

THE MILITARISATION
OF THE SOUTH AFRICAN REGIME

P A R T 4

- Jimmy Wilson

Besides military service, there are other ways in which civilians (white civilians, in particular) are being drawn into Botha's 'Total Strategy' web.

Civil Defence units, manned by civilians, are being established all over the country. So far over 700 such units have been set up. Their role is to man essential services in times of emergency - such as fire-fighting, emergency relief services etc.

Some industries - especially those considered as strategically important - are forming white employee commando units, with the intention not only of protecting the industry against sabotage, but also of providing an internal force to put down any rebellion on the part of the Black workforce.

The number of weapons in the hands of white civilians is growing rapidly. At the end of 1977 about 750,000 whites had been issued with gun licences. By now the number must be near one million.

White schoolchildren are being prepared for an adulthood of war. One of the subjects they are taught is 'Youth Preparedness', in which they are given lectures with a strong military bias. Also, more and more schoolchildren are being incorporated into the school cadet system under which they are given basic military preparation, such as marching drill etc. Botha has also been threatening to introduce this school cadet system into Coloured and Indian schools - a proposal which has met with strong opposition from the Coloured and Indian communities.

The regime is using every conceivable propaganda means - newspapers, magazines, radio, television, the entertainment media, schools and churches - to psychologically prepare the South African population for war. A quick flick through the pages of any of the popular South African magazines and papers will reveal that pictures of weapons and soldiers are fast becoming as popular, if not more popular, than the usual pictures of half-naked women.

Strange happenings

As we said right at the beginning of this series of articles - some strange things have been happening in our country recently. These 'strange things' are nothing more than the regime's preparations for war. Botha's 'Total Strategy' is rapidly engulfing the whole country and creeping into every aspect of South African society.

The South African ruling class has got a problem. No matter what strategies, manoeuvres, and tricks they employ, the revolution continues to loom larger and larger on the horizon like a hot ball of fire. Verwoed's uncompromising 'pure apartheid' approach just made matters worse. Vorster's 'detente' approach only fooled those who wanted to be fooled. Even the machinations of their powerful imperialist allies are beginning to look like the sad, desperate attempts of a child to put together a complicated broken toy.

As we have said - the rise to power of P. W. Botha is the coming into play of the South African ruling class' last card - its final desperate attempt to stop the ball of fire from coming any closer.

Staving off revolution

Thus the militarisation of the South African regime is the ruling clique's last-ditch strategy. By means of it they hope to stave off revolution in the following ways:

- 1) by the suppression of any internal uprising;
- 2) by the prevention of the entry of guerrilla units into the country, the isolation of the guerrillas from the people, and the elimination of any guerrilla units that are operating inside the country;
- 3) by the elimination of guerrillas in their rear bases in neighbouring countries;
- 4) by the intimidation into submission of neighbouring states by means of superior military and economic power;
- 5) by the acceleration of the bantustan programme in order to create buffer 'states' between 'white South Africa' and the revolutionary forces, and to give the war a

'Black against Black' image;

- 6) by military, economic and diplomatic efforts to prevent or to reverse the revolutions in Zimbabwe, Namibia, Mozambique and Angola.

By trying to achieve these objectives the regime hopes to create a situation in which the revolution cannot succeed. They hope that by sheer might they can discourage the forces ranged against them, and by so doing, buy the time they think is necessary for their apartheid dream to fully unfold, thus trying to eliminate what they see as the contradictions which are causing all their problems.

The ANC prepares

For almost two decades the ANC has seen, and acted on the knowledge, that the goals laid out in the Freedom Charter cannot be achieved without a protracted armed struggle. It has taken into account the actual and potential strength of the enemy, and it has devoted the last two decades to preparing itself politically, organisationally and militarily in order to build the forces necessary to sap, drain and finally squeeze the life out of the enemy.

The regime's 'Total War' strategy and its rapid militarisation comes as no surprise to the ANC. We never believed that the enemy would spend much time fussing around conference tables and fidgeting about with compromises unless it was forced to do so at the point of the people's spear.

History's trap

It would be naive to believe that the enemy's hurried build-up of its military capabilities is simply a direct result of our preparations for armed struggle. That is partly true. But in an important sense the militarisation of the South African regime is an inevitable consequence of the very nature of South African society and its history.

The rulers of South Africa cannot maintain a brutal system without the use of brutal means. But brutality breeds resistance. The only way South Africa's rulers can bring an end to resistance would be by bringing an end to the brutal system. But to do so would mean bringing an end to their own rule.

