

MILITIRATION AND CONSCRIPTION

The paper is not a lecture on this important matter. It is also not meant to be a complete thesis on the topic.

The paper will merely serve as ~~an~~ input to begin to ~~begin~~ to discuss in order to write up a more complete paper on the topic of conscription.

INTRODUCTION

Up to about 1960 the South African Defence Force was a relatively small operation. But after 1960 onwards we witness an escalation in the activities of the military on all levels of our society and more specifically in it's illegal occupation of Namibia.

There are specific reasons for this. And we must look at why this happened so that we would be able to understand the latest initiatives of the regime.

South Africa was experiencing one of it's worst crises. Infact it was a deep organic crisis, i.e. South Africa was facing a crisis on all levels of society.

Economic level

- After 1976/77 we saw an enormous outflow of foreign capital from S.A.
- A massive increase in unemployment.
- And a shortage of skilled labour.

Political level

- Nationwide uprisings in 1976
- 1977 SADF. defeat in Angola.
- Deaths in detentions.
- Increased military activities from both Swapo and the ANC.
- Pressure from overseas countries.
- And since 1973 S.A. was faced with increasingly organised and militant working class resistance which took at times an open anti-capitalist line.

It was because of this deep organic crisis that we find ~~that~~ the ruling class talking about restructuring society. We specifically could hear this from the quarters of big bussiness and the military.

In December 1977 we witness a conference between the military and big business. It became clear that they realised that narrow Afrikaner nationalism and racial hegemony is not the kind of system all South-Africans would defend. They agreed that a shift to the free market system ~~system~~ and economic growth and stability would be a more acceptable system. And that if they wanted to stem the tide of Revolution they had to co-opt and win the hearts and minds of big sectors of the oppressed and exploited. Though they realised that they needed to develop and expand their military apparatus and strength they also agreed that bullets kill bodies not beliefs. And that the war is only 20% military and 80% socio-economic. They agreed that if they lose the socio-economic struggle then they might as well not bother to fight the military one.

This clearly illustrates that the ruling class defines the struggle in political terms more than a clearcut military one.

It is with this kind of thinking that the ruling class began to reshape and to change our society. And over the past few years we saw a new structure emerging in the top hierarchy of government, i.e. the state security council, and it became the most influential decision making political institution in the country. (the SSC consists of top military, business and cabinet ministers and all major decisions first has to go through this council before it goes through parliament)

And from here onwards we are witnessing the SADF beginning to extend itself throughout all levels of society.

- top government - the SSC
- It's closer relationship with capitalists.
- An escalation in the activities of the SADF in Namibia.
- The destabilization of neighbouring states.
- The civic action programmes
- Border operations in Northern Tvl.
- Civil defence in urban areas.
- Manning roadblocks assisting the police.
- In Education.
  - Militarization of the media
  - Youth preparedness programmes
  - Cadet system

Also in black schools we find the SADF busy as;

- Teachers with the gun in the corner.
- In youth training camps.

This clearly illustrates a co-ordinated planned campaign of militarising our already oppressive society.

## CONSCRIPTION

The government, as part of its concerted effort to win over sections of the oppressed and exploited, introduced a New Deal to co-opt the coloureds and Indians.

As part of its new deal the government is planning to conscript coloured and Indian youth into the SADF. This should be seen as a serious attack on the progressive democratic movement. And we are forced to respond to this - as <sup>it</sup> has the potential to destroy the whole democratic movement and on the other hand also has the potential to take the liberation struggle forward in leaps and bounds. But we need to clearly understand the issue of conscription before actually embarking on a campaign.

### Conscription as an issue

We must see conscription as part and parcel of the government's fraud, the new deal. And our struggle against conscription should be part of our resistance against the divisive new deal.

Why does the ruling class deem it important to conscript coloured and Indian youth?

It is a clear attempt to divide the progressive movement in the country against the increased militancy and struggle of our people against Apartheid/Capitalism.

Secondly and very importantly is the way the government wants to portray the war in S.A. They want to make us and the world to think that the SADF is involved in a war against a foreign aggressor intent on overthrowing the current order and replacing it with an "atheistic Marxist dictatorship". This propaganda has been used to disguise the reality of the situation in S.A. - that within S.A., the SADF is fighting a civil war against fellow South Africans who could no longer passively accept their oppression and exploitation.

And meanwhile in Namibia the SADF, as a foreign aggressor, ensures the continued colonial type occupation and exploitation of that country. This is important to understand as our campaign against conscription should reflect this ideological struggle correctly.

We also see the deracialization of the economy at the edges and conscription serves to strengthen this, it shows a tendency to a more free market economy.

We also witness the increased army involvement in the Bantustans. With the aid of ex-Rhodesians, Israelis and the SADF controlling labour and any resistance in those areas. All those found redundant by the S.A. economy are dropped in the Bantustans and therefore it creates a highly inflammatory situation (massive unemployment). The army is used to control and to stabilize that situation.

In the light of all this we need to rigourously oppose conscription. But we need to plan the campaign. And there are important aspects to remember before planning any campaign.

#### Some broad principals

Non-racial unity- United action of all the oppressed against conscription. Throughout the campaign we must consolidate the unity of the oppressed and exploited against the devisive state strategy.

The ideological (political) importance/nature of the campaign-We have to fight against the propoganda that the SADF is in a fight against a foreign aggressor.

The campaign must be used to strengthen our organisations and structures.

- We must popularize our structures.

- Raise the consciousness of the masses on this issue.

- Develop popular slogans. To lent national cohesion to the campaign.

Because it might be taken up differently in different regions pending on specific conditions in the regions.

It should also be noted that conscription is an issue that will affect all sectors of our community and not only the youth who are directly affected by conscription. It therefore becomes important to discuss the issue as broad as possible, involving almost all the UDF affiliates.

#### Focus of the campaign

- Oppose drafting of legislation extending conscription to coloured and indian youth.

- Oppose the implementation of conscription.

- Oppose continued conscription of those already conscripted.

- Expose the SADF publicly and to counter it's propoganda.

- To support those who would refuse to comply with their call up's.

#### The campaign

It is clear that the campaign will have to go through different phases. And this paper could not mechanically map out the entire campaign. But very broadly...

- Internal education, i.e. educating our members around issues of conscription
  - resources

How it will affect different sites of struggle

- legislation

- rural areas

- slogans etc...

- The more high powered degree of mobilization and education and to use the issue to build our organisations.

- Phase of defiance.

It will be important for this conference to discuss the phases, especially the educational phase and broadly outline the others, more in depth.

It is my opinion that this conference could at most only clearly outline the educational phase and that we should agree to meet again to further discuss strategy.

Comrades conscription is a long term campaign. We must set realizable goals and we need to be flexible with regard to adjusting the course of the campaign while it is in progress.

Let us move forward united and remember that we shall never fight for Apartheid and exploitation.

Forward to a united democratic South Africa free from racism, oppression and exploitation.

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## **END CONSCRIPTION CAMPAIGN (ECC)**

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