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APARTHEID MILITARISM:

THE RESPONSE OF THE SOUTH AFRICAN  
CHURCHES AND WHITE STUDENT BODIES

COMMITTEE ON SOUTH  
AFRICAN WAR RESISTANCE  
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## APARTHEID MILITARISM: THE RESPONSE OF THE SOUTH AFRICAN CHURCHES AND WHITE STUDENT BODIES

As the militarisation of the apartheid South African state intensifies, so has the opposition to serving in the military forces increased. Every year over three thousand young white South Africans, who are expected to take up arms in defence of apartheid, resist call-ups to military training or active service in Namibia, Zimbabwe or in South Africa itself. These war resisters, or conscientious objectors, may be classified into three categories.

- a) Those who avoid service for personal reasons (e.g. farmers who don't want to leave their farms)
  - b) Universal objectors- those who are opposed to all forms of military service for pacifist or religious reasons.
  - c) Selective objectors- those who for religious and political reasons refuse to serve in what they see as an unjust war.
- Sometimes selective objectors (and occasionally universal objectors) are prepared to serve in the military in non-combatant roles.

Non-combatant status for universal objectors is, in theory, recognised by the South African defence legislation. Recognised universal non-militarists (those who refuse to serve in any role in the military) are usually sentenced to a 36 month period in detention barracks after which they are exempt from further conscription. All other objectors are liable to a maximum sentence of 2 years after which they are again conscripted and liable to be charged on each subsequent refusal to serve.

### The Church and the Military

In 1970, a meeting of the Civil Rights League in Cape Town, consisting of representatives of religious denominations and other interested groups, resolved to call on the South African Government to amend the Defence Act to give determined conscientious objectors an alternative to a prison sentence. The league proposed the introduction of alternative national service schemes completely separate from the Defence Force. In August 1974 the SA Council of Churches took this a stage further. It passed a resolution at its annual conference at Hammanskraal which called on its member churches to challenge all their members to 'consider whether Christ's call to take up the Cross and follow Him in identifying with the oppressed does not, in our situation, involve becoming conscientious objectors.' (This debate- and the state response to it- is examined in the booklet The SA Church and the Military, available from COSAWR.)

There was immediate reaction from Government circles to the Hammanskraal resolution. In addition, the resolution was criticised by the conservative Dutch Reformed (N.G.) Church, which had not been party to the conference. The net result was the passing of the Defence Further Amendment Act later that year. Section 12(c) of the Defence Act was amended to make it an offence, liable to a fine not exceeding R5,000 and/or imprisonment for a period not exceeding 6 years

'to advise,...../'



'to advise, encourage, aid, incite or instigate any other person or any category of persons or persons in general' to refuse to render any service to which they are liable under the Act.'

The effect was to render any further discussion on the subject liable to prosecution. In July 1977, the Justice and Reconciliation Division of the SA Council of Churches compiled a list of 'ten transgressions of freedom by the SA Government'. Number 6 read as follows: 'The ruling of the Defence Further Amendment Act which prevents a Christian from offering full pastoral care in regard to matters of involvement in the Defence Force, especially with reference to conscientious objection.'

However, the churches would not remain silent on military issues, and there was an on-going conflict between the churches and the state on the issue of chaplains serving in the SA Defence Force. This is related to discussions that have taken place between the various church bodies on the role of chaplains and whether they should wear uniforms or not.

The invasion of Angola, the Soweto uprisings and the militarisation of South Africa directed attention to the issue of conscientious objection again, as more and more young South Africans were refusing to serve in the apartheid military. In 1977 the Southern African Catholic Bishops Conference made a statement on the issue, in which it upheld the conscientious objectors right to follow his own conscience and urged the state to make provision for alternative forms of non-military national service. This statement was endorsed by other church groups and in a resolution supporting it, the Cape Town Diocesan Synod of the Anglican Church stated that it upheld the right of people 'who in conscience believe that is an act of disobedience to God to be part of the military structures of this country, because they are convinced that by doing so they would be defending what is morally indefensible', to be conscientious objectors; urged the state to make provision for alternative forms of non-military service; and stated its acceptance of the positive duty of the Church to make all people aware of 'what is involved in being used to defend the morally indefensible.'

