.[161] The subsequent delays in the 'official' announcement was the result of administrative hurdles.

The first phase of recruitment for CC (for five MT companies) commenced late May 1940 across centres in the Union.[162] The inaugural fortnight of recruitment was chaotic, wrecked with postponements and logistical difficulties. The Recruiting Office in Cape Town, under the charge of Captain C. A. Hillary, was not prepared for the rush of hopefuls who had travelled from different parts of the Western Province. On the first day, Hillary had to inform a disappointed crowd that no recruitments would be carried out that day. He further had to clarify that recruitment was presently limited to transport companies. The disarray caused an overall lack of confidence in those in charge. Consequently, criticism was directed at DNEAS for not including veterans and local non-White leaders in the campaign to ensure an effective operation.[163] Additionally, there were also concerns from the Muslim populace (primarily Cape

[160] *Op. cit.*, CGS to AG, 16 March 1940.
[161] *Op. cit.*, G143/22 Copy of 'Cape Corps' DCGS to CGS,
This was the 'basic' uniform of a new recruit leaving for training. Changes were made depending on the deployment of the soldier e.g. helmets for stretcher-bearers, trousers for cold regions etc.
[162] The recruitment for the Indian corps and the Malay battalion commenced in July.
[163] UCTSC. 'Cape Town's Recruiting Rush', 28 May 1940.

Malay and Indian Muslims) that young Muslim men would not be able to practice their religion while in service. Both these concerns were later addressed. As will be demonstrated, CC veterans came to play an important role in the recruiting campaign. Furthermore, within CC, the need to raise a separate 'moslem' battalion (along the lines of the Indian army that separated Hindu and Muslim regiments) was also accepted.[164] The 'moslem' battalion and the Indian Service corps were later merged, as a result of declining enlistment from the Indian community and also because of the organisational ease of maintaining Muslim (Malay and Indian) soldiers within the same unit.[165]

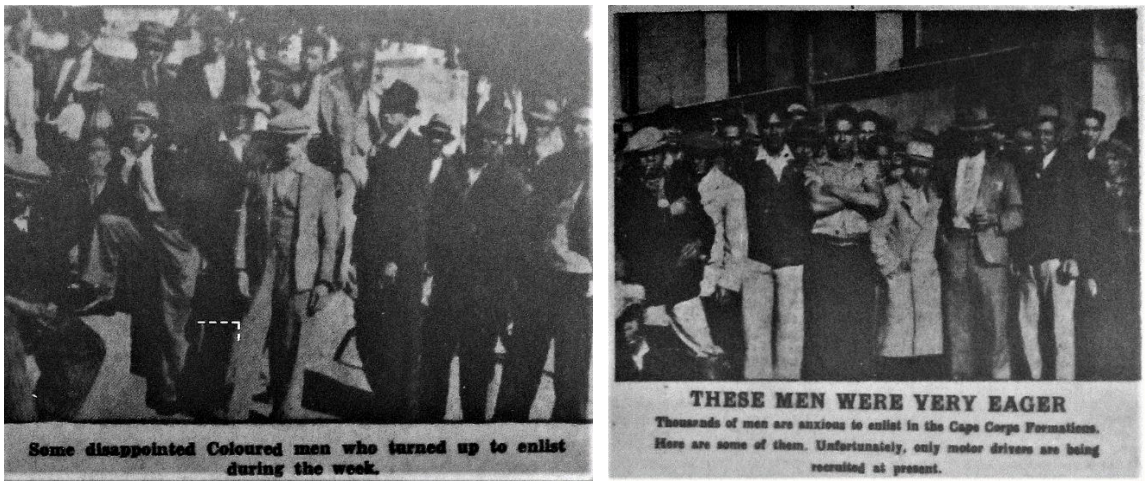

Figure 4: Images from The Cape Standard: 28 May 1940 (L), 9 July 1940 (R)

Recruiting veterans and encouraging voluntary veteran participation were of course not difficult tasks considering the support veterans' associations had already shown. In an official capacity, senior decorated veterans were some of the first to be enlisted to serve in the recruitment campaign, in training camps, and in other administrative roles. 'Genial' Sergeant Charlie Peters, Chairman of the 1st CC Association, was recruited and re-took training to serve as an instructor. He had previously enjoyed an illustrious career in World War I which had

[164] DOD. UWH, Box 89, 51/1, Military Secretary to CGS, 15 June 1940.
[165] *Op. cit.*, Box 168, NAREP UNFO:23, Historical Record Indian and Malay Corps, p.2. To solve the diet problem, the cooking and serving of food for Muslim soldiers was separated.

concluded with him as an instructor in musketry.[166] Sergeant-Major C. Clavart, who had been awarded a DCM, enlisted along with his son to assist in recruitment.[167] A civilian recruiting committee was also formed, headed by the Mayor of Cape Town, known as the Mayor's National Fund Committee (MNFC), to assist in the campaign. The committee's purpose was to ensure the welfare of dependants, pressure employers to augment the salaries of their employees while they served and 'generally to ensure a square deal.'[168] The committee was expanded in the early stages and had offices in Durban, Johannesburg and other major cities that had recruitment centres. The committee was supported by the 1st CC Association (it had appointed members from their ranks) and frequently organised 'recruitment rallies' to boost uptake.

However, despite these interventions, the practical challenges to recruitment remained. The rush of volunteers stressed the offices which struggled to cope, consequently leading to public misbehaviour. In September 1942, a full-page feature was published in *The Cape Standard* in response to this. The piece provides valuable insights into the workings of recruitment centres. At the Cape Town office, of the 25 non-White soldiers on the staff, eight were veterans of World War I, all of whom had been given prominent roles. The centre had only two White officers-in-charge. Alongside running recruitment, the staff also managed the initial stages of training before the newly enlisted were sent to camps, managed queries of (and at times even provided welfare for) dependants. They also investigated and managed inquires on CC/IMC soldiers on the front – thus working well beyond their expected duties. However, their deployment in the Union (and away from 'danger'), as the article informs, was causing the belittling of their 'desk' role by members of the public and 'some soldiers'. The article

[166] UCTSC. 'Coloured Soldier', *The Cape Standard*, 28 May 1940.
[167] UCTSC. 'A Smart Soldier', *The Cape Standard*, 16 July 1940.
[168] UCTSC. 'Welfare of Coloured Troops', *The Cape Standard*, 21 May 1941.

chidingly concluded that 'These men, then, the public will now realise, have very important work to carry out, and it is no mean feat when one considers that over 20,000 men have passed through […] In future, therefore, look more kindly upon them'.[169]

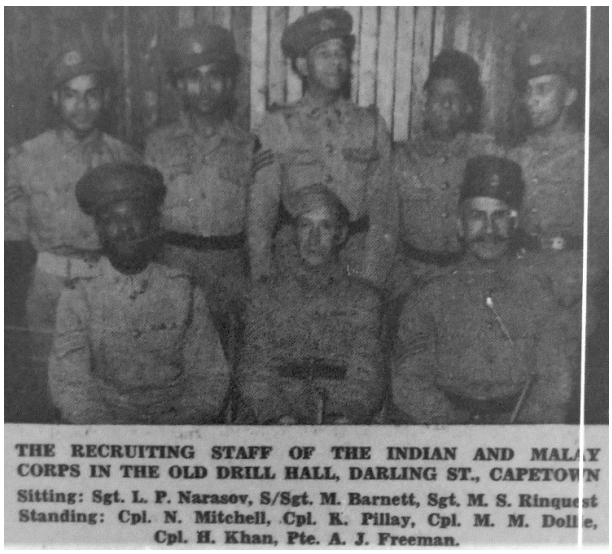

Figure 5: Images from The Cape Standard: Captain Hillary, Col. Hoy and Sgt-Maj. Calvart, 9 July 1940 (L); IMC Recruiting Staff Cape Town, 1 April 1941 (R)

The Recruitment Centre, therefore, was the first point of contact between the 'civilian' and the 'military' and was central to the non-White experience of the War in the Union. It was here that keen non-White men had their first taste of military bureaucracy with lengthy forms, medical examinations, skills tests, and endless documentation – the reality of recruitment beyond the spectacle of propaganda and rhetoric. It was also here that civilian dependents of non-White recruits sought information and help in the absence of their male relatives.

1.2. Amalgamation of CC and IMC

Separation of the 'Coloured', 'Indian', 'Malay' and 'African' units for military service was part of the segregationist agenda that sought to communalise and isolate non-White identities. For CC and IMC, the reasoning given was to 'protect' the communal identity of the Cape Malay and the South African Indian communities that had previously been subsumed under the Cape

[169] UCTSC. 'The Work of the Coloured Recruiting Staff', *The Cape Standard*, 8 September 1942.

'Coloured' Corps. There were non-White representations for this. Notably, the Cape Malay battalion within CC had been formed at the behest of community leaders.[170] However, there were also voices of dissent. Councillor Ahmed Ismail, then President of the Cape Indian Congress, expressed his scepticism over this sectionalism when previously, as he pointed out that 'Coloured, Malay and Indian joined in the one unit, the Cape Corps.'[171]

Nevertheless, separation was not just an ideological quandary. Irrespective of the authorial judgement of the White government, segregation caused practical difficulties in recruitment. Men enlisted for units of their choosing as opposed to the corps of their community (i.e. they enlisted for motor, labour, or pioneer units regardless of whether they were CC/IMC). Furthermore, regulations of DNEAS did allow members of 'other classes' to enlist at the discretion of the recruiting officer and OC.[172] As a result, uneducated Christian 'Coloured' men adopted Malay (Muslim) names and enlisted in the IMC labour battalions. The 1st CC Association estimated that nearly 75% of men in IMC units were Cape Coloured Christians (and complained that the Indian and Malay communities would get credit for Coloured service).[173] This was also highlighted by Colonel H. G. Mockford who estimated that 95% of those recruited for IMC were not 'Indian' and that the Indian community was taking the 'kudos' for IMC's service.[174]

It is difficult to determine the data that these arbitrary percentages were based on but there does seem to have been a decline among the Indian communities after the initial zeal of enlistment. Captain Wallace pinned the blame for this on botched recruitment policies. The more 'senior' Indians who had been recruited as staff for centres had been privately promised promotions to

[170] UCTSC. 'Facilities for Malay Soldiers', *The Cape Standard*, 13 August 1940.
[171] UCTSC. 'Merging of Non-European Recruiting', *The Cape Standard*, 1 October 1940.
[172] DOD. UWH, Box 89, 51/3, Regulation for the NEAS, p.7. Officers could also transfer soldiers to 'appropriate' units at their discretion.
[173] *Op. cit.*, 51/2, Swarts to Smuts, 20 November 1940.
[174] DOD. DNEAS Group 2, Box 20, NAS 4/1/1, Mockford to DAG, 2 March 1942.

officer ranks after initially joining as Staff-Sergeants. Additionally, in meetings with influential Indians, promises for combatant service had been made with assurances of financial security, embarkation leave, and post-war benefits. While Wallace noted that such 'false promises' were not authorised, the 'officialdom' was aware of the practice but disclaimed all responsibility for it. 'Be that as it may, the fact remains that recruiting flourished for a time on them, and later came to a complete standstill *because* of them.'[175] Another problem, Wallace noted, was food. Indian recruits were fed 'dhal and rice' three times a day, as that was believed to be their cuisine. This caused much displeasure and only after repeated complaints, and later outright defiance, was an investigation launched. 'Officialdom was indignant at first, then horror stricken that these Indians…did not eat their national food dhal and rice' and instead had the same diet as South Africans. Although interventions were made, 'the rot had set in Natal, the hunting ground for the Recruiting officers'.[176] Combined with disarmament, pioneer duties, and the disallowing of embarkation leave, the recruiting for the Indian Service Corps came to a complete halt *before* the first units were deployed. Despite efforts to correct the situation, enthusiasm remained low. Wallace's account also explicates the multiple 'propaganda' pieces in *The Cape Standard* praising camp life.[177] It is further corroborated by the observations of, then High Commissioner of India in the Union, Sir Shafaat Ahmed Khan:

> In Durban I consulted every leading Indian […] They tell me the Indian soldiers in the Corps are intensely dissatisfied…There is really nothing in common in between the Coloureds and Bantus and Indians. Their food, tradition, outlook and way of life are wholly different, and they are very badly treated by the Natives and Coloureds. The food has improved a little, but relations with their comrades are strained […] Another serious disadvantage is that the Officers are very unsympathetic, and are mostly Afrikaners, who know nothing about India and Indians, and are partial to the Coloureds.[178]

[175] DOD. UWH, Box 168, NAREP UNFO:12, History of 'B' Company Indian Services Corps, p.3
[176] *Op. cit*., p.5
[177] *See* Section 3.2
[178] DOD. CGS, Box 130, 32/12, Extract from the High Commissioner of India's letter, 12 June 1942.

Although Khan's assessment contradicts Ahmed Ismail's scepticism, it is reflective of the regional disparities within communities. His description of the isolation felt by South African Indian soldiers is similar to the seclusion felt by Mopeli-Paulus as a Mostho in a 'Coloured' unit. Communal identities do impact the experience of service. Pre-existing ethnic ties transform more naturally into bonds of comradeship. However, this also does not negate the role of soldiering in creating imagined ties of camaraderie – ties that are exclusive to the military and not shared with the civilian.

Even so, the unauthorised 'mixing' of recruitment also caused considerable concern within the Church which feared corruption and/or conversion of Christian soldiers. Represented by Bishop Lavis, deputations were made to DNEAS to remove racial barriers to enlistment and allow Coloured, Indian and Malay men to enlist in the unit of their choosing (similar to how White recruits signed for units of their choice).[179] Separation of the units was also creating an unhealthy level of competition between the recruitment offices of CC/IMC. Additionally, recruiting officers were having to spend considerable energy determining who was 'Coloured', 'Indian', and 'Malay' and were having to 'turn away fit men'. The practicable case for merging was that if the units were combined, recruitment would increase as eligible volunteers would not be turned away and the staff would waste less time on determining the race of soldiers.[180] Thus, CC and IMC were merged into the 'Cape Corps', and a new unit badge was issued.

Thus, the actual formation of NEAS and CC/IMC was disorderly. The exigencies of war inter-twined with the government's impractical demands of segregation and unnecessarily problematised the formation and functioning of these units. Still, they were formed, and enlistment did occur.

[179] DOD. UWH Box 89, 51/2, 40292 Military Secretary to The Minister, 24 January 1941, p.3
[180] *Op. cit.*, p.2

2. Joining Up

Turning next to enlistment, a potential recruit had to be physically fit, of 'good character', between 18-45 years old for active service or up to 55 years old for a desk job. There were no educational qualifications required for enlisting as a private, neither was literacy required. However, a lack of education did disadvantage soldiers from applying for NCO ranks. Specific units did require some demonstrable knowledge for the trade-craft (engineering, driving etc), although there were training 'schools' in camps. The assessment of the 'ability' of a potential recruit relied entirely on the judgement of the recruiting officer, as evidenced in a directive by CGS:

> there is no necessity to insist that Cape Coloured recruits for the Artillery should have passed 6th standard – or any standard […] please recruit…[those] who appear to be likely good gunners.[181]

Most recruits, however, had to provide references from their employers and, if they were married, a marriage certificate. Hopeful drivers also had to produce a driving license. Unofficially, however, arrangements were made for men who could drive but did not have driving licenses. Additionally, they had to clear a driving test before being enlisted. However, these requirements were mutable. While officers were strict in the early stages of recruitment, increased demand for soldiers later laxed these rules. Thomas Cabel, a CC soldier, concisely recounted how:

> They were that strict with the Cape Corps that when you wanted to enlist you had to bring a letter from your boss saying you were a very good worker working twenty-five hours a day, nine days a week, a letter from the priest to tell them what a good boy you were. In the end they just took everybody because they were short.[182]

[181] DOD. CGS, Box 130, 32/7, CGS to OC of Recruiting CT, 14 January 1942.
[182] Interview in *Forgotten Soldiers*. DVD. Directed by Bernard Rundle (South Africa: SABC, 1996).

Initially all attestations were limited to six months, but this was swiftly readjusted to match White attestations. Furthermore, it was also decided, on Colonel Hoy's recommendation, that all NCOs, WOs, and staff sergeants should be non-White. This was justified on the grounds of, (i) reducing overall cost (non-White personnel were not paid at same rates as White personnel), (ii) non-White soldiers responded better to non-White superiors, as had been realised in World War I and, (iii) to attract a 'better class' of recruits.[183]

There were obvious regulatory differences concerning CC/IMC enlistment. These translated into how CC/IMC soldiers were regarded by their White superiors and the merit of their service. While CC/IMC soldiers were upholders of their own military traditions, adept at skilled tasks, sporty, commended for loyalty and honour, they were never considered trustworthy enough. They were prohibited from qualifying as officers, strategists and as combatants. Contrarily, White 'Springbok' soldiers, as van der Waag posits, were considered an 'excellent fighting force' who were 'quick to assess a tactical situation yet unwilling to suffer needless losses'.[184] Thus, by excluding non-White service from combatant capacity and despite their lengthy service – CC/IMC soldiers were not Springbok soldiers.

2.1. The Volunteer's Perspective

Sources documenting the perspectives of the recruits have survived in a myriad of mediums and give a sense of the motivations of non-White hopefuls.[185] They can be divided in three broad categories: (i) those influenced by their community, (ii) those inspired by patriotism, (iii) those driven by need. In 1942, Abrams Jewell wrote to DNEAS, asking to enlist as both his

[183] DOD. UWH, Box 89, 51/1, Memorandum Hoy to CGS, 3 May 1940.
[184] Van der Waag, *Sights, Sounds, Memories*, p.4
[185] Interviews in *The Cape Standard*, *Forgotten Soldiers*, *A Pair of Boots and a Bicycle*, IWM Audio Archives.

brothers were serving 'Up North'.[186] S. J. Louw, who had served in the transport units of CC, in an interview in 1996 recalled the moment he had decided to join:

> I was at a place called Kakamas, there was a young man who worked in the Post Office as a messenger, who joined the army. That evening, as we sat in the church, this young man, Mr Kriel, whose father was the pastor – when he and the other soldiers entered the church, they looked so stately in their uniforms, each one with his helmet on his arm. As I sat in admiration I said to my brother – 'No hell man! I'm going to join the army!'[187]

R M Naidoo, an IMC veteran, remembered:

> I thought I am a South African and it's nice to join and see what it is like and being in the army and all that... My uncles were in the First World War, two of my uncles. They were stretcher-bearers and [I thought] I'll join up and see what it is like.[188]

Louw's decision was spontaneous. Attracted by the presentation of the soldier, it portrays the image of the young, enthusiastic man wanting to be more than what he was. Jewell likely felt left behind and wanted to share in his brothers' adventures. Naidoo's decision, although also inspired by the curiosity and attraction of armed service, most likely had the long-drawn influence of his uncles' stories of their days in the army, a characteristic universal to veterans. All three experiences, however, are reflective of a communal culture, directly and indirectly, instigating recruitment. This is further supported by the exhaustive coverage in *The Cape Standard* on prominent members of the Coloured, Indian and Malay communities enlisting. A few examples – short pieces were published on the enlistment of famous non-White golfers, Sergeant 'Hercules' who owned a taxi business, the CC Regimental Band enlisting, Reverend H. C. Sheasby who was appointed Chaplain for CC, Sergeant B. Adams (veteran of World War I) who was then manager of the Allies Social Club, a list of prominent enlistees from Mossel Bay. Frequent parades of soldiers to the train station departing for training and/or deployment

[186] DOD. DNEAS, Box 30, NAS 8/4/3, Jewell to DNEAS, 19 June 1942.
[187] Interview in *Forgotten Soldiers*. Directed by Bernard Russel (SABC).
[188] *Ibid*.

that attracted large crowds of spectators were also part of the war-time social fabric of communities in cities with recruitment centres. For young men living in places like Cape Town, Kimberly, Ladysmith, Mossel Bay, Port Elizabeth, regardless of what their position was on non-White participation, it would have been difficult to remain indifferent to the recruitment campaign.

Patriotism and loyalty were also motivations for joining the ranks, although individuals interpreted these ideals in diverse ways. Charles Pillai was inspired by loyalty to his own community and his desire to contribute to their welfare:

> I felt if we joined the army, when we come back we could always ask for things we didn't have in the past. If we don't do that, if we didn't make a contribution when they needed us most…pointless coming back and asking for things.[189]

Local boxing heroes Sonny Thomas and Arvie Williams, local politician Jimmy La Guma, the superintendent of the Newtons club were also well-known non-White enlistees. Sonny had originally agreed to participate in a friendly boxing match to raise funds for the GGWF but was dissatisfied with this 'level' of participation. As he explained to *The Cape Standard* reporter, he wanted to 'do his bit in a practical way'.[190] La Guma enlisted as he believed that the only way 'a man could fight fascism' was to participate in the war against it.[191] Thomas Cabel, a CC veteran, responded more succinctly that 'Well I felt I also had to play my part and I enlisted.'[192] K B Maharaj, an IMC veteran, had a more rebellious journey:

> I wanted to be patriotic and I was a youngster at the time, and for adventure you know. Some of my very good friends joined up. So, I just wanted to go with them. Although my parents didn't want me to go and I had to get special consent […] my uncle gave me the consent.[193]

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[189] *Ibid*.
[190] UCTSC. 'Latest Volunteers', *The Cape Standard*, 17 September 1940.
[191] *Ibid*.
[192] Interview in *Forgotten Soldiers*. Directed by Bernard Russel (SABC).
[193] *Ibid*.

Maharaj's enlistment highlights the importance of familial support and the peer pressure young men would have felt, especially if they were 'falling behind'. It also highlights the loop-holes that the recruitment system enabled. Nevertheless, even though the stories of these soldiers vary, there was a common desire to be a part of something greater, something larger than the individual or his immediate environment. Participation in the war, for them, was a duty and also as an opportunity. Of course, not all enlistees were motivated by patriotism and adventure. Some were driven by financial need. Willie Stevens, an IMC veteran, recounted:

> We didn't have work, so we enlisted. When we were in the frontlines, if there were 31 days in a month, then we earned 31 shillings. My wife at home received 7 pounds a month with which she had to make ends meet.[194]

Stevens' use of the more collective 'we' points to there being other recruits, most likely from his community or those whom he met while in service, who joined the army for the pay. Johannes Buis wanted to enlist as there was 'nothing to do' and he needed employment.[195] Stories of men motivated by pay were not a feature in *The Cape Standard*. Perhaps this was because it went against the image of the loyal non-White. Or perhaps because only a certain 'upper-class' of recruits were interviewed and the stories of the low-income enlistees neglected. However, DNEAS' focus on pay cannot be dismissed. At the 'recruitment rallies' mentioned previously, Captain Hillary and Lieutenant Dickerson would invariably explain the pay rates and dependent allowances in detail. Majority of the advertisements published in *CS* would frequently list the rate of pay, the possibility of promotion, disability allowances and pensions, and benefits to dependants. Interestingly, although the issue of non-White financial benefits was contentious, the remuneration offered was considered an improvement on the World War

[194] *Ibid*.
[195] DOD. DNEAS, Box 30, NAS 8/4/3, Buis to DNEAS, 10 October 1942.

I rates as disabled allowances and pensions had been made available for new enlistees from the outset.[196]

2.2. Pay and Welfare

The pay for a non-White private was 2 shillings 6 pence per day, and an additional 2 shillings per day for lodging and 1 shilling 6 pence per day for family allowance. These wages were far too low. In January of 1941, a deputation headed by Professor R. F. Alfred Hoernlé, including Rheinalt Jones (head of SAIRR) and two 'unnamed Coloured men', produced a report for the Minister of Defence on the grievances of non-White recruits.[197] The main concerns were regarding pay and dependent allowances. The initial set of regulations only recognised the wife and children of soldiers as dependents. This was problematic as it excluded other dependents such as parents, unmarried sisters, minor siblings, and children of relatives who could not support them etc. This exclusion had increased pressure on GGWF, MNFC, and other welfare associations to cover the gap.

Additionally, the pay rate for all ranks was considered low for the 'type' of recruits that were enlisted. Because the initial recruitment was for MT companies for CC, Colonel Hoy, then OC, had focused on 'quality not quantity' of recruits. As a result, well-paid, educated non-White men had been enlisted who had been earning substantially more in their civilian employment and, therefore, were unable to maintain their families with their military pay. For example, an IMC Private earned £2.50 per month. However, in his civilian job, the average IMC private earned £10 per month.[198] It was also estimated that Coloured recruits made between £2-£8 per

[196] UCTSC. 'Recruiting Begins in Cape Town', *The Cape Standard*, 21 May 1940.
[197] DOD. UWH Box 89, 51/2, Military Secretary to Minister of Defence, 27 January 1941.
[198] *Op. cit*., 51/6, Memorandum on South African Indian Soldiers by Professor H R Burrows.

week in their civilian jobs.[199] Consequently, the soldiers' pay could barely support their family's monthly ration.

The gap in civilian and military pay was no doubt substantial. As a result, the burden of financial insecurity was passed on to welfare organisations, primarily the GGWF and MNFC. Material aid was also provided by the Red Cross, Toc H, YMCA, and the many non-White Comforts and Gifts Committees (CGCs) that had sprung up across the Union. However, like other White institutions, these welfare organisations provided segregated aid. MNFC gave dependants support at 60% of the rate of White soldiers.[200] The GGWF limited it to a mere 40% of the allowance for White dependants. The justification given for proportional aid was the 'less-expensive' lifestyle of non-White communities as compared to White standard of living.[201] Furthermore, while MNFC's 'definition' of dependents did include parents, widowed mothers, and other close relatives, GGWF provided no assistance for dependants who were not the wife and children of the soldier.[202] MNFC also provided temporary grants to soldiers to cover the costs between the day of their enlistment and the day they received their first pay. Nevertheless, the burden for aid was primarily borne by GGWF which, numerically, provided more aid to non-White soldiers and their families than to White soldiers. Consequently, there was growing concern of this information leaking out to the White press and creating an uproar within the White community.[203]

Civilian employers of enlistees were also encouraged to augment non-White soldiers' pay. Non-White members of the South African Typographical Union who enlisted received the

[199] *Op. cit.*, W. H. Le Grange to Smuts, 15 January 1941.
[200] UCTSC. 'Coloured Men on Active Service', 18 June 1940.
[201] Simultaneously, the standard of living of the Malay, Coloured and Indian communities was believed to be higher as compared to 'Natives'. Non-White NMC soldiers, therefore, were paid at even lower rates.
[202] *Ibid*.
[203] DOD. UWH Box 89, 51/6, Lavis to Lawrence, 7 December 1940.

same allowance as White enlistees.[204] Provincial administrations covered the difference in pay for 'Coloured' teachers who enlisted and matched their salaries to what they were receiving as teachers.[205] Employers in the catering trade were also incentivised to make up the difference in salaries for those employees who enlisted in the IMC.[206] But of course, these schemes were directed at supporting the skilled and/or educated recruit who had been receiving decent pays in their civilian jobs. Men like Willie Stevens, who were from low-income families and in financial distress, would not have been incentivised to enlist at the low scales unless they were hopelessly unemployed. For their benefit, numerous deputations were made to different authorities to raise the issue of pay and allowances.

In June 1940, a CC veterans deputation from Port Elizabeth met with Louis Esselen, then United Party's General Secretary, to make the case for a combatant unit, a medical unit, and for better pay. The deputation pointed out that CC dependants were paid less than the dependent of 'enemy' internees in the Union.[207] In December 1940, Roberta Bruce, who was on the Cape Corps Recruiting and Welfare Committee wrote to Isie Smuts to place the matter of pay before the 'beloved General'.[208] A letter by the Chairman of the Committee to the Minister of Interior, listed, in great detail, the difficulties faced by the Coloured community due to the disparity between pay and the cost of living. Cases of five recruits were highlighted, all of whom had been earning upwards of £20 pre-enlistment and were now reduced to £7.10 and aid from the GGWF which was capped at £3. Particularly pitiful was the plight of widowed mothers who relied on their sons for care but were not covered under the dependents scheme. The Chairman added that although GGWF was struggling to cope with requests:

[204] UCTSC. 'Coloured Men on Active Service', *The Cape Standard*, 18 June 1940.
[205] UCTSC. 'War and Coloured Teachers', *The Cape Standard*, 9 July 1940.
[206] UCTSC. 'Indian Recruiting Meeting', *The Cape Standard*, 13 August 1940.
[207] UCTSC. 'Pay of Coloured Recruits', *The Cape Standard*, 11 June 1940.
[208] DOD. UWH Box 89, 51/2, Roberta Bruce to Isie Smuts, 12 December 1940.

> the alternative is practical starvation for the dependents of hundreds of men who are assisting in the fighting of the country's battles. This is a denial of the principles of all that we are fighting for, for even the most barbarous regime could offer nothing less that starvation to its subjects.[209]

Prof H R Burrows of Natal University authored a memorandum on non-White dependant allowances of South African Indian recruits that was presented to Brigadier-General Collyer. UDF, the professor pointed out, covered all dependents of a White soldier in the allowance scheme while only the wife and children of Indian recruits were covered. He further pointed that the average income group of the recruit was between £10 - £20 and most families only had one wage earner. Thus, the total pay offered was 'well below the minimum cost of a well-balanced Indian diet'.[210] The professor concluded that 'in the interest of humanity and moral' the situation be corrected. Justice Richard Feetham, ex-officer of CC in World War I and then Vice Chancellor of University of the Witwatersrand, also repeatedly intervened on behalf of CC/IMC for the same.[211] In a letter addressed directly to Smuts, members of the CC Welfare Association requested action, informing that a total of £12,000 by April 1941 had been distributed by GGWF to support families of non-White soldiers. [212]

Despite the multiple deputations, the basic pay rates were not revised on the grounds that 'Pay of any army can never be approximate to the wages earned by people in civil life.'[213] While the definition of 'dependents' was expanded, the allowances (per dependent) were still not raised to meet living standards. Instead, the burden of welfare continued to fall on charitable organisations.

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[209] *Op. cit.*, S W Lavis to H G Lawrence, 7 December 1940.
[210] *Op. cit.*, Memorandum on South African Indian Soldiers by Professor H R Burrows.
[211] *Op. cit.*, Feetham to Collyer, 5 June 1941.
[212] *Ibid.*
[213] DOD. CGS, Box 130, 32/14, Memorandum of meeting held on 30 June 1942.

2.3. Healthcare

There were, however, advantages in enlisting. In September 1941, an article in the *Standard* very seriously declared 'Army training increases height'.[214] The piece explained that, as a result of good nourishment and robust physical activity, men beyond the mid-twenty-barrier had gained height. The case of a 29-year old who had grown an inch after a few months of training was cited. While it is debatable if the appeal to vanity influenced potential recruits, assurances of decent food, as has been discussed, was central to recruitment. While army food was certainly not to the taste of well-to-do men, it is not irrational to posit that men from poorer circumstances would have been encouraged to enlist for good nutrition and medical services. Another article, published six months later, announced the special provisions were being made for enlistees who were malnourished. They would receive good care and treatment before being sent for regular training.[215] Related to this was also the problem of poor dental hygiene. Because most non-White men did not have dental care, their teeth were damaged. A dental examination was part of the medical exam for recruitment. However, prompted by DNEAS, it was announced in *The Cape Standard* that 'Would-be volunteers should not let their lack of teeth prevent them from answering the call.'[216] Damaged teeth impacted good nutrition and health, and this was a concern among the authorities. DNEAS, therefore, provided full dental care for soldiers and only rejected those volunteers whose teeth were well beyond repair.[217] Perhaps there were men who joined the army simply to get their teeth fixed.

2.4. 'Our War': Women and the War Effort

It is important to give space to the non-White civilian effort for the war. Initially, the welfare of non-White soldiers fell under the larger umbrella of the combined CGC that was presided

[214] UCTSC. 'Army Training Increases Height', *The Cape Standard*, 16 September 1941.
[215] UCTSC. 'More Recruits Wanted', *The Cape Standard*, 17 March 1942.
[216] UCTSC. 'Soldiers Teeth', *The Cape Standard*, 27 August 1940.
[217] DOD. UWH, Box 89, 51/1, Memorandum Hoy to CGS, 3 May 1940.

over by Isie Smuts, wife of General Smuts, popularly known as 'Ouma' (grandmother). However, a separate sub-committee for non-White soldiers was later formed as White women who had knit articles of clothing 'for Europeans were annoyed when they received letters of thanks from coloured men.'[218]. Following these complaints, the committees were separated along racial lines and 'articles made and marked by Europeans would be distributed to Europeans and those made by Non-Europeans should be distributed to Non-Europeans.'[219] Aid, therefore, whether from funds or welfare committees, remained segregated.

In April 1942, *The Cape Standard* began publishing a weekly (occasionally bi-weekly) piece titled 'Our War' that would inform on the efforts of (primarily) non-White women (usually relatives of recruits) engaged in raising funds and material aid for dependents.[220] This civilian effort for the war supported the sustenance and continuation of the non-White military effort. Fundraising events such as dances, boxing matches, a golf tournament, raffles, 'Bazzars', soccer matches, variety concerts, musical concerts, street bands, circus shows, were regularly organised by non-White welfare committees. A frequent feature of the fundraising campaign were street collections that were carried out on specified dates of the month. Non-White women were also engaged in making 'comfort goods' such as knitted articles, pouches with toiletries, Christmas parcels etc. They provided comforts for soldiers on leave and refreshments on train stations for men passing through. Notably, the organisation in Kimberley managed to raise funds for the construction of a recreation centre for soldiers in training.[221] These committees would also become the first point of contact for dependants (usually female relatives themselves – mothers, wives, sisters) looking for guidance and assistance.

[218] HRPA. AD843RJ, O11.2 File 2, Minutes of Non-European Sub-Committee, 12 March 1941.
[219] *Ibid*.
[220] UCTSC. 'Our War', *The Cape Standard*, 21 April 1942.
[221] UCTSC. 'Coloured Women's Comfort Guild', *The Cape Standard*, 3 September 1940.

The mobilisation of these women was no small feat as there were no organised efforts to encourage young, physically-able non-White women to join the war effort. In 1940, *The Cape Standard* declared that they had received many letters from young women who were anxious to serve. A Mrs Mybrugh wrote an open appeal to the 'leaders' to allow non-White women to 'sacrifice and serve'.[222] The 1st CC Association also appealed to the authorities for the same. A group of 36 zealous young women in Cape Town banded together in a 'Moslem Women's Auxiliary Service' on their own initiative. They had uniforms, were drilled by Sergeant-Major Calvart and Sergeant B. Adams (who were also in-charge of drilling CC/IMC enlistees) and were 'knitting for the troops'.[223] This was of course not officially sanctioned. A further 2,000 Coloured women expressed interested in serving in auxiliary capacities in hospitals and as drivers.[224] While this was not sanctioned, non-White women did replace non-White men in WAAF and WAAS, although they were unattested.[225] Nevertheless, non-White civilians who could not enlist were, however, able to volunteer for organisations such as Red Cross. In fact, a report on the South African Red Cross operations stated that number of non-White civilians learning first-aid had increased 'eight-fold' during the war years. The report credited young women for this movement:

> After the fall of France, […] Boy-friends of non-European V.A.Ds [Voluntary Aid Detachments] began to hear so much about the girls' Red Cross activities, that they in turn decided to have a share. It was no small share either, for in eighteen months' time, their detachment had thirty-two trained members.[226]

Relatives of non-White soldiers and the civilian community in general participated in World War II in consequential ways. Not only did they 'do their bit' by raising funds, producing

[222] UCTSC. 'Athlone Cape Corps Welfare Committee', *The Cape Standard*, 3 September 1940.
[223] UCTSC. 'Non-European Girls Anxious to Serve', *The Cape Standard*, 29 October 1940.
[224] UCTSC. 'Coloured Soldiers and Railway Travelling', *The Cape Standard*, 18 February 1941.
[225] DOD. CGS, Box 130, 32/17, AG Circular 41, 21-March-1945. Previously NMC filled these posts. This was problematic as WAAS and WAAF had no 'disciplinary' authority over them.
[226] DOD. UWH, Box 25, The South African Red Cross by J. Hasted, p.85

material goods and providing essential unpaid voluntary war-time service, they also generated a hospitable environment that allowed non-White men to enlist. Despite the substantial pay disparities, it was communal mobilisation that provided a 'safety net' for soldiers' dependents and families. 'Our War', as *The Cape Standard* christened it, was not just one of uniformed men on the front, it was also one that was fought in the Union, led by non-White women – a war for survival.

3. 'A Fine Life in the Army': Training and Deployment

This research has revealed the diverse motivations and the myriad of circumstances that had to converge to enable a non-White hopeful to volunteer his services. Simply having the desire to go to war was insufficient. Still, having being accepted following the lengthy bureaucracy of forms, paperwork, medical examination, dental check-ups and, for transport drivers, driving tests – the civilian was declared a recruit, although yet to be a soldier. On enlistment, the new recruits received their first round of drilling and instruction so 'they know something about soldiering'[227]. Following this, a senior officer-in-charge would inspect the parade. The new recruits, usually in civilian clothes and with few belongings, would then march as rank-and-file to the train station, whilst being cheered by enthusiastic crowds. Local welfare committees would provide refreshments and entertainment for the departing troops. At Cape Town these refreshments included 'tea, cake, hot pies, sandwiches, scones and cigarettes'- to make the departure of the troops 'as comfortable as possible'.[228] On 3 and 5 July 1940, the first group of CC recruits left to 'go North'.[229]

This section then elaborates on the processes involved in transforming the recruit into the soldier. The conversion has been studied through three different lenses: (i) the experience of

[227] UCTSC. 'Sgt B Adams', *The Cape Standard*, 22 October 1940.
[228] UCTSC. 'Providing Our Soldiers with Refreshments', *The Cape Standard*, 24 September 1940.
[229] UCTSC. 'Enthusiastic Farewell', *The Cape Standard*, 9 July 1940.

separation from home, (ii) the adaption into army life and, (iii) for non-White soldiers specifically, the acclimation to social segregation in an otherwise rigidly rank-based institution. Each new recruit had to encounter all three circumstances in the process of becoming a soldier in the UDF.

3.1. Deployment

One of the first experiences of deployment for non-White soldiers was segregation from their fellow White comrades. Originally, military regulations stated that second-class coaches were to be made available for CC/IMC soldiers on duty. In practice, however, soldiers were seated in third-class carriages. When a local White official was publicly questioned about this, he responded by saying that 'the fresh air […] would help those who fainted.' A 'hee-haw excuse', a witness commented.[230] White soldiers, comparatively, were seated in first and second-class carriages according to their rank while African soldiers were all seated in third-class carriages by regulation. In August 1940, the 1st CC Association wrote directly to the PM to raise the issue, once again pointing out that even enemy internees and their dependents were transported in second-class carriages:

> The Coloured community views with resentment the way the Cape Corps…are being sent […] They feel, Your Honour, that better accommodation could be provided for these men, who are the very best class of Coloured men.[231]

Although the soldiers allegedly did not mind 'roughing it' (perhaps the nervous excitement of departure occupied their thoughts more than the class of their tickets), relatives of soldiers and veterans particularly felt slighted. The situation was 'corrected', however, by 1941, the arrangements were reverted, and only non-White NCOs were allowed to travel second-class while CC/IMC rank-and-file continued to travel in third-class carriages. Moreover, the Minister

[230] UCTSC. 'Third Class for Coloured Soldiers', *The Cape Standard*, 27 August 1940.
[231] UCTSC. 'Second Class for Coloured Soldiers', *The Cape Standard*, 10 September 1940.

of Railway also assured the House of Assembly that coaches used to transport non-White soldiers were not used for White soldiers.[232]

In another sensational case, the General Secretary of the 1st CC Association, L. Swarts (who regularly appears in the archives as an appellant on behalf of veterans and servicemen) was charged with sitting in a 'European' carriage. Although he was acquitted, the court reminded Swarts to not view the acquittal as a pass to travel in carriages reserved for 'Europeans'.[233] The two incidents are indicative of the hardening of racial barriers in the Union and also contextualise the treatment of non-White soldiers as not isolated affairs driven by military regulations, but part of a systematised enforcement of racial laws. As a soldier wrote to *The Cape Standard*, 'So, is this one way of showing gratitude and appreciation to our volunteered service?'[234]

Nevertheless, the experience of the first deployment would have been significant for new enlistees. In a lengthy piece, a CC soldier, only 19 years old from Cape Town[235], described the departure for war:

> What a scene of mixed looks and faces! If the reader has seen a pudding being mixed he will be able to imagine what it was like. Sweethearts and wives were either weeping or laughing. Mothers and fathers were glum and sullen, or passing words of encouragement. Fathers looked strange with a look of mingled pride and sorrow written over their faces, Mothers were kissing their beloved ones and passing on last words of advice and encouragement. As the train steamed out of Cape Town Station some of the young recruits turned aside to shed a silent tear. As we left the shadows of night were creeping across the sky, slowly, silently and unnoticed, blotting out familiar landmarks. Everyone took, what they termed, their last look at "Good old Table Mountain", at whose feet lay nestled snug and warm, the ever-growing "Gateway to South Africa" [Cape Town].[236]

[232] UCTSC. 'Non-Europeans and Visiting Soldiers', *The Cape Standard*, 29 April 1941.
[233] UCTSC. 'Non-European Discharged in Test Case', *The Cape Standard*, 6 May 1941.
[234] UCTSC. 'Third Class for Non-European Soldiers', *The Cape Standard*, 29 April 1941.
[235] UCTSC. 'Soldier's Experiences', *The Cape Standard*, 31 December 1940.
[236] UCTSC. 'The Experiences of a Cape Corps Soldier', *The Cape Standard*, 24 December 1940.

The sombre departure from Cape Town, the ritual of a 'last look', all bring to fore the state of mind of the recruits. Notably, he makes no mention of the conditions and class of their travel; perhaps he was overwhelmed by the whole experience. It certainly seems that the soldiers felt the weight of their decision in those moments as they wondered when and if they would return home. Moreover, as some of the early enlistees, they also would not have known what to expect from their actual and metaphorical journey ahead. News of the non-White man at war had not yet travelled back. In fact, this recollection was the first substantial piece to be published by *The Cape Standard* on the war experience of CC/IMC soldiers. The march through Adderley Street, the separation from the 'snug and warm' for the war 'Up North', the existential anxieties – these were the recruits' first experience of soldiering and of comradeship in the army.

On arrival, the men were first stationed at a 'Receiving Depot' where they were issued their 'equipment' by the Quartermaster that included uniforms and accoutrements Their uniform issue included a pair of trouser braces, two pairs of boots, two sets of buttons, one brass button, a 'Great' coat, two frock coats, two dinner frocks, one 'drab veld' hat, two waist hooks, a pair of canvas leggings, two shirts, two shorts, two pairs of socks, two sets of 'ring splits' to hold tunic buttons, one working cap, one 'comforter' cap, two woollen drawers, a cardigan waistcoat, two net vests, and a leather waist-belt to hold it all together. They were also issued a 'housewife' sewing kit that contained everything a soldier would need to maintain their uniform. Other accoutrements issued included a kit bag, two dinner forks, one dinner knife, one dinner spoon, two hand towels, one tooth brush, one hair brush, one polishing brush, on shaving brush, and 'brass' brush, a comb, a 'holdall' bag, a knife clasp, one polish for boots, a razor with case, a suit comb, two blankets, one sheet, a water bottle with shoulder straps, a haversack, and a tin mess with straps. Soldiers who were deployed outside the Union were also issued a helmet, a protective suit, a pair of protective 'anklets', two 'bush' shirts, and a pair of protective 'drab veld' style trousers. All soldiers were required to religiously maintain their kit

and uniform and have it ready for inspection as part of their drilling. The equipment had to be returned upon discharge or 'to be paid for at issue rates'.[237]

At these depots and camps soldiers were once again subjected to medical examinations. In the later years, because war needs were paramount, many men had been enlisted irrespective of their health. At the camp examinations, they would later be found physically unsuitable for army life, discharged and sent back. Although this created an added financial and administrative burden on DNEAS and its personnel, the rushed recruiting of later years did not stop. However, in most cases, if soldiers were found to be of low medical fitness, efforts were made to better them. They were entitled to free medical and dental treatment. Dentures, as previously discussed, were central to nourishment and where dentures were required, CC/IMC soldiers had to pay for them but at half the rate of White recruits. Additionally, soldiers were also entitled to a set quota of rations (same as White recruits) while Muslim recruits received rations in compliance with their religious practices unless they opted for the 'European' ration. At the discretion of the OC, 'light wine' was also issued (contrarily, White recruits had alcohol allotments).[238] While soldiers could purchase their own alcohol trhough canteens, the sale of alcohol, at least in the Union camps, was heavily regulated – likely a result of the non-White recruits' perceived tendency for alcoholism and misbehaviour. Thus, while non-White men, in theory, were part of the same military institution and subject to the same norms and assistances, the ingrained prejudice of the institution and those dictating its functioning created a nuanced experience of non-White soldiering.

[237] DOD. UWH, Box 89, 51/3, DNEAS to Prime Minister on Regulations, 10 January 1941.
[238] *Ibid*. Other 'army benefits' included concessions on tickets for soldiers travelling for leave, and special travel arrangements for those who were discharged for being unfit (as a result of illness or injury while on duty). Public funds were also used for funerals for soldiers who died on duty.

3.2. Camp Life

At the Receiving Depots, soldiers received basic training of ten days to two weeks duration and were then transferred to the main training camps for advanced instruction. The CC training camps were located at Kimberley and Ladysmith, and the IMC camps were located at Johannesburg and Natal. Accommodations were provided by the army and where there was no availability, soldiers were paid two shillings a day to arrange their own lodgings. The training camps were usually on the outskirts of cities and towns to reduce the mingling of soldiers and civilians and, also, for space.

As elaborated previously, during the early days of enlistment, there were negative rumours about the state of camps and treatment of non-White soldiers, especially Indian soldiers. To counter the negative impact of such news, DNEAS, through its intermediaries, encouraged the publication of pieces that presented camp life positively. Bandsman G. Meyer, who had been on leave in Cape Town informed his friend (who in turn announced in *The Cape Standard*) that camp life was like a picnic and that the rumours should not deter anyone from enlisting. 'The food we receive is excellent, and in between drilling we have ample resting periods.' He added that they started their day with coffee in bed.[239] Meyer and/or his writer friend were certainly exaggerating their description of camp life. Perhaps they felt enthusiastically dutiful about countering the rumours, or perhaps they wanted to encourage undecided volunteers. Regardless, this was the first piece of information published in *The Cape Standard* about camp life until the anonymous soldier's article. His description of a typical day:

> During the training we were up at 5.30 am, had P.T. [physical training] at 6 am, to keep us in trim for the day. 6.30 am coffee, and at 7 am breakfast, which consisted of coffee, porridge, bread, jam and butter. After breakfast we had quite a lengthy rest until we were called by the bugle to fall in for a day's strenuous but happy and enjoyable drill. Although the drill was strenuous, we had many breaks, so as to enable us to get new vigour for the next 45 minutes. At 10.30 am we had a long break for tea and rusks. At 11 am drill

[239] UCTSC. 'Camp Life', *The Cape Standard*, 17 September 1940.

> continued until we ceased for lunch and a good one at that! After the afternoon spell and supper we were allowed to proceed to town […] The next day the same routine was carried out […] it became quite boring afterwards, although it was very interesting.[240]

The writer states that he was in the camp for two weeks in total. Considering his account does not include details of specialised courses, this 'camp' was probably a Receiving Depot. There is of course a glaring contradiction between the account of the anonymous writer and that of Meyer – the writer and his fellowmen did not have coffee in bed. However, he too portrays the camp positively. His description of the regimental routine, the relentless repetition and the exertion it required, was something he and his comrades were unused to. As the writer explained 'We no longer belong to ourselves, but to our superiors.'[241] Despite the novelty of the experience, he believed that it was in the Coloured man's blood to be a soldier 'no matter if he has never drilled in his life or marched, but if he hears a military band, as if by nature, he braces up and marches along'.[242]

The anonymous soldier's description spotlights the three main aspects of military life: food, commanders, routine. By focusing on these three aspects, the soldier was detaching his army life from his civilian one, and yet he was also musing on a sense of generational continuity of military service. Whether disagreeable or novel, these three key points were at the crux of soldiering. Corporal Pillay, who had recently arrived in an IMC training camp, provided a description in a similar vein:

> I have been struck by the kind treatment of the men by the officers and senior NCOs […] The food is good, and we are served in messes which are provided with tables and benches. There are also proper washing and facilities and clothes lines. We have hot and cold water baths. In the afternoons the men play various games […] Although our camp is far from the town we are enjoying every minute of our stay.[243]

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[240] UCTSC. 'The Experiences of a Cape Corps Soldier', *The Cape Standard*, 24 December 1940.
[241] *Ibid.*
[242] *Ibid.*
[243] UCTSC. 'Camp Life Praised', *The Cape Standard*, 22 July 1941.

Pillay's additional focus on recreation suggests his relief from the break in the drill routine and perhaps even enjoyment in regularly playing sports, opportunities for which would have been limited in civil life. A 'W. Brown' and 'D. George' who visited a CC camp also wrote to the *Standard* that the camp was well-managed, and the 'rumours' were not true.[244] Another anonymous soldier from Natal wrote:

> We have a fine life in the Army; one gets up at 5.30 in the morning, and inhales the pure, fresh, bracing open air; off to training field, where we work for about six hours a day. Tea at 10.30, lunch at 12.30, lectures and physical, culture and sports from 2 to 3.30; tea again at 4, and then we are off for the remainder of the day.[245]

The 'rumours' are at the centre of each of these descriptions. Although aimed at combating negative perceptions, these letters to *The Cape Standard* were not fabricated and it would be unreasonable to argue that they did not, at least partially, represent the experience of their writers. While the early enlistees of the erstwhile Indian Service Corps certainly had valid grievances, by and large it seems that the situation was improved or had at least become acceptable. Nevertheless, the experience of training camps was novel and perhaps attractive, so much so that enlistees felt enthused to share their stories with the larger community.

3.3. Training

Depending on the unit that the soldier had enlisted in (and that the type of work they had been assigned), their training commenced. All soldiers, regardless of units, had daily drill and physical training. Additionally, those assigned specific roles received training in engineering, first-aid, cooking etc. Soldiers in the MT units received instruction in convoy driving, which, as many of them learned, was very different from driving in a city. However, the most liked aspect of training was arguably the instruction in musketry. Colonel Hoy, in the early days of CC's formation, was of the opinion that all soldiers had to be given training in musketry

[244] UCTSC. 'Cape Corp Camps', *The Cape Standard*, 3 June 1941.
[245] UCTSC. 'He Likes Camp Life!', *The Cape Standard*, 16 September 1941.

(selected battalions also received training in the Bren Gun) 'if the men are to defend their convoys'. The colonel expected CC men to be armed outside the Union as it was irrational to station unarmed men in convoy trucks that passed through treacherous regions and were vital for maintaining supply lines for the front.[246] Initially IMC recruits were not authorised to train with rifles, however this was swiftly corrected.

Musketry training was a favourite of CC/IMC recruits. Although they were not issued rifles, each training camp was issued a set of rifles (to be kept away from soldiers when not in use) and had a shooting range. Soldiers took turns to learn how to use the weapons and smaller detachments among them received training in 'intensive musketry' (i.e. volley fire).[247] Several inspection reports of units of both corps highlighted keenness of the men to learn shooting. The anonymous writer reinforces this: 'The musketry training added to our joy; we men, after a day's training with a rifle, could almost stand alongside any European who was on full-time service.'[248] Interestingly, this particular line by the writer became a cause for contention in the parliament. D. F. Malan and J. G. Strydom of the Nationalist Party, quoting the line, put forward a no-confidence motion against Smuts, stating that 'nothing had ever happened which helped to undermine the authority of Europeans in South Africa more'.[249] The motion failed but the incident is reflective of the caution that the government and the DNEAS had to observe when it concerned the armament of non-White troops. The incident would have also added to the myth of the better and 'almost' equal, treatment of non-White South African troops.

Besides musketry, soldiers also received drill training (gas mask drilling, 'compliments and saluting', instruction in discipline, visual training and elementary judging of distances),

[246] DOD. UWH, Box 89, 51/1, Hoy to Military Secretary, 9 June 1940.
[247] DOD. CGS, Box 635, 1019/45, Weekly Progress Report, multiple files.
[248] UCTSC. 'The Experiences of a Cape Corps Soldier', *The Cape Standard*, 24 December 1940.
[249] UCTSC. 'Malanites Criticise Non-European Recruiting', *The Cape Standard*, 11 February 1941.

lectures, and general instruction in hygiene (personal). In particular, lectures on the war were meant to explain to soldiers why they were fighting, who the enemy was, and informed on:

> the functions of the Sapper and Engineers in the modern Army, on the Artillery, on the activities of the Army in general, of the Navy and Air Arm, and finally in the achievements of the South African Forces.

To this end, the task was given to officers who could speak 'simple but imaginative Afrikaans' and who had preferably been deployed on the front.[250] Other lectures included instruction (and practical lessons) on formations, concealment and camouflage, fieldcraft, lines of advance, stalk and scout training. The advanced instruction courses included convoy driving, construction, blacksmiths, engineering works, first aid, cooking courses, printing, veterinary training, signals, mine detection, administration etc. For each training, specialised schools were set up. For example, for driving, mines near Ladysmith were used to mimic the rough terrain of the front. The training period of each course varied, from five weeks to over ten, depending on the course and where the recruits were being deployed (shorter periods for those deployed in the Union). Additionally, as is the case with militaries in war, the experience of instruction for each batch of recruits also varied. This was most prominent in the capabilities of trained soldiers. Some groups were able to quickly adapt to fieldwork while others were found lacking in knowledge and training. A 1942 report on non-White MT drivers attached to a White division noted:

> The Cape Coloured personnel […] were better [compared to a stationed unit of NMC drivers] but still poorly trained on joining. Most could drive a vehicle but few drove well by military standards and almost all lacked any general military training. Little training was possible before operations commenced.[251]

[250] DOD. CGS, Box 635, 1019/45/0, 'Lectures on the War', 14 January 1942.
[251] *Op. cit.*, Box 130, 32/15, Dilution 'Q' Services, 2 January 1942.

