

REVIEW of

War and Society: The Militarisation of South Africa edited by Jacklyn Cock & Laurie Nathan (David Philip: Cape Town & Johannesburg, 1989).

Bill Freund

Militarisation is defined in the introduction to this volume as 'the mobilisation of resources for war. This process has developed as a result of intensifying resistance to minority rule. It has been spearheaded by the SADF, and has in turn expanded and extended the power and influence of the military' (p4). Cock and Nathan, in a sensible introduction, explain that the concept is a debatable one and in fact introduce into the South African literature some of the scholarly peace studies literature which has been produced elsewhere in recent years. How and to what extent has South Africa been transformed in recent years through the militarisation of society? This is the question which dominates this new collection of twenty-four essays.

In fact, these essays are very diffuse but they can be divided into a number of categories, of which my own selection would be somewhat different from the book sections. Mark Phillips essentially describes the SADF in brief and Kathy Satchwell expounds on the legal basis for its operations. Marian Lacey, in the only historical chapter, looks at the army in the first years after Union. A second category of essays considers the SADF in practice. Weaver, Davies and Grest take up the South African military role in Namibia, Mozambique and Angola respectively. Carole Cooper writes about the military in the bantustans (where conscription was introduced but has never been enforced and the armies seem to play an elite role); Nathan reviews the active role of the army in the townships after 1984; and Cobbett looks at how the SADF copes with the arms boycott of South Africa. This category is in fact the subject of a significant, in part international, literature, as one considers the work of such writers as Frankel, Cawthra, Grundy, Hanlon, Leonard and Seegers. Two authors in this collection, Graeme Simpson and Sean Archer, try to assess the militarisation of the economy. Then there is a third selection of pieces that move away from any direct assessment of the military to discuss the war in the townships and the militarist-bureaucrat alliance in implementing urban policy more generally by Swilling and Phillips, Selve, Boraine and Haysom.

Apart from two factual essays on anti-military organisation by Nathan (on the ECC), and by Winkler and Nathan (on the churches), the remaining essays can be grouped together as they are broadly speaking looking at the sociology of militarisation. State 'discourse' (propaganda?) is considered by Posel; military-related toys and other consumer goods by Jochelson and Buntman; the impact on business by Philip; the relationship to the schools by Gavin Evans; the discussion of war in South African, mainly Afrikaans, literature, by Koomhof, in what I found to be the most original and thought-provoking piece of the collection; troop psychology by Sandler; and the situation of women in the SADF and attitudes towards women by Cock.

The format of this volume itself tends to be the cause of its main limitation.

The average essay is a mere 14 pages and it can be argued that the total is really too diffused and scattershot to present a unified picture. Many essays are purely descriptive and others based on little more than a selection of secondary reading. Most of the articles that talk about South African politics or describe army activity repeat material well-known from other writing and should really have been eliminated or cut down to one or two in number. For instance, Haysom, writing on vigilantes, produces a useful and analytically interesting chapter but unless one simply equates militarism and violence, it does not easily fit in this volume. The militarisation of the state appears, moreover, to be reversing itself under the de Klerk administration which rather dates some of this material.

I could have taken far more on the sociological and psychological side, which must be central to any workable concept of militarisation. The potentially key piece by Diane Sandler on 'psychological experiences of white conscripts in the black townships' is substantially devoted to an international literature, much of it on the Americans in Vietnam, with no really sustained effort to clarify the South African experience specifically. Yet this subject is crucial to the whole project. The actual human experience of the soldier gets far too little attention and what it does get is unsystematic.

What about the pieces that work? Evans, apparently building on a 1983 Honours thesis, considers the cadets programme and other intrusions of the military into education that is genuinely significant and not available elsewhere. He also tries to assess how effective those intrusions have been. With great efficiency in her few pages, Koornhof succeeds in convincing us that 'what border novels express in metaphorical terms is the erosion of ideas (such as the grand design of apartheid) that have been accepted as politically feasible in the past' (p279) and are attempts to 'come to grips more with a militarised existence than with a state of actual war' (p282). Both writers are getting at the heart of the whole issue of militarism in the South African context. The useful chapters on economics by Simpson and Archer, for all the limitations in data, also attempt assessments.

There is a tension between those writers who wish simply to use the militarism label as a stick with which to attack the regime and those who have a more generalised pacifist viewpoint. Kate Philip, writing on 'the private sector and security establishment', is in the first category and essentially produces a diatribe in which capital is 'implicated' in 'the maintenance of apartheid', the purpose of which would appear to be to discourage any in the anti-apartheid forces from trusting these bad chaps. The second tendency is exemplified by Karen Jochelson and Fran Buntman's chapter on 'shopping for war', essentially based on South African newspaper and magazine articles but which could be set anywhere in the world. Heavy use of the media requires a considered critical grasp of its purposes. Too many chapters take the army in-house journal, *Paratus*, at its word and I wondered at times how confidently to digest the often repeated sayings of General Bert Wandrag, the source of so much splendid ammunition for the anti-war sharpshooters of Cock and Nathan.

The tough questions as to the importance of national defense and a civilian army are never properly raised as a result of too easily insisting that armies are just not very nice. Just recently, the Democratic Party ran several candidates for

parliament, on a ticket that cannot simply be dismissed as obsessed with security, who were from the professional military, including the director of the SA Army Women's College. Nothing in Cock's essay on women and the SADF prepares me to comprehend this and other contradictions in South African militarism.

What should have been included but was not? Already mentioned is the need to explore militarism more substantially in an historical context. The extent to which white society by definition has always contained a vigilance towards black resistance and young male South Africans have, therefore, always been bred in the martial virtues needs to be investigated far more fully. The impact on black society and the extent to which it has itself become militarised is only touched on by a few contributors. One thinks of those toy guns at eastern Cape funerals and the universal popularity of songs celebrating the armed struggle. Reverend Frank Chikane, who has written a foreword to the volume, talks about the internal struggle as a war and Archbishop Tutu describes the military as the enemy in the eyes of most Africans. What does this do to the consciousness and actions of black people in South Africa? Hopefully, these criticisms will not deter interested readers. This book, for all its limitations, is timely and raises questions of great importance. It has a good bibliography and generally succeeds in compiling relevant material into a convenient, indexed form. Instead, the crucial thing is for others to take up the gaps in this volume.

REVIEW of:

Zimbabwe: Politics, Economics and Society; by Colin Stoneman and Lionel Cliffe, (London & New York, Pinter Press, 1989; vii + 210 pp).

Bill Freund

Transformation has published short writings and reviews on Zimbabwe by Cobbing, Phimister and Saxby in recent issues. Interested readers will find that Stoneman and Cliffe presents an up-to-date survey of Zimbabwe from a Left perspective efficiently and usefully. The position of the authors is most reminiscent of the collection reviewed by Saxby, edited by I Mandaza. It points out the barriers that have been raised to socialist transformation in Zimbabwe but does not lack hope that a section of the petty bourgeoisie will eventually breach them. There is considerable emphasis on the achievements of the ZANU regime and an interesting critique of the assumption that only large-scale capitalist farming continuing from the old regime can ever produce food efficiently in Zimbabwe. The biggest problems that receive attention are the failure of the state to promote jobs, the continued weakness of worker organisation and the structural stagnation of the economy, whose basic patterns have changed so little since 1980. This volume belongs to a larger series on 'Marxist Regimes' throughout the world that contains significant contributions on two countries in the region, Angola and Madagascar, and is intended to include another on Mozambique.