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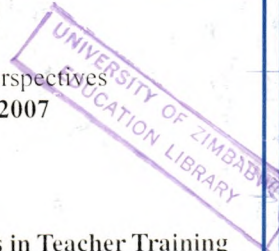
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### BOOK REVIEW



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# 'CATCH THEM YOUNG' CADET SCHOOLS AS RECRUITMENT BASES: A CASE STUDY OF SOUTHERN RHODESIA (ZIMBABWE) 1900-1968.

Gilbert Mada

*Department of History, University of Zimbabwe*

## *Abstract*

*This article examines the cadet system paying special attention to its curriculum, aims and objectives in the context of the discourse of masculinity and martial orientation of young lads as it afforded the young boys with a frontier of experiences. The term cadet system refers to the physical training and practical teaching of young boys in the use and handling of military weapons as was done in almost all White dominated schools in Southern Rhodesia. The idea was mainly to instil a high sense of civil defence and obedience among the youth in a society suffering from a strong siege mentality. Furthermore, the British spirit of volunteering was not popular among some of the White male settlers especially in a situation where every sector was facing manpower shortages. Lack of involvement among settlers could have been caused by a strong belief in British naval ability as well as the use of local natives as examples from India had proved successful. With regards to youth, it had been noted that very few were taking active roles in the military hence the need to give them military instruction at an early age. These are some of the challenges that contributed to the introduction of cadet schools as well as the use of the term 'Catch Them Young' referring to early training, enlistment and recruitment of young boys. However, the nature of the curriculum should be viewed as education for patriotism tailor-made to shape consciousness among pupils and educate them to accept the national priorities of an increasing militarised state.*

## **Introduction**

The discourse on the militarisation of the society in Southern Rhodesia is gaining wide currency and a number of scholars have approached it from different perspectives. However, too much focus on combat issues, glorification of campaigns and the formation of different units has dominated the military history of Southern Rhodesia in the early phases. The nature of this historiography was mainly influenced by the availability of abundant information produced by

military personnel, Pioneers and war veterans of different wars. Such imbalances have made some historians to conclude that serious academic work was born in the 1960s by L.H. Gann's *A History of Southern Rhodesia: Early Days to 1934* (Stapleton: 2002, 2). It is important to note that the location of youth in this military discourse has largely been glossed over especially the role and contributions made by the cadet schools as 'military barracks'. Only a few scholars came closer to examining the militarisation of the youth such as J. F. McDonald. (MacDonald: 1947, 8) Here the general belief was that a young Rhodesian, well educated, full of self-confidence and possessing natural initiatives, was an ideal soldier. It is against such a backdrop that this study points out that the roots of the militarisation of the youth lay in the day to day running of cadet schools where the nature of education enabled the state to prepare and control the young lads for future military roles. In addition, by studying youth, the study is informed by Bayart's argument that to study youth politics is to 'study politics "from below"— studying politics of the powerless.' (O'Brien: 1995, 55) Youth, in this study specifically refer to the age group between thirteen and twenty-four years since this was the range that most young men were conscripted into the army (both combatant and non-combatant roles).

As a means of achieving successful grooming of White male youth, Rhodesia set out to establish cadet schools as early as 1901 which included Prince Edward, Plumtree, Milton, Chaplin and Churchill High Schools. These cadet schools were more or less like regimental systems in which the young male youth were instructed in the art of war at a very tender age of thirteen to fifteen years, as junior cadets and sixteen to eighteen years, as senior cadets. According to 1941 regulations, a boy who had not attained the age of thirteen years on or before the first day of that half year could not be enrolled until the first day of the succeeding half year. Transference from junior to the senior cadet division was done half yearly on the first of January and July in each training year. Furthermore, a cadet could be transferred on the first day of the half-year following that in which his fifteenth birthday occurred and every transfer was to be notified in Cadet Orders. After completing a senior cadet course, one would then graduate into the Territorial Active Force, which was an official boy force responsible for the training of those between nineteen and twenty-four years of age. The cadets were nurtured in military techniques such as Fieldcraft, Section Battle Drill, Platoon Battle Drill, Visual Training and the use and handling of weapons like rifles, Sten MC and 2" Mortar. This program, as designed by the elders, subjected individual personalities to militarism and was in one way a

form of servitude, which through physical and practical training made young people to regard war as unavoidable and desirable. Thus it was another avenue that appealed to male triumphalism and warrior machismo. The scheme initially covered army cadets only to be expanded in the 1930s to include air, sea and naval cadets. This transformation, coinciding with the outbreak of the Second World War, also witnessed the introduction of specialist training in the early 1940s.

