

MILITARISATION IN SOUTH AFRICA

For the purpose of this paper we are going to concentrate on the role of the military in the crisis of the ruling classes' hegemony in South Africa.

While the bureaucracy (both civil and military), and the social strata from which the bureaucracy is traditionally recruited, potentially can wield a lot of power, in South Africa it is more true of the civil than the military bureaucracy. Sweeping changes in the structure of the State over the past few years have been accompanied by a parallel reorganisation of the civil bureaucracy. The number of Departments has been reduced from 40 to 22, and the Public Service Commission has been charged with the task of producing a smaller but more effective and better paid public service. The Prime Minister has appointed the 'private sector leaders' to oversee the work of the commission. If it is remembered that State employees have in the past constituted a vital basis of support for the National Party, the significance of these changes become clearer. In effect the Prime Minister is now trying relying on leading businessmen, some of them even non-nationalist party businessmen representing four of the biggest monopolies in the country, to oversee the reduction and re-organisation of a crucial part site of employment and power for the Afrikaner petty bourgeoisie.

The opposite is true of the military. The army's duty is usually seen as defending the constitution - in other words the legal foundation of the state together with all the institutions erected on the foundation. However, this does not mean that armies are constitutionally barred from making politics. In South Africa the military proved to be surprisingly inovatory in the way it involved itself in the political field.

The military lined up with its natural allies, namely big business, and started to apply pressure for a more pragmatic policy with regards to the political and economic needs which need to be satisfied if the capitalist system is to survive. Initially this was done from outside the corridors of executive power. After "Muldergate", the subsequent decline in the power of the police and the Bureau of State Security (BOSS), and finally the take over of P.W. Botha as Prime Minister, who was Minister of Defence for over 10 years, the military had direct access to the positions of power in the South



African political apparatus. Some of the more visible indicators of this increasing influence were the promotion of General Magnus Malan (former head of the Army) to the position of Minister of Defence, and former Deputy Minister of Defence Kobie Coetzee, who became Minister of Justice.

More important are the less visible changes in the political and parliamentary structures:- The military and private sectors directly participate in the Government. During the Vorster era the cabinet was still important as a decisionmaking body, and cabinet ministers had relative autonomy over their own Departments. Under Botha the Cabinet has been virtually abolished as a responsible, decision-making political institution. It now seldom meets as a body, and leads a largely formal existence. The entire principle of cabinet responsibility has been shifted into the office of the head of the Government, dramatically increasing his power. The long established role of the National Party Cabinet as an important arena of struggle between the representatives in the National Party has been virtually terminated. Much of the Cabinets' former functions have been taken over by a system of six "Broad Cabinet Committees". The membership of the Cabinet committees is not only restricted to members of the National Party, nor to members of Parliament. Through these committees Botha has introduced directly into key roles in Government a number of prominent (non-Nationalist) businessmen and senior military officers.

Over and above this system of Cabinet Committees senior military officers now occupy key positions in the State Security Council. This ~~should~~ Council has emerged as the most influential decision-making political institution in the country. It is the main forum for planning the implementation of the much trumpeted Total Strategy. According to a White Paper on Defence in 1977 it aims to co-ordinate action on a united basis. It functions to:

advise people the Government regarding the formulation of national policy and strategy in connection with the security of the Republic, the manner in which this policy must be carried out, and a policy to combat any particular threat against the security of the Republic ... The aspects of national security which require attention are the following:

- Political action
- Military/para-military action
- Economic action
- Psychological action
- Scientific and technological action
- Religious - cultural action
- Manpower services
- Intelligence services
- Security services



- National supplies, resources and production
- Transportation and distribution services
- financial services
- community services
- Tele-communication services.

Military advisors also sit on 15 of the interdepartmental committees covering all major aspects of the government and whose recommendations are co-ordinated through the State Security Council. On a local level joint planning centres, which have been set up in 9 military regions into which the country is divided, are largely under the control of military advisors. Large pieces of land are available in all nine these areas for direct military use when ever necessary. Many of these areas are portrayed to the public as game reserves or experimental farming areas.