At this stage, October 1977, a series of bannings and detentions took place and amongst the organisations banned was the Christian Institute. A number of its leaders who had played an active role in the debate on conscientious objection were also banned or detained - among them Brian Brown and Beyers Naude.

But the issue of conscientious objection is still a lively one in ecumenical circles. In October 1979 the Baptist Union Assembly requested that a non-military alternative to national service be provided for objectors, while in September the Presbyterian Church came out in support of selective conscientious objection in the apartheid situation. Following the imprisonment for 18 months in December 1979 of Peter Moll, a young Baptist war resister, a statement was released by religious leaders, including the Archbishops of Cape Town, Durban, Pretoria, the Bishop and Suffragan Bishop of Natal and the Secretary General of the SA Council of Churches. The statement pointed out that Peter Moll 'is a conscientious objector in the present situation of South Africa because he is convinced that SA society is fundamentally unjust and that military

service...../



service would involve him in violent conflict with citizens of South Africa who suffer under the prevailing injustices. In these circumstances he cannot see what he is expected to fight for and to die for.' The statement went on to call on the Government 'to regularise the position of conscientious objectors through the provision of non-military forms of national service and in the meantime to exercise in regard to Peter Moll and all other conscientious objectors the humanity and clemency that should be characteristic of a Christian society'.

#### The white student organisations and the military

After the SA Council of Churches' Hammanskraal resolution of August 1974, the National Union of SA Students (NUSAS), which represents most of the English-language campuses, issued a statement associating itself with the SACC resolution, and calling on students to challenge their consciences on the matter of resistance to military call-up. The resolution provoked considerable debate on the NUSAS campuses, but the passing of the Defence Further Amendment Act soon afterwards appears to have stifled any open debate on the issue. This is despite the fact that the student community is one of the groups most affected by military call-ups, and it is well-known that many people become students in order to get temporary deferment from military service.

Dec. 1978  
Nusas

After the Angolan invasion hundreds of young conscriptees, many of them students or ex-students, fled the country rather than fight for the apartheid armed forces or face imprisonment for resisting. Largely as a response to this, the NUSAS annual Congress in December 1978 resolved to establish a committee to 'investigate the influence of service in the SA Defence Force on-

- i. those facing such service
- ii. those undergoing such service
- iii. those who have completed such service;

to investigate the influence of Youth Preparedness Programmes; and to explore official (alternatives to service) in the SADF in the fields of education, medical and community services and to press the Government for the implementation thereof.'

The congress resolved further to call on the state to 'lift restrictions imposed on the individual's right to debate conscientious objection; and recognise the right of the individual to decide for himself whether or not to engage in military or in community service'.

As a result of the first resolution, the Committee of Investigation into Service in the SADF, Youth Preparedness Programmes and Alternative National Service (MILCOM), was formed. Its activities have included a focus week at universities with debates on conscientious objection and alternatives to military service, the submission of a petition urging the Government to introduce alternative forms of military service for conscientious objectors and the publication of pamphlets on the issue. In its first pamphlet, MILCOM issued a statement calling on the Government to take note of the plight of conscientious objectors and to provide forms of national service other than military or paramilitary service as an alternative to service in the SADF.

During 1979...../



1979  
NUSAS

X During 1979 the student press at the NUSAS campuses took a strong stand on the issue of military service, with the result that many editions of the various papers have been banned and two 'Varsity' and 'National Student', have been banned for all further issues. The newspapers focussed on different aspects of militarisation and military service, often making hard-hitting points. The cover of the last issue (before it was banned) of Varsity, for instance, carried a list of 'Names of all those who have died in defence of South Africa since 1961' superimposed on which were two SADF soldiers, and the slogan 'Some people are not dying for change'. Bannings took their toll, however, and an edition of another student paper was banned even though it argued in the editorial that it had 'decided to refrain from focussing on important issues such as the military. The student press is subjecting itself to a rigid self-censorship in order to survive.'

