

PERSPECTIVES OF OUR STRUGGLE

Part 2

QUESTION: You'll remember that we talked about the military struggle - the military overthrow of the regime. And you talked at length about the unity of the oppressed majority of South Africa that it is one of the pillars on which you lean when you have to conduct the military struggle. If that is correct I would like to move from that point a little, that, given that unity of the o p p r e s s e d m a s s e s and given the unity also of the regime, that is, the ruling classes this time. And not only the ideological strength which they wield globally, but also the technological strength which they have. The oppressed people led by the African National Congress start from a position of weakness in terms of military hardware and military know-how. Now the regime starts from the position of strength. Do you think such a strategy will work in South Africa where the majority is weak ...?

CDE. THABO MBEKE: Let's say we are not exceptional in South



Africa in regard to the issue that you are raising. Any people that decides to take up arms against an oppressive regime always start from a position of weakness - weakness in terms of the hardware. There isn't any struggle anywhere in the world which has started with the masses being in the position of strength with regard to hardware. So ... South Africa is not exceptional. You can take any example in the world. You take Cuba - when the Cuban armed struggle began, how many people

were there? They c r o s s e d on a boat, the Granma, from Mexico into Cuba and they got into a clash and in the end they were reduced to less than 50 people. And with those 50 people with whatever weapons they had - old weapons - started the military struggle in Cuba against a very well organised and very strong army. The Vietnamese people similarly did not

start their military struggle with anti-aircraft missiles. They started with old weapons. They started with bows and arrows and axes. South Africa is by no means exceptional. You can come even close to the South African borders. The Mozambicans, the Angolans, the Zimbabweans and so on, everybody starts from a position of relative weakness in relation to the enemy on the issue of hardware.

Now even take the word "guerrilla". The word "guerrilla" means irregular warfare as opposed to regular warfare. Now, you are obliged to conduct irregular warfare because you are relatively weak in terms of military hardware, in terms of this military power. You have to conduct an irregular warfare because as I say, your forces are weak. Even the word "guerrilla" means a person who conducts a military struggle from a position of weakness with regard to the issue of hardware. In terms of that hardware, the oppressed people of South Africa are of course in a position of weakness with regard to the enemy. But that fact does not necessarily mean that the battle cannot be won, that the war cannot be won. Everybody else who has conducted guerrilla struggle and has won guerrilla struggle has started from a position of weakness. And in Cuba, Algeria, Angola, Mozambique and so on people have won.

QUESTION: But Comrade Thabo Mbeki, whatever strategy you use, why don't you take up a strategy which is not going to be harmful, which is not going to hurt the people you are struggling for. You take the military strategy which the African National Congress is using. Who is going to suffer? The black people are going to suffer in South Africa and, in fact, that is the problem. Why don't you take up a strategy like what is now bandied around inside the country, the constituency type of strategy where you use your power to gain whatever right wherever it is possible? If you are supposed to get a dam through the homelands why don't you get that dam? If you have got to use the community councils to get one or two rights, why don't you use the community council rather than get into the bush and fight and get so many people killed?

REPLYING TO APARTHEID VIOLENCE

CDE. THABO MBEKI: You say that the black oppressed majority is going to suffer as a result of the armed struggle. I agree entirely. But the question then comes: does the fact we are going to suffer as a result of armed struggle mean that we must not conduct armed struggle? And I would say the answer to that question is known, that we can't say, because we are going to suffer therefore we must not conduct armed struggle. We

are suffering today. We are suffering as a result of the repressive policies - the whole apartheid system.

