

STRATEGY THIS TIME was totally offensive & long-term as opposed to the containment operation in '85. But I think we are only now realising the exact character of this offensive which distinguishes it from all previous repressive onslaughts.

A 3-phase counter-revolutionary strategy has been unfolding which was fairly clearly identified in a paper written for the Harae's Childrens Conference last year. Have you got a copy of it? ~~The ideas need developing but basically they~~ The ideas need developing but basically they are as follows: The regime recognised that a revolutionary situation was developing rapidly. What was therefore needed was not a reform strategy (which couldnt work in this situation) but a counter-revolutionary strategy. This strategy like its opposite (a revolutionary strategy) entailed a fundamental restructuring of the terrain.

The FIRST PHASE is the all-out frontal assault on the democratic movement & the masses, what Vlok called "bombing the enemy in his bases". This phase has two prongs:

1. crushing the revolutionary spirit of the masses, or 'pacifying' them, by using large-scale random terror in the townships & villages.

2. SMASHING THE POLITICAL INFRASTRUCTURE of the democratic movement by the use of mass activist detention & other repressive measures, specifically aimed at crippling organisations. The widespread terror & repression of this phase also aims to make it impossible for the ANC to operate politically, isolating it from the masses, & attempting to defeat it militarily.

PHASE TWO: Having created WHAT THE PAPER CALLS A POLITICAL WASTELAND, the state aims to develop a counter-revolutionary politics in the communities. This phase has three prongs:

1. to create & entrench local structures of authority & control which are in some way 'organic' to the local communities (as opposed to the occupying SANDF & SAP) in the absence of a real alternative popular power.

2. to introduce socio-economic measures in response to popular discontent where it is seen as a breeding ground for 'revolutionary mobilisation'

3. to identify where problem individuals, problem organisations & problem areas continue to exist & to ensure that these problems are eliminated (not only figuratively). That is, to isolate & ~~xxx~~ carry out an offensive against what are seen as the remaining revolutionary bases.

The task of strategising & co-ordinating these operations is given to the JMC'S . The JMCs would at local level, identify structures that needed to be set up, resurrect the informer network, identify potential grievances , propaganda & projects that needed to be embarked on etc.

While the phases are over-lapping & wont necessarily proceed in the way the state envisages, they clearly saw themselves as moving into Phase 2 in June last year. Some of the indicators of this were the mass release of detainees, but the continued detention of a core of 'revolutionaries'; the ideological offensive & surge in socio-economic programmes; the activities of the JMCs at a local level; the greater reliance on local apparatuses of repression & control, ranging from kitsconstabls to vigilantes to informer networks ; more recently the attempts to set up local authorities (all but 5 in the E. Cape "have been reestablished") ; the withdrawal or reduced presence of SADF from the townships & schools, & the decrease in wide-scale random acts of terror against the population.

But it is clear that this phase must not be interpreted as 'reformist' or abandoning repression & terror. The socio economic measure ('reforms') are very specifically connected to mass struggle (i.e. sanitation in Alex but not Harrismith). Repression & terror on the other hand are transformed from blunt instruments into sharp weapons. This use of selected repression/ terror has recently been seen in a no. of ways: the assassination of ANC cadres ; the focussed attention on the detention of people who are seen as key to the continued functioning of the democratic movement; the harsh measures used in areas e.g. Soweto where mass mobilisation & organisation continue to develop..

A couple of recent press reports indicate this sort of thinking. Sunday Times: according to the latest issue of Suid Afrikaan, a document doing the rounds in government circles" proposes a 30-20-50 formula : 30% of blacks are "moderate & place a high value on law & order " ;

20% are radical & want a black government' ; the other 50% are 'sitting on the sidelines' waiting to see who'll win' . The formula contends that there are only 2000-3000 people in the country who are truly bent on fomenting unrest. Lock them up & the middle group will be won over. "

