

**Civil Defence and Protective Services in South Africa  
during World War Two, 1939–1945**

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**Abstract**

During World War Two, South Africa inaugurated the Civilian Protective Services organisation as a civil defence effort to deal with, inter alia, the preventive and protective measures in defence of the civilian population against attack from the air and the sea, and against the dangers arising from sabotage and sudden emergency. Between 1940 and 1945, about 80 000 civilians volunteered for service in the air raid precautions and the civilian guard sections of the Civilian Protective Services, to contribute towards a national defence effort of the Union of South Africa. This article examines the origin of the Civilian Protective Services and its development during World War Two, within the context of South Africa's political and internal security challenges. It contends that the institution of the Civilian Protective Services was a vital element in South Africa's effort to enhance internal security, to assuage public anxieties and to sustain morale as well as to maintain public support for its war policy.

**Key words:** World War Two; Civilian Protective Services; South Africa; propaganda; civil defence; aerial bombardment; H.G. Lawrence.

**Opsomming**

Tydens die Tweede Wêreldoorlog, het Suid-Afrika die Burgerlike Beskermingsdienste-organisasie ingestel as deel van 'n breër burgerlike beskermings poging om, onder meer, die voorkomende en beskermings maatreëls ter verdediging van die bevolking teen aanvalle vanuit die lug en die see te hanteer, asook teen die gevare van sabotasie en skielike noodgevare. Tussen 1940 en 1945, het ongeveer 80 000 burgerlike vrywilligers aangemeld vir diens by die Burgerlike Beskermingsdienste, as deel van die nasionale verdedigingspoging van die Unie van Suid-Afrika. Talle vrywilligers het diens gedoen in die burgerlike veiligheids afdeling,

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asook die afdeling wat verantwoordelik was vir die implimentering van voorsorgmaatreëls teen moontlike lugaanvalle. Hierdie artikel ondersoek die oorsprong van die Burgerlike Beskermingsdienste, en die ontwikkeling daarvan, tydens die Tweede Wêreldoorlog, veral binne die konteks van Suid-Afrika se politieke- en interne veiligheidsuitdagings. Die artikel bevind dat die instelling van die Burgerlike Beskermingsdienste 'n belangrike element van Suid-Afrika se poging was om die interne veiligheid situasie te verbeter, om bevolkingsangst te sus, om moraal te hep onderhou, asook om openbare steun vir sy oorlogsbeleid te handhaaf.

**Sleutelwoorde:** Tweede Wêreldoorlog; Burgerlike Beskermingsdienste; Suid-Afrika; propaganda, burgerlike verdediging, lugbombardement; H.G. Lawrence.

## Introduction

The problem of protecting civilians in the event of war was a subject of much concern during the interwar years of 1919 to 1939. With the development of military aviation and air power in the early twentieth century, cities, population centres and industrial areas were targets of aerial assaults.<sup>1</sup> This was experienced during the Great War (1914–1918) in Europe, when the German Zeppelin airships and Gotha bombers embarked on air raids against Britain and France, subjecting London and Paris to bombing campaigns. For protection, the general public sought refuge in places such as underground tunnels and stations, basements, cellars and church crypts.<sup>2</sup> Consequently, rudimentary public air raid shelters and air raid warning systems for civil defence purposes were implemented.<sup>3</sup> After the Great War, it became apparent that the advent of aerial warfare presented a new dimension to modern conflict. Theorists of air power such as the Italian Giulio Douhet, the United States's Billy Mitchell and Britain's Hugh Trenchard advocated strategic aerial bombing against the civilian and economic targets behind the enemy frontlines to create panic and collapse the morale of the civilian population on the home-front.<sup>4</sup>

The Great War had shown that the civilian population was vulnerable to aerial bombardment and as a result civil defence emerged. During the inter-war years, many governments began to contemplate taking civil defence measures against

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1. W. Murray and A.R. Millet, *A War to be Won: Fighting the Second World War* (Harvard University Press, Cambridge: Mass and London, 2001), pp 30–35.
  2. S.R. Grayzel, *At Home and Under Fire: Air Raids and Culture in Britain from the Great War to the Blitz* (Cambridge University Press, Cambridge and New York, 2012), pp 23–26; J.H. Morrow, "The War in the Air", in H. Strachan (ed.), *The Oxford Illustrated History of the First War* (Oxford University Press, Oxford, 1998), pp 269–272; R.J.C. Thomas and P. Stamper, *Civil Defence: From First World War to the Cold War* (Historic England Publishing, Liverpool, 2016), pp 2–3.
  3. Thomas and Stamper, *Civil Defence*, pp 2–3.
  4. Murray and Millet, *A War to be Won*, pp 31–33; R.A. Preston, A. Roland and S.F. Wise, *Men in Arms: A History of Warfare and its Interrelationships with Western Society* (Wadsworth/Thomson Learning, Belmont, 2001), pp 252–253.

airborne assaults on civilians in the event of war.<sup>5</sup> The United States flirted with national preparedness and emergency programmes in the early 1930s when major European powers embarked on arms programmes and tensions escalated. Civil defence programmes were eventually instituted in 1940.<sup>6</sup> In 1937, the British adopted the air raid precautions (ARP) system against aerial attacks. It involved the mobilisation of civilians to participate in a range of activities including first aid, evacuation, shelters and warden services for reporting incidents, providing information and advice.<sup>7</sup> Susan R. Grayzel observes that as aerial bombardment brought war to the home-front “against women and children, against schools and homes as well as factories”, it was imperative for the wider participation by the civilian population in defence of their homes and communities.<sup>8</sup>

The Union of South Africa instituted the Civilian Protective Services (CPS) in June 1940, as a civil defence instrument, after months of public prodding, warnings, and deputations.<sup>9</sup> The South African wartime government of General J.C. Smuts was cognisant of the potency of air power as demonstrated during the Great War, and subsequently employed the Air Force internally against miners to suppress their strike in 1922.<sup>10</sup> The authorities, however, tended to believe in the “safety” provided by geography – the remoteness of the country from the European war theatre, located at the southern tip of Africa.<sup>11</sup> Hence, with the outbreak of World War Two (WWII) in September 1939, no civil defence or even effective security measures were in place. However, with the entry of Italy into the war on 10 June 1940, siding with Nazi Germany, the threat of war moved a little closer to South Africa. The Italian forces invaded and occupied Ethiopia in October 1935. Suddenly, South Africa was within striking distance of the Italian aircraft from East Africa, making the country vulnerable to air raids.<sup>12</sup> The reaction was however, very slow. The scheme for South

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5. L. Dodd and M. Wiggam, “Civil Defence as a Harbinger of War in France and Britain during the Interwar Period”, *Synergies Royaume-Uni et Irlande*, 4 (2011), pp 139–150.
  6. US Department of Homeland Security, Report, “Civil Defense and Homeland Security: A Short History of National Preparedness Effort”, September 2006, pp 4–6.
  7. L. Noakes, “‘Serve to Save’: Gender, Citizenship and Civil Defence in Britain, 1937–41”, *Journal of Contemporary History*, 47, 4 (2012), pp 734–736.
  8. Grayzel, *At Home and Under Fire*, pp 15–16.
  9. D.S. Haddon, N. Hanson and R. Martienssen, “Civil Defence in South Africa”, *The South African Architectural Record*, 25, 9 (September 1940), pp 313–354; E.J. Hamlin, “Civilian Protective Services in South Africa”, *South African Society for Civil Engineers*, 38 (September 1940), pp 145–169.
  10. B. Hirson, “The General Strike of 1922”, *Searchlight South Africa*, 3, 3 (October 1993), pp 63–94; A. Garcia, “Airpower in the Union of South Africa’s First World War Campaign in German South West Africa”, *Historia*, 62, 2 (November 2017), pp 1–26.
  11. I. van der Waag, “South African Defence in the Age of Total War”, *Historia*, 60, 1 (May 2015), p 132.
  12. H.J. Martin and N. Orpen, *South African Forces in World War 2, Volume 7, South Africa at War: Military and Industrial Organization and Operations in Connection with the Conduct of War, 1939–1945* (Purnell, Cape Town, 1979), p 66; I. van der Waag, “The Union Defence Force between the Two World Wars”, *Scientia Militaria*, 30, 2 (2000), pp 214–215.

Africa's version of the British ARP system, the Civilian Protective Services (CPS), was only introduced in mid-1940.<sup>13</sup> The implementation of a civil defence system became a vital element of South Africa's war policy to enhance internal security, to mitigate public apprehensions and to sustain morale.

