

pose of establishing what was possible and what was not were immediately taken. Within about six weeks of my arrival there (I was due to go back with the answers and to then continue functioning underground), while awaiting for these missions to come back, Rivonia occurred. It became virtually useless to attempt to implement 'Operation Mayibuye' because of the destruction which had occurred.

Internally we had decided on a very extensive programme of beginning to manufacture our own equipment inside the country in preparation for the implementation of 'Operation Mayibuye'. Denis Goldberg was in charge of that aspect of the work. We had a programme for the manufacture of 50 000 hand-grenades. We had a way of doing it successfully, using local material. But of course everything fell by the way as a result of the Rivonia arrests.

POST MORTEM

I always say that looking back on a situation is easier than looking forward to it, because when you look back on it you know things that people in that situation did not know, which were still ahead of them. There were a number of factors which influenced the rather inexperienced approaches to aspects of what we had to do. First of all an important factor was our misassessment of the situation. We were still working on the approach that the enemy security apparatus was what we knew in the fifties. We did not sufficiently realise that the beginnings of armed struggle would lead to the very steps which the enemy took. The enemy sent out specialists for training in Algeria, the United States, from the North Korea war, Vietnam etc. They came back and completely refashioned the security apparatus. However firm the old type of policemen like Spengler were, they were not torturers.

Not only did they create a new force but they also began to legislate for new techniques. In a sense up to about 1960/61 the underground struggle was fought on a gentlemanly terrain. There was still a rule of law. You had a fair trial in their courts. Nobody could be kept in isolation. Up to 1963 I know of no incident of any political prisoner being tortured. The whole legal structure which existed lulled us into feeling that we could

do much more than we eventually discovered we could. We underestimated the potential for the growth in viciousness of the enemy security apparatus and the fact that the counter revolution learns from the revolution.

We, of course, made many wrong estimations of what could be done. Rivonia too, looking back on it, was bound to be discovered and destroyed. For an example, people like me were in Rivonia three times every day, moving from my chambers. Same with Bram Fischer and others. People who came to see the leadership from other parts of the country were taken to Rivonia. And this in a way was also determined partly by the contempt in which we held the enemy.

This euphoria was influenced

by facts like: the Communist Party was made illegal in 1950. Between 1950 and 1963 there was not a single communist or sympathiser convicted of participating in the underground. True, we had not engaged in public propaganda but our existence was known. All of us were both in the Party and the ANC, from the early 50's onwards. We had been banned and subjected to all kinds of restrictions. Yet we committed three crimes every single day of our lives: attending meetings, leaving the area you were prevented from leaving except with permission, etc. and we were hardly ever caught. The point I am trying to make is that we had a decade where the weakness of the other side lulled us into a feeling that we could do much more than in fact we were able to do later.

MK IS BORN

STEVE TSHWETE

The banning of the African National Congress in 1960 closed the chapter of "legal" non-violent struggle against the fascist clique in Pretoria. Throughout the country the pertinent question in the minds of the oppressed South Africans was what was to be done now that the vanguard of the national democratic struggle had been banned without the demands of the oppressed and exploited being met. It was a legitimate question by the majority of our people who had seen the ANC amassing strength and generating tremors of fear and panic within the ruling classes in our country.

There were views that the struggle could still be prosecuted and led by the same movement under a different name. But such a conception would have presupposed a smothering of the revolutionary demands and aims of the movement. It would also have meant a deep-going revision of our entire tactical approach to a struggle whose mass character could not be jettisoned for purposes of protecting legality.

At the same time there was the more popular idea that somehow some other methods of struggle other than "legal" should be pursued for the realisation of the freedoms enshrined in the Freedom Charter.

At that level - i.e. the masses' own understanding of the situation - there could, of course, be no precise stipulation or identification of these "other methods of struggle". Understandably so, if one takes into account the fact that at that time the reality of armed struggle still remained a strange concept to the whole of the sub-continent.

But the very idea itself of the exploration of other means and ways by which liberation could be attained was an important signal for the democratic movement spearheaded by the ANC. It was a vindication of the correctness of our strategy and tactics in just over 48 years of legal political agitation, i.e. taking the masses along with us every inch of the way and getting them to say, with their own vanguard organisation; "Here we stood and here we fell. Here we retreated and here we still fell, so let's go forward and fall marching forward".

For in the absence of that frame of mind, in a situation where the biggest majority of the people feel that other methods other than revolutionary violence could still be explored, the prospects of armed struggle cannot auger well. In our case, we plodded with the masses all the way right up to the All-

in-Africa Conference in Pietermaritzburg in 1961 where the oppressed people of our country chanted the clarion call to action against the fascists: "No ba kubi siyaya enkululekweni - Even if it is hard we are getting to freedom". Nothing had changed in their conditions of existence!