You've got a very glaring outstanding example uppermost in the consciousness of anybody in South Africa, of the Soweto Uprisings. Here are young people who come out to demonstrate against the issue of the imposition of Afrikaans as a medium of instruction - not talking about them a b o u t changing the system in this and that way addressing themselves to this issue. Now you see, maybe this is the constituency power you are talking about. They used whatever power they had to try and get this issue of Afrikaans as a medium of instruction reserved. What is the r e p l y? They got s h o t. in those hundreds and hundreds. You've had the immediate example of just the past few weeks of the Sigma workers in Pretoria, who are demonstrating and some white woman takes out a pistol and shoots some. You've had the same thing in the Eastern Transvaal. We are suffering directly as a result of shooting. Now, is there any day in South Africa which passes without some report that the police have shot somebody, some-



The fascist Pretoria soldiers and police seen in one of the ghettos of Soweto ready to shoot at peaceful demonstrators.

body has died in the cells and so on. I don't think any day like this passes. You've also had something which is of course known to the black people generally, (but you know these things pop out sometimes in the white press) of the issue that had arisen of the number of farm workers that have been killed by the white farmers. You know the things they usually do; they hang somebody by their feet and they thrash them and pec-

ple die. Some of those things get into the papers and most of them don't. Our people are dying today as a result of that kind of thing.

Now take people who are in the resettlement areas. Vast numbers dying everyday, children dying simply because of hunger, that is the violence of the system. Hundreds of our people are dying everyday as a result of the apartheid system. That is suffering. Now it is that suffering that we are against, it is that suffering that we say must stop. Now, war inevitably results in deaths. War is a battle between two or more people, two or more forces and there will be death on both sides. What the ANC is saying is that our people cannot allow themselves to remain in a condition where they are perishing as a people because of the apartheid system; where millions of people have been removed from the white farms, towns and cities, dumped in the countryside, really to perish there because there's no food, there's no jobs, there's no land, there's nothing. People just go and perish there.

We are dying today, so the ANC says there is a way out of this condition. Rather than sit there and wait to die because of hunger. Let's take up arms and fight. It is better to die standing on our feet than to die of hunger. So the suffering of the black people must itself serve as the spur, as the injection that moves the oppressed people to say this suffering is enough. We must take up arms to stop it. But in a war people die on both sides.

Today very few white South Africans are dying, that's the apartheid system. They are protected with a huge police force, with a huge army whose principal task is to protect this population and the state. They are not dying, we are dying. In a war, we want to say to the white population of South Africa, we want to make it very costly for them to continue to maintain the system. They must begin to die as we are dying. That's the nature of war. So suffering there will be on our side but let there be suffering also on the other side. To show the white population of South Africa, to show that regime that they can't sit in this comfortable, nice, prosperous, safe life any longer when the people begin to take up arms - people who are dying already. Let the other side also feel the pain of this kind of system.

So, I would therefore say the fact that we are suffering should in fact be the very cause which makes us to decide that let's take up arms. Not the other way round, that we will suffer as though we are not suffering now, we will suffer and therefore let's not take up arms. We are suffering today!

QUESTION: But Comrade Thabo you seem to be ruling off any other possibilities in this context. I am thinking now of the strategy of negotiations where people have come to sit with the Botha regime and discuss issues and come to conclusions without taking up arms. I am not saying that what you have been saying is wrong. It's correct, people are suffering and they are dying. And they say we can't die alone, let the enemy taste the salt of its making. Now, here I am moving to this strategy of negotiations because even if you suffer, if you can negotiate your way through, why not? And there are people in South Africa who are doing that. And I think we should perhaps think of these people.

CONSTITUENCY POLITICS

COM. THABO MBELE: I missed out or forgot a question that you asked earlier. For instance, when you said why not use the Bantustans or the community councils to get whatever you can get - that's what is called constituency politics. Now you see the Bantustans, as you know, the community councils, are a creation of the oppressor regime. The regime did not consult us in saying do you want such a thing. The regime imposed the system on us, of Bantustans, of community councils. Where the masses of the people rejected this so-called separate development system, the enemy replied as usual with force, compelling people to take this separate development institutions whether they liked them or not. Of course the enemy is not foolish, the enemy did not impose on us what it calls the separate development program because it wanted to help the black people. It imposed that system on us because it wanted to perpetuate white minority rule. So, whatever you do through this system, and the enemy agrees, must necessarily be because the enemy is convinced that what you are doing through this separate development institutions is not weakening the regime, it does not threaten the regime. So the regime agrees. And the regime agrees because what you are able to achieve through these things in its view strengthens the whole of the oppressor regime over the country.

