

# Richard Steele



What role did he play as an ordinary man in bringing about a democratic nation?

WHY DID I CHOOSE  
DR STEELE?

# He possessed ordinary qualities...



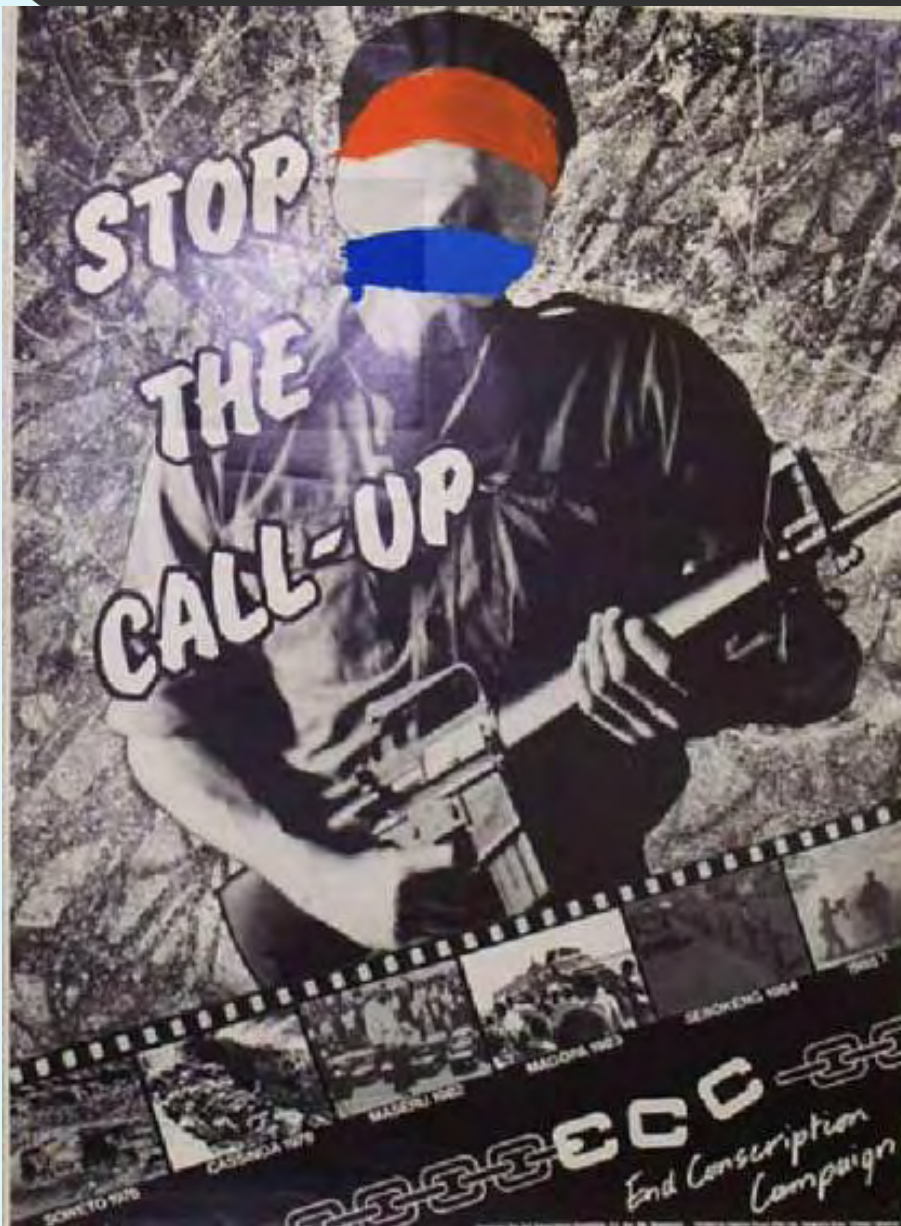
- Well-spoken
- Gentle
- Kind
- Mainstream job
- Strong convictions
- Religious
- Pacifist
- Not easily intimidated
- Ordinary

# ...that he used to create an extraordinary life



- Opposing the Apartheid government
- Creating an entire anti-conscription movement
- Fasting for peace
- Sacrificing his own well-being for a greater good
- Standing tall in the face of intimidation
- Not letting anyone else define his own beliefs

WHAT WAS SOUTH  
AFRICA LIKE AT THAT  
TIME?