They had seen the Langa and Sharpeville massacres, they had gone through the state of emergency and experienced the intensification of savage oppression and brutal exploitation in a country which refused to see them as human beings.

So, when on the 16th of December 25 years ago explosive devices were detonated in major cities and towns of the country excitement leapt heavens high.

"Is it possible?" "Yes, it is. We have done it. We have proved the point that the African is not inferior" "A bomb by an African?" "Yes. You must go and see the post office".

This type of whispered conversations one would come across in trains and buses, even in sheebens. A tremendous achievement by MK within hours of its birth. It did not only raise hopes in the hearts of millions of admirers, but also instilled confidence in their own ability to liberate themselves. It blasted to smithereens the myth that by reason of our colour and race we were fatally confined to the knob-kierie and the assegai. The African can do it. MK became the apple of our people's eye. They just loved it.

I remember one instance when one old man was reminiscing to me along these lines: "You see, my boy!" he pulled his grizzled white beard. "The name of this army is fantastic. In the olden days in our traditional society we would take the spear in defence of our very existence as people. Even when things start going wrong within a given family, we would take the spear and go to the kraal to propitiate the ancestors. And things would go right. No more cattle giving birth to still-born calves or makotis (newly weds) breaking their legs. That is the effect of Umkhonto, my boy. It is a fitting name and I am sure that we are going to get what we have set ourselves".

He took his tobacco pouch made of goat skin, tottered towards the kraal and there urinated in an obviously agitated frame of mind. He has since passed away, but I remember

his words when puppet Sebe named his so-called crack military unit Ikrele leSizwe - Sword of the nation. And I laughed when I remembered that the instrument in our whole way of life, that it is to-day associated with tsotsism and thuggery. But not MK. It is our people's army for the express purpose of correcting the ills in that society and detending the health of a post-apartheid South Africa.

RECEPTION

But the reception of the new child was not homogeneous. As we have just said, the oppressed and exploited South Africans blessed the baby and even showered it with adoring nicknames. On the other hand the privileged white clique sneered, jeered and cursed. The birth of the child was a nuisance to their God-ordained orderly life. It was an expression once again of the barbaric character of a savage race of infidels. "Maar julle kan nie ver gaan nie, Koos, ek se vir jou. Ons sal die donor se kaffirs vlinters slaan. Nie daar die kak hier so nie".

A typical drinking mutual reassurance among Afrikaners in cheap pubs and other drinking sports. In no way very much different about the foregoing type of gossip about MK in its early days, one would read high pitched speeches by prominent ruling class spokespersons about the capability of Africans ever waging a successful armed struggle against the "baas". "Daar is niks van daardie soort. Waar het jy sien 'n kaffir skiet?"

They were obviously attaching racist connotations to the entire notion of armed struggle as conducted by black people. That is why they desperately tried to convince their followers that Moscow was practically involved in the sabotage campaign. We did not care what they said and thought about MK. In due course, the nature of our own operations would demonstrate that this was a popular disciplined army, and not a mercenary assortment of thugs who have no respect for human life which does not belong to the "mense".

DISCIPLINE

The men and women who were recruited to the ranks of MK thus became an embodiment in concrete form of revolutionary discipline, that peculiar blend of discipline which is

inspired by one's love for his country and the people to be liberated. Oh, yes, that preparedness to lay down one's own life so that others might live. They so treasured life that they were prepared to lose theirs to ensure others of theirs. Invariably they were the physical representation of the spirit of no-surrender, the sort of attitude of mind that is characteristic of the main core of MK combatants and the young lions in our township streets today.

"DIE ALONE"

When it came to how one should deal with the police in the event of arrest, the slogan was "die alone". Under no circumstances were you expected to reveal the positions of the underground. If the degree of torture had become so intense that you could no longer take it, the way out was to implicate yourself and nobody else. The underground was not there for one to trade to the Boers for one's escape from the cells.

There were lapses here and there, and some in commanding sectors of the underground. But it was only almost after two years that the fascists were able to root us out with the help of those of us who had succumbed. But even those who broke under torture knew perfectly well that they had betrayed the people's army and compromised the revolutionary aims of the ANC by such actions.

The way our people are hostile to informers and traitors today in the conditions of ungovernability reminds one of the early days of MK. Hatred for an informer, an enemy agent and collaborators is a reflection of a high degree of political consciousness. There can be no justification for one crossing over to the enemy for fear of physical death when one is already dead spiritually by the very thought of giving in to the enemy. The early combatants knew this moral. And for those who would not abide by it the option was there to stay at home and play with the cat.

The police knew it, too. I remember an instance when one cadre was told by one of the most notorious torturers: "Look here! I used to understand the old Congress of Luthuli, not this thing of Mandela. This is not an organisation but a bloody f--- army. You are therefore a soldier and I am going to bliksem you like is done to a captured soldier".

