



*"Ons het dit gemaak!"*

# Vasbyt '88 — Men got their teeth deep into it

**"Vasbyt? What is Vasbyt?" This is a question asked by hundreds of troops selected for leadership courses in the SADF each year. Everyone talks about it but until the exercise has been performed, you cannot really comment on it!**

The whole idea behind the exercise is to test endurance, initiative, teamwork, leadership and other qualities sought after in a person to lead others in the future. Vasbyt is a walk, over a given distance, along a planned route, along which candidates will be required to perform certain tasks under different forms of pressure.

1 SAI Bn C Coy Section Leader course started their ordeal on the 9th May 88. To some, it was a mere challenge, to others a waste of time, may be, but a time in which they would discover their true personalities, who and what they were.

The first day started off with no real problems, but a 20h00 when the last syndicate arrived at the overnight resort where hot showers, hamburgers and chalets awaited them, the exercise was no longer a Sunday school, reality had started to dawn on 140 very tired and morally broken young men. The day had its surprises, water points that most unfortunately turned into vinegar-tasting fluid. Tyres

and poles that had to be moved from one point to the next, a rain storm that added a slight rinse to the Free State winter and most unfortunately the hot water that had run out, hamburgers that were sold out and chalets that were fully booked.

Day two was probably the worst, a day that will be remembered by candidates who just did not have what it takes and fell by the wayside to be picked up by the waiting vehicles.

That night they knew two thirds of the journey was over, the question that hung over all of them was "I've made it this far, will I make it all the way?"

The final day started with a river crossing, stiff, sore and cold, they paddled over, kit pushed ahead of them, some becoming waterlogged and even heavier to carry. The final leg a 12km speed march to the finish, the finish? Who knows.

"Kom manne, not net 12 kilo's, Vasbyt ons is amper klaar" 'n paar uur daarna "Ons is klaar, ons het Vasbyt gemaak". Kit was loaded onto the Sa-

mils, rifles, everything. Candidates all changed into PT clothes and tekies. Now for the braai, everyone chatting, talking about the past few days, around the next bend, the hill and . . . a deathly hush and "Nee, dit kan nie wees nie, nee". Poles, drums, ropes and life jackets lay like a mountain in front of them.

"Manne, weens die oorstrooming hier in die Vrystaat, is die braaiplek nie meer hier nie, maar 'n redelike afstand met die rivier af". Each syndicate built it's own raft and just after dark, the last raft sailed in, everyone was soaked, freezing cold and very sore but at the same time, very, very happy, Vasbyt was a memory!

For those that finished, a memory that will live with them forever, for those that didn't, well, that the way the cookie crumbles. On a more realistic point of view, just the end of one exercise created to test character and find the true colours in men needed to keep the SADF on a winning streak that has been fought for and we must strive to keep.