Civil defence has been the subject of growing debate, analysis and research.<sup>14</sup> Drawing on World War II experience, most researchers have focused on civil defence in the context of the post-war contingency programmes adopted by governments to deal with the threat of nuclear bombs.<sup>15</sup> However, in South Africa, studies on civil defence are limited. Other than the publications by the advocates of civil defence such as E.J. Hamlin<sup>16</sup> and D.S. Haddon,<sup>17</sup> there is no scholarly literature on the subject. In 1979, H.J. Martin and N. Orpen published their *South Africa at War*,<sup>18</sup> as part of a semi-official record in the series of publications compiled on South Africa's participation in the Second World War. Although the book reflects briefly on home defence and internal security arrangements, there is hardly any mention of the CPS. André de Villiers Smit's unpublished master's thesis submitted in 1981, deals with civil defence organisation in the Cape Peninsula, giving brief attention to its origin in WWII.<sup>19</sup> Although it focuses for the most part on natural disasters, this is the first work to give concerted scholarly consideration to the subject of civil defence. In academic publications, there is only fleeting reference to civil defence during WWII.<sup>20</sup>

This article seeks to fill a gap in the historical record regarding civil defence in South Africa. It does so by investigating the home-front dimension of South Africa's

13. University of Cape Town (hereafter UCT) Jagger Library, Archives and Manuscripts, H.G. (Harry) Lawrence Papers, BC640, file E.3, 188, "Memorandum on Internal Security Organisation: Part B", 12 June 1940; Hamlin, "Civilian Protective Services in South Africa", pp 145–148.
14. Civil defence, also referred to as civil protection, has expanded in meaning. It now also covers emergency situations such as natural disasters and technological calamities.
15. Grayzel, *At Home and under Fire*; Noakes, "'Serve to Save'", pp 734–753; M. Smith, "Architects of Armageddon: The Home Office Scientific Advisors' Branch and Civil Defence in Britain, 1945–1968", *British Society for the History of Science*, 43, 2 (June 2010), pp 149–180; M. Grant, *After the Bomb: Civil Defence and Nuclear War in Britain, 1945–1968* (Palgrave Macmillan, New York, 2010); D. Garrison, *Bracing for Armageddon: Why Civil Defense Never Worked* (Oxford University Press, New York, 2006); K. Clymer, "U.S. Homeland Defense in the 1950s: The Origins of the Ground Observer Corps", *Journal of Military History*, 75, 3 (July 2011), pp 835–859; D.H. McMillen, "Civil Defence in the People's Republic of China", *Australian Journal of Chinese Affairs*, 8 (July 1982), pp 35–50.
16. Hamlin, "Civilian Protective Services in South Africa", pp 145–148.
17. Haddon, Hanson and Martienssen, "Civil Defence in South Africa", pp 313–328.
18. Martin and Orpen, *South African Forces in World War 2, Volume 7*.
19. A. de Villiers Smit, "South African Civil Defence Organisation and Administration with Particular Reference to the Cape Peninsular", MPA thesis, UCT, 1981.
20. K. Fedorowich, "German Espionage and British Counter-Intelligence in South Africa and Mozambique", *The Historical Journal*, 48, 1 (March 2005), pp 209–230; I. van der Waag, *A Military History of Modern South Africa* (Jonathan Ball, Cape Town, 2015), p 179.

involvement in WWII, particularly the civil defence efforts made to safeguard the public and to preserve internal security. Martin and Orpen suggest that internal security challenges “dominated South Africa’s war effort” due to the prevalence of political divisions and objections to the war policy.<sup>21</sup> This article will firstly examine the political and security context within which civil defence and protective services developed. It will focus mainly on the government’s security thinking, threat assessment and defence policy which influenced the development of civil defence. Secondly, it will analyse the institution of civil defence measures, concentrating on the formation of the Civilian Protective Services (CPS). Thirdly, it will explain the operational functions of the CPS and the services rendered within the framework of the government’s wartime internal security policy. Finally, the paper will conclude by reflecting on the significance of the CPS, not only from a civil defence perspective, but also to ascertain the government’s intention to sustain civilian morale and to maintain public support for its war policy.<sup>22</sup>

### **Threat assessment, defence policy and civil defence**

On 7 June 1940, the South African minister of the interior, H.G. Lawrence, who supervised internal security, accepted a report titled, “National Civilian Protection Measures for South Africa”. It was produced by the Civil Defence Committee of the Central Council of the Institute of South African Architects, urging and advising the government on the need for a nation-wide civil defence system for the protection of the civilian population against the threat of aerial bombing.<sup>23</sup> Until that time, no effective system of civil defence or measures for protecting civilians against the threat of aerial attacks existed. There was also no effective internal security strategy such as the existence of intelligence, counter-intelligence and counter-sabotage measures.<sup>24</sup>

When South Africa entered the war on 6 September 1939, the country was vulnerable in many respects and its national defence was generally weak. The Union Defence Force (UDF) was under-strength, inadequately trained, ill-equipped and unprepared for any kind of war.<sup>25</sup> The navy existed in name only (a few sailors, but no warships) and the country was relying on the 1922 Anglo-South African naval agreement through which the Royal Navy undertook to counter maritime threats.<sup>26</sup>

21. Martin and Orpen, *South African Forces in World War 2, Volume 7*, p 24.
22. This article makes use of archival material on the CPS housed at the National Archives of South Africa, Pretoria (hereafter NASAP), and the intelligence and internal security reports of the departments of the Interior and Defence. For the most part, secondary sources provide context and clarity on South Africa’s participation in WWII.
23. Haddon, Hanson and Martienssen, “Civil Defence in South Africa”, pp 313–328.
24. Fedorowich, “German Espionage and British Counter-Intelligence”, pp 212–213; Van der Waag, *A Military History of Modern South Africa*, p 179.
25. NASAP, J.C. Smuts Papers, A.1, vol. 132, “Statement on the Local Military Position, 7 September 1939 and Steps Taken thereafter”, Report, J.J. Collyer, Military Secretary to J.C. Smuts; Van der Waag, “South African Defence in the Age of Total War”, pp 129–155.
26. K. Shear, “Colonel Coetzee’s War: Loyalty, Subversion and the South African Police, 1939–1945”, *South African Historical Journal*, 65 (2013), pp 222–248; Van der Waag, *A Military History of Modern South Africa*, p 140.

The South African Air Force (SAAF), which had been established in 1920, lacked modern aircraft and had no aerial warfare policy.<sup>27</sup> This was problematic for the country's security because the whole notion of a civil defence system was driven by fear of bombs and gas attacks from the air. Basically, the country had inadequate policy direction and no immediate defence plans at the outbreak of hostilities. According to the South African secretary for defence, Brigadier General C.H. Blaine, the weaknesses of the national defence system were not due to "military policy" but "lack of military policy" by the interwar government of General J.B.M. Hertzog and his passive minister of defence, Oswald Pirow.<sup>28</sup>

The weak state of South Africa's national defence infrastructure, military assets and defence policy can be attributed to a number of factors. After the Great War, many national economies suffered depression, which resulted in serious reductions of military expenditure in the 1920s and 1930s. Demobilisation, rationalisation and reduction of military forces naturally followed. Because of the economic situation, General J.B.M. Hertzog, South Africa's prime minister from 1924 to 1939, pursued frugal economic policies and curtailed military expenditure.<sup>29</sup> Another reason was political. The South African leadership could not achieve a consolidated vision about the country's defence policy. There was no agreement about the type of contingencies likely to be encountered and the type of military forces required for the country's defence. Hertzog and his supporters in cabinet advocated and pursued a conservative defence policy. The primary focus was on limiting South Africa's defence objectives to the country's borders and not foreign missions. South Africa, they believed, was too remote for its cities, towns and the civilian population to be threatened with aerial bombardment of any significance. The Royal Navy was calculated to be able to combat attacks from the sea. Hertzog's defence policy favoured a focus on internal unrest (mainly industrial disturbances) and on the threat of a Pan-African anti-colonial rebellion in the south and central regions of Africa.<sup>30</sup>

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27. Garcia, "Airpower in the Union of South Africa's First World War", p 5; P. Furlong, "Allies at War? Britain and the 'Southern African Front' in the Second World War", *South African Historical Journal*, 54, 1 (2005), p 18; Van der Waag, *A Military History of Modern South Africa*, pp 186–187.
28. South African Department of Defence Documentation Centre (hereafter DOD Archives), Chief of General Staff (CGS), War, Box 42, file 10/4, "The Birth of South Africa's Army, 1939/40", 6 September 1940.
29. The poor state of South Africa's military forces and the reasons for this have been investigated by Ian van der Waag. See Van der Waag, *Military History of Modern South Africa*, chapters 4 and 5; Van der Waag, "The Union Defence Force between the Two World Wars", pp 183–219; Van der Waag, "South African Defence in the Age of Total War; and I. van der Waag, "'The Thin Edge of the Wedge': Anglo-South African Relations, Dominion Nationalism and the Formation of the Seaward Defence Force in 1939–1940", *Contemporary British History*, 24, 4 (2010), pp 427–449.
30. J. Ellis, "Oswald Pirow's Five Year Plan for the Reorganisation of the Union Defence Force, 1933-1939", *Scientia Militaria*, 30, 2 (2000), pp 221–235; Van der Waag, "The Union Defence Force between the Two World Wars", pp 202–213.

Hertzog's political opponent, General J.C. Smuts, believed differently. After losing the 1924 elections to Hertzog, he often criticised the government for its narrow defence policy. Smuts and his supporters believed that South Africa's defence objectives should focus beyond the country's immediate borders. Smuts advocated a more modernised and sophisticated military force capable of deployment at least "anywhere in Africa", and that imperial links with Britain, regarded as essential to the security of South Africa, should be maintained.<sup>31</sup> When Smuts and Hertzog formed a coalition government from 1933 to deal jointly with the problems of economic depression, they failed to reconcile their opposing views pertaining to the country's defence policy. Oswald Pirow, who succeeded F.P.H. Cresswell as the minister of defence in the Smuts-Hertzog coalition government, attempted a five-year military improvement programme.<sup>32</sup> He was criticised for making bold statements about upgrading the military forces, but delivering very little on the promised objectives.<sup>33</sup> He was constrained by the conservative economic policy and limited defence objectives pursued by Hertzog.