Inevitably, such reports would lead to lengthy correspondences between units and the DNEAS, usually the non-DNEAS units complained of having to re-train soldiers while the DNEAS insisted that only officers approved by them be given the responsibility as they had training in managing 'non-Europeans'. A particularly nonsensical case was that of an MT unit of IMC. In the early days of recruitment and training, the IMC camp at Natal *did not have* convoy trucks to train its drivers with. Instead four 'old cars' were provided by the Natal Indian Association to the camp. The absurdity of training convoy drivers in four old cars does not need to be emphasised. Despite the lack of infrastructure, these poorly trained soldiers were deployed on their first assignment to Broken Hill 'as a result of efforts made to push forward training'. [252] In another instance, an officer inspecting a CC MT camp at Kimberley noted that while there were convoy trucks, there was no mobile repair unit. As a result of this, if a truck were to get a puncture it would be out of commission as there were no tools to repair it with.[253]

More positive examples of training can also be found in the records. In a report on the IMC Ladysmith camp, the inspecting officer recorded multiple instances of ingenuity by the IMC sappers who were learning 'on-the-go'. This unit of men had upgraded the rudimentary power grid system to provide electricity for the whole camp. They had also fixed the plumbing, the problem of insulation of live wires, built their own steel bunkers, and had a recycling heap from which they made 'comforts' for themselves such as tea-boxes, a variety of cans, mugs, soup ladles, water bottles, petrol funnels, guttering and chimneys for field kitchens.[254] Moreover, the men training in public health and camp hygiene were receiving instruction in a customised and updated course that had been 'recognised by public health authorities as being the most modern throughout the entire Union.'[255] Not to be left behind, the cooking school in

[252] DOD. UWH, Box 168, NAREP UNFO:23, Historical Record Indian and Malay Corps, p.1
[253] DOD. CGS, Box 635, 1019/45, Report on Units and Requirements at Kimberley, 2 September 1940, p.4
[254] DOD, UWH 297, 138, Indian and Malay Corps, pp.2-5
[255] *Ibid.*

this camp produced fully trained chefs who could not only prepare a complete meal from 'soups to sweets' but could also build an oven from limited materials, and had instruction in nutrition.[256]

Figure 6: SA Official Photos (L) 1474, MT driving class. (R) 1485, class on camp hygiene. NMMH

Military training of South African non-White units, ironically, was not a systematised, uniform experience. Poor infrastructure, political interference, quality of officers, needs of the front – all impacted the level of training a CC/IMC recruit received. If the front was in more immediate requirement for manpower, training was accelerated. If there was a lack of infrastructure, officers did what they could to teach with what was available. The officers' own dedication depended on their interest in teaching, on the pressure by higher ranks to ensure quality instruction, and the resources and time available to them. Much also depended on the skills of the recruit. If a soldier had a foundational skillset, not only was he more likely to cope, but his group would also likely benefit from peer-learning. Additionally, if a unit was not trained properly before being deployed, it would have impacted not only their performance in the field but would have mentally stressed soldiers and depressed their confidence. Despite the varying conditions and challenges that soldiers faced during their training, a majority of inspection reports highlighted 'the exceptional keenness of men, the extraordinary pride in their unit and

[256] *Ibid.*

a real desire for hard work.'[257] It can thus be concluded that it was not the formal training of the military structure, which was insufficient in the best of times, that made the recruit into a soldier, but the recruit's own enthusiasm and diligence that enabled the transformation.

4. Segregating the Ranks

Underlying fluctuating experiences of training was the common thread of segregation and, to a lesser degree, infantilization. For example, Emergency Regulation 34 stipulated that all White soldiers, regardless of rank, out-ranked all non-White soldiers in the UDF. Non-White NCOs only had authority over non-White soldiers within NEAS. Essentially, a White private not only out-ranked a non-White Staff Sergeant, he was also by default 'in-charge' in an emergency. In a meeting between then Secretary of Defence, Brigadier C. H. Blaine, and representatives of various labour unions of Cape Town, the degraded position of non-White NCOs was raised by Miss J. Fourie, then Secretary of the National Union of Distributive Workers. The Brigadier responded that 'Would the position not solve itself in an emergency. It always happens that the one man who is a born leader comes out.'[258] Despite being a military man himself, the Brigadier showed little regard for the earned rank of non-White NCOs, treating their position as a temporary fixture of the war, one that was expendable.

Furthermore, commissioned officers and White NCOs *de facto* attached to the DNEAS were, *de jure*, part of the UDF's General Service Corps. This was done to avoid applying DNEAS' regulations on White pensions (that were applicable on the pensions of all non-White ranks). Thus, a White NCO and a non-White NCO of the same rank in the DNEAS had different pay-scales and pensions for the same job and, the value (and, by implication, quality) of the non-White NCO's service was less than that of his White counter-part.[259] In January 1941, a

[257] DOD. CGS, Box 635, 1019/45, Weekly Progress Report, multiple files.
[258] *Op. cit.*, Box 130, 32/14, Memorandum of meeting held on 30 June 1942, p.4
[259] *Op. cit.*, 32/6, Posting of Personnel to General Service Corps, 15 January 1941.

progress report of DNEAS produced for the Adjutant-General highlighted the lack of White officers in CC/IMC units. Non-White NCOs were not considered for filling this gap. It was also established that not all White officers could serve with the NEAS. Only those who 'understood' the non-White man or had previously served with them could be stationed. The OC of an IMC company described his criteria for promotion of White NCOs to commissioned ranks:

> When I was given command of this Regiment I decided that all my Officers with the exception of a few senior experienced Officers should join up as Staff Sergeants, and I would test them out before giving them Commissions […] the importance of such a step in a coloured regiment, as it would be fatal to have Officers who suffered from a "Colour-complex" as they would not be sympathetic to the coloured man.[260]

Thus, prejudice was a given. Not only were non-White men considered incapable of leading their own units, they were also infantilised and permanently boxed in the position of subordinate. Compared to the 'Springbok' soldiers who were 'inclined to think of themselves as good as their officers'[261], the non-White South African soldier was instead seen as 'less' than the Springbok in every manner – incapable of commanding, bearing responsibility, and essentially not qualified for being a 'Springbok' at all.

Still, these men were civilians who had been taken in by a larger-than-life machinery that had drilled, trained and churned out 'men'. They were presented as 'more', better in every way – skilled, with polished personalities and an honourable purpose. Lieutenant Dickerson, the IMC Recruiting Officer, recalled:

> A few weeks ago I had to make up my mind whether a certain man who appeared down and out should be accepted. Then at the [training] camp I met the same man. A transformation had taken place […] the work being done up North is not only producing good soldiers, but also good citizens.[262]

[260] *Op. cit.*, To Stubbs, 21 November 1940.
[261] Tylden, *Armed Forces in South Africa*, p.30
[262] UCTSC. 'Sound Training of the Non-European Soldier, *The Cape Standard*, 15 April 1941.

The following image, taken at a Ladysmith Receiving Depot by an official UDF photographer, perfectly captures this 'bettering'. In the foreground are uniformed, equipped soldiers marching in unison led by their White officer; in the background, an uneven line-up of newly arrived recruits in their civilian clothes with their backs to the camera. The parade, now comprising of soldiers, leaves behind the civilian life, and marches 'forward'. The caption reads:

> When they joined up, many did not know their left foot from the right, now they leave for the training camp at Ladysmith loaded with kit. In two short weeks their backs have been straightened and taught to march like men

Figure 7: SA Official Photo 1448. NMMH

Conclusion

Beyond the politics and propaganda for participation were the realities of recruitment. The needs of war and the political confusion surrounding non-White participation and administration led to a less than smooth formation and organisation of these units. Once more, it was with non-White civilian and veteran support that the mammoth project of enlistment was systematised. Still, within the system there was much disappointment with the benefits being offered and it was only through repeated intervention by civilian leaders that non-White volunteers were give improved, if not satisfactory, compensations. The support from non-White civilians on the domestic front and in welfare associations was also central to providing volunteers and their dependents financial and social security. Thus, civilian contribution was

central to the experience of soldiering for non-White recruits. Without communal support, it is unlikely that UDF would have been able to encourage enough young men to volunteer their services.

The institution is usually credited for the conversion of the recruit into the soldier. However, as this chapter has demonstrated, non-White volunteers were given insufficient training and infrastructural lapses in the system meant that both, soldiers and their officers, did what they could do with the little time and resources they had. Despite their diligence and enthusiasm, non-White soldiers did not receive due credit for their efforts. Moreover, while they were recognised as 'bettered' military men, they were still treated as racially-inferior, infantilised subordinates. They were trained, qualified and yet limited in exercising their skills. Ultimately, it was the non-White ranks' own self-belief in their capacity and talent for soldiering that attained them the identity of a 'soldier'. As the next chapters will demonstrate, this self-belief was central to their performance in the war.

CHAPTER 3

At War: Serving in East Africa

In 1995, Charles George Adams, a CC veteran of World War II, gave an interview to Christopher Somerville, a British journalist and travel writer. While narrating his experience in El Alamein, Sommerville asked Adams as to how he felt about not being able to participate in the 'action'. Adams responded:

> I was a young man. I would have like to go up in the main push…I would have rather liked to be in the infantry, I think I would have been more happy […] I wasn't a combatant because, when South Africa declared war, again this *Ossewabrandwag* business came in. They didn't want us armed. But when we got to East Africa we were [armed] […] They once said in the [news]paper that Smuts is training the Coloured people to kill White people. So to keep the peace in South Africa, to keep the White people happy. That's it. They didn't keep us happy. We had been a regiment since 1793.[263]

Adams joined the UDF as a private in the first cycle of recruitment and rose to the rank of sergeant during the war. He served in East Africa and North Africa campaigns and in 1943 became an instructor. His reflections on armed service, although fifty years on, parallel enlistment motivations elaborated upon in the previous chapter. Like Mopeli-Paulus[264], Adams explained that being a soldier was part of being a 'young man' – he implied that participation in war, participation as a soldier and a protector, is intuitive in 'young men', and is constituent of their masculinity. It can also be implied that this 'instinct' negates any need for a rationale for participation in war, i.e. he is a man, so he fights. Moreover, by spotlighting the politics

[263] IWM. 18404, Reel 1.

[264] *See* p.91

preventing non-White men from fully exercising their masculinity (as combatants), Adams shows that not only were non-White soldiers adept (and not inferior soldiers that needed protection, proven by their long military legacy), they also had the confidence of the White commanding ranks. However, Adams' reflection also alludes to an underlying dissatisfaction with non-combatant work and the value of such work vis-à-vis the fighting soldier.

This chapter explores the history of CC/IMC's service in East Africa and argues that the implementation of irrational racial policies in an active state of war is seldom as neat on the ground as it is in directives. Although disappointment at being barred from combatant service was vehemently felt by CC/IMC soldiers, even within the limits set by the Union government, as this chapter will argue, these men did commendable work, rising beyond the anonymity imposed on auxiliary units. The chaos of war enabled the soldiers and officers alike to bend the Union's race-based regulations where it was practicable. This, of course, does not imply that segregation was 'less' in the armed forces – contrarily, the purpose is to circumvent the 'official' filter and reconstruct the non-White soldier's war as they experienced it. The subaltern view of this usually side-lined campaign also demonstrates the crucial role of military labour in warfare and the impact of 'formalising' this labour within armed forces.

The geographic spread of the East African campaign was, broadly, over modern-day South Sudan, Northern Kenya, Ethiopia, Eritrea, and Somalia with the base(s) of the Allied forces in Kenya. In 1939, the Allied position in Kenya was precarious at best. The policy of non-provocation had meant that there was a stark paucity of information on Italian troops and defences in Italian Somaliland and Abyssinia.[265] The fall and occupation of France (1940) very suddenly turned the tide against the British in Africa.[266] British West Africa consequently was

[265] Orpen, N. (1968) *Hyper-War,* Prunell. p.14

[266] *See* Stuart, A. (2016) *The First Victory: The Second World War and the East Africa Campaign*. Yale University Press

surrounded by Vichy enemy forces and needed to withdraw its troops from East Africa. Furthermore, control of the East Africa coast was crucial to protecting the Suez supply lines. However, at the beginning of the campaign, the Allied forces simply did not have any military manpower and infrastructure in the region and the entire operation had to be dramatically and speedily scaled.[267] Most of the troops for this campaign came first from West Africa, and were subsequently replaced by soldiers from South Africa and British East Africa. The 1st African Division (later the 11th East African Division) comprised of the 1st East African Brigade and the Nigerian Brigade. The 2nd African Division (later the 12th East African Division) comprised of the 2nd East African Brigade, the Gold Coast Brigade, and the 1st S.A. Infantry Brigade Group. Additionally, UDF also provided for an additional third brigade and air support, administration, engineering, medical and supply services.[268] After the Italian aggression in British Somaliland began (August 1940), the Indian Army (4th and 5th Infantry Division at the Battle of Keren, 1941) also reinforced the region.[269]

This chapter reconstructs the experience of CC/IMC units in, arguably, NEAS' most prominent engagement in the war. NEAS provided the highest number of rank-and-file (9,570 in total) among all South African units for the campaign and gave non-White soldiers their first taste of

[267] Jackson, *The British Empire and the Second World War*, p.173
[268] *Ibid.*
[269] Some literature on the East African Front: Lawler, N. (2002). *Soldiers, Airmen, Spies, and Whisperers: The Gold Coast in World War II*. Ohio University Press.; Kerslake, R. T. (1997). *Time and the Hour: Nigeria, East Africa, and the Second World War*. Radcliffe Press.; Crosskill, W. E. (1980). *The Two Thousand Mile War*. Robert Hale & Company.; Klehynnas, E. (2018). 'The 'apostles of terror': South Africa, the East African Campaign, and the Battle of El Wak'. *Historia*.; Stuart, A. (2020). ''The despicable fighting qualities of the Wops': The East African campaign and the British Commonwealth's victory over Fascist Italy'. In Aterrano & Varley. (Eds.) *A Fascist Decade of War*. Routledge.; Liebenberg, E. (2016). 'The Springboks in East Africa: The Role of 1 SA survey company (SAEC) in the East African Campaign of World War II, 1940-1941'. *Scientia Militaria*.; Page, M. (1998) *A History of the King's African Rifled and East African Forces*. Leo Cooper Ltd.; Sutherland, J. & Canwell, D. (2009) *Air War in East Africa 1940-1941*. Casemate Publishers.; Shiroya, O. J. E. (1985). *Kenya and World War Two: African Soldiers in the European War.* Kenya Literature Bureau.; Hingston, W. G. (1942). *The Tiger Kills: The Story of the Indian Divisions in the East African Campaign*. Calcutta: Directorate of Public Relations.

war.[270] Although, the 'high politics' of South Africa intended to demean the non-White man's right to armed service, within the barriers set by the Union, CC/IMC soldiers performed vital support tasks – contributions recognized by their senior officers but historically forgotten. Soldiers worked as pioneers and in motor transport units primarily, but also picked up skills such as mine-clearing. Their unique placement in the DNEAS, as military labour units and as non-White soldiers provides for interesting juxtapositions on race, military labour and military hierarchies. At the end of a critical reconstruction of this history, a section is dedicated to examining this intersection. This is the first of two chapters that, for the first time, chronicle the service of CC/IMC ranks.

1. From Cape to Kenya

War was already well under-way and shortages mounting when recruitment for CC/IMC units began in July 1940. The Abyssinian campaign against the Italian forces was in full swing and the 1st South African Division had been deployed as part of the push from Kenya. Consequently, owing to the exigencies of the front, training for the NEAS MT units was conducted at an exponentially accelerated pace and was often inadequate. In unit reports, officers frequently revealed the deficiencies in the system. In the report of one of the first deployed CC MT company, an officer admitted that the lack of drivers on the front allowed for 'very little training'.[271] The officer of an IMC company that was deployed at the same time confessed to the lack of driving experience among the men but that they 'carried on gamely'.[272] The unit report for the 107 SARMT IMC company elaborated that no more than a 'dozen' of the fifty recruits had driven a motor vehicle before. In fact, most of the men had been dock-labourers and factory workers in their civilian lives.

[270] Orpen, *Hyper-War*, p.222
[271] DOD. UWH, Box 120, History of 129 RES MT CC, p.1
[272] *Op. cit.*, History of 109 SARMT company (IMC), p.1

Despite this obvious lack of skill and experience, more than two-thirds of the batch was cleared as 'good' after only 4 to 5 hours of instruction on driving in total.[273] This state of affairs remained throughout the war. In November 1941, K Company of 130 CC SARMT was trained for only three weeks before being deployed. The officer commented that 'even at the early stages we were given examples of the Coloured man's striking qualities, his powers of endurance and unfailing sense of humour under the worst circumstances.'[274] Praise from officers-in-charge of MT companies was neither infrequent nor unfounded. The challenges in the system were obvious to officers and recruits alike, however these did not hinder the MT companies from performing.

Following a short crash-course on convoy-driving, companies of men were transferred to Broken Hill (modern day Kabwe, Zimbabwe) by train. The journey took four days. On arrival the men were immediately put to work in preparation for the journey ahead. With no rest, the convoys were loaded with supplies and arms for the front and set off in sections for East Africa. The size of a convoy could be anywhere between 150 to 250 vehicles, covering a distance between 1500 to 3200 miles (depending on the destination) over a period of two to three weeks. The route from Broken Hill was through Northern Rhodesia (Zambia), across the lake districts and through the 'muddy plains' of Tanganyika (Tanzania) and Kenya. This was one of the most crucial supply lines in the continent via which 13,000 SA-manufactured military vehicles were transported to the conflict in the North.[275] The quality of roads on this route was poor and sections of Northern Rhodesia and Tanganyika were particularly rough. Conditions would further deteriorate in bad weather, particularly during heavy rains. Still, most reports on the journeys undertaken by the convoys inform favourably in terms of number of accidents, health of troops, conduct of troops, and maintaining schedule. It can, therefore, be inferred that drivers

[273] DOD, UWH, Box 125, 7 IMC MT Company, p.1
[274] DOD. UWH, Box 120, A Summary of 'K' Company 130 SARMT CC, p.273
[275] Jackson, *The British Empire and the Second World War*, p.176

learned MT work 'on the go'. One anonymous CC soldier recalled his first trip 'up North' for *The Cape Standard*:

> We left that morning early by truck across what I termed the roughest road in existence, but I was mistaken because there was more for me. Let me confess here that I had never driven a truck in all my life but for one lesson. That morning I was given a truck to take the kit down to the parking area, where we embark on our trucks. I assure you, reader, that I was that nervous that I shook like a jellyfish. Nevertheless, I succeeded. To add to my consternation, I was given a truck to drive up to [censored]. With the exception of one mishap caused through carelessness, I came through all right. To-day I stand equal to any experienced driver.
>
> The road, as I have said, was damned bad at times. We were shaken a lot that we didn't know where our stomachs were. Nevertheless, it was most interesting: the vegetation differed somewhat from ours. Whereas we were used to quick-grass and weeds, this place was overrun with tall grass sometimes reaching the height about eight feet. Bird life was abundant and varied, from small sky-blue-hued birds to ostriches.[276] [sic]

The soldier's recollection of his first journey as a convoy driver in the army presents several points of observation. Most obviously, the soldier's concern and anxiety over having to perform a task he did not believe he had the capacity for – yet his superiors, who were well aware of the lack of training, not only assigned him the task, they most likely saw him as the 'best bet' to successfully perform it. That a soldier with only a few hours of training and instruction was deemed somewhat capable of managing the transport is reflective of the 'make-do' spirit of the corps. Secondly, the soldier's description of the landscape, vegetation and exploration during the journey (and the substantial word-count he allocated to the description in his article) illustrates the sense of adventure that these men would have felt, a majority of whom had never left South Africa. That he chose to share such observations in the newspaper also intimates towards the fulfilment of the promised adventure. The army was at least delivering on one of its propaganda assurance. Finally, by labelling his driving mishap as a result of his own 'carelessness' (as opposed to other factors such as lack of training, a challenging terrain and having to drive a vehicle that was hard to manoeuvre), the soldier also displayed a sense of

[276] UCTSC. 'The Experiences of a Cape Corps Soldier', *The Cape Standard*, 31 December 1940.

responsibility in his duties and a sense of pride. The narrative he presents is one of him overcoming hardships against all odds.

A more astounding example was of a driver who drove his truck through 600 miles of perilous road without knowing how to reverse. It was only when he finally needed to reverse the truck that he appealed to the officer to 'show him where the reverse gear was'.[277] The driver reportedly completed his journey to Nairobi without accidents. Although this seems an extreme case of unschooled driving, it was by no means an anomaly. Despite institutional failure in properly training these men, that they felt responsible for any mishaps and, arguably, were motivated to 'prove' themselves, evidences the pressure they felt as 'non-White' soldiers. That is, the non-White rank had to perform well despite institutional neglect so as to be recognised as a worthwhile soldier. This is perhaps most obviously observed in the pressure put on White NEAS officers to get their units to deliver.

A lengthy and instrumental report on this first journey was compiled by Captain Wallace of 'B' company of the then Indian Service Corps (later 102 SARMT IMC). The captain's report informs that on the dawn of the convoy's first departure, 21 'instructors' (6 officers, 3 White NCOs, and 12 non-White experienced drivers) 'assembled in trepidation to "put the boys on the road".'[278] It should be noted that between 250 'drivers', there were only 21 instructors. Additional unit reports indicate that this was not the exception but the norm. More absurdly, none of the White officers had any knowledge of mechanics or MT. In fact, the OC of the company had never driven a vehicle. There was only one White NCO with technical knowledge, but he had been issued no equipment for repairs. Wallace continued:

> Captain Hutcheson led the venture in a Sedan, the next truck followed in a reasonable order. Then there was a slight mishap. The driver of the second truck forgot himself, speeded across the road, couldn't make a bush inconveniently situated beyond and came

[277] DOD. UWH, Box 125, 7 IMC MT Company, p.1
[278] DOD. UWH, Box 158, History of 'B' Company Indian Services, p.8

> to a standstill. An appointed assistant went to the rescue, backed the truck out of the bush into the road, showed the driver the right direction, encouraged him to be calm and bid him goodbye and meant it. No blame can be attached to the drivers. The only road they know was an undefined circular one of some 100 yards circumference across rough veld with a margin error of at least one mile at each point of the compass should anything untoward happen. And here they were all lined up and dressed from the right facing a perfectly straight and narrow road and scattered bush beyond. A slight error of judgement was excusable in the circumstance notwithstanding the convoy made a dignified if not skilful departure. They consoled themselves in superstition of number thirteen and said all would be well tomorrow.[279]

Wallace reported that '10%' of the convoy had accidents in the first twenty-four hours, although the situation did subsequently improve. The tone of his report, however, is defensive. Due to the initial difficulties the company acquired a reputation for accidents – one that Wallace was plainly attempting to challenge and 'correct' through his report. As a result, his is the most detailed account on this expedition. Additionally, it can also be inferred from Wallace's lengthy exposition that, despite the obstacles, the authorities above did not employ interventions and instead expected a level of performance from these units. He further recounted that the convoys had to be constantly patrolled to ensure the men were driving correctly. The most common faults included speeding, driving on flat tires, in the wrong gear or with the hand-brake on. Additionally, picquets were placed alongside slopes to prevent drivers from 'racing down to death'. With more difficult turns, each truck was stopped, instruction given to the driver and with 'encouragement and caution', the driver would be sent on his way. 'For the men the days were long and exhausting and for many of them terrifying as they certainly were for the officers.'[280]

Wallace's report underscores the dangerous nature of this first assignment of the CC/IMC MT units. Ill-trained, ill-equipped, in treacherous conditions, these men drove with the constant mental toll of the menace of road accidents, some of which, as Wallace points, could certainly

[279] *Op. cit.*, p.8
[280] *Op. cit.*, p.10

be fatal. It can be argued that the institution's lack of support worsened this situation. Instead of acknowledging and accommodating for these shortcomings, UDF re-directed responsibility on the unit, the officer and, indeed, the driver for their 'failure' to perform well. The physical toll of the journey was also significant. One report informs of twenty men contracting malaria as a result of the 'cold'.[281] An IMC report mentions two accidents that were caused by drivers falling asleep on the wheel (the trucks in question randomly went 'off-road'). Following this, their OC halted the convoy every hour for five minutes.[282]

Additionally, although Wallace's company seemed to have had a decent cadre of officers and 'assistants' (Hutcheson himself had served in the British Indian army for nineteen years), this was not always the case. Captain Knoetze, in his survey of NEAS, noted that the selection of officers for NEAS was 'not discriminating' as, from the outset, the directorate absorbed:

> redundant officers and ENCOs [White NCOs] from other Corps. Many such men were not suitable to lead Non-Europeans, mainly because they were not interested and had no faith in them and seldom really tried to understand and appreciate the mentality of the men they were called upon to lead.[283]

Similar criticism was levelled in a CC unit report wherein the author stated that 'sufficient consideration' was not given in the appointment of the transport and administrative officers. As a result, the burden of these tasks fell on officers who were not 'specifically trained or qualified'.[284] Thus, it is reasonable to conclude that not all units had similar experiences of their first East Africa run. The cadre of officers, the capabilities of soldiers, weather and road conditions would have affected the duration and success of the journeys. It can also be inferred that, although the experience of each unit varied, the men would have uniformly and routinely

[281] DOD. UWH, Box 120, History of 129 RES MT CC, p.2
[282] DOD. WD, Box 265, A2, 4th Indian Corps Dec 1940, OC 4th Indian MT to DDNEAS, 2 December 1940 p.2
[283] DOD. UWH, Box 158, Historical Survey of NEAS, p.2
[284] DOD. UWH, Box 120, History of 129 RES MT CC, p.1

engaged in forms of 'peer learning' – sharing their knowledge and experience of the day with one another and bridging the gap in their training created by the small number of instructors.

Despite the listed handicaps, CC/IMC companies generally had a reputation for not only successfully completing the run from Cape to Kenya, they were also able to maintain the supply schedules with only a small number of vehicles needing repairs at the end of the run.[285] 147 of the 150 vehicles in Wallace's convoy successfully completed the journey, the deficit 3 were in need of repairs – this, he pointed, was sufficient proof of the company's efficiency. While concluding, Wallace echoed sentiments similar to the anonymous soldier-author of *CS* article who stated that 'The first hurdle had been successfully surmounted. The men had received an invaluable training in MT work and the company as a whole had benefited in all directions from the experience.'[286]

Wallace's positive spin on the arduous experience examples the view of non-White ranks within UDF. Had the units not performed well and had had higher accident rates, it is likely that blame would have been placed on the incompetence of 'non-White' soldiers and not on the institution's obvious failures. Just as previous mutinies by non-White troops had been pegged on the poor 'character' of Coloured troops[287], CC/IMC drivers would have suffered a similar reputation for an inherent lack of competence. Additionally, this infantilization could not be altered by their performance either. The success of the Cape to Kenya runs was not credited to the rank-and-file's work ethic but was instead, as Wallace did, reduced to a 'learning experience'. Thus, the gains on the ground rarely materialised into professional advancements. If anything, as subsequent sections demonstrate, CC/IMC units continued to suffer from both, prejudiced expectations and institutional neglect.

[285] DOD. UWH, Box 158, Historical Survey of NEAS, p.2
[286] *Op. cit.*, History of 'B' Company Indian Services, p.11
[287] *See* Chapter 1, Section 2.

2. *'I imagined I was in a Spitfire'*: Supplying the Front

On arrival in Nairobi, the convoys were usually stationed at various staging camps outside the city before being re-located to assigned base camps. Usually, the men were given a short 'rest' period. The 'rest' simply meant that the soldiers were not required to drive and instead carried out other activities such as loading/unloading the trucks, repair of vehicles, setting camp and, if possible, receiving additional training in driving and instructions on what to expect on the East Africa supply lines. At the Nairobi camps, the units would be assigned to work on one of four major supply lines: (i) the advance on Lake Rudolf (Lake Turkana, Kenya), (ii) the Nairobi to Wajir line (some routes went as far as Mouth Marsabit via the Chalbi desert in Kenya) and, with the success of the advance, (iii) Wajir to Mogadishu (Somalia) and, (iv) Wajir to Addis Abba and Jijiga (via Mega) into Abyssinia. Units also operated on supply lines in (South) Sudan, mainly on the Nairobi to Juba route. They also worked alongside SAEC and KAR to further the advance in Kenya's Rift Valley.[288] As the campaign progressed, a majority of the CC/IMC units were gradually deployed in Abyssinia and some also served in Eritrea.[289]

The severe lack of infrastructure in East Africa continued to impede progress of the Allied campaign. Most of the roads, camps and defences were erected on virgin lands. The climate itself was very unforgiving. The Kenyan 'highlands' were tropical, littered with high peaks, with convoys having to drive at heights of 8,000 feet in cold weather.[290] As the advance progressed, the landscape changed into 'nothing but sand and hard scrub, heat and insects'. The 'lowlands' of the desert were rocky with limestone deposits. On the route to the Great Rift were lava belts that were almost impossible to cut through. 'There was little relief from the burning

[288] DOD. UWH, Box 158, History of 'B' Company Indian Services, p.16

[289] *Op. cit.*, Historical Survey of NEAS. Several unit reports and documents have been used to reconstruct the routes on which the convoys operated.

[290] Mt Kenya at 17,000 ft, Kilimanjaro at 19,000 ft

heat which seldom dropped below 100°F in scanty shade'.[291] The heat in Berbera, one of the main Allied ports in East Africa, was particularly terrific and frequently complained about. Water was always scarce. Only Mt Marsabit had 'safe' water wells.[292]

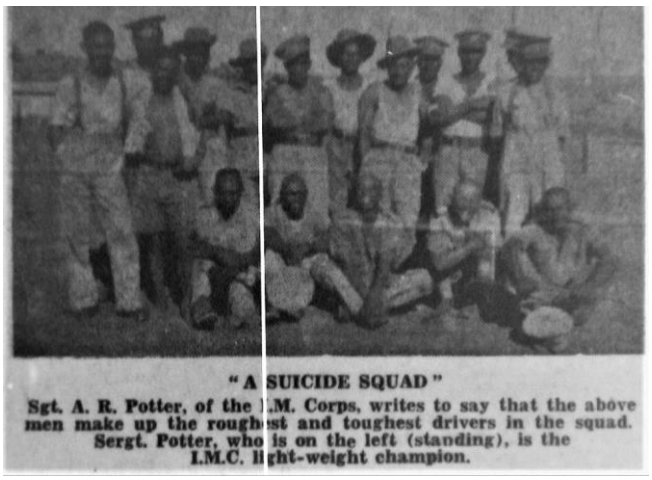
"A SUICIDE SQUAD"
Sgt. A. R. Potter, of the I.M. Corps, writes to say that the above men make up the roughest and toughest drivers in the squad. Sergt. Potter, who is on the left (standing), is the I.M.C. light-weight champion.

Figure 8 Image from The Cape Standard, 21 October 1941

The MT units were known as the 'third-line' and were usually attached to a combatant company for whom they maintained frontline supplies. For example, Adams' unit served with the Gold Coast Brigade, the 109 IMC Company was attached to KAR etc. They would transport troops and supplies including ammunition, bombs, fuel, medical supplies, food and water to the front, and on the return trips they would bring back salvage, captured supplies and arms, and prisoners. The convoys themselves could be anywhere between three trucks providing emergency reinforcements to 150 vehicles supplying a brigade. The lack of infrastructure and intelligence meant that MT units were often operating in navigably challenging regions. Additionally, to conceal the movement of convoys from enemy planes and scouts, the routes to the front were regularly changed. At times, to maintain concealment, convoys would have to cover distances at night with no headlights.[293] Closer to the front, driving in the dark would become the norm. To aid convoys deployed in 'new' territories, units would adopt various

[291] DOD. UWH, Box 125, History of SA Medical Services, p.2
[292] *Ibid.*
[293] DOD. UWH, Box 120, History of 109 SARMT company (IMC), p.7

procedures to ensure that the drivers stayed on the route and were not separated. One system for the crossroads was – the lead truck would post a soldier to direct the following vehicles. The standing order was that if no man was posted on a crossroad, convoys would drive straight ahead.

Of course, mistakes were made. In one instance, the soldier who was to give direction believed that all vehicles had passed and was unaware that five trucks had been held up by repairs. Subsequently, those five trucks drove 'straight on' and ended up with the advancing Gold Cost brigade.[294] In another instance, vehicles of a convoy stopped for the night and parked the trucks in the forest to prevent their locations being exposed. The camouflage was so well executed that the remaining trucks which were trailing due to delays on the road, missed their unit's camp and drove an additional 270 miles.[295] Small convoys also faced the challenge of lack of manpower which could lead to dangerous situations, especially for lone drivers. An IMC driver, who was transporting emergency supplies between Nanyuki and Nairobi, returned to his base camp to find that his unit had moved. He made unsuccessful enquiries about their location and ultimately followed his own instinct to look for his detachment in Garissa. He found them twelve days later. During this time, he had run out food, petrol, and his vehicle had broken down. In his last attempt, he camouflaged his truck in the bushes, removed and hid the battery, and started his search on foot. Fortunately, he was able to find his unit not too far from his location.[296] Considering the lack of infrastructure and the on-the-go nature of the campaign (and of MT duties), most drivers would have frequently faced such challenges. However, only a limited few have been recorded in official sources – more so to showcase a 'job well done'

[294] *Op. cit.*, p.2
[295] *Op. cit.*, p.3
[296] *Op. cit.*, p.4. It was procedure for drivers to attempt to conceal run-down trucks or at least remove the batteries and essential parts so as to avoid them falling into enemy hands. Their units would later attempt to recover them.

despite the obstacles as opposed to the actual experiences of the soldiers and to prevent revealing the failures of the units themselves.

2.1. 'Bad-Roading' in East Africa

Maintaining supply lines was no easy feat. For one, the convoys rarely ever drove on 'roads'. Instead they would either drive on semi-permanent roads or no roads. Erratic weather and environmental conditions made construction of roads difficult. In one instance, an IMC convoy chanced on an asphalt road after months of driving through thick vegetation. They were so 'thrilled' that they half-expected to see robots at every intersection.[297] Moreover, in 'advance' areas (Italian Somaliland), the roads were purposefully damaged by retreating Italian forces, and were rigged with mines, road-blocks and craters. On one occasion, Sergeant Davis, a non-White CC NCO in-charge of a convoy of four trucks that was running a crucial supply line to an advance brigade found the steep mountain route blocked by an over-turned 'Fiat' (Italian truck). Still, the drivers managed to manoeuvre their vehicles and made it to camp. The TO of the brigade (nicknamed 'Hobo') sent his commendations to the CC unit and requested that the drivers responsible for the delivery receive an extra ration of rum. The CC company was thereafter known as 'Hobo's Own'.[298]

The spotlighting of the four drivers as 'Hobo's Own' is indicative of both the importance of and the difficulty in maintaining the East Africa supply line. More significantly, it was the persistence of the drivers themselves that was key to these operations. Sergeant F. M. Ward, a non-White CC NCO, detailed the experience of one convoy section's 'run' to the frontline with a brigade. 'B' section, under Lieutenant G. M. Campbell, was operating from Lokitaung (Lake Rudolf) to forward areas, at times driving through enemy territories and no man's land to maintain supplies. Ward's account of this section's activities was added as an appendix to his

[297] *Op. cit.*, p.20
[298] *Op. cit.*, p.6

unit's report to illustrate 'the devotion to duty, and unremitting work, cheerfully performed despite appalling conditions.'[299] He recounted a particularly harrowing leg to Washawaha with KAR troops:

> From that morning, the 10th, our troubles really started; it rained until I was almost convinced that the Lord had forgotten his promise never to drown the world: however even as this War must, the rain ceased, and left us in a veritable swamp. We worked like men possessed, pushing, pulling and cutting bush to place in the road as anti-skids for the trucks, we only progressed a bare 2 miles that day. The next day was even worse, we moved, nay crawled for but a mile, even though we worked late at night. We slept where we could, too tired to bother removing boots which were encased in a cast of clay similar to what is termed as pot-clay; even then we couldn't rest. The mosquitoes joined forces with the flies with but one object, that of making us as uncomfortable as possible for round of the clock. They bothered us more than all [of] Musso's Legions.[300]

Ward's description of the struggles in dragging the convoy through are not exceptional. Most unit reports inform similar experiences of torrential rains, swamp-like conditions, felling trees and bush to 'harden' the path and create temporary bridges. In one report, an officer mentioned how one path through the forest had turned into a swamp from the traffic and, subsequently, an entirely new path had to be made to circumvent it.[301] Majority of the journeys on the supply lines involved unloading trucks, physically pulling them through difficult patches, and loading them again. Ward further details that on the return journey, it took forty 'Askaris' (KAR's non-White ranks) and the CC unit three days to 'pull the trucks' out of Washawaha. A more gruesome quagmire near Mega required a 100 Askari soldiers 'changing in relay every hour' and an IMC unit to 'push and pull the trucks' through the night, the final truck being 'released' at 3.30 am.[302] In another instance, an entire infantry was deployed to maintain movement of convoys through a cedar forest.[303]

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[299] DOD. UWH, Box 120, History of 129 RES MT CC, p.4
[300] *Op. cit.*, 'A Memorable Convoy by Sgt Ward', p.1
[301] DOD. UWH, Box 120, History of 109 SARMT company (IMC), p.11
[302] *Op. cit.*, p.4
[303] *Op. cit.*, p.11

The physically taxing nature of such assignments meant that soldiers rarely ever made camps for rest. Sleep came from dire exhaustion. Drivers would sleep in camouflage nets to protect themselves from mosquitoes, rain and the cold.[304] Even then, mosquitos proved to be the final front of the war. A CC soldier described that 'It seemed to me as if hundreds of them [mosquitoes] lifted the mosquito net, while the others swarmed the attack. Musso's Banda could still be shot at with a rifle, but I would still like to meet the sniper who can down these 'Caproni Bombers' in flight.'[305] Aside from causing insomnia, the mosquitos could also carry malaria and swarms caused serious skin irritation. Operating the third-line was a laborious, taxing, and challenging job, very unlike the Cape to Kenya run. Soldiers *had* to be good drivers to navigate the complexities of the front. They had to constantly apply their wit, skills and knowledge to complete their supply runs. The smaller convoys especially worked with the understanding that they were, in fact, totally on their own.

2.2. 'Three Tins of Bully, Three Tins of Peas'

Shortage of food and water was characteristic of CC/IMC convoys. An IMC unit report informs that as a result of constant patrolling and the convoys being split on different assignments, the men were going hungry for 'long periods' as they rarely made camp in time for meals. To correct the situation, soldiers were given seven days of dry and raw ration and had to make their own cooking arrangements. Initially the men would mismanage their supplies and run out of food by the fourth/fifth day. However, after learning to manage their food supplies, they were subsequently allowed to draw twenty-one days of ration.[306] Heavy rains resulted in low mobility. Convoys travelling in these areas could get marooned because of flooding. Multiple reports mention running low on food and water caused by delays on the journey. Additionally,

[304] *Op. cit.*, p.2
[305] DOD. UWH, Box 120, History of 129 RES MT CC, 'Wheel of Victory', p.E
[306] *Op. cit.*, History of 109 SARMT company (IMC), p.7

the rationed water would only be used for drinking and the soldiers would go days without a shave and a wash. Bathing in the rivers was also not without its risks as the currents were strong and they were infested with crocodiles. An unnamed CC sergeant saved three of his men from drowning on three separate occasions.[307] Furthermore, Adams mentioned that the men preferred not to shave as the rationed water would make their face sticky. He also recounted being limited to about a litre of water a day on his assignments.[308] Another report informs that the water at Wajir was of such poor quality that it would curdle the milk. Following this discovery, the unit stopped using water for their tea and coffee and used plenty of lime juice in the water to 'kill the taste'.[309]

The challenge of food and water shortages further meant that when supplies finished, soldiers depended on the goodwill of other units to provide them with resources and aid. This was not always guaranteed. The worst of the 129 RES MT CC 'B' section's frontline run was from Washawaha to Maji, when sixteen trucks were separated from the convoy because of their advanced progress. Catastrophically, the truck which had the CC section's rations was with the separated group that was trailing the advance party. In the prevailing circumstance, Ward, in-charge of the separated convoy, had expected that his men to be able to draw rations from the KAR units they were transporting. However, the KAR officers did not allow this:

> One East Africa Captain actually telling his men – in the presence of our men – "Don't give them any rations!" However, one NCO in sympathy with us gave three tins of bully and three tins of peas which sixteen men existed on for 3 days. This little episode happened near Sisky; at Sisky we were forced to beg for food and they conceded to allow us the magnificent ration of a petrol can of Mealie Meal (eaten as standard ration by the East Africa native soldier) and 5lbs of meat – we made this last a further 3 days. We were then approximately 5 miles from Maji. At this stage we received orders to return…We again begged for food, and received 12 tins of bully, no coffee or other food stuff.[310]

[307] UCTSC. 'What our soldiers are doing up North', *The Cape Standard*, 8 June 1943.
[308] IWM. 18404, Reel 1.
[309] DOD. UWH, Box 120, History of 109 SARMT company (IMC), p.2
[310] *Op. cit.*, History of 129 RES MT CC, 'A Memorable Convoy', p.1

Owing to frontline exigencies and the difficulty in acquiring supplies, it is not unsurprising that the KAR officers were unwilling to allow soldiers from other units to draw from their store. However, the heavy-handed approach was also unwarranted considering the dire circumstances that the whole convoy was facing. That the CC drivers had to beg on multiple occasions for food is a reflection of the status of auxiliary troops in support roles in military hierarchies. Combatant troops, especially those deployed on an active frontline, received prioritised treatment while units in support roles were seconded. Furthermore, the senior-most between the sixteen was Ward, a non-White NCO. It is likely that had the separated sixteen men been led by an officer of their own unit, they would not have had to plead for basic sustenance as fellow soldiers. Because they were not 'protected' by a senior rank, they struggled to advocate for their welfare.[311] However, for them, this was certainly a discouraging experience:

> We were thoroughly disillusioned to think that after we worked like slaves cutting trees to make roads, digging banks of earth to fill in the craters made by the Italians, removing trees felled across the road to impede our advance and being up to knees in the morass, that we should be thanked in this ungracious manner.[312]

Ward's disappointment and anger at the KAR officer's conduct is obvious. However, he surprisingly notes that despite the hardships the group's morale remained good. It can be construed that they viewed the mistreatment by the KAR officers as a shortcoming of the commanding ranks' leadership and not reflective of their general experience under their own officers. Here again it is the self-perception and self-motivation of the rank-and-file that allowed them to endure the mistreatment. In contrast Ward narrated how, on a different run to Washawaha they were transporting a section of SA Road Construction Engineers, were once more bogged down, and the SARCE unit's supplies emptied before their own. However, the

[311] Additionally, Ward mentions that, following this incident, their section's Lieutenant would insist on regularly assembling the entire convoy at staging camps to ensure no one was left behind.
[312] *Op. cit.*, p.2

unit had shared their food with the CC drivers on previous occasions and so the soldiers were 'glad' to return the favour.[313] This show of comradery and the KAR NCO's sympathetic treatment are also reflective of how soldiers can and do negotiate within military structures, by-pass hierarchies and act with agency.

Convoys on the road, removed from their units, had to independently manage their own circumstance. While they were the 'support' line, they infrequently had support themselves. Their experience of frontline run varied and depended not only their preparedness and supplies, but also the circumambient condition and the attitudes of the officers and units they were attached with. Still, these were situations in which drivers could at least ask for help. For smaller convoys, or convoys not carrying troops, the tropical terrain meant that they were more likely to be marooned, isolated and lost. Lieutenant C. G. Goldsbury's account of an attempt to Washwaha, gives a glimpse into driving in tropical downpour:

> Next day ordered to return to Lokitaung. Consider it our duty to make attempt. […] Weather threatening […] Torrential downpour sets in. Manage to progress five miles before getting bogged. Estimate at least 4 inches of rain, country under water as far as the eyes could see. Realise we are in a bad position. […] 9th May. Proceed three miles to running river 120 yards wide 4ft 6in deep […] 10th May. At noon decide to attempt to get 1 vehicle through. Yard by yard we battled changing distributors, filling holes in bed of river with petrol tins packed with dry soil. 11th May. […] made 1 mile to find road washed out, got badly bogged trying to get around. Heavy thunderstorm made conditions quite impossible […] 13th May. Had to build road with Elephant grass and other plants, sticks and clay. Reload [the trucks]: proceed 500 yards to another similar spruit, adopt same procedure, succeed in crossing by 2000 hours. Proceed with difficulty 1 mile soft country, each truck taking a new track […] Cpl King goes down with fever, 2 cases of stomach trouble. Position pretty hopeless unless weather remains dry for considerable period. By this time we had run out of sugar, milk, jam, vegetables.[314] [sic]

[313] *Ibid.*

[314] DOD. UWH, Box 120, History of 129 RES MT CC, 'On the Road to Washwaha'.

The group was ultimately found by a Turkana patrol who helped them return to camp. Despite failing the assignment, Goldsbury cited it as an invaluable experience as they learned exactly what a '3 tonner and 1 tonner can do in such conditions'.

The above account illustrates the challenges of driving in heavy flooding and the creative solutions that soldiers employed, using what was available in their surroundings and the strength of their own labour. Consequently, for the completion of any mission, managing food supplies was crucial. Goldsbury frequently shot game to feed his men and avoid using the stores. Hunting was normal within the convoy units. However, it depended on the availability of rifles. As non-White soldiers were unarmed, they were dependent on their officers to either hunt or provide them with weapons to hunt. Private A. P. J. van der Horst, a CC driver on a similar journey, recalled the time when his convoy was rendered immobile from the downpour and their supply of rations finished. 'Here we had a taste of starvation, mud cakes also featuring on the menu.'[315] Horst's group then ran into a 'tribe of Abyssinians'. 'We were stumped again as we couldn't make them understand we were hungry. After making numerous signs we eventually learned that they were just as hungry as we were, fleeing the *Itis* [Italian soldiers].'[316] On realising that the tribe did have some fowls, the group begged them (as they did not want to be 'nasty like the *Itis*' and use force), and thus were able to share one fowl between thirty-two men. Despite the lack of food and sleep, the unit had to subsequently drag their trucks through mountainous territory before making camp.[317]

2.3. Into Abyssinia

Beginning of 1941, as the Allied forces pushed forward on the Abyssinian front, the supply lines were extended from Wajir to Mega fort and Mount Marsabit via the Chalbi desert, and

[315] *Op. cit.*, 'Wheel of Victory', p.E
[316] *Ibid.*
[317] *Ibid.*

from Nairobi to Mogadishu and Berbera. The Chalbi desert was initially considered impregnable by the Italian forces due to its difficult terrain.[318] Conditions were vastly different from the tropical lines. One CC unit report described the line extended from Wajir fort into Somaliland, 'In dry weather, this route was an inferno of dust and sand and when it rained, a nightmare of mud and water.'[319] The report also described the route in the opposite direction to Marsabit via the Chalbi desert:

> The run to Marsabit was more interesting but more arduous. On the Isiolo flats the road was covered with fine white dust a foot deep which made it impossible at times to see more than twenty feet ahead and the heat here was intense. Reaching Archer's Post it would go through bush country across innumerable dry river beds – which became torrents when it rained – passed Laisamis and across the sands…over lava belts until in Marsabit itself it became a track burrowing into the heart of the bush – a track made possible for vehicles only by mixture of the fact that the Work Companies had removed those boulders which could not be cleared by the axes of the G S trucks. In and about the range of hills that is Marsabit mountain it was then only possible to proceed by truck in low or auxiliary low gear and sedan cars were well nigh an impossibility.[320] [sic]

Unless the convoys were driving in wet weather or through dust storms, these journeys were usually 'easier' – although trucks did have to drive at a distance from each other to avoid dust clouds that could hamper visibility. The initial runs were more comfortable because of the newly constructed roads by the work companies. However, the 'quality' of the roads was 'soft' and they would crack once it rained. Additionally, dust-storms would cover the road in 'axel-deep' sand that made driving difficult.

Nevertheless, compared to the tropical climate in Northern Kenya, the convoys were able to function with more speed and less delays. The challenge on these routes was the traffic. Frequent movement of troops meant that the MT units operated non-stop to facilitate the advance. In February 1941, in the battle for Barentu and Agordat (Eritrea), CC/IMC units

[318] UCTSC. 'Adventures in Abyssinia', *The Cape Standard*, 18 November 1941.
[319] DOD. UWH, Box 120, 'K' Company 130 SARMT CC, p.274
[320] *Ibid*.

received praise for their swift opening of roads and manning transport that enabled the infantry to push the Italian forces far beyond their original line of defence. The MT units would drive 150 miles a day for two days, load the lorries on the third day, and continue the process with no respite for all seven days of the week. On one occasion, an urgent supply of food and munitions was needed at a fighting post. The CC unit assigned completed the two-day journey in twenty-four hours and, despite the fatigue, helped the swift unloading and delivery of supplies.[321] After only a few hours of sleep, they departed. Corporal Layne, who served with a CC MT unit in the Battle of Keren, described for *The Cape Standard*:

> If I look back […] I marvel at how the boys managed […] Although their weary bodies could scarcely stand the strain due to the much-travelled corrugated roads any longer, tenacity won the day and in due course all the sacrifices were rewarded and the unconquerable Cheren [Keren] fell.[322]

Layne's account and the praise from the OCs is reflective of the efficiency of formal, structured military labour and the impact that pioneer units can have on the outcome of battles. The fighting in Keren lasted for nearly two months and, from the Allied perspective, bulk of the battle was fought by making 'a stand in ideal defensive country'.[323] The intention was to hold out long enough to drive the Italian forces and take control of the 'heights of Keren' and severe the Italian 'nerve' in East Africa. For their work in the campaign CC/IMC MT units received praise from Lt. Gen. William Platt, Commander-in-Chief of the Sudan force, who commended them to Sir Pierre van Ryneveld and Smuts.[324] As Jackson observed, 'During the final stages of the battle imperial forces had fired over 100,000 shells, carried in a thousand trucks, a breath-taking logistical effort in a country presenting unique problems of distance and terrain.[325]

[321] UCTSC. 'Magnificent Work of Cape Corps', *The Cape Standard*, 9 December 1941.
[322] UCTSC. 'We Must Deliver', *The Cape Standard*, 7 April 1942.
[323] Jackson, *The British Empire and the Second World War*, p.191
[324] BNA. 'Italians Last Desperate Bid to Hold Barentu'. *Newcastle Journal & North Mail*, 3 February 1941.
[325] Jackson, *The British Empire and the Second World War*, p.191

Not much is known of the experience of CC/IMC work companies. A rare piece of evidence comes from a letter by Corporal L. P. Maclear who served with 26th CC Works Company:

> When a place is about to be attacked, the Pioneers are ahead, ready to march in and erect accommodation for the troops taking the position. Not only do we provide accommodation, but if at all possible, we locate water, lay pipes and erect shower baths for the weary troops. We do not have the benefit of these conveniences, as, as soon as they are completed, we are despatches somewhere else. We are responsible for a large area, some of our sections being 400 miles apart. Game is fairly plentiful, and small buck, partridges and other wild fowl form a welcome change in our diet […] Our OC does not find it necessary to visit the sections more than once a week to see how the work is progressing, which because of distance, transport and roads, he appreciates.[326]

Maclear's letter provides an idea of the work and conditions in which CC/IMC pioneer units performed. Much like the MT units, the pioneer units were populated with semi-skilled or unskilled recruits who had received insufficient training and learned their work on-the-go. Within these, road construction units were formed that were subsequently also assigned mine-clearing duties. Italian forces laid land-mines and 'crated' main routes as they retreated – fixing these obstacles was the main priority of the road construction companies. Mine-clearing was a mentally strenuous task (discussed in detail in the next sub-section) while filling craters was a task that required speed. Although bulldozers were used for a majority of the work, the 'finishing' of the road was done by hand. CC/IMC units were known to work long hours to open roads in short periods and received praise for the same. In particular, for the battle of El Alamein, CC/IMC units laid secret routes for the infantry and armoured vehicles to pass through and were recognised for the work.[327] Simultaneous to mine-clearing, these companies were also assigned mine-laying alongside SAEC units, most of which was done by hand:

> [Soldiers] divided into four teams, the first being the fencing party, the second being the Sappers [engineers] who were making the field, to dig the holes for the mines, the third carrying the mines from the vehicles to the holes and putting them in, the fourth team, after the Sappers had armed the mines, covered them and removed all traces of

[326] UCTSC. 'Experiences of the Cape Corps Pioneers', *The Cape Standard*, 21 October 1941.
[327] DOD. UWH, Box 158, Units and Formation NEAS, Report on CC in Field Companies, p.19

handiwork…Working with the Sappers in this team-fashion an unbelievable number of mines were laid in a day.[328]

2.4. A Spare to Spare: Keeping the Engine Running

Aside from bad weather, poor supplies and physical exhaustion, a fourth hurdle that constantly impeded the functioning of MT units was the shortage of spare parts. This was a feature, without exception, in all units. As discussed previously, the training camps in the Union barely had any resources to train recruits. The condition on the front was sparsely better. Owing to the accelerated pace of the operations, MT companies had been established from scratch and were, from the start, ill-equipped. This condition did not improve during the course of the operations. Multiple unit reports, at first, repeatedly complained about the lack of tools and spares, and later seemed to be resigned into accepting the desperate shortage of supplies in the entire region. An IMC unit report recounted that the company was 'hampered more by broken spring than by bullets.'[329] Another report suggested that it was the soldier's 'never say die' attitude that kept the vehicles running. Other officers bluntly report regretting 'handing in' the wheel-chains at Nairobi as units continued to request a supply of wheel chains to no avail.[330] Swollen rivers caused damage to fans and radiators as some trucks were driven/dragged 'axel-deep' through the mud and water. On one occasion a whole convoy was stuck as they ran out of spare tyres on the journey.[331] There were instances of entire sections of companies being 'immobile' because of lack of repairs.[332] One report stated that 'The spare position is desperate. And it is only through super-human effort on part of all the company personnel that the vehicles continue to run – but the whole fleet is still mobile.'[333]

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[328] *Ibid.*

[329] DOD. UWH, Box 125, 7 IMC MT Company, p.2

[330] Multiple reports. The chains had been used on the Cape to Kenya route and were meant to help trucks get traction in muddy, swamp-like conditions

[331] UCTSC. 'CC in Eritrea', *The Cape Standard*, 16 September 1941.