### *The early stages of cadet schools: 1900-1930*

The settlers, soon after arriving into Rhodesia in 1890, began to seek ways of consolidating their power. Internally, Europeans greatly feared possible African uprisings and externally, viewed the people of East and Central Africa with great distrust as they saw them as 'excitable, somewhat gullible and liable to unexpected outbreaks of fanaticism if brought under the influence of religious movements and witchcraft, or if roused by a sense of grievance.' This could have been based on previous disturbances such as the John Chilembwe Movement of 1915 in Nyasaland. It is against such a high level of siege mentality that the British South Africa Police (BSAP) had to form the first line of defence. In addition, various types of forces had been raised during emergency situations only to be disbanded afterwards such as the Mashonaland and Matabeleland Mounted Police, the Bechuanaland Police and later on the Southern Rhodesia Volunteer Unit. However, the major weakness of the Southern Rhodesia Volunteer Unit was inadequate preparation as it was drilled a few nights a week before getting into camp. Such a training programme never reached a very high level of efficiency and membership kept on fluctuating as settlers drifted in and out of the country while those who were constantly available came from scattered places which hindered effective mobilisation.

Despite such drastic measures, the laager mentality within the White community was so strong that the military leaders had to find other avenues of maintaining national security. Therefore by 1901 through the establishment of cadet schools, efforts were made to try and groom an idle soldier who would be able to defend and promote the gains of the colony. Thus, the creation of cadet schools should be viewed as the manipulation of child environment. As Brady notes, from the earliest days, the youth must be taken 'in hand, their actions controlled, their thoughts regimented, their ideas fixed, their habits determined, the ebb and flow of their character development manipulated to the ends laid down—by leaders.' (Brady: 1937, 172) This would help in winning the hearts and minds of

the youth and instil a high level of mindless thinking among them. In this vein, most boarding schools had to play a major role as cadet schools.

In the Rhodesian context, 'a boarding school seems to provide the best atmosphere for motivating pupils to high aspirations and achievements' (Murphree: 1975, 147) Therefore the idea of a boarding school as an initiation lodge was a crucial factor in cultivating hyper-masculine ideologies and machoism. The environment of most of these boarding schools had to be kept captivating so as to maintain the interest of the youth. Here popularization of various sporting activities can be cited as one good example. In the early period, shooting competitions were among the most prized games before being replaced by rugby and cricket which were eventually attached to masculine identities. District competitions in musketry were often held annually with the participants being awarded certificates and merit grades. These competitions usually targeted the fourteen year age group and over and of a minimum weight of eighty-five lbs.

Furthermore, one of the earliest methods employed during the initial stages of establishment of cadet schools was to involve School Heads in the administrative structures. Thus, Headmasters assumed the roles of supervising the military training of the schoolboys and with time, were promoted to the posts of Commanding Officers of Cadet Units. Here they were given an extra pay, which was indeed an incentive tailor-made to keep them stay motivated. M. Rupiya notes that the rates of payment of Headmasters after 1926 depended on the total number of boys registered in each unit. For a Cadet Unit of between fifty and ninety-nine boys, the Head would receive £24 per year, £48 for a unit below 149 boys and £60 for a unit over 149 boys (Rupiya: 2000, 26) This was a package that few individuals would have resisted. Apart from giving Headmasters an extra pay, the state also rewarded personal achievement. For instance, in 1924, the Commandant of the junior cadet awarded the Sword of Honour to Lieut. E. Schultz of Chaplin High School for his great achievement in the junior category.