The international security environment changed in the 1930s, with the rise of authoritarian states such as Nazi Germany, Fascist Italy and Imperial Japan, which displayed aggressive expansionist tendencies. After the Italian invasion of Ethiopia in 1935, the South African defence policy was reviewed. The focus of the possible military deployment was extended to East Africa.<sup>34</sup> Nevertheless, Hertzog's government downplayed the implications for South Africa of the deteriorating international political situation. The proximity of the Italian air bases in East Africa did not seem to be a major concern. The country's geographical position appeared to render the possibility of airborne or seaborne attack remote, and the authorities did not believe the civilian population was vulnerable.<sup>35</sup>

However, the government's view was not shared by the wider South African public. There were concerns about growing internal security threats. During the mid-1930s, South Africa was subjected to a torrent of Nazi propaganda and subversive activities that was conducted through the German-based Zeesen Radio broadcast service in the Afrikaans language and by secret agents who had infiltrated the country.<sup>36</sup> They encouraged exclusive ethnic-nationalism among Afrikaners,

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31. Van der Waag, "South African Defence in the Age of Total War", pp 146–147.
  32. Ellis, "Oswald Pirow's Five Year Plan", pp 221–235; F.A. Mouton, "Fascist or Opportunist? The Military Career of Oswald Pirow", *Historia*, 63, 2 (November 2018), pp 93–111.
  33. NASAP, Smuts Papers, vol. 132, "Statement of the Local Military Position"; Ellis, "Oswald Pirow's Five Year Plan", pp 233–234.
  34. Van der Waag, "The Union Defence Force between the Two World Wars", p 210.
  35. Haddon, Hanson and Martienssen, "Civil Defence in South Africa", p 316.
  36. UCT, Lawrence Papers, BC640, file E3.262, "Otto von Strahl Report: Protect your Home Country", 18 July 1941; O. von Strahl, *Seven Years as a Nazi Consul* (Redout, Cape Town, 1942), p 96; C. Marx, "'Dear Listeners in South Africa': German Propaganda Broadcasts to South Africa", *South African Historical Journal*, 27 (November 1992), pp 148–172.

promoted a pro-German sentiment and stimulated an anti-British feeling.<sup>37</sup> The public was concerned about the emergent threat of subversion in the form of the fifth column, the rise of the German National Socialism (Nazi) in the country and the proliferation of the pro-Nazi movements such as the Greyshirts and the Blackshirts.<sup>38</sup> Another concern emanated from the agitation of the extra-parliamentary organisation called the Ossewabrandwag (OB) (Oxwagon Sentinels) which adopted a militant posture and made contact with the Nazi agents such as Dr Luitpoldt Werz.<sup>39</sup> The OB was founded in 1938 to perpetuate the spirit of the symbolic Afrikaner Great Trek and to promote Afrikaner culture. In 1939, it developed rapidly into a mass movement which was considered “dangerous and subversive” by Smuts.<sup>40</sup> The OB grew into a political force which threatened to undermine state authority and internal stability.<sup>41</sup> The Hertzog administration observed these organisations and their activities, but did not act against them. Smuts kept silent until he took over the reins in September 1939.<sup>42</sup>

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37. UCT, Lawrence Papers, BC640, file E.5, “Official White Book on Nazi and Nazi Propaganda in South Africa, vols. 1-5, 1945”; F.L. Monama, “South African Propaganda Agencies and the Battle for Public Opinion during the Second World War, 1939–1945”, *Scientia Militaria*, 44, 1 (2016), pp 145–167; Marx, “Dear Listeners in South Africa”, pp 148–172; Fedorowich, “German Espionage and British Counter-Intelligence”, pp 209–230. For an overview see P.J. Furlong, *Between Crown and Swastika: The Impact of the Radical Right on the Afrikaner Nationalist Movement in the Fascist Era* (Wits University Press, Johannesburg, 1991).
38. The *Nationalsozialistische Deutsche Arbeiterpartie* (NSDAP) (National Socialist German Workers’ Party or Nazi Party) was founded in South Africa in 1932 by the UCT academic, Professor Herman Bohle. See UCT, Lawrence Papers, BC640, file E5. 47, “G.C. Visser, Strictly Confidential Report on the Affidavit of Dr Luitpold Werz, SAP Special Investigator, Union War Prosecutions”, 25 November 1946. See also UCT, Morris Alexander Papers, BC160, List IV, file 24, “Memorandum on anti-Jewish Movements in South Africa”, 1935; and G. Saron, “It did Happen Here: The “Shirt” Movements as Links in the World Nazi Chain”, *Common Sense*, 1, 8 (February 1940), pp 8–9.
39. University of KwaZulu-Natal (hereafter UKZN), Killie Campbell Archives and Manuscripts (hereafter KCM), Durban, E.G. Malherbe Papers, file 444/7, KCM 56975 (87-100), “Secret Military Intelligence Reports on the Ossewabrandwag, c. 1940–5”; UCT, Lawrence Papers, BC640, file E5. 83, “Interview (extract) of J.S. Harris, a ‘special assistant’ in the US Office of War Information in South Africa, with J.F.J. van Rensburg, Kommandant-Generaal of the Ossewabrandwag”, 5 June 1944. For a broader analysis of the Ossewabrandwag (OB), see C. Marx, *The Oxwagon Sentinel: Radical Afrikaner Nationalism and the History of the Ossewabrandwag* (Unisa Press, Pretoria, 2008).
40. UKZN, Malherbe Papers, file 444/7, KCM 56975 (87-100), “Secret Military Intelligence Reports on the Ossewabrandwag, c. 1940–5”; Van der Waag, *A Military History of Modern South Africa*, pp 174–177.
41. UCT, Lawrence Papers, BC640, file E5. 47, “Affidavit of Dr Luitpold Werz”; UKZN, Malherbe Papers, 444/7, KCM 56975 (87-100), “Secret Military Intelligence Reports”.
42. J.C. Smuts, *Jan Christian Smuts* (Heinemann and Cassell, Cape Town, 1952), pp 370–371.



In March 1939, South Africa's military chief of the general Staff (CGS), Sir Pierre van Ryneveld, produced a confidential memorandum urging the implementation of precautionary measures for internal security. He requested the tightening up of police protection to preserve internal order; advised that police reserves be placed on standby; and urged that the Department of Information should bring censorship into operation and make arrangements for the protection of vulnerable points against sabotage.<sup>43</sup> The CGS's memorandum was followed by a secret document entitled "Emergency Measures", outlining a 17-stage process for securing vulnerable civil and military points. The different directors-general in the military, the commissioner of police and railway police, and the chairman of the board of trade and industries were forewarned about their expected roles and actions in the event of an emergency.<sup>44</sup>

The government was alarmed by the possibility of sabotage of the national economic infrastructure. In May 1939, the minister of mines, C.F. Stallard wrote to Pirow, proposing a scheme for precautionary measures to preserve the key industrial activities such as transportation, water and power supply systems, communications and the smooth production of gold, steel and weapons. Stallard urged Pirow to approve the measures contained in the memorandum and proposed further steps to take in the event of an emergency.<sup>45</sup> Whilst the military officials attempted to preempt the internal security situation, however, Pirow displayed passivity and indifference to the proposals. Few practical steps were undertaken.<sup>46</sup> Civil defence planning for the protection of the public was not seriously considered.

Anxious about the government's inaction, prominent members of the public appealed to the authorities to provide measures for protecting civilians in the event of war. In April 1939, the General Committee of the Cape Town City Council issued a memorandum titled, "Protection of the Civilian Population in the Event of War", to the minister of the interior, Richard Stuttaford, to determine the responsible authority for civilian protection, prevention of sabotage, and for establishing cooperation and coordination of efforts between the civilian and military authorities for emergencies. The memorandum was taken to be a matter for discussion in the cabinet.<sup>47</sup> The Johannesburg City Council supported the recommendation of the Cape Town City Council to establish a voluntary organisation to deal with emergencies "which may arise in the event of war". They wrote a letter urging the government to declare its policy and to take the lead in the provision of the necessary precautionary measures for protecting the civilian population. Furthermore, it was deemed urgent to

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43. DOD Archives, Chief of General Staff (hereafter CGS) (War), Box 223, file 49/3, "Urgent Precautionary Measures", 17 March 1939.

44. DOD Archives, CGS (War) Box 223, file 49/1, "Defence Headquarters, Emergency Measures" (E.M. 1), 8 June 1939.

45. DOD Archives, CGS (War) Box 223, file 49/1, "Internal Security Measures", Stallard to Pirow, 1 August 1939.

46. Martin and Orpen, *South African Forces in World War 2, Volume 7*, p 33.

47. NASAP, Smuts Papers, A1, vol. 130, "Memorandum on the Protection of Civilian Population in the Event of War", Minister of Interior to Prime Minister, 27 April 1939.

undertake the organisation and training of auxiliary services for emergencies before and not after the necessity of their services arose.

