

The Pantserlied

Song of the Armoured Corps



Was it his Germanic heritage of a nation who loves traditional music and marching songs, or was it the German 'Panzerlied' as sung by the Panzer Truppen in the film 'The Battle of the Bulge' or was it his dream to inspire tradition into the South African Armoured Corps. A song to be heartily sung during special ceremonies and parades, a song for South Africa and its Armoured Corps.

The inspiration shown by Col H.T. (Hans) Heinze, then Officer Commanding School of Armour started a long time ago but only came to fruition in 1991. During a team building get together with his senior staff members, he asked them what they knew about 'Traditions in the Armoured Corps' and was surprised to learn that in actual fact none really existed. A further thought going through his mind was how to impress young 'Armour Troops' with the start of their training, something to imprint on their young minds, something to inspire them and something to say 'We are Men in Armour the pride of the country, and troops of the South African Armoured Corps.' This brief summary will merely cover the history behind the Pantserlied and not about the ceremonies and the Flame of the Armour.

With the impending celebration of the 25th Anniversary of the School of Armour looming, Col Heinze wanted something unique for this gala occasion. He approached a Bloemfontein vocalist/composer, Phillip Kotze (who incidentally served in the Armoured Corps at 1 Special Service Battalion during his National Service) with the musical score of the German 'Panzerlied', requesting him to compose lyrics for the South African Armoured Corps. He added his ideas and emphasised that it must be inherent to Southern Africa and to the SA Armoured corps. He also asked Phillip to compose music for the Tankers Prayer. Phillip Kotze then composed the music and lyrics and sung it to Col Heinze, who listening to the words and music was overjoyed and gave his blessing to Phillip to finalise the compositions.

On the evening of 11 October 1991, Philip Kotze sang the Pantserlied and the Tankers Prayer to the personnel of the SA Armoured Corps and guests attending the 25th Anniversary celebrations of the School of Armour. These two lyrics were thus played and sung for the first time; the lyrics were a total surprise and were met with mixed feelings and scepticism.

The two lyrics remained in the background of Armour units until January 1992. On 20 January 1992 during the first ever annual Training Commencement Ceremony (also instigated by Col Heinze) and with the lighting of the Flame of the Armoured Corps (made by WO1 N.J. Coertze, RSM School of Armour) the Pantserlied was played followed by the Tankers Prayer.

The Pantserlied now eventually got through to Armour personnel and together with the

Tankers Prayer became part of Armour ceremonies and traditions and were also played during Shot Action get togethers. The Pantserlied and Tankers Prayer were here to stay.

During the early stages of 1994, Col B.C. (Chris) Gildenhuis, the new Officer Commanding School of Armour approached Phillip Kotze requesting him to translate the Pantserlied into English. In a letter, dated 26 July 1994, Phillip Kotze wrote these words to Col Gildenhuis 'What a battle! I practically sweated blood in the attempt to keep the song the same - and to translate it! I hope you will find it in order...' (translated from the original Afrikaans letter). The colonel, to his satisfaction, approved the words of 'The Song of the Armoured Corps'.

With the celebration of the SA Armoured Corps' 50th Anniversary a black male choir, trained and conducted by Chaplain (Ds) Johan Janse van Rensburg of 1 SSB, sang the Pantserlied and Tankers Prayer during the Gala Evening held on 14 September 1996 in the Sand du Plessis theatre in Bloemfontein.

On 11 September 1998 members of the armoured corps sang the Pantserlied and the Tankers Prayer for the first time and guests attending a 'Shot Action' held at 1 Special Service Battalion. Goose pimples, hair rose on the arms and maybe a tear or two greeted this emotional occasion. The Officer Commanding 1 Special Service Battalion, Col DJ. Laas remarked that from this date, during all 'Shot Actions' these two songs should be sung. To date all Full Time and Reserve Force Armour Units, immaterial of colour or creed gustily sing these two songs.

PANTSERLIED

In ysig kou, van 'n wintersnag
die skroeiend son, van 'n somersdag
Waai stormwinde, om ons heen
en reën dit dag, en nag aaneen.
Dan bly ons ferm, bly ons sterk
getrou aan God, ons land, ons werk.

Pantserman, bly getrou
ander hoop, en steun op jou.
Altyd ferm, altyd trots,
staan jy pantserman, sterk soos 'n rots.

Die grofgeskut, reën om ons heen
Steeds vorentoe, bly ons enjins dreun.
'n Hellevuur, verlig die nag
en ons bly bid, "Kom lig, kom dag"
Die slag geslaan, die stryd gewen
word ons geprys, gevrees, geken!

Pantserman, bly getrou
ander hoop, en steun op jou.
Altyd ferm, altyd trots,
staan jy pantserman, sterk soos 'n rots.

En as die wiel dan teen ons draai
as die winterswind, oor ons kom waai.
Heer as dit kan, en ek moet gaan
laat ander weet, laat hul, verstaan.
Ek sterf steeds ferm, sterf steeds sterk
getrou aan God, my land, my werk.

Pantserman, bly getrou
ander hoop, en steun op jou.
Altyd ferm, altyd trots,
staan jy pantserman, sterk soos 'n rots.

ARMOUR SONG

When icy winds, blow your way,
the scorching heat, of a summers day.
When winds of storm, howl round your ears,
and rain is pouring down like tears.
We'll still stand proud, still stand tall,
faithful to God, our land, our all -

Armoured man, still be true.
Others do rely on you!
Ever proud, ever strong -
That's the oath we pledge, ever be true!

Artillery shots, disturb the night.
Forward still, our engines fight.
A hellish light, enlightens night
and we keep praying 'Come day, come light.'
The struggle fought, the battle won -
we are respected, as team, as one -

Armoured man, still be true.
Others do rely on you!
Ever proud, ever strong -
That's the oath we pledge, ever be true!

And when the winds, of change do come.
When stormy clouds, block out the sun.
Lord when time comes, for me to go -
let others see, please let them know.
I die with pride, true to my call,
faithful to God, my land, my all -

Armoured man, still be true.
Others do rely on you!
Ever proud, ever strong -
That's the oath we pledge, ever be true!