

DAWN

Journal of Umkhonto we Sizwe

SOUVENIR ISSUE

Who will deny that thirty years of my life have been spent knocking in vain, patiently, moderately, and modestly at a closed and barred door? What have been the fruits of moderation? The past thirty years have seen the greatest number of laws restricting our rights and progress, until today we have reached a stage where we have almost no rights at all.

— Chief AJM Luthuli —

Umkhonto we Sizwe will be at the front line of the people's defence. It will be the fighting arm of the people against the government and its policies of race oppression. It will be the striking force of the people for liberty, for rights and for their final liberation.

— MK manifesto

What were we, the leaders of our people, to do? Were we to give in to the show of force and the implied threat against future action, or were we to fight it and, if so, how?

We had no doubt that we had to continue the fight. Anything else would have been abject surrender. Our problem was not whether to fight, but was how to continue the fight. We of the ANC had always stood for a non-racial democracy, and we shrank from any action which might drive the races further apart than they already were. But the hard facts were that fifth years of non-violence had brought the African people nothing but more and more repressive legislation, and fewer and fewer rights.

It may not be easy for this court to understand, but it is a fact that for a long time the people had been talking of violence — of the day when they would fight the white man and win back their country — and we, the leaders of the ANC, had nevertheless always prevailed upon them to avoid violence and to pursue peaceful methods. When some of us discussed this in May and June of 1961, it could not be denied that our policy to achieve a non-racial state by non-violence had achieved nothing, and that our followers were beginning to lose confidence in this policy and were developing disturbing ideas of terrorism.

— Nelson Mandela, First Commander-in-Chief of MK

In building up our own popular army we aim therefore not only at the overthrow of the fascist regime, we aim also at building up a politically conscious and revolutionary army, conscious of its popular origin, unwavering in its democratic functions and guided by our revolutionary orientation.

Commander-in-Chief O.R. Tambo.

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Umkhonto is a people's army fighting a people's war. We fight to liberate our oppressed and exploited people. We fight for their interests. Umkhonto has no mercenaries, no paid soldiers or conscripted troops. It consists of the sons and daughters of the most oppressed, the most exploited sections of our people. For these reasons we claim with pride and truth: Umkhonto is the Spear of the Nation.

— MK military code *