No ruling class in the history of the human species has ever brought an end to its own rule.

For those who might tremble at the growing might of the South African military machine - at the seemingly impressive facts and figures this series of articles has outlined - it is important to remember that the very fact that the South African regime is following an inevitable path is an indication of the fact that it is falling into a trap laid for it by history - a trap which many great powers (greater even than Botha's 'Total War' machine) have fallen into.

History gives us many examples of the failure of military might to crush people's revolution.

The great French army, with centuries of warfare experience behind it, and a huge armaments industry of its own, could not hold back the liberation of the Algerian people. The sophisticated Batista military machine, backed by American imperialism, could not stop the total liberation of the Cuban people. The brutal Portuguese army of Salazar and Caetano could not, despite years of oppression and massacre, turn back the tide of revolution in Mozambique, Angola and Guinea Bissau.

The highly-trained and equipped army of the Shah of Iran, despite the support of American advisors, bases and equipment, was turned into a fleeing rabble under the weight of the revolutionary anger of the Iranian people, armed only with the most basic of equipment and virtually no training. Not long ago we saw another friend of imperialism - Somoza - running home to his masters, leaving his country in the hands of its rightful owners.

And that greatest of economic and military imperialist powers - the USA - which spent millions of dollars a day on the Vietnam war, and dropped more bombs on that heroic country than were dropped during the whole of the Second World War, was sent yelping home like a whipped dog by the sheer political will and determination of the Vietnamese people.

Racists on the run

These are not just encouraging stories of events that took place in other countries, at other times.

We've seen our own oppressors marching with typical racist bravado into Angola, only to turn tail and run home in the face of the united Angolan people.

And even closer to home we can already see the glaring weaknesses of the racist's military machine. A large part of the regime's current military preparations and activity have been directed towards countering the guerrilla forces of SWAPO in Namibia. The introduction of new military units, the production and purchasing of new weapons, the increasing involvement of civilians in the military, the attempt to "win the hearts and minds" of the people, the growing use of Flacks in the SADF - all these have been put into play in Namibia. Yet every day brings new evidence that SWAPO is increasing its foothold in Namibia, that it is striking heavier and heavier blows against the enemy. In short - despite the 'Grand Strategy' of Botha - SWAPO's armed struggle is moving rapidly along the path to liberation.

Analysis and Action

Why is this so? Why is military might no guarantee of the defeat of revolution? Why have the greatest military and economic powers of the world failed to stop the freedom struggles of peoples all over the world, armed only with the most basic of equipment and with minimum manpower? Why can't Botha's 'mighty' military machine put a swift and sharp end to SWAPO in Namibia? Why in our own struggle do we say 'Victory is certain' no matter how powerful the enemy?

All of us are familiar with the general principles governing struggle between the materially weak oppressed and the materially strong oppressor. What is important is to understand the working out of these principles in the concrete South African situation. Such an understanding will throw light on the direction in which the militarisation of the South African regime is leading. It will make clear the nature of the trap the Botha clique is walking into. Most importantly - it will show us where and how we must act, for although the development of history is inevitable, its precise

course and tempo depends on organised forces like ourselves making the correct analysis and engaging in the correct actions at the correct time.

Botha is building a huge edifice on very shaky foundations. The bigger the edifice becomes the more the foundations tremble. In the final part of our series of articles we will take a closer look at where the regime's militarisation strategy is leading it. We will look at some of the weaknesses and loopholes in the racist fortress which point the way to placing our own people in the long list of heroic peoples who have dealt death blows to the once mighty bastions of reaction throughout this ever-progressing world of ours.

To be continued....

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"THE PERSPECTIVE IN SOUTH AFRICA IS QUITE CLEAR. IT IS ONE OF A MOUNTING OFFENSIVE BY THE MASSES OF OUR PEOPLE WAGING POLITICAL, ECONOMIC AND MILITARY BATTLES. THERE IS NO WAY IN WHICH THE ENEMY CAN STOP THIS. BUT WE KNOW THAT THE RACISTS WILL SEEK TO EXACT A HIGH TOLL IN THE LIVES OF OUR PEOPLE. ALL THE MANOEUVRING THAT HE IS ENGAGED IN IS INTENDED TO INCREASE HIS MURDEROUS POWER TO SLOW DOWN OUR PROGRESS TO VICTORY. YET VICTORY IS CERTAIN".

- COMRADE PRESIDENT O.R. TAMBO -

in address to 6th Non-Aligned Conference.