On the other hand, young boys often found it difficult to evade cadet training as Howman explains, 'I suppose it (cadet training) was voluntary but we were damn well cadets anyway. We had no option. McGee would have sloshed us if we hadn't turned up: so as far as I know, it was just part of the accepted pattern that you were a cadet.' McGee, as the Head of Plumtree High, would do anything within his means to make sure that the young boys comply with the orders. The fact that one could only be exempted on medical grounds further reinforces the

idea that cadet training was mandatory. Howman's statement also shows that the young men were supposed to accept some of these principles without questioning as they were 'damn well cadets anyway.' The likes of John Burton offer the other side of the story as he enjoyed being a cadet at Plumtree High. Now Captain of the E Company during the Second Chimurenga, Burton admits that he could have pursued a number of careers,

But the bush beyond the irrigated rugby fields and plainly plastered facades of his school had conceived and nurtured within him, a deep yearning for the freedom of spaces. The confines of university and a sterile career as a doctor or lawyer had not been for him, Burton had joined the Rhodesian Army instead. (Thrush: 1997, 30)

One can also argue that the youth became a target for conscription mainly because very few were volunteering for active military duty. In most of, if not all, defence units formed before 1900, the contribution of the young lads was insignificant. As one legislator observed, it was natural that the boys after receiving military drills at school, would find it less entertaining and reasonable to take up careers in the military.

In view of such developments, it is important to note that Section 5 of the 1926 Defence Act made cadet training compulsory to all able-bodied young White lads. This legal coercion followed a great appeal from legislators that Rhodesia had to emulate South Africa. G. Evans, in his study of the South African cadet system, notes that the aims and objectives of having such a scheme include the desire to foster, among the young generation, a sense of responsibility and love for the country and national flag, instil civil defence and train them into good citizenship as a forerunner to National Service. (Evans: 1989, 176) Thus attempts were made to control the youth's environment, determine their values, and shape their minds and national character. Here emphasis was put on the 'inculcation of discipline, loyalty and fostering of an ethnic identity and the acquisition of military and development skills.' (Evans: 1989, 180) It is therefore along these lines that cadet schemes became a forerunner to national service.

#### *The Second World War and Cadet Schools: The Post 1930 developments*

The outbreak of the Second World War had a profound effect on the administration of cadet schools. Unlike in 1914 where the British spirit of volunteering was the motivational force, the Second World War found Southern Rhodesia inadequately prepared. The strength of the colony was greatly reduced



by the First World War. By 1938, Rhodesia could only rely on 3000 White soldiers (Gann & Gelfand: 1964, 147) The cadet system had ceased briefly due to economic constraints posed by the Great Depression of 1930 and generally, there was still evidence of natural resistance to conscription from certain quarters of the society. The situation changed slightly when Tredgold became the new Minister of Defence and maintained the argument that training was more important than equipment, for weapons could be collected at short notice but practice at arms was often a long term project. (Gann & Gelfand: 1964, 147) However, by May 1940, Rhodesia was able to deploy some 1.600 men to the warfront but this fell short of the expected number. Therefore, it is not surprising to note that in the same year, the state passed a legislature aimed at conscripting all British subjects of European descent between 18 and 55 who had been resident in the country for more than six months prior to the outbreak of the hostilities. Mathematically, this involved senior cadets and the Territorial Active Force Unit. With the progression of the conflict, the colony had to adjust the minimum age of enlistment from nineteen and a half to eighteen by early 1942. Such post-1930 developments impacted on the cadet schemes and one of the earliest measures was to improve the curriculum.

The curriculum of the school cadet units after 1930 targeted both the training staff and the youth. The training staff included teachers, Warrant Officers (WOs) and Native Commissioners (NCOs) who were supposed to attend refresher courses during school holidays. For instance, in May 1945, there was a refresher course at King George VI Barracks and in attendance were captain H. Wilcock of St. Georges, Lieut G. Gardener from Prince Edward, Capt Slaven from Umtali High, Capt C.C. Taylor from Allan Wilson as well as Lieut E.J. Bannard, all being school masters. Refresher courses covered topics such as Fieldcraft, Section Battle Drill, Platoon Battle Drill, visual training and instruction in the use of Rifles, Sten MC and 2<sup>nd</sup> Mortar. This was meant to keep them abreast with latest military techniques such that they would be able to effectively train the young lads.