The English-language white campuses have also been the setting for the growth of alternative service schemes. One of the figures who has been prominent in this process is Dr. James Moulder, a philosophy lecturer at Rhodes University in Grahamstown, who has argued for the setting up of alternative national service schemes along the lines of the Civic Action Programme carried out in Namibia by the SADF where soldiers have been used in key civil service positions as part of the military's 'Hearts and Minds' strategy. No doubt many objectors, though, would not be prepared to participate in this sort of scheme as it can still be seen as furthering the interests of the apartheid military.

Another alternative service scheme, associated with Professor Paul Hare of the University of Cape Town, is more developed. Professor Hare met early in 1979 with an official of the SADF to canvas the idea of these schemes, such as an ambulance service corps to serve both military and civilians in the border areas. To be acceptable, the length of service in the special corps would be longer than military service and the duties at least as hazardous as in non-combatant military positions.

The SADF dissociated itself from the idea, but nevertheless the corps was set up, initiated by the Quaker and Unitarian Churches, and it was reported in the SA press that the Cape Town branch of the corps provided an ambulance service, trained members as hospital attendants and sought to provide a health and education service. The idea was to get the corps operating in Namibia, but the SADF proved uncooperative.

The student press, NUSAS, the churches and the alternative service committees have all played a major role in putting the issue of apartheid militarism and the question of military service on a public platform. They have generated widespread moral and political discussion in South Africa on conscription and conscientious objection in defiance of repressive defence legislation. But as the armed forces are at the heart of the Botha regime's strategy to maintain its racist rule, it seems unlikely that the state will be prepared to negotiate any widespread organised resistance to military service.



War resistance.

COMMITTEE ON SOUTH AFRICAN WAR RESISTANCE

REPORT OF ACTIVITIES DURING FIRST 6 MONTHS OF EXISTANCE

After considerable discussion with the ANC and AAM in London last year, COSAWR emerged in November 1978 with the following aims:

- 1) The provision of assistance to war resisters in the form of advice regarding residence in the UK, jobs, housing, education etc.
- 2) The involvement of war resisters in discussion groups, seminars and public meetings on the South African situation as well as in anti-apartheid solidarity work in the UK.
- 3) The raising of the issue of the increasing militarisation of the apartheid state and the resultant resistance to it. The Committee will also campaign for the implementation of the United Nations General Assembly resolution on assistance to refugees from the South African military.
- 4) Research into South African militarisation and war resistance.
- 5) The production of publications, including a regular bulletin for South African war resisters abroad, information booklets on South African militarisation and war resistance etc.
- 6) Liason with other organisations and groups in the UK and abroad on the issue of war resistance in South Africa.

The Committee consisted of 8 members drawn from South Africans who had been involved in the war resistance issue: Bill Anderson, Gavin Cawthra, Jimmy Corrigall, Dereck Forbes, Barry Gilder, Kevin Laue, Alan Leas and Terry Shott. In addition Garth Strachan sat on the committee as a representative of the AAM. COSAWR has met about once a fortnight since then and undertaken numerous projects which can best be described under each of the six general areas of work. It should be mentioned that the committee consists of 7 members at present, as both Gilder and Strachan have left the UK.

I) Assistance and advice to WR in UK

There are now around 100 known WR, including several deserters, in Britain, arriving on average at a rate of one every ten days. The procedure has been to pass those who we consider to be bona fide to the United Kingdom Immigrants Advisory Service, which then processes applications to remain to the Home Office.



If a WR approaches the UKIAS directly it puts him in touch with us for our opinion before accepting his case. In this way we and the UKIAS work together to avoid becoming involved with non-genuine WR.

The problem of border-line cases still remains ie. sometimes it has been difficult to decide how politically-motivated an individual is. So far the Home Office has been known to refuse 2 applications processed through UKIAS, neither of which came through the present committee. COSAWR has agreed to assist both in their appeals by means of supportive documentation regarding conscription laws and the militarisation of SA, if necessary. Similarly COSAWR has assisted the UKIAS in trying to prevent the deportation of a WR in detention in Gloucester. It is not yet clear what effect the Tories will have in the area of SA WR, but a general tightening up is expected.

COSAWR has so far not found it necessary to provide any assistance other than advice, along with the occasional small short-term loan. It is to be expected, however, that more deserters without funds will arrive in future.