The municipal councils of other major cities in South Africa also received requests from the Johannesburg and Cape Town councils to support the recommendations as they understood that the primary responsibility for the actual implementation of precautionary measures had to be borne by the local authorities. After all, it was these urban centres that would be most directly affected by the kind of attacks envisaged in the war.<sup>48</sup> The Department of Defence acknowledged receipt of the letter from the Johannesburg town council and noted that it expected further details of the scheme for civilian defence to be furnished (by the council) at a later stage.<sup>49</sup> However, the office of the defence secretary, led by A.H. Broeksma, considered the matter to be related to the ARP system and thus not the concern of the Department of Defence. On this basis, no action was deemed necessary from their side.<sup>50</sup>

After the outbreak of the war in September 1939, the South African public urged the government to provide plans for the protection of civilians. H. Wilson, the editor of the *Cape Times*, wrote to the newly appointed defence secretary, C.H. Blaine, proposing the establishment of a voluntary organisation of the “Civilian Guards” in the larger towns and coastal ports to assist the government in preserving internal security. The proposed Civilian Guards would be an outlet for the general public to lend their support to the government’s war policy, especially those who desired to be involved in “some kind of defence”.<sup>51</sup> Blaine supported Wilson’s proposal, but raised concerns about a civilian defence scheme which could interfere with the recruitment for the UDF’s fighting forces, especially for citizens between the ages of 17 and 45. Wilson was commended for “performing a public service” and Smuts also gave his blessing for the development of the civilian defence organisation, but it was only to be composed of the citizens who were above the military age of 45 years, so as not to interfere with the recruitment for active military service.<sup>52</sup>

The military officials, on the other hand, were not oblivious to aerial and seaborne threats. While the threat of a large scale intensive air assault or sustained seaborne bombardment by enemy vessels was considered remote, sporadic enemy

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48. DOD Archives, Secretary for Defence (hereafter DC), Box 3156, file 1651/6, “Preparation for Civilian Defence”, Johannesburg Town Clerk to Secretary for Defence, 2 June 1939.
  49. DOD Archives, DC, Box 3156, file 1651/6, “Measures for Civilian Defence”, Secretary for Defence to Johannesburg Town Clerk, 9 June 1939.
  50. DOD Archives, DC, Box 3156, file 1651/6, Assistant Secretary for Defence to Secretary for Defence, no date.
  51. DOD Archives, DC, Box 3156, file 1651/7, “Civilian Protective Services: Civic Guards”, Wilson to Blaine, 20 September 1939.
  52. DOD Archives, DC, Box 3156, file 1651/7, Blaine to Wilson, 20 October 1939. South Africa modelled its Civil Defence system on the British Air Raid Precautions. Other dominions such as Australia, instituted their own measures under different names.

raids on the country's ports and coastal towns was still something of a possibility. The effect on morale of such raids would be considerable if no precautionary measures had been taken to guide and assist the civil population. The South African director-general of operations (DGO) requested officers commanding (O's C) of various coastal military units to draw up appropriate schemes for civil defence. It was recommended that such schemes should include, inter alia, a black-out system whereby lights were to be extinguished or dimmed; first aid arrangements; dressing stations; fire-fighting arrangements; auxiliary ambulances; transport organisation; communication, and civil defence headquarters.<sup>53</sup>

There was no official decision for instituting civilian defence and protective measures. Nonetheless, the military officials recognised and anticipated the possible threat of air raids from the Germans; such air raids were already taking place in Britain. They issued precautionary instructions for planning and preparations until a definite government policy was declared. It took a further six months before the government decided to initiate plans for the institution of a national civilian organisation for the protection of the population and to facilitate the efficient coordination of measures to deal with any internal emergency arising out of the war conditions.<sup>54</sup> This was long overdue because the intelligence reports were highlighting the fact that the loyal supporters of the government's war policy were losing patience and feeling neglected. It was imperative to assuage their anxieties and to reassure them that, "the Government had its fingers on the pulse of the situation in the Union", and that action was being taken.<sup>55</sup> The introduction of the civilian defence organisation was meant to inspire public confidence in the government and, in a way, also to provide them with an opportunity to "participate" in a national defence effort.

#### **The formation of the Civilian Protective Services**

The necessity of instituting civil defence and protective measures during the war was conveyed by the minister of the interior, H.G. Lawrence, through the Inter-departmental Committee on internal security which was set up after the outbreak of the war.<sup>56</sup> On 31 May 1940, Lawrence announced the special measures for the maintenance of internal security. The government had already taken steps to safeguard vital points such as power stations, railway bridges, waterworks, aerodromes and other key economic infrastructure, by establishing a semi-military unit of retired servicemen called the Essential Services Protection Corps (ESPC) in

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53. DOD Archives, DC, Box 3156, file 1651/6, "Civil Defence in Coastal Towns", Director of General of Operations to O'C Commands, 18 December 1939.

54. NASAP, Civilian Protective Services Archives (hereafter CPS), Box 1, file CPS 8, Minute, Director Civilian Protective Services to All Municipalities, 13 August 1940.

55. DOD Archives, Union War Histories (hereafter UWH), Box 265, file B.I. 20, Intelligence Summaries, 12 October 1940.

56. The Internal Security Committee was a strategic inter-departmental committee comprising the interior minister, the justice minister, the police commissioner, the director of intelligence and the chief control officer (censorship), with additional departmental heads operating at inter-departmental and sub-committee level.

October 1939.<sup>57</sup> It was deemed necessary to develop plans to mobilise all civilian resources to safeguard internal security, to protect the homes, villages, towns and cities against organised attacks and to provide intelligence. This effort was to be undertaken by “loyal citizens of the Union”.<sup>58</sup> To this end, civilian resources were mobilised in the form of a network of vigilance committees. Their tasks included:

- a. To observe espionage, sabotage, and hostile action by groups.
- b. To promptly report on all cases of intimidation, tampering with natives [sic], subversive speech or action, and parachutists, should the latter arise.
- c. To immediately report all cases of hardship from whatever cause arising as affecting the wives and families of those away on active service, with a view to prompt examination and, where necessary, early redress.
- d. Generally to watch for any movement or action which may tend to impair internal security.<sup>59</sup>

A series of vigilance committees would operate in the Transvaal, OFS, Natal and the Eastern Province. However, Lawrence did not want to entrust intelligence work to untrained civilians, fearing a “disconcerting embarrassment” for the government should things go wrong. To this end, he recommended that the vigilance committees should not enjoy official government recognition but should rather be run independently through local security liaisons. The authorities would benefit from good “unofficial” intelligence provided by the vigilance committees, who would also be useful in facilitating the spread of government propaganda to shape and direct public opinion in line with state policy.<sup>60</sup>

In addition to providing measures designed to preserve internal security against organised attacks, it was imperative to consider protection against potential threats from the air and the sea. The Institute of South African Architects submitted a report to Lawrence on 7 June 1940, regarding civil defence measures for South Africa. It advised the government on the scheme for a nationwide civil defence system for the protection of the civilian population against the threat of aerial bombing. Countermeasures proposed in the report entailed the establishment of a comprehensive civil defence capability mainly involving two features: first, the military defence by means of air assets, and second, the civilian protection measures including the provision of air raid shelters, evacuation facilities, fire-fighting and rescue services.<sup>61</sup> With this in mind, Lawrence suggested the establishment of what he called the Internal Security Corps consisting of persons who were not fully fit for active military service, to deal with enemy attacks from the air, the arrival of

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57. DOD Archives, CGS (War) Box 224, file 49/13, “The Story of the Essential Services Protection Corps”, S. Varney, ESPC Staff Officer, 2 December 1941.

58. NASAP, CPS, Box 19, file CPS 11, “Statement by Minister of Interior, H.G. Lawrence”, 31 May 1940. See also F.L. Monama, “Wartime Propaganda in the Union of South Africa”, PhD dissertation, Stellenbosch University, 2014.

59. UCT, Lawrence Papers, BC 640, file E.3, 188, “Memorandum on Internal Security, Suggested Scheme”, Lawrence to Smuts, 12 June 1940.

60. UCT, Lawrence Papers, BC 640, file E.3, 188, “Memorandum on Internal Security”.

61. Haddon, Hanson and Martienssen, “Civil Defence in South Africa”, pp 324–328.

parachutists, acts of sabotage and internal revolts. A warden for civilian defence would be in charge of controlling municipal services and performing several tasks such as preventing the spread of fire caused by bombardments; the demolition of damaged buildings; first aid services; and the removal of women and children from dangerous areas. The suggested scheme would apply to large cities and, with modifications, also applied to smaller towns and villages.<sup>62</sup>

On 12 June 1940, the government inaugurated the Civilian Protective Services (CPS) officially. Through Proclamation No. 105 of 1940, the CPS became an approved civilian organisation under the Department of Interior, authorised to coordinate all efforts regarding the protection of the South African public.<sup>63</sup> Lieutenant Colonel T.B. Clapham, an UDF officer from the Active Citizen Force (ACF) was seconded to the minister of the interior to organise the CPS as its director on 17 June 1940.<sup>64</sup> Under Regulations 36 and 37 of the National Emergency Regulations, promulgated by Proclamation No. 35 of 1940, the minister of defence confirmed the appointment of the CPS director and appointed the mayors of inland cities and coastal towns as chief area commandants, to facilitate civil defence and protective efforts in their local municipalities.<sup>65</sup> The CPS director and the chief area commandants were given instructions to the effect that the defence authorities retained over-riding responsibility and thus all activities pertaining to the CPS should be conducted in close cooperation with the military and naval officials.<sup>66</sup> The CPS directorate highlighted the imperative of the civil defence organisation:

To deal, inter alia, with the preventive and protective measures in defence of the civilian population against attack from the air and the sea, and against the dangers arising from sabotage and sudden emergency. The chief object is to organise local civic resources (personal and mechanical) to deal with any emergency arising from conditions such as incendiarism, havoc, panic and air raids, causing damage to property and life, or disruption of civilian services.<sup>67</sup>

62. NASAP, CPS, Box 19, file CPS 11, "Statement-Interior Minister"; UCT, Lawrence Papers, BC 640, file E.3, 188, "Memorandum on Internal Security".
63. NASAP, CPS, Box 1, file CPS 7, "Proclamation No. 105 of 1940: Declaration of Approval", Secretary for Defence to Director Civilian Protective Services, 16 August 1940.
64. NASAP, CPS, Box 23, file CPS 39, "Notes of Conference regarding Civilian Protective Services", 26 June 1940; DOD Archives, DC, Box 3156, file 1651/9, "Appointment of Director, Civilian Protective Services", Adjutant-General to Secretary for Defence, 13 November 1941.
65. NASAP, CPS, Box 1, file CPS 7, "Civilian Protective Services: Delegation of Authority", Circular, Minister of Defence (J.C. Smuts) to Director of Civil Protective Services, 20 July 1940. The mayors of strategic cities and towns included A.B. Sidney (Pretoria), J.F. Fotheringham (Johannesburg), A.T. Allison (Pietermaritzburg), V.G. Lewis (East London), W. Brinton (Cape Town), J. McLean (Port Elizabeth), R.E. Brown (Durban) and R.M. Scholtz (Mossel Bay).
66. DOD Archives, CGS (War), Box 224, file 49/1, Adjutant General to OCs and Head of Sections, 17 October 1940.
67. NASAP, CPS, Box 22, file CPS 35, "Civilian Protective Services: Instructions No. 1", 17 July 1940.

Although enemy raids from the sea and the air were considered a remote possibility, the authorities still emphasised that reasonable precautions were imperative.<sup>68</sup> The immediate responsibility fell on the local authorities who were required to maintain contact with the CPS director to “coordinate and direct all measures for the protection of civilian in towns”.<sup>69</sup>

The CPS organisational structure was based on the scheme designed by the Johannesburg City Council, which was intended for local civil defence at the outbreak of the war. The council’s scheme, derived from the British ARP system,<sup>70</sup> was also shared with other cities to adapt to their local conditions.<sup>71</sup> The mayor, who was the chief area commandant, worked through special sub-committees responsible for coordinating various services such as medical, wardens, firefighting and rescue. The city was subdivided into municipal areas under the control of the wardens.<sup>72</sup> The area warden, in particular, was a critical position because the incumbent had to possess a thorough knowledge of the area under his command and then establish a control centre from which to direct operations. Furthermore, area wardens were expected to organise civilian volunteers, enforce control orders and report to the chief area commandant about events within their sector. The chief warden, who was in charge of all the area wardens, was required to collaborate with the local police and traffic chiefs to coordinate their services. All wardens were required to wear distinctive armbands with “C.P.S.” letters in black on white for identification and also to carry a certificate of appointment to authenticate themselves to householders or to other persons they visited in the course of their duties.<sup>73</sup>

The CPS organisation consisted of two main sections, namely the ARP and the Civilian Guard. The ARP section was responsible for providing and appointing wardens, medical services, mechanical services, firefighting, street traffic control and for providing information services to the general public. The Civilian Guard section was responsible for coordinating street patrols and assisting the South African Police (SAP) in the general maintenance of law and order.<sup>74</sup> All civilians between the ages of 45 and 65 years and those who were not eligible for active military service could apply to serve in the ARP or Civilian Guard. The CPS volunteers were required to take an oath of service at attestation<sup>75</sup> and could if they so wished, tender their resignation

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68. NASAP, CPS, Box 23, file CPS 39, “Notes of Conference regarding Civilian Protective Services”, 26 June 1940.
  69. NASAP, CPS, Box 21, file CPS 21, “CPS Policy and Instructions”, 25 August 1940.
  70. Hamlin, “Civilian Protective Services in South Africa”, pp 145–169.
  71. NASAP, CPS, Box 23, file CPS 39, “Notes of Conference regarding Civilian Protective Services”, 26 June 1940.
  72. NASAP, CPS, Box 21, file CPS 21, “Minutes of the Special Committee of Johannesburg City Council”, 18 June 1940.
  73. NASAP, CPS, Box 22, file CPS 35, “Civilian Protective Services: Instructions No. 1”, 17 July 1940.
  74. NASAP, CPS, Box 24, file CPS 46, “CPS Broadcasts”, 26 August 1941.
  75. Attestation implies the signing of an official document formally declaring and confirming acceptance of military service.

by giving 24-hours' notice at their respective magisterial district.<sup>76</sup> The financial costs of the CPS were borne by the local authorities concerned, except in the case of the control and administrative costs of its director and for the chief area commanders.<sup>77</sup> The government undertook to finance uniforms for the Civilian Guard, to fund training courses for CPS personnel and to supply a limited number of firearms, whistles, batons, tin hats and badges.<sup>78</sup>

To stimulate recruitment and to provide publicity for the CPS, Clapham arranged for five-minute weekly radio broadcast talks by different mayors and fortnightly talks conducted by the government's information officer, Arthur Wilson, who was also the director of the state's propaganda institution, the Bureau of Information (BOI).<sup>79</sup> The CPS was regarded as a national scheme for home defence which was focused on safeguarding civilian property and protecting civilian life.<sup>80</sup> The CPS directorate issued a circular letter, claiming that there was "no age limit, no class, creed, political or racial distinction" in the CPS.<sup>81</sup> This was merely a propaganda effort to attract as many volunteers as possible. In practice, there were racial distinctions in state institutions which conformed to the existing policies of the country.<sup>82</sup> The CPS membership was between 50 000 and 60 000, with the Civilian Guard being 10 000 strong by September 1941.<sup>83</sup> The institution of the CPS was considered a significant step in reinforcing the morale of the UDF troops on the frontline and those members

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76. NASAP, CPS, Box 1, file CPS 8, Directorate Civilian Protection Services to All Municipalities, 13 August 1940; NASAP, Department of Justice (hereafter JUS), Box 1526, file 1/57.40, "Volunteer Application Form and Attestation Form", D.I. 241, undated.
77. NASAP, CPS, Box 23, file CPS 39, "Notes of Conference Regarding Civilian Protective Services", 26 June 1940; DOD Archives, CGS (War), Box 224, file 49/13, "Memorandum, Financial Expenses for the Civilian Protective Services", 16 March 1942.
78. NASAP, CPS, Box 24, file CPS 46, Interior Minister to Editor, Women's Auxiliary, 26 August 1941; DOD Archives, CGS (War), Box 224, file 49/13, "Memorandum, Financial Expenses for the Civilian Protective Services", 16 March 1942.
79. NASAP, CPS, Box 24, file CPS 46, Director CPS to Assistant Director CPS (W. Brinton), 23 June 1941; See also Monama, "South African Propaganda Agencies and the Battle for Public Opinion", pp 145–167.
80. NASAP, CPS, Box 1, file CPS 8, Directorate Civilian Protection Services to All Municipalities, 13 August 1940.
81. NASAP, CPS, Box 21, file CPS 21, "CPS Policy", 26 August 1940.
82. "Non-Europeans" were recruited separately and served in segregated institutions such the police and the military. See provisions for special actions to organise and provide necessary CPS services to servants and residents on railway premises, NASAP, CPS, Box 21, file CPS 21, "CPS Policy", 26 August 1940; NASAP, CPS, Box 19, file CPS 11, "Natives as Special Constables", Commissioner of Police to CPS Director, 27 September 1941.
83. DOD Archives, CGS (War), Box 224, file 49/13, "Extract of Broadcast by Colonel T.B. Clapham", 9 September 1941.

of the public who had complained about the need for civilian defence.<sup>84</sup> The CPS existed throughout the war, easing public fears, although its work was often frustrated by the difficult service conditions, operational challenges and legal uncertainties.

### **CPS operations, activities and service conditions**

Initially, the CPS seemed to lack a clear operational mandate and focus. As indicated above, Lawrence had envisioned an Internal Security Corps for maintaining internal security and for counter-propaganda.<sup>85</sup> At the same time, local authorities in larger cities like Johannesburg, Cape Town and Durban, had embarked on sporadic individual and uncoordinated initiatives to deal with attacks from the air and the sea. With the appointment of Lieutenant Colonel Clapham, the CPS began to develop a unified direction and operational focus.<sup>86</sup> Dr E.J. Hamlin, a member of the Johannesburg City Council's civil defence committee elaborated on the main tasks of the CPS for the city, and recommended them to the Department of the Interior for adoption.<sup>87</sup> The scheme elaborated on the measures within the scope of the local authorities, including those activities associated with the ARP section and the role of the Civilian Guard section of the CPS.<sup>88</sup> The Civilian Guard had been introduced during the Great War, due to the unrest on the Witwatersrand at that time, to assist with police work. It was then incorporated into the CPS during WWII to perform a similar role when most of the police personnel went on active military service.<sup>89</sup>

At its inception, the operational functions of the CPS comprised six categories, namely, i) warning signals, ii) medical services and firefighting, iii) police and traffic control, iv) mechanical services, supplies and maintenance (including transport, sirens, black-outs, rescue parties and shelters), v) non-Europeans (patrols in black areas) and vi) information, instruction and propaganda (reports, notices, literature).<sup>90</sup> Each area under the control of the chief warden was required to coordinate and control the siren warning system; black-out system; firefighting;

84. DOD Archives, UWH, Box 265, file B.I. 20, Intelligence Summaries, 12 October 1940; DOD Archives, CGS (War), Box 224, file 49/13, "Extract of Broadcast by Colonel T.B. Clapham", 9 September 1941.