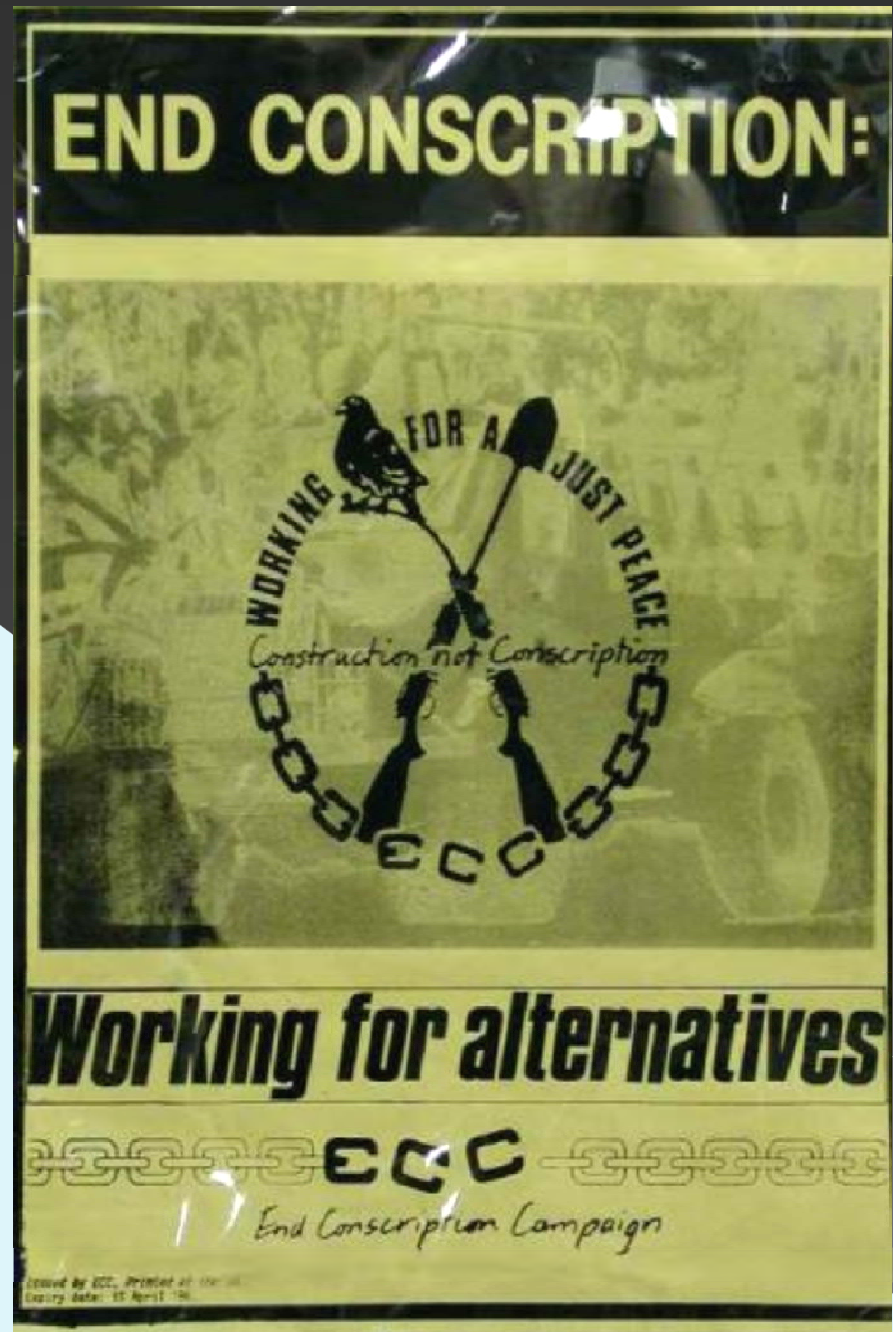


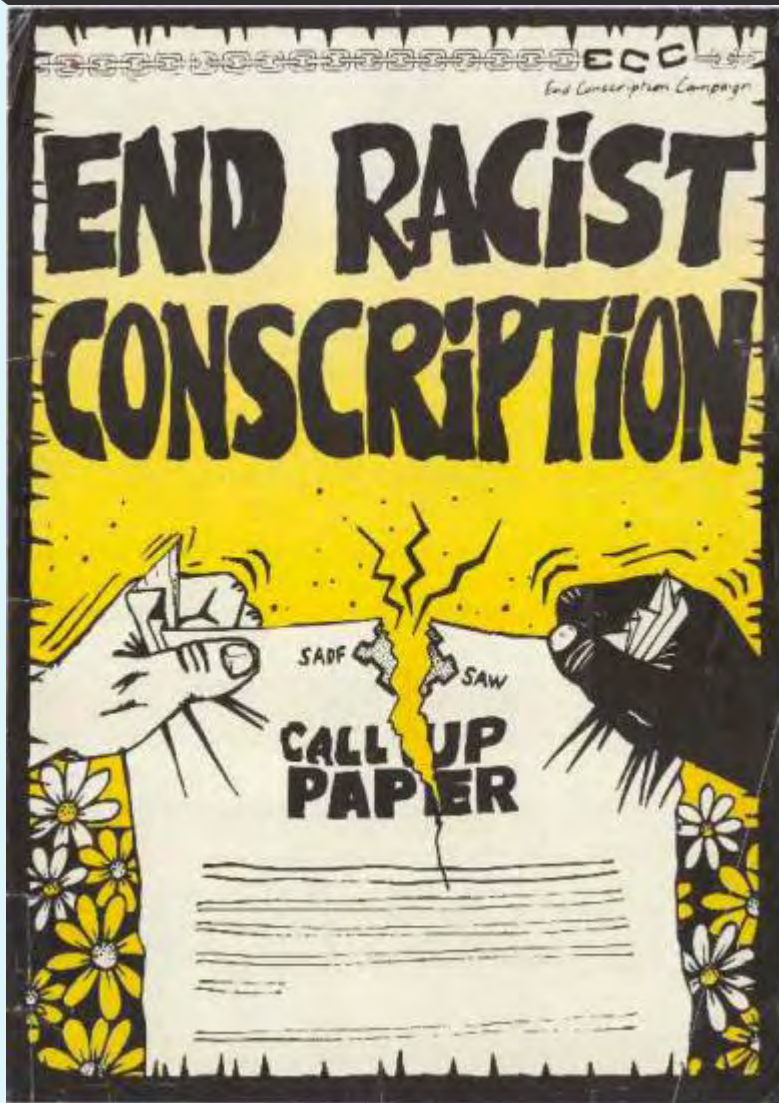
Mandatory  
conscription of  
young men after  
studies