The second report , on the same day, headed Fear strikes Township said that "unknown people have started a terror campaign in Atteredgeville' . Three people have been killed , one injured, & extensive damage done to property in attacks in the area in the past 3 weeks. The attacks have left local residents on t~~he~~ alert... There have been calls for the formation of a vigilante group to help stop the increasing spiral of violence. " What were the attacks the report was referring to
1. a limpet mine explosion at the Attredgeville municipal offices 2. an AK47 attack on a house where 3 policemen were shot dead . Also significant here was the fact that the report was published by City Press. The ANC are described as 'unknown people' , attacks on the police are depicted as attacks on the community ; & residents are said to be calling for the formation of a vigilante group to stop the violence. It is not beyond the realms of possibility that the Pretoria JMC planned this intervention & that vigilante attacks are on the cards in the area , which by the way has also been targeted for detentions of leading activists recently. '

The THIRD PHASE is more hazy, but the scenario is broadly the following: having crushed the democratic movement , ruptured the revolutionary climate, installed the RSCs JMCs BLAs , the way will now be paved for a national constitutional/ negotiated settlement. It is not clear what form this will take , & it seems that the state is leaving its options open , depending on how the situation develops between now & then. Talk of consultation & negotiation leading to a national constitutional solution implies the possibility of anything ranging from the Muzorewa option to an indigenous version of Lancaster House - negotiations with a liberation movement which, if not smashed, finds itself in a chronically weakened state.

Anyway it is clear that a lot of water has to flow under the bridge before this stage is reached, most critically the municipal elections & any attempt to hold elections for the NSC. The regime is painfully aware that these episodes could well be the obstacles on which their counter-revolutionary strategy will flounder.

I think we have to concede that the state had ~~a~~ measure of success with Phase 1. It is too early to tell what the effects of the far more complex & contradictory Phase 2 will be, but it clearly contains various dangers. Having said this I was surprised to find on my return that although there was the usual defeatist ~~scholarly~~ strain, there was a strong element of political confidence that the state would not succeed in its objectives. This is not the untempered triumphalism of before, but a confidence which appears to me to be objectively grounded in the current reality.

If we go back to Phase 1, it is clear that the state only scored partial successes. At one level there is no doubt that these attempts to terrorise the masses into submission (a la Israel) had some definite effects. The unbridled militancy of the '84-86 period subsided dramatically. But this surface calm was incorrectly interpreted in some quarters as indicating a mood of defeat & passivity. While this element may have crept in, indications are that it was not the most significant component of mass consciousness (if, for arguments sake we are to aggregate what is in reality an uneven & heterogeneous phenomenon).

The outstanding feature of this period is not the absence of mass militancy but the fact that when called to do so, the masses exhibited a remarkable degree of readiness to embark on disciplined & united mass action, in spite of the extent of state terror & organisational breakdown which they had to deal with. Also significant is the fact that forms of mass action, in general, involved far lower degrees of coercion than had been the case in '84-86, despite the fact that the general level of organisation was lower. This implies in some respects at least, an advance in mass consciousness. Indications of this were the Fronts Christmas campaigns, the May 5 & 6 stayaway & the March 21st stayaway. The preparedness of people to respond to calls identified with COSATU & UDF especially, & around national political issues, was quite remarkable, given the lack of space for organisations to operate.

Two factors re above : 1. the relative incapacity of the em. m.ment to consistently tap & give direction to this high level of mass consciousness 2. the critical & selective attitude of the masses to calls for action- a consistent refusal to take actions which were seen to be rash & ill-considered. This has also been reflected in the manner in which action has been embarked upon- with a constraint & discipline which corresponds to the real balance of forces.

The second prong of Phase one has also only been a partial success. While enormous damage has been wreaked on the Dem. Movement's structures, the D.M. has maintained an elementary presence in most areas & even grown in others.

It seems to me that this situation which Vlok calls the 'continuing revolutionary climate', led to the Feb 24th bannings. The timing of the crackdown was designed to avoid the mistake of August 1984 where a crackdown at the peak of mobilisation only served to exacerbate the situation. Feb 24th was sufficiently before the May/June period to avoid the bannings issue being fed into this volatile period, & most importantly it was substantially before the October Municipal elections. Its timing before the by-elections was a bonus.