For the students, the curriculum comprised both compulsory and optional subjects. It was considered essential that at least half of the time demarcated for training be spent on compulsory subjects such as Musketry, drill and field Formation. The other half was devoted to optional subjects like Morse Signalling, First Aid, Bugling, Drumming and Lewis Gun. Usually training took two years and each training year corresponded with the school year, which ran from the first of January to the thirty-first of December. The teaching of both compulsory and optional subjects covered both junior and senior cadets. For instance, prior to 1944, Junior Cadets were taught compulsory subjects only in the two academic



years. At the end of each year, they were expected to fire a Miniature Range Course. Compulsory subjects took the form of Squad Drill with and without arms. The Cadets would also engage in Musketry with emphasis on mechanism and cleaning, rifle arming (usually 1 – 4 lessons, lesson 5 and 6 were on firing instructions while the other lessons were devoted to range discipline and practices). The last part of the Junior Cadets' training was spent on military formations that included infantry section leading, single file, file and extension line and signals. A mere look at such a training syllabus reflects that to a larger extent, efforts were made to make sure that young boys receive military basics and techniques at junior level. The aim was to make the lads behave, walk and act like mature soldiers. This also reflected efforts to make youth to appreciate and view the military as one of the best careers on offer in Rhodesia.

The curriculum of senior cadets also involved the teaching of both optional and compulsory subjects. Compulsory subjects focussed on Platoon Drill with an ammunition allowance of 100 rounds per member for an Annual Musketry course and 125 rounds for Lewis Gun. Unlike in the Junior Division, the Annual Miniature Range Course for senior cadets involved 100 rounds of ammunition. All these resources were bankrolled by the state in an effort to see the successful execution of the scheme. Such a training programme compares well with the South African case study in which standard six pupils were taught in various military aspects in addition to topics on intelligence and security, discipline and leadership, organisation in the South African Defence Force and internal service of a unit. Standard eight pupils were instructed in the necessity of compulsory military service, the meaning of National Service, among many other topics. (Evans: 1989, 286) The South African cadet system proceeded by way of Veld-Schools, Youth Preparedness, guidance and civil defence. The two cases only differed in the sense that the South African case was determined by the Nationalist Party's ideology that aimed at extending apartheid elements while Rhodesia by that time, lacked a strong political ideology.

In 1943, the training programme of senior cadets in Southern Rhodesia was modified and intensified in line with the demands on the battlefield. For instance the following training programmes were introduced: instruction in Artillery, 3.7. Howitzer by Southern Rhodesia light Battery, Signal training under the courtesy of Southern Rhodesia Signals coy in Salisbury, Bulawayo, Gwelo and Umtali, training in 3" Mortar under the infantry Training School in Gwelo and the Southern Rhodesia Reconnaissance Regiment in Umtali and Training in Light Machine Gun. Another key development was the decentralisation of training facilities and personnel for effective administrative purposes. For

instance, map reading became a responsibility of the training school of Gwelo while Driving and Maintenance of mechanical transport became a preserve of D&M School of Salisbury and training in Pioneering was to be conducted by the Southern Rhodesia Reconnaissance Regiment.

The year 1943 was also a major landmark in the history of cadet schools as witnessed by the introduction of specialist training in schools in January. All cadets of Senior Division were armed with SMLE rifles and bayonets and issued with full web equipment and clothes. The supplied clothes included overalls and battle dress uniforms, which were to be pulled over school uniforms. Bayonets were also introduced but under strict supervision. Bayonets were only issued out to those specialising in their use during parades and were to be immediately returned after practice. Bren LMG were issued out only at the rate of 1.DP and two Service Guns per Unit with an addition of one 2" Mortar and one 3" Mortar (with slipper Barrel) and 5 Sten Machine Carbines. To ensure further safety, training in 3" Mortar was determined by age and physical strength of a cadet. In addition, training in Sten Machine Carbines was confined to senior cadets who were in their final year of service and were regarded as sufficiently responsible. Therefore, great precaution was taken in the training of the cadets especially in relation to the use of bayonets and mortars.

At the end of each training programme, cadets were given oral and written tests. For instance, in an oral test carried out in October 1944, it was found that an average cadet had a sound general knowledge of the concepts required from a cadet student. However, it was discovered after the oral test that some more practice was needed in the actual transmission of messages. Thus, following the involvement of the colony in the Second World War, it became evident that the study of signals was crucial in achieving military victory. There was an examination for specialist certificate. The most successful candidates were awarded with Certificates of Efficiency. This Certificate of Efficiency enabled a cadet to be exempted from a certain part of his first year's training in the Territorial Active Force. The awarding of this certificate followed certain laid down channels. Most importantly, it was awarded and signed by an officer of the permanent staff whilst the duty of recommending cadets was left into the hands of Officers and NCOs of the Permanent staff. No cadet was recommended into joining the Territorial Active Force unless he had attained the age of seventeen years and had been efficiently involved in the cadet-training programme for at least three years. Such demands would not only encourage efficiency and productivity but also the nature and quality of the cadet trained.