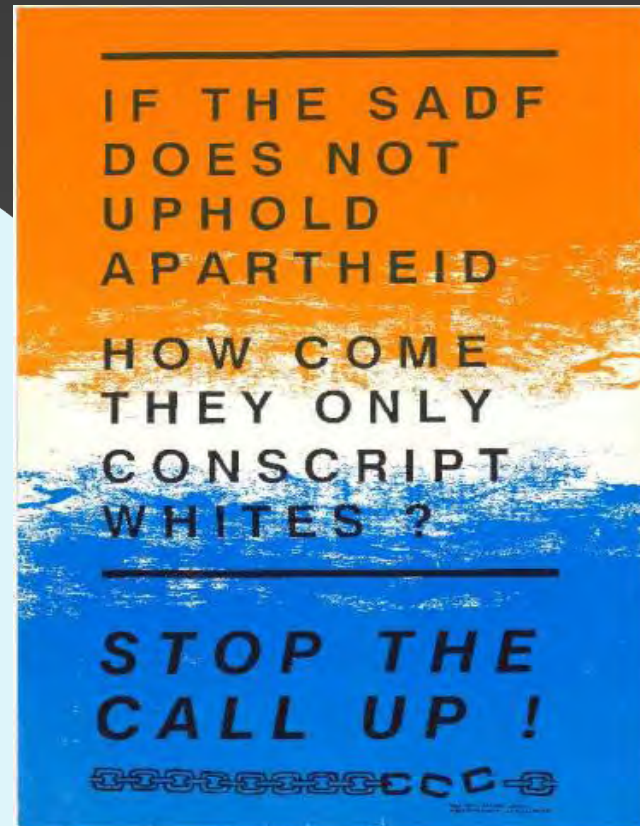
There were no alternatives for those who did not want to fight. They were to choose between war, exile or jail

People such as Jehovah's Witnesses, pacifists and those who didn't agree with the government



