

James Selfe.

j PFP Research Department.

Introduction.

The process of militarization in South Africa has occurred in three distinct ways. First, there is a formal and visible manifestation of militarization, which has, for example, been observed in the increase in the visible profile of the security forces in our society, so much so that they now intrude into Virtually every home in our country. This has occurred chiefly by means, in the white community, of school cadets and the system of conscription, and in the black community, of the semi-permanent presence of the troops in the townships.

t F... ..

This first process has taken place gradually, yet openly and legally, in the sense of having been sanctioned by the law. The extension of conscription, for example, passed through definite stages: first, only volunteers were required, then ballottees, then universal conscription for nine months, then twelve months, then two years, with an ever-increasing pbst-initial service commitment. What is important, though, is that each stage of extension was accompanied by amendments to the Defence Act, debated by Parliament, and increasingly by the wider public.

There can be no doubt that this formal process has had important secondary influences in our society, principally in the sphere of political socialization. Our school-going and young adult white population are acclimatized to believe that military service is both inevitable and perhaps desirable; by contrast, 2/.....

k

our black population sees in the presence of Casspirs and Buffels on their doorstep the most graphic underscoring of a statement which might otherwise be contradicted - namely, that our country is somewhere down the slippery slope towards civil war .

The political socialization which has occurred has been powerfully bolstered within the white group by a second form of militarization, namely, an extension of the ideology of militarization. Perhaps "ideology" is a formal description of the steady and unrelenting propaganda which the government and its agencies promote that the country is subjected to a "total onslaught", but whatever the name, the effect has been the same. Most white South Africans are convinced that their government is engaged in a life and death struggle with the forces of communism, because, over the years, there has been a steady flow of persuasion that this is the case. All too frequently, we tend to ignore this element of socialization, since it seems extravagant and even melodramatic. Yet I am powerfully reminded of Professor Keppel-Jones's remark when reflecting on his book "When Smuts goes":

"The other thing that impressed me was how the Nats, and their many fellow-travellers, had succeeded in injecting their ideas into what might be called the climate of opinion, i.e. the unstated assumptions that were becoming general currency."

This climate of opinion has facilitated the third form of militarization, a bureaucratic arrangement known now as the National Security Management System. Unlike the formal process of militarization, this arrangement is not statutorily controlled, and its parameters shrink or expand as threats - real or imagined - materialize and dissipate. Instead of being visible, it is
3/.....

shrouded in secrecy, its functionaries hiding behind statutory provisions, such as the Protection of Information Act, which they themselves poorly understand.

Because the NSMS is an ad hoc and largely invisible system, the debate on the subject has more frequently than not been poorly-informed, conspiratorial or downright paranoid. This does not imply that the development of this militarized system of political decision-making is not a cause for concern; on the contrary, it is an extremely worrying and sinister development. But it is essential, in my view, to base one's analysis on as much hard evidence as possible. This, amongst other things, allows one to devise appropriate political strategies to these developments-

In the course of this address, I will be focussing primarily on the ideological input which gave rise to the NSMS, and the organizational structures in this system itself. I hope to be able to demonstrate that there is a direct link which exists between the rhetoric and the structures. If this will serve to alert us to take seemingly sensational pronouncements by government seriously, I hope to be able to achieve something thereby.

The Development of the Ideology.

There is a commonly held view that the NSMS is a new development which has corresponded with the imposition of the state of emergency. This is not true. The NSMS is an organizational system which has been carefully conceived and planned over a period of more than fifteen years, and which has been accompanied by the fostering of a deliberate belief that South Africa is the subject of a total onslaught master-minded by the Soviet Union.