Recently the military's central role in planning South Africa's foreign policy has been confirmed. Both general Van der Westhuizen of Military Intelligence, and General Magnus Malan, Minister of Defence, were among the top five negotiators at the Maroela Meeting with Kenneth Kaunda. But there is also a more sinister side to this, and that is the S.A.D.F.'s widespread involvement in destabilising southern African states, we will look at this aspect in more detail later.

The basis of this military involvement lies, at least partially, in the economic involvement of the military, as a state apparatus, with productive capital in South Africa. In other words, at one level, it is impossible to clearly distinguish the military from other bourgeois organisations and institutions, or to distinguish those organisations from the military. In this regard it seems logical that interests of the military and the bourgeoisie are merging. Both both the military and great capital seems to enforce each others political power. While groups both groups' will is directed towards the same end, it usually requires a lengthy process before the convergence of views can become politically and organisationally expressed.

The military's interventions in politics can be reactionary, conservative, reformist or revolutionary; it all depends on the social classes to which it is allied at any given time. In Chile the army intervened to prop up the power of the landed classes and the industrial bourgeoisie; in Ethiopia the 'colonels' destroyed the semi-feudal aristocracy which provided the basis for Haile Selassie's power, and initiated a revolutionary process. In Guatemala the recent



military coup threw out an ultra reactionary and installed a reformist, Rios Montt, as the leading political figure.

However, whatever the class basis and political nature of the military's intervention in politics, it necessarily transposes the authoritarian command structure of the army into the executive and bureaucracy. The army knows no other way of ruling. As such military action will in the final analyses always exhibit characteristics of rigid control and close monitoring of society.

A society where the military has significant power in the political executive will usually become increasingly militarised. This is strikingly true of South Africa. Call up orders for white males have been extended, this law is the latest of a series of massive expansions of the SADF. Compared to its size today the SADF in 1960 was a relatively small force, with only 10 000 permanent employees and volunteers, and with an expenditure which account for only R39 million, or 7% of the budget. South Africa's defence budget has risen as follows: R44m in 1961, R472-m in 1973, R1 899-m in 1978, and R2 465-m in 1981. In the past 10 years there has been an increase of 860%.

Massive expansions in numbers took place in 1967 when universal conscription was introduced for whites between the ages of 17 and 65, thus immediately increasing the number of trainees by 50%. The introduction of universal conscription came as a direct result of the deteriorating situation in the white ruled states of Southern Africa. The late 50's and early 60's had been marked by the emergence of independent Africa states which were hostile to apartheid and supported its opponents. In Angola in 1961 and in Mozambique in 1964 guerilla wars of liberation were launched. Then in 1966 SWAPO launched its armed struggle against S.A. in Namibia, by which stage the guerilla war had begun in Zimbabwe with the active participation of units of Umkhonto we Sizwe.

With each intensification of the liberation struggle, the SADF has attempted to draw larger numbers of people into its ranks. Thus by 1977, when military service was lengthened to 2 years plus 240 days (excluding border camps), the size of the SADF's standing operational force had swollen to 105 000. This came one year after the 1976 Soweto uprising, when thousands of new ANC recruits left for training. By 1979 the size of the operational force had risen to 180 000.



Further defence force expansions has taken place through the growing incorporation of women and black people. 1000 women are being trained every year at George. They are employed in a variety of roles - not only the traditional 'female' roles of nursing and clerical assistance, but also in a number of operational roles, including intelligence and the Signal Corps.

Blacks, too, are increasingly being recruited, so that today 5% of the SADF, but significantly almost 20% of the operational force is black. Which beg the question, are they being used as cannon fodder? Many of these people are forced by increasing unemployment to join the army. More important are the Bantustan batallions, which having been trained by the SADF, are used to enforce viciously the repressive and corrupt rule of "homeland" leaders.