[332] *Ibid.*

[333] DOD. UWH, Box 120, 'K' Company 130 SARMT CC, p.281

Alongside the shortage of spares was the shortage of technical and mechanical staff. In July 1942, a CC company was left with only one TO following the death of a Staff Sergeant. Another example, the 107 SARMT IMC company was meant to have seventeen mechanics at its establishment but only 3-4 mechanics were actually available. These men worked around the clock to keep the trucks mobile.[334] Multiple unit reports, at great length, discuss the ingenuity of their mechanics. Springs and bolts were constantly fashioned from salvage, company sections would put in great effort to retrieve immobile trucks from routes. Usually, damaged trucks would be 'taken apart' loaded on the convoys and brought back. If a convoy did not have the capacity to bring back salvage, then efforts would be made to hide the truck and retrieve it on the next run. An example of the ingenuity of mechanical staff, 107 IMC unit's workshop converted a large dump of Italian spring-blades recovered from Mogadishu into 'very useful 3 Ton Ford springs' that allowed the company to be 'independent' for as long as the supply lasted. Credit for the innovation was given to the unit's blacksmith, who was a builder's assistant in civilian life, and the 'springmaker', who used to be an entertainer.[335] Another unit was able to make eleven-hundred springs from scraps that they used for their own convoy and also assisted other units in the region.[336] In a more fantastic incident, a truck was stranded with the 'front top radiator hoses chafe[d] through' en-route Mogadishu. Men on the job then 'contrived to stop the leakage by fastening up the holes with handkerchiefs and turning the holes topside', the truck continued onwards and successfully completed its journey.[337]

Shortage of mechanical staff was not a characteristic of CC/IMC only. Technical units across the African campaigns consistently struggled to keep pace with war-work. Nila Kanten, an NCO who served with 5th Indian Division, recounted how, on being injured in an air-raid, his

[334] DOD. UWH, Box 125, 7 IMC MT Company, p.2
[335] *Ibid.*
[336] DOD. UWH, Box 120, 'K' Company 130 SARMT CC, p.277
[337] *Op. cit.*, History of 129 RES MT CC, 'Convoy Highlights', p.262

officer insisted on getting him immediate medical attention (even though there were other soldiers with more severe injuries) because he was a 'technical man'.[338] The incident is reflective of the invaluable position of the mechanical staff. This, however, also meant that the technical staff worked constantly. Moreover, workshops rarely had a full set of tools or infrastructure to operate with. One report mentioned that the absence of a welding machine handicapped the mechanics.[339] A progress report from 1941 detailed that 'the company mechanics are being seriously overworked. In addition to work of a R.M.T. Company they are doing the work of a base workshop. The personnel consist of one 1 S/Sgt, 5 European mechanics and 16 Non-Europeans.'[340]

Owing to this shortage of technical staff, MT soldiers received instruction on repairing and maintaining their trucks. This was especially crucial for smaller convoys where mechanical personnel could not be spared for the assignments and the drivers essentially had to fend for themselves and their trucks. As one report summarised:

> The life of a Transport driver or Mechanic is just one job after another. He may perhaps take it easy for the first day on his return, but after that he spends hours on his truck, on maintenance so as to be ready to move again on short notice. The driver of each truck must know everything there is to know about its 'Inside'. After completing his work the driver reports on the condition of his truck to his section sergeant and then if necessary accompanies it to the Workshops for major repairs.[341]

Keeping the convoys on the road was a resourceful affair. It required diligence on the part of the drivers and ingenuity from the technicians. Sergeant Mckillen, a technical NCO, described how he once encountered a truck with a broken 'connecting rod and piston'. As he did not have the spare parts to replace the hardware, he simply removed the rod and piston and 'let the truck

[338] IWM. 18391, Reel 2. Kanten was a mechanic.
[339] DOD. UWH, Box 120, 'K' Company 130 SARMT CC, p.277
[340] *Op. cit.*, History of 129 RES MT CC, p.3
[341] *Op. cit.*, 'With a CC MT Company in the North', p.3

carry on'.[342] Such temporary 'fixes' were not uncommon on assignments. Drivers and mechanics did what they could to keep the vehicles running. A stranded truck was worse than a defective but running truck. However, the 'make-do' nature of the work also meant that drivers operated faulty and unsafe vehicles. Private Hourst recounts an episode when, while driving through a mountainous region:

> the brake-system of one chap in the convoy failed to act 100%. His was a mad dash down. Goodness knows how he managed the intricacies of the mountain road, but when we caught up to him on the straight, he was as cool as a cucumber. The only remark was, 'I imagined I was in a Spitfire'.[343]

The driver's levelled reaction in the circumstance is indeed praise worthy. However, the incident highlights the high risk of the vehicles. Hourst himself added that it was the 'sandbagging' of the mountain roads by the works company that helped prevent the truck's fall into the valley. However, not all accidents had a fortuitous conclusion. Corporal J. Carollissen of 109 SARMT IMC drowned when his truck overturned while 'negotiating a narrow bridge'. Private F. R. William of the same unit died of an accidental gunshot wound caused by a faulty loaded rifle that 'fell out of the cab'.[344] On a trip to Somalia, a CC truck fell off the Sheikh Pass and the 'vehicle going over the edge of the pass on a narrow turn dropped hundreds of feet killing the driver and making salvage operations impossible.'[345] These are but few examples of casualties 'on the job'. Accidents caused by unsafe vehicles and infrastructure, and bad weather were inevitable. Between June 1940 and April 1941, 125 NEAS soldiers died from motor vehicle accidents.[346] The ingenuity of these MT units is appreciable when considering these obstacles. To illustrate – by December 1941, after approximately fourteen months of active

[342] *Op. cit.*, 'Convoy to Mogadishu', p.260
[343] *Op. cit.*, 'Wheel of Victory', p.7
[344] DOD. UWH, Box 120, History of 109 SARMT company (IMC), p.12
[345] *Op. cit.*, 'K' Company 130 SARMT CC, p.280
[346] DOD. UWH, Box 125, History of SA Medical Services, p.7

duty, the 129 RES MT CC Company was averaging over 20,000 miles per truck, with some trucks in the unit averaging at 25,000 miles.[347]

As this research shows, CC/IMC MT units, one of the first non-White South African units deployed on the East African front, operated in dire conditions. Despite facing poor infrastructure, bad weather, a lack of supplies, physical exhaustion, and generally being treated as 'second' to the combatant frontline troops, these soldiers maintained crucial supply lines and movement of troops across the Abyssinian campaigns well into 1942. The assignments were arduous and taxing, and required quick learning skills, adaptability and innovation. Soldiers needed to have a 'never say die' attitude in order to cope with the challenges of serving in an MT unit. Corporal G. J. de Bruin, a White South African enlistee who had served alongside CC units in the Abyssinian campaign, described:

> The Italians were reinforced by Germans, who were in charge of pretty deadly trench mortars. But the Cape Coloured transport drivers were one too many for them. They rendered valuable service in ensuring our supplies. Nothing would stop them – not even a full load of bombs dropped on them. They were really amazing and simply would not give in.[348]

By the end of the East African Campaign, a total of 5,500 CC/IMC soldiers had been deployed in MT units and a further 1500 in work and construction companies.[349]

3. *'That all Folks'*: Surviving the Front

Supplying the front, as the previous sections have explored, was a challenging task. However, contrary to the perceived 'security' of being the 'third-line', for CC/IMC units, surviving on the front was an even more perilous experience. Aside from the physical and mental strain of maintaining supply-lines, these units faced dangerous situations and worked in nerve-wrecking

[347] DOD. UWH, Box 120, History of 129 RES MT CC, p.248
[348] UCTSC. 'Cape Corps Drivers Dauntless', *The Cape Standard*, 22 April 1941.
[349] DOD. UWH, Box 158, Historical Survey of NEAS, p.5

conditions. Additionally, smaller convoys received little to no support from other units for protection and had to usually fend for themselves.

3.1. Lion Land, Banda Land

Aside from the German and the Italian forces, the frontline units had a third enemy, the East African lion. The supply lines from Nairobi that went deep into the wilderness of Kenya were populated with a diversity of wildlife, including lions. An East African Lion weighs, on average, between 150 – 225 kg while a female lion weighs between 83 – 165 kg. These formidable creatures, although they tended to stay away from larger camp-sites, were frequently found patrolling convoy routes and made their presence felt. Convoys would report sightings of prides the same way they would report enemy movements. Driving through such areas was particularly risky for smaller convoys, trucks that got separated, and lone drivers. Private Hourst described an encounter:

> The convoy halted at midday for a tea-break in lion-infested country. We all disembarked but on sighting a pride of lion boarded our trucks again. One driver calmly walked slowly in the direction of the beasts lighting his pipe as he went. He had a good look at them for quite a minute before suddenly scooting for the safety of his cab. It was apparent that he did not realise the danger while strolling up to the lions. When the fact dawned on him he turned tail for his truck.[350]

Although Hourst recalled the incident as a 'breezy' humorous story since the driver was unharmed, the underlying anxiety of running into prides can be deduced. One report on a convoy's run informed 'Lions make a great noise around camp. Next morning find remains of kill 200 yards away.'[351] Sergeant Ward also mentioned his experience of 'resting' in the forest during a run: 'At intervals the lions would start their serenading and as can be expected none of us wanted an en core.'[352]

[350] *Op. cit.*, Box 120, History of 129 RES MT CC, 'Wheel of Victory', p.C
[351] *Op. cit.*, 'Road to Washwaha', p.1
[352] *Op. cit.*, 'A Memorable Convoy', p.2

In addition to 'lion territory', the region also had a 'Banda' territory. The Banda (or *Bande* in Italian, literally 'band') were the irregular forces of the Italian army recruited from the colonies, usually comprising of recruited and conscripted Somalian and Eritrean fighters and some Abyssinians as well. The Banda conducted ambush attacks in small groups on convoys to disrupt supply lines. They were particularly active in the early stages of the campaign near the frontlines. By operating in small groups in the forests they were able to conceal their movements and evade capture. The 109 SARMT IMC report spotlighted two incidents of Banda activity. On one occasion, three of the company's vehicles were deployed to transfer Banda prisoners to a different camp. Having successfully completed the outbound journey, the trucks were then ordered to return and were not provided with an escort despite driving through known Banda area. A corporal was the senior-most in the group:

> At one point about 10 miles from home they got very badly stuck. Out of the bush, there suddenly appeared some five or six fully armed Abyssinians. Our men were armed with spanners only. The Corporal in-charge pounced on the first Habash and disarmed him. By means of signs and backed by the captured rifle he made the others hand over their rifles and bandoliers. He then instructed the prisoners to push the vehicles and assist. This they did. He put his prisoners in rear of his truck and headed for home, where he handed over his prisoners.[353] [sic]

In another terrifying incident, Private I. Murray of the same unit was transporting Banda POWs when he got delayed and separated from the main convoy. His experience was recorded verbatim for the report:

> I drove like hell. I was afraid that if I got stuck these fierce looking lot might sort of kill me, and there I was with nothing to defend me. I can remember that the tail board fell down on account of all the bumps but that didn't worry me, and the Bandits were shouting like hell inside. But I paid no attention. The only attention I paid was to get to the aerodrome without getting stuck. I can imagine how the Bandits felts. When at last I reached the aerodrome, 1,2,3 and all were out, talking like lots of sheep and myself like a new born baby because I was back with the civilised people. That all Folks.[354]

[353] DOD. UWH, Box 120, History of 109 SARMT company (IMC), p.9
[354] *Op. cit.*, p.10

Notably, Murray fell behind on the convoy because he was assisting a KAR sergeant whose truck had broken down. Murray himself was accompanied by the mechanic sergeant of the convoy. His own sergeant ordered him to drive to the aerodrome by himself with the prisoners in tow and did not provide him with any means of protection. Much like the first story, Murray was left to his own devices despite the obvious dangers.

The issue of arming CC/IMC drivers, especially in the absence of an escort, was circumstantial – it solely depended on the officer or ENCO in charge. Sometimes the drivers were given rifles, usually if they were in smaller convoys. But expecting convoys to operate on dangerous routes while unarmed was also normalised. The unit report, of which these two accounts are a part of, makes no comment on the dangers of disarmament or how reckless it was to allow these soldiers to be isolated and vulnerable to attack. That 'spanners', in the face of rifles, were mentioned as weapons is representative of this normalisation. In fact, the report concluded these experiences in the following manner:

> Yes, we had our moments, but it was ever the worry of all concerned, that our men were never armed. They were doing a man-sized job, and they were in numerous cases in danger of their lives, but at all times they were not allowed to be armed. They however at all times had *at least one tyre lever in the cab of the truck, in a fairly handy position*. [emphasis added][355]

Despite Murray's veiled complaint over disarmament and the anxiety he felt as a result, no blame was assigned nor addressed. Instead, it can be argued that the report is boastful in declaring that the Union policy was maintained at all cost and is exhibiting a lack of genuine concern for the lives that were being endangered irrationally. In contrast, other unit accounts are usually vague on the policy of disarmament and do leave room for the reader's interpretation.[356] Of course the report cannot be seen as a uniform representation of all the

[355] DOD. UWH, Box 120, History of 109 SARMT company (IMC), p.10.

[356] E.g., the 129 RES MT CC reports occasionally indicate that non-White soldiers were armed – as in the case of Sergeant Ward who informed he shot game for food.

White officers and ENCOs of the company, but the overall tone of the compiled report does illustrate the base-line policy of the company. It is then reasonable to conclude that this policy would have impacted the issue of rifles and ammunition to each unit and would have consequently handicapped officers who did/intended to arm their drivers 'off-the-record'. Additionally, the two incidents recounted in the report are presented as a depiction of the difficulty of operating the supply lines and the grit and valour of the drivers themselves. The onus of survival then is on the unarmed soldiers, and not on their armed officers and ENCOs.

3.2. Landmines

A third menace of the frontline supply lines were landmines. As the positions in conflict zones changed, retreating armies would plant land-mines for heavy vehicles on supply routes, roads, aerodromes and other infrastructure that could be used by enemy forces. Avoiding, excavating and clearing these mines was crucial to the maintenance of supply routes. The changing terrain of the region made it difficult to ascertain minefields. Occasionally, the mines themselves would get 'misplaced' from the heavy rains and flooding. Work companies and SAEC were officially given the task of mine-clearing. However, considering the main threat was to convoys, drivers also picked up the know-how of mine-spotting/clearing. Following is an account of driving in mine-infested areas:

> We were, for instance told that in certain areas the roads were mined and there was a probability of our being attacked. Not a man murmured. They carried on expecting to be blown to hell any minute. Four of our trucks actually drove over the mines, this being proved subsequently by the fact that mines were actually extracted in the road after our trucks had passed over.[357]

It was not unusual for trucks to drive through minefields. The advance of the fighting troops depended on the quick extension of the third-line. For convoys operating on the front, this meant driving through no-man's-land and even enemy territories. Consequently, not only were

[357] DOD. UWH, Box 120, History of 129 RES MT CC, 'A Memorable Convoy', p.2

mine-clearing operations not always possible, at times they were done by the convoys themselves. The following incidents were reported in a war-diary and best illustrate the risks involved in driving through active mine-fields:

> [Date 15.03.1941] On approaching Yavello, one of my trucks with 12604 Driver Madde R was put right in front of the Armoured Cars [by order of the KAR Captain]. The excuse was that Itis [Italians] will not open fire on the A-car, when leading. I saw through the whole excuse. My lorry was leading for the purpose of taking the land mines. On reaching the tank traps Southeast of Yavello, the lorry passed clean through the mine field without touching one. The A-car of course religiously kept in the tracks of the lorry and also got through. From the third lorry a young engineer fortunately saw part of a mine washed up by the floods and stopped the convoy before any damage was done. Here we dug up about 23 land mines of the type…
>
> [Date 16.03.1942] In leaving for the Yavello aerodrome I got into the leading lorry with the driver 12683 Johnson V. On going out of the place through the line of tank traps, I stopped the lorry, went forward and saw the edges of two mines showing above the ground. Here we dug up 8 mines.[358]

The first account is patchy on details. The preceding information in the report suggests that the author of the report was a White NCO and was out-ranked by the KAR captain who was likely the senior-most officer in the convoy. An armoured car is better equipped to withstand the shock of a landmine explosion than a lorry. However, the captain likely did not want to risk damage to the armoured cars as they had higher fire-power and were far more useful on in battle than in a blind-drive through a minefield. By forcing the IMC truck to lead the convoy, the captain ensured that the armoured cars were relatively protected from the mines. However, this was against protocol and put the leading truck and driver at great risk. Despite the obvious hazard and the unjust endangerment to the driver's life, he obviously responded with grit and discipline and risked his own life.

The author of the war diary presumably felt personally responsible for the men under him. That he mentioned both leading drivers by their name and their service number shows that not only

[358] *Op. cit.*, History of 109 SARMT company (IMC), pp.5-6

did he acknowledge their work but wanted his superiors to be aware of the risks his men were taking and the efficiency with which they were executing their tasks. Additionally, the year-long gap between the two entries also shows that despite maintaining the supply lines of the same route for a prolonged period, it was still not clear of mines despite the efforts of the engineering units and the convoys themselves. Thus, it was not just the initial runs into conflict zones that were risky, the danger persisted for as long as drivers had orders to operate in the area, and they did so fully aware of the consequences.

Mine-clearing itself was a complex task. In the first stages, the focus of the road construction and engineering units was on the main routes that were usually heavily 'trapped' to impede advance. The mine-clearing units would excavate the tar-strips, the berms of the road and nearly twenty-yards of area on each side. In an interview produced by IWM, Major Ewen Thompson, a British officer shed light on the experience of mine-clearing and the taxing effect it had on the men:

> we were trained in mine-clearing […] [We had] to identify any disturbance in the ground, investigate if a mine was there, then having found it, to defuse the mine. The type of mine they were using was a circular mine and [it was] fairly easy to remove the detonator. It was a hand-done mechanical operation […] We had to check if the ground appeared dug up and the Askaris were very good at noting what might be a disturbance, any digging that had taken place, any non-natural variation of the earth. Then it was only a matter of probing with a stick. These mines would not detonate with a man's weight walking on them, if you jumped on it, it did explode.[359]

Thompson also had experience clearing mines on-the-go. He was commanding a CC convoy carrying his own unit and some Abyssinian POWs when they had to cross a minefield. Unlike the 'circular' mines, these mines were locally improvised and far more dangerous, volatile and difficult to disarm. The entire convoy was involved in clearing out the mine-field using metal-detectors. To avoid the risk of disarming them, they were collected and exploded.[360]

[359] IWM. 7367, Reel 9.
[360] *Ibid.*

Thompson's recollections provide a blue-print of mine-clearing operations. The hazardous nature of the work is self-explanatory. Units were not always provided the equipment they needed to carry such operations. Instead, soldiers relied on experience, intelligence, bravery and a keen awareness of their environment, and of course, sticks. This, once more, is in line with the institutional neglect of and the disproportionate expectations placed on pioneer non-White ranks. Thompson's own 'make-do' attitude demonstrates the normalisation and even internalisation of this neglect despite the great risk involved in the task.

Similar to Thompson's observation of the Askaris being good mine-spotters, the OC of the 11 Field Company SAEC employed CC units in the task for the same reason. With training, 'Coloured' soldiers were found to be efficient in mine-spotting.[361] Whether ethnicity had anything to do with their efficiency is debatable. It is more likely that because non-White soldiers were uniformly viewed as 'subordinate' (and not 'leaders'), the general perception among the White powers of their skills and talent was quite low. That, with the right training, they would perform the given task is not extraordinary. That White officers found it note-worthy is characteristic of White belief that non-White soldiers had limited abilities and intelligence. Therefore, any challenge to this assumption was the result of an inherent trait typical to their 'race' as opposed to their intelligence and ability to learn a new trade. There is no reason to believe that non-White 'African' mine-spotters did any better or worse job than White or Indian or any other mine-spotters. Land-mines, after all, were a hazard in all battlefields throughout the war. Additionally, in the case of Askaris, the assumption that they were better at spotting 'non-natural variation' most likely stemmed from the idea that they had more knowledge of the terrain as they were considered traditionally 'tribal'. The assumption

[361] DOD. UWH, Box 158, Various "Praise" Documents, p.19

that ‘Coloured’ men from the Cape would also be efficient at the task was probably an extension of this belief, even though most recruits came from urban areas.

The mental strain of such work is difficult to gauge from the available evidence. But it can be reasonably assumed that the work would have caused high levels of anxiety and stress among soldiers, especially those working without the proper equipment. It can also be argued that the selection of soldiers for such work would have most likely been more discerning, officers would have picked men with a ‘resilient’ temperament. An example, Corporal Nicholaas Saphier, an NCO of a CC unit attached to an SAEC company, was, along with his unit, clearing land-mines when one of the mines blew up injuring Saphier and twelve others. Saphier not only refused first-aid till his men were treated, he also helped evacuate the casualties and provided them with ‘on-ground’ medical aid. He left his post to receive treatment only when his platoon commander ordered him to do so. While on the long journey to the hospital, two of the injured men died. In such a situation Saphier ‘kept the spirits up’ of the survivors. After three days in the hospital he was discharged with a pallet still in his upper arm. Saphier, with three other discharged soldiers, returned to his platoon and helped in rebuilding a vital road that had been badly bombed. With their help the work was completed before schedule. Saphier was promoted to the rank of Lance-Corporal awarded the MM for his valour and leadership.[362]

3.3. Third-line Action

CC/IMC units were deployed in conflict zones and had their fair share of ‘action’. As part of advancing convoys, they entered enemy territories, areas with active engagement and were under fire, although sporadically armed themselves. Ten IMC trucks that were deployed with patrol units where the first to enter the town of Neghelli where ‘They had to fight their way in and were being sniped at constantly.’[363] This section of drivers received praise for their work

[362] TNA. WO 373/25/230.
[363] DOD. UWH, Box 120, History of 109 SARMT company (IMC), p.6

and conduct from the OC of the KAR company they were with. In another incident, drivers of the same company were serving with the SA Field Battery when four of them took charge of delivering ammunition 'right into the gun-pits'.[364] Corporal J A Daniel informs of drivers in his unit having to frequent into enemy territory. Despite this the unit had had no casualties. 'Honestly, God is with the Cape Corps.'[365]

Surviving on the front was not just a matter of grit, luck and ingenuity. At times, the ability to con also proved beneficial. In June 1941, H Company of CC comprising of 18 men (16 OR and 2 officers) while reconnoitring the Awash river in Abyssinia discovered a group of 800 Italians including women, children and 24 officers. They led the group to believe that they were surrounded by a larger Abyssinian army and secured their surrender by promising protection against this army.[366] The unusual troop marched together under a prominent Union Jack banner and 'an even bigger Abyssinian banner' to Addis Abba.[367]

Consequently, these situations produced individual acts of significant heroism. For example, Private Jacob Rayners of CC was operating a utility truck and deployed with a Field Provost Company when a section was cut off from the rear. The company was unable to evacuate its vehicles because of heavy mortar, machine gun and rifle fire. Without being ordered to do so, Rayner joined the Provost personnel in the attack and was on the forefront of the bayonet charge. He made a single-handed charge on an enemy mortar and for his display of 'greatest dash' and disregard for his personal safety, he was awarded the MM.[368] Priavate Ebrahim Abrahams of IMC was awarded a BEM. He was attached to a company of Irregular Scouts who

[364] *Op. cit.,* p.10. They were: Corporal J. C. Hendricks, Private W. J. Peters, Private M. Govender, Private C. Naidoo.
[365] UCTSC. 'What CC did in Eritrea', *The Cape Standard*, 16 September 1941.
[366] BNA. '18 Capture Nearly 800', *Gloucestershire Echo*, 17 June 1941.
[367] Orpen, *Hyper-War*, p.253
[368] DOD. UWH, Box 158, History of 'B' Company Indian Services, p.2

were cut off by bad weather and subsequently ran low on fuel and ration. Additionally, the motor vehicles of the unit became immobile. In a final effort, Abrahams carried an emergency despatch for aid from the company's captain and travelled on horseback for two days through enemy territory and torrential rains; the unit was reinforced because of his effort.[369] In the battle for Mega in Abyssinia the SA Field Force Battalion's armoured vehicles were heavily damaged from intense firing by the Italian light tanks. To facilitate a retreat, CC drivers provided cover and transport using three-ton trucks, earning the admiration of the fighting infantry. Private I. Adams lost his life behind the wheel.[370]

Such instances sufficiently challenge the assumed 'safety' of third-line operations. Serving 'behind' the fighting frontline did not make the service of CC/IMC personnel less dangerous. In fact, whether in MT units or as pioneers, they constantly showcased a 'disregard for personal safety' simply by being unarmed in active conflict zones. Units deployed with advance parties frequently found themselves in the cross-fire, skirting land-mines, and at risk of their lives. Disarmament further exaggerated the stress of service as soldiers wholly depended on their officers, ENCOs and escorts for protection and/or means of protection. Non-White NEAS ranks were perhaps the only regular soldiers in the Allied armies who did not legally have the right to defend their own person. Between June 1940 and April 1941, 112 NEAS ranks were battle casualties.[371]

3.4. Bad-Backs and Dysentery

The strain of service on the soldiers' health was equally formidable. Although it is difficult to estimate the impact on their mental health, it would also be irrational to argue that they were completely free from trauma of the war. Uniformly, sources are silent on cases of mental

[369] TNA. WO 373/79/283.
[370] Orpen, *Hyper-War*, p.142
[371] DOD. UWH, Box 125, History of SA Medical Services, p.7

breakdowns (if they were understood and treated as such).[372] Only a short reference is found of a Lieutenant 'cracking up' and, subsequently, being released from service.[373] Related to mental health is the question of troop morale which has been discussed in detail in Chapter 5.

Physically, men were usually plagued with stomach ailments and joint and back pain, 'the latter no doubt brought on by working in the wet for long periods without having a chance to properly get dry'.[374] Within a period of ten months, three officers of 129 CC were discharged due to chronic pain caused by 'bad-roading'. At the end of the Eritrean Campaign, 60 of 263 men in Daniel's unit were in treatment for 'bad backs'.[375] Dysentery also regularly impacted unit strengths. Cooks were usually the carriers of the disease. However, in MT units, poor camp and individual hygiene were also major contributors. Because drivers were away from camp for prolonged periods, they were unable to maintain their hygiene and would fall ill.[376] Cases of the disease would spike during particularly busy periods.[377] Instances of malaria and typhoid were generally low as regular quinine 'parades' were held for the former and mandatory inoculation was carried out for the latter.[378] High levels of stress to the soldiers and officers alike was also caused by lack of rest. As in the case of 129 CC company, repeated requests for rest were made but leave was only approved eleven months into the relentless work, with the

[372] This is not unique to CC/IMC. WW historiographies have across-the-board struggled to piece together histories of trauma among soldiers. Makepeace views this silence in part due to societal and institutional failures to adequately address trauma, but also as a coping mechanism for veterans who wanted to 'move-on' and leave the war behind. Chetty, in 'The Great Adventure' (*Sights, Sounds, Memories* (2020)), discusses trauma through a gendered lens, elaborating on how White South African women were pushed into adopting the role of care-givers to returning soldiers. Additionally, while trauma was 'silenced' in 'public', veteran networks presented protected-spaces for voicing war trauma, wherein ex-soldiers participated in various forms of remembrance activities and shared in collective grief.

[373] DOD. UWH, Box 120, 'K' Company 130 SARMT CC, p.288

[374] *Op. cit.*, History of 109 SARMT company (IMC), p.13

[375] UCTSC. 'What Cape Corps did in Eritrea', *The Cape Standard*, 16 September 1941.

[376] DOD. UWH, Box 125, NAREP EA:7 History of the SA Medical Services, p.6

[377] The pattern of illness can be neatly followed in unit reports.

[378] DOD. UWH, Box 125, NAREP EA:7 History of the SA Medical Services, p.17

first batch of twenty men being sent to a leave camp.[379] At the end of their East Africa service, when the 109 SARMT IMC company was inspected, seventy men were found to be in such poor state that they could no longer be allowed to take on any strenuous duties:

> There is no doubt that the work done in the previous fourteen months was beginning to tell, and the long periods when the men had to live under the most exacting conditions as imposed on all and sundry during the Abyssinian campaign, was telling on them.[380]

4. Non-White and Non-Combatant: Race and Identities in the Military

The preceding sections have pieced together the involvement of CC/IMC in the East Africa campaign, arguably the units' biggest operation(s) in World War II. The patchwork of experiences from the sources include 'stand-out' events that instigate a critical reading of this history. The lone driver in a lorry leading armoured cars through a minefield, soldiers begging for ration amidst an exceptionally exhausting supply run, the recklessness of disarmament – at first glance, these episodes appear as neat examples of racism and mistreatment of non-White rank-and-file in the armed forces. Can it then be argued that this cadre of soldiers were little more than glorified porters in uniform? Robert Johnson looks at recruitment practices of the EIC during Company rule in the Indian sub-continent and postulates that while it is 'easy' to find episodes of mistreatment, distrust and infantilization of *Sepoys*, 'this would also apply in exactly the same way to European infantrymen. Men with rural backgrounds, lacking education, characterized both European and Indian foot soldiers.'[381] In 'Creating a (Gendered?) Military Identity', Tessa Stone argues that for women who worked in WAAF services during the war, it is inadequate to view their experience 'based purely on their gender', and instead emphasises 'the overriding importance of the military context in defining their self-identity.'[382]

[379] DOD. UWH, Box 120, History of 129 RES MT CC, p.8
[380] *Op. cit.*, History of 109 SARMT company (IMC), p.15
[381] Johnson, R. (2013). '"True to their Salt"'. In Zürcher (Ed.), *Fighting for a Living*. CUP. p.270
[382] Stone, T. (1999). 'Creating a (gendered?) military identity'. *Women's History Review*, p.607

A similar argument can be applied to non-White soldiers in the World Wars. To assume that the treatment of non-White units (here, CC/IMC) was the result of their ethnicity alone is grossly reductive. Rather, this sub-section analyses the spectrum of identity(s) in the armed forces, the evolution of non-combatant labour, the role of race in war and, thereafter, theorises on the experience of CC/IMC units.

Interactions within modern militaries are primarily dictated by rank-based hierarchies. While perceived social statuses do play a role in defining these interactions, the first identity of a recruit is that of a soldier. As has been argued in Chapters 1 and 2, CC/IMC recruits were not conscripted, they were volunteers. Additionally, the voluntary mobilisation of their communities in aid of the war-effort influenced the attitude of the recruited men and the expectations they had from the army and their commanders. This of course was not a homogenous experience. However, the imagined agreement that the UDF entered into with the CC/IMC recruits defined the foundation of the DNEAS.[383] The Directorate and the soldiers themselves, viewed their participation as 'serving' in the army, as opposed to being employed by the army. Such an understanding of wartime service came with underlying considerations: (i) it was understood that men would receive less pay compared to what they earned in their civilian jobs (although the base-line of this pay, as discussed, was contested), (ii) soldiers were aware of the risk to their own self in frontline deployment; (iii) regular members of the armed forces were subjected to military regulation which was restrictive and placed soldiers under forms of strict surveillance;[384] (iv) once in service, it was difficult for soldiers to obtain a discharge and, at the height of hostilities, to obtain leave. Such considerations made service in the armed forces inherently different and less 'free', compared to civilian professions.

[383] Particularly obvious in the fall in Indian recruits because of mishandled recruitment tactics.

[384] By dictating where they could live, their leave and discharge, what counted as 'infringement' and what actions could have disciplinary consequences. In this manner, soldiers, compared to civilians, were 'unfree'.

Within this system, a soldier's social standing in the institution was defined by: (i) their profession, i.e. the unit they served with (infantry, anti-aircraft, pioneer etc), the work they were deployed in (construction, frontline engagement, guard duties, provost, pilots etc), where they were deployed (at the front, 'home' bases, field headquarters etc) and, (ii) their military rank (associated with this is length of service, pace of promotion, commendations and medals etc). However, institutional identities were supplemented by social identities that were imported from the soldiers' civilian lives. These included education, civilian professions, social standing within familial and communal units, and ethnicity. The negotiation of these layered identities silhouetted the varied experiences of individual soldiers. Similar to other imperial troops, CC/IMC's non-White ranks had several economic and professional barriers to their service as a result of institutional racism, specifically disarmament. Their own individual experiences as non-White members of a pre-dominantly White institution varied considerably and were dependent on the White officers/NCOs they served under and the units they served with. However, it was the restriction to non-combatant service that specified their status in the armed forces.

The concept of 'pioneer battalions' within imperial forces first materialised in the Indian sub-continent as the British Raj attempted to do away with irregular 'followers' and formalise non-combatant war-work (batmen, cooks, washer-men, hygiene workers, gang-men etc, usually recruited from the 'lower castes' who had traditionally performed these tasks in Indian society). Pioneer battalions were meant to streamline the use of auxiliary forces and to increase efficiency of the army by training combatants into adopting some of the 'menial' tasks (e.g. doing their own laundry). Although the formalisation of non-combatant work offered more 'dignity' to workers, recruits for labour corps continued to come from under-privileged classes of society, thus maintaining established social hierarchies in military structures.[385] In the

[385] Singha, R. (2020) *The Coolie's Great War*, Hurst. pp.16-17

British African colonies, a similar trajectory is observed. Non-White porters and labourers in the armed forces were 'casual' labourers drawn from rural areas who worked on a temporary basis and, once the assignment was over, returned to their homes. Because transportation on the continent was a constant challenge, recruitment of porters, like in the Indian sub-continent, were drawn from specific communities, as Killingray posits that 'Certain ethnic groups were identified as ideal sources for carriers, and colonial literature is littered with descriptions of those who were 'sturdy men under fire' as well as those 'cowardly races who panicked, dropped their burdens and fled' at the first sign of trouble.'[386]

With the introduction of light lorries in World War I, transport units were created and, much like the Indian army, the African colonial armies underwent a 'modernisation' of non-combatant service.[387] Even so, in *Fighting for a Living*, Erik-Jan Zürcher argues that 'Change from one army style to another may be sudden, but is rarely absolute […] developments in war very often takes place side by side with the continued existence of older forces, which remain important even if they are obsolete and have lost their credibility on the battlefield.'[388] Despite the inclusion of non-combatant companies in military ranks and the war-time propaganda of the crucial role of third-line work, their status remained subsidiary to that of fighting units. When viewed through this lens, the experience of CC/IMC units then becomes a chapter in a longer of history of military labour in the continent. Although they served alongside other non-White battalions such as the Gold Coast Regiment, the 5th Indian Battalion, KAR, as support units they remained mistreated and depressed within military ranks.

This is perhaps most tellingly observed in the management of the welfare of CC/IMC soldiers. The first NEAS MT units were deployed in a rush in East Africa, as has already been analysed.

[386] Killingray, *Labour Exploitation for Military Campaigns*, p.487
[387] *Ibid*.
[388] Zürcher, *Fight for a Living*, p.33. Zürcher makes his observation in the context of the contributions to the edited volume, stating that 'universal patterns' in militaries across history can be observed among the chapters.

However, this push also meant that the first CC/IMC units were usually deployed in areas that were not ready for their arrival. There was poor to no infrastructure, obtaining their own supplies was a challenge, and units often had to start from scratch to build their camps while performing their own duties. Work and construction companies were infrequently spared to these units for camp-construction. The 129 RES MT CC was deployed in East Africa as early as November 1940. On arrival at Nairobi, the unit was shifted to a 'plantation camp' on 18 December 1940 which was supposed to be temporary accommodation while a permanent camp was made available for them. This 'camp' was simply an abandoned plantation and had no facilities. There were no toilets, plumbing was a challenge (consequently, so was cooking), and soldiers slept in their trucks as the plantation was so run-down that it was difficult to set up any kind of accommodation inside of it. Despite repeated requests, the unit was not moved to a permanent camp and was given no alternative. On 24 May 1941, the OC of the unit submitted a detailed report on the poor conditions of the camp and the negative impact it was having on the health and morale of soldiers. On 6 September 1941, ten months into their deployment, the unit was finally moved to a semi-permanent camp where living conditions were better. It is to be noted, this camp was *not* the promised camp in lieu of the plantation. The unit that followed 129 CC was shifted into the very same run-down plantation camp and construction of the new camp area began simultaneously.[389]

Poor camp conditions were more frequently reported by units that were deployed in the initial stages. Although conditions did improve, soldiers lived with poor facilities for months, performing hard labour. It is reasonable to argue that had they been a fighting unit, efforts to improve conditions would have been accelerated for fear of dampening troop morale and causing unrest. Additionally, because drivers were usually attached to other companies, their own camps were not always accessible to them. To save time, soldiers were encouraged to

[389] DOD. UWH, Box 120, History of 129 RES MT CC, p.7

build their own make-shift camps/accommodation from which they could operate. Soldiers did receive some supplies, but this varied in each unit and depended on what was available. The drivers of 109 SARMT IMC only had 'odd petrol tins, scraps of wood, and no nails' from which they built huts for themselves.[390] Once more, the unit report praised the ingenuity of the drivers as opposed to addressing the lack of supplies that they were provided with. It is also notable that within British colonial forces, prior to the establishment of pioneer corps, porters and labourers were expected to provide for themselves (even in war) as the army only paid wages for their employment.[391] This is not to imply that what was happening to CC/IMC was a continuation of this policy. However, these histories are reflective of the typically low status of the non-combatant workforce and the relative normalisation of their mistreatment.

Conclusion

For their first 'action', CC/IMC units served in the East Africa Campaign and were part of the forces in Battle of Keren, the capture of Asmara and the Battle of Amba Alagi. Despite being 'third-line' these auxiliary units frequently found themselves in active conflict zones, battling the Italians, the Banda, and the lions. Being support units, they often did not have any alternative 'support' themselves and, throughout the campaign, relied on their own wits to see themselves through the day. Additionally, the imposition of unarmed non-combatant service relegated them to the bottom of military hierarchies while institutional prejudice impacted perceptions of their skill, talent and contribution. Still, despite institutional prejudice and neglect, these units performed crucial supply tasks, whether in MT or Work companies. Arguably, their belief in their own 'soldiering' was central to the successful functioning of the

[390] *Op. cit.*, History of 109 SARMT company (IMC), p.7
[391] Singha, *The Coolie's Great War*, p.52

pioneer works which was central to the victory at Keren. In fact, at the peak of hostilities, NEAS was the largest South African unit deployed.[392] Without the formalisation of military labour and the self-motivation of the non-White ranks, the speed and efficiency with which reinforcements repeatedly arrived on the frontline would not have been possible.

Nevertheless, the debasement that CC/IMC rank-and-file were subjected to would have negatively impacted their experience of service. It would, however, be erroneous to assume that these soldiers viewed themselves through this institutional lens. Chapter 2 analysed the motivations of enlistment of non-White soldiers and argued against pegging them as uniformed mercenaries. A soldier's view of his own motivations and the value of his service, his view of the White government-in-power, his socio-economic standing in civil life – all contributed to how the rank-and-file understood and responded to their circumstance. Soldiers were aware of the inequitable treatment that they were receiving. In the listed examples in the previous sections, they expressed disappointment when they did not receive what they believed to be fair treatment. For example, Sergeant F. M. Ward made known his disappointment in the KAR Captain who refused to allow the CC drivers to draw ration. By emotively informing on his experience of transporting Banda POWs, Private Murray challenged the notion of the courageous, gritty non-White driver and instead provided a glimpse into the complex experience of disarmed service. In narrating these histories, the non-White rank-and-file displayed agency and ownership of their own stories. They challenged the notion of a dispirited auxiliary service and instead presented confidence in the value of their contribution. As Private Hourst, in his piece, 'Wheel of Victory', articulated:

> War, poverty and death know no colour. It is for this reason that the non-Europeans have decided that the fight is theirs too. The magnificent work of the fighters from India cannot be over-emphasised. The acts of self-sacrifice and endurance displayed by the many Coloured men of the Cape Corps from down South will always be remembered. The workers of East Africa and Abyssinia together with Dominion troops have flung back the

[392] Orpen, *Hyper War,* p.222

> menace to our fatherland. Together they faced the rigours of the weather and the attempts of the enemy to stem the historic advance. In war at least it seems as if all men are truly brothers.[393]

The imperial armed forces, like most colonial systems, denied opportunities to non-White groups and was institutionally racist. Within this framework, however, is the nuanced lens of Stone's 'military context' – non-combatant *and* disarmed service – that outlined CC/IMC military identity. Rank-and-file interacted in complex and consequential ways with these identities and defined their own experience of war and wartime service.

[393] DOD. UWH, Box 120, History of 129 RES MT CC, 'Wheel of Victory', p.B

CHAPTER 4

‘Men England Forgot’: The Desert and Other Campaigns

‘The British described the Mediterranean as an ‘artery’.’[394] What made this artery crucial to the war was the speed of the route that connected Britain to India and the Far East. It took a full fortnight longer to reach Bombay from London via South Africa. However, the ‘enclosed’ nature of the sea, threatened on all sides by belligerent forces meant that the fight in the Western Desert was over ports, coastal roads and aerodromes. In fact, Simon Ball argues that there was never a ‘Desert War’ but a war for the Mediterranean.[395] South African involvement in hostilities in North Africa began as early as January 1940 when the 1st South African Infantry division was deployed in its many theatres.[396] In the early days of the campaign, the Allied

[394] Ball, S. (2015). ‘The Mediterranean and North Africa’. In Ferris, & Mawdsley (Eds.) *The Cambridge History of the Second World War Volume 1*. CUP, p.359

[395] *Op. cit.*, p.364

[396] Some works on the campaign in North Africa and on South African participation: Harrison, F. (1997). *Tobruk: The Great Siege Reassessed*. Caxton Editions; Shores, C. (1996). *Dust Clouds in the Middle East: The Air War for East Africa, Iraq, Syria, Iran and Madagascar, 1940-42*. Grub Street Publishing; Gordon, J. (1987) *The Other Desert War: British Special Forces in North Africa, 1940-43*. Praeger; Brooks, J. (2015). ‘Nurses as therapeutic agents in the extreme environment of the desert war, 1940–44’. *Journal of Advanced Nursing*; Barr, N. (2004). *Pendulum of War: The Three Battles of El Alamein*. Pimlico; Kitchen, M. (2009). *Rommel's Desert War: Waging World War II in North Africa, 1941–1943*. CUP; Kelly, S. (2002) *The Hunt for Zerzura: The Lost Oasis and the Desert War*. Westview Press; Katz, D. (2019). *South Africans Versus Rommel: The Untold Story of the Desert War in World War II*. Delta Books; Bechthold, M. (2017). *Flying to Victory: Raymond Collishaw and the Western Desert Campaign, 1940–1941*. University of Oklahoma Press.; Horn, K. (2020) ‘"This is war, isn't it?" Fear and mortality from El Wak to El Alamein (1940 - 1942)’, *Scientia Militaria*.; Fennell, J. (2011). ‘'Steel my soldiers' hearts': El Alamein Reappraised’, *Journal of Military and Strategic Studies*. Bentz, G. (2012). ‘From El Wak to Sidi Rezegh: The Union Defence Force's first experience of battle in East and North Africa, 1940-1941’, *Scientia Militaria*.; Cornwell, R. (2012). ‘2 Anti-Tank Regiment, SAA - Tank and Anti-Tank in the Western Desert, 1940-1942, (Part II)’, *Scientia Militaria*.

forces levelled significant defeats on the Italian forces. 'In a period of six weeks Wavell's forces had destroyed an army of nearly 250,000 men […] In ten weeks the British imperial forces had advanced over 700 miles at the cost of only 500 dead.'[397] German entry into the campaign under the command of the 'Desert Fox' General Erwin Rommel in February 1941 altered the map of North Africa. NEAS involvement in the campaign coincided with this new leg of the war for the coasts.

NEAS troops were stationed in the desert from January 1941 onwards in MT and support units. They were further reinforced by the East African units at the end of hostilities (March 1942 onwards). In the desert too, they served in a variety of auxiliary roles and, uniquely, as armed soldiers in the Second Battle of El Alamein. Many of them were also with the 2nd South African Division in Tobruk in June 1942 when the fortress fell. When the long-drawn campaign finally concluded in Axis defeat, the focus shifted across the sea. Despite the Union's White anxieties, NEAS ranks were deployed in the Italian peninsula. They also served in the occupation of Madagascar and were part of the forces guarding the South African coastline from an anticipated Japanese invasion.

This chapter argues that an analysis of these campaigns, especially from the CC/IMC vantage point, reveals subaltern understandings of the war in the desert. The campaign, as Jackson posits, was a 'struggle that was to see both forces advance and retreat along their supply lines'.[398] The CC/IMC experience, as will be demonstrated, foregrounds the important battle for the creation and maintenance of these desert supply lines that were vulnerable to enemy attack and a challenging climate. It also analyses the malleability of military labour within otherwise rigid military structures. The loss of the 2nd South African Division meant that a

[397] Jackson, *The British Empire and the Second World War*, p.105
[398] *Op. cit.*, p.106

considerable re-organisation was required of the South African forces. The NEAS units were 'sectioned' in much smaller groups and attached to combatant units.[399] This dilution continued in subsequent campaigns in Italy and Madagascar.

The UDF's fractionalisation directly challenged the 'espirit de corps' of the NEAS. Notably, this re-arrangement would not have been instituted had they been combatant units for fear of a fall in morale and instead new units would have been raised to bring the regiments up to strength. Dilution caused a clear disruption in how NEAS units served in the UDF and in the Desert and Italian campaigns. The loss of the unit created a fall in welfare, morale and attitude, and even the professional growth of soldiers (particularly those in mechanics and other skilled tasks). This disruption is also obvious in the archives as the detail-heavy unit reports are replaced with much more brief inspection and progress reports by non-NEAS officers. The voice of the non-White soldiers becomes harder to trace in the official archives as, unlike in East Africa, few officers-in-charge were affording opportunities to non-White soldiers to record their experience. The sectioning itself is reflective of the status of auxiliary roles in military hierarchies, worsened for the NEAS because of their racial status. From an institutional view, non-White morale was expendable. Interestingly, this is not the only case of dilution. The British army also diluted some of its units (such as the British Heavy Anti-Aircraft) with non-White soldiers from the High Commission Territories.[400]

However, although the 'soldiering' of non-White ranks was undermined, as in East Africa, CC/IMC soldiers performed crucial support tasks in these campaigns. This chapter argues that the successful completion of these duties cannot be credited to the institution but must be seen as a consequence of the rank-and-file's collective capacity for soldiering. In the Italian

[399] DOD. UWH, Box 158, Historical Survey of NEAS, p.16

[400] Jackson, A. (2002). 'Supplying War: The High Commission Territories' Military-Logistical Contribution in the Second World War'. *Journal of Military History*, p.745

peninsula for example, NEAS soldiers were diluted and deployed in small numbers, their presence over-shadowed by the intense warfare in the region. Yet, their performance as stretcher-bearers received institutional recognition. This chapter explores the impact of formal and informal regulation of military labour. It argues that South African military labour in the Western Desert and in the peninsula was not formalised, but disorganised, and CC/IMC ranks performed in trying conditions of their own volition. Thus, the soldier's participation in their own soldiering is central to understanding the performance and functioning of militaries.

1. 'Never Mind Our Trials': To Garawi and Onwards

Following the success in Abyssinia, NEAS, alongside other East African Allied forces, began a 'great trek' of 2000 miles over 'swamp and desert' from Kenya to Cairo manned by MT units.[401] NEAS headquarters were subsequently moved to Cairo, and the main NEAS camp was re-located to Garawi (25 miles north of Cairo). The auxiliary units that had remained behind for the clearing operations were later transported by sea from Berbera. In a letter published in *The Cape Standard,* Corporal J. A. Daniels described his unit's move to Egypt:

> The news that we were to stand by for a move was very welcome, seeing that everybody anticipated the move to be home […] Travelling for the full night brought us the next morning to the hottest seaport of [censored] […] Quite a number of men had never seen the sea before, nor had they seen a boat […] on the very afternoon a good many of the men were sea-sick. Many of them on that day, being so sick, decided to never get aboard a ship again, but rather to travel to the Union by road, should they one day be returned.[402]

Daniels' ignorance about the destination is not surprising. Information on troop movement was confidential to protect them from attacks by the Axis airforce and navy, both of which were heavily reinforced in the region. The unit reports indicate that even officers were not privy to this information. However, Daniels' silence on what he and his fellow soldiers felt on realising they were headed for Egypt is intriguing. It is unlikely that this gap was caused by the censor

[401] *Op. cit.*, p.5
[402] UCTSC. 'The Latest Letter Home', *The Cape Standard,* 31 March 1942.

but was his own choice. Daniels had written the letter with the intention of having it published in *CS*. Perhaps he did not want to depress readers and cause concern to the loved ones of soldiers. Or perhaps the realisation was too painful and was best left repressed. However, his initial description of the joy and anticipation of homecoming and the dispirited comment 'should they one day be returned', hints at the disappointment soldiers must have felt. Decades later, Charles Adams described this journey North: 'Originally the ship was going south [towards SA], we were happy. When we woke up [the next morning], the sun was not on the port-side, it was rising from Starboard. We were headed North! I thought 'there is no way you are going home'.'[403]

On being asked if he had felt disappointed on the realisation, Adams answered 'you don't even think of going home then, after the disappointment.'[404] Despite his intrepid acceptance, Adams's clear recollection, fifty years on, emphasises the marked impact the moment had on him. The depleting hope of returning home was not unique to Adams and Daniels. CC/IMC units had lengthy services, especially those that had been deployed in the first run in 1940. Soldiers being re-located from East Africa were already fatigued and the false hope of return would have been mentally challenging for them. Some of these men served for as long as three years without returning.[405] As Corporal W. E. Layne explained 'never mind how hard our trials are, we keep a stiff upper lip and our folks back home bear their sacrifices easier.'[406]

[403] IWM. 18404, Reel 2.
[404] *Ibid.*
[405] DOD. UWH, Box 158, Historical Survey of NEAS, p.17. Soldiers who had served for three years qualified for 'Union Leave' and, by regulation, had to be sent home. E.g., 203, 204, 206, 207 NMC were disbanded because their ranks qualified for Union Leave.
[406] UCTSC. 'We must deliver', *The Cape Standard*, 7 April 1942.

1.1. Instituting Dilution

In November 1941, the 5th SA Infantry Brigade (part of the 1st South African Division) was nearly wiped out at the Battle of Sidi Rezegh. With two more divisions engaged with the Eighth Army, the 1st Division required immediate reinforcements; the need was met by NEAS.[407] To fulfil the tall order, CC/IMC MT and Work companies were disbanded and soldiers were then drafted into the 1st Division in the usual support roles. This was the first instance of intentional 'dilution' of White South African units with NEAS troops. The aim of the policy was to 'free' manpower for the front by replacing White soldiers in non-combatant roles with non-White non-combatants. NEAS soldiers would go on to serve with MT units, Work and Road Construction units, South African Airforce, SAMC, SAEC, South African Veterinary Corps, in Assembly units (re-assembling vehicles transported from the Union to the front) and as hygiene personnel. They built aerodromes in Casablanca, maintained routes across the desert, drove convoys from Cairo to Turkey. A small number of CC/IMC soldiers were also trained as signallers and telephonists and attached to artillery regiments.[408] Approximately 18,000 NEAS personnel were part of the Eight Army's campaign in EL Alamein in 1942.[409] Of these, Figure 9 lists the approximate number of diluted troops in the 'most notable formations'.[410]

[407] DOD. UWH, Box 158, Historical Survey of NEAS, p.5
[408] DOD. UWH, Box 159, Record of NEAS, p.119
[409] DOD. UWH, Box 158, Historical Survey of NEAS, p.8
[410] The institutional challenges of the policy of dilution have been analysed in the next section.

1 SA Division	2000 CC and 1000 NMC
MT Formations	3000 NMC
SAAF Formations	1500 CC and NMC
Medical Units	1000 NMC
SAEC	3500 CC and NMC
TSC Units	500 CC and NMC
Signals Units	500 CC and NMC
HQ Guards and Provost duties	2000 CC and NMC
POW Guard Duties (armed)	1000 CC

Figure 9 Diluted NEAS troops with the Eight Army[411]

From the soldier's perspective, the good work in East Africa did not result in increased claims for egalitarian treatment of non-White ranks. Instead dilution was an upheaval that resulted in the loss of corps identity. As previously discussed, non-combatant units in the imperial armed forces were historically mistreated and depressed. However, by serving as a company, the soldiers and their officers were able to exert agency over their own management. The line of command for non-White ranks followed the DNEAS chain of command. With dilution, however, soldiers came under the command of the units they were attached to and were, thus, devoid of the limited protection NEAS had afforded them. They were entirely at the mercy of the White units they were deployed in. Moreover, non-White NCOs were, by regulation (the 1942 'Power of Command' order), out-ranked by the White rank-and-file.[412] This could and did cause a break-up in the structure of military hierarchy and increased the likelihood of their being subjected to racism by White ranks. As one CC NCO explained:

> This new regulation will cause rupture and disunity […] As it is at present, they [White ranks] already look upon us as nothing else but camp servants. […] Every one of us took pride in being a member of the corps and endeavoured to uphold the dignity of the regiment. […] Previously I could command the respect of my men, but I am afraid that if the European private is allowed to countermand my orders to my men, I will lose what

[411] DOD. UWH, Box 158, Historical Survey of NEAS, p.8
[412] *See* Chapter 2, Section 4.

> little respect they might have had […] I am but a lance-corporal who is doing the work of a sergeant, and will have to submit to a private, because I am not European.[413]

The dilution of CC/IMC is also reflective of the malleability of military labour in the armed forces. A break-up of units and regiments, especially in an active state-of-war, would not have happened had they been a combatant unit as the command ranks would've feared a fall in troop morale and consequent unrest. Thus, despite the repeated propaganda of non-White pioneer ranks being soldiers, the policy of dilution reflects their actual 'standing' in the military hierarchy. It is obvious that the morale, welfare and even military systematisation of regimental service were seconded to needs of the war. CC/IMC pioneers were soldiers for as long as the military could tolerate them being soldiers. Just as their deployment despite White anxieties was caused by war exigencies, so was the depreciation of their contributions, morale, welfare and corps identity.

2. Of Dunes and Scorpions: The Desert Life

Service in the desert was significantly different. Adams described that 'It was a bush war in East Africa. In the desert anything you see is sand.'[414] Climate and the terrain were a challenge, not just in terms of warfare, but for the men themselves. Proportionally, letters by soldiers printed in *The Cape Standard* complained more about the weather than about the enemy. One of these published excerpts (by Sergeant C. W. du Perez and Corporal T. F. Kinsman of CC) contained a lengthy account of the soldier's battle with the desert:

> It is as if the fires of Hell are let loose. The pitiless sun, blazing on the great desert wastes, burns savagely on the unwary soldier. The sand itself burns through the thick leather soles, causing painful blisters […] Inside the tent it is worse. To open the flaps of the tent for ventilation is a vain attempt [because of the dust] […] Drinking water? Warm enough to have a good shave. We are four men lying in the tent. Sweating, gasping, cursing. Four

[413] UCTSC. 'The Non-European NCO', *The Cape Standard*, 10 February 1942.
[414] IWM. 18404, Reel 2.