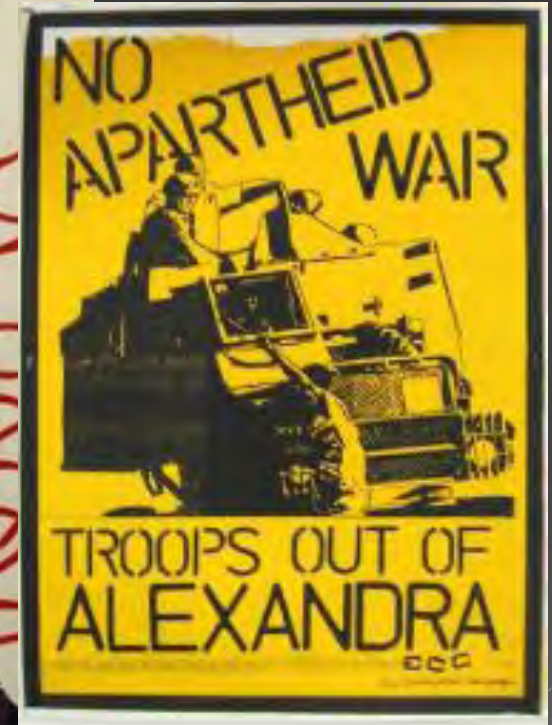
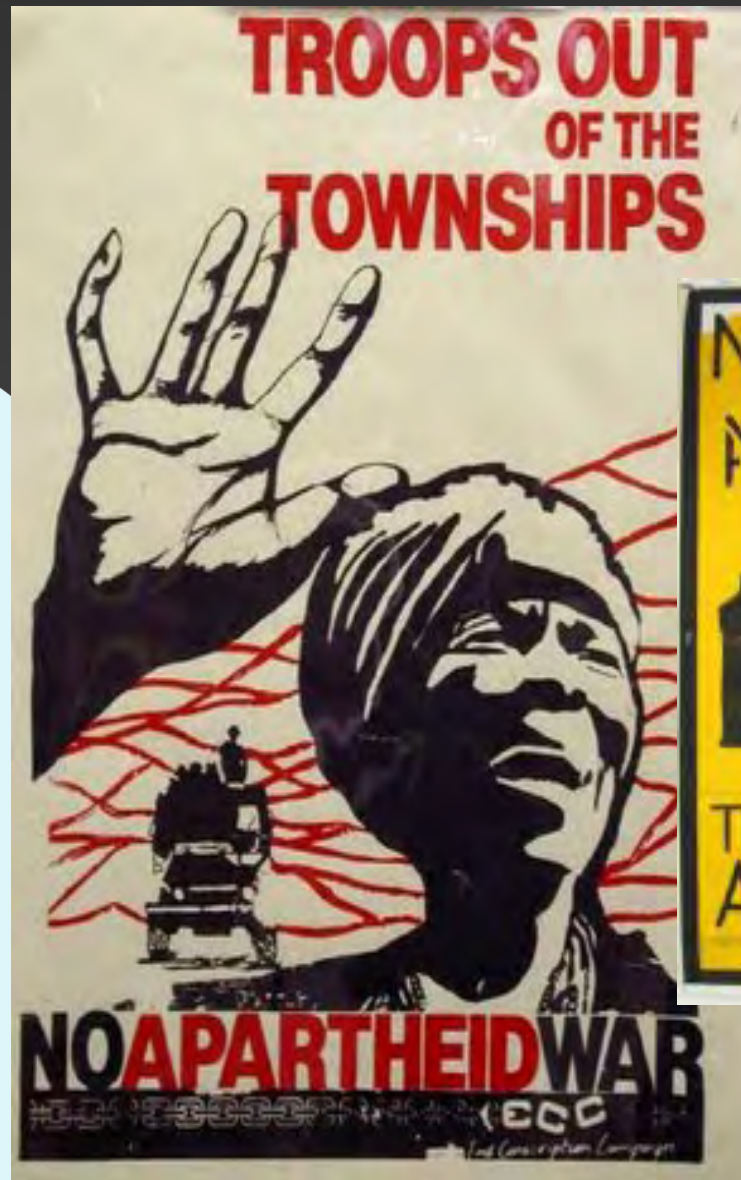


Conscription  
only applied to  
young WHITE  
men





The government, being a minority government, needed the support of the entire white minority to stay in power and it relied on a strong military and police force to suppress the black majority



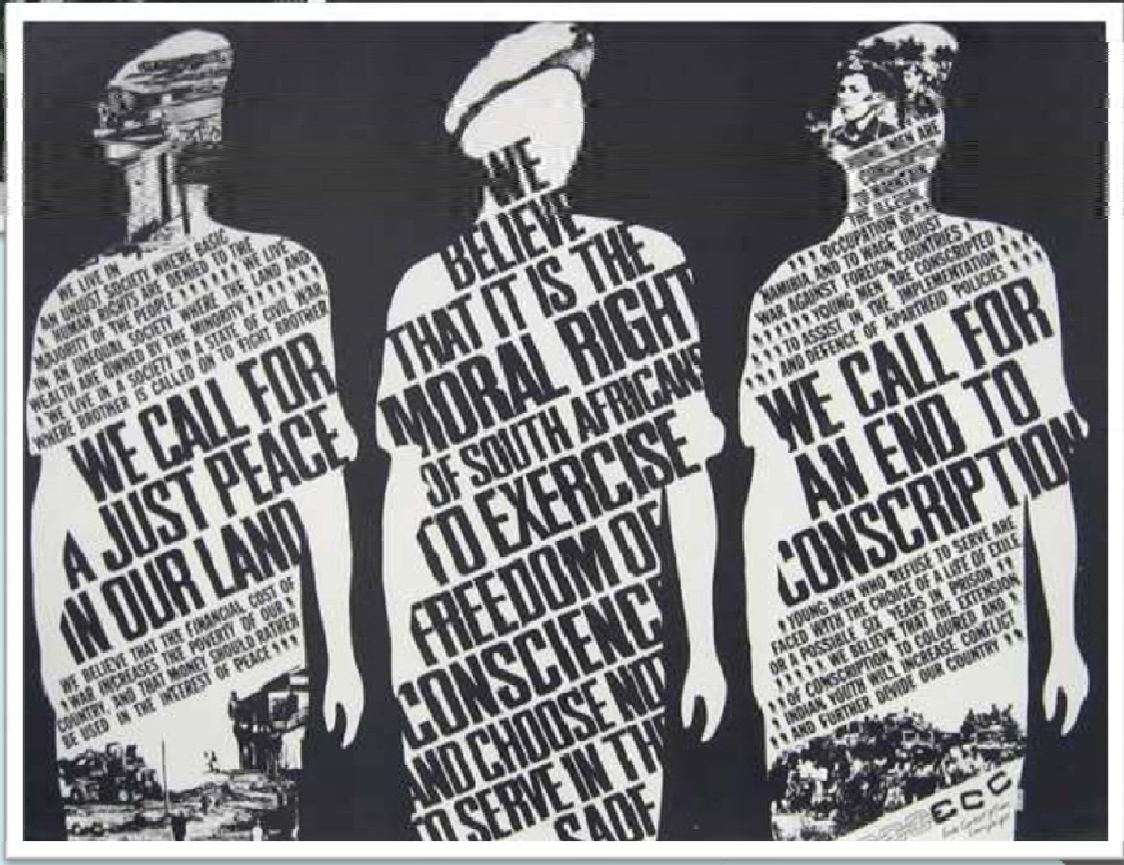
Therefore, when conscripts refused to report, it weakened the government's capacity to govern by removing part of the police force and potential voters.