85. NASAP, CPS, Box 24, file CPS 46, "CPS Broadcasts", 26 August 1941.

86. NASAP, CPS, Box 24, file CPS 46, "CPS Broadcasts", 26 August 1941.

87. NASAP, CPS, Box 21, file CPS 21, "Minutes of the Special Committee of Johannesburg City Council", 18 June 1940; Hamlin, "Civilian Protective Services in South Africa", pp 145-169. The Civil Defence Committee of Johannesburg City Council provided a CPS operational scheme with duties and responsibilities of the respective authorities. This was adopted by the directorate of CPS and circulated to all municipalities as instructions for implementation along the general guidelines.

88. Hamlin, "Civilian Protective Services in South Africa", pp 145-148.

89. NASAP, CPS, Box 1, file CPS 8, Directorate Civilian Protection Services to All Municipalities, 13 August 1940.

90. UCT, Lawrence Papers, BC640, E3. 138, "Circular, Civilian Protective Services Instruction No. 1", 17 July 1940, amended 23 June 1942; NASAP, CPS, Box 21, file CPS 21, "CPS Policy", 26 August 1940.



rescue operations; traffic and panic control; demolition of damaged buildings and debris clearance; operating mobile and stationary medical and first aid posts and clearing stations; ambulance services; emergency communications and transport services.<sup>91</sup>

In case of an emergency, the warning system would be in the form of a siren or another sound system like a whistle or a hand-bell, depending on the area.<sup>92</sup> The chief area commandant took instructions from the military authorities, then issued orders for warning signals to the public regarding enemy danger. The warning signals were sounded according to the level of the perceived threat, for example, four successive blasts of one minute each separated by a brief pause for “alert” and a continuous even note for “all clear”.<sup>93</sup> The wardens operated the signal systems and the CPS members monitored the situation and enforced civilian compliance with the orders within their jurisdiction.

The commitment required from the CPS was not particularly onerous. They were mainly expected to be proficient in the services outlined above. The authorities emphasised that it was crucial to be prepared and to maintain a state of efficiency and readiness to deal with potential emergencies emanating from the war conditions.<sup>94</sup> The CPS also enforced black-outs in coastal and inland cities. The system of blacking-out premises, street lights and vehicles was considered an essential element of the country’s defence against enemy aircraft.<sup>95</sup> Authorities issued instructions stipulating the lighting restrictions and the provisions of material or appropriate fittings required to comply with black-outs. The CPS members were authorised to monitor, supervise and check the buildings and vehicles to enforce compliance with the black-out orders.<sup>96</sup> Enforcement of black-outs was a daunting task for the CPS because some civilians often ignored them.<sup>97</sup>

The CPS were initially considered unnecessary and some people remarked that, “we are too far away from the enemy to be bombed and nothing would ever happen in this country”.<sup>98</sup> When Japan entered the war, it posed a threat in the Indian Ocean, and, along with the deteriorating internal security situation (due to a rise of

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91. UCT, Lawrence Papers, BC640, E3. 138, “Circular, Civilian Protective Services Instruction No. 1”, 17 July 1940, amended 23 June 1942.
  92. UCT, Lawrence Papers, BC640, E3. 138, “Circular, Civilian Protective Services Instruction No. 1”, 17 July 1940, amended 23 June 1942.
  93. Union of South Africa, *Government Gazette Extraordinary*, No. 3071, “Civilian Protective Services: Blackout Orders”, 6 July 1942.
  94. NASAP, CPS, Box 24, file CPS 46, “‘We Must Be Prepared’: Broadcast by Colonel T.B. Clapham”, 9 September 1941.
  95. NASAP, CPS, Box 22, file CPS 35, “Instruction No. 3, Civilian Protective Services, Blackouts”, 6 August 1940.
  96. NASAP, CPS, Box 1, file CPS 7, “Black-out Orders: Imposition of Responsibility for Observance”, undated.
  97. “Black-outs at the Ports”, *The Star*, 20 February 1943; “Cape Town’s Black-out”, *Cape Argus*, 23 March 1943.
  98. NASAP, CPS, Box 24, file CPS 46, “‘We Must Be Prepared’”, 9 September 1941.

bomb explosions, telephone and telegraph wire-cutting and other sabotage incidents perpetuated by the militant anti-war elements in the country),<sup>99</sup> the CPS presence was appreciated and more members were needed for civilian defence and to mitigate public fears.<sup>100</sup>

Lawrence indicated that the CPS personnel were trained for ARP against bombardments, however, their services were on occasion called upon to deal with “emergencies not caused through enemy action”.<sup>101</sup> He was referring to the incidents highlighted above, which created civilian panic and insecurity in the country. The Civilian Guards in particular, performed police work, conducted nightly street patrols, assisted the police in the maintenance of law and order and facilitated arrests and prosecution of offenders.<sup>102</sup> This also generated funds for the treasury through fines collected by the courts.<sup>103</sup> In 1942, the CPS took over the civilian and military guard responsibilities previously performed by the police reservists, who were required for active military service.<sup>104</sup> The status of the CPS was thus enhanced.

Other activities of the CPS involved information and propaganda services. J.S. Fotheringham, mayor and chief area commandant of Johannesburg explained:

There is abundant evidence in existence that to prove that there still exists in South Africa a dangerous attitude of complete indifference to precautions ... it is the common sense duty of every citizen to learn how to protect his own people and himself from the effects of high explosive bombs, incendiary bombs and poison gas. It is the object of the Civilian Protective Services to provide essential knowledge and information to the public – to bring an adequate nucleus of people fully trained in Air Raid Precautions.<sup>105</sup>

A series of circulars and instructions were published to enlighten the public, develop their confidence and to reduce panic. They were concerned with matters such as air

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99. DOD Archives, Army Intelligence, Box 24, “Intelligence Records Bureau Summary”, 7 February 1942; “Sabotage Plot in TVL”, *Cape Argus*, 29 January 1942; “Local Incendiarism and Bomb Outrages”, *The Friend*, 18 June 1942. For more details, see G.C. Visser, *OB: Traitors or Patriots?* (Macmillan, Johannesburg, 1976).
  100. DOD Archives, CGS (War), Box 224, file 49/13, “C.P.S. and Defence”, P. van Ryneveld to H.G. Lawrence, 13 March 1942; “C.P.S Work Goes On”, *The Star*, 20 February 1942; “More C.P.S. Recruits Wanted”, *The Friend*, 18 June 1942.
  101. NASAP, CPS, Box 22, file CPS 35, “Circular No. 45, Speech by Minister of Interior”, 27 April 1943.
  102. DOD Archives, CGS (War), Box 224, file 49/13, “Civilian Protection Services”, Lawrence to Smuts, 16 March 1942; NASAP, CPS, Box 22, file CPS 35, “Circular No. 45, Speech by Minister of Interior”, 27 April 1943.
  103. DOD Archives, CGS (War), Box 224, file 49/13, “Civilian Protection Services”, Lawrence to Smuts, 16 March 1942.
  104. DOD Archives, CGS (War), Box 224, file 49/13, “Civilian Protective Services and Guard Duties: Minutes of the Conference held in the Office of the Chief of the General Staff, Cape Town”, 13 January 1942.
  105. NASAP, CPS, Box 24, file CPS 46, “National Broadcast by Regional Commandant, J.S. Fotheringham”, 18 August 1941.

raid warnings; advice about incendiary bombs and how to deal with them; information on Japanese incendiary bombs; methods and consequences of attacks from the air, as well as protective measures and anti-air raid devices.<sup>106</sup>

The CPS operational system was instituted by various sectors and was adapted to suit local conditions. The railway and harbour authorities, for example, arranged for the implementation of the local siren system throughout the railway areas, the black-out system and the rescue services within their domain. The first aid squads were trained in the Railway and Harbour Divisions of the St Johns Ambulance Brigade and the local authorities assisted with training the auxiliary fire squads.<sup>107</sup> Large businesses organised their staff members into firefighting and first aid squads who were trained by the CPS experts. Government departments were also required to prepare adequate protective measures and to organise their members for CPS duties to deal with emergencies affecting the buildings they occupied or utilised.<sup>108</sup>

The Institute of South African Architects placed its services at the disposal of the CPS with regard to providing advice and developing plans for bomb shelters throughout South Africa.<sup>109</sup> However, despite the elaborate designs and plans offered to the CPS and local authorities, no shelters were considered or erected.<sup>110</sup> No doubt, financial considerations and the apparent lack of air raid threats due to Allied military success in Africa, influenced the decision not to construct shelters.

