

PRACTICE BEARS US OUT

—Jacob Molefe

A discussion on the continued relevance of the Strategy and Tactics of the African National Congress

It is now almost thirteen years since the historic 1969 Morogoro Conference where one of the most significant documents of our movement: The Way Forward – Strategy and Tactics of the ANC was adopted. One needs to give the briefest of glances to notice the far-reaching changes that have and are taking place since then. Though the strategy of a revolutionary party or organisation remains unchanged for the whole strategic stage, it would nevertheless not be a futile exercise to examine our strategy and tactics in the light of the developments since 1969. With our people's war unfolding at the rate it does and the forces of change daily conquering majestic heights, this article will endeavour to examine, however briefly, the basic tenets of our Strategy and Tactics with the aim of proving its continued and ever-growing validity. For in the final analysis, practice alone is the criterion of truth.

As the overall plan of battle, the art of directing the campaign and the overall statement of objectives of our national democratic revolution the Strategy and Tactics of the ANC consists of three main elements:

- i) The definition of the strategic goal;*
- ii) The principal enemy against whom the main revolutionary blows must be directed and*
- iii) The main revolutionary force and its allies.*

For the amelioration and betterment of the lot of the oppressed majority of the African people who have borne the main brunt of the colonial yoke for the past 330 years, the ANC's Strategy and Tactics states in no uncertain terms: "What then is the broad purpose of our military struggle? Simply put, in the first phase, it is the complete political and economic emancipation of all our people and the constitution of a society which accords with the basic provisions of our programme — The Freedom Charter"

FREEDOM CHARTER

It is on the basis of our demands as enshrined in the Freedom Charter that a correct definition of the class and national enemy against whom the main revolutionary thrust is to be concerted is made. Our Strategy and Tactics does not end up at identifying the enemy, but proceeds to soberly assess his strong and weak points.

It points out the racist regime has a massive potential of armaments and manpower resources, a sophisticated network of communication and railway lines, an organised economy and a relatively well-trained and efficient army. Moreover our enemy has got a strong backing from the imperialist countries like US, Britain, FRG and others who may not limit themselves to supporting the regime but may pass over to active intervention militarily. But inseparably bound up with its strength is also the weakness of our enemy that mainly stems from its unpopularity within the people as well as the need to protect widely scattered installations on which his economy is dependent. Skilful application of guerilla tactics will, asserts our Strategy and Tactics, render the material strength of the enemy useless.

The past years, in direct contrast to the demands of the international community to isolate the apartheid regime, have witnessed increased support rendered by the imperialist countries to the South African regime. With the coming to throne of the war monger Ronald Reagan, the US has not only ended with the underground shipment of military equipment to South Africa, but Reagan has been bold enough to openly voice his support for the racist regime.

The Reagan Administration has relaxed the restrictions on trade with South Africa and refers to our liberation forces as 'International Terrorism'. In Reagan's words: "Can we abandon a country (South Africa) that has stood beside us in every war we've ever fought, a country that is essential to the free world, that has minerals?" What does all these factors signify? They are a clear pointer to the extremes to which the western

world is prepared to go in defence of apartheid South Africa. Therefore when our Strategy and Tactics indicated the possibility of active intervention by the imperialist countries in our country it was basing itself in the understanding of how much stake the entire western world have in the South African wealth and strategic location.

ARMED STRUGGLE

On the other hand the recent past has also witnessed a consistent growth of armed struggle to a level hitherto unprecedented in our history. The dramatic operations of our heroic army, Umkhonto We Sizwe have greatly undermined and disorganised racist South Africa's defence and security networks, shattering to smithereens the old myth about South Africa's invincibility.

The racist defence minister has been forced to admit: "The permanent force and the present number of national servicemen are no longer capable of guaranteeing the safety of the white community." Yet in another confession the security forces have also reiterated the 'difficulty to find the ideal security protection for key installations'. It is against this background that the government talks about the so-called area war preparations in which it envisages the extension of part-time services to inactive reserves.

NATIONAL SERVICE

Whilst the National service was nine months in 1967 and 12 months in 1972, it increased to 24 months in 1977. Service in the Citizen Force rose from 19 days per year for five years in 1972 to 240 days served over eight years in 1982. All these developments attest to the correctness of our proposition, viz, that the enemy will find difficulty in coping up as he has to attenuate his enormous manpower resources over large and wide expanses in an effort to arrest the country-wide torrents of our armed and sabotage attacks. The racist enemy already feels the strain. This is what we meant in 1969 when we concluded "superior forces can thus be harassed, weakened and in the end destroyed". To our enemies and their detractors, it sounded a dream then but today practice is bearing us out.

The position of the white population is also given the attention it deserves in our Strategy and Tactics. While the majority of the whites are prepared to die in defence of their apartheid privileges, our Strategy and Tactics points out that it is not altogether impossible that a substantial section of the white population may be won over. Indeed opposition to the apartheid regime is steadily claiming ever-growing numbers from Whi-

tes. The War Resisters Movement is daily growing from strength to strength. But despite all these developments, the majority of Whites still see their stakes in the ruthless oppression and exploitation of the black masses and the defeat of our liberation drive. To convince them of the coincidence of their interests and those of the black masses we need to intensify our political and military struggle to ever higher levels. It is only through relentless engagement with the enemy in all fronts that the whites will learn in practice that the future is ours.