> naked men of the Cape Coloured Corps. We are trying to rest, but rest will not come. […] Rest? – THE ARAB'S PARADISE – THE SOLDIERS' HELL![415] [sic]

This exposé on desert heat creates a compelling image, sensationalist even. However, the authors were not exaggerating. Accounts from the North Africa campaign uniformly complain about the climate. In the Libyan desert, temperatures during the day could be as high as 125°F with claims of 140°F in the Nubian desert.[416]

Alongside the problem of dust and heat was the relentless attack of flies, as Charles Adams described: 'In the desert, the flies, they bite you and they are poisonous. So, with your cigarette you had to burn it away. On the bite, it's a bubble and you can see the water, so you burn it.'[417] Poor camp hygiene, waste (human and otherwise), and dead bodies further increased the problem of flies. These insects caused skin irritation, dysentery and Sandfly fever which, although not fatal, was incapacitating.[418] Reportedly, a staggering 25,000 Allied troops in the desert were admitted to hospitals because of the fever. In fact, the spread of the disease was considered an epidemic.[419] Naturally, as Adams described, soldiers took novel precautions to protect themselves. They would also ascribe to the usual tactics of 'sealing' their clothes to prevent bites and maintaining camp hygiene.

While the days were unbearably hot, at night temperatures dropped drastically. Private Gordon Fry (Cape Town Highlanders) described, 'I was cold in the bloody desert at night, more than in winter-time in Switzerland. The biting cold gets right into your bones'[420] [sic]. Drivers en-route usually slept under their trucks or on the floor in make-shift shelters and dug-outs in

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[415] UCTSC. 'A Dust Storm in the Desert', *The Cape Standard*, 30 June 1942.
[416] UCTSC. 'CC in the Nubian Desert', *The Cape Standard*, 2 June 1942; Bourhill, J. (2011). *Come Back to Portofino*. 30° South Publishers. p.72
[417] IWM. 18404, Reel 2.
[418] DOD. DNEAS Group 2, Box 1, Letter No. 38, 29 December 1942.
[419] Stout, T. (1954). *War Surgery and Medicine*. Historical Publications. p.554
[420] IWM. 18403, Reel 1.

freezing conditions. They had to avoid lighting fires in case they attracted enemy planes and patrols.[421] The cold created a more dangerous problem in tents as the heat inside attracted scorpions at night that could climb into the bedding. Adams described being bitten by a scorpion:

> While we were eating, I felt something crawling in. I thought it must be a fly, so I touched it. I felt a burning pain. If there was ever a medal to take off a man's pants I would win it! [laughs] This muscle [where the Scorpion stung him] starts coming up. I killed the scorpion and reported to the medic. I was rushed to the hospital. The poison had gone from below my knee to my groin and my leg was in spasm. I got an injection and slept it off. The next morning, I was back on duty.[422]

Surviving on this front was no easy feat. Aside from the challenging living conditions, there was also the problem of supplies. The region was dry and arid, water supply was difficult (in fact, only in the Desert campaign were separate water supply units established), and food was scarce. Units entirely depended on convoy lines for survival. The German General Johann von Ravenstein famously described the region as 'a tactician's paradise and a quartermaster's hell.'[423] Furthermore, the heavy losses in Sidi Rezegh (1941) and the fall of Tobruk (1942) stressed an already shaky Allied supply line. A correspondent's piece in *The Cape Standard* described a supply line of 600 miles that was maintained by CC. It connected an isolated outpost to a railhead and in the whole journey there was no 'water hole': 'The double journey from the railhead to the oasis and back is so trying that individual convoy drivers cannot do it more than once a month.'[424]

In these circumstances, navigation was both crucial and tricky. So much so that the advanced British-made maps captured by German forces provided valuable information on the terrain for

[421] UCTSC. 'A Soldier Describes Experiences', *The Cape Standard,* 24 March 1942.
[422] IWM. 18404, Reel 2.
[423] Quoted in several sources.
[424] UCTSC. 'CC in the Nubian Desert', *The Cape Standard*, 2 June 1942.

the Axis forces in the campaign.[425] However, for the rank-and-file driver, maps were of little use. A. Beaconsfield, a White private who served alongside CC, described the experience:

> The officers are fully equipped for their job with maps and compasses but the rest of us rely on instinct, sun, moon, stars, observations and guess-work. The last one is pretty useful if one is born with a lot of luck […] When the weather is fine, it is still understandable finding one's way around in day-light. One gets to observe land-marks – petrol-tins, wrecked trucks etc, and one's observation of these things couple with the sun at a rough place but necessary guide gets one places. But at night or in dust-storm when one cannot see the bonnet of the truck, nor the very ground, then surely it is instinct and plenty of luck […] in a terrific dust-storm, I directed a driver to his tent about 300 yards away, though it could not be seen. The driver set out in the right direction (it was 3.30 pm). The next morning he found his tent – he had travelled 49 miles to get there![426]

Although Allied troops in the desert were issued compasses (and compasses were supposed to be attached to every vehicle's windshield), Beaconsfield's account suggests this was not the case for everyone. As the article mentioned, dust-storms were powerful enough to cause zero visibility. Additionally, the terrain was a moving landscape with shifting dunes. In Libya and Egypt, the dunes were so vast they formed ridges as high as fifty meters. The wind, shifting the dunes, created a confusing landscape. Driving through them, Major-General Toppe explained, the driver had to 'drive at top speed at the first dune, breaking through its crest, and on driving down the opposite slope, to gather speed for the next dune. While driving in this way, vehicles were enveloped in a dense cloud of dust that reduced visibility to practically nil. In this way, one to two kilometres might be covered per day.'[427]

The conditions in the desert were vastly different from the tropics of East Africa. Replacing the mud-swamps were the salt swamps that developed when water surfaced and mixed with clay, sand and salt. Vehicles caught in a swamp could only be pulled out by tow-trucks on firm ground with strong engines.[428] Furthermore, the sand was soft and deep enough to sink and jam

[425] Toppe, A. (1991). *Desert Warfare.* Combat Studies Institute, p.2
[426] UCTSC. 'CC show their Mettle', *The Cape Standard*, 10 March 1942.
[427] Toppe, *Desert Warfare*, p.21
[428] *Op. cit.*, p.22

motor vehicles. To avoid this, larger 'aircraft' tyres that had double-lining and low air-pressure were used. Vehicles were additionally made 'light' by removing anything that could be spared. Drivers also carried rope ladders and grids to provide grip to the wheels if they got stuck. To prevent clogging and damage from dust, air intakes were built into the vehicles. Adjustments in air filters also had to be made to keep the engines cool.[429] Although these mechanical changes considerably improved transportation, breakdowns of vehicles remained frequent. Corporal Layne's account illustrates this:

> The first batch of drivers left to meet the Jerries. This detachment was given a number of vehicles to convoy up the line [of communication]. I am not trying to attach any praise to old 'E' Company, but on reaching our destination with the whole convoy intact the authorities could not believe that the convoy was intact. We were the first to take such a long convoy intact over the sand.[430]

As the war intensified, the worst blow to South African forces came from the loss of the 2nd Infantry Division at Tobruk (1942). This included 3000 of NEAS' 'best men' who had mastered operating in the desert.[431] The result was a push for recruitment and the deployment of inexperienced soldiers. Additionally, experienced troops from East Africa also had to be trained in desert operations and especially in navigational skills that they were uniformly lacking in.[432] With dilution, the Directorate could no longer rely on its own officers to train the men 'on-the-go'. Subsequently, specialised training schools were set up for driving and maintenance, and also cooking, artisan training, medical units etc at the Garawi depot.[433] However, one of the biggest challenge of the campaign was exposure. Convoys in the desert were vulnerable to attacks by the Axis airforce and, among the newer recruits, there were

[429] *Op. cit.*, p.10
[430] UCTSC. 'Conquest of Eritrea', *The Cape Standard*, 17 March 1942.
[431] DOD. UWH, Box 158, Historical Survey of NEAS, p.8
[432] DOD. Divisional Documents, Box 141, M/2515. Adm Post 1 SA Infantry to HQ 1 SA Division, 19 July 1942.
[433] DOD. UWH, Box 158, Historical Survey of NEAS, p.7

reports of resentment at having to serve on the front as they had been given the impression that they would be in the 'third-line'. This resulted in panic and reckless driving.[434]

2.1. Digging in the sand: Axis bombing of 'Cape Lorries'

Camouflage (or, more accurately, mis-direction) was a novel element of the war in North Africa. The British command invested heavily in creating camouflage units that included zoologists, painters, architects, illusionists (magicians) for the sole purpose of inventing ways to mis-direct enemy reconnaissance and create false impressions of movement of troops, strength of troops, available infrastructure etc.[435] While patrolling was an important aspect of reconnaissance, both forces heavily relied on aerial spying for intelligence. Most famously, at the battle of El Alamein (1942), a phoney army of fake tanks (trucks camouflaged as tanks) was built to create the impression of Allied movement from the south while the real tanks (camouflaged as trucks) approached from the north.

Concealment played a crucial role in Allied victory at El Alamein. This scale of misdirection showcases the problem of exposure in the desert. Because the terrain was barren, all movement were marked by shadows, tracks and unnatural disturbances in the sand, making concealed movement almost impossible. Convoys thus drove 'in the open', vulnerable to enemy attack by air. Despite the measures of camouflage, convoys (especially large supply lines) were frequently attacked. CC/IMC MT units experienced this threat first-hand. Charles Adams described his brushes with Axis planes: 'I remember one morning there was a German Junker [aircraft]. The convoy trucks were nose to nose. The Junker dived so low, I could hear the rear

[434] DOD. Divisional Documents, Box 141, M/2515. Conduct of NE Personnel Message 0267, 9 July 1942.
[435] Forsyth, I. (2014). 'Designs on the desert: camouflage, deception and the militarisation of space'. *Cultural Geographies*.

gunner laughing, but he didn't fire. I don't know why. If he had fired I wouldn't be alive.'[436]

In another incident:

> One of the Sergeants spotted a flicker in the sun. It was the Jerries. He shouted to the convoy to scatter. They were bombarding us. I was lying next to another chap. They machine-gunned and dive-bombed at us. I was lying there and, all of a sudden, I hear a roaring noise come over. [It was] South African fighters [planes]. How the hell did they know what was going on. They were coming in very low. I just wanted to get away. When I got out of there, only then did I realise the danger I was in. It's just a matter of thinking. We lost four chaps that day.[437]

Adams' second recollection is of the 1 Squadron SAAF's famed 'Stuka Party', a forty-five minute engagement at El Alamein during which eleven South African Hurricanes shot down fourteen Junkers and one Bf109, and damaged two more planes of the German squadron, at a loss of one SAAF plane. Adams' description of the haze he felt during the battle, not realising the gravity of the situation until after, indicates the way soldiers coped with the mental anxiety and chaos of this form of warfare. Being caught by an air-borne enemy, unable to fight back and only able to wait the raid out would have been a nerve-wrecking experience. On being asked if he was afraid, Adams responded he was not. The rush of adrenaline kept him going. Private W. J. Daniels narrated three instances of air-raids:

> One day just after lunch we had an air-raid, but we had a stilt trench within reach in which to take cover and anti-aircraft and Bren-guns kept Jerry from having things his own way. The raid lasted from five to ten minutes, but it seemed like so many hours to us. That night just before sunset we had another raid and exploding ammunition and roaring fire are testimony of the horror of war. About 50 to 100 planes participated in the raid […] At one place I saw an Italian convoy blown to pieces by the RAF. This happened shortly before we passed, and the dead were still lying around. It was truly a gruesome sight. Then on another occasion we were machine-gunned by a few fighter planes and there we had some narrow escapes.[438]

[436] IWM. 18404, Reel 2.
[437] *Ibid.*
[438] UCTSC. 'A Soldier Describes Experiences', *The Cape Standard*, 24 March 1942.

While Daniels was able to take cover in a stilt trench, as his own account indicates, this was not always possible. Much like the tanks, soldiers learned to camouflage themselves by using salvage or taking cover in dug-outs and even in sand. In one incident, at a raid in Derna, two soldiers 'dived' into the red mud to avoid the bullets and cut 'funny figures' when they emerged from their refuge.[439] Mopeli-Paulus and his fellow soldiers once took cover in graves to successfully trick a reconnaissance plane into believing there was no activity in the area.[440] However, taking cover was not always possible. A British officer described an air-raid on a CC convoy in Libya:

> they had to traverse a road which ran along a cliff. There was a steep incline on the one side and a sheer drop on the other. The enemy planes tried their best to stop the progress of the convoy, but the Cape Corps drivers carried on regardless of the bombs. It was evidently the aim of the attackers was to block both ends of the road and trap the convoy in between and blot it out. Although we were splashed with mud and covered with dust, the convoy moved on as if nothing untoward was happening.[441]

This constant brush with death and the reality of air raids would have been an occurrence that soldiers, especially convoy drivers, would have had to accept as part of their regular operations, perhaps even normalise. As Adams stated, 'It's just a matter of thinking.' There were of course casualties in this crossfire. Sergeant L. A. Richards was injured during an air-raid while diving for a dug-out. Sergeant T. J. Kannemeyer's truck was gunned down in Derna.[442]

Accounts of engagement in the Western Desert usually highlight the major engagements of Tobruk, El Alamein, Sidi Rezegh etc. The CC/IMC view, however, illustrates that the war was in fact a more constant occurrence, especially for convoys. There were no lulls for the pioneers and drivers and, in fact, disruption of supply lines was crucial to the success of the campaign. Despite not being combatants, NEAS ranks were serving constantly on the frontline and it is

[439] UCTSC. 'Never Braver or Better Soldiers', *The Cape Standard*, 5 May 1942.
[440] Mopeli-Paulus, *The World and the Cattle*, p.95
[441] UCTSC. 'They serve with a smile', *The Cape Standard*, 19 May 1942.
[442] UCTSC. 'A Soldier Describes Experiences', *The Cape Standard*, 24 March 1942.

only through the maintenance of these supply lines by auxiliary units that the Eight Army was able to defend against and pursue the German forces. Although not as 'spectacular' as the tank battles, the ingenuity, grit and labour of the MT and Work companies was central to Allied victory in the desert.

3. Death in the Desert: 1942

Pain, suffering, death are experiences central to a war. This section reconstructs CC/IMC's participation in one of the most crucial battles that turned the Desert Campaign in favour of the Allied armies – the Battle of El Alamein fought in November 1942. During the same year, the Royal Navy had all but lost control of the Mediterranean Sea and the fighting in the desert was redirected to regain naval power. The first step towards this was to stop the Axis advance in Egypt and the Allied forces decided to face-off Rommel at El Alamein. The final aim, however, was to secure the port of Derna from where the Italian peninsula was easily accessible by a short flight. This push was hard-fought on both sides and resulted in heavy losses and casualties. The intense engagements along the 'Gazala line', at El Alamein, and finally at Derna have featured heavily in CC/IMC accounts and are reflective of the mental impact that the battles of 1942 had on CC/IMC ranks.

Interviews and accounts narrated by White Officers and soldiers frequently describe the collectedness and cheerfulness of the CC/IMC men, and their bravery under fire. An excerpt of an officer's report published in *The Cape Standard* informed that 'Right through the first division you hear nothing but praise for these men, from senior Officers, NCOs and European soldiers.'[443] Although supported by evidence, these articles were part of DNEAS' propaganda efforts to maintain morale and boost recruitment. They do have under-lying motives to present a dauntless, unwavering, dutiful and cool non-White soldier in the face of a formidable enemy.

[443] UCTSC. 'Achievements of the Cape Corps', *The Cape Standard,* 14 April 1942.

The sub-text is directed at the un-enlisted – the revered soldier on the front could be you if you join. Another motive was to create the perception of communal participation in the war and maintain support at home. However, while awards, mention-in-despatches, episodes like the attack on the convoy in Libya are proof of this imagined steadfastness, the first-person accounts of Adams and Daniels present the soldiers in a less perfect and more humane light – homesick men enduring the stress, performing their duties and surviving in the fog of war.

From May 1941 to June 1942, the bulk of Allied and Axis forces were engaged in a series of battles at what was known as the Gazala Line, which the Allied armies were holding to defend Tobruk. The 1st and 2nd SA Division were deployed with the Eight Army. After the fall of Tobruk, the Eight Army was scattered and falling back to El Alamein. However, part of the forces were chased and engaged by General Rommel at the Battle of Mersa Matruh (fortress port in Egypt). Rommel intended to wipe out the army while it was disorganised and in retreat.[444] NEAS troops served at both Gazala and El Alamein and some of the MT drivers were at Mersa Matruh. On the frontline they were attached to artillery units, medical units (as stretcher-bearers) and even the drivers were in the thick of the action. Private John Booysens, a CC driver, was awarded the MM for saving a gun crew. His heroism was reported by a correspondent, published on the front page of *The Cape Standard*, describing how he repeatedly crawled through heavy fire to secure an ambulance for the wounded crew. He had to wait for two hours before help arrived and in the meantime he attended to the wounded soldiers, providing first aid as best as he could. Once the crew were helped, Booysens returned to his truck and destroyed the engine with a hammer as the truck had been badly damaged from the shelling. On being asked about his experience by the correspondent, 'he told me that the

[444] The bulk of the Allied forces attacked were the British, Indian and New Zealand divisions. NEAS MT units were perhaps the only South African troops at the battle. The Allied forces did not have enough supplies and could not organise to mount a defence. Despite the odds and the heavy losses (6,000 POWs in addition to the 35,000 at Tobruk), the Eight Army survived.

bombardier of the gun crew was a fine man, 'When I was helping him, he kept saying 'don't bother about me, look after the others'.'[445]

The correspondent's reporting seems to suggest that he heard the story elsewhere and *then* endeavoured to meet the soldier in question. While Booysens' bravery is certainly commendable, his comment at the end, in remembrance of the bombardier, provides a glimpse into the emotions of a soldier watching his fellow-men die. It is of course difficult to expound on the impact of such incidents on soldiers. But the trauma of war and the death that accompanied it would have stayed with these men long after the last post. As James Brown, a South African gunner, described in his memoir, 'Killing the enemy is not war; war is seeing your pals die.'[446]

In another act of heroism, an unnamed CC driver saved an entire brigade staff that had escaped German captivity. The staff of fifteen were attempting to head back to Allied lines when they spotted a 'Cape Lorry' heading for the German line. Assuming the truck had been captured, the men decided to attack and re-capture it. However, the driver turned out to be a CC soldier who explained that he was searching for his colonel whom he had 'lost'. The brigade staff was then driven back to safety and, presumably (as nothing was reported), the colonel was safe too.[447] Private J Edwards was awarded the BEM for preventing a petrol dump from exploding. Enemy planes were dropping incendiary bombs at Mishiefa (railhead west of Mersa Matruh) when Edwards realised the danger to the petrol dump. He led other CC soldiers and extinguished the bombs with sand.[448] Sapper W. Stevens of IMC was awarded the MM for carrying out 'numerous dangerous operations under fire, such as driving truckloads of mines

[445] UCTSC. 'Coloured Soldier's Heroism Under Fire', *The Cape Standard*, 7 July 1942.
[446] Brown, J. (1991). *Retreat to Victory*. Ashanti Publications, p.276
[447] UCTSC. 'Never Braver or Better Soldiers', *The Cape Standard*, 5 May 1942.
[448] DOD. UWH, Box 159, Record of NEAS, Appendix A

and explosives to various positions with the utmost calm and efficiency.'[449] Another account relaying the events of 1942 is by Adams who was by then a Corporal. His experiences at Gazala and Mersa Matruh:

> I was […] at the last line, the Gazala line. We could hear it all, [the tanks were] like two boxers going off. One day we lost twenty tanks. At the retreat we picked up troops. They didn't look miserable. They just wanted to get back to their unit […] We [the convoy] picked two Bren-gun carriers and I took them and went to Mersa Matruh, pulled up and had something to eat, whatever there was. That night the firing began and it was so loud, we could feel our bodies shaking.[450]

As the forces re-grouped at El Alamein, the dwindling numbers of the Eighth Army meant measures had to be taken to strengthen the line. Part of this was the armament of NEAS units. Additionally, on 13 October 1942, IMC was merged with CC, increasing the strength of CC to 40,000.[451] It was also decided that select CC units should be formed and trained in the use of rifles. Daniels was chosen as part of this scheme and described that 'a week's training has again proved us to be competent with any European unit. The 'darkies' as we are called, really have the ability of any other soldier.'[452] Also deployed at El Alamein was Mopeli-Paulus who provided an informative description of the Second Battle:

> Of all things the most wonderful to me […] was the sight of the arrival of a batch of Coloured troops…who were actually driving Bren carriers [light armoured vehicles with machine guns]. They had been trained in the field to manage them and looked proud and happy. We too were like new men, because at last we had been issued with arms, for the first time in our war service. Our issue of rum made us brave and confident that the battle would be won. Of us all, the tea-leaf smokers were the gayest. Everyone was in good humour and, while we waited, the banjos played.[453]

[449] UCTSC. 'IMC Soldier Awarded', *The Cape Standard*, 18 August 1942
[450] IWM. 18404, Reel 2.
[451] DOD. UWH, Box 159, Record of NEAS, p.37. Hereafter, where just 'CC' is mentioned, it is inclusive of IMC ranks unless mentioned otherwise.
[452] UCTSC. 'With CC in the Middle-East', *The Cape Standard*, 10 March 1942.
[453] Mopeli- Paulus, p.91

NEAS troops at El Alamein served majorly as stretcher-bearers, artillery gunners, armed guards, and ground staff for SAAF. They were not part of the fighting infantry because: (i) while arming of CC/IMC guards had been approved, they were not to be trained for combatant roles,[454] (ii) there was also not enough time to train them for combat. El Alamein, since June 1942 was constantly under attack. The Second Battle, as it is known, began as early as the end of October. The short training period would have allowed only for basic instruction in handling and using a rifle. Thus, experienced combatants who would have otherwise been used for guard duties, were relieved for frontline fighting. Mopeli-Paulus' first role in the field was that of a guide. Because the battle was fought at night, tracks were laid beforehand stretching forty miles for troops to march to the frontline. Mopeli-Paulus had been assigned one of these tracks and was to direct the troops to the location. As a result, he was in the 'rear' of the frontline, next to the artillery line with the gunners. Mopeli-Paulus' description provides a sense of what it was like to be in the battlefield especially as a non-White South African soldier who had been officially armed for the first time in World War II and was part of the advance in one of the most important battles of the campaign:

> 'Along the ridge the big guns were preparing to fire. I could hear the officers speaking to their men, so close was I to the guns, and the 'cling-cling' of them as they swung. The ground was heaving and swarming with vehicles of all types, including Bren carriers and tanks. A big job was to be done: the job of killing other human beings. I began to feel I was a soldier, about to do my share […] the opening up of hundreds of big guns, all fired in one tremendous shot. I was so shaken that for a few seconds I knew nothing.'[455]

Mopeli-Paulus provides little information on his other duties in the course of the war but his emphasis on the battle at El Alamein reflects the importance of the event to him. Like Daniels, that he finally feels himself a 'soldier', despite his lengthy deployment, indicates the insufficiency soldiers like him felt in and about their participation. Adams was also at the battle

[454] DOD. UWH, Box 158, NAREP UNFO:12, Various 'Praise' Documents, p.21
[455] Mopeli-Paulus, p.92

as a driver and his recollection supports this argument. 'When the guns all went off, it was just like thunder. The flashes were as bright as daylight. For forty-five miles it was just guns – oh, just amazing! […] I would have liked to have gone up with the main push – I would have liked to be in the fighting.'[456] Also notable in the accounts is the 'thrill' of the battle. Both Adams and Mopeli-Paulus are taken by the immensity of the operation. Unlike their previous experiences of skirmishes, this was an organised war-zone that pulled in a vast amount of men and resources. To witness and participate in such a battle would have been momentous for them. In the aftermath of the campaign, Mopeli-Paulus served in the 'Grave unit', recovering the bodies of the dead. They were to search for bodies (they could be whole or dismembered), cover them with sand, and scavenge for identity cards. He described:

> We dug out all the half-buried bodies, collected them together and transported them to their new places. The stink was horrible. Flies in great numbers collected on the corpses. Sometimes we could not eat for them. We were not issued with gloves. It was a tough job that took us two months, all the time with sore hearts.[457]

Mopeli-Paulus' experience, from the excitement and anxiety of action and pride of armament, to the morbid work of interring the war dead exemplifies a complete arc of the finality of war. Like him, Adams, and Daniels, CC/IMC ranks who had been in this battle would have viewed it as a defining moment of their service. Whether they were awed by the engagement or nervous about their participation, or somewhere in between, the experience would have left many with trauma. They would have seen a brutal loss of limbs and lives on both sides and been made aware of the destruction that war brings. Moved by his experience, Mopeli-Paulus penned a poem. Following is an extract:

> Here lies El Alamein of yesterday:
> El Alamein, birthplace of victory,
> in the coldness of the desert the cemetery stands.

[456] IWM. 18404, Reel 2.
[457] Mopeli-Paulus, p.96

A man is no hero until he is dead
and lies beneath the cold soil,
shut out from the air
and the gossip and noise of the earth.[458]

4. Guarding the Desert: From North Africa to Middle East

With the decline in fighting in the desert campaign, at the beginning of 1943 NEAS units were re-located to depots in the Middle East where the Allied forces had also had successes. The Middle East lines (from Cairo to Aleppo, a 2000-mile route) were strategic for maintaining operations in the Mediterranean theatre. Allied stores of munitions, workshops, rest and training camps, reinforcements were located here, as well as large POW camps. NEAS units were now also assigned in guard and provost duties. They were no longer involved in active conflict zones but were, once more, replacing White auxiliaries to free personnel for the Italian Campaign. As an example, in May 1943, before departing for the campaign, 6th South African Division 'shed' 7000 CC personnel who were relocated to the Middle East. In June 1943, 10 CC battalions were formed under the command of Lieutenant Colonel Foxon. The expectation was that these units would possibly serve in a combatant capacity in Europe or the Far East but they were ultimately consigned to POW guard duties at Geneifa (Egypt).[459] Elements of the 103 CC Battalion were deployed as security in Raffa (Palestine) and the 104 CC in Algiers. Guard duties, as a report informs, were:

> heartbreakingly monotonous and they were required to serve in a trying place from a climatic point of view. Carrying on efficiently day after day therefore called for a lot of moral courage and devotion to duty from both officers and men […] Although these men clamoured for and genuinely desired to take a more active part in the war in a combatant role, their relegation to less conspicuous but nevertheless vital work, did not effect their efficiency as soldiers.[460]

[458] *Ibid*.
[459] DOD. UWH, Box 158, Historical Survey of NEAS, p.17
[460] *Ibid*.

Despite the relative lack of focus on this service in sources, there was a notable incident involving a POW guard. Private J. Stevens of CC was awarded the MM for his 'zealous' work. Stevens was transporting thirty POWs when, due to a dust-storm, he lost contact with his convoy and, owing to poor visibility, drove into a minefield. The rear wheel was blown off by a mine and, despite the danger, Stevens managed to replace the wheel. He then attempted to reverse the truck on its tracks, but the front wheel hit a second mine, rendering the truck immobile. Stevens then decided to gather the POWs in a safe spot. On their refusal to walk through the minefield, he led them individually to safety. Once out of the minefield he made the prisoners dig a hole to sit in for the night and himself stood on guard. A German POW tried to escape but was recaptured by Stevens. The next morning, he led the prisoners to a railway line five-miles away and handed them to the OC there. He then walked another ten miles and reported back to his unit.[461]

Although Stevens' experience can certainly be described as dangerous and eventful, regular guard duties, as the report described, were monotonous. In fact, to break the monotony and maintain morale, recreation and sports activities were increased. At Garawi educational facilities were established for soldiers. They could also now go sight-seeing and be entertained at different leave camps and soldiers' clubs.[462] CC soldiers with the 6th South African Division in the Middle East established their own paper, 'The Fighting Sixth', and were provided with resources for the same.[463] In a letter to *The Cape Standard*, a soldier described the living conditions in the Middle East:

> I do not hesitate to say there is a vast difference between occupied enemy territory and neutral country, as where we find ourselves at the moment. One notices a big change. Life seems to be real and worth living in an area like this, when you are used to living in a dead area as we did before [in North Africa]. The one complaint from all the new

[461] DOD. UWH, Box 159, Record of NEAS, Appendix A.
[462] *See* Chapter 5.
[463] UCTSC. 'CC have their Own Paper', *The Cape Standard*, 28 December 1943.

> arrivals is about the terrible cold and the dust, which nobody like, especially when you have to face it as we do now. Water is scarce and you cannot bathe as desired. Food is abundant and a good meal by fairly well-trained cooks is always enjoyed.[464]

Life, as the soldier implied, was slower and monotonous for these details. The work companies settled into construction of telephone lines, water supply, roads and tunnels, buildings, aerodromes and other infrastructure for the Mediterranean theatre. Four new CC MT companies (136, 137, 138, 139) were formed in September 1943 to maintain supply lines in North Africa, Gaza and the Benghazi region.[465] Large convoys of all types of military vehicles were moved from North Africa through the Sinai desert to Palestine. On one occasion, select drivers of 133 CC MT were tasked with driving eighteen new Packard Sedans from Cairo to Aleppo, as a gift from the British government to the Turkish Army.[466] A more interesting role was adopted by a party of CC soldiers attached to the 6th South African Division, who formed a troupe, the 'Anywhere Boys', and prepared a series of four concerts called 'The Crazy Capers'. These were attended by approximately 6000 soldiers. The Divisional Commander, Major-General W Poole, attended the final concert and was so impressed by their show, he awarded the best performers five extra days of leave and recommended that they tour the Middle East.[467]

[464] UCTSC. 'With CC in the Middle East', *The Cape Standard*, 10 March 1942.
[465] DOD. UWH, Box 158, Historical Survey of NEAS, p.18
[466] *Op. cit.*, p.6
[467] UCTSC. 'Cape Corps Soldiers Entertain the Sixth Division', *The Cape Standard*, 2 November 1943.

Figure 10 Princess Frederika of Greece inspecting CC Guard of Honour at SA Base, Middle East. MEM1991. IWM.

Approximately 15000 NEAS served behind the lines. As is general with sentry work in other campaigns of WII, the lack-lustre work assigned to these soldiers has meant that the service of these men received less attention in sources. However, their presence was crucial to the occupation of important Allied outposts and ensured the safe transitions of Allied troops across the Suez. That the ranks maintained military decorum and the dignity of their uniforms is also reflective of their own conviction in their duties as a soldier, despite being away from the frontline and in uninspiring circumstances. Still, with the end of hostilities in the region, the acronym for the Middle East Forces, 'MEF', was interpreted by Allied soldiers as 'Men England Front'.

5. An Inconspicuous Service: The Other Campaigns

CC/IMC served on three more fronts: in Italy, Madagascar, and in the Union. However, unlike in East Africa and North Africa, their numbers on these three fronts were relatively small. Additionally, being relegated to support roles, as has been seen, further hid their service from historical records. In the war histories, 1944 has been dominated by studies of the battles on

the French coast, the Russian push on the Eastern front and the American-Japanese engagements in the Pacific. The occupation of Italy and Madagascar have received less consideration. Within these histories, CC/IMC participation was, unsurprisingly, inconspicuous, but not insignificant. The Italian campaign provided a novel opportunity for non-combatant NEAS to serve in continental Europe – in a region that had been propagandised as the birth of White civilisation. Alternatively, the Home Front provided opportunities for the non-White community to associate military service with their own communal cultures, identities and histories. Despite the challenges in reconstructing these histories, they cannot be excluded from the historical survey of CC/IMC.

5.1. In Italy

Axis losses in North Africa were greater than the casualties of Stalingrad.[468] Although the defeat was staggering, Axis forces were still holding out in several regions. Following the victory in North Africa, Allied forces had two options for further campaigns, (i) to open a 'second front' in north-western Europe (to draw away German forces while Stalin prepared for an attack from the east), (ii) to 'liberate' the Italian peninsula and knock Italy out of the war. Because of heavy German U-boat activity in the Atlantic, the British and the American forces could not sufficiently gather men and resources for the second front and thus, the attack on Italy was finalised in 1943. With virtually full control of the Mediterranean, the Allied plan was to move the Desert forces to Sicily and the peninsula. Despite initial success, the northern invasion was hard fought and the Allied troops only entered Rome in June 1944.[469] Moreover, the troops deployed were already battle-weary and morale was low.

[468] Barbier, M. (2015). 'The War in the West, 1943–1945'. In Ferris, Mawdsley (Eds.), *The Cambridge History of the Second World War Volume I*. CUP. pp.391-393
[469] *Ibid*.

NEAS service in Europe was, predictably, a contested issue. Despite repeated and multiple reassurances by White NEAS officers, there was initial resistance to deploying them. This was partly because, as has been analysed, diluted regiments did have challenges of assimilation and functioning. Although dilution brought these regiments to full strength, it was feared that the inclusion of NEAS troops was dampening overall morale and, thus, it was considered 'unwise' to deploy diluted regiments in a combat zone.[470] Additionally, non-White personnel with diluted troops had qualified for Union Leave and inexperienced recruits were being used for dilution. Thus, there was scepticism over involving inexperienced soldiers in combat zones. There were also concerns over non-White troops mingling with White women.[471] Nevertheless, war trumped race.

To serve outside of Africa, all UDF soldiers had to sign a 'General Oath' and again volunteer their service. Most NEAS soldiers who signed the oath were deployed in Middle East. Owing to the above listed hesitancies, only select NEAS troops were attached to units bound for Italy. The initial detachments of diluted regiments mostly included NMC troops. In April 1944, however, the 6th South African Armoured Division including 2300 CC soldiers was deployed. These men were mostly employed in menial duties as cook, batmen, construction workers, drivers, and as stretcher-bearers. The Work Companies, as on the other fronts, served in abysmal conditions. One CC work unit in Pian di Setta, which had previously been relentlessly bombed by Allied planes, established themselves in derailed Axis rail-carriages for the winter.[472] In units short on strength, the batmen were the stretcher bearers. At Monte Caprara, CC batmen replaced Italian bearers[473] on the field as the Italians were 'distressed' by the heavy

[470] DOD. UWH, Box 158, Historical Survey of NEAS, p.12
[471] DOD. UWH, Box 159, Record of NEAS, p.152
[472] Bourhill, *Come back to Portofino*, p.325
[473] These were civilian medics hired by Allied armies.

bombing.[474] Captain Ken Elkin of the Special Service Battalion informs of one CC soldier, 'Sgt Brown', who was a school teacher in civilian life, and a batman and bearer in Italy. He was also a linguist and was able to learn Italian. He then acted as an interpreter for intelligence-gathering.[475]

Despite these 'invisible' roles, CC stretcher-bearers in particular acquired a glowing reputation. CC Ambulance jeeps with two bearers each proved successful in evacuating casualties in mountainous areas.[476] Bearers would provide first aid and evacuate the wounded from frontline positions on sleighs. At Chiusi, CC bearers worked 'in the open' in enemy-controlled areas under heavy fire.[477] Lance-Corporal Solomon Fillies was awarded the MM for aiding and evacuating his wounded platoon commander under heavy sniper fire.[478] Lance-Corporal William Colete was awarded the MM for his bravery and leadership. Under heavy mortar fire he himself carried out no fewer than ten seriously injured soldiers and returned to the front 'again and again', inspiring his team to 'great heights of endurance'. Later, at the battle of Monte Sole, Colete was wounded when 'a sniper's bullet entered his left eye and exited the right.'.[479] As a result he was blinded at the age of 24.[480] Also at the assault of Monte Sole were Private Harry Petersen and Private Johannes Phyfer. When all the stretcher bearers of their company, including their White NCO became casualties, both privates carried the wounded to a village down a steep slope (500 ft below) by themselves throughout the night.[481] At this

[474] Kros, J. (1992). *War in Italy*. Ashanti Publishing. p.153
[475] *Op. cit.*, p.152
[476] DOD. UWH, Box 159, Record of NEAS, p.27
[477] Kros, *War in* Italy, p.153
[478] DOD. UWH, Box 158, Historical Survey of NEAS, p.14
[479] UCTSC. 'Blinded Ex-Soldier', *The Cape Standard*, 9 October 1945.
[480] Bourhill, *Come Back to Portofino*, p.308
[481] UCTSC. 'Two more Military Medals', *The Cape Standard*, 21 July 1945.

engagement, 3 CC ranks were killed and another 8 wounded.[482] In appreciation of their service, Private E. W. Leppan of the Royal Durban Light Infantry recounted:

> Nothing could be more impressive than to see the men running up the path almost brushing us as they did so and returning with the wounded. They ran both ways, completely disregarding enemy fire, all of them sobbing for breath with the tongues hanging out like exhausted dogs. I remember one badly wounded man staggering back saying [to them]: 'My God I hope you're not going into that.[483]

W. L. Fielding, who was with the 6th Division at the tank battle near Viterbo (north of Rome), reflectively remembered:

> From time to time grey-black clouds of smoke would raise their ugly heads among the advancing Springboks, figures would fall to earth, and as the smoke cleared, a little party carrying the Red Cross flag would go forward – the stretcher-bearers, often men of the Cape Corps.[484]

Most South African White memoirs from the war tend to not feature non-White men. That their service as stretcher-bearers in Italy was particularly remembered is reflective of the admiration that these men felt and the dedication of CC's stretcher-bearers. It also images the harrowing tasks that were being performed by these ranks and the grit with which they fulfilled their roles, shocking even the combatants.

[482] Bourhill, *Come back to Portofino*, p.328
[483] *OP. cit.*, p.379
[484] Fielding, W. (1946). *With the Sixth Division*. Shuter & Shooter. p.105

Figure 11 CC Stretcher-bearers. I761. NMMH

As previously mentioned, morale of the British and South African forces in the peninsula was low and this impacted NEAS ranks too, with rising cases of indiscipline. Long service and poor treatment by the White ranks was beginning to take to its toll on the men.[485] Official reports blamed bad behaviour of NEAS specifically on the 'unfamiliar' climate and culture, the availability of 'wine and women', and the presence of 'doubtful characters' among the ranks who stirred trouble.[486] However, the specification of NEAS behaviour is reflective of institutional prejudice as the consensus among Allied commands was of battle-weariness causing low morale. That the NEAS were believed too incompetent to cope in non-African places indicates the racism of South African commands. It also shows that NEAS soldiers were not considered qualified to have the same issues as White combatants. However, the problem of exhaustion was widespread. On a visit to the Italian Front, Adjutant-General R. F. Adam found that many of the senior ranks were concerned about battle-weariness causing mass desertion (this never materialised).[487] After the fall of Florence to the Allied forces in 1944, the

[485] Bourhill, *Come Back to Portofino*, p.43

[486] DOD. UWH, Box 158, Historical Survey of NEAS, p.13

[487] French, D. (2001). *Raising Churchill's Army*. OUP, p.123; Battle-weariness was officially defined as the condition in which a soldier had reached their psychological breaking-point and was 'battle exhausted'.

6th South African Division was given leave and most of the troops travelled to Rome. Alex Fry recounted that 'Wine, women and song became the order of the day and rightly or wrongly it was the reaction after the disciple, strain and horror of war. I was an onlooker at the time and it was clear to me that the morale of the regiment was down to rock bottom.'[488]

To better the condition among NEAS ranks numerous steps were taken. The policy adopted was to *not* punish the 'innocent with the guilty'. No privileges were restricted. Instead, efforts were made to 'weed out' the 'drunkards, recidivists and malicious agitators'. To create more opportunities for recreation, a CC Theatre unit for entertainment and a Cape Corps Club for tourism were established. Performances by CC bands and theatre units were popular with all troops.[489] An NEAS Leave Camp was also established near Bari. This camp, run mainly by NEAS NCOs, was also a rehabilitation centre where the 'undesirable' was, as an officer reported:

> Instead of being treated like a criminal, he was treated like a gentleman. He was given the same leave, recreational and canteen facilities as the other men […] He was not regarded with suspicion, contempt or as a criminal; neither was he allowed to assume the pose of 'a champion of the oppressed.' […] Many difficult and arrogant individuals became rational men after a period in this camp and rendered excellent service on reposting to other units.[490]

The above excerpt, although positive on the surface, testified to the discrimination that soldiers were receiving. It can be argued that the attitude of men who were being rehabilitated was poor due to the mistreatment that they were receiving. The impact of being treated in a dignified manner could have only had a positive outcome if they had not been treated with that same dignity previously which, most likely, caused or worsened the perceived 'arrogance'. When viewed from this lens, it is then unsurprising that soldiers responded well to being treated as a

[488] IWM. 12466, Private Papers R A Fry, p.23
[489] UCTSC. 'Cape Corps Club in Italy', *The Cape Standard*, 24 October 1944; 'CC Theatre in Italy', *The Cape Standard*, 13 February 1945.
[490] DOD. UWH, Box 158, Historical Survey of NEAS, pp.13-14

'normal human being'. It can also be construed that the men sent to this camp had not been charged with any criminal conduct but were most likely guilty of insubordination, misbehaviour and unionising. Soldiers facing charges of indiscipline or criminal conduct were sent to punishment centres where they served sentences of hard labour. This practice of reforming 'undesirables' was also unique to DNEAS within South African forces as usually corrective measures would have been carried out by OCs and officers within camps to manage and maintain discipline among rank-and-file. The intensity of war in Italy, the mismanagement of NEAS rank-and-file by White UDF officers, and battle-weariness in general, had created the need for these unique camps which were not present in the African theatres.

A more serious case in Italy was that of NMC Private Ngma who got drunk, raped and shot dead an Italian woman. He was court-marshalled and sentenced to death. This was the only case of execution of a South African soldier in Italy.[491] John Pitts, an NCO with SAAF, was one of the executioners:

> They had a promulgation parade on the field at Foggia. They brought units from all round Italy – especially NMC units: Swazi chaps, Pioneer Corps, East Africans. They brought quite a few detachments from various SAAF squadrons as well. They read out the sentence in English, Afrikaans and several languages and he was sentenced to be shot dead at dawn the next day […] [The next morning] Our padre who spend the night with this chap, came to us and said 'If it helps you blokes, I've been talking to him most of the night. He realises he did wrong and he is prepared to pay for it.' […] Then the MO came on and pinned a white disc over the chap's heart. He said something to the prisoner, who looked away, then bowed his head. The MO blindfolded him. Then we were ordered to pick up the rifles to fire. And then quick as hell, right turn, quick march and around the other side […] It's quite different killing a bloke like that than in war, you know.[492]

The death penalty was not a punishment that was meted out frequently within British imperial forces. The British army had abolished the death penalty for desertion before the start of the war. While there were multiple reasons for this, primarily, with growing studies on battle-

[491] DOD. UWH, Box 159, Record of NEAS, p.79
[492] Quoted in Kros, *War in Italy*, p.159

weariness post-World War I, it was sufficiently refuted that death penalties did not discourage desertion and only lead to the loss of 'able' fighting men who could, otherwise, be reintegrated.[493] Usually, the punishments for criminal offences involved sentences of dishonourable discharge, hard labour and confinement. In non-criminal cases, the sentences were reviewed periodically and could be reduced for good behaviour.

However, to maintain morale and disciple, commanding ranks did occasionally make 'examples' of offenders. In 1944, two deserters of the 1st Black Watch who returned to their unit were 'manacled and sent into no man's land at night with a patrol as an example to others'.[494] Thus, the death sentence that Ngma received, the subsequent promulgation parade, the reading of the sentence in African languages – these were clearly meant to serve as a warning to non-White African troops to maintain discipline. That colonial African units were also present at the parade shows that this was endorsed by the British command. It is difficult to assess whether this episode had a direct impact on conduct of non-White ranks or how troops realised the execution. But, as a result of all the above measures, discipline among NEAS ranks did improve. In May 1945, Major-General Frank Theron stated in a letter:

> After careful observation over the last 6-9 months it has become evident that offences, in particular the more serious, committed by members of NEAS in Italy, have considerably decreased […] Non-Europeans are of good and stable character [and] can equally withstand the rigours of war and the innumerable temptations which inevitably must come before them at all times in this theatre of operations.[495]

5.2. In Madagascar

In 1942, after the fall of Singapore, Smuts was concerned that the Japanese navy would bring the war to the Union's coast. As a result, he pressured the War Cabinet at Whitehall to approve

[493] French, D. (1998). 'Discipline and the Death Penalty in the British Army during the Second World War'. *Journal of Contemporary History*, p.535
[494] French, *Raising Churchill's Army*, p.141
[495] DOD. UWH, Box 159, Record of NEAS, p.60

the occupation of Madagascar which would act as a defensive post for the Union.[496] The plan was approved and, primarily, the Royal Navy, a British infantry brigade, South African combatants and SAAF on reconnaissance were deployed, alongside other imperial reinforcements from the continent. Most of the warfare was on the coastlines and north of the island. In a matter of a few months, the Vichy forces were driven out and the main ports were occupied. Following this, the British forces were moved out and the 3rd South African Division was posted on the island.

Very little is known about the NEAS' involvement in Madagascar.[497] The available sources have already been collated and reconstructed in Gleeson's *Unknown Force*.[498] A short letter in *The Cape Standard* described the embarkation of NEAS to Madagascar. 'The men of the Indian and Malay Corps livened up the embarkation with their singing. Many brought with them their musical instruments and played all the bright and lively tunes they knew.'[499] The campaign had all the challenges of a tropical climate – heat, malaria and dysentery. Diluted NEAS soldiers served in the usual menial roles of batmen, cooks, scullions, hygiene personnel, drivers, pioneers etc. Coastal artillery was also deployed. However, owing to the exigences in North Africa, most White gunners were deployed on the Desert front. Subsequently, CC gunners significantly outnumbered the White personnel in Coastal artillery units and served as armed combatants.[500] They were part of but one engagement. CC personnel also served with the 1st

[496] Jackson, *The British Empire and the Second World War*, p.341

[497] Some works on the campaign: Phillips, R. (2021). *A Strange Campaign: The Battle for Madagascar*. Shilka Publishing; Thomas, M. (1996). 'Imperial Backwater or Strategic The British Takeover of Vichy Madagascar in 1942'. *Historical Journal*.; Benbow, T. (2005). 'Operation Ironclad: The British Invasion of Madagascar May 1942'. In Lovering (Ed.) *Amphibious Assault - Manoeuvre from the Sea*. Blackwell; Jackson, A. (2001). *War and Empire in Mauritius and the Indian Ocean*. Palgrave MacMillan; Grehan, J. (2013) *Churchill's Secret Invasion: Britain's First Large Scale Combined Operations Offensive 1942*. Pen & Sword Books; Grainger, J. (2013). *Traditional Enemies: Britain's War with Vichy France 1940-42*. Pen & Sword Books.

[498] Gleeson, *The Unknown Force*, pp.208-216

[499] UCTSC. 'For Madagascar', *The Cape Standard*, 7 July 1942.

[500] Gleeson, *The Unknown Force*, p.210.

Pack Transport Company and were known for their ability to conceal and camouflage their animals and lead them to forward locations with minimal noise. An SAPC special broadcast in the Union praised their work. 'They [CC] have a deep understanding of their animal comrades, who follow them with great confidence over most difficult country.'[501]

By December 1942, the naval threat had been deterred and most of the South African units were moved out. Only the Pack Transport units remained on the island. Because the campaign was not too heavy on 'war' and the Japanese invasion never materialised, it has, consequently, largely remained ignored within World War II historiographies. The months following are best surmised in the words of Arthur Blintiff (Pretoria Highlanders) who described the occupation as a 'protracted picnic, with plenty of discomforts and annoyances, in a hot country.'[502]

5.3. In the Union

NEAS service in the Union was very different from service on the frontline. For one, the Union was not embroiled in the chaos of war. In fact, save for the social trauma, South Africa's economy experienced a boom in the war years.[503] The expected Axis invasion of Union shores never materialised. The Union was one of the few belligerent powers in the war with no active conflicts on its domestic soil. Consequently, non-White troops serving in the Union remained under the vigilance of the segregated state, unlike the troops deployed outside of SA.

Initially, NEAS units in the Union involved those who were employed in administration (recruiting, clerical work) and at training camps. These posts were usually filled by CC veterans of World War I and educated men from non-White communities. NEAS Work Companies also served in many parts of the Union, usually engaged in military projects. On occasion some MT

[501] UCTSC. 'Coloured Troops in Madagascar', *The Cape Standard*, 1 September 1942.
[502] Klehynnas, E. (2020). 'A Protracted Picnic'? In. Van der Waag (Ed.), *Sights, Sounds, Memories*. African Sun Media, p.105
[503] Nasson, *History of South Africa at War*, p.19

and work units would also be used for government work. Unlike the East Africa and North Africa fronts, these work companies were better housed, had facilities, and recreation was regularly arranged for them.[504]

Deployment in the Union began on a large-scale due to manpower shortage. White guards and sentries were replaced with CC armed guards and, absurdly, NMC units with assegais (spears). Predictably, armed non-White guards were politically problematic. A scathing piece was published in *Die Burger*, the Nationalist Party's organ, denounced the use of non-White guards against Italian POWs, calling it an 'insult to White people'. It further warned of racial strife unless the 'criminal stupidity' was corrected.[505] The Nationalist Party had run a sustained campaign against non-White armament. Of course, despite their efforts, the deployment of non-White sentries was not stopped considering the manpower shortage in UDF. Additionally, in mid-1942 diluted CC gunners were deployed for coastal defence at Simonstown, Port Elizabeth, East London, Cape Town, and Saldahna Bay. Although the attached personnel were supposed to only serve as batmen, orderlies, drivers – the eventual shortage resulted in the staffing of non-White gunners with White instructors.[506]

A more popular role in the Union was that of the Regimental Bands of CC and IMC. The CC band, established in World War I, was well-liked among military ranks and civilian circles. So much so that despite demobilisation, a collective effort was made by both groups to keep the band alive. Subsequently, they were used for recruitment during World War II, performed for visiting troops and dignitaries, performed on the African fronts, and entertained CC/IMC soldiers leaving and returning to the Union. An article on the band's visit to Uitenhage (now Kariega) in 1942 for the World War I memorial service indicates their popularity: 'Saturday

[504] DOD. WD, Box 150, To DDMO 163 Works Feb, Routine Order 28 27/2/43.
[505] UCTSC. 'Non-Europeans who guard Italian Prisoners', *The Cape Standard*, 10 November 1942.
[506] Crook, L. (1994). 'Non-White Personnel in the SA Artillery: 1939-45'. *Scientia Militaria*, p.24

was a red-letter day for the Coloured community of Uitenhage when the Cape Corps Band and two drill squads of the Cape Corps and Indian and Malay Corps visited the town. Thousands of people, both Coloured and European, lined the streets along the route.'[507]

CC/IMC service in the Union was more 'comfortable' compared to the front. Soldiers could return home more frequently, had better access to facilities, engaged in regular recreations, and had access to their families. But they were also under the watchful eye of the segregationist state and any disturbance to the racial status quo was put down swiftly. Non-White soldiers in the Union did not have the opportunity to form the bonds of comradery (with each other and with other Allied troops) that NEAS ranks on the front formed. In fact, some of the worst inter-ethnic racial tensions within NEAS occurred among troops who had only ever been deployed in the Union.[508] Thus, in these ways, their experience of service was markedly different and perhaps 'less' of a soldiering experience.

6. 'Teething Troubles': The Policy of Dilution

During the East African Campaign, Major-General Brink (OC, 1st South African Division) received recommendations to arm NEAS drivers to reduce the need for White escorts. NEAS troops were meant to release White combatants for frontline service. However, disarmament was undermining this as convoys now needed armed White escorts, creating an unnecessary manpower burden on units.[509] Consequently, in 1941 Brink advised CGS on armament of NEAS to no avail. Of course, as has been sufficiently previously illustrated, although sporadic arming of NEAS personnel was taking place, an official consent would have ensured armament of all units, without discrimination, especially units like 129 IMC where Union policy was being implemented. Regardless, the policy on NEAS (dis)armament intricately affected the

[507] UCTSC. 'Visit of Military Band and Drill Squads to Uitenhage', *The Cape Standard*, 15 September 1942.
[508] *See* Chapter 5, Section 1.1.
[509] Orpen, *Hyper*-War, p.87

policy of dilution. To meet the shortage of troops, instead of arming the NEAS personnel and reducing the requirement of White convoy guards, UDF chose to 'dilute' existing White units with non-White ranks for menial labour and 'free' White personnel. This sub-section, firstly, explores the role and deployment of diluted units, secondly, examines treatment by White units and, finally, informs on the most unique episode of dilution – that of non-White artillery gunners.

The break-up of NEAS units impacted them in several ways: (i) it depressed morale as the 'espirit de corps' that had emerged was lost with the disbandment of units,[510] (ii) the diluted personnel, especially fresh recruits, were untrained or ill-trained for the tasks they were to perform and this impacted the efficiency of the units they were 'diluting', (iii) non-White soldiers were at the mercy of White units and their welfare was lost-in-translation, (iv) all avenues for training and promotion were closed for diluted units as they were relegated to menial work, (v) administratively, diluted troops were a nightmare for the Directorate to manage, leading to gaps in the service files of personnel (this later affected demobilisation). The initial 'teething troubles' of poorly trained or unskilled diluted NEAS ranks was addressed by withdrawing and re-classifying personnel to tasks they were trained for. Training schools in Garawi were also established. The success of these schemes is difficult to assess as the only evidence is from DNEAS reports which inform positively on the interventions but provide no substantial evidence for the reported success. Nevertheless, as seen in Figure 9, multiple UDF units were nevertheless diluted.

The news of dilution, especially for 'experienced' units that had established regimental identities and emotional bonds of comradeship, was dispiriting. Staff-Sergeant A. Richards of 151 CC Works Company, whose unit diluted SAEC regiments, informed:

[510] DOD. UWH, Box 158, Historical Survey of NEAS, p.6

> We were just settling [at Garawi] when we received the biggest surprise of our lives when we were informed that we would be split up and would be attached to other European SAEC […] a number of our men have left for front line service, and what a sight it was to see men while bidding farewell to their comrades. Even our band (started in East Africa) could not play a farewell tune to cheer the lads up […] Having parted from our OC and officers, we soon missed them very much. Our one hope is that men such as Major Proudfoot will lead us in Kimberley when we return.[511]

Richards' short description is indicative of the non-White soldier's perspective on dilution, and hints at the emotional strain of this break-up. Having served away from home for a prolonged period, the men would have found comfort in serving together as a unit, and in the experiences, they shared. Dilution removed them not only from this comradery, but also from the protection of the NEAS as they were now joining units that already had their own 'espirit de corps', and under officers who had different priorities. Assimilation would have been challenging.