This was the aim of the ECC





Police officers at a ECC graffiti wall



The Natal Mercury, Monday, September 9, 1985

# Vlok says ANC using End Conscription Campaign

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**Mercury Reporter**  
THE Deputy Minister of Defence, Mr Adrian Vlok, said the End Conscription Campaign (ECC) was being used by the ANC to achieve the banned organisation's 'evil' goals.

He was speaking at the ANC's annual conference in Durban on Saturday as part of the Glenwood Boys' High School's 75th birthday celebrations.

But in a statement yesterday, the ECC rejected the allegation that it was doing the work of the ANC or any other organisation as it represented only those organisations affiliated to the campaign against conscription and the presence of troops in the country.

Mr Vlok said South Africa's course was a just one and we are prepared to put right what is wrong but nothing would be solved by arming South Africa to the teeth.

Mr Vlok said the youth of South Africa needed courage to face the future, and we are prepared to defend it with the strongest terms possible. That is why I reject the efforts of certain people specifically the End Conscription Campaign to break down the will of our young men and women to defend our country.

Those people who are prepared to arm Africa to the teeth are prepared to arm the rest of the world. Those who are prepared to arm the rest of the world are prepared to arm Africa to the teeth.

He also said a change in attitude was necessary in South Africa because there were too many leaders of colour who were in the country. I only call on you let us the white, coloured and black youth unite and stand up against violence, bloodshed and chaos.

The speaker Administrator's Trophy for seven consecutive years was won by Glenwood Boys' High School with Glenwood in second place and Pietermaritzburg in third.



Mr. Adrian Vlok, Deputy Minister of Defence, speaking at the Glenwood Boys' High School's 75th birthday celebrations.

Some ECC is a direct attack on South Africa. The statement said. Rather, it is directed against the use of young white men to uphold the evil system of apartheid which is condemned the world over. Our ideals are those of a just peace which cannot be through force on the part of the South African Defence Force.

Mr Vlok speaking about how the youth of South Africa needed courage to face the future, and we are prepared to defend it with the strongest terms possible.

Those people who are prepared to arm Africa to the teeth are prepared to arm the rest of the world. Those who are prepared to arm the rest of the world are prepared to arm Africa to the teeth.

**HOW DOES THE  
INTERVIEW HELP US  
UNDERSTAND THE EVENTS  
FROM A PERSONAL  
PERSPECTIVE?**

How conscription affected the lives of those who chose not to report



# (64) Bulawayo The apartheid army in which many will not serve

SOUTH AFRICA has probably experienced the fastest military build-up in world history. In 1960 the South African defence budget was Z\$32 000 000; by 1981 this had increased to a staggering Z\$18 500 million.

Today's South Africa is an openly racist state, it is also a highly militarised one. As General Malan, head of the South African Defence Force, put it in 1977: "South Africa is today involved in total war... everyone is involved and has a role to play."

But the war psychosis for the South African army is meeting resistance from within the white community itself. As the militarisation of the South African state proceeds, so an increasing number of young white South Africans are refusing to have anything to do with the apartheid army.

## COMPULSORY

While this is still very much a minority trend within the white population, it is surely significant that hundreds of young South Africans have deserted from the army on openly political grounds, and thousands more have refused to undertake military service.

Every white male in South Africa is called up for two years compulsory military service, which in almost every case involves several months of active service in the war in Namibia.

## NO PROVISION

After this initial period, they are then recalled for at least one month a year for the next ten years. Since there is legal provision for an "emergency call-up" of up to six months a year, it means that many young South African whites find themselves being recalled for some months or longer (usually on active service).

have failed to report for military service.

Every year between 3 000 and 3 500 young whites are evading the draft. Some flee into neighbouring countries, and then make their way to Europe or North America, where a few hundred have been able to stay.

## JAILED

Some have been given what amounts to political asylum; others have been able to stay in Britain because they hold British passports.

