

A Buffel in a China/Shop?

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It would seem that white papers and white power go together. Towards the end of April this was the case with the publishing of the Defence White Paper. This key defence policy document made a strong case for maintaining the present role of the SADF, while smoothing up its operations.

"We are presented in the White Paper" said an ECC spokesperson, "with a document that tinkers with the day to day workings of the SADF while ignoring to address the fact that it is playing a fundamental role in upholding apartheid. This is a crucial issue to confront and an

ommission such as that in this paper is dangerous + frightening in the extreme."

] The spokesperson went on to say that it did nothing to bring the day forward when the SADF ceased to function as the "armed defence of apartheid."

] The function of the SADF as a pillar of apartheid has been under attack from many quarters over recent years. This has especially been so since the widespread deployment of troops in townships since September 1984. And despite claims ^{by members of govt.} that the SADF ~~is~~ 'restoring law + order' by

~~members of government, that are~~ ^{it is}
~~increasingly~~ ^{being} seen as ^{an} enemies by
 township residents. Said an Alexandra
 township activist: ^{Recently} "The government
 is always talking about restoring
 order in the townships. What we
 say is that there can be no
 law, and no order, until we
 have peace. And now if we
 want peace we must have justice.
 And if we want justice we must
 get rid of apartheid, and its
 army in our townships. It's quite
 simple. Everybody agrees, everybody
 understands."

There is a similar message from

township after township around South Africa. The call for "Troops Out of the Townships" is being echoed by young and old. If there is a clear message to be gained in the townships it is that the SADF is identified with and seen as part of the Apartheid government structures.

A brief look at the white paper makes it clear that the SADF's ~~ideology~~ ^{think tanks} ~~is~~ ^{is} either dangerously ignorant of this fact; or tempting fate + trying to weigh ~~themselves~~ ^{itself} up against the weight of majority

opinion within the country. ~~perhaps~~
 Perhaps a case of a ~~perhaps~~
~~perhaps~~ buffet in a china shop.

] A large ~~part~~ section of the paper is devoted to an analysis of the current conflict within the country.

○ Defining the unrest as part of a total onslaught by revolutionary forces on South Africa, the paper lays the blame for this on "Soviet Russia as chief planner and initiator".

○] "Of the most important resistance groups forming the spearhead of this onslaught are the so-called Charterists, that is, those resistance groups which propagate the Freedom Charter as their policy manifesto. The chief exponent being the United

Democratic Front and its affiliates," the paper continues.

[This kind of reasoning ^{by the authorities} ~~was~~ ^{en} ~~because~~ the order of the day for years. And while we are today presented with the ogre of the Russian bear looming over the South African horizon - the so-called red threat, this was not always the case. The red threat has been the recent rationalisation by the apartheid government for maintaining its policies. It is the new version of the traditional "Swart gewaar" scare tactic ^{which ~~was~~ used} to win the support of a racist white public. 'Swart gewaar' has however become too racist

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for international consumption, and so the change. Sadly what hasn't changed is the political system which these terms attempt to legitimise; and of course its defence force - the SADF.

○ In all but a few quarters apartheid is seen as the root of the conflict, and there is widespread agreement that it needs to be abolished and a system of one-person ^{in a unitary South Africa} one-vote introduced if we are to even contemplate a peaceful future. No amount of red-baiting by the SADF will stop legitimate township protests from being aired; and ^{resistance} protest action being engaged in.

○ Within the context of the growing movement

for democracy has been the increasing involvement of whites in ~~a~~ resistance. A significant grouping in this respect has been the End Conscription Campaign. It, together with the Conscientious Objector Support Group, other civil rights organisations as well as the mainline churches have been calling for ^{an end} ~~changes~~ to the conscription of young~~er~~ white men as well as voicing protest at the role that the SADF has been playing.

] During last year these protests left the mass ^{daily} ~~meeting~~ stages and were addressed directly to the authorities. In giving presenting evidence to the SADF's

Geldenhuys Committee of enquiry, the ECC
 and other groups called for an end
 to conscription and the situation not unlike
 war within South Africa. At the
 very least ECC called for the recognition
 of all who in conscience felt they
 * could not serve in the SADF.

I Certain of the key recommendations
 of the Geldenhuys committee form
 the basis of the new Defence
 White Paper. For the many groups
 which made representations + the tens
 of thousand white South Africans
 who would support them the new
 proposals go no way towards meeting
 their demands. They have been entirely

ignored by the authorities who are convinced by the necessity for conscription + for the SADF to be playing a role in the townships. In fact the White Paper limits extending conscription to coloureds + Indians.

] In response to the lack of any change to the conscription laws, the ECC said that the "proposals display an arrogant disregard for what is a growing + sincere movement to end compulsory military service in the SADF."

] The ECC comment also on the SADF's reasoning in this regard. "To claim as the document does," said a

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a spokesperson, "that extending the provisions for conscientious objection would result in the SADF being reduced in efficiency" + "would ~~encourage~~ encourage an attempt against national service' is a clear admission on the part of the authorities that there exists a widespread resistance to conscription. Clearly it is only conscription + the threat of punitive measures which ensures that the SADF has sufficient personnel."

A strong suggestion is made in the White Paper that the SADF is going to attempt to increase its black component. Conscrip

tion for coloureds + indians, it would seem also, is not too distant a prospect. This together, with the promise of further ~~troop~~ deployments in townships is most frightening. ECC described this as abhorrent.

3 They went on to ~~say~~ add that regardless of the racial make-up of the SADF, it will continue to be seen as an enemy ~~the~~ by township residents for as long as it continues to defend apartheid. To call, as the White Paper does, for more black SADF members is highly insensitive, particularly in the light of the current conflict in our country." ~~The commitment~~

3 "The commitment by the state to conscripting coloureds + Indians in principle is worrying." This ~~had~~ ~~the~~ ~~post~~ would lead to increased divisions between our people, they said.

3 In ~~conclusion~~ It is important, ^{as well} to note the threatening tone aimed at the ECC. A call is made for increased efforts to counter the 'anti-national service campaign.' This the ECC spokesperson said was a clearly ~~via~~ veiled and ignorant attack on the ECC. "It is crude + misinformed in implying that the ECC is opposed to national service. This

is not true. ECC exists to work towards an end to conscription. We are in fact in favour of people performing a genuine national service but this we believe should not happen through forced military service. There are many constructive ways of serving our community. Being conscripted into the SADF + thus siding with apartheid is not one."

The White Paper has been tabled in parliament. Many of its suggestions have already been implemented; others are yet to be. It is a very dangerous path that the SADF is treading with this policy. It

requires a renewed and vigorous
resistance to counter its
disastrous prospects.

Hi Uiv,

This is it. Could you pass
one copy to Tony for 'Upfront'

Hi Tone

I'm sorry, but I've had
no time to edit this down.

So....

Love David.

Collection Number: AG1977

END CONSCRIPTION CAMPAIGN (ECC)

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