The policeman, true to type in all places of reaction everywhere in the world failed to read the new signs. He did not realise that changed circumstances demanded changed methods of struggle. But it was important and very significant for our movement and our entire people that he acknowledged the fact that MK was an army. In so far as treatment of captured combatants was concerned we do not share his sentiments nor do we expect mercy from him since it was by no accident that one found oneself in the ranks of the people's army.

DISCIPLINE

Revolutionary discipline also manifested itself in the selection of targets for assault. The point was made abundantly clear to all and sundry that loss of human life should be avoided by all means possible. It took a leadership to make such a directive in a situation where a particular racial group has taken it upon itself to carry out an obviously genocidal campaign against another racial group. In such a situation of racial arrogance and brutality as one finds in South Africa where every single deprivation that befalls a black person is generated from the white clique camp, it is even more difficult.

But the ANC has never even dreamt about the possibility of abandoning its principled and scientific approach to the problem facing our country. It has always resisted the temptation of seeing the whites as a homogeneous satanic grouping and the blacks as an equally homogeneous but upright entity. This perspective had to filter down every command structure of the young MK.

I am not aware of any liberation army having to exercise such restraint in such outrageous conditions of racial oppression and exploitation, where every white person is virtually a licence bearer to kill and maim in the interests of so-called western civilisation. When we look back over our shoulders and see how twenty-five years of restraint and ordered control have dealt such telling blows within the white ruling classes in apartheid South Africa, we cannot but beat our breast with pride and look forward to a bright future for all South Africans - black and white.

Post Offices, power lines and stations, railway installations and

all structures that are an expression of that satanic system called apartheid had to be blasted and set ablaze. And dynamite and fire were exceptionally good messengers in conveying to the white reactionary clique that the ANC and the oppressed people of our country had now entered a new phase of armed struggle. The sort of good life that they enjoy by their villification of our own life had to be terminated forthwith. For too long they had been lotting on the lap of luxury and privilege while our people were sweating blood in the gold mines and potato fields of the Transvaal. The young MK had just to knock them in the nose and this it did with tremendous effect for an organisation whose combatants could only be afforded just the very elementary skills in the art of this type of warfare.

There was no question of a "rear" base. Tanzania and Ghana were thousands of miles away. The young MK base was an empty room in a residence in the township, suburb or somewhere along a bushy river bank. In a word our own people became the base. Similarly with logistical resources! The young MK relied on resources inside the country - and these were and are still galore - loving South Africans had to come up and give what they were able to acquire to boost the striking capacity of the young people's army. Anything - including an ordinary carpenter's saw - that could help bring down a pylon, dislodge a rail line or set on fire a pass office was welcome in the MK armoury.

It did, of course, happen that in certain regions the directive to spare human life was flouted. This was particularly the case in the Border and Eastern Cape regions where houses of collaborators and informers were attacked with resultant loss of life. This should not, however, be seen as an instance of indiscipline. Rather it should be looked at against the background of enemy reactionary activity in this part of the country.

The Verwoerd regime had just started its course of setting up what today are the so-called independent homelands. Transkei's Matanzima had become their blue-eye boy and as such had the task to do his master's dirty work - to become the grease-boy of the machinery of fragmentation, oppression and exploitation.

To give some veneer of reality to the concept of a "free" bantustan he started working energetically in East London where a long line of "ambassadors" representing all the reactionary chiefs in the Transkei was set up. This sort of divisive arrangement had not yet been introduced to this extent in other areas of our country. The peculiarity of a "free" homeland was still an exclusive experience of this part of the country.

And were the white people so happy with it! They never even bothered to think about the prophetic observation by one Comrade Zanzolo in the African Communist that "independence and freedom are such dynamic concepts in the continent of Africa today that whosoever tries with them is playing with fire". (Quotation remember. It might not be exact). "Yes", they would say, quite happy with themselves, "you are going to rule yourself in your own country away from the baas".

The people were very angry with this sort of tom-foolery. The people had never seen Matanzima as belonging to them. He had been persecuting them all along the line for their refusal to be alienated from what historically and naturally belongs to them. He had burnt down their kraals and extorted taxes from them to finance his brutal schemes. They hated him and they detested his ambassador henchmen who had made life difficult for them once back at home in the Transkei from the city.

The young MK command structures in the area found themselves caught up in this situation. What should they do? Should they allow Matanzima to build up bases and divert those thousands of ANC and MK supporters by force into the Verwoerd camp? They were certainly proud of the image of the democratic movement in the area and out of conviction were tempted to believe, quite correctly, that blasting a Matanzima is not that much different from blasting a pass office.