2) Involving WR in (a) discussion groups, seminars and public meetings (b) in solidarity work.

(a) A reasonably successful public meeting was held in January. This was a launching event where AAM and COSAWR spoke, and a film was shown. About 40 people attended, although not many WR. Since then we have concentrated on organising a series of seminars designed mainly for WR, but also for other interested South Africans and people involved in solidarity work. These have not been advertised except *by* personal invitation. Two have taken place so far, with about 25 WR and friends at the first, and slightly less at the second. We see this as a priority area of work, but progress is clearly going to be slow. A social event was also held recently.

(b) An early attempt to mobilise WR to support a Mahlangu picket was not successful - only the Committee and one WR were present. The need to get WR to join AAM and involve themselves in local groups and general campaigning is recognised by COSAWR, but it is not easy to ascertain how many are doing so. The Committee is considering ways in which specific campaigns which have a military angle (eg. Barclays) might be more successful in attracting WR to campaigning work. This, too, is clearly going to be an area of slow progress.

3) The raising of the issue of militarisation and WR, and campaigning for the UN resolution.

The Committee and war-resistance has received some publicity in the SA press,



Anti-Apartheid News and <sup>New</sup> Africa magazine (attached). Members of COSAWR met Mr Reddy and Mr Nyamekye in London, who raised the possibility of a hearing with the Special Committee, and contributions to Notes and Documents. A taped interview with a member of the Committee was done by the UN office for broadcasting into SA. For tactical reasons a low profile has been kept with the British media regarding WRs in the UK. No plans for campaigning for the UN resolution have been adopted. Two members of the Committee took part in addressing a meeting in London to mark the anniversary of the Cassinga massacre. This was organised by the Namibia Support Committee. COSAWR has also made available to NSC material for their bulletin on the SA military in Namibia. The issue of militarisation and resistance is also described under (5) below.

#### 4) Research

This is regarded as a high priority area of activity, consisting of the de-briefing of WRs, analysing press cuttings and military journals. Bill Anderson works virtually full-time in this field. Other members of the Committee are also involved in research from time to time. A fact paper on the SA military machine written by Bill Anderson is to be published soon by IDAF. This area of work is of course closely connected with (5) below.

#### 5) Production of publications, bulletins, information booklets.

The fact paper mentioned above will carry an acknowledgement of COSAWR's assistance in its production. The Committee also intends to publish its own fact papers and briefing documents eg. one has been produced on the conscription laws for UNHCR.

Two issues of the regular bulletin RESISTER have been published, and the third is in production. It is planned to continue to produce RESISTER once every 2 months. It is sent to all known WR in the UK and abroad, to other interested persons in the UK and abroad, and all major solidarity organisations and liberation movement centres in the UK and abroad. A print-run of 1000 copies has now been fixed to cater for the above.

300 copies of an introductory booklet for WR in London has been produced which gives a brief outline of the solidarity groups, liberation movements and useful books on SA. A booklet on the church and military, produced last year by SAMRAF in London, is also distributed by the Committee.

#### 6) Liason with other organisations and groups in (a) the UK and (b) abroad.

(a) In UK: liason with the AAM and ANC is well-established. In addition contact has been established with both SWAPO and the Namibia Support Committee. Other



groups and organisations are dealt with on an ad hoc basis eg. NUS, MAGIC, UNHCR.

(b) Abroad: members of COSAWR have attended 2 conferences abroad: the World Youth and Student Conference of Solidarity with the Peoples, Youth and Students of South Africa (Paris, February), and the Movement International Reconciliation event (Brussels, March). As mentioned above, RESISTER is sent to all the major groups abroad. It is also reproduced by IUEF and sent in their international mailing.

Direct contact has been made with a group of WR in Holland who are beginning to organise along broadly similar lines as COSAWR, although less ambitious. The Committee has advised them on various tactics, including their plan to mail a pamphlet into SA.

Contact has been maintained with SAMRAF in the USA by way of sending them RESISTER and general information on our aims and objects. In addition numerous discussions have been held with Mike Morgan when he has been in London.