The largest dilution, however, was not of the army, but of SAAF. Owing to crippling shortages, the SAAF desperately needed ground staff. However, the air-force was on stand-by for the invasion of Europe and there was considerable opposition, political and within UDF, against sending NEAS details to Europe. The firm support of Brigadier Hingeston, then Senior Air Administrative Officer, ultimately allowed for the successful dilution of SAAF units. Subsequently however, only a small number of NMC were deployed with SAAF in Italy. In a scheme with the RAF, it was agreed that RAF would provide the ground staff in Italy while UDF's diluted troops would serve with RAF posts in the desert. The 101 and 102 CC battalions were formed and tasked with the protection of major aerodromes in Palestine and the Benghazi area from 1943 to 1945. In 1944, the 101 battalion was issued with full battle equipment and trained in the use of PIAT guns, Tommy guns, anti-tank guns and Bren carriers, rifles, Vickers, grenades and mortar.[512] However, some NEAS details were deployed in Europe. SAEC units marked for Italy were also diluted with 20 CC soldiers each, mostly as cooks, batmen, hygiene

[511] UCTSC. 'Cape Corps in Western Desert', *The Cape Standard*, 9 December 1941.
[512] DOD. UWH, Box 159, Record of NEAS, p.24

works and scullions. In April 1944, 2300 CC details were deployed with 6th South African Division in menial capacities. Within the Division there was also a diluted MT unit and two field ambulances with CC stretcher-bearers.[513]

6.1. (Mis)Treatment of Diluted NEAS

An additional challenge of dilution for the historian is the reconstruction of this experience. Because NEAS units served mostly in menial capacities, their work is not highlighted in sources. Still, sporadic details in sources can shed some light on the issue. One significant surviving source is an address by DDNEAS at a conference of high-ranking UDF officers in August 1943. In presenting the report on the work done by NEAS troops, a separate section was dedicated to their treatment by White South African officers and soldiers:

> Some [officers/NCOs] understand and are able to handle the CC but not the NMC and vice versa. It is not so much a matter of being able to understand the language or even experience in handling them as of attitude of mind. We must remember that they are in the Middle East as soldiers. […] To some extent they are like children or rather growing boys with an immature mental outlook […] A great more harm is done by bullying, by being impatient and by injustice to NEs than would similar conduct to Europeans. […] An efficient unit is invariably a happy one. NEs in the Unit have been treated with justice and consideration. They are not sworn at or addressed in a non-military manner. NEs are particularly sensitive in these matters. They should not be treated merely as pick and shovel labour gangs.[514]

There are several points of note here. Firstly, that the report was made in a conference of senior ranks signifies the wide-spread mistreatment of NEAS units, especially diluted troops. Secondly, prejudice underlined this mistreatment, as the Deputy Director's own address reflects. Instead of condemning the White rank-and-file and viewing their bullying as improper military conduct, he is excusing their behaviour by implying that it was unintentionally provoked by the non-White soldier's supposed immature mentality. Thirdly, by implying that non-White troops are more 'sensitive' than White soldiers to mistreatment, he is also

[513] DOD. UWH, Box 158, Historical Survey of NEAS, pp.12-14
[514] *Op. cit.*, DDNEAS Address, pp.2-3

highlighting a lack of imagined grit among the non-White ranks – that they needed special care to function, as opposed to dignified treatment. Fourthly, in mentioning the deployment of NEAS troops as a 'necessary evil', it can be construed that diluted soldiers were being *tolerated* by the UDF, and not amalgamated. Finally, that the Deputy Director himself had to raise the issue with senior staff (that too as an appeal) reflects the lack of power DNEAS had in safe-guarding the welfare of its own rank-and-file. The bullying that the address is referring to can also be substantiated with the oral testimony of Nila Kanten, an Indian NCO who served with the 5th Indian Division in North Africa:

> they were all of the same clan [White SA]. I have seen the Black soldiers being abused venomously. They were not armed at all, they were all non-combatants. They used to abuse them in the most unpronounceable language […] He is fighting for a cause, I am fighting for a cause. So, there should be a spirit of comradery. Nothing of that sort was there [among White SA]. It was very sad indeed. That was one of my gloomy experiences of the Second World War.[515]

Kanten was most likely referring to soldiers doing menial work with White units. On comparing it to the treatment he received by British troops, Kanten had a favourable opinion of his British commanders. However, he added that he believed it was because he could fluently speak English and was educated. The address too offers the solution of education to the bullying experienced by non-White soldiers – i.e. if they are 'bettered' they won't *provoke* the bullying.[516] The difference in class and education and its impact on the socio-economic lives of individuals and communities is well-documented in the social sciences. However, what is unique about the dilution policy is that despite the claims of providing education (usually in literacy and instruction in skilled tasks), they were still not allowed to professionally progress. For example, a non-White mechanic in an NEAS workshop would have had more opportunities to learn the trade and be promoted than a diluted semi-skilled worker in a White unit where he

[515] IWM. 18391, Reel 2.
[516] DOD. UWH, Box 158, DDNEAS Address, p.3

would have been limited to low-skill duties. Joe Blencowe, a British NCO who served with RAF, mused on this, 'We had quite a few Cape Corps doing run of the mill jobs but none were given skilled work. […] I realised [it was because] the ordinary non-White chap had never had an education, he never had the opportunity to come anywhere near a qualification status.' On being asked if he would agree that non-White South African soldiers would not have had a chance to do anything beyond menial labour, Blencowe responded that 'Yes, that would be absolutely true.'[517]

6.2. Gunners

Despite rigorous implementation of the dilution policy, the shortage of White personnel remained. This was most impactful in artillery units that were unable to replace transferred and discharged White gunners with new enlistees. The problem was further aggravated in 1942 when the fall of Singapore made Cape Town and Durban one of the most prominent ports on the Europe to Asia and East Africa routes. This meant that both ports needed better coastal defences as they were now attracting Allied ships and enemy submarines. To tackle the shortage of coastal gunners and anti-aircraft gunners, the decision to enlist CC soldiers for artillery units was approved by Smuts himself. Once more, to fulfil the needs of war, the Union's White leadership was temporarily forgoing its argumentation of the inability and incompetence of non-White troops to serve as combatants. Ironically, after fervently denunciating the use of armed non-White soldiers against White soldiers, the UDF was now training CC in the use of powerful artillery that caused far more damage than a rifle.

Initially, the deployment of CC gunners was expectedly met with strong opposition. As early as October 1940, a board of senior UDF officers considered the enlistment of non-White soldiers for artillery units and concluded that it could it not be done as 'they lacked the moral

[517] IWM. 18402, Reel 2.

fibre and education necessary for the specialised work.'[518] However, in April 1941 when suitable White recruits had not been obtained for training, the policy was reconfigured. The men were trained on Robben Island and reportedly displayed an aptitude for the job.[519] Once the experiment was a success, more soldiers were trained. The earliest deployment of non-White gunners was in the Desert Campaign where they received commendations from several high-ranking officers including Lieutenant-Colonel Howie, Commander of 2nd Light Anti-Aircraft Regiment, and Lieutenant-Colonel Parking, Commander of 2nd Anti-Tank Regiment. In a letter to DDNEAS, Parking wrote that 'Both out of line and in the line their soldierly behaviour has been exemplary. They have participated in two withdrawals […] and on each occasion they have performed their duties beyond criticism.'[520]

All soldiers in artillery units were required to be armed. Backed strongly by Colonel Adler, the order was passed for arming non-White gun crews outside the Union.[521] When the casualty lists of artillery units reached the Union, the issue of non-White names within these lists was raised in the parliament. To this, Smuts responded that the names were of *unarmed* non-White non-combatants. The Directorate, taking issue with this, advised the Prime Minister that no gun crew could be considered non-combatant and the statement was misleading.[522] Smuts was most likely choosing to respond diplomatically to the opposition, while the Directorate was seeking to protect the interests (and perhaps even legacy) of its non-White gunners. The instance highlights the political precarity of non-White artillery service. As a result, there is a lack of information on their experiences. There was most likely an endeavour to not spotlight their service excessively and risk political unrest. A scene in a UDF recruiting film showing 'non-

[518] DOD. UWH, Box 159, Record of NEAS, p.91
[519] Crook, 'Non-White Personnel in the SA Artillery', pp.16-17.
[520] DOD. CGS, Box 130, 32/15, Lt Col Parking to DDNEAS, 17 August 1942.
[521] DOD. UWH, Box 159, Record of NEAS, p.104
[522] *Op. cit.*, p.107

White gunners in action' was cut for this reason.[523] Regardless, the ranks of non-White troops in artillery units steadily grew, although the number of troops diluting each unit remained small. Owing to racial prejudice, there were objections by White gunners to serving in the same capacity with non-White personnel.[524] In response, the Adjutant-General firmly dismissed the concerns decreeing that any transfer of White or non-White troops for this reason would set a dangerous precedent: 'those who object would stay where they were – after all, there was a war to fight!'[525] This 'forced' service of White gunners, once more, indicates the mistreatment that would have been meted out to non-White troops by their White counter-parts. Even though the requests for transfers were rejected, the letters by senior officers discussing the issue make no mention of the safety of NEAS soldiers. So, while prejudice within units persisted, institutionally, as the Adjutant-General implied, war trumped race, in the short term at least.

Conclusion

A subaltern view of the tropics of East Africa, the Desert and the Italian peninsula has revealed hidden histories of these campaigns. By viewing the conflict through the vantage point of the auxiliary, the centrality of military labour to the success of these conflicts becomes obvious. War work was and is not glamourous. And yet, success in Africa depended heavily on the maintenance of supplies through dangerous, harrowing circumstances. In Italy, it was the grit of stretcher-bearers that not only caught the attention of the White combatants but also likely bolstered their morale on the front. Still, the service of CC/IMC pioneers has remained invisible, in line with the historic shadowing of military labour. Not only have they not been recognised for their relentless service, but being non-White, their ingenuity, valour and their

[523] *Op. cit.*, p.107
[524] *Op. cit.*, p.105, p.116. Consequently, unsuccessful recommendations were made to *not* dilute because of the disruption it was causing.
[525] *Op. cit.*, p.117; Crook, 'Non-White Personnel', p.23

ability to adapt and 'make-do' was also not given due credit. The White paternal assumption that the non-White could only perform when 'led' has also underlined the 'official' archives. Ill-trained, ill-informed, suppressed – these men performed essential tasks in formidable circumstances with little to no acknowledgement. Furthermore, disarmament and dilution targeted and negated the 'soldiering' of CC/IMC ranks. The experience of a 'soldier', especially one in war, is closely related to the experience of combat. This argument of 'incomplete' service is further substantiated by the enthusiasm with which non-White soldiers responded to enlistment in the artillery and also to the armament of soldiers at El Alamein. Despite the enthusiasm for armed service, it would be erroneous to assume that non-White troops disparaged the duties they were performing. Numerous acts of heroism evidence the dedication with which CC/IMC served in their 'third-line' roles. Additionally, by writing their experiences for the purpose of publishing (in *The Cape Standard*), CC/IMC soldiers were reclaiming the narrative of their service. The articles can also be viewed as expressions of pride, one that was not limited to the soldiers and their units but was to be shared with the non-White communities in the Union. It must however be flagged that these narratives emerged from educated (or at least literate) soldiers who generally displayed political consciousness and were aware of the discriminations they were being subjected to. Little can be construed of the illiterate 'silent' ranks. Still, unit reporting and accounts by White officers and soldiers indicate that these sentiments were more wide-spread. Major Ewen Thompson, a British officer who commanded a CC MT unit attached to his Askari regiment, informed that 'They [CC] would have loved to serve as infantryman […] these people were not allowed to give their full contribution […] that was very outspoken.'[526] It is then argued that, despite serving in auxiliary capacities, CC/IMC soldiers did not see themselves as 'inferior'[527] – instead they viewed

[526] IWM. 7367, Reel 9.

[527] *See* pp.68-69. Smuts implied their non-combatant service was 'inferior'.

themselves as soldiers deserving of the combatant roles that they were being deprived of by a prejudiced State. Commenting on the 'military tradition' of the Coloured community, C. A. Thorne, Secretary of the Officer's and Coloured Ex-Servicemen Association, surmised, 'the Cape Coloured man served as he could, not always as he would.'[528]

[528] UCTSC. 'A Fine Military Tradition', *The Cape Standard*, 31 December 1940.

CHAPTER 5

Maintaining Morale: Discipline and Recreation

A critical concern of any regular army, especially one at war, is troop morale. Morale, simply put, is the willingness of a soldier to obey orders and fight. Troop morale relies on the collective discipline and compliance of a soldier, unit, battalion, regiment and army. The ability of the officer corps to lead and the enthusiasm with which rank-and-file follow, underline the fighting power of an army. To create obedience among rank-and-file, as David French illustrates, the British forces used a variety of tactics, primarily, (i) basic training to indoctrinate the idea of a structured hierarchy (creating 'corporate loyalty to a regimental system'), (ii) maintaining the welfare of troops and their dependents and, (iii) creation of a regimental identity that provided a sense of community and persuaded 'the individual soldier that he was not facing mortal danger alone'.[529] In exchange for the soldier's obedience 'officers were obliged to provide paternal leadership by ensuring that their men benefited from the army's bureaucracy and did not simply feel themselves to be its defenceless victims.'[530] The obedience of ranks can be broadly understood as the 'discipline' of a force. Kaushik Roy posits that 'In general, bad discipline is partly responsible for bad morale and vice versa. This adversely affects the fighting

[529] French, *Raising Churchill's Army*, p.124
[530] *Op. cit.*, p.126

power of armies and, in turn, brings back the issue of 'why do men fight'?'[531], or, more accurately, why do men *continue* to fight?

This chapter analyses the morale and discipline of CC/IMC soldiers during the war. It further investigates the methods used to maintain morale and discipline and, also, the forms of recreation that soldiers used to cope with the stress and monotony of war. The study is unique for two reasons. Firstly, the studies on troop and civilian morale are numerous; however, the examination of non-White morale in imperial forces is an underdeveloped area. Additionally, the CC/IMC case study is unique because of the socio-economic background of the troops, the politically contentious nature of their service, the ambiguity around their race (being only 'half-White'), and the fractured legacies of military service.[532] Secondly, this study uniquely explores the impact of institutional discrimination on the creation and destruction of morale. As addressed in Chapter 1, historically, (in)discipline among non-White rank-and-file was usually watered down to racial ineptitude. Naturally, indiscipline among CC/IMC ranks was seen as inherent and, as in the Laingsburg train incident, reports of indiscipline and disobedience were greatly inflated to maintain the narrative of incompetence of non-White soldiers.

[531] Roy, K. (2010). Discipline and Morale of the African, British and Indian Army units in Burma and India during World War II. *Modern Asian Studies*, p.1256

[532] Some works examining morale: Fennell, J. (2014) *Combat and morale in the North African campaign: The Eighth Army and the path to El Alamein*. CUP; McLaine, I. (1979) *Ministry of Morale Home Front Morale and the Ministry of Information in World War II*. Routledge; James, L. (1987) *Mutiny: In the British and Commonwealth Forces, 1797-1956*. Buchan & Enright.; Overy, R. (2015). 'Making and Breaking Morale: British Political Warfare and Bomber Command in the Second World War'. *Twentieth Century British History*.; Ussishkin, D. (2017) *Morale: A Modern British History*. OUP; Clodfelter, M. (2010). 'Aiming to Break Will: America's World War II Bombing of German Morale and its Ramifications'. *Journal of Strategic Studies.*; Stanislav, A. (1982). 'Italian military efficiency: A debate: Causes of the low morale of the Italian armed forces in the two world wars'. *Journal of Strategic Studies*.; Johnson, M. D. (2011) 'Propaganda and Sovereignty in Wartime China: Morale Operations and Psychological Warfare under the Office of War Information'. *Modern Asian Studies*.; Strachan, H. (2006). 'Training, Morale and Modern War'. *Journal of Contemporary History*.; Parsons, T. (1999). *The African Rank and File*. Heinemann.

However, this chapter argues that although troop morale is an institutional and an individual experience, individual morale is not exclusive to institutional manipulation. South African non-White morale was not maintained by the institution but in spite of it. Wherein considerable effort was made by UDF to maintain White morale, DNEAS was hampered by many obstacles (dilution in particular) and non-White morale was not prioritised. Without the participation of non-White ranks in the maintenance of their own morale, the White military institution would have been unable to maintain discipline among its subaltern ranks. Contrary to a top-down approach that centres the command ranks on the question of morale, it is argued that soldiers acted with agency in the creation and maintenance of troop morale.

1. 'Treat them as Soldiers': Disciplining the Ranks

Analysing CC and IMC units via French's three-pronged approach to maintaining discipline raises the following conundrums, (i) as observed in Chapter 2, training of NEAS units was rapid and insufficient, thus challenging the tactic of 'indoctrination' via drills; (ii) the financial schemes were insufficient and often excluded some dependents, thus impairing welfare maintenance; and (iii) amalgamation of CC and IMC and their subsequent dilution undermined their regimental identities, their 'espirit de corps'. On the surface, this analysis implies that there was no reason to expect any discipline among CC/IMC rank-and-file. However, troop morale among these regiments was a convoluted creation that varied in each unit, and each campaign. To understand discipline, it is important to tabulate indiscipline. From unit and divisional reports, three states of discipline and indiscipline can be observed, (i) (in)discipline in frontline areas with active conflict (as opposed to areas with relative stability, like occupied territories and the home front), (ii) (in)discipline among soldiers on active duty (as opposed to soldiers at 'liberty' and those on leave), (iii) indiscipline caused by battle-weariness and prolonged foreign service. The maintenance and disruption of discipline in all three scenarios allows for an analysis of the mutating morale of CC/IMC rank-and-file.

1.1. In the Union

A distinctive cause of indiscipline in CC/IMC ranks was their amalgamation that resulted in intra-corps clashes. A report on one such incident in Kimberley informed:

> The amalgamation of these two units was a mistake […] the failure to dissolve the smaller IMC completely by inter-posting and interspersing. 'This was all because the Cape Corps don't want those hooligan Indians,' stated a Cape Corps detail. Reference to the Indians and Malays as 'skollies' and 'koelies' [coolies] were also prevalent. It was found that this feeling had its origin largely in inter-corps jealousy.[533] [sic]

The report, however, noted that this rivalry was mainly among 'new' recruits who had not been posted outside of the Union. Soldiers who were ex-North were rarely part of such fights as, it was believed that 'intermingling' in the North had made them more accepting of this amalgamation. This does seem the case as in-fighting among NEAS soldiers on the front was usually over minor issues wherein soldiers tended to act individually or with their own formed social groups (and not as members of a regiment). As an example, an NMC private was charged with attempted murder of two CC soldiers and one NMC NCO.[534] Witness accounts from the non-White ranks related that the argument was over sandbags. The accounts certainly suggest that the Private's response was more aggressive than warranted. However, this can also be viewed through a lens of battle-weariness and hysteria.[535] Nevertheless, while the fight between an NMC Private and two CC ranks may, on the surface, appear ethnically or regimentally motivated, a close inspection of such skirmishes usually reveal specific issues pertaining to those involved.

Reportage on (in)discipline in the Union was laced with political prejudice. Usually the instances of indiscipline concerned drunk behaviour by soldiers on and off duty, such as the

[533] DOD. UWH, Box 159, Record of NEAS, p.37
[534] DOD. Divisional Documents, Box 120, HQ 1SA DIV Court Martial of Pte John Twala. 26 November 1942.
[535] Although there is lack of evidence to support this claim.

Laingsburg incident.[536] However, such incidents were usually not serious. It can be argued that it was the lack of wet canteens for NEAS in the Union that catalysed this, prompting soldiers to procure alcohol irregularly from civilian shops. Multiple reports also mention 'mutinies' although it is difficult to fully ascertain the extent and severity of these mutinies. A reported 'mutiny' in a Works coy at Howick was caused by a White NCO hitting a CC Private. When the incident was reported to the OC, although he assured the soldiers of an investigation, the NCO was not arrested but continued to command the ranks. In protest, the soldiers refused to return to their duties despite multiple threats. 35 of them were eventually charged with mutiny although none of them raised arms or threatened violence against anyone and, in fact, maintained discipline in protest and followed due procedure when charged.[537] The incident examples the severity with which non-White troops were treated.

Not all incidents, however, were non-violent. Alex Fry recounted a brutal suppression of a 'coloured' unit near Cullinan. The mutinying men had demanded to be allowed to go to the cinema like White soldiers. The officer-in-charged detailed to deal with them 'lost his cool' and shot dead the 'ringleader'. This caused a riot and Fry's unit was deployed to suppress it:

> There followed scenes of brutality that made my blood run cold. Darkness had fallen and the lights from the armoured cars and military vehicles of all descriptions in the camp added to the horror of the mayhem around me. I was aware of white soldiers looting the possessions of the coloured soldiers. Besides using bayonets, the men were hitting the rioters on their heads with the butts of rifles and I witnessed a number of rifles being broken in these unwarranted attacks. It was obvious to me that the majority of the men in the camp were not rioting.[538]

The incident has proved difficult to trace in the military archives. It was also not reported in *The Cape Standard*. It is likely that the brutality of the White regiment, the 'mutinying' of non-White soldiers would have caused negative publicity for both political camps and news of the

[536] *See* pp.67-68
[537] DOD. WD, Box 136, Annexure 'I' Report on Visit to Units in Durban, 16 March 1944.
[538] IWM. 12466, Private Papers R A Fry, p.16

events was likely suppressed. This is not unusual. A more serious riot at the CC 4th Battalion Zonderwater camp on 31st December 1943, that resulted in multiple casualties and the destruction of two canteens and a kitchen, was also not reported.[539] A riot by (White) UDF troops in 1945 at Helwan camp (outside Cairo) received considerable negative publicity and there were concerted efforts to downplay the event. Still, it is unclear what Fry meant by 'coloured' troops but it is likely these were NEAS men as the UDF would not have engaged in such a brutal suppression of imperial troops. Additionally, there were POW camps in the area and these NEAS units were likely deployed on sentry and work duties. While rioting over cinema seems like a small offence, as with the Zonderwater and Helwan riots, it can be presumed that there were long-standing grievances existed over lack of recreation, plus a general distrust in commanding ranks in addition to intensification of segregationist politics. Lieutenant Reyneke, one of the main witness and victim of the Zonderwater riot informed in his testimony that there were no recreational facilities at the camp. The mutiny had been triggered by a lack of organised celebrations for New Year's Eve in addition to delay in payment of salaries that had thwarted the men's own plans for celebrations. Prior to rioting, the men had sent a representation to Reyneke 'The general gist of the remarks was that they suffered the same disabilities in the army as they did in politics.'[540]

The incident at Howick and the brutal suppression of the Cullinan mutiny make plain the prejudiced treatment that non-White ranks were receiving. Their grievances were not given due consideration, their attempts at raising their complaints were treated with suspicion and, when all else failed, the violence with which they were suppressed was justified and normalised by the White commands. Considering the paucity of sources, it is likely that there were other racially-motivated incidents of bullying of non-White troops.

[539] DOD. DNEAS, Box 40, NAS 8/36/4, Summary of Evidence 16 January 1943.
[540] *Op. cit.,* p.8

In a report internally-circulated, the UDF Middle East HQ blamed the rising indiscipline in the Middle East on (i) the breakdown of the colour-bar on the front causing non-White ranks to lose 'recognition of the European's higher status', (ii) availability of alcohol and prostitutes (Middle East women) whom the non-White ranks considered 'white women', (iii) 'parades in their honour' and ''pampering' of NE when good work is done'.[541] Unlike NEAS reports, the HQ's report is bluntly prejudiced. It stereotyped all non-White soldiers. Criminality of one soldier was imposed on all. Additionally, the report does not view the indiscipline as part of a larger problem of morale but as a failure of fully implementing segregation. It further recommended that to remedy the situation NEAS personnel should be strictly made aware that the conditions on the front would not be replicated in the Union, such as 'facilities for consumption of liquor; the respect for South African European womanhood notwithstanding his intimacy with loose women whose skins are fair.'[542]

Again, the lack of public information on these riots was likely an organised effort as such information could/would have been exploited by the anti-War faction to depress public support and impair the war effort. Still, key observations can be made from the little information available. Firstly, the events are narrated solely through a White lens, and the non-White voice is deafeningly absent. For example, of the 18 witnesses interviewed for the Zonderwater inquiry, none were non-White. Additionally, the usual defensive stance of *The Cape Standard* articles is also missing.[543] This makes it difficult to critically analyse these events as the non-White version of events is non-existent. Secondly, at Cullinan, the White soldiers, by Fry's own account, acted ruthlessly and without any fear of consequences. This mistreatment is part of a larger institutional treatment that demeaned, dehumanised and isolated non-White soldiers. Contrarily, in the aftermath of the Helwan riots by White South African troops, the court of

[541] DOD. CGS, Box 129, 32/1, JAG 113 Precis of Memorandum, 25 November 1943.
[542] *Ibid.*
[543] Even the reporting on Laingsburg was limited to a brief opinion-free paragraph.

inquiry found 'no leaders' and charged no one. Instead, the matter was closed, and concerted efforts were made to better the conditions of the camps and arrange for swift repatriation of the troops.[544] Thirdly, the report is underlined with the assumed ineptitude and savagery of non-White ranks, that they are not and never were fit to be soldiers. The needs of the war allowed for the momentary toleration of their service, however, at the close of hostilities, the state would not accommodate non-White ranks given their inherent incapacities.[545]

1.2. Outside the Union

Indiscipline on the frontline was usually limited to lapses in following orders. For example, men of the 109 SARMT IMC company defied orders to take cover during an air raid as they were keen to 'have a look at the enemy'.[546] They were punished with pack drills. Private Hourst recounted a similar punishment following an incident while on convoy duty:

> On another day we made slow progress all morning. The rate of progress made us all irritable and one bright private decided to take things into his own hands. He came charging from his position in the rear, passed the forward trucks and was disappearing ahead in a cloud of dust. The officer commanding the convoy set off after him and had a hard ride catching up with him. An exchange began:
>
> > OC to Pte: 'Where the devil are you off to?'
> > Pte: 'To camp, sir.'
> > OC: 'Don't you know you've got keep your proper distance behind your front truck?'
> > Pte: 'Yes sir. But I thought that for once in your life you could take your distance from me and we will make camp sooner.'
> > OC: (unprintable) '!!!XXX!'
>
> In this instance, a few hours of pack-drill settled once and for all the question as to who should lead the convoy.[547] [sic]

While not 'on the front', morale in all armies was threatened by 'idleness'. During a 'lull' in activities in East Africa, an IMC war diary reported that following a practice air raid alarm, the

[544] Webster, S. (2002). 'The Helwan Riots August 1945'. *The South African Military History Journal*.
[545] *See* Chapter 1, Section 2.
[546] DOD. UWH, Box 120, History of 109 SARMT company (IMC), p.8
[547] *Op. cit*., History of 129 RES MT CC, 'Wheel of Victory', p.D.

whole company took a full forty minutes to 'turn out'. 'A pointer indeed that something had gone wrong and the cause of discipline was in jeopardy'.[548] Consequently, a drill instructor was attached to the company and more attention was given to training. As discussed previously, similar challenges were faced by units on guard and sentry duties, especially in occupied areas with no active conflicts. Here too drilling, parades and inspections were used to maintain the sense of soldiering despite the monotony. Although these cases of indiscipline cannot necessarily be considered instances of poor morale (causing poor performance), corrective drilling and assignment of camp/fatigue duties were frequently used as tools to maintain command within units.

Alternatively, at Gazala, various units were requested to send reports on the conduct of their diluted soldiers. While most reports were usually neutral (and a few positive), some stated that CC MT drivers panicked under fire and drove recklessly, breaking the convoy line and also abandoning their vehicles for the safety of dugouts.[549] Officially, such actions were considered a consequence of 'low morale', i.e. soldiers were afraid and their fear eclipsed their ability to follow orders. However, it can be argued that the causes for such actions were varied: (i) a lack of training and drilling, (ii) the dispersal of diluted non-White ranks, (iii) bullying by White soldiers, (iv) being unarmed and unable to 'fight back'. It can also be construed that the lack of *espirit de corps* among diluted ranks would have demoralised them and made them feel isolated and as though they were, as French expounded, 'facing mortal danger alone'. That the reports do not reflect on these causes is reflective of the White officers' tendency to pass the blame on the imagined incapability of their non-White soldiers.

[548] DOD. UWH, Box 158, History of 'B' Company Indian Services by Captain Wallace, p.12
[549] DOD. Divisional Documents, Box 141, M/2515. Conduct of NE Personnel. Message 0267, 9 July 1942.

Although reports on their conduct on the Desert front varied, NEAS morale was generally considered low during this period, especially among diluted ranks. Within units there were frequent instances of defiance of 'trivial' orders. More seriously, since there was easy access to cities like Cairo and Alexandria, there were rising cases of desertion.[550] An order on non-White discipline issued to all units in North Africa and the Middle East by the Middle East UDF HQ stated that to tackle the defiance of authority, OCs of units were to lecture and train their NEAS personnel in military conduct. 'It is desired at the same time to stress the importance of Units treating the Non-Europeans at all times as soldiers to prevent their mentality reverting to that of common labourers.' The issue, as the order implied, was the lack of drilling and parades among diluted soldiers that was causing the NEAS troops to lose their identities as soldiers. It was additionally recommended that frequent kit inspections be conducted, recreation be provided for soldiers (including sports and Church services) and that they should not address soldiers 'in a non-military manner, [this] cannot be over-emphasised.'[551]

The problem of indiscipline and low morale caused by dilution remained throughout the war, especially in units that had small numbers of non-White troops attached to them. In contrast to service in East Africa, CC/IMC units were no longer engaging in exercises that would build 'regimental identity', such as sports matches against other units. Access to recreational clubs also became a challenge as White clubs remained out-of-bounds and not all units had segregated clubs for NEAS troops to use. In such conditions, the only recreation available to these units came from the CGCs, at Leave Camps, and when soldiers were given liberty to visit nearby cities. As a result, there was rise in drunkenness and 'dagga'[552] smoking. In North Africa and the Middle East, there was also a rise in skirmishes with the local population, usually petty

[550] *Ibid*.
[551] DOD. Divisional Documents, Box 120, SAR/AP4/6, UDF Adm. HQ MEF to All units, 28 July 1942.
[552] Indian hemp/Cannabis

fights. Disciplinary action in such cases depended on the severity of the fight and the service record of the soldier. If a soldier had a decent or good record, they were let off with a warning. If a soldier was a repeat offender, disciplinary action was taken, and they could also be transferred and/or dishonourably discharged. Courts of inquiries were only convened in cases of criminal charges, such as assault with the intention of murder. In addition to these issues, the treatment by White ranks worsened the deteriorating condition. This falling morale was then transported to Italy where battle-weariness further exaggerated the problem.[553]

Surmising NEAS conduct during the course of the war, DNEAS files declare the morale and discipline of the non-White troops as satisfactory, save few lapses in North Africa and Italy. The regressing discipline in 1942 on was seen as caused by 'recidivists' soldiers who should not have been enlisted as they did not have the 'right' personality for armed service. Although mistreatment, erosion of group loyalty and length of service were discussed in reports, little emphasis was placed on these issues for the indiscipline in units.

The emphasis on enlisting the 'right type' of men was not unique to DNEAS. The British Army, for example, categorised men on the basis of their 'combatant temperament' and ability to serve on the frontline.[554] The enlistment of men who were mentally 'weak' and struggled to follow orders was considered a primary cause of desertion during World War II. Post-1941, indiscipline among CC/IMC, in the Union and on the front, was usually pinned on the enlistment of men considered unfit for soldiering. The fixing of morale was also usually credited to the removal of such men from service. In this way the responsibility for indiscipline was placed primarily on the non-White recruit and some unwitting recruiting officers. The White commands were, of course, most assuredly found to be without blame.

[553] Discussed in Chapter 4, Section 5.1.
[554] French, *Discipline and the Death Penalty*, p.536.

Regardless, the morale of an army is not concluded from its record of indiscipline but from its success(es) in war. The exemplary performance of CC/IMC MT and Work companies in East Africa and North Africa, of stretcher-bearers in North Africa and Italy, and the overall success in El Alamein adjudicated their enlistment as favourable. However, this assessment of troop morale is not indicative of the mental state of soldiers, especially of non-White soldiers who were entirely dependent on prejudiced institutions that lacked empathy and were momentarily tolerating them.

2. Recreation in the Army

Challenges to NEAS morale and discipline were diverse and differed circumstantially in each unit, regiment, and campaign. At a sectional and company-level, officers had to exercise their own judgement in introducing corrective interventions. With diluted units, this role was adopted by NEAS Welfare officers (however, deploying them with diluted soldiers was a challenge due to shortage of staff). In NMC units there was the added challenge of language as not all soldiers spoke English or Afrikaans. Nevertheless, the evidence available suggests some general practices were employed to maintain confidence. Recreation for/by soldiers can be investigated via two routes, (i) army-sanctioned practices and, (ii) recreation soldiers pursued of their own volition.

2.1.The Club Life

Recreation in the armed forces was both a communal and an individual experience. Institutional recreation was centred at the 'club'. Soldier's clubs varied in size, facilities and infrastructure. Larger clubs were constructed in towns and cities like Nairobi, Cairo, Alexandria, Bari etc. On the Desert front, eighteen NEAS clubs were run in cities, rest camps and in larger bases.[555] These clubs usually had: (i) a canteen (few had restaurants) with refreshments (alcohol was

[555] UCTSC. 'Welfare Work', *The Cape Standard*, 23 February 1943.

infrequently provided), (ii) guidance for tourism, (iii) sporting equipment, indoor games, musical instruments, cinema, library, and (iv) usually housed a priest. NEAS clubs were funded by the Directorate and by aid organisations such as YMCA, Toc-H and CGCs. Individual donations also supported their functioning. Non-urban clubs were usually located in Leave and Transit Camps and were accessible to soldiers in the vicinity or when frontline units were granted leave.

Predictably and significantly, NEAS clubs and canteens were segregated establishments. However, soldiers had access to Allied canteens and clubs as they were not segregated and welcomed all ranks as long as they could pay. Charles Adams mentioned frequenting Australian and British clubs in Mogadishu.[556] In fact, segregated clubs were, at times, absurd to Allied soldiers. Mopeli-Paulus described an incident when he and his friends were asked by a group of Australian soldiers to join them for a drink. The canteen they were going to was for White South African and the CC soldiers expressed concern on going in. One of the Australian soldiers responded that 'This isn't South Africa and we are all in the war together.'[557] Although the CC soldiers were ultimately not served, such incidents are indicative that segregated canteens, instead of reinforcing the 'colour-divide', were causing ridicule of it. Nila Kanten, an NCO with the 5th Indian Division, faced a similar circumstance when he was denied service at a White South African canteen and his fellow White British comrades, taking issue with this, got into a brawl with the canteen staff.[558] Soldiers could still avail Allied facilities alongside White ranks and while they may not have done this regularly, the break-down of such barriers would have left an impression on them.

[556] IWM. 18404, Reel 3.
[557] Mopeli-Paulus, p.86.
[558] IWM. 18391, Reel 2.

The most important service provided by these clubs were hot meals at cheap prices. As French argues, food was important, not just for sustenance but also for morale as it could bond men.[559] To underscore the value of good food – on one occasion, the cook of a unit was so talented that the officers' mess wanted him transferred. The lieutenant of the unit had to 'put up a hard fight' to keep him as, he felt that 'the men must come first.'[560] The situation was, however, particularly difficult in the desert as there was a shortage in variety of food and men were usually stuck with tinned meals for lengthy periods. Another important amenity was plumbing. A British Officer described the experience of his CC men:

> Having returned from the front there was nothing that the men enjoyed more than a shower bath. The spirit that existed among them was not unlike that of happy, care-free schoolboys.[561]

Tourism and adventure had been key components of the propaganda effort for recruitment. To deliver on these promises, guided tours in major cities like Cairo, Alexandria, Rome and Florence were organised by Leave Camps that would take soldiers in groups around historical monuments and tourist attractions. Private A. Charles of the 11 IMC Pioneer in a letter to *The Cape Standard* described sight-seeing in Cairo and related that 'Egypt is quite a historical and geographically interestingly place and had there been no war I would have already learned much more about the country'.[562] However, this was a 'limited' form of recreation as once the sights were seen, there was not much else to do.

Clubs also doubled up as cinemas. Semi-permanent structures in large clubs served as theatres. Films included war news, training films on hygiene and health, educational, and movies.[563] Civilian establishments in cities like Cairo and Alexandria also accommodated the growing

[559] French, *Raising Churchill's Army*, p.144
[560] DOD. WD, Box 136, Annexure 'I' Report on Visit to Units in Durban, 16 March 1944.
[561] UCTSC. 'They Serve with a Smile', *The Cape Standard*, 19 May 1942.
[562] UCTSC. 'Soldier writes about Egypt', *The Cape Standard*, 22 September 1942.
[563] UCTSC. 'Welfare Work', *The Cape Standard*, 23 February 1943.

demand for cinema, especially once the Desert campaign was over. For soldiers in remote outposts, DNEAS Film Vans operated long tours to entertain soldiers. These film vans were self-sufficient units that, along with reels and a projector, carried their own generator, megaphone and 'lecturer' (someone who could narrate films in different languages). Movies of comedians such as Joe E. Brown and George Formby were screened and the 'Wild West Cowboy' genre was found to be popular among NEAS troops.[564]

Outside of clubs and within units, sporting activities were the most frequent form of recreation as they built stamina, team-work and a competitive attitude. Fields (or at least clearings) were provided for football and rugby and matches between regiments were organised in periods of lull. However, NEAS troops could only play with other non-White units. Boxing was also popular among CC/IMC units.[565] Corporal Archie Makgoko reported on two football matches between CC and NMC. He described the general animosity that the players and spectators felt towards one of the referees and informed that the day was filled with excitement and that 'The meeting of comrades in arms was an occasion of laughter'.[566] Competitive sports, thus, were not just for players, but also for spectators and helped build regimental identity. Corporal L. P. Maclear described his experience playing against other teams:

> We have played against Somali teams, who play a tricky game, and are very nimble, in spite of or because of their bare feet. They are sportsmen, but the Somali urchins pelt us with stones if our score is too big. The Somali elders, however, have drastic measures to cure such unseemly behaviour. We have played against imperial troops, but, as I have said, our colours [flag] are still nailed to the mast.[567] [sic]

[564] UCTSC. 'DNEAS Film Vans', *The Cape Standard*, 10 April 1945.
[565] UCTSC. 'They Serve with a Smile', *The Cape Standard*, 19 May 1942.
[566] UCTSC. 'NMC Vs CC', *The Cape Standard*, 23 November 1943.
[567] UCTSC. 'Experiences of CC Pioneers', *The Cape Standard*, 21 October 1941.

2.2.Song and the Soldier

Another organised activity was the creation of unit bands and theatre groups. Unlike sports, the creation of bands and arrangement of concerts was a lengthier affair and required a more long-term commitment from participating soldiers. Thus, these could usually only be organised by stationary units, such as pioneer companies, and not by MT units. However, this form of recreation could be sustained for longer as soldiers usually produced multiple shows. For example, soldiers of the 21st CC Works Company formed a jazz band. Its members built their instruments from available scraps 'drums out of flat iron' and organised a concert, primarily to entertain the CC MT unit they were serving with. However, the band grew popular and attracted larger audiences from other units in the area.[568] A well-known CC concert unit, organised by DNEAS, were the 'African Stars'. The popularity of their shows resulted in multiple tours around North Africa, Middle East and Italy and was believed to have contributed to the upliftment of morale.[569] Their performances also accounted for the few instances in war when non-White South African soldiers were spotlighted in the army, their capacity for music and entertainment allowing them to temporarily circumvent the suppression of White hierarchies.

The African Stars variety concerts had musical acts (including a pianist), theatre, acrobatics, comedians and a tap-dancer, and could host an audience of up to 3000 per show. However, the most popular performance was the feature act, described by Staff Sergeant J. S. Jacobs, was 'The Cape Corps sweetheart, "Carmen Miranda" emulated by Corporal Petersen, was the hit of the evening. In fact, someone in the audience suggested "inviting the dame to a tea party."'[570] There is only one other recorded instance of female impersonation in a CC concert which also 'delighted' the audience.[571] Female impersonators were not unique to CC but were part of

[568] UCTSC. 'CC Jazz Band', *The Cape Standard*, 7 October 1941.
[569] UCTSC. 'The 'Africa Stars' Entertain', *The Cape Standard*, 5 December 1944.
[570] UCTSC. 'The 'Africa Stars' Entertain', *The Cape Standard*, 5 December 1944; 'Cape Corps 'Africa Stars' at Torelli', 30 January 1945.
[571] UCTSC. 'Welfare Work', *The Cape Standard*, 23 February 1943.

longer history of entertainment in military units. In the imperial context, however, they first came into existence during World War I and were continued in World War II to entertain frontline troops. In *A Lovely War*, Laura Halladay investigates the place of female impersonators in the Canadian military during the World Wars. The longevity of World War I distanced soldiers from female contact and this gulf was acted on-stage by female impersonators in variety concerts. Contrary to modern perceptions, these drag acts did not challenge masculinity and 'proper conduct' of soldiers. Instead, as Halladay illustrates, soldiers understood that impersonators on-stage were doing double-duties as, off-stage, they participated in the war enterprise as much as their audience. Such understandings did not threaten drag-performers, neither were the performers threatening – contrarily, they contributed to 'the homosociability of the battlefield.'[572]

Both CC and IMC were known for their musicality and their concerts, at all levels, were generally well-received. This interest in music, like in other troops, was also widespread among rank-and-file. A substantial number of letters published in *The Cape Standard* and most unit reports discuss music-making as central to the life of CC/IMC soldiers. Multiple officers mention soldiers requesting musical instruments for everyday recreation. An article in *The Cape Standard* reported that many drivers had formed their own 'bands' and used a variety of instruments including guitars, banjos, mouth organs, accordions. An MT company had also found an 'enemy' piano during the East African campaign and had been given permission to keep it. [573] An IMC NCO made a public appeal for donations to purchase a banjo for his unit.[574]

[572] Halladay, L. (2004). 'A Lovely War: Male to Female Cross-Dressing and Canadian Military Entertainment in World War II'. *Journal of Homosexuality*, p.23.
[573] UCTSC. 'CC in the Nubian Desert', *The Cape Standard*, 2 June 1942.
[574] UCTSC. 'Life in the IMC', *The Cape Standard*, 11 March 1941.

Figure 12 A CC Soldier, South Africa Official Photograph 1837, NMMH.

Considering the popularity of this form of recreation, it is probable that CC/IMC soldiers were using music to manage the strain of war. Within psychiatric studies the consensus is that, although music therapy (and creative arts in general) does not reduce PTSD and related symptoms in veterans and trauma survivors, it does help in recovery of survivors.[575] As an example of this is Mopeli-Paulus' irritation with his driving-partner:

> We set off for […] my co-driver singing 'Happy days are here again'. I was homesick as ever, but he was a jolly fellow who insisted that singing, and that song in particular, was the best cure for homesickness. Occasionally, I would grumble at him and ask 'What happy days?' But that did not seem to disturb him, as he pretended to be convinced that the war would be over in a couple of months.[576]

Mopeli-Paulus' indication that his co-driver was *pretending* that war would be over soon illustrates the use of music to maintain an optimistic mindset. Despite his testy response, Mopeli-Paulus did appreciate the effort to entertain, as he later admitted that 'I admired my fellows for their love of music and singing. In their company one never felt lonely'.[577] Similar sentiments were expressed by Corporal J. A. Daniels. 'Some nights in our tents we have a sing-song. On a few nights we organised concerts and on other occasions we were entertained with

[575] Drozd, N. (2020). 'The Therapeutic Approach to Military Culture: A Music Therapist's Perspective'. *Journal of Medical Humanities*, p.173
[576] Mopeli-Paulus, p.76
[577] Mopeli-Paulus, p.90

bioscope plays. These help us pass the time and also make the 'homesick Johnnies' feel a bit happy.'[578] Lieutenant Lucien Frank described how, after a particularly gruelling battle with a mud-swamp in East Africa, he yelled 'Are you downhearted?' at the last departing truck of the CC convoy. He heard a voice reply 'no' and then the song 'Sarie Marais' was heard from the back of the truck.[579] In a UDFI report, an unnamed South African officer detailed his experience at an NEAS ward in a hospital 'Up North':

> I sat at the foot of the guitar player's bed. "Something gay" was the request. He obliged with the standby of the Cape Coloured man – "Pale Toe", one of the "hottest" Afrikaans *liedjies* [folk-song] […] all were singing – softly, with slow tempo, and sometimes – almost sadly, for song reminds the Coloured man of the Cape, and the Cape is his home.[580]

All the above incidents indicate at the use of music for stress-alleviation, to maintain morale, and a general upliftment of spirits. Like other soldiers, NEAS troops too used music to alleviate stress and its popularity among their ranks was supports by NEAS officers who readily provided for musical instruments, at the very least a banjo or guitar.

Finally, also intrinsic to troop morale is faith. As with other troops in war[581], South Africa's non-White troops also employed their NEAS camps were, where possible, required to have a chaplain among their ranks and hold regular Sunday church services. While mention is found of such services, it is difficult to establish the frequency of them, especially for diluted troops. Nothing can be said from the records about the provisions of priests for faiths other than Christianity. Additionally, chaplains in deployed armies also adopt an additional role of counselling as soldiers struggled with the morality of wars and the trauma they suffered. This,

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[578] UCTSC. 'The Latest Letter Home', *The Cape Standard*, 31 March 1942.
[579] DOD. UWH, Box 120, History of 129 RES MT CC, 'Convoy Highlights', p.263
[580] UCTSC. 'Song and the Coloured Man', *The Cape Standard*, 21 August 1941.
[581] There are many interesting works on faith and war. Some mentions: Hansen, K. (2012). *Military Chaplains and Religious Diversity*. Palgrave MacMillan.; Bredenkamp & Wessels (2009). 'The Development of Military Chaplaincy, with Special Reference to South Africa (up to 1966)'. *Journal for Contemporary History*.; Hassner, R. E. (2016). *Religion on the Battlefield*. Cornell University Press.; Stahl, R. (2017). *Enlisting Faith: How the Military Chaplaincy Shaped Religion and State in Modern America*. Harvard University Press

however, is an individual experience and private as well. Because most sources for this history come from public letters in the *Standard* and from unit reports, it is unsurprising that such discussions have not emerged. However, as the above accounts show – the singing of hymns is particularly indicative – CC /IMC soldiers were employing their faith as a means to cope with war.

Morale was an individual and a communal experience. It mutated over time, varied in each campaign, and dissimilarly impacted armies, units, and soldiers. The morale of a regiment was responsive to the treatment by officers, comrades, and the provision for recreation and welfare. As French surmises that 'Morale was a dynamic force […] Just as unrelenting physical hardships, mounting casualties, and in particular the loss of trusted leaders, served to degrade a unit's morale, so effective leadership, the presence of trusted comrades, and adequate food and shelter sustained it.'[582]

3. Alcohol and Female Companionship

The previous section analysed recreation that was sanctioned by military authorities. This section examines those forms of recreation that were neither sanctioned nor allowed, and yet, as soldiers do, CC/IMC ranks sought them anyway. Alcohol consumption and female companionship were the primary non-sanctioned recreations. Considering there was a risk of disciplinary action in engaging in these, no mention of it is found in letters published in *The Cape Standard*. Official sources tell little about the men who were participating in them, except that soldiers were caught and punished. Mopeli-Paulus provides the only first-person account of engagement in these activities.

Alcohol is central to the experience of and recovery from war. In the NEAS case, as it was usually associated with disciplinary action, except for Mopeli-Paulus' autobiography, there is

[582] French, *Raising Churchill's Army*, p.156

no mention of it elsewhere. Additionally, within the Coloured and Malay communities, there was a severe problem of alcoholism and any use in the armed forces by CC/IMC men would have generally been concealed from civilian knowledge, especially in newspapers like *The Cape Standard* that were sympathetic to the non-White cause.

Armies use alcohol as a 'means of mediating stress'. Soldiers use it to alleviate the anxiety of war and boredom. During World War II, in Allied lines, rations of rum were issued before action and after engagement and could also be used to pacify soldiers after a heightened experience.[583] In East Africa, cases of drunkenness were low. This was because, on the tropical frontline, the army tightly controlled the issue of alcohol. It was extremely difficult for soldiers to smuggle it from elsewhere unless they were visiting large civilian settlements. However, as has already been discussed, most units served in remote areas. Additionally, unlike North Africa and Italy, there were no official concerns of widespread poor morale. In the Desert, the Union and in Italy, alcohol was more readily available and multiple reports on disciplinary action against soldiers indicate the unsanctioned widespread consumption of alcohol. Mopeli-Paulus' is the only first-person account that illustrates the recreational use of alcohol:

> We used to get a weekly tot each from big rum barrels that were placed behind the cookhouse. For habitual drinkers this was worse than nothing and just mean a greater longing for more. One night we bored a hole in one of the barrels with a big nail and queued up in the shadows with our dixies to draw it out. That night was a joy! It was a party and a concert from end to end. Even when we were all found drunk, no one could guess where the liquor had come from. For some reason I cannot understand the officers thought we must have bought too much American beer from the Naafi.[584]

Also specific to CC/IMC units was the use of 'dagga' (cannabis), especially in the Desert campaign. These were usually bartered for with local populaces. Mopeli-Paulus described how,

[583] Jones & Fear. (2011). 'Alcohol Use and Misuse within the Military: A Review'. *International Review of Psychiatry*.
[584] Mopeli-Paulus, *The World and the Cattle*, p.91

on one occasion, there was simply no supply of dagga in his unit. As an alternative, soldiers started smoking tea leaves, claiming it gave them a better 'kick'. This severely depleted the tea rations of the unit.[585]

Alongside consumption of addictive substances was the seeking of female companionship. A South African Medical Corps reports informs that, in 1941, the rate of infection for syphilis among non-White ranks was 17.5 per 1000, and 21.3 per 1000 for Gonorrhoea, much lower compared to White South African soldiers.[586] The lack of access to urban settlements also meant that men did not engage in solicitation. Outside of East Africa, soldiers were readily able to access cities like Cairo, Alexandria, Khartoum where sex-trafficking and prostitution were thriving. Among NEAS ranks this is further supported by the rise in cases of venereal diseases, so much so that military orders decreed that soldiers found infected or concealing the infection were liable for punishment after treatment.[587] However, such efforts, varyingly taken by all armies throughout the war, rarely thwarted solicitation. The rise in prostitution itself is indicative of this and the creation of regulated brothels by both sides in the war. Mopeli-Paulus described a visit to a brothel in Khartoum:

> At a gate where we entered, and near the door of the house, sat a huge woman […] An interpreter asked 'Do you want women?' and we answered 'Yes'. Several handsome looking girls entered the room and took their places on one side […] We knew what we had come for, not delaying, chose according to our tastes. Each paid – two piastres – about a shilling – to satisfy our desires. There seemed to be no disgrace in leaving the room followed by a girl, yet everyone knew what was going to take place […] Among the girls, the one who felt the happiest was she who had the most men.[588]

Forms of sex-trade were also wide-spread in Italy and 'Many [Italian women] were only too willing to barter for wine or play their female trade for foodstuffs, soap or cigarettes.'[589] Of

[585] *Op. cit.*, p.90
[586] DOD. UWH, Box 125, History of SAMC in EA, p.6
[587] *Op. cit.*, Box 158, Historical Survey of NEAS, p.35
[588] Mopeli-Paulus, *The World and the Cattle*, p.81
[589] DOD. UWH, Box 158, Historical Survey of NEAS, p.11

note is the perception of the women by the men. There is an assumed promiscuity of the women engaging in sex-trade and that they did so consensually. Mopeli-Paulus, although admitting that there was a language barrier, projected the women as being comfortable with and even taking pride in their work. In discussing sex between Italian soldiers and Russian women, Raffaello Pannacci argues that perceptions of immorality and 'experience with sex' made women available for sex in the male gaze. 'Automatically, the idea of coercion in relations with these women became absurd.'[590]

In tandem with prostitution was sexual violence. For instance, in Tripoli, four CC details raped a British nurse.[591] It is likely that this case was recorded because a nurse was attacked, and not a sex-worker. A telegram by Stubbs to the office of the Aadjutant-General concerning the rising dissatisfaction among NEAS in the Union mentioned an increasing number of cases of attempted rape against White women.[592] Even in the case of the NMC soldier who was sentenced to death for the rape and murder of an Italian woman, it is debatable if the case would have been investigated at all had he not murdered her.[593] Sexual violence has been historically cloaked in the victim's silence.

A discussion around sexual assault and prostitution requires a survey of the attitudes of non-White troops towards female bodies and the impact of service on the front on these mutating perceptions. Although the lack of first-person accounts makes it difficult to investigate this intersection in the case of NEAS troops, certain generalisations of male anxiety and the commodification of female bodies can be assumed as reflective of their experience. In *Victory Girls, Khaki-Wackies, and Patriotutes*, Marilyn Hegarty analyses the bending of gender norms

[590] Pannacci, R. (2020). 'Sex, Military Brothels and Gender Violence during the Italian Campaign in the USSR, 1941-3'. *Journal of Contemporary History*, p.78
[591] DOD. UWH, Box 158, Historical Survey of NEAS, p.35
[592] DOD. CGS, Box 129, 32/1, DIRNEAS to AG, 15 March 1943.
[593] *See* p.208

in World War II as women entered the work-force and their roles as care-givers evolved. This created anxiety within society and within the armed forces as men on the frontlines were required to come to terms with the independence of their wives, girlfriends, and mothers – women who had previously been dependent on them for sustenance. In discussing female impersonation in the Canadian military, Halladay argues that it was this anxiety that was acted out on stage wherein naïve young women were cherished in scripts while female-characters who were exploring their independence were punished. Additionally, the commodification of the female body itself is a complex discussion. Military institutions particularly intended to control prostitution as venereal diseases could severely impact the fighting capacity of an army. This control was exercised through 'legalisation' of certain brothels, provisions of contraceptive and the criminalisation of solicitation. Prostitution also had an underlying layer of class and race. Regardless, broadly speaking, in the male gaze, sexualised female bodies were both, exploited and condemned.[594]

However, not all companionship was bartered. Mopeli-Paulus regretted visiting the brothel as, having forgotten about his estranged wife, he was now in love with an African-American girl, Isabel, who he courted until he was transferred to Garawi. The records reveal one more case of an IMC soldier courting, marrying and having a child with a Muslim North African woman.[595] It is, thus, likely that CC/IMC rank-and-file sought female companionship when they could. Although whether these experiences were unique to the war and how they had been impacted by service on the frontline remain investigative gaps.