4/.....

w mm Vi

In part, the view that the NSMS is a new development has been capped - as I have said - by the unwillingness on the part of political observers to take what government spokesmen have been saying seriously. Chiefly, this is because much of what was said by these spokesmen seemed at the time to be so outrageous that it did not warrant serious consideration. For example, Mr. P.W. Botha gave an important speech in July 1970, in which he referred to the pressure on South Africa from the Afro-Asian bloc. He continued,

"Behind the great pressure of the Afro-Asian campaign there is a deeper force, and that is the overall strategy which has been let loose upon the Western world by the forces of communism. ...It is a communistic onslaught under the cloak of religion or freedom, or whatever, and it is directed against stability, security and progress.

...It applies to all spheres. This threat facing us is a total threat, an overall strategy. It is operative in the economic sphere. It manifests itself in the form of incitement to boycotts and illegal strikes. It manifests itself in the sowing of confusion in government ranks, such as by means of student unrest, etc. It manifests itself, consciously or unconsciously, in the news media of the world. It manifests itself through subversion, infiltration and the sowing of disorder, and in terrorism in its various forms. ... The military and economic fronts are but two of the ways in which that onslaught is being made on the Western world, but there are numerous others. Today virtually every sphere of life is part of that overall strategy and that total onslaught on the free world and the people of the West".

At this stage, a member of the House of Assembly interjected:

"You are dreaming again".

In 1970, this reaction was understandable, as indeed it remains today. But Mr. Botha was in deadly earnest. He wished to

5/..;..

u-._-_-_- _____.A V-

A

persuade anyone who was prepared to listen that a total onslaught against the West existed, and that South Africa, both because of its minerals and its strategic geo-political position, formed an integral and important part in this total onslaught.

The most immediate objective of his rhetoric was a foreign policy one, in the sense that if Mr. Botha could persuade the West that such an onslaught existed, and that the onslaught which he perceived to exist against South Africa was part of this global strategy by the Soviet Union, he might thereby induce the West to become involved in the defence of South Africa. Unfortunately for him, though, the West saw things differently, and whatever those governments' own perceptions about Soviet global policy, they saw the Southern African conflict in terms of the struggle of indigineous peoples against colonialism or apartheid, which the Soviet Union might be exploiting for its own incidental purposes. Indeed, if anything, the West was inclined to blame South Africa, Rhodesia and Portugal for providing precisely the opportunity for the Soviet Union to increase its influence and involvement in the sub-region.

Simultaneously and, after it was apparent that the West was not prepared to join a South African-sponsored crusade against Soviet expansionism, with greater intensity, Mr. Botha turned his attention to selling the idea of a total onslaught to his own colleagues, to the State administration, and to the wider South African public. In this campaign, he made use of every platform at his disposal, but more particularly the biennial Defence White Papers, to advance his theories: for example, in his preface to the 1973 Defence White Paper, Mr. Botha wrote:

"Like the rest of the Free World, the RSA is a target for international communism and its cohorts - leftist activist,

6/.....

exaggerated humanism, permissiveness, materialism and related ideologies. In addition, the RSA has been singled out as a special target for the by-products of their ideologies, such as black racialism, exaggerated individual freedom, one-man-one-vote, and a host of other slogans employed against us on the basis of double standards."

Mr. Botha continued to advance his theories and had some significant success, at least in persuading his own colleagues, so much so that towards the end of 1973, Mr. Vorster wrote in a Cabinet document about

"toenemende politieke en propaganda-aanslag teen die Republiek, beide in intensiteit en omvang...

Mr. Botha, however, had cause to be less satisfied by the response by the South African state to the onslaught. With the failure of his policy to make the defence of South Africa integral to the defence of the West, he wished to establish an integrated national effort with which to counteract the onslaught. Again, the idea of a total strategy to counter the total onslaught is not new, and was advanced by Mr. Botha in his 1970 speech. He argued that, in order to counteract the total onslaught effectively there needed to be an "opposing will" which, he said, "needed to be 'just as total on your side in order to offer resistance'. He broadened out on this theme in the 1973 Defence White Paper by arguing that all the elements in South Africa's policy structure needed to be

"closely coordinated and integrated". He wrote, "The conclusion to be stressed is that our defence is not a matter for the Defence Force only, but also for every department (of state) and citizen; it demands dedication, vigilance and sacrifice - not only from the Defence Force, but from all who are privileged to find a home in this country."