It can also be argued that the 1943 developments came at a time when respective military authorities were beginning to boast that Southern Rhodesia was contributing immensely towards the war effort in terms of the quality of manpower more than any other British colony. It was pointed out that cadet training had enabled individuals to fit quickly into National Service and achieve personnel successes in different military careers they had been enrolled while at the same time the young cadets had fought gallantly in defence of the colony. This is so because some ex-senior cadets like Hayward, W.V. (19 years 1 month), Levesque A, (18 years 10 months), I.F. Retief (19 years 10 months) and Fraser A.K. (19 years 3 months) who had been deployed during the Second World War had scored some historic military victories on the war front. However despite these military achievements, a significant number of young boys died on the battlefield. For instance, Howman points out that about 65% of his former schoolmates at Plumtree perished in the Second World War.

The impact of the War on the cadet schools cannot only be discussed in the context of demographic losses but also in the way in which it affected the various schools across the country. Most importantly, production at several schools was affected. Staff Members who had been the core of the military training personnel were recruited inclusive of teachers, schoolmasters and warrant officers. Then the enlistment of cadets created divisions within the state. This followed government's announcement that all youth still at school were liable for call-up during the first year they would reach the age of 18 and that the Educational Department would furnish the Chief Recruiting Officer with all the details needed for record keeping and tracking such as names, addresses, dates of birth, certificates and credit results. In actual fact, the announcement contradicted earlier decrees. For example on 12 November 1941, it was pointed out that students were supposed to complete their degree programmes while those in the medical department were to continue as long as they made normal progress. This was only on paper as the state went on to conscript the youth into the army.

The enlistment of youth was met with mixed opinions in the society. Though the voices of parents had been silent over the establishment of cadet schools, by 1940 several parents became concerned by increased state interference into the affairs of the youth. Thus some parents started to question state interventionism on both moral and religious grounds. One good example is that of Reverend A. A. Louw of Pamushana Mission who tried to seek military exemption for his son, Andreis Adrian Louw on both educational and religious grounds. He argued that his son had just passed his matriculation with a first class and was due to join the University of Stellenbosch on the 28<sup>th</sup> of February 1943 where a bursary

had also been assigned to him for 3 years. Moreover, on the 11<sup>th</sup> of April, his son would turn 18 years meaning that he would be liable for military service. His major concern was that military call-up would jeopardise his son's chances of advancing academically while on the other hand, it would affect his desire to be a missionary just like himself and grandfather. This shows that not only the targeted group resisted, but also parents and guardians who mostly thought that calling up of 18 year olds was a pre-mature decision. However, these parents and guardians were bound by part of the provision of the 1918 Defence Act that made it clear that any parent or guardian attempting to prevent his son or ward from enlisting would be guilty of an offence and liable on conviction to a fine not exceeding £100 or imprisonment with or without hard labour for a period not more than six months. Thus it became difficult for most parents to speak on behalf of their sons.

Not only parents complained over the enlistment of school cadets for military duty but also some organisations and individuals concerned. Some school cadets such as G.M. Berry (aged 21) who was enrolled at Rhodes University for a Law Degree at the time of his call-up on the 28<sup>th</sup> of January 1942, applied to the Recruiting Office challenging his enlistment. His reasons for being unable to report for duty were purely academic. He had failed in the Roman Law in his final year but the University of South Africa had agreed to let him supplement in March of the following year. Therefore, full-time military service would interfere with his studies hence the request for postponement of the notice for a period of two months. Similarly, the Memorable Order of Tin Hats also protested on behalf of the youth over the increased militarisation of this young generation. In one of its letters, the organisation saw the whole exercise of conscripting school cadets as an interruption of studies and 'irreparable and one which would undoubtedly permanently prejudice their (students) future careers.' In a nutshell, the issue of conscripting school cadets faced different forms of resistance from different sectors and individuals.