The SABC is broadcasting more and more programmes of a military nature. Advertisements are increasingly adopting war as a theme. A light truck is advertised as a "little tank". A lawn mower is promoted to fight 'the battle of the lawn'. And a video camera is insidioudly marketed under the banner: "Shoot the workers; it's the only way they'll learn."

While on a pure social level censorship might have been relaxed, there has been a state security clamp down on information of a political and military nature. The commercial press is already hamstrung to such an extent that newspapers find it impossible to portray even descriptively the true nature of the South African society.

In this context the social schollar Gramsci's remarks are correct, "... the military strength, when organised, lays down the law to the ruling class, at least as far as the 'form' of the solution is concerned, if not the content" Gramsci, "Prison Notebooks", p.213).

To understand the merging interests of Great Capital and the Army, it is important to understand the history of arms manufacturing in South-Africa. Anticipating an arms embargoe, South Africa began to develop an arms industry by manufacturing amunition in 1961. In 1964 with the assistance of private industry, the Armaments Board and the Armaments Development and Product Corporation were established.



At the end of 1964, the then Minister of Defence, Jim Fouché, announced that South Africa was "practically self-sufficient". This announcement was made a year after the United Nations called for an arms embargo on South Africa. In 1977, The Armaments Development and Production act combined the two armaments production bodies into one - the Armaments Corporation (ARMSCOR). Today Armscor has assets of over 12 billion rand, and ranks as a major industrial giant. Besides ensuring that 80% of South Africa's arms are locally produced, ARMSCOR draws large sectors of business into the defence force machinery. Over 800 companies are involved in production, and together ~~yt~~ they employ over 100 000 workers.

It must be remembered that the private industry's contribution to the war effort extends well beyond the production of arms. The provision of transport, food and administrative communications and training make S.A.'s low level war a profitable venture for large sectors of big business. Companies are thus eager to gain a share in the arms market; this would be even more so in a period of recession.

Up to 60% of Armscor's production is contracted out of to the private sector. This partnership with private enterprise is according to the Financial Mail crucial to Armscor's efficiency.

The partnership is large: there is said to be about 50 main contractors who are directly involved in the manufacturing of arms, 400 subcontractors supplying major components and about 1500 firms which supply the "nuts and bolts", to keep the war machinery running (Star, 13,03,82).

During 1981 ARMSCOR produced R1 4000 -m worth of defence equipment which involved guided missiles, aircraft, artillery, armoured vehicles and computers. For the past few years, there have been persistent reports that South Africa has exploded a nuclear device. In February 1982 the STAR reported that a U.S. study had concluded that South Africa certainly had the technological and economic capacity to produce nuclear weapons (Star, 09/02/82). A recent publication by the Council on Foreign Relations in the U.S.A., entitled "The Global Politics of Arms Sales", state it as a fact that S.A. has a nuclear bomb to its disposal!

South Africa reported to be the world's tenth largest arms producer (STAR, 31/03/82) also produces many other military products such as



napalm and is preparing to produce submarines.

ARMSCOR is not only supplying the local demand for arms, but according to Fred Bell, chief executive designate of ARMSCOR, "One of the prime objectives of ARMSCOR is to establish South Africa as an arms exporter on the international market" (Star, 13/03/82).

ARMSCOR seems to fairly successful in this aim, and one of its mayor successes was the participation in the international arms exhibition in Greece last year.

One of the few cases of allēdged arms exports publicised in censored South African newspapers has been that of the sale of 60 IML tanks sold to Morocco (and also the training of the personnel to use them against the Polisario Front (Transvaler, 01/04/82). For further information on breaches of the arms embargoe, it will be good- to refer to the already mentioned publication, "The Global Politics of Arms Sāles", by Andrew J. Pierre being a book published by the American Council of Foreign Relations it is conservative and would certianly not exaggerate.