7/.....

The idea was, then, that in order to counteract the total strategy, a coordinated and integrated total defence effort embracing all state departments, and if necessary all citizens as well, would have to be launched. But how was this to be brought about?

Mr. Botha was fortunate to have found a theoretician whose appreciation of the strategic aims of the Soviet Union corresponded with his own, but who also set out an administrative model for operationalizing a total counteractive strategy. This theoretician, General Andre Beaufre, wrote a book in 1965, and most of his ideas have been adopted, more or less, it seems, *voetstoets*. Beaufre believed that it was necessary both to formulate a clear counteractive strategic plan, and to direct that plan at the highest level. He expressed it thus:

"We are faced with a veritable pyramid of differing, though interdependent forms of strategy; these must be clearly identified if they are to be welded into the best series of coordinated actions, all aimed at the same overall object".

Beaufre had no doubt about how this strategy should be directed:

"At the top. of the pyramid, and under the direct control of the Government ... is total strategy, whose task it is to define how total war should be conducted. Its task is to lay down the object for each specialized category of strategy and the manner in which all - 'political, economic, diplomatic and military - should be woven, in together."

Now was he in any doubt about how the overall control should be exercised, in practical terms. Note well the words he used:

8/.....

dThis level of strategy is clearly the prerogative of the Heads of Government, assisted by the Chief of the Defence Staff and some high level Defence Committee".

Mr. Botha proceeded to attempt to recreate this structure in South Africa. The first step was to convert the Defence Cabinet Committee into the State Security Council, a step achieved by the passage of the Security Intelligence and State Security Council Act through Parliament in 1972. Unfortunately, both because of Mr. Vorster's apparent lack of interest in a total strategy, and because of the rivalry of Mr. Botha's colleagues, he was able to achieve little else prior to being elected Prime Minister in 1978.

Not that his endeavours in this regard ceased; on the contrary, two investigations were undertaken by the Public Service Commission in 1973 and 1975 to assess the practicality of creating a national security management system. But it was primarily inculcated the idea of a total onslaught/total strategy in a cadre of senior military officers that the most success was achieved. From 1973 onwards, total strategy became a subject at the Defence Forces' Joint Staff Course, the qualifying course for senior management in the SADF. In this process, a new generation of officers came to the fore, who proved invaluable when the system came to be deployed. This was so much so that in September 1979 General du Toit, previously the Director of Military Intelligence, was moved to say of the then just-established Security Management System:

"Wat die Weermag betref, is dit geen geheim dat hy die inisieerder en stuwende agter die nuwe nasionale strategie is nie, en nog die enigste departement is wat oor die oorstigtelike beeld en metodiek beskik om dit deur te voer nie."

9/.....

What distinguished this new breed of officers was their uniform acceptance that South Africa was engaged in a "revolutionary War", and that in such a war military prowess constituted only a fraction of the effort required. What was far more important was the political, social and economic action which accompanied military action, and that, without winning the battle for the "hearts and minds" of the population, the military battle was as good as lost. It was therefore essential that reform on political, economic and social take place on a coordinated basis, as an essential adjunct to military strategy.

One other extremely important preparatory step was taken by Mr. Botha prior to his accession to the premiership, and that was the organising of a National Security Seminar at the University of Pretoria at the end of March 1977. Apart from the predictable paper on the nature of the onslaught, and the inability of the Defence Force to counteract it effectively on its own, Dr. Jan Lombard delivered an illuminating paper entitled "The Economic Aspects of National Security: Some Policy Considerations." In it he argued that the State had two principal responsibilities, namely to guarantee security and to provide welfare. While out of their nature the State's security, or order functions needed to be centralized, he suggested that the State's welfare functions ought, as far as possible, to be decentralized and democratized. This paper, too, found a receptive audience in P.W. Botha.

