

The Harnessing of Mass Anger

- LERATO MORENA

(Practical recommendations by an MK combatant on the r o l e the Youth can play in mobilising the masses).

The mainstay of any revolutionary struggle, the revolutionary store-house of the fighting energy, is the masses of the oppressed. History records numerous examples to this effect. In our own case the African National Congress (and its allies) could never have survived, let alone exercise the leadership role that it has so consistently provided throughout the last 69 years of its existence, had it not been for the popular support that it has always enjoyed. Even under the present difficult conditions of clandestine operation, the ANC continues to be visibly in the van of the revolutionary transformations that are unfolding. But still we counsel for more work amongst the masses.

That the masses are oppressed, that they openly declare their identification with the liberation movement is not enough. The great Vietnamese revolutionary, Truong Chinh, puts it unequivocally:

"To win victory, the whole people must participate in it, shoulder their responsibilities, be courageous and make sacrifices. Therefore, the entire people m u s t be mobilised."

It therefore becomes very clear that satisfied as we are with the hatred our people have for the racist regime, their militancy and their refusal to be cowed down by the fascists, and their united desire to be free, we have no cause to imagine that half the battle is won - in fact, this situation has brought about yet greater demands on the liberation movement of our country, and in particular our youth, in whose name the year's campaign has been launched.

AN ANGRY PEOPLE

Our people are indeed an angry people, they have long reached the end of their tether. That is why this year we are to celebrate the 20th Anniversary of the formation of Umkhonto we Sizwe, our people's army. Since that 16th December 1961,



Angry crowds line the street in Mamelodi waiting for the body of Solomon Mahlangu; the racist police patrol is greeted with the clenched fist salute.

we have looked forward to the great day when the masses of our people would, in unprecedented fashion rise up to seize power. But many unforeseen obstacles have marred our path. There was the Rivonia set-back which brought about difficulties and new demands on organisation. There was the unfriendly climate around the borders of South Africa. Above all, there was the unrestrained rule of harassment and intimidation internally - a factor which specifically had a telling effect on organisation and mobilisation. Looked at closely all these factors (they are not the only ones) taken together, have somewhat served to retard the unfolding of our People's War.

O A U

The collapse of the Portuguese colonies and a positive shift within the OAU (as opposed to the days of the Domino theory) opened new vistas and doubtlessly greater prospects of revolution in our own country. By this time the ANC had rebuilt its forces inside the country, and having gone through such great experiences as the Wankie days, was ready to stand up to greater challenges. The decade of the 70s saw the workers, and particularly the Youth of our country demonstrating with militant strikes that the post-Rivonia 'lull' was over. This process has never halted since. But throughout this most encouraging period some serious shortcomings were evident. The actions were not co-ordinated nor united;

the countryside remained relatively quite whilst the Bantustan tailors measured their cloth. In a nutshell, the voice of protest was reverberating, and yet not properly harnessed.

It would be negligent for us to imagine that no effort was made to correct this situation. The African National Congress was quick to urge the people to action, unity and organised resistance through the radio, pamphlets, underground workers, etc. The people's response though encouraging (credit must especially go to the Youth) was on the main confined to the bigger industrial areas - even here co-ordination still has to be striven for. We have witnessed great advances in this respect during the historic Year of the Charter. Therefore, 1981 finds us still with mass mobilisation high up in our agenda. This time the Youth of our country are to take up the cudgels in the tradition of the Congress Youth Leaguers; the Mandelas, Sisulus, Tambos, etc.

N O B L E T A S K

It therefore becomes a noble task of the Youth to go to the people and to explain to them the elementary questions of our war.

