



Editorial Comment

DECEMBER 16

This month, on December 16, we celebrate the eighteenth anniversary of Umkhonto we Sizwe - our People's Army. At the same time we bow our heads and clench our fists in memory of the heroes and heroines who have already sacrificed supremely for our freedom. We also commemorate the death of Makanda, leader of our people in their struggle against colonialism, who on the 25th December 1819 drowned off the Cape Town coast during his heroic escape from Robben Island.

December 16 is a great day in our revolutionary calendar. It marks not only the coming into being of the armed wing of our movement on that day in 1961. It marks, most importantly, the beginning of a new era, a new phase of our struggle... we could say - the final phase of our struggle - the phase which will be ended by victory.

Our history and the objective conditions of our struggle led us inextricably to that day in 1961, when the first blast waves of a more determined, more organised and more skillful struggle rattled the champagne glasses in the parlours of power. It was from that day that those who were feasting on the spoils of centuries of exploitation began rapidly to realise that their time around the table of power was shrinking fast.

The eighteen years which have passed since then have served to increase the confidence of our people in victory, and to intensify the panic of our oppressor.

In these eighteen years our people have learned much, not only of armed struggle, but also of political struggle. In these years our movement has plunged headfirst into the cauldron of underground struggle, and despite serious reversals, has emerged unbroken, with its underground machinery well-established and growing daily.

In these years we have seen the flexing of the muscles of our working class in the strikes of 1972/73.

In these years we have seen the massive politicisation of our youth in their major confrontation with all the viciousness of the racist machine in the uprisings of 1976.

In these years we have seen the development of our armed struggle from purely sabotage campaigns to the infiltration of large numbers of fully-armed and trained cadres into the country and the first armed confrontations with the enemy.

Yes, these years have shown that December 16 1961 was a turning point for our people.

But it was also a turning point for our enemies - both internal and international. These years have forced our enemies to devise new methods of oppression. They are learning to use different combinations of brute military force, economic bribery, dirty diplomacy, blackmail and gentle persuasion.

Internally we see our enemy trying to paint flowers on the ugly face of apartheid, while at the same time noisily bringing up the big guns to warn us that if the flowers don't get us, the shrapnel will. We see our enemy trying to drag Southern Africa into a stranglehold of states, to drag whoever it can down with it into the pit of history. We see our enemy desperately trying to throttle the revolution with the hangman's noose - the noose it is now trying to place around the young neck of James Mange.

Internationally we see our enemy - the imperialists - doing all they can to save Southern Africa for 'the West'. At the moment they are very pleased with the results of their Lancaster House talks. In the ruling circles of imperialism there are currently many gin-drinking snobs patting each other on the back in congratulations for the 'jolly good job' they did on Zimbabwe, and promising to do their 'damndest' to do the same in Namibia and South Africa. We can see these dandies giggling gleefully over the increased profits they now expect to reap from Southern Africa.

But let us, in this month in which we celebrate the birth of our People's Army, in this Year of the Spear - let us remind

the racists and the imperialists that all their contortions are ultimately in vain. No one can outmanoeuvre the people. No one can twist their way out of the path of history.

In Zimbabwe the people are already adapting themselves to new conditions of struggle. The British governor in Salisbury and Maggie Thatcher in London can cheer themselves to their hearts' delight with dreams of the return of the old British empire. But if they don't give the people of Zimbabwe genuine freedom, the people will take it, one way or another.

The 'Western Five' can scheme their hearts away on how to preserve the diamonds and uranium of Namibia for themselves. But if the Namibian people don't get what they want, they will take it, one way or another.

In South Africa our people are showing as never before that the days of racism's and imperialism's free hand in our country are clearly numbered. We are seeing our people standing more and more firmly on the principle of no compromise with the racists on the fundamental question of power.

We see our workers once again demonstrating their enormous strength as they defy all legal and economic restrictions to tackle the exploitative system at its roots.

We see the banner of the African National Congress raised higher and higher in the esteem of our people. We see our Freedom Charter fast becoming a universally accepted political programme for the vast majority of our people.

We see our people rally behind their son and hero, James Mange, and his fellow fighters.

We see the cadres of Umkhonto we Sizwe proving again and again that it is possible to tackle the racists militarily. The time is well-passed when repression goes unrevenged.

In this month in which we celebrate the formation of the Spear of our Nation, when we celebrate the beginning, 18 years ago, of a new era in our struggle, in which we commemorate our fallen heroes, in which we remember our great Makanda: we warn the enemy that his manoeuvrings are serving only to increase our determination, our vigilance, our discipline and our understanding. The brutality of starvation, unemployment, forced removals and naked repression will not go unchallenged. The death sentence on Comrade James Mange will not go unchallenged. With all the people of Southern Africa we will fight until final victory.

A M A N D L A!