

OPERATION MAYIBUYE

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It is of paramount importance for any revolutionary movement at each step of growth to review critically and objectively its achievements and setbacks. Umkhonto We Sizwe the military wing of the ANC has now come of age in view of the fact that on December 16th this year (1982) it turns twenty-one. The blueprint structural and operational basis of MK as drawn by the High Command is a document of interest to study and analyse in consideration of the totality of factors at that time in particular. It must be borne in mind that the formation of Mk in 1961 was as a result of the failure of non-violent means of struggle which reached their zenith in 1960 through the Sharpeville Massacre, the banning of the ANC and PAC, the declaration of the state of emergency and promulgation of draconian laws like the 90 days detention without trial and other manifestations of fascism in the early 1960's. The socio-economic and political situation was indeed precarious and foresightedness and unflinching commitment was needed within the leadership. Consequently leading members of the ANC and SACP and above all the people realized that the time to answer reactionary violence with revolutionary violence had come. Umkhonto We Sizwe was formed and its guidelines were in the document Operation Mayibuye, whose opening remarks analysed the situation in the following manner:

1. A disillusionment with constitutional or semi-constitutional forms of struggle and a conviction that the road to victory is through force;
2. A militancy and readiness to respond to a lead which holds out a real possibility of successful struggle.

For a thorough understanding of Operation Mayibuye we

have to look into another important document that influenced the leaders of the national liberation movement when they adopted armed struggle as a political tactic. This is the M-PLAN. When the Nationalist Party assumed power in 1948 one of the first laws they promulgated was the Suppression of Communism Act in 1950, which ultimately led to the banning of the CPSA. But the amorphous and unscientific definition of a communist disturbed the leaders of the revolutionary movements. Their fears were endorsed by laws that were passed after the 1952 Defiance Campaign. These developments were an indication of worse things to come especially laws against the ANC itself and as expected leaders must of necessity be able to foresee the future and to take appropriate steps in favour of the forces of progress, hence the M-PLAN was adopted by the ANC as a guarantor for the functioning of the organisation under conditions of illegality. It was put into operation in the 1950's and was quite successful in the Eastern Cape. The emphasis of the plan was an efficient and effective organisation requiring detailed and duplicated membership cards, financial records and records of activities, as well as weekly meetings of all cells - stewards, who were in charge of a street, Chief Stewards, who were in charge of a zone of about 7 streets with a political lecturer. There was also a prime-steward who was placed in charge of a ward of about four zones with a branch secretary. Coming back to Operation Mayibuye we find the large concentration of personnel within individual structures very vivid and conspicuous as in the M-PLAN.

The High Command wanted an initial force of 7 000 men in the four main areas ready to join the guerilla army in the initial offensive. These areas were:

1. Port Elizabeth - Mzimkulu - 2 000 men.
2. Port Shepstone - Swaziland - 2 000 men.
3. North Western Transvaal bordering Botswana and Limpopo River - 2 000 men.
4. North Western Cape - South West - 1 000 men.

There was to be a simultaneous landing of four groups of

30 trained cadres coming by land, sea and air, armed and equipped in such a way as to be self-sufficient in every respect for at least a month. They were to be further split into platoons of 10 each. This group was the one which had to train the new recruits and to arm the local population. There were also serious efforts directed at mobilizing the international community against the apartheid regime; already O.R. Tambo who was then the deputy president of the ANC had left the country to lead the external mission. But there was also a serious underestimation of the strong class relationship between South Africa and the rest of the imperialist world. For instance Operation Mayibuye states that "...the state is isolated practically from the rest of the world, and if effective work is done, it will have to rely in the main on its own resources". Facts proved otherwise.

INVESTMENTS

We shall remember that after the sabotage actions by MK on December 16, 1961 indeed several companies suspended or withdrew their investments in South Africa, but it was the USA through mining magnates like Charles Engelhard that revived the economy and military strength of the apartheid regime. There was also a tendency to overestimate the support we could possibly receive from the independent African states, including a failure to assess the problems we could encounter in the neighbouring states like Lesotho, Botswana and Swaziland which by then were still British Protectorates. Zimbabwe was also a British colony and the Portuguese Empire under Salazar still strong. Tanzania was the only independent African state near South Africa and it is thousands of kilometers away. All these problems became very serious obstacles towards the development of our struggle.

Concerning the internal situation it is a fact of history that conditions for armed struggle had matured in 1961, as evidenced by the Sekhukhuni revolts, Pondoland Uprising, the Sharpeville massacre and other manifestations, but could we say with precision and accuracy that those Congressites of non-violence could be transformed and convinced overnight that the time had come to take up

arms? Is the decision to join a liberation army not a highly personal one that requires the individual to see the necessity to die? In other words was it possible to mobilise a force of 7 000 within the prescribed period? Concerning the military feasibility of the utilization of large units of 10 men, present experience inside the country has proved beyond any reasonable doubt that small units of 3-4 men are the most effective for the preparatory stage and the first stage where the guerillas, numerically and in arms, are still inferior and therefore engaging the enemy in positional warfare may be suicidal. It is through such small scale operations spread throughout the country that the enemy is dispersed, fatigued and gradually wiped out. Coupled with the necessary political work this is how we can also win the support of the entire population. This requires that we should organise several small but sophisticated operations which will inspire the masses to see how simple it is to kill a racist soldier, how possible it is for him to destroy a police station or enemy camp and the following day he goes to work as if nothing has happened. This form of tactic and strategy will in retrospect facilitate for the transforming of our guerilla warfare into a real people's war, both in town and countryside.

One has to express his appreciation for the gallantry and profound leadership of leading members of the ANC like Nelson Mandela the first Commander-in-Chief of MK and other members of the High Command like Walter Sisulu, Govan Mbeki, Ahmed Kathrada, Dennis Goldberg whose quality of leadership has been tested and steeled by time. Their unflinching conviction has not only won them the respect and admiration of the South African people but also of the international community. Their arrest and subsequent life imprisonment has deprived us of some of the finest sons our embattled motherland has ever had.

OBSTACLES

In conclusion, when acknowledging the failure to fully appreciate the obstacles to the implementation of "Operation Mayibuye" it is also imperative for us to understand

that none of the black leadership of the High Command had and training in military science and art except only whites like Dennis Goldberg and Jack Hodgson. It is therefore logical that mistakes ought to be met, for he who never made a mistake never made a discovery.

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remember Vietnam and El Salvador as if it were only yesterday. The imperative and urgency of building our army into a strong and ever-combat ready force, ready to respond fittingly to any change for the sour in the situation is beyond question. We impel the adventurous Americans never to forget Vietnam, however short their memories seem. Putting their oars in the South African conflict will land them in a quagmire maybe deeper than the Vietnamese. We are committed to the destruction of apartheid and the establishment in its place of a democratic society fashioned along the principles enshrined in the Freedom Charter where all shall abound in peace and friendship for all. Along this path not even the entire Pentagon's and the CIA's machineries will quell us.

DAWN Politixword No.7 Answers

ACROSS: 1. Luthuli 5. O.R. 7. Elf 9. Boost
 10. Uganda 13. Pioneer 16. Earshot
 17. Nudge 19. A.A.C. 21. Doe
 22. Oliver 24. T.N.T. 25. Yea

DOWN: 1. Lieutenant 2. Heunis 3. Lebanon
 4. ILO 6. Ruth 8. Fore 11. Apricot
 12. Doh 14. Etude 15. Rage 18. Dory
 20. Air 23. Ma