But most of the draft dodgers have remained in South Africa, on the run, being chased by the military police.

The police don't seem to have a very good record in tracing them down — less than 20 per cent have been caught.

just and anti-Christian, and his conscience forbade him to defend it. He could not join the army without contradicting his Christian principles.

He was initially treated leniently, and given a suspended sentence. He was then immediately called up a second time. Again he refused, and this time he was fined.

The following week he received a third call-up order. For the third time he appeared in court, and was given an 18 months prison sentence (later reduced to 12 months).

In court he named the liberation movements, saying that he refused to fight against SWAPO or against the ANC (the judge demonstrated his own ignorance by dismissing the courage.

"I could never serve in an army where I would shoot at people whose cause I believed in."

Nonetheless, since 1965 there have been at least 2 343 convictions in the South African courts for refusal to serve in the apartheid army.

Most of the draft dodgers have taken their stand out of a form of enlightened self-interest — they simply do not want to risk their lives in Namibia.

But others have taken an open, political stand against the entire apartheid system. These cannot be adequately described as "draft dodgers" — the term they use to describe themselves is "war resisters".

The best known of these is Peter Moll who based his

liberation movements as "foreign communists".

Two months later a second war resister, Richard Steele, was also sentenced to a year's imprisonment.

At his trial he said: "I view the South African Defence Force as being a major pillar of a fundamentally unjust political, social and economic system."

## HUNGER STRIKE

"By cooperating with the military, I would be reproducing and perpetuating these injustices, and I am not willing to do so."

Convicted war resisters are not sent to civilian prisons, but to military detention barracks, where they are supposed to wear army uniforms.

Moll and Steele, however, refused to wear military clothing, and went on a hunger strike, to win the

By ANTONIO MAKWALA

these young men had won a considerable political victory over the South African army.

Conditions inside detention barracks are very bad. There is widespread brutality, and there have been at least seven deaths under military punishment since 1978.

## SUICIDE ?

For instance, Arthur Lewin, a prisoner in a very poor state of health, was effectively tortured to death.

He was forced to do excessive physical exercises and heavy manual labour until he collapsed and died of exhaustion. Those responsible for his death were brought to court, but, they were acquitted of his murder.

In July 1980, a 20-year-old war resister, Henry Holloway, who had refused to report for that month's call-up, died under mysterious circumstances at the Voortrekkerhoogte detention barracks.

The military authorities said he committed suicide; but why a healthy young man, who had only been detained a few days previously, should kill himself remains unexplained.

Some war resisters come from highly respectable backgrounds. Martin, a war resister currently working in Mozambique, comes from a family recognised as one of the pillars of white South African society.

His father was a Senator for the now defunct United Party, once the main opposition force in the racist parliament.

Martin was called up for military training in 1979, but refused to go.

"I couldn't serve in an

army where I would be shooting at people whose cause I believe in," he says, "and I couldn't fight in an army that was occupying another country, Namibia."

So he left for Britain, where he was granted permission to stay, and where he was eventually recruited as a technician for work in Mozambique.

## FIGHT BACK

People like Martin are not pacifists, in that they are not opposed to war as such. They are opposed to the particular war which the apartheid regime is waging against the people of Southern Africa.

Even more important, they recognise the right of the oppressed to take up arms and fight back.

In Britain, Martin and other war resisters set up COSAWR (the Committee on South African War Resistance), which acts in close liaison with the Anti-Apartheid Movement, and publishes a bi-monthly bulletin, Resister.

Similar organisations of South African war resisters have been set up in Holland and in the United States.

## RESOLUTION

War resistance in South Africa has received international recognition. Amnesty International has adopted imprisoned war resisters as prisoners of conscience.

The United Nations General Assembly in 1978 passed a resolution calling on member states to "grant asylum or safe transit to another state" to persons compelled to leave South Africa "because of conscientious objection to assisting the enforcement of apartheid through service in military or police forces".

Perhaps the last word in this article should be left to another war resister. Chris, a war resister currently exiled in the United States explained his refusal to serve in the South African army thus:

"I will not take up a rifle and place myself in a position where I am compelled to kill a man whom someone classifies as my enemy."

"My enemy is the man of destruction, hate, greed and bigotry, not the man who asks for his share of the country's wealth, opportunity and potential for peace and justice." — Ziana.