CPS members volunteered in accordance with their preference (ARP or Civilian Guard) and in terms of their profession, trade, expertise or prior training, for example, in the medical services or fire-fighting.<sup>111</sup> In addition, training for CPS personnel, principally the wardens who served as officers, took place at the South African Military College in Pretoria from 1941. The training programme entailed courses in passive air defence, air raid precautions, anti-gas measures and fire-

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106. NASAP, CPS, Box 22, file CPS 35, "Instruction No. 6: Incendiary Bombs and How to Deal with Them", 1 November 1940; NASAP, CPS, Box 22, file CPS 35, "Circular No. 19, Japanese Incendiary Bombs", 24 April 1942.

107. NASAP, CPS, Box 21, file CPS 21, "Civilian Protective Services", General Manager, CPS Railway and Harbours, 26 August 1940.

108. NASAP, JUS, Box 1526, file 1/57/40, Secretary for Public Works to Secretary for Justice, 18 September 1941; DOD Archives, CGS (War), Box 224, file 49/13, "Emergency Protection of Public Buildings against Enemy Action or Sabotage", Secretary for Public Works to All District Representatives, January 1942.

109. UCT, Lawrence Papers, BC640, E3. 138, "Civilian Protective Services Instruction No. 1", 17 July 1940, amended 23 June 1942; NASAP, CPS, Box 21, file CPS 21, "CPS Policy", 26 August 1940; Haddon, Hanson and Martienssen, "Civil Defence in South Africa", pp 328-354; Hamlin, "Civilian Protective Services in South Africa", pp 170-171.

110. NASAP, CPS, Box 24, file CPS 46, "National Broadcast by Regional Commandant, J.S. Fotheringham", 18 August 1941.

111. CPS Attestation Forms posed questions on the expertise or trade of volunteers, e.g. medicine, first aid, fire-fighting, and ARP, which had to be completed by recruits.

fighting.<sup>112</sup> The Civilian Guard section was trained in wardens' duties, high explosive and incendiary bomb control, rescue and demolition work as well as police patrol work.<sup>113</sup> The defence authorities facilitated a twelve-day CPS training programme until 1942, where the CPS was even raised to become the "fourth service", along with the army, air force and navy, like the British civil defence. After completion, the graduates were authorised to train other CPS volunteers in their respective areas.<sup>114</sup>

The demand for the CPS grew consistently across the country. In many towns and cities, the local citizens approached local military commands for extending CPS operations.<sup>115</sup> Despite of the huge demand, the CPS organisation was not without problems, however. Funding was insufficient. The CPS members volunteered their services without any payment,<sup>116</sup> while most of the CPS organisational and running costs were carried by the municipalities.<sup>117</sup> The defence authorities made it clear that the country's resources were mobilised for military requirements and necessities such as the medical and surgical equipment for the CPS should be sourced by the local authorities.<sup>118</sup> A limited number of uniforms were paid for by the government, but these were only for the Civilian Guards. The police commissioner offered to equip the Civilian Guards with uniforms, pistols and rifles where necessary. However, the minister of defence rejected requests to provide uniforms for the CPS, citing financial constraints.<sup>119</sup> Where possible, some local municipalities offered to purchase second-hand uniforms for their CPS members.<sup>120</sup> The local authorities were also expected to provide plastic helmets for the ARP section as the steel helmets were reserved for the military personnel.<sup>121</sup>

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112. DOD Archives, DC, Box 3156, file 1651/1, Deputy Chief of Staff to Secretary for Interior, 17 December 1941.
  113. NASAP, CPS, Box 19, file CPS 11, Town Clerk Johannesburg to Minister of Interior, 1 April 1941.
  114. DOD Archives, DC, Box 3156, file 1651/5, Deputy Chief of Staff to Director CPS, 2 October 1942; "C.P.S. Raised to 'Fourth Service'", *The Friend*, 18 June 1942.
  115. DOD Archives, CGS (War), Box 224, file 49/13, "Minutes of conference, Civilian Protective Services", 13 January 1942; DOD Archives, CGS (War), Box 224, file 49/13, Henry Hope, Bureau of Information to Blaine, Secretary for Defence, 28 February 1942.
  116. NASAP, CPS, Box 24, file CPS 46, "CPS Broadcast, H.G. Lawrence", 26 August 1941; NASAP, CPS, Box 22, file CPS 35, "Circular No. 45, Speech by Minister of Interior", 27 April 1943.
  117. UCT, Lawrence Papers, BC640, E3. 138, "Civilian Protective Services Instruction No. 1", 17 July 1940, amended 23 June 1942.
  118. DOD Archives, DC, Box 3156, file 1651/5, "Medical and surgical requirements for CPS", Secretary for Defence to Secretary for Interior, 5 November 1940.
  119. DOD Archives, DC, Box 3156, file 1651/8, "Civilian Protective Services: Civilian Guards Units", Secretary for Interior to Secretary for Defence, 18 March 1941; DOD Archives, DC, Box 3156, file 1651/8, Blaine to Lawrence, 21 March 1941.
  120. DOD Archives, DC, Box 3156, file 1651/8, "Sale of Second-hand Uniform Clothing to CPS at East London", Quartermaster-General to Secretary for Finance, 1 July 1942.
  121. NASAP, CPS, Box 23, file CPS 38, "Issue of C.P.S. Equipment", Director CPS to Secretary of Interior, 22 September 1942.

Some of the CPS volunteers complained about the apparent lack of support from the government. In small towns like Springs and Benoni in the Witwatersrand area, the unpaid volunteers of the Civilian Guards carried out patrols in wet and cold conditions without greatcoats or raincoats. They also supplied their own boots, shirts and overcoats, and had to wait for months before their claims on damaged uniforms could be compensated.<sup>122</sup> They complained that the Civilian Guards were doing police work, yet, they did not enjoy better privileges such as the provision of petrol for members using their own vehicles and the construction of protective facilities. The municipalities also protested about the large sums of money expended on the CPS organisation and operations without government support, although, the state treasury was benefiting from the fines derived from court prosecutions. They also complained that the government was not taking interest in the CPS.<sup>123</sup> The municipalities implored the government to make some direct contributions to them with respect to the CPS work.<sup>124</sup> The government was not swift in dealing with the problems, however, this did not hamper recruitment efforts. It was only in 1943, that the government established a committee to allocate subsidies to defray the costs borne by the local authorities in CPS work.<sup>125</sup> The work of the CPS was given publicity in the press and it was even contemplated that it should be retained after the war.<sup>126</sup>

Apart from difficult service conditions, the CPS also experienced some legal problems. The minister of defence divided the military commands of the country into two broad areas of control: the Inland Area under Major General G.E. Brink, and the Coastal Area under Major General I.P. de Villiers. The military commanders assumed operational control and the authority of the CPS's chief area commandants was restricted to administrative control, discipline and training.<sup>127</sup> It was unclear who was ultimately accountable for and the main authority to issue black-out orders. The matter was clarified after consultation with the defence legal advisor, that "operational control" was restricted to the actual conduct of operations where the military commanders retained overriding authority to issue orders. The CPS members would be required to execute those orders as prescribed.<sup>128</sup> Another challenge was the refusal of the government attorney to represent members of the CPS in court cases – such as assault charges – that arose from actions taken in the

122. "Needs of Springs Civilian Guards", *The Star*, 27 May 1942; "Reef Towns want State Lead", *Sunday Times*, 31 May 1942.

123. "Reef Towns want State Lead", *Sunday Times*, 31 May 1942.

124. DOD Archives, CGS (War), Box 224, file 49/13, Lawrence to Smuts, 16 March 1942.

125. NASAP, CPS, Box 22, file CPS 35, "Circular No. 45, Speech of Minister of Interior", 27 April 1943; "Committee to Allocate State C.P.S Subsidy", *Cape Times*, 6 April 1943.

126. "Future of Pretoria CPS", *Pretoria News*, 6 April 1943; "CPS after the War", *Cape Argus*, 7 April 1943. Recruitment and placement of the CPS members was generic, however, those with backgrounds in specific professions and trades had an option to serve in those capacities such as fire-fighting or ambulance services.

127. DOD Archives, DC, Box 3156, file 1651/1, "National Emergency Regulations 36 and 37: Delegation of Authority", 22 June 1942.

128. DOD Archives, DC, Box 3156, file 1651/1, "Powers of the Chief Area Commandants of the CPS", Secretary for Justice to Director CPS, 21 October 1942.

course of carrying out their duties, for example, in effecting an arrest.<sup>129</sup> The Department of Justice was not sympathetic and indicated that no special courts or tribunals, as proposed by the chief area commandant of Springs, would be approved. CPS members had to abide by the existing judicial processes.<sup>130</sup>

On 12 June 1942, the CPS Disciplinary Code was published, which regulated the conduct of the CPS volunteers.<sup>131</sup> The code prescribed the rules for the CPS members and penalties against them if they committed any of the eighteen listed acts of misconduct, for example, dereliction of duty, insubordination, fighting and absent without leave.<sup>132</sup> The code provided the CPS with improved status. However, the members did not enjoy the same privileges as the police or the UDF. They were unpaid volunteers and in most cases had to cater for themselves. There were deficiencies in the supply of equipment, unequal distribution of the workload and financial burdens as some municipalities could not afford to support the CPS. Whereas civilian protection was the responsibility of the government, it shirked that obligation and the CPS operated through the “generosity” of the town councils, and of private firms.<sup>133</sup> In fact, the town councils took the lead in CPS organisation and the government provided oversight.