The above examination of recreation, morale and discipline of CC/IMC troops on the front explored the dynamic ways in which institutions and soldiers coped with and mediated battle-

[594] Hegarty, M. (2007). *Victory Girls, Khaki-Wackies, and Patriotutes: The Regulation of Female Sexuality during World War II.* NYU Press.
[595] DOD. DNEAS, Box 27, NAS/8/MISC, Letter I Muhammed, 30 July 1946.

stress. Despite being non-combatants, the frontline service of non-White troops did induce anxiety in them. The length and location of service also impacted the experience of deployment. Within these intersections is the history of mental well-being and trauma. The lack of personal first-person sources such as letters, journals and memoirs does obstruct an in-depth analysis. However, glimpses of these experiences can be found in the soldier's *act* of communication from the front.

4. War and Despondency

A common illness of war is homesickness. For CC/IMC, prolonged foreign service, anxiety of frontline action, poor living conditions and the added burden of race would have strained their mental well-being. While soldiers were subjected to many stresses, what helped them most was correspondences with loved ones. Letters helped alleviate the isolation soldiers felt and even aided in validating their sacrifice and service. As French posits, 'Mail that brought good news raised morale, just as mail that brought bad news lowered it.'[596] Martin Lyons further argues that the/a letter itself was a 'sign of life' for soldiers and that 'the fear of silence, a silence which was unbearable to contemplate…for those at the front, silence or some irregularity in mail deliveries could cause panic and fear of infidelity'.[597] For CC/IMC ranks this can be substantiated by Corporal J. A, Daniel's recollection. 'A letter of good news is an absolute consolation to a soldier […] though after the mail has arrived you can see many a man sitting with his hand under his chin, thinking deeply of home or worrying about his family.'[598] The value of letters is also emphasised by Sergeant L. A. Richards who described an incident of his men searching for their correspondences after an air raid:

[596] French, *Raising Churchill's Army*, p.145

[597] Lyons, M. (2003). 'French Soldiers and Their Correspondence: Towards a History of Writing Practices in the First World War'. *French History*, p.90

[598] UCTSC. 'What CC did in Eritrea', *The Cape Standard*, 16 September 1941.

> Their quest, strangely enough, is for letters. These letters are among their most precious processions; they must on no account be lost. Well, you can imagine how precious these missives are when I tell you that the men read and re-read them each day, whenever they have a moment to spare. Every now and again some wag would shout: "Hey, what are you looking for?" A laugh would be raised and the search would be continued.[599]

Of course, letter-writing was a privilege of the literate. However, during war-time, it can be assumed that literate men were helping others maintain correspondence. Basic training to uneducated men in writing would have also helped in this effort. Particularly difficult for soldiers was the holiday season. An unnamed soldier who had returned to the Union wrote an emotive piece for *The Cape Standard* describing Christmas on the front. 'All is quiet, everyone to his own thoughts. Silent tears are shed in every of the several soldier's homes, their trucks. A common prayer: "God when will this awful war end?"'.[600] His intention was to remind readers to write to soldiers on the frontline.

Another method of attaining news was the *Standard*. The newspaper, as had been analysed, was circulated among troops on the frontline and provided news of home. It also created a measure of validation for soldiers. To see their exploits celebrated would have raised the confidence of soldiers and perhaps, at least momentarily, provided them with assurance of the value of their service. Soldiers writing to *CS* would occasionally mention reading the paper and would sometimes comment on other pieces and letters that had been published. Corporal P. J. Foster's letter evidences this:

> We always look forward to receiving the Cape Standard. It gives us some idea of what is going on at home. We out here always like to read about us by various people, and I can tell you how proud the boys feel. [601]

The above accounts hint at the impact of homesickness on men. Letters and parcels were crucial lines of communication for soldiers, connecting them with their erstwhile civilian lives. Any

[599] UCTSC. 'CC Soldier Writes Home', *The Cape Standard*, 24 March 1942.
[600] UCTSC. 'A Soldier Thinks of Christmas', 24 November 1942
[601] UCTSC. 'Soldier Appreciates Standard', *The Cape Standard*, 11 August 1942.

disruptions in this instigated frustration and lowered morale. Several accounts mention the delay in mail and parcels, especially around Christmas when letters would take anywhere between six to eight weeks to reach their recipients. A closer analysis of correspondence would have revealed more about the domestic attitudes of soldiers, how they privately perceived the war, and their general mental condition during service. It would have also provided for a gendered investigation on the impact of service on soldiers, and an analysis of the mutation of familial and romantic relationships as a result of deployment. Nevertheless, the act of communication itself is an indicator of not only the homesickness that men felt, but also dispels notions of unconditional, valorous service that was attached to the masculine identity of rank-and-file.

4.1. Humour

Despite all the above forms of recreation and methods for stress alleviation, there were still many 'eventless' periods in which soldiers carried on soldiering. In their everyday life CC/IMC soldiers, like other soldiers, carried on as best as they could and filled the gaps with humour. Tim Cook posits that 'Jocularity and wit were outlets for soldiers and one of the ways they staved off the crushing psychological strain. Humour remained an important safety valve for soldiers attempting to endure the destruction at the front.'[602] Mopeli-Paulus substantiated this recounting that 'In the army more than anywhere else it is always an acceptable thing to bring laughter. The more jokes, the better life becomes.'[603]

Military humour can be described as 'internal' and 'external'[604]. Internal instances of humour include organised forms such as variety concerts, female impersonation etc, and humour at a

[602] Cook, T. (2013). '"I will meet the world with a smile and a joke" Canadian Soldiers' Humour in the Great War'. *Canadian Military History*, p.49
[603] Mopeli-Paulus, p.90
[604] 'External' humour is civilian humour of military formalities and functioning.

rank-and-file level.[605] Corporal J. A. Daniels informed that 'Our men come from all part of the Union and each has his life experiences to relate and many jokes to tell. We have one fellow who is a real comedian and he amuses us a lot.'[606] Of the rank-and-file humour, it can be construed that it was essential to coping with everyday life.

Although CC/IMC soldiers were generally referred to as a 'cheerful' group, there are limited sources that reflect this humour in action. The best example is a lengthy semi-fictional account by an unnamed CC soldier deployed in East Africa. The soldier informed his readers that because military censorship would not allow him to provide a 'true' account of his service, his readers must 'be content with what little I am able to share with you'. Titled *The Army has its Humorous Incidents*, the soldier detailed a series of observations in the form of embellished and fictional narrations. An excerpt:

> Without exaggeration, we have to take precautionary measures about drinking water. First we boil it; secondly, we steam the result, filter the remainder, and, to be absolutely on the safe side, drink beer!

He also mentioned that they feed their fowl ice-cream so the birds don't lay hard-boiled eggs, that food at the front was better than any 'highbrow hotel in Cape Town (with apologies to Mount Nelson)', and their cook was a concrete-mixer in civilian life and his concoctions were starving the unit. 'Then they say the Army marches on its stomach!' He described their Sgt-Maj as the adopted mother of the unit and that, although love is blind, he pities his 'father if he ever seeks a mother like this!' The soldier also discussed at length his and his comrades' suspicion about the theft of tobacco by the orderly of the Sergeant-Major. Having converted their suspicion into belief, he declared that the men had decided to lace the Orderly's cigarettes with gunpowder.[607] Of course, it is highly unlikely that the soldiers actually went through with

[605] Holmes, Singleton, & Jones. (Eds.). (2004). *The Oxford Companion to Military History*. Entry. Humour and the Military.
[606] UCTSC. 'The Latest Letter Home', *The Cape Standard*, 31 March 1942.
[607] UCTSC. 'The Army has its Humorous Incidents', *The Cape Standard*, 12 August 1942.

the lacing. The publishing of the article, however, is reflective of the 'dismissive' style of military humour used to deal with unpopular figures or situations. The incidents that the soldier narrated also represent the general grievances of rank-and-file: food, climate, low-quality cigarettes and hard task leaders. It is likely that the piece was published in *The Cape Standard* more for soldiers on the front than readers at home. Such a piece would have had a wider impact on morale of rank-and-file as they would have been able to 'make light' of their grievances and perceive them as collective and universal experiences as opposed to targeted and individual issues. Perhaps the shared communal experience of service is what motivated the author to pen the article.

Another form of humour, as observed in Private Hourst's story about the soldier who unwittingly walked into a pride of lions[608], is 'avoidance joking' meant to diminish the horridness of an incident. Sergeant Charles Adams also narrated his painful experience of being bitten by a scorpion using this style of humour (as can be heard in the interview), in that he laughed and presented the entire episode as a funny memory instead of a painful one.[609] This form of humour is more common and used to mask anxiety and panic as 'combatants, faced with laughing or crying, try to laugh.'[610]

Although descriptions of humour within CC/IMC ranks are few, as Tim Cook illustrates in the case of Canadian soldiers in World War I, soldiers joked about a variety of subjects, from warfare to military service, political humour, gendered humour etc. Most of this humour, in all armies, is unrecorded. However, as Cook argues, through humour soldiers not only employed crucial coping mechanisms but they also constructed new understandings of masculinity. He further posits that humour was not just for coping in the trench, but also easing the blow at

[608] *See* p.159
[609] *See* p.186
[610] 'Humour' In. *The Oxford Companion to Military History*.

home in an effort to not worry loved ones. 'These comedic by-products of the war became essential tools to battle boredom and ennui, to rail against the system, and are a reflection of how soldiers resisted the dehumanizing effects of the war.'[611] Although Cook's insightful methodology cannot be employed to study humour among CC/IMC ranks, it can be reasonably construed that the application of military humour by them is an indication of the stresses of war that they faced, and also binds them into a universal experience of soldiering and combat, not limited to World War II.

Conclusion

Morale among CC/IMC ranks was an evolving experience. For the institution, it was a secondary concern. Morale of soldiers needed to be maintained, however the forms of maintaining challenged the segregation of the Union. NEAS units had good morale when they were treated with dignity as soldiers, and their concerns viewed as legitimate challenges of war service. When they were treated as 'less than' or their issues reduced to incompetence borne of racial inferiority, morale worsened and generally resulted in the breakdown of discipline. Although the circumstances effecting morale varied in every unit in every campaign, it can generally be construed that under 'sympathetic' officers with proper facilities, CC/IMC ranks fared better. This is most obvious in the dip in discipline following dilution and 'sectioning' of units in North Africa. Discipline was never really a concern in the East Africa campaign and this can largely be credited to the maintenance of 'espirit de corps', to collective service, and officers who favourably worked towards the welfare of their men. All three conditions were varyingly lacking post-East Africa. The access to amenities on the front further enabled the use of unsanctioned recreation (similar to other British imperial forces). The incidents of mutinous

[611] Cook, 'I will meet the World with a Smile', p.61

behaviour, rioting, rising alcoholism and engagement in solicitation are also representative of how soldiers' chose to regulate their own morale and stresses, especially in the absence of constructive institutional interventions. The general tendencies of the White commands to pass-the-buck on to non-White ranks and blame them for their supposed inherent personality flaws also translated into the scorn, suspicion and brutality with which non-White units were treated. This mistreatment is also reflective of the agency with which non-White ranks managed their mental well-being and continued to soldier despite being suppressed and interdicted.

Nevertheless, morale cannot be understood as exclusively indicative of the mental health of soldiers. Good morale did not always mean soldiers were 'happy', it meant they were coping, following orders and maintaining rank. A variety of methods were used by rank-and-file to meet the demands of war. However, soldiers suffered, mostly in silence, as they coped with their trauma and sought temporary relief and escape through sanctioned and illegal recreational mediums. Yet the finality of the circumstance was never lost on them. As one soldier penned:

> 'If you have a heart, dear,
> In the distance far away,
> Sit down and write the note,
> You have put off day by day,
> Don't wait until my steps
> Reach heaven's pearly gate,
> But show me what you think of me
> Before it is too late'[612]

[612] UCTSC. 'Before it is too Late', *The Cape Standard*, 2 December 1941.

CHAPTER 6

‘A Hapless Post of Hungry Men’: CC and IMC Prisoners of War[613]

Studies on POWs in World War II have seldom taken into account the experiences of non-White captives.[614] This chapter focuses on non-White South African POWs and asserts that their experience of captivity was unique and multi-faceted. A total of 1,215 CC and IMC soldiers were captured by German and Italian forces through the course of the war.[615] During this period they faced a great amount of physical and mental exhaustion. They were made to march through the desert, called ‘thirst marches’, lasting for a few weeks at times. They were starved, dehydrated and forced to work on military assignments. Treatment by German and Italian guards, as will be discussed, was racially motivated and harsh. Added to this, the

[613] A version of this chapter was published in the edited volume *Sights, Sounds, Memories* (2020)

[614] Raffael Schek’s compendium on French African prisoners are important studies on the experience of African captives. Scheck, R. (2015) ‘French African Soldiers in German POW Camps, 1940-1945’ In: *Africa and World War II*. CUP; Scheck, R. (2014) *French Colonial Soldiers in German Captivity During World War II*. CUP.; Scheck, R. (2006) *Hitler's African victims: the German Army massacres of Black French soldiers in 1940*. CUP. Other works of note on South African internment and internment in general: Horn, K. (2011). ‘“Stalag Happy”: South African Prisoners of War during World War Two (1939-1945) and their Experience and Use of Humour’, *South African Historical Journal*.; Horn, K. (2015). *In Enemy Hands: South Africa’s POWs in World War II*. Jonathan Ball Publishing.; Makepeace, C. (2017) *Captives of War: British Prisoners of War in Europe in the Second World War*. CUP.; Crawley, A. (1985) *Escape from Germany: The Methods of Escape used by RAF airmen during the Second World War*. Air Historical Branch.; MacKenzie, S. P. (2006) *The Colditz Myth: British and Commonwealth Prisoners of War in Nazi Germany*. OUP.; Moore, B. (2014). ‘Captive Audience: Camp Entertainment and British Prisoners-of-war in German Captivity, 1939-1945’. *Popular Entertainment Studies*.; Johnson, M. (2021) ‘Recreating the playing fields: New Zealand prisoners of war and sport during the Second World War’. *War & Society*.; Fedorowich, K. (1996). *Prisoners of War and their Captors in World War II*. Berg Publishers.

[615] Loraine-Grews, J. (1985). ‘Union Defence Forces: Statistics of the Wounded and Prisoners of War during the Second World War’. *Scientia Militaria,* p.62. Additionally, 3,411 NMC were also captured.

prisoners in Europe also faced the challenge of being interned in lands that were entirely foreign to them.

The research for this chapter does not have the benefit of sizeable first-person accounts as studies on White POWs do. However, some non-White voices have been collated, primarily from interviews of escapees obtained from British intelligence (MI9) reports and, interviews and articles published in *The Cape Standard*. Still, a glaring shortcoming of these accounts for the historian is their *raison d'être*. The MI9 reports were produced for the sole purpose of collection of intelligence on conditions of camps and Resistance networks. Similarly, as elaborated in the Introduction, the *Standard* presented a compiled and collective account of the experience of internment. Thus, these first-hand accounts are incomplete as the information they narrate has been coaxed by external actors and this took away agency from the soldier who recounted it.

This chapter has attempted an informed reconstruction of this history by juxtaposing available sources with government archives and by analysing them against the histories of other captives. As previous chapters have demonstrated, the experiences of non-White South African soldiers were greatly impacted by the disarray of war, and so was their captivity. This chapter presents two arguments that characterise their internment. Firstly, the impact of institutionalised racism on interned non-White ranks is highlighted and it is argued that it was the lack of protection of Allied to non-White South African prisoners worsened Axis brutality towards them. Secondly, it distinguishes between White and non-White internment and argues that communal civilian support, disarmament, and internment in Europe, created disparate experiences for non-White internees despite being in similar circumstances as White internees. The lens of the non-White captive reveals how the self-perception of soldiers on their own soldiering impacts their view of their internment.

1. Surviving Captivity

Some generalisation can be made about the South African POW experience. In the Desert campaign, South African faced its most crushing losses at the battle for Sidi Rezegh (1941) where the 5th South African Infantry Brigade was destroyed, and at the fall of Tobruk (1942) which accounted for the majority of South Africa's POWs.[616] A staggering 17,303 South African soldiers[617] were captured or reported missing during the war, over 10,000 from Tobruk alone.[618] They served their internment mostly in North Africa, usually Benghazi and Tobruk, and in occupied Italy and France, and in Germany. While White POWs were shipped across the Mediterranean to European camps, most non-White POWs were retained in the desert to work on military details. This sub-section details the period of captivity for non-White prisoners in North Africa and Europe. Although internment was an equalising experience, in that prisoners faced the same/similar circumstances during internment, Allied protection, Axis perception and the attitudes of the captors themselves impacted how non-White prisoners experienced said circumstances.

1.1. Surrender in Africa

The loss of Tobruk was certainly catastrophic for the Allied forces. Churchill is said to have been rendered speechless on being informed of the defeat.[619] For the soldier, however, it was confusing and a sudden shock. Multiple accounts by White South African soldiers focused on the abruptness of the event.[620] W J Adams, a CC soldier, who was at Tobruk described his and his comrades bewilderment 'The battle of Tobruk was a nightmare to me, for Jerry kept on

[616] Orpen, *War in the Desert*, pp.90-92, 311
[617] Loraine-Grews, 'Statistics of the Wounded and Prisoners', p.62
[618] Wessels, A.(2000). The first two years of war: The development of the Union Defence Forces. *Military History Journal*.
[619] Jackson, *The British Empire and the Second World War*, p.107.
[620] Horn, *In Enemy Hands*, p.40

shelling […] Rumours were rife […] Somebody had heard that the tenth army was advancing on Rommel. Some even knew that Mr Churchill had resigned.'[621] Once the dust settled, the mass of captured soldiers were shifted to camps.

All twelve MI9 reports of CC/IMC escapees have some commonalities. After their capture the soldiers were searched and stripped of all valuable and personal items including money and 'good' boots. While White accounts recall infrequently that the German guards were better at curtailing looting[622], this does not appear in the narratives of non-White soldiers. In fact, while White South African POWs generally had more 'respect' for their German captors (and viewed the Italians with contempt), none of the non-White prisoners made such observations in any of the available sources. It is also unlikely that they would have failed to mention such incidents as the accounts often focus on White treatment and non-White observation of the experience of White captives. The only recollection is from W. J. Adams who viewed both Italians and Germans with contempt and often described their bravado as false and failing.[623]

Following surrender, prisoners faced the first of a series of long 'thirst' marches, usually to Benghazi or Derna. Private Daniel Alexander recounted that the POWs marched for five days to Benghazi, only being able to drink water when it rained. They had to survive on a single large biscuit to share between two men.[624] W. J. Adams was first moved to Derna and then to Benghazi by trucks and trailers, and described that 'The journey was horrible. There was no place to sit. We had to stand for a whole long, hot day.'[625] Newman Robinson, a White South African POW, recalled non-White prisoners being queued last for food and water and men fainting from dehydration:

[621] UCTSC. 'A POW's Adventure', *The Cape Standard*, 28 December 1943.
[622] Horn, *In Enemy Hands.*
[623] UCTSC. 'A POW's Adventure', *The Cape Standard*, 28 December 1943.
[624] UCTSC. 'Many Ex-Prisoners Return', *The Cape Standard*, 19 June 1945.
[625] UCTSC. 'A POW's Adventure', *The Cape Standard*, 28 December 1943.

> Cape Corps and African sections had been left till last, and before their turn came the water had finished. They would have been justified in making a protest. Instead, they turned away sadly with the angry look of beaten animals. I felt like crying with helpless rage.[626]

The North African camps were in a poor state as the captors themselves were unprepared for the influx of prisoners. Shortages of food, water, shelter, toilets, medical aid were common. Alexander was camped at Benghazi for two weeks where the daily ration comprised of a loaf of bread between two men and a small tin of bully beef between six men. Like Benghazi, the camp conditions in Derna were abysmal and 'Many of us suffered from dysentery, there were flies and lice galore, we had little food, and water was scarce.'[627] W. J. Adams recounted that the food they received was a tiny portion of horse-meat and a biscuit that was hard as a 'tile'. 'Pte W' [sic], who was admitted to an Italian tent hospital in Derna described 'My arm was in a plaster of Paris cast. An inhuman Italian doctor simply wretched the cast off my arm; the agony was indescribable.'[628]

In North Africa life was difficult. Prisoners were camped in enclosures that were usually open spaces which had been simply fenced in. They were over-crowded with a lack of tents and generally little order was maintained. At Benghazi the tents were 'thin' and did little to combat the cold weather.[629] Furthermore, non-White prisoners were forced to work long, gruelling hours as labourers, usually in docks, for no pay and very little food. Official reports described it as 'the worst treatment imaginable'.[630] The non-White captives in particular were subjected to demoralising propaganda. In one instance, a German officer who spoke Afrikaans, tried to unsuccessfully convince three NEAS POWs to participate in a broadcast to the Union, saying

[626] Horn, *In Enemy Hands*, p.51
[627] *Ibid*.
[628] UCTSC. 'Nerve-Racking Experience', *The Cape Standard*, 15 May 1945.
[629] UCTSC. 'A POW's Adventure', *The Cape Standard*, 28 December 1943.
[630] DOD. UWH, Box 158, Historical Survey of NEAS, p.57

they were 'happy' in Tobruk.[631] Additionally, Allied bombing of Axis camps in the desert dramatically increased in the bid to regain the Mediterranean. During these air-raids, non-White prisoners were not allowed to take shelter and were instead placed in wire cages, in the open and vulnerable. Many of these men were killed and injured as a result.[632] Adams described his experience of the air-raids:

> our planes came over. The big flying fortresses, or whatever they were, silenced the ack-ack; sunk the boat, strafed the jetties and created havoc, the like of which I fear to see again! I got wounded, nearly killed, but I felt that my release or escape was near.[633]

However, working away from the camps also meant that non-White POWs had more opportunities to steal food. Adams recalled that the circumstance had turned the men into 'expert thieves' and they particularly waited for air-raids to steal as the guards would abandon their posts for safety.[634] This subverted the power dynamic as White prisoners then depended on the charity of non-White prisoners.[635]

The desert internment does not feature heavily in the recollections of non-White ex-POWs. It is unclear why this is the case. Perhaps familiarity with the desert did not catalyse an interest in recounting that period of internment as the unfamiliarity of Europe did. Perhaps because *The Cape Standard* prioritised reporting on European internment. Or perhaps because the desert internment itself was for a comparatively shorter period. Tobruk was re-captured in November of the same year and approximately 300 CC and 1200 NMC POWs were liberated. A smaller number of NEAS prisoners, usually sick and wounded, in Derna, Benghazi, Tripoli and Bizerta,

[631] DOD. DNEAS Group 2, Box 1, Middle East, SAPA from Sutherland, Timmi November 15.
[632] DOD. UWH, Box 158, Historical Survey of NEAS, p.55
[633] UCTSC. 'A POW's Adventure', *The Cape Standard*, 28 December 1943.
[634] *Ibid*.
[635] Horn, *In Enemy Hands*, p.44

were also subsequently liberated.[636] However, about 2,000 NEAS had been moved to Europe and served much longer periods in captivity.

Figure 13 NEAS troops welcoming Allied troops, November 1942, No. E 1733, NMMH.

1.2. The Mediterranean Voyage

From North Africa ports, captives were transported to POW camps in Italy, Greece and Germany. The journeys across the Mediterranean were treacherous as a result of intense naval warfare as both sides engaged in heavy bombardment in the sea.[637] Private Alexander, Private Arthur Daniels and Private Daniel Dorman, had all been aboard Italian ships that were torpedoed. Private Joe David Brown was adrift for six hours after the cargo ship he was on sank.[638] W. J. Adams was also on a torpedoed ship:

> Just off Derna we were torpedoed and of all the narrow escapes I had that one was the narrowest. Hot water, pieces of broken glass and shrapnel were raining down on us. Water rushed into the hold like a river in flood and the ship began to nose-dive.[639]

[636] DOD. UWH, Box 158, Historical Survey of NEAS, p.56
[637] The Italian *Regina Marina* lost a total of 83 warships and 83 submarines in the Mediterranean and the Red Sea between 1940-43.
[638] TNA. WO 208/3350/1181.
[639] UCTSC. 'A POW's Adventure', *The Cape Standard*, 28 December 1943.

He recounted the abandonment of the Italian crew, how the prisoners were left to fend for themselves, and that, despite being on a sinking ship, the men prioritised scavenging for food. Karen Horn's piece, *A Sudden Sickening Sensation*, reconstructs the experience of White South African prisoners aboard an Italian hospital ship which was torpedoed. The immense variations in the surviving accounts of the POWs inevitably reflect the chaos of drowning at sea. While some survivors recall feeling terrified, others viewed it as a thrilling adventure and an opportunity to escape. Regardless, as Horn argues, for prisoners on board there were usually two choices: to stay on board and hope that the ship stays afloat or risk the sea.[640] Being aboard any ship in the Mediterranean, let alone a sinking ship, would have been a stressful experience for the captives.

Depending on the port of embarkment in Europe, the POWs either faced more long marches or suffocating transportations to the European camps. Arthur Daniels and Daniel Dorman, both of whom were wounded in different torpedo attacks, were rescued by an Italian Red Cross ship and brought to Naples. They were two of the first CC men to arrive in Italy – even before the deployment of CC soldiers in the peninsula. Meanwhile, Private Alexander along with hundreds of marooned soldiers ended up on Greek shores. Under the vigilance of Italian guards, they walked in rain and snow, wearing only their North African desert uniforms that were grossly insufficient for the cold conditions.[641] 'On the first night […] about a thousand men for shelter had about a hundred bales of straw.'[642]

The non-commissioned South African POWs were divided between various transit and labour camps. There was no clear policy of segregation based on race in the camps, an aspect of captivity that CC/IMC prisoners were quick to notice, understandably so. Private W, who had

[640] Horn, *A Sudden Sickening Sensation*, p.121
[641] Horn, *In Enemy Hands*, p.124
[642] UCTSC. 'Many Ex-Prisoners Return', *The Cape Standard*, 19 June 1945.

been moved by a Red Cross ship from Derna to Naples, described his experience in a hospital at Gizerta where 'nice' English POW medical staff were managing the ward and that 'There was no segregation in the two hospitals, white and coloured lay side by side.' That the private felt the need to single out the hospital suggests that he had previously been facing segregation in medical treatment. After his release, 'W' was transferred to Camp Lucca where the prisoners occupied tents. Here, he described that 'The cold was terrific and the mud and slush most annoying. I occupied a tent with some English-speaking and Afrikaans-speaking Springboks who were always very nice and chummy with me.'[643] Once more, by sequestering the identity of his White tent-mates, W indicated the uniqueness of their experience in Europe. This clear need to define racial identities and highlight instances of momentary social equality is notable. It seems the POWs and their interviewers were attempting to point to the weekly's readers the possibility of racial equality under the auspices of a unifying cause (of which captivity had been a consequence).

1.3. 'An Exceptionally Bad Time': Life in Camps

While in camps POWs worked in a variety of details with negligible pay. They worked as manual labourers performing jobs such as chopping wood, harvesting potatoes, digging gun emplacements, carrying munitions and bombs, and unloading supplies. They would work for as long as 10-11 hours. They were, for the most part, divided on the basis of language for ease of administration. Non-White soldiers, especially African soldiers, were also penned into 'non-European' camps. Here they were forced to work on aerodromes and airfields, ammunition wagons, petrol dumps and other military projects. This was perhaps the most gross violation

[643] UCTSC. 'Nerve-Racking Experience', *The Cape Standard*, 15 May 1945.

of the Geneva Convention.[644] One anonymous CC ex-POW described his experience at one such camp:

> Only Non-Europeans were sent to Camp 85 in Italy to work on the aerodromes which continually came under Allied bombing. The camp was controlled by Germans with Italian guards. At this 'arbeitslager'[645], i.e. work camp, we were forced to work. It was a case of 'Nochts arbeiten, nichts essen' i.e. no work no food. Hunger compelled several of us to do the work. A German Sargent-Major used to overturn our homemade beds if we were a minute late getting up for work.[646] [sic]

While several stipulations concerning health, safety, and possessions of POWs (especially non-commissioned prisoners) were regularly violated, significantly, White POWs in Europe *were not forced* to work on military projects. However non-White captives were subjected to this as neither Germans nor Italians considered 'Black' POWs as regular force, and therefore the Geneva Convention was not applicable to them. [647] It is also possible that 'Black' or 'African' POWs were used as they were not as actively protected by Allied commands as their White counter-parts. This was especially true for non-White South Africans as the administration of these soldiers fell entirely under the DNEAS – an institution that Colonel Stubbs, the Director himself, had described as the 'Cinderella' of the UDF'.[648] Of course, this is not to presume that all POWs simply succumbed to their fate. It is possible that those who had formal education or some form of instruction in military regulations were aware of their rights as POWs.

Private Alexander, for example, refused to work on a military labour assignment. He was punished with ten days of solitary confinement.[649] In another incident, Gunner Duickers related that he had been injured at an Italian camp during an air raid while working on an aerodrome.

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[644] Article 31, 1929 Geneva Convention: 'Work done by prisoners of war shall have no direct connection with the operations of the war. In particular *it is forbidden to employ prisoners in the manufacture or transport of arms or munitions of any kind, or on the transport of material destined for combatant units* [emphasis added].'
[645] These were forced labour camps run by Nazis for the war industry.
[646] UCTSC. 'Nerve-Racking Experience', *The Cape Standard*, 15 May 1945.
[647] Horn, *In Enemy Hands*, p.57
[648] In that DNEAS bore the brunt of auxiliary work and remained depressed and fairly powerless.
DOD. CGS, Box 129, 32/1, DIRNEAS to AG, 15 March 1943.
[649] UCTSC. 'Many Ex-Prisoners Return', *The Cape Standard*, 19 June 1945.

In retaliation, his supervisor Sergeant John Colbert, a CC NCO who was also a POW, organised a strike for ten days protesting the military nature of the work. Colbert was gaoled, and work resumed. The following year, as Duickers recalled, Colbert once more complained to two Red Cross officials about the military work details being assigned to non-White South African POWs at Beauvais. While the officials agreed it was against the Geneva convention, subsequent reports of continued work at the aerodrome suggests no action was taken.[650]. Colbert, however, was later recognised for his tireless efforts to protect the rights of non-White POWs and awarded the BEM.[651] However, vast number of CC/IMC POWs found themselves captive in countries they were hopelessly unfamiliar with and had no higher authorities to advocate for them. That the Red Cross officials did not press German authorities to correct such violations suggests that they may have shared their prejudice and possibly prioritised complaints of White captives.

In the case of CC/IMC soldiers, this theory is supported by accounts of a camp at Beauvais (a town in northern France). Several official reports and first-hand accounts from NEAS POWs point to the existence of a 'non-European' camp at Beauvais that mostly held non-White SAs. This POW camp at Beauvais (*Stalag* 133) was a 'Frontstalag' – one of 57 Nazi POW camps established in occupied France, originally, to imprison African soldiers of the French colonial armies.[652] Additionally, Beauvais also had a major *Luftwaffe* aerodrome from where air raids were carried out by Germany during the Battle for Britain. It was therefore frequently bombed by RAF.

[650] TNA. WO 373/63/177.
[651] Gleeson, *The Unknown Force*, p.200
[652] Scheck, *French Colonial Soldiers in German Captivity*, p.3

According to *The Cape Standard*, the Beauvais camp held nearly 400 POWs from NEAS units working on the aerodrome.[653] Conditions here seemed more lenient. The captors allowed and provided for rugby and soccer tournaments. They also allowed internally-organised concerts for the amusement of the POWs. This implies that the captives were healthy enough to engage in social activities. Indeed, 'All prisoners who had been at Beauvais agreed that it was the best camp they had known.'[654] It is then reasonable to presume that the camp's proximity to the Allied lines on the Western front and its strategic importance in aerial warfare would have incentivised the camp captors to maintain morale of their prisoners to prevent acts of sabotage and escape.

However, life in most camps was not as 'pleasant' as that in Beauvais. In the early days of captivity, the Red Cross, YMCA and Toc H were still establishing their presence. Red Cross had not yet begun supplying parcels at Camp 66 in Capua (Italy) where some of the first CC prisoners were detained. Here food was so scarce the men were reduced to eating 'old bones and even grass'.[655] Once conditions improved, Pte W noted, the Italian rations provided consisted of a 'sourish' bread that they referred to as 'catspaw', some macaroni, boiled cabbage leaves, and, on alternate days, one square inch of hard cheese. He also noted that all prisoners, irrespective of race, received the same food and treatment from the Italian guards. He further described an incident where a group of guards dumped a POW in a lavatory pit full of human excrement as punishment for attempting to steal a Red Cross parcel.[656] Conditions in the

[653] As has been previously seen in the case of Sergeant Colbert, it was unlikely that there would have been any intervention on behalf of these POWs to prevent them from working on the aerodrome, making them the ideal labour force.
[654] UCTSC. 'Many Ex-Prisoners Return', *The Cape Standard*, 19 June 1945.
[655] *Ibid*.
[656] This, as Makepeace noted, was a common punishment for theft and insubordination – the objective being to humiliate and dehumanise the captive.

Stalags were no better. Private Dixon, who was interned at Jakobathsal (a German camp near Dresden), described his time there:

> It was in the heart of winter with two feet of snow on the ground. Some of us had to sleep in draughty stables without doors and we were given two blankets each by the Germans. We managed to scrounge some grass, which we made do for a mattress. Others were not so lucky, they had to sleep outside in the bitter cold as best as they could. Six of us had to share a small loaf of stale bread about 8 inches long. We received potatoes boiled in water, but I never saw a whole potato because they were always boiled to pieces. On rare occasions we received about ½ cubic inch of butter. The meat was blueish, and we suspected that it must have been either donkey or horse meat. It tasted neither like beef nor mutton. We Non-Europeans had an exceptionally bad time in this camp.[657]

While interned, CC/IMC soldiers unanimously credited their survival to the Red Cross parcels. Despite the hardships of forced labour, Daniels and Dorman described Grotalia (a camp in Italy) as the 'best camp' simply because they received food parcels from the Red Cross.[658] In the Italian camps, it seems, even the captors relied on these parcels. Brown noted that the prisoners would only receive one-quarter of the cigarettes assigned to them and that the Italian guards would warn them not to complain about the amount. It is reasonable to presume the guards were responsible for the shortfall. Daniels, along with others, was later transported to Ziegenhaum, a 'starvation camp'. Here, as he described, there were 193 men – non-White South Africans, Palestinians, Tunisians and Senegalese. None of them received the Red Cross parcels and their captors only gave them 'bad brown potato-bread, sugar beet sometimes [and] water to drink'. However, French prisoners at the camp did receive parcels. The group had to beg the French for 40 parcels, one parcel between five men, and this 'saved their lives'.[659]

However, the Red Cross initiatives had their limitations. One South African POW representative (who himself was in German captivity) described the condition of South African

[657] UCTSC. 'Nerve-Racking Experience', *The Cape Standard*, 15 May 1945.
[658] Provided by the International Association of the Red Cross, the Red Cross parcels consisted of food, tobacco and items of personal hygiene for POWs during the World Wars. Distribution of this was in accordance with the Geneva convention and helped POWs survive.
[659] UCTSC. 'Adventures of Prisoners of War', *The Cape Standard*, 19 June 1945.

captives in general in an intelligence report sent to the Red Cross. He reported that the men in Italy had not received any mail for over two months; that '90% of parcels of cigarettes from the South African Red Cross had not arrived'; that there were severe shortages of warm clothes and boots; and that South African POWs in Italy had, on average, lost twenty kilograms in twelve months of captivity. Overall, the Allied representatives who had authored the report complained that 'the British Red Cross published details about life in the *Stalag* which in no way correspond with the truth.'[660] While the Red Cross did not explicitly make any distinctions based on race while providing aid, the aid they did provide was, in most cases, just enough to allow prisoners to scrape by.

2. Violence

In the MI9 reports, the soldiers continually described the violence they were subjected to at the hands of both Italians and Germans. One South African CC soldier said that 'the Italians treated us very badly; not much food […] In Germany we were treated badly, no food.'[661] In a group interview Private John April, Private Marugoe Kgapula and Private Aron Zvani recalled how on asking for more food the Germans would call them 'dirty English dogs' and beat them.[662] W. J. Adams informed that the Italians would 'chase' them with bayonets.[663] Private Hermenes Daniels further described the violence he and his comrades faced from their captors: 'We were all badly mistreated and beaten with rifle butts and kicked and slapped on the face […] We worked all the time'.[664] In an Italian POW camp at Pollus (Greece) Private Joe David Brown recounted how there was no food for five days sometimes and that 'Many of the prisoners were ill with dysentery, and nothing was done for them.' Brown was later shifted to another camp

[660] DOD. CGS, Box 189, 40/28, Reports on Visits POWs and Internees, 30 October 1943.
[661] TNA. WO 208/3349/550.
[662] *Ibid*.
[663] UCTSC. 'A POW's Adventure', *The Cape Standard*, 28 December 1943.
[664] TNA. WO 208/3349/547.

at Capua where the conditions of work were brutal. The prisoners were mercilessly beaten, especially if they became sick and could not work.[665]

As the war progressed, the tide began turning against the Axis powers and the treatment in camps got worse. In 1944, Private Brown was shifted to a German *Stalag* in Moosburg which was, in his words, 'fit for pigs'. He was later moved to Chartes (France) which was frequently under attack by American forces. 'Whenever Allied planes came over, the Germans seemed to go mad and would beat us with rifle butts for no apparent reason.'[666] In May of the same year, Jim Mckenzie was shot and killed at the camp for complaining of being ill.[667] W. Harris was another CC soldier who was shot at the camp for, as the Germans claimed, being drunk. It is curious how a POW could get hold of alcohol under confinement, with little pay and even less time to spare. Perhaps he was delirious or suffering from a nervous break-down. Regardless, even if the POW did manage to bribe or steal alcohol, to shoot a prisoner for drunkenness is an excess and shows how little the lives of non-White captives mattered.

Sadly, these were not the only incidences of cold-blooded killings. In August 1944, the wife of Private William Harris received a cable informing her that her husband, who was captured at Tobruk, had been shot dead in a German camp for 'insubordination'. The Defence Department in Pretoria implied that they were investigating the circumstance of this 'insubordination' to warrant the private's death.[668] Although no further information is available on the incident, when compared to the insubordination by White South African POWs who were certainly not killed for it, the expendability of non-White lives becomes apparent. Meanwhile, at Camp 85 (Italy) Red Cross parcels of boots were being issued to the non-White prisoners when a 'native'

[665] TNA. WO 208/3350/1181.
[666] *Ibid.*
[667] *Ibid.*
[668] UCTSC. 'Prisoner of War', *The Cape Standard*, 1 August 1944.

was hit by a guard with a rifle-butt for cutting the line. The 'native' retaliated by head-butting the guard and knocked him off his heels. Fearing retribution, the captive fled and hid in the camp. After a futile attempt to find the prisoner, the infuriated guard fired at random killing an 'innocent South African prisoner'.[669]

The violence of their captors certainly brings to fore the speculation of whether this aggression was the result of racism. In the absence of more definitive information, one way to analyse this mistreatment is to juxtapose it against the treatment of White soldiers. Brutality by German and Italian soldiers against White Allied soldiers was not uncommon. However, even a cursory reading of White POW accounts reveals that this brutality was not without 'reason'. Captors threatened their prisoners with violence as an interrogation technique, or because they (or their fellow prisoners) had attempted to escape, or an offending remark had been made against Germany or the German Führer. Of course, there were also those captors who were simply sociopathic and cruel towards prisoners. Still, White POW accounts present a 'narrative' of the brutality they endured.

As a further comparison, in Horn's history of White South Africana in captivity, while there are certainly instances of violence, there is a 'narrative' to them – usually some kind of provocation. This was more intense in the desert during the initial stages of captivity, but more restraint was exercised as internment went on. In Horn's reconstruction of the experience of White South African POWs being transferred to Europe, an interviewee recounted, while the prisoners were being marched through the Italian countryside, Italian women would come out to hand cigarettes and food to the POWs but they stopped doing this when the Italian guards fired warning shots at the women.[670] Compare this to April, Zvani and Kgapula's account of being beaten on asking for more food. Although White POWs faced all the usual hardships and

[669] UCTSC. 'Nerve-Racking Experience', *The Cape Standard*, 15 May 1945.
[670] Horn, *In Enemy Hands*, p.60

stresses of internment, they were better protected by Allied commands and the Geneva Convention. In contrast, Russian POWs were treated with brutality as the Soviet Union did not ascribe to the Geneva Convention. Consequently, both Germany and Russia bullied and abused enemy prisoners in response to the bullying and abuse suffered by their own captured soldiers.[671]

Nevertheless, stories of brutality in World War II are endless. But it is the context of this brutality that allows for an analysis of the nuances of racialised violence. Violence towards White soldiers was carried out when it was 'provoked'. In contrast, all non-White escapee accounts inform of multiple instances of 'unprovoked' beatings. Raffael Scheck's in-depth analysis on African French POWs also presents similar conclusions. Scheck in his studies discusses the brutality of the treatment meted out to French 'colonial' soldiers who were viewed as animalistic, sub-human and violent. There are several recorded instances of 'Black massacres' wherein captured French African soldiers were indiscriminately murdered by German soldiers to exact 'vengeance'. However, Scheck notes that the frequency and intensity of this violence significantly decreased as the Vichy government assumed a more active role as a Protecting Power to shield its captured non-White soldiers in Nazi camps.[672] It can thus be assumed that the lack of UDF and British protection to non-White South African prisoners enabled the captors to aggressively assert their authority and to not view these captives at par with other prisoners from the imperial forces and less deserving of humane treatment. As a brief report on 'Axis cruelty' concluded that 'Tired and weary, they are beaten and kicked by both Germans and Italians.'[673]

[671] MacKenzie, S. (1994). The Treatment of Prisoners of War in World War II. *The Journal of Modern History*, pp.506-507
[672] Scheck, *French Colonial Soldiers in German Captivity*, pp.182-192
[673] DOD. UWH, Box 130, Narep ME4, Axis cruelty to native prisoners, 11 September 1942.

The violence experienced by CC/IMC POWs was not limited to the brutality they were forced to bear, but also the instances of cruelty that they witnessed being perpetuated on fellow captives, both, White and non-White. Yet, for the non-White prisoners this violence, although seemingly senseless, was systematically cruel. Their White captors considered their lives expendable *without consequence*. It can be argued that the difference in treatment meted out to White and non-White South African captives is symptomatic in the difference in protection afforded to both groups by Allied commands and neutral organisations such as Red Cross. Although the Geneva Convention of 1929 did not discriminate soldiers based on ethnicity, the underlying assumption that non-White soldiers were not part of the 'regular forces' is not just a prejudice that the Axis captors carried, but also one that was cultivated by Allied governments and commands. After all, non-White soldiers were not paid at par with their White counterparts; they could not be commissioned as officers; and in the case of South Africans, could not bear arms. Thus, despite serving the causes of liberty and democracy, these non-White prisoners were not protected by their own governments, and brutally assaulted, abused, starved and over-worked by their captors.

3. Escaping Captivity

'Escape' is perhaps one of the most dominant themes in the public memory of the World Wars. Biographies of Allied POWs detailing their experiences that were subsequently converted into films constructed glamorous stories of captivity and escape.[674] 'The stories of these brave men provided a popular myth of escape, being alone in enemy territory with very limited resources, living on one's wits and returning to the arms of a loving family at home.'[675] As Makepeace

[674] Some cult classics include *The Wooden Horse* (1950), *Stalag 17* (1953), *The Great Escape* (1963). These films were adapted from books and/or screenplays that were true accounts of escape.

[675] Tyas, S. (2010). 'Escapes of Allied Prisoners of War and Forced Labourers from German Captivity'. In M. Soleim (Ed.), *Prisoners of War and Forced Labour*. Cambridge Scholars Publishing, p.180

posits, within this myth of internment 'captivity was a game for POWs, dominated by their schemes to outwit, evade and escape from their captors.'[676] In SA, the most well-known escape of a non-White recruit was that of Job Maseko[677]. He was an NMC stretcher-bearer, who, with the help of his comrades Andrew Mohudi, Sam Police of NMC and Koos Williams of CC, blew up a docked German cargo boat while detained in Tobruk. Despite his extraordinary bravery, Maseko was robbed of the Victoria Cross as he was 'African' and was instead awarded the MM. Nevertheless, his valiant feat was subsequently counted and recounted by several historians, journalists, and even in a feature documentary by Vincent Moloi titled *A Pair of Boots and a Bicycle*. In 1997, the South African Navy renamed a Warrior-class strike craft after him. Maseko's exploits are perhaps the most celebrated history of participation of non-White South African soldiers in World War II.

Most CC/IMC POWs who had attempted escape were interned in North Africa. Proximity to the front, familiarity with the terrain and regular Allied bombing (and the chaos it caused) enabled NEAS prisoners to seek and use these opportunities for escape. In Europe, however, the POW camps were usually away from Allied lines, and for CC/IMC prisoners, they were in unfamiliar lands. Still, soldiers did make attempts with varying results. Private Alexander while, in captivity in Camp 60 in Lucca (Italy), attempted his first escape after almost two years of internment. He observed the movements of the guards and sentries and cut the wires to break out. Following this he proceeded to walk to Rocacastrala, a journey that took eight days. He spent the winter hiding in Rocacastrala and joined fifteen Americans and an Italian partisan group that was a hundred strong. Alexander served with them till they reached Allied lines.[678] Similarly, Private Joseph King of IMC escaped in Italy while being transported:

[676] Makepeace, *Captives of War*, p.6
[677] Also spelled 'Masego'
[678] TNA. WO 373/64/862.

> After wandering around I met an Italian girl who took me to her home and fed and clothed me. I then went towards Pescara but was captured again. I was taken to Aquilla POW camp. I escaped from the camp in a dustbin, and went in search of our lines, a week later I met 6 British soldiers who were armed […] I decided to join them.[679]

The party of seven then met up with a larger partisan group of armed Allied escapees that was led by an 'Imperial Captain'[680]. King was the only non-White among them and took part in missions to loot and destroy enemy convoys and bridges. He later met an American pilot who had been shot down and assisted him in getting back to Allied lines. Significantly, King was fluent in German and Italian and during his 'adventures' with the partisan group, he had become familiar with the countryside. Despite knowing the position of Allied forces, he *chose* not to return. Perhaps he preferred the freedom and purpose he had with the fighting group.

Gunner William Loubser who had been in internment for over two years when he, like Alexander, managed to escape by observing the guard shift and cutting the wires. He was near Rome at the time and was helped by civilians for a week before he was recaptured. On his second attempt, during the Italian invasion, Loubser simply 'walked out' of his camp unchallenged by the sentries. He was recaptured by Germans in April 1944, this time Loubser was imprisoned. On his third attempt, he eluded the guards by hiding behind a pillar as the camp was being evacuated by the retreating German forces. He evaded capture and joined an Italian partisan group, serving with them until he reached a British unit at San Justina.[681]

However, such a linear approach of 'braving the odds' undermines the physical and psychological complexity of escape for a POW, especially a non-White captive. Prisoners, as has been explored, lived in trying conditions, suffering from malnourishment, starvation, dehydration, fatigue, untreated injuries, and diseases such as lice, fever, and dysentery. The

[679] DOD. DNEAS, Box 29, NAS 8/1/16, Affidavit, 7 June 1945.
[680] Likely a British officer
[681] TNA. WO 373/64/616.

position of CC/IMC captives was made more challenging since they had not been prepared for European internment. NEAS troops were not meant to serve beyond the continent and were therefore not briefed on survival on European soil. Even a cursory reading of MI9 accounts and newspaper interviews reveals that CC/IMC soldiers had little information on their captors or surroundings and were unaware of their rights as POWs. They were consequently also susceptible to demoralising rumours and Axis propaganda of Allied defeat. Harsh weather conditions further limited the 'seasons' of escape. Those who did not speak English had the additional handicap of communication.

For CC/IMC prisoners, escaping European camps without the support of intelligence networks, little aid and a language barrier meant that a lot depended on the captive's wit and luck, and on timing. Most prisoners carried out their escape in France, presumably, because of their proximity to the front. They were all uniformly helped by French civilians who hid them, fed them, gave them civilian clothes, and aided their return to the American line.[682] Gunner Duickers and Private J. Swartz stayed with a French family on the outskirts of Beauvais for nearly two months. Private William Magabe, Private Hermanes Daniels and Private Johnny van Heerden were all hidden by civilians for twelve days before being helped to the American lines. With the threat of evacuation to German camps, several CC/IMC soldiers managed to escape from Beauvais as it was close to the American line at Chartes.[683]

There are several aspects of evasion that are unique to the men of this study. Escape and evasion amongst White Allied POWs was more organised. Soldiers often received briefings on captivity, were made aware of available help should they manage to escape, and set-up 'escape committees' while imprisoned. Escape was a collective effort – with studies of patrolling,

[682] French assistance was not an experience unique to CC/IMC soldiers. The European resistance aided Allied soldiers caught across enemy lines and hid targeted minorities such as the Jewish population.
[683] TNA. WO 373/63/177.

bribing guards for information, digging tunnels, acquiring tools and money and finally, executing the plan. Contrarily, CC/IMC escapees acted on their own and, more often than not, chanced on opportunities of evasion, usually while being transported or evacuated. Theirs was a more 'spontaneous' and unsupported escape.

Moreover, for White Allied POWs, the challenge was to evade recapture by the secret and military police. However, escapees generally had knowledge of Allied outposts to determine the direction of their travel to either Allied lines or neutral states. While in camp they would also be able to acquire information on trains, ports, and details of civilians helping escapees. Similarly, non-White South African POWs also made numerous daring and successful escapes from North African camps as they were better informed.[684] CC/IMC escapees in Europe, contrarily, were woefully uninformed and relied heavily on the goodwill of civilians to hide, help and guide them to Allied posts. This lack of information would have discouraged many from attempting to escape – the dilemma remained, escape and go where? One example of this comes from Private W:

> After the capitulation of Italy the Jerries [Germans] came with six truck-loads of men armed with machine- and tommy-guns. The colonel and the captain of Lucca Camp were shot at the camp gates. We prisoners who thought that we would receive the same treatment jumped over the barbed wires. The Germans did not open fire on us but called us back and took us to a German camp near Dresden.[685]

Despite having the opportunity to escape, the prisoners chose to 'return' to captivity. Aside from being an act of defiance, escape was, ultimately, an act of survival. For most CC/IMC POWs, captivity involved surviving the day, as best they could. Escape was usually not an option as the chances of surviving after escaping were ambiguous at best. Thus, CC/IMC

[684] *Ibid.*
[685] UCTSC. 'Nerve-Racking Experience', *The Cape Standard*, 15 May 1945.

prisoners in Europe were entrapped not just by the barbed wires and guards, but by their circumstance.

4. Carrying the War Home: The Trauma of Internment

The road to liberation was long for CC/IMC captives. Their first experience of Axis defeat was the invasion of Italy. As Allied forces made gains, Germany began evacuating POW camps in the region. Prisoners were transported by train, trucks and on foot. Pte D was transported from Lucca to Germany and described the abhorrent journey:

> We were issued with rations for seven days, put in cattle trucks which were nailed shut and covered with many strands of barbed wire. There was no chance of escaping. Two palls were to give to us to be used as lavatories and by the time we reached the Brenner Pass, the stench was so awful and flies and fleas covered our bodies.[686]

Several NEAS POWs were eventually transferred from Germany to labour camps in France such as Beauvais. In 1945, as the American line began pressing on the French front, CC/IMC prisoners became part of the taxing long marches to the heart of the Third Reich. Private P. Williams who had been injured in captivity from an air raid and had a badly burnt leg, along with other prisoners, was made to march 'at a rate of twenty miles per day' with only a day's rest per week. On this day, however, the prisoners would work on civilian farmland in exchange for food. They were fed five potatoes a day and Williams recalled that he craved cigarettes so badly that he used the pages of his diary (that he had been keeping) to make cigarettes using the tobacco he got from German civilians.[687] The group walked for three weeks before they were liberated. The existing sources are silent on how the POWs reacted to Germany's unconditional surrender. Nevertheless, one can imagine it must have made homecoming a sweet reality.

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[686] *Ibid.*

[687] UCTSC. 'Adventures of Prisoners of War', *The Cape Standard*, 19 June 1945.

As the Allied advance progressed rapidly in 1945, they liberated several labour and POW camps. Freed South African POWs were moved from the continent to ports in England where they were received by UK authorities and subsequently transferred to UDF Reception camps being managed by the *South Africa House* in London.[688] The Reception camps were divided between White and non-White soldiers. At the Reception camps, the ex-POWs received medical attention, were issued new clothes and pay-books with pay and transferred to segregated rest camps. All White ex-POWs received 30 days of leave for recuperation. Non-White ex-POWs were allowed no leave during their stay (possibly to prevent their mixing with the local populace) and instead 'outings, picnics and tours' were arranged for them.[689] Private M. Davids was at the Slinfold Manor camp in Sussex where he recounted that he had a 'fine time' and was only disappointed that London was out of bounds for non-White South African soldiers unless they were escorted by White soldiers. Meanwhile, Gunner B. G. de Goede was in a camp in Cambridge, then Brighton and the only 'Coloured' man in both camps. He did not face many restrictions in either and had a 'wonderful time'. His final transfer at the non-White camp at Slinfold dulled his spirits as he found the five-mile radius restriction 'irksome'.[690]

Subsequently, soldiers were shipped across the Atlantic to the ports of Cape Town and Durban where they were received by cheering crowds. On 13th February 1945, few months before the end of hostilities, 700 released NEAS prisoners on liners accompanied by two battleships were bought into Durban. There they were welcomed by Colonel Stubbs. He greeted the men with a short speech in English that he repeated in Afrikaans, Sesotho and Xhosa:

> I thank God that you have all been spared and that you have had a safe journey across the seas. Your capture and the welfare of your families have been a great concern to me but with the help of the Almighty you have all returned, and I hope that so you will all

[688] High Commission of SA
[689] DOD. CGS, Box 189, 40/31, POW Welfare Committee.
[690] UCTSC. 'Dramatic Scenes at Quayside', *The Cape Standard*, 3 July 1945.