When Mr. Botha became Prime Minister in September 1978, the stage was set for the introduction of the NSMS. Armed with the staff-work which had preceded his accession, and, as part of a general rationalization of the Public Service, Mr. Botha created the organizational framework which became known as the NSMS. This system, which became operative on 6th August, 1979, has retained its form, with minor adaptations, ever since.

10/.....

THE STRUCTURE

Most people who have followed the debate on the NSMS in the Weekly Mail and elsewhere will be familiar with its basic structure, but I will briefly recap it here.

The system comprises 6 basic elements.

(1) The Cabinet is formally in control of the NSMS. There have been suggestions that the State Security Council has to a large extent supplanted the Cabinet as the de facto executive decision-making body. While out of the very nature of central government decision-making, it is not always easy to prove or disprove such assertions, my research inclines me to the view that the Cabinet does act as the final arbiter in matters which have political ramifications, and does lay down broad policy parameters within which the security management system operates. However, because of the largely overlapping memberships between the SSC and the Cabinet, the issue of who actually makes decisions where is largely academic.

(2) The State Security Council is one of four permanent cabinet committees which replaced the 33 or more cabinet committees which existed during the Vorster administration, but it is the only one whose composition and functions are prescribed by Statute, in this case, the Security Intelligence and State Security Council Act of 1972. Formerly the Defence Cabinet Committee, the SSC's Chairman is the State President, and further consists of the senior Minister of the Republic, the Ministers of Foreign Affairs, Defence, Law and Order and Justice, as well as the Director-General or Heads of these Departments. The Act also provides for the permanent or ad hoc inclusion of other Ministers or officials, and during 1984, P.W. Botha told Parliament that Chris Heunis, Barend du Plessis and Gerriit Viljoen had been permanently co-opted. Other may attend meetings of the SSC if they wish to raise matters of significance. i
ll/.....

The functions of the SSC are also determined by the Act and amount to advising the Government on national security threats and steps which ought to be taken to counteract such threats. However, according to the Prime Minister's Office's Report for 1980, 'its functions are 3... more inclusive than those laid down in the Act' This might - and probably does - mean that the SSC acts as a type of inner cabinet charged with all matters remotely concerned with national security. The significance of this lies in the fact that it is the dominant ideology of 'total onslaught', any or all the activities of the state may come within a definition of 'national security', and therefore within the purview of the State Security Council.

(3) The Working Committee of the SSC Probably the least significant of the components, the working committee consists of all the official members of the SSC. As far as can be ascertained, the working committee acts as management committee/caucus of the SSC

(4) The Secretariat. This is the most important new innovation in the structure - a permanent professional staff structure to give effect to the determinations of the SSC. Approximately 100 officials are attached to the secretariat on secondment, 56% of whom are drawn from the N18, 16% from the SADF, 16% from the SAP and 11% from the Department of Foreign Affairs. Organizationally, the secretariat is divided into four branches. The Administrative Branch is politically not relevant, but the other three branches are extremely significant. The National Intelligence Interpretation Branch, consisting of representatives of all institutions involved in intelligence gathering, is charged with the responsibility of providing evaluated intelligence to the secretariat and to the SSC. The raw intelligence is provided by the constituent departments in their ordinary line functions, as well as through the Joint Management Centres. The intelligence which this body gathers is very sophisticated and comprehensive: no doubt a report on this very conference will soon be in the process of being evaluated. However, given the total onslaught thought pattern, it is likely that the quality of the evaluation of raw intelligence would tend to be less sophisticated than in countries where the bureaucracy is less ideologically identified with the ruling elite.

12/.....

The Strategic Communication Branch has the responsibility for "selling" the idea of a total strategy to the public and ensuring that all actions by the NSMS are portrayed in the best possible light. The obvious association between the Branch and the Bureau for Information and the Police Public Relations Sections cannot be overlooked.