According to this logic the state, having immobilised the national political centre of the D.M. would now pick off the remaining leading activists & crush remaining structures. The objective would be to achieve this before the October Elections. Events since Feb 24 tend to bear out this scenario. A large no. of leading activists have been detained, particularly from SAYCO. This scenario also doesn't bode well for the category of activists which the state has identified - i.e. 'comrades of a special type(sic)' - either in or out of prison. As indicated earlier it implies long-term detention for 'CSTs' and an even grimmer fate for those not detained.

The offensive & apparently confident posture of this strategy in fact obscures its essentially weak & contradictory character. While in theory the counter-revolutionary strategy combines terror, attack on organisations, socio-economic measures, development of local counter-revolutionary bases, & constitutional & negotiated options; the state is fundamentally so weak politically & unable to deliver the goods economically, that the law & order / repression / terror components must continue to dominate. This at best achieves a suppression of organisation & mobilisation, but is unable to fundamentally disorganise the 'rev. bloc'. In other words, despite the appearance of being a counter-revolutionary offensive, it too is a holding action, although on a far broader scale & with much more devastating consequences than before. Any attempt to move beyond this 'stalemate' risks the potential of exploding the suppressed mass energy which has been building up. This is precisely the potential which the state has identified in the October elections.

So, there is actually an element of panic that the strategy isn't quite going to plan. If it were the February actions wouldn't have been necessary. The clampdown has in turn given a critical focus to international action, & has opened up the churches as a terrain of mass opposition in a way that has never been possible before. An important complicating factor for the regime is the growing fragmentation of the white bloc, which leads them to play to the right wing in strident ways, thereby undermining certain elements of their counter-revolutionary strategy.

And then there is their counter-revolutionary thrust in Southern Africa which is designed to alter the balance of forces in the region as a whole. While devastating in its consequences, this offensive is stretching the state on all fronts & has the contradictory effect of cementing a stronger regional & international bloc lined up against it.

Another unintentional effect of the clampdown may be to provoke a 'turn to the streets'. The crackdown will firstly force the structures of the D.M. deeper under ground; but secondly may provoke the youth in particular into militant mass action. These bannings could well redirect the energy which has gone into defending & rebuilding structures. Also the current attacks on the trade union movement aiming to roll back 1. workers economic gains in the last number of years & 2. their involvement in politics, could well provoke a wave of mass worker militancy. There is already evidence of this in demonstrations against the Labour Bill which have seen workers in factory battles with the police. Of course this analysis is purely speculative & developments may be in the opposite direction. But these are some of the contradictions the state is sitting on.

A further complication for the state is the fact that the bantustan structures are beginning to crack up in many areas. This is especially significant given the fact that THEY house half the African population, and, until 1985, these structures had remained relatively successful in containing opposition. Despite a vicious crackdown in these areas since the June 86, there have been continuing signs of resistance & organisation from the side of the people; and growing corruption squabbling & disorganisation on the side of the bantustan rulers. At the village level this has resulted in widespread challenging of tribal authorities, particularly in areas like Lebowa, but more recently also in Natal. At the macro level: the Transkei / Bop coups & squabbles for power, the defeat of independence for KwaNdebele & the plan to incorporate Moutse. Serious tension exists around the incorporation of Overwacht into QwaQwa. The challenge to Buthelezi

appears to be not only PMB based , but has also spread to ^{b/} a number of rural areas on the one hand (see the latest SALB) & the Durban township complex ^{b/} on the other. The combination of this growing instability of the bantustan structures , & the states problems in reimposing township structures indicates that the crisis for apartheid rule in the African areas is increasingly national although different in appearance from '86.

In other words, despite a situation of surface calm , a volatile situation could well be developing under the surface . What the state wants to avoid in the ^{n/} months leading up to the elections is this exploding in a repeat of ~~1984~~ 1984 , except this time with all the experience, quantitative & qualitative growth of the struggle since then, being brought to bear. On the other hand the state will also bring to bear the critical lessons that it has learnt since then . Presumably they are working to avoid a situation where they provoke a 1984-type development, both in terms of their overall national approach & using their JMC-system as a sensory device to diffuse such build-ups.