

Political and Military Training in our Army

-- MOUNTAIN KEPADITSE

Our people's army, Umkhonto we Sizwe, is a product of centuries of struggles and sacrifices. It is an army composed of those sons and daughters of our oppressed people who have devoted their lives for the cause of their people and are ready to serve them dutifully to the bitter end.

As our struggle sharpens and pierces deep into the heart of the enemy, armed struggle continues to occupy an important role in our people's efforts to overthrow the Pretoria tyranny presently ruling our country. It is the striking force of the people whose ultimate goal is the seizure of political power. Therefore, our People's Army, as the cutting edge of our people's offensive, is spearheading this popular offensive to its logical conclusion.

Today it is a little over 21 years since our movement, the African National Congress, embarked on a course of building this army into an army which not only aims at overthrowing the Botha-Malan regime ruling our country, but an army which will become the spear and shield of the nation, the defender and protector of the gains of our revolution when we have hoisted our people's flag. Above all an army which aims at building and moulding our youth into a new man who will make South Africa a respected country amongst the community of nations.

Therefore, in order to ensure this and victory over our enemy, it is necessary to mould our army into an army of dedicated and committed combatants, not just of armed men but of professional revolutionaries whose devotion to the cause is borne out of political conviction.

POLITICAL TRAINING

Much as we are convinced that armed struggle must now be the main form of our liberatory activity, we do not beautify war. We see war for what it really is - an extension of politics by other means. This is our starting point in our understanding of war, so any attempts to promote such ideas as militarism in our ranks should be combated mercilessly. We are waging a political struggle with arms in hand. So it is extremely important that we should have a very deep political understanding of our struggle, to know what we are fighting for, to believe in it very deeply and to carry it in our consciousness constantly in the course of our struggle.

When we talk of political training in our army, we are talking of quite a complex process, in that political training in itself entails many sided aspects.

Firstly, it is the dissemination of political knowledge by political workers in the army, i.e. political instructors and political commissars. This is an important aspect in training and in moulding the character of a soldier. It includes education about the history and policies of our revolutionary movement, the definition of the enemy, necessity of fighting with arms, etc., to cite but few. In our conditions where the working class is predominant and by the virtue of the black working class being the most oppressed, the most exploited and the most degraded section of our oppressed, it is necessary that our army should be reflective of this. Ideological orientation of our army to love and respect the revolutionary working class, the producers of all material wealth and the vehicle for social change is one of the tasks of utmost importance in moulding our army as a means of the politico-ideological education of the combatants and the inculcation of an elevated moral spirit in our soldiers. This is also a decisive weapon against our enemies who by the virtue of being an exploiter class are inevitably anti-worker.

Also included is the teaching about the experiences of other revolutionary organisations and parties in their struggles against colonialism, imperialism and for peace and social progress. Our struggle is linked up with the overall struggle against imperialism, so in our daily political training, emphasis is made to connect our struggle with this world-wide offensive against imperialist domination and our place and role in the world revolutionary process is stressed.

The second most important aspect of political training is the transformation of the already acquired political knowledge into political consciousness and conviction. In our conditions of underground struggle which involves thousands of extremely complex and difficult tasks, political consciousness and conviction should be at a very high level.

Political understanding and political knowledge should work in a close unity, for the disregarding of the former at the expense of the latter could lead one to serious problems and misconceptions. Working in unity, they help to establish military discipline, to strengthen the unity between word and deed which is one of the basic criteria for any revolutionary. It lays basis for mass enthusiasm in the soldiers, encouraging their creative initiative and inculcating in them the sense of duty and pride.

From the moral point of view it helps in resolutely struggling against all enemies of a revolutionary: reluctance, laziness, ignorance, subjectivism, despair, individualism, etc. It further instills the sense of respo-

nsibility, maintenance of vigilance against the enemies of our revolution, standing ready to fight and refuse to submit to the enemy, and above all subordination of one's interests to those of one's movement and the people as a whole. Lastly, political training helps a soldier to overcome all the difficulties and obstacles that arise in his path. A soldier who is not firm to his ideological and political commitment, who is without an unbending will, cannot cope with the difficulties and in moments of danger and setbacks is apt to lose heart. Furthermore this political conditioning of the soldiers in the army includes inculcating in them a sense of class hatred towards the enemy. This feeling of hatred should be based on the clear understanding of the iniquities and vile crimes the enemy has committed to his people. Hatred for those who keep the people you love under the jack-boot of colonial fascism and the country one love swimming in a pool of blood is a decisive component of the patriotic feeling.

MILITARY TRAINING

Political and moral training, while occupying an important place in moulding our soldiers, are linked with military training. A pre-condition for any victory in a battle is the effective military training of the personnel.

As we are forging forward to more SASOLs, Voortrekkerhoogtes, Paupietersburgs and more ikhuzes, the military training and education of our personnel is fast becoming more and more demanding and exacting, thereby demanding not only effective group or unit training but a strict combination of both individual and group training.

One of the most important aspects of our military training is the cultivation of military traditions on the basis of the rich heritage inherited from the traditions of the armies of our heroic ancestors during the wars of resistance. This should not only be a matter of recreating that heroism of the past generations but also of maintaining continuity of generations and reminding the younger ones of their responsibility. "The glory of heroes gives birth to heroes", so goes an age-old Russian saying. The most important task facing us is to preserve and multiply what was achieved by our fore-fathers and borrow from them all that is invaluable and employ it creatively in our own conditions. We need to study these military traditions left to us by such great military strategists like Shaka, Makana, Moshoeshe, Sekhukhuni, Magoma, etc.

Our people have been deprived the knowledge of military skills by the cancerous apartheid regime, hoping that they would rule us by force forever. So the task facing our generation is the mastering of the modern military techniques. A soldier without the knowledge of his own weapon is not fit for any battle. With military science and technology advancing at

the pace it does, the need arises for raising our academic knowledge so as to cope up with the present demands of military science and art. This of course can be accomplished with no difficulties with the help the socialist countries, led by the USSR, are rendering us.

Our main objective should be to ensure that each soldier is helped to develop high combat, moral, political, psychological and physical qualities and is able to cement them into a single whole in order to attain high levels of combat skills, mental stability and flexibility in solving military problems no matter how complicated they are.

In our conditions where the enemy is desperately in need of doing the impossible - of crushing our army wherever he finds it - combat readiness

MKA**SOLDIER**

LET US ORGANISE

(OUR TASK TO THE WORKING PEOPLE)

PART ONE

- KHUMALO MTGWE

The question *'What is to be Done'* is now a formal question for our entire movement. Comrade Oliver Tambo, our President, in the 1983 political yearly message from the National Executive Committee, has categorically declared that everybody, indeed each and every member of our glorious and popular vanguard movement, the African National Congress, should pose this question to oneself and seek to find an answer.

The question of *'What is to be Done'* is, certainly, the most burning question of our liberation movement, and no matter how we may twist and turn with the zig-zags of the struggle, it confronts us, South African revolutionaries, with particular stubbornness and insistence. It is not a question of what path we must choose (as was probably the case in the beginning of the sixties when new historic conditions forced our movement to adopt new strategies), but of what practical steps we must take upon the already chosen path and how they shall be taken. It is a question of the system and plan of practical work, a question of the character and methods of struggle. This emphasis has to be made deliberately in order to avoid the unnecessary differences of opinion within our ranks, differences of opinion often arising from a failure to distinguish the immediate demands (what is at issue right now) from the general tasks and permanent needs of our liberation as a whole.