

LET US NOT SHOOT OURSELVES IN THE FOOT

Walter Sisulu made clear his attitude to armed struggle when he stated: *'An oppressed people cannot give up their protest or the sword in the hope that their demands will be granted'*.

Indeed, it is the armed struggle, combined with mass resistance, that has driven the regime into crisis. Umkhonto's actions have been a key factor in popularising the ANC and inspiring the oppressed.

At a time when De Klerk is allowing a greater measure of political expression, the argument is being raised that it is the armed struggle that prevents a further opening.

Let us clearly state that we reject this argument out of hand. Firstly, who can say how long De Klerk will permit such a state of affairs to continue? There is no way we can prematurely disarm the liberation struggle. This would be tantamount to 'shooting oneself in the foot'.

Secondly, all the basic reasons for the adoption of the armed struggle remain. We cannot risk facing the enemy without recourse to arms. Whatever sugar-coating De Klerk applies to the pill of white domination, apartheid remains an inherently violent system with the ever-present possibilities of unleashing massacres, and a reign of terror.

Thirdly, there can be no turning the clock back to a period of non-violent struggle when the gathering of revolutionary forces — a product of the momentum and sacrifice of decades of struggle — has brought the liberation movement to the threshold of seriously challenging for power. It is precisely at this point in time, with apartheid in tactical retreat, that we must give De Klerk and the system he heads no respite.



How is this to be achieved?

In our conditions a powerful revolutionary army can only be constructed on the foundation-stones of a powerful underground. The underground is best placed to recruit suitable activists for clandestine combat work.

The underground solves the problem of political leadership and command and control of the combat forces. The underground links the armed struggle to the mass struggle, popularises the skills of warfare among the masses, and prevents professional combatants from being isolated from the people.

The underground ensures that the armed struggle graduates from a low intensity level and helps open up the insurrectionary potential. Many of the problems in the way of developing the armed struggle, not the least being the absorbing of MK cadres trained abroad, can be solved only through the underground. Elevating the task of underground construction to an all-out priority will result in greater and swifter progress.

Linked with this is the necessity of developing self-defence units. Together with the underground combat forces (urban and rural) these make up the Revolutionary Army.

Conditions are becoming more favourable for the emergence of locally-based units which could be the fore-runner of a national people's militia.

The self-defence units which emerged in some areas in 1983-86 could be developed to defend popular organisations and individuals against vigilantes, protect people against rent evictions, engage in physical exercises, reconnaissance of the enemy, disciplined duty, etc.

In periods of revolutionary advance these units can develop ten-thousand fold, becoming the mass force around the core of MK combatants. Activists should already take the initiative to set up such structures taking care they fall under the political leadership of the movement. Without a Revolutionary Army of the masses the seizure of power or the transfer of real power through a negotiated settlement is not possible.

The building of the underground and the Revolutionary Army must go hand-in-hand with ongoing operations. These must give De Klerk no room to breathe, harass the enemy forces and undermine their morale, weaken the economy, punish the evil-doers, win over black soldiers and police, inspire the masses and demonstrate the effectiveness of armed action.

Our choice of targets must be based on our political objectives. On no account must we be seen to be targeting mere civilians of whatever race.