> be fully restored to health, ready to take up your positions where you left off when you were captured.[691]

The soldiers were then given refreshments and transported by train to Pretoria where 'plans were elaborate'. They were served with buns, minerals, ginger beer, cigarettes, and music was provided by Directorate Film Vans.[692] It is difficult to imagine how these soldiers would have perceived their return, carrying the burdens of their traumatic captivity while being reunited with family and friends they had probably lost hope of seeing again. They must have been relieved yet traumatised and scarred, mentally and physically, from their experience of captivity. As Gunner Messiah expressed, 'You cannot realise how glad I am to be back in Cape Town.'[693]

4.1. The Emotional Impact of Surrender

A detailed emotional history of the impact of internment can only be reconstructed from first-person accounts where the writer either intended no readers or was relating his experience to someone privately and in confidence. This, as has been elaborated, is almost impossible for the men of this study as such material has not survived in archives. Still deductive methodologies can allow for a glimpse into the mental trauma that was experienced by prisoners. Following is an examination of the impact of non-White internment through the comparative lens of the White experience.

In *Captives of War*, a key point of inquiry for Clare Makepeace was perceptions of masculinity among POWs. She examined the impact of surrender, disarmament, propaganda and mistreatment by camp officials on the mental health of POWs and how they did (or did not) cope with this 'emasculation' during and after the war. A crucial component of coping with

[691] UCTSC. 'Prisoners of War Return', *The Cape Standard*, 13 February 1945.
[692] *Ibid.*
[693] UCTSC. 'Dramatic Scenes at Quayside', *The Cape Standard*, 3 July 1945.

this emasculation, as Makepeace and Horn observed in their works, was their perception of the Italian and German guards. By viewing the Italian soldiers as less than themselves, and the Germans as fighting for a 'loosing' side, the POWs were able to cope with the 'shame' of disarmament and their inability to fight on the front as their non-captured comrades were doing. Specifically, for those captured in Tobruk, Horn argues that the blame by rank-and-file was placed on the failure of their commands to effectively lead them, thus faltering in their duties as officers. The lack of confrontation at Tobruk further intensified the humiliation that the captured combatants felt. In an interview with Horn, Fred van Alphen Stahl, a White South African POW, described his experience as ''this is the end' because while the thought of losing one's life was a valorous undertaking, the thought of being a prisoner of war was simply not 'imagined'.'[694] Consequently, escape formed a key part of defiance of captivity, as did attempts at sabotage and provocation of guards and sentries against propaganda of Allied defeat.

For CC/IMC prisoners, disarmament was not related to emasculation or the feeling of 'shame' as the soldiers had already been disarmed by their own government. For them the right to bear arms was more closely related to their political rights as 'first-class' citizens of the Union. In the communal perception, Coloured soldiers in particular, had already proven their fighting worth in previous wars and were prepared to provide young men *en masse* of the same calibre for this war.[695] It was not the ability of the men but the politics of the Union that was obstructing them. It is thus reasonable to deduce that 'surrender' and 'disarmament' for the CC/IMC men did not necessarily 'tarnish' their 'sense of honour' as it did for White captives.

[694] Horn, *In Enemy Hands*, p.39
[695] BNA. 'Fund for Purchase of Spitfires', *The Evening Telegraph*, 13 June 1940.

4.2. The Emotional Impact of Internment

The absence of the feeling of 'shame' can further be traced in the publicization of the experience of internment. The articles on POWs published in *The Cape Standard* are unique. Most of them are not centred on any feats of bravery and escape and in fact relate the daily lives of prisoners. This suggests that the ex-POWs were comfortable with sharing their stories publicly, *and* that the civilian communities also did not view their capture as a shameful occurrence.

There are certain distinct characteristics of the interviews conducted by the weekly. For one, there was no rule of thumb on the identity of soldiers. While some ex-prisoners were forthcoming with their name and addresses (perhaps allowing other members of the community to communicate with them), others preferred to refer themselves simply with their initials (such as 'Pte W', 'Pte A'). This could be a result of their desire to protect the privacy of their experience. Considering that within each article there was a variation in the names, and the accounts of the ex-POWs were extensive – it is unlikely that the lack of details about the interviewees was a consequence of negligence by the journalist. Furthermore, each interview in the article varied in size and this suggests that the journalist eliminated the commonalities between them and chose to instead focus on the 'unique' aspects of the stories. The interviews also seem to have been led by questions on life in European campaigns, questions about segregation, treatment at the hands of Germans, and perhaps even their experiences with other White nationalities. In compiling these stories, the published piece presents a narrative of loyalty, of physical and mental capability, of service, and of hardships suffered by the non-White soldier for King and Empire. The section on the Beauvais camp is perhaps the most intriguing addition amongst the interviews. This was likely due to the number of NEAS POWs in Beauvais (and therefore this was a common topic for discussion), or perhaps an ode to the spirit of the soldiers who had spent long years in captivity.

Nevertheless, the focus on internment in Europe (and not in other theatres of war such as North Africa, East Africa, and Middle East) also demonstrates the importance of non-White soldiers having participated, even in the capacity of a captive, in the 'White man's war' on the White man's land. The true extent of the violence of the Nazi camps was perhaps felt most acutely by the POWs in their sensitivity to the plight of European civilians in labour camps. Despite having faced trying conditions himself, Private A recounted that 'It nearly broke my heart at Compiègne to see French civilians including many cripples being sent to the labour camps in Germany.'[696] For Private Dixon, his worst experience was in a German camp where he resided with 'thousands of Russian male and female prisoners of war'.[697] No account in the articles reiterates such an empathy for other non-White nationalities. The singling of these experiences suggests that while the CC/IMC prisoners did not expect fair treatment from their White captives, the violence they witnessed that was meted out to White civilians certainly affected them.

Still, simultaneous to the publicization of these experiences is the silencing of trauma by ex-prisoners. It is unlikely that all POWs shared the vulnerability of the interviewed ex-prisoners. In fact, it is likely that those interviewed also skirted around their most painful memories. An understanding of what ex-prisoners suppressed and silenced is key to reconstructing the emotional impact of captivity.

As has been discussed previously, the physical strain of being a non-White captive of war was enormous. Additionally, those captured in the desert and then interned in Europe remained in captivity anywhere between 3 to 4 years. The surviving sources do not allow for an insight into the psychology of CC/IMC prisoners or the extent of PTSD among them. However, it can be inferred that prolonged captivity in foreign lands, and the exhausting conditions, must have

[696] UCTSC. 'Nerve-Racking Experience', *The Cape Standard*, 15 May 1945.
[697] *Ibid*.

depressed and demoralised the POWs to a point of defeat and hopelessness. An anonymous CC captive described how susceptible he and his comrades had become to Axis propaganda. 'When the Italians told us of the Italian armistice we did not believe them, because they had so often told us lies e.g. they told us Alexandria had fallen.'[698] As a comparison, the Allied White captives in Makepeace's study actively resisted accepting any form of 'news' given by their captors on Allied defeat. Additionally, non-White captives in North Africa also resisted rumours despite concerted Axis efforts.[699] W. J. Adams implied that it was because the Allied forces were constantly bombing North African Axis defences that, despite the initial surprise of Tobruk, the captives overall felt optimistic about the prospects of war as 'The Germans told us that Rommel was outside Alexandria, and we retaliated by telling them about the thousand planes over Berlin. They wouldn't believe us and we simply didn't believe them at all.'[700]

The impact of demoralisation is relevant when attempting to understand the mental health of prisoners. W. J. Adams and his fellow captives faced several near-death experiences and witnessed brutal destruction caused by the air-raids. Still, by his own account, Adams remained resilient in the face of danger and hardship because he believed he would soon be liberated or be able to escape. Comparatively, the previously mentioned anonymous CC soldier (most likely suffering from severe PTSD), detailed the anxiety he felt:

> The camp was surrounded by petrol and ammunition dumps and the psychological effect on us was nerve-wrecking. Sometimes Yank 'Lightnings'[701] machine-gunned us by mistake. I will remember one day a Mr Nel, of Cape Town, being mortally wounded. […] Once we marched through a dead city. Bodies were lying about in a state of decay, the stench was awful and we were compelled to close our noses with handkerchiefs.[702]

[698] UCTSC. 'Nerve-Racking Experience', *The Cape Standard*, 15 May 1945.
[699] DOD. DNEAS Group 2, Box 1, Middle East, SAPA from Sutherland 'Endurance', November 15.
[700] UCTSC. 'A POW's Adventure', *The Cape Standard*, 28 December 1943.
[701] The American fighter aircraft 'Lockheed P-38 Lightning'.
[702] UCTSC. 'Nerve-Racking Experience', *The Cape Standard*, 15 May 1945.

The anonymous ex-POW would not have been alone in his trauma. The inability to further expound the mental anguish of these POWs is the most glaring and regrettable limitation of this chapter. However, following is a poem sent to *The Cape Standard* written by a CC captive in the desert. This more effectively illuminates the psychological ordeals of war and captivity:

Barren wastes of scrub and sand,
Dry unfertile desert land,
Spiked wire on every hand,
A hapless post of hungry men,
Crowded like rats in cage and pen,
Shut off it seems from human ken,
Ill clad unkempt and underfed,
Trading your watches, rings for bread,
A chilly concrete floor for bed,
Queuing long hours in the blistering heat,
Receiving a morsel of bread and meat,
Glad if even scraps to eat,
Striving to keep alive your hope,
Feeling at times its beyond your scope,
Drugging yourself with rumours as dope,
Setting new values on trivial things,
The smell of a flower, a bird that sings,
The beauty and grace of a butterfly's wings,
Bullied and driven like flocks of sheep,
Treated as dirt from dawn to sleep,
Hearts being filled with a hatred deep,
Cut off from news of the outside world,
Sifting the truth in the taunts that are hurled,
Silently keeping the flag unfurled.[703]

[703] UCTSC. 'Poem', *The Cape Standard*, 19 June 1945.

Conclusion

War is ugly, and captivity is brutal. Stories of captured CC/IMC soldiers underscore this grim reality. But they also bring to the fore the additional tragedy of internment as a non-White prisoner. Non-White South African soldiers were subjected to unprovoked violence, worked long gruelling hours, were not *de facto* protected by the Geneva Convention or the Allied commands and governments, and, while in European internment, were unfairly uninformed about their circumstance and had no prospects of returning home. This further pronounced the mental and physical trauma of starvation, exhaustion, and despondence. One can only speculate the will of the CC/IMC captives to survive this unsparing internment.

In the introduction to the seminal work *Africa in World War II,* Timothy Parsons observed that 'The circumstances under which a man becomes a particular kind of colonial soldier were usually the primary factor in determining how he viewed the nature of his service and behaved in combat.'[704] Perhaps this definition can be furthered for CC/IMC prisoners – the circumstances under which a colonial soldier is interned is the primary factor in determining their survival and impact of captivity on the soldier. For CC/IMC prisoners the response to surrender and captivity was not akin to that of White prisoners. The political circumstance of their enlistment, attitudes of their captors, attitudes of their Allied representatives – all impacted their experience and survival of internment. However, the disarray of captivity in Europe also allowed for discordant experiences as captives witnessed the dreadful treatment suffered by persecuted White civilians, the aid escaped ex-prisoners received from European civilians, and other noted incidents. Still, the emotional impact of internment was enormous and the silence in sources is most telling of this mental burden. Subsequently, as the next chapter explores, just as interned prisoners received little to no protection from their Allied commands, neither did

[704] Parsons, T. (2015). 'The Military Experiences of Ordinary Africans in World War II'. In *Africa and World War II*. CUP, p.12

returning soldiers who were all but abandoned by the UDF and the government. For all their sacrifice and endurance, the non-White position in the Union rapidly deteriorated. Service brought no gains. Instead, as will be explicated, the ex-soldier was treated with scorn and suspicion.

CHAPTER 7

Beyond the Bugle: Segregation, Demobilisation, Remembrance

Private G Roman had enlisted in IMC and was appointed as a clerk. On 29 April 1943, Roman, along with 26 other CC details of the 4th Battalion, was charged and found guilty of a mutiny at Zonderwater (South Africa). He was sentenced to a year of hard labour and a dishonourable discharge from the UDF. On being released, Roman repeatedly wrote to the Directorate, insisting on his innocence and asking for his sentence to be over-turned for lack of evidence. As a response, he was provided with the proceedings of his inquiry for a fee of £5.10 and his petitions were forwarded to CGS, although ultimately rejected. In a last attempt he wrote directly to the office of CGS:

> I never had a bad record prior to my enlistment, and the mistake that I have a bad record now is not due to me. But to some officer who might have misjudged me…I only wish to make my final appeal, I want no benefits. But being a full time member in the service of the UDF I wish to be paid [£46.16] …from 29 April 1943 to 28 April 28 April 1944. […] Pay me out this money and be finish with me.[705] [sic]

Roman's final letter was purposefully left unacknowledged. Army regulation stated that imprisoned soldiers and their dependents were not entitled to pay or benefits.

It is difficult to judge the veracity of the verdict on Roman. Perhaps he was innocent and was simply caught in the chaos of the mutiny. Perhaps he was guilty and only realised the financial consequences of his actions after being discharged, thus instigating his lengthy quest for an

[705] DOD. DNEAS, Box 32, NAS 8/7/13, Roman to CGS, 13 January 1945.

overturned sentence. However, what is significant in Roman's case is that, (i) despite the seriousness of the charge against him, he was allowed to pursue his case to the full extent of the appellate process within the UDF; (ii) his ability to pursue the case depended on his education i.e. because he was literate (and most likely 'educated' as he was appointed as a clerk), he was able to navigate the administrative web; (iii) finally, the £5.10 fee to obtain the documents of the proceedings (almost two months of a CC/IMC Private's pay) limits the ability of an ex-soldier to pursue his appeal in the UDF system. Roman's case illustrates the complexities involving the discharge of a non-White soldier from the UDF. While he was certainly able to push his case in the system, the system itself was top-down and without a proper appellate 'bottom-up' process for the non-White soldier. Service in the UDF was both chaotic and regularised. Although the reality of the war 'up North' was haphazard, soldiers were also functioning within a military establishment with an absolute chain of command and defined channels for communication and redressal.

This final chapter explores the experience of CC/IMC soldiers as they stepped outside this military authority and re-negotiated their identities as ex-soldiers.[706] Both repatriated and demobilised soldiers were situated at the intersection of military establishment and civilian existence. While they were still formally part of the UDF (i.e. they had a service number), they were no longer classified as soldiers on 'active' service. Additionally, as this chapter illustrates, theirs is also the most silenced and politicised narrative of this history. The service of NEAS

[706] Some literature on demobilisation in the Empire after the war: Lewis, J. (2000). *Empire State-Building: War and Welfare in Kenya, 1925–52*. Ohio University Press.; Grundlingh, L. (1992). 'Prejudices, Promises and Poverty: The Experiences of Discharged and Demobilised Black South African Soldiers after the Second World War'. *South African Historical Journal*.; Pope, R. (1995). 'British Demobilisation after the Second World War'. *Journal of Contemporary History*.; Brands, H. (2005). 'Wartime Recruiting Practices, Martial Identity and the Post-World War II Demobilisation in Colonial Kenya'. *The Journal of African History*.; Deshpande, A. (1996). 'Hopes and disillusionment: Recruitment, demobilisation and the emergence of discontent in the Indian armed forces after the Second World War'. *The Indian Economic and Social History Review*.; Ojeleye, O. (2016). *The Politics of Post-War Demobilisation and Reintegration in Nigeria*. Routledge.; Oosthuizen, F. (2012). 'Soldiers and Politics: The Political Ramifications of the White Union Defence Forces Soldiers' Demobilisation Experience after the Second World War. *Scientia Militaria - South African Journal of Military Studies*.

was used by both the Union government and the non-White leadership towards attaining their own political aims. The Union wanted to formalise apartheid while the non-White leadership sought to gain civil rights. However, neither camp centred the interest or the voices of the non-White ex-servicemen. This chapter further argues that NEAS demobilisation was haphazard. Ex-servicemen were given a poor deal, the economic impact of which was crippling. Consequently, veterans were pushed to the brinks of society and seen as public nuisance, and their issues were neglected. This chapter then elaborates on the practical matters of demobilisation including, in the short term, discharge, remunerations, compensations and benefits, employment. Such a reconstruction requires a broader socio-cultural awareness of the soldier's circumstance and the circumstance of the society in which he was being discharged. In the long-term, the impact of war service on the families and local communities of ex-soldiers is examined and cultures of remembrance of CC/IMC participation are analysed. This chapter then argues against viewing the war as a 'bettering' circumstance. Participation of non-White communities did not translate into post-war benefits. In the Union specifically, there was a 'return' to pre-war segregation which intensified with the 1948 elections. White politics sought to diminish and disperse NEAS veterans. However, as will be demonstrated, despite this institutional pressure, resistant cultures of military commemoration emerged, and veterans continued to identify themselves as soldiers with remembered legacies.

1. 'God's Stepchildren' and the 'Exotic' Indians

World War II had created an opportunity for non-White soldiers to experience a world beyond SA, beyond the excesses of pass laws and segregation. Within the Union however, the government by and large maintained the existing segregationist structure. For example, over quarter of a million Allied troops transited through Cape Town and Durban during the war,

creating a melting pot of cultures and ethnicities.[707] The subsequent threat of racial 'inter-mingling' presented a unique challenge for the Union and imperial governments. In 1941, Field-Marshal Sir Archibald Wavell wrote to Smuts and intervened on behalf of Indian officers and nurses who were being subjected to racism in the Union.[708] The solution proposed was to avoid the de-boarding of Indian forces on Union ports altogether and only allow it in special circumstances wherein arrangements would be made on land to accommodate them separately.[709] Of course this was not always practicable and racial abuse continued. Experience with racism for foreign non-White troops varied according to rank and the geographic location of their deployment or stay in the Union. An Indian contingent sent for sentry duties to Durban (which had a sizable South African Indian population) received a more welcoming reception (Indian officers in particular) than Nigerian troops who had also been previously temporarily embarked there.[710] In contrast, in 1946, two Sikh officers who had been awarded the Victoria Cross were denied service at a restaurant in Cape Town where an Italian waiter informed them that 'We don't serve niggers.' [sic].[711] As Jean Smith argues that 'The variation in the treatment of visiting Allied troops based on race reflected the systems of racial segregation and discrimination in South Africa, even in the years before formal apartheid.'[712]

Segregation was not targeted at non-White soldiers alone. In 1943, a pamphlet issued by the Air Ministry to RAF pilots on overseas service was criticised by UDF for its section on SA. The section in question did not fully explicate the severity of the colour bar in the Union, especially concerning 'carnal intercourse' between White men and non-White, specifically

[707] Nasson, *History of South Africa at War*, p.79
[708] DOD. CGS, Box 283, 58/4, Personal – Wavell to Smuts, 8 October 1941.
[709] *Op. cit.*, Personal – Smuts to Wavell, 11 November 1941.
[710] Smith, J. (2020). 'Race and Hospitality: Allied troops of colour on the South African home front during the Second World War'. *War and Society*. p.162
[711] UCTSC. 'Not Served', *The Cape Standard*, 22 January 1946.
[712] Smith, 'Race and Hospitality', p.161

African women.[713] The Immorality Act of 1927 had criminalised such relations, the breach of which could result in five years of imprisonment without the option of fine, and Allied soldiers were being prosecuted under it. Ultimately, the issue required the then Deputy PM Clement Attlee's direct involvement so as not to 'offend' SAs and sour diplomatic relations, and to avoid penalties for military and merchant seamen.[714] The incident highlights the unforgiving prejudiced disposition of the Union that punished even White Allied soldiers in favour of maintaining White supremacy in SA. Thus, despite their embroiled experiences across two continents, this was the reality CC/IMC soldiers would return to.

From a top-down perspective, the war years had been dominated by Smuts and the United Party. With victories in the 1939 and 1943 elections, Smuts led the Union through World War II, although always having to balance the growing Afrikaner nationalist movements in the opposition. The war years, alongside an economic boom, were dominated by racial insecurities. With a heightened demand for production, African labour entered previously barred urban factories and markets. This was also the peak of inter-ethnic 'mixing' as multiracial neighbourhoods formed in cities like Johannesburg, Port Elizabeth, Cape Town, Durban.[715] Indeed, Smuts' own dramatic 'Segregation has fallen on evil days' speech at SAIRR seemingly denounced segregation.[716] However, with the end of hostilities, the reality of the war economy hit home as a record number of White men were demobilised and re-entered a highly competitive labour market. The focus on the urban economy had additionally marginalised the

[713] White Allied soldiers were also marrying non-White women who were not technically barred under the Immorality Act (such as Coloured and Indian women) and the Admiralty also wanted to discourage such unions via the leaflet. Smith, J. (2017). ''Young blood' and 'the blackout': Love, Sex and Marriage on the South African Home Front'. In Crowley, & Dawson, *Home Fronts - Britain and the Empire at War*. Boydell Press. p.107

[714] TNA. DO 35/1208/16.

[715] Freund, B. (2011). 'South Africa: The Union Years, 1910-1948 - Political and Economic Foundations'. In Ross, Mager, & Nasson (Eds.), *The Cambridge History of South Africa Volume 2*. CUP, p.241

[716] Hyslop, J. (2012). ''Segregation has fallen on evil days': Smuts' South Africa, global war, and transnational politics, 1939–46'. *Journal of Global History*, p.439

agricultural sector. It was clear, there was a need to undo the liberties of the war years to maintain White welfare. Consequently, despite Smuts' popularity, the Malan-led pro-apartheid Nationalist Party won the 1948 elections and came to power. However, as Freund argues, it would be erroneous to see the party's win as disruptive as there was a continuation of policies and 'The assumptions underlying white dominance and segregation were never shaken in official circles.'[717] An analysis of this complex and compact post-war period (1945–1948) will reveal not only the accelerated evolution of racial politics in SA, but also the reactions and impact of this politics on CC/IMC soldiers.

Following the end of the war, in 1946 the government of India appealed to the newly-formed United Nations Organisation to review the treatment of 'Indians' in South Africa.[718] This sparked a debate in the Union's parliament. Stubbs, ex-head of the DNEAS and a Senator[719], argued against racial integration stating that White rule had 'civilised' the 'Native' races. Additionally, the vast majority of South Africa's Indian population was from the 'untouchable' castes who had been worse off in India (and had prospered in the Union). Moreover, the 'Coloured' community were 'God's Stepchildren' that the White race was 'responsible for bringing these people into the world'. Stubbs argued that the support of all three non-White communities in the war was representative of the fact that they were in fact satisfied with White rule and therefore segregation was working:

> despite the fact that we have discriminatory laws which very often press hard on the non-Europeans in this country, and with the structure which has been built up through the years and which we who graduated in the hard school of experience will still add to and improve. We must make haste slowly […] we shall as before take every opportunity of

[717] Freund, 'The Union Years', p.216

[718] The complaint, lodged in June was indicative of the dramatic loss of Britain's control over the sub-continent. In 1947, post-independence, India repeatedly went against the apartheid government on international forums and this campaign played a significant role in ousting the Union from the Commonwealth.

[719] The 'Upper House' of the South African parliament chosen through electoral college

> improving the structure so carefully and laboriously built up for the benefit of the non-European races in this country.[720]

Stubbs' speech highlights the Union government's contradictory attitude as the war was ending. He was content to self-congratulate on the White government's successful 'civilising mission' and did not acknowledge the onus of participation as belonging to the non-White community. He ignored the non-White communities' larger war effort and also the many complaints and appeals made to DNEAS by non-White figures and associations against this segregation and disarmament of non-White recruits. Although he argued for 'improving' the structure of segregation, he does not elaborate on the imagined benefits that will be acquired by the non-White communities as a result of said 'improvements'.

The World Wars have been of little use to the politics of the Union post-1948.[721] This was, however, one of the rare occasions were, contrary to non-White participation making the case for greater liberties, World War II was instead used as an example of the success of segregation in uplifting the non-White man as he became aware of his duties as a civilised member of society under the tutelage of White patronage. The infantilization was wholly aimed at depriving non-White men of any rewards for having fulfilled these duties. As previously mentioned, the case for the enfranchisement of Coloured soldiers was dropped because of the Laingsburg incident, and the formation of CAD was reaffirmed.[722] Additionally, a Department of Asiatic Affairs was also proposed and formed to separate the governance of South Africa's 'exotic' races, and to avoid the creation of a 'Babylonia' of races in the country (which, it was argued, would be challenging to 'manage').[723]

[720] DOD. CGS, Box 129, 32/5, Senator Col Stubbs speech, 31 January 1947.
[721] As mentioned in the Literature Review. *See* pp.28-29
[722] *See* p.68
[723] DOD. CGS, Box 129, 32/5, Senator Col Stubbs speech, 31 January 1947.

However, considering the 'successes' of CC and the policy of dilution, there was talk within UDF of establishing a Permanent Force (PF) of non-White units by 1944. In expressing his views on such a force, Stubbs stated that the 'Cape Corps and NMC have participated extensively (and not altogether without credit) in the present War. It would be no more than their due for their claims to inclusion in the post war Defence scheme to receive the fullest and most sympathetic consideration of the Government.'[724] However, Stubbs also recommended that, while such an initiative was welcome, the non-White PF must only comprise of ex-volunteers and the units must be employed in areas of their own ethnicity (i.e. CC in Coloured areas and 'natives in essentially native areas'). He further added that he did not recommend forming a military unit merely for 'providing employment', but that there should be economic grounds for their existence – i.e. he recommended that the Engineer Work companies be retained 'for as long as they are required'. He also added that such formations must be limited to 'small groups' and not be allowed to grow to the size of battalions or regiments as they would be 'cumbersome to maintain'.[725] Stubbs' response is reflective of the continued anxieties of the segregationist movement despite the successful participation of non-White troops in the war, not just from the Union but also from elsewhere. Stubbs recommendations were to continue to limit non-White soldiers as non-combatants, to serve only in non-White areas (or, more specifically, *not* in White areas), and be deterred from gaining regimental identity or any form of unity as a non-White force.

By 1946, the intention of a CC Permanent Force was made public and the idea was floated in the CAD. Although CAD gave enthusiastic support, they did put forward two recommendations: (i) CC be led by its own Coloured commissioned officers and that their ranks be recognised by the White ranks of UDF, (ii) CC not be deployed against non-White

[724] DOD. DNEAS, Box 27, NAS8/1/1, DIRNEAS to DAG, 21 October 1944
[725] *Ibid.*

communities, especially in civilian settings.[726] These recommendations were taken into account but, of course, were not implemented. Still, the wheels were put into motion as some of the DNEAS staff (including some non-White clerks and Staff Sergeants) were retained to organise the administration of the re-formation. The process, of course, halted in 1948. J. G. Strijdom, the new Minister of Agriculture and Irrigation (and later Prime Minister in 1954), led the charge against any and all representation of non-Whites in positions of influence. This included electoral participation, education, wealth acquisition, and in the military. Speaking in the parliament for the abolition of the constitutional provision to approve enfranchisement of non-Whites through a simple majority of the House, J G Strijdom made his case for White minority rule. *The Scotsman* reported:

> According to Mr Strydom, it is absolute madness to give non-Europeans a vote, because of their numbers. The Europeans cannot rule by merit and leadership alone as Mr Hofmeyr has suggested; the more educated the natives become, the more imperative is it for the Europeans to keep political power firmly in their own hands. […] The Nationalists fear Communism in Africa, but there must be no non-European armed forces to fight it […] *the Cape Coloured for instance – are to have all insignia removed from their uniforms, which are to be 'dyed brown' so that their wearers will no longer have a military appearance*… [emphasis added][727]

Thus, the attack by Strijdom was not simply on non-White soldiers in armed forces, but on their identity, their history of service, and their right to serve. They were being deprived the opportunity to ever aspire for first-class citizenship and the merits of their previous service were being debased. The intention was not just to remove opportunities from non-White communities, but also underplay and ignore the military contributions of the non-White communities. The government promptly demobilised the barely re-formed CC, only two years after its reinstatement. However, this exclusion was not a knee-jerk reaction of far-right politics or even the implementation of apartheid. As the next section re-constructs, even under Smuts'

[726] DOD. CGS, Box 130, 32/19, Permanent Cape Corps Unit, 16 May 1946.
[727] BNA. 'Dr Malan Determined to Increase Majority', *The Scotsman*, 6 November 1948.

United Party, NEAS ex-servicemen were being given inequitable economic and social compensations. Prejudice, undoubtedly underlined this mistreatment and the White government adopted a policy of swift dispersal of non-White units. Over three decades later, an article in Umkhonto we Sizwe's *Dawn*[728] concisely explained why: 'The SADF, being one of the most conservative institutions of apartheid rule, had to be snow-white.'[729]

2. 'Off you go! Thank you very much!': Demobilisation

On his return to South Africa after the success of El Alamein (1942), Mopeli-Paulus reflected in his memoir: 'At last we landed. In the midst of our welcome we remembered, this was a country of thorns for us.'[730] As the previous section has illustrated, Mopeli-Paulus' observation was not without good reason. Despite their loyal service, War had done little to improve the supremacist government's attitudes towards non-White communities. If anything, the government's policy was to further the cause of segregation by (mis)using the narrative of non-White participation. This not only impacted demobilisation of the NEAS in the short-term, but in the long term it also affected how non-White soldiers would be commemorated and remembered. This section reconstructs the experience of demobilisation of CC/IMC soldiers and contemplates on the impact of war service on non-White communities.

2.1. Homebound

On May 8, 1945, in an issue dedicated almost entirely to the war, *The Cape Standard* declared that 'European War Ends: Nazism Defeated but its Seeds Remain'. It was followed by a two-page spread on the end of the war and South Africa's contribution, and a three-page 'victory souvenir' commissioned by DNEAS dedicated to the service of CC and IMC regiments. Aside from the informative and propaganda purposes of the souvenir, the piece was also meant to

[728] Umkhonto we Sizwe was ANC's armed wing founded by Nelson Mandela in 1961. *Dawn* was its monthly publication.
[729] DISA. 'The South African Cape Corps in Defence of Slavery', *Dawn* 8(6). p.18
[730] Mopeli-Paulus, *The World and the Cattle*, p.98

make the populace aware of the time-consuming nature of demobilisation. The other articles in the piece, from the perspective of non-White leaders, were meant to remind readers that there was still a much longer war to be fought at home. This shift from war to politics can be seen as an indicator of the disregard that CC/IMC ex-soldiers would face as neither DNEAS nor the non-White leadership featured the ex-servicemen in their articles.

However, for soldiers stuck in North Africa and Middle East, as well as the ex-POWs in Europe, the war was not over till they returned home. As previous chapters have illustrated, the long services had taken a toll on the physical and mental well-being of the non-White forces. Home-coming was another battle that soldiers had to fight. As an aged Private Thomas Mautsoa of the NMC emotively expressed decades later in an interview: 'my heart is getting sore now [thinking about it]. We thought 'when will we go home?', 'when will the war be over?'. A young boy like me, when I think about my mother and father'.[731]

Before being repatriated, most NEAS units were involved in clearing missions that were part of the post-war work. Only the POWs in UK were prioritised for return as the UDF did not want to catalyse non-White and White civilian interactions. However, notably, a small section of NEAS soldiers who had been awarded the MM and DCM were part of the 'Victory Parade' of Commonwealth and Allied troops held in London in 1946.[732] Following these tasks, soldiers were transferred to the Allied ports in the Mediterranean from where they sailed home. Below is a photo of one such homebound group, a scaled copy of which today hangs at the entrance of NMMH in Johannesburg:

[731] Interview in *Pair of Boots and a Bicycle*. DVD. Directed by Vincent Moloi.
[732] WCARS. 3/CT, 4/1/11/479, Souvenir (Historical Programme) Cape Corps 'Flag' Ceremony, 29 February 1948.

Figure 14 CC troops on a ship in Cairo, The Cape Standard 21 July 1945

The ships docked in Durban or Cape Town where news of their anticipated arrival would gather crowds. Usually a band played tunes popular with the CC/IMC units[733] and welcome speeches would be given by civilian and military leaders. *The Cape Standard* reported on one such reception:

> As the 'Dukes' band struck up with 'Sarie Marais' the Coloured men grouped in the 'bows' joined in the community singing and cheering […] As the ship was being tied up, the faces of the men became tense as they strained their eyes trying to pick out relatives and friends on the quayside. While the band was playing tunes such as 'Pack up your troubles…' the 'boys' brought forth peals of laughter by: 'We don't want ginger beer and buns – we want real he-man beer![734]

The soldiers would then be treated to refreshments and transported to transit camps from where further arrangements to their final destinations would be made. In a similar vein, especially for larger groups, arrangements would be made for arriving soldiers at train stations of cities and towns, usually by non-White comforts committees, before being re-located to their dispersal depots. For smaller groups or lone soldiers, reception canteens were opened in larger

[733] Some examples include 'Pale Tole', 'Daisy', 'Poor Old Joe', 'Danny Boy', 'Suikerbossie'.
[734] UCTSC. 'Dramatic Scenes at Quayside', *The Cape Standard*, 3 July 1945.

settlements. There are no first-person accounts of this journey back, but it can safely be assumed that spirits were high among the ex-North arrivals. As Gunner J. Peters expressed to a journalist, 'I was a POW for three years, please I am too excited to talk anymore!'[735]

While homecoming would have certainly been a welcome reality for these men, there were also those who did not return home and lay buried in foreign lands. In the midst of the celebratory mood of the Union, J. R. McAuley, a discharged CC soldier, wrote to *The Cape Standard* a reminder to the readers and a tribute to his fallen comrades:

> It was days I shall never forget…our men advanced in that blazing hell, in that god-forsaken country, where water is as gold, where men faced it to fight for justice, where guns roar, and tanks rumble their goal. But our men died like heroes. Remember, they were only MTs. They were not armed, but that did not stop them […] And so we respect them, as all men should. Did they not give their lives in the name of humanity? Never mind their creed or colour; they were men.[736]

By the end of the war, on the segregated casualty list were 2,214 'non-Europeans' who had died in service.[737]

2.2. Financial Compensations

Louis Grundlingh, writing about the demobilisation of NMC, observed that preceding historiography has made no distinction between 'discharge' and 'demobilisation' and historians have often used the terms inter-changeably. 'Discharge', within the context of the UDF (particularly NEAS), simply meant that a soldier was discharged from the armed forces (with or without due process). Alternatively, 'demobilisation' implied due process. The Department of Demobilisation of the UDF was formed in 1944. Soldiers discharged prior to the department's formation had an ambiguous administrative experience. If discharged honourably, the benefits they received varied considerably and usually depended on the

[735] *Ibid*.
[736] UCTSC. 'They gave their lives', *The Cape Standard*, 22 May 1945.
[737] UCTSC. '2214 Non-Europeans Dead', *The Cape Standard*, 21 August 1945.

office/officer/OC recommending and discharging them. There was little clarity on the financial and material compensation that a non-White soldier was entitled to, and even less interest in ensuring the just discharge of soldiers. In the case of the NMC, this situation was made more complicated as ex-soldiers often went back to the reserves, making it difficult for the Directorate to trace their whereabouts once 'demobilisation' had begun. This was generally not an issue with the CC and IMC soldiers as their recruitment had been generally limited to urban areas and thus ex-soldiers could be traced more easily.

Nevertheless, within the formal process of NEAS demobilisation, three types of discharge existed: (i) honourable discharge with full benefits, (ii) discharge without benefits (usually for soldiers who had served for less than three months and were discharged on medical grounds or simply because the war was over) and, (iii) dishonourable discharge or discharge with ignominy. Most discharges without benefits occurred due to soldiers: (i) having furnished unsatisfactory antecedents or false answers/documents at the time of their recruitment (this usually pertained to more serious lapses such as having concealed a criminal record), (ii) who had been convicted by a civil power, (iii) whose services were 'no longer required', i.e. those who had served less than three months, (iv) who had been court-martialled and/or imprisoned, and (v) 'in the interest of service', i.e. soldiers who had a history of disciplinary issues or were 'non-effectives' (awaiting trial, in civil custody).[738] Another category of 'non-effectives' were soldiers in hospitals who could be discharged with or without benefits at the hospital itself instead of a dispersal depot, depending on their individual cases.

Additionally, a strict procedure was followed in determining the order of discharge. Soldiers who were arriving from the Northern campaigns were given precedence over all others. Within this group, precedence was given to POWs. Among the remaining units, soldiers who had

[738] DOD. DNEAS, Box 30, NAS 8/4/4, Letter, 7 September 1945.

served longer were discharged first and so on. UDF units were also instructed to 'shed' their non-White personnel in a similar manner, i.e. they had to first relieve soldiers who had served the longest. This was done to avoid a fall in morale as soldiers would naturally get frustrated if those who had served for less time were discharged earlier. Only where an OC specifically applied to retain a soldier (usually because of his qualifications or experiential knowledge), was an exception made.[739] Additionally, OCs also had the power to discharge a soldier without benefits if they were dissatisfied with the soldiers' conduct.

In terms of financial compensation, non-White soldiers were predictably not at the level of White servicemen. CC/IMC soldiers received one-half of the pay of White soldiers and three-fifth of the pension (for the sick and disabled only), while NMC soldiers were paid at a meagre forty-percent rate of their White counterparts.[740] The pensions and gratuities further depended on the rank, years of service and condition of discharge of the soldier (with or without benefits). Soldiers who were considered medically unfit, disabled or had contracted tuberculosis could claim pensions from the UDF. A veteran residing in urban areas was entitled to a pension up to £24 per annum and in rural areas, £8 per annum. There were further allowances for dependents. However, if a veteran and his wife earned £30 per annum, the pension was stopped.[741] An additional 10 shillings was to be paid to CC/IMC soldiers for each completed month of service (5/- for NMC), not including time spent in transit camps, detention, and any unpaid leave. The gratuities of CC/IMC were to be paid into Post Office Savings Accounts opened by the government for the ex-soldiers at a branch near their residence. However, to claim this, a soldier needed to have had a minimum of six months of continuous service. CC/IMC were also given cash allowances for civilian clothing and railway vouchers to travel

[739] *Op. cit*., Letter, 9 July 1945.
[740] Grundy, *Soldiers Without Politics*, pp.82-83
[741] UCTSC. 'How the Demobilised Soldier is Faring', *The Cape Standard*, 10 October 1944.

home. Soldiers also received full pay and allowance in lieu of any vacation leave that they did not take in their final leave cycle. Ex-North soldiers were given further compensation (for maximum 30 days) in lieu of leave not taken while serving 'up North'. POWs were given an additional compensation for 30 days alongside the ex-North leave.[742] However, financial benefits were only given to those who had been discharged 'honourably'. This as well be seen was an ambiguous classification that was misused and pushed vulnerable soldiers out of the system.

Despite a seemingly straightforward process on paper, demobilisation was rigged with administrative hurdles that the many departments and committees involved were ill-equipped to handle because of a lack of man-power and the general chaos of war. Furthermore, prejudice in the system disproportionately impacted NEAS veterans. In a letter to *The Cape Standard*, Col Morris, the previous OC of CC (known for his sympathetic treatment of non-White soldiers) made public the challenges being faced by soldiers awaiting demobilisation.[743] Although he was making representations within political circles to improve the situation, it seems the Colonel also wanted to make the non-White community aware of the issues concerning CC/IMC soldiers and perhaps create public pressure. In his letter Morris criticised the process of appointment of officers at dispersal depots, stating that many of the officers who were appointed had no interest in protecting the non-White soldiers. He additionally informed that a similar prejudice was impacting the distribution of war pensions wherein claims that were initially denied, when reopened by 'sympathetic' officers received positive responses. He further critiqued that the pensions being granted were on the lower end of the scale and 'could not keep two people from starvation'.[744] That the Colonel himself penned a scathing public

[742] DOD. UWH, Box 158, Historical Survey of NEAS, pp.59-61.
[743] UCTSC. 'How the Demobilised Soldier is Faring', *The Cape Standard*, 10 October 1944.
[744] *Ibid*.

critique of the entire process is indicative of the severity of prejudice in the system and the failure of the institution to intervene and correct the damage.

Practical challenges to demobilisation also revealed themselves quickly. The loss/theft of pay-books among ex-North soldiers was the most frequently occurring difficulty. Once the dust had settled in the desert campaigns, soldiers often found themselves at leisure in war-torn cities with the usual issues of post-conflict areas. With high poverty came higher rates of crime and soldiers were often the targets of petty theft, losing their wallets and pay-books.[745] Retracing the finances of a lost pay-book was a laborious task with staff having to contact and retrace entries with all the units that a soldier had served with. This was further complicated for diluted soldiers.[746] As with pay-books, personal files were crucial for the financial settlements and benefits of soldiers and were also central to claims of pensions. These could only be substantiated by the War Records office which was the only other department with a copy of personal files. The inter-departmental tussle between the Directorate, the department of pensions, the demobilisation committee and War Records further exaggerated delays causing 'tremendous dissatisfaction' among soldiers and heavy surcharges on discharge depots for the upkeep of these men.[747] Aside from the hurdle of paper-trails, there were also the more general hurdles – the poor state of kits (usually of diluted soldiers as they were not inspected or paraded as frequently), railway warrants (confusions in issuing of passes), and the impatience of soldiers themselves.

Additionally, the process of demobilisation itself was cumbersome and there were significant delays in payments. In September 1945, a Captain Colson wrote to Colonel Mockford (Deputy DNEAS) informing that the CC men under him had not been paid in months and the timeline

[745] DOD. Divisional Documents, Box 120, ISAR/AP46, Non-Europeans Discipline, Multiple Files.
[746] DOD. WR, Box 48, 25/2/14, Draft: 6th Armoured Division, 24 July 1943.
[747] DOD. DNEAS, Box 29, NAS/8/2/1, CCHQ Kimberley to AG, 10 November 1941.

for payment remained unclear.[748] Thus, demobilisation was a gargantuan effort and the sizable volumes on inquiries by soldiers and officers to the DNEAS and War Records office in the DOD archives indicates the slow-moving machinery that was demobilisation.

2.3. Employment

In the post-war period, UDF launched several schemes of employment for demobilised soldiers.[749] Within these schemes White soldiers were given preference. Not all schemes were accessible to non-White soldiers. In fact, African veterans only received further training and employment as cooks and waiters. For semi-skilled and unskilled work, preference was first given to White soldiers, then CC/IMC veterans, and finally NMC veterans. The post-War welfare of CC/IMC soldiers and dependents was handled by the Dispersal Demobilisation Committee (DDC) that comprised only two non-White civilian members. A sub-committee, the Discharged Soldiers and Demobilisation Committee (DSDC) specifically handled the employment of CC/IMC veterans. The objectives of the committee were; (i) to provide 'satisfactory' employment i.e. 'as good a job as he had when he joined up', (ii) to approve loans and grants. While White ex-servicemen were entitled to loans up to £1250, CC/IMC ex-servicemen were only entitled to loans up to £750. This loan depended on the 'merits' of each application. The committee could also, on its own accord, provide immediate £30 grants to struggling veterans. As *The Cape Standard* pointed, by attempting to maintain the pre-war status-quo in allocation of jobs, the committee was reasserting the class differences that had existed pre-war and providing no opportunities for socio-economic growth.[750]

For CC/IMC soldiers, in conformity with their wartime training and service, the employment on offer was usually that of transport drivers. However, soldiers from MT units who had been

[748] DOD. DNEAS, Box 27, NAS/8/Misc, Letter, 27 September 1945.
[749] Grundlingh, L. (1992). Prejudices, Promises and Poverty. *South African Historical Journal*, pp.127-8
[750] UCTSC. 'Prospects for Coloured Ex-Volunteers', *The Cape Standard*, 22 May 1945.

trained as drivers, after their demobilisation, discovered that their army licenses could not be converted to professional licenses.[751] Thus, they remained entirely dependent on UDF for 'upward mobility' in the workforce and often had to be recommended or their applications supported by the DNEAS to secure civil employment. For the few whose pre-war occupation was farming, they were encouraged to return to agriculture, usually on White-owned farmlands. For CC/IMC soldiers from urban areas, the situation was grim. In the Western Cape the war years had fostered employment of unskilled African workers in positions previously occupied by skilled Coloured workers. Concerns of the ex-servicemen were voiced in Cape Town City Councils which resulted in reversal of the open labour market and reinstating of strict controls over African labour.[752] While they were 'given back' their pre-war employment, within it promotions were limited and wages competitive. Those who were educated or literate (or had become literate in the duration of the war), preference was given to them for clerical work, sometimes within the UDF in a non-military capacity. Veterans were also offered employment in hospitals (as hygiene workers), railways, garages, engineering departments, police force, and construction work. However, these opportunities were only offered to CC/IMC veterans *if* the post could not be filled by a White soldier. Additionally, within these professions, no efforts were made to allow veterans to develop on the skills they had learnt during their time in the army.

2.4. The 'Honour' in Discharge

Central to the question of demobilisation is 'honour' and the nebulosity surrounding the term. What did it mean to have an 'honourable' discharge and who was classified as without this honour? An honourable discharge, as discussed, gave soldiers limited financial and economic benefits. They and their dependants were also, at the very least, sympathetically entertained by

[751] Grundlingh, *Prejudices, Promises and Poverty*, p.128
[752] Goldin, *Making Race*, pp.70-71

DNEAS and the GGWF in case they were in financial distress or were otherwise in need of welfare. An honourably discharged soldier was afforded the opportunity to build back his life in the Union. A 'dishonourable' discharge not only meant financial consequences but could also gravely hamper an ex-soldier's employment prospects, especially if they did not have a pre-war job to return to. While *de jure*, the criteria for dishonourable discharges adhered to military conduct, *de facto* there was ambiguity concerning the fifth category of dishonourable discharge – i.e. 'in the interest of service'. Within this criterion, an OC of a unit could dishonourably discharge a non-White soldier and send him back to the base where he had originally enlisted and the discharged soldier himself would have no volition or channel to appeal the release. It was only on their return to camp that, on the initiative of the officers-in-charge, were their cases re-considered.

As early as 1943, a memorandum submitted by SAIRR contended that this category of discharge was being misused by officers stating that: (i) many of these soldiers were in fact medically unfit for service and had been categorised as 'ineffectives' and provided with no benefits, (ii) the problem of 'bad' discharges was more rampant in diluted units wherein a 'lack of understanding of the Coloured soldier might lead to a 'bad' certificate on insufficient grounds', (iii) honourably discharged soldiers who (pre-discharge) declined the offer of employment three times (on grounds of the offer of work being of poor standard/pay or far away etc) were 'crimed' and dishonourably discharged.[753]

In response to the memorandum, the Department of Defence announced that it would abolish the terms 'honourable' and 'dishonourable', and instead use 'entitled to discharge benefits' and 'not entitled to discharge benefits'. However, this change in nomenclature did little to remedy the situation and the terms continued to be use everywhere except on discharge certificates.[754]

[753] HPRA. AD843J, O4 Discharges, Welfare of Non-European Soldiers.
[754] UCTSC. 'Dishonourable Discharge and Non-European Soldiers', *The Cape Standard*, 22 February 1944.

For example, in 1945 Private G Groenewald of CC informed in a letter to the Directorate of Demobilisation that he had been an NCO in CC when he was demoted by court-martial back to the rank of Private. However, he had once more gained compliments from his OC and had hoped of being re-instated as an NCO. However, his officers were transferred, and the new officers-in-charge discharged him dishonourably. He was not provided with a reason for this. As a result, he was unemployed, and his family was homeless and dependent on the charity of relatives.[755] Groenewald was subsequently informed that his discharge could not be over-turned.[756] In a different case, a depot officer wrote to WR informing that men who had 'voluntarily' asked for a discharge without jobs had been given a release 'in the interest of service'. Subsequently, they were unable to find employment as the category of discharge was usually used for delinquents or 'ineffectives'. In response WR amended their certificates 'engagement terminated at own request for civil employment'.[757]

However, such interventions were on the individual initiative of the officers. Additionally, the onus of 'fixing' things was still placed on the soldier who had to repeatedly appeal his case to get a better, if not fair, deal. There was also no clear appellate process for ex-servicemen. Some would write to the offices of DNEAS, WR, Pay Department etc, while others wrote to SAIRR, their elected representatives, veterans associations and other persons of influence within civil society. The only 'aid' in employment dishonourably discharged soldiers received was to have their names registered as 'civilians' in the labour exchange, *separate* from the list of the honourably discharged. However, this separation meant that employers were less likely to hire them. The SAIRR report additionally stated that it had been informed that from this register 'not a single one had found work'.[758] Mopeli-Paulus' account supports this statement as, post-

[755] DOD. DNEAS, Box 30, NAS 8/4/4, Complaints Letter, 10 August 1946.
[756] *Op. cit.*, RE: Ex-volunteer, 4 September 1946.
[757] DOD. WR, Box 136, 66/13, RE: Volunteer Discharged, 7 August 1945.
[758] HPRA. AD843J, O4 Discharges, Welfare of Non-European Soldiers.

war, he served with a veteran's organisation, primarily in facilitating the employment of 'the forgotten Non-European soldiers'. He would contact workplaces to hire these men and although those who worked there had themselves served, they would decline hiring non-White ex-servicemen as they had done so previously, and it had not ended well. Mopeli-Paulus, surprisingly, did not blame them for their attitude:

> because I knew what soldiers are. I had seen many men who joined the army as non-smokers and non-drinkers, who returned enslaved by cigarettes and turned into the worst drunkards. The war brought the good ones as well as these into disrepute.[759]

However, he does place blame on the government and municipalities for failing to provide support and welfare for non-White ex-servicemen and their families. Similarly, the SAIRR report concluded:

> the dishonourably discharged Cape Coloured soldier has no prospect whatever. If married, his household must suffer. He is thrown upon the community and his anti-social tendencies are liable to become criminal.[760]

Turning to the honourably discharged, the report stated that they were not fairing any better in the employment schemes. The Department of Defence contended that any soldier whose physical 'unfitness' was at '15%' was considered physically fit to pursue civil employment. However, such soldiers were unable to hold on to their jobs because of their ailments. The report gives an example of a soldier who was a painter and a waiter in his pre-war life. Whilst he was offered work in both fields, he could not hold either job as he had suffered from concussion and frequently experienced spells of dizziness and was subsequently without work.

There were other challenges to the welfare and employment schemes and some created by the mismanagement of them. Soldiers who had ailments prior to their service (and were worsened during their time in the army, thus disabling them) were not considered for war pensions as it

[759] Mopeli-Paulus, *The World and the Cattle*, p.102
[760] HPRA. AD843J, O4 Discharges, Welfare of Non-European Soldiers.

was believed that their health issues had not been 'aggravated due to military service'. Importantly, these same men had been passed as medically fit for service at the time of recruitment and, despite multitude of reports detailing the physical impact of these duties, UDF was simply finding reasons to *not* support disabled veterans. The disabled veterans who did receive pension found that the pay was inadequate to support them. Ex-soldiers who were given loans to run small-businesses would have run-ins with the municipalities over permits and paperwork. The report also informs that the slow-moving machinery of demobilisation was creating low morale and idleness among soldiers who were consequentially engaging in 'anti-social behaviour'.[761] There was also the issue of soldiers being unable to 'return' to normal life because of administrative delays. For example, in 1946, a CC soldier who was being treated for tuberculosis appealed to DNEAS to be discharged from the army and the hospital as his wife had been admitted to a psychiatric institute and his children had no guardian.[762]

Considering the variables involved in each soldier's discharge, it is difficult to generalise the experience of demobilisation. The only certainty was the chaos of the process and the UDF's eagerness in shedding its non-White ranks with less concern for their welfare. Delays in demobilisation were purely the result of incomplete paperwork, and never because a soldier was challenging the terms of his discharge. It can also be reasonably argued that most soldiers did not receive the opportunity to have their cases or needs heard. Instead they wholly depended on the (mis)judgment of officers of their units and depots. Only the literate few could attempt to navigate the military bureaucracy. The inclusion of DNEAS demobilisation into the larger fold of UDF can be argued as the main cause for this neglect. Despite the initial challenges, DNEAS had been able to scale its recruitment and administration with interventions, notably the inclusion of non-White staff at officers and the involvement of civilian non-White efforts.

[761] *Ibid.*
[762] DOD. DNEAS, Box 27, NAS/8/Misc, Letter, 3 October 1946.

Administratively, this had meant that the administration of the DNEAS had been kept separate and did not follow the regulations of the UDF. The inclusion of NEAS demobilisation into the UDF thus caused considerable bureaucratic challenges for the White UDF officers and staff.

It is likely that for the demobilising soldier, the immediate priority was to avail whatever financial compensations he could from the army and be released from service. In a monthly progress report, a captain of a unit of the 1st Battalion of CC informed the DNEAS that some soldiers who had been recommended for discharge without benefits had been granted 'benefits'. As a result, he had had cases of men with good records in his unit who were engaging in petty crimes to get discharged sooner. Additionally, they feared that all the good jobs were being 'taken' by those discharged sooner. The OC of the battalion seconded the captain's report, stating that the entire battalion was suffering from low morale and soldiers were committing offences as they were 'tired of the army' and wanted to 'go home'.[763]

It is likely that the instance of 'delinquents' being discharged with 'benefits' was probably a bureaucratic miscommunication or if it had happened, it was likely limited to a few soldiers. However, what is more pertinent is the impact that the pace of demobilisation was having on soldiers. The anxiety of returning to civil life, the insecurity around employment and financial stress marked the process of demobilisation for non-White soldiers. Robert Gaunt, a White South African ex-serviceman described that 'no one [White soldiers] was demobbed until they'd got a job. For the Blacks and Coloureds that certainly was not the case. For them it was a case of 'Off you go! Thank you very much!'.'[764] As Charles Adams surmised:

> Well when we were discharged, they offered us jobs which I never took. They offered me a job in the railway as a ganger, 18 Rand money for clothing and I received a gratuity cheque from the government. When I was discharged I found the country the same as

[763] DOD. WR, Box 136, 66/13, Discharges CC Details, 21 March 1946.
[764] IWM. 18433, Reel 2.