MONOPOLY

A unique feature of South Africa, a monopoly capitalist state, is that race and national oppression are endemic to the entire exploitative system. It is the African masses who are the main victims of the evils and appalling consequences of apartheid which, though the racist rulers of late pretend to give it a coat of sugar, has been stepped up with unbridled intensity. The system of reserves is carried out with added vigour, more and more bantustans are becoming independent, forced mass removals, mass arrests and detentions without trials is the order of the day; pass laws are still intact; the list is endless. Hence we still hold firmly to the belief that the main content of our revolution is the national liberation of the African people. For, in the words of our Strategy and Tactics "...it is only the success of the national democratic revolution which – destroying the existing social and economic relationship – will bring with it a correction of the historical injustices perpetrated against the indigenous majority and thus lay the basis for a new – and deeper internationalist – approach. Until then the national sense of grievance is the most potent revolutionary force which must be harnessed."

The Coloured and Indian people, though occupying an intermediary position between the Africans and the Whites, are also subjected to White oppression and have no say in the running of the state affairs. Our Strategy and Tactics states that these national groups are the natural allies of the African people at the present phase of our revolution. It further calls for the full intergration of the revolutionaries from these racial groups on the basis of individual equality in our struggle.

PHENOMENON

Though not at all a new phenomenon, the past few years have seen our Coloured and Indian people living up to their role in a manner unprecedented in the history of our struggle. During the Soweto uprisings of 1976 and later the Coloured and Indian youth showed once again their

growing resentment of apartheid, the coincidence of their interests with those of the Africans and their determination to march hand in hand with their African brothers in the war against the common enemy. On more than one occasion the enemy schemes aimed at separating these communities from the Africans and setting them against each other have ended in failure.

Last year the boycotts organized by both the Indian people and the Africans against the dummy SAIC elections ended in utter frustration of this government scheme.. On top of this rebuff of the government by our people, the Indian people reaffirmed their strong adherence and loyalty to the Freedom Charter. The domination of the portrait of the ANC leader, Nelson Mandela in most of these anti-SAIC meetings was once again symbolising the growing unity of the people of South Africa across the colour lines. The unwavering support to the Freedom Charter also points to the fact that this document which embodies the strategic goals of our movement still serves as the basis for unity of all the people of South Africa and therefore remains as relevant as ever .

In its recognition of the predominant significance of national oppression in South Africa, the ANC, by no means underestimates the class contradictions inherent in the apartheid structure. It gives full consideration to the fact that national oppression in South Africa is used by the bourgeois class to facilitate the most intense and brutal exploitation of our people. In this regard our Strategy and tactics states that: "Our drive towards national emancipation is therefore in a very real way bound up with economic emancipation." For this reason, our programme sets aside a special and leading role to be played by the working class in our struggle.

Never before have South Africa ever been rocked by such a wave of strike actions by the working class. The discipline and collectivist nature with which these class battles are conducted shows that both, politically and organizationally, the working class is the main contender of the entire apartheid system, its economic, social and political structures. A so-called international research corporation, assessing the situation in South Africa for foreign investors warned them that "eventually business will be unable to develop reliable workforces." Many other similar bourgeois organizations have also been forced to admit that the strike fever in which South Africa is presently gripped, instead of diminishing, is escalating, affecting the cross-section of the business sectors, from the small companies to the largest private industrial associations. These factors indicate in no less clear terms the basic nature of the contradictions between capital



Workers on the March!

and labour in South Africa, and that, these cannot be resolved by any form of reforms short of the total destruction of the capitalist system. The African working class, being brutally oppressed and super exploited, and constituting 71% of the total economically active population, is in the forefront of all these class and national battles.

One important thing to be noted is that while the mass upsurges rocking our country stem from the contradictions inherent in the system of apartheid, they also result from the conscious efforts of our movement directed at harnessing the mass anger and leading our people in their fight against national domination to a victorious end.

POLITICAL AND MILITARY

These activities of our movement are two-fold in character — political and military. It becomes necessary therefore that in examining these activities we also try and show the relationship between these two aspects. Our strategy states that by revolutionary armed struggle we mean "political struggle by means which include the use of military force." In simple terms what we mean is that our struggle is aimed at winning the support of the masses so that at a certain stage of its development, armed violence should be the weapon employed by the entire people to crush the racist government.

Trodding along this path charted in our Strategy and Tactics our movement, starting from 1979, embarked on a 3-year programme aimed at raising the level of both mass and armed struggles to unprecedented levels.

Looking back at the three years that went down in our history as the 'Year of the Spear', 'Year of the Charter and the South African Worker' and the 'Year of the Youth' respectively, one cannot but marvel at the successes scored by the revolutionary forces of our land headed by the African National Congress.

The skilful exercise of tactics, particularly the combination of armed struggle with the mass struggles have gained our organisation great reputation with both friend and foe alike admitting that the ANC has become a household name in our country.

UMKHONTO WE SIZWE

Of particular significance in this regard are the telling military blows delivered by our army, Umkhonto We Sizwe. The Sunday Times once noted: "Of the 10 blasts this year (1981), many of them have been directed at the symbols of authority, including the SADF recruiting office,..." Such direction of our blows to issues immediately affecting the people have served to reinforce the people's mass struggles and have stimulated mass action further, creating more favourable conditions for the survival, entrenchment and multiplication of our army, and consequently, the general upliftment of our struggle to higher levels.

Summing up our basic strategy and tactics, Nelson Mandela wrote: "Between the anvil of united mass action and the hammer of armed struggle we shall crush apartheid and white minority rule." This is the strategy that saw to the defeat of French colonialism in Vietnam, Portuguese in Angola, Mozambique and Guinea Bissau and yesterday, Ian Smith in Zimbabwe. South Africa can be no exception. The boers are already flinching. The imperative of the day is to surge ever forward unsparing of ourselves, guarding against all deviations from the general line charted out in our time-stested document – The Way Forward – Strategy and Tactics of the ANC which has lived to be a noble contribution to the storehouse of world revolutionary theory and practice.

DAWN PolitiXword No.4 Answers

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- DOWN:** 1. Poet 2. Laborious 3. Monarch 4. Fee 5. Wage
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