## GENERAL REPORT

### I) Financial

At COSAWR's formation the need for substantial funds was recognised. This would be essential for medium and longer term costs such as paid full-time/part-time workers, an administrative office, regular publications and so on. Barry Gilder was mandated to deal with this area, and approached IUEF, IDAF and the WCC for £5000 each, based on a draft expenditure account. He formally visited IUEF and the WCC in Geneva, and IDAF in London.

IUEF: It made an emergency advance of £700 initially, and indicated that a further £4300 would be given. However, this would take until September to be approved by the IUEF administration. A recent request for a further advance was met by a promise of £1000.

IDAF: The general secretary gave a sympathetic hearing and agreed to pass the matter to Caron Collins. When asked recently whether there was any way of speeding up a response, she said there was nothing could be done to hasten the process.

WCC: A sympathetic hearing was given, and it was indicated that they wished first to consult with the BCC as to its attitude towards COSAWR. A member of the committee had discussions with Jim Wilkie of the BCC, and it seemed he would speak positively of COSAWR to his colleagues. However, a recent formal letter to the WCC from COSAWR asking if any progress has been made, has had no response.



The financial situation has thus become problematic, and the departure of Gilder has added to this. We have several times re-adjusted our draft budget in attempts to make the best of things as they stand, but feel ham-strung as regards funding an administrative office and part-time administrative worker, full-time researcher, and research facilities, all of which are urgent priorities. Therefore we feel it is essential to approach other organisations for funds, for even if IUEF makes the full £5000 available it does not look as though the WCC and IDAF are going to be forthcoming. In this regard we feel the need to liase very closely with the ANC as to which other sources of funds are available and how to approach them.

2) Publications/raising the issue.

Any ongoing programme of publications is also of course linked to the financial situation.

Generally in the field of publications and raising the issue of militarisation/war resistance, we think it necessary to have discussions with the ANC as to:

- a) its response to the two issues of RESISTER (content, distribution).
- b) its response to the information booklet.
- c) ideas for other publications by COSAWR.
- d) other ways of raising the issue eg. tapes, exhibitions.

3) Campaigning/study classes.

In this field we feel it would be useful to discuss what has been achieved so far, and how it could be improved as far as the ANC is concerned.

4) International.

The basic approach of the committee has been to establish itself firmly in the UK. As the situation has developed it is becoming increasingly clear that already substantial numbers of WR are gathering both in Holland and the USA. We feel it is important to discuss with the ANC both how we and the liberation movement are responding to the groups concerned, and future likely developments in this field.

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It is proposed, therefore, that 3 members of the committee (Cawthra, Laue and Shott) formally meet with the ANC comrades as soon as possible to discuss the above issues. A proposed agenda is:



(6)

1) Clarification/discussion of anything arising out of the first part of the report.

2) Finance

3) Publications/raising the issue

4) Campaigning/study classes

5) International

6) A.O.B.



APPROXIMATE EXPENDITURE JAN-JUNE '79

RESEARCH	£ 165.00
PRINTING	£ 155.00
POST	£ 75.00
STATIONARY	£ 48.00
TRAVEL	£ 12.00
SUNDRIES	£ 20.00
	<hr/>
	£ 475.00
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# Political Daily News Dec 78 asylum for two

Daily News Bureau

LONDON: Two South Africans who came to Britain in 1976 to evade their military commitments have been granted permanent residence and work permits here.

Kevin Laue and Laurence Bartlett, both 29, sought political asylum on the grounds that they were "conscientious objectors" to having to fight for the South African defence.

Mr Bartlett, a journalist, and Mr Laue, now working for International Defence and Aid in London, have not been granted British citizenship but have had their passports stamped, authorising 12 months' residence.

Renewing this every year was a "formality," Mr Laue said this week. After five years they could claim British citizenship.

Both men are from Pietermaritzburg. Mr Bartlett left South Africa after being called up for service on the South West Africa border. Mr Laue, whose regiment is the Natal Field Artillery, was called up for a three-month camp in 1976.

"It is a very simple issue," Mr Laue said. "I did not want to fight for something I did not believe in. In fact, I believe the other side is right. I am a bitter opponent of apartheid."

The two men, who were at school together at Maritzburg College, applied through Mr Frank Hooley MP, in November 1976 for political asylum.