> when I had left it. I had not expected it to be different. […] I thought 'You live in a White man's paradise'.[765]

3. Life at Home: Substance Abuse, Welfare, Racism

In a report Captain Knoetze commented on life of non-White soldiers after service:

> It is confidently expected that instead of having an adverse effect on them, army experience has had and will continue to exercise a very good influence on NEs who served in the CC or NMC. They have learnt the value of discipline, the futility of crime and the reward of good service. They have also learnt how to live cleanly, occupy themselves beneficially during leisure hours and acquired skills in many useful trades and occupations. They will therefore be returning to South Africa as more useful citizens and should be sought after by employers rather than regarded as a problem.[766]

Knoetze's reflections are in-line with the 'civilising mission' agenda of the White government and the paternalistic approach of the UDF. Once more, reducing the non-White soldier to an infantile status. Instead of viewing these men as battle-weary soldiers, Knoetze projected the war and service as a schooling experience that produced a new and improved workforce instead of men who had sacrificed much in foreign lands. Such an understanding undermines the mental and physical impact of war on not only soldiers but also their families and ignores the responsibilities of the government in providing aid for veterans and impacted communities. Unlike the propaganda for White ex-servicemen that focused on battle-weariness and rehabilitation (the onus of which was usually shouldered on women as nurturers[767]), the UDF and DNEAS did not view non-White soldiers as men in need of help and welfare. As Knoetze implied, the route envisioned for life after war went from military service to civil employment. Despite the grandiose vision of the bettered non-White man, the reality of demobilisation was in stark contrast. In addition to non-White ex-servicemen not being treated at par with their

[765] IWM. 18404, Reel 3. Post-war Adams became a fisherman, working for a deep-sea fishing and whaling boat and was part of several fishing expeditions to the Antarctic.
[766] DOD. UWH, Box 158, Historical Survey of NEAS, p.58
[767] Chetty, '"Our Victory Was Our Defeat"'.

White counterparts, there was also an urgency to demobilise and disperse without ensuring aid and welfare for all ex-servicemen and their dependants.

It is difficult to reconstruct the impact of non-White military service in South Africa post-World War II. Post-war politics in the Union, White and non-White, focused on the 1948 general election, wider societal issues and, later, apartheid. Consequently, non-White ex-servicemen were not on any political radar. Notably, *The Cape Standard* too remained relatively silent on the stories of non-White ex-servicemen. When they were mentioned, it was usually from the top-down perspective of ex-servicemen's legions, unlike their bottom-up reporting of the war that had included soldiers' letters and voices. One possible explanation for this can be found in Mopeli-Paulus' own recollection[768] of the plight of ex-servicemen, also echoed in the following extract of a letter by a Social Welfare Worker in East London (Eastern Cape) that was secretly obtained by DNEAS through intelligence networks:

> In my job, I'm getting fed-up with the discharged soldier ramp. Of course, I know that I deal mostly with the poorer types, who would be a problem war or no war, but now they're getting discharged they think the whole world should be handed to them on a silver plate […] In this district Coloureds used to get an average wage of 25/- per week which of course kept most families below the poverty line and was all wrong. Now the man gets board, lodging and clothes from the army, and his wife gets over £13 per month. She lives according to her old standard, which costs £1 to £2 per month more owing to the cost of living and the rest goes to drink […] I wish we could give them more in kind – cheaper milk and other food and better medical and educational services, because so many are incapable of handling money…[769] [sic]

Although the writer's observations are unsympathetic and prejudiced, the letter highlights the socio-economic challenges facing the non-White communities post-war. Three long-form pieces in *The Cape Standard* inform on the rise of dagga-smoking and alcoholism among the

[768] *See* p.307
[769] DOD. DNEAS, Box 27, NAS/8/Misc, Miscellaneous Correspondence, 17 October 1944.

non-White communities and especially urban populaces.[770] While the articles adopt a moral stand on the 'evils' of society and also recommend policy changes on prohibition and sale of alcohol, there is little exploration of the impact of military service on ex-servicemen especially pertaining to mental health, economic insecurity, and the frequent consumption of alcohol and addictive substances while in service.

It is difficult to examine addiction among non-White South African veterans and its impact on their lives and those of their families, but the imagined impact should also not be left out. A 1995 medical study on alcoholism in World War II veterans demonstrated that there was significant correlation between 'combat stress and the subsequent development of alcohol abuse' and that veteran suffering from alcoholism were more likely to have psychiatric problems.[771] Ali Haggett in the edited volume *Stress in Post-War Britain* illustrates the 'collective silence' surrounding alcoholism and mental illness among ex-servicemen and the use of addictive substances by these men to self-medicate and cope with the trauma of war. The gendered assumptions on mental illness further pushed men to the fringes of medical assistance as they were less likely to seek help and were not acknowledged by the state, workplaces and health organisations as 'suffering'.[772]

Although collating a record of mental illness among CC/IMC veterans is unrealizable, an image can be constructed from the letters of desperate relatives writing to the DNEAS looking for 'missing' discharged soldiers who had not returned home. The wife of Private Maurice

[770] UCTSC. 'Why Drink is a Problem', *The Cape Standard*, 5 September 1944; 'Drunkenness among Coloureds and Africans', *The Cape Standard*, 6 December 1944; 'Dagga Smoking on the Rise', *The Cape Standard*, 29 March 1946.
[771] Herrmann & Eryavec (1996). 'Lifetime Alcohol Abuse in Institutionalized World War II Veterans'. *The American Journal of Geriatric Psychiatry*.
[772] Haggett, A. (2015). 'Gender, Stress and Alcohol Abuse in Post-War Britain'. In Jackson (Ed.), *Stress in Post-War Britain, 1945–85*. Routledge.

Peterson wrote one such letter, pleading to locate her husband's whereabouts as she and her children had been evicted from their house and needed his support:

> my husband has been home in September last so I don't know what is the trouble that he don't want to come home because the last [time] he had been home he was happy from the house so there is no trouble between me and him. So please let me know about him.[773]

In another letter, a Mrs T Baartman, wife of an ex-CC soldier wrote to the DNEAS in 1944 asking for her husband to *not* be discharged and be sent back 'up North'. She wrote that he was abusive and an alcoholic and relied on her earnings to support his addiction. 'I have no pleasure at all when he is home. I shall be very grateful if he could be sent away and not allowed to come home for a time as I cannot stand the life under him anymore.'[774] The wife of another soldier wrote asking for financial assistance as she was homeless and had no way of supporting herself and her children because her husband was serving a year in prison for desertion.[775]

Most of these 'complainants' received little help. DNEAS would only provide the information in documents and registers on the whereabouts of soldiers but would not forward these complaints to any kind of welfare associations unless they were entitled to benefits within the demobilisation schemes. Apologies were expressed by the officers and the complaints closed. The disappearances, desertions and substance abuse illustrate the mental state of soldiers and veterans at the close of hostilities. They were unable to return home and 'resume' life and their families were plunged into desperate situations.

These are, however, by no means isolated cases. While there were certainly ex-servicemen like Adams and Mopeli-Paulus who did well post-war, this was the result of their own enterprising efforts. They were also generally in favourable economic positions (Adams was honourably discharged as a Staff Sergeant while Mopeli-Paulus's book of poetry, by his own account, had

[773] DOD. DNEAS, Box 27, NAS/8/Misc, From Mrs Peterson, 22 October 1946.
[774] DOD. DNEAS, Box 30, NAS/8/4/4, From Mrs Baartman, 8 November 1944.
[775] *Op. cit.*, From Princess Amien, 16 October 1945.

done well in sales). Soldiers discharged with benefits were more likely able to 'return' to civil life than those who were without benefits and those who came from low-income communities. The impact of these socio-economic hurdles, especially in fringe communities such as the non-White South African minorities, would have further alienated and depressed these veterans and their families. Furthermore, as the letter of the social worker from East London examples, the State and communal perceptions of these men would have resulted in them being treated with contempt and as public nuisance instead of offering them social welfare and support. Mopeli-Paulus's account illustrates the domino effect of the lack of aid to ex-servicemen:

> One day we heard that some ex-soldiers had followed a certain man to an empty space near Orlando location and formed a squatter's camp there. Overnight it was flooded with thousands of others, who came with all their goods and settled there too. Soon fights arose between the 'civilians' and the 'military' [...] Life in them was dirty. Water and fuel were scarce and often had to be paid for at exorbitant prices. Women from all parts of the Reef collected together where they were established and sold beer until they found men for themselves. Squatting was the result of real need.[776]

Aside from institutionalised racism, there was also the everyday racism that ex-soldiers faced. The memorandum produced by the SAIRR, the reports filed by the likes of Captain Colson and the OC of the 1st Battalion CC, demonstrate the gravity of resentment and disappointment that demobilising soldiers felt – in that enough of them complained that those in-charge noticed. However, as has been seen, not much was done in response to these damning allegations. Instead, the general attitude of 'shedding' soldiers perpetrated in civil society. A particularly distressing incident: CC Sergeant Louis Emile Hiss was awaiting discharge when his wife gave birth to a premature baby that died. He was given to leave to bury the baby but needed a burial order that he was told to get from the police station from a White Sergeant-in-charge. As it was late at night, at first the sergeant refused to entertain Hiss but when Hiss insisted, he told him that he had 'nothing to do with that' and swore at him, 'You bloody soldiers reckon that we are

[776] Mopeli-Paulus, *The World and the Cattle*, pp.102-3

here to fix matters for you' [sic]. Hiss was dismissed by the Sergeant and subsequently given the order by the constable who likely intervened on his behalf.[777] In another incident, an IMC private was arrested by the police in 1944 and was in the back of the van when the police sergeant stopped it for a while and chatted with a White civilian. The civilian inquired whether the sergeant had made arrests that day, to which the sergeant responded that he may make more. The man then responded that 'I wish I had my own way. I'd take a sjambok [leather whip] and knock hell out of every one of them, as they are not worth the uniform they are wearing.'[778] No action was taken by DNEAS on either complaint.

The idea of a uniformed, experienced, 'improved' man returning home to a family that the army had been taking care of for him and pursuing a better life after the war is a romantic notion. It also served larger political agendas of supremacist and imperial governments as they shrank from their obligations to their non-White veterans and instead project an imagination of war as an ameliorative experience that 'uplifted' the non-White man with dignified, aimful service. The reality, as has been demonstrated, was depressing. As with recruitment, demobilisation was a prejudiced, unjust process that slashed the rightfully earned benefits of non-White servicemen. Welfare for their families, at best, allowed them to survive the entropy of post-war South Africa. Soldiers relied on their own means to re-start their lives. To this debasement, some, like Adams, responded with indifference, unsurprised at the mistreatment. Others were forced to harbour their resentment with the looming threat of apartheid. And still others – those who were traumatised and suffering mentally – became casualties of the war long after it was over. Some years later, Job Maseko[779], of POW fame, was destitute and his girlfriend had left him. He committed suicide by jumping in front of a train.[780]

[777] DOD. DNEAS, Box 30, NAS/8/4/4, Affidavit 14 April 1942.
[778] *Op. cit.*, Affidavit 18 January 1944.
[779] *See* p.272
[780] Interview in *Pair of Boots and a Bicycle*. DVD. Directed by Vincent Moloi.

4. Remembrance

Sociologist Maurice Halbwachs observed that within remembrance there are two types of memories – the individual and the group. The individual participates in remembrance within the framework of their own personality while in the group, they 'evoke and maintain impersonal remembrances of interest to the group'.[781] For Halbwachs, individual memory remains contextualised by (although not always in sync with) collective memory. Collective memory, however, subsumes individual remembrance as 'any individual remembrances that may penetrate are transformed within a totality having no personal consciousness'.[782] In examining the role of military history in the formation of national memory, Mark Humphries observes that the imagination of the collective, ultimate 'sacrifice' (that consequently, motivates military historians to 'honour' and record this sacrifice) subsumes the individual soldier into the collective narrative. For Humphries, collective memory and historical analysis are competing and have 'contradictory aims'.[783]

The history and memory of CC and IMC service and soldiers can be examined through both, Halbwachs and Humphries' methodological approaches. At the individual level, as this thesis has repeatedly demonstrated, the experiences of the soldiers varied considerably. They were defined and impacted by their civilian identities, the circumstance of their enlistment, politics of the Union, service in their units, institutional prejudice, and conditions of deployment. Soldiers' response to these were complex and nuanced. Their motivations to enlist, their use of humour and music to combat stress, their inability to cope with combat stress, their expressions of agency via letters to The Cape Standard, their negotiations with the institution through complaints, mutinies and civil representation, their silences – all of these contradict the

[781] Halbwachs, M. (1950). *The Collective Memory.* Harper & Row, p.50
[782] *Op. cit.*, p.51
[783] Humphries, M. (2015). 'Between Commemoration and History: The Historiography of the Canadian Corps and Military Overseas'. *The Canadian Historical Review*, p.396

'memory' of the disarmed, depressed non-White pioneer, and instead image the myriad of individual and collective experiences of CC/IMC war service. Similarly, post-war, ex-soldiers interacted with the growing politicisation of their service in complex ways. While some chose to disassociate entirely, others engaged in collective remembrance and memories. The legacy and remembrance of CC's and IMC's service can be analysed through two lenses: (i) via their participation in veterans' associations, (ii) via their participation in memorial services and commemorations.

Post-World War I, grassroot ex-servicemen organisations sprouted in the Union that represented veterans' interest and participated in cultures of commemoration. However, such associations were usually regiment-centric and by default segregated. The Springbok Legion, formed in East Africa in 1940, was the first soldiers' association to include and represent non-White South African soldiers. The Legion was also active in its opposition to the Nationalist Party but lost support post-1948 and was defunct by 1952. The activism of its White members did not translate into civil society and as Plint and Deplort observed that 'if World War II had had a liberalising effect on ex-serviceman, then it was fleeting and time-dependent. Unless vested in a strong sense of community, the attitudes and beliefs formed in crisis and youth were vulnerable to change.'[784] The Cape Corps Association, however, rapidly expanded during the war years and post-war was brought into the fold of the BCESL.[785] Yet, the association remained limited in its scope and capacity. The more active and powerful organisations that had robust ties with the UDF and the Union government, such as MOTH and Torch Commando, continued to debar non-White soldiers. As Charles Pillai, ex-IMC, surmised that 'When we got back […] the non-Whites were non-existent really speaking and we had

[784] Deplort & Plint (2020). 'From the Battlefield to the Ballot Box'. In Van der Waag (Ed.), *Sights, Sounds, Memories*. African Sun Media, p.318
[785] DISA. Maqoma, L. (1980, September). 'South African Coloured Corps: Part 2'. *Dawn, 4*(9). p.30

problems to even join various organisations like the MOTH. We couldn't get membership those days.'[786]

Being debarred from joining White veterans' associations ensured the relegation of the cause of non-White servicemen to the margins. NEAS ex-soldiers were unable to beneficially mobilise as a political group to negotiate the cost of their service in civil society. The most NEAS associations could do was provide aid to struggling veterans and their families and help ex-soldiers find employment. After the Nationalist Party rose to power and with the implementation of apartheid, there was little hope for non-White veterans to seek what was owed to them. However, this disbarment did not, notably, translate into an amnesia of their service.

Commemorations form a central part of military cultures, especially in the context of the 'modern' militaries of the West in the twentieth century. It is the duty of militaries to remember the 'ultimate sacrifice' of the war dead. As Humphries posits, 'At the very least, remembering wartime sacrifice involves emphasizing ideals of national service which subordinate the individual to the interests of the state.'[787] The NEAS units were not immune to this sense of responsibility, not just within the limits of their units, but outside of military ceremonies as well. In 1944, with the decline in hostilities in Middle East, CC men visited the war graves of CC soldiers who had died in Palestine in 1918.[788] These pilgrimages were a continuation of the annual memorial services that had been held in South Africa post-World War I and the military funerals being held during the war. This culture of commemoration kept alive the collective memory of non-White participation in the World Wars. Uniquely, on 29 February 1948 a 'flag parade' was held in Cape Town to honour the service of CC in World War II. The stately event

[786] Interview in *Forgotten Soldiers*. DVD. Directed by Bernard Rundle.
[787] Humphries, 'Between Commemoration and History', p.386
[788] UCTSC. 'Soldiers at the Graves at Jerusalem', *The Cape Standard*, 13 February 1945

was attended by Smuts, still PM, then Governor-General of SA, Gideon Brand van Zyl, the Mayor, the Bishop and other civil and military dignitaries. A total 4000 ex-servicemen and 800 guests attended, not including the spectators.[789] One report claimed that an audience of 10,000 was expected. A special Ceremonial Officer was loaned to ensure proper military procedure.[790] The event was marked by prayers, sermons and speeches and a march-past of CC ex-servicemen under their own command. A fourteen-page souvenir booklet was also issued.

The booklet notably (re)established three 'myths' of the Cape Corps that, as Humphries explicated, placed the service of CC into a collective, continuous and, now, national memory. Firstly, it reasserted the unit having a longer history of service by dating its establishment to the eighteenth century, thus blurring the individual and collective experiences of soldiers in World War II into a longer, mythicised legacy of duty and service, and disjointing the World War II experience from its own time and space. This normalised the service of the Coloured community and presented their participation as a historical continuation, thus ignoring the political obstructions the non-White populace was faced with at the time. Secondly, the formation and subsequent merging of IMC into CC was disregarded, thus insisting on the racial criterion (specifically 'Coloured') of the corps. This particularly excluded the South African Indian community from the public and political memory of service, especially in light of India's international representations against apartheid in SA. Finally, the souvenir declared that 'the Cape Corps were represented very strongly in every theatre of the War (except in Europe)', re-positioning the non-White man in 'non-West' theatres.[791] Continually, subsequent services in the following decades revolved around commemorating World War I and the 1918 Battle of Square Hill, usually including World War II commemorations as an addendum. Thus, when examined through Halbwachs's lens, despite the marching ex-servicemen having distinctly

[789] WCARS. 3/CT, 4/1/11/479, Town Clerk to Branch Commandant, 13 February 1948
[790] *Op. cit.*, Maj George Woods to Town Clerk, 21 January 1948.
[791] *Op. cit.*, Souvenir (Historical Programme) Cape Corps 'Flag' Ceremony, 29 February 1948.

contradicting memories to the collective, it is this politicisation and subsequent mythization of the Cape Corps that overpowered the individual, even historical, experience of the CC/IMC soldier.

Politicisation of wars and the war dead are not a phenomenon unique to SA. Akira Iriye posits that the politicisation of memory is a national process and that 'political considerations and nationalistic emotions tend to make memory something altogether detached from the events themselves that are being remembered.'[792] This certainly rings true for the non-White soldiers of the World Wars. Disassociated from their own time and space, they have been both reduced to the label of a mercenary and haloed as the valourous non-White man betrayed by the White powers. Such an imagination limits a historical understanding of the lives that took part in the war and their story of survival. It replaces their lived experience with imagined ones that present them as one-dimensional actors, heroes or hires, betrayed or bettered, always only a non-White soldier, never just a soldier. Iriye deduces that to correct national possession of memory, societies across-borders must shed national agendas and view the past, all pasts, as a collective, shared experience. Echoing Iriye, Ricardo José contends that it is through transnational research and dialogue, by crossing the regional scopes of histories that myth-making can be challenged. However, he adds that 'Historians may say what they will, and may argue with each other, but war memories will continue along with — and perhaps in spite of — the work of historians.'[793]

Beyond this collectivisation, memorial services were and are centred on honouring the dead. As Jay Winter argues, remembrance in the form of commemoration is the natural next step of support and comfort. Usually voiced by bereaved relatives, veterans, and impacted

[792] Iriye, A. (2002). Foreword: The War in My Diaries and Memories. *The Journal of American-East Asian Relations*, p.2
[793] José, R. (2001). War and Violence, History and Memory. *Asian Journal of Social Science*, p.469

communities, they are centred around memorials, graves and 'social actions' such as ceremonies.[794] They make seen the bodies of bereavement in the form of those 'left behind' but also provide dedicated spaces to anchor personal and collective grief. However, not all remembrance and not all grief is public. Simultaneous and crucial to the voicing of grief are the private acts of remembrance. Private grief is suffered behind closed doors and is centred on personal shrines of letters, journals, photographs, mementos of what was lost and what was lived before the war. This form of grief largely remains undocumented and forms a distinctive category of what Suhi Choi calls 'suppressed mourners'.[795] These silences, although difficult to reconstruct, are crucial to investigating post-conflict societies. They raise pertinent inquires on the impact of war on society and conceptions of peace. It can be argued that peace cannot be reduced to an end of hostilities but entails longer post-war processes of administration of justice and prosecution of war crimes, restitution, compensation, commemoration and, for the anonymous subaltern, the physical and mental toll of conflict and the end of private grief.

Conclusion

For all their valour and sacrifice, non-White soldiers returned to a deteriorating political reality. Instead of receiving the praise of their government, they received scorn and suspicion. The urgency to shed non-White ranks resulted in a chaotic demobilisation process that was largely unsympathetic to veteran and dependent welfare. Despite the illusion of providing benefits and aid, as this chapter has illustrated, non-White ex-servicemen had to rely on themselves to navigate the post-war transition. There were also those who could not navigate their circumstance, suffering from physical and mental ailments, and, most prominently, addiction

[794] Winter, J. (1995). *Sites of Memory, Sites of Mourning*. CUP, p.30
[795] Choi, S. (2019). *Right to Mourn*. OUP, p.7

– these men were viewed as ‘anti-social’ nuisances and pushed to the edges of society. Non-White veterans were unable to organise as a political collective and relied on the goodwill of military and civil leaders to push their causes and cases, often with little success. Despite the propaganda of war being a civilising mission, ex-servicemen and their dependents suffered from a lack of economic and financial support, and social welfare. The ‘invisible’ women on the domestic front were often the worst impacted in such crises.

With the intensification of segregation and racial politics in the Union, the doors to recourse for non-White veterans were being permanently barred and the imagined socio-political gains ‘earned’ during the war were rapidly lost. Although military commemoration protected the public legacy of CC/IMC service, the long-term politicisation of their service impacted how these men were remembered. Service of the Cape Corps and the Indian and Malay Corps was subsumed under a larger collective mythical memory of the ‘Cape Corps’ with an imposed ‘Coloured’ identity, disjointed from their own time and space. The formalisation of apartheid in 1948 further segregated the historical memory of their service from the narratives of the World Wars and indeed from South Africa’s national memory.

CONCLUSION

This thesis has presented seven main arguments in the analysis of CC and IMC rank-and-file's experience of the Second World War. Chapter 1 has demonstrated the impact of the long legacy of non-White military service in the sub-continent on the formation of non-White units in World War II and has argued against defining the identities and motivations of the non-White communities and recruits via the White institutional lens. Chapter 2 has discerned the influence and impact of civilian communities on the institution and has demonstrated the limitations of the military in institutionalising soldiering. Chapters 3, 4 and 5 have theorised on this soldiering and posited on race and identities in the military, the failures of the institution to maintain professional soldiering among non-White ranks. It had argued that non-White ranks significantly participated in the creation of their own identities as professional soldiers (and sustained it despite institutional neglect). Chapter 6 has uniquely argued how the self-perception of captured soldiers influenced their view of their own internment, and the impact of the lack of Allied protection on non-White prisoners. Chapter 7 has argued that instead of being a 'bettering' circumstance, war worsened the socio-economic and indeed political standing of the Coloured, Indian and Malay communities in South Africa and strengthened the case for segregation that culminated in apartheid in 1948. It has also investigated the creation of communal memory and the role of civilian and veteran collective in the preservation of military legacies. The underpinning narrative in these arguments is one of subaltern agency, White anxieties, institutional prejudice and toleration, and the intersection of war and society.

From a historiographical view-point, this thesis has addressed broader themes of: (i) the war as an imperial conflict, (ii) non-White soldiering and colonial warfare, (iii) functioning of modern militaries/professional armies. This thesis highlights the value of subaltern histories in reconstructing the 'lived experiences' of rank-and-file and in critically deconstructing their narratives from 'official' sources. The resultant theorisation on the history of CC and IMC has imagined three over-arching arguments that are in dialogue, not just with the spatial history of SA, but with broader historical studies of the World Wars and modern militaries of the twentieth and twenty-first centuries.

On Military Institutions

By re-centring analysis on rank-and-file, this research has theorised on the formation, functioning and mutation of modern armies in the twentieth century, and contests viewing armed forces as mutually exclusive institutions that have rigid hierarchies and are unresponsive to both, rank-and-file and civil society. Chapters 1 and 2 demonstrate how regulations around recruitment, armament, professional advancement, welfare and demobilisation of CC/IMC were impacted by the circumambient politics of the day, exigencies of the front, and historical institutional prejudice. Perceptions in civilian and political society dictated the terms of service of NEAS soldiers and, later, determined the remembered legacy of their participation. Nevertheless, within these limitations, the military institution was responsive to the demands of war, the morale of rank-and-file, and the perception of those in command on the front.

Chapters 3 and 4 further evidence this hypothesis in relation to the institution responding to its own internal needs. This is exampled in the sporadic arming of NEAS soldiers on the front, the 'official' arming of CC/IMC ranks for the battles of El Alamein, the establishment of 'rehabilitation' clubs in Italy, the absorption of IMC into CC, the deployment of NEAS artillery and anti-aircraft gunners, and the deployment of NEAS in Europe. A top-down approach to

analysing modern armies undermines rank-and-file agency and the permeability and elasticity of the institution. In fact, militaries are in a constant negotiation with both, civilian collectives and its own participants. It was the non-White leadership that advocated for pay rises and better welfare for NEAS soldiers. Although only partially successful, their constant campaign for non-White soldiers, maintained pressure on the government and the UDF. The institutions thus had to be conscious of non-White perceptions of military service. In the absence of political and civilian oversight, it is likely that non-White soldiers would have received a more pauperising bargain. This is highlighted in the experience of NEAS POWs who were not protected by Allied commands and therefore were significantly worse off than White Allied POWs.

However, the military institution was not blind to the contradiction of creating professional soldiers in a segregated capacity. Modern militaries rely on positive troop morale, on creating an imagined comradeship through the 'espirit de corps', and the hyper-masculinisation of service. Disarmed service challenged this axiom of a professional, functioning military. Aware of this, both UDF and DNEAS, attempted to negotiate this gap through alternate appeals to the masculinities of non-White men: competitive sports, drilling and parading, the service of artillery gunners, 'men' manning heavy machines. Nevertheless, civilian identities did impact the experience of soldiering for non-White ranks. This is perhaps most obvious in the everyday racism that non-White soldiers faced while in service. Mopeli-Paulus' experience with homesickness also highlights the role of communal identities in creating camaraderie. White officers themselves had stereotyped perceptions of their non-White ranks and, consequently, dealt with them accordingly. Thus, civilian identities and institutions are key to reconstructing the experience of military institutions. When viewed from this intersection of war and society, a critical analysis of their functioning then reveals key understandings on how recruits, particularly non-White ranks, became soldiers *despite* the institution.

On Soldiering

Continually, this thesis has argued that although the institution demarcated the service of the soldiers, it did not define their perception or experience of their own service. Tarak Barkawi distinguishes two schools of thought that offer conflicting methodological approaches to understand and study the modern soldier. The 'societal' approach centres the examination on historical and cultural arcs that impact the creation, motivation and conduct of a soldier. The 'organisational' approach emphasises on the role of the institution in banding together a disparate group of men and shaping them into soldiers. 'From the beginning of their service' Barkawi explains that 'soldiers are placed in common conditions and designated by a common symbol, core features of military life pregnant with the possibilities of comradeship and cohesion.'[796] CC/IMC soldiers fall into a grey space, between these approaches. In fact, their study can make the case for a third approach into the study of the modern soldier – the subaltern view. Although they were enlisted by an institution with the exclusive purpose of shaping them into soldiers for modern warfare – theirs was also an experience steeped in segregationist histories and legacies. The experience of 'soldiering' for them was limited by them being non-White. While they were included in the UDF, they were also isolated in the DNEAS. Yet, it can be argued, war itself and the trauma of war was a levelling circumstance. Removed from the institutional lens, the subaltern view can, therefore, provide a foundational understanding of what it means to be a soldier and what soldiering entailed for non-White ranks.

CC/IMC soldiers were aware of the prejudices stunting their service. However, when faced with the fog of war, they were also able to compartmentalise their socio-political grievances from their role as soldiers. The successes of the East Africa Campaign, the battle at El Alamein, stretcher-bearing in Italy are all examples of the fulfilment of the duties of professional

[796] Barkawi, T. (2006). 'Culture and Combat in the Colonies'. *Journal of Contemporary History*, p.353

soldiering. They were also not without agency. They interacted with and responded to their service in complex and consequential ways. They were aware of the duties of their officers towards them and recognised when they were faced with what they perceived as injustice when said responsibilities were not satisfactorily met. Most significantly, as Chapter 5 argued, they participated in the creation, maintenance and destruction of their own morale. Without the involvement and active participation of the non-White ranks, it is unlikely that the White institution would have been able to maintain the soldering of these units. Being a soldier and continuing to soldier, as Chapters 2, 3, 4, 5 have argued, was an individual process.

Additionally, the trajectory of CC/IMC service was neither predetermined nor definitive. Armament and dilution were both policies and realties that were influenced by the course of the war, those in command, and exigencies of the frontline. Within these mutating circumstances, CC /IMC soldiers re-aligned their expectations from their service which, in turn, was reflected in troop morale. Maintenance of morale of NEAS units reveals the motivations of the DNEAS (and the UDF) that did view the welfare and contribution of non-White troops as essential and requiring toleration from a racist institution, however, their morale as non-combatants was seconded to the morale and welfare of combatant units. This relegation is most obviously seen in the bullying and mistreatment of diluted ranks (Chapter 4). However, this is not to imply that soldiers simply succumbed to their fate. Contrarily, faced with exploitation and what they believed to be was unjust treatment, soldiers exercised agency. They aired their grievances through official channels, public mediums, and even mutinies. Maggie Dwyer posits that mutinies 'provide a unique glimpse into a group whose voice is normally and intentionally stifled through a system of strict hierarchy'.[797]

[797] Dwyer, M. (2018). *Soldiers in Revolt: Army Mutinies in Africa*. OUP, p.179

However, warfare has its own dynamics that supersede civilian conventions and diversely impacts those in the thick of it. Several accounts analysed in chapters 3 and 4 demonstrate the sense of responsibility that men felt as soldiers. Disarmed non-combatant service did not necessarily mean depressed, dispirited, emasculated service. Such a view relegates the 'imposed' non-combatant service of non-White soldiers to an inferior status that does not compare to the 'ultimate sacrifice' of a White soldier on the frontline. If the soldier cannot wholly participate (i.e. as a combatant), then the value of his participation is diminished. As this thesis has sufficiently demonstrated, this is untrue. Despite the un-glamourous nature of war work that often relegated their contributions to obscurity, non-White soldiers provided crucial services and rose beyond the anonymity imposed on third-line units. They performed as other Allied soldiers did in war. With feats of bravery and choices of self-preservation, these men acted in diverse ways, responding to their circumstance and command. They received praise for their service from the highest offices in East Africa and North Africa and, and this itself sufficiently undermines assumptions of mercenary-like participation and service of these units.

The subaltern view argues against pegging non-White soldiers into binary narratives that present them in one-dimensional spectrums – as martyrs or mercenaries, victims or traitors – always without voice and agency. It instead highlights a myriad of identities and motivations that illustrate the recruit's belief in his own capacity as a professional soldier, the responsibilities he believed he had to perform to fulfil the imagined oath of service, the incapacity he felt from disarmament, and the mutation of motivations as the war progressed. Thus, it can be argued that while the institution creates the 'curriculum' for soldiering, why a soldier continues to soldier (or not) is self-determinant.

On Race, War and Empire

A longer view of CC/IMC participation reveals historical continuities that allow for several conclusions to be made on Race and Empire and the role of non-White soldiers in imperial armies. Firstly, CC/IMC's participation in auxiliary capacity illustrates the evolution of military labour in the sub-continent and indeed in the British imperial forces. The use of non-White labour forces is key to understanding the progression, success and nature of military campaigns (Chapters 3,4). It also reveals the prevalence of occupation-based hierarchies within militaries that, at times, superseded the rank-based hierarchies (as illustrated in troop and morale and in the inability of CC/IMC officers to ensure the welfare of their own men, Chapter 4). However, the systematisation of this labour and the creation of a 'soldiering' workforce is key to discerning the successes/failures of military campaigns which are won as much by expansion into enemy areas as they are through battles for key outposts.

Related to military labour is the 'class' of people who were assigned these duties. In the Indian army, as Singha demonstrates, military labourers were primarily recruited from the 'lower' castes that had historically been relegated to menial duties in the sub-continent's social structures. This was not the case in South Africa. Instead of maintaining the 'status quo', as in India, the Union's White government played an active role in limiting the service of non-White men. The recruitment of educated men like Mopeli-Paulus was not reinforcing class structures, rather reflecting the fears of the supremacist government. As Chapter 1 argues, although non-White military labour had been used in previous wars, especially in the South African War, the longer legacies of 'Coloured' armed service meant that their relegation was a break in South Africa's own military traditions. CC/IMC soldiers' demotion was not based on their incapacity for armed service, but rather on their capability for it.

Secondly, the adoption and implementation of prejudiced policies further illustrates that, for the institution, the lives of non-White soldiers were 'less' than that of White soldiers and, therefore, expendable – most obvious in the lack of protection afforded to NEAS POWs and the lack of economic support and welfare for non-White ranks. NEAS soldiers were perhaps the only Allied ranks that did not have the right to defend their own person. And yet, semi-officially, soldiers were trained in the use of weapons and sporadically armed. From an institutional perspective, it is argued that disarmament was a political policy that was practicably flouted. Thus, institutional prejudice itself was not a binary experience. Instead it required a complex negotiation of political policy with functional military practices.

Thirdly, as the final chapter argues, the end of the 'disruption' of the Second World War did not translate into a return to the pre-war status quo. Although participation did not create equitable civil, economic and political opportunities, as Halbwachs observed, 'war, rebellion, national ceremony, popular festivity, new kind of transportation, or great construction […] are events, unique in their kind, that alter group life'.[798] As chapter 7 demonstrates, the lives of soldiers, veterans, their families, and communities were significantly altered. Soldiers returned with addiction, trauma, physical ailments. Additionally, the institution all but abandoned them. The negative consequences of service morphed into negative narratives of social disruptions. Destitute ex-servicemen and their families were marginalised. Viewed with scorn and suspicion, non-White ex-soldiers were made invisible and forgotten. Thus, war was not a 'bettering' circumstance that created disciplined men and citizens, but one that intensified the White and non-White socio-economic divide, rationalised segregation, and limited post-war opportunities. Nevertheless, the memory of war, participation, and service persisted. Centred at memorials and remembrances, these narratives subsumed the individual experience in favour of the group's identity and collective memory. It created a mythicised history of the Cape Corps

[798] Halbwachs, *The Collective Memory*, p.58

that continues to persist today. However, this mythicization and the resilient cultures of commemoration do not contradict a historical reconstruction of CC/IMC, nor do they abet it. Instead they are representative of the significance of these experiences on communal perceptions and collective memory.

The history and service of the Cape Corps and the Indian and Malay Corps underscore and spotlight the agency of non-White colonial populations in the formation, sustenance and evolution of seemingly 'White' imperial institutions and narratives. Their experiences of World War II have evidenced the mutation of racial politics and policy, the permeability of modern militaries, and the impact of civilian participation. The investigation into their non-combatant service has revealed longer legacies of military labour in the sub-continent and in the British Empire. The war experience of CC/IMC ranks can neither be analysed purely through a lens of segregation nor through the frameworks of military methodologies alone. Their history is situated at the inter-section of war and society, in the Union specifically and the Empire broadly. Within this conjunction are the individual histories of each participant which were, as this thesis has demonstrated, underlined and impacted by the rank-and-files' dynamic and mutating identities and perceptions. Despite the challenges of resource availability, this thesis has reconstructed and 'reimagined' the histories of South Africa's forgotten non-White regiments in new detail in relation to the Second World War. It has investigated also the emotional impact of the uniquely challenging experiences that came with being non-White imperial soldiers. And fundamentally, it has presented their service as in tandem with modern conceptions of professional soldiering.

APPENDIX

Select Poems by Soldiering Poets

The Cape Corps
By C F du Preez

Some months ago we heard the call,
We came as one – both great and small –
To do our bit and play our part,
Because we have no fear of heart.

We came to fight, to guard our shore,
This war of Briton and of Boer,
It's for our children's sake we came,
To keep the Cape Corps name from shame.

Our loved ones begged, they shed a tear,
'Please stay at home dear, it's hard to bear.'
We heed them not but forth we went,
It is alas just to repent?

We're entrusted with Convoy Work,
And from our duty we'll never shrink.
Over mountain and over hill,
Through the river, we go on still.

We work in rain, we work in sun,
By and of day our task is done.
Bespattered with mud, frozen with cold,
A song from our lips makes this gold.

Many a time the foe we fear,
But someone whispers, 'God is near.'
A silent prayer keeps us from harm,
And once again our nerves calm.

Unarmed into these wilds we go?
On no, my friends, it is not so
For God's our bomb, our gun, our Light,
He's on our left and on our right.

When once again we reach our shore,
Hearts will be glad, Hearts will be sore
For many miles away some brave,
Lie buried in an unknown grave.

But the end will be glorious,
And we'll come home victorious
Yes, we'll win through this great war.
What then of us – Briton and Boer?

Source: DOD, UWH, Box 158, NAREP UNFO:12, Various 'Praise' Documents

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The Battle of El Alamein
By A S Mopeli-Paulus

In the month of October
The great battle began:
Fought in the Wilderness of El Alamein.

Here was a place of fighting
In a wilderness of sadness
Blanketed in dust and smoke.

We fear the cruelty of the pork-eater
And are bitter as well as fearful
As we pass, one before the other.

Into battle; guns and human beings;
Guns and human beings –
The sons of men smelling each other's odour.

Along the banks of yellowish sand
Where nothing may graze
Save the laden camel –

Which only licks the sour dust –
Passing, one before the other;
We walked among the falling ashes.

Bodies falling, one before the other;
Bullets flying past, whistling
Like the lightening flash

Pinning the four corners of the earth.

Here is El Alamein of yesterday:
El Alamein, birthplace of victory,
In the coldness of the desert the cemetery stands.

A man is no hero until he is dead
And lies beneath the cold soil,
Shut from the air
And the gossip and noise of the earth.

Source: Mopeli-Paulus, A. S. (2008). *The World and The Cattle*. Johannesburg: Penguin.

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The Little Trucks
By E. Daniels

Up and Down the narrow roads,
The convoys come and go;
In summer heat and cooling breeze,
In rain, in fog, in snow.

This life-line of our nation's health,
This stream of all commodities
Is half our fiercest fighting wealth
And commands the road.

And when the war at last is won,
When the roads again are free,
The little truck unkown, unsung,
The nation's toast must be.

They watch now without cease,
Their vigil still they keep.
Dreaming of a newer Peace
When all should be asleep.

But now across the narrow roads
The Cape Corps come and go,
The little truck and men like these
Deem and demand it so.

Source: *The Cape Standard*, 8 July 1941

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In Tagani Camp
By ‘W.R.’

A sad lament,
With bared heads bent,
A last respect to give,
With earnest heart,
He did his part,
So that others might live.

His night must fall,
A bugler’s call,
Last Post, with reveries,
Although he’s gone,
His deeds live on,
‘Midst sad memories.

A cross stands there,
So very brave,
Upon Earth’s virgin face;
A fence around,
To mark the bound,
A peaceful resting place.

Source: *The Cape Standard*, 15 July 1941

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  - NAS 8/4/2 Complaints - General
  - NAS 8/4/3 Individual Applications - General
  - NAS 8/4/4 Complaints – NMC Drivers
  - NAS 8/4/12/2 Cape Corps Attestations
  - NAS 8/4/14/2 Cape Corps Block Numbers
- Box 31
  - NAS 8/4/12/4 New Oath for Service Anywhere NEAS
  - NAS 8/5/1 Cape Corps Health Matters
  - NAS 8/5/3 Health Matters

- NAS 8/5/7 Health Matters
- NAS 8/5/12 Health Matters
- NAS 8/5/14-A Hospital Discharge
- NAS 8/5/13/2 Cape Corps Medical Categories
- NAS 8/7/8 Pay-book Irregularities
- NAS 8/7/9 CC Pay and Allowances
- NAS 8/7/9/1 Cost of Living Allowances
- NAS 8/7/9/4 Uniform and Refit Grants
- NAS 8/7/9/7 Dependents Allowances
- NAS 8/7/9/8 Trade Allowances
- NAS 8/7/9/10 Marriage Allowances
- NAS 8/7/9/11 Allowances Deferred Pay
- NAS 8/7/Misc NMC Pay Queries

- Box 32
  - NAS 8/7/13 Cape Corps GG War Fund
  - NAS 8/7/20-A Trade Allowances
  - NAS 8/7/20-A(1) Trade Allowances
  - NAS 8/8/1 Clothing
  - NAS 8/8/1/2 Dress Regulations
  - NAS 8/8/1C Loss of Clothing
  - NAS 8/8/1-D Kit Deficiencies
- Box 33
  - NAS 8/2/2-A Cape Corps Arms
  - NAS 8/8/2 Cape Corps Equipment
  - NAS 8/9/1 Rations CC – General
  - NAS 8/10 Appointment of Officers 6 Battalion (V) CC
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  - NAS 8/10 Officers Movements and Releases
  - NAS 8/11/4/1 Nominal Rolls for Warrant Officers
  - NAS 8/13/2 CC Recruiting
  - NAS 8/14/3 Non-European NCO's Refresher Course
  - NAS 8/14/7 Q Services CC
- Box 36
  - NAS 8/18/5-A Africa Star Ribbon
  - NAS 8/19 Nominal Roll
  - NAS 8/20/5 Cape Corps Motor Transport Licenses
  - NAS 8/21 Propaganda and Press Matters
  - NAS 8/21E CC Information NCO Courses
  - NAS 8/22/1 Comforts Donations and Sports Equipment Etc
- Box 37
  - NAS 8/22/5 Concert Parties
  - NAS 8/22/5/1 Purchase of Equipment Concert Parties
  - NAS 8/22/5/2 Personnel Cape Corps Concert Parties
  - NAS 8/22/6 Entertainment
  - NAS 8/22/7 Cape Corps Organised Sport and UDF Sport Control Board
  - NAS 8/22/8 Cape Corps Defence Link Committees
  - NAS 8/22/9 Cape Corps Legion
  - NAS 8/23/1 Cape Corps Transport for Unit
- Box 38
  - NAS 8/23/5 Misuse of DD Transport

- NAS 8/28/2/1 Employment of Coloured Women
- NAS 8/28/2 CC Details Attached to Other Units
- NAS 8/28/1/2 Attachments from Other Units to CC
- NAS 8/28/14/1 Inter-NEAS Transfers
- NAS 8/29/1/2 Leave
- NAS 8/29/1/(1) Leave Rail Privileges

- Box 39
  - NAS 8/29/1/3 Cape Corps Leave Without Pay
  - NAS 8/29/2 Individual Applications
  - NAS 8/29/3-A Cape Corps Deserters
  - NAS 8/29/3/2 Illegal Absentees
  - NAS 8/29/4 Rail Privileges
  - NAS 8/30/1 Discharges
- Box 40
  - NAS 8/11/2
  - NAS 8/30/1B Correspondence RE Discharges
  - NAS 8/30/2 Re-Enlistment of Discharged Personnel
  - NAS 8/32/8 Religious Returns
  - NAS 8/34/8 Accounts General
- Box 41
  - NAS 8/34/13 CC Regimental Funds
  - NAS 8/35/1 Reports on Injuries
  - NAS 8/35/5 Cape Corps Casualties Deaths in Union
  - NAS 8/36/1-A Civil Proceedings Against CC Details
  - NAS 8/36/2 Detention Barracks
  - NAS 8/36/4 Cape Corps Disturbances
  - NAS 8/39 Marriages
  - NAS 8/41/1a Directorate Inspection Tours
  - NAS 8/42 Arrival of Ex-North
- Box 42
  - NAS 8/42/1 Educational Scheme for CCs
  - NAS 11/T Transfers 10 Air Depot VTH
  - NAS 8/43 Welfare Officers Reports
- Box 45
  - NAS 174 A Heavy Battery
  - NAS 90/RM 2 Heavy Battery
  - NAS 90/D Discharges 2 Heavy Battery Simonstown
  - NAS 80/T Transfers 1 Heavy Battery SAA
- Box 46
  - NAS 174/RM 4 Heavy Battery
  - NAS 175/P Promotions 11 MT Sub-Depot
  - NAS 175/Y Promotions 11 MT Sub-Depot
- Box 50
  - NAS 557/T Transfers 3 Battalion CC
  - NAS 557/S Strength 3 CC Battalion (V)
  - NAS 557/L Leaves
  - NAS 557/G General 3 CC Battalion (V)
- Box 54
  - NAS 689/D Discharges Dispersal Depot Durban
  - NAS 689/J Transfers Dispersal Depot Durban
  - NAS 689/RM Dispersal Depot Durban

        - NAS 689/P Promotion Dispersal Depot Durban
        - NAS 762/D Discharges
        - NAS 762/G Central Command
- DNEAS Group 2
    - Box 1
        - Middle-East
    - Box 2
        - PP 72 News Coverage Official Observers
        - Middle-East Report by Col Mockford
    - Box 20
        - NAS 8/26/15 Cape Corps Training and Discipline and Arming of Non-Europeans
        - NAS QT 60/28/100 Training MT Drivers
        - NAS 4/1/1 Organisation and Establishment
        - NAS G/222/21 Training Reports from SA Base Middle-East

- UWH – Union War Histories
    - Box 8
        - SA War Economy 1939-1945 Finacial by E Williamson
            I. Allowances for POWs in Italy
            II. Hospital Ship 'Amra'
    - Box 25
        - The South African Red Cross in War 1939-45 by J Hastead
    - Box 89
        - 51/1 Cape Corps Organisation
        - 51/2 Recruiting for CC and IMC
        - 51/3 NEAS Circulars
        - 51/4 Railway Concessions
        - 51/5 Capture of Enemy Force
        - 51/6 Dependents Allowances
        - 51/7 Cape Coloured Recruiting
        - 51/7 Recruiting Farm Labour
        - 51/9 National Council of Coloured Welfare
        - 51/10 Miscelleanous
    - Box 120
        - A Summary of 'K' Company 130 SARMT CC
        - History of Abbysinnian Campaign of 109 SARMT company (IMC)
        - History of S&T Services 129 RES MT company (V) CC
    - Box 121
        - NAS 45/C/4 5 Indian Division Report on Operations during May 1941
    - Box 125
        - NAREP East Africa:7 1312 10 SA Motor Ambulance Convoy History
        - 7 IMC MT Company (later 107 SARMT IMC)
    - Box 130
        - NAREP Middle East:4 Western Desert Campaign
    - Box 158
        - NAREP UNFO:12 NEAS Various "Praise" Documenst
        - NAREP UNFO:12 The 133 SARMT Company (CC) Maj G W T Gunning
        - NAREP UNFO:12 NEAS Speech at Garawi and other files
        - NAREP UNFO:12 The UDFI and Non-European "Boys Up North" by Corporal A S Remailane

        - NAREP UNFO:12 History of 'B' Company Indian Services by Captain Wallace
        - NAREP UNFO:12 Historical Survey of NEAS by Captain J C Knoetze
    - Box 159
        - NAREP UNFO:13, Record of Non-European Army Services
    - Box 167
        - NAREP:UNFO:22 161 Works Company CC
        - NAREP:UNFO:22 160 Works Company CC
        - NAREP:UNFO:22 163 Works Company CC
        - NAREP:UNFO:22 164 Works Company CC
        - NAREP:UNFO:22 166 Works Company CC
    - Box 168
        - NAREP UNFO:23, Historical Record Indian and Malay Corps
    - Box 263
        - B.I.:19 Demobilisation Coloured Troops
    - Box 275
        - B.T.:27 Treatment of Prisoners of War
    - Box 297
        - B.I.:42 Indian and Malay Corps

- WD – War Diaries
    - Box 135
        - SA:116 60 Pioneer Company
    - Box 136
        - SA:118 84 Base Works Company SAEC
        - SA:117 70 CC Pioneer Battalion (V) SAEC
    - Box 150
        - SA:130 163 Works Company CC (V) SAEC
    - Box 178
        - SA:156 War Diary of 2nd SA Indian MT Company
    - Box 184
        - SA:162 No 1 Veterinary Hospital SAVC
    - Box 265
        - East Africa:83 4th SA Indian MT Corps
    - Box 272
        - East Africa:91 'H' SA RMT Company Cape Corps
          (later) 128 SA RMT Company Cape Corps
        - East Africa:92 129 SA RMT Company Cape Corps

- WR – War Records
    - Box 48 War Documents and Personnel Files
        - NAS 25/2/14 Cape Corps
        - NAS 25/2/15 Indian and Malay Corps
    - Box 60 Unit Orders
        - 34/5 Indian and Malay Corps
    - Box 136 Discharges
        - NAS 55/13 Cape Corps
    - Box 181 NEAS
        - 93/1 General Circulars
        - 93/4 General Correspondence
        - 93/5 General Correspondence

- Box 182 NEAS
  - 93/10 Inter-corps Transfers
- Box 183 NEAS
  - NAS 93/12 Transfer to and from NEAS
  - NAS 93/13 Discahrges and Medical Boards

HPRA *Historical Papers Research Archive, University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg*

- AD 843 RJ
  - Aa 12.10.4 Non-Europeans on Military Service
  - Aa 12.10.20 Welfare of Non-European Soldiers by Ellen Hellman
  - Aa 12.10.22 The Indian in South Africa
  - Aa 12.11.15 Demobilisation of Non-European Soldiers
  - Aa 12.11.1 Welfare of Non-European Soldiers: Cape Corps
  - O8 File 1 News of the War
  - O10 World War II: Pensions
  - O4 Discharges
  - O1 Allowances
  - O5 Governor General's National War Fund
  - O11 South African Gifts and Comforts Committee
  - O13 World War II: Welfare
  - O14 World War II: YMCA and Toc H
- AG 1977 'History of the Cape Corps in Brief' compiled by Major J. S. C. Cupido.
- AD 1715 The South African Indian Question

NMMH *Ditsong National Museum of Military History, Johannesburg*

- Egypt
  - E 1733
  - E 3083
- Italy
  - File 7 No. I. 761
  - File 7 No. I. 738
  - File 11 No. I. 1131
- South African Official Photo Album
  - No. 1467
  - No. 1448
  - No. 1474
  - No. 1485
  - No. 1837

WCARS *Western Cape Archives and Records Service, Cape Town*

- KAB 3/Cape Town
  - 4/1/11/479
    - Memorials, Statues, Monuments etc Memorial of 1st Battalion Cape Corps Mounting of the Flag
    - CAPE CORPS "FLAG" CEREMONY, GRAND PARADE CAPE TOWN: Sunday, 29th February 1948, 10.30 a.m.: souvenir (historical) programme: dedication of King's Colour and Cape Corps Colour by Rt. Rev. Bishop S.W. Lavis; address by Field-Marshal the Rt. Hon. J.C. Smuts P.C. O.M., Prime Minister. Cape Town: Galvin & Sales, 1948.
  - 4/1/11/592 Post-War Civil Re-Employment Cape Corps Ex-Volunteers
  - 4/1/11/619/13 Street Collections. Cape Corps and Coloured Soldiers

- 4/2/1/3/1120 Completion of Soldiers' C/O Cape Corps Welfare Committee

❖ KAB 3/KIM
- 4/1/35 Cape Corps War Memorial

UCTSC *University of Cape Town Special Collections Archive*

❖ BZA 89/8397 Microfilm 'The Cape Standard'
- 2218. 3 Jan 1939 – 27 Dec 1939
- 2221. 3 Jan 1940 – 25 June 1940
- 2222. 2 July 1940 – 31 Dec 1940
- 2223. 7 January 1941 – 30 December 1941
- 2226. 6 January 1942 – 29 December 1942
- 2233. 5 January 1943 – 28 December 1943
- 2234. 4 January 1944 – 26 December 1944
- 2235. 3 January 1945 – 31 December 1945
- 2236. 8 January 1946 – 31 December 1946
- 2245. 7 January 1947 – 25 November 1947

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UNITED KINGDOM

BNA *British Newspaper Archives*

❖ N/A (1940, February 27). Coloured Men in War: They are anxious to serve as Combatants. *Northern Daily Mail*, p.3

❖ N/A. (1941, June 17). 18 Capture Nearly 800: South African's Action in Abyssinia. *Gloucestershire Echo*, p.3.

❖ N/A. (1940, June 13). Fund for Purchase of Spitfires. *The Evening Telegraph*, p.9.

❖ N/A. (1941, January, 31). Wavell Sweeps on to Benghazi. *The Western Daily Press and Bristol Mirror*, p.1

❖ Mosley, L. (1941, February 3). Italians Last Desperate Bid to Hold Barentu. *Newcastle Journal & North Mail*, p.5.

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❖ Staff Correspondent. (1948, November 6). Dr Malan Determined to Increase Majority. *The Scotsman*, p.7.

IWM *Imperial War Museum London*

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- 7367 Ewen Thompson
- 8234 George William Draffan
- 10077 Edward William Dobson
- 18391 Nila Kanten
- 18402 Joe Blencowe
- 18403 Gordon Fry
- 18404 Charles George Adams

    - 18433 Robert George Armstrong Gaunt
- Document 12466 – Private Papers of R A Fry
- Poster Art.IWM PST 123267367 CC Enlistment Poster
- Photograph MEM 1991 The Greek Government in Exile. Princess Frederika inspecting CC

TNA *The National Archives, Kew*

- DO 35-1119/31
  Political Affairs – Union of South Africa: Establishment of a Cape Coloured Permanent Commission
- DO 35-1208
  Original Correspondence Service Overseas
- WO 373/25 Combatant Gallantry Awards Middle-East (Egypt and Libya)
    - Lance-Corporal Nicholaas Saphier, Awarded Military Medal
- WO 373/63 Combatant Gallantry Awards Escape and Evasion and Special Operations
    - 177 Gunner David Duickers, Mentioned in Despatches
- WO 373/64 Combatant Gallantry Awards Escape and Evasion and Special Operations
    - 616 Gunner William Loubser, Awarded Military Medal
    - 862 Private Alexander Daniel, Mentioned in Despatches
    - 629 Private John Swartz, Mentioned in Despatches
    - 869 Private Mustapha Davids and Private Arumugam Sithambaram Pillay, Mentioned in Despatches
- WO 373/79 Meritorious Service Middle-East (Egypt and Libya)
    - 283 Private Ebrahim Abrahams, Awarded British Empire Medal
- WO 208/3349 Escape Reports
    - 547 Private Hermannes Daniels, Private Johnny Van Heerden
    - 549 Private William Magiba
    - 550 Private John April, Private Marugoe Jan Kgapula, Private Aron Zvani
    - 556 Corporal Kenneth Fritz, Private William Botes
- WO 208/3350 Escape Reports
    - 1181 Private John David Brown

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