Ward 1, Ward 2, Ward 3, Ward 4, Ward 5, Ward 6, Ward 7, Ward 8, Ward 9, Ward 10, Ward 11, Ward 12, Ward 13, Ward 14, Ward 15, Ward 16, Ward 17, Ward 18, Ward 19, Ward 20, Ward 21, Ward 22, Ward 23, Ward 24, Ward 25, Ward 26, Ward 27, Ward 28, Ward 29, Ward 30, Ward 31, Ward 32, Ward 33, Ward 34, Ward 35, Ward 36, Ward 37, Ward 38, Ward 39, Ward 40, Ward 41, Ward 42, Ward 43, Ward 44, Ward 45, Ward 46, Ward 47, Ward 48, Ward 49, Ward 50, Ward 51, Ward 52, Ward 53, Ward 54, Ward 55, Ward 56, Ward 57, Ward 58, Ward 59, Ward 60, Ward 61, Ward 62, Ward 63, Ward 64, Ward 65, Ward 66, Ward 67, Ward 68, Ward 69, Ward 70, Ward 71, Ward 72, Ward 73, Ward 74, Ward 75, Ward 76, Ward 77, Ward 78, Ward 79, Ward 80, Ward 81, Ward 82, Ward 83, Ward 84, Ward 85, Ward 86, Ward 87, Ward 88, Ward 89, Ward 90, Ward 91, Ward 92, Ward 93, Ward 94, Ward 95, Ward 96, Ward 97, Ward 98, Ward 99, Ward 100.





# **SOUTH AFRICA IN CONFLICT**

Protest, Resistance, Power : A Photographic Exhibition. Baker Theatre, April 6-26. END CONSCRIPTION CAMPAIGN.

**HOW CAN INDIVIDUALS  
CHANGE A  
SOCIETY?**

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# 3-day fast for Moll and Steele

Evening Post 4/4/80

CAPE TOWN — Conscientious objectors Peter Moll and Richard Steele are planning to fast for three days from Thursday in protest against their solitary confinement in the Pretoria detention barracks.

At the same time, a vigil will be held in two Cape Town churches.

Individuals concerned about their solitary confinement have released the following statement:

"The SA Defence Force has yet again put Peter Moll and Richard Steele into solitary confinement. Peter is now in solitary confinement for the fourth time, and Richard for the second.

"The cells confining such prisoners have a floor space about the size of a large double bed. They are provided with a mattress, a water bottle and a chamber pot. Besides this, they are allowed only a Bible. They are given only two half-hour periods of exercise outside their cells a day."

The statement said the charge referred to their refusal to wear the regulation Army uniform but they refused to wear it because it could identify them completely as part of the SADF, and they were sentenced to detention in the first place precisely because they refused to be so identified." — Sapa.

# Objectors in DB: now Tutu joins protest

Reliable Jan Cutler RDM 8/4/80

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By ARNOLD GEYER

BISHOP Desmond Tutu, general secretary of the South African Council of Churches, has joined in the protest against the treatment of conscientious objectors in the Pretoria military detention barracks.

Over Easter, individual church ministers and congregational members of four major denominations will fast and hold vigils to coincide with a three-day fast by two students in detention for refusing to do military service because of their Christian beliefs.

The students, Mr Peter Moll and Mr Richard Steele, plan to take this action because the Army does not recognise them

as conscientious objectors and because, it is alleged, they have to "undergo repeated spells of solitary confinement".

A Defence Force spokesman yesterday refused comment.

Mrs Helen Suzman, Progressive Federal Party's spokesman on Prisons, also condemned the practice of imposing sentences of solitary confinement on conscientious objectors, describing it as "cruel and unnatural".

Bishop Tutu said he fully supported the planned action of protest.

"They have all the right to be recognised as conscientious objectors. This should be the case in any Christian and

democratic country, which South Africa claims to be."

From April 3 to April 5 Mr Moll and Mr Steele are to stop taking any food in order to bring their situation to the attention of the authorities.

So far Baptist, Presbyterian, Anglican and Congregational churches in Natal, Transvaal and the Cape have said they are willing to allow their premises to be used for the weekend fasting and vigils.

The Rev Robert Robertson, a member of the SACC's justice and reconciliation division, is undertaking wider circulation of a letter written by Mr Steele's parents, appealing for support of the fast.

John and Dorothy Steele say in the letter: "As far as the military are concerned, the Defence Force regulations state that conscientious objectors can only emanate from 'peace churches'.

"As Richard and Peter are Baptists and as this church denomination is not recognised as a 'peace' church — like, for example, the Jehovah's Witnesses — they cannot be officially categorised as conscientious objectors."

Individuals concerned about the two men's situation yesterday released a statement saying:

"As fellow Christians and other concerned people we protest against the action of the SA Defence Force in yet again putting Peter Moll and Richard Steele into solitary confinement.

"Peter is now in solitary confinement for the fourth time, and Richard for the second."

The SADF's reply was: "We refuse any comment as it is the policy of the SADF not to discuss the activity and actions of soldiers in detention with any outsiders."

TUTU

# I won't fight

By Maureen Griffin

THE parents of Richard Steele, the 23-year-old conscientious objector who was this week jailed for a year after a military trial at Voortrekkerhoogte, have declared themselves "one hundred percent behind him in his commitment".

Dorothy and John Steele of Kempton Park this week spoke in an open letter of their schoolteacher son's willingness to work in the operational area under civilian direction as an alternative to taking up a rifle and participating in acts of violence during his national service.