Do the people understand our f i g h t? This question must trouble all serious patriots of our country. Understanding the fight means much more than knowing that the racist oppressor is an enemy. It means being able in the most precise way to identify the enemy, estimate his strength, know how to tackle him, and above all, to be perspicacious as regards the type of social order we would like to replace the oppressive one with. This should be explained to the masses of town and country without let up. It is only when this has been amply done (this is not an easy thing to measure. But such readiness as to respond to a call of the liberation movement in united militancy and on a nationwide scale, can serve as a pointer greatly assisting our estimation of the masses) that we shall begin to see the greater percentage of the oppressed united in their determination to "shoulder their responsibilities, be courageous and make sacrifices." Therefore, the importance of the political work amongst the masses, the need to "fight for unity and fight in unity", the fact that the masses are the backbone of our war, can never be overemphasised.

T H E Y O U T H

What then is the role of the Youth in this most arduous task? The Youth must seize the initiative of forming themselves into active Agitational and Propaganda units whose pri-

mary task would be to lay bare the facts of our people's war in front of the eyes of the masses. By explaining the nature of our war, exposing the enemy, his stooges at home and props abroad and by educating the masses about the invincibility of the liberatory war, the Agitational and Propaganda groups will indeed be elevating the political consciousness of the people, strengthening their patriotism and vigilance, and fostering their fighting spirit.

The people must be taught that our liberation war is protracted and most demanding. And that it is likely to be long-drawn and bloody. And yet they must be told that no matter the length of time, in the ultimate, our victory is assured. Our liberation war draws its strength from our own sacrifices and refusal to submit. Such an honest and unequivocal approach will provide a firm political grounding that will help limit the illusion of a sweeping revolution with minor losses, and therefore help steel the masses for the actual war situation in which we are already entangled.

To this end, Agitational and Propaganda groups must popularise the slogan; "Everybody has a role to play." They must transmit the call of Comrade President Oliver Tambo that:

"We call on our people in the countryside to unite themselves in the fight against the balkanisation and fragmentation of our country and people. The churches, mosques, religious organisations and Christians and Moslems at large should further enhance the dynamic role they have begun to play in moving the Christian and Moslem masses of our country into the forefront for a free and humane society. Workers in the field of culture and sport are urged to make greater use of their skill and talent to promote the people's cause."

The youth of our country must spare neither strength nor effort in ensuring the transformation of every village and homestead, every township, every factory and shop, wherever our people meet, into schools of revolution.

DEMANDS OF THE PROGRAMME

Such a programme will doubtlessly call for the highest level of discipline and organisation within the Agitational and Propaganda groups. This fact does not need much elucidation. A disciplined and organised Agitational and Propaganda group

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will be a true reflection of the patriotic motivation of its membership and therefore draw respect and trust from the people.

For proper and effective functioning the groups must be vigilant and skillful at evading the enemy. They must expose traitors to the nation, reactionaries and enemies of the revolution for what they are.

To ensure continuity in their work the groups should occasionally sit down to take stock. To evaluate their activities and study the best ways of improving where they have lagged behind in the past. In this way a progressive expansion of their activity will be guaranteed.

For us in MK, it is going to be our duty in the different areas of operation to encourage the formation of these groups whilst at the same time providing the crucial political guidance in line with the **"Strategy and Tactics of the ANC."** It is from such groups that the best patriots can be drawn into the ranks of Umkhonto we Sizwe.

C O N C L U S I O N

This article has attempted to make certain observations, remarks and suggestions on mass mobilisation and the role the Youth can play in this Year. Of course the arguments used here can never be said to be sufficient. The subject itself is a dynamic one and several considerations have to be made in specific areas before the general recommendations (they are indeed general) of this article can be implemented. For example thorough and up to date knowledge of the current mood and inclinations of the people is necessary before any meaningful step can be taken in any area of interest. This will also be of assistance in the choice of suitable covers under which the youth of the Agitational and Propaganda groups are to operate. Perhaps the most difficult issue for this author to deal with is the role of our underground workers vis-a-vis these groups. This question must for obvious reasons definitely be left to them. But that they are to play a most decisive role in initiating this movement is beyond question.

"EACH CITIZEN A SOLDIER, AND WHEN THE BANDITS COME
EVEN THE WOMEN FIGHT."

- FAMOUS VIETNAMESE SAYING -

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