A sense of public apathy and resentment crept in.<sup>134</sup> Authorities accordingly worked harder to stimulate interest. Through the radio broadcasts, it became increasingly apparent why the government had instituted the CPS: to reassure the public that the government was doing something, to boost their morale and to give them a sense of “public service” as an “an army of civilians” mobilised towards the national war effort and contributing to the security and defence of their home country.<sup>135</sup> It is interesting that despite the challenges, the membership of the CPS

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129. NASAP, JUS, Box 1526, file 1/57/40, “Civilian Guards”, Chief Area Commandant, Springs, to Secretary for Justice, 30 March 1942.

130. NASAP, JUS, Box 1526, file 1/57/40, “Civilian Guards”, Secretary for Justice to Chief Area Commandant, Springs, 20 May 1942.

131. DOD Archives, DC, Box 3156, file 1651/1, “Members of UDF serving with CPS”, Adjutant-General to Secretary for Defence, 28 December 1942; “More CPS Recruits Wanted”, *The Friend*, 18 June 1942.

132. NASAP, CPS, Box 1, file CPS 7, “Legal Matters”, 16 September 1943; “More CPS Recruits Wanted”, *The Friend*, 18 June 1942.

133. “Needs of Springs Civilian Guards”, *The Star*, 27 May 1942; “Reef Towns want State Lead”, *Sunday Times*, 31 May 1942; “The Protection of Bloemfontein”, *The Friend*, 18 June 1942.

134. DOD Archives, CGS (War), Box 224, file 49/13, “Minutes of Conference, CPS”, 13 January 1942.

135. NASAP, CPS, Box 24, file CPS 46, “CPS Broadcasts,” 9 September 1941; NASAP, CPS, Box 24, file CPS 46, “CPS Broadcast, H.G. Lawrence”, 26 August 1941; NASAP, CPS, Box 22, file CPS 35, “Circular No. 45, Speech by Minister of Interior”, 27 April 1943.

was estimated to be 80 000, with 167 branches across the country, as reported by the minister of the interior.<sup>136</sup>

The activities of the CPS began to decline during 1943, due to the diminishing security threats after the Allied forces began to roll back Germany, and the slackening off of anti-war activism. The government initiated the process of disbanding sections of the CPS in the inland areas, but retained those in coastal areas where black-outs were still enforced. Essential services such as medical, firefighting and demolition were also retained.<sup>137</sup> Authorities were cautious not to dispense completely with the CPS, especially the Civilian Guards, because the war was not yet over and many areas remained without police protection.<sup>138</sup>

### Transfer and disbandment

In September 1943, the directorate CPS was transferred from the Department of Interior to the Department of Justice. The new arrangements also involved T.B. Clapham, who relinquished his position as CPS director. He was succeeded by Robert A. Meston on 27 August 1943.<sup>139</sup> But the new arrangements came with problems. Whereas Clapham was seconded to the CPS post from the UDF as a military officer, Meston was not. He had previously served as the deputy police commissioner of South Africa. Although he exercised similar powers as Clapham in the CPS, the defence authorities refused to grant him the military rank of lieutenant colonel and he was requested by the adjutant-general to seek approval from the police commissioner to wear a police uniform.<sup>140</sup> Meston appealed the decision to the CGS (Van Ryneveld) for reconsideration, but it was not approved.<sup>141</sup> No reasons were furnished, but it could well have been because he did not serve in any military capacity either in the ACF or the UDF.

The CPS continued to function normally within the Department of Justice. In December 1943, it was recommended that the Civilian Guards be reorganised as an auxiliary police force and be sworn in as special constables for the duration of the war

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136. NASAP, CPS, Box 22, file CPS 35, "Circular No. 45, Speech by Minister of Interior", 27 April 1943; "CPS Work Goes On", *The Star*, 20 February 1943; "CPS after the War", *Cape Argus*, 7 April 1943.
137. "5000 CPS Wardens to be released in Johannesburg", *Rand Daily Mail*, 20 March 1943; "Minister thanks 5 000 disbanded CPS Wardens", *Rand Daily Mail*, 23 April 1943.
138. NASAP, CPS, Box 1, file CPS 7, "Civilian Protective Services: Civilian Guards", Director CPS to Secretary for Justice, 11 November 1943; "5000 CPS Wardens to be Released in Johannesburg", *Rand Daily Mail*, 20 March 1943.
139. NASAP, Department of Interior (hereafter BNS), Box 254, file 150/72, "Transfer to Department of Justice of all Records of CPS and Internment Camps", 2 September 1943; NASAP, CPS, Box 19, file CPS 11, "Circular No. 48", CPS Directory to All Assistant Directors and Chief Area Commandants, 3 September 1943.
140. DOD Archives, DC, Box 3156, file 1651/9, "Director: Civilian Protective Services", Adjutant-General to Director CPS, 10 December 1943.
141. DOD Archives, DC, Box 3156, file 1651/9, "Lt. Col. R.A. Meston, Director of Civilian Protective Services", Adjutant-General to Secretary for Defence, 7 March 1944.

or until termination of services based on the 24 hours' notice principle.<sup>142</sup> From late 1943 to 1944, the CPS activities in the inland regions were suspended. Although there were calls to retain the services of the CPS after the war, on 14 April 1945, towards the conclusion of the war in Europe, the Department of Justice announced that the CPS was to be disbanded throughout South Africa, except the Civilian Guards and those who protected the oil sites.<sup>143</sup> Interestingly, Meston continued to use the military rank of lieutenant colonel in all his correspondences until the disbandment of the CPS in 1945.

The efficiency of the CPS during the war was never tested because South Africa was not subjected to any aerial attacks or seaborne bombardment. Hence it became easier to wind down its services without any major incidents or disruptions before the termination of hostilities. It had served its purpose as a wartime measure to safeguard public safety, as an instrument to sustain the population's morale and to mobilise public support for the government's war policy. Hence the CPS was retained until the end of the war when Allied victory was assured and the potential internal security threat had diminished. The CPS mainly assisted in providing auxiliary services to the national police, who dealt directly with subversive elements in South Africa during the war.<sup>144</sup>

### Conclusion

Civil defence developed as a result of the development of military aviation in the early twentieth century, and the fear of aerial bombing of civilians which was first experienced during the Great War. It involved the provision of measures such as shelters, black-outs, emergency services, warning systems and information to ensure civilian protection against aerial attacks. Countries such as Britain, the USA and France, developed civil defence provisions such as the ARP system during the inter-war period in anticipation of aerial bombing in future conflict. However, in South Africa, civil defence preparations during the inter-war years were virtually non-existent. Despite public outcries and anxious letters from concerned citizens urging government action, authorities did not believe that the country was vulnerable to aerial attacks because it was too distant from the potential theatres of war. The authorities instituted the Civilian Protective Services (CPS) in June 1940, when Italy entered the war on the side of Nazi Germany. Authorities realised that South Africa was within reach of the enemy air raids, and measures were necessary to protect the civilians. The CPS consisted of the air raid precaution (ARP) and the Civilian Guard sections, which required the voluntary participation of the civilian population for it to work.

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142. NASAP, CPS, Box 1, file CPS 7, "Circular No. 53", Director CPS to All Chief Area Commandants, 9 December 1943.

143. NASAP, CPS, Box 21, file CPS 21, "Disbandment of Civilian Protective Services", CPS Director to All Chief Area Commandants, 14 April 1945.

144. Fedorowich, "German Espionage and British Counter-Intelligence", pp 209-230; Shear, "Colonel Coetzee's War", pp 222-248. See also Furlong, *Between Crown and Swastika*.



As highlighted above, the development of civil defence in South Africa was not a government initiative. It was the civilians in larger local municipalities, motivated by fear of bombardment from the air and from the sea, who designed individual civil defence schemes to protect themselves as they were most likely to bear the brunt of such attacks. The authorities seized the opportunity to institute the CPS and justified it as a “preventive and protective” measure aimed at dealing with emergencies arising out of war conditions. Government involvement in establishing the CPS was intended to provide a coherent and “unified” national approach for home defence. In essence, the authorities relied on the measures designed by the municipalities to define the CPS operational purpose and functions. The government provided limited support for the CPS, except giving it official status, training and belated subsidies. It left most of its financing and operations to the municipalities. This presented a challenge to institute efficient protective services due to poor service conditions and equipment deficiency. However, through publicity in the press, radio broadcasts, general circulars and appeals by local authorities, the South African population was besought to participate in the CPS as a “civic duty” in a national defence effort, and a means to preserve the morale of the troops in the field, to enable them to focus on winning the war abroad. The population, especially local authorities, were concerned about their own security, thus they persevered and supported the CPS. Hence 80 000 civilian members volunteered for service. It is difficult to ascertain the effectiveness of the CPS because South Africa never experienced any aerial attacks. However, its value can be deduced from calls to retain some of the services after the war, in order to provide capacity to deal with other potential civil emergencies.<sup>145</sup>

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145. “CPS Work Goes On”, *The Star*, 20 February 1943; “CPS after the War”, *Cape Argus*, 7 April 1943; De Villiers Smit, “South African Civil Defence Organisation”, p 15.

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