Mr Hooley wrote to the Home Office and the men were granted an interview with Home Office officials the following month.

"Few months later we received a letter saying our applications had been refused," said Mr Laue.

The Home Office was not satisfied that "there was a well-founded fear of persecution if they returned to their own country."

The South Africans then submitted an appeal to the Home Secretary Mr Merlyn Rees, and the Anti-Apartheid movement in Britain led a delegation to Mr Rees in May 1977 on their behalf.

Mr Rees said that the cases of genuine South African war resisters would be considered on their merits. A few months later the Home Office sent for their passports which were stamped for 12-months residence and they were given blanket work permits, said Mr Laue.

Mr Laue's parents have emigrated from South Africa to Canada.

"I'll go back to South Africa," he said. "But only when things have radically changed or are in the process of changing."



# SA ARMY DODGERS CAN STAY, SAYS UK

Argus Bureau

LONDON. — Two South Africans who entered Britain in 1976 to evade military commitments have been granted residence and work permits here.

Mr Kevin Laue and Mr Laurence Bartlett, both 29, sought political asylum on the grounds that they were 'conscientious objectors.'

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A few months later their passports were stamped for 12-months' residence and they were given work permits.

## Britain accepts draft dodgers

LONDON — An increasing number of young South African men who leave to avoid being called up on military service are being accepted into Britain.

While they are not granted political asylum as such, the Home Office — after satisfying itself on the merits of each case — gives a blanket work permit and residence for a year. This is renewed annually as a matter of formality.

Scores of such young men are working or studying in the United Kingdom.

To deal with the increasing numbers, a new widely-based organisation has been launched here to advise newcomers and consolidate those already here.

Called the Committee on South African War Resistance, this body is the result of a merging of two groups which previously had been functioning separately.

They are the South African War Resisters (SAWR) which was set up in July last year and another ad-hoc group

formed in 1976 by a number of "war resisters" who have been working in co-operation with the Anti-Apartheid Movement.

SAWR was set up on the initiative of the South African Liberation Support Committee (Salscom). The parent movement dissolved itself in October last year, but SAWR continued to function, primarily to mobilise South African war resisters — or draft dodgers — abroad.

Spokesman for the new committee is former Natal University student Kevin Laue, 29, whose efforts to obtain political asylum in England — as one of the first to evade military service — made headlines in 1976.

At that time, he and another South African, Lawrence (Pop) Bartlett, were refused asylum by the British Home Office.

Mr Laue said yesterday a constant stream of young men evading military service had been arriving in Britain since his own test case three years ago. — DDC.

## S.A. military dodgers in U.K. growing

Mercury Correspondent

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To deal with the increasing numbers a new widely-based organisation has been launched here.

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Spokesman for the new committee, which recognises the African National Congress, Swapo, and the Patriotic Front in Rhodesia, is former University of Natal student Kevin Laue (29), who was one of the first to dodge the draft in South Africa in 1976.



CT 11/1/79

# SA draft dodgers accepted in UK

Own Correspondent

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SAWR was set up on the initiative of the South African Liberation Support Committee (Salscom).

The aims of the committee are:

- To provide help in the form of advice regarding resistance in the UK, jobs, housing, and studies.

- The involvement of these young men in discussion groups, seminars and public meetings on the South African situation as well as in what is termed as "anti-apartheid solidarity work" in the UK.

- The committee will also campaign for the implementation of the United Nations General Assembly resolution on assistance to "refugees" from the SA Defence Force.

- The production of publications, including a regular bulletin for SA "war resisters" abroad.

- Liaison with other organizations and groups in the UK and abroad, such as trade unions, students organizations and anti-apartheid movements.

A spokesman for the new committee is a former University of Natal student, Kevin Laue, 29, whose efforts to obtain political asylum in Britain, as one of the first to evade military service, made headline news in 1976.

At that time he and another South African, Lawrence Bartlett, were refused asylum by the British Home Office.

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In May 1977, a deputation including Mr Bob Hughes, Labour MP, and Mr Abdul Minty, of the Anti-apartheid Movement, saw Home Secretary, Mr Merlyn Rees, who granted the two South Africans residence in the