"With his BA degree and teacher's diploma he is qualified to teach and is willing to undertake duties in any area and with any group needing tuition anywhere in the country; he was part of a Cape Volunteer Service Corps doing ambulance duties in the Cape while there as a student at the University of Cape Town and he is willing to work under civilian direction in the operational area doing any service in this line or as required."



Richard Steele: Deep-seated and inviolable convictions

**... but I'll go into operation area to teach, says Richard**

The letter, which was written shortly before their son's trial, states: "During the past few weeks he has explained his reasons for requesting alternative national service in personal interviews with various senior officers in the Defence Force including the Chaplain General, the Registering Officer in Pretoria and law officers in Pretoria and Johannesburg.

"To date, however, the Government has closed the door to all of these suggestions and Richard has no alternative but to face a military tribunal which may sentence him to either two years (recurring) or three years, in detention barracks, depending on the particular section of the Defence Act under which he is charged.

## Committed

As it happened, Richard was sentenced to 18 months' imprisonment, of which six months were conditionally suspended for three years.

His parents point out that of 3 123 people who failed to report when called up for military service last year, the whereabouts of nearly 2 000 were unknown, according to a parliamentary statement.

"It is known that there are overseas organisations established to assist South Africans who wish to opt out of national service.

"Richard, however, feels committed to the people and the future of his country and wants to be part of its move towards peace through acting in a peaceable and non-military manner."

They describe Richard's convictions as being "deep-seated and inviolable".

24/2/80

6

# Teacher faces court martial

By MARTIAN SHINN  
**RICHARD Steele** says he could have skipped the country and easily avoided military service — but he chose to stay.

He will be court-martialled at Voortrekkerhoogte tomorrow for refusing to serve in the SADF or to wear a military uniform of any kind.

He will most likely be sentenced to two years in military detention and there is every chance he will be charged again when he is released.

"I refuse to take part in any war or any training for war. I would not fight in any war, under any circumstances, anywhere," he says.

Mr Steele, 23, who graduated from the University of Cape Town as an English teacher, realises his stand has political implications.

"The army is a very strong pillar of apartheid and by not signing up to its support that

pillar I am also making my feelings known about apartheid."

Mr Steele says he would serve two years in a form of national service in which he could use his skills — but without wearing a uniform or doing any military training.

"Ideally I would like to spend two years helping out in the mental health services, with education as a second choice," he says.

Mr Steele, a Baptist, said his Christianity was central to his refusal to take part or prepare for any aggressive act.

"I made the choice to remain in South Africa. It would have been very easy for me to have left."

"I feel committed... I want to be part of what's happening. It seems a great shame that I will be punished in D/S rather than be able to contribute my skills to the country."

# Objector to serve 12 months

By MARTIAN SHINN  
**Freteria Bureau**

A 24-year-old conscientious objector, Mr Richard Steele, was found guilty at a court martial in Pretoria yesterday of refusing to do national service and sentenced to 18 months' detention.

The president of the court martial, Colonel S W Raa, suspended six months of the sentence for three years on condition that Mr Steele is not convicted of the same offence again.

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The Star

Tuesday February 26 1980

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# 18 months DB for national service objector

By WILLIAM SAUNDERS-MEYER  
**Freteria Bureau**

A teacher was yesterday sentenced to 18 months' imprisonment in Voortrekkerhoogte detention barracks for refusing to do military service.

He is Mr Richard Steele, a high school teacher, of Bonaero Park, Kempton Park.

Six months of the sentence was suspended by the military tribunal.

If, after his sentence is served, he again refuses military service, an additional recurring sentence of two years may be imposed.

The tribunal refused a plea by defence counsel that the whole sentence be suspended to allow Mr Steele to investigate doing alternative service in the Prisons Department.

Mr Steele said he would be willing to work for the Prisons Department in a rehabilitative post, using his university psychology training.

But he said he had not been told by the military authorities that this was acceptable.

Earlier he told the tribunal that he viewed the Defence Force as major pillar of a fundamentally unjust society.

"It is common knowledge that thousands of young men fail to report for their military service each year and that some flee the country."

"I am a South African and I want to serve my country as a conscientious objector."

"I am prepared to work in circumstances similar to those of the national servicemen, in the operational area, if necessary for a longer period and for less pay."

"But I cannot subject myself to military authority or wear a uniform."

The Rev Rae Trew, a Baptist minister in Kempton Park, said he had known Mr Steele since he was a young boy and they had spent hours discussing the problems of military service.

Mr Trew said the Baptists were not a conscientious objection denomination, but allowed adherents to decide for themselves if they should serve.

The sentence will be reviewed by the SADF and Mr Steele said he would also appeal to the Supreme Court.

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**HEALING OUR PAST**

**FIRST HEARING - EAST LONDON 15 - 18 APRIL 1996**





**PERSONAL  
REFLECTION**





Steele speaking at a ECC peace concert