Take a current issue that has arisen in a number of parts of the country, but let's just take the Eastern Transvaal. You know there are big rent struggles going on there and Koornhof says it is not I (Koornhof) and my government that have decided to increase rents in this area (in Seshego for example - it was more than Seshego, it was also in the East Rand). He says it is the community councils that decide these things -

they decided that we want to increase rent and they made recommendations to us and since they wanted this thing we said o'kay. Now, that is exactly what the enemy had intended - that it would use institutions like the community councils, like the Bantustans and so on, as I say, for the perpetuation of the apartheid system. And there is absolutely nothing that anybody can produce in South Africa as an example of a gain that the people have made through the system. I am talking about fundamental things, issues of concern to the people; whether it's rent or the system of education or the pass laws or the release of political prisoners or anything; police harassment and so on. There's nothing you can think of that is of fundamental concern to the people that anybody who is within the separate development system can say: "Okay you see, through the Soweto community council we were able to get the pass laws abolished." Or "through the Bantustan we were able to get land to the people." You can't find anything and will not because these are institutions which are created by the enemy for the perpetuation of the apartheid system and not for the upliftment of the black people. So I'm saying, you can pose the question in a sort of theoretical sense and say: well, why don't we use the power that we have in the Bantustans to gain whatever we can gain? I'm saying you can't gain anything because those institutions are designed exactly to make sure that you don't gain anything. A simple question, not so simple but an important issue that, here are millions of our people who unilaterally are being deprived by the regime of citizenship in a country of their birth. I mean here are white people who come from Europe and they settle in South Africa after many wars and so on. And it's a white settler population, and it then decides that the people whom we found here we are going to make them foreigners in their own country - that's the Bantustan system. Now can any sensible person expect that you can use the Bantustan system? For instance to restore the citizenship of people who have been made emigrants or alternatively foreigners in their own country? You can't. I'm saying that with regard to any and every important issue that is confronting our people; the Bantustan system, the community councils, the management committees, the South African Indian Council and all those things. The masses of the people cannot gain anything out of those institutions because those institutions are oppressive institutions designed by the enemy to perpetuate oppression. So if what is meant by we must now adopt a strategy of constituency politics, if that's what it means it is a foolish strategy. It is a hopeless strategy. Per-

haps people who put it forward are people who have not understood properly.

Alternatively there are people who are speaking as the spokesmen, as the agents of the regime to promise manna and honey and sweetness to come out of institutions created by the enemy which are supposed to produce poison and say they are going to produce honey. And I am saying people who put forward that kind of thing are either very seriously deluded, have not thought out the matter properly or are just acting as enemy agents. I think the argument is very wrong, is very false, plays into the hands of the enemy. We've got to destroy these separate development institutions because they are one of the obstacles that stand between us and liberation.

TO BE CONTINUED IN NEXT ISSUE.

SECURING OUR PEOPLE'S FUTURE

- ALEX MASHINI

The question of securing the future of our people in our embattled Southern African region and the entire continent demands urgent attention. Our people are concerned with building for themselves a future free of all forms of oppression and exploitation, a peaceful and prosperous future. The youth, builders of new societies tomorrow, have an important role to play in the realisation of our people's noble ideals. This is a struggle which they must begin to wage now, with the aid of their revolutionary mothers and fathers. This is the spirit which prevailed during the First Co-ordinating Meeting of the Youth Organisations of the Front-Line States held in Luanda from the 18th to the 20th June, 1981.

The meeting was attended by delegates of JMPLA (MPLA Youth) of Angola, OJM (Mozambican Youth Organisation), Umoja wa Vijana of Tanzania, Zimbabwean Ministry of Youth, Sports and Recreation, SWAPO Youth League and ANC Youth Section. This came at a very crucial moment in our people's struggle for national independence and freedom. On the one hand are the great advances made by our people towards their liberation in Namibia and South Africa respectively. On the other hand