But the most important branch, and the most politically significant is the Strategy Branch, whose job it is to construct 'total strategies' for recommendation to the SSC. Armed with evaluated intelligence, and assisted by the interdepartmental committees, the Strategy Branch formulates and systematizes total strategies to counteract total onslaughts.

(5) The Interdepartmental Committees It would be inconceivable for a smallish branch of the secretariat to construct total strategy alone.

It is assisted by 13 interdepartmental committees, each one dealing with an area of government activity which is the responsibility of more than one government department. The idea of instituting interdepartmental committees arose out of the perceived necessity for total strategy to be comprehensive and co-ordinated, spanning the activities of more than one government institution. In practical terms, before a recommendation on a total strategy is made by the Strategy Branch, the problem is first referred to as many IDC's as can or do have an interest in that problem.

(6) The Joint Management Centres The JMC's have excited the most attention from commentators; strangely, since their role in actual policy-making is relatively small. However, obviously because they are at the cutting edge of government policy as it is deployed on the ground, they tend to be most visible and therefore most controversial.

There are 11 JMC's countrywide, corresponding to the area of the SADF commands. It is anticipated that at some future stage, the JMC areas will correspond with the 9 economic planning regions, but at the moment considerations of efficiency incline the JMC's to follow command boundaries. Beneath the JMC's are 60 odd sub-JMC's and approximately 350 Mini-JMC's. It is anticipated that sub-JMC's will, also at some time in the future, correspond with the boundaries of the RSC's; at the moment, the borders seem to be ad hoc.

13/.....

Out of their nature, the MMC's are the local representatives of the SMS. They, too, are subdivided into committees which deal with specific issues, and which mirror the branches in the secretariat. A Joint INtelligence Committee is responsible for the collation of local intelligence for onward transmission to the National Intelligence Interpretation Branch. A communications committee, meshing in with the Strategic Communication Branch, provides that the activities of the JMC are "correctly" reported. A Constitutional, Social and Economic Committee is responsible for the co-ordination of the deployment of the total strategy on local level. By virtue of the JMC's, the NSMS is able carefully to monitor developments on the ground as well as to apply and assess total strategy at local level.

The work of the JMCs is to identify what locally constitutes contributing to the revolutionary climate, and advising the secretariat of such-a climate. Either singly, or as part of a country-wide strategy, the JMC's are charged with the responsibility of lowering the revolutionary climate by a judicious mix of security action and socio-economic reform. In the processk the JMC'S are inevitably drawn into political controversy, since they seek to restore the prestige and credibility of the formal political structures against the challenge which the progressive community organizations have launched.

Critique and Conclusion: Democracy vs. Efficiency.

I said at the outset that the development of the NSMS was an extremely sinister and worrying development. Why should this be so? Advocates of the NSMS argue - quite correctly - that the System has simplified lines of communication and cut red tape, providing long-overdue services to communities deprived of them for too long. What is the objection to the form, they argue, as long as the system is efficient. .

There are several serious objections. Firstly, democracy demands that government should be open, and accountable to the community it governs. This is certainly not true of the NSMS, which operates in secrecy, its officials responsible only to an executive State President who is not directly elected by, or responsible to, even the white electorate, never mind the people as a whole. Furthermore, not only are decisions secret, but the decisions are mad on the basis not necessarily of what the people want, but what will cause the people to be quiescent. Therefore the good of the greatest number is not the touchstone, but the lack of complaining by this greatest number.

The basic lack of respect shown by these security apparatchniks of democratic values is further complicated by the nature of the society in which we live. In most homogenous societies, there is a basic consensus on fundamental national goals, allowing thereby the population to identify with the objectives of the security services. This is not so in South Africa where conflict has become endemic. In Such a society, no fundamental consensus-exists; the security services are seen - rightly or wrongly - as the props of a fundamentally unjust dispensation. When the security services then additionally involve themselves in civil government (or indeed replace it) the conflict takes on a more serious dimension. In the process, the security

15/.....