### **The Cadet Scheme: An Overview**

In context of the involvement of school cadets in the Second World War, the cadet system should be viewed as frontier of experience that identified itself with the masculinity discourse. It was an exclusively male training programme, which often took place after normal learning hours. The young lads were set to benefit from engaging in physical and military training. However, though a lot of emphasis was on the physical, ideological indoctrination was not totally absent from these cadet schools. As E. T. Jolie notes, 'the strong patriotic note was not

absent in the teaching of Rhodesian children. On the Empire Day all larger school centres have some sort of fête for the children and an address is given on the meaning of this day. (Jolie: 1924, 239) This means that the young ones were constantly reminded of a glorious past that relived and celebrated the adventurous spirit of the Pioneer Column. Moreover, by merely separating boys from girls, White masculinity and male triumphalism were promoted. Here the lads would see themselves as protectors of White civilisation and progress as well as of women and children. The socialisation of men from boyhood along military lines would make them value masculine identities as primarily determined by the desire to protect women. This was however one of the major ideologies that was used by the Rhodesian Front during the Second Chimurenga.

Before attending physical and military training, the boys also benefited from the teaching of subjects such as History and Geography because of their relevance to the military. For example, through the teaching of History, the Rhodesians celebrated past achievements, learnt about great European Wars and those laborious efforts to,

Conquer this vast country was to be found here—children and the flag. Not for Gold, nor for Trade, nor for Strategy, not for Pride of Dominion only—but because the Briton—knows that his children must have horizons if they are to breed true to type—that they will never be more true to type and more worthy of the race than when they are making fresh Britons across the seas. (Jolie: 1924, 241)

The teaching of history was also distorted to depict the social construction of the society. For instance, the Shangani patrol in which Major Allan Wilson perished to an Ndebele army was celebrated in the context of martyrdom. (MacAthur: 1962, 62) There are quite a number of novels that try to foster such ideological thinking which include Major's *In Search of Gold*, and Johnston's *With The Rhodesian Horse*. The last book gave an appealing impression of a youngster testing his British manhood by participating in expansionist wars. (Chennells: 1995, 249) Most of these novels were always accessible in most Rhodesian schools and bookshops. Moore-King further reinforced a similar point when he notes that the White youth were told of 'a war that was a glorious adventure, an easy test of manhood, one that was right and always honourable and a war where the good were the White and the evil were Black. (Moore-King: 1989, 5) Thus the cadet scheme became another platform to impart some of these doctrines.

The bias towards White supremacy was also evident in several school textbooks. Most of textbooks would start by describing how missionaries had bought about

civilization to a society ruled by tribal wars and paganism. Here one can cite the likes of Jeannie M. Boggie's *First Steps in Civilizing Rhodesia*. Questions asked in some History textbooks also reinforced such White-engineered ideologies. One could find questions like 'The numbers of Africans in Rhodesia increased greatly under European rule, for— [tribal wars] were stopped, better farming was begun and—[clinics] were started to heal sick people and write six sentences about what Rhodes wanted to do with his money, and the country named after him.' (*Discovering Rhodesian History, Grade 5, 1975*). Thus, the initiatives were European and were the makers of history not Africans.

As far as cadet training was involved, Specialist Training in schools was discontinued in 1945 with the end of the War but general training programme continued right up to 1968. Here it formally ended due to among other factors, unproductiveness, its growing unpopularity in Britain, South Africa and other Territories, increase in White immigrants in the 1960s which gave the impression that manpower was now readily available in the colony. According to Taylor, the major reason for discontinuing the programme was that it was now becoming economically burdensome especially in terms of financial resources. He recalls that at Churchill High the Cadet training programme was discontinued in the 1960s following the outbreaks of disturbances in Nyasaland. Here, all rifles at the school were recollected and most of the training personnel recalled to go and serve in Nyasaland. (Interview with Taylor, 3 June 2006)

## **Conclusion**

In conclusion, the cadet system played a major role in preparing the youth for future military roles. The major emphasis was on military training in the form of compulsory activities such as field craft, drill, rifle shooting and signalling. It was in one way or another, education for patriotism, a forerunner to national service and a guiding manual to civil defence. It is not surprising to point out that due to such a scheme, the military leaders in the 1970s were claiming that they had one of the best fighting forces in the world. However, given the nature of the curriculum and the training program, one can point out that the cadet schools were meant to instil a high sense of mindless thinking and obedience in the minds of the youth. This was indeed a type of servitude where men can come to view war as desirable and unavoidable. It basically followed the formalisation of all relevant youth institutions, training and equipping the youth, manipulation of the environment and elements such as sport and camping activities.



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