These slight departures apart, I want to say that the performance of the young MK between 1961 and 1963 was exceptionally good. It took a considerable period of time before the fascists could unravel our underground structures in spite of the close

JOE SLOVO

Magagula

frequency in our operations. Draconian legislation, which allowed for indefinite detention in their torture chambers, had to be introduced to crack the pioneering combatants. They were tough, and the new skills they had acquired inside the country under the nose of the enemy inspired them throughout their operational life. Some died under torture, refusing to part with any information that could compromise the revolutionary movement they so dearly loved. Others had to leave the country for more advanced training whilst a few broke down and sold out.

There were no pitched battles against the enemy personnel. But demolition work by means of explosives at hand was the major thrust and this was quite successful in the major regions such as Natal, the Transvaal, the Western Cape and the Eastern Cape. There were very few cases in which comrades were caught in the act. This can be attributed to the high sense of secrecy, vigilance and discipline. These attributes themselves were historically acquired because most of the cadres who manned the underground command structures were drawn, in the main, from the ranks of people who were members of the movement before and after the ban. So that underground unit work was not something strange to them.

Combat readiness was also yet another tenet that was uncompromisingly taught to all members. When you go to bed you must not think that the day has ended. You could be called to duty any time of the day, which meant that you had to remain sober all the time. Drunkenness was never to be countenanced.

At the same time, if you had to be away from home at a particular point in time, then your immediate command had to know where you could be found.

Besides discipline, vigilance and secrecy, organisation had thus become one other important factor in the early days of this invincible people's army. Even personal organisation. Your own family programme had to be made to fit the movement one and not vice versa.

It is on the basis of all these points that one can safely conclude that the 1961-63 operational period was quite good and with more propitious time at its disposal the young MK would have messed up the Boer regime.

How does one begin to write a profile on Joe Slovo? He has been operating in underground conditions for the last thirty-six years. These have not been ordinary years in the history of our struggle. They have been and continue to be pregnant with the hazards of torture, detentions, assassinations, massacres and executions. Yet this has been a period which has witnessed the gathering of revolutionary storms and hurricanes in our country. In this heroic period, Joe Slovo has found himself in perfect relation with both great men and events. It is said that great people fly best and easiest in the hurricane.

Of course, Joe Slovo is not marching alone in this great journey. He is together with the best sons and daughters of our motherland. No single important event in South Africa can be attributed to him alone but one can be sure to always find his well defined footprints in the thorny path that has been and continues to be walked by so many of our oppressed people.

For obvious reasons one cannot write a complete profile on a man who has played a leading role in the formulation, planning and execution of almost all the telling blows against our common enemy. There will come a day when we shall be able to do this.

SMEAR CAMPAIGN

If there is any leader of the African National Congress and indeed the South African National Liberation Movement as a whole who has been singled out and targetted for a smear campaign by the enemy in all its shades, it is Joe Slovo. These have varied from the South African racist regime and their international allies, the Pan Africanist Congress, the Group of Eight and the backward elements within the black consciousness movement on the one hand and the ultra leftists on the other. He has been called by various names; "a KGB Colonel who has infiltrated the ANC on behalf of Moscow, public enemy number one, an assassin, a hard core terrorist, a hooligan etc."

If the enemy believed that

by applying these slanderous techniques it would be able to distance and isolate Joe Slovo from our people, history has proved it fatally wrong. Joe Slovo has become a household name among our people. Schools and parks in the black ghettos have been defiantly named after him. Songs like 'USlovo noTambo amakhomando' have become a permanent feature among the revolutionary ranks. Among his fellow comrades in Umkhonto We Sizwe he is simply and affectionately known as OUR ARMY CHIEF OF STAFF.

Sometimes when people are showered with these praises they begin to develop a cancer of personality cult. But Joe Slovo's political clarity and his sincere belief in the might of our people as the true makers of history has made him to rise above this fatal disease. Perhaps this is a unique feature of the ANC.

He has remained as modest as ever though he can be very persistent and vigorous in pushing across his point when he believes he is correct. Anyway modesty can be a sign of immodesty. Over the years he has developed an extraordinary quality of listening to the views of others no matter what rank one holds. He is truly an independent person. Of course, he does not swallow everything. In fact his interventions can be as sharp and penetrating as a fish bone.

In Dar-es-Salaam I once asked Comrade Violet Weinberg when she first knew Joe Slovo. She replied me with these simple words: "I knew him as a young boy selling newspapers. Did you think he has never been a young boy?" Then I knew why he is so humble and humane. He rose from the ranks and he understands the problems of the rank and file. When you come to him even with a personal problem he tries his best to help solve it. He will never say 'I do not have time for it.' He is extremely approachable and sensitive to problems that concern the revolution. This is one of the qualities of a real leader.

Let us briefly look at his humble growth and development. Joe Slovo was born sixty years ago in Lithuania in the Soviet Union. He immigrated to South Africa with his parents at the