

## POLITICS AND THE ARMY

From the outset the paper will seek to assert the obvious, that Umkhonto We Sizwe is a liberation army entrusted with the historical task of removing the fascist clique and bringing about the establishment of a people's democracy in our country. The accomplishment of that mission will, ofcourse, mean that the army of the emancipated people now assume the posture of a shield for the protection and consolidation of the revolutionary gains. In addition to that, it will have to tackle the heculian responsibility of integrating some elements from the decadent apartheid colonialist armed forces and in that capacity address the question of reconciliation.

Being what it is, our army must, as it always has been, influenced and directed by the policies, strategy and tactics of the vanguard organisation - the ANC - every inch of the way. It can be safely said that no other single issue has been dealt with in our revolutionary work quite so closely and profoundly as the role of political education in the army.

Since its inception some twenty seven years ago, Umkhonto We Sizwe has always been taught to see itself as an armed detachment of the entire democratic people of our country. Because of the intense politicisation that has characterised its existence, it has been able to sustain the war effort with tremendous courage against heavy odds. In the absence of a rear base - a strategic facility that every other liberation army in this region enjoyed - it has fought against the most powerful war machine in the continent and placed our struggle at the commanding level where it is today. It has waged stirring battles in a number of countries in the sub-continent and is presently fighting side by side with FAPLA - far away from home - in defence of that country's freedom and independence. All these, and many other acts, are an eloquent expression of the overall importance of political education within the ranks of

our armed men and women.

But it will be an oversimplification to assume that all is well; that the membership of the ANC and the mass democratic movement must be complacent and relegate all else to the army leadership and other supporting structures. Indeed, individual members of the movement, even some of our people from inside the country are beginning to question the quality of the cadre that goes inside. Lately we have had to contend with an alarming number of defectors. There is even a decline of operational work in a situation which is so much demanding in terms of our military presence.

In the rear, around our transit areas one discerns visible demoralisation and disgruntlement and even a loss of interest in the very life-line of the army - politics. Outside these areas, in the training camps, the situation is quite different. The morale is high and sense of responsibility of the highest quality generally at all levels of the command structures.

What then brings about these symptoms of hopelessness in the ranks of some cadres in the transit areas? Certainly the cause lies not in a lack of political work. When you talk to them and question their political lethargy, they will retort that "an army marches on its stomach". This is probably true. Those of us who go to the transit areas quite often will discover that the logistics section is not at the job as it should. It is admitted that some of the cadres dispose of the supplies to their girlfriends, and that some of the items are sold to buy some niceties. But the issue of logistics is certainly a problem area and one hopes that the steps taken by MHQ to address it squarely is going to bring about some relief.

Still on logistics, Mphando becomes yet another area of complaint. It is a pity that up to now we have not been able to address the matter adequately. One hopes that the Seminar will devote a good measure of its little time to look into the matter.

One other problem about which almost all the cadres feel strongly is one of their prolonged stay in these transit areas. At the moment we are contending with a series of applications in which cadres are requesting to opt out of the army for academic studies elsewhere. It has been advised that cadres do not leave the camps till when they are due for immediate infiltration. It is a stop-gap measure that might as well create problems in the very camps themselves.

We believe that these problems should be seen as the property of the movement in its entirety. They have been brought about, to a certain extent, by our attitude that the prosecution of the armed struggle is the sacred preserve of Military Headquarters and the PMC and nobody else.

Whilst it is absolutely necessary that our army should plan and execute operations in terms of all the tenets of conspiracy and secrecy, it will be wrong to maintain a watertight situation in which the army is totally closed to other sections of the organisation and even the mass democratic movement inside the country. Such a state of affairs can only lead to stagnation, demoralisation and frustration.

The leadership of the army should be accessible to constructive criticism and advice from the membership. Let us illustrate areas where this can be applicable. The population of women in South Africa is well over 50%. But if you look at the composition of the army today, you will immediately discover that female presence is a tiny drop in the ocean. Even that paucity is not fully utilised in operational action inside the country. We seriously believe that in a situation where the army related more positively to the Women's Section this gross imbalance could be significantly minimised. The Women's Section is in touch with their counterparts inside the country and should be in a position to suggest concretely how we can step up women recruitment. They might even help to suggest in which areas of deployment women can best be effective.

Similarly with the other departments and the South African Congress of Trade Unions. All of us, together with the leadership of the mass democratic movement, have the collective responsibility of seeing to it that the armed struggle in particular is pushed to where it is supposed to be. Through properly created structures we should be able to reach one another without at all endangering the security of the army and the movement. The areas in which we can contribute and make our army viable and strong are immense.

In the field of political education, for instance, the DPE is doing a lot of good work to assist in the building up<sup>of</sup> a cadre of quality. The DIP has a tremendous role in the field of propaganda and agitation. A positive response from them could go a very long way in eliminating the boredom in the transit areas. They are not doing much presently and it is left to the army to forage for itself. Even their publications have become dangerously scarce.

On the question of lifting up the academic education of the cadre the Department of Education can and should assist a great deal. We **need** it in the camps, and were we relating properly, we would not be needing to remind one another. All of us know that military science is becoming more sophisticated and demanding in terms of academic stature.

We have cited here by name only a few departments. It does not mean that those we have not mentioned have nothing to do with the army. Ukhonto We Sizwe is our collective creation and its morale and fighting capability cannot be seen apart from the morale of the movement and the oppressed and democratic people at home. One Soviet writer makes the point brilliantly when he says, "The morale of an army is a direct reflection of and part of the people. The more the war aims corresponds with the interests of the people, the higher the level of that

people's morale and, as a consequence of this, the higher the morale of their army". (A.A. Grechko).

The National Executive Committee must crack the whip and, together with all sections and departments of the movement, make sure that the ANC does not talk war but makes one. It must ruthlessly enforce accountability, efficiency and professionalism to a point where every member of the movement is able to remain aware of his or her personal duty and responsibility for the success of the common cause, no matter how difficult the situation. We must all of us be fired with that desire to go home and fight. Let us remember what we said at Kabwe.

Once we adopt the frame of mind of nostalgia, accountability, efficiency and revolutionary professionalism, then our problems will be minimised. As departments and sections of the movement we shall have come to understand that MK is ours and we are MK's. As departments and sections let us, therefore, come forward with contributions aimed at reinforcing the morale of our army and its performance inside the country.

Let all of us understand that the ability if the fascists to deploy their murderous hordes all over Southern Africa is due to a very large extent to the fact that we have not been able to engage them sufficiently inside the country.

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