One of the best examples of the close co-operation between ARMSCOR and big business is the considerable overlap with private sector management. John Maree an executive director from Barlow Rand, was released from his duties and headed ARMSCOR for three years. This partnership had been described as "crucial to ARMSCOR's efficiency" (Financial Mail, 11/09/82). Among Maree's achievements at ARMSCOR has been listed "the heavy private sector involvement, both at board and production levels, in armaments and production" (Financial Mail, 11/09/81).

The collaboration between the military and the private business sector in securing better strategival and business conditions in South Africa lead them together to a secret meeting at the Rand Afrikaans University to discuss the proposals of the Wiehahn and Riekert commissions. All delegates had to sign an undertaking in terms of the Official Secrets Act, forbidding them from disclosing certian issues of conference sessions held in camera. The conference was opened by Magnus Malan, and significantly was jointly chaired by Ian MacKenzie, chairman of Standard Bank, and Major-General Neil Webster, Defence Director of General Resources..



While the new controllers of South Africa seem to be willing to water down "hardline Apartheid", along the lines of the labour needs of big industrial monopolies and their ally ARMSCOR the South African Government and parliament still need to maintain a certain degree of credibility in the eyes of the "volk". Specially while these new proposals are endangering the "priviledges" of some groups who were traditionally their strongest supporters.

This means that the capitalusts must be granted more freedom, and yet the "volk" must be ensured that the leadership still protects their material and cultural goods, and finally an increasingly militant black population needs to be neutralised in the belief that ewnpossibilities are created for them to fulfill their political and material aspirarions.

On the one hand it is imporant to water down staunch nationalism, but at the same hand time to give them a new cause to live and fight for. That cause became the fear of communism. The military plays an important role on co-opting the youth. The school cadet service was officdally launched in 1976 and is co-ordinated by the SADF and the six ed education departments. It serves as a forerunner to national servide, promoting an interest in civil defence and aiming to 'stimulate in cadets a loyalty to their country'. With cadet training being statrted at coloured and Indian schools, it is anticipated that the number of cadets will rise to 200 000. Veldschools, where people are subjected to bng sessions of anti-communist propaganda, contribute to this militarised socialisation. Lectures at Veldschools discuss "Total onslaught against he fatherland" etc., and further 'education' involves learning how to handel and fire an R1 rifle. Vecently a junior police force was intro-duced, and the SABC broadcasted lengthy interviews with some of the 16b year old boys who told how they have were taught to use an R1, and how to follow and arrest suspected "terrorists".

The army is also involved in the education of white male teachers. After completion of studies they commence their national service and are put through a special course at Oudtshoorn. This has been described by one writer as the most effective brainwashing course the army has. After completing the course they will perhaps be deemed suitable for taking part in the army's Civic Action Programme and for doing cadet instruction in Schools when they finished their period of service. Teachers, of course, are also regularly called to camps and thus further militarise the schools.



The role which is being forced on the white South Africa, male and female, in the 80's is that of soldier. What could be more clear than the statement by P.W. Botha a few years ago. "Our education must train people for war".

All this is done in the name of Total Strategy. Total Strategy enables the powers to be, to control all the spheres of each South African existence. The best person to explain this is Defence Minister, Gen. Magnus Malan: "Total Strategy should encompass the state, the private sector, diplomacy, commerce, industry and organisations like ARMSCOR, the Council of Scientific and Industrial Research (C.S.I.R.), and the Human Sciences Research Council (H.S.R.C.)".

Lessons learnt from Vietnam and recent experiences in Zimbabwe and Angola provided military strategists with the insight that it is impossible to enforce subservience and maintain control only with brutal force. Gen. G J J Boshoff in the PRP ~~Journal~~ Journal Progress described the war as being "80% socio-economic and only 20% military. If we lose the socio-economic struggle, then we need not even bother to fight the military one". Gen. Magnus Malan recently declared that, "... bullets kill bodies not beliefs. I would like to remind you that the Portugese did not loose the military war in Angola and Mozambique, but they lost faith and the trust of the inhabitants of these countries." (Daily News, 13/06/79). For the last few years the military indulged in a comprehensive prpopaganda campaign. Pamphlets and posters are often distributed in the border areas portaying the guerri guerillas as ehemies who exploit and slaughter the local population while the SADF helps them, The amount of viewing time spent by TV1 and TV 2&3 on the military increased dramatically over the last few months. RUcently Paratus published a ser-ies of interviews with Opposition Party spokesmen on the military, where they gave their unconditional support for the SADF and the Namibian war.

Many soldiers are used as teachers in black schools, they teach in their uniforms with R1 rifles standing in the corner of the class room. The military is often used in supplyin food and water in draught and disaster struck areas. The military also started with a series of week-long camps for black schoolchildren. Recently yhere have been frequent reports of black schoolchildren from Cape Towns townships, being dragged of to a defence Force school in Hermanus for a week long training camp. This was done in many cases without the permission of the parents. These campd are something similar to the Veldschools for white pupils, and except for long anti-communist and pro-Government lectures, the children are treated in the best possible



manner. Sometimes they are even issued with defence force T-shirts, anti-communist booklets and other small reminders of a "wonderful week."

It has been alleged that S.A. is also involved in attempts to destabilise certain of the countries in Southern Africa, particularly Angola, Mozambique, but also Zimbabwe, Lesotho and Botswana.

Claims of destabilisation programmes suggest that they are aimed at:

- damaging the economies of the frontline states;
- supporting materially and logistically opposition dissident groups in those territories with a view of creating internal stability;
- preventing those states involved from offering their territories as bases for South African and Namibian guerilla fighters;
- in some cases, to install more sympathetic governments, at least Mozambique and Angola. S.A. sponsored forces are involved in acts of sabotage, banditry, assassinations, and acts of savagery against members of the local populations.

The following allegations have been made:

- The 1975 invasion of Angola attempted to prevent the MPLA from assuming power by supporting and attempting to install a UNITA government.
- The Matola and Maseru raids in 1981 and '82 (these raids were openly acknowledged by the SADF)
- It is claimed that South Africa controls and directs a number of armed groups hostile to Mozambique. In particular, the MNR has carried out acts of sabotage, murder and committed atrocities in an attempt to undermine the political work of the Frelimo government.
- South African forces are alleged to be training 5 000 former Rhodesian auxiliaries in the northern Transvaal. Denials of this have been weakened by the recent entry of South African trained ex-Rhodesians into Zimbabwe, and the subsequent engagement between this group and the Zimbabwean forces.

The new concessions to so-called coloureds and Indians, and the right of representation in P.W. Botha's new three tier parliament opens the doors wide open to co-opt these groups not only into a more privileged middle-class but also eventually to conscript them into the SADF. This will happen not only because of a need to further increase the



manpower of the army, but also because of the prppaganda value. Conscription of "coloureds" and Indians is intended to break the unity-between black people and coloured communities.

The increasing centralisation of the Government is in itself significant. Botha concentrates within his own political person the interests of the Cape National party organisation, and that also means the political outlook of great Afrikaner Capital (i.e. SANLAM and Rembrandt) which is traditionally based in the Cape, as well as those of the military high command, ARMSCOR concentrates the interests of capital, the military apparatus, and the political organs of the state.

Thus without undergoing the formal process of a coup d'etat, the vestigial remains of parliamentary government in SA have been almost totally abolished, and the bourgeois politics have been militarised to a very considerable extent.

Finally we must refer back to Gramsci's evaluation of the role of the military; "A political movement can be military character even if the army as such does not participate in it openly. In certain situations it may happen that it suits them better not to "reveal" the army, not to have it cross the bounds of what is 'constitutional', not to introduce politics into the ranks, as the saying goes - so that the homogeneity between officers and other ranks is maintained, on a terrain of apparent neutrality and superiority to the factions, yet it is nonetheless the army, that is to say the General Staff and the officer corps, which determines the new situation and dominates